



Pak. groups training cadre for sea strikes, says Hansraj Ahir
page 10



China is building 'advanced' warships for Pakistan, says report
page 12



Ramakant Achrekar, who honed a battery of cricketers, passes away
page 15



Kohli's men primed to script history as fourth Test begins at Sydney
page 15

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NEARBY



AAP to announce LS candidates by Feb. 15

NEW DELHI With the aim of getting voters in Delhi and Haryana out on polling day, the Aam Aadmi Party will be appointing lakhs of workers – one for every 10 households in Haryana and Delhi – for the week leading up to the Lok Sabha election, senior party leader Gopal Rai said on Wednesday. The party would contest Lok Sabha seats in Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Goa and Chandigarh, a total of 33 seats, he said. The candidates would be announced by February 15.

DELI METRO ▶ PAGE 1

Celebratory firing: former MLA detained

NEW DELHI The Delhi police on Wednesday detained former Bihar MLA Raju Singh and his driver-cum-bodyguard Hari Singh from Uttar Pradesh's Gorakhpur in connection with the celebratory firing that left a 42-year-old architect battling for life. The victim, Archana Gupta, who received a bullet injury in the head, has been declared brain-dead, police said.

DELI METRO ▶ PAGE 1

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DELI METRO ▶ 6 PAGES

Two women make it to Sabarimala

Bindu, Kanakadurga are in their early 40s

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Two young women entered the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple in Kerala under police cover in the early hours of Wednesday, triggering anti-government protests across the State.

Chandran Unnithan, 55, a BJP worker, was killed when a protest march taken out by the Sabarimala Karma Samithi (SKS) in the palace town of Pandalam was pelted with stones by miscreants. He suffered a head injury and died later in hospital.

The women who were in their early 40s – Bindu from Kozhikode and Kanakadurga from Malappuram – reached the foothills around 1.30 a.m. at Pampa, from where they were escorted to the temple by plainclothes policemen.

CM confirms darshan

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan later confirmed the temple entry of Bindu and Kanakadurga. "Yes, they have had darshan."

The temple chief priest, Kandararu Rajeevaran, closed the sanctum sanctorum at 10.35 a.m. to perform 'purification' rites after it was confirmed the two young women had offered worship. The temple reopened after the hour-long rites.

This is the first time that women in the 10-50 age group have managed to enter the temple following the

One killed as protests erupt against Kerala govt.

Supreme Court verdict of September 28.

Protesters owing allegiance to the Sangh Parivar and the BJP took to the streets, blocked roads, threw stones and clashed with the police, leading to tense situations at several places.

The SKS has called a State-wide dawn-to-dusk hartal on Thursday.

In the stone-pelting in Pandalam, besides Mr. Unnithan, 10 were injured, three of them seriously.

Mr. Unnithan belongs to Kurampala near Pandalam. According to reports received in Pathanamthitta, certain miscreants threw stones, bricks, and concrete blocks at the SKS march from the rooftop of the building that housed the CPI(M) office in the town.

Both the Congress-led United Democratic Front and the BJP came out against the government, accusing it of "masterminding" the operation and "hurting" the religious sentiments of devotees.

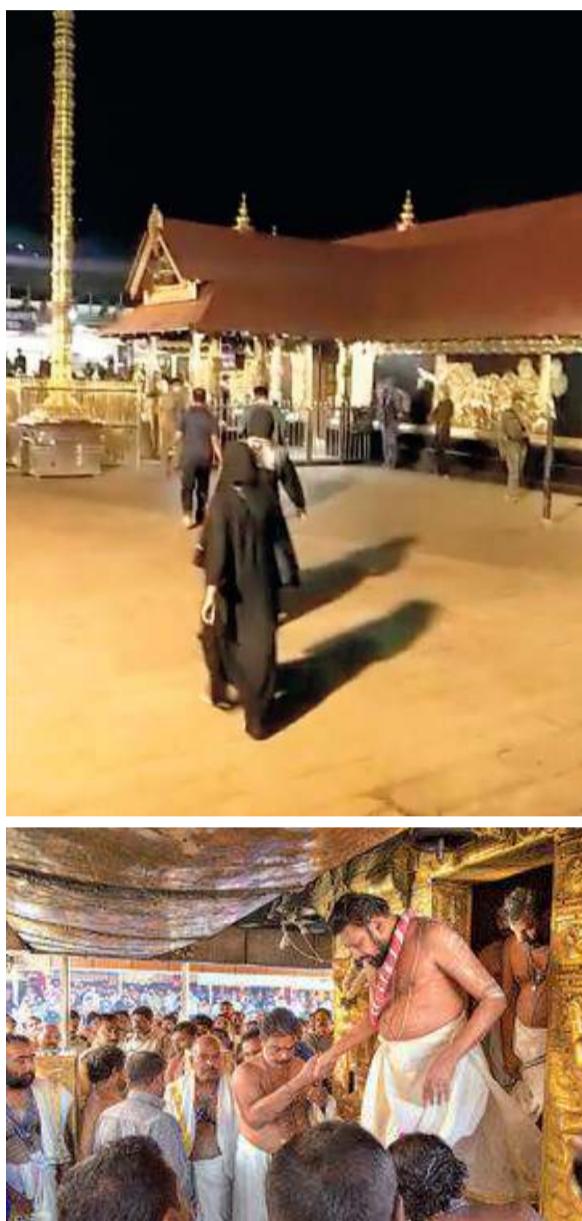
Alleging that the government was behind the "violation of the temple traditions," the BJP announced that it would support the hartal on Thursday.

The Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee too will observe a 'black day' on Thursday, protesting against the government for allegedly violating the ritualistic practices at Sabarimala.

This is the first time that women in the 10-50 age group have managed to enter the temple following the

Chief priest performs rites of 'purification'

Dawn-to-dusk strike called for today



Mission and aftermath: (From top) A video grab of Bindu and Kanakadurga visiting the Ayyappa temple; and the chief priest during the 'purification' rituals. ■ PTI, SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Women kept in 'safe custody'

After they entered the Sabarimala temple on Wednesday, the two young women were escorted by the police downhill to Pampa, and from there to Angamaly. Then they were taken to an undisclosed location. The whole operation was closely guarded. Bindu and Kanakadurga reached the Sanmidanam around 3 a.m. and were escorted by the police to the temple premises in the next 50 minutes. Skirting the 18 holy steps, they entered the temple through the front door. ▶ PAGE 7

Purification violates ruling

The closure of the sanctum sanctorum to perform purification rites after two women of menstruating age entered the temple may amount to using the concept of impurity and pollution to violate the women's right against untouchability. Though the temple priest said his action should not be treated as "any discrimination against women," the Supreme Court said in its September 28 verdict that any form of exclusion based on "purity and pollution" amounted to untouchability. ▶ PAGE 7

The Goa Minister is saying clearly that Parrikarji said in a cabinet meeting that he has a complete file on Rafale deal with all details and therefore, he can't be disturbed. There may be other such audio tapes

ARUN JAITLEY, Finance Minister

Prime Minister Modi is like Meghnad in Ramayana. He is hiding behind Jaitley. The Prime Minister should have the courage to face Parliament

RAHUL GANDHI, Congress president

SAUGATA ROY, Trinamool Congress member

Rahul, Jaitley spar over Rafale

Congress chief dares PM to a debate

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

On the first working day of 2019, the Lok Sabha on Wednesday witnessed an intense battle between Congress president Rahul Gandhi and Finance Minister Arun Jaitley over the Rafale fighter jet deal.

Mr. Gandhi accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of "hiding in his room as he doesn't have the guts to confront questions" and repeated his party's demand for a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to probe the deal.

At a press conference later, Mr. Gandhi dared Mr. Modi to a one-on-one debate on the facts of the deal and claimed that the Finance Minister, by stating the size of the deal to be

₹58,000 crore, had already indicated their price. "If you divide ₹58,000 crore by 36 planes, you get ₹1,600 crore [₹1611.11 crore]," he said. The BJP ally, Shiv Sena, embarrassed the government, joining the Opposition ranks in demanding a JPC.

Peddling lies'
Rejecting the demand, the Finance Minister accused Mr. Gandhi of "peddling repeated lies" and claimed that the Congress chief didn't understand the basics of a combat aircraft. He quoted the Supreme Court judgment to argue that even though the "conscience" of the court was satisfied, it did not satisfy the Congress's election necessity.

HIGH DRAMA ▶ PAGE 11

Hindus cannot wait till eternity for temple: VHP

'The only way forward is to enact legislation'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) on Wednesday said "the Hindu society cannot wait till eternity" for the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya, a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement on Tuesday that he would not bring legislation for the temple before the legal process got over.

VHP international working president Alok Kumar said here that "considering the overall situation, the VHP continues to be of the firm view that the Hindu society cannot be expected to wait till eternity for a court decision." "The only appropriate way forward is to

enact legislation clearing the way for the construction of a grand Ram temple at the Ram Janmabhoomi now," he added.

He clarified that the VHP did not see attempts to introduce a private member Bill for the construction of a temple in Ayodhya, stating

that a "government-sponsored Bill" was what the organisation wanted.

"Further steps will be decided by Hindu seers at the Dham Sansad to be held during the Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj," he added.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

Share swap ratio for bank merger cleared

BoB, Vijaya, Dena boards give nod

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

The boards of Bank of Baroda (BoB), Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank on Wednesday approved the share swap ratio for the proposed merger. Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank shareholders will get 402 and 110 shares of BoB, respectively, for every 1,000 shares held.

The Union Cabinet approved the amalgamation of the three banks, with Bank of Baroda as the transferee bank, and Vijaya and Dena as transferor banks. This would mean that the merged entity would be known as the Bank of Baroda.

However, bank officials said there would be a new logo of the merged entity to reflect the identity of all the three banks. The merger will come into effect from April 1.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

Bill to allow voluntary use of Aadhaar ID introduced

It is in compliance with SC verdict, says Law Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Wednesday introduced a Bill in the Lok Sabha that will provide legal backing for voluntary seeding of biometric Aadhaar ID with mobile numbers and bank accounts after the Supreme Court barred mandatory use of the 12-digit unique identifier by private firms.

No privacy violation'
He said the proposed amendment Bill was in compliance with the Supreme Court's judgment and that there would be no infringement of privacy.

Wide coverage
Union Minister Hansraj Ahir has released in the Rajya Sabha details of Aadhaar cards issued till November 30, 2018

122.90 crore cards issued across the country

6.71 crore cards were issued to children below the age of five

121 crore is India's population, as per the 2011 census

States with least coverage as of Oct. 31, 2018
Assam 10.9%
Meghalaya 28.1%
Nagaland 57.5%

He also said the government was ready with a data protection Bill and it would soon be introduced. "It [the linking] is voluntary and not mandatory at all," Mr. Prasad said. The parallel authentication norms were there

to safeguard privacy, he added. Objections were raised by Shashi Tharoor of the Congress, Saugata Roy of the Trinamool and N.K. Prema-chandran of the RSP.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

Air hostess, friends molested, phone snatched on New Year's Eve

Husband, male friend thrashed by drunk men in Hauz Khas

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI
A 28-year-old air hostess and her two female friends were allegedly molested and her husband and a male friend were thrashed by about a dozen men when the five had gone to celebrate New Year's Eve in Hauz Khas.

The woman's husband, a consultant with a firm in Gurugram, told *The Hindu* that they had stepped out of a cafe at Sri Aurobindo Marg around 1.30 a.m. and were waiting for a cab when the incident happened.

"Initially, two boys passed lewd comments at my wife and her friends. I told them to leave us alone and an argument ensued," the 28-year-old consultant said.

The victims spotted two police officers and told them about the boys. "The officers slapped the duo. While leaving, they threatened us with dire consequences," he said. About 10 minutes later, the duo came back with about 10 others and started thrashing them. They beat up the consultant, groped his wife and her friends and threatened them with rape. "My wife has an injury on her upper body. She and her friends are still in shock," the consultant said, adding that the attackers, who were drunk, also snatched his wife's mobile phone.

He claimed that the attack continued for 10-15 minutes and there were about 100-150 people on the street but no arrests have been made so far.

Losing the thread



Death trap: Thread-makers preparing manja, a coloured thread coated with glass powder for flying kites, in Surat ahead of the Makar Sankranti festival. The thread coated with glass powder has been banned by the National Green Tribunal. ■ VIJAY SONI

New panel to protect Assam's heritage

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet has approved the setting up of a high-level committee for implementation of Clause 6 of the Assam Accord which provides for constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of Assam. It also recommended reserving Assembly seats for indigenous communities in the State.

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh had assured Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal in May 2018 that a committee would be set up at the earliest.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 10

AN-NDE

DELHI Timings

THURSDAY, JAN. 03		
RISE 07:14	SET 17:37	
RISE 04:38	SET 15:36	
FRIDAY, JAN. 04		
RISE 07:15	SET 17:38	
RISE 05:33	SET 16:20	
SATURDAY, JAN. 05		
RISE 07:15	SET 17:39	
RISE 06:26	SET 17:08	

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Safdarjung	23	06
Palam	24	08

Delhi Palam Today
23°C A cold morning is likely. Day would be sunny. Marginal improvement in pollution is likely.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
22°C Morning temperature may rise and day temperature may drop. Increase in pollution level likely.

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Cess to pay for cowsheds in U.P.

Opposition slams move; Mayawati challenges Centre to impose it nationwide

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

To tackle the menace of stray cattle, the Yogi Adityanath-government in Uttar Pradesh has decided to set up 'temporary' shelter homes for cows across the State but the costs will be borne by the public in the form of additional 'cow welfare cess' on excise items.

In a Cabinet meeting on Tuesday, the State government decided to introduce an additional levy of up to 0.5% as 'gau kalyan cess' on more than half-a-dozen public sector infrastructure departments, including excise, to fund and maintain the project.

The levy imposed on mandi parishes will now be doubled from 1% to 2%, while a cess of 0.5% will be levied on the toll tax collected by the government agencies for travel on State-built roads and highways, and on profits made by the public

GIt is the responsibility of the government to protect cows, but I wonder why the people are being burdened

RAJENDRA CHAUDHARY

Samajwadi Party spokesman

sector enterprises and construction agencies.

Whether the excise items would include alcohol has not yet been clarified.

The Opposition in Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday slammed the decision, saying this would burden the people. "It is the responsibility of the government to protect cows, but I wonder why the people are being burdened," Samajwadi Party spokesman Rajendra Chaudhary said.

Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati challenged the Centre to impose a similar cess at the national level if the protection of cows can

be ensured through such thinking of the BJP and the RSS.

The government decision comes amid reports that farmers staged protests against the growing menace of stray cattle, which raid fields and destroy their crops. Also, the Opposition parties have also regularly blamed the BJP government for the role of the animals in the vehicle accidents.

In a statement, the government said that it has decided to set up 'asthayi govanash ashram sthal' or temporary cow shelters in both rural and urban areas with capacity to house a minimum of 1,000 cows and cow progeny.

These shelters would be made financially 'self-sustainable' through sale of milk, dung and compost.

If cattle-rearers and farmers leave their animals in public places, on roads or on the private land of other pe-

ople, a fine will be imposed on them, the government said. In parts of U.P., there has been a tradition to abandon old or dry cows.

The government has allotted ₹10 crore to each of the 16 municipalities in the State to arrange shelters for destitute cows. "Apart from this, ₹1.2 crore has been given to every district for gau sholas," said the statement last week.

Mr. Adityanath had then instructed officials to make 'immediate arrangements' for proper care of destitute cows in the State and ensure strict action against land mafia who have encroached upon grazing areas.

The CM also instructed officials to make functional the 750 kanji houses (cows shelters) set up at the Zilla Pan-

chayat level, and ensure proper fodder, shed and drinking facilities for the bovines.

(With PTI inputs)

Fresh snowfall in Kashmir Valley

Weather advisory issued urging people against going out in avalanche-prone areas

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

A fresh spell of snowfall on Wednesday ended the chilly wave, triggered by the sub-zero temperature in the past two weeks, in Kashmir Valley.

However, the snowfall forced the closure of the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway and cut off many areas from the towns in north and south Kashmir.

"Snowfall left many stretches on the Srinagar-Jammu highway slippery and was not fit for vehicular traffic," said an official of the traffic department.

The fresh spell saw heavy snowfall in upper reaches of the Pir Panjal mountain range and moderate snowfall in tourist hotspots like Gulmarg and Pahalgam.

Mild rainfall

Srinagar city also witnessed a mild rainfall. According to the meteorological department, the minimum temperature improved to minus



Children playing out in the snow on the outskirts of Srinagar on Wednesday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

0.4 degree Celsius compared to around minus 2.8 degree C recorded the previous night. "The day temperature hovered around 6.5 degree Celsius," said a met official.

The department predicted a fresh spell of light snowfall in next two days. "Snowfall may be moderate to heavy but isolated on Ja-

nuary 4," said the official.

Meanwhile, on the inputs received from the Indian Meteorological Centre in Srinagar, Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Baseer Ahmad Khan issued a weather advisory on Wednesday. This new weather system may lead to disruption of surface and air transportation. "Deputy Com-

missioners of Kashmir Division, including Leh and Kargil, have been asked to advise people not to venture in avalanche-prone areas during this period," said Mr. Khan. The Deputy Commissioners were directed to activate their control rooms and ensure that the snow clearance equipment is placed at proper places.

Minister flayed for caste remark

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAIPUR

The Rajasthan BJP has condemned a State Minister for her remark that her first priority was to work for her caste and then the larger society, saying it reflected the

narrow-mindedness of the Congress. "What Mamata Bhupesh has said reflects the thought of the Congress. Works are not done on the lines of caste in the government," BJP State president Madan Lal Saini said.

SC rejects plea seeking FIR against Mulayam

On the ground of delay in filing the appeal



Mulayam Singh Yadav

■ FILE PHOTO

1990. He had alleged that the Samajwadi Party leader had given a statement in public meetings that he had ordered the police to fire on 'kar sevaks' at Ayodhya in 1990.

A Bench, comprising Justices Ashok Bhushan and K.M. Joseph, dismissed the plea on the ground of delay considering the fact that appeal has been filed against the May 3, 2016, order of the High Court.

The trial court had dismissed his plea after which he had moved the High Court challenging the order.

In his appeal filed in the top court, the petitioner had claimed, "The High Court failed to appreciate that in a huge public gathering, Mulayam Singh Yadav, has confessed/admitted that he ordered to fire guns on 'kar sevaks' and he further admitted in the second public meeting that if he did not order to fire on kar sevaks then the confidence of Muslims would be broken."

The plea was filed by a Lucknow-based man, who had in 2014 approached a trial court for a direction to the police to lodge an FIR against Mr. Yadav, who was the Chief Minister of U.P. in

Punjab Cabinet nod for smartphones to youth

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH



Capt. Amarinder Singh

■ FILE PHOTO

statement.

The State government had announced 'Mobile Phone to the Youth' in its budget for financial year 2017-18 with the objective of providing digital access to youth.

The Cabinet also approved one-time settlement of non-compoundable violations in the case of unauthorised constructions that have come up in the State up to June 30, 2018.

The Cabinet also gave its nod for the new online transfer policy of the School Education Department, thus ensuring equal opportunity for all employees using online mode for seeking transfers.

NGT seeks response on sand mining in Yamuna

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal has sought response from the Divisional Commissioner, Allahabad, after a committee headed by the officer failed to submit a report on the alleged illegal sand mining in the area.

A Bench, headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel, said, "The committee was to furnish a report which has not been furnished. Issue notice to the Divisional Commissioner, Allahabad, as to why penal action be not taken for non-compliance of orders of this Tribunal."

The officer has been directed to be present before the Tribunal on January 22.

In September last year, the green panel had directed constitution of a committee to be headed by the officer and sought a report on the allegations of illegal mining. Petitioner Atul Singh Chauhan had challenged the ongoing sand mining in the Yamuna riverbed in Allahabad without the requisite environmental clearance.

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Plan to have specific names on Arunachal ST list cleared

Cabinet approves MHA's proposal to do away with generic term 'any Naga tribes'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the Home Ministry's proposal to replace the generic term 'any Naga tribes' with the specific names of the tribes that would qualify for recognition as Scheduled Tribes in Arunachal Pradesh.

The decision taken ahead of the 2019 general election, on a proposal from the Arunachal Pradesh government, is likely to have a bearing on the peace talks with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak Muivah (NSCN-IM).

The NSCN-IM and other Naga groups have been campaigning for a Greater Nagaland or a contiguous land for the Nagas across Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur



The Central government's decision is likely to have a bearing on the peace talks with the NSCN(IM). • FILE PHOTO

and Myanmar.

Proposal cleared in 2018

The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In October last year, Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh had cleared the proposal, which was examined and recommended by the Tribal Affairs Ministry and the Registrar-General of India.

"As for replacing 'any Naga tribes' with the specific names of Tutsa, Wancho, Nocte and Tangsa, it has been cleared by the Tribal Affairs Ministry first. The Cabinet has endorsed it," said a senior official.

Union Law and Justice Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2018, for revision of the list of Scheduled Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, was cleared, and the names of some communities would be deleted.

An official statement said 'Khampti' would be replaced with 'Tai Khamti' in the list. 'Abor' would be deleted and 'Mishmi-Kaman, Idu and Toraon' would be included. 'Monpa, Memba, Sartang, Sajolong' would be included in lieu of 'Momba' in the ST list of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Home Ministry will have to move the Bill in Parliament before the winter session concludes on January 8 for the changes to come into effect.

Bengal to pay entire amount of crop insurance for farmers

Won't allow Centre to take credit by paying only 20%: Mamata

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BOLPUR (W.B.)

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Wednesday that her government won't allow the BJP-led Centre to tag its name with crop insurance for farmers in the State by bearing only 20% of the cost.

The State would henceforth pay the entire amount, she said while addressing an administrative meeting in West Bengal's Birbhum district.

Ms. Banerjee said as of now 49% of farmers in West Bengal are covered under crop insurance and the rest will be brought under its purview soon.

'Emotive issue'

"We won't allow the Centre to do politics with an emotive issue like crop insurance by tagging their name with the project when it is sharing only 20% of the premium amount. The State presently



Mamata Banerjee

feels 80% of the crop insurance amount and we will pay the entire amount in future," she said.

"West Bengal pays the major portion of the premium and the Centre uses its name. This cannot go on, we will pay the entire amount henceforth," the Chief Minister said.

She reiterated her last week's announcement of paying ₹2 lakh under 'Krishi Krishak Bandhu' scheme to the next of kin of a farmer, aged between 18-60 years, in case of his death.

Financial assistance
Ms. Banerjee further said a farmer will get ₹5,000 as financial assistance for each acre of his land in a year for growing a single crop. Under the scheme, farmers will get ₹2,500 twice a year for growing a single crop per acre.

"We have already waived agricultural tax and abolished mutation system for farmers," she said, adding that these measures will lead to the State incurring cost of thousands of crores of rupees but "this is important as it concerns the well-being of our farmers, the backbone of our State".

Colonel Dahda was then the Commanding Officer of the 556 Army Supply Corps and Lieutenant Colonel Mahendra Kumar a platoon commander.

Flurry of political events in Odisha ahead of polls

CM to address event on PM's rally day

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BHUBANESWAR

With Lok Sabha and Assembly elections a few months away, the political situation in Odisha is hotting up with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's back-to-back visits to the State to inaugurate projects and address BJP rallies.

Chief Minister and BJD president Naveen Patnaik had raised a series of issues and demanded financial autonomy for Odisha two days after Mr. Modi visited Bhubaneswar on December 24 to inaugurate projects and address a party rally.

Funds for SHGs
Mr. Patnaik is not taking any chances this time. When Mr. Modi will dedicate Indian Oil Corporation Limited's Balasore-Haldia-Durgapur section of Paradip-Haldia-

Durgapur LPG pipeline project on January 5 at Baripada, the Chief Minister will address a State-level meeting of the women self-help groups in Puri that day. At the function, Mr. Patnaik will launch distribution of ₹15,000 each to the newly formed SHGs in the State.

A senior BJD leader told journalists on Wednesday that Mr. Modi's frequent visits to Odisha will not have any impact on the State's political scene.

Further, Mr. Modi is scheduled to visit western Odisha town of Balangir on January 16, his third visit to the State in less than a month. The Prime Minister will address the BJP workers and public at a mega rally in the town. The BJD has not announced any programme to counter the saffron party's Balangir rally so far.

that the deceased had a history of torturing his spouse. His first wife and their son had left him for this reason.

Second wife

According to police sources, Padia Madkami continued to ill-treat his second wife, Ms. Mude, and their daughter, Ms. Anjali. When his torture became unbearable, Ms. Mude and Ms. Anjali decided to kill the deceased.

On December 31, 2018, decomposed remnants of a half-burnt body were found in a bushy forest near Gorahunda under Malkangiri police station limits. Post-mortem and inquiry revealed that the body was of Padia Madkami and he had been killed on December 7. Investigation suggested

Woman, daughter kill abusive husband, held

Duo set body afire in Malkangiri forest

STAFF REPORTER
BERHAMPUR

A 50-year-old woman allegedly murdered her husband with the help of their daughter in Malkangiri district of Odisha.

The woman, Mude Madkami, and her daughter Anjali Madkami, 18, of Balakati village were arrested on Wednesday. According to the police, the duo killed Padia Madkami, a migrant labourer and an alcoholic, to escape his torture and abuse.

On December 31, 2018, decomposed remnants of a half-burnt body were found in a bushy forest near Gorahunda under Malkangiri police station limits. Post-mortem and inquiry revealed that the body was of Padia Madkami and he had been killed on December 7. Investigation suggested

School timings in Tripura may not change

SYED SAJJAD ALI
AGARTALA

The Tripura government is unlikely to give nod to a proposal to change school timings and make one shift in place of two shifts in public schools. The proposal remained pending as most schools were facing space constraints, sources said.

The government earlier had directed the education department to examine feasibility to fix new timings for schools from April 1.

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(वीडियो क्लासेज़)

द्वारा- डॉ. विकास दिव्यकर्ता

ओटिएन्टेशन क्लास के साथ सत्र प्रारंभ

आज दोपहर 3:00 बजे

नोट: विकास सर द्वारा वर्तमान में ली जा रही लाइव कक्षा पर आधारित वीडियो क्लासेज़।

भूगोल

वैकल्पिक विषय

द्वारा- कुमार गौरव

निःशुल्क परिचर्चा

के साथ सत्र प्रारंभ

5 जनवरी
प्रातः 8:00 बजे

यूपीएससी प्रारंभिक परीक्षा टेस्ट सीरीज़

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19 टेस्ट 13 जनवरी से प्रारंभ

सामान्य अध्ययन

ओटिएन्टेशन क्लास

29 जनवरी
प्रातः 11:30 बजे

दृष्टि पब्लिकेशन्स

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IN BRIEF



Speed up Kaleshwaram project work, says KCR

PEDDAPALLI
Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao has instructed officials to speed up work for completion of Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP) to lift Godavari water from June onwards. The Chief Minister inspected the Goliwada pump house in Anthargao mandal on Wednesday.

'Fame was the motive behind attack on Jagan'

VISAKHAPATNAM
Giving clarity on the ongoing investigation into the knife attack on Leader of the Opposition in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, the police said the attacker J. Srinivasa Rao, had done it only to gain publicity.

HC stays ban on online sale of drugs

Bench cites potential hardship to patients while providing interim relief

MOHAMED IMRANULLAH S.
CHENNAI
A Division Bench of the Madras High Court on Wednesday stayed the operation of a single judge's December 17 order banning online sale of medicines. Though the Centre was yet to notify statutory rules for regulating such sales, imposing a sudden ban would cause grave hardship and health issues to patients relying on e-pharmacies, the Bench said.

Passing interim orders on a batch of writ appeals preferred by e-pharma firms, Justices M. Sathyaranayanan and P. Rajamanickam said the number of people who prefer to purchase medicines online was on the rise

SC dismisses plea to defer bifurcation of Hyderabad HC

Supreme Court observes that A.P. and Telangana HCs are already functioning

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to entertain a petition filed by the Andhra Pradesh High Court Advocates' Association in Hyderabad to defer the implementation of a notification issued on December 26 bifurcating the Hyderabad High Court into the new Andhra Pradesh and Telangana High Courts.

A Bench of Justices A.K. Sikri and S. Abdul Nazeer said there would be "initial hiccups" and the High Courts "have already started functioning."

Justice Sikri observed orally that the court had considered every aspect of the matter of bifurcation before

Telangana HC opens with 1.87 lakh cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

Chief Justice of Telangana High Court Thottathil B. Radhakrishnan on Wednesday said the newly constituted HC had an opening balance of 1,87,000 pending cases. Momentum, discipline and equilibrium

would be needed to dispense timely justice, he observed. The CJ was speaking at a Full Court meeting held to mark the opening of the separate High Court for Telangana.

The judges heard various matters in their respective courts later.

asking the government to go ahead with it. The association's plea was dismissed as withdrawn.

The two separate High Courts are functioning from

January 1. The petition had urged that the bifurcation be delayed until the new premises for the Andhra Pradesh High Court in the capital city of Amaravati was

completed. The High Court will function from temporary premises till the construction work is completed.

Judges satisfied'
Andhra Pradesh had already informed the Supreme Court that the judges, who would preside over the courts of the new High Court, were satisfied with the facilities that were created in an interim building complex that would house the High Court till a permanent building was constructed.

Senior advocate Fali Nariman for Andhra Pradesh had also made a statement that the government would be providing villas to take care of the residential needs of the judges at Amaravati.

Only truth can defeat TDP's lies: PM

STAFF REPORTER

VIJAYAWADA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday accused the Andhra Pradesh government of pushing the blame for its failures on to the Central government. He said he would expose the "opportunistic politics" played by the TDP dispensation.

Writing the interim order for the Bench, Justice Sathyanarayanan said there was no necessity to ban online sale in toto when e-pharma firms had conceded that the authorities constituted under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940 were already empowered to initiate appropriate action against them.

Addressing booth-level party workers through a video-conference from New Delhi, Mr. Modi said the BJP had contributed to the development of A.P. and insisted that "truth, truth and only truth can defeat the tsunami of lies spread by the State government."

Lost cover

A look at the loss of high-altitude grasslands in the Western Ghats

The negatives

- As much as 60% of the landscape has been modified in the last 4 decades
- Large extents of 516 sq km (38%) of native grasslands have been lost

Some positives

- Most small mountain-tops are stable, with little or no change
- Munnar and the Anamalai ranges are relatively stable

The study

- Landsat images between 1973 and 2017 used
- Covered all shola habitats across Western Ghats
- Researchers visited 840 locations across this habitat



* in sq km

Green meadow: This is how an undisturbed shola-grassland ecosystem should look like.
● SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Exotic trees eating up Western Ghats' grasslands

But shola forests have remained 'relatively unchanged'

AATHIRA PERINCHERY

KOCHI

The new year heralds bad news for the high-altitude grasslands of the Western Ghats. Over four decades, the country lost almost one-fourth of these grasslands and exotic invasive trees are primarily to blame, find scientists. Though grassland afforestation using pine, acacia and eucalyptus ceased in 1996, the exotics still invade these ecosystems, confirms a study published on January 2 in the international journal Biological Conservation.

When satellite images revealed to a team including scientists from the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER, Tirupati) grassland loss in Tamil Nadu's Palani hills in early 2018, they decided to study how shola-grasslands (characterised by patches of stunted evergreen shola trees in the valleys and grasslands on hill slopes)

so visited 840 locations across the Ghats - from the Baba Budan Hills in Karnataka to Tamil Nadu's Ashambu Hills - changed in extent between 1972 and 2017. The satellite images they accessed reveal that 60% of the shola-grassland landscape has changed; almost 40% (516 km²) of native high-elevation grasslands have disappeared.

Most of this loss occurred on the mountain tops of the Nilgiri, Palani and Anamalai hill ranges, which comprise more than half of the Ghats' shola-grassland ecosystems, primarily due to the expansion of exotic trees (pine, acacia and eucalyptus). Even though no plantations were established between 2003 and 2017, invasion by existing trees increased areas under exotic plantations by 27% in the Palanis and 17% in the Nilgiris. Broadly, shola-grassland ecosystems in Tamil Nadu showed the highest rates of invasion. The researchers al-

"Little research focus"
However, all possible efforts must be made to conserve the remaining grassland tracts, said scientist Dr. Robin V. Vijayan (IISER Tirupati), one of the authors who led the study. "There is very little research focus on grasslands and mechanisms to restore them are also few, unlike forests," he added.

"The immediate reaction would be to remove all exotics including mature plantations from grasslands but that should not be done," said Godwin Vasanth Bosco, who has restored some grassland patches in Udhagamandalam.

Action against TV channel sought

STAFF REPORTER

KOZHIKODE

The Muslim Students Federation, the students' wing of the Indian Union Muslim League, has sought action against a private television channel, which recently telecast visuals of festivities on a college campus in Thiruvananthapuram portraying them as activities of terror outfit Al-Qaeda.

MSF State president Mishab Keezhariyu and general secretary M.P. Navas told the media on Wednesday that the news report was part of the "Sangh Parivar agenda to perpetuate communalism".

The students had attended the festivities wearing black dress. The channel reported that the campus was in the grip of Islamic terrorism and the students were being drawn to the Al-Qaeda.

A police inquiry disproved the claims later.

Public service vehicles to get time to install panic button

The device is mandatory for new vehicles from January 1

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU
The Transport Department has said that owners of public service vehicles such as buses and cabs will be given a "reasonable amount of time" to comply with the mandatory installation of vehicle tracking system and panic button.

After being directed by the Union government, the department made the device installation mandatory for newly registered vehicles with effect from January 1.

On Wednesday, Karnataka Transport Minister D.C. Thammanappa, who inaugurated the initiative at Yeshwantrao RTO, said the device would be mandatory in the coming days for vehicles already registered in the State. The device, developed by BSNL, will cost ₹10,000 to ₹12,000. The Minister said

fety of passengers, especially women, and help reduce accidents as vehicles can be monitored for rash driving and other offences.

Transport Commissioner V.P. Ikkere told *The Hindu* that the time frame for installation of vehicle tracking system and panic button would be decided depending on the age of the vehicles.

"We will give a reasonable time for the owners to install the device mandated by the Union government. There are talks of imposing a ban on vehicles older than 15 years from plying on the road. We have to consider this issue as well while implementing the new rules. The department will come up with a plan on the time frame and action that needs to be taken on vehicle owners who fail to follow the directions," he said.

The State government would approach the Centre to reduce the cost if the vehicle owners find the device too expensive.

Department officials said the device would ensure sa-

fety of passengers, especially women, and help reduce accidents as vehicles can be monitored for rash driving and other offences.

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6 NATION

IN BRIEF



Eminent writer Manoj Das honoured

BERHAMPUR
Eminent English and Odia writer Manoj Das on Wednesday received the Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja National Award for Lifetime Achievement in Literature, instituted by the Berhampur University. During the 53rd foundation day ceremony, the university also honoured noted folk dance guru Nabagana Parida with Dakshin Odisha Loksankruti Samman.

Five-day Manali carnival begins in Kullu

SHIMLA
The five-day Manali Winter Carnival in Kullu district began on Wednesday. Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur flagged off the carnival parade from the circuit house. PTI

Man held for attempting to rape woman

MUZAFFARNAGAR
A 28-year-old man was arrested for allegedly attempting to rape a woman after promising her a job, the police said on Wednesday. The accused was identified as Sameer Thakur, they said. PTI

Man crushed to death by bus in Himachal

SHIMLA
A motorcycle rider was crushed to death by a bus in Kangra district on Wednesday, the police said. After colliding with the bus, the man fell and came under its front tyre, dying instantly, they said. PTI

Fire breaks out in Jaipur factory

JAIPUR
A fire broke out in a three-storey building of a foam manufacturing factory here on Tuesday morning. No loss of life was reported. Raw material kept at the factory was gutted in the fire, a fire officer said. PTI

Balanced blades



Cricket fever: A roadside vendor arranges bats in Bhopal on Wednesday. ■ A. M. FARUQUI

M.P. decision on Vande Mataram to please particular community'

Congress making State a centre of its appeasement policy, says Amit Shah

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Taking a swipe at the Congress government in Madhya Pradesh, BJP chief Amit Shah on Wednesday said 'Vande Mataram' was not sung at the State secretariat just to please a 'particular' community and asked whether it was done on instructions from party president Rahul Gandhi.

In a Facebook post, Mr. Shah alleged that Congress was making Madhya Pradesh, the "heart of Hindutva", a centre of its "appeasement" policy.

'Vande Mataram' was not sung at the State secretariat on Tuesday, the first working

MISA pension suspended

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BHOPAL

The Congress-led Madhya Pradesh government has put on hold payment of pension to those who were detained under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act during the Emergency.

A government order

dated December 29 said the officials have been directed to carry out physical verification of former MISA detainees, and until this exercise is over, the monthly pension of ₹25,000 should not be paid.

The Bharatiya Janata Party said it will oppose the decision.

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clear his stand before the people of country on the unfortunate decision by the Congress government," Mr. Shah

said.

The BJP chief said 'Vande Mataram' does not belong to any particular community and instead it is a symbol of the sacrifice of lakhs of warriors who laid down their lives for the freedom of India.

"And its insult just to please a particular community is very sad, shameful and disrespect of the country's freedom," Mr. Shah said.

Earlier in the day, former CM Shivraj Chouhan also attacked the Kamal Nath government and said he and all other BJP MLAs will sing 'Vande Mataram' on the first day of the Assembly session.

RLSP may get four seats, claims party leader

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PATNA

The opposition Grand Alliance in Bihar has agreed to give as many as four seats to former Union Minister Upendra Kushwaha's Rashtriya Lok Samata Party in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, double the number it was offered by the BJP-led NDA, a senior party leader claimed on Wednesday.

The RLSP leader, who requested anonymity, said the deal was finalised after Mr. Kushwaha's recent meeting with RJD supremo Lalu Prasad in Ranchi followed by negotiations with the Congress, both of which are major constituents of the Grand Alliance.

The opposition coalition in Bihar also comprises former Chief Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi's Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM).

Announcement soon

A formal announcement will be made for all seats after January 14.

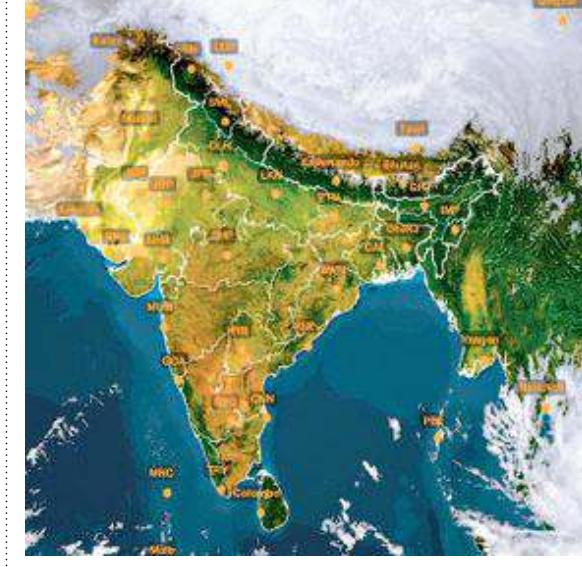
"But we can confirm that the RLSP has been given Karakat, which is the sitting seat of Mr. Kushwaha, besides Motihari and Gopalganj, the RLSP leader said.

He said senior leader Dasai Chaudhary is likely to be the candidate from Gopalganj, while the party's national general secretary and chief spokesman Madhav Anand may contest from Motihari.

Notably, Mr. Anand was given the charge of organising the party's open convention in Motihari last month where Mr. Kushwaha had declared a war on the NDA leadership.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Thursday: Cold wave conditions likely at isolated pockets over east Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	28.0	10.2	Kozhikode	—	32.4	21.8
Ahmedabad	—	29.3	8.0	Kurnool	—	32.0	14.6
Aizwal	—	25.2	11.5	Lucknow	—	22.8	6.6
Allahabad	—	25.6	6.6	Madurai	—	30.6	18.9
Bengaluru	—	27.4	12.4	Mangalore	—	35.6	17.0
Bhopal	—	27.8	8.8	Mumbai	—	31.4	13.6
Bhubaneswar	—	27.6	9.8	Myanmar	—	27.8	10.4
Chandigarh	—	21.5	9.4	New Delhi	—	23.4	6.5
Chennai	—	29.1	20.2	Patna	—	22.6	7.9
Coimbatore	—	29.0	16.6	Port Blair	—	29.6	24.2
Dehradun	—	21.0	8.2	Puducherry	—	29.0	17.2
Gangtok	—	13.3	5.1	Pune	—	32.2	7.9
Goa	—	33.5	17.4	Raipur	—	28.6	11.4
Guwahati	—	25.2	7.8	Ranchi	—	24.6	6.5
Hubballi	—	29.0	14.0	Shillong	—	17.1	4.5
Hyderabad	—	30.5	9.8	Srinagar	—	11.0	3.7
Imphal	—	22.0	2.6	Trivandrum	—	33.2	20.7
Jaipur	—	25.2	7.9	Tiruchi	—	30.2	18.6
Kochi	—	31.2	23.2	Vijayawada	—	28.6	15.4
Kohima	—	16.6	3.5	Visakhapatnam	—	27.6	17.8

(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	63	128	21	.270	—	—
Bengaluru	.5	.37	.80	.108	.122	■
Chennai	—	26	.63	.117	—	■
Delhi	30	123	.95	.472	.471	■
Hyderabad	.7	.111	.44	.156	.144	■
Kolkata	17	119	.13	.348	.248	■
Lucknow	14	114	.53	.441	—	■
Mumbai	33	78	.100	.151	.181	■
Pune	85	.17	.69	.211	.145	■
Vishakhapatnam	36	107	.43	.265	.224	■

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, 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

BSES Yamuna Power Limited, New Delhi ... A joint venture with Govt. of NCT of Delhi					
TENDER NOTICE Date: 03.01.2019					
BYPL invites Sealed Tenders from all CERC approved traders /Utilities for banking of power					
NIT No.	Brief Item Description	Period	Cost of EMD (Rs.)	Due Date & Time of Bid Submission	Date and Time of Bid Opening
BYPL/PMG/FY 18-19/Tender/ Banking-2 dt 31-Dec-2018	Banking of Power	Jan-19 to Mar-20	Rs 1,00,000/-	15-Jan-19 at 15:15 hrs.	15-Jan-19 at 15:30 hrs.
For Further Details please log on to https://www.bsesdelhi.com/					
Address : 2nd Floor, A-Block, Shakti Kiran Building, Karkardooma, Delhi-110032 HEAD (Power-Management)					
Regd.Off: BSES Yamuna Power Ltd, Shakti Kiran Building, Karkardooma, Delhi-110032 CIN: U40109DL2001PLC111525 TEL: 011-3992048 Fax:011-3992076 Website: www.bsesdelhi.com					

BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, New Delhi					
TENDER NOTICE Date: 03.01.2019					
BSES Rajdhani Power Limited intends to invite tenders for following jobs from all bidders.					
NIT No.	Brief Item Description	Estimated Cost (₹)	Cost of EMD (₹)	Due Date & Time of Submission	Date & Time of Opening
CMC/BR/18-19/SVAR/751	NEW CONTRACTOR REGISTRATION AND REVALIDATION OF EXISTING CONTRACTORS	—	—	23.01.2019 15:30 HRS	—
CMC/BR/18-19/SVAR/752	COMPREHENSIVE AMC FOR MAINTENANCE & MONITORING OF LT AUTOMATIC POWER FACTOR CORRECTION PANELS AT SOUTH AND WEST CIRCLE IN BRPL	1.82 Crs	3.64 Lacs	16.01.2019 15:30 HRS	16.01.2019 15:45 HRS
Cost of each Tender Document : ₹ 1180/- For details in respect of Equipment/BOM/Services, Qualifying requirements, Terms & conditions, purchase/submission of tender documents etc, please visit our website www.bsesdelhi.com					
Head (Contracts & Materials) Regd. Off. : BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, BSES Bhawan, Nehru Place, New Delhi-110019 Corporate Identification No.: U40109DL2001PLC111527 Telephone No. : +91 11 3999 9444 E-mail : brp.leauction@relianceaads.com Website : www.bsesdelhi.com					

INVITING NOMINATIONS FOR APPOINTMENT AS FULL-TIME MEMBER AND PART TIME MEMBERS OF THE NATION MONUMENTS AUTHORITY					
Applications are invited from the eminent professionals with proven experience and expertise in the fields of Archaeology, Country and Town Planning, Architecture, Heritage Conservation-Architecture or Law for appointment as Whole Time Member (01) and Part Time Members (04) of the National Monuments Authority (NMA), a body constituted under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 by the Central Govt.					
a) The Whole- Time Member shall be eligible to draw salary in the higher Administrative Grade plus such other allowances as are admissible to an officer of the rank of Additional Secretary to the Govt. of India.					
b) The part- Time Member shall be eligible for sitting allowance of Rupees five thousand for each day he/she attends the meeting of the Authority but not exceeding Rs. 50,000/- in a month and shall be entitled to reimbursement of transportation charges at the rates as admissible to the Whole-Time-Member.</					



Fury and fire: As the Sangh Parivar and other groups staged protests across Kerala over the entry of two young women into Sabarimala temple, police resorted to lathicharge to quell the agitators. • PTI, THULASI KAKKAT, K.K.MUSTAFAH, S.K. MOHAN

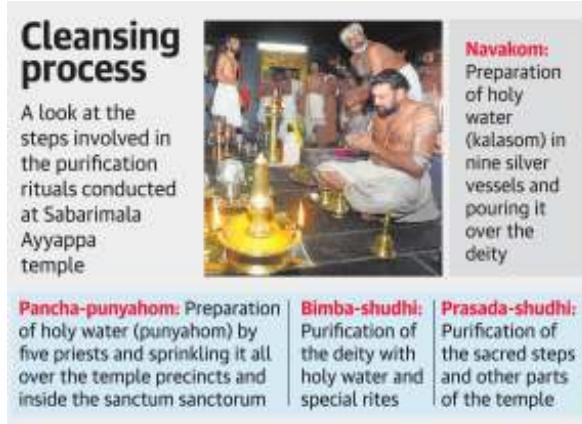
Sabarimala 'purification' triggers row

Govt. condemns priest; NSS and Cong. back him

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATHANAMTHITTA/
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The closing of the Sabarimala temple for purification rituals following the entry of two women of menstruating age on Wednesday has put the 'tantri' (chief priest) in the spotlight. 'Tantri' Kandararu Rajeevararu closed the sanctum sanctorum at 10.35 a.m. for performing the 'purification rites' in the wake of official confirmation of the entry of two young women into the temple.

Darshan was resumed after the rites by 11.25 a.m.



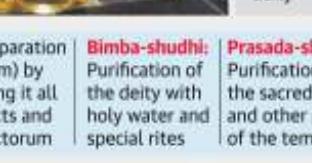
Cleansing process

A look at the steps involved in the purification rituals conducted at Sabarimala Ayyappa temple



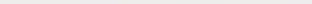
Navakom:

Preparation of holy water (kalasam) in nine silver vessels and pouring it over the deity



Pancha-punyaham:

Preparation of holy water (punyaham) by five priests and sprinkling it all over the temple precincts and inside the sanctum sanctorum



Bimba-shudhi:

Purification of the deity with holy water and special rites



Prasada-shudhi:

Purification of the sacred steps and other parts of the temple



Devaswom Board (TDB) president A. Padmakumar

said the 'tantri' had performed the rituals without obtaining the board's consent. However, the 'tantri' told *The Hindu*

that he had told the TDB president over phone that the 'purification rites' would have to be done. Mr. Rajeevararu said he had discussed the matter with Devaswom executive officer D. Sud-

heeshkumar. "Being the chief priest, I am duty-bound to follow the ritualistic practices at Sabarimala," he said.

No legal mandate

Devaswom Minister Kadakkampally Surendran said Mr. Rajeevararu had no legal mandate to close the shrine on his own under the manual of the TDB.

The TDB, a public entity, owned the temple, not the 'tantri' or the former ruling family of Pandalam. Only the TDB could order the closure of the temple. The 'tantri' was but an employee.

Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala said the State-sponsored entry of women was a trespass on Ayyappa faith. "Non-believers

have conspired to destroy faith. The 'tantri' acted appropriately," he said.

BJP president P.S. Sreedharan Pillai said the government would face a backlash for "the assault on Hindu faith."

CPI(M) secretary Kodiyeri Balakrishnan said the action of the 'tantri' was "provocative" and tantamount to contempt of the Supreme Court.

By closing the *sanctum sanctorum*, he had challenged the Supreme Court verdict that granted unrestricted entry for all women.

General secretary of the Nair Service Society G. Sukumaran Nair thanked the 'tantri' and the Pandalam family for having closed the temple for purification.

Chief priest's action violates Supreme Court verdict

Any form of exclusion based on concepts of 'impurity and pollution' amounts to untouchability

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

Closure of the Sabarimala temple's *sanctum sanctorum* on Wednesday to perform 'purification rites' after two women of menstruating age managed to enter may amount to using the concept of impurity and pollution to violate the women's right against untouchability.

Though temple priest Kandararu Rajeevaru explained that his action should not be treated as "any discrimination towards

women", the Supreme Court has clearly laid down in its September 28 verdict - which is not yet stayed and is fully operational - that any form of exclusion based on concepts of "purity and pollution" amounts to untouchability, a practice abolished under Article 17 of the Constitution.

Notions of "purity and pollution", which stigmatise individuals, can have no place in a constitutional regime, the Supreme Court had held in its Sabarimala judgment.

The court made it clear that untouchability was not confined to practices relating to lower castes.

Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, in his opinion, expanded untouchability to any practice which amounts to "systemic humiliation, exclusion and subjugation faced by women."

Review petitions

A five-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi is scheduled to hear on January 22 the review petitions, including one by Ra-

jeevaru, against the verdict which struck down the ban on the entry of women of menstrual age into the temple.

"Prejudice against women based on notions of impurity and pollution associated with menstruation is a symbol of exclusion. The social exclusion of women, based on menstrual status, is but a form of untouchability which is anathema to constitutional values," Justice Chandrachud observed in his opinion.

The court held that "re-

garding menstruation as polluting or impure, and worse still, imposing exclusionary disabilities on the basis of menstrual status, is against the dignity of women which is guaranteed by the Constitution."

The main opinion, written by then Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra, said it was "an essential part of the Hindu religion to allow Hindu women to enter into a temple as devotees and followers of Hindu religion and offer their prayers to the deity."

The policemen on duty at the temple were reportedly told by plainclothesmen that the women were 'relatives' of an Inspector General of Police.

Police escorted the women downhill to Pampa in



A video grab of Bindu and Kanakadurga visiting the Ayyappa temple.

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the next 45 minutes and from there to Angamaly, which is over 113 km away. Later they were shifted to an undisclosed location.

Skirting the 18 holy steps, they entered the temple through the front door, where a few policemen were deployed to check the entry of pilgrims. Video footage showed them entering through the staff gate on the northern side of the temple at 3.48 a.m. and being escorted out by plainclothes police through the barricade in front of the holy steps at 3.50 a.m.

The policemen on duty at the temple were reportedly told by plainclothesmen that the women were 'relatives' of an Inspector General of Police.

Police escorted the women downhill to Pampa in

BJP MP Udit Raj welcomes it

NEW DELHI
Bharatiya Janata Party MP Udit Raj welcomed the entry of women into the Sabarimala shrine on Wednesday, while his party has opposed it and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his interview on Tuesday, termed it a matter of "tradition".

Mr. Raj, speaking to *The Hindu*, however made it clear that he held these views in his personal capacity rather than as a member of the BJP which is agitating against the entry of women into Sabarimala. "I hold these views in my personal capacity and as the head of the SC/ST and women Parivash, one of the largest such organisations in the country," he said. "The entry of women in Sabarimala is to be welcomed, and it is the way ahead for gender equality and for equality before law for all," he said.

Pejawar seer takes 'neutral' stand

UDUPI/HASSAN
Vishwesha Tirtha Swami of Pejawar Mutt said on Wednesday that his stand on the issue of women's entry into Sabarimala temple was neutral and the 'shastras' perse did not ban it. Speaking to *The Hindu* over telephone, the Pejawar seer said, "In Sabarimala, there is no entry for women in the temple. But women are given entry in other temples [in the country]. However, there is nothing in the 'shastras' that bars or restricts the entry of women into temples. So I do not know what I should say about the Sabarimala issue. Hence, I am neutral on this issue." He said that women had been entering temples for so many centuries.

Operation was kept under wraps to ensure safe passage

The women were inside for 2 minutes

RADHAKRISHNAN KUTTOOR
PATHANAMTHITTA

The entry of two young women into the Sabarimala temple under police protection on Wednesday morning was a swift, closely-guarded operation and devoid of any drama, unlike previous attempts when protesters mobilised in strength to force them to turn back.

The two women, Bindu and Kanakadurga, clad in salwar and kurtas, reached the hilltop 'Sannidhanam' around 3 a.m. They were sheltered by the police and later escorted to the Ayyappa temple premises in the next 50 minutes.

Skirting the 18 holy steps, they entered the temple through the front door, where a few policemen were deployed to check the entry of pilgrims. Video footage showed them entering through the staff gate on the northern side of the temple at 3.48 a.m. and being escorted out by plainclothes police through the barricade in front of the holy steps at 3.50 a.m.

The main opinion, written by then Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra, said it was "an essential part of the Hindu religion to allow Hindu women to enter into a temple as devotees and followers of Hindu religion and offer their prayers to the deity."

The policemen on duty at the temple were reportedly told by plainclothesmen that the women were 'relatives' of an Inspector General of Police.

Police escorted the women downhill to Pampa in

Train 18 may run this month

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The indigenously-built, semi-high-speed train, dubbed Train 18, is likely to start operations this month, with the first run being between Delhi and Varanasi, a senior railway official said.

Train 18, touted as the successor to the Shatabdi series, can run at a speed of between 160 and 200 kmph. Manufactured by the Integral Coach Factory, Chennai, at a cost of ₹100 crore, Train 18 touched a high speed of over 180 kmph during trial run. However, once it is launched, it is expected to run at 130 kmph speed.

The official said the train would cover the distance between Delhi and Varanasi in eight hours, compared to over 11 hours at present.



THIRUVALLUVAR UNIVERSITY VELLORE

APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHANCELLOR THIRUVALLUVAR UNIVERSITY VELLORE

SEARCH COMMITTEE NOTIFICATION

The Government of Tamil Nadu, vide G.O.(D) No.398, Higher Education (K2) Department, dated 19.12.2018, has constituted a Search Committee, consisting of the following persons, to recommend a panel of three persons, to the Chancellor, for appointment of Vice-Chancellor, Thiruvalluvar University, Vellore-632 115:-

1 Dr. S. C. Sharma,	Chancellor Nominee -Convenor
2 Thiru Vishwanath A Shegaonkar IAS (Retired)	Government Nominee – Member
3 Prof. Dr. Sudhindra Nath Panda	Syndicate's Nominee - Member

The Search Committee invites applications for the post of Vice-Chancellor, Thiruvalluvar University, Vellore, from distinguished academicians with highest level of competence, integrity, morals and institutional commitment possessing the necessary educational qualifications and work experience, as notified by the Government of Tamil Nadu in its G.O. Ms.No 187, Higher Education(K2) Department, dated 14.07.2017 copy of which is available in the Thiruvalluvar University Website, www.tvu.edu.in

The Vice-Chancellor shall hold office for a period of three years provided that the person appointed as Vice-Chancellor shall retire from office, if, during the term of office, he/she attains the age of 70 years.

Interested candidates, possessing the requisite qualifications and experience may download the prescribed application from the website of the Thiruvalluvar University. The filled in applications shall be sent in the prescribed format, by post or by e-mail or submitted in person, duly superscribing the Envelope "Application for the post of Vice-Chancellor, Thiruvalluvar University", so as to reach the following address, on or before 5.00 PM of 24.01.2019.

Applications received after the closing date will not be entertained, on any account.

Mrs. M. Sentharamai

Nodal Officer

Search Committee for Selection of Vice-Chancellor, Thiruvalluvar University
National Institute of Technical Teachers Training and Research (NITTTR)
CSIR Road, Near Tidel Park, Taramani, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600113
E-mail: tvvcsc2019@gmail.com

Registrar i.c.

IN BRIEF



Manju Verma's bail petition rejected

PATNA

Former Bihar Social Welfare Minister Manju Verma's bail petition was rejected by a local court in Begusarai on Wednesday. Ms. Verma, lodged in Begusarai jail, was arrested in an Arms Act case related to Muzaffarpur shelter home case in which 34 minor girls were allegedly sexually abused.

Smoke forces flight to make priority landing

AIRPORT
An IndiGo flight from New Delhi made a priority landing here on Tuesday after smoke was detected mid-air in the cockpit and cabin, a source said on Wednesday. An IndiGo spokesperson said the pilot issued a Pan-Pan call, one issued in a less urgent situation that still requires attention from ATC.

Chhattisgarh gets new Chief Secretary

RAIPUR
In a sudden move, the newly-elected Congress government in Chhattisgarh replaced the State's Chief Secretary, Ajay Singh, with Sunil Kujur, a 1986-batch IAS officer, on Wednesday night. Mr. Singh has been made the Bilaspur Revenue Board chairman.

Stalin not to contest Tiruvarur bypoll

CHENNAI
DMK Leader M.K. Stalin, who was under pressure from senior party leaders to contest the Tiruvarur byelection, has opted out of the race. Party sources said he had decided against contesting in Tiruvarur as it would trigger a bypoll in his constituency, Kolathur.

"I am not aware of any

Gujarat BJP leaders fight over location of AIIMS

Centre yet to make announcement

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

The Union government is yet to announce the setting up of a world-class All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home State Gujarat, but some State Bharatiya Janata Party leaders are already fighting over its location.

Gujarat BJP leaders and legislators from Rajkot and Vadodara have been fighting over the venue of the facility, which is likely to be set up in the State. Recently, Gujarat State BJP president Jitu Vaghani said in Rajkot that the AIIMS would be set up in Rajkot to cater to the healthcare needs of the people of the Saurashtra region.

Mr. Vaghani said this while campaigning for the recently held by-election for the Jasdan Assembly constituency in Rajkot. His imprecise



GST shortfall

As the tax collections remain below target, it may be time to recalibrate expectations

Revenue collections from the Goods and Services Tax (GST) are going too far off the mark for comfort. Inflows declined for the second consecutive month in December to ₹94,726 crore from ₹97,637 crore in November and ₹1,00,710 crore in the month before. Between April and December, GST collections have averaged about ₹96,800 crore, and have not even once met the monthly target of ₹1,06,300 crore, going by the Union Budget math for 2018-19. Now in order to achieve the year-end target, GST collections over the next three months will have to reach an average of ₹1,34,900 crore. But given the spate of tax rate cuts announced by the GST Council in December that kick in this month and Prime Minister Narendra Modi hinting at further rationalisation of rates for construction materials soon, the pressure on revenues is likely to persist. Separately, as the government looks to woo traders and small businesses back to its electoral fold, the Council is considering a relaxation in the GST norms for micro, small and medium enterprises by raising the annual sales threshold for compulsory GST registration from ₹20 lakh to over ₹50 lakh. Such a relaxation, along with regulatory steps like greater forbearance for small business loans, will boost sentiment among such firms, but it will further dent the tax kitty. Other revenue heads, including direct tax or disinvestment receipts (even via innovatively structured intra-public-sector deals), are unlikely to be adequate to plug the GST shortfall.

This poses a challenge for the Centre at a time when it would have been hoping to announce some populist measures ahead of elections, while retaining its macroeconomic management credentials. States' revenue collections under the GST regime have been uneven and a GST Council panel is examining inter-State variations. But the Centre is bound to compensate States for revenue shortfalls for the first five years of the GST regime. Unless the Centre decides to drop its fiscal deficit goals, a squeeze on spending, including planned capital expenditure, may be the only option. There is a more problematic aspect to the dip in GST collections, based on economic activity and compliance trends in November. The total number of returns filed that month hit a high of 72 lakh from 55 lakh at the beginning of the fiscal, yet revenues fell. November also marked the onset of India's festive season, with a late Deepavali. Yet, the higher compliance and the festive fervour translated into collections lower than the average monthly receipts for the year till date. Though India's growth fell to 7.1% in the second quarter of this fiscal, an uptick in private investment over the same period was considered a sign of revival. But if consumers are not confident enough to spend, a consumption-led investment revival to take the economy to an 8% growth path seems elusive again.

Caught in a crossfire?

Spats over detention of Canadians in China reflect the scale of the U.S.-China trade war

The diplomatic row between Beijing and Ottawa over the detention and treatment of Canadian nationals in China continues to escalate, to the detriment of bilateral relations. But more serious could be the implications of the standoff for the ongoing trade war between China and the U.S. The spat goes back to the detention on December 1 of a top Chinese telecom executive in Vancouver, who has since been released on bail, in response to a U.S. request. Washington wanted custody of Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of Huawei and the daughter of the company's founder. Her arrest was part of the U.S. Justice Department's ongoing criminal probe into the company's sale of telecommunications equipment to Iran, a potential breach of sanctions against Tehran. But the arrest is also seen in the context of the caution in much of the West against Huawei's potentially winning bids as 5G communication networks are adopted, on grounds of a security threat. The military background of the Huawei founder has only raised speculation about the firm's connection to the Chinese defence and intelligence services. Conversely, the U.S. has invoked a rare national security provision under domestic law to impose punitive tariffs on global steel and aluminium imports. A similar investigation is under way specifically to determine the risk to domestic security from alleged Chinese intellectual property abuses. In addition, Beijing's "Made in China 2025" industrial policy has aroused deep suspicion in the U.S. about the persistence of state subsidies to prop up indigenous firms. It is therefore speculated that Washington has its lens trained on Huawei, which has emerged as the world's largest telecommunications equipment maker, surpassing Sweden's Ericsson.

Meanwhile, there is concern that Canadian residents in China may face retribution for Ms. Meng's detention. A Chinese court last week ruled as too lenient the 15-year sentence against a Canadian convicted of drug-related offences. A former diplomat who was arrested has apparently been denied legal representation, although Canadian embassy officials were permitted to visit him. Another Canadian was detained for alleged transgressions of national security. Given the climate of mistrust between the U.S. and China, it is hard to dispel the perception that Canada has got caught in the crossfire. In fact, the Canadian Foreign Minister has suggested that President Donald Trump should desist from using the episode as a bargaining chip in trade disputes with China. But it is conceivable that Chinese trade concessions to de-escalate tensions could pave the way for a resolution of the standoff over Huawei. That would likely satisfy the hawks in Washington who fear that the U.S. is ceding its technological dominance to China.

Religion vs religious nationalism

The starting point for anti-Hindutva politics must be the distinction between Hinduism and Hindutva. Else, it's doomed



VARGHESE K. GEORGE

Any rigid secular approach, unrestrained by considerations of electoral politics, could only lead to disapproval of Congress president Rahul Gandhi's demonstration of his religious faith and his characterisation of the Congress as a "party of Hinduism". His approach has been widely termed "soft Hindutva", and as an attempt to compete with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in its game. Those who deride Hindutva and those who swear by it both consider Mr. Gandhi a poor imitator of it. Centrist politics by definition is vulnerable to criticism from radical perspectives of different hues – for instance, Marxist M.N. Roy, Dalit leader B.R. Ambedkar and Hindutva proponent, and later his assassin, Nathuram Godse, were all critical of Mahatma Gandhi's ideas of Hinduism. What is worth a closer analysis in the current context is the suggestion that the invocation of Hindu symbols for electoral gains is Hindutva, albeit a softer version.

A clear trajectory

Mainstream Indian nationalism and Hindu nationalism shared a range of symbols and personalities during their formative decades, and distinguishing one from the other can appear a challenging task often. Consolidation of the Hindu society was a preoccupation of several reformists and leaders of the struggle for independence, who were not linked to

Hindutva. In a classic essay written in the 1990s, at the peak of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, historian Sumit Sarkar marked the stages of the evolution of Hindu nationalism in two distinct phases: first from the use of the word Hindu as a geographical marker to 'Hinduism', an attempt to codify the cultural and religious practices, and then to Hindutva. Swami Vivekananda was the seer of the first shift. "Of the Swami's address before the Parliament of Religions, it may be said that when he began to speak it was of the religious ideas of the Hindus but when he ended, Hinduism had been created," wrote Sister Nivedita, the Swami's closest disciple. Three decades later Veer Savarkar, who invented Hindutva, did not merely seek to unify Hindus, but tried to achieve it by imagining the other as those who do not consider India their sacred land. While secular nationalism's adversarial image was imperialism, the edge in Savarkar's Hindutva was against Muslims and Christians. Vivekananda's Hinduism had no enemy figure.

The political rise of Hindutva has been directly proportionate to the success of its proponents' attempts to equate itself with Hinduism.

The Gandhi-Nehru way

For Gandhi, Hinduism was the essence of his existence, but even the avowedly secular Jawaharlal Nehru was not dismissive of faith and tradition. *The Discovery of India* draws from sacred texts and beliefs; "though I have discarded much of past tradition and custom... yet I do not wish to cut myself off from that past completely," he wrote in his will, asking for some of his ashes to be immersed in the Ganga.



P.K. RADHAKRISHNAN

The vertical rise and the horizontal spread of Hindutva challenge its opponents to devise new political idioms. A puritan view is that Hindutva can be challenged only with an unyielding secular paradigm, devoid of Hindu symbols. Those leaders and parties that are directly involved in electoral politics are more conflicted on these questions than those who have the convenience of a quarantined approach. In the early 2000s, when critics began to use the neologism saffronisation to describe the A.B. Vajpayee government's policies that advanced Hindutva, within the Congress there was a debate on the wisdom of it. A.K. Antony and Digvijay Singh vehemently opposed the expression, arguing that it amounted to legitimising the Hindutva agenda given the cultural association of the colour saffron with sacrifice and renunciation. The Congress discontinued use of the word.

Other parties too have used Hindu symbolism and terminology. Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Lalu Prasad, whose mastery of electoral politics broke the Hindutva momentum in Bihar, connects his community to Lord Krishna. "Haathi nahin Ganesh hai, Brahma Vishnu Mahesh hai (this is not merely an elephant, but is Lord Ganesh; and Brahma Vishnu Ma-

hesh)" was the Bahujan Samaj Party's 2005 slogan referencing its election symbol, the elephant. Groups associated with the Communists Party of India (Marxist) in Kerala recently organised events around Ramayana month. "The Sangh has created a particulate image of Ram, that a majority of the faithful do not relate to," said V. Sivadasan, CPI(M) State committee member, who was closely associated with the programme. "Given this context, it is the duty of the secularists to come in support of the believers who understand Ram different from the way the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) tries to make him. All secular people have this responsibility to help protect the plurality of faith that exists among religious people."

Whether or not these attempts add up to a robust and credible challenge to Hindutva is an open question. However, the notion of 'soft Hindutva' is detrimental to anti-Hindutva polemics and mobilisation.

For one, it ignores the tactical components of electoral politics, which the moralist might dismiss as opportunism, for good reasons. What is more critical is that the notion of expressive faith as 'soft Hindutva' is an inadvertent endorsement of the Hindutva claim that it is equivalent to Hinduism. The proponents of Hindutva also acknowledge the existence of 'hard' and 'fringe' elements within its fold. Categories of soft and hard, being relative terms, trick moderates and offer an alibi to opportunists to side with the softer versions – Vajpayee against L.K. Advani, Mr. Advani against Narendra Modi, and who knows, perhaps Mr. Modi against Yogi Adityanath in the future?

Any equivalence between Hin-

duism and Hindutva, conversely, is taken to mean that any criticism of Hindutva is an attack on Hinduism. That one could be accused of being anti-Hinduism for questioning the logic of building a temple on the site of a destroyed mosque at Ayodhya draws from the logical premise of likening Hinduism to Hindutva. To take another example, the Hindu American Foundation claimed recently that even the questioning of 'Brahminical patriarchy' is an act of Hindu-phobia.

To Hindutva's advantage?

And most consequentially, any polemical negation of the wall between Hinduism and Hindutva makes the transition from the first to the second easier. It could even encourage believers to consider Hindutva their natural political abode, if they sense hostility in the anti-Hindutva camp. If non-Hindutva platforms expect templegoers to explain their conduct, that is not an enticing recruitment pitch. The fact is that there are numerous people who visit temples and even believe in vastu, astrology, tantra, etc. while still being secular in a political and public context.

The only politics that benefits from associating Hinduism to Hindutva is Hindutva. The practice of Hinduism, even when it is exhibitionist and for political ends, is not Hindutva – soft or hard. Hindutva stands out for its conceptual clarity, leaving little scope for a spectrum within it. A manifesto for any durable anti-Hindutva politics is still a long way away, but its singular starting point is an assertion of the distinction between Hinduism and Hindutva. Anything else is doomed.

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Powering South Asian integration

The new electricity guidelines are a first step towards creating a true regional market



ADITYA VALIATHAN PILLAI

On December 18, the Union Ministry of Power issued a seemingly anodyne memo that set the rules for the flow of electricity across South Asian borders. Evaluated against the turbulent politics around the issue, the new guidelines are a startling departure from India's previous stance. In an atmosphere of regional intrigue and mistrust, it is a rare and recent example of political pragmatism. It is important not only because it leads South Asian electricity trade in progressive directions but is also a concession to India's neighbours in an area of political and economic importance.

A course correction

The revision is a response to two years of intense backroom pressure from neighbours, particularly Bhutan and Nepal, to drop trade barriers put up in 2016. The new guidelines meet most of their demands, that were timed to coincide with the recent visit of Bhutan's new Prime Minister. India has thus signalled that it is serious about working with neighbours on the issues that should undergird 21st century South Asian regionalism, such as electricity trade.

This course correction is a re-

turn to a trajectory of incremental, hard-earned progress developed over the decades. Ideas of tying South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries together with cross-border energy flows – that punctuated the early 2000s – began to gain steam with substantial power trade agreements between India and Bhutan (2006) and Bangladesh (2010). These were driven by India's need for affordable power to fuel quickened growth in a recently liberalised economy.

The apotheosis came in 2014 with the signing of the SAARC Framework Agreement for Energy Cooperation and the India-Nepal Power Trade Agreement in quick succession. The new government in New Delhi was keen on regional cooperation, and these agreements imposed few restrictions on trade. Instead, they laid the contours of an institutional structure that would allow private sector participation and facilitate market rationality in electricity commerce. At the Fifth SAARC Energy Ministers' meeting that year, Power Minister Piyush Goyal said he dreamt of a seamless SAARC power grid within the next few years' and offshore wind projects 'set up in Sri Lanka's coastal borders to power Pakistan or Nepal'. Yet, two years later, the Union Ministry of Power released guidelines that imposed a slew of major restrictions on who could engage in cross-border electricity trade.

There was a strong undercurrent of defensiveness in the guidelines of 2016. They seemed to be a



GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

reaction to perceptions of increased Chinese investment and influence in the energy sectors of South Asian neighbours.

Some irritants

The guidelines prevented anyone other than Indian generators in the neighbouring country, or generators owned by that country's government, from selling power to India. Excluded were scores of privately held companies, particularly in Nepal, that had hoped to trade with India. In restricting access to the vast Indian market, the economic rationale for Nepali hydropower built for export was lost. Bhutan was worried about a clause that required the exporting generation companies to be majority owned by an Indian entity. This created friction in joint ventures between India and Bhutan. Bhutan also fretted about limited access to India's main electricity spot markets, where it would have been well placed to profit from evening peaks in demand. Bangladesh had sensed an opportunity to partially address its power crisis with imports from Bhutan and Nepal routed through Indian territory but the guidelines complicated this by giving India disproportional control over such trade.

After two years of protests from neighbours, the new guidelines resolve all these issues and restore the governance of electricity trade to a less restrictive tone. Earlier concerns that India was enabling the incursion of foreign influence into neighbouring power sectors seem to have been replaced by an understanding that India's buyer's monopoly in the region actually give it ultimate leverage. More broadly, India seems to have acknowledged that the sinews of economic interdependency created by such arrangements have the political benefit of positioning India as a stable development partner rather than one inclined to defensive realpolitik.

Tool for a greener grid

A liberal trading regime is in India's national interest. As India transitions to a power grid dominated by renewables, regional trade could prove useful in maintaining grid stability. Major commitments to renewables, which could amount to half of India's installed power within a decade, have prompted justifiable concerns about stabilising the grid when the sun goes down or in seasons when renewables are less potent. Harnessing a wider pool of generation sources, particularly hydropower from the Himalayas that ramps up instantly as India turns on its lights and appliances after sunset, could be an important instrument in achieving a greener grid. Nepal and Bhutan have long recognised that their

prosperity is tied to the sustainable use of vast hydropower reserves.

The new guidelines are a tentative first step towards the creation of a true regional market in which generators across the subcontinent compete to deliver low-cost, green energy to consumers. Since this would soften the hard borders of South Asia, it is essentially a political vision. The new guidelines are a significant step in this direction because, for the first time, they allow tripartite trading arrangements, where power generated in a country is routed over the territory of a neighbour to be consumed in a third. This is a crucial move towards the evolution of complex, multi-country market arrangements. Such markets require the construction of regional institutions that absorb the politics and manage the technicalities of electricity trade.

At present, this function is managed by the Indian state because of its geographic centrality and the ready availability of institutions that manage its domestic power sector. As volumes increase and experience in regional trade grows, South Asian nations might feel the need to build joint, independent regional institutions that proffer clear and stable rules of the road. The political vision to create this – felt in the new guidelines – must be maintained.

Aditya Valiathan Pillai is Senior Researcher at the Initiative on Climate, Energy and Environment, Centre for Policy Research

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Peace overture

Amid escalating India-Pakistan hostilities, it comes as a whiff of fresh air that as a follow-up to the release of India's Hamid Ansari and Pakistan's Imran Wasir, in December 2018, the estranged South Asian neighbours have decided to herald in 2019 with a goodwill gesture of exchanging lists of prisoners (Page 1, "India, Pak. move towards release of civilian prisoners", January 2). However small or fragile the olive branch extended to each other by India and Pakistan might be, the thaw in bilateral relations, that have been mutually destructive, needs to be welcomed. The relentless efforts of peace activists to usher in some peace between the warring

neighbours seems to have paid off to some extent. It cannot be refuted that many of the prisoners are innocent fishermen who have unwittingly strayed into enemy territory.

NALINI VIJAYARAGHAVAN, Thiruvananthapuram

■ India's long-forgotten "Neighbourhood first" policy now gets a push when seen together with positive developments in India-Maldives and India-Bangladesh ties as well. We need to keep the spirits high and not just solely focus on larger and distant nations.

ANJALI BHAVANA, Thiruvananthapuram

■ Now that there is significant development on the exchange of information on prisoners, India must

make an earnest effort to find out the fate, in Pakistan, of Indian prisoners of war of 1971 – nearly 60 personnel. Much has been written about them but little is known about their well-being. Their families need to know what happened.

DARIUS KHAMBATA, Mumbai

■ India's long-forgotten "Neighbourhood first" policy now gets a push when seen together with positive developments in India-Maldives and India-Bangladesh ties as well. We need to keep the spirits high and not just solely focus on larger and distant nations.

ANJALI BHAVANA, Thiruvananthapuram

■ Now that there is significant development on the exchange of information on prisoners, India must

available institutional credit to farmers and educating them on this aspect is the way forward. The Congress's reaction to the interview is on expected lines as the party always speaks in negative terms against Mr. Modi ("Full of 'I's and lies": Congress, January 2).

C.G. KURIKOSE, Kothamangalam, Kerala

■ The entire discussion, with easy and non-controversial questions, enabled the Prime Minister to field replies with absolute ease. The interviewer very carefully avoided controversial questions. It sounds reasonable that spokespersons of the Congress party have reason to be critical.

THARCIUS S. FERNANDO, Chennai

■ Ever since the results of the five State elections, there has been a palpable change in the attitude of Mr. Modi. Many of his answers, such as going soft on the temple issue, the poll pitch that it will be people versus a coalition, the stance on triple talaq and Sabarimala and on RBI Governor Urjit Patel's resignation, all point towards only one objective – to somehow retain power.

G.B. SIVANANDAM, Coimbatore

■ The entire discussion, with easy and non-controversial questions, enabled the Prime Minister to field replies with absolute ease. The interviewer very carefully avoided controversial questions. It sounds reasonable that spokespersons of the Congress party have reason to be critical.

THARCIUS S. FERNANDO, Chennai

■ The Indian XI The report, "Cheteshwar Pujara – the man for all

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CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS
->A story titled "Parliamentary committee irked by States' insensitivity to Western Ghats" (Jan. 2, 2019) inadvertently referred to over 56,000 kilometres of ecologically sensitive areas in the Western Ghats. It should have been over 56,000 square kilometres.

The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300;

Deterrence or danger?

India does not gain anything by escalating the nuclear arms race in the region with INS Arihant



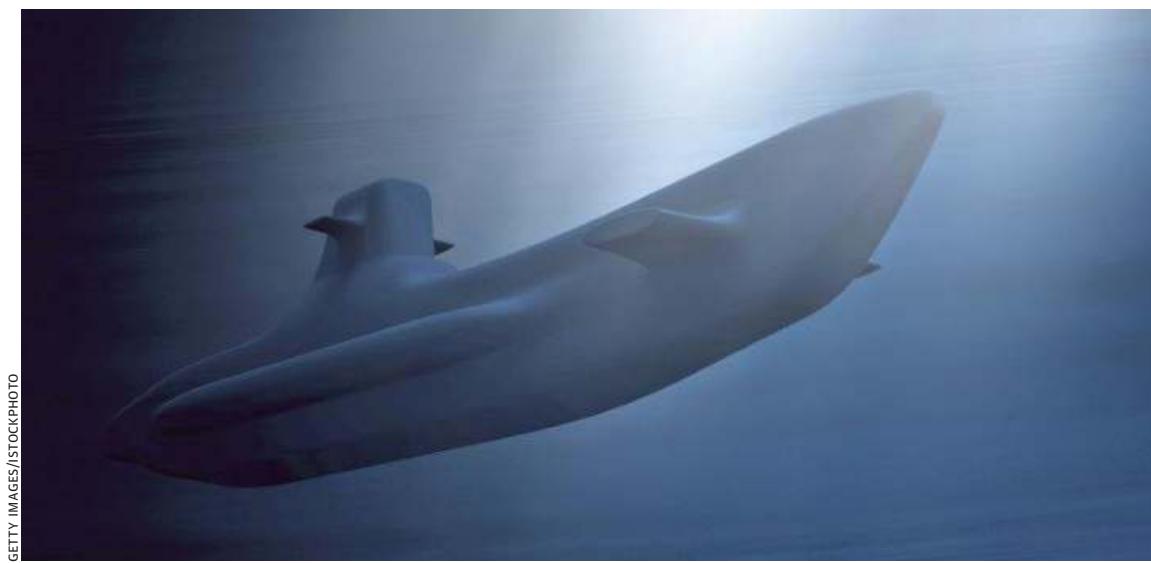
CHINMAYA R. GHAREKHAN

The indigenous nuclear submarine, INS Arihant, is a great achievement for India. The Indian Navy, its engineers and scientists have done us immensely proud. But it might not be inappropriate to ask: Will Arihant make us more secure, and if so, in what way?

It has been universally recognised that the sole justification for having nuclear weapons is their deterrence value. If ever a nuclear bomb has to be used, it has destroyed its raison d'être. The initiation of a nuclear attack would mean utter destruction, not just for the two parties involved but also for regions far beyond. The Americans got away with their bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, however controversial it was, because they had a monopoly of nukes at the time. Today, the situation is vastly different and far more dangerous. If nuclear weapons fail to deter the outbreak of war involving use of such weapons, they have disastrously failed in their deterrence mission.

A nuclear triad

The major nuclear weapon powers, principally the U.S., have developed the myth of a nuclear triad, that consists of land-based, air-based and sea-based nuclear delivery systems. The theory is that if country A initiates a nuclear attack on country B in a first strike, country B must be in a position, even after absorbing the nuclear strike, to retaliate with a massive nuclear attack on the enemy country. This is called second strike capability. In the event that country A manages to destroy the land and air-based nukes of country B, country B will still have its third leg in the shape of sea-based nuclear-tipped missiles, called SLBMs or submarine-launched ballistic missiles, for use against country A because the sea-based missiles, launched from nuclear-powered submarines, would have remained undetected and hence safe from enemy attack. Thus, the rationale for the naval leg of the triad is its survivability. Essentially, the argument in favour of the naval



leg is not that it makes the deterrent more credible, but that, as mentioned above, it will survive for retaliation.

In the event that an enemy initiates a nuclear strike, it will never be able to destroy all the land and air-based nuclear weapons of the target country. Again, the enemy might attack population centres and not nuclear weapon sites; in that case, all the nukes of the target country would be available for retaliation. In either case, the deterrence capability of the target country would remain intact. If the possession of the naval leg were to deter the enemy, ab initio, from initiating a nuclear launch, it would add to the deterrence value. Survivability by itself does not appear to make deterrence more credible.

If the hostilities reach the threshold where a country may consider using nuclear weapons, it would be preceded by a period of conventional warfare. The enemy would also have to reach the conclusion that unless he uses his nuclear weapons, he would suffer a defeat that he simply cannot afford to let happen. A conventional conflict itself will not start before several days of negotiations, including possible mediation by external powers and the UN Security Council. Even a small incident involving India and Pakistan would immediately invite big powers to rush in and mediate pull-back of forces, etc. Whether the external interventions succeed or not in preventing a major war, the target country would have ample time to disperse its land and

air-based nuclear assets. The naval leg does not seem indispensable.

The case of Pakistan

Let us take Pakistan. One does not know if it has a nuclear doctrine, but even if it does not have one, that by itself does not make it an irresponsible nuclear power. Pakistan has rejected the no-first-use policy and has in fact said that it would not rule out using nukes if it felt compelled to do so in a war. It claims to have so-called tactical nuclear weapons which can presumably be used in a battle field.

Pakistan, in other words, keeps the option of using nuclear weapons first as a deterrent against a conventional attack by India. India's stand is clear.

Any use of nuclear weapon, tactical or otherwise, will invite massive retaliation by India which would have disastrous consequences for Pakistan.

(Will India remain unaffected by radiation, etc? Can we guarantee that the winds will not blow in our direction? The radiation, debris, heat, blast, etc will be carried well beyond the belligerents' borders.) So, even assuming that we will have the political and moral will to unleash the full force of our nukes, how does acquiring SSBNs or a nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine make our deterrent more credible?

Since Pakistan is still a long way away from having the naval leg of the triad, would not our land and air-based nukes be enough of a deterrent? Is it conceivable that after destroying each other's land and air-based nuclear platforms, either country will have even the need to

bring into play its naval leg? And, and when Pakistan does acquire the third leg, which it is bound to sooner or later, even if it has to 'eat grass', will it then make the nuclear equation more stable and make each country's deterrent more credible? We may not admit it, but we are engaged in a nuclear, and conventional, arms race, exactly the same way the superpowers were during the Cold War era.

China is far ahead of India in many respects. It has more warheads and more nuclear-powered submarines. Both India and China have repeatedly declared adherence to the no-first-use doctrine. So where is the justification for acquiring the naval leg of the triad? We have a territorial dispute with China, but both countries have acquired enough experience to manage and contain the conflict. It is reasonably safe to say that there will not be an all-out war involving the use of nuclear weapons between India and China.

One of the arguments in the 1960s and 1970s in favour of atom bombs was that they would be cheaper in the long run. That has not happened. The acquisition of expensive conventional platforms as well as the ever-expanding nuclear programme has destroyed that argument. India has been in the forefront in campaign for nuclear disarmament. Let us not at least escalate a nuclear arms race in our region.

Chinmaya R. Gharekhan, a former Indian Ambassador to the United Nations, was Special Envoy for West Asia in the Manmohan Singh government

SINGLE FILE

Breaking the stranglehold

There is scant focus on India's secret shame: bonded labour

MOHIT M. RAO



Last year, on December 22, an incident of bonded labour reached the national headlines, even if only for a fleeting moment. BJP president Amit Shah tweeted on the subject. A week earlier, 52 trafficked labourers had been rescued from a ginger farm in Karnataka where they had been made to work inhuman hours with little pay. Yet, for the most part, both the mainstream discourse and social media commentary miss the underlying phenomenon: bonded labour, India's secret shame.

The practice was abolished under the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976 after the issue found a place in the Emergency-era's 20-point programme. Four decades on, independent surveys and State government-led committees still point to its myriad forms. The Global Slavery Index 2016 estimated there to be 1.8 crore Indians in modern slavery, including bondedness, while the International Labour Organisation said there were 1.17 crore bonded labourers in 2014.

However, there has been no government-led nationwide survey since 1978, despite each district having been given ₹4.5 lakh for such surveys. Instead, the government relies on rescue and rehabilitation numbers: Since 1976, over 3.13 lakh people have been rescued, with Karnataka topping the list (nearly 66,300 people). This does not reflect the extent of the prevalence of bonded labour, as most labourers are not aware of the Act and turn to the authorities only when it becomes overtly violent.

Moreover, National Crime Records Bureau data show that not all cases are reported by the police. Between 2014 and 2016, they recorded just 1,338 victims, with 290 police cases filed – a stark difference from 5,676 rescues reported by six States in this period.

This becomes important given the structure of the disbursal of rehabilitation funds: ₹20,000 is given as immediate relief while the rest (which depends on the case) is given only after conviction of the accused. In these three years, only 28 cases (of the 334 in trial) saw judicial resolution, resulting in a conviction rate of just 32%. It is no surprise that the Centre has had to spend just ₹7.65 crore on rehabilitation in this period. Some patterns emerge. Traffickers continue to source labour in socio-economically backward districts, an example being Bolangir in Odisha. Tribals and Dalits remain vulnerable. Advances and small loans accompanied by promises of steady pay are tools of entrapment. Brick kilns, quarries, horticulture farms, shoe and plastic factories in metropolises are venues for this practice.

The Ministry of Labour says, "The root of the problem lies in the social customs and economic compulsions," before listing a "multi-pronged" strategy which focusses solely on rescue and rehabilitation processes. However, a preventive measure, which must start with a survey, is missing. Creating financial access for vulnerable communities/vulnerable districts could help. Further, regulatory attention must focus on trafficking rings and sectors.

The writer is a Principal Correspondent at The Hindu's Bengaluru bureau



FAQ

All along the coastline

Breaking down the new Coastal Regulation Zone Notification

G. ANANTHAKRISHNAN

What changes will the notification bring?

The Cabinet has approved a significant relaxation of development controls along the coastline through the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification 2018, as part of a plan to encourage construction of buildings and launch tourism activities in areas that are closer to the high tide line. State governments and others had made representations, calling for a review of coastal management policies. Recommendations for changes were then made by the Shailesh Nayak Committee.

The Centre has taken the view that both affordable housing availability and tourism will grow if restrictions on coastal zones are relaxed. With this objective, a decision has been taken to permit current Floor Space Index

(FSI) or Floor Area Ratio (FAR) in urban areas coming under CRZ-II – which governs the size of buildings – as on the date of the new notification. This does away with the restrictions on construction which date back to the Development Control Rules of 1991. The CRZ-II urban category, as per the CRZ notification of 2011, pertains to areas "that have been developed up to or close to the shoreline", and are legally designated municipal limits already provided with roads, water supply, sewerage connections and so on.

What about rural areas?
For rural areas, the newly approved notification adds a sub-category to CRZ-II. The new provision, CRZ-III A, applies development restrictions to a much smaller area of 50 metres from the high tide line, compared to the 200 metres that was earmarked as the no development

zone (NDZ) earlier for densely populated areas. These are defined as places with a population of 2,161 per sq km as per the 2011 Census. Areas with a population density below that will continue to have 200 metres as the NDZ.

However, for tourism expansion, the new scheme will allow temporary facilities such as shacks, toilet blocks and changing rooms, maintaining only a slim margin of 10 metres from the high tide line.

The system of granting clearances has also been changed. States will have the authority to approve proposals for urban (CRZ-II) and rural (CRZ-III) areas. The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change will grant clearances for ecologically sensitive areas (CRZ-I), and areas falling between the low tide line and 12 nautical miles seaward. The modifications also include demarcation of a 20-metre

Lessons from Kerala

Its experience could help achieve the objectives of the Astana Declaration on primary care



RAJEEV SADANANDAN

commitment to substantially increase the allocation of funds. It is sobering to remember that most successful primary care interventions allocate not more than 2,500 beneficiaries per team.

Providing the entire set of services, even if limited to diagnosis and referral, is beyond the capacity of medical and nursing graduates without specialised training. Practitioners in most good primary care systems are specialists, often with postgraduate training. The Post Graduate Course in Family Medicine, which is the nearest India has to such a course, is available in very few institutions. If the services are to be provided by mid-level service providers, as is planned in many States, building their capacity will be even more of a challenge. It would be a long time for this to be built. Kerala has tried to get over this through short courses in specific areas such as management of diabetes mellitus, hypertension, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and depression.

The primary care system will be effective only when the providers assume responsibility for the health of the population assigned to them and the population trusts them for their health needs. Both are linked to capacity, attitude and support from referral networks and the systemic framework. It will not be possible unless the numbers assigned are within manageable proportions. Access to longitudinal data on individuals through dynamic electronic health records and decision support through analysis of data will be helpful in achieving the link.

Discussion on primary care in India focuses only on the public sector while more than 60% of care is provided by the private sector. The private sector provides primary care in most countries though it is paid for from the budget or insurance. The private sector can provide good quality primary care if there are systems to finance care and if the private sector is prepared to invest in developing the needed capacities. Devising and operating such a system (more fund management than insurance though it can be linked to insurance) will be a major challenge but a necessary one if good quality primary care is to be available to the entire population. Negotiations to set up such systems in Kerala are only at the initial stage.

Achieving Universal Health Coverage – one of the Sustainable Development Goals to which India is committed – is not possible without universal primary health care. The experience of Kerala in transforming primary care reveals the steepness of the path India will have to cover to reach the goals committed to in the Astana Declaration.

Rajeev Sadanandan is Health Secretary, Kerala. The views expressed are personal

FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 3, 1969

Scope for India-Iran cooperation

The Shah of Iran said to-night [January 2] there were tremendous possibilities of co-operation between Iran and India and "we must seek to develop it to the maximum possible extent." Responding to the toast at the State banquet here [New Delhi], he stressed the importance of regional co-operation. "Those who need assistance must be helped." The Shah traced the historical and cultural ties between the two countries which, he said, "are one of the most ancient of their kind in the world." Referring to the present relations between the two countries, he said the approach of Iran and India to almost all the problems was very similar. "We attach importance to the dignity of the human being and the freedom of man. It is but natural that, bound by ties of the past and the present, we are seeking closer friendship." The President, Dr. Zakir Husain, described the visit of the Shah to this country as "a milestone" in Indo-Iranian relations and expressed the "confident hope" that it would renew not only the ancient ties between the two countries but "will also beckon towards a common exercise in the practice of modern ideals of Government."

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 3, 1919.

Tea Trade in England.

The Indian Tea Association announces [in London] that the Food Ministry has arranged that licences shall be freely issued for private import of tea provided that no portion of the tea is sold for home consumption and at least fifty percent of imports are offered to Food Ministry. Subject to grades, FOB prices will be as follows: India and Ceylon will be equivalent to present contract prices. Java Sumatra and Nyassa land will be analogous to Indian contract prices. China and Formosa prices will be determined by Food Ministry in consultation with the trade within the limits of eight pence for fair common leaf to two shillings for the finest tea at the present rate of exchange on the basis that FOB costs and prices will be paid by Food Ministry for their purchases of three million pounds. Tea not taken by the Ministry will be free for re-export without limitation of price subject to export restrictions. Quantities of tea which are at present available for re-export to blockaded countries are very small.

CONCEPTUAL Sexual dimorphism

BIOLOGY

This refers to the various prominent differences in the physical characteristics of males and females of the same species apart from just their primary reproductive characteristics. These differences may include size, colour, shape, cognitive abilities, and various other distinct characteristics. Sexual dimorphism, which is prevalent across various species, has been attributed by scientists to the process of sexual selection. It is believed that males or females with certain characteristics may have been favoured by the opposite sex. This might have caused genes responsible for these characteristics to be passed on to future generations, thus magnifying differences between the sexes.

MORE ON THE WEB

Watch: In a first, two women of menstruating age enter the Sabarimala temple

<http://bit.ly/Sabarimalawomenentry>

FROM PAGE ONE

Bill to allow voluntary use of Aadhaar ID

Opposing the Bill, Mr. Roy said the proposed amendments infringe the Supreme Court judgment. He said it should have been introduced after consulting the stakeholders and asked that "the Bill not be introduced."

Call to withdraw Bill

Mr. Tharoor said it violated the ruling that held the right to privacy to be a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution. "The Bill is premature because first we need enactment of data protection law. Where is the draft data protection law? The Bill must be withdrawn and revised," he said. His colleague from Kerala, Mr. Premachandran endorsed his views.

Calling these apprehensions as 'misplaced,' the Bill to amend the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016

CThe Bill is premature because first we need a data protection law

SHASHI THAROOR
Congress MP

and another Bill to amend the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002 were introduced in the House amid protests by members of the AIADMK and the TDP over various issues.

The two Acts are being changed to allow voluntary sharing of the 12-digit identification number for obtaining new mobile phone connections and for the opening of bank accounts.

Under the proposed changes, an Aadhaar holder can opt for offline verification using a QR scan and will not require to share the actual Aadhaar number.

Pak. groups training cadre for sea strikes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The government informed the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday that Pakistan-based terror groups continue to train their cadre for underwater strikes and exhort them for 'Samundari Jihad' (seaborne jihad) against India.

Replies to a written question in Rajya Sabha, Union Minister Hansraj Ahir said that as per available information, there is no specific input about any terrorist group planning a 26/11 type Mumbai terror attack on ports, cargo ships and oil tankers in the high seas.

"However, available inputs indicate that Pakistan-based terrorist groups continue to train their cadres for underwater strike capabilities in a bid to infiltrate them into India by sea/waterways," Mr. Ahir said.

Venkaiah sends out T.N. MPs

Action against 12 AIADMK, DMK members follows protests in Rajya Sabha

**SOBHANA K. NAIR
DEVESH K. PANDEY**
NEW DELHI

Invoking the rules of procedure, Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu asked 12 All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) members to leave for the day, as despite repeated requests and warning they continued to remain in the well of the House protesting against the proposed Meekadatu dam on the Cauvery.

The move came after an emergency meeting between the two Tamil Nadu parties and Water Resources Minister Nitin Gadkari failed to break the ice.

Mr. Gadkari was summoned by Mr. Naidu to listen to the concerns of the two parties. The Minister, according to sources, said the dam would not be constructed without the consent of the Tamil Nadu government. He, however, refused to recall the order of the Central Water Commission (CWC) giving in-principle approval for Karnataka to prepare a detailed project report, the first step towards construction of the dam. He said the commission was just following procedure.



Uproar again: AIADMK members protest in the well of the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday. ■PTI

N. Gokulakrishnan, A.K. Selvaraj, R. Lakshmanan, Vijila Sathyaranth, S.R. Balasubramanian, A. Vijayakumar, R.S. Bharathi, Tiruchi Siva, Kanimozihi and T.K.S. Elango.

Appeal to Chairman

According to sources, Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, NCP leader Sharad Pawar and Trinamool Congress leader Derek O'Brien met Mr. Naidu urging him not to insist on further action against the named MPs.

Those who were told to leave were Mr. Navaneethakrishnan, S. Muthukaruppan,

winter session on December 11, the AIADMK with placards in the well of the House and the DMK members mutely standing at their seats. On Wednesday, the DMK MPs too joined AIADMK members in the well and shouted slogans.

DMK's Tiruchi Siva led the slogan with the call "Vendum [We want], vendum" and AIADMK members chiming in response "Needhi [Justice] vendum." Despite the Chair's ruling, the members continued to shout slogans, resulting in two breaks before the House was adjourned till Thursday.

AIADMK MPs suspended in Lok Sabha

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Twenty-four AIADMK members were suspended by Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan on Wednesday for the next five consecutive sittings for protesting and creating ruckus continuously in the House over the Cauvery issue.

Soon after the House reconvened after adjournment at 5 p.m., AIADMK members trooped into the well with placards and some flinging torn pieces of papers towards the table where Lok Sabha secretariat officials sit.

The Speaker then suspended 24 members of AIADMK under rule 374 (A) that allows the Lok Sabha Speaker to suspend members in the event of grave disorder occasioned by a member coming into the Well of the House or abusing the rules of the House.

The members suspended included K. Ashok Kumar, R.K. Bharathi Mohan, M. Chandrasekhar, J. Jayavardhan, K. Parasuraman, Dr. K. Kamaraj, P. Kumar, M. Vasanti, C. Mahendran, K. Maragatham and P. Nagarajan.

The AIADMK has 37 members in Lok Sabha.
(With PTI inputs)

Hindus cannot wait till eternity, says VHP

Mr. Kumar said the VHP had by now contacted 350 members of Parliament, but was waiting for appointments with UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and Congress president Rahul Gandhi to try and persuade them to support a Bill aiding the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Mr. Modi's comments had come amid heightened demands by Hindutva organisations, including the RSS, for an ordinance for early construction of the temple in Ayodhya.

The government also faced fire from its ally, Shiv Sena, with party MP Sanjay Raut putting out a strong statement.

"We don't need the Prime Minister to tell us that the matter is in court. If that's what we wanted what was the need for the movement? Karsewaks martyred, bomb blasts in Mumbai, riots; it was genocide in the Ram temple's name, who is responsible? You [the BJP] formed the government on this issue, don't forget that," he said.

Share swap ratio for + bank merger cleared

There are 15,784 employees of Vijaya Bank and Dena's headcount is 13,440. The merged entity would have 85,675 employees.

No retrenchment' Announcing the Cabinet decision, Law and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the merger would not result in the retrenchment of any employee, a major fear the banking unions have voiced and held strikes over.

The government expected that the merged entity would be better equipped to meet the credit needs of a growing economy, absorb shocks and capacity to raise resources. Commenting on the strengths of the individual banks, the government said while Dena Bank had a relatively higher access to low-cost deposits, Vijaya

Bank's was its profitability and availability of capital for growth.

"The extensive and global network and offerings of BoB will translate into advantages in terms of market reach, operational efficiencies and the ability to support a wider offering of products and services," it said.

The merged entity would be the second largest commercial bank in the country, after State Bank of India. The total business would be about ₹15 lakh crore, with almost 9,500 domestic branches.

"Benefits would also flow as a result of wider reach and distribution network, and reduction in distribution costs for the products and services through subsidiaries," the government said.

Rajya Sabha calendar charts many milestones

Venkaiah says it's a chronicle of political changes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The 2019 Rajya Sabha calendar, launched by its Chairman and Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu, is a treasure trove of the Upper House's history. For instance, it says that over 34 of its 66 years of existence, including the first 17 years, the Rajya Sabha did not have a Leader of the Opposition.

It was only in December 1969 that the position was first occupied by Shyam Nandan Mishra of the Congress. The office was formally created by an Act in 1977. The longest serving Leader of the Opposition is former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, with a tenure of six years. He has the distinction of being the longest-serving Leader of the House, with a stint of 10



Venkaiah Naidu, along with Arun Jaitley and Ghulam Nabi Azad, releasing the Rajya Sabha 2019 calendar. ■PTI

years. The calendar, Mr. Naidu said, is a chronicle of political changes in the Rajya Sabha since 1952. Featured in the calendar are 65 leaders, including 13 Chairmen, 12 Deputy Chairpersons (three women among them), 26 Leaders of the House and 14 Leaders of the Opposition, since the inception of the Rajya Sabha in 1952.

Six Rajya Sabha Chairmen who have gone onto become the President. The last to make this transition was K.R. Narayanan, and Pratibha Patil is the first Deputy Chairperson of the house to occupy the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Lal Bahadur Shashtri, India's second Prime Minister, was the first Leader of the House to lead the executive.

Isolate IS supporters, says Mirwaiz

Says unfurling of the terror group's flag in the Jamia Masjid was 'sacrilegious'

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Hardening his pitch over the bid to unfurl an Islamic State (IS) flag inside the Jamia Masjid here recently, Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq on Wednesday said, "The December 28 incident is highly condemnable act. It has left the entire Valley in a deep shock and hurt their sentiments. It's time to isolate those elements who are trying to damage and violate the sanctity of the grand masjid. People of J&K should maintain strict vigil."

A group of masked youth tried to unfurl an IS flag atop the pulpit of the Jamia Masjid in Srinagar on December 28.

In Srinagar's old city, which houses the 624-year-old mosque, the Mirwaiz held a meeting at the Mirwaiz Manzil, Razia Kadal, on Wednesday and described the incident as "sacrilegious".

The December 28 incident is a highly condemna-



Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq cleaning the Jamia Masjid in Srinagar on Wednesday after the desecration. ■PTI

ble act. It has left the entire Valley in a deep shock and hurt people's sentiments. It's time to isolate those elements who are trying to violate the sanctity of the grand masjid. People of J&K should maintain strict vigil," said the Mirwaiz. He urged the people to stay united on this.

"Unity among all sects will not allow these elements to damage our religious and social fabric and ethos."

gy and the pulpit of Jamia Masjid has represented both. Nobody will be allowed to tamper with the centrality of Jamia Masjid and what it stands for," the Mirwaiz, who is also the head priest, said. He performed certain rites at the mosque in the wake of the "desecration".

Civilian casualties

Meanwhile, Director-General of Police (DGP) Dilbagh Singh on Wednesday said a total of 423 people were killed in 2018, including 252 militants, 91 civilians, 45 policemen, five CRPF jawans and 30 Army soldiers in 97 operations.

"Of the 97 operations, 83 witnessed no collateral damage. Of the 91 civilian deaths, 44 were killed by militants and 38 lost their lives near encounter sites," said DGP Singh in a press conference on Friday.

"The old city has always been the epicentre of Kashmir's spiritual religious quest and its political ideolo-

gy. Days after Afghanistan strengthened its defence and security wings, its National Security Adviser is expected here on Thursday, sources have confirmed. The NSA, Hamidullah Mohid, took charge in mid-2018 replacing Hanif Atmar and has the crucial responsibility as the war with the Taliban intensified against the backdrop of the international dialogue. Mr. Mohid is expected to hold a series of meetings with top officials of the Government of India.

Scribe, media house settle defamation case

NEW DELHI Journalist Vir Sanghvi and the *Outlook* news magazine have settled a defamation case related to the publishing of the controversial taped conversations of former lobbyist Niira Radia with politicians, corporates and journalists in connection with 2G spectrum case. The settlement was arrived at during mediation after a trial court suggested to both parties to resolve the dispute and the media outlet has published an apology, the journalist's advocate, Nitya Ramakrishnan, said. ■PTI

Afghanistan NSA likely to arrive today

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Rane audio clip authentic: Rahul

Manohar Parrikar says it's a lie

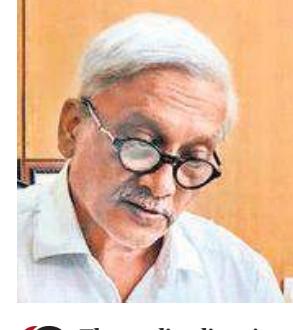
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI/PANAJI

Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said the audio clip, in which Goa's Health Minister Vishwajit Rane is heard saying that Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar had all the files on the Rafale deal in his bedroom, is "authentic".

At a press conference in the national capital, Mr. Gandhi said "there might be many other such tapes in circulation even though he didn't know for sure".

Mr. Rane, however, said in Panaji that the audio clip was 'doctored', and Mr. Parrikar never talked about the Rafale deal in any State Cabinet meeting.



The audio clip ... is a desperate attempt to fabricate facts

MANOHAR PARRIKAR

Goa Chief Minister

Mr. Parrikar took to Twitter to deny the charges.

"The audio clip released by the Congress party is a desperate attempt to fabricate facts after their lies were exposed by the recent Supreme Court verdict on Rafale. No such discussion ever came up during Cabinet or any other meeting," said Mr. Parrikar, during whose tenure as Defence Minister the Rafale deal was signed.

"Do you think Mr. Parrikar will not deny it? If you were Mr. Vishwajit Rane, would you not deny it?" Mr. Gandhi retorted when told about the Chief Minister's statement.

"The Congress played the tape, the Congress party has made the transcript available. I read part of the transcript and the tape is authentic," he said. However, he had not said the audio clip was authentic in the Lok Sabha where he wanted to play it.

Asked why he did not do so, Mr. Gandhi said: "I asked

the Speaker, 'Can I play the tape?' The Speaker refused to allow me to play the tape. Had I played the tape, then the question of authenticity arises."

The Congress had released the audio clip and the transcripts of a "conversation" between Mr. Rane and another person, whose identity has been kept confidential.

"The Chief Minister makes one interesting statement. That I have all the information of Rafale in my bedroom. He said it's in my bedroom ... here only in the flat ... Each and every document of Rafale is with me ... that means he is holding them to ransom," Mr. Rane was heard telling the other person.

"The day those files are out, as stated or threatened by Mr. Parrikar, it will prove what we have always said that Rafale is the biggest scam and the person accountable for it is Prime Minister Narendra Modi," said Congress communication chief Randeep Singh Surjewala, while playing the audio clip at a press conference.

Evidence against PM'
"Modiji says there is no personal allegation against him in the Rafale deal, but this audio is evidence of his culpability which was earlier established by former French President Francois Hollande," Mr. Surjewala said.

He alleged that the Prime Minister did not want a joint parliamentary committee as he did not want the "Rafale secrets to be known even to his party colleagues". A JPC could find out the truth within 10 days.

Mr. Rane, a former Congress leader who switched over to the BJP immediately after Mr. Parrikar won the trust vote in 2017, said he was being used as a pawn in the power game between the ruling and Opposition parties.

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Face-off: Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and Congress president Rahul Gandhi in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. ■ PTI

High drama in Lok Sabha

Jaitley questions Congress record in defence deals; Rahul contests PM's claim

SANDEEP PHUKAN

NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on Wednesday raised the Congress's record in defence deals, including the role of Mr. Q and alleged revelations by Christian Michel who took the name of "Mrs Gandhi" in the AgustaWestland VVIP chopper deal.

And while the Opposition and Treasury benches faced off, the Lok Sabha witnessed unprecedented scenes of AIADMK MPs climbing and standing on a front row seat with placards and Congress MPs flying paper planes while Mr. Jaitley was speaking.

Opening the debate, Mr. Gandhi countered Prime Minister Narendra Modi's claim, in an interview to news agency ANI, that there were no personal allegations against him. The Congress chief said the "whole country" was pointing direct questions at Mr. Modi.

Where are the planes?
Posing a series of questions,

ments as Congress president Rahul Gandhi sought Speaker Sumitra Mahajan's permission to play a controversial audio clip of a Goa Minister who said Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar had all the files on the Rafale deal with him. While the Speaker denied permission, Mr. Jaitley accused the Congress of "manufacturing the audio clip." He threw an immediate challenge: either Mr. Gandhi must authenticate the audio clip or face expulsion.

He spoke for 90 minutes in a staged interview but still did not answer questions on the Rafale issue," the Congress chief said and reiterated his demand for a JPC.

He said Defence Ministry officials had objected to the inflated price of ₹1,600 an aircraft that went up from the UPA's ₹526 crore and on

ly a JPC can find the truth as the Supreme Court lacked the jurisdiction.

"We demand a JPC probe into the matter. There is no reason for BJP leaders to feel afraid. The country will get to know that Modi put ₹30,000 crore in the pockets of 'double A'. The contract was snatched from HAL (a government-run unit)," Mr. Gandhi said.

He alleged that the deal favoured industrialist Anil Ambani, who he referred to as double A after the Speaker asked not to name a person who is not a Lok Sabha member.

The Minister countered that under the renegotiated deal, the fully loaded aircraft was 20% cheaper than what the UPA had agreed, and accused Mr. Gandhi of manufacturing lies, as he was someone who had a natural dislike for truth.

He said Defence Ministry officials had objected to the inflated price of ₹1,600 an aircraft that went up from the UPA's ₹526 crore and on



Mr. Gandhi asked why did the government change the UPA's order of 126 planes to 36 planes, did the Indian Air Force ask it to do so and if it was because of urgency, why not a single Rafale jet had landed in India until now.

"He (Modi) spoke for 90 minutes in a staged interview but still did not answer questions on the Rafale issue," the Congress chief said and reiterated his demand for a JPC.

He said Defence Ministry officials had objected to the inflated price of ₹1,600 an aircraft that went up from the UPA's ₹526 crore and on

Sena demands JPC investigation

Embarrasses government in House

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Shiv Sena, a member of the National Democratic Alliance, embarrassed the government in the Lok Sabha debate on the Rafale deal on Wednesday when party MP Arvind Sawant echoed the Opposition's demand for a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) investigation.

"Aren't we a clean government? So, let us have a JPC; everything will become clear," Mr. Sawant said, urging the government to agree to the setting up of a JPC to look into the issue.

Trinamool stand

Saugata Roy of the Trinamool Congress faulted the government for ordering just 36 Rafale aircraft for ₹59,000 crore.

"The UPA price was just ₹526 crore per aircraft. Why was it renegotiated at ₹1,671 crore per aircraft," Mr. Roy asked.

Referring to the government's argument of immediacy involved in the purchase, he said that while Mr. Modi announced the deal in April 2015, the Defence Minister signed it one year and four months later. "A company registered only 12 days before the PM went to France... Why was a Johnny-come-lately given preference over the trusted HAL," Mr. Roy asked.

Mohammad Salim of the CPI(M) said the team negotiating the commercial terms said the price had increased in the new deal.

preme Court Bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi chose not to call for the "primary documents" of the Rafale contract. The Bench had relied wholly on a secondary document like the sealed cover note which contained "gross factual errors".

The petitioners said the CAG is an independent constitutional body accountable only to Parliament. The government's claim that the CAG's final report on Rafale would be in a redacted form was simply untrue. In fact, the government cannot dictate to the CAG what should or should not be redacted.

Sinha, Shourie urge court to 'recall' Rafale order

Petition says the judgment's reliance on a hypothetical CAG report was not merely a 'clerical or arithmetical slip'

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court should not just review but even consider recalling its "erroneous" judgement, which relied on a "non-existent" report of the Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) to uphold the purchase of 36 Rafale jets, former Union Ministers Yashwant Sinha and Arun Shourie submitted before the court on Wednesday.

The office of the CAG has not yet concluded its audit of the Rafale contract.

The judgment's reliance on a hypothetical CAG re-

port was not merely a "clerical or arithmetical slip" in judgment, but a substantial error which deserved the recall of the December 14 judgment, the former Ministers, joined by advocate Prashant Bhushan, argued.

The December 14 judgment said the CAG report had been finalised and placed before the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). Further, a "redacted" report would be placed in Parliament and in the public domain, according to the verdict.

This information was "patently false" and based on



Legal recourse: Senior lawyer Prashant Bhushan with Arun Shourie after a hearing on the Rafale deal. ■ FILE PHOTO

the confidential note given to the court by the government, the petitioners contend. Besides, the peti-

tions were not given an opportunity to rebut the note, they said.

The petitioners pooh-

poohed the government's application in the Supreme Court to "correct" the judgment. The application, they argued, was filed after a public furore broke out about the verdict. The government said the court "misinterpreted" its note, which was only citing the procedure to be followed after the CAG finalised its report.

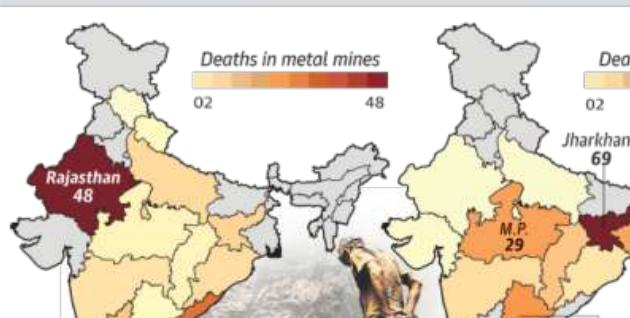
If it was "procedure", the note should have said the CAG report "will/would" be placed before the PAC and not "is placed before the PAC", the former Ministers said.

They asked why the Su-

India records 377 mine deaths in 3 years

Occupational hazard

In the last three years, Rajasthan has recorded the most number of accidental deaths in metal mines while Jharkhand has registered the most such deaths in coal mines



Data sourced from Lok Sabha is for a three-year period from 2015 to 2017

in mines. Of the 377, more than half, 210, were killed in coal mines.

These figures were provided by the Labour and Employment Ministry on December 31, 2018 in response to a question raised by Laxman Giluwa, BJP MP from Jharkhand.

Jharkhand, which recorded 69 deaths (11 in 2015, 46 in 2016 and 12 in 2017) in the three years, has accounted for the highest death of coal mine workers in accidents inside mines. Goda in Jharkhand witnessed one of the biggest open cast mine accidents in 2016 when 23 work-

ers died in December that year.

Telangana recorded 32 deaths in these three years while Madhya Pradesh registered 29.

During the period, 152 persons died in accidents in metal mines across the country. Rajasthan, one of the highest mineral producing States in the country, accounted for 48 deaths (20 in 2015, five in 2016 and 23 in 2017) while Andhra Pradesh recorded 29 deaths. During this period, 15 deaths were reported in oil mines, most of them occurring in Assam and Gujarat.

Coal mines have accounted for the highest number of casualties due to accidents

Water being drained out of Meghalaya mine

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

Odisha fire service personnel drained more water out of an old shaft adjoining the coal mine in Meghalaya where 15 miners have been trapped since December 13. They reduced the water level to a little more than 16 inches.

The old shaft and the main one where the miners have been trapped are interconnected underneath, officials said.

A renewed search and rescue operation started on December 30. After Navy divers conducted an initial

survey with remote-controlled detection devices, the fire service personnel started draining water out of the adjoining abandoned shaft on Tuesday.

The fire service personnel brought down the water level by 16.4 inches between 10.30 a.m. and 5.10 p.m. Coal India Limited is preparing to put a 100-HP submersible pump that can discharge a higher volume of water. Navy divers can work after the water in the main shaft goes down," a spokesperson for the East Jaintia Hills district administration said on Wednesday.

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A renewed search and rescue operation started on December 30. After Navy divers conducted an initial

SC to hear plea for urgent rescue steps

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to hear on January 3 a writ petition for urgent measures to rescue 15 miners trapped in a rat-hole mine in Meghalaya.

Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi said the petition, which was orally mentioned by senior advocate Anand Grover for petitioner Aditya N. Prasad, would be listed for Thursday, even as a rescue operation is underway in the State.

Besides seeking a stan-

dard operating procedure for rescue in mines, the petition said the court should ask the government to utilise the services of the technical arms of the forces in the rescue operation immediately.

The petition sought the repositioning of high-capacity pumps, including those built by the Kirloskar Brothers Ltd., which were offered to the government of Thailand in June/July last year when schoolboys and their teacher were rescued from a cave.

Besides seeking a standard operating procedure for rescue in mines, the petition said the court should ask the government to utilise the services of the technical arms of the forces in the rescue operation immediately.

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**National Entrance Screening Test 2019
NEST 2019**

Admission to 5-year Integrated MSc Programmes in
Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics
at NISER (Bhubaneswar) and UM-DAE CEBS (Mumbai)
(Autonomous Institutions under Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India)

The National Entrance Screening Test (NEST) is a compulsory test for admission to the 5-year Integrated MSc programme in basic sciences - Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics - at National Institute of Science Education and Research (NISER) Bhubaneswar and University of Mumbai - Department of Atomic Energy Centre for Excellence in Basic

IN BRIEF



Brexit won't affect Britain's global role: Hunt

SINGAPORE Britain can still punch above its weight globally even after it exits the European Union, Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said on Wednesday. Although Britain is neither a superpower nor in possession of an empire, the country still has the military might, economic muscle and diplomatic connections to play a major role in world affairs, Mr. Hunt said in Singapore. **AFP**

Kurdish fighters have withdrawn from Manbij

DAMASCUS The Syrian regime on Wednesday said hundreds of Kurdish fighters had withdrawn from Manbij near the border with Turkey, days after the Kurds appealed to Damascus for support against a threatened Turkish offensive. "A convoy of units of Kurdish fighters comprised of more than 30 vehicles left Manbij, heading towards the eastern bank of the Euphrates river," the Defence ministry said online. "Nearly 400 Kurdish fighters have left Manbij so far." **AFP**

Fatal crash



Blown off: Rescue workers at the site of a train accident on the Great Belt Bridge in Nyborg, Denmark, on Wednesday. At least six people died and 16 were injured when the train hit a falling cargo from a passing freight train as it crossed the bridge. **AP**

U.S. granted access to citizen held in Moscow

Paul Whelan was arrested for 'spying'



ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON
The Russian government said on Wednesday it has allowed an American citizen held on espionage charges to have access to U.S. officials seeking answers about his arrest.

U.S. consular officials were granted access to Michigan resident Paul Whelan for the first time since his arrest during a visit to the country, according to a Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman quoted by the state news agency Tass.

Mr. Whelan, head of global security for a Michigan-based auto parts supplier, was arrested on Friday. Announcing the arrest three days later, the Russian Federal Security Service said Mr. Whelan was caught "during an espionage operation," but gave no details.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said earlier on Wednesday, while in Brazil,

Taiwan's unification with China is inevitable, says Xi

'We will not renounce the option of using military force to bring it into the fold'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

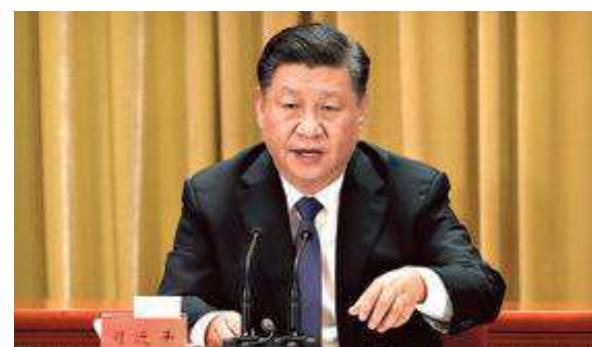
BEIJING

Taiwan's unification with the mainland is "inevitable", President Xi Jinping said on Wednesday, warning against any efforts to promote the island's independence and saying China would not renounce the option of using military force to bring it into the fold.

Mr. Xi's comments provoked a swift rebuke from Taipei, where President Tsai Ing-wen said Taiwan's people would never willingly give up the kind of democratic freedoms unseen on the mainland.

China still sees democratic Taiwan as part of its territory to be reunified, despite the two sides being ruled separately since the end of a civil war in 1949.

"China must and will be united... which is an inevitable requirement for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese people in the new era," Mr. Xi said in a speech commemorating the 40th anniversary of a message sent to Taiwan



Strong stance: President Xi speaking at an event at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Wednesday. **AP**

in 1979, in which Beijing called for unification.

One country, 2 systems'

"We make no promise to give up the use of military force and reserve the option of taking all necessary means" against Taiwanese separatist activities and "outside forces" that interfere with reunification, he said.

Mr. Xi described unification under a "one country, two systems" approach that would "safeguard the interests and well-being of Taiwanese compatriots".

Taiwan considers itself a sovereign state, with its own currency, political and judicial systems, but has never declared formal independence from the mainland.

Democratic values

Relations have been strained since the 2016 election of President Tsai, who has refused to acknowledge Beijing's stance that the island is part of "one China". "Democratic values are cherished by the Taiwanese people, it's their way of life," Ms. Tsai said in a press conference ar-

ranged in response to Mr. Xi's speech. She accused Beijing of provocations that strained people's "emotional connection" to the mainland such as "buying off" Taiwan's few diplomatic allies and increased military drills near the island.

Taiwan's Foreign Ministry released a terser response. "If the Chinese government cannot treat its own people kindly, cannot guarantee human rights and will not let its own people vote... then Taiwanese will look at China's intent with suspicion," it said.

Though Mr. Xi's speech takes a strong stance against Taiwanese separatists, it is aimed mostly at domestic audiences, analysts say. "It's rather empty and doesn't have any new points except that cross-strait unification would not affect the interests of other countries," said Fan Shih-ping, political analyst at National Taiwan Normal University, adding that Mr. Xi's words may also be intended for the U.S.

China building 'advanced' warships for Pak.: report

It is a version of its most advanced guided missile frigate

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BEIJING

China is building the first of four "most advanced" naval warships for Pakistan as part of a major bilateral arms deal to ensure among other things "balance of power" in the strategic Indian Ocean, the state media reported.



Type 054A is the best frigate in service with the PLA Navy. **WIKIMEDIA COMMONS**

stability and the balance of power in the Indian Ocean region," the report said.

It will also support the Pakistani Navy's initiative of securing sea lanes for international shipping by patrolling distant waters, the daily quoted CSSC as saying.

The report said Type 054A is the best frigate in service with the PLA Navy.

Equipped with modern detection and weapon systems, it will be capable of anti-ship, anti-submarine and air-defence operations, *China Daily* quoted state-owned defence contractor China State Shipbuilding Corporation (CSSC) as saying.

Under-construction

ship is a version of the Chinese Navy's most advanced guided missile frigate in

Shanghai.

China, an "all-weather ally" of Islamabad, is the largest supplier of weapon system to Pakistan. Both countries also jointly manu-

faturing the JF-Thunder, a single engine multi-role combat aircraft.

The ship's class is reported to be Type 054AP, which means it is based on the Type 054A of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy, the report quoted the Pakistani Navy as saying.

The Pakistani Navy previously said four such ships had been ordered, according to the report.

Balance of power'

Once constructed, the warship "will be one of the largest and technologically advanced platforms of the

Pakistani Navy and strengthen the country's capability to respond to future challenges, maintain peace and

"Based on pictures circulating on the Internet, the ship will have vertical launch cells that can fire Chinese HQ-16 air-defence missiles and other kinds of missiles," he said.

Got 'great' letter from Kim: Trump

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Wednesday he had received a "great letter" from North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

"I just got a great letter from Kim Jong-un," Mr. Trump told a Cabinet meeting, reiterating that he still expected to hold a second summit with Mr. Kim, after the pair signed a pledge on denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula in Singapore last June.

"We really established a very good relationship," he said. "We'll probably have another meeting."

Netflix pulls satire episode in Saudi

The show by Hasan Minhaj criticised the kingdom over the killing of Khashoggi



Hasan Minhaj. **AP**

tistic freedom worldwide and removed this episode only in Saudi Arabia after we had received a valid legal request – and to comply with local law," a Netflix spokeswoman said in a statement on Tuesday.

The episode can still be seen in other parts of the world – and in Saudi Arabia on YouTube.

"Saudi Arabia's censorship of Netflix... is further proof of a relentless crackdown on freedom of expression in the kingdom," said Samah Hadid, Amnesty's Middle East campaigns director. The Saudi Information Ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Netflix has removed an episode of a satirical comedy show from its service in Saudi Arabia over its criticism of the kingdom, following a legal request by officials in Riyadh.

The move was widely denounced by rights groups, including Amnesty International, which said it risks facilitating a crackdown on freedom of expression in Saudi Arabia.

In the episode of 'Patriot Act with Hasan Minhaj', the American-born Muslim

lashed out at the kingdom after the October killing of The

move was widely de-

nounced by rights groups,

including Amnesty Interna-

tional, which said it risks

facilitating a crackdown on

freedom of expression in

Saudi Arabia.

"We strongly support ar-

Trump has not risen to mantle of office: Romney

The incumbent's shortfall has been glaring: U.S. Senator



Mitt Romney. **AP**

many other things where he can be helpful. I won hot, and he didn't. He should be happy for all Republicans. Be a TEAM player & WIN."

It is the latest twist in a relationship that has run hot and cold for years. Mr. Romney called presidential candidate Mr. Trump a fraud and a phony in 2016. But last year, he thanked Mr. Trump for his endorsement as Mr. Romney ran for a senate seat from Utah.

In the op-ed piece, Mr. Romney said he was initially encouraged when Mr. Trump brought into his Cabinet steady-hand figures like James Mattis as Defense Secretary and John Kelly as Chief of Staff. "But, on balance, his conduct over the past two years, particularly his actions this month, is evidence that the President has not risen to the mantle of the office," Mr. Romney wrote.

His comments seemed to suggest that Mr. Romney is positioning himself to take over the role of Jeff Flake, a departing Senator who was a vocal critic of Mr. Trump.

The U.S. leader responded in a relatively restrained tweet. "Here we go with Mitt Romney, but so fast! Question will be, is he a Flake? I hope not," he wrote.

"Would much prefer that Mitt focus on Border Security and so

that "if the detention is not appropriate, we will demand his immediate return." He added that the Trump administration had "made clear to the Russians our expectation that we will learn more about the charges and come to understand what it is he's been accused of."

Mr. Whelan, 48, a former Marine, was in Moscow to attend a wedding when he disappeared, his brother, David Whelan, said on Tuesday. "And it is in this province where the incumbent's shortfall has been most glaring."

He added that Mr. Trump's actions had caused

that killed 22 people at a pop concert.

The Greater Manchester Police said, in a statement, that the 25-year-old man was assessed by medical staff before the decision was reached. The suspect has not been identified and the police have not explained a possible motive for the attack.

Officials said verifying that the suspect acted alone without a support network is a key

objective of the investigation, which is being headed by the counter-terrorism police. The police searched the suspect's home in Manchester for evidence.

Two of the victims, a man and a woman, are still hospitalised with serious injuries but authorities say they are not life-threatening. A policeman who was stabbed in the shoulder has been released from the hospital.

Chief Engineer (DPI & Roads), Odisha.
OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF (CIVIL), ODISHA, BHUBANESWAR
34117/11/0174/1819

DELHI JAL BOARD: DELHI SARKAR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (SOUTH) IV O.H.T.O.I.A Ph-II: OPPOSITE GOVIND PURI: NEW DELHI-20 e-mail: eesouthiv498@gmail.com/Tel. 011-26388976 Press N.I.T. NO: 87 S-IV (2018-19)					
Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (In Rs.)	Date of release of tender in e-procurement solution	Last date/time of receipt of tender through e-procurement solution	
1.	Providing Laying internal water distribution network in SRS Colony Madanpur Khadar, Ph-III, in Okhla Constituency under EE (South) IV AC-54	1,38,58,231/-	2018_DJB_164607_1 28.12.2018	28.01.2019 up to 2.00 pm	

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

ISSUED BY P.R.O. (Water)

Advt. No. J.S.V. 644/2018-19

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (SOUTH) IV

भारत सरकार / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA अंतरिक्ष विभाग / DEPARTMENT OF SPACE राष्ट्रीय सुदूर संवेदन केंद्र / NATIONAL REMOTE SENSING CENTRE बालनगर, हैदराबाद - 500 037 / BALANAGAR, HYDERABAD - 500 037				
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MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	% CHANGE
Sensex	35,892	-1.00
US Dollar	70.18	-1.08
Gold	32,500	0.09
Brent oil	56.20	7.89

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	381.30	-7.70
Asian Paints	1383.30	-11.75
Axis Bank	620.05	-7.25
Bajaj Auto	2692.00	-34.65
Bajaj Finserv	6384.00	-137.95
Bajaj Finance	2614.05	-42.80
Bharti Airtel	312.65	-6.85
BPCL	357.95	-9.25
Cipla	514.55	-8.50
Coal India	236.70	-4.80
Dr Reddy's Lab	2601.05	-6.00
Eicher Motors	21162.30	-2032.60
GAIL (India)	350.30	-11.85
Grafix Ind	815.50	-18.00
HCL Tech	946.35	-13.50
HDFC	1980.65	-28.35
HDFC Bank	2128.50	-19.60
Hero MotoCorp	3046.55	-81.05
Hindalco	214.55	-8.20
HPLC	256.55	-0.15
Hind Unilever	1784.60	-16.50
Indiabulls HFL	842.30	-2.45
ICICI Bank	364.60	-0.85
IndusInd Bank	1576.60	-19.00
Bharti InfraNet	264.25	2.00
Infosys	669.05	4.00
Indian Oil Corp	137.25	-0.45
ITC	280.60	-2.10
JSW Steel	288.70	-15.25
Kotak Bank	1240.60	-9.85
L&T	1425.50	-16.40
M&M	741.70	-31.65
Maurti Suzuki	7267.85	-208.95
NTPC	147.00	-1.70
ONGC	147.05	-1.45
PowerGrid Corp	195.25	-4.75
Reliance Ind	1106.40	-14.60
State Bank	293.90	-5.70
Sun Pharma	440.05	6.50
Tata Motors	168.55	-4.90
Tata Steel	493.65	-22.10
TCS	1923.30	20.50
Tech Mahindra	712.05	-7.05
Titan	932.15	4.15
UltraTech Cement	4006.10	-3.10
UPL	756.50	3.00
Vedanta	193.15	-8.95
Wipro	325.55	-1.10
YES Bank	184.65	0.40
Zee Entertainment	470.25	-10.00

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	69.97	70.29
Euro	79.82	80.19
British Pound	88.51	88.91
Japanese Yen (100)	64.09	64.38
Chinese Yuan	10.20	10.25
Swiss Franc	70.96	71.29
Singapore Dollar	51.27	51.51
Canadian Dollar	51.29	51.53
Malaysian Ringgit	16.91	16.99

Source: Indian Bank

BULLION RATES CHENNAI

Retail Silver (1g)	41.8	(41.5)
22 ct gold (1 g)	3039	(3021)

Bring bikes in 18% GST slab: Munjal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Hero MotoCorp on Wednesday called for reduction in goods and services tax (GST) on motorcycles and two-wheelers to 18% from the current rate of 28%.

"Given that two-wheelers provide basic mobility to the masses, there is an urgent need to reduce the GST rate on two-wheelers from the 28% bracket of 'luxury goods' to that of 18% for mass usage items," Hero MotoCorp Chairman Pawan Munjal said in a statement.

Mr. Munjal said this would provide the much-needed relief to millions of two-wheeler buyers and the entire value chain dependent on the sector as well. "It is absolutely imperative to ensure growth in the auto sector to create and sustain inclusive economic growth," he said.

TRAI moves SC against TDSAT order

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Telecom regulator TRAI has approached the Supreme Court against the order of Hon'ble TDSAT dated 13th December, 2018. The appeal is yet to be listed," Telecom Minister Manoj Sinha said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

"TRAI had barred telecom operators, with over 30% market share, from offering services at a price that is below the average cost of service that are intended to reduce competition or eliminate the

China growth woes roil Indian markets

Major Asian indices shed 1-3%; Sensex loses 520 points intraday; rupee slumps 1% against dollar

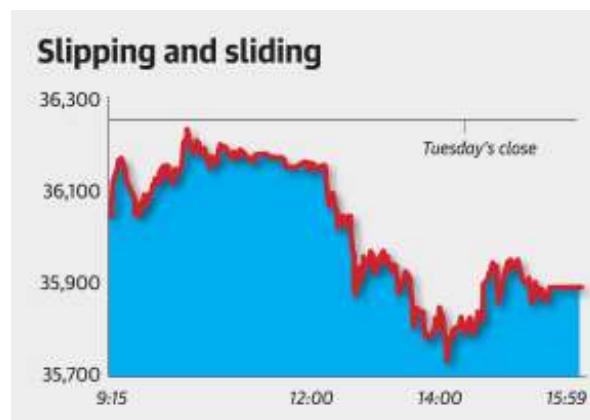
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

A weak trend in the global equity markets on the back of disappointing economic data from China led to the Indian benchmarks shedding 1% on Wednesday as investors became jittery over the near-term outlook on equities.

The 30-share Sensex fell below the psychological 36,000-mark while losing 363.05 points, or 1%, to close at 35,891.52.

During intraday trades, the benchmark was down nearly 520 points to touch a low of 35,734.01.

The negative sentiment was further corroborated by the weak market breadth as more than 1,600 stocks lost ground on the BSE, as against only 923 gainers. All



the broader indices, including BSE SmallCap and BSE Midcap, ended the day in the red on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the 50-share Nifty closed at 10,792.50, down 117.60 points or 1.08%.

Elsewhere in Asia, Hang Seng lost a whopping 715

points or nearly 3% with South Korea's Kospi and Taiwan's TSEC indices also shedding over 1% each. Most European markets were also trading in the red at the time of writing.

Market participants attributed the weakness to the

contraction in the manufacturing activity – the first in 19 months – in China. Incidentally, data showed that factory activity has shrunk in other Asian economies such as Malaysia, Taiwan and South Korea, too.

Earnings season

The upcoming results season, beginning next week, also acted as a catalyst for the fall in the Indian market as investors have turned cautious amid a global bearish trend, they added.

Auto and metal stocks bore the brunt on Wednesday with Vedanta, Tata Steel, M&M, Tata Motors, Maruti Suzuki and Hero Motocorp among the top losers in the Sensex pack. Both Vedanta and Tata Steel lost more than 4% each on Wednesday amid

concerns of a global slowdown. Both the BSE Metal and BSE Auto indices were the worst hit among sectoral indices, shedding over 3% each.

Weak GST collections

The weakness in equities spilled into the currency markets with the rupee falling over 1% against the dollar to close the day at 70.18. The rupee opened lower at 69.60 and fell further to touch the day's low of 70.23-a-dollar.

Strengthening of the dollar against all major global currencies apart from unfavourable domestic factors like weak GST collection also contributed to the rupee's fall. Brent crude, the global benchmark, was trading higher at \$56.20 per barrel after falling to \$52.51.



Losing steam: New orders, an indicator of future activity, fell for the first time in two and a half years. ■REUTERS

'China Dec. factory activity shrinks'

Export orders decline for ninth month

REUTERS

China's factory activity contracted for the first time in 19 months in December as domestic and export orders continued to weaken, a private survey showed.

The gloomy readings largely dovetailed with an official survey on Monday which showed growing strains on China's manufacturing sector, a key source of jobs. The findings reinforce views the economy is losing more steam.

The Caixin/Markit Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for December, released on Wednesday, fell to 49.7 from 50.2 in November, marking the first contraction since May 2017.

New orders – an indicator of future activity – fell for the first time in two and a half years, with companies reporting subdued demand despite some price discounting. New export orders shrank for the ninth month in a row.

While production edged higher after two months of stagnation, factories cut jobs for the 62nd month in a row.

"External demand remained subdued due to the trade frictions between China and the U.S., while domestic demand weakened

more notably," said Zhengsheng Zhong, director of macroeconomic analysis at CEBM Group.

"It is looking increasingly likely that the Chinese economy may come under greater downward pressure," said Mr. Zhengsheng.

The Caixin/Markit survey focuses mostly on smaller businesses, which are believed to be more export-oriented.

China's official PMI showed factory activity contracted for the first time in over two years, also pressured by weak demand at home and abroad.

It suggested small and mid-sized firms were seeing a sharper deterioration in business conditions than larger companies, a trend that policymakers have repeatedly tried to address through special loan programmes and steps to reduce operating costs.

With business conditions expected to get worse before they get better, China is expected to roll out more support measures in coming months on top of a raft of initiatives in 2018. The country's top leaders, at an annual meeting in December, pledged to cut taxes and keep liquidity ample while pushing forward trade talks with the U.S.

Economy on track to maintain high growth rate'

Govt. has taken steps to boost investors' confidence: FinMin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The Indian economy is projected to be the fastest-growing major economy in the current year and upcoming fiscal 2019-20, the Finance Ministry said on Wednesday, while emphasising that the government has taken several steps to boost investors' confidence.

The average growth of the economy between 2014-15 and 2017-18 was 7.3%, the fastest among major economies in the world, the Ministry said in its Year End Review.

"Indian economy is projected to be the fastest-growing major economy in 2018-19 and 2019-20 [International Monetary Fund October



■ GETTYIMAGES/ISTOCK

vector confidence and boost growth, it said there were measures to spur manufacturing, comprehensive reforms in foreign direct investment policy, special package for the textile industry, push to infrastructure development by giving infrastructure status to affordable housing and focus on coastal connectivity.

The direct tax-to-GDP ratio of 5.98% achieved during 2017-18 fiscal is the best in the last 10 years, the Ministry added.

It further said there was a growth of over 80% in the number of tax returns filed in the last four financial years from 3.79 crore in 2013-14 to 6.85 crore in 2017-18.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA ENERGY(HR.A1) DEPARTMENT

NOTIFICATION CALLING FOR NOMINATIONS FOR APPOINTMENT AS CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF TELANGANA STATE ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION

The Telangana State Electricity Regulatory Commission was constituted vide G.O.Ms.No.3, dt 28.7.2014 with Chairman and two Members. Keeping in view the vacancy position of the Chairman and Members in the Commission, selection committee for this purpose has been constituted vide G.O.Ms.No.22, Energy (H.R.A1) Department, dt.28.12.2018 as per section 85(1) of Electricity Act, 2003. Hence, it is decided to call for nominations from suitable persons for the posts of Chairman and two Members of the Telangana State Electricity Regulatory Commission. The appointment would be made in accordance with the terms and conditions and other details as available in the website viz., www.telangana.gov.in, www.tserc.gov.in, www.tsfranco.telangana.gov.in, www.tssewrpower.com, and www.tsenergy.telangana.gov.in.

The nominations as indicated above are to be sent to the Special Chief Secretary to Government, Energy Department, ROCM No.433, 3rd floor, D-Block, Telangana Secretariat, Hyderabad-22, and last date for receipt of nominations is 10-01-2019.

Sdr.- SPECIAL CHIEF SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT

DIPR.R.O.No.-1373-DPCL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2018-19 Date: 02-01-2019

NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER FOR SUPPLY & INSTALLATION OF EQUIPMENT & FURNITURE

IN BRIEF



Equitas SFB revises interest rates upwards

CHENNAI Equitas Small Finance Bank (SFB) has revised the interest rates on its savings account with effect from January 1. It offers interest rate of 5.5% per annum on SB deposits for balance up to ₹1 lakh, 6% for up to ₹10 lakh, 6.5% for up to ₹1 crore and 7% for up to ₹5 crore. It offers 8.8% interest on fixed deposit for a tenure of 2 years 1 day to 3 years. Senior citizens will get benefit of 0.75%, said a company statement.

Shapoorji arm sells 720 flats in Pune project

NEW DELHI Diversified firm Shapoorji Pallonji's real estate arm has sold 720 flats worth ₹350 crore in its residential project in Pune, reflecting better demand for homes offered by big corporate houses and credible players. The 8-acre project Joyville-Hinjawadi, scheduled to be completed by June 2022, is being developed by Joyville Shapoorji Housing – a \$200 million platform of Shapoorji Pallonji Real Estate along with ADB, IFC and Actis. PTI

Ford India reports 18% decline in Dec. sales

CHENNAI Ford India reported a 18% decline in its combined domestic and exports sales in December at 24,420 vehicles compared to 29,795 vehicles in the same month last year. In the domestic market, the automaker sold 5,840 vehicles against 5,087 units. Exports dipped to 18,580 units from 24,708 units. For the calendar year 2018, Ford outpaced the industry with double-digit growth in domestic wholesales.

Jet Airways misses payments to banks

Airline says temporary cash-flow mismatch led to default, ICRA downgrades rating to 'default' status

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Jet Airways India Ltd. has missed payment to lenders, prompting ratings agency ICRA to downgrade the rating to 'D' or default grade due to the default and the inability of the airline to mobilise funds to improve liquidity. The share price of the air carrier ended the day with a decline of 6.16% on the BSE.

In a filing with the stock exchanges, Jet Airways said payment of interest and principal instalment due on December 31 to a consortium of Indian banks led by State Bank of India "has been delayed due to temporary cash-flow mismatch" and that the company "has engaged with them in relation to the same."

The filing did not specify

Turbulent times

- Jet has posted three quarterly losses of over ₹1,000 crore each since March 2018
- Carrier has been making delayed salary payments to staff
- Airline has been looking to raise funds



the amount due. "The ratings downgrade considers the delays by the company in the payment of the interest and principal instalment due on December 31, 2018 due to cash flow mismatches. There have been delays in the implementation of the pro-

posed liquidity initiatives by the management, which have aggravated its liquidity," ICRA said in a report.

Salary delays
"The company has already been delaying its employee salary payments and lease

rental payments to the aircraft lessors. Furthermore, the company has large debt repayments due over December 2018 to March 2019 (₹1,700 crore), FY2020 (₹2,444.5 crore) and FY2021 (₹2,167.9 crore), it added.

As on September 30, 2018, the company had a gross debt of ₹8,411 crore, as against ₹8,403 crore, as on March 31, 2018.

This, despite the receipt of lease incentives during June 2018 and advances from Jet Privilege Private Ltd. in October 2018.

"The debt levels are, however, expected to increase in the near term because of the ongoing stress on profitability, unless the company is successful in its liquidity initiatives. Overall, till the company starts reporting profits

on a sustained basis, the debt levels are expected to continue to remain high," the ratings agency said.

The company has repayments of ₹1,700 crore due over December 2018 to March 2019, ₹2,444.5 crore in FY2020 and ₹2,167.9 crore in FY2021.

In the absence of adequate cash accruals, the company requires refinancing for its repayments falling due.

The company's liquidity position is stressed with operating losses, high debt levels and negative networth, the report said.

The stock tanked 6.16% to close at ₹263.75 on the BSE. The company's market valuation slumped by ₹195.87 crore to ₹2,996.13 crore on the BSE.

(With PTI inputs)



Helping hand: The Reserve Bank has also formed a panel to look at international practices. ■ REUTERS

RBI 'eyes' solution to read denominations

Mulls tech to help visually challenged

N. RAVI KUMAR
HYDERABAD

In a bid to help the visually challenged, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is scouting for a digital solution that can identify and read out the denomination of Indian currency notes to users.

Coming in the backdrop of issuance of new currency notes, the plan is aimed at developing or authenticating a technology-based solution to achieve the task in a few seconds, according to a source familiar with the development.

The solution could be a device, software or a combination of both, to help not just the visually challenged, but also those who cannot read in poor lighting, the source said.

In respect of coal offtake,

a 5.5% growth was reported for the period under review, with a slowdown in December 2018.

As on December 31, 2018, the PSU closed December with a marginal 0.9% production drop, according to a regulatory filing.

Output in the nine-month period between April and December 2018 rose by 7.4% over a year ago, to touch 412.5 million tonnes.

Asansol-based Eastern Coalfields Ltd., producing some of the best coal grades, clocked the highest growth rate of 17.2%, followed by Western Coal Fields based in Nagpur.

However, Bharat Coking

nomination. There are also certain Intaglio (raised) printing-based identification marks in currency notes of ₹100 and above. The RBI is "sensitive to the challenges faced by visually challenged in conducting their day-to-day business with Indian banknotes," the statement in June said.

Noting that technological progress had opened up new vistas for making banknotes more recognisable for the visually challenged, the bank had announced its decision to explore the feasibility of developing a suitable device or mechanism for aiding them in the identification.

As on March 31, 2018, about 102 billion pieces of banknotes were in circulation, having a value of ₹18 trillion. This comprised ₹10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500 and 2000 notes, including the new series being issued since November 2016. The new ₹20 note is expected to be released soon.

Apart from inviting EoIs, the RBI has formed a panel to go into different aspects, including solutions in practice abroad, which include an app used in the U.S. and a credit card-sized solution in a few other countries.

Suzuki Motorcycle Dec. sales rise 34%

Well poised to meet target, says MD

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Suzuki Motorcycle India Pvt. Ltd. (SMIPL) reported a 34% increase in domestic sales to 43,874 units in December 2018, as against 32,786 in the year-earlier period.

From April to December 2018, Suzuki's cumulative sales stood at 5.46 lakh, a growth of 30% over the 4.21 lakh in the corresponding period last year.

Suzuki's overall sales figure in December 2018 stood at 52,354 units (including exports) with a 31% growth over 40,017 units clocked last year.

"As we head into the final quarter of this financial year, not only are we well-

TVS Motor sales up

TVS Motor Company, meanwhile, reported a sales growth of 6% for December 2018 to 2.71 lakh units against 2.57 lakh units in the corresponding year-ago period.

Two-wheeler sales increased by 4% from 2.48 lakh units to 2.58 lakh units.

During the period under review, scooter sales grew by 9% from 83,638 units to 91,480 units, and motorcycles by 13% from 95,246 units to 1.07 lakh.

ALL hikes equity stake in Ashley

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Ashok Leyland Ltd. said it has acquired another 27.25% shares of Ashley Aviation Ltd. (AAL) from an individual holder with the purpose of converting AAL into a wholly-owned subsidiary. The deal to be completed by March 31, 2019 and is valued at ₹55.59 lakh. Currently, Ashok Leyland holds 49% stake in the AAL and the purchase would help raise holding to 76.25%, said a company statement.

The Hinduja Group company acquired 10.90 lakh shares of AAL shares having a face value of ₹10 each, representing 27.25% of paid-up share capital, at ₹5 per share.

Coal India output drops in December

Production in April-Dec. rose by 7.4%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Coal Ltd., based in Dhanbad, showed a production decline for these nine months. A 20.2% decline was seen in December 2018. South Eastern Coalfields in Chhattisgarh also closed the month with a production slowdown.

In respect of coal offtake, a 5.5% growth was reported for the period under review, with a slowdown in December 2018.

A CIL press brief said that the PSU increased its supplies to thermal power stations by 25.5 million tonnes during the nine months. Pithead coal stocks, which were 23.4 million tonnes at end-December, were also slowly building up at CLLend, according to an official.

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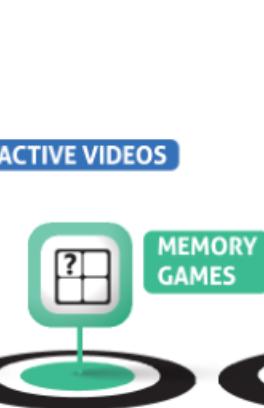
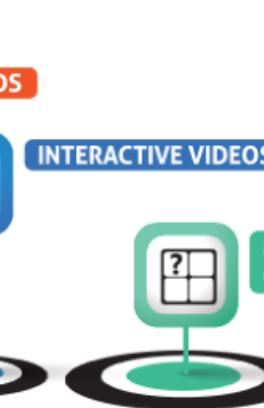
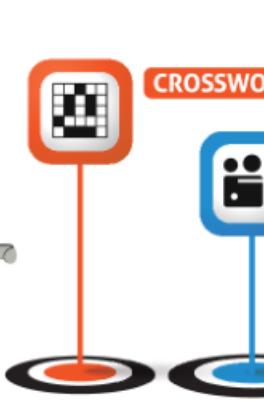
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Epoch-making series win beckons

Ashwin, who seems to have made a good recovery, is likely to play; Rahul set to return as opener

OZ CHALLENGE

S. DINAKAR
SYDNEY

Making history is never easy. India first toured Australia in 1947-48. And a Test series triumph down under has proved elusive.

Now, Virat Kohli and his men, with a 2-1 lead entering the fourth Test at the SCG, have a gilt-edged opportunity to accomplish an epoch-making series victory with either a draw or a win.

Turn it on
Staring at such a monumental achievement, India has to show character and single-mindedness in the big game beginning here on Thursday.

Going for a 3-1 verdict is the better option for Kohli's side. The Indians should not leave behind their attacking instincts.

India has been up against some great Australian teams in the past. Tim Paine's side is a weakened batting outfit and India has to be ruthless.

The conditions here could suit India. The pitch, with a light covering of grass, should assist the spinners as the match progresses. The SCG has the reputation of being the most spinner-friendly pitch in Australia.

The sun has been blazing in these parts too and the heat could open up cracks on the surface, further assisting the spinners.

This is precisely why the presence of its two leading spinners, R. Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja, is so crucial for India.

Will he, won't he?

There was plenty of drama on the eve of the Test. First, Virat Kohli, addressing the media, ruled out Ashwin's participation in the match. "He is not 100% fit. He is as disappointed as we are. Ashwin is really important to our Test plans," the Indian skipper said.

Yet, over an hour later, India announced a 13-member squad for the Test with Ashwin's name in it.

What had transpired to put the off-spinning all-rounder



Momentous Test looms: Virat Kohli, obliging a young fan with a selfie during practice, is on the cusp of a feat hitherto not achieved — leading India to a Test series victory in Australia. • AFP

der back in contention?

Ashwin seemed to have made a good recovery from an abdominal strain — he has been bowling and batting at the nets — but the injury appeared to have flared up on Wednesday morning. When Kohli spoke to the media, he had this information with him.

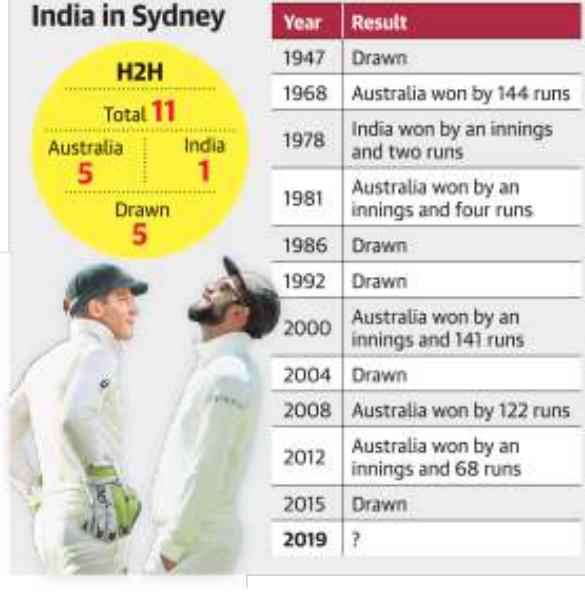
And Ashwin would not play, he said.

Subsequently, the physio found out that it was not a relapse but only a niggle that settled down soon. Ashwin too felt much better and his name was included in the list.

If Ashwin doesn't suffer a fitness setback in the morning, the off-spinner will team up with left-arm Jadeja here. The pair could sting at the SCG. In case, Ashwin fails to make the cut, left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav could come into the eleven.

Ishant ruled out

Seamer Ishant Sharma has been ruled out with strained ribs and India might go into



the Test with just two pacemen — the in-form Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami.

K.L. Rahul is likely to return to the opening slot. This means Hanuma Vihari will be pushed back into the middle-order, in place of Rohit Sharma.

Usman Khawaja could open with Marcus Harris with the out-of-form Aaron Finch left out.

India will be hoping to win

the toss, put up a mammoth score and then turn the screws on the Australians as the ball starts turning from day three.

Australia has major batting concerns.

Usman Khawaja could open with Marcus Harris with the out-of-form Aaron Finch left out.

Match starts at 5 a.m. IST.

Peter Handscomb, a fine player of spin, could emerge in the middle-order. And Marcus Labuschagne, who can supplement his batting with useful leg-spin bowling, should come in for the underwhelming Mitchell Marsh.

Nathan Lyon's match-winning skills on these tracks are well known.

The Indians will need to be positive against the off-spinner.

The next few days here will be massive for Indian cricket.

The teams (from):

India: Virat Kohli (Capt.), K.L. Rahul, Mayank Agarwal, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Hanuma Vihari, Rishabh Pant (wk), R. Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Mohammed Shami, Jasprit Bumrah, Kuldeep Yadav and Umesh Yadav.

Australia: Tim Paine (Capt. & wk), Usman Khawaja, Marcus Harris, Shaun Marsh, Peter Handscomb, Travis Head, Marcus Labuschagne, Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon, Josh Hazlewood, Aaron Finch.

Match starts at 5 a.m. IST.

'We will play with full intensity, effort'

A relaxed Kohli says the entire team is motivated and raring to go

S. DINAKAR
SYDNEY

When Virat Kohli took over Test captaincy from M.S. Dhoni it was at the SCG in 2015. The series was already lost, only pride remained to be salvaged.

Now he returns to the same venue with India having a wonderful chance to win a Test series in Australia for the first time. The wheel has come a full circle.

No pressure

Looking calm and relaxed, Kohli said here, on Wednesday, that the thought of a series win was not putting pressure on him.

"What is going to come is not something you need to think about. We need to stay in the present and focus on the things we can do. The controllables, we need to figure out what they are. We will play with full intensity and effort."

The Indian captain said, "If the series win happens, it's great because I have come here the third time on a Test tour and I know how difficult it is to win here."

He said the team was motivated and there was nothing to tell his players. "There is nothing to be said at all because you sense energy in the change room, the guys just want to step out on the field. Everyone is very very focused."

On the pitch here, Kohli said, "On this ground, from

what we have seen in the past, the pitch is good for batting for the first two or three days and after that reverse-swing and spin come into play."

Obsessed to win abroad

Dwelling on his obsession to win abroad, Kohli said, "The reason I said it has to be an obsession to win away from home is because you cannot afford to be negative even for a single minute, a single day on tour. You need to be that convinced about your ability to come up with a match-winning performance."

Asked about R. Ashwin's constant fitness issues, Kohli replied, "The physio and the trainer have spoken to him in terms of what's required [from him] in order to get over the injury concerns. He is a vital part of this Test team and we want him to be 100% fit and for a longer period. In his absence, Vihari has bowled beautifully."

Queried how he was coping with his back injury, Kohli said, "On my personal fitness concern, I've had disc issues since 2011, it's nothing new. I've been able to manage it because of the physical effort I have put in over the last few years. When you have a back which has disc issues you can only maintain it. That's why I'm not too bothered by it."

SCG curator promises a 'fair contest'



Justin Groves. • AFP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SYDNEY

The fourth Test will be the first Test of the series not to be played on a drop-in pitch. And curator Justin Groves has been a busy man, moving around the ground, answering questions.

Even as Australia sought to maintain its proud unbeaten record in a home Test series against India, Groves, who was under increasing pressure from former Aussie stars to prepare a surface that offered help to the seamers, believed he had made a pitch that had something in it for everyone.

But then, the pitches at the SCG, lately, have either helped the spinners or been flat as it was in India's tour game ahead of the ongoing series.

Groves said, "There will be a green tinge on days one and two. The pitch will start turning late in the game and become unpredictable as the game progresses. I am really happy with it. There will be some surprises."

He added, "It's been hot and humid here. So we've got enough moisture in the pitch to make it last five days and produce a fair contest."

Paine determined to put up a good fight

Wants his batsmen to convert starts into big scores

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

SYDNEY
Australian captain Tim Paine said his focus in the series had been to play the best cricket his team could, stay competitive at all times and learn quickly.

"We want to win every Test we play, at times it's not always possible. We're playing against the best Test team in the world at the moment."

Even as Australia faces the prospect of losing a Test series on home soil for the first time against India, Paine said, "I haven't thought too much about losing the series, that's for sure. We know if we can keep India in the fight long enough, as we showed in Perth, we can win."

Performers needed
The team selection has come under criticism and



Tim Paine. • AP

Paine said, "We want to pick the best eleven but at the same time we want to ensure that we have the right kind of guys in the team who can take the side forward and perform across series

and conditions."

Paine wanted the batting group to convert starts into big scores. "Obviously, there has been a lot of talk around that."

On leg-spinning all-rounder Marnus Labuschagne, Paine said, "We know how good a cricketer he is, he's really skilled in all facets of the game."

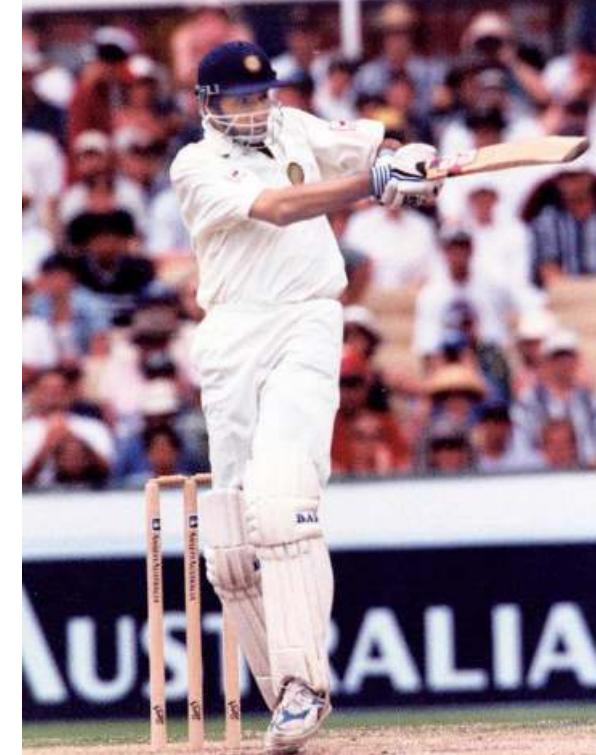
"His leg spin's improved out of sight."

Praise for Pant

Commenting on Rishabh Pant's picture with his kids, Paine said: "That was interesting. We were at the PM's house and just had a quick chat with Rishabh and my wife actually happened to be there, so we just grabbed a quick photo."

"He was a good sport, and he is on the field as well, to be honest."

The Sydney 167 was a turning point: Laxman



Pivotal knock: Laxman reckons the 167 gave him the confidence to compete with the best. • FILE PHOTO: V.V. KRISHNAN

ASHWIN ACHAL
BENGALURU

Before V.V.S. Laxman cemented his place in cricket history with his epic 281 at Kolkata, there was a time when he was in danger of losing his spot in the Indian team.

Coming into the second essay of the Sydney Test of the 1999-2000 India-Australia series, Laxman had recorded just 249 runs in his previous 15 innings.

Laxman resurrected his career with a brilliant attacking 167 at Sydney — the first of his 17 Test hundreds. India lost the match, but there would be no questions asked about his calibre after that knock.

"Sydney and Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) holds a special place in my heart. The 167 was the turning point for me, because I finally gained the confidence that I can do well against the best in the world."

"The Australian attack consisted of guys like Glenn

McGrath, Shane Warne, Damien Fleming and Brett Lee — who was breathing fire at that time. Before getting that hundred, I felt that I didn't belong on the international stage," Laxman said here recently, during an event to promote his book *281 And Beyond*.

Early in his knock, Laxman was struck on the helmet by a nasty bouncer from McGrath.

"It woke me up. When you play quality bowlers like McGrath, you are bound to have difficult moments. It is very, very important to forget about the previous ball and focus only on the present," Laxman said.

In awe of Tendulkar

Four years later, when the Indian team returned to Sydney, Laxman witnessed a Sachin Tendulkar masterclass. Tendulkar did not play a single cover drive during his 241, as he believed the shot was the cause of his poor run of scores.

"Sachin's self-control was unbelievable. I had the best seat in the house (the two put on 353 runs for the fourth wicket).

"Sachin didn't play the cover drive even to part-time bowlers like Simon Katich, Damien Martyn and Steve Waugh. That shows his mental fortitude. It's so difficult to keep one shot locked up, because once you reach 100 or 150, you get into the flow and start playing your natural strokes," Laxman said.

"The Australians I played against were fearless; not once did the thought of losing cross their minds. Even when they were in a gloomy match-situation, they would make us feel like they were on top. The current Australian team cannot match them in terms of quality and fearless mindset," Laxman said.

Achrekar, Tendulkar's guru, passes away

He had also coached Sandhu, Pandit, Kambli, Amre and Agarkar among others

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI
Ramakant Achrekar, who has honed a battery of Test cricketers including Sachin Tendulkar, died at his residence here on Wednesday. He was 86.

Achrekar served as a cricket coach on the Mumbai maidans for more than four decades until he was paralysed in the late 1990s. Quite a few of his disciples — including Balwinder Singh Sandhu, Chandrakant Pandit, Lalchand Rajput, Tendulkar, Vinod Kambli, Pravin Amre, Sa-

meer Dighe, Ajit Agarkar, Paras Mhambre, Ramesh Powar — represented India in Tests and many others succeeded in First Class cricket.

"Cricket in heaven will be enriched with the presence of Achrekar sir. Like many of his students, I learnt my ABCD of cricket under Sir's guidance," Tendulkar said of his beloved coach-cum-mentor. "His contribution to my life cannot be captured in words. He built the foundation that I stand on."

Tendulkar, along with Kambli and Amre, visited

Achrekar sir taught us the virtues of playing straight and living straight. Well played, Sir, and may you coach more wherever you are

— SACHIN TENDULKAR

in 2010, he was awarded the Padma Shri.

After being a regular on the Mumbai maidans in the 1940s and 1950s, he founded the Kamath Memorial Cricket Club at Shivaji Park in Dadar and continued to hone budding youngsters till he had a paralytic attack in the late 1990s. He was considered to be among the most selfless coaches in local cricket.

Discipline

Besides grooming cricketers, such was his emphasis on discipline that many of protégés



Abhimanyu stars in Bengal's sizzling chase

Guides the side to crucial win over Delhi

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

Opener Abhimanyu Easwaran scored a magnificent unbeaten century to lead Bengal to a much-needed seven-wicket victory over Delhi on the concluding day of their Ranji Trophy Group B match at the Eden Gardens here on Wednesday.

Chasing 322 for win, Bengal resumed at 18 for no loss and gained massively from Abhimanyu's 211-ball 183 not out, during which he contributed in two key hundred-plus partnerships, to make a fine comeback and record its highest ever run chase.

Bengal, which collected six points to aggregate 22 and be seventh, remains in the hunt for a quarterfinal place. It will host Punjab in its last group match.

Openers Abhimanyu and Abhishek Raman began the day with positive intent. The duo did not let the good deliveries and half-chances affect their focus. They rotated the strike and hit the loose deliveries to the ropes to score at a fast pace and put pressure on Delhi's fielders.

Abhishek (52 off 73, 7x4), who got a 'life' on 22, played some fluent drives to the fence to get his fourth half-century of the season. The 121-run opening stand ended when Abhishek threw away his wicket, caught at deep extra-cover.

Sudip Chatterjee and Manoj Tiwary departed cheaply because of Kulwant Khejroliya's superb bowling as Bengal lost three wickets quickly before lunch.



In full flow: Abhimanyu Easwaran exploited Delhi bowlers' lack of discipline to cut, pull and drive confidently on both sides. ■ PPI

Pankaj breaches the 400-mark

For a fast bowler to achieve it is a special thing, says the Puducherry speedster

S. DIPAK RAGAV
CHENNAI

There has not been a more consistent fast bowler in Indian domestic circuit over the last decade than Pankaj Singh. The former Rajasthan pacer has, year-on-year, delivered the goods for his side.

For the current, the senior pro moved out of Rajasthan to join new entrant Puducherry and, on Sunday, finished with another eight-wicket haul as his side posted an easy 10-wicket win over Manipur in the Ranji Trophy.

But more importantly, when he picked his first wicket in Manipur's second innings, the 33-year-old crossed yet another landmark in domestic cricket becoming the first fast-bowler and 10th overall to pick 400 wickets in the National championship.

Feels great
Speaking to *The Hindu* on Wednesday, Pankaj Singh said, "It feels great to go past 400 wickets in Ranji Trophy. It is quite a big landmark be-

Pankaj's distinction

Pankaj became the first medium-pacer to take 400 wickets in the Ranji Trophy

THE 400-CLUB

Rajinder Goel	637
S. Venkatraghavan	530
Sumit Joshi	479
Narendra Hirwani	441
B.S. Chandrasekhar	437
V.V. Kumar	418
Sairaj Bahutule	405
Bishan Singh Bedi	403
Pankaj Singh	403
Utpal Chatterjee	401



cause, for a fast bowler to achieve it is a special thing."

Pankaj Singh, who played in two Tests for India against England in 2014 added, "When I started playing, I never thought I would be able to do this. But in the last two years, I was aware this record was a possibility and I am fortunate to get to this mark."

With chances of a India comeback slim, the 33-year-old pacer, who was part of

two Ranji-winning campaigns with Rajasthan, said, he did not want to block the chance of a youngster as one of the reasons behind his move to Puducherry.

"More importantly, moving here gives me a chance to mentor some young fast bowlers and bring up a team."

When asked what keeps him going, the pacer said, "I just love playing cricket and I want to be the best when I

step on a field. More importantly, I want to leave on a high playing at my best, and as long as I feel I can do well, I will play."

Pankaj's debut in Southampton was a forgetful one as he returned wicketless but things could have been different had Ravindra Jadeja held on to a catch of Alastair Cook or a close lbw shout against Ian Bell had gone his way.

It is something the pacer agrees could have had a different outcome for his national career, but added, "I have no regrets because I fully believe in the fact that you can't change the past and if you are thinking about it you can't focus on the present and future."

Speaking about his current team Puducherry, Pankaj Singh added, "We have a very good professional setup here, thanks to former CAP secretary P. Damodaran's efforts. If we continue to go in the right way, in three to five years, Puducherry can compete with established teams."

wal, Saurav Patwal, Amritpal Singh jr., Suhdeepal Singh, Rajbir Singh, Arshpreet Singh Bhullar, Prabhnoor Singh, Gurwinder Singh. **Coaches:** Rajinder Singh, Gurkirpal Singh.

FD in rough weather

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Delhi Soccer Association (DSA), now known as Football Delhi (FD), has run into rough weather with the newly elected body ordering a fresh audit into the working of the former treasurer Hem Chand.

In a communication to Hem Chand, the FD secretary, Edmund Jones, restrained him from "dealing with any financial matters of DSA and abstain from dis-

cussions or agenda on financial matters."

Hem Chand, in his reply, accused FD of "tarnishing" his image. "This letter certainly violates the basic principles of natural justice and the very foundation of our legal system and hence is condemnable and offensive." Even as FD insisted it was following a democratic process, Hem Chand stood his ground and claimed the accounts had been previously audited properly.

Punjab teams for National basketball

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Jagdeep Singh Bains and Anmolpreet Kaur will lead Punjab's men's and women's teams in the 69th National basketball championship to be played in Bhavnagar, Gujarat, from January 5 to 12.

The teams: **Men:** Amritpal Singh, Jagdeep Singh Bains (captain), Principal Singh, Anmolpreet Singh, Devinder Singh, Indu Sehgal.

Women: Harjot Kaur, Harmander Kaur, Jagroop Kaur, Kuldip Singh, Anmolpreet Kaur (captain), Kirandeep Kaur, Smriti, Gagandeep Kaur, Komalpreet Kaur, Rajdeep Kaur, Shalu Bala. **Coaches:** Devinder Singh, Indu Sehgal.

RANJI TROPHY SCORES, DAY FOUR

Elite Group A

At Bengaluru: Karnataka 418 & 219 for seven decl. in 49.3 overs (Manish Pandey 102 n.o., Pankaj Rao four for 67) bt Chhattisgarh 283 & 156 in 57 overs (Avnish Singh 61, Rony More four for 35, Shreyas Gopal four for 44). **Points:** Karnataka 6 (27).

Chhattisgarh 0 (6).

At Pune: Maharashtra 230 & 185 in 55.5 overs (Naushad Shaikh 40, Anupam Sanklecha 40 n.o.) lost to Gujarat 545 for eight decl. **Guarata 7 (26), Maharashtra 1 (11).**

At Ranchi: Tripura 253 for nine & 308 in 108.3 overs (Bishal Ghosh 61, Udayan Bose 91, Neelambuj Vats 55 n.o.) drew with Jharkhand 409 & 144 for seven in 21.5 overs. **Jharkhand 3 (33), Tripura 1 (11).**

Group B

At Vizianagaram: Hyderabad 271 & 251 for five in 85 overs (Akash Reddy 65, B. Sandeep 45, Himalay Agarwal 60 n.o.) drew with Andhra 502 for seven decl. **Andhra 3 (11), Hyderabad 1 (17).**

At Kolkata: Delhi 240 & 301 lost to Bengal 220 & 323 for three in 70.2 overs (Abhishek Raman 52, Abhimanyu Easwaran 183 n.o., Anustup Majumdar 69 n.o.). **Bengal 6 (6).**

Group C

At Porvorim: Goa 244 & 295 in 69.1 overs (Sagun Kamat 96, Amit Verma 118, T.M. Ul-Haq four for 87, Rahul Chahar five for 81) lost to Rajasthan 513 for eight decl. & 27 for no loss in five overs. **Rajasthan 7 (44), Goa 0 (6).**

At Ranchi: Tripura 253 for nine & 308 in 108.3 overs (Bishal Ghosh 61, Udayan Bose 91, Neelambuj Vats 55 n.o.) drew with Jharkhand 409 & 144 for seven in 21.5 overs. **Jharkhand 3 (33), Tripura 1 (11).**

Plate

At Bhubaneswar: Sikkim 219 & 304 for four in 108 overs (Nilesh Lamichaney 70, Ashish Thapa 43, Milind 127 n.o.) drew with Meghalaya 826 for seven decl. **Meghalaya 3 (29), Sikkim 1 (20).**

At Dehradoon: Debaasis Samanta 102, Anurag Sarangi 46 n.o.) drew with Services 417 for eight decl. **Services 3 (19), Odisha 1 (20).**

At Dhaka: Odisha 177 & 256 for five in 110 overs (Debasish Samanta 102, Anurag Sarangi 46 n.o.) drew with Services 417 for eight decl. **Services 3 (19), Odisha 1 (20).**

At Bhurban: Sikkim 219 & 304 for four in 108 overs (Nilesh Lamichaney 70, Ashish Thapa 43, Milind 127 n.o.) drew with Meghalaya 826 for seven decl. **Meghalaya 3 (29), Sikkim 1 (20).**

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THE HINDU NOIDA/DELHI
THURSDAY, JANUARY 3, 2019

TV PICKS

Australia vs India: 4th Test, day one, Sony Six (SD & HD), 5 a.m.**New Zealand vs Sri Lanka:** 1st ODI, SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 6.30 a.m.**NBA:** Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 6.30 a.m.**Hopman Cup:** Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 7.10 a.m. & 2.40 p.m.**South Africa vs Pakistan:** 2nd Test, day one, Sony ESPN (SD & HD), 2 p.m.**Tata Open Maharashtra:** SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 3 p.m.**PBL:** Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF

**Leonard fuels Raptors' win**

LOS ANGELES Kawhi Leonard poured in a career-high 45 points to lead Toronto Raptors to a 122-116 NBA victory over Utah Jazz on Tuesday. With the win Raptors improved to 28-11, keeping the pressure on the Milwaukee Bucks. With the win the Raptors improved to 28-11, keeping the pressure on the Milwaukee Bucks who boosted their league-leading record in terms of winning percentage to 26-10 with a 121-98 victory over Detroit.

Other results: Denver Nuggets 115 bt New York Knicks 108; Portland Trailblazers 113 bt Sacramento Kings 108 (OT); Philadelphia 76ers 119 bt Los Angeles Clippers 113. AFP**Chelsea signs Pulisic from Dortmund**

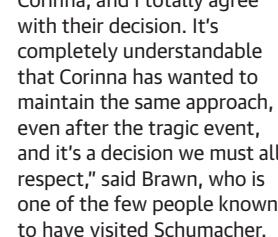
LONDON American international Christian Pulisic, regarded as one of the hottest properties in European football, signed for Premier League side Chelsea for a reported fee of £58 million (£74m) from Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday. The 20-year-old right winger—who has had more playing time in the Champions League this term than the Bundesliga—has been loaned back to the German league leader until the end of the season. AFP

**Emery concerned over Arsenal's defence**

LONDON Arsenal manager Unai Emery was happy with his team's attacking play after Tuesday's 4-1 victory over Fulham but admitted its defending has plenty of room for improvement. "Our challenge now is to improve defensively. Today was the first time we could play with Sokratis, (Sokratis) Mustafi and (Laurent) Koscielny. We are very happy with the attacking players, scoring lots of goals like today. But we need more balance defensively," Emery admitted. AFP

**'Silence around Schumacher completely understandable'**

LONDON The radio silence surrounding the status of stricken Formula One legend Michael Schumacher is totally understandable, his mentor at Benetton and Ferrari Ross Brawn told Press Association Sport on Wednesday. "I am constantly in touch with Corinna, and I totally agree with their decision. It's completely understandable that Corinna has wanted to maintain the same approach, even after the tragic event, and it's a decision we must all respect," said Brawn, who is one of the few people known to have visited Schumacher.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA BALLARI

World Championships medalists Sonia Lather and Simranjit Kaur beat Saloni Singh and Sandhya with consummate ease to storm into their weight category quarterfinals of the third women's National boxing championships here on Wednesday.

Manisha accounted for Tokas in the 64kg category.

The results (pre-quarterfinals): **48kg:** K. Bina Devi bt Khushboo Tokas 5-0, Anchu Sabu w/o Ravina, Sanju bt Tushree Bangle 5-0.**51kg:** Pinki Jangra bt Pratibha (RSC, 3rd round), Nikhat Zareen bt Likhitha Battini 5-0.**54kg:** Manisha Moun bt Riya Tokas 5-0. **57kg:** Sonia Lather bt Saloni Singh 5-0.**60kg:** D. Bhavya bt A. Prasanna Laxmi 4-1; **64kg:** Simranjit Kaur bt Sandhya 5-0.

Anderson survives a Djere scare

Gulbis puts paid to Chung's aspirations; Simon wards off Ivashka's challenge

TATA OPEN

N. SUDARSHAN
PUNE

The timing of the Tata Open Maharashtra, just after the off-season, is ideal to make its stars vulnerable. At the Balewadi Stadium here on Wednesday, the tournament's top three seeds found that out first-hand.

Second seed Hyeon Chung bit the dust, going down 7-6(2), 6-2 to Latvian Ernest Gulbis, before top-ranked Kevin Anderson, and then the defending champion Gilles Simon, had to mine every bit of their reserve to come through.

Anderson required two tie-breaks to despatch Serb Laslo Djere 7-6(3), 7-6(6) and Simon, three sets to ward off Belarus' Ilya Ivashka 6-7(3), 6-2, 6-1.

It was Anderson's match which caused maximum angst for the fans. In Djere, the 6'8" South African had an opponent who would never consider defeat. There were four breaks of serve in the first eight games and with neither player ready to blink, it took a tie-break to settle matters. At 4-3, however Anderson hit two aces before a botched forehand volley from Djere handed him the set.

Even in the second, the two were neck and neck till 3-3. It was then that Anderson loosened up slightly and made the play. He went up 40-15 on the Djere serve, but couldn't land the break. Djere responded, surging

**Perseverance pays:** Ernest Gulbis' patience came to the fore against Hyeon Chung. ■ R. RAGU

ahead 30-0 when Anderson was serving at 5-6, and even reached a set point, only to meet the same fate.

The match, inevitably, slipped into another tie-break, and was decided by the narrowest of margins. At 6-6, Djere's sliced backhand travelled only as far as the net and on matchpoint another backhand sailed long.

The Chung-Gulbis contest was relatively more straightforward. The South Korean did race to a 4-0 lead and serve for the set thrice – at

5-2, at 5-4 and 6-5 – but apart from that initial phase, he seldom looked in control.

Gulbis' ranking of 95 is deceptive at best, and he displayed all the tact worthy of a former top-10 player, who counts amongst his best achievements a win over Roger Federer at Roland Garros in 2014.

For a consummate shot-maker, he showed remarkable patience and his defence stood out. But he was clinical when it mattered, taking the first set tiebreak for the loss of just two points. A com-

plete breakdown of the Chung backhand in the second set brought down the curtains.

One-set all
Ramkumar Ramanathan and fourth seed Malek Jaziri were tied at one set apiece in their second round match at the time of going to press.

While Ramkumar took the first set 7-6(3), the World No. 45 restored parity by winning the second 7-6(5). The Indian in fact had multiple opportunities to force the issue, but fluffed four break

points and squandered a 3-0 lead in the tie-break.

The results (second round):
Singles: Ernest Gulbis (Lat) bt Hyeon Chung (Kor) 7-6(2), 6-2; Kevin Anderson (RSA) bt Laslo Djere (Srb) 7-6(3), 7-6(6); Gilles Simon (Fra) bt Ilya Ivashka (Blr) 6-7(3), 6-2, 6-1; Ivo Karlovic (Cro) bt Evgeny Donskoy (Rus) 6-4, 7-5; Benoit Paire (Fra) bt Jiri Vesely (Cze) 6-4, 6-2; Jaume Munar (Esp) bt Simone Bolelli (Ita) 7-5, 6-0; Steve Darcis (Bel) bt Michael Mmoh (USA) 4-6, 7-6(4), 6-2.**Doubles:** Luke Bambridge & Jonny O'Mara (GBR) bt Sriram Balaji & Arjun Kadhe 7-6(5), 6-1.

Srikanth downs Sugiarto

Bengaluru Raptors beat Delhi Dashers

PBL

G. VISWANATH
AHMEDABAD

Wins for Kidambi Srikanth and Vu Thi Thrang ensured that Bengaluru Raptors beat Delhi Dashers 2-1 after they split the opening two Trump matches in the Vodafone PBL at 'The Arena by SE TransStadia' here on Wednesday.

Eventually Srikanth lifted his game up a notch to take the third game and the match to put his team ahead in the tie.

Srikanth blended his powerful smash and soft hand skills to convert the 8-4 lead at the break into a decisive winning score at 15-10. Srikanth won a short rally with a smash to bring an end to the contest.

The results: Bengaluru Raptors bt Delhi Dashers 2-1; B. Sai Praneeth bt H.S. Prannoy (T) 15-3, 14-15, 15-13; Marcus Ellis and Lauren Smith (T) lost to Maneepong Jongjit and Evgeniya Kosetskaya 3-15, 9-15; K. Srikanth bt Tommy Sugiarto 15-6, 12-15, 15-10; Vu Thi Thrang bt Chia Hsin Lee 12-15, 15-3, 15-8; Mohammad Ahsan and Hendra Setiawan lost to Biao Chai and Maneepong Jongjit 7-15, 15-11, 14-15.**Keenly contested:** K. Srikanth and Tommy Sugiarto's intense rivalry was on view once again. ■ FILE PHOTO

Spurs stay in title contention

Kane equals New Year's Day goal-scoring record

PREMIER LEAGUE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
CARDIFF**Great start:** Harry Kane's opening goal helped Tottenham Hotspur begin 2019 in style ■ PHOTO: MICHAEL STEELE/GETTY IMAGES

verhampton Wanderers at home on Saturday.

It toyed with Cardiff at times, and the third goal killed the game.

Cardiff's poor record against the top teams continued, losing its last 15 Premier League matches to the 'big six' sides, conceding 45 goals.

Meanwhile, Spurs man-

ger Mauricio Pochettino said his players need to be consistent if they are to win the league. "I don't want to see the table. Of course we are in a good position. We need to be consistent during the whole season," he told Sky Sports.

The result: Cardiff 0 lost to Tottenham Hotspur 3 (Kane 3, Eriksen 12, Son 26).

Simranjit and Sonia advance

**Vijay Sundar moves up****SPORTS BUREAU**
ANNING (CHINA)

Vijay Sundar Prashanth won both his singles and doubles matches in the \$25,000 ITF men's Futures tennis here on Wednesday.

The results, first round: Ti Chen (Tpe) bt Anirudh Chandrasekar 4-6, 6-1, 6-4; Vijay Sundar Prashanth bt Wei-De Lin (Tpe) 6-2, 6-1.**Doubles, pre-quarterfinals:** Anirudh Chandrasekar & Vijay Sundar bt Cing-Yang Meng & Li-Wie Tan (Tpe) 7-6(2), 6-2.**Afridi blocked my return: Butt****PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**
KARACHI

ree stopped the contest in the third round, while Nikhat Zareen showed some excellent mix of defensive and attacking prowess against Likhitha Battini to win 5-0.

Manisha accounted for Tokas in the 64kg category.

The results (pre-quarterfinals): **48kg:** K. Bina Devi bt Khushboo Tokas 5-0, Anchu Sabu w/o Ravina, Sanju bt Tushree Bangle 5-0.**51kg:** Pinki Jangra bt Pratibha (RSC, 3rd round), Nikhat Zareen bt Likhitha Battini 5-0.**54kg:** Manisha Moun bt Riya Tokas 5-0. **57kg:** Sonia Lather bt Saloni Singh 5-0.**60kg:** D. Bhavya bt A. Prasanna Laxmi 4-1; **64kg:** Simranjit Kaur bt Sandhya 5-0.

Pinki defeated Pratibha in the 51kg class when the referee stopped the contest in the third round, while Nikhat Zareen showed some excellent mix of defensive and attacking prowess against Likhitha Battini to win 5-0.

Tamil Nadu posts easy win over Punjab

Delay in start hurts both the teams

SENIOR NATL

K. KEERTHIVASAN
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu endured a bad start, but finished quite well scripting a 27-25, 25-21, 26-24 win in a Group-A men's match of the senior National volleyball championships at the Nehru Indoor Stadium here on Wednesday.

On the other court, defending champion Railways posted an easy 25-13, 25-13, 25-21 win over Haryana in a Group-A women's tie.

The scheduled inauguration began one-and-a-half hours late and by the time the TN-Punjab contest began, it was 8.30 p.m.

Both the host and the visitor struggled in the first set primarily because of this reason.

Erring often
Setter and captain M. Ukkapandian commenced the**Take that!** Tamil Nadu's Manoj spikes past Punjab defenders. ■ P. PICHUMANI

match by serving one wide. By and large, TN couldn't quite click as a unit as its attackers and blockers erred often.

Universal M. Ashwin Raj was not in his elements, and the team's main attacker Naveen Raja Jacob couldn't land his smashes at the right places. Punjab, too, was erratic with its blocks, service and attack.

Lakhbir's attack
Thanks to Lakhbir Singh's attack in large measure, Punjab managed to stay in the game. Towards the end of the first set, it was neck-and-**The third set witnessed a see-saw battle till 16-15, but TN broke free with wonderful blocking by Vaishnav and Manoj. However, at 25-24, it was an Ukkapandian's block that got the team the match.****The results:** Men: Group-A: TN bt Punjab 27-25, 25-21, 26-24; Group-A: Women: Railways bt Haryana 25-21, 25-13, 25-7.**Women: Group-A:** Railways bt Haryana 25-13, 25-13, 25-7.**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**
Sealed item rate tenders are invited in two cover system for the following works at IISER TVM Campus, Vizhura.NIT No.: IISER-T-131/2/29/18-19 [Re-tender]
Name of Work: Furnishing of "D" Block Hostel (Phase-II) with wardrobe and shoe rack.

PAC : Rs.89 lakhs, Due Date: 17.01.2019

Further details can be obtained from the Office of the Superintending Engineer, IISER Campus, Vizhura, Thiruvananthapuram or from web site www.iiser.ac.in

Superintending Engineer, Advt. No. 31/18-19, DATED 05.01.2019

The Tender Documents will be available for download at <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in> from 10-01-2019 - 21-00 hours to 21-01-2019 - 13.00 hours on payment of above document fees through crossed Demand Draft in favour of "Special Commissioner, Women Development & Child Welfare Department, P.O. Box No. 522007, Maruthamala Post, Vizhura, Thiruvananthapuram". Last Date for submission of tenders is 21-01-2019 upto 13-00 hours.The Tender Documents will be available for download at <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in> from 10-01-2019 - 21-00 hours to 21-01-2019 - 13.00 hours on payment of above document fees through crossed Demand Draft in favour of "Special Commissioner, Women

IN BRIEF



Migratory starlings put on spectacular show

NEGEV DESERT

Starlings wintering in Israel have been putting on a spectacular aerial dance display over the Negev desert every morning for the past two weeks. The birds, which have come from Russia and eastern Europe, form dark, shifting shapes known as murmurations as they swirl through the skies of southern Israel. **REUTERS**



Facebook testing 'dark mode' for Messenger

After experimenting to bring changes to the user interface (UI) of Messenger, Facebook is testing a dark mode for the messaging app in some countries. Dark mode uses less power and saves battery life. It changes the overall colour theme of an operating system (OS) or applications to the colour black. **IANS**



Juno captures volcanic plumes on Jupiter moon

NASA's solar-powered Juno spacecraft has beamed back new images of volcanic plumes on Jupiter's moon Io, captured during the mission's 17th flyby of the gas giant. On December 21, four of Juno's cameras captured images of the Jovian moon Io, the most volcanic body in the solar system. **PTI**

Film hunts for beauty in trash

IRS officer engaged his wedding photographers to make a satire on wastefulness

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

Satyakam Dutta

Indian Revenue Service officer Satyakam Dutta found 'beauty' in trash to make a mockumentary – a satirical documentary – that struck gold at an international short film festival last month.

What gave his film the edge were a couple of photographers who wanted some "adventure" beyond wedding assignments. *Finding Beauty in Garbage*, with a running time of seven minutes and 19 seconds, was released on YouTube on Tuesday.

Filmmaking was far from Mr. Dutta's mind when he was transferred three years ago from Nagpur as the Deputy Director of Income Tax (Investigation) in eastern Assam's Dibrugarh, about a

two-hour drive from his home in Dhemaji via the Bognibel Bridge across river Brahmaputra.

But random garbage dumps across the town, the administrative and commercial hub during British rule and a major Second World War military base, made him wonder whether people

found littered streets beautiful.

The idea turned into a script 18 months ago. He found in Partha Bhuyan and Chandan Kakoty who volunteered to execute the idea on film.

"They were assigned to photograph my wedding in October 2016. They offered to work without any fee because they wanted a break from the monotony and hoped to earn some name," Mr. Dutta, 35, told *The Hindu* on Wednesday.

On a budget
Mr. Dutta and the photographer duo took time off their routine work to document the ever-expanding dumpsites. They shot with SLR cameras and mobile phones. "After shooting physically

and with drones, the search for a good narrator took me to a freelancing website to which I paid \$26.25 for the voiceover by a man who identified himself as jovial-duty," Mr. Dutta said.

The audio file delivered by the website was mixed during the editing of the video.

The final product turned out to be much better than Mr. Dutta had imagined.

"I decided to send it for short film festivals around the world, and won the gold medal in the very first – the South East Asia Short Film Festival in Cambodia – I participated in," he said. The IRS officer is undecided about making another film. "I hope it would be a documentary, not a mockumentary, on finding the charm of Dibrugarh," he said.

Pink Test to raise funds for breast cancer awareness

Effort driven by McGrath Foundation and Cricket Australia

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SYDNEYMark of support: The Australian cricket team posing with former player, Glenn McGrath, in Sydney on Wednesday. **AP**

come a national phenomenon and is the largest sporting fund-raising initiative in Australia.

Mr. McGrath said: "With 50 Australians diagnosed

with breast cancer every day, there is critical and continuing need for more McGrath Breast Care Nurses to support families through breast cancer."

Morocco ranks high in climate action

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
RABAT

Morocco has been named the second best performing country after Sweden in the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI).

The North African country significantly increased the share of renewables over the past five years and increased new renewable energy capacity.

Sweden is in top position, followed by Morocco and Lithuania in the CCPI 2019. The bottom five in the list are Saudi Arabia, U.S., Iran, South Korea and Taiwan. With the connection of the world's largest solar plant to the grid, Morocco is on track for achieving its target of 42% installed renewable energy capacities by 2020.

Tawny two

Warm corner: Five-month-old lion cubs bask in the sun at the Sepahijala Zoological Park near Agartala. **ABHISEK SAHA**

Karachi's public buses to run on biogas

3,200 tonnes of dung to be used

REUTERS
ISLAMABAD

In a bid to freshen its air and cut planet-warming emissions, the Pakistani port city of Karachi will introduce buses that run on biogas.

With funding from the International Green Climate Fund, Karachi will launch a zero-emission Green Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network, with 200 buses fuelled by bio-methane.

Malik Amin Aslam, adviser on climate change to Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, said the BRT system was the first transport project the Green Climate Fund had approved, and would bring "multiple environmental and economic benefits".

The BRT system, to be rolled out over four years, will have a fleet of 200 hybrid buses that will run on bio-methane produced from manure excreted by Karachi's 4,00,000 milk-producing water buffaloes.

Energy and fertilizer
The project will prevent about 3,200 tonnes of cow manure going to waste. The cow dung will be converted into energy and fertilizer at a biogas plant, Mr. Aslam said.

Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, CEO of Leadership for Environment and Development (LEAD) Pakistan, a policy think-tank, said calculating the overall impact on the environment was complex, as the buses would be introduced in stages.

Toy story: Barbie doll prototypes on display at a Mattel workshop in El Segundo, California. **AFP**

Mr. Baynard said during a recent visit to Mattel's design studio in El Segundo, a suburb of Los Angeles.

In all, more than one billion Barbie dolls have been sold since she made her debut at the American Toy Fair

in New York on March 9, 1959.

She was invented by Ruth Handler, the co-founder of Mattel, who was inspired by her own children to create the doll.

"Her daughter Barbara

was limited in the choices of her toys – the only ones were baby dolls," Mr. Baynard recounted.

"The only role she could imagine through that play was caregiver, mother," whereas Ms. Handler's son "could imagine being an astronaut, cowboy, pilot, surgeon."

Barbie is, of course, a shortened version of Barbara. The doll was supposed to teach girls "that they had choices, that they could be anything. In 1959, it was a radical idea!" Mr. Baynard said. Barbie was an instant success. In the first year, 3,000 dolls were sold, he added.

From the start, Barbie's pin-up measurements didn't immediately seem all that feminist, and would spark criticism for decades to come.

"In 1959, her body structure was exaggerated to match the aesthetics of the time and the fabric available," said Barbie designer Carlyle Nuera.

Keeping with the times
Since the blonde beauty first hit stores, and after a torrent of complaints over what was seen as unrealistic proportions, Mattel has made many changes – introducing multiple body types and dozens of skin tones.

In 1965, four years before Neil Armstrong walked on the Moon, Barbie became an astronaut. In 1968, the first black Barbie doll, a friend named Christie, hit store shelves.

Lisa McKnight, senior vice-president and global general manager for the Barbie brand, said that today,

55% of the dolls sold around the world have neither blonde hair nor blue eyes.

Mattel has more than 100 people working in the El Segundo design studio, a massive hangar-like building wedged between Los Angeles International Airport and a freeway.

Designers begin with a simple sketch. From there on, every bit of a prototype is made by an army of experts – from sculpting the doll using state-of-the-art software and 3D printing to painting the face, styling the hair, choosing fabrics and crafting the clothing patterns.

The entire design process for a new Barbie can last 12 to 18 months. Then, the prototype is sent from the California workshop to factories in China and Indonesia for mass production.

Frenchwoman's 'oldest' title may be a fraud

Daughter assumed her identity: report

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MOSCOW

Calment as well as her interviews and photos, witness testimony and the public records of the city of Arles in southern France where she lived.

"Analysing all these materials led me to conclude that Jeanne Calment's daughter Yvonne assumed her mother's identity," said Mr. Zak.

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