

Its innumerable street food haunts are mainstays of student life in Kolkata. But for Iti Mishra, there are a few that have a special place in her mind and memory. When asked – and often before being asked – any born-and-bred Calcuttan can rattle off the names of a dozen lanes, bylanes, shops and shacks, each with a reputation for perfection at some tasty treat or the other., Like any other long-term inhabitant, Iti Mishra is also an authority on the flavours found in the nooks and crannies of Kolkata. But the home chef's expertise on the subject must be a slight cut above the rest, for she was roped in by Monkey Bar (a chain of resto bars in Bengaluru, Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata) to help plan their Durga Pujo menu, inspired by the City of Joy.,

, Says Iti, "There are scores of delicious spots in the city. But when I had to narrow it down to must-haves, I finally settled on 10. Anyone who visits Kolkata and wants to experience its street food, cannot afford to miss any of these.", 'These' include, among others, fish rolls at Beadon Street, shoitaner dim (which literally translates to devil's eggs) at Girish Park, ghughni at Vivekananda Park, chicken rezalla at Chitpur Road, mughlai porota at Esplanade, pork momos at Elgin Road and chicken kabiraji at Lake Market. Looks too big for a 'must-have' list? It's a foodie city!, Among the top on the list, of course, is College Street. "During our University days, we used to go across and have hing kochuris and alur torkari. This is so connected to my student life: we always had little money, and it was a filling dish in a small budget. It was also a nice sharing experience: we would just buy two or three and pass it around. Everybody would dig in.",

, Vardaan Market is a newer entrant in the street food arena; Iti doesn't remember it being around back when she was a child. Her pick from that particular haven is the moong daal pakodi chat, a nod to the area's cosmopolitan population. "It's new, but very popular. The market came up recently, and a lot of people used to eat by the streets while shopping. It's popular for its North Indian and Marwari dishes.", The new menu will be available at all Monkey Bar outlets during the festive season., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kolkata/kolkatas-must-have-street-foods-and-where-to-find-them/article25192478.ece>

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'Sale of audio systems, TVs on the rise'
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Cyclonic storm Titli rages on in Odisha

| Photo Credit: AP , Although no casualty from Odisha has been reported due to 'very severe cyclone Titli' till 2 p.m. on Thursday, news about damages caused by the cyclone is trickling in from south Odisha districts like Ganjam, Gajapati and Rayagada., Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik reviewed the situation and administrative measures to face aftermath of Titli, at State secretariat in Bhubaneswar on Thursday. This meeting was attended by State chief secretary, development commissioner, Special Relief Commissioner (SRC), heads of various departments and director of the meteorology department., The CM reiterated that

no one had died in Odisha due to this cyclonic storm. He expressed his satisfaction of 'zero casualty' during this cyclonic storm that had its landfall near Palasa in Andhra Pradesh between 4.30 a.m. and 5.30 a.m. on Thursday., Around three lakh people from low lying cyclone vulnerable areas of coastal districts have been sheltered at 1112 relief camps. Around two lakh of them were of Ganjam district. They were provided relief materials and other basic amenities., This cyclonic storm will pass over Odisha to reach Gangetic West Bengal. Mr Patnaik said that administrative officials must keep close watch on its impact. He ordered for provision of adequate relief materials to the affected and needy., The CM directed officials concerned to take up immediate measures for resumption of electricity, drinking water supply and connectivity of road in areas affected by the cyclone. Collectors were ordered to make an assessment and file a report on damages to crops and houses as early as possible., Some districts of Odisha have experienced rainfall over 100mm. Except for western districts all other parts of Odisha are expected to have rains due to the cyclonic storm., Thirteen NDRF teams were deployed in ten districts while ODRAF teams were deployed in nine districts. Fire services teams were in high alert throughout the State., Meanwhile, reports of damages have started to come up from Gajapati and Rayagada districts of south Odisha. Road and telecommunication has been disrupted in several parts of Gajapati district., Because of damages caused by the cyclone near Palasa, East Coast Railway has not yet resumed train services between Khurda Road in Odisha and Vizainagaram in Andhra Pradesh, which had been stalled from 10PM on Wednesday., 'Titli' is moving north westward over coastal Odisha causing heavy to very heavy rainfall in parts different parts of the State. During its north westward movement it will weaken gradually and re-curve north eastward towards Gangetic West Bengal., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Vice-President inaugurated the World Peace Monument, the largest dome in the world ,
The 9,600 sq ft flag stands on a 319.5 ft flag pole at Gandhi Mandap, a memorial for Mahatma Gandhi atop the Sarania Hill , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][
Former Pakistan president and former army chief Pervez Musharraf

| Photo Credit: REUTERS , "There are good doctors in Pakistan", Supreme Court Chief Justice Saqib Nisar told Pervez Musharraf on Thursday as he directed the Dubai-based former dictator to appear before the apex court to record his statement in the treason case against him., General (retd) Musharraf, 75, who has been living in Dubai since 2016, is facing the treason case for suspending the Constitution in 2007. The former army chief left for Dubai in March 2016 for medical treatment and has not returned since, citing security and health reasons., The chief justice's cryptic remarks came as he headed a bench hearing the case related to National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO), passed by Mr. Musharraf in 2007., The NRO granted amnesty to politicians and other individuals by quashing various corruption and criminal cases against them so they could return to the country and engage in the democratic process., During the hearing, Mr. Musharraf's lawyer Akhtar Shah submitted a reply regarding the former president's return to the country and said, "I request the bench to keep my client's illness confidential." , Justice Nisar, however, remarked, "There are people present in the country who are suffering with this disease." , Mr. Musharraf's lawyer then urged, "If it is necessary for Musharraf to return then he should be allowed to visit a doctor and his name should not be placed on the Exit Control List (ECL)." , To this, the chief justice assured, "Let Musharraf return to Pakistan, no one will arrest him but I cannot say anything regarding the removal of his name from ECL." , A person placed in the ECL cannot leave the country., "He should record his statement under Section 342 of the criminal procedure code in the treason case," Justice Nisar said while adding that "Dubai

is not the best place for treatment and there are good doctors in Pakistan"., Mr. Musharraf's lawyer then told the court that the former president left the country after permission from the government. The chief justice, however, said, "We are saying it again, we did not grant permission to Musharraf." , "We cannot put anyone's life at risk. Musharraf should come record his statement and whenever he wants to leave for treatment he can." , Naming Mr. Musharraf, former president Asif Ali Zardari and former attorney general Justice (retd) Malik Qayyum as respondents, petitioner Feroz Shah Gilani had requested the court in April to order recovery of "huge amounts of public money" misappropriated and wasted by them through unlawful means. , He contended that Mr. Musharraf subverted the Constitution by declaring emergency followed by the promulgation of the NRO, through which criminal and corruption cases against politicians, including Mr. Zardari, were "arbitrarily withdrawn"., A conviction for high treason carries the death penalty or life imprisonment., Mr. Musharraf, who ruled Pakistan from 1999 to 2008, has been declared a fugitive in the Benazir Bhutto assassination case and the Red Mosque cleric killing case. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Twelve Thai boys and their football coach, who were dramatically rescued from a flooded cave in July, enjoyed a high-profile kickabout on Sunday, ,
From missiles, they do not make ploughshares. They make knives jambiyya (jam-BEE-yah), the ornamental daggers Yemeni men wear for prestige and as a show of courage.

, Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][The Editors Guild of India on Thursday expressed concern over the Income Tax department's searches at media baron Raghav Bahl's residence and office, saying it believed that "motivated" IT raids would seriously undermine media freedom and the government should desist from such attempts., A team of I-T sleuths raided the premises of the founder of The Quint website in Noida early morning, looking for documents and other evidence related to a case of "bogus long-term capital gains (LTCG) received by various beneficiaries"., Mr. Bahl had shared his "great concern" with the Editors Guild of India after dozens of IT officials descended on his residence and The Quint's office for a "survey". , The guild, in a statement, expressed concern over the search and survey conducted by the I-T department., Mr. Bahl is also a member of the Executive Committee of the guild and a founder of the Network18 media group., The guild said it was perturbed over Mr. Bahl's statement that he had to strongly advise the tax officials that they should not try and pick up or see any other mail or document which is likely to contain very serious and sensitive journalistic material., "If they do that, then we shall seek extremely strong recourse," Mr. Bahl has stated., "While the tax administration is within its rights to make inquiries in compliance with the relevant laws, it should not exercise those powers in a way that could be seen as an intimidation of the government's critics," the guild said., "The guild believes that motivated income-tax searches and surveys will seriously undermine media freedom and the government should desist from such attempts," it added. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/i-t-raids-on-raghav-bahls-premises-motivated-searches-will-undermine-media-freedom-says-editors-guild/article25192181.ece>

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Relatives of those arrested may target the girls again, say residents of Bihar village

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Cordon has been strengthened, no fresh firing, says police official

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M Nandakumar

| Photo Credit:

special arrangement , , Language flowed like manna from his lips, for he was the master versifier. He knew the forests and the hills and their ineffable utterances, even as he knew the art of love and the frolic of friendship. Seasons were moods to him, and love, the cosmic energy that made kinesis possible in this ephemeral world. The stylised perfection of his verses, the sheer beauty of his art, the eddying whirlpools of his passion, have all transported generations of readers into sublime heights of poetic rapture. This was Kalidasa, the greatest of Sanskrit poets and probably one among the most renowned of legends in world poetry. Believed to have lived around the fourth or fifth century CE, however there are hardly any historical evidences connected to him other than his literary masterpieces themselves. It is the brief but mystifying and incandescent moments of Kalidasa's life that M Nandakumar brings alive through his fictional tribute titled Kalidasante Maranam. , Like in the Greek and Roman epics, it is the shades or spirits that speak, bringing alive memories from an ancient past. From his resting place in the netherworld, Kalidasa's gentle shadow flits into the concrete realms of a wondrous world, unleashing poignant narratives of a life richly lived and poetically embellished. From the fate of dwelling in shadow after death, the poet's spirit comes to narrate the tale of the final enigma of his death, akin to the challenges laid out in life to him by the king, of samasya purti or completing half-finished metrical compositions to perfection. , Nandakumar's historical evidence for the life and love of the master craftsman are Kalidasa's poetic gems themselves, and the author borrows from his ancient literary predecessor's genius to complete a hitherto un-narrated tale of evocative beauty., The reader is spellbound, as on the pages are unfurled vignettes of Epicurean joy and aesthetic investments, love and ennui, poetic sublime and worldly mundanity, and above all a deeply philosophical rumination on the nature of life itself. ,

The cover of M Nandakumar's Kalidasante Maranam

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special arrangement

, Nandakumar's forte is that the characters are fleshed out in minute detail, each a colossal presence to the poignant absence of Kalidasa himself. The politics and poetics of the absent presence, a presence that would come to haunt all subsequent poetry in the Indian subcontinent and come to mould their aesthetic and philosophic terrains, is what keeps the reader glued to the page. , Here is a tale that is as much an elegy to Kalidasa as it is an ode to poetry and death. The primal impulse to verse as much as to the beauty of life is what keeps Kalidasa alive across centuries. And Nandakumar captures that perennial charm in his book. There is the freshness of Kalidasa's inspiration, his profound understanding of human emotions, his delightful imagery, the subliminal beauty of his language, but most of all his capacity to be one with both the physical and the transcendental realms of nature. Using Kalidasa's own purple patches, the molten beauty of his verses, the sublime excesses of his imagination and imagery, Nandakumar crafts a tale of the master teller., Here is a book that while attempting to measure the sublime heights of Kalidasa's poetic genius, occasionally flounders and falls into bathos. But even such attempts, however incomplete or flawed, is novel in its literary enterprise. It opens up illuminative glimpses into the life of a great poet who offered a beautiful

calendar of life to the aesthete, a paean, to love and youth, and to everything beautiful and buoyant in nature. It offers a vignette of a poet's life that was luxuriant in its verse, abundant in its amorous play, flaunting its enchanted worlds, and opening up magic casements of fun and frolic in nature's bounty. And yet there is jealousy and bitterness, betrayal and melancholy in this world too, haunted as it is by gore and death., The beauty of this book is that it does not destroy the mystifying enigma of Kalidasa's death but opens it up to multiple possibilities and interpretations. In a characteristically postmodern turn to the narrative, the teller and the tale fuse to turn the tables upon readers who are looking for closures. The death of Kalidasa only signifies the birth of more and more new readers, thus yielding way to the possibility of multiple interpretations and influences. For someone who has been the touchstone of a nation's romantic sensibility for nearly two thousand years, no memorial can be memorial enough. Nandakumar attempts to borrow the beauty of Kalidasa's mellifluous verse, the felicity of his expressions, in the process plumbing the psychological depths of his unique character. In this book the image of a poet comes floating to us across millennial time, reminding us that between him and us empires have fallen, and destinies erased to dust, but his legacy lives on in each and every simile we use, in the chiselled beauty that our languages encompass, in the poetry that we all aspire to. Therefore, this book about the death of Kalidasa is more about his immortality, how his ancient verses continue to describe the ephemeral beauty of our fleeting lives and come to haunt the enigmas of our present. In his death is our poetry., (A fortnightly column on the best of fiction in Malayalam literature. The writer is Professor, Institute of English, University of Kerala.), Kalidasante Maranam, M Nandakumar, DC Books, ₹130, Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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What binds the two parts of J&K; despite limited cultural ties
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The Soyuz MS-10 spacecraft carrying the crew of astronaut Nick Hague of the U.S. and cosmonaut Alexey Ovchinin of Russia blasts off to the International Space Station (ISS) from the launchpad at the Baikonur Cosmodrome, Kazakhstan on Thursday, October 11, 2018.

| Photo Credit:
Reuters

, U.S. astronaut Nick Hague and Russian cosmonaut Alexei Ovchinin have left their Soyuz capsule and are both in good condition, NASA television reported on Thursday., Soyuz made an emergency landing near the city of Zhezkazgan in central Kazakhstan after its booster rockets failed in mid-air en route to the International Space Station. Rescuers reached the site of the emergency landing, Interfax and TASS news agencies reported on Thursday, citing military officials., Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov said on Thursday he hoped the United States would be understanding about the malfunction., He was quoted as saying by Interfax news agency that manned space flights would be suspended until an investigation into the causes of the malfunction is completed., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Twelve Thai boys and their football coach, who were dramatically rescued from a flooded cave in July, enjoyed a high-profile kickabout on Sunday, ,

From missiles, they do not make ploughshares. They make knives jambiyya (jam-BEE-yah), the ornamental daggers Yemeni men wear for prestige and as a show of courage.

, Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][“About 30% of the total agricultural produce in our country is wasted. Processing it can minimise this to an extent,” says S Karthikeyan, Chief Executive of Eka Foods. He has recently launched a ready-to-cook range of pulses called Kwik Pack in Coimbatore. The range includes kabuli and kala channa, rajma, peanuts and horse gram., “I worked as an electrical engineer and manufactured computer chips in the US for 15 years before coming back to India. My family has an agricultural background and I always wanted to do something related to agriculture and food. That is why I set up this company to combine my interest in production with agriculture.” He started production in June in a 2000 sq ft unit at Nethaji Nagar, Nanjundapuram Road.,

, Karthikeyan sources his raw material in bulk from Salem and Coimbatore once a month. “I follow the standard canning procedure that is more than 200 years old.” The pulses are first cleaned manually to remove stones. It is then washed thoroughly and soaked in water for 12 hours before being washed again thrice. “The pulses are then boiled and stored in brine in a multi-layer barrier pack. These containers are then fed into the steriliser at a specific temperature and pressure for a fixed time to kill the bacteria. This process increases its shelf life to one year.” But the content has to be consumed within two days if opened and not refrigerated. The container is also re-usable., “The sodium content in the brine is very little. If you want to remove the salt, all you have to do is rinse the pulses in cold water before cooking it. There is no nutrition loss in this process. Rajma is rich in folic acid and calcium, horse gram has high protein with a low glycemic index, peanut is rich in protein, folic acid and iron. Kabuli and kala channa are both high in fibre and proteins. As the pulses are already soaked and boiled, they are ready to cook.” He has trained three women to help with the manufacturing. ,

, “The production is according to order. We have a capacity of 500 packs a day.” He sends his samples to the Central Food Technological Research Institute, Mysuru, regularly for quality checks. His future plans? “To tie up with farmers and source my pulses directly from them and to launch our website soon.”, Info you can use, The price range is from ₹70 to ₹85, Each container weighs 450 gm and contains 250 gm of pulses, Available in Palamudir Nilayam, Thudiyalur, Arts College Road and Trichy Road; Nilgiris, R.S Puram; and Sri Chennis Super Market, Saravanampatti, Available online at www.facebook.com/kwikpack/ or in amazon.in, Call 8300412011 for more details, Door delivery available, Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address., Printable version | Oct 11, 2018 5:16:22 PM | <https://www.thehindu.com/life-and-style/food/forget-about-cleaning-and-cooking-the-dals-eka-foods-offers-ready-to-eat-varieties-of-five-pulses/article25191693.ece>

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Whoever thought mango, lassi, palm sugar and dark chocolate would bring in medals, but they did for Arun Viswanathan at the International Chocolate Awards , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) police arrested the

Principal of Government Pre-University College, Anavatti village, Sorab taluk on Thursday for allegedly receiving bribe from a student to rectify errors in her marks card., The ACB police named the arrested as G. Manohar. In the marks card issued for Anitha, a student who has completed her second year Pre-University Course, the name of her father was wrongly printed. The student had applied for rectification., In the complaint lodged with ACB police, Anitha had alleged that Manohar had demanded ₹ 800 as bribe for completion of the formalities related to rectifying the error and issuance of new marks card. Acting on the complaint, the ACB police laid a trap., Manohar was caught red-handed while receiving the bribe from the complainant at his chamber in the college. A case under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, has been booked against him., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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The 10th century work depicts the battle between cousins Bhima and Duryodhana
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Allen Dipu at Kuppi outlet

| Photo Credit:

Harikumar J S

, , "Don't waste your time here. Go home and enjoy," says Allen Dipu with a smile, as he hands me a glass bottle of ice-cold Oreo vanilla milkshake from inside a tiny but tidy counter. He then quickly whips out a cherry-red straw that doesn't feel so shiny and smooth. "You'll take home plastic only if I offer you," he says. It turns out the spiral-designed straws are made of paper., Allen started the milkshakes bar Kuppi, located along the Pottakuzhy-Gowreesapattom road, with the purpose of "eschewing single-use plastic." Kuppi, which whips up takeaway milkshakes in many flavours, offers the cold beverage in customised, theme-oriented 300 ml and 500 ml bottles that you can just take home., Formerly working in the jewellery industry, Allen says he had long wanted to start "an innovative business" of his own. But he struck upon on the idea of a "plastic-free venture" after seeing a host of messages and videos in social media during the devastating floods that highlighted the man-made plastic menace. "I realised that all the plastic we used and callously threw away simply came back. That convinced me to take up an initiative that would be a statement against the use of plastic," says the 35-year-old.,

Kuppi's Oreo vanilla milkshake

| Photo Credit:

Harikumar J S

, But he found it a challenge to hit upon a striking and marketable name. "My wife, Deepthi, and I brainstormed on it for several days and we came up with alternatives like 'Once Upon a Bottle', 'Take Me Home' etc... but I wasn't really convinced. Those were sleepless times and one day, in the middle of the night, while jotting down possible names, the word 'Kuppi' struck a chord in me," explains Allen. , Kuppi's handy, airtight bottles, that take after the popular milk bottles of the Eighties, are sourced from a manufacturer in Uttar

Pradesh. On bulk order, they are transported in trucks to a stockist at Coimbatore, before being ferried to a printing unit for brand and theme designing. "Since the focus is on the use of glass over plastic, I wanted the bottles in itself to be collectibles. Hence we introduced silhouette-illustrated seasonal themes," Allen says. ,

Kuppi's cricket edition bottles
| Photo Credit:
Harikumar J S

, The current and the third theme is a 2018 Cricket Edition, featuring a close-up of Virat Kohli on one side and the catchline 'Taste the Kuppi Run by Run' on the other. While the launch theme carried the slogan 'You're holding the most wanted - Change - Avoid plastic and save yourself', the second one read 'I am Nature's best friend until you break me'. Allen says he's now working on bringing out a Deepavali-based design for the festival of lights. He says with a chuckle that once he places an order, he finds himself on pins and needles until the bottles reach him safely.,

Paper straws

| Photo Credit:
Harikumar J S

, Allen keeps two varieties of biodegradable paper straws - of 8 mm and 10 mm diameters each - at Kuppi. While the bigger one is sourced from an Ernakulam-based supplier, Allen purchases the other from a stationery store near Attakulangara. Allen says ice cubes, water or additional sugar are a no-no, instead preferring to serve purely ice cream-based milkshakes shipped up from toned, full-cream milk with a bit of crushers and syrups for flavour. While Oreo vanilla wins hands down, more fancy flavours include jackfruit, kiwi, banoffee (a combo of banana and coffee) and bubblegum. Allen says he himself prepares the banoffee flavour by mixing banana crush, coffee decoction and coffee-flavoured ice cream, while syrup flavours are used for bubblegum and Irish cream varieties. For jackfruit milkshakes, he sources flavoured ice cream from distributors., With the initiative catching on, Allen says he now plans to open another outlet near Technopark. A cool way to say no to plastic., Price range: ₹99 to ₹180 per milkshake , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,
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Whoever thought mango, lassi, palm sugar and dark chocolate would bring in medals, but they did for Arun Viswanathan at the International Chocolate Awards , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][Residents of Jeratgi village blocking the Bidar-Srirangapatna National Highway on Thursday morning.

, Four persons were crushed to death and three were injured when a speeding tanker ran over them at Jeratgi village of Jewargi taluk in Kalaburagi on Thursday morning., The police identified the deceased as Shrikant Badiger (32), Golu Rajasthani (18), Mohin Bhagwan (18) and Peer Sab Anwar Patel (25)., The injured, Prakash, Anil and Vijaykumar, have been admitted to Jewargi taluk hospital., Tension gripped the area when villagers rushed to the accident spot and staged a snap protest, blocking traffic on Bidar-Srirangapatna National Highway passing through Jewargi town. The villagers demanded a service road for pedestrians and two-wheeler riders, who are at risk due to heavy movement of vehicles on the highway., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address., Printable version | Oct 11, 2018 5:33:04 PM | <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/four-ran-over-by-tanker-three-injured/article25191464.ece>

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The 10th century work depicts the battle between cousins Bhima and Duryodhana , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][A 36-year-old man allegedly committed suicide by hanging from a tree on his land in K.K.Palya of Sira taluk in the district over a family dispute and livestreamed it on Facebook., The police said that the deceased has been identified as Niranjan. He spoke on Facebook live that his wife used to pick quarrels frequently with him due to which he was deeply hurt. He has three children. He sung the national anthem and said the guilty have to be punished, before committing suicide. , He committed suicide on the evening of October 9. , A case has been registered in Pattanayakanahalli police station. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address., Printable version | Oct 11, 2018 5:26:42 PM | <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/man-livestreams-suicide-on-facebook/article25191423.ece>

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The 10th century work depicts the battle between cousins Bhima and Duryodhana , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][Director of Ctie Nitin Kulkarni, with students

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- Girish Pattanashetti , Around 300 teams from 32 different technical institutions and a few schools from across the State are expected to participate in "Pupa-2018", an event aimed at inculcating product development skills among youths, particularly of tier-II and -III cities, in Hubballi on Saturday (October. 13)., KLE Technological University's Centre for Innovation and Technology (Ctie) and 'Make in BVB' has been conducting the event on the lines of 'Make In India' and it is in the sixth edition of the event., Director of Ctie Nitin Kulkarni, student organiser Susheth Tadahal and other students briefed presspersons here on Thursday about the event which was first started in 2013 with 20 teams., Mr. Nitin Kulkarni said: "A seed capital of ₹ 500 is given to those who register for the event and they will get three-weeks' time to design and develop their product and also find customers.", The objective was

to motivate the students to innovate from the first year of their engineering studies and develop them further, improvise them or develop newer products before they completed the course., This year, already 412 teams from 32 colleges have registered for the event and around 300 teams are expected to participate with their products. Apart from engineering colleges, students of polytechnics, NTT and a few schools are also participating this time., Some of the students including Nikhil Akalwadi, Shubham Naik, Ankush Halabhavi, Shubhangi Kasture, Namita Rayanagoudar, Ramyashri, A.G. Sourav Kotur, and Saicharan M.R. gave details of products designed by them including 'wagon wash', car fridge, and smart irrigation system., Prof. Nitin Kulkarni said while 230 teams would be from KLE Technological University, the remaining were from institutions across Karnataka. The products developed by the participants would be classified into different domains, ranging from agriculture to entertainment., Ee-Lab, He said the centre was setting up an Electronic Enabling Laboratory with assistance from the Department of Science and Technology and it would be ready within three months. "Students will be able to design and develop a product and also test it so that they could release it to the open market after all tests", he said., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,
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The 10th century work depicts the battle between cousins Bhima and Duryodhana
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Sant Rampal at a court in Sirsa. File

| Photo Credit: PTI , Self-styled godman Rampal was on Thursday convicted in two cases of murder by a court in Hisar city, Haryana. A total of 29 persons, including four women, have been convicted in the two cases., The cases pertain to the death of five women and an infant during the stand-off between the police and Rampal's supporters in November 2014., Two FIRs – 429 and 430 – were registered in connection with the six deaths., Hisar District Attorney Mahender Pal told journalists that the accused were convicted on charges of murder, wrongful confinement and criminal conspiracy. The court fixed October 16 and 17 for the pronouncement of the quantum of sentence in the two cases respectively. Three persons have been declared proclaimed offenders in the case., All the accused, including Rampal, were present in the court. The verdict was pronounced by Additional District and Sessions judge D.R. Chalia., Clashes broke out between the supporters of Satlok Ashram head Rampal and the police in Hisar's Barwala town when the police went to arrest him to produce him before the Punjab and Haryana High Court in connection with a murder case. The stand-off ended on November 19, 2014 with the arrest of Rampal and several of his supporters., Security was stepped up in Hisar and adjoining towns in the run-up to the court verdict. Police were deployed at the abandoned Satlok Ashram., District Magistrate Ashok Kumar Meena imposed Section 144 in Hisar on Wednesday prohibiting carrying of weapons and gathering of five or more persons. He said that no one would be allowed to take the law in their hands., Duty Magistrates were appointed in Hisar and adjoining towns of Hansi and Barwala., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,
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Vice-President inaugurated the World Peace Monument, the largest dome in the world ,

The 9,600 sq ft flag stands on a 319.5 ft flag pole at Gandhi Mandap, a memorial for Mahatma Gandhi atop the Sarania Hill , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][Capital punishment in Malaysia is currently mandatory for murder, kidnapping, possession of firearms and drug trafficking, among other crimes.

| Photo Credit:

Special Arrangement

, Malaysia's Cabinet has agreed to abolish the death penalty, a senior Minister said on Thursday, in a decision hailed by rights groups., Capital punishment in Malaysia is currently mandatory for murder, kidnapping, possession of firearms and drug trafficking, among other crimes. The penalty is exclusively carried out by hanging in Malaysia -- a legacy of British colonial rule. , Communications and multimedia Minister Gobind Singh Deo confirmed the cabinet had resolved to end the death penalty. "I hope the law will be amended soon," he told AFP., The government decided to scrap capital punishment because there had been strong domestic opposition to the practice. The decision was welcomed by rights advocates., "The death penalty is barbarous, and unimaginably cruel," N Surendran, an advisor with the Lawyers for Liberty rights group said in a statement., Once the death penalty is scrapped, Malaysia will have the moral authority to fight for the lives of Malaysians facing death sentences abroad, he added., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Twelve Thai boys and their football coach, who were dramatically rescued from a flooded cave in July, enjoyed a high-profile kickabout on Sunday, , From missiles, they do not make ploughshares. They make knives jambiyya (jam-BEE-yah), the ornamental daggers Yemeni men wear for prestige and as a show of courage.

, Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][A young man named Chandan Kumar Tiwari threw a slipper at Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar during a programme in Patna on Thursday., The slipper missed the CM and the programme continued. Chandan Kumar Tiwari from Aurangabad district of Bihar also shouted slogans against Mr. Kumar. He was protesting against amendment in reservation. , The youth was thrashed by JD(U) workers before being taken into custody by Patna police. The incident happened at a programme organised by the student wing of the JD(U)., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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The 9,600 sq ft flag stands on a 319.5 ft flag pole at Gandhi Mandap, a memorial for Mahatma Gandhi atop the Sarania Hill , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][

Kannada Development Authority Chairman S.G. Siddaramaiah addressing a review meeting in Kalaburagi on Thursday.

| Photo Credit:

Arun Kulkarni

, Expressing dissatisfaction over the disinterest that Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) of Kalaburagi had allegedly shown in addressing the issues in the way of implementation of Kannada in governance during a meeting of Kannada Jagruti Samithi (KJS) a few months ago, S.G. Siddaramaiah, Chairman of Kannada Development Authority (KDA), said that it was the Deputy Commissioner and not

his/her deputy, who must convene a meeting of KJS. , "The ADC of Kalaburagi forced the KJS members to wait inordinately for the meeting. When he came, he treated the members in an objectionable manner. He apparently had no interest in the effective implementation of Kannada in governance," Mr. Siddaramaiah said and asked the Deputy Commissioner, R. Venkatesh Kumar, to hold the meeting himself instead of getting it done by his deputy., "KJS units are formed in all the districts. But, the sad thing is that a very few of them are functioning properly having regular meetings. It is mandatory that the Deputy Commissioners of every district should hold meetings once in every three months to oversee the implementation of Kannada in governance," he said., Banking, Referring to the complaints that he received from the public on the poor use of Kannada in the banking sector, Mr. Siddaramaiah asked the Deputy Commissioner to ensure that all the bank transactions and communications involving public were carried out in Kannada., "As many as 18,000 employees have been recruited by the banks in Karnataka between 2015 and 2017 and only a few hundreds of them are Kannadigas. It is because of the restructuring of recruitment rules and procedures in favour of non-Kannadigas. Now, these bank employees sitting in the rural branches have become a problem for local people as they do no't communicate in Kannada. They have even published the essential transaction materials such as challans in English and Hindi only," he said., He also directed the Deputy Commissioner to ensure that all communication and banking material involving public should be printed in Kannada and English., "Karnataka has adopted a bilingual policy with Kannada and English. Hindi is an optional language for us. It is not right to strike out Kannada to accommodate Hindi bank material. And Hindi is not a national language as some people wrongly argue often. There are 22 official languages and Hindi is one among them," he said., Mr. Siddaramaiah also directed the Deputy Commissioner to ensure that the official websites of all the government departments would have Kannada as their default language and English as an optional language in their home page. "You [the Deputy Commissioner] should also see that all the judgments in courts are delivered in Kannada," he said., He also took objection to Karnataka Neeravari Nigam Limited (KNNL) officials for having most of their written communication in English., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/holding-kannada-jagruti-samithi-meeting-mandatory-says-kda-chairman/article25190843.ece>

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Dundhu Renjeev

| Photo Credit:

Special Arrangement , , Dundhu Renjeev hails from a family of doctors, in fact, about nine of them. "Naturally, there was pressure on me to go down the beaten path," she says. But Dundhu, perhaps the first woman art director from Kerala, clearly had other plans., "Despite my background, my inclination has always been towards art. When my dad took me to the movies when I was young, he would introduce me to its crew as the credits rolled. So it was not just the actors that I learnt about, but, in a small way, about unseen faces too. By and by, I developed an admiration for behind-the-scenes workers in films," says the 30-year-old over phone from Kochi., Describing herself as "a self-taught artist", Dundhu, who grew up in Taliparamba, Kannur, in fact, succumbed to family pressure and did enrol in a course in Yoga and Naturopathy in Mangalore after Plus Two, only to drop out after the first year to pursue her true calling. She then went on to do an animation course in Toonz Academy in Thiruvananthapuram before joining St. Joseph's College, Bangalore, to study visual communications that "opened a lot of possibilities.",

Dundhu Renjeev

| Photo Credit:
Special Arrangement

, But the turning point was towards the end of her course when she landed an opportunity to join the sets of Dulquer Salman-starrer 100 Days of Love as part of her internship. "Actually, I went to the set with a blank slate, utterly clueless about what to do. I didn't really speak a word for the first two days and I think it was only on the third day that the crew realised I was a Malayali girl," Dundhu recounts. There, she came under the tutelage of her "mentor", art director Nimesh Thanur, whom she later assisted in Oru Mexican Aparatha. Her other works now include the V K Prakash-directed Rockstar and a biopic on filmmaker John Abraham by Prem Chand, apart from a slew of ad films for some major brands., But her début as an independent art director came with the 12-episode web series The 'Other' Love Story in 2016, which was followed by the crowd-funded experimental film Across the Ocean by Uma Kumarapuram and Los Angeles-based Nicole Donadio. It was Uma who later introduced Dundhu to director Prasobh Vijayan who was "specifically looking for a woman art director" for his female-centric revenge thriller Lilli that hit the screens recently., In Lilli, Dundhu doubled up as production designer and art director, a project that "excited as well as challenged" her on account of its shoestring budget. "We had to crank out maximum output on a very limited budget. The huge roots that you can see growing on the wall in the isolated house where Lilli is taken captive in had to be set right everyday and still look perfect. Lilli had a dark theme and we had to choose a colour palette that suited the mood right from get-go," she reveals.,

A still from Lilli

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, Dundhu feels the fundamental skill-set of an art director boils down to "just hard work", apart from a drive to do some research as the work requirements differ from film to film. "I feel an art director should also have a good sense of colour and fashion, be it architecture or haute couture. Depending on the project, the director's vision and the cinematographer's ideas, one must be open to experiment and mix and match," the art director says., Though quite a few women filmmakers have made the grade in Bollywood, Dundhu feels it's the disinclination to venture out of "a set pattern and take a gamble" that prevents women art directors from coming to the fore. "Many women don't want to experiment or are afraid of treading an unbeaten path. That has to change. It may also be due to a lack of exposure. There are plenty of courses in acting and direction but how many do we hear about art direction? It's also deemed a thankless job since it lacks that 'glamour quotient' associated with acting and direction," she points out.,

Dundhu Renjeev
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, Though hesitant to comment on the current state of affairs of Women in Cinema Collective, Dundhu throws her weight behind the need for such an association. "When I am the only female member in the group, I have felt that some basic needs are sometimes ignored. From my experience, shoots in Bangalore were much more comfortable as they (set managers) arranged for proper caravans or e-toilets for the women crew. But, here, the arrangements may not even be hygienic all the time," she says. Two films, directed by Anuraj Manohar and Nikhil Premraj respectively, are in the pipeline and discussions are on for a couple of other projects too. Though Dundhu says she can't really point out any inspirations, she remembers getting a chance to work with acclaimed art director Sabu Cyril right after her first film. "However, I backed out as I felt I didn't really know much then to work with such a titan in the field," she says good-humouredly. , That was when she was only cutting her teeth in a male-dominated territory. There's no backing out now., 'As Jithin, I'm easy to hate': Vijilesh Karayad , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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<https://www.thehindu.com/entertainment/movies/dundhu-renjeev-on-breaking-the-glass-ceiling-in-art-direction-in-mollywood/article25190785.ece>

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They might not always play the lead, but they make a lasting impact on screen. Here is why you should track these performers.

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Sujith K J (left) and Aswadev S S, who run Green Habito

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Special arrangement , , At Green Habito I am welcomed by its soothing décor and the juicery's two enthusiastic owners, Sujith K J and Aswadev S S. Sticky notes displayed on a white board indicate that there are quite a good number of fans for juice and smoothies served at this joint, located along the service road opposite Technopark., Sujith and Aswadev, college mates-cum-mechanical engineers, opened Green Habito in May this year. Sujith, an employee with IBS for the last five years, was planning to open a new venture and Aswadev had come down from Muscat, leaving behind his job, with "some business plans". Their focus was on healthy food. "Our initial plan was to supply fruit boxes but that had to be put on hold as we had reservations about its viability. The World Health Organisation recommends consuming more than 400 gram fruits and vegetables every day. However, while intake of fresh fruits and vegetables is more like a habit in the West, we are yet to do that on a regular basis. So we thought cold-pressed juices would be a healthy option," Sujith says.,

Some juices and smoothies available at Green Habito
| Photo Credit:

Special arrangement

, The USP of Green Habito, they say, is that all juices are cold pressed. "And we don't use sugar, preservatives, artificial syrups or water," Aswadev chips in. , They explain that when fruits are cold pressed, no nutrients are lost because there is no heat generated, which happens in the case of a centrifugal juicer. "A lot of research went into finalising the menu. We wanted the right blend of health and flavour. We experimented with different combinations for some months before launching this joint," says Aswadev. , It's time to taste the fare. From the 25-odd juice on the menu, I immediately rule out the "healthy" options such as Fat Cutter (red capsicum, apple, cucumber and tomato), Blood Purifier (beetroot, carrot and apple), and Absolute cleanse (broccoli, lettuce, cucumber and ginger). So also Skin Glow (pineapple, amla, aloe vera and tender coconut) and Skin Toner (carrot, water melon and lime), as I was not in a mood for a health booster then. With some apprehension I settle for the special of the day – Popeye Powershot, which has spinach, pineapple and green apple. To my surprise, the rawness of the spinach blend well with the fruits, in spite of not having any sugar in it. , Tender coconut is a common ingredient in many of the drinks. For example, Moksha has tender coconut with lemon and basil, and Longevity is a blend of pineapple, orange, and mosambi with tender coconut! , Moving on to smoothies, there are over 20 on the menu. As the duo try to tempt me with "top sellers" such as Choco Bliss that has banana, dark chocolate, peanut butter and honey, and Peanut Powerhouse, a blend of peanut butter, banana and honey, I go with Nutty Affair. The drink has almond, pistachio, cashew, fig, walnut, raisins and honey. With honey lending the right dose of sweetness, I had nothing to complain about the rich smoothie. "We have an open kitchen because we want people to be rest assured that we are not using water or sugar!" Aswadev says. , Meanwhile, they have introduced what they had originally planned to sell – "fruit energy boxes". You can purchase a box with five varieties of fruits for ₹100 (₹110 if you want it delivered). The box has a sachet of dry fruits and one of chaat masala. Sandwich is also there on the menu. The juicery now runs weekly (five days) and monthly (22 days) subscriptions under which the eats and drinks will be delivered. ,

Fruit box at Green Habito

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, Right now all products are delivered in and around Kazhakuttam area only. "We are launching 'Health at desk'. Under this package, the fruit boxes will be delivered in corporate offices along with juice and smoothies. Deep Cleanse is for those planning a juice-only diet. We want to create a demand for healthy food and thereby inculcate a habit," Sujith says. , Green Habito is open on all days from 11 am to 11 pm. Contact: 8075654646, Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Vijilesh Karayad

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Special arrangement , Jithin is a character you love to hate. One of the villains in Amal Neerad's Varathan, he at first look, seems like a miscast. He looks like an ordinary guy, not a menacing villain. Surely, he can't strike fear. In the film though, he sure does, when he reveals his perverse tendencies. , Says Vijilesh Karayad, who played Jithin: "As Jithin, I'm easy to hate. In fact, I have been receiving hate messages from strangers, who have confused me with the character. Although it is unnerving to receive such messages, I feel triumphant that I have managed to bring the character to life.", But then, the 30-year-old from Kozhikode is no stranger to breathing life to characters. A theatre artiste who has toured the country with hit plays such as Jilebi and Kannadi, Vijilesh's fascination for theatre began during his college days at Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady.,

Vijilesh Karayad in a scene from Varathan

| Photo Credit:

Special arrangement

, "One of our professors was into theatre and encouraged us to participate in mono-acts, skits and plays. A few of us found life on stage intoxicating and started a drama troupe – Joke Voice. Our troupe preformed skits at various venues. Kalavoor Ravikumar, the scriptwriter for films such as Ishtam, Manju Poloru Penkutty and Nammal was in the audience during a staging of Kannadi and offered me a small role in the film Navagatharkku Swagatham," says Vijilesh. A film buff, he admits that he had a niggling desire to act, right from his childhood days. , He recalls replying to advertisements in Malayalam dailies inviting actors to audition for roles in movies. "I would send my biodata and photo unflinching. I gave up after being continuously rejected. I convinced myself that I was not cut out for the big screen as I was plain-looking and did not fit into any of the moulds, be it that of a hero or a villain," says the actor who has acted in films such as Kali, Guppy, Alamara, and even the recent release Theevandi, where he plays an antagonist with a touch of comedy. , According to Vijilesh, he was clueless about his role in Varathan until Amal handed him a copy of the script during the shoot. "To be honest, I was rather hesitant to play a guy, who, apart from being a creep, was a melcryptovestimentaphiliac. I was convinced only when the scriptwriters, Suhas-Sharfu told me that the scene in which I hold the heroine's lingerie was essential to the storyline." ,

Vijilesh Karayad in a scene from Theevandi

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, Amal, he says, gave him a free reign in introducing quirks to his character in the film. "Like the way he ties his lungi or scratches his thigh while talking." The actor first made his mark in Bollywood with Dileesh Pothan's Maheshinte Prathikaram, where he played a timid man who learns Kung Fu in order to protect his sister from eve-teasers. "Dileesh was clear on what he wanted. He knew the character inside out and introduced me to him. My job was easy.", A fan of actors such as Sankaradi and Oduvil Unnikrishnan, Vijilesh hopes to do character roles. "However, I can't be too picky as I am still a newbie in the industry. But that does not mean I will be on a signing spree." , So, what about theatre? "While theatre is my first love, I can't commit to any play as there will be a clash of interest and dates if I sign up for a film. Once I learn to balance between the two, I will resume theatre.", #MeToo in Bollywood: Aamir Khan exits Subhash Kapoor's film as producer, Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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They might not always play the lead, but they make a lasting impact on screen. Here is why you should track these performers.

, Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][A Delhi court on Tuesday ordered attachment of liquor baron Vijay Mallya's properties in Bengaluru in a case relating to FERA violations., Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Deepak Sherawat issued fresh directions after the Bengaluru Police, through ED's special public prosecutor N K Matta and advocate Samvedna Verma, sought more time to execute its earlier order., The Bengaluru Police had earlier informed the court that it has identified 159 properties belonging to Mallya, but has not been able to attach any of them., Mallya has been declared a proclaimed offender by the court on January 4 for evading its summons in the case., The court had on May 8, 2018, directed the attachment of Mallya's properties in the case through the Bengaluru Police commissioner and sought a report on it., It had declared Mallya a proclaimed offender for evading summons in a FERA violation case after noting that he had failed to appear despite repeated summonses., It had on 12 April last year issued an open-ended non-bailable warrant against the liquor baron., Unlike a non-bailable warrant, an 'open-ended NBW' does not carry a time limit for execution., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Relatives of those arrested may target the girls again, say residents of Bihar village

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Cordon has been strengthened, no fresh firing, says police official

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Army jawans walk towards encounter site at Shatgund Balla in Kupwara district of north Kashmir on Thursday.

| Photo Credit: The Hindu , Aligarh Muslim University scholar-turned-militant Manan Bashir Wani and another militant were killed in an operation by the Army on Thursday in Kupwara, sparking a spate of street protests., Wani, 26, who was pursuing doctorate in geology in AMU, joined the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen last January., "Wani was killed in an operation by the Army's 30 Rashtriya Rifles and the police's Special Operation Group at Shatgund Balla. Wani was trapped along with his associate around 2:30 a.m.," said the police., The operation in the area continued "as two militants were killed so far," an Army spokesman said.,

Wani is a resident of Kupwara's Lolab. The authorities have closed all educational institutes in north Kashmir's Kupwara, Bandipora and Handwara districts., Scores of locals clashed with the security forces in parts of Kupwara after the news broke out. One civilian was hit by bullets in the lower limbs and was shifted to a Srinagar hospital., Hurriyat activist Tariq Ahmad Ganie, who was a former militant, has been shot dead by unknown gunmen near his home at Meemender village in Shopian., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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A 5.5 kg lunar meteorite discovered in Northwest Africa in 2017 rests on a table, in Amherst, New Hampshire.

| Photo Credit:

AP

, Anyone who can't make it to the moon to gather a few lunar rocks now has the opportunity to buy one right here on Earth., A 12-pound (5.5 kilogram) lunar meteorite discovered in Northwest Africa last year is up for auction by Boston-based RR Auction and could sell for \$500,000 or more during online bidding that runs from Thursday until Oct. 18., It is "one of the most important meteorites available for acquisition anywhere in the world today," and one of the biggest pieces of the moon ever put up for sale, RR said., The rock classified as NWA 11789, also known as "Buagaba," was found last year in a remote area of Mauritania but probably plunged to Earth thousands of years ago., The meteorite is actually composed of six fragments that fit together like a puzzle. The largest of those pieces weighs about 6 pounds., Most lunar meteorites found are the size of a walnut or golf ball, said Geoff Notkin, star of television's "Meteorite Men" and CEO of Aerolite Meteorites, which is selling the rock., "As soon as we saw this, we knew it was extraordinarily unusual," he said. "This is close to a once in a lifetime find.", It is also one the few known lunar meteorites with what experts call "partial fusion crust," caused by the tremendous heat that sears the rock as it descends through the atmosphere., "It actually toasted on the outside," Mr. Notkin said., Another thing that makes it different from most meteorites is that it is "unpaired." Sometimes different pieces of the same meteorite are discovered at different times, and those examples are known as "paired." An "unpaired" meteorite is more desirable to collectors and perhaps more valuable to science., The meteorite would be a nice addition to any natural history museum, but don't be surprised if a private collector snaps it up, said Robert Livingston, RR's executive vice-president., "This is the only way a private collector can get their hands on a piece of the moon because the moon rocks brought back by astronauts are U.S. government property," he said., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Twelve Thai boys and their football coach, who were dramatically rescued from a flooded cave in July, enjoyed a high-profile kickabout on Sunday, ,
From missiles, they do not make ploughshares. They make knives jambiyya (jam-BEE-yah), the ornamental daggers Yemeni men wear for prestige and as a show of courage.

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. File

| Photo Credit:

AP

, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's top ministers are squabbling, a deadline looms for contentious legislation that may bring down his government and a corruption indictment could be just around the corner., Against this backdrop, there're signs he may soon call for elections – possibly as early as next week, when parliament reconvenes from its summer break., And though Mr. Netanyahu hasn't committed yet, conditions appear ripe for him to schedule the vote, nearly a year ahead of schedule., Polls, for now at least, predict a solid Netanyahu victory, one that would assure his place in history as Israel's longest-serving leader and allow him to solidify his close alliance with President Donald Trump., But one big obstacle could still trip him up: a mounting corruption investigation that may soon deliver criminal charges. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Twelve Thai boys and their football coach, who were dramatically rescued from a flooded cave in July, enjoyed a high-profile kickabout on Sunday, , From missiles, they do not make ploughshares. They make knives jambiyya (jam-BEE-yah), the ornamental daggers Yemeni men wear for prestige and as a show of courage.

, Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][The decision to partner with Reliance Defence on Rafale aircraft deal was taken 'freely,' Dassault Aviation said in a press release on Thursday, October 11, 2018., The clarification came a day after reports in the French media suggested that the company was made to choose Reliance Defence in a "trade-off" to get the Rafale aircraft deal from India., "Dassault Aviation has freely chosen to make a partnership with India's Reliance Group. This joint venture, Dassault Reliance Aerospace Ltd (DRAL), was created on February 10, 2017. Other partnerships have been signed with other companies such as BTSL, DEFSYS, Kinetic, Mahindra, Maini, SAMTEL. Other negotiations are ongoing with a hundred-odd other potential partners," Dassault Aviation said.,

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If the Opposition wants to go on a wild goose chase, so be it: Nirmala Sitharaman

, French investigative journal Mediapart had reported that Dassault Aviation found it mandatory to have Anil Ambani's Reliance Defence as an offset partner to clinch the Rafale deal. The journal said it was a "trade-off." It cited documents from Dassault Aviation that showed that it had no option but to take Reliance as the offset partner., The clarification from Dassault Aviation forms the backdrop of a visit to France by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on

Thursday. During the visit, she is expected to assess the progress of the supply of 36 Rafale jets by Dassault to the Indian Air Force under a ₹58,000 -crore deal., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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In this July 25, 2018 file photo, Cricket star-turned-politician Imran Khan, chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), speaks after voting in the general election in Islamabad, Pakistan.

| Photo Credit:

Reuters

, Not impressed with Pakistan's efforts to combat terror financing, a delegation of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has asked it to do more to strengthen its legal framework if it wants to avoid being blacklisted by the Paris-based anti-money laundering watchdog, according to a media report on Thursday., Currently placed on the FATF'S 'grey list', Pakistan has been scrambling in recent months to avoid being added to a list of countries deemed non-compliant with anti-money laundering and terrorist financing regulations by the FATF, a measure that officials here fear could further hurt its economy., A second team of experts from the FATF arrived over the weekend to review the progress made by Pakistan on an action plan agreed in June to address global concerns., Dawn reported that the delegation of the Asia Pacific Group (APG) of the FATF was not impressed with the progress made by Pakistan so far as it found the legal framework insufficient, and the institutional arrangements weak., According to sources, the delegation feared that the setup installed for scrutinising the activities of non-profit organisations, brokerage houses, exchange companies and donations of corporate entities - registered under the companies act - was not robust enough., The sources said that the APG believed that even in areas where the legal framework appeared vigorous, the implementation mechanism was not geared to track down financial flows of the entities in question, because the agencies involved were not well-connected, according to the report., This weakness was prominent in real estate brokerages where large business transactions remained outside the ambit of legal records., A team of the Securities & Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) reported to the APG that brokerage houses were largely documented though real estate dealers and their operations were generally outside its area of regulation., The APG also noticed shortcomings in commodity trading - and the effectiveness of laws against money laundering through cross-verification of service providers., The sources said the delegation asked the relevant authorities to issue deadlines for resolving the flagged weaknesses so that the problems could be remedied and future performance evaluations be made on the proposed matrix., The authorities would also have to properly record the number of donation boxes placed by religious and other organisations at restaurants and business centres among other places. Besides, all currency and real estate dealers would have to record every transaction - both small and large., The purpose of the mutual evaluation visit is to assess the effectiveness of Pakistan's Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) regime under FATF methodology., The visiting team included Ian Collins of the United Kingdom's Scotland Yard, James Prussing of the United States Department of the Treasury, Ashraf Abdullah of the Financial Intelligence Unit of the Maldives, Bobby Wahyu Hernawan of the Indonesian Ministry of Finance, Gong Jingyan of the Peoples Bank of China and Mustafa Necmeddin Oztup of the Turkish Ministry of Justice. , In June 2018, Pakistan made a high-level political commitment to work with the FATF and the

APG to strengthen its AML/CFT regime and to address its strategic counter-terrorism financing-related deficiencies by implementing a 10-point action plan., The successful implementation of the plan and its verification by the APG is a prerequisite for the FATF to remove Pakistan from its grey list., Earlier in August, the APG - as part of the mutual evaluation -identified a series of deficiencies in Pakistan's AML/CFT mechanisms. By the end of September next year, Pakistan must comply with the 10-point action plan it committed to with the FATF or else it will fall into the black list., The authorities are required to upgrade agencies and their human resource assets to be able to handle foreign requests to block terror financing and freeze illegal assets. The authorities are working on strengthening laws for extradition of those involved in terror financing and money laundering on requests from FATF-member countries., By January next year, Pakistan will identify and assess domestic and international terror financing risks to and from its system to strengthen investigations and improve inter-agency cooperation, the Federal Investigation Agency, the State Bank of Pakistan, the SECP, banks, the interior department as well as all other associated federal and provincial agencies, the report said. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Congress president Rahul Gandhi addressing the media in New Delhi on Thursday, October 11, 2018.

| Photo Credit:

R.V. Moorthy

, Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Thursday alleged that Mr. Modi was a "corrupt man who helped industrialist Anil Ambani pocket ₹30,000 crore in the purchase of the Rafale fighter aircraft.", At a press conference, Mr. Gandhi demanded an investigation against the Prime Minister., "PM is Anil Ambani's chowkidar", Mr. Gandhi said. Corruption was happening under the Prime Minister's nose, he alleged as he read out a report of Mediapart that said Mr. Ambani's offset contract was a 'compensation' for the Rafale deal to the aircraft manufacturer, Dassault Aviation.,

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If the Opposition wants to go on a wild goose chase, so be it: Nirmala Sitharaman

, Mr. Gandhi also described Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's trip to France as part of a "huge cover-up" by the government., A report in the French media said that Dassault Aviation had to choose Mr. Ambani's firm Reliance Defence as

its offsets partner in India as a trade-off for getting the deal., The government had been insisting that it had no role in Dassault's choice of Reliance Defence., Dassault Aviation said in a statement that it had "freely chosen to make a partnership with India's Reliance Group"., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address., Printable version | Oct 11, 2018 5:19:13 PM | <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/rahul-gandhi-accuses-modi-of-corruption-in-rafale-deal/article25189757.ece>

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Imran Khan

| Photo Credit:

Reuters , Pakistan is seeking its largest loan package of up to \$8 billion from the IMF to bail itself out from a severe balance-of-payments crisis that threatens to cripple the country's economy, a media report said on Thursday., The International Monetary Fund (IMF) could place strict conditionalities, forcing Pakistan to seek additional loans for meeting those restrictions and this could expand the loan facility to \$12 billion, said the report in the Dawn newspaper., Pakistan began exploring the possibility of yet another loan package with the IMF while the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) PML-N was still in power and the exploratory talks continued under the interim government as well, it said., The final decision, however, was announced on Monday night when Finance Minister Asad Umar confirmed that the government was going to the IMF to bail Pakistan out of its foreign currency crisis., The announcement followed the highest single-day loss in a decade in the stock market, which plunged by over 1,300 points, losing almost Rs 270 billion of its capitalisation.,

Also Read

Pakistan to seek IMF loan to avert meltdown

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Pakistan to seek IMF loan to avert meltdown , On Tuesday, the IMF said that it would listen to Pakistan's request for financial support "very, very attentively", as it did with any member with good standing., Pakistan has received more than a dozen financial support packages from the IMF in the past. It completed the last three-year package of \$6.4 billion in August 2016, which was 216 per cent of Pakistan's quota at the IMF., Meanwhile, the government came under heavy criticism after announcing that it would seek bailout assistance from the IMF, but Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday defended the decision., Mr. Khan said that the country was burdened due to debts incurred by the previous government and his government was constrained to borrow more money to pay back those debts., "There has been a lot of noise in the country [after decision to go to IMF] during the last 48 hours as if the heave is going to fall. But we need to do it [go to IMF] before our reforms start yielding results in about six months," he said.,

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'Sexy Beast'

, Sexy Beast by Jonathan Glazer shows a retired criminal, Gal (Ray Winstone), enjoying idyllic days in his beautiful Spanish villa with his wife, until a former associate, a psychopath criminal Don (Ben Kingsley), turns up to lure Gal back with one last intriguing project. Look out for the intense, yet comedic dialogues between Winstone and Kingsley., Nayakan ,

'Nayakan'

, Lijo Jose Pellissery's debut film, Nayakan, follows a Kathakali artist, Varadanunni (Indrajith), who seeks to avenge his family's death at the hands of a mysterious personality by joining an aging underworld don Vincent Karanavar (Thilakan). Plot originality, cast performances and the exceptional background score make it a thrilling ride for the viewer., The Town,

'The Town'

, Ben Affleck bounced back from a series of lows with this directorial venture, in which he also stars. He plays career criminal Doug McCray who has to balance his feelings for a bank employee whose bank he had previously robbed, whilst dodging a determined FBI agent looking to bring his crew down. Jeremy Renner stars as Jem Coughlin, McCray's partner in crime. Jon Hamm and Rebecca Hall also star in this thriller with stylised action scenes., The Raid,

'The Raid'

, This Indonesian martial arts film sees an Elite squad tasked with bringing down a high-rise building controlled by notorious drug lord, Tama, in the slums of Jakarta. When plans go awry, the members need to ensure they finish the mission and survive – among them is Rama (Iko Uwais), a rookie. The film's inventive fight scenes are eye-popping., Old Boy, Old Boy is testament to Park Chan Wook's brilliance. The edgy psychological thriller stars Choi Min Sik as Oh Dae-su, imprisoned for 15 years without knowing the identity of his captor or their motives. When eventually released, he finds his quest for vengeance still trapped in a web of violence and deception. Choi Min Sik and Yoo-Ji Tae show their acting prowess in this classic., Readers can send in their top five movies to frkerala@thehindu.co.in. The write-up should not exceed 250 words. Please include your phone number as well., What's with Kollywood and early morning shows?, Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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They might not always play the lead, but they make a lasting impact on screen. Here is why you should track these performers.

, Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][The Amrapali group on Thursday informed the Supreme Court that its nine properties in Noida, Greater Noida, Rajgir and Buxar in Bihar have been sealed in compliance with the court's order., A Bench of Justices U.U. Lalit and D.Y. Chandrachud asked the Amrapali group to file an undertaking with regard to sealing of its properties by 2 p.m. on Thursday., The Bench also sought presence of two forensic auditors Ravi Bhatia and Pawan Kumar Aggarwal at 2 p.m. to ascertain their satisfaction with regard to the documents to be audited., The Bench will hear the matter at 2 p.m. on October 11., The apex court on October 10 ordered the sealing of nine properties of the embattled real estate company after its three directors, who are in police custody, said the documents related to the group's 46 firms were stored there., The three directors had moved an application before the court stating that they were willing to hand over all documents but the police was unaware about which one

needed to be seized., The directors of the group – Anil Kumar Sharma, Shiv Priya and Ajay Kumar – were taken into police custody on October 9 and the firm was castigated for playing “hide and seek” with the court by not complying with its orders to hand over all documents to forensic auditors., These directors had told the Bench that documents related to Amrapali’s 46 group companies were kept in seven locations at Noida and Greater Noida and two premises – Rajgir and Buxar districts in Bihar., The Bench had then directed that after the sealing of these nine premises, the keys be handed over to the registrar of the apex court., The court is seized of a batch of petitions filed by home buyers who are seeking possession of around 42,000 flats booked in projects of the Amrapali group., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Waves crash on tilt houses along the shore due to Hurricane Michael at Alligator Point in Franklin County, Florida, U.S., on Wednesday.

| Photo Credit:
Reuters

, Hurricane Michael’s battering waves swamped streets and docks and shrieking winds splintered trees and rooftops. The most powerful hurricane on record to hit Florida’s Panhandle left wide destruction and at least one person dead and wasn’t nearly finished on Thursday as it crossed Georgia toward the Carolinas, still reeling from epic flooding in Hurricane Florence. , Authorities said at least one person has died, a man killed by a tree falling on a Panhandle home. Search and rescue crews were expected to escalate efforts to reach hardest-hit areas and check for anyone trapped or injured in the storm debris. , A day after the supercharged storm crashed ashore amid white sand beaches, fishing towns and military bases, Michael was no longer a Category 4 monster packing 155 mph (250 kph) winds. Downgraded to a tropical storm early Thursday over south-central Georgia, it continued to weaken but was still menacing the Southeast with heavy rains, blustery winds and possible spinoff tornadoes. , The National Hurricane Center in Miami said the eye of Michael was about 30 miles (48 km) south-southwest of Macon in central Georgia at 12-00 a.m. on Thursday. The storm had top sustained winds of 70 mph (112 kph) and was moving to the northeast at 17 mph (27 kph). , After daylight Thursday residents of north Florida would just be beginning to take stock of the enormity of the disaster. , Damage in Panama City near where Michael came ashore Wednesday afternoon was so extensive that broken and uprooted trees and downed power lines lay nearly everywhere. Roofs were peeled away, sent airborne, and homes were split open by fallen trees. Twisted street signs lay on the ground. Palm trees whipped wildly in the winds. More than 380,000 homes and businesses were without power at the height of the storm. , Vance Beu (29), was staying with his mother at her home, Spring Gate Apartments, a complex of single-story wood frame buildings where they piled up mattresses around themselves for protection. A pine tree punched a hole in their roof and his ears even popped when the barometric pressure went lower. The roar of the winds, he said, sounded like a jet engine. , “It was terrifying, honestly. There was a lot of noise. We thought the windows were going to break at any time,” Mr. Beu said. , Sally Crown rode out Michael on the Florida Panhandle thinking at first that the worst damage was the many trees downed in her yard. But after the storm passed, she emerged to check on the cafe she manages and discovered a scene of breathtaking destruction. , “It’s absolutely horrendous. Catastrophic,” Ms. Crown said. “There’s flooding. Boats on the highway. A house on the highway. Houses that have been there forever are just

shattered." , A Panhandle man was killed by a tree that toppled on a home, Gadsden County Sheriff's Office spokeswoman Anglie Hightower said. But she added emergency crews trying to reach the home were hampered by downed trees and debris blocking roadways. The debris was a problem in many coastal communities and still hundreds of thousands of people were also left without power. , Gov. Rick Scott announced afterward that thousands of law enforcement officers, utility crews and search and rescue teams would now go into recovery mode. He said "aggressive" search and rescue efforts would get underway. , "Hurricane Michael cannot break Florida," Mr. Scott vowed. , Michael sprang quickly from a weekend tropical depression, going from a Category 2 on Tuesday to a Category 4 by the time it came ashore. It forced more than 375,000 people up and down the Gulf Coast to evacuate as it gained strength quickly while crossing the eastern Gulf of Mexico toward north Florida. It moved so fast that people didn't have much time to prepare, and emergency authorities lamented that many ignored the warnings and seemed to think they could ride it out. , In Panama City, plywood and metal flew off the front of a Holiday Inn Express. Part of the awning fell and shattered the glass front door of the hotel, and the rest of the awning wound up on vehicles parked below it. , "Oh my God, what are we seeing?" said evacuee Rachel Franklin, her mouth hanging open. , Based on its internal barometric pressure, Michael was the third most powerful hurricane to hit the U.S. mainland, behind the unnamed Labor Day storm of 1935 and Camille in 1969. Based on wind speed, it was the fourth-strongest, behind the Labor Day storm (184 mph, or 296 kph), Camille and Andrew in 1992., It also brought the dangers of a life-threatening storm surge. , In Mexico Beach, population 1,000, the storm shattered homes, leaving floating piles of lumber. The lead-gray water was so high that roofs were about all that could be seen of many homes. , "We are in new territory," National Hurricane Center Meteorologist Dennis Feltgen wrote on Facebook. "The historical record, going back to 1851, finds no Category 4 hurricane ever hitting the Florida panhandle." , The storm is likely to fire up the debate over global warming. Scientists say global warming is responsible for more intense and more frequent extreme weather, such as storms, droughts, floods and fires. But without extensive study, they cannot directly link a single weather event to the changing climate., After Michael left the Panhandle late Wednesday, Kaylee O'Brien was crying as she sorted through the remains of the apartment she shared with three roommates at Whispering Pines apartments, where the smell of broken pine trees was thick in the air. Four pine trees had crashed through the roof of her apartment, nearly hitting two people. , "We haven't seen her since the tree hit the den. She's my baby," a distraught O'Brien said, her face wet with tears. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,
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A Karti Chidambaram property attached by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with the INX Media case.

| Photo Credit: Special Arrangement , The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday said it had attached properties worth ₹54 crore of former Union Minister P. Chidambaram's son Karti Chidambaram and a company in India, Spain and the United Kingdom in the INX Media case., "The attachments include assets belonging to Mr. Karti-controlled company Advantage Strategic Consulting Private Limited (ASCPL)," said an ED official.,

Properties belonging to Karti Chidambaram seized by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with the INX Media case.
| Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

, The list includes an agricultural land in Kodaikanal, bungalows in Ooty, land and property in Delhi's Jorbagh, a house, cottage, stone barn and land in the U.K., besides a tennis club and land in Barcelona., Fixed deposits worth ₹90 lakh in the company's name, and ₹9.23 crore in the name of Mr. Karti in Indian Overseas Bank, have also been attached, the ED said., The ED had alleged that the then INX Media directors, Peter and Indrani Mukerjea, had met Mr. P. Chidambaram pertaining to an FIPB (The Foreign Investment Promotion Board) approval.,

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ED moves court to cancel interim relief from arrest granted to Karti Chidambaram

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ED moves court to cancel interim relief from arrest granted to Karti Chidambaram , They were allegedly asked to keep Mr. Karti's business interests in mind, said the ED. Both father and son have denied the allegation., The ED said it had identified payment of ₹3.09 crore by Mr. Mukerjea to ASCPL and associated entities "controlled" by Mr. Karti through "manipulated" debit notes., The money received by the associated entities was channelled back into the company and it also purchased shares of Vasan Health Care. A part of these shares were sold at a profit of nearly ₹41 crore., ASCPL also earned ₹18.49 crore from sale of shares in another company for an amount of ₹29.49 crore, said the ED., Reacting to the ED move, Mr. Karti took to Twitter to say: "A bizarre and outlandish 'Provisional Attachment Order' which is not based on law or facts but on crazy conjectures. This is meant only to grab 'headlines'. The 'order' will not withstand judicial scrutiny, review or appeal. Will approach the appropriate legal forum.", Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,
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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/inx-media-pmla-case-ed-attaches-karti-chidambarams-assets-worth-54-cr-in-india-uk-and-spain/article25188450.ece>

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Relatives of those arrested may target the girls again, say residents of Bihar village

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Cordon has been strengthened, no fresh firing, says police official , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][The Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to hear on Friday an appeal challenging the West Bengal government's decision to grant ₹10,000 each to Durga puja committees., A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi was told that on Wednesday the Calcutta High Court refused to interfere with the Mamata Banerjee government's decision to grant money to the Durga Puja committees., The Bench also comprising Justices S.K.Kaul and K.M. Joseph was

told by lawyer Saurav Dutta, who had filed an appeal against the High Court's decision, that the decision of the State government was against the established principle of law and sought an urgent hearing on his plea., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address., Printable version | Oct 11, 2018 5:36:48 PM | <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/supreme-court-to-hear-plea-challenging-grant-of-money-to-durga-puja-committees/article25188342.ece>

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Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike, third from left, gestures as she looks at frozen tunas during the first auction at the newly opened Toyosu Market, new site of Tokyo's fish market, in Tokyo on Thursday.

| Photo Credit:

AP

, The world's largest fish market resumed operations at a new location in Tokyo on Thursday, after final auctions last week at the previous facility in Tsukiji, one of the Japanese capital's top tourist attractions., The long-delayed opening of the gleaming new \$5-billion Toyosu market on reclaimed land was marked by a minor truck fire and an early morning traffic jam., As the new market's first auction kicked off at 5:30 a.m. (2030 GMT), its halls filled with the sound of bells and the shouts of traders, who also used hand signals in the scramble to get the day's best produce., "It might take some time to get used to," Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike said at the site. "Together, we would like to develop this as the core market of Tokyo, and Japan, and make the Toyosu brand better day by day.", The 83-year-old Tsukiji market had attracted tens of thousands of visitors each year to its warren of stalls laden with exotic species of fish and fresh sushi in a tourism boom key to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's economic plan., But it had become dilapidated and unsanitary, city officials have said in planning the move to Toyosu, further away from central Tokyo, a relocation delayed many times since it was conceived 17 years ago., Kimio Amano, a 45-year-old blue tuna seller, said he was concerned about the location., "There are some customers who said they are not coming any longer because it is too far," said Amano. "Let's see what happens.", More than 80 % of Tsukiji fish traders oppose the move, a survey by a group fighting the relocation showed., Demolition work is due to start on Thursday at Tsukiji, but a group of fishmongers protesting the move to Toyosu forced their way back in., In 2016, toxic substances were found in soil and groundwater at Toyosu, once home to a gas plant, prompting Tokyo to spend an extra 3.8 billion yen (\$34 million) to dig hundreds of wells to pump out groundwater., In July, Koike declared the site safe after experts signed off on additional clean-up measures, but some traders remain sceptical., The old site will provide temporary parking for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics before becoming a tourist centre. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Raghav Bahl.

| Photo Credit:

Twitter account of Raghav Bahl , The Income Tax Department on Thursday conducted searches in the residences and offices of four businessmen, including that of Raghav Bahl, founder of media website The Quint, for alleged tax evasion on the proceeds of the sale of shares in a company., "Today, the Income Tax Department conducted searches on the premises of businessmen Raghav Bahl, Kamal Lalwani, Anup Jain and Abhimanyu Chaturvedi," a spokesperson of the department confirmed to The Hindu. ,

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I-T raids on Raghav Bahl's premises: motivated searches will undermine media freedom, says Editors Guild

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I-T raids on Raghav Bahl's premises: motivated searches will undermine media freedom, says Editors Guild , "We are looking at a possible tax evasion of more than Rs. 100 crore in the case of Mr. Bahl himself on account of some long-term capital gains that have accrued to him through the sale of shares of a particular company," the spokesperson said. "The other three have also been beneficiaries of the sale of shares of the same company, which is why all four of them have been covered together.",

My note to the @IndEditorsGuild. pic.twitter.com/l1Gwmf1dDl- Raghav Bahl (@Raghav_Bahl) October 11, 2018

, My note to the @IndEditorsGuild. pic.twitter.com/l1Gwmf1dDl, In a statement to the Editors Guild of India, Mr. Bahl said The Quint was fully tax compliant and they would provide access to all the appropriate financial documents., "I have a matter of great concern to share with the Guild," Mr. Bahl wrote. , He said:, "While I was in Mumbai this morning, dozens of IT officials descended on my residence and The Quint's office for a 'survey.' We are a fully tax compliant entity, and will provide all access to all appropriate financial documents., "However, I have just spoken to the officer on my premises, one Mr. Yadav, and requested him, strongly, to not try and pick up or see any other mail/document which is likely to contain very serious/sensitive journalistic material., "If they do that, then we shall seek extremely strong recourse. They should also not misuse their smartphones to take unauthorised copies of this material. I am now on my way back to Delhi.", Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,
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Cordon has been strengthened, no fresh firing, says police official
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Activists, members of the Human Rights Association Istanbul branch, holding posters with photos of missing Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, talk to members of the media, during a protest in his support near the Saudi Arabia consulate in Istanbul, on Tuesday.

| Photo Credit:

AP

, The fiancée of a missing Saudi contributor to The Washington Post on Wednesday asked President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump to "help shed light" on his disappearance. , The request on behalf of Jamal Khashoggi, who disappeared a week ago while visiting the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul, comes as Turkey said it was preparing to search the diplomatic post. , While Saudi officials haven't acknowledged the pending search, it would represent an extraordinary development in a case that has Turkish officials saying they fear Khashoggi was killed there. Though Riyadh has dismissed the allegation as "baseless," their possible consent to a search shows the increasing international pressure the kingdom faces over Khashoggi's disappearance. , Writing on Wednesday in the Post, Khashoggi's fiancée Hatice Cengiz acknowledged the writer first visited the consulate on Sept. 28 "despite being somewhat concerned that he could be in danger." He later returned Oct. 2 after being promised needed paperwork so the two could be married. , A surveillance video image surfaced on Tuesday showing Khashoggi walking into the consulate in Istanbul's upscale 4th Levent neighborhood. So far, there's no public evidence showing he ever walked out, nor any released by Turkish officials about why they believe Khashoggi was killed. , "At this time, I implore President Trump and first lady Melania Trump to help shed light on Jamal's disappearance," Cengiz wrote. "I also urge Saudi Arabia, especially King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, to show the same level of sensitivity and release CCTV footage from the consulate." , She added- "Although this incident could potentially fuel a political crisis between the two nations, let us not lose sight of the human aspect of what happened." , Khashoggi, who wrote critically for the Post about Prince Mohammed's rise to power, also sought to become a U.S. citizen, Ms. Cengiz wrote. He had been in a self-imposed exile in the U.S. since last year, fearful of the prince's low tolerance for criticism. , Mr. Trump, who took his first overseas trip as U.S. President to the kingdom and whose son-in-law Jared Kushner has close ties to Prince Mohammed, said while he had not yet talked to the Saudis about Khashoggi. , "But I will be at some point," he said on Tuesday, without elaborating. , Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman Hami Aksoy also said on Tuesday that Saudi authorities have notified Ankara that they were "open to cooperation" and would allow the consulate building to be searched. It's unclear when such a search would take place. , Such a search would be an extraordinary development, as embassies and consulates under the Vienna Convention are technically foreign soil and must be protected by host nations. Saudi Arabia may have agreed to the search in order to appease its Western allies and the international community., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Twelve Thai boys and their football coach, who were dramatically rescued from a flooded cave in July, enjoyed a high-profile kickabout on Sunday, ,
From missiles, they do not make ploughshares. They make knives jambiyya (jam-BEE-yah), the ornamental daggers Yemeni men wear for prestige and as a show of courage.

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Godman Sant Rampal. File

| Photo Credit:

Akhilesh Kumar

, A local court in Hisar on Thursday is likely to pronounce its verdict in two separate cases pertaining to death of five women and an infant during several days long stand-off between the Haryana Police and self-styled godman Rampal's supporters in November 2014., Rampal's counsel M.S. Nain told The Hindu that two FIRs – 429 and 430 – were registered in connection with the six deaths and verdict would be pronounced in these two cases. , The clashes had broken out between the supporters of Satlok Ashram head Rampal and the police in Hisar's Barwala town when the police went to arrest the godman to produce him before the Punjab and Haryana Court in connection with a murder case. The stand-off ended on November 19, 2014 with the arrest of Rampal and several of his supporters., Meanwhile, the security has been stepped up in Hisar and the adjoining towns fearing backlash by the supporters of Rampal. The police deployment has been made at the abandoned Satlok Ashram as well., District Magistrate Ashok Kumar Meena imposed Section 144 in Hisar on Wednesday prohibiting carrying of weapons and gathering of five or more persons. He said that no one would be allowed to take the law in their hands., Duty Magistrates have been appointed in Hisar and adjoining towns of Hansi and Barwala, besides reinforcements have been called., The decision will be pronounced at a makeshift court inside the district jail around noon. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,
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Vice-President inaugurated the World Peace Monument, the largest dome in the world ,
The 9,600 sq ft flag stands on a 319.5 ft flag pole at Gandhi Mandap, a memorial for Mahatma Gandhi atop the Sarania Hill , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][
In this June 12, 2018 file photo, U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un hold a signing ceremony at the conclusion of their summit at the Capella Hotel on the resort island of Sentosa, Singapore.

| Photo Credit:

Reuters

, U.S. President Donald Trump has said that planning for his next summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is advanced and that "three or four locations" have been short-listed., Mr. Trump said on Tuesday at the White House that the meeting would "probably" not be in Singapore, where their historic first talks took place in June., The pair discussed ending the reclusive state's nuclear weapons program and hostilities between Washington and Pyongyang., Mr. Trump said that in terms of timing, the summit "won't be too far away," later telling reporters it would take place after the November 6 midterm elections., He also said that there could "eventually" be a meeting on US soil. "On their soil also," Mr. Trump added., U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met Mr. Kim on Monday in Pyongyang to discuss the next summit., "I returned late last night from North Korea from a trip where we made real progress. While there is still a long way to go and much work to do, we can now see a path to where we'll achieve the ultimate goal which is the full and final verified denuclearization of North Korea," Mr. Pompeo told reporters at the White House., "We will, in short order, be able to talk about when the president will get to meet with him at what will be the second summit." Trump talked of "incredible progress," hailing the absence of missile or nuclear tests this year and the recent return of remains of U.S. service members killed during the Korean War., "You have no nuclear tests, you have no rockets, and we have a very good relationship with Chairman Kim, which is very important," Mr. Trump said., "I like him, he likes me, the relationship is good." , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,
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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/planned-kim-summit-narrowed-down-to-three-or-four-locations-trump/article25187658.ece>

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Twelve Thai boys and their football coach, who were dramatically rescued from a flooded cave in July, enjoyed a high-profile kickabout on Sunday, ,
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Remains of the vehicle that fell into a gorge at Kadamparai in Coimbatore on Wednesday night.

| Photo Credit: Special Arrangement , Five persons were killed and 12 others injured after a mini lorry carrying 18 people fell into a 50 feet gorge at Kadamparai in Coimbatore late on Wednesday., All the passengers in the vehicle were from a tribal settlement of Mavadappu near Kadamparai hydroelectric power plant which is located inside Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR)., The accident took place around 11 p.m. when the mini lorry was returning to the tribal settlement from the market at Kottur where they had come for weekly purchases. The police said that driver lost control of the vehicle which fell into a gorge as it reached the ninth bend on the power station road., The deceased have been identified as V. Selvi (32), her husband S. Vellaiyan (45), J. Mallappan (36), P. Raman (45), and K. Thannasi (34), all hailing from Kurumalai, Mavadappu., Eight women and four men were injured in the accident. V. Rajkumar (10), son of Selvi and Vellaiyan was the only passenger who escaped without sustaining any injury. Of the 12 injured, nine were admitted to the Government Hospital Pollachi, while three with serious injuries were shifted to Coimbatore Medical College Hospital., The police said that V. Rajan (40) of Kulipatti, who did not have a driving licence, was behind the wheel. He suffered injuries in legs, hands and head., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Coimbatore/five-killed-12-injured-as-mini-lorry-falls-into-gorge-in-coimbatore/article25187594.ece>

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Arun doesn't even remember who was driving the car , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][

Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen speaks during a press conference at the Presidential Office in Taipei on August 21, 2018.

| Photo Credit:

AFP

, Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen has called on China not to be a "source of conflict," and has pledged to boost the island's defenses against Beijing's military threats. , In a National Day address, Ms. Tsai said the best way to defend Taiwan was to "make it indispensable and irreplaceable to the world." , China has been increasing diplomatic, economic and military pressure on Taiwan to compel Tsai to agree to China's insistence that the self-governing island democracy is a part of China. , Ms. Tsai also said on Wednesday that Taiwan would upgrade its security by increasing the defense budget annually and further developing domestic defense industries. , China and Taiwan separated amid civil war in 1949 and China considers the island a part of its territory to be taken control of by force if necessary. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/taiwan-leader-calls-on-china-to-not-be-source-of-conflict/article25187566.ece>

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GVMC Commissioner M. Hari Narayanan, Principal Controller of Communication Accounts Srikanta Panda going round digital payment mela, on Wednesday.

| Photo Credit:

C.V. Subrahmanyam

, Making a strong pitch for cashless transactions, GVMC Commissioner M. Hari Narayanan on Wednesday said that digital economy was the future and efforts should be made by one and all to promote it. , Inaugurating a digital payment mela organised by the office of the Principal Controller of Communication Accounts (Andhra Pradesh Circle) for telecom retailers at the VUDA Children's Arena here, Mr. Hari Narayanan said that such melas were being organised in all the 100 chosen 'Smart Cities' as a part of the Digital India Mission., "Infrastructure has been built to ensure conduct of digital transactions smoothly, seamlessly and being a Smart City, Vizag should take the lead. We are putting in all efforts to make the city a cashless economy," the Municipal Commissioner said, adding that digital financial transactions would also improve tax payment compliance., Principal Controller of Communication Accounts Srikanta Panda said telecom operators should make special efforts to educate their customers on the importance of digital payments. "If people have any misgivings, they should be removed. There is no option but to go digital in future," he added., Joint Controller of Communication Accounts Anita Mahadas, Deputy Controller of Communication Accounts C.M Sampar and other senior officials spoke on the occasion. , Airtel, BSNL, Reliance-Jio, Vodafone and others participated in the mela., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Visakhapatnam/efforts-on-to-make-city-a-cashless-economy/article25187222.ece>

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Reaches pact with OMC to get iron ore from Gandhamardhan hills

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NGOs take out a rally in Visakhapatnam marking 'World Homeless Day' on Wednesday.

| Photo Credit:

C.V. Subrahmanyam

, The Supreme Court judgement on providing night shelters with all amenities to the homeless should be implemented in its spirit, failing which legal remedies can be sought, former Union Energy Secretary E.A.S. Sarma has said., Addressing a convention of homeless and NGOs running shelters and homes from all over the State, organised by Association for Urban and Tribal Development here, marking the World Homeless Day on Wednesday, he said the homeless should be provided medical facilities., Citing an example, he said preparation of food was sought to be barred at a shelter in Vijayawada recently and it was restored only after the issue was taken to the notice of a panel on night shelters led by retired IAS officer J.C. Sharma., AUTD secretary Pragada Vasu said the State had initiated measures and was running 56 shelters accommodating 2,200 homeless people as part of the Mission for Elimination of Poverty in Municipal Areas (MEPMA). "But, a lot remain to be done as a survey has identified more than 11,000 homeless," he said., He demanded that a shelter with a capacity of 100 each be opened for every 1 lakh population and separate shelters for the differently abled and the mentally challenged and working hostels for migrant workers be set up., Earlier, a rally was taken by the participants from the city railway station to the venue. A video film on the work done through the MEPMA for the homeless was also screened on the occasion. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Visakhapatnam/rights-of-homelessshould-be-protected/article25187218.ece>

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The way forward: APSRTC Vice-Chairman and Managing Director N.V. Surendra Babu addressing the media at the PNBS in Vijayawada on Wednesday.
, On the performance scale, the AP State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) has always been in the top three positions in the country in all parameters, but constant increase in the cost input has pushed the public sector giant into deep financial crisis, according to RTC Vice-Chairman and Managing Director N.V. Surendra Babu. , "Take for instance its 78% occupancy ratio, a record nowhere else found in the country, or earnings per km, without the increase in the cost input," said Mr. Surendra Babu at a press conference here on Wednesday. He said when compared to the 2015 fares and conditions, the public sector transport had in fact earned profits to the tune of ₹160 crore. Budgetary support by the government, he emphasised, was the only way to help RTC tide over crisis. , To cater to the festival rush, the corporation would run 3,000 additional buses during the Dasara festivities., "The organisation has added 805 new buses in its fleet this year. Of them, 120 are a/c buses and 32 sleeper buses. There is a move to install surveillance cameras in all the new buses acquired by the RTC in the days to come." , Mr. Surendra Babu asserted that RTC would never run buses that were not in good condition. "There is no rule that a vehicle is reduced to scrap after covering 15 lakh-km distance. The vehicle performance has improved over the years, thanks to new technologies," he said, adding that it was not right to attribute accidents to use of 'unfit' buses. "95 % of the road accidents occur due to human error," he maintained, stating that drivers were given training and made aware of their duties through regular workshops., Speaking about other initiatives, he said in the personnel department, the number of pendency cases had been brought down drastically in the last six months and same was the case with pending pension cases, reduced from nearly 5,000 to 3,000 now. As part of rationalisation of the strength in the department, the staff was being shuffled wherever there was a need. "This should not be mistaken as a move to remove people from their jobs," he clarified. , Doing away with the punishment culture, the corporation had addressed 15,000 cases bringing them down to 3,000 cases. "This is to remove any possible fear in their minds of losing their jobs. The feedback we received says the move has instilled confidence in the employees," he said. , APSRTC Executive Director (IT) A. Koteswara Rao, EO G. Jairao and other officials were present., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Vijayawada/rtc-crisis-attributed-to-rise-in-input-cost/article25187211.ece>

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Most of them accompanied their parents for fishing , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][
Chief Secretary Anil Chandra Punetha
| Photo Credit: ARRANGED , Chief Secretary Anil Chandra Punetha on Wednesday said the Mukhyamantri Yuvanestham should be seen as a scheme aimed at imparting skills to unemployment youth thereby enabling them to earn a decent livelihood and not merely as ₹1,000 allowance., Addressing a review meeting at the Secretariat, Mr. Punetha said there were some teething problems in the implementation and it would be made foolproof over a period of time. He instructed the officials concerned to take necessary action. , Director of youth services Y. Bhanu Prakash said vocational training would be given to the youth through the State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC) depending on their qualifications and interest and also financial support extended for self-employment ventures. Of the 7.85 lakh youths who registered on the Mukhyamantri Yuvanestham website, 1.64 lakh were found to be eligible and the allowance had been credited to their bank accounts. Hereafter, applications received till the 25th of every month would be scrutinised and money remitted on the first day of

the next month., The applicants should at least be a graduate and not possess four-wheelers. , Principal Secretaries B. Udaya Lakshmi, Gopalkrishna Dwivedi and B. Rajasekhar, Commissioner of industries Siddharth Jain, Special Commissioner (collegiate education) Sujatha Sharma, A.P. Housing Corporation MD Kantilal Dande and APSSDC Director Subba Rao were present. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address., Printable version | Oct 11, 2018 5:23:40 PM | <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Vijayawada/yuvanestham-is-an-enabling-scheme/article25187209.ece>

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Winners of the cookery contest
, Sixty-five-year-old B. Seethamahalakshmi walked away with the top honours for her ganji pulusu kadambam at the "Our State, Our Taste" cookery contest organised by The Hindu Group, in collaboration with the Tourism Department here on Wednesday. She bagged a cash prize of ₹50,000., The contest witnessed more than 180 participants in the age group of 12 to 65 years vying with one another to make the signature dish of the region., The second prize was bagged by K. Bhavani for her dish thaati boorelu. M. Sarojini came third for her sweet dish paala thalikalu. Both of them received cash prizes of ₹30,000 and ₹20,000 respectively. , Unusual recipes such as keema kajjikaya, royyala pulao, kottimera vadiyalu, multivitamin laddu, oats kheer, arikela patikibellam pongali, fruit-ragi java, amruthaphalam sweet, thaati boorelu and korrela pulihora were the cherry on the top. All the dishes, which included curries, snacks and desserts, represented the rich heritage and culture of Andhra Pradesh., Two head chefs from the State Institute of Hotel Management, Tirupati, A. Sivaramakrishna and K. Sivaramakrishna, tasted the dishes and adjudged the three best along with two consolation prizes. "Some of the dishes reminded us of our childhood when we craved for our grandmothers' food," said Mr. A. Sivaramakrishna., The show was sponsored by RKG, Butterfly, Kanchi Kamakshi and Fortune. Nissar Ahmed of the Tourism Department, Kishore of the Butterfly group, and Kiran Kumar of Fortune group were among the invitees. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address., Printable version | Oct 11, 2018 5:27:16 PM | <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Vijayawada/whats-cooking-the-signature-dishes-of-andhra-pradesh/article25187207.ece>

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Humble roots have not deterred Anantapur girl from pursuing her passions , Most of them accompanied their parents for fishing , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][Four photojournalists and a journalist of The Hindu bagged awards in the 'India Press Photo Awards - 2018' organised by the State Photojournalists Association of Andhra Pradesh for the third consecutive year. , The Hindu's photojournalists - K.R. Deepak, Chief Photographer, Visakhapatnam, K.V.S. Giri, Special News Photographer, Hyderabad, and M. Periasamy, News Photographer, Coimbatore, bagged the top three places in the general news and sports category. In the photo travel category, V. Peddi Raju, Principal News Photographer, Vijayawada, won a consolation award for his picture of monks rally. , Also, Special Correspondent for The Hindu in Visakhapatnam, Nivedita Ganguly won the Padma Vibhushan Awardee Homai Vyarwalla India's First Woman Photojournalist Memorial Award carrying ₹10,000 cash prize. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address., Printable version | Oct 11, 2018 5:23:40 PM | <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Vijayawada/the-hindu-journalists-win-awards/article25187202.ece>

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Devotees waiting in a queue at the Kanaka Durga temple on the first day of the
Dasara festivities in Vijayawada on Wednesday.

| Photo Credit:

CH. VIJAYA BHASKAR

, The nine-day Dasara festivities at the Kanaka Durga Temple atop Indrakeeladri
began on an auspicious and grand note amid special pujas and other rituals such
as suprabhata seva, bala bhoga nivedan performed by the priests starting from 3
am on Wednesday. , At 9 am, when the temple doors were thrown open for the
public, devotees thronged it through the carpeted queues lines extending up to
more than one kilometre to the foot of the hill and beyond, to have a glimpse of
the presiding deity adorned as 'Sri Swarnakavachalankrutha Sri Durga Devi.' , As
of 7.30 pm, over 49,000 devotees had visited the temple, according to the
officials of Sri Durgamalleswara Swami Varla Devasthanam. Though the rush came
down around noon, it went up in the evening. The drop in temperature owing to
the formation of a cyclonic system came as a relief for the devotees. , AP
Special Protection Force Commandant Konda Narasimham and his wife blew conches
for three minutes continuously marking the beginning of the festivities. The
couple have been doing so for the past 30 years at the temple premises., MLC
Buddha Venkanna, who visited the temple, said that he prayed for the victory of
Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu in the coming elections. , Officials of the
Srikalahasti temple presented silk robes to the presiding deity for the first
time. Minister for Water Resources D. Umamaheswara Rao went in the queue line to
have darshan of the goddess. , Meanwhile, devotees who came in the ₹300 queue
lines expressed concern over the delay in darshan even though there was not much
rush. They complained that the free queue lines were moving freely., The temple
had earned over ₹16 lakh by evening through the sale of darshan tickets,
prasadam and other services. , Only about 2,400 persons and about 3,230 persons
purchased the ₹300 and ₹200 tickets respectively until evening. , The sight of
police personnel wearing boots near the mahamandapam irked the devotees. , The
presiding deity will appear as Sri Balatripura Sundari Devi and devotees can
have darshan starting from as early as 3 am on Thursday. The temple will be open
till 11 pm. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please
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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Vijayawada/festivities-off-to-grandstart-at-durga-temple/article25187200.ece>

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subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][A 34-year-
old man allegedly sexually assaulted his five-year-old daughter near Avanigadda
in Krishna district. He was absconding after his wife lodged a complaint with
the police on Tuesday night. Though the incident occurred on Saturday, the
victim revealed it to her mother after three days when she developed some
complications. , Avanigadda Deputy Superintendent of Police V. Pothuraju told
newsmen that the accused person, S. Koti Nageswara Rao, was a teacher in the
limits of Kaikaluru police station and he and his wife had been living
separately for the past two years following differences. , According to Mr.
Pothuraju, the couple have two children and both are staying with their mother.
Nageswara Rao frequently meets his two children. He offered a chocolate to his
daughter while she was on way to school on Saturday and allegedly sexually
assaulted her. , "Preliminary medical examination has confirmed the sexual
assault and a case has been registered against Nageswara Rao under the
Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act. , The accused is absconding and
special teams are deployed to nab him," Mr. Pothuraju said. The girl was
admitted to hospital., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every
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Devotional fervour: Procession of Golden Tiruchi being taken out on at Tirumala
on Wednesday.

| Photo Credit:

K.V. Poornachandra Kumar

, The procession of Golden Tiruchi marked the commencement of the annual
Navaratri Brahmotsavams of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala. , Processional deity
Lord Malayappa and his two divine consorts Sri Devi and Bhoo Devi, mounted atop
the golden palanquin, were taken around the mada streets on the inaugural day on
Wednesday. , A series of rituals dominated the religious proceedings on the
opening day. The pre-dawn rituals were followed by special ones like 'suddhi',
'koluvu', 'ekantha thirumanjanam' inside the temple. , Tirumala-based TTD JEO
K.S. Srinivasa Raju at a high-level meeting with HoDs of various departments
urged the officials to render uncompromising services to the visiting pilgrims
who he said are expected to throng the town in huge numbers. The officials in
charge of core areas should remain more vigilant and address the grievances that
crop up during their discharge of duties., Underlining the need for a better
coordination between various departments, he urged the officials to focus more
on the maintenance of hygiene atop the town. He also exhorted them to come up
with a ballpark figure with regard to the requirement of Srivari seva volunteers
and their deployment in select areas like mada streets, health and annadanam
during the festival period. , Later in the night the procession of seven hooded
golden Pedda Sesha vahanam was organised. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in
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Anantapur youth make it to the Indian squad for the Special Olympics

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Fresh from scaling Mt. Kilimanjaro, Anand and Sivaprasad look for sponsors
, Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep
getting the alerts.][The very severe cyclonic storm (Titli) caused heavy to very
heavy rainfall in Ganjam, Gajapati, Puri districts of Odisha but no casualties
or major damage were reported., As per IMD report, 'Titli' crossed north Andhra
Pradesh and south coast near Palasa in Srikakulam district to the southwest of
Gopalpur in Odisha between 4.30AM to 5.30AM at wee hours of Thursday. Gopalpur
experienced wind of 126 kilometers per hour at 4.30AM. At 5.30 AM the wind speed
went down to 102 kilometer per hour., This cyclonic storm sustained wind speed
of 140-150 kilometers per hour with gusting wind of 165 kilometers per hour
during landfall near Palasa., According Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) of
Odisha, Bishnupad Sethi, Titli cyclone affected Ganjam, Khurda, Puri,
Jagatsinghpur, Gajapati, Kendrapara, Bhadrak and Balasore districts of the
State. It caused heavy to very heavy rainfall in Ganjam, Gajapati and Puri
districts., Some thatched or asbestos houses, street lights as well as road
blockage because of falling trees was reported from parts of Ganjam district.
But no injury to humans was reported till 9AM. Minor damage to power and
communication has been reported from some parts of Ganjam district, official
sources said., Around three lakh people were evacuated to safe places in coastal
districts of Odisha for the 'Titli' cyclone. Around two lakh of them were of
vulnerable areas of Ganjam district. One thousand one hundred and twelve relief
camps were opened to shelter evacuees. They were also sheltered at 879
multipurpose cyclone shelters. In Ganjam district, 108 pregnant women were
shifted to hospitals. In Jagatsinghpur district number of shifted pregnant women

was 18., Odisha was well prepared to face the cyclone. As per Mr Sethi, 30 district emergency operation centers were activated to respond to untoward incidents. Three hundred power boats were kept ready with crew. All schools, colleges and anganwadi kendras in the State will remain closed till October 12., Thirteen NDRF teams were deployed in Ganjam (2 teams), Gajapati, Puri (2 teams), Kendrapada, Nayagarh, Bhadrak, Jagatsinghpur, Balasore, Jajpur, Khurda and Sambalpur districts. ODRAF teams were deployed in nine districts, Ganjam, Puri, Jagatsinghpur, Khurda, Cuttack, Balasore, Mayurbhanj, Boudh, Kalahandi. Fire services teams were in high alert throughout the State., The situation is being closely monitored at different levels, said Mr Sethi., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address., Printable version | Oct 11, 2018 5:41:02 PM | <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/cyclone-titli-landfall-no-casualty-damages-reported/article25187191.ece>

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Vice-President inaugurated the World Peace Monument, the largest dome in the world ,
The 9,600 sq ft flag stands on a 319.5 ft flag pole at Gandhi Mandap, a memorial for Mahatma Gandhi atop the Sarania Hill , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][Cyclone Titli which caused tension among the Andhra Pradesh administration and people of North Andhra region had caused a little damage in Srikakulam district although IMD and officials anticipated devastation., The cyclone which hovered between Gopalpur of Odisha and Kalingapatnam of Andhra Pradesh for the last two days hit the coast near Gollapadu-Pallesarathi villages of Santabommali mandal, 60 km away from district headquarters at around 3.35 am on Thursday. During the landfall, the gales which moved with a speed of 120 km caused losses to the coconut, paddy and other crops. , Moderate rain was recorded in places like Santabommali, Kotabommali, Tekkali, Vajrapukotturu, Palasa, Mandasa and Itchapuram. With the impact of rains and gales, the damage has been done to the coconut crop which was grown in 7 mandals including Vajrapukotturu, Mandasa, Palasa and others in Uddanam region. Trees have been fallen in Tekkali division. Roads and Buildings department swung into action clear the roads. , Srikakulam Collector K. Dhananjaya Reddy who has been reviewed the weather situation continuously directed the revenue, civil supplies, irrigation and other departments to be alert for the next couple of days till IMD withdraws its warning over cyclone. "We have to be very cautious for the next two days since the district would receive heavy rainfall after cyclone hitting the coast. Special monitoring teams have been sent to Kanchili, Sompeta, Mandasa, Palasa and other places. The impact of the cyclone will be more around 50 km from the landfall area," said Mr. Reddy. , Fire Safety wing head Ch. Kripavaram said that rescue teams had been kept in Palasa so that they would move easily to the cyclone hit places. According to him, two NDRF teams were also stationed in Palasa and Tekkali for taking up relief measures in affected areas. Srikakulam Joint Collector KVN Chakradhar Babu said that essential goods including food and fuel were stored sufficiently at identified relief camps., APSRTC has been operating limited services to Visakhapatnam, Palasa, Tekkali and other routes to avoid damage to vehicles and inconvenience to the passengers. With the suggestion from the district administration, a majority of the people remained indoors in the district. Meanwhile, the situation in Vizianagaram was not alarming even after cyclone hitting the coast. Vizianagaram Collector M.Hari Jawaharlal directed the officials to be vigilant till Saturday., Curfew like situation is prevailing in Srikakulam district, particularly in the district headquarters on Thursday morning with people confining themselves to houses with the impact of cyclone Titli which hit the coast near Gollapadu, Pallesaradhi villages of Santabommali mandal of the district at around 3.30 pm. With bitter experiences during Phailin and Hud Hud cyclones, the people feared about natural calamity this time too. , Complete darkness in early hours of Thursday, moderate rain and heavy gales with a speed of 120km per hour caused tension among the people and made them to stay indoors. Minister for Transport K. Atchannaidu and Collector K. Dhananjaya Reddy directed the education department to declare holiday for schools and colleges to prevent untoward incidents. Vehicular movement in all routes is very thin.

APSRTC buses are moving with little occupancy rate with passengers postponing their travel plan even in Dasara season., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,
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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/cyclone-titli-hit-srikakulam-coast-andhra-pradesh/article25187185.ece>

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Anantapur youth make it to the Indian squad for the Special Olympics

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Fresh from scaling Mt. Kilimanjaro, Anand and Sivaprasad look for sponsors
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Donald Trump

, US President Donald Trump has mocked the “#MeToo” movement, saying that he needs to censor himself due to the rules of this movement, which is being enforced by the press., “There’s an expression, but under the rules of #MeToo, I am not allowed to use that expression anymore. I can’t do it,” Trump said at a mid-term election rally in Pennsylvania, and then he pointed at the phrase “the girl that got away”., “It’s the person that got away. The old days, it was a little different than Pennsylvania to it,” Mr. Trump said referring to the GOP’s inability to win presidential elections earlier., Pointing to the media, Mr. Trump said he would use the original phrase, except for the media. “I would do it except for these people up there. They would say, did you hear what President Trump said? Did you hear what he said?” he said imitating reporters., “So, there is an expression, but we’ll change the expression. Pennsylvania was always the person that got away. That’s pretty good,” he said amidst applause from the audience. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,
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Twelve Thai boys and their football coach, who were dramatically rescued from a flooded cave in July, enjoyed a high-profile kickabout on Sunday, ,
From missiles, they do not make ploughshares. They make knives jambiyya (jam-BEE-yah), the ornamental daggers Yemeni men wear for prestige and as a show of courage.
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Ayyappa devotees consider SC judgment an attack on the Hindu customs and the temple rituals being followed for centuries. File

| Photo Credit:
Nagara Gopal

, A meeting of Ayyappa devotees opposing the recent Supreme Court judgment on the entry of women into the temple will be held at Shubham Convention, Nagole on October 14. , Ayyappa devotees, who have formed a ‘Ayyapa Aikya Vedika’ said that the meeting would discuss on what it calls an attack on the customs of Hindus and the temple rituals being followed for centuries, said Raju Deshpande, president and Ayyappa, joint secretary in a statement here. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,
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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Hyderabad/ayyappa-aikya-vedika-meet-on-october-14/article25187145.ece>

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Scriptsville, a fledgeling body, hopes to streamline the writing process and generate quality content for web series and Telugu cinema

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The Hyderabad High Court. File

| Photo Credit:

G. Krishnaswamy

, Directing the Election Commission of India to come out with an action plan to rectify the discrepancies in voters' list of Telangana, the Hyderabad High Court on Wednesday consented to its decision for publication of the revised electoral rolls on Friday. , The order was passed by a division bench comprising Chief Justice Thottathil B. Radhakrishnan and Justice S.V. Bhat in a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by Congress leader and former Minister Marri Shashidhar Reddy over "large-scale discrepancies" in draft electoral rolls. The bench also instructed the EC to place before it an action plan, modalities and mechanism to be followed to respond to complaints about voters' list. , Dictating the order, the bench observed that the purity of electoral rolls was the cornerstone on which the EC operates. It was imperative to follow proper procedure to bring in changes for purification of voters' list. , The bench said it heard the submissions of EC counsel Avinash Desai citing the provisions of the Constitution, the Representation of People Act and the electoral rules. It said EC was making efforts to rectify mistakes in the electoral rolls and carry forward the process of finalisation of the voters' list. , The High Court lifted its earlier order directing the EC not to publish the revised electoral rolls on Friday. "It would be open for any individual voter or persons to raise objections over the details of the voters list and place request for exclusions or inclusions as per the law," the bench noted. , Before passing the order, the bench told the EC counsel that it would appreciate the efforts being made by the poll panel to update the voters' list. But at the same time, the issues raised by the petitioner like nearly 900 voters being listed with a single house number and anomalies relating to voters having same names and house numbers need to be examined. , "Do you have a field level mechanism to tackle such issues relating to discrepancies in electoral rolls?" the bench sought to know. Mr. Desai replied that the EC was already on the job and most of the discrepancies would be set right in the revised voters' list to be released on Friday. , Justice S.V. Bhat suggested to the Election Commission to explore the idea of releasing booth-wise details of the voters' list. The job of rectifications in voters' list would be made easier if objections are invited and changes are made polling booth-wise, he observed. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,
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Appearing for hearing: Actress Preity Zinta outside the Bombay High Court on Wednesday.

| Photo Credit:

Emmanual Yogini

, The Bombay High Court on Wednesday quashed a 2014 case lodged by the city police against industrialist Ness Wadia for allegedly outraging the modesty of Bollywood actor Preity Zinta., Ms. Zinta and Mr. Wadia along with their lawyers appeared before a Division Bench of Justices Ranjit More and Bharti Dangre in the judges' chamber., " We have been told by the court not to divulge anything more," Mr. Wadia's lawyer Aabad Ponda said. Ms. Zinta's lawyers also refused to give any details., On October 1, the court suggested that two settle the issue amicably. , Ms. Zinta's lawyer had said that she was willing to settle the matter if Mr. Wadia was ready to apologise. Mr. Ponda had then said that his client was ready to bury the hatchet, but he would not apologise., The alleged incident took place at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on May 30, 2014 during an

Indian Premier League (IPL) match., Ms. Zinta and Mr. Wadia are co-owners of the IPL team Kings XI Punjab. , According to the complaint, Mr. Wadia was abusing the team staff over ticket distribution when Ms. Zinta asked him to calm down as their team was winning., He abused her too and molested her by grabbing her arm, Ms. Zinta said, as per the first information report lodged on June 13, 2014 under IPC Sections 354 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 504 (intentional insult), 506 (criminal intimidation) and 509 (using word, gesture or act intended to insult a woman's modesty)., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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State govt. considers cancelling licence of plastic traders , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][

An emergency drill being conducted at IOC, Tiruchi Terminal, at Vazhavandankottai on Wednesday.

, The bi-annual emergency response mock drill was conducted at Indian Oil Corporation, Tiruchi terminal at Vazhavandankottai, on Wednesday, to determine alertness of employees and technical staff to meet contingencies., The drill was conducted at petrol and diesel storage tanks with fighting facilities like dry chemical powder extinguisher, water cum foam monitor, water monitor and fire hoses to extinguish the mock fire. It was held as per Factories Act under the leadership of R.Sujatha, Senior Terminal Manager, Tiruchi terminal. Combating, auxiliary and rescue teams took part in it. Fire tenders from BHEL, HAPP and OFT supported the teams. , A. Ravi, Joint Director Industrial Safety and Health, Tiruchi, inspected the drill and gave suggestions for improving the impact of the drill., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Pamphlets against illegal sand mining being distributed to the public on Wednesday.

, Officials from various departments carried out an awareness campaign here on Wednesday. , They travelled on vehicles covering nine places on the city's outskirts to drive home the message. They explained the damage that could be caused to nature due to illegal sand mining and smuggling. , Headed by the Revenue Divisional Officer, Tiruchi, K. Anbazhagan, the campaign was carried out involving police officers of Tiruverumbur sub division besides officials from the Public Works, Revenue and Mines and Minerals departments., The campaign began from Kiliyoor in Tiruverumbur taluk and covered Pathalapettai, Koothaippar, Bhagavathipuram, Vengur, Puthapuram, Ottakudi, Keezhamullaikudi and Panayakurichi. , They distributed pamphlets stressing the need to protect river sand., They explained that lifting sand from the Cauvery and Coleroon without permission was a crime and habitual offenders would be detained under the Goondas Act. , They emphasised the need to protect water resources and river sand as they were key in improving ground water table. , Illegal sand mining and smuggling would be detrimental to farmers affecting their livelihood. , They made use of the campaign to drive home the precautionary measures public needed to take to prevent outbreak of dengue and its spread. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Tiruchi Corporation embraces a successful Bengaluru model , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][The drinking project for the five wards added to the Tiruchi Corporation in 2010-11 is unlikely to be completed before June or July 2019 due to undue delay in starting construction of head works. , The project, which is to be implemented at an estimated cost of ₹63.70 crore, is aimed at supplying 135 litres of drinking water per head to residents of 61, 62, 63, 64 and 65 wards in Tiruverumbur, Kattur, Pappakurichi, Ellakudi, Keezha Kalkandarkottai and nearby areas. , The Cauvery river bed near Melur is the source for the new water supply scheme. Construction of head works at an estimate of ₹12.17 crore, construction of eight over head tanks and provision of additional water pumping mains for a length of 25.70 km at a cost of ₹18.43 and provision of distribution mains for 205.70 km at an estimate of ₹14.09 are some components of the project., Construction of a collector well, installation of three motors including a standby for round-the-clock operation and construction of a footbridge across the river from the pump house up to Kambarasampettai for laying a main to bring water are also parts of the project. , As per the original plan, the project should have been completed before March, 2018. Even after six months, only 70% of works have been completed. Out of 8 overhead tanks, six have been completed. Construction of overhead tanks at Pari Nagar and Ganesh Nagar is still under way. Though laying of pumping mains along the Tiruch-Thanjavur highway and Tiruchi-Karur highway from Kambarasampettai was progressing at a fast pace initially, the works have been suspended due to objection from a line department. , Construction of head works, which is considered as a prime component, is yet to be started due to flow of water in the Cauvery. Though the Public Works Department had accorded its nod for head works, the corporation officials said that it was not possible to start the work until the Mettur dam was closed for the season. , The flow of water was likely to continue up to the second or third week of February. The works would be started only thereafter. It might take at least 4 to 5 months for completing the head works from February. , A senior official said that sincere steps had been taken to clear decks on laying mains along the highways. Head works would be initiated immediately after the closure of the Mettur dam. Steps would be taken to complete all works before June or July, 2019. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,
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Street vendors staging a protest in Tiruchi on Wednesday.

, A group of street vendors affiliated to the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) staged a demonstration here on Wednesday condemning the authorities for trying to destroy the livelihood of street vendors by evicting them in the name of Smart City., The demonstration held at Chinthamani near the Chatham bus stand was led by A. Ansardeen, district secretary of the Street Vendors Association. , They alleged that the authorities were trying to evict street vendors from Central Bus Stand, NSB Road and Teppakulam area near the Main Guard gate with the intention of destroying them. , They wanted the civic body administration to remove the encroachments of big commercial establishments along NSB Road, the city's commercial hub. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Students of National Institute of Technology - Tiruchi, handing over gifts to inmates of an old age home at Kattur.

, Students of National Institute of Technology - Tiruchi, celebrated a week-long Festival of Joy of Giving., The team timed the festival of giving money, devoting time, contributing resources and imparting skills coinciding with Gandhi Jayanthi celebrations. Their initiative was supported by a number of non-government organisations and corporates, staff, students and alumni. Students raised funds by screening movies and flash mob performances., The philanthropic activities reflecting in fulfilment of needs of inmates of orphanages and old age homes were coordinated by the Social Council and various Social Responsibility Clubs in the institute., First, students conveyed their gratitude towards bus drivers and conductors for their service. Each of the 300 crew was given a kit containing biscuits, sweets, towels, small diaries and combs., Groceries, notebooks and stationery items were gifted to the inmates of Valluvar Orphanage and Therasa Karunalayam on the second day. Students engaged the inmates in events and games., The visit to Truwdes Old Age Home on the third day was marked by the same activities. Students visited Kindergarten Schools at Thirunedunkulam, and Thuvakudi, consulted the beneficiaries before gifting them toys, chocolates, colour pencils. The 300 inmates of the Lourba Blind Home were provided with groceries, cots, and mixers. Clothes, soaps and antiseptic lotion were given to 60 inmates of Manayeripatti Mudhiyor Maruvazhvu Illam and Malarchi Home on the next day., A cheque for ₹ 10,000 was gifted at Malarchi Home on behalf of EEE Association for the welfare of mentally challenged kids. The kids were given sweets., The students invited 400 students from government schools and orphanages to the institute where several events like 'Gala for Kids' were conducted. The alumni members spent time with them., On the final day, they visited Thuvakudi Middle School and Thuvakudi Malai School to distribute chairs and fans. They visited St. Antony's Old Age Home, Kattur, and distributed groceries and mosquito nets. The evening was replete with a joyous melange of music, songs and dance., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Tiruchi Corporation embraces a successful Bengaluru model , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][An earthquake collapsed homes on Indonesia's Java island, killing at least three people, and shook the tourist hotspot of Bali on Thursday, two weeks after a major quake-tsunami disaster in a central region of the archipelago. , Indonesia's disaster agency said the nighttime quake was centered at sea, 55 km northeast of Situbondo city, and also felt in Lombok. The U.S. Geological Survey said it had a 6.0 magnitude. , The agency said the worst affected area was in Sumenep district, East Java where three people died in one village and several homes were damaged. , It said "the earthquake was felt quite strongly by people in Sumenep and Situbondo for 2-5 seconds. People poured out of their houses. In other areas the earthquake was felt to be moderate." , The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are holding annual meetings on Bali through Sunday. , Some tourists and residents on Bali went outdoors as a precaution but then back to sleep when there was no tsunami warning. , The country is still working to recover from the earthquake and tsunami that killed more than 2,000 people and left perhaps thousands more buried deeply in mud in some

neighborhoods of Palu city in central Sulawesi. , Disaster agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho said Wednesday the death toll from the double disaster on Sept. 28 has risen to 2,045, with most of the fatalities in the coastal city of Palu. More than 80,000 people are living in temporary shelters or otherwise displaced, he said. , Possibly 5,000 people were buried in places where the earthquake caused liquefaction, a phenomenon where wet soil weakens and collapses, becoming mud that sucks houses and everything else into the ground in a quicksand-like effect. Stretches of the coastline were trashed by the tsunami that Mr. Nugroho said had waves up to 11 meters (36 feet) high. , The official search for bodies will end Thursday with mass prayers in hard-hit neighborhoods, but Mr. Nugroho said volunteers and family members can continue searching. Memorials will be constructed in hard-hit neighborhoods such as Balaroa and Petobo, he said at a news conference in Jakarta. , "People are traumatized. They don't want to go back" to those places, Mr. Nugroho said. "They asked to be relocated to another place and a house made for them." , After making a rare appeal for international assistance, Indonesia is now trying to limit foreign involvement in the disaster relief effort. Mr. Nugroho said there's no need for international aid other than the four priorities identified by Indonesia tents, water treatment units, generators and transport., The disaster agency has circulated guidelines that say foreign aid workers can be in the field only with Indonesian partners. Groups that sent foreign personnel to the disaster zone are "advised to retrieve their personnel immediately," according to those guidelines. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Twelve Thai boys and their football coach, who were dramatically rescued from a flooded cave in July, enjoyed a high-profile kickabout on Sunday, ,
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Revenue Minister R.B. Udhayakumar, Minister of Cooperation 'Sellur' K. Raju and MLA V.V. Rajan Chellappa inspect works at Sellur tank on Wednesday.

, Revenue Minister R.B. Udhayakumar on Wednesday said the State government and the district administration were working towards assessing the damage caused by the heavy downpour in Madurai. , Residents whose houses and farmlands were affected will receive compensation., The Minister, along with Minister of Cooperation 'Sellur' K. Raju and MLA V.V. Rajan Chellappa, visited water-logged areas. They also inspected tanks where desilting work was carried out to prevent further flooding in the city., Visiting Sellur tank, the Minister attributed the damage to surplus channels that could not handle the sudden excess inflow of water due to rain and release from Vaigai dam. "The Public Works department is assessing storage capacity and placing sandbags in places where the bunds are weak. All officials have also been asked to keep an eye on the total inflow for the next 24 hours," he said., Asked why inundation continued to take place in many parts of the city despite planning, he said the district administration had already mapped out 4,399 vulnerable spots ahead of the rain. The strength of old structures was being monitored and maps had been charted for rescue and relief operations. "We have a total of 5,000 sandbags in place. Desilting works have already taken place. Encroachments along the northern bank of the Vaigai have been removed as well," he said. , Mr. Raju attributed the downpour to climate change. Many tanks in his ward had already been disilted and maintained. The groundwater would improve in the constituency due to timely effort., Mr. Rajan Chellappa said a ₹20-crore project would soon be undertaken by PWD in order to cement the Panthalkudi channel. "This will prevent major flooding in the future.", Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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A section of students boycott classes in protest against hike in fee , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][

Frequent overflowing of sewage from underground drainage pipelines at Bethaniyapuram in the city poses a health hazard to residents.

, M. Jyothi stands in the middle of Bethaniapuram's Kamarajar street raising slogans against the City Corporation and takes part in a road roko campaign. , It is her ninth month of pregnancy and the sun beats down on her as she wipes the sweat beads off her forehead. , "I have no choice but to take to the streets. The Corporation has not cleaned the manhole near our house. Drainage and excreta is floating in our houses. This is a question of my child's health," she says., For 40 days, the Corporation has ignored the pleas of residents and not tended to the drainage system in the streets. , K. Sushila, one of the protestors says that the residents have not been able to eat at their houses. "The drainage rises and flows into our houses, causing extensive stench. It is repulsive and it is getting increasingly difficult to live in our houses," she says. , On the verge of tears and rage, Sushila says her young sons feel an itch in their feet due to stepping on drainage. "We have visited the Corporation office several times and written complaints everyday. The officials regularly give us excuses or blatantly refuse to visit our homes despite requests. On rare days when a group of us approach them, they oblige. They also ask us to arrange about Rs. 1,000 for the clearance work," she says., She adds that cleaners often threaten to stop the drainage work unless the amount is paid. "As tax-paying citizens, we are entitled to clean houses and proper drainage systems. Should we have to pay for it?" she asks. , Sushila adds that each time she decides to visit the Corporation office, she loses her day's wages. "I earn ₹200 at a local tailoring shop. When I am out protesting, my day's salary is compromised," she says. , Other women, including S. Vellaiammal and S. Subbulakshmi, say that they cannot cook or watch the television in their houses. All their time is diverted towards cleaning the mess. It is almost an inhuman way to live, they say. , A senior Corporation official from the Engineering department says residents have been discouraged from paying money to the cleaners unless they willingly tip them., "There maybe a block in the stretch. We will ensure that all steps are taken to prevent such problems," he said. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Army jawans walk towards encounter site at Shatgund Balla in Kupwara district of north Kashmir on Thursday.

| Photo Credit: The Hindu , Scholar-turned-militant commander Manan Bashir Wani was among two militants killed in an operation by the Army on Thursday in Kupwara, sparking a spate of street protests.,

Read more

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American Lara Alqasem (centre) sits in a courtroom prior to a hearing at the district court in Tel Aviv, Israel on October 11, 2018.
| Photo Credit: AP

, A senior Israeli Cabinet minister on Wednesday defended the government's handling of the case of an American graduate student held in detention at the country's international airport for the past week over allegations that she promotes a boycott against the Jewish state., In an interview, Gilad Erdan, who oversees the government's efforts to counter the Palestinian-led boycott movement, said that Israel has the right to protect itself and decide who enters its borders. He also rejected international criticism of Israel's handling of the case and said he would not be swayed by criticism in the media., "World media many times are against the state of Israel, and that is not something that has to tell us to change our ideology or to change our mind," Mr. Erdan said., Lara Alqasem, a 22-year-old American citizen with Palestinian grandparents, landed at Ben-Gurion Airport last week with a valid student visa and was registered to study human rights at Israel's Hebrew University in Jerusalem. But she was barred from entering the country and ordered deported, based on suspicions that she is an activist in the boycott movement.,

Tourists take photographs outside the closed Acropolis ancient site in Athens on October 11, 2018 during a 24-hour strike called by a Greek union representing staff at the country's ancient site.
| Photo Credit: AP

, The ancient Acropolis in Athens and most of Greece's archaeological sites and publicly-run museums are closed to the public because of a 24-hour strike called by a union of Culture Ministry employees. Scores of tourists gathered on Thursday outside the Acropolis, initially unaware of the strike., The union has accused the government of failing to exempt the transfer of ownership of national heritage sites to a powerful privatisation fund created during the country's international bailouts., The Culture Ministry says the concerns are unfounded.,

People make their way as Cyclone Titli hits the city, starting with surface wind effect reaching speeds of 126 kmph at Gopalpur, in Ganjam

| Photo Credit: PTI

, The 'very severe' cyclonic storm 'Titli' left two persons dead in Srikakulam district, the State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) said.,

Also Read

Cyclone 'Titli', Bali IMF meetings, and other news in pictures

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' Cyclone 'Titli', Bali IMF meetings, and other news in pictures
, Rainfall ranging from 2 cm to 26 cm was recorded in several mandals of the district and the State Road Transport Corporation suspended its bus services.,
"Every hour from now on is very crucial. Focus should be on relief measures and restoration of communication network. Care should be taken to prevent spread of communicable diseases," Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said.,

Managing Director of International Monetary Fund (IMF) Christine Lagarde talks during a press conference ahead of the annual meetings of the IMF and World Bank in Bali, Indonesia on Thursday on Oct. 11, 2018.

| Photo Credit:
AP

, International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde says the U.S. and China should de-escalate their trade dispute and work to fix trade rules instead of breaking them. Ms. Lagarde said on Thursday at the annual meeting of the IMF and World Bank in Bali, Indonesia, that so far there had been no "contagion" of major damage from penalty tariffs imposed by the two countries on each other's exports, but that they do risk hurting "innocent bystanders"., Ms. Lagarde said her advice was in three parts: "De-escalate. Fix the system. Don't break it.", She said the rules-making World Trade Organisation had ways of addressing U.S. complaints that China's policies unfairly extract advanced technologies and put foreign companies at a disadvantage. But she said the WTO does need to work on addressing issues like subsidies.,

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U.S. astronaut Nick Hague (left) and Russian cosmonaut Alexey Ovchinin, members of the main crew to the International Space Station (ISS), wave to their relatives walking to a bus prior to the launch of Soyuz-FG rocket at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan on October 11, 2018.

| Photo Credit:
AP

, Russian Soyuz spacecraft carrying a veteran cosmonaut and a NASA flight engineer is ready for launch on Thursday on a quick four-orbit flight to the orbiting lab complex., Russian cosmonaut Alexey Ovchinin and U.S. astronaut and flight engineer Nick Hague are scheduled to blast off from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on Thursday.,

A 12-pound (5.5 kilogram) lunar meteorite discovered in Northwest Africa in 2017 rests on a table, in Amherst, N.H.

| Photo Credit:
AP

, Anyone who can't make it to the moon to gather a few lunar rocks now has the opportunity to buy one right here on Earth., A 12-pound (5.5 kilogram) lunar meteorite discovered in Northwest Africa last year is up for auction by Boston-based RR Auction and could sell for \$500,000 or more during online bidding that runs from Thursday until Oct. 18. It is "one of the most important meteorites available for acquisition anywhere in the world today," and one of the biggest pieces of the moon ever put up for sale, RR said.,

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, (With inputs from Agencies),
The companies go ahead despite U.S. call for sanctions , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][
women devotees participating in the protest at Vyttila.

| Photo Credit: H Vibhu , Road blockades staged by various Hindu outfits, protesting against the Supreme Court verdict permitting entry of women of all ages into the Sabarimala temple, threw normal life out of gear in the district on Wednesday. , Long queues of vehicles were witnessed at major points along national highways and other thoroughfares from 11 a.m. , Vyttila Junction was jam-packed with vehicles as protest rallies from Ponnurunni, Nettoor, and Maradu converged there. , Vehicular movement was obstructed after protesters occupied the entire stretch of the national highway from Edappally to Aroor. Only ambulances and other emergency vehicles were allowed. , Policemen were posted on duty at all protest centres. Senior police officers said cases had been registered against the organisers for obstructing traffic and causing

inconvenience to the public., Kaloor and nearby areas also witnessed traffic snarls. Commuters were put to a lot of hardship as most of them were caught unawares. , Tension prevailed at Aluva and Muvattupuzha even though the police intervened to ease the situation. , Protesters at Aluva had a heated argument with a person, who objected to road blockade by them. The police had a tough time controlling the crowd and ensuring his safety. , A minor scuffle ensued between rally participants and the police at Muvattupuzha even though the situation was brought under control soon. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/road-blockades-against-sabarimala-verdict-throw-traffic-out-of-gear/article25187068.ece>

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Second phase project with 39% green space offers seamless multi-modal services , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][

The Kalhatti Ghat Road before the 35th hairpin bend.

| Photo Credit: M_Sathyamoorthy , The Nilgiris district police have revealed that on an average 34 people were injured and six persons were killed in accidents on Kalhatti Ghat Road each year over the last almost five years, prompting activists to call for greater efforts to improve safety on the route., Police officials said that since 2014, a total of 168 people had suffered injuries, and 28 people died in accidents. , Officials said that 2016 saw the highest number of fatalities on this route in the recent past, with nine persons dying in 21 accidents. Since then, a number of initiatives were taken to prevent speeding, as well as other measures to make the road safer, a top district police official said. , The officials said that the number of deaths had reduced in the last two years, until last week's accident between hairpin bends 34 and 35 left five of the seven tourists dead when their vehicle crashed through a barrier and plunged into a gorge. , Officials said that only three persons died on this road in 2017. The police's efforts to restrict traffic, and prevent old vehicles on this route had reduced fatality. , However, more needs to be done, as crowded government buses too use the road, said president of Ooty Public Awareness Association G. Janardhanan. "The stretch of the road past the Bison Valley View Point is extremely dangerous with the steel barriers that line the road proving insufficient to prevent out-of-control vehicles from skidding off the hill and into the valley," he said. A concrete barrier could be put up along certain sections of the road, he suggested. , "More awareness boards along the route and mirrors at hairpin bends need to be put up to prevent vehicles colliding with each other," he said., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu (third left) inaugurating the Diamond Jubilee Block and Arutchelvar Advanced Technology Centre at Nachimuthu Polytechnic College's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in Pollachi on Wednesday. Also seen are Municipal Administration Minister S.P. Velumani (second right) and members of the college management committee

| Photo Credit: HANDOUT_E_MAIL , India is blessed with youth power and with talent at that but they need skills, Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu said at the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of Nachimuthu Polytechnic College in Pollachi on Wednesday., Skilled youth were fewer and to skill the youth, governments should devise various programmes. , Changes should be made to curricula and teachers should lead the change. Inventions and innovations were equally

important to take forward the nation, he said, according to a release from the institution., Equally important for the nation's growth was rural development. People in rural areas should get access to facilities and have opportunities as their urban counterparts and it was here that the Nachimuthu Polytechnic College founder N. Mahalingam was a pioneer, as he took a leaf out of Gandhiji's teaching in starting the institution in a rural area., The Central Government had also devised schemes for rural development by launching Digital India and Skill India programmes., The release quoting Mr. Naidu said that rural India played an important role as it took care of the country's huge food requirement. In this context, the students would do well to recall the contributions of scientists and policy-makers who launched the Green Revolution and the farmers who supported the initiative., Mr. Naidu inaugurated the Arutchelvar Advanced Technology Centre and Mirakle Wellness Clinic., B.K. Krishnaraj Vanavarayar, Chairman, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Coimbatore Kendra, said thanks to the institution's founder Mahalingam, the NIA group of institutions had grown from an institution with 120 students in 1957 to 35 institutions with around 35,000 students and 3,000 faculty in the last 60 years, the release said. He also thanked the institution's alumni who had donated ₹2 crore towards their alma mater's development., M. Manickam, Chairman, NIA Educational Institutions, recalled the growth of the institutions and highlighted various milestones reached in the past 60 years. M. Hari Hara Sudhan, Correspondent, NIA Educational Institutions, spoke about the presence of Sakthi Group of Institutions in various fields and across geographies., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address., Printable version | Oct 11, 2018 5:24:18 PM |

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Coimbatore/devise-programmes-to-skill-youth-governments-told/article25187058.ece>

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Arun doesn't even remember who was driving the car , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][Protests taken out by various Hindu organisations against the Supreme Court verdict allowing women of all ages to offer worship at the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple, in various parts of the city on Wednesday morning, blocked traffic for well over an hour., The Thiruvananthapuram taluk union of the Nair Service Society took out a protest march from the Martyr's Column to the Secretariat. Taluk union president Sangeeth Kumar led the march. , The protesters marched, chanting hymns on Lord Ayyappa and holding placards against the State government. , Later, they squatted in front of the Secretariat, when they continued to chant the hymns. A group of Shiv Sena activists were also holding a separate protest at the Secretariat, chanting Ayyappa songs., Another protest was led by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and other Hindu religious groups in front of the Ganapathi Temple at East Fort. Both sides of the main road were blocked, as the protesters, including women and children, occupied the roads. , A ceremonial fire was lit, followed by which the group chanted Ayyappa hymns., In the morning, activists of the Bharatiya Janata Party waved black flags at Dewaswom Minister Kadakampally Surendran at Kazhakuttam. The road leading to the city from Kesavadasapuram and other places were also blocked by the protesters., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address., Printable version | Oct 11, 2018 5:23:38 PM |

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The student of Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer reflects on her career as singer, administrator and her gurus
, Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][There is no shortage of coal for power generation in the thermal power stations in the State, Electricity Minister P. Thangamani said on Wednesday., Mr. Thangamani told presspersons that the thermal power stations were receiving 16 rakes of coal every day from the Centre, following the demand made by the State government. As such, there was no coal shortage in the power

stations, he said., The State had taken effective steps to ensure uninterrupted power supply to consumers during the monsoon season, he said, adding that the DMK was levelling corruption charges against the AIADMK regime for political reasons., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/no-coal-shortage-says-minister/article25187023.ece>

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'Nothing wrong in his desire'

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A fishing village on East Coast Road finds itself stuck between a rock and a hard place, as development comes in the form of desalination plants; and the villagers claim the promises made to them have not been kept

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M.G. Ramachandran

| Photo Credit:

ARCHIVES

, The then Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran was admitted to Apollo Hospital on October 5, 1984. A press release from the CM's office said that he had "slight asthmatic trouble." On November 25, The Hindu reported that during her October 16 visit to meet MGR, "who just three days earlier had been paralysed by a stroke," then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi "promised all help in treating him.", On October 19, The Hindu quoted the leader of a team of doctors from the US who examined MGR to say that, "the swelling in the brain was coming down." On October 20, two Japanese neurologists examined the CM. One of them was quoted in The Hindu on October 27 saying, "since the CM's condition was stable and improving, there would be no need for him to be brought to Japan for treatment." On the morning of November 5, the cabinet decided to fly the CM to the US for treatment, based on a report submitted by a panel. The panel noted that the CM's wife Janaki Ramachandran had consented to the shifting. An Air India Boeing 707, converted into a flying hospital, took off with the CM at 10.45 pm. On November 6, he was admitted to the Downstate Medical Centre. On February 5, the next year, The Hindu reported that MGR returned to Chennai to a tumultuous welcome "after a kidney transplant.", Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Principal blames it on quantitative assessment , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][The Tamil film industry is going through a rare purple patch in the last four weeks. The massive - but simultaneous - successes of Chekka Chivantha Vanam, Pariyerum Perumal, 96 and Ratsasan at the box office has made every stakeholder associated with Tamil cinema heave a collective sigh of relief., The industry had gone through a terrible trough since summer: there was a 48-day shutdown as producers were in confrontation with digital service providers over fees, resulting in loss of revenue during the holiday season, and the implementation of the GST made tickets costlier. The theatre owners struggled to bring people back to the theatres as the occupancy rates fell., But these concerns have been allayed thanks to a string of films released in September and the first week of October. While Mani Ratnam's star-studded Chekka Chivantha Vaanam and Mari Selvaraj's perceptive Pariyerum Perumal have both struck gold at the box office, serial killer neo-noir film Ratsasan featuring Vishnu Vishal and Amala Paul and C. Prem Kumar's love story 96, featuring Vijay Sethupathi and Trisha, have brought people back to theatres in hordes.,

, Speaking to The Hindu, Abirami Ramanathan, MD, Abirami Cinemas, said, "After a long time, all theatre owners are happy. It has broken the previously held assumption that audience will watch only one or two movies a month. The success of all four movies has proved that if the script is good and the film is well made, people will come to the theatres." He further said that the number of seats in Chennai can just accommodate one percent of the city's total population of around 65 lakh. "People don't want to waste money. With YouTube and social media, they form an idea whether the film is good. If the film is good, they will come.", Filmmaker and now producer, Pa. Ranjith, whose Neelam Productions has bankrolled Pariyerum Perumal, said that the movie had done well beyond expectations. "I knew that the content of the film, which highlights the caste differences, will appeal to the Tamil audiences. This is the reason why I distributed the film myself even though the distributors and theatre owners were sceptical. It is true that we did not get theatres because it came to the theatres along with films such as Chekka Chivantha Vaanam while Sivakarthikeyan's Seema Raja and Vikram's Saamy 2 were already in theatres. But, we took a decision to show the movie to the press in advance to generate a buzz that would get the audiences into the theatres. And it worked," he said., "While the film was given more screens through word of mouth, in places such as Madurai or Ramanathapuram or Kamudhi, we still didn't get enough screens. Pariyeum Perumal has done well but so have other movies such as CCV. We have achieved a gross collection of ₹5.5 crore and a producer's share of ₹3.5 crore for this film," he added., Actor Vishnu Vishal also expressed the same feeling that getting more screens was an issue for his film, Ratsasan, but he was so confident with the film's content that it would do well in theatres., G. Dhananjayan, founder of BOFTA film institute and producer of upcoming Jyotika-starrer Kaatrin Mozhi, said, "The movies will continue to do well and the next major set of releases are only expected in the third week of October." , With more big movies ready for release in October and November, the box office will continue to be a busy., (With inputs from S. Poorvaja), Leave those remixes alone, Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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<https://www.thehindu.com/entertainment/movies/kollywood-hits-a-purple-patch/article25186974.ece>

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They might not always play the lead, but they make a lasting impact on screen. Here is why you should track these performers.

, Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][Veteran percussionist Vikku Vinayakram was presented with the Special Lifetime Achievement award at a function held here on Wednesday. , Organised by The Music Academy, the event had veteran artists coming together to honour Mr. Vinayakram. , Presenting the award certificate and medal to Mr. Vinayakram, renowned flautist Hariprasad Chaurasia said, "It felt like I was getting the award as I gave the award to Mr. Vinayakram. He is a great musician and has inspired me. We have played together in several concerts.", Recalling his long association with Mr. Vinayakram's family, veteran violinist T.N. Krishnan said he exhibited his music talent when he was quite young. , Highlighting the achievements of the awardee, N. Murali, president, The Music Academy, said Mr. Vinayakram personified Indian percussion to global audience and accompanied several stalwarts. His music's underlying themes were devotion and reverence to art., Mr. Vinayakram is the third musician to receive special lifetime achievement award from the Music Academy. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/music-academy-honours-vikku/article25186954.ece>

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Principal blames it on quantitative assessment , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][
Cyclone Titli made a landfall at the Gopalpur on the Bay of Bengal's eastern coast beach in Odisha on October 11, 2018.

| Photo Credit: Biswaranjan Rout , The 'very severe cyclonic storm Titli' made its landfall by crossing north Andhra Pradesh-south Odisha coast (near Palasa, Srikakulam district) to the southwest of Gopalpur early morning on Thursday, with wind speed touching close to 149 kmph., Five coastal districts such as Ganjam, Puri, Jagatsinghpur, Khurda and Kendrapara have been evacuated, with residents moved to safer zones. About 3 lakh people have been evacuated., As per Met officials the landfall will continue for the next 3 to 4 hours and then the system will re-curve towards Gangetic West Bengal along the Odisha coast to weaken., Odisha government has declared a two-day holiday from Thursday., Apart from setting-up control rooms and shelter homes, NDRF and ODRF teams have already been deployed at all key districts and officials are on alert mode to mitigate any eventualities., Multiple trains, buses and flights have been cancelled. Trees and electric poles have been uprooted in the coastal region between Kalingapatnam in Andhra Pradesh and Gopalpur., Although no casualty from Odisha has been reported due to 'very severe cyclone Titli' till 2 p.m. on Thursday, news about damages caused by the cyclone is trickling in from south Odisha districts like Ganjam, Gajapati and Rayagada. Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik reviewed the situation and administrative measures to face aftermath of Titli, at State secretariat in Bhubaneswar on Thursday.

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, Some more trains, in addition to the ones announced on Wednesday, have been cancelled on Thursday in view of the severe cyclonic storm Titli in the west central Bay of Bengal, according to a statement issued by the Waltair Division of East Coast Railway (ECoR) on Thursday afternoon., The trains cancelled are: Train no. 22838 Ernakulam- Hatia express, leaving Hatia on October 11, is cancelled, 12864 Yesvantpur-Howrah Express, leaving Yesvantpur on October 10, is cancelled, 12509 Bengaluru-Guwahati express, leaving Bengaluru on October 10, is cancelled, 15227 Yesvantpur-Muzaffarpur express, leaving Yesvantpur on October 10, is cancelled and 58526 Visakhapatnam -Palasa Passenger, leaving Visakhapatnam on October 11, is cancelled., The trains to be short terminated are: 58506 Visakhapatnam-Gunupur passenger, leaving Visakhapatnam on October 11, will run up to Vizianagaram and return to Visakhapatnam., Train no. 67294 Visakhapatnam-New Palasa, leaving Visakhapatnam on October 11, will be short terminated at Vizianagaram and return from Vizianagaram to Visakhapatnam., , Compared to previous cyclones Phailin and Hud Hud, the damage was very less with the impact of Titli which hit the coast on Thursday morning., The senior official heaved a sigh of relief with the damage was confining to Uddanam coconut region and Tekkali division. Srikakulam Collector sent a detailed report to Chief Minister's office and said there was no need for panic as the situation was under control even after landfall., Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu is expected to come to Tekkali division for the ground level assessment of crop and property damage. Coconut and banana farmers were the worst victims of Titli, according to senior agriculture officials. Fortunately, there would not be floods to Nagavali, Vamsadhara and other rivers as rains were limited to Tekkali division. Rainfall is below 2 cm in Srikakulam, Palakonda divisions., However, normal life was thrown out of gear with power cut and lack of transport facility to other places from Srikakulam. RTC withdrew many services due to cyclone. Many people were stranded in several areas including Tekkali, Subhadrapuram and other places with lack of bus facility., Heavy rains continue to lash Srikakulam district and rain and gales are expected to continue till the evening., There is no rain in Visakhapatnam, except for a drizzle, on Wednesday. Except for occasional power disruptions at some places in the city due to strong winds, there are no reports of any major disruption in Visakhapatnam., Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu is likely to visit Srikakulam district on Thursday

afternoon. "We are yet to get an official communication on the time of his arrival," Deputy Director of the Information and Public Relations (I & PR) Department said., The CM is reviewing the situation in Srikakulam district via teleconference from Amaravati. He directed the Revenue, Police, NDRF and other departments to undertake relief measures., There is no power in Srikakulam district with the falling of electricity poles and disruption of power lines. NDRF and other relief teams are on the job of clearing the fallen trees with power saws., IndiGo has cancelled three scheduled flights from Vizag to Bengaluru and Hyderabad on Thursday as a precautionary measure., "No other airline has cancelled its flights. A couple of flights are delayed but there is no other problem at Vizag Airport," Airport Director G. Prakash Reddy told The Hindu., East Coast Railway (ECOR) has already announced cancellation of some trains, diversion and short-termination of trains between Vizianagaram and Khurda Road (in Odisha)., The Cyclone Warning Centre (CWC), Visakhapatnam has asked the ports to lower the danger signals. It said that the great danger signal no. 10 hoisted at Kalingapatnam could be replaced with local cautionary signal number three (LC-III) and the great danger signal no. 8 hoisted at Visakhapatnam and Gangavaram Ports be replaced with local cautionary signal number three (LC-III). The Bheemunipatnam and Kakinada Ports have also been asked to lower all the danger signals., Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University postponed the scheduled examinations due to cyclone Titli, according to Vice-Chancellor Ramjee., Very severe category cyclone likely to turn to cyclone by Thursday evening and into Deep Depression by Friday morning. It is expected that maximum impact will be during next 3 to 4 hours., The helpline numbers are: 0674-2301625 and 0674-2301525, Fifteen NDRF and ODRF teams were deployed in Titli-hit coastal districts of Odisha. The relief officers toll free number is 1070. Now the wind speed had reached 165 kmph., The authorities have stopped the trucks and vehicles at Berhampur, Khurda and Balasore due to heavy rain and surface wind speed of 140 to 150 kmph. Five districts in Odisha were on red alert.,

Cyclone Titli made a landfall at the Gopalpur on the Bay of Bengal's eastern coast beach in Odisha on October 11, 2018.

| Photo Credit: Biswaranjan Rout

, The IMD had predicted heavy rainfall in Odisha and upper Srikakulam., The trains on Vizianagaram and Khurda route were cancelled. Four NDRF team rushed to Kalingapatnam area of Andhra Pradesh, No casualty or major damages were reported till 8 a.m. while 'very severe cyclonic storm Titli' made its landfall near Palasa of Andhra Pradesh to the southwest of Gopalpur in Odisha's Ganjam district at around 5.30 a.m. on Thursday morning., Gopalpur experienced wind with velocity of 102 kmph during the landfall. According to local fire services officials, branches of trees were broken at several places and at some places few trees were uprooted. As per Ganjam district administration, till now no incident of major damage had been reported from any part of the district.,

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, Curfew like situation is prevailing in Srikakulam district, particularly in the district headquarters on Thursday morning with people confining themselves to houses with the impact of cyclone Titli which hit the coast near Gollapadu, Pallesaradhi villages of Santabommali mandal of the district. With bitter experiences during Phailin and Hud Hud cyclones, the people feared about natural calamity this time too.,

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, Complete darkness in early hours of Thursday, moderate rain and heavy gales with a speed of 120 kmph caused tension among the people and made them to stay indoors. Minister for Transport K. Atchannaaidu and Collector K. Dhananjaya Reddy directed the education department to declare holiday for schools and colleges to prevent untoward incidents. Vehicular movement in all routes is very thin. APSRTC buses are moving with little occupancy rate with passengers postponing their travel plan even in Dasara season., Cyclone Titli which caused tension among the Andhra Pradesh administration and people of North Andhra region had caused a little damage in Srikakulam district although IMD and officials anticipated devastation., The cyclone which hovered between Gopalpur of Odisha and Kalingapatnam of Andhra Pradesh for the last two days hit the coast near Gollapadu-Pallesarathi villages of Santabommali mandal, 60 km away from district headquarters at around 3.35 a.m. on Thursday. During the landfall, the gales which moved with a speed of 120 kmph caused losses to the coconut, paddy and other crops.,

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, The process of landfall of the very severe cyclone Titli started early on Thursday with surface wind reaching speeds of 126 kmph at Gopalpur in Odisha's Ganjam district, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said., "The process of landfall has started and it will completely cross the Odisha coast in one or two hours. The system will pass close to Gopalpur," H.R. Biswas, Director of Meteorological Centre, Bhubaneswar, said., The IMD said, "The forward sector of the eye of the storm has been entering into the land mass.", While Gopalpur in Odisha reported surface winds at 126 kmph, Kalingapatnam in Andhra Pradesh recorded wind speed of 56 kmph.,

, As the landfall process started, at least five districts like Ganjam, Gajapati, Puri, Khurda and Jagatsinghpur are receiving good amount of rainfall coupled with high speed winds under the impact of Titli., Mr. Biswas said the very severe cyclonic storm (VSCS), 'Titli', is being monitored by the coastal Doppler Weather Radars at Visakhapatnam, Gopalpur and Paradip.,

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Cyclone Titli intensifies into severe storm; around 3 lakh people evacuated in Odisha

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Cyclone Titli intensifies into severe storm; around 3 lakh people evacuated in Odisha

, The latest observations indicate that 'Titli', over west-central Bay of Bengal moved north-northwestwards with a speed of about 19 kmph during the past six hours., After the landfall, the system is very likely to re-curve gradually northeastwards, move towards Gangetic West Bengal across Odisha and weaken gradually., Reports of trees, electric poles getting uprooted and damages to kuchha houses were reported, officials said, adding that road communication in some places, including Gopalpur and Berhampur, was snapped.,

, Meanwhile, the Odisha government has geared up its machinery to tackle the situation. The state government has already evacuated over 3 lakh people living in low lying areas and kuchha houses ahead of the landfall in five coastal districts., The people have been evacuated from vulnerable areas in Ganjam, Puri, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara and Khordha districts., Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik reviewed the preparedness at Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) office as cyclone Titli races towards Odisha-Andhra coast., "Till now 3 lakh people have been evacuated," said a statement from the Chief Minister's Office., The Chief Minister also reviewed the position of the reservoir and asked the authorities to closely monitor the situation., SRC Bishnupada Sethi has asked collectors of affected districts to ensure that 836 numbers of multi-purpose shelters are kept ready to accommodate maximum people., 13 NDRF and 9 ODRAF teams have been deployed in Ganjam, Gajapati, Puri, Kendrapada, Nayagarh, Bhadrak, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur, Khordha, Cuttack, Balasore, Mayurbhanj, Kalahandi, Boudh and Sambalpur districts., The rare phenomenon of twin cyclones – Luban and Titli – occurring at the same time, over the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal respectively, is happening after nearly 40 years., The north Indian Ocean has witnessed similar weather phenomena on 23 occasions since 1891, according to a study. While it is generally feared that twin cyclones adversely influence rainfall during the northeast monsoon, the State has recorded good rainfall during most of the years when two weather disturbances developed simultaneously, notes a study by weather blogging site Chennaiyil Oru Mazhaikalam, based on the India Meteorological Department's data.,

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, (With inputs from PTI, IANS, Sib Kumar Das, Andhra Pradesh Bureau), Vice-President inaugurated the World Peace Monument, the largest dome in the world , The 9,600 sq ft flag stands on a 319.5 ft flag pole at Gandhi Mandap, a memorial for Mahatma Gandhi atop the Sarania Hill , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][The very severe cyclonic storm 'Titli' over the westcentral Bay of Bengal moved northwestwards with a speed of about 18 kmph and lay centred about 230 km southsoutheast of Gopalpur (Odisha) and 190 km southeast of Kalingapatnam (Andhra Pradesh) on Wednesday night. , It is very likely to intensify and move north northwestwards and make landfall between Gopalpur (Odisha) and Kalingapatnam on Thursday morning, with wind speed touching 145 kmph. Thereafter, it is very likely to re-curve northeastwards, move towards the Gangetic West Bengal across Odisha and weaken gradually., As per IMD officials, gale speed reaching 140-150 kmph and gusting up to 165 kmph are likely along and off south Odisha and the adjoining north Andhra Pradesh coasts during landfall. , As per the Cyclone Warning Centre in Visakhapatnam, upper Srikakulam and parts of the coastal Odisha region will experience heavy rainfall from 15 to 20 cm. Fishermen have been advised not to venture into the sea. Parts of Visakhapatnam such as Bheemunipatnam, Anandapuram, Gajuwaka, Gangavaram, Visakhapatnam rural and urban will also experience heavy to isolated rainfall during the next 24 hours., Some trains have been cancelled and some diverted. Train services will not be allowed

between Khurda Road and Vizianagaram in both directions from 10 p.m. on Wednesday till further advice, according to an official release. Long distance trains, passing through , The weather in Srikakulam and Vizianagaram districts underwent a perceptible change on Wednesday. The Srikakulam district administration is taking utmost care to minimise the possible damage now. Vizianagaram Collector M. Hari Jawaharlal alerted all officials of heavy rains in the next two days and ordered evacuation of people to safe locations as early as possible. Parvatipuram ITDA Project Officer G.Lakshmi Sha said the road network might be damaged in many parts with the heavy rains in the division., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Anantapur youth make it to the Indian squad for the Special Olympics

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Fresh from scaling Mt. Kilimanjaro, Anand and Sivaprasad look for sponsors
, Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][Good news for aspiring politicians. They will soon have an institute in Ghaziabad to learn the nuances of the profession, the Uttar Pradesh government said on Wednesday., The decision to establish a sprawling political training institute at a cost of ₹198 crore was taken on Wednesday at the State Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath., "The Cabinet has approved establishment of a political training institute in Ghaziabad at a cost of ₹198 crore. It has also made a provision of ₹50 crore for the first phase of the institute to be set up on 60 bighas of land," Urban Development Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna told reporters., "This will be a first-of-its-kind institute in the country," he added., The courses are being designed for the institute and will impart A to Z training to those planning entry into politics and also to the elected representatives, the Minister said., The institute will also offer lectures by prominent political personalities, including ambassadors, heads of states and other experts., The location of the institute has been selected in the National Capital Region so that those coming to Delhi can easily plan a visit there, the Minister said., The institute will be run by the Urban Development Department of Uttar Pradesh, Mr. Khanna said, adding that discussions are on with various national universities for its recognition so that its degrees have value and weight., The institute will become operational in the next two years, he said, adding that a committee has already been formed to decide its curriculum. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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Vice-President inaugurated the World Peace Monument, the largest dome in the world ,

The 9,600 sq ft flag stands on a 319.5 ft flag pole at Gandhi Mandap, a memorial for Mahatma Gandhi atop the Sarania Hill , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][
Suraj Verma in police custody on Wednesday.

| Photo Credit:

Special Arrangement

, Suraj Verma stabbed his mother 20 times, even as his 14-year-old sister Neha lay bleeding profusely on the bed from his attack moments earlier. , After he was done with his mother Siya, the 19-year-old turned his attention to his sobbing sister, whom he stabbed four more times till she finally breathed her last. , This chilling revelation was made by the police on Wednesday, after they arrested the engineering student for allegedly murdering his father Mithilesh

Verma (42), mother and sister inside their house in south Delhi's Kishangarh. , The accused was infuriated with his parents for "opposing" his lifestyle and "forcing" him to focus on his studies. Suraj did not show much remorse during questioning, the police said. , "Either they or me, one of us had to die," he reportedly told the police., He developed a grudge against his father, who "scolded him for not studying"; his mother, who "did not allow his friends to come home and never took his side"; and his sister, who "checked his mobile phone and told on him". The final straw, the police said, was the beating Suraj received from his father for bunking college to fly kites in August. , "Suraj hated his father the most but claimed that he cried next to Neha's body," the police said. , Suraj told the police that his parents were against the company he kept over the past few years. He claimed his father got him admitted to an engineering course despite knowing that he did not want to study anymore. , Suraj and his friends later rented a flat in Mehrauli to "escape" college. , "The friends, including girls, formed a WhatsApp group and pooled money to pay the rent. They would go to the flat whenever they wanted to bunk college. The flat boasted hookahs and other things they wanted to hide from their parents. None of the parents were aware of this arrangement," said a police officer., Suraj smoked hookah all day in the Mehrauli flat on Tuesday, and later went to buy the knife and scissors he used to butcher his family the next day., Preliminary investigation has revealed that Suraj faked his abduction in 2013 after his father scolded him for failing in class. , A day after his "abduction", he mysteriously reappeared in Uttar Pradesh's Modinagar., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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The accused were about to surrender in court when they were arrested , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][Three persons have been arrested in connection with the murder of Aam Aadmi Party worker Naveen Das, whose body was found inside a burnt car in Sahibabad on the intervening night of October 4-5., Ghaziabad Senior Superintendent of Police Vaibhav Krishna said 25-year-old Das was in a relationship with one of the accused, Tayyab, and had been forcing him to live with him. Tayyab resented this. He roped in two friends to rob and murder Das. They sedated him after giving him drug-laced sweets and then burnt him alive inside his car., The accused stole the victim's phone, passport and other things. Tayyab also transferred ₹7 lakh to his account via online banking. , Das' vehicle was found in a secluded spot in Bhopra on the road leading to Loni from Sahibabad, an officer said., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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The accused were about to surrender in court when they were arrested , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][The Tripura High Court on Wednesday stayed the deregistration of Daily Desher Katha, a mouthpiece of the CPI(M)'s State unit, paving way for the Bengali daily to resume publication., In a letter on October 1, the Registrar of Newspapers for India said the publication of Daily Desher Kathawas being suspended based on a verdict passed by the District Magistrate of West Tripura, Sandeep Mahatme. It cited "unauthorised change of ownership" as the reason behind the step., The stay was granted by Tripura High Court Chief Justice Ajay Kumar Rastogi., "The future effect and operation of the order of the District Magistrate, West Tripura, dt. 01.10.2018, followed with the order passed by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Sadar, dt.01.10.2018, are hereby stayed," the court said., However, the respondents will be at liberty to file application for

vacation/modification of the interim order after filing of the counter affidavit, it added., There is no restriction on publication of the newspaper any more, the daily's counsel Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharjee told reporters at a press conference here., He alleged that West Tripura District Magistrate's order was made under political influence and termed it as an attack on freedom of the press., Daily Desher Katha had applied to the RNI to change its ownership details in 2015. The process was not completed due to red tape, Mr. Bhattacharjee said., After fresh papers were submitted, the RNI approved the revised details of editor, printer and publisher on October 1. The DM and SDM issued a notice outside their jurisdiction on the same day and wrote to the RNI to cancel the newspaper's registration. "This can't be done without political intervention," Mr. Bhattacharjee claimed., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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The 9,600 sq ft flag stands on a 319.5 ft flag pole at Gandhi Mandap, a memorial for Mahatma Gandhi atop the Sarania Hill , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][A septuagenarian couple was allegedly robbed and assaulted by four unidentified masked men who barged into their house in outer Delhi's Mianwali in the small hours of Wednesday., The police said the incident took place between 3 a.m. and 4 a.m. Chaman Lal Sahni (75) and his wife Krishna Sahni (72), who run a poultry business and live in a two-storey building with their children, were asleep on the ground floor at the time of the robbery. , The couple's two sons, who live with their families on the first and second floors, slept through the home invasion., The couple told the police that they woke up when they sensed someone else's presence in the room. Assuming it was a family member, they called out but did not get any response. Sensing that something was wrong, they tried to raise an alarm but were overpowered by the accused. The robbers threatened to kill them unless they remained quiet., "The couple said the robbers were armed. They took the jewellery Krishna was wearing and the cash kept in the room. The family said the accused took nearly ₹2.5 lakh and gold worth ₹15 lakh," said a police officer. , Initial probe has revealed that the men gained access to the elderly couple's room by breaking a window grill. After the robber fled, Chaman and Krishna raised an alarm and informed the police. The police control room received a call regarding the robbery at 3.45 a.m. , DCP (Outer) Seju P. Kuruvilla said a case of robbery has been registered and efforts are on to identify the miscreants., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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The accused were about to surrender in court when they were arrested , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][A Delhi court has allowed an investor to recover ₹15 lakh from two directors of a television company. The duo had duped the investor of ₹15 lakh by showing him a business plan for launching a news channel called "Planet News" in 2013. , In his suit, the investor alleged that the two directors gave him the business plan with the intent to defraud him. They claimed they had a licence from the Union Information and Broadcasting Ministry for the news channel, the suit said., When the investor insisted on an agreement before transfer of the money, the directors assured him that it would be done within a week after the investment. The investor transferred ₹15 lakh to the company's account but the directors went back on their word regarding the agreement and also refused to repay the money., The investor further alleged that the duo showed a rosy

picture of their company and induced him to invest the amount, thereafter siphoned for their personal use. When the investor was not able to contact the two directors, a recovery suit was filed in the court of Additional Sessions Judge Hasan Anzar. , The court proceeded in the matter ex parte as the two directors stopped appearing in court after dismissal of an application filed by them., Allowing the suit, the judge said: "In the present case, the defendants are directors of the company and they have played a key role in the entire transaction by playing fraud and, therefore, not only the defendant company but the directors are also liable to pay back the money to the plaintiff. , The plaintiff has placed on record the business plan in which it has been clearly shown that one of the directors even has share to the extent of 40% in the running of the 'Planet News'." , "The plaintiff is entitled to recover ₹15 lakh along with future and pendente lite at the rate of 6% per annum from June 13, 2013, till the date of realisation, along with costs from the defendants," the judge added., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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The accused were about to surrender in court when they were arrested , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][A 42-year-old sub-inspector allegedly shot himself in the head inside Kavi Nagar police station's staff quarters on Wednesday morning. The victim has been identified as Vijay Kumar Thenua. , The police said the staff at the station rushed towards Thenua's residence as soon as they heard the gunshot. The staffers found him lying unconscious in a pool of blood. , He had sustained a gunshot injury in the head. , His colleagues rushed him to a hospital. He was referred to Yashoda Super Speciality Hospital, where doctors declared him dead on arrival. , "Prima facie it appears that he was under stress as a criminal case had been registered against him under Section 307 of the Indian Penal Code," said Ghaziabad Senior Superintendent of Police Vaibhav Krishna., His body has been sent for post-mortem and a team has been constituted to probe the incident. , The police said an FIR was registered against Thenua in Mathura in April for allegedly thrashing his neighbours. However, the sub-inspector was given a clean chit in the incident., He joined the force as a constable in 1994 and was promoted to sub-inspector in 2016. , "We have questioned the Thenua's colleagues, friends and family to establish the motive or the reason that compelled him to shoot himself," said a senior police officer. , Thenua belonged to Aligarh district in western Uttar Pradesh. His family lives in Mathura district. He shared the accommodation with head constable Saiyad Imam Akhtar Zaidi in the Kavi Nagar police station quarters. , Kavi Nagar police station incharge P.K. Tripathi said Thenua was on duty on Tuesday night and returned to his room in the small hours of Wednesday. At the time of the incident, his roommate was sleeping inside the room. Zaidi woke up on hearing the gunshot and found Thenua in a pool of blood., Thenua is survived by his wife and two sons, who are in Classes X and XII., Suicide prevention helpline: Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health. Telephone: 011-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday, 10 am -7.30 p.m. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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The accused were about to surrender in court when they were arrested , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][

Medical Tactile Examiner Hasiba demonstrates her breast screening skills in front of Mandeep S. Malhotra at an event on Wednesday.

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The Hindu

“Prevention is better than cure but if it is not preventable, then early detection is key,” said Mandeep S. Malhotra, head of Department of Surgical Oncology at Fortis (Vasant Kunj) who in association with the National Association of Blind India (Centre for Blind Women) unveiled “Discovering hands” – a unique breast screening technique for early detection of cancer. Discovering Hands – the first such venture in the country aimed at catching breast cancer early – is a unique initiative that was started by Dr. Frank Hoffmann in Germany. It trains visually impaired women to become Medical Tactile Examiners (MTEs), using their highly developed tactile sense to identify the minutest abnormalities in breasts. In a nine-month long training program supported by Bayer Crop Science, visually impaired women are trained to screen patients of all age groups to detect breast cancer. These MTEs have helped screen over 100,000 women in Germany, Austria and Columbia. Dr. Malhotra said that recent studies in India suggest that breast cancer is increasingly being detected in younger women, with peak incidence in Delhi between 40 to 50 years. “Most of the women come to us in stage III, only 10% of my patients reach me in stage I. We can save almost 90% of our patients from this disease if we catch it at an early stage. Screening mammography is mainly applicable after the age of 40. Moreover about 30% of Indian women have dense breasts that are not suitable for a mammogram,” he said. “We are putting forward an indigenous breast cancer screening methodology, inspired from Germany, which uses the superior sense of touch of visually impaired women and integrates it with standard methodology of sonomammography and self breast examination. The process is supervised by my team of doctors, and we can apply it to women across all ages. In this way, we hope to catch breast cancer early and save precious lives,” said Dr. Malhotra. Shalini Khanna, director of the National Association for the Blind’s Centre for Blind Women in Delhi said: “The road to a pilot project was a roller-coaster ride... we were sure the girls would be perfect to develop the heightened skills for breast screening... and they lived up to our expectations. I am happy to see them working in their own OPD at a hospital and thankful to the hospital team’s support.” At the launch of the programme on Wednesday, MTEs Hasiba and Sakshi said that the scheme has given them “a purpose”. “Our technique is new and innovative. When we were given a chance to work at our own OPD in Fortis Hospital, Vasant Kunj, we felt like we had been given a chance to prove ourselves and showcase our talents. We are truly grateful for this chance,” said Hasiba. The examination by the MTE is verified by a team of doctors. Further evaluation by ultrasound and/or mammography is suggested according to the findings, said Mangla Dembi, facility director at Fortis Hospital, Vasant Kunj. Doctors advised that all “lumps or thickenings” in the breast need medical attention to determine whether they are benign or signs of cancer. Age, family history, genetics, dense breasts and race are the major risk factors for breast cancer. Lifestyle factors such as smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, an inactive lifestyle and lack of exercise might also contribute to breast cancer, said doctors. Early symptoms of breast cancer may include pain in breast/breasts, discharge, change in shape and size of breasts, rash, flaky or crusty nipple and dimpling of the breast skin. Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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The accused were about to surrender in court when they were arrested, Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][The wife and daughter of a Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) official were found dead on Tuesday at their residence in Indirapuram’s Nyay Khand-I, the police said on Wednesday. Balwant Singh Bisht’s 28-old-daughter Deepa was a chartered accountant and his wife Prema (48) a homemaker. A senior police officer said the incident was reported on Tuesday night. “The incident was reported at around 9.30 p.m. on Tuesday. A police team was dispatched to the spot as soon as the police control room received a call,” the officer said. He

said Prema was found hanging from the fan and Deepa lying on the corner of the bed. Mr. Bisht and his younger daughter were out at the time of the incident., The police said Mr. Bisht called his wife several times but did not receive any response. Concerned, he sent his brother-in-law to check on her. Since the house was locked from inside, the brother-in-law broke the door to find Prema and Deepa dead., Superintendent of Police (City) Shlok Kumar said, "Prima facie it appears to be a case of suicide by hanging." , Stating that a note was found near the bodies, Mr. Kumar said the writer has apologised to Monu, Mr. Bisht's younger daughter. "However, the note does not mention why the mother and daughter took the step," the senior officer said, adding that a probe in on. , The police have questioned the neighbours, family, friends and relatives to establish the motive behind the incident. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem. The family hails from Almora district in Uttarakhand and has been living in Indirapuram for over 10 years. "The two deaths have come as a shock for all of us. The family shared cordial relations with their neighbours," said Ankur, a local., Suicide prevention helpline: Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health. Telephone: 011-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday, 10 am -7.30 pm , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address., Printable version | Oct 11, 2018 5:17:30 PM | <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/hal-officials-wife-daughter-found-dead/article25185352.ece>

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The accused were about to surrender in court when they were arrested , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][The much-awaited 640-metre NTPC underpass at the intersection of Sectors 24, 25A, 32 and 33A in Noida was inaugurated on Wednesday by Uttar Pradesh Industries Minister Satish Mahana. , Also present were MP Mahesh Sharma, MLA Pankaj Singh, Noida Authority CEO Alok Tandon, and Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) founder and chairperson Kiran Nadar. Work on the project, which began on June 30, 2015, finished on Monday at a cost of ₹55.55 crore, said Authority officials. In a unique public art initiative for the city, the Authority and the KNMA in Sector 126 here collaborated on beautification of the underpass. , Rajeev Tyagi, the Authority General Manager (incharge of work in circles 1 to 5), said: "The Authority had earlier planned to use tiles, which would have cost over ₹1 crore. With this collaboration, we not only saved money but also added more colour to Noida's world-class infrastructure.", Mr. Tyagi said, "Stretching across the length of the underpass on both sides are paintings titled 'Kalpavriksha: The Sacred Wishing Tree'. They have been done by Delhi-based artists Laxman Singh and Kunal Jain from Jamia Millia Islamia." A 25-acre herbal and medicinal park in Sector 91 was also opened. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address., Printable version | Oct 11, 2018 5:17:30 PM | <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/ntpc-underpass-in-noida-inaugurated/article25185351.ece>

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The accused were about to surrender in court when they were arrested , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][Haryana Public Works Department Minister Rao Narbir Singh on Wednesday inaugurated the construction of the five kilometre-long elevated road from Netaji Subhash Chowk to Badshahpur village on Gurugram-Alwar Highway, locally known as Sohna Road. , The ₹1,897-crore project to ease traffic flow from Netaji Subhash Chowk to Sohna will be carried out in two phases. In the first phase, the five km-long elevated road on single pillars will be constructed from Netaji Subash Chowk to Badshahpur village and further four-km road will be widened to six lanes at the cost of ₹707 crore in around one-and-a-half years. , In the second phase, the remaining stretch from Netaji Subhash Chowk to Sohna on National Highway 248-A will be widened to six lanes and underpasses and flyovers will be constructed in view of the villages on both sides of the road. , Mr. Singh said the project would address the problem of perennial traffic jam on the stretch, especially at Badshahpur village. With several housing societies and

commercial establishments on both sides of the road, traffic snarls are a routine affair on this stretch. , Mr. Singh said Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Expressway would also be opened to public by November 1. It will help reduce traffic and pollution in the Millennium City, the Minister said. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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The accused were about to surrender in court when they were arrested , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][Aimed at reducing the rapidly growing human-elephant conflict in areas of Chhattisgarh, where nearly 20 human lives were lost because of attacks by a herd of 19 elephants, the State Forest Department in collaboration with Wildlife SOS has radio-collared a wild elephant to help create an early warning system and save human lives. , Wildlife SOS raised funds to procure the radio collars and deployed a dedicated team of biologists and researchers to understand the problem in depth., "The 19-strong herd led by a matriarch (older female elephant) leads the group to agricultural farms that border the forest areas in Mahasamund to eat crops at night as the forest does not have sufficient nutrition for them. When villagers try to drive them away to protect their crops, the elephants panic and run helter-skelter, causing damage to crops, property and also human lives," noted a release issued by Wildlife SOS., "Wildlife SOS and the Chhattisgarh Forest Department deployed a team of elephant trackers who tracked the herd every single day for several months to understand their movement patterns. This was not only risky but also quite dangerous. After several repeated attempts, the team of veterinarians and biologists was finally successful in tranquilising and radio-collaring the matriarch of the herd. This will now help to map the movement of the herd and set up early warning systems," said Kartick Satyanarayan, co-founder and CEO, Wildlife SOS. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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The 9,600 sq ft flag stands on a 319.5 ft flag pole at Gandhi Mandap, a memorial for Mahatma Gandhi atop the Sarania Hill , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][Two persons have been arrested for the murder and rape of a 7-year-old girl and hiding her body on the roof a mosque in Muradnagar on October 7, the police said on Wednesday., The accused, who are uncle and nephew, are suspected to be in a relationship for over a year, the police said. The uncle works with a pharmaceutical company and the nephew is a Class XII student. , The accused are related to the victim, the police said, adding that the family was aware of their role in the girl's death but chose to remain silent., The police said the duo raped the girl inside their room and that the family was aware of the fact but failed to alert the police. , The police have seized the bed sheet and mattress from the crime spot, and the clothes worn by the accused at the time of the incident. The police have given a clean chit to the four accused named in the FIR. , Ghaziabad Senior Superintendent of Police Vaibhav Krishna told journalists that action will also be taken against victim's family., "The family knew the main accused but did not share this information with the police. They hid facts and accused innocent people," Mr. Krishna said., The police had raided 80 locations and questioned over 100 people in the case. They are waiting the DNA report to file a charge sheet. The seven-year-old was kidnapped and her body was found on the terrace of a mosque in Ghaziabad's Muradnagar on October 6., The family had accused a local

councillor and his three brothers for the girl's death. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,
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The accused were about to surrender in court when they were arrested , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][Three persons have been arrested for allegedly murdering a cargo van driver after his van brushed past a pet dog in Dwarka's Uttam Nagar, the police said on Wednesday., The trio have been identified as Ankit, his brother Paras and their neighbour Dev Chopra. The three accused were about to surrender in court when they were arrested., They stabbed 40-year-old driver Vijender Rana and his brother Rajesh on October 6 in Mohan Garden after the cargo van brushed past Ankit's pet dog. , Ankit called Paras and Dev to spot, and they stabbed Vijender. When Rajesh tried to save his brother, he too was stabbed. Rajesh is undergoing treatment at a hospital., During investigation, raids were conducted at multiple location. The accused switched off their mobile phones after the incident. They were spotted in a CCTV camera footage in Dwarka Sector 7. Dev's friend was held for questioning. He told the police that Dev had called from a new number. The call details of the new number were scanned and its location was traced to Phagwara in Punjab. A police team was sent to Phagwara, where Paras and Ankit's uncle told the team that they had approached him seeking shelter but he turned them down. The brother left. Further probe revealed Manesar as the last location before the new number too was switched off. A team was sent to Haryana but failed to trace them. , "We received information regarding their presence in Delhi to meet a lawyer and their plan to surrender in court. Several teams were deployed near Dwarka court and they were arrested in Dwarka Sector 9, while on the way to the court," said a police officer., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,
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Meat shops near Jama Masjid in Old Gurugram's Sadar Bazar were forcibly closed by Sanyukt Hindu Sangarsh Samiti activists on Wednesday morning. The shops reopened in the evening following assurances from the police.
| Photo Credit: Manoj Kumar , Meat shops across Gurugram were forcibly shut by members of the Sanyukt Hindu Sangarsh Samiti on Wednesday, which also marks the start of the nine-day festival of Navratri. , The member of the Samiti, a conglomeration of 22 local units of right-wing organisations, claimed they took action as the meat shops were being run illegally and the administration had failed to check the menace despite repeated complaints. , An FIR was registered on charges of causing voluntarily hurt after Madhav Karan, a meat shop owner in Rajiv Colony, lodged a complaint alleging that a man beat him up and forced him to close his shop., Assistant Commissioner of Police Rajeev Kumar said that Mr. Karan had furnished video footage of the incident and efforts were being made to identify the accused. , Four persons, including Gurugram Bajrang Dal chief Abhishek Gaur, were taken into preventive arrest to stop them from disturbing peace in the area, said the police., Hindu Kranti Dal leader Rajiv Mittal said that around ten teams of the Samiti members, comprising 20-50 activists each, went around the city, including Manesar, Badshahpur, Sadar Bazar, DLF Phase-III, Nathupur and Sector 14, in the morning directing meat shop owners to close their establishments. , Mr. Mittal said they were forced to take matters into their own hands after repeated complaints to the district administration did not elicit any response. , "We gave a memorandum to Deputy Commissioner Vinay Pratap Singh on October 4 seeking closure of illegal meat shops. On Tuesday, we met

Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG) Commissioner Yashpal Yadav, but the administration failed to address the issue," said Mr. Mittal. He claimed there were several thousand illegal meat shops in the city and their drive would continue during the Navrati festival., The Samiti activists also forced closure of around 20 meat shops and dhabas near Jama Masjid in Old City. Mohammad Yusuf, 64, who runs New Pakija Hotel, said that around two dozen people came to the area in the morning and forced owners to close their shops. , "I have been running this dhaba for the past 46 years, but this never happened before. It is a Waqf Board shop, I pay ₹5,200 per month as rent. I have a staff of five. If the dhaba remains closed even for a day, it means a huge financial loss to me," said Mr. Yusuf. The shops reopened by the evening following assurances from the police. , Mr. Singh said that the MCG was taking routine action against illegal shops. He said that the forced closure of shops was wrong and that the district administration and the police would continue to take action against those trying to do so. , Gurugram police spokesperson Subhash Boken said that patrolling has been increased in areas with meat shops and personnel were on stand-by to deal with any law and order situation., Chief Medical Officer (MCG) Ashish Singla said only 95 meat shops in the city have a valid licence. Regular action is taken against those selling meat in the open, he added. , A senior MCG official, on condition of anonymity, said there were barely 100 illegal meat shops in the city. , Earlier this year, Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar had directed the MCG not to issue fresh licences for meat shops in the city., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address., Printable version | Oct 11, 2018 5:14:23 PM | <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/meat-shops-forced-to-close-in-gurugram/article25185337.ece>

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The accused were about to surrender in court when they were arrested , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][The National Green Tribunal has directed the Uttar Pradesh government to submit a report following allegations that a garbage dump was set up near Mother's Pride Public School in Sitapur district. , A Bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice A.K. Goel on Monday directed the Urban Development Principal Secretary of the State government to respond by October 25. The plea by the school had alleged that a plot adjacent to the school had been allocated as a dumping ground by the District Magistrate. , The allegation in the order added, "... A plea [to the District Magistrate] that 800 students will be adversely affected if the site is not shifted was rejected.", It was alleged that the dump yard was set up within 200 metres of the school in violation of solid waste management rules. , , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address., Printable version | Oct 11, 2018 5:14:23 PM | <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/green-panel-seeks-report-from-up-govt/article25185335.ece>

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The accused were about to surrender in court when they were arrested , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][The Delhi Congress on Wednesday alleged that BJP-ruled municipal corporations of Delhi have collected over ₹3,084 crore in the name of conversion and parking charges but have not yet used the money to develop markets., Senior Congress leader Mukesh Sharma demanded a high-level inquiry into the alleged corruption and demanded that criminal cases be filed against the guilty officials. Mr. Sharma said 13 multi-level parking were to be constructed but the civic bodies have neither developed any new parking lot nor there has been any step taken in this direction. He alleged that BJP leaders were hand in glove with the parking mafia., The Delhi Congress said when Ajay Maken was the Union Urban Development Minister, he had declared around 3,600 streets as industrial areas for mixed land use by making provisions in the Master Plan, and it was made clear then that the conversion and parking charges collected from these people for changing the land use will be used for the upkeep of these markets

and for developing parking slots in nearby areas. , The party also claimed that provisions were also made that after collecting conversion charges for 10 years, no conversion charges would be taken from any shopkeeper and industrialist., Delhi Congress alleged that under the garb of the Supreme Court order, the BJP leaders and the officials were collecting crores of rupees in bribes. "First the properties are sealed and then after collecting hefty bribes, these properties are desealed in an irregular manner with the connivance of the BJP leaders, Mr. Sharma said., North Corporation Standing committee chairperson Veena Virmani refuted the claims saying, "But parking facilities are being constructed such as in Gandhi Maidan and other places. Multilevel parking isn't the only kind of parking facility we provide.", Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,
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Accused Suraj Verma with his father Mithilesh, mother Siya, and sister Neha.

| Photo Credit:
The Hindu

, A 19-year-old engineering student allegedly murdered his parents and younger sister at their house in south Delhi's Vasant Kunj on Wednesday for opposing his lifestyle and scolding him to focus on studies., The police said they received a call around 5 a.m. about a robbery at a house in Kishangarh. A police team reached the spot and found three bodies of a family lying in two rooms of a flat. The bodies were sent for post-mortem at AIIMS., Mithilesh Verma, 42, his wife Siya, 42, and their 14-year-old daughter Neha were found dead in the first floor of a house in Kishangarh. The bodies had multiple stab wounds. , Their 19-year-old son Suraj Verma alias Sarnam was found with minor injuries., He claimed that his parents and sister were murdered during a robbery bid., During investigation, Suraj told the police that two men had entered his house and attacked the family members. He said his mother shielded him during the attack. After killing the family members, the attackers fled through the balcony, Suraj told the police., The knife used in the crime was recovered from the house., The police said that suspicion fell on Suraj when a neighbour, who had entered the house after the accused alerted neighbours about the incident, said he had entered the flat from the balcony and found the bodies. The flat was locked from the inside and the main door on the ground floor was also locked, said the police., "The only exit point was the balcony and no CCTVs in the area recorded entry or exit of any person during that time. And in the brutal attack on his family members, Suraj remained unhurt," said a police official. , On sustained interrogation, Suraj broke down and confessed to killing his parents and sister. , He said that he bought a knife for ₹200 from Mehrauli on Tuesday. , At 3 a.m. he woke up and first stabbed his father, said the police. While the accused was stabbing his father, his mother woke up and witnessed the incident, so, he killed her too. , The commotion had woken up Suraj's sister who tried to protect her mother. , The police said that Suraj then attacked Neha also. , "When his sister was lying injured on the floor and crying, he also cried but he picked up the knife again and stabbed her multiple times till she died," said a police officer. "We have arrested Suraj under murder charges," said Devendra Arya, DCP (South West)., Mithilesh, from Kannauj in UP, was a civil contractor. He had bought a four-storey house in Kishangarh in 2016. He was the general secretary of the Delhi State Lodhi-Rajput Sabha., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,
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The accused were about to surrender in court when they were arrested , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][Following a plea alleging that Noida's Spectrum Mall was constructed without obtaining requisite environment clearances, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Uttar Pradesh State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) to submit a report. , A Bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel observed on Monday, "The allegation in this application is that a commercial project, Spectrum Mall, was illegally constructed in Noida. No valid environmental clearance was taken. In view of the above allegation, we consider it necessary to require the SEIAA to furnish a report about factual aspects of the matter." , SEIAA has been asked to submit its report to the tribunal by November 9. The direction came during the hearing of a plea by Dharmendra Singh, who alleged that construction was completed without obtaining environmental clearance. , "Construction of the project is complete. It started in 2016 and finished in 2017. Environmental clearance was taken later. It is further stated that the status of project depicted while seeking environmental clearance was 'proposed project'," the Bench observed, while noting the allegations by the petitioner. Mr. Singh has also alleged that final clearance was granted in June 2018. , Warning authorities of action in case of non-compliance, the Bench added, "Needless to say, the order of the NGT is binding as a decree of court and non-compliance is actionable by way of punitive action, including prosecution."., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,
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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/submit-report-on-clearance-to-noida-mall-ngt-tells-up-body/article25185327.ece>

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The accused were about to surrender in court when they were arrested , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][Three Kashmiri students were arrested on Wednesday in a joint operation of the Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab police from Jalandhar district of Punjab for their alleged links with militant outfits – Ansar Ghazwatul Hind and Jaish-e-Muhammad. Another person, a suspected handler, was arrested from the Kashmir valley., "The students were arrested after we received inputs about their links with militant outfit headed by Zakir Musa. One AK-47 and a pistol were seized from what seems like a module working for Musa," said Director General of Police Dilbag Singh. Some explosives were also seized from the students., A police officer in Srinagar said the students were held from the hostel of CT Institute of Engineering Management and Technology in Shahpur on the outskirts of Jalandhar. , The students, pursuing engineering courses, were identified as Zahid Gulzar of Rajpora, Awantipora, Mohammad Idrees Shah alias Nadeem of Pulwama, and Yusuf Rafiq Bhatt of Noorpura, Pulwama. "The weapons were recovered from Gulzar's hostel room," said the police., The fourth suspect was arrested from Pulwama's Awantipora and is being questioned by the police. The police said the person may be the module handler., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,
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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/three-kashmiri-students-held-in-punjab-for-links-with-militant-outfits/article25185324.ece>

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Vice-President inaugurated the World Peace Monument, the largest dome in the world ,
The 9,600 sq ft flag stands on a 319.5 ft flag pole at Gandhi Mandap, a memorial for Mahatma Gandhi atop the Sarania Hill , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][The North Delhi Municipal Corporation on Wednesday suspended the incharge of a corporation school in Wazirabad following preliminary inquiry that revealed students were being segregated on the basis of religion., Following a media report regarding the matter on Wednesday, an internal inquiry was conducted by officials of the

corporation's education department. School records revealed that segregation was indeed taking place, an official said. The municipal corporations run primary schools up to fifth standard. The school in question falls in the Civil Lines zone of the corporation., Reacting to the development, North Delhi Mayor Adesh Gupta said major penalty proceedings have been initiated. "Social divide on the basis of caste, community or religion would not be tolerated. The corporation follows the spirit of the Constitution," he said., A corporation official said that a detailed inquiry will be carried out by the Vigilance Department and the culprit will be charge-sheeted. A "major penalty" implies being dismissed from work or to have multiple increments cancelled, the official said., Meanwhile, the HRD Ministry sought a report from a North Corporation over segregation of students. "We have not received any complaint yet but have read about it in media reports. I have asked for a report," HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar said., The Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights also issued a notice to the head of the North Corporation-run school., (With PTI inputs), Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address., Printable version | Oct 11, 2018 5:41:33 PM | <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/school-incharge-suspended-over-segregation/article25185321.ece>

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Education Minister Manish Sisodia at the orientation programme of the World Class Skill Centre in New Delhi on Wednesday.

| Photo Credit:

Varun Gupta , Delhi Education Minister Manish Sisodia on Wednesday said there is so much emphasis on marks at the 10+2 level and getting into good universities that students are not told about or given the option to pursue skill-based courses. , "Skill courses are the answer to India's poverty and unemployment problem. Even PhD holders do not find jobs easily today but people with specialised skills earn a living from a young age and go on to bring a change by developing new skills," he said. , Mr. Sisodia was addressing students at the orientation programme of the World Class Skill Centre (WCSC), an initiative by the government that imparts practical skill courses. , The WCSC has become popular with students as it was able to offer placements opportunities to most of them in the first five years of its existence. , "WCSC students are the real ambassadors of skill courses as they have been placed well after undergoing practical training and not just theoretical training," said Mr. Sisodia, asking students to spread the word that skill courses are a viable first option after 10+2 and to not a fallback option as perceived. , "A misconception prevails in our mindset that skill means carpenters or electricians. This needs to change. There are several skills that can be taught professionally. The students should tell the world how their life transformed after they honed a professional skill," the Minister added. , The Centre currently boasts four courses – Hospitality Operations, Retail Services, Finance Executive, and Digital Marketing & Web Development. , Technical Education Secretary Devinder Singh Nijjer said another 25 WCSCs in various other need-based disciplines will be set up across Delhi. Efforts are on to start at least three of these before the end of the year. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address., Printable version | Oct 11, 2018 5:42:13 PM | <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/skill-courses-a-solution-to-unemployment-problem/article25185319.ece>

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DU teachers and students protest against the Central government over privatisation of education on Wednesday.

| Photo Credit:

Varun Gupta / Intern

, Several teacher and students joined the march called by the Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) to protest against the Central government's "bullying insistence" on the signing the tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)., The DUTA said it was opposed to the tripartite MoU because it causes the university and its colleges to generate resources through regular fee hikes, increased enrolment and mobilise revenue from corporate sources, alumni and self-financed courses. , "It also puts an end to University Grants Commission (UGC) grants and forces the university to take infrastructure loans through Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA). Additionally, it allows the Ministry of Human Resource Development to set absurd quantified targets for the qualitative assessment and learning outcomes of courses offered at the university," said DUTA president Rajib Ray . , The teachers marching from Mandi House to Parliament Street, said that such a move would have adverse effects on equity, access and quality higher education and urged the government to have a larger debate on the issue. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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The accused were about to surrender in court when they were arrested , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][With the festive season round the corner, the South Delhi Mayor Narendra Chawla on Wednesday instructed officials of the department of environment management services to ramp-up cleanup activities. , The department has been asked to arrange special sanitation drives at religious places and markets in order to tackle higher quantities of garbage. The civic body is expected to clean garbage bins twice a day and to conduct night sweeping. The Mayor also called for more water tankers to curb dust pollution. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address.,

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The accused were about to surrender in court when they were arrested , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][V.P. Zuhra, president of NISA, a Kozhikode-based progressive Muslim women's forum, is planning to approach the Supreme Court demanding that women be allowed to offer prayers in all mosques in the country, and that they be allowed to become Imams as well., Ms. Zuhra, one of the petitioners in the landmark triple talaq judgment, told The Hindu here on Wednesday that women were allowed to pray in mosques under the Jamaat-e-Islami and Mujahid denominations, but separate from men. , Ms. Zuhra said women were not allowed to be Imams in any denominations even if they were religious scholars. , Ms. Zuhra's demand is that all denominations of Islam, especially the predominant Sunni faction, consider women on a par with men., "I have been to Mecca where men and women worship Allah together. I have read in texts of Islamic history that Prophet Mohammed allowed his wives to be present in mosques even when they were menstruating. So, when Allah and his Prophet have no problem with women worshipping in mosques, why are women being denied their right?", She has decided to approach the apex court directly against the backdrop of its recent verdict permitting the entry of women of all ages into the Sabarimala temple. "I expect that the verdict will come to our advantage," Ms. Zuhra said., She has already submitted two other petitions in the apex court, one demanding equal property rights for Muslim women and another demanding a revision of Muslim marriage laws. , Sign up to

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P.T. Thomas calls for value-based environmental awareness in rebuilding Kerala , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][

Students during a protest march at Delhi University on Wednesday.

| Photo Credit:

Sushil Kumar Verma

, Delhi University students joined the Pinjra Tod campaign and rallied around the North Campus on Wednesday. Breaking gate locks of various colleges on the campus, the protesters asked students to join the march. The students were followed by the Delhi Police and paramilitary personnel all along the march., Pinjra Tod, a women's rights collective, organised the protest after a memorandum of their demands to the Vice-Chancellor did not yield any results. The members said they will continue protesting for as long as it takes for the V-C and the Proctor to respond to their demands of ending curfew and creating a gender-just campus. Pinjra Tod member Trishala Dutta said, "We want them [authorities] to address our issues, but we do not see that happening. We want a definite answer, and we want it right now.", Meanwhile, routes to the Vice-Chancellor's office were blocked by the police. "I don't think that they would cave into our demands so easily, because till now we have only received vague responses, so we are here again to protest for as long as it takes," said Tridisha Thakuria, another member., Diya Davis, a protester, said the reason why they needed to resume the protest was because during their last protest on Monday, they got a chance to talk to the Proctor who told the students that she was not aware of their demands and refused to address the protesters. "It is ridiculous, we have been protesting for the same demands for the last three years now. Thus, we are here again demanding them to accept our demands immediately," Ms. Davis said. , Pinjra Tod had on October 1 submitted a memorandum - 'Charter of Demands' - to the DU authorities with a week's ultimatum to respond to their demands. They launched a protest on October 8 after they received no response. The charter lists 18 demands which includes curfew-free nights for university's women's hostels., Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address., Printable version | Oct 11, 2018 5:40:54 PM | <https://www.thehindu.com/news/Delhi/pinjra-tod-resumes-protest-over-hostel-curfews/article25185310.ece>

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The accused were about to surrender in court when they were arrested , Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.][The Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, Vijender Gupta, on Wednesday demanded that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal 'immediately' remove Kailash Gahlot from his Cabinet berth as Transport Minister in view of the raids at 16 premises linked to businesses operated and owned by his family. , The Rohini legislator alleged that the raids on Mr. Gahlot's premises had ensured that "another gem" from Mr. Kejriwal's collection of 67 gems "got exposed". , "The Income Tax Department is not being allowed to work in an independent and fair manner. The Chief Minister and his team started shielding their corrupt Minister immediately after receiving news of the raids," Mr. Gupta said., Accusing Mr. Kejriwal of levelling "irrelevant and irreverent allegations against the Centre" and the Income Tax Department for "no logical reason", Mr. Gupta said that the "entire machinery" of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was "churning out false and wild allegations". , "Their only objective is to make so much political noise that public attention is diverted from the raid. Instead of critically examining the role of its Minister, the AAP is using the shameful occasion for boasting about its false achievements," Mr. Gupta said., Many AAP

Ministers and MLAs were still facing corruption probes where Mr. Kejriwal was "compelled" to take action, the LoP argued. "Is not the probe going on against Satyendar Jain for his involvement in a hawala case? Was not the former Law Minister's degree found to be fake?" Mr. Gupta demanded. , Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!, Please enter a valid email address., Printable version | Oct 11, 2018 5:38:38 PM | <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/bjp-asks-cm-to-remove-gahlot-from-cabinet/article25185308.ece>

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The Supreme Court's refusal to strike down the section of the Aadhaar Act making Aadhaar mandatory for availing oneself of state subsidies and benefits was a huge disappointment. Photo: The Hindu Archives , Chief Justice Dipak Misra. Photo: PTI , Justice A.K. Sikri Photo: Manvender Vashist/PTI , Justice A.M. Khanwilkar. Photo: PTI , Justice Ashok Bhushan. Photo: PTI , Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, who gave a dissenting judgment. Photo: Ravi Choudhary/AP ,

The judgment struck down the linking Aadhaar with bank accounts as the requirement did not have legislative backing. Photo: THE HINDU archives , The judges held that Aadhaar could not be made mandatory for the Sarva Siksha Scheme, as elementary education was not a state benefit but an entitlement. Photo: V. Sreenivasa Murthy , Interview with Shantha Sinha, child rights activist. , Interview with Anupam Saraph, an expert on governance and informatics. , Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dipak Misra's last week in office, from September 24 to October 1, saw a number of landmark judgments by the Supreme Court that have the potential to change the future of the country in myriad ways. Of these, the judgments decriminalising adultery and the lifting of the bar on menstruating women from worshipping at Sabarimala, Kerala, will, no doubt, be hailed by those who want India to get rid of gender discrimination in both private and public spaces., On the other hand, the judgments excluding the creamy layer from the purview of reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and declining the plea to direct the Election Commission to debar candidates facing heinous criminal charges from contesting elections, its refusal to ensure that an independent probe was conducted into the arrests of prominent civil society activists and its failure to reverse a previous ruling of the court declaring that mosques were not an essential aspect of Islam will be seen as setbacks to movements seeking to ensure greater equity, fairness and justice in our lives. The Supreme Court's judgment upholding the validity of the Aadhaar scheme and the Act, delivered by a five-judge Constitution Bench on September 26 by a majority of 4:1, however, has grave implications for the future of the country. While the majority, comprising the CJI Dipak Misra, Justice A.K. Sikri, Justice A.M. Khanwilkar and Justice Ashok Bhushan, held that the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016, is constitutional, it struck down/read down individual sections of the Act and the UIDAI (Unique Identification Authority of India) Regulations as unconstitutional., The majority judges pronounced two judgments, one by Justice Sikri for himself, the CJI and Justice Khanwilkar, and another by Justice Bhushan, who concurred with the majority. Justice D.Y. Chandrachud dissented from the majority and gave reasons for striking down the Act. While the majority judgment is, of course, binding, the dissenting judgment has great persuasive value, and as Prasanna S. points out in a separate article, on issues where both the majority and the dissenting judgments agree, the directions given by the latter too are likely to be binding., The majority judgment's refusal to strike down Section 7 of the Act, which makes Aadhaar mandatory for availing oneself of state subsidies and benefits, was a huge disappointment. The petitioners were concerned that the collection of biometrics and demographic data under the scheme and the Act would lead to profiling of individuals and create a

surveillance state, thus violating the fundamental right to privacy, which received unequivocal support from a nine-judge Constitution Bench of the court last year., Justice Sikri held that minimal possible data were obtained from Aadhaar card holders and that there were enough safeguards, including the facility of encryption and not storing the data beyond the period for which they were required. The majority judges uncritically accepted UIDAI chief Ajay Bhushan's PowerPoint presentation claiming that during the enrolment process, there was minimal collection of biometric data; that the collection was purpose-blind as it did not collect purpose, location or details of the transaction; and that the information collected remained in silos., Justice Sikri held that Aadhaar was unique and more foolproof than other identification documents such as the Permanent Account Number (PAN) and ration card because Aadhaar could not be duplicated. The majority judges also saw Aadhaar as an empowering tool insofar as it enabled the marginalised and disadvantaged sections of society to access state subsidies and benefits easily., The majority judges dismissed concerns over Aadhaar's violation of the right to privacy by following the "just, fair and reasonableness" standard rather than the "strict scrutiny test". The "just, fair and reasonableness" standard was laid down in the privacy judgment, delivered by the nine-judge Constitution Bench last year, and it stated that a law infringing the right to privacy must meet the tests of legality (which postulates the existence of law), need (defined in terms of a legitimate state aim) and proportionality (which ensures a rational nexus between the objects and the means adopted to achieve them)., The majority judges also dismissed concerns over Aadhaar's violation of a person's dignity, emphasising that there was a need for a balance between two conceptions of dignity: one based on the right to personal autonomy and other based on the right to live a dignified life. They concluded that Aadhaar helped disadvantaged sections lead a dignified life by assuring better targeting of subsidies and state benefits and helped in the effective realisation of a range of socio-economic rights., Justice Bhushan held that the right to privacy could not be given precedence over the Fundamental Right to life under Article 21, as Section 7 of the Aadhaar Act aims to ensure that all citizens had adequate access to food and shelter., While upholding the Aadhaar Act, Justice Sikri struck/read down some of its provisions. Thus, he struck down Section 2(d) to disallow collection of metadata. He also read down Section 33(1), which prohibited disclosure of Aadhaar information except by order of a court, by clarifying that an individual whose information was sought to be released should be afforded the opportunity of a hearing. He struck down Section 33(2), which allowed disclosure of Aadhaar information in the interest of "national security" with a qualifier that it could be remedied if an officer higher than the rank of a Joint Secretary was given the power and if a Judicial Officer (preferably a sitting High Court judge) was associated with it to avoid any possible misuse of that power. Justice Sikri directed the Centre to take suitable measures to ensure that illegal immigrants were not able to take the benefits of enrolment under Aadhaar., Justice Sikri partially struck down Section 57, which enabled non-state actors to seek authentication of Aadhaar data. Justice Bhushan too held that Section 57 violated the fundamental right to privacy, as it permitted private companies to request individuals to provide their Aadhaar number. As private contracts were not law, it failed the legality test, he held. Therefore, Justice Bhushan suggested that Parliament pass laws in the future to allow private companies to require Aadhaar., Justice Bhushan also upheld Section 59, which retrospectively justified all actions taken by the state in pursuit of Aadhaar prior to the passage of the Aadhaar Act in 2016., Justice Sikri also partially struck down Section 47, which allowed for cognisance of an offence by a court only when the UIDAI or an officer authorised by it lodged a complaint. He recommended an amendment to this provision to enable an individual victim to file a complaint. Justice Bhushan, in his separate concurring opinion, however, upheld Sections 33 and 47 and Rule 9 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, as amended last year., While the majority judges upheld the requirement for PAN holders to provide Aadhaar number, they struck down a similar requirement in the case of bank account holders and mobile users. Neither of these two had legislative backing, and compulsory linking with the Aadhaar number for these two categories did not meet the proportionality test, they held. The Prevention of Money Laundering (Maintenance of Records) Rules, 2005, as amended last year,

mandated the linking of Aadhaar with bank accounts. Under the garb of prevention of money laundering or controlling black money, there cannot be such a sweeping provision that targeted all residents of the country as suspicious persons, they held. Presumption of criminality was treated as disproportionate and arbitrary, they added, and struck down the amendment as unconstitutional. The majority judges held that parents' consent was mandatory for enrolling a child under the Aadhaar scheme, and the child, upon coming of age, can exercise the option to exit the project if he or she so desired. While the majority judges upheld Section 7 of the Act, they did not approve its use for making Aadhaar mandatory for accessing the functions of the Central Board of Secondary Education, the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test and the University Grants Commission, as these were neither services nor benefits of the state. Similarly, they held that Aadhaar could not be made mandatory for children under the Sarva Siksha Scheme as elementary education was not a state benefit but an entitlement. The bench clarified that no child shall be denied the benefit of a scheme if, for any reason, she was not able to produce her Aadhaar number and such benefit shall be given by verifying the identity on the basis of any other document. The bench also made it clear that school admissions were not services or a subsidy of the state, to justify mandatory requirement of an Aadhaar number. As a child had the Fundamental Right to education under Article 21A, school admission could not be treated as a "benefit" as well, it held. The majority judges found that Parliament was competent to pass the Aadhaar Act as a Money Bill under Article 110 of the Constitution. The main aim of the Act was to deliver state subsidies and benefits, the expenditure of which falls under the Consolidated Fund of India, they reasoned. The majority judges struck down Regulation 27 of Aadhaar (Authentication) Regulations, 2016, which provided for archiving of data for a period of five years, as they held that retention of data beyond six months was impermissible. They, however, upheld Section 29 of the Act, which imposed a restriction on sharing information, as in their view it protected the interests of Aadhaar number holders. They agreed that if a provision was made in the Aadhaar (Sharing of Information) Regulations, 2016, which impinged upon privacy rights, it can be challenged. The Aadhaar case was heard by the Constitution Bench over 38 days, considered the longest period devoted so far to a matter for hearing by the Supreme Court after the historic Keshavananda Bharati case in 1973, by a 13-judge bench, which held that there were certain basic features of the Constitution that were beyond the amending powers of Parliament. Although the lead petitioner in the Aadhaar case was a former judge of the Karnataka High Court, Justice K.S. Puttaswamy, there were a number of other writ petitioners and interveners who were allowed to make submissions against the project's constitutionality on various grounds. Among them were Major General S.G. Vombatkere, who had served the Indian Army in various capacities; former defence scientist Col Mathew Thomas; the advocate Raghav Tankha; the feminist researcher Kalyani Menon Sen; the anti-child labour activist Shantha Sinha; a former judge of the Karnataka High Court, Justice Anand Byrareddy; the social activists Aruna Roy and Bezwada Wilson; John Abraham, who had challenged the project on purely religious grounds; and the non-governmental organisations the Beghar Foundation (representing homeless persons), the Nagarik Chetna Manch (a civil society group) and Swatantra (which represents transgenders and sexual minorities). The petitioners and the interveners were represented by a galaxy of senior advocates who argued pro bono as many of them believed that if they were to lose this case, they stood the risk of losing the Constitution too. The senior advocates who argued pro bono were Shyam Divan, Kapil Sibal, Gopal Subramaniam, K.V. Vishwanathan, P. Chidambaram and Arvind Datar. For the interveners, the senior advocates Meenakshi Arora, Sajan Poovayya, P.V. Surendran, C.U. Singh, Sanjay Hegde, Jayna Kothari and P. Sugathan made submissions. The respondents, the Central government and the UIDAI, were represented by Attorney General K.K. Venugopal, Additional Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and the senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi. The initiative in spearheading the attack on the Aadhaar structure was taken by the petitioners Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (retd) and Pravesh Khanna when they filed Writ Petition (C) No.494 of 2012. At that time, the Aadhaar scheme was not under the legislative umbrella. In 2016, with the passing of the Aadhaar Act, these petitioners filed another writ petition challenging the vires of the Act. Initially, both the Centre and the UIDAI took the stand that the right to privacy was not a fundamental right, as it was held

by the eight-judge bench judgment in *M.P. Sharma and four others vs Satish Chandra*, District Magistrate, Delhi in 1954. This was notwithstanding the fact that thereafter in many judgments rendered by this court, the right to privacy was accepted as a facet of Article 21. The respondents contended that those judgments were contrary to the dicta laid down in *M.P. Sharma* and were, therefore, *per incuriam*. This aspect was heard by a three-judge bench, and after hearing the parties, the bench deemed it appropriate to make the reference to the Constitution Bench. A five-judge bench was constituted, which, after considering the matter, referred the case to a nine-judge bench to resolve the controversy in an authoritative manner. In 2017, the nine-judge bench gave an unanimous answer with conclusive, unambiguous and emphatic determination that the right to privacy was a part of Fundamental Rights, which can be traced to Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution. In various interim orders since September 23, 2013, the Supreme Court has been restraining the Central government not to make Aadhaar enrolment mandatory. But the majority judges, strangely, ignored the series of violations of its interim orders by the Centre and the State governments. The Aadhaar Bill was introduced in 2016, to make the process of enrolment, authentication, security, confidentiality and the use of Aadhaar-related information statutory. The Bill received the assent of the President on March 25, 2016, and thus became Act 18 of 2016. The petitioners told the court that Aadhaar was intrusive in nature. "At its core, it alters the relationship between the citizen and the state. It diminishes the status of the citizens. Rights freely exercised, liberties freely enjoyed, entitlements granted by the Constitution and laws are all made conditional, on a compulsory barter. The barter compels the citizens to give up their biometrics voluntarily, allow their biometrics and demographic information to be stored by the state and private operators and then used for a process termed 'authentication'. By the very scheme of the Act, and the way it operates, it has propensity to cause 'civil death' of an individual by simply switching off Aadhaar of that person. Constitution balances rights of individuals against state interest. The Aadhaar completely upsets this balance and skews the relationship between the citizen and the state enabling the state to totally dominate the individual," they explained. Even when a person availed himself of a subsidy, benefit or service from the state, mandatory authentication through the Aadhaar platform (without giving a citizen the option to use an alternative mode of identification) violated the right to informational privacy, the court was told. "Compelling the citizen to part with biometric information violates individual autonomy and dignity. In a digital society an individual has the right to protect himself by controlling the dissemination of personal information. Compelling an individual to establish his identity by planting her biometric [data] at multiple points of service violates privacy involving the person," they added. The seeding of Aadhaar in distinct databases enabled the content of information about an individual that was stored in different silos to be aggregated. This enabled the state to build complete profiles of individuals, violating privacy through the convergence of data, they suggested. The Constitution was not about the power of the state but about the limits on the power of the state. Post Aadhaar, the state would completely dominate citizens, altering the relationship between the citizen and the state. The state could build a profile of the individual on the basis of the trail of authentication from which the nature of a citizen's activity could be determined, they warned. By making Aadhaar compulsory for other activities such as air travel, rail travel and directorship in companies, and availing oneself of services and benefits extended by the State governments and municipal corporations, there would be virtually no zone of activity left where the citizen was not under the gaze of the state. This would have a chilling effect on citizens, they alerted the court. This is an inversion of accountability in the right to information age: instead of the state being transparent to the citizen, it is the citizen who is rendered transparent to the state, they told the court. The majority judges were aware of these concerns. Still, they trusted the respondents who clarified that since the project was an ongoing project, there might be some glitches in its working and there was a continuous attempt to make improvements in order to ensure that it became foolproof over a period of time. The petitioners argued that the architecture of Aadhaar, by its very nature, was probabilistic, and therefore, it might result in exclusion in many cases. Therefore, rather than extending subsidies, benefits

and services to the section of society for which these were meant, it might have the tendency to exclude them from receiving such subsidies, benefits and services, they contended., In response, the UIDAI told the court that biometric accuracy was 99.76 per cent, and if the project was shelved on the grounds that it was probabilistic, 99.76 per cent beneficiaries would suffer exclusion. "It will amount to throwing the baby out of hot water along with the water," it told the court., The majority judges, therefore, concluded that the remedy to the problem of exclusion was to plug the loopholes rather than axe the project aimed at the welfare of a large section of society. If there were failures of authentication, the remedy was to adopt alternative methods to identify such persons after finding the causes of failure of authentication in their cases, they added. It would be appropriate if a suitable provision was made in the concerned regulations to establish an identity by alternative means in situations where authentication of Aadhaar number failed because of reasons such as fingerprint and iris changes on grounds of physical disabilities and so on, they suggested., No person rightfully entitled to benefits should be denied the same on such grounds, the bench emphasised. It warned the state not to expand the scope of subsidies, services and benefits unduly, thereby widening the net of Aadhaar to areas where it was not permitted otherwise., The majority judges have upheld the validity of Aadhaar believing optimistically that the government will comply with its directions and prescriptions. Only time will tell whether the optimism is justified or not.][

At the Pension Parishad, a mass meeting of unorganised-sector workers and peasants in Delhi in late September demanding a minimum pension of Rs.3,000 from the government. Many of them had stories of exclusion linked to Aadhaar. Photo: T.K. Rajalakshmi ,

Kapoori, Dinesh Kumari and Somni Devi, all Jagdamba Colony residents in Delhi who have suffered exclusions caused by Aadhaar one way or the other. , Radhakant Sharma from Saharsa, Bihar, is disabled. He used to get Rs 400 a month; but after Aadhaar was linked to bank accounts, his pension stopped coming. Photo: T.K. Rajalakshmi ,

Interview with Justice K.S. Puttaswamy. , Aadhaar, or identity authentication based on biometrics, will lead to good governance, the empowerment of marginalised, and economic prosperity for the nation. It is a scheme in the best interests of the poor. This was the self-congratulatory belief of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) when it conceptualised the idea, and also that of the National Democratic Alliance when Aadhaar was legislated. When the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of Aadhaar, it said that Aadhaar served a "much larger public interest" and added that it gave dignity to marginalised sections of society and thus the interests outweighed concerns about data collection., "Aadhaar, on the face of it, is voluntary because no one can be coerced into the scheme. But even after the September verdict, which ruled that private entities cannot ask for Aadhaar and said that no deserving person can be denied government benefit for not having an Aadhaar number, it is still not optional if one seeks benefits linked with the Consolidated Fund of India. , Going by the experience so far, the poor have no reason to believe that mere possession of an Aadhaar number automatically ensures any entitlements or guarantees a decent livelihood or dignity. On the other hand, scores of examples collated from beneficiaries of welfare schemes showed that Aadhaar, far from empowering the poor, often turned into an impediment and a tool of harassment. A day after the judgment was pronounced, a report documenting the death of Chunni Devi, a 75-year-old woman in Rajsamand, Rajasthan, said she died of starvation when her husband's biometrics did not match at the ration shop for a continuous five days. The incident was documented by the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) among scores of other examples of exclusions from entitlements. , The idea that Aadhaar is empowering and bestows a unique identity to an individual, upheld by the Supreme Court, was relentlessly pushed by the present government and its predecessor. , Conceptualised and conceived during the second UPA regime, Aadhaar was given the legal stamp by the present government. The Preamble of the Aadhaar Bill spoke of good governance, efficient, transparent and targeted delivery of subsidies, benefits and services, expenditure for which was incurred under the Consolidated Fund of India. However, each recipient of the number had to authenticate it each time as a precondition for getting the benefits. Despite stated assurances that failure of authentication would not

lead to denial of benefits, in practice, people faced denials. , Aditi Dewedi was with the Satark Nagrik Sangathan, a non-governmental organisation working in resettlement colonies in Delhi. She said: "In Delhi, we found for the presswallahs who ironed clothes using an iron press with coal as the base fuel, biometrics would not work as the point of sale machine could not authenticate their fingerprints because their fingers were coal-stained and discoloured. Secondly, the beneficiaries who have cards have to link their Aadhaar numbers with their bank account to get pension." Aditi was among the organisers of the Pension Parishad, a mass meeting of unorganised sector workers and peasants who had converged in Delhi in the last week of September demanding a minimum pension of Rs.3,000 from the government. A resident in the resettlement colony of Jagdamba Camp in Delhi, daily-wage earner Kapoori Devi, said that her son had his ration card cancelled because he did not have Aadhaar and even had his ration card cancelled. "What is the point of having an Aadhaar number or a ration card? The ration shop owner does not open the shop for days together. He says, 'dukaan khulegi to aana' [come when the shop is open]," she said., The CEO of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) had said, while arguing for the merits of Aadhaar, that authentication failures did not mean denial or exclusion of subsidies, benefits or services as the requesting entities were obliged under the law to provide for exception-handling mechanism. But like Chunni Devi, Kesi Devi of Panta Ki Anti village in Deogarh Tehsil, Rajsamand, was denied ration repeatedly as she was told her biometrics did not match. MKSS surveyors found that she had received ration only once in the entire year. There were many like her in the village. Gatu Devi, a single woman with a goat as her only possession, lives in a thatched dwelling without a door. In the last one year, she received entitlements only twice as her finger-/thumbprints did not match. There is Ganga Devi, a widow with a BPL (below poverty line) card, who could not avail herself of benefits under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) after the point of sale machine was installed because her biometrics did not match. She was put in the "abeyance list", which meant that she could not get the benefit until she could provide an explanation at the Sub-Divisional Magistrate's (SDM) office about why she did not draw her ration in the intervening time. She is also required to write an application to the SDM to bypass biometric authentication. Clearly, having an Aadhaar card has not ensured that the material benefit will reach the intended beneficiary. Neither has it empowered the beneficiary or bestowed more dignity in any manner. In fact, it has reduced the poor to being passive recipients of a technology that they had to adopt with no guarantee of the material benefit from that technology. , The Supreme Court, while upholding the constitutionality of the Aadhaar Act, said the scheme could not be crucified on the unproven plea of exclusion of some. The failure rate of authentication is mentioned as 0.232 per cent in the order. , The MKSS activist Vineet, who has been documenting various instances of poor people being deprived of entitlements, said that there were multiple ways in which Aadhaar negatively affected the most marginalised; ration, pension and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) are some of the schemes in which this happens. "There is pressure to have pension sent to bank accounts, but the banking infrastructure is not ready in our area to support so many people. Banking correspondents provide services at some places, but they use biometric authentication. If that doesn't work, you have to be in bank queues. In the NREGS, there is pressure to make Aadhaar-based payments. In 2018-19 alone, as per the NREGA Management Information System, Aadhaar-based payments worth Rs.43 crore were rejected. This means these people worked in NREGS, had to be paid for that work, but didn't get paid because the transaction failed," Vineet told Frontline. , In August 2015, a three-judge bench ordered the Central government to widely publicise that the possession and production of an Aadhaar number was not mandatory for citizens to avail themselves of benefits. It also ruled that the UID number would not be used by the government other than in the public distribution system (PDS), and in particular for the purpose of distribution of foodgrains, cooking fuel and for the distribution of LPG. By October, more schemes were added to the list, such as old-age pensions, widow pensions, disability pensions, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana and the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation. , Narrating stories of exclusion from PDS benefits, Vineet said that there were instances of the beneficiary not being allowed to authenticate his/her credentials at the ration shop; of exclusion owing to

biometric authentication failure; of beneficiaries not being able to reach the shop; and of the beneficiary being told that biometric authentication had failed even when it was successful. There were instances of less than the full entitlements being given to the beneficiary with no receipts or incorrect entries or no entries in the ration card. There were instances of benefits being denied to migratory workers. Internet connectivity issues also came in the way of people receiving benefits and required them to make multiple trips to get entitlements. For example, Vineet said that despite there being a ration shop some three kilometres from his village, everyone was required to go uphill for biometric authentication as the shop had problems with signal reception. There were instances of the beneficiary being charged more than government-prescribed rates; no social audit being conducted despite being required under law; and of exclusion owing to dealers having inadequate stock., The MKSS and its volunteers had been requesting the Rajasthan government to provide a month-wise report in the public domain listing the beneficiaries who tried biometric authentication but were deprived of their entitlement. "We have requested the Secretary of the Food Department multiple times since January 2017. If such a report becomes available, it will show the exclusion list," he said. A number of beneficiaries were found to have been put on "abeyance". These were cases of people who had not received any entitlement after the introduction of biometric authentication. "We did a survey and found these reasons: biometrics not working, inability by the card holder to visit the shop because of disability/age, and migratory causes. Then there were duplicate ration cards and ineligible persons registered under the NFSA, including non-existent people. We requested the government several times to figure out who these people were, but not much headway has been made there," he said. The MKSS requested the government to place in the public domain information about the quality of Internet connectivity at each ration shop, but to no avail. , The justification for having a biometric identification appears to consist in the need to grant an identity. The majority judgement of Justice A.K. Sikri stated: "Aadhaar gives identity to those persons who otherwise may not have such identity. In that sense, it recognises them as residents of this nation and in that form gives them their dignity." The connection between identity and dignity was not very well established either by the respondents or even in the judicial pronouncements. There is a difference between the provisioning of concrete material means such as food, water, employment and shelter to lead a dignified existence and reducing dignity to the mere ownership of a number. In the course of the arguments, the Central government admitted that the leakage of foodgrains through ghost cards was not more than 16.67 per cent. The Economic Survey 2016 stated that authentication failures were as high as 49 per cent in Jharkhand and 37 per cent in Rajasthan. Biometric technology did not guarantee 100 per cent accuracy, it was averred in the course of the arguments by the petitioners. The basis of entitlement should be economic and social status and not a numbered identity, the petitioners said. They contended that the government had not shown any evidence that leakages would not exist in an Aadhaar regime. On the contrary there were data to show that people were excluded despite having Aadhaar. Most interestingly, the government while responding to the failures in the authentication system argued that "as Aadhaar was an ongoing project, there may be some glitches in its working and there was a continuous attempt to make improvements in order to ensure that it becomes foolproof over a period of time". The only problem was that people would have to go hungry or be deprived of basic survival entitlements until such glitches got resolved. The progenitors and propagandists of biometric authentication failed to realise that "over a period of time" was actually a life-and-death situation for most of the intended beneficiaries., The judgment held that "certain categories of people, especially those living in abject poverty and those who are illiterate will not be in a position to get other modes of identity like PAN card or passport, etc." Hence, it said, it was necessary for them to have a biometric identification. This view betrays a sense of deep distrust directed at the poor, who, apart from their routine hardships, are now required to prove their citizenship and economic status in order to get a meagre subsistence-level entitlement. It has not been established anywhere that possessing an Aadhaar card has lifted people out of poverty. In 2015, the Central government issued an order to transfer cash subsidies to bank accounts so that beneficiaries could get their entitlements from anywhere in the country.

But the precondition was that the beneficiaries needed to have their Aadhaar numbers seeded with their accounts. Pilot schemes in at least three Union Territories were launched. , The policy of exclusion began in the early 1990s when the then Congress government introduced the revamped PDS followed by the targeted PDS in 1997, which ensured that a large segment of the population got automatically excluded in one stroke. The passage of the NFSA made food security a mandated right to an extent for the majority in the targeted PDS category, but the stress on digitisation of identities for basic entitlements made the implementation of the NFSA ineffective even for the targeted categories. Aadhaar legitimised exclusion. The consequences of the "glitches" were not small, as Chunni Devi's case demonstrated. , If the aim of the Aadhaar Act is to ensure that the benefit actually reaches the populace for whom it is meant, it is not being fulfilled.][

Enrolment for Aadhaar card at a centre in Chennai in January. The judgment recognises the rights of children in two stages: when they are children, at which time the UID number may be used with parental consent and not be demanded of them, and when they are 18, at which stage they can exit the scheme. Photo: B. Jothi Ramalingam , The judges constituting the majority in the Supreme Court bench that heard the case against the unique identification (UID) number saw the challenge to the project and the law as being "primarily on the ground that it violates right to privacy, which is a facet of fundamental rights enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution". Justice K.S. Puttaswamy's petition did indeed raise questions about the unspoken implications of the project for the right to privacy. He was also concerned that the UID number would be given to everyone, regardless of nationality. And there was outrage discernible in the petition that a project to fix our identity was being launched without a law. In 2010, civil society pressure led to the introduction of the National Identification Authority of India Bill in the Rajya Sabha, but in December 2011, the Standing Committee of Finance, to which the Bill had been referred, categorically rejected not just the Bill but the project as well. "The committee would, thus, urge the government to reconsider and review the UID scheme as also the proposals contained in the Bill in all its ramifications and bring forth fresh legislation before Parliament." This was simply ignored., The project had been promoted as voluntary, but in 2012 that changed and the UID scheme was made mandatory for all manner of entitlements and services such as subsidised commodities from public distribution system outlets, widow pension, scholarships for students belonging to economically weaker sections and provident fund. In Delhi, the Revenue Department began to refuse services without the UID number. By end December, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) had issued 22 crore numbers. Coercion and the threat of denial of service were used to drive people to enrol for an Aadhaar number., By 2012, UIDAI documents had established that biometrics were an experiment and the people of India, especially the poor who relied on the state for basic services for survival, were its lab rats. The possibility of exclusion was a real worry. That there was reason to worry was reinforced in 2015 when the UIDAI admitted that it had set up the UIDAI Biometric Centre of Competence to do research because the "nature and diversity of India's working population adds another challenge to achieving uniqueness through biometrics features", and its mission was "to design biometrics system that enables India to achieve uniqueness in the national registry"., The range of petitioners who went to court challenging the constitutionality of the UID project raised a spectrum of issues: "seeding" the number in multiple databases and the enhanced power to practise surveillance, tagging, labelling, tracking; the national security risk of having every person in the country on an electronic database; the access given to companies such as Ll Identity Solutions and Safran and Accenture and their closeness to the Central Intelligence Agency and Homeland Security of the United States; the vulnerability if data are leaked; and the inversion of the relationship between the state and the people with the state demanding that people become transparent while it becomes more and more opaque., As time moved on, the issues expanded. In September 2013, the Supreme Court ordered that no one should be denied any service merely because they did not have an Aadhaar number. The UIDAI immediately went to court to admit that it wanted to be allowed to make it mandatory even if it said it was voluntary. The court did not oblige. So, the UIDAI just went ahead, acting as if the court order did not exist. Six times

between the start of the project and the enactment of the Aadhaar Act in March 2016, the court gave its order, but each time the UIDAI shrugged it off like it was nothing more than a minor irritant. If the court cannot act to save people from unlawful power, what is the recourse? The Act was passed as a Money Bill, which it plainly was not. More than 2,000 people in Meghalaya approached the court saying that their religion warned them about the "mark of the beast". "He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Revelation 13:16-17) , What is happening resembles too closely the caution, and they were asking that their religious beliefs be respected. Data breaches started happening, and the UIDAI chose to attack those who revealed the vulnerabilities of the system. The corporate interest in using the UID database as an "identity platform" on which businesses could be built showed up, as did the hijacking of the project by India Stack. Conflict of interest made its appearance in the public domain, but only peripherally in the case., It was not primarily on the grounds of privacy, as the majority judgment said. It was on all these grounds. Privacy did acquire primacy, but that was after the court was told that the people of the country did not have a right to privacy., How does the majority judgment, written by Justice A.K. Sikri for himself, Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, speak of these concerns?, The judges have based their factual understanding of the project on what the project authorities have said to them: that it is foolproof, unique, incapable of being duplicated. The main source of information is a PowerPoint presentation made to the court by A.B. Pandey, the chief executive officer of the UIDAI. , Starvation deaths linked to the UID had begun to surface even as the case was being heard. On September 28, 2017, Santoshi, 11, died in Jharkhand. His family members were enrolled, but they seem to have been unable to link their UID number with the ration list. The story of Santoshi's death after eight days of going without food, makes painful telling. On September 27, 2018, one day after the Supreme Court judgment was delivered, Chunni Bai died in Rajasthan. It is estimated that about 25 people have died owing to UID-linked starvation. The court refers to studies done by non-governmental organisations and researchers on exclusion, but the respondents (read, the government, the UIDAI) have refuted such studies. "These become disputed questions of facts. It will be difficult to invalidate provisions of parliamentary legislation on the basis of such material, more particularly, when their credence has not been tested," the court said, The Right to Food Campaign in Karnataka, Jharkhand and Rajasthan and persons with leprosy from Andhra Pradesh had filed affidavits from the field. But the court found these to be anecdotal. "The government," the judges explained, "seems to be sincere in its efforts to ensure that no such exclusion takes place and in those cases where an individual who is rightfully entitled to benefits under the scheme is not denied such a benefit merely because of failure of authentication. In this scenario, the entire Aadhaar project cannot be shelved. If that is done, it would cause much more harm to the society." Given the serious nature of the reports on large-scale exclusion—the figure for Rajasthan, for instance, still hovers around 23 per cent—and death, maybe the court could have the reports investigated. This has been done in many cases before the Supreme Court., The judgment does not indicate what the judges thought of the various documents of the UIDAI regarding biometrics. In 2010, the UIDAI had said that "there is a lack of a sound study that documents the accuracy achievable on Indian demographics (that is, larger percentage of rural population) and in Indian environmental conditions (that is, extremely hot and humid climates and facilities without air conditioning)", and a biometrics consultant had produced a proof of concept report in December 2010, a few months after the first enrolment. State government records reveal high failure rates, and the dissenting judgment invokes some of them. Pandey, in his PowerPoint presentation, said that in trials they had done, the failure rate had been 8.54 per cent of those who participated in iris authentication and 6 per cent of those who attempted fingerprint authentication. The UIDAI did not have figures from the States, he said. The judges relied on a different figure. "The Authority has claimed that biometric accuracy is 99.76 per cent," they said, "and the petitioners have also proceeded on that basis. In this scenario, if the Aadhaar project is shelved, 99.76 per cent beneficiaries are going to suffer.

Would it not lead to their exclusion? It will amount to throwing the baby out with the bathwater. In the name of 0.232 per cent failure (which can in any case be remedied), should we revert to the pre-Aadhaar stage with a system of leakages, pilferages and corruption in the implementation of welfare schemes meant for the marginalised section of the society, the full fruits thereof were not reaching such people?" , What the Authority was saying to the court did not, as Pandey had told them, include the figures from the States. Also, the Economic Survey 2016-17 stated that biometric failure rates were "49 per cent for Jharkhand, 6 per cent for Gujarat, 5 per cent for Krishna district in Andhra Pradesh and 37 per cent for Rajasthan". If the court was making its decision on the basis of a failure rate of 0.232 per cent, it may have to revisit its order., The nine-judge bench decision of August 24, 2017, was categorical. Privacy is a fundamental right. It is a natural right, an inherent right, it was not given by the Constitution but recognised by it, and not having been given, it cannot be taken away either. There can be "no waiver of fundamental rights". The right to human dignity is a fundamental right, and "reflections of dignity are found in the guarantee against arbitrariness (Article 14), the lamps of freedom (Article 19) and in the right to life and personal liberty (Article 21)". The judgment delivered by four judges in the privacy case emphasised what had been said in the Kesavananda Bharati case: "We are unable to agree with the contention that in order to build a welfare state, it is necessary to destroy some of the human freedoms. That, at any rate is not the perspective of our Constitution. Our Constitution envisages that the state should without delay make available to all the citizens of this country the real benefits of those freedoms in a democratic way.", Justice Sikri's majority judgment has a different view of privacy. Piecing it together from the judgment, privacy is intrinsic to freedom, liberty and dignity. Privacy is the constitutional core of human dignity. The sanctity of privacy lies in its functional relationship with dignity. In reading socio-economic rights into human dignity, the community approach assumes importance along with individualistic approach to human dignity. Human dignity is a constitutional principle rather than a free-standing fundamental right. Dignity as a community value emphasises the role of the state and community in establishing collective goals and restrictions on individual freedoms and rights on behalf of a "certain idea of the good life". There needs to be balancing of two competing fundamental rights, the right to privacy on the one hand and the right to food, shelter and employment on the other, the judges said. "Axiomatically both the rights are founded on human dignity. At the same time, in the given context, two facets are in conflict with each other. The question here would be, when a person seeks to get the benefits of welfare schemes to which she is entitled to as a part of the right to live life with dignity, whether her sacrifice to the right to privacy, is so invasive that it creates imbalance." , The court's judgment is that the UID number empowers the "underprivileged and marginalised", they get a "unique identity" and "it also enables such individuals to avail themselves of the fruits of welfare schemes of the government which are floated as socio-economic welfare measures to uplift such classes. In that sense, the scheme ensures dignity to such individuals." Some aspect of autonomy may be "sacrificed" in setting out welfare schemes, and the court will perform the "balancing" act. One criticism of this approach recalls George Orwell's Animal Farm, and the writing on the wall as the book draws to a close: All animals are equal; but some animals are more equal than others., Convergence, profiling, breaking down of silos by the use of a single number as identifier across discrete databases, labelling and tracking across time and across purposes were among the issues that had been taken to court. These were not hypothetical. The UIDAI was demonstrably working with State governments to set up State Resident Data Hubs (SRDH) as set out in a 2012 document. The SRDHs were enabled to have a "360 degree view" of their residents. These were before the court. The majority judgment, however, saw surveillance in the context of the UID project as being about the amount of data that the UIDAI has with it. Judging the amount of data that are with the UID as minimal, the judges directed that records of authentication should be deleted after six months and metadata be contained. That about sums up the discussion on surveillance., Interestingly, the court "take(s) on record (in a footnote) responsible statements of the learned Attorney General and Mr Dwivedi who appeared for UIDAI that no State would be interested in any mass surveillance of

1.2 billion people of the country or even the overwhelming majority of officers and employees or professionals. The very idea of mass surveillance by state, which pursues what an ANH [Aadhaar number holder] does all the time and based on Aadhaar, is an absurdity and an impossibility.”, The judgment does not deal with the ubiquity introduced into the project by “seeding” the number in all manner of databases. It is significant that even after the passage of the Aadhaar Act, there is no law allowing seeding. The surveillance, and labelling, potential is unexplored in the judgment., The passage of the Aadhaar Act, 2016, as a Money Bill did not have legitimacy. Constitutional questions abounded. Article 110 of the Constitution is specific and unequivocal that any Bill to be passed as a Money Bill must have only provisions that are covered by that Article. These are, simply stated, matters concerning the putting in and taking out of monies from the Consolidated Fund and Contingency Fund. Its purpose is to ensure that the government does not come to a standstill. The Rajya Sabha has 14 calendar days in which to debate and suggest changes to the Bill, but the Lok Sabha does not have to heed any of this. This is plainly an extraordinary provision in the making of laws and cannot be deployed in regular lawmaking. Passing the Aadhaar Act as a Money Bill was an act of parliamentary defiance. The Constitution provides that where there is a dispute about whether a Bill is a Money Bill or not, the decision of the Speaker is final. The question before the court was whether the Speaker’s decision could be judicially reviewed. The court held that it could be., The majority judgment, however, held that the court’s review of the Aadhaar Act led it to hold that it indeed is a Money Bill. That is difficult to explain. The judgment sets out 18 clauses of the Act to test if they suffer from the “vice of unconstitutionality”. The bench strikes down some provisions, for instance, parts of Section 57, which allows companies and individuals to use the UID database, and recommends amendments to the Act, for instance, the right of individuals and victims whose right is violated to file a complaint and initiate proceedings. (As the law stands, only the UIDAI has this authority, to the exclusion of everyone else, including those adversely affected, and even when the complaint may be against the UIDAI.) , To arrive at this finding that the Act is valid, the court used the doctrine of “pith of substance”, arguing that since the core of the law was the delivery of benefits, services and subsidies from the Consolidated Fund of India, it was, in pith and substance, a Money Bill. This is not a convincing statement of law and may need to be revisited soon., The judgment is solicitous to the rights of children and recognises their rights in two stages: when they may still be children, at which time the UID number may be used only with parental consent and not be demanded of them. (The court does not acknowledge the experience of “coercion as consent” that has been at the centre of this project.) When the child turns 18, there is an opportunity to “exit” the system., Others too may exit the system. “Since, we have held that enrolment is voluntary in nature, those who specifically refuse to give the consent, they would be allowed to exit from Aadhaar scheme,” the judgment reads. “After all, by getting an Aadhaar card, an individual so enrolled is getting a form of identity card. It would still be open to such an individual to make use of the said Aadhaar number or not.” Those needing state assistance are made an exception, again: “Those persons who need to avail themselves of any subsidy, benefit or service would need Aadhaar in any case. It would not be proper to cancel their Aadhaar cards.”, In June 2017, Justices Sikri and Ashok Bhushan held that the law (a Money Bill, again) mandating the linking of UID numbers with PAN (permanent account number), and including the number while filing income tax returns was valid. In that judgment, the judges had held that a law could not be challenged on the grounds of arbitrariness. In August 2017, a majority in the triple talaq judgment held that that was not the correct position in law. In June 2017, privacy was still an uncertain right, and the judges had said that their decision could be revisited once the question of privacy was decided. As we know, privacy has been unequivocally proclaimed to be a strong right. Justice Sikri found that the law could stay as it was and held that it passed the threefold privacy test: of there being a legitimate state aim, a law and of proportionality., Making the UID number mandatory “in the name of checking money laundering or black money is grossly disproportionate”, the judges held. There should have been a proper study about the methods adopted by persons who indulge in money laundering, the kind of bank accounts such persons maintain, and target those bank accounts for the purpose of Aadhaar. It has not

been done. A mere ritualistic incantation of "money laundering", "black money" is not enough; no explanations have been given as to how the mandatory linking of every bank account will eradicate/reduce the problems of "money laundering" and "black money"; the state has not discharged its burden as to why linking of Aadhaar is imperative., The contrast with the court's reliance on assurances of the state in relation to subsidies, services and benefits is instructive., There is no law authorising the linking of the UID number with mobile phones; it fails the test of proportionality, and of necessity, and "there can be other appropriate laws and less intrusive alternatives"., Ever since the first interim order of the court on September 23, 2013, the government—first the United Progressive Alliance and then the present National Democratic Alliance—have been in flagrant violation of court orders. The UID database was built on coercion, bullying and threats of exclusion, punishment and freezing of monies and services. The Aadhaar Act was enacted in 2016. Even if the court were to consider that the government had the legal authority once the law was passed, that cannot be said for what transpired before the law. Section 59 of the Aadhaar Act ratifies everything that was done between 2009 and 2016. The majority are prone to forgive and forget., Significantly, the first response, apart from claiming "victory", was to assure companies that the government would do what it takes to bring them back on board., Usha Ramanathan works on jurisprudence of law, poverty and rights.][

Ravi Shankar Prasad, Union Law Minister for Law and Justice. He said that the Aadhaar verdict would enhance good governance and empower the poor and strengthen their voice. Photo: Subhav Shukla/AP ,

Yashwant Sinha addressing a meeting in his capacity as Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance, in November 2013 in Kolkata. Sinha, who was with the BJP then, opposed Aadhaar, saying its conceptualisation was riddled with lacunae. Photo: Sushanta Patronobish ,

Congress leader Kapil Sibal addressing the media following the verdict. He said that the verdict endorsed the UPA's vision for Aadhaar. Photo: V.V. Krishnan ,

Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Congress spokesperson, said that the Supreme Court decision striking down Section 57 of the Aadhaar Act, was a "slap in the face of the BJP". Photo: Sushil Kumar Verma ,

The most conspicuous political spectacle following the Aadhaar verdict was one where both the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the opposition Congress were found indulging in what has been termed in the national capital's political circles as "credit mongering". Both the mainstream parties were claiming to have been vindicated by the verdict. The spectacle virtually stood on their head the conventions of parliamentary democracy on the roles of the government and the opposition. For long, these conventions have defined the government's role as one that stipulates it to act in the national interest and for people's welfare while the role of the opposition is to question the government of the day and hold it accountable to the public. But the immediate reactions to the verdict smudged these distinctions to such an extent that the government seemed to be playing the role of the opposition, while the opposition was seen to be seeking credit for its role as part of the ruling dispensation while the Aadhaar scheme was originally formulated. , Ravi Shankar Prasad of the BJP and Abhishek Manu Singhvi of the Congress represented the mixed-up dual play of the two parties and the war of words they unleashed. Addressing the media shortly after the Supreme Court delivered its 4:1 judgment, Ravi Shankar Prasad, Union Law Minister, stated that the verdict had upheld the government's position that technology that enabled complete transparency was a tool to empower the poor., He went on to add that though the concept of Aadhaar was launched during the earlier Congress rule, its version was totally "niradhaar" (baseless) as it had no legal backing. "It's our government that has brought in a robust law with due regard to privacy and delivery, which the Supreme Court has upheld." Ravi Shankar Prasad argued that the propounders of Aadhaar in the earlier government did not know how to employ it for the poor and the marginalised of the country as their concepts of a universal identity system were inspired by foreign values and methods. "They were not in tune with Indian situations. That is exactly why they could turn around and oppose Aadhaar when they were relegated to the opposition and even criticise the programme as Chairperson of the Standing Committee, which looked into the scheme. Now that the Supreme Court has accorded sanctity to the NDA [National Democratic Alliance] government's vision of Aadhaar, the Congress is

shamelessly claiming that it is their victory." Ravi Shankar Prasad contended that it had been proven that the implementation of Aadhaar by the NDA government had promoted good governance as it had helped enrol 122 crore out of 130 crore Indians in Aadhaar. This in turn has saved Rs.90,000 crore through the routing out of middlemen by facilitating direct transfers to the bank accounts of the poor through Aadhaar and Jan Dhan accounts, the Minister told mediapersons. , Singhvi's exposition immediately after the verdict used similar arguments to justify the Congress' role in conceiving, promoting and implementing Aadhaar. He said that the Congress welcomed the Supreme Court's verdict as it "rightly appreciated brilliant idea... [of Aadhaar], protected its core, promoted its development and eliminated its flotsam and jetsam". He also argued that the judgment was "a slap in the face of the BJP" as many observations of the judges were tantamount to "ripping off the Aadhaar Act", which was passed by the Narendra Modi government in Parliament using questionable means, including the Money Bill provision. Singhvi pointed out that the track record of the NDA government in terms of the implementation of Aadhaar was marked by widespread data leak and misuse in the hands of private players. "The Supreme Court judgment has, in practical terms, given a directive to the government to set right these foibles and take up the implementation of Aadhaar with responsibility," Singhvi said. , A close inspection of the processes through which the Aadhaar issue has reached the present stage—from its original initiation in December 2010 by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, when it moved the National Identification Authority of India Bill, 2010, in Parliament—clearly exposes the claims of both the mainstream parties as hollow and unfounded. If anything, the record of both the parties on this issue is marked by glaring inconsistencies. The Congress, as Ravi Shankar Prasad pointed out, opposed the Aadhaar Act when in opposition, and the BJP too played a similar game, only in reverse. If the Congress used the position of the Chairperson of a Standing Committee to criticise Aadhaar, the BJP, too, had used the position of Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance to criticise Aadhaar. , The Chairperson of that Standing Committee, consisting of 31 members drawn from both the then ruling coalition and opposition, was former Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha. (Incidentally, Sinha is no longer with the BJP and is a vociferous critic of the Modi government's economic policies.) In its report dated December 11, 2011, the committee observed that "prima facie the issue of unique identification number, which has been referred to as 'Aadhaar number'... s riddled with serious lacunae and concern areas". It went on to add that the "scheme has been conceptualised with no clarity of purpose and leaving many things to be sorted out during the course of its implementation and is being implemented in a directionless way with a lot of confusion. The scheme, which was initially meant for BPL [below poverty line] families, has been extended for all residents in India and to certain other persons. The Committee regrets to observe that despite the presence of serious difference of opinion within the government on the UID [unique identification] scheme, the scheme continues to be implemented in overbearing manner without regard to legalities and other social consequences." , The then UPA government countered these trenchant observations with arguments very similar to the ones that are being advanced by the present BJP government. It contended that Aadhaar was a significant step to build a central identities data repository, which in turn would facilitate better management of the transfer of government funds to beneficiaries, especially subsidies, pensions and scholarships. It also argued that such transfer of government funds had been traditionally plagued by pilferage, diversion and duplication and that the UID scheme would once and for all settle these problems. The BJP, along with other parties in the opposition, especially the Left parties led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist), questioned these claims. These parties specifically highlighted the infringement of privacy that would happen with the collection and storage of individual demographic and biometric data. Many non-governmental social organisations and activists also adopted this position, and all this finally took the form of a legal challenge through the cases in the Supreme Court. Once the BJP swept to power in the 2014 general election, it not only appropriated almost all the arguments that its predecessor in power had used to justify Aadhaar but added a few new ones from its ideological pocket. Central to these additions was the emphasis on national security and the claim that Aadhaar would strengthen

security initiatives. , Manoeuvres on this plank went well with the "nationalism versus sedition" debate aggressively pursued by the Modi government. It was a convenient ploy to cover up the government's glaring failure to fulfil its promises. The Aadhaar project came in handy because greater access to private information regarding individuals gives more teeth to the supposed drive to weed out sedition. It was this political and ideological plan that led to the Aadhaar Act, 2016 and its adoption through the Money Bill route that bypassed the Rajya Sabha. , Against this background, the scramble to claim credit for the scheme by the two major mainstream parties is not unexpected. No doubt, the lack of sustained focus and application from regional and smaller parties, barring the Left parties, to this vital issue has helped the BJP and the Congress to get away with their duplicitous roles. , The CPI(M) has reiterated its long-standing and principled opposition to the Aadhaar scheme and its implementation and announced its intention to continue the struggle. In a statement after the verdict, the party pointed out that lakhs of poor people were being denied universal rights in the name of non-authentication of Aadhaar: "This renders vulnerable crores of poor people whose existence is dependent upon the accessibility to welfare schemes. Unfortunately, the majority judgment of the Supreme Court continues to maintain Aadhaar as mandatory. The Supreme Court's so-called safeguards will prove to be ineffective. The benefits for the poor and marginalised sections can only be reached if Aadhaar is explicitly made non-mandatory. The apex court has ruled that private companies cannot have access to data and Aadhaar is not required for bank accounts, mobile connections, admissions to educational institutions and entrance exams. While this may provide some protection to right to privacy, a major problem arises when this Central government has privatised and outsourced to private companies many government responsibilities. Such companies will have access to Aadhaar data. This is violative of the right to privacy—a Fundamental Right—ruled by the apex court itself." , The party welcomed the minority judgment of Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, who has held that the passing of the Aadhaar legislation as a Money Bill is a fraud on the Constitution. There is little doubt that this principled opposition to Aadhaar is confined essentially to the Left stream of Indian politics. It remains to be seen whether more regional and smaller parties will rally round this point of view.] [

Consumers at a protest demanding that LPG supply be delinked from Aadhaar, in Visakhapatnam on January 6, 2014. Photo: C.V. SUBRAHMANYAM , Agricultural labourers whose names did not figure in the pensioners' list show their Aadhaar cards at Thallayapalem village of Guntur district in Andhra Pradesh, on October 14, 2015. Photo: Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar , The much-awaited verdict of the constitutional Bench on the Aadhaar project is out. So, who won and who lost? The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has claimed that it is a historic judgment, while the Congress has claimed that the verdict upheld its vision of Aadhaar. But if you pose this question to those who waged resistance to Aadhaar from its inception in 2008—the "fringe", as Finance Minister Arun Jaitley would have it—they would say: we just passed one important stage and are gearing up for the next. For them, the struggle for freedoms in the digital age is a long one and will continue. , It is often said that the critics of Aadhaar emphasised the privacy argument disproportionately. Nothing could be further from truth. From the beginning itself, the critics of Aadhaar focussed on four major themes. To begin with, the project trampled upon constitutional rights relating to privacy and liberty. It compromised India's national security by sharing personal data of citizens with other countries. , Secondly, the biometric technology on which Aadhaar is based is flawed and untested for a population as large as India's. , Thirdly, the government's claim that Aadhaar would lead to significant savings was wrong. Fourthly, Aadhaar is a neoliberal tool to dismantle India's social security programmes ("High cost, high risk", Frontline, August 14, 2009). , The idea behind Aadhaar has a long history in Indian public policy. The creation of unique identity numbers for Indian "citizens" was a demand of the Home Ministry in the 1990s to address the threat of terrorism. Towards this, the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government introduced the multipurpose national identity card, or MNIC in 2003, for which it also amended the Citizenship Act of 1955. Every citizen was to compulsorily register in the National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC). The Citizenship Rules of 2003 also created a National Identity Number, which would be attached to the name of each

citizen in the NRIC., Confusion began when the Home Ministry encountered the complexities of determining who was a citizen. It then decided that the National Population Register (NPR) should precede the NRIC; the NPR would be a database of "residents" and not citizens. As the NPR database was to include biometric data of residents, the Home Ministry required technical expertise. The establishment of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) in 2008 was to meet this requirement. Nandan Nilekani was appointed Chairman of the UIDAI in 2009., In parallel, the then Planning Commission had mooted the idea of a unique identity number for developmental purposes in 2006. When Nilekani became UIDAI Chairman, this agenda received a boost, and Aadhaar was publicised as an instrument to improve governance. Nevertheless, the links between the UIDAI database and the NPR database remained intact. The Aadhaar number in the UIDAI database was to be the same as the National Identity Number in the NPR database. Any understanding of Aadhaar would have to begin from this interdependency between its developmental and security dimensions. , It was this interdependency that led to fears of privacy and of the emergence of a surveillance state. Questions arose of "functionality creep" in large databases such as the NPR or the UIDAI, wherein data collected serves purposes other than the original intent., First, there were many ways in which the state could use such a database to persecute marginalised sections of the population. Police and security forces, if allowed access to the biometric database, could use it extensively for regular surveillance and investigative purposes. , Secondly, personal data are vulnerable to misuse when the government explicitly encourages private participation in the provision of social services such as education, insurance and health. In other words, personal data could be transformed into commodities in the market for big data. , Thirdly, the UIDAI had outsourced the task of de-duplication of biometric data to foreign companies such as L1 Identity Solutions and Morpho SAS. These companies, and their employees, had access to the UIDAI's biometric templates. These companies could collect, use, transfer and store personal information of Indian citizens. Further, many of these companies had close links with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States and other Western intelligence agencies. For instance, George Tenet, the former CIA chief, was on the board of L1 Identity Solutions. , The UIDAI collected three sets of biometric information from residents: a photograph, fingerprints of all the 10 fingers and an iris scan. In 2009 itself, the Biometric Standards Committee (BSC) of the UIDAI was circumspect about using fingerprints. , The reason was that a large section of the Indian population was dependent on manual labour, which led to worn-out fingerprints. This was an early note of caution, which the UIDAI ignored., There was another early note of caution. 4G Identity Solutions, a supplier and consultant for the UIDAI, concluded in 2009 that about 15 per cent of the Indian population may fail to enroll due to unreadable fingerprints. , Biometric data was to be used at two stages: one, when the person enrolls to ensure that the person has not enrolled before; and two, to authenticate a person whenever a UID-compliant service is provided. , The process of enrolment into Aadhaar was chaotic, corrupt and error-ridden. For example, a single person in Hyderabad enrolled more than 30,000 persons in a short span of three months, and about 870 of them were enrolled as physically disabled ("biometric exceptions" in UIDAI parlance). It was unclear as to how many of these 870 were actually disabled because most of their addresses were fake. Aadhaar numbers were issued for dogs, cats, trees, vegetables and flowers. The Department of Posts was on record that across India, as on April 20, 2012, 6.46 lakh Aadhaar letters posted were returned because the addresses did not exist. , If we consider authentication, even the UIDAI officials were not confident that it would work. Many individuals were able to obtain multiple Aadhaar cards despite biometric checks. A set of proof of concept studies was published by the UIDAI in 2012. These studies arrived at three broad findings: (a) only some fingers of residents showed best authentication accuracy; (b) even when fingerprint quality was good, authentication was not always successful at the first try; and (c) residents above the age of 60 showed poor authentication accuracy., It was clear, then, that widespread use of Aadhaar at authentication would lead to a massive exclusion of poor manual labourers and elderly persons from social sector schemes ("Tale of errors", Frontline, June 30, 2012). , It was argued that Aadhaar would reduce leakages in social sector schemes such as the public

distribution system (PDS) by eliminating bogus beneficiaries or ration cards. However, the critics argued that Aadhaar would be of no help in this matter. First, the proportion of fake ration cards across States is small, ranging from 2 to 13 per cent. Secondly, many States had already identified fake ration cards and eliminated them before the introduction of Aadhaar. By December 2010, about two crore fake ration cards had been eliminated across 26 States. The same was the case with beneficiaries of subsidised gas cylinders., Thirdly, the proponents of Aadhaar appeared unable to locate the source of corruption in schemes like the PDS. There were two major sources of leakage in PDS: one, after the foodgrains left the godown and before they reached the ration shop; two, between the ration shop and the customer. The major proportion of leakage belonged to the former category; the latter accounted for only a small proportion. Yet, Aadhaar was firmly pushed ahead as the panacea for all the problems that plagued schemes like the PDS., In the game plan of neoliberal policymakers in New Delhi, Aadhaar was an extremely useful tool to reform the architecture of welfare provisions and qualitatively restructure the state's role in the social sector. Such a policy had two dimensions, both of which were constitutive of neoliberal economic policy in India., The first was a shift from universalism to targeting. Aadhaar was not intended to expand social service provisions. Its aim was to keep benefits restricted to "targeted" sections, ensure targeting with precision, and thus limit the government's fiscal commitments., The second was a shift from direct provision to indirect provision of social and economic services. Here, existing institutions of direct intervention were to be dismantled and replaced by new institutions of indirect provision. With Aadhaar-linked bank accounts and ration cards, it became easier to wind up the PDS and move towards direct cash transfers ("Cash evangelism", Frontline, December 28, 2012). Aadhaar, thus, was not a tool of empowerment; it was an excuse for the state to leave the citizen unmarked in the market for social services., In sum, the Aadhaar project was not criticised from a privacy angle alone, but from at least four distinct angles (Cover Story, Frontline, November 19, 2011). However, the then United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government disregarded these concerns and introduced the National Identification Authority of India (NIAI) Bill, 2010, in Parliament. , The preamble of the NIAI Bill stated that it would aim to provide identification numbers to individuals residing in India and facilitate access to benefits and services to which the individuals were entitled. After introduction, the Bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Finance. However, in 2011, the committee unanimously rejected the Bill and raised serious questions over the very idea of Aadhaar itself. , First, the report criticised the government for beginning Aadhaar enrolment without passing the Bill in Parliament. Secondly, it raised questions over the truthfulness of the enrolment process for Aadhaar numbers. Thirdly, the committee came down heavily on the government for proceeding with Aadhaar enrolment without enacting a data protection law. Fourthly, the report questioned the government on why it began the project without a comprehensive feasibility study. Finally, the report rejected the faith placed on biometrics in the project, as it was an untested and unreliable technology. , Despite the rejection of the NIAI Bill, the government went ahead and attempted to make Aadhaar mandatory in a large number of government schemes. The UIDAI cajoled different government agencies to make service provision contingent on the submission of Aadhaar. For the services that would not be provided without Aadhaar, the UIDAI had a name: "killer applications". , The 2014 general election was drawing close and the UPA government needed to showcase at least one application that effectively "leveraged Aadhaar". Thus, the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) programme in the provision of gas cylinders was chosen as the prime "killer application". Gas agencies regularly harassed consumers with threats of ending subsidised provision of cylinders. There were smaller killers too: post-matriculation scholarships were withheld for Dalit and Adivasi students for not having Aadhaar; provident fund transactions were disallowed for salaried employees; salaries were not paid to government employees in Maharashtra; even marriage registrations were disallowed in Delhi. , Interestingly, during the same period, leaders of the BJP were spewing venom on Aadhaar. According to the then Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, Aadhaar was a security threat and a political gimmick; the scheme had no vision and crores of rupees were wasted on it. Arun Jaitley wrote blog posts against

Aadhaar arguing that it was an invasion into the right to privacy of citizens. The BJP leader Ananth Kumar said: "Aadhaar card is not at all good for India; Aadhaar card should be scrapped." , By this period, however, more people began to detest the arbitrary imposition of Aadhaar. Threats posed by the project were also being discussed on a wider scale. At this point, a set of concerned citizens approached different High Courts and the Supreme Court., In October 2012, K.S. Puttaswamy, a retired judge, filed a case in the Supreme Court with the prayer that the Aadhaar project be shut down. Given the large number of cases filed all across India, the Supreme Court ordered that all cases filed in different High Courts be referred to the Supreme Court bench hearing the Puttaswamy case. , In an interim order on September 23, 2013, the apex court directed that "no person should suffer for not getting the Aadhaar card in spite of the fact that some authority had issued a circular making it mandatory". However, the Central and State governments paid no heed to this order and continued to demand Aadhaar numbers for delivery of services. The petitioners approached the court again and again when compulsoriness continued. The court put out two more orders, in March 2014 and March 2015, that repeated the spirit of the September 2013 order. There was still no relief to citizens., In May 2014, the National Democratic Alliance came to power at the Centre. Once in power, the BJP made a remarkable U-turn and embraced Aadhaar wholeheartedly, much more than the Congress did. The Modi government unleashed a blitzkrieg of sorts in trying to ensure that each and every service provided to citizens was mandatorily linked to Aadhaar., Aadhaar was made mandatory for opening a bank account, to obtain a mobile number, filing tax returns, to make use of free ambulance services, to receive treatment for tuberculosis, to receive treatment under the National Health Mission, to get housing subsidy for beedi workers, to receive soil health cards, for crop insurance benefits, to receive scholarships under the National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship, to receive benefits under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, for skill training under national skill development programmes, to obtain benefits under the Bonded Labour Rehabilitation Scheme, to partake of midday meals in school, and to get benefits under the Janani Suraksha Yojana., The Modi government also created a new law for Aadhaar. It passed, through an extraordinarily dubious procedure, the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Bill, 2016. The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha as a Money Bill. However, the Bill was by no means a Money Bill. It was introduced as a money bill to ensure that the Rajya Sabha, where the BJP did not enjoy a majority, had no say in the matter., The Bill could have been considered a Money Bill if it had dealt only with the flow of money in and out of the Consolidated Fund of India. However, the Bill dealt with much more than that, including the modalities of sharing personal data with private agencies. These provisions raised the possibilities of infringement of the fundamental rights of citizens. But the government paid no heed to criticisms and went ahead to pass the Bill in the Lok Sabha ("Freedom in Peril", Frontline, April 10, 2016). , At this point, the litigants in the Supreme Court case approached the Chief Justice's bench multiple times to request that hearings in their cases begin. Finally, when the hearings resumed in 2015, Attorney General Mukul Rohatgi put forward a strange argument. He argued that privacy was not a fundamental right under Article 21, as ruled by two benches of the Supreme Court in the past. Opposing the government's view, the petitioners argued that in many other cases, Supreme Court benches had ruled that right to privacy was indeed a fundamental right ingrained in Article 21. While the apex court was inclined towards the latter, it still found it fit to refer the matter to a Constitution Bench. , A nine-judge Constitution Bench was finally set up in July 2017 to decide whether privacy was a fundamental right. In August 2017, the Bench gave the historic verdict that privacy should be considered a fundamental right. Once the clarification was obtained, the hearings in the original Aadhaar cases resumed, but under a different bench constituted by the Chief Justice under his own leadership. The hearings began in January 2018. Multiple hearings later, the bench gave its verdict on September 26, 2018., It is against this background that one has to analyse the question posed to the critics of Aadhaar: who won and who lost? When the struggle against Aadhaar began in 2009, no one imagined that it would ultimately transform the very reading of Fundamental Rights in the Constitution. , The first success of the struggle was when the Supreme Court unanimously upheld privacy as a fundamental right in 2017. In the

same judgment, the sexual orientation of a person was upheld as a facet of one's privacy. Relying on such a reading of privacy, the Supreme Court, in September 2018, decriminalised homosexuality under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. Here, the critics crossed yet another stage in their struggle. The Aadhaar judgment of September 26 was the third stage. Here, admittedly, the victory for the critics was only in patches. For the critics, the dissenting voice of Justice D.Y. Chandrachud on the Bench would provide much room for hope ("Plethora of complaints", page 24; "Landmark dissent", page 28). His majestic judgment is indeed a message to India to not lose heart. Surely, it is in his dissent that the seeds of future struggles against Aadhaar will be sown., R. Ramakumar is a professor at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.][Justice D.Y. Chandrachud arriving for Chief Justice Dipak Misra's farewell function on October 1. Photo: Ravi Choudhary/AP , The Supreme Court has pronounced its final verdict on the six-year-long litigation challenging the Aadhaar project, the Government of India's constitutionally courageous effort to build and operate a database of sensitive demographic and biometric information of all Indian residents. Twenty-six judges of the Supreme Court heard the case over that period. The case posed several questions that tested the court's, and indeed the Indian public's, understanding of the essential values of the Constitution and the Fundamental Rights. The 1,448-page-long 4:1 majority verdict partially upheld the Aadhaar project. Justice Dhananjaya Chandrachud delivered the lone dissenting opinion, striking down the entire project and the Aadhaar Act as unconstitutional. By all measures, for Aadhaar it was a close shave., Justice Chandrachud wrote the lead opinion in the landmark nine-judge bench judgment of the Supreme Court that unanimously upheld the status of the right to privacy as a fundamental right. That judgment not only answered the seemingly simple yes/no question before it but in the process also caused our fundamental rights jurisprudence to take a quantum leap as it considered and expounded on ideas such as dignity, autonomy, self-determination and, importantly, the interrelationship of fundamental rights. , It furthered the project that began with the 11-judge bench judgment on bank nationalisation in 1969-70 and was followed through in the seven-judge and nine-judge bench decisions in Maneka Gandhi (1978) and IR Coelho (2007) respectively. The privacy judgment summarily rejected the Government of India's attempts to rely on pre-Maneka Gandhi readings of India's charter of Fundamental Rights—in what was India's Make India Great Again moment (taking its cue from Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" campaign that looks to turn the clock back on the progress made on the civil and political rights front). , The question of the existence of the fundamental right to privacy was a rather soft one for the court. That was but one of the more than two dozen questions that required a decision from the court through the Aadhaar litigation that began in 2012 and ended, for the moment, in September 2018. What it was going to decide on the question of the constitutionality of Aadhaar was the real deal, many thought., The author of the lead opinion in the "right to privacy" case found himself in the minority as he delivered what is expected to be one of the more celebrated judicial dissents in the history of the Supreme Court. He accepted the petitioners' view on almost every issue and struck down both the Aadhaar project and the Aadhaar Act as unconstitutional. Even when he was less than halfway through reading out the series of 23 conclusions of his judgment in open court, the momentousness of the dissent had become clear. No other judicial pronouncement in recent memory has come down as heavily on the actions of the government as this one did. If the "right to privacy" judgment was about fundamental rights, Justice Chandrachud's dissenting judgment in this case was about the limits of state power. , One of the issues argued in the case was that when the Aadhaar Act was passed in 2016 as a "Money Bill" it should not have been passed so. A piece of legislation introduced in the Lok Sabha certified as a Money Bill effectively nullifies the role of the Rajya Sabha, called the "Council of the States", a part of the bicameral legislature crucial to the federal character of Indian democracy. The Rajya Sabha cannot vote on a Money Bill but can only recommend amendments that are not binding on the Lok Sabha. Article 110 of the Constitution defines the scope of a Money Bill. It lays down the criteria, all of which relate to the Consolidated Fund of India, revenue and taxation, which every provision of the Bill must adhere to in order to be certified as a Money Bill. Article 110 uses the word "only" to limit the ambit of the Bill; the text of the Article states

at the outset that "a Bill shall be deemed to be a Money Bill if it contains only provisions dealing with all or any of the following matters". Article 110 also lays down that on the question of whether a Bill is properly certifiable as a Money Bill, the Lok Sabha Speaker's decision is final., Two previous decisions of the Supreme Court had held that the finality of a Bill's certification as a Money Bill was not open to question in any court, including the Supreme Court. For any government that is short of numbers in the Rajya Sabha, the Money Bill route is a godsend. These decisions, however, ran contrary to the weight of at least two Constitution Bench decisions that had held that the finality of the Speaker's decision meant only immunity from appeal and not immunity from judicial review for non-compliance with constitutional provisions. , The petitioners in the Aadhaar case contended that the Speaker's certification of the Aadhaar Act as a Money Bill was illegal and that the Act, having not been duly passed, was stillborn, a nullity, and therefore had no force of law. The government, on the other hand, argued that the Supreme Court could not review the Speaker's decisions and that the Aadhaar Act, dealing with targeted delivery of subsidies and benefits flowing out of the Consolidated Fund of India, was correctly certified in any event. , In his opinion, Justice Chandrachud examined several precedents on judicial review and finality clauses in the Constitution, the role of the Rajya Sabha in a federal Constitution such as India's, the scope of the provision in Article 110 and the significance of the term "only" occurring therein, and the various provisions of the Aadhaar Act, including the sole provision in Section 7 that had any connection at all to the Consolidated Fund of India. He concluded that the certification of the Aadhaar Act as a Money Bill was completely illegal and unconstitutional and struck down the Act for violation of Article 110. He said: "The Rajya Sabha has an important role in the making of laws. Superseding the authority of the Rajya Sabha is in conflict with the constitutional scheme and the legitimacy of democratic institutions. It constitutes a fraud on the Constitution.... That would constitute a subterfuge, something which a constitutional court cannot countenance." , Phrases like "fraud" and "subterfuge" are seldom used in relation to government action by a usually restrained Supreme Court, in deference to the status of the executive and the legislature as coequal organs of the state. However, the Supreme Court, acting in the capacity of the guardian of the Constitution, must assert itself to limit the excesses of the other two organs and to call a spade a spade when it ought to. Justice Chandrachud's judgment does exactly that, even as the majority opinion of Justice A.K. Sikri invents principles and doctrines to squeeze the Aadhaar Act within the confines of Article 110. , Another issue on which Justice Chandrachud's opinion was in sharp contrast to the majority opinion was on the correctness of the government's action of making Aadhaar mandatory for several schemes while the interim orders of the Supreme Court were still in operation. The majority held that the government's conduct was improper and unfair as it did not seek a variation order from the court but stopped short of striking down those notifications. , Justice Chandrachud's opinion went further: He struck down those notifications and held that the Union government's conduct violated the rule of law and its own constitutional duty. His judgment stated: , "Institutions of governance are bound by a sense of constitutional morality which requires them to abide by judicial orders. What seems to emerge from the course of action which has been followed in the present case by government is a perception that judicial directions can be ignored on a supposed construction of the statute.... If we were not to enforce a punctilious compliance with our own directions by government, that would ring a death knell of the institutional position of the Supreme Court.", Although Justice Chandrachud's opinion adopted a contrasting view on several other issues such as the privacy of biometric information, the evidentiary value and effect on the constitutionality of studies on exclusion that the Aadhaar scheme was causing, the test and the standard of legislation infringing the privacy of the individual, it must be said that his decision was not a "dissent" in the strict sense of the word. It is not clear which of the opinions was penned first. While Justice Ashok Bhushan made it clear that he had had the benefit of having read Justice Sikri's opinion, it did not appear that the majority opinion had been read by Justice Chandrachud or vice versa because there is no expression of dissent or disagreement with each other's opinion in the judgments. Justice Chandrachud himself indicated that it was only a partial dissent as he began to

pronounce his judgment in open court. There were several issues on which Justice Chandrachud and the majority opinion agreed. , First, there was a broad agreement on the principle that any decision of the Speaker, although final, was not immune from judicial review. Second, both the opinions agreed that Section 57 of the Aadhaar Act, to the extent that it allowed private companies and service providers to use Aadhaar authentication, was unconstitutional because it allowed commercial exploitation of personal information. Third, both agreed that the Rules of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act that mandated Aadhaar-linking for all existing and new bank accounts were unconstitutional because this amounted to a disproportionate invasion of privacy. Fourth, both agreed that the telecom circular that mandated SIM-Aadhaar linking had no authority of law and was a disproportionate and unconstitutional invasion of privacy. , The lone dissent, however, went further and directed that the government should direct deletion of all Aadhaar data by telecom service providers. There has been some discussion on whether this direction, not endorsed by the majority of judges, is binding. It is an established principle in reading separate judicial opinions that on the point where there is concurrence on the reasoning or conclusions, the directions given even by one of the opinions must be taken to have the endorsement of the others, which makes Justice Chandrachud's directions binding. This makes this "dissenting" opinion not merely of academic importance as some suggest. , However, the lasting impact that Justice Chandrachud's opinion will have is the judicial acknowledgement of the constitutional problems that arise in the context of a rapidly digitalising governance, in its own words: "[I]n understanding the interface between governance, technology and freedom, this case will set the course for the future.... Our path will define our commitment to limited government. Technology confronts the future of freedom itself." Elsewhere, it spoke about the dialogue between technology and power; and the relationship between the citizen and the state. This was a theme that senior counsel for the petitioners painstakingly argued, and it was refreshing to see that the opinion had not only absorbed it and done justice to it but had travelled further beyond. , From Virginia Eubanks' work titled Automating Inequality, which demonstrates how technological solutions are often discriminatory against those already vulnerable, to L. Viswanath's piece in The Wire on the nature of biometrics and the implications of its use in Aadhaar, the dissenting opinion relied on several unconventional sources to examine some of the unfamiliar questions before the court. The dissenting opinion's recognition that the rights and dignity of the individual and constitutional guarantees cannot be subjected to the algorithms, probability and vicissitudes of technology stood in sharp contrast to a broad idea of techno utopianism endorsed by the majority. , Chief Justice Charles Evan Hughes (1862-1948) of the United States Supreme Court once wrote that "[A] dissent in a court of last resort is an appeal to the brooding spirit of law, to the intelligence of a future day..." , The history of the Indian Supreme Court is replete with instances of dissenting opinions later becoming the law of the land. Justice Chandrachud certainly knows a thing or two about that. For, even within the Aadhaar litigation, his right to privacy judgment overruled the majority decisions in ADM Jabalpur (Emergency case, 1975) and in Kharak Singh (1962-63). The celebrated dissenting opinions of Justice H.R. Khanna and Justice Subbarao respectively in those cases now hold the field. One hopes that Justice Chandrachud's dissent in the Aadhaar case sees that transformation sooner rather than later., Prasanna S. is a Delhi-based advocate. He assisted the petitioners' side in the Aadhaar case before the Supreme Court.][

Uday Kotak, non-executive chairman of the new IL&FS; board, with Vineet Nayyar, vice chairman, at a media briefing in Mumbai after the board meeting on October 4. Photo: Paul Noronha ,

Rapid Metro, the first fully private funded metro rail in the Gurugram business district in Haryana, on August 14, 2013. To execute the metro project IL&FS; Rail Limited was founded in 2008. Photo: Kamal Narang ,

November 28, 2004: Work under way near Siruseri in Chennai for the six-lane IT corridor project of the Tamil Nadu Road Development Company, an equal joint venture between Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation and IL&FS.; IL&FS;' profit-gouging tactics forced the government to oust it from the TNRDC. Photo: BIJOY GHOSH , ON October 1, after dithering for weeks following a string of defaults that threatened Indian financial markets and institutions,

the Union government announced that it was taking control of the beleaguered Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services Ltd (IL&FS). Although the Finance Ministry termed the decision of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs to move the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), Mumbai, as "firm and decisive", there is little evidence to suggest that a quick resolution to the crisis is in sight.. Much of this arises from the fact that little is known about the company. It is supposed to be a Systemically Important Non-Deposit Accepting Core Investment Company registered with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), but no one, not even the Finance Ministry, appears to know how many entities constitute this group. More importantly, since it transformed from a financial services company into one that is an active player in the infrastructure business long ago, it has a footprint in the infrastructure business like none other. Thus, its collapse not only has ramifications for financial markets but affects projects across the country. Given the completely opaque nature of the company's functioning and the complex web of interrelated entities that constitute the group, the general consensus is that sorting out the mess in IL&FS is going to take time, but with the threat of further defaults looming, the question is whether the company has the time it needs. To complicate matters, the government has also asked the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) to investigate the companies in the IL&FS group.. The Corporate Affairs Ministry announced that it was superseding the existing management and the NCLT approved its demand for a reconstituted board that included Uday Kotak, managing director (MD) and chief executive officer (CEO) of Kotak Mahindra Bank; Vineet Nayyar, former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer and currently executive vice chairman of Tech Mahindra; G.N. Bajpai, former Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI); G.C. Chaturvedi, ICICI Bank chairman; Malini Shankar, IAS officer; and Nand Kishore, a retired officer from the Indian Audit and Accounts Service. Vineet Nayyar was appointed vice chairman and MD at the first meeting of the board on October 4. Some of these appointments have already raised questions, especially grave ones about the potential conflict of interest. For instance, questions have been raised about whether the chairmen of the two private banks can steer the company, their competitor in several key areas of project finance, to safety. Proxy advisory firms have also questioned the appointment of Bajpai, alleging that he was being investigated for serious conflict of interest issues during his tenure as an independent director at Kingfisher Airlines. It is alleged that a consultancy closely connected to Bajpai provided services to the now-defunct airline while he was director.. How little the Finance Ministry, or for that matter the general public, was aware of is evident from the following. On October 1, the Ministry said the IL&FS Group consisted of 169 entities, including subsidiaries, associates and joint ventures. The company's latest annual report confirms this. However, the auditor's report accompanying the annual report mentions 209 entities, including 135 subsidiaries (of which at least 50 are foreign, located as far apart as Laos and the United States).. Moreover, the group has control of nine investment funds, including the Infrastructure Equity Fund and the Saffron Investment Fund. However, speaking to the media after the first meeting of the board, Uday Kotak put the total number of entities in the group at 348. Uday Kotak also revealed that Rs.835 crore of commercial paper, essentially short-term debt, issued by the group would mature by the end of the current financial year, of which Rs.250 crore would have to be repaid by December 2018. Clearly, the Finance Ministry—and by extension the RBI because it recognises IL&FS as "systemically" significant—were sleeping at the wheel. Uday Kotak also confirmed that unravelling the complex web of interrelated transactions of loans and investments within the group would take time.. In effect, without the basic information of what exactly this group is, who knows when the next landmine is waiting to explode? Significantly, although the stated figure of outstanding loans of the group is reported to be about Rs.91,000 crore, nobody is confirming this yet. In fact, Uday Kotak, in his press conference of October 4, refused to confirm this. However, according to one report, about two-fifth of the group's outstanding debt is unsecured and thus remains at risk. Significantly, a big portion of the secured loans is earmarked against cash flows that the group earns from projects—from road tolls to water and power projects.. The government's takeover of IL&FS was immediately compared to the takeover of Satyam Computers Services in 2009, but this time it is different. For one,

Satyam's collapse did not pose a systemic risk simply because it had no debts. Moreover, felony has not yet been established in the IL&FS case, as was immediately evident in the Satyam case following the promoter's admission of misstating revenues. The delayed action of the government, some would say, delayed by several years, is possibly explained by the initial idea of using the ever-available bailout institution, Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), and State Bank of India (SBI), to organise an escape for IL&FS from default. But as the extent of the required bailout as well as the extent to which a default would spook markets became apparent, it appears the government turned tack, which resulted in the takeover. However, there is not much time. The NCLT wants a turnaround plan to be submitted by the end of October, an obviously arduous task given the fact that those at the helm have just learnt about the constituents of the group. Both the RBI and the Finance Ministry ought to have been aware by May 2018 that IL&FS was fast approaching a crash. In the year ending March 2018, it reported a loss of Rs.2,200 crore, which meant the erosion of the company's book value by at least one-fifth within a year. More importantly, its interest payments in the year were 10 per cent more than its earnings, not inclusive of the interest earned, depreciation and the taxes paid. Clearly, no company in such a state appeared viable. On the basis of available data, there is evidence to indicate that IL&FS was using short-term borrowings to fund infrastructure projects, a practice that accountants and economists would term a sure recipe for a looming asset-liability mismatch. While repayments would devolve soon, the asset (infrastructure projects with longer gestation periods) would take considerably longer to yield dividends. This is exactly what happened: the IL&FS' issue of commercial paper increased by 300 per cent between fiscal 2017 and 2018; during the same period, its borrowings from the inter-corporate debt market increased by 140 per cent. Both these instruments are short term and are meant to tide over immediate liquidity problems. In fact, the company's annual report reveals that its share of short-term borrowings in overall borrowings jumped from a little over one-tenth in 2016-17 to more than one-fifth within a year. It ought to have been evident to anybody watching the company that a crisis was looming thick and fast. How did IL&FS reach where it is now? The company was promoted in 1987 by Unit Trust of India and Central Bank of India. After the collapse of UTI in 2001 during the tenure of the National Democratic Alliance, LIC, the current dominant shareholder, started getting a stake in the company. Initially, as its name suggests, IL&FS' primary focus was leasing business. But, it soon started arranging finance for infrastructure projects that were aided and abetted by successive governments' unwillingness to build roads, transportation facilities, provide water and sanitation facilities and establish publicly funded power projects. All this happened under the broad umbrella of what we term liberalisation. But the real flood of opportunities came IL&FS' way when the government started aggressively wooing investors into infrastructure projects under the public-private partnership (PPP) model. These opaque and, in many cases costly, projects were now being thrust on State governments, especially since the middle of the last decade ("The Trojan horse", Frontline, February 5, 2016). This is when IL&FS' second switch in focus happened: it became a facilitator of such projects instead of a promoter of such projects. And, as the several controversies about its role in such projects testify, it began drawing the ire of victims of these costly projects. Typically, hard-pressed State governments would align with IL&FS because it would display its public sector shareholders as proof of its robust status. With a tiny shareholding in project, the IL&FS would get a toehold in the company, while the State government would invest in the company and also provide all kinds of subsidies (such as land and tax breaks) to it. IL&FS would levy a range of fees and commissions for the project—loan syndication fees, merchant banking fees, project management fees, fees for commissioning environmental impact studies or project feasibility and a plethora of other fees. In fact, these fees were often more than the company's initial investment. Just one example of this would suffice: New Tirupur Area Development Corporation Limited project, which was implemented in PPP mode in 2006 ("Costly alliance", Frontline, April 21, 2006). The project, which angered the people in and around Tiruppur because of the high cost of water and which resulted in prolonged litigation, prompted the Madras High Court to observe that the deductions that IL&FS made were excessive. It noted that the company had deducted Rs.41.24 crore out of a total

disbursement of Rs.140 crore (almost 30 per cent) citing various fees and commissions.. In 2014, the Madras High Court observed that the State government's contribution had only been "to service the debt with a pre-condition that the money will not even be used to improve the infrastructure". "Investing more money just for the purpose of servicing a debt is neither a prudent business decision nor in the interest of the public," it said. Similar practices were adopted by IL&FS in the case of the Tamil Nadu Road Development Company (TNRDC), a special purpose vehicle structured to build the IT corridor. The company was a 50:50 joint venture between IL&FS and the Tamil Nadu government. IL&FS' profit-gouging tactics led to the government eventually ousting it from the TNRDC., A similar fate was reserved for NOIDA Toll Bridge Company Ltd, again a company in which IL&FS was a partner. IL&FS gave itself an assured return of 20 per cent on its investment, unthinkable even in the eyes of capitalist logic. More shockingly, the concession period of the project was extended from 30 years to 100 years even as the cost of the project escalated by 150 per cent. Eventually, public ire and the courts forced the scrapping of the project., What is common to these projects—as is the case with most PPPs—is that the projects commence on the premise that a private investor must undertake them because the government does not have the wherewithal. But as soon as the project starts—even before they start yielding any results—IL&FS' cost meter is already ticking, with fees and charges loaded onto the project which the state (State governments or state-owned companies) has to pay. Moreover, enormous hidden subsidies in the form of land, tax breaks and other concessions are doled out to these so-called joint venture companies. For example, as pointed out by the financial journalist Sucheta Dalal, in the case of the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City project, land was provided at Rs.2 an acre, which amounted to more than Rs.440 crore as a giveaway. To make matters worse, these PPPs masquerade as private companies although they draw from public funds and then cite their right to maintain confidentiality., Financial markets appear to have a surreal life of their own. They give the impression that the world of finance has a life of its own, far away from the real world of real issues, real livelihoods and the real economy. Implicit in this construct of the world of finance is the suggestion that lesser mortals cannot fathom what happens in this world. Nothing could be further from reality. The IL&FS crisis was initially presented as a problem of the markets, later, as a problem for the banks, and still later as a problem for the entire financial system. But the real problem with the IL&FS story pertains to the reality, the reality of profit gouging, which has resulted in costlier water, costlier road tolls, costlier power tariffs and a generalised perpetuation of opacity that remains unaccountable to common folk across the country in the hundreds of projects that IL&FS has a hand in. This is where the real world meets the world of finance., There have been reports that a wider fallout of the IL&FS crisis needs to be prevented in order to ensure that it does not envelop financial markets. The argument is that a full-blown default by IL&FS would not only set off a collapse of other stressed banks and financial institutions but trigger a wider crisis in the debt and equity markets. There is also the unstated fear that such a collapse would result in surging interest rates, which would jeopardise the Narendra Modi government's borrowing programme as it enters an election year. Implicit in this train of logic is the demand for a bailout, which raises several questions., Does IL&FS' track record indicate that the company serves the public interest in any meaningful way? If that is not so, as all evidence from the negligently run company shows, the answer to what ought to be done can be broken down into simpler parts. First, it ought to be recognised that IL&FS is a notoriously unique company. There is none like it in the land; there is no other company that finances infrastructure while acting as an investor on the scale that it does. Given the fact that many infrastructure companies have come to grief in the past few years, mostly because of their unwillingness to bring in equity to match their high levels of borrowings (mainly from public sector banks), why should IL&FS get special treatment?, As for the question of what would happen to IL&FS' many projects, it would appear that a far better solution would be to let the State governments or other governmental entities reacquire control over these projects. After all, the state would be in a far better position to ensure that public good is served rather than a private entity that functions in a grossly opaque manner. Of course, this would require IL&FS to sell these assets

at a discount, a distress sale of sorts. But if the government (States as well as the Union) is getting back control of the project, what could be the objection to a reckless private company now having to suffer a haircut?][Devotees waiting to ascend the holy 18 steps leading to the sanctum sanctorum of the Ayyappa temple at Sabarimala. A file picture Photo: Leju Kamal , A view of the "Namajapa Yatra" held under the aegis of the Sabarimala Protection Council in Pandalam on October 2. Photo: LEJU KAMAL , Justice Indu Malhotra. Photo: R.V. Moorthy , IT is anybody's guess whether young women devotees will throng the hill shrine of Sabarimala during the main pilgrimage season, beginning on November 17, now that the Supreme Court has ruled that the age-old custom of the temple barring the entry of women in the age group of 10 to 50 is illegal and unconstitutional., The Sabarimala verdict is a radical departure from many past judgments dealing with the sensitive issue of religious customs and traditions, and it has shaken the very foundation of the belief of the Ayyappa faithful that "the practice of celibacy and austerity is the unique characteristic of the deity at Sabarimala and that it required exclusion of women in the menstruating age from entering the temple or worshipping there"., In its judgment, lauded by many as "transformative" or described as "historic", the apex court declared: "We have no hesitation to say that such an exclusionary practice violates the right of women to visit and enter a temple to freely practise Hindu religion and to exhibit her devotion towards Lord Ayyappa. The denial of this right to women significantly denudes them of their right to worship.", The 4-1 majority judgment of the Constitution Bench, with a dissenting opinion from the lone woman judge in it, caught most stakeholders off guard. While it led to disappointment and widespread agitation by Ayyappa devotees, including large numbers of women, within political parties it resulted in confusion about how they should react to such a fundamental change in the scheme of things at Sabarimala., The Left Democratic Front (LDF) government wholeheartedly welcomed the judgment, and Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the State would move ahead immediately to provide more facilities for women pilgrims coming to the forest shrine on the basis of the court verdict. "The Supreme Court's verdict is now the law. The State government is bound to obey the verdict and make necessary arrangements. The government is not planning to file a review petition," he said. After hesitating initially, the Travancore Devaswom Board also announced that it had decided against seeking a review of the verdict, "based on the legal advice it had obtained"., With a major pilgrimage season just around the corner, the government moved quickly to arrange more facilities for women devotees at Sabarimala and the base camps at Nilakkal and other places. The floods in August had already stretched the administration to the limit because the camp facilities at Pamba suffered severe damage or had been washed away. There were also varying estimates of the number of additional pilgrims the verdict would bring to Sabarimala. For the Devaswom Board and government agencies, it is clearly a race against time., The verdict of the five-judge Constitution Bench was a result of a writ petition filed under Article 32 of the Constitution (for the court's intervention for enforcement of fundamental rights) by Indian Young Lawyers Association seeking directions to the Government of Kerala, the Travancore Devaswom Board and the Chief Thanthri of Sabarimala temple, among others, to ensure the entry of women devotees between the age group of 10 and 50 years to the Sabarimala temple. The petition had said that the right to enter the temple had been denied to them on the basis of certain customs and usage., It had also sought the court's direction to declare Rule 3(b) framed under the Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (Authorisation of Entry) Act, 1965, unconstitutional. Section 3 of the Act required that places of public worship should be opened to all sections and classes of Hindus, subject to special rules for religious denominations. Rule 3(b) however sought to exclude women "at such times during which they are not by custom and usage allowed to enter a place of worship". The petitioners said this rule was violative of Articles 14 (Right to Equality), 15 (Prohibition of discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth), 25 (Right to Freedom of Religion) and 51A(e) (Fundamental duty to promote harmony and spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India) of the Constitution., A three-judge bench that first heard the petition considered the arguments and framed a list of five questions and referred them to the Constitution Bench in October 2017., The five-judge Constitution Bench held, on

September 28, that the right to practise religion under Article 25(1), in its broad contour, is "a non-discriminatory right which is equally available to both men and women of all age groups professing the same religion. This right has nothing to do with 'gender' or, for that matter, certain physiological factors, specifically attributable to women'." Women of any age group have as much a right as men to visit and enter a temple in order to practise freely a religion as guaranteed under Article 25(1). , "Patriarchy in religion cannot be permitted to trump over the element of pure devotion borne out of faith and the freedom to practise and profess one's religion. The subversion and repression of women under the garb of biological or physiological factors cannot be given the seal of legitimacy. Any rule based on discrimination or segregation of women pertaining to biological characteristics is not only unfounded, indefensible and implausible but can also never pass the muster of constitutionality," Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justice A.M. Khanwilkar said in their main opinion., The court said the tenets of the devotees of Lord Ayyappa are no different from those that are common to all in the Hindu religion, and the practice of exclusion of women of the age group of 10 to 50 years followed at the temple—which was formalised on the basis of Rule 3(b) of the Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (Authorisation of Entry) Rules, 1965—could not be regarded as an "essential practice" of the religion., It cannot also be said that the non-observance of such an exclusionary practice will change or alter the nature of the Hindu religion. In the absence of any scriptural or textual evidence, too, the practice cannot be considered an essential practice of the Hindu religion. Moreover, the exclusionary practice has not been observed with "unhindered continuity", and the Devaswom Board had accepted before the Kerala High Court earlier that female worshippers of the age group of 10 to 50 years used to visit the temple and conduct poojas in every month for five days for the first rice-feeding ceremony of their children., The court also said even a cursory reading of Rule 3(b) divulged that it was ultra vires both Section 3 and Section 4 of the 1965 Act and that the language of both Section 3 and the proviso to Section 4(1) of the 1965 Act clearly indicated that "custom and usage must make space to the rights of all sections and classes of Hindus to offer prayers at places of public worship".., "Any interpretation to the contrary would annihilate the purpose of the 1965 Act and the fundamental right to practise religion guaranteed under Article 25(1). It is clear as crystal that the provisions of the 1965 Act are liberal in nature so as to allow entry to all sections and classes of Hindus, including Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. But framing of Rule 3(b) of the 1965 Rules under the garb of Section 4(1) would violate the very purpose of the 1965 Act., "The exclusionary practice, which has been given the backing of a subordinate legislation in the form of Rule 3(b) of the 1965 Rules, framed by the virtue of the 1965 Act, is neither an essential nor an integral part of the religion," Chief Justice Misra and Justice Khanwilkar said, while allowing the writ petition., Justice R.F. Nariman and Justice D.Y. Chandrachud gave separate but concurring judgments, while Justice Indu Malhotra wrote a dissenting one., The majority opinion held that devotees of Lord Ayyappa do not constitute a separate "religious denomination" (which would have given it the freedom to manage its own affairs in matters of religion) as enshrined in Article 26 of the Constitution. This, they said, was because Ayyappa devotees did not pass the judicially enunciated "test" for such a status, which required them to have "a collective common faith, a common organisation which adheres to the said common faith and, last but not the least, designation by a distinctive name—meaning that, the said collection of individuals must be labelled, branded and identified by a distinct name".., In her dissenting opinion Justice Indu Malhotra, however, said that the judicial definition of a religious denomination, unlike a statutory definition, is a mere explanation. It is not a "straitjacket formula, but a working formula". It provides "guidance" to ascertain whether a group constitutes a religious denomination or not. According to her, the respondents have made out a plausible case that the worshippers of the Sabarimala temple satisfy the requirements of being a "religious denomination", or sect thereof, which is entitled to the protection provided by Article 26., She said: "The issue whether the Sabarimala Temple constitutes a 'religious denomination', or a sect thereof, is a mixed question of fact and law. It is trite in law that a question of fact should not be decided in writ proceedings. The proper forum to ascertain whether a certain sect constitutes a

religious denomination or not would be more appropriately determined by a civil court, where both parties are given the opportunity of leading evidence to establish their case.", "Judicial review of religious practices ought not to be undertaken, as the court cannot impose its morality or rationality with respect to the form of worship of a deity. Doing so would negate the freedom to practise one's religion according to one's faith and beliefs. It would amount to rationalising religion, faith and beliefs, which is outside the ken of courts," she said., In her minority, dissenting view, Justice Indu Malhotra also raised another important issue: one of maintainability of the public interest litigation (PIL) petition seeking such a remedy when the petitioners are not devotees whose right to worship has been violated but are outsiders. "In matters of religion and religious practices, Article 14 can be invoked only by persons who are similarly situated, that is, persons belonging to the same faith, creed, or sect. The petitioners do not state that they are devotees of Lord Ayyappa who are aggrieved by the practices followed in the Sabarimala Temple. The right to equality under Article 14 in matters of religion and religious beliefs has to be viewed differently. It has to be adjudged amongst the worshippers of a particular religion or shrine who are aggrieved by certain practices which are found to be oppressive or pernicious.", She also said: "[P]ermitting PILs in religious matters would open the floodgates to interlopers to question religious beliefs and practices even if the petitioner is not a believer of a particular religion or a worshipper of a particular shrine. The perils are even graver for religious minorities if such petitions are entertained.", Article 25(1) of the Constitution says that "subject to public order, morality and health and to other provisions of this Part [III] of the Constitution that deals with fundamental rights], all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion"., Justice Indu Malhotra said: "The equality doctrine enshrined under Article 14 does not override the Fundamental Right guaranteed by Article 25 to every individual to freely profess, practise and propagate their faith, in accordance with the tenets of their religion." , She added: "Constitutional morality in a secular polity would imply the harmonisation of the Fundamental Rights, which include the right of every individual, religious denomination, or sect, to practise their faith and belief in accordance with the tenets of their religion, irrespective of whether the practise is rational or logical.", But the majority view was that the term "morality" occurring in the Article 25(1) "cannot be viewed with a narrow lens" so as to confine the sphere of definition of "morality" to what an individual, a section or religious sect may perceive the term to mean. The term "public morality" in Article 25 has to be appositely understood as being synonymous with "constitutional morality"., In his concurring judgment, Justice Nariman, said the fundamental right claimed by the thanthis and worshippers of the institution on the basis of custom and usage under Article 25(1) must necessarily yield to the fundamental right of such women under the same Article 25(1) as they are equally entitled to the right to practice religion, which would be meaningless unless they were allowed to enter the temple at Sabarimala to worship the idol of Lord Ayyappa., Referring to the plea of the respondents that the writ petition, which was in the nature of a PIL petition, was not maintainable because "no woman worshipper has come forward with a plea that she has been discriminated against by not allowing her entry into the temple as she is between the age of 10 and 50", the judge said the present case raised "grave issues" relating to the exclusion of women in the ages of 10 to 50 from the temple on the grounds of a physiological or biological function—which was common to all women between those ages. "Since this matter raises far-reaching consequences relating to Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution, we have found it necessary to decide this matter on merits. Consequently, this technical plea cannot stand in the way of a constitutional court applying constitutional principles to the case at hand.", In his separate opinion concurring with the majority, Justice Chandrachud also takes the view that Sabarimala is not just a case about right to worship or a mere religious dispute that agitates a community but one of larger import also to social and public life in India. He said: "The transformative potential of the Constitution lies in recognising its supremacy over all bodies of law and practices that claim the continuation of a past which militates against its vision of a just society. At the heart of transformative constitutionalism is a recognition of

change. What transformation in social relations did the Constitution seek to achieve? What vision of society does the Constitution envisage? The answer to these questions lies in the recognition of the individual as the basic unit of the Constitution. This view demands that existing structures and laws be viewed from the prism of individual dignity.", Pointing out that the individual, as the basic unit, is at the heart of the Constitution and that all rights and guarantees of the Constitution are operationalised and are aimed towards the self-realisation of the individual, he said: "This makes the anti-exclusion principle firmly rooted in the transformative vision of the Constitution, and at the heart of judicial enquiry. Irrespective of the source from which a practice claims legitimacy, this principle enjoins the court to deny protection to practices that detract from the constitutional vision of an equal citizenship.", Justice Chandrachud perhaps provides the dominant rationale for the Supreme Court's verdict. "The primacy of individual dignity is the wind in the sails of the boat chartered on the constitutional course of a just and egalitarian social order," he said, arguing that "practices that perpetuate discrimination on the grounds of characteristics that have historically been the basis of discrimination must not be viewed as part of a seemingly neutral legal background. Instead, they have to be used as intrinsic to, and not extraneous to, the interpretive enquiry.", The Sabarimala case has brought the question before the court on whether it is constitutionally permissible to exclude women between the ages of 10 and 50 from the Sabarimala temple. "In the denial of equal access, the practice denies an equal citizenship and substantive equality under the Constitution," he said., A claim for the exclusion of women from religious worship, even if it be founded in religious text, should therefore be subordinate to the constitutional values of liberty, dignity and equality. Exclusionary practices are contrary to constitutional morality. "In any event," he said, "the practice of excluding women from the temple is not an essential religious practice. The court must decline to grant constitutional legitimacy to practices which derogate from the dignity of women and to their entitlement to an equal citizenship. The social exclusion of women, based on menstrual status, is a form of untouchability which is an anathema to constitutional values. Notions of 'purity and pollution', which stigmatise individuals, have no place in a constitutional order.", Justice Chandrachud went on to say that "custom, usages and 'personal law'" (the latter, especially, so far left largely untouched by the courts based on the 67-year-old verdict of the Bombay High Court in State of Bombay vs Narasu Appa Mali) have a significant impact on the civil status of individuals. "Those activities that are inherently connected with the civil status of individuals cannot be granted constitutional immunity merely because they may have some associational features which have a religious nature. To immunise them from constitutional scrutiny is to deny the primacy of the Constitution." The decision in the Narasu case, "in immunising uncodified personal law and construing the same as distinct from custom", deserves detailed reconsideration in an appropriate case in the future, Justice Chandrachud said., The Sabarimala judgment establishes the primacy of individual rights over group rights, even in matters of religion, and opens up the possibility of a flurry of disputes and litigation, given the incredible diversity of circumstances in India in which it would soon be applicable. In her dissenting opinion, Justice Indu Malhotra said: "The issues raised in the writ petition have far-reaching ramifications and implications, not only for the Sabarimala Temple in Kerala but for all places of worship of various religions in this country, which have their own beliefs, practices, customs and usages, which may be considered to be exclusionary in nature.", At the time of writing, with the State Government and the Devaswom Board, respondents in the case, deciding against filing review petitions, other stakeholders have announced their dismay and their own decision to approach the court independently for a review or an interim stay. This included the Nair Service Society, a prominent respondent in the case, the Sabarimala Ayyappa Seva Samajam, the representatives of the Pandalam Palace and the members of the family of Sabarimala thantris, among others., The Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) accused the State government of showing "undue haste" in implementing the court verdict instead of filing a review plea, and of "preventing the Devaswom Board from seeking a review". However, with the LDF government's firm decision to go ahead with the implementation of the court order, there was much confusion among the BJP and Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh,

on the one hand, and the State and Central leadership of the Congress, on the other, about evolving a proper response to the verdict and to the grievance of the devotees that was evident in the protest marches and dharnas organised by Hindu organisations in different parts of the State., The biggest such rally, a "Namajapa Yatra" chanting bhajans, was held on October 2 at Pandalam, believed to be the birthplace of Lord Ayyappa, under the "Sabarimala Protection Council" and was organised by the Pandalam Palace. The president of the palace managing committee, P.G. Sasikumara Varma, said devotees across the country would come together under the apolitical banner "to protect Ayyappa dharma and age-old customs and ritualistic traditions of the Sabarimala temple".., The yatra attracted an unprecedented number of women devotees too, and they were holding up signs that read: "Ready to Wait."][

Muslims offering prayers in the mosque at Feroz Shah Kotla fort in New Delhi on August 22. Photo: PRAKASH SINGH/AFP ,

December 6, 1992: Hindu fundamentalists atop the Babri Masjid five hours before the structure was demolished. Photo: AFP , THE capabilities of the propaganda machinery of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS)-led Sangh Parivar to twist and turn any development or fact into a narrative that suits its political and social agenda-be it short, medium or long term-is time-tested. This attribute has once again come to the fore through the Sangh Parivar's voluble interpretations of the Supreme Court's September 27 majority verdict on a petition seeking to refer to a larger, five-judge Constitution Bench the question whether a "mosque as a place of prayer is an essential part of Islam". The bench made it clear that it was addressing only this limited question and that it had no bearing on other legal proceedings on the Ayodhya Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute, including the crucial title dispute. However, sections of the Sangh Parivar, including Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and senior RSS leader Indresh Kumar, have started depicting the verdict as a major step towards obtaining legal approval for the construction of a Ram temple at the spot where the Babri Masjid existed until it was demolished on December 6, 1992. , To put the September 27 verdict into perspective, it is a judgment on one appeal in the many related cases that have come up along with the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute but has no direct link to the original title dispute case. The appeal was essentially based on a 1994 judgment of the Supreme Court, which incidentally was made on legal challenges raised by one Ismail Faruqi to the government acquisitions of land in Ayodhya, particularly land in which mosque(s) stood, first in 1992 by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Uttar Pradesh led by Kalyan Singh and later in 1993 by the Congress government at the Centre led by P.V. Narasimha Rao. Some of these government acquisition moves had targeted plots on which the Babri Masjid stood. The 1994 judgment of the Supreme Court in the Ismail Faruqi case had held that the offering of prayers in a mosque was not an essential feature of Islam and hence government acquisitions of land where mosques stood had legal sanction. The September 27 judgment was made on a plea by a number of Muslims seeking to refer these observations to a larger bench. The plea was apparently based on the perception that the 1994 judgment might have an adverse impact on Muslims' claims on the Babri Masjid in the original title dispute case. , Dismissing the plea to revisit the 1994 observations, Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justice Ashok Bhushan, who together constituted the majority in the bench, categorically stated that the observations about the place of a mosque in Islam were limited to the context of acquisition of land by the government and had no bearing on the title suit in the Ayodhya matter. , In keeping with its seasoned political-organisational practices, the Sangh Parivar has sought to overlook this pointed clarification by the apex court and to present the verdict as a major milestone in the Hindutva march in relation to the Ayodhya dispute. The most striking political gambit in this vein was from Indresh Kumar, who likened the verdict to the one given by the Supreme Court on the triple talaq issue in August. "As in the case of triple talaq in which India and the world is congratulating the court and the judges on liberating 8.5 crore Muslim women from the clutches of injustice, the court will solve the Ayodhya problem too and create history. All these are processes in the path of such solutions. All these are bound to strengthen the faith of the people in the judicial system," he said., Kumar's interpretation of the September 27 verdict was picked up almost simultaneously by Yogi Adityanath, who said that the judgment gave hope that the whole Ayodhya

issue would get a solution from the judiciary soon. In the days following this, RSS sarsangachalak Mohan Bhagawat kept up a steady rhetoric on clearing the legal hurdles in the construction of a grand Ram temple in Ayodhya. "The building of a Ram mandir will end a major issue of friction between Hindus and Muslims. And if it is done amicably, it will automatically silence those who point fingers at the Muslim community." Bhagawat has used this refrain, marked by unconcealed condescension and subtle intimidation, in many public meetings since the last week of September. , Speaking to Frontline from Ayodhya, Khaliq Ahmad Khan, a social activist associated with the Babri Masjid Action Committee (BMAC), said that this sort of rhetorical build-up on one or the other national development was almost always accompanied by an upping of the ante on the ground in Ayodhya with concerted programmes to raise the Ram temple demand aggressively. "It is bound to erupt any time now, since the atmosphere is being built up," he said. He was also of the view that the sort of control the Sangh Parivar managed to have on significant sections of the media had greatly restricted an involved and sensible public discourse on the finer details of the September 27 verdict, including the dissenting judgment of Justice S. Abdul Nazeer. , Justice Nazeer was of the view that the 1994 observations needed to be referred to a larger bench. In his judgment, he observed that the question of what was essential or not in a religion could not be decided in haste. Rather, the question raised on the essentiality of offering prayers in mosques should be examined by a seven-judge bench before the Ayodhya suit appeals were heard. "What is essential or not in a religion can be decided only after studying tenets, beliefs and doctrines," Justice Nazeer held, adding that the comment had to be examined against the background of the fundamental right against discrimination guaranteed in Article 15 and the protection guaranteed to practice, profess and propagate religion in Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution. He felt that the seven-judge bench should also answer questions whether offering prayers in places of worship of "particular significance" alone was protected under the right to freedom of religion under the Constitution., The view held by Chief Justice Misra and Justice Bhushan was that "all mosques, all churches and temples are significant for the community" but "no place of worship, be it a temple, church or mosque, is immune from acquisition". They reiterated that the 1994 judgment merely wanted to convey that mosques had no special immunity from acquisition. On their part, the appellants, represented by the senior advocate Rajeev Dhawan, pointed out that the Supreme Court had not looked at original Islamic sources about the significance of a mosque while proclaiming the 1994 judgment. , Khaliq Khan told Frontline that the same oversight was manifest in the September 27 majority verdict, too. He and several other BMAC activists from different parts of Uttar Pradesh added that this oversight was a major point of discussion in the Muslim community across India. Frontline's interactions with several Muslim scholars and activists underscored this observation. , Mohammad Salim Engineer, secretary general of the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, said: "If you go back in time, you will realise that a mosque is indeed central to the existence of Islam. When the Prophet went to Madina, first a mosque was raised there, then the city developed around it. When the honourable judges stated that namaz can be offered even in the open, they were right, but one must realise that provision for offering namaz in the open, at railway stations or an airport, is for specific circumstances when a mosque is not available. Wherever you will find Muslims, you will find mosques. A Muslim cannot live without mosque." The point was reiterated by Muhibullah Nadwi, chief Imam of the Jama Masjid in New Delhi. He stated: "Prayers by congregation are mentioned multiple times in the Quran. And there is the tradition established by the Prophet Muhammad himself of calling people for prayer, through azaan. How does one call people for prayer if there is no mosque?" , Indeed, an invitation to attend the daily prayers is issued five times a day from every mosque. In other words, people are supposed to gather at the mosque at least five times a day. In Islamic history, the mosque has been central to a believer's life. It has not been merely a place for conducting rituals or doing worship. It has been a place for dialogue, debate, even guidance on emerging socio-political and economic problems. , In fact, the concept of the weekly Friday sermon started with the intention to guide the community about day-to-day challenges. That is why, while in the actual prayer, only Arabic verses from the Quran are recited; the sermon is usually delivered in the local language. For instance, mosques in

north India often present an Urdu translation of the sermon, while those in Tamil Nadu restrict themselves to Tamil. In the month of Ramzan, in which the Quran was revealed, special prayers are held every evening in all mosques. This taraviah prayer is in addition to daily prayers. In the last 10 days of the month, every mosque is supposed to host at least one—it may go up to hundreds—pilgrim for 10 days and nights. The practice is called itikaaf. The person concerned spends his time in collective prayer during the day and total solitude at night. Without a mosque, itikaaf is not possible. There is a hadith of the Prophet wherein believers are encouraged to stand in the first row for prayer in a mosque. Also, many mosques are linked to Islamic seminaries., The scholars are on a sound footing. Nowhere does the Quran ask believers to say the daily compulsory prayers in solitude or even to merely offer prayers. Instead, in 86 places, the Quran asks the faithful to establish prayer. "One can establish prayer only through congregation, not by offering namaz in solitude," reiterated Engineer. Wherever the holy book talks of giving charity, it talks of establishing prayer. Although the judgment states that namaz can be offered anywhere, the Quran is categorical about the unique status of the mosque in Islam. Verse 18 of "Surah Taubah", says: "The mosques of Allah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakah and do not fear except Allah, for it is expected that those will be of the (rightly) guided." It effectively rules out the possibility of state maintenance of mosques or proprietorship over mosque land. Similarly, Verse 114 of "Surah Baqarah", the longest chapter in the Quran, says: "And who are more unjust than those who prevent the name of Allah from being mentioned in His mosques and strive toward their destruction. It is not for them to enter them except in fear. For them in this world is disgrace, and they will have in the Hereafter a great punishment.", Not surprisingly, the leaders of the Muslim community believe that a review of the judgment is the need of the hour. "We strongly urge all to reconsider this hastily pronounced judgment. Some people may try to misuse it and try to link it to the Babri Masjid case. If the essentiality of the mosque to Islam is to be decided, it has to be done through a thorough understanding of the tenets of the faith," Engineer said. , As this discussion gathers momentum within the Muslim community, there are signs that several organisations and individuals are exploring ways and means to seek a judicial review. At the same time, efforts on the part of the Hindutva combine and its leading organisations such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), one of the three main litigants in the original title dispute case at Ayodhya, are not exactly on a judicial framework. Following their own game plan in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the VHP and other affiliates of the Sangh Parivar were able to bring about the demolition of the Babri Masjid and are now clearly evolving structured moves to restart their Ayodhya campaign on the ground. What concrete forms these moves will take are to be seen. But, evidently, twisted interpretations of the developments in the judiciary, including the September 27 verdict, are bound to become instruments in this power game.]

Shantha Sinha. Photo: The Hindu , THE child rights activist Shantha Sinha, who had challenged the constitutionality of Aadhaar, sees "some relief" in the September 26 judgment of the Supreme Court, which ruled against its mandatory linkage to several key services. But, she feels that Aadhaar continues to be a potential mechanism for surveillance in the absence of a robust data protection regime. Shantha Sinha, who received the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 2003 for community leadership, also expressed concern about the problems confronting the disabled and the marginalised, and pressed for their speedy redress. Excerpts from the interview., The Supreme Court judgment has limited the government's push to make Aadhaar mandatory for access to key services such as having bank accounts and mobile connections and for admission in schools. Is this verdict a partial victory? , To the extent that citizens have been spared from mandatorily linking the Aadhaar card to access services like bank accounts and mobile connections, there has been some relief. It is a welcome step that all entitlements enjoyed by children do not necessitate linkage to Aadhaar. There is a need to give wide publicity to the judgment as one is witness to innumerable instances of children being denied admission to hostels, midday meal programmes, scholarships and other benefits for want of Aadhaar., The judgment stipulates that "Aadhaar empowers the marginalised section of the society and gives them an identity....." This is in stark contrast to arguments that the Aadhaar programme

seeks to set up a surveillance state., There have been occasions when the data collected through Aadhaar, even if it is "minimal demographic and biometric data", have been leaked at the cost of the privacy and autonomy of the individual. It is not clear how and when the government will set up a "robust data protection regime". Until this is corrected, the argument of a surveillance state holds ground. In this connection, I am afraid linking PAN to Aadhaar is also risky., It is unclear how the marginalised sections would be empowered through the issuance of Aadhaar, especially when there is a trust deficit as far as the poor are concerned. It certainly does not give them dignity or empower them if they must prove that they are citizens every time they make a rightful claim to their entitlements., The onus of responsibility for correcting the leakages in the system does not lie with the poor. There is a need for correction of the governance mechanism., The judgment is silent on what will happen to the data and Aadhaar numbers that telecom companies, banks and other private entities have in their possession currently. Does the safety of the data remain a big concern? , I agree that striking down Section 57, which allowed anyone, including private entities, from using the Aadhaar number, is one of the positive aspects of the judgment. Citizens will now be able to refuse demands for Aadhaar by all sorts of agents such as mobile companies, who had no business asking for it in the first place. Several concerns relating to data protection, surveillance, and so on by private entities have been addressed to a large extent. , However, it is still not clear how this will be regulated and who is to be excluded. The government also needs to issue orders on destroying the data that the private companies have collected., The National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled has expressed concern that the verdict will adversely affect the community. How does the authentication criteria mandated by Aadhaar threaten the constitutional guarantees of the specially abled? The UIDAI claims that authentication failure does not mean exclusion or denial of subsidies, benefits or services., I fully endorse the concerns expressed by the National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled. The difficulties faced by them from the stage of enrolment, which is a cumbersome procedure, the issue of biometrics and accessing their claims to services are unimaginable., Indeed, these are problems that confront the marginalised sections as well. There are innumerable instances of failure of authentication, and thus, denial of services to the poor., The judgment looks at these issues as technical problems and they would be resolved over a period of time. Why must the disabled and the poor go through anxiety and loss of dignity in the meantime?, Linking Aadhaar with different databases runs the risk of individual profiling and, as Justice Chandrachud pointed out, "could also be used to influence the decision-making of the electorate in choosing candidates for electoral offices". Have the issues of rights and privacy been trivialised?, It seems that there is a huge potential for misusing the data that are beyond the purpose of UID.,][

Anupam Saraph. , AN expert on complex systems, governance and informatics, Anupam Saraph advises governments and businesses across the world. A teacher and former IT Adviser to Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar, he challenged Aadhaar as part of the Nagrik Chetna Manch. In the wake of the Supreme Court judgment, he spoke to Frontline on its implications. Excerpts from the interview. , How will the Supreme Court verdict affect companies such as Paytm that require Aadhaar for authentication?, Companies that use Aadhaar for authentication are now saved from the mistaken belief that Aadhaar authentication is more secure than traditional username and password challenges. Unlike Aadhaar biometrics which are neither certified nor controlled by the person to whom they belong, passwords are in the control of users. Unlike biometrics, which can't be changed if compromised, passwords can be reset., Aadhaar biometrics are not certified by the UIDAI [Unique Identification Authority of India] as belonging to the person who is being authenticated. The biometrics associated with an Aadhaar number can be changed by processes (both legitimate and illegitimate) outside the control of fintech companies. They, therefore, had no way of guaranteeing risk-free outcomes with Aadhaar., These companies will now be required to shift back to a more robust non-Aadhaar KYC [know your customer] that reduces significantly the risk of benami, or proxy, bank and wallet accounts using Aadhaar., This is a win for fintech companies that want to prevent money laundering and financial terrorism. This is a win for the RBI, which prior to 2011 had clearly indicated that the use of Aadhaar in banking was not only against its own extant

guidelines but also against the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, the Basel Standards and the government's concerns about financing terrorism. It had highlighted that nowhere in the world are third-party identification systems used in banking. , While the Supreme Court verdict does not make Aadhaar compulsory, it still needs to be linked to PAN. Bank accounts need PAN and some other places also recognise PAN authentication. Can there be leakages through the PAN route?, The UIDAI's affidavit to the Supreme Court indicates that more than 51 per cent of the Aadhaar numbers have never been used for biometric or iris authentication anywhere. So, it is obvious that most of them are likely to be ghosts or duplicates. Section 139AA of the Income Tax Act, which requires the linking of Aadhaar to PAN for income tax purposes, if upheld, will continue to generate fake PAN through fake Aadhaar. This will continue to generate benami bank accounts that are Aadhaar-enabled with these fake PAN numbers. , The concern is not about public exposure of Aadhaar numbers. It is about treating these uncertified, unverified and unaudited numbers as identity and enabling money transfers to benami bank accounts created through such Aadhaar numbers. , Can companies and banks that have collected Aadhaar data destroy the data now or will they still be stored somewhere? Also how do users know that the data have been deleted?, Delinking Aadhaar, while an essential process for financial and other institutions to reduce risks, is not sufficient to protect an individual or those institutions. Financial institutions need to run a campaign now to cleanse themselves of the Aadhaar virus to protect themselves from financial scams and unprecedented risks, which are outside their ability to contain. Aadhaar is not KYC. , A person's safety cannot be guaranteed by just delinking his/her Aadhaar number. As long as uncertified, unverified and unaudited Aadhaar is treated as identity, it will expose one to identity fraud. As long as Aadhaar numbers, or any identity document based on Aadhaar numbers, are used to make Aadhaar-enabled payments, they will continue to enable money transfers to benami bank accounts created through Aadhaar., In order to protect against harm from Aadhaar, the RBI needs to ensure two things. First, that banks revert to keeping a person's identification documents for KYC, as long as they are not generated using that person's Aadhaar and, unlike the Aadhaar, are certified, verified or audited by some government agency. Second, the National Payments Corporation of India's [NPCI] Aadhaar-enabled payments should be delicensed, and no money transfers with Aadhaar or documents derived from Aadhaar should be allowed., Aadhaar was also linked to the Prime Minister's Digital India programme. Now that the court has ruled that private companies cannot use Aadhaar, what happens to the Aadhaar-enabled infrastructure that was created?, The UIDAI has stated, in response to an RTI [Right to Information] query, that it is not responsible to certify the biometric or demographic data, or even the use of this data. It does not certify the identity, address or date of birth of anyone. It has also stated that it cannot retrieve a unique record with a biometric. It has no idea of the number of unique biometrics in its database. It has also stated, under RTI, that it does not identify anyone. It merely authenticated the biometric or demographic data associated with an Aadhaar number. The UIDAI has also reiterated, under RTI, that it is not responsible for any transactions undertaken with Aadhaar., The Aadhaar data, in legal terms, are completely useless. Those monetising Aadhaar recognised its unprecedented power to create ghost, proxy or benami transactions, including financial transactions, property transactions, and for delivering subsidies, benefits or services. That is precisely why, driven by Aadhaar, exclusion, identity frauds and associated crime have grown the black economy exponentially., It is unlikely that this interest will wane without banning the use of any uncertified ID for any legal transactions, banning authentication in place of identification, and destroying the Aadhaar data., As Justice D.Y. Chandrachud said in his dissenting judgment that there was no institutional accountability for Aadhaar. What happens when there is fraud or data breach? Also, can we then believe the statistics rolled out by the UIDAI, such as its claim that Aadhaar saved Rs.90,000 crore? , Justice Chandrachud is absolutely correct in pointing out that there is no institutional accountability for Aadhaar. This is true in more ways than just being accountable to another body. The UIDAI has no accountability in either the issue or the use of Aadhaar. It takes no responsibility to the legal validity of any Aadhaar number or the data associated with it. It takes no responsibility to the use or the consequences of the use of any Aadhaar number., The real worry is

the UIDAI's lack of accountability to the creating and usurping of identities. The real worry is about the UIDAI's lack of accountability to the use of these identities to exclude, cause civil death, siphon subsidies, benefits and services and commit frauds. Since the UIDAI is unable to state how many unique biometrics or persons exist in its database, there is no possibility that it can identify ghosts in its own or other beneficiary databases. Asked under the RTI, neither the Ministry of Finance nor any other Ministry has been able to indicate the existence of beneficiary databases for various government benefits, subsidies or services. They do not even know who the custodians of beneficiary databases are. There is no possibility that they can claim to have weeded out duplicates from databases whose existence they are unaware of. It is an insult to the intelligence of Indians to claim that Aadhaar has plugged any leakage or saved any money. , You say Aadhaar does not authenticate or identify a person. Can you explain why biometrics are not a good metric for identification?, It is like a lock authenticating the key that tries to unlock it. It cannot identify the person holding the key. The biometric is the key authenticated by the record associated with an Aadhaar number. It cannot identify whose biometric it is. Not only can the biometric associated with an Aadhaar number be changed by gaining access to the record through legitimate or illegitimate means, but the stored biometric can also be one of the means of anyone being authenticated using Aadhaar. When Aadhaar authenticates, there is no identification., Identification requires the persons identifying to be co-present. It requires them to take responsibility for the consequences of (mis)identification. The UIDAI is not co-present and takes no responsibility of identification., The UIDAI does not certify the identity, address or date of birth of anyone. This destroys the possibility of relying on the data associated with the Aadhaar number to identify anyone. The UIDAI does not even know the primary documents used as proof of identity and proof of address to issue any Aadhaar number. This means that it is not possible to challenge an authentication with the primary documents to verify the identity of a person., It has admitted that the Aadhaar Act defines authentication, not identification. This removes any ambiguity that Aadhaar, with or without biometric, is useless to identify any person., We hear a lot about how big businesses use data. Could you please explain how they monetise it and also address the fears around its misuse?, Businesses can use data to address the needs of their customers better. This is how businesses interested in serving their customers monetise their data legitimately., Data is misused when third parties, in the name of innovation and digital economy, gain access to transaction data a person generates in his/her relationships with governments or service providers and exploit them. Aadhaar is the handle that enables these third parties to generate transactions that one did not undertake. These transactions are indistinguishable from those one makes. Third parties with access to Aadhaar data are also able to generate transactions of ghost and duplicate Aadhaar numbers that are proxy to those laundering money or committing crimes. Such misuse hurts not only individuals but also financial and governance institutions.][

Justice K.S. Puttaswamy. Photo: K_BHAGYA PRAKASH , IN 2012, irked by the seemingly endless list of intrusive questions, the procedural rigmarole and the thought that personal details could quite easily pass into the hands of private entities, retired High Court Judge K.S. Puttaswamy, then aged 86, along with a few "friends", challenged the government's Aadhaar scheme in the Supreme Court. Questioning the constitutional validity of making Aadhaar mandatory for access to government services and benefits, Puttaswamy's petition before a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court argued that Aadhaar was a violation of the right to privacy. Faced with Puttaswamy's petition and the Union of India's contra contention that the Constitution does not grant specific protection for the right to privacy, the apex court in August 2015 felt that "institutional integrity and judicial discipline" and the "far-reaching questions" on hand necessitated reference of the issue to a larger bench. , In July 2017, a Constitution Bench presided over by the Chief Justice considered it appropriate that the issue be resolved by a bench of nine judges. The nine-judge bench in a unanimous and landmark 547-page judgment ruled in August 2017 that the right to privacy was a constitutionally protected fundamental right and "incidental to other freedoms guaranteed by the Indian Constitution". , Puttaswamy's 2012 petition may have been Aadhaar-specific but in effect it spun off challenges and

sought judicial directions on a wide range of Indian legislation, including the criminalising of same-sex relationships, adultery and the bans on beef and alcohol consumption in many States. Puttaswamy, as the lead petitioner, had also questioned the government's decision to implement Aadhaar through an executive order. , In its latest decision, the Supreme Court has partially upheld the constitutionality of the Aadhaar programme by a majority of 4 to 1. However, the court in its 1,448-page judgment, also struck down several key provisions of the Act as unconstitutional. , Ironically, Puttaswamy, after resisting it for a long time, finally got himself enrolled for an Aadhaar number in 2017. , Are you happy with the Supreme Court's judgment in the Aadhaar case?, In my view, the majority judgment in the Aadhaar case is correct. But, of course, I also feel that the minority judgment [of Justice D.Y. Chandrachud] may be more learned and more interesting than the majority judgment. We will assume that it is better reasoned and a better judgment. But, as our law stands, a minority judgment will not hold the field. And the majority judgment held that Aadhaar is valid and Aadhaar enrolment is necessary for the state. There is nothing wrong (legally). And given that this is a Constitution Bench, it is unlikely that another bench, maybe a larger one, will take another opinion. There is nothing wrong in making Aadhaar mandatory for those who pay income tax, and this has been held as valid by the majority judgment. Hardly 1 per cent of the population comes in this category. Compelling income tax payees to furnish all their details is also valid in my view. , Your 2012 petition against Aadhaar highlighted infringement of privacy. , At that stage the Government of India wanted to implement the Aadhaar scheme through an executive order. I filed the writ petition in the Supreme Court contending that asking for details by an executive order was wrong. Then they enacted the Aadhaar Act, 2016, providing for what are called the details in Aadhaar. The details sought are valid; the majority judgment is correct. , Your petition against Aadhaar brought into focus questions over whether the Constitution granted specific protection for the right to privacy., That is different. Right to privacy has also been upheld. In fact, it is after a long struggle that the Supreme Court upheld the right to privacy as a fundamental right. Earlier there was a difference of opinion. While one bench had taken the view that it was a common law right, another said it was a fundamental right. The law was not settled. Now that has been set to rest by the court holding that right to privacy is a fundamental right. It has nothing to do with Aadhaar. Aadhaar only requires us to give some details, nothing more than that. Whether those details are good or bad is for you to decide. , When you petitioned the Supreme Court, your petition questioned the mandatory nature of Aadhaar. , I cannot remember all that has happened. Now, my view is that the majority view of the Supreme Court is correct. I'm likely to change my own opinion depending on a variety of factors. Especially for men who are reasonable, there is nothing like a fixed opinion for all time to come. And the court has removed the sections where private companies could use citizens' details. Why should we give details to private entities? It is okay for the state to use these details to an extent. , The Supreme Court had itself pulled up the government on the implementation of the Aadhaar scheme but has now upheld it. , Nothing wrong. The Supreme Court has overruled decisions of smaller benches and even Constitution Benches by larger benches. , The Aadhaar Act was passed as a Money Bill making the Rajya Sabha otiose., Yes, critics and the minority judgment says it cannot be passed as a Money Bill. You see, the term Money Bill has been defined in the Constitution. You cannot say that the Supreme Court or the bench that passed the majority judgment has not looked at this aspect. The court has decided that it is a Money Bill. The matter ends there. , Aadhaar enrolment has gone from voluntary to mandatory. It is also, according to many legal experts, an infringement of the fundamental right to privacy., It is for you to decide. The government has said that Aadhaar is necessary for several purposes, including security. There must be something in the argument, but we cannot accept it in its entirety., Do you not think that Aadhaar can lead to a lot of misuse? , Everything in this world can be misused. Misuse is inevitable. Being a developing nation, the possibilities of misuse are more., Giving one's biometric details while enrolling for Aadhaar will result in losing one's fundamental right to privacy., Privacy is different. Aadhaar only seeks some details. Aadhaar requires some details to be kept by the state, which will help, for example, to track hardened criminals. There is nothing wrong in seeking

these details. , Economically weaker sections stand to lose state benefits if they do not have an Aadhaar card. The state is unfairly linking Aadhaar to state benefits. , Maybe it is right for the government to insist on this. If it is necessary, you must obtain an Aadhaar card. Now it has been made simpler to obtain too. Earlier, when I applied, lots of details were asked. Not so now I am told. There is nothing wrong in compelling people to get it. I have obtained one but not used it.][

Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justice A.M. Khanwilkar stated in their lead judgment that "progression in law and the perceptual shift compels the present to have a penetrating look to the past". Photo: PTI , Justice A.M. Khanwilkar. Photo: PTI , Justice D.Y. Chandrachud. He dwelled on the connection between patriarchy and the subordinate status of women in marriage. Photo: AP , Justice Indu Malhotra. She called Section 497 "institutionalised discrimination" which "legalised adultery". Photo: R.V. Moorthy , Justice Rohinton F. Nariman. He held that what was punished was not adultery per se but the proprietary interest of a married man in his wife. Photo: S. Krishnamoorthy , SEPTEMBER proved to be one of the most unusual months in the history of Indian jurisprudence as two antiquated and colonial pieces of legislation were struck down by a five-judge Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra. Constitutional morality and transformative constitutionalism appeared to be the leitmotif and operative sentiment in both the judgments that sought to protect individual rights, privacy and autonomy, including sexual autonomy. Transformative constitutionalism, the judges ruled, was "abhorrent to any kind of regressive approach". , After reading down Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860, which outlawed same sex relationships, in the first week of September, the bench once again ruled unanimously that Section 497 of the IPC, which made adultery a criminal offence, with the male adulterer punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years, or with fine, or with both, was unconstitutional and "manifestly arbitrary". , The 250-odd-page judgment also declared Section 198 (2) of the Code of Criminal Procedure unconstitutional as it laid down the procedure for prosecution under Section 497. It was reasoned that as the law had been declared unconstitutional, the procedure had to follow suit. "Progression in law and the perceptual shift compels the present to have a penetrating look to the past," Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justice A.M. Khanwilkar stated in the lead judgment. A perceptual shift had indeed been made 158 years after the provision came into force. In fact, the father of the IPC, Lord Macaulay, had been averse to criminalising adultery. Justice Rohinton F. Nariman quoted Macaulay as having said that "the man who treats a generous benefactor with gross ingratitude and insolence deserves more serious reprehension than the man who aims a blow in passion or breaks a window in frolic". Macaulay's somewhat liberal opinion was overruled by court commissioners. But post-Independence India was no different. The 42nd Law Commission report in 1971 had recommended the retention of Section 497, making the wife also punishable for adultery. , The main judgment was delivered by Chief Justice Misra and Justice Khanwilkar while separate and concurring opinions dwelling on a range of issues from the antiquity of adultery to sexual and individual autonomy interspersed with legal, historical and literary anecdotes were delivered by Justices D.Y. Chandrachud, Nariman and Indu Malhotra. While Justice Chandrachud dwelt considerably on the connection between patriarchy and the subordinate status of women in marriage, Justice Indu Malhotra called Section 497 "institutionalised discrimination" which "legalised adultery". Treating it as an offence was tantamount to the state entering into a real private realm, ruled Chief Justice Misra and Justice Khanwilkar. The provision, they said, was reflective of a "tripartite labyrinth". , The issue was not only about decriminalising Section 497; it was also about contextualising law and its reading of it in a contemporary milieu. The matter came to the court after the constitutionality of Section 497 was challenged. The section had been challenged before as well on grounds that it was not gender neutral; it was discriminatory as it did not allow the wife of an adulterer to seek remedy; it did not allow the husband of the adulteress to seek remedy against the wife; it in fact sanctioned adultery if it was in connivance with the husband or someone who was in charge of the wife in the absence of the husband. , "A constitutional court cannot remain entrenched in precedent for the

controversy relates to the lives of human beings who transcendently grow," observed the lead judgment. In fact, the main judgment and the concurring ones conceded that Section 497 basically ruled out the existence of the woman, either as an adulteress or as an aggrieved party as having any independent agency, more so as the law allowed an adulterous relationship of a woman with another man provided her husband connived or gave consent to such an alliance. Yet, in a situation where there was no such connivance or consent, the third party, that is, the adulterous male, could be prosecuted against. All the judges, including a previous three-judge bench ruling in *Sowmithri Vishnu vs Union of India*, concurred that the section had an element of "romantic paternalism" wherein it reduced the woman to a chattel and the property of a man, to be treated as he deemed fit. The three-judge bench had concluded then that adultery could only be committed by a man and not a woman. , Under Section 497, "whoever has sexual intercourse with a person who is and whom he knows or has reason to believe to be the wife of another man, without the consent or connivance of that man, such intercourse not amounting to the offence of rape is guilty of the offence of adultery, and shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years, or with fine, or with both. In such cases, the wife shall not be punishable as an abettor." Only the husband of the woman was treated as aggrieved for offences punishable under Section 497 and Section 498. The right to prosecute the adulterer was restricted to the aggrieved husband and not to the wife of the adulterer. Section 487, and the concept of adultery, circumscribed as it was to monogamous relationships, was curiously silent on extramarital relationships between a married man and an unmarried woman or widow. A man was criminally liable under certain conditions and not under another set of conditions. It was, therefore, arbitrary and defied rational norms. Both the "offence" and the definition of aggrieved person was absolutely and manifestly arbitrary as it did not even appear to be rational, ruled the judgment. "It conferred a licence on the husband to deal with the wife as he liked which is extremely excessive and disproportionate," stated the order. , After pointing out the infirmities in the law, wherein the element of connivance was found offending Article 21 of the Constitution, the judges looked at the criminality of the adulterous act. The judgment referred to Section 498 A and the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, both of which afforded women protection in matrimonial relationships and which were civil remedies. Adultery could be a ground for any kind of a civil wrong, including dissolution of marriage, they averred. Interestingly, the judges delved into basic definitional concepts, including that of crime and what constituted criminal liability. Was adultery then a crime that affected the security and well-being of the public and was there a public interest in its suppression? Whether adultery should be treated as a criminal offence was one of the central issues facing the court. Even if the right to file a case and to equality of status was given to the wife within Section 497, the whole situation was extremely private, the judgment observed. , "We are not making a law or legislating but only stating that a particular act, adultery, does not fit into the concept of crime," stated Chief Justice Misra and Justice Khanwilkar. They cautioned that if Parliament treated it as a criminal offence, it would offend two facets of Article 21, the dignity of the husband and the wife and the privacy attached to the relationship between the two. It was also pointed out that adultery had not been granted separate exclusive space in the context of Sections 306 (abetment to suicide) and 498 A (husband or a woman or relative of her husband subjecting her to cruelty) of the IPC. , In his concurring judgment, Justice Nariman held that under the crime of adultery, what was punished as adultery was not adultery per se but the proprietary interest of a married man in his wife. He dwelt on the historicity of the dealing of adultery from Hammurabi's code or the Babylonian Code of law dating to 1754 B.C., where adultery was punished by drowning, to Roman law which allowed the husband to have relationships outside marriage provided it was with a slave or an unmarried woman. In 17th century England, adultery was the only ground for divorce. , In fact, by decriminalising adultery, India has joined the ranks of the People's Republic of China, Japan, Australia and Brazil, among other countries. In some States of the United States adultery is still a criminal offence although the Model Penal Code had decriminalised adultery. It is a criminal offence in many Islamic countries. Smaller countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Barbados have done away with criminalising

adultery. In South Korea and Guatemala, provisions similar to Section 497 have been struck down by constitutional courts. , In any event, it is pointed out in the judgment that theoretically punishing adultery is no guarantee of saving a marriage. It said adultery was often not the cause of an unhappy marriage but a result of it. England, from where much of Indian jurisprudence draws its structure, illegalised adultery only in the 11-year period under Oliver Cromwell's rule, also known as the period of puritanical England. In fact, for quite some time the act of adultery was referred to as "criminal conversation", which was abolished in 1857. , Interestingly, Justice Chandrachud, in his concurring judgment, made a reference to the American writer Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, which depicts the travails and ignominy of an unmarried woman (Mistress Prynne) with a child out of wedlock and condemned to stitch and wear the letter "A" for adulteress on her garment. He dwelled on the role of law in creating gendered identities. , He held that used in a liberal perspective the law can enhance democratic values and that "law and the courts had a responsibility in the application and conferring of constitutional rights". While testing the validity of Section 497, "we also test the constitutionality of moral and societal regulation of women and their intimate lives through the law", he observed. Although earlier judgments upheld the constitutionality of Section 497, it did not prevent a Chief Justice of a High Court, while dealing with a case in 1954 (*Abdul Azis vs State of Bombay*), to observe that "Section 497 may not find a place in any modern code of law—days are past when women were looked upon as property by their husbands". Earlier judgments, Justice Chandrachud noted, had generally held that as neither spouse could prosecute the erring spouse, the provision did not discriminate on the grounds of sex. Yet, he held that "a commitment to constitutional morality requires us to enforce the constitutional guarantees of equality before law, non-discrimination on account of sex and dignity of all which are affected by the operation of Section 497". Deconstructing what could be the sociological and political dimensions of Section 497 type of laws, Justice Chandrachud, giving historical anecdotes, wrote that the main objective of laws such as Section 497 was to uphold the honour and property rights of a father, a husband and higher-status groups. , Women's organisations such as the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) have welcomed the decriminalisation of Section 497 by the Supreme Court which had "rightly held that the section was backward looking and retrograde and that adultery is not a criminal offence but a civil wrong and should not be criminalised". , Kirti Singh, legal convener of AIDWA, said that if a spouse had a sexual relationship outside marriage, the other spouse could always file for divorce and other matrimonial relief. An aggrieved woman, she said, could also file under the Domestic Violence Act for monetary relief, separate residence and compensation if she had suffered physical and mental trauma or torture. She could also file a complaint under Section 498A of the IPC if, along with adultery, she has been treated with cruelty and tortured., The decriminalisation of Section 497 marks a progressive step in independent India. It should have been done much earlier. While the principle of the application of constitutional morality is a fundamental one, the translation of that to make a meaningful dent in the lives of the majority in real material senses is still awaited. The subordinate nature of women is a combination of patriarchy and economic exclusion that may not find a solution in the trajectory of development that flies in the face of all moralities, including constitutional ones.][

At a Rashtriya Dalit Panchayat rally for reservation in promotion in government jobs, in New Delhi. A file picture. Photo: V. Sudershan ,

Members of the Sarvajan Hitai Sanrakshan Samiti at a rally against reservation in promotion, in Lucknow in 2015. Photo: Rajeev Bhatt ,

P.S. Krishnan, former Adviser to the Government of India. Photo: M. Vedhan ,

Ramesh Nathan, general secretary, National Dalit Movement for Justice. Photo: Nagara gopal ,

The obsession with social stratification and the inability to let go of feudal hierarchies had led to the creation of the concept of "creamy layer", under the garb of social justice. , The creamy layer argument is as problematic now as it was during the time of the implementation of the Mandal Commission report, which recommended reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in education and government employment. Introduced into legal parlance by anti-reservationists in the 1970s, the term first came into prominence in 1992 in *Indira Sawhney vs Union of India*, or the Mandal case as it is known;

subsequently, the Supreme Court defined the creamy layer on the basis of 11 criteria., There is no constitutional sanction for the term creamy layer. The Mandal judgment had stated unequivocally that creamy layer did not apply to Scheduled Castes (S.Cs) and Scheduled Tribes (S.Ts). It also said that Article 16(4) did not permit reservation in promotions. , On September 26, a five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dipak Misra and Justices Rohinton Nariman, Kurien Joseph, S.K. Kaul and Indu Malhotra delivered a significant judgment on this issue. While upholding the validity of Articles 16(4A) and 16(4B) of the Constitution, allowing reservation for promotions for S.Cs (15 per cent) and S.Ts (3 per cent) in government jobs with consequential seniority, the bench introduced exceptions that dilute the very same provisions., The concept of creamy layer, which was earlier applicable only to OBCs, was extended to S.Cs and S.Ts. Furthermore, the order left it to the States to decide whether they wanted to implement the reservation or not, thereby making it open to the States' interpretation and discretion., The States are not uniform in their willingness to allow pro-S.C./S.T. legislation, and how forthcoming they will be in implementing the order is a key question., In Uttar Pradesh, for instance, the Bahujan Samajwadi Party government under Mayawati had implemented reservation in promotions. But the moment the Samajwadi Party took over, the S.C. and S.T. employees who had benefited from the order were demoted to their original posts (following an Allahabad High Court order that struck down the earlier order). On July 23, the Bihar government passed a notification to provide reservation for S.Cs and S.Ts in promotions. The Karnataka government has been dragging its feet over restoring the promotions of close to 4,000 S.C. and S.T. employees and stalling the deemed promotions of 5,000 more., The Samanya Pichhda Alpsankhayak Kalyan Samaj, a known anti-reservation outfit, has formed a political party to contest the upcoming Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh. , Meanwhile, the Supreme Court bench also held that the 2006 judgment in M. Nagaraj & Others vs Union of India & Others need not be referred to a larger bench for consideration. It clarified that there was no requirement to collect quantifiable data of backwardness of S.Cs and S.Ts to provide reservation in promotions, as prescribed in Nagaraj., At the time, a five-judge bench of Chief Justice of India Y.K. Sabharwal and Justices K.G. Balakrishnan, S.H. Kapadia, C.K. Thakker and P.K. Balasubramanyan dealt with challenges to constitutional amendments aimed at neutralising the impact of judgments, including the one on reservation in promotions for S.Cs and S.Ts., The apex court had held in toto that if the state exercised its discretion to mandate reservation for S.Cs and S.Ts in promotions, it would have to collect quantifiable data showing backwardness of the class and inadequacy of representation of that class in public employment, in addition to compliance with the requirement of maintaining administrative efficiency as per Article 335., Also, the state would have to ensure that its reservation provision did not breach the ceiling of 50 per cent or obliterate the creamy layer or extend the reservation indefinitely. This interpretation was referred to a Constitution Bench for reconsideration in November 2017 and came up before the Constitution Bench headed by CJI Misra. , P.S. Krishnan, a former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, adviser to the government and Planning Commission Member, said that the Nagaraj case pertained only to S.Cs and S.Ts and yet the creamy layer argument was mentioned., "As Honorary Adviser to the Human Resource Development Ministry to help in defending the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admissions) Act in the Ashoka Kumar Thakur case between 2006 and 2008, I had suggested to the Solicitor General of India, the Additional Solicitor General and the Special Counsel to specifically raise the point of inapplicability of the creamy layer concept to S.Cs and S.Ts, and they agreed with me and pointed it out to the Supreme Court bench and the Supreme Court held accordingly. The Nagaraj conditionality of exclusion of creamy layer in a matter pertaining only to S.Cs and S.Ts is per incuriam as it is contrary to the nine-member bench Mandal case judgment," he said., The Supreme Court has laid down that the concept of creamy layer would include children of constitutional functionaries such as the President, Vice President and judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts. The creamy layer also includes children of members of Union Public Services Commission, Group A and B or Class I and II officers of all-India and State services, some public sector employees, doctors, dentists, engineers, chartered accountants, information technology consultants, media

professionals, authors and sportspersons., For these criteria to be applicable, one must first see how many Supreme Court and High Court judges are Dalits, to begin with. K.G. Balakrishnan is the only Dalit to have served as Chief Justice of India. After his retirement in 2010, no Dalit judge has been elevated to the Supreme Court. Among the 24 High Courts across the country, there is no Dalit judge serving as Chief Justice., The apex court has been praised for its progressive ideals shown in gender justice in recent judgments. But as far as caste issues are concerned, it has received flak, first after it tampered with the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act earlier this year and now with the creamy layer judgment., Where members of the S.C. and S.T. communities find representation, they are so few in number that their presence is at best symbolic. At the same time, the few who do make it there are cited by anti-reservationists as an example to vilify and question the continuation of reservation. Exceptions are cited as the norm to generalise the entire community, ignoring the many instances of caste discrimination that continue to take place and with greater brutality., According to Census 2011, S.Cs account for 16.6 per cent of India's total population, while S.Ts make up 8.6 per cent. "This comes to 25 per cent. Out of this, how many are IAS officers at the national level and how many of their children are IAS officers?" asked Ramesh Nathan of the National Dalit Movement for Justice., Stressing the need to look at the backlog in fulfilling reservation, Nathan said that when so many posts were vacant, there was no need to eliminate posts on the basis of the creamy layer. Representation of these communities is inadequate, and the creamy layer concept will only further restrict the upward mobility of the few people who could make use of reservation. , The various definitions of creamy layer boil down to an income criterion, which was capped at a family income of Rs.1 lakh a year in 1993 and revised to Rs.8 lakh in 2017. The fallacy in pegging reservation to economic criteria cannot be overstated. Caste discrimination can overlap with class discrimination, but while change in class is possible, change in caste is impossible to achieve. , Caste is determined by birth and cannot be changed even by converting to another religion., Economic progress does not remove the social stigma nor does it suddenly make inter-caste marriages acceptable. In fact, the past decade has been testimony to extreme brutalities aimed especially at educated and aspirational Dalit youths, as seen in honour killings, suicides in educational institutions, struggles over land and atrocities on Dalits for refusing to participate in caste-ordained occupations such as picking up carcasses or manual scavenging. , More importantly, data from the National Sample Survey Office show that despite reservation and the perceived prosperity of S.Cs and S.Ts, the economic gap between upper castes and Dalits persists. A comparison of the average monthly expenditure of Dalit and upper-caste households showed that in rural areas there was a gap of about 38 per cent in 1999-2000, which changed only marginally to 37 per cent in 2011-12., In urban areas, upper-caste households reported incomes that were 65 per cent higher than Dalit households in 1999-2000. This gap had reduced to 60 per cent in 2011-12. , For S.T. households, the gap in monthly expenditures increased from 49 per cent in 1999-2000 to 53 per cent in 2011-12 in rural areas, and from 45 per cent to 48 per cent in urban areas. , According to Krishnan, the term creamy layer itself is misleading. The correct term used in the Mandal case is socially advanced persons/sections in the identified castes of Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEdBCs). The criterion for identification of S.Cs and S.Ts was not backwardness or, more precisely, social backwardness. It is only the SedBCs for whom the criterion of identification was social backwardness, accompanied by educational backwardness., The criterion for identification and specification of S.Cs was "untouchability", which is far more debilitating than social backwardness and has been historically continuous to this day, he said., "It is only in the case of the SEdBCs that the question of individuals or sections ceasing to be socially backward and becoming 'socially advanced', often loosely referred to a 'creamy layer', can arise. This cannot arise in the case of those identified on the basis of 'untouchability' and tribal identity," he said., "The only legitimate question that can be put in the case of S.Cs is whether any individual or section has ceased to be viewed by society as 'untouchable'. 'Untouchability' is far more pernicious and far more persistent than 'social backwardness', that is, it is far more difficult for individuals and sections to cease to be free from the stigma of 'untouchability'

than to become free from 'social backwardness'," he explained., To elaborate his point, Krishnan cited the example of the unveiling of a statue of Dr Sampurnanand, the former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, by Jagjivan Ram, who belonged to the S.C. community. Jagjivan Ram had been a Union Minister and had served as Deputy Prime Minister in the government headed by Morarji Desai. Yet, after he left, the statue was washed with gangajal for purification., "In the case of S.Cs and S.Ts, unless policies and programmes, and their implementation, raise the whole communities to the level of forward communities in every respect—occupational, economic, educational, etc.—it is impossible and unthinkable that individuals can escape the stigma of 'untouchability' or the stigma attached to tribal people. This aspect apparently could not be placed before the bench clearly and could not be brought home to the bench. It is necessary to put this basic aspect beyond doubt and the scope for arguments in future," he said. , After the judgment, Krishnan wrote to the Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment and the Prime Minister suggesting constitutional amendments and executive orders that need to be issued by the Ministry of Personnel, which is directly under the Prime Minister. , The Constitution Bench headed by CJI Misra heard a battery of lawyers, including Attorney General K.K. Venugopal, Additional Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, Senior Counsel Indira Jaising, P.S. Patwalia, Dinesh Dwivedi and Sanjay Hedge, in favour of promotions, and the senior advocates Shanti Bhushan, Rajeev Dhavan, Rakesh Dwivedi and Shekhar Naphade in support of the 2006 ruling. When Frontline asked Nathan if any Dalit lawyer or organisation was involved in the entire process, he said he was not aware of any., Holding that the introduction of creamy layer for S.Cs and S.Ts was against the Constitution and the principles of social justice, Nathan said that it would be challenged legally. , "Even 70 years after Independence, the socio-economic condition of the community has not changed but may have only improved marginally. The constitutionally guaranteed rights enshrined in Articles 15 (non-discrimination), 17 (untouchability), 16 (equal opportunity in public employment), 15 (education and cultural) and 46 (economic safeguards) have not been achieved," he said., "Especially over the last two decades, post-globalisation and structural readjustment programmes, there are no trade unions left, and forced displacement of people is taking place along with reduction in the number of posts in public departments, which are increasingly being privatised. Another aspect is whether there is sufficient representation of S.Cs and S.Ts at all levels. In A, B and C grades, they will not be there, but D grade may be overfilled. How many are there in decision-making posts? Until the time all these rights are guaranteed, there is no point in talking about creamy layer," he added.][

Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad during a meeting with Muslim women on the triple talaq issue at his residence in Patna on September 23. Photo: Ranjeet Kumar ,

A silent protest by women against the Muslim Women Marriage Protection Bill, 2017, at Ram Lila Maidan in New Delhi on April 4. Photo: R.V. Moorthy , Dr Asma Zehra, member of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board and chief organiser of its women's wing, addressing the media in Hyderabad on September 22. She demanded the withdrawal of the Ordinance on instant triple talaq. Photo: G. Ramakrishna , IT is little more than a year since Supreme Court's five-judge bench invalidated in August 2017 instant triple talaq by a Muslim husband, but talaq-e-biddat refuses to fade away from public memory. Rather, it continues to exercise even the mind of the government. Even as the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017, to make instant triple talaq a non-bailable offence was pending before the Rajya Sabha, the Union Cabinet convinced the President to promulgate the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Ordinance, 2018, in order to make talaq-e-biddat a crime. , The Cabinet did not cite any figures to substantiate the claims of a sudden increase in the prevalence of the practice after the apex court had rendered it null and void although Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad did talk of an "overpowering urgency and compelling necessity" for the promulgation of the Ordinance. , The Ordinance is a watered down version of the Bill, which was passed by the Lok Sabha. In what may be seen as a concession to the demand raised by the opposition, the Ordinance states that in case of talaq-e-biddat only the woman or her family members can lodge a complaint with the police. Earlier, any third party could do so. Instant talaq has been made a cognisable offence. Section 4

of the Ordinance makes pronouncement of instant talaq by a Muslim husband punishable with imprisonment of up to three years and a fine. Also, the errant husband will have to pay maintenance to his wife and children. A district magistrate is empowered to grant bail after hearing the wife. Also, the offence has been made compoundable, wherein the parties concerned can settle the matter between themselves. It is done to enable the marriage to continue if the spouses so desire. , However, the Ordinance is silent on how the jailed husband can be expected to provide for the maintenance of his wife or the welfare of his children. The provision in the Ordinance is weaker than what a Muslim woman or her children are entitled to from her husband/father in Islam. Islam gives a maintenance right to a divorced woman and makes it incumbent upon the father to provide for his children's food, clothing and education. Even for suckling a little child, the wife is entitled to compensation. The Ordinance, however, seeks to reduce her right to merely a token, as the jailed husband is unlikely to have avenues for continued earning., The cosmetic changes fail to address the serious concerns of the Muslim community in particular and all justice-loving people in general. No wonder, around five crore Muslim women participated in a campaign against the proposed Bill that preceded the Ordinance. Agitating under the auspices of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board's (AIMPLB) women's wing, they argued that after the Supreme Court had invalidated instant triple talaq, the marriage subsists even after the pronouncement of such talaq. "When the marriage continues and both husband and wife continue to enjoy marital rights, where is the offence?" the women asked. They were participating in a rally at Ram Lila Maidan in New Delhi in August. , "If the motive was to protect a Muslim wife in an unhappy marriage, no reasonable person can believe that the means to ensure it is by putting an errant husband in jail for three years and creating a non-bailable offence for merely saying talaq, talaq, talaq. The motive is not to help the women in distress but to punish Muslim men, and thereby break up Muslim families," said a participant from Ahmedabad. , Asma Zehra, an AIMPLB women's wing member, said: "The government made no effort to interact with Muslim intellectuals or even women's groups. It ignored nearly five crore signatures against the proposed Bill making triple talaq a criminal offence. What was the hurry when the Rajya Sabha was due to deliberate on the Bill in the next session?", Islamic women activists from the south, notably, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telengana, raised similar objections. The Samastha Kerala Jamiathul, one of the biggest religious organisations of Sunni Muslims in Kerala, moved the Supreme Court challenging the constitutionality of the Ordinance. It argued that the only objective of the Ordinance was perhaps to "punish Muslim husbands". "Even if we were to accept the government's stance, the Ordinance is riddled with contradictions. If the marriage subsists after the triple talaq announcement, where is the crime? If it is a wrong committed by the husband, it is a civil matter. Why bring criminal provisions to what is essentially a civil matter? Isn't nikkah a civil agreement which can be dissolved accordingly?" they asked. , This view is shared by a number of Muslim ulemmas. They question the government's hurry in bringing in an Ordinance when no pressing instances of instant talaq had been brought to public attention. The New Delhi unit of the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind asked pertinent questions regarding the various sections and subsections of the Ordinance. "Leaving aside the possible political motive, Section 2 (b) of the Ordinance signed by the President defines talaq-e-biddat as any form of talaq "having the effect of instantaneous and irrevocable divorce". Yet in the next section it is said that such a pronouncement "shall be void and illegal". If Section 2 considers it an irrevocable divorce, how come Section 3 renders such a divorce null and void?", Jamaat's president Maulana Syed Jalaluddin Umari said that if the government was sincere about the welfare of Muslim women, it should hold discussions with ulemmas and experts of Islamic jurisprudence over the entire triple talaq issue. "If pronouncement of instant triple talaq does not dissolve marriage, where is the need to bring about a law in a tearing hurry? Any woman who faces the same can approach the court and get justice. The Ordinance is against the spirit of the Constitution of India, which gives every citizen the right to practice his or her own religion and personal laws. The Ordinance contravenes the Shariah laws, too.", Umari is right. The Ordinance goes against the Fundamental Rights enshrined in the Constitution. By seeking to arbitrarily curtail the personal liberty of a citizen who has not committed an offence, and whose marriage subsists, the move to jail him goes

against Article 21 of the Constitution, which clearly states: "No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law." , At another level, the Ordinance goes against the letter and spirit of the Quran, which was quoted by the Supreme Court when it set aside instant triple talaq. Indeed, the Quran provides for both a revocable and an irrevocable divorce. The procedure is outlined in two separate chapters, namely, "Surah Baqarah", the longest chapter in the Quran, and "Surah Talaq". A single pronouncement of divorce—or even multiple pronouncements at the same time—has the effect of a revocable divorce, which the husband can take back either through word or action within the period of iddat (waiting). Simple cohabitation between the spouses renders the divorce null. It is under the light of these verses that the Ordinance takes away the right of the sparring couple to sort out their differences or annul divorce through simple cohabitation in bed. In a hadith, the Prophet Muhammad says he was confronted by a woman in a similar situation. The woman complained to the Prophet that her husband had divorced her. Upon this, he asked whether her husband had said talaq in three separate sittings across three months or at one go. When the woman revealed that her husband had made multiple pronouncements at one sitting, he considered it only a single divorce, hence revocable. He allowed the woman to go back to her husband. Incidentally, there are eight ways that are legally sanctioned or allowed by the scriptures through which a Muslim marriage may end; talaq-e-biddat is not one of them., An interesting anomaly in the Ordinance was pointed out by Maulana Mahmood Madani of the Jamiatul Ulemma-e-Hind who responded to Ravi Shankar Prasad's claim of dire need for the Ordinance by saying: "According to the latest figures available, there have been 201 incidents of talaq in two years, or 100 cases per annum, in the 16-crore Muslim community. It does not warrant such a hasty Ordinance. It is a clear instance of dictatorship. The government did not even feel the need to consult the community.", Another Jamiat member pointed out that the Ordinance was self-contradictory: "The Ordinance's Section 4 mandates a three-year imprisonment and fine. But Section 7 declares it a cognisable and non-bailable offence. Which Section operates?" , Not surprisingly, the All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat (AIMMM), an umbrella organisation of Muslim bodies, believes the Ordinance is likely to fall under the weight of its contradictions. "It is at best a diversionary tactic," stated AIMMM president Navaid Hamid. "The government wants to deflect attention from its failures and burning issues such as rising fuel prices and corruption. I believe the government's sole aim is to incite the community to give it a communal colour. If the government is sincere about the welfare of Muslim women, it should tell us the steps it has taken for Muslim widows whose husbands have been killed in lynching cases in the past four years.", Zehra said: "Protection of wives cannot be achieved with incarceration of husbands."][

O.P. Singh, DGP, Uttar Pradesh. Encounters are part of crime prevention, he said recently. Photo: Rajeev Bhatt , "A CRIMINAL should have no human rights," Kalyan Singh, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. (Outlook, July 20, 1998). The BJP made him Governor., What the Director General of Police of Uttar Pradesh, O.P. Singh, said in New Delhi recently suggests that the State has had a settled practice in this matter. "Encounters are part of crime prevention. The fact is that this is not a state policy, but a police strategy. We do not call it encounter but police engagement. We are engaged with the criminals in a very professional and strategic manner. There have been about 62-63 police engagements in which the criminals have been killed, but rest of them have resulted in either arrest or apprehension" (DNA, September 12, 2018)., Anuja Jaiswal's report in The Times of India of September 21, 2018, indicates that a deliberate practice has been adopted. On September 20, a few local journalists in Uttar Pradesh's Aligarh district "received a call from the police around 6:45 a.m. They were surprised to be asked to reach Machua village immediately if they were interested in 'watching and filming a real encounter'. The news spread like wildfire and within 15 minutes, an entire troop of local and national journalists had lined up at the site, roughly 25 km from the district headquarters. The cops killed two men, Mustakim and Naushad, in the 'encounter' ... A TOI [The Times of India] photojournalist was part of the group that witnessed what must be India's first encounter where the media was invited.", Matters will get worse unless this practice is checked; of this, there is no sign. Bollywood has extolled "encounters" and "encounter specialists" in a good few blockbusters without a

word of criticism from any quarter. It reflects Indian society's indifference, if not approval. It all began in Punjab in the reign of Partap Singh Kairon. One of the volumes of Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru has his Note on encounters. I owe to my friend Ravi Nair of the South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre in New Delhi a huge debt for helping me with documents on the subjects. His research is world class., In 2017, Zaid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights, published, under his foreword, an updated version of the original U.N. Manual on the Effective Prevention of Extralegal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions of 1991, which through widespread usage became known as the Minnesota Protocol. Like the original, this updated version supplements the U.N. Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extralegal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions (1989), which remains an important part of the international legal standards for the prevention of unlawful deaths and the investigation of potentially unlawful deaths. The original Minnesota Protocol was drafted through an expert process led by the Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee, motivated by an awareness among civil society actors that there was no clear international reference point at the time to act as either a practical guide for those tasked with conducting investigations into suspicious deaths, or as a norm against which to evaluate such investigations., In the years since it was drafted, the Minnesota Protocol has been widely used as an education resource, as a practical guide and as a legal standard. Along with the Principles, it has been used by national, regional and international courts, commissions and committees, such as the European and Inter-American Courts of Human Rights, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights and the U.N. Human Rights Committee., In the years that followed, there have also been many welcome developments in international law, investigative practice and forensic science. Several resolutions of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights found that this valuable resource was in need of updating to retain and expand its relevance. In 2014, Christof Heyns, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, initiated a process to revise and update the protocol and convened the expert meetings that led to the finalisation of this text., Given the role of forensic experts themselves in devising the original version, the first U.N. Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, S. Amos Wako, played a significant role in the process. "Special effort was also made to get inputs from States, other international organisations, other Special Rapporteurs, treaty bodies, NGOs [non-governmental organisations] and individual professionals. The collaborative approach has greatly enriched the text, and has, I hope, made more likely the widespread distribution of the revised standards to those experts and institutions who can most directly benefit from it." The manual deserves a wide readership in India., It contains a detailed Guideline on Investigation, interviews and many other topics. Needless to mention, admission to this country has been denied to any U.N. Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions., On July 4, 2018, Agnes Callaward, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, and Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, urged India to complete thorough investigations into alleged killings by security forces in the State of Manipur after officials failed to meet a deadline set by the Supreme Court for inquiries into the cases. "We are extremely concerned that the delay appears to be deliberate, undue and unreasonable, and we condemn this lack of progress." There is a U.N. Code on the rights., In 2012, civil society groups submitted more than 1,500 cases of alleged extrajudicial killings in Manipur to the Supreme Court of India. In many of the cases, the deaths had been registered by the police as caused by the exchange of fire between security forces and armed groups or individuals. However, the families alleged that the cases were "fake encounters" and that the individuals had been killed intentionally., In 2013, a commission appointed by the Supreme Court examined six cases selected at random and found in all cases that the conclusions of the security forces were not genuine and that none of the individuals killed had established criminal records. The Central Bureau of investigations (CBI) was ordered to probe a number of other cases., "The Supreme Court has since set three deadlines for investigations into a number of cases to be completed, and three times these deadlines have not been met. In 2016, the Supreme Court set a deadline of 31 December 2017, for investigations to be

completed in 89 cases. But, by the deadline, only 12 cases had been registered. The court set another deadline of 28 February 2018, for these cases, but by 12 March only 42 cases had been registered. Finally, the Supreme Court ordered investigations be completed and a report be filed by 30 June 2018, for 50 cases. But in a hearing last Monday [July 2, 2018], the CBI not only failed to submit the required report but also indicated it had completed investigations into only four cases., "Some of these families have been waiting decades for these cases to be fully investigated. It is unacceptable that the CBI is failing to meet these deadlines and appears to lack good faith.", The commission also expressed serious concerns about information that human rights defenders associated with the cases had faced harassment by the authorities and had even been attacked by unknown individuals. Sagolsem Menjor Singh, Ranjeeta Sadokpam and Salima Memcha, members of one of the civil society organisations involved in a case, had reportedly been harassed by the police. Shots were fired at the home of another supporter of human rights, Okram Nutankumar, by unknown individuals., The reference was to the judgment delivered on July 14, 2017, by Justice Madan B. Loba for himself and Justice U.U. Lalit in the Supreme Court (Extra Judicial Execution Victim Families Association & Anr. vs Union of India & Others)., Paragraphs 38, 39 and 44 of the judgment reveal a sorry state of affairs., "38. It was submitted by the NHRC [National Human Rights Commission] that all its communications and Guidelines have remained only on paper and are not enforced by any State government. The submission of the NHRC was that to ensure that good quality reports are available, the Guidelines need to be strictly enforced. We agree with this submission and make it clear that the intention of the NHRC is to more effectively assist the criminal justice delivery system and avoid any factual controversies while respecting human rights. It is not as if the dignity of only living persons needs to be respected but even the dignity of the dead must be given due respect. Unless the communications and Guidelines laid down by the NHRC (which have been prepared after wide-ranging and detailed consultations) are adhered to, the respect and dignity due to the dead and the human rights of all of us will remain only on paper., "39. Apart from a lack of concern for the communications and Guidelines issued by the NHRC or the absence of attention that they deserve, the difficulty faced by the NHRC is that even if there is half-hearted compliance, there are unexplained delays on the part of the State government in sending reports; the quality of the reports is certainly not up to the mark and as expected; sometimes some columns are left blank in the reports and on other occasions some documents are illegible, etc. All this, according to the NHRC, hampers its efficient functioning and causes delays in the implementation of the human rights of aggrieved persons. ..., "44. Considering that such a high-powered body has brought out its difficulties through affidavits and written submissions filed in this Court, we have no doubt that it has been most unfortunately reduced to a toothless tiger. We are of the clear opinion that any request made by the NHRC in this regard must be expeditiously and favourably respected and considered by the Union of India otherwise it would become impossible for the NHRC to function effectively and would also invite avoidable criticism regarding respect for human rights in our country. We direct the Union of India to take note of the concerns of the NHRC and remedy them at the earliest and with a positive outlook.", There exists a comprehensive international instrument on the Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extralegal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions, adopted by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1989/65 of May 24, 1989. Principle 4 sets forth the obligation of governments to guarantee effective protection through judicial or other means to individuals and groups who are in danger of extralegal, arbitrary or summary executions, including those who receive death threats. , The court's ruling is a welcome break from the past. For, as the U.S. State Department's Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2001 remarked, "court action cases of extrajudicial killings is slow and uncertain". The South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre's comprehensive backgrounder lists the following lapses: "The Indian government's failure to ensure the adequate investigation of allegations of extrajudicial killings. Legal protection afforded to perpetrators. Failings of the judicial system in holding perpetrators to account. Inadequacy of compensation available to victims' families. The Indian government's failure to ensure the accountability of the army and security personnel. The Indian government's

actions in effectively authorising the commission of extrajudicial killings.”, The International Commission of Jurists opined that “the deliberate killing of people in police or military custody is simple murder” (Human Rights in Kashmir, Report of a Mission 1995, page 39). To describe such crimes in Kashmir would need a book., The state has failed in these respects—investigation, prosecution and punishment. The crucial question is why the police resorted to this crime and why society has acquiesced in it. The reason are not hard to seek: Even honest policemen were disgusted at the state’s failure to support them; incompetent, if not corrupt, prosecutions; “the laws of delays”; and a magistracy which was slow, incompetent or simply corrupt. The police decided to take the law into their own hands—true, not for these reasons alone., The people, harassed by growing crime, began to welcome encounters as a swift cure for the crimes. There is also another factor: the nexus of Ministers/politicians with criminals, which ensures immunity for criminals. We need to tackle crime at all these levels, beginning with giving the police full protection against Ministers’ interventions. It was one such interference by the Home Minister of Bombay, Morarji Desai, which protected V.D. Savarkar and cost Gandhi his life. The J.L. Kapur Commission censured him.][

Tribal people protesting against the dilution of the Chhota Nagpur Tenancy Act and the Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act, in Ranchi, Jharkhand, in October 2016. Photo: Manob Chowdhury , MUCH has been written about development and its inequalities. One only has to travel through Indian cities or visit rural India to have it stare one in the face. Poverty and inequality are prevalent and part of the everyday reality that one negotiates, often without even batting an eyelid. A History of Adivasi Women in Post-Independence Eastern India: The Margins of the Marginals tells the story of one of India’s most marginalised social groups. , Whether the author, Debasree De, is correct or not in pointing out that little has been written about Adivasi women, her book provides important insights into how development has impacted them in that part of the country. , The story of Adivasi dispossession in the colonial and postcolonial period, often in the name of development and the greater public good, is fairly well known. Adivasi women are doubly “disadvantaged” as Adivasis and as women. They bear not only the brunt of development’s violence but also the adverse impact of that on gender relations. By drawing on short case studies from across West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha, Debasree De offers glimpses of the hazardous work conditions that Adivasi women face as the project of development steamrolls ahead. She narrates how the Oraon, Munda and Santhal women who work in tea estates in West Bengal were hit by the crisis in the tea industry in the early 2000s, many losing their jobs and dying of starvation., She also details the exploitative conditions of Adivasi labour in the brick and construction industries of Bihar and the mining industries of Jharkhand and Odisha. Many of these stories of development and dispossession, notably those of the industrial town of Kalinganagar, and POSCO and Vedanta, all in Odisha, are familiar, but what Debasree De does well is illustrate how such examples are ubiquitous across the landscape., Her analysis of the political economy of development must be seen in the context of what was promised. Jawaharlal Nehru’s panchsheel, or five principles, spoke about the need for people to develop according to their own genius and for development not to be imposed. It also spoke of respecting Adivasi rights to forests and land. The reality is a far cry from this: Adivasi land alienation has been the order of the day and relocation and rehabilitation an almost complete failure. Forest-based livelihoods have been undermined with increasing state control over forests and common agricultural practices such as shifting cultivation have been made illegal. While the Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers (Rights to Forest) Act, 2006, goes some way in redressing land alienation, implementation has been slow in many States. , What comes across from Debasree De’s narrative is that the state has tried but failed to cushion the impact of this dispossession. On the one hand, the state does not want to stymie capital accumulation; on the other, it is aware that it must cater to the needs of all its citizens. The vast bureaucratic machinery for tribal development in the country is testimony to the latter, as are government schemes such as the Integrated Rural Development Programme and programmes targeted at women such as the Mahila Samridhi Yojana, which have had a fairly large presence in Adivasi areas. , Tribal development can be seen, therefore, as a form of governmentality that seeks to create new subjects who on paper are

increasingly provided for by the state but more importantly perhaps do not get in the way of the development juggernaut. In practice, it is questionable as to whether the state has actually provided adequate welfare., Debasree De illustrates how tribal development agencies established throughout the Adivasi belt of eastern India have to a large extent been dysfunctional. She also depicts how the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and the Indira Awaas Yojana amongst other schemes have not delivered, opening up the playing field for non-governmental organisations, which must now do what the state cannot. She points out that progressive land-related laws such as the Chhota Nagpur Tenancy Act, 1908, and the Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act, 1876, have been watered down to take away agricultural land for industrial and commercial purposes. , Debasree De is careful not to essentialise either Adivasis or Adivasi women while capturing the violence of development. She illustrates the huge diversity of Adivasi communities—differences in the realm of culture (folk traditions, crafts, marriage ceremonies, etc.) and economy (settled agriculture versus minor forest produce-based). , She also does not hesitate to point out that gender relations in Adivasi communities should not be romanticised. While it is true that many Adivasi communities have a bride price instead of dowry and that the ghotul (youth dormitory) is a common institution that improves gender relations at a young age, Debasree De suggests that Adivasi women are often denied inheritance, especially of property. Having said this, she reiterates that development is the main culprit in the worsening plight of women and the increasing objectification and commercialisation of the Adivasi woman's body., While much of the book's focus is on "the discursive and material contexts that have historically produced tribal women as victimised, invisible and mute" (page xiv), the author also alludes to how Adivasi women have been central to Adivasi struggles: be it the Bhutia women in the Chipko movement or the Dhulia and Santhal women in the fight against land alienation in Maharashtra and Jharkhand respectively or Adivasi women more generally in armed resistance to the Indian state. , Moreover, the everyday stories that Debasree De narrates of women working in mines, tea estates and construction sites are testimony to the resilience of women under extremely adverse circumstances. One cannot help wonder, however, despite the strength and perseverance of Adivasi women, whether their struggles, everyday and long-term, can roll back the development that continues to marginalise them and have an adverse impact on gender relations within their communities. Debasree De suggests the same in her chapter on cultural silencing, making the case that Adivasi voices to a large extent have been drowned out in the process of development., This book is worth reading if only to get a glimpse of the other side of development. To be honest, if one is looking for a positive spin on things, one will not find it in this book. My own feeling is that one must take cognisance of what is happening in the nooks and crannies of India that rarely catch the eye. One must also understand how the Indian economy is able to grow at 7 per cent and at whose expense that happens. These are fundamental questions about development that continue to haunt one and for which struggle seems the only option. , Is it possible to provide basic health and good education to Adivasi communities without displacing them and making them footloose labour? Neither Debasree De nor I for that matter would suggest that Adivasis are not interested in improvements to their lives, but surely it should be on their terms. , Although the story told is important, it is not always reader friendly. At times the book is too laborious. It has a somewhat long-winded conceptual discussion around what it means to be Adivasi, the difference between terms such as Adivasi and tribal, and how gender must be understood in the context of development. Important as these concerns are, they detract from the story the author wants to tell. Moreover, the anecdotal case study approach the author has taken, while revealing, only touches the surface of issues that require much more detailed enquiry. If one is to come to terms with the violence that development often brings, it is necessary to document much more systematically how it operates. , Ajit Menon is a professor at the Madras Institute of Development Studies.][

January 1942: Mahatma Gandhi with Mahadev Desai at Sevagram. Photo: the hindu archives ,

A page from Mahadev Desai's manuscript of his translation of "An Autobiography": Chapter XXII, "Comparative Study of Religions", Part II. ,

A page from Mahadev Desai's manuscript of his translation of "An Autobiography": Chapter XXII, 'Comparative Study of Religions', Part II. Photo: FROM AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY OR THE STORY OF MY EXPERIMENTS WITH TRUTH , TRANSLATIONS render; they do not reproduce the original., There they are rather like music. Every time a song is sung or played, it comes just a shade different, depending on the musician's state of being—physical and psychological—external factors like the climate, natural and aesthetic, and the availability of musical aids which change, vary, diversify from age to age. The song stays the same; its singing varies., A raga composition by Tyagaraja (1767-1847) would have been sung by his contemporaries in one way, a century later in another way, and today, by today's vidwan, with somewhat new inflections. And if, by some H.G. Wells-ian fluxions of time and space, Tyagaraja were to descend on the contemporary scene in a flying chariot, he might well collaborate with the blue-jeaned vidwan in rendering his 150-year-old composition with old fealties intact but new novelties added, the text or lyrics as they are called, of course, remaining the same., Quite something like this happened with the autobiography of M.K. Gandhi (1869-1948). Written by him in instalments in astonishingly expressive Gujarati over an extended period starting in 1925, it was rendered into classical English by his scholar-secretary and literary alter ego, Mahadev Desai (1892-1942). One can be sure Gandhi went through his own story as it was being done into English line by line, word by word. Navajivan published the English translation in two volumes, in 1927 and 1928, to instant and international acclaim., The fostering words were Gandhi's, the fostered words were Desai's. There was an authenticity in the English version, not an indenticality. And the margin between those two was not just "passed" by Gandhi as legit but embraced by him as licit. The Gujarati original had osmosed into the English version. The English was, therefore, less of a translation than a recension of the original. The English translation is Desai's in a literal sense. It is a Gandhi-Desai product in its inner-ness., Eager to take in Gandhi's life story as told by him, the world absorbed the English translation, with Gandhi witnessing and perhaps wondering at the surge of approval and the tide of appreciation with which it was received. For its readers, the book was what it indeed was, Gandhi's autobiography written by him and published in his lifetime and so as salt-true as true salt can be. They did not, when the translation appeared or even for a long time thereafter, sit down to compare, with the help of bilingual experts or dictionaries, the English with the Gujarati to see if there was any departure from the first. If there was any, it was Gandhi's, not Desai's. They also knew Gandhi's English was of the highest quality as was the translator's and the work, collaborative and conjoined, was for all intents and purposes straight from out of Gandhi's experience and his active vocabulary., And so Satyana Prayogo athava Atmakatha in the aqua pura of its Gujarati emerged as An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments With Truth in the delectamentum aqua of its English version. A literal translation of the title would have been "Truth's Experiments or An Autobiography". True to the original, yes, but would it have rung true? One wonders., Two questions arise., 1. Is the difference in title a significant difference?, 2. Did readers note the subtle difference in the title?, The answer to the first has to be: Yes, "Truth's Experiments or an Autobiography" is not the same thing as An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth. To the extent that truth as experimenter is different from truth as the experimented-upon, the difference is significant. In the Gujarati, truth is the protagonist, the active agent. In the English, the author is. In fact "My" brings him into the title frontally. Inter-language variations in translation may or may not be intrinsically significant, but whether they are or not, the fact of the variation has to be noticed, noted and recorded., Why? It has to be noticed and noted for both verisimilitude and veracity. We can be sure that Gandhi and Desai would have discussed the title. Did they find the original somehow wanting, deficient? Did the erudite V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, long-serving president of the Servants of India Society, who went through the draft and, on the condition of anonymity, suggested revisions "from the point of view of language", encourage Gandhi to modify the title? Did the austere "Servant of India" think it presumptuous—arrogating the right to speak on truth's behalf? Perhaps one day a mouldy paper trail will lead to the answer. Be that as it may, Gandhi and Desai modified the title in English to what has now settled into the readers' imagination. But—and this is significant—Gandhi did

not proceed to retro-revise the Gujarati title. He kept that as it was. The title of the original work, the autobiography in its first form, therefore, remains and it has truth as the protagonist in Gandhi's life, not Gandhi as the protagonist in truth's terrestrial career., The answer to the second question is: Not the "ordinary" reader but the fastidious one or the pedant would have noticed. And then saying "Ah yes" moved on to the text., Rigour requires the reader to note, ponder, consider the nuances of the title change. Respect requires the reader to accept it un-judgmentally for it has come from the author. From another hand, this atrial change would have been regarded as unacceptable., A combination of rigour and respect actuates Tridip Suhrud's meticulously produced critical edition of the Gandhi-Desai translation. He brings to bear on the entire text—a mammoth task—the kind of reflection I have attempted in the preceding lines on the title alone., If as his translator literary alter ego and interpreter Desai was, to deploy a cliché, something like Gandhi's Boswell, then Desai has found in Suhrud, his own or Boswell's Boswell or—to be specific—a Peter Martin, Boswell's and, therefore, the biographer's biographer. Not in the sense of one who has written a life of Desai (which, one hopes, he will, some day) but in that of one who has entered the translator's mind to see its working, in the word renderings, the subtle edits, the elisions, occlusions, substitutions and, thereby, helped us see the working of the author's own evolving self-image., Not just a mastery over Gujarati, his mother tongue, but an unabashed love for that language has spurred Suhrud to match the original autobiography, word for word, with the English version and to put down on the margins of the work, the variations. And he has not done so to demonstrate the superiority of the original but to enrich the reading of the English by this "alongside" method. "Look!", Suhrud seems to say, "Gandhi's was no ordinary Gujarati; it was that of a stylist, an aesthete, an artist in economy and precision but an artist also in expressive picturisation. So that you, dear reader of the great English rendering, do not miss out on the nuances that the Gujarati has, just look at some of those..." And he then proceeds to give, on the margins of page after page, new English renderings of some of the Gujarati words, phrases, references that have dropped off from the English rendering., This method has, in Urdu writing, both calligraphic and printed, a hallowed word—hashiya, meaning literally, the margin. But the word has a wider connotation, signifying the space fringing a page of text in which space the reader, the commentator, may write, with the same care as the author of the page, notes, comments and observations that will be, thereafter, read in conjunction with the central text. The hashiya becomes, in effect, a running commentary on the text. And as it is transcribed on the page itself (which provides for hashiye by leaving wide margins) it cannot be random, casual not to say frivolous., Suhrud has used the hashiya mode to differential effect. The page stirs with new life, as it were, because of the alternatives that link the chosen word or reference to the original Gujarati and illuminate it. The marginal annotations do not crowd the page, they just about dot it. Typically, they could number three to five per page and then certainly not on every page. Suhrud's marginalia are restrained, spare. So the reader has the Desai rendering and the Suhrud rendition on the same page, not to choose one over the other but to experience both stereophonically. He has fimbriated the text with annotations that fill up the black-and-white charcoal line drawing with the pigments of felt experience., To consider a few representative examples., Gandhi's well-known disparaging of his father's three marriages seriatim is followed up-close by his description of his own marriage at the age of 13. The English translation has:, "I was devoted to my parents. But no less was I devoted to the passions that flesh is heir to.", The Gujarati is more direct, like Gandhi. Suhrud shows us that the original had "I was devoted to father" (not "parents") and he renders the original next sentence in his hashiya as, "But was I any less devoted to the passions?", That sentence in the Gujarati has an interrogative ending is just as Gandhi would have said or written it, with a rhyme tucked in it as well: pitrabhakt (father-devoted) juxtaposed with vishaybhakt (passion-devoted). The rhyme just could not have been transported from one language register to the other, and Desai is right in not having even tried but the deficit suffered in the substitution of "parents" for "father" and the impersonalised reference in "flesh is heir to" is made up for by the hashiya., Desai has, with good reason, sought generally to rub down Gujarati's very "its own" linguistic demarches.

This leads to his morphing proverbs into their standard English meaning—a pragmatic solution. Talking about his neglect of cultivating a good handwriting, he writes of his repenting this neglect when he saw the “beautiful handwriting of lawyers and young men born and educated in South Africa”. This is how it is put in the English. But the original, as Suhrud shows, did not use the generic “beautiful”. It had a Gujarati metaphor: *moti na dana jeva aksharo*, which translates as (in Suhrud) “pearl-like” characters. In the same passage on handwriting, the English has “I later tried to improve mine, but it was too late.” So it was and saying “it was too late” is not wrong, not wrong by far. But it is still not the same as saying it, as Gandhi does in the Gujarati, through a proverb: *pan pake ghade kain kantha charhe?*, which Suhrud renders as “(but) can one add a rim to a perfectly baked clay pot?”, In the passage where Gandhi recounts his confessing to his father the “stealing” of a piece of gold from his brother’s armlet, the English sentence reads: “I was afraid of the pain that I should cause him.” The Gujarati paints a more graphic scene, which Suhrud provides as “...lest he should be pained and strike his head in anguish”. There are in the English version some rub-down of the scene as it unfolded. When, for instance, Sheth Abdul Karim Jhaveri meets the recently London-returned and despondent Gandhi in Rajkot and offers the assignment in South Africa that was to change everything for Gandhi, the entrepreneur is quoted as saying to him (according to the English version): “You will of course be our guest.” The original Gujarati is sharper, as a practical arrangement of this kind has to be. In Suhrud’s *hashiya*, Jhaveri tells Gandhi: “[You will] stay in our bungalow.” A difference, there., In the chapter “Near Death’s Door”, narrating his illness, Gandhi says in the English translation: “I had thought all along that I had an iron frame...” The Gujarati has *patthar jevun*. Suhrud very rightly points out the variation from “a body hard as stone” to “an iron frame”. There is such a thing as idiom. Everyone has one’s own. Where does it come from? Language or grammar? Instinct or training? In owning up to his “Himalayan miscalculation” about his compatriots’ readiness for civil disobedience, Gandhi says in his inimitable frugal yet picturesque Gujarati idiom: *...savinay bhangnun gadun dharya kartan dhimun chalshe*. He employs the image of the cart-gadun. How has Desai rendered it? With fidelity to the spirit of the original and an understanding of the author’s disappointment with himself, as: “I realised that the progress of the training in civil disobedience was not going to be as rapid as at first expected” but with the central motif of the cart taken out. And with that out, something of Gandhi’s idiom goes out as well., Are Suhrud’s alternative translations of words, expressions and phrases invariably meant to show up the Gujarati over the English? Not so. If most of the alternative examples can make the reader feel that the English version trails behind the original Gujarati, Suhrud also gives clear instances of the opposite, that is, where Desai has kept the spirit of the original but decidedly brought its English version closer to the experience. Talking of the time spent by him as a student in London in front of “a huge mirror watching myself arranging my tie and parting my hair in the correct fashion”, Gandhi says in the Gujarati that back home (in Suhrud’s construction) “one got to see a mirror on the day one got a shave”. Desai has rendered that, with telling effect, as “...the mirror had been a luxury permitted on the days when the family barber gave me a shave”. He has vivified the description., Likewise, when narrating the different ways in which the Indian “coolie” was referred to in South Africa, Gandhi says that “sami” being a Tamil suffix occurring after many Tamil names got to be adopted by their white masters who routinely called all of them “sami” without realising that “sami” was nothing else than the Sanskrit “swami” meaning, paradoxically, “master”. In the Gujarati, Gandhi says: “Whenever therefore an Indian... had enough courage in him... he would return the compliment... ‘I am not your master!’.” Desai has changed “enough courage” to “enough wit”—a distinct improvement that Gandhi, doubtless, welcomed., Suhrud’s alternatives are not suggested replacements but parallel glimpsing, meant to enlarge the reader’s options in understanding., The critical edition cannot be and is not immune from critical study itself., Suhrud’s alternative translations have to be the result of his option-choices. And every alternative being subjective has to have other alternatives to it. Suhrud, being the scholar that he is, will doubtless be the first to acknowledge that. A classic “case” is provided by the description of Gandhi’s first meeting with A.W. Baker, an attorney in Pretoria. It is described in the English matter-of-

factly with: "He received me very warmly." This seems to be exactly what Gandhi means by the corresponding line in the original: mane bhavthi bhetya. Now, bhet can be any of the following: "encountering", "meeting", "interviewing", "embracing". Suhrud chooses the most demonstrative—"embracing"., Did the boss at Baker & Lindsay embrace Gandhi at their first meeting? Perhaps he did. But Desai's cautious rendering, approved by Gandhi, did not, it seems to me, need an alternative, and that, too, of "embracing"., Occasionally, Suhrud's alternatives seem to be redundant., "I must skip many other experiences... and come straight to the Boer War" is how the English chapter titled "The Boer War" starts. Suhrud suggests as an alternative "shall" for "must". If the original had the Gujarati for "shall" and not "must", that would have been only right. But it does not. So? So just this, that Suhrud is most helpful when he is critically, not imaginatively reconstructive., There should be no doubting that the English version of the autobiography is in Gandhi's Gujarati ink flowing through Desai's English nib. Suhrud's critical edition polishes the nib's point, clears its tines, slit, shoulders and vent-hole of unwanted and unintended substances, to leave it gleaming and free to work the Desai magic., Suhrud's critical edition is not an alternative text but a concordance volume of its own type. And one that must self-correct in its successive editions. Where are these self-corrections needed? In the wording of some of the alternatives where the definite article can play truant—the copy editor's domain. And in the absolutely first class footnotes. These, as a genre, can never reach perfection for there is so much that can be added and so much that can be sharpened. Jairamdas Doulatram is, for instance, described inter alia as "...first editor of The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi"—unfairly to the person who was that, Bharatan Kumarappa., Suhrud's edition will be valued for its shashiye alternatives and, no less, for its industrious footnotes. But above all for giving readers of Gandhi's autobiography in English some of the flavours of the original in Gujarati of which Gandhi was as much a master as Premchand was of Hindustani.][

Kalpana Lajmi . Photo: By Special Arrangement , DELETE the word unconventional from your dictionary and you will struggle to describe Kalpana Lajmi. She was all that the patriarchal, stereotypical society did not order. She lived with the legendary Bhupen Hazarika, who was almost 30 years older to her. When she first met him, she was 17 and he was 45. They were together for 40 years until he breathed his last at the age of 85. She looked after him like a wife, nursed him like a mother, pampered him like a sister, and enjoyed his success like a friend. In the last two decades of his life, when his fame touched new heights, she even managed his career, his concerts and his recordings. To the world outside, she was a no-nonsense woman who did not allow her guard to drop when it came to protecting her partner. Inside the privacy of her home, though, she was the one who often put up with his tantrums, his idiosyncrasies and his mood swings., Yet, she never married him. As she wrote in Bhupen Hazarika: As I knew Him, which was released a few days before she departed from this world: "He always said that both of us should celebrate our love story because it was a special, unique love that was undefined and would remain so given the conservative parameters and construct of society around us. Our lives, from youth to old age, were a continuous journey of mutual passion and love. We stepped into various chapters of our lives, sliding in and out of relationships with men and women, making memories along the way. We cherished some of them but there were some we wished we could forget but couldn't.", He was from Assam, the eldest of 10 siblings in a lower-middle-class family. She hailed from the stock of the legendary Guru Dutt and counted Shyam Benegal among her cousins. Socially, there were seemingly intractable polarities. Yet, she made the relationship work., As she wrote: "Perhaps my entry in his life instilled peace, harmony and happiness in his persona and he became a comfortable householder with me. I was totally unaware of the depth of friction and complexities that enveloped the Hazarika household. We never discussed it and perhaps all the relationships that disintegrated in front of his eyes, the loss of his parents, sibling rivalry and jealousy, his wrecked marriage, disillusionment with his only son made him accept me and look upon me, I feel, with the love of a tender, concerned and caring father.", It was not easy to begin with, their wide age difference apart. She did not know his language. She did not even understand much of his music. Born in an upper-class family, she had not experienced poverty and deprivation. Slowly, she found her way in his life; she learned his

language and appreciated his musical genius. Way younger, she looked at him as a father figure of sorts. He indulged her. Slowly, the two warmed up to each other. And without realising it, Hazarika had got the anchor he never thought possible after all the domestic vicissitudes in his life back in Assam., As for Kalpana Lajmi, she was happy to be in his shade. In that shadow lay comfort, familiarity and warmth., It took a long time for her painter mother, Lalita, to come to terms with her daughter's unique status in Hazarika's life; it reached a fitting culmination when Kalpana Lajmi stepped forward to complete the last lap of Hazarika's last journey. As she recalled: "He had elicited a promise from me that wherever he expired, I would take him back to Guwahati and cremate him by his beloved Brahmaputra. My mother, who had never approved of my live-in relationship with Bhupen, was the one to insist that I should not desert him now, that I had to forget all my personal pain and give him the dignified farewell that he deserved, thus closing this chapter of my life with fortitude.", That was in November 2011. A little under eight years later, the curtains came down on Kalpana Lajmi's life too, following almost a year-long struggle with kidney cancer, during which the actor Soni Razdan stepped forward to help her deal with mounting medical bills., Her relationship with Hazarika hung on delicate threads; it was a relationship the larger world around her took a long time to understand. In conventional society, it was easy, almost inevitable, to label her a home-breaker, a gold-digger. Yet, Hazarika's first marriage had long ended when Kalpana Lajmi stepped in. And Hazarika's best phase of music, and subsequent rewards and recognition, came while in her company., Yet, she never forgot she had with her a legend of his era. He may not have experienced much calm and harmony for years, but in the world of sounds and songs, he was an incomparable genius. She urged him to find solace in his work. Slowly, Hazarika was a changed man. As for Kalpana Lajmi, she made a handful of documentaries in their early years together. In 1978, she stepped into the world of cinema as an assistant to Shyam Benegal, and soon made a documentary on the noted Bengali film-maker Dhiren Ganguly. Then came other essays but nothing truly memorable., Then, in 1986, came Ek Pal, a Naseeruddin Shah-Shabana Azmi-Farooq Sheikh starrer that Kalpana Lajmi helmed. With that film, she stepped out of Hazarika's huge shadow and became a director in her own right. The film, which gently tugged at the heart, was a feminist essay. And in the world of mainstream cinema, it was as unconventional as it could get. Just like the director., Based on a short story by Maitreyi Debi, the film narrated the story from a woman's point of view. The censor board, unaccustomed to scenes of the leading lady in bed with a man she is not married to, gave the film an "Adults Only" certificate. It only heightened interest in the film that came at a time when Hindi cinema was dishing out mediocrity every week. In the era of Mard, Maqсад and Masterji, Ek Pal was cerebral fare., Kalpana Lajmi had announced her entry as a formidable, feminist voice. It gained in volume with her next film, Rudaali, which came after almost seven years. Yet again, she defied conventional wisdom. In Hindi cinema, both the actors and the directors tend to follow up a hit film with another one in double-quick time to capitalise on the first one's easy recall value. Kalpana Lajmi went to the other extreme; she waited for her audiences to forget Ek Pal before putting together a cinematic adaptation of a short story by Mahasweta Devi., The trampling of stereotypes did not end with the subject of mourners. Instead of taking an art house giant like Shabana Azmi to play the lead, Kalpana Lajmi surprised everybody by pencilling in Dimple Kapadia as a mourner. Dimple Kapadia had started her career as a dream girl of sorts with Bobby and had not been suspected of having an art house card up her sleeve. Yet, through this tale of a woman enveloped in silent sorrow, she scooped up the National Award for Best Actress., Rudaali, though, is remembered today for "Dil Hoom Hoom Kare", easily the most memorable of Hazarika's Hindi gems. The maestro himself sang the male lead while Lata Mangeshkar lent her voice to the female part. Together, the songs became the lasting imprint of the professional association between Hazarika and Kalpana Lajmi., A few years later, she gave us Darmiyan, which talked of the intersection of gender and sexuality. Again, much before our cinema warmed up to the subject of alternative sexuality or people with a different taste, this Arif Zakaria-Kirron Kher film challenged viewers to look afresh at the world around them. The film got limited commercial but plenty of critical acclaim., Then came Kalpana Lajmi's weakest film, Daman, starring Raveena Tandon, which told a tale of domestic violence and marital

rape. The subject was, yet again, ahead of its times, but it sank under the weight of melodrama. Not every commercial actor could pull off a Rudaali, and Raveena Tandon failed to lift the film above mediocrity., Disappointed, Kalpana Lajmi reenergised herself with Chingari, with Sushmita Sen as the protagonist. The film had no spark, and with it went the fire from the life of Kalpana Lajmi, the bold feminist film-maker who dared to tell stories from the point of view of her women characters., The box office did not always reward her good intentions and artistes were not always able to put in sterling performances befitting her idea. But Kalpana Lajmi never failed for want of trying. She did it all on her terms, in her own unconventional ways. There was only one Kalpana Lajmi. Nobody could accuse her of not being original.][

Two addicts, related to each other, outside Navjeevan Kendra, a drug de-addiction centre in Kapurthala, Punjab. Photo: AKHILESH KUMAR ,

Chief Ministers of Uttarakhand, Punjab and Haryana, Trivendra Singh Rawat, Amarinder Singh and Manohar Lal Khattar, arriving to attend an inter-State regional conference to tackle the problem of drug use and drug peddling, in Chandigarh on August 20. Amarinder Singh's campaign promise ahead of the 2017 Assembly elections in Punjab to eradicate the problem in the State within a month of coming to power is nowhere near being fulfilled. Photo: Akhilesh Kumar ,

THE debate on the pitfalls of incarcerating drug addicts is an old one, and a recent study has made a strong pitch for the decriminalisation of drug use. The findings of the study, conducted in Punjab, prove that despite the pre-election rhetoric and campaign promise of every political party in the State the problem on the ground is far from being solved. In 2013, Punjab had the highest crime rate for drug offences across India: 42.3 per cent, or 14,564 out of a total of 34,668 cases. Captain Amarinder Singh's promise to eradicate the problem within a month of his becoming Chief Minister is nowhere near fulfilled., Leaders of the ruling Congress blame the decade-long rule of the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Bharatiya Janata Party preceding theirs for having allowed the problem to take root and fester. The Aam Aadmi Party rode on an anti-drug campaign to make inroads into Punjab early on. Already, political parties have begun the blame game ahead of the 2019 general election. But the problem continues to trouble the people of the State. Recent reports suggest that the profile of a typical drug user is widening, and virtually everybody, from housewives to police personnel, young people and politicians, is involved in the drug trade as either users or peddlers., An analysis of 13,350 cases registered in the special courts of Punjab under the Narcotics, Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act between 2013 and 2015 found that no one was sent to de-addiction centres by any court in Punjab. Instead, all addicts were sent to prison. The police, the prosecution and the courts repeatedly failed to treat addiction as a health issue requiring medical and psychological care and put drug users behind bars. Sections 39 and 64A of the Act, which allow addicts to be diverted out of the criminal justice system, were never put to use., The study "From Addict to Convict: The Working of the NDPS Act (1985) in Punjab", done by the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, advocates the removal of criminal penalties for drug use and instead wants it to be treated as an administrative offence. It examined whether drug trafficking and addiction could be curtailed by harsh punishments under the Act and whether drug addicts were being rehabilitated effectively. It focussed on the strict liability provisions of the law, where punishment is assigned by virtue of a wrongful act (possession of drugs) independent of any accompanying intent or mental state (trafficking, sale, consumption). It recommends that the police or the judicial authorities should refer addicts to an administrative body comprising legal, health and social work professionals, which could then decide to penalise users with a warning, fine or community service or encourage them to seek treatment., The NDPS Act was initially projected as a deterrent against trafficking. But the study found that the law had not lowered crime rates for drug offences or trafficking in Punjab. Instead, a disproportionate number of addicts were incarcerated under it. This shows the need for a rethink on the handling of addiction through the criminal justice system and for considering the adoption of a public health framework. The study urges the Central government to cooperate with Punjab in amending the legal framework and gathering data on the extent and pattern of drug use. , "The State government can focus on ensuring that infrastructure and financial resources are adequate and all treatment centres adhere to minimum quality standards. If the policies

are reoriented along these lines, drug addiction in Punjab can be tackled more meaningfully and effectively," the study says., Neha Singhal, senior resident fellow with the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy and a co-author of the study, advocates decriminalising drug use. "The death penalty was introduced to the NDPS Act in 1989 as a strong deterrent to traffickers. Until 2011, second offence in trafficking attracted mandatory death penalty. But trafficking has continued unabated. Our criminal justice system is geared towards punishing the weakest sections of society. Harsh punishments only make more victims and solve little, if anything," she told Frontline., According to the study, the facilities available for treating addicts in Punjab are inadequate. Treatment and demand-reduction strategies within existing hospitals are also not up to the mark. Responses to applications under the Right to Information (RTI) Act from various hospitals and de-addiction centres revealed that rehabilitation strategies largely focus on counselling and on providing recreational and sports facilities, lectures and campaigns. Further, the Ministries of Social Justice & Empowerment and Health & Family Welfare are responsible for funding de-addiction and rehabilitation programmes respectively. While the MSJE handles demand reduction, the MHFW handles treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts. De-addiction and rehabilitation, however, are part of the same process and breaking them down into two different functions, allocated to two different Ministries, does not make sense. In order to effectively tackle drug addiction, treatment and rehabilitation should be under a single Ministry. This would help avoid confusion about who is responsible and ensure greater accountability., Between 70 to 90 per cent of all cases under the NDPS Act across all districts involved intermediate quantities of drugs. Only 6 per cent of all narcotics cases involved commercial quantities of drugs. Even within the category of intermediate quantity, most cases veered towards small quantities. This meant that people who were arrested were largely addicts or users and not peddlers or smugglers. The psychological risks associated with incarcerating drug users are too many to enumerate. In an era where movements around prison abolition were gaining ground, incarcerating drug users was reminiscent of a time when imprisoning people with mental health issues, homosexuals or black persons to perpetuate slavery was the norm. , Drugs seized were categorised into small and commercial quantities, and thus a large negatively defined category of intermediate quantity was created. For example, an intermediate quantity for heroin was anywhere between 5 and 250 grams. "Intermediate quantity" cases received disparate sentences because of the wide range of punishments available to a judge together with a lack of sentencing guidelines. Because of this arbitrariness, addicts found with intermediate quantities of drugs were denied de-addiction treatment. The report says high convictions under the NDPS Act did not offer any long-term solution; besides, they did not comprise cases of trafficking., Since intermediate quantity cases largely involve addiction, they should be given the benefit of judicial and prosecutorial discretion under Sections 39 and 64A, according to the authors of the study. Of all the cases that came to NDPS Special Courts across 18 districts of Punjab, 71.4 per cent involved people between the ages of 20 and 40. Out of these, about 40 per cent were between the ages of 20 and 30. Given how young drug users are, "the law should allow addicts to be diverted to rehabilitation through the non-punitive sections of the NDPS Act, regardless of whether they have been found with small or intermediate quantity of drugs. Further, the police and the judiciary should be trained on the non-punitive provisions of the Act. They should be empowered to discharge offenders pre-trial or refer them for treatment before or during the trial," said the report. Incidentally, a Department of Revenue notification dated November 18, 2009, called for determining the drug quantity on the basis of the weight of the whole quantity, and not the pure drug quantity. The notification had in effect worked contrary to the original intent of the law: individuals caught with relatively smaller quantities of pharmaceutical drugs were sentenced to a mandatory minimum punishment of 10 years., During the launch of the report, Salman Khurshid, Senior Advocate and former Member of Parliament, said: "The problem is the entire perspective regarding crime. The only magic formula that we see to address crime is deterrence. There is need to reassess and re-examine the overall concept. It has not yet happened that anybody has been deterred from committing a murder because there is a possibility of death sentence. The ministry, the judiciary and the police all are overworked. This

may hamper the lawmaking process and the approach to lawmaking has to change. We don't take as much feedback and whatever we take is not circulated enough and we should be receptive and open towards feedback.", The NDPS Act incorporates strict liability provisions. Section 54 provides that possessing any narcotic or psychotropic substance is sufficient to constitute an offence. Similarly, Section 35 shifts the burden onto the accused to prove that no mental state to commit an offence existed while committing it. Since the law does not require establishing motive or intent, it has resulted in repetitive police narratives across districts, which indicates poor investigation. Further, more people were arrested and kept behind bars longer for possessing pharmaceutical drugs than those found with narcotics. Pharmaceutical drugs comprise over-the-counter options such as alprazolam, buprenorphine, codeine, dextropropoxyphene, diphenoxylate, metamphetamaine, nitrazepam and pentazocine. Narcotics constitute cannabis, heroin, smack, opium and poppy husk. , Interviews by Frontline with a disparate group of people, from unemployed Jat boys in Chhattarpur village to middle-class corporate workers in Gurgaon to artists, over many years revealed that pharmaceutical drugs were widely in use in Delhi as well. Contrary to perceptions, men and women of all ages and classes were frequent users of these drugs. "It's just that drug abuse is not seen as a major problem in Delhi as it is in Punjab. But it is also not unusual," said a former user on condition of anonymity., Being a border State, Punjab's geographical proximity to the drug-trafficking zones of Pakistan, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan had contributed to drug addiction within its districts. The report was conceptualised to fill various gaps in understanding Punjab's drug situation and showed how the NDPS Act failed to meet its twin objectives of deterrence and rehabilitation in Punjab where drug offences continued unabated., Justice Mukul Mudgal, former Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court, said: "The disparity that has emerged in the report is distressing. What is more distressing is the ignorance the judges show by sending the addicts to prisons instead of de-addiction centres. Long spells in prisons lead to interaction with hardened criminals and make addicts hardened criminals as well. Commercial drug dealers are hardly convicted, and this is something that needs to be reversed. Deterrence as a theory does not work."[

The white dome on the main office building of L.S. College, Muzaffarpur, Bihar. Photo: Photographs: By Special Arranegment , An astronomy class in session at the L.S. College observatory c.1949. , Inside view of the dome. Photo: By Special Arrangement , The dome's rotating mechanism. (Below) An inside view of the dome. Photo: By Special Arrangement , INCONSPICUOUS in the midst of massive trees with frills of red gulmohur and yellow amaltas, the majestic facade of Langat Singh College in Muzaffarpur, Bihar, is a curious sight. This sprawling structure was modelled on the early modern European style of Balliol College in Oxford, United Kingdom, which is outlandish for Muzaffarpur. The white metallic dome on its roof and the adjoining igloo-like masonry structure that stare one in the eye right at the entrance of the building complete the picture of a fairyland comic thriller. These dome-shaped structures, telltale signs of an era gone by, are the remnants of an astronomical observatory., The large dome rotates on a circular track and has a sliding opening on the top through which a telescope can be focussed on celestial bodies. Under the dome, there were telescopes and other instruments used in astronomical observations. Just a little distance away is the planetarium. A miniature version of modern planetaria, it once had a machine that recreated views of the sky with stars on its arching ceiling. Both the observatory and planetarium are non-functional and closed now. But where are their machines?, There are conflicting stories about the origins of the observatory. Old students of L.S. College believed that the telescope was gifted to India by the British imperial government on the occasion of its victory in the First World War. However, college records tell a different story. According to them, in February 1914, Professor Romesh Chandra Sen of GBB College, as the college was known then, sought guidance from J. Mitchell to establish an astronomical observatory at the college. An amateur astronomer and the principal of Wesleyan College, Bankura in West Bengal, Mitchell responded with detailed suggestions. Accordingly, the college acquired in February 1915 a telescope from England with a four inch object glass with a 1½ inch finder, a dewshade, and a rack and draw tube. More accessories, including an astronomical clock and a

chronograph, were acquired in the coming months., The observatory was operational by the spring of 1916. On April 7, Mitchell congratulated the college authorities on their "excellent astronomical equipment" that only a few possessed and said he expected them to send him research findings in the future. Soon, they requested the Survey of India in Dehradun for the accurate latitude and longitude of the observatory. In December 1919, the Trigonometrical Survey sent them the coordinates of three points in Muzaffarpur town. Consultations took place also with the Mathematical Instrument Office, Calcutta (now Kolkata), and more instruments and accessories were added in following years., Thus, observation and research work went on in full swing. The observatory interacted with the astronomical observatory at Presidency College, Calcutta, on such issues as difficulties in making observations, problems of "double stars" and "sunspots" and the paucity of literature on astronomy. Thanks to the enhanced activities of the observatory, the Department of Physics, which was in charge of it, appears to have attained some amount of autonomy by February 1920, as letters from the observatory now emanated from the "Physical Laboratory" instead of GBB College., Meanwhile, a new building for the college was inaugurated on July 26, 1922. It was planned in such a way as to accommodate the observatory above the main office comprising the principal's office and the college administration and the dome sits overhead like a crown. More equipment, accessories and literature were procured., It seems to have had a significant upgrade in 1930, with the acquisition of such items as geometrical and mathematical models. In 1932, electrical connections were made between the chronograph and the astronomical clock. The remarks of S.M. Hussain, Minister of Education, Bihar and Orissa, when he visited the observatory in December 1933, testify to the fact that it was in good shape at this time and functioning well. He described the college building as "magnificent... fit for a residential university" and took note of the "very fine observatory and... very good arrangement for the study of planets". He considered it a "special gift" to the college. Was he referring to the imperial "gift" of the telescope after the First World War? No one has a clear answer., One knows little about how the observatory functioned after 1933. However, the fact that a planetarium was added to it in 1946 indicates that it was doing well. The planetarium was fairly advanced for its time., The observatory was also used in the BSc astronomy course in which students were taught how to operate the equipment and watch the sky. They could see all the planets of the solar system, the six satellites of Jupiter with its rings, the depressions on the moon's surface, stars, comets and the Milky Way. Any happening in the sky could be recorded instantly with the help of instruments. The position of the stars published in The Statesman was used to make the nightly observations, sources testify., Ironically, there is less information about the observatory in the post-Independence period. There is no documentary evidence, or none readily available, with which to corroborate what one is told about it during this time. R.L. Verma was one of the professors-in-charge during this time, and he evinced considerable interest in it., He was succeeded by Professor Sati Raman Prasad, who managed it until his retirement in the 1980s. The observatory developed some problem in 1963, which was rectified, and it worked for some years before things went haywire, and it slipped into oblivion., I managed to get permission to enter the observatory after much effort around 1985 and was stunned to find the telescope and other instruments covered in dust and cobwebs and going to ruin in the musty air, a typical scene from a horror movie. No one would believe that they had all been working until recently. Curiously, the telescope I saw was a much simpler machine (about five feet long) than the one whose photograph appears in this article. This picture, taken around 1949, shows an astronomy class in progress with an advanced machine befitting its description as an "imperial gift". A few people on the campus believed that there were two telescopes. But where are they now?, Subsequently, I interviewed Sati Raman Prasad. He was happy that someone approached him in connection with his association with the observatory and recounted its history with zest but was sad, at the same time, to reflect on its fall. A little later, I visited the campus with the idea of reviving the observatory, hoping to accomplish this through a donation from a non-resident Indian from Bihar who had settled in the U.K. But the local response was extremely discouraging. Only a few people supported the idea; others were indifferent or more interested in the

prospective funds than in the restoration. A few were even hostile to the proposal., Some equipment of the observatory was allegedly stolen around 1995, after which it was sealed. Meanwhile, the college authorities contacted a servicing agency to refurbish the old machine; in response, the firm offered to purchase it for Rs.1 crore and replace it with a more advanced telescope free of cost. Whether this story is true or not, it gives an indication of the market value of machines of this vintage. No wonder it is believed that most of the instruments were smuggled out over the years, which could not have happened without the connivance of insiders. Did the authorities take cognisance of the matter and report it to the police? No one is ready to say anything in this regard. Shocked after my 1985 visit, I wrote to the then Chief Minister of Bihar and to virtually all his successors since then but have got no response to date. Will the Bihar government probe the criminal vandalism of this precious piece of heritage and restore it to its past glory?, Established in 1899, L.S. College was a fine gift of the Swadeshi movement to the nation, and the observatory was an impressive part of the college. Some 1,500 years after Aryabhata established an observatory in Taregana near modern Patna, just about 100 km from Muzaffarpur, and made great findings about the cosmos, it is sad that this present-day observatory could not last., J.N. Sinha is a former associate professor of history of science at the University of Delhi. Email: jnsinha@rediffmail.com][

At Cherunelli tribal colony near Nelliampathi in Palakkad district, Kerala. The Justice Rohini Commission for categorisation of the socially and educationally backward classes is expected to categorise them on the basis of relative degrees of backwardness and apportion the 27 per cent quota among them. Photo: K. K. Mustafah ,

Officials of the District Civil Supply Office inspecting Socio Economic and Caste Census work in Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu. A file picture. Photo: N. Rajesh , Members of the Karnataka State Backward Nomadic, Semi-Nomadic and Denotified Tribes Federation, Bengaluru, staging a dharna in front of the Suvarna Vidhan Soudha in Belgaum. A file picture. Photo: D.B. Patil , THE decision of the Central government, at a meeting chaired by Home Minister Rajnath Singh on August 31, to canvass data with regard to the socially and educationally backward classes (SEBCs) in Census 2021 is both welcome and long overdue. This will provide a mine of valuable information—economic, occupational, educational and social—that can facilitate better planning of the comprehensive socio-economic development of the SEBCs and the formulation of schemes tailored to the development needs of different categories of the SEBCs., This fits in with the recognition of the specific role entrusted to the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC), which is being set up for the SEBCs under the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-third) Amendment Act that Parliament passed in its 2018 monsoon session., Such data for the Scheduled Castes (S.Cs) and the Scheduled Tribes (S.Ts) have been available since the first census of independent India in 1951. It has helped officials to formulate development plans and design specific programmes for the S.Cs and the S.Ts more precisely. This writer, too, has been communicating to the government, in the form of a road map, his suggestions and advice based on his countrywide knowledge and experience of more than seven decades. However, the process is yet to be addressed holistically and comprehensively by governments. , One more welcome and long-overdue task being undertaken by the government is the categorisation of the SEBCs, for which a commission was set up in October 2017 under the chairpersonship of Justice (Retd) G. Rohini and whose report is expected by November 2018. This will also help in meaningful and holistic development planning and in the formulation of programmes for different categories of the SEBCs., The census data will be available only in 2024, but planning and formulation of appropriate schemes do not have to wait until then. They can be started straightaway and fine-tuned when the census data become available. As of now, there is reservation in government employment, in admissions to higher educational institutions and for a few limited and disjointed schemes such as scholarships., Centre's neglect , The long delay in taking up the census of the SEBCs as part of the decennial census is typical of the neglect of the SEBCs by the Centre. The southern States and even States such as Bihar under the late Karpoori Thakur have a better record than the Centre with regard to the SEBCs. Article 340 of the Constitution had been flouted by the Central government until

1990 when the V.P. Singh government introduced 27 per cent reservation, as recommended by the Mandal Commission in 1980, for the SEBCs, which the Supreme Court upheld in 1992. Thereafter, it was another 14 years before the then Minister for Human Resource Development, Arjun Singh, whose honorary adviser this writer was, introduced in 2006 a legislation for 27 per cent reservation for the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in admissions to Central educational institutions, along with reservation for the S.Cs and the S.Ts. This partly fulfilled the mandate of the 93rd Constitution Amendment, which inserted Clause (5) in Article 15. Thereafter, it has taken more than a decade for the reforms of 2017-18. The need for a census with due attention to the SEBCs has been urged by various commissions, including the Kaka Kalelkar Commission (1953-55) and the Mandal Commission (1978-80) at the national level and State Backward Class commissions such as the Sattanathan (1969-70) and Ambasankar (1985) commissions of Tamil Nadu, the Anantharaman Commission (1968-70) of Andhra Pradesh and the Havanur Commission (1972-75) of Karnataka. , After the Mandal Commission Report was submitted to the government in 1980, the Census Commissioner of India convened a conference in 1988 to elicit views for planning Census 1991. I participated in it as Special Commissioner for S.Cs and S.Ts. In addition to giving suggestions for improvements in gathering data in respect of the S.Cs and the S.Ts, I advised that data regarding the SEBCs should be collected in the census. I kept in view the fact that the Mandal Commission's Report could be expected to be implemented sooner rather than later and data gathering in Census 1991 would be of help., Thereafter, the NCBC, of which I was Member-Secretary, gave formal institutional advice to the Government of India in its report of 1997 and by a formal letter that data regarding the SEBCs be taken, as was being done for the S.Cs and the S.Ts, in Census 2001. This, too, was not considered seriously by either of the two governments of that period. , When preparations for Census 2011 were being made, I suggested to the government a precise format by which data for the SEBCs could be easily gathered. This consisted of opening a new column, next to the column for the S.Cs and the S.Ts, in respect of the SEBCs ("Case for BC Count", Frontline, July 2, 2010). This would enable every item of census information, in addition to population data, to be filled up in respect of the SEBCs. This was a very manageable task because by that time there was a Central list of the SEBCs. All that an enumerator in each State had to do was to keep with him/her the Central list of the SEBCs for that State and ask each person whether he/she belonged to any of the castes in that list and fill each item under that column accordingly. This is the procedure followed for the S.Cs and the S.Ts in the census. , These suggestions were communicated in writing to the government, in particular to the then Home Minister, and to the Census Commissioner, and also explained at consultations and conferences of the SEBCs regarding this matter. Unfortunately, the then Home Minister, P. Chidambaram, pronounced that a B.C. census would "compromise the integrity of the Census". I do not know what he meant by that. , Caste census , Then the government embarked on the path of socio-economic caste census (SECC) in 2011 and entrusted this work to the ministries of Rural Development and Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, neither of which has the required expertise or the background or the infrastructure for this task. It was clear that this exercise was foredoomed to failure insofar as the SEBC data were concerned. Instead of asking each respondent whether she or he belonged to any of the castes in the SEBC list for the State concerned, the respondents were asked which caste they belonged to. They variously gave names of castes, sub-castes, sub-sub-castes, synonyms, clans, gotras, and so on. The outcome was a chaotic number of castes—as many as 46 lakh, according to The Times of India. , An expert committee was set up in 2015 under Arvind Panagariya, then Vice Chairman of the NITI Aayog, to make sense out of this welter of "information". Panagariya is an eminent economist, but he has no background in social demography. The other members of the committee were not appointed. This, then, was a non-starter. Thereafter, the task of making sense of the data seems to have been dumped on the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment., The SECC provided some economic information, which is useful for identifying beneficiaries on economic basis for schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana. But the original purpose of securing data caste-wise, in particular SEBC-caste-wise, remained unfulfilled., Enumerators and supervisors in the next census should be instructed to start with the Central list of the SEBCs for each State. This has to be meticulously

planned, and census personnel have to be fully trained so that there is no error or confusion in the SEBC data that is gathered., The Central list for each State for Central purposes and the State's own list for State purposes are the same or nearly wholly the same in respect of most States. In some cases, particularly Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, there are certain entries of castes that are not in the Mandal list or the Central list and whose applications for inclusion have been rejected by the government on the advice tendered by the NCBC after a public enquiry and in-depth study. These States may want to collect data of castes that are included in the State list but not in the Central list. In case they so wish, there may be one column for castes that are in the Central SEBC list and another column for castes that are only in the State list. This will help States plan for the development of these castes also. This does not mean the inclusion of such castes in the Central list after they have already been left out by the Mandal process and/or rejected by the government on the advice of the NCBC., The media reaction to this important development is, as usual, distorted. They can think of only the electoral context and reservation rather than the holistic socio-economic development of the SEBCs. The Mandal Commission's recommendations deal with all these aspects. It is true that all parties are motivated by electoral calculations, which are perhaps inevitable in the democratic process and its working. But what is important is whether the decision is right or wrong and whether it helps to secure an important social purpose and to fulfil the constitutional mandate of social equality and social justice. , This is the standard by which every decision should be measured. By this standard, this decision and other decisions pertaining to the SEBCs and the S.C. and the S.T. (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2018, should be welcomed and appreciated. , At the same time, possible loopholes, including in the NCBC Act, 2018, should be identified and moves made to plug them. , Another short-sighted approach of the media is to link the SEBC census with 27 per cent reservation for the SEBCs. The SEBC census by itself does not have any bearing on the reservation for the OBCs. The 27 per cent reservation was proposed by the Mandal Commission keeping in view the 50 per cent limit mentioned in the Balaji judgment of 1963, though the Mandal Commission's own estimate of the SEBC population was 52 per cent. This estimate was questioned in writ petitions, and subsequently the Supreme Court in its Mandal case judgment (Indra Sawhney vs Union of India) upheld the 27 per cent reservation on the grounds that it was nobody's case that the population of the B.Cs was less than 27 per cent. , In view of the basis on which the Supreme Court arrived at the conclusion, on a harmonious interpretation of Clauses (1) and (4) of Article 16, that 50 per cent be the limit for "vertical" reservation, that is, reservation for the S.Cs, the S.Ts and the SEBCs, whether the population of the SEBCs is 52 per cent or 40 per cent or 60 per cent by itself would make no difference to the 27 per cent Central quota. State quotas vary from State to State. For example, in Kerala it is 40 per cent for the SEBCs in employment under the State because reservation for the S.Cs and the S.Ts together is only 10 per cent based on their population. , The National Sample Survey Office's (NSSO) 55th Round (1999-2000) Survey came out with the figure of 35.8 per cent as the population percentage of the SEBCs. , While some people thought that the figure would make the 27 per cent quota untenable, it is to be noted that the NSSO survey underestimated the population of the SEBCs on account of certain methodological limitations of the survey. In the next survey, the NSSO estimated the population of the SEBCs to be 41.1 per cent. This was not the result of accretion in the numbers of the SEBCs but because of the part-removal of earlier limitations in the NSSO's survey methodology, and when this process is completed the figure may go up closer to the Mandal Commission's estimate of 52 per cent. In any case, all the speculation will be put to rest once the SEBC census data of 2021 come out. , The census data may be helpful in another way. The Justice Rohini Commission for categorisation of the SEBCs is expected to categorise them on the basis of relative degrees of backwardness, possibly into four categories, Backward Classes, More Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes and Extremely Backward Classes and apportion the 27 per cent quota among them. These sub-quotas can be fine-tuned after the data of Census 2021 are published., Nomadic communities, There is one more social category for which census data is important, namely, the Nomadic, Semi-Nomadic and Vimukta-Jati/Denotified communities (NSNVJs/DNTs). At present, they are distributed among the S.Cs, the S.Ts and the SEBCs. The

Renke Commission, set up by the previous United Progressive Alliance government, and the Idate Commission set up by the present government envisage their constitution into a separate class and the provision of separate quotas and separate social justice measures for them. It may not be practicable to bring them all together as a separate class. It would be more practicable to give them priority within the social classes (viz., S.C., S.T. and SEBC) in which they presently exist. , The Rohini Commission's proposals for categorisation may look after the NSNVJ/DNT communities which are in the Central list of the SEBCs. Caste-wise and tribe-wise data are available in respect of the S.Cs and the S.Ts. , The population and other data regarding the NSNVJs/DNTs among the S.Cs and the S.Ts can be culled from the census tables for the S.Cs and the S.Ts. In 1980, as Joint Secretary in charge of the S.Cs and the SEBCs in the then Ministry of Home Affairs, I incorporated the aspect of developmental schemes for them in the formula I designed for the distribution of Special Central Assistance to the States' Special Component Plans. , This aspect of the development of the NSNVJs/DNTs has also been incorporated in the draft national and State legislation for the "Special Component Plan for Scheduled Castes and Tribal Sub-Plan and S.C. and S.T. Development Authorities", which have been circulated among leaders of the Central and State governments. Their enactment and the process of developmental planning suggested therein can holistically address the development and advancement of the NSNVJs/DNTs among the S.Cs and the S.Ts., The Census data of 2021 can be expected to provide such data for the NSNVJs/DNTs among the SEBCs. In my written and verbal advice to the Rohini Commission, I have suggested that NSNVJs/DNTs should be included in the subcategory of Extremely Backward Castes. This will then enable better and appropriate developmental planning and other comprehensive social justice measures for this extremely deprived category., It is essential that organisations of the SEBCs and those working for their rights keep a watch on the devising of schedules and the methodology for the gathering of SEBC data in the census, and the actual conduct of the census, so that what has been secured after so much effort and such an inordinate delay has useful outcomes and output without any scope for error or confusion. I have suggested to the Census Commissioner to place in the public domain the schedules and methodology after drafting and before finalising them., P.S. Krishnan retired from the Indian Administrative Service as Secretary to Government of India and is in the field of social justice for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes.][

The funeral procession of Mohammad Saleem Malik, a civilian, in Srinagar on September 27. Photo: AP ,

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti during a press conference in Srinagar on September 10. The party has decided to boycott the upcoming municipal and panchayat elections. Photo: NISSAR AHMAD ,

The Eidgah area of Srinagar where a curfew was imposed on September 27 after violence ahead of local elections next month left six people dead. Photo: AFP ,

UNDER the blazing sun on a September afternoon, some young men were playing cricket at the sports stadium in Pulwama, not far from the simmering villages in south Kashmir where militancy is at its peak. An hour later, around 1:15 p.m., Mukhtar* announced recess. As the famished players dispersed for lunch, he was alarmed by the foreboding sound of someone approaching him from behind. He turned around to find a masked man with a pistol. In a moment, the militant had pulled the trigger. The bullet missed Mukhtar by a whisker., In Shopian, separated from Pulwama by 20 kilometres of narrow stretches of road flanked on both sides by dense apple orchards and an extensive network of hills that camouflage the movement of new recruits, the scene is not violent, but nonetheless it is disturbing for Mohammad Sayeed Shafi, whose neighbours do not greet him any more. At the mosque near his house in Wadi Pora village, where he offers Friday prayers, he is met with hostile stares and mutters. "It has become a common occurrence now," he said with a sigh. , In the months following the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) decision to pull the plug on the Mehbooba Mufti government, there has been a swift erosion of people's trust in the democratic set-up in the Kashmir Valley. (The BJP was a difficult ally, reluctant to hold dialogue with stakeholders of the conflict, and often spurred efforts to dilute the State's constitutional guarantees.) The decision to hold urban civic body and panchayat elections at a time when the Centre has kept everyone guessing on

its intent on Article 35A has added to the mistrust., It is in this charged atmosphere that political workers such as Mukhtar and Shafi, now seen as "collaborators of the state", have been denied a sense of belonging. Although the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the National Conference (N.C.) claim that their decision to abstain from the elections is to register their protest over Article 35A, Frontline has information that they had tried their best to mobilise their cadres and find candidates but failed., Alienation, Alienation in Kashmir began when the PDP, which had sold soft separatism in the 2014 Assembly elections, joined hands with the BJP. It grew sharper after the killing of a young militant commander, Burhan Wani, in July 2016 and the ruthless quelling of a civilian uprising in its aftermath, which left nearly 100 people dead and more than a thousand partially or fully blinded by pellet guns., Hundreds of political workers who have fled from their villages over the past two years are now hiding in Srinagar, some at comfortable guest houses provided by senior leaders with whom they have a rapport and others at shabby lodges downtown, living without any source of income and worrying about the fate of their houses and property. , Abdul Qayoom of the PDP explained why he refused to go back to his village and canvass for the party. "At dusk, on April 4, 2017, my wife, who was on the terrace, saw two gunmen approaching our house," he said, recounting the circumstances in which he had fled from Urpora A, a village in Shopian district, more than a year ago. "She huddled the three children downstairs, into a rear chamber, and screamed for help. The militants could not break open the main iron door but damaged everything outside, including our car." , Qayoom, the sarpanch of Urpora A, had received two threatening letters earlier but had ignored them. That night, he sneaked out with his family to his in-laws' house at Sheikh mohalla and passed the ominous, dark hours, praying. "At the first gleam of light, I left for Srinagar," he told Frontline. "C.M. sahiba [Mehbooba Mufti] ne khud phone kiya, kaha chale aao [The C.M. herself asked me to flee].", He said that in the post-Burhan Wani era, their influence is conclusively lost. "Workers are reluctant to visit their native places.... People will beat them.", Well before the PDP announced that it would not participate in the elections, a couple of legislators from Kashmir indicated to this correspondent that the decision was inevitable. "South Kashmir is beyond our control. People are seething with rage; the workers are hiding. How does one prepare for an election?" a young PDP Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from south Kashmir asked. Another prominent face of the party, who was earlier in the N.C. and had once fought an election against PDP founder and two-time Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, hinted that they were not able to find candidates. , A young Turk of the PDP who was involved in the screening of candidates spoke to this reporter on September 3 in Rajbagh, Srinagar, which was a week before the PDP decided to boycott the elections. He was more candid about what had happened inside party circles. "Initially, we thought the elections wouldn't happen. But when the Centre announced the dates, we hurriedly started the screening process. We contacted some likely candidates and asked them to prepare for their wards. But they tersely replied that they wouldn't contest." , Officially, however, the PDP came up with a face-saving explanation. "The situation created by linking panchayat elections with the case pending in the Supreme Court on Article 35A has created apprehension in the minds of the people, who see an assault on the special constitutional position of the State.... It was unanimously resolved that the party would stay away from the electoral exercise at this juncture," PDP president and former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti told the media at her Gupkar residence in Srinagar on September 10, after a meeting with her party leaders. The party's arch-rival, the N.C., had, a few days earlier, decided to stay away from the hustings on the same grounds., Elections, Elections to municipal corporations, councils and committees will be held in four phases from October 8 to October 16. The panchayat elections are slated to be held in eight phases between November 8 and December 4. , Qayoom of the PDP said that he had been approached by the party leadership to stand in the election but he had declined. "I met Mehbooba Mufti in the last week of August. She wanted me to prepare [for the elections], but I asked her, 'Who will protect my wife and children who are still in the village?'" He suggested that the former Chief Minister begin the campaign trail from the less volatile Kupwara, Baramulla and Ganderbal districts in north Kashmir. "In the south," he cautioned, "villagers will kill us before the militants do." It seems like an

overstatement from a crestfallen man on the run, but it is not. On October 16, 2017, a block-level PDP worker named Ramzan Sheikh was murdered by two militants at his house in Humhama village in Shopian. One of the two gunmen, identified as Showkat Ahmad Kumar, was hunted down by Sheikh's family members and killed in a scuffle that ensued. , What followed validates Qayoom's presentiment. A large number of villagers attended Kumar's funeral, and shortly afterwards, some of them marched towards Sheikh's house, demolished it and set it ablaze. , Speaking over phone from his office in Srinagar on the genesis of the current flare-up, Tanvir Sadiq, political adviser to the N.C.'s working president, Omar Abdullah, said: "The unholy marriage is to blame." He was referring to the erstwhile coalition between the PDP and the BJP. "The PDP went to the [Assembly] elections in 2014 vowing to keep the BJP out of power; it occupied the space between the separatists and the N.C., and that's why people voted for it. Later, not only did it join hands with the BJP, it pursued a policy of exclusion instead of engagement; people who had voted in the election were tied to jeeps and paraded in Kashmir. In Jammu, arms rallies were held, generating a fear psychosis." Public disillusionment , Kulgam MLA Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) said that alienation and disillusionment were the biggest reason for people staying away from the elections. "The willingness of people to participate in elections is most important for any democratic exercise. But the reality is, people in Kashmir are reluctant to participate in such an exercise at present. The unwillingness of the Government of India to file a counter affidavit in the apex court in defence of Article 35A has created serious doubts about its intentions," he said., In 1996, when elections were held in Kashmir after a seven-year interval marked by armed insurgency, polling was dismal; many of those who voted alleged that there had been coercion by the security forces. Political analysts writing on Kashmir said it had taken New Delhi years of confidence-building measures (CBMs) to engage voters and persuade them to vote. , Najmu Saqib, an additional spokesperson for the PDP, credits the late Mufti Mohammad Sayeed for "legitimising the electoral exercise" in the Valley. "He brought the fringe to the mainstream and that worked. The BJP delegitimised it again," he said., There is a perception that in the 2002 Assembly elections, which witnessed 42 per cent polling, the PDP fielded many former renegades of the erstwhile Ikhwan group, allegedly created by New Delhi in the 1990s to crush militancy. However, the turnout soared past 65 per cent in the 2014 Assembly elections, the highest in 25 years., Some State legislators explained the role of political workers in mobilising the electorate. "When New Delhi announces CBMs, a positive message is generated, but it is the worker who takes the signature schemes to the grass roots and builds the mood for election," said Aijaz Ahmad Mir, MLA from Wachi, Shopian., A few villagers in Anantnag and Shopian districts shed more light on how a political worker pursued that objective. "It's a barter," said Imtiyaz Ahmad*, a cousin of the fugitive militant Owais Malik, at the picturesque Arwani village in Kulgam tehsil in Anantnag, half an hour's drive from Bijbehara, the PDP stronghold to which the Muftis belong. "A dependence on the political system has been created over the years," said Ahmad, who is in his twenties. "Here, in these villages, if one approaches the authorities to secure an electricity line in one's neighbourhood or install a motor in one's orchard, one is told chitthi likhwa ke lao [get a letter of recommendation]. We get it from the local MLA or the Collector. At the time of election, the political workers who had facilitated it ask us to vote; we can't refuse them." The octogenarian Salam Malik, a journalist with Kashmir Uzman, an Urdu daily, said that the Mehbooba Mufti government helped recruit 200 to 300 youths from villages around Bijbehara and Anantnag to Jammu and Kashmir Bank. "Naturally, the favour will be returned," he added. , Political workers, Today, political workers are looking for escape routes, jeopardising the very electoral structure they had helped erect over the decades. "We don't want to be identified as pro-India," Mukhtar said over phone from an undisclosed location in Srinagar. On September 2, at the sports stadium in Pulwama, he narrowly escaped death. "I ran as fast as I could towards the bushes. I thought the trees would help me elude my assassin," he said., But others were not as fortunate. Abdul Gani Dar and Shabir Ahmad Wani of the PDP, Gowhar Ahmad Bhat and Shabir Bhat of the BJP, and the senior politician G.N. Patel are a few names in the growing list of casualties. , "Security is a concern," Tanvir Sadiq admitted. "It is an open fact that no political leader or an elected representative can

visit his constituency. South Kashmir is out of the question." , Rafi Ahmad Mir of the PDP said he used to "travel freely" in Pahalgam, which he represented in the peak militancy years of the late 1980s, when the Hizbul Mujahideen dominated Anantnag, where the hill station falls. "But I cannot any longer.", The son of a well-known MLA in south Kashmir, who did not wish to be named, drew parallels to the situation in the early 1990s. "When we were young, people did not venture out of their house after 7 p.m.," he said. "There would be silence outside; sometimes the silence was so eerie that children cried. Those days are back." He said that on several occasions his father had sought permission to hold public meetings in his constituency, but the police had refused. , The panchayat election was scheduled for February 2018, but the government was forced to defer it indefinitely at that time after Riyaz Naikoo of the Hizbul Mujahideen, Kashmir's most dreaded militant, released an audio clip threatening candidates with acid attacks. The fear persists. , In 185 of the 315 seats in the municipal bodies that will go to the polls in the first two phases on October 8 and October 10, there are either no candidates or no contest., Touseef Raina, the 27-year-old independent candidate from Ward no. 15 of the Baramulla municipal council, is a notable exception. "If good candidates stay away, the political system will degenerate further," said Raina, who heads the Srinagar-based non-governmental organisation Global Youth Foundation. "Development, peace and accountability will restore people's faith in the system," he told Frontline., Most leaders believe that "there is nothing to sell to people" and are pressing for dialogue with Pakistan. "The National Conference has all along been an advocate of dialogue between India and Pakistan. It was very unfortunate that India and Pakistan were supposed to talk in New York and, in the end, the plan got cancelled," Tanvir Sadiq said., Dialogue with Pakistan, On September 21, a proposed talk between the Foreign Ministers of India and Pakistan, to be held on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, was cancelled. The Government of India stated that the recent brutal killing of three policemen in Jammu and Kashmir by Pakistan-based militant outfits had exposed the "true face" of Imran Khan, the new Prime Minister of Pakistan. Pakistan refuted the statement, saying: "India had wasted an opportunity for peace.", In Kashmir, the regional parties are apprehensive that a "forced" election would further erode people's faith in democracy. Najmu Saqib said that the upcoming elections were bound to be an exclusive process. Tanvir Sadiq pointed to some of the civic bodies in south Kashmir where people from Jammu won unopposed. "Democracy is not about election; it is about participation," he said. "If the BJP thinks that it can get people elected unopposed from places in south Kashmir, then they are undermining the very essence of elections.", Militant threats have dissuaded most people from filing nominations, allowing the BJP to secure a foothold in the Muslim-majority Valley. The BJP candidates have been declared unopposed winners in eight seats in Devsar and two seats in Kulgam, two of the four municipal committees where elections are scheduled. As per a report published in Greater Kashmir on September 30, the BJP is set to win the majority of municipal committees in south Kashmir., Speaking to Frontline, the BJP's district president in Shopian, Javed Ahmad Qadri, said that he was confident of the party's victory. He has been attacked thrice in the past, most recently in March 2017, but he is camping in Shopian undeterred. "There are 101 booths here; in 60 of them our people are active," he said. In the 2014 Assembly elections, he had polled 4,000 votes in Shopian on the BJP ticket. According to local journalists, migrant votes are enough for the BJP to scrape through in the urban civic elections. , At Dewan Sahab restaurant, barely 2 km from Shopian's famous fruit market, a group of young traders, activists and other professionals have gathered to unwind after a hard day's work. They are discussing politics and are full of scorn for New Delhi. On the table are raging issues that include Article 35A, the upcoming elections and Army excesses, particularly the notoriety it has earned of late by charring the bodies of dead militants., "Earlier there was a binary. There were people who were Indian by conviction. They would mock others who identified with Pakistan, reminding them of the neighbouring country's dwindling economy and sectarian violence," said Habeel Iqbal, a lawyer in the Shopian district court. "In BJP's India, that binary is lost." , These men fear that the elections will come at a "huge human cost". The political workers in Srinagar assert they would be the first to be killed. But Sayeed Shafi, who had won the panchayat election in 2011 from Wadi Pora's Ward no. 6, is planning to

return to his village. "I had taken a personal loan from the bank, that money is about to end. The party gives us a few thousands sometimes, but that is not enough for the upkeep of my mother, wife and sister, who fled along with me," he said., Shafi has a plan. "I will publicly apologise at the mosque. I will vow not to join politics again," he said. After a pause, in a trembling voice, he added: "If I ever return to Shopian, will I make it to the mosque alive?," *Names have been changed to protect the identity of the individuals.][The front page of "Daily Desher Katha" on October 1 before it was ordered to be closed. ,

The Certificate of Registraton issued by the Registrar of Newspapers for India to the Daily Desher Katha on October 1, which was subsequently withdrawn on the same day on the basis of a communication (right) from the District Magistrate of West Tripura. , IN a direct attack on the freedom of the press, Daily Desher Katha, the popular mouthpiece of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in Tripura, was closed down by Biplab Kumar Deb's Bharatiya Janata party (BJP)-Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT) government in the State. In what appeared to be a premeditated move, the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI), apparently acting at the behest of the administration, cancelled the registration of the 40-year-old newspaper on October 1 on the grounds that it had violated the Press and Registration of Books (PRB) Act, 1867. This meant that the daily had to stop publication. The move is being perceived in political and social quarters as a veiled warning to those who dare to criticise the State government. , What appears to have been a simple lapse in updating certain information relating to the newspaper on the RNI website has resulted in this extreme step taken by the State administration. A complaint was filed by a local person in the court of the District Magistrate of West Tripura that there was a discrepancy in the information that Daily Desher Katha presented about itself in the newspaper and what was put up on the RNI website. The printline of the paper states that Samir Paul is the editor, printer and publisher and that the Daily Desher Katha Trust is the owner. But according to the RNI website, Gautam Das is the editor, printer and publisher, and the CPI(M) Tripura State Committee the owner., The CPI(M) says this was not the paper's fault, as all necessary documents had been provided for every change in the management and editorship of Daily Desher Katha. When the paper came into existence on August 15, 1979, a year after the CPI(M) came to power in the State, it was owned by the Tripura State Committee of the CPI(M), and Gautam Das was its founder-editor and publisher and printer. In 2012, the party decided that the management of the newspaper should be handled by a "society", and accordingly the Daily Desher Katha Society was formed. In 2015, with Gautam Das getting more preoccupied with party work, the Society decided to appoint Samir Paul as the new editor, publisher and printer. , In September this year, the Daily Desher Katha Society decided to convert the ownership into a "trust", and the Daily Desher Katha Trust came into being with Gautam Das as its chairman. "Whether it was the change of proprietorship from the party to the society to the trust, or the change of editorship from Gautam Das to Samir Paul, all the relevant documents as per procedure were submitted to the District Magistrate [DM], and all the necessary formalities were followed so that the matter could be updated by the RNI," Rahul Sinha, party leader and senior journalist of Daily Desher Katha, told Frontline., It was around June this year that the management of the daily came to know that the change of proprietorship and editorship made in 2012 and 2015 respectively had not been updated by the RNI. The DM, who is in charge of newspapers of the district, was apprised of the situation, and on July 4 he gave a written reply that he had enquired into all the aspects of the problem and, after verification, had sent all the documents to the RNI. "After submission of the proposal, it is a responsibility of RNI to issue Certificate of Registration of said Newspaper U/S 6 of the Press & Registration of Books Act, 1867," wrote Mahatme Sandeep Namdeo, District Magistrate, West Tripura, to Samir Paul, editor and publisher of Daily Desher Katha., On September 1, this year a trust was formed to take over the management of the daily. The documentation for this was authenticated by a first class magistrate before it was submitted to the RNI by the proprietors. On October 1, the RNI issued a Revised Registration Certificate, which clearly stated that the proprietor of the newspaper was the Daily Desher Katha Trust and the editor was Samir Paul. This was also updated in their web portal., However, the matter did not end there. According to Rahul

Sinha, when the revised certificate was submitted in the court of the DM the same day, the DM apparently summoned the Sub-Divisional Magistrate who had authenticated the documents of Daily Desher Katha and ordered him to cancel the authentication. He then communicated to the RNI that the authentication was cancelled, and the RNI, at around 9:45 the same night, emailed the publisher the information that the Certificate of Registration issued by it had been withdrawn. "The Office of the Registrar of Newspapers for India is in receipt of an email from the office of the District Magistrate and Collector, West Tripura, Agartala, enclosing a communication from the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Sadar, West Tripura... cancelling the authentication as recorded by him over the declaration made in Form 1 by Shri Samir Paul... regarding the Bengali daily newspaper Daily Desher Katha," said the letter from the RNI., The manner in which the newspaper was forced to close shop in spite of having all the necessary documents convinced observers that there was a deeper political motive behind this. According to the CPI(M), after the hearing in the DM's court ended around 6:15 p.m., the DM said he would pass his order in the next 15 minutes. What is baffling is why it took the DM five hours instead. , According to Gautam Das, who is also a CPI(M) Central Committee member, the presence of the senior BJP leader Rajiv Bhattacharya in the room of the DM after the hearing was over was clear evidence of the BJP's influence behind it all. "What the District Magistrate did was at the behest of the State government. It was not just a violation of the freedom of the press but also of all democratic principles and even the law," Gautam Das told Frontline., At around 11:35 that night the DM passed an order stating: , "I hereby pass the order to cancel the declaration submitted by Sri Samir Paul dated 30th March 2015 and under Section 8(B) of Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867, as it has been found that Daily Desher Katha is violating Section 5 (1), Section 5 (2E). , "I hereby request to Registrar of Newspapers of India to take cognisance of cancellation of declaration and to cancel the certificate of registration in favour of Daily Desher Katha., "The respondent (OP) is advised to prefer an appeal to Hon'ble Press and Registration Appellate Board as per Section 8c of PRB Act, 1867. The publication of this newspaper may resume again if this order is set aside by the Hon'ble Press and Registration Appellate Board. Violation of this order shall be treated seriously and in case of violation, Sri Samir Paul shall be liable for legal action and also the publication premises and printing press shall be forcibly locked and sealed as to stop the publication in order to uphold the Rule of Law.", "By closing down Daily Desher Katha, the BJP has once again proved that it does not tolerate any kind of dissent. Daily Desher Katha has been consistently exposing the ruling party's misrule and that is the reason why such a step has been taken against it. If one protests against the intolerance of the BJP government, one will get murdered. M.M. Kalburgi and Gauri Lankesh are burning examples of that," said Gautam Das. , Even the CPI(M)'s old and bitter enemy, the Congress, came down heavily on the State government. "What the government did was a naked attack on the media. We condemn it. The government is trying to send a message that those who are critical of it will suffer the same fate. Immediately after coming to power, they first started attacking members of their rival political parties, and now they have trained their guns on the media," Tapas Dey, vice president and spokesperson of the Tripura Pradesh Congress, told Frontline., According to the CPI(M), the BJP government of Tripura has targeted its mouthpiece right from the time the BJP came to power in March this year. "After coming to power, the BJP-IPFT combine has been trying to destroy Daily Desher Katha. They seized control of the transport depots and prevented copies of the paper from reaching different parts of the State," said Gautam Das. In fact, in the last seven months the circulation of the paper dropped from 53,000 to just 8,000. "Agents and hawkers of the paper were being threatened, copies of the newspaper were burnt and our reporters were attacked. In April, the department of ICA [Information and Cultural Affairs] abruptly stopped giving advertisements to us. After we approached the department, they resumed giving ads but the volume fell drastically," said Rahul Sinha., There have also been innumerable instances of attacks on party members and on party property. The Congress, too, has been suffering for the past few months. "They have bulldozed around 45 Congress party offices all over the State that have stood on government land for the last 40 years. Under the Tripura Land Reforms Act, if anybody occupies government land for 30 years or more they have a claim

on that land. The government has to first serve an eviction notice and then proceed to the court, but they just bulldozed our offices to the ground," said Tapas Dey. The BJP is accused of using force even on non-political issues. The CPI(M) claimed that BJP goons attacked its workers who were collecting funds for the flood victims of Kerala., The closing down of Daily Desher Katha is seen as the culmination of the growing intolerance of the BJP in Tripura, and its condemnation has been unequivocal and widespread. The Editors Guild of India said in a statement: "The Guild is of the view that cancellation of the registration of a publication on the mere finding that there was mismatch between the information of the editor, printer and publisher is not only a gross overreaction but also a draconian step that throttles the freedom of the media." , As of October 4, the management of the paper was exploring various alternatives, including taking recourse to legal action. Gautam Das told Frontline: "Our immediate concern is to protect the interest of the 200-odd employees of Daily Desher Katha."][

In a Durga puja pandal in Kolkata, a file picture. Photo: K.R. Deepak , WEST BENGAL Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's announcement that her Trinamool Congress government will be doling out a whopping Rs.28 crore to all the community Durga Pujas in the State has sparked off a major political controversy, once again bringing to the fore her proclivity to use the religion card in politics, especially ahead of elections. , Clearly with an eye to stemming the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the State ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha election, Mamata Banerjee has promised to give Rs.10,000 to each of the State's 28,000 puja committees (3,000 of which are in Kolkata). The government has also waived the licence fee that puja organisers had to pay and increased the concession on electricity bills from 20 per cent to 23 per cent. The Kolkata Municipal Corporation and the Fire and Emergency Services Department will bear the expenditure for the Kolkata pujas, while the Departments of Tourism, Consumer Affairs, and Self Help Groups, along with the West Bengal Police, will take care of the pujas in the rest of the State., While calling it a "gift" from the State government to facilitate "community development", the Chief Minister made no attempt to camouflage the political overtones behind the move. "Out of mischief, a lot of money may be offered to you from outside. Do not succumb to the temptation. There is no need to beg anything from anyone," she said at a pre-puja coordination meeting with puja organisers. This is being seen as a blatant attempt by Mamata Banerjee to win back into the Trinamool fold those Hindu voters who, disenchanted by her perceived politics of minority appeasement, have begun to lean towards the BJP. , According to Surjya Kanta Mishra, Communist Party of India (Marxist) Polit Bureau member and secretary of the West Bengal unit of the party, the State government is engaging in "competitive communalism". "For the last two years, she tried to compete with the Hindutva forces at their own events: when the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] gave a call for Ram Navami celebrations, she also organised Ram Navami processions; when the RSS celebrated Janmashtami, so did she. This competitive communalism is ultimately leading to political polarisation, a choice between the Trinamool or the BJP," he told Frontline. Mishra believes that secular democratic forces are still strong in West Bengal, but there is an increasing perception that the main political battle is essentially between the Trinamool and the BJP. "This is an illusion that a section of the media has also helped create, that in Bengal if you want to fight the Trinamool you have to take the side of the BJP, and if you need to take on the BJP, you have to seek help from the Trinamool. It can influence people for some time but not all the time," he said., The BJP, too, did not miss the opportunity to come down heavily on the government. "In the first place, the State government should not be funding any pujas. For so long they [the Mamata Banerjee government] were trying only to keep the Muslims happy by extending various favours to them. This has angered the Hindus and, as is evident in the elections, resulted in the rise of the BJP, and now in an attempt to take a pro-Hindu step, the government is doing an illegal thing. People are not fools. They are laughing at this gesture," Dilip Ghosh, president of the BJP's West Bengal unit, told Frontline., Mamata Banerjee's announcement came just six days after the Majerhat bridge (one of the busiest flyovers in Kolkata) collapsed, leading to the death of three people, and has raised questions about her government's priorities. "They could not even finalise a meagre tender to repair the bridge, but they can spend Rs.28 crore on Durga Puja," said Mishra,

referring to a tender that was floated in April for "urgent" surface repair of the bridge. Moreover, with the State's debt burden exceeding Rs.3.6 lakh crore, the government can ill afford such extravagances. However, it is clear that for Mamata Banerjee, tackling the BJP's rise and its brand of Hindutva politics with her own brand of "soft" Hindutva takes precedence over other immediate requirements., "The rise of the BJP in West Bengal is an undeniable fact. There has been an exodus from the Left and the Congress camps to the BJP, and also a section of the Trinamool people who are not finding any scope for furthering their interests within the party are trying their luck with the BJP. This move will not only counter the BJP's Hindutva campaign but also stop once and for all the allegations of minority appeasement that keep cropping up against our party," a highly placed Trinamool source told Frontline., This perception of minority appeasement by the Mamata Banerjee government is not new. In April 2012, barely a year after coming to power, she announced a monthly honorarium of Rs.2,500 for all imams in the State and a stipend of Rs.1,500 to muezzins. This was widely criticised in political circles and was subsequently struck down by the Calcutta High Court, which ruled it to be "unconstitutional" and going against the public interest. The Chief Minister's evident proximity to Muslim religious leaders, who are often seen sharing the public stage with her and are known to pressure the government on different issues from time to time, has further added fuel to the opposition's accusation that she plays the religion card in her politics. This overt emphasis on consolidating the Muslim vote was instrumental in her victory over the 34-year-old CPI(M)-led Left Front rule in 2011 and has given a further fillip to the BJP, which has been establishing a base in the State since the 2014 Lok Sabha election. The electoral polarisation was further exacerbated when for two consecutive years, 2016 and 2017, the State government suspended for a day the immersion of the idol on the last day of the Durga Puja as it coincided with Muharram. , According to the BJP, this was "the turning point" for many Bengali Hindus as Durga Puja is the biggest festival for them, and the impact of the government's decision could be felt all across the State and not just in Kolkata. "The same Mamata Banerjee who just a year ago stopped the immersion of the idol of the Goddess to appease the minority community is today, out of fear of the BJP, giving away Rs.10,000 to each community puja all over the State," said Abhijit Roy Choudhury, senior BJP leader from north Bengal. Even the Calcutta High Court did not spare the State government for its decision to postpone the immersion of the Durga idol for the sake of the Muharram procession. "There has been a clear endeavour on the part of the State government to pamper and appease the minority section of the public at the cost of the majority section without there being any plausible justification," it had said., The BJP's growth in West Bengal since the Trinamool came to power has been rapid. Unlike the CPI(M), which had successfully managed to keep the forces of the Sangh Parivar at bay at the grass-roots level, Mamata Banerjee does not have an organised, disciplined cadre base to do that. As a result, not only the RSS but also other Hindutva organisations have seen an exponential growth in West Bengal. The rise of Hindutva forces has changed the political narrative in the State even though it has not yet led to the BJP winning a substantial number of seats in elections. If the CPI(M)-led government had been careful to maintain an equidistance from the affairs of all religions and never permitted the mixing of religion and politics, the Trinamool government has tried to embrace them all and use them as political tools. This has not only led to the growth of religious fundamentalist forces but also resulted in an alarming increase in communal clashes all over the State. Even political battles are ending up with communal overtones., What has perhaps been particularly worrying for Mamata Banerjee is the BJP's performance in this year's panchayat elections. Even though the Trinamool swept what was one of the most violent and bloody elections in recent times, the BJP managed to make inroads at the gram panchayat level into some of the ruling party's strongholds, particularly the tribal belts of Paschim Medinipur, Bankura, Purulia, Jhargram, Alipurduar and Jalpaiguri. The Trinamool is well aware that this development can slowly snowball into a major threat for it. Mamata Banerjee's decision to fund community pujas is also a two-pronged tactical move. A Trinamool member pointed out that almost all the Durga Puja committees across the State are dominated by the Trinamool party, and with this move Mamata Banerjee is consolidating and strengthening her political base.

"This move is countering the BJP on the one hand, and simultaneously addressing the core areas of the party vote bank," said the Trinamool source. , However, political observers and social scientists believe that even if such religious overtures bring an immediate political dividend, in the long run it is pernicious both for the political party concerned and for society at large. "What Mamata Banerjee has done is set off an endless loop. She started it by giving honorariums to imams, and now she has to maintain a balance by giving sops to Hindus as well. If the opposition is able to impress upon the people that this money can be spent for development purposes, this can backfire on her," said the social scientist Biswanath Chakraborty.][

The family of Rajesh Sarkar mourns his death in Islampur on September 21. (Below) The grieving relatives of Tapash Burman. Photo: PTI ,

Relatives mourn the death of Tapash Barman at Islampur in North Dinajpur on September 21. Photo: PTI ,

A labourer taking a nap on September 26 during the bandh called by the BJP, in Kolkata. Photo: DIBYANGSHU SARKAR/AFP ,

THE death of two young men in police firing in Islampur in West Bengal's Uttar Dinajpur district has ignited a political backlash across the State and once again brought to the fore the State government's intolerance of protest and the heavy-handed means the police use to suppress it. The incident was triggered by an agitation over the appointment of teachers in Daribhit High School in Islampur. The students of the school had been protesting against the appointment of an Urdu teacher and a Sanskrit teacher at a time when they felt there was an acute need for teachers of core subjects. Matters came to a head when on September 20 the two new teachers, posted by the State Education Department, arrived at the school premises to join work. The students' agitation, allegedly backed by the local people, turned violent, and when the police arrived, the school premises had virtually turned into a battle zone. , The protesters, who had blocked the main gate, refused to disperse on the orders of the police and attacked them with sticks and stones. As the clash intensified, Mou Sarkar, a Class 12 student, called up her elder brother Rajesh and asked him to come and pick her up. Nineteen-year-old Rajesh, an alumnus of Daribhit and studying in an industrial training institute, went to the school to pick her up and was shot in the back, allegedly by the police. By the time he was taken to the Islampur Subdivisional Hospital, he had died. Another former student, Tapash Burman, 21, was also shot at, allegedly by the police, and he died the following day. Like Rajesh, Tapash was apparently not involved in the agitation; he was killed outside his sweet shop next to the school. , Fourteen police personnel were also injured in the clash. Seven people, including some Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers, were arrested in connection with the violence. , Sujit, Rajesh's younger brother and a former student of the school, said that the bullets fired at Rajesh came from a police van. He also said that the agitation seeking teachers for core subjects had been on for quite some time. "The school does not have teachers for the main subjects, but they have hired teachers for Urdu and Sanskrit, which are considered peripheral. So naturally the students began to protest. They said, give us teachers for the regular subjects first, and then you can hire teachers for Sanskrit and Urdu," he told Frontline. , As of October 2, the bodies of Rajesh and Tapash were not yet cremated because the families were demanding a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The school remains closed, with the women of the region, led by the mothers of the two victims, staging an agitation outside the premises. , "Our demand is first let the CBI investigation begin and then the school can resume. Once the school reopens, people will slowly forget the incident," Sujit, a first-year student of science in Islampur College, told Frontline. He dismissed allegations by the police and the State government that "outsiders" were involved in the protest. "The video footage clearly shows that the agitators were mainly students. There is a marketplace right next to the school. It is likely that the villagers present there at the time rushed to the rescue of the children, finding them under attack from the police," said Sujit. , Meanwhile, the fathers of Rajesh and Tapash were taken by the BJP to New Delhi where they met President Ram Nath Kovind and asked for a fresh post-mortem of their sons' bodies and a CBI investigation. , Although the State government maintains that the police had not opened fire and had used rubber bullets, local people insist that the police had indeed shot at the agitators. Even the Trinamool Congress MLA from Islampur, Kanialal Agarwala, has accused the police

of shooting live bullets. "Blood was flowing from Rajesh's back. We cannot believe it was caused by a rubber bullet," Agarwala reportedly said. , The incident resulted in a political uproar, with all the opposition parties coming down heavily on the State government. Senior Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader Sujan Chakraborty, who leads the Left Legislature Party in the State Assembly, told Frontline: "Today in Bengal the police have lost their neutrality and are nothing more than an extension of the Trinamool family. What happened once again reinforced the attitude of the State government that its word is final and it will not tolerate any dissent." The Students' Federation of India, the student wing of the CPI(M), called for a 12-hour strike on September 22. Manoj Chakraborty, chief whip of the Congress Legislature Party, also wanted a CBI probe. "The matter should be made clear to the general public. They have a right to know what happened," he said. The BJP called a 12-hour bandh in Islampur on September 21, the day after the shooting, and a 12-hour State-wide shutdown on September 26., The matter soon degenerated into a political slanging match, with the Trinamool alleging that the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh was behind the violence and the BJP demanding a CBI probe and State Education Minister Partha Chatterjee's resignation. The bandh on September 26 became the stage for a standoff between the ruling Trinamool, determined to foil the bandh, and the BJP, determined to prove that it was not just a token opposition but a political force to reckon with. There were clashes between Trinamool and BJP supporters throughout the state; public buses were burnt by BJP workers, train services were disrupted, and even school buses carrying children were attacked. A trader from Pashchim Medinipur district was killed by alleged BJP goons when he insisted on keeping his shop open despite the threats issued by miscreants in the area. , Although the State government had deployed its entire machinery to ensure normalcy and issued a notification making it compulsory for its employees to attend work, it could not completely neutralise the impact of the bandh. While Mamata Banerjee called it a "flop show" and congratulated the people of the State on not allowing it to be a success, State BJP chief Dilip Ghosh called it a huge success. "People have willingly participated and supported it as it was called for a genuine reason," he said., The shooting has also thrown up certain key questions. Besides the issue of using unwarranted force to quell a school agitation, serious lapses in the education system have come to the surface. Shortage of teachers is nothing new at Daribhit High School. A former student said: "I remember barely three out of seven periods in a day were utilised for teaching. Most of the time, there would not even be roll calls of students." , Sujan Chakraborty said: "Daribhit is not a one-off case. There are many such schools all over the State. The root cause of what happened in Islampur has to be addressed and the entire education system has to be overhauled. That is our main concern now."[

Somendra Nath Mitra (right) after his appointment as West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee president on September 21. Photo: PTI , The uncereemonious removal of West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee (WBPC) president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and the installation of former Trinamool Congress MP Somendra Nath Mitra in his place have sparked off speculations about the party's electoral strategy in West Bengal for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections., The decision of the party's central leadership to replace the rigidly anti-Trinamool Chowdhury with the apparently more flexible Mitra is perceived in certain political circles as keeping a channel for dialogue open with the Trinamool in case the need for an electoral or post-election understanding arises., Mitra, a veteran Congress leader, joined the Trinamool in 2008 and became a Lok Sabha MP before returning to the Congress fold in 2014. While acknowledging that the Congress had suffered heavily at the hands of the Trinamool, the new WBPC president said that the decision for any kind of alliance with any party would ultimately be taken at the national level. He said: "We have to keep both the short-term and the long-term perspectives in mind." Earlier, Mitra had said that if the Congress was looking to make short-term gains, it should ally itself with the Trinamool; however, if it was looking at a long-term strategy, then it should forge ties with the Left. This is Mitra's second stint as WBPC president. Earlier he had held the post from 1992 to 1998., Chowdhury, who has been made chairman of the Congress Campaign Committee after his removal, made it clear that he was not about to change his stand vis-a-vis the Trinamool Congress. "Today the Congress is a persecuted party-persecuted by the Trinamool. How can

the persecutor and the persecuted be together?" he asked Frontline., , Right from the inception of the Trinamool, when Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee broke away from the Congress in 1998, the party's growth has come at the expense of the Congress. In 2009, when the two parties forged an understanding, albeit a rocky one, for the Lok Sabha election, after the CPI(M) withdrew its support to the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government at the Centre, and later in 2011, when the two bickering allies joined forces to overthrow the 34-year-old CPI(M)-led Left Front government in West Bengal, the Congress had to swallow its pride and accept the humiliating conditions laid down by the Trinamool in the seat-sharing arrangements. In 2012, Mamata Banerjee quit the UPA and the relationship between her party and the Congress continued to worsen., With the Trinamool's political position in the State getting stronger and the attacks on Congress and Left Front workers not abating, the once-bitter enemies, CPI(M) and the Congress, had to turn to each other to take on the might of the ruling party in the 2016 elections. Chowdhury, one of the chief architects of the alliance, told Frontline then that the main reason for the seat-sharing arrangement between the two parties was survival: "Otherwise the opposition will be obliterated from Bengal," he said., However, the Congress-Left seat adjustment was never properly cemented and their failure to dislodge the Mamata Banerjee government came as no big surprise. The alliance fell apart soon after the 2016 election and the subsequent byelections saw both the parties losing further political ground to the Trinamool. "If the Congress-Left tie-up had worked, the Bharatiya Janata Party would not have been able to occupy the political space it does today," said Chowdhury. He still believes that the only way to take on the BJP and the Trinamool together is for the Left and the Congress to come to a political understanding in the State. "It is a fact that the vote share of the Left parties is dwindling, but they cannot still be written off," he said. However, a veil of uncertainty has now fallen over the prospects of a Congress-Left alliance, as new windows of possibilities have apparently opened. "For the Congress high command now, it is not about Adhir Chowdhury's stand or Somen Mitra's policies, it is all a matter of numbers," said a Trinamool source., A few Congress leaders admitted that the decision over the issue of an "understanding" is now in flux. "Nothing is impossible in politics. One cannot say with certainty that the Congress will tie up with the Trinamool, nor can one say that the Left and the Congress will not come together again," a Congress MLA told Frontline. In spite of what appears to be evident, most Congress leaders insist that the change of guard at the helm had little to do with opening a channel with the Trinamool; rather, it was a routine reshuffle following Rahul Gandhi's ascension to the post of All India Congress Committee (AICC) president. There was also a sizeable section in the WBPCC that was not happy with Chowdhury's autocratic style of functioning. "This change of guard is for a collective leadership where senior party leaders will lead it to the 2019 elections, rather than one single individual's dictates," a senior Congress source told Frontline., But the manner in which Chowdhury was removed has left many party workers unhappy. "It is the AICC's prerogative to decide who will be the president of the party, but party workers feel that the decision could have been taken after the 2019 elections. Adhir Chowdhury had after all maintained a sustained attack on the Trinamool Congress government," said Manoj Chakraborty, Congress chief whip in the West Bengal Assembly.,][

Supporters of Ibrahim Mohamed Solih celebrate his victory in Male on September 24. Photo: AP ,

Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, President-elect. Photo: AP ,

President Abdulla Yameen. Photo: AP , A conditional victory is often more difficult to reconcile with, and deal with, than a crushing defeat. In winning the September 23 presidential election in the Maldives in an unprecedented manner, the candidate of the combined opposition, Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, has the unenviable task of holding together a coalition that has never made common cause once an election gets over. His second challenge: making sure that he is always in step with his friend, brother-in-law and widely popular party leader, former President Mohamed Nasheed., Ibrahim Solih was nowhere in the picture when the presidential race was announced a few months ago. Nasheed refused to return to the Maldives to serve the remainder of a 13-year prison sentence after he got "leave" to go abroad for medical treatment and lived in Colombo and London in self-imposed exile. He had hoped that he would be able to run, aided by

considerable help from the international community. When this did not happen, the names of a few senior Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) leaders were floated, possibly to catch the ruling party off guard. The MDP finally proposed Ibrahim Solih, a well-respected but low-profile lawmaker. His style of low-key, on-the-ground campaigning, with the support of a team of dedicated volunteers, involved engaging with as many voters as possible from across all the inhabited islands in the Maldives. He did not court controversy with any comment or visit he made. This approach made it seem as if there was only one candidate campaigning in the Maldives—the incumbent President, Abdulla Yameen., The joint opposition candidate, known as Ibu to those close to him, polled nearly 58 per cent of the almost 90 per cent votes cast in the election, stunning Yameen, who seemed to hold all the aces in the events leading up to the election., Of the 2,62,135 voters, as many as 2,38,877 voters turned up to cast their votes in 472 ballot boxes (89.22 per cent)—a rarity in the Maldives. Ibu won convincingly, polling 1,34,616 to Yameen's 96,132., Ibu managed this against insurmountable odds. After Yameen came to power in 2013, through a controversial run-off to the presidential election, he systematically seized control of all democratic institutions; threw almost all opposition politicians in jail or forced them into exile; barred any candidate with a remote potential of winning from contesting the election; created fear in the minds of his own legislators by jailing his Vice President, Ahmed Adeeb, accusing him of being responsible for an attempt on his life; and cherry-picked foreign observers from "friendly" nations to witness the election. , There were arbitrary arrests in the run-up to the voting, and an unexplained police raid on the opposition headquarters around midnight on the eve of the election. He appointed people to top independent institutions at whim: the Elections Commissioner was a secretary general of Yameen's political party and the Supreme Court Chief Justice was appointed after Yameen arrested and jailed the previous Chief Justice for giving a judgment against him. The police had made no headway in as many as 30 murder cases in the Maldives during the Yameen years, including that of a blogger, and the disappearance of a journalist. , Yameen rebuffed any attempt that major democracies made at course correction: his Foreign Office warned India, the European Union and even the United States to stay away from interfering in the internal affairs of the Maldives and he personally ordered a freeze on visas to Indian workers. He also asked the Indian Coast Guard helicopters stationed in the Maldives to leave the archipelago and cosied up to China, just as Sri Lanka's Mahinda Rajapaksa had done. He pulled the country out of the Commonwealth and warned the international community that he would not tolerate any negative comments about the manner in which his country was being governed. , Yameen granted China a slew of projects in the Maldives, and no one in the opposition, including Nasheed, who was in forced exile, or the Grand Old Man of the Maldives, Maumoon Gayoom, has any clue what these projects are. The Maldives was the first nation in South Asia to cut off ties with Qatar, and this move pleased Saudi Arabia immensely. Again, no one in the Maldivian polity, barring a few close to Yameen, is aware of the details of the deal with Saudi Arabia. , Yameen had the money, the muscle and the entire state machinery at his disposal when he went into the election. "After the raid on the opposition headquarters just a few hours before polling was to start, we did not believe that there could be a free and fair election," said a diplomat based in Colombo who was tasked with monitoring the election. "It was almost as if Ibu had lost even before polling began," another diplomat said., But the people did not give up. Friends of this correspondent in the Maldives sent images of voters queuing up before midnight even though the polling booths opened only at 8 a.m. "I was in a queue for more than seven hours," a friend said after voting. "We all stayed. And we voted because we wanted to get this done," he added., The process of polling was strangely delayed, leading to many people spending six hours or more across multiple polling booths. The opposition saw a conspiracy in this, but the Elections Commission (E.C.) clarified that each voter detail had to be manually verified because of a glitch in the computer systems. The E.C. also extended the polling time to 7 p.m. Transparency International Maldives, which had about 400 volunteers across booths in the Maldives, announced that the process was largely free and fair and kept issuing updates as the day progressed., At the end of polling, exit polls of the joint opposition showed that Ibu was winning 63 per cent of the votes. In the Maldives, votes are counted as soon as polling closes

in each booth. Unlike in other democracies, the ballot boxes are not taken to a central counting centre. Each polling booth announces results at the end of counting after they are certified by the counting agents of political parties. This system is followed because the islands are far-flung and it is not practically possible to bring all ballot boxes to a central location., Although a few former Indian Election Commissioners, who had been in the Maldives during the last election, found flaws in this method, the Chief Elections Commissioner of that time, Fuwad Taufeeq, had stood firm. "That has stood us in good stead this time around. If the counting was centralised, I am not sure what would have happened," he told Frontline in Colombo, where he lives in self-imposed exile. , Around 8:30 p.m. on September 23, as the first results came in, it appeared that Ibu was headed for a sweep. The first two read like this: Booth, Holiday Inn resort, Kandooma; Votes polled: 112 (out of 125); Ibu managed 92, while Yameen got just 19; Cheval Blanc, Randheli; of the 107 votes polled (out of 113), as many as 92 went to Ibu, while Yameen got 15., From there, catching up seemed an uphill task for Yameen. At 9:30 p.m., after 233 of the 472 boxes had been counted, Ibu had managed 58.1 per cent of the votes (52,279) to Yameen's 41.9 per cent (37,763). At 11:30 p.m., almost all media houses and civil society groups called the election for Ibu, after he had strengthened his lead to 30,000. In achieving this feat, Ibu has created history: never before in the Maldives since multiparty electoral democracy took root about a decade ago has a candidate won so convincingly in the first round of a presidential election. (If no candidate gets a 50 per cent plus one vote in the first round, a second round of polling has to be held between those who came first and second in the first round.) , In the first multiparty presidential election in 2008, Nasheed led the race but fell short of the magic 50 per cent plus one mark. He then teamed up with the rest of the opposition to win it in the second round. After he was forced to resign in circumstances often described as a bloodless coup in February 2012, his Vice President, Mohamed Waheed, took charge, as mandated by the Constitution., In the next election too, in 2013, Nasheed, who firmly rebuffed the attempts of some like-minded parties to come together, led the race but fell short of the Constitution-mandated mark, necessitating a second round. In that fateful election, the man who paved the way for multiparty elections in the Maldives after ruling over the country with an iron hand for about three decades, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, decided to support his half-brother, Yameen. Gayoom managed to swing the influential but smaller political parties to his side and ensured Yameen's victory. , "This is a moment of happiness. This is a moment of hope, this is a moment in history," Ibu declared, just past midnight on September 23, even though the E.C. had not announced the results. "The message is loud and clear," a normally soft-spoken Ibu thundered in the Dhivehi language. "The people of the Maldives want change, justice and stability," he added. , Soon after this electrifying speech, the E.C. said that it would announce the results in seven days, as mandated by the Constitution. Although there was no doubt about Ibu's electoral victory after 11 p.m. on September 23, the fact that the E.C. had not announced it soon enough was a cause for concern. This was because the E.C. had to tally results from all booths; there is also a provision that gives it seven days to complete this process. But the decision of the E.C. not to make an official statement sowed the seeds of fear in the minds of the leaders of the combined opposition. , Soon after the election results were unofficially announced, it was clear that Yameen was in no mood to concede. Realising this, India welcomed the verdict, the first country to do so, even though the results had not been announced. The United Kingdom, the United States and Sri Lanka followed suit, in a bid to pre-empt Yameen from subverting the verdict., On September 24, India welcomed Ibu's victory. Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to President-elect Solih over the phone. The Indian statement called the election results a "triumph of democratic forces in the Maldives". "The United States congratulates the people of Maldives, who peacefully raised their democratic voices to determine the future of their country," said State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert., The night of the victory itself, a confidant of Yameen approached the High Court. It is not clear if this was to annul the verdict, but the sudden increase in visible police presence across Male made it seem ominous. , Yameen conceded the election the next day, after a meeting with Ibu. "The citizens of the Maldives had their say yesterday. I accept that result. I have served the Maldivian public sincerely," he said in a

short televised address. Despite this, the fact that almost all the opposition leaders were still in jail and the fact that the police were out on the streets made it seem as if Yameen had made the announcement to buy time. , It was only after the Maldivian National Defence Forces (MNDF) announced that they would protect the will of the people that Yameen backed off. Soon after this announcement, Yameen realised that the crack commando force of the Defence Forces, numbering just over 100, were firmly on the side of the combined opposition and were prepared to implement the verdict. , Yameen's antics did not end there. Realising that he was pushed into a corner, Yameen announced a meeting of the Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) for September 28. The aim was clear: take over the party from his half-brother Maumoon Gayoom and be the clear leader before demitting office. Maumoon Gayoom could not prevent this as he has been jailed by Yameen. In fact, all the male members of the Maumoon family who are in politics were behind bars until September 30 on one trumped-up charge or another., The E.C. finally announced the results after a whole week. The Commissioner, Shareef Rangondi, announced the results and said that the E.C. members had been receiving death threats after the election. This public statement, too, was viewed with some suspicion. , A relieved Ibu tweeted on September 29: "Thank you to the people of the Maldives for your unwavering spirit and strength in our struggle for justice and democracy. Today we are victorious. Congratulations to all who made this happen. I aspire to be a President for all Maldivians and look forward to working with you all." , But the problems are far from over. The President continues with full powers until the swearing-in of the President-elect, and this can be held only on November 17. Right now, the combined opposition believes that everyone in the ruling establishment is covering their tracks and destroying much of the paper trail on what they have been up to, similar to what happened in Malaysia soon after the upset victory of Mahathir Mohamad., The delay in the swearing-in is because of constitutional provisions. The time given from the date of the first election, September 23, to November 17 is to accommodate a possible run-off round of election in case no candidate got the 50 per cent plus one vote. , On October 1, taking many by surprise, Yameen appointed a new police chief, ACP Hamdhoon Rasheed. "A SoE [State of Emergency] is also likely," tweeted Ahmed Mahloof, spokesperson of the joint opposition and a Member of Parliament. Later in the evening, Yameen joined a puzzling protest organised by the PPM, the party he had taken over a few days ago. The protest was against the election that Yameen lost. Yameen took part in the protest despite the fact that he had conceded the election and that it was his hand-picked Elections Commissioner who had overseen the election., Managing a disparate opposition and staying together until the time of parliamentary elections will be crucial to the success of an MDP presidency a second time. The President can be checkmated by the Majlis (parliament), as was seen during the tenure of Nasheed, and this is the trap that Ibu would want to negotiate deftly. For this, he has to manage at least three seniors—Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who has had a hand in all democratic governments that came after his three-decade rule; Gasim Ibrahim, who was instrumental in propelling Yameen to the presidency; and Mohamed Nasheed himself, who is the face of Ibu's party. "Let us see how long this combine lasts," said a diplomat, who hopes that the coalition will focus on implementing a common minimum programme before infighting begins., Then there is the question of revenge. Scores of MDP leaders that this correspondent spoke to in person or interacted with over phone and social media believe that the MDP erred in not taking action against the losers of the 2008 election. "You have seen what happened to us after 2008. We followed everything that a mature democratic party is expected to follow. And then they ousted Nasheed in a coup," said a senior MDP leader. , Another demanded to know whether he had suffered in vain. "We have been hounded, and we have fought. It has been a long six years. How can we let them [those who created trouble for us from within the government] so easily?" asked another. Topping the list of names is Yameen, the new Chief Justice, Maldivian Ambassador to Sri Lanka Mohamed Sharieff, and the Chief Elections Commissioner. Ibu's stand on the issue will be watched closely by MDP cadres and the international community. , Within the MDP itself, Ibu's place has changed from that of a man on the sidelines to one of its top leaders. Ibu is now President-elect, but he has much more on his plate than merely restoring democracy in the Maldives. The first person that he has to keep on his side is

Nasheed, whose personal struggle has made the MDP what it is today. "Rees [President] Nasheed was jailed 21 times. We should always remember that," said Ahmed Naseem, former Foreign Minister and a mastermind of the 2018 campaign, at a meeting convened on September 29 in Colombo to celebrate the victory. The closed-door meeting of MDP cadres, to which this correspondent was invited, recognised the efforts of many who had toiled in the days leading up to the election., Keeping Nasheed on his side might not be a huge problem for Ibu if he is willing to be the silent force that he has always been in the party and allows Nasheed to be the face of the Maldives. Ibu and Nasheed grew up together in the same house and share innumerable childhood and adolescent memories. In fact, Nasheed wanted Ibu in politics. Ibu, who wanted to lead a quiet life, had no choice but to agree. , Then comes the India-China question. Although Nasheed has held China responsible for land grab in the Maldives, no government in the Maldives can speak the language that Nasheed has spoken. Some of the Chinese projects, such as the runway at the Ibrahim Nasir Airport in Male and the bridge connecting Male and the airport island, are complete and a slew of projects are on: this is increasing the debt on the Maldives to a level the country will not be able to repay. , Managing India is the other issue. Only one Maldivian leader has managed to keep India happy for a long period—Maumoon. In his 30-year rule in the Maldives, Maumoon visited India as often as required, sometimes several times a year, and briefed anyone in government who wanted to know on the situation in his country., "Maumoon set his ego aside. He would meet any official who had a query on the Maldives. And he personally explained each issue because he was on top of all issues," an Indian officer who spent considerable time in Maumoon's Maldives said. "He was so effective that some in New Delhi thought that we did not need a High Commissioner in the Maldives," he added, on a lighter note. , That period is long over. India has strategic concerns, and Ibu's office has made the right noises so far. An MDP spokesperson said that the question of extension for India's Dhruv helicopters on the archipelago nation will be considered in the light of the fact that these two helicopters have saved 164 lives so far. This, in effect, underlines the practical approach that Ibu wants to pursue in international relations. , Sooner rather than later, Ibu will be confronted with the powers of the only institution that has been a constant in the Maldives, the Maldivian National Defence Forces. So far, the MNDF has remained neutral even in the face of intense pressure, but the temptation to attempt a larger role in the country cannot be overruled. The MNDF's support is coveted by all political parties, and as such, it cannot be immune to the pulls and pressures of everyday polity. If the bickering among political parties continues, the MNDF might be tempted to bring order to the country with the support of some from within the country and some international players. That will be a bigger danger, far larger than the damage Yameen has inflicted on the system., But for now, not many think that far ahead. Zaheena Rasheed, who had to flee the Maldives because she worked on a story of governmental corruption, said it in four words: "Guys, I'm going home." Almost everyone who lives in Colombo in self-imposed exile shares her sentiment. This includes Nasheed, who has announced that he will attend the oath-taking ceremony of Solih., When Nasheed enters the Maldives on November 17, he will still be a fugitive from law unless the Maldivian courts quash the terrorism conviction against him before that date. Either way, Nasheed wants to be in the Maldives when history is being made yet again.,][

President Donald Trump at the U.N. Security Council briefing on counter-proliferation in New York on September 26. Photo: AFP , Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addresses the General Assembly on September 27. He claimed that Israeli intelligence services had discovered a "secret atomic warehouse" in Tehran. Photo: TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP , Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif addresses the meeting on counter-proliferation at the U.N. On the "secret atomic warehouse", he said "Israeli intelligence was taken for a ride". Photo: Beбето Matthews/AP , Bolivian President Evo Morales speaks during a briefing on counter-proliferation at the U.N. Morales and his U.N. envoy said Trump's statements about Iran were "unwelcome". Photo: Evan Vucci/AP , President Donald Trump brought down the gavel at the United Nations Security Council. The United States holds the rotating presidency of the Security Council in October. The topic for discussion at its first session was to be non-proliferation. Trump wanted to turn the

entire session into an attack on Iran and the 2015 nuclear accord signed with that country. The accord—the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action—had been ratified by the U.N. and was being overseen by the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). There has been no indication of any violation by Iran of the terms of the deal. Appetite for ending the deal is near nil. Only the U.S. and Israel—as well as Saudi Arabia—have made it clear that they would like to nullify the nuclear deal and resume their pressure on Iran., Trump said that the deal—which has paused the Iranian nuclear programme—was unacceptable. "This horrible, one-sided deal allowed Iran to continue its path towards a bomb and gave the regime a cash lifeline when it needed it the most. They were in big, big trouble," Trump spluttered. "They needed cash. We gave it to them." It is true that the Iranian economy had stalled for lack of ability to sell oil to the international market. That vital foreign exchange has been denied to Iran for two decades. It has put a great deal of pressure on a country that is reliant on oil sales and needs that money to tackle endemic problems—including poverty (one in five Iranians lives below the poverty line). Trump promised to throttle Iran with new U.S.-driven sanctions that go into effect in early November., European diplomats, in the halls of the U.N., would not go on record about Trump's assault on Iran. They are cautious. Europe has tried every legal measure to protect European firms that want to do business both with Iran and with the U.S. These firms—from Volkswagen to Airbus, from Total to Sanofi—do not want their dealings in Iran to impact the much more lucrative trade that they do with the U.S. Fear of being shut off from the U.S. market and from credit from U.S. banks drives the European agenda. The European Union's (E.U.) foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, had tried to build a "legal shield" to insulate these firms. Such a shield, she was told by the Trump administration, was simply not available. That was the reason for the tepid response from Europe. Large European firms are too closely integrated into the economy of the U.S. for the E.U. to risk a confrontation with the U.S., At the U.N. General Assembly, both Trump and Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tried to revive an anti-Iran mood. Netanyahu came once more with an aerial map that purported to show a secret warehouse for Iran's nuclear weapons programme. The Iranian delegation laughed openly as Netanyahu spoke. Later, Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif and Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said that the site was actually a Persian carpet washing factory. "Israeli intelligence was taken for a ride," Zarif said after the session. Araghchi concurred. "Someone set him up," he said. Even three U.S. officials later admitted that the site pointed at by Netanyahu was not a nuclear facility. Despite this, the U.S. has asked the IAEA to investigate the site. Zarif said in a meeting with reporters: "The IAEA will not allow itself to be the arm of the boy who cried wolf.", Inside the Security Council, it was left to the plucky Bolivia to challenge Trump's claims about Iran. Both Bolivia's President Evo Morales and his U.N. envoy Sacha Llorenty Soliz sharply noted that Trump's statements on Iran were "unwelcome". Morales pointed to the history of "unilateral action, political interventionism and regime change" by the U.S.—manoeuvres that are already afoot against Iran. Later, Llorenty said that the U.S. move in the Security Council had been "clumsy", wrong-footed. Little was gained by the heavy-handed attack on Iran, which is not seen amongst most of the member-states of the U.N. as a threat to world peace., The ugliest statements about Iran came from Trump's close adviser, John Bolton. He warned Iran that it would have "hell to pay" if it harmed U.S. citizens or allies. There is a far-fetched tone to these comments. Threats from Iran are mute. Domestic economic challenges have galvanised the Iranian government, which worries about the new U.S. sanctions that will go into effect from November 5. The expense of its intervention in Syria and the inability to use payment systems to receive money for its oil exports are two daunting problems. No easy solution is available for either. Iranian officials know that they cannot abandon their ally in Syria, which will require considerable funds to rebuild the devastated country. They know as well that despite European appetite for Iranian oil, the U.S. will not permit European countries to easily pay Iran. Europeans are eager to create a new payment system—one that is immune from U.S. pressure. Iranian government officials hope that such a system can come into effect as soon as possible. They are not cavalier. They know that the new sanctions from November will have a strong negative impact on Iran., China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi defended the Iran nuclear deal. It, he said, "is a

consensus-based multilateral agreement endorsed by the U.N. Security Council. It serves the common interest of all parties concerned and the international community at large." Ma Zhaoxu, China's envoy to the U.N., was as clear that there should be no unilateral disposal of the nuclear deal. It had created stability in West Asia—a major goal for the Chinese government, which buys over 700,000 barrels of Iranian oil a day and which has considerable investment across Iran. That Trump is in the midst of a trade war against China put the steel in the Chinese comments. There was little space for compromise here. China made it clear that it would not honour Trump's new sanctions and that it would continue to trade with Iran., Fears of a U.S. war on Iran are not unfounded. Diplomats do not like to talk about war. Their mode of speech is muffled. Yet, on Iran, veteran diplomats said that the atmosphere resembled in many ways that of the lead-up to the U.S. war on Iraq. There is one major difference, however. The U.S. now faces an open challenge from many other powers, especially China, which will play its part to prevent a war on Iran. One diplomat from a South American country joked that he would like to see Chinese military aircraft enter Tehran as a shield against an Israeli or U.S. attack on the country. "It would be like the Russian entry into Syria," the diplomat said., Trump and Netanyahu, and certainly Bolton, have not come to terms with this elementary fact, namely that China and Russia are now not merely going to make quiet noises in the U.N. They are capable of challenging the U.S. and its allies where it matters, on the ground. A U.S. bombing run against Iran would certainly widen the war that is now slowly ending in Syria. This is precisely what Russia does not want. Nor does China. Chinese officials were pleased to switch the topic of conversation to the new train that runs from China to Iran. They would like to see the Belt and Road Initiative expand along the southern edge of Asia. It is a far better outcome for them than another war in western Asia, another set of unpredictable and dangerous consequences that would come out of Trump's obsession with Iran.][

Prime Minister Narendra Modi (centre) and Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman (to his right) attend the function to celebrate the second anniversary of the "surgical strike", in Jodhpur on September 28. Chief Minister of Rajasthan Vasundhara Raje and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval are also present. Photo: PTI ,

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan (centre) with Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi (left) attend a briefing at the Foreign Ministry in Islamabad on August 24. Photo: AP ,

Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs. Photo: AFP ,

The glimmer of hope of bilateral talks between India and Pakistan resuming was extinguished within 24 hours after the two sides made the announcement on talks in late September. The newly elected Pakistani Prime Minister, Imran Khan, signalled his willingness to open a new page by stating that he was willing to take "two steps" if India took "one step" forward to restore the bilateral dialogue process. Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrote a congratulatory letter to Imran Khan after he took over as Prime Minister. Imran Khan's letter in reply reiterated the offer "for constructive engagement" with India. It said that his government was willing to hold talks on all contentious issues, including "terrorism", along with Kashmir. Surprisingly, the Modi government accepted the offer. It was announced that the Foreign Ministers of the two countries would meet on the sidelines of the annual meet of United Nations General Assembly in New York in the last week of September., The two countries' decision to restart talks at a high level was immediately welcomed by the United States. The Donald Trump administration, which is now more closely aligned with India, has been urging the two nuclear-armed neighbours to hold talks as it strives to make an honourable exit out of Afghanistan. The U.S. State Department described the proposed meeting as "terrific news". The U.S. is also interested in weaning the new government in Pakistan off its "all-weather friend", China. , Imran Khan is known to be wary of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. He has said that he wants Saudi Arabia to be involved in it. Pakistan's Commerce Minister, Abdul Razak Dawood, said that the "CPEC should be put on hold for one year" as Pakistan has been put in a "disadvantageous position". Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told the media in New York in the last week of September after a meeting with Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi that plots to sabotage China-Pakistan relations "will not succeed". The opposition in Pakistan alleges that Imran Khan is going out of his way to please the Trump administration

despite the shabby way the country has been treated by its oldest ally. , China too, like the rest of the international community, wants India to resume the dialogue process with Pakistan. Virtually no country supports the Indian government's adamant "no talks" stand that has led to a diplomatic impasse between the two countries and the fast deteriorating situation in the Kashmir valley. The Indian government called off the scheduled meeting between Sushma Swaraj and Qureshi, citing, among other things, the "mutilation" of a paramilitary officer along the line of control (LoC) and the brutal killing of three policemen by militants in the valley., The Indian government also took umbrage at the Pakistan government releasing 20 commemorative stamps honouring separatist "freedom fighters" in Kashmir and the current hero of the militants in the valley, Burhan Wani. The killing of the 21-year-old Wani in 2016 gave the insurgency in the Kashmir valley a new lease of life. The stamps were released more than a month before Imran Khan became Prime Minister. However, the Indian government spokesman said that Imran Khan's offer of talks was a sham and "that the evil agenda of Pakistan stands exposed and the true face of the new Prime Minister of Pakistan has been revealed to the world". , The Modi government's initial agreement to the Foreign Ministers' meeting immediately came in for criticism from the Congress party. Its spokesman Abishek Manu Singhvi said that it was a sign of weakness in the face of continuing ceasefire violations and acts of terrorism by Pakistan. He claimed that his party played a role in the cancellation of the talks, saying that the Congress deserved "some of the credit" for the achievement. It is clear that meaningful talks with Pakistan can be expected only after the formation of a new government in India next year., Meanwhile, villagers living on both sides of the LoC and ordinary citizens continue to bear the brunt of the violence triggered by the crisis in the valley and the escalating insurgency. There are reports that cross-border shelling increased after the war of words erupted between the two governments after India's abrupt cancellation of the Foreign Ministers' meet. A civilian helicopter carrying the Chief Minister of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, Raja Farooq Haider, was shot at by Indian forces as it was flying near the LoC. , While initially accepting Imran Khan's offer, the Indian government had made it clear that the proposed talks would be a one-off affair and that it was not a commitment to restart the stalled dialogue process involving the Foreign Secretaries. This dialogue was called off abruptly by the Modi government three years ago and that had derailed the dialogue process. , The "Rafale" controversy erupted, and the attention of the public had to be diverted. The Modi government's decision to renege on the talks offer, according to many commentators, was dictated by the exigencies of domestic politics as general elections are scheduled for next year. Pakistan-bashing has brought the Bharatiya Janata Party electoral dividends in past elections, and the BJP government revels in playing the nationalism card. The BJP also seems determined to "polarise" the electorate on sectarian lines. A war of words with Pakistan and a "hot border" along the LoC could come in handy during the elections as the government is unable to boast of any meaningful achievements during its tenure so far., The statement by the Indian Army chief, Gen. Bipin Rawat, following the abrupt cancellation of the talks and Imran Khan's response have only further queered the pitch. Rawat, thankfully, did not once again talk about the readiness of the armed forces for a war "on two and a half fronts". This time, his threats were exclusively aimed at Pakistan. Rawat, who is prone to giving his opinion on political and diplomatic issues, said that the government's decision to call off the talks was justified. "I think that our government's policies are quite clear and concise," he told reporters. "We've made no bones that talks and terrorism cannot go hand in hand. Pakistan needs to curb the menace of terrorism." , He went a step further and threatened retribution for the Pakistan Army's alleged acts of terror. "We need to take stern action to avenge the barbarism that terrorists and the Pakistani army have been carrying out. Yes, it's time to give it back to them in the same coin, not resorting to similar kinds of barbarism. But I think that the other side should also feel the pain," Rawat told the media. Pakistan has denied that its troops had a role in the "mutilation" incident. The Pakistan government's spokesperson said that the Indian Army Chief was speaking "like a BJP functionary". Its Army spokesman, Maj. Gen. Asif Ghafoor, said that his country preferred dialogue over war but, at the same time, was prepared for any exigencies. "Pakistan is a nuclear-armed

country and is ready to respond to Indian misadventures.” , Imran Khan reacted to the abrupt cancellation of the scheduled talks in a very undiplomatic way. “Disappointed at the arrogant and negative response by India to my call for resumption of the peace dialogue. However, all my life I have come across small men occupying big offices who do not have the vision to see the big picture,” he said in a Twitter post. This was an insult aimed directly at the Indian Prime Minister. Imran Khan said that if there was peace between the two countries the entire subcontinent would be able to thrive and that Pakistan’s offer of talks should not be seen as a sign of weakness. “Our people are ready, our tanks are ready,” he said after the rebuff from India. There is no love lost between Imran Khan and Modi, but to the Pakistan Premier’s credit, at least he made an attempt to restart the dialogue process with India. , Instead of talking, the two sides are exchanging insults and threats now. The meeting of Foreign Ministers of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) on the sidelines of the General Assembly meet in New York witnessed amateurish diplomatic behaviour. Sushma Swaraj, after delivering her speech, chose to walk out before her Pakistani counterpart’s turn to speak came. In his speech, Qureshi blamed India for the failure to make SAARC a viable regional grouping. He specifically mentioned India’s failure to attend the SAARC summit in Islamabad in 2016. No SAARC summit has taken place since then because of India’s refusal to attend the summit, which is to be hosted by Pakistan., During the election campaign, Imran Khan labelled Nawaz Sharif as “Modi ka yaar” (Modi’s friend). Modi, unlike previous Indian Prime Ministers, has very few admirers in Pakistan. Amit Shah, the BJP president, said recently that Pakistan’s aim was similar to that of the Congress party. Both wanted Modi to be defeated in the next general election. The BJP reacted angrily after Navjot Singh Sidhu embraced the Pakistan Army chief, Gen. Qamar Bajwa, when he was in Pakistan to attend Imran Khan’s swearing-in ceremony. Sidhu is a Minister in the Congress government in Punjab and was the only Indian dignitary present at the ceremony. , From September 28 to 30, the BJP government commemorated the so-called “surgical strikes” that the Indian military carried out across the LoC in 2016. The Ministry of Human Resource Development ordered universities and schools to also commemorate the event. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the chief guest at a function to celebrate the second anniversary of the strike. Nirmala Sitharaman, the Defence Minister, gave a belligerent speech stating that the Indian armed forces had “adequately punished” those who sought to spread terrorism in the country. Pakistan continues to deny that such strikes ever took place. At any rate, surgical strikes of the kind claimed by the present government were carried out by previous governments too. , Responding to criticism from Pakistan’s opposition, Pakistan’s Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Fawad Chaudhry, said that Imran Khan’s offer to India was prompted by his desire to end the conflict between the two countries, which had lasted more than 70 years, and his vision to uplift millions of people from poverty in the subcontinent. Peace between the two countries, according to Imran Khan, would give Pakistan access to the two huge international markets of West Asia and Central Asia, Chaudhry said. In a recent study, the World Bank estimated that there was a trade potential of \$37 billion between the two countries if peace prevailed. , Pakistan offers the cheapest transit route for Indian goods to the lucrative Central Asian market, and pipelines passing through Pakistan would make the import of oil and gas easier. Peace between the neighbours would help make the world safer. Talks between the two countries would have at least lessened tensions along the LoC. Since September 2016, guns have been booming on both sides without respite. And given the speeches made by Sushma Swaraj in the General Assembly and the Indian Prime Minister in his “Mann ki Baat” programme on October 1, tensions along the LoC will only escalate further. ,][

Free Syrian Army fighters eating in the cave where they live on the outskirts of the northern town of Jisr al-Shughur, west of the city of Idlib, on September 9. As the decisive battle for Idlib province looms, a motley crew of opposition fighters are holed up in this last rebel stronghold. Photo: Ugur Can/AP ,

Displaced Syrian children at a refugee camp in Atimah village of Idlib province on September 11. Photo: Khalil Ashawi/REUTERS ,

September was an eventful month in Syria. Even as the Western powers led by the United States were predicting a humanitarian catastrophe in the rebel-held areas of Idlib province in western Syria, Russia and Turkey sprang a surprise by announcing in the third week of

September that a deal had been reached whereby the Syrian government would temporarily put on hold its plans for launching a military offensive. Russia and Turkey agreed to establish "a demilitarised zone" that would separate the rebels and the Syrian army, which is determined to purge the last remnants of terrorism from the country. The agreement was announced after a meeting between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin in the Russian resort town of Sochi. President Putin said that the two sides had agreed to the creation of a 20-24-kilometre-wide buffer zone separating the rebel forces from the Syrian army by the middle of October. The rebel fighters, along with their heavy weaponry, will have to exit from the demilitarised zone by October 10. , Turkey now fears that the imminent defeat of the rebels and their jihadist compatriots will trigger a new refugee flow into its territory. Many of the extremists currently holed up in Idlib will also eventually find their way into Turkey, which is among the main backers of the principal rebel groups in Idlib. This motley group of rebels has hard-core jihadists, including those owing allegiance to Al Qaeda outfits such as the Tahrir al Sham. Idlib is the last pocket of resistance following the fall of rebel strongholds in Aleppo, Daraa and Damascus in the last couple of years. , The government in Damascus has been trying to get the rebels there to surrender or defeat them militarily. It was evident, despite forecasts by the West of an imminent attack by government forces, that Damascus was ready to exercise patience. Senior officials in the Donald Trump administration such as Nikki Haley had gone to the ridiculous extent of predicting that the Syrian government was preparing to use poison gas on its people. The Trump administration was evidently waiting for an excuse to bomb Syria again. The Russian government had issued a series of warnings that the rebel groups were preparing to stage a fake chemical attack, like they had done in the past, in order to precipitate a Western military attack on Syria. , Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, speaking at the United Nations General Assembly, issued a strong warning to the terrorist groups and their patrons. "We warn the terrorists and their sponsors that new provocations involving chemical weapons are unacceptable," he declared. He said that reconstruction of the war-torn country should be the priority for the international community and that it should be implemented without any "double standards". He told the media in New York that the American military presence in Syria was illegal and went against U.N. Security Council resolutions. He also said that the United States was protecting terrorist groups in the al-Tanf area. , Reports from the ground in Syria, including from reputed Western correspondents like Robert Fisk, had belied stories of an imminent large-scale aerial and ground attack against the populated parts of Idlib province, which has an estimated three million people, along with 30,000 rebel fighters. The rebels have been evidently told by their patrons such as Turkey to give up fighting. The Syrian government has promised them amnesty or safe passage out of Idlib. The die-hard jihadi fighters, especially those belonging to the al Nusra, are still insisting that they would rather die fighting than surrender., Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov, who is the Special Representative of the Russian President, said in late September that the goal of liberating the whole of Idlib from terrorists remained unchanged and that setting up "de-escalation zones" was only a "temporary measure". Syrian Deputy Prime Minister Walid al Moualem, who is also Foreign Minister, said in his speech at the General Assembly that the U.S., French and Turkish troops operating in Syrian territory, which he described as "occupying forces", should withdraw immediately and "without conditions". He assured the General Assembly that the battle against terrorism was nearing its end and that the need of the hour was to ensure the quick return of millions of Syrians displaced during seven years of bloodshed. Blaming the "illegal coalition" led by the U.S. for the widespread destruction in his country, he said it had "fought everything but terrorism... Instead it has proved that its goals are almost the same as the terrorist groups, mainly fostering chaos, death and destruction.", Israel, a de facto member of the coalition, has been trying to undo the substantive gains made by Syria, Russia, Iran and allies such as Hizbollah in the war against terrorism. Israel has the dubious distinction of having carried out more than 200 air strikes on Syrian government targets in the last two years in its increasingly desperate efforts to stop the decimation of the terror groups by the Syrian army. In recent years, it has been justifying its attacks by saying that the real targets are Iranian military advisers who

have played a crucial role in the defeat of the jihadi forces. Before that, the Israelis said that they were targeting Iranian missiles and armaments meant for the Hizbollah militia in Lebanon that were transiting through Syria. The Russians, for reasons of their own, had decided to look the other way as Israel was allowed a free run over Syrian airspace. Moscow is playing a careful balancing game as it manages friendly relations with both Tel Aviv and Tehran. , But predictably, the Israelis overplayed their hand. In the second week of September, a Russian military surveillance plane inside Syrian airspace was shot down. Israeli fighter jets on a bombing mission over Latakia had taken shelter behind the Russian IL-20 reconnaissance plane as they came under attack from Syrian ground defences. The Russian plane came down in the crossfire. The Israelis had not bothered to inform the Russian ground control either about the presence of the plane or about the mission it was conducting. All 15 crew members on board were killed. , The Kremlin was livid. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who thinks he has "a special relationship" with Putin, tried to blame the Syrian army. The Russian Defence Ministry angrily accused the Israelis of positioning their F-16 jets behind the Russian transport plane. Israel was also accused of not adhering to the one-minute warning system agreed between the two militaries, whereby notice is given to the Russian military before the Israelis decide to strike a military target inside Syria. Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said that the Israelis had deliberately used the Russian surveillance plane as a cover for their own war planes "on the assumption that Syrian air defences would not be operating in the area". Shoigu pledged that Russia would not leave "such provocations unanswered". , The Kremlin seems to have at last decided to end the free run Israel enjoyed over the skies of Syria. Within days of the downing of the Russian plane, the Kremlin announced that it was bringing in the lethal S-300 missile batteries to Syria. Netanyahu had wanted to send a high-level delegation to Moscow to persuade the authorities there about Israel's non-culpability in the downing of the Russian plane. Moscow politely refused to receive it. The Kremlin said there was enough evidence to prove Israel's guilt. The S-300s, which have been compared to the U.S.' Patriot systems, have a range of more than 250 km. The Russians have also installed an electronic system in Syria that is able to distinguish between friendly and enemy aircraft. According to reports, Russia will shortly dispatch two to four S-300 systems to guard Syria's coastline and its borders. More S-300 units will be sent in later. , The Russians have already sent sophisticated electronic equipment to Syria that is able to interrupt the radar and navigation equipment of hostile aircraft. Military experts agree that the deployment of the new missiles will significantly curb Israel's ability to hit targets in Syria at will. If deployed in Damascus, the missile system will be able to monitor the entire Israeli airspace. According to Russian officials, the S-300s will help Syria regain full sovereignty over its airspace as it will now have the capability to close its airspace "where necessary". The "defensive weapons", according to defence analysts, will lead "to the stabilisation of the region"., John Bolton, National Security Adviser to U.S. President Donald Trump, has termed the stationing of the S-300 missiles as "a significant escalation". But Netanyahu has said that it will not stop Israel from continuing with its raids. He told the media that he had got assurances from the Trump administration that it would continue backing Israel's bombing campaign in Syria. "We will continue to act to prevent Iranian build-up in Syria," he said. There are only a handful of Iranian military advisers in Syria. Iran does not need military bases in the region to spread its political influence. Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman has talked of destroying all missile systems in Syria if Israeli planes are targeted on their bombing missions. This prompted Russia to issue a warning that any such act would result in a dramatic escalation of the conflict., There have not been any serious Israeli acts of aggression against Syria since the downing of the Russian plane despite the threats issued by Netanyahu and his Defence Minister. The recent events could in fact hasten the end of the insurrection supported by the West and its allies in Syria. More than 50,000 Syrian refugees have returned home in the last couple of months. Once Idlib is liberated and U.S troops leave the eastern part of Syria, comprehensive peace could once again return to the country.][Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the inauguration of the new airport at Pakyong on September 21 . Photo: PTI , On September 24, the tiny Himalayan state of

Sikkim got its long-awaited airport. Situated at a height of 4,500 feet (1,350 metres) at Pakyong, around 33 kilometres from the State capital of Gangtok, the airport was set up at a cost of a little over Rs. 550 crore. The first greenfield airport in the north-eastern region, it covers an total area of 202 acres (one acre is 0.4 hectare)., The Pakyong airport not only has opened up an alternative route to Sikkim but is expected to boost the State's economy, particularly the tourism sector. Until now, to go to Sikkim one had to either take the train to New Jalpaiguri or a flight to Bagdogra in West Bengal, and from there travel by road to Gangtok, a journey that takes more than three hours., Inaugurating the airport, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said: "This airport has not only reduced the time taken to reach Sikkim, but we have also ensured that it is affordable to the common people by linking it with the Udan Yojana. The Pakyong airport is a symbol of not just beauty but also engineering excellence in the country. The way the mountain was cut, the debris used to fill the valley, and the manner in which the mountain streams were diverted and made to pass from below the airport, is truly an engineering marvel. For this, my heartiest congratulations to all the engineers and workers involved in this project. You have truly pulled off something amazing." Situated just 60 km from the India-China border, the Pakyong airport is also seen to be of great strategic importance for the Indian Air Force., Although the foundation stone for the airport was laid in 2009, a number of problems, including resistance from the local people over land acquisition, delayed the implementation of the project. There were technical problems to be overcome owing to the mountainous terrain., In its press release, the Airports Authority of India stated: "Difficult topography and hostile weather conditions made this project extremely challenging and exciting. An extensive use of Geo-grid soil reinforcement and slope stabilisation was used to maximise the development area. The reinforcement wall on the project is one of the tallest in the world." At present, the airport can handle ATR 72-500 type of aircraft, and the terminal building has a peak-hour handling capacity of 100 passengers., "This airport has been in the making for quite some time now and allows for quick connectivity to the rest of India. Hopefully, we will also have a connection to New Delhi soon. This also opens up our market of floriculture and organic produce as it allows for quick transportation to other parts of the country. We can also expect a boost to tourism," P.D. Rai, Sikkim's Lok Sabha member from the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front, told Frontline.,][

exomoon candidate Kepler-1625b-i, the companion planet and the star in the centre of the star system. An artist's impression. Photo: NASA, ESA, and L. Hustak (STScI) , Astronomers have spotted what could be the first known moon to orbit an exoplanet. Earlier observations last year with NASA's Kepler telescope had hinted at its existence, but with new and better data from the powerful Hubble Space Telescope, astronomers are now more confident that the exomoon, a moon orbiting a planet outside the solar system, is real. , Evidence suggests that it is as big as Neptune, orbiting a gas-giant planet roughly the size of Jupiter (called Kepler-1625b), which, in turn, orbits a star called Kepler-1625. Researchers say that the moon hypothesis is tentative and must be confirmed by follow-up Hubble observations. The moon has been designated as Kepler-1625b-i. The new results are presented in the journal "Science Advances"., Exomoons cannot be imaged directly. Their presence is inferred by their transit in front of a star, momentarily dimming its light, a technique used to detect many of the exoplanets catalogued to date. Being smaller than their companion exoplanets, exomoons are tougher to detect. Searching for exomoons, Alex Teachey and David Kipping, astronomers at Columbia University, analysed data from 284 Kepler-discovered exoplanets with relatively wide orbits—longer than the 30-day orbit period—around their host star. They found a transit signature with intriguing anomalies in one instance in planet Kepler-1625b, suggesting the presence of a moon. The researchers observed the planet for 40 hours using Hubble to study the planet intensively, also using the transit method, obtaining more precise data on the dips of light. They monitored the planet before and during its 19-hour transit across the parent star. But a second, and much smaller, decrease in the star's brightness was also seen by Hubble about 3.5 hours later. They determined that this small dip was consistent with a gravitationally bound moon trailing the planet. , In addition to the second dip, Hubble provided supporting evidence for the moon hypothesis by finding the planet transit occurring more than an

hour earlier than predicted. This is consistent with a planet and moon orbiting a common centre of gravity that would cause the planet to wobble from its predicted location, much the way the earth wobbles as its moon orbits it. "A companion moon is the simplest and most natural explanation for the second dip in the light curve and the orbit-timing deviation," Kipping explained. Large moons do not exist in our own solar system. , The researchers say this may yield new insights into the development of planetary systems. Kepler-1625b-i is estimated to be only 1.5 per cent the mass of Kepler-1625b, which itself is several times the mass of Jupiter. This mass-ratio is similar to the earth-moon system. , In the case of earth-moon and Pluto-Charon systems, the moons are thought to be created through dust left over after rocky planetary collisions. However, Kepler-1625b and its possible satellite are gaseous. So the moon may have formed through a different process. , Kepler-1925b orbits its parent star at a distance similar to the sun-earth distance. However, since both are gaseous, they would be unsuitable for life as we know it.][

The nuclei of Mercury isotopes, unlike any other element, can have two different shapes. After more than 40 years, ISOLDE has solved the mystery of how and why this happens. , Using an unprecedented combination of experimental nuclear physics and theoretical and computational modelling techniques, scientists working at the Isotope mass Separator On-Line facility (ISOLDE) nuclear physics experimental facility at CERN, the Geneva-based European Organisation for Particle Physics, have revealed the true nature of the alternating odd-even shapes of exotic mercury isotopes. The result has been published in the latest issue of "Nature Physics"., The experiment has demonstrated and explained the unique behaviour of mercury isotopes, where the shapes of the nuclei keep shifting between that of a football and a rugby ball., Isotopes are forms of an element that contain the same number of protons in their nuclei but different numbers of neutrons. The properties of different isotopes can be exploited in a variety of ways, including archaeological and historical dating and radiation medicine. Stable isotopes have an optimal neutron-proton ratio. However, as the number of neutrons decreases or increases, the isotope nucleus becomes unstable and its shape must change for stability. This means it will spontaneously transform itself towards a stable isotope of another element through radioactive decay. Isotopes with extreme neutron-proton ratios are typically short-lived, making them difficult to produce and study in the laboratory. ISOLDE at CERN is the only facility in the world where a wide range of exotic isotopes can be studied., In one of the earliest experiments conducted in ISOLDE about 40 years ago, the dramatic nuclear shape staggering in the chain of mercury isotopes was seen for the first time. That result showed that although most of the isotopes with neutron numbers between 96 and 136 have spherical nuclei, those with 101, 103 and 105 neutrons have strongly elongated nuclei, the shape of rugby balls. This dramatic result was, however, difficult to believe., This new experiment used laser ionisation spectroscopy, mass spectrometry and nuclear spectroscopy techniques to take a closer look at how, why and when these quantum phase transitions take place. The researchers not only reproduced the results of the historic experiment (observing isotopes up to mercury 181), they also produced and studied four additional exotic isotopes (atomic mass 177-180); they also discovered the point at which the shape staggering ceases and mercury isotopes return to normal isotope behaviour. Several theories have been advanced to describe what was happening, but none has been able to explain the behaviour convincingly., Bruce Marsh of CERN explained: "Due to the extreme difficulty in producing such exotic nuclei, as well as the computational challenge of modelling such a complex system, the reasons for this shape staggering phenomenon remained unclear." Only now, with the development of new ISOLDE's Resonance Ionisation Laser Ion Source have scientists been able to examine the nuclear structure of these isotopes., Using one of the world's most powerful supercomputers, theorists in Japan performed the most ambitious nuclear shell model calculations to date and have been able to explain the shape staggering effect theoretically. , The calculations show that both nuclear shapes are possible for each mercury isotope, depending on whether it is in the ground or excited state, but most have a football-shaped nucleus in their ground state. The surprise is that the elongated rugby ball shape as the ground state for three of the isotopes.][

The 2018 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine to James Allison and Tasuku Honjo (both on screen) being announced by the Nobel Committee of the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden, on October 1. Photo: Fredrik Sandberg/TT via AP

Figure 1: The three pillars of cancer treatment directed against the cancer cell, and the fourth, immune checkpoint inhibitor, based on unleashing an immune response against the tumour, following the discoveries by Allison and Honjo. Photo: www.nobelprize.org ,

Figure 2: Upper left: Activation of T-cells requires that the T-cell receptor binds to structures on other immune cells recognised as "non-self". A protein functioning as a T-cell accelerator is also required for T-cell activation. CTLA-4 functions as a brake on T-cells that inhibits the function of the accelerator. Lower left: Antibodies (green) against CTLA-4 block the function of the brake leading to activation of T-cells and attack on cancer cells. Upper right: PD-1 is another T-cell brake that inhibits T-cell activation. Lower right: Antibodies against PD-1 inhibit the function of the brake leading to activation of T-cells and highly efficient attack on cancer cells. Photo: www.nobelprize.org ,

Figure 3: Immune checkpoint therapy in non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) treated with anti-PD-1 (adapted from Topalian et al., 2012). The tumour size actually increased after 2 months due to infiltrating immune cells and the tumour size reduced after 4 months , THE body's immune system is programmed to recognise "self" from "non-self" cells—foreign molecules such as bacteria, viruses and parasites—and mount a response to get rid of them. Critical to this response are certain white blood cells called T-cells. T-cells have receptor molecules on their surface that bind to structures recognised as non-self, and this binding triggers the immune response. There are also two kinds of other proteins on the surface of the T-cells, one kind that switches on the immune response and the other that switches it off. These are called "checkpoint proteins"., The former set of checkpoints make the T-cells active when an infection is present and the latter set puts the brakes on the immune system and helps it switch off when the immune cell response is no longer required. Just like in a motor car, an intricate balance between acceleration and braking is essential because otherwise the immune system will go on an overdrive and begin to respond to things that it should not respond to and potentially destroy healthy cells and tissues. Autoimmune disorders are the result of the body's immune system reacting to the body's self cells as if they were non-self or antigenic. , Cancer cells, by producing certain proteins, can often trick the immune system to switch off its T-cells when they should actually be attacking them. These proteins on cancer cells are thus actually activating a certain switch-off molecule on the surface of the T-cells. This year's Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine has been awarded to two key scientists who identified these brake checkpoint molecules on T-cells and invented biological techniques to prevent the cancer cells from activating these, which otherwise would have put brakes on the immune response to cancer. The molecular brakes on T-cells thus remain inactive and the surcharged immune system can now attack the cancer cells. , James Allison, 70, of MD Anderson Cancer Centre at the University of Texas, Houston, and Tasuku Honjo, 76, of Kyoto University are the two immunologists whom the Nobel Academy has chosen for the prestigious award for, as the citation says, "their discovery of cancer therapy by inhibition of negative immune regulation". The two scientists will share the prize money of \$1.1 million equally. , The research of these two laureates has marked a paradigm shift in the approach to cancer therapy. Before their groundbreaking work, the approach was mainly aimed at attacking cancer cells directly through different kinds of drugs that were specific to types of cancer. Here the approach is more universal, where the immune system itself is being primed, or reprogrammed, to unleash T-cells to fight all types of cancer. The technique is referred to as cancer immunotherapy and the corresponding therapeutic agents—drugs that block checkpoint proteins—are called "checkpoint inhibitors". Given the way it works, the technique is also sometimes called "checkpoint blockade therapy"., Their seminal work has laid the foundation for an entirely new clinical approach to treating cancer. The first "checkpoint inhibitor" drug was approved by the United States' Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2011 and within a short period, a number of drugs came into use that have either

completely cured thousands of patients who had no hope, or have prolonged many lives by a decade and more where traditional interventions would have at best extended their lives by a year or two. , "The laureates' discoveries have added a new pillar in cancer therapy [Figure 1]; it represents a completely new principle because, unlike previous strategies, it is not based on targeting the cancer cells but rather the brakes—the checkpoints—of the host immune system," said Klaus Karre, a member of the Nobel Committee for the Physiology or Medicine and an immunologist at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, while describing the work during the announcement. "It's a big step in the fight against cancer. We can now see the long-term outcome of this treatment [since 2011], and it is quite convincing," he added. , In an interview to the popular science magazine Scientific American in 2015, soon after winning the Lasker Award, Allison said: "Traditional therapies are typically drugs that attack mutations causing the cancer... but there are a few problems there including the fact that the tumour becomes resistant to the drug. What we call 'checkpoint blockade' therapy differs in a few ways. We get the immune system to attack the process of carcinogenesis itself... T-cells detect mutant or foreign peptides on the surface of cells to give the immune cells an idea of what is going on. With lung cancer or melanoma [a type of skin cancer] there are hundreds of thousands of mutations... Then once you have T-cells, unlike with chemotherapy or radiation, there is memory. You have T-cells for the rest of your life... The last difference is adaptability. Since your immune system is a dynamic thing, if the tumour changes, the immune system can change its response itself." , In the late 1980s, a protein molecule expressed by T-cells, called CTLA-4 (cytotoxic T-lymphocyte associated protein 4), was isolated and cloned. However, its function was unknown. It is now known that CTLA-4 protein resides intracellularly within resting T-cells but translocates itself rapidly to the surface after T-cell activation and is constantly expressed. In 1994, work by researchers, including Allison, led to the conclusion that CTLA-4 reined in the T-cell activation; that is, it acted as a negative regulator, a brake. This discovery led researchers to find ways of enhancing its expression as a method to develop therapy for autoimmune diseases. , But Allison, then working at Berkeley University, thought otherwise. In a bid to find a cure for cancer, he intended to block the negative regulatory effects of CTLA-4, thereby unleashing a full-scale immune response. He had already developed an antibody that could bind to CTLA-4 and block its function (Figure 2). He also realised that, in contrast to other approaches to cancer therapy, here there was no need to understand which "non-self" molecules the T-cells would recognise, and the strategy was not selective for a particular type of cancer but universal. , Allison and his co-workers performed the first experiment at the end of 1994, which was immediately repeated after the Christmas break. The results of these were spectacular. Mice transplanted with tumours were cured when injected with antibodies that blocked the brake CTLA-4 and unlocked anti-tumour T-cell activity. In 1996, Allison and colleagues also showed that antibodies against CTLA-4 in mice models not only got rid of tumours but also prevented new tumours from forming. Such dramatic results had never been seen before in any therapy for cancer. , In the post-announcement telephonic interview with the official website of the Nobel Prize, Allison said that he had not actually set out to find a cure for cancer. "I was trying to understand how T-cells work. We figured out this one thing about this negative regulator. [I] had this idea that if we just took that off, you know, maybe it would do a better job of killing cancer cells, and sure enough it works!" , "We patented it and I thought everybody would jump at it," the magazine The Scientist quoted him as saying earlier this year. Despite the pharmaceutical industry showing little interest in this crucial finding, Allison was determined in his intense efforts to develop the strategy into a therapy for humans. , That persistence came from his innate interest in cancer, as he told Scientific American in his 2015 interview. "I became particularly interested in cancer because my mother died from lymphoma when I was a kid. I saw the effects of the radiation treatment she was receiving. I also saw the ravages of the treatment on her brothers who also died from cancer. One of her brothers had lung cancer and another had melanoma. I saw personally the toll that the disease takes. More recently my older brother died from metastatic prostate cancer. Both me and my other brother had prostate cancer, too, but we caught it quickly with me and I'm fine. It's had a big impact on my family." , It took two years of peddling his

checkpoint blockade idea to pharmaceutical companies before Allison managed to establish collaboration with a small biotech firm, Medarex, where producing human monoclonal antibodies became possible. In 1999, an anti-CTLA-4 monoclonal antibody, called MDX-010, was developed, which was later named Ipilimumab. Bristol-Myers Squibb of New York City subsequently acquired Medarex and advanced the clinical programme for the new checkpoint inhibitor. , In 2003, Allison and colleagues tested the anti-CTLA-4 antibody in 14 patients with advanced metastatic melanoma (who usually are given one year of life, at best) and found the tumours disappeared in three of them, but still scepticism prevailed. Except for a few immunologists, even the larger medical community did not show much interest. , Michael Curran, an immunologist who worked in Allison's laboratory for a decade, told The Scientist how a journal review of a paper that he, Allison and others had submitted, said: "It is well known that immunotherapy works only in mice." Recognition of Allison's work had to wait until another important clinical study in 2010, when he showed similar striking effects of the therapy in patients with advanced melanoma. , In a 2013 interview to Nature, Allison said: "It was very frustrating. They [the companies] said, 'It may work in mice, but it'll never work in people.' The concept was new and it was so unusual." Finally, in 2011, the FDA approved the drug Ipilimumab, now commercially known as Yervoy, as a treatment for advanced melanoma. , A couple of years before Allison's discovery, across the Pacific, Honjo and his colleagues were looking at another T-cell surface protein called PD-1 (programmed death-1), which they had isolated and cloned in 1992. This, too, was a basic research programme, and not aimed at finding a cure for cancer. , In fact, initially Honjo and colleagues at Kyoto believed that the protein was involved in biochemical pathways regulating apoptosis (cell death that occurs as part of normal growth and development). Hence the name PD-1. Over the next nearly 10 years, Honjo's group studied the protein using a series of elegant experiments and discovered that, like CTLA-4, it was also a checkpoint protein that acted as a brake but operated by a different mechanism (Figure 2). , Alongside, Honjo and colleagues were also attempting to find the ligand (a molecule that binds on to a target protein) that binds with the protein PD-1. Together with the groups of Gordon Freeman at Harvard Medical School and Clive Wood at the Genetics Institute in Massachusetts, they identified the associated ligand, which is called PD-L1. On the basis of the observation that the molecule was expressed not only by macrophages, dendritic cells and additional immune cells but also by certain cancer cells, Freeman and others suggested in a paper that some tumours may use PD-L1 to switch off the anti-tumour response in T-cells. They were the first to do so. It has been reported by Nature that Freeman felt disappointed by the Nobel Committee passing over his contribution to the prize-winning work. , The proposition that the PD-1/PD-L1 pathway could be associated with immune responses to tumours was tested in two studies in 2002, one at the laboratory of Lieping Chen at Mayo Clinic (who actually had identified the ligand PD-L1 as B7-H1 in 1999 but had not studied its binding to PD-1) and another at the laboratory of Honjo. In animal model studies by Honjo and colleagues, PD-1 blockade was also shown to be a potential strategy to fight cancer. This paved the way for utilising PD-1 as a target for treating cancer patients. In fact, their work was the first to also discuss the possible synergistic effects in combination therapy based on CTLA-4 and PD-1 pathways to blockade, which strategy is now being clinically investigated. , After the initial studies that showed the effects of CTLA-4 and PD-1 blockade clinical development has been both dramatic and rapid. Immune checkpoint inhibitor therapy has fundamentally changed the outcome for patients with many types of advanced cancer. , Although an MD (Doctor of Medicine), Honjo had not set out to find a cure for cancer. "Well, you know, biology is such a complex system. We cannot design. Many people tried to find therapy for cancer, but all failed. I never expected my research, working on immune system, would lead to cancer therapy. But, in a sense, I am also fortunate that I thought about it. You know you have to try many things and if you are lucky you can hit, but you have to pursue," he told the Nobel Prize website in his post-announcement interview. , Of the two strategies, checkpoint therapy against PD-1 has proven to be more effective and it has shown positive results in many types of cancer, including lung cancer, renal cancer, lymphoma and melanoma. The checkpoint proteins CTLA-4 and PD-1 are found on T-cells, whereas the ligand PD-L1 is found on cancer

cells., As Freeman has pointed out to Nature, CTLA-4 inhibitors have so far proved to be effective only in melanoma, whereas the FDA has approved drugs that target PD-1 and PD-L1 to treat 13 different cancers. The checkpoint inhibitors against PD-1 include nivolumab (Opdivo) and pembrolizumab (Keytruda), which are used for patients with melanoma, Hodgkin's lymphoma, non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) and cancer of the urinary tract. Those against PD-L1 include atezolizumab (also known as MPDL3280A), which is used as treatment for some people with lung cancer and urothelial cancer. It is also being currently studied for breast cancer and other cancers., "PD-1 and PD-L1 are what work in a really wide variety of people, and our discoveries were foundational there," Freeman has been quoted as saying in Nature. "But CTLA-4 was the first success and Jim Allison had been a real advocate and champion of the idea of immunotherapy," Freeman added. , When asked whether immunotherapy may not be effective against certain types of cancers, Allison said in his Lasker Award interview to Scientific American: "Theoretically, since we are not treating the cancer, the cancer doesn't really matter. Melanoma and lung cancer, where most of this work has been done, both have a lot of mutations. They have hundreds of thousands of mutations per cell and it's the mutations the immune system recognises. When you get to cancers like breast, prostate and kidney, which have smaller numbers of mutations, the drugs aren't quite as effective. Our job now is to figure out how to make immunotherapy effective against those tumours with small numbers of mutations. I think there may be some that don't respond to [immunotherapy] but I'm pretty optimistic that we will be able to deal with a very large number of types of cancer.", Echoing these thoughts, Honjo said in his interview: "Well, there are still several problems, but two are most important. One is, still only 30 per cent of patients are responding. So we wish to have some biomarkers to predict whether he or she is responsive or not. Secondly, definitely we wish to improve the efficacy of this treatment... I believe these two problems will be solved in the near future.", Also, at present, similar to other cancer therapies, adverse side effects are seen to checkpoint inhibitor therapy as well, which can be serious and even fatal. They are caused by a hypercharged immune response leading to autoimmune response, but it is believed that they are usually manageable. Intense continuing research is currently focussed on elucidating mechanisms of action, with the aim of improving therapies and reducing side effects., Although checkpoint inhibitor therapy has revolutionised the treatment of tumours, many patients still do not respond, as Honjo has pointed out. But there are also many long-term survivors. In other forms of cancer treatment, the Nobel Assembly observed in its description of the scientific background to the discovery, durable recurrence-free survival is extremely rare, particularly among patients with certain forms of cancer like advanced melanoma and NSCLC (Figure 3). , New clinical studies have indicated that combination therapy, targeting both CTLA-4 and PD-1, can be even more effective, as demonstrated in patients with melanoma. Thus, Allison and Honjo have inspired efforts to combine different strategies to release the brakes on the immune system with the aim of eliminating tumour cells even more efficiently. A large number of checkpoint therapy trials are currently under way against most types of cancer, and new checkpoint proteins are being tested as targets., Immunotherapy is actually not new. It goes back to 150 years ago when infectious agents were used to stimulate immune responses to cancer. The first such attempts were made by German clinicians. But the most well known for such studies in this field are by the American surgeon William Coley, who inoculated live, cultured Streptococci bacteria to treat malignant tumours in the early 1890s. However, the practice fell from favour with the medical community as the clinical outcomes varied wildly. Today the treatment for bladder tumours is akin to this approach where the bacillus Calmette-Guerrin is administered. , In the early 20th century, even though the mechanism underlying the principle of stimulating the immune system with infectious agents to cure cancer was not understood, the idea that the immune system could be boosted to influence tumour development prevailed. As Allison has pointed out: "The fact that the immune system could be used to treat cancer was first proposed in 1909 by Paul Ehrlich, and he had the idea about antibodies. He thought the immune system had antibodies that could eliminate tumours. The question was, what antibodies could we use? The reason I think there is so much excitement about checkpoint blockade is it's relatively easy. You inject an antibody into a person. And you target

the immune system and unleash it, and there are many different ways to do it that can be combined. It's the renaissance of immunotherapy. I would say it's the rebirth of immunotherapy rather than it's new.", The future course of development in this field, in which researchers across the world are seriously engaged in, is to improve the understanding of the mechanisms of the therapy, in particular the ones leading to adverse events., As the Nobel Assembly's descriptive note points out, the identification of CTLA-4 and PD-1/PD-L1 is only the beginning, and additional molecules with similar functions are currently under investigation in different laboratories. Despite attempts by scientists to engage the immune system to fight cancer, clinical development towards a general approach to treating all types of cancer was absent until checkpoint inhibitor therapy arrived thanks to the seminal discoveries by Allison and Honjo. With the unprecedented research in immune checkpoint therapy that their discoveries have unleashed, one can expect major discoveries at all levels in the field that should benefit humankind a great deal more in the years to come.]]

Vikhar Ahmed Sayeed with the award he received from the Magsaysay Award winner P. Sainath. Also present are Dr A. L. Sharada (right), director, Population First, and Cecilia Costa, Cooperation Manager at the European Union Delegation to India. Photo: by special arrangement , Vikhar Ahmed Sayeed of Frontline in Bengaluru recently won two awards. The Laadli Media & Advertising Award for Gender Sensitivity 2017 in the "Investigative Story-Print Category" was for his story titled "A Tale of Exploitation" (Frontline, March 31, 2017). , The citation reads: "Vikhar Ahmed Sayeed highlights the medical malpractice of unwarranted hysterectomies on poor and illiterate women in Kalaburagi district of Karnataka. He brings to light the exploitation of the women by doctors and the effects of the unwanted hysterectomies on women's health and work.", The award was presented by the Magsaysay Award winner P. Sainath in New Delhi on September 14., The 12th edition of the Press Institute of India-International Committee of the Red Cross presented Vikhar a Special Award for the best article on a humanitarian subject. , The award-winning article, "Beware the ticks of Kyasanur", was published in the Frontline issue of June 23, 2017. It looked at the long history of the Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD), or "Monkey Fever" and at the innovations in health care around this zoonotic disease. The disease, which is sometimes fatal, spreads through ticks and is endemic to the region of the Western Ghats. , The PII-ICRC awards are designed to promote and recognise outstanding work of journalists in the field of humanitarian reporting. This year's theme was "Changing Lives through Innovation in Health and Sanitation". , The senior journalists Usha Rai and Ammu Joseph and the senior photographer Usha Kris presented the award—a certificate and a cheque for Rs.20,000—to Vikhar in Chennai on September 21.]]

A woman works on packaging rim steels for export, in Hangzhou, China. During the 1990s and after, much of the export of manufactures came from China. Photo: REUTERS ,

Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Facebook Inc., speaks during a product launch event in San Jose, California, U.S. In 2015, 17 of the ICT majors accounted for close to a fifth of the profits of the top 100 transnational firms. Photo: David Paul Morris/Bloomberg , Voices questioning the claim that nations and the majority of their people stand to gain from global trade are growing louder. The one difference now is that the leading protagonist of protectionism is not a developing country but the global hegemon United States under Donald Trump. Free trade benefits big corporations with production facilities abroad, Trump argues, while harming those looking for a decent livelihood working in the U.S. With time, Trump has made clear that his words are not mere rhetoric, matching them with tariffs that have frightened European and North American allies and U.S. corporations, besides troubling the likes of China and Japan., A nation that pushed for freer trade is now building economic walls along its borders. This turn in policy at the metropolitan core not only undermines the case for free trade among other nations but revives arguments usually advanced by developing countries. The benefits of trade under capitalism, they hold, tend to be distributed unequally among nations. They sometimes fail to mention that the gains are asymmetrically distributed at the national level as well, favouring the more powerful., Such arguments have traditionally been disputed by international institutions dominated by developed countries, especially the institutional triumvirate—the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank

and the World Trade Organisation (WTO)—that serves as the intellectual fountainhead for free-trade advocacy. , Not surprisingly, pushed by the scepticism over free trade that Trump has managed to kindle, the three have come together once more, to put together a "report" (released last month and titled Reinenergizing Trade and Inclusive Growth) extolling the virtues of a world without restrictions on the cross-border flow of goods and services. In the words of WTO Director General Roberto Azevedo (ironically a Brazilian whom experience must have taught otherwise): "Trade has been vital in lifting living standards and reducing poverty over the years but much more remains to be done. Many WTO members recognise that improvements are necessary in many areas of trade policy to keep up with the evolving needs of their economies and their people. This report is a welcome contribution to ongoing discussions on reinenergizing the trading system to the benefit of all.", However, any discerning reader of the report would be disappointed by its pedestrian and unsubstantiated set of assertions (as opposed to arguments). The report takes for granted the "benefits that trade and trade reform can provide for economic growth and inclusiveness" and concludes that in recent times the world has been doing badly in terms of trade growth because "reform", or trade liberalisation, has slowed., While reiterating the need to persist with "trade reform", the report laments that this has been inadequately extended to the increasingly important services area and argues that opening up areas like e-commerce would lift living standards and reduce poverty because medium and small enterprises would ostensibly benefit. No mention here of the domination of e-commerce by global giants like Amazon and Walmart and of the effects of their presence on the retail trade populated by small players. What is striking about the report is that there is not even an effort to revisit arguments about the distribution of gains from trade. The tone is that of a preacher who finds no need to establish what is right, of bearing the burden of proof., Compare this with the much more conceptually rich and empirically grounded Trade and Development Report 2018 from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), candidly subtitled Power, Platforms and the Free Trade Delusion. The report notes that during the period from the mid 1980s to the global financial crisis of 2008, a substantial part of the increase in global trade was contributed by the developing world, especially East and South-East Asia, which was also home to the faster growing economies. This was because while liberalisation resulted in freer flows of capital and technology, labour was still largely immobile., Capital flowed to a few developing countries to benefit from access to a reserve of cheap labour, initially in the second-tier, newly industrialising economies such as Malaysia and Thailand in Asia and then in China. As a result, these economies accounted for a growing share of the global production and export of manufactures. South-South trade also increased because of the growing importance of global value chains (GVCs), with individual developing countries integrated as partial producers of goods, importing inputs and capital good and exporting semi-finished products. Thus, in 2016, East Asia accounted for 7 out of every 10 dollars of manufactures exported by developing countries. "Asia alone accounted for about 88 per cent of developing country gross exports of manufactures to the world, and for 93 per cent of South-South trade in manufactures, while East Asia alone accounted for 72 per cent of both.", Moreover, during the 1990s and after, much of the export of manufactures came from one country, China. This had its impact on China's contribution to output growth as well. Between 1990 and 2016, the share of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) bloc in global output rose from 5.4 to 22.2 per cent. But if China is removed from this group, the remaining (or the RIBS) saw their share increase from 3.7 to only 7.4 per cent. China stands out as an exception in other senses as well. Between 1995 and 2014, most developing countries saw a fall in the share of domestic value added in the value of their manufactured exports, with the fall in the case of India, South Africa and South Korea being as much as 13, 12 and 6 per cent. Integrated into a chain involving imports, processing and exports, less of the value of the exported product was being retained as income generated at home. On the other hand, the value added share accruing to China in its exports of manufactures rose by 12 per cent., UNCTAD attributes this striking difference to the active industrial policies geared to enhancing domestic value added adopted by China. It is well known that despite its decision to join the WTO, China has managed to ensure a high degree

of state control and management of its export trajectory, leading to the criticisms of “unfair trade” currently being levelled against the country by the U.S. and its European allies. But, as developed countries recognised in their industrial infancy, and Trump reiterates now, the idea that free trade policies deliver more gains to a country, as argued by the triumvirate, is not supported by the evidence. Rather, what seems crucial is the adoption of an industrial policy explicitly aimed at neutralising, at least partially, the inequalising effects of participation in global trade through integration in GVCs., Such intervention can also make a difference to the domestic distribution of the benefits of growth. Overall, the evidence is that, even to the extent that world trade grows, the benefits of that growth accrue to a few global corporations and their junior “business partners” in developing countries. UNCTAD’s estimates relating to 2014 show that on average across countries, the top 1 per cent of exporting firms accounted for 57 per cent of the export of goods (excluding oil and services), the top 5 per cent for more than 80 per cent, and the top 25 per cent for almost all of a country’s exports. Associated with this was a redistribution of incomes derived in favour of capital and away from labour. Information collated from the World Input-Output Database shows that globally the share of capital in exported value added in manufacturing GVCs rose from 44.8 per cent in 2000 to 47.8 in 2014. In India’s case, the corresponding figures were 56.6 per cent and 60.6 per cent. In China, on the other hand, the share of labour rose from 43 to 50.4 per cent, while that of capital fell from 57 to 49.6 per cent., It is against this background that the UNCTAD report examines whether, as suggested by the report from the triumvirate, the growing importance of services, especially those linked to or enabled by digital technologies, offers new opportunities to developing countries, including India. Unfortunately, here too, the combination of deep pockets and network effects (in which all users of a network gain when the number of users increases) favours “winner-takes-all” outcomes, leading to the dominance of a few giants, whether in product software or in areas like e-commerce and digital payments. Moreover, the access to data, mined while offering digital consumers free services, has resulted in a burgeoning business involving the use of such data for commercial purposes. As a result, information and communications technology (ICT) giants now feature among the top 100 transnational firms, and by 2015, 17 of them accounted for a quarter of the market capitalisation of the top 100 and close to a fifth of their profits. So, here too, free trade benefits a few., This calls for three kinds of policies. Anti-trust measures that curb monopoly and prevent restrictive trade practices. Privacy laws that require informed consent before collecting and using data on consumers. And measures such as data localisation and regulated transfer that prevent the monopolisation of data by transnational firms and local monopolies. In sum, policies similar to that needed for successful late industrialisation are required in digital services as well., The evidence-based arguments presented in the UNCTAD report are telling. They reveal why the votaries of free trade as a panacea for underdevelopment are victims of delusion. They also make it clear why the assertions of the free trade triumvirate amount to just hype not justified by facts.][

Oriental darter. Photo: SUBASH JEYAN ,

The Periyar river, picture taken in May. ,

Salim Ali crossing the Periyar in 1933, with his car mounted on two

boats. Photo: Photo courtesy: Thattekad bird sanctuary ,

Sri Lankan frogmouth. Photo: SUBASH JEYAN ,

Malabar grey hornbill. Photo: SUBASH JEYAN ,

R. Sugathan, a scientist at the bird monitoring cell, Thattekad Bird Sanctuary.

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Red-whiskered bulbul. Photo: SUBASH JEYAN ,

Little cormorant. Photo: SUBASH JEYAN ,

Blue-faced malkoha. Photo: SUBASH JEYAN ,

Malabar grey hornbill. Photo: SUBASH JEYAN ,

Magpie Robin Photo: SUBASH JEYAN ,

White-cheeked barbet. Photo: SUBASH JEYAN ,

Malabar trogon. Photo: SUBASH JEYAN ,

Greater racket-tailed drongo. Photo: SUBASH JEYAN ,

Orange-headed thrush. Photo: SUBASH JEYAN ,

Yellow-browed bulbul. Photo: SUBASH JEYAN ,

A pair of Sri Lankan frogmouth. Photo: SUBASH JEYAN ,
 The flimsy nest of the Sri Lankan frogmouth with the remains of an egg. The bird
 has only one breeding season in a year, during which it lays only one egg. ,
 Brahminy kite. Photo: DR GIRIDHAR VIJAY ,
 Malabar parakeet. Photo: DR GIRIDHAR VIJAY ,
 White-bellied blue flycatcher. Photo: DR GIRIDHAR VIJAY ,
 Flame-throated bulbul. Photo: DR GIRIDHAR VIJAY ,
 Golden-fronted leafbird. Photo: DR GIRIDHAR VIJAY ,
 Red spurfowl. Photo: DR GIRIDHAR VIJAY ,
 Red spur fowl (male). Photo: DR GIRIDHAR VIJAY ,
 Jungle fowl. Photo: DR GIRIDHAR VIJAY ,
 Brown wood owl. Photo: DR GIRIDHAR VIJAY ,

THE Thattekad bird sanctuary in the Western Ghats in Kerala is known chiefly for the Sri Lankan frogmouth and other birds endemic to the region. The sanctuary owes its existence to an accident of history. In 1932 Sri Chithirai Thirunal Balarama Varma, the Maharaja of Travancore (now part of Kerala), asked the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Mumbai, if it would like to conduct a bird survey in his kingdom. Salim Ali, who would later come to be known as the birdman of India, was working as a guide-lecturer at BNHS. He had conducted a bird survey in the princely state of Hyderabad in 1931 and 1932. The British curator of BNHS asked Salim Ali to conduct a similar survey in Travancore and Cochin. Salim Ali readily agreed. The Maharaja had earmarked a princely sum of Rs.10,000 for the project., In February 1933, Salim Ali and his wife, Tehmina, set out by train from Bombay to Madras. Since Salim Ali wanted to begin the survey in Munnar, they travelled by road to Munnar via Coimbatore. At Marayur, N.G. Pillai, the representative of the Maharaja and curator of the Trivandrum zoo, joined them, presumably to help Salim Ali negotiate with officialdom easily. Dr R. Sugathan, a protege of Salim Ali who is a scientist at the bird monitoring cell in the Thattekad sanctuary, recalls that Salim Ali spent about a month at Marayur surveying the bird life in the shola forests., After studying Munnar, Salim Ali wanted to survey the area around Kumarakom near Kottayam. To reach Kumarakom, he had to come down the western side of the Western Ghats on the only available road that wound its way through thick forest areas in Mankulam, Pooyamkutty, Thattekad and Kothamangalam before ending at Aluva near Cochin., The Aluva-Munnar road owes its origin to the compulsions of commerce. The British tea estate owners in Munnar used to send their produce to Top Station, from where a ropeway carried it to Bodinayakannur in Theni district of Tamil Nadu to be transported by road to Madras for shipment to England. The ships had to go all the way around Sri Lanka. Finding a way to ship the produce directly from the Cochin port would shorten the journey time considerably and also lower expenses. The British made a slight alignment to a bridle path used by tribal people that connected Munnar to Cochin, widened it and constructed a ghat road. The road, all of 45 kilometres long, had around 15 culverts and bridges. Along the road, at every 16 km there was a dak or forest bungalow consisting of a kitchen and one or two rooms. The British used the road to transport tea bags on the backs of bullocks and buffaloes to Cochin., Salim Ali and his companions were coming down this road from Munnar on their way to Cochin in 1933. Sugathan says: "When they reached Thattekad in February 1933, it was evening, so they decided to stay at the dak bungalow on the banks of the Periyar. Seeing the rich birdlife around him, Salim Ali told Pillai that he wanted to stay there for a few days. He ended up staying in Thattekad for 12 days. He recorded over 165 species of birds during that period. What was an unscheduled stop became one of the focal points of the bird survey. Today, 330 bird species, 300 of them endemic to the area, have been recorded in the Thattekad bird sanctuary, also known as the Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary., The bird diversity of Kerala, in particular Thattekad, left a deep impression on Salim Ali. He noted a "curious similarity between the fauna and flora of the higher hills of Kerala forming part of the southern Western Ghats complex... on the one hand and the Eastern Himalaya, West China, Burma and Malaysia on the other" (The Fall of a Sparrow, Salim Ali, OUP, pages 81-82). He wondered about the continuities in the flora and fauna when the two regions were "separated by more than 2,000 kilometres of very different terrain ecologically"., While it is for experts to explain what he called an anomaly, in his autobiography, Salim Ali is forthcoming about his Travancore and Cochin bird survey: "Of all my regional bird surveys between the years 1930 and 1950—which I

regard as the most productive period of my career—perhaps the one that gave me the greatest satisfaction both as to the fieldwork and writing up its results was the ornithological survey of Travancore-Cochin which later provided the basis for my book *The Birds of Kerala*” (*The Fall of a Sparrow*, page 81)., With regard to the birdlife in Kerala, he wrote: “For richness and diversity of birdlife Kerala stands, in my estimation—at least stood at the time of the survey fifty years ago—as undisputed No.1. There were certain localities in particular, for example Thattakad [sic] on the Periyar river in northern Travancore, which linger in my memory as the richest bird habitat in peninsular India I have known—comparable only with the Eastern Himalaya” (*The Fall of a Sparrow*, page 84)., Fast forward almost 50 years to 1982. Salim Ali and Sugathan happened to run into K.P. Nooruddin, the then Minister for Forests in Kerala, at the Bombay airport. The Minister told Salim Ali that he had read about his survey work in Kerala and wanted to commemorate that feat undertaken 50 years ago. Upon hearing that Kerala did not have a bird sanctuary, Salim Ali asked the Minister whether he could help establish one. The Minister readily agreed and got back with a formal proposal in late 1982., The responsibility of deciding the location fell to Sugathan and Dr Vijayan, another student of Salim Ali. Says Sugathan: “Salim Ali asked me to visit [along with Vijayan] the 21 sites he had visited in 1933 and find out their present status. We covered some other areas too and gave our report in six months. Of all the surveyed areas, we thought Thattekad was the best one. There was one other place that was equally good: Vazhachal. But Thattekad had greater bird diversity. A dam constructed across the Periyar near Thattekad in 1962 led to the creation of a big reservoir which attracted about 30 species of waterbirds. [Salim Ali had observed only two species of waterbirds during his survey in 1933.] So we recommended Thattekad., “The bird sanctuary, the first in Kerala, covered an area of 25.16 square km with two rivers [the Periyar and the Kuttampuzha] and two streams [the Urulanthanni and the Kolambethodu] forming a natural boundary...”, The topographical location of the sanctuary is unique. It is situated in peninsular India in the Western Ghats which extends from the Tapi in Gujarat to just short of Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu, for about 1,500 km, and in Sugathan’s words, “lies squat in the path of migratory birds, forcing them to stop here”. The highest point of the Western Ghats, the Anamudi peak, at 8,800 feet (2,682 metres), is only 22 km east of Thattekad (altitude 35m–523 m). There are 13 or 14 different habitats as one ascends from Thattekad to Anamudi, from high altitude shola forests to evergreen moist deciduous forests, each having its own unique flora and fauna., But, the Thattekad of 1983 was very different from the one that Salim Ali saw in 1933. He recorded that on both sides of the river there were thick forests. He said he encountered elephants, plenty of bison, gaurs, king cobras and other wildlife. Incidentally, in a photograph showing Salim Ali crossing the Periyar with his car strapped onto boats one could see the banks of the Periyar denuded of trees. The British had, some years earlier, discovered rubber cultivation. It was in Palamattom, about 5 km upstream of Thattekad on the Periyar, that the British started the first rubber plantations in Kerala., When rubber began to be cultivated on a large scale, labourers were brought in to work in the plantations. These labourers settled down with their families in the clearings on the fringes of the forest. In the 1980s, Salim Ali wrote: “Since the survey, and particularly since our Independence, I have visited Kerala every few years and been more and more depressed and scandalised each time by the mindless vandalism being perpetrated by successive State governments and crooked politicians in the devastation of virgin evergreen forests to settle repatriates, or for so-called ‘development’ projects such as dams for hydroelectric power and raw material for wood-based industries” (*The Fall of a Sparrow*, page 84)., Sugathan says the area was not exposed to the outside world until the early 1930s and all the encroachments and degradation of the forest along the Periyar up to Pooyamkutty started in the 1930s. Since the rubber plantations made the area accessible, what was once a virgin forest became a secondary forest. After Independence, too, valuable timber such as rosewood, mahogany and teak was extracted illegally. “That was still going on when we started the sanctuary in 1983. By that time, most of the animals that Salim Ali saw in 1933 had been wiped out because of large-scale poaching. Only the smaller birds were left.”, Once the sanctuary was started, poaching declined because of the protective measures that were introduced and the animal population increased

slowly. "In 1983, there was just a single herd of elephants here. Thanks to improved management practices, the elephant population had gone up to 22 in 1994-95. In a recent census, we counted over 40 elephants inside the sanctuary, all permanent residents," says Sugathan., Now the sanctuary can claim to have even a tigress. "It doesn't stay here permanently but visits just twice or thrice a year," says Sugathan. "In order for tigers to stay permanently, big kills are needed. Since there is no gaur, or bison, in the sanctuary, the tigress does not stay here permanently. We've got three or four leopards here. Two years ago, one pair had a cub. We have bears also now. The adjoining forest areas have gaur, but because of the intervening human habitation they are unable to enter the sanctuary. We are trying to introduce gaur in Thattekad," he says., As for birdlife, the most important bird the sanctuary lost was the great Indian hornbill and the Malabar pied hornbill. These two birds were plentiful during the time of Salim Ali's survey. "We have lost these birds because their food availability was lost. They are mainly frugivorous birds. They move from one area of the forest to another depending on the fruiting of the ficus tree. In almost all the areas, ficus trees were gone. People had cut down the trees and removed even the dead trees that provided nesting cavities for hornbills. Hornbills nest in a particular tree for years together. Because of their huge timber value, people had cut and removed such trees. So, since they lost their feeding and breeding habitat, hornbills left this place," says Sugathan., Now, hornbills have started coming back thanks to the efforts taken by the Forest Department to plant ficus and jamun trees in the sanctuary. About five years ago, when the trees began fruiting, hornbills were sighted. The birds have not started nesting in the sanctuary, but Sugathan is sure that in another five years they will start nesting and stay in Thattekad permanently., The sanctuary had also lost the gaur, the Nilgiri langur and the lion-tailed macaque because of poaching. The Nilgiri langur, hunted for its meat which was used in the making of an ayurvedic medicine, was wiped out in the sanctuary. "But after about 35 years of conservation, there is now a troop of the Nilgiri langur, numbering five or six, in the sanctuary," says Sugathan., The Sri Lankan frogmouth is the sanctuary's deservedly most famous success story., About 13 species of frogmouth are found all over the world, of which two are found in India. The Sri Lankan frogmouth is endemic to the Western Ghats and Sri Lanka. In the 18th century, Europeans recorded the sighting of the bird, and the BNHS museum has four skins collected by them. Until Sugathan set out on his quest to find the bird in the Western Ghats, the skins were the only known evidence of the bird in India., How Sugathan found the frogmouth is a tale best told in his own words: "In 1976, when I was with Dr Salim Ali, he was revising the Red Data book. When you revise the book every five years or so, you have to assess the current status of endangered and extinct bird species. Salim Ali was not sure about the current status of four or five species. One of them was the Sri Lankan frogmouth. Until then there had been no confirmed record of the bird's presence for more than 80 years. If a species has not been seen for 50 years, its status is officially considered as 'extinct'. Salim Ali was about to enter 'extinct' for the Sri Lankan frogmouth but he had his doubts because it is a shy nocturnal bird and so could have escaped notice. To make sure the bird was really extinct, he asked me to carry out a survey. Since nobody alive then had seen the bird and nobody had records of its call, we had to locate the bird through visual identification alone. This is where the four skins available with BNHS was really helpful. Salim Ali asked me to cover the entire known habitat of the frogmouth by foot. Through the Europeans' previous sighting, we knew that its habitat was below 4,000 ft (1,219m), in thick evergreen forest, especially bamboo and cane forest., "So in 1977, I started from Tapi in Gujarat, along with a helper. We passed through Khandala, Lonavla, Pune, Goa, Chikmagalur, and walked down the entire Western Ghats. We passed human habitation very rarely. When my rations were over, my helper would go to the nearest tribal settlement and procure them. Eventually, I came to the Nilgiri junction where the Eastern Ghats branches off from the Western Ghats, and came to the virgin forest area on the Kunthi river in Silent Valley in Kerala., "At that point we'd run out of rations and so my helper went to Attappadi to get rations. It would take a couple of days for the journey. While he was gone, I busied myself surveying the birdlife in the area. In the evening, I heard the sound of elephants from the river and I thought I'd go and watch them since that was the only

'entertainment'. I was sitting on a rock close to the river, watching the elephants. Between the elephants and me there was a dead tree in the water. Suddenly, I saw one broken branch of the tree move. I took out my binoculars and began looking at the tree when a bird alighted on a branch and, sitting erect, looked as if it was an extension of the branch., "It was the Sri Lankan frogmouth. It was similar to the skins at the BNHS, with the same wide mouth with bristles near the beak.... I didn't have a camera with me at the time. My helper came the next day with the rations and I told him that we would be staying there until we located the bird again. On the third day my helper found two of these birds. We found out that they roosted in the same tree during daytime. I made a tree-top shelter and stayed there for about 50 days to record its calls and movement pattern in flight. Once these and the habitat they preferred became known, it became easy to locate more birds. Thereafter, I could locate up to about 26 birds., "In Thattekad, we found just four birds [two pairs] during a survey conducted in 1982. I suggested giving special emphasis to the conservation of the frogmouth. So, in selected areas we planted trees preferred by the frogmouth and gave special protection to such areas. By 1997, we had about 10 pairs. Now we have about 32 pairs. The frogmouth is a slow breeder. It has only one breeding season in a year, during which it lays only one egg, in a nest which is very light and flimsy. So, it is all the more gratifying to see them flourishing.", The unprecedented rainfall and floods in Kerala in August has impacted the sanctuary, too. Sugathan says that while the core forest areas remain largely unaffected because they were not flooded, it is a different story as far as the waterbodies in the sanctuary are concerned. The sanctuary is facing an acute water shortage mainly because sand deposits and silt have filled up the rivers, streams and waterbodies. As a result they have lost the capacity to store water. About 35 species of waterbirds migrate to Thattekad from October. This year, they have already started arriving. but there is no water in the wetlands. Also, since the floods, new fish species have been found in the rivers and some old ones have disappeared. This will affect the feeding habit of migratory waterbirds and force them to find alternative habitats, Sugathan says., Unlike Salim Ali, I did not have to wait for ferries to cross the Periyar. Used as I am to rivers "baring their sand ribs" in summer, it was quite a sight to see the mighty Periyar in full flow. I thought I had chosen a good time to go to Thattekad. The monsoon would not start until about June., Since it was early May, I knew that most of the migratory birds would have left, but I was as keen to sight the resident birds. I had not counted on the early onset of the monsoon and the rain gods draping everything with a veil of water. For most of the three days I was there, the skies opened up and I could not witness for myself the legendary birdlife of Thattekad. The veil only lifted to reveal occasional tantalising glimpses. I was staying with the mother-son team of Sudha Amma and Gireesh Chandran, who seem to know the Thattekad forest and roosting habits of its denizens inside out. Within the short time available to us, when it was not raining, they were able to take me to the roosting spots of the Sri Lankan frogmouth (I was able to sight not one but three pairs) and the Malabar trogon., Thattekad may no longer be the place it was during the time of Salim Ali's visit. In fact, in his autobiography he says it has become a travesty of what it once was. But especially in these times of vanishing ecosystems, it is what it is, extremely valuable and, for me, worth coming back to one more time to see the place in its full splendour., , 1. Ali, Salim (1985): The Fall of a Sparrow, OUP., 2. Ali, Salim (1999): Birds of Kerala, revised by R. Sugathan and edited by J.C. Daniel, Kerala Forests & Wildlife Department, (third edition)., 3. Ali, Salim (2003): The Book of Indian Birds, OUP, first published in 1941.,][, Oriental darter.

Photo: SUBASH JEYAN

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The Periyar river, picture taken in May.

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Salim Ali crossing the Periyar in 1933, with his car mounted on two boats.

Photo: Photo courtesy: Thattekad bird sanctuary

, Sri Lankan frogmouth.

Photo: SUBASH JEYAN

,

Malabar grey hornbill.

Photo: SUBASH JEYAN

, R. Sugathan, a scientist at the bird monitoring cell, Thattekad Bird Sanctuary. ,

Red-whiskered bulbul.

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,
Little cormorant.

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,
Blue-faced malkoha.

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,
Malabar grey hornbill.

Photo: SUBASH JEYAN

, Magpie Robin

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,
White-cheeked barbet.

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,
Malabar trogon.

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Greater racket-tailed drongo.

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Orange-headed thrush.

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,
Yellow-browed bulbul.

Photo: SUBASH JEYAN

,
A pair of Sri Lankan frogmouth.

Photo: SUBASH JEYAN

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The flimsy nest of the Sri Lankan frogmouth with the remains of an egg. The bird has only one breeding season in a year, during which it lays only one egg.

,
Brahminy kite.

Photo: DR GIRIDHAR VIJAY

,
Malabar parakeet.

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,
White-bellied blue flycatcher.

Photo: DR GIRIDHAR VIJAY

,
Flame-throated bulbul.

Photo: DR GIRIDHAR VIJAY

,
Golden-fronted leafbird.

Photo: DR GIRIDHAR VIJAY

,
Red spurfowl.

Photo: DR GIRIDHAR VIJAY

,
Red spur fowl (male).

Photo: DR GIRIDHAR VIJAY

,
Jungle fowl.

Photo: DR GIRIDHAR VIJAY

,
Brown wood owl.

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