



Congress Working Committee to take up leadership issue today
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Venkaiah Naidu urges parties to have code of conduct for MPs
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Carrie Lam, Hong Kong chief executive, rules out concessions
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BCCI comes under the ambit of National Anti-Doping Agency
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NEARBY



Arun Jaitley admitted to AIIMS, stable

NEWS ▶ PAGE 12
Senior BJP leader Arun Jaitley was admitted to the AIIMS here on Friday. He is under the care of the Cardiorthoracic and Neurosciences Centre of the hospital. According to a hospital release, Mr. Jaitley is hemodynamically stable. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other BJP leaders, including Amit Shah and Harsh Vardhan, visited Mr. Jaitley at the hospital.

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BJP plans grand I-Day celebrations in J&K

50,000 flags to be distributed to party workers, motorcycle rallies also planned

DAMINI NATH
JAMMU

Ramping up its Independence Day celebration plans after the Centre revoked Jammu & Kashmir's special status on Monday, the Bharatiya Janata Party's State unit intends to distribute 50,000 Indian flags to its workers to hoist on August 15.

"People should know that it's a *jashn* [celebration]," BJP J&K unit president Ravinder Raina told party workers, who had gathered at the office here on Friday as he distributed flags to them.

As Mr. Raina and the BJP made preparations for motorcycle rallies and programmes on August 15, large parts of Jammu and Kashmir remained under curfew-like conditions for the fifth day.

For the BJP, however, it was time to celebrate. "This time, Independence Day is *jashn-e-azaadi* for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.



Festival of flags: BJP president Ravinder Raina distributing flags at the party office in Jammu on Friday. ■ DAMINI NATH

This is the first time that we are out of the shackles of slavery," said Mr. Raina.

With the government revoking provisions under Article 370 of the Constitution, Jammu & Kashmir's constitution and flag have been scrapped. "We will hoist the tricolour in every panchayat and ward," he said.

Flags were being flown in from Delhi to Jammu, Srinagar and Leh.

While interacting with a group of sarpanches and handing over flags to them

at the party office, Mr. Raina led those who had gathered through chants of *Jahaan hue balidaan Mookerjee, vo kashmir hamara hai* (Where Syama Prasad Mookerjee laid down his life, that Kashmir is ours). Bharatiya Jana Sangh founder S.P. Mookerjee, who had opposed Article 370, had died a detainee of the Sheikh Abdullah government in Kashmir in 1953.

An official said stone-throwing started at Soura, Nowshera, Rambagh, Barzalla and Rainawari after the prayers.

At the end of the procession from Soura to Ali Jan Road, 4,000 people clashed with security men for hours. Several mosques in Pulwama passed resolutions against the dilution of Article 370.

The Army had warned mosques in Kulgam against political sermons. A policeman, Nasir Ahmed, was beaten up by a mob in Hawal.

Friday prayers are peaceful

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Most Friday congregations in Srinagar passed off peacefully, barring a major procession at Soura against the Centre's decision to divest Jammu and Kashmir of its special status.

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National honours

The 66th National Film Awards were announced on Friday with Bollywood stars winning across many categories. A curated list of the winners:



Ayushman Khurana & Vicki Kaushal jointly won Best Actor Award for *Andhadhun* and *Uri: The Surgical Strike*



Best Director: Aditya Dhar, *Uri: The Surgical Strike*



Keerthy Suresh bagged Best Actress for Telugu movie *Mahanati*



Best Female Playback Singer: Bindhu Malini for "Maayavi Manave..." in *Nathicharami* (Kannada)

Best Film on Environment Conservation: Paani, (Marathi)

Best Film on Social Issues: Padman, (Hindi)

Best Screenplay (original): Rahul Ravindran for Chi La Sow (Telugu)

Best Music Direction: Sanjay Leela Bhansali for *Padmaavat*

REPORT ON PAGE 9

Many States reel under monsoon fury, 70 dead

28 killed in Kerala, seven die in Karnataka's Kodagu

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The depression that has caused torrential rainfall mainly in Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, claiming at least 70 lives and forcing the evacuation of tens of thousands of people, is expected to abate from Saturday, the chief of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Friday.

"Except for Rajasthan, there will be a marked reduction in rain from tomorrow [Saturday]. While these are extremely heavy rains, they are nowhere close to record rainfall that these States have witnessed in the past," M. Mohapatra, Director-General, IMD, told *The Hindu*.

feared trapped in a massive landslip. "Three bodies have been recovered," he said after a review meeting.

The bodies of nine people were recovered from Meppadi, Wayanad district, the site of a second landslip. "It is not yet clear how many people were affected... Rescue operations using excavators are in progress. Eleven deaths have been reported in Wayanad district so far," Mr. Vijayan said.

As of Friday, 64,103 people had been shifted to 738 camps in the flood-hit districts. Thirteen dams – seven maintained by the Kerala State Electricity Board and six by the Water Resources Department – were opened. Twelve teams of the NDRF were deployed and Army units rushed to Idukki

and Malappuram, he said.

The IMD has issued red alerts in seven districts – Ernakulam, Idukki, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad and Kannur – for Saturday.

In Karnataka, mudslides and flash floods in Kodagu district resulted in seven deaths in 24 hours, and eight people were reported missing. There was one rain-related death in Mysuru district. Rain intensified in the southern districts on Friday but abated in the north Karnataka districts.

Extremely heavy rain battered the western coastal States and many parts of the Western Ghats on Thursday night, killing 28 persons in central and northern districts of Kerala and prompting the evacuation of nearly 65,000 people.

Rescue under way
Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday that at Kavalappara, near Nilambur in Malappuram district, rescue workers were struggling to trace at least 40 people

Assessing loss: Farmers surveying the damage to their crops at a village in Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu. ■ M. SATHYAMOORTHY

Amid lockdown, locals queue up for a phone call

Srinagar residents wait for hours at a government office to talk to kin outside State on a mobile phone

VIJAYA SINGH
SRINAGAR

There were tears of both anger and relief at a government office in the heart of Srinagar, where people had come to make a solitary phone call to their loved ones living outside the State.

As the Kashmir Valley remained under a lockdown for the fifth day, the administration made some arrangements for residents to make calls. Three personal mobile phones of officials working at the Tankipora office were turned into helplines. Residents swarmed the office, with some waiting for more than six hours for their turn. The administration had shared the three numbers on local cable channels.

A plastic chair and a table had been placed on the lawn at the administrative complex where people queued up to register the numbers



cherished hellos: People waiting to make a call to their loved ones in Srinagar on Friday. ■ VIJAYA SINGH

they wanted to call. Paper slips were handed out as tokens. "There are more than 200 people who have registered since 9 a.m. and only 23 have been able to speak as of now, it's already 12 p.m. You can calculate how long we have to wait here now,"

said Feroza Ansari, a local shopkeeper.

C.L. Vishesha had had a death in the family and needed to speak to relatives in New Delhi.

"I have come here so that I can ask when are the rituals planned," said Prof. Vishesha,

TV channels turn town criers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

With communication lines shut for five days now, people in Kashmir are using local TV channels to announce deaths and other news.

The 24X7 Chinar Gold music cable channel had a scroll running on top: "Nazir Ahmad Akhoon of Srinagar's Pather Masjid is no more. All relatives watching this are intimated about it."

A close relative of the de-

ceased told *The Hindu* that just eight people attended the burial, only after pleading for permission before the security forces on the evening of August 6.

The local channels have become the main communication source to announce cancellations of weddings.

"Attention: we regret that all invitations of my son Jibril Javed Buch's wedding at Hazratbal area stand cancelled," one scroll read.

a Kashmiri Pandit living in Srinagar.

Rashida Ejaz burst into tears at the prospect of a chance to speak to her daughter. "She is in Delhi to pursue a course for two months. My only worry is what if she runs out of mo-

ney," said Ms. Ejaz, who had been waiting for over three hours.

Sadiq Bhatt, an official at the DC's office man-

ning one of the lines, said the numbers had been shared on social media on Thursday night and that calls hadn't stopped coming since then.

Court frames charges against Sengar, co-accused

MLA will also be tried under POCSO Act



Kuldeep Singh Sengar initially registered by the local police.

Mr. Sengar and the co-accused have denied their involvement in the rape case. During the court proceedings, the CBI had on Thursday submitted that the victim's father was framed in an Arms Act case in conspiracy with three U.P. police officers and five others.

The alleged incident took place on April 3 last year when the victim's father was taken to a police station following an altercation and an FIR was registered against him for allegedly possessing a country-made firearm and four live cartridges. He was arrested and sent to judicial custody, during which he died, on April 9, 2018.

Accident case
The rape survivor was seriously injured along with her lawyer, and her two aunts were killed, when an "overspeeding" truck collided with their car in Rae Bareli last month. The Central Bureau of Investigation will also probe the case, which was

Supreme Court upholds law empowering homebuyers

They can start bankruptcy proceedings against errant builders, rules three-member Bench

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday upheld a central law which empowered harassed homebuyers to initiate bankruptcy proceedings against errant real estate builders.

The judgment gains significance as many real estate builders have been under fire for incomplete projects leaving homebuyers in dire straits.

A three-judge Bench led by Justice Rohinton Narine

confirmed the constitutional validity of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Act of August 2018, which gave homebuyers the status of "financial creditors" with power to vote in the Committee of Creditors.

On par with banks

The Act had brought the homebuyers on par with the creditor banks and other operational creditors. Homebuyers had hardly figured, though their hard-earned savings may have provided a major chunk of the housing

project.

The Amendment Act allowed homebuyers, as financial creditors, to trigger bankruptcy proceedings under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code of 2016

and have their "rightful place" on the Committee of Creditors (CoC). The CoC, by voting, makes important decisions on the future of the bankrupt builder. These calls include what to do with his assets and who should finish the pending housing projects.

The builders had challenged the Amendment Act. They said making homebuyers financial creditors was like "forcibly inserting a square peg in a round hole."

The builders argued that homebuyers were already armed with the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act (RERA), another piece of legislation which protected the interests of the individual investor in real estate projects.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

Man arrested from Mumbai for threat mails to Kejriwal

The 28-year-old zeroed in on Delhi Chief Minister to draw attention, say police

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 28-year-old man from Mumbai has been arrested for allegedly sending death threat emails to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the police said on Friday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Cyber Cell, Special Cell) Anvesh Roy said that the accused has been identified as Abhishek Tiwari, who works as a delivery man with a furniture distributor. Hailing from Unnao in Uttar Pradesh, Tiwari is a resident of

Mumbai's Nala Sopara.

The police said that they had received a complaint last month from Mr. Kejriwal's office stating that two emails were received at the CM's official email address on July 25 and July 30 respectively with "Kill...kill...kill" written in the subject line. Based on the complaint, a case under relevant sections was registered and investigation taken up.

"With deep analysis of technical inputs, his location was traced to Nala Sopara, Mumbai, a densely populated

area.

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First ecotoxicology diagnostic centre at AIIMS

NEW DELHI

All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on Friday inaugurated the country's first clinical ecotoxicology diagnostic and research facility. This will look at the increasing number of diseases resulting from exposure to environmental toxins contaminating water, food and air. All body fluids can be tested at the facility to screen for toxic exposure.

CORRIGENDUM					
Sr. No.	Letter No.	Name of Department	Old NIT No.	Nature of Corrigendum	Website
1	31116-A-dated 05.08.2019.	Water Services Mechanical Division, Water Services Mechanical Division, 289/6/SA dt 17/07/2019 & 29/04/06/04 dt 29/07/2019	The Last date of receipt of online tenders for the works shown at Sr. No.1 to 35 except tender at Sr. No. 13,30,33 & 34 fixed for 10.08.2019 at 15:00 Hrs, date of receipt of physical document upto 14:00 Hrs on 07.08.2019 and the same will be opened on dated 13.08.2019 at 15:00 Hours. Tender at Sr. No. 13,30,33 & 34 are hereby postponed till further order due to administrative reasons.	http://tenders.nic.in/ xermech@yahoo.com	sdr- Executive Engineer, W.S. Mech. Division, Rewari.

—sdr—
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Cuttack lawyers boycott courts over SAT closure

CORRESPONDENT
CUTTACK

Lawyers of all lower courts, tribunals and the Orissa High Court here in the city abstained from their respective courts on Friday in protest against the recent abolishment of the Odisha State Administrative Tribunal (SAT). Following a proposal from the Odisha government, the Union government earlier this week abolished the Tribunal in the State.

Expressing gratitude for their solidarity, SAT Bar Association secretary P.K. Rout said their token protest on the day against the abolishment of all Benches of the SAT across the State was a "success". "We will decide our next course of action next week seeking cooperation from other Bar Associations of the State," Mr. Rout said.

Illegal gutka, pan masala units unearthed in Odisha; one held

Raids part of ongoing operations against manufacturers: police

STAFF REPORTER
BERHAMPUR

A series of recent police raids has revealed that Berhampur is a major centre for manufacture and trading of illegal gutka and pan masala in Odisha.

On Friday, the Berhampur Sadar police station personnel raided an illegal manufacturing unit of gutka and pan masala at Baunsipalli and seized machinery and raw materials used for its production.

48 bags seized

Forty-eight bags of illegally manufactured gutka were seized while it was being transported in a passenger bus from the Berhampur bus stand. One person involved in its transportation was arrested.

On Thursday night, an illegal manufacturing unit of gutka at Panigrahipantha Street was raided.

According to Berhampur Additional Superintendent of Police Pravat Routray, these raids are part of continuing operations against illegal manufacturers and traders of gutka and pan masala.

On August 3, two illegal manufacturing units of gutka and pan masala at Bhutapalli and Borigaon under the Berhampur Sadar police station were raided and two persons arrested.

On the same day, another unit was unearthed at Sarguna Street under the Badabazar police station of Berhampur. Four persons were arrested.

On August 6, three persons were arrested when the

police raided and sealed an illegal gutka manufacturing unit operating in the Bhairabi Nagar area of Berhampur Sadar police station.

Small units

All these were using small packing units in houses on different streets to manufacture fake versions of popular gutka and pan masala brands. It is suspected that a large portion of their produce was being sent to other parts of the State.

In January this year, around 50 sacks of illegal gutka were seized from an Odisha State Road Transport Corporation bus in Bhubaneswar.

Investigation had revealed that the seized product had been sent from Berhampur.

'Centre will not touch Article 371F'

Sikkim CM cites Union Home Minister's assurance on State's special status

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Even as he welcomed the amendment of Article 370 pertaining to Jammu and Kashmir, Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang, better known as P.S. Golay, assured the people that the Centre will not interfere with Article 371F which provides special status to the State.

"The decision of the Union government to amend Article 370 is in the interest of the nation and we support it, but as far as Article 371F and other similar provisions are concerned, we heard in Parliament that Union Home Minister Amit Shah said these provisions will continue," Mr. Golay told journalists.



P.S. Golay. ■ FILE PHOTO

any possibility of merger of Sikkim and Darjeeling hills, and said that Sikkim is protected by Article 371F of the Constitution, which is the result of the agreement in 1975 between the Union of India, the king of Sikkim and the State's political parties.

'No merger'

"Those demanding Gorkhaland for Darjeeling hills are doing so as per their constitutional right. It is for the Centre to decide on whether to agree with it or not. However, there is no question of its merger with Sikkim," he said.

After the reorganisation of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, the political parties in Darjeeling hills have

been demanding the status of a Union Territory.

A press statement by Sikkim's Information and Public Relations Department on August 8 said that Mr. Golay, during his recent visit to New Delhi, had requested the political leaders at the Union level to protect Article 371F.

"More than the legal provisions in Article 371F, it is a very emotive issue and every political party in the State, including the national parties, stress upon how important the Article is," said Pema Wangchuk, senior journalist and consulting editor of *Summit TIMES*.

He said that Article 371F is one of the key terms of the merger of Sikkim with India in 1975.

University teachers' body condemns MU action

Manipur University had 'arbitrarily' terminated services of a guest faculty

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Federation of Central Universities' Teachers' Associations (FEDCUTA) has condemned the "arbitrary termination" of the service of Ningombam Bupenda Meitei as a guest faculty at Manipur University.

Mr. Meitei was on June 26 appointed in the Philosophy Department for six months but his services were termi-

nated after less than two months.

"Throwing all academic freedom to the wind, Mr. Meitei was asked to clarify whether he was a member of a political party. Subsequently on the grounds of being a member of a political party, he was thrown out of his job. Such actions spring out of attempts to impose the Central Civil Services Rules in universities which

are contrary to building a free and fair academic atmosphere in a university," FEDCUTA president Rajib Ray and secretary Atul Sood said in a statement issued on Thursday night.

"In the past and currently, even full-time teachers in the universities have exercised this freedom and even contested elections on the tickets of various political parties. Academic freedom has

meant the freedom to carry through one's beliefs and convictions in the political arena," they said.

The FEDCUTA believes that this termination of services of Mr. Meitei, who belongs to a different political party and ideology, comes out of the authoritarian imposition of the ideology of the ruling BJP government in Manipur on Manipur University," the federation said.

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VISION I

IN BRIEF



Rahul Gandhi allowed to skip court hearing

AHMEDABAD

A court hearing a criminal defamation case against Rahul Gandhi over his statement against Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday allowed the Congress leader to remain absent for the day. However, the judge ordered Gandhi to remain present on October 11. PTI

Pilot project for ration card portability launched

NEW DELHI

Migrants between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, as well as between Maharashtra and Gujarat, will be the first to get access to portable ration cards, which can be used at ration shops in their destination States and not just their home States.

Ram Rahim's plea for parole rejected

CHANDIGARH

Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh's request for parole was rejected on Friday. Singh, who is serving life imprisonment at Sunaria jail following his conviction in two cases had applied for parole to attend to his unwell mother.

Farmer pension scheme open for registrations

NEW DELHI

The Centre has opened registrations for its new pension scheme aimed at small and marginal farmers owning less than two hectares of land. By noon on Friday, 418 farmers had registered for the scheme, according to Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar.

Azam Khan's university under ED scanner

LUCKNOW/NEW DELHI

The ED has initiated a money laundering probe against Samajwadi Party leader Azam Khan following allegations that a university he runs in U.P. has been built over a piece of land taken in violation of the enemy property law, sources said. PTI

Chidambaram, son get protection from arrest

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Friday extended the interim protection from arrest granted to former Union Minister P. Chidambaram and his son Karti in Aircel-Maxis cases. The court extended the relief, which was to end on Friday, till August 23. PTI

Three doctors granted bail in Payal Tadvi case

MUMBAI

Three doctors arrested for allegedly abetting the suicide of 26-year-old Payal Tadvi on BYL Nair Hospital premises were granted bail by the Bombay High Court. While granting bail, the court said, "Let them remain public domain with this stigma and this order". It directed them to pay ₹2 lakh each.

U.P. STF foils plot to kill BJP MLA; 3 arrested

LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Police's Special Task Force on Friday arrested a notorious sharpshooter, who was allegedly planning to kill BJP MLA Sushil Singh, after a brief encounter in Varanasi, an official statement said. Shiv Prakash Tiwari alias Dhoni Tiwari was carrying a cash reward of ₹1 lakh on his head, it said. PTI

Over 2 lakh evacuated in Sangli, Kolhapur

There have been 29 flood-related or rain-related deaths in five flood-hit districts in Maharashtra

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

With the intensity of the rains decreasing and floodwaters marginally receding on Friday, rescue operations proceeded at full throttle in flood-ravaged Sangli and Kolhapur on Friday. Local rescue teams, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and Army jawans pulled out stranded persons in backwater villages in the two districts.

Thus far, 2.85 lakh persons across the five flood-hit districts of Sangli, Kolhapur, Satara, Pune and Solapur in western Maharashtra have been moved to shelters in safer zones, said Pune Divisional Commissioner Deepak Mhaisekar. Of these, 2.35 lakh persons have been evacuated from around 450 villages in Sangli (1.34 lakh) and Kolhapur (1.11 lakh) alone.

Dr. Mhaisekar said there had been 29 flood-related or



Sign of relief: Villagers stranded in flood waters at Rajapur, around 43km from Kolhapur, for almost four days being rescued by the Coast Guard on Friday. ABHIJEET GURJAR

rain-related deaths so far in the five districts, including the nine casualties in Sangli boat accident of Thursday. Eleven people were still missing. "We have been able to recover only nine bodies in that accident so far," he said.

"In order to compensate people for their possessions

lost in the floods, ₹15,000 would be given to each family in the urban areas and ₹10,000 to each family in the rural areas. The State government has entrusted us with an *ad hoc* fund of ₹76 crore and we have already begun distributing this amount at the district level,"

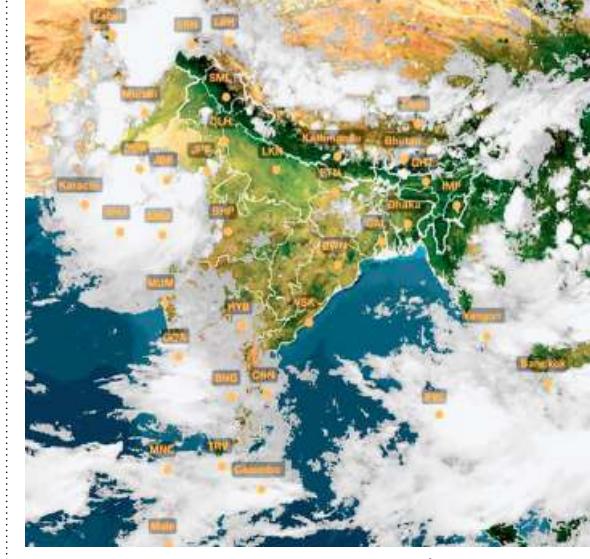
said Dr. Mhaisekar. 480 relief centres were presently operational in the five flood-hit districts in western Maharashtra. The Divisional Commissioner said Air Force and Navy helicopters were being deployed from Friday to drop supplies in flood-affected zones.

Meanwhile, under fire for failing to lend support with their presence in deluge-hit regions, senior BJP leaders including State Water Resources Minister Girish Mahajan and the Guardian Ministers of Kolhapur and Sangli Chandrakant Patil and Subhash Deshmukh finally made their way to Kolhapur on Thursday.

As they entered Sangli, Mr. Mahajan and Mr. Deshmukh faced the wrath of the hapless locals, who surrounded the Ministers and angrily questioning their absence for nearly five days since the deluge, and the administration's alleged tardiness in dealing with the crisis. "The people's anger is perfectly understandable and justified...regrettably, this is a natural calamity which is far more serious than the 2005 deluge," said Mr. Mahajan, speaking in Sangli.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Saturday: Heavy to very heavy rainfall likely over Saurashtra, Kutch, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala, Karnataka, Konkan, Goa, Gujarat, Lakshadweep, Karnataka, central Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	13.8...	34.2...	25.3...	Kozhikode	137.6...	29.0...	23.6...
Ahmedabad	19.6...	27.3...	25.3...	Kurnool	—	35.0...	25.5...
Aizawl	—	31.3...	23.1...	Lucknow	—	32.8...	27.0...
Allahabad	0.6...	33.0...	27.3...	Madurai	1.3...	34.8...	26.2...
Bengaluru	0.5...	25.3...	20.4...	Mangaluru	24.2...	29.1...	23.0...
Bhopal	98.2...	26.3...	24.2...	Mumbai	4.0...	28.8...	26.0...
Bhubaneswar	—	34.2...	25.1...	Mysuru	39.4...	23.7...	19.3...
Chandigarh	1.0...	35.8...	25.2...	New Delhi	—	34.0...	28.4...
Chennai	—	37.2...	27.6...	Patna	6.8...	29.3...	25.1...
Coimbatore	106.4...	25.4...	21.0...	Puducherry	—	36.0...	25.3...
Dehradoon	23.0...	33.2...	23.2...	Pune	2.8...	26.8...	22.7...
Gangtok	1.4...	20.1...	17.6...	Raipur	1.0...	29.2...	23.0...
Goa	76.8...	29.5...	24.1...	Ranchi	10.6...	30.2...	22.2...
Guwahati	8.0...	35.4...	26.8...	Shillong	19.6...	24.7...	18.9...
Hubballi	—	24.0...	21.0...	Silimla	25.4...	24.3...	16.0...
Hyderabad	0.4...	30.6...	23.8...	Srinagar	—	—	—
Imphal	—	32.1...	21.9...	Thiruvananthapuram	28.2...	28.9...	22.8...
Jaipur	—	—	—	Tiruchi	5.7...	32.7...	23.2...
Kochi	126.0...	26.8...	22.0...	Vijayawada	0.8...	35.1...	25.2...
Kohima	52.8...	28.6...	18.8...	Kolkata	50.0...	31.2...	24.3...
Kolkata	28.9...	33.1...	26.5...	Visakhapatnam	—	—	—

Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES SO₂ NO₂ CO PM2.5 PM10 CODE

Ahmedabad	51.85	71.109	.129	...
Bengaluru	1.47	.57	.25	...
Chennai	.13	.32	.30	.69
Delhi	18	32	8	33
Hyderabad	—	.37	.28	.29
Kolkata	.52	.27	.11	.38
Lucknow	.8	.37	.100	.43
Mumbai	10	19	103	.33
Pune	74	8	.67	.46
Visakhapatnam	—	.31	—	—

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Guwahati, Assam recorded an exceed in ozone reading (AQI) score of 190 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Siliguri, West Bengal recorded a healthy AQI score of 20

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.
PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Modi-inspired *Chalo Jeete Hain* gets prize in non-feature category in National Film AwardsWinners all: *Padmaavat* won three awards, including Best Music Director for Sanjay Leela Bhansali, and Akshay Kumar's *Padman* won the award for the Best Film on Social Issues.

early life was voted the Best Film on Family Values in the non-feature category. It is directed by Mangesh Hadawale

and produced by Mahaveer Jain and Bhushan Kumar.

Uri-The Surgical Strike, a dramatised version of the

first cross-border strike by Indian forces in retaliation to the attack on an Army camp in 2016, won four awards. The lead actor Vicky Kaushal was voted the Best Actor, sharing the award with Ayushmann Khurana for *Andhadhun*. The director of the film, Aditya Dhar, bagged the Best Director Award. It also got an award for the Best Music Direction for its background score by Shashwat Sachdev. The Best Audiography Award went to its sound designer Bishwadeep Dipak Chatterjee. He shared this award with three others.

Badhaai Ho, about a family dealing with a late pregnancy, was adjudged the best popular film and veteran actor Surekha Sikri bagged the Best Supporting Actress award.

The Best Film on Social Issues went to Akshay Kumar starrer *Padman*. It was inspired by the life of Aruna-chalam Muruganathan, a social activist from Tamil Nadu who introduced low-cost sanitary napkins.

Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Padmaavat* walked away with the Best Choreography for *Ghoomeerand* and the Best Music Director award for Bhansali. Its song *Binte Dil* got Arijit Singh the best male playback singer recognition.

Ayodhya case will be heard five days a week

Two days are usually allotted to PILs



The Bench will have to pronounce the judgement by November.

The Bench has scheduled the case and the day to day hearing of the appeals may owe to the fact that Chief Justice Gogoi is retiring in mid-November. The Bench would have to complete the hearing and pronounce the judgment by then.

The hearing on Friday saw senior advocate K. Parasaran, for the Ayodhya deity, ask how Ramjanmabhumi, 'where the spirit of Lord Ram pervades', could be split into three.

"Is there anyone from the Raghuvanshi dynasty still around?" Justice Bobde asked at one point in the hearing.

The vigour with which

NDTV founder Prannoy Roy stopped from flying abroad

denial of their basic rights.

"They have been stopped on the basis of a fake and wholly unsubstantiated corruption case filed by the CBI about an ICICI loan that was taken by their company RRPR which was fully repaid with interest ahead of sche-

dule," said NDTV in a statement.

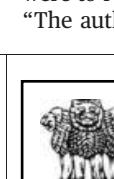
The media house claimed that both of them have been cooperating in the case and have travelled abroad as and when required. The Roys were to return on August 15. "The authorities did not in-

form the court, where the matter is sub judice, or the Roys, about today's action," NDTV said.

In view of similar foreign travel by the Roys in the past, Friday's action was "ludicrous", said the TV channel. It termed Friday's action

against the Roys as a warning to the media from the authorities "to fall in line."

The Central Bureau of Information Confirmed that the Roys were detained on the basis of a look-out circular issued by the agency against them.

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MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
Government of India
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Reference NBE Letter No. NBE/C&R/2019/1770 dated 28.06.2019. Where they have requested to the ministry to conduct common counselling of NEET Super Speciality courses



State of the Union

Early elections and full statehood are essential to the total integration of J&K with India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation on Thursday may not have reached its primary audience in Jammu and Kashmir which was in blackout. But he did well by speaking out on his decision to revoke its special status, and divide it into two Union Territories. Considering the secrecy and disinformation that preceded the decision that he rightly characterised as historic, and the triumphalism among his supporters that followed, the address was reassuring. The promises he made will be checked against delivery in the coming months, not only by the people of J&K but also by the rest of India and other countries. In his 37-minute address, Mr. Modi promised restoration of statehood to J&K once normalcy returned, a participatory election, and growth in employment, commerce and opportunities in general for them. The PM urged industrialists to set up shop, and film-makers to shoot in the Valley, and asked people there to integrate with the global community. He even offered a catalogue of products and services that could make the State attractive in the global market. While these are desirable objectives, the PM could start with what is exclusively within his powers to effect – to call for fresh election and restore statehood at the earliest. While an elected government itself will be a sign of improvement in the situation, it will also make normalcy more organic. Revocation of statehood was unjustified in the first place, and its restoration must be immediate.

What actually triggered separatism and terrorism in J&K – whether the special status and autonomy it was granted by the Constitution, or the gradual erosion of these concepts over decades – is a difficult question, but the BJP has always claimed to have known the answer. The PM reiterated that position, stating that Articles 370 and 35A gave only "separatism, nepotism and corruption to the people of J&K". Additionally, he also said these were hurdles in the region's development; and now that these are removed, an era of development and progress could be ushered in. While the charges of corruption and nepotism are true to an extent, there is no reason to suggest that J&K has been any worse than other States in this respect. The implied reductionism in the address that political aspirations may be a price worth paying for material progress may not be a democratic path to progress. No other formation in India is more vociferous than the BJP on questions of culture, heritage and faith. National integration is essential for peace, stability and progress, and uniform development across regions, but this is not synonymous with an enforced cultural homogeneity. J&K needs a representative government and full statehood urgently for normalcy and integration with the Indian Union.

Taking on the mob

Rajasthan's laws on lynching, 'honour killing' are inevitable responses to rising hate crimes

It is possible to argue that there is no need to create new criminal offences for 'lynching' and 'honour killing' because they remain plain murders. These are already punishable with death or life imprisonment. Yet, mob lynchings and murderous attacks on young couples in the name of preserving family or community honour have emerged as preponderant social evils. It is but inevitable that societies come up with new ways of combating such hate crimes. Rajasthan has made bold to grapple with these two crimes by passing special penal laws. Vigilante mobs have unleashed a wave of crimes in the name of cow protection and preventing the sale of beef or transport of cattle; the spread of rumour and attempts to establish sectarian dominance have also contributed to this disturbing phenomenon. The Supreme Court zeroed in on the nub of the trend when it spoke of "rising intolerance and growing polarisation" in a judgment last year. It also mooted a special law to criminalise it and "instil a sense of fear" among those too quick to form a lynch mob. The passage of the Protection from Lynching Bill, 2019, makes Rajasthan the second State, after Manipur, to implement the suggestion. A positive feature is that it closely resembles the Manipur law in the way "lynching" is defined. It covers any act of violence, whether spontaneous or planned, by a mob on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, language, dietary practices, sexual orientation, political affiliation or ethnicity. And two persons are enough to constitute a 'mob'.

According to the State's Parliamentary Affairs Minister, 86% of mob lynchings incidents reported in India after 2014 were in Rajasthan. The Bill says that when a mob attack ends in death, it is punishable with life imprisonment and a fine of up to ₹5 lakh. There are lesser terms for causing injuries. As directed by the Supreme Court, the Bill provides for appointment of a nodal officer to prevent lynching and for district police chiefs to act as coordinators. It ensures compensation to victims and rehabilitation measures for those displaced. The opposition BJP, on expected lines, contended that the Bill was being brought in a hurry to please a community. However, it is a fact that Muslims have been prime targets of lynch mobs. The party's fulmination against the other Bill that prohibits interference in the "freedom of matrimonial alliances in the name of honour and tradition" was equally bereft of substance, as it cited societal norms and cultural practice to oppose the progressive law. In effect, it was batting for khap panchayats that seek to interdict inter-caste marriages. The Bill provides for both death and life imprisonment for killing in the name of honour, but it is doubtful if courts will look at all such murders as among the 'rarest of rare cases' that warrant the resort to the death penalty.

Incisive interventions that blunt the RTI's edge

With the kernel of the Information Act under threat, the independence of the information commission is in peril



SUHRIT PARTHASARATHY



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

When we describe India as a democracy what do we really mean? Are we referring merely to a system of popular sovereignty founded in universal adult franchise? Or are we suggesting something more – perhaps an assurance, grounded in the Constitution, of a set of rights, of the rights, among others, to a freedom of expression, life and personal liberty, and equal opportunity and status?

These are questions, as Astra Taylor argues in her remarkable new book, *Democracy May Not Exist, But We'll Miss It When It's Gone*, that we must perpetually ask ourselves. If nothing else can be reasonable disagreements over how a republic ought to be structured, seeing democracy as purely an enforcement of majoritarian will, where the only end in mind is the selection of a representative government, leads to self-rule "becoming not a promise but a curse". Evidence throughout history has shown us that just results do not necessarily follow from a simple guarantee of equal status enshrined in a right to vote. The wealthy and the dominant classes find uncanny ways to ensure concentration of power. Democracy, therefore, has to percolate beyond the bare promises of formal political equality.

It is to this end that India's Constitution provides a framework for governance by pledging to people a set of inviolable guarantees. But

realising the full value of those guarantees at times requires a parley with the state. It was one such long battle, fought over nearly two decades, driven by the unstinting efforts of the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, that resulted in the enactment in 2005 of the Right to Information Act (RTI Act). By any account, the law proved transformative to India's democracy; it revolutionised the citizen's ability to engage with the state, arming people with a mechanism to ferret out some of the truth from the government's otherwise secretive operations.

Deep-reaching amendments

Today, though, the kernel of the RTI Act is under threat. New amendments have been passed without subjecting the draft law to scrutiny by a parliamentary committee. A feature common to every law enacted by Parliament in its present session, this portends the reduction of governance to a form of democracy by crude proclamation. The changes made include an alteration to the term in office of the information commissioners (ICs) and to the manner of determination of their salaries. In place of the existing five-year term accorded to the Central Information Commissioner (CIC) and the various ICs the law grants to the Union government the power to notify their terms through executive regulations. What is more, the amendment deletes the RTI Act's mandate that the salary paid to the CIC and the ICs ought to be equivalent to that paid respectively to the Chief Election Commissioner and the Election Commissioners (ECs). Now, the salary, allowances, and terms and conditions of service of the CIC and the ICs will be determined by executive guidelines.

On its face, a reading of these amendments might not strike us as being especially harmful. The changes may appear to be nothing more than matters of legislative niceties. But the RTI Act is not an ordinary statute. It is a law that enlivens and animates the basic right to freedom of information. Although such a right is not enumerated in the Constitution, the Supreme Court has repeatedly affirmed its position as intrinsic to the right to freedom of expression (for example, in *PUCL v. Union of India*, 2004).

It might be difficult to see the merit in this finding if we take democracy to mean governance by the many and nothing more. But as the courts have wisely recognised, information often acts as a great leveller; it helps anchor democratic action. Therefore, for democracy to be valuable, citizens must possess a right to freely express themselves. It ought to follow then that it is only when citizens have a right to know what the state is up to, where governance is transparent, can their speech have genuine meaning; only then can they constructively participate in the veritable marketplace of ideas.

It was with a view to giving effect to these constitutional promises that the RTI Act was formulated. Extensive debate was held both in

Parliament and within parliamentary committees before it was decided that public authorities ought to be mandated by law to making a series of voluntary disclosures on their structure, their functioning, and their financial management. Besides this basic directive, citizens are also empowered under the RTI Act to seek and obtain any information from public authorities, barring a few exempted categories such as information which might affect the sovereignty of the country or private information which might have a bearing on a person's right to privacy.

Ferreting out the truth

This freedom to secure information that the law provides has, in many ways, redesigned the structure of India's democratic governance. It has helped open the government up to greater scrutiny. For example, it was through a response to a request made under the RTI Act that it was discovered that between 2006 and 2010 more than ₹700 crore had been diverted from Delhi's special component plan, intended for the development of Scheduled Caste communities, to projects related to the Commonwealth Games. More recently, an exposé by Rohini Mohan into the horrifying processes of the "Foreigners Tribunal" in Assam was made on the back of securing information through the RTI Act. Even there, as Ms. Mohan has pointed out, only five out of the 100 functioning tribunals replied to requests for copies of the orders delivered.

It is when a plea for information goes unheeded that the CIC and the ICs play an especially vital role. Should the initial request for information made to a public information officer, designated by each public authority, fail, the pe-

titioner is entitled to lodge an appeal to an authority within the department concerned. Should that entreaty fail too – and it often does since this is a virtually illusory remedy – a further appeal can be made to the office of the CIC or the State Information Commission.

Until now, the RTI Act granted an acceptable level of independence to ICs. By placing their terms of service on a par with those of the ECs the law insulated the ICs from political influence. This protection was not dissimilar to the autonomy accorded to members of the higher judiciary. The basic idea remained the same: security in office is imperative if members must intervene without fear or favour to ensure that the law's mandate is met.

It could well be argued that the RTI Act, in its original form, was far from flawless, especially in that it did not do enough to open up public authorities to complete scrutiny. But the present amendments, far from strengthening the existing regime, subvert the independence of the information commission. The delegation of the power to fix the tenure and the salaries of the CIC and the ICs to the political executive places the information commission's autonomy in a state of peril. With the withering of that independence, the right to freedom of information also begins to lose its thrust. Ultimately, therefore, the new amendments represent a classic piece of totalitarian legerdemain. Democracy, to borrow the American philosopher Cornel West's conception, demands a "leap of faith". If the new amendments are allowed to stand, making that leap becomes all the more implausible.

Suhrit Parthasarathy is an advocate practising at the Madras High Court

Not the final word from Islamabad and Delhi

There are already signs that the Kulbhushan Jadhav case between Pakistan and India might return to the ICJ



VANSHAJ RAVI JAIN

The publication of the International Court of Justice's award in the Kulbhushan Jadhav case on July 17, 2019 was heralded by both India and Pakistan as a victory to their side; the truth probably lies somewhere in between. The award vindicated India's claims on merit, concurring that Pakistan was guilty of multiple violations of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (VCCR): by failing to inform Mr. Jadhav of his rights under Article 36 of the treaty, by neglecting to notify India of his arrest without delay, and by denying him consular access. Nonetheless, the ICJ rejected India's claims on two crucial grounds: fair trial rights and remedy.

The bedrock

Much of India's case hinged on Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which guarantees individuals the right to a fair trial. By convicting Mr. Jadhav through a military tribunal, using video evidence of a confession obtained under coercive circumstances, and by denying Indian consular officers the opportunity to arrange for his legal representation, India ar-

gued that the Pakistani state had employed an unjust procedure in his trial. Predictably, however, the ICJ chose to hinge its jurisdiction in this case on Article 1 of the Optional Protocol to the VCCR, which grants the ICJ compulsory jurisdiction only over disputes arising out of the application or interpretation of the Consular Convention. The unfortunate consequence of this choice was that disputes pertaining to violations of other international law norms, such as the human rights obligations under the ICCPR, were ruled to be outside the remit of the ICJ's jurisdiction. India's attempts to have the ICCPR piggyback on the VCCR, by claiming that the latter was also, in essence, a human rights treaty and by asserting that the inclusion of the ICCPR was necessary for an effective remedy, were rejected out of hand.

Issue of remedies

The more troubling aspect of the ICJ's award, from the Indian perspective, concerns the ICJ's decision on remedies. It denied India's prayer to set aside Mr. Jadhav's conviction by the military tribunal, and for his release. Instead, it ruled that the appropriate remedy would be for Pakistan to carry out an "effective review and reconsideration" of the tribunal's conviction and sentence. What this means, in simpler terms, is that Pakistan will have to provide Mr. Jadhav a judicial mechanism to assess the prejudice caused to him by a denial of consular access, and

to reconsider (and possibly alter) his sentence and conviction based on its findings.

While not entirely unforeseeable, this decision is worrying for several reasons. First, this remedy carries a fraught history: it has only ever been used before by the ICJ in *LaGrand* and *Avena*, which involved an identical denial of consular access to nationals of Germany and Mexico, respectively, by the United States. Crucially, the unsatisfactory implementation of this remedy and the weak review mechanisms provided by the U.S. in response to the ICJ's decision in both cases have been widely noted in academic literature. Second, the remedy does little to account for the violation of Mr. Jadhav's fair trial rights. This means that the review procedure Pakistan opts for might well be one carried out by a military tribunal, and also one that continues to rely on the allegedly-forced video confession. But perhaps the most troubling aspect of this remedy, and the one that makes it most ripe for further litigation, is that it is intrinsically ambiguous.

Apart from asserting that the re-

view and reconsideration of Mr. Jadhav's conviction "must be effective", the ICJ has offered little guidance on how it must be carried out. It is known, from the *Avena* judgment, that providing Mr. Jadhav access to a clemency petition (as Pakistani law does) is an insufficient form of review, since it does not entail the use of a judicial mechanism. The Pakistani Supreme Court, in *Said Zaman Khan v. Federation of Pakistan*, ruled that the state's civilian courts could only review the decision of a military tribunal on the narrow grounds of *coram non judice* (i.e., an absence of jurisdiction) or *mala fides* (bad faith). It is unlikely that Mr. Jadhav's denial of VCCR rights falls under either category. However, the decision in *Said Zaman Khan* is under review, following the Peshawar High Court's attempts to widen it in 2018, in the Abdur Rashid case.

Heading back to The Hague?

The outcome of the latter case may well portend the use of a civilian review mechanism for Mr. Jadhav's case. Even if the Rashid case fails, Pakistan could potentially be required to alter their laws to provide a more effective review mechanism for decisions of military tribunals: a fact alluded to by the ICJ, which stated that "Pakistan shall take all measures to provide for effective review and reconsideration, including, if necessary, by enacting appropriate legislation" [emphasis added].

Ultimately, though neither state

will admit it, the Jadhav decision will be a bitter pill to swallow for both India and Pakistan. For Pakistan, making a significant alteration to its legal system would amount to an admission that the ICJ's judgement was a public admonition of Pakistan's judicial review mechanism; a prospect Pakistan is unlikely to welcome. For India, any review mechanism that fails to acquit Mr. Jadhav will be seen as procedurally unsound, and an attempt by Pakistan to further shirk its international legal responsibilities. It does not help that both countries have dug themselves into holes by thoroughly politicising the ICJ's verdict.

The likely consequence is that, irrespective of what review mechanism Pakistan implements, both nations will be soon be back, knocking on the door of the International Court: the ICJ's Statute allows parties to approach the court again, asking it to interpret its judgment. Signs of this outcome can already be witnessed, with Pakistan refusing India unimpeded access to Mr. Jadhav through a note verbale issued mere weeks after the ICJ's decision. India's counsel, Harish Salve, has publicly stated that the state will not hesitate to return to the ICJ if Pakistan's conduct proves to be unsatisfactory. It is increasingly likely that we haven't heard the last of the Jadhav litigation. For now, however, the ball remains in Pakistan's court.

Vanraj Ravi Jain is a DPhil candidate and Rhodes Scholar at the University of Oxford

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.

Pakistan's stance

Strange as it might seem, the reverberations over the Central government's decision to abrogate Articles 35A and 370 and re-designate Jammu and Kashmir as a Union Territory appear to be felt more in neighbouring Pakistan than in the Kashmir Valley itself (Editorial, "Knee-jerk", August 9). A flurry of activity has been witnessed in Pakistan – expulsion of the Indian envoy, bilateral trade coming to a halt, and even a refusal to grant consular access to Kulbhushan Jadhav. What is even more of an oddity is Pakistan which has absolutely no locus standi as far as Kashmiri affairs are concerned also threatening to take the matter to the United Nations Security

Council. India has to thwart all efforts by Pakistan to meddle in our internal affairs.

C.V. ARAVIND,
Bengaluru

■ Before it rushed ahead with snapping trade ties with India, debt-ridden Pakistan should have understood that trade is a basic need for employment and income generation for its people. Also reorganising its own State is India's internal matter. Even on the diplomatic front, the rest of the subcontinent has recognised this as fact. Pakistan must shun its policy of state-sponsored terrorism as it is already on the grey list of international donor agencies for terror-financing. It should continue to engage in talks with India at the bilateral level and resolve all

pending issues.

HARVINDER SINGH CHUGH,
Jalandhar City, Punjab

the structure of non-banking financial companies and small- and medium-enterprises, holistic consolidation in banking and industrial structures. Change is the essence.

K.U. MADA,
Mangalore

rural economy. It would be far more prudent to correct systemic faults that have crept in the sector in the course of the last 50 years than reversing a policy measure that has made financial inclusion a reality. Even merger to create a few leviathans may prove to be counter productive.

KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI,
Hyderabad

trees is Manipur's green ambassador", August 9). However, the gesture of the Manipur government in making her a green ambassador, offering 20 saplings to her and extending her other concessions, will go a long way in not only assuaging her distraught feelings but also making it clear that there exists a government that cares for its citizens. That the Chief Minister himself intervened in the matter is gratifying. The incident needs to be highlighted in all educational institutions so that the younger generation is encouraged to do its bit in the protection of the environment.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai

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In Beed, a harvest of crushed hopes

Maharashtra's drought-stricken district of Beed hit the headlines recently when reports emerged of an unusually high rate of hysterectomies among its women, especially those who migrate to nearby districts to cut sugar cane. **Jyoti Shelar** pieces together their story as the State administration carries out an investigation

At 34, Sangeeta Kale from Maharashtra's Beed district is a mother of two college-going sons, aged 19 and 17. Married off to a sugar-cane cutter at the age of 13 even before she had hit puberty, Kale had little inkling of the hard life ahead. Kale, who had her first child when she was just 16, worked through her pregnancy with husband Sadashiv in the fields of western Maharashtra, sometimes spending up to 16 hours cutting and loading the cane crop into trucks during the harvesting months – October to March. Her life remained the same after her first and second deliveries and subsequent years.

However, she found the routine back-breaking work daunting on days her menstrual cycle set in, as the fields had no toilets. She couldn't take leave for fear of being heavily penalised. Finally, fed up with these troubles and other recurrent gynaecological issues ranging from white discharge to pain, Kale underwent hysterectomy – uterus-removal surgery – last July.

Just like Kale, many women, some of whom are just in their 20s, in Beed have undergone this life-altering procedure, which is otherwise prescribed only for a handful of medical conditions and often performed as a last resort.

What is even more shocking is that Kale was the seventh woman in her extended family, living in Beed's Umrad Jahagir village, to have undergone the operation. "Frustrated with period pain, white discharges and foul smell, when I approached a doctor, I was told my uterus was damaged and hysterectomy was the way out," says Kale.

The drought-stricken Beed district in Maharashtra's Marathwada region came under the scanner this May after reports came to light about the unusually high rate of hysterectomies among its women, especially among those who migrate to neighbouring districts to work as sugar-cane cutters.

State figures say that in three years (2016-2019), as many as 4,605 women have had their uterus removed in Maharashtra. Civil rights organisations allege that the hysterectomy rate in Beed is 14 times more than that for the State or the country. In Umrad Jahagir village where the Kales reside, the number of 'wombless' women now stands at 50.

Pushed into debt

Sitting on the floor of her tin-roofed shanty, Kale, slightly under five-feet tall, points towards her back and knees. "The uterus-removal surgery has no doubt relieved me from the menstrual cramps and vaginal discharge, but it has brought along back and joint pain. On many days, the pain is unbearable. It's like I have aged at a greater speed," she says.

"The doctor assured me that removing the uterus was the best option. Though I was taking medication, my infections were recurring. I had already undergone a sterilisation surgery, so there was anyway no scope of having more children. Hysterectomy seemed like the right thing to do. But later, the after-effects started," rues Kale, who missed out on the last sugar-cane cutting season as she was bedridden for three months after the procedure. Her decision to undergo the procedure has brought not just health issues but severe economic distress to the already impoverished household.

Her husband holds her responsible for the debt of ₹2 lakh that has piled on them. At first, he blamed her one-off leaves from work. Then, he pointed fingers at her for the ₹30,000 that they had to borrow for the hysterectomy. The taunts have gotten worse since they missed out on the last season of sugar-cane cutting.

Kale relied on the testimonies of her four sisters-in-law and two of their mothers-in-law, who had all been through the procedure, when she got admitted to the Veer Hospital located on the Beed-Jalna road for the surgery. "None of us has ever been to school. But the doctor is educated. His word was as sure for us," she says.

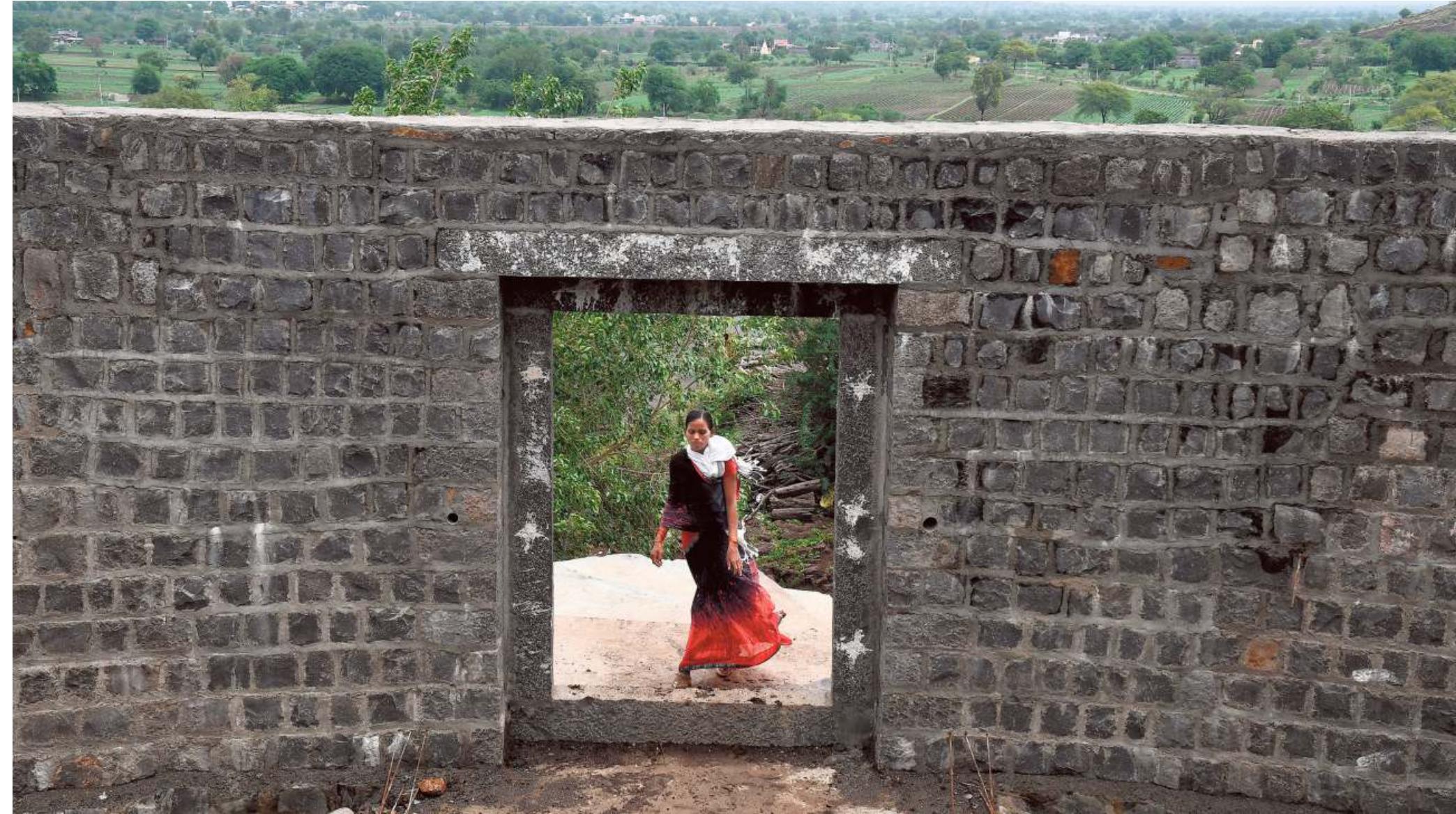
Kale's sister-in-law Vaishali, 33, was also advised a hysterectomy when she sought medical help after grappling with vaginal discharge and recurrent infections for years. "I was told my uterus was damaged and getting it removed was best. I had two sons, so we thought the most important job of the womb was done," says Vaishali.

Scores of women in Beed offer a similar narrative. Shockingly, most don't have medical reports or any papers to show the history of their treatment.

Their individual stories all follow a pattern. Women would commonly consult their doctors for health issues lasting up to a year, but then complain of recurrent infections. Sooner or later, hysterectomy would be recommended to them as a permanent solution.

However, they were never told how the surgery could lead to hormonal imbalance, calcium deficiency and constant body ache, among other things.

In Beed, open defecation remains a ground reality. Many households do have built toilet blocks built under the



Sarika Chandrasen Kurlekar, 32, among the 56 women in Vanjarwadi village who have undergone hysterectomy. ■ ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

government's Swachh Bharat scheme but their members still defecate in the open due to lack of water. For the women in the district, it is a vicious cycle as they have no sanitary facilities either at their workplace or at their homes. And the nature of work in a sugar-cane field has only worsened their situation.

An estimated 5-6 lakh people, including pregnant and lactating women, migrate from Beed to other parts of Maharashtra, and border areas of Karnataka, to work as sugar-cane cutters. Hailing from a region that is perennially under a spell of drought and not having many avenues of employment, Beed residents continue to live in abject poverty and have to rely on sugar-cane cutting to make a living. Traditionally, a couple is hired by a *mukadam* (contractor) as a single 'unit', known as *ek koyta* (one sickle). The contractor pays them *uchal* (a lump sum) in advance, ranging from ₹80,000 to ₹1.2 lakh, for a period of four to six months. The pairs migrate after Deepavali every year.

While a typical workday starts at around 6 a.m. for the couple, the woman gets up earlier, at 4 a.m., and cooks food for the entire family before she sets out. Children are left behind in temporary shanties near the sugar-cane farms as their parents toil under the sun.

Two-and-a-half tonnes a day

Laxmi Chauhan, 44, from Beed's Vanjarwadi village and her husband Nanabhai, 45, have been migrating for sugar-cane cutting for the past 25 years. "We manage to cut about two-and-a-half tonnes of sugar-cane in a day. A tonne of sugar-cane earns us anywhere between ₹350 to ₹400 depending on the seasonal rate," says Nanabhai, a father of two sons, both in their twenties.

Soon after the birth of their children, Chauhan began experiencing pain in the abdomen, which resulted in her frequent absences from work and low productivity. "Working during the menstrual cycle was anyway difficult," says Chauhan, adding that she had to make multiple strikes with the sickle to cut a single cane, a process which made her feel further weak and unwell. It also meant lower earnings for the couple.

"We earned less than the *uchal* and had to repay the remaining amount to the *mukadam*. Also, when one failed to report to work, the *mukadam* demanded a fine of ₹500, which had to be paid in cash and was distributed among other workers who took the extra workload," says Chauhan.

Troubled by her own dwindling productivity and the couple's mounting debt, Chauhan finally decided to see a doctor at the Veer Hospital in 2014. Following a sonography, she was told that her uterus had got swollen and this could lead to cancer. Within the next few days, the couple hurriedly collected ₹25,000 and Chauhan got her uterus removed, as advised by the doctor. She was hospitalised for seven days.

"Since then, my body has begun swelling and I am in pain every day. But



I feel better than before," she says. Weight gain, which Chauhan has experienced, is another inevitable side effect of hysterectomy. When asked if the uterus removal was at the suggestion of a *mukadam*, the couple deny it. "We trusted the doctor's word," says Nanabhai, adding that they had sought help with the intention of getting medical treatment and not surgery. "When the doctor told us about the risk of cancer, we did not want to take any chances," he says.

Coaxed by contractors?

Following reports on the high number of hysterectomies performed in Beed, the Maharashtra administration launched an investigation on June 18. Among the many aspects that the authorities are probing, one is whether the *mukadams* push women to undergo the procedure to ensure better returns. "There could be a nexus between profit-driven doctors and the *mukadams*. This definitely needs to be investigated, among other things," says Neelam Gorhe, who is heading the seven-member investigation committee that will submit its report to the Chief Minister and Health Minister this month.

A *mukadam* is a well-connected village who reaches out to prospective labourers from the nearby areas. With frequent droughts and failing crops, many couples prefer to migrate for income generation, even if they have acres of farmland back home.

"The poverty is so ingrained that the advance taken by couples is exhausted very quickly. When they fail to cut sugar-cane worth the advance paid to them, we are left with no choice but to

pursue them to return the remaining money," says Bappa Kotwade, 42, a *mukadam* from Beed's Irla Dubba village. Having been a *mukadam* for the past 15 years, he supplies up to 200 *koyatas* (couples) to sugar-cane factories every season.

While some labourers are *gadiwale* (couples with a pair of bullocks and a rented cart), some work as *toliwale* (groups that transport harvested sugar cane in trucks or tractors).

"Some men are alcoholics and recovering money from them becomes a task. Some couples disappear midway. There are some who never pay back. We have to be taskmasters to deal with this," says Kotwade, adding that they forge long-standing relationships with the labourers and keep paying them small amounts for food and health expenses to ensure that they come back every season.

But it is not always hunky-dory for the labourers, some of whom have been beaten up and even illegally detained in factories when they failed to cough up the money. "There have been murders too," says Kotwade, citing a story of a *mukadam* who had a scuffle with a labourer while demanding the money. "The labourer died due to serious injuries and the *mukadam* landed in jail."

Kotwade, however, rubbishes the allegation that *mukadams* suggest hysterectomies to women. "It is a vicious cycle of hard manual labour, grinding poverty and bad living conditions. Uterus or no uterus, they have to work to earn. Why should we tell them anything?" he says, adding that women have been undergoing hysterectomies for years in Beed.

Let down by doctors?

A muddy pathway through a farm in Vanjarwadi leads to the house of Sarika Chandrasen Kurlekar, a frail 32-year-old. In the village, where 56 women have undergone uterus removal procedures, Kurlekar is the youngest to have been operated. She has never migrated for cane cutting but, like all other women, had been complaining of continuous white discharge that caused fatigue. Her medical record from Matoshri Hos-

taeologist Madhav Sanap, who has run the Shree Bhagwan Hospital since 1998, is prompt to assert that there may be doctors who conduct unindicated procedures, but he is not one of them. "Of the 193 surgeries that I have carried out, only four were of women under 35. I can provide history for each and every case," he says, while arguing that the hype around hysterectomies in Beed requires an in-depth analysis. "It will prove that the district has rates comparable to other parts of the State," he says.

ABHIJIT MORE
Health activist

pital cites "bulky cervix and persistent demand by patient" as the reason for the hysterectomy.

Ashok Anand, head of gynaecology at the state-run J.J. Hospital in Mumbai, is amused at the reasons cited. "Neither a bulky cervix nor persistent demands by a patient warrant a hysterectomy. Her symptoms were more likely due to cervicitis, which could be treated through conservative medication," says Anand.

Since news on the hysterectomies in Beed came to light, questions have been raised on the possible role of the medical fraternity in making women undergo the procedure. State data showed that 99 private hospitals in Beed district have carried out 4,605 hysterectomies since April 2016. Eleven of these hospitals have carried out more than 100 hysterectomies in the three-year period.

Gross exploitation?

The top five in the list are: Pratibha Nursing Home (277); Tidke Hospital (196); Shree Bhagwan Hospital (193); Gholve Hospital (186); and Veer Hospital (179). In comparison, 2,000-odd hysterectomies have been performed in the public sector in the same period in Beed. "Instead of getting rational treatment in public health-care facilities, the women are pushed towards irrational treatments in the private sector," says Abhay Shukla, national co-convenor of the Jan Swasthya Abhiyan. "It's nothing but gross exploitation of vulnerabilities of women and a failure of the state," he says.

Activists also rue that the official count could be under-reported as the state banks on these same hospitals to furnish the figures.

Local doctors, however, feel the criticism is uncalled for and insist that for most of the women who underwent the surgery, their health warranted it. Gy-



Six out of the seven women from the extended Kale family in Umrad have undergone hysterectomies. ■ ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

CThe surgery has no doubt relieved me from the menstrual cramps and vaginal discharge, but it has brought along back and joint pain

SANGEETA KALE
Beed resident

naecologist Madhav Sanap, who has run the Shree Bhagwan Hospital since 1998, is prompt to assert that there may be doctors who conduct unindicated procedures, but he is not one of them. "Of the 193 surgeries that I have carried out, only four were of women under 35. I can provide history for each and every case," he says, while arguing that the hype around hysterectomies in Beed requires an in-depth analysis. "It will prove that the district has rates comparable to other parts of the State," he says.

Poor hygiene
Sanjay Veer, a gynaecologist and owner of Veer Hospital, says no one goes under the knife unless there is real suffering. "These women live in conditions of extremely poor hygiene. They don't have access to toilets. They can't afford sanitary pads. Open defecation is rampant in their villages as near the sugar-cane farms where they work," he says.

"The core issues are poverty, illiteracy, lack of sanitation and access to water. Doctors are being made scapegoats in this issue, which is largely a socio-economic one and requires a larger solution," he adds.

The National Family Health Survey data show that the rate of hysterectomies in Maharashtra is 2.6%, while the national average is 3.2%. But when it comes to Beed, a 2018 survey of 200 women by Maharashtra State Commission for Women revealed the extent of the problem as around 36% were found to have had undergone hysterectomies.

According to Beed's civil surgeon Ashok Thorat, there is an absence of enough data to carry out comparisons with other districts in Maharashtra. "Our primary investigations have shown that the prevalence of hysterectomies is 17 per 1,000 women in Beed. In some parts of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and other States, the prevalence is about 50 to 60 per 1,000 women," says Thorat, adding that a detailed survey is under way to get to the root cause.

In fact, a circular dated April 16, has made it compulsory for private gynaecologists in Beed to seek permission from a civil surgeon for every hysterectomy procedure barring emergency procedures, which have to be reported within a span of 24 hours. The circular warns doctors against portraying all kinds of tumours, growths and swelling on uterus as cancers.

"The number of hysterectomies has gone down by 50% since we implemented the SOP [Standard Operating Procedure]," Beed's collector Astik Kumar Pandey tells *The Hindu*. "Right now, all the hospitals are under our scanner. All hysterectomies in the past, especially of women who are under 35, are being scrutinised," he says.

Activists say that the menace of unwarranted hysterectomies affects not just sugar-cane cutters but women in general. "Early marriages and child birth, fear of cancer and the loss of wages during menstruation have all culminated in the high rate of hysterectomies. The government has no clue about the ground reality as it has never maintained any data," says health activist Abhijit More who terms Beed's situation as a blatant violation of rights of women living in the district, who are uneducated and therefore ill-equipped to make the right health choices.

FROM PAGE ONE

Many States reel under monsoon fury

Across Karnataka, there were 1.74 lakh people in relief camps, about 35,000 of them rescued since Thursday night. About 64,300 hectares of agricultural land was inundated, taking the total area affected to 2.56 lakh hectares. Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa put the preliminary estimate of flood losses at ₹5,000 crore, and Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Coal and Mines Pralhad Joshi said that the Centre had released ₹200 crore for flood relief.

Houses buried
In the worst-hit Kodagu district, five members belonging to two families were buried alive after their houses located next to each other collapsed in a landslip at Kolangala village near Bhagamandala. Local residents rescued three persons.

In five districts of Western Maharashtra, the death toll in the last fortnight has touched 29, while 2.35 lakh people have been evacuated from Sangli and Kolhapur, besides 50,000 in Satara, Pune and Solapur.

Pune Divisional Commissioner Dr. Deepak Mhaiskar said the casualties include nine people who died in the Sangli boat accident on Thursday, and 11 people were missing, nine of them from the boat incident.

Deficit wiped out
Tamil Nadu's Nilgiris district recorded a staggering 91 cm of rain at Avalanche for a 24-hour period until Friday morning.

Six people have died in rain-related incidents in the Nilgiris in the week-long showers. The deaths were caused by collapsing buildings, flood waters and landslips. Three women and an 8-year-old child are among the dead.

In Gujarat, 26 out of 30 gates of the Sardar Sarovar Narmada dam were opened for the first time in two years to maintain water level at the 131.18-metre limit.

While the rain has had a devastating impact, it has nearly wiped out the monsoon deficit. The IMD on Friday said the monsoon deficit was down from 10.5% on July 31 to 0.6% as of August 9.

The IMD forecast was a 4% below normal season from June-September. Mr. Mohapatra said such spells were typical for August, but not reason enough to assume yet that it would be a 'normal' monsoon.

A new rain-bearing system was seen forming in the Bay of Bengal by August 12

BJP plans grand I-Day celebrations in J&K

Asked whether the BJP workers would be allowed to carry out their plans on Independence Day, given the potential for law and order issues, a senior police official said that would be "decided later."

Meanwhile, the flag of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, which has been split into two Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, would be removed from government offices, an official said. At one government office in Jammu, two flags – one of India and the other of J&K – were in place on Wednesday. On Thursday, however, the J&K flag had been replaced with the

Supreme Court upholds law empowering homebuyers

Adding the Amendment Act to the armoury of the home buyers was like using a sled-gehammer to kill a gnat, the builders argued. Justice Nariman dismissed these contentions. The judge reasoned that the IBC and the RERA operate in different spheres and can be used harmoniously for the interest of home buyers. The IBC

with potential to bring rain to North India, particularly Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh.

83 NDRF teams
"So far, 83 National Disaster Response Force teams have been positioned in vulnerable areas of flood-affected States along with all necessary equipment. These are in addition to the 173 teams of Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard. Control rooms in the Ministry of Home Affairs, NDRF, IMD, and Central Water Commission are keeping a close watch. They have evacuated over 82,000 people to safer places and rescued 2,325 people," a statement from the Press Information Bureau said. This followed a review meeting chaired by the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Nitin Gadkari.

The Sardar Sarovar Narmada dam continued to fill up fast but acted to maintain the water level at 131.18 metres, the limit allowed by Narmada Control Authority, Gujarat.

The administration alerted the downstream districts of Narmada, Bharuch and Vadodara about potential flooding. Several bridges have been closed as the Narmada is flowing at danger level. Chief Minister Vijay Rupani and Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam MD Rajiv Kumar Gupta visited Sardar Sarovar dam. Dr. Gupta tweeted that the 1,200 MW power house was operated on Thursday after a gap of two years.

On Friday, Gujarat continued to receive medium to heavy rainfall. More than 3,000 people were shifted to safer locations.

The Gujarat government said 168 talukas received rain during the last 24 hours, and 14 dams and reservoirs were overflowing. But total monsoon rainfall in the State stood at 66.41% in the season.

Massive rainfall in Tamil Nadu's elevated ranges in the Western Ghats disrupted life in the plains, with the Noyyal, Bhavani and Moyar rivers swelling up to the brim. Valparai, the tea and coffee-growing part of the mountains was lashed by torrential rain, sending copious inflows to reservoirs in the Parambikulam-Aliyar Project.

The record for the highest rain volume in the State, held by Cuddalore since 1943, was broken for two consecutive days in Avalanche in the Nilgiris, with 820 mm on Thursday, and 911 mm on Friday.

BJP names key persons for polls

Asked whether the service would be provided to the

highest rain volume in the State, held by Cuddalore since 1943, was broken for two consecutive days in Avalanche in the Nilgiris, with 820 mm on Thursday, and 911 mm on Friday.

The record for the highest rain volume in the State, held by Cuddalore since 1943, was broken for two consecutive days in Avalanche in the Nilgiris, with 820 mm on Thursday, and 911 mm on Friday.

This was announced by Jammu Deputy Commissioner Sushma Chauhan on Friday. She said Section 144, which imposes restrictions on assembly and movement, had been lifted in Jammu. While some shops opened on Friday and there was vehicular movement, things were not yet back to normal.

Supreme Court upholds law empowering homebuyers

deals with the replacement of the bankrupt builder from the helm of affairs and hitting upon a resolution plan to benefit all the stakeholders. The RERA's purpose is to protect individual homebuyers by requiring the promoter to strictly adhere to the purchase deal and complete the project within a stated period.

CWC to take up leadership issue today

Ajoy Kumar resigns as Jharkhand Congress chief, accuses senior leaders of sabotaging party's interests

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

The Congress Working Committee (CWC), the party's highest executive body, will start the formal process of finding a replacement for outgoing president Rahul Gandhi, but a final decision will take a few more days.

At a meeting of the Pradesh Congress Committees (PCCs) chiefs, convened to discuss the political fallout of the Centre's decision to abrogate Article 370 and split Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) into union territories, Mr. Gandhi said the Congress position on J&K was reflected in the CWC resolution that called the decision "unilateral, brazen and totally undemocratic".

Mr. Gandhi made it clear that though regional parties such as the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Aam Aadmi Party backed the government on the J&K decision,



Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi at a Congress Working Committee meeting held on August 6. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

those like the Trinamool walked out. Only the Congress stood for the truth of Article 370. He, however, acknowledged that individuals may have different opinions.

Against this backdrop on Article 370, senior leaders Ghulam Nabi Azad and P.

Chidambaram explained to the State Congress chiefs the historical and legal aspect of the Constitutional provisions.

The research department of the Congress has also prepared an 11-page document to counter the government's charge that former Prime Mi-

nister Jawaharlal Nehru mishandled Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India.

To take forward the process of choosing the next party president, the PCCs have been called for a meeting on Saturday.

Joint consultation

PCC chiefs along with MPs will form small groups (five-six members) for consultations.

A senior leader quoted Mr. Gandhi as telling party colleagues at the meeting, "It will be done in three or four days." His response came after several State leaders pointed out that the party workers were demoralised and were deserting the Congress after the Lok Sabha rout.

On Friday, Ajoy Kumar added to the sense of crisis as he resigned from the post of party president of Jharkhand – a State where elections are

due in about three months. In his resignation letter, he blamed senior leaders of sabotaging party interests.

"Rahulji told us that there is nothing to fear. In the past 15 years, he said he was not scared even by a bullet," said a leader quoting the outgoing chief. "He also said that some leaders will leave the party but majority will fight."

Mr. Gandhi told his party colleagues that though he would not hold the president's post, he would continue to fight the government and the RSS.

Public speculation on possible contenders for the president's post included the names of Mukul Wasnik, Mallikarjun Kharge, Sachin Pilot and Jayotiraditya Scindia. As per the party's constitution, the senior most general secretary is made the provisional Congress president before organisational elections are held.

President gives assent to UAPA Bill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind has given assent to legislation under which individuals can be declared terrorists and their properties seized.

The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019 also provides for putting a travel ban on such individuals once they are declared terrorists.

The President gave his assent to the legislation late on Thursday night, a Home Ministry official said. The Lok Sabha passed the amendment Bill on July 24 and the Rajya Sabha on August 2.

Lashkar-e-Taiba founder Hafiz Saeed and Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar are likely to be the first two to be designated as terrorists under the legislation, the Ministry official said.

Manjhi says party will go it alone in 2020 election

'NDA and grand alliance cheated us'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

Former Bihar Chief Minister and Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) president Jitan Ram Manjhi said here on Friday that the party would contest the next Assembly election on its own. Mr. Manjhi alleged that the NDA and the grand alliance had let down his party during the previous elections.

The next Assembly election in Bihar is due in November 2020.

"Both the NDA and the grand alliance had cheated us in elections... so my party men have suggested that we contest the next Assembly polls in the State on our own," Mr. Manjhi told presspersons soon after launching the party's membership

drive in Patna. "Whatever seats we win will be our own and on our strength," he said.

Out of the State's 40 Lok Sabha seats, Mr. Manjhi's party contested three – as a member of the *Mahagathbandhan* (grand alliance) – and drawn a blank.

"My party was given three seats in last parliamentary elections but only I, from Gaya (reserved) seat, was contesting as our party candidate as the other two

seats had Congress and RJD candidates," Mr. Manjhi said. "This decision had angered my party leaders and workers." Now, they [party leaders and workers] have suggested to contest the Assembly poll in 2020 on our own strength.

Assembly elections are due in Delhi, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Haryana



Bigger role: Prakash Javadekar will be in charge of Delhi and Narendra Singh Tomar of Haryana. ■ FILE PHOTO

2020. The party also appointed Union Ministers Nitin Gadkari and Hardeep Singh Puri to assist Mr. Javadekar in Delhi, where the BJP managed to win only three of the 70 seats in the

previous Assembly election. Mr. Javadekar, who was earlier in charge of the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections in Rajasthan, said he would discharge the new responsibility with dedication

and would prepare plans for the Delhi polls after consulting the party president and other leaders.

More appointments

The BJP has appointed co-in-charge for Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Haryana too.

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister and OBC leader Keshav Prasad Maurya, along with Karnataka leader Laxman Sevadi, would be the co-in-charge for Maharashtra.

Mr. Tomar would be assisted by Bhupendra Singh, a Jat leader from Haryana, in handling election-related affairs in the State. Jats have a sizeable population in Haryana.

Nand Kishore Yadav, a Bihar Minister, would assist Mr. Mathur in Jharkhand.

Uncertainty over Thar Express's Jodhpur departure

Pak says midnight train to Karachi on Friday will be the last

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

Uncertainty loomed large over the Thar Express weekly train to Karachi – scheduled to depart from Jodhpur's Bhagat Ki Koti station late Friday night – following the Pakistan Railway Minister's announcement that the service was being halted.

The announcement was made in Islamabad on Friday, a day after Pakistan stopped the Samjhauta Express as part of its moves to downgrade bilateral ties following India's revocation of special status to Jammu and Kashmir. The train leaves Bhagat Ki Koti station for Munabao in Barmer district every Friday night.

Officials at the North-West Railway divisional office in Jodhpur said Friday's train had not been cancelled and



People wave to their relatives as the Thar Express enters India. ■ AFP

was scheduled to depart after midnight. A total of 143 passengers had booked their seats till Friday evening and the booking was open till 10 p.m., about three hours before the train's departure.

"From midnight tonight, we will stop the Thar Express," Pakistan Railway Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad said at a press conference in

Islamabad. "We don't have the resources to take responsibility for the security of Indian passengers in Mirpurkhas," he added.

Finished now?

"So in order to avoid any untoward incident, we will send off the 200 passengers to Zero Line with a bottle of water at 11.55 p.m. tonight. This is finished now. No more," he said.

Thar Express's operations had remained unaffected following the Balakot air-strike in February, when the Samjhauta Express was briefly suspended. According to an estimate, more than 4 lakh passengers – both Indians and Pakistanis – have travelled by the train during the last 13 years.

(With inputs from Mehmood Sarfraz in Lahore)

Parties should have a code of conduct for MPs'

This is to monitor their behaviour, says Venkaiah Naidu

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu said on Friday that political parties should have a code of conduct for their MPs in Parliament to monitor their behaviour, and parties should include such a code in their election manifestos.

"I suggest that political parties should have a code of conduct for their MPs to monitor their behaviour," Mr. Naidu told presspersons at a get-together at the end of the Parliament session.

Such a code of conduct should include stipulations that the members would not enter the Well of the House, nor resort to sloganising and disruptions or any other unruly behaviour such as tearing papers and throwing them in the House.

In an indirect response to the Trinamool Congress's allegation that one out of every four legislation passed in this session were anti-federal, Mr. Naidu said it had helped in changing the perception of the people regarding the political class.

He hoped that both the Treasury benches and the Opposition would maintain the "positive momentum" of the just concluded session.

Pointing out that political parties were only rivals and not enemies, he was of the firm opinion that the ruling and the Opposition parties should interact more frequently to ensure the smooth functioning of Parliament.

"Federalism flows from constitutional scheme of

things and Parliament is also a constitutional entity," he said.

Changing perception

While expressing satisfaction over the successful session of Parliament in terms of the number of key Bills passed, Mr. Naidu said it had helped in changing the perception of the people regarding the political class.

He hoped that both the Treasury benches and the Opposition would maintain the "positive momentum" of the just concluded session.

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"Federalism flows from constitutional scheme of

things and Parliament is also a constitutional entity," he said.

Long way home for migrant workers

They are returning to Bihar, unsure of ever coming back to collect unpaid wages

DAMINI NATH
JAMMU

Leaving Srinagar under pressure from security forces, landlords and employers, a group of migrant workers from Bihar found themselves outside the Jammu railway station on Thursday with the prospect of an uncertain two-day journey back home.

Ahead of announcing the revoking of Jammu and Kashmir's special status, the government had begun moving out tourists, pilgrims and outstation workers. With large parts of Jammu and Kashmir under curfew-like conditions since Monday, the group of 30 men from West Champaran district of Bihar said they were unsure of ever returning to collect their unpaid dues.

Lal Babu Shah went to Srinagar for the first time about a month ago, hoping to stay for four or five months work-



Uncertain times: A group of migrant workers waiting to leave Jammu on Friday. ■ DAMINI NATH

ing in construction.

Evicted at night

"I used to sell vegetables back home, but this time the crops failed; so business was down. I thought I would be able to make some money by working in Srinagar for a few months. I was working in a mosque, laying tiles," he said.

At 3 a.m. the previous morning, they were all asked

they said the work was incomplete. We were able to scrounge enough for bus tickets. Now, we don't know how we will buy tickets to Bihar," Lalji Kumar said.

The government has announced special trains for the workers. Srinagar Deputy Commissioner Shahid Iqbal Choudhary tweeted on Thursday that special trains and coaches had been arranged from Udhampur and Jammu "in view of large number of workers including those going home on Eid". Spending six months a year in Srinagar taking up construction jobs, Mr. Kumar said he was able to make ₹60,000 to ₹70,000 a season, the highest rate anywhere in North India. Now he was leaving with ₹3,000 in unpaid wages.

Having gone through a harrowing few days, both men, however, said they sup-

ported Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decisions on Jammu and Kashmir. "In two years, the way life is in Jammu, that is how we will be able to live in Srinagar," said Mr. Kumar, adding he was not sure if he would return.

For Mohammad Arif, who has been going to work in Srinagar for the past 10 years, this time was different. During the violence and curfew after the killing of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen "commander" Burhan Wani in 2016, he said, the situation for migrant workers was not as bad on Friday.

"They used to hurl insults at us then, but now they are telling Biharis to leave. We heard that some people beat up a Bihari worker in Soura," he said.

Another member of the group, Bhola, said locals would taunt him saying "come back with a passport".

Shock over Centre's move keeps Valley streets silent

Residents await release of mainstream, separatist leaders

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

A sense of shock and disbelief keeps the streets of Kashmir Valley unusually silent in reaction to the abrogation of Article 370, bifurcation and stripping of statehood, even as curfew-like restrictions and communication blockade continued for the fifth day on Friday.

A senior police officer, monitoring the situation since August 5, told *The Hindu* that street agitation compared to the 2008 Amarnath land row, the 2009 alleged rape-and-murder of two women in Shopian, the hanging of Afzal Guru in 2013 and the killing of militant 'commander' Burhan Wani 2016 "is far far less with just one casualty, due to drowning at Safa Kadal reported during a

protest, in the first four days."

"It is disconcerting as much as heartening to see the streets silent in Kashmir. We witnessed an over 20-day shutdown and street protests in 2018 on mere rumours of Article 35A being heard by the Supreme Court (SC)," a senior police officer told *The Hindu*.

Nazir Ahmad, an arts graduate from Khanyar, said, "We are angry about what has been done to J&K. However, this is no more an issue to be settled with just stones or street agitation. We have reached a pass where political solution to J&K has to be now or never."

Many locals are awaiting the release of leaders, both mainstream and separatists. "Let (National Conference

vice-president) Omar Abdullah be released from jail. We want our leadership to take a final call on this. It is the second time New Delhi has backstabbed the NC, the first time in 1953," said Ghulam Nabi, an NC worker.

250 arrested

Around 250 leaders, including top brass of the Peoples Democratic Party and the NC, have been arrested.

Curfew-like restrictions have made life difficult in the Valley. Only movement for emergencies is allowed, ATMs are running dry and eatables are scarce.

"I was surrounded by policemen in the old city and forced to delete all videos of protests," Shafat Ahmad, a stringer of the BBC, told *The Hindu*.

Animals unavailable for Id sacrifice

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

The customary sacrificial animal for Id is unavailable at all major traditional grounds in the Valley.

The main market of sheep and goat at Eidgah here is empty and walled by security forces' vehicles.

Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Baseer Khan, said the administration was facilitating mobile delivery of essentials on Id. "Bazaars of mutton, vegetables will be set up. Medicine will be made available from Friday," he said.

He said sub-district magistrate and tehsildars have been provided with transportation to shift medical cases to hospitals.

Yechury, Raja turned away at airport

The place has been completely taken over by security forces, say the Left leaders

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

CPI (M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury and his CPI counterpart D. Raja were detained at the Srinagar airport and sent back by the security forces on Friday.

The leaders questioned the government's claim that the situation in Srinagar and other parts of Kashmir was normal. "If all is well as the Central government is claiming, why were we stopped?" Mr. Yechury asked at a press conference upon returning to New Delhi. He said the Narendra Modi government had forgotten the principles proposed by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee of 'Insaniyat, Jamhuriyat, Kashmriyat', which meant protecting humanity, peace,



Left leaders Sitaram Yechury and D. Raja at a press conference in New Delhi on Friday. ■ PTI

and Kashmiri ethos.

Mr. Raja said Kashmir was tense and an atmosphere of fear prevailed there. "The situation was far from normal. The political parties or the people were not taken

into confidence by the government before revoking Article 370. There is a great amount of uncertainty in the minds of people about the future," he noted.

The leaders were at the

airport for four hours.

Mr. Yechury said, "It is our democratic right to meet our own comrade, who has been keeping unwell. The Central government wants everyone to believe that there is no curfew in Kashmir and everything is normal. But our experience today shows that the place has been completely taken over by security forces. The repression is palpable and visible to everyone."

The State has been completely taken over by the Central government, he alleged.

Mr. Raja said, "India doesn't belong to the BJP alone. It belongs to us. We should be allowed to go to any part of the country to meet people."

Law and order steps are temporary, says Ministry

Situation will gradually return to normal, assures official

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Law and order measures in Kashmir were taken as precaution and there is already a sense of calm and normalcy, the External Affairs Ministry said on Friday.

Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said the measures taken by Pakistan after India ended the special status for Kashmir were unilateral.

"Certain precautionary measures have been taken by concerned authorities to maintain law and order. Prime Minister [Narendra] Modi in his address yesterday [Thursday] mentioned that the situation will gra-



Raveesh Kumar

dually return to normal and the inconvenience experienced by people in Jammu and Kashmir is very temporary in nature. We already see a sense of calm and normalcy," said Mr. Kumar, emphasising that food supply, operation of hospitals, newspaper circulation re-

mains undisturbed in the state. The statement of the Indian government came after the human rights organisation Amnesty International had expressed concern over additional deployment of forces and an unprecedented communication blockade that cut off Kashmir from the rest of India.

This was accompanied by the statement from UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres who urged both countries for restraint. The spokesperson noted that Pakistan had begun an international campaign on Kashmir and accused it of trying to portray an alarmist situation.

China opposes unilateral action in J&K

ATUL ANEJA
BEIJING

China on Friday backed the resolution of the Kashmir issue on the basis of the UN Security Council resolutions as well bilateral agreements between India and Pakistan – a veiled reference to the Shimla accord of 1972.

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, following talks with his

counterpart from Pakistan, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who had arrived on an "urgent" visit to Beijing in the wake of change of status of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, said that "China will stand up for justice on the Kashmir issue."

Mr. Wang said that China is "seriously concerned" about the recent escalation of tensions in Kashmir.

J&K govt. airlifts 20 more 'troublemakers' to Agra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SRINAGAR

The Jammu and Kashmir authorities airlifted a fresh batch of 20 "potential troublemakers" from Srinagar to Agra, officials said here on Friday.

The people, who have a history of being involved in separatist activities, were taken out of Kashmir Valley in a special Indian Air Force plane, they said.

They are alleged to be active members of separatist groups in Kashmir Valley. They were taken in a special IAF plane to Uttar Pradesh and lodged in Agra Central Jail.

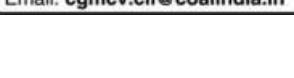
The authorities had airlifted 25 people, including president of Kashmir High Court Bar Association Mian Qayoom, on Thursday as a precautionary measure in the wake of constitutional changes made by the government.

Besides Qayoom, Munib Shah, an office-bearer of Kashmir Chamber of Commerce, was also part of the group.

Mr. Qayoom is a noted lawyer and has been representing many cases in which separatist leaders have been booked by the police.

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Online Submission Upto Date:- 03/09/2019 upto 18:00 Hrs
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4 BESCOM/GM(DAS)/19-20/ AMC/13

5 BESCOM/GM(DAS)/19-20/ AMC/14

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Hong Kong leader rules out concessions

Carrie Lam asks protesters to end violence and chaos, warns of lasting economic troubles

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HONGKONG

Hong Kong's leader Carrie Lam warned on Friday that two months of pro-democracy demonstrations were causing economic chaos in the city but ruled out making concessions to "silence the violent protesters".

The embattled leader met with business leaders as thousands of pro-democracy activists staged a sit-in at Hong Kong airport, hoping to win international support for their movement.

Ms. Lam, whose support for a Bill to allow extradition to mainland China sparked the crisis, warned that the economic impact of the unrest threatened to be worse than the 2003 SARS outbreak in the financial hub.

"Compared to the economic downturn caused by SARS that we handled previously, which caused an economic storm, the situation this time is more severe," she said at an abruptly organised press conference. "In other words, the economic recovery will take a very long time."



Demonstrators at the arrival hall of the Hong Kong International Airport on Friday. •REUTERS

The private sector and the tourism industry in particular have raised concerns about the economic impact of the ongoing protests on the city, with travel agencies reporting drops of up to 50% in group tour bookings and the tourism board warning of double-digit declines in visitor arrivals in the second half of July.

Hong Kong carrier Cathay Pacific has also warned that inbound bookings are down.

Protesters have continued to stage almost daily rallies

which have seen increasingly violent confrontations with police, prompting several countries to issue Hong Kong travel warnings for their citizens.

Extradition Bill

The protests began two months ago over the controversial extradition Bill but have morphed into a broader movement demanding democratic reforms.

Ms. Lam has refused to cave in to the demands, which include a call for the

direct election of the city's Chief Executive, currently chosen by Beijing.

"As far as political solution is concerned, I don't think we should just sort of make concessions in order to silence the violent protesters," she said.

"We should do what is right for Hong Kong. And at this moment, what is right for Hong Kong... is to stop the violence, and to say no to the chaotic situation that Hong Kong has experienced in the last few weeks, so that

we can move on."

On Friday, activists staged a sit-in at Hong Kong airport's arrivals hall and held up signs in Chinese and English condemning police violence. "No rioters, only tyranny," the demonstrators chanted as they began a three-day action. "Save Hong Kong from tyranny and police brutality!" read one sign.

Protesters have staged increasingly inventive rallies across Hong Kong, and brought out supporters ranging from families to lawyers in a bid to show the broad backing for their demands.

But the demonstrations have also increasingly descended into violence, with police firing tear gas and rubber bullets and protesters hurling bricks and bottles.

The airport sit-in is the second time the demonstrators have brought their message to the busy travel hub, hoping to garner support from international arrivals.

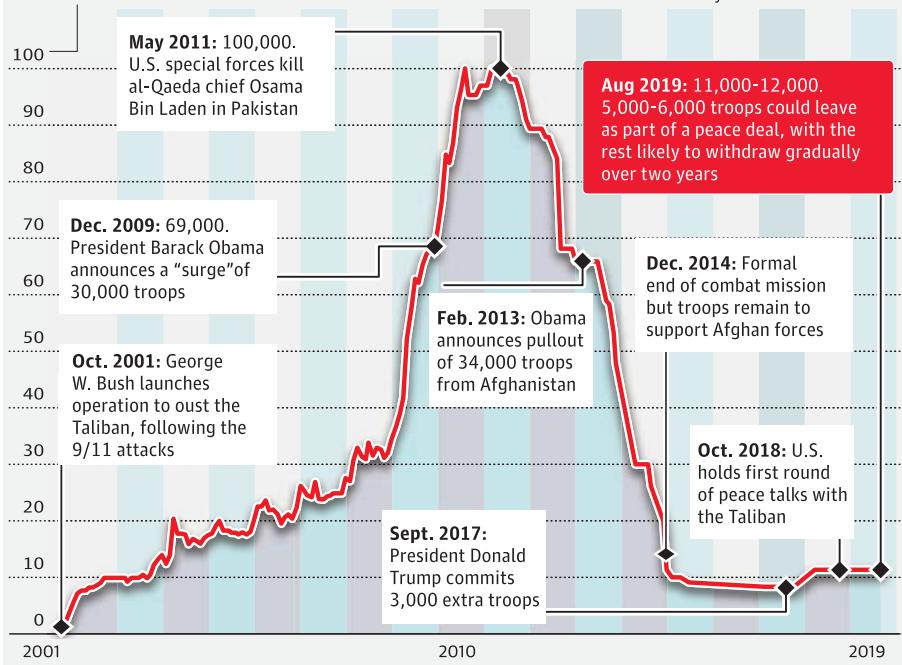
"Ask me about Hong Kong" read signs in different languages attached to the sleeves of some of the protesters.

Push for peace in Afghanistan

A peace deal to end Afghanistan's 18-year-long conflict could see the U.S. pulling out thousands of troops in exchange for promises from the Taliban that it will sever ties to militant groups like al-Qaeda

U.S. spending for the Afghan war (2001-2019*)
\$975 bn

U.S. TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN (in thousands)



5,000-6,000 troops could leave as part of a peace deal, with the rest likely to withdraw gradually over two years

Source: Graphic News

China orders Cathay Pacific to suspend staff backing protests

REUTERS
HONG KONG/BEIJING

China's aviation regulator on Friday demanded that Hong Kong flag carrier Cathay Pacific suspend personnel who have engaged in illegal protests in the city from staffing flights into its airspace from August 10.

Hong Kong has been embroiled in increasingly violent anti-government street protests for the past two

months, which a top Chinese official described this week as the greatest crisis since its return from British to Chinese rule in 1997.

Last week, a Cathay pilot was among over 40 people charged with rioting for allegedly taking part in violent clashes with the police near Beijing's main representative office in the city.

On Friday night, the Civil Aviation Administration of

37 dead in ethnic clashes in Chad

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NDJAMENA

At least 37 people have been killed in fighting this week between rival ethnic groups in Chad, President Idriss Deby said on Friday.

"The intercommunal conflict has become a national concern," Mr. Deby said. He said that in just three days, 37 people were killed in Ouaddie, a strategic area bordering Sudan.

Trump reassures NRA on gun control

President says group's views 'can be fully represented and respected'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump said on Friday that he has reassured the National Rifle Association that its views about the right to bear arms won't be ignored in Washington's response to recent mass shootings.

Mr. Trump said he is talking with the NRA and others to make sure that their "very strong views can be fully re-

presented and respected".

"I am the biggest Second Amendment person there is, but we all must work together for the good and safety of our Country," Mr. Trump tweeted.

"Common sense things can be done that are good for everyone!"

The NRA, however, is uncompromising when it comes to gun control. Association Chief Executive

Wayne LaPierre said in a rare public statement on Thursday that some federal gun control proposals "would make millions of law-abiding Americans less safe and less able to defend themselves and their loved ones".

Mr. Trump did not say specifically how the NRA's position could be reconciled with the push for new gun control measures.

On Thursday, Senate Ma-

jority Leader Mitch McConnell said he now wants to consider background checks and other action.

At the same time, Mr. Trump said he has a "greater influence now over the Senate and the House", which can be used to rally Republicans around stronger federal background check laws as Congress and the White House work on a response to the mass shootings in U.S.

Brexit turmoil drives Britain towards recession

GDP falls 0.2% in the April-June period

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Britain's economy unexpectedly shrank in the second quarter of the year on Brexit turmoil, official data showed on Friday, placing the country on the verge of recession.

Gross domestic product fell 0.2% in the April-June period, the first time the economy has contracted in almost seven years, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

The data, which was worse than market expectations for zero growth and also reflects global economic strains, sent the pound sliding against the euro and dollar.

Bank of England Governor Mark Carney recently warned that a no-deal Brexit could undermine sectors of the economy such as the car industry and farming.

Another contraction in the current third quarter

would put Britain in official recession, ahead of the nation's expected withdrawal from the EU at the end of October. "The latest data reveal an economy in decline and skirting with recession as headwinds from slower global economic growth are exacerbated by Brexit-related paralysis," said IHS Markit economist Chris Williamson.

The government's official forecaster last month warned that Britain would slide into a year-long recession should it leave the EU without a deal.

Countries around the world are grappling with the question of how to treat citizens who went to the Islamic State "caliphate" and have since decided to return.

That problem is felt particularly keenly in Russia, which has seen thousands of people leave to fight alongside jihadists in Syria, according to President Vladimir

Chechnya sends former IS members to schools, not jails

They share their experiences about the perils of extremism

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GROZNY

Zalina Gabibulayeva, a mother of five, says she was "tricked" into joining the jihadis in Syria five years ago. Now, repentant and repatriated to Russia's Chechnya, she goes to schools to teach others of the dangers of extremism.

While some Western nations have stripped IS recruits of citizenship or banned them from coming back, Russia has repatriated women and children.

Most of Russia's IS recruits came from Muslim-majority Caucasus repu-

blics, such as Chechnya. The republic, however, has welcomed in women like Ms. Gabibulayeva – with the expectation that some will go to work to prevent young Muslims from becoming radicalised. "It's very difficult for (the women) to talk about their experience but we get them to understand it's a way to show they're repented," says Kheda Saratova, who sits on the rights council of Chechnya's leader Ramzan Kadyrov.

Ms. Saratova hopes Russian authorities will remove their ban on repatriating women from Syria and Iraq. The activist says around 200 women and children have already been brought back.

Huawei unveils 'Harmony' as a rival to Android

First version to launch later this year

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DONGGUAN

Chinese telecom giant Huawei unveiled its own operating system on Friday, as it faces the threat of losing access to Google's Android platform, amid escalating U.S.-China trade tensions.

The highly anticipated operating system is considered crucial for the tech titan's survival as it confronts a looming White House ban on U.S. companies selling technology products to Huawei, which could remove its access to Android.

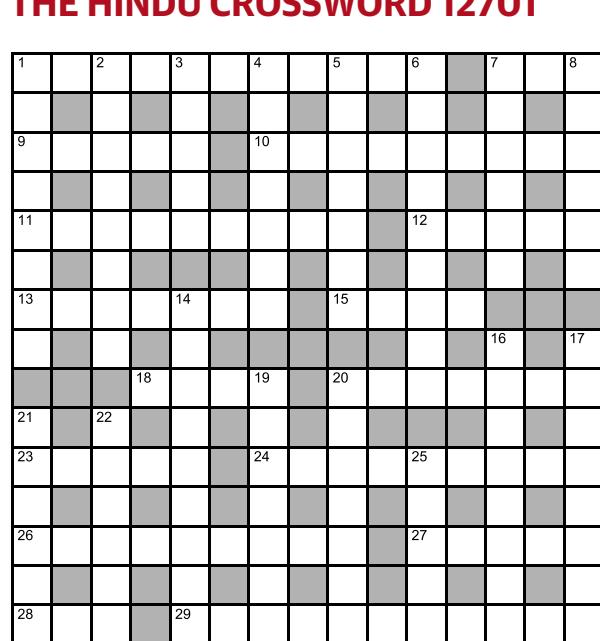
Richard Yu, the head of Huawei's consumer business, revealed HarmonyOS – HongMeng in Chinese – at a press conference in Dongguan. He said the first version would launch later this

year in its smart screen products, before expanding across a range of smart devices, including wearable technology, over the next three years. "If you're asking when will we apply this to the smartphone, we can do it at any time," he said.

"If we cannot use it (Android) in the future, we can immediately switch to the HarmonyOS." But Mr. Yu said Huawei had no plan to "launch a smartphone with HarmonyOS" while noting that "our backup plan is always ready".

Mr. Yu said HarmonyOS was "future oriented" and designed to be "more smooth and secure", which he said was "completely different" from Android and iOS.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12701



ACROSS

- 1 With complaining wife everyone comes here to pray (7,4)
- 7 Decline, it's not the full story (3)
- 9 Talk of heads that are free (5)
- 10 Account of how one hurried back with some food (9)

(set by Arden)

- 3 In record time becomes clumsy (5)
- 4 Comprehensive information on the boy (7)
- 5 A game – make it short (7)
- 6 Raising and going away, regularly seen inside (9)
- 7 Booze partly lost in godowns (6)
- 8 Criminals crossing English river (6)
- 14 Overlap India and China, allow an economic union (9)
- 16 Follow people to the water outlet (8)
- 17 Cheers erupt from mid-level for an astronomer (8)
- 19 Part that puts husband in a daze (7)
- 20 Agreement as soon as there is TV coverage (7)
- 21 Excels at regular intervals, the song is sweet (6)
- 22 Cooler inside, are they esoteric? (6)
- 25 For example, Tata's average is picking up (8)

SUDOKU

			7	3	9			
4				5	3	8		
	8	3			7	1		
3	6			2		4		
7	5		8		6			
9	7							
5	3	8			9			
	8	6	2					

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12700

M	R	C	F	C
G	A	E	R	T
A	E	R	O	N
R	S	T	E	H
S	T	E	H	N

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

2	9	7	4	8	3	6	1	5
8	3	5	1	6	2	9	4</td	

MARKET WATCH

	09-08-2019	% CHANGE
Sensex	37,582	-0.68
US Dollar	70.78	-0.12
Gold	38,330	-0.36
Brent oil	58.56	-0.75

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	376.60	2.65
Asian Paints	1575.50	9.60
Axis Bank	660.80	0.70
Bajaj Auto	2707.60	3.85
Bajaj Finance	7504.25	213.55
Bharti Airtel	371.15	-1.00
BPLC	346.45	2.95
Britannia Ind	2588.15	10.55
Cipla	484.50	-18.55
Coal India	207.60	-4.25
Dr Reddys Lab	2573.45	1.50
Eicher Motors	17587.25	775.60
GAIL (India)	123.85	1.90
Grasim Ind	746.50	9.05
HCL Tech	1086.30	-1.95
HDFC	2211.65	29.35
HDFC Bank	228.00	48.85
Hero MotoCorp	2622.25	34.35
Hindalco	176.20	-4.85
Hind Unilever	1841.35	38.25
Indiabulls HFL	505.25	60.90
ICICI Bank	420.15	5.75
IndusInd Bank	1413.40	-0.65
Bharti Infratel	252.05	1.80
Infosys	789.85	1.10
Indian Oil Corp	130.50	-0.35
ITC	254.20	-3.55
JSW Steel	220.60	-1.10
Kotak Bank	1532.10	29.35
L&T	1364.60	3.95
M&M	545.55	6.00
Maruti Suzuki	6099.90	197.65
NTPC	123.90	-0.75
ONGC	130.95	0.10
PowerGrid Corp	202.00	-0.70
Reliance Ind	1162.10	9.75
State Bank	291.35	-3.00
Sun Pharma	422.00	-4.45
Tata Motors	122.05	-2.00
Tata Steel	362.35	-5.05
TCS	2246.25	-11.85
Tech Mahindra	663.35	-16.85
Titan	1067.00	25.90
UltraTech Cement	4281.35	48.20
UPL	533.45	0.60
Vedanta	141.50	2.80
Wipro	263.50	-2.25
YES Bank	82.15	-7.05
Zee Entertainment	328.10	-3.35

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	70.60	70.92
Euro	79.05	79.40
British Pound	85.16	85.58
Japanese Yen (100)	66.72	67.02
Chinese Yuan	10.00	10.05
Swiss Franc	72.53	72.87
Singapore Dollar	51.07	51.30
Canadian Dollar	53.43	53.67
Malaysian Ringgit	16.87	16.95

Source: Indian Bank

BULLION RATES CHENNAI

Retail Silver (1g)	47.5	(47.6)
22 ct gold (1g)	3569	(3558)

IN BRIEF



Yes Bank shares tank 8% after QIP

MUMBAI Yes Bank shares fell close to 8% on Friday after its qualified institutional placement, through which the lender was planning to raise ₹2,000 crore. The QIP was fully subscribed. On Thursday, post market hours, the lender had set the QIP floor price at ₹87.9 apiece. The shares closed at 82.10. This round of equity capital raising will lead to 10% dilution. Motilal Sunil, JM Financial, CLSA, among others, were the investment banks that handled the QIP.

Indian Bank, Chola MS ally for bancassurance

CHENNAI Indian Bank has entered into a corporate agency pact with Cholamandalam MS General Insurance Co. Ltd. (Chola MS) for distribution of the latter's insurance products to Indian Bank customers. Chola MS insurance products – ranging from motor, home, health, travel insurance, SME, fire, engineering and marine insurance – will be offered through traditional and digital platforms to the bank's customers, the company said in a statement.

SPIC Q1 net rises 27 times to ₹14.61 crore

CHENNAI Southern Petrochemicals Industries Corp. Ltd. (SPIC) has posted a 27-times rise in its standalone net profit to ₹14.61 crore for the first quarter ended June 2019. The firm had posted a loss of ₹55 lakh in the same quarter of the previous year. Revenue dropped to ₹554 crore from ₹575 crore. "Even though revenues have seen a marginal downturn, I am confident that the sales will pick up in the ensuing quarters," said Ashwin Muthiah, chairman, SPIC.

FPI tax issues put divestment at risk'

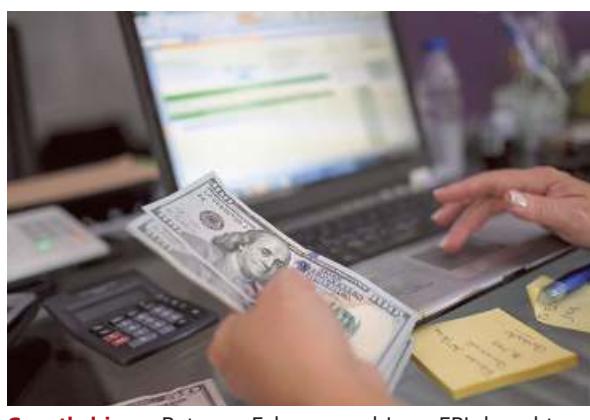
Players meet FM, say Centre may take steps to revive overseas investor interest in capital markets

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR
MUMBAI

The government could risk missing its record ₹1.05 lakh crore divestment target that has been set for the current financial year as foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) could stay away from such share sales if the ongoing tax concerns are not resolved soon, according to capital market participants.

The participants, who met Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday, also urged her to address the liquidity concerns of non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) – especially those focussed on consumer spending – before the festive season begins, to spur overall consumption growth in the country.

According to persons fa-



Growth drivers: Between February and June, FPIs bought shares worth nearly ₹83,000 crore. ■ GETTYIMAGES/ISTOCK

miliar with the deliberations, the government has taken the suggestions 'positively' and has hinted that it would take all possible steps to lay the concerns of foreign investors," said a person, who was part of the meeting.

"Even the PMO [Prime Mi-

nister's Office] is involved and is keen to address the tax concerns, which are impacting the capital markets. There was unanimity that the tax surcharge could discourage FPIs from participating in the divestment offerings in the coming months and hence need to be urgently reviewed," he added on condition of anonymity.

In the Union Budget 2019-20, the Finance Minister introduced a surcharge for individuals earning more than ₹2 crore. However, FPIs became the collateral damage

of the proposal as bulk of such investors structure themselves as trusts or a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) that are not recognised as a corporate entity by the Income Tax Act and hence are taxed as per the individual tax slabs based on their earnings.

Selling spree
FPIs, often looked upon as prime drivers of any bull run in the Indian stock market, ended July as net sellers at ₹12,419 crore. This was the first time since January 2019 when foreign investors ended a month as net sellers.

Between February and June, FPIs bought shares worth nearly ₹83,000 crore. In the current month till date, FPIs have net sold shares worth ₹11,135 crore.

M&M, Tata Motors to cut production

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Growth in industrial production slowed to a four-month low of 1.96% in June 2019, due in large part to a slowdown in the manufacturing sector and a dramatic contraction in the capital goods and consumer durables sectors.

Construction

also

slowed

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May

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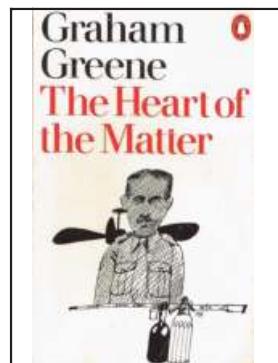
2019

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Last book that made you laugh?
The Bartimaeus Trilogy by Jonathan Stroud. He's so funny, so old and so irascible.

What are you reading now?
Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter*. It's so depressing; I have no idea why I picked it up.

Literary character you love?
Yossarian, from *Catch-22*.



And web series... your pick?
Fleabag. I loved the first season of *Stranger Things* but subsequent seasons had me scratching my head. Among Indian shows, I love *The Viral Fever's Kota Factory*. I also enjoyed *Made in Heaven* but kept wishing it had a smidgen of romance somewhere.



Anuja Chauhan:

READY FOR BOLLYWOOD



This September, Chauhan, 48, is all set to make another career jump. *The Zoya Factor* has been adapted for screen with Sonam Kapoor and Dulquer Salmaan in the lead and director

Abhishek Sharma at the helm. The author is credited with 'Additional Dialogues' for the film. "While I haven't met Dulquer, I've interacted with Sonam often. The first time I met her, she

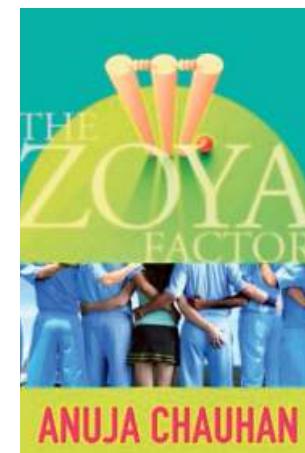
pulled out all my books which looked old and well-read. She asked me to sign all her copies," recalls Chauhan, who is working on two original web series that are 'all hush-hush for now'.

But that's not all. *Battle for Bittora* has been optioned by Anil Kapoor Films while YashRaj Films recently picked up *Baaz* and Hotstar has announced a series based on *Those Pricey Thakur Girls*.

It began with Shah Rukh

The Zoya Factor's journey from book to screen has been a long one. Shah Rukh Khan's Red Chillies Entertainment had first optioned the book. "On that Pepsi shoot, when Shah Rukh had gotten to know that I [was] writing a book, he'd said 'I'll make the film'. He had called dibs on it even before I had finished it. They were excited but eventually nothing happened. The book was languishing when Pooja and Aarti Shetty (of WalkWater Media) got in touch, saying they wanted to make it," says the author who relocated to Bengaluru from Mumbai five years ago.

Chauhan credits her time in advertising for having honed a writing style that seems tailor-made for screen adaptations. "When you write ads, you're visualising things and have to put the audio and the video together when you're creating it. Once you have a style, it stays," Chauhan explains, quickly adding, "But it's not easy because you have to trim the fat for a film and my books have so many layers and characters. This is why I was so happy that for *The Zoya Factor* I was brought in only after someone else had already chopped it. All I had to do was put a neat bow on it."



No lotus-eater

Laughing over the romantic notion most people have about a writer's life and process, she says, "Writing is a job and it's as unromantic as any other sort of work. When my kids were younger, I'd start when they left home at 7 am and keep writing until they returned at 4 pm. I am not so regimented now that I am working on a web series, but I write a regular magazine column just to keep that deadline muscle toned; you don't want to become some flakey, lotus-eating type." Five years ago, her move from Gurugram to the Garden City has also helped. "I get so much respect now when I go to Mumbai because people think living in a 'jungle' must mean that I am wise," she says laughing, adding that she is "happy to live in a 'jungle' with my animals, many gardens and great weather. It's a lovely township... And you have just enough space to not feel crowded".

Chauhan believes that *The Zoya Factor* is more relevant now than it was then. "It's quite weird because of the state of the nation today, with the kind of superstitions, blind faith and the worshiping of Godmen and all these weird gurus. The idea that superstition makes Zoya the mascot for the team seems less far-fetched now."

Working on the dialogues for the film gave Chauhan a taste of what it would be like to collaborate with others once again. When she quit advertising, she imagined herself being a 'nightie-person' who spent her days writing books that she had complete control over. But the very safe, creative and constructive atmosphere with Pooja, Aarti and Abhishek for this film has readied her for collaborations with others and a new medium.

"I am currently working on the *Thakur Girls* adaption. It's all very exciting. Maybe if OTT platforms were around in 2006, I might not have written any of my books," muses Chauhan.

The film adaptation of *The Zoya Factor* releases next month, two other books of hers have been picked up by heavyweights (Anil Kapoor and YRF, if you must know), and there's a Hotstar series coming up

KARISHMA UPADHYAY

About 13 years ago, advertising executive Anuja Chauhan found herself on an ad shoot for Pepsi with Shah Rukh Khan, Saif Ali Khan, R Madhavan and Surya. The plan was to shoot a multi-lingual commercial with the stars over a span of four days. "We had an insane number of shots to be done in one day, and were compromising a lot. I felt so helpless and out of control, because I had written something and we were shooting something completely different," she remembers. On her way back to the hotel, she decided to write a book because "no one could mess it up".

Thus was born the love story between Zoya Singh Solanki, a young advertising executive, and the dashing captain of the Indian Cricket team, Nikhil Khoda. Chauhan, after 17 years at the ad agency JWT India – having created memorable slogans like Pepsi's Yeh Dil Maange More and Darr ke Aage Jeet Hai – decided to pivot to a full-time literary career in 2010. In the years since, she's written four more bestsellers – *Battle for Bittora*, *Those Pricey Thakur Girls*, *The House That BJ Built* and *Baaz* (the story of a fighter pilot who falls in love with a colleague's sister).

Waves and poetry with Ditty

Back in Delhi soon after the release of her debut album, singer-songwriter Ditty talks about poetry creating an experience through her album

VANGMAYI PARAKALA

The calming sounds of waves wash over you when you press play on Ditty's debut album *Poetry Ceylon*. Then, lilting, rhythmic music builds into poetry. Ditty is talking to us, telling us of coming back home to her roommate, after a particularly tough trip to the grocery store, where she's had many little memories with her former partner.

This recollection is not entirely melancholy – she thinks back fondly to the conversation, how her roommate comforted her, "collecting the pieces of her sadness." But the tone changes soon, as early as the second track, when her words take to tune; the ambient sounds are present but



Talking music Ditty will soon perform in the city
■ RONIT SARKAR, GORKEY PATWAL

not as prominent, only coming back when they're needed. This well-thought-out execution of an artistic expression is of 30-year-old urban ecologist Aditi Veeva's (aka Ditty) time in Sri Lanka. She has broken the path of complacency towards which Indian "indie" seemed to be heading. The truncated word for independent artists, has quickly taken on a "vibe" of its own, denoting a whole genre by itself.

"For me, song-writing is essentially having a conversation with myself... I just let things come. I don't necessarily

rily think about what's going to work or not," says Ditty, whose spoken-word makes us feel like we've stolen a few pages off her journal; the ambient sounds transport us to exactly where she'd want us to be.

Ahead of her performance in Delhi, at the monthly musical series Under The Banyan Tree (which also features the Hindustani singer from Mumbai Nirali Kartik), Goa-based Ditty talks about how her day job inspires her work, and the art of performing such delicate, themed albums live. Edited excerpts.

It's been four years since your EP, *Mumblelings*. How do you think your music and writing have evolved?

I feel like I can write better songs now. I know myself more. *Mumblelings* was my first attempt at songwriting. This time I was writing a whole record.

You started work on Poetry Ceylon in October 2017. What's the process been like?

I suppose I was thinking of the whole album as one piece – like an experience, as a journey for people to float in and out of through poetry and music. That's how I like to perform it as well, especially when I'm playing with a band.

Has your work in urban ecology ever influenced your music?

Yes. Meeting permaculturist Raya

Cole of Living Ecology, and working on a permaculture farm, for instance, inspired *Under the Sun* [the final track in *Poetry Ceylon*].

How big a part of the conceptualizing of Poetry Ceylon were its ambient sounds?

Most of the album was first recorded in my bedroom by Shantanu Pandit [Delhi-based musician]. But I recorded *Under the Sun* myself, in my garden. The birds sounded so beautiful, and I decided to make that the last track. And then came in more ambient sounds [for the rest of the tracks on the album].

There's a sense that the spoken-word must be experienced at a personal level, rather than at a gig. Do you agree? How do you recalibrate when you perform these tracks for a live audience?

A lot of people have reached out to me to tell me that they've been touched by the spoken-word pieces. I got more confident about putting the songs on the album after performing them to audiences who loved them. It's been lovely performing in live spaces. I have consciously chosen to do curated shows and not play in bars or restaurants because they give me a chance to connect with the audience in front of me.

Under The Banyan Tree; 7 p.m. onwards at 1AQ, Opposite Qutub Minar, Mehrauli; tickets ₹1,500 upward, on friendsofmusic.in

PRODUCTS

Rainforest seating

Transport yourself to Malaysia's Borneo rainforest with this ode to a mushroom. Built to lend your living room an earthy feel, the Oyster Lounge is intricately handcrafted out of refurbished teak wood. The circular seat also sports a *tel pani* polish finish, blending seamlessly into almost any kind of decor.



Details on artisera.com; ₹2,06,500

Dog's day



Legend has it that at a board meeting, David Brown, owner of Aston Martin, walked in with his dog, plonked him on the table, and demanded, "Build me something for him to sit in." Thus was born the Aston Martin DB5 Shooting Brake. The 1965 vintage had a limited-edition run of a dozen cars. It's up for auction by RM Sotheby's at the Monterey Car Week (August 15-17), and is expected to go for between USD \$1 million and \$1.4 million.

Details on rmsothebys.com

Contact us at delhimetro@thehindu.co.in

5 EVENTS WORTH YOUR WHILE



MUSIC

Ghazal
Noted musician and writer Vidya Shah teams up with the popular radio personality Sayema Rahman for a musical evening, *Aaj Jaane ki Zid Na Karo, Romancing the Ghazal*. The show features some of the most romantic, celebrated ghazals of all time with interesting anecdotes, trivia and stories about them and the artists.

VENUE: Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre

TIME: 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.



WORKSHOP

Rakhi making
This Sunday, The Earth Collective, a group of organic food-lovers and farmers, is conducting a workshop on rakhi-making. Organised by Yatan, an NGO, this workshop will educate the participants on adding seeds as decoration on the rakhis, so that it can grow into trees when the day is done.

VENUE: Sunder Nursery, Nizamuddin

TIME: 9 a.m. - 10 a.m.



DANCE

Arangetram
The Bharathanatyam arangetram of Shreya Srikanth, a student of Guru Kanaka Srinivasan, an exponent of the Vazhuvoor School of Bharatanatyam, will be held this evening. Shreya has been learning this ancient art for the past 11 years and has been part of various dance productions under her Guru's tutelage.

VENUE: The Delhi Tamil Sangam, RK Puram

TIME: 6:30 p.m.



FASHION

Khadi way
Good Earth, a home décor chain of stores, has launched, The Khadi Way by 11.11/eleven eleven, a unique hand spun collection. An ode to Mahatma Gandhi, this collection celebrates Gandhi's legacy of hand spun and handwoven textiles made from desi cotton on the wheels of Gandhi Charkha and Ambar Charkha.

VENUE: Good Earth Store, Khan Market

TIME: 12 noon - 8 p.m.



THEATRE

The Unknown
Divyansh Vyas, an aspiring writer, whose poems have been aired on AIR, has now penned a play titled *The Unknown* that will be staged this Sunday. The play deals with the idea of an artist's unchecked ego to satiate his desires and the extreme importance he gives to himself for producing art.

Venue: Akshara Theatre, Baba Kharak Singh Marg

TIME: 7 p.m.

FILM REVIEWS



A journey through horror that sees some changes in the characters • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

There will be blood

Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark makes you momentarily recoil at the gruesome and the hideous

NAMRATA JOSHI

If one were to talk of *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark* in Indian terms then, instead of *bhaya* (fear), it evokes quite another rasa – *veehatsa* or that of revulsion; here the macabre disgusts. Instead of becoming the stuff of your worst and most abiding nightmares, this scary movie makes you momentarily recoil at the gruesome and the hideous. It doesn't quite manage to mess with your head and heart enough to haunt you long after it's over.

An adaptation of Alvin Schwartz's popular tales, Andre Ovredal's *Scary Stories...* it feels like a mix of the *The Twilight Zone* and *Urban Legend*. But a bland one despite some good acting and atmospherics. It is set in 1968, during the 'season of the witch', in the American small town of Mill Valley. These are the times of the Vietnam War's horrors, of the cult horror film *Night of the Living Dead*, of Nixon on the eve of the presidential elections and also of openly racist bullying. However, beyond the incipient uneasiness, uncertainty and a sense of the sinister, there is a bigger evil looming large, at a specific address: the haunted house of the Bel lows, the site of a tortured childhood. A group of

Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark

DIRECTOR: Andre Ovredal

STARRING: Zoe Colletti, Michael Garza, Gabriel Rush, Austin Zajur, Natalie Ganzhorn, Austin Abrams

RUN TIME: 107.29 minutes

STORYLINE: A group of

youngsters in small town America of 1968 visits a haunted house, returns home with a book of stories only to find newer, malevolent ones getting written on its blank pages with blood

and, of course, the pale, smiling lady who embraces only to consume you. Then there is the gruesome Toe monster found in the bowl of stew and a disgusting, uncontrollable zit, the red spot which has spiders run amok. It's these grisly beings that make the film come alive.

The monsters could have had more meaning than meets the eye. When it comes to Guillermo de Toro (one of the producers and screenplay writers), monsters are often mirror images of the marginalised, and hence, a conduit for persuasive social commentary. They don't quite plumb the philosophical depths here. However, the journey through horror does make the young protagonists confront their worst of fears. Stories hurt, they heal and often they turn real to make people face up to who they are. It makes Ramon (Michael Garza) find a direction in life and has Stella (excellent Zoe Colletti) realise that she isn't quite accountable for the guilt she had been needlessly harbouring for long. It also makes her take the responsibility of telling the real story of another girl who has been wronged all along. A film that comes a wholesome full circle even while dealing with spooky uncertainties.

youngsters visits it for a short while, returns home with a book of stories belonging to its now dead resident – young Sarah – only to find it transcending time with newer, malevolent ones getting written on its blank pages with blood. "You don't read the book, the book reads you", they are warned. *Scary Stories...* ticks a bunch of requisite boxes when it comes to what is needed in a typical horror film. There is a restless spirit, bent on settling scores for the wrongs done unto her. There are a handful of cool monsters – Harold the Scarecrow; the Jangly Man – the dismembered one who drops down the chimney and reassembles his body parts into a disgusting whole

Painfully preachy

A stellar supporting cast cannot uplift *Jabariya Jodi*, a lacklustre romcom disguised as a social message

DEBORAH CORNELIOUS

Robin Hood stole from the rich and gave to the poor. In *Jabariya Jodi*, Abhay Singh (Sidharth Malhotra) kidnaps men who demand dowries and forces them to marry young women at a fraction of the cost. Both are some form of social work, right? At least that's what director Prashant Singh had in mind when making his debut with *Jabariya Jodi*. The film is yet another half-hearted attempt to cash in on the hinterland milieu that's popular with Bollywood these days.

What Singh envisioned is a romcom that would capture life in contemporary Patna, while simultaneously imparting a message on abolishing dowry and the freedom to marry.

Unfortunately, the execution fails at the get go with the casting of Malhotra. The actor, try as he might, cannot embody the disposition or essence of a Patna lad.

Jabariya Jodi

DIRECTOR: Prashant Singh

CAST: Sidharth Malhotra, Parineeti Chopra, Javed Jaffrey, Sanjay Mishra, Aparshakti Khurana, Chandan Roy Sanyal, Neeraj Sood, Sheba Chaddha

STORYLINE: Abhay Singh who kidnaps grooms for a living, ends up in a similar situation

Like someone forced, pun intended, to messy up, Malhotra stands out sorely, as he mouths dialogue in a dialect he's clearly uncomfortable with. That coupled with the zero chemistry he has with the feisty Babli Yadav (Parineeti Chopra), makes for a terrible combination. When Abhay isn't being incorrigible – like poking holes in condoms so the eventual baby compels a forced-couple to stay married – he's painfully preachy, whether he's wishing for a daughter or waxing eloquent on the ill-



The connection between the lead pair is simply not there • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

fects of *jabariya pyaar* and *shaadi* (forced relationships and weddings).

Babli, for all the 'freedom', comes across as less independent and more deranged. In spite of *Jabariya Jodi* being a romcom that requires two people, the film's entire focus is on its male protagonist. Babli is just an accessory to Abhay's redemption arc. And even as Sanjeev K Jha's screenplay unfurls without an ounce of unpredictability, the crux of the film, its love story, takes infuriatingly long to pro-

gress. Then there's the fact that the film's director thinks women in Bihar roam about in mid-riff-baring crop-tops. Even worse are the film's product placements – a blood pressure machine, Mayavar and Gas-O-Fast antacid – that will induce eye rolls galore.

The redemption then, for *Jabariya Jodi* is fleeting and in spurts. Thanks to a cracking supporting cast, the film isn't entirely an oppressive watch. Sanjay Mishra, as Babli's patient and benevolent father, shines in every mo-

ment he's on screen. Javed Jaffrey as Abhay's father, is equal parts the menacing wannabe Bihar politician-cum-thug as well as sassy joker. Some of the best deliciously cheesy lines are devoted to his camaraderie with subordinate goons. Aparshakti Khurana as Babli's pal Santo is hilarious in spite of the injustice meted out to his character. It's as if every single actor, with the exception of the lead duo, have done their best for *Jabariya Jodi*. Unfortunately, it's just not enough.

still raking in much moolah.

Isabela Moner as Dora is sweet and committed, while Eugenio Derbez as Alejandro, the mandatory inept adult in children's adventures, is competent enough. Michael Peña and Eva Longoria play Dora's parents Cole and Elena. Peña's impromptu rave session was quite funny. Voice work by Danny Trejo (Boots the monkey) and Benicio del Toro (annoying Swiper the Fox) makes the cut.

Dora and the Lost City of Gold though not explicitly stating the time it's set in, has a nostalgic feeling of adventure of the movies one watched as a child, when everything was simpler. Without gross mind flayers, the film offers an escape for a little window of time, in a now complex world.

Fun family adventure

With thrills, humour and life lessons, it is happy times at the movies with *Dora and the Lost City of Gold*

MINI ANTHIKAD CHHIBER

This live-action adaptation of the Nickelodeon and Nick Jr. show, *Dora the Explorer* finds a 16-year-old Dora leaving the jungle to tackle the scariest place on earth, high school, in *Dora and the Lost City of Gold*.

When her explorer parents drop off the grid while searching for the mystical lost city of the Incas, it is up

to Dora, her cousin Diego, the school dork and doorkess,

and a talking monkey to find them ahead of evil, mercen-

ary treasure hunters.

The film, directed by James Bobin, (*Alice through the Looking Glass*) is ener-

getic and good humoured. The CGI does not work, but that too is a relief after the photo-realistic Simba and gang in *Lion King*, which is

Dora and the Lost City of Gold

DIRECTOR: James Bobin

CAST: Isabela Moner, Eugenio Derbez, Michael Peña, Eva Longoria, Danny Trejo

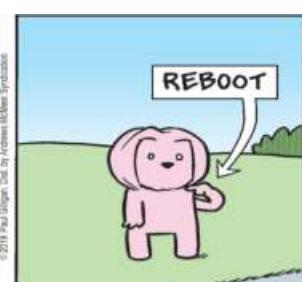
STORYLINE: A teenage Dora and her group of friends, have to save her parents and find a lost Incan city

RUN TIME: 102 minutes

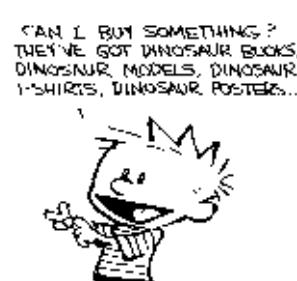
PEANUTS



POOCH CAFE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



TIGER



THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13145

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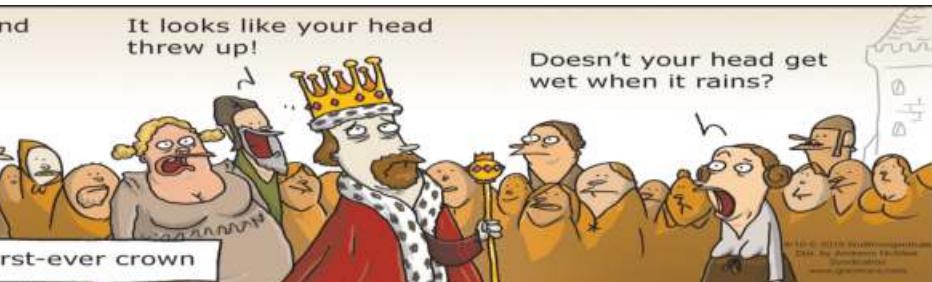
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(anag) (7)
3 Have a prevailing direction (5)
5 Horse that races 'over the sticks' (7)
6 Bleed (5)
7 Smoulder (6)
9 Criterion (9)
13 Yokels (7)
14 Trap (7)
15 Alters (anag) – less fresh (6)
16 Carefree and happy (6)
18 Exposure to harm (5)
20 Highland Games event (5)

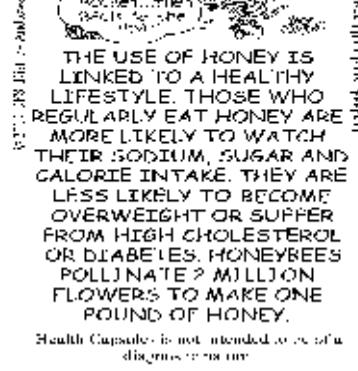
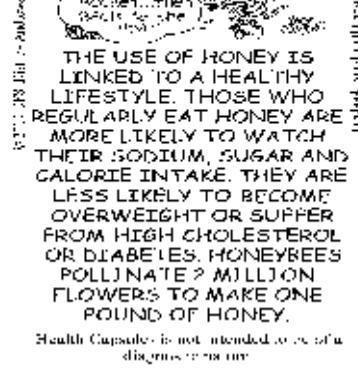
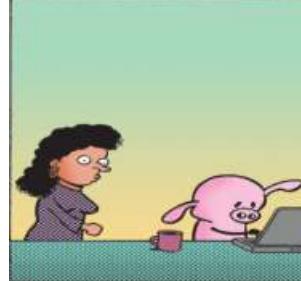
Solution will appear in *The Hindu* dated August 12, 2019.

Solution No. 13144

WUMO



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



CM YK

IN BRIEF



Arsenal snaps up David Luiz

LONDON Brazilian defender David Luiz was signed by Arsenal on Thursday on a permanent transfer from Chelsea. The 32-year-old centre-back has a wealth of experience and has made 524 club appearances in a career spanning over 13 seasons. He has completed a shock move from Chelsea to Arsenal in an £8 million (\$10m) deal and will wear the number 23 jersey. ANI



Legend Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne has been appointed coach of Lord's-based London team for next year's Hundred competition. Warne was captain-cum-coach when Rajasthan Royals famously won the first-ever Indian Premier League title. Former Australia women's coach Lisa Keightley will coach the women's Lord's-based team. The Hundred is a 100-ball format that is set to be launched in July next year with the men's and women's tournaments to run concurrently over a five-week period. IANS



Neymar rape case dismissed

SAO PAULO A Brazilian judge on Friday dismissed the rape case against footballer Neymar citing insufficient evidence, a court spokesman said. The decision – the final episode in the rape case hanging over the Brazilian international superstar for months – comes on the recommendation of prosecutors just over a month after police dropped the case citing lack of evidence. Neymar vehemently denied allegations he raped a Brazilian woman in a Paris hotel in May. AFP

Delhi Half Marathon registrations open

NEW DELHI Procam International, the pioneers of distance running movement in India, announced that the registrations for the 15th edition of Airtel Delhi Half Marathon scheduled for October 20 are now open. The start line of this IAAF Gold Label race is expected to attract 35,000 athletes across five categories – Half Marathon (21.097km), Great Delhi Run (5km), Open 10K, Senior Citizens' Run (3.2km) and Champions with Disabilities (3.2km). Bharti Airtel CEO, Delhi & NCR, Vani Venkatesh said, "The Delhi Half Marathon is a landmark event and the most prestigious half marathon in the world. It is simply amazing to see so many participants from across the world and India come together to celebrate the human spirit and run for a cause."

Pranesh bags junior title

ABU DHABI Twelve-year-old M. Pranesh clinched the junior title, with eight points, in the Abu Dhabi International chess festival here on Friday. In fact, all the top four places were won by Indians.

Other Indians (top four): 2.

Kushagra Mohan (7.5), 3. L.R. Srihari (7.5), Aaryan Varshney (7.5).

Serena takes on Osaka in quarterfinals

Another Federer landmark falls to Nadal

ROGERS CUP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE TORONTO

Serena Williams and Japan's Naomi Osaka booked a rematch of last year's US Open final in the Rogers Cup Toronto quarterfinals after straight-set triumphs on Thursday.

Reigning US and Australian Open champion Osaka broke at love in the final game to defeat Polish teen Iga Swiatek 7-6(4), 6-4 in one hour and 51 minutes.

World No. 10 Williams was broken twice and dropped the first three games in 10 minutes then battled back to defeat Russia's 48th-ranked Ekaterina Alexandrova 7-5, 6-4 in 91 minutes.

That set the stage for 37-year-old Williams to face Osaka.

"I've been actually looking forward to playing her for a while," Williams said. "She has had a great year early in the season and she's still doing pretty good."

It will be their first match since the controversial finish to their Grand Slam showdown last year in New York.

"I guess I'll treat it like a regular quarterfinal, but I ha-



Focused: Naomi Osaka says she is super grateful to get the chance to play Serena Williams. • AFP

ven't been in a quarterfinal in a while," Osaka said.

"I'm just really excited. I grew up watching her, so whenever I get the opportunity to play her, it's something I feel is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

"And it feels more like I'm showcasing my skills to her, like, 'Look what I can do? You know what I mean? So I go into the matches with that mentality. And just super

grateful to get the chance to play her."

Pliskova chases No. 1 ranking

Czech third seed Karolina Pliskova kept the pressure on Osaka in the battle to take the World No. 1 ranking by also reaching the quarterfinals.

Pliskova eliminated Estonia's Anett Kontaveit 6-3, 7-5 to set up a last-eight clash

with rising Canadian star Bianca Andreescu, who outlasted fifth-seeded Dutchwoman Kiki Bertens 6-1, 6-7(7), 6-4. Pliskova, 27, must reach the final to have any chance of taking the top spot next week for the first time since 2017. Otherwise, Osaka will claim the No. 1 berth.

Rolling on

Meanwhile in Montreal, Rafael Nadal stepped closer to a

record 35th Masters title dispatching Argentina's Guido Pella 6-3, 6-4.

The Spanish World No. 2 has now notched up the most wins in the elite series, with his 379th Masters victory surpassing Roger Federer by one.

Nadal could add another Masters footnote to his epic resume if he successfully defends his Canadian crown for the all-time trophy mark.

The results (third round): At Montreal: Daniil Medvedev bt Christian Garin 6-3, 6-3; Dominik Thiem bt Marin Cilic 7-6(7), 6-4; Karen Khachanov bt Félix Auger-Aliassime 6-7(7), 7-5, 6-3; Alexander Zverev bt Nikoloz Basilashvili 7-5, 7-6(7), 6-4; Rafael Nadal bt Guido Pella 6-3, 6-4; Fabio Fognini bt Adrian Mannarino 6-2, 7-5; Gael Monfils bt Hubert Hurkacz 6-4, 6-0; Roberto Bautista Agut bt Richard Gasquet 7-5, 7-5.

At Toronto: Sofia Kenin bt Dayana Yastremska 6-2, 6-2; Elina Svitolina bt Belinda Bencic 6-2, 6-4; Karolina Pliskova bt Anett Kontaveit 6-3, 7-5; Bianca Andreescu bt Kiki Bertens 6-1, 6-7(7), 6-4; Simona Halep bt Svetlana Kuznetsova 6-2, 6-1; Marie Bouzkova bt Jelena Ostapenko 6-2, 6-2; Serena Williams bt Ekaterina Andreanova 7-5, 6-4; Naomi Osaka bt Iga Swiatek 7-6(4), 6-4.

Aishwarya set for Hungarian challenge

MOTORSPORTS

IANS VARPALOTA (HUNGARY)

India's Aishwarya Pissay will seek to win the FIM World Cup as she begins her campaign in the Hungarian Baja – the fourth and final round of the championship – on Saturday.

The 23-year-old is leading the women's category by seven points, after having won in Dubai, finishing third in Portugal and fifth in Spain.

Looking ahead to the event, Aishwarya said: "Going into the Hungarian Baja, I am hopeful of performing better than in the previous round since the World Cup is at stake."

Not easy

"It will not be easy as I have to negotiate nearly 590 kms of special stages, but I am up for the challenge. After the last round in Spain, I stayed back to train."

"So, I have done pretty much all I can in terms of preparations. My focus here will be on performing well and the results will follow."

After four rounds of the FIM World Cup, Aishwarya



■ FILE PHOTO: M. PERIASAMY

has 52 points, followed by Portugal's Rita Vieira (45) and Spaniard Sara Garcia Alvarez (36).

The trio, along with two other women riders, will be going head-to-head in what promises to be an exciting battle.

Five special stages

The Hungarian Baja comprises five special stages totalling 588.26 kms besides 205.66 of liaison section.

The competitors will be flagged-off late on Friday night for SS-1 (7.18 kms) near to this former mining town before heading out to complete the remainder of the course over the weekend.

Bopanna-Shapovalov pair in quarterfinals

INDIANS ABROAD

SPORTS BUREAU MONTREAL

Rohan Bopanna and Denis Shapovalov of Canada cruised into the doubles quarterfinals with a 6-3, 6-4 victory over Kyle Edmund and Taylor Fritz in the \$6,338,885 ATP-1000 tennis tournament here on Thursday.

In the quarterfinals, the Indo-Canadian pair will play Benoit Paire of France and Stan Wawrinka of Switzerland.

In the Challenger in Japan, Saketh Myneni was beaten 7-6(5), 6-1 in the quarterfinals by third seed Tatsuma Ito. In the doubles quarterfinals, Saketh and Harry Bournier of Australia were beaten by the Japanese pair of Shintaro Imai and Yusuke Takahashi.

In the Challenger in Germany, second seeds Sriman Balaji and Vishnu Vardhan bt Scott Puodzians (Aus) & Vijay Sundar Prashanth 3-6, 6-4, [10-4].

woman Lexie Stevens.

The results: \$6,338,885 ATP-1000, Montreal: Doubles: Pre-quarterfinals: Denis Shapovalov (Can) & Rohan Bopanna (Bra) bt Kyle Edmund (GBR) & Taylor Fritz (US) 6-3, 6-4.

\$54,160 Challenger, Yokohama, Japan: Quarterfinals: Tatsuma Ito (Jpn) bt Saketh Myneni 7-6(5), 6-1. Doubles: Quarterfinals: Shintaro Imai & Yusuke Takahashi (Jpn) bt Harry Bournier (Aus) & Saketh Myneni 6-4, 6-4.

\$46,600 Challenger, Augsburg: Doubles: Quarterfinals: Sriram Balaji & Vishnu Vardhan bt Scott Puodzians (Aus) & Vijay Sundar Prashanth 3-6, 6-4, [10-4].

\$15,000 ITF men, Jakarta: Quarterfinals: Vladislav Orlov (Ukr) bt Manish Sureshkumar 3-6, 6-1, 6-2. Doubles: Semifinals: Luca Castelnovo (Sui) & Rhett Purcell (Nzl) bt S.D. Prajwal Dev & Niki Poonacha 6-0, 0-6, [10-6].

\$15,000 ITF men, Wetzlar, Germany: Pre-quarterfinals: Kai Wehnelt (Ger) bt Adil Kalyanpur 6-3, 6-1; First round: Kalyanpur bt Matthew Dellavedova (Aus) 6-4, 6-3. Doubles: Quarterfinals: Dominik Recek (Cze) & Adil Kalyanpur bt Matthew Dellavedova (Aus) & Adrian Oetzbach (Ger) 7-5, 6-2; Jan Soeren Hain & Mark Steiner (Ger) bt Leopold Zima (Ger) & Arjun Mahadevan 6-1, 6-2.

\$25,000 ITF women, Chiswick: Quarterfinals: Samantha Murray (GBR) bt Ankita Raina 6-2, 5-7, 6-4. \$15,000 ITF women, Nairobi: Quarterfinals: Mahak Jain bt Tiffany William 6-2, 6-2. Doubles: Semifinals: Paulina Jastrzebska (Pol) & Tiffany William (GBR) bt Sathwika Sama & Saumya Vig 7-6(2), 6-2.



Comrades in arms: Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer will work together for the betterment of the sport. • AFP

Nadal and Federer join hands

Make joint decision to enter ATP Player Council

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE MONTREAL

World No. 2 Rafael Nadal said that he and long-time rival Roger Federer made a joint decision to stand for the ATP Player Council.

The 33-year-old Spaniard, an 18-time Grand Slam singles winner, confirmed the choice by the pair of icons at the ATP Montreal Masters.

Federer, a 20-time Slam

singles champion, and Nadal were elected by fellow players to fill two of the vacancies caused by the resignations of Robin Haase, Jamie Murray and Sergiy Stakhovsky prior to Wimbledon.

"We are here to help and to know a little bit better what's going on. Last year there were some ups and downs in a lot of things."

Controversy has arisen over the past months concerning various issues, with ATP Council president Novak Djokovic often on the opposite side of discussions from Nadal and Federer.

"We decided to be together out there," Nadal said. "I will not be alone there. He will not be alone there. Both of us can (combine to) be a good power, good help for

the sport in some way – hopefully in a better way.

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Shiva wins Team of Four Bronze title

BRIDGE

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Shiva defeated Apanjan 116-85 to clinch the title in the Team of Four Bronze event of the 17th HCL International bridge championship at the Aerocity.

In the semifinals of the Team of Four Gold contest, K1 Plus led 65-53 against Don Julio, while Russia was 56-3-50 against South Sweden, at the halfway stage.

In the Team of Four Silver contest, Pradeep led 79-22 against I-Doctors, at the halfway stage of the semifinals. Hope N Pray led 69-53 against ICSA Group in the other semifinal.

In the Open Match Point Pairs event, 52 pairs qualified to the third elimination round from 132. They were joined by 20 pairs from the

losing quarterfinalist teams. The 72 pairs play four sessions of nine tables each.

The top 26 teams will play Match Point Pairs Gold final. The teams ranked 27-52 will play the Match Point pairs Silver final and the rest of the 20 will play the IMP Pairs final.

Ghanshyam Pal and Abhijit Datta emerged the champion from the Match Point Pairs Strata-2, from among 228 pairs.

The IMP Pairs events began on Friday with 258 teams. It will lead to 84 qualifiers for the IMP Pairs final to be played on Saturday. The non-qualifiers will play IMP Pairs Strata-2 event.

Other results: Team of Four Gold (quarterfinals): K1 Plus bt Formidables 122-104; South Sweden bt FII 150-109; Russia bt Hansa Narasimhan 134-63; Don Julio bt Hemant Jalan 113-92.

"When we play at home

the cheering and chanting of the Giants' fans give players a special energy. It boosts their confidence level.

"It is not different this time. Everyone is raring to go. We have an excellent record here and will try and repeat the show in all four matches," said Manpreet.

Back-to-back matches

The first two matches will be played back-to-back; against Thalaivas and the Telugu Titans on Sunday.

The third home match will be against the Bengal Warriors and the fourth and last against the Jaipur Pink Panthers.

Talking about the Giants' defeats, Manpreet said: "There were a few miscalculations and some mistakes which caused our downfall. Going for advance tackles

as we did in.