



NEARBY



Boycott everything Kashmiri: Tathagata Roy

GUWAHATI
Meghalaya Governor
Tathagata Roy on Tuesday
tweeted that he was "inclined
to agree" with an unnamed
retired Army officer's call to
boycott everything Kashmiri,
including the Amarnath
Yatra, as a response to the
Pulwama suicide bombing
that killed more than 40
CRPF personnel on February
14. His tweets have attracted
sharp reactions with some
saying his comments virtually
absolved Pakistan by shifting
the blame for the attack on
Kashmiris.

NATION ▶ PAGE 6

OPPORTUNITIES ▶ PAGE 2
DELHI METRO ▶ 6 PAGES

AIADMK signs pact with BJP, PMK

Allots five Lok Sabha seats to national party, seven to ally in the State

T. RAMAKRISHNAN
CHENNAI

The All India Anna Dravida
Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK)
on Tuesday inked
pacts with the Pattali Makkal
Katchi (PMK) and the Bharatiya
Janata Party (BJP) for the
Lok Sabha election, by allotting
seven and five seats
respectively.

This leaves 28 seats, in-
cluding one in the Union Ter-
ritory of Puducherry, availa-
ble to the AIADMK and other
possible allies.

Support in byelection

The PMK and the BJP
pledged support to the ruling
party in the by-election
to 21 Assembly constituencies,
expected to be held
along with the Lok Sabha

Joining hands

AIADMK alliance for Lok Sabha elections

TOTAL NO. OF SEATS

Tamil Nadu: 39

Puducherry: 1

SEATS ALLOTTED SO FAR

BJP: 5

PMK: 7 + 1 Rajya Sabha seat

Piyush Goyal addressing
the media after the deal
was concluded in Chennai
on Tuesday. PTI

AIADMK: Seats to be finalised after
allotment to other allies (Indiya
Jananayaga Katchi, New Justice Party,
Puthiya Tamizhagam, and DMDK)

PIYUSH GOYAL ADDRESSING THE MEDIA AFTER THE DEAL WAS CONCLUDED IN CHENNAI ON TUESDAY. PTI



election. It was after a gap of
10 years, for the Lok Sabha
election, that the AIADMK
has reached an understand-
ing with the PMK and after
an interval of 15 years, with
the BJP. On both occasions,
the Dravidian party's allies
drew a blank.

Chief Minister and
AIADMK co-coordinator
Edappadi K. Palaniswami
and Deputy Chief Minister
and party coordinator O.
Panneerselvam signed the
agreement with the PMK.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

Congress seals pact with DMK

B. KOLAPPAN
CHENNAI

The Congress and the DMK
completed seat-sharing
talks and a formal
announcement will be
made in Chennai, TNCC
President K.S. Alagiri said.

"We are satisfied with the
number of seats offered by
the DMK. Either Ahamed
Patel or Ghulam Nabi Azad
or Mukul Wasnik will visit
the city and make the
announcement," he said.
DMK sources said the
Congress would get nine
seats in the State and the
lone seat in Puducherry.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

Pakistan will hit back if India strikes, says Imran

Guarantees action if given actionable intelligence

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Breaking his silence on the
Pulwama terror attack, Pak-
istani Prime Minister Imran
Khan on Tuesday warned India
that Islamabad would re-
taliate if New Delhi decided
to take punitive military ac-
tion against it.

In a televised address, Mr.
Khan said, "If you think that
you will launch any kind of
attack on Pakistan, Pakistan
will not just think about re-
taliation, Pakistan will re-
taliate."

Speaking five days after
the car-bomb strike carried
out by the Pakistan-based
Jaish-e-Mohammed, he said,
"There will be no other op-
tion [for Pakistan] but to
retaliate."

Using a mix of Urdu and
English, he said, "We all
know that it's in a person's
hands to begin a war, but it's
not in his hands to end a
war. Where this will go, God
knows better. That's why I
hope better sense will
prevail."

'Victims ourselves'
Claiming that India had pre-
sented "no evidence" of Pa-
kistan's involvement in the
Pulwama attack, Mr. Khan
wanted to know what advan-
tage would accrue to Pak-
stan when the country itself
was a "victim" of terrorism.

He felt that India was
"again and again" making
Pakistan the "whipping boy"
instead of starting a dialogue
with Islamabad. He said it
was not in Pakistan's interest
to allow its soil to be used for

If you think that you will
launch any kind of attack
on Pakistan, Pakistan will not just
think about retaliation, Pakistan
will retaliate

We all know that it's in a person's
hands to begin a war, but it's not in
his hands to end a war. Where this
will go, God knows better

— IMRAN KHAN, Pakistan Prime Minister

Imran's offer a lame excuse'

Pakistan Prime Minister
Imran Khan's offer to
investigate the Pulwama
terror attack, if proof is
given, is a "lame excuse,"
the External Affairs
Ministry said on Tuesday.
"The Prime Minister of
Pakistan has neither chosen
to condemn this heinous
act nor condoled with the
bereaved families," the
Ministry said in a
statement. ▶ PAGE 11

He promised that if India
provided Islamabad with
"actionable intelligence"
about Pakistani involvement
in the Pulwama attack, in
which 40 paramilitary per-
sonnel were killed, "I guar-
antee action." India, he sug-
gested, should embrace a
"new thought process" and
introspect why young people
in Kashmir were no longer
scared of death.

PAK. NEVER ACTED ON EVIDENCE:
DEFENCE MINISTER ▶ PAGE 11
'END TERROR SUPPORT' ▶ PAGE 11

Mr. Khan said he under-
stood that it was election
year in India and any "lesson
to Pakistan would give a
boost [to the party in power]."
Pakistan was hearing
voices in the media and from
Indian politicians saying that
Islamabad should be taught a
lesson. "What internation-
al law allows a country to be
judge, jury and executioner?" he wanted to know.

Fatal rehearsal

Two aircraft of IAF's aerobatic team Surya Kiran crashed after grazing each other mid-air during a rehearsal for the Aero India show near Bengaluru. A pilot was killed and two others, who ejected, were injured



The aircraft
Hawk MK-132 trainers.
The British-origin Hawks are
made in India by Hindustan
Aeronautics Ltd.

Time of the accident
11.50 a.m.
Accident spot
ISRO Layout near
Yelahanka airbase

The deceased
Wing Commander Sahil Gandhi
Two survivors
Wing Commander V.T. Shelke and
Squadron Leader T.J. Singh



ALL IMAGES FROM VIDEO GRABS

REPORTS ON PAGE 5

SC upset at the plight of illegal migrants in Assam centres

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Illegal immigrants should not
languish for long in detention
centres in Assam; instead
they should be repatriated or
deported expeditiously, the
Supreme Court and the
Centre agreed on Tuesday.

The Centre assured the
court that it would hold con-
sultations with the State on a
scheme to expedite deporta-
tion or repatriation of illegal
foreigners and report back to
the Bench, led by Chief Justice
of India Ranjan Gogoi, on
March 13. The court is hear-

ing a petition by activist
Harsh Mander about the dis-
mal living conditions in As-
sam's detention centres. The
court noticed that many de-
tainees were kept in these
centres even after they
served their term of im-
prisonment.

"The petition says the
conditions are pathetic, even in-
human. Detention should on-
ly be for a minimum time...
For all these years, these
centres were virtual jails,"
Chief Justice Gogoi observed.
Solicitor-General Tushar
Mehta submitted that deten-

tion centres had a variety of
recreational facilities, includ-
ing chess, carrom and choice
TV programmes. The Bench
referred to the draft list of the
National Register of Citizens
(NRC) for Assam that left out
40 lakh people.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

Cabinet approves new National Electronics Policy

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA

NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Tues-
day approved the National
Electronics Policy 2019
aimed at achieving a turnover
of \$400 billion (about ₹26
lakh crore) for the electronics
system design and manufac-
turing sector by 2025, while
generating employment
opportunities for one
crore people.

"The policy will enable
flow of investment and tech-
nology, leading to higher val-
ue addition in the domesti-
cally manufactured elec-
tronics products and in-
creased manufacturing of
electronics hardware for lo-
cal use as well as exports," IT
and Law Minister Ravi Shan-
kar Prasad said.

Incentive schemes
The policy has introduced
"easier to implement" incen-
tive schemes, including an
interest subvention scheme
and credit default guarantee,
to replace some of the exist-
ing ones under the National
Electronics Policy 2012.

It proposes to provide
interest subsidy of 4% on loans
up to ₹1,000 crore on plant
and machinery, an IT Minis-
ter official told *The Hindu*.

adding that in case of larger
loans, the subsidy would be
limited to ₹1,000 crore.
The government proposes
to create a fund to provide
default guarantee of up to
75% to banks for plant and
machine loans of up to ₹100
crore. "This will eliminate
the need for small and new
investors to provide third-
party collateral... the
scheme will be on the pat-
tern of credit guarantee be-
ing provided by SIDBI for the
SME sector," the official said.

However, for both these
schemes, consultations are
on with the Department of
Expenditure, the official ad-
ded. They will be launched
once the policy is notified.

To help create an ecosys-
tem, the policy has pitched
for 2.0 version of the Elec-
tronics Manufacturing Clus-
ter Scheme, under which in-
frastructure support will be
provided for a group of in-
dustries that are part of the
product supply chain rather
than individual industries.

It has also proposed a so-
vereign patent fund to ac-
quire intellectual property
for chips and chip compo-
nents.

TRIPLE TALAQ ORDINANCE
TO BE RENEWED ▶ PAGE 10

+

CM YK

Interns strike it rich

Corporates offer huge stipends to students with the requisite skills; colleges tweak the programme for the latter

LIFFY THOMAS

Company representatives camp at an institution for three days and screen candidates through a series of tests. They offer the cherry picked talent a fat "compensation package" that comes complete with attractive perks.

Given the time of the year, you might be excused for assuming that we are referring to a campus-interview scenario. It is a campus-interview all right, but one undertaken with the objective of choosing interns.

Corporates are investing heavily in internships that usually last three months, and offering students who make the cut, stipends that are very similar to impressive entry-level salaries. Monthly stipends in the range of ₹40,000 to ₹1,00,000 are not uncommon for interns selected from premier engineering colleges.

Last month, after a series of written and face-to-face interviews, 30 undergraduate and postgraduate students from BITS Pilani joined Cisco in Bengaluru for a six-month internship, with stipends ranging from ₹44,000 to ₹55,000 every month.

Cisco, Amazon, Goldman Sachs, Walmart Labs, Google and Facebook are some of the companies that are quite generous with their stipends for interns.

Of course, big stipends calls for big talent. When Citi Group visited Madras Insti-

tute of Technology (MIT) in Chennai to shortlist students for a two-month internship programme, the first criteria it had laid down was that those with a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 8 or 8.5 could only apply.

"For Dow Chemical, we were divided into groups for a two-day hackathon where we were asked to come up with solutions to a given problem," says a final-year student of the college. That was just the preliminary. Students had a "presentation" round where they were assessed how well aligned they were with company's culture and ethos.

A new calendar

Companies are working out unique programmes with colleges to get industry-ready talent. Take the case of AMD, a multi-national semiconductor company that has signed MoUs with 18 colleges, both in Tier-I and Tier-II cities.

The company has been running a "co-op programme" since 2011, where they select accredited universities in Hyderabad and Bengaluru that offer courses in VLSI and related fields. Open to M.Tech students, who, if selected, spend nine months of their final year at the company.

Some colleges are tweaking their academic calendar to allow students to take internships of a longer duration.

Ramaiah Institute of Technology, Bengaluru, for instance, does not saddle students with any subjects whose study would be time-consuming, in the final semester of the engineering course. Students are encouraged to combine internship with their project work.

"Until the 2015-16 academic year, internships were not mandatory in our engineering curriculum. Now, they are a must. We have an MoU with Boeing for an internship programme," says N.V. R. Naidu, principal.

Wide exposure

Some of the well-structured programmes provide students with exposure to learning that is diverse in its focus.

"The programme is different from regular internships, as students get to work on real-world projects as part of teams that are executing our next-generation CPU and GPU technologies.

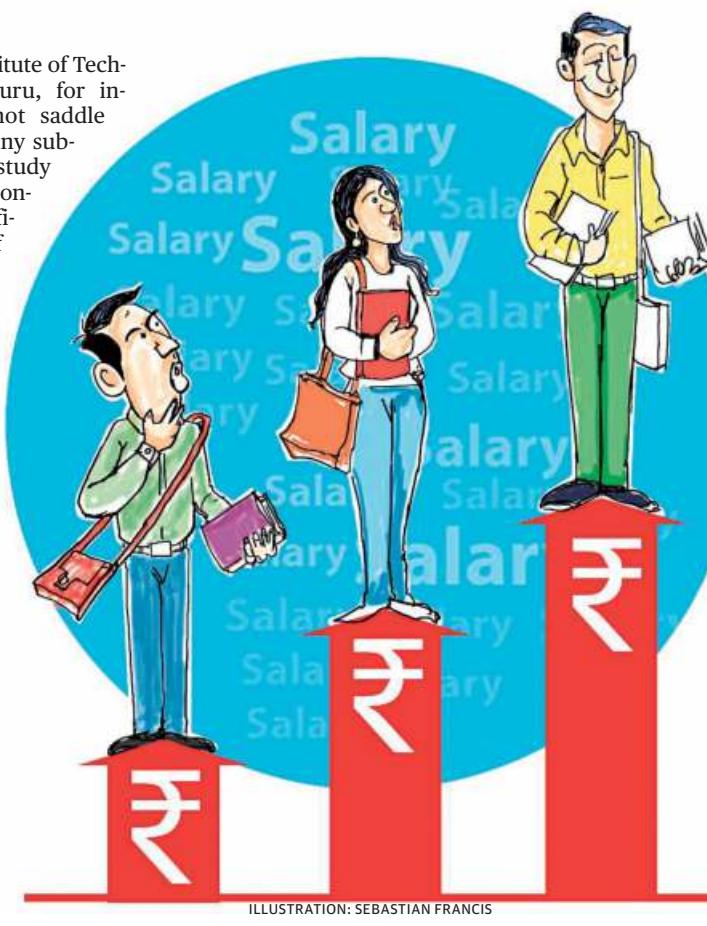


ILLUSTRATION: SEBASTIAN FRANCIS

Colleges are tweaking their academic calendar to allow students to take internships of a longer duration.

For example, when we worked with the makers of the movie *Baahubali*, as their technology partner, many of

our Co-ops were part of the VFX team that executed the project," says Fathima Farouk, India HR Lead and Director, HR Business Partner, AMD.

If Co-ops perform well, they get absorbed as full-time employees after completion of their post graduation. "On an average, 90% of the Co-ops become full-time employees," says Fathima.

How do you form and train your ICC?

A recent panel discussion explained how a few corporates have gone about these two processes

LIFFY THOMAS

What makes for an effective Internal Complaints Committee? This question was central to "Equipping our ICCs: Advantages, Challenges and Successes", a panel discussion organised by Parity Consulting in Bengaluru recently. The panelists, who were drawn from the corporate sector, agreed that "selection" and "training" were two processes that would determine the quality of an ICC, which is a mandatory provision at any workplace for receiving complaints of sexual harassment of women.

Each of the panelists explained how their companies went about these processes. The panel comprised Sukanya Gopinath, head, Ethics Management, Titan Company; K. Sriboomi Yesaswini, partner, Kasturi & Associates; Sajan Mathai, senior director, Oracle India; and Padmaja A.R., vice-president, Robert Bosch Engineering and Business Solutions (RBEI).

At Oracle, nominations for the role come from the human resources department, and the list is then pared down using a variety of parameters. The ICC has a 70:30 percentage of women and men, with representation from each of the 30 offices of the company across India. Sajan pointed out that the process of selection was carried out with great care over a period of three months.

At RBEI, those in the short-

list are evaluated for credibility and approachability. Seniority is another factor. The HR Department would recommend names of people, and the committee must have a representative from every region the company operated in.

At Titan, a background check including feedback from the peer group would be done before selecting someone to be a part of the ICC.

Two components

There are two components to the training provided to members of an ICC. One of the two is obvious: It is training that will help them deal with a complaint effectively, which covers a host of issues, including ensuring confidentiality, showing sensitivity and fighting unconscious bias, and also providing counselling to those left with scars.

And two, training that will be of help to ICC members themselves: In other words, providing them with the strength to deal with highly traumatising cases. For, an ICC member can sometimes find the experience of listening to what a complainant has to share, traumatic.

Sriboomi Yesaswini, an advocate who is part of the committee of various organisations, said each case was mentally draining. "I don't take many cases at a time," she said.

Two years ago, Titan launched counselling for its

ICC members. The company also provides support to the family of the one against whom a complaint has been brought.

At RBEI, the Committee goes the extra mile to protect confidentiality. "We choose another location for the enquiry," said Padmaja.

Greater understanding

"The key role of an ICC is to determine whether a complaint that has been raised is sexual harassment or not," said Kalpana Tatavarti, founder, Parity Consulting who moderated the session. Kalpana says that to be able to do so, an ICC has to have a lot of maturity and understanding of the subject. It should have answers to questions such as when and why does a behaviour become unwelcome, why is it difficult for the victim to say a clear no and why is it difficult for a complainant to raise a complaint as soon as she faces sexual harassment.

Through videos shot by employees, Titan has creating awareness among them about prevention of sexual harassment (POSH) at the workplace.

To get better at dealing with these cases, ICC members have to meet regularly and exchange notes. "At Oracle, we meet every quarter and we write the minutes even if there are no cases," said Mathai.

At RBEI, the committee would meet every two months, said Padmaja.

U.P. IPS officer suspended for interview to English portal

He had booked then Gorakhpur MP Yogi Adityanath under NSA in 2002

OMAR RASHID LUCKNOW

An IPS officer in Uttar Pradesh has been suspended weeks after he gave an interview to an English portal on how he had been sidelined over the years especially after he had booked CM Yogi Adityanath, then Gorakhpur MP, under the National Security Act in 2002.

U.P. police spokesperson R.K. Gautam confirmed that the 1992 batch IPS officer Jasvir Singh, who was last posted as ADG Rules and Manual, was placed under suspension. However, he did not clarify why. When asked on a private WhatsApp group of the U.P. police meant for journalists, he said the information circulating about the reason for the suspension was correct.

Mr. Singh was allegedly sus-

pended for violation of service rules by making controversial statements and for being absent without taking leave approval. According to the U.P. police website, Mr. Singh was suspended on February 14. "ADG under suspension," it read under his current post section.

Mr. Singh was the SP of Maharaiganj district in Purvanchal in 2002 when he booked Mr. Adityanath under the NSA. In a story published in *Huffington Post* on January 30, Mr. Singh was quoted as saying that he had refused to withdraw the case for preventive detention against the then sitting MP, Mr. Adityanath, despite pressure from the BJP, in power at the Centre at the time, and the BSP, which formed the State government. Two days later, he was

transferred to the Food Cell of the U.P. police, said the story.

Mr. Singh had also taken strong action against Raghuraj Pratap Singh aka Raja Bhaiya, then Food Minister in the Mulayam Singh Yadav government, in the Lakhimpur Kheri food scam case. **Paying the price** The police officer says he paid the price for trying to hold politicians and Ministers to account, as per the article, in which he also questions the encounter killings under the Yogi government. Mr. Singh is quoted as saying: "They want loyalty to political persons. This is totally unconstitutional. If we don't resist, things won't change. Resisting is the most rewarding thing especially when there is a big allurement."

AMU students end their six-day-old agitation

After assurance from district authorities

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ALIGARH (U.P.)

The students of Aligarh Muslim University ended their six-day-old agitation here after a meeting between the university administration, district officials and leaders of the students' union.

The dharna ended on Monday midnight after the agitating students were assured by the district authorities that no vindictive action would be taken against any student. The meeting took place at the residence of AMU Vice-Chancellor Tariq Mansoor.

Fourteen AMU students, including their union president, were booked under sedition charges after violence broke out between two student groups on the

campus on February 12 over reports of a planned visit by AIMIM lawmaker Asaduddin Owaisi.

The protest intensified on Monday after the arrest of a student from the university campus on Sunday night.

AMU spokesman Professor Shafey Qidwai said, "The protesting students have agreed to end their dharna after the district authorities gave an assurance that justice will be meted out after carefully scrutinising all allegations as per the law."

President's intervention
Meanwhile, students' union president Salman Imtiaz said, "We have written to the President, asking him to intervene in the crisis."

Oppn. to corner Khattar govt. in Assembly

Cong., INLD to expose divisive politics, raise SYL canal issue in budget session beginning today

VIKAS VASUDEVA CHANDIGARH

As the budget session of the Haryana Assembly is slated to begin today, the Opposition parties – the Congress and the Indian National Lok Dal – have decided to corner the ruling BJP government on issues related to government employees, corruption, water, farmers' distress and deteriorating law and order.

The ruling BJP, which is high on confidence after sweeping the recent Jind bypoll, is all set take on the Opposition.

The party claims that the people have entrusted their faith in the Manohar Lal Khattar government's transparent and graft-free governance and uniform development policy, which has been proved by the

 We have moved at least six calling attention motions on different issues

KIRAN CHAUDHARY
Congress leader

Jind bypoll and municipal polls in the State.

Budget on Feb. 26

The budget session will start with the Governor's address on Wednesday and the budget for 2019-20 would be presented by Finance Minister Capt. Abhimanyu on February 26.

Congress Legislature Party leader Kiran Choudhary told *The Hindu* that the party would highlight issues pertaining to government employees, who have been staging protests on various

platforms against the alleged wrong policies of the State government.

"Rising corruption, scarcity of water, deteriorating law and order situation and farmers' plight are other important issues that we intend to raise in the House. We have moved at least six calling attention motions on different issues," she said.

"Apart from these, we will also expose the BJP government on its caste-based divisive politics, which it had been adopting for garnering votes. The BJP has failed to fulfil even a single promise that it made during the 2014 Assembly elections. Every section of society – be it farmers, government employees, traders or youth – is suffering due to the anti-people policies

of the BJP," said Ms. Chaudhary. "Before the session starts, we will have a meeting on February 20 (morning) to fine tune the final strategy to strongly raise public interest issues in the House," she added.

INLD, the principal Opposition party in the State, is also set to take the government to task on issues related to the problems of government employees, the Sutlej-Yamuna Link canal issue, corruption and law and order. "The BJP had promised to regularise government employees but has failed to do so... the staff of various departments are protesting. We will raise their voice in the House," Leader of the Opposition and senior INLD leader Abhay Singh Chautala said.

DELHI Timings

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 20
RISE 06:56 SET 18:15
RISE 19:09 SET 07:29
THURSDAY, FEB. 21
RISE 06:55 SET 18:15
RISE 20:16 SET 08:13
FRIDAY, FEB. 22
RISE 06:54 SET 18:16
RISE 21:22 SET 08:54

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 24 12
Safdarjang 24 12
Palam 24 13

Delhi Palam Today
21°C Few spells of rain and thundershower at many places with hailstorms in pockets will affect. Pollution level to improve.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
22°C A pleasant weather with cloudy sky. Shallow fog/mist during morning. Chances of rain/thundershower over parts of the city.

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IN BRIEF



Saritha Nair moves HC against Congress leader

KOCHI A writ petition was filed in the Kerala High Court on Tuesday by Saritha S. Nair, an accused in the solar scam, seeking a directive to the State government and the Crime Branch to complete the investigation in the case registered against Congress leader and former Union Minister of State K.C. Venugopal on her complaint of rape charges. She alleged that the investigation agency was not conducting any probe, apparently under the influence of the former Minister.

Modi capable of creating anarchy, says Naidu

VIJAYAWADA A day after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee raised doubts over the timing of the Pulwama attack, A.P. Chief Minister and TDP national president N. Chandrababu Naidu said that the entire nation was discussing it. The TDP would not allow anyone to "pledge the country" for political interests, he said during a teleconference with party leaders on Tuesday. Mr. Naidu alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was capable of creating anarchy.

TTD approves budget of ₹3,116.25 cr. for 2019-20

TIRUMALA The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) on Tuesday approved its annual budget for 2019-20 with an overall revenue of ₹3,116.25 crore. The TTD trust board, headed by Chairman Putta Sudhakar Yadav, met in Tirumala to approve its revised budget for 2018-19 and the budget estimates for 2019-20. The temple hundi topped the receipts table with an income of ₹1,231 crore.

But the fear of further ex-

IAF pilot killed, two injured in crash

They were part of an aerobatics display team practising manoeuvres ahead of Aero India show

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

A pilot was killed and two others were injured when two Hawk trainers of the Indian Air Force's Surya Kiran Aerobatics Display Team (SKAT) grazed each other mid-air and crashed into a residential layout behind the Air Force base in Yelahanka on Tuesday.

They were practising manoeuvres ahead of the Aero India 2019, scheduled to begin on Wednesday.

Two pilots of one aircraft bailed out. But Wing Commander Sahil Gandhi, 38, who was in the same aircraft did not survive the crash. His teammates in the other display aircraft, Wing Commander Vijay Shelke and Squadron Leader Tejeshwar Singh, were injured.

The Hawk MK.132 trainer that Wing Commander Gandhi was in and another SKAT plane came into contact with each other while performing a mirror or Calypso pass. The manoeuvre involves one plane flying inverted above the other, with a gap of four to five metres between them. Wing Com-



Mid-air tragedy: Indian Air Force officials inspecting the charred remains of an aircraft after two planes crashed near the Yelahanka airbase in Bengaluru on Tuesday. • PTI

mander Gandhi was in the inverted aircraft.

"The two injured aircrew have been airlifted to Air Force Command Hospital, Bengaluru. A Court of Inquiry has been ordered to investigate the accident," the IAF said in a statement.

Wing Commander Gandhi from Hisar in Haryana, has been living in Bidar, where

the SKAT is based, for a year and a half. He leaves behind wife Himani and five-year-old son Riaan.

K. Unnikrishnan, the father of 26/11 hero Major Sanjaydeep Unnikrishnan, who resides in ISRO Akash Vihar where both the aircraft crashed, remembers hearing a loud sound. "I thought it was a transformer blast and

rushed outside and saw an aircraft burning," he said.

"It is very unfortunate," said Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in the city for the Aero India. "I will not say anything until the inquiry is over. But no doubt, we have to pay more attention [to preventing such incidents]."

The five-day Aero India 2019, the largest so far in

terms of participation, will open on Wednesday as scheduled. The aerobatics team will, however, be grounded till the inquiry is over.

'Dangerous operations'

The U.S. ambassador to India conveyed his sympathies to the family of the dead pilot. "Unfortunately, we don't always appreciate how dangerous these manoeuvres are... It is a real shame," said ambassador Kenneth I. Juster, who is here with a large delegation of U.S. military and administrative officials for the Aero India.

Alan Shaffer, Deputy under-secretary of Defence for acquisition and sustainment, said these demonstrations signified the greatness of the military. "As a former Airman, I recognise the dangers of military operations, which are highlighted in these kinds of events. It happens in many places and [even] the U.S. is coming up on the one-year anniversary of the loss of a [U.S. Air Force] Thunderbird pilot in an aerial demonstration [in April 2018]," he said.



New team: Governor of Telangana E.S.L. Narasimhan and Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao with the new Ministers in Hyderabad on Tuesday. • K.V.S. GIRI

Ten Telangana Ministers sworn in

KTR, Harish Rao do not figure in list

N. RAHUL
HYDERABAD

The over two-month-old Telangana Rashtra Samithi government was expanded on Tuesday with the induction of 10 Ministers at a ceremony on the Raj Bhavan lawns. With this, the strength of the K. Chandrasekhar Rao-led Council of Ministers has gone up to 12 and there is scope to take on board six more Ministers, which is likely only after the Lok Sabha election.

Governor E.S.L. Narasimhan administered the oath of office and secrecy to the new Ministers, starting with A. Indrakaran Reddy, in the presence of Mr. Rao and over 1,200 invitees who packed the premises. Mr. Reddy was followed in the order by T. Srinivas Yadav, G. Jagdish Reddy, Eatala Rajender, S. Nirjan Reddy, Koppula Easwar, E. Dayakar Rao, V. Srinivas Goud, V. Prashant Reddy and C. Malala Reddy.

Barring Mr. Rajender, Mr. Srinivas Yadav, Mr. Indrakaran Reddy and Mr. Jagdish Reddy, all are new faces. There is no representation for Khammam district in the Cabinet. The Chief Minister who hails from Medak also avoided anyone else to represent the district.

An MLC of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen Syed Amin Jaffri was the lone leader from the other parties to attend.

KTR tweets

All eyes were on TRS working president K.T. Rama Rao, who held half a dozen portfolios in the previous government, and former Irrigation Minister T. Harish Rao, both of whom missed the bus this time. Mr. Rama Rao tweeted his compliments to the new Ministers later, saying "heartiest congratulations. I am confident that you will do your best for Telangana under the able guidance of KCR garu."

At the venue, Mr. Harish Rao said no motives should be attributed to his omission. He recalled his election speeches that he would remain a disciplined soldier of the TRS. He said he was committed to implementing the instructions of the party and the Chief Minister.

Mr. Rao said the Chief Minister had constituted his team, balancing representation to different regions and social groups in the State. "I am never unhappy. I condemn adverse social media posts against me. I am not identified with any group within the party."

Students, locals rush to the rescue of pilots

Eyewitnesses see 'ball of fire' after aircraft crash

SUCHITH KIDYOOR
BENGALURU

When two aircraft of IAF's aerobatic team Surya Kiran crashed near the Yelahanka airbase here around 11.50 a.m. on Tuesday, residents of ISRO Akashvihari Layout heard a thunderous sound. Eyewitnesses described a ball of fire as two aircraft crashed onto the ground.

After 10 minutes of

explosion and the fire that engulfed the wreckage did not deter students of the Nitte Meenakshi Institute of Technology from approaching the injured pilots.

Final year aeronautical students Chethan Kumar B.M. and Prajwal H.K., who were on the terrace watching the practice session of the Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team, witnessed the incident from the take-off to when the aircraft grazed each other mid-air and crashed.

Mr. Chethan added: "After the crash, it looked like the pilots were coming out

stunts in the sky, during one of the formations, it appeared like one aircraft hit the tail of the other. They then started falling. One aircraft hit the ground a few metres away from our building. There were two pilots who ejected themselves from the aircraft with the help of a parachute. One fell on a farmland and the other on the road. We immediately rushed to attend to them," said Mr. Prajwal.

They later learnt that the other pilot, Squadron Leader Tejeshwar Singh's para-

chute was entangled in an electric pole. He fell on the road and sustained injuries in his back and neck. Within 10 minutes, emergency services reached the spot.

"The Air Force personnel thanked us for the help."

Uday Kumar, another resident, said: "It was difficult to react to the situation. After the crash, the aircraft was in flames and repeated explosions caused fear among people. We were relieved when emergency services reached the spot to attend to pilots."

IN BRIEF



CM lays foundation stones of water projects

PATIALA
Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Tuesday laid foundation stones for three projects to supply canal water to 409 villages in Patiala and Fatehgarh Sahib districts. He appealed to the people to use groundwater reserves judiciously. PTI

Goods train derails, rail traffic hit in Jharkhand
RANCHI
A goods train derailed between Khalari and Ray stations near Dhanbad on Tuesday, disrupting train movement in Dhanbad Rail Division, a statement issued by the Railway Protection Force said. There was no report of any casualty. PTI

Ex-councillor held for highway robbery

KENDRAPARA (ODISHA)
Three persons, including a former councillor of Kendrapara urban local body, were arrested on the charge of committing a highway robbery, police said on Tuesday. The trio had robbed a man on the Paradip-Daitary expressway, they said. PTI

3 dead after vehicle hits motorcycle in U.P.

HAROON
Three men were killed on Tuesday after their motorcycle was hit by a vehicle, police said. Rajendra (45), Mansaram (40) and Ram (38) were killed in the mishap that took place in Baghauti village of Hardoi district, they said. PTI

Punjab Police bust gang of snatchers, 5 held

RUPNAGAR
The police on Tuesday claimed to have busted a gang allegedly involved in over 60 cases of snatching and theft in Punjab and Himachal, and arrested five of its members. 50 mobiles were recovered from them. PTI

Boycott everything Kashmiri, tweets Roy

Meghalaya Governor draws flak from several sections for controversial posts following Pulwama attack

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI
Meghalaya Governor Tathagata Roy on Tuesday tweeted that he was "inclined to agree" with an unnamed retired Army officer's call to boycott everything Kashmiri, including the Amarnath Yatra, as a response to the Pulwama suicide bombing that killed more than 40 Central Reserve Police Force personnel on February 14.

"An appeal from a retired colonel of the Indian Army: Don't visit Kashmir, don't go to Amarnath for the next 2 years. Don't buy articles from Kashmiri emporia or Kashmiri tradesmen who come every winter. Boycott everything Kashmiri. I am inclined to agree," read his tweet.



Tathagata Roy tweeted that he was "inclined to agree" with a "retired Army officer". ■ FILE PHOTO

Replies to a tweet by retired Major Gaurav Arya, the Meghalaya Governor suggested that the Indian Army (who

should take a leaf out of the book of its Pakistan counterpart in dealing with Kashmiris.

"The Pakistan Army (who

are handling the Kashmiri separatists) was among their own in East Pakistan in 1971. They slaughtered and raped right and left. And they would have kept EP but for the whacking from India. I am not suggesting that we go that far. But at least some distance (sic)" Mr. Roy said on Twitter.

Sharp reactions

His tweets have attracted sharp reactions with some saying his comments virtually absolved Pakistan by shifting the blame for the attack on Kashmiris.

Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said in reply to Mr. Roy's tweets: "People like Tathagata want Kashmir but

without Kashmiris. They'd sooner see us driven into the sea. He'll be best placed to know he can't have one without the other so what's it to be?"

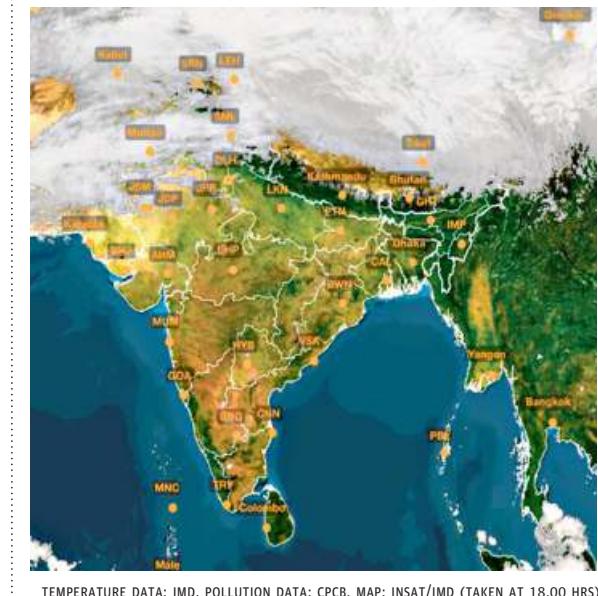
Not new to controversies
Mr. Roy had posted controversial tweets even when he was the Governor of Tripura.

On March 23, 2015, he tweeted on the 'fighting back' nature of Hindus by pointing out: "One exception was Gujarat, 2002. I'm glad you appreciate what the Hindus did then."

Four months later, on July 31, he tweeted that many people who attended the last rites of 1993 Mumbai blast accused Yakub Memon were "potential terrorists".

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Wednesday: Heavy/very heavy rain/snow likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. Thunderstorm accompanied with hailstorm, lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and north Rajasthan

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... -	30.6	13.5	Kozhikode	... -	24.0	24.0
Ahmedabad	... -	32.5	17.2	Kurnool	... -	24.1	24.1
Aizawl	... -	30.4	-	Lucknow	... -	28.0	14.6
Allahabad	0.2 ... 30.2	... 13.7	-	Madurai	... -	37.2	25.1
Bengaluru	... -	32.8	22.0	Mangalore	... -	33.1	20.0
Bhopal	... -	32.3	13.2	Mumbai	... -	32.5	16.0
Bhubaneswar	... -	34.6	18.8	Mysuru	... -	34.0	16.4
Chandigarh	7.6	22.7	11.8	New Delhi	2.2 ...	24.5	12.0
Chennai	... -	32.7	26.2	Patna	... -	29.4	12.5
Coimbatore	... -	36.2	22.5	Port Blair	... -	31.0	23.2
Dehradun	3.3 ... 24.4	... 9.6	-	Puducherry	... -	32.6	26.1
Gangtok	14.8	... -	6.4	Pune	... -	35.9	13.0
Goa	... -	31.3	19.5	Raipur	... -	33.5	17.0
Guwahati	4 ... -	23.1	15.0	Ranchi	... -	29.4	12.0
Hubballi	... -	34.0	18.0	Shillong	... -	18.3	5.3
Hyderabad	... -	34.9	21.7	Shimla	... -	28.5	8.4
Imphal	... -	25.0	9.1	Srinagar	... -	11.3	0.4
Jaipur	... -	29.0	16.0	Trivandrum	... -	34.7	25.2
Kochi	... -	30.8	25.0	Tiruchi	... -	36.4	26.2
Kohima	... -	23.8	5.8	Vijayawada	... -	34.0	24.4
Kolkata	... -	32.0	17.1	Visakhapatnam	... -	31.8	26.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	58	.74	.3295	... -	■■■
Bengaluru	.8	.59	.70	... -	.156	■■■
Chennai	17	.14	.5864	... -	■■■
Delhi	24	104	.77	.323	.239	■■■
Hyderabad	.3	113	.29	.138	.124	■■■
Kolkata	24	170	.38	.360	.280	■■■
Lucknow	10	.62	.63	.308	... -	■■■
Mumbai	22	.43	.84	.82	.105	■■■
Pune	32	.16	.26	.98	.115	■■■
Visakhapatnam	.6	.29	.2958	... /4	■■■

In observation made at 4.00 pm. Telcher, Odisha recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 354 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Rupnagar, Punjab recorded a healthy AQI score of 23

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

SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Anuj Sharma appointed new Kolkata Police Commissioner

Rajeev Kumar takes charge as Director General, CID

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Newly appointed Kolkata Police Commissioner Anuj Sharma at the Lalbazar Police Headquarters. ■ SUBHAM DUTTA

in one position for three years ought to be shifted out.

Siddhi Nath Gupta has replaced Mr. Sharma as the new ADG (Law and Order).

‘Kashmiris safe’

Speaking to journalists after assuming charge, Mr. Sharma assured them that all Kashmiris residing in Kolkata are safe and their security has been stepped up.

"Kashmiris are safe in the

city. We have already identified the pockets where they are staying. We have interacted with them and assured them of their safety and security," he told media persons at the Lalbazar Police Headquarters.

Mr. Sharma said the Kolkata police were already doing a very good job in serving the people of the city and there was a need for some "fine-tuning".

Imphal court releases student activist on bail

FB post not seditious, observes CJM

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

Four days after Manipur student activist Veemon Thokchom was arrested from his residence in Delhi for a Facebook post over the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, an Imphal court on Tuesday released him on bail noting that the post was not seditious.

Chief Judicial Magistrate Ningthoujam Lanleima remarked that the content of Mr. Thokchom's Facebook post "cannot be stated to bring into hatred or contempt, or excite or attempt to excite disaffection towards the government". "At the most, the accused mentioned the incident of burning of Assembly with approval, but I don't find any attempt or incitement to commit violence," the judge said.

As a condition for his re-

lease on bail, the judge has directed him not to commit an offence similar to the one he is accused of.

Following the court's order, Mr. Thokchom was released during the day and reached his home in Manipur around 4 p.m.

Second such case

Mr. Thokchom is the second case in recent months where the Manipur government has booked individuals for sedition, an offence which entails a maximum punishment of life imprisonment.

In December last year, Manipur journalist Kishorechandra Wangkhemcha, who had posted an alleged offensive Facebook post on Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, was booked for sedition and later detained for 12 months under the National Security Act.

IN BRIEF



Apps offering free legal advice launched

NEW DELHI
Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Tuesday said Pro Bono or free legal services should be an important criterion in the appointment of judges. He was launching two new mobile apps, Tele Law and Nyaya Bandhu, that seek to offer easy access to justice and free legal advice across the country.

Narayanasamy, Bedi call 'temporary truce'

PUDUCHERRY
The agitation led by Puducherry CM V. Narayanasamy in front of the Raj Nivas, bringing to a head the long-standing tug-of-war with Lt. Governor Kiran Bedi, was called off on Monday night after extended consultations produced a 'temporary truce'. He said the Lt. Governor 'agreed' to reconsider her decision to close down the Anglo French Textiles and Swadeshi Bharati Cotton Mills.

9 killed as truck runs into marriage procession

JAIPUR
A speeding truck ploughed into a marriage procession in Rajasthan's Pratapgarh district, leaving nine people, including four children, dead and 19 others injured, the police said on Tuesday. The accident happened near the Ramdev Temple on National Highway-113 on Monday night when the truck going to Banswara from Nimbalera rammed into the marriage party moving on the roadside, SP, Pratapgarh, Anil Benwal said. PTI

Refinery gets deadline to raze wall on jumbo path

GUWAHATI
The administration of eastern Assam's Golaghat district had set a week's deadline to Numaligarh Refinery Limited to demolish a boundary wall erected on a major elephant corridor. The Supreme Court had on January 18 ordered NRL to remove the 2.2 km wall around its proposed township that included a golf course.

Censor Board denied certificate to 793 films in 16 years

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Central Board of Film Certification banned a total of 793 films in 16 years, an RTI response has revealed.

The response to the RTI query filed by Lucknow-based activist Dr. Nutan Tha-

7 islands in Andamans, Lakshadweep identified for seaplane operations

Bids invited for private sector participation in tourism-based projects; Home Minister Rajnath Singh reviews progress of development work

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Four islands in the Andamans and three in Lakshadweep have been identified for seaplane operations, while private sector participation has been invited for tourism-based projects, the Home Ministry said on Tuesday.

The 5th meeting of the Island Development Agency, chaired by Home Minister Rajnath Singh, also reviewed the progress made towards the programme 'Holistic development of islands'.

Swaraj Dweep, Shaheed Dweep, Hutbay and Long Island in Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Kavaratti, Agatti and Minicoy in Laksh-

adweep have been identified for seaplane operations.

Key infrastructure projects such as operationalisation of the Diglipur airport for civilian aircraft and the construction of a new airport on Minicoy Island have been accorded high priority by the government, while Coastal Regulation Zone clearance (CRZ) has been accorded for 'Middle Strait Bridge' on Andaman Trunk Road.

Bids for private sector participation in three tourism-based projects have already been invited by the Andaman & Nicobar Administration. They include eco-tourism projects on Smith Island and Long Island and a

tent city project on Aves Island. Bids will be invited shortly for one more project on Neil Island.

Three projects in Lakshadweep have been identified for issue of bids. These include tourism projects in the islands of Kadmat, Minicoy and Suheli Cheriyakara. Environmental Clearance (EC), CRZ clearance and all other clearances required for these projects are being obtained upfront, on priority, to attract more number of reputed bidders, the statement said.

The Ministry of Commerce has issued a notification extending tax incentives for investments made in the manufacturing and service

sector in the islands of Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep.

In order to sustainably utilise the potential of Tuna fish, 10 deep-sea modern fishing vessels are being procured by the Lakshadweep administration from Cochin Shipyard Limited.

The Home Minister expressed satisfaction at the progress made since the last meeting held on June 30, 2018, when directions were given to focus on creation of recreational facilities along with tourism infrastructure, implementation of renewable energy projects, incentives for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and the development of a film city.

Connecting islands

The Centre has taken up various projects for the development of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep. A look at some of them

Seaplane operation

- Islands in the Andamans: Swaraj Dweep, Shaheed Dweep, Hutbay and Long Island

- Islands in Lakshadweep: Kavaratti, Agatti and Minicoy

Other key infrastructure projects

- Operationalisation of the Diglipur airport in the Andamans for civilian aircraft
- Construction of a new airport in Minicoy
- 'Middle Strait Bridge' on Andaman Trunk Road

Projects identified for private sector participation

- Eco-tourism on Smith Island and Long Island in the Andamans
- Tent city on Aves Island
- Tourism projects at Kadmat, Minicoy and Suheli Cheriyakara in Lakshadweep



More than 4 lakh children are inhalant addicts: survey

5.7 crore people suffer from alcohol dependence in India

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Chhattisgarh and Arunachal Pradesh have emerged front runners in alcohol abuse and health complications arising due to the addiction, according to a survey conducted by the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi.

The survey report, which was submitted to the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on Monday, noted that 5.7 crore people in the country suffered from alcohol-related problems.

Of the 16 crore people who consumed alcohol across the country, prevalence of alcohol consumption was 17 times higher among men than among women.

More than four lakh children and 18 lakh adults needed help for inhalant abuse and dependence, the report said.

The survey, conducted to

Growing addiction

A survey conducted between December 2017 and October 2018 to ascertain the magnitude of substance abuse in India has thrown up some disturbing figures

People with alcohol-dependence:

5.7 crore

High prevalence States: U.P., Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Arunachal Pradesh

Sedative/Inhalants users: 4,60,000 children, 18 lakh adults

Cannabis dependence:

72 lakh

High prevalence States: U.P., Punjab and Odisha

Heroin is the most abused opioid (1.14% of Indians use this)

High prevalence States:

U.P., Chhattisgarh, Punjab and Delhi

maximum cannabis dependence.

The most common opioid used was heroin. The current use of heroin was 1.14%, followed by pharmaceutical opioids (0.96%) and opium (0.52%). The abuse was found most prevalent in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana.

The Ministry for Social Justice and Empowerment maintained that a national guideline would be formulated after detailed consultation with all stakeholders to counter the drug menace in the country.

ascertain the magnitude of substance abuse in the country, was carried out between December 2017 and October 2018. It covered 4,73,569 individuals in the 10-75 age group. High prevalence of consumption of alcohol was also reported in Tripura and Chhattisgarh.

Cannabis use
The survey also revealed that about 3.1 crore individuals consumed cannabis, with 72 lakh of them needing help for cannabis use problems. Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Odisha registered

as many as 231 Hindi films

were refused certificate, fol-

lowed by 96 in Tamil, 53 in

Telugu, 39 in Kannada, 23 in

Malayalam and 17 in Punjabi.

Twelve films each in Bengali

and Marathi were also

banned during this period.

Most of the films banned had titles like *Adamkhor Hasina*, *Qatil Shikari*, *Pyasi Chandani*, *Madhura Swapnam* and *Khooni Raat*.

3% DA hike for Central staff

Increase is as per formula based on the 7th Pay Commission recommendation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the release of an additional instalment of Dearness Allowance (DA) to Central government employees, and Dearness Relief (DR) to pensioners w.e.f. 1.1.2019 representing an increase of 3% over the existing rate of 9% of the Basic Pay/Pension, to compensate for price rise," the government said in a release.

This will involve an increase of 3% over the existing rate of 9% of the basic pay or pension. "The Union Cabinet has given its appro-

val to the release of an additional instalment of Dearness Allowance (DA) to Central government employees, and Dearness Relief (DR) to pensioners w.e.f. 1.1.2019 representing an increase of 3% over the existing rate of 9% of the Basic Pay/Pension, to compensate for price rise," the government said in a release.

The government said the combined impact of the hike in dearness allowance and

dearness relief will amount to ₹9,168.12 crore per annum and ₹10,696.14 crore in the financial year 2019-20 (for a period of 14 months from January 2019 to February 2020).

This will benefit about 48.41 lakh Central government employees and 62.03 lakh pensioners, it added.

The increase is in accordance with the accepted formula based on the recommendations of the 7th Central Pay Commission.

Central Pay Commission.

The government had last increased the dearness allowance in August 2018, when it approved an increase of 2% in dearness allowance for Central government employees over the rate of 7%, effective from July 1, 2018.

Previously, the Cabinet had increased dearness allowance in March 2018, from 5% to 7% in accordance with the recommendations of the 7th Central Pay Commission.

Ordinance to curb Ponzi schemes gets nod

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Cabinet on Tuesday approved the promulgation of an ordinance with regard to the Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, to protect investors from Ponzi schemes.

The Lok Sabha had passed the Bill on the last day of the Budget session, but could not get the approval of the Rajya Sabha.

The proposed ordinance

will tackle the menace of illicit deposit-taking activities launched by rapacious operators, who at present are exploiting regulatory gaps and lack of strict administrative measures to dupe poor and gullible people of their hard-earned savings, an official statement said.

The Lok Sabha had passed the Bill on the last day of the Budget session, but could not get the approval of the Rajya Sabha.

The proposed ordinance

Govt. provides more for mid-day meal costs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Tuesday approved the revision of norms under the Mid Day Meal Scheme with an outlay of ₹12,054 crore for 2019-20, in addition to the subsidy of about ₹8,000 crore borne by Department of Food & Public Distribution.

"This year cooking cost is enhanced...by ₹361 crore," the government said in a re-

lease. "This will offset the impact of inflation on the food items under Mid Day Meal Scheme," it added.

A new component of ₹10,000 per kitchen for repair of more than 10-year-old kitchens had been introduced. Also, ₹50 crore has been allocated for fortification of food items in a systematic manner. This would address the problems of anaemia and other micronutrient deficiencies.

Centre launches panic button on mobiles

Dial 112 to access emergency services

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The government on Tuesday launched the panic button feature on mobile phones for safety of women and other emergency services across 16 States and Mumbai.

The initiative was opened jointly by Home Minister Rajnath Singh and Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi nearly three years after the government first made the safety feature a mandatory requirement in phones through a gazette notification.

In order to access an emergency service, such as police, medical and other services, a user can dial 112 from any phone. A smartphone user can also press the power button thrice in quick succession and a user of a basic or feature phone can long press 5 or 9 on the key pad. One can also download the 112 mobile application.



One can also download the 112 mobile application.

■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

SMSes and emails to police officials at the State, district and local level.

It can be availed in Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, UP, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Puducherry, Lakshadweep, Andaman, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Jammu & Kashmir as well as Mumbai.

The safety feature had earlier been launched in Nagaland and Himachal Pradesh. The panic button facility, also known as the Emergency Response Support System, is being supported under the Nirbhaya Fund set up for safety of women.

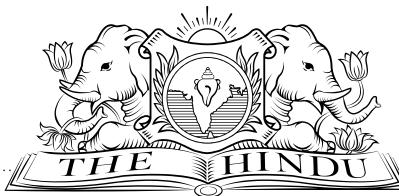
Vacate govt. bungalows: HC to ex-Bihar CMs

AMARNATH TEWARY
PATNA

The Patna High Court on Tuesday ordered all former Chief Ministers of the State to vacate government bungalows.

A Division Bench of the High Court, comprising Chief Justice Amreshwar Pratap Sahai and Justice Anjana Mishra, struck down the Bihar Special Security Group (Amendment) Act 2010 that allowed former Chief Ministers to retain their official bungalows for lifetime. An executive order was passed by the Building Construction Department in March 2016 for this purpose. The former CMs were also entitled to several perks and facilities under the Act. The High Court quashed the Act in the light of the Supreme Court's judgment in the Lok Prahladi case.

The court's decision will hit former Chief Ministers Rabri Devi and Lalu Prasad, Satish Prasad Singh (Chief Minister for three days in 1968), Dr. Jagannath Mishra (three terms in 1975-77, 1980-83 and 1989-90) and Jitan Ram Manjhi (Chief Minister for nine months in 2014-15).



Interim bailout

A system for sharing the RBI's surpluses with the Centre must be quickly institutionalised

The decision of the central board of the Reserve Bank of India to transfer an interim surplus of ₹28,000 crore to the Centre should come as a big relief to the Modi government. Together with the ₹40,000-crore final surplus share for 2017-18, which the Centre received in the first half, the total receipts from the RBI this fiscal will be a tidy ₹68,000 crore. For a government strapped for finances and struggling to meet the revised fiscal deficit target of 3.4% of GDP, the RBI's largesse will be handy. The total surplus received by the Centre for 2018-19 is substantially higher than the ₹50,000 crore it got from the RBI in 2017-18, and this is the second successive year the central bank is making an interim transfer: last year it transferred ₹10,000 crore. Though there is nothing wrong in a shareholder demanding an interim dividend payout, the fact is that the Centre is advancing a receipt from the next fiscal to bail itself out in the current one. Should the RBI decide not to repeat this practice, the government's revenues will suffer because as much as ₹82,911 crore has been budgeted on this count for the next fiscal. Again, the central bank is not like a corporate enterprise, nor can the government compare itself with a company shareholder. The RBI's income and surplus growth cannot be measured in commercial terms since a large part of it comes from statutory functions it has to perform as a regulator.

The large payout this fiscal is bound to raise eyebrows, especially because of the recent history of conflict between the RBI and the Centre over the sharing of the former's accumulated reserves as dividend with the Centre. Pressure on this count was said to be a major reason for the resignation of Urjit Patel as RBI Governor. Though the practice of an interim payout started under Mr. Patel, there are inevitable questions over whether there was pressure from the Centre now for the transfer of a higher sum than last year. This is because the Centre had in the Interim Budget bumped up receipts under this head from the central bank, nationalised banks and other financial institutions to ₹74,140 crore from the original estimate of ₹54,817 crore made in the 2018-19 Budget. Clearly, the Finance Ministry knew what it wanted. There will, hopefully, be a system and a structure in place once the committee under former RBI Governor Bimal Jalan, that is now reviewing the economic capital framework for the RBI, submits its report. It was constituted to de-personalise and institutionalise a system for the sharing of the RBI's surpluses with the government, and is expected to come out with its recommendations by the end of the next month.

Clean power

A viable financial mechanism must be evolved to remove pollutants in power plants

The effort to clean up India's thermal power plants running on coal has never really taken off, despite the Ministry of Environment notifying emission limits for major pollutants such as suspended particulate matter, sulphur oxide, nitrogen oxide and mercury in December 2015. Considering that the cumulative impact of these pollutants on the health and well-being of people is severe, the Centre should have followed up the notification with a viable financial plan to help power plants acquire pollution control technologies. The economics favours such an approach for the larger plants, while for the smaller, older units, scaling down generation during the winter months when pollutants accumulate may prove beneficial. Originally, the compliance deadline was set for 2017, but that was missed and the plan now is to achieve the norms by 2022. Unofficial estimates prepared by one NGO, Greenpeace India, suggest the estimated cost of non-compliance by the original deadline has been about 76,000 premature deaths. Benefit-cost projections from another non-profit, the Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy, put the positive outcomes from achieving pollution control at coal-fired plants by 2025 at potentially 3.2 lakh lives saved from premature death, and 5.2 crore respiratory hospital admissions avoided in the next decade. These are outcomes that need to be pursued seriously. It is in this context that the latest proposal from the Power Ministry to provide the equivalent of over \$12 billion (about ₹88,000 crore), mainly to remove sulphur from coal plant emissions, becomes important.

A viable financial mechanism must be evolved to remove pollutants in existing and upcoming power plants, without losing sight of the need to stop further long-term investments in a dirty fuel such as coal that contributes to carbon emissions. Optimally, the burden of incorporating pollution control should fall on the beneficiary-user, which in simple terms would translate into a tariff hike. On the other hand, achieving speedy implementation of the new processes covering both public and private power producers may require some form of immediate governmental support, such as grants. This is particularly relevant, given that power producers that have borrowed from several institutions, including state-funded ones, are reported to be under severe financial stress. India's coal use represents just over 54% of the present energy mix, and the fuel will continue to retain a high share of the overall generation. The challenge, therefore, is to identify the right instruments to fund the entire exercise, in the interests of pollution control and the wider social objective of extending electricity access to the un-reached. There could be a positive spin-off from sulphur-removal, since it can yield commercially significant quantities of synthetic gypsum. But even if little else accrues from the effort, the benefits of clean air to public health would make the investment well worth the effort.

The importance of being humane

Opposition parties must make a new anti-torture legislation part of their common programme



GOPALKRISHNA GANDHI

Custodial torture is global, old and stubborn. Dismemberment was a method of torture practised with vigour in ancient India, crushing-by-elephant-foot another. The Arthashastra prescribes mental torture through swear-words with or without physical assaults. Death by a thousand cuts was ancient China's speciality. The Tang Code (652 CE) describes judicial torture in detail. Ancient Japanese methods of torture numb the human imagination. Their modern avatar in Japan's World War II of biological and chemical experimentation on humans – prisoners, mainly Chinese – in Unit 731 stop the blood-flow to one's heart.

Cautioned by history

So, does that mean sadism is an inherent part of human nature? It certainly shows that the inflicting of pain is an inseparable part of human history. More specifically, the history of power, of authority and control.

The practice of custodial power is about men – and sometimes, women – who are in positions of power, even if for a brief while and over a limited terrain, having custody over a powerless person. It is about the use of custodial opportunity to torture the captive's body and mind. And there, in that arena of wantonness, it becomes something of a sport for the human "Gods" that rule mere humans. "They kill us for their sport," Shakespeare said of "the Gods".

Custodial death, when not 'natural', is the extreme end-point of custodial torture. The death penalty, notwithstanding 'due process', is a close kin to this lawless and heartless game.

In Greece, the pinnacle of culture, Socrates was in 399 BCE sentenced to death by hemlock, which was known to act slowly, incapacitating the person in stages, climbing from the lower extremities limb by limb to the heart. A little further to the east, around 30 CE took place what is ironically the only hallowed case of plain torture. After being stripped and scourged, the victim's palms, known in anatomy to be among the most sensitive of human limbs, were nailed to the cross's horizontal beam, his feet to the vertical. "I thirst," Mary's son said.

Torturers are invariably sadists. Mary Surratt is not a well-known name. She was the first woman to be hanged in the U.S., in 1865, under due process. Her crime: being part of the conspiracy that led to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Minutes before her end, she complained to the hangman that her handcuffs hurt. They won't hurt long, he said. Peering down the 'drop', she then said she hoped they would send her down neatly. Sure thing, they said. Sure enough they botched it. Her frame doubled up. "She makes a good bow," the hangmen jested. Lincoln must have screamed in his grave.

Hitler's torturing of his prisoners would shame Satan, if such a creature exists. He was as real as his poison gases, tooth-extractors. Stalin's, Pol Pot's, "Papa Doc" Duvalier's examples would have embarrassed Hell, if such a place exists. The power-centres of these tyrants were hellishly real.

Apartheid South Africa had its torturers trained in Algeria to inflict pain without leaving any signs on the body. Imam Haron, Steve Biko and the Naidoo family are among the better known of the many less known and unknown brutalised by the apartheid regime.

The butchering last October of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi tells us custodial torture and killing are no country's, creed's or



culture's monopoly. Nor that of any clime-time. Torture seems to be, like the roach, co-terminus with Time. And co-extensive with homo sapiens.

Custodial torture is about the here and now. As I write and the reader reads this, we can be sure that not far from wherever we are, someone is being tortured by somebody. I am not referring to criminals torturing their captives, but of that somebody who has ephemeral custody, semi-legal, pre-legal, legal, over that someone's body and mind.

India has practised and continues to practise the 'third degree' with impunity. Let only him deny it who has cause to hide it.

But if torture is real, human revulsion with torture is also real. And it has shape, definition. It has scope.

Meeting on December 10, 1984, the UN General Assembly stirred the world's conscience. It adopted the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Better known as the UN Convention against Torture, it sought to prevent torture around the world. More specifically, it required states to take effective measures to prevent torture and forbade them from transporting people to any country where there is reason to believe they will be tortured (refoulement). Most significantly, the Convention made state parties to undertake that "no exceptional circumstances whatsoever" will be "invoked to justify torture, including war, threat of war, internal political instability,

public emergency, terrorist acts, violent crime, or any form of armed conflict".

In other words, it foresaw every possible subterfuge and subversion by states.

The Indian case

India took 13 years to sign the Convention, but sign it did, on October 14, 1997, during the 11-month-old Prime Ministership of I.K. Gujral. Hat's off to him. He did what Rajiv Gandhi, V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar, P.V. Narasimha Rao, H.D. Deve Gowda could not, did not, do. But signing is only the first step. Unless a convention is ratified and followed or preceded by domestic legislation that commits the ratifying party to compliance, the original signing carries no meaning. India has not ratified.

India's non-ratification of the Convention is both surprising and dismaying. What is the constraint? A state which signs the Convention has to have a domestic law on the subject to outlaw and prevent custodial torture. Without such a law, there is no meaning to signing the Convention. And so, late as it was, the UPA II government introduced a Prevention of Torture Bill in the Lok Sabha in 2010 and had it passed in 10 days. The bill as passed by the Lok Sabha was referred to a select committee of the Rajya Sabha. The committee gave its report recommending the Bill's adoption later the same year. Citing National Human Rights Commission figures of reported torture cases, the report said the figures showed custodial torture was rising. It also pointed out that the number of reported cases being only a fraction of actuals, the situation was serious.

But that Bill was unlucky. It lapsed with the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha. And was not revived by the 16th, the present Lok Sabha. Ratification of the Convention remains in limbo. Custodial torture remains in position.

In reply to a question (May 11,

2016) whether the government was planning to ratify the Convention, the Minister of State for Home did not answer either in the positive or negative but spoke of amending Sections 330 (voluntarily causing hurt to extort confession) and 331 of the Indian Penal Code. The nature of these amendments has not been delineated and so, almost nine years after the report of the Select Committee and 21 years after signing the Convention, India is yet to legislate a law that will outlaw torture an enable it to ratify the Convention.

What is the constraint? Why is the Indian state unwilling to say, 'no custodial torture in India'? The answer can only be that the power over a captive's body and mind is not easily given up.

Waiting for a nudge?

Senior advocate Ashwani Kumar, former MP and Minister, moved a PIL in the Supreme Court in 2016 asking it to get Parliament to move forward in the matter. After a full day's exclusive hearing in the case, the court has reserved its orders. Can the Supreme Court indeed "nudge" Parliament? It knows best, in its wisdom and experience. This much, however, one can hope: In a matter that concerns 'life and liberty', the Supreme Court is the guardian of the Constitution's guarantees. And when the one being guarded says, 'I thirst,' the guardian can only bring to its parched lips the waters of life. Whatever be the outcome of Mr. Kumar's PIL, it is imperative that the democratic opposition makes the ratification of the Convention and a new anti-torture legislation part of its common programme. The 17th Lok Sabha must take a stand on this matter. It has a choice: to join the civilised world in moving away from ancient barbarism or stay in the dungeons of blinding, numbing brutality.

Gopalkrishna Gandhi is a former administrator, diplomat and governor

The Saudi-India-Pakistan triangle

New Delhi should not be overly optimistic about prying Riyadh away from Islamabad



MOHAMMED AYOOB

There seems to be much exultation in New Delhi that the visit by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, or MBS (left in picture), will lead to further strengthening of Saudi Arabia-Indian ties, a process that had begun with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Riyadh in 2016. Some of this jubilation is based on rational calculations regarding Saudi interest in expanding trade and investment in India and collaboration in the energy sector. Saudi Aramco is interested in partnering with the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company in developing an integrated refinery and petrochemicals complex at Ratnagiri in Maharashtra, a \$44 billion joint venture with Indian public sector involvement. Saudi Arabia is already one of the three largest suppliers of oil to India.

However, much of the euphoria is based on wishful thinking and vague statements such as Riyadh's declaration that India is one of eight countries with which it wants to intensify its strategic partnership in various fields. The Indian self-delusion is demonstrated, above all, by the speculation in

policy-making circles in New Delhi that the Saudi stance on Kashmir has now changed and its tilt toward Pakistan corrected.

The latter assumption is nothing more than a pipe dream. The Saudi Foreign Minister's statement in Islamabad during MBS's visit that Riyadh is committed to "de-escalating" tensions between India and Pakistan over Kashmir must not be read as an endorsement of the Indian stand but as an attempt to intervene in the dispute rather than accept its bilateral nature.

Key reasons

New Delhi should, therefore, not be overly optimistic that growing Saudi-Indian relations in the economic sphere will succeed in prying Riyadh away from Islamabad. There are various reasons that lead to this conclusion. First, Pakistan is far too important to Saudi Arabia for internal security reasons for Riyadh to sacrifice its stake in Islamabad in order to appease New Delhi. The Pakistan Army has more than once acted as the Saudi rulers' praetorian guard and given the uncertain hold of MBS on his country, despite impressions to the contrary, he may need the services of Pakistani mercenaries in the near future.

Second, Afghanistan has been a point of strategic convergence for Pakistan and Saudi Arabia going back to the 1980s when the Saudis



used Pakistan as a conduit for material assistance to the Islamist forces fighting the Soviet Union and its proxy government in Kabul. With U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and the consequent expansion of Taliban influence very much on the cards, Pakistan's strategic value as the Taliban's patron has grown exponentially. Saudi Arabia is interested in curbing Iranian influence in Afghanistan and needs Pakistan to contain Tehran's ability to influence events in that country after the American withdrawal through its Tajik and Hazara allies.

The Iran angle

Iran is Saudi Arabia's chief adversary in West Asia. The Saudi-Iranian rivalry is being played out across the region, from Syria to Yemen. Riyadh perceives Pakistan as a major asset it can use to check the spread of Iranian influence despite the Nawaz Sharif government's refusal to commit Pakistani

troops in the Yemen war on behalf of the Saudi-led alliance. It sees Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan (right in picture) and Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa as more amenable to Saudi persuasion. Pakistan on its part perceives MBS as a valuable interlocutor on its behalf with the U.S. because of his excellent rapport with U.S. President Donald Trump. Islamabad deems this essential in light of the recent strains in U.S.-Pakistani relations over Pakistan's support to terrorist groups targeting U.S. forces in Afghanistan that led to stern rebukes from Mr. Trump and suspension of American military aid to Pakistan.

Moreover, Pakistan's relations with Iran, never easy, have hit a new low following the recent terrorist attack in the Sistan-Baluchestan Province that killed 27 Revolutionary Guards. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei pointed the finger at "the spying agencies of some regional and trans-regional countries", an obvious reference to Pakistan and the U.S. The commander of the IRGC said, "The government of Pakistan must pay the price of harbouring these terrorist groups and this price will undoubtedly be very high."

As Pakistan's relations with Iran deteriorate, it is likely to move further into the Saudi orbit. Increasing Sunni fundamentalism, bordering on Wahhabism, in Pakistan also makes it a natural ideological ally of Saudi Arabia and an

Aid bailout

Saudi economic largesse matters greatly to Pakistan, which is in dire economic straits and has been forced to turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for loans that are bound to come with strict conditionalities. Over and above the \$6 billion already promised by Saudi Arabia, MBS has promised a further \$20 billion in Saudi investment in Pakistan. A large part is earmarked for investment in the construction of an oil refinery in Gwadar on the Makran coast, which is being developed as a strategic port by China and features prominently in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) plan.

In the context of this strategic and economic nexus between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, it will be unwise for New Delhi to seriously believe that it will be able to wean Saudi Arabia away from Pakistan. India should take advantage of any benefit that accrues from India's economic relations with Saudi Arabia but should not pin much hope on Riyadh in the political-strategic sphere.

Mohammed Ayoob is University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Michigan State University and Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Center for Global Policy, Washington DC

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

After Pulwama

No one wants a full-scale war now, which, by all accounts, would be disastrous for both India and Pakistan (OpEd page, "India's options after Pulwama", February 19). Defence officials in India ought to brainstorm to counter the enemy's covert and overt plans. Border incursions should be stopped completely. As far as trade and travel are concerned, all kinds of punitive measures must be implemented without a time frame, till the aggressor feels the heat. Being able to convince China and Saudi Arabia about the sinister intentions of Pakistan may prove to be difficult. Finally, targeting and

eliminating the non-state actors of terrorism is the good suggestion.

A.M.N. PANDIAN,
Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu

■ Is it the fear of collateral damage that is holding India back from acting against Pakistan, as the writer seems to hint at? If we do not instill fear in terrorist groups that are entrenched in Pakistan, we are only going to be suffering more losses. While improving security measures and preventing radicalisation of our youth is a desirable long-term plan, our military also needs to act – act promptly and adequately to make enemies realise that fostering terrorism on our soil is no more an option.

ATUL KRITI,
New Delhi

Plastic ban

As a German tourist who was travelling in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry for three weeks (December 2018/January 2019), I want to express my deepest respect for the enormous challenge the authorities faced in banning single-use plastics in such a short time. I think it is important to do it as quickly and strictly as possible not only because it is a global issue but also out of the need to preserve the beauty of India. My wife and I tried to do our little bit to clean Mamallapuram beach, south of Chennai. We collected a few bags of plastic in less than 10 minutes, but of course could only cover a few metres. We now fly back to Germany where the issue is less visible

but as big and challenging as it is in India. All nations have to rethink their behaviour as far as the environment is concerned. India has taken an excellent step – in my opinion.

ARMIN KRAUS,
Wuerzburg, Germany

Chemistry table

As a chemistry educator, I was delighted to come across an article in an Indian newspaper which focussed on an essential aspect of science ('Science & Technology' page, 'The Table that defines chemistry turns 150', February 10). Apart from history, the periodic table is an important tool in chemistry to explain various fundamental concepts. Unfortunately, to most

students, it is a topic for rote learning as there is hardly any emphasis on interactive classroom activities.

ANURADHA MUKHERJEE,
Bengaluru

■ It took me back to the time when I had finished school and applied for college admission, in 1976. Eventually I went on to do my post-graduation in chemistry. On my first-ever visit to the leading book store, I came across a interesting title,

THE WEDNESDAY INTERVIEW | ARUN K. SINGH

'We can defeat terrorism by upholding the unity of our society'

The former diplomat on the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, India-Pakistan ties, and the security situation in Kashmir

VARGHESE K. GEORGE

Arun K. Singh was Indian Ambassador to the U.S., France and Israel, and served in various capacities in the Ministry of External Affairs, including dealing with Afghanistan post-2001. Now a teacher, commentator and keen observer of geopolitics, Mr. Singh discusses in this interview the evolving situation in Afghanistan and how it is linked to the security scenario in Jammu and Kashmir. Excerpts:

The U.S. appears to be planning an exit from Afghanistan after making a deal with the Taliban. How do you assess the evolving situation?

■ The U.S. under President Donald Trump clearly wants to pull out of Afghanistan. This is not something new. Even under former President Barack Obama, there was a concerted attempt to pull out of Afghanistan. There is a certain amount of wariness in American society about this prolonged involvement in Afghanistan. It has now gone on for almost 18 years. There have been costs, economic and social. Obama was not able to do it, partly due to the push from the U.S. military and partly because he was worried that if there was a major terrorist attack in the U.S. after the pullout, and sourced from Pakistan or Afghanistan... that would have been devastating. The U.S. also did not want to convey the message that it lost in Afghanistan. Then there would have been wider consequences.

Trump and his politics are different. I think he is in a position to handle the consequences of pulling out even if there is a subsequent attack in the U.S. Their challenge now is that the military is pushing for a slow drawdown, as they don't want to create the impression that they have been defeated and leave, like they did in Vietnam. They would like to make an agreement on a political solution, and even if that collapses after a few

months, the U.S. cannot be held responsible.

This is causing a lot of anxiety among groups within Afghanistan. The Afghan President has concerns. The Taliban is reaching out to different countries and groups within Afghanistan, barring the government. Much will depend on whether the Taliban is negating what happened over the last 18 years or accepting the broad parameters of the Afghan Constitution; whether it accommodates others, shows more moderation and also talks to the government. If it is not willing to do that, there will be further instability.

What chances do you see of the Taliban moderating and accepting the broad parameters of the present Constitution?

■ At the moment it looks difficult. The Taliban has managed to create an impression that the present effort is not succeeding, and it has an edge militarily. It also perceives the U.S. as being keen to withdraw from Afghanistan. I don't think it would be willing to make much compromise. Also, there is the question of whether Pakistan is willing to accept an independent and autonomous Afghanistan. Pakistan will be tempted to think that it sustained the Taliban for 18 years and now if the Taliban is back in power, it can re-establish its pre-2001 equity in Afghanistan. That then raises the question of how much independence the Taliban will be able to exercise with re-

gard to Pakistan.



Regardless of how the U.S. withdrawal happens, the Taliban will consider this as its victory, right?

■ The Taliban will consider it a victory, many in Pakistan will also consider it a victory. Since 2001, Pakistan has been under tremendous pressure from the U.S. to give up support for the Taliban, for the Haqqani network. Pakistan has managed to sustain its support for these groups, risking its ties with the U.S.

After the exit of the Soviets from Afghanistan, Islamists had claimed they would defeat the Western capitalist system. Will they feel vindicated?

■ Yes, they will. There will be a reinforced argument that the radical Islamist forces defeated the Soviets, and now they have defeated the world's most powerful country. It will certainly encourage extremist tendencies in the Islamic world. We will see the impact of this in diffe-

rent parts of the world. In Syria, Iraq, and other parts of the Gulf, Africa, and even European countries.

For the Islamists, Kashmir is also part of the same continuum. How do you think the situation in Afghanistan will influence the situation in Kashmir?

■ Clearly, there are some links. If you see reports about the Pulwama attack, people who were fighting in Afghanistan earlier put together the IED that was used. Afghanistan was, in the past, used to train terrorists for action in India. When the IC-814 hijacking happened [in 1999], the released terrorists were taken to Kabul and they reportedly had meetings with Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden. There is a

link between Afghanistan and Kashmir: the entity that controls both is the ISI [Inter Services Intelligence]. In the 1990s, when the challenges in Kashmir flared up, one of the factors fanning those was the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Besides being a morale booster, this could also lead to redeployment of personnel from the Afghan front to Kashmir.

■ Yes, unless there is continued instability in Afghanistan. If they get free, they could be deployed elsewhere.

Pakistan is at the centre of all these calculations. The U.S. was categorical in calling out Pakistan after Pulwama. How does it square with its priorities in Afghanistan?

■ India must continue to explain to the world the challenge that Pakistan is posing to global stability. Not every country faces those challenges in the same fashion as India does. We are right next

door. But it is not just India. Recently, Afghanistan and Iran came out with statements directly accusing Pakistan. Attacks in the U.S. and the U.K. have been sourced to Pakistan. At the same time, we should be aware of the limit to what one can achieve in the short term. Each country looks at its relationship with Pakistan from the perspective of its own interest. Of all statements from other countries on Pulwama, one can say there is widespread support for India, but very few countries have directly named Pakistan. The U.S. specifically named Pakistan and asked for measures against terrorists; in the French statement, there is a reference to cross-border terrorism. All the other countries made general statements on terrorism. So one has to understand the limits. Three countries are critical for Pakistan. One is China, for political support, military equipment and investment. China will not discontinue its support. Saudi Arabia will continue its support for Pakistan, which it sees as a large Muslim country where its interests are critical. When MBS [Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman] was under international pressure, [Pakistan Prime Minister] Imran Khan went to support him. Similarly, the U.S., despite all the current challenges in the relations, does not want to burn all its bridges with Pakistan. Despite all that has happened, it has not declared Pakistan a terrorist state as that would disrupt diplomatic engagement.

India-China ties also keep oscillating. How will China respond to the current tensions between India and Pakistan?

■ We will have to wait and watch. China has not come

100% to the side of Pakistan. China sees Pakistan as a useful partner to challenge India, but it will not come fully in support of Pakistan and against India. In Kargil, in 1994, it did not fully support Pakistan. It also made the right noises along with the international community during Kargil and after 2008, asking Pakistan to control terrorism. It would not want to lose India completely. Due to two issues – China's opposition to India's membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group and on the question of declaring [Jaish-e-Mohammed chief] Masood Azhar a global terrorist – the mood about China in India is negative. But I think it would be very careful to not get 100% on the side of Pakistan.

Why do you think China is staking so much on one individual, Masood Azhar?

■ I think it is clearly at the request of Pakistan. All the reports suggest that there are very deep links between Azhar and the ISI. Pakistan does not want to be in a position where it is compelled to take action against him. Azhar has remained loyal to the Pakistani establishment through thick and thin, and has been a great leverage for it in Afghanistan and India. It is clearly at the behest of Pakistan that China is giving him cover.

Given this context, how should India approach the conflict in Kashmir?

■ There are two dimensions to the problem in Jammu and Kashmir. One is the external – cross-border terrorism, state support from Pakistan, the situation in Afghanistan, etc. Then there is an internal dimension – the relationship between the Central government and the State government and the people of Jam-

mu and Kashmir. The two have to be addressed, broadly speaking, in separate tracks. The radicalisation of youths in the State must be addressed urgently and politically. It has to be a battle of hearts and minds.

After every terrorist strike, there is a flurry of comments that broadly say India is paying the price for being soft. The argument is that India should have used more military force earlier. How do you see that?

■ A challenge like this has to be handled in a long-term framework, though short-term steps are necessary. In 2001-2002, after the attack on our Parliament, the government took a lot of short-term measures – diplomatic and military, including mobilisation at the border. It had some impact and a message was conveyed to the world and Pakistan. President Pervez Musharraf made some moves, such as banning Lashkar-e-Taiba and JeM. But short-term measures cannot do away with a problem of this nature. If one were to look at what the U.S. has done since 2001, nobody would accuse it of being a soft state or not having used power. But despite having used all that power, it has not quite achieved the objectives it set out to achieve. Or look at France and its use of hard military power in Africa. That has its utility, but that cannot resolve a problem. So it has to be a sustained effort, a multidimensional effort. It has to be handled with care and patience. One clear objective of Pakistan is to use terrorism to create a divide among communities in India, and that must be thwarted. If the people of India show unity and solidarity as these challenges are mounted, that would be a clear defeat of terrorism.

SINGLE FILE

Real tests of leadership

Where does Rahul Gandhi stand on jobs, secularism and democracy?

ANITA INDER SINGH



Rahul Gandhi's leadership of the Congress is being tested. Where does he stand on jobs, secularism and democracy? His promises of farm loan waivers and a minimum income guarantee scheme are populist. In the long run, more Indians will need jobs and the economic changes necessary to create them. If voted to power, what will the Congress do to generate employment? Unless he spells out his plans in detail, Mr. Gandhi's talk of progress will ring as hollow as that of the ruling BJP.

Mr. Gandhi's idea of a minimum income guarantee resonates with the BJP's idea of a universal basic income (UBI), which was presented by Arvind Subramanian when he was Chief Economic Adviser. It was rejected by then Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog, Arvind Panagariya, on the grounds that India lacks the fiscal room to implement such a scheme. The only country that has experimented with a UBI is Finland, which has a per capita income of about \$41,000, compared to India's \$2,134. Finland's UBI reportedly made more people happy, but did not create jobs. It also imposed an extra burden on the state. More generally, many Scandinavians and Germans would probably say that a country has to create wealth in order to create welfare. How does that sound to Indians?

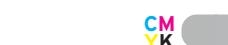
Then there is the question of religious issues. Recently, the Congress government in Madhya Pradesh invoked the National Security Act against three men accused of cow slaughter. While Mr. Gandhi's Congress is making the BJP's authoritarianism an election issue, this act shows that the Congress government can be as high-handed as the BJP government it seeks to displace.

Especially at a time when high unemployment figures are making headlines, it should be remembered that the cow slaughter ban not only impacts the beef export industry, which is worth about \$4 billion, but also implies coercion against those Indians who are not Hindus. Will Mr. Gandhi's soft Hindutva build new social bridges? Divided on the issue, some Congresspersons have asked whether cows are more important than human beings. It is precisely these divisions that will test Mr. Gandhi's mettle.

Mr. Gandhi has also lambasted the BJP's use of Aadhaar as an instrument of authoritarianism, intended to disempower citizens. Will the Congress do away with the relevant legislation on Aadhaar if it comes to power? What will the party do to ensure that a Congress government will not misuse authority in an analogous manner?

All these issues – jobs, equality, and secularism – are intertwined. Voters would like to know how Mr. Gandhi's Congress will handle them. To paraphrase Martin Luther King Jr., leadership is about moulding consensus and showing the way.

The writer is a founding professor of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution in New Delhi

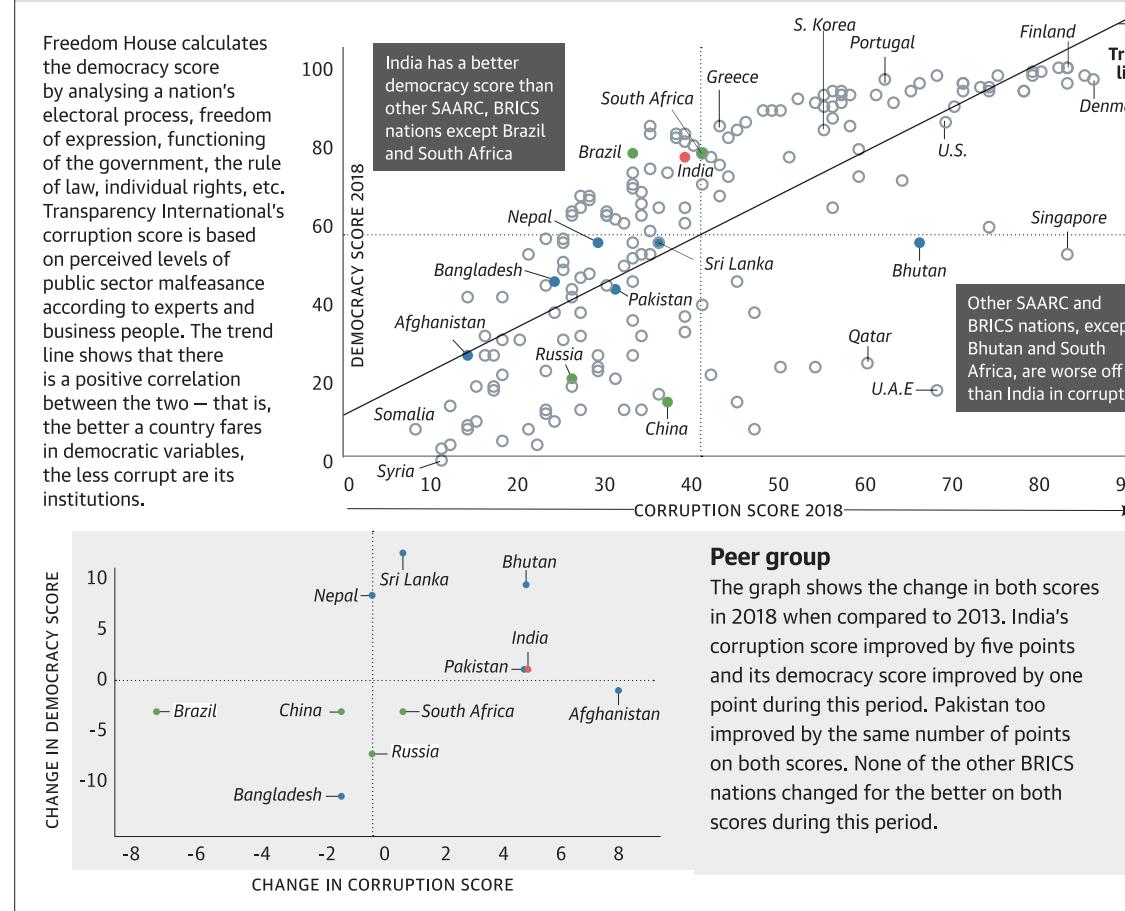


DATA POINT

Corruption and democracy

Freedom House calculates the democracy score by analysing a nation's electoral process, freedom of expression, functioning of the government, the rule of law, individual rights, etc. Transparency International's corruption score is based on perceived levels of public sector malfeasance according to experts and business people. The trend line shows that there is a positive correlation between the two – that is, the better a country fares in democratic variables, the less corrupt are its institutions.

Nations which are relatively more corrupt tend to have weaker democratic institutions. India was among the aberrations in 2018. It registered an above average democracy score of 77 (0: autocracy, 100: full democracy) and a below average corruption score of 41 (0: highly corrupt, 100: very clean)



FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 20, 1969

Surplus railway budget

The Railways have for the first time in the last four years come out with a surplus budget and that too without resort to increase in passenger fares and freights. Presenting the budget to the Lok Sabha [February 19, New Delhi], the new Minister of Railways, Dr. Ram Subrahmanyan, estimated a small surplus of Rs. 1.91 crores in 1969/70 after fully discharging the Railways' dividend liability, to the general revenues at Rs. 159 crores, the highest so far. The Railway Minister said that the Railways expected to lift about nine million tonnes of additional revenue earning traffic and carry an extra three per cent of passenger traffic in the coming year.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 20, 1919

Hinduism and Sea-Voyages (Correspondence)

Sir, We are under the deepest debt of gratitude to Mr. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar for the clear terms in which in his Conjeevaram speech he determined the principles of solution of conflicts between Orthodox Hinduism and Nationalism. "I have no hesitation in saying that if there be any conflict between the principles of Nationalism and Hinduism, which I believe there is not, I will pursue the path marked out by the former." It is hoped that no narrow construction will be placed on this statement saving only sea-voyages involved in political deputations from the prohibitions of orthodoxy by the weight of his authority. I trust that not only political deputations to England, but every action aimed at "the elevation and the good of the masses of our countrymen and the attainment of national unity and progress" will be included in the category of things not to be obstructed, but to be encouraged by those who heard or read this splendid exhortation.

C. Rajagopalachari,
Salem, February 18.

CONCEPTUAL
Turkheimer's laws

BIOLOGY

This refers to a set of laws regarding the heritability of various behavioural traits and the relative influence of genes and environment on human behaviour. The first Turkheimer law states that all human behavioural traits are heritable. The second law states that the influence of genes on human behaviour is greater than the family environment. The final law argues that a significant number of behavioural traits may be explained neither by genes nor the family environment. Turkheimer's laws were proposed by American psychologist Eric Turkheimer in his 2000 paper "Three Laws of Behavior Genetics and What They Mean".

MORE ON THE WEB

<http://bit.ly/SaudiPrinceinIndia>

Why is Mohammed bin Salman's India visit crucial?
<http://bit.ly/SaudiPrinceinIndia>

FROM PAGE ONE

AIADMK signs pact with BJP, PMK

In the morning, State Ministers P. Thangamani and S.P. Velumani, both regarded as confidants of the Chief Minister, went to the residence of daughter of the PMK founder in T. Nagar to escort Dr. Ramadoss and former Union Minister Anbumani Ramadoss to a star hotel in R.A. Puram, where the AIADMK leaders received them.

The Deputy Chief Minister then told the media that the two parties had clinched a deal. The PMK leader had presented a charter of demands.

Wishes for Vijayakant
Union Minister Piyush Goyal reached the city in the afternoon and got the understanding with the AIADMK finalised after a meeting with the latter's leaders.

SC upset by plight of migrants in Assam centres

On the other hand, the Foreign Tribunals were able to identify only 52,000 illegal foreigners. "How do you expect people to have confidence in the government when you have acted like this for the past 50 years... You have not done anything," the Chief Justice told Mr. Mehta.

Referring to the submission that about 29,000 illegal immigrants were "pushed back," the Chief Justice asked the government whether "pushing back was an effective way of deportation." "Of the 52,000, how many have you actually deported," he asked the government.

Mr. Mehta repeatedly assured the court that steps would be taken to expedite deportation or repatriation of illegal immigrants rather than have them spend years

Even though it was expected that the BJP would finalise an arrangement with the Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMKD), what emerged after his meeting with the DMDK's leaders, Vijayakant, his wife Prema-latha Vijayakant and brother-in-law L.K. Sudeesh, was a statement from the Union Minister that he had come to the city only to wish Mr. Vijayakant, who came back to Chennai on Saturday after undergoing treatment in the U.S., a "very good and healthy life."

According to a source, the DMDK was said to have sought five Lok Sabha seats along with one Rajya Sabha seat. To this, the BJP sought more time to respond. However, another source in the BJP said the issue would be resolved in a few days.

Triple talaq ordinance to be reissued

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Tuesday gave its approval to reissue the triple talaq ordinance that makes the practice of talaq-e-biddat or instant triple talaq by Muslim men a criminal offence with a jail term.

Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley made the announcement at a press conference.

The government adopted the ordinance route after the Bill lapsed, failing to get passed in the Rajya Sabha in the recently concluded session of Parliament.

For the third time in less than a year, the ordinance will become law once President Ram Nath Kovind signs it.

The petition, whose contents were inspired from a report Mr. Mander wrote as Minorities Monitor for the National Human Rights Commission, underscored the helplessness of children, aged over six, separated from their parents held in these centres.

dia Shining" pitch was helmed by Leo Burnett. For the 2014 election, Japanese firm Dentis India handled the Congress's ₹500-crore advertising campaign.

Catching the pulse

The sources say seven taglines have been shortlisted including *Bande Mein Hai Dum-Saath Challenge Hum, Ab Is Bar Soch Samajh Ke, and Bahut Hua Jumalon Ki Mar-Aao Badlein Modi Sarkar*. The companies made their presentation on January 30 and 31 to the core committee, headed by A.K. Antony and with Ghulam Nabi Azad, P. Chidambaram, Ashok Gehlot, Mallikarjun Kharge, Ahmed Patel, Jairam Ramesh, Randeep Surjewala and K.C. Venugopal as mem-



Game plan
Campaign launch: First week of March
Theme: Non-fulfilment of promises by the BJP
Strategy:
▪ Emphasis on 130 million first-time voters and 110 million second-time voters
▪ Party will partner with private firms for promotions and advertisements
▪ Social media push planned in tie-up with digital specialists

Preparation: Collected data on issues that affected the most number of people before Assembly elections in five States

bers. A meeting of the campaign committee and State campaign committee chairpersons was held on Monday and Tuesday to further fine-tune the taglines and the campaign strategy.

The Congress's emphasis is on the critical 130 million first-time voters and 110 million second-time voters who voted in 2014. A total of 900 million persons are on the rolls for Lok Sabha election.

nation," a source said. In 2014, the Congress was taken by surprise with the digital effort of the BJP, while it was still using it in a rudimentary manner. It is learnt from sources that the Congress is considering hiring a digital media firm and has had presentations by the New York-based Gutenberg and India-based Silverpush.

A member of the publicity committee told *The Hindu* that the Assembly election in five States was used as a testing ground for its strategy.

"We worked at many levels to distil the issues affecting the people the most. At first stage, data was collected, then inputs from the State units were collated and we did a real time check on the issues," the member said.

'Celebrities willing to endorse parties for a fee'

Cobrapost conducts sting operation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Investigative platform Cobrapost on Tuesday claimed to have exposed 36 Bollywood personalities who agreed to promote for a fee any specified political party on their social media accounts ahead of the Lok Sabha election.

"Most of them were willing to accept the bulk of their fee in cash, which in other words means black money," Cobrapost said in a statement. While some actors proposed they would indirectly promote the political party in their press briefings during the promotion of a film or an event, others even offered to post videos on social media and make them go viral.

Mr. Bahal asserted that the report highlighted the need for the Election Commission to frame guidelines to regulate proxy campaigning by celebrities on social media.

However, four of those

who were approached refused the offer straight away.

Cobrapost Editor Aniruddha Bahal said the sting operation was conducted last year and it took some time to release it after the post-production work.

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SC dismisses plea on CBI interim chief

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed a petition challenging the re-appointment of M. Nageswara Rao as interim CBI Director in January as both "fallacious" and "misconceived".

In a 13-page judgment, a Bench of Justices Arun Misra and Navin Sinha said the petition by NGO Common Cause through advocate Prashant Bhushan was filed with "undue haste" without verifying facts.

The NGO had claimed that the appointment of Mr. Rao, after the exit of Alok Verma, was done by the government without the prior approval of the high-power selection committee of the Prime Minister, the Opposition leader and the Chief Justice of India or his nominee Supreme Court judge as per the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, the statute which controls the functioning of the CBI.

Rahul hosts lunch for entrepreneurs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday hosted a group of entrepreneurs for lunch and had an interaction as part of the 'Apni Baat Rahul ke Saath' initiative to interact with different sections of the society.

"When you listen to TV debates, everybody talks about growth, 'India is growing at 6%... 8%'. But nobody talks about jobs. Where are the jobs?" Mr. Gandhi told the group.

10 NEWS

Congress campaign to roll out in early March

Party to shift gears once the nomination process is completed; a uniform message will go out across the nation

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

The Congress is set to launch its campaign for the Lok Sabha election in the first week of March. The party is expected to focus on the "non-fulfilment" of promises by the BJP government, highlighting its *vada* (promise) and *dohka* (betrayal).

The work on the campaign strategy began in October. Top sources say many companies such as Leo Burnett, Niksun, FCB-ULKA, Percept, Design Box and Crayons made a series of presentations on the campaign strategy. The Congress had worked with many of these firms in the past too. In 2004, the Congress campaign around the *Aam Aadmi* to counter the NDA's "In-

dia Shining" pitch was helmed by Leo Burnett. For the 2014 election, Japanese firm Dentis India handled the Congress's ₹500-crore advertising campaign.

Catching the pulse

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Dismiss plea to free Jadhav: Pak.

India accused of engaging in 'political theatre' and 'grandstanding' at ICJ

VIDYA RAM



Kulbhushan Jadhav

of failing to answer fundamental questions and of "causing terrorism and training terrorists to act in Pakistan" and wanting to "destroy" the country.

Indian interference
Pakistan had suffered more than 74,000 terrorism-related casualties and fatalities that had been caused "mainly by the interference" of India, said Mr. Khan in open-

presentations that contrasted with the more muted tone of India's opening oral arguments the day before, Mr. Qureshi and Pakistani's Attorney-General Anwar Mansoor Khan accused India

for another individual to be sworn in to replace Mr. Jillani and for them to be given "sufficient time" to review the case. "This is a matter of great concern for Pakistan," he said.

"I have been a victim of Indian brutalities," he told the court, in his opening submission, after he had been told to proceed with setting out Pakistan's case, despite their putting forward a request for an adjournment after former Chief Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jillani was taken ill on Monday, and has not been able to return to the court.

Pakistan had invoked the right for Pakistan to appoint an ad hoc judge because one of the ICJ judges is Indian, and because of Mr. Jillani's absence.

Mr. Khan on Tuesday called for the court to allow

the three-hour hearing – during which Mr. Qureshi was asked to slow down the pace of his presentation several times by the President – followed opening arguments by Harish Salve, India's counsel, and joint secretary Deepak Mittal, who accused Pakistan of "knowingly, wilfully and brazenly" flouting the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

The court will provide its response to your questions in due time," ICJ president Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf told Pakistan during the proceedings.

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Arguing that the Supreme Court should not enter the realm of facts in criminal cases like this, Mr. Sibal said factual evidence should be best left to be argued before the Magistrate's court concerned.

At one point, Justice Sikri asked Mr. Bhatia whether the CBI could investigate cases in West Bengal considering the fact that the State government had withdrawn general consent to the CBI's jurisdiction within its territory.

Here, Mr. Sibal intervened and said that "as an officer of this court I have to say that nothing can prevent the Supreme Court from ordering a CBI investigation. But having said that, I feel this court should not decide on facts".

The court adjourned the hearing.

Hearing on plea for CBI probe into death of BJP men

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday witnessed a sharp exchange between a judge and West Bengal counsel. When Justice A.K. Sikri asked, "What is happening in West Bengal government?", senior advocate Kapil Sibal instantly retorted, "What is happening in the CBI?"

The impromptu query of the judge came after advocate and BJP leader Gaurav Bhatia detailed the alleged circumstances around the deaths of three BJP workers in Purulia as part of his plea for a CBI probe. Mr. Bhatia contended that the "brutal killings", with the body of

CBI complaint to be heard today

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refrained from ordering the personal appearance of West Bengal chief secretary, DGP and the Kolkata police commissioner in court on February 20, when the CBI application is listed for hearing.

The CBI had moved the apex court against the State Police personnel who said physically prevented the agency's team from questioning the Kolkata police commissioner.

"West Bengal?" Justice Sikri remarked.

Mr. Sibal, however, responded with a counter-question. "So what is happening in the CBI also... And all of this [Mr. Bhatia's petition] is indeed politics," he coun-

tered.

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Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi instead said the matter would come up for consideration on February 20, when the CBI application is listed for hearing.

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Sharp exchanges in SC on Bengal

Hearing on plea for CBI probe into death of BJP men

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IN BRIEF



Intervene with Imran, Digvijaya tells Sidhu

NEW DELHI
Convince your friend 'Imran bhai' to act against terrorists targeting India. Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh tendered this advice on Tuesday to his party colleague Navjot Singh Sidhu, who is at the centre of a row over his remark on the Pulwama attack. After the attack, Mr. Sidhu asked whether an entire nation could be blamed for the act of a "handful of people."

What proof do you want, Amarinder asks Imran

CHANDIGARH
Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh reacted sharply on Tuesday to Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's remark that India had no evidence of his country's involvement in the Pulwama terror attack, wondering "if the Pakistan Prime Minister wanted New Delhi to send the bodies of the soldiers." "What proof is he talking about? Masood Azhar is in Pakistan and doing things from there ... Every day our soldiers are being killed at the Line of Control – so who's killing them?" he asked.

Pak. seeks U.N. mediation to de-escalate tension

ISLAMABAD
Pakistan has sought the urgent intervention of the U.N. Secretary-General in defusing tension with India and help facilitate dialogue between the two countries, the Foreign Office said on Tuesday. The Pulwama attack has heightened bilateral tensions with both New Delhi and Islamabad calling back their envoys for "consultations". PTI

JeM local leadership destroyed'

Group had been taking directions from ISI, neutralised within 100 hours: Army

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

The Army on Tuesday said it had neutralised the top local leadership of the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), which had been "taking directions from Pakistan Army and its intelligence agency ISI directly," within 100 hours of the Pulwama suicide attack.

"We have eliminated the JeM leadership in the Valley, which was being handled by the JeM based in Pakistan and was taking directions from Pakistan Army and ISI," Lt. Gen. Kanwal Jeet Singh Dhillon, General Officer Commanding (GOC), Chinar Corps, told presspersons. "The February 14 type car bombing has happened after a long time...we will keep all options open to deal with these kinds of attacks."

Lt. Gen. Dhillon briefed the press jointly with Inspector-General of Police (IGP) S.P. Pani and IG CRPF Zulf-



Tough talk: General Officer Commanding of the Chinar Corps Lt. Gen. Kanwal Jeet Singh Dhillon, centre, addressing a press meet in Srinagar on Tuesday. • NISSAR AHMAD

kar Hassan on the operation carried out in Pulwama on Monday in which three JeM militants were killed in an 18-hour encounter.

Pakistani operatives

The Army said two Pakistani JeM terrorists, Kamran, alias Fahad, and Rashid, alias Gazi, alias Lukaman, and a lo-

cal militant, Hilal Ahmad, "played a role in the suicide attack" on a CRPF convoy at Pulwama's Lethpora area that killed 40 jawans. Kamran had taken over as JeM's operational commander last year and was active in the Pulwama-Awantipora-Tral axis, officials said.

The GOC asked the moth-

ers of Kashmiri youth to request their sons who had joined terrorism to surrender and return to the mainstream.

"Anyone who has picked up a gun will be killed and eliminated, unless he surrenders. Our focus is clear on counter-terrorism operations," he said.

France to propose ban on JeM chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

France will move a proposal to the U.N. in a "couple of days" to ban Masood Azhar, chief of the U.N.-proscribed JeM, French sources said on Tuesday.

This will be the second time France will be party to such a proposal. In 2017, the U.S., supported by the U.K. and France, moved a proposal at the U.N.'s Sanctions Committee 1267 to ban him. However, it was blocked by China.

"At the U.N., France will lead a proposal to put Masood Azhar on the terrorist list ... It will happen in a couple of days," a senior French source said. The French decision was discussed between Philippe Etienne, Diplomatic Adviser to the French President, and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, French sources said.



Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman speaking at a press conference in Bengaluru on Tuesday. • K. MURALI KUMAR

Pak. never acted on evidence: Minister

'Morale of armed forces not hit'

"There is no doubt about it," she said.

"The morale [of the armed forces] has not been affected at all," she said to another question.

Budget allocation

About Budget allocations reportedly falling short of requirements, the Minister said the government would do whatever needed to be done. "Post-election, we will take a call."

To a query on the many defence deals that were signed or were ready to be signed with Russia in the face of threats of U.S. sanctions, Defence Secretary Sanjay Mitra said, "We have developed a modus vivendi with the Ministry of External Affairs. And it is going on for the present and future projects."

The five-day Aero India 2019, which officials said is the largest so far in terms of participation, opens here on Wednesday.

The military and civil air show opens under a cloud, as a Hawk pilot died early on Tuesday while the aerobatic team was rehearsing at the Yelahanka air base.

U.S. envoy wants Pak. to end terror support

Pulwama attack bolsters resolve to cooperate with India in counter-terrorism, says Juster

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

Pakistan should end the support to terror groups operating on its soil, said U.S. Ambassador to India Kenneth I. Juster.

His comments came a few hours after Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said there was no proof linking the country with the Pulwama terror attack.

"The United States condemns in the strongest terms this horrific attack by a Pakistan-based terrorist group



... The United States calls on Pakistan to end immediately the support and safe havens provided to all terrorist

groups operating on its soil," he said on Thursday, during an interaction with presspersons in connection with the Aero India 2019.

The "horrific" Pulwama incident "bolsters" the U.S.'s resolve to cooperate with India on counter-terrorism. "[We will] work with them [India] to get to the bottom of what has occurred last week," Mr. Juster said.

He said the U.S. had previously condemned terrorist sanctuaries that existed in Pakistan and suspended mil-

itary assistance. Asked if Pakistan could initiate the crackdown on terror groups with increased U.S. pressure, the Ambassador said: "I don't want to get ahead of the situation that is developing."

Growing defence ties

The coming year will surpass the achievements of 2018 in terms of U.S.-India defence relationship, said the Ambassador.

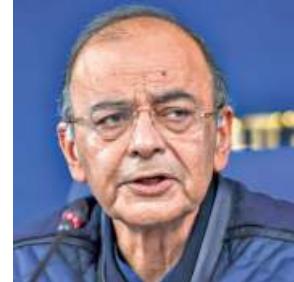
"2018 was a banner year in our partnership in India.

The Indian armed forces conducted more exercises with the United States than with any other country, and more U.S. service members came to train with their counterparts than any time in the past ... 2019 is on track to meet or exceed last year's levels of bilateral cooperation," he said.

The five-day Aero India 2019, scheduled to start on Wednesday, will see the largest delegation of military and industry officials from the U.S.

Imran Khan giving a 'lame excuse', says India

'Pakistan PM has not chosen to condemn the heinous act'



Arun Jaitley

condemnation of the incident," said Mr. Jaitley describing Pakistan's demand for actionable intelligence as "shallow logic".

The Ministry's statement singled out Pakistan Minister Noorul-Haq Qadri's appearance with Hafiz Saeed in an event last year, and said that Imran Khan's "new Pakistan" was also responsible for

Pak. nationals asked to leave Bikaner

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

The Collector of Bikaner in Rajasthan has asked all Pakistani nationals to leave the district within 48 hours, citing intelligence reports that indicated "extreme unrest" among the locals after the Pulwama attack. Collector Kumar Pal Gautam issued prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code on Monday, banning the stay of Pakistani nationals in any hotel, inn or hospital within the limits of the district and restricting any direct or indirect trade and exchange of classified information with any Pakistani national.

Bikaner is adjacent to the international border with Pakistan. The order also bans the use of Pakistani SIM cards in the district.

Fiji to maintain China-India balance

'We have more in common with India. We understand its aspirations,' says envoy



Yogesh Punja

south Pacific island nation, some 40% are of Indian origin.

Infra project

Asked about Fiji's participation in the China-led trans-border infrastructure project, Belt and Road Initiative, Mr. Punja said his country had signed up with the Chinese for several infrastructure projects but "we do not want to be dependent on loans."

In an indirect reference to China's debt diplomacy, which faces criticism for en-

trapping smaller powers in prolonged debt burdens, the High Commissioner said: "The Chinese experience in the Pacific is well known... We have learnt from what we have seen. We are using Chinese loans for our infrastructure development...[but] the government is functioning with the agenda that we do not throw the baby out with the bathwater."

Defence agreement

Both India and Fiji signed a defence agreement in 2017 with a goal to deepen cooperation in maritime security and provide training for Fiji troops.

Asked about the pact, the High Commissioner said he can't discuss the details of defence cooperation. "But we are bringing personnel here for training purposes and we are also negotiating for some equipment and things like that. It's all there."

He added that there are a

number of areas other than defence that both sides have identified to strengthen bilateral ties. "We have close to 28 MoUs on the table," said the envoy. These include MoUs on sugar industry, agriculture and tourism. Fiji is a major producer of sugar. The state-owned Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) is the largest public enterprise in the country, employing some 3,000 people.

Mr. Punja added that Fiji is planning to focus on attracting more Indian tourists to the country.

Climate change

S.N. Srikanth, Honorary Consul of Fiji, said that the Consulate in Chennai would announce some initiatives in collaboration with the High Commission to create awareness of climate change in South India and to make available the experience and expertise that Fiji has in these matters.

STANLY JOHNY
CHENNAI

Both India and China are important partners of Fiji and the island nation will continue to strengthen ties with the two Asian giants, its High Commissioner to India, Yogesh Punja, has said.

"It's a balancing act... We are engaging with both. We have good relationship with both countries. We have defence cooperation not only with China but Russia at the same time. We have all the players on the table, depending on who has more love," Mr. Punja told *The Hindu* in an interview. "I am not saying no to one and yes to the other. We work with both. The more love goes to the one who gives us more love in return."

He said that politically Fiji was more attached to India. "We have more in common with India. We understand the aspirations of India." Of the 9,00,000 people of the

A crowded space

With the entry of Bernie Sanders, an Independent who caucuses with the Democrats, there are now at least 10 contenders for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination



Elizabeth Warren, 69
Massachusetts Senator

- A favourite of the progressive left. She called for tough regulation in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis



Kamala Harris, 54
California Senator

- Drew attention for her tough questioning of Trump's Cabinet nominees
- Unveiled middle-class tax legislation last year and has championed a liberal civil rights agenda



Tulsi Gabbard, 37
Hawaii Congresswoman

- She has been a supporter of universal government-provided health care and raising of the minimum wage. She is also an opponent of America's interventions in other countries
- Opted out of challenging Ted Cruz for Senate in 2018
- Has emphasised Medicare for all and immigration reform and universal primary education



Julián Castro, 44
Former Mayor of San Antonio

- She has positioned herself as one of the presidential candidates who can capitalise on the #MeToo movement
- Has placed women's equality at the centre of her policy agenda



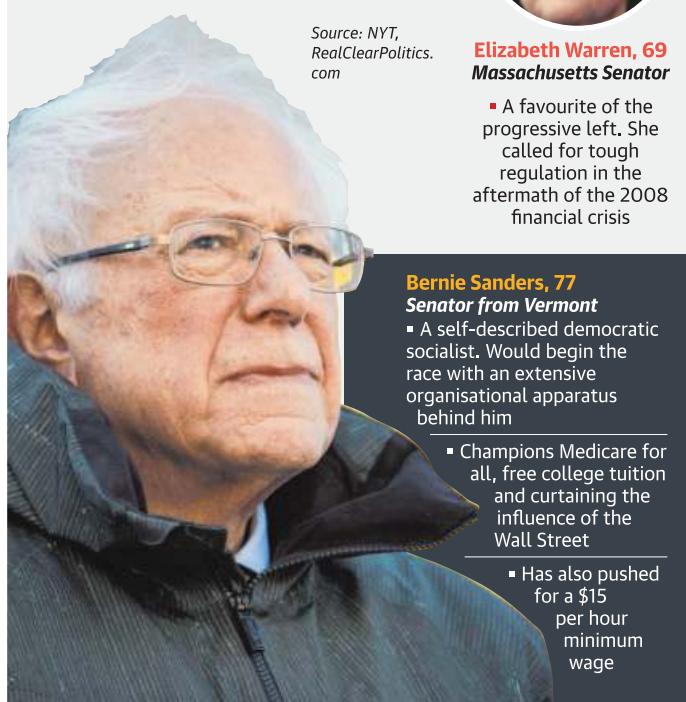
Kirsten Gillibrand, 52
New York Senator

- She has positioned herself as one of the presidential candidates who can capitalise on the #MeToo movement
- Has placed women's equality at the centre of her policy agenda



Cory Booker, 49
New Jersey Senator

- Enjoys a vast fund-raising base, thanks to connections with donors across the country
- Has been one of the leaders in the Senate on criminal justice reform



Bernie Sanders, 77
Senator from Vermont

- A self-described democratic socialist. Would begin the race with an extensive organisational apparatus behind him
- Champions Medicare for all, free college tuition and curtailing the influence of the Wall Street
- Has also pushed for a \$15 per hour minimum wage

Sanders has the advantage of having the small donors behind him

The 2018 Senate candidates who raised the largest share from small donors

Sanders
77%

Warren
56%

Corey Stewart
50%

Gabbard
1.3%

*Among those who have announced their candidacy, Sanders has the highest favourability ratings



Average of all polls compiled by Real Clear Politics

Bernie Sanders announces White House bid

Our campaign is about taking on the powerful special interests that dominate our economic and political life, he says

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
NEW YORK

Independent Senator from Vermont and 2016 presidential candidate, Bernie Sanders, has announced that he is seeking the Democratic nomination for the White House in 2020. Mr. Sanders announced his intention to run on Vermont Public Radio on Tuesday morning, entering a crowded field of at least 10 other Democratic candidates.

With his 2016 campaign and agenda of free health care for all, a \$15 minimum wage, zero college tuition and higher taxes on the rich, Mr. Sanders, who has described himself as a democratic socialist, gave the Democratic Party a push to the left, bringing several progressive policies to the mainstream of political discourse.

Some of the policies he popularised are now part of the agenda of those seeking

the Democratic nomination, including Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, who is likely to run on a similar platform to Mr. Sanders's.

The nature of the race has changed markedly in just three years. In 2016, Mr. Sanders was pushing progressive policies and his main opponent for the Democratic nomination, Hilary Clinton, was an establishment candidate. In 2020, Mr. Sanders will run in a less ideologically unique space – a result of his own policy agenda and presence on the national stage.

Grassroots campaign

At least two of those who had endorsed Mr. Sanders previously – Tulsi Gabbard, Congresswoman from Hawaii, and author Marianne Williamson – will now compete with him for the Democratic ticket.

"Hi, I'm Bernie Sanders.

I'm running for President," Mr. Sanders said in a video and email sent to supporters on Tuesday, in which he also asked them to be part of an "unprecedented grassroots campaign". Mr. Sanders had raised some \$230 million, mostly through small donations in 2016.

"Our campaign is not only about defeating Donald Trump, the most dangerous President in modern American history," Mr. Sanders said in the video. "It is not only about winning the Democratic nomination and the general election. Our campaign is about transforming our country and creating a government based on the principles of economic, social, racial and environmental justice."

"Our campaign is about taking on the powerful special interests that dominate our economic and political life. I'm talking about Wall

Street, the health insurance companies, the drug companies, the fossil fuel industry, the military-industrial complex, the private prison industry, and the large multinational corporations that exert such an enormous influence over our lives," said Mr. Sanders, who has projected himself as a candidate for working class Americans and against entrenched Washington interests.

Mr. Sanders referred to e-commerce giant Amazon paying "nothing in federal income taxes" and the "grotesque" income inequalities in American society. He called for an end to racism, sexism, homophobia, religious bigotry and an end to voter suppression and gerrymandering (manipulating the boundaries of an electoral constituency in an electorally strategic manner).

"We are running against a President who is a patholog-

ical liar, a fraud, a racist, a sexist, a xenophobe, and someone who is undermining American democracy as he leads us in an authoritarian direction," Mr. Sanders said.

Oldest candidate

If he wins, Mr. Sanders, at 77, will be the oldest candidate on the Democratic ticket. Yet, he is highly popular among young voters and won the under-30 vote in 2016 against Ms. Clinton. However, Mr. Sanders fared badly last time with African-American and women voters. Ms. Clinton won South Carolina – where some 60% of Democratic voters are black – by almost 50 points.

Mr. Sanders visited South Carolina on Martin Luther King Jr. day at the end of January and met with lawmakers and others, and delivered a speech in honour of King. There are other vulnerabilities in the Sanders cam-

paign. His opponents will likely bring up his voting record on gun control – he received support from the NRA as a Congressman in 1990 for voting against wait times for those wanting to buy handguns.

Mr. Sanders is also likely to be challenged on reports of harassment of women workers by their colleagues and pay disparities in the Sanders campaign in 2016. "I certainly apologise to any woman who felt she was not treated appropriately, and of course, if I run we will do better the next time," Mr. Sanders had said.

A recent Morning Consult nationwide poll of democratic primary voters put Mr. Sanders in second place, winning 22% of primary voters and behind former Vice-President Joe Biden (29%). Indian and African-American candidate Kamala Harris came in third at 13%.

Venezuela military should abandon Maduro'

Trump warns that the armed forces will find 'no safe harbour' if they keep backing him

REUTERS
MIAMI

U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday warned members of Venezuela's military who remain loyal to President Nicolás Maduro that they are risking their future and their lives and urged them to allow humanitarian aid into the country.

Speaking to a cheering crowd mostly of Venezuelan and Cuban immigrants in Miami, Mr. Trump said if the Venezuelan military continued supporting Mr. Maduro, "you will find no safe harbour, no easy exit and no way out. You'll lose everything."

'Nazi-style speech'

Mr. Maduro retaliated late on Monday that Mr. Trump's speech was "Nazi-style" and said he acted as if he were the owner of Venezuela and its citizens his slaves.

Mr. Trump offered strong



Strong words: People listening to U.S. President Donald Trump during a rally in Miami, Florida, on Monday. ■ AFP

backing for Venezuelan Opposition leader Juan Guaidó, whom the United States, many of Venezuela's neighbours and most Western countries have recognised as interim President of Venezuela. But Mr. Maduro, who won a second term last year in an election that critics denounced as a sham, retains the

backing of Russia and China and control of Venezuelan state institutions, including the security services.

The U.S. has sent tonnes of aid that is being stockpiled on Colombia's border with Venezuela, but Mr. Maduro has refused to let it in. Mr. Maduro has called the aid a U.S.-orchestrated

show and denied any crisis. Mr. Maduro said Venezuela already received "humanitarian assistance" on a daily basis. Russia, for example, was sending 300 tonnes of aid to the country by plane on Wednesday, he said, albeit clarifying this was not a donation but supplies for which Venezuela had paid.

"We seek a peaceful transition of power but all options are open," Mr. Trump said. It was a further hint of Mr. Trump's repeated insistence that military options remain on the table, though most Latin America experts believe such action is unlikely.

The United States has had direct communications with members of Venezuela's military, urging them to abandon Mr. Maduro, a senior White House official said earlier this month, and Mr. Trump's aides have openly predicted more defections.

French Jewish cemetery vandalised

REUTERS
STRASBOURG

Vandals have daubed swastikas and anti-Semitic slogans on around 90 graves in a Jewish cemetery in eastern France, local officials said on Tuesday, shortly before planned marches nationwide against a rise in anti-Semitic attacks.

French President Emmanuel Macron visited the cemetery on Tuesday in the village of Quatzenheim, near the city of Strasbourg, following the overnight desecration, walking through a gate daubed with a swastika as he entered the graveyard. Figures released last week showed there were

more than 500 anti-Semitic attacks in 2018, a 74% increase from 2017.

Among incidents in recent days, 'yellow vest' protesters were filmed hurling abuse at Alain Finkielkraut, a well-known Jewish writer and son of a Holocaust survivor, on Saturday.

Data leak exposes mass surveillance in Xinjiang

Information on 2.6 million people stored

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

A Chinese technology firm has compiled a range of personal information on 2.6 million people in Xinjiang – from their ethnicity to locations – according to a data leak highlighting the wide extent of surveillance in the restive region.

Xinjiang is home to most of China's Uighur ethnic minority people and has been under heavy police surveillance in recent years after violent inter-ethnic tensions. The leak was discovered last week by security researcher Victor Gevers, who found that Chinese tech company SenseNets had stored the records of individuals in an open database "fully accessible to anyone".

Pakistani national behind suicide attack, says Iran

It was initially planned for the revolution day'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TEHRAN

The bomber who carried out last week's attack that killed 27 members of Iran's Revolutionary Guards was a Pakistani national, the elite force said on Tuesday.

"The suicide bomber was named Hafez Mohammad Ali and was from Pakistan," said Brigadier-General Pakpour.

Apart from the suicide bomber, one of the suspected accomplices was also Pakistani, he said.

He said the attack had originally been planned for February 11 to coincide with celebrations for the 40th anniversary of Iran's Islamic revolution. But had security forces had been "fully prepared" on that day, he said.

A jihadist group, Jaish al-Adl (Army of Justice), which Tehran says operates mostly out of bases in Pakistan, claimed responsibility for the attack.

16 U.S. states sue Trump over border wall emergency

They warn of a constitutional crisis

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SAN FRANCISCO

Sixteen U.S. states sued President Donald Trump's administration on Monday over his decision to declare a national emergency to fund a wall on the southern border with Mexico, saying the move violated the Constitution.

Mr. Trump announced the emergency on Friday in order to bypass Congress, which approved only a quarter of the \$5.6 billion he wanted for the wall in a spending Bill.

But the lawsuit, filed in a federal court in California, said the President's order was contrary to the Constitution's presentment and appropriations clauses, which outline legislative procedures and define Congress as the final arbiter of public funds, respectively.

The move had already been announced by Xavier Becerra, the Attorney-General of California, who said on Sunday his State and others had legal standing because they risked losing money intended for military projects, disaster assistance and other purposes. Critics have warned that Mr. Trump has opened the door for future Presidents to call on the act whenever they fail to get their way with Congress.

"After the government reopened, Congress approved, and the President signed into law, a \$1.375 billion appropriation for fencing along the southern border, but Congress made clear that funding could not be used to build President Trump's proposed border wall," it said.

The complaint also questioned Mr. Trump's categorisation of illegal border crossings as a national emergency, saying data issued by the administration refuted it. "Customs and Border Protection data show that unlawful entries are near 45-year lows," it said.



A protest against President Donald Trump in New York City on Monday. ■ AFP

Huawei pledges not to share data with govt.
WASHINGTON
Huawei Technologies Co Ltd's founder and chief executive Ren Zhengfei pledged not to share any customer information with the Chinese government and said the company had never done so, in an interview with CBS News. ■ AFP

Bangladesh shuts 20,000 websites
DHAKA
Bangladesh authorities have blocked almost 20,000 websites as part of an anti-pornography "war", a Minister said on Tuesday. The crackdown was launched after Bangladesh's High Court in November asked the government to block pornography websites and publication of obscene materials in electronic forms for six months. ■ AFP

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	35,353	-0.41
Gold	34,680	0.66
Brent oil	66.31	-0.19

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	339.55	-7.75
Asian Paints	1377.85	-2.20
Axis Bank	693.05	-0.25
Bajaj Auto	2787.85	-5.65
Bajaj Finserv	5969.75	84.60
Bajaj Finance	2559.80	10.35
Bharti Airtel	303.70	1.15
BPCL	335.25	7.50
Cipla	539.65	-1.50
Coal India	214.25	-0.90
Dr Reddys Lab	2536.90	-28.65
Eicher Motors	20409.80	254.60
GAIL (India)	320.25	2.80
Grasim Ind	718.35	18.50
HCL Tech.	1039.05	-7.25
HDFC	1853.45	-21.40
HDFC Bank	2084.05	-5.85
Hero MotoCorp	2636.85	-46.70
Hindalco	186.55	2.00
HPCL	214.80	2.15
Hind Unilever	1737.95	-13.95
Indiabulls HFL	614.30	-9.20
ICICI Bank	342.25	4.50
IndusInd Bank	1480.50	-36.50
Bharti Infra	318.45	1.40
Infosys	724.30	-16.75
Indian Oil Corp	125.60	0.65
ITC	275.90	1.20
JSW Steel	266.85	4.95
Kotak Bank	1280.45	3.40
L&T	1258.30	13.80
M&M	632.60	7.90
Maurti Suzuki	6804.55	-38.15
NTPC	133.70	-3.75
ONGC	139.15	2.05
PowerGrid Corp	179.45	-1.30
Reliance Ind	1216.10	-4.00
State Bank	262.90	2.95
Sun Pharma	413.65	-1.00
Tata Motors	163.75	0.85
Tata Steel	470.95	5.40
TCS	1904.80	-65.50
Tech Mahindra	791.00	-12.45
Titan	1028.80	1.45
UltraTech Cement	3467.60	38.35
UPL	816.45	-5.40
Vedanta	153.10	5.10
Wipro	363.45	-12.15
YES Bank	212.85	-0.70
Zee Entertainment	446.45	7.50

BULLION RATES CHENNAI

February 19 rates in rupees with previous rates in parentheses

Retail Silver (1g) 43.6 (43.6)

22 ct gold (1 g) 3211 (3196)

IN BRIEF

Yes Bank says disclosure as per regulatory norms

NEW DELHI

Yes Bank on Tuesday said its disclosure of 'nil divergence' was as per the regulatory guidelines. The bank was of the view that the information received under Risk Assessment Report was an Unpublished Price Sensitive Information likely to be misused or leaked, Yes Bank told the NSE. PTI

New angel tax rules provide relief to eligible start-ups

Centre's notification exempts investments up to ₹25 crore in eligible firms and funding by non-resident Indians

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Centre on Tuesday notified new rules pertaining to angel tax which, will exempt registered start-ups of a specified size from the tax and any scrutiny to do with its applicability.

Angel tax is applicable to unlisted companies that have raised capital through sale of shares at a value above their fair market value. This excess capital is treated as income and taxed accordingly. This tax predominantly affects start-ups and the angel investments they attract.

According to Tuesday's notification, investments of up to ₹25 crore in an eligible company will be exempt from the angel tax. In addition, investments made by a listed company of a net-

worth of at least ₹100 crore or a turnover of at least ₹250 crore would also be exempt. Investments made by non-residents will also be exempt.

The notification said that an eligible start-up would be one that is registered with the government, has been incorporated for less than 10 years, and has a turnover that has not exceeded ₹100 crore over that period.

"It is a positive move by the government," Bhavin Shah, Financial Services Tax Leader at PwC India said. "This clarification would help in avoiding potentially significant tax challenges faced by start-ups. There was a request from the industry to include Category II Alternate Investment Funds as well in the exclusion list,

which has unfortunately not been considered favourably."



Right step: The move will help start-ups avoid significant tax challenges, says PwC India's Bhavin Shah • GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

In order to register with the government as a start-up, the company will also have to make an online application to the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

This application will have to be accompanied by a copy of the Certificate of Incorporation or Registration, a

write-up about the nature of the business highlighting how it is working towards "innovation, development or improvement of products or processes or services, or its scalability in terms of employment generation or wealth creation."

Welcoming the move, the start-up community said

some issues such as start-ups having already been sent tax notices, and the applicability of Section 68 of the I-T Act still remained and that they would take it up with the tax department.

Fast track disposal

"We will also make a submission to CBDT soon and request them to drive fast track disposal for start-ups having cases under appeal with exemption to be considered and any possible consideration for orders under Section 68 where PAN of investors have been furnished to be included in CBDT's instructions to assessing officers," Sachin Taparia, founder of LocalCircles, said.

The start-up will also have to attest to the fact that it has not invested in any land that is not being used in its ordin-

ary course of business, any vehicle over the value of ₹10 lakh, any jewellery, among other things.

Many of the concerns raised by the start-ups have been addressed in the recent notification," S. Vasudevan, partner, LakshmiKumaran & Sridharan Attorneys, said. "However, the notification imposes certain restrictions on investments by the start-ups. Some of these restrictions can lead to hardships for the start-ups and may even disqualify some genuine start-ups from this exemption."

Once the signed declarations and documents are submitted to the DPIIT, the body will decide on the eligibility of the start-up and then communicate a list of eligible start-ups to the Central Board of Direct Taxes.

Ola gets ₹650-crore from Sachin Bansal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Ride-hailing platform Ola, on Tuesday, said Flipkart co-founder Sachin Bansal had invested ₹650 crore in the company. The investment, which has been made in Mr. Bansal's personal capacity, is the largest investment by an individual in Ola till date.

Mr. Bansal, who had co-founded Flipkart with Binny Bansal in 2007, exited the company after the U.S. retail giant Walmart picked up 77% in the Bengaluru-based e-commerce firm for \$16 billion.

"I have known Bhavish [Ola co-founder and CEO] as an entrepreneur and as a friend over these years and I have great respect for what he and the team at Ola have built in just 8 years. I am personally thrilled to be part of the Ola journey and I look forward to contributing to their success," Mr. Bansal said.

In October last, the firm had raised \$1.1 billion from China's Tencent Holdings Ltd. and SoftBank Group. The company had stated then that it was in talks to raise another \$1 billion from a group of investors to take the total funding to more than \$2 billion.

Bhavish Aggarwal, co-founder and CEO, Ola, said: "Sachin is an icon of entrepreneurship and his experience of building one of India's most respected businesses ground up is unparalleled. I personally look forward to learning from Sachin's journey, his mentorship and guidance, as we look to build one of the most impactful global businesses out of India."

GST Council to discuss realty rates

Wednesday's meet to also examine ways to boost collections

TCA SHARAD RAGHAVAN

NEW DELHI

The Goods and Services Tax Council will meet via video-conferencing on Wednesday to discuss key issues such as the possible reduction of GST rates on the real estate sector, and ways to increase tax collections.

Experts feel that this will be the last meeting of the Council before the general elections, since the model code of conduct will come into force soon. The GST Council, in December, had created a Group of Ministers to look into the applicability of GST rates on under-construction properties. One of the options reportedly recommended by the GoM was to reduce the tax rate on the sale of such properties to 5%

without input tax credits (ITC) from the current 12% with ITC. Addressing the real estate issue, however, is a much more complex issue that requires more nuanced solutions, according to tax experts.

Input tax credit
"I'm not sure how they can look at it [real estate] as a standalone issue," Archit Gupta, founder and CEO of ClearTax said. "It is a deeper issue and they should take a more holistic view of how the input tax credit set-off will play out, whether the rates on cement will be reduced, etc. It also causes credit blockages, because if you are not getting input tax credits then that breaks the chain. It may be difficult to

give a complete solution at this juncture." If the input credit has to be restricted, then it is important that the rates on key inputs such as cement and the tax paid to construction contractors should also be reduced," Pratik Jain, Indirect Tax Leader at PwC India said.

In general, tax experts feel that removing ITC for the real estate sector would be a big blow to the structure of GST since it would open the doorway for other sectors to ask for similar treatment, whereas the backbone of GST is built on the provision of ITC.

Apart from the single-point rate agenda of real estate, the Council will likely discuss ways to improve overall collections as well.

Cabinet approves Phase II of rooftop solar programme

Provides for 40% central funding for installations up to 3kW

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Wednesday approved Phase-II of the Grid Connected Rooftop Solar Programme that aims to achieve a cumulative capacity of 40,000 MW from rooftop solar projects by 2022.

The programme will be implemented with a total central financial support of ₹1,814 crore.

The Phase II programme provides for central financial assistance (for residential rooftop solar installations) up to 40% for rooftop systems up to 3kW and 20% for those with a capacity of 3-

10kW. The second phase will also focus on increasing the involvement of the distribution companies (DISCOM).

Performance-based incentives will be provided to DISCOMs based on RTS capacity achieved in a financial



year [i.e. April 1 to March 31 every year till the duration of the scheme] over and above the base capacity, i.e., cumulative capacity achieved at the end of previous financial year," the government said in a release.

Farmer security

In a separate decision, the Cabinet approved the launch of the Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan aimed at providing financial and water security to farmers.

Through the scheme, farmers will be given financial assistance to set up solar panels in their unused or fallow land.

Standard mediclaim policy on the cards, guidelines to be framed

Basic sum insured is ₹50,000 and maximum of ₹10 lakh

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has set in motion the process of formulating guidelines for a Standard Health Product that it wants all general and health insurance companies to offer.

The Standard Mediclaim Policy, followed by the name of the insurer concerned, as the product would be called, will have a minimum basic sum insured of ₹50,000 and a maximum limit of ₹10 lakh. It will be for those above 18 years of age with the maximum age at entry of 65 years. With health products differing significantly in terms of their benefits, it is essential that potential customers need to have access to a basic health insurance

cover. This would enable them to choose the coverage based on the need, IRDAI said, inviting suggestions from stakeholders on the draft guidelines.

Such a policy, it said, was necessary as at times the prospective customers may have no option but to choose a health product which has embedded certain other covers whether or not such covers are needed. Dependent child/children aged up to 25 years are to be covered under the policy.

On the benefit structure, the regulator mooted a 'Base Cover' comprising various, mandatory components un-

U.S. top court clears way for Suboxone copycat

REUTERS

WASHINGTON

The U.S. Supreme Court dealt a blow to Indivior Plc on Tuesday, clearing the way for a copycat version of the British pharmaceutical firm's lucrative opioid addiction treatment Suboxone Film, in a victory for India-based generic drug maker Dr. Reddy's Laboratories.

Expenses incurred on treatment under Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH) systems of medicines would be covered as well as those on pre and post hospitalisation medical expenses subject to certain limits; dental treatment, necessitated due to an injury; and plastic surgery, necessitated due to disease or injury. IRDAI wanted the companies to devise a pricing mechanism that incentivised early entry of prospective policyholders, continued renewals and favourable claim experience.

Indivior's suit claimed Dr. Reddy's copycat will violate a patent on the treatment, filed in New Jersey federal court in 2017.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

A bigger A350-900 aircraft to be deployed between Singapore

IN BRIEF



RPOWER promoters eye ₹2,500 cr. via stake sale

NEW DELHI Sovereign wealth funds of Qatar and Abu Dhabi and private equity major KKR have evinced interest in investing in Reliance Power, where promoters plan to sell part of their direct holdings to raise ₹2,500 crore, investment banking sources said. The promoters plan to offload 18-19% of their 30% direct holding in the firm. Overall, they would retain 51% of direct and indirect shareholding post sale. PTI

I-T raids on Divi's Laboratories

NEW DELHI Divi's Laboratories on Tuesday said the Income Tax department had conducted raids at its premises, including its head office and manufacturing sites, between February 14-18. The raids were conducted by I-T officials under Section 132 of the Income-Tax Act. "The search operation concluded on February 18 and no irregularities have been found," the company said in a regulatory filing. PTI

Govt. may launch ETF of PSB stocks next fiscal

NEW DELHI The Finance Ministry is planning to launch an exchange traded fund consisting of PSU bank stocks in the next financial year, an official said. "We are studying the price movement of the probable stocks which could form part of the index," the official said. The bank exchange traded fund (ETF) would be in addition to the CPSE ETF and Bharat-22 ETF – launched by the Centre which have seen huge investor demand. PTI

JSW Cement eyes 30 mtpa by 2025

Company plans to invest more than ₹12,000 crore, make an IPO in 2020

PIYUSH PANDEY
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

After failing to buy out Lafarge and Binani Cement units, JSW Cement now plans to more than double its capacity to 30 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) at a cost of more than ₹12,000 crore by 2025.

The company plans to reach a capacity of 20 mtpa by 2020 at a capex of ₹2,000 crore and raise another ₹3,500 crore through an initial public offering (IPO) to add another 10 mtpa of cement capacity, aiming to be among the top 5 cement players in the country.

Parth Jindal, managing director, JSW Cement, told *The Hindu*, "We plan to be among the top five cement players in India. Our current capacity is 12.6 mtpa, which will be enhanced to 14 mtpa



Expansion mode: MD Parth Jindal says his firm aims to be among the top five cement players in India. ■ BIJOY GHOSH

by April 2019, and to 20 mtpa by December 2020. Then, we will plan for an IPO to increase our capacity to 30 mtpa by adding two cement plants of 5 mtpa each in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh." The company will expand its capacity mostly through a combination of brownfield and greenfield

projects. However, it is also evaluating various 'inorganic' opportunities to further ramp up capacity growth.

With revenue of ₹2,800 crore, an EBITDA margin of 24% and debt of ₹2,400 crore, JSW Cement is looking at enterprise valuation between ₹25,000 crore and ₹30,000 crore while launch-

ing its maiden IPO. The company will appoint merchant bankers for its IPO later this year.

₹3,500 cr. from IPO'

"With ₹3,500 crore from IPO, we will be in position to invest over ₹10,000 crore in expanding our cement business, as the rest will come from debt," said Mr. Jindal.

JSW Cement recorded a cumulative volume growth of 54% during the first nine months ending December 31, 2018, compared with the cement industry growth of 20% across participative markets during the same period.

JSW entered the cement market in 2009 and has plants in Vijayanagar in Karnataka, Nandyal in Andhra Pradesh, Salboni in West Bengal and Dolvi in Maharashtra.

SIDBI plans bond issue to raise ₹300 crore

Bonds will bear a coupon rate of 3%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Government-owned Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) will raise ₹300 crore through bonds over the next few months from a clutch of investors, including Tata group companies such as Tata Chemicals, Voltas, Tita and Trent.

Wealth managers such as Centrum group, ASK Wealth Advisors, Ambit Capital and Aditya Birla Finance have reached out to high net-worth individuals and impact investors to raise funds. Private equity fund KKR has also evinced interest to subscribe the bonds.

The World Bank group,

which is facilitating the fund-raising, said the money would be extended to micro finance institutions, which, in turn, would be disbursed to women entrepreneurs.

The bonds will be unsecured and unlisted with a fixed coupon rate of 3% and with a tenure of five years.

At a press conference, SIDBI chairman and managing director Mohammad Mustafa said that the actual lending rate for the borrower would not be more than 13%. These bonds would enable woman entrepreneurs in sectors such as agriculture, food processing, services and manufacturing to borrow ₹1 lakh - ₹1.5 lakh.

Tata Motors gears up for EV race

Auto major to develop vehicles with capacity to run 200 km on a single charge

LALATENDU MISHRA
MUMBAI

Tata Motors Ltd. has announced plans to develop a comprehensive range of electric vehicles with capability to run more than 200 km on a single charge and an ecosystem that would support the company's e-mobility push in the country.

Having being convinced that e-mobility is imminent in India due to tighter emission norms and growing pollution in major cities, Tata Motors has committed to lead the e-mobility space in India, a top executive said.

Electrifying vehicles

For this, the company has set up the electric mobility business that has already started working on electrify-

ing some of the existing Tata vehicles and developing new ones under the Alpha and Omega platforms of the company. At least three new electric vehicles are being developed.

The first concept of an all new electric vehicle will be showcased at the Geneva Auto Show in March and this passenger vehicle should hit

RInfra moves SC in DAMEPL award case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Reliance Infrastructure has filed a Special Leave Petition (SLP) in the Supreme Court challenging a judgment of the Division Bench of the Delhi High Court setting aside the over ₹5,800 crore arbitral award won by Delhi Airport Metro Express Pvt. Ltd. (DAMEPL) against Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC). DAMEPL is the special purpose vehicle (SPV) of Reliance Infrastructure.

The SC has issued notice to the DMRC on the SLP.

A short notice was also issued to DMRC on DAMEPL's plea for interim relief, so that DMRC continues to service the debt of DAMEPL pending the disposal of SLP by the Supreme Court," RInfra said.

The SC has issued notice to the DMRC on the SLP.

"We are not against installation of CCTVs. But don't snoop on us as they encroach into our privacy," said Union treasurer A. Gopinath.

"The company installed CCTVs unilaterally in over 100 places," said MRF Union, general secretary, C.R. Prabhakaran.

MRF claimed that the CCTVs were installed for safety and security purposes.

Strike at Tiruvottiyur plant illegal, says MRF

Union opposes CCTVs at select places

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Tyre major MRF Ltd. has termed the ongoing strike by a large section of workers at its Tiruvottiyur plant here illegal.

MRF, however, said that the industrial action would not have any financial impact on the company.

In a regulatory filing, MRF said that the employees were on strike since February 8.

While the management did not give any reason for the strike, the union representatives said the industrial action was to protest against the unilateral installation of surveillance cameras within the factory premises.

"We are not against installation of CCTVs. But don't snoop on us as they encroach into our privacy," said Union treasurer A. Gopinath.

"The company installed CCTVs unilaterally in over 100 places," said MRF Union, general secretary, C.R. Prabhakaran.

MRF claimed that the CCTVs were installed for safety and security purposes.

Jindal Steel sets up facility for Railways

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

JSL Lifestyle Ltd., a subsidiary of Jindal Stainless Steel, has commissioned its first dedicated facility for Railways.

The facility, spread over two acres, has come up at Maraimalai Nagar near Chennai. The new facility would supply stainless steel components to Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai, for production of railway coaches. Earlier, these components were supplied from the Pathredi unit of Jindal in Haryana.

"This railway facility will produce railway coach sub-assemblies for ICF," said Deepika Jindal, MD, Jindal Steel, in a statement.



If we play to potential and are injury-free, we can go the distance'

The ability to dominate in all conditions is Kohli's strength; he's just 30 and already a great, says Shastri

EXCLUSIVE

S. DINAKAR
CHENNAI

Ravi Shastri talks straight, doesn't hold back his punches. The Indian cricket team coach shared his views with *The Hindu* on a variety of issues.

How different is this Indian team from the previous sides?

I wouldn't like to compare sides. This team plays as a unit. It plays with pride. Individual brilliance will be there but the emphasis is on collective effort.

What does Virat Kohli bring with him?

He brings with him extreme professionalism with a very high price tag on fitness, work ethics and on-field aggression. We have a similar view on the direction the team should go.

Where would you put Kohli in the pantheon of great batsmen?

His ability to dominate in all conditions and situations is his strength. He is right up there with the very best. He's just 30 and already a great.

What are India's chances in the World Cup?

If we play to potential and are injury-free, we can go the distance.

Which teams are the biggest



Complete package: India skipper Virat Kohli brings with him extreme professionalism with a very high price tag on fitness, work ethics and on-field aggression, according to coach Ravi Shastri. ■ AFP

threats for India?

The much-improved England have gone for one-day specialists and they will be playing at home. And you can never discount Australia

with Smith and Warner back and the bowling attack they have.

Fitness will be crucial in a long, gruelling format. The Indian pace attack will

be in the hunt in England...

If it is overcast and the tracks have got something in it; they will be more than handy, especially the way they have

months. Collectively they have been varied, accurate, hostile and deadly.

On the role bowling coach Bharat Arun played in the development of the

pacemen...

Massive. He has been in the coaching system for over 20 years. He's seen these guys at the academy. And his ability to communicate with them, in the manner he does, is a great help.

Jasprit Bumrah has added an additional dimension to the attack.

He's an awkward customer with his action, gets steep bounce, his pace doesn't drop and he's got the skills. A massive asset.

The fielding standards have gone up.

Overall, catching, ground fielding, speed on the ground, the ability to create chances have all improved. Identifying and preparing fielders for catching positions is an area where Sridhar is very good.

You have shown a great faith in wrist spin and said

Kuldeep Yadav will be India's No. 1 Test spinner overseas.

I don't want to go in that direction. What I meant to say was Kuldeep, a special talent who can only get stronger and wiser and is already bowling with good control, had become a contender who could even be first-choice overseas. It all depends on the conditions, the combination you want to go in with, whether you want an all-rounder.

For that matter, even Jadhua (Ravindra Jadeja), when he got two opportunities overseas, did an excellent job. Any of the three can play depending on the opposition you are playing against and what combination you want. Jadeja can use the rough outside the left-hander's off-stump, Kuldeep can use the rough both ways from over and round the wicket. Then you have Ashwin (Ashwin) with all his experience.

The Test series triumph down under was a path-breaking moment in Indian cricket. There was desire, hunger, and the boys wanted it badly. Your view on Cheteshwar Pujara's rise?

Unbelievable concentration. Once he got in, you needed a stretcher to get him off in Australia.

Your reply to those who said

there was some infighting within the side in Australia?

There wasn't anything and we are not bothered. If anybody wants to cook up stories, be my guest. By the way, we won the series in Australia.

Where do you draw the line between aggression and bad behaviour?

With experience you know that you can't get personal, you can't go over the line, you play within the rules. But

the intent should be there.

Your thoughts on the evolution of Rishabh Pant? Grabbed his opportunities. Away hundreds at Oval and Sydney. Likes the big stage, has the confidence. Learned quickly, kept well. And he is just 21.

On the coordination between the team-management, the selection panel and Rahul Dravid...

The regular 'A' tours is a very good system BCCI has created. Stands you in good stead when you want to raise the bar.

Prithvi Shaw, Mayank Agarwal, Hanuma Vihari, they are a good crop, good strength of mind. I interact with Rahul pretty regularly. Sometimes, more than runs and wickets, you are looking for balance in the eleven and the selectors have to look in a particular direction. They have done that very well.

What has been the most satisfying aspect in your tenure as a coach?

The Test-series win in Australia. I know how hard it is. When the job is done, you enjoy the moment. I must compliment the support staff. Arun, Sanjay [Bangar] and Sridhar for their remarkable work in a gruelling schedule. The hallmark of this team is 'no excuses'. If you slip, you own up.

Australian team arrives

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

The Australian cricketers, led by Aaron Finch, arrived here on Monday night. The team will play the first T20I against India in Visakhapatnam on Feb. 24 before flying to Bengaluru for the second match.

The Australians will come back to the city for the first of the five-match ODI series to be played on March 2.

The cricketers preferred to stay indoors and are scheduled to train on Wednesday and Thursday before flying out.

Osaka exits

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DUBAI

World No.1 Naomi Osaka went down in a flurry of errors to exit the Dubai Championships on Tuesday. Kristina Mladenovic claimed a 6-3, 6-3 win to reach the third round as Osaka made 25 unforced errors.

Important results (second round): Petra Kvitova bt Katerina Siniakova 6-7(3), 6-4, 6-4; Victoria Kuzmova bt Kiki Bertens 6-2, 4-6, 7-6(6); Alison Riske bt Alize Cornet 6-2, 6-3; Elina Svitolina bt Ons Jabeur 7-6(4), 4-0 (retd.); Garbine Muguruza bt Zheng Saisai 7-5, 6-2; Simona Halep bt Eugenie Bouchard 7-6(4), 6-4; Angelique Kerber bt Daria Gavrilova 7-6(4), 6-3; Kristina Mladenovic bt Naomi Osaka 6-3, 6-3; Aryna Sabalenka bt Ivana Jorovic 6-4, 6-0.

HC exempts BCCI from submitting audio recordings of AGMs to Competition Commission

MOHAMED IMRANULLAH S.
CHENNAI

and had its registered office at M.A. Chidambaram Stadium at Chepauk in Chennai. At present, it was managed by a Committee of Administrators appointed by the Supreme Court in January 2017.

In 2013, Pan India Infra-projects Pvt. Ltd. approached the competition commission accusing BCCI of having contravened Section 4 (abuse of dominant position) of the Competition Act of 2002.

The issue was taken up to the erstwhile Competition Appellate Tribunal and got remitted to the commission which on June 1, 2018, about three years after the tribunal's order, directed the Director General to conduct a detailed inquiry.

Two allegations

The investigation was ordered with respect to two allegations: "Whether BCCI restrained the conduct of a competitive league titled Indian Cricket League (ICL) and whether the petitioner excluded the informant (Pan India Infra-projects) in the downstream market by disallowing it to bid for the media rights for Indian Premier League (IPL)." The Director General was further ordered to submit a detailed probe report to the commission.

Registered society

In his affidavit, BCCI's Chief Executive Officer Rahul Johri stated that the board had chosen to file the case in the Madras High Court because it was a society registered under the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act of 1975

CSK to host RCB in opener

Schedule subject to the announcement of Lok Sabha poll dates

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Chennai Super Kings (CSK), that staged a spectacular title-winning return to the VIVO Indian Premier League 2018 after serving a two year suspension, will lock horns with Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) in the league's season 12 opener in Chennai on Saturday, March 23.

Crowned champion for the third time following a convincing win against Sunrisers Hyderabad at the Wankhede Stadium, CSK was forced to move its home matches to Pune last year owing to the tense situation in the State caused by the Cauvery water dispute.

CSK marked its return with a five-wicket win against

Kolkata Knight Riders in the only home match it played at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium. CSK has so far played 48 home matches.

The opening match will

straightaway bring into picture the captaincy mettle of M.S. Dhoni and Virat Kohli.

Advantage

CSK holds considerable advantage in the 22 matches the two teams have played so far; it has won 14 including the last six, while RCB has won on seven occasions.

RCB's home match in April 2012 did not deliver a result.

The BCCI-IPL has not announced the full schedule though it has also attached a rider to the 17-match programme featuring

the eight teams across as many home venues.

The release said: These (schedule) are still subject to the announcement of the Lok Sabha 2019 election dates. Once these have been released, the BCCI will address any issue with the first two weeks and will also prepare a schedule for the remainder of the season working with the local authorities around the polling dates."

The eight teams will play a minimum of four matches (two each home and away) while Delhi Capitals and RCB will play five (three home and two away). There will be no off-day between March 23 and April 5 when the 17 matches will be played.



East Bengal not keen to travel to Srinagar

'Head coach and a number of players, especially foreigners, are feeling apprehensive'

I-LEAGUE

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA
KOLKATA

Kolkata giant East Bengal FC voiced its concern about the prevailing situation in Srinagar and sought a postponement or a change of venue of its upcoming I-League football match against Real Kashmir FC.

One of the directors of the Quesa East Bengal FC, Debraj Sarkar, said that the

head coach of the team and a number of players, especially the foreigners, are feeling apprehensive about the situation in and around Srinagar.

East Bengal is scheduled to play its match, which has once been postponed owing to heavy snowfall in Srinagar, on February 28.

Serious reservations

The East Bengal FC director

said the team's Spanish coach Alejandro Menendez,

has mailed his "serious reservations about playing the match in Srinagar" to the CEO of the team, Sanjit Sen.

"The primary concern is about the players, who are quite apprehensive of the existing situation. The situation is extremely volatile in Srinagar and if we are forced to play, the players will be doing it under duress."

"The All India Football Federation (AIFF) should take a decision after properly assessing the situation and

not just to prove a point," said Sarkar.

"We can certainly travel to Srinagar and play the match but when the situation is normal," he added.

The East Bengal team placed on record a mail sent to the AIFF by the team CEO Sanjit Sen outlining the concern of the team and its manager Alejandro Menendez.

"If we do not get a satisfactory reply from AIFF then we decide on the next course of action," Sarkar said.

Neutral venue

The East Bengal team CEO's letter, while addressing the

concern of the coach and its players, asked the national federation about a possibility of having the match at a neutral venue.

According to the team officials, the AIFF has refused to postpone the match or change the venue while asking the team to send its travel plans to arrange for additional security for the team.

"If we do not get a satisfactory reply from AIFF then we decide on the next course of action," Sarkar said.

Stump microphones serve a purpose, but not the one you think

The adage that what happens on the field should be left on the field no longer applies



BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESH MENON

Professional sport is seriously competitive; sportsmen and women react when frustrated, or feel badly done by. The distance between the performer and the spectator once lent sport a unique charm – and enabled writers like Neville Cardus to invent conversations. The quotes he fabricated were often humorous or imaginative, so the players didn't mind. And then came the stump mic.

This was an innovation by Kerry Packer, who, briefly stole international cricket, spruced it up and returned it. He stuck microphones into the ground near the pitch so television audiences

could hear the rattle of stumps.

Two consequences

There were two unintended consequences as the microphones graduated to the middle stump: they picked up the chatter around the bat, and they served as a vehicle for free advertisement.

This last was a response most recently by the Australian team during the 'Sandpaper' series in South Africa when the broadcasters refused to turn down the mics, and the players plugged their personal sponsors. The umpires, sponsored by Emirates, were asked, "How good is Qantas?", and Australian beers were fondly mentioned. Australia had done this in 2006 when they played Bangladesh.

Whether it is more irritating to hear plugs for sponsors or well-articulated four-letter words and banter that wouldn't pass muster in a low-grade movie is difficult to tell. Broadcasters love it; often listeners too, convinced they are being allowed into the sanctum

sanctorum. The adage that what happens on the field should be left on the field no longer applies. What happens on the field lands up in our drawing rooms and on the match referee's table.

In recent weeks, Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed and West Indies bowler Shannon Gabriel have been suspended from matches for racist and homophobic comments respectively, thanks to the all-hearing stump mic.

Moral leader
Cricket is once again being asked to play the moral leader, to set an example for those who get away with casual racism or homophobia in everyday life. Perhaps the message will get through to the general public; perhaps it won't, but there is an argument for keeping the mics on full-time to a) discourage bad behaviour and b) punish it so it stays as an example for those watching who either don't know or don't care that certain behaviour crosses a line.</p

Laureus laurels for Djokovic and Biles

Vinesh loses out to Woods in Comeback of the Year category

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
MONTE CARLO

The applause wouldn't stop.

Among those standing up in respect for a remarkable woman on the world sport's most glamorous stage were legends who have won several Olympic golds, World Cups, Grand Slams and major leagues between them.

Novak Djokovic, Sergey Bubka, Edwin Moses, Nadia Comaneci, Missy Franklin, Cafa, Boris Becker and Monica Seles could only watch in amazement at the achievement of Henrieta Farkasova, a visually impaired downhill skier from Slovakia who won the Laureus World Sports Award of the Year with a Disability on a night most memorable at the Sporting Club here.

Last year, she had won her sixth Paralympic gold at the Winter Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

Hers is an amazing story that proves how inspiring sport can be. The night be-



Best of the best: It was yet another red letter day in Novak Djokovic's career when he won the Laureus World Sportsman of The Year. ■ ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/GETTY IMAGES

longed to her as much as it did to Djokovic, who won the Sportsman of the Year for the fourth time in the last

nine years.

After accepting the award from Seles, who was also born in Serbia, he revealed

he had nearly quit tennis because of injuries. The current men's World No. 1 said to the former women's

World No. 1: "Thank you for inspiring me on the court; I had to grunt like you and be aggressive like you."

Simone Biles wasn't there in person to make a speech like that after winning the Sportswoman of the Year award, which she had taken home in 2017 as well. The American gymnastic sensation said through video that she could not make it to Monaco because she was hosting a gymnastics event in Houston.

Team of the year
Earlier, the distribution of the awards – that have over the last couple of decades become the equivalent of cinema's Oscars – was kicked off with the one for the team of the year.

It went to France, the 2018 World Cup champion. Accepting it, coach Didier Deschamps thanked his players, who all came up with great individual performances, and the French football fed-

eration for helping the team prepare.

The winner of the Comeback of the Year award was just as popular. It was Tiger Woods, the golfing legend, of course.

The short film on him was among the several well-made ones. Among the nominees in that category was wrestler Vinesh Phogat, the first Indian ever to make this far at Laureus.

The other winners of the night were Naomi Osaka (Breakthrough of the Year), Chloe Kim (Action Sportsperson), Eliud Kipchoge, Arsene Wenger (Lifetime Achievement), Lindsey Vonn (Spirit for Sports), Yuva (Sport for Good) and Xia Boyu (Sporting Moment), the man who climbed Mount Everest, 44 years after he lost both his lower legs due to frostbite on his first attempt.

(The writer is in Monte Carlo at the invitation of Laureus)

tired. "It was a very tough decision, but I had to take it because I was in too much pain and there wasn't much I could do with my shoulder injury," she said. "Yes, I know had another Olympics or two in me still, but at least I could take heart from the fact I have five golds at home."

She admits it isn't easy staying away from the pool. "I was put into water by my mother when I was six months old, as she couldn't swim and didn't want me to be like her," she said. "In America, every kid is taught to swim."

"That is what India needs to do if it wants to do well in swimming," said Franklin, who is fascinated by the country and Hinduism.

"There is no reason why India couldn't do well in swimming. But children need to be taught when they are very young. It has to be a cultural thing, as in the US."

SRFI decides to have different coaches for different tournaments

K. KEERTHIVASAN
CHENNAI

In the aftermath of the Ashraf El Karargui fiasco, the Squash Rackets Federation of India (SRFI), it appears, has chosen to tread a slightly different path in the appointment of foreign coaches.

It has decided, in principle, to have different coaches for different tournaments for a particular period of time, instead of a full-time coach.

According to SRFI National coach Cyrus Poncha, the federation has shortlisted Egypt's Amir Waghi and Australia's David Palmer, a former world champion, and it is also looking at coaches from the England High Performance Centre.

"We have written to the Sports Ministry and are in

C We have written to the Sports Ministry and are in touch with the coaches. We hope to get a favourable response [from the Government]

■ CYRUS PONCHA
SRFI National coach

touch with the coaches. We hope to get a favourable response [from the Government]," he said.

Major tournaments

Poncha said with two major tournaments – Asian senior championships in May in Malaysia and the World men's championship in December in Washington – coming up, SRFI is keen to use the services of the top names provided the ministry accepts its proposal.

"Having a full-time coach defeats the purpose," emphasised Poncha.

As most of the top Indians play abroad, SRFI has decided that it is wise to have an "horses for courses" approach.

"For example, if a tournament is in Washington, the [Indian] players can train there instead of practicing in India. It is not necessary that they will have to train in the Indian Squash Academy [here]," said Poncha. "We are not fixated on anything."

He added that the SRFI wanted to try out the new idea for the current year and see how it goes.

"Overall, if you look at it, it [having different coaches for a particular tournament] is an economical one and will definitely help the [Indian] players," he said.

India U-19 starts favourite

South African team has adjusted to the climate and conditions

M.R. PRAVEEN CHANDRAN
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

India Under-19 starts as the favourites against the visiting South Africa Under-19 side in the first unofficial Test which begins at the KCA-St. Xavier's College ground here on Wednesday.

Home advantage and familiarity with the conditions give India the edge though it is altogether a new squad that will take the field against South Africa.

Seventeen-year-old opener Yashavini Jaiswal, who was part of the squad which won the Under-19 Asia Cup in October last year, is the only player with prior experience of playing for the team. All others are new and have been selected based on their excellent performances in the Cooch Behar Trophy.

He added that the SRFI wanted to try out the new idea for the current year and see how it goes.

"Overall, if you look at it, it [having different coaches for a particular tournament] is an economical one and will definitely help the [Indian] players," he said.



Rex Singh.
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

of our abilities," he said.

The South African team arrived in the city three days ahead of the Test match and has been practising hard at the venue and has adjusted to the climate and conditions here.

Preparation

South African Captain Matthew Montgomery was happy with his team's preparation but admitted that India had an edge.

The teams: India Under-19: Suraj Ahuja (captain), Divyaansh Saxena, Varun Nayara, Avneesh Sudha, Yashavini Jaiswal, Vaibhav Kandpal, Shaurya Saran, Hritik Shokeen, Manav Suthar, Manishi Sabir Khan, Anshul Kamboj, Rajvardhan Hangarekar, Rohit Dattatreya, Rex Singh and Vathsal Govind

South Africa Under-19: Matthew Montgomery (captain), Luke Beaufort, Jonathan Bird, Achille Cloete, Gerald Coetzee, Marco Jansen, Thamsanga Khumalo, Bonga Makaka, Andile Mogokane, Kgaudise Molafe, Lifa Ntanzi, Bryce Parsons, Siya Plaatjie, Ruan Terblanche and Nonelela Yika.

Calicut Heroes enters final

Jerome Vinith is its star player with 12 points



Clinical show: Heroes' players celebrate after winning the semifinal against U Mumba. ■ R. RAGAV

PRO VOLLEYBALL

S. DIPAK RAGAV
CHENNAI

Calicut Heroes came into the semifinals of the RuPay Pro Volleyball league as the overwhelming favourites and on Tuesday the team lived up to that billing with a comprehensive straight-set win over U Mumba Volley (15-12, 15-9, 16-14) at the Nehru Indoor Stadium here to claim its rightful place in the final.

Jerome Vinith was the Heroes' star player with 12 points and was ably supported by Republic of Congo's Ilouni Ngampourou with six.

With a huge crowd already egging on Heroes with heavy percussions, the table toppers wasted no time in taking an early 9-6 lead in the opening set.

But U Mumba, which showed resilience to reach the semifinals after losing its first three matches, fought back starting with a super point from Pankaj Sharma to

level the scores 10-10.

However, on Heroes' super point, Vinith Kumar hit a spike long surrendering two points. A few more unforced errors, including on one serve by Vinith Kumar, gave Heroes the set 15-12.

The second set was a blowout as the Heroes always maintained a two-point edge and ran away after another error from Vinith on super point allowed the Heroes to take an 11-7 lead and eventually the set 15-9.

Jerome was once again the top scorer with four points in the set.

Mumba showed signs of a fightback in the third set with Vinith and Pankaj producing some good spikes while Deepesh Kumar Sinha was effective with his blocks at the net. Mumba looked all set to make the Heroes work for victory and was on course to take the third set at 12-7.

However, Heroes' Karthick produced a spike on

super point before a moment of misjudgement from Mumba gave another two points to the opponents as they failed to go for a serve from Jerome that narrowed the lead to 12-11.

Pankaj then made the cardinal sin of netting his serve and on 14-14 yet another confusion between Tomislav Coskovic and Pankaj meant neither went for the ball giving match point to Heroes before an unforced error from Vinith sealed Mumba's fate.

Heroes will now await the winner of the Kochi Blue Spikers vs Chennai Spartans match to be played on Wednesday. When the two teams met in the round-robin stage in Kochi, Blue Spikers came back from 0-2 down to win the match 3-2.

The Spartans will now want to get one back in front of their home crowd and reach the summit clash to be played on Friday, February 22.

Atletico vs Juve — a clash of high stakes

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ASSOCIATED PRESS
MADRID

Coach Massimiliano Allegri told Juventus not to be afraid of Atletico Madrid but for one of these teams their worst fears in this season's Champions League are about to become a reality when they face off in the last-16, the first leg of which will be held in Madrid.

Juventus and Atletico Madrid have reached 12 European Cup finals between them, with last season's game in Kiev the first in five years in which neither featured.

C Those that have ambition are not afraid

■ MASSIMILIANO ALLEGRI
Juventus coach

Atletico could unleash an attacking trio in an effort to finally outdo Ronaldo with coach Diego Simeone able to call on a potent combination of Antoine Griezmann, Diego Costa and Alvaro Morata to deliver the goods.

Meanwhile, Manchester City will look to keep alive the prospect of a historic clean sweep of four trophies when it faces Schalke on Wednesday for the Champions League last-16 first leg before the League Cup final

C It's like a final, we cannot put a foot wrong

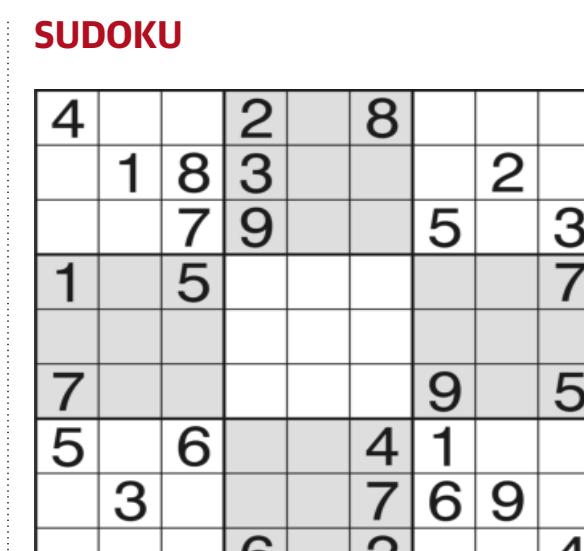
■ DIEGO SIMEONE
Atletico boss

against Chelsea on Sunday.

It is another piece of history that Pep Guardiola's side now craves by outdoing even Manchester United's treble of league, Champions League and FA Cup in 1998/99.

City will be heavy favourites to retain the League Cup this weekend and should cruise past a Schalke in 14th in the Bundesliga to make the Champions League quarter-finals.

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12553

I	M	C	E	B	U	G
T	O	F	U	A	L	P
T	S	R	S	S	R	O
C	A	C	N	I	T	I
B	O	R	D	E	L	O
L	E	T	R	I	C	E
G	I	S	A	G	A	E
E	A	T	S	L	A	M
S	I	A	O	Y	T	P
D	I	R	E	M	R	N
B	E	T	A	H	T	E
B	E	T	A	H	T	E
S	R	Y	D	T	S	N

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

7	1	6	5	8	9	4	2	3
3	2	8	6	4	1	9	5	7
5	4	9	3	2	7	6	1	8
9	3	4	8	5	2	1	7	6
5	6	7	1	4	3	8	9	2
3	7	6	9	8	5	4	1	0
6	2	4	1	3	7	8	5	9</td

Frost has a knack of identifying young players: Padukone

The Indian ace believes the Dane can effectively marry the old world knowledge with the modern-day methods



Legends all: Morten Frost, Prakash Padukone and Vishwanathan Anand at the Padukone-Dravid center for sports excellence. ■ SUDHAKARA JAIN

N. SUDARSHAN
BENGALURU

In the early 1980s, when badminton legend Prakash Padukone dropped anchor in Denmark for six long years, he left a lasting impact. On no one could it be better seen than Morten Frost, a World No.1 and winner of All England titles.

"He simply raised my game," recalled Frost on Tuesday. "He elevated it to a standard I did not have before. He was a better player than me when he arrived but I turned out to be better than him when he left." If Frost can do a bunch of youngsters at the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy (PPBA) what Prakash did to him, it will be yet another glorious chapter in a lifelong friendship.

"He has the knack of identifying young players," said

Padukone at the unveiling of the 60-year-old as a consultant coach, in partnership with the Olympic Gold Quest. "I remember him telling us 10 years back about Viktor Axelsen. He has that knack and also in giving them the right inputs. I am very sure that we will benefit from his immense experience."

Outliers
Back then, Padukone and Frost were considered the outliers, trying to crack the code with their fleet-footed movement and strategic brilliance against the marauding Chinese and Indonesians. Padukone believes Frost can effectively marry this old world knowledge with the modern-day methods the latter is abreast of through coaching stints in Europe and Asia.

"It's very much a matter of moving with the times," said Frost. "Taking some of the good things from the past and combining them with new trends to get a more complete player. The game today is faster, players hit harder but I also think they make a bit more mistakes."

"The game has also got more breaks now. The umpires are always trying to push the players to continue playing, but somehow we always need to wipe the floor, towel or drink water resulting in longer matches. But that gives them the extra strength to go faster for shorter periods of time whereas we had to stretch it a bit more."

Frost though conceded that the players of the current era were better than those in his times and singled out the current crop of

women's singles stars. "Women's singles badminton has never had such a high level. It is by far the most competitive category of all five on the world scene. There is a nice spread of nationalities and also of personalities and playing styles."

It is this level which Frost will like to help a few youngsters reach during his stint in India. "Hopefully, I can make a little difference," he said.

"The toughest thing for any sportsperson is the transition from junior status to senior. It is about self confidence and belief. It's also about picking up pace. There is a massive difference. What you can get away with in juniors you get punished in the seniors. With the experience I have, hopefully I can help some of the players here be world-beaters one day."

Nikhat and Meena Kumari strike gold

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Former junior World champion Nikhat Zareen and Meena Kumari Devi on Tuesday became the first set of Indian women boxers to notch up gold medals at the Strandja Memorial Tournament in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Nikhat claimed a 5-0 win in the 51kg category finals against Filipino Irish Magno, while Devi got the better of Aira Villegas 3-2, also from Philippines, in bantamweight (54kg).

Manju Rani (48kg) got a silver after going down to another Filipino Josie Gabuco in a split 2-3 verdict.

On Monday, Pwilao Bamsutari (64kg), Neeraj (60kg) and Lovina Borgohain (69kg) had won bronze medals.

NEUFC eyes maiden playoffs spot

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
GUWAHATI

NorthEast United FC (NEUFC) will look to seal a maiden play-offs spot when it hosts FC Pune City in an Indian Super League (ISL) match here on Wednesday.

Elco Schattorie's team is one of the four which have lost just three matches this season. The Highlanders with 27 points from 16 matches are in the third spot.

"I didn't mention anything to the players about qualifying. I really take it game by game because if I look back at the last 10 games, the number of times I had to shuffle to make the best possible eleven, it was almost 10 games," said Schattorie.

With 12 goals, Bartholomew Ogbeche remains the key for NEUFC and he is two shy of equalling Ferran Corominas. He has the support of Federico Gallego, who is joint-second on the list of most assists, and new recruit Panagiotis Triadis, who has had an impact in the attacking, third.

Jeevan & Purav beat top seeds

SPORTS BUREAU
MARSEILLE

Wild card entrants Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan and Purav Raja knocked out top seeds Oliver Marach of Austria and Mate Pavic of Croatia 6-2, 6-4 in the doubles pre-quarterfinals of the € 744,010 ATP tennis tournament here on Tuesday.

In the Challenger in Bangkok, Saketh Myneni was outplayed 6-4, 6-0 by James Duckworth of Australia in

the second round. Sasi Kumar Mukund went down after winning the first set, in the first round to Kevin King of the US.

Fourth seeds Sriram Balaji and Arjun Kadhe were beaten 11-9 in the super tie-break of the doubles quarterfinals by Enrique Lopez Perez and Hiroki Moriya.

In the ITF women's event in China, Natasha Palha and Saumya Vig won their doubles pre-quarterfinals in con-

Lopez Perez (Esp) & Hiroki Moriya (Jpn) bt Sriram Balaji & Arjun Kadhe 5-7, 6-4, [11-9].

\$15,000 ITF women, Nan-

chang, China: Doubles (pre-

quarterfinals): Si Qi Liu (Chn) &

Natasha Palha bt Jiatian Qi & Zi-

yi Yang (Chn) 6-0, 6-2; Izabela Gabriela Novac (Rou) & Saumya Vig bt Ai Qi Chen & Meiting Liu (Chn) 6-7(6), 7-5, [10-4].

\$54,160 Challenger, Bangkok:

Singles (second round): James

Duckworth (Aus) bt Saketh Myne-

nvi 6-4, 6-0. First round: Ke-

vin King (US) bt Sasi Kumar Mu-

kund 5-7, 6-4, 6-2. Doubles

(pre-quarterfinals): Enrique

Roma inches towards CL places

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MILAN

Aleksandar Kolarov and Federico Fazio scored in the second half as Roma closed in on Champions League places with a 2-1 win over Bologna.

The results: Serie A: Roma 2 (Kolarov 55'-pen, Fazio 73') bt Bologna 1 (Sansone 84).

La Liga: Huesca 0 lost to Ath-

letic Bilbao 1 (Garcia 19'-pen).

Bundesliga: Nuremberg 0 drew with Borussia Dortmund 0.

Llorente strikes six

Manuel Llorente struck six goals in helping Garcha Group-Araval Polo to a 9-7 victory over Sona Polo in a league match of the Northern India Polo championship at the Jaipur Polo ground on Tuesday.

The results: Northern India

championship (league):

Garcha Group-Araval Polo 9

(Manuel Llorente 6, Angad

Kalaan 2, Ravi Rathore) bt Sona

Polo 7 (Abhimanyu Pathak 4,

Basheer Ali, Gaurav Sahgal,

Sawai Padmanabh Singh).

Sahara Warriors 10 (Matthew

Perry 4, Dhrupal Godara 3,

Siddhant Sharma 2, Vandit

DELHI ROUND-UP

Golechha) bt Jindal Panther 6

(Tom Brodie 3, Shamsheer Ali 2,

Simran Shergill).

Army Polo championship

(league): Territorial Army

(Combined) 7 (Tarsem Singh 4,

Raghavraj Singh 2,

Bhanupratap Singh) bt Artillery

6 (Joginder Singh 3, Irfan Khan

2, Asish Samantaray).

61st Cavalry 8 (Vishal Chauhan

5, Ilyash Ali 2, Anant

Rajpurohit) bt ASC 5 1/2

(Yatinder Kumar 2, G.S.

Pandher, handicap 2 1/2).

YMCA advances

Host YMCA defeated Gargi

College 25-223, 25-22 in the

women's pre-quarterfinals

of the YMCA volleyball

tournament on Tuesday.

In the men's section, Master Academy beat Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) 25-20, 25-22 to make the quarterfinals.

The results (pre-

quarterfinals): Men: Pran

Nath Club bt Central

Secretariat 25-18, 25-20;

Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium bt

Proton Club 25-16, 25-21;

Master Academy bt ESIC

25-20, 25-22. Women: YMCA

bt Gargi College 25-23, 25-22;

Janki Devi College bt Mata

Sundari College 25-22, 25-10;

Uvas Academy bt JLN Stadium

25-11, 25-19; Laxmi Bai

College bt PGDAV College

25-6, 25-9.

We have a well-rounded side, says Karthik

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders captain Dinesh Karthik on Tuesday said that he had got a stronger team for the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League (IPL) starting on March 23.

Karthik, who led KKR to the IPL playoffs last season, said the team was bolstered after assessing its performance.

"We have a slightly different team than that of last year. We are really looking forward to the season. We have realised what we lacked last year. So we have added resources accordingly."

"So, it's a more well-rounded team this year," said Karthik during an interaction on the sidelines of the KKR-backed Mayor's Cup cricket tournament at the Eden Gardens here.

On neutral venue
On the possibility of KKR playing at a neutral venue owing to the forthcoming general elections, Karthik said, "I will miss Kolkata because there are certain vibes – you are playing in the



Eden Gardens, 60,000 people cheering you. We will massively miss it. The schedule has just come out but it's early for me to comment. If we don't play a few matches (here), I will miss the Eden Gardens terribly."

KKR CEO Venky Mysore said the franchise had not received any guidelines from the Indian Cricket Board (BCCI) regarding workload management of the players ahead of the World Cup.

"If May 12 is the (IPL) final and India plays its first match on June 5, then there is enough gap. But we have not had any such guidance or instruction," said Mysore.

New Universe map unveils 3,00,000 more galaxies

LOFAR telescope detects light sources that optical instruments cannot find

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

The known Universe just got a lot bigger.

A new map of the night sky published on Tuesday charts hundreds of thousands of previously unknown galaxies discovered using a telescope that can detect light sources optical instruments cannot see. The team behind the space survey said their discovery literally shed new light on some of the Universe's deepest secrets, including the physics of black holes and how clusters of galaxies evolve.

"This is a new window on the universe," said Cyril Tasse, an astronomer at the Paris Observatory who was involved in the project.

"When we saw the first images we were like: 'What



Deep secrets: An optical image of the M106 galaxy stacked on an image of the galaxy's emissions (in orange). ■ PSL/AFP

is this?' It didn't look anything at all like what we are used to seeing."

More than 200 astronomers from 18 countries were involved in the study, which used radio astronomy to look at a segment of sky over the northern hemisphere, and found 3,00,000 previously unseen light sources

thought to be distant galaxies.

The map created by the LOFAR observations, part of which was published in the journal *Astronomy & Astrophysics*, contains data equivalent to the capacity of ten million DVDs yet charts just two percent of the sky.

Radio astronomy helps

detect radiation produced when massive celestial objects interact.

Ancient radiation

The team used the Low Frequency Array (LOFAR) telescope in the Netherlands to pick up traces – or "jets" – of ancient radiation produced when galaxies merge. These jets, previously undetected, can extend over millions of light years. "With radio observations we can detect radiation from the tenuous medium that exists between galaxies," said Amanda Wilber, of the University of Hamburg.

The discovery of the new light sources may also help scientists better understand the behaviour of one of space's most enigmatic phenomena.

Haute couture designer Karl Lagerfeld is dead

VANESSA FRIEDMAN
PARIS

Karl Lagerfeld, the most prolific designer of the 20th and 21st centuries and a man whose career formed the prototype of the modern luxury fashion industry, died on Tuesday in Paris. He was 85.

"More than anyone I know, he represents the soul of fashion: restless, forward-looking and voraciously attentive to our changing culture," Anna Wintour, editor of *American Vogue*, said of Mr. Lagerfeld when presenting him with the Outstanding Achievement Award at the British Fashion Awards in 2015.

Creative director of Chanel since 1983 and Fendi since 1965, and founder of his own line, Mr. Lagerfeld

was the definition of a fashion polyglot, able to speak the language of many different brands at the same time (not to mention many lan-



Karl Lagerfeld ■ AFP

guages themselves: He read in English, French, German and Italian).

In his 1980s, when most of his peers were retiring to their yachts or country estates, Mr. Lagerfeld was designing an average of 14 new collections a year ranging from couture to the high street, and not counting collaborations and special projects.

"Ideas come to you when you work," he said before a Fendi show at age 83. As a result, Mr. Lagerfeld never stopped creating. ■ NY TIMES

A bundle of joy from a hidden ovary

The baby was born through surrogacy

STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI

At 27 years, Soumya (name changed) had to undergo removal of the uterus and the left ovary, due to uterine cancer (mild-grade endometrioid adenocarcinoma). Her surgical oncologist decided to preserve her right ovary, but moved it to the abdominal wall, just underneath the skin.

Five years later, the woman became a mother through surrogacy as fertility specialists, in a novel method, extracted the egg from the transposed ovary percutaneously, and fertilised it.

Unique case
Soumya's case was unique as IVF specialists at GG Fertility and Women's Specialty Hospital found no reports of pregnancies in which eggs were extracted from an ovary in such an ectopic location, and that too, retrieved through the skin, according to Priya Selvaraj, scientific and assistant director of the hospital.

"Her uterus with fallopian tubes as well as the left ovary were removed in a hospital in Kerala. What was remaining was her right ovary. The only way she could have her child was through surrogacy. There was a twist as the right ovary along with its blood supply, instead of being lodged within the abdomen, was brought up through the abdominal wall and placed right beneath the skin," she said.

Ovaries in cancer patients, Dr. Selvaraj said, can be located within the abdomen or above the pelvic brim in case they had to go undergo radiation. In the literature search, the doctors found that people in this situation usually have their ovaries removed and



The baby was born five years after her mother underwent treatment for uterine cancer. ■ B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

later transplanted back once they are cancer free. In some cases, it moved out of its normal position in the pelvic area to just above the pelvis, and eggs are retrieved laparoscopically, she explained.

Being married and childless, the woman was referred to GG Hospital in August 2016. After detailed work-up, she was put on stimulant injections and doctors used a syringe (same as used in regular IVF procedures) to extract the eggs, but through the skin of the patient's abdomen. The quality of eggs was another challenge, Dr. Selvaraj added.

Three attempts later, doctors finally managed to get embryos out of such a retrieval and implanted them a surrogate in 2018. She delivered a baby girl, weighing 2.62 kg on February 16.

Doctors said this was the country's first surrogate birth following egg extraction from an ovary transplanted under the skin.

Preserving tissue
The hospital is now working to preserve ovarian tissue for future re-transplantation into the individual for fertility purpose after thawing. "Childhood cancers in pre-pubertal age group are maximum indicators for ovarian tissue preservation," she added.

Kamala Selvaraj, associate director of the hospital, was present.

Aussie mammal the first 'climate change extinction'

Ocean inundation led to the loss

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SYDNEY

Australia officially declared a Great Barrier Reef rodent extinct on Tuesday, making it the first mammal believed to have been killed off by human-induced climate change.

The rat-like Bramble Cay Melomys – whose only known habitat was a small sandy island in far northern Australia – has not been spotted in a decade.



The Bramble Cay Melomys. ■ QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT

vey in 2014 in a bid to track down the species, but found no trace.

Expected move

Researchers from Queensland determined a key factor in its disappearance was "almost certainly" repeated ocean inundation of the cay – a low-lying island on a coral reef – over the last decade, which had resulted in dramatic habitat loss.

Australia's Environment Ministry on Tuesday said it had officially transferred the animal to the "extinct" list.

The declaration was unexpected.

The researchers completed a wide-ranging sur-

vey in 2014 in a bid to track down the species, but found no trace.

Sea-level rise
Available data on sea-level rise and weather events in the Torres Strait region point to human-induced climate change being the root cause of the loss of the Bramble Cay Melomys", a study released in 2016 mentioned.

The *Melomys rubicola*, considered the Great Barrier Reef's only endemic mammal species, was first discovered on the cay in 1845 by Europeans who shot the "large rats" for sport.