

## NEARBY



Major, jawan killed in Kashmir

**SRINAGAR**  
 A Major and a sepoy and two militants were killed in two incidents in Kashmir on Thursday. Major Kamlesh Pandey and Sepoy Tanzin Chhultim died of injuries after being hit by the bullets fired by three Hizbul Mujahideen militants trapped during an operation at Imam Sahab in Shopian at 2.30 a.m.

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**Mohsin Shaikh murder: HRS leader's bail rejected**

**PUNE**  
 The district and sessions court on Thursday rejected the provisional bail plea of HRS leader Dhananjay Desai, the prime accused in the murder of IT professional Mohsin Shaikh in 2014. Mr. Desai's bail pleas have been rejected thrice in the past: twice in the Pune sessions court and once in the Bombay High Court.

WEST ▶ PAGE 4

**Lalu says he is touch with Sharad Yadav**

**PATNA**  
 RJD chief Lalu Prasad on Thursday said he was in touch with JD(U) leader and Rajya Sabha member Sharad Yadav for the formation of a "formidable anti-BJP front".

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FRIDAY REVIEW ▶ 12 PAGES  
(TABLOID)

# NOTA option to stay in Rajya Sabha polls

Are you apprehensive of losing, SC judge asks counsel Sibal

**KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL**  
 NEW DELHI

The 'None Of The Above' (NOTA) option will remain on the ballot paper in the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections.

The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to stay an Election Commission circular issued in January 2014 that introduced NOTA in Rajya Sabha elections.

A Bench of Justices Dipak Misra, Amitava Roy and A.M. Khanwilkar rejected Gujarat Congress's plea to freeze the NOTA option for elections to the three Rajya Sabha seats in the State on August 8.

Refusing to also quash a Gujarat Vidhan Sabha circular of August 1 to include NOTA in the ballot papers, the court paid scant regard to submissions made by senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Congress chief whip in Gujarat Assembly, Shailendra Manubhai Parmar, that NOTA would be a "recipe for corruption" and it would be seen as if the court was turning its back on corruption.

Mr. Sibal raised the concern that MLAs could defy party whip and invalidate their votes by opting for NOTA. To this, Justice Roy asked Mr. Sibal whether he was apprehensive of losing the RS polls in Gujarat.

**Notice to EC**  
 The court however issued notice to the Election Commission of India, saying the poll body should be heard in detail as any judicial decision on NOTA may have a ripple effect on elections

**The protest vote**

A look at the genesis of NOTA



Against NOTA: Congress leaders at the EC office in New Delhi

• The Election Commission introduced NOTA option in EVMS from October 11, 2013, pursuant

to the Supreme Court's fiat dated September 27, 2013

• The main objective of the option is to enable electors to exercise their right to not vote for any candidate in the fray.

• In 2015, the Bihar Assembly polls saw 2.49% of NOTA votes, the highest NOTA votes polled so far

• What if NOTA gets maximum votes? The EC says that in such a case, the candidate securing the maximum votes is elected

• The NOTA symbol has been designed by NID, Ahmedabad

## Modi to meet MPs today

The vice-presidential election, scheduled for Saturday, may look like it is in the bag for the ruling NDA, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi is taking no chances. On Friday evening, he will meet all MPs of the NDA and the parties that

have pledged support to its candidate M. Venkaiah Naidu at the G.M.C. Balayogi Auditorium in the Parliament House complex. The meeting will also have an exercise of mock voting with replicas of the ballot.

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conducted from January 24, 2014 to the present day.

The court asked why the Congress was challenging the circular now, while noting that "God knows how many elections were held since January 24, 2014."

The court specifically recorded Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal's submission that the Union of India does not in anyway interfere with the decisions of the Election Commission and, hence, had no role in this case.

Consequently, the court issued notice only to the Election Commission for a response on the Gujarat Congress's challenge of its January 24, 2014 notification. Though the Union was let off as a party in the case, Mr. Venugopal was roped in by the Bench to assist the court.

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**NOTA IN USE IN RAJYA SABHA POLLS SINCE 2014; IMPACT WILL BE LIKE ABSTENTION** ▶ PAGE 11  
**THE NOTA PRINCIPLE** ▶ EDITORIAL

## Dalit woman killed for 'braid-chopping'

Villagers felt she was behind the act

**STAFF REPORTER**

**MEERUT**  
 Amid rising panic over reports of mysterious 'braid-chopping' incidents, Mutnai village of Dauki police station area in Agra saw a 65-year-old Dalit woman, Maan Devi, being beaten to death in an upper caste locality by people who suspected her of being the witch who was going around chopping women's hair.

Interestingly, no cases of hair-chopping have been reported from this village. The police have booked the accused on charges of murder and also under the SC/ST Atrocities Act.

**Panic in U.P.**

The lynchings comes in the wake of reports over the past week from Delhi, Haryana, and Rajasthan where women have complained of their hair being mysteriously chopped off while they were asleep. The reports caused panic in parts of western Uttar Pradesh, as in the last two days the local media reported ten cases – six from Mathura, two from Agra, and one from Ghaziabad – of sleeping women waking up to find their hair 'chopped off'.

Macchla Devi, 35, in Mangal Jat village of Achchhera area in Agra woke up to find her hair cut. Similarly, Premvati, a resident of Sheshram village in Mathura, found her braids cut although she had been working in her home.

"She was too shocked to talk about it when she found her chopped off in her bedroom. She called me and showed me the hair. It was scary," Naval Singh, husband of Premvati, told *The Hindu*. In some cases reported from Mathura, villagers had approached tantriks instead of the police with complaints.

Meanwhile in Khair town of Aligarh, on Thursday afternoon, a mob surrounded a woman on suspicion that she was the "hair chopper". Police reached the spot before the crowd started misbehaving with her, and took the woman in custody.

Senior police officials said Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had directed all district magistrates and senior superintendents of police to probe the alleged incidents.

While discussing the law and order situation with senior district officials of the State via video conference on Wednesday, Mr. Adityanath said the culprits involved in acts of mischief and vandalism should face strict action.

The police haven't acted on these rumours till now as no complaints have been registered. "So far there are only media reports of the incidents. No victim has come forward to register a complaint.

The police will take cognizance if the number of incidents goes up or if someone registers a complaint," said the SSP Mathura, Swapnil Mamgain.

"She was too shocked to

## 'Blue Whale' game worries Elders

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
 NEW DELHI

Several Rajya Sabha members on Thursday expressed concern over some online games that encourage young users to break the law and

even commit suicide. They demanded that such games be blocked.

Member Amar Shankar Sable raised the issue stating that one Manpreet, who allegedly committed suicide

by jumping from a building at Andheri in Mumbai last month, had been playing the "Blue Whale" game for 50 days.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 10

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# End face-off peacefully: Sushma

We should be prepared for war, but it is not a solution, she tells Rajya Sabha

**VIJAYA SINGH**  
 NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj told the Rajya Sabha on Thursday that "war was not a solution," referring to the ongoing stand-off with the Chinese People's Liberation Army at Doklam, adding that "wisdom was to resolve issues diplomatically."

**Sushma Swaraj**, External Affairs Minister  
 Patience and control on comments are key to resolving problems. We are maintaining patience and controlling comments. We will keep engaging with China to resolve the dispute. But war cannot resolve problems. So wisdom is to resolve diplomatically

Minister Indira Gandhi for "cleverly annexing Sikkim with Russia's help" but accused the current government of being a "stooge of the U.S." Sitaram Yechury of the CPI(M) said that in the past three years, India had been reduced to a "junior strategic ally of the U.S."

**Anand Sharma**, Congress leader  
 The neighbouring country is being unusually aggressive and the doors of diplomacy seem to be closing. De-escalation does not mean retreat. It is safeguarding India's interest

Anand Sharma of the Congress said that after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met U.S. President Donald Trump, there was a missive from the PMO to the revenue department to reduce import duty on Harley Davidson motorcycles but there was no assurance on the H1B visas, which would hurt a large number of Indian professionals working in the U.S.

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**CHINA RAISES THE HEAT ON DOKLAM STANDOFF** ▶ PAGE 10

## Shivakumar's official chambers searched

I-T sleuths scrutinise several papers

**K.V. ADITYA BHARADWAJ**  
 BENGALURU

Search and seizure operations against Karnataka Energy Minister D.K. Shivakumar continued for the second day on Thursday, bringing for the first time his official chambers at the Ministry under the scanner. Raids were also conducted at SBG Group, Hassan, which has interests in real estate, for its alleged links with the Minister.

Income tax sleuths, who arrived with CRPF personnel, scrutinised several documents at the Minister's chambers at the Karnataka

Power Transmission Corporation Ltd, but did not seize any. However, they have marked certain documents for future reference, sources said.

Two keymakers were summoned to the Sadashivnagar residence of Mr. Shivakumar, to open two almirahs, the keys for which the residents claimed were lost. No information was available on what was found. An AC technician was also called.

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**KARNATAKA PROTESTS USE OF CRPF IN RAIDS** ▶ PAGE 11

## You've been a mentor, Modi tells Pranab

Touched by gesture, says ex-President

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
 NEW DELHI

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi termed Pranab Mukherjee as a "father figure" and a mentor to him, in a letter written to him on his last day in office as President of India.

Touched by the gesture, Mr. Mukherjee shared the letter, dated July 24, on his private Twitter handle on Thursday, to which Mr. Modi replied, "Pranab da, I shall always cherish working with you." In the letter, the Prime Minister acknowledged that though the two had different ideological ori-

entations, they struck a rapport and worked together.

He said that "[Pranab's] wisdom, guidance and personal warmth have given me greater confidence and strength."

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**Shutdown enters 50th day in Darjeeling**

DARJEELING

The indefinite shutdown in the Darjeeling hills over the demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland entered its 50th day on Thursday amidst rallies taken out by the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) and other hill parties.

PTI

**MUMBAI**

FRIDAY, AUGUST 04

RISE 06:17 SET 19:13

RISE 16:36 SET 03:14

SATURDAY, AUGUST 05

RISE 06:17 SET 19:12

RISE 17:25 SET 04:02

SUNDAY, AUGUST 06

RISE 06:17 SET 19:12

RISE 18:11 SET 04:52

**Mumbai Weather** max min  
Mumbai Airport 31 25  
Pune 26 21  
Mumbai City 31 25

**Mumbai Today**  
31°C Drizzle is expected. The morning will be pleasant. Sky is likely to remain mostly cloudy.

**Mumbai Tomorrow**  
32°C Few spells of rain are likely in the city. Sky is expected to remain cloudy. Morning will be warm.

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# Centre not helping us tackle flood havoc, claims Mamata

Flood water washed away roads, bridges and crops in several districts of Bengal'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday accused the Centre of not helping the State government in tackling the 'havoc' caused by the recent floods in the State.

She said flood waters washed away roads, bridges and crops in several districts of the State.

**50 killed**

At least 50 people were killed in 14 districts and nearly 4 lakh hectares of agricultural land washed away in incessant rain and resultant water discharged by the Damodar Valley Corporation through its dams.

"They [Centre] are not at all helping us in tackling the flood havoc," Ms. Banerjee said, adding that districts like Howrah, Hooghly, Birbhum and two Midnapores have been badly hit.

Ms. Banerjee said she would speak to Chief Secret-



A hand-rickshaw puller carrying passengers through a water-logged street in Kolkata on Thursday. ■ PTI

ary Malay Dey, who is currently in New Delhi, in this regard once he is back.

Meanwhile, a senior official at the State agricultural department said around 36,110 hectares of land out of 1,24,144 hectares, where

vegetables were planted, is under water.

"The maximum damage was witnessed in districts like East Midnapore and South 24 Parganas. In East Midnapore, around 6,984 hectares of land lay under water while in South 24 Parganas the figure is 8,242 hectares," the officer said. Paddy damage in East Midnapore was estimated at 16,940 hectares while in South 24 Parganas it was at 13,263 hectares, he said.

## Five killed in Odisha fire

Died of suffocation after an air-conditioner caught fire

## STAFF REPORTER

BHUBANESWAR

Five persons, including four members of a hotel owner, died of suffocation after a fire broke out at Budheswari Colony here early on Thursday.

The city-based hotelier, Satpal Singh, escaped with injuries. He has admitted to the government-run Capital Hospital.

The victims have been identified as Mr. Singh's son Gagan Pal Singh (40), daughter-in-law Bhawna Singh (38), grandson Rubir Singh

and granddaughter Sohabi Singh. A domestic help, Khushi Das (15), also died in the incident.

Though fire service personnel rescued all the six persons alive, five of them succumbed to their injuries on the way to hospital.

According to preliminary investigation, the fire emanated from an air-conditioner and soon the smoke spread out in different directions. The ply ceiling helped the smoke to escape to different rooms.

The smoke was spotted

by neighbours around 4.30 a.m. They informed the police control room, which in turn forwarded the message to the fire service station.

"We received information about the fire at 5.18 am. When we reached the spot, all the rooms were filled with smoke. We rescued six persons. The injured persons were rushed to hospital by police and private vehicles. Some victims had skin burn marks," said fire officer Ramesh Chandra Majhi, fire officer.

## Dacoit held in Ganjam after encounter

## STAFF REPORTER

BERHAMPUR

A hardcore dacoit, Babu Nayak, was arrested by the police following an exchange of fire under the Tarasing police station area in Ganjam district of Odisha on Thursday. About 1.2 kg of gold ornaments were seized from him.

Nayak is alleged to be the mastermind behind the dacoity at the Manitara branch of Utkal Gramin Bank (UGB) at Manitara in Ganjam district on May 24. A group of six armed men had looted mortgaged gold ornaments and ₹4 lakh in cash from the bank.

Apart from gold ornaments, a pistol, bombs, detonators and a bike were seized from his possession.

**40 criminal cases**

According to Ganjam Superintendent of Police Ashis Singh, Nayak was involved in several major dacoities and robberies in Ganjam, Nayagarh and Khurda districts. He was also involved in crimes in the Khandagiri area of Bhubaneswar. Over 40 criminal cases related to dacoity, robbery and violent attacks are pending against him in the police stations of Ganjam and Nayagarh districts.

On Thursday, the police received a tip-off about the possible movement of Nayak in the Bhanjanga area.

Three police teams kept a watch on different strategic locations.

"The team of the Tarasing police station located Nayak near Janibanda. When asked to surrender, the criminal hurled country bombs and fired at the police team. Retaliatory firing by the police injured Nayak in both the legs and left hand," the police said.

Nayak has been shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital for treatment.

# Nikhil Dey, 3 others acquitted in 19-year-old RTI-related case

They were charged with criminal trespass and causing hurt

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

JAIPUR

Nearly one month after their conviction on charges of criminal trespass and causing hurt in a 19-year-old Right to Information-related case, social activist Nikhil Dey and his three associates in Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) have been acquitted by a Sessions court at Kishangarh in Ajmer district of Rajasthan.

A Judicial Magistrate had sentenced Mr. Dey



Nikhil Dey

and others to four months in jail in a case pertaining to an incident on May 6, 1998, when the RTI activists demanded information from the sarpanch of

the Harmada panchayat samiti in response to a large number of complaints of corruption in development works in the panchayat.

Sarpanch Pyarelal, an alleged liquor contractor, had filed a criminal case accusing the activists of assaulting him at his house when they came to ask for information from him. The activists defended themselves, saying they had tried to deliver a letter from the Block Development Officer and the

sarpanch had come out of his house and assaulted them.

The Kishangarh Additional Sessions Judge compounded the offence under Section 320 of Criminal Procedure Code, while setting aside the conviction of activists by the lower court in the third week of July. Besides Mr. Dey, others set free from criminal charges under Sections 323 and 451 of Indian Penal Code were Norti Bai, Ram Karan and Chotu Lal Malakar.

## No question of leadership change in Haryana: Shah

ASHOK KUMAR

ROHTAK

Putting to rest all speculation on possible leadership change in Haryana in the run-up to the Assembly elections, Bharatiya Janata Party president Amit Shah on Thursday said the party would fight the next elections under Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar.

"I had said in Chandigarh that there is no question of change in leadership in Haryana and the same has been repeated by State BJP chief Subhash Barala recently," said Mr. Shah.

Mr. Shah is on three-day visit to Rohtak to review the performance of the Khattar government and assess the political situation in the State. Lauding the State government, Mr. Shah said the earlier governments belonged to a particular family or a caste, but the present BJP government was "transparent" and "belonged to all".

He said the State government had made "transparent" recruitments in police and other departments and its policy for online transfer of teachers should be emulated by all.

IN BRIEF



Vikram Goud remanded in judicial custody

HYDERABAD

M. Vikram Goud, son of former Telangana Minister M. Mukesh Goud, who was accused of orchestrating an attempt on his life using hired gang of assailants, was arrested by the Banjara Hills police on Thursday. He was presented before a local court and remanded in judicial custody for 14 days. He was lodged in the Chanchalguda central prison.

**Lottery dealer moves Kerala High Court**

KOCHI

An anticipatory bail petition was filed on Thursday in the Kerala High Court by a lottery dealer from Palakkad, suspecting an arrest in connection with a case registered against the stockist of the Mizoram State lotteries. The petition was filed by S.S. Vishnu.

## SC: shocked at demand for ₹15 lakh to escort Maudany

Asks Karnataka if it is scuttling order on PDP leader's bail

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Karnataka government on Thursday found itself at the receiving end of a tongue-lashing from the Supreme Court for demanding about ₹15 lakh from the 2008 Bangalore serial blasts case accused, Abdul Nasir Maudany, to escort him to Kerala for his son's wedding.

The court recently granted Mr. Maudany 14 days' bail for his Kerala visit. It ordered Mr. Maudany to bear the expenses for his police escort.

**'Not part of work?'** However, a Bench of Justices S.A. Bobde and L. Nageswara Rao expressed shock when Mr. Maudany's lawyers, advocates Prashant Bhushan and Haris Beeran, presented in court a communication from the Bengaluru Police Commissioner saying



Abdul Nasir Maudany

Mr. Maudany would have to shell out ₹14,79,876 to cover the expenses of the police escort.

A visibly annoyed Bench asked the Karnataka government whether it was trying to indirectly scuttle the court's order allowing Mr. Maudany to go to Kerala. The court also asked whether escort duty was not part of police work.

The court directed Karnataka to prepare a fresh

list of expenditure and return on Friday.

In his bail plea, Mr. Maudany said he had last visited Kerala in July 2016 and had refrained from making frequent requests for relaxation of the conditions to his bail.

"The petitioner [Mr. Maudany] has only sought relaxation now because it is his son's wedding, and, therefore, it is necessary for him to attend," the plea said.

The last time he had asked for bail, the Karnataka government had assured the Supreme Court that the trial would be concluded in four months. But the trial was not completed and he had to seek bail in July 2016 to visit his ailing mother in Kerala.

In one of the earlier hearings, the Supreme Court had expressed concern about the prolonged nature of the trial.

## Kapu leader's plan foiled again

B.V.S. BHASKAR

KIRLAJAMPUDI

Former Andhra Pradesh Minister and Kapu leader Mudragada Padmanabham's bid to resume *padayatra* on Thursday was again foiled by the police who did not allow him to leave his residence in Kirlampudi in East Godavari district.

Tension built up when he came out of his house in the morning.

Officer on Special Duty Ravisanthar told him the police would not allow anyone to go out as there was no permission for the *padayatra*.

**Verbal exchange**

It resulted in a verbal exchange between the police and Mr. Padmanabham and Kapu JAC leaders.

Mr. Padmanabham came down heavily on the police when they cited law and order problem for denying permission.

## Jaitley to head for Kerala

BJP ups the ante on political violence, leaders take on CPI(M)

NISTULA HEBBAR

NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Finance and Defence Arun Jaitley will visit Kerala on Sunday in the backdrop of growing incidents of violence against Bharatiya Janata Party and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh workers in the State. He will visit the home of Rajesh, a RSS worker who was hacked to death last Saturday, and BJP councillors in Thiruvananthapuram whose homes have been attacked.

The BJP has been raising, in Parliament too, the killings of its and RSS workers in Kerala, allegedly by CPI(M) members, and Mr. Jaitley's visit is being seen as upping the ante. It is not yet known whether he will meet Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who was asked earlier by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh to put an end to such incidents. Mr. Vijayan had called a "peace meeting" of RSS and CPI(M) leaders, but it has not satisfied the BJP.



**Heated arguments:** CPI(M) member P. Karunakaran with party members in the Lok Sabha on Thursday. ■ PTI

## Issue figures in LS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

CPI(M) leader P. Karunakaran on Thursday sought to counter the BJP's attack on the political killings in Kerala, during Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha, leading to slogan-shouting by MPs from both parties. The CPI(M) members trooped into the well of the House.

He spoke again soon after the House reassembled, but was barely audible. He said Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had been holding meetings with members of the RSS, the Left and other stakeholders to end the violence, and added that many Left workers too had been killed over the years.

As BJP members protested again, the Speaker said the BJP members should not turn the House into a 'karakshetra' but 'dharmakshetra' where they could debate issues.

**'Serious allegations'** According to the uncorrected debate on the Lok Sabha website, Mr. Karunakaran said: "Some of the respected members of the ruling party made serious allegations against the CPI(M) leaders, including the Chief Minister of Kerala and the Secretary of the State Committee. There is no justification in giving the names of Shri M.M. Mani and others... (Interruptions). Since they are not in a position to give any reply, it is not proper to make such allegations against these leaders... (Interruptions)."

"Besides, they have

quoted the ... (Not recorded) as terrorist of the CPI(M)... (Interruptions). They are the senior members of this party... (Interruptions). I would like to know from the ruling party, i.e. the BJP, whether ... (Not recorded) is a terrorist party or not... (Interruptions)."

He spoke again soon after the House reassembled, but was barely audible. He said Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had been holding meetings with members of the RSS, the Left and other stakeholders to end the violence, and added that many Left workers too had been killed over the years.

As BJP members protested again, the Speaker said the BJP members should not turn the House into a 'karakshetra' but 'dharmakshetra' where they could debate issues.

**NHRC notice** The NHRC has asked the Kerala government to take effective steps to bring to an end the "spate of attacks on political party workers and their killings in Kerala."

## Techie held for accessing Aadhaar data

Abhinav Srivastav used infrastructure of another app to hack into the data base: Bengaluru police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

Abhinav Srivastav, 31, an IIT-Kharagpur graduate, has been arrested by the Bengaluru city police on the charge of illegally accessing confidential Aadhaar data, the police said on Thursday.

Mr. Srivastav was the founder of software firm Qarth, taken over by cab aggregator Ola in 2016. A complaint was filed against him by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) last week. He was arrested on Tuesday.

Mr. Srivastav, currently employed by ANI Technologies, which owns the Ola brand, as a software development engineer, has been accused of accessing

Aadhaar information in January this year through an app named 'Aadhar e-KYC' which was available on the Google Play store till recently.

According to the police, Mr. Srivastav had developed five apps and made ₹40,000 from advertisements displayed on the apps. Police officials are now scanning all his apps to ascertain whether more violations were committed.

A senior police officer said around 400 entities had been authorised to access the data for authentications. Mr. Srivastav's company was not among them.

A native of Kanpur, Srivastav completed his M.Sc. in Industrial Chemistry from IIT-Kharagpur and joined a private firm in 2010 as a security researcher. He launched Qarth technologies in 2012 and closed it due to financial reasons in 2016. In March 2016, Ola announced that it had acquired Qarth

and its mobile payments product X-Pay.

Investigations so far have revealed that the e-hospital company was not aware of his activities. However, further investigations are on to ascertain the facts.

**How it happened**

Investigation has revealed that Mr. Srivastav piggy-backed on the infrastructure of another app for hacking into the data base.

"Aadhar related information, legally housed by the NIC server, was illegally accessed and used to support this mobile application," says a statement by the police. Mr. Srivastav, in order to give his 'Aadhar e-KYC' app an air of authenticity, hacked into

the server of the National Informatics Centre (NIC), which houses the e-hospital system which is a solution for government hospitals to handle patient care and other services, including medical records management.

As part of its regulations, UIDAI accords certain agencies the title of an Authentication User Agency, which can provide Aadhar enabled services to the card holder.

For authentication, these agencies have to connect to the Central Identities Data Repository through the services of an Authentication Service Agency (ASA). ASAs are bound by regulations that stipulate encryption of data and logging of access.

## Lingayat religion tag: why a similar petition was set aside

In 1990, HC dismissed a plea by Akhila Bharata Veerashaiva Mahasabha

**Veerashaiva-Lingayat is a sect of Hinduism, not an independent religion**

faithfully recorded as reported by the respondents. Thus, all the religions had a fair and equal opportunity to be recorded and providing a code was only an administrative convenience.

**Various citations**

What is more interesting is the reply of the Assistant Registrar General of India Pratibha Kumari (dated 14/11/2013) to the letter submitted to the Registrar General of India by the Mahasabha. She recalled the 1990 court order, census reports and works of British writers to argue why the plea of the mahasabha could be enter-

tained. Her objections stemmed mainly from the data available on the pre-Independence census reports and two works of British authors. In the reply, it is mentioned that the census of pre-Independence period (1891, 1901, 1911, and 1931) reported Lingayats to be "caste Hindu".

In the reply, it is stated that standard ethnographic literature also substantiates the fact that Lingayat/Veerashaiva is a sect evolved from Hinduism, but it rejects the traditional temple cult dominated by the Brahmin priest. "As described by C.B. Brown... Lingayats are anti-Brahminical worshippers of Siva." Ms. Pratibha Kumari further says that they are disciples of Basavanna whom they regard as a form of God Siva. She also quotes from Thurstone's *Castes and*

*Tribes of Southern India* (1909; rpt; 1975, Vol IV, page 236) where he says: "Lingayats have been aptly described as a peaceable race of Hindu Puritans. Their religion is a simple one. They acknowledge only one God Siva."

Ms. Pratibha Kumari says from the details stated above, that it is inferred that Veerashaiva-Lingayat is a sect of Hindu and not an independent religion.

Interestingly, she has also made an observation regarding people belonging to the Scheduled Castes community losing their reservation if the demand is met.

However, several seers who contend that Lingayat and Veerashaiva are different, feel the term Veerashaiva was the reason for rejection, since it has its roots in Hinduism.

The Veerashaiva Mahasabha, considered a representative body of the community, had approached the High Court of Karnataka seeking separate code for Veerashaiva/Lingayat in the census by filing a writ petition in 1990. The court had dismissed the petition on the ground that the census instructions to the enumerators allow all religions to be

## Saying it with art



**Twin message:** Bengaluru-based artist Baadal Nanjundaswamy has drawn a mosquito around a pothole to highlight two issues – dengue and poor road conditions – in Yadavagiri, Mysuru. ■ M.A. SRIRAM

## At this library, read people like a book

The Human Library is coming to Bengaluru to engage readers on discrimination, identity

K.C. DEEPIKA

BENGALURU

Call it a library with books that talk, tell their own stories and answer your questions.

The Human Library series, a concept that was born in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2000, will hit a new destination this month – Bengaluru.

The unusual project coaxes people to "not judge a book by its cover" and instead initiate conversations.

**Browse through titles** The discussions, which have journeyed through New Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Chennai, will have the same format in the Bengaluru edition as well. People will register for it



**Speaking books:** The project asks people to "not judge a book by its cover," and initiate conversations. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

interested in 'being a book'. Those who pass the filters will get to set what their own title will be, and themselves

become the human book.

At the event, "readers" – people who are interested to listen to these "books," will browse through the 'titles',

pick one and start 'reading' them through a conversation.

The minimum age for participants, both as the human books and readers, is 18. The event itself will last about half a day, said Roshni Ross, an organiser at the Bengaluru event, adding that the response to the call for "books" had been good.

**Choosing identities**

"Those who are interested in reading can pick their book and converse with it sitting across for 20 to 30 minutes," she said.

Though general feedback will be collected, the "end-result" would be to "break the bridge between what is known and what it really is," she said.

The event is about

discrimination and identities. Samples of titles that the parent Human Library offers include "Unemployed," "Autism Spectrum Disorders," "Convert," "Homeless," "Soldier (PTSD)," "Sexually abused" and "Refugee."

With each city having its own discrimination priorities, the titles range from gender normative and transgenders to *Dabbawala* in Mumbai.

The stories narrated give readers a new perspective and broaden their horizons. It was at the Roskilde Festival in Denmark that the Human Library (Menneskebiblioteket in Danish) made its debut, as an eight-hours-a-day, four-day event featuring over 50 'titles'.

## Another plea against Irom Sharmila

Hindu outfit says Kodaikanal's peace would be hit

STAFF REPORTER

KODAIKANAL

Another petition was filed with the sub-registrar office here on Thursday against Manipuri civil rights activist Irom Sharmila's marriage proposal.

The Hindu Makkal Katchi (HMK) handed over a petition demanding denial of permission for her marriage to keep in mind the interests of the local people. Ms. Sharmila and her British partner Desmond Coutinho had submitted their papers for their marriage at the Sub-Registrar Office on July 12. A 30-day notice was served as her marriage could be registered under the Special Marriage Act.

In a petition, HMK's State general secretary R. Ravikumar said Kodaikanal is a peaceful place attracting thousands of tourists from





False cases will not be tolerated: Badal

LUDHIANA  
Former Punjab Chief Minister and Shiromani Akali Dal patriarch Parkash Singh Badal on Thursday said that false cases against SAD members due to political vendetta would not be tolerated at any cost. He said the SAD has decided to fight false cases against party workers at the political, judicial and administrative levels. PTI

**₹20 lakh for family of martyred jawan**

SHIMLA  
Family of Sepoy Tanzin Chhultin from Lahaul and Spiti district, who was killed in Kashmir by militants on Thursday, would be given compensation of ₹20 lakh by the Himachal Pradesh government. The State government has made a policy for giving uniform compensation to all my personnel killed during operations against militants and other actions. PTI

**Nurse found guilty of negligence; removed**

JAIPUR  
Days after a woman gave birth to a child outside a State-run hospital in Jaipur, a nurse was removed after she was found guilty of medical negligence, following an inquiry ordered by the State government. PTI

**Sanitation workers shed clothes to get jobs back**

FARIDABAD  
Nearly 160 semi-naked sanitation workers, who were rendered "jobless" after the HUDA handed over maintenance of certain sectors to the municipal corporation, carried out a protest march here demanding restoration of their jobs. PTI

**IN BRIEF**

# Commercial fish in Chilika face threat of depletion

Has hampered livelihood of traditional fishing communities that live near the lake

SATYASUNDAR BARIK  
BHUBANESWAR

With the migration of a variety of fish from the sea to Chilika Lake adversely affected by the rampant use of small and zero mesh size nets, and overfishing further damaging fish breeding, at least five commercially important fish in the lake face threat of depletion.

Disappearance of commercially valued fish has hampered the livelihood of traditional fishing communities that live in and around Chilika, which is one of the fish-rich lagoons of the country.

**Adverse ecosystem**

The Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute (CIFRI), Barrackpore, has identified five fish species - Khainga (*Mugil cephalus*), Dangala (*Liza macrolepis*), Boraga (*Daysaena albida*), Sahala (*Eleutheromera tetracanthum*) and Kundala (*Etreplus suratensis*), which find adverse ecosystem to grow.

The CIFRI had carried out biological and ecological survey for measuring the length, frequency, spawning season, spawning ground and fishery resources in the Chilika lagoon.

There has been a marked

**Diminishing returns:** A woman drying fishes at Baulagan village near Chilika Lake. ■ FILE PHOTO: BISWARANJAN ROUT

fall in the length, size and spawning stock biomass (SSB), the total group of the fish in a stock that are old enough to spawn.

"The fall in SSB is a matter of concern. The SSB decline in case of Khainga is 82.64%, Sahala (89.73%), Dangala (87.1%), Boraga (80.9%) and Kundala (80%)," said a senior official of the Chilika Development Authority (CDA). The sharp decline

means the SSB is assessed below 20% in all five fish varieties.

There is rampant use of small and zero mesh size nets in the lake to catch all size groups of fish and shell fish. This causes serious biodiversity loss besides destruction of larval and juvenile stages of a number of commercial fish species. Fishery of the lake depends to a large extent on species

migrating into the lagoon through the sea mouth. Dense deployment of destructive nets blocks free movement of larvae, juveniles and adults.

**Biggest obstruction**

"The drop in commercial fish catch will affect local fishermen. Destructive fishing practice especially fish enclosure (ghery) for aquaculture is the biggest obstruction for migration of fish between the sea and lake. We are carrying out a massive ghery eviction drive ever undertaken in Chilika," said Sushant Nanda, Chief Executive of CDA. Mr. Nanda said the satellite imageries found 14,590 ha areas of Chilika under man-made gheries for illegal prawn cultivation.

As of now, more than 2,000 ha of gheries have been removed, he said.

During 2016, the total annual fish landing including fish, prawn and crab from Chilika is estimated at 14,067.50 tonnes valued at ₹190.10 crore which worked out to 10.26% increase as compared to the annual catch in 2014. The average per capita income of the active fishers during 2016 was estimated at ₹56,035.

## Cable car service in Gulmarg resumes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
SRINAGAR

The cable car service in Kashmir's Gulmarg, which was shut in June following an accident that claimed seven lives, was reopened for public on Thursday after over a month, officials said.

The Gulmarg Gondola service has been restored and many tourists and locals took rides. Operations for both phases of the cable car have been resumed, Riyaz Ahmad, the general manager of Jammu and Kashmir State Cable Car Corporation, said.

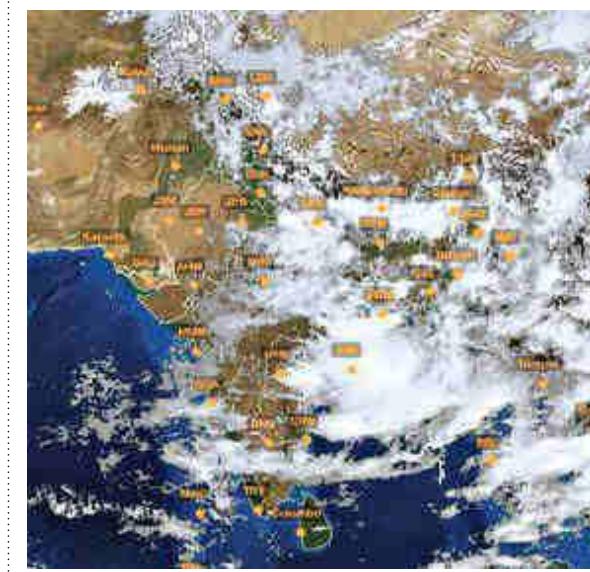
**Inspections done**

There were inspections following which the engineers and technicians gave a go-ahead for the resumption of services for both the phases.

Four members of a Delhi family and 3 tourist guides were killed when a cable car came crashing down after a ropeway snapped midair in the ski-resort of Gulmarg on June 25.

**WEATHER WATCH**

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

**Forecast for Friday:** Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and coastal Karnataka

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	2.4...	34.6...	26.7	Kozhikode	2.4...	31.0...	24.5
Ahmedabad	0.8...	33.3...	25.0	Kurnool	1.5...	34.6...	24.5
Aizawl	—	30.2...	13.6	Lucknow	3...	31.9...	26.5
Allahabad	0.6...	32.7...	27.3	Madurai	1.2...	38.0...	24.8
Bengaluru	—	29.5...	20.3	Mangaluru	9...	29.2...	24.3
Bhopal	0.7...	29.4...	23.2	Mumbai	5.8...	30.8...	25.5
Bhubaneswar	0.2...	33.2...	26.0	Mysuru	—	29.7...	19.8
Chandigarh	11...	32.6...	25.9	New Delhi	0.2...	34.6...	27.3
Chennai	14.8...	36.1...	26.8	Patna	9.1...	29.6...	25.7
Coimbatore	—	32.0...	23.1	Port Blair	2.4...	31.7...	26.2
Dehradun	50.2...	31.8...	25.0	Puducherry	—	36.5...	24.9
Gangtok	23.4...	22.6...	18.2	Pune	0.9...	26.1...	21.2
Goa	20.2...	31.0...	24.8	Raipur	—	33.0...	26.3
Guwahati	—	35.4...	27.5	Ranchi	—	30.7...	21.1
Hubballi	—	27.0...	22.0	Shillong	—	25.8...	16.8
Hyderabad	—	33.5...	23.8	Shimla	2.8...	22.9...	16.8
Imphal	—	32.7...	23.9	Srinagar	—	30.1...	19.5
Jaipur	—	31.4...	22.9	Trivandrum	—	31.8...	25.2
Kochi	3...	30.2...	24.6	Tiruchi	—	38.1...	27.0
Kohima	4...	25.6...	18.7	Vijayawada	0.8...	35.5...	27.4
Kolkata	0.4...	33.4...	27.0	Visakhapatnam	—	34.2...	28.6

**Particulate matter in the air you are breathing Yesterday**

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>2</sub>	CO	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>	CODE
Ahmedabad	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bengaluru	9...	44...	—	—	80...	■
Chennai	10...	24...	64...	—	—	■
Delhi	14...	51...	98...	77...	365...	■■■
Hyderabad	76...	15...	8...	64...	99...	■■■■■
Kolkata	20...	75...	36...	—	108...	■■■■■■
Lucknow	6...	23...	23...	76...	—	■■■■■■■
Mumbai	8...	19...	10...	19...	41...	■■■■■■■■
Pune	23...	3...	69...	148...	147...	■■■■■■■■■
Vishakhapatnam	55...	13...	46...	77...	86...	■■■■■■■■■■

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■■ Moderate ■■■ Good  
In observation made at 4 p.m., Haldia, West Bengal recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 137 indicating a moderate level of pollution.

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

■ 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.

■ Nitrogen 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.

■ Particulate matter pollution can irritate 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.

(Individual pollutant data for various cities are averages for the previous day)

## Headmaster arrested for assaulting student

Boy started bleeding from the ear after the incident and had to be hospitalised

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
RANAGHAT (WB)

The headmaster of a boys high school in West Bengal's Nadia district was arrested on Wednesday following complaints by the guardians of other students.

The incident took place

on Wednesday morning when the Class X student reported for class after a long absence. The headmaster allegedly pulled his ear, slapped him on his cheek and disallowed him from appearing for a class test.

With the student bleeding from his ear after the assault, he was taken to a local pharmacy by the school authorities.

The student's father rushed in on being informed by the school authorities.

The headmaster, he alleged, had beaten his son brutally.

The boy was first taken to Ranaghat sub-divisional hospital and later to Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Hospital at Kalyani.

## IN BRIEF



Cricket bookie Krishna Singh arrested in A.P.

NELLORE

In a major breakthrough in the cricket betting case, the police arrested 115 persons, including notorious bookie Devalam Krishna Singh, and seized three cars, ₹44.24 lakh, 27.5 sovereigns of gold, 96 cellphones, 10 laptops, one TV and three communicators from their possession. Of the arrested, nine persons were found to be main bookies while 20 others were their assistants and partners.

## Warrants against three in Vicky Tyagi murder case

MUZAFFARNAGAR

A court here on Thursday issued non-bailable warrants against three accused in the gangster Vicky Tyagi murder case. The Uttar Pradesh government handed over the probe to the CB-CID in November. Tyagi was gunned down in the courtroom during a hearing in another case here on February 16, 2015. Shooter Sagar Malik was arrested from the spot while Brijbir Singh was nabbed the next day.

## Punjab BJP's farmer wing to gherao CM's house

CHANDIGARH

The BJP's Kisan Morcha on Thursday threatened to gherao Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh's residence on Friday over his government's 'failure' to implement the farm debt waiver. Punjab's farmers had been betrayed and this was the reason they continued to commit suicide despite the Chief Minister announcing a "partial" loan waiver, BJP leaders alleged. PTI

## Three self-proclaimed tantriks held in Odisha

BERHAMPUR

Three self-proclaimed tantriks involved in the superstitious practice of 'khatavidya' – meant to trace sorcerers and thieves – over the last three days were arrested on Thursday in Jakarta village in Ganjam district of Odisha. All of them were residents of Nayagarh district. They were rounded up by personnel from Polasara police station while they were secretly making their way out from Jakarta.

# Red light for Spanish racer's dream run

Govt. unable to find way around tendering issues for Talgo

SOMESH JHA

NEW DELHI

The train from Spain that could have drastically cut journey times appears to have hit a dead end, with the government unable to move forward on its plan to rope in Spanish locomotive firm Talgo, despite a successful trial run last year.

But going by the hurdles that have come up now, that may have been a premature claim to success.

"We do not have a framework to roll out tenders for trains manufactured by

**Railways tender requirements didn't allow company to participate**

Talgo, as a single-player bid would prove to be ineffective," a top Railway Ministry official said, requesting anonymity.

"We aim to set up a factory here. The tender with specifications floated by Indian Railways in the past didn't allow us to participate," Subrath Nath, Director, India and Asia Pacific, at Talgo told *The Hindu*.

Officials said Indian Railways had also considered leasing four Talgo trains. But that, too, would be subject to a tendering process,

noted a committee examining the issues related to acquiring Talgo trains for operations on Indian railway tracks.

"We anyway didn't conduct such a big and successful trial to lease just four trains. Our target is to manufacture in India," Mr. Nath said.

Incidentally, the Indo-Spanish joint statement issued after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Spain in May this year didn't mention Talgo's successful trial run.

## No commitment

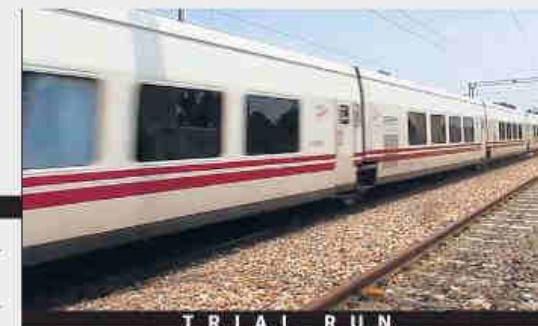
Prior to the PM's visit to Madrid, joint secretary in the External Affairs Ministry Randhir Jaiswal had said, "Although the technology is good and is globally recognised, there are a lot of technical issues due to which progress has been stalled. In the coming days, we will examine how we will address those issues."

The Railways had stated as a pre-condition for the trial that it would not entail a commitment to signing the final contract with Talgo.

Talgo trains have light aluminium body coaches.



Class apart: The cafeteria and the interior of one of the Talgo coaches whose trial run was conducted last year to examine the time saved for a journey between New Delhi and Mumbai. ■ ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY



## Next generation connectivity

Talgo, the Madrid-based train manufacturer, had offered to take rail journeys to the next level in India

## PRIME ATTRACTIONS

- Enhanced passenger comfort
- Operational speed of 200 kmph
- Integrated suspension
- Lightweight aluminium body
- Independent axle-less wheels
- Disc brake system
- Natural tilt leading to higher speed on curves

**TRIAL RUN**

March 2016: Railway Board gives approval for conducting field trials

April 2016: Nine Talgo coaches arrive in India from Spain

May-Sept 2016: Three-phase trials take place on these three routes:

1. Bareilly-Moradabad 2. Mathura-Palwal 3. Delhi-Mumbai

- During trial, Talgo clocked a top speed of 180 km/hr
- The train took 11 hours and 40 minutes to cover the distance between New Delhi and Mumbai against the usual travel time of 15 hours and 50 minutes of the New Delhi-Mumbai Rajdhani Express
- Trial was conducted using engines of the Indian Railways

**During trials, Talgo coaches negotiated curves and gradients at higher speeds compared to conventional coaches**

RAJEN GOHAIN, MoS, Railways

## Delhi reports 'good' air quality

Combination of factors, including above-normal rain, brings rare record for July

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI



Change is in the air: A view of the Capital skyline on Thursday, a day when Delhi recorded good quality air ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

For the first time in two years, Delhi has seen two days of 'good' air quality in July, according to a report by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). Moreover, not a single day in July saw 'poor' air quality, a feat that has not been replicated in any month of the last 25, save August 2016. These classifications are part of a 6-grade, colour-coded Air Quality Index (AQI) that the government uses to rate air quality.

Officials attribute July's salubrious air to a "combination" of above-normal rain and the various steps taken in the aftermath of the Graded Action Plan – noting

fied this January – whereby municipal and State authorities must undertake a series of steps if particulate matter pollution exceeds 300g/m<sup>3</sup>, i.e., 'severe' pollution.

While the peak monsoon months of July and August typically see an improve-

ment in air quality – because monsoon winds and rain settle noxious particles to the ground – the average air quality in these months is mostly only 'moderately' good, or still not absolutely safe for asthmatics or those with underlying respiratory

problems. Delhi gets monsoon rain only around mid-July and has got 25% less monsoon rainfall than what is normal for June 1 to August 3.

Two weeks of June and one in July, however, saw excessively heavy rainfall.

"There is no single factor but weather has played a role. The real test, however, will be during the winter months," said D. Saha, who heads air quality monitoring at the CPCB.

Since the organisation began issuing colour-coded air quality reports only since May 2015, Mr. Saha said he was not sure if previous Julys had seen air quality improve to the levels observed last month.



CEO of Mukhi Media (centre) Pavani Prasad and director Krishna Mohan greeting actor Naseeruddin Shah.

Health & Family Welfare and Andhra Pradesh's Jeevandan programme will be displayed in the film.

The film, which was formally launched by Mr. Siva Prasad Rao recently, will be promoted by the Andhra Pradesh Film, Television and Theatre Development Corporation (APFTTDC).

## First in India

Mukhi Media director Krishna Mohan and CEO Pavani Prasad said the film was the first one in India to be screened in all theatres beginning with Andhra Pradesh. It would be screened in cinemas across the country later.

## Rose Valley investors, agents vandalise property

Agitation demanding return of money turns violent, two detained

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

Hundreds of people who had invested in the schemes of the Rose Valley Group in south Kolkata on Thursday. An agitation demanding return of money turned violent when a mob comprising agents and investors vandalised a hotel belonging to the company.

Senior officials said the local police station had to intervene to control the situ-

ation. Two protesters were detained.

The Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate have been carrying out investigations into the illegal deposits of the Rose Valley Group. The company's chairman and managing director Gautam Kundu was arrested in March 2015 and has been behind bars since then.

The CBI, in its charge sheet against Mr. Kundu and other senior officials of the company, mentioned

charges such as criminal conspiracy (Section 120 B of IPO) cheating (Section 420 of IPC) along with Sections 4 and 6 of The Prize Chits Money Circulation Schemes banning Act. The ED has attached properties valued at ₹1250 crore of the company.

Those protesting during the day claimed that while they had not got their money back, certain business activities of the company were still going on.

The Trinamool Congress, whose leaders including MP

Sudip Banerjee were arrested for their alleged involvement in the scam, had raised questions over the long duration of investigations. Mr. Banerjee, who was arrested in December 2016, was granted bail in May this year.

Senior TMC leader Partha Chatterjee said the West Bengal government had taken steps to return money by setting up a commission but people had not got any money back since the Central agencies started the probe.

## Ex-prison staff convicted in stamp paper case

They allegedly helped kingpin Telgi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka on Thursday sentenced two former prison officials to five years simple imprisonment for allowing stamp paper racket kingpin Abdul Kareem Telgi to perpetrate crime when he was lodged in Bengaluru central prison as an undertrial.

P.N. Jayasimha, the then Superintendent of Bengaluru central prison, and Nanjappa, the then Assistant Superintendent, were convicted under 13(1)(d) [criminal misconduct by a public servant] of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. The court has also imposed a fine of ₹50,000 each on them.

A Division Bench comprising Justice Ravi Malimath and Justice John Michael Cunha delivered the verdict while partly allowing an appeal filed by



Abdul Kareem Telgi

the CBI challenging the September 14, 2010 judgement of a special court.

The Bench held that Jayasimha and Nanjappa, both retired and aged around 65, had flouted prison rules and betrayed the trust of the court by helping Telgi when he was in judicial custody.

As the Bench allowed the period of three-and-a-half years spent by them in the prison as undertrials, they will now have to undergo imprisonment for around one-and-a-half years.

## Bihar form drops 'virgin'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PATNA

Bihar's premier government hospital, the Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (IGIMS), which kicked up a row by asking its new recruits to declare if they are "virgins", has dropped the word and replaced it with "unmarried".

Amid the furore over the issue, the Health Minister, however, sought to explain away the gaffe, saying the meaning of the word 'virgin' in the dictionary was 'kunwari' or unmarried, which was not objectionable. The marital declaration form given to new recruits had asked them to declare whether "he/she was a bachelor/widower/virgin". The form also asked male recruits to mention whether they had only one wife or more.

IGIMS director N.R. Biswas confirmed having replaced the word "virgin" with "unmarried" in the form.



LEFT, RIGHT, CENTRE

# Is India a good neighbour?

PHUNCHOK STOB DAN  
is a former diplomat  
and a strategic affairs  
commentator

There is no single yardstick to measure foreign policy successes and failures but the absence of crises is broadly viewed as a sound criterion. India's foreign policy of late has come under sharp public scrutiny – especially the direction in which it is moving.

**Frosty relations**

So, what do we see? On the one hand, an extremely frosty relationship with Pakistan. On the other, the relationship of stability with China built over three decades has been falling apart despite increased

VEENA SIKRI  
is a former Indian  
Foreign Service officer

China might have deep pockets, but the relations between India and her neighbours are multidimensional

→ Based on my experience and certainly over the last three years of the Narendra Modi government, neighbourhood is the first ring of India's foreign policy. Neighbourhood became the primary focus with the creation of the SAARC in 1985, but it has been enhanced over the last three years.

**Ties that bind**

If you take the area of education, there is enormous interest in the neighbourhood in coming to India to study. Engineering and medicine

B.R. DEEPAK  
is Professor of Chinese  
and China Studies at  
the Centre for Chinese  
and South East Asian  
Studies, JNU

India's dealings with its neighbours can be characterised as both benevolent and malevolent

↑ We must acknowledge that the geographical boundaries in our CENTRE neighbourhood are an outcome of the colonial and imperial legacies inherited by both India and China. This has bred 'Sinocentrism' and 'Indocentrism' on either side of the Himalayas and both are vying to maintain their influence in the smaller countries or diminish each other's. The 'India-centric' fragmented integration in South Asia, according to some Chinese scholars, has provided an opportunity to China to build a new regional order in

**SINGLE FILE**

## The Iran question

India's West Asia relations are no longer viewed through the Israel-Palestine prism

BILAL BALOCH



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's widely publicised trip to Israel last month was labelled as de-hyphenating the traditional vector of Israel-Palestine in Indian strategic thinking in West Asia, without damaging relations with Arab states. The final say on this balancing, however, will be determined by Iran.

Historically, India has projected Israel as an apartheid regime. Despite the latter's drawn-out courtship, it was a weakening of old structures that ushered new ideas into Delhi's decision-making and, in 1992, mutual securities became salient. Since then, cooperation and trade have improved steeply. Not unusually, and simultaneously, India has maintained support for the Palestinian cause. Despite not making the customary stopover in Ramallah during his trip, the ground was privately prepared when Mr. Modi welcomed Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to Delhi in May. The relative quiet across Arab states during Mr. Modi's visit and conversations with diplomats in the region reveal that India's West Asia relations are no longer viewed through the prism of Israel-Palestine, but the changing security landscape in the region pertaining to Iran.

A new political order in West Asia is in full force, led assertively by Saudi Arabia, and one that regards Iran as the existential threat. The assumption in some sections of the international community, that India's ties with Israel naturally negate the South Asian power's relationship with the Arab nations, specifically of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), is misguided. Indeed, Mr. Modi would not have made the visit to Israel had he calculated that such a trip would antagonise the Sunni Arab leaders who have shown concrete interest in India's growing market and improving regulatory environment. India, in turn, looks to the region for its constantly expanding natural gas and crude oil thirst. Essentially, Arab leaders can today live with their allies operating with the Israelis, but not with the Iranians. Since the Iran nuclear deal, insecurities among Tehran's rivals, supported increasingly by the Trump White House, have gone into overdrive. That the Iranian leadership is fully aware of these shifting dynamics was on show in the days leading up to Mr. Modi's Israel visit.

Twice in the space of 10 days, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei linked the plight of Muslims in Gaza, Yemen, and Bahrain, with, unexpectedly, those in Kashmir. The timing and frequency of his comments, which were so close to the Israel visit, cannot be underplayed. The Iranians will have been aggrieved by the visit coupled with India's unambiguous pro-Riyadh tilt. Despite this, ties between India and Iran will not cease any time soon, but run on an independent track. Indeed, they are currently developing the geopolitically valuable Chabahar port on the Gulf of Oman. But rising economic stakes in Delhi and a new regional order will mean that India cannot maintain its traditionally equidistant, neutral position in West Asia for long. These pathways will be stress-tested soon if India desires a concrete regional strategy beyond tactical visits.

Bilal Baloch is a Visiting Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Delhi, India. Twitter: @bilalbaloch



Foreign policy had earlier been driven by peace. The new priority to security has distorted India's image

diplomatic engagement – not only because of Chinese mistakes but also because of the absence of innovative thinking in India to deal with its biggest neighbour.

India lacks a coherent means to contain China except for nurturing some myopic ideas. The old time-tested friendship with Russia has been allowed to slip through our fingers by downscaling the levels of engagements and limiting the areas of interest over time. The tragedy is that China has shrewdly neutralised India's close proximity with Russia while at the same time sustaining its nexus with Pakistan.

Broadly speaking, Indian foreign policy relied on its deep resources of wisdom and inner strength based on a percept of it being a civilisational state, that was reflected in its international conduct. To that effect, foreign policy has been driven by peace rather than security. It gave India a global persona of benign international influence.

There is a marked divergence from that position. Priority to security has distorted India's image vis-à-vis its neighbours – especially when policies are pursued through the precolonial security-centric "zero-sum" or "frontier mindset" or even from a Cold War political



prism. In fact, this approach has failed to stop China's influence in India's neighbourhood despite the "neighbourhood-first policy".

Seventy years is not a short period for India to come up with a sound and clear statecraft device. Yet we see a clear lack of finesse in India's approach, more so when the world has moved away from a bilateral to a multilateral context.

In our pursuit to gain great power status, we have slipped into apathy in transforming our old arrangements with smaller neighbours like Bhutan and Nepal. Instead of developing India as a regional economic hub, we are

turning it into a fortress by overemphasising on border security.

**Getting fundamentals right**

A better option to probe future ties would be to return to the strategic fundamentals. A good example to emulate is the top-down waterfall approach espoused by Russia and China to lower tensions between them.

At the same time, India need not see China as an object of disdain in perpetuity – a narrative often sold by the West. An honest attempt to build a new paradigm of India-China trust grounded on the shared historical and cultural awareness, as also on the collective wisdom of ordinary citizens on both sides, may prove to be more effective. For

India to emerge as a global power of any reckoning, it has to realise that a narrow tactical pursuit devoid of strategic thinking will lead to nowhere. We need to reframe our terms of relationship with China; rethink our own posture; rescue ourselves from experiencing a delusion of grandeur and instead persevere to emerge as a confident and aspiring regional power.

Of course, one cannot judge foreign policy on the ephemeral flux of events only. What is seen as success today may turn out to be blunder tomorrow. Also, foreign policy failures may not always be the consequences of a botched-up diplomacy; it can be the result of a misplaced and impractical pursuit of goals.

ground for future growth trajectories through innovative projects of cooperation and collaboration. In turn, South Asian leaders visit India regularly, and this too plays a vital role in developing partnerships of friendship and understanding.

India gives complete importance to its neighbourhood. China may like to give some support to South Asia, but it is not all its primary neighbourhood. Pakistan has a so-called strategic partnership with China, but how many go to China for people-to-people contact? We have people from Pakistan willing to travel to our country all the time. China has deep pockets but it does not have the support of geography.

As told to Kalol Bhattacharjee

existing border mechanisms, the India-China border has remained peaceful barring a few stand-offs including the recent one at Doklam. These face-offs along the Line of Actual Control are an indicator that any attempts to enhance military capacity along the borders by both India and China may vitiate the security environment. On the other hand, the peaceful resolution of these face-offs point to the maturing nature of ties. But the face-offs are also a pointer to the fact that relations remain "fragile" and the border issue is the root cause. If not handled properly, it could rekindle animosities in no time. It is imperative for India and China to show political will and reach an agreeable resolution as soon as possible.

Nepal and India have an open border where trade and business are prominent. Bangladesh and India have a huge trade gap, but Bangladeshi exports to India are going up to almost a billion dollars. Sri Lanka-India trade is enormous and growing fast. Trade relations among all South Asian countries should be viewed as a specialisation area of India's foreign relations. Natural disasters are another area where India has extended support to neighbours consistently – the Indian Navy has been prompt in helping in disasters in Sri Lanka or the Maldives, and the Air

Force was prompt during the Nepal earthquake. These areas remain under the radar, but the fact is in foreign relations work is always going on.

Problems do arise from time to time in neighbouring countries, but India has always helped in its own way. In 1971, Bangladesh faced a terrible genocide; 10 million refugees poured into India. In Sri Lanka, the 1987 India-Sri Lanka accord marked a new beginning. In Afghanistan, we are working along with all other countries.

**Neighbourhood first**

The relations between India and her neighbours are multidimensional and interactive. The shared civilisational heritage among all the countries of South Asia is reflected through the activities of the Indian Cultural Centres run by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations in the capital cities of each of India's neighbours. The launch in May 2017 of the South Asia Satellite is another example of the strong mutually beneficial nature of the relations between South Asian countries.

India's support for the Bangladeshi liberation movement brought the two countries closer, discords such as sharing of the Ganges water and Bangladesh denying India transit facilities to the Northeast have cast a shadow on bilateral ties. As regards Sri Lanka, the traditionally friendly relations were negatively impacted by India's intervention in the Tamil and Sinhala conflict.

Under Narendra Modi, India has formulated an increasingly assertive foreign policy. The continental mindset is undergoing tremendous change, and there is a strong rationale for developing blue economy as well as blue-water naval capabilities; Mr. Modi's visits to Seychelles, Mauritius and Sri Lanka in early 2015 demonstrate this.

**Engaging China**

Given the complexity of the relationship and the nature of animosities, India has managed its relationship with China fairly well, albeit these could have been managed better especially when it comes to the resolution of the boundary issue. Generally speaking, the security, trade and investment, and people-to-people exchanges have been broadened in scope.

Imagine if India's borders with China plunge into the kind of volatility we have witnessed with our western neighbour! Thanks to the

South Asia, diminishing India's role in the region. This demonstrates that the contours of bilateral and multilateral relationship in our neighbourhood are extremely complex, and more often than not have given rise to narrow nationalism and regional hegemonism.

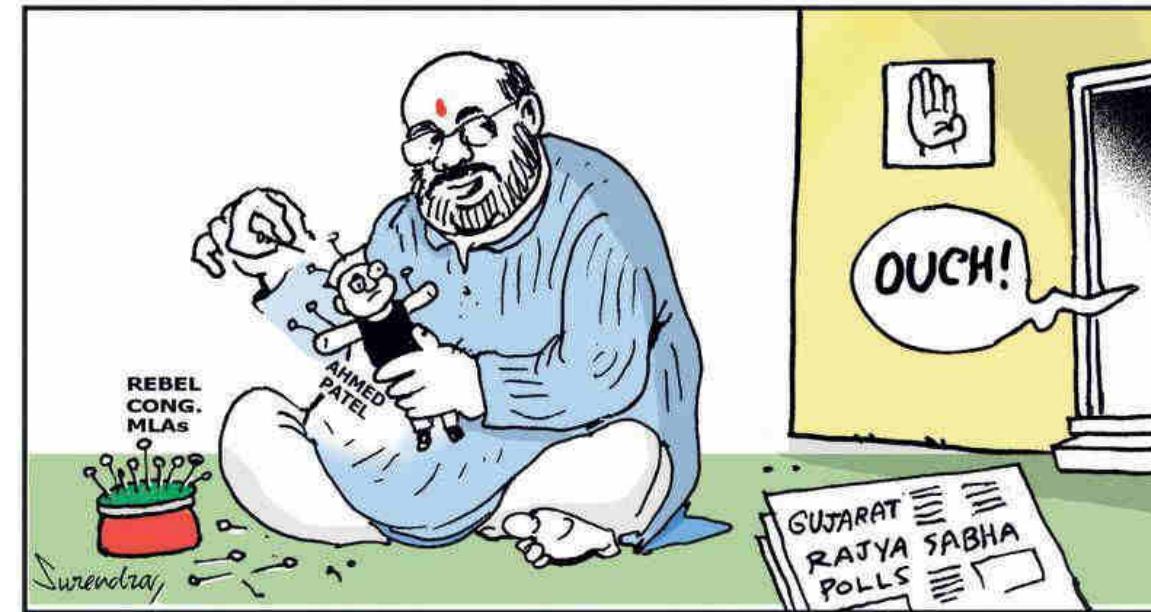
**The good and the bad**

Irrespective of the complexity and hypersensitive nature of the security issues, India's dealings with its neighbours can be characterised as both benevolent and malevolent. No other country in the region can allow free and unrestricted move-

ment of people across their border as India and Nepal have done even after delineating the border more than 200 years ago. This guarantees employment opportunities and facilitates trade, tourism and transport between the two countries. Conversely, the 1989 and 2015 Indian blockade crippled Nepal economically, and gave rise to anti-India hysteria. In the case of Bhutan, India remains one of the most trusted partners as far as economic and security relations are concerned. However, India halting the subsidised fuel supply to Bhutan just before the general election in July 2013 didn't augur well for bilateral

ties. In the same vein, if India's support for the Bangladeshi liberation movement brought the two countries closer, discords such as sharing of the Ganges water and Bangladesh denying India transit facilities to the Northeast have cast a shadow on bilateral ties. As regards Sri Lanka, the traditionally friendly relations were negatively impacted by India's intervention in the Tamil and Sinhala conflict.

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**CONCEPTUAL****Big Mac index**

ECONOMICS

This is an index used to compare the price of a good across countries. The law of one price states that the price of a good sold internationally should converge as entrepreneurs try to profit from any price discrepancy. The purpose of the Big Mac index, which compares the price of the Big Mac burger across countries, is to establish the purchasing power parity between currencies. It has been published by the British magazine *The Economist* since 1986. One drawback of the Big Mac index is that goods that look physically similar to each other may not necessarily be similar in their economic nature.

**MORE ON THE WEB**

NOTA in the Rajya Sabha polls: an explainer

<http://bit.ly/NOTARSPoll>**ACT ONE****Evicting unauthorised VIP occupants**

There is now a solution to the problem

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

The Supreme Court once said there is no law to "entirely control the act of disobedience" of powerful but unauthorised occupants of government residential accommodations.

In *S.D. Bandi versus Divisional Traffic Officer (2013)*, a Supreme Court Bench led by Justice P. Satishavam observed that unauthorised occupants of public property should realise that "their act of overstaying in the premise directly infringes the right of another".

The Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act of 1971, which prescribes eviction of unauthorised occupants from public premises, has proved largely ineffective before VIP tenants of government residences. Efforts to evict an unauthorised occupant are often met with resistance and years of litigation. Instead of complying with the eviction order, the ten-

ant prefers to move court. The Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Amendment Bill, introduced in the Lok Sabha, comes up with an answer for this problem. It proposes to insert a new sub-section (3A) in Section 7 of the 1971 Act to the effect that if an unauthorised occupant goes to court against an eviction order, he/she will be bound to pay "damages" for every month of his/her stay in the particular residential accommodation.

As per the existing allotment rules, the occupants have to vacate on the expiry of the licence. The 1971 Act calls for the "smooth, speedy and time-bound" eviction of unauthorised occupants. The law calculates that an eviction proceeding in court, in case the tenant refuses to vacate, would take five to seven weeks. A subsequent appeal before a higher court would mean another four weeks. But reality is

contrary to what the law envisages on paper. It may take years of effort and public money to actually nudge out an unauthorised occupant. The 1971 Act provides for summary eviction proceedings, under which the estate officer does not have to follow an elaborate procedure for serving notice, show cause, inquiry and hearing before passing the eviction order. But this procedure is not applicable to residential accommodations. This loophole in the existing 1971 Act has been exploited by unauthorised occupants who resort to dilatory tactics or move the High Court for a stay of the eviction order.

On this, the Amendment Bill has proposed the insertion of a new Section 3B. It proposes to extend summary eviction procedure to residential accommodations too. The unauthorised occupants would be provided a showcase notice of only three days.

**FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES**

FIFTY YEARS AGO AUGUST 4, 1967

**Govt. studying seizure of tax evaders' assets**

The Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Morarji Desai, told the Lok Sabha to-day [August 3, New Delhi] that Government was considering legislation for making forfeiture of property a penalty for tax evasion. Intervening to reply to questions on the alleged tax evasion by the Aminchand Pyarelal group of firms, he said instructions had been issued that wherever possible, prosecution should be launched against income-tax evaders. Mr. Desai said it was not possible to mop up all evaded taxes but he was trying to devise machinery by which it would be lessened to the minimum.

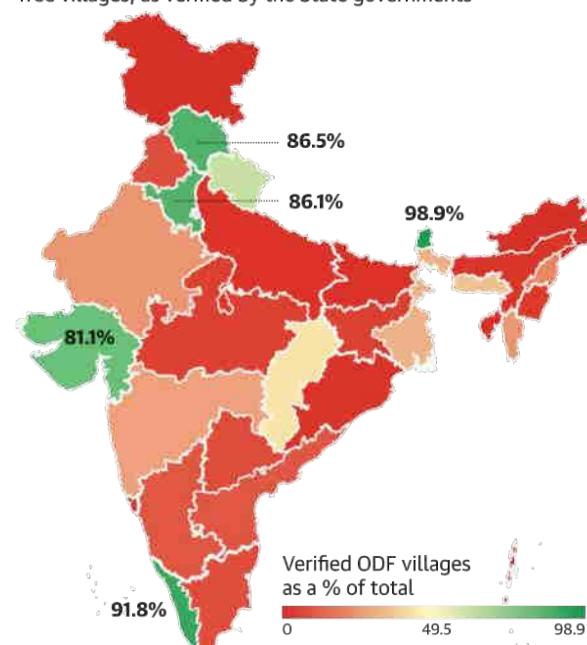
A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AUGUST 4, 1917

**Three years of war.**

The Kaiser has issued a Proclamation to the Army, Navy and Colonial troops as follows: "The third year of war has ended, our adversaries have increased but their prospects of victory are no better. You crushed Rumania last year and the Russian Empire again trembles under your strokes. Both of these States sacrificed themselves for others and now bleed to death. You have braved the enemy's assaults in Macedonia and in the mighty battles in the west you remain masters. Your lines are firm. You are protecting the dear ones at home against the terrors of devastation of war..."

**DATA POINT****State of sanitation check**

Sikkim, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Gujarat top the list of States with the highest percentage of open defecation-free villages, as verified by the State governments



FROM PAGE ONE

## End Doklam standoff peacefully: Sushma

Responding to the charges, Ms. Swaraj said there was no drop in the number of H1B visas for Indians and it had remained intact at 65,000 since 2004, when the UPA was in power. She said that within an hour of Mr. Trump's statement that India's participation in the Paris climate deal was contingent on receiving "billions of dollars" in aid, Mr. Modi issued a statement that "we were not dependent on doles given by anyone." "Modi has the power to challenge the U.S.," she said.

D. Raja of the CPI asked India to resume dialogue with Pakistan. Ms. Swaraj said relations with Pakistan soured not after the terrorist attack at the Pathankot airbase in January 2016 but after Hizbul Mujahideen terrorist Burhan Wani was killed in an encounter in July the same year.

"Pakistan did not go into

## NOTA option will stay for RS polls, says SC

"Does the Election Commission not consult political parties before issuing such a circular," Justice Khanwilkar asked at one point, even as the court scheduled the case for hearing the Election Commission on September 13.

"The system of NOTA makes the system of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote nugatory and otiose and cannot be made applicable in Rajya Sabha elections. The use of NOTA cannot be sanctioned by way of the impugned circular which has the effect of overriding the provisions of Article 80(4), the provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1951 and the Conduct of Election Rules 1961," Mr. Parmar submitted.

**'Illegal and arbitrary'**  
His petition said the 2014 circular to introduce NOTA

## You've been a mentor, Modi tells Pranab

"Pranab Da, our political journeys took shape in different political parties. Our ideologies, at times, have been different. Our experiences are also varied. My administrative experience was from my state, whereas you have seen the expanse of our national polity and politics for decades. Yet, such is the strength of your intellect and wisdom that we were able to work together with synergy," Mr. Modi said.

He added that three years ago he had come to Delhi as an outsider. "The task before me was huge and challenging. In these times, you have always been a father figure and a mentor to me. Your wisdom, guidance and personal warmth have given me greater confidence and strength," he said.

"You have been so warm, affectionate and caring to me. Your one phone call asking me 'I hope you are

## Shivakumar's official chambers searched

The raids are expected to spill over to Friday as well, I-T officials said. The Minister and his wife remained at their Sadashivanagar residence, and continued to be questioned by I-T sleuths.

Meanwhile, raids are still on at other locations including the houses of the Minister's brother and Lok Sabha MP D.K. Suresh, his astrologer Dwarakanath, his father-in-law in Mysuru and Congress MLA S. Ravi.

Raids at the educational institution the Minister heads are also still on, apart from private firms in transport, real estate and export businesses, where the Minister is said to be closely involved.

# China raises the heat on Doklam standoff

In sharpest comment by neighbour, diplomat warns of serious consequences if troops are not withdrawn

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

India must withdraw its troops from the Doklam plateau or "face consequences", a senior Chinese diplomat said here on Thursday.

The remarks mark a serious escalation in rhetoric over the ongoing tensions between the two countries, as their Armies continue a six-week standoff near the India-Bhutan-China trijunction of Sikkim.

"The crossing of the boundary line by Indian troops into the territory of China using the pretext of security concerns for a third party [Bhutan] is illegal," the Chinese Deputy Chief of Mission, Liu Jinsong, told presspersons. "The troops should be withdrawn imme-

diately; otherwise, there will be serious consequences."

Refusing to elaborate on what the "consequences" would be, the diplomat said the Indian action at Doklam was akin to "intruding into your neighbour's house, and demanding the neighbour leave to ensure your withdrawal". Quoting Chinese President Xi Jinping, he said, "Military option is the fundamental guarantor of sovereignty."

The diplomat's comments, the sharpest so far from China, followed India's

rejection on Wednesday a 15-page statement of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs saying the numbers of Indian troops on the stretch of the Doklam plateau, contested by both China and Bhutan, had reduced from 400 to "over 40". Government sources said India had not reduced the number of troops.

### China's count

Mr. Liu, however, said that as of Thursday, the Chinese Army had counted 48 Indian soldiers.

"Even one Indian soldier violating Chinese sovereignty is too many," he continued. "We cannot bear that for another hour, another day, and they must be pulled out immediately."



Liu Jinsong

The diplomat said Chinese troops had notified India of their intention to repair a road in what it called its own territory on two occasions – May 18 and June 8.

Sharing the specific details for the first time, China said

it was "very shocking" for the Chinese side when Indian troops came over to the disputed territory. More significantly, the diplomat alleged that India had not, as the government had maintained, come to the rescue of Bhutanese troops in the area.

Asked by *The Hindu* if China had been embarrassed by the Bhutan Foreign Ministry's statement of June 30 that the Chinese road construction activity was in "direct violation" of previous agreements, Mr. Liu shot back, "From the Bhutanese statement, nothing reflects that the Bhutanese side invited or knew beforehand that India would send troops. Even if we accept a difference of view between

China and Bhutan, we have many mechanisms to resolve them bilaterally."

### No comments: Bhutan

Bhutan's Ambassador to India V. Namgyal told *The Hindu* he would not comment on the remarks by the Chinese envoy, saying there was "nothing further to add" to the official statement.

When contacted for a response, the External Affairs Ministry declined to add to its statement on Wednesday, where it said that "peace and tranquillity on the India-China border areas is an important prerequisite for smooth development of our bilateral relations with China."

For interview, log on to <http://bit.ly/IndiaChinaborder>

## Major, sepoy killed in Kashmir

Three Hizbul militants fire at Army men and escape from encounter site

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR

A Major and a Sepoy and two militants were killed in two incidents in Kashmir on Thursday.

Major Kamlesh Pandey and sepoy Tanzin Chhultim died of injuries in the 92 Base Hospital of the Army here after being hit by bullet fired by three Hizbul Mujahideen militants trapped during an operation at Imam Sahab in Shopian at 2.30 a.m. The condition of sepoy Kirpal Singh, who was also hit, remains critical, police sources said.

It said the Election Commission, "despite being the constitutional watchdog for ensuring free and fair elections, has become a tool in the hands of the ruling dispensation to facilitate violation of the provisions of the Constitution, the provisions of the Act and the Rules."

The Election Commission had issued a Press Note on July 14 on the conduct of biennial elections to the Rajya Sabha for the States of Gujarat (3 seats), West Bengal (6 seats) and Madhya Pradesh (1 seat).

**Three injured**  
There were specific inputs about the militants' presence at Matribhugh-Zoipora village. "As security forces zeroed in, the militants hiding there opened fire, injuring three security personnel," a police official said.

Major Pandey of Almora in Uttarakhand joined the Army in June 2012. Sepoy Chhultim, 25, of Lahaul Spiti in Himachal Pradesh joined the Army in September 2012.

Sources said the militants escaped in the cover of darkness. The Hizb announced a cash reward for them.

Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti and Deputy Chief Minister Nirmal Kumar Singh and Chinar Corps Commander Lt. Gen. J.S Sandhu



Encounter on: Jawans cordon off an area in Shopian district of south Kashmir following the death of Army men in firing by militants. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

paid tributes to the deceased personnel.

### 2 militants killed

In another operation on Wednesday night, two Hizb militants were killed in an encounter at Gopalpora in Kulgam. The operation was launched on specific information. The militants fired upon the search party, leading to an encounter. Two militants were killed," said a Srinagar-based police spokesman.

The slain militants were identified as Aaqib Ahmad

Itoof of Gopalpora and Suhail Ahmad Rather of Yaripora.

An INSAS rifle, an AK rifle and two magazines were recovered from the encounter site. "Aaqib was involved in the attack on a cash van of J&K Bank at Pombai in which five policemen were martyred and two civilians lost their lives. He was also involved in bank robbery and weapon snatching," the police said.

Suhail, the police said, was involved in "instigating people and firing indiscriminately upon security per-

sonnel". Hundreds of local people participated in the militants' funeral prayers. Unidentified militants appeared at the funeral of Suhail and fired in the air.

### Internet suspended

Mobile Internet and railway services remained suspended in south Kashmir. Most degree colleges and higher secondary schools were closed for the third consecutive day on Thursday, in the wake of the killing of Lashkar militant Abu Dujana in an encounter on Tuesday.

## LoC trade via Uri to resume soon

India, Pakistan officials hold talks

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR

In a boost to trade across the Line of Control, Indian and Pakistani authorities on Thursday agreed to start a formal communication mechanism between the trade officers and resume trade and travel on the Uri-Muzaffarabad route next week.

"We held a meeting with our counterparts [from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)] in a very positive atmosphere. Both sides decided to resume travel from Monday and trade from Tuesday next week besides establishing a permanent communication mechanism," Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Uri, Sagar D. Doiphode told *The Hindu*.

The meeting, held on the Salamabad Bridge or Aman Setu on the zero line at noon, was headed by Deputy Commissioner, Baramulla, Nasir Naqash and Colonel (retired) Muhammad Shahid, Director, Trade and Trade Authority, PoK.

It's the first time since cross-LoC trade service started in 2008 that permanent communication lines would come up.

Earlier, the hotlines

between the security agencies were the only source of communication.

Sources said the two sides had decided to share landline and mobile numbers and e-mail addresses "of the trade officers on both sides to formalise communication lines".

### NIA caution

The move comes despite the National Investigation Agency, probing the funding of public unrest through the LoC route, reportedly advocating against opening the trading points.

Both sides are meeting on September 7 in PoK's Chakoti trade centre again to take forward the initiative. The upcoming meeting will be the first of its kind with officials from Jammu and Kashmir crossing the LoC and hold a meeting.

"We have decided to hold a meeting of the traders every three months in a controlled atmosphere to discuss issues related to trade on the LoC. The next meeting will be at Chakoti," said SDM Doiphode.

The trade on the Uri-Muzaffarabad route was stopped after 66.5 kg of heroin was seized from a PoK truck on July 21.

## Sharad, Lalu keeping in touch

RJD chief says the Janata Dal(U) leader is pro-poor and pro-minorities

AMARNATH TEWARY  
PATNA

A special court on Thursday took cognisance of the charge sheet against alleged middleman Sukesh Chandrashekhar in the attempted Election Commission bribery case involving AIADMK (Amma) deputy general secretary T.T. Dhinakaran.

Special judge Poonam Chaudhry issued a production warrant for Chandrashekhar, and directed the Tihar jail authorities to produce him before the court on August 18.

The charge sheet says the police are yet to establish the money trail in the deal between Chandrashekhar and Dhinakaran to get the 'two leaves' symbol for the latter's party faction.

However, the police said they would file a supplementary charge sheet against Dhinakaran and the remaining accused after completing the probe.

**50-lakh deal: police**  
Earlier the police had said the deal was fixed for ₹50 lakh and a part of it had been paid to Chandrashekhar.

The police have cited two media executives working for private television channels, the Director of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat and the staff of the hotel from where Sukesh was arrested on April 16, besides Income Tax officials and policemen as witnesses in the case.

The charges against Chandrashekhar include various counts of forgery.



Sharad Yadav

Bihar for their support to the BJP Bhagao, desh bachao [throw out the BJP, save the country] mega rally in Patna on August 27".

### 'On PM's orders'

On the income tax raids on a resort in Bengaluru where Congress had put up its MLAs in Gujarat ahead of the Rajya Sabha elections in that State and at the residence of a Karnataka Minister, Mr. Prasad said they were "carried out on the orders of Prime Minister Narendra Modi".

"The Centre has imposed an undeclared emergency," he said. "The situation in the country is frightening."

## 3 attacked on beef rumours

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PATNA

Three men were beaten up on Thursday by alleged Bajrang Dal activists and the local people on suspicion that they were transporting beef from an illegal slaughterhouse at Ranisagar, Shahpur, in Bhojpur district of Bihar. The police have taken the three into custody.

The mob intercepted a lorry on its way to Muzafarpur and thrashed the driver and two others in the vehicle. Another person managed to escape. A local television channel broadcast footage of the driver being brutally slapped by a person.

"Three men have been taken into custody after a truck was intercepted by local people near the Shahpur petrol pump for carrying meat. We will verify whether it was cow meat or buffalo meat ... investigation is on," a senior district police official, Daya Shankar, told presspersons. "Strict action will be taken against those running the illegal slaughterhouse," District Magistrate Sanjeev Kumar said.

**Protest on highway**  
The mob tried to set the lorry on fire, but the police reached the spot and foiled the attempt. Later, the people blocked National Highway 84 on the Arambux road, demanding action against the Shahpur police station in charge for not taking action against illegal slaughterhouses.

Later, police officials pacified the protesters.

## 'Blue Whale' game worries Elders

Block sites that prompt youngsters to break the law, say Rajya Sabha members

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Several Rajya Sabha members on Thursday expressed concern over some online games that encourage young users to break the law and even commit suicide. They demanded that such games be blocked.

Member Amar Shankar Sable raised the issue stating that one Manpreet, who allegedly committed suicide by jumping from a building at Andheri in Mumbai last month, had been playing the "Blue Whale" game for 50 days. Nearly 130 suicides linked to the game had been reported in the U.S., Russia, England and Italy, he said.



New worry: The Rajya Sabha in session on Thursday. ■ PTI

Mr. Sable said the players were given instructions such as "watch horror movies" and "travel without ticket on trains", and later they are told to commit suicide. He sought action to ensure that young people were not influenced by such games, stating that the issue was also raised in the Maharashtra Assembly.

Vikas Vikas Mahatme said such games were addictive. Sanjay Seth of the Samajwadi Party said there should be provisions to remove such games from websites.

### Land deal

In the Rajya Sabha, Congress members alleged that a Chhattisgarh Minister's wife had bought forest land in the State to construct a resort, which was opposed by BJP members saying it was a State issue. Deputy Chairman P. J. Kurien turned down the notice given by members Pramod Tiwari and P.L. Punia. The Chair asked them to give some other notice.

# Karnataka fumes at use of CRPF in I-T raids

Income Tax officers say the move was meant to avoid a leak or tip-off

BAGESHREE S  
BENGALURU

The Karnataka government has expressed "strong protest" against the use of Central forces while conducting Income Tax search and seizure operations on the premises linked to Energy Minister D.K. Shivakumar.

In a letter to Revenue Secretary Hasmukh Adhia, the State's Additional Chief Secretary to Home Department Subhash Chandra said use of Central Reserve Police Force personnel in the operations is against the "established conventions of cooperative action between agencies of the Central and State government", which cannot be bypassed in matters where both share responsibility.

Mr. Chandra said there were protests following the raids and "there was every possibility that the matter could have escalated" into a law and order situation, which is the responsibility of the State government.

This comes a day after Chief Minister Siddaramaiah expressed opposition to the use of CRPF personnel in the raids and called it "politically motivated" and against "the principles of democracy and co-operative federalism."

**'Wrong impression'**  
In his letter to Mr. Adhia, the ACS has said deployment of CRPF "in full operational attire with weapons for a civilian operation" conveys a wrong impression. "It casts aspersions of adverse credibility, integrity and professionalism on the State police,

## BJP State unit soft on leader

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

The top leadership of BJP in Karnataka was conspicuous in not launching an all-out attack on or demanding the resignation of Congress leader and Energy Minister D. K. Shivakumar.

The BJP leaders, who had vociferously demanded the resignation of another Minister, Ramesh Jarkhikoli when he faced I-T raids in January earlier, have remained quiet this time.



**In the net:** (Clockwise from left) A scene at the residence of Karnataka Energy Minister D. K. Shivakumar during an I-T raid in Bengaluru on Thursday; the local police interacting with the CRPF personnel; and police and Income Tax sleuths check the bag of a mechanic. ■ SUDHAKAR JAIN & BHAGYA PRAKASH K

which has been utilised by the IT department effectively earlier," said the letter. The IT Department did not seek assistance from the local police or any senior police authority for these operations, Mr. Chandra said, arguing that Central forces being deployed for such an operation is a first for Karnataka. About 30 armed CRPF personnel were deployed in the city during the search.

However, I-T department sources said the department could seek the services of any force in its operations. "There is no rule that only local police have to be roped in. The CRPF has been used earlier as well," an official said. He added that the decision on not using local police was taken by senior officials to "avoid a leak or tip-off of the raid since the assessee is a Minister in the State government."

"Two of our members were told by I-T officials to leave the resort and return to Gujarat immediately," Congress legislators Paresh Dhanani and Mohammad Javed Pirzada claimed, adding that the I-T officials were more concerned about why the legislators from Gu-

## 2 MLAs claim they were told to leave resort

'Main purpose of raid was to scare and force them to return to Gujarat so that BJP could poach them'

AFSHAN YASMEEN  
MAHESH LANGA  
BENGALURU/AHMEDABAD



**Strong backlash:** Youth Congress workers raise slogans against the Centre to protest the I-T raids on Thursday. ■ PTI

jarat were staying in the resort.

"As soon as the I-T team reached the resort, they took hold of the reception

counter and asked the staff about guests staying in the rooms, who was paying for them, and who had done the booking for them," Mr.

Dhanani said, alleging that on the pretext of the raid on Shivakumar, the main purpose of the raid was to scare away MLAs and force them to return to Gujarat so that the BJP could poach them.

### Muscle power

"The way the BJP government has created an atmosphere of fear in Gujarat using State machinery, the Central government tried to do the same in the resort using the I-T establishment," Mr. Dhanani added, stressing that all legislators of the party were united and would not submit to the I-T team's money and muscle power.

He also brushed aside all

speculation that some MLAs desired to return to their home. "BJP leaders have become frustrated after we moved our members here, escaping their dirty tricks, and therefore they have been spreading rumours that our MLAs want to go back."

On Thursday, Karnataka Congress President G. Parasuram had a meeting with all legislators to assure them that despite the I-T raids, the State Congress leadership was with the party MLAs from Gujarat.

Meanwhile, two Congress leaders from Gujarat, including a legislator Jaitabh Patel, were taken to hospital after they fell ill.

**I-T raids against Energy Minister**  
D.K. Shivakumar are not politically motivated. He is a big-time businessman and the department is bound to have issues. ■ S. VENKATESWARA, ECR, Bangalore

**At a time when there are allegations of political motivation, only a Special investigation Team-monitored probe involving all Central agencies would take the probe forward in a proper manner and nullify the allegations.** ■ E. HIRANJANI, ECR, Bangalore

## Modi taking no chances with V-P elections

NDA MPs to take part in mock voting



Narendra Modi  
The ballot will have the names of the two candidates in the fray: Mr. Naidu and Gopal Krishna Gandhi, who has been put up by the Opposition. Mr. Modi will also take part in the exercise as an MP.

**Two names**  
"There were 21 invalid votes polled in the presidential election, and many of them were from the BJP. It was felt, therefore, that there should be a demo of the voting process again," said a senior office-bearer of the BJP.

## NOTA in use in RS polls since 2014

Despite party whip, legislators can exercise their choice, says an EC official

DEVESH K. PANDEY  
NEW DELHI

It's not as if NOTA or None of The Above option is being introduced for the first time in the Rajya Sabha elections taking place in Gujarat on August 8. The option was available in all elections to the Upper House since 2014 as directed by the Supreme Court in 2013.

On September 27, 2013, a three-Judge Bench of the Supreme Court said NOTA was also in use in 13 countries, including the United States, France, Brazil, Bangladesh, Sweden and Spain. It ob-

served that in Indian Parliament also, voting machines had three choices: Ayes, Noes and Abstain.

The Election Commission, in October 2013, issued direc-

tions for providing the NOTA option in elections. But then, doubts were raised about its applicability in the Rajya Sabha polls.

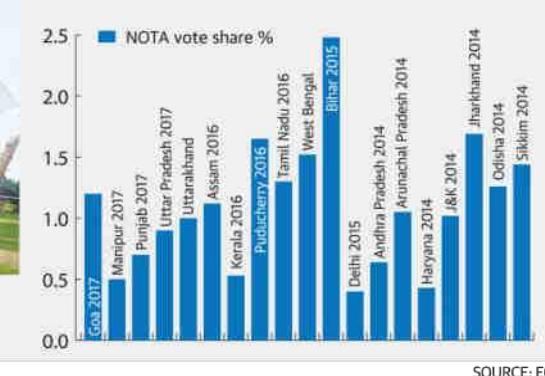
After examining the issue, the EC on January 24, 2014, directed that the option would also apply for elec-

### Nota in elections



A file photo of officials of the Election Commission taking part in a poll awareness campaign. ■ PTI

On average, the maximum NOTA vote share has not crossed 2.02% of the total votes polled in any election cycle.



ted. "If a candidate from a party exercises the NOTA option, the total votes will go down," said former Lok Sabha secretary general PDT Achary. This will bring down the number required to win.

## NOTA's impact will be like abstention

'It does not attract anti-defection law'

VIKAS PATHAK  
DEVESH K. PANDEY  
NEW DELHI

The impact of the decision of MLAs to exercise the NOTA (none-of-the-above) option in elections to the Rajya Sabha will be the same as that of an abstention.

Nor does it attract the anti-defection law, though it can be a sign that an MLA is disgruntled with his party leadership or official candidate.

The Supreme Court observed: "The contention that the right of expression of the voter at an election for the Council of States is affected by open ballot is not tenable, as an elected MLA would not face any disqualification from the membership of the House for voting in a particular manner."

The Court said the member "may at the most attract action from the political party to which he belongs."

Political scientist Yogenra Yadav said the exercise of NOTA would be more a sign of an MLA being disgruntled with his party leadership or not supporting the official candidate. "It's nothing more than transferring the logic of NOTA for an ordinary voter to MLAs."

## Search on for Panagariya's successor

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA  
NEW DELHI

With NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman Arvind Panagariya set to return to academic pursuits, the government is learnt to have zeroed in on a few economists to take on the role, including Shankar Acharya, Rajiv Kumar and N.K. Singh.

Mr. Acharya has previously served as the Chief Economic Adviser to the government from 1993 to 2001 and was a member of the Twelfth Finance Commission. He is currently on the board of governors and an honorary professor at the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations.

Mr. Kumar, who holds a D.Phil. in economics from Oxford, has served as director & chief executive of ICFI and has earlier worked with the Asian Development Bank. Mr. Singh recently chaired the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management committee.

## Centre mulls changing minimum wages formula

Panel decides to form committee to look into calculation



for minimum wages – number of units per family, inclusion of dependant parents and "treatment of women and children at par with the male family member."

**Norms criteria**  
The norms for fixing minimum wages today are based on recommendations of the Indian Labour Conference in 1957. Under it, the minimum wage level for industries is fixed based on spending estimates for a working class family on 2,700 calories of

food per person, 72 yards clothes, minimum housing rent and education and light and fuel. A standard working class family consists of three consumption units for one earner with earnings of women, children and adolescents being disregarded.

RSS-affiliated Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh recommended the government to increase the total units for calculating minimum wages for a family from three to six, its organisation secretary (north-central region) Pawan Kumar said.

However, employer representatives, part of the Central Advisory Board, highlighted the inability to pay higher wage levels in case the formula for minimum wages is revised, a source present in the meeting said.

Mr. Dattatreya said the Union Cabinet had approved a labour code on Minimum Wages.

## GST Council official held in graft case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The CBI has arrested a superintendent of the GST Council for allegedly receiving bribe through his conduit for purported favours extended to some businessmen during his earlier stint in the Central Excise.

Monish Malhotra, the superintendent, and Manas Patra, the alleged middleman, were arrested by the CBI on Wednesday evening, an official said.

### ₹7 lakh recovered

During searches, the CBI has recovered ₹7 lakh in cash from the premises of Mr. Malhotra, CBI spokesperson R. K. Gaur said in a statement.

It was alleged that Mr. Malhotra, who was earlier posted in the Central Excise, had been indulging in corrupt practices of extending undue favours to private parties by not taking action against them in return for periodic bribes.

### Raids jolt hold in party

BENGALURU  
Though Congress leaders have protested the timing of the I-T raids on D.K. Shivakumar's residence and offices, his rivals within and outside the party seem to be sensing a chance to hit back at him, especially ahead of next year's Assembly polls. Known to be a politician in the limelight, Mr. Shivakumar is also seen as someone with a "high-handed" style of functioning.

### Sheet from diary aired

A TV channel on Thursday evening aired visuals of what they claimed was the pieced-together sheet from the alleged diary of Karnataka Energy Minister D.K. Shivakumar. The Minister was allegedly caught tearing it up by I-T sleuths when they raided his room at the Eagleton Resort on Wednesday morning.

**I-T raids against Energy Minister**  
D.K. Shivakumar are not politically motivated. He is a big-time businessman and the department is bound to have issues. ■ S. VENKATESWARA, ECR, Bangalore

**At a time when there are allegations of political motivation, only a Special investigation Team-monitored probe involving all Central agencies would take the probe forward in a proper manner and nullify the allegations.** ■ E. HIRANJANI, ECR, Bangalore

## ELSEWHERE



S. African kidnapped by Al-Qaeda released

PRETORIA A South African tourist who was kidnapped in 2011 by al-Qaeda while travelling in Mali has been released and is back home, Foreign Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane said on Thursday. Stephen McGowan was one of the four foreigners who were seized in a restaurant in the town of Timbuktu. REUTERS

## Passenger planes collide in Indonesia

JAKARTA Two passenger planes collided at an airport in the Indonesian city of Medan on Thursday, an airline spokesman said, the latest incident to hit the country's beleaguered aviation sector. No one was injured in the incident and authorities are investigating the cause of the collision. AFP

## Chile Congress lifts ban on abortion

SANTIAGO Chile's Congress on Wednesday eased a strict ban on abortion in effect since the final days of the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship. The measure, which passed with a 22-13 vote in the Senate, allows abortion in cases of rape, if the mother's life is at risk or if the foetus presents a deadly birth defect. AFP

## Shinzo Abe opts for 'safe hands' in reshuffle

TOKYO Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe opted for safe hands over fresh faces in a Cabinet reshuffle on Thursday but the changes may not boost his support to the extent he seeks. Many Ministers are being reappointed, such as Finance Minister Taro Aso. REUTERS

## President backs plan to slash legal immigration to U.S.

Bill seeks to replace current process for getting green cards

## ASSOCIATED PRESS WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump embraced legislation on Wednesday that would dramatically reduce legal immigration and shift the nation toward a system that prioritises merit and skills over family ties.

Mr. Trump joined with Republican Sens. David Perdue of Georgia and Tom Cotton of Arkansas to promote the Bill, which has so far gained little traction in the Senate. It was the latest example of the President championing an issue that animated the core voters of his 2016 campaign, following decisions to pull out of the Paris climate treaty and ban transgender people from the military.

**Skills-based point system** The legislation would replace the current process for obtaining legal permanent residency, or green cards, creating a skills-based point

# Trump blames Congress as Russia ties hit 'dangerous low'

Moscow terms U.S. sanctions a declaration of 'full-fledged economic war'

## AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Thursday that relations with Russia had hit an all-time and "very dangerous" low, putting the blame on Congress after he reluctantly approved sanctions against Moscow.

After Moscow called the sanctions a declaration of "economic war" that had exposed the U.S. president's weakness, an angry Trump lashed out at his own lawmakers who had overwhelmingly approved the measures. "Our relationship with Russia is at an all-time & very dangerous low," Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter. "You can thank Congress, the same people that can't even give us HCare!" he added in reference to a recent defeat in the Senate on his health care reform plans.

Mr. Trump's outburst came a day after he grudgingly signed off on the sanctions, calling the legislation "significantly flawed" and adding that some of its provisions were unconstitutional. Mr. Trump's presidency has been overshadowed by allegations that his campaign team colluded with Moscow during last year's U.S. presidential campaign in which he defeated Hillary Clinton.

After meeting his Russian counterpart at a G20 summit in Germany last month, Mr. Trump said he wanted to work more closely with Moscow on areas such as the conflict in Syria.

But the legislation – which includes measures against North Korea and Iran – greatly limits his room for manoeuvre and underlines the lack of trust from law-



Hitting back: Russian President Vladimir Putin with Gazprom head Alexei Miller in Amur region on Thursday. ■REUTERS

makers, even though his own Republican Party controls both houses of Congress.

The sanctions target the Russian energy sector in particular, giving Washington the ability to sanction companies involved in developing Russian pipelines. It also places curbs on some Russian weapons exporters and constrains Trump's ability to waive the penalties.

**Total weakness** Moscow, which announced a series of retaliatory measures over the weekend, has painted the Bill's passage in the Senate as a humiliation for Mr. Trump.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev took to Facebook late on Wednesday to say Mr. Trump's signing of the Bill "ends hopes for improving our relations with the new U.S. administration".

"It is a declaration of a full-fledged economic war

on Russia," Mr. Medvedev wrote. "The Trump administration has shown its total weakness by handing over executive power to Congress in the most humiliating way."

Moscow has already ordered the U.S. to slash staff at its diplomatic mission in Russia by 755 personnel in response. The Kremlin said Mr. Trump's formal approval did not "change anything" and no further retaliation was planned.

The sanctions seek to penalise the Kremlin for allegedly meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and for Russia's annexation of Crimea.

Washington has already slapped several rounds of sanctions on Moscow over Ukraine since 2014, and in December then leader Barack Obama turfed 35 Russian diplomats out due to accusations of election interference.

Mr. Trump had received

## U.S. violating n-deal: Iran

## AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE TEHRAN

Iran said on Thursday that new U.S. sanctions were a violation of its nuclear deal with world powers, piling pressure on President Hassan Rouhani as he starts his second term. Mr. Rouhani vowed to keep up his efforts to end Iran's isolation as he was sworn in by the Islamic Republic's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei following his re-election in May. "We believe that the nuclear deal has been violated and we will react appropriately,"

Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said. "We will certainly not fall into the trap of U.S. policy and Trump, and our reaction will be very carefully considered."

"We will never accept isolation," Mr. Rouhani said as he was sworn in front of top political and military officials.

.....

the legislation at 1:53 pm on Friday, but waited until Wednesday to sign it. The delay had raised speculation that Mr. Trump might veto or try to somehow shelf the sanctions, which were approved in a 98-2 Senate vote.

By signing it, he avoided the humiliating prospect of Congress overriding his veto.

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said on Wednesday that he would meet with his Russian counterpart Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov over the weekend, but warned U.S.-Russia ties could still get worse.

# Venezuela crisis exposes divisions in Labour Party

Corbyn asked if he regrets his earlier support for Maduro

## VIDYA RAM LONDON

The crisis in Venezuela has exposed divisions in Britain's Labour Party amid calls from some of its MPs and other leaders to strongly condemn President Nicolas Maduro and the recent Constituent Assembly vote. The party's stance is seen as particularly relevant as leader Jeremy Corbyn has in the past – while a backbench MP – stressed his support for late President Hugo Chavez, as well as Mr. Maduro. "Now that he is the leader of the Labour Party we have an absolute right to know if now regrets what he said or recants it," a former Labour MP Tom Harris told the BBC's Newsnight programme late on Wednesday.

Angela Smith, a long-term critic of Mr. Corbyn, told *The Times* she was "appalled" at the events in Venezuela and called on Mr. Corbyn to condemn the events as soon as possible, as well as call for the release of political prisoners. Mr. Corbyn, who is on holiday, is yet to speak out on recent developments in Venezuela.



President undeterred: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro at a meeting with constitutionalists on Wednesday. ■AFP

## No manipulation, says Maduro

## ASSOCIATED PRESS CARACAS

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on Wednesday defiantly dismissed allegations that official turnout figures for the election of a Constituent Assembly were manipulated, accusing the international software firm behind the claim of bowing to U.S. pressure to cast doubt over the vote.

Earlier this week, the party issued a statement, urging the government to "recognise its responsibilities to protect human rights, free speech, and the rule of law," and called for the President to personally respond to "legitimate" concerns internationally about the "increasing authoritarian nature of his rule and the growing hardship facing his people".

## U.S. hand

However, some within the Cabinet have been critical of the U.S.-imposed sanctions, suggesting it would be far better to facilitate talks

"They have a shady record going back many decades of interfering in Latin America right back to Chile," he said. "We've had these manufactured shortages with factory owners stopping production to create these shortages in shops... and it's the same tactics used against Allende in 1973," he said, referring to the bloody military coup that deposed socialist Chilean President Salvador Allende.

Mr. Williamson is not the first Labour politician to have drawn parallels between Venezuela and Chile. During a rally in solidarity with Venezuela two years ago, Mr. Corbyn attacked U.S. efforts to undermine and discredit Venezuela. "When we celebrate the achievements of Venezuela... in jobs, in housing, in health, in education, but above its role in the whole world as a different place we recognise what they achieved and how they are trying to achieve," he said at the time, warning that there were "powerful forces trying to destroy all of that".

## President backs plan to slash legal immigration to U.S.

Bill seeks to replace current process for getting green cards



Donald Trump boarding Air Force One in Morristown, New Jersey. ■AP

and eliminate a programme that provides visas to people from countries with low rates of immigration.

The roll-out included a combative press briefing led by Trump policy aide Stephen Miller, who clashed with the media over the plan and accused one reporter of being "cosmopolitan" when he suggested it would only bring in English-speaking people from Britain and Australia.

Backers said the Bill would sharply increase the proportion of green cards available to high-skilled workers and would not affect other high or low-skilled workers visa programmes such as H1-B and H2-B visas.

But the Senate has largely ignored a previous version of the measure, with no other lawmaker signing on as a co-sponsor. GOP leaders have showed no inclination to vote on immigration this year, and Democrats quickly dismissed it.

Overall, immigration would be slashed 41% in the legislation's first year and 50% in its 10th, according to projection models cited by the Bill's sponsors. The Bill would also aim to slash the number of refugees in half

## Congratulatory calls to Trump never happened

WH says Nieto talked to him in person

## ASSOCIATED PRESS WASHINGTON

Fake news or fib? Two phone calls described by U.S. President Donald Trump that didn't actually happen represent the latest chapter in a long-running series of disputes revolving around the President's rocky relationship with facts.

White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders on Wednesday found herself explaining that compliments Mr. Trump had described receiving in phone calls from Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto and the Boy Scouts did happen – just not on the phone.

"I wouldn't say it was a lie. That's a pretty bold accusation," she told reporters. "The conversations took place, they just simply didn't take place over a phone call... He had them in person."

The non-calls weren't earth-shattering news. But they fit a pattern that also in-

volves weightier issues and that has raised larger questions about Mr. Trump's credibility six months into his presidency.

After Donald Trump Jr. put out a statement, later shown to be misleading, about his meeting with a Russian lawyer in 2016, the President's outside lawyer was categorical that the President had no role in drafting the statement. But when *The Washington Post* later reported that the President had dictated the statement for his son, Ms. Sanders acknowledged that Mr. Trump had "weighed in" on his son's statement "as any father would based on the limited information that he had."

Polls, history and other research leave open the question of how impressions of Mr. Trump's truthfulness affect his job approval, which hovers around a third of Americans.

## Liu's widow being held by Beijing

## AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE BEIJING

China's government is responsible for the "enforced disappearance" of Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo's widow, her lawyer said on Wednesday in a formal complaint. Beijing faced a global backlash for its treatment of Liu when he died of liver cancer last month.

Liu Xia (56), has not been in touch with anyone since about a day before her husband's death, her lawyer, Jared Genser, said in a statement to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. Liu Xia has been "held incommunicado in an unknown location by Chinese government authorities" since July 15, the day of her husband's funeral, the lawyer's statement read.

## 'Tamim the Glorious' enthrals Qatar

A portrait of the Emir, drawn by a young artist, turns into a national emblem



For the Majesty: Artist Ahmed Bin Majed Al-Maadheed next to his painting of the Qatari Emir titled 'Glorious Tamim'. ■AFP

quent painted in black and accompanied by the red-and-white Qatari flag.

The success of "Tamim the Glorious" propelled the then-unknown artist into the limelight overnight, and by the end of June he had exhibited his work at an annex of Qatar's art museum and one of Doha's top hotels. Nearly all the paintings sold that month. The emblem of the Emir has since been translated to English for the country's expatriate community, which make up 80% of Qatar's 2.5 million population, and stickers and banners in English are now visible across the Qatari capital.

Mr. Madheed, who runs a small advertising agency by day, said he had been offered \$10 million for the original Arabic design by a private party, but opted instead to gift it to the Emir.

The design also resurfaced as a graffiti stencil, fre-

MARKET WATCH		
	03-08-2017	% CHANGE
Sensex	32,238	-0.74
US Dollar	63.69	0.01
Gold	29,430	-0.07
Brent oil	52.71	1.35

NIFTY 50		
	PRICE	CHANGE
ACC	1810.60	38.50
Anil Ports	407.35	-3.90
Ambuja Cements	272.10	5.50
Asian Paints	1146.10	1.60
Aurobindo Pharma	741.30	10.25
Axis Bank	506.00	-10.90
Bajaj Auto	2834.25	31.35
Bank of Baroda	158.20	-5.20
Bharti Airtel	424.20	8.35
Bosch	24849.55	-180.20
BPCL	490.00	3.70
Cipla	557.15	-11.40
Coal India	241.75	-9.10
Dr Reddy's Lab	2323.95	-54.60
Eicher Motors	30726.05	-427.75
GAIL (India)	370.55	0.65
HCL Tech	875.75	-6.25
HDFC	1736.75	-29.65
HDFC Bank	1779.95	-11.70
Hero MotoCorp	3838.35	35.75
Hindalco	220.95	-7.25
Hind Unilever	1169.90	1.15
Indiabulls HFL	1199.75	4.00
ICICI Bank	295.70	-6.15
IndusInd Bank	1645.20	-13.55
Bharti Infratech	403.95	6.10
Infosys	984.00	-9.35
Indian Oil Corp	387.05	16.95
ITC	281.40	-4.05
Kotak Bank	996.40	-14.50
L&T	1174.75	-2.05
Lupin	993.40	-41.55
M&M	1416.50	1.90
Maurti Suzuki	7737.40	-58.10
NTPC	172.55	0.70
ONGC	165.70	0.30
PowerGrid Corp	222.95	1.15
Reliance Ind.	1650.10	20.90
State Bank	300.55	-7.15
Sun Pharma	515.85	-7.70
Tata Motors	431.45	-8.90
Tata Motors DVR	253.60	-6.85
Tata Power	82.65	0.05
Tata Steel	559.30	-9.95
TCS	2489.45	15.65
Tech Mahindra	407.15	5.10
UltraTech Cement	4084.40	-3.05
Vedanta	279.95	-1.00
Wipro	289.10	-4.70
YES Bank	1785.45	-43.55
Zee Entertainment	539.95	-0.35

EXCHANGE RATES		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	63.49	63.81
Euro	75.21	75.59
British Pound	83.53	83.96
Japanese Yen (100)	57.51	57.80
Chinese Yuan	9.44	9.49
Swiss Franc	65.48	65.81
Singapore Dollar	46.68	46.92
Canadian Dollar	50.39	50.65
Malaysian Ringgit	14.82	14.91

Source: Indian Bank

BULLION RATES CHENNAI		
August 03 rates in rupees with previous rates in parentheses		
Retail Silver (1g)	40.60 (40.90)	
22 ct gold (1 g)	2,711 (2,727)	

# 'GPS facility to raise handset costs'

Ministry calls for meeting with industry as phone makers flag 40%-50% rise in cost of feature phones

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA  
NEW DELHI

With the industry raising a red flag over the government's decision to make GPS mandatory in all mobile phones, including features phones, the Telecom Ministry will hold a meeting with handset makers shortly to review the policy's implications.

In a meeting with Telecom Secretary Aruna Sundarajan on Wednesday, mobile phone companies pointed out that adding the GPS – or the Global Positioning System, a feature that enables tracking the location of a device – to a feature phone is not only technically challenging, but will also lead to at least a 40%-50% jump in the price of such devices.

#### 'Seeking inputs'

The government has made it mandatory to install GPS in all mobile phones that will be sold in India, January 1, 2018 onwards with an aim to



**Questions galore:** At higher prices, one is taking away mobile connectivity from people in order to offer them something that adds no value, says an industry official. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

locate subscribers in emergency situations.

Asked if the government would review the decision, Ms. Sundararajan told *The Hindu*: "We will be sitting with the industry soon... listen to their objections in detail and then take a decision."

In the meeting on Wednesday, a representative from HMD Global, which

holds the rights to market the Nokia brand globally, said, "the whole industry is facing a huge challenge" with regard to the enabling of GPS in feature phones.

The representative said that more than 40% of the mobile market still comprises features phones which are sold at an average of about ₹1,500. "To add GPS component to that is not

only technically challenging as the device will need more power and memory, but it will also increase the cost by 40-50%. It means that we are taking away the connectivity from people... to give them something that really is adding no value," he said, reasoning that without data, the GPS function won't help.

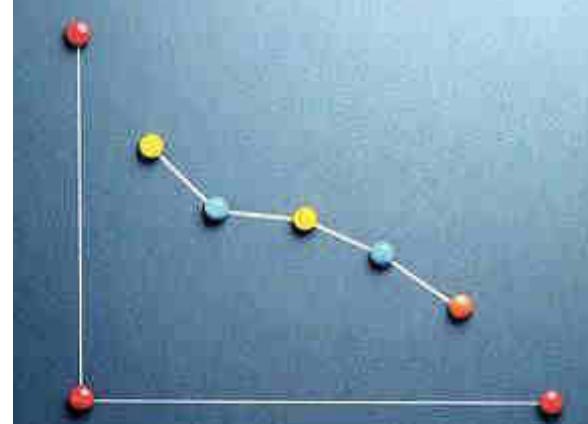
"We don't know the purpose.... I think GPS in feature

phones is a big mistake," the representative said, requesting the Telecom Secretary to "look into" the issue.

A representative from home-grown firm Intex also said the policy needed a fresh look as it would increase costs and would not be of any use as data connectivity is not there across the country. "The capacity of the chip and the memory of the phone is not adequate at that cost level...It is something that needs review."

In a letter to the government last year, the Indian Cellular Association had said feature phones retail for ₹500-700 for which bill of material (BOM) used was to the tune of \$5 (about ₹330-₹350).

Adding GPS in such phones would increase the production cost to ₹9-11 per unit, it had said. An industry representative said that the telecom ministry may meet handset makers over the issue as early as Friday.



**Double whammy:** Slowdown in services coincides with that in manufacturing activity in July. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

## Services PMI drops to lowest since Sept. 2013

Output falls under GST shadow

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Service sector activity in July slowed to its lowest level since September 2013, with the Manufacturing PMI registering a reading of 47.9, the lowest it has been since February 2009.

"PMI data for July highlight a reversal in fortunes across India, with the economy going into reverse mode after seeing a pick-up in growth momentum during June," Pollyanna De Lima, Principal Economist at IHS Markit, and author of the report said. "The downturn in services follows similar weakness in manufacturing, to make a double-whammy of disappointing news at the start of the second quarter of the 2017-2018 financial year."

Ms. De Lima, however, highlighted the fact that while the slowdown was attributed to the implementation of the GST, confidence for the future was at a 11-month high.

Services firms surveyed said that the introduction of the GST had caused a contraction in new work, leading to lower activity. This drop in new business inflows resulted in a fall in output, the first such case since January, and the most pronounced in almost four years, the report added.

## Infosys not to reveal probe report

Statement follows founder N.R. Narayana Murthy's demand for full disclosure

STAFF REPORTER  
BENGALURU

Infosys on Thursday said it was not planning to disclose details of the report of the probe conducted by an external agency relating to whistleblower complaints.

"The company does not plan to make the report public," Infosys said replying to an email from *The Hindu* asking whether Infosys would release the report as demanded by Infosys co-founder N.R. Narayana Murthy.

It is reliably learnt that Mr. Murthy had written to the company's board seeking disclosure of details of the probe related to irregularities feared in Infosys's acquisition of Panaya and Skava.

### To buy Brilliant Basics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Infosys on Thursday said it would acquire Brilliant Basics, a London-based product design and customer experience company, for an undisclosed amount.

The acquisition is expected to close in the July-September 2018

quarter, subject to customary closing conditions, Infosys said. "Adding Brilliant Basics' design and CX capabilities has already proven to be invaluable, helping Infosys close large deals with a deep blend of skills," Infosys President and Deputy COO Ravi Kumar S. said.

In June, Infosys had said that an independent probe, by law firm Gibson Dunn and investigation firm Control Risks, had found no impropriety. Mr. Murthy's fresh salvo came after the board, at the company's annual general meeting, briefed shareholders on the issue.

The probe was conducted based on two anonymous whistleblower complaints (forwarded to the company by the SEBI), alleging wrongdoing by the company during the acquisition of Panaya and Skava Systems in 2015.

Previously, Mr. Murthy had raised the issue of corporate governance and had questioned the salaries paid to CEO Vishal Sikka and COO Pravin Rao.

"After a detailed and extensive investigation conducted by Gibson Dunn and Control Risks, they did not find any evidence whatsoever of wrongdoing by the management to support the allegations of the anonymous complainant," said Infosys.

## Indian Oil Q1 net profit slides 45%

REUTERS  
BENGALURU

Indian Oil Corp Ltd. said net profit fell 45% in its fiscal first quarter of 2017, beating analysts' estimates, as higher inventory losses and lower refining margins weighed on profitability.

Net profit was ₹4,459 crore in the quarter ended on June 30, compared with ₹8,269 crore a year earlier, the country's top refiner said in a filing.

Analysts, on average, had expected a net profit of ₹3,063 crore for the first quarter, Thomson Reuters data showed. The quarterly average gross refining margins, or profit earned on each barrel of crude processed, eased to ₹4.32 per barrel, compared with ₹9.98 per barrel in the same period last year.

## 'NPAs: Banks need more provisioning'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

Banks may need to do an incremental provisioning of 20% for 50 large stressed accounts to absorb any losses, says a report. These 50 large accounts are from the sectors such as construction, power and metals, among others and constitute about half of the gross non-performing assets of the banking sector.

"Banks may require an incremental provisioning of 20% against cumulative debt of 50 large stressed assets worth over ₹4.3 lakh crore," says a joint report by Assocham and rating agency Crisil.

While banks may have already provisioned for a part of these exposures, they need to adequately capitalise to absorb such losses which could fuel credit growth and support the next leg of economic growth, it said.

## Centre pings rating agencies on economy in upgrade push

Asks them to consider India's long-term credit strength

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

To convey India's pitch for a sovereign rating upgrade better, the finance ministry has begun interacting with global rating agencies through teleconferences and e-mails on a more regular basis to give clarifications and updates regarding the economy.

"... FDI has a relatively small weight in the total criteria. India fares well in the case of FDI but because the debt and deficit indicators are not favourable, ratings are not improved," DIPP said in an action taken report tabled in Parliament.

**Improving rating**  
The government also informed the committee that it had taken several steps to improve India's sovereign credit rating, including introduction of a structural interaction process with rating agencies, to provide them the information they need.

The Secretary in the Department of Economic Affairs chairs an annual review meeting on India's sovereign credit rating with agencies, which

is followed by interactive meetings with officials.

"During these meetings, government presents its perspective to rating agencies about the strengths of the Indian economy and recent initiatives taken... DEA encourages agencies to also consider the long-term credit strengths of the economy in a holistic manner,

## IN BRIEF

**Cochin Shipyard IPO subscribed 72.49 times**

NEW DELHI

The initial share sale of Cochin Shipyard saw robust demand from investors with the offer getting subscribed by 72.49 times on the last day of the bidding on Thursday. The Initial Public Offering received bids for over 246 crore shares against total issue size of 3.39 crore shares, data with NSE showed. It aims to raise up to ₹1,468 crore through the share sale offer. PTI

**GST portal now has 71 lakh accounts**

NEW DELHI

More than 71 lakh taxpayers of VAT, Service Tax and Central Excise have so far activated their accounts on the Goods and Services Tax portal, but only 44 lakh have completed the entire enrolment process, the GST Network said on Thursday. The GSTN warned that failure to complete the enrolment process will lead to the cancellation of the provisional IDs after three months.

# Cognizant net rises 86.5%; BFSI, healthcare dominate

IT major revises lower end of guidance for annual numbers upwards

K.T. JAGANNATHAN  
CHENNAI

U.S.-headquartered information technology (IT) major Cognizant Technology Solutions, which has a huge presence in India, has reported an 86.5% rise in net income for the quarter ended June, 2017.

The second quarter report card is better than what the market had widely expected.

The rise in net income is primarily due to a significantly lower outgo on taxation during the quarter under review vis-a-vis the year-earlier period. Cognizant has made an income tax provision of \$165 million for the quarter ended June 2017, compared with \$343 million in the same quarter last year.

The net income of the company rose to \$470 million from \$252 million a year earlier.

**'One-off expense'**

Cognizant said it had to incur an incremental income tax expense of \$190 million in the second quarter of 2016 as its principal operating subsidiary in India repur-



**Client connect:** The company has added seven new strategic customers in the June quarter, bringing the total to 343.

chased shares valued at \$2.8 billion from its shareholders, which are non-Indian Cognizant entities, in May last year. This \$2.8 billion was a one-off cash remittance from the Indian subsidiary to non-Indian Cognizant entities, a company release said.

Revenue for the June quarter rose 8.9% to \$3.67 billion from \$3.37 billion in the same quarter of the previous year. The second-quarter revenue of the company rose 3.5% sequentially.

Financial services and

healthcare verticals were dominant revenue earners for the company. Together, they contributed close to 67% of the total revenue in the quarter.

Revenue from the financial services sector rose 4.1%, and that from healthcare services, 9.5% in the second quarter.

Asserting that the second quarter report card reflected the progress the company had made in enabling clients to realise value in digitising their entire enterprise, Fran-

cisco D'Souza, CEO, said Cognizant was determined to accelerate its shift to digital services and solutions.

The company gave a revenue projection in the range of \$3.73 billion to \$3.78 billion for the third quarter. The company has revised the lower end of its annual guidance upwards. The guidance range changed from \$14.56 billion-\$14.84 billion, which it announced in the earlier quarter, to \$14.7 billion-\$14.84 billion (9-10% revenue growth).

Reiterating the execution capabilities of Cognizant, its chief financial officer Karen McLoughlin asserted that the strong balance sheet and cash flows would continue to support the capital return and investment programmes of the company.

The company said it had added seven new strategic customers in the June quarter, bringing the total to 343. The headcount fell by 4,400 during the quarter to 2,56,800. Annualised attrition was 23.6% resulting from performance evaluation and a voluntary separation programme.

# India's first private missile production facility unveiled

Hyderabad unit to supply anti-tank guided missiles to Army

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

India's first private sector missile sub-systems manufacturing facility, a joint venture between the \$2.5 billion Kalyani Group and Israel's Rafael Advanced Defence Systems Ltd., was inaugurated near Hyderabad on Thursday.

To begin with, the Kalyani Rafael Advanced Systems (KRAS) plant will make anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) Spike and the production is expected to begin in a few weeks, Kalyani Group chairman Baba N. Kalyani said.

Besides supplying to the Indian Army, the plan is to export to South East Asian countries, he added.

**Advanced equipment**

Formed in line with the 'Make in India' initiative of the Centre and the policy to encourage private sector participation in defence production, the 51:49 joint venture will develop a wide range of advanced capabilities.

These include command control and guidance, electro-optics, remote weapon systems, precision guided



**Long sight:** The plant will manufacture Spike-MR, an electro-optical missile system for ranges up to 2.5 km. • G. RAMAKRISHNA

munitions and system engineering for system integration. The plant would employ more than 300 engineers and provide indirect employment to 1,000 people.

Addressing the media ahead of the inauguration, Mr. Kalyani said ₹60-70 crore had been invested in the plant.

Going forward, once orders start flowing, "we will invest more... also looking to [make] other products, he said, adding that Spice glider bombs used by the Air Force would be the next.

On the plant's ATGM capacity, Rafael Advanced Defence Systems president and CEO Maj. Gen. (retired) Yoav Har-Even said: "We are speaking in thousands of the air-to-surface missiles."

The localisation content is 90% and most of the vendors are in and around Hyderabad, Mr. Kalyani said.

Telangana Industries and IT Minister K.T. Rama Rao, said that more than 30,000 researchers and scientists and 1,000 MSME units in and around the city were working in the areas of defence systems.

## Ramco Cements to raise capacity of grinding units

Expansion cost to be met through internal accruals: CEO

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

The Ramco Cements Ltd., has embarked on a ₹1,095 crore programme to expand the capacity of grinding units, said a top official.

"We are doubling the capacity of grinding units in Vizag and Kolaghat (West Bengal) from 0.9 million tonnes to 2 million tonnes per annum each," said A.V. Dharmakrishnan, CEO, Ramco Cements. "Besides, we are setting up a new unit in Odisha of 0.9 million tonnes."

The proposed expansion will be completed in 18 months and the cost will be met through internal accruals and borrowings.

After the proposed expansion, the capacity is set to increase to 7.1 million tonnes.



Odisha and West Bengal," he said. Severe drought and shortage of river sand in Tamil Nadu, coupled with an increase in fuel prices impacted the financials in the first quarter ended June 30.

The company reported a flat growth in its standalone net profit at ₹156 crore. Total income increased to ₹1,194

crore from ₹1,124 crore in the year-earlier period.

The company reported a 4% increase in overall sales at 21.50 lakh tonnes against 20.66 lakh tonnes.

"But, we had degrown by 12% in Tamil Nadu; it affected the overall performance of the company. The impact due to demonetisation and the Goods and Services Tax were minimal," Mr. Dharmakrishnan said.

On the buyback of shares, he said the company had purchased close to 25 lakh shares in the open market at ₹167 crore.

**Ramco Industries**

Ramco Industries' standalone net profit for the first quarter ended June 30, dipped 48% to ₹15.73 crore from ₹30.25 crore due to an increase in the cost of raw materials.

Total income rose to ₹272 crore from ₹260 crore.

## Tata Global rejigs Russian business unit

Move after review with co-shareholder

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

Tata Global Beverages has decided to restructure its loss-making Russian business unit, OOO Tea Trade LLC, by granting a 5-year operational responsibility to two Russian firms, Skodnya Grand and Coffee Pack.

The decision was taken after a "strategic review" with its co-shareholder European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, according to a BSE filing.

According to the agreement signed with the Russian companies, Tata Global will "transfer the ownership and operational responsibility of the Russian business

## Titan's Q1 net profit rises 96.84%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

Titan Company's net profit for the first quarter rose 96.84% to ₹237.97 crore, driven by its jewellery business. The jewellery division posted a 55% increase in income for the quarter compared to the same period a year ago, according to a filing.

The jewellery business contributed ₹3,352 crore to its overall revenue of ₹4,049.5 crore..

Festive sales, a gold exchange programme and "advancement of sales in June 2017 in anticipation of higher GST rates" led to higher revenue from jewellery, said Bhaskar Bhat, managing director.

## Colgate Q1 net profit rises 8%

GST helps firm to pass on price cut to consumers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Colgate-Palmolive (India) Ltd reported 8% growth in its first quarter net profits to ₹136.4 crore even as the net sales fell 3% to ₹1,109.9 crore largely due to de-stocking in trade channel ahead of Goods and Services Tax implementation.

Colgate's volume declined 5% during the quarter even as the company continues to maintain its leadership position in toothpaste and toothbrush categories, with

volume market shares at 54.3% and 45.0% respectively. Mr. Issam Bachaiani, managing director at Colgate-Palmolive (India) Ltd, said, "In the run up to the implementation of GST, we did expect many challenges including an impact on trade pipeline inventory.

Colgate has been long preparing for this and in anticipation took necessary steps to minimise business disruption. We are pleased to inform that the required

changeover in our systems and processes has been smoothly accomplished. Despite the transition challenges leading to softness in sales, we are pleased to report an 8% increase in profits, margin expansion of 50 bps and EBITDA by 150 bps."

"GST has enabled us to pass on the benefits to our consumers leading to a reduction in MRP by 8 to 9% for our key categories of toothpastes and toothbrushes," he said.

## TV PICKS

**Sri Lanka vs India:** 2nd Test: Sony Six, Sony Six HD, Sony TEN 3 & Sony TEN 3 HD, 10 a.m.  
**England vs South Africa:** 4th Test: SS Select 1 & Select 1 HD, 3.30 p.m.

## IN BRIEF



**Andre de Grasse to miss Worlds**

**LONDON** Canadian sprinter Andre de Grasse suffered a torn hamstring in training and will not compete at the IAAF World Championships in London, Athletics Canada has announced. The 22-year-old, who took silver in the 200m and bronze in the 100 at last year's Rio Olympics, was expected to challenge Usain Bolt for gold in the meet beginning on Friday. AFP

**Harikrishna finishes third, Yifan wins**

**BIEL** P. Harikrishna, who lost to Etienne Bacrot in the ninth and final round, finished third with 5.5 points at the 50th Biel Chess Festival came to a close on Wednesday. China's former women's world champion Hou Yifan won with 6.5 points, ahead of the Frenchman Bacrot.

## Australia pay war ends

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**

**MELBOURNE** Australia's bruising and protracted cricket pay dispute was finally resolved on Thursday with players and management agreeing on a new "in-principle" deal, ensuring upcoming series against Bangladesh, India and England can go ahead.

"Today's agreement is the result of sensible compromises by both parties," said Cricket Australia chief James Sutherland.

## Manish stars for India-A



**Manish Pandey** ■ FILE PHOTO

**AKHILESH KUMAR**

**AGENCIES**

**PRETORIA**

Captain Manish Pandey's unbeaten 93 (85b, 5x4, 2x6) trumped South Africa-A wicketkeeper Heinrich Klaasen's 108-ball 127 as India-A managed a one-wicket win in a tri-series match here on Thursday.

**The scores:** South Africa 266 in 48.2 overs (Heinrich Klaasen 127, Willem Mulder 66, Shradul Thakur four for 35, Siddarth Kaul three for 41) lost to India A 267 for nine in 49.4 overs (Sanju Samson 68, Manish Pandey 93 n.o. Krunal Pandey 25, Junior Dala three for 56, Tabraiz Shamsi three for 55).

## Anand starts with a draw

**SPORTS BUREAU**

**ST. LOUIS** Viswanathan Anand settled for a 30-move draw with Hikaru Nakamura in the opening round of the \$300,000 Sinquefield Cup chess tournament here on Wednesday.

Frenchman Maxime Vachier-Lagrave stunned World No. 2 Wesley So in 43 moves, while Levon Aronian and Sergey Karjakin posted impressive victories. The clash between Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana ended in a 43-move draw.

**The results:** First round: Viswanathan Anand drew with Hikaru Nakamura (USA); Levon Aronian (Arm) bt Ian Nepomniachtchi (Rus); Sergey Karjakin (Rus) bt Peter Svidler (Rus); Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra) bt Wesley So (USA); Fabiano Caruana (USA) drew with Magnus Carlsen (Nor).

# Pujara powers on, Rahane finds his ton-touch

Their unfinished fourth-wicket stand yields 211 runs as India finishes day one on 344 for three

## INDIA IN LANKA

**K.C. VIJAYA KUMAR**  
**COLOMBO**

There is a synergy between Cheteshwar Pujara and the Sinhalese Sports Club. He feels at ease in this venue, akin to his home ground in Rajkot.

The middle-order batsman also shares a few attributes with Ajinkya Rahane. Both are self-effacing, have a quiet hunger for runs and



**Going on and on:** Cheteshwar Pujara was rock-solid yet again as he tamed the Sri Lankan bowling en route to his 128 not out on the first day. ■ REUTERS

opening day of the second Test.

## Unsettling the spinners

Decisive in his foot-work and adept at unsettling the spinners, be it striding forward or rocking back, Pujara scrambled the trajectory of the slow bowlers. It was a method that Rahane too used to good effect.

Much before Pujara and Rahane bruised the host attack, an approach that was more feather-touch than the sledge-hammer, Kohli won the toss and opted to bat.

Confirming its expectation of a slow pitch, Sri Lanka stepped in with just one seamer Nuwan Pradeep who opened the bowling with left-arm spinner Rangana Herath.

Opener Shikhar Dhawan kept both bowlers interested, edging through the slips. After those nervous bouts, the southpaw dished out a cameo and watched fellow-opener K.L. Rahul survive an lbw appeal on 19, thanks to a successful review.

Back after a four-month break due to fitness issues,

Rahul (57) square-drove and flicked Herath and Pradeep respectively but his 56-run first-wicket partnership with Dhawan ended when the latter fell on the sweep to off-spinner Dilruwan Perera.

At 10.50 a.m., Pujara, appearing in his 50th Test, cast a sideways glance at the sun and entered. He endured an anxious moment as he edged Perera but the ball raced past Angelo Mathews at first slip.

Rahul then offered a rude welcome to Malinda Pushpakumara, lofting and pulling the debutant left-arm

spinner. Pushpakumara's maiden Test was also his 100th first-class game but he neither found respect nor respite. Rahul got to his sixth consecutive fifty in Tests, and India had an appetising lunch score of 101 for one.

In the afternoon, India suffered a testing phase but it was transitory like the dark clouds which wafted across the sky at 2.11 p.m. Rahul cut Herath, set off for a single and got run-out as a hesitant Pujara back-peddled.

Next-man Kohli threaded immaculate fours, then tried

## Scoreboard

SSC, Colombo, Second Test, Day 1			
	R	B	4s
<b>INDIA - 1ST INNINGS:</b>	35	37	5
Shikhar Dhawan lbw b Dilruwan	57	82	7
K.L. Rahul run out	128	225	10
Cheteshwar Pujara (batting)	13	29	2
Nuwan Pradeep (bowling)	103	158	12
Extras (b-4, nb-1, lb-3)			8
<b>Total (for three wks. in 90 overs)</b>	<b>344</b>		
<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-56 (Dhawan, 10.1 overs), 2-109 (Rahul, 30.4), 3-133 (Kohli, 38.5).			
<b>Sri Lanka bowling:</b> Pradeep 17.4-2-63-0, Herath 24.3-83-1, Karunaratne 3-0-13-0, Dilruwan 18.2-68-1, Pushpakumara 19.2-0-82-0, Dhananjaya 8-0-31-0.			
<b>Toss:</b> India			

## Rohit's flying visit

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

**COLOMBO**

Rohit Sharma will make a lightning visit to Mumbai for a regular medical examination.

According to a BCCI press release, "Rohit will undergo a scheduled med-

ical check-up, as a follow-up, after his recent surgery."

Rohit, who had surgery on his thigh last year, will fly to Mumbai on Thursday night and return to Colombo on Friday.

to cut Herath to a ball that offered no width and Mathews took a fine catch at slip.

## Tipping point

India was at its tipping point – 133 for three, but alarms were quelled as Pujara and Rahane built a fine path. They found their starters in fours off Perera, and Pujara eased past 4000 Test runs. Except once when on 41, he edged Perera past slip, Pujara's was a sedate presence.

His calmness found a mirror-image in Rahane.

The duo displayed its batting repertoire on either side of the pitch. Pujara pulled Pushpakumara for six, cut

Herath with precision and Rahane danced down and lofted Perera. At tea, India had made 238 for three in 58 overs and the last session augmented that total.

When Pujara got to his 13th Test hundred, he and Rahane punched the air as they ran between the wickets. Their shared joy was spontaneous and once the new ball was taken after 80 overs, Rahane reached his ninth Test hundred. Coming

in at 10.50 a.m., Pujara, appearing in his 50th Test, cast a sideways glance at the sun and entered. He endured an anxious moment as he edged Perera but the ball raced past Angelo Mathews at first slip.

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## I didn't want to get out at all: Rahul



Ajinkya Rahane. ■ AP

joyed the challenge. Each time I have come back, I have come back stronger. **Six fifties in a row:** I have never chased numbers. My job as an opening batsman is to give the team a good start and I have done that. Disappointing that I have not been able to convert the starts but that will keep me more hungry. Each time I bat, I will want to get more and more runs.

**The angst over his run out:** I wasn't upset with him (Cheteshwar Pujara). Run outs happen. It could have been him who got run out and it could have been my mistake. I wasn't disappointed about that. I was disappointed because I have been away from the game so long and I didn't want to get out at all.

**The pitch:** The pitch was on the slower side and I think it will take turns as the days go. The more the footmarks, the more turn and purchase R. Ashwin and (Ravindra) Jadeja can get.

middle, I was very happy. I am even more happy that I could start with a fifty and make some contribution to the team.

**Recovery and return:** More than playing for a long time, I have been in and out of the team because of injuries. It's never easy and it takes you a couple of games to get back into your groove as an opening batsman, understand where your off-stump is, to understand what pace you have to play at. There are doubts. But, yeah, I have en-

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## We were a fraction short: Pothas

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

**COLOMBO**

(Cheteshwar) Pujara scores on the leg-side. We were guilty of bowing to his strengths," Pothas told the media here on Thursday.

Elaborating further, Pothas said: "(Ajinkya) Rahane played well. We just released the pressure a little bit. That was the turning point. India got the momentum back. This is day

one and it's Test match cricket. It's about how you bounce back."

Asked about Nuwan Pradeep, who could not complete his 18th over, Pothas replied: "The physio said that Pradeep is having a bit of muscle tightness. He is in treatment now. We will get a proper assessment in the morning."

## Fewer Ranji games will mean fee cut

Four groups, six league matches each team from this season

**G. VISWANATH**

**MUMBAI**

Players will take an eight-day match-fee hit with 28 Ranji Trophy teams to be drawn into four groups from 2017-18. Until the 2016-17 season, nine teams were drawn into three groups (A, B and C) and in 2016-17, Chhattisgarh, promoted as a BCCI full member, was placed in Group C.

Under the present pay-

ment scale, each player taking part in a senior tournament of the BCCI, receives

₹10,000 as a single match-day fee, which means a ₹40,000 for the four-day league match and ₹50,000 for the five-day knock-out match.

The balance is paid after the BCCI's audited accounts are adopted at the Annual General Meeting in the last week of September.

## IN BRIEF



Giant panda gives birth at record 23 years old

BEIJING  
Haizi, a 23-year-old giant panda in Sichuan province's Wolong National Nature Reserve, has given birth to twins. She is now the world's oldest panda mom. Haizi, who is equivalent in age to an 80-year-old human, started showing interest in courtship this spring, resulting in a blind date with a male panda sutor four months back. AFP



S. Korean director Kim Ki-Duk accused of assault  
SEOUL  
South Korean prosecutors opened a criminal probe against filmmaker Kim Ki-Duk on Thursday over allegations that he hit an actress while shooting a movie. Kim's glittering career prizes include the top honours at the Venice and Berlin film festivals for *Pieta* and *Samaritan Girl*. AFP

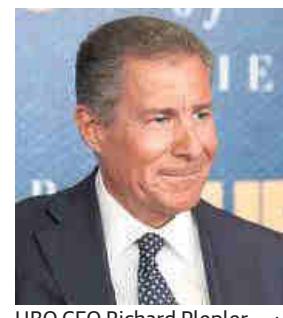


Sunglasses can now generate solar power  
BERLIN  
Scientists from the Karlsruher Institute of Technology in Germany have designed new 'smart' solar glasses incorporated with coloured, semi-transparent, flexible organic solar cells that can generate electric power enough to operate devices such as hearing aids or step counters. PTI

## HBO assesses damage from cyberattack

Email system as a whole not compromised, says CEO

JOHN KOBLEN  
EMILY STEEL



**H**BO continued to assess the extent of a cyberattack on its systems on Wednesday, working with law enforcement agencies and seeking to provide assurance to its employees.

In a memo to staff, Richard Plepler, the premium cable network's chief executive, said that the company did not believe its "email system as a whole has been compromised" but that a forensic review was being conducted.

Mr. Plepler wrote in the memo that the network was trying to hire an outside firm "to work with our employees to provide credit monitoring".

HBO acknowledged on Monday that it had been victimised by a cyberattack, after an anonymous hacker

boasted about leaking full episodes of upcoming shows like *Ballers* along with written material from next week's episode of *Game of Thrones*.

### Hacker's threat

The hacker or hackers claimed to have stolen an estimated 1.5 terabytes of data, according to Entertainment Weekly, which first reported the breach on Monday. The

hacker said more material would be "coming soon".

The attack is not expected to have any effect on Time Warner's deal with AT&T, according to two people familiar with the matter, who requested anonymity to discuss private company matters. Only a large material change in Time Warner's business would prevent the deal from going through, one of the people said.

Unlike Yahoo, which disclosed last year that hackers had stolen the credentials of hundreds of millions of users in two breaches that went undetected for years, HBO does not appear to have sensitive personal information on a similar scale.

Much remains unclear about how much information was obtained in the cyberattack, said a person familiar with the breach. NYT

## Gazans throng to ship restaurant

Lolo Rose, a wooden ship run aground on a beach, fuels their longing for the sea

REUTERS  
GAZA



**Life's little pleasures:** Palestinians enjoy themselves at 'Lolo Rose', a popular restaurant on a beach in Gaza City. ■ REUTERS

Hamas, the Islamist group that has controlled Gaza since 2007, will smuggle weapons into the territory.

### Artificial island

Israel's Minister of Intelligence and Transport has been pushing the idea of building an artificial island off Gaza's coast that would provide a port and other facilities, but that has so far failed to win the government's backing. So for now, the "Lolo Rose" is one place where Gazans can go to get a feel for the sea and imagine themselves on it.

The owners once used the vessel for fishing, but Israel's tight restrictions on access to the sea have made the industry unprofitable.

"We are under blockade, the idea is that you feel yourself inside the water," said Thabet Tourtari, the ship's owner. "We hope one day, we will be allowed to have tourist ships that will go from Gaza to the whole world."

Asia Minor and north Africa. That status continued into the 20th century and World War One.

### Decades of trouble

But recent decades have not been so good. After Israel seized Gaza in the 1967 Middle East war, the port was effectively put out of use.

In the mid-1990s, under the Oslo accords, plans were drawn up for a much larger

port for Gaza's now 2 million people, but they never came to fruition. Israel withdrew its forces and settlers from Gaza in 2005, but still controls entry and exit, access to the sea and the territory's airspace. Locals feel trapped and frustrated.

Despite Palestinian and international efforts, Israel will not allow a new port to be built, citing security.

The concern is that

"We can use this information to help train doctors and nurses to provide better care to trans patients and to also develop amicus briefs to support equal rights legislation," said Prof. Davis, who is also director of research for Vanderbilt's gender health clinic.

The Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Tennessee has one of the world's largest DNA databanks. It also has emerged as a leader in transgender healthcare with initiatives such as the Trans Buddy Program, which pairs every transgender patient with a volunteer to help guide them through their healthcare visits.

## Researchers explore the science of gender identity

Scientists look for the biological underpinnings of gender even as the battle for transgender rights plays out in the U.S. political arena

REUTERS  
NEW YORK

While U.S. President Donald Trump has thrust transgender people back into the conflict between conservative and liberal values in the United States, geneticists are quietly working on a major research effort to unlock the secrets of gender identity.

Now scientists in the consortium have embarked on what they call the largest-ever study of its kind, searching for a genetic component to explain why people assigned one gender at birth so persistently identify as the other, often from very early childhood.

Researchers have extracted DNA from the blood samples of 10,000 people, 3,000 of them transgender and the rest non-transgender, or cisgender. The project is awaiting grant

funding to begin the next phase: testing about 3 million markers, or variations, across the genome for all of the samples.

Knowing what variations transgender people have in common, and comparing those patterns to those of cisgender people in the study, may help investigators understand what role the genome plays in everyone's gender identity.

### 'Anciently related'

"If the trait is strongly genetic, then people who identify as trans will share more of their genome, not because they are related in nuclear families but because

they are more anciently related," said Lea Davis, leader of the study and an assistant professor of medicine at the Vanderbilt Genetics Institute.

The search for the biological underpinnings is taking on new relevance as the battle for transgender rights plays out in the U.S. political arena.

One of the first acts of the new Trump administration was to revoke Obama-era guidelines directing public schools to allow transgender students to use bathrooms of their choice. Last week, the president announced on Twitter he intends to ban transgender people from serving in the military.

Texas lawmakers are debating a bathroom bill that would require people to use the bathroom of the sex listed on their birth certificate.

North Carolina in March repealed a similar law after a national boycott cost the state hundreds of millions of dollars in lost business.

### Reasons to worry

Currently, the only way to determine whether people are transgender is for them to self-identify as such. While civil rights activists contend that should be sufficient, scientists have taken their search to the lab.

That quest has made some transgender people nervous.

If a "cause" is found it could posit a "cure", potentially opening the door to so-called reparative therapies similar to those that attempt to turn gay people straight, advocates say. Others raise concerns about the rights of those who may identify as trans but lack biological "proof".

Prof. Davis stressed that her study does not seek to produce a genetic test for being transgender, nor would it be able to. Instead, she said, she hopes the data will lead to better care for transgender people, who experience wide health disparities compared to the general population.

## Bjork to release new album

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARIS

The Icelandic singer Bjork has said that she will soon release a new album.

The avant-garde diva got rave reviews for her last album *Vulnicura*, which detailed the pain of her split from the renowned American artist Matthew Barney.

"I am excited to share with you that my new album is coming out very soon," she said in a handwritten note to fans posted on Twitter and Facebook on Wednesday.

**'Future facing album'**  
Bjork, 51, and Barney, 50 – best known for *The Creemaster Cycle* of films – who have a 14-year-old daughter, broke up in 2013, with the album appearing little over a year later.

Californian artist and film-maker Andrew Thomas Huang, who worked with Bjork on *Vulnicura*, has told reporters the new album is "future-facing in a hopeful way that I think is needed right now".

## Danish Prince refuses to be buried with wife

He has long voiced his frustration over not being made King

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
STOCKHOLM

Denmark's Prince Consort Henrik, the French-born husband of Queen Margrethe II, does not want to be buried with his wife when the time comes, breaking with tradition, the royal palace said on Thursday.

Long vocal about his frustration over being relegated to a supporting role, the 83-year-old prince said he was not on equal footing with his wife in life and therefore did not want to be so in death.

That decision has been accepted by the Queen, the palace's communications chief Lene Balleby told Danish daily BT.

Disappointed that his royal title of Prince Consort was never changed to King when his wife became queen in 1972, Prince Henrik has often spoken out about his discontent, which did little to endear him to his subjects. The couple will break with royal tradition by



**A chasm between them:** Queen Margrethe II and her husband, Prince Henrik, in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. ■ FILE PHOTO

not being buried together in the Roskilde Cathedral.

The Prince consort nonetheless intends to be buried in Denmark. He "loves Denmark and worked for Denmark for more than 50 years. The prince therefore wants to be buried in Denmark, but the details have not been settled yet," Ms. Balleby said.

Born Henri Marie Jean An-

dre Count de Laborde de Monpezat on June 11, 1934 in Talence, near Bordeaux, Prince Henrik met Margrethe, then the crown-princess, while he was stationed in London as a diplomat. Upon marrying her, he changed his name to Henrik, converted from Catholicism to Protestantism and renounced his French citizenship to become a Dane.

## Up in the air



**Breathtaking feat:** People walk on the 'Europabruenke', which is supposed to be the world's longest pedestrian suspension bridge with a length of 494 metres, in Randa, Switzerland. The bridge, unveiled last week, connects two villages. ■ AP

## Veteran actor Robert Hardy dies

He played Cornelius Fudge in the Harry Potter movies

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
LONDON

Robert Hardy, a veteran British stage and screen actor who played Minister for Magic Cornelius Fudge in the Harry Potter movies, has died. He was 91.

Born in 1925, Hardy began his career in Shakespearean roles on stage in Stratford-upon-Avon in the years after Second World War.

Between 1978 and 1990 he played eccentric veterinarian Siegfried Farnon in *All Creatures Great and Small*, a popular TV series based on James Herriot's books about rural life in the Yorkshire Dales.



**Irreparable loss:** Robert Hardy, who died at 91, also starred in the popular TV series *All Creatures Great and Small*. ■ AP

## 'Arthritis drug can treat blood cancer'

Tests carried out by British scientists

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LONDON

Blood cancer sufferers could be treated with a simple arthritis drug, according to scientists at a leading British university.

Martin Zeidler, from the University of Sheffield's Department of Biomedical Science, and his colleagues have found that methotrexate (MTX) – a drug on the WHO list of essential medicines and commonly used to treat arthritis – works by directly inhibiting the molecular pathway responsible for causing the disease.

Initial tests were carried out on fruit fly cells to

screen for small molecules that modulate JAK/STAT signalling – a pathway whose misregulation is central to the development in humans of Myeloproliferative neoplasms (MPNs), the collective term for progressive blood cancers like Polycythemia Vera (PV).

**Ineffective treatment**  
Current treatments do not slow the disease progression and provide little relief from symptoms, the University said in a release on Thursday.

The team now hope to go on to a full clinical trial early next year.