

PRINTED AT : CHENNAI • COIMBATORE • BENGALURU • HYDERABAD • MADURAI • NOIDA • VISAKHAPATNAM • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • KOCHI • VIJAYAWADA • MANGALURU • TIRUCHIRAPPALLI • KOLKATA • HUBBALLI • MOHALI • MALAPPURAM • MUMBAI • TIRUPATI • LUCKNOW • CUTTACK • PATNA  
**BYJU'S**  
The Learning App  
**IAS 2019**  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH

THE HINDU

ALL INDIA FREE  
IAS SCHOLARSHIP  
TEST  
7<sup>th</sup> April (Sunday)  
Time - 1:30 pm

For Free Registration CALL  
or SMS <ST/DEMO Name> to

9873643487

FREE IAS DEMO CLASSES (11<sup>th</sup> April to 13<sup>th</sup> April)

DEMO  
CLASSES  
HIGHLIGHTS

- 3 Days Comprehensive Modular Coverage
- Meet Our Faculty
- One-on-One Doubt Sessions

FOUNDATION  
2019-20 BATCH  
STARTS 15<sup>th</sup> APRIL  
MORNING 7:00 AM to 9:30 AM  
EVENING 5:00 PM to 7:30 PM

DATE MORNING EVENING  
11<sup>th</sup> April Indian Economy Modern History  
12<sup>th</sup> April Modern History Indian Economy  
13<sup>th</sup> April Current Affairs Current Affairs  
MORNING : 7:00 AM to 9:30 AM  
EVENING : 5:00 PM to 7:30 PM

OFFICE : Apsara Arcade,  
Near Karol Bagh Metro Station

ALL MAINS GS PAPERS AVAILABLE



JNU case: court seeks time frame from govt.

NEW DELHI  
A Delhi court on Wednesday directed the Additional Public Prosecutor in the JNU sedition case to give within three days a time frame in which the Delhi government would be able to decide the prosecution sanction requested by the city police. Former JNUSU president and CPI candidate for Begusarai Kanhaiya Kumar and others are being prosecuted for sedition and other charges in the case.

DELHI METRO ▶ PAGE 1

BHU chief proctor named in student murder FIR  
LUCKNOW  
The chief proctor of Banaras Hindu University was among the five persons named in the police complaint in connection with the murder of a suspended student, who was shot dead on the campus on Tuesday evening. Four persons have been arrested in connection with the case.

NATION ▶ PAGE 7

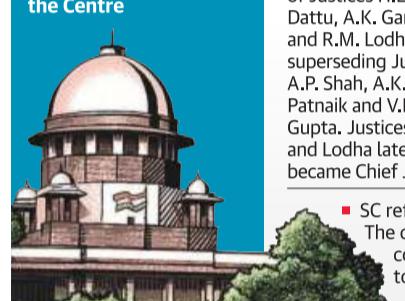
DELHI METRO ▶ 6 PAGES

## 'RTI scrutiny will ruin judicial independence'

Collegium workings must be confidential, says AG

### Lens on Collegium

The events which led to the RTI on confidential communication between the SC and the Centre



- Activist Subhash Chandra Agarwal files an RTI seeking the correspondence between the SC Collegium and the Centre on the appointment of Justices H.L. Dattu, A.K. Ganguly and R.M. Lodha superseding Justices A.P. Shah, A.K. Patnaik and V.K. Gupta. Justices Dattu and Lodha later became Chief Justices
- SC refuses. The case comes to the

- Central Information Commission (CIC), which rules in favour of Agarwal in 2009 and dismisses SC's argument that judiciary should be free from "intrusions by strangers..."
- SC appeals in the Delhi HC against the CIC verdict. The HC dismisses the appeal
- In January 2010, a three-judge HC Bench of Justice A.P. Shah (now retired) upholds HC decision
- In November 2010, SC appeals to itself.

- An SC Bench led by Justice B. Sudarshan Reddy (now retired) refers the appeal to a three-judge Bench
- In August 2016, a three-judge Bench refers the appeal to a Constitution Bench
- If the Constitution Bench upholds the CIC order of 2009, the ordinary citizen would be empowered to seek confidential details of all judicial appointments and transfers, thus opening a "judicial Pandora's Box"

to the court. For the past decade, the Supreme Court has refused to divulge information under the RTI Act about the collegium's confidential communications with the government.

**Judges' appointment**  
The collegium recommends judges for the High Courts and the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court, after losing legal battles before the Central Information Commission (CIC) and the Delhi High Court, finally had to appeal to itself to protect the collegium's workings.

After nine years, the appeal is now being heard by the Constitution Bench. It is hearing the broad question whether it would be deleterious to judicial independence to bring the collegium under RTI.

Mr. Venugopal asserted that pushing the collegium under the public spotlight

through RTI would "destroy" judicial independence. "Mr. Attorney, you are saying that if information is given under RTI, various entities, from judges to the government, will feel shy to voice their opinions," Justice Gogoi noted, by way of going over the AG's argument. "Besides, the career, family and even continuance in office of a person against whom adverse remarks were made would be ruined," he said, summing up the AG's submissions.

"A person has self-respect... Reputation is more precious than life itself," the AG agreed. "But the information [sought under RTI] is used to make an appointment in a public office, is it not?" Justice Gogoi asked. To this, Mr. Venugopal responded, "It depends on the nature of the public office."

"In terms of geographical

**Election mood**  
Beginning Friday, April 5, *The Hindu* will carry a series of articles based on surveys carried out by CSDS-Lokniti on election themes - national security, economy, peoples' perceptions on Central government performance, and voting behaviour.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

J&K govt. bars civilian traffic twice a week on NH

of vehicles of the security forces.

The move comes in the wake of the Pulwama attack on February 14, which left 40 CRPF jawans dead.

"Keeping in view the large movement of security forces on the national highway dur-

ing the elections and associated possibility of any fidayeen (suicide) terror attack, two dedicated days in a week, Sunday and Wednesday, will be exclusively for movement of security forces convoys," said the statement of the J&K government.

**Thinking of Joining Brands !!!**  
Just Think, do they provide Assurance for even Prelims !!!

**Join MALUKA IAS**

**ASSURED PRELIMS**  
Either Clear Prelims  
or 100% Fee Refund

**ASSURED MAINS**  
Either 80% questions in Mains  
from our dictated Notes  
or 100% Fee Refund

**GS FOUNDATION 2020**  
STARTS FROM  
2<sup>nd</sup> May, 18<sup>th</sup> May, 8<sup>th</sup> June & 20<sup>th</sup> June

Our Past PRELIMS Result

2016 ➡ 22 Qualified out of 26  
2017 ➡ 35 Qualified out of 38  
2018 ➡ 137 Qualified out of 180

OPTIONALS AVAILABLE

**PUNJABI LITERATURE** by Satinder Sir  
**GEOGRAPHY** by S. Choudhary  
**HISTORY** by Maluka Sir & Himanshu Sir  
**HINDI LITERATURE** by Manoj Sir

Join Prelims-2019 Crash Course and Get Minimum 70 questions in Prelims

For live/online classes-[www.malukaias.com](http://www.malukaias.com)

99101 33084, 97188 57646

51/6, Basement, Old Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi-110060

For Free Prelims Current Affairs Subscribe our YouTube Channel MALUKA IAS

CM YK

# SC asks GJM leaders to approach Calcutta HC for anticipatory bail

To enable Bimal Gurung, Roshan Giri to participate in the Lok Sabha poll

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday gave liberty to Gorkha Janmukti Morcha leaders Bimal Gurung and Roshan Giri, against whom several cases are lodged in West Bengal, to approach the Calcutta High Court for anticipatory bail to enable them to participate in the upcoming Lok Sabha poll.

The apex court said its interim order of December 12, 2018, in which it had said that no coercive action be taken till next date of hearing, will continue to operate until further orders.

"We request the High Court not to go into the issue of maintainability by relegating to the different sessions courts in whose jurisdiction the FIRs (against them) are lodged," a Bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra said.

#### No delay

"If such applications for anticipatory bail are filed within four days from today, it is expected that the HC shall take them up expeditiously and dispose them in accordance with law without delay in-



GJM president Bimal Gurung and general secretary Roshan Giri (left) in Kolkata. ■ FILE PHOTO

cluding grant of ad-interim orders to its satisfaction," said the Bench, also comprising Justices M.M. Shanta-nagoudar and Navin Sinha.

The court passed the order on interim plea of Mr. Gurung and Mr. Giri who were seeking protection to enable them to approach the appropriate court for seeking anticipatory bail.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for them, had argued in the apex court that numerous FIRs have been lodged against them and they were "effectively being prevented from parti-

cipating in the upcoming general election".

#### 'Political vendetta'

They argued that the State government has "political vendetta" against them.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for West Bengal, has opposed their plea seeking protection saying FIRs lodged against them were of serious nature.

In its order, the Bench said: "Having heard the parties, the prayer for interim relief, in the peculiar facts and circumstances of the case, is disposed of with li-

berty to approach the High Court for grant of anticipatory bail in accordance with law."

The court also made it clear that it has not expressed any opinion on the merits of the matter.

Mr. Gurung and Mr. Giri had on Tuesday claimed in the court that the West Bengal government was "vindictive" towards them and has implicated them in various "bogus cases".

#### 'Incriminating material'

However, the State government alleged that there was incriminating material against them showing their complicity in various cases of heinous nature.

Mr. Gurung and Mr. Giri are among the accused in the 2010 Madan Tamang murder case. Besides, several other cases are pending against them in West Bengal.

Police have claimed Tamang, who was the All India Gorkha League president, was hacked to death in Darjeeling on May 21, 2010, in broad daylight when he was overseeing preparations for a public meeting.

## Ex-DGP files papers for Cuttack seat

CORRESPONDENT  
CUTTACK

Retired IPS officer and former DGP of Odisha and CRPF Prakash Chandra Mishra on Wednesday filed his nomination papers for the prestigious Cuttack Lok Sabha seat as a BJP nominee.

Mr. Mishra had joined the BJP last month and was given the ticket to contest from Cuttack, a traditional BJD seat that had reposed faith in editor-turned-politician Bhartruhari Mahatab for the last five terms. The soft-spoken and suave Mr. Mishra will also lock horns with seasoned politician Panchanan Kanungo of the Congress. Besides the segments bifurcated from the Millennium City – Barabati Cuttack, Choudwar Cuttack and Sadar Cuttack – segments like Banki, Badaumba and Athgarh of Cuttack district and Khandapada of Khurda district come under the Cuttack LS seat.

Top Congress and BJP leaders have already addressed voters here. On March 8, a large number of supporters of Mr. Pradeep and the Congress had attended AICC president Rahul Gandhi's rally in Jajpur in adjoining Koraput Lok Sabha constituency. BJP leaders feel Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Jajpur on March 29 would have an impact on the voters. BJP president Amit Shah had followed it up with a rally in Nabarangpur on Monday.

## NOTA played a special role in Nabarangpur in 2014

With four candidates in the fray, the south Odisha constituency is all set for a close fight

SIB KUMAR DAS  
BERHAMPUR

The Nabarangpur parliamentary constituency of south Odisha, whose voters had demonstrated the importance of None Of The Above (NOTA) to political parties in 2014, is all set for an interesting fight this time.

In 2014, sitting Congress MP Pradeep Majhi lost to Biju Janata Dal candidate Balabhadra Majhi by a narrow margin of 2,042 votes, while 44,408 votes were cast in favour of NOTA in this constituency reserved for the Scheduled Tribes.

Mr. Pradeep and Mr. Balabhadra are again locking horns in this constituency.

## In poll season, KBK's poverty back in focus

Top political leaders frequent Odisha's most backward region with big promises



Rural poor and tribals in the KBK region continue to face chronic hunger ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

ELECTION 2019

SATYASUNDAR BARIK  
BHAWANIPATNA (ODISHA)

The KBK (Kalahandi-Balangir-Koraput) region has become a major electoral battleground for the three mainstream parties – Biju Janata Dal, BJP and Congress – as each of them sees a fair chance of winning the four parliamentary constituencies here.

All the four Lok Sabha seats – Koraput, Nabarangpur, Kalahandi and Balangir – are currently held by the BJD. With Prime Minister Narendra Modi frequenting the region and Congress president Rahul Gandhi already holding a public meeting here, the region has come into focus again. Also, the blame game over the poverty in the region and negligence by the powers that be has begun.

Mr. Modi used Tuesday's public meeting in Kalahandi to question the Congress' sincerity in alleviating poverty. In the run-up to the elections, all three star campaigners of the BJP – the PM, party president Amit Shah and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath – have already held separate meetings at Bhawanipatna, the

district headquarter town of Kalahandi. From Congress' side, Mr. Gandhi and Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel together had held a meeting here and made several pro-poor, pro-farmer commitments.

#### Tribal-dominated

Of the 80 blocks falling under KBK, 44 are identified under the tribal sub-plan, which means the region is predominantly tribal-dominated.

Despite years of focused development intervention, a large proportion of the rural poor and tribals in the region continues to face chronic hunger. With shrinking forest cover, their livelihood is also threatened. Landless and marginal farmers without

said to have been inspired by her visit here.

"It was the Congress government which had started KBK-focused intervention. Unfortunately, it was discontinued. The State government was found missing from the scene when it was needed the most. I would request the Congress leadership to pilot NYAY from the KBK region," said former Union Minister Bhakta Charan Das, who is the Congress candidate from Kalahandi.

#### 'Administration missing'

Ashok Tripathy, former KBK administrator who has joined the BJP after his retirement, blamed the State government for not giving due importance to the region. "Earlier a top officer in the rank of Chief Secretary used to be posted as KBK administrator. Now, development strategy is chalked out by the Planning and Coordination Department in consultation with the Development Commissioner, who has many other things to do," he said.

The Centre's decision to reduce allocation of funds under the regional long-term action plan project for KBK from 2015-16 is often derided by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who has reiterated his commitment to the all-round development of the region.

## Smoked out



Police personnel burning seized cannabis in Agartala on Wednesday. ■ PTI

## Arunachal CM orders judicial probe into anti-PRC violence

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Wednesday announced a judicial probe into the large-scale rioting, violence, and vandalism during the protest against permanent resident certificates for six non-tribal communities, leading to the death of three people and huge loss of public and private properties.

He said that a committee headed by a retired judge will probe into the matter to ensure thorough and impartial inquiry so that the real picture of the PRC protest could be unearthed and appropriate action taken against those behind the violence.

"The State government



A building set on fire by a mob protesting against move to grant PRC to six communities in Arunachal Pradesh in February this year. ■ FILE PHOTO

had never intended to move a resolution or Bill in the Assembly over PRC. The issue was misinterpreted causing unrest among the students. The rioting and vandalism happened despite the government issuing a statement that the PRC matter which meant that the anti-social elements had taken control of the protest with a political motive," Mr. Khandu said. He said the matter of granting PRC to non-tribal communities has been scrapped and a gazette notification was published accordingly.

## Gold seized at Biju Patnaik Airport

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BHUBANESWAR

The air intelligence unit of the Customs department on Wednesday seized 278.83 gm of gold from two passengers at the Biju Patnaik International Airport here. Customs officials at the airport said.

The value of the seized gold is ₹ 9.08 lakh, said the officials who intercepted the two passengers.

The passengers, hailing from West Bengal and Jharkhand, had arrived from Bangkok.

On searching their luggage, the officers found white gold rings of foreign origin, having purity of 99.99%, concealed under buttons of garments, the officials said.

## Post Doctoral Fellowship Programs

(Offered Under the AEGIS OF THE TAMILNADU DR MGR MEDICAL UNIVERSITY, CHENNAI)

### ADMISSIONS OPEN: 2019 -2020 Batch

#### Courses Offered

- Cardiac Anaesthesia
- Neuro Anaesthesia
- Advanced Echocardiography
- Paediatric Cardiology
- Orthopaedic Spine Surgery
- Arthroscopy
- Joint Replacement (Arthroplasty)
- Hand and Reconstructive microsurgery
- Minimal Access Surgery
- Paediatric Intensive Care
- Aesthetic Dermatology
- Endo Gynaecology
- Diabetic Foot Surgery

An opportunity to do your Post doctoral Fellowship Program in a reputed Medical College Hospital

Monthly Stipend  
Rs. 80,000/-  
(Per month)

Course Starts on  
01.07.2019

To Apply  
For more details & to Download Application forms  
visit: [www.velammalmedicalcollege.edu.in](http://www.velammalmedicalcollege.edu.in)  
(APPLY BEFORE: 15.06.2019)

For Admission contact: Dean, Velammal Medical College Hospital & Research Institute



Velammal Medical College Hospital & Research Institute

(Affiliated to The Tamilnadu Dr MGR Medical University & Recognised by MCI for 150 Admissions)

"Velammal Village", Madurai - Tuticorin Ring Road, Anuppanadi,

Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India. Pincode - 625009

Contact: Medical College: 0452 - 7114100 & Hospital: 0452 - 7113333

Mail: [info@velammalmedicalcollege.edu.in](mailto:info@velammalmedicalcollege.edu.in)

[www.velammalmedicalcollege.edu.in](http://www.velammalmedicalcollege.edu.in)

## IN BRIEF



## Mortal remains of jawan consigned to flames

MATHURA  
The mortal remains of Havaldar Satvir Singh, who was killed in an avalanche near the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district on Sunday, were consigned to flames at his village here. His five-year-old son lit the funeral pyre. PTI

## Woman killed by lightning in Nagaland

KOHIMA  
A woman was killed when lightning struck her in Peren district while many houses and standing crops were damaged in thunderstorms which hit the state, officials said on Wednesday. A Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority official said thunderstorms and gusty winds accompanied by hailstones lashed Peren, Phek, Dimapur and Wokha districts on Tuesday. PTI

## Three minors die after TV set catches fire

BADAUN  
Three minors were killed and one was injured when a television set at their home caught fire, the police said on Wednesday. The incident occurred on Tuesday night at Kathauli village in the Civil Lines area, they said. PTI

## 2 farmers electrocuted in Rajasthan

JAIPUR  
In separate incidents, two farmers were electrocuted to death while working in their fields in Rajasthan's Ajmer district on Wednesday, the police said. Rambeen Jat of Katusra village and Raghunath Jat of Dadia village came in contact with live wires while irrigating their fields, Arai SHO Vikram Sewawat said. PTI

# Akhilesh, Mulayam 'agents' of BJP, says Bhim Army chief

Won't contest from Varanasi if my candidature strengthens Modi: Chandrashekhar



## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Bhim Army founder Chandrashekhar Azad on Wednesday alleged that Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and his father Mulayam Singh were "agents" of the BJP, adding he will not contest from Varanasi if his candidature scuttled the Dalit movement. He made the remarks during a public meeting in Jaipur days after ahuja Samaj Party chief Mayawati termed him a "BJP agent" and alleged that he was contesting from Varanasi as part of the saffron party's conspiracy to divide Dalit votes.

Ms. Mayawati's BSP has entered into an alliance with the SP in Uttar Pradesh to take on the BJP.

Chandrashekhar Azad

"Akhilesh Yadav gave promotion to officers who inflicted atrocities on Dalits. His father says in Parliament that he wants Modi to become Prime Minister again. They are agents of the BJP, not me," the Bhim Army chief said.

"They call me an agent for questioning them. Yes, I am

an agent of B. R. Ambedkar... If my own people were not in my way, I would have shown you (Akhilesh) that if we can vote you to power, we can pull you down too," he said.

**'Mayawati being misled'**  
Mr. Chandrashekhar also claimed that Ms. Mayawati was being "misled" by Satish Chandra Mishra, her general secretary and Brahmin face of the BSP.

He added that he won't contest the election in Varanasi if his candidature "strengthened" Prime Minister Narendra Modi in any way. Varanasi is the parliamentary constituency of Mr. Modi.

Ms. Mayawati had on Sunday tweeted, "BJP tried hard

to help Chandrashekhar join the BSP as its mole, but failed in its conspiracy. It is imperative in national interest to dislodge autocratic, despotic anti-Dalit BJP from power. Please ensure no vote goes waste."

The Bhim Party founder had announced at a rally in the national capital last month that he would contest against Mr. Modi from Varanasi and welcomed support of all parties, including the Congress, to take on the BJP.

He had also sought the support of the SP and the BSP for his candidature, saying Dalit groups would back their alliance in other seats.

The SP-BSP-RLD alliance is yet to declare its candidate in Srinagar on Wednesday.

The police arrested a Laskar-e-Taiba (LeT) militant in an operation in Srinagar on Wednesday.

## Panch injured in militant attack in J&K

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR

Suspected militants opened fire at a panch in south Kashmir's Kulgam on Wednesday evening. In a separate incident, security forces arrested a militant who was involved in looting of weapons in Srinagar.

An official said Abdul Majid Dar was shot at by unknown gunmen at Shalipora village in Kulgam. "The gunmen barged into the house of Mr. Dar and fired at him. He was critically injured as he sustained bullet wounds in the abdomen," said the official.

Mr. Dar had quit the Peoples Democratic Party last year and contested the panchayat polls as an independent candidate.

Meanwhile, the police arrested a Laskar-e-Taiba (LeT) militant in an operation in Srinagar on Wednesday.

"Based on a specific input regarding movement of a suspected person near Kursoo, Rajbagh, Srinagar, a special team of Srinagar Police apprehended Danish Haneef Wani, a resident of Srinagar's Azad Basti Natipora. He is an active member of the LeT," said the police.

The police said Wani is believed to be behind looting four service rifles from the guard room of Congress leader and former legislator Muzaffar Parry's official residence in Jawa-har Nagar area in Srinagar on December 30 last year.

"The militant was involved in the weapon looting incident. Further questioning of the arrested accused is going on," said the police.

Wani had joined militant ranks on January 8 this year, according to the police.

## WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE &amp; AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

**Forecast for Thursday:** Heat wave conditions likely in some isolated parts over Rajasthan, north central Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. Thunderstorm accompanied with gusty winds likely at isolated places over south interior Karnataka, north coastal Andhra Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	12.6	33.4	17.3	Kozhikode	—	36.5	27.2
Ahmedabad	—	41.6	26.0	Kurnool	—	41.7	28.1
Aizawl	—	4.9	15.1	Lucknow	—	37.1	18.3
Allahabad	—	40.0	17.7	Madurai	—	39.0	25.4
Bengaluru	—	36.2	22.2	Mangaluru	—	35.0	23.4
Bhopal	—	40.4	20.9	Mumbai	—	34.2	23.4
Bhubaneswar	—	36.6	25.8	Myssore	—	35.9	20.3
Chandigarh	—	32.8	17.2	New Delhi	—	36.8	17.6
Chennai	—	34.0	27.1	Patna	—	37.0	20.0
Coimbatore	—	38.0	24.5	Port Blair	—	32.0	24.3
Dehradun	—	32.2	16.4	Puducherry	—	33.0	25.7
Gangtok	20.2	18.4	9.7	Pune	—	39.9	18.5
Goa	—	33.0	23.3	Raipur	—	40.0	24.4
Guwahati	—	28.0	18.4	Ranchi	—	36.2	17.9
Hubballi	—	37.0	19.0	Shillong	—	4.2	20.0
Hyderabad	—	39.2	24.5	Shimla	—	23.4	12.2
Imphal	2	27.1	11.6	Srinagar	—	25.3	6.6
Jaipur	—	39.3	21.1	Trivandrum	—	35.6	26.8
Kochi	—	33.6	27.0	Tiruchi	—	39.0	26.0
Kohima	3.6	24.4	20.3	Vijayawada	—	36.4	24.5
Kota	—	35.1	25.6	Visakhapatnam	—	32.6	26.9

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>x</sub>	CO	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>	CODE
Ahmedabad	16	121	26	.211	—	—
Bengaluru	.2	.31	61	.172	—	—
Chennai	.7	13	46	.176	—	—
Delhi	28	.45	31	.245	.287	—
Hyderabad	.3	.69	34	.07	.114	—
Kolkata	.7	.24	26	.55	.64	—
Lucknow	17	.36	75	.261	—	—
Mumbai	29	.38	92	.46	.87	—
Pune	33	.16	34	.78	.93	—
Visakhapatnam	23	.45	33	.49	.93	—

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Jodhpur, Rajasthani recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 259 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 52

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)  
SO<sub>2</sub>: 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<sub>2</sub>: 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.

PM<sub>2.5</sub> & PM<sub>10</sub>: 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

Dear Anu  
Happy Birthday!  
Love,  
Mom & Dad

CLASSIFIEDS  
LIFE MADE SIMPLE

## A GREETING TO REMEMBER

Be it a birthday, an anniversary, an academic accomplishment or even a promotion.

Now you can surprise your loved ones by wishing them on

For more details, email: classifiedscustomercare@thehindu.co.in  
Contact Toll Free Number: 180030700404  
For Placing Advertisements Online, Log on to www.thehinduads.com



THE HINDU

## CLASSIFIEDS

LIFE MADE SIMPLE

## IN BRIEF



Edappadi hits out at Chidambaram

SIVAGANGA  
Hitting out at senior Congress leader P. Chidambaram, AIADMK co-coordinator and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Wednesday alleged that despite being elected multiple times from Sivaganga constituency and having served as Union Minister, the former failed to develop the district.

**I-T searches a ploy to postpone polls: Stalin**  
COIMBATORE  
DMK president M.K. Stalin on Wednesday alleged that the recent Income Tax searches on the premises linked to party treasurer Durai Murugan in Vellore and election static surveillance team searches at party MLA Anitha Radhakrishnan's farmhouse in Thoothukudi were a conspiracy to get the polls in these constituencies postponed. The actions were also aimed at bringing disrepute to the DMK, he added.

**Cash found in doors of VCK functionary's car**  
TIRUCHI  
Electron officials seized ₹1.99 crore stashed inside the doors of a car in which a group of Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi functionaries were travelling, in Perambalur district of Tamil Nadu on Tuesday night. The seizure led to a search by the Income Tax department on the premises of a private company, in which a VCK functionary was said a director, at Mannarpuram in Tiruchi on Wednesday. The search was on till late in the evening but there was no information about any seizure from the premises.

**Bishop's support to priest irks community**  
MUMBAI  
Christians are irked at the Jalandhar Bishop's support for a priest who was caught with unaccounted cash of ₹9.6 crore last week. "I have issued the clarification as I know there is no foul play involved. The priest will be able to show all the paper work and the bills about the money," Bishop Agnelo Gracias said on Wednesday.

**HC asks Centre to prohibit download of 'Tik Tok'**  
MADRASI  
Taking cognisance of the increase in cyber crimes, the Madurai Bench of the Madras HC on Wednesday directed the Centre to prohibit the download of 'Tik Tok' mobile application. Media houses were directed to prohibit the telecast videos of the app. The HC asked the Centre whether an Act similar to the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of the U.S. would be enacted here to stop children from becoming cyber crime victims.

## Air pollution shortened lifespan by 30 months'

Study claims poor air quality caused 1.2 mn deaths each in India and China in 2017

**BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN**  
NEW DELHI  
The current high level of air pollution has shortened the average lifespan of a South Asian child by two-and-a-half years, while globally the reduction stands at 20 months, according to a global study released on Wednesday.

State of Global Air 2019, published by Health Effects Institute (HEI), said exposure to outdoor and indoor air pollution contributed to over 1.2 million deaths in India in 2017. The report added that worldwide, air pollution was responsible for more deaths than many better-known risk factors such as malnutrition, alcohol abuse and physical inactivity.

In India, air pollution is the third highest cause of death among all health risks, ranking just above smoking; each year, more people globally die from air pollution-related diseases than from road traffic.

## BHU chief proctor among five named in student murder FIR

Gaurav Kumar Singh was shot indiscriminately by bike-borne persons; four held

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW

The chief proctor of the Banaras Hindu University was among the five persons named in the police complaint in connection with the murder of a suspended student, who was shot dead on campus on Tuesday.

Chief proctor Royana Singh, along with the other accused, faces charges of murder and criminal conspiracy. Four persons have been arrested in connection with the case.

The FIR lodged by the police at the Lalka police station in Varanasi names Ms. Singh, the first woman chief proctor in BHU history, as accused number one.

Ashutosh Tripathi, Rupesh Tiwari, Kumar Manglam and Vinay Dwivedi, who are mentioned as BHU students, are also accused of the crime.



Police personnel deployed outside BHU on Wednesday. •PTI

Gaurav Kumar Singh, a Master of Computer Applications student, who was on suspension since 2017, was on Tuesday evening shot at indiscriminately by three-four bike-borne persons on the sprawling campus. He was rushed to the BHU trauma centre, but succumbed to his injuries, said a police officer.

As per the police complaint lodged by the de-

ceased student's father, Rakesh Pratap Singh, Ms. Singh is accused of hatching the "conspiracy" to get his son murdered due to old enmity.

**Personal enmity**  
Anil Kumar, the circle officer, said it was a case of personal enmity between the students. The FIR was lodged under Sections 147, 148, 149, 120 B, 302 and 34 of the IPC and 7 CLA.

Gaurav was suspended in 2017 for his alleged role in the arson on campus. He was accused of burning buses and damaging government property during an agitation on campus safety.

**Political conspiracy'**  
Talking to *The Hindu*, Ms. Singh said her name was dragged into the FIR as part of a "political conspiracy" as she had acted against rival student groups for creating trouble. "Perhaps they want to disrupt the administration work which I have been doing," she said. Asked how she is connected to the incident, Ms. Singh quipped: "That's a million dollar question."

She said the deceased student had been living illegally in the Arts faculty hostel, while those named in the FIR were no longer students of the varsity.

## ED to seek extradition of Sandesaras

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate will soon forward its request for the extradition of Nitin and Chetan Sandesara, the accused in the ₹8,100 crore bank fraud case involving Sterling Biotech Group, from Albania.

The Sandesaras had flown out of country after the CBI registered an FIR against them in 2017. They are also wanted by the ED in a money laundering case.

It is learnt that the family members took Albanian citizenship last year.

**Decent pension**  
The amendment limiting the maximum salary to ₹15,000 for pensions would deprive most of the employees of a decent pension in their old age. Since the pension scheme was intended to provide succour to the retired employees, this objective would be defeated by capping the salary.

The High Court added that the PF authority had no right to deny pension legitimately due to the employees on the ground that the fund would get depleted.

than this amount as daily wage.

### Decent pension

The amendment limiting the maximum salary to ₹15,000 for pensions would deprive most of the employees of a decent pension in their old age. Since the pension scheme was intended to provide succour to the retired employees, this objective would be defeated by capping the salary.

The High Court added that the PF authority had no right to deny pension legitimately due to the employees on the ground that the fund would get depleted.

## Scientists call upon voters to 'choose wisely'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A collective of at least 150 scientists has appealed to voters to "reject those who lynch or assault people" and vote against "inequality, intimidation, discrimination, and unreason."

"We must reject those who lynch or assault people, those who discriminate against people because of religion, caste, gender, language or region. Again, we must reject those who encourage such practices... an atmosphere in which scientists, activists and rationalists are hounded, harassed, intimidated, censored, jailed, or worse, murdered, is not the future our country deserves... we appeal to all citizens to vote wisely, weighing arguments and evidence critically," says the online petition.

The report highlighted that nearly half of the world's population – a total of 3.6 billion people – were exposed to household air pollution in 2017. Globally, there has been progress: the proportion of people cooking with solid fuels has declined as economies develop. But in India, 60% of the population still used solid fuels; in Bangladesh that number rose to 79%, underscoring the importance of achieving success in government initiatives to address the problem.

## Cool gear



Beat the heat: A woman with a pitcher, among other belongings, waits for her train at the Ajmer station, as the temperature soared close to 40°C on Wednesday. •V.V. KRISHNAN

## SC rejects EPFO plea against HC verdict

The ruling had held it unrealistic to cap salary at ₹15,000 for quantifying pension

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has dismissed a special leave petition filed against an October 2018 verdict of the Kerala High Court on petitions filed by various organisations and employees challenging the 2014 amendment.

The petitioners in the High Court had pointed out that the amendment order issued in August 2014 limited the maximum pensionable salary to ₹15,000 per month.

The High Court had held that it was absolutely unrealistic to cap the salary at ₹15,000 for quantifying pension.

A monthly salary of ₹15,000 then worked out only to about ₹500. Even a manual labourer was paid more

short order on April 1. The Supreme Court's order in this case would have an impact on a pending petition filed by retirees and members of the Employees Pension Scheme (EPS) 1995, against the government and the Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO). That case was posted by the apex court for final arguments in May.

In that plea, the petitioners have claimed that a 2014 amendment and a 2017 circular exclude thousands from receiving their rightful benefits under EPS 95.

The April 1 order of the apex court related to the ap-

peal against a Division Bench judgment of the Kerala High Court on petitions filed by various organisations and employees challenging the 2014 amendment.

The petitioners in the High Court had pointed out that the amendment order issued in August 2014 limited the maximum pensionable salary to ₹15,000 per month.

The High Court had held that it was absolutely unrealistic to cap the salary at ₹15,000 for quantifying pension.

A monthly salary of ₹15,000 then worked out only to about ₹500. Even a manual labourer was paid more

than this amount as daily wage.

### Decent pension

The amendment limiting the maximum salary to ₹15,000 for pensions would deprive most of the employees of a decent pension in their old age. Since the pension scheme was intended to provide succour to the retired employees, this objective would be defeated by capping the salary.

The High Court added that the PF authority had no right to deny pension legitimately due to the employees on the ground that the fund would get depleted.

## AIR POLLUTION SHORTENED LIFESPAN BY 30 MONTHS'

Study claims poor air quality caused 1.2 mn deaths each in India and China in 2017

### Life hazard

Contribution of major risk factors to loss of life expectancy\*

Dietary risks 30

Cancer 28

Tobacco 22

Air pollution 20

Ambient PM2.5 12

Household air pollution 9

Water pollution 7

Lung cancer 5

Breast cancer 2

programme, accelerated Bharat Stage VI clean vehicle standards, and the new National Clean Air Programme. These and future initiatives have the potential – if fully implemented as part of a sustained commitment to air quality – to result in significant health benefits in coming years," said Robert O'Keefe, vice-president of HEI.

The report highlighted that nearly half of the world's population – a total of 3.6 billion people – were exposed to household air pollution in 2017. Globally, there has been progress: the proportion of people cooking with solid fuels has declined as economies develop. But in India, 60% of the population still used solid fuels; in Bangladesh that number rose to 79%, underscoring the importance of achieving success in government initiatives to address the problem.

The study found that China and India together were responsible for over half of the total global attributable deaths, with each country facing over 1.2 million deaths from air pollution in 2017. China has made initial progress, and is beginning to achieve a decline in air pollution.

Overall, long-term exposure to outdoor and indoor air pollution contributed to nearly 5 million deaths due to stroke, diabetes, heart attack, lung

cancer, and chronic lung disease in 2017.

Out of these, 3 million deaths were directly attributed to PM2.5, half of which were from India and China together. South Asian countries – Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan – led the world as the most polluted region, accounting for over 1.5 million air-pollution related deaths. "At the same time, India has initiated major steps to address pollution sources: the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana Household LPG

## Court summons Yechury, Rahul in defamation case

RSS member filed suit for 'linking outfit with Lankesh murder'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

The Thane sessions court on April 1 issued summons to Congress president Rahul Gandhi and Communist Party of India general secretary Sitaram Yechury for linking Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) with the murder of journalist Gauri Lankesh. It directed them to be present in court on April 30.

Gaurav was suspended in 2017 for his alleged role in the arson on campus. He was accused of burning buses and damaging government property during an agitation on campus safety.

### Political conspiracy'

Talking to *The Hindu*, Ms. Singh said her name was dragged into the FIR as part of a "political conspiracy" as she had acted against rival student groups for creating trouble.

"Perhaps they want to disrupt the administration work which I have been doing," she said.

Asked how she is connected to the incident, Ms. Singh quipped:

"That's a million dollar question."

It is alleged that Mr. Gandhi made a statement, while speaking to a journalist outside Parliament hours after the death of Lankesh. The statement was,

"Anybody who speaks against the ideology of the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), against the ideology of RSS is pressured, beaten, attacked and even killed."

Mr. Yechury also made a statement that it was the RSS

ideology and RSS men who killed Lankesh.



Rahul Gandhi

He said, "We are seeking an injunction (stay) that both the leaders accused in this case and their party workers are restrained from talking against RSS whenever Gauri Lankesh murder comes up."

He added that there were no grounds for linking the RSS to the murder as no judicial inquiry or investigation had connected the two.

On April 1, judge S.M. Bhattacharya issued summons to Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Yechury.

On February 22, the Mazgaon magistrate had also issued notices to Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Yechury for making allegations against the RSS over the Lankesh murder.

Advocate Dhritiman Joshi, a grassroots worker of the RSS, had filed a criminal defamation suit regarding the same statement made by both the leaders, and will be heard on April 5.

## BSNL gets licence for WiFi on flights

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

State-owned telecom service provider Bharatiya Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has received licence from the Department of Telecommunications to provide Internet and mobile services on flights.

BSNL and its satellite partner, Inmarsat, will be able to offer in-flight connectivity to airlines "later this year, once the ground infrastructure and associated approvals are in place," said a press statement from Inmarsat.

Hughes Communications India Ltd., a subsidiary of a global company, and Tatanet Services have already bagged the Flight and Maritime Connectivity (FMC) licence. Bharti Airtel has also sought the permit.

The DoT had notified its rules in December allowing airlines flying within and transiting through India to provide Internet and voice services on mobile phones along with an Indian telecom operator or licensee. So far, SpiceJet has announced that it will offer Internet access to passengers. Vistara has evinced interest in this service.

According to the rules, passengers can make phone calls or use Internet when a flight is at a minimum height of 3,000 m in Indian airspace to avoid interference with terrestrial mobile networks.

### Adding fortification

Some of the measures introduced by WhatsApp to curb fake news

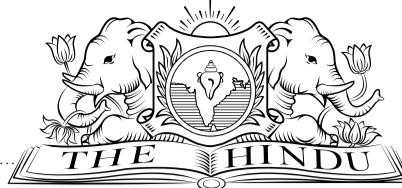
July 2018: Starts testing limiting of the number of forwards for each message to 5

July 2018: Introduces feature to let users identify messages as 'forwarded'

July 2018: Kicks off ad campaign on identifying fake news

June 2018: Introduces new group setting option where only admins are able to send messages

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI



## Words and deeds

In its campaign, the Congress must discuss the road map for implementing its manifesto

The Congress party in its manifesto pledges to follow a 'wealth and welfare' approach if voted back to power. In an attempt to appeal to the poor without scaring away the rich, it promises to create wealth through promotion of private enterprise and expand welfare for the vulnerable sections of society at an unprecedented scale. An ambitious minimum income guarantee scheme is to directly transfer ₹6,000 a month to the poorest 20% households. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, introduced by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government in 2005, is to be expanded to ensure employment for 150 days instead of the 100 days now. The promised expansion of health care, education and housing has attracted a lot of public attention, but equally eye-catching is the manifesto's approach to several other critical questions of public policy. While welfare schemes are an attempt by the Congress to reconstruct its lost public support on the basis of a renewed development agenda, the manifesto tries to address many current questions that impact Indian democracy. Defamation will only be a civil offence; provisions for charging people for sedition will be removed from the Indian Penal Code; and the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act will be amended to address human rights concerns. The party promises to expand reservations to private educational institutions, an unfinished component of UPA-I's agenda of OBC reservations in educational institutions. Congress leaders stress that this manifesto addresses the needs and aspirations of the marginalised sections of society.

Election manifestos are important for political discussions ahead of elections, and for understanding the direction different political parties propose for the country. However, it must be kept in mind that parties overpromise ahead of elections, and the Congress must explain why it must not face that scepticism. Its manifesto has scant details about how its ambitious schemes will be funded. It is true that the Congress did deliver on many of the promises it made in 2004, though not entirely and to the full extent. Nonetheless, the Congress will do well to address follow-up questions on its schemes and their implementation. The manifesto has triggered a national debate on several issues that are close to people's lives, and that is a welcome development. It has also prompted a fresh round of debate on broader topics such as India's development path, the potential and limits of welfare and questions of fiscal discipline and revenue extraction. The Bharatiya Janata Party should join this debate on the merit in the Congress's promises rather than use this as yet another opportunity to question the patriotism of its opponents. Details are inadequate, but the direction envisioned in the manifesto is encouraging.

## Serious setback

Quashing of the 'February 12 circular' could undo credit discipline in the banking system

The Supreme Court order quashing a circular issued by the RBI on resolution of bad loans is a set-back to the evolving process for debt resolution. The voiding of the February 12, 2018 circular could slow down and complicate the resolution process for loans aggregating to as much as ₹3.80 lakh crore across 70 large borrowers, according to data from the ratings agency ICRA. The circular had forced banks to recognise defaults by large borrowers with dues of over ₹2,000 crore within a day after an instalment fell due; and if not resolved within six months after that, they had no choice but to refer these accounts for resolution under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code. Mounting bad loans, which crossed 10% of all advances at that point, and the failure of existing schemes such as corporate debt restructuring, stressed asset resolution and the Scheme for Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets (S4A) to make a dent in resolving them formed the backdrop to this directive. The circular was aimed at breaking the nexus between banks and defaulters, both of whom were content to evergreen loans under available schemes. It introduced a certain credit discipline – banks had to recognise defaults immediately and attempt resolution within a six-month timeframe, while borrowers risked being dragged into the insolvency process and losing control of their enterprises if they did not regularise their accounts. RBI data prove the circular had begun to impact resolution positively.

It is this credit discipline that risks being compromised now. It is not surprising that international ratings agency Moody's has termed the development as "credit negative" for banks. It is true that the circular failed to take into account the peculiarities of specific industries or borrowers and came up with a one-size-fits-all approach. It is also true that not all borrowers were deliberate defaulters, and sectors such as power were laid low by externalities beyond the control of borrowers. The RBI could have addressed these concerns when banks and borrowers from these sectors brought these issues to its notice. By taking a hard line and refusing to heed representations, the RBI may only have harmed its own well-intentioned move. That said, it is now important for the central bank to ensure that the discipline in the system does not slacken. The bond market does not allow any leeway to borrowers in repayment, and there is no reason why bank loans should be any different. The RBI should study the judgment closely, and quickly reframe its guidelines so that they are within the framework of the powers available to it under the law. Else, the good work done in debt resolution in the last one year will be undone.

# A very risky gamble in Wayanad

Rahul Gandhi's decision to contest from Kerala flies in the face of Opposition unity



ZOYA HASAN

Congress president Rahul Gandhi has decided to contest from Wayanad in Kerala as a second Lok Sabha seat in addition to his Amethi constituency in Uttar Pradesh. He has acquiesced to a demand that emanated from Congress leaders in Kerala who feel that his presence will lift the party's prospects in three States as Wayanad is at the tri-junction of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. In 2009, the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) in Kerala had won 16 of the State's 20 seats, and is looking to repeat the sweep in 2019.

### The Congress game plan

But the question is, why did Mr. Gandhi acquiesce to the demand of the Kerala unit of his party to contest from Wayanad even at the risk of jeopardising Opposition unity? One reason for choosing a seat in the south is that he enjoys significant popular support in the region. Also, this seat has been won by the Congress in the last two parliamentary elections, though with a reduced margin in 2014; it's not exactly a safe seat but the chances of the Congress winning it would be high with Mr. Gandhi in the fray. Furthermore, the Congress claims that this is part of its outreach to south India. An important reason, however, is that the Congress depends heavily on the control of government for the consolidation of the party, so that when it is not in power, the party feels paralysed. The main goal in the circumstances is restoring the primacy of the Congress after its

spectacular defeat in 2014. It seems alliances matter but not at the expense of its push to maximise its individual tally by building its own base.

A series of other questions arise too. The Congress's opponent in Wayanad is not the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which has hardly any presence in Kerala, though the party is fielding a candidate from there. Its main opponent is a party in the Left Democratic Front (LDF), the Communist Party of India (CPI), which is in the forefront of the fight for a secular alternative to the ruling BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). True, the Congress-led UDF will be contesting all 20 seats in Kerala, but the Congress president pitting himself against the Left Front in one of these seats gives an impression that the Congress perceives the Left parties to be its main rivals, as much as the BJP, against whose candidate Mr. Gandhi is pitted in Amethi.

### A big mistake

We do not need cutting edge theory or psephological analysis to see that it's a mistake for the Congress chief to contest from Wayanad in the context of what lies ahead in the 2019 elections. If the idea is to strengthen the Congress in south India, then Kerala is a curious choice because the party is already quite strong there. Even if we accept the argument that the Congress president going to Wayanad can have a ripple effect across neighbouring States, that purpose could have been served by contesting from Karnataka. In the past, Indira Gandhi chose Medak in Andhra Pradesh (now Telangana) and Sonia Gandhi chose Bellary in Karnataka as second seats. Kerala didn't figure as an option. This has changed with Mr. Gandhi contesting from Kerala.



By contesting from Kerala, Mr. Gandhi is sending a double-edged message: he would be supporting the southern States against any intrusion by an overpowering Centre, but he's also opposing the Left, despite the priority to fight the Right in this critical election. This is complicated messaging, and is not the best way to differentiate between the BJP and the Congress. It actually dilutes the party's aggressive stand against the BJP and undercuts Opposition unity, which is needed to prevent Hindutva forces from returning to power in 2019. For this, parties have to recognise that the primary fault-line is political mobilisation along religious lines promoted by the Hindu Right, which needs to be confronted. Mr. Gandhi's candidacy in Wayanad does not counter this basic contradiction.

It is useful to put this change of narrative in the historical context. Post-1991, the most progressive phase of the Congress was under the first United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, from 2004-09, when it passed a slew of landmark rights legislations with the support of the Left parties inside and outside Parliament. The Left had a significant role in the formation of this alliance and its common minimum programme.

However, the policy of welfarism that defined UPA-I began to wither away under UPA-II (2009-14) after the withdrawal of Left support in 2008, leaving the government free to pursue neoliberal economic policies. It is worth stressing that the UPA-I period when the two formations came together was undoubtedly good for the Congress, but it was also good for the Left parties. At a broader level, the coordination was conducive for growth, signalling that social welfare is not incompatible with economic growth. The decision of the Left Front to withdraw support from the UPA over differences on the India-U.S. civil nuclear deal ended this social compact, which hastened the Left's decline, as it went down from 60+ seats in 2004, to about 30 in 2009, and then to single digits in 2014.

Mr. Gandhi's Wayanad gamble complicates this further and could contribute to further erosion of the Left. It's only in Kerala that the Left Front is actually in power, but here too there are fears that anti-incumbency could work against it. But even if the Left parties don't win many seats in the elections, their support is crucial for the Congress's redistributive politics as this paradigm shares a natural affinity with the Left and the multitude of people's movements that have emerged across the country, particularly on issues of farmers' and workers' rights, joblessness, atrocities on Dalits, and against cow vigilantes and mob lynchings, even as the Congress often failed to raise its voice against the same. These demonstrations and protests have shaped the political discourse against the Narendra Modi government on the ground in the last five years. It is here that the interleaving of the Congress-Left narrative is to be located. The Wayanad decision marks a rupture

in this narrative to some extent.

### A strategy

Mr. Gandhi's controversial decision has drawn sharp criticism from the Communist Party of India (Marxist)-led LDF, which is irked because the Left parties were counting on Kerala to make up for potential losses in West Bengal and Tripura. But a more judicious strategy, though counter-intuitive, would be to not get drawn into a bitter war of words over the Congress letdown. It is the time to try to take like-minded people and forces along, which has the additional advantage of pinning down the BJP to the extreme right of the political spectrum.

The Congress too must avoid a vitriolic campaign against the Left Front and instead restate that it is a firm ally in the wider struggle to safeguard pluralist India against Hindutva majoritarianism in this watershed election. The party has taken the lead in attacking the BJP, which has catapulted it to the centre stage of opposition nationally, even as it aligns with regional parties in some States, and continues to battle others, as in West Bengal, Kerala and Uttar Pradesh. This contradiction is the central challenge of this election, which has complicated the emergence of even State-level alliances against the BJP because many parties that are opposed to it are also opposed to one another in the States. Given the exigencies of national politics, it is important for these parties to focus on cooperation so that they are able to form an alternative secular government, should the NDA fall short of an absolute majority on its own, which is not unlikely.

Zoya Hasan is Professor Emerita, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University

## Proving a point on audit trail

Nizamabad has 185 candidates — it is an opportunity for the Election Commission to settle the EVM and VVPAT debate



S.Y. QURAISHI

As the campaign for the 2019 general election builds up, so too with the debate on electronic voting machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs). For example, as a result of a new development in the Nizamabad parliamentary constituency in Telangana, the Election Commission (EC) would have been forced to conduct elections using ballot papers — there are 185 candidates in the fray. This exceeds the capacity of an EVM, which can cater to 64 candidates (63 candidates and the None of the Above, or NOTA, option). The EC is now considering using special machines which can accommodate up to 384 candidates. These will use 24 ballot units connected in series. For this it will have to buy at an enormous cost 26,820 ballot units, 2,240 control units and 2,600 VVPATs. I wonder whether it is possible to acquire so many machines with technical changes in the short time available.

### In the past, in A.P.

The use of ballot papers to conduct elections is not new; they were used in the same State in 2010 in a near comic situation.

In July 2010, the Telangana agi-

tation was at its peak, and 12 MLAs of the Andhra Pradesh Assembly had resigned and were contesting the by-elections. This coincided with the Bharatiya Janata Party-led anti-EVM campaign. After the EC turned down the request of political parties to go back to paper ballots, the parties resorted to a smart ploy. The Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) decided to field more than 64 candidates in each constituency. So, there were 114 nominations in Yellareddy (then in Nizamabad district and 107 in Siricilla. Even after large-scale rejection of nominations, the numbers in six constituencies exceeded 64. The EC was forced to conduct elections in these constituencies by ballot paper.

The EC took it as a great opportunity to showcase the relative strength of EVMs. While the EVM results were available in four hours, the ballot paper results took 40 hours. Adding to this were thousands of invalid votes. The other issues were the economic and environmental costs of printing ballots and prolonged drudgery for polling staff. Ironically, the results from both systems across seats were similar.

Where did the political parties stand then? A media report said the TRS opposed EVMs "because it [had] reliable information that the Congress [would] try to manipulate the machines to win the polls". The Telugu Desam Party president N. Chandrababu Naidu demanded that ballot papers be used in all 12 constituencies. Ban-

daru Dattatreya, BJP president in then undivided Andhra Pradesh, said, "We have been demanding that there should be a nationwide debate on EVMs. The TRS has used the right strategy." A Congress spokesman said it was unfortunate that the parties had doubted the EC's integrity, forcing it to incur additional printing expenses. So, while the issue remains the same, the characters have changed.

It is pertinent to point out that the difference between the 2010 incident and this time (in terms of the number of candidates) is that a large number of farmers are contesting as independent candidates to highlight their problems. It has nothing to do with an anti-EVM movement.

### Stringent trials

Since the last general election, there have been allegations about the BJP hacking EVMs. The EC has repeatedly challenged conspiracy theorists to demonstrate that EVMs can be hacked but no party has accepted it.

This debate should have ended in October 2010 when the EC called an all-party meeting which

unanimously recommended the adoption of VVPATs, which was promptly accepted. The two factories manufacturing EVMs were asked to develop VVPATs, and an independent committee of professors from five Indian Institutes of Technology was requested to monitor the process.

There were a series of trials, followed by two full-day election simulations in five cities across India (with different climatic conditions) in 2011-12. Only after the VVPATs passed all the rigorous tests (climatic endurance and technology) were they deployed, initially in 20,000 polling booths. As manufacturing progressed, all constituencies were equipped with VVPATs. In 2013, the Supreme Court lauded the EC's initiatives, directing the government to release adequate funds for procurement for all booths for the 2019 elections.

Since 2017, all elections have been held with VVPAT-attached EVMs. A total of 1,500 machines have been counted as per the present norm of counting slips generated by one VVPAT in each Assembly constituency. Not a single mismatch has been detected.

### Sorting things out

The only pending issue is of VVPAT audits. As many as 23 Opposition parties have moved the Supreme Court demanding that half the total slips be tallied. A group of retired bureaucrats and diplomats has also written to the EC regarding the sample size to en-

sure 99.9% public satisfaction.

The EC has submitted to the court that the three-member expert panel comprising members from the Indian Statistical Institute, the Chennai Mathematical Institute and the Central Statistics Office has endorsed the current practice of counting one VVPAT per Assembly constituency, and that the sample size proposed by political parties would only serve to delay results by six days. The judgment is expected soon.

I have also proposed an alternative. The top two runners-up in the constituency can choose any two VVPATs to be counted as they have the highest stake in the results. This would serve to do away with a large sample, as only four machines per Assembly constituency would have to be counted to ensure public faith in the system. This is on the analogy of the highly popular and successful Umpire Decision Review System in cricket.

EVMs have made India a proud global leader in elections. After incorporating VVPATs, the system is now foolproof. After the expert panel report, the EC's initiatives in this regard stand vindicated. It should now clinch the EVM debate and utilise the opportunity in the Nizamabad constituency to demonstrate the relative superiority of the EVM as the wonder machine of Indian democracy.

S.Y. Quraishi is a former Chief Election Commissioner of India and the author of *'An Undocumented Wonder - the Making of the Great Indian Election'*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### The fine print

Even if wishes were horses, it is doubtful whether the Congress party would be able to deliver even a fraction of what has been promised in its over-ambitious manifesto, which is obviously not backed up by any due diligence or practicalities (Page 1, "Congress promises to create wealth, ensure wealth for all", April 3). The party should have taken into account that in all probability it may only be leading a coalition catering to uncompromising regional aspirations. A united Opposition front with a Common Minimum Programme would have ensured more credibility. It is a pity that even after Independence, parties are still talking about finding

solutions to farmers' grievances in a predominantly agriculture-oriented nation. While all the manifestos promise windfalls, one has still to find a party with a practical road map for sustainable economic growth. Such an exercise would have automatically taken care of all the ills facing the country. It is evident that the vision and mission of all parties are aimed only at short-term electoral gains.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,  
Chennai

■ The Indian voter is inured to the lure of grand promises made once every five years or so because they struggle through the debris of broken promises every day of the intervening period before the next set of promises.

Although the Congress's manifesto promises dignity and autonomy to institutions, there is no road map for this.

P. ARIHANTH,  
Secunderabad

■ The annual minimum guaranteed income, whatever be its good intent, reminds one of John Wayne's words, "Government has no wealth and when a politician promises to give something for nothing — he must first confiscate that wealth from you either by direct taxes or by the cruelly indirect tax of inflation." Come election time, it is not only the Congress, with its proposed NYAY scheme, but also other parties which promise huge bank loan waivers, attractive freebies, excessive subsidies that seem to throw sound

principles of economic logic to the winds. All such indiscriminate doles are bound to substantially widen fiscal deficits, pushing the economy into a vicious circle of dented growth, escalated unemployment, snowballing inflation, hiked interest rates and growing recession. Do parties bother at all about the inescapable and long-term, self-damaging economic consequences of their myopic vote-catching strategies?

A. MOHAN,  
Chennai

■ It is time we ask our leaders why climate change and air pollution are not adequately discussed during electoral campaigns. According to the WHO, 6.2 lakh people die of air pollution and lung-related issues every year in India. In

London when the air quality became poor, there was a health emergency. Subsidising electric-powered transportation and renewable energy sources is important.

APOORV ACHARYA,  
Chittorgarh, Rajasthan

■ Connected  
I would say that another vital step towards achieving 24x7 power for all is a widespread awareness campaign on renewable energy sources (Editorial page, "How to achieve 24x7 power for all",

April 3). Such a mass movement should start from metro cities and include innovative ways to make the public aware about the great potential of renewable energy sources. It can be followed by a 'show and tell' campaign, where people who are solar power users can be invited to campaign to help spread awareness. There should be plans for a separate solar power grid.

PRERNA SUHAG,  
Bhadurgarh, Haryana

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

**CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:**  
The first woman chief of the Sashastra Seema Bal was Archana Ramasundaram and – not Archana Ramachandran, as stated in the OpEd page article titled "The principle and procedure in Lokpal" (April 3, 2019). In the penultimate sentence of the article, the word chor was erroneously translated as chief. It should have been thief.

The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

</

# Turf issues in fighting corruption

How the Lokpal, the CVC and the CBI coordinate will be crucial



R.K. RAGHAVAN

The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 is complicated. This could perhaps not be avoided, given that what was being attempted was a new and bold experiment to pull the anti-corruption campaign out of oblivion. This law was badly needed, if only to lend a modicum of credibility to the process of enhancing the accountability of those in high places, who were cocking a snook at all efforts to demonstrate to the world that India is not second to any other nation in making its public administration clean and fair.

Surprisingly, the appointment of India's first Lokpal has not been received with great excitement. The preoccupation with the general election of all those likely to be affected by the Act may perhaps explain the apathy. Nevertheless, the working of the Act may be expected to be closely followed in the months to come, both by the polity and the legal fraternity, which is how it ought to be in a vibrant democracy.

The corruption of public servants in India has become such a menace that something drastically new had to be tried, and appointing the Lokpal at least partially meets this crying need. There is guarded optimism in a few quarters, and considerable cynicism in others, over the likely efficacy of the Lokpal. However, any high expectations that the new mechanism against corruption will measurably transform the scene seem misplaced.

## Actors against corruption

There are now three principal actors at the national level in the fight against graft: the Lokpal, the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Some people have misgivings over the independence of the Lokpal. They wonder how it will work with the other two so that the objective of cleansing public life is achieved with reasonable satisfaction. Some critics allege that the Lokpal's composition was dictated solely by the establishment led by the Prime Minister. But what about the Chief Justice of India, or his nominee, another important member of the Selection Committee? Casting aspersions on the neutrali-



ty of the highest judicial authority in the country is unacceptable unless one can prove with reasonable material that he acted in a biased manner in choosing the first Lokpal.

The decision of the 'special invitee' to stay away from the process on the ground that he was a mere invitee and not a full-fledged member of the Selection Committee is regrettable. The accusation that the process of selection of the Lokpal was not transparent falls flat if someone in the Opposition abstains from participating in the Committee's decision and denies himself and the nation the chance of knowing and evaluating how open-minded or not the other members were in choosing the members and chairperson of the Lokpal.

## Jurisdiction issues

To my mind, what is worrying is how well the CVC and CBI are going to play a complementary role in upholding the objective for which the Lokpal has been appointed. The Lokpal has jurisdiction over Group A and B public servants. This does not deprive the CBI of its own jurisdiction over these two groups. The Lokpal Act permits using the CBI (referred to by the Act as the Delhi Special Police Establishment, from which the CBI was born) for examining a complaint against a public servant for misconduct. Although the Lokpal has its own Inquiry Wing, it can nevertheless forward a complaint to the CBI for a preliminary inquiry, and thereafter for registering a regular case under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. It is not clear what happens when such a complaint is already being inquired into by the CBI. Legally speaking, the government, in addition to the Lokpal, is competent to order a preliminary inquiry and permit the CBI to proceed with a regular case. What is also to be

remembered is that the CBI can register a case even without the government's nod in instances in which a public servant is caught red-handed while receiving a bribe. If an individual lodges a complaint with the government and the Lokpal, what should the Lokpal do? Does it have the authority to give direction to the CBI to keep its hands off the matter and wait for the Lokpal's own Inquiry Wing to handle the matter?

The Act creates a Prosecution Wing exclusively for the Lokpal. How will that body coordinate with the CBI's Director of Prosecution in respect of a matter handled by both of them? It is a common practice for complainants in India to dash off their complaints to a host of agencies. There is a distinct prospect of a clash between the government (which has greater powers of superintendence over the CBI than the Lokpal) and the Lokpal over a wide spectrum of issues. The Act gives the impression that superintendence over the CBI is shared by the Lokpal and the government, and neither is in exclusive command of the former. Can the Lokpal order the CBI to suspend its inquiry in respect of a complaint and report on it to the exclusion of the government?

The initial days are going to be difficult in terms of coordination. Everything will depend on how well the Lokpal and the government sink their egos and concentrate on the fundamental objective of striking at corruption without getting bogged down by technicalities.

All these imponderables, however, do not reduce the utility of a highly placed ombudsman. It may finally boil down to Justice Ghose's perception of what his role is. He can certainly shape the future of this experiment.

R.K. Raghavan is a former CBI Director. Views expressed are personal

## SINGLE FILE

### A ladder, not a crutch

Using behavioural science in the design of cash transfers can make them more effective in the fight against poverty

SAUGATO DATTA



There are many legitimate questions about the Congress's Nyuntam Aay Yojana (NYAY) scheme, which promises to transfer ₹72,000 annually to 20% of families in the poorest of the poor category. But the fundamental soundness of the idea should not be in doubt. Evidence from dozens of cash transfer programmes around the world speaks resoundingly in favour of such schemes as a tool for sustainable poverty alleviation.

Evaluations of cash transfers show that they usually lead to large increases in household consumption, improve health and education outcomes for beneficiaries and their children, and improve women's agency and empowerment when paid to women. At the same time, common fears, such as that money will be squandered on alcohol or cigarettes, turn out to be largely unfounded. Neither does handing money to the poor make them reluctant to work or be entrepreneurial. Rather, behavioural economists have found that poverty itself makes it harder for people to do things like plan for a future beyond immediate survival. It's hard to be ambitious on an empty stomach. By freeing people's minds from having to fret about their next meal, a cash transfer can enable entrepreneurship or more productive employment.

In fact, ideas from behavioural economics are increasingly being used to magnify the already positive effects of giving people cash. In Morocco, MIT economist Esther Duflo and her colleagues found that simply 'labelling' a cash transfer as an education transfer can push up school participation. In ongoing research with the World Bank and the governments of Madagascar, Kenya, Ghana, and Tanzania, my colleagues and I are exploring whether it is possible to use the 'mental space' that an infusion of cash enables to help beneficiaries use the money they get more productively.

In Madagascar, we asked recipients to develop a plan for how they would use the cash transfer amounts to further their goals. Eighteen months on, those who received this 'nudge' were more food secure, more likely to have invested in livestock, and had higher cash-crop incomes. In another study in Madagascar, we found that helping people visualise how much they needed to save for a goal (example, a new milch cow) and giving them a pouch to set money aside for it increased saving. These designs are now being adapted and piloted in Kenya and Tanzania.

By helping parents invest in the next generation, cash transfers strike at the heart of persistent poverty. Incorporating small behavioural interventions makes the money go even further. If a programme like NYAY takes experimentation, design and evidence seriously, its impact on the lives of India's poor could be transformative.

The writer is Managing Director, ideas42, a behavioural science research and design firm, where he leads work in the developing world

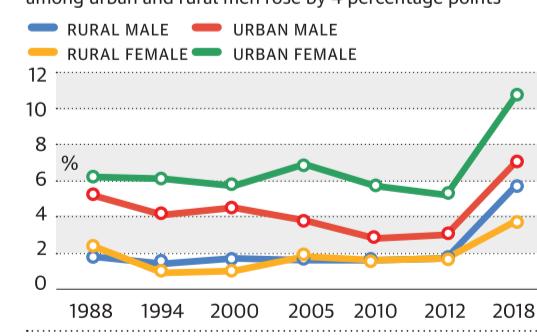


## DATA POINT

### Qualified but jobless

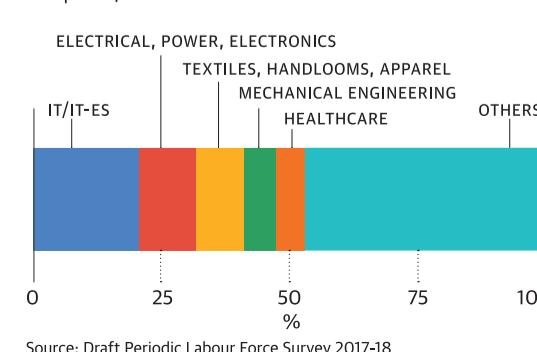
#### Sudden spike from 2011-12

Unemployment among urban women saw the steepest climb (over 5 percentage points), while the unemployment rate among urban and rural men rose by 4 percentage points



#### IT, electronics boom

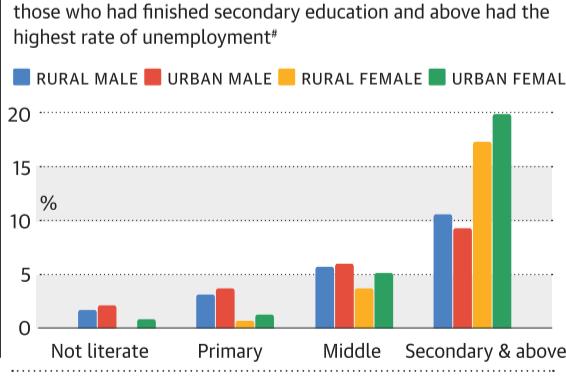
About 20% of those who had received some formal vocational/technical training were trained in IT-related disciplines, while electrical and electronics came next



Data in the draft Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2017-18 reveal that the unemployment rate\* was the highest for all demographics in the past three decades. The survey also shows that a section of those surveyed are unemployed despite decent academic qualifications and vocational/technical training

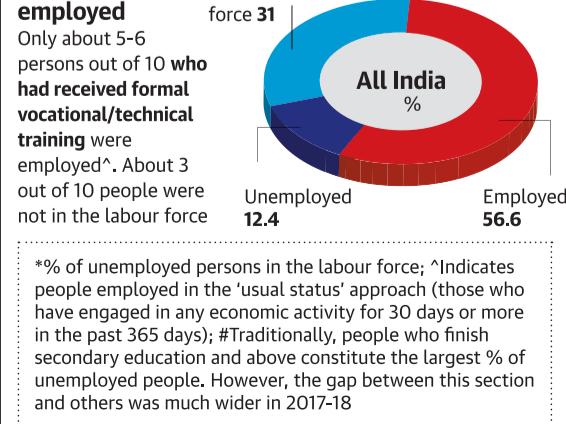
#### Education doesn't mean jobs

Across all demographics (urban and rural women and men), those who had finished secondary education and above had the highest rate of unemployment\*



#### Just over half employed

Only about 5-6 persons out of 10 who had received formal vocational/technical training were employed\*. About 3 out of 10 people were not in the labour force



\*% of unemployed persons in the labour force; ^Indicates people employed in the 'usual status' approach (those who have engaged in any economic activity for 30 days or more in the past 365 days); ^Traditionally, people who finish secondary education and above constitute the largest % of unemployed people. However, the gap between this section and others was much wider in 2017-18

# Leaders who ignited a deadly fire

There is limited satisfaction in seeing L.K. Advani and M.M. Joshi being retired



RUCHIR JOSHI



BJP leaders Murli Manohar Joshi and L.K. Advani during the BJP National Executive Meeting in New Delhi in 2017.

■ V. SUDERSHAN

Any taste of satisfaction or schadenfreude someone may get from the news of senior BJP leaders L.K. Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi being put out to pasture by the RSS-BJP is quickly superseded by something unpleasant, dark and chemical-tasting. Many may have looked forward to the day when we would see the back of these two. Many would want to relish this moment: the humiliation, the casual back-handed slaps with which these 'marg-darshaks' are darshaked their marg into political oblivion, their fury, their suppurating resentment, all of it. But this is where history plays the jester, suddenly peeping out from the wings and asking the audience, 'Are you really happy now?'

Around half of us Indians were born after the Babri Masjid was torn down and millions were too young for the event to register. It takes an effort for the rest of us to remember the time before words like 'shilanya', 'pseudo-secularist' and 'Sangh Parivar' entered common parlance. Even as Babri began to be stoked in the mid-1980s by the RSS-BJP and its polyp-groups, there were many real issues that occupied the public: the Khalistan movement, the Bhopal gas tragedy, AIDS, the Bofors case, computerisation, the impunity with which D.H. Ambani had bypassed governmental checks and balances on big business, the Mandal Commission report, the possible tessellations of various reservations, and the economic liberalisation that then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi wanted to bring in.

**A different route to power**  
Many of today's challenges were present then: corruption, huge inequality, the dearth of proper education and universal healthcare, widespread unemployment, looming ecological disasters. There was ample room to challenge the Congress on these issues. There were many parties aiming for, if not a Congress-mukt India, at least a Congress-light one, which would be a happier, more egalitarian place. But the leaders of the RSS-BJP saw a different route to power: forget about education, healthcare, women's rights, let's put to boil Hindu pride in the pot of a Ram

Mandir in Ayodhya, let's twist genuine faith, appeal to the basest sentiments and see what happens. Despite the choices available, Mr. Advani and Mr. Joshi chose to gamble on relentlessly creating religious enmity and small and large-scale violence. They were cunning men who knew what they were doing.

#### A calculated gamble

The Ram Mandir 'issue' was indeed a gamble but it was a calculated one: the RSS-BJP and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad knew the Congress was riven with squabbling and that its secularism was shaky (Mr. Advani's barb about pseudo-secularists was a precise arrow into the heart of Congress hypocrisy); they knew the growing regional parties had little concern for the well-being of the nation as a whole. They sensed that a disaffected, jobless mass of male youth, at least in central and north India, was a tinder keg that could be ignited with the touchpaper of communalism and the targeting of the minority communities as the 'enemy'. Long-honed instincts told them their pseudo-Hinduism had a strong chance of defeating the Congress's pseudo-secularism, at least in the so-called cow belt. Most importantly, these men knew fully well that their 'rath-yatras' and their carting of 'consecrated' bricks to Ayodhya would lead to a bloodbath. Not only did they know it – the very success of their gamble depended on violence ensuing, on large parts of the country tearing at com-

munal lines. After the demolition of the Babri Masjid this is exactly what happened.

In case there is any amnesia or unfamiliarity, let's not forget that Mr. Advani and Mr. Joshi had passionate and vociferous support from a second rank that included not only Ashok Singh, K.N. Govindacharya, Uma Bharti, Sadvi Rithambara and Jaswant Singh but also Yashwant Sinha, Shatrughan Sinha and Arun Shourie, gentlemen who today seem to be having such severe problems with the monster they helped incubate and nourish. Below these tiers you had the organisers, including Narendra Modi and Pravin Togadia, with even younger people like Manohar Parrikar travelling to Ayodhya as a kar sevak.

There might be some differences between the current BJP bosses and the duo so unceremoniously consigned to the knacker's yard, but it's useful to note that the differences are of degree and style, not substance. The first tampering with school textbooks and the initial orange assault on cultural and educational institutions was under Human Resource Development Minister Joshi. Likewise, Deputy Prime Minister Advani too pushed the majoritarian agenda as much as he could, but within the constraints of a coalition.

#### The horrors continue

Vajpayee's and Mr. Advani's masks of democratic civility fell off after the clearly pre-planned anti-minority Gujarat pogrom of 2002. The chancers at the top had to deal with an even bigger chancer in Mr. Modi. Vajpayee may have tried to remove Mr. Modi as Chief Minister because of the Gujarat riots, but Mr. Advani defended Mr. Modi and Vajpayee chickened out. It is a fleeting consolation to realise that Mr. Advani might have, at that precise moment, sown the seeds of his own unseating by a protege even more mendacious than himself. It provides only the most superficial of gratifications to see Mr. Advani and Mr. Joshi being sent off to their enforced *sanyas*, their elatedy for position and power forever unfulfilled. Any sense of elation at historical justice being finally delivered is quickly tempered by remembering the horrors these two men inflicted upon the country when in their prime, horrors that, far from being over, are alive and enlarged as never before.

Ruchir Joshi is a writer, filmmaker and columnist

## FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 4, 1969

### Krishna waters issue to Tribunal

The Krishna river waters dispute is to be referred to a Tribunal under the River Waters Disputes Act. This decision was taken after the Chief Ministers of Andhra, Mysore and Maharashtra, who met here to-day [April 3, New Delhi] under the chairmanship of Mr. Morarji Desai, Deputy Prime Minister, failed to reach an agreement on the sharing of the river waters. Mr. Morarji Desai, it is believed, told the Chief Ministers that he was not arbitrating on the issue. He was only anxious that an amicable settlement should be reached among the various parties out of court. He referred to a decision taken by the Union Cabinet some weeks ago that he should mediate in the dispute by utilising his good offices and it is only in response to this that he had arranged this meeting.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 4, 1919.

### The Delhi Tragedy: Mr. Gandhi's Statement

Mr. M.K. Gandhi, who arrived here this morning [Bombay on April 4], has written the following letter to the press: It is alleged against the Delhi people assembled at the Delhi Railway Station: (1) That some of them were trying to coerce sweetmeat sellers into closing their stalls. (2) That some were forcibly preventing people from plying trams and other vehicles. (3) That some of them threw brickbats. (4) That the whole crowd that marched to the station demanded the release of men who were said to be coercers and who were for that reason arrested at the instance of the railway authorities. (5) That the crowd declined to disperse when the Magistrate gave orders to disperse. I have read Sanyasi Swami Shraddhanandji's account of the tragedy. I am bound to accept it as true unless it is authoritatively proved to be otherwise and his account seems to me to deny the allegations 1, 2 and 3. But assuming the truth of all allegations it does appear to me that the local authorities in Delhi have made use of a Nasmyth hammer to crush a fly.

## POLL CALL Observer

An Observer, who is an officer of the government, is nominated by the Election Commission (EC) to watch the conduct of election in a constituency or a group of constituencies. The Observer has the power to direct the returning officer of the constituency or group of constituencies to stop the counting of votes before the declaration of the result or not declare the result at all if he or she believes that booth capturing has taken place or the ballot has been tampered with accidentally or otherwise to an extent where the result at the polling station cannot be ascertained. If the Observer believes this to be true, he or she is expected to inform the EC immediately.

## MORE ON THE WEB

General election 2019: constituency-wise key candidates' list

<http://bit.ly/GeneralElectionsConstituency>

FROM PAGE ONE

## RTI scrutiny will ruin judicial independence'

Elaborating on some of the reasons to exclude the collegium from the purview of the RTI, Mr. Venugopal said: "If reasons for his rejection come into public domain, will a judge be able to function independently? The entire future of the judge is ruined. The public, litigants lose their confidence in him. A judge whose integrity has been questioned and overlooked for appointment or elevation, is handicapped. He cannot go to the press to clear the air."

"Disclosure of highly sensitive communication under RTI will risk the very existence of the judicial way of functioning. So, the information should be kept confidential."

Acknowledging that the right to know was part of the right to free speech, Mr. Venugopal said the right to

## 'Cash for votes' found in Khandu convoy: Cong.

Mr. Gao admitted one of the cars belonged to Dengi Perme, who is the BJP candidate for the Mebo Assembly seat.

"The car belonged to him but the money belonged to his son, who will do the necessary explanation," he said.

A sum of ₹1 crore was seized from Mr. Perme's car while ₹80 lakh was found in the vehicle belonging to the State's Transport Department.

**'Serious matter'**  
State Congress president Takan Sanjoy, who is contesting the Lekang Assembly seat, said: "The money was seized in the vicinity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally. This is a very serious matter. The Election Commission should take punitive action against the PM, the CM and Gao. The BJP has no influence on the voters, so it is doling out cash to win votes."

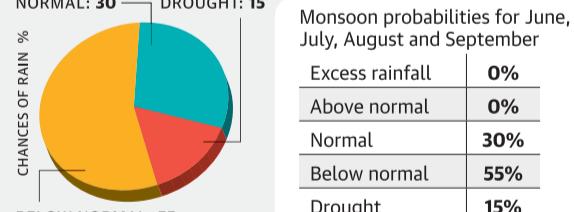
The State's chief electoral officer Kaling Tayeng and his deputy Kangki Darang declined to speak on the seizure.

Two women led the raid on the basis of a complaint

## Skymet expects 'below normal' monsoon

### Dry days ahead

India is headed for deficient monsoon, according to Skymet



There is a 15% chance of a drought (seasonal rainfall less than 90% of the average), 30% chance of normal (seasonal rainfall that is between 96%-104% of the long period average or LPA), and 55% chance of below normal (seasonal rainfall that is between 90%-95% of LPA). June was likely to post only 77% of its historical average of 164mm, July 91% of its average, according to Skymet.

On a monthly scale, the precipitation is expected to be: June - 77% of its average of 164 mm; July - 91% of its average of 289 mm; August - 2% more than its average of 261 mm; and September - 99% of its 173mm average.

The key culprit, according to Jatin Singh, Managing Director, Skymet, was the El Niño - the warming of the central Pacific Ocean that's frequently associated with drying monsoon rains.

"The Pacific Ocean has become strongly warmer than average. The model projections call for 80% chance of El Niño during March-May, dropping to

## Congress manifesto a document of lies, says PM

Alleges the party has damaged the 'morale' of the security forces

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who addressed two meetings in West Bengal on Wednesday, launched a two-pronged attack on the Trinamool Congress and the Congress, targeting West Bengal's ruling party over its remarks on the Balakot air strikes and the latter on its promise of reviewing the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA).

At his first meeting at Siliguri in north Bengal, he alleged that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee sitting in Kolkata felt the "same pain" after the air strikes in Balakot, which was felt in Islamabad and other parts of Pakistan. "The strikes were carried out there and the pain was felt here. Neither Didi (Ms. Banerjee) nor her friends from the mahamilat (adulteration alliance) liked it."



Pulling out all the stops: Prime Minister Narendra Modi waving to supporters during a meeting in Siliguri on Wednesday. ■ AFP

Describing the Congress's manifesto as *dhakolsa patra* (document of falsehood), Mr. Modi said by promising to review the AFSPA that shielded security forces from terrorists, the Congress damaged the "morale" of the security forces and made them "helpless" in the fight against terror. Later in the day, while addressing a rally at the Brigade Parade grounds in Kolkata, he accused the Congress of "bow-

ing to terrorism for votebank politics."

"This *chowkidar* stands as a wall between the *dhakolsa patra* of the Congress and national security. This manifesto has come with an expiry date - May 23 (the day poll results will be announced). On that day both the Congress and its *dhakolsa patra* will be gone," he said.

Trying to paint the Trinamool Congress with the same brush, the Prime Mi-

nister said the party, which was formed from the Congress, was also responsible for the same sin.

**'Speed breaker'**  
During his speech, Mr. Modi primarily targeted the Trinamool Congress, and ridiculed the grand Opposition rally held at the Brigade Parade grounds on January 19, where leaders from 23 parties came to give a call to oust the BJP-led government at

the Centre. "There was a carnival here in Kolkata. From different States leaders came here, and all they said was Modi needs to go. What crime has he committed," he asked and then switched to the BJP slogan *Modi Hai to Mumkin Hai* - 'Modi makes it possible' - referring to the achievements of his government.

From calling Ms. Banerjee a "speed breaker" in the process of development, making

Modi is 'expiry babu': Mamata

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday came up with the strong rebuttal to the allegations levelled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Describing Mr. Modi as "expiry babu," she dared him to participate in a debate with her. "I do not speak lies like Modi babu. Will call him 'expiry babu' from now on," she said.

references to the chit fund scam, promising the implementation of benefits of Seventh Pay Commission to State government employees, appealing to tea garden workers and the Gurkha community, Mr. Modi pulled out all the stops.

He also touched upon the issue of starting the process of National Register of Citizens in the State, and said the Gurkha community would not be affected in any way.



Flight of campaign: Congress supporters waving at party chief Rahul Gandhi's chopper as he arrives to address an election rally in Assam on Wednesday. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

## Modi, Rahul accuse each other of lying to the people

PM slams manifesto; Cong. chief rakes up ₹15 lakh promise

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress president Rahul Gandhi, addressing rallies within 200 km of each other in the northeast on Wednesday, hurled mutual accusations of selling "lies" to the people.

At Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh, Mr. Modi termed the Congress manifesto as a "sham document."

"The Congress manifesto is corrupt and full of lies just like them. Their manifesto of 2004 had promised electrification of every house in the country by 2009. They failed, revised the target for 2014 but failed to achieve that too," he said.

Insisting that the BJP ensured development and better connectivity for Arunachal Pradesh and the rest of the northeast, the Prime Minister said the upcoming election would be a choice for the people between "trust and resolution" and "corruption and conspiracy."

He also panned the Congress for "undertaking a project" of separatism and violence by sympathising with those who burn the national flag and raise slogans for breaking up the country.

At North Lakhimpur town in Assam, barely 200 km west of Pasighat, Mr. Gandhi targeted the Prime Minister. "Five years ago, Narendra

Modi had come to you and promised that he would give each one of you ₹15 lakh. Did anyone of you receive ₹15 lakh? He speaks only lies," he said.

The Congress, if elected, would give ₹72,000 each to poor families just like the Modi government gave ₹3.5 lakh crore to 15 selected industrialists.

"You may wonder where we will get the money from. It will be taken from the pockets of Anil Ambani's family and distributed to the poor," he said.

Prior to North Lakhimpur, Mr. Gandhi made a similar speech at Bokakhat in central Assam and in Nagaland.

## Give details on 'Namo TV', I&B Ministry told

AAP cites violation of election code

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India has sought details of 'Namo TV' from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MoIB) after the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) raised objections, alleging violation of the Model Code of Conduct ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

In a letter to the EC, the AAP had earlier urged the poll panel to ensure level playing field for all political parties, citing various Supreme Court judgments.

"The intention behind these judicial precedents is to have equal opportunities for all political parties, irrespective of money and muscle power so that all political parties can reach out to the voters. But defying this very cardinal principle, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has

launched a 24-hour 'Namo TV' channel" the party said.

The AAP sought to know whether a party could be given approval to have its own TV channel after the Model Code of Conduct was enforced and, if so, who would monitor its contents.

If the BJP did not approach the media certification committee to certify the contents and cost of the telecast, had the Election Commission served a show-cause notice, it asked.

"A perusal of the website of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has revealed that neither 'Namo TV' nor 'Content TV' finds a mention on the list of 'Permitted Private Satellite TV Channels' (as updated and viewed on 30.03.2019),"

said the Congress, alleging that the channel's contents were being broadcast in violation of the rules and regulations pertaining to cable television.

**G** The intention behind the judicial precedents is to have equal opportunities for all political parties so that all political parties can reach out to the voters

AAM ADMI PARTY

### IN BRIEF



Upendra Kushwaha to contest two seats

PATNA  
The mahagathbandhan constituent in Bihar, the Rashtriya Lok Samata Party on Wednesday announced names of candidates for all five seats it is contesting in the State. The party chief Upendra Kushwaha will contest from two seats - Karat and Ujjiyarpur. Under the seat-sharing pact, the RLSP has got five seats.

### Congress pits Chavda against Amit Shah

AHMEDABAD  
The Congress has chosen its low-profile legislator Dr. C.J. Chavda to take on BJP president Amit Shah from the Gandhinagar parliamentary constituency. Dr. Chavda's name was announced on Wednesday. A sitting MLA representing Gandhinagar North Assembly constituency, Dr. Chavda is a bureaucrat-turned-politician and won the Assembly polls twice: in 2002 and 2017, while he had lost in 2007.

### 'BJP did not implement 2 key initiatives of UPA'

NEW DELHI  
Former Union Minister P. Chidambaram on Wednesday accused the BJP of leaving India vulnerable to terror attacks by "sitting on" the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) and the National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) that were the key initiatives of the UPA. "It is the BJP that has made India vulnerable to terrorist attacks by sitting on two vital initiatives for 5 years," he said.

### Congress manifesto a deception: Mayawati

LUCKNOW  
Targeting the Congress, Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Wednesday said like previous promises made by the party its manifesto for the 2019 Lok Sabha election was a "sham and a deception." She said the Congress lacked credibility among people for repeatedly breaking its promises. "In such matters, there is little difference between the Congress and the BJP," said Ms. Mayawati on Twitter.

### CPI names candidates for nine seats in four States

NEW DELHI  
The Communist Party of India on Wednesday announced its candidates for nine Lok Sabha seats from Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar. The candidate list released by the party includes East Champaran in Bihar, Chatra seat in Jharkhand and Shahdol in Madhya Pradesh as well as six seats in Uttar Pradesh. Till now, the party has announced 31 candidates, including former JNU student leader Kanhaiya Kumar from Begusarai in Bihar. ■

## Candidates file papers for volatile Anantnag seat

Mehbooba, Ghulam Mir in fray here

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti, J&K Pradesh Congress Committee president Ghulam Ahmad Mir and National Conference (NC) leader Hasnain Masoodi were among the candidates who filed their nominations on Wednesday for the volatile Anantnag Lok Sabha seat in south Kashmir.

Ms. Mufti, referring to BJP president Amit Shah's remarks on abrogating Article 370, said his 2020 deadline "will also be the deadline for J&K's merger with the Union of India." She took on the BJP on the issue of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA).

As Congress's Mr. Mir filed his nomination, senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, campaigning in the Valley, blamed the BJP for pushing regional parties in J&K to a point where they were demanding their own

Prime Minister. On a day when NC candidate Hasnain Masoodi filed his nomination, party president Farooq Abdullah said at an election rally that J&K's people were the rightful owners of their land. Choudhary Zaffar Khanana of the Peoples Conference also filed his nomination on the seat.

Anantnag seat will see elections in three phases due to the volatile security situation. The allies, the NC and the Congress, have decided against fielding a joint candidate.

As Congress's Mr. Mir filed his nomination, senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, campaigning in the Valley, blamed the BJP for pushing regional parties in J&K to a point where they were demanding their own

Political leaders who did not visit Odisha during devastating natural calamities are now thronging the State for votes. With this allegation Odisha Chief Minister and Biju Janata Dal president Naveen Patnaik flagged off his election campaign on Wednesday from his home district Ganjam.

Attending an afternoon public meeting at Kanis on the outskirts of Berhampur, he retaliated against the verbal barrage fired at him by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president Amit Shah, without taking their names in his speech.

He alleged that they did not come to Odisha during the Phailin, Hudhud, and Titli cyclones as well as severe drought situations.

"But when elections come, top leaders of the BJP start shedding crocodile

tears," he quipped. According to him these leaders come to voters only during elections and vanish after that.

He came up with a series of questions to the BJP-led Central government. "Where went the promised Sitalapalli railway wagon factory; special category status for the State; Women's Reservation Bill; why were scholarships for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students of Odisha stopped; peasants will surely give them fitting answer during elections.

proper crop insurance while insurance companies are making profit at their cost; where went your promise of 10 crore jobs in five years," he asked.

He claimed that the 4.5 crore Odias were his family. "I am always with you and will continue to remain with you," he said. According to him his government had provided different schemes for Odias from their birth till death.

He claimed that around 40 lakh farmers had already benefited from Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation scheme of his government and 20 lakh more have been identified as future beneficiaries. Alleging that some opposition parties were opposed to this rightful support for farmers, he said, peasants will surely give them fitting answer during elections.



Mehbooba Mufti



Naveen Patnaik

Questions BJP-led Central government on unmet promises

STAFF REPORTER  
BERHAMPUR

Political leaders who did not visit Odisha during devastating natural calamities are now thronging the State for votes. With this allegation Odisha Chief Minister and Biju Janata Dal president Naveen Patnaik flagged off his election campaign on Wednesday from his home district Ganjam.

Attending an afternoon public meeting at Kanis on the outskirts of Berhampur, he retaliated against the verbal barrage fired at him by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president Amit Shah, without taking their names in his speech.

He alleged that they did not come to Odisha during the Phailin, Hudhud, and Titli cyclones as well as severe drought situations.

"But when elections come, top leaders of the BJP start shedding crocodile

[IN FOCUS: TRIPURA]

# Will the winds of *paltai* blow this time too?

'Let's change' was the BJP's slogan in the Assembly polls of March 2018, and that swell upstaged the Left in its last citadel

RAHUL KARMAKAR

GUWAHATI  
The Left kept reigning in Tripura even when other communist citadels in India's east – West Bengal and a few pockets of Assam and Manipur – crumbled. That changed when the State took a right turn in March 2018.

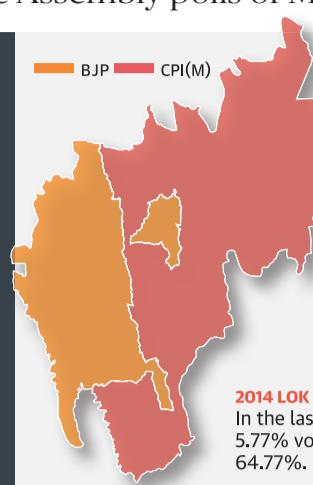
The Left Front has been allegedly under siege since its 25-year rule was ended by the Bharatiya Janata Party and its regional ally, Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT), a year ago. Few are feeling the heat more than the State's two MPs, Jitendra Choudhury and Shankar Prasad Dutta.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has renominated Mr. Choudhury (60) for the predominantly tribal Tripura East and Mr. Dutta (60) for the Bengali-dominated Tripura West constituency, each comprising 30 Assembly seats.

The CPI(M) has been virtually unchallenged in Tripura since 1996 when it made the

## As things stand

If the 2018 Assembly election results were aggregated for Lok Sabha seats, the BJP would have led in one seat and the CPI(M) in the other. Map shows the leads in Lok Sabha seats based on the 2018 Assembly results. The vote share of the BJP in the last Assembly election was **43.59%** and that of CPI(M) **42.22%**



**2014 LOK SABHA POLL**  
In the last Lok Sabha election, the BJP secured 5.77% votes, the Congress 15.38% and the CPI(M) 64.77%. The CPI(M) won both the seats

Congress, which ruled the State from 1988 to 1993, bite the dust. That year's election marked the beginning of the slide of the Congress, eventually creating a political void for the BJP to fill after 2014.

The winds of *paltai* (let's change) blew Manik Sarkar's Left Front government away, and a reportedly eroding support base has put the CPI(M) under pressure.

"A fear psychosis has created an abnormal situation in Tripura where democracy is being threatened every day," Bijan Dhar, Left Front convenor, said.

**'Lawless land'**  
"It is as if we are staying in a lawless land. Our people are being intimidated. I have been attacked at least seven times. It is difficult to hold party

meetings unless the central paramilitary forces personnel create a ring of security around us," Mr. Dutta said from Tripura's capital Agartala.

The Congress, too, has accused the BJP and its affiliates of unleashing violence and creating an atmosphere of terror.

"They have attacked our candidate Subal Bhowmik

(Tripura West). The BJP is using muscle power because the people have seen through the government's fake promises and are turning towards the Congress," Sridam Deb Barman, a senior Congress leader, said. Mr. Bhowmik, who was the BJP's State vice-president, defected to the Congress a few days ago.

"The BJP rose in Tripura on the shoulders of leaders mostly borrowed from the Congress and Left parties. Now, people from the BJP, its ally IPFT and the CPI(M) are joining us, indicating that the Congress is emerging as a stronger opposition than the CPI(M). This has made us hopeful," Mr. Deb Barman said.

The BJP, however, said the Congress was not a factor in the State. "A clash or two happens in every State during election. Grumbling when not in power is a communist habit. Some 50 people were killed in two months after the Left Front won the 2013 Assembly

polls but there hasn't been a single political death in the past year," BJP spokesperson Ashok Sinha said.

According to election analyst J. Bhattacharjee, the fear factor and the patriotic spin to BJP's campaign has seemingly put the party – despite its failure to deliver – on a stronger wicket than its rivals. "Another reason is the uncertainty about how strong the opposition is, though the Congress appears to have gained ground," he said.

The BJP is "not losing sleep" over Mr. Bhowmik leaving the party. "People know he has been a party-hopper," Mr. Sinha said, adding the BJP chose a deserving candidate in Pratima Bhowmik, 50, for the Tripura West seat.

The BJP's candidate for the Tripura East seat is Rebati Tripathi, 43. Apart from Mr. Choudhury of the CPI(M), his rivals include the 50-year-old Maharaj Kumari Pragya Debbarman of the Congress.

## For saints' grace before voters' blessings

Mehbooba, Farooq visit Sufi shrines

PEERZADA ASHIQ

SRINAGAR  
In the Kashmir Valley, top-ranking candidates of the National Conference and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) visited Sufi shrines before filing their nominations on Wednesday.

Former Chief Minister and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti, who filed her nomination for the Anantnag seat on Wednesday, visited the 16th century shrine of Baba Naseeb-ud-din Gazi in the Baba Mohalla area of her hometown Bijnor in Anantnag district.

The shrine is among the last remaining places where whirling dervishes, influenced by Persian poet Jalal ud-din Muhammad Rumi, are still seen on the *urs* (death anniversary of a Sufi saint).

"This is the first election I

will contest without my father's guidance and support. But I am confident that my people will restore their faith in the PDP. It's an honour to fight for them," tweeted Ms. Mufti, after filing her nomination.

Thereafter, she drove 23 km to another shrine of Zain-ud-din Rishi, housed at the top of a hillock in Aishamugam.

NC president Farooq Abdullah, who filed nomination papers for the Srinagar seat last week, first paid obeisance at the shrine of Hazrat Sheikh Hamza Maqdoomi, hours before filing his nomination.

After this, he rushed to the Dargah Hazrat Bal, which his father Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah reconstructed to claim back his then lost political stature in the 1960s.

"This is the first election I

## On the move



**Follow the leader:** A woman carrying a cut-out of Prime Minister Narendra Modi during Shiv Sena candidate Rahul Shewale's door-to-door campaign at Matunga in Mumbai on Wednesday. ■ SUPREET SAPKAL

## The intangible seat, where only monks contest and vote

3,293 voters are there in the segment sans shape or size

SHIV SAHAY SINGH

GANGTOK  
On April 11, when the Himalayan State of Sikkim goes to the polls, elections will be held in an Assembly constituency that does not exist on the State's map and has no geographical boundaries.

"The Sangha Assembly constituency has no geographical boundary and it is a one-of-its-kind constituency in the country reserved for the monastic community (Sangha)," the office of Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Sikkim says on its website.

Only the Buddhist monks registered with 51 monasteries in the State can contest and cast their votes for the Assembly seat. CEO R. Telang says the number of voters in the Sangha constituency during this election is 3,293 – 3,224 monks and 69 nuns.

Three EVMs

"In 51 polling stations, arrangements are being made for casting vote for the Sangha seat," the CEO says.

"Along with one EVM for the Assembly and one for the Lok Sabha seat, there will be a third EVM for monks to cast votes for the Sangha seat," he says.

The monks can vote at the EVMs designated for the Lok Sabha seat and for the Sangha seat in these 51



**The seat draws its origin from hundreds of years of tradition ... The Ministers to the king were selected from lay people and priests**

SONAM LAMA

Sangha MLA

polling stations, he adds. Elections to the State's 32 Assembly seats and one Lok Sabha constituency will be held simultaneously on April 11.

**Centuries-old tradition**  
Sonam Lama, who won the Assembly seat in 2014 as a representative of the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM), says the seat draws its origin from hundreds of years of tradition.

"Before 1975, when Sikkim became part of India, the State had a monarchy," Mr. Lama says. "The Ministers to the king were selected from both common people and priests," he added.

The monkeys can vote at the EVMs designated for the Lok Sabha seat and for the Sangha seat in these 51

Tshering Lama, who is contesting the seat as a candidate of the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), says that references to representation of Lamas (monks) in the Council of Ministers dated back to 1640 under the Chogyal kings of the State. Experts say the separate electorate for monks of the 51 registered monasteries in the Sangha seat is provided for under Article 371 (F) of the Constitution, which has separate provisions with respect to the State of Sikkim.

**Three-cornered contest**  
In the 2014 Assembly polls, the SKM candidate won the seat by a margin of only 126 votes.

With one of the lowest numbers of voters, the Sangha Assembly seat is one of the closely contested seats of Sikkim. Other than the candidates of the SKM and the SDF, Karma Tashi Bhutia from the Congress is in the electoral fray.

All three candidates are reaching out to the monks residing in monasteries across the State with promises to bring the Karmapa to Sikkim and serve the religion.

On April 11, the monks will take a break from their spiritual routines and chanting of prayers to elect their representative in the Assembly.

## For Amaravati's newly minted millionaires, wishes are horses

Farmers-turned-landlords cast their lot with the TDP

APPAJI REDDEM

AMARAVATI

Narendra, 25, of Velagapudi village in Amaravati is the proud owner of two horses, one of which is the premium breed Panchakalyani. The farmer's son attributes the family's instant riches to the State government's decision to go for land pooling to develop the new capital of Andhra Pradesh. His father could afford to buy the horses to fulfil his childhood dream, he says.

Such stories are not uncommon in 29 villages of Amaravati including Velagapudi, where the Secretariat is located. Not just horses, even expensive luxury cars are parked in the compound of the new buildings.

Many of the farmers who contributed more than 33,000 acres towards the land pool want Telugu Desam Party president N. Chandrababu Naidu back as Chief Minister. A key factor is their fear that the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) may shift some development activity to its heartland in the Rayalaseema region if it comes to power.

Ever since the TDP government announced Amaravati as the capital city of Andhra Pradesh after Telangana was formed, the price of land had soared from ₹20 lakh an acre to ₹4 crore. The subsequent land pooling scheme was a big success in the region, in which the government offered developed plots (1,000 sq.ft for residential and 250 sq.ft for commercial) and an annual compensation of ₹30,000 to ₹50,000 an acre for 10 years, depending on the



**Galloping on:** Narendra of Amaravati's Velagapudi village is a proud owner of two horses. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

classification of land. The land pooling exercise worked well in areas where the Kamma community, to which Mr. Narendra belongs, is in a majority or constitutes a sizeable proportion. Now, with urban development activity gathering pace, people here aspire for a stable government.

"We know that the TDP is winning here," Mr. Narendra says. "We want the party to win across the State."

"Our residential and commercial plots are already marked, and we are sure that they will be developed soon," said a farmer from Nelapadu, where a temporary building of the High Court of Andhra Pradesh and numerous other structures are under development. "We don't mind the delay as the much-needed building and road infrastructure is coming up here. The YSR Congress, if voted to power, will spoil this and shift development to other places," he says, on condition of anonymity.

However, not everybody in

the region views the TDP government's efforts favourably. Several farmers living near the banks of the Krishna, especially at Nidamarri, Penumaka, Vundavalli and Errabalem villages, dominated by the Reddy community, refused to part with their land (about 3,000 acres) for the capital, demanding better compensation.

### Voices of protest

"Owing to the proximity to the river bank, our land is always more fertile and costly," says K.S. Reddy from Penumaka. "When the other lands were selling at ₹20 lakh, our land was quoted at ₹4 crore an acre. The government refused to recognise this fact and started troubling us with a lot of restrictions. The result: the market price per acre has come down by a crore," he says.

After an alleged arm-twisting exercise for land acquisition, the farmers approached the High Court and obtained an order enabling them to continue farming.

## POLL POURRI



### No heartburn, says Sidhu's wife

CHANDIGARH

With the Congress party deciding to field former Union Minister Pawan Bansal from the Chandigarh Lok Sabha constituency, Navjot Kaur Sidhu, who was in the race for ticket for the seat, on Wednesday said she did not have anyone to represent her case "strongly" before the party central leadership. Ms. Sidhu, a former MLA and wife of cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu said, "...it's party's decision, every candidate has his/her reasons to apply but party takes a decision on several factors, they collect feedback. Pawan Bansal is a senior leader and there's no heartburn."

### The village forgotten



GUWAHATI  
Some 150 Garo tribal people of Longturi Pahar, a village on the Assam-Meghalaya border, have virtually been forgotten by the Election Commission. Eligible to vote, these people have been waiting –

as did their parents and grandparents settled there since 1940 – to be enrolled in the voters' list. One of the reasons they have been forgotten by the huge democratic exercise is a dispute between Assam and Meghalaya over the jurisdiction of the village, about 85 km west of Guwahati. Village headman Arbiton Momin said they had asked the authorities to enrol them in the Boko Assembly segment of Assam's Guwahati Lok Sabha constituency. "This should happen soon, but not before this election," Kamrup Deputy Commissioner of Police Kamal Kumar Baishya said.

### Cong. gets boost in Manipur

IMPHAL

The Congress candidates for the two Lok Sabha seats in Manipur have received a shot in the arm with the Janata Dal (secular), the Trinamool Party Manipur, the Democratic Janata Party and the Manipur Samajwadi Party announcing their support for them. Manihar Goswami, convenor of the four political parties, said, "We are of the view that the Congress is the only party which can save democracy and the country."

### Spoke as an economist: Kumar

NEW DELHI

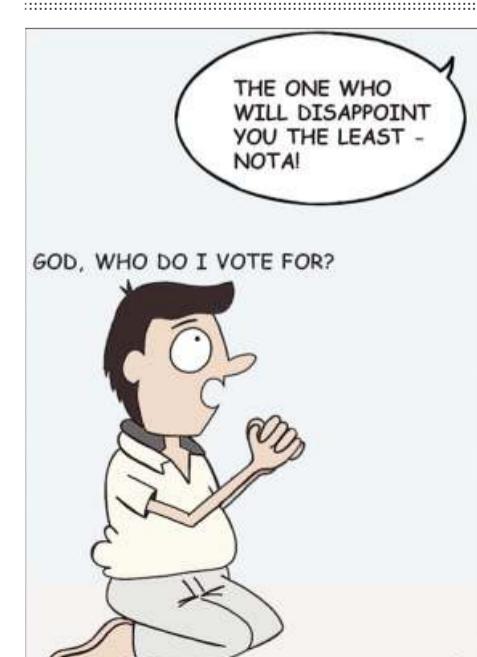
NITI Aayog vice-chairman Rajiv Kumar is learnt to have told the Election Commission that he spoke against Congress's NYAY scheme as an economist and not as part of the policy body. In his reply to a show-cause notice submitted on Tuesday, Mr. Kumar is also learnt to have said that he can speak out his mind as an economist on important issues concerning policy and economy. He said that his remarks should not be construed as the stand of NITI Aayog. On March 27, the poll panel had sought Mr. Kumar's response on his remarks in which he had attacked Congress over minimum income guarantee promise. PTI

### AAP not in fray in Maharashtra

MUMBAI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) will not be contesting the Lok Sabha election in Maharashtra, the party's State convenor Brigadier Sudhir Sawant (Retd) announced on Wednesday, citing the need to stop the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). "They will bury the Constitution and bring in dictatorship. Hence in the national interest, it was consciously felt that the political aim of the 2019 election should be the defeat of fascist forces. It may be recalled that Arvind Kejriwal had given a call to defeat the Modi-Shah duo in the larger interest of the country," Brig. Sawant said.

### POCKET | VASINI VARADAN



THE ONE WHO WILL DISAPPOINT YOU THE LEAST - NOTA!

GOD, WHO DO I VOTE FOR?

## ELSEWHERE



Malaysia's ex-PM Najib goes on trial

KUALA LUMPUR  
Malaysia's disgraced ex-leader Najib Razak pleaded not guilty to all charges against him as he went on trial on Wednesday over a multi-billion-dollar fraud, almost a year after his shock election loss. AFP

## Sri Lanka interviews 47 potential hangmen

COLONBO  
Sri Lanka on Wednesday began interviewing 47 applicants for two positions as hangmen, officials said. "Since there is no living person... who has carried out an execution, we need to send the new recruits abroad for training," said an official, adding that Colombo was also yet to identify a country to provide training. AFP

## Chinese woman arrested at Trump's resort

A Chinese woman who passed security checkpoints at President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida carrying a thumb drive coded with "malicious" software was arrested on Saturday for entering a restricted property and making false statements to officials, according to a court filing. REUTERS

# Bouteflika resigns, but calls for 'sweeping change' continue

His departure follows weeks of protests spearheaded by young Algerians

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
ALGIERS

Flag-waving Algerians celebrated the resignation of veteran President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, but vowed on Wednesday to keep protesting to demand sweeping change to the country's political system.

The departure of Mr. Bouteflika, 82, announced on state media late on Tuesday, followed weeks of massive demonstrations that have shaken the North African nation. Car horns sounded on the streets before jubilant crowds converged in the centre of the capital Algiers to cheer his departure. Many Algerians have never known any President other than Mr. Bouteflika, who held power for two decades but was rarely seen in public since suffering a stroke in 2013.

## Changing the 'system'

Protesters in Algiers welcomed his departure but said they were determined to continue demonstrating, rejecting any transition that leaves power in the hands of the "system". "I want my daughter to remember this historic day. Bouteflika's gone, but it's far from over,"



**A momentous occasion:** People celebrating on the streets of Algiers on Tuesday after Abdelaziz Bouteflika submitted his resignation as President. ■ REUTERS

said 35-year-old Amal, who wore a T-shirt with the slogan "I am against the system" and vowed to march again on Friday.

Algeria's Constitutional Council said on Wednesday that it had accepted Mr. Bouteflika's resignation and informed Parliament that his post was officially vacant.

Algeria's constitution says that once the President officially resigns, the Speaker of the upper house of Parliament, currently Abdelkader Bensalah, acts as interim leader for up to 90 days during which a presidential election must be organised.

Discontent, particularly among the young, turned to anger after Mr. Bouteflika announced in February that he would seek a fifth term in office in an election that had been scheduled for this month. He dropped his bid in the face of the mass protests but also postponed the vote, angering Algerians who saw the move as a ploy to stay in power.

As pressure mounted, state television announced late on Tuesday that Mr. Bouteflika had submitted his resignation to the Constitutional Council. The decision aimed "to contribute to the

appeasement of the hearts and minds of my compatriots, to allow them to take Algeria towards a better future to which they legitimately aspire," his resignation letter read. Footage showed Mr. Bouteflika handing the letter to the council's head, Tayeb Belaïd.

The resignation came after the military demanded impeachment proceedings. Armed forces chief Ahmed Gaid Salah said the army's "sole ambition" was to "protect the people from a handful of (other) people who have taken over the wealth of the Algerian people".

# A long reign comes to an end

But the regime Bouteflika built survives his presidency

STANLY JOHNY

## Who is Bouteflika?

■ Since February 22, tens of thousands of Algerians, especially the youth, have thronged Algeria's cities, including the capital Algiers, demanding that President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, 82, go. His political career goes back to the pre-independence years. At age 19, Mr. Bouteflika joined the National Liberation Army, the military wing of the National Liberation Front (FLN) that was fighting the French colonialists for independence.

vil war and stabilising the economy, he is also known for his ruthless administrative style that denied several basic freedoms. The presidential elections were hardly free and fair.

In 2014, he won a fourth term without inviting much public protest even as he had withdrawn from the public by that time following the previous year's stroke. But the resentment was gradually rising, particularly amid mounting economic woes following the 2014

introduce political and economic reforms. Protesters rejected these offers. As it was evident that Mr. Bouteflika could not resolve the crisis, both the FLN, the ruling party, and the Army turned against him.

On Tuesday, Army chief Ahmed Gaid Salah held a meeting with generals and top officials of the Defence Ministry after which he demanded Mr. Bouteflika vacate immediately. Within hours, Mr. Bouteflika announced the resignation.

## EXPLAINER

## What next?

■ According to Algeria's Constitution, the head of the Council of the Nation, the upper house of Parliament, should become interim leader for up to three months if the President steps down and then elections have to be held. Abdelkader Bensalah, the current Parliament chief, has already taken over the responsibility. It is to be seen whether the protesters will now vacate the streets and accept the transition. Some of them have called for a break with the system and demanded a democratic transition. They don't want the vestiges of the old regime to be in control. But for now, only Mr. Bouteflika is gone. The regime he built has survived.

## In the post-independence government led by revolutionary leader Ahmed Ben Bella, Mr. Bouteflika was a Minister. In 1963, Bella appointed him Foreign Minister, a post which he would hold till 1979. In 1999, when the country was in the midst of a civil war between the government and the Islamist militants, he won the presidency. In three years, Mr. Bouteflika brought the civil war to an end and his government built a strong welfare state funded by revenues from oil and gas exports.

## Why did he resign?

■ After protests broke out, he backed off from the early plan to seek a fifth term, but said elections would be postponed. He also promised to

commodities meltdown.

While the country was battling economic woes, the President was missing. He has been wheelchair-bound and has rarely been seen in public recently.

Five years of economic troubles and growing scepticism about the President's health have added to the public resentment. So when the ruling party said Mr. Bouteflika will seek a fifth term, the Algerian society erupted into protests.

## Why did he resign?

■ While Mr. Bouteflika is credited with ending the ci-

# U.S. State Department approves \$2.6 billion chopper sale to India

If Congress takes no action for the 30-day period, the MH-60R helicopters sale will move forward; Lockheed Martin is the principal contractor

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN  
WASHINGTON

The U.S. Department of State has approved the sale of 24 MH-60R 'Romeo' multi-mission helicopter to India under its Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme. The value of the potential sale is \$2.6 billion, as per a statement released on Tuesday by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), the body that administers the FMS programme. The principal contractor for the deal will be Lockheed Martin.

The DSCA submitted its certification notifying the U.S. Congress of the possible sale, kicking off a 30-day notification period. Congress is not required to approve or disapprove the potential

sale. If it simply takes no action for the 30-day period, the sale moves forward. The Indian government had submitted a Letter of Request for the Romeoos last year, as reported by the media last November.

## Enhanced capability

"The proposed sale will provide India the capability to perform anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare missions along with the ability to perform secondary missions, including vertical replenishment, search and rescue, and communications relay. India will use the enhanced capability as a deterrent to regional threats and to strengthen its homeland defence," the DSCA said.



**On offer:** A model of the MH-60R Seahawk helicopter at an Aero India exhibit in Bengaluru.

In the case of India and most other non-NATO countries, Congress must be notified for sales of Major Defense Equipment (MDE) of \$14 million and above, defense articles and services of \$50 million and above and design and construction services of \$200 million and above. The statement notes that India typically requires

offsets and that any offset agreement will be defined between India and the contractor.

"We are confident the MH-60R 'Romeo' is the right aircraft for India's Navy as it provides a vital capability for the Navy in the Indo-Pacific region," Lockheed Martin said in an email statement to *The Hindu*. "In addition, an

MH-60R acquisition allows the Indian Navy to benefit from the ongoing support provided for over 300 MH-60Rs in operation around the world today."

Along with the hardware requested by the Indian government are requests for personnel training and training equipment, U.S. government contractor engineering, logistics and technical support services, the statement said.

## Multi-mission role

There are over 300 MH-60R helicopters globally and they have accumulated over 6,00,000 flight hours, according to Lockheed Martin. The chopper is available off the shelf and costs no more

than \$5,000 per flight hour, and it is designed to operate from destroyers, frigates, cruisers and aircraft carriers as per the manufacturer. The multi-mission capability of the Romeo includes anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare, search and rescue, vertical replenishment, command and control.

The MH-60R has "situational awareness and actionable knowledge, enabling target engagement both close-in and over-the-horizon", according to its manufacturer. "This proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security of the U.S. by helping to strengthen the U.S.-Indian strategic relationship and to improve the security of a major defensive partner which continues to be an important force for political stability, peace, and economic progress in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia region," the DSCA said.

India was granted the unique Major Defence Partner (MDP) designation in 2016 by the Obama administration – a step towards India accessing U.S. military technology at a level on par with those of the U.S.'s closest allies. India was then given Strategic Trade Authorisation-1 (STA-1) status by the U.S. in August last year, the third Asian country after South Korea and Japan (and 37th country globally) to acquire it. This was to further facilitate the transfer of technology in the defence and space sectors.

# China protests parallel initiative to block Azhar

ATUL ANEJA  
BEIJING

China on Wednesday raised its pitch against Washington's parallel initiative to designate Masood Azhar as a global terrorist, insisting that its diplomacy within the I267 committee of the Security Council was yielding "positive results".

In response to a question on Washington's attempt to designate Azhar as an international terrorist through a separate resolution, Chinese Foreign Ministry spo-

kesperson Geng Shuang said that most countries within the Council were not supporting the U.S.'s move.

He stressed that Washington's parallel initiative was needless as Beijing was making progress to build consensus to list Azhar as a global terrorist within the I267 committee itself. The Associated Press reported that a draft resolution circulated to Security Council members on March 27 by the U.S. would impose a travel ban and asset freeze on him.

Chicago's first openly gay Mayor as well as the first African-American woman to hold the post.

Since 1837, Chicago voters have elected only one black Mayor and one woman Mayor.

The initial field in the mayoral race consisted of 14 contenders, but Ms. Lightfoot managed an upset – sidelining moderates and establishment figures by promising to clean up city government and reduce economic inequality.

# May, Corbyn holding 'constructive talks' on Brexit

But the EU warns that agreement has to be passed in Parliament to avoid a no-deal exit on April 12

VIDYA RAM  
LONDON

Downing Street described talks between Prime Minister Theresa May and Opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn as "constructive," with further meetings scheduled to take place on Thursday, as the U.K. attempts to break the Brexit deadlock and avoid crashing out of the EU without a deal by April 12.

However, the Labour Party struck a more cautious note, saying there had not been as much change as Mr. Corbyn had expected. The EU warned that simply holding talks is not enough to be granted an extension beyond April 12, and that the withdrawal agreement would need to be passed by that date if a no-deal Brexit is to be avoided.

On Wednesday afternoon, the meeting between Ms. May and Mr. Corbyn was attended by a number of Cabinet and shadow Cabinet members, including Brexit Secretary Stephen Barclay, and Chief Whip Gavin Barwell. Mr. Corbyn was joined by his shadow Brexit Secretary Keir Starmer, adviser Seamus Milne, as well as party whip Nick Brown.

"Today's talks were constructive, with both sides showing flexibility and a commitment to bring the current Brexit uncertainty to a close," Downing Street said. "We have agreed a programme of work to ensure we deliver for the British people, protecting jobs and security."

In a statement following the meeting, Mr. Corbyn said



also raised the possibility of a confirmatory public vote on any deal to avoid leaving on a bad deal or no deal.

Both camps unhappy

It came amid signs of divisions within both parties, as Labour also indicated its commitment to ending freedom of movement with the EU, while some Labour MPs questioned the logic of engaging with the government in this way, warning that it was an attempt to make the party share responsibility for the government's vision of Brexit.

Meanwhile, Conservative MPs lambasted the government for engaging with Labour, which they warned could shift Britain towards a softer Brexit, while two Ministers resigned in protest.

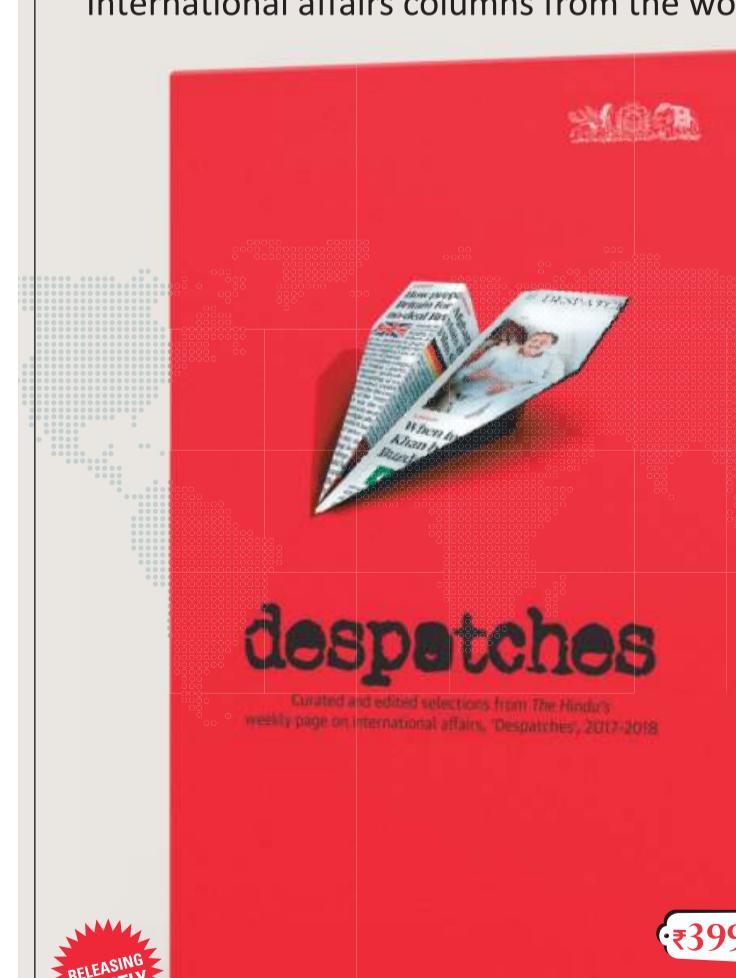
that he had put the party's perspective to the Prime Minister, in particular its push for a customs union with the EU, as well as strong guarantees around workers and consumer rights and environmental protections in line with EU standards. He

The talks provide a final opportunity for the U.K. to avoid a no-deal Brexit after Ms. May's withdrawal deal was thrice rejected by MPs, who also rejected all eight alternative strategies put to them. An effort by MPs to hold another series of indicative votes next week was unsuccessful on Wednesday, as Speaker John Bercow voted against it after MPs were told on the question.

European Commission president Jean Claude Juncker said the developments meant they had a "few more days". "If the U.K. is in a position to approve the withdrawal agreement with a sustainable majority by April 12, the EU should be prepared to accept a delay until May 22," he told the European Parliament on Wednesday.

For bulk booking, e-mail: bookstore@thehindu.co.in

Curated selections from *The Hindu's* International affairs columns from the world over



PRE-BOOK YOUR COPY AND GET 20% OFF

To Book Online



Visit: [www.thehindu.com/publications](http://www.thehindu.com/publications)  
For bulk booking, e-mail: [bookstore@thehindu.co.in](mailto:bookstore@thehindu.co.in)

Shipping charges extra

For any enquiries call: 1800 3000 1878

CM YK

ND NE

## MARKET WATCH

	03-04-2019	% CHANGE
Sensex	38,877	-0.46
US Dollar	68.41	0.48
Gold	32,750	-0.30
Brent oil	69.13	-0.11

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	382.00	+2.30
Asian Paints	1497.60	+21.70
Axius Bank	761.50	-5.90
Bajaj Auto	2847.30	-5.80
Bajaj Finserv	7401.55	+121.95
Bajaj Finance	3046.00	-9.20
Bharti Airtel	350.00	-6.45
BPCL	363.20	-17.30
Britannia Ind	2990.10	-4.10
Cipla	520.45	-2.20
Coal India	234.10	-2.30
Dr Reddy's Lab	2765.70	-33.55
Eicher Motors	20202.70	-380.80
GAIL (India)	352.45	-10.15
Grasim Ind	831.70	-13.95
HCL Tech.	1120.60	18.00
HDFC	2031.10	-17.15
HDFC Bank	2292.75	-2.10
Hero MotoCorp	2580.45	10.50
Hindalco	215.95	-1.00
Hind Unilever	1670.80	-16.35
Indiabulls HFL	869.85	30.40
ICICI Bank	392.10	-5.05
IndusInd Bank	1773.60	-0.95
Bharti Infralet	317.25	2.25
Infosys	753.30	-6.10
Indian Oil Corp	153.45	-4.70
ITC	296.15	-1.75
JSW Steel	289.90	2.80
Kotak Bank	1334.20	-5.25
L&T	1378.70	-31.70
M&M	658.45	-10.15
Maruti Suzuki	7072.90	183.20
NTPC	134.80	-0.35
ONGC	155.45	-2.05
PowerGrid Corp	200.95	1.15
Reliance Ind	1375.20	-14.50
State Bank	320.50	-8.50
Sun Pharma	462.00	-7.70
Tata Motors	201.35	-1.60
Tata Steel	535.45	4.80
TCS	2079.30	0.00
Tech Mahindra	777.70	-14.75
Titan	1100.50	-11.40
UltraTech Cement	4001.60	-24.40
UPL	924.25	-2.85
Vedanta	185.80	-2.10
Wipro	261.65	0.00
YES Bank	273.70	-6.60
Zee Entertainment	404.55	-13.15

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	68.22	68.54
Euro	76.71	77.08
British Pound	89.75	90.18
Japanese Yen (100)	61.18	61.46
Chinese Yuan	10.17	10.22
Swiss Franc	68.43	68.78
Singapore Dollar	50.44	50.68
Canadian Dollar	51.26	51.50
Malaysian Ringgit	16.72	16.81

Source: Indian Bank

## BULLION RATES CHENNAI

April 03 rates in rupees with previous rates in parentheses

Retail Silver (1g)	40.3	(40.3)
22 ct gold (1 g)	3002	(3014)

## IN BRIEF

## Rail Vikas Nigam IPO subscribed 1.83 times

MUMBAI

The initial public offer (IPO) of Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd., which closed on Wednesday, was subscribed 1.83 times till 7:30 pm, as per data available on the NSE website. Bids for 46.33 crore shares were received as against 25.35 crore shares on offer in the price band of ₹17 to ₹19. Retail investors will be allotted shares at a discount of ₹0.50 to the issue price. While the retail segment has been subscribed nearly 2.8 times, the portion reserved for institutional investors was subscribed nearly 1.4 times.

**Growth opportunities** He said it was his fervent desire that Jet Airways not only survived but continued to provide meaningful employment and growth opportunities to every employee.

"To this end I have consistently taken some hard, personal decisions. I have agreed to each and every terms and conditions laid

(With PTI inputs)

## Reliance Jio in ₹700-cr. pact with Haptik

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Reliance Jio Digital Services Limited (RJDSL), a subsidiary of Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), has entered into a definitive business transfer agreement with Haptik Infotech Pvt. Ltd., one of India's largest conversational AI platforms, for ₹700 crore.

"The transaction size, including investment for growth and expansion, is estimated at about ₹700 crore, with ₹230 crore as the consideration for the initial business transfer," said RIL in a statement, adding that the Haptik team would continue to drive growth of the business, including the enterprise platform as well as digital consumer assistants.

On a fully-diluted basis, Reliance would hold about 87% of the business with the rest being held by Haptik founders and employees through stock option grants.

The focus of the investment is on enhancement and expansion of the platform, with an addressable market opportunity of more than one billion users in India.

CMYK

## Why a rate cut won't help lower lending rates

Linking of floating loan rates to an external benchmark not operational yet

## MANOJ SAHA

MUMBAI

With the first bimonthly review of the Reserve Bank of India's monetary policy of this fiscal scheduled to be announced on April 4, there is an expectation of another rate cut as inflation continues to remain soft.

Though retail inflation – the central bank's main yardstick for policy making – rose to a four-month high of 2.57% in February, it is still below the RBI's medium-term target of 4%.

In the previous policy in February – which was the first one under Governor Shaktikanta Das – the central bank had reduced the repo rate by 25 basis points (bps) to 6.25%. [100 basis points = 1 percentage point]

Despite the rate cut, the response from banks, in cutting lending rates, has only been partial. Only a few banks reduced their marginal cost of funds based lending rate (MCLR) – the benchmark lending rate to which all the loans are linked – by 10-15 bps.

Bankers justify not passing on rate changes to end customers on two grounds: one, their cost of deposits has not fallen with a cut in the repo rate; two, monetary



Delay in norms: As final norms have not been issued, the new external benchmark scheme is not yet in place. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

## NEWS ANALYSIS

But banks have been prompt, and even ahead of the curve, when rates were rising. Many lenders, including State Bank of India and ICICI Bank, announced 20 bps MCLR hikes from March 1, 2018, while the RBI started the repo rate increase cycle in June 2016.

Monetary transmission has been an issue for the central bank for more than a decade and all the Governors tried to address it in the

last 10 years. First, Duvvuri Subbarao replaced the then benchmark prime lending rate regime with the base rate in July 2010. His successor Raghuram Rajan introduced the MCLR regime, which replaced the base rate from April 2016.

Both the base rate and the MCLR were a function of cost of funds of the banks.

With both the regimes largely failing to address the issue of monetary transmission, Dr. Rajan's successor Urjit Patel proposed a new regime in which the floating loan rates for small borrowers would be linked to an external benchmark. Four options were given to banks to choose the external benchmark, one of them being the

repo rate. In his last monetary policy held on December 5, Dr. Patel mandated that this new system of external benchmark-linked lending rates will come into effect from April 1, 2019. The final guidelines were scheduled to be issued by the end of December 2018.

The final guidelines are yet to be issued. Hence the new scheme was not made operational from the beginning of this month. Banks have opposed this system tooth and nail. They argue that the costs are not linked to external benchmark and lending rates should be a function of cost. But at the same time, SBI decided to link the savings account rate (for deposits over ₹1 lakh) to the repo rate from May 1.

RBI is yet to clarify why there is a delay in implementing the scheme even after it was announced.

In the February policy, when asked about shifting the lending rate to an external benchmark, Mr. Das said: "We have received comments from the public and the banks; they are currently under examination." The Governor may choose to clarify the RBI's position on the issue in the monetary policy review on Thursday.

## 'Ensure borrower discipline'

With SC quashing RBI's 2018 circular, new norms needed, says NITI Aayog CEO

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

With the Supreme Court quashing the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) circular on loan defaults, the central bank and the government will now have to sit together and bring a new regulation to ensure financial discipline among borrowers, said NITI Aayog Chief Executive Officer Amitabh Kant.

"A lot of work has been done by the government and the RBI to bring financial discipline and good regulation to end crony capitalism in India," Mr. Kant said, speaking on the sidelines of a capital market event organised by the World Federation of Exchanges and the National Stock Exchange.

"It is important that we ensure discipline so that money borrowed from financial institutions is repaid. [With] the Supreme Court striking down [the RBI circular] as *ultra vires*, the issue needs to be relooked by both RBI and



Job done: A lot of work has been done by the government and RBI to end crony capitalism in India, says Kant. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

central government to arrive at a new regulation, which will ensure that the financial discipline from borrowers should continue," he added.

On Tuesday, the apex court struck down a February 2018 circular issued by the RBI that gave lender banks six months to resolve their stressed assets or move under the Insolvency Code against private entities who

have defaulted in loans worth over ₹2,000 crore.

Incidentally, one of the factors missing from the RBI circular, as per the apex court order, was an authorisation from the government.

## Long-term growth

Mr. Kant, a 1980-batch officer of the Indian Administrative Services (IAS) and Essential Commodities Act needed to be scrapped.

essential for the long-term growth of the country, and hence the banking regulator and the government would have to come up with a new regulation.

Earlier in the day, while delivering the keynote address at the event, Mr. Kant said that the Indian economy must grow rapidly at 9-10% even as the country faced four main challenges – manufacturing with a focus on exports, gender parity, agriculture, and transforming areas that have remained backward.

He highlighted the fact that while India had demonstrated that it can manufacture on a huge scale, the focus had to be on exports that gave better value per unit of sales.

He also said that agriculture needed radical reforms and outdated laws related to Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) and Essential Commodities Act needed to be scrapped.

## Resolution plan taking longer, Jet tells staff, defers March salaries

Airline promises update by April 9

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Jet Airways' former chairman Naresh Goyal is believed to have pledged all his shares with banks to augment funding.

The move comes in the wake of the airline's operations coming to the brink and the management struggling to make both ends meet with the lenders delaying disbursement of fresh loan of ₹1,500 crore.

"I have agreed to sacrifice my every control and interest in the airline with the sole aim to ensure the Jet family's lasting welfare," Mr. Goyal said in a statement.

After the resolution plan came into force, his holding was reduced by half to 25.5% of which 16% was to be pledged with banks to release additional loans.

**International routes** Reacting to Civil Aviation Secretary Pradeep Singh Kharola's statement in Delhi on the need to examine if Jet

was eligible for international operations as its active fleet had reduced, an airline spokesperson said, "Jet Airways would like to clarify certain speculative media reports with regard to the airline's ability to operate on international routes. As informed to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), the airline is operating a curtailed schedule with sufficient number of aircraft, and is compliant with applicable guidelines."

## Dwindling fleet size

While the airline has officially not shared numbers, engineering staff at Jet Airways' Mumbai hangar said that 26 aircraft had been signed off to fly on Wednesday. "While the total strength is 29, three aircraft are on ground for maintenance and not due to lessors," an official said.

We want to be inspired by you. For us, Ambassador is an asset, of course. We understand what it represents in this country in terms of status, comfort and reliability," said Carlos Tavares, chairman, managing board, Groupe PSA, at a media round table.

## IL&amp;FS arm's gross NPAs stand at 90%

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

## IN BRIEF



## Radisson to double hotel portfolio by 2022

MUMBAI Radisson Hotel Group has announced plans to double the number of hotels in India by 2022. "Currently, we have 94 operating hotels and have 49 hotels in pipeline. By this year-end we will have 100 operating hotels. Every year we sign 12 to 15 new hotels and open 7 to 10 new hotels. We will reach our target of 200 hotels by 2022," said Zubin Saxena, MD and V.P., operations, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group.

## Shriram City Union to raise up to ₹750 crore

MUMBAI Deposit-taking non banking financial company (NBFC) Shriram City Union Finance on Wednesday said it plans to raise up to ₹750 crore through non-convertible debentures (NCD). "The funds will be utilised for various financing, lending, investments, repaying existing liabilities or loans, business operations and capital expenditure, among others," the firm's executive director Y.S. Chakravarti told reporters. PTI

## JK Tyre raises ₹200 crore from promoters

NEW DELHI JK Tyre and Industries said it has raised ₹200 crore through issue of equity shares on preferential basis to promoter group. At an extraordinary general meeting held on March 22, 2019, the shareholders had approved the allotment of 1,94,17,400 equity shares of ₹2 each at a premium of ₹101 to the group, the company said. The issue had been made to part-finance expansion of the truck and bus radial tyre capacity. PTI

# Amara Raja, Johnson Controls end alliance

Promoter Galla family to acquire 2% equity shares from international partner

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

The 22-year equity partnership between Amara Raja Batteries Ltd. (ARBL) and the Johnson Controls Group of the U.S. has come to an end. According to an announcement by ARBL to the stock exchange on Wednesday, the shareholders' agreement between the Galla Family, Johnson Controls (Mauritius) Pvt. Ltd. and Johnson Controls Battery Group has been terminated.

Consequent to the termination, which took effect on April 1, a few other agreements, including the technical assistance as well as the power frame and technology collaboration agreements, stand terminated from the same date, ARBL said in its filing. As of December 2018



Charting their own course: In this file photo, Ramachandra N. Galla (right) is seen with Jayadev Galla. ■ P.V. SIVAKUMAR

quarter, the R.N. Galla Family Pvt. Ltd. holds 24.24% while Mangal Industries, part of the promoter group holds 1.82% taking the total promoters' stake to 26.06%. Johnson Controls (Mauritius) holds 26% of ARBL. A spokesperson of the compa-

nier refused to share anything more than what was filed with the stock exchange.

In November 2018, Johnson Controls had said it wanted to sell its power solutions business

On the reasons behind the termination, ARBL said that in November 2018 Johnson Controls International Plc. had announced that it wanted to sell its power solutions business.

**No impact on operation'** ARBL, however, expects no impact on the operation as a result of termination of the agreements. "As a progressive organisation, the company would continue to invest into new technologies and nurture partnerships,"

the filing said.

Stating that over the years, all critical technologies had been fully absorbed, ARBL said it manufactured a wide range of batteries utilising most advanced product and process technologies to serve the customer requirements across various application segments.

Subsequent to signing of the power frame technology licence agreement in September 2018, the company had received complete technology know-how. Further, JC would continue to provide technology assistance to ARBL for an additional period, the statement said.

Shares of the company hit a new 52-week low-intraday before ending at ₹672.35, nearly 7% lower.

Volkswagen Group to merge three Indian arms

Moved aimed at operational synergy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

German automotive major Volkswagen Group said it plans to merge its three Indian subsidiaries – Volkswagen India Private Ltd., Volkswagen Group Sales India Private Ltd. and Skoda Auto India Private Ltd. to bring about synergy in operations and make the organisation more agile.

The proposed merger is aimed at making more efficient use of the existing synergies in developing India which is an important growth market.

The group's brands such as Volkswagen, Skoda, Audi, Porsche and Lamborghini would maintain their individual identities, dealer network and customer expe-



rience initiatives. But all these brands would work under the leadership of Gurpratap Boparai with a common strategy for the Indian market.

"With the proposed merger, we intend to combine the technical and managerial expertise of the three companies," said Gurpratap Boparai, MD, Volkswagen India and Skoda Auto India Private Ltd.

## Raymond forays into realty, plans to monetise Thane land

Expects revenue to total ₹3,500 crore in the next five years

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Textile major Raymond Group has decided to foray into the real estate development business by developing its Thane land, and expects revenue to total ₹3,500 crore over the next five years.

The company has set up a new division called Raymond Realty for its maiden venture into the real estate sector, which will develop 14 acres of land with five acres of central landscaped greens and amenities.

### 3,000 residential units

This first phase of the project will house 3,000 residential units across 10 towers. Each of the 42-storey towers will house 2 bed homes, the company said in a statement, adding that it had received over 500 'Expression of Interest' within 30 days during the soft launch.



Gautam Hari Singhania

Commenting on the development, Gautam Hari Singhania, CMD, Raymond Limited said, "Raymond has forayed into real estate development in order to monetise the land at Thane. [As] this land parcel is in the heart of Thane, it offers a massive positive upside potential for venturing into the real estate sector."

The project is expected to be cash positive on a year-on-year basis and would not require significant debt funding. The peak funding till FY20 is expected to be ₹250 crore and a major part of this had already been spent in the planning phase and obtaining statutory approvals, said the statement.

## Tata Projects bags \$321 mn NPCIL order

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Tata Projects has received an order from the Nuclear Power Corporation of India for the construction of 2 x 700 MW power plant, valued at about \$321 million. This is the firm's third contract in the nuclear power sector, said a statement.

Satyaranayana K., COO, Industrial Systems, Tata Projects, said, "Once completed, this project will provide the much needed power supply to the region and ensure developmental initiatives receive an impetus." The scope of work involves construction of main plant buildings, structures and other works of Gorakhpur Haryana Anu Vidyalaya Pariyojana – I&2.

## Roadis, NIIF to invest \$2 billion

Set up platform to tap opportunities in road projects

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Roadis, a private investor and operator of transport infrastructure worldwide and the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) have jointly set up a platform to invest in road projects in India. The platform would invest up to \$2 billion of equity targeting toll-operate-transfer models, acquisitions of existing road concessions and investment opportunities in the road sector with an aim to create a large roads platform in the country, NIIF and Roadis said in a joint statement.

"This agreement, which aligns with our growth strategy, strengthens our long-term commitment to India. NIIF is a partner that perfectly fits our profile given its

decades and will continue to offer large investment opportunities," said Sujoy Bose, MD and CEO, NIIF.

"The road network is a key enabler for the Indian economy to grow and sustain its position as the fastest growing major economy in the world, and this provides significant upside potential for investments, while creating value for users. We are delighted to partner with Roadis, which brings global expertise and has the ability and interest to invest substantial capital in India."

With strong investment and operational expertise, the platform intends to operate the roads portfolio with the highest global standards, creating maximum value for shareholders, the statement said.

# Want practice tests for NEET?

**empower**  
MOCK TEST SERIES

BY



THE HINDU GROUP

**Register for two scheduled online all India mock tests to benchmark yourself now**



To register, log on to  
<https://empower.thehindu.com>

**All India Online Mock Test Series for NEET**

Knowledge & Platform Partner



## IN BRIEF



**Police arrest man they say killed U.S. rapper**

LOS ANGELES

After a nearly 48-hour manhunt, police arrested the suspect they say gunned down U.S. rapper Nipsey Hussle. Eric Holder, 29, was detained on Tuesday. Holder is likely to make his first appearance in front of a judge in the next two days. Police said a tip from a citizen led them to Holder. AP



**Heirs welcome return of Nazi-looted masterpiece**

NEW YORK

Descendants of a Jewish Parisian art collector have welcomed the return to their family of a masterpiece — a 17th century painting — looted by the Nazis during the Second World War. U.S. authorities said the painting resurfaced in 2017 when a Chilean art dealer tried to sell it in New York. AFP



**Research in space may offer cure for Parkinson's**

WASHINGTON

Astronauts aboard the International Space Station are striving to provide an insight into Parkinson's disease. A team is studying the growth of protein crystals associated with Parkinson's and hoping to help researchers find a way to slow it. The low gravity environment is useful to produce better samples. IANS

## Dark matter not made up of tiny black holes'

Scientists challenge Hawking theory

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

TOKYO

Dark matter is not made up of primordial black holes smaller than a tenth of a millimetre, say scientists who have put the theory put forward by the late Stephen Hawking to its most rigorous test to date.

About 85% of the matter in the universe is believed to be made up of dark matter. Its gravitational force prevents stars in our Milky Way from flying apart.

However, attempts to detect such dark matter particles using underground experiments, or accelerator experiments including the world's largest accelerator, the Large Hadron Collider, have failed so far, according to a study published in the journal *Nature Astronomy*.

Researchers led by Kavli Institute for the Physics and Mathematics of the Universe

# South Korea first to roll out 5G services, beating U.S. and China

Technology expected to change the landscape of the gaming industry

REUTERS  
SEOUL

South Korea will become the first country to commercially launch fifth-generation (5G) services on Friday as it rolls out the latest wireless technology with Samsung Electronics' new 5G-enabled smartphone Galaxy S10.

With one of the world's top smartphone penetration rates, South Korea is in a race with China, the United States and Japan to market 5G, hoping the technology will spur breakthrough in fields such as smart cities and autonomous cars, and drive up its economic growth that slowed to a six-year low in 2018.

"It is meaningful that South Korean telecom companies are providing services and networks meeting South Korean customers' high standard in speed and picture quality," Ryu Young-sang, executive vice president at the country's top mobile carrier SK Telecom, said on Wednesday.

5G will change the land-



**Work and play:** An employee demonstrates 5G services during a press conference of telecom operator KT in Seoul. ■ AFP

scape of the gaming industry as it allows games streamed with minimal delay to be played on smartphones, Mr. Ryu added.

**Faster speed**  
The technology can offer 20-times faster data speeds than 4G long-term evolution (LTE) networks and better support for artificial intelligence and virtual reality with low latency.

Sometimes it can offer 100-times faster speeds.

South Korean carriers have spent billions on campaigns marketing 5G and, on Wednesday, SK Telecom showed off K-pop stars and an Olympic gold medallist as its first 5G customers.

SK Telecom is working with its memory-chip making affiliate SK Hynix to build a highly digitised and connected factory powered by

5G technology, Mr. Ryu said. The operator expects about 1 million 5G customers by the end of the year. It has a total of 27 million users. Rival KT Corp is set to offer cheaper plans than its LTE service, with unlimited data and 4-year instalments to buy 5G devices.

### Samsung on top

Samsung was the first to unwrap a 5G phone in February when it unveiled the Galaxy S10 5G and a nearly \$2,000 folding smartphone, putting the world's top smartphone maker by volume in pole position in the 5G race, some analysts say.

Smaller local rival LG Electronics plans to release its 5G smartphone in South Korea later this month.

In the U.S., carrier Verizon plans to launch its 5G network in two cities on April 11.

Among South Korea's top three telecom operators, SK Telecom and KT Corp do not use Huawei equipment for 5G services.

# U.S. Agriculture Department closes 'kitten slaughterhouse'

Animal rights group had exposed deadly experiments

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WASHINGTON

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced this week that it would no longer use cats in research that, according to a watchdog group, involved forced "cannibalism" and resulted in over 3,000 of the animals being put down since 1982.

Over more than three decades, in a laboratory in Beltsville, near the capital Washington, scientists fed cats and kittens meat possibly contaminated with the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii*, according to the White Coat Waste Project.

The researchers then tested the cats' stools to confirm the presence of *Toxoplasma* — which can only complete entire life cycles in cats — in the meat.

After three weeks, they went on to euthanise the cats even though they were healthy.

At least 3,000 cats and kittens were used since 1982, according to the White Coat Waste Project, which unveiled the "kitten slaughterhouse" in May 2018. The



moment of unity for Democrats and Republicans, with at least 60 co-signing the "Kitten Act" to stop the programme.

"Hardworking taxpayers shouldn't be funding government kitten abuse," said Republican Congressman Matt Gaetz. Under that pressure, USDA said that "the use of cats as part of any research protocol in any ARS (Agricultural Research Service) laboratory has been discontinued and will not be reinstated."

"This is a major victory for kittens, cats, and taxpayers," said Nevada Congresswoman Dina Titus.

The 14 remaining cats will be adopted by officials at the department, which pointed out the research has contributed to halving the rate of people infected with the parasite, which is dangerous for pregnant women and can be deadly.

The best way to avoid infection is to thoroughly cook meat and wash your hands after gardening or cleaning cat litter.

# Extra holidays pose a dilemma for Japanese

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
TOKYO

when we are suddenly given 10 days of holidays," said 31-year-old finance worker Seishu Sato. "If you want to go travelling, it's going to be crowded everywhere and tour costs have surged... I might end up staying at my parents' place," he said.

A survey by the Asahi Shimbun daily showed 45% of Japanese "felt unhappy" about the long vacation, with only 35% saying they "felt happy".

Phenomenon indicates that climate change is affecting even remote spots, says scientist

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SYDNEY

The world's southernmost coral reef has been hit by bleaching this summer, Australian scientists said on Wednesday, as they warned rising sea temperatures from climate change were affecting even the most isolated ecosystems.

The corals off Lord Howe Island — some 600 km offshore from Sydney — were af-

fected by elevated temperatures this summer, despite escaping severe bleaching that damaged the Great Barrier Reef in 2016 and 2017.

"It's a canary in the coal mine that we are seeing bleaching at this very isolated southernmost reef," said Bill Leggat of the University of Newcastle.

"It's just another indicator that climate change is affecting everywhere around the

world. Here is a reef that is 600 km from the mainland and we are seeing bleaching there in a lovely, beautiful ecosystem," he said.

### Shallow lagoons

Mr. Leggat and other scientists from several Australian universities and the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration found severe bleaching of up to 90% at Lord Howe's inshore,

shallow lagoon reefs. Deep-water corals in the marine park, which contains species not found anywhere else and like the Barrier Reef is a World Heritage site, were still "looking quite healthy" having mostly escaped the bleaching, Mr. Leggat said.

Mr. Leggat said increasing baseline temperatures caused by climate change, and local factors such as elevated temperatures in the

area this summer, caused the bleaching to occur. The scientists are set to return to Lord Howe in the next few months to find out if some corals have been so severely bleached they can't recover.

Bleaching occurs when abnormal environmental conditions, such as warmer sea temperatures, cause corals to expel tiny photosynthetic algae, draining them of their colour.

# London exhibition pays tribute to the queen of the mini-skirt

Mary Quant is among Britain's most iconic designers

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON



A Mary Quant retrospective at the V&A Museum. ■ AFP

as for her designs, the petite Ms. Quant also created hot pants, the skinny rib sweater and waterproof mascara.

Her personality and style made her "probably the most famous fashion designer that has come out of this country," according to V&A fashion curator Jenny Lister.

"She was in the right place at the right time and that was part of her success."

She explored geometric designs, polka dots and contrasting colours, and played with new fabrics, including PVC and stretch fabrics, to achieve a modern and playful look.

# Madhur Jaffrey gets new role as rap grandma

At 85, the actor and cookbook author brings sass to the music video for a rap song by Mamdani

LIGAYA MISHAN

NEW YORK

The halal cart was shaking. Inside the hot tin box, 85-year-old actor and cookbook author Madhur Jaffrey, masked in giant sunglasses and a rippling white wig, was hopping up and down and making profane gestures with both hands.

It was day two of the video shoot for *Nani*, a rap song by Zohran Mamdani, who calls himself Mr. Cardamom.

### Gangsta nani

The elegant Ms. Jaffrey — best known for her roles in the Merchant-Ivory film *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) and, more recently, NBC sitcom *I Feel Bad* — was incarnating a gangster granny who refuses to submit to her son's beat-



Zohran Kwame Mamdani and, right, Madhur Jaffrey. ■ NYT

ing demands for less meddling and more dutiful child care. In the video, which debuted on Monday online, the character describes herself as "85 years gold" and "the best damn Nani that you ever done seen".

She is prone to slapping bothersome men on the street (who cower even as they loom over her) and insisting that restaurant maîtres d' come grovel and refill her water glass. "It's like playing Lady

Macbeth," Ms. Jaffrey said. "If you're an actress, you have to play everything."

### Unlikely pairing

In what may be the unlikely pairing since Martha Stewart and Snoop Dogg, Ms. Jaffrey agreed last spring to appear in Mr. Mamdani's video after he wooed her over a cup of chai.

She watched rap videos as research, and grew nervous. The biggest challenge: to mouth the lyrics at top speed, while staying on the beat.

The song was written two years ago as an homage to Mr. Mamdani's then-85-year-old nani Praveen Nair, a former social worker in Delhi and a founder of the Salam Baalak Trust, which

helps underprivileged children living on the streets. "She has gone against the grain in so many different ways," Mr. Mamdani said.

# Eiffel's mini cannon to go on sale

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARIS

A miniature cannon which sat on Gustave Eiffel's desk in the Paris tower that bears his name is to go under the hammer, auction house Christie's has said.

Armaments maker Chobert gave Eiffel the two-foot-

long replica in 1889, the year the tower opened. Its big brother on the tower was fired to mark the opening of the World's Fair that May and every noon afterwards until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

# Eiffel's mini cannon to go on sale

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARIS

A miniature cannon which sat on Gustave Eiffel's desk in the Paris tower that bears his name is to go under the hammer, auction house Christie's has said.

Armaments maker Chobert gave Eiffel the two-foot-

**MI FAN FESTIVAL**  
4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> April

Offers on smartphones, accessories and TVs

<b>Redmi 6 Pro</b> 3GB + 32GB ₹7,999 ₹11,499	<b>Redmi 6</b> 3GB + 32GB ₹6,999 ₹8,999
---	--

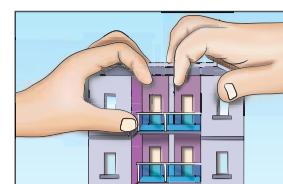
HDFC BANK 5% Instant Discount up to ₹ 500 on HDFC Bank Card and EMIs.  
Available at mi.com | Mi Home | amazon.in | Flipkart

# DELHI METRO



## Weighing traders' votes

Despite glitches in GST implementation and demonetisation, traders support BJP govt [Page 2](#)



## Builder dupes buyers

A builder lands in police net for duping two persons by selling the flats bought by them to different persons [Page 3](#)



## Web of intrigue

Evan Ratliff finds out how the dark side of the Internet helped a criminal mastermind broker everything [Page 5](#)



## In ice we trust

The first Indian Army officer to summit the 7 highest peaks, on how adventure has helped him travel the world [Page 6](#)

### IN BRIEF



#### Illegal dairies: NGT pulls up city authorities

NEW DELHI

Coming down heavily on the Delhi Pollution Control Committee and civic bodies over inaction towards illegal dairies and its waste management in the Capital, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has slapped a fine of ₹10 lakh each on the DPCC and the North, South and East Delhi Municipal Corporations.

[CITY ▶ PAGE 4](#)

#### Worker crushed under machine, one arrested

NEW DELHI

A 21-year-old worker was crushed under a machine while working in a factory in south Delhi's Asola on Wednesday afternoon, the police said. They said that the factory's owner has been arrested. Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Vijay Kumar said that the victim has been identified as Madhu Ram, who hailed from Uttar Pradesh.

[CITY ▶ PAGE 3](#)

#### Air quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	187	Gurugram	162
Ghaziabad	211	Faridabad	219
Noida	166	Greater Noida	208
Good 0-50	51-100	Moderate 101-200	
Poor 201-300	301-400	Very poor >401	Severe

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

## Mirror effect



A mirage appears on Rajpath on a hot Wednesday afternoon. Warm conditions prevailed in the Capital with the maximum temperature settling at 36.8 degrees Celsius, three notches above the season's average. [▪ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA](#)

## Sikh body members get notices for colouring hair, drinking alcohol

Panel calls move politically motivated; complaint alleges that their acts flouted the committee membership rules

DAMINI NATH  
NEW DELHI

Several members of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) have been issued notices by the Delhi Minorities Commission (DMC) to respond to a complaint that alleges they coloured their hair and/or drank alcohol, acts that flout the committee membership rules.

DMC member Kartar Singh Kochhar said the panel had received a complaint from a member of the Sikh community against DSGMC members, including its president Manjinder Singh Sirsa. The complaint alleges that some of the DSGMC mem-

## JNU case: court seeks time frame from govt

Directs Additional Public Prosecutor to inform it within 3 days

NIRNIMESH KUMAR  
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Wednesday directed the Additional Public Prosecutor in the JNU sedition case to inform it within three days a time frame within which the Delhi government would be able to decide the prosecution sanction requested by the city police.

Former JNU Students' Union president and CPI candidate for Begusarai in Bihar, Kanhaiya Kumar, and others are being prosecuted for sedition and other charges in the case.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Deepak Sherawat said: "The sanction to prosecute must be decided within a time span which is fairly necessary to do whatever is required to be done to ensure that trial may not be held back for too long."

**Home Dept letter**  
Observing that grant or refusal of sanction is an administrative act which must be performed within a reasonable time, Mr. Sherawat said, "The AAP is directed to submit a report as to within how much time the matter regarding grant or otherwise of sanction is likely to be decided."

Later, the CMM posted the matter to coming Friday.



Former JNUSU president Kanhaiya Kumar, and others are being prosecuted for sedition. ■ FILE PHOTO

Earlier, in compliance with the court order, the AAP filed a letter written by the government's Home Department to the Director, Prosecution, where it was stated that the issue of sanction is under consideration. However, the letter did not mention any time frame on taking a decision on it.

**Anti-India slogans**  
Thereafter, the court passed the direction seeking an exact time period for it.

The accused have been

charged with allegedly shouting anti-India slogans on the JNU campus in 2016.

Section 196 of the Criminal Procedure Code states that "no court shall take cognisance of any offence punishable under Chapter VI of the Indian Penal Code except with the previous sanction of the Central government or of the State government." And Section 124-A (sedition), under which the accused have also been charged, is placed under this chapter.

make it clear that the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers would be binding on the Lieutenant-Governor on all but three reserved subjects.

**Promising justice'**

On Wednesday, AAP Delhi convener Gopal Rai said he had written a letter to Mr. Gandhi asking him to reconsider the issue, since the Congress had in 2015 promised full statehood for Delhi, but had now backed down from the position.

In his letter, Mr. Rai said

## Golden chance to get rid of Articles 370 and 35A'

RSS leader says Muslims are equal partners in the development of the country

### ELECTION 2019

JATIN ANAND  
NEW DELHI

The country needed to utilise the "golden opportunity" to get rid of Articles 370 and 35A by choosing the BJP in the upcoming election, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) leader Indresh Kumar said here on Wednesday.

Mr. Kumar, who is also the national convener of the RSS-affiliated Muslim Rashtriya Manch, termed the Articles "divisive" and "inimical" to both the unity of the

Indian people and the Constitution.

A day after the Congress released its manifesto, which stated it would not change the government's constitutional position on Jammu and Kashmir if voted to power, Mr. Kumar attacked the party for "weakening" the security apparatus of the country continuing to allow "separate status" to the State and exposing its "anti-democracy, anti-people and anti-national" nature.

"This is a golden opportunity to relegate Articles 370 and 35A to history. People say similar rules and laws are in place in other

States too, such as in the Northeast, but that is really not the case. No other Indian State has its separate flag, property rights, citizenship rights; no other State has its own Constitution or a provision for having its own PM," said Mr. Kumar.

#### Positive response

The Congress, he argued, had "all along kept Muslims out of the mainstream" in the name of minority politics.

"They are equal partners in the development of the country. We are trying to impress this fact upon them and our efforts are getting a positive response from the Muslim community," he added.

## AAP urges Rahul to support statehood demand

Gopal Rai's letter comes a day after Congress released its election manifesto

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A day after the Congress released its manifesto for the 2019 Lok Sabha election, the Aam Aadmi Party on Wednesday urged Congress president Rahul Gandhi to add full statehood for Delhi to the manifesto.

The Congress manifesto included the promise of granting Puducherry statehood, but for Delhi the party stopped short of that, saying it would amend the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991 to

make it clear that the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers would be binding on the Lieutenant-Governor on all but three reserved subjects.

#### Worst vendetta

"For undoing the injustice to Delhi, it is time for a fresh constitutional amendment to provide it with full statehood. Since 2015, when a new government was elected by the people of Delhi with a historic mandate, the Modi government unleashed

the worst kind of vendetta on it," Mr. Rai wrote.

Listing out the issues faced by the AAP government, Mr. Rai wrote: "I request you to reconsider the stand taken by your party in the manifesto regarding Delhi and support the demand for full statehood, which will allow the people of Delhi to lead their lives with dignity."

Mr. Rai's letter comes a day after Mr. Gandhi said his party was "flexible" with regard to alliances when asked about a potential tie-up with the AAP in Delhi.

## ASI accused in double murder case dismissed from service

He had killed sister-in-law, her fiancé on temple premises

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police on Wednesday dismissed Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Dinesh Kumar from service after he was found involved in the Ghaziabad double murder case.

Additional Commissioner of Police (Eastern Range) S.N. Mosobi ordered the dismissal of ASI Dinesh Kumar, posted in Apsara border area in east Delhi, with immediate effect.

"After having committed the gravest misconduct, if the defaulter ASI is allowed to continue in the police force, it would be detrimental to public interest and further tarnish the image of police in the society. The facts and circumstances of the cases are such that it would not be reasonably practicable to conduct a regular departmental enquiry against the defaulter ASI," the order read.

The ASI had confessed that Preeti was his sister-in-law.

Due to family relation, Dinesh used to visit the family of the deceased frequently.

As time passed, the two got involved in a relationship.

She later got into a relationship with Chauhan and the rejection did not go down well with the accused.

The ASI and his accom-

panying partner took the ASI to the temple to seek his pardon.

On March 25, the ASI left from duty and went with his accomplice to the temple.

#### Used his service pistol

The ASI was furious to see Chauhan along with Preeti there. A heated argument broke out between them following which the ASI shot them with his service pistol. He pumped seven bullets into the couple. Ghaziabad police arrested the ASI and his accomplice. They recovered the weapon and three unused bullets used in the crime.

Anil Mittal, Additional PRO of the Delhi police, said the department takes strict against its officers for any kind of indiscipline or misconduct.

The charges on the ASI were grave in nature and he was found to be unfit for the police force, he added.



The Department of Education had argued that the single judge Bench had quashed the 2018 circular without going into its legality. ■ FILE PHOTO

## HC stays interim fee hike by unaided schools

DOE had challenged the Bench order

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday stayed an interim hike in fees by private unaided schools in the Capital on a petition by Department of Education (DoE), Delhi government.

The DoE has challenged the March 15 order of the Single Judge Bench of the High Court quashing an April 2018 circular which had prohibited private unaided schools functioning on government land from hiking tuition amounts without its approval.

The department argued that the Single Judge Bench quashed the 2018 circular without going into and deciding its legality. "Instead [the Single Judge Bench] has only looked into the validity and correctness of provision of October 17, 2017 circular, permitting fee hike," which, the DoE said, "is a fundamental flaw committed by the Single Judge [Bench]."

#### No prior approval

The DoE said the court had erred in holding that no prior approval of the department was required in case of interim fee hike as the same was not an act of fee increase by the school, but a dispensation by the department itself.

"The Single Judge failed

to appreciate the interim fee hike as contemplated in the circular of October 17, 2017, could not have obviated the mandatory requirement of prior approval in DDA land clause cases, even though, the same was a dispensation by the DoE as the said dispensation was merely an interim measure subject to detailed scrutiny and prior approval of the DoE once the accounts of the schools have been scrutinised," the Delhi government said in its appeal.

The plea said that the Single Judge Bench failed to appreciate that the said hike, even though interim, was nevertheless a case of increase in fee, which was clearly prohibited in terms of the mandate of the Supreme Court in Modern School case.

Acting on the DoE's plea, a Bench of Justice S. Muralidhar and Justice I.S. Mehta also issued notice and sought response of Action Committee Unaided Recognised Private Schools, in which a number of private schools are members.

The High Court said that till April 8, the next date of hearing, none of the 'land clause' schools will proceed to collect the interim hiked fee.

[SEE ALSO ▶ PAGE 2](#)

## Sikh body members get notices for colouring hair, drinking alcohol

Panel calls move politically motivated; complaint alleges that their acts flouted the committee membership rules

DAMINI NATH  
NEW DELHI

Several members of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) have been issued notices by the Delhi Minorities Commission (DMC) to respond to a complaint that alleges they coloured their hair and/or drank alcohol, acts that flout the committee membership rules.

DSGMC member Kartar Singh Kochhar said the panel had received a complaint from a member of the Sikh community against DSGMC members, including its president Manjinder Singh Sirsa. The complaint alleges that some of the DSGMC mem-



We are answerable to the Akal Takht, not the government. They have no right to issue such notices. This is an attempt by the AAP government to intervene in religious affairs," said Mr. Sirsa, who is also the BJP MLA from Rajouri Garden.

#### Issued to individuals'

DMC chairperson Zafarul-Islam Khan, however, said the notices were issued to "individuals, not the DSGMC" and that if the respondents replied to the notices saying that they followed the rules then there would be no case.

According to the complaint submitted by Daljeet Singh on January 29, many members of the DSGMC

were "patit", which means a Sikh who violates the tenets of the religion, as per the definition of a Sikh given in the Delhi Sikh Gurdwaras Act.

#### Sikh Rehat Maryada</h4

## IN BRIEF



## IIT-D and BIS to set up Centre of Excellence

NEW DELHI Indian Institute of Technology Delhi and Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) on Wednesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding to collaborate in the field of standardisation and conformity assessment. BIS and IIT-Delhi have agreed to set up a Centre of Excellence in the field of standardisation, testing & conformity assessment with the BIS branding at IIT-Delhi campus. STAFF REPORTER

## BJP to explain Centre's schemes to park-goers

NEW DELHI Purvanchal Morcha workers of the Delhi unit of the BJP will hold interactions with the city park-goers telling them about Modi government's schemes for their benefit while "exposing" AAP government in Delhi. PTI

## Lamba asks public if she should resign from AAP

NEW DELHI Disgruntled AAP MLA Alka Lamba on Wednesday asked the people outside Jama Masjid here whether she should resign from the Aam Aadmi Party as her "party people" were "repeatedly demanding" her resignation. Her visit to Jama Masjid followed a bitter Twitter spat with party lawmaker Saurabh Bharadwaj, who had taunted her to resign. PTI

## Ministry seeks EC's nod to start hiring in varsities

Delhi govt objects to it citing poll code

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI The HRD Ministry has sought the Election Commission's nod to start recruitment process in central universities while the model code of conduct is in effect.

However, the Delhi government has objected to the Ministry's request, saying the EC should not grant permission.

In a letter to the poll panel, the Ministry said, "In view of the UGC mandate to provide teaching and non-teaching faculty before start of new academic year in June, 2019, the Election Commission of India is requested to give its clearance/permission from model code of conduct for starting/continuing the recruitment process for regular teaching and non-teaching vacant posts in central universities".

# Most traders not upset with demonetisation, GST

Sealing drive, lack of credible alternative are a few issues to take centre stage

## SIDHARTH RAVI

NEW DELHI

Despite glitches in implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and cash crunch faced due to demonetisation, the trading community in Delhi is not annoyed with the BJP government, said secretary of Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) Praveen Khandelwal.

He echoed the view of several traders for whom issues of national importance and lack of a credible alternative took precedence while weighing their vote for the upcoming general election.

However, not everyone has decided on whom to vote for. A handful of traders *The Hindu* spoke to are waiting for developments during the election campaign to decide whom to vote for.

## Backs BJP

Vikram Khurana, who worked with a cloth trader in Chandni Chowk, said he lost his job because of demonetisation, but he still backs the BJP. "The person I was working for was not able to pay me. So I left. That caused some difficulty, but now I have a better job," he said. He used the BJP's slogan of *Sabka Vikas* to argue that under the Congress, only the rich and the Muslim community were being benefited, but "Modi ne sabko equal kar diya he" (Modi has



A handful of traders are waiting for developments during the election campaign to decide whom to vote for. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

made everyone equal").

However, not everyone is of the same view.

For traders affected by the sealing drive, local issues were more important. Jagdish Gupta, a shop owner in Defence Colony, whose store was sealed in 2017 said that Modi's actions on national security and at the international level were commendable, but the BJP had dragged its feet on sealing.

Surprisingly, AAP didn't receive much support either. Mandeep Singh Kholi of Amar Colony said that he didn't have any faith in Arvind Kejriwal. "Kejriwal said he would go on a hunger strike if our properties weren't desealed by March 2018, but he didn't do anything. Also, he stopped coming

to talk to us," said Kholi.

For these traders the Congress presents a better option given that in 2006 the party helped traders come out of similar issues with sealing by bringing in amendments.

## Not many favour Cong

But, a few argued that Congress rule had yielded no results and that the BJP government need time for its policies to get streamlined and show results.

Divansh Jain, another trader from Chandni Chowk, compared the political situation to selecting a phone model. "If you have an option between an iPhone and any other, which one would you choose? Sure the iPhone (in this case being compared to

Modi) has bugs, but it is still the best option we have. In any case, my soul won't let me put my vote for Rahul Gandhi" he said.

With regard to questions on communal politics 'engaged in' by the BJP, the CAIT secretary Mr. Khandelwal dismissed the suggestion saying it was a narrative borne out of an agenda by the party's opponents and certain sections of the media to paint the party as communal.

"There had been no riots in the last five years and things like lynchings in the name of cows were local issues that had been played up" he said while condemning the instances. The trading community is the most secular and does not discriminate, he said.

# AAP seeking votes by spreading lies on several issues: Puri

Minister tweeted purported pamphlet of AAP's candidate

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Wednesday alleged that AAP is seeking votes from Delhiites by spreading "lies" on several issues and asserted that a party which does not have the expertise of running an administration nor dedication towards works, is resorting to lies.

The Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister tweeted a purported campaign pamphlet of AAP's east Delhi candidate Atishi and said a

bunch of lies has been prepared by her.

## Contents of pamphlet

In the pamphlet, the party promises regularisation of unauthorised colonies once the national capital gets full statehood and also promises to stop the sealing drive in the city. "Every citizen knows that the sealing drive had been carried out following the direction of the Supreme Court-appointed Bhure Lal committee, and neither the Centre nor any civic body had anything to

do with it," Mr. Puri said in a series of tweets in Hindi.

No immediate reaction was available from AAP.

Mr. Puri alleged that it was the BJP-led Central government which provided relief to the people by making amendments in the Master Plan, but surprisingly, AAP is not "ashamed" of spreading lies".

The ruling AAP is currently running a campaign in support of its demand for granting full statehood to Delhi in the run up to the Lok Sabha elections.

# Kejriwal, Goel engage in heated Twitter fight over statehood

CM says Opposition seeking votes in the name of Vajpayee

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The war of words between the ruling AAP and the BJP over full statehood to the national capital is hotting up with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday charging that the Opposition party was seeking votes in the name of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, but doing nothing to "realise his dream".

The AAP has themed its campaigning for the Lok Sabha polls on its demand for full statehood to Delhi

and accused the BJP of "betraying" Delhiites over the issue.

## Taunting tweet

Mr. Kejriwal's attack on the BJP came in response to senior party leader and Union Minister Vijay Goel's tweet taunting AAP for seeking support on full statehood from leaders outside Delhi.

"Mamata Banerjee neither raised the full statehood matter nor did she support the demand for full statehood to Delhi in 20 years.

Mr. Kejriwal should first get those leaders support full statehood, along with whom he can be seen raising hands (in rallies)," Mr. Goel tweeted.

Kejriwal hit back reminding Goel that former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had brought a Bill in Parliament over the issue. "The BJP is touring the country carrying ashes of Atal ji and seeking votes but does not want to realise his dream," Mr. Kejriwal said in a tweet in Hindi.

# 720 complaints received on cVigil app: Delhi CEO

72% plaintiffs found genuine: Singh

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Over 720 complaints have been received from people through the 'cVigil' app by the office of Chief Electoral Officer here and 72% of those were found to be correct, the Delhi CEO said on Wednesday.

The Election Commission last year had launched an Android-based app - 'cVigil', using which a person can send to it geo-tagged videos and photos of illegal money being distributed or a hate speech being made during polls.

The CEO office has received over 720 complaints till date from citizens on poll code violation through the app, Delhi CEO Ranbir Singh said during an event here.

"Of the total complaints, 72% have been found to be correct and have been dis-

posed of while the rest are being looked into," Mr. Singh said.

He was speaking during an interactive session on 'Exercising Your Electoral Rights' hosted by FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO), the women business wing of Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

Till date Delhi has 1.41 crore registered voters which include 77.5 lakh male voters and 63.5 lakh female voters. The gender ratio of electors registered is about 812 women voters per 1,000 male voters, Mr. Singh said.

"The last date for getting registered as a voter in Delhi is April 13 and we expect more women voter to register in the national capital. New voters can register online as well as offline," Mr. Singh said.

## Stolen moments



Children play near a field on the banks of the Yamuna while their mother takes a nap. ■ ANUJ ARORA

# 'Cong will deliver on poll promises'

Yadav lists out schemes in election manifesto at cycle rally

## STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Addressing a public meeting during the "Haath Ke Saath Cycle Yatra" DPCC working president Devender Yadav said that the Congress manifesto has various schemes to address poverty, unemployment, farmers' distress and traders' woes due to the GST, problems of youth and women and myriad other issues which the common people are saddled with.

He added that if voted to

power, the Congress would fulfil each and every promise made in the manifesto.

Mr. Yadav said that during the last five years, the Modi government did nothing other than spreading lies and helping his rich industrialist friends.

## Slams Modi

"Mr. Modi sold big dreams to the people, telling them that ₹15 lakh would be deposited in the name of each bank account holder, 2 crore jobs

would be generated every year and several other promises, but nothing was delivered," Mr. Yadav said.

He added that the cycle rally was helping the Congress have door to door interaction with the people to expose the failures of both the Modi government at the Centre and the AAP government in Delhi.

The Delhi Congress also organised a chaupat at Janakpuri to discuss the Congress manifesto.

## STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The JNU Teachers' Association on Wednesday said that despite university Statutes, the university did not invite two professors for a meeting of the Executive Council and alleged that the university was "victimising" teachers for showing their dissent.

The teachers said that recent advertisement put out by the university administration for Assistant Professor positions also demonstrates

the utter disdain the administration has for the Act, Statutes and Ordinances of JNU and for the laws of the land. "The administration has conjured up a recruitment policy that has absolutely no sanctity," the JNTA alleged.

**Implementation of quota** They said that the policy of implementing EWS reservation in faculty recruitment is not according to the guidelines or regulations of the

UGC/MHRD or any law enacted by the government. "The documents referred to in the JNU advertisement of EWS reservation to faculty posts, refer only for reservation in direct recruitment to civil posts and services in the Government of India and not to teaching positions in the Central Educational Institutions," the JNTA said.

"The Vice-Chancellor has tended to treat the university as his estate where he can usurp all powers to himself

beyond the ambit of law and JNU Act. His unilateral decision to impose EWS reservation in teaching posts in JNU is just another example of the same," the teachers alleged in a statement.

**Undermines policy** They added that the advertised short-term contractual positions in the Schools of Management and Engineering undermines the reservation policy applicable to faculty appointments.

Govt appeal prohibited schools from hiking fees: CM

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI  
Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said that it was because of an honest Delhi government and its appeal to the High Court that private unaided schools in the national capital will not be able to make "arbitrary" hike in school fees.

A Single Bench of Delhi High Court had said in a verdict on March 15 that private schools could raise fees but the Delhi government appealed against the decision of the Single Bench and got a stay on the order.

"After the Delhi High Court's decision, many private schools in the national capital had raised the fees in the last one week, and thousands of rupees were being charged as arrears. Your government appealed to the High Court and prohibited schools from taking increased fees," the Chief Minister tweeted.

## STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A book on labour migration from South Asia will be released on Friday. The book, "Uncertain Journeys: Labour Migration from South Asia" edited by A.S. Panneerselvan, *The Hindu's Readers' Editor*, will be launched at the India International Centre.

Bharat Bhushan, colum-

# ABVP plans protest to raise issues faced by DU students

## STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) on Wednesday started a signature campaign in Delhi University ahead of a protest to be held on April 10 against the university administration.

The student leaders said that the protest will be led by DUSU to raise various problems faced by the students of different colleges in the university.

"Starting supplementary examinations, facilities for the differently-abled students, a 24-hour library, creating new reading hall, building new hostels, increasing dietary allowance for sports students, demand for a gynaecologist in the college medical room are some of the demands of the students," said president of DU-SU Shakti Singh.

ABVP Delhi State secretary Sidharth Yadav said,

"We have consistently been raising the long-standing demands of students with the DU administration, but the university administration has not paid heed to our requests. That is why we are protesting against the administration and in the interest of the students, we will continue our struggle till these demands are met."

A delegation from the ABVP also met the Vice-Chancellor Yogesh Tyagi re-

garding the issues and demands of research scholars of DU.

Central Working Committee member of ABVP, Abhishek Verma, who is a research scholar in the Chemistry department said that the scholars met the V-C to demand that research scholars of MPhil and PhD be given voting rights in Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) elections as per the Lyngdoh Committee recom-

mendations.

The delegation also demanded time-bound admission process for MPhil & PhD programme and evaluation of thesis within 3 months from the date of submission. They also asked the V-C to restore R&D grant and Delhi University Vice-Chancellor's travel grant for students and teachers to participate in international conferences, workshops and summer and winter schools.

## IN BRIEF



## Foreign national held at IGI with fake ID card

NEW DELHI A foreign national was apprehended by the CISF at the IGI Airport here for allegedly using a fake ID card to get entry into the highly-secured facility, officials said on Wednesday. They said the woman, from Uzbekistan, was intercepted in the terminal area on Tuesday. She had come to catch a flight to Hyderabad. She had a fake driving licence in the name of Kumush Khan issued in Gurugram, officials said. PTI

## Woman found dead in south-west Delhi

NEW DELHI A 24-year-old woman allegedly died by suicide in south-west Delhi's Kishan Garh, the police said on Wednesday. She was from Uttar Pradesh and had been preparing for competitive exams here. The incident happened on Tuesday and the police said they were informed about it around 10.30 p.m. In a note left behind by the deceased, the woman held no one responsible for her death, a senior police officer said. PTI

## 'Rape' case: accused nabbed after 7 months

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

An accused wanted in connection with an alleged rape case has been arrested, the police said on Wednesday. The accused had been absconding for the past seven months.

A police officer said that a team from Subhash Place police station on Tuesday arrested the accused, identified as Daljeet, a resident of Uddham Singh Nagar in Uttarakhand.

**Held from Uttarakhand** "The accused was arrested from Uttarakhand. He was absconding since the last seven months. Further investigation into the matter is under way," the police officer added.

The officer also said that the accused and the victim used to work at the same shop. He had allegedly called the victim at his place on the pretext of some work and forced himself on her.

The woman had registered a complaint at Subhash Place police station after the incident. Daljeet was evading arrest since then, the police said.

## DELHI TODAY

**Talk:** "Art and archaeology of ancient India: Earliest times to the Sixth Century", a discussion based on Professor Naman P. Ahuja's book. Followed by a discussion with Prof. Romila Thapar, Emeritus Professor of History, JNU; and Prof. Deborah Swallow, Marit Rausing Director of The Courtauld Institute of Art at C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, India International Centre (IIC), 6.30 p.m.

**Talk:** Panel discussion on "Unmistakable humanism of Mirza Ghalib and Rabindranath Tagore". Panelists: Reba Som, former Director, ICCR Centre, Kolkata; Prof. Radha Chakravarty, Writer and Professor at Ambedkar University; Prof. Anisur Rahman, Professor at Jamia Millia Islamia; Dr. Saif Mahmood, Author. Moderator: Amb. Surendra Kumar, President IAFB at Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m.

**Talk:** "Uttaranga", an interactive session with the artistes and director of "Rango'ntarama", a multi media dance production inspired by the philosophy of oneness of Kashmir Shaivism. Moderator: Dr. Arshya Sethi at Casuarina Hall, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m.

**Music:** A tribute to K.L. Saigal and his immortal songs by Shalini Bhagava. An audio-visual presentation followed by ghazals, presented by D.R. Gaurav Sood at Multipurpose Hall, India International Centre (IIC), 6.30 p.m.

**Music:** "Aye dil-e Begar Jhoom", a recital of some of K.L. Saigal's memorable songs by vocalist Nitin Koshi at Amritsari Hall, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m.

**Exhibition:** "Cartography of Narratives" a group art show by Bikash House, Pandara Road, 10:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.

(Mail your listings for this column at cityeditordelhi@thehindu.co.in)

## Builder dupes buyers, sells same flats to different persons; arrested

Accused neither cooperated in investigation nor responded to notices: cops

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 37-year-old builder has been arrested for duping two persons by selling the flats bought by them to different persons in south Delhi's Fatehpur Beri, the police said on Wednesday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Vijay Kumar said that the accused has been identified as Yogesh Kumar Bhati, a resident of Sultanpur village.

The police said that on March 8, they received a complaint from one Sanjeev Kumar. In it, Sanjeev said that Mr. Bhati was constructing flats for sale and he got him interested in the property. A few days later, a meeting was held where a deal was finalised, Sanjeev said in the complaint.

"He booked one flat measuring 630 square feet in Sultanpur village by agreement of sale dated January 27, 2017, with Mr. Bhati. The total value of the flat was ₹28 lakh. The complainant paid the entire amount to the accused in different transactions," DCP Kumar said.

Subsequently, the victim got the possession of the house in 2018, but had to lock the house as Yogesh had stopped taking his calls thereafter, the police said.

A similar complaint was made by one Tanuj Kumar, who said that he had bought a flat with three separate portions from Mr. Bhati and had paid him ₹60 lakh in

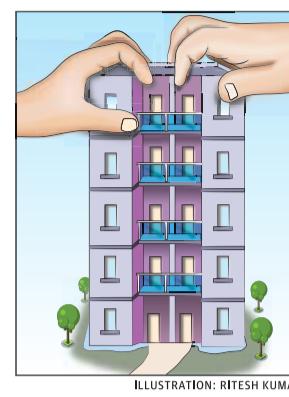


ILLUSTRATION: RITESH KUMAR

tion work", the police said.

On January 7 this year, when the victim went to see the flat, he found some people living in the house, who allegedly told him that they had purchased it from Mr. Bhati.

"When he called the builder and enquired as to how he sold the house to someone else, the accused agreed to return his money with damages. He handed him a cheque of ₹34 lakh and also promised to pay balance in due time," the officer said.

When the victim tried to encash the cheque, it bounced and the accused also stopped taking his calls thereafter, the police said.

"He [the accused] revealed that he had sold the same property through sale deed to different persons and received ₹30 lakh per flat from the buyers," the DCP said.

2018. After he was given possession, the accused made the same excuse.

"The accused told Tanuj that some renovation work needed to be done at the house. When the complainant went to see the property later, he was shocked to see the three portions bought by him were occupied by three different parties," said the officer.

The police also said that the accused neither cooperated with them in the investigation, nor responded to notices sent by the police. The accused was finally traced and arrested on Tuesday, the police said.

Maha Singh, a resident of Nuh's Manuwasi village, was pulling the shutters of his clinic near Sohna's Silani Chowk on August 7, 2012, when unidentified men had shot him.

## Seven years on, former sarpanch arrested for doctor's murder

Accused had an affair with deceased's wife; hired contract killers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GURUGRAM

several times, but the case remained unsolved.

However, the breakthrough in the case came a month ago when the Sohna Crime Branch, which took up the investigation into the matter, arrested Rizwan (34), a resident of Gannaur in Sonipat, on February 20.

Rizwan revealed two names—Vikram and Jaideep—during interrogation, leading to two more arrests in the case. All the three were involved in the murder of the doctor, the police said.

Raju, the fourth accused, was arrested on March 30.

A resident of Paldi Khurd, Raju had allegedly stolen the motorcycle used in the commission of the murder and handed it over to the contract killers.

It was revealed during interrogation of the accused that the deceased's wife Rekha and Mr. Dharambir, both residents of Ahir Majra vil-

lage in Sonipat, had illicit relations since their college days in 2009. Rekha got married to Singh in 2010, but continued to stay in touch with the sarpanch.

## Repeated run-ins

Mr. Dharambir allegedly had an argument with Singh over talking to Rekha after the latter had visited his in-laws after the marriage.

The two also had a scuffle on the day of the wedding of Rekha's sister, four months before the murder.

The doctor, who sustained injuries in the incident, had threatened to teach Mr. Dharambir a lesson. The sarpanch then paid ₹2 lakh in advance to the contract killers to murder the doctor, the police said.

Mr. Dharambir was arrested in Kaithal on April 1 and remanded to police custody by the court till Thursday.

## Two men from Madhya Pradesh held in city for supplying firearms

Fifty-two pistols seized from their possession, say police

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Two persons, both hailing from Madhya Pradesh, have been arrested for allegedly supplying firearms in the Capital, the police said on Wednesday. The police also claim to have seized 52 pistols from their possession.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Sanjeev Kumar Yadav said that the accused have been identified as Amarikan (25) and Sheetal Singh (22), both residents of Madhya Pradesh's Badwani. They were arrested from Rohini on March 31, he said.

The police said that a specific information was received that the two accused would deliver a huge consignment of illegal firearms in Delhi and would come to Sector 15 in Rohini for the same. "A trap was laid. The accused were spotted arriving in a car around 10 a.m. They were apprehended after a brief chase," Mr. Yadav said.

During interrogation, the accused told the police that they have been in the trade for over 10 years and it is also so their family business.

"Their families are in the business for probably more than 80 years. Several families in the villages are indulged in this illegal trade of manufacturing and supplying of firearms in various parts of the country, including Delhi," Mr. Yadav also said, adding that the two accused have expertise in manufac-

turing any weapon, including sophisticated pistols.

The police said that Amarikan's father, who also used to manufacture firearms, had taught him the skill. Both of his brothers deal in the same business. Mr. Yadav said that Sheetal, who has been in the trade for over eight years, runs a machine in the village to manufacture firearms and ammunition.



Huge haul: The accused with the cache of weapons seized by the Delhi Police, on Wednesday. ■ PTI

## Worker crushed under machine, one arrested

Case filed against owner for negligence

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 21-year-old worker was crushed under a machine while working in a factory in south Delhi's Asola on Wednesday afternoon, the police said. They said that the factory's owner has been arrested.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Vijay Kumar said that the victim has been identified as Madhu Ram, who hailed from Uttar Pradesh. The accused has been identified as Manish Kumar Gupta who has been running a factory at a rented property in Asola.

The police said that they received a call around 1.15 p.m. and were informed that the worker had sustained injury at the factory. "When the police reached the spot, they were told that

Mr. Gupta had put up a plastic bottle crushing machine and employed some workers for operating the machine," Mr. Kumar said.

## Died on spot

The police also said that the victim was operating the machine with another worker, Himanshu. As Madhu leaned partly into the machine to settle the crushed bottles, the shaft of the machine came down crushing and he died on the spot.

A case under charges of causing death by negligence and negligent conduct with respect to machinery has been registered and the factory owner has been arrested, the police said. The body has been preserved at Safdarjung Hospital mortuary and the family of the deceased has been informed.

## Rohini ashram case: ₹5 lakh reward on Dixit

His last-known location was in Nepal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has announced a reward of ₹5 lakh for information leading to the arrest of Virender Dev Dixit in connection with the alleged illegal confinement of girls and women, and rape at his ashram in Rohini.

The last-known location of the 77-year-old accused was in Nepal, where he runs another ashram.

"An Interpol Blue Notice was issued against him on March 26 last year. The agency also issued notices asking him to appear before the probe team. However, he did not turn up," said a CBI official.

In January last year, following a Delhi High Court directive, the CBI had taken over three FIRs registered

Virender Dev Dixit by the Delhi Police involving Dixit and his Rohini ashram, Adhyatmik Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya. Investigations in the case of allegedly obstructing the work of a High Court-appointed committee in the ashram have been completed and chargesheet filed against 59 women inmates.

The other two FIRs are against Dixit for alleged rape and criminal intimidation.

+   
 +

## Hop for the drop



People gather to fill water from a tanker, which comes once a day in the early hours, near Geeta Colony in east Delhi on Wednesday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

## HC asks Delhi govt to respond to Chautala's plea

INLD chief has sought parole to take care of ailing wife; next hearing on April 12

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday sought response of the city government on a plea by INLD chief O.P. Chautala seeking three months parole to take care of his ailing wife. Chautala has been serving a 10-year jail term in teachers' recruitment scam.

Justice Sangita Dhingra asked the Delhi government to file a status report and posted the case for hearing on April 12.

## 3-month parole

Chautala (85) has sought a parole for three months to spend time with his wife in her "last days", claiming that she is critically ill and is

currently in the Intensive Care Unit at a hospital.

The INLD leader also said that he had filed an application with the jail authorities in November 2018, for parole on the ground that he, being the head of the family, has to amicably settle the dispute between his two sons.

He said that he wanted to

look after his 83-year-old wife, who is suffering from various age-related chronic ailments, and provide for her medical treatment.

His parole plea was rejected by the Minister of Home, Delhi government, in January this year on the ground that he had already availed two weeks' parole and seven weeks' furlough in 2018.

## Govt nod for hoarding removal plan

Existing defacements to be removed within 24 hours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Delhi's Urban Development Department has prepared a policy on the removal of unauthorised advertisements and hoardings under the Delhi Prevention of Defacement of Property Act, 2007, said an official statement. Under the policy, defacement is of four types: posters, banners, wall graffiti and illegal hoardings/flexes/digital banners.

The competent authority has given compounding powers to the five urban local bodies (ULBs). Existing defacements as per the provisions of Delhi Prevention of Defacement of Property Act, the statement also said.

In compliance with Delhi High Court orders, a committee was constituted to frame a policy with the objective of ensuring cleanliness of public places, especially maintaining public property as per the provisions of Delhi Prevention of Defacement of Property Act, the statement also said.

The ULBs will identify three sites per ward for the display of political and social messages.

# NGT pulls up Delhi authorities for going soft on illegal dairies

Imposes interim fine of ₹10 lakh each on pollution control panel, civic bodies

## STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Coming down heavily on city authorities over inaction against illegal dairies and its waste management in the Capital, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has slapped a fine of ₹10 lakh each on the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) and the three municipal corporations.

Noting that authorities have "failed to discharge their duties," a Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel directed the DPCC and the civic bodies to deposit the interim compensation with the Central Pollution Control Board within one month.

"Neither polluting activities are being prevented nor prosecution initiated, nor assessment and collection of compensation for restoration of the environment is



The tribunal noted that the authorities had 'failed to discharge their duties'.

number of animals and number of diseased animals. No carrying capacity has been assessed or enforced to check overcrowding."

The Delhi Chief Secretary has also been asked to convene a meeting with the authorities concerned and furnish an action taken report by July 8.

### 'Lack of sensitivity'

Rapping officials for failure to devise proper action plan to tackle the issue, the Bench said, "Though various authorities of the Delhi government are represented by counsel, none of the authorities have undertaken to comply with environmental norms even though violation is clearly acknowledged...this shows lack of sensitivity on the part of all the authorities represented before this tribunal."

"They have failed to perform their constitutional duties and responsibility in protecting environment and enforcing right of citizens to clean environment. If this is the state of affairs in the Capital of the country, environmental rule of law will remain a serious challenge, even if it is recognised as a part of right to life," said the Bench.

The NGT also took note of a report submitted by a joint panel comprising representatives of the CPCB and DPCC which established violation of norms and failure on the part of authorities to take due remedial action.

The directions came while the green panel was hearing a plea moved by animal rights activist Nuggehalli Jayasimha who sought directions to penalise and shut down illegal dairy units in the national capital.

being done. The municipal corporations claimed to have recovered certain fines but no adequate measures (in terms of relevant rules) have been adopted to remedy polluting activities," the Bench observed.

Adding that the Animal Husbandry Department had failed to check overcrowding of animals, the Bench said, "(The department) has merely collected data of

## Tell me a yarn



**Softest bed ever:** A child rests on wool yarn at a wholesale market near the Inderlok metro station in Delhi. ■ ANUJ ARORA

## CBI surprise check at home of industrialist Hari Bhartia

India must re-establish itself as innovation hub, focus should be on learning-by-doing: Vice-President at IGNOU convocation

## STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The CBI, along with vigilance officers of various agencies, carried out a surprise check at the residence of industrialist Hari S. Bhartia for alleged illegal construction, officials said on Wednesday.

A joint surprise check is merely a verification exercise to ascertain whether any allegation deserves an investigation or not.

Mr. Bhartia, who is founder and co-chairman of Jubilant Bhartia Group, lives in the tony neighbourhood of Amritsar Shergill Marg. He is a former president of industry body CII.



**Looking forward:** Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu with faculty members and students at the 32nd convocation of IGNOU in Delhi on Wednesday. ■ PTI

The Vice-President stressed on the need for students to continuously learn to remain competitive. "Your learning does not end with the acquisition of an educational degree. Learn-

ing is an ongoing process and you need to upgrade knowledge on a daily basis to face a highly competitive world," Mr. Naidu told the students.

Speaking on the vital role

played by IGNOU, Mr. Naidu said the varsity has made knowledge acquisition accessible to many learners, who otherwise were unable to attend regular institutes of higher learning.

The Vice-President said, "The root cause of the problem in private and government-funded institutions is commercialisation and poor governance respectively. Higher education should transform an individual into a responsible human being with social, moral and ethical values embedded in him or her apart from making the person more productive."

**'Quality assurance'**  
The quality assurance and accreditation mechanism should acknowledge the transformative role of education in a broader sense and facilitate in widening the horizons of the Indian higher education system, Mr. Naidu added.

## IGNOU likely to start four new online courses

### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

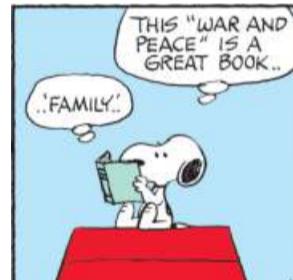
IGNOU is likely to start four online courses, including MA in Hindi, from July. The other courses will be certificate programmes.

The university has established a centre for online education, which has identified 85 online programmes, including 46 undergraduate/postgraduate certificate, that will be launched after getting approval from the University Grants Commission, said IGNOU Vice-Chancellor Nageshwar Rao. The university had online courses around 2011 but they were discontinued.

## POOCH CAFE



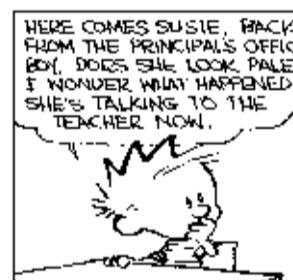
## PEANUTS



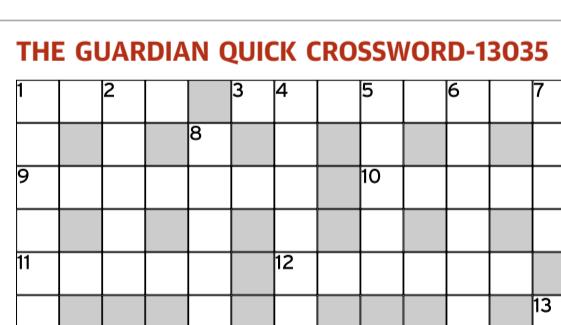
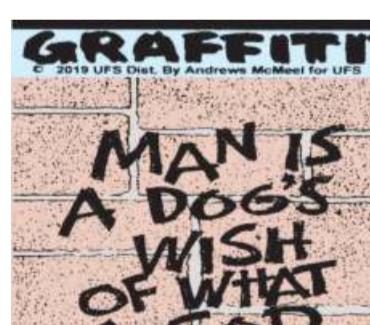
## HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



## CALVIN AND HOBBES



## TIGER

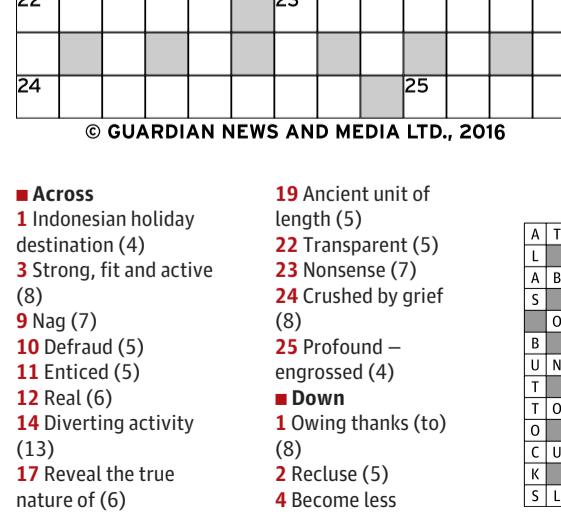
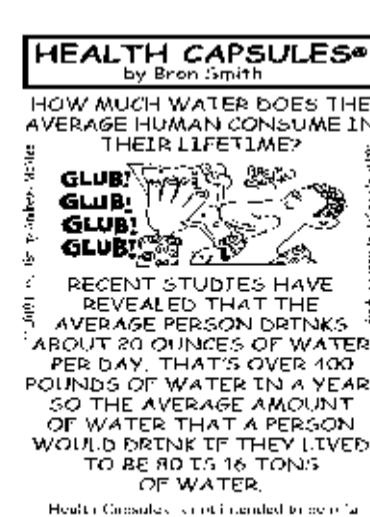


important (4,1,4,4)  
5 Allowable (5)  
6 Adolescent (7)  
7 Reductions (4)  
8 Tributary (6)  
13 Incriminate by unfair means (6,2)  
15 £10 notes (7)  
16 Stolen – arrested (6)  
18 Month that's autumnal in Oz (5)  
20 Hold responsible (5)  
21 Corrosive liquid (4)

Solution will appear in Delhi Metro dated April 5, 2019.

**Solution No. 1303**

## WUMO



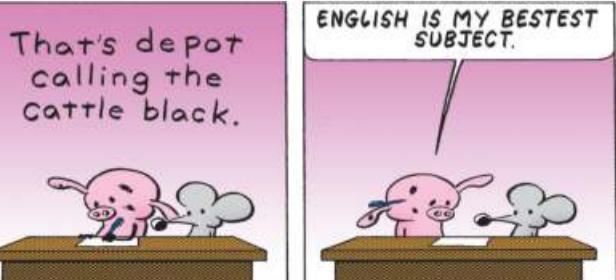
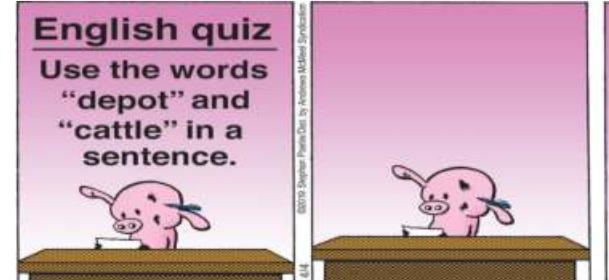
**Across**  
1 Indonesian holiday destination (4)  
3 Strong, fit and active (8)  
9 Nag (7)  
10 Fraud (5)  
11 Enticed (5)  
12 Real (6)  
14 Diverting activity (13)  
17 Reveal the true nature of (6)

**Down**  
19 Ancient unit of length (5)  
22 Transparent (5)  
23 Nonsense (7)  
24 Crushed by grief (8)  
25 Profound – engrossed (4)

**Across**  
1 Owing thanks (to) (8)  
2 Recluse (5)  
4 Become less (6)

**Down**  
1 Owing thanks (to) (8)  
2 Recluse (5)  
4 Become less (6)

## PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



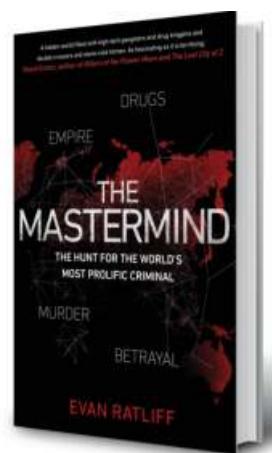
**Across**  
1 Indonesian holiday destination (4)  
3 Strong, fit and active (8)  
9 Nag (7)  
10 Fraud (5)  
11 Enticed (5)  
12 Real (6)  
14 Diverting activity (13)  
17 Reveal the true nature of (6)

**Down**  
1 Owing thanks (to) (8)  
2 Recluse (5)  
4 Become less (6)

**Across**  
1 Indonesian holiday destination (4)  
3 Strong, fit and active (8)  
9 Nag (7)  
10 Fraud (5)  
11 Enticed (5)  
12 Real (6)  
14 Diverting activity (13)  
17 Reveal the true nature of (6)

**Down**  
1 Owing thanks (to) (8)  
2 Recluse (5)  
4 Become less (6)

**Solution No. 1303**



He had a strong desire to be successful in the same way that many startup founders, whether it's Elon Musk or Mark Zuckerberg, wanted to win

Evan Ratliff

# Web of intrigue

In his new book, Evan Ratliff finds out how the dark side of the Internet helped a criminal mastermind broker everything from drugs to arms deals

SINDHURI NANDHAKUMAR

Arms dealers and drug cartel kingpins are no novelty. We've all watched enough *Narcos* to get a glimpse of how that world operates. But one particular journalist – New York-based Evan Ratliff (co-founder of *Atavist* magazine and co-host of the *Longform* podcast) – was convinced that the story of criminal mastermind Paul Le Roux was unique.

The reason? Because he believed that Le Roux was "fully a product of the Internet age", and that his story was very different to that of tech company founders like Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg. "It's an almost clichéd Silicon Valley startup story – Le Roux was a natural programmer, he dropped out of school and took computer classes on his own," he explains. But along the way, Le Roux's life took a very

different turn to that of the Tesla and Facebook founders.

In his recently-released book, *The Mastermind: Drugs, Empire, Murder, Betrayal*, Ratliff walks readers through his multi-year fascination with this subject. It is not just thriller, but also a glimpse into the far-reaching powers of those who know how to skilfully manipulate the Internet.

#### Success at all costs

From super-fast yachts carrying drugs, to pirates in Somalia and arms deals with Iran, Le Roux's life has all the makings of an action flick. But the Zimbabwe-born South African – who ran most of his operations out of Manila – started his career (if you can call it) in the World Wide Web.

In the early 90s, he built a piece of encryption software, E4M, which he shared with other coders

for free under the principles of the Open Software movement (thereby foregoing any royalties). It became very successful, forming the basis of TrueCrypt, the software used in 2013 by ex-CIA employee and whistle-blower Edward Snowden. "Le Roux was very frustrated that he never made any money on it," explains Ratliff, adding that he soon delved into "grey-area" businesses on the Internet, selling prescription medicines. American residents could enter their symptoms on a website, have them reviewed by a doctor (who was paid for every prescription filled), and receive the order from a local pharmacy. "If you take away just the legal aspects, as a startup, it was very successful," he says. In fact, by one estimate, the venture was making around \$250 million a year in revenue in 2008 – roughly the same as Facebook.

Le Roux eventually "diversified" into ventures such as arms and drug trafficking to become the leader of a criminal cartel that is believed to have contributed to the American Opioid epidemic. Busted by American authorities in 2012, he somewhat bizarrely turned informant, and currently awaits trial in the US.

#### Around the world illegally

Officers at the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in the US were first alerted to suspicious sales of prescription drugs in 2006, and spent six years gathering information and biding their time. Ratliff, too, was on Le Roux's trail, from Tel Aviv (meeting call-centre employees who managed the network of American doctors and pharmacists) to Manila (trying to piece together the murder of a real estate agent) to Minneapolis (attending trials). "Just in terms of building a criminal cartel from nothing – I had never seen that anywhere in the world," explains the tech writer, about his fascination with the man he calls the most successful cyber-criminal in history.

By the time trials surrounding the case had begun in the US in 2016, Ratliff started writing a seven-part longform series of highly detailed, carefully-researched articles for *Atavist*. His intimate knowledge soon made him a source of sorts. People reached out to him, and an influx of clues and tips led to more information, including the details of the anonymous ex-employee



and bidding their time. Ratliff, too, was on Le Roux's trail, from Tel Aviv (meeting call-centre employees who managed the network of American doctors and pharmacists) to Manila (trying to piece together the murder of a real estate agent) to Minneapolis (attending trials). "Just in terms of building a criminal cartel from nothing – I had never seen that anywhere in the world," explains the tech writer, about his fascination with the man he calls the most successful cyber-criminal in history.

By the time trials surrounding the case had begun in the US in 2016, Ratliff started writing a seven-part longform series of highly detailed, carefully-researched articles for *Atavist*. His intimate knowledge soon made him a source of sorts. People reached out to him, and an influx of clues and tips led to more information, including the details of the anonymous ex-employee

**Following Le Roux's trail:** Ratliff (above) was so intrigued by the story of Le Roux (left) that he travelled across the world, trying to piece together the puzzle ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

who colluded with the authorities to trap the mastermind.

#### Worth the wait

Ratliff is the journalist who deliberately "vanished" in 2009, making his physical whereabouts unknown, offering readers of *Wired* magazine \$5,000 to locate him. Eventually tracked in New Orleans, he did the experiment to see what "going off the grid" looked like in the social media age. His book brings the same level of curiosity and willingness to jump in to the thick of things. With reams of notes and a web of interconnected characters that he pursued relentlessly, he hopes that *The Mastermind* will not just serve as a juicy read, but also as a signal of more complicated realities. "For instance, a lot of Le Roux's mercenaries (employees) were products of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They had the kinds of skills that drug dealers needed. There's also the Opioid epidemic. My hope is that those things filter into your brain as you're enjoying an insane story," he concludes.

The *Mastermind*, published by Penguin Random House, is available on amazon.in

## PEOPLE

### Kashmir ki kali

Rohit Bal talks of his work with Kashmiri women in Guldastah, his trans-seasonal collection

"The emotional strength of this collection is where its uniqueness lies. The fact that Kashmiri women artisans are living in the middle of a war zone, yet they've made such exquisite pieces within a stipulated period, that too in freezing weather, speaks for their skills and hard work," says Rohit Bal. The designer is describing the making of his collection Guldastah that was launched at his store in Defence Colony, after its outing at Lakme Fashion Week. He talks of his personal connect with Kashmir, in these excerpts from an interview:

**How did the idea of partnering with Usha Silai for fashion week, come about?**

Jaspreet Chandok, vice president and Head of Fashion, IMG Reliance broached the idea. Being a Kashmiri I jumped at it. I am very happy that this is happening as a long-term project. In all, there are 15 women; they're all educated. It was a great pleasure to meet and interact with them.

#### What was the process of collaboration?

The embroidery and printing were done by us. We sent them sketches, patterns and trims. They stitched everything with the help of patterns. Kashmir is already blessed with talent. This is proof of that. . The best part is that they have never done anything like this before. We went through a long process of editing. What was not good, was sent back. On the whole though, they did more than what I expected.

#### Take us through your collection.

This is an initiative by Usha Silai that travels to different parts of the country. In this case, it went to Kashmir, where it worked with training the women for two months. It has been so encouraging that we are doing the whole exercise again; the second lot will soon be available.

#### What was the meeting point?

I am a Kashmiri anyway. So every collection of mine invariably has an imprint of the Valley. I didn't have to change my style of work.

#### Did you ever feel it was a risk?

At the Lakme Fashion Week we got a 10-minute standing ovation. There's always a risk, whether I make a collection or some other designer does. It's worth taking this sort of risk.

#### Tell us about the embellishments.

We used embroideries and prints in floral motifs. In Kashmir, wool is the only fabric used. Here, it is difficult to sell wool. Cotton and Chanderi and silk have been sourced from Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and parts of South India. Having been born and brought up in the Valley, flowers are all-important for me. Every flower grows there. I remember right from the time while I was growing up in Srinagar and Gulmarg, I was surrounded by flowers like tulips, sunflowers. In fact, poppies are everywhere in my collection. Chrysanthemum was another flower I've used. In Gulmarg, there were daffodils, Nargis, daisies which are all in this collection.

**Kashmir is famous for pristine white topography. How difficult was it to replicate that, yet look unique?**

It was not difficult at all. White is my favourite colour. So I did not have to make an extra effort. The collection also has greys, indigos, blues and wines. As this collection did not have any time frame, it is non-seasonal.

**Collection available at Rohit Bal Studio, D-31, Defence Colony; ₹20,000 upwards**

MADHUR TANKHA

## PRODUCTS

### Stepping into summer



Jyotsna Gokhale has chappals with crochet uppers in pure cotton, with leather and rubber soles. One set of lowers can take multiple uppers that come in 15 colours with some colour mixes. They are embellished with sequins, wooden and glass beads, buttons, and crochet motifs. There are two styles: Roman sandals (with tie-ups) and slip-ons.

**Available in sizes 35 to 42; Rs 950 each, extra uppers Rs 450; 8800463903**

# The people's POV

Ariel Dorfman's 1990 play *Death and the Maiden* makes audiences think of how the personal and the political intertwine



VANGMAYI PARAKALA

We're only 30 minutes into the play, when the till-now frail Paulina Salas, acts swiftly: In a matter of minutes, she knocks her husband Gerardo Escobar's guest unconscious, drags him out of their spare room where he had retired for the night, heaves his body onto herself, and props him onto a living room chair where, finally, she leaves him tied for the rest of the play.

This very physical and

breathless sequence of events really drives the action forward in *Death and the Maiden*.

The plot, set in post-Pinochet Chile spotlights a personal engagement with the new government's efforts to inquire into human atrocities committed during the regime. Gerardo, a lawyer, is called to head this inquiry.

Sarila, despite his slight awkwardness in chemistry with Mehra, embodies the tragedy implicit in his character. Torn between his professional idealism of believ-



#### Engrossing affair: Scenes from the play

Katooch), who'd offer the regime his consultation on prisoner 'treatment'. And what Paulina in turn reveals to him only the morning after taking their guest hostage, is that very doctor is the one in their home.

Sarila, despite his slight awkwardness in chemistry with Mehra, embodies the tragedy implicit in his character. Torn between his professional idealism of believ-

ing innocence before proof of guilt, and his personal empathy for his wife's trauma, Gerardo is helpless.

The original dialogue too captures this. "I'm tired of being in the middle, in between the two of you. You reach an understanding with her, you convince her," he says to Miranda. This might as well be a comment on how the system is stuck between wanting to provide justice to a wronged and silenced population, in an atmosphere where there might be no 'rational' proof to implicate those involved in the excesses.

The fullness of each character leaves the audience on an edge – raw and ready for catharsis. But the *Death and the Maiden* offers none of that. In a 2015 interview to

Mehra's Paulina doesn't hesitate: "Why does it always have to be the people like me who have to sacrifice," she asks, her delivery and presence, despite being the most petite person on stage, most powerful. She stammers through Paulina's bouts of hysteria fluidly, with tears welling up as she recounts details about the incident to Gerardo – things she's never recalled before. Nearing the end, she's spent. It takes her a few minutes to break out of character and bow.

**Daily, until 10th April, at 8 p.m., ₹1,100 for one. Shed 9, Dhan Mill Compound, Chattarpur**

## 5 EVENTS WORTH YOUR WHILE



### CONCERT

**Flute and Violin**  
Shwaas is hosting an evening of Indian Classical music in memory of shehnai and flute player Pt. Raghunath Prasanna. The event will feature a flute recital by Pt. Rajendra Prasanna and Rishab Prasanna accompanied by Ram Kumar Mishra on tabla, a violin recital by Dr. N. Rajam and Ragini Shankar, accompanied by Akram Khan on tabla.  
**VENUE:** Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre  
**TIME:** 7 p.m.



### THEATRE

**Story Telling**  
TEC India presents *Aaina*, a concept of Indian dance theatre. This two-day event will have a variety of art forms with seamless blending of music and dance styles, both Indian and International. Conceptualised by a team of passionate artists and thinkers, *Aaina* is telling humanity's tale.  
**VENUE:** Kamani Auditorium, Mandi House  
**TIME:** 7 p.m.



### CULINARY

**Spring Special**  
Plaza Premium Lounge, an outlet at New Delhi Airport, has introduced its spring special menu. The new menu offers dishes such as mango smoothie, gazpacho, jamon kala khatta, hummus with falafel and crackers, aam ras ke aloo, rose mehlaby, mango shrikhand tarts and amaranth payasam.  
**VENUE:** Plaza Premium, T-3, New Delhi Airport  
**TIME:** 24 hours



### EXHIBITION

**Embroidery**  
*The Needle Reverence: A story stitched by the thrifit of Bengali women*, is an exhibition showcasing Bengali Kantha embroidery collections. The art show will feature collections from the late 19th century till pre-independence as well as collections of Siddhartha Tagore and Mahesh Naithani.  
**VENUE:** Art Gallery, Kamaladevi Complex, IIC  
**TIME:** 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.



### DANCE

**Indian Classical**  
Sunaina, a society engaged in the activities of upliftment of education and culture, is celebrating its Silver Jubilee. The event will have the performances of Bharatanatyam by Aparajita Sarma, Mohiniattam by Jayaprabha Menon, Kathak by Moumala Nayak, Mayurbhanji Chhau by Rajesh Sai babu and Odissi by Kavita Dwivedi.  
**VENUE:** Triveni Kala Sangam, Mandi House  
**TIME:** 6 p.m.

# Go tell it on the mountain



DEEPA ALEXANDER

As summer sets in over the Northern Hemisphere and Everest's raw and challenging landscape seems at its most benign, nearly 800 climbers will attempt to conquer it; the cost is exorbitant (nearly \$45,000) but it has helped Nepal's economy breathe. Ever since Sir Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay first summited it in 1953, more than 4,000 people have followed suit (according to The Himalayan Database), leaving the wider world unable to comprehend why an increasing number of climbers prefers its ice-cold embrace, even if all they get is approximately 20 minutes at the top.

Mountaineering emerged as a sport in Europe in the 1850s, but opened up to recreational climbers only in the 1980s when it started getting commercialised. An increasing number of travel holidays centre around exploring the Alps and the Lesser Himalayas, but Everest remains the Holy Grail of mountaineering. The trail of ice-picks pounding its slopes has affected its environment and geography, but for some, climbing it is not a one-time dalliance but a lifelong affair.

It is 7 am, May 25, 2012. The peak of Mount Everest glints in the sunlight like a diamond on fire. Picket after picket of the Himalayas is shrouded in cloud. From here, eternity seems to lie at Colonel Ranveer Singh Jamwal's feet. The ascent to the highest peak in the world began in the wee hours of dawn, guided by a twinkling swathe of the Milky Way. If anyone on earth is closest to plucking a star from the night sky at this moment, it is Jamwal, the man from Jammu who, over the next few years, would become the first Army of

ficer to summit the highest peak in all seven continents, rounding off the last when he unfurled the Tricolour on Antarctica's desolate Vinson Massif on January 4 this year. With 10 days at hand, he followed it up by climbing six mountains over 6,000 metres in the Chilean Andes, including Ojos del Salado, the planet's highest volcanic peak. Everywhere, the Tricolour, Army flag and the Hanuman Chalisa have been constant companions.

**No shortcuts to the top**

Jamwal, 44, has been at the highest point on the planet thrice when he summited Everest in 2012, 2013 and 2016. His derring-do has earned him the Vishisht Seva Medal twice (a decoration of the Indian armed forces for distinguished service of an exceptional order, indicated by \*\*), the Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Award and a host of other distinctions.

In a part-email, part-telematic interview, his voice


**IN MY BAG**

Water bottle / First aid kit

Snacks / Sunscreen / Head lamp

**ON MY PLATE**

In addition to core-strength training, milk, eggs and chicken rice are part of the diet. A successful summit calls for a celebration with butter chicken and butter naan.

laced with humour and cheer, Jamwal (Jammy to family and friends) says he never joined the Army thinking it would open doors for him to see the world from above. Hailing from sturdy mountain stock, he spent his childhood pursuing sport of every kind, excelling in football and javelin, consistently winning gold. Along with a love for the outdoors, Jamwal also inherited a legacy of service to the nation. His father and grandfather had served in the Army and Jamwal too joined as a soldier when he was 17. With the same remarkable tenacity that underlines his life as a mountaineer, Jamwal rose to be an infantry officer after clearing the Army Cadet College exam. In 2003, he arrived at the High Altitude Warfare School, Gulmarg, for a course and left a convert. "Getting a chance to be part of the Army mountaineering team is an honour. In 2007, I first climbed Machoi near Zoji La."

In 2009, prolonged exposure



**In ice we trust:** (Clockwise from left) Col Jamwal leads the ascent to Everest; at Union Glacier, Antarctica; navigating the dangerous Khumbu icefall; and unfurling the flag atop Vinson, Antarctica

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

tain rescue missions, including for the avalanche triggered by the Nepal earthquake of 2015 that resulted in many deaths at Everest Base Camp, Jamwal says he doesn't feel the need to prove himself. "My aim is to better myself," he adds.

"Every climbing day is full of nervousness. You pack for contingencies carrying clothing, equipment, food and chocolates. Finally, it boils down to the vagaries of weather; every experience with Everest has been different – blizzards, quake, blinding sunshine. Going up is optional but coming down is mandatory, so positive thoughts help."

Every place from where a climb is launched is a great place to tick off on the travel list. Often located away from the humdrum of tourist hubs, these are places that thrill the intrepid traveller. Jamwal says that going with the sole aim to climb does not leave him much time to travel beyond his brief, but a good local mountaineering partner, like he had in the Andes, can show views that are memorable enough to fill your hard drive.

Back in India, Jamwal says he hopes to get his 11-year-old son and seven-year-old daughter interested in the mountains with an Everest trek soon.

And what will be his next challenge, I ask. There's a pause and I can sense him smile. "You can't challenge mountains," he says. "You survive them."

to the brutal cold while climbing Mana, Uttarakhand, led to both joy and pain. The team summited the peak, but Jamwal knew he had lost his ring finger on his left hand to frostbite. He simply

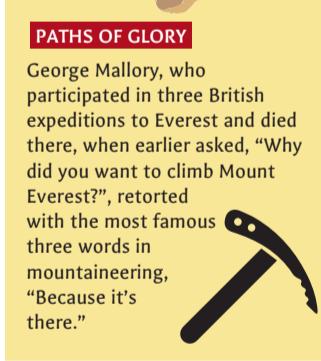
moved his wedding ring to his other hand and climbed on.

Jamwal says the jagged, lone beauty of mountains such as Shivling, Trishul and Nanda Devi in the Garhwal and Kumaon Himalayas have made this area his favourite climbing destination.

"These mountains are beautiful and between 6,000 and 7,000 metres. They are lovely to climb at leisure." But his resoluteness finds its echo in the crevasses that he bounds across and the many iconic mountaineers such as Reinhold Messner, David Breashears and Lakpa Rita Sherpa whom he has met and is inspired by.

After 39 mountaineering expeditions in the last 15 years, that have included four moun-

Every climbing day is full of nervousness. Going up is optional but coming down is mandatory, so positive thoughts help



**PATHS OF GLORY**  
George Mallory, who participated in three British expeditions to Everest and died there, when earlier asked, "Why did you want to climb Mount Everest?", retorted with the most famous three words in mountaineering, "Because it's there."


**GET, SET, GO**

## All eyes on Seychelles



Seychelles Tourism Board's (STB) India office has come up with a promotional video highlighting the best the destination has to offer.

The promotional campaign developed by digital content creators – TheVibe, positions Seychelles as a destination that has more to offer than its white sandy beaches and a getaway for honeymoon couples.

The video begins with aerial views of the main islands of Mahé, Praslin and La Digue, before moving to Anse Source d'Argent, one of the world's most photographed beaches. From powdery soft sand to clear blue waters, the film focusses on fun activities like cycling on the beach, trekking and hiking on the island pathways.

Travellers can also take a helicopter ride to capture scenic views across the islands, relish local cuisine, sail on a luxury yacht and try water sports.

## On a heritage trail



The US has several UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Some of them, such as Yosemite National Park, Yellowstone National Park and the Statue of Liberty are known worldwide. Many other sites haven't courted much spotlight. Take for instance an international park system located on either side of Canada and US borders. This area comprises Kluane National Park and Reserve, Wrangell-St Elias National Park and Preserve, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve and Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Park. This region was designated a World Heritage Site in 1979 and has an impressive complex of glaciers and high peaks. Glacier Bay features the largest non-polar ice field in the world. Mammoth Cave National Park in Kentucky was designated a World Heritage Site in 1981. This is the world's longest known network of caves and underground passageways with 644 km explored areas. This area supports more than 130 species of flora and fauna.

## In Namibia's wilderness



Natural Selection group's new farmhouse Safari House will welcome visitors from April 15. The farmhouse, located in the heart of Etosha Heights Private Reserve, Namibia, will allow visitors to explore 60,000 hectares of pure wilderness. Safari House has a pool for guests to cool off after dusty game drives and a waterhole in front of the house, around which one can spend leisurely evenings. Guests will be offered home-style meals and the highlight will be the Namibian braai (BBQ). Game drives will be tailored to guests' needs and flexibility. Founded in 1999, Etosha Heights is one of the largest private reserves in Namibia, sharing a 70-km border with Etosha National Park. The savannah is punctuated by pods of mopane woodland, thick, riverine forest and waterholes that attract animals. The reserve is home to lion, cheetah, eland, hartebeest, springbok, and Namibia's desert species such as the black-faced impala.

## Light on Sydney



Vivid Sydney, touted to be the largest festival of light, music and ideas in the southern hemisphere, will attract visitors from May 24 to June 15, 2019, with a star-studded programme of events. One of Australia's popular festivals, it is now in its 11th year, and will bring together light artists, music makers and innovative minds to showcase Sydney as the creative industries hub of Asia-Pacific. In 2018, Vivid Sydney attracted 2.25 million attendees. According to a statement, a record 1,85,887 travel packages were sold to domestic and international visitors for Vivid 2018, and this was an increase of 37% over 2017. This year's festival is expected to have installations, events and experiences over 23 nights. In addition, there will be a Vivid School section for students, to explore the creative processes involved in imagining, designing and delivering light-based artworks for this global event. Check [www.vividsydney.com/media-centre](http://www.vividsydney.com/media-centre)