



Naga outfits boycott meeting with Centre's point man R.N. Ravi
page 7



In address to BJP cadre, PM Modi calls for unity against external enemy
page 10



UN probe accuses Israel of possible crimes against humanity
page 12



India women lose final ODI, but clinch series against England 2-1
page 15

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NEARBY

JNU sedition: court to go ahead with proceedings

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police once again failed to file prosecution sanction against former JNU Students' Union president Kanhaiya Kumar and others in a sedition case for allegedly raising anti-India slogans on the university campus in 2016.

DELHI METRO ▶ PAGE 1

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FRIDAY REVIEW ▶ 12 PAGES
(TABLOID)

DELHI METRO ▶ 6 PAGES

J&K ordinance doesn't tinker with 35A or 370'

VIJAYA SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Thursday approved the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2019, that will pave the way to extend reservation in jobs, promotions and education to people living 10 km from the International Border (IB) in Jammu.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 10

Pakistan will release Abhinandan today

■ It is a peace gesture, says PM Imran Khan

MEHMAL SARFRAZ

LAHORE
Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Thursday that Indian Air Force pilot Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, now in Pakistan's custody, would be released on Friday.

"As a peace gesture, we are releasing the captured Indian pilot tomorrow," he told a joint session of Parliament.

On Wednesday night, there was a situation in which there could have been a missile strike from India, but it was defused, the Prime Minister said. "This is why I am saying to India not to take this any further. We will be left with no choice but to retaliate. Don't do it," he said.

Mr. Khan added that he had tried to contact his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi on Wednesday evening. "We also sent a message

■ Adds that he doesn't want escalation of tensions

■ They sent Pulwama dossier today – two days after launching an attack. Question is could they not have sent it earlier and if Pakistan had not acted upon it, then taken action against us? But we realise this is because of their elections

IMRAN KHAN, Pakistan Prime Minister

to him. This wasn't due to any weakness. Our forces are battle-hardened but we don't want escalation."

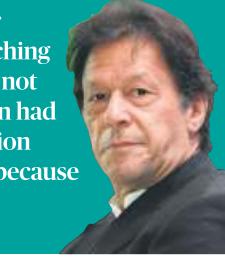
On Thursday evening, the IAF said it was "extremely happy" to have Wing Cdr Varthaman back. "We want to see him back," said Air Vice-Marshals R.G.K. Kapoor.

Asked whether the IAF saw the release as a goodwill gesture by Pakistan, he said: "We only see it as a gesture in consonance with all Geneva conventions."

Rejecting the Pakistan

■ Says he tried to contact PM Modi on Wednesday

■ No talks till action on terror outfits, says India



India presents proof of downed PAF F-16 jet

DINAKAR PERI

NEW DELHI

The Indian Air Force on Thursday produced evidence to prove that Pakistan Air Force deployed F-16 fighters to target Indian military installations, one of them was downed. The armed forces, in a rare tri-service press conference, reiterated that they were fully prepared, putting the onus of further escalation on Pakistan.

"There is no doubt that Pakistan has tried to target our military installations. We responded swiftly because of which their designs to deliver their bomb load at the intended targets were thwarted," said Air Vice-Marshall

(With inputs from Delhi)

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

WANT TO SEE HIM FIRST,

SAYS FATHER ▶ PAGE 11

DOSSIER GIVEN ▶ PAGE 11

COMING HOME ▶ EDITORIAL



Maj. Gen. Surinder Singh Mahal, Rear Admiral D.S. Gujral and Air Vice-Marshal R.G.K. Kapoor in Delhi.

(AVM) R.G.K. Kapoor. "In the aerial combat that ensued, one F-16 of the PAF was shot down by an IAF MiG-21 Bison."

DEFENCE SYSTEM ▶ PAGE 10

WORLD LEADERS WORK BEHIND THE SCENES ▶ PAGE 11



Editorial transition

Today, Mukund Padmanabhan completes a successful run as Editor of *The Hindu* and Suresh Nambath, formerly National Editor, takes over from him.

Having joined this newspaper in June 1997 as an editorial writer, Mr. Padmanabhan gave a new vibrancy to the feature and analysis sections, including the newspaper's in-depth election reportage and analysis. He curated *The Hindu's* Theatre Fest and November Fest. He became Editor of *BusinessLine*, the Group's business daily, in 2013.

During his editorship of *The Hindu* starting 2016, Mr. Padmanabhan introduced and anchored several innovations in the content and presentation of the newspaper. He

conceptualised and conducted 'The Huddle', the newspaper's annual thought conclave.

Mr. Padmanabhan oversaw the seamless and fast-track re-design of both *BusinessLine* and *The Hindu*. He took steps to enhance the newspaper's digital presence and content and launched the news app Briefcase.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of our publishing Group, I record our warm appreciation of Mukund Padmanabhan's contributions to our Group publications over more than two decades, and in particular his contributions as Editor of *The Hindu*.

N. Ram,
Chairman,
The Hindu Group Publishing Pvt. Ltd.

Trump-Kim talks collapse

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

HANOI

The U.S.-North Korea nuclear summit ended abruptly without a deal on Thursday, with President Donald Trump saying that he had decided to "walk" in the face of Kim Jong-un's demand for dropping sanctions.

"...they wanted the sanc-

tions lifted in entirety and we couldn't do that," Mr. Trump said.

But Mr. Trump insisted he was "optimistic that the progress we made" before and during the summit left them "in position to have a really good outcome" in the future.

DETAILED REPORT ON ▶ PAGE 12

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed its February 13 order directing the eviction of lakhs of the Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest-dwellers, whose claims for forest land rights have been rejected under the Forest Rights Act, 2006.

But the Bench, led by Justice Navin Sinha and M.R. Shah, emphasised that "the mighty and the undeserving," who had encroached on forest lands, would be shown no mercy.

Directive to States
The court has given the States four months to file affidavits responding to complaints that there was a high rate of rejection of claims, non-communication of re-

jection orders, unrealistic time lines in deciding claims, irregular holding of State-Level Monitoring Committee meetings, lack of support from the district administrations concerned in providing revenue or forest maps and rejection of claims despite incomplete or insufficient evidence.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

GDP growth slows again

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

GDP growth slowed for the third consecutive quarter in the October-December 2018 period, according to data released on Thursday.

Growth fell to 6.6% in the third quarter, the lowest in the last six quarters.

ESTIMATE CUT ▶ PAGE 13

Akali Dal, BJP clinch Lok Sabha election pact for Punjab

Parties have adopted the 2014 formula for seat sharing



Mr. Shah tweeted after meeting SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal.

With this, the BJP has overcome some hiccups as the SAD had, in the last parliamentary session, protested against the BJP's alleged interference in the matters of gurdwaras.

This is the fourth seat-sharing arrangement Mr. Shah has finalised in the last six months.

BJP will fight the 2019 Lok Sabha election together. Their seats will remain the same as they were in 2014,"

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17 th March 2019	Sunday	Geography-2	Physical + Indian + Human Geography with emphasis on location Environment & Ecology-Biodiversity, Pollution, Various Initiatives and Recent Developments
23 rd March 2019	Saturday	Environment & Ecology	Indian Economy Basics + Recent Developments in Indian and World Economy
24 th March 2019	Sunday	Economy-1	Indian Economy Basics + Recent Developments in Indian and World Economy
30 th March 2019	Saturday	Economy-2	Indian Constitution + Governance + Contemporary Political Development
31 st March 2019	Sunday	Polity-1	Indian Constitution + Governance + Contemporary Political Development
6 th April 2019	Saturday	Polity-2	Indian History - Ancient, Medieval, Modern + Recent Developments
7 th April 2019	Sunday	History	Indian History - Ancient, Medieval, Modern + Recent Developments
13 th April 2019	Saturday	CSAT	Complete Test CSAT
20 th April 2019	Saturday	Mock 1	GS + CSAT
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Arvind Kejriwal
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RISE 04:44	SET 15:33

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Palam	22	11

Delhi Pali Today
24°C A cool morning with mist/haze will persist. A comfortable day with light breeze is likely.

Delhi Pali Tomorrow
26°C Rise in night temperature is likely. Very light winds are likely. A few spells of rain will occur.

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Sukhbir demands independent probe into 2015 firing incidents

Accuses Amarinder of 'misusing SIT to harass Akali leaders, settle political scores'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH



Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Thursday accused the Congress government of "misusing" the Special Investigation Team probing the 2015 Kotkapura and Behbal Kalan police firing incidents to "settle political scores".

"In the light of this brazen politicisation by the Congress government, we demand that the probe be handed over either to a sitting judge of the Supreme Court or to an independent investigating agency. Only then can a fair probe be conducted into these incidents," Mr. Badal said in a statement. He said the real motive of



Sukhbir Singh Badal alleged that the real motive of the Congress government was to weaken the Akali Dal. ■ FILE PHOTO

the State government was to weaken the Akali Dal and Sikh institutions, something that the Congress has been "conspiring unsuccessfully in the matter. The Congress party's game plan to implicate the Akali leadership in the Kotkapura and Behbal Kalan [police firing] incidents was clear from the beginning.

instructions". "Mantar was only an MLA at that time [2015] and had no role whatsoever in the matter. The Congress party's game plan to implicate the Akali leadership in the tragic firing incidents. Only a sitting judge of the Supreme Court or an independent investigating agency can bring the truth out," added Mr. Badal.

Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and Punjab Congress president Sunil Jakhar had held the Akalis responsible for both the incidents even before any inquiry was instituted into the cases," said Mr. Badal.

'SIT party tool'

"The SIT has become a tool of the Congress party to indulge in vendetta politics. Its officers are openly being directed by the Chief Minister and his ministerial colleagues to implicate the Akali leaders in the tragic firing incidents. Only a sitting judge of the Supreme Court or an independent investigating agency can bring the truth out," added Mr. Badal.

'Need to provide quality education'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAIPUR

Rajasthan Education Minister Govind Singh Dotsara on Thursday stressed on providing quality education to the new generation for the country's development.

"It is a challenge for the government to provide quality education given the limited resources. All stakehol-

ders should pool in their resources to improve the services and infrastructure for quality education in the State," Mr. Dotsara said while addressing the 'CSR Conclave on Education' here.

The Minister said there were 86 lakh children studying in 63,000 schools in the State. There is need for development of centres of excellence and schools in rural areas, he said.

A road map should also be devised for promoting sports in schools, rewarding teachers and inclusion of specially abled and other sections in the mainstream, he said.

Principal Secretary, school education, R. Venkateswaran, said development of soft skills is also important.

PLFI member killed in encounter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
RAMGARH (JHARKHAND)

A member of People's Liberation Front of India was killed in an encounter with police in Ramgarh district, an officer said.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team raided a forest area near Chamaribera village on Wednesday night and confronted the PLFI activist, Bijiram Mahto, and his accomplices, asking them to surrender. The rebels opened fire at the officers, leading to a gun battle in which Mahto was killed, Superintendent of Police Nidhi Dwivedi said.

SPIC MACAY
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Punjab plans employment programme for urban youth

It will ensure dignity of labour, says CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JALANDHAR

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said on Thursday that his government would soon launch an employment generation programme for the urban youth which will "ensure dignity of labour".

Titled 'Mera Kam-Mera Abhimanyu', the programme is part of the State government's 'Ghar Ghar Rozgar and Karobar' mission, the Chief Minister said.

Job fairs
Mr. Singh congratulated 265 youngsters who got job letters during the 10-day-long job fair held in all 22 districts under the State's Rozgar mission.

The youth had been recruited in different government and private sectors out of the total 40,517 selected during the job fair, an official statement said.

Speaking on the occasion and



Punjab CM Amarinder Singh

giving details of the State-level mega job fairs, the Chief Minister said that under the Rozgar mission, the State government was facilitating 808 youth per day in getting jobs and this number would be increased to 1,000 per day soon.

"The aim of this mission is to provide one job for each family in a time-bound manner and the scheme would certainly reach out to every household," he added.

Two nurses jump off hospital roof in protest; one injured

They were demanding service regularisation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PATIALA

Two contractual nurses demanding regularisation of their services jumped off the roof of a six-storey government hospital here on Thursday, the police said, adding that one of them was severely injured in the incident. The nurses have been identified as Karamjit Aulakh and Baljit Kaur.

High drama was witnessed as the nurses remained perched on the roof of the six-storey hospital. The authorities placed a net below the spot from where the duo was trying to jump, the police said. As the nurses jumped, one of them fell into the net, while the other tore through it and sustained grievous injuries, the police added.

Khaira slams CM
Punjabi Ekta Party president and Bolath MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira alleged that the Amarinder Singh government had turned a blind eye towards the legitimate demands of the nurses.

"I strongly condemn the insensitive attitude of Pb Govt for turning a blind eye to legitimate demands of nurses forcing them to jump from 6th floor of Rajindra hospital Patiala, to register their protest. Shame on Capt (chief minister) for his failure to prevent such an untoward happening in his city (Patiala)," he tweeted.

Hooda demands White Paper on state of Haryana's economy

'State budget reflection of failure under BJP rule'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDIGARH

Alleging that the Haryana budget was a reflection of the overall failure of the economy under the BJP rule, former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Thursday demanded a White Paper on the state of economy.

He accused the Manohar Lal Khattar government of leading the State to bankruptcy.

Financial mismanagement
"The budget is a reflection of the overall failure of the economy under the BJP government... Allocations on important segment of economy have been reduced and mismanagement of finances is clearly evident. The government must issue a White Paper on state of economy," Mr. Hooda told a news conference here. Congress leaders from the State – Karan Singh Datal, Raghubir Singh Kadian and Geeta Bhukal – were also present at the conference.



Former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda

Mr. Hooda said the total outstanding debt of the State, projected in the budget presented by Finance Minister Captain Abhimanyu earlier this week, was nearly ₹1.79 lakh crore, which has gone up from under ₹70,000 crore when the Congress was in power five years ago. He charged the Minister with having presented a "visionless budget while depending heavily on borrowings".

Decongesting Delhi-NCR through High Speed Highway Corridors



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- 6-lane elevated corridor on Gurugram – Sohna Road, Length-22.00 km, Cost Rs. 2,000 Crore- work started.
- 8 lane Delhi-Panipat Highway from Mukarba Chowk to Panipat on NH-1, Length-70.50 Km, Cost Rs. 2,300 Crore-46% completed.
- 8-lane access controlled Dwarka Expressway, Length-29.20 Km, Cost Rs. 9,500 Crore- Work Started.
- Delhi-Meerut Expressway Project (Pkg-II, III & IV), Length-73.20 Km, Cost Rs. 5,900 Crore- Progress Pkg-II-36%, Pkg-III-76%, Pkg-IV-32%.
- Rangpur Bypass to connect Dwarka/NH-08 with Vasant Kunj/ Nelson Mandela Road, Length-5.00 Km, Cost-Rs. 1,000 Cr. In DPR Stage
- Urban Extension Road (UER-2)- 3rd Ring Road for Delhi under Bharatmala, Length-75.00 Km, Cost-Rs. 4,000 Crore In DPR Stage
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BE IT KNOWN TO ALL THAT ALLOTTEE LKEHRAJ S/O LT. SHERA R/O VILLAGE- NANGLI WAZIPUR NOIDA GB NAGAR, PLOT NO-WP-263, WP-269 (WAZIPUR 5% PLOT) SEC-130, NOIDA (AREA 334.8 SQ.MTR, APPROX) KHAJA NO. 10, 12 HAVE GIVEN THE RIGHTS/WILL WHICH IN REGISTERED ON DATE 06/11/2000 BAHI-3, JILD NO-69 PAGE NO 253-258 SR. NO-695 SUB REGISTER-II NOIDA GB NAGAR IN FAVOUR OF CHARAN SINGH S/O CHANDER SINGH RO-NANGLI WAZIPUR NOIDA GB NAGAR AS THE ABOVE MENTIONED PROPERTY OF THE BASIS OF SAME WILL WHICH IS REGISTERED HAS APPLIED FOR TRANSFERRING ABOVE SAID PROPERTY IN THEIR NAME. IF ANY BODY/HAS ANY OBJECTION CAN FILE THEIR OBJECTION WITH PROOF IN 30 DAYS FROM THE PUBLICATION DATE OF THIS NOTICE TO RESIDENTIAL DEPTT OF NOIDA AUTHORITY SECTOR-6 NOIDA.

SD/- CHARAN SINGH

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

BIRTH CENTENARY



Sri.T.R.Krishnamurthy (TRK)

Rtd.Teacher RKM(Main) school, T.Nagar

1-3-1919 - 18-1-2004

Fondly remembered by: Smt.Lalitha(wife)

Sons and daughters in law

Daughters and sons in law

Grandchildren & Great grand children

Ph: 044 24810165 / 9566145972 / 9841252345

DEATH

BIRTH CENTENARY



Raghunath K

of Cuddalore, ExNLN passed away on 27th February at Mumbai.

Dasasthu at Mumbai at his son's residence on 8 March.

Ph. 773812773.

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HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT INVITATION FOR BID (IFB)

Tel. 0172-223965, 225735

Email- hp-ham@nic.in

The Superintending Engineer, 8th Circle, HPPWD Hamirpur HP on behalf of Governor of H.P. re-invites the item rate bids, in electronic tendering system from the eligible class of contractors registered with HPPWD for the works as detailed in the table.

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost	Starting Date for downloading Bid	Earnest Money	Deadline for submission of Bid.
1.	Up-gradation of BassiBadiyanLabiyana road km. 0/0 to 5/0 including routine maintenance for five years Under PMGSY Package No. HP-03-124 (L-038),(World Bank for 2018-19 Batch-I RRP-II).	2,46,87,461.00	14.03.2019 (At 6:00 PM)	4,93,800.00	26.03.2019 (At 5:00 PM)
2.	Up-gradation of BheraiBhurSulgwan Road km. 0/0 to 5/00 including routine maintenance for five years Under PMGSY Package No. HP-03-133 (World Bank for 2018-19 Batch-I RRP-II).	3,19,70,258.00	14.03.2019 (At 6:00 PM)	6,39,000.00	26.03.2019 (At 5:00 PM)

IN BRIEF



D.K. Shivakumar gets relief in I-T case

BENGALURU
Water Resources Minister D.K. Shivakumar has got relief from a special court in Bengaluru for now. On Thursday, the court discharged him from the accusation of evading income tax of nearly ₹13 crore based on the details of financial transactions he had scribbled on a sheet of paper that he tore up when the I-T officials conducted a search.

HC sets aside panel decision on MBBS fee

KOCHI
The decisions of the Admission and Fee Regulatory Committee for Medical Education in Kerala, issued between 2016-17 and 2018-19, have been set aside by a Division Bench of the Kerala High Court. It was considering a batch of 26 petitions filed by a few private self-financing medical colleges while passing the order on Thursday.

Don't hand over airport to Adani, Pinarayi tells PM

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
After accusing the Centre of a "scam" in the tender for operating five international airports, including Thiruvananthapuram, to Adani Enterprises, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi asking that airport here not be handed over to Adani. IANS

Church of South India for a green Lent this year

PATHANAMTHITTA
The Church of South India, in association with the Universal Church, has decided to observe the 40-day Lent, beginning on March 6, avoiding all kinds of disposable plastics as its contribution towards a lesser carbon footprint.

Pollution scare



Cause for concern: The colour of water at the Shankumugham beach in Thiruvananthapuram is turning yellow, allegedly due to the discharge of effluents from nearby factories. • S. MAHINSHA

Braving all odds, Hadiya finally achieves her dream

Husband shares photograph showing her in doctor's coat

STAFF REPORTER
KOTTAYAM

Overcoming obstacles that once threatened to shackle her, Hadiya has finally caught up with her career dream.

Her husband Shafin Jahan announced in a recent Facebook post that Ms. Hadiya Asokan had finally become a doctor, and shared a photograph showing her in a doctor's coat with a stethoscope.

"This shining victory is an outstanding achievement because it comes at the end of countless prayers, relentless struggles of separation, love, patience and so on...Alhamdulillah! Finally, you reached an important destination out of all odds. Very proud to address you Doctor," read the post.



The 27-year-old Ms. Hadiya, a native of Vaikom in Kottayam, was caught in a storm when she converted to Islam and married Mr. Jahan in December 2016. Her father, K.M. Asokan, and mother, Ponnamma, approached the Kerala High Court with a complaint that she had been forcibly converted and would soon be recruited to join the Islamic State (IS) in Syria.

Parents' complaint
During the period, Ms. Hadiya had been staying at her friend Jaseena's residence, where she pursued a graduation programme in homoeopathy medicine and surgery. Mr. Asokan's complaint alleged that Ms. Jaseena's father Aboobacker had persuaded Ms. Hadiya to embrace Islam.

In May 2017, the Kerala High Court annulled Ms. Hadiya's marriage with Mr. Jahan, stating that the woman seemed mentally indoctrinated. The court also ordered her to return to live with her parents at Vaikom.

The order, however, was set aside by the Supreme Court in March 2018.

recruited to join the Islamic State (IS) in Syria.

Yeddyurappa faces backlash for statement on air strikes

BJP leader had said that the attack will help the party win 22 seats in Karnataka

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

BJP State president B.S. Yeddyurappa, who faced a backlash from the Opposition and even some of his partymen for forecasting gains in the Lok Sabha poll from India's air strikes in Balakot, sought to backtrack on Thursday.

On Wednesday, Mr. Yeddyurappa had said in Chitradurga that the border situation would guarantee at least 22 seats for the BJP in Karnataka in the Lok Sabha election.

"The recent incident of armed forces attacking Pakistan has turned the situation in Narendra Modi's favour. The youth of the country are happy after the attack. It will help us win 22 seats in Karnataka," he had



saying for a long time.

BJP leader and Minister of State for External Affairs V.K. Singh tweeted that he would "beg to differ" with Mr. Yeddyurappa on his statement.

Safeguarding the nation was "not to win a few extra seats," he said.

In Karnataka, Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy took to Twitter to say that Mr. Yeddyurappa was "busy calculating how many extra LS seats" the situation would bring to his party.

distic gains over soldiers' death, only an anti-nationalist can."

Speaking in Hubballi, Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee president Dinesh Gundu Rao and the Congress' Karnataka Campaign Committee chairman H.K. Patil demanded an apology from Mr. Yeddyurappa.

Mr. Rao asked whether Indian soldiers were fighting Pakistani forces or BJP and RSS workers.

"The BJP is crossing limits of decency in trying to politicise the whole issue to gain in the Parliamentary election," he said.

Pratap Simha, MP, defended Mr. Yeddyurappa and said elections were an occasion for the people to make a choice for "courageous leadership."

Railways on drive to purge 'ghost' staff

Payroll data manipulated, funds siphoned

S. VIJAY KUMAR

CHENNAI

The Railways has begun an exercise to cleanse employee data after an internal analysis exposed serious lapses in the maintenance of critical attributes such as date of joining and date of birth, in the Integrated Payroll Accounting System (IPAS).

ter table are bona fide employees, appointed by competent authorities, following legislated recruitment procedures. The validation can only be done by comparing the pay roll details with the service records, starting with the recruitment and appointment letters," the Financial Commissioner (Railways) said in a note to all general managers after the fraud came to light.

The move follows the detection of fraud in the Northern Railway Zone, where 'ghost employees' were created to claim Travelling Allowance, Overtime Allowance and Night Duty Allowance by manipulating the payrolls in the computerised system, causing misappropriation of funds to the tune of ₹1.5 crore.

Master data

The Ministry had called for an urgent need to validate the employee master data that generates payroll and other establishment claims.

"Even critical attributes like appointment date and date of birth are not correct, which creates problems at a

later stage. Similarly, inconsistency in joining date and employee type (Provident Fund, National Pension Scheme, etc.) has been noticed.

"Data of PAN, PRAN has also been found duplicate/invalid/missing," Director Finance (CRIS) Anuradha Mukhedkar said in a letter to the Railway Board.

Special drive

Ms. Mukhedkar said the Railways should conduct a special drive for cross-checking employee data as available in IPAS with their service sheet and make appropriate corrections so that the master data is sanitised. "This will also help in identifying ghost employees in Railways," Ms. Mukhedkar said.

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It's so easy



Election Commission of India
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NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY
Tender Notice No. PCMM/EP/2018-19/10 dt. 28.02.2019
E-PROCUREMENT SYSTEM

"Suppliers are requested to visit website www.ireps.gov.in on which tenders issued by PCMM Office, Stores Depot, Sr. DMMS of NER Division and Dy. CMM/CON/BG Office are published and tender documents are available. The site also permits for submitting the offer online."

CPRO-S-80 Principal Chief Material Manager, Gorakhpur
About any passenger amenity complain SMS on Mobile No. 09794845955
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THE HINDU
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E - TENDERING PRESS NOTICE
The Executive Engineer, Civil Division No.V, Irrigation and Flood Control Department, Govt. of NCT of Delhi, Near Parivaran Complex, Saidulajab New Delhi 110030 invites on behalf of President of India, on line percentage rate tender from approved and eligible contractors registered with Irrigation and Flood Control Department up to 3:00PM on dates mentioned as below.

1. NIT 24/2018-19/EE/CD-V/Acs/(ID No. 2019_1FC_169782_1 (Percentage rate). H.OA-MLALAD.
N.O.W- Construction of Hall in Qabristan of Kalu Sarai at Ambirdi Margin Malviya Nagar Assembly Constituency (AC-43). E.C.Rs. 8,92,069/- Earnest Money Rs 17,84/- Period of Completion 90 Days. (Date of opening 02.03.2019)
2. NIT 24/2018-19/EE/CD-V/Acs/(ID No. 2019_1FC_169792_1 (Percentage rate). H.OA-4217 U/C-N.O.W.- Improvement of streets at Lado Sarai Extension Unauthorised colony (Regn No. 493-B) in Mehrauli Assembly Constituency.
E.C.Rs. 77,45,751/- Earnest Money Rs 1,54,915/- Period of Completion. 60 Days. (Date of opening 02.03.2019)
3. NIT 24/2018-19/EE/CD-V/Acs/(ID No. 2019_1FC_169865_1 (Percentage rate). H.OA-MLALAD.
N.O.W - Renovation of cremation ground at Katwaria Sarai in Mehrauli Assembly Constituency (AC-45). E.C.R. 17,00,195/- Earnest Money Rs 34,184/- Period of Completion. 60 Days. (Date of opening 05.03.2019)

1) The enlistment of the contractors should be valid on the last date of opening of tenders. In case the last date of opening of tender is extended the enlistment of contractor should be valid on the original date of opening of tenders.
2) Earnest Money in physical form i.e. deposited at FOR/Banker cheque / Demand Draft or schedule bank issued in favour of EE CD V & FC Deptt. should be deposited in the office of EE CD V & FC Deptt. Govt. of NCT of Delhi, Saidulajab near Parivaran complex New Delhi 110030. Date of opening 02.03.2019
3) Details of above mentioned work can be seen and downloaded from website <http://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>
4) Tender submitted through e-procurement portal shall be accepted only.
5) Corrigendum, if any will be published one-procurement web site only.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER CD.V.
DIP/Shabdharth/3056/2019
DIP/DDU/R.O: 2357/2018-19

KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
49, East Wing , 4th & 5th Floor, Khanija Bhavan Race Course Road Bengaluru – 560 001. Phone No. 22267891 / 40931272
website : www.kiadb.in, e-Mail: cof@kiadb.in

No.KIADB/COF/E-Auction-07/16361/2018-19 Dt: 28.02.2019

PAPER PUBLICATION

This is to inform that Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB), intends to invest its Surplus Funds in the short term deposits with Nationalized/Public Sector Banks. The details of the quantum of amount and period to be kept in short term deposits are as under:

1) Rs.350.00 Crores - For 6 Months in Nationalized/Public Sector Banks
The complete details of the E-Auction can be downloaded from the e-portal of the Government of Karnataka at the below address:
Schedule of Various Events For e-Auction is as below:
Date of E-Auction can be Downloaded : 02.03.2019
Last Date to upload the Declaration in Annexure-B in the e-portal :07.03.2019 on or before 16.00 Hrs.
Live Bidding : 12.03.2019, Commences at 11.00 Hrs. & Concludes at 13.00 Hrs.
Sd/-
Controller of Finance, KIADB

IN BRIEF



Naveen inaugurates new berths at Gopalpur port

BERHAMPUR
Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Thursday inaugurated two new berths at Gopalpur port in Ganjam district of Odisha. The port has now three berths for cargo handling.

32 kg of gold seized from Afghan national

AMRITSAR
In a big haul, the Customs Department on Thursday claimed to have seized over 32 kg of gold from an Afghan national, who has been put under arrest. The gold was concealed inside an apple consignment and was seized at the Attari checkpoint. PTI

Three killed as SUV overturns in M.P.

TIKAMGARH
Three men were killed and another one severely injured on Thursday after the SUV in which they were travelling overturned near Neemkhera village in Madhya Pradesh, police said. The deceased, all in their late twenties, were relatives. PTI

Body of newborn found near railway station

AMBALA (HARYANA)
The body of a newborn was found near the Ambala Cantt railway station on Thursday, police said. Passers-by noticed the body and informed the Railway Police, they said. The body was sent to a civil hospital and a probe was underway. PTI

Man arrested for assault on health worker

JAJPUR (ODISHA)
A man has been arrested for allegedly misbehaving with a community health worker at a village in Jajpur district of Odisha. The accused, who was arrested on Wednesday, has been identified as 32-year-old Sudarshan Pradhan, police said. PTI

Labourers sore over wait for wages under rural jobs scheme

NREGA Sangharsh Morcha files complaints against 'main accused' Centre

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

The govt. seems to have plenty of money to fund bullet trains but not for wages of labourers

MUKESH NIRVASIT
Convenor, NREGA Sangharsh Morcha

As part of a nationwide campaign, representatives of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) Sangharsh Morcha and Rajasthan Unorganised Labour Union on Thursday filed complaints for registration of First Information Reports in more than 10 police stations in five districts of the State for non-payment of wages to labourers engaged under the Centre's flagship scheme.

The complainants said that the government's failure to pay wages and ensure the basic NREGA entitlements to workers "amount[ed] to a crime", as per the Supreme Court's judgment of May 13, 2016. The complaints were filed against the Secretary of

complainants were told at some other places that the higher officers would be apprised of it."

The complaints for registration of FIRs were submitted in Ajmer, Pali, Bhilwara, Dungarpur and Udaipur districts. Mr. Nirvasit said ₹778 crore were due for payment to labourers in these districts, while the fund transfer orders (FTOs) had not been processed since January 18 and the workers had been forced to wait for their wages.

Job applications

In a large number of instances, even the submission of job applications remains an uphill task and the work is not available within 15 days, as mandated by NREGA. Labourers were being deprived

of the NREGA entitlements, including timely payment of wages, work on demand, compensation for late payment and unemployment allowance because of lack of allocation of proper funds, Mr. Nirvasit said.

The NREGA Sangharsh Morcha regretted that the Union government had failed to send funds on time to the States for payment of wages to the hard hit rural workers. "On the other hand, the government seems to have plenty of money to fund bullet trains and compensate the banks for non-performing assets created by corporates," stated the Morcha.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot had last week requested the Centre to release ₹400 crore for the workers' wages.

Nine held for 3 murders over 'witchcraft'

STAFF REPORTER
BERHAMPUR

Nine persons, including three women, who allegedly murdered three on suspicion of witchcraft, were arrested in Rayagada district of Odisha on Thursday.

The victims included a couple – Gopal Sabar and Laxmi Sabar, both in their 40s – and a 77-year-old woman, Jakili Sabar. All of them were missing since February 23 night.

The victims as well as the accused were residents of Ukumbaguda village under Gunupur police station limits.

Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Gunupur, Rajkishor Dash said investigation revealed that the arrested persons had allegedly abducted the victims and beaten them to death. To destroy evidence, they had burnt the bodies.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 19.00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds likely at isolated places over Jammu and Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, coastal Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	34.3	25.6	16.8	Kozhikode	—	36.0	26.2
Ahmedabad	—	28.6	19.4	Kurnool	—	36.3	22.6
Aizawl	—	25.6	13.6	Lucknow	4.2	22.7	10.0
Allahabad	—	25.8	12.1	Madurai	—	37.7	25.1
Bengaluru	—	33.8	20.5	Mangaluru	—	34.6	22.0
Bhopal	—	24.6	11.4	Mumbai	—	31.7	18.2
Bhubaneswar	21.8	32.5	18.2	Mysoor	—	33.7	18.8
Chandigarh	0.6	19.7	5.5	New Delhi	—	22.0	6.8
Chennai	—	32.0	25.4	Patna	0.2	24.0	15.0
Coimbatore	—	35.9	23.0	Port Blair	—	31.6	25.2
Dehradoon	4.4	20.1	5.0	Puducherry	—	32.5	25.6
Gangtok	4.2	9.4	5.7	Pune	—	31.1	10.6
Goa	—	32.2	18.8	Rajpur	—	29.1	19.3
Guwahati	3.9	20.3	15.0	Ranchi	—	32.0	13.5
Hubballi	—	32.0	18.0	Shillong	9.8	13.0	8.4
Hyderabad	—	33.4	21.3	Shimla	3.8	9.4	-2.0
Imphal	2.8	20.0	10.4	Srinagar	—	10.7	-3.4
Jaipur	—	22.9	9.6	Trivandrum	—	36.0	25.7
Kochi	—	32.0	25.8	Tiruchi	—	37.1	26.0
Kohima	9...2	21.4	6.2	Vijayawada	35.4	32.1	21.4
Kolkata	68.2	23.5	18.6	Visakhapatnam	—	31.5	25.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂ NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	52	85	25	55	—
Bengaluru	.4	31	19	124	■■■■■
Chennai	10	12	36	245	—
Delhi	17	56	27	263	■■■■■
Hyderabad	28	74	28	115	■■■■■
Kolkata	.6	65	28	78	■■■■■
Lucknow	12	34	.53	111	■■■■■
Mumbai	—	—	—	—	—
Pune	39	20	108	86	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	—	—	—	—	—

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Bhiwadi, Rajasthan recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 255 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Haldia, West Bengal recorded a healthy AQI score of 40

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.

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

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

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Dalit groom visits Ram temple under police protection in M.P.

Upper caste 'ban' on their entry; no untoward incident

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
INDORE (M.P.)

A Dalit bridegroom visited a Ram temple at a village in Indore district of Madhya Pradesh under police protection on Thursday in the face of an unwritten 'ban'.

Members of upper castes allegedly do not allow the Balais, a Dalit community, to enter the Ram temple at Aurangpura village.

The marriage procession of Ajay Malviya (22) was taken out under police protection on Thursday, and security was also provided when he visited the temple, a police officer said.

Plea to police

The Akhil Bhartiya Balai Massabha had submitted an application to the Betma police station on Wednesday, alleging that Dalits were not allowed to enter the Ram temple at Aurangpura. It also alleged that caste-based discrimination was prevalent in the village.

Alleging that there had been trouble during the marriage procession of another Dalit man in the past, the organisation demanded security for Mr. Malviya's wedding procession.

Dharmendra Malviya (32), the groom's elder brother, said, "I have not seen in my entire life any person belonging to my community entering the Ram temple. So this time we decided that my younger brother must visit the temple."

He also said that when he rode a horse during his marriage procession in 2009, stones were pelted at them.

Five SIMI men sent behind bars for life

For possession of deadly explosives

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BHOPAL

Five activists of the banned Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) were sentenced to life imprisonment by a special National Investigation Agency court here on Thursday for possession of explosives.

Special judge Girish Dixit acquitted five others.

Of the 12 accused in the case, Khalid Ahmed and Abdul Mazid were killed in a police encounter in October 2016, prosecutor Yogesh Tiwari said.

The special court awarded life imprisonment to Abdul Aziz, Javed, Abdul Waheed, Jubar and Mohammad Adil. The court also imposed a fine of ₹8,000 on each of them.

ATS raid

Madhya Pradesh Police's Anti Terrorism Squad had arrested three SIMI activists with a cache of explosives during a raid in Mahidpur area in Ujjain district on January 1, 2013.

Nine others were arrested subsequently.

Eight hundred gelatin sticks, 540 detonators, a gelatin bomb, a pipe bomb and 11 other types of bombs were recovered from the accused.

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY Notification No. 50/2019

Important Notice for Rail Passengers

In continuation to this office notification no.45/2019 dated 25.02.2019 it is notified for information of general public that permanent stoppage of train no. 14370/14369 Tanakpur-Singrauli-Tanakpur (Tri-weekly) and train no.24369/24370 Tanakpur-Shaktinagar-Tanakpur (4 days in a week) at Khatima station and change in train no. will be as under.

Train No	Station	Arr.	Dep.	W.E.F
14370/24370 Tanakpur-Singrauli/Shaktinagar Express	Khatima	08.15	08.20	27.02.2019
14369/24369 Singrauli/Shaktinagar-Tanakpur Express	Khatima	15.20	15.25	27.02.2019
S.N Existing Train Number	Changed Train Number			W.E.F
1 14370/14369 Tanakpur-Singrauli-Tanakpur Express	15074/15073 Tanakpur-Singrauli-Tanakpur Express			01.07.2019
2 24370/24369 Tanakpur-Shaktinagar-Tanakpur Express	15076/15075 Tanakpur-Shaktinagar-Tanakpur Express			01.07.2019

IN BRIEF



SC orders funds for subordinate judiciary

NEW DELHI The Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Centre to disburse funds allocated for various States to develop infrastructure in subordinate judiciary within two weeks. The court said the funds would be disbursed after the States provide the Centre utilisation certificates of funds disbursed earlier. PTI

IRCTC launches its own payment aggregator

NEW DELHI The Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) has launched its own payment aggregator system, IRCTC iPay, a step that will help to promote the Digital India initiative. Under the new arrangement, the IRCTC will have full control of the payment system.

Lawyer shot dead inside court campus in U.P.

GORAKHPUR An advocate was on Thursday shot dead inside a court campus in neighbouring Basti district, the police said. Citing eyewitnesses, the police said Jagannay Yadav (63) was in his chamber when the incident took place. Two youth came to him and after talking for some time, took out a pistol and fired at him. PTI

New airport at Rajkot gets Centre's approval

NEW DELHI The Centre on Thursday gave its approval for the development of a new airport at Hirrasar in Gujarat's Rajkot at an estimated cost of ₹1,405 crore. The decision was taken at the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs.

AJL told to move out of Herald House

Delhi High Court dismisses plea challenging Centre's order to evict the publisher of National Herald

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday dismissed the plea of Associated Journals Limited (AJL), publisher of National Herald newspaper, challenging the Centre's order to vacate its Herald House premises here.

An official of the Urban Development Ministry said that in compliance with the court's orders, the possession of the Herald House was to be handed over to Land and Development Office on March 1 at 11 a.m. failing which proceedings under the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act will be initiated against AJL.

Order upheld

A Bench of Chief Justice Rajaendra Menon and Justice V.K. Rao upheld the single judge's December order which had dismissed AJL's

Paper trail

A brief timeline of the case involving the lease of Herald House, the building which houses the Congress mouthpiece

Oct. 30, 2018: Land and Development Officer terminates lease given to AJL for the building

Nov. 15, 2018: The Delhi High Court asks the Centre to maintain status quo with regard to its eviction process

The Herald House in New Delhi.
■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Dec. 21, 2018: A single judge bench of the Delhi High Court dismisses appeal against the lease termination order

Jan. 6, 2019: AJL challenges the single judge verdict before a division Bench of the High Court

Feb. 28, 2019: Delhi High Court upholds the single judge's decision

findings recorded by the learned writ court to hold that the transfer in question comes within the prohibited category under clause XIII (3) of the lease agreement," it added.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, had argued that in the manner the shares were transferred, the court needed to "pierce the corporate veil" to see who owns the premises. The government had contended that the land in question was allocated to AJL on lease for printing press and this "dominant purpose" was stopped several years ago.

AJL has argued that transfer of the company's majority shares to Young India, in which Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and his mother Sonia Gandhi are majority shareholders, would not make them owners of the Herald building here.

"We see no error in the

CBI books 2 for forging letters from PM's office

Complaints were filed in April last year

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Central Bureau of Investigation has registered two FIRs for allegedly sending forged letters in the name of the Prime Minister's Office to government establishments for their personal interests.

According to CBI officers, the FIRs were registered after Assistant Director P.K. Israr from the PMO submitted complaint letters last year.

"The first FIR has been registered against Mo-

hammed Salim, secretary of the Ghausia Compound housing society in Bandra (east). It was found that the accused sent a letter to the office of the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, which was supposedly signed by Debasree Mukharjee, Joint Secretary to the PM," a CBI officer said.

The second letter, also in the name of Ms. Mukharjee, was allegedly forged by Ujagar Singh, Director of M/s Ariya Nangai Biofuel and Power Pvt. Ltd., Chennai.

hammed Salim, secretary of the Ghausia Compound housing society in Bandra (east). It was found that the accused sent a letter to the office of the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, which was supposedly signed by Debasree Mukharjee, Joint Secretary to the PM," a CBI officer said.

The Ordinance also gives a child an option to exit from Aadhaar on attaining 18 years of age.

"The amendments proposed are the same as those

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Thursday approved the promulgation of an Ordinance to allow voluntary submission of Aadhaar as identity proof for use by private entities such as banks, telcos and fintech firms.

The Ordinance also gives a child an option to exit from Aadhaar on attaining 18 years of age.

"The amendments proposed are the same as those

contained in the Bill passed by the Lok Sabha on January 4, 2019," the government said. However, the Bill was not passed in the Rajya Sabha which was adjourned sine die.

The amendment also provides for civil penalties for violations of the Aadhaar Act and provisions by entities in the Aadhaar ecosystem. "It permits the entities to perform authentication only when they are compliant with the standards of privacy and security specified by the authority," it said.

"Subsequent to this amendment, no individual shall be compelled to provide proof of possession of Aadhaar number or undergo authentication for the purpose of establishing his identity unless it is so provided by a law made by Parliament," the government said, adding that the amendments will enable UIDAI to restrain the misuse of Aadhaar.

The amendments "provide for 12-digit Aadhaar number and its alternate virtual identity to conceal the actual Aadhaar number."

Odisha Collectors on alert against spurious liquor sale

Warning comes in wake of 250 deaths

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government has put all District Collectors on alert over possible infusion of spurious liquor as consumption in the State has gone up sharply against inadequate supply.

He said the EC had expressed concern over little enforcement to prevent sale of over 250 people due to consumption of illicit liquor in last one month.

"I have received intelligence inputs regarding sudden spurt in demand for liquor recently. The demand for liquor is likely to go up in the near future. The supply of liquor through the authorised channels may not be adequate to meet the abnormal increase in demand," said Nikunj B. Dhal, State Excise Secretary.

"Criminal elements may step up production of illicit and spurious liquor and

medicinal preparations to meet the gap between supply and demand. Field level enforcement should be stepped up to prevent any health hazard caused due to consumption of spurious liquor," said Mr. Dhal.

He said the EC had issued a warning in the wake of death of over 250 people due to consumption of unauthorised outlets. Sale of liquor through unauthorised outlets was disturbing public peace. The Excise Department has issued a notification empowering police officers under various provisions of the Odisha Excise Act, 2008.

It will help the police in preventing and investigating excise offences and taking action against offenders. Collectors have been asked to review the performance of multi-disciplinary squads at regular intervals.

Amended rules to benefit air travellers

No fine for cancellation within 24 hours

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Air travellers will be able to cancel or amend a ticket within 24 hours of making a reservation without incurring any penalty, according to the passenger charter released by the government.

In case of delays of up to two hours, passengers are entitled to free meals. If a flight is delayed for more than six hours and a passenger has been informed about it more than 24 hours before the scheduled depa-

ture, then the airline will have to arrange an alternate flight within a period of six hours or provide a full refund.

Passengers will be entitled to free hotel accommodation if there is a delay of more than 24 hours.

A passenger will also have to be offered free stay if a delay of more than six hours occurs between 8 p.m. and 3 a.m.

If a passenger cancels a ticket, the airline will have to refund all taxes.

Centre's bid to update Nagas on peace process ignored

+ Civil society and student groups in Nagaland boycott consultations with Deputy National Security Adviser

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Civil society and student organisations in Nagaland have cold-shouldered the Centre's bid to update the people on the progress made in the peace with Naga extremist groups.

These organisations boycotted consultations with Deputy

National Security Adviser R.N. Ravi, who had visited the State on February 26 and 27, to drive home the point that they have had enough of waiting for a settlement to the protracted "Naga political problem."

The State's apex tribal organisation, Naga Hoho, said meeting Mr. Ravi, also the inter-

locutor in the Naga peace talks, would have been a waste of time. "There is a lack of political will for a comprehensive solution, which was assured in our last meeting. Taking part in another consultation would have been meaningless," Naga Hoho president Chuba Ozu-kum said. The Centre was test-

ing the patience of the Nagas and, in the process, belittling the commitment to an early solution by President Ram Nath Kovind and Nagaland Governor P.B. Acharya, he said.

The Naga Mothers' Association and the Naga Students' Federation also boycotted the consultations.

However, representatives of the United Naga Tribes Association on Border Areas met Mr. Ravi and asked New Delhi to fulfil its promise made in the 9-Point Agreement in 1947 and 16-Point Agreement in 1960 to "bring back all the reserved forests and contiguous Naga areas to Naga people."

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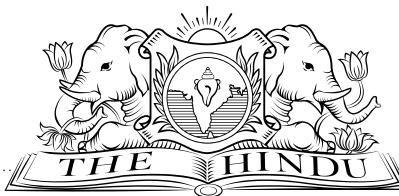
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Coming home

The release of the IAF pilot gives India and Pakistan the chance to de-escalate tensions

With Pakistan's decision to release Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, tensions between India and Pakistan may finally wind down. The gesture, which Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan called an offer of peace and goodwill, must be appreciated, although there is evidence to suggest that there was pressure from other countries on Islamabad to make such an announcement to prevent further escalation from India. If Wing Commander Abhinandan's return provides the space for diplomacy to take over, it is because it gives both countries the opportunity to signal a victory of sorts. Islamabad will project itself as having done the decent thing, and New Delhi is likely to claim that its tough stance compelled his return. There have been a number of incidents that took the subcontinent to the brink of a conflict that could have quite easily spiralled out of control – from the Pulwama attack to the Indian air strikes on Balakot, to attempted attacks by Pakistani military aircraft in Jammu and Kashmir, and the IAF pilot's capture. The sense of uncertainty was only made worse by the utterances of public figures and the media on both sides, who tried to score points domestically. In India, within a few weeks the image of a nation in grief determined to fight terrorism appeared to have given way to triumphalism over the Balakot strikes. Pakistan went the same way after it foiled an attack across the Line of Control that saw both sides take down each other's aircraft. Videos of Wing Commander Abhinandan being manhandled by a mob before Pakistani soldiers moved in to protect him did not help. As a result, the focus changed within a few days from India's outrage over the terror strike to two nuclear neighbours poised for conflict.

It is time for New Delhi and Islamabad to use the pause afforded by the relief over the release to decide on the rules of engagement. Pakistan must realise that the time for denial and obfuscation is over. Unless it begins to act on India's and the world community's concerns about Pakistan-based terror safe havens in a time-bound manner, the two nations could be back on the brink of war if there is another trigger. If it does act, it could herald a paradigm shift in India-Pakistan engagement and help fix its own fragile economy. This has a precedent: the period that followed then-Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's 2003 announcement on shutting down terror groups, when Pakistan's military actually showed some results in the matter, was the most productive phase of engagement between the two countries in recent decades. Significantly, it was a time of economic growth and stability too for Pakistan. New Delhi must be ready to show both flexibility and a determined focus on Pakistan's action against terror groups, including the Jaish-e-Mohammad. This is the best way to build constructively on the international consensus built post-Pulwama in India's favour.

The deal-maker

The drama over Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif's moves reflects an ideological tussle

A day after posting his resignation on Instagram, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif was compelled to resume duties when President Hassan Rouhani rejected it. This sudden move by Mr. Zarif, who is widely credited with playing a key role in forging the nuclear deal in 2015, reflects the tensions within the Iranian political establishment. The U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal after Donald Trump became President, and the reintroduction of American sanctions on Iran, have sharpened contradictions between the hardliners and the moderates within the Islamic Republic, an ideological tussle that has endured for a long time. Hardliners opposed to any thaw in relations with the West, and who were always sceptical of the nuclear deal, have found in the current circumstances an opportunity to question and critique the architects of the deal. Mr. Zarif's public resignation was also a kind of a power play. He was missing in the parleys between Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his hosts in Tehran recently. Mr. Assad, who is a key West Asian ally for Iran and has received military help from Tehran during the civil war, had also met Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Through his resignation and the public outcry that followed, Mr. Zarif sent a signal to his government that he was no lightweight diplomat and had a significant public standing among Iranians favourably disposed towards the regime.

The re-imposition of sanctions has been a major economic setback for Iran. The country did get some respite after the U.S. granted a temporary waiver for eight countries, including India, which are key trading partners. But with the sanctions, it is reeling under a weakening currency and galloping inflation. The major countries in the European Union – Germany, France and the U.K. – have reiterated that Iran has complied with the regulations of the nuclear deal and have created a new financial "special purpose vehicle" to facilitate trade with Iran despite the U.S. sanctions. The operationalisation of this entity is dependent on Iran abiding by rules framed by the international Financial Action Task Force. Bills that will bring Iranian laws in line with FATF rules are pending in Iran's Expediency Council and Parliament due to a protracted debate between the moderates and the hardliners. Had Mr. Zarif, the main architect and advocate of the deal, exited the government, it would have complicated Iran's continued adherence to the agreement. The conservatives' critique of Mr. Zarif must be seen in this light. President Rouhani's rejection of his resignation also indicates that he can ill-afford to lose an ally at this crucial juncture for Iran and its engagement with the West.

Living on the edge

India and Pakistan need to find a way to keep de-escalating tensions without either losing face



HAPPYMON JACOB

The possibility of the ongoing India-Pakistan military stand-off spiralling out of control cannot be overstated, given the high stakes involved with regard to national reputations, military redlines and, most undeniably, domestic political considerations. The limited air war over the Line of Control (LoC), shooting down of each other's aircraft and, equally importantly, the capture of an Indian fighter pilot by Pakistan have further complicated what was initially believed to be a crisis that might not go beyond round one (the terror attack in Pulwama and the Indian air strikes on Balakot). With Wednesday's limited air war, the two sides completed round two, and it's been anyone's guess what round three may entail. Thursday's late evening joint press briefing by the three services gave no definite indication of de-escalation even though the tone of the conference did not suggest escalation.

Mapping the escalation

In days ahead, if there is no clear de-escalation, we are likely to witness more fire assaults on the LoC with high calibre weapons and stand-off strikes without crossing the border using short-range air-to-surface or surface-to-surface missiles against each other. In so far as this does not involve more pilot captures, deep strikes in each other's territories and extending to the International Boundary sector, it could still potentially remain contained. But, as they

say, miscalculations and mistakes can easily take place in the fog of war whereby the stand-off could move up the next rung of escalation.

Let's take a step back and recapture how we got to two rungs up the escalatory ladder. To begin with, by carrying out a daring air strike deep inside the Pakistani mainland, India crossed the redline, from the Pakistani point of view. It meant clear and present reputational damage for the Imran Khan government as well as the Pakistan military. Their retaliatory strike against India was something they felt compelled to undertake. On the Indian side, coming in the run-up to the general election, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government couldn't have responded to a terror attack that took the lives of 40 of its men in uniform. A military response was expected, but choosing to strike inside mainland Pakistan was perhaps not wise.

But then, New Delhi's war planners were also trying to stretch the success of the surgical strikes of 2016 (since Pakistan didn't respond to them) by extending its scope beyond Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), a strategy that may not have panned out as planned.

From a more conceptual point of view, by carrying out a strike against Pakistan in its Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, India wanted to create a new military normal between the two sides, i.e. counter-terror air strikes inside Pakistan would now be a regular feature, something, one could argue, straight out of the American and Israeli counter-terror playbooks. If Pakistan had faked ignorance of an attack in Balakot, which it initially did, or decided not to respond to it, India would have set the new military normal in stone. Moreover, yet another denial from Rawal-



pindi would have run the risk of Pakistan's military threats being rendered hollow and the associated conventional and nuclear bluffs being called, in full public view. Knowing fully well the implications of a non-response, Pakistan therefore opted for, I would say, a military air strike across the LoC.

What further complicated matters for the Pakistani war planners was India's use of the phrase 'non-military pre-emptive strike'. While the term 'non-military' was meant to signal to Pakistan that the attack was against the terror camp and not against its military, the 'pre-emptive' part was unacceptable to the Pakistani side, I would imagine. A successful, and unresponded to, Indian pre-emptive strike, once again from the American playbook, would have meant that India could now keep the option of striking anywhere inside Pakistan to take out terror camps which it believes poses a threat to India. Recall that the 2016 surgical strikes were projected as a 'retaliatory strike' than a 'pre-emptive one', unlike the attack on Balakot. That again, would have been a major problem for Pakistan.

In that sense, this week's escalation is the fallout of a misplaced Indian belief that it could change the military normal between the two sides, and the Pakistani refusal to let that happen. To that extent, if

the crisis doesn't escalate any further, Pakistan would have successfully dissuaded India from altering the status quo.

Signalling restraint?

Given the fact that round two of the military engagement so far has been confined to the LoC, it is possible to argue that the two countries want to keep the engagement limited with the possibility of some air skirmishes and then perhaps call it quits. If the limited spatial scope of the strikes is indeed intentional, and not just a result of Pakistan limiting its attacks above the LoC, we could potentially look forward to more signalling for de-escalation, in addition to Pakistan's announcement that the captured IAF pilot, Abhinandan Varthaman, would be released "as a gesture of peace".

And yet, there are several challenges to this assessment. For one, India did not gain any military advantage over Pakistan in round two, which makes it difficult for New Delhi to claim victory. More so, Pakistan's custody of an Indian pilot has made New Delhi look weak, and the BJP-led government certainly would not want to look weak in the run-up to the general election. Given that the first conventional shot was fired by India (even as the trigger was the terror attack in Pulwama), it would be possible for India to get off the escalation ladder with Pakistan taking the high moral ground with Wing Commander Varthaman's release?

Equally important is the issue of how either side can convey to the other a desire for de-escalation without being seen as blinking first, if indeed there is a desire for de-escalation. At the end of the day, the BJP needs a victory over Pakistan, which the latter will not give without a war of attrition and

the attendant dangers of escalation. India may not want to go down that long-drawn-out path of uncertain outcomes, certain damage and difficulties of spinning narratives of victory and loss in the age of social media and instant communication, and with the Opposition ready to pounce on it.

On a de-escalation plan

For arch-rivals such as India and Pakistan, public commitment on de-escalation is not a charming option given the potential future narratives about humiliation. Third party mediation also looks easier said than practised – Islamabad might not trust Washington as a neutral mediator, Moscow might not have enough interest, and Beijing's good offices will not find any takers in New Delhi. Unless there is some creative way the U.S. can discreetly mediate between the two countries, third party mediation is looking difficult.

The other easier option is to open back-channel negotiations between the two sides. This has precedent in the India-Pakistan context. As a matter of fact, there were quiet back channel negotiations between Islamabad and New Delhi at the height of the Kargil conflict, even as the U.S. was trying to defuse tensions. If indeed the two countries are keen on taking this road, they would need to immediately send their respective back-channel emissaries, preferably to a third country, to hold discreet talks on how to de-escalate. They would need to work out a solution which will be seen as a win-win deal even if in reality it might not be exactly so.

Happymon Jacob teaches at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, and is the author of *Line on Fire: Ceasefire Violations and India-Pakistan Escalation Dynamics*

Nigeria's difficult democratic journey

Abrupt postponement, chaos at polling stations and violence, all contributed to the lowest ever general election turnout



S.Y. QURAISHI

Nigeria has just had its general election, its sixth since its return to democracy. Incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC) defeated his closest rival, Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), by about four million votes. Despite pre-election promises of accepting the result, Mr. Abubakar has rejected the results, calling the election a "sham" and "militarised" and deciding to question it in court. There were 73 registered candidates in the fray. There are 91 registered political parties.

Election data

With a population of nearly 200 million, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, accounting for 47% of west Africa's population. It comprises more than 300 ethnic groups. The numbers of Muslims and Christians are almost equal though the first seem to be politically dominant. Although 82.3 million voters were registered and their Permanent Voter Cards

(PVCs) made, 11.2 million were not collected, denying over 13% of all registered voters an opportunity to vote. Though the observer missions found the register of voters to be generally robust, I feel the figure of 41% registered voters to be disproportionate to the total population. In India, nearly 62% of the population is registered as voters.

Unlike India, counting is done in the polling stations but the results are collated and declared at collation centres. It took seven days to announce the results of the presidential election while the collation of National Assembly elections is still going on.

A federal republic with a presidential form of government, Nigeria has a bicameral National Assembly comprising the 109-member Senate and 360-member House of Representatives, both elected for four years. The country has 36 states (besides the Federal Capital Territory), each with an elected governor and a legislative assembly.

It is Africa's biggest oil exporter and has the largest natural gas reserves in the continent. Yet it ranks near the bottom of UNDP's Human Development Report, 2017, ranking 157 in 189 countries.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has enormous power and independence and is considered to be neutral



and credible. Each state has a resident electoral commissioner, all appointed through a process of parliamentary ratification. When asked what his most important concerns were, INEC Chairman Mahmood Yakubu had mentioned security, fake news and hate speech, followed by 640 pending court cases and expenditure control.

Gaps in this poll

Despite the experience of two good elections of 2011 and 2015 and assurances given by the INEC, the management of elections was fraught with all kinds of flaws. First, there was the last-minute postponement of the poll by a week, just six hours before its commencement, because of the collapse of logistics. This created extreme anger across the nation apart from causing enormous economic loss (estimated at \$10.25 billion). Then, despite the week's deferment, there were delays not

only in the distribution of materials but also late arrival of polling staff, causing a late opening of polling stations. This in turn led to many procedures not being adhered to. Voting booths were often located too close to polling officials, polling agents and voters waiting to vote, potentially compromising the secrecy of the ballot.

The elections were also marred by sporadic incidents of violence before and on election day, besides destruction of voting materials, ballot-box snatching and bribing of voters. At least 39 people were killed in election-related violence. However, the death toll this time has been lower than in previous national elections.

Abrupt postponement, delays and chaos at polling stations and the violence, all contributed to the lowest ever turnout – 35.6%, down from 44% in 2015. In Lagos, there were only 1.1 million valid votes (just above 5% voted). Further, polling officials, security staff and other essential services personnel were unable to vote and were, therefore, deprived of their vote. There was also widespread failure of smart card readers as polling officials awaited technical assistance or replacements, compounding the problems.

Despite the complaints of 'militarisation', police presence was

generally discreet and helpful to the electoral process. A coalition of more than 70 civic organisations monitored the elections, which enhanced the credibility of the elections.

Connecting with India

Nigeria is of great interest to India, being its biggest trading partner. Over 135 Indian companies have a footprint in Nigeria, including the State Bank of India, New India Assurance and Mecon in the public sector and Bharti Airtel, Tata, Bajaj, Birla, Kirloskar and Mahindra in the private sector. The number of Indians is relatively small – about 50,000. Though we have substantial economic interests, there are no political favourites. But as the world's largest democracy, India has great interest in the success of the largest democracy of Africa. While the election commissions of the two countries have regular interactions and many officials have visited the flagship institution, the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management, there is need for enhanced engagement.

S.Y. Quraishi is a former Chief Election Commissioner of India and the editor of *'The Great March of Democracy: Seven Decades of India's Elections'*. He was a member of the Commonwealth Observer Group

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

The confrontation

The initial euphoria created over the Balakot airstrikes evaporated in no time with the capture of an Indian pilot by Pakistan (Page 1, "IAF plane shot down, pilot taken captive by Pak army", February 28).

Though emotions are running high, there will not be any winners if the situation escalates into full-fledged war. Having made its intentions clear with its airstrikes, India should now attempt to make clear to the international community the pressing need for consensus on combating terrorism. So far it appears that world opinion is inclined favourably towards India, which should be capitalised. Despite its bravado, Pakistan may be eager to engage in talks with India. Reviving talks through backdoor channels could help ease the situation. A growing

economy like India's should not put the clock back.

Restraint and diplomacy should be the focus.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai

I hope opinion writers understand that it is because India is civilised that Pakistan exists

(Editorial page, "Think like a civilisation", February 28).

But given Pakistan's record of perfidy and being a terror agent, there is virtually no chance of it becoming a civilised nation.

It appears to be in the hands of terror agents.

Let us not prevent the Indian government from acting against Pakistan so as to save India from the dangerous consequences of

Pakistan becoming a permanent hub of terror.

Pakistan is not a danger for India alone but it also endangers the entire

civilised world. India needs

to act with the support of all like-minded nations.

M.V. GOPALAKRISHNAN,
Chennai

I think the writer has forgotten history. India has always been restrained in its responses and in adopting tactics that are moderate, but it is Pakistan that does not understand that war and violence will not solve any issue. There is no guarantee that even after Pulwama, Pakistan will change. One can expect it to adopt the same old tactics: of asking for evidence and denying its involvement following terror.

There are times when firm action is needed to correct others.

ARVIND KUMAR CHOURHARY,
New Delhi

Pacifists would be well-advised to read world history, starting from the 20th century. Pakistan is waging a war of a "thousand cuts" against us, but do we

want to be a part of it? We are

MOHAMMED IKRAMULLA,
Hyderabad

still turn the other cheek, in the name of peace? The writer talks of civilisational values.

But an examination of civilisations will show a history of wars, punctuated by spells of peace. George Washington's quote, "To be prepared for war is one of the most effective means of preserving peace", is worth remembering. No nation wants a war, least of all its soldiers. However, if a nation's territorial integrity or its citizens' lives are under threat, retaliation in a manner deemed fit is an option.

RAVINDRA RAMARAO,
Bengaluru

Every sentence is sensible. Taking recourse to jingoism and drum beating will lead us nowhere. India is peaceful and loving and should explore all avenues that will defuse the situation and result in a peaceful dialogue.

MOHAMMED IKRAMULLA,
Hyderabad

FROM PAGE ONE

Pakistan will release Abhinandan today

Speaking in Parliament, Prime Minister Khan said Pakistan was not involved in the Pulwama attack, that killed at least 40 Indian soldiers. "Fingers started pointing towards Pakistan for Pulwama attack in less than half an hour of the incident. This came at a time on the eve of an important visit of Saudi Crown Prince. "Why would we sabotage such an important visit? What would Pakistan gain from the Pulwama incident? I asked India to give us actionable intelligence and we will act on it."

"They sent Pulwama dossier today - two days after launching an attack. The question is: could they not have sent it earlier and if Pakistan had not acted upon it, then taken action against us?"

"We debated whether to respond after the India attack since there were no casualties. We did not want to cause any Indian casualties and be responsible for an escalation. The next day, we demonstrated our capability and will to respond but there was no collateral damage."

'No victor in war'

"There is no victor in a war. We shouldn't even think of war. War is not a solution. If India takes any action again now, we will again have to retaliate. Pakistan wants peace. Our interest lies in peace and de-escalation... [But] we are prepared for everything," said Mr. Khan.

He added that his attempts to kick start peace talks with India were in vain. "On July 26, when I hadn't even been sworn in as the Prime Minister, I gave a statement that if India moves one step forward, we will move two steps forward. I also wrote a letter to



Imran Khan

Prime Minister Modi suggesting that our Foreign Ministers should meet at the UN, but didn't get a positive response from India. We realised it was because of the upcoming Indian elections so we thought, 'Let's just wait for the elections'."

'The world is worried'

Fawad Chaudhry, Information Minister of Pakistan, said an escalation in hostilities between two nuclear nations is a "disaster waiting to happen".

"The world is worried. Yes, there has been international mediation and several countries are involved in backchannel diplomacy. We hope good sense prevails and there is no further escalation," he told *The Hindu*.

Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, Chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party, said, "If - God forbid - a full-scale war ensues between India and Pakistan, the people of both countries will pay the real price, especially the youth of the Subcontinent."

"De-escalation is the only answer in the current crisis. We need to move forward, towards a peaceful resolution and think about our future generations. I hope that PM Modi will not let his electoral campaign get in the way of peace," he told *The Hindu*.

SC stays order on eviction of tribals, forest dwellers

In fact, the Bench, also comprising Justices Navin Sinha and M.R. Shah, wanted to know whether tribals and other traditional forest dwellers (OTFDs) were ousted from forest lands on the basis of sketchy and incomplete information.

It acknowledged the need to delve into whether due process had been followed by the gram sabhas and the State authorities under the FRA before the claims for forest rights of the forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes (FDSTS) and OTFDs were finally rejected.

The government, represented by Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, submitted the order had affected a "large number of families." The Centre had submitted that the States ought to first file proper affidavits on the procedure followed in the verification of forest rights claims before any such eviction.

"The eviction of the tribals may be withheld... the eviction of tribals, without such information, would cause serious prejudice to them, who have been residing in forests for generations... Many are poor and illiterate," Mr. Mehta had submitted.

'In a slumber?' To this, Justice Mishra initially retorted by wondering whether the Centre had been in a "slumber for the past three years".

Observing that the February 13 order had only been a follow-up of the court's order on January 29, 2016, which had also directed the eviction of encroachers on forest lands, Justice Mishra asked why there was no mechanism in place in the States, or at the Centre, to review the rejection orders.

Senior advocate Shyam Divan, for petitioner NGO Wildlife First, countered that the 2006 Act was a beneficial legislation which should be liberally construed in favour of the poor.



However, the court said "the mighty and the undeserving" would be shown no mercy.

were honoured under the FRA.

MoTA data

He also cited the data of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) up to November 2018, which showed that 42,24,951 claims from individuals and communities had been received till November 30 last year. Of this, 18,94,225 titles were distributed, while 19,39,231 claims were rejected.

The Ministry's data, collated from inputs supplied by the States, revealed that titles had been distributed against 44.83% of the claims received.

To this, Justice Mishra said "are they [rejected claimants] really tribals or normal people encroaching on forest lands?"

Justice Sinha said the Rules under the 2006 Act comprehensively cover every stage of the process of verification of claims and the provisions were self-explanatory. "This is a human problem more than a legal problem," Mr. Mehta responded.

"Encroaching forest lands is a serious problem," Justice Shah addressed Mr. Mehta. "But forests and tribals are to coexist," the Solicitor-General responded.

The Centre also submitted that the 2006 Act was a beneficial legislation which should be liberally construed in favour of the poor.

Modi pitches for unified front across country

Cautions against any act that might diminish the morale of the forces

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday called for a unified front across the country supportive of the Armed Forces, who he said were defending the borders with utmost valour, and cautioned against any act that might diminish the morale of the forces.

"When an enemy country wants to destabilise India, when they attack us in terror strikes, their main aim is to cripple our speed of our progress, that our country comes to a standstill. Every Indian should stand like a rock in front of their aims, they will have to acknowledge that this country will neither stop nor will its progress," Mr. Modi said in his opening remarks during a video chat with over a crore Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) booth level workers.

The chat, that lasted a little over two hours, made no reference to India's captured abhimandhan Varthaman and took place amid criticism by the Opposition



Lending strength: BJP cadre participating in Narendra Modi's 'Sangathan Sanwad - Mera Booth Sabse Majboot' programme via video conferencing at the Delhi BJP office on Thursday. ■ AP

minds." He said there were "three rules by which to engage with social media as a BJP person: one is positivity, the second is honesty and the third is accuracy."

Mr. Modi then talked to BJP workers at different locations, answering questions posed to him, including (from a party worker in West Bengal) on the possible effect of the Opposition unity 'Mahagathbandhan'. "First of all, please refer to this grouping not as 'Mahagathbandhan'

(grand alliance) but as 'mahamilawat' (grand adulteration). Parties that can't otherwise see eye to eye are coming together. This is nothing but an exercise in demonstrating the existential crisis of the Congress that, after the grand declaration at Pachmarhi in 1998 that it would go it alone, is now tagging itself to smaller parties as a junior partner. It has also become a fashion to say that a vulnerable or coalition government would be good for

the country. You should dispel that myth and work for a decisive government. This 'grand adulteration' will lead the country into an intensive Care Unit," he said.

Prospects in the South

To a question on the National Democratic Alliance's (NDA) prospects in the south, Mr. Modi expressed confidence that the NDA's alliance with the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu will see the party

Don't place party before country, says Congress

Urges Prime Minister Modi to address nation on situation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) not to 'put party before country' and urged Mr. Modi to address the nation and inform the citizens about the latest stand-off with Pakistan.

Addressing a press conference, former Union Minister Manish Tewari said the country was worried about growing hostilities between India and Pakistan and was looking towards the Prime Minister for reassurance.

"It is unfortunate that at this point in time, when priority should be to further strengthen the nation, the Prime Minister thinks that this is the time to strengthen their electoral booths," said Mr. Tewari.

The Congress also targeted Mr. Modi on Twitter for talking to booth level workers on a videoconference as part of a programme called #meraboothsabssemajboot. The Congress started a hashtag #merajawansabsemajboot to underscore the point that the BJP was giving precedence to party work over the security forces.

Mr. Tewari asserted that while the entire nation and the Opposition had backed

It is unfortunate that at this point in time, when priority should be to further strengthen the nation, the Prime Minister thinks that this is the time to strengthen their electoral booths

MANISH TEWARI
Congress spokesman

the government and stood as one, the ruling party was trying to reap political dividends from the air strikes.

"It is not only limited to the Prime Minister, yesterday the Home Minister of India was in Bilaspur [Chhattisgarh] attending political programmes of the BJP. And that too on a day when Wing Commander Abhimandhan Varthaman displayed exemplary courage, exemplary dignity and exemplary poise in the face of adversity. The day the pre-emptive non-military strikes took place, the president of the BJP was in Ghazipur appealing for the re-election of the Prime Minister," he added.

The Congress also targeted Mr. Modi on Twitter for talking to booth level workers on a videoconference as part of a programme called #meraboothsabssemajboot. The Congress started a hashtag #merajawansabsemajboot to underscore the point that the BJP was giving precedence to party work over the security forces.

Mr. Tewari asserted that while the entire nation and the Opposition had backed

senior BJP leader from Karnataka, B.S. Yeddyurappa, in which he reportedly said that the 'air strikes' would help the BJP win 22 out of the 28 seats in Karnataka. "With great respect, all the statements play into the hands of Pakistan. They play into the hands of Pakistani propaganda," he said.

Crass politicking?
"This is not the time for crass politicking," Mr. Tewari said. "The nation today stands as one, but it is time that the NDA-BJP Government and the Bharatiya Janata Party come together as one with the nation," the Congress leader added.

On the other hand, a meeting of the Congress Working Committee, which had originally been scheduled for Thursday in Ahmedabad, had been cancelled keeping in mind national interest, Mr. Tewari said.

The Congress leader also pointed to the statement of

of the Army and 192 km IB in Jammu is manned by the BSF.

"People living along the IB in Jammu live under similar conditions as those along the LoC. They also face continuous shelling and firing from across the border. While the population along the LoC was getting reservation benefits, those along the IB were not. Through this ordinance the anomaly has been corrected. It has nothing to do with altering Article 35A or Article 370," Mr. Ma-

lik said.

The proposal to this effect came from the Jammu and Kashmir administration, which is at present under President's rule. J&K Governor Satyapal Malik told *The Hindu* that the ordinance in no way affected the rights of people of the State nor did it tinker with Article 35-A, which provides special rights and privileges to permanent residents of J&K. The 740 km LoC in J&K is under the operational control

Missile debris proves Pakistan used F-16s in attack, says IAF

AMRAAM systems carried only on U.S.-supplied fighters

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

The Indian Air Force (IAF) on Thursday displayed parts of an AIM-120 AMRAAM (Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missile) fired by an F-16, which fell in Indian territory to prove that the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) had deployed the fighter aircraft in an attempt to strike military targets across the LoC early on Wednesday.

The PAF F-16 was shot down in the consequent aerial combat with the IAF. "The F-16 crashed and fell across the Line of Control in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)," Air Vice-Marshal R.G.K. Kapoor said at a tri-service press conference here, displaying parts of AMRAAM.

Crash politicking?
"This is not the time for crass politicking," Mr. Tewari said. "The nation today stands as one, but it is time that the NDA-BJP Government and the Bharatiya Janata Party come together as one with the nation," the Congress leader added.

Asked about cricketer-turned politician Navjot Singh Sidhu's comment on resuming dialogue with Pakistan, Mr. Tewari said, "Dialogue can only take place when the atmosphere is conducive for a dialogue and the current atmosphere is not conducive for a dialogue."

Therefore, the fact remains that one F-16 of the PAF was shot down by an IAF MiG-21 Bison," AVM Kapoor said.

The IAF's early warning aircraft had recorded electronic signatures of the PAF fighters, he added.

Pakistan had earlier said no F-16s were used in the operation and no Pakistani jet was downed.

Official sources said IAF pilot Abhimandhan Varthaman had downed a F-16 fighter by firing an R-73 air-to-air missile before his MiG-21 Bison was hit.

A senior defence source said the AMRAAM was supplied to Pakistan by the U.S. under strict conditions that

it could not be used in an offensive role. "It is due to this they were trying to deny the very presence of an F-16 jet," the source said.

As for the Army's role, Maj. Gen. Surindra Singh Mahal said the PAF "attempted" to target military establishments, including a brigade headquarters, a battalion HQ, forward defences and a logistics installation.

On the air strike on the Balakot terror training camp, AVM Kapoor said there was evidence of "credible damage" and it was for the government to decide on how to present it. "Whatever we intended to destroy we achieved it," he added.

(With PTI inputs)

J&K-based JeI banned

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Home Ministry has banned the Jammu and Kashmir-based group, Jamaat-i-Islami (JeI), as "an unlawful association" under Section 3 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

In a notification on Thursday, the government said the JeI "has been indulging in activities which are prejudicial to internal security and public order,

J&K ordinance cleared by Union Cabinet doesn't tinker with 35A or 370'

It will pave way to extend reservation in jobs, promotions

VIJAYA SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Thursday approved the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2019 that will pave the way to extend reservation in jobs, promotions and education to people living 10 km from the International Border (IB) in Jammu. Earlier the benefits were only reserved for people living 10 km beyond the Line of Control (LoC) and affected by shelling and firing from across the border.

While the population along the LoC was getting reservation benefits, those along the IB were not. Through this ordinance the anomaly has been corrected. It has nothing to do with altering Article 35A or Article 370," Mr. Ma-

lik said.

He said since the State was under President's rule, the ordinance had to be cleared by the Centre. An ordinance to implement the 10% reservation quota for the economically weaker sections, as passed by the Parliament earlier this year, was also cleared by the President, he said.

A statement by the Press Information Bureau said the J&K Reservation Act, 2004 and the 2005 Rules provide vertical reservation in direct recruitment, promotions and admission in different professional courses to various categories - Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (Residents of Backward Area, Residents of Areas adjoining Actual LoC and Weak and Under Privileged Classes (Social Castes) along with horizontal reservation to the ex-serviceman and physically challenged Persons.

However, the reservation benefits are not extended to the persons residing in the areas adjoining IB. Due to continuous cross border tensions, persons living alongside the IB suffer from socio-economic and educational backwardness. Shelling from across the border often compels these residents to move to safer places and is adversely impacting their education as Educational Institutions remain closed for long periods," the statement said.

EC allows 11 documents to prove voters' identity

Photo voter slip not in list

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Thursday said those not having their Electors Photo Identity Cards can now show any of the 11 alternative documents, including Aadhaar card, for exercising their franchise. Henceforth, photo voter slip will not be accepted as a standalone identification paper.

The documents accepted are passport, driving licence, service identity cards of the Central and State governments, public undertakings and public limited companies, bank or post office passbooks carrying photographs of voters, PAN card, smart cards issued under the National Population Register, MNREGA job card and health insurance smart card.

Pension documents with photograph, official identity cards issued to the legislators and Aadhaar card have also been included.

The Commission, in its order, said minor discrep-

encies in the voters' identity card should be ignored, provided the identity of the elector can be established by the card. If an elector produces a card issued by the Electoral Registration Officer of another Assembly constituency, such card will be accepted provided the name of that elector finds place in the electoral roll pertaining to the polling station concerned.

If it is not possible to establish the identity of the elector on account of mismatch of photograph

IN BRIEF



India stops Samjhauta train service

NEW DELHI The Railways has cancelled operations of the India-Pakistan Samjhauta Express due to drastic decline in occupancy, especially after the Pulwama terror attack, and the suspension of the train service from across the border, sources said. At least 40 passengers from both countries are said to be stranded at Attari. The Attari Special Express (Delhi-Attari-Delhi), together with the Wagah-Lahore link, is known as the Samjhauta Express. PTI

YouTube removes videos of Abhinandan's capture

NEW DELHI Google-owned YouTube removed 11 objectionable video links of IAF pilot Abhinandan Varthaman on Thursday on a directive from the IT Ministry. "The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology had directed YouTube to delete 11 videos on the capture of the pilot and the debris of Mig 21," an official said. "We comply with valid legal requests from authorities wherever possible," a Google spokesperson said.

Pulwama survivor returns home

GOKAKHUPUR Two weeks after he was injured in the Pulwama terror attack that left 40 of his colleagues dead, CRPF constable Awadhesh Kumar returned to his native village here in Uttar Pradesh and celebrated his daughter's birthday. He received a grand welcome at his village Aabadi Sakhni on Wednesday evening and was greeted by a large number of locals and political leaders. "My head and hands were injured. Now I am better and ready to leave home on call (of duty)," he said. PTI

World leaders work behind the scenes to avert conflict

U.S., Saudi Arabia and the UAE may have been behind Pakistan's decision to announce the release of Abhinandan Varthaman

SUHASINI HAIDAR
KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

and France at the U.N. Security Council had the desired effect on New Delhi, sources told *The Hindu*.

Trump's announcement

While Pakistan maintains its decision was purely a "gesture of goodwill and peace," and India rejected any "third party mediation" in ties with Pakistan, the first hint of an outside player came from U.S. President Donald Trump.

"[India and Pakistan] have been going at it, and we have been involved in trying to have them stop, and I think we will have some reasonably decent news, hopefully its going to be coming to an end... we have been trying to get them both some help, get some organisation and peace..." Mr. Trump, who was in Hanoi, said on Thurs-



Peace notes: A Pakistani activist singing at a rally in Islamabad on Thursday. ■ AFP

day around noon in India, hours before Mr. Khan's announcement.

In Delhi, the government appeared surprised by Mr. Trump's words. Sources said

that India and Pakistan have several channels of communication should they wish to use them, and don't need third parties to come in. The sources blamed a 'war psy-

chosis' whipped up by Pakistan on Wednesday, with its officials warning the international community of a "massive Indian missile strike" in response to the Wednesday

attacks by Pakistan, despite the government making it clear it would not escalate the situation.

By evening, rumours and comments had gripped many world capitals, sufficiently alarmed by the build-up in Pakistan, which included the shutdown of Pakistani airspace, a full "red alert" for hospitals, and raised security at Karachi port. Overnight, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who was also in Hanoi, called National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and discussed escalating tensions.

Saudi intervention

Meanwhile Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel Al-Jubeir announced a visit to Islamabad with an "important message." And in Delhi, Saudi Ambassador Saud Al-Sati met with Prime Minister

Narendra Modi. UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Mohammad Bin Zayed (MbZ) spoke to Mr. Modi and Mr. Khan from Singapore. In a rare public comment on Twitter, MbZ said he spoke to both of the "importance of dealing wisely with recent developments and giving priority to dialogue and communication."

Diplomats said that the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, who visited both countries last week, and the Crown Prince of UAE had a keen interest in the situation. "Given the huge investment from UAE and Saudi Arabia in the Indian and Pakistani economies, these two countries that are both close to the Gulf region will not be allowed to go to war," a diplomatic source told *The Hindu*.

India gives Pakistan a dossier on Jaish

It carries specific details of JeM's complicity in Pulwama attack and its continued recruitment drives

VIJAYA SINGH
NEW DELHI

A dossier handed over by India to Pakistan mentions nine specific instances, in the past two years, when Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) was conducting rallies and religious congregations to recruit men to the terror outfit.

India said these activities were conducted "right under the nose of the Pakistani establishment," even though it was banned by the Pakistani authorities in 2002.

On Islamabad's list

The outfit still features at serial number 3 in the list of 67 terror organisations proscribed by Pakistan's Ministry of Interior published on the website of the National

Counter Terrorism Authority.

The Ministry of External Affairs said on Wednesday that a dossier was handed over to Pakistan with "specific details of JeM complicity in Pulwama terror attack and the presence of JeM terror camps and its leadership in Pakistan."

"The information about these activities of JeM are available in open source platforms like blogs, websites, Facebook and Twitter. Many of the posts openly declare association of JeM with terror attacks in India," said a senior government official.

The dossier said on February 20, 2018, JeM concluded a six-day congregation in Lahore when its "Shoba-e-Taa-



Masood Azhar

ruf" (Department of Introduction) delegation held 13 interactive sessions in which 700 people, including 65 'Ulemas' (Religious Scholars), participated.

"During these interactions, around 30 people expressed their desire to take part in JeM training course – Daura-e-Tarbia. The partici-

pants showered praise on organizational activities of JeM and the role played by its chief Masood Azhar," it said.

JeM's propaganda blog *Al Qalam* claimed that its 'Mujahideen' carried out a "suicide attack" on February 10, 2018 at the Army's Sunjuwan camp in Jammu where five Army officers were killed.

The blog claimed that the attack was a gift for "Modi government" on the occasion of the death anniversary of 2001 Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru and also for keeping its chief Masood Azhar in captivity when he was arrested in Kashmir in 1994. He was exchanged for release of hijacked passengers of Indian Airlines IC 814 in 1999. Afzal Guru was hanged on February 9, 2013. The dossier said the JeM claimed on its website that "revenge" operations launched by the Afzal Guru Shaheed Squad continue in Kashmir."

The dossier said that on March 27, 2018, a four-day congregation was organised by JeM in Sialkot district spanning over 17 sessions in which 1,500 people, including 50 Ulemas (Religious Scholars), participated.

"They (participants) appreciated the religious services rendered by Masood Azhar and prayed for JeM's 'Mujahideen'. The delegation held five separate sessions with JeM activists, which were attended by 28 Ulemas and activists," it said.

Want to see him first, says pilot's father

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

S. Varthaman, father of Abhinandan Varthaman, leaving for the Chennai airport on Thursday. ■ PTI

questions if his son had called home from Pakistan.

Meanwhile, leaders of various political parties made a beeline for the retired Air Marshal's house in Chennai through the day to express solidarity with the family.

+ Another push at UNSC to ban Azhar

U.S., U.K. move quickly amid concerns over escalating India-Pak. tensions

China may not budge

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BEIJING

Three permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the U.S., U.K. and France, have made a 'listing request' to the UNSC on Wednesday, asking for a travel ban, arms embargo and asset freeze on Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) leader Masood Azhar. The JeM had claimed responsibility for the February 14 suicide attack on an Indian security convoy in Pulwama in Kashmir that killed more than 40 Indian troops.

Government sources in Delhi said India had shared the dossier given to Pakistan, on Azhar and Jaish-e-Mohammad – including specific details of the group's terror camps and links to the Pulwama attack and previous attacks carried out by them – with all 15 members of the UN Security Council as well.

Wednesday's listing request, which is not publicly available but *The Hindu* has reviewed, will be considered as accepted by the UNSC 1267 Committee unless ob-

jections are raised by 3 p.m. on March 13, i.e., after a period of 10 business days.

Fourth attempt

China had used its veto power as a permanent member of the UNSC to block previous attempts at sanctioning Azhar (most recently in 2017). This week's attempt is the fourth since 2009 to list the JeM chief.

The request has been in the works since shortly after the Pulwama attack, but was expected to take longer. Given the escalating situation

between India and Pakistan this week, some UNSC members were keen on getting the request finalised quickly, to help keep the peace, a western diplomat familiar with the process told *The Hindu*.

"Yes, we have been able to do this quite quickly, and we are grateful we were able to submit it at the right time, that has also helped in de-escalation tensions. We have all been worried by the situation on the ground between two powerful states, and we also want to make it clear to

With inputs from Suhasini Haidar in New Delhi

youth shouted 'Pakistan Army Zindabad.' On this, the Wing Commander took a shot in the air and the boys picked up stones. The pilot then started running. He ran in the backward direction while pointing his pistol towards the boys who were chasing him, Mr. Chaudhry added.

The pilot, later identified as Wing Commander Abhinandan, is said to have shouted some slogans and asked which place exactly it was in India, according to the *Dawn* report. The pilot was made to believe "it was Qilla'n," Mr. Chaudhry said, adding that one of the men responded that it was India.

The pilot, later identified as Wing Commander Abhinandan, is said to have shouted some slogans and asked which place exactly it was in India, according to the *Dawn* report. The pilot was made to believe "it was Qilla'n," Mr. Chaudhry said, adding that one of the men responded that it was India.

flames and came down speedily. He noticed a parachute landing around one kilometre away from his house on the southern side. "A pi-

But "some emotional

Indian pilot was safe and sound at the time of landing in Pak. territory: report

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
ISLAMABAD

Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman was "safe and sound at the time of his landing" in the Pakistani territory, details published on Thursday in Pakistan's *Dawn* newspaper revealed.

The report quotes an eyewitness, Mohammad Razzaq Chaudhry, 58, who was in the courtyard of his house in Horra's village, located barely 7 km from the Line of Control, in Bhimber district.

About 8.45 a.m. on Wednesday, Mr. Chaudhry saw two aircraft catching fire, while one sped across the LoC, the other burst into



Students praying for Abhinandan Varthaman in Ahmedabad. ■ AFP

lot emerged out of the parachute safe and sound," he told *Dawn* over telephone.

"The pilot, who was equipped with a pistol, asked the youngsters whether it was India or Pakistan," Mr. Chaudhry said, adding that one of the men responded that it was India.

The pilot, later identified as Wing Commander Abhinandan, is said to have shouted some slogans and asked which place exactly it was in India, according to the *Dawn* report. The pilot was made to believe "it was Qilla'n," Mr. Chaudhry said, adding that one of the men responded that it was India.

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But "some emotional

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NOTICE INVITING BIDS & BID DOCUMENT

PROC-I/NB-11/2018-19/RN-9015001848, BN-9015001855 to BN-9015001858

Open online e-bids are invited for Insulated Safety Shoes (BN-9015001848-BN-9015001855, ACSP, BN-9015001856, UBN-VPN1819GLOB03169) and Various Tower Material fabricating Machines (BN-9015001858 UBN-VPN1819GLOB03169) and Various NB and Bid document / specification are available for viewing / download on the website <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> Any bid submission/opening date if any will be floated/ uploaded on <http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in>. The interested bidders shall have to be enrolled/ registered and submit / upload the bids online in electronic format on the website <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> for participating in the bidding process.

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OPEN DOMESTIC TENDER : (i) RADHANAGAR-PIPRATAND BLOCK, (ii) NORTH OF PIPARWAR PHASE-II BLOCK

CMPDI intends to offer outsourcing through CIL Portal the : (i) Round the Clock Drilling in the Radhanagar-Pipratand Block in Jharia Coalfield of Dhanbad District in State of Jharkhand to assess the Shale Gas Potentiality and,

(ii) Regional/Promotional coal exploration in North of Piparwar Phase-II Block, North Karanpura Coalfield Chatra District in State of Jharkhand.

The complete NIT, General Terms & Condition, Letter of Bid and Bill of Quantity can be seen and downloaded from <http://www.coalindiatenders.nic.in> from 01.03.2019 onwards.

Office of the General Manager (Exploration) may be contacted for details/clarification on Phone on any working day between 10.00 Hrs. to 17.30 Hrs. (IST) or through mail (gmexpl.cmpdi@coalindia.in) or Fax.

Ranchi 26.02.2019

On and behalf of CMPDI General Manager (Exploration)

PUNE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
GLOBAL TENDER NOTICE – ELEVATED SIX LANE INNER RING ROAD

Date: February 27, 2019
Tender Notice Number: 1/1008

Date of Technical Bid Opening: 24/04/2019, 3 PM

The Municipal Commissioner, Pune Municipal Corporation invites e-tenders for International Competitive Bidding from eligible and reputed bidders for the work mentioned below. The detailed tender documents, including the Request For Proposal ("RFP") are available on the following websites – www.pmcetenders.abcprocure.com and www.punecorporation.org. Brief details of the tendered work are given below –

Tender Number	Name of Department	Name of Scheme	Estimated Cost (In Rupees) (In Million)	Bid Security Deposit (In Rupees) (In Million)	Period of Completion	Cost of Bid Document (In Rupees)
461 - 2018	Road Department	Construction of High Capacity Mass Transit Route (HCMTTR) Project – an				

ELSEWHERE



Senate panel supports Neomi Rao for key seat

WASHINGTON The Senate Judiciary Committee voted on Thursday to advance President Donald Trump's nominee to replace Brett Kavanaugh on a high-profile appeals court to the Senate floor. The panel voted to endorse Neomi Rao for a seat on the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

Israel frees Palestinian woman lawmaker

RAMALLAH Israeli authorities on Thursday released Khalida Jarrar after holding her in detention for 20 months without raising charges. The 56-year-old lawmaker was held under "administrative detention," an Israeli policy that permits holding people for months at a time without charges.

U.S. SC stays execution of inmate with dementia

WASHINGTON The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a psychological evaluation of Vernon Madison, a death row inmate with dementia, had not been thorough enough to carry out the sentence without fear of violating a constitutional ban on "cruel and unusual" punishment. AFP

29 killed as ethnic violence grips Nigeria

KANO At least 29 people have been killed in northern Nigeria, police say, in a suspected revenge attack after gunmen shot dead more than 130 people in the same area earlier this month. Gunmen stormed into Kajuru area of Kaduna State and killed 29 people, officials said. AFP

Trump, Kim fail to reach deal in Hanoi

North Korea 'wanted the sanctions lifted in their entirety, but we couldn't do that,' says U.S. President

EDWARD WONG
HANOI

U.S. President Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un, North Korea's leader, abruptly ended their second summit meeting on Thursday after talks collapsed with the two leaders failing to agree on any steps toward nuclear disarmament or measures to ease tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

"Sometimes you have to walk," Mr. Trump said at an afternoon news conference in Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam.

He said Mr. Kim had offered to dismantle the North's most important nuclear facility if the U.S. lifted the harsh sanctions imposed on his nation — but would not commit to do the same for other elements of its weapons programme. That, Mr. Trump said, was a deal breaker.

"It was about the sanctions," Mr. Trump said. "Basically they wanted the sanctions lifted in their entirety, but we couldn't do that."

The premature end to the negotiations leaves the unusual rapprochement between the U.S. and North Korea that has unfolded for most of a year at a deadlock, with the North retaining both its nuclear arsenal and facilities believed to be producing additional fissile material for warheads.

It also represents a major setback at a difficult political moment for Mr. Trump, who has long presented himself as a tough negotiator capable of bringing adversaries into a deal and had made North Korea the signature diplomatic initiative of his presidency.

Even as the talks began, Mr. Trump's long-time lawyer and fixer, Michael Cohen, was delivering dramatic



In limbo: U.S. President Donald Trump, right, and North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un during the second U.S.-North Korea summit in Hanoi, Vietnam, on Thursday. ■ AFP

and damaging testimony in Congress, accusing him of an expansive pattern of lies and criminality.

Mr. Trump had flown across the world to try to work face-to-face with Mr. Kim for the second time, an effort to reduce what U.S. officials regard as one of the world's foremost nuclear threats. Experts estimate that the North has 30 to 60 nuclear warheads as well as intercontinental ballistic missiles that can hit the U.S., though it has not demonstrated the technology to protect warheads as they enter the atmosphere.

Halt on missile tests

Before ending the news conference to fly back to Washington, Mr. Trump tried to put a good face on the outcome. "This wasn't a walkaway like you get up and walk out," he said. "No, this was very friendly. We shook hands."

"There's a warmth that we have and I hope that stays," he added.

Mr. Trump said that Mr. Kim had pledged to maintain

a halt on nuclear and ballistic missile tests that is now in its 16th month, and that the negotiations would continue.

But further progress could be difficult now that Mr. Trump has broadcast that he and Mr. Kim have staked out conflicting bottom lines.

Both leaders will face greater pressure from hard-line officials in their governments to dig in. For Mr. Trump, facing criminal and civil investigations at home, maintaining public support is a growing concern, while Mr. Kim has long used the nuclear program to justify his government's totalitarian rule and explain its weak economy.

On his flight leaving Hanoi, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said officials had worked through the previous night and into the morning to come up with terms acceptable to both leaders.

"When you are dealing with a country that is of the nature of North Korea, it is often the case that only the most senior leaders have the capacity to make those im-

portant decisions," he said. "We'll each need to regroup a little bit." There was no immediate statement from Mr. Kim or the North Korean government.

Sticking point

According to the Americans, the sticking point turned on what it would take for the North to begin dismantling a central part of its nuclear programme — the Yongbyon enrichment facility. Mr. Kim said he would do so only if all sanctions on his country were lifted.

But Mr. Trump and Mr. Pompeo said the North would have to dismantle other parts of its program as well before the U.S. agreed to such a big concession.

In response to a question, Mr. Trump acknowledged for the first time that his administration was aware of a second enrichment site other than Yongbyon, but it was unclear what role that played in the talks.

The U.S. has long insisted that sanctions will be lifted only after North Korea completely dismantles its nu-

clear programme in a verifiable manner. There was talk before the summit, though, that Mr. Trump might agree to ease sanctions in exchange for initial steps toward denuclearisation by allowing joint economic projects between North and South Korea.

It was not immediately clear if Mr. Trump made such an offer or how Mr. Kim responded.

Constructive meetings

The first sign of the collapse of the talks came after morning meetings, when White House officials said a working lunch and signing ceremony had been cancelled.

The White House then issued a statement saying that Mr. Trump and Mr. Kim had "discussed various ways to advance denuclearization and economic-driven concepts," and that they had had "very good and constructive meetings," but had failed to reach an agreement.

"I worry about the consequences," said Jean H. Lee, a Korea expert at the Wilson Center, a research organisation in Washington. "Did these two leaders and their teams build up enough good will to keep the lines of communication open, or are we headed into another period of stalled negotiations — or worse, tensions — that would give the North Koreans more time and incentive to keep building their weapons programme?"

"This result leaves very little room for Kim to save face," she added.

Officials from both sides had hoped the Hanoi summit meeting would produce more concrete results than the vague communiqué issued by the two leaders after their first meeting last June in Singapore. NY TIMES

UN probe accuses Israel of crimes against humanity

Calls Gaza protests in 2018 peaceful

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GENEVA

A UN probe on Thursday said there is evidence that Israel committed crimes against humanity in responding to last year's protests in Gaza, as snipers targeted people clearly identifiable as children, health workers and journalists.

Israel immediately rejected the findings as "hostile, deceitful and biased."

The UN Independent Commission of Inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory investigated violations committed during demonstrations in the Gaza strip between March 30 and December 31 of 2018.

"Israeli soldiers committed violations of international human rights and humanitarian law," committee chair Santiago Canton said in a statement.

"Some of those violations stressed that there were reasonable grounds to believe that Israeli troops killed and injured Palestinians "who were neither directly participating in hostilities, nor posing an imminent threat."

The commission also dismissed claims by Israel that the protests were aimed to conceal acts of terrorism. "The demonstrations were civilian in nature," it said. "Despite some acts of significant violence, the Commission found that the demonstrations did not constitute combat or military campaigns."

At least 251 Palestinians have been killed since March 2018, the majority shot during border protests and others hit by tank fire or air strikes in response to violence from Gaza. Two Israeli soldiers have been killed over the same period.



Benjamin Netanyahu

rejects outright the report".

"The council sets new records of hypocrisy and lies, out of obsessive hatred of Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East," Mr. Netanyahu said on Twitter.

No imminent threat

Among the most contentious questions surrounding the Gaza protests was whether the Palestinian protesters posed a grave threat to Israeli troops.

The UN investigators stressed that there were reasonable grounds to believe that Israeli troops killed and injured Palestinians "who were neither directly participating in hostilities, nor posing an imminent threat."

The commission also dismissed claims by Israel that the protests were aimed to conceal acts of terrorism. "The demonstrations were civilian in nature," it said. "Despite some acts of significant violence, the Commission found that the demonstrations did not constitute combat or military campaigns."

The Commission found reasonable grounds to believe that Israeli snipers shot at journalists, health workers, children and persons with disabilities, knowing they were clearly recognisable as such," it said.

Israel's Foreign Minister

Israel Katz

called the report

"hostile,

deceitful

and biased," labelling it "the theatre of the absurd."

Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu

said Israel "re-

Trump says Cohen lied 95%, spoke truth on 'no collusion'

In testimony, his former lawyer called him 'racist and a conman'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HANOI

President Donald Trump sought again to discredit Michael Cohen on Thursday after his former long-time lawyer's bombshell congressional testimony in which he called Mr. Trump a racist and a conman.

"He lied a lot," Mr. Trump told a press conference in Vietnam after his summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

Mr. Trump insisted Mr. Cohen's testimony on Wednesday had provided no evidence the Trump campaign had colluded with Russia in the 2016 U.S. election and that this is what mattered most in the keenly awaited session before a House committee.

Mr. Cohen, who also worked as Mr. Trump's fixer, told lawmakers he had no direct knowledge of collusion



Michael Cohen

but that he had suspicions. Mr. Trump, however, insisted his former lawyer said no collusion had taken place.

"And I was a little impressed by that. He could have gone all-out. He went 95% instead of 100%. The fact is, there is no collusion," said Mr. Trump.

"He didn't lie about one thing. He said, no collusion with the Russian hoax. And I said, I wonder why he didn't lie about that, too, like even-

Israel's AG for Netanyah's indictment

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM

Israel's Attorney General (AG) on Thursday recommended indicting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with bribery and breach of trust in a series of corruption cases, a move that could spell the end of his illustrious political career.

Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit announced his decision after more than two years of intense investigations.

Police had recommended indicting Mr. Netanyahu for bribery, fraud and breach of trust in three different cases that ranged from accepting expensive gifts from wealthy allies to allegedly trading influence for favourable press coverage. The final decision on indictment will only take place after a hearing, where Mr. Netanyahu is given the opportunity to defend himself.

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(A Government of India Enterprise)
NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER
The General Manager (P), RITES Ltd., acting for and on behalf of CDFD as an agent/power of Attorney holder invites online bids on two packet system, for the work of: 1) NIT No.RITES/SC/CDP/IBMS/2018-19, Dt: 28.02.2019. Name of the work: "SITC of IBMs, CCTV, Access control system, Public address, External electrical works and Minor Civil works at CDFD Lab Complex and Residential Complex, Upali, Hyderabad." Estimated cost: Rs. 6,079,568.28, E.M.D.: Rs. 6,00,000/-, Period of Completion: 6 months. Last time & date of submission of bid: 13.03.2019 at 11:00 hrs. The bid forms and other details can be obtained from the website <https://etenders.gov.in>. Addendum/Corrigendum, if any, shall be hosted online only.

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NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Tender No	Material Description	Due Date
181913 007401	Production, Supply & Maintenance of Seedlings at TNPL Unit-1 branch Nursery in Kattukollai, Ariyalur district during 2019-20	12.03.2019
181933 000597	Gypsum	13.03.2019
181933 000598	PP Bags for Power Bond Cement	13.03.2019

Terms & condition, Qty., Tender fee, EMD are available in tender document at our websites : www.tnpl.com / www.tenders.tn.gov.in DIPR/1404/Tender/2019 TPL - Maker of bagasse based eco-friendly Paper

MYSORE PAINTS & VARNISH LTD.,
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Phone: 0821-249381-2497469/2499340,
Fax: 0821-2499466, website : www.mysorepaints.com
e-mail : info@mysorepaints.com

Ref: MPVL/MAT/ST/2018-19/423 Date: 26.02.2019

TENDER NOTIFICATION

Tenders are invited from reputed manufacturers / authorized dealers for supply of the following materials through eProcurement Portal. The details are as mentioned below:
1. MPVL/2018-19/IND423 - Short Term Tender for supply of Empty Marker Pen for filling Indelible Ink (1 Item, estimated value Rs. 20.00 Lakhs Approx.)

Interested parties may visit www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in, for participating in tender. Last date for submission of Tender/Bids is 12.03.2019 at 17:00:00 hrs. Technical Bid Opening on 14.03.2019 at 11:00:00 hrs.

For Mysore Paints and Varnish Ltd.,
Sd/-
Materials Manager & Tender Inviting Authority

DIPR/DD/MYS/MCA/1215

TRANSMISSION CORPORATION OF ANDHRA PRADESH LIMITED
e' PROCUREMENT NOTICE
The APTRANSCO invites online bids under e-procurement for the following equipment.
SL. NO. Specification No. Description of Equipment

1	PMM31-8/2019	Supply of 220 KV Silicon Rubber Composite Insulators i) 70 KN/220 KV SRC insulators - 8,097 Nos. ii) 120 KN/220 KV SRC insulators - 5,259 Nos.
2	PMM31-9/2019	Supply of 332 KV Silicon Rubber Composite Insulators i) 70 KN/332 KV SRC insulators - 1,811 Nos

MARKET WATCH

	28-02-2019	% CHANGE
Sensex	35,867	-0.11
US Dollar	70.72	0.73
Brent oil	66	-0.79

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	325.85	0.60
Asian Paints	1405.20	-0.50
Axis Bank	709.55	-8.65
Bajaj Auto	2900.60	-14.10
Bajaj Finance	6462.45	42.60
Bharti Airtel	318.05	-2.10
BPLC	337.55	6.85
Cipla	554.55	2.65
Coal India	228.30	6.85
Dr Reddy's Lab	2631.65	-15.25
Eicher Motors	19869.10	-538.65
GAIL (India)	342.00	6.30
Grasim Ind	777.05	-5.35
HCL Tech	1053.90	-6.45
HDPC	1841.20	0.20
HDFC Bank	2077.55	-14.70
Hero MotoCorp	2628.10	-50.45
Hindalco	195.75	-0.20
HPCL	223.35	0.70
Hind Unilever	1732.65	-3.85
Indiabulls HFL	655.25	-3.65
ICICI Bank	350.15	4.60
IndusInd Bank	1473.85	-2.85
Bharti Infratech	293.65	-3.10
Infosys	734.30	-0.95
Indian Oil Corp	144.60	3.70
ITC	276.05	0.95
JSW Steel	281.10	-2.90
Kotak Bank	1213.10	-3.05
L&T	1292.95	8.25
M&M	645.90	-10.25
Maurit Suzuki	6829.70	-138.80
NTPC	141.25	2.50
ONGC	148.65	0.65
PowerGrid Corp	182.85	1.40
Reliance Ind	1231.05	7.55
State Bank	269.55	1.40
Sun Pharma	445.15	2.45
Tata Motors	177.45	0.10
Tata Steel	500.45	-6.65
TCS	1983.45	-74.65
Tech Mahindra	830.15	4.55
Titan	1025.20	8.95
UltraTech Cement	3826.50	-62.60
UPL	877.60	8.30
Vedanta	169.40	4.75
Wipro	368.90	-5.50
YES Bank	231.15	2.95
Zee Entertainment	466.70	3.30

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	70.52	70.84
Euro	80.47	80.84
British Pound	93.77	94.21
Japanese Yen (100)	63.67	63.96
Chinese Yuan	10.55	10.60
Swiss Franc	71.01	71.35
Singapore Dollar	52.30	52.55
Canadian Dollar	53.55	53.80
Malaysian Ringgit	17.34	17.43

Source: Indian Bank

Need to keep PSBs in good health: Jaitley

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said on Thursday it was necessary to keep public sector banks (PSBs) in good health as they were the lifelines of the economy.

Speaking at an event, Mr. Jaitley said: "If their [PSBs] health is not good, then the economy at large will also suffer. The worst in the banking system is now behind us. Reforms were long overdue in the banking system. Some reforms are born out of compulsion, while there are many others which are born out of conviction," he added.

He said the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) had brought back almost ₹3 lakh crore into the banking system. "For the last two or three quarters, the NPA curve is going down," he said. "The NPAs didn't go up because banks made some strong decisions in the recent past. The NPAs went up because of truthful disclosure."

Cabinet okays National Mineral Policy 2019

Aims at more effective regulation

The Cabinet also gave its approval for the creation of a SPV for the disinvestment of Air India

tioning of virgin areas on a revenue-sharing basis.

In a separate decision, the Union Cabinet gave its ex-post facto approval for the creation of a special purpose vehicle (SPV) for the disinvestment of Air India and its subsidiaries and joint ventures.

The SPV, named Air India Assets Holding Ltd. (AI AHL), has been created for the purpose of warehousing the accumulated working capital loan not backed by any asset along with four subsidiaries (Air India Air Transport Services Ltd. (AIATSL), Airline Allied Services Ltd. (AASL), Air India Engineering Services Ltd. (AIESL) and Hotel Corporation of India Ltd. (HCI), according to the statement issued by the government.

Reconnaissance permit Some of the features in the policy include the introduction of the right of first refusal for the reconnaissance permit (RP) and prospecting license holders, encouraging the private sector to take up exploration and the auc-

Union Cabinet approves software product policy

Also gives nod for Vodafone Idea fund raising plan

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Thursday approved the National Policy on Software Products 2019 that aims to help the industry grow at CAGR of 40% to reach \$70-80 billion by 2025, while creating employment opportunities for 3.5 million people.

"The policy aims to adopt a shift in strategy so that IT products also contribute equitably and significantly to the industry along with IT services," Electronics and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said.

In a statement, the government said that initially an outlay of ₹1,500 crore is being planned for various schemes under in policy in the next seven years.

Further, the policy proposes to create a ₹5,000-crore fund with industry participation to

promote emerging technology such as Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, Big Data and robotics. Of this, government contribution will be ₹1,000 crore.

Promoting ecosystem "Software Product Development Fund" will participate in venture funds having objectives aligned to this policy and so can leverage private investments targeted to promote software product ecosystem," the government said.

The SPDF will be financially managed by a professional financial institution.

Presently, total revenue of IT-ITES industry in India is pegged at about \$168 billion (including e-commerce), with revenue of about \$7.1 billion from software product industry, of

which \$2.3 billion is from exports.

Tenfold rise

The policy, which aims to increase share of Indian software products in global market by tenfold, pitches for nurturing of 10,000 technology start-ups in software product industry, including 1,000 such start-ups in tier-II and tier-III towns.

It also proposes upskilling of 10 lakh IT professionals as well specialize 10,000 professionals to "provide leadership."

In a separate decision, the Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs approved foreign investment of more than ₹5,000 crore and up to ₹25,000 crore in the recently merged Vodafone Idea Limited as part of a proposed equity fund raising through a rights issue.

RBI forms panel to keep rupee stable

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has formed a task force on the offshore rupee market. It will be headed by former Deputy Governor Usha Thorat and will recommend steps for ensuring the stability of the currency.

"The task force shall examine the issues relating to the offshore rupee markets in depth and recommend appropriate policy measures that also factor in the requirement of ensuring the stability of the external value of the rupee," the central bank said.

The committee would submit its report by the end of June 2019.

The task force will assess the causes behind the development of the offshore rupee market, and study the effects on exchange rate and market liquidity in the domestic market.

It would also recommend measures to address concerns arising out of offshore rupee trading.

Phillip Commodities India barred over NSEL matter

Fifth brokerage to face such action by regulator SEBI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has rejected the application for registration of commodity broking licence of Phillip Commodities India for its alleged role in the ₹5,600-crore settlement scam at the National Spot Exchange Ltd. (NSEL) that came out in the open in July 2013.

This is the fifth brokerage to face such an action by the capital markets regulator.

"Earlier, SEBI rejected

similar applications by Anand Rathi Commodities, Geofin Comtrade, Motilal Oswal Commodities Broker and India Infoline Commodities.

In line with the earlier orders, SEBI has given Phillip Commodities India 45 days to allow all existing clients to move to other brokerages within 45 days.

'Not fit to function' According to the capital markets regulator, the brokerage is not 'fit and proper' to function in the commodity segment for

its alleged role in facilitating so-called paired contracts for its clients on NSEL, which was forced to suspend trading in all contracts in August 2013 due to the absence of the underlying commodities to settle the contracts.

As per the SEBI probe, large brokerages colluded with the spot exchange for marketing of paired contracts wherein clients were assured fixed returns ranging between 13% and 16% per annum.

The NSEL scam came to light almost six years ago.

Govt. cuts FY19 growth estimate to 7%

Q3 growth estimated at six-quarter low; agriculture, manufacturing contribute to slowdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The government on Thursday revised downwards its estimate for GDP growth in the 2018-19 financial year to 7% from the 7.2% estimated in the first estimate for the year released in January.

Data showed that the GDP growth slowed for the third consecutive quarter in the quarter ended December 2018 to 6.6% – a six-quarter low – from 7% in the second quarter and 8% in the first quarter of this financial year.

Growth pangs

Investment growth has been revised lower to 10% from the earlier estimate of 12.2%.

GROWTH RATES OF GDP

	Constant prices (2011-12)
Annual 2018-19 (second advance)	7.0
Q1 2018-19 (April-June)	8.0
Q2 2018-19 (July-Sept.)	7.0
Q3 2018-19 (October-December)	6.6

earlier."

The two notable divergences between the second estimate and the first are that private final consumption expenditure growth has been revised upwards to 8.3% from 6.4% and investment growth was revised lower to 10% from the earlier estimate of 12.2%.

Nominal GDP

Economists point out that the size of the economy in terms of nominal GDP is now estimated to be ₹190.54 lakh crore, up from the ₹188.41 lakh crore estimated earlier.

They said, will go a long way in helping the government meet its fiscal deficit target of 3.4% of GDP for the year.

On a quarterly basis, the

agriculture sector is estimated to have grown at 2.7% in the third quarter of this financial year, compared with a 4.6% growth in the same quarter of the previous year.

The manufacturing sector grew at 6.7% in the third quarter, down from 8.6% in the December quarter of 2017-18.

"[The] FY19 GDP growth at 7% is the lowest in last five years and the third quarter FY19 growth at 6.6% is a six-quarter low," Mr. Pant added.

"This indicates that the economy is losing steam. Based on the revised first three quarters and annual numbers, Ind-Ra's calculation shows that the GDP growth in Q4 has to be 6.5% to attain overall 7.0% growth in FY19."

EMIs to fall as banks cut lending rates

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

With commercial banks having begun to cut lending rates, interest rates on home and auto loans are set to come down from March.

This, after RBI decided to reduce the key policy rate earlier in February.

Two state-run lenders – Punjab National Bank and Allahabad Bank – have decided to reduce their one-year marginal cost of funds based lending rate by 10 bps to 8.45% and 8.65%, respectively. Private sector lender Kotak Mahindra Bank has reduced their one year MCLR by 5 bps to 9%.

The new rates will be effective from March 1.

MCLR is the benchmark lending rate to which all the loan rates are linked.

Statement about ownership and other particulars

**IN BRIEF**

Jet may have to scale down flights

18 planes have been grounded till now including six on Thursday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Leasors on Thursday grounded six more aircraft leased to Jet Airways on account of non-payment of lease rentals. Seven aircraft were grounded on Wednesday for the same reason.

This may result in the cancellation of a large number of flights in the domestic and some international sectors.

The grounding of six aircraft comes even as the airline's board approved a bank-led provisional resolution plan (BLPRP).

Last week, Jet had stated that five planes were grounded by lessors due to non-payment of lease rentals. Going by this, 18 aircraft have been grounded and in the absence of recapitalisation, more aircraft could face a similar fate. Jet Airways, in a filing



Fly no more: In the absence of recapitalisation, more Jet aircraft could face a similar fate. ■ H.S.MANJUNATH

with the stock exchanges on Wednesday, said, "An additional seven aircraft have been grounded due to non-payment of amounts outstanding to lessors under their respective lease agreements."

"As mentioned earlier, the company is actively engaged with all its aircraft lessors and regularly provides them

with updates on the efforts undertaken by the company to improve its liquidity. Aircraft lessors have been supportive of the company's efforts in this regard," it said.

"The company is also making all efforts to minimise the disruption to its network. The company also continues to provide required and periodic updates

to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation in this regard," it added.

Reportedly, 300 flights have been cancelled by the airline due to grounding of the aircraft and as per its cost reduction plans to get out of unprofitable routes.

More to come?

Sameer Kalra, equity research analyst and founder, Target Investing, said, "There will be another seven [aircraft] grounded by next week if nothing incremental comes."

"Lenders also met Jet Airways and Etihad management but no resolution was agreed on."

Jet Airways stock plunged by more than 5% intraday but recovered to close at ₹222.80, or down 0.91%, on the BSE on Thursday.

J&J resumes baby powder production

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Johnson & Johnson said on Thursday it had resumed production of baby powder at its plants after a government-sanctioned testing reaffirmed that the product does not contain asbestos.

The company highlighted that regulatory authorities from Singapore, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait and Egypt in recent months have also reaffirmed the purity of Johnson & Johnson's talc.

The company has resumed production of its baby powder at plants in Badli and Mulund, after government-sanctioned testing reaffirmed that the product does not contain asbestos, a J&J spokesperson said in a statement.



Under the lens: The firm said a probe has already been started by SEBI and appropriate action taken. ■ REUTERS

MF units worth ₹344 cr. transferred illegally, says Odisha Cement

Transfers from erstwhile subsidiaries

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Odisha Cement has said that mutual fund units worth ₹344 crore have been illegally transferred from the demat account of two of its former subsidiaries and that the company has reported the matter to SEBI. The company has also filed a criminal complaint with the Economic Offences Wing in New Delhi.

Demat accounts

"We wish to inform you that certain mutual fund units, valued at approx. ₹344 crore, have been illegally transferred from the depository participant from the demat account(s) held by our erstwhile subsidiaries, OCL India Limited and Dalmia Cement East Limited," Odisha Cement said in a stock exchange statement on Thursday. "We have already reported the matter to National Securities Depository Limited, National Stock Exchange and other appropriate authorities including SEBI," it added.

"It is further observed that these transferred mutual fund units have been used as collateral for F&O margin with its clearing member IL&FS Securities Services Ltd. towards trade obligations of these three associated concerns," it added.

appropriate action, including keeping the transfer or redemption of the mutual fund units on hold, has been taken. Incidentally, the company statement comes a day after the capital markets regulator passed an interim order against stock broker Allied Financial Services for alleged irregularities, including transferring shares held by OCL India and Dalmia Cement East to unregistered clients.

"The member [Allied Financial Services] has transferred the mutual funds units belonging to unregistered entities / client to its client beneficiary account through its three associated concerns viz. Money Mishra Financial Services, Avanish Kumar Mishra and Money Mishra Overseas Pvt. Ltd," the order by SEBI whole-time member Ananta Barua said.

"It is further observed that these transferred mutual fund units have been used as collateral for F&O margin with its clearing member IL&FS Securities Services Ltd. towards trade obligations of these three associated concerns," it added.

Decide on ArcelorMittal's Essar bid by March 8'

NCLT yet again told to take call on bid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) on Thursday again directed the NCLT Ahmedabad bench to take a decision by March 8 on the ₹42,000-crore bid submitted by ArcelorMittal for the acquisition of debt-ridden Essar Steel.

This is the fourth time in the last five weeks that NCLAT has directed the NCLT Ahmedabad to pass a final order on the resolution plan submitted by the global steel major. Earlier, on January 23, NCLAT had directed NCLT Ahmedabad to pass appropriate orders on ArcelorMittal's resolution plan by February 4. On February

4, the NCLAT had directed NCLT Ahmedabad to take a decision on the plan by February 11, failing which it said it may call for records and pass appropriate order under Section 31 of the IBC.

However, the NCLT could not pass an order and the matter came up for hearing again on February 12, when the appellate tribunal extended the deadline for a week to February 19 and directed to list the matter on February 28.

A two-member NCLAT bench, headed by Justice S.J. Mukhopadhyaya, on Thursday, observed that the hearing was not concluded and final order was yet to be passed.

Development scheme for knitwear sector launched

Total outlay for the knitwear scheme is ₹47.72 crore

M. SOUNDARIYA PREETHA
COIMBATORE

Union Minister for Textiles Smriti Zubin Irani launched a comprehensive programme on Thursday for the development of knitting and knitwear sector in the country under the PowerTex India scheme.

The programme, the outlay for which is ₹47.72 crore, would be in operation till the end of March next year.

The total outlay for PowerTex India Scheme and the Knitwear Scheme is ₹487.07 crore. Of this, ₹439.35 crore is for powerloom units for three years from April 1, 2017 to March

31, 2020 and ₹47.72 crore for the knitwear scheme, according to a statement from the Textiles Ministry. Almost ₹70 crore were disbursed to the powerloom sector till January 31, 2019.

Knitting is a major segment in the textile value chain, constituting 27% of the total fabric produced in the country.

Knitwear clusters

Of the knitted fabric produced, 15% is exported. Some of the major knitwear clusters in the country are Tiruppur, Ludhiana, Kanpur, and Kolkata, said the Textiles Minister.

The programme for knitting and knitwear units, catering to domestic and exports markets, has eight components where the industries would get support to install machinery under group work shed scheme, buy yarn, go in for solar energy, have common facilities and create new service centres under public private partnership mode.

"Since the scheme is for knitting and knitwear units, stitching machinery can also be installed under the group work shed scheme," said K. Selvaraju, secretary general, Southern India Mills' Association (SIMA).

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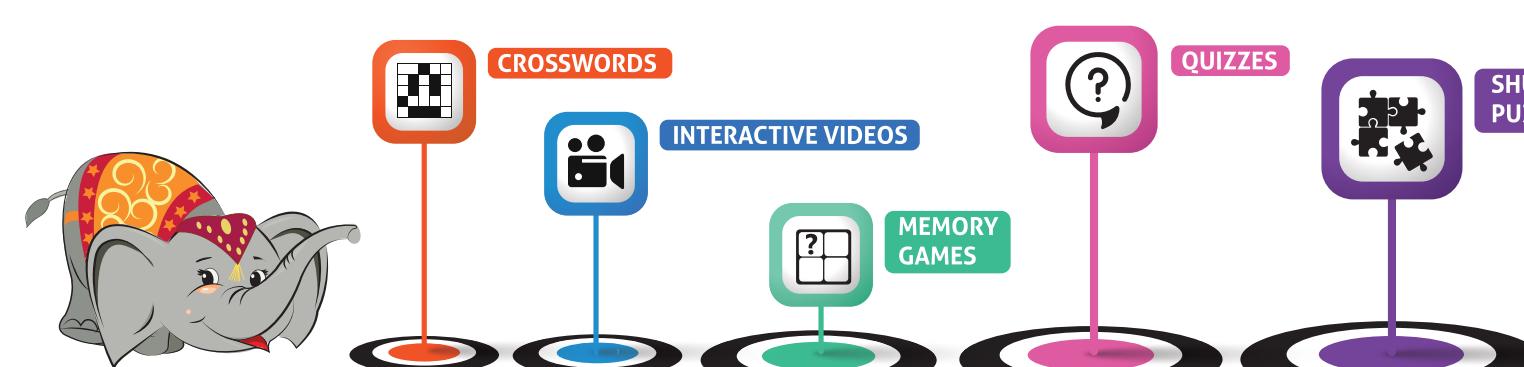
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England pulls off an incredible victory in final one-dayer

Brunt, Knight negate some excellent Indian performances, including Smriti and Punam's half-centuries

ENG IN INDIA

G. VISWANATH
MUMBAI

England fashioned an incredible turnaround and beat India by two wickets and seven balls to spare in the third ODI against England at the Wankhede Stadium here on Thursday.

There were a number of a high-quality performances from the Indians after losing Jemimah Rodrigues to the seam ball of the day. Smriti Mandhana excelled with her controlled aggression and forged a 128-run partnership for the second wicket with Punam Raut.

Jhulan strikes

Thereafter, Jhulan Goswami made the new ball count with a three-wicket haul in her opening spell (five for 28) to alter the situation. She had gone wicket-less in five previous matches against India.

After the collapse, India recovered to take its score to a little over 200.

England had struggled to chase a 200 plus target in the first match and its chase on Thursday looked on the wane after Jhulan dismissed the

top three, off-spinner Deepi cut short the tenure of Natalie Sciver and Shikha trapped

Sarah Taylor leg before.

But not one to give up,

skipper Heather Knight (47, 63b, 6x4) inspired an England comeback with a show of resolve that ultimately saw

her team prevail.

Heather added 69 for the sixth wicket with Wyatt, who

showed remarkable poise against the spinners and notched up her first half-cen-

tury in 62 matches.

Brunt was declared Player-of-the-Match.

England won the match by two wickets with seven balls to spare.

But after almost seven

hours of competitive cricket it was Anya Shrubsole's pull to the boundary off the first ball she faced from leg-spinner Poonam Yadav that turned out to be the defining moment of the match. England, thus added two points to its tally in the ICC Women's Championship table.

Having lost the three-match series, England's sole objective was to salvage some pride and travel to Sri Lanka for the next set of the Championship matches with a win under its belt.

With India sailing smoothly at 129 for one on the back of a century stand by Smriti and Punam, it appeared an uphill task for England.

However, seamer Katherine Brunt provided an incisive spell (five for 28) to alter the situation. She had gone wicket-less in five previous matches against India.

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TV PICKS

New Zealand vs Bangladesh: 1st Test: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 3.30 a.m.
NBA: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 6.30 a.m.
I-League: Star Sports 3, 5 p.m.
ISL: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Suarez's brace helps Barca blank Real

MADRID Luis Suarez scored twice on Wednesday as Barcelona inflicted another defeat on Real Madrid to move within touching distance of winning a record fifth consecutive Copa del Rey. Madrid was the better side for at least half of a wild Clasico at the Santiago Bernabeu but three goals conceded in 28 chaotic, second-half minutes sent Barca through to the final with a 3-0 victory, 4-1 on aggregate.

The results:

Copa del Rey (semifinal, second-leg): Real Madrid 0 lost to Barcelona 3 (Suarez 50, 73 (p), Varane 69 (og)).

Coppa Italia (semifinal, first-leg): Fiorentina 3 (Chiesa 33, Benassi 36, Muriel 79) drew with Atalanta 3 (Gomez 16, Pasalic 18, De Roon 58).

Sowjanya-Petra duo in last four

ANTALYA Sowjanya Bavisetti and Petra Januskova of Canada reached the semifinals of the \$15,000 ITF women's tournament on Thursday.

The results:

Doubles: Quarterfinals: Petra Januskova (Can) & Sowjanya Bavisetti bt Sakura Hosogi (Jpn) & Deniz Paykoc (Tur) 4-6, 6-3, [10-7];

Pre-quarterfinals: Petra & Sowjanya w.o. Kamilla Bartone (Lat) & Vitalia Stamat (Mda).



Zhou's 'maximum' goes in vain

Scores 147 but loses to Lyu in an all-Chinese thriller

INDIAN OPEN

STAN RAYAN
KOCHI

The Chinese were in a mood for big breaks at the Indian Open world-ranking snooker tournament at the Grand Hyatt here on Thursday.

England's seasoned Mark Davis started the fireworks early in the evening with a 140 in his 4-0 first round victory over compatriot Paul S. Davison and later Zhou Yuelong produced snooker's maximum, the 147 and a tournament record, but it went in vain as he lost 3-4 to Lyu Haotian in a first round battle between two Chinese 21-year-olds.

Zhou is no stranger to big breaks. At the event's last edition, in Visakhapatnam in 2017, the Chinese had the tournament's highest break of 141.

Another Chinese, Zhao Xintong, fired a 140 in his 4-2 victory over England's Sam Baird while Englishman Andrew Higginson had a 133 in his 4-0 verdict over the last Indian here, the 16-year-old Digvijay Kadian.

A few hours before that, England's Michael Holt, hun-



Fine effort: Zhou Yuelong produced snooker's maximum, the 147, but ended up losing.

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

gry for revenge after his loss last week to Thepchaiya Un-Nooh in the one-frame Shoot Out tournament, produced a century break in his revenge match but that was not good enough as the Thai recovered well to take the match 4-2.

"My ranking was just a step behind Holt at No. 41, now, with this victory, I will

go one step above him," said Thepchaiya.

Meanwhile despite the 4-0 loss, Digvijay, a wild-card here, impressed while giving the Englishman a close fight in the second and third frames which he lost on the last black. He led 68-20 in the third frame before losing 68-69.

The results: Lyu Haotian (Chn)

bt Zhou Yuelong (Chn) 4-3 [60-48, 5-105, 118-0, 0-147(147), 65-46, 45-81, 74-40]; Zhao Xintong (Chn) bt Sam Baird (Eng) 4-2 [140(140)-0, 122-12, 116-24, 0-89, 37-103, 60-40]; Thepchaiya Un-Nooh (Tha) bt Michael Holt (Eng) 4-2 [91-37, 89-14, 1-73, 16-120(102), 95-0, 87-28]; Andrew Higginson (Eng) bt Digvijay Kadian (Ind) 4-0 [86-53, 53-50, 69-68, 133-0].

The results: Lyu Haotian (Chn)

Higgins trying out a different strategy to regain World crown

STAN RAYAN
KOCHI

John Higgins was into football when he was around 10 but he felt he was not strong enough for the sport.

"I was a midfielder but I think I was too timid. I think I would never have made it in football," said the Scot in a chat with *The Hindu* on the sidelines of snooker's Indian

Open at the Grand Hyatt here.

He turned to snooker, following his elder brother Jason, at 15 and later, moved from his hometown Wishaw to Glasgow to train with stronger players. That worked wonders.

Higgins, who turned pro at 17, was so good that he won four professional World

titles, in 1998, 2007, 2009 and 2011.

He is 43 now but still so good that he finished runner-up at the last two Worlds, to England's World No. 1 Mark Selby in 2017 and Welshman Mark Williams last year after dramatic finals.

After coming painfully close to the title, Higgins is trying a different strategy for

"We have never tried something like this before."

Higgins feels Pankaj Advani, India's multiple World champion in cuesport and a billiards heavyweight but who never made it big in pro snooker, would have done very well had he moved to the United Kingdom.

"I would have loved him to stay in snooker. I was very

impressed with Pankaj and there was one good match many years ago when he beat me. I think he would have made it good in pro snooker," said the Scot, the Indian Open's biggest star here.

Higgins is a legend in snooker but his two sons have not followed in his footsteps.

Gurdeep, Vishal take golds

Ravi Kumar and Mirabai Chanu adjudged the best

WEIGHTLIFTING

Y.B. SARANGI
VISAKHAPATNAM

Gurdeep Singh, a 2017 Commonwealth championships bronze medallist, won a close battle over fellow Railwaysman Himanshu Kumar Chang to take the men's +109kg title in the concluding event of the National weightlifting championships at the Railway Indoor Sports Enclave here on Thursday.

Gurdeep's total lift of 390kg enabled him to beat Chang by 4kg.

Vishal Solanki's well-measured and blemish-free display earned him the men's 109kg gold. He added 5kg to his initial snatch effort of 150kg before registering 160kg. K. Ravi Kumar (men's 89kg) and Mirabai Chanu (women's 49kg) were adjudged best lifters. Host Rail-

way picked up the team championship.

The results: Men: 109kg: 1. Vishal Solanki (RSPB) snatch 160kg, clean-and-jerk 200kg, total 360kg; 2. Lovepreet Singh (Chd) 164, 188, 352; 3.

+109kg: 1. Gurdeep Singh (RSPB) 170, 220, 390; 2. Himanshu Kumar Chang (RSPB) 168, 218, 386; 3. Vipan Kumar (SSCB) 156, 201, 357.

The overage issue

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM

The Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWF) has started to crackdown on State associations that turn a blind eye towards age-fudging issues.

IWF, which believes that proper grooming of youngsters can fetch more than one Olympic weightlifting medal by 2024, has withheld the results of the Uttar Pradesh State

championships.

"Overage and doping are the two major issues. Doping cases have come down and we will continue our fight against it."

"The biggest challenge is the overage problem. It discourages talented boys and girls and hurts their growth. It also hampers the growth of those who do it," said IWF secretary-general Sahdev Yadav.

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Andhra pulls off a thrilling win

Mayank Raghav's century goes in vain as Manipur loses to J&K

MUSHTAQ ALI

SPORTS BUREAU
MULAPADU

Andhra pulled off a thrilling three-run win over Jharkhand in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 cricket championship league here on Thursday.

Useful contributions

Andhra, electing to bat, posted 179 with opener M. Pranith (43, 17b, 6x4, 3x6), Ricky Bhui (38, 29b, 1x4, 3x6) and Karn Sharma (30, 15b, 2x4, 2x6) chipping in with useful contributions.

For Jharkhand, pacer Varun Aaron picked up three wickets.

In reply, Jharkhand looked on course when Saurabh Tiwary (54, 32b, 5x4, 2x6) was at the crease and the score read 162 for six in the 19th over before he was run out by wicketkeeper K. Srikanth Bharat.

Decisive

That proved to be decisive as Y. Prithvi Raj struck twice in the 20th over to send back Shahbaz Nadeem (1) and Monu (16) and to the delight of

This is Andhra's second win in five matches and Jharkhand's first loss in five games

the Andhra players Rahul Yadav was run out, again by the wicketkeeper, to leave Jharkhand three runs short.

This is Andhra's second win in five matches, while this was Jharkhand's first loss in five games.

In another match, opener Mayank Raghav's century (103, 66b, 11x4, 5x6) went in vain for Manipur as Jammu & Kashmir scored an eight-wicket win.

For J&K, this is the third win in six games, while Manipur suffered its fourth defeat in five matches.

Easy for Kerala

Kerala notched up a thumping 10-wicket win over Nagaland with openers Vishnu Vinod (53 not out, 38b, 4x4, 3x6) and Rohan S. Kunnummal (51 not out, 36b, 8x4) batting with great freedom.

This is its fourth win from five matches, while Nagaland suffered its fifth straight defeat.



Practise make perfect: Kerala's M.D. Nidheesh picked up three wickets to restrict Nagaland to 103 for eight in its allotted 20 overs. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Standing strong in the face of stiff competition

Saurabh and Manu made it a memorable finish for India

KAMESH SRINIVASAN

NEW DELHI

Saurabh Chaudhary was the hero of the Indian team as he provided a fitting climax for the host by powering the mixed air pistol team to the gold in the company of another teenage sensation Manu Bhaker in the shooting World Cup on Wednesday.

It was the second gold for Saurabh who had earlier clinched the air pistol gold with a world record and bagged the Olympic quota for the Tokyo 2020 Games.

India was eligible to win only 12 of the 14 Olympic quotas on offer, as Anjum Moudgil and Apurvi Chandela had won the maximum possible two women's air rifle quota places in the World Championship in Korea last year.

The challenge for Anjum and Apurvi is to retain the Olympic quota places in the face of stiff competition from the domestic front from ta-



Lifting spirits: Manu and Saurabh bagged the 10m air pistol mixed gold to boost India's confidence. ■ KAMESH SRINIVASAN

lented youngsters like Elavenil Valarivan and Mehuli Ghosh.

It was perhaps this healthy competition that pushed Apurvi to her maiden gold in a World Cup with a world record to boot. She stands to get merit points for Olympic selection for the world record as well as the gold, apart from the Olympic quota. It could help her stay ahead of the pack, and com-

pete in her second Olympics.

Coach Deepali Deshpande was equally happy with Anjum's shooting in air rifle, even though she is known more for her expertise in the 50-metre rifle 3-position event in which she has a world record qualification score against her name.

The focus
The Indian shooters' focus will be to get more Olympic

quota places in the forthcoming World Cups not just in rifle and pistol, but also shotgun.

Saurabh was expected to win the Olympic quota, as he had shown his class in winning the Asian Games gold last year, apart from the World Championship junior gold and the Youth Olympics gold.

Manu made the 25-metre sports pistol final in a spectacular fashion with 590 out of 600, but was dejected to finish fifth.

She missed the air pistol final by one point, when she struggled to reach 573, overcoming many 9s and 8s along the way.

The gold in mixed event should do a world of good to her confidence. She had won the World Cup women's gold last year itself, and thus has the calibre to win the Olympic quota in the forthcoming World Cups in Beijing, Munich and Rio de Janeiro.

Defending champion City finally broke the resistance of West Ham in the second half to stay just one point behind Liverpool, while third-

placed Tottenham slipped to a damaging 2-0 defeat at Chelsea.

Arsenal swatted aside a limp Bournemouth team 5-1 to remain in fourth place, one point clear of Manchester United, with Romelu Lukaku taking advantage of the absence of Marcus Rashford to score twice in a 3-1 win.

Settling its nerves
Liverpool came into its match after three draws in four matches but Mane set-

tled its nerve early, heading home a cross from Trent Alexander-Arnold before the pair teamed up again, with the Senegalese forward producing an audacious back-heel strike.

Divock Origi extended the lead midway through the second period and defender Virgil van Dijk netted twice on to complete the rout.

Sergio Aguero broke the deadlock for City from the penalty spot in the 59th minute, with the spot kick

awarded after Felipe Anderson brought down Bernardo Silva.

The results: Arsenal 5 (Ozil 4, Mkhitaryan 27, Koscielny 47, Aubameyang 59, Lacazette 78) bt Bournemouth 1 (Mousset 30); Chelsea 2 (Pedro 57, Trippier 84-og) bt Tottenham 0; Crystal Palace 1 (Ward 66) lost to Manchester United 3 (Lukaku 33, 52, Young 83); Liverpool 5 (Mane 9, 20, Origi 66, van Dijk 79, 82) bt Watford 0; Manchester City 1 (Aguero 59-pen) bt West Ham 0; Southampton 2 (Romeu 23, Ward-Prowse 40) bt Fulham 0.

Chennai City can seal it with a win

The side takes on Churchill in the penultimate round

I-LEAGUE

K. KEERTHIVASAN
VASCO

Chennai City FC is on the cusp of glory. After a forgettable last year (finished eighth), the club, helmed by the redoubtable new head coach Abdul Nawas, has made a fantastic turnaround this season.

City needs (on 40 points) just one win from its last two matches to bag the crown.

The master strategist Nawas is more than eager to script a victory in its penulti-

mate I-League contest against Churchill Brothers to be held at the Tilak Maidan Stadium here on Friday, and clinch the title, with a game to spare.

Beyond expectation
All Nawas wanted, before the start of the tournament, was to finish in the top-four. "What we've achieved has been far and beyond what we expected. Realistically, we wanted to be in the top-six and hopefully in top-four," he said at the pre-match press conference here on Thursday.

Not an easy team
On taking on Churchill

Nawas gave full credit to the quartet of Spanish players for integrating with the Indian players. According to him, it happened mainly because of the humility displayed by foreigners. "They (Spain players) were willing to let go of their egos," he said, while admitting the huge improvements made by the local players.

For the record, City's Pedro Manzi is the top goalscorer with 19, followed by Churchill's Willis Plaza at 18.

Not an easy team
On taking on Churchill

Brothers, the Singaporean coach said, "they are not an easy team. They have a good bunch of local players who are so composed on the ball," said Nawas. In their previous match in Coimbatore, Churchill held City to a 2-2 draw.

Churchill's Romanian coach Petre Gigiu said City has the first chance to win [the I-League Trophy]. Refusing to analyse the reasons for his team's downfall, Gigiu said the away loss to Neroca was what started the decline. Add to it injuries to a few key players.

"Our job is to win and we achieved that today. We will try to win the next two matches also. And then we will see where we finally stand. We had (some) problems, especially after they scored from the penalty. But we controlled the match."

The results: At New Delhi: East Bengal 2 (Esqueda 20, Colado 43) bt Real Kashmir 1 (Katebe 67).

At Kolkata: Mohun Bagan 1 (Azhuruddin Mallick 17) lost to Indian Arrows 3 (Abhijit Sarkar 30, K. P. Rahul 74, Rohit Danu 90+5).

At Kochi: Gokulam Kerala 1 (Marcus Joseph 9) lost to Aizawl 3 (Paul Ramfangzauva 83, Lalkhawpuimawia 88, Ghanefo Kromah 90+6).

losing his cool. Kofi fouled Jhonny Acosta and earned a yellow card which became a red when the player charged threateningly at referee Rowan Arumughan. East Bengal coach Alejandro Menen-

nu. Aaron Katebe scored

from a penalty in the 67th minute but East Bengal controlled the remaining period to emerge the winner.

Real Kashmir paid dearly for Ghanaian Abednego Kofi

menen-

dez was happy with the overall performance.

"Our job is to win and we

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The I-League title race entered the final phase following East Bengal's 2-1 win over Real Kashmir at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here. The win propelled East Bengal to the second spot behind Chennai City FC.

East Bengal, 36 points from 18 matches, has two matches in hand but Chennai City, at 40 points, can seal the league if it wins against Churchill on Friday.

Watched by a sparse crowd, East Bengal dictated the match in the first half when Enrique Esqueda and Jamie Santos Colado exploited Real Kashmir, which was down to 10 men with the contest just into the 28th mi-



Off the mark: Enrique Esqueda (No. 9) celebrates after scoring East Bengal's first goal. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

nu. Aaron Katebe scored a red card when the player charged threateningly at referee Rowan Arumughan. East Bengal coach Alejandro Menen-

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Rhinos without borders is conservation credo

Asian wildlife protection experts place emphasis on expanding the species' domain to boost population

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

International boundaries will not come in the way of conservation of rhinos, said representatives of Asian countries where the one-horned herbivore thrives.

The New Delhi Declaration adopted at the second meeting of the Asian rhino range countries that ended on Thursday underscored trans-boundary collaboration among India, Nepal, and Bhutan for the conservation and protection of the greater

one-horned rhino. There are no rhinos in Bhutan, but some from the Manas National Park in adjoining Assam or Buxa Tiger Reserve in West Bengal are known to cross over occasionally.

Emphasis was also laid on expanding rhino domains within a country or between rhino range countries. Indonesia and Malaysia are the other Asian countries where the last of the rhinos live.

The current global population of the Indian one-horned rhinoceros is 3,584.



Assam's Kaziranga National Park has the bulk of 2,938 rhinos in India while Nepal 646.

Once ranging from China to Bangladesh, the Javan and Sumatran rhinos are nearing extinction.

The Sumatran rhino, the smallest of all rhino species and the only Asian rhino with two horns, became extinct in the wild in Malaysia. "There is only one found now in the Sabah island of Malaysia while Indonesia has a few," Assam-based Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, the chair of Asian Rhino Specialist Group of IUCN's Species Survival Commission, said. IUCN expands to International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Among the other decisions taken at the New Delhi meeting of the Asian rhino range countries was "making the best use of all available individuals and technologies" to accelerate natural and conservation breeding of the critically endangered Sumatran rhino.

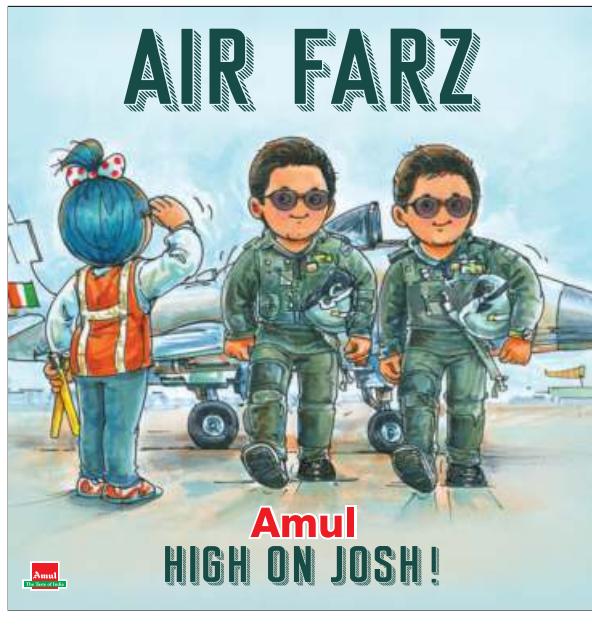
Emulating India

Part of the plan has been to replicate or develop upon the Kaziranga rhino conservation success story for Sumatran as well as the Javan rhino. Kaziranga had less than 10 rhinos when it was

declared a protected area for the animal in 1905.

On February 26, the National Rhino Conservation Strategy for India called for active engagement between India and Nepal to protect the species.

The plan said the single population of rhinos in Sukla-Phanta (Nepal), Valmiki Tiger Reserve (India) and Chitwan National Park (Nepal) and Dudhwa (India) is separated by the political boundary between the two countries.



daCunha/AB/643

Glass and cloth tell story of 300 years of slavery

Kochi Biennale work recalls voyages to and from Africa

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

Sue Williamson travelled all the way from South Africa to India to display two installations that shed light on a neglected part of history of her country and drew parallels with the city hosting the Kochi-Muziris Biennale.

The 77-year-old artist's 'Messages from the Atlantic Passage' is based on records on 300 years of slavery, beginning in the 16th century. The work has five fishing nets, filled with glass bottles containing traces of earth and suspended from the ceiling. Each of the 2,000-odd bottles is inscribed with a slave's name.

Ms. Williamson, who was born in England and migrated to Cape Town in 1948, said the work was inspired by the voyages of slave ships from Africa to the Americas in the 19th century. "The bottles and nets show how people were treated like cheap commodities," she said.

A wooden structure that is part of the installation is inscribed with the details of the journeys, including chills-



In tribute: Artist Sue Williamson poses in front of her installation showcased at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale. ■ PTI

ing lists of headcount at departure and arrival.

Ms. Williamson's second work 'One Hundred and Nineteen Deeds of Sale', is a result of her visit to Kochi last year, when she was struck by the similarities in the colonial histories of Kochi and Cape Town.

In South Africa, she found transaction records from the Cape Town Deeds Office that tell of the 17th century enslavement of Indians, many of them from the Kerala region, who were taken to Africa by the Dutch East India

Company. Ms. Williamson sourced shirts worn by the working class and wrote on them the names given to their masters.

She then dipped the T-shirts in the muddy water around Cape Town Castle, a site of enslavement, to symbolise the slaves' struggle.

During Biennale, the garments were washed at a facility frequented by Dutch officers in the colonial era and hung out to dry as part of the installation.

"It is like an act of memorialisation," the artist said.

By 2040, Arctic summers may turn ice-free

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON

The Arctic Ocean could experience ice-free summers within the next 20 years – much earlier than previously predicted – unless human greenhouse gas emissions are greatly reduced, a study warns.

Computer models predict climate change will cause the Arctic to be nearly free of sea ice during the summer by the middle of this century.

However, a closer examination of long-term temperature cycles in the tropical Pacific points towards an ice-free Arctic in September, the month with the least sea ice, on the earlier side of forecasts, according to the research published in *Geophysical Research Letters*.

Philippines' President backs smacking of kids

Vetoes Bill on corporal punishment

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MANILA

A draft law that would have made it illegal for parents to smack their children in the Philippines has been vetoed by President Rodrigo Duterte, the presidential palace said on Thursday.

The Bill would have banned physical, humiliating, or degrading acts of punishment or discipline by parents or teachers on children.

It also called for repeat offenders to undergo anger management counselling.

"I am aware that there is a growing trend, prevalent in Western nations, that sees all forms of corporal punishment as an outdated form of disciplining children," Mr. Duterte told Congress, explaining why he would not



Rodrigo Duterte

sign it into law. "I strongly believe that we should resist this trend," he said in a statement, adding that he believed parents should be able to impose corporal punishment.

The president has also called for the age of criminal liability – currently 15 years old – to be lowered, to give more teeth to a narcotics crackdown that has claimed the lives of more than 5,000 drug suspects.

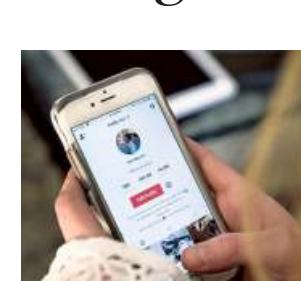
TikTok fined \$5.7 mn in U.S. for illegally gathering children's data

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

The fast-growing, Chinese-owned video sharing network TikTok agreed to pay a \$5.7 million fine to U.S. authorities to settle charges that it illegally collected personal information from children, officials said.

The U.S. Federal Trade Commission said the penalty by the social network was the largest ever in a children's privacy investigation.

The social network, which has been surging in popularity with young smartphone users and taking over from rivals like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, failed to obtain



parental consent from its underage users as required by the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act.

Officials said the company knew that many of its users were under 13 and should have taken greater precautions. TikTok said in a statement it would create a "separate app experience" for younger users with additional privacy protections.

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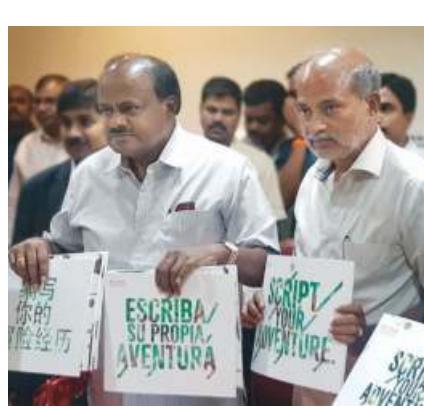
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