WEATHERWATCH
Max 32°c
Min 26°c
Humidity 89%
FORECAST Light showers

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ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE was the first external affairs minister to deliver a speech in Hindi at the United Nations General Assembly. P3

THE WORLD reacted with shock and grief over the death of Vajpayee. From Russia to Pakistan to Bangladesh, world leaders paid rich tributes to the former Indian Prime Minister. P2

NARENDRA MODI said Atal Bihari Vajpayee was a father-figure for him and the death of the former Prime Minister was a personal loss. P2

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WINDOW TO THE EAST

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Ten things the nation will never forget about Vajpayee

UJJWAL K CHOWDHURY

Much is being spoken about the former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, and rightly so. Today is the day to remember the great son of India. If we glance through his life and work, for me these ten things below stand out glowingly as lessons from his life and work for the nation.

First and foremost, Vajpayee had been a gentleman politician, and a poet politician. As several channels are showing clips of his speeches in Parliament, both as the Prime Minister and as the Leader of the Opposition, we can see that whenever he stood to speak in Parliament, no one disturbed and people listened to him with rapt attention, enjoying the way he would blend poetry into politics seamlessly. PM Nehru respected young Vajpayee as a leader in the Opposition, and sent him to represent India in UN General Assembly.

Vajpayee respected the right to dissent or disagree, as a part of polemics, and yet engaged with the dissenter, within and beyond his own party, which is so important in current times.

Second, that Vajpayee is a loved leader is proven by the fact that between 1957 to 2009, he was continuously a Parliamentarian, being elected ten times to the Lok Sabha. He believed in the seriousness of a lawmaker's job, proposed training for newbie Legislators, and proposed National Agenda of Governance including role of Parliamentarians. The purposefulness of the Parliament was writ large in his work while in the Opposition or in power.

Continued on Page 2

ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE
1924-2018

ATAL ERA ENDS

Poet-politician ex-PM Vajpayee passes away at 93

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI: Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the gentle giant of Indian politics, is no more. The former Prime Minister, whose grace, moderation and willingness to listen — contrasting with his hard-line friend and tactical foil Advani's aggression — drove the BJP to power in the 1990s, died on Thursday away from the heat and dust of contemporary politics.

The government announced seven days of state mourning to mark his passing away. The poet-politician former PM was admitted to AIIMS on June 1 with a urinary tract infection and breathed his last at 5.05 pm. He was 93 and leaves behind a foster family.

"It is with profound grief that we inform about the sad demise of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Unfortunately, his condition deteriorated over the last 36 hours and he was put on life support system. Despite the best of efforts, we have lost him today," the hospital said in a statement.

The cremation is scheduled to take place at Smriti Sthal around 5 pm on Friday. The departed leader's mortal remains will be kept at his 6-A Krishna Menon Marg residence between 6.30 am and 8.30 am on Friday for people to pay their last respects. The funeral precession will leave the premises at 1 pm.

Rich tributes poured in for Vajpayee till late at night. Modi described his passing away as "the end of an era". Every Indian would continue to be guided by his vision, he added. President Ram Nath Kovind said Vajpayee was a "true Indian statesman". "His leadership, foresight, maturity and eloquence put him in a league of his own." Congress President Rahul Gandhi said Vajpayee was loved and respected by millions. "Today, India lost a great son."

Earlier, as news of deterioration of his health spread, national leaders, including Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu, BJP brass — party President Amit Shah, veterans L.K. Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi, and Home Minister Rajnath Singh, cabinet ministers, chief ministers and opposition leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mamata Banerjee visited the hospital during the day.

The former PM was honoured with the Bharat Ratna in 2014. His combined terms of more than six-years was marked by a peace initiative with Pakistan and the 1998 Pokhran nuclear test that invited US sanctions.

Though Advani was credited with powering the BJP's rise in the 1980s on the Ayodhya temple plank, many think it was Vajpayee's moderate stance that took the party close to power. He was Prime Minister for 13 days in mid-1996 and then forced to resign ahead of the trust vote as he could not muster the numbers.

Vajpayee again became PM again in March 1998 with improved numbers and new allies like the TDP, the AIADMK, the National Conference and the Samata Party. But his government fell 13 months later on the floor of the Lok Sabha losing by one vote in the confidence motion after the AIADMK withdrew support to the BJP.

Vajpayee returned to power in 1999 and completed almost its full term till 2004 when his party lost in the polls called earlier than scheduled.

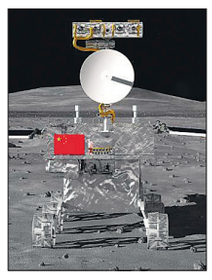
More reports on Pages 2,3 and 11

MILESTONES

1942 Joins Quit India movement, jailed
1951 Founds Jana Sangh
1957 Elected to Lok Sabha
1962 Elected to Rajya Sabha
1968 President of Jan Sangh
1975 Placed under house arrest during Emergency
1977 Founder member of Janata Party
1977 Becomes first non-Congress external affairs minister
1979 Makes memorable speech in Hindi at the UN
1980 President, BJP (1980-86)
1984 Losses Lok Sabha poll from Gwalior
1992 Conferred the Padma Vibhushan
1996 Becomes PM for only 13 days
1998 Becomes PM for second time. His government carries out nuclear tests at Pokhran in May 1998
1999 Travels to Pakistan in February 1999 by bus, starts new era of negotiations.
Wins the **Kargil War,** hailed for his leadership.
Resigns after losing vote of confidence on **April 13, 1999**
Becomes PM for third time on **October 13, 1999,** after his party and its allies regain control
2001 Talks with Musharaf at Agra Summit break down
2002 Calls first ever joint session of Parliament, pushes through POTA
2004 Concedes defeat in parliamentary polls
2014 Awarded Bharat Ratna

SPOTLIGHT

CHINA UNVEILS NEW MOON ROVER



BEIJING: China has unveiled a new lunar rover as it prepares to become the first nation in the world to explore the dark side of the moon later this year. Revealed at a press conference Wednesday, the unmanned vehicle is 1.5 meters (5 feet) long and about one meter (3.3 feet) wide and tall, with two foldable solar panels and six wheels.

China announced its intentions in 2015 to send a rover to the dark side of the moon. In May this year, it launched a relay satellite to establish a communication link between Earth and the planned lunar probe. The country's last lunar rover — named Yutu, or Jade Rabbit — ceased operation in August 2016 after 972 days of service on the surface of the moon as part of the Chang'e 3 mission. China was only the third nation to successfully carry out a lunar landing, after the United States and Russia. Yutu's successor is currently nameless, with a global competition underway to choose a moniker. The winner will receive $435 and tickets to watch the launch live.

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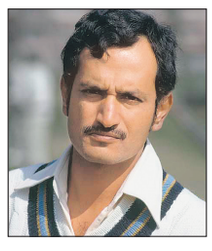
ASHUTOSH QUITS AAM ADMI PARTY

NEW DELHI: Senior leader Ashutosh jolted the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Wednesday by quitting it citing personal reasons, but AAP convenor and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal refused to let him go. Ashutosh is the latest in a series of senior leaders to quit the AAP, which has ruled Delhi since 2015. Those who exited earlier included Yogendra Yadav, Prashant Bhushan, Mayank Gandhi, Anjali Damania, Anand Kumar, Ajit Jha and Shazia Ilmi. Ashutosh, who joined the party in 2014 after being a journalist for 23 years, took to Twitter to announce he was quitting and thanking the party for its support. **PTI**

AJIT WADEKAR PASSES AWAY



LONDON: Ajit Wadekar did not possess the princely demeanour of Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi but with his middle-class grit coupled with pragmatic thinking, he scripted one of the most glorious chapters in Indian cricket history. An astute thinker of the game, Wadekar blended the copybook 'Bombay School of Batsmanship' with his carefree approach that included muscular pulls and audacious hook shots. His biggest achievement certainly was leading the country to twin series victories in England and the West Indies in 1971 but he was much more than just that. The man who breathed his last in Mumbai played just 37 Tests and had only one hundred against his name. But numbers do not exactly tell the story of a cricketer, who possibly made Indian cricket captaincy a coveted job. Wadekar epitomised the 'khadoos' nature of Mumbai cricketers but he could also enthral the cricket lovers with his audacious pull shots and the slog sweeps.

Page 14

Expect steep rise in fuel prices as rupee falls further

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI: India's crude import bill could jump by about $ 26 billion in 2018-19 as the rupee had dropped to a record low making oil import costlier, government officials said on Thursday.

Besides, the rupee hitting a record low of 70.32 to a US dollar in the opening deal on Thursday will also lead to a hike in the retail selling price of petrol, diesel and cooking gas (LPG).

India, which imports over 80 per cent of its oil needs, spent $ 87.7 billion (Rs 5.65 lakh crore) on importing 220.43 million tonne (MT) of crude oil in 2017-18. For 2018-19, the imports are pegged at almost 227 MT.

"We at the beginning of the financial year estimated that crude oil import bill will be around $ 108 billion (Rs 7.02 lakh crore) at an average crude oil price of $ 65 per barrel and exchange rate of Rs 65 per dollar," an official said.

But the exchange rate has been at an average of Rs 67.6 till August 14. If the rupee is to stay around 70 per dollar for the rest of the ongoing fiscal, the oil import bill will be $ 114 billion, he said.

The rupee has been among the worst performing currencies in Asia, witnessing 8.6 per cent slump this year.

Fanned by a higher oil import bill, India's trade deficit, or the gap between exports and imports, in July widened to $ 18 billion, the most in more than five years.

Trade shortfall puts pressure on the current account deficit (CAD), a key vulnerability for the economy.

Rupee depreciation will result in higher earnings for exporters as well as domestic oil producers like Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) who bill refiners in US dollar terms. But this would result in rise in petrol and diesel prices, with full impact likely to be visible later this month.

"Though oil firms fix retail selling price of petrol and diesel on a daily basis, the inputs for that fixation are an average of previous fortnight. So today's rate is based on average benchmark of international oil prices and the exchange rate of August 1-15.

"And since the rupee in the beginning of the month was at 68.3 to 68.6 a dollar, the exact impact of today's depreciation is not visible," he said.

Prices of petrol and diesel were on Thursday hiked by 6 paise a litre each to Rs 77.20 and Rs 68.78, respectively in Delhi. Rates are highest in two months.

Fuel prices in Delhi are the cheapest in all metros and most state capitals due to lower sales tax or VAT.

If oil prices continue at these levels and rupee at 70 a dollar, retail rates should go up by 50-60 paisa a litre.

Kerala flood toll crosses 80, Army, Navy, Air Force join rescue efforts

AGENCIES

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Army detachments from Pune and Bhopal landed in Kerala on Thursday and the Navy deployed 21 teams as part of the stepped-up fight against floods that have claimed more than 80 lives so far.

PM Narendra Modi asked the defence ministry to step up rescue operations across the flood-hit state after Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan called him. Union home minister Rajnath who also spoke to Vijayan said the said the Centre was dispatching additional teams of the National Disaster Response Force to Kerala in response to the CM's appeal.

The Indian Air Force launched rescue operations in Pathanamthitta district which is one of the worst affected places and winched people to safety. The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) was in action in Thrissur district's Arattupuzha village, rescuing people from flooded areas.

People being rescued from flooded Kochi on Thursday. PTI PHOTO

The flood situation in the state worsened on Thursday amid nonstop rain with the public transport system virtually collapsing in many parts of central Kerala after the Southern Railways and Kochi Metro suspended their operations due to floods.

Seven people were killed in a massive landslide in Palakkad this morning, taking the death toll in Kerala's worst natural calamity to 87. Three persons are still trapped at the site. Many areas of the state remain marooned with rail, road and air services severely crippled across the state. All 14 districts of the state are under red alert as heavy rain continued in many parts of the state.

ANI news agency reported that 82 tourists are stranded inside a bus in Munnar. All routes are either flooded, or blocked due to mudslides. The floods have affected the transport system to the Kochi city.

"Due to rise in water level at Bridge No 176 on Downline between Angamali and Aluva, the services on this bridge is suspended," a Southern railway spokesman said in a statement on Thursday.

The Kochi Metro Rail Limited also suspended its operations on Thursday morning after flood water submerged its yard in Muttom near Aluva.

On Wednesday, the Cochin International Airport shut down flight operations till Saturday as water entered in the airport area following continuous rains and the opening of dam shutters in Periyar river.

People in downstream areas have been severely affected after shutters of all major dams including Mullaperiyar, Cheruthoni, part of Idukki reservoir, and Idamalayar were opened.

Nation's 1st Born-in-India penguin is here!

AGENCIES

MUMBAI: For now, it is known as the 'Freedom Baby'. Mumbai's Byculla zoo welcomed the first penguin to be born in India on Independence Day.

Flipper, one of the eight Humbolt penguins brought to Byculla zoo, had laid an egg on July 5 after mating with Molt, another of the penguins. Over the last few days, Flipper went without food to sit on her egg and took breaks only when her partner stepped in.

"The 40-day incubation period ended on Wednesday and the egg hatched in the evening," said Dr Sanjay Tripathi, director of Byculla zoo.

The new-born at Byculla zoo in Mumbai. PTI PHOTO

Shiv Sena's Aaditya Thackeray, who was instrumental in getting the penguins to Byculla zoo, shared the news on Twitter, calling it the 'Freedom Baby' as it was born on Independence Day.

"We have some great news coming in from Rajmata Jijamaya Udyaan (Byculla Zoo)!... The parents and the chic are doing well. My congratulations to all those involved in this process, especially Dr Tripathi & his team and Sudhir Naikji!" Aaditya Thackeray tweeted.

Aaditya Thackeray had promoted the project to bring the penguins to Mumbai zoo from Seoul, South Korea. Even in the face of criticism, the tiny colony of penguins was brought to Byculla zoo in June 2016.

The death of one of the penguins had led to immense criticism. But with the birth of the penguin, zoo authorities will have some relief as questions had been raised about the feasibility of the penguins surviving in tropical weather.

ATAL ERA ENDS

THE FUNERAL will take place at Smriti Sthal in New Delhi at around 5pm.

Ten things the nation will never forget about Atal Bihari Vajpayee

Continued from Page 1

Third, Vajpayee surely was a value oriented leader. He lost his first government of 13 days in 1996 for lack of numbers in LS, and also his next government in 13 months, in 1998, again for lack of support of just one more MP. But he did not compromise on ethics. Contrast this with the times today. He was optimist that if your politics is right, people will back you up. His writing, 'Andhiara fir hatega, ek naya savera ayega' and poem, 'Geet Naya Gata Hoon', bear testimony to his spirit against adversity and acceptance of the same to win another day. People rewarded him with full majority in 1999 and he ruled full term as the first non-Congress PM to have finished a full term.

Fourth, Vajpayee had been thoroughly a nationalist, but one who advocated and practiced positive nationalism. He proudly took Hindi to the UN first time, and spoke in it in the General Assembly. He represented the best of Indian ethos and culture.

Fifth, this nationalism of Vajpayee made him perhaps the only Right Wing leader of India ever who represented the Ganga-Jamuni culture of India to the hilt, and is loved by Hindus and Muslims alike in Lucknow. He was elected with record margin as MP from Lucknow which has a large percentage of Muslim votes. Vajpayee bitterly criticised the failure of Raj Dharma during Gujarat riots, which was an indictment of the government of the day in the state. His philosophy of being a Hindu, so aptly described in his poem, 'Hindu tan man, Hindu jeevan', stands in sharp contrast to the aggressive no-holds barred version of Hindutva today.

Sixth, Vajpayee was the man who ushered in an infrastructural revolution in India. His model of development was inclusive, for the common man on the street. He initiated the Delhi Metro rail as a mass transit system, and encouraged Sheila Dixit of Congress to take it forward. He brought in National Highway Development Project leading to East West North South Corridor or the Golden Quadrilateral, and put his confidante B C Khanduri to lead the project to success which has surely revolutionized road transport in India. He envisaged and executed the first round of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana which connected rural India greatly. The New Telecom Policy of 1999 brought in by him was also a crucial part of Indian telecom revolution.

Seventh, Vajpayee was the Messenger of Peace. Against many odds, he himself rode a bus to Lahore in 1999 for Indo-Pak peace, along with many Indian celebrities. Sad that the Pak hawks got the better of the civilian government in Pakistan and did not allow it to go ahead and then Kargil war was imposed. But it is to the credit of PM Vajpayee that he did not allow India to cross the Line of Control during Kargil War to avoid being called the aggressor and due to the Pak Nuclear status. He, even in duress, gave peace a chance.

Eighth, PM Vajpayee gave a great push to science and technology. He conducted Nuclear Test in Pokhran 2 in 1998, and made the hero of this achievement, Dr APJ Kalam as the next President of India, who was later named as the true People's President. Vajpayee coined the slogan: Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan. He promoted scientific spirit, and not just technology.

Ninth, Vajpayee as a Prime Minister was against rule through ordinances, and while turning POTO into POTA (Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance/Act), he took the entire belligerent Opposition into confidence through his now famous tea-party diplomacy. His was a perspective of reconciliation with the Opposition, and respect and consensus for the allies (he ran a government of 24 parties and Akalis and Shiv Sena still calls for the 'Vajpayee touch' in current dispensation).

Tenth, as a person and politician, he was not a hypocrite. The famous line of his, "I am a bachelor, but not a brahmachari", says it all. When he disputed on a serious point of difference, he did not play Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. When the RSS ideologue Govindacharya called him 'mukhouta', he ensured that this view does not gain currency. Govindacharya is still in political wilderness.

So, here has been a Right Wing leader (who was briefly into communism as a young adult during Quit India movement), who was truly the leader of a diverse India of many languages and religions, for whom reconciliation and engagement were the key words of politics, and who considered peaceful and mass-oriented transformation as the only to go ahead.

Rest in Peace, honorable former Prime Minister of India, Sri Atal Behari Vajpayee.

(*The writer is a media academic and columnist, being the School Head of School of M edia, Pearl Academy, Delhi and Mumbai campuses today, and former Media Dean of Symbiosis and Amity Universities*)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi pays tribute to Atal Bihari Vajpayee in New Delhi on Thursday. PTI PHOTO

I have lost a father figure: PM Modi

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi - whose government conferred Bharat Ratna on Atal Bihari Vajpayee and declared his birthday, December 25, as "Good Governance Day" — mourned the passing of the BJP patriarch on Thursday in a series of deeply emotional tweets.

The three-time Prime Minister, who had been hospitalised since June 11, died a little after 5 pm.

Calling it the "end of an era", PM Modi said the "exemplary leadership" of Atal Bihari Vajpayee had "set the foundations for a strong, prosperous and inclusive India in the 21st century". The "futuristic policies" of the three-time Prime Minister had "touched the lives of each and every citizen of India".

India grieves the demise of our beloved Atal Ji.

His passing away marks the end of an era. He lived for the nation and served it assiduously for decades. My thoughts are with his family, BJP Karyakartas and millions of admirers in this hour of sadness. Om Shanti.

It was Atal Ji's exemplary leadership that set the foundations for a strong, prosperous and inclusive India in the 21st century. His futuristic policies across various sectors touched the lives of each and every citizen of India.

His initial tweet, a deeply emotional one in Hindi, read, "I'm speechless, I feel a great void, yet am overcome by emotions".

Vajpayee's passing, he said in another tweet, was a "personal and irreplaceable loss" him. "I have countless fond memories with him. He was an inspiration to Karyakartas like me. I will particularly remember his sharp intellect and outstanding wit," read another tweet by the Prime Minister, who had visited the 93-year-old leader five times since his admission in Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences on June 11.

Last evening, the Prime Minister visited Mr Vajpayee and stayed for 50 minutes after the hospital announced that he had to be put on life support systems after his condition turned critical. This afternoon, he returned again, minutes after Amit Shah rushed back after his morning visit.

Vajpayee, who ruled the country for 13 days in 1996, 13 months in 1998 and for five years from 1999, had retired from public life over the last few years due to his failing health. But the friends and well-wishers he won over his 47-year career in parliament streamed into AIIMS for over 24 hours to wish him a speedy recovery - a reflection of his politics and personality.

"HE WORKED IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST RATHER THAN PERSONAL INTEREST, HE BROUGHT A POLITICAL STABILITY TO OUR COUNTRY.

YOGI ADITYANATH, UTTAR PRADESH CM

"DEEPLY SADDENED BY THE DEMISE OF SHRI. ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE JI, ONE OF THE GREATEST LEADERS IN INDIAN POLITICS.

SURESH PRABHU, CIVIL AVIATIONS MINISTER

India has lost a great son, says Rahul Gandhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI: Congress chief Rahul Gandhi, who was one of the first to meet former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee after his hospitalisation in June, was also among the first today to mourn his death. "Today India lost a great son. Former PM, Atal Bihari Vajpayee ji, was loved and respected by millions. My condolences to his family & all his admirers. We will miss him," Rahul Gandhi's tweet read.

In a letter to Vajpayee's adopted daughter Namita Kaul Bhattacharya, former prime minister Manmohan Singh said Vajpayee was a "great patriot" and people from all walks of life, irrespective of their political leanings, loved and respected him. Describing Vajpayee as a great prime minister and an outstanding parliamentarian, the Congress leader said the former premier was an excellent orator and an impressive poet.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who died a little after 5 pm today after a long illness, was known for winning over adversaries despite ideological differences. It reflected at Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences as politicians of all hues flocked to meet the leader in his last hours.

From Trinamool chief Mamata Banerjee, to Kashmir leader Farooq Abdullah, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, a number of opposition leaders had made a beeline for AIIMs.

Atal Vihari Vajpayee's relations with the Gandhi family had always been cordial. It was Rahul Gandhi's grandfather, former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who, hugely impressed by Mr Vajpayee's debut speech in parliament, had predicted that this "young man" will one day become Prime Minister.

After Jawaharlal Nehru's death in 1964, Mr Vajpayee had paid tribute to him in a steller speech in Rajya Sabha.

Vajpayee's relation with former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was also cordial. In an interview, Vajpayee once said that Rajiv Gandhi, after coming to know that he was ailing, had included him in India's delegation to the UN and asked him to get treatment there.

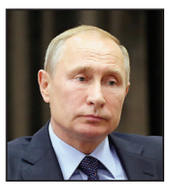
WHAT THE WORLD SAID

Vajpayee was a renowned statesman who contributed to bringing a change in India-Pakistan relations and remained a key supporter of SAARC and regional cooperation for development. The Government and people of Pakistan extend their heartfelt condolences to his family and to the Government and people of India.

PAKISTAN GOVERNMENT

We are deeply shocked at the sad demise of the former Prime Minister of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee, one of the most famous sons of India. He will be remembered for contributing towards good governance and for highlighting issues affecting the common people of India as well as for regional peace and prosperity. His tireless work for the welfare of the people of India will inspire future generations of leaders. An excellent orator and a poet Shri Vajpayee took significant strides towards acceleration of inclusive economic growth in India. Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee was our great friend and highly respected in Bangladesh. As a token of recognition for his invaluable contribution to our Liberation War in 1971

BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT



We mourn the death of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a great statesman. His name became an integral part of a whole era in Indian politics. His devoted service to the nation can hardly be overestimated. Mr Vajpayee enjoyed due respect in India and globally. We knew him also as a poet, a man of knowledge and a true friend of our country, where he is well-known as one of the architects of our long-lasting and time-tested privileged strategic partnership

RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT

Vajpayee had put India onto the global nuke stage

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI: Was Atal Bihari Vajpayee a moderate? Was he a hawk? The jury will be out for ever on this. Because the Pokhran nuclear test under his auspices and his bus trip to Lahore will be cited with equal force by rival camps debating the issue. Way back in 1964, after China detonated a 16-kiloton bomb becoming the world's fifth nuclear power, Vajpayee, a Jana Sangh MP in the Rajya Sabha, had declared that "the answer to an atom bomb is an atom bomb, nothing else".

Vajpayees words were not new at the time, for the Bharatiya Jana Sangh had expressed its unstinted support to making India a nuclear-armed nation as part of its "Hindu nationalist" agenda.

The statement was met with thunderous approbation and was crucial coming as it did barely two years after Jawaharlal Nehru's India had suffered a humiliating defeat to China in the 1962 war. Twenty-four years later, Vajpayee's India shook the world with the Pokhran nuclear tests and emerged as a nuclear power in 1998.

The Jana Sangh and Vajpayee's commitment to nuclear research was so colossal that in 1969, economist and party member Subramanian Swamy published a comprehensive study on Indian nuclear strategy titled 'Systems Analysis of Strategic Defence Needs' in the Economic and Political Weekly. Swamy argued that while India could be faced with a nuclear threat from China, other superpowers or nuclear nations aimed to keep India from acquiring such arsenal as it would diminish their power.

'We may be faced with a nuclear threat from China and be without help because a direct confrontation among the superpowers which have nuclear capability is impossible and has been made remote by mutual agreements among them. Also, it is in the superpowers' interest to keep other countries like India from acquiring nuclear defence capability as it would reduce their own manoeuvrability and power," he wrote in the abstract of the paper.

When Indira Gandhi conducted the Pokhran-I test in 1974 on Buddha Purnima, she called it a "peaceful nuclear explosion" to pacify the western powers and avoid sanctions from them. The ploy didn't work.

For more than two decades since then, successive Prime Ministers such as PV Narasimha Rao attempted to revive nuclear research, only to be thwarted by US surveillance satellites and threat of sanctions. In 1995, Rao approved a nuclear test, but had to abort it after the CIA detected suspicious movement at Pokhran.

A subsequent New York Times report on 15 December, 1995, on the same sent alarm bells ringing through the power corridors of Washington, compelling US Ambassador to New Delhi Frank Wisner to return to New Delhi with photographs of the hole being dug at the test site and caveats of impending sanctions if India went ahead with it. Just before elections in 1996, Rao again tried to conduct nuclear tests, but a courtesy call from CIA officials put an end to that as well. Vajpayee's first steps towards nuclear testing

That year in May, Vajpayee came to power as the head of a rocky coalition government and took the first steps towards nuclear testing. He called his private secretary Shakti Sinha and asked him to locate chief scientific adviser Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, who was also the secretary of the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO). However, before the preparations could take shape, Vajpayee's government fell within a mere 13 days. This was also before the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was ratified by 149 countries at the United Nations.

Subsequent governments headed by HD Deve Gowda and IK Gujral did not bother with the nuclear programme, and the plans were put in cold storage.

Bhabha Atomic Research Centre director Anil Kakodar, who was involved in the 1974 and 1998 nuclear tests, later said that one of the reasons conducting the nuclear tests were important for India was that post-1974, China had begun sharing technology and materials with Pakistan. When the BJP government came back to power in March 1998, with Vajpayee at its helm again, the party veteran and prime minister began laying the ground for the nuclear tests. On 8 April, he summoned Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) chief R Chidambaram and DRDO chief APJ Abdul Kalam to give them the thumbs-up for the tests, reported India Today. Principal secretary Brajesh Mishra and Vajpayee's closest aide, was responsible for conducting the entire operation from the Prime Minister's Office.

The entire operation was conducted in such high secrecy that nobody except the aforementioned and home minister LK Advani knew about it.

On the morning of 11 May, members of the Cabinet Committee on Security were formally informed about it. Pokhran was host to an unusual set of guests in the balmy month of May 1998. Along with Kalam and Chidambaram, director of test sites preparation Dr K Santhanam and a team of nuclear scientists and engineers moved at night to avoid the prying eyes of US spy satellites. The nuclear devices were flown and driven in from different places. After the wind died down and under cloudy skies, at 3.45 pm, three devices — thermonuclear device, the fission device, and a sub-kiloton device — were detonated on 11 May, which also happened to be Buddha Purnima. Thanks to the weather condition, a US satellites could detect nothing. Later in the day, Vajpayee, the weeks-old government, announced the news to the world.

Atal Bihrari Vajpayee inspects the site in Pokhran where India carried out a nuclear test. PTI PHOTO

ATAL ERA ENDS

OFTEN DESCRIBED as the right man in the wrong party, there were also those who belittled him as a moderate "mask" to a hardline Hindu nationalist ideology.

He scripted history with Hindi at UN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

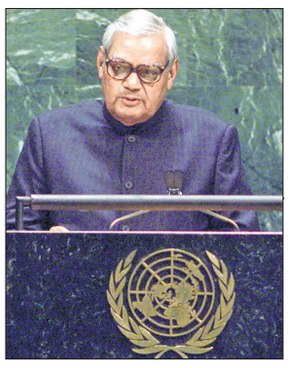
NEW YORK: Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the first external affairs minister to deliver a speech in Hindi at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), effectively raising the stand of India on key issues, such as nuclear disarmament, state-sponsored terrorism and reforms of the world body.

Vajpayee, in his role as external affairs minister and prime minister, visited the UN headquarters to deliver speeches to the UNGA on seven occasions from 1977 to 2003. Known for his great oratory skills, Vajpayee first addressed the UNGA at its 32nd session in 1977 as foreign minister under the Janata Party government headed by then Prime Minister Morarji Desai.

"I am a newcomer to the United Nations, but India is not, having been associated actively with the Organisation from its very inception," he said in his historic address. "As one who has been a parliamentarian in my own country for two decades and more, I feel a special sense of exhilaration in attending this assembly of nations for the first time," he said.

It was the first time that an Indian leader had delivered a speech in Hindi at the UNGA as other Indian leaders had opted to speak in English, the dominant language at the forum. It is said that Vajpayee, who was also fluent in English, was the force behind uplifting Hindi to the international platform by using the language at the UN every time de delivered a speech.

He touched the subject of Non-Aligned Movement and said that India "stands firmly for peace, non-alignment and friendship with all countries".



Vajpayee addresses the UNGA. PTI

eign minister and raised the issue of nuclear disarmament. "There is no let-up in the arms race either quantitatively or qualitatively. Disarmament is still a distant goal, and the probability of a nuclear war looms over us like a menacing shadow. India believes that partial measures, such as the creation of zones free of nuclear weapons comprising the nuclear 'have-nots', are not likely to generate any genuine feeling of security unless there is, at the same time, significant progress towards nuclear disarmament," he said.

In 1998, Vajpayee returned to deliver a speech at the UNGA as prime minister and met then Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in New York. "India has demonstrated that democracy can take root in a developing country. I am confident that the Indian experience will prove that democracy can also provide the basis for stable, long-term economic growth in developing societies. That is the path that the people of India have chosen, and I stand before the Assembly today as the symbol of this new resurgent India," he said.

Prayers and yagna for Atal Bihari Vajpayee at Varanasi on Thursday. PTI

In one of his finest hours...

MANASH GHOSH

One of the finest hours of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's life to which I was a witness at the massive Opposition rally at Delhi's Boat Club held to mark the release of prominent opposition leaders who were incarcerated during the Emergency imposed by Mrs Indira Gandhi will always remain etched in my memory.

On that wintry afternoon of late February, 1977, the vast sprawling greenery flanking the Rajpath looked like a sea of humanity. Delhi until that date had never seen such a record turnout as this was the first time that jailed leaders of major Opposition parties like Morarji Desai, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, LK Advani, Nanaji Deshmukh, Raj Narain, Madhu Limaye, and a Young Turk of the Congress fold, Chandrasekhar, who too had been put behind bars, were to share the same dais and for the first time address a post Emergency public rally. All Delhi roads on that day led to Boat Club. People from Delhi's neighbouring towns and also Delhi's gentry flocked to the venue in their cars, scooters, hired buses and trucks and even on foot to listen to what these leaders had to say about ending the "oppressive" and "dictatorial" regime of Mrs Gandhi and the need to save democracy.

An OB van of Doordarshan was also parked on Rajpath not to do a live coverage but to record the event. Half way through the rally the sound system suddenly stopped working. Vajpayee was then on his feet and with his oratorical skills had held the crowd spellbound. There was power shut down and the crowd got restive. Vajpayee made a fervent appeal to the crowd repeatedly, "*Aap log shaant rahiye. Koi harkat na kare. Yeh hamaare virodhion ka saazish (conspiracy)hai*".But the crowd wouldn't listen to him. The OB van of the DD suddenly became their target.Vajpayee realizing that the situation may go out of control gave an ultimatum: "*Aaplog yadi garbar karte hain to hum bhashan nehi denge aur yahan se chale jayenge.*"

His warning worked like a magic and the angry crowd which was on its feet for the next two hours listened to the speeches of India's new emerging leaders spellbound. Morarji Desai, Vajpayee, Advani, Raj Narain and Madhu Limaye for the first time talked about the need for devising a joint strategy of voting Mrs Gandhi and her Congress out of power through elections by forming a joint front of opposition parties.

WHO SAID WHAT

Deeply saddened at the passing away of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. A reasoned critique in opposition and a seeker of consensus as PM, Atal Ji was a democrat to the core. In his passing away, India has lost a great son and an era has come to an end. My deepest condolences.

PRANAB MUKHERJEE, Former President

I have learnt with profound sorrow about the sad demise of Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee ji. An excellent orator, an impressive poet, an exceptional Public Servant, an outstanding Parliamentarian and a great Prime Minister, Shri Vajpayee Ji stood among the tallest leaders of modern India, who spent his whole life serving our great country. His services to our nation will be remembered for a long time to come

MANMOHAN SINGH, Former Prime Minister

Extremely sad to hear of the passing away of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, our former Prime Minister and a true Indian statesman. His leadership, foresight, maturity and eloquence put him in a league of his own. Atalji, the Gentle Giant, will be missed by one and all.

RAM NATH KOVIND, President

Vajpayee was a great leader with a great sense of compassion and humour. He will be remembered fondly by a vast number of us.

RATAN TATA, Chairman, Tata Sons

He will be remembered for ushering in the connectivity revolution in the country. His personality, oratory, devotion to duty and friendliness all combined in his remarkable leadership will be remembered for a a long time to come.

M VENKAIAH NAIDU, Vice-President

I am deeply grieved over demise of Vajpayeeji. India has lost one of its tallest leaders. He was loved by the people of India and of course the people of Odisha as well. May his soul rest in peace.

NAVIN PATNAIK, CM, Odisha

Chaats, kebabs, prawns: He loved a good platter...

NEW DELHI: Such was Atal Bihari Vajpayee's love for food that it once took a wily plan by his aides to deploy Bollywood star Madhuri Dixit to draw him away from gulab jamun at an official lunch.

Close aides and journalists recalled his fondness for gastronomical delights particularly sweets and sea food, his favourite being a platter of prawns. Senior journalist Rasheed Kidwai remembered how while attending an official lunch, Vajpayee, then the Prime Minister, was headed for the food counter even though he was on a strict diet.

Anxious aides then struck on a plan. They immediately introduced him to Dixit who was in attendance, and soon the film buff in Vajpayee took over as the two went on to talk about movies.

"Meanwhile, the aides quickly removed the desserts from his line of vision," recalled Kidwai.

Bureaucrats who worked with Vajpayee said that wherever he went he insisted on tasting the local cuisine. "So it was phuchkas in Kolkata, biriyani and halim in Hyderabad, Galoti kebabs in Lucknow. He specially-liked pakodas with lots of chat masala accompanied with masala tea," said one bureaucrat. Those close to him recalled how he relished every meal he ate.

On numerous occasions journalists were treated to dishes cooked by the Vajpayee himself. "He would cook at least one dish for us. It could be a dessert or something non-vegetarian," recalled a journalist.

A close aide said that Vajpayee used to pop in salted peanuts throughout Cabinet meetings and wanted his plate to be replenished each time it went empty.

While Lalji Tandon, known as his protege, was tasked to bring him kebabs from the Chowk area in Lucknow, Union Minister Vijay Goel brought him bedni aloo and chaat from Old Delhi.

Vice President Venkaiah Naidu would bring him prawns from Andhra Pradesh, said a close aide.

Another aide recalled how, despite being unwell, Vajpayee would keep having kaju and samosas. **PTI**

First Tango with US

NEW DELHI: The Indo-American relationship progressed to a new level under Atal Bihari Vajpayee and George Bush though the two countries used to be at an arm's length before that, US Ambassador Kenneth I Juster said on Thursday.

The ambassador was speaking during a discussion here on "Evolution of US India relationship" with Lalit Mansingh, former Foreign Secretary of India and Ambassador to the United States.

"The Indo-US relationship used to be at an arm's length before the times of Vajpayee and Bush, who took the relationship to a new level," the US Ambassador said.

Agreeing with Juster, Mansingh said, "Indian diaspora did not play a major role in foreign policy formation until recent years when Indian immigrants distinguished themselves and the government focused on an outreach programme and used the Indian-American community as a lobby for betterment of Indo-US relationship".

"Indian culture is also doing well in the United States and people don't look for patronage from the government for the purpose. Most significant presence of Indians in the United States is of students and professionals," he said.

Over 75,000 Indians study in the United States and 15 per cent of the Silicon Valley start-ups are owned by people of Indian origin, he noted. Talking about the future of Indo-US relationship, Ambassador Juster said, "The new frontier of US-India relationship is the economic relationship between the two country and we are far far away from fulfillment of the potential. India needs to open up further for innovation and entrepreneurs". **PTI**

ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE (1924 – 2018)

A leader admired at home and abroad

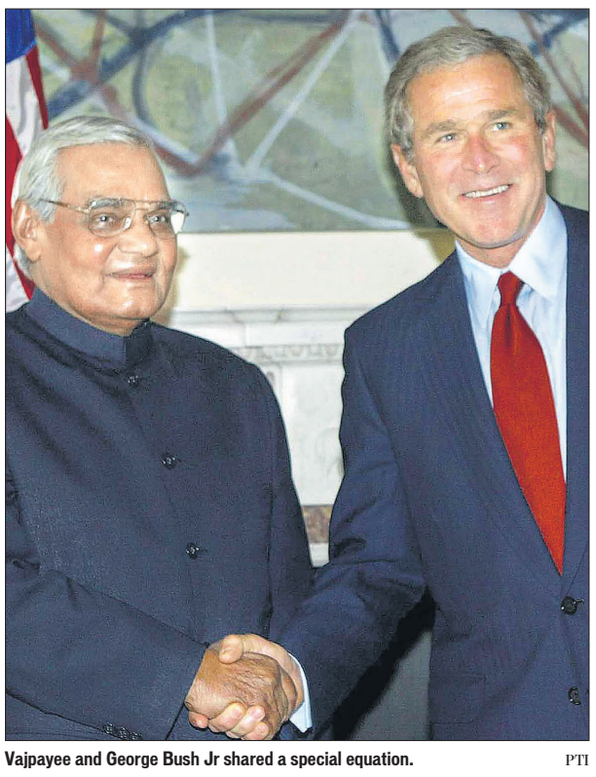
INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI: He was a man of moderation in a fraternity of jingoistic nationalists; a peace visionary in a region driven by religious animosity; and a man who believed in India's destiny and was ready to fight for it.

Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee (93), who died on Thursday, will go down in history as a person who tried to end years of hostility with Pakistan and put development on the front burner of the country's political agenda. He was also the first non-Congress Prime Minister to complete a full five-year term.

Even though he lived the last 13 years of his life in virtual isolation, dogged by debilitating illnesses and bedridden, he has left an enduring legacy for the nation and the region where he was much loved and respected across the political spectrum and national boundaries, including in Pakistan.

In the tumultuous period he presided over the destiny of the world's largest democracy, Vajpayee stunned the world by making India a declared nuclear state and then almost went to war with Pakistan before making peace with it in the most dramatic fashion. In the process, his popularity came to match that of Indira Gandhi, a woman he admired for her guts even as he hated her politics.



Vajpayee and George Bush Jr shared a special equation. PTI

The lowest point in his career came when he lost the 1984 Lok Sabha polls, that too from his birthplace Gwalior, after Rajiv Gandhi won an overwhelming majority following his mother Indira Gandhi's assassination. And the BJP he led ended up with just two seats in the 545-member Lok Sabha, in what looked like the end of the road for the right-wing party. In no time, Vajpayee was replaced and "eclipsed" by his long-time friend LK Advani.

Although they were the best of friends publicly, Vajpayee never fully agreed with Advani's and the assorted Hindu nationalist groups' strident advocacy of Hindutva, an ideology ranged against the idea of secular India. Often described as the right man in the wrong party, there were also those who belittled him as a moderate "mask" to a hardline Hindu nationalist ideology. Often he found his convictions and value systems at odds with the party, but the bachelor-politician never went against it.

It was precisely this persona of Vajpayee — one merged in Hindutva ideology yet seemingly not wholly willing to bow to it — that won him admirers cutting across the political spectrum. It was this trait that made him the Prime Minister when the BJP's allies concluded they needed a moderate to steer a hardliner, pro-Hindu party.

He brought into governance measures that created for India a distinct international status on the diplomatic and economic fronts. In his third prime ministerial stint, Vajpayee launched a widely acclaimed diplomatic initiative by starting a bus service between New Delhi and Pakistan's Lahore city. Its inaugural run in February 1999 carried Vajpayee and was welcomed on the border by his Pakistan counterpart Nawaz Sharif. It was suspended only after the 2001 terror attack on the Indian Parliament that nearly led to a war between the two nuclear-armed neighbours.

The freeze between the two countries, including an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation on the border for nearly a year, was finally cracked in the spring of 2003 when Vajpayee, while in Kashmir, extended a 'hand of friendship' to Pakistan. That led to the historic summit in January 2004 with then President Pervez Musharraf in Islamabad — a remarkable U-turn after the failed summit in Agra of 2001. Despite the two men being so far apart in every way, Musharraf developed a strong liking for the Indian leader.

His unfinished task, one that he would probably rue, would be the peace process with Pakistan that he had vowed to pursue to its logical conclusion and a resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

unforgettable

Atal Bihari Vajpayee will be remembered for his oratory skills for a long, long time. Here are excerpts from his select speeches on a range of subjects, from nuclear tests and Kashmir to education and freedom of the press.

Education, in the truest self of the term, is a process of self-discovery. It is the art of self-sculpture. It trains the individual not so much in specific skills or in specific branch of knowledge but in the flowering of his or her latent intellectual, artistic and humanist capacities. The test of education is whether it imparts an urge for learning.

(December 28, 2002: Inaugural speech of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of UGC)

The Pokhran-2 nuclear tests were conducted neither for self-glorification, nor for any display of machismo. But this has been our policy, and I think it is also the policy of the nation, that there should be minimum deterrence, which should also be credible. This is why we took the decision to conduct tests.

(In Parliament on the 1998 nuclear tests)

You can change friends but not neighbours.

(In Parliament in May 2003)

One cannot wish away the fact that before good neighbours can truly fraternise with each other, they must first mend their fences.

(At Peking University on June 23, 2003)

If I break the party and forge new alliances to come to power, then I will not like to touch that power even with a pincer.

(While replying to the no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha in 1996)

Mutual suspicions and petty rivalries have continued to haunt us. As a result, the peace dividend has bypassed our region. History can remind us, guide us, teach us or warn us; it should not shackle us. We have to look forward now, with a collective approach in mind.

(Talking on South Asia at the 12th SAARC Summit in Islamabad January 2004)

The freedom of the press is an integral part of Indian democracy. It is protected by the Constitution. It is guarded in a more fundamental way by our democratic culture. This national culture not only respects freedom of thought and expression, but also has nurtured a diversity of viewpoints unmatched anywhere in the world.

(September 13, 2013: Speech at the 125th anniversary of The Hindu)

Persecution on account of one's beliefs and insistence that all must accept a particular point of view is unknown to our ethos

(September 13, 2013: At the 125th anniversary of The Hindu)

Gun can solve no problem; brotherhood can. Issues can be resolved if we move forward guided by the three principles of Insaaniyat (humanism), Jamhooriyat (democracy) and Kashmiriyat (Kashmir's legacy of amity).

(April 23, 2003, in Parliament on Kashmir)

North-East Chronicle

ASSAM STATE ELECTION COMMISSION has appointed the Dy Commissioner, Goalpara as District Election Officer for Goalpara District for conduct of ensuing Election to Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council.

Manipur University agitation to be suspended from today

REMOVAL OF V-C The agitation began on May 30, being spearheaded by Manipur Univesity Students Union, Manipur University Teachers Association and University Staffs' Association

AGENCIES

IMPHAL: The 75-day long agitation at Manipur University will be temporarily suspended from Friday after the stakeholders reached a mutual agreement on Thursday.

The students of the university have been demanding the removal of Vice-Chancellor AP Pandey and constitution of an Independent Enquiry Committee to look into the allegations of administrative and financial lapses made by the V-C. The decision to temporarily suspend the agitation was made on Thursday following rounds of talk held consecutively from August 14, according to a copy of the memorandum made available to the media.

The memorandum, signed by Joint Secretary GC Hosur of the Union HRD Ministry, Commissioner (Higher and Technical Education) Government of Manipur and leaders of the agitating bodies, stated that there will be "temporary suspension" after issuance of the official orders on Friday. The agitation that began on May 30, is being spearheaded by the University Community functioning under the aegis of Manipur University Students Union, Manipur University Teachers Association and Manipur University Staffs' Association. The agitation had affected the academic activities in the Central varsity as well as stopped the declaration of the exam results of the final year college students.

Memorandum of Agreement signed between MUSU, MUTA and MUSA of Manipur University on one side and G C Hosur, Jt.Secretary of MHRD, Govt. of India on the other in presence of CM, Ministers, MLAs, CS, Commissioner (Hr.&Tect.Edn.) Govt. of Manipur, at CM Secretariat on Thursday. TWITTER PHOTO

Chief Minister N Biren Singh had yesterday promised that the impasse will be over within 2-3 days. As per the memorandum, the fact finding committee will be reconstituted as an independent 2-member enquiry committee chaired by former acting chief justice of Meghalaya High Court T Nandakumar Singh.

Earlier, the University Community had remained adamant that they would not accept the fact finding committee which was constituted by the HRD ministry on July 12 and later reconstituted on July 16. The agitating bodies did not approve the two officials included in the committee saying that one of the member was a close associate of the V-C AP Pandey. They also had declared they will not allow any member of the committee enter the university.

According to the agreement today, the two official members in the existing fact finding committee will be replaced by a retired cice chancellor of a university mutually acceptable to all the stakeholders and that the order of reconstituting the independent committee shall be issued on August 17.

The memorandum further informed that "during the period of enquiry and until follow up action was taken on the inquiry report by the competent authority," Prof AP Pandey shall be on leave.

It was also agreed that the copies of the report will be made available to the University Community and that the Registrar shall be the nodal officer for the enquiry committee.

Assam Guv condoles Vajpayee's demise

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI: Assam Governor Prof Jagdish Mukhi mourned the death of former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee who died at All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi on Thursday. He was 93.

Describing him as a towering personality and a powerful national voice who had played crucial roles even on the international political scene, Prof. Mukhi said that in his death, the nation had lost an eminent statesman who had earned the unique distinction of being the first non-Congress Prime Minister who led the country three times as Prime Minister.

Prof. Mukhi said, "The sagacity and leadership of the former Prime Minister at both the national and international levels has been a source of inspiration and guidance." Atal Behari Vajpayee in 1977 as India's foreign minister surprised one and all in the UN General Assembly by speaking in Hindi.

The way he conveyed so much in so few words left the world dumbfounded. He spoke about Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam at that level and made the intentions of the country clear at the world forum. This speech made many people realize the importance of the native tongue and also placed an Indian Language on the political stage of the modern world for the first time.

Former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee

During his tenure as the Prime Minister he made a bold yet subtle statement regarding India's nuclear capability by going for Pokhran test thereby helped India to ensure its entry in Nuclear Club.

He however, made it unambiguously clear that the country's nuclear repository and policy 'is for self-defense and the country which is a believer of non-violence in no way will be in nuclear race with any country' and India will not use the nuclear power first but will be used as self-defense mechanism.

Stating his long association with Vajpayee, the stalwart of National and International politics, Prof. Mukhi said he had turned to the veteran leader on many occasions for his advice on important issues and the response was always pragmatic.

Patowary pays condolence too

DISPUR: Assam Industries and Commerce Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary has deeply condoled the demise of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. In a condolence statement, the Minister said, 'Atal Bihari Vajpayee was an iconic statesman and stalwart of Indian politics. A revered politician, Vajpayee was widely appreciated in national and international arena for his acumen and foresight. One of the most popular public figures of the country, Vajpayee was loved, appreciated and regarded as a role model by generations of leaders in the country. His demise is a huge loss for the nation.'

The Minister also prayed to the almighty for eternal peace of the departed soul.

Two trucks torched in Manipur

IMPHAL: Two loaded trucks carrying essentials were torched by unidentified miscreants at a village in Tamenglong district of Manipur on Thursday, police said.

The incident was reported during a 24-hour 'Zeliangrong area' bandh called by Zeliangrong Baudi and its allies since yesterday midnight. The trucks were torched at Tupul area along the NH-37 (Imphal-Jiri Road) at around 2 am, said a senior police officer.

Tupul is located at least 54 km from the state capital.

Reinforcements have been sent to the area from Keithalmanbi police station, the officer said.

The bandh has been called to protest the alleged move by the NSCN(IM) to create divisions in the Zeliangrong community, settled mostly in the Tamenglong district of Manipur and adjoining areas of Assam and Nagaland. AGENCIES

NFR recovers more than ₹5 crore from ticketless travelers

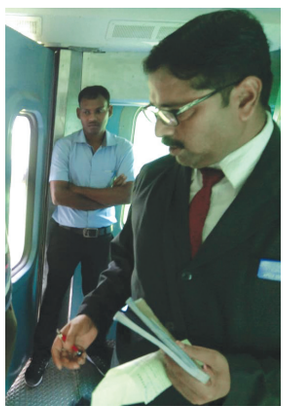
GUWAHATI: By conducting a relentless drive against ticketless travelling in Mail Express and Passenger trains during the month of July 2018, 74432 ticketless travellers have been detected by Northeast Frontier Railway (NF R).

This was found out to be 6.25 % higher than the corresponding figure of 70057 persons detected during July 2017, as mentioned in a press communiqué released by N.F.R on Thursday.

An amount of Rs. 5.33 crores was also realised from these without ticket or irregular ticket passengers which is about 9.5 % higher than the corresponding figure of Rs. 4.84 crores collected during July 2017.

It is to be mentioned that during the period from April to July in 2018, as many as 280443 passengers were detected to be travelling with irregular ticket or without ticket in trains. This was about 14% more than the corresponding period of 2017. The amount realised during 2018 period is Rs. 19.24 crores which is about 22.00% more than 2017.

NF Railway officials have been conducting regular surprise ticket checking drive in Mail Express and passenger Trains.



As per section 137, of the Indian Railway Act of 1989, travelling without ticket, improper ticket or un-booked luggage is an offence punishable by imprisonment or fine or both.

To discourage ticketless travelling, N.F.R has put systems in place whereby surprise ticket checking drive is conducted by Flying Ticket Checking Squads of Divisions as well as HQ.

Fortress checks are also being conducted in stations for which officers are nominated at HQ and Divisional levels from different department who are accompanied by security personal from Railway Protection Force and Govt. Railway Police.

Illegal Bangladeshi teacher arrested in Assam

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI: An illegal Bangladeshi migrant, working as a teacher in a government school and also engaged in National Register of Citizens (NRC) work, was arrested from Moirabari in Morigaon district of central Assam on Wednesday late night.

Swapnanil Deka, Superintendent of police of Morigaon on Thursday said, "The arrested person, Khairul Islam, was identified as a foreigner by a Foreigners' Tribunal of Morigaon district in 2015."

Reportedly he had, however, managed to evade the authorities and was working as a teacher in Thensali Khondapukhuri Primary School in Morigaon and was also engaged in the work of updating the NRC for the state, the final draft of which was published on July 30 last.

"Islam was arrested while he was hiding in Moirabari. The police are on the lookout for the rest of his family members, including his mother, sister and two brothers," said Deka. "Islam will be sent to the detention camp for identified foreigners in Tezpur for further course of action," added Deka.

ONE LYNCHED ON SUSPICION OF COW LIFTER

GUWAHATI: One person was beaten to death, while three others injured critically in a mob beating case at Diplonga tea estate in Sootea of northern Assam on Wednesday night. Reports received on Thursday revealed that the four persons, hailing from Bholaguri village in Sootea, had gone to the tea estate to procure pigs for selling.

However, a section of people mistook them for cow lifters and started beating them up, using sticks and sharp weapons.

The victims were rescued from the mob by the police and rushed to a local hospital, where one of them, Deben Rajbonshi, was declared dead.

Three others are undergoing treatment in a critical condition.

Police have launched investigation into the incident.

RPF ARRESTS DRUGGING GANG

GUWAHATI: Crime Prevention and Detection Squad (CPDS) team of Railway Protection Force (RPF), Guwahati arrested four persons who were involved in drugging passengers on trains.

Acting on information received at about 9 pm on August 11, 2018, about drugging of a constable of Assam Police who was arriving atKamakhya railway station in a train, the CPDS team swung into immediate action and conducted checking of the train and arrested onedrugging criminal Sukur Ali (38).

Further in the same night, the CPDS team under suspicion apprehended one criminal Hakim Ali (58) of Dhubri from circulating area of Kamakhya railway station. His physical description matched with that given by one lady victim who was drugged by him. Hakim was later confirmed by the lady.

According to a press statement released by Northeast Frontier Railway on Thursday, after confession from the arrested Hakim Ali, two more of his counterparts identified as Anuar Hussain (30) and Foyjal Haque (30), both of Dhubri as well were arrested from a train.

They were all planning to drug passengers. About 99 numbers Ativan tablets (2 mg each) were recovered from them.

GAIL awards contract for 108 km of Barauni-Guwahati gas pipeline

GUWAHATI: GAIL (India) Limited has awarded the first contract for purchase of 108 km 24-inch diameter line pipes under the Barauni-Guwahati segment of the Jagdishpur-Haldia and Bokaro-Dhamra Natural Gas Pipeline (JHBDPL) project. The contract for purchase of line pipes of 108 km was awarded to M/s Ratnamani at a total cost of Rs 125 crore.

"Line pipe procurement activity for the rest of the 600 km trunk line up to Guwahati is at an advanced stage of tender process," said a senior official of M/s Ratnamani on Thursday.

It is to be mentioned that the Barauni-Guwahati pipeline section executed on a capital outlay of Rs 3,300 crore is an integral part of the prestigious 3,405 km-long JHBDPL project, popularly known as 'Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga', executed by GAIL, and envisages to connect eastern and Northeastern India to the existing natural gas grid.

This project is planned to cover eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha and Assam. GAIL officials said that JHBDPL project is progressing in full swing and the first phase is scheduled for completion by December 2018.

The project will usher industrial development in eastern part of India by supplying environmentally clean natural gas to fertilizer units, power plants, refineries, steel processing plants and other industries.

It will also provide clean energy to households and transportation through the city gas distribution networks through the pipeline. City Gas distribution projects have been commissioned at Varanasi, Bhubaneswar and Cuttack while project activities are in progress at other cities of eastern India.

Three bike lifters nabbed in Hojai

NAGAON: Acting on a tip off, a team of Hojai police apprehended 3 motorbike lifters from different parts of Hojai district on Wednesday.

Reportedly, during special naka checking on the eve of Independence Day, police apprehended one Suraj Nath of Kuhimari village in Nagaon from Nagayapaam at Jamunamukh-Sarupathar link road while he was riding a motorbike, which worth in lakhs. On checking it was found out that he did not have any valid documents.

Later police apprehended one Gurkmukh Singh from Notun Bazar area of Hojai and subsequently caught the third lifter Ashish Nath. Stolen motorbikes were recovered from their possession. Both hail from Karbi Anglong and it was found out that the duo had been to jail twice for stealing motorbikes.

4 DEAD, THREE INJURED IN A ROAD MISHAP

UDALGURI: In a fatal road accident, three persons died on spot while four others suffered severe injuries as their car which was going uphill fell down from a height of 400 feet, at Kalaktang while on their way to Arunachal on Wednesday.

According to sources, the group of seven persons was travelling to Arunachal Pradesh from Ratwa in Udalguri for a trip on the Independence eve. They all hailed from Udalguri. The accident occurred at around 5 pm when one of the person in the driver's seat lost control. CNS

Inaugurating the five-day long Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Jayanti, Deb said that in 1942 Manikya got the Agartala airport constructed. It played a crucial role in the World War II. TWITTER PHOTO

Will take forward Tripura's last king's legacy: CM Biplab

AGENCIES

AGARTALA: Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb has said that his government will take forward the legacy of Tripura's last king Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya who ruled the princely state from 1923-1947.

"He was the father of modern Tripura and dreamed to make it the best state in India. The present BJP government is also working on the same lines," Deb said on Wednesday night.

Inaugurating the five-day long Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Jayanti, Deb said that in 1942 Manikya got the Agartala airport constructed. It played a crucial role in the World War II.

The Agartala airport was renamed Maharaja Bir Bikram Airport in July.

Beside setting up many schools, colleges, the king had also brought the Burmese company into Tripura to explore natural gas, found abundantly in the bordering state.

At the end of the 517-year rule by 184 kings, including Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya, on October 15, 1949, the erstwhile princely state of Tripura came under the control of the Indian government

The merger agreement was signed with Kanchan Prabha Devi, the then regent. The king died in May 1947 at the age of 39 years only. The Chief Minister said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced to make Tripura a 'HIRA' by developing highways, i-ways (internet), roadways and airways.

"After the completion of the under construction bridge over river Feni in southern Tripura, the state will be directly connected with the Chittagong international sea port in neighbouring Bangladesh," he added.

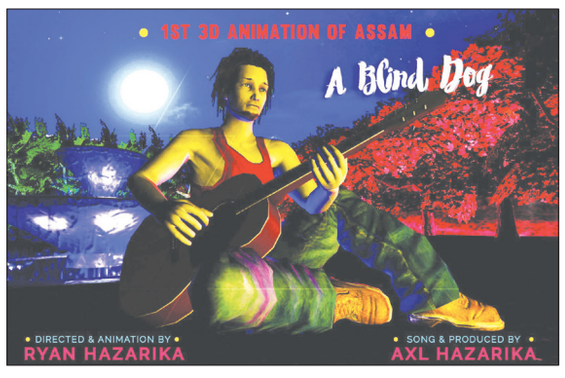
MOVING AROUND THE GLOBE

Assam's first 3D animation film to be screened at American film fest

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI: Assam's first Three Dimensional (3D) animation film, 'A Blind Dog', has been selected to be officially screened at the American Psychological Association (APA) Film Festival, held as part of the 126th Annual Convention of the APA, during August 9 to 12, 2018, at Moscone Center in San Francisco, California.

It is the only Indian film to be screened at the festival there. It will be shown on Saturday, August 11, 2018 in the 3.40 pm slot there. It is to be mentioned that the film is the first 3D animation film from Assam officially certified and censored by Central Board of Film Certification, India. Animation, as well as direction, was done by Ryan Hazarika while his brother Axl Hazarika is the producer, music composer and Visual Effects (VFX) editor of the film. Both are from Northeast.



The film is a real-life-based story showcasing the relationship between a musician and his blind dog. The animation conveys a special and heartfelt message about the presence of strong emotional bonds with animals outside the realm of human relations.

Axl recently became the first and only Indian artist to rank in Sound Cloud Top 10 Global Trance music charts and Billboard music charts. Both the brothers are also credited with the first animation video-'Hum Badal Gaye'.

Besides, Axl is involved in a lead role in developing Northeast India's largest government-run digital archive- Jyoti Chitraban Digital Archive (JCDA), that aims to store and preserve for posterity archival materials of all kinds including music, videos, films, documentaries, texts, and photographs. He is currently the technical head in JCDA as well.

A Blind Dog has made a tremendous impact in the global arena with the official selection at more than 25 International Film festivals across countries like Russia, Germany, UK, Italy, Africa, the United State, etc. which includes major festivals like 60th St. Petersburg International Film Festival (Russia), The Golden Peak Film Festival (Russia),etc.

The film is scheduled to be released in India later in 2018.

Heroin seized in Mizoram

AIZAWL: Officials of the Mizoram Excise and Narcotics department on Thursday seized more than 200 grams of heroin, valued at Rs 10.50 lakh, from an area near here and arrested two persons in this connection.

The contraband, weighing 252 gm, was seized by the anti-narcotic squad from Bawngkawn area in Aizawl, department spokesman Peter Zohmingthanga said.

The heroin was reportedly smuggled from neighbouring Myanmar, he said.

Lalzuineihsial (29) of Kolasib district and Ginminlun (49) of Tamenglong district of Manipur were arrested in this connection, he said.

AGENCIES

NOTICE

I, Uma Ghosh D/O Lt. Ram Ch. Ghosh & Uma Ghosh Bhunia W/o Sujit Bhunia of Vekutia, Nadigram, Midnapur (E) is the same and one identical person vide Affidavit No.17, Dt. 28/5/2018 before SDEM Hooghly at Chinsurah.

NEWS NUGGETS

Sun Pharma gets for USFDA nod ophthalmic solution used to treat dry eye disease

NEW DELHI: Sun Pharma has received approval from the US health regulator for CEQUA (cyclosporine ophthalmic solution), used to increase tear production in patients with keratoconjunctivitis sicca (dry eye). Dry Eye Disease represents an area of high unmet medical need, with a significant number of patients who are currently untreated, Abhay Gandhi, CEO, North America, Sun Pharma. "The the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) approval of CEQUA represents a long-awaited dry eye treatment option and is an important milestone in the development of Sun's Ophthalmics business," said he added. AGENCIES

Walmart reports Q2 loss, but higher sales

NEW YORK: Walmart reported much higher second-quarter sales and robust growth in its e-commerce businesses on Thursday, even as it reported a loss on one-time costs associated with selling a Walmart Brazil stake. The world's biggest retailer scored its most robust jump in more than 10 years in US comparable store sales, sending shares sharply higher. But it reported an $861 million loss following pre-tax costs of $4.8 billion on the Brazil sales.

MCX inks MoU with IBJA to set up bullion exchange

MUMBAI: Multi Commodity Exchange of India (MCX) on Thursday said it has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA) to set up bullion spot exchange. "MCX and IBJA have entered into an MoU to explore collaboration in setting up a bullion spot exchange in the country, in line with the government's vision of a regulated spot platform", MCX managing director and CEO Mrugank Paranjape said.

FIMI appoints Sunil Duggal as new president

NEW DELHI: The Federation of Indian Mineral Industries (FIMI) has appointed Sunil Duggal, the CEO of Hindustan Zinc, as its new president. The decision was taken by FIMI in their Annual General Meeting held on 14th August, a press statement said.

USFDA issues warning letter to Apotex Research

NEW DELHI: The US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) has issued a warning letter to Apotex Research, the Indian arm of Canadian pharmaceutical major Apotex Inc, for violating current good manufacturing practice norms at its Bengaluru-based plant. The USFDA said inspectors during November 6-17, 2017, had found significant deviations from standard manufacturing practices at Apotex Research Pvt Ltd's Bengaluru-based plant.

First Westside store opens in Jamshedpur

JAMSHEDPUR: Westside, the retail chain of the Tata Group, has opened its first store in the steel city. The store was opened on the occasion of Independence Day on Wednesday, a press release said on Thursday. "Jamshedpur is an integral part of the Tata history and it is a proud moment for us to launch our first store in Jamshedpur," Noel Tata, Chairman, Trent Ltd, wich operates Westside, said. The store is spread over 24,000 sq ft at P & M Mall.

Tech Mahindra to partner US football team

NEW DELHI: IT firm Tech Mahindra on Thursday said that it has signed 4-year technology partnership contract with Florida-based football team Jacksonville Jaguars to enhance experience of team's fan by using modern tools like artificial intelligence and data analytics.

Airtel Payments Bank, Bharti AXA Life ally for govt's insurance scheme

NEW DELHI: Airtel Payments Bank and Bharti AXA Life Insurance today announced a pact to offer Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), leveraging the payments bank's network in rural pockets. The alliance will be supported by the payments bank's network "to reach deep rural pockets and serve the underinsured", a company statement said. PMJJBY offers life insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh at a premium of Rs 330 per annum, and will initially be available at 1,00,000 banking points of Airtel Payments Bank. The number of banking points will be scaled to over 5,00,000 over time. PMJJBY aims to enhance penetration of life insurance among underinsured masses contributing to financial inclusion in the country. AGENCIES

Andhra Bank raises MCLR by 0.15% for various tenors

NEW DELHI: Andhra Bank has increased the marginal cost of funds based lending rate (MCLR) by 0.15 per cent to up to 8.70 per cent for various tenors. "The bank has increased its MCLR with effect from August 16, 2018," Andhra Bank said in a BSE filing. The MCLR for overnight, 1 month, 3 month, 6 month and one year tenors has been raised by 0.15 per cent each to 8.15 per cent, 8.20 per cent, 8.40 per cent, 8.55 per cent and 8.70 per cent, respectively, the bank said.

Uber quarterly loss jumps as it invests in 'big bets'

SAN FRANCISCO: Uber has disclosed that its quarterly loss jumped despite taking in more money, as it invested in scooters and other "big bets." The San Francisco-based smartphone ride star reported it lost $891 million on net revenue of $2.8 billion, while overall bookings rose to $12 billion.

Urea production likely to increase 1.6% in FY'19

NEW DELHI: Urea production is likely to increase 1.6 per cent to 24.4 million tonne (MT) in 2018-19 financial year on smooth functioning of units, a senior Fertiliser Ministry official said on Thursday.

HDIL continues to surge, shares end 20% higher

NEW DELHI: Shares of realty firm HDIL continued their rally for the second straight session on Thursday, zooming nearly by 20 per cent on robust performance in June quarter earnings. The company's stock surged 18.27 per cent to close at Rs 30.75 on the BSE. During the day, it jumped 20 per cent to Rs 31.20.

Infibeam posts 14 crore loss in June quarter

NEW DELHI: E-commerce and payment solution firm Infibeam Avenues has posted a standalone net loss of Rs 13.88 crore during the first quarter of this fiscal. Its net profit stood at Rs 12.72 crore in the year-ago period, the Ahmedabad-based firm said in a statement. However, revenues from operations rose by 27 per cent to Rs 91.34 crore during April-June period of this fiscal from Rs 72.13 crore in the year-ago period.

BlackBerry KEY2 Lite may be unveiled at IFA '18

SAN FRANCISCO: A budget version of the newly-launched BlackBerry KEY2, which is likely to be named BlackBerry KEY2 Lite or KEY2 LE, may be launched at the upcoming IFA 2018 in Berlin, Germany. AGENCIES

Ratings peg down FY19 GDP forecast to 7.2% on inflation

GROWTH affected by rising trade protectionism, falling rupee and NPAs of banks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI: India Ratings on Thursday revised down its economic growth forecast for financial year 2018-19 by two notches to 7.2 per cent citing rising inflationary risks.

The ratings agency has also revised upwards its inflation forecast despite a likely normal rainfall this year. "The key reasons for the downward revision (GDP forecast) is the headwinds emanating from the elevated global crude prices and government decision to fix the minimum support prices (MSPs) of all kharif crops at 1.5 times of the production cost," the agency said in a note.

The other headwinds are rising trade protectionism, a falling rupee and no visible signs of the abatement of the non-performing assets of banks, it added.

The agency has also revised upwards its inflation forecast saying "despite a likely normal rainfall in 2018, we now expect average retail and wholesale inflation in FY19 to come in at 4.6 per cent and 4.1 per cent, respectively as against 4.3 per cent and 3.4 per cent forecast earlier." The inflation forecast is due to the pass-through of global crude prices, the massive hike in MSPs of kharif crops and the hike in house rent allowances by the states.

At a disaggregated level, the agency expects private final consumption expenditure to grow 7.6 per cent in FY19, compared with 6.6 per cent in FY18.

Growth is coming from the waning impact of note-ban, a rise in rural consumption due to two consecutive favourable monsoons and reduction in the GST rates on several items, the agency said. "However, investment expenditure as measured by gross fixed capital formation is unlikely to improve significantly in FY19 which is expected to clip at 8 per cent this year," it added.

The agency believes government capex alone will not be sufficient to revive capex cycle, as its share in the total capex was only 11.1 per cent during fiscals 2012 and 2017.

Although it expects annual value of exports to touch USD 345 billion in FY19, crossing the peak of USD 318 billion attained in FY14, it will continue to face headwinds due to the ongoing global developments which are threatening to turn into a trade/currency wars between the US and China.

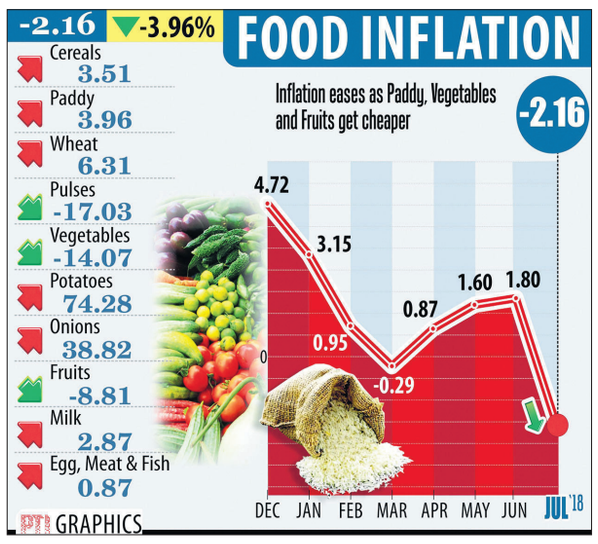
In response to the rising inflation, the Reserve Bank so far this fiscal has raised the repo rate by a cumulative 50 bps. It now expects CPI inflation for the second half to be 4.8 per cent, 10 bps higher than its earlier projection. The agency does not expect any more hikes in FY19, though, and therefore expects the benchmark 10-year G-sec to be in the range of 7.8-7.9 per cent by Macy 2019.

BANK CREDIT GROWS 12.7%

Bank credit grew 12.70 per cent to Rs 86,79,741 crore in the fortnight to August 3, according to the latest RBI data. In the year-ago fortnight, bank advances was at Rs 77,01,926 crore.

The increase in advances in the reporting fortnight was higher than the growth registered in the previous fortnight ending July 20 when it had risen by 12.44 per cent to Rs 86,13,164 crore.

During the reporting fortnight, bank deposits grew by 8.21 per cent to Rs 1,15,83,058 crore from Rs 1,07,04,112 crore in the period ending August 4, 2017, as per the data.



Rupee closes below 70-mark for 1st time against $

MUMBAI: The rupee fell 26 paise to close at 70.15/16 against US dollar on Thursday at the Interbank Foreign Exchange market. In the opening trade, the Indian currency slumped 43 paise against the US dollar to trade at a life-time low of 70.32 on strong demand for the US currency.

According to forex dealers, besides strong demand for the American currency from importers, capital outflows mainly weighed on the domestic currency. A sharp surge in trade deficit too impacted the rupee on Thursday.

The rupee fell 26 paise to close at 70.15/16 against US dollar at the Interbank Foreign Exchange market. In the opening trade, the Indian currency slumped 43 paise against the US dollar to trade at a life-time low of 70.32 on strong demand for the US currency. According to forex dealers, besides strong demand for the American currency from importers, capital outflows mainly weighed on the domestic currency.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on Wednesday said that foreign exchange reserves are comfortable by global standards and sufficient to mitigate any undue volatility in the foreign exchange market. AGENCIES

Rupee moving towards its natural value: NITI Aayog

NEW DELHI: As rupee continued to fall to new record lows on Thursday, NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar said the Indian currency was overvalued and is moving towards its real value, and that it will not hurt the Indian economy.

"Let's be clear, the depreciation of the Indian Rupee against the USD is not indicative of a bad time for the Indian economy. Over the past three years, the rupee has been overvalued by approximately 17 per cent and the current depreciation of 9.8 per cent since January is a move towards its natural value," Kumar tweeted.

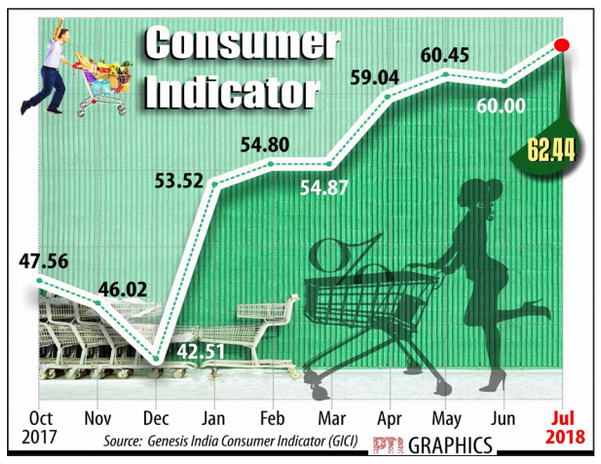
During the morning session, the Indian rupee weakened to a fresh record low of 70.32 per US dollar on wider trade deficit, outflow of foreign funds and global cues. It had plunged to its previous lowest-ever mark of 70.08 on Tuesday.

Kumar, head of government's premier policy-making think tank, in another tweet said that the focus should now be on taking advantage of the depreciated rupee in terms of boosting exports and reducing trade deficit.

"A sharper focus needs to be on further improving our export performance. As @nasscom and @anandmahindra, both have said that this depreciation will help boost our exports which will be a sure way to reduce the trade and current account deficits," he added.

To counter the perception that rupee is seeing a major fall, Kumar highlighted the time periods in the previous government when the Indian currency saw steep depreciation.

While the rupee depreciated 15.8 per cent against the greenback in the last four years between May 2, 2014 and August 14, 2018, it fell 19.96 per cent between April 2, 2009 and April 30, 2014, showed the table posted by Kumar in his tweet. AGENCIES



RBI Governor Urjit Patel unveils UPI 2.0 version

NEW DELHI: RBI Governor Urjit Patel on Thursday unveiled UPI version 2.0 which will allow customers to use overdraft limit for making payments for merchants.

The second version of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) will also enable customers to check the invoice sent by merchant prior to making payment, National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) said in a statement.

Delivering the presidential address at the event, Patel outlined that the launch has been the result of the calibrated approach adopted by the Reserve Bank of India - in the initial years as a developer and in later years as a catalyst and facilitator. He said that the payment systems in India are not only comparable to any system, anywhere in the world, they also do set standards and good practices for others to emulate.

Patel also outlined the need for ensuring adequate importance to be ascribed to cyber security, stating that all efforts need to be channelled to this area and that costs should not be an inhibiting factor to this critical area, it said.

Speaking at the occasion, Nandan Nilekani, Adviser, NPCI lauded the efforts of Patel for the calibrated regulation and an innovation-fostering approach, which has resulted in India having many payment systems, which are 'state-of-the-art', and cost effective. PTI

'Oil prices, local funds flow 2019 elections' top drivers for market'

NEW DELHI: Oil price movement is the most important driver for the Indian stock market going forward, followed by local fund flow and the 2019 elections, according to global brokerage firm UBS.

The UBS survey of investors jotted down five possible drivers for the Nifty in order of importance -- oil prices, local fund flows, 2019 elections, bank non-performing loan (NPL) resolution and rupee exchange rate.

The rupee has been among the worst-performing currencies against the dollar compared with its peers so far this year and breached the 70-mark against the American unit in intra-day trade on August 14 amid global uncertainties and concerns over inflation. "The impact of INR depreciation is mixed' while 5 per cent depreciation would push up inflation by 10-15 bps, the impact on growth would be favourable, given the boost to net exports," UBS said.

According to UBS, India's macro stability still gets impacted by oil and currency, but "structurally, India is nowhere near the 2013 fragility scenario," the report said.

Investors were asked to rank five possible drivers for the Nifty in order of importance and to predict market sentiment around the Nifty ranging from very bearish (a score of 1) to very bullish (a score of 5). Market sentiment around the Nifty seemed to be more 'neutral', with an average score of 3.03 on a scale of 1-5.

Over the past two years, local mutual funds (MF) flow has had more relevance than foreign flow for small and midcaps, but according to UBS the best of local fund flow supporting small and mid cap performance may be "behind us". The report further noted that a key local factor for Indian markets over the next three quarters will be investors' perception of will Modi win in 2019. AGENCIES

Oil import bill to jump by $26 bn on rupee woes

NEW DELHI: India's crude oil import bill is likely to jump by about USD 26 billion in 2018-19 as rupee dropping to a record low has made buying of oil from overseas costlier, government officials said on Thursday.

Besides, the rupee hitting a record low of 70.32 to a US dollar in the opening deal today will also lead to a hike in the retail selling price of petrol, diesel and cooking gas (LPG).

India, which imports over 80 per cent of its oil needs, spent USD 87.7 billion (Rs 5.65 lakh crore) on importing 220.43 million tonne (MT) of crude oil in 2017-18. For 2018-19, the imports are pegged at almost 227 MT.

"We at the beginning of the financial year estimated that crude oil import bill will be around USD 108 billion (Rs 7.02 lakh crore) at an average crude oil price of USD 65 per barrel and exchange rate of Rs 65 per dollar," an official said.

But the exchange rate has been at an average of Rs 67.6 till August 14. If the rupee is to stay around 70 per dollar for the rest of the ongoing fiscal, the oil import bill will be USD 114 billion, he said.

The rupee has been among the worst performing currencies in Asia, witnessing 8.6 per cent slump this year.

Fanned by a higher oil import bill, India's trade deficit, or the gap between exports and imports, in July widened to USD 18 billion, the most in more than five years.

Trade shortfall puts pressure on the current account deficit (CAD), a key vulnerability for the economy.

Rupee depreciation will result in higher earnings for exporters as well as domestic oil producers like Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) who bill refiners in US dollar terms.

But this would result in rise in petrol and diesel prices, with full impact likely to be visible later this month. AGENCIES

JSW Steel offers ₹19,700 crore for Bhushan Power & Steel

NEW DELHI: JSW Steel has submitted a resolution plan of Rs 19,700-crore to the Committee of Creditors of debt-laden Bhushan Power and Steel Ltd, a source in the know of the matter said.

Besides JSW Steel, Tata Steel and Liberty House have also submitted bids to acquire the special steel maker Bhushan Steel and Power Ltd (BPSL) which is under the insolvency process.

The bids were submitted for the second time to the CoC late night on August 13. Now the CoC will inform the NCLAT on Friday about the bids received by the interested parties. "JSW Steel has submitted Rs 19,700 crore (resolution) plan to the CoC. The entire amount is upfront amount," the source said.

According to reports, Tata Steel has made an offer of Rs 17,000 crore and Liberty House's resolution plan is of around Rs 19,000 crore.

Email queries sent to three companies seeking their response remained unanswered.

> THE BIDS WERE SUBMITTED FOR THE SECOND TIME TO THE COC LATE NIGHT ON AUGUST 13. THE COC WILL INFORM THE NCLAT ON FRIDAY ABOUT THE BIDS RECEIVED BY THE INTERESTED PARTIES

Sajjan Jindal-led JSW Steel, Tata Group firm Tata Steel and UK-based Liberty House are competing with each other to acquire BPSL.

BPSL owes about Rs 45,000 crore to its lenders. It was among the 12 non-performing accounts referred by the Reserve Bank of India for NCLT proceedings. BPSL with a production capacity of 3.5 million tonne per annum (MTPA) is a leading manufacturer of flat and long products. AGENCIES

HP dominates India printing market

NEW DELHI: With a massive 47 per cent share, printing and PC major HP Inc remained the leader in the overall printer market in India, selling 391,940 units in the second quarter of 2018.

Epson with 24 per cent market share was second (201,565 units) and Canon Group third with 20 per cent (170,002 units) share in the country in the second quarter, according to the IDC's Hard Copy Peripherals (HCP) Quarterly Market Report (2018 Q2).

In the Office Printing segment, HP led with 32 per cent share (without Samsung Print) and in the Home Printing segment, the printing and PC major had 42.8 per cent to remain on top.

HP in November last year completed the acquisition of Samsung's printer business in a deal valued at $1.05 billion.

"HP's continued leadership position in the printer segment is a testament of the trust consumers and businesses put in our products. Our growth momentum has been fuelled by increasing adoption of printers by home users and businesses of all sizes -- large enterprise, SMBs, startups as well as public sector and government departments," Leo Joseph, Senior Director, Printing Systems, HP Inc. India, said on Thursday. PTI

NBCC gets ₹250-cr order from SAIL

NEW DELHI: State-owned NBCC (India) Ltd on Thursday said it has bagged Rs 250 crore order from SAIL for the construction of Ispat post-graduate medical institute and super-speciality hospital at Rourkela Steel Plant.

The proposed hospital will have 156 beds accommodating super-specialities like cardiology, cardiac surgery, neurology and nephrology. The new super-speciality block, 500-seater Auditorium and the medical institute will be spread across 3 lakh sq ft, it added.

NBCC will plan and design the building as a 'Steel Intensive' structure and execute the works as project management consultant using green and energy-efficient technologies. AGENCIES

Investment in P-notes hits new low of ₹80,341 crore

NEW DELHI: Investments through participatory notes into Indian capital markets plunged to over nine-year low of Rs 80,341 crore till July-end amid stringent norms put in place by the watchdog Sebi to check misuse of these instruments. P-notes are issued by registered foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to overseas investors who wish to be part of the Indian stock market without registering themselves directly. They, however, need to go through due diligence process.

According to the Sebi data, total value of P-note investments in Indian markets - equity, debt, and derivatives - slumped to a low of Rs 80,341 crore till July-end from Rs 83,688 crore clocked by June-end. Prior to that, in May the figure was Rs 93,497 crore. This is the lowest level since April 2009 when the cumulative value of such investments stood at Rs 72,314 crore.

Of the total investments made last month, P-note holdings in equities were at Rs 60,550 crore and the remaining in debt and derivatives markets. Besides, the quantum of FPI investments via P-notes dropped to 2.4 per cent during the period under review from 2.6 per cent in the preceding month.

P-note investments were on a decline since June last year and hit an over eight-year low in September. However, these investments rose slightly in October but fell again in November and the trend continued till July this year.

The decline could be attributed to several measures taken by the market watchdog to stop the misuse of the controversy-ridden participatory notes.

In July 2017, Sebi had notified stricter norms stipulating a fee of USD 1,000 on each instrument to check any misuse for channelising black money. It had also prohibited FPIs from issuing such notes where the underlying asset is a derivative, except those which are used for hedging purposes.

These measures were an outcome of a slew of other steps taken by the regulator in the recent past.

In April last year, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) had barred resident Indians, NRIs and entities owned by them from making investment through P-notes. AGENCIES

TimeOutChronicle

Actor, **SHARAD KELKAR** has joined the cast of *Housefull 4* where he will be seen in a pivotal role and it will be his first out-and-out comic outing. The actor has earlier made his mark with intense characters in films like *Goliyon Ki Raasleela - Ram-Leela* and *Bhoomi* and the most cherished voice as Baahubali in Bollywood. Sharad says, "I always try to do different things, be it in terms of my accent or looks. I don't want to repeat myself. While I've mostly played intense characters, it's good to do a light-hearted film." While it marks Sharad's second collaboration with producer Sajid Nadiadwala and Riteish Deshmukh after the Marathi film *Lai Bhaari*, he will be also be working with his *Guest in London* co-actor Kriti Kharbanda and *Mohenjo Daro* co-star Pooja Hegde

Bollywood playback singer **ABHIJEET BHATTACHARYA** is in trouble for allegedly using objectionable language against a woman on telephone. The singer has been booked in Mumbai. He faces charges under sections 509 (word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) at the Amboli police station, Andheri, Mumbai. Abhijeet has refuted all allegations. As per media reports, he was quoted as saying, "She has been threatening me and others to extort money. I have given a commercial place to rent. My tenants were getting some work done, and she objected to it. Being the owner of the place, I intervened in it"

THE BOLLYWOOD HUNK claims that success hasn't changed him at all. He also gets candid on films, bikes, younger actors and others

DIDN'T TURN PRODUCER TO ENJOY POWER: JOHN

SNEHA C

The last one year has been an eventful one for actor-producer John Abraham. First, it was the much-talked about *Parmanu* which turned out to be a money-spinner. Now he has *Satyameva Jayate* co-starring Manoj Bajpayee that released on Independence Day. Over to the man.

You have been working round the clock for almost last two decades. Do you remember your initial days?
Those were the days of hard work and rewards. I tell my team how much patience we had to display. During 2002-2003, I used to be a media planner and work for more than 16 hours. Nowadays, youngsters do not want to work so hard. It is good that you want to leave early from work, but you need to finish your assignments too. From my media and advertisement days, I have learnt a lot about brands and marketing which is useful now as I also produce films.

Do you remember your first pay cheque?
Yes clearly, it was Rs 13,500 and I straight away went to buy a bike which I had planned for a long time. My love for bikes is known to all. I was happy that with my first pay cheque I could manage to buy a bike. I remember later on, when I sold my first bike I had tears in my eyes. I sold the first bike to buy the next one.

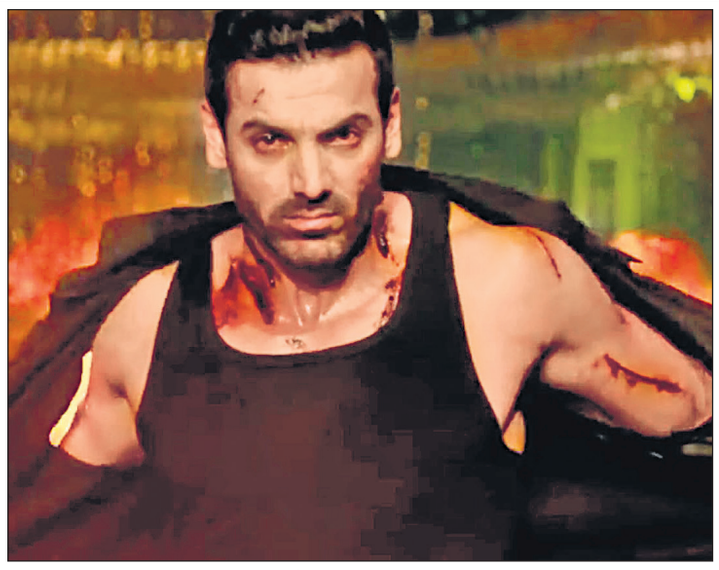
How many bikes do you currently have?
Currently 6, but the numbers have decreased in the last few years. Whenever I have a time off and am in Mumbai, I go out for a short ride. But I don't go out during monsoons. My bike gets dirty and it is a hard task to clean. I don't allow anyone to touch my bike. I clean it myself. People do feel monsoon is very romantic, but I somehow do not like the idea.

What is romantic for John?
I have made my bike sound like my heartbeat. The piston of my bike is synchronised with my heartbeat. I find that as romantic.

John Abraham, the human being has not changed. Whom would you give the credit to?
My dad always taught me something - before following any religion, be a good human being. Recently Manoj Bajpayee also told me that I have not changed at all. So this is really gratifying. My upbringing and my values will never allow me to cross the line. I see newcomers and also some established stars, the way they speak and their body language are very unreal. Today you are a famous actor. but tomorrow your film may not do well and you will be nobody. People should not forget this.

Which job is tougher - acting or a production?
It is difficult to judge. I can only say an actor always takes the credit if the film does well and also faces the discredit when the film fails. A producer's job is to work endlessly and tirelessly.

Will we get to see you on screen more often?
After *Satyameva Jayate*, I have *RAW* (Romeo Akbar Walter), which is being directed by Robby Grewal. I have never seen a director more prepared than him. Then I have *Batla House* with Nikhil Advani, which is such an intense, fantastic and explosive film. So, each one has got a certain flavour, and then I'll also be doing an action franchise.



The John-starrer 'Satyameva Jayate' hit the screens on August 15

How do you assess the young talent in the industry?
They all are extremely talented. I have a great equation with actors like Varun Dhawan, Ayushmann Khurrana and Tiger Shroff (left). If I find scripts, I will definitely work with them in the near future. I am not an actor who has become a producer to be powerful.

EC LEISURE

Aries (March 20 - April 20)
Someone new in your life is going to make you smile; remember, however, that it doesn't always have to be fur and diamonds. A song sung straight from the heart makes a greater impact, says Ganesha. Today's the right time to do things which will make you proud later.

Taurus (April 20 - May 21)
This day, your heart is likely to rule your head. You will be driven by your moods feelings and sentiments. Most of the decisions will be based on your emotions, instead of your reason and experience. Don't allow your emotionality to enter deep.

Gemini (May 21 - June 21)
Lady Luck is likely to smile on you, foresees Ganesha. You are generally shy, but today is a different day. You will remain outgoing and will be able to freely express your feelings. This temporary change will do a lot of good to your ego, says Ganesha.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)
Today, you will need to rise above your emotional leanings and will have to choose between doing the right thing and keeping your loved ones happy. It is about time that you learn to deal with your fears, suggests Ganesha. Emotions cloud your reasoning.

Leo (July 22 - August 23)
Easy come, easy go – that is the best way to sum up money. Try holding on to it, advises Ganesha, as there is a strong possibility that you shall incur a lot of wasteful expenditures today. Please keep it in mind.

Virgo (August 23 - September 23)
You are the banner carrier for those around you today, giving hope and inspiring. Clad yourself in robes of the perfect family man. This should spread warmth and love, and will work wonders in improving relationships.

Libra (September 23 - October 23)
The theatrical you comes to the fore. Ganesha expects you to put up a show in all that you do today, be it a display of devotion to your work, or dedication to your family. You may give the best in the business a run for their money.

Scorpio (October 23- November 21)
Signs indicate you may face unexpected expenses today. But this spending is likely to be on family and friends. But keep track of every penny. Ganesha advises you not to have any pockets at all today.

Sagittarius (November 22 - December 21)
Confidence-building measures will need to be taken up. Be the herald, and usher in new vigour and confidence in people around you. Your business is set to sky-rocket and a fair share of profits are in the offing, says Ganesha.

Capricorn (December 21 - January 20)
It's time to party, whether or not you have no reason for it. Friends and even acquaintances will be invited to take part in the celebrations; you will be all charged up to have a blast.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)
If you're stuck indoors today, make the most of it. There's always carrom, checkers, chess and partying! Shake yourself a bit, and you'll come up with creative ways.

Pisces (February 18 - March 20)
Your expenses are likely to soar and you will need to draw a line between your needs and your desires if you are to keep them in check. You will undergo a spiritual experience.

SOAPS

BENGALI

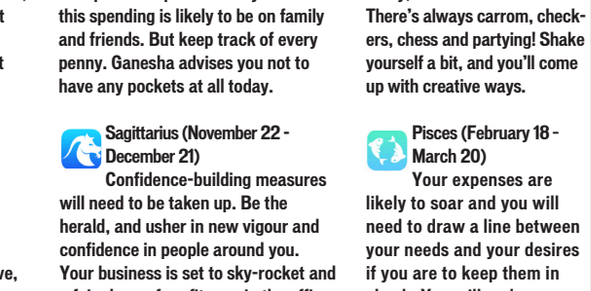
STAR JALSHA
09:30 AM Parineeta
10:00 AM Anjoli Swarno Bandhan
10:30 AM Adi Mohini Mohon Kanjilal
11:00 AM Can Soumi's Wonder
11:30 AM Care of Keya
12:00 PM Parampara Ayurveda Bonediyana
12:30 PM Om Namah Shivaay
1:30 PM Jomer Raja Dilo Bor
5:00 PM Ardhangini
5:30 PM Jibon Jyoti
6:00 PM Om Namah Shivaay
7.00 PM Kusum Dola
7:30 PM Ke Apon Ke Por
8:00 PM Gopal Bhar
5:30 PM Jibon Jyoti
6:00 PM Ardhangini
6:30 PM Sanyasi Raja
7:00 PM Kusum dola
7:30 PM Ke Apon Ke Por
8:00 PM Gopal Bhar
8:30 PM Phagun Bou
9:00 PM Bhoomikanya
9:30 PM Bhojo Gobindo
10:00 PM Rakhi Bandhan
10:30 PM Protidaan
11:00 PM Jai Kaali Kalkattawali
11:30 PM Om Namah Shivaay

AAKASH AATH
04:00 AM Radhuni
04:30 AM Chhoy Masher Mega
05:00 AM Jheel Danger Kanya
05:30 AM Ek Maasher Sahityo
06:00 AM The Lord's Challenge
06:15 AM The Lord's Challenge
06:30 AM Bhakti Geeti
07:00 AM Good Morning Akash Live
09:00 AM Fm On Tv
10:30 AM Jagat Janani Maa Sarada Mahaparbo
12:30 PM Dadathakurer Deshey
1:30 PM Kulangar
4:30 PM Aakaash Barta Live
5:00 PM Ayurved-Er Rog Niramoy
5:30 PM Gaan Dariya
8:30 PM Police File Mahaparbo
10:30 PM Aakaash Barta Live
11:00 PM Laughing Club

COLORS BANGLA
06:00 AM Manasa
06:30 AM Afp - Abhoya Dham
07:00 AM Shubho Drishti
09:00 PM Ke Hobe Banglar Kotipoti
11:00 PM Manasa

MOVIES IN TOWN

GOLD (Directed by Reema Kagti, the film stars the actorAkshay Kumar, Mouni Roy and Kunal Kapur) **BIOSCOPE (AXIS MALL, RAJARHAT)** 9:30 AM, 10:30AM, 12:50 PM, 1:50 PM, 5:50 PM, 6:35 PM, 8:05 PM; **CINEPOLIS ACROPOLIS MALL** 9AM, 10AM, 12:25 PM, 1:05 PM, 7:15 PM, 7:55 PM, 10:40 PM, 11:20PM; **CARNIVAL SALT LAKE** 8AM, 8:40 AM, 11AM, 11:35AM 4:15 PM, 5:15 PM, 7:30 PM, 8:30 PM, 10:45 PM, 11:45PM; **CINEPOLIS LAKE MALL** 9 AM, 9:45AM, 12:25PM, 3:50 PM, 4:20PM, 7:15PM, 7:45 PM, 10:40PM, 11:10 PM; **INOX SOUTH CITY** 9AM,12:15, 3:30, 6:50, 10:10PM; **INOX HILAND PARK** 9 AM, 10AM, 12:15 PM, 1:15 PM, 3:30 PM, 4:35 PM, 6:45, 7:55PM, 10:05PM, 11:15PM; **INOX FORUM MALL** 9:00, 10AM, 12:15 PM, 1:20PM, 3:30PM, 4:35PM, 6:45PM, 7:55 PM, 9PM, 10:05 PM, 11:15PM; **HIND INOX** 9:55 AM, 10AM, 4:25 PM, 7:40PM, 10:55 PM; **INOX CITY CENTRE II RAJARHAT** 9 AM, 10AM, 12:15 PM, 1:15PM, 3:30PM, 4:35PM, 6:45PM, 7:55PM, 10:05PM, 11:15PM; **INOX: CITY CENTRE SALT LAKE** 9 AM, 10AM, 12:15 PM, 1:15PM, 3:30PM, 4:35PM, 6:45PM, 7:55PM, 10:05 PM, 11:15PM; **INOX QUEST MALL INSIGNIA** 11:15AM, 2:35 PM, 5:55PM, 9:15PM; **INOX QUEST MALL** 9AM, 10AM, 12:15 PM, 1:15PM, 3:30PM



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

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

Solutions to Yesterday's Sudoku

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

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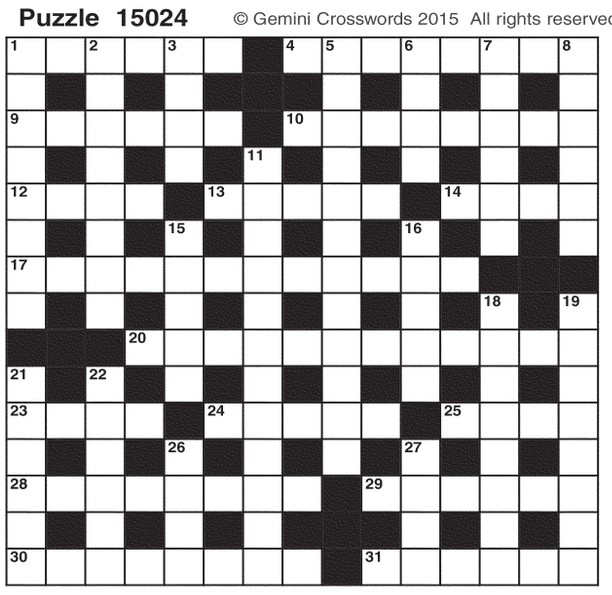


Across
1 Allow to advise on how to treat straight hair (6)
4 Lent is brought forward (8)
9 With a new clue I'd get the mathematician (6)
10 Bird takes fruit by the door (8)
12 A friend gets everything a year behind (4)
13 Go out with a girl (5)
14 Ascetic who may take an unnatural attitude (4)
17 Physical training manual? (8,4)
20 Badly beaten apparently by two balls at snooker (5,3,4)
23 A marmalade container just opened (4)
24 Picture that amuses young children (5)
25 Fit properly (4)
28 A course that is purely experimental? (5,3)
29 Sailor has to obtain an objective (6)
30 Party member who went to pot (8)
31 Added zest in the kitchen (6)

Down
1 Being trimmed in advance it's now ready (8)
2 Runners who jump the gun are not forgotten (8)
3 Flag of many colours (4)
5 Bounder badly shaken might need it! (6,6)
6 Long for a piece of Gouda cheese (4)
7 Bed not turned - but the sheets may be (6)
8 Hilda unsettled by a bloomer (6)
11 An impostor's standard (5,7)
15 Climb and mark at regular intervals (5)
16 Believes they're used for cargo (5)
18 Being so one may react rashly with sad ill-grace (8)
19 The apartment is indeed airless (8)
21 Put on the hook from a debit? (6)
22 Weapon in bad repair (6)
26 Albert shortly gets to be a singer (4)
27 Parking sign on top is a swindle (4)

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzles

Cryptic

Across: **1** Ducks, **4** Upright, **8** Via, **9** Free trade, **10** Cutlass, **11** Hades, **13** Turn in, **15** Stored, **18** Radio, **19** Leather, **21** Following, **23** Run, **24** Express, **25** Steve.

Down: **1** Dovecot, **2** Chartered, **3** Sofia, **4** Unease, **5** Ratchet, **6** Goa, **7** Tress, **12** Dark horse, **14** Iron ore, **16** Derange, **17** Claims, **18** Rifle, **20** Aegis, **22** Lip.

CRITICS' CORNER

GOLD

DIRECTOR
REEMA KAGTI

CAST
AKSHAY KUMAR, MOUNI ROY, KUNAL KAPOOR AND AMIT SADH

RATING
POOR

'CHAK DE! INDIA 2' LOSES GOLD

DIGANTA GUHA

Patriotic films, we have seen them aplenty. Over the years, filmmakers have tried to capitalise on this sentiment. There's nothing wrong with it since strong subjects do make an impact, but there's another side to it. If the flavour is repeated, the product becomes an old wine in a new bottle. The joint effort of Reema Kagti and Akshay Kumar to cash in on the Independence Day spirit to reap 'gold' may come a cropper. It's safe to say 'may' because the audiences are very unpredictable and have a habit of rebutting a film critic's perception. But, interpretations differ and there's no dispute on that.

Coming to the film, *Gold* covers Indian men's hockey team's onerous journey to bag the coveted gold medal at the 1948 London Olympics. It was also free India's first Olympic gold that came after defeating Great Britain (the country that subjected us to succumb before its might) in the final. But, *Gold*, leaves too many questions unanswered. What is exasperating is that on one hand, the makers claim the film chronicles the Indian hockey team's triumph, but on the other hand, they get the liberty to change the names of the players? Why is Balbir Singh Senior, Himmat in the team, if one guesses so? Secondly, the result of the final was 4-0 in India's favour, but in *Gold*, Britain finds the net more than once against India's four. Is it a joke? Is the film an imagination of the writers and the director, as well as the lead star?

If that is so, then it's condemnable the makers resorted to misinterpretation of history. It's a crime to tamper with facts, especially if they involve saluting the marvellous achievement of our sporting heroes. By the way, is Tapan Das (Akshay Kumar), the victorious team's co-manager, AC Chatterji? If that is so, then one is left infuriated at the audacity of Kagti to show the senior manager of the triumphant side in poor light because the character seems to be inspired by legendary sports administrator Pankaj Gupta (the chief manager of the team) who was also referred to as Mr Hockey. Come on Kagti!

One may say, Shimit Amin in *Chak De! India*, too, made Mir Ranjan Negi (the one on whom the film was based) Kabir Khan (Shah Rukh Khan), but its presentation was far more gripping.

Ok, it's a fictional take. But even then, Kagti and Rajesh Devraj's story falters on various fronts. Firstly, we have seen it all in *Chak De! India* — be it the comeback of a man ostracised by the federation on grounds of graft and treachery or infighting within the team and the federation or the same old nationalism. If in *Chak De! India*...Kabir (who faced the ignominy of being called a traitor after he shook hands with the Pakistani captain post India's defeat to its arch rival) took upon the responsibility of transforming the Indian women's hockey team to a World Cup winning side, in *Gold* an alcoholic Bengali hockey fanatic, Tapan, also part of the staff of the Berlin Olympics Indian team that won the gold, dreams of seeing an independent India's flag fluttering atop in London.

Post the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, the biggest sporting carnival in the world was not held on two occasions — 1940 and 1944 because of the Second World War. A disheartened Tapan turns to drinking and gambling much to the dismay of his wife Monobina (Mouni Roy). But as we all knew, he would come up trumps. So, another ground on which the film fails to grip the audiences is the suspense factor. Thirdly, the script stretches and stretches. An enormous portion of the film is lost in capturing the team's preparations. Fourthly, *Gold* lacks the spirit of *Chak De! India*.

Talking of the similarities, one glaring example is the foes-turned-friends like equation between Preeti and Komal in *Chak De! India*. We see its almost exact replica in the rivalry between Raghuvir and Himmat in *Gold*, until they join hands at the eleventh hour to take the country to another Olympic glory. In terms of performance, with due respect to Akshay, he falls behind Shah Rukh.

In *Gold*, Akshay makes the mistake which is Shah Rukh's 'forte'— trying to win it on his own, relegating the rest to the background. Akki overacts and is too garrulous most of the time. Shah Rukh, on the contrary, was far more composed and dignified. May be so, the person Akshay essays in *Gold*, had such traits, but even then he is somewhat intolerable at times.

Kunal Kapoor as hockey star Samrat is refreshing, but Mouni as Monobina breaks the heart. She is found baffled at times on screen and looks too artificial. Our expectations from her have been belied. Two of the songs only waste our time. With utmost humility, it's logical to term *Gold* as a failed attempt and a blatant tinkering with facts! Period!

'Sacred Games' actor Elnaaz came to India for SRK

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

Not many are aware that the Iranian-born **Elnaaz Norouzi,** who shot to fame with the recent Netflix series *Sacred Games*, was actually charmed by Shah Rukh Khan's movies, which became the biggest reason for her to come to India. Yes, you read that right.

"Iranians love India and Bollywood. But as I grew up, my relationship with Bollywood became more and more special as my mom and I would watch at least one Bollywood film every week," quips Elnaaz. "We were crazy about those romantic Shah Rukh Khan films and I fell in love with SRK and wanted to work in Bollywood after that," she reminisces.

She smiles and informs that even her father is a "big Bollywood fan". "So, watching Hindi films became a passion for me. I remember buying loads of DVDs of Bollywood films and music albums in my childhood. I knew so many hit songs by heart, even without understanding the lyrics back then," laughs Elnaaz.

Elnaaz's luck shone as she actually landed in India and also got to work with her idol Shah Rukh in two commercials — one for an emulsion paint manufacturer and the other for a cosmetic brand. "It was indeed a dream come true," beams the *Sacred Games* star. By now, the newbie has perfected her Hindi diction too. Elnaaz is proud that she dubbed all her dialogues in *Sacred Games*, where she featured alongside Saif Ali Khan, Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Radhika Apte. A month before the release of the first season of the series, Elnaaz also featured opposite Punjabi heartthrob singer-composer Guru Randhawa in the super-successful music video of the single *Made In India*.

WALL OF FRAME

FIRSTPOSTER

Suited and booted

Seven Bengali films will release this Durga Puja. So, one can expect that the directors will start promoting their films on social media months before. On Independence Day, Arindam Sil, who is holidaying in the south, took to social media to share the first poster of his Durga Puja release 'Byomkesh Gowtro'. Starring Abir Chatterjee, this time, Byomkesh Bakshi is seen in a suit and not in a typical dhoti kurta. 'Byomkesh Gowtro' is based on the story 'Rakter Daag' and also stars Priyanka Sarkar, Sohini Sarkar, Anjan Dutt, Rahul and others

Celebration time for Saif Ali Khan and daughter

Saif Ali Khan turned 48 on Thursday and his wife Kareena Kapoor Khan, kids – Sara and Ibrahim and sister Soha – threw a birthday bash for the 'Sacred Games' actor. With sister-in-law Karisma and brother-in-law Kunal Kemmu in attendance, Saif cut a lovely birthday cake, which had 'We Love You Saifu' written on it

Saif Ali Khan and Amrita Singh's beautiful daughter Sara Ali Khan is all set to debut alongside Ranveer Singh in 'Simmba'. On Independence Day, the young star made her Instagram debut. Karan Johar, who is a hit among the star kids, welcomed Sara on Instagram. "Welcome the gorgeous and stunning @saraalikhan95 on Instagram!!!!," he captioned the photograph

GRANDPA LOVE

This is absolutely adorbs. Shahid Kapoor's wife Mira Rajput took to Instagram to share a cute photograph of her daughter Misha and her father-in-law Pankaj Kapoor. Misha was at her radiant best sporting a pretty pink kameez with her grandfather looking handsome in green. "Kite flying with Baba! It's a happy Independence Day!," Mira captioned the photograph. Mira is expecting her second child soon. Meanwhile, Shahid is busy promoting his film 'Batti Gul Meter Chalu'. The film also starring Shraddha Kapoor, Divyenndu Sharma and Yami Gautam, will release on September 21

Timeless magic of Sridevi reminisced

SANGHITA CHOUDHURY

Sridevi as an actress was a phenomenon. And she was also a paragon of beauty. She may be no more, but in the hearts of her die-hard fans, Sridevi is immortal. On the occasion of her first birthday after her sudden demise earlier this year, choreographer Sudarshan Chakravorty and actress Sreelekha Mitra, presented *Sri returns: Stories of the Diva* in a Gallery on August 13 at the Abanindranath Gallery (ICCR).

The show was a tribute to the late actress by city celebs as they took us on a trip down the memory lane. Performances by actresses Sreelekha, Debleena Dutt Mukherjee, Sonalee Chowdhuri and Rupanjana Mitra, singers Sidhu, Ritika Sahni, Chandrima Bhattacharya, Jojo Muherjee and others with Sapphire, mesmerised the audiences. Veteran singer Usha Uthup, who sang the title song of the Sridevi-starrer *Naka Bandi* and crooner Priya, who was Sridevi's voice in *Judaai*'s song *Raat Ko Neend*, were felicitated.

Photos: Sanghita Choudhury

Agnimitra Paul, Sudarshan Chakravorty & Sreelekha Mitra; Usha Uthup (above right), Sonalee (far right) and Rupanjana Mitra at the event held recently at ICCR

Sreelekha shared, "I was in a state of shock, after her death. What added to my concern was the fact that her body needed a post-mortem. Her beauty and charm always attracted people. And I just could not sleep the whole night recalling the way she died." Uthup was in tears while singing *Surmai Ankhiyon Mein* from the film *Sadma*. Usha added, "So you see, you couldn't dare to have this event without me".

Earlier, designer Agnimitra Paul introduced the concept *Sri Returns* by reading out a letter penned by her in memory of the actress. Sonalee danced to the tunes of songs like *Kisi Ki Haath*, *Taki o Taki* and others. Ritika sang the title track of the film *Roop Ki Rani Choron Ka Raja*. The entire programme was followed by a cake cutting ceremony.

Rima Das' next film at TIFF 2018

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

After winning the National Award for *Village Rockstars*, Assamese writer-director-producer, Rima Das returns to the prestigious, Toronto International Film Festival with her next film, *Bulbul Can Sing*.

Das' third independent feature in Assamese will make its world premiere in the "Contemporary World Cinema" at the 43rd edition of Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), which will be held from September 6-16. Rima made the film independently, in the same way as her earlier film, *Village Rockstars*. "It's a huge honour to return to TIFF after *Village Rockstars* and start the journey of my next feature, *Bulbul Can Sing*. It's like the homecoming for me," she says.

Bulbul Can Sing is a coming-of-age drama about a teenage girl, Bulbul, living in a village in Assam, fighting her way through love and loss as she figures out who she really is. Rima's debut film, *Man with Binoculars* was premiered at Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival 2016. *Village Rockstars* was premiered at TIFF 2017 under Discovery Section. The film was screened at more than 70 renowned film festivals and has won 44 awards including four National Awards (best feature, best editing, audiography and child artiste).

A still from 'Bulbul Can Sing'

Film pays tribute to freedom fighter Basanta Biswas

DRISTI BANDOPADHAY

Basanta Kumar Biswas was born in the fiery age of the Independence movement of India. He lived a life less long, yet kindled such a flame through his *karma* that should inspire the youth today and for ever. Having inheritances of the Indigo Revolt leader Digambar Biswas running through his veins, he fought for the freedom of his motherland under the guidance of Rash Behari Bose, his Rash Behari *dada*. Basanta hurled a bomb at Lord Hardinge in Delhi during a procession. He failed and was hanged to death at the young age of 17.

Unfortunately, Biswas is a name less heard among the Indian youth today. Sankar Majumdar in his film titled *Bahni Balak Basanta* (Basanta the fire child) portrayed the story of his life. Birla Academy Calcutta showed the film on August 10 as a tribute to the great rebel keeping the auspicious occasion of India's 72nd Independence in mind.

The film starring newcomer Arkoranjan Bhattacharya as Basanta and Sukriti Lahari as his mother was shot in Poragacha, Nadia — the location where Basanta was born and lived. A villa in Paglachandi Krishnanagar was used as the home of the Viceroy Hardinge. The director's intention was to bring out the inherent pathos of the rebel's life.

He focused on Basanta's relation with his mother and extracted the agony that emerged out of the brutal hanging of the young boy. Other than the sentimental leanings of the scenario, there is a fitting location and a matching background score that had enhanced the impact of the work. Songs of Jyotirindranath, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Bankim Chandra and D L Roy were performed by Sujata Majumdar, Suvasisah Majumdar, Swadesh Chatterji and others.

Basanta Kumar Biswas

THE DIRECTOR FOCUSED ON BASANTA'S RELATION WITH HIS MOTHER AND EXTRACTED THE AGONY THAT EMERGED OUT OF THE BRUTAL HANGING OF THE YOUNG BOY

In a situation where storytelling is getting complex in movies, such a flat narrative may seem out of point. But sentimentality of a patriot's life is never bizzare in Indian cinema. Many films have been made on Khudiram, Bagha Jatin, Surya Sen and others. *Bahni Balak Basanta* is a glaring addition to the list.

Amazing Chronicle

Split from Brooklyn Beckham, Chloe Grace Moretz opened up about the breakup and reflected on what she's learned from it. Back in April, Brooklyn was photographed kissing Playboy model Lexi Wood. While Beckham and Moretz had dated on and off again for years, the two had rekindled their romance about seven months prior. Moretz had also professed her love for Beckham via an Instagram birthday message just the month before. "Breakups are hard across the board," Moretz told. "But when every verified account on Twitter posts something about me, I get tagged. And every major publication is verified. So anytime they post something about a certain relationship, it pops up on my phone, which is how I find out about 90% of things."

A judge ordered a convict appearing in his court to have his mouth gagged with duct tape when he refused to stop interrupting. Judge John Russo ordered that Franklyn Williams's mouth to be taped over to prevent him from speaking after warning him to be silent at least 12 times over the course of 30 minutes. Williams, 32, was being sentenced for armed robbery at the time and talked almost continuously during the hearing. Judge Russo told the accused, who was dressed in an orange suit and was sitting next to his lawyer: "I'm going to hear from your lawyers and that means zip it." Williams was eventually sentenced to 24 years in jail for aggravated robbery, kidnapping and theft.

Ziona Chana: The man with 39 wives, 94 children and 33 grandchildren

Ziona Chana lives with all of them in a 100-room mansion

He is head of the world's biggest family - and says he is 'blessed' to have his 39 wives, reports Daily Mail.

Ziona Chana also has 94 children, 14-daughters-in-law and 33 grandchildren. They live in a four storey house set amidst the hills of Baktwang village in the north-eastern Indian state of Mizoram, where the wives sleep in giant communal dormitories.

Chana told the Sun: 'Today I feel like God's special child. He's given me so many people to look after.

'I consider myself a lucky man to be the husband of 39 women and head of the world's largest family.'

The family is organised with almost military discipline, with the oldest wife Zathiangi organising her fellow partners to perform household chores such as cleaning, washing and preparing meals.

One evening meal can see them pluck 30 chickens, peel 132lb of potatoes and boil up to 220lb of rice. Coincidentally, Chana is also head of a sect that allows members to take as many wives as he wants.

He even married 10 women in one year, when he was at his most prolific, and enjoys his own double bed while his wives have to make do with communal dormitories. He keeps the youngest women near to his bedroom with the older members of the family sleeping further away - and there is a rotation system for who visits Mr Chana's bedroom.

Rinkmini, one of Mr Chana's wives who is 35 years old, said: 'We stay around him as he is the most important person in the house. He is the most handsome person in the village.

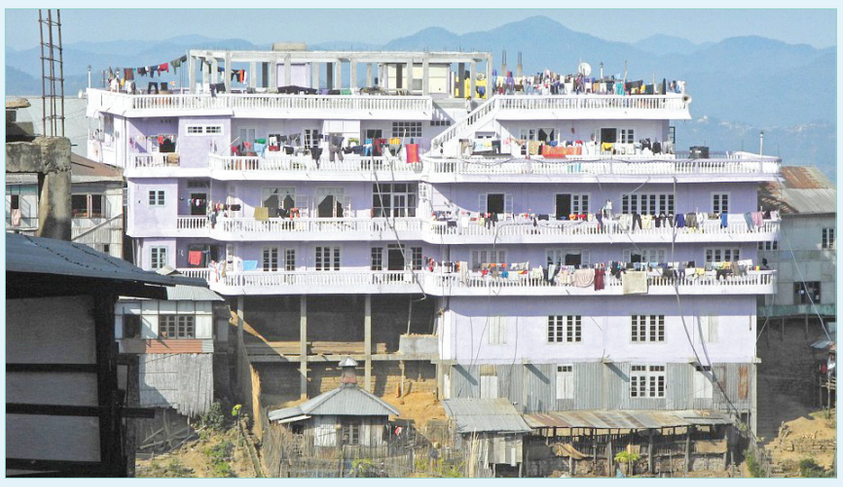
She says Mr Chana noticed her on a morning walk in the village 18 years ago and wrote her a letter asking for her hand in marriage.

Another of his wives, Huntharnghanki, said the entire family gets along well. The family system is reportedly based on 'mutual love and respect'

Chana, whose religious sect has 4,00 members, says he has not stopped looking for new wives.

'To expand my sect, I am willing to go even to the U.S. to marry,' he said.

One of his sons insisted that Mr Chana, whose grandfather also had many wives, marries the poor women from the village so he can look after them.



Great Pyramid of Giza can focus pockets of energy in its chamber, scientists say

The Great Pyramid of Giza can collect and concentrate electromagnetic energy in its chambers and at its base, scientists have discovered.

The 139m (456ft) construction was built by the ancient Egyptians more than 4,500 years ago and is the oldest of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

Experts are still working to solve the mysteries of the pyramid, which is believed to have been built as a tomb for the pharaoh Khufu, also known as Cheops.

Its ability to concentrate electric and magnetic energy was discovered by a team of researchers led by scientists from ITMO University in the Russian city of St Petersburg. They created a model of the pyramid to measure its electromagnetic response.

The model was used to see how wave energy is scattered or absorbed by the pyramid and the group tested the interactions with waves of resonant length - ranging from 200m to 600m.

If the pyramid's ability to concentrate energy can be recreated on a nanoscale size, researchers say the same science could be used to create more efficient sensors and solar cells.

The study, published in the Journal of Applied Physics, says: "In general, one may conclude that pyramidal objects located on a substrate and supporting multipole resonances can significantly suppress the reflection of incident electromagnetic waves.

"In the earth conditions, this could be used for controlling the radio-wave propagation and reflection. "Due to the scaling properties, such a behaviour can be realised in different spectral ranges for suitable material and geometrical parameters."

Dr Andrey Evlyukhin, scientific supervisor and coordinator of the research, said: "Egyptian pyramids have always attracted great attention.

"We as scientists were interested in them as well, so we decided to look at the Great Pyramid as a particle dissipating radio waves resonantly.

"Due to the lack of information about the physical properties of the pyramid, we had to use some assumptions.

Slovenians set Guinness record for scything

A total 570 people chopped grass in a Slovenian countryside to set the Guinness World Record for most people scything in one place.

Organizers of the event said 570 people, including President Borut Pahor, used scythes to chop grass in a Skofja Loka field for 15 minutes, qualifying the

feat for the Guinness Book of World Records. The Society of the Rural Youth, which organized the event, said participants ranged in age from 16 to 88.

Pahor said the scything event reminded him of when he was young.

"Some things from your childhood stay with you. This you stays with you," EuroNews quoted him as saying at the event.

World's youngest practising playwright sets Guinness record

A 10-year-old girl in India has just become the youngest practising playwright, after writing, planning and performing a piece called Mystical Magical Adventures – The Lost Key.

The play is about a young girl called Tinky, who meets four mystical creatures that take her on a magical adventure to save a kidnapped fairy.

Krshaana Rawat from Jaipur, invited some of her friends to act in the show, but professional actors, actresses and dancers were also hired with Krshaana taking on the lead role herself. Forty people performed in the 85-minute play. It took the young playwright around four months to put the performance together, with her mum Shreya, who works in theatre production, assisting with producing and directing.

Sitting in the audience alongside hundreds of guests, official Guinness

World Records adjudicator Swapnil Dangarikar was invited along to verify the attempt.

"The play was of very professional standards, with elaborate stage setup and costumes," he commented.

After being awarded her Guinness World Records certificate, Krshaana said: "I feel so honoured after winning the Guinness World Records title for the Youngest practising playwright. It gives me a feeling of excitement [and] I sense a sparkle of happiness when I know that our play will be going into your books." Krshaana started reading when she was just four years old, and her favourite authors are fellow record holder J.K. Rowling and David Walliams.

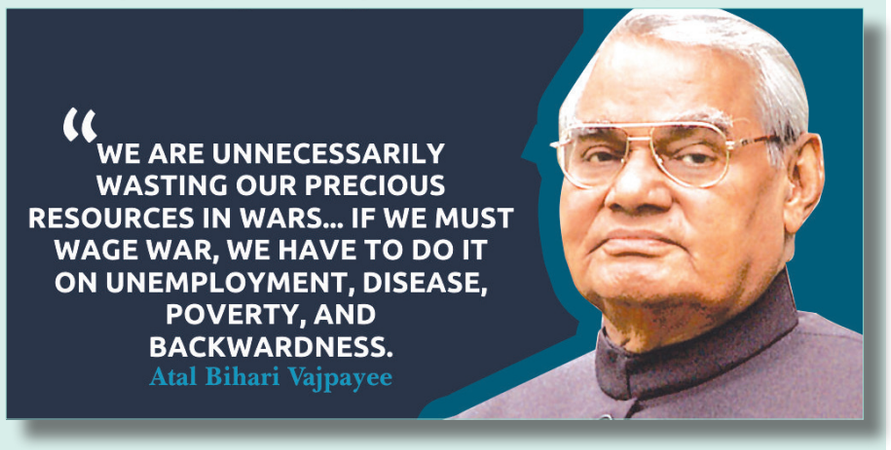
"When I was eight, I started writing short stories – thanks to my mum Shreya, who is also a theatre artist. Actually, I wanted my mother to start working in the theatres again, as she had taken a break to take care of me. She said me that she will direct plays when I start writing," she told.

Girl, 6, buys $350 worth of toys on mom's Amazon account

A Utah 6-year-old used her mother's Amazon account to secretly buy $350 worth of toys and ended up donating them to a children's hospital. Ria Diyaolu tweeted a photo that went viral this week showing her cousin, Kaitlin, standing next to a pile of Amazon boxes at her family's Ogden home. Kaitlin's mother said the girl had permission to buy a Barbie from Amazon for her birthday and she gave the child access to her account so she could check the shipping status of the order. The girl used the Amazon information to buy another $350 worth of toys, which her parents didn't know.

VIRAL VIBE

Facebok, Whatsapp and Twitter have now become inseparable part of our daily life. Young and old alike are deeply immersed in the pleasures of social media. Daily, lakhs of users are posting messages through this medium. Many of those messages have a wide variety of flavours. Some are very serious, other s convey messages of social responsibility while the rest are downright funny. We shall be publishing one or two samples of such posts for the reading pleasure of our readers.



Unknown facts about Atal Bihari Vajpayee

1. 1st Class Student
He has been a bright student and was awarded first class Post Graduate Degree in Political Science.

2. When his father was his classmate!
He and his father went to the same Law College (DAV College in Kanpur) together for their Law studies and they even shared the same room in the hostel.

3. When he was arrested for the 1st time!
In 1942, Atal was arrested along with elder brother Prem for 23 days for participating in Quit India Movement against the British Government in India.

4. Tryst with Journalism
Atal was greatly fascinated with journalism and was always eager to become a journalist. His dream to become a journalist came true when he was sent to Uttar Pradesh to work for Deendayal Upadhyaya's newspapers- Rashtradharma (a Hindi monthly), Panchjanya (a Hindi weekly) and the dailies Veer Arjun & Swadesh.

5. His first Lok Sabha Election
In the 2nd General Elections of 1957, he contested for the first time from two constituencies- Mathura and Balrampur in Uttar Pradesh.
He lost the Mathura seat to Raja Mahendra Pratap and won the Balrampur seat.

6. Atal as an ardent follower!
He was an ardent follower of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee (founder of the Bhartiya Jana Sangh) and went on a fast-unto-death along with him in 1953 to protest against the law of carrying a permit to visit Kashmir. Atal was shattered when Mukherjee died during the protest.

7. Agra Connection
His ancestral village is in Bateshwar, Agra and his grandfather, Pandit Shyam Lal Vajpayee, had migrated to Morena in Madhya Pradesh from Bateshwar in Agra.

8. He was a Communist!
Before joining Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh (RSS), Atal was inclined towards communism and after being influenced by Babasaheb Apte, he joined the RSS in 1939 and in 1947, he became a Pracharak of RSS (technically a full-time worker).

Readers can choose such posts and send them to VIRAL VIBE at 9864056705 for our consideration. We shall choose the most interesting ones for publication in the viral column.

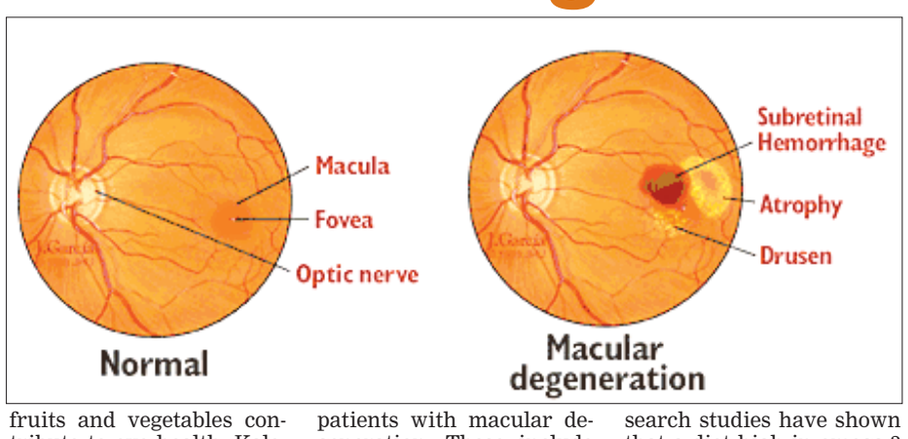
GO HEALTHY

With growing age be conscious about macular degeneration: 2

Surgery to implant a telescopic lens
For selected people with advanced dry macular degeneration in both eyes, one option to improve vision may be surgery to implant a telescopic lens in one eye. The telescopic lens, which looks like a tiny plastic tube, is equipped with lenses that magnify your field of vision.

The telescopic lens implant may improve both distance and close-up vision, but it has a very narrow field of view. It can be particularly useful in an urban environment to aid in identifying street signs.

Precautions
• Don't smoke. If you smoke, ask your doctor for help to quit.
• Choose a healthy diet. The antioxidant vitamins in



fruits and vegetables contribute to eye health. Kale, spinach, broccoli, peas and other vegetables have high levels of antioxidants, including lutein and zeaxanthin, which may benefit people with macular degeneration. Foods containing high levels of zinc may also be of particular value in patients with macular degeneration. These include high-protein foods, such as beef, pork and lamb. Nonmeat sources include milk, cheese, yogurt, whole-grain cereals and whole-wheat bread.

Another good choice is healthy unsaturated fats, such as olive oil. And research studies have shown that a diet high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as found in salmon, tuna and walnuts, may lower the risk for advanced AMD. But the same benefit is not shown from taking omega-3 supplements, such as fish oil pills.

• Manage your other medical conditions. If you have cardiovascular disease or high blood pressure, for example, take your medication and follow your doctor's instructions for controlling the condition.

• Maintain a healthy weight and exercise regularly. If you need to lose weight, reduce the number of calories you eat and increase the amount of exercise you get each day. Maintain a healthy weight by exercising regularly and controlling your diet.

• Have routine eye exams. Ask your eye doctor about the recommended schedule for follow-up exams. In between checkups, you can do a self-assessment of your vision using an Amsler grid. These steps will help identify if your condition develops into wet macular degeneration, which can be treated with drugs.

GLOBE-TROTTING

Record numbers summit Everest this yr

KATHMANDU: A record 807 climbers reached the summit of Mount Everest in May this year, officials confirmed today, capping a successful climbing season that also saw multiple other firsts. Unusually good weather on the roof of the world allowed the staggering number of mountaineers to reach the 8,848-metre (20,029-foot) peak, including a double amputee from China. Everest — which straddles the border between Nepal and China — saw 563 people summit from the south and 244 reach the top from the northern flank in Tibet, authorities on both sides confirmed. The numbers smashed the previous record of 665 summits set in 2013, according to the Himalayan Database. Two Nepali Sherpas broke their own world records for the most Everest summits by a man and a woman, reaching the top for a 22nd and ninth time respectively.

2 mosques attacked with catapults in UK

LONDON: Two mosques in Britain's Birmingham were targeted with heavy-duty catapults and ball bearings overnight, police said on Thursday. Armed police officers have been deployed outside the mosques, they said. West Midlands Police were called to Masjid Qamarul Islam in Small Heath and then to Al-Hijrah mosque nearby. Police said they had recovered some ball bearings which appeared to have been fired from catapults, which smashed windows during evening prayers. "Officers were deployed as a precaution, but the bearings recovered are thought to be from a heavy-duty catapult," the police said.

Israel to reopen Gaza goods crossing

JERUSALEM: Israel will reopen its only goods crossing with the Gaza Strip tomorrow if calm is maintained, after having prevented most deliveries since July 9 over border tensions, the defence ministry said on Tuesday. "Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman this afternoon held a situation assessment" with security chiefs, his office said in a statement. "In the meeting it was decided that if the quiet which has been maintained on the Gaza border continues until tomorrow morning, Kerem Shalom crossing will open tomorrow at 9:00 am (0600 GMT) and the fishing zone will be expanded back to nine miles from the beach."

IS strikes intelligence centre in Kabul

KABUL: Gunmen launched an attack on an intelligence training centre in Kabul early today, officials said, just a day after a suicide bomber killed dozens of students in the war-weary city. "Clashes are ongoing and the area is cordoned off by the Afghan security forces," said Kabul police spokesman Hashmat Stanikzai. An official at the scene requesting anonymity confirmed the attack. Several gunmen were firing on a training facility overseen by the National Security Directorate -- Afghanistan's intelligence agency – from a nearby construction site according to officials. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack. The attack comes hours after a suicide bomber struck an education centre in western Kabul.

Mourners carry the coffin of a child at the funeral procession for those killed in an airstrike on a bus in Yemen.

IN ONE YEAR

More than fifty strikes on civilian vehicles in Yemen

AGENCIES

KIEV: The bombing of a bus full of school children last week was just one of more than 50 airstrikes against civilian vehicles by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen so far this year, according to new data.

The data also shows that the monitoring body set up in Riyadh purportedly to investigate incidents of civilian casualties has supported the Saudi military version of events in almost every case.

The Joint Incidents Assessment Team (JIAT) has not issued comprehensive statistics but has instead issued periodic press statements. And according to an analysis by Human Rights Watch (HRW), out of 75 incidents where civilian casualties were reported, JIAT has admitted Saudi rules of engagement may have been broken in only two.

In 10 more cases, JIAT has conceded that civilians may have been killed in error and said that compensation would be paid, but human rights advocates said there was so far no sign of any payments being made.

"None of the victims' families we reached out to said they had been contacted," said Kristine Bekerle, a HRW researcher, noting that the cases where compensation had been promised were up to two years old.

The 9 August airstrike obliterated a bus carrying schoolboys on a field trip in northern Yemen, leaving 40 children and 11 adults dead. The Saudi government told the UN security council that the strike would be investigated – but described it as "a legitimate military action", saying it had targeted "Houthi leaders who were responsible for recruiting and training young children, and then sending them to battlefields".

The schoolboys had been on the way to a cemetery where rebels were buried but survivors told journalists that was because it was one of the very few green spaces left in the whole of the northern Saada province. Parks and gardens have been destroyed in the relentless fighting.

Pakistan Assembly set to elect Imran as PM today

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's newly-elected National Assembly will meet today to elect the Prime Minister, as cricketer-turned politician Imran Khan's victory has become almost certain after a rift emerged in the grand opposition alliance over the candidature of PML-N chief Shahbaz Sharif.

Khan, 65, the chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Sharif have filed nominations for the top slot of the leader of the house.

The scrutiny of their papers was carried out in the office of the speaker. The papers of both leaders were accepted.

According to National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser, the parliament session has been summoned at 3:30pm tomorrow to elect the new prime minister.

The voting will be held in open through division of members in different galleries designated for different candidates.

The Prime Minister-elect will take oath on August 18.

The PTI emerged as the single largest party with 116 seats in July 25 elections. Its number increased to 125 after nine independent members joined it and final tally reached 158 after it was allotted 28 out of 60 seats reserved for women and five out of 10 seats reserved for minorities.

The PTI has the support of smaller parties including Muttahida Quami Movement with seven seats, Balochistan Awami Party five, Balochistan National Party four, Pakistan Muslim League three, Grand Democratic Alliance three, Awami Muslim League and Jamori Watan Party one seat each.

Khan may take a lead of 30 to 35 votes in the tomorrow's election for the office of prime minister, Dawn reported.

Meanwhile, the rift persisted in the grand opposition alliance over the candidature of Sharif, the paper said.

The Pakistan Peoples Party has asked the PML-N to review its decision and nominate someone else as a joint candidate of the 11-party opposition alliance in place of Sharif, who was said to have passed derogatory remarks against PPP co-chairman and former president Asif Ali Zardari in the recent past.

However, the PML-N reacted strongly to the demand and threatened that this could lead to change of the leader of the opposition and the chairman of the Senate.

The efforts were under way to remove differences between the PML-N and the PPP over Sharif's candidature.

Imran Khan's party had won the July 25 general elections.

Pak Prez polls on September 4

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will hold presidential elections on September 4 to elect President Mamnoon Hussain's successor at the end of his five-year-tenure, the election commission announced on Thursday.

Pakistan's president is elected indirectly by the members of Parliament and the four provincial assemblies.

"Presidential election will be held on September 4," the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) said as it issued the schedule of the election. Voting is held through a secret ballot.

President Hussain's term is set to end on September 9. According to the Constitution, the presidential election must be held at least a month prior to the expiry of the incumbent's term, which in this case would have been August 8.

Normally, the presidential election is held either a month after the General Election, or at least a month before the expiry of the president's tenure.

Holding a presidential election on August 8 was out of the question this time as neither the National Assembly nor the provincial assemblies were functional after the July 25 general elections.

The candidates can filed nominations by August 27 and the final list of contesting candidates will be issued on August 30, it said.

In Pakistan, the President is considered as a symbol of the federation and head of the state and exercises all powers on the recommendations of the prime minister.

Trump revokes security pass of ex-CIA director

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has revoked the security clearance of former CIA director John Brennan, one of his staunchest critics, accusing him of "lying" and attempting to "sow division and chaos" in the country.

The 62-year-old former top intelligence official served in the previous Obama administration. He was the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) director from 2013 to 2017.

White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders read out a statement from Trump during a press briefing yesterday in which the President said he has decided to revoke Brennan's security clearance since he recently has "leveraged his status as a former high-ranking official with access to highly sensitive information to make a series of unfounded and outrageous allegations, wild outbursts on the Internet and television, about this administration." Brennan tweeted that his security clearance being revoked is part of a broader effort by Trump to "suppress freedom of speech and punish critics. It should gravely worry all Americans, including intelligence professionals, about the cost of speaking out. My principles are worth far more than clearances. I will not relent." He also hit back at the President in a blistering New York Times op-ed published on Thursday.

"Trump clearly has become more desperate to protect himself and those close to him, which is why he made the politically motivated decision to revoke my security clearance in an attempt to scare into silence others who might dare to challenge him," Brennan wrote.

> CALL IT THE RIGGED WITCH HUNT. [IT] IS A SHAM. AND THESE PEOPLE LED IT. SO I THINK IT'S SOMETHING THAT HAD TO BE DONE.
>
> JOHN BRENNAN, EX-CIA DIRECTOR

He argued that Trump's "claims of no collusion are, in a word, hogwash," referring to the allegations that the Trump campaign associates coordinated with Russia to influence the 2016 election. Trump has repeatedly denied any collusion.

Brennan has also strongly criticised Trump for using derogatory words against former White House aide Omarosa Manigault Newman, one of his most vocal black supporters, who is currently on a massive publicity tour to promote her explosive book, reportedly on the physical and mental health of the president.

When Trump addressed Newman as "that dog" in a tweet, Brennan replied it is "astounding how often you fail to live up to minimum standards of decency, civility and probity. Seems like you will never understand what it means to be president, nor what it takes to be a good, decent and honest person. So disheartening, so dangerous for our Nation."

China unveils rover to explore moon's dark side

AGENCIES

BEIJING: China has unveiled a new lunar rover as it prepares to become the first nation in the world to explore the dark side of the moon later this year.

Revealed at a press conference Wednesday, the unmanned vehicle is 1.5 meters (5 feet) long and about one meter (3.3 feet) wide and tall, with two foldable solar panels and six wheels.

China announced its intentions in 2015 to send a rover to the dark side of the moon. In May this year, it launched a relay satellite to establish a communication link between Earth and the planned lunar probe.

The country's last lunar rover — named Yutu, or Jade Rabbit — ceased operation in August 2016 after 972 days of service on the surface of the moon as part of the Chang'e 3 mission. China was only the third nation to successfully carry out a lunar landing, after the United States and Russia.

Yutu's successor is currently nameless, with a global competition underway to choose a moniker. The winner will receive $435 and tickets to watch the launch live.

"Its overall design is inherited from our last lunar rover," Wu Weiren, the chief designer of China's lunar probe program, told state broadcaster CCTV. "But we worked hard to improve its reliability, conducting thousands of experiments to ensure its long-term operation, especially taking into consideration rocks, ravines and frictions on the moon."

The next lunar mission -- Chang'e-4 -- will take off at the end of this year, officials said, though a final launch date has yet to be announced.

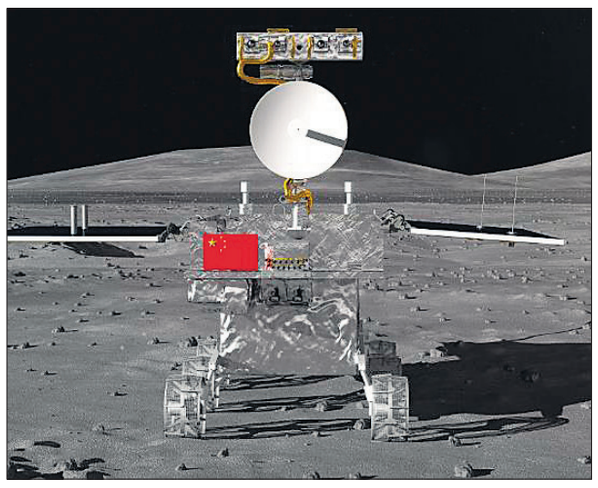
Wu said the new rover will carry equipment jointly developed by China and Sweden, as well as a domestically-made radar, cameras and scientific gear.

On Chinese social media, suggestions for a name for the rover abounded, with some commenters advising against another name associated with rabbits — linking operational difficulties "Jade Rabbit" encountered during its mission to the "feeble" animal.

Many users suggested the name "Monk Pig," after Zhu Bajie, a fictional character from the famous classical Chinese novel "Journey to the West."

Once an immortal in heaven, Zhu was turned into a half-man, half-pig monster as punishment for his drunken flirtation with Chang'e — the moon goddess whose name is now synonymous with China's lunar program.

China was late to the space race — it didn't send its first satellite into space until 1970, after the US put the first man on the moon. But in the decades since, Beijing has pumped billions of dollars and other resources into research and training.



China's rover for the Chang'e-4 lunar probe, which is expected to land on the far side of the moon this year, was unveiled Wednesday.

Chinese hackers targeted US govt firms

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON: Hackers operating from an elite Chinese university probed American companies and government departments for espionage opportunities following a U.S. trade delegation visit to China earlier this year, security researchers told Reuters.

Cybersecurity firm Recorded Future said the group used computers at China's Tsinghua University to target U.S. energy and communications companies, and the Alaskan state government, in the weeks before and after Alaska's trade mission to China. Led by Governor Bill Walker, companies and economic development agencies spent a week in China in May.

Organizations involved in the trade mission were subject to focused attention from Chinese hackers, underscoring the tensions around an escalating tit-for-tat trade war between Washington and Beijing. China was Alaska's largest foreign trading partner in 2017 with over $1.32 billion in exports.

Recorded Future said in a report to be released later on Thursday that the websites of Alaskan internet service providers and government offices were closely inspected in May by university computers searching for security flaws.

Europe bridges are in a 'dangerous state'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

GENOA: Fears have risen across Europe about infrastructure following the deadly collapse of a stretch of a motorway bridge in Genoa, with experts warning that some road bridges are in a dangerous state

The French transport minister has warned that the country's road network is in a "critical state" after a report submitted to the government before the Genoa bridge collapse revealed a third of the country's road bridges required repairs and 841 posed a potential risk.

In Italy, as many as 300 bridge are at risk of failure. They include a bridge near Agrigento, Sicily, designed by Ricardo Morandi, who also designed the Genoa bridge, that was closed by local authorities in 2017 because of structural damage in its pillars.

Genoa's chief prosecutor said on Thursday that there could be as many as 20 people missing in the rubble from the collapsed bridge, in addition to the 39 already confirmed dead.

Shares in the holding company of Autostrade Per l'Italia, the operator of both the bridge and motorway that ran over it, fell dramatically in trading on the Milan stock exchange on Thursday after the Italian government said it would take steps to revoke its concession.

The summary of the general audit on the state of France's road network was published in July without fanfare, but does not make reassuring reading for motorists.

The collapsed Morandi Bridge is seen in the port city of Genoa.

Its authors reported a "marked deterioration" of French roads in general and particularly bridges and viaducts.

"Of the 12,000 bridges in the network, a third need repairs … often small repairs in order to prevent the appearance of structural deterioration", it claims. "In 7% of cases, the damage is more serious, leading eventually to a risk of collapse and therefore the strong probability of the preventative closure of these road bridges to heavy vehicles or all vehicles."

Elisabeth Borne, the French transport minister, said she would be presenting new legislation including a programme reviewing the country's infrastructure next month. The government is also proposing a new euro 1bn plan to "safeguard the road network" and carry out urgent repairs.

A MOVE TO BEAT TESLA

India-born launches renewable plan in Australia

AGENCIES

CANBERRA: India-born British billionaire Sanjeev Gupta has launched a $1 billion, one-gigawatt renewable energy plan based in South Australia's mid-north that he says will lead the country's industry transition to more competitive power.

In the first of a number of projects slated for the upper Spencer Gulf region, will include a 120MW lithium-ion battery bigger than the 100MW battery built by Elon Musk's Tesla in South Australia in 2017, according to details released by Gupta's energy company Simec Zen of its Cultana Solar Farm.

The project will produce 280 megawatts of power and feature 780,000 solar panels, generating enough electricity for 96,000 homes. The Cultana Solar Farm will begin construction in early 2019, employing 350 workers during construction, reported *ABC News*.

"Today's event is symbolic of our desire to develop and invest in new-generation energy assets that will bring down Australia's electricity prices to competitive levels again," Gupta said on Wednesday.

"Solar will be the main base of our ambitions in Australia but we will have some wind and we have lots of storage solutions."

When completed, Gupta's battery will surpass the battery built by Tesla as the largest in the world, reports said.

However, the Gupta Family Group (GFG) Alliance has no intention to stop there with plans for pumped hydro projects and expanded solar farms being developed for South Australia.

Sanjeev Gupta has launched a $1 billion, 1 GW renewable energy plan.

> IN THE FIRST OF A NUMBER OF PROJECTS SLATED FOR THE UPPER SPENCER GULF REGION, WHICH WILL INCLUDE A 120MW LITHIUM-ION BATTERY

"All of these projects will not only improve reliability and greatly reduce the cost of electricity in our own operations, they will also provide competitive sources of power for other industrial and commercial users, while at the same time playing a key role in the market's transition towards renewables," he said.

"We have a strong conviction that traditional carbon-intensive generation sources do not have a long-term future as the predominant source of power in Australia and globally.

"We believe the world is undergoing a momentous transition to renewable power as the cost of renewables drops dramatically and quickly," he added.

Mali's president wins second term

ISTANBUL: Mali's president, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, has won a second term after taking 67% of the vote in a runoff election.

Opposition leader Soumaïla Cissé received more than 32% of the vote in Sunday's poll.

The estimated turnout was 34%. Voters were put off by threats of violence from extremist groups, and there was widespread disillusion with veteran politicians, whose campaign promises failed to offer convincing solutions to the impoverished and violent west African country's many problems.

The election looks unlikely to bring stability, which is key in the battle against Islamist extremism in the Sahel region and in efforts to curb illegal migration to Europe.

Cissé, 68, has said he will reject the results of the runoff, which was marred by allegations of ballot-box stuffing and other irregularities.

Style is a reflection of your attitude and your personality.
Shawn Ashmore, Canadian actor

EasternChronicle
AUGUST 17, FRIDAY, 2018

Modicare to benefit all

The Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission (AB-NHPM) which could make India the world's largest health insurance programme. The scheme could also have a multiplier impact on allied sectors like pharmaceutical, diagnostics and medical devices and the overall Indian economy by way of employment generation. If adopted well, the government will have addressed one of the three things that are in a terribly sorry state today.

The three are jobs, education and health. The problem of jobs is addressable, if the government adopts the rooftop solar model and encourages methane generation. Together they have the potential for creating over 80 million jobs within a few years, and making India a net exporter of oil and gas. Education, however, will require a lot more of work. The entire school system needs to undergo radical change – but without the ideological baggage that is being pushed at present. But, if planned properly, medicare could be a game-changer. The objectives embraced by AB-NHPM are daunting indeed.

Unlike the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) which offers an insurance cover of ₹30,000, the AB-NHPM will offer a cover of ₹5 lakh. Moreover, the AB-NHPM covers high end medical procedures as well, unlike RSBY which covers basic medicare. And while RSBY covers a population of 18 crore people, the AB-NHPM is expected to be targeted to cover 50 crore.. This may require creating capacities for 1.6 lakh more beds (in addition to the existing 13.5 lakh beds). And while the premium for the RSBY is ₹300-400 a year (or ₹1.00/day), the premium for AB-NHPM should get announced shortly. Such a scheme is sorely needed.

The fact is that health services are terrible in India. Healthcare insurance in India is largely un-penetrated. Government expenditure on health services is also pathetic – at just 1.25 per cent of GDP. Even the existing government run health services are poorly managed. Most people spend money on (expensive and exploitative) private sector clinics and health centre. More than two-thirds of the amount spent on healthcare in India comes from private pockets.

Not surprisingly, as the CII-PWC report on AB-NHPM documents, almost 55–60 million Indians are pushed into poverty every year because they are unfortunately compelled to shell out half of their annual household expenditure to meet medical needs, especially for hospitalisation. Just one major illness can bankrupt a middle class family. There is no real health insurance scheme for 80 per cent of the Indian population.

Of course, implementing AD-NIPM won't be easy. It will have to cope with several challenges. One is funding. The financial details of the scheme are yet to be announced. The other issues that plague healthcare in India are weeding away bogus or ghost beneficiaries which in turn allow for siphoning away of funds. At times funds get embezzled through false documentation — for instance an out-patient (OPD) could be shown as an in-patient, undergoing major medicare procedures.

Hospitals need to be computerized across the state and even across the country to know the exact state of inventories to prevent over-purchases and cozy deals with producers of sub-standard products. This problem could get addressed through the implementation of the Registry of Hospitals in Network of Insurance (ROHINI) System and the National Health Resource Repository (NHRR) project.

Where are the promised jobs?

Answers to questions raised in Parliament between February and July this year lay bare the lackadaisical approach of the central and state governments towards filling job vacancies. Nearly 24 lakh posts are lying vacant with the central and state governments. This, even as millions of women and men, many of them educated, are struggling with unemployment. According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, India's unemployment rate nearly doubled in nine months, from 3.39 per cent in July 2017 to 6.23 per cent in March 2018.

Narendra Modi rose to power in 2014 promising to create 20 million jobs a year. Forget creating private sector jobs, why hasn't his government, and the governments in the states, now most of them ruled by the BJP, filled up even existing vacancies in the government sector? The figures are shocking: 10 lakh teacher posts vacant in government schools, 90 per cent of them at the primary level; 5.4 lakh vacancies in the police forces; 2.2 lakh jobs in anganwadis; 1.5 lakh jobs in health centres; the Railways has 2.4 lakh vacancies; the armed forces 62,000 and the Paramilitary 61,000; the postal department is short of 54,000 personnel; the premier All-India Institute of Medical Sciences nearly 22,000; other higher education institutions are short of 12,000 people, and the country's courts are short of nearly 6,000 people.

Of particular concern is the fact that the bulk of the vacancies — over 10 lakh — are in primary school teaching posts. Among the problems that education experts have repeatedly drawn attention to is this very shortage of teachers in government schools.

How important school education and the appointment of teachers are to our central and state governments can be gauged from the fact that despite the large number of unfilled teaching posts, the Central Board for Secondary Education did not conduct the teacher eligibility test last year, citing "administrative reasons".

Vajpayee changed Indian politics

SRINIVASAN K. RANGACHARY

Barring a few thoughtful voices who have offered a nuanced criticism of his regime for its failings the level of veneration that Atal Behari Vajpayee enjoyed among a large section of mainstream is all pervasive. Indian right wing has resulted in mostly uncontested hagiographical accounts about him and his NDA government. Of course, he was also often unfairly subjected to vicious criticism from a section of hardline Hindutva proponents who blame him for what they saw as ideological compromises he made to stay in power and for the lack of progress in advancing the 'core Hindu' agenda. Some of the most virulent attacks Vajpayee had to face also came from the angry, old vanguard of the Sangh.

That bitter patriarch of the Hindu Labour movement Dattopant Thengdi had even described Vajpayee as a "petty politician playing into the hands of his policy advisers with doubtful credentials". Any balanced appraisal of Vajpayee would have to necessarily acknowledged, the man's failings while celebrating his many triumphs.

Vajpayee's cultivated cultural finesse, his poetical flourishes, his avuncular persona and several instances of nationally televised oratorical brilliance combined to earn him enormous goodwill among the populace and considerable respect across the political spectrum. The Golden Quadrilateral project, envisioned and executed by his government, contributed significantly to solidify his positive legacy. Policy innovations of Vajpayee's government sparked off India's telecom revolution. And to his credit, he sagaciously ran the first successful coalition government of India – an onerous task given that the NDA comprised fractious parties with divergent agendas.

By choice and conviction, the Vajpayee-led NDA was perhaps the only time India had a government ideologically committed to right-wing economics.

Many distinguished economists credit his government's economic policies for India's sustained GDP growth rate of over 8 per cent from 2003-2007. Under the NDA government, companies were privatised via strategic sale, taxation was rationalised, foreign exchange rules were relaxed, capital markets and insurance reforms were executed and the government even proposed to privatise PSU banks and liberalise India's strangulating labour laws. Plans to privatise Air India and the oil marketing companies could not materialise – had they succeeded, the national exchequer would have saved several trillion rupees.

But it was not that Vajpayee or his government was without blemishes. Vajpayee had this remarkable ability to usurp entire credit for the various notable achievements of his government while his spin-masters conveniently scapegoated others for the glaring acts of omission and commission. For instance, in the popular narrative, the shameful surrender at Kandahar after the hijacking of an Indian Airlines flight came to be identified with Advani, though it was well known that the latter fiercely opposed the release of the militants, which was the hijackers' demand.

Vajpayee enjoyed a great press thanks to his PMO's self-serving embrace of Delhi media establishmentarians and he did not nothing to challenge the charade enacted by the friendly section of his media machinery – good Vajpayee- versus- bad BJP.

Vajpayee's greatest failing perhaps was a failure to create an alternative ecosystem that accommodated the forces that drove him to power. Some intellectuals and journalists commented that "Vajpayee, who many in the BJP regarded as a closet Nehruvian, was anxious to inherit the old establishment rather than forge a counter-establishment. Despite initial fears of a 'right wing takeover' that some hardened secularists did their utmost to spread, the genial Vajpayee was neither a Margaret Thatcher nor a Ronald Reagan. The NDA regime's contribution to nurturing alternative political worldviews was extraordinarily unimpressive."

The astounding personal popularity that Vajpayee enjoyed also camouflaged BJP's political eclipse in the Hindi heartland state of Uttar Pradesh, revival of which had to wait until the spectacular Modi-Shah campaign in 2014. While facile political punditry continues to superficially attribute a multitude of reasons for the electoral decline of BJP in 2004, the single most significant political blunder that led to the dramatic fall in parliamentary seats was the marginalisation and subsequent expulsion of Kalyan Singh – a powerful Other Backward Class (OBC) leader who brilliantly blended social engineering strategies with purposeful governance, albeit for a short period.

A battery of electorally irrelevant upper caste leaders, blessed by Vajpayee, staged a revolt against Kalyan Singh, which finally resulted in his exit from the party. A much chastened Kalyan Singh returned later, but he was a pale imitation of his original political personality.

Vajpayee had often displayed exemplary personal courage – for instance during the 1984 Sikh riots. His government was daring in challenging the discriminatory nuclear order by performing the tests at Pokhran and then skilfully navigated through the geopolitical consequences of that decision. But Vajpayee also often resorted to humming rhetorical poetry rather than confront situations which required morally unambiguous positions to be asserted or needed concrete action.

Vajpayee's PMO turned out of be a den of political intrigue and dubious deal making featuring his foster son-in-law who was often in the eye of several controversies. His key aide Brajesh Mishra later turned out to a huge embarrassment for the BJP.

Through his irresponsible sound-bytes, he lent himself well to media in their attempts to tarnish the BJP. Vajpayee was a tired man by the time he had assumed office, but that was understandable. Along with other stalwarts, he had meticulously built a political formation, traversing the length and breadth of the country, motivating cadres when there was not even a glimmer of hope of capturing political power.

That the BJP is the only political force that has survived and flourished, to challenge and eventually uproot the Congress party, is testimony to the blood, sweat and toil of Vajpayee and millions of BJP/Sangh cadres. Vajpayee surely deserves a place under the sun for this achievement alone – of fashioning a viable political alternative.

AUGUST 17

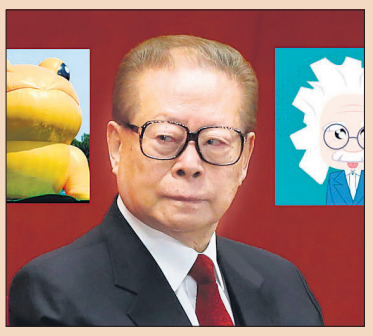
THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1743 – Treaty of Åbo signed in Turku by Sweden and Russian Empire, ending the Russo-Swedish War (1741-1743)

1917 – Italy declares war on Turkey

1926 –Jiang Zemin, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (1989-2002) and President of the People's Republic of China (1993-2003), born in Yangzhou, Jiangsu (pic)

1932 – V.S. Naipaul, British novelist (Middle Passage), born in Chaguanas, Trinidad and Tobago.



1940 – 1940 Adolf Hitler orders a total blockade of Great Britain.

1943 – Robert De Niro, American actor (Taxi Driver, Raging Bull), born in NYC, New York.

1959 – USSR & Iraq signs contract for building Iraqi nuclear reactor

1982 – First Compact Discs (CDs) released to the public in Germany

2013 –18 people are killed in conflict between Boko Harem and Nigerian military

What it takes to lose people's trust

KRISHNA PRADHAN

K.P. Oli took over as Prime Minister in mid February. It is still too early to judge his performance in five months of his rule. Yet, all indicators point to a disappointing performance. The dissatisfaction of both the Press and the Public with the government are very palpable and the daily newspapers do not waste a moment to criticise the government on some issue or other. One of the Analysts had described Oli's government as "Oliyarchy". Oli had won a stunning majority on a platform of nationalism and a promise of economic prosperity and social progress.

He promised an eight per cent growth and a per capita income of $ 5000 in five years. Yet the steps taken by him so far do not give any hope of such development and promises remain only as promises. Nationalism is a very sensitive and yet a dangerous issue. History has shown that nationalism was misused to exploit the people.

Oli has come to power on a strong appeal for nationalism but it has to be followed by good governance which is lacking. Still, it looks that Oli has been harshly judged. May be, his style of functioning with no holds barred is not liked by many including those in the Government. Oli is also not seen to be getting any support from his party colleagues either and even the normally active Maoist leaders like Dahal are mostly silent and perhaps enjoying the discomfiture of the Prime Minister!

To his credit, Oli started off very well. He ended the transport syndicate which had been looting the public with official support. Despite international objections, he forced the UN to close its Political Affairs office.

He placed regulations on the activities of "foreign Volunteers" and barred construction activities on cultivable land. His Home Minister began well by making the contractors accountable for fulfilling the contracts on time and fining them if they do not do so in time. And there it ended.

In spite of having a two third majority and being assured of a full term of five years, Oli's government gives the feeling of being under "siege". The frustration of the Prime Minister is seen when he deals with criticism with disdain and arrogant satirical responses even in the Parliament! The opposition- the Nepali Congress is seen to be deeply insecure and is not acting as a powerful opposition party. Besides poor leadership with not so competent Deuba in charge, the party is only indulging in picking holes and not making any constructive suggestion and it does not seem to have any vision either. The party has not yet attempted to win over Terai which had been consistently electing them to the Parliament.

Their stand towards constitutional amendments is also not known. The only good development is that younger leaders like Gagan Thapa are being given more space! Oli has also not handled a few major issues that are critical and that needed his personal attention and prompt action. Some of his actions done with good intention have not had the support of the people. In two instances the Supreme Court had to issue stay orders.

The government has been slow in spending on capital projects. With just a month left, more than fifty percent of development budget was not spent. The result- the Government went on a spending spree with no regulations or control at the last moment. On one day alone, on 17th June- the Government issued official bank cheques to the tune of Rs.33 Billion, all in a hurry to meet the deadline. Any strict control exhibited by the Government towards the contractors in the beginning vanished with PM's colleague and a member of UML Raghubir Mahaseth taking a soft line towards the contractors towards the end. In handling the case of Dr. Govinda K.C., the Government took a firm line initially only to give in later on the issue of medical education.

In the process, Dr. Govinda who is a maverick got huge support not only from the public but also from those in medical services. There was some merit in Dr. Govinda's demand as many big wigs were actually planning to make money by opening new medical colleges to make up for the loss in running hospitals. Dr. Govinda is not new to hunger strikes and this time in Jumla it was the fourteenth time.

The Government took too long a time by which time, the public took over the issue in support of reforms and the government had to finally give in. It was messy and showed poor statesmanship! Similarly, the Government appeared to be insensitive in Ganga Maya's case who was on hunger strike again to bring justice to her son who was murdered by the Maoists during the insurgency.

The father of the deceased son Nanda Prasad died in September 2014 on the 334th day of hunger strike after fighting for justice for over 10- years. The Government did nothing to take action against the known perpetrators of the murder! People know why no action is being taken. Over 20,000 Quake victims will be spending their fourth monsoon under tents. Rehabilitation work has been very slow. So is the implementation of transitional justice. The victims of the insurgency period are still waiting for justice.

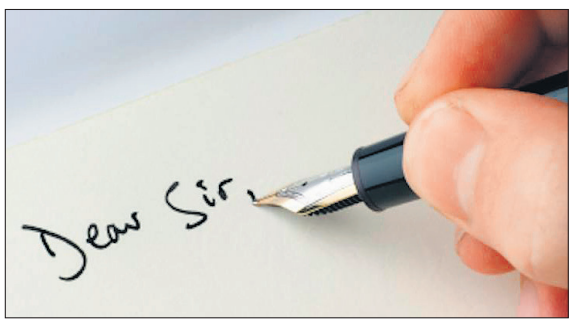
The Government declared certain areas in the capital as "no protect zone" which included Matighar Mandala close to the Singha Durbar and declared certain specified places in the city where demonstrations will be allowed. The Government had a case, as protest demonstrations were disturbing the normal life of the people and yet it had no support even from the party men of the UML.

The Supreme Court has stayed the order. The Government had rightly issued termination notices for the politically appointed staff recruited during the previous regime and the Court has again stayed the order.

READERS REACT

Bad week for Indian politics

Indians will remember the month of August when the country lost several of its revered politicians and bureacrats – from the south DMK's K Karunanidhi, from north, Chhattisgarh Governor Balramji Dass Tandon, Tandon, 90, one of the founding members of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s parent organisation, the Jan Sangh, died in Raipur after suffering a heart attack. Also the nation will mourn the passing of probably one of India's finest leaders Atal Bihari Vajpayee. All the three lived long and productive political lives and contributed immensely for the development and prosperity of the country. The foundation of the country's major infrastructure like the



multi-lane national highways was done during Vajpayee's tenure and arguably he had the most tough of any politician would aspire to have of balancing a massive coalition of diverse minds under one umbrella. But as a seasoned and witty politicians, Vajpayee rose above and floated his ideas with dignity and purity.

The current generation of politicians should take their inspiration from such leaders and rise above frivolous issues and lead the nation properly. While, the loss to the nation cannot be replaced, but at least we and future citizens can hope that the new generation of politicians will follow the path of such illustrious leaders.

Saurabh Aggarwal Behala

Readers can send in their letters to ecedit@gmail.com. The letters could be edited for space and clarity

THOUGHT OF THE DAY

If fear is cultivated it will become stronger, if faith is cultivated it will achieve mastery.

John Paul Jonesp

NATIONALISED BANKS are gearing up to install anti-skimming devices in all of its ATMs in the city area to make sure that fraudsters cannot install skimmers on ATM machines to extract data of customers and dupe them anymore. P12

IN A bid to ease mutation and plan sanction process in the added areas under its jurisdiction, Kolkata Municipal Corporation has decided to amend certain existing laws. P12

CHIEF MINISTER Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday said people of the country and its institutions must strive to remain "independent" in the true sense of the word. Banerjee unfurled the Tricolour and attended a colourful parade on Red Road, as the state joined the nation in celebrating the 72nd Independence Day. P13

Kolkata Chronicle

cityhighlights

Candle Light Dinner in River Cruise

The 360-degree river view, candlelight with soft music and mouth watering food to surely mesmerise your loved one. Five-course meal will be served on the table (veg, non-veg and Jain options available). The 65 ft x 16 ft boat will be exclusively for you with a butler. Cruise will start from Babughat and sail upto the 2nd Hooghly Bridge, Dock and Howrah Bridge. Sailing time is two hours. Menu shall be mailed for your prior selection. Hookah available on request. Time: 7 pm to 9 pm. Venue: Babughat.

75-minute show of standup comedian

The 75-minute show of Amit Tandon will tell you the journey of entire life. Are they funny? Well, that's for you to decide. Amit is known as 'The married guy' of standup comedy. With over 15 million video views and 1,000 shows across ten countries, he is one of the best known observational comics of India. Time: 7:30 pm. Venue: GD Birla Sabhaghar.

Launch of *Hamari Azadi Ki Ladai*

The book *Hamari Azadi ki Ladai* focuses on all important facts and events that had occurred since India's first failed attempt at attaining Independence in 1857 until our victory in 1947. The book authored by Late Govind Prasad Srivastava and published by his son Dr Anand Srivastava. Time: 12 pm. Venue: Oxford Bookstore, Park Street.

Vedic Village: The Luxury Resort

Vedic Village Spa Resort is a hidden gem, nestled in the lap of nature just 20 minutes away from the international airport in Kolkata, India. Built horizontally in the authentic architecture of Bengal villages, the world-class luxury resort blends in completely with the uniqueness of the landscape. It combines tremendous natural beauty and outdoor fun with unbeatable indoor luxury. A boutique getaway sprawling over 150 acres of fertile farmland greenery, sparkling lakes, coconut groves and a wealth of flora; it is a haven for migratory birds, butterflies, squirrels and exotic species of plants. Time: 10 am - 6 pm. Venue: Vedic Village.

National Building Code Of India 2016

A seminar on National Building Code Of India 2016: Fire & Life Safety will be addressed by D K Shami, Fire Adviser, Directorate General Fire Services, Civil Defence & Home Guards, Govt of India, Jag Mohan, IPS, Director General, West Bengal Fire & Emergency Services, GoWB, Arnab Roy, Principal Secretary, PWD Department, GoWB, Vishnu Gupta, Deputy Director General – East, BIS, Pradeep Sureka, Managing Director, Sureka Group, S Arun Kumar Scientist D (Civil Engg), BIS, Sashikant Jadhav, Member, Panel for Development Control Rules of NBC 2016, N Nagarajan, Member, Panel for Electrical Installations of NBC 2016. Time: 9.45 am. Venue: Lalit Great Eastern.

Great Eastern salutes fighter in every woman

Great Eastern Retail Private Limited is here to pay a tribute to all those fearless women warriors who deserve to be recognised and respected. On Friday, the women—whose have gone unheard and continued to be dominated from securing their rights and realising their full potential—would be honored and remember. An event, Radio Drive on Women Empowerment, will be hosted where all those unheard voices will finally get a platform to pour their hearts out and share their experiences. Let's honour the power and struggles of women who have broken all barriers and reached the pinnacle of success in every sphere of life. Time: 6 pm. Venue: Great Eastern.

CITY SHAKEN BY ATAL DEATH

Beriwalas regret the loss

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA: For the Beriwalas of 167 Chittaranjan Avenue in the city, the former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was a family friend since 1956.

Mourning the death of the first national BJP president, the members of the Beriwal family will visit Delhi on Friday to pay homage to the former Prime Minister during his last rite.

Speaking with *Eastern Chronicle*, Kamal Kumar Beriwala, son of Ghyansham Beriwala said that Vajpayee used to put up at their residence during his visits to Kolkata.

"Whenever he had a programme in Bihar, Odisha, he used to go via Kolkata and would come to our house. He was just our family member," said Kamal.

Speaking about his experience with the ace politician, Kamal said that after his marriage when he visited Vajpayee at his residence, Vajpayee himself made tea for Kamal's wife.

"Vajpayeeji was a very down to earth person. In order to welcome my wife at his residence for the first time, he made tea for her. On asking the reason, he said that women always serve everyone and it is also the duty of men to serve the women. He also said that my wife was like his daughter," said Kamal.

Kamal also said that the former Prime Minister would religiously call up Kamal's mother (Shanti Devi) on Raksha Bandhan every year as for Vajpayee Shanti Devi was his sister.

(Left) The room in which former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee would stay during his visit to Beriwal residence in Kolkata; Ghyansham Beriwala's wife Shanti Devi shows how Vajpayee loved eating golgappa. PTI PHOTOS

> VAJPAYEEJI WAS A VERY DOWN TO EARTH PERSON. IN ORDER TO WELCOME MY WIFE AT HIS RESIDENCE FOR THE FIRST TIME, HE MADE TEA FOR HER.
>
> KAMAL KUMAR BERIWALA
> GHYANSHAM'S SON

Ghyanshyam Beriwala, father of Kamal Kumar Beriwala said that though Vajpayee was a non-vegetarian, but he never complained for eating vegetarian dishes at the Beriwala's residence during his visit in the city.

"He was a non-vegetarian and connoisseur of good food. But in our house, non-vegetarian food is not cooked. So, he used to eat all kinds of food. On some occasions, Vajpayeeji even used to have phuchka (golgappa) sitting in our balcony. He mostly liked spicy food," Ghyanshyam recalls.

Ghyanshyam also said that they were pleasantly surprised by Vajpayee's unannounced visits on several occasions.

"After becoming Prime Minister for the second time, he didn't get much time to visit us at our place so we often met with him at Dum Dum airport. But before that there were many occasions when he paid surprise visits to our place and used to stay with us for weeks. He used to meet party leaders in our drawing room but he always made sure that no one in our family gets disturb by his meetings and also made it clear that we do not have any political connection with favourite authentic Bengali fish curry with rice. He loved Rasmalai and Rabri of Bengal like anything," Ghyanshaym said.

Krishna Kumal Beriwal, elder brother of Kamal Kumal Beriwal recalled that in his young days he used to watch films with Atal Bhari Vajpayee at their residence.

"Vajpayeeji also used to watch films in our house. Once we had watched the film Umrao Jaan. He is a nice human being, and used to love everyone. Inspite of being the Prime Minister, he visited my father at hospital when he had undergone a bypass surgery," said Krishna Kumar Beriwla.

Krishna Kumar also added that whenever they used to be in Delhi, they would make it a point to drop in at his residence. No matter how busy Vajpayee was, he always took out time for Beriwalas.

GRIEF-STRICKEN

Our country has lost a great son. Every inch a perfect Statesman, his contribution to Indian democracy will be remembered forever. A true Indian, who gave every bit for the nation.

Sanjiv Goenka, Chairman of Goenka group

Atalji was like a father to all BJP workers. No one can ever match up to you. A true and gentle human being. An impeccable loss in politics. Om Shanti.

Rahul Sinha, BJP national secretary

Atalji will always remain our guide. I had cancelled my programme and retured from Bankura. A true Bharatiya, who dedicated his life for the janata.

Locket Chatterjee, state BJP leader

I deeply mourn the death of our former PM, who was our source of inspiration. My condolences to the entire nation at this time. Om Shanti.

Roopa Ganguly, BJP MP

Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee was a reasoned critique in Opposition and a seeker of consensus as PM. He was a democrat to the core. An era has come to an end.

Pranab Mukherjee, Former president

Though we opposed each other vehemently on political & ideological issues, Vajpayeeji's good-nature and decency always made him stand out. Condolences.

Suryakanta Mishra, CPI(M) secretary

State BJP mourns the death of former PM

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA: Mourning the death of the former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the state BJP president Dilip Ghosh on Thursday said that it was an end of an era.

Speaking with Eastern Chronicle, Ghosh said the former Prime Minister was the idol of every Indians and that Vajpayee had dedicated his entire life for the nation.

"It is an impeccable loss for everyone. Vajpayeeji had served for the betterment of the country. The nation lost a true parliamentarian and good orator. The BJP activists follow his path and dedicate themselves to the service of mankind. He represented nationalism of India," said Ghosh.

The BJP state president had also arranged for a floral tribute for the former Prime Minister and first BJP national president at party's Kolkata headquarters where most the senior party leaderships paid homage to the ace politician.

BJP national secretary Rahul Sinha said Atal Bihari Vajpayee would be remembered for many things, but above all for his genuine efforts to establish the credentials of the BJP to run the Central government.

State BJP president Dilip Ghosh pays tribute to Vajpayee at party headquarters in Kolkata on Thursday. EC PHOTO

"Vajpayeeji was a man of great wisdom, tolerance and compassion. He led the saffron camp to its first victory in national elections and established the credentials of the BJP to run the central government. After him, Modiji is giving his best to reestablish that the BJP stands for the people in every sense," said Sinha.

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) general secretary Jishnu Basu said the vacuum created after the demise of such a political stalwart will not be filled easily.

Paying tribute to the former Prime Minister, Basu said he was a decisive leader who was acceptable to all.

"With his ideas and conduct, he established the Indian cultural values in his public life. He was a decisive leader who was acceptable to all," Basu said.

On hearing the critical health condition of the former Prime Minister earlier on Thursday, Ghosh and senior BJP leader Mukul Roy went to Delhi to visit him at AIIMS.

Vajpayee's health condition started to worsen from Wednesday night and he was on life support.

Vajpayee was a great statesman: Mamata

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA: Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday condoled the death of former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and said his passing away is a big loss to the country.

Banerjee, who was the Railway minister in the erstwhile Vajpayee government, said she would always cherish many fond memories. "Very very saddened that the great statesman and former PM Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayeeji is no more with us. His passing away is a very big loss to our nation. I will always cherish the many fond memories. Condolences to his family and his many admirers," she said in a tweet.

Vajpayee died at the AIIMS, New Delhi, following prolonged illness. Banerjee took the 2:45 pm flight for Delhi to see Vajpayee after his condition deteriorated. However, she received the sad news after she landed in Delhi. 0

File photo of Vajpayee with TMC chief Mamata Banerjee in New Delhi.

Before leaving, the CM recounted her fond memories with the former prime minister saying, "The way he had worked, it does not match with the politics that the BJP does now. We ourselves have supported Atalji's government then. When Atalji came to Kolkata, he visited my place and also met my mother. I was always in touch with his family. We had stood like pillars beside him when his government fell."

She further said, "Last time when I visited Delhi, I went to AIIMS to see him."

World loses one of the greatest politicians: Guv

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KOLKATA: Governor K N Tripathi on Thursday mourned the death of former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, and said not only India but the world has lost one of the greatest politicians and diplomats.

He was incomparable, a loving leader and a true guide to the nation and party workers, he said in a statement.

"I am deeply grieved to learn that our beloved leader Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee is no more. Not only India, but the world has lost one of the greatest politician and diplomat. He was a symbol of unique political cooperation, which he enjoyed as three-time prime minister of this country," Tripathi said.

"He has left a deep mark in the heart of the people of the country. Respected by the international community of leaders, Shri Vajpayee had unique quality of taking people with him. He was a nationalist in the true sense of the word," he said.

HC stays state medical council election process

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA: A single-judge bench of Calcutta High Court on Thursday ordered an interim stay putting on hold the West Bengal Medical Council Election till November.

In the voting process, seven medical teachers at various medical colleges of the state were to be elected by 2,850 eligible voters and nine others from general medical practitioners by 49,800 eligible voters, lawyer for WBMC Saibalendu Bhowmick said.

Justice Tapabrata Chakraborty stayed the election process and said the matter would be taken up for hearing again in November.

Chakraborty issued the ruling on a contempt petion filed by a charity, People for Better Treatment president Kunal Saha against WBMC registrar-cum-returning officer Manas Chakraborty.

Baijayanti Baur and four other doctors moved a petition before the high court alleging irregularities in the electoral rolls and in the process of sending ballot papers to voters through postal service.

The filled in ballot papers of medical teachers were scheduled to be sent to the WBMC by August 20, while that for the doctors were to be sent by August 22, lawyer for the medical council, Saibalendu Bhowmick said.

The petitioners claimed that there were severe malpractices in sending of ballot papers to voters by way of empty envelopes reaching the voters.

Saha had moved another petition seeking to dissolve the present WBMC body because the five-year tenure of the present medical council headed by Dr. Nirmal Maji expired on July 14, 2018.

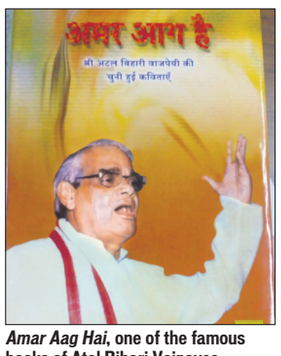
Saha argued that it was even more important that this election cannot be allowed to continue under the control of an illegitimate medical council.

Kolkata cannot forget Atalji

KUNAL CHATTERJEE

KOLKATA: It was August 13, 1994 when Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited the city to participate in a three-hour oration of his poems and songs at Mahajati Sadan. Eminent personalities, professors, leaders and industrialists were all present just to get a glimpse of the then BJP national chief and listen to his mesmerising voice.

Mahabir Prasad Bajaj, secretary of Burrabazar Kumarsabha Pustakalaya (BKP), said that BKP later published *Amar Aag Hai*, the famous and unforgettable book which was sold like hot cake and is still in demand. He said, "I will never be able to forget the day when Vajpayeeji came down to the city. I was at the main gate along with the security people. We were all trying to manage the huge crowd who were trying to enter the auditorium. There were only 1,200 seats allotted and somehow we managed to accommodate a few more." He added that looking at the enthusiasm of people we have decided to publish a book on his three-hour oration and later made CDs, DVDs and audio cassettes which are still in demand. "In the beginning we published 50,000 books which were all sold and currently it is undergoing its sixth edition. Many foreigners, who visit the city, look for the book and also order through our website which costs ₹50 only."



Amar Aag Hai, one of the famous books of Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Arun Prakash Mallawat, treasurer of BKP, said: "That day I understood that Vajpayeeji was not just a politician, but also a great human being. So many people turned up for the show which proved his literary excellence. The anchor was Vishnu Kant Shastri. Professor Rajendra Singh, the then head of RSS, was also present on the occasion."

Prem Shankar Tripathi, resident editor of a popular hindi daily in India, said: "In one word, he is a legend."

V-B cancels event as a mark of respect to its former chancellor

SUROJIT GHOSH HAZRA

SANTINIKETAN: Visva-Bharati cancelled its pre-schedule function as a mark of respect to its former chancellor Atal Behari Vajpayee.

The former Prime Minister and Bharat Ratna Vajpayee died on Thursday after a prolonged illness.

After his demise on Thursday, varsity authorities have decided to cancel its Barsha Mongol Utsav, which were supposed to be held on Thursday evening.

Vajpayee as chancellor of Visva-Bharati visited the campus in 2001 and 2004.

"He was such a wonderful human being. I remember in 2001, within 72 hours of the Parliament attack, Vajpayee ji attended varsity convocation as chancellor," said Amitabha Choudhury, the then public relation officer of the varsity.

Performers wait outside Visva-Bharati campus after Barsha Mongol Utsav was cancelled on Thursday. INDRAJIT ROY

He added, "Due to security reasons it was decided that acharya (chancellor) will not hand over Saptaparni to recipients. This decision created some anger among a section of students. Realising this, he (Vajpayee) took over the microphone and said, "My dear students, unfortunately your chancellor is the Prime Minister of India'. He had shown importance to the post of chancellor of this prestigious university."

In 2004, Atal Behari Vajpayee had again visited Santiniketan to stand beside varsity authorities after the Nobel medallion and other Tagore memorabilia were stolen from Rabindra Bhavan museum.

BJP LEADERS, RAHUL SINHA AND MUKUL ROY, will pay respects to the former-PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee at his house in New Delhi on Friday.

ATM security: Bank staff panel may go on strike

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA: Nationalised banks are gearing up to install anti-skimming devices in all of its ATMs in the city area to make sure that fraudsters cannot install skimmers on ATM machines to extract data of customers and dupe them anymore. The Reserve Bank of India also ordered the banks to employ security guards in all ATMs by the year end.

A visit at different ATMs, across the city, revealed that security guards were not present in many of them even after the scam came to light. Many of the ATMs in Lenin Sarani, Hospital Street, Chandni Chawk, Bhawanipore or Gariahat areas are still unguarded.

Jayanta Sinha, a customer coming out of an ATM in Gariahat, said, "It is so scary to draw cash from the ATMs these days. While Prime Minister Modi is shouting to go cashless, he had been a total failure in securing the system, without which his dream would never be fulfilled. We immediately need security guards inside all ATMs."

Pradip Biswas, general secretary of Bank Employees Federation of India said, "All the ATM counters that were hacked by the miscreants didn't have security guards. This fraud is not the first time. This has been happening since a very long time. The banks are not taking any action. Instead of employing more security guards, the banks are rapidly downsizing. We have asked banks to follow the Reserve Bank of India guidelines immediately otherwise we have to go on indefinite strike."

Recently, the consumer affairs minister along with Kolkata Police issued a directive for the banks asking them to install anti-skimmers in all ATMs. Praveen Tripathi, deputy commissioner of police said, "We have asked the banks to depute security guards and install anti-skimming devices in all ATMs. It is yet to be seen whether they go by our guidelines or not. One must remember that security guard inside a Bhawanipore ATM helped us to nab some of the most important criminals involved in the crime."

An expert dealing in ATM operations of different banks said that anti-skimmers are devices that don't allow any foreign object to be installed inside an ATM counter. Still, if someone does it, the anti-skimmers will make sure that the customer will not be able to use his or her card whenever it is swiped in the machine. These devices would also help banks to know about the functioning of the ATMs from time to time.

FRAUD

The security guards were not present at many ATMs in Lenin Sarani, Hospital Street, Chandni Chawk, Bhawanipore and Gariahat.

Now, nationalised banks are gearing up to install anti-skimming devices in all of its ATMs to make sure that fraudsters cannot install skimmers on ATM machines to extract data of customers and dupe them anymore.

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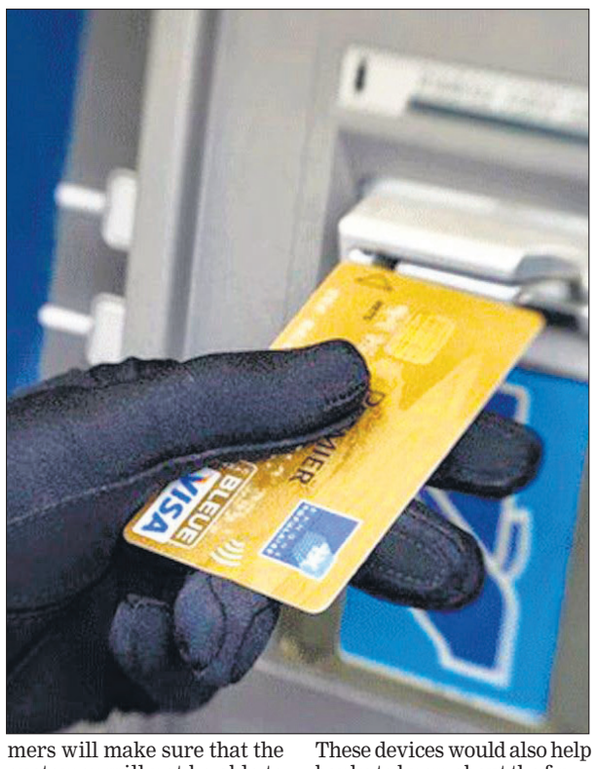


Man shot at in Narkeldanga

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA: Four unidentified people on two bikes fired at a person in Narkeldanga creating panic in the area on Thursday.

Police reached the spot and shifted the injured to the hospital. Doctors said that the injured is critical. Nobody has been arrested yet. Locals said three shots were fired by the bike-borne men.

The victim, identified as Danesh Sheikh, a local, was out of his house in Narkeldanga for his regular morning walk. Four miscreants came in two bikes and fired at him in front of Narkeldanga post-office. One of the shots hit him in the lower part of his body. He fell down as bystanders rushed to the injured. While fleeting the spot, the miscreants hurled bombs to disperse the crowd.

Later, Danesh was rushed to NRS Hospital, where he is under treatment. Doctors said that he is critical and is in a state of shock. He is not in the state to speak to police right now.

Police reached the spot soon after the incident and cordoned off the area. Forensic experts were called in to examine the crime scene. Police are also interrogating some of the witnesses.

A senior police officer said, "From preliminary investigations, its seems like a case of old rivalry. We have informed all the police stations and have launched a manhunt for the two bikes, whose numbers were given to them by the locals. We are also checking the CCTV footage attached on the nearest pillar from the spot."

DANESH SHEIKH WAS OUT OF HIS HOUSE IN NARKELDANGA FOR HIS REGULAR MORNING WALK. FOUR MISCREANTS CAME IN TWO BIKES AND FIRED AT HIM IN FRONT OF NARKELDANGA POST-OFFICE.

KMC decides to ease mutation process in its areas

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

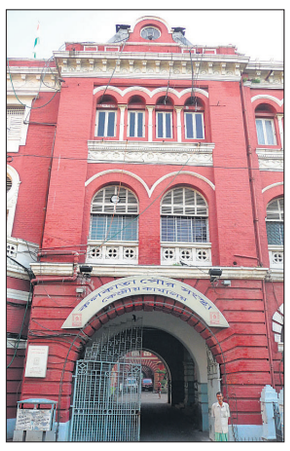
KOLKATA: In a bid to ease mutation and plan sanction process in the added areas under its jurisdiction, Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) has decided to amend certain existing laws.

The existing norm says that during the approval of a house plan and mutation process, the owner of the flat or house within Ward-100 has to seek permission from the civic board. However, there is a deviation in case of the construction in the Wards 101-144, the added areas of civic board.

The owners not only have to seek approval of the civic board but also of the Block Land Records Office (BLRO) for getting the mutation done. Civic sources said that with the revision of the existing norms, the assessee need not seek the permission from the BLRO anymore.

Chief manager of revenue in added areas Saheli Mukherjee said that the civic board had received reports from six borough offices encompassing the added areas. "The assessee often faces difficulty in seeking permission from two different sources for one common purpose of mutation of the property," Mukherjee said.

Sources said that apart from seeking dual permission, an assessee has to submit mutation fee at the civic board as well to the BLRO. After the amendment, the people will have to submit the fee only with the civic board.



THE ASSESSEE OFTEN FACES DIFFICULTY IN SEEKING PERMISSION FROM TWO DIFFERENT SOURCES FOR ONE COMMON PURPOSE OF MUTATION OF THE PROPERTY, SAHELI MUKHERJEE, CHIEF MANAGER OF REVENUE IN ADDED AREAS, SAID.

Meanwhile, it was learnt that following the approval on the floor of the civic house, the ruling civic board will be seeking for amendment in the municipal law from the state government at the Assembly.

Meanwhile, the KMC is working on spreading awareness on the unit areas assessment procedure. Inspectors from the borough offices are visiting wards to discuss on the new system of assessment.

DM, BDO to head panchayat boards till SC passes its verdict

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA: State panchayat department would engage district magistrates or other state government officials to head the panchayat boards which are still waiting for the Supreme Court green signal to start functioning.

According to Nabanna sources, the chief minister wants to expedite the process as she does not want the development works in these districts to be stalled as the tenure of the panchayat boards is to be completed by the end of this week.

Recently, the panchayat department had issued notification to form panchayat boards in eight district councils such as Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar, Malda , Howrah, Purulia, Jhargram , South Dinajpur, West Midnapore. Panchayat boards are to be formed in 1,638 village panchayats and in 123 panchayat samities.

On July 8, the state government has decided to publish the names of the 38,000 plus candidates' name who were winners in the last panchayat elections in state. According to panchayat rules , the State Election Commission is required to publish a list of all the winning candidates and the seats from where they had won after counting and after that the panchayat department releases a notification regarding the same. If this notification is not issued, then the election procedure is not complete as new boards cannot be formed. According to the panchayat rules, the existing gram panchayat boards have tenure of five years.

The existing gram panchayat tenure ends in August by then if the new board is not formed then the responsibility has to be given to the block development officer (BDO) or deputy magistrate(DM).

For the last few months, all development works of the state were stopped due to the panchayat elections. As the Supreme Court verdict is still pending, so the district magistrates have been given the responsibility to continue the developmental work.

CHIEF MINISTER WANTS TO EXPEDITE THE PROCESS AS SHE DOES NOT WANT THE DEVELOPMENT WORKS TO BE STALLED AS THE TENURE OF THE PANCHAYAT BOARDS IS TO BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF THIS WEEK.

Boy arrested for raping 3-year-old girl

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

BERHAMPORE: The Suti police in Murshidabad arrested a 16- year-old boy from Bahagalpur-Dakshin Namopara village on Wednesday night for allegedly raping a three-year-old girl.

The accused was produced before the juvenile justice board at Berhampore on Thursday, said police. On Wednesday evening, the girl child was playing alone, sitting on a rickshaw near her house. The accused who stays barely 20 metres away from the victim's house, lured her with chocolates and took her to a secluded place, said the police sources.

The child's father alleged the accused was known to my daughter. Therefore, she did not protest going with him, when she was offered chocolates by the boy. The accused outraged my daughter's modesty, taking advantage of the darkness, alleged the child's father.

On hearing screams of the child, some villagers rushed to the spot and caught hold of the boy. Later, the Suti police arrested the accused on the basis of written complaint filed by the girl's father. Police sent the girl child to Jangipur Hospital for treatment. Officer in-charge (OC) of Suti police station, Biswabandhu Chattaraj, said,

UNCERTAIN TIMES

A person updates the rate chart of foreign currency at a money exchange centre, in Kolkata, on Thursday as the rupee hits fresh record low of 70.32 against US dollar, plunges 43 paise. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, on Thursday, said the informal sector and small businesses will be worst hit by the depreciating rupee and lead to increase in the oil import bill. "After demonetisation disaster and now rupee slide, rupee crashes to its lowest ever. We are concerned," the CM tweeted. "Oil imports bill will now jump. Prices of vegetables will go up. After demonetisation and now rupee slide, informal sector and small businesses will be further killed. (sic) Farmer distress will be compounded... Time is running out. The writing is on the wall!! #RupeeCrash", she said. PTI

Left bodies to launch agitation against govt's 'anti-people policies'

KOLKATA: To protest against the anti-people policies of the state and the Centre, the left wing organisations in state will hold a 24-day march across the state in September, pushing for an eight-point charter of demands including remunerative prices for famers, lowering of rates for Petroleum substances and ensuring standard minimum wages for everyone.

The march christened "Adhikar Yatra" to be held under the banner of 'Bengal Platform of Mass Organisations' (BPMO), will start from the state's Cooch Behar district on September 10 and continue till October 3 aiming to touch 78,000 polling booths across 126 blocks and 127 cities in the state.

The march would culminate with a massive public rally in Kolkata on October 3. Over 100 mass organisations, including trade unions, peasants' organisations, student-youth-women organisations and representative organisations of different sections of people will participate in the march under the banner of BPMO. The marchers would also raise demands to protect the rights of tribals and women all over the country, besides stopping all communal and fundamentalist activities, curbing corruption in the educational sector and inclusion of all Indian citizens in the NRC in Assam.

"Under the current regime, the rights of farmers and trade unions are being throttled, the labour laws are being tampered with and women and tribals in the country are in danger. We have named the march as 'Adhikar Yatra' as nothing is more relevant in the country than the demands to protect people's rights,"

The CITU state President Shamyal Chakraborty told reporters here. He said the Narendra Modi-led government is not announcing a moratorium on debt recovery to the farmers, as recommended by the Swaminathan Commission (National Commission on Farmers), which is leading to farmers' suicide in the country.

IANS

LOOKBACK

On Aug 15, 1947, Pak flag was hoisted in Murshidabad

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

BERHAMPORE: There is an old myth among a large number of people in Bengal that after the Independence of India on August 15, 1947, Murshidabad was witness to an unusual phenomenon: Pakistani flags were seen fluttering atop government buildings till August 17 that year.

Since Murshidabad was not a part of India and as a result of this flags of Pakistan were hoisted in many government offices and important building of Murshidabad district on the Independence Day of India. Murshidabad was freed from Pakistani rule on August 17, 1947.

However, famous historian and the author of the 'Political Movements in Murshidabad 1920-1947' Bishan Gupta said, "Like thousands of people of Bengal, I also used to believe that Murshidabad was in Purba Pakistan till August 17, 1947 after the Independence of India. On August 18, Khulna district (Now in Bangladesh) was included to East Pakistan. I think the notion that Murshidabad was with Purba Pakistan for 3-4 days after the Independence spread because many people saw Pakistani flag flying atop government buildings after the Independence Day."

He continued, "Several Congress leaders such as Ananta Bhattacharya and Sanath Raha supported Murshidabad's inclusion in Pakistan and they held a rally at Berhampore barrack square field on August 15 in support of this. The founder of Bharatiya Gananatya Sangha (Murshidabad unit) Sudhin Sen even penned a poem for including Murshidabad in Pakistan. All these suggest that once Murshidabad was in Pakistan for three days after the Independence of India."

The famous historian said, "However recent studies indicate that Murshidabad was never within the Pakistan territory, it is mere a projection. On August 13, 1947, the chairman of Boundary Commission Cyril Radcliffe during his media conference presented the proposed map of India and Pakistan to the journalists. In the map Murshidabad was shown within the territory of India. It was scheduled that Sir Radcliffe will officially publish his report on August 12, 1947 but the report was partly published in two leading daily newspapers of that time. The newspaper reports also show that Murshidabad was in India."

Gupta, who had also authored 'Pattern of the Muslim Politics in Murshidabad 1947-1988' said, "The Muslim League leaders were very confident that Muslim majority Murshidabad will be included in Purba Pakistan and Hindu majority Khulna will be in India. Muslim League leader Hamidul Haque Chowdhury made the same demand appearing before the Boundary Commission in Kolkata. But renowned lawyer HM Sanyal opposed this appearing before the same commission."

He said, "Some Muslim League leaders spread rumour that Murshidabad was included in Pakistan. They also hoisted Pakistan's flag in different government offices and buildings. Literally, there was no administration in this district for 3-4 days. But I think people in the corridor of power in Delhi between August 14 and 17 opposed the move, and eventually Muslim League leaders' plan was foiled."

"Kajem Ali Mirza, Md.Khodabaksh and some other Muslim League leaders of Bengal went to Karachi to meet Md. Ali Jinnah with the demand to include Murshidabad in Pakistan but didn't get his appointment. They returned empty handed after meeting Liyakat Ali," said Gupta.

MUSLIM LEAGUE LEADERS HAD SAID MURSHIDABAD WAS INCLUDED IN PAKISTAN. THEY ALSO HOISTED PAKISTAN'S FLAG IN DIFFERENT GOVERNMENT OFFICES AND BUILDING, HISTORIAN BISHAN GUPTA SAID.

HELPLINE

Police – 100
Fire Brigade – 101
Ambulance – 102

POLICE
Lalbazar Police Station – 033-22143230/3024
West Bengal Control Room 22215486,22215415
Traffic Control Room 22143644/5000
Police Commisoner's Office 22256060
Airport Police Station 25118292

BLOOD BANK
Central Blood Bank – 23510619
Hemophilia Society Blood Bank – 24163739
Life Care Medical Services – 22444940
Bhoruka Blood Bank – 22449619

FIRE STATION – 101
Head Office – 033-22440101, 033-22440163/0170/6164
Behala – 24672085
Baisnabghata – 24360685
Central Avenue – 2241 4545, 2241 4546
Dumdum – 2551 4309
Kalighat – 22440101
Salt Lake – 23575293
Tollygunge – 24115393

GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL
Calcutta Medical College – 22414904,22414901
SSKM / PG Hospital – 2223 9654, 2223 4246, 2223 9692
Calcutta National Medical College – 033 2284 4834
R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital – 033 2555 7656
NRS Medical College and Hospital – 033 2265 3215
Sambhu Nath Pandit Hospital – 22470077, 22470078
B C Roy Polio Clinic & Hospital for Cripple Children – 2350 1969
Bangur Institute of Neurology – 2223 2235, 2223 2768
ID & BG Hospital – 2350 1251, 2350 1252

CREMATORIUMS
Nimtola Burning Ghat – 22691955
Kashimitra Burning Ghat– 25542967
Garia Burning Ghat- 24357317
Sirity Burning Ghat – 24032013
Keoratala Crematorium & Burning Ghat – 24666602

RENT-A-CAR
Kolkata Car Rentals, Airport – +91 9007087111, 033-25298666
Kolkata cabs, Bhowanipur – 033 24191310, +91 9831492956
Kolkata car hire, Chandni Chowk – +91 98364 07413

MULTI-SPECIALITY HOSPITALS
Medica Superspecialty Hospital 127 Mukundapur: +91 33 66520000
AMRI HOSPITIAL
Salt Lake: 033-2335 7710
Mukundapur: 033-66061000
Dhakuria: 033-66260000
Apollo Gleneagles Hospitals Ltd. Kadapara: 033-23203040/2122/2003-6
B.M.Birla Heart Research Centre Iqbalpur: 033-24567890
Belle Vue Clinic Minto Park:033-22872322
Columbia Asia Hospital Salt lake: 033-39898969
Desun Hospital & Heart Institute EM Bypass, Kasba Golpark; call: 033-24434567
Institute of Neuro Sciences Kolkata Park Street,Mullick Bazar crossing: 033-22867094
Peerless Hospital & B.K.Roy Research Centre Panchasayar: 033-24622394
Rabindra Nath Tagore International Inst.of Cardiac Sciences Mukundapur: 033-24363000
Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan Hazra, Landsdowne crossing: 033- 2475 3636
Ruby General Hospital Limited Kasba Gol Park:033-24426091/24426576
The Calcutta Medical Research institute Diamond Harbour Road:033-30903098
Woodlands Multispeciality Hospital Limited Alipore:033-24567075
Fortis Hospital Anandapur, Kolkata Anandapur: 033 6628 4444
Dr. Nihar Munsi Eye Foundation Dover Place, Gariahat:033-24619844/8733
Sankara nethralaya Mukundapur: 033-44013000
Silverline Eye Hospital a unit of Biswas Medical Centre Prince Anwar Shah Road:033-24736940
Susrut Eye Foundation & Research Centre Salt Lake :9433060109/983150841

MEDICAL SHOPS
DHANWANTARY MEDICARE
Bhowanipore - +91 9830584845
Howrah - 033 26664506, +91 9831084843
Alipore - 033 24791219, +91 8334828484
Central avenue - 033 25339811, +91 8334838484
College street - 033 22573698, +91 8335028888
Maniktala - 033 23600012, +91 9874684845
Behala - 033 24883247, +91 9836884845

24 HOUR MEDICAL SHOPS
APOLLO PHARMACY
New Town, Rajarhat: 9831444129; 24 hours open
Paddapukur, Bhowanipore 033 2455 5090; timing - open 24 hours
FRANK ROSS PHARMACY
DLF Galleria, AA-I, New Town, Kolkata: 6505-0200; 09-00 p.m. Salt Lake City: **Amri Hospitals** (unit – iii), (saltlake), ground, JC-16 & 17, sector-iii, Salt Lake City, Kolkata; call: 033 6452 7013 /2335 2750
Bhowanipore: 5 b, Harish Mukherjee Road,near s.s.k.m.Hospital,Kolkata: 033 6452 7015 / 2454 8601
College street - (ii) 50/1, College street, , Kolkata: 033 6499 3336 / 2257 3369
Shyam bazar - 128/2a, Bidhansarani,Kolkata; call- 033 6452 7018 / 2533 6339
BLUE PRINT
21, chowringhee road, new market, Kolkata; - 033 22492405; timing: 8am - 9pm
New market - 31, betram street, new market : 033 2252 1175, +91 9831115908

HEARSE
Meeraseva Kendra - 2/87 Naktala, opposite naktala petrol pump, NSC Bose road, Naktala,Kolkata; call: (033) 24119400, 24118316, 24110968,24810315
Peace Heaven - 62 b,rafi ahmed kidwairoad,parkstreet,kolkata

Eco-village in Berhampore. EC PHOTO

Soon, training centre for guides in Berhampore

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

BERHAMPORE: The town is soon going to get a training centre-cum-educational hub for professional tourist guides. It will come up over a 12-acre land near Natungram in the proposed eco-village site, funded by West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation.

Former Union finance minister Pranab Mukherjee in 2008 laid the foundation stone of the eco-village project. The state tourism department had initially allotted ₹75 lakh and it was decided that 34 cottages would be constructed and tourists- who come to visit Lalbagh, can stay in an eco-friendly environment at a very reasonable cost.

However, for several reasons the project couldn't be completed and the 27 incomplete cottages turned into shelters for snakes and insects.

Project coordinator of Berhampore municipality Narugopal Mukherjee said, "For a long time Berhampore municipality is planning to complete the project. But due to paucity of funds we have failed to do so. On Sunday, I had met state tourism minister Goutam Deb and discussed with him the future of the project. He assured me to help the civic body in all possible ways to make the cottages ready for use."

FORMER UNION FINANCE MINISTER PRANAB MUKHERJEE IN 2008 LAID THE FOUNDATION STONE OF THE ECO-VILLAGE PROJECT

Mukherjee further said, "Every year, more than 10 lakh tourists come to Murshidabad, mainly to visit the historic places of Lalbagh town. But most of them stay at Berhampore and leave the district with very little knowledge about Murshidabad's history. Now, we have planned to use the cottages for training professional tourist guides, who will help tourists to know the history of Murshidabad in a better way. It will create job opportunity for many local youths and help tourists get authenticate information."

"The state tourism department is working on the project, 'Places of Historical Interest', which will connect Nadia-Murshidabad and Malda. We are hopeful more tourists will come to Murshidabad in coming years," said Mukherjee, adding, "Few of the cottages in the eco-village would be used to accommodate tourists. State tourism minister has assured me that fund will not be a problem to complete the project. I am hopeful to finish the work within a year."

Mukherjee said, "The project value of the eco-village has crossed ₹6 crore, which would be funded by WBTDC."

Woman suffers injuries in acid attack

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

RAMPURHAT: A woman and her sister suffered severe burn injuries in an acid attack on Wednesday evening.

A complaint has been lodged against the accused, who is absconding after the incident, said police.

According to police, the incident occurred in Nalhati area of Birbhum district when the victim woman was asked to come at a place and meet her husband Roni SK.

Sister-in-law of the accused also suffered injuries during the acid attack, said police.

Two years back, the victim woman had tied the nuptial knot with Roni and it was stated to be a love marriage.

Local people alleged that their conjugal life turned sour; when Roni began torturing his wife, on suspicion of having an extra marital affair with someone else.

The woman left her in-laws place, which is also in the same district, and went to her parents' house.

According to sources, Roni asked his wife to come at a designated spot and hand over the Aadhaar and Voter ID cards, because it was required urgently.

Taking his words on face-value, the woman and her sister came to the place near Nalhati College, riding on a bicycle.

THE INCIDENT OCCURRED IN NALHATI AREA OF BIRBHUM DISTRICT WHEN THE VICTIM WOMAN WAS ASKED TO COME AT A PLACE AND MEET HER HUSBAND. SISTER-IN-LAW OF THE ACCUSED ALSO SUFFERED INJURIES DURING THE ACID ATTACK, SAID POLICE

The accused was waiting at the spot with a bottle of acid.

The victim told police that Roni started pretending that he would consume poison, on seeing her.

The woman and her sister tried to stop him from doing so and in the melee, few drops of acid fell on the victim's hand and her sister.

"When we realized our folly, we tried to flee from the spot. Roni chased us riding on a motorcycle and threw acid on us," alleged the victim.

The victim had suffered severe burn injuries and the complaint was lodged against the accused with Nalhati police station. The accused is still at large, said police.

50-cr loss at tea gardens after three-day strike

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA: The three-day strike in tea gardens, earlier this month, on the issue of minimum wages could incur a loss of ₹45-50 crore to the tea industry, feel experts. An estimate carried out by Tea Association of India (TAI) suggested that for these three days, minimum crop loss would be over 3.20 million kilogram in Darjeeling, Terai and Doors areas.

Prabir Bhattacharjee, secretary general of TAI, said, "In August, the production would be around 50-52 million kilogram. Out of which, the organised sector's share is around 55-57 per cent. Therefore, the unorganised sector's share is about 20-25 percent in hill areas. Keeping this in mind, the total loss would not be less than 3.20-3.25 million kilogram, and in value term that would cost around ₹45-50 per kg."

The trade unions had called the strike for revision in minimum wages.

Generally, tea workers wages are revised every three years. Last time it got revised was in 2014, but the government had already raised the limit by ₹17.50 to ₹150 and then made an interim hike of ₹9 per day. But unions did not accept this, so in July 17 meeting it was decided to hold another meeting on July 30, which too remained inconclusive. Later, that meeting was rescheduled on August 6 but due to absence of labour minister Malay Ghatak on that day the next meeting is expected to take place on August 20.

Minster Ghatak said, "Presently, the minimum wage is ₹159. On Thursday we took a decision that from September onwards, the minimum wages would increase ₹10 and October onwards, by another ₹7."

The CITU union leaders said, "This is not the right way to handle this issue. We came to know that the government is not willing to facilitate the issue of hike the wage further. We have demanded ₹239 per day as minimum wage but management is giving us only ₹176, which is not acceptable."

Not only CITU unions, Gorkha Janamukti Morcha's union is also fighting with the government over this issue.

They demanded ₹243, excluding medical benefits, housing, rations and power. But government sources are tight-lipped about this specific issue.

Currently, the minimum wage in Assam is ₹351 per day, excluding all facilities. Which is more than twice than what was proposed by the state in August 6 meeting.

And this figure would perhaps excite the unions for a tough fight against the state government.

Major fire in East Burdwan mill causes extensive damage

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

BURDWAN: Property worth lakhs of rupees was reduced to ashes when a fire broke out in an oil mill at Ausgram village crossing in East Burdwan district on Thursday morning.

The mill produces oil from the rice bran.

According to authorities of the mill, the fire had caused an extensive damage to property.

Fire tenders were pressed into service to douse the rising flames and the situation was brought under control after two hours.

But, in the evening, the flames spread to the factory's warehouse building, where a huge quantity of rice bran had been stockpiled.

At around 6:30pm, two additional fire tenders from Bhatar Fire Station in East Burdwan were drafted in to douse the flames.

A file photo

At around 8am, some workers of the factory noticed thick plume of smoke billowing out of the machine shop floor of the mill.

The rice factory runs at Bora village on Burdwan-Suri Road in Ausgram police station area.

When the workers saw the smoke, they started scurrying for cover.

Four fire engines from Bhatar and Burdwan fire stations were pressed into service to control the flames at the machine shop floor of the factory.

Tarun Ghosh, manager of the mill, said, "We were caught unaware that the rice bran kept in the warehouse had already caught fire, which caused extensive damage."

Red Road turns mini Bengal on Independence Day

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee unfurls the Tricolour on the occasion of Independence Day in Kolkata. Various contingent of the state's armed forces and women's battalion conduct march past on Red Road parade ground. PHOTOS: ASHOK NATH DEY

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA: Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday said people of the country and its institutions must strive to remain "independent" in the true sense of the word.

Banerjee unfurled the Tricolour and attended a colourful parade at the arterial Indira Gandhi Sarani (erstwhile Red Road), as West Bengal joined the nation in celebrating the 72nd Independence Day.

In a midnight tweet on the occasion, Banerjee called for cherishing the "idea of India" for which the freedom fighters had laid down their lives.

"Our country must reach the glorious heights that the founding fathers of our Constitution envisioned," she tweeted greeting "all brothers and sisters".

Her ministers, senior bureaucrats and police officers, armed forces officers and members of the diplomatic corps also took part in the main function in the city.

Various wings of the police and NCC cadets participated in the parade, as a helicopter showered petals, and folk dance troupes from across the state depicted diverse cultures.

In a first, police personnel from Odisha took part in the parade.

Riding their blue-white and pink-black scooters, the newly formed special all-woman patrolling team from the Kolkata Police earned applause on their maiden presence in the parade.

Constituted in 2018, the team christened "winners" have been primarily trained to assist their male counterparts in helping women complaining of molestation or eve-teasing.

Various state government departments also brought out colourful tableaux highlighting their achievements, some of the government schemes and Bengal's rich cultural heritage.

After the Trinamool came to power in 2011, Banerjee started the ritual of the Independence Day parade at the Indira Gandhi Sarani.

Earlier, Banerjee was present at the customary midnight Independence Day celebration organised by her party Trinamool Congress at South Kolkata's Hazra Crossing.

Independence Day was also celebrated in schools and colleges, hospitals and other government and non-government institutions across the state.

Patriotic songs reverberated in the air while people exchanged greetings and wishes on the occasion.

(From left) Jawans show acrobatic skills on the move. A troupe performs Chhou. (Below) Artistes display state's rich cultural diversity.

MICHAEL SCHUMACHER Ex-Formula One champion is not being moved from his home in Switzerland to the Spanish island of Mallorca, a spokeswoman said, denying a report by a Swiss magazine.

Indian players observe two minute silence in tribute of former India cricket captain Ajit Wadekar before nets session ahead of the 3rd Test at Trent Bridge in Nottingham on Thursday. AP/PTI

Adieu WADEKAR: Cricketers pay homage to 'father figure'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI: A man who didn't just shape careers but also touched lives Ajit Wadekar meant many things to the many cricketers he played with and led, mentored as a manager and moulded as a selector.

Wadekar, the first captain to lead India to Test series wins in England and the West Indies, passed away at 77 in Mumbai yesterday after prolonged illness.

The death was described as a massive loss by India's top cricketers, including the likes of Mohammed Azharuddin and Anil Kumble, who worked closely with Wadekar during his tenure as manager. The duo called him a "father figure".

Sachin Tendulkar described the former India captain as a big "influence".

"Deeply saddened to hear about the demise of Ajit Wadekar Sir. He was someone who was instrumental in bringing out the best in us during the 90s. We'll always be grateful for his advice and guidance. Praying for strength for his family during this difficult time," Tendulkar wrote on twitter.

Manager Wadekar had an instrumental role to play in making Tendulkar an opener, a position in which he flourished.

It was also under Wadekar that Azharuddin, who was till then a struggling captain after Test series losses in New Zealand, England and Australia, got a second wind from 1993 to 1996.

"such an iconic person.. deeply saddened by his demise!! Sir was a father figure for me.. May his soul rest in peace! My Heartfelt Condolences to the family," Azharuddin wrote on twitter.

For Kumble, Wadekar was a God-sent after he was dropped following the 1990 tour of England.

His comeback coincided with Wadekar's entry as manager during the 1992-93 tour of South Africa. He was never dropped during the next 16 years till his retirement in 2008.

"Deeply saddened by the passing away of #AjitWadekar He was more than a coach to the entire team - a father figure and a shrewd tactician. My heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones. He will be missed. Thank you Sir for the confidence shown in my ability!" wrote Kumble.

For Sanjay Manjrekar, Wadekar was a "tough character" as coach.

"Ajit Wadekar's impact on Indian cricket is immense. His contemporaries worshipped him, such was his aura. Found him to be a tough character as coach. Exceptional Indian cricketer... RIP Sir." Bishan Singh Bedi was magnanimous in his praise even though he conceded that they had difference of opinion on cricketing issues.

"V sad news-Ajit Wadekar passing away-only Indn Capt to win 3 series in a row-2 away 1 at home-ALW was good contemporary-we had differences of (sic) opinion but always respected glory of (sic) Crkt-fine batsman & great close in catch-served Indn Crkt w/aplomb as player/Selectr/Coach-RIP Jeetu!".

Also calling him a father figure was Vinod Kambli, who was part of the 1996 Indian team.

"He was like my father and was there with me when I started playing Test matches. I had a very different kind of relation with him. We spent time discussing cricket and other aspects of life," Kambli said.

"He showed a lot of confidence and interest in me. Me and Sachin used to spend lot of time with him and it's a big, big loss for us. He was a pillar in my career," he added.

My captain no more, but will always be with me

AJIT LAXMAN WADEKAR
APRIL 1, 1941 ● AUGUST 15, 2018

PROLONGED ILLNESS

Former captain Ajit Wadekar, who led India to their first overseas wins in England and West Indies, passed away on Wednesday after a batle with cancer. He was 77 and is survived by wife Rekha, two sons and a daughter. He breathed his last in Mumbai.

AWARDS

Arjuna in 1967, Padmashri in 1972, BCCI's CK Nayudu Lifetime achievement award in 2012.

DID YOU KNOW?

Ajit Wadekar is the only Indian to don the hats of captain, coach and senior selection committee chairman.

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Wadekar's highest Test score and only century, against NZ in a winning cause in Wellington, 1968.

Career in Numbers

	Mat	Runs	HS	Ave	100	50	Ct
Tests	37	2113	143	31.07	1	14	46
ODIs	2	73	67	36.50	0	1	1
FC	237	15380	323	47.03	36	84	271

CAPTAIN MARVELLOUS

Appointed India captain in 1971, he led a team that included Sunil Gavaskar, Gundappa Viswanath, Farokh Engineer, and the spin quartet of Bishen Singh Bedi, Erapalli Prasanna, Bhagwat Chandrasekhar and Srinivasaraghavan Venkataraghavan. In 1971, became the first Indian captain to win a series in West Indies and England. Was also India's first ODI captain, when he led the team on the 1974 tour of England.

CHANAKYA AS COACH

Named coach for the 1992-93 tour of South Africa, he formed a winning combination with Mohammad Azharuddin as India won 11 Tests and went unbeaten in the format from 1992-1994 that included a 3-0 whitewash of a visiting England side. In ODIs, India won 41 of the 71 ODIs with Wadekar as coach, and reached the 1996 World Cup semifinals.

15

Part of Bombay sides which won 15 concecutive Ranji Trophy finals from 1958-59 to 1972-73.

'Sunil, sorry, he is no more'. Those devastating words conveyed to me that 'my captain' Ajit Wadekar had passed away. Just a little while earlier, I was trying to help put him in the car to rush him to the hospital since the ambulance was going to take another 15 minutes to arrive and even then it looked like it was a hopeless battle.

Ajit Wadekar was my captain when I made my debut for Mumbai in the Ranji Trophy and he was my skipper when I got my India cap. So for me he was always 'captain'.

That he was from Shivaji Park Gymkhana and I was from Dadar Union Sporting Club the great rival clubs then made no difference as I was a fan first. Those days there was hardly a single weekend where you didn't read that Wadekar had got a century.

He was so prolific in local and Ranji Trophy cricket that it was a surprise to many that he made his India debut as late as 1966 against Garry Sobers' West Indies team.

Five years later it was against Garry Sobers' team that he led India for the first time and went on to win the series, beating West Indies for the first time.

A couple of months after that he led India to another historic win when India beat England in England for the first time.

He was unkindly called a lucky captain by those who couldn't stomach the fact that he had replaced the charismatic Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi as the skipper.

The then Chairman of selectors, batting legend Vijay Merchant was also pilloried by some for it was his casting vote that made Wadekar the new Indian captain then.

Even after these twin wins and another in India a year later neither Vijay Merchant nor Ajit Wadekar got the credit they deserved for bringing India those hat-trick of wins.

Ajit retired from Test cricket suddenly when he was left out of the West Zone team for the Duleep Trophy by a committee led by another Indian great, Polly Umrigar and thereafter concentrated on his banking career and also cricket administration with the Mumbai Cricket Association.

He also was a successful manager/coach of the Indian team in the early '90s. When some of us sportspersons requested the Maharashtra Government for a plot of land to build an apartment block, it was Ajit who took the lead and there was Umrigar also in the society formed showing that he harboured no hard feelings towards his senior.

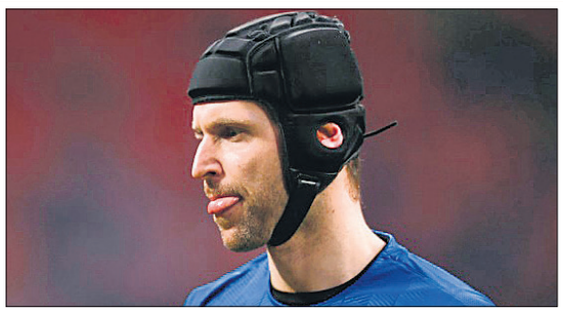
Being the promoter, he got the top floor of the building when it was built and since I was on the floor immediately below him he used to always joke, 'I am the only one on top of Sunny'.

There's hardly been a day when I haven't mimicked his 'arre kay re' at least once and not just me but even Sachin Tendulkar told me that he too says the same at least once a day.

My captain is no more but he will always be with me when I say, 'arre kay re' RIP, Captain.

(Sunil Gavaskar has written this column as part of a special arrangement with PTI).

SPORT DIGEST



Emery keeps faith in Cech for Chelsea return

LONDON: Arsenal manager Unai Emery will keep faith with goalkeeper **Petr Cech** for his return to Chelsea.

Cech, 36, struggled with Emery's orders to play out from the back in the Spanish coach's first game in charge as the Gunners lost 2-0 to Premier League champions Manchester City last weekend.

Emery surprisingly left Bernd Leno on the bench despite Arsenal spending £20 million ($25.5 million, 22 million euros) on the German 'keeper from Bayer Leverkusen in June. Cech, who spent 11 years at Chelsea before joining Arsenal in 2015, nearly scored a comical own goal against City as a misplaced pass across his own area went just wide. AFP

Cipriani fined for assault

LONDON: England rugby star **Danny Cipriani** was fined £2,000 ($2,500) on Thursday after pleading guilty to common assault following an incident at a nightclub on the island of Jersey.

The mercurial 30-year-old utility back who had revived his international career in June with a first start for over a decade against South Africa. AFP

Kehrer signs deal with PSG

BERLIN: Germany Under-21 defender **Thilo Kehrer** completed his move to Paris Saint-Germain on Thursday by signing a five-year contract, the French champions announced.

"I could not imagine a better club to push my development and achieve my goals," Kehrer was quoted as saying on the PSG website. AFP

Somdev Devvarman predicts bright future for surfing in India

CHENNAI: Putting his weight behind surfing, former India tennis star **Somdev Devvarman** on Thursday predicted a bright future for the new Olympic sport in India.

Speaking at the official launch ceremony of the sixth Covelong Point Surf, Music & Yoga festival, which will run for three days, Somdev revealed that he had been an avid surfer himself.

Somdev said: "I never used to swim before but in the last 2-3 years I am just hooked to surfing."Somdev said that the sport is now going to be a part of the Olympics and it was great. IANS

Prepare to play ugly and show grit: Shastri to under-fire India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NOTTINGHAM: Under-fire India coach Ravi Shastri called on his struggling batsmen to show more discipline and grit when the third Test against England gets underway at Trent Bridge on Saturday.

He said that despite tough conditions, need of the hour is to show resolve and play gritty cricket. England lead the five-match series 2-0 after winning the first two Tests in Birmingham and Lord's.

"Conditions have been tough right through this series. But that's where character and discipline come into play. The resolve to know where your off stump is, leave a lot of balls, be prepared to look ugly and dirty and show some grit," said Shastri.

"I don't think its fair to single out any one player," he added, when asked about Ajinkya Rahane's struggles on this tour.

"Batsmen from both teams have struggled. When the occasion demands, it's a case of mental resolve ' how you put mind over matter. Mental discipline will be the key as far as batsmen are concerned going forward in this Test match. Rahane is one of our pillars and he will remain so." There is some good news ahead of the must-win Test for India. Skipper Virat Kohli is near full fitness ahead of the game as he batted without any discomfort and also took slip catching. Jasprit Bumrah, R Ashwin and Hardik Pandya have already been declared fit for the game.

"Kohli is feeling much better. You saw him in the nets ' he is moving much better and improving by the day.

India coach Ravi Shastri (left) captain Virat Kohli laugh during nets session ahead of 3rd Test at Trent Bridge in Nottingham on Thursday. AP/PTI

"In hindsight, it (picking second spinner) was an error. We should have gone, seeing the conditions, with an extra seamer. It might have helped. Then again, you didn't know how much it would rain, whether a match could go into the final day where just in case a second spinner is needed and the ball starts to turn, would we have needed him? "But in hindsight the way things panned out, the amount it rained, the time we lost, a seamer could have been a better option," said Shastri.

England are on the cusp of wrapping up the series with victory at Trent Bridge, and the only way India can avoid that is to register only their second win in six overseas Tests in 2018.

Shastri said that the team knows how to do it because they have been in this position before.

"Just believe in your self," he said, when asked what he has told the team post defeat at Lord's.

"You have been in this position couple of times before and you have responded. There is no reason why. One thing for sure in this unit, there is no negative bone.

"Despite what happened in the last Test match, conditions favoured England but that is no excuse whatsoever. It can happen to any side. We are here without a negative bone and wanting to play to win, as simple as that."

"We focus on cricket. Stokes is a terrific cricketer, and we would like to play against top cricketers. If the courts have cleared him, what's the reason for him not to play? If I were in England's position I would have wanted him to play.

England coach Trevor Bayliss.

Ben Stokes not assured automatic selection: Bayliss

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NOTTINGHAM: England coach Trevor Bayliss welcomed Ben Stokes back in the national team's fold after he was cleared of affray charges but said the troubled all-rounder is not assured of an automatic selection for the third Test against India.

"It's good to have him back around the squad. I'm happy for Ben that's all over. It was a collective decision (to bring him back into the side so quickly). It was basically thought that for his own wellbeing, it was good to get him back around cricket," Bayliss said.

"There's nothing automatic about selections and we'll see how he is mentally as well as physically. He hasn't played for a couple of weeks. He's been a guy that in the past who has been able to come in and perform without having played a lot of cricket. We'll take that into consideration.

"But also, sometimes it's a little bit like when someone gets injured, someone else comes into the team and does well, it's a bit difficult for that injured played to come back in. This is a similar situation. It's a difficult decision to make," he added.

Sam Curran was man-of-the-match in the first Test at Birmingham, while Chris Woakes, who replaced Stokes in the second Test, won man of the match at Lord's.

"It's a good position to be in from that point of view. Whether he plays or not, we've got some guys in form in the team. It's going to be a difficult decision to make whoever misses out, whether it's Ben or someone else," he said.

"It's a position we've been trying to get into in the Test team for a while. The one-day team is a difficult team to select. The Test team, it's been difficult for other reasons. But we're starting to get some good young players into the team, which makes it a difficult job for selectors. Whoever misses out, whether it is Ben or someone else, they will be very unlucky," he said.

Bhuvi,Bumrah were missed by India: Jonty

MUMBAI: Jonty Rhodes, who has been the fielding coach for three-time IPL-winning outfit Mumbai Indians, felt that India have missed the services of their fast bowlers Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Jasprit Bumrah who did so well in his own native country in the Test series held there late last season.

"India came so close to a victory in South Africa but they have been missing two key bowlers who did well in that series - Bhuvneshwar and Bumrah (due to injuries) in England," said the 49-year-old Natal born former cricketer who had represented his country in 52 Tests and 245 ODIs between 1992 and 2003.

India are 0-2 down in the five-Test series in England and have also dropped a few catches in the slip cordon over the last few years in overseas conditions.PTI

'If I am offered opening slot in Tests, will be ready for it'

MUMBAI: Opening in shorter formats proved to be a boon for Rohit Sharma, who said that he will not mind taking a shot at it in Test matches too, if the team management ever considers that as an option in near future.

The 31-year-old has scored 1479 runs at shade under 40 per innings in 25 Tests with three hundreds and nine half centuries but is currently out of favour as far as longest format is concerned.

With the trio of KL Rahul, Shikhar Dhawan and Murali Vijay struggling, Rohit was posed a question if he would like to open the innings in Test matches too.

"Look, I have never been offered (to open the innings in Tests) yet but I am open to anything as in whatever the team management wants. I never thought I will be an opener in ODIs when I started playing or when I was playing for India. But it happened along the way, so I (want to) keep my options open. No option is shut for me, so if the opportunity comes, I will take it," Rohit told mediapersons at a promotional event.

"I want to be part of the (Test) team, but it is not in my hands. I have to wait for the opportunity, whenever it comes, I have to be ready for it. To be ready, I am doing everything, training, doing as much as possible to give myself the best chance when the opportunity comes there," he added.

Rohit came in support of the under-fire team which is down 0-2 in the five match and said that a comeback is still possible even though it won't be easy.PTI

Pandya not upto the mark so far: Holding

LONDON: West Indian fast bowling great Michael Holding feels Hardik Pandya is not yet the all-rounder India wants him to be, because he is ineffective as a bowler and also not scoring enough runs with the bat.

"The (Indian) attack has not been the right balance. Apparently they are playing Hardik Pandya as an all-rounder to help out with the bowling. When he bowls he isn't as effective as he should be," Holding was quoted as saying.

"I don't think he does a lot with the ball. That is number one," he said.

"He is not consistent. He does not have the control that puts batsmen under pressure constantly. He will bowl a couple of good deliveries, yes, but you need to have the control to put batsmen under pressure consistently. PTI

Injury-hit Kohli could be more dangerous: England coach

NOTTINGHAM: He might be recovering from a back injury, but Virat Kohli could become more dangerous as a player when the India skipper turns up for his team in the third cricket Test starting here on Saturday, feels Trevor Bayliss.

Bayliss said he isn't worried about Kohli's fitness issues.

"It could mean he's more of a dangerous player. Through history there are a lot of players who have played with an injury and scored runs and taken wickets," Bayliss said.

"I don't know if that focuses the mind more but I have just seen him take some slip catches without any problems, so I'm sure he'll be playing. That won't change our approach to the way we play him. PTI

MAURICIO POCHETTINO believes winning is the only way to keep Spurs fans happy while waiting to move into the club's new stadium. Tottenham face a logistical nightmare after delaying their move to the 62,000 capacity ground until at least October due to "issues with the critical safety systems".

TOP INDIAN MEDAL CONTENDERS AT ASIAN GAMES

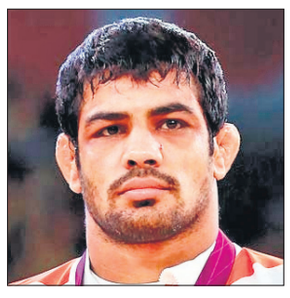
GO FOR GOLD 18th edition begins in Jakarta and Palembang, hopes of the nation rest on these select athletes to bring joy and glory

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

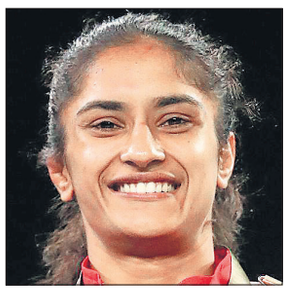
JAKARTA: With action set to begin at the 18th Asian Games in Jakarta and Palembang this weekend, let's takes a look at prominent Indian athletes, who will be medal contenders at the the biggest multi-sport event after the Olympics.

WRESTLING:

■ **BAJRANG PUNIA:** The 24-year-old grappler from Haryana, a silver medallist at the Incheon edition, is in tremendous form and will be a firm favourite in 65kg freestyle event. He has already won three tournaments this year. He began with a gold in Gold Coast Commonwealth Games and followed it up with titles at Tbilisi Grand Prix (Georgia) and Yasar Dogu International (Istanbul).



■ **SUSHIL KUMAR:** One of India's most successful Olympians, Sushil is under pressure to perform after a flop show at Tbilisi Grand Prix. The defeat in Georgia, his first in four years, has already resulted in people questioning his exemption from Asiad trials. The two-time Olympic medallist would look to show that he still is force to reckon with.



■ **VINESH PHOGAT:** Vinesh is competing with lot of vigour after making a comeback from a heart-breaking leg injury, suffered during the Rio Olympic Games. The ease with which she won the CWG gold and then the Grand Prix of Spain in Madrid, Vinesh will also be a strong medal contender in the 50kg.

BADMINTON:

■ **PV SINDHU:** A lot rests on the shoulders of World Championship silver-medallist PV Sindhu but she needs to forget her defeat to Carolina Marin in Nanjing. Having lost four major finals, Sindhu would be keen to break the jinx.

■ **SAINA NEHWAL:** The woman who revolutionised the sport in India with her exploits has not been consistent enough, of late. The performance has gone up and down and the way she was blown away by Carolina Marin in at the Worlds was not a great sign. However, with her caliber and experience, she can never be ruled out.

■ **K SRIKANTH:** The CWG silver-medallist will be the lone Indian hope in the men's singles. Srikanth briefly held the number one rank this April but will face stiff challenge from the Chinese, Indonesian and Japanese shuttlers.

SHOOTING:

■ **MANU BHAKER:** No Indian shooter has shown more promise than the Haryana school-going 16-year-old. With her gold medal winning performance at the ISSF World Cup, Manu became the youngest Indian to achieve the feat. She also shot down the gold at the CWG and will be a strong contender in the 10m air pistol event.

ATHLETICS:

■ **HIMA DAS:** The rise of the 20-year-old from a village in Assam has been phenomenal in the last few months. After her sixth-place finish at the Gold Coast CWG with a timing of 51.32, she became the first Indian to win a gold at a global IAAF track and field event with a timing of 51.46s in 400m. Also, her CWG timing is better than Bahrain's Kemi Adekoya (51.59), the gold medal winner at 2014 Incheon Games.

■ **NEERAJ CHOPRA:** The young javelin thrower's status in the Indian contingent was underlined when he was chosen as the flag-bearer. The 2016 Under-20 world champion has enjoyed a meteoric rise. After winning gold at CWG with a throw of 86.47m, he bettered his personal best by clearing a distance of 87.43 at the IAAF Diamond League in Doha. He has won three gold medals in last four events.

■ **SEEMA PUNIA:** In the last leg of her career, the 35-year-old discus thrower Seema Punia would look to defend her title and add yet another medal to her tally. The Chinese will be her main opponents.

■ **DUTEE CHAND:** After reclaiming her place on the track, the sprinter is all fired up to complete some unfinished business. After winning her gender case at CAS, the 22-year-old from Odisha bettered her own national record by clocking 11.29s in semifinals. She won gold with a timing of 11.32s.

TENNIS:

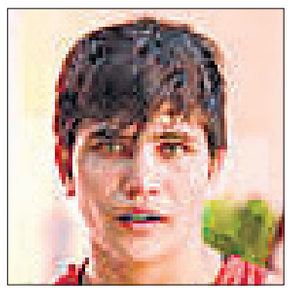
■ **BOPANNA & SHARAN:** If the veteran pro from Bengaluru has overcome a recent shoulder issue and could play to his potential, Bopanna will be a contender along with very impressive Divij in men's doubles.

■ **RAMKUMAR RAMANTHAN**: In the absence of top singles player Yuki Bhambri, the Chennai-player will carry India's hopes. His run to the final of the ATP Newport event is a testimony that he is capable of pulling off big wins. He beat top-10 player Dominic Thiem last year and needs self-belief to return with a medal.

BOXING:

■ **VIKAS KRISHAN:** A winner of two Asian Games medals, Vikas Krishan will be India's strongest contender for a medal in Jakarta. He has already won gold this year at the Gold Coast CWG in the 75kg category.

■ **SHIVA THAPA:** Success has eluded Shiva at multi-disciplinary events and the boxer from Guwahati would be desperate to better his record when he takes the ring in the men's 60kg category. He has a good record at the Asian Championships to draw confidence from, having claimed three successive medals.



■ **SONIA LATHER:** The World Championship silver-medallist will lead a three-member Indian women's team in the absence of M C Mary Kom, who pulled out to focus on the World Championship. Sonia will compete in the 57kg.

GYMNASTIC:

■ **DIPA KARMAKAR:** After missing out on CWG due to a knee injury, Dipa returned to competitions at the World Challenge Cup in Mersin, Turkey and won a gold. The Rio Olympics fourth-place finisher is tipped to be India's best medal bet in Jakarta.

TABLE TENNIS:

■ **MANIKA BATRA:** Her gold medal winning performance at the Gold Coast was arguably the most inspiring performance at 2018 CWG for India. Although the level of competition in Jakarta will be altogether different, the Delhi-player is expected to give a strong fight to her rivals.

Flag raised at village

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

JAKARTA: The tri-colour today unfurled at the Asian Games athletes Village following a simple flag-hoisting ceremony, attended by India's men's hockey stars and wrestlers.

Since hockey players and wresters were the first ones to land here, only they could attend the ceremony as shuttlers and kabaddi players landed in the Indonesain capital this afternoon via Singapore.

The tennis players, led by coach Zeeshan Ali, headed straight to Palembang from Singapore.

Indian contingent's Chef de mission (CDM) Brij Bhushan Singh Sharan and two deputy CDMs were also present during the occasion.

The officials from the organising committee greeted the officials and wished luck to the Indian athletes.

Veteran tennis star Paes pulls out

JAKARTA: Miffed at not getting a "specialist" men's doubles partner, veteran tennis star Leander Paes today pulled out of the 18th Asian Games starting on Saturday.

The 45-year-old Indian, winner of 18 Grand Slams, was asked to team up with struggling singles player Sumit Nagal after All India Tennis Association (AITA) agreed to pair country's top doubles players Rohan Bopanna and Divij Sharan in the men's doubles, on their request.

Paes was already miffed at his exclusion from TOP Scheme but had made himself available for the Asian Games, where he has won eight medals, including five gold.

"It is with a heavy heart that I have to say that I will not be playing the upcoming Asian Games in Indonesia," Paes said in a statement sent to PTI.

"Despite my repeated requests, from so many weeks in advance, it is sad that we have not been able to put a doubles specialist in the team for a credible second doubles pairing for the Asian Games." With Sharan and Bopanna deciding to play together, captain Zeeshan Ali had no choice but to pair Paes with Nagal or Ramkumar Ramanathan.

PTI

Sourav Kothari slams two double century breaks

CCI BILLIARDS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI: Kolkata-based Sourav Kothari of ONGC showed excellent cue touch to slam two double century breaks while easing his way past Arun Agrawal and Nishant Dossa in the Rs 3.8-lakh prize money CCI Billiards Classic 2018.

The former Asian billiards champion, playing fluently and striking the balls with regular consistency, compiled a mammoth break of 247 as he went on to outclass Dossa 624-169 late last evening.

He returned today and maintained his impressive form by firing a break of 261 on way to drub Agrawal 658-96 in Group H.

With his third successive victory, Kothari is assured of qualifying to the knockout round of 16 draw along with Dhruv Sitwala, who also has three wins in the five-team group.

Mumbai-based Siddharth Parikh of the Railways made a bright positive start winning his opening two Group-E matches.

Parikh scraped past Maharashtra's Loukic Pathare 374- 349 after earlier defeating teammate S Simhachalam 669-189.

Alok Kumar of ONGC and Neeraj Kumar of the Railways also won their respective concluding Group-D matches and qualified for the pre-quarter-finals.

Sourav Kothari outclassed Nishant Dossa 624-169 in the CCI Billiards Classic 2018 in Mumbai on Thursday.

RESULTS

Group-A: Dhvaj Haria (IOC) beat Ashok Shandilya (Rlys) 478(193,96)-264; Raajeev Sharma (Mah) beat Sandeep Gulati (Del) 367-307; Raajeev Sharma beat Hasan Badami (Mah) 283-261.

Group-B: Nikhil Ghadge (Rlys) beat Aditya Mehta (Mah) 304(81,54)-294(60,74);

Group-C: V. Subramaniam (Mah) beat Shekhar Surve (Mah) 271(61,106)-220.

Group-D: Alok Kumar (ONGC) beat Aditya Agrawal (Mah) 514(103,94,79)-313; Neeraj Kumar (Rlys) beat Aditya Agrawal (Mah) 376-304; Aditya Agrawal (Mah) beat Raayan Razmi (Mah) 473(85,54,60,71)-303.

Group-E: Siddharth Parikh (Rlys) beat S. Simhachalam 669(130,104,67,53)-189; Siddharth Parikh (Rlys) beat Loukic Pathare (Mah) 374(87,89)-349(54,73).

Group-F: Hitesh Kotwani (Mah) beat Raj Khandwala (Mah) 550(88,84)-233; K Venkatesh (Rlys) beat Devendra Joshi (BPCL) 499 (54,51)-248.

Group-G: Brijesh Damani (IOC) beat Rishabh Kumar (Mah) 554(149,79)-296;

Group-H: Dhruv Sitwala (ONGC) beat Arun Agrawal (Mah) 499(92,76,73)-220; Sourav Kothari (ONGC) beat Nishant Dossa (Mah) 624-(247,138,103)-169(50); Kothari beat Agrawal 658(105,80,261,90)-96.

India improve to 96 in FIFA rankings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI: Indian football team improved a spot to be placed at the 96th position in the latest FIFA world rankings.

Stephen Constantine's men, who were ranked 97th in the previous week, currently share the 96th spot with Georgia after FIFA implemented a new ranking system called ELO where points will be added or subtracted to a national team's already existing total before a match.

Defending champions India are currently preparing for the SAFF Cup to be held next month at Bangaldesh. The seven-time title holders are grouped with Sri Lanka (ranked 200) and Maldives (150) in Group B of the tournament.

India's next big assignment is the upcoming AFC Asian Cup which kicks-off in January next year. They are placed in the Group A alongside hosts UAE, Bahrain and Thailand.

At the top, world champions France have moved up six spots to be ranked first while Belgium are second. Brazil, Croatia and Uruguay complete the top five.

Delhi Dynamos pre-season plan

NEW DELHI: Delhi Dynamos FC are set for a month-long pre-season camp in Kolkata and Doha as the two-time semi-finalists begin their preparation for the upcoming Indian Super League season.

The side led by new head coach Josep Gombau will be playing three friendly matches each in Kolkata and Doha, before travelling back to Delhi where they will play a string of friendlies before the start of the new season.

The Indian group of Dynamos has already reached Kolkata and will undergo a week long preparatory camp under assistant coach Mridul Banerjee.

The foreign players will start joining from August 20 onwards.

Six players ' Vinit Rai, Lallianzuala Chhangte, Nandhakumar Sekar, Sukhadev Patil, Daniel Lahlimpuia and Mohd Sajid Dhot will miss the camp due to the SAFF Camp. PTI

Khushi takes lead

HYDERABAD: Khushi Khanijau shot 3-over 75 to take sole lead in the 11th leg of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour on Thursday.

Khushi's total score is 4-over 148 and is one shot clear of second placed Amandeep Drall (75-74).

Tvesa Malik (75-76) is third at 7-over 151, while Afshan Fatima, who was second after the first round, dropped to fourth with a second round card of 79.

In windy conditions, it was a tough day for the golfers. While none of the players could card a birdie on the front nine, scores on the back nine were only marginally better.

Jaipur teenager Khushi turned pro only at the start of this season. She finished 10th in the sixth leg, seventh in the eighth leg and those have been her best performances. PTI

U-23 team travel to Australia

NEW DELHI: A 22-member Indian football team squad will travel to Australia on August 17, as part of their preparation for the forthcoming SAFF Cup.

The squad has been camping in Delhi since July 28.

The Indian U-23 squad will be based at the Valentine Sports Park in Sydney for a 16-day long preparatory camp before they leave for Dhaka on September 1.

"The exposure trip was planned before the Asian Games but unfortunately, we were barred from taking part in the Games. We didn't see any reason to cancel the trip and had to postpone it prior to the SAFF tournament," head coach Stephen Constantine said.

Apart from the 22 players, two have been kept in reserves and might get a call-up to join the contingent in Australia if circumstances demand so. 20 players will eventually travel for the SAFF Suzuki Cup.

Constantine also thanked the clubs for releasing the players from their club commitments giving the national duty more priority.

GOALKEEPERS: Vishal Kaith, Kamaljit Singh, Sukhdev Patil.
DEFENDERS: Davinder Singh, Salam Ranjan Singh, Sarthak Golui, Subhasish Bose, Mohd. Sajid Dhot, Jerry Lalrinzuala.
MIDFIELDERS: Nikhil Poojary, Isaac Vanmalswama, Nandha Kumar, Vinit Rai, Germanpreet Singh, Anirudh Thapa, Lallianzuala Chhangte, Ashique Kuruniyan, Vignesh D.
FORWARDS: Sumit Passi, Hitesh Sharma, Manvir Singh, Farukh Choudhary.
RESERVES: Lalruatthara, Rohit Kumar. PTI

CALCUTTA SPORTS JOURNALISTS' CLUB ANNUAL AWARDS

(From top) ■ Former tennis player Akhtar Ali and footballer Aroon Ghosh felicitated with the Lifetime Achievement Awards by Aroop Biswas, Sports Minister, at the Calcutta Sports Journalists' Club's annual award ceremony at the Moulali Yuva Kendra in Kolkata on Thursday;
■ Indian football captain Sunil Chhetri recieves the Sportsperson of the Year award after a brilliant show for his side Bengaluru FC in the ISL as well as the national team, which made it to the AFC Asian Cup 2019;
■ The 34-year-old gives a speech after receiving the accolade. When asked what keeps him so young, he answered cheekily, "a magic serum..."

PHOTOS: RAMKRISHNA SAMANTA

BARCELONA won the Joan Gamper Trophy, defeating Argentina's Boca Juniors 3-0 at the Catalonian side's home stadium of Camp Nou. Thursday's trophy is the sixth straight for Barcelona.

Atletico Madrid's Lucas Hernandez celebrates after the UEFA Super Cup final between Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid at the Lillekula Stadium in Tallinn, Estonia on Wednesday. AP

Stunning Real blow, Atletico way

VICTORY TO SAVOUR Simeone's men fight back to beat neighbours 4-2 in extra time

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TALINN: Saul Niguez and Koke scored in extra time as Atletico Madrid fought back to beat city rivals Real Madrid 4-2 and win the UEFA Super Cup in Tallinn on Wednesday, as Julen Lopetegui got off to a losing start with the European champions.

Real had earlier looked set to win the trophy in their first competitive game since the departures of Cristiano Ronaldo and coach Zinedine Zidane when a Sergio Ramps penalty put them 2-1 up in the second half.

That came after Karim Benzema cancelled out Diego Costa's first-minute opener in the Estonian capital, but Costa hauled Diego Simeone's side level again late on to force extra time.

Simeone's men then looked stronger in the extra period as they won this competition, the annual meeting of the Champions League and Europa League winners, for the third time in nine seasons.

Real had won the trophy under Zidane in each of the last two years, and emerged victorious against their neighbours in the Champions League finals of 2014 and 2016.

But this result comes after a close season in which Atletico have strengthened while Real look to have gone backwards, with no replacement signed for Ronaldo after his move to Juventus.

Antoine Griezmann started for Atletico at the compact Lillekula Stadium, fresh from helping France to World Cup glory last month.

In contrast, former Spain coach Lopetegui left Luka Modric on the Real bench at kick-off, seeking to ease the Croatian playmaker back after he led his country to the World Cup final.

Goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois did not feature at all following his recent arrival from Chelsea, and nine of Real's starting line-up also started May's Champions League final win over Liverpool in Kiev.

Atletico also had France winger Thomas Lemar making his competitive debut following his 72 million-euro ($84 million) move from Monaco, and they took the lead after just 49 seconds.

With Simeone watching from the stands as he serves a touchline ban, Costa met Diego Godin's long ball forward with his back to goal and nodded it over Ramos before turning to burst through and rifle a shot home from a tight angle.

It was a superb finish, but Real were level just before the half-hour via a combination of the two men expected to step up following Ronaldo's departure.

Gareth Bale delivered a cross from the right and Benzema headed past Jan Oblak at the far post.

Lopetegui sent on Modric for Marco Asensio just before the hour mark and Real took the lead shortly after, Ramos scoring a 63rd-minute penalty awarded for a Juanfran handball.

It looked like that would win it, yet Atletico showed great resolve to level the scores again in the 79th minute as Juanfran and substitute Angel Correa combined to set up Costa to stab home.

Into extra time they went, and Atletico went ahead again in the 98th minute, Thomas Partey pressing to win back possession before holding up a cross for Saul to thump a superb left-foot volley past Keylor Navas from 17 yards.

The powerful Costa and substitute Vitolo then set up Koke to make it 4-2, securing victory and giving Atletico their seventh trophy since Simeone took charge in late 2011.

Now they will hope to push Barcelona and Real all the way in La Liga, with their opening game at Valencia on Monday, after Lopetegui's side host Getafe on Sunday.

Major Davis Cup revamp approved

TENNIS

ORLANDO: World tennis chiefs on Thursday approved a radical Davis Cup revamp that will overhaul the 118-year-old competition, condensing the annual worldwide showpiece into an 18-team, week-long event.

The shake-up for the men's team tournament received 71.43 per cent support from about 120 delegates at the International Tennis Federation annual meeting in Orlando, well ahead of the two-thirds majority needed for approval.

ITF president David Haggerty supported the revamp proposed by Kosmos, a group led by Barcelona football star Gerard Pique -- who flew in from Spain for the vote -- and backed by Japanese billionaire Hiroshi Mikitani, that has vowed USD 3 billion over 25 years to support the new event.

Haggerty called the reform plan "key to ensuring that the ITF and its member nations will guarantee a bright future for the sport." Also backing the reconstituted event is US billionaire Larry Ellison, who hopes his Indian Wells tennis facility would host the 2021 edition of the finals after the first two were played in Europe.

The current Davis Cup format is a knockout event played February, July, September and November at home and away venues around the globe, best-of-five match ties following Grand Slam events until the final round.

Many top players have skipped it in recent years to ease their schedule load.

The reform plan will create a November finals with 18 teams: 12 winners from 24-team home and away qualifying in February, the prior year's four semi-finalists and two wild-card nations.

Round-robin groups of three would send six group winners and two runners-up into knockout round playoffs.

The finals would feature two singles matches and one doubles match each day, all cut to best-of-three sets. AFP

Spanish league matches in US

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MADRID: A regular-season Spanish league game is coming to the United States, possibly as early as this year, but a "clasico" between Real Madrid and Barcelona is pretty much out of the question.

The league said today it is planning to play a match across the Atlantic as part of a new 15-year partnership with sports and entertainment group Relevent to promote soccer in North America.

The group operates the International Champions Cup, the world's largest summer club tournament. Barcelona and Real Madrid faced each other in the tournament in Miami last year.

The league gave few details on the planned regular-season game. League president Javier Tebas, however, dismissed the possibility of taking the "clasico" away from Spain.

The league said it is still making arrangements for the game and there is no timetable for when it will happen, but it could be this season.

The Spanish league has been trying to expand internationally for some time.

Lexi Thompson back to the LPGA

Thompson: Ready to defend title.

INDIANAPOLIS: Lexi Thompson defends her LPGA Indianapolis title this week after more than a month away from the game to give herself a mental, emotional and physical break.

The American said it was a "hard decision" to skip the Women's British Open two weeks ago, but one she thought was well worth it.

"I never want to skip that event," she said Wednesday at the Brickyard Crossing Golf Club. "It's just a very prestigious event. But with how I was just mentally and emotionally, I wasn't ready to compete there.

"I felt like, if I skipped that tournament, it allowed me to have those four weeks of just figuring myself out a little bit, give myself the rest needed, and come out to the last seven or eight tournaments I have left refreshed."

Thompson, a nine-time winner on the LPGA Tour, hasn't won since lifting the trophy in Indianapolis last year.

But it wasn't just on-course struggles driving her need to reassess her priorities.

"I'm not just a robot out there," she said. "I need to have a life.

"I have transformed myself around this game for such a long time, ever since I was five years old," she said.

"The last year and a half, I have honestly been struggling a lot, emotionally, and it's hard because I can't really show it," added Thompson, whose mother, Judy, has battled uterine cancer. AFP

SPORT NUGGETS

Rooney scores a brace in win

WASHINGTON: Wayne Rooney scored two goals and D.C. United beat the Portland Timbers 4-1 on Wednesday night to move out of last place in the Eastern Conference. D.C. (6-9-6) won its third consecutive home game. Portland (10-5-7) has lost two straight after going unbeaten in its previous 15 matches. Rooney, the English star who joined the Washington club in June, tied it at 1 in the 43rd minute.

Blow for Arsenal

LONDON: Arsenal's highly-regarded midfielder Ainsley Maitland-Niles could be out for as long as two months after suffering a "small fracture" to his left leg, the club said Thursday. The 20-year-old -- a member of the England side that won the U20 World Cup last year -- suffered the injury in a challenge with Kuyle Walker during Arsenal's opening Premier League clash against champions Manchester City, a 2-0 defeat last Sunday. I t is a blow both to the player and the club as big things had been expected of him at first team level this season.

Halep in pressure

CINCINNATI: The women's draw took a beating on Wednesday in Cincinnati, where world number one Simona Halep's was still battling when rain halted play. The top-seeded Romanian stood 4-6, 6-3, 3-3 against Australian qualifier Ajla Tomljanovic when storms rolled in to bring the night session to an end on a day that had already seen one three-hour rain delay. Halep had regained some momentum after falling two breaks down in the third set.

Toni Kroos slams Mesut Ozil

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON: Germany midfielder Toni Kroos says Mesut Ozil was 'out of order' to make accusations of racism within the German set up as he retired from international football last month.

"Basically Mesut is a long-serving national team player and deserved a better exit as a footballer," Kroos, 28, told German daily Bild.

"I have played with Mesut for many years and know that he is a nice guy. But the way he retired was out of order.

"The proportion of his statement which was fair and justified was unfortunately overshadowed by a much higher proportion of nonsense.

"I think he himself knows that racism does not exist within the national team and the DFB.

"On the contrary, we are always committed to diversity and integration.

Ozil (left) and Kroos: In good times.

"Mesut was a good example of that, like many of our team mates." Ozil, 29, created a furore last month when he retired from international football in an explosive three-part statement in which he accused German FA (DFB) president Reinhard Grindel of racism.

"In the eyes of Grindel and his supporters, I am German when we win, but I am an immigrant when we lose," wrote Ozil, sparking a racism storm in Germany and triggering fierce debate about integration.

Ozil fell offside with German fans and was booed during pre-World Cup friendlies after he and fellow midfielder Ilkay Gundogan posed for pictures with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in May, raising questions about the pair's loyalty to Germany.

Only a handful of Germany players have spoken about the saga, which captain Manuel Neuer described as 'stressful' while Thomas Mueller said there is "no question of racism within the team".

Head coach Joachim Loew has yet to comment.

Kroos says Ozil was wrong to meet with Erdogan and then wait two months before breaking his silence.

"Mesut was criticised for the photo - and rightly so," said Kroos. "And he missed the chance to explain himself.

Lahm to head Euro 2024 bid

BERLIN: Former World Cup winner Philipp Lahm will be the head of the organising committee if Germany win the bid to host Euro 2024.

Germany and Turkey are the only two candidates bidding to host the European championships in six years time with a decision by European football's governing body UEFA set to be made on September 27.

Lahm, 34, stepped down from international duty after leading Germany to the 2014 World Cup title and retired from all football in May 2017 after winning a joint record eighth Bundesliga title with Bayern Munich.

"From the beginning of my work as an ambassador for the European Championship 2024, it was my desire to take responsibility in the long term," said Lahm in a statement.

"The new role offers me a very interesting opportunity to do just that." AFP

Walker backs Phil Foden to fill De Bruyne's boots

MANCHESTER: Manchester City defender Kyle Walker believes 18-year-old Phil Foden has the talent and attitude to step up in the absence of injured Kevin de Bruyne.

Belgian midfielder De Bruyne was widely hailed as City's player of the year as Pep Guardiola's men racked up a record 100 Premier League points and also lifted the League Cup last season.

De Bruyne suffered a knee injury in training on Wednesday that is expected to keep him sidelined for at least two months.

Foden starred as City comfortably beat Chelsea 2-0 to win the Community Shield earlier this month and is believed to be on the brink of a call-up to the England squad after leading his country to win the Under-17 World Cup last year.

Manchester City's Kevin de Bruyne (left) and Phil Foden.

Phil's got a great attitude, a great player, and more importantly, he's a great lad," said Walker.

"He wants to learn, he's keen to listen. I've met a lot of young players throughout my career now who've kind of got a chip on their shoulder but he's definitely not one of them.

"He's one of those who wants to learn and I think he shows that in his performances -- he's keen, he's energetic, he's keeping people on their toes really."

Despite the blow of losing De Bruyne, City remain heavy favourites to become the first side in a decade to retain the Premier League. AFP

Djokovic gets past stomach bug, beats Adrian Mannarino

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

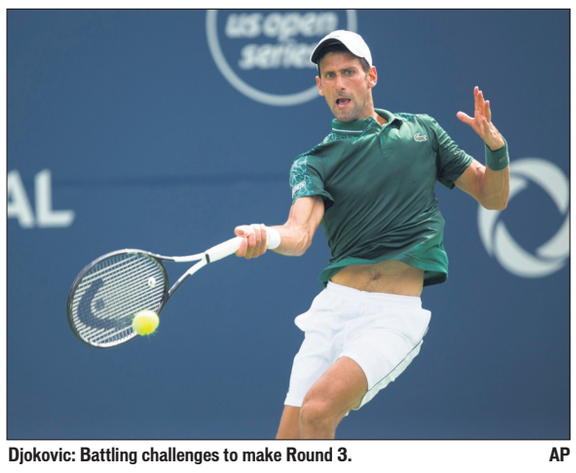
CINCINNATI: Novak Djokovic battled stomach issues to beat Adrian Mannarino and reach the third round in Cincinnati on Wednesday as women's title holder Garbine Muguruza crashed out.

Wimbledon champion Djokovic called for the doctor during the second set against Mannarino but put aside his discomfort to progress 4-6, 6-2, 6-1 over the Frenchman before rain halted afternoon play.

"I wasn't feeling well, I didn't have a great night and wasn't feeling that well for the first set and a half," said Djokovic, who has won every Masters 1000 title except Cincinnati.

"I kind of made it through, and with the help of the doctor and God...I'm just, you know, happy that I managed to overcome the challenge. Credit to him playing well the first set, but I wasn't myself."

Seventh-seeded Muguruza played for the first time since crashing out in the second round of her Wimbledon title defense, falling 2-6, 6-4, 6-4 to Lesia Tsurenko.



Djokovic: Battling challenges to make Round 3. AP

"It was a very ugly match, but I'm happy that I fought, even if the level wasn't very high," said Muguruza, who got a late start to her hard-court buildup to the US Open because of an arm injury.

"At the end, she managed to come back in the third set and play better and found a way to win the match.

"I'm happy I didn't feel (arm) pain. Obviously I didn't have a lot of practices to try to recover, so I had to manage a little bit." Marin Cilic, the 2016 men's champion, beat Romanian Marius Copil 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-4, but third-seeded Alexander Zverev was upset 5-7, 6-4, 7-5 by Dutch veteran Robin Haase.

The German remains winless in four appearances at the pre-US Open tournament. His early exit comes a week after he lost in the Toronto quarter-finals to fellow youngster Stefanos Tsitsipas.

The 55th-ranked Haase clinched a surprise victory when Zverev fired a return long after losing serve six times.

"I think I played well. Today my returns I think were really, really good," Haase said.

"The first serve he hit at me was 136 (mph), and I just hit it right back. I was good from my side. Nowadays against top 10, 20, maybe top 50 you have to be a little bit lucky." Zverev came into the event leading the ATP with 43 match wins this season, while it was a seventh career win over a top 10 player for Haase.

Disappointment for Vishy Anand

RAPID AND BLITZ

ST. LOUIS (USA): India's Viswanathan Anand had a forgettable outing in St. Louis Rapid and blitz as he finished last after scoring 13.5 points in all out of a possible 27 games that ended here.

Anand will now combat the world's best including Magnus Carlsen of Norway in the Sinquefield cup slated to start after a day's gap.

The Indian ace never got going after scoring a first round victory over Hikaru Nakamura of United States in the rapid section and this could be saving the blushes as Nakamura emerged as the clear winner of this leg.

Anand ended the last day scoring four points out of a possible nine in the blitz section that left him with 7.5/18 and did not help much.

The competition still remains but it is quite unlikely for Anand to finish in top four now in the overall Grand Chess tour standings that guarantees a play-off in London later this year.

Anand: Finishes last.

However, the Indian ace will really like to test his form ahead of the Chess Olympiad.

FINALS STANDINGS

Hikaru Nakamura (Usa, 22.5); 2. Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 21.5); 3. Shakhriyar Mamedyarov (Aze, 21); 4. Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 20); 5. Levon Aronian (Arm, 18); 6. Sergey Karjakin (Rus, 17); 7. Leinier Dominguez (Cub, 16); 8. Alexander Grischuk (Rus, 15.5); 9. Wesley So (Usa, 15); 10. V Anand (Ind, 13.5).

Sainz comes in for Alonso

LONDON: Spaniard Carlos Sainz will drive for McLaren in next season's Formula One championship, filling the vacuum left by the retirement of Fernando Alonso, the team announced on Thursday.

The 23-year-old -- son of the legendary Rally driver who bears the same name -- has signed a "multi-year deal" with McLaren.

He is presently 11th in the championship this year driving for Renault.

"McLaren Racing today confirms that Carlos Sainz will race for the team in Formula 1 from the 2019 FIA Formula One World Championship," said a statement on team's website.

"Carlos, 23, from Madrid, Spain, has signed a multi-year deal with the team, replacing Fernando Alonso."

Sainz, who in almost four years on the circuit has yet to feature on the podium, said he had been eyeing a seat at McLaren for a while.

"I'm delighted to finally be able to confirm that I'll be a McLaren driver from the 2019 season," said Sainz, whose best finish was fourth in the 2017 Singapore Grand Prix. AFP

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