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Hawaii judge blocks Donald Trump's revamped travel ban  
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Roger Federer gets the better of Rafael Nadal again  
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## NEARBY



SP MLAs join chorus on 'EVM tampering' issue

LUCKNOW  
Newly-elected Samajwadi Party MLAs on Thursday joined the chorus on "EVM tampering" allegations levelled by BSP chief Mayawati and AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal and demanded that future elections be held using paper ballots. At the first meeting here of the new SP MLAs, the consensus was to go back to the traditional paper ballots to rule out possibility of any tampering of the EVMS, party spokesman Rajendra Chowdhury said.

NATION ▶ PAGE 6

Bihar govt show-cause notice to IAS officers

PATNA  
The Bihar government on Thursday issued show-cause notices to over a dozen IAS officers and District Magistrates, asking them under whose permission they left the headquarters to participate in a meeting on February 26 and form a human chain outside Raj Bhavan. The officers have been asked to respond within three days.

NORTH ▶ PAGE 2

**SUPER-50 Batch For IAS Prep**  
By EX-Civil Servants  
Starting 1st April in Chandigarh  
SCO 213, Sec 24D, CHD  
BrainyIAS 84594-00000

FRIDAY REVIEW ▶ 12 PAGES  
(TABLOID)  
DELHI METRO ▶ 6 PAGES

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10  
CHOICE FOR UTTAR PRADESH  
UNDER WRAPS ▶ PAGE 10

## Parrikar govt. sails through trust vote

22 votes in favour with sole NCP member's support

**PRAKASH KAMAT**  
PANAJI  
Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar's BJP government on Thursday won the vote of confidence in the Assembly with 22 votes. In addition to the 12 BJP MLAs, it was supported by three MLAs from the Goa Forward Party (GFP), three from the Maharashtra Gomantak Party (MGP), three Independents and the sole NCP member, Churchill Alemao, excluding protom speaker Sidharth Kunclienkar of the BJP.

Sixteen members of the Congress voted against the motion while one member, Vishwajit Rane, stayed away from the vote, defying the party whip.

After winning the vote, a jubilant Mr. Parrikar said the Congress never had the numbers. He was flanked by GFP leader Vijai Sardesai and MGP MLA Sudin Dhavlikar, whose support sealed the deal in favour of the BJP.

Mr. Parrikar also rubbished allegations of horse trading levelled by the Congress against the BJP. "I think there are wild allegations being made. We saw everyone (legislators) voluntarily came and voted," he said.

Soon after all 39 MLAs were administered the oath of office by the protom speaker after the House assembled, Mr. Parrikar moved a one-line confidence motion.

(With inputs from PTI)



At home: MLAs greeting Manohar Parrikar soon after the floor test in the Goa Assembly on Thursday. ■ ATISH POMBURFEKAR

## Cong. MLA defies whip, quits party

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

PANAJI

The beleaguered Congress in Goa on Thursday faced a major embarrassment on the floor of the House during the vote of confidence motion on the Manohar Parrikar government when its legislator Vishwajit Rane remained absent during the voting, reducing the Congress' strength to 16.

Mr. Rane, who had defied party whip, later resigned from the Congress as well as an MLA.

His resignation was promptly accepted by protom speaker Sidharth Kunclienkar. Mr. Rane said he would contest again from Valpoi and support the Par-

rikar government.

Later in the evening, while speaking to reporters, Mr. Rane blamed Central leaders of the Congress party for failing to act swiftly to form the government by getting the small parties and independents on board.

The Congress Legislative Party, which included leader Babu Kavlekar and former chief minister and Vishwajit's father, Pratapsingh Rane, held a prolonged meeting immediately after the Assembly session was adjourned.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10  
GOING FORWARD IN GOA  
► EDITORIAL

## GST laws ready for Assemblies, Parliament

15% cap on cess rate for aerated drinks, luxury cars; separate cess ceilings for tobacco products

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

The Goods and Services Tax Council has approved a 15% ceiling on the cess to be levied on aerated drinks and luxury cars over and above the maximum proposed GST rate of 28%. The enabling laws for the States and the Union Territories

were also approved at the Council's meeting on Thursday, paving the way for the adoption of the new indirect tax regime.

While beedis have been kept out of the GST net, separate cess ceilings have been approved for pan masala and tobacco products, including chewing tobacco

and cigarettes – keeping adequate provision to raise the effective rate from their existing levels.

**Three other laws**  
With the Council having already cleared three other GST laws – pertaining to central GST, integrated GST and the compensation to be

paid to States for loss of revenue – this paves the way for the Centre and the States to pilot the new indirect tax system, proposed to be introduced from July 1, through Parliament and the Assemblies. "Four of these laws have to be cleared by the Centre in Parliament, and will now be taken up by the

Union Cabinet for their introduction and passage. We will try and do that expeditiously, and am sure that States would also try to expedite their respective cabinets to approve them," Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said after the meeting.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

## Captain begins second innings in Punjab

Seven Cabinet Ministers, two MoS

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

CHANDIGARH

Congress leader Capt. Amarinder Singh was sworn in as the Punjab Chief Minister on Thursday. At the Raj Bhavan, Governor V.P. Singh Badnore administered the oath of office and secrecy to Capt. Amarinder Singh and seven Cabinet Ministers and two Ministers of State.

Senior Congress leaders, including the former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi, attended the ceremony.

**Sidhu gets local govt.**  
Speculation on Navjot Singh Sidhu becoming the Deputy Chief Minister ended after he was given the portfolio of local government, tourism and cultural Affairs.

The Chief Minister will look after general administration, personnel, home affairs and justice and vigilance.

Cabinet Minister Brahmin Mohindra has been given health and family welfare, research and medical education and parliamentary Affairs. Manpreet Singh Badal will handle finance, planning and employment.



Capt. Amarinder Singh at the swearing-in ceremony.

■ AKHILESH KUMAR

generation. Forests and welfare of SCs and BCs will be looked after by Sadhu Singh Dharamsot.

Tript Rajinder Singh Bajwa has been put in charge of rural development and panchayats and water supply and sanitation. Rana Gurjeet Singh will handle irrigation and power. Charanjit Singh Channi has been allotted technical education and industrial training.

Aruna Chaudhary, Minister of State (Independent Charge), has been assigned higher education and school education. Razia Sultana is the other Minister of State (Independent Charge), who will handle the portfolios of PWD (B&R), social security and development of women and children.

# THE HINDU



Leading from the front



Captain's knock: Australia's captain Steve Smith celebrates after scoring a century on the first day of the third Test between India and Australia at the Jharkhand State Cricket Association Stadium in Ranchi on Thursday. ■ K.R. DEEPAK (REPORTS ON PAGE 15)

## Health spending to be 2.5% of GDP

Clears the long-awaited new policy with 'assurance' of health care for all

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

The Centre on Wednesday cleared the long-awaited National Health Policy 2017, which promises to increase public health spending to 2.5% of GDP in a time-bound manner and guarantees health care services to all Indian citizens, particularly the underprivileged.

While Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda on Thursday called the new policy a 'milestone,' rights activists said the government had fallen short of making health a fundamental right – a section that was removed from the

### New horizons

Focus areas under the new National Health Policy

- Promote universal access to quality healthcare services
- Delivery of healthcare services to socially vulnerable population groups
- Promote research on tribal medicines
- Establish a Public Health Management Cadre in each State
- Ensure public hospitals provide universal access to drugs and diagnostics
- Regulate use of medical devices for quality compliance
- Envision increasing the life expectancy to 70 years from 67.5 years
- Set up tribunals for redressal of grievances



SOURCE: PIB

final draft.

The policy aims to move away from 'sick care' to 'wellness,' Mr. Nadda said in

Parliament on Thursday.  
"The policy seeks to move away from sick-care to wellness, with a thrust on pre-

vention and health promotion. While the policy seeks to reorient and strengthen public health systems, it also looks afresh at strategic purchasing from the private sector and leveraging their strengths to achieve national health goals," said Mr. Nadda.

The government will pursue ambitious targets like reducing Under Five Mortality to 23 by 2025 and Maternal Mortality Ratio from current levels to 100 by 2020, and Infant Mortality Rate to 28 by 2019.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

## Jat stir likely to be called off

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

The meeting between Jat leaders, led by Akhil Bhartiya Jat Aarakshan Sangharsh Samiti national president Yashpal Malik,

and a high-level committee under the chairmanship of Haryana Education Minister Ram Bilas Sharma at Panipat on Thursday ended on a positive note with both sides reaching a consensus on most of the issues.

The Jat leaders are expected to make an announcement calling off the ongoing agitation at a joint press conference with Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar in Delhi on Friday afternoon.

DETAILS ▶ DELHI METRO PAGE 3

DELHI Timings	
SATURDAY, MARCH 18	RISE 06:27 SET 18:31
SUNDAY, MARCH 19	RISE 06:26 SET 18:32
	RISE 00:00 SET 10:43

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	30	14
Safdarjung	30	14
Palam	30	14

Delhi Palam Today  
31°C A hazy and pleasant morning turns little warm day with partly cloudy sky.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow  
32°C A hazy morning. Day will be warm and cloudy. Thunder activity is possible.

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THE HINDU  
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# Bihar govt. issues notice to over a dozen IAS officers

Bureaucrats had protested against arrest of officer in question paper leak scam

AMARNATH TEWARY  
PATNA

The Bihar government on Thursday issued show-cause notices to over a dozen IAS officers and District Magistrates, asking them under whose permission they left the headquarters to participate in a meeting on February 26 and form a human chain outside Raj Bhavan. The officers have been asked to respond within three days.

Protesting against the arrest of Bihar Staff Selection Commission (BSSC) chairman and senior IAS officer Sudhir Kumar in connection with the question paper leak scam, the State IAS association members had held an emergency meeting on February 26 at IAS Bhawan and also formed a human chain outside Raj Bhavan while a delegation had gone inside to meet Governor Ram Nath Kovind.

**In denial**  
Over 50 IAS officers, including secretaries of several departments and District Magistrates, had participated in



**Resentment:** IAS officers protesting outside Raj Bhavan against the arrest of Bihar Staff Selection Commission chairman Sudhir Kumar in Patna last month. ■FILE PHOTO

the meeting and the human chain. The protesting IAS officers had also met Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and State Assembly Speaker Vijay Kumar Chaudhury to apprise them of the issue. They said that "Sudhir Kumar was one among the upright and honest IAS officers of the State". Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad, the ruling alliance partner, too had called Sudhir Kumar an "honest IAS officer".

stone," Mr. Kumar had told journalists.

Slapping the show-cause notice on Thursday, the State government asked them whether they "had participated in the meeting? If yes, under whose permission they left the headquarter and how could they form a human chain in the prohibited zone outside the Raj Bhavan on February 26?"

**Fresh round of conflict**  
"The show-cause notice served on IAS officers is bound to trigger a fresh round of confrontation between the State and the bureaucracy," a senior IAS officers and member of the IAS association of the State told *The Hindu*.

Meanwhile, Sudhir Kumar was produced in a local court on Thursday which fixed the next date of hearing for March 26. He along with four members of his family were arrested from his home at Hazaribagh in Jharkhand earlier, BSSC secretary Parmeshwar Ram too was arrested.

## Srinagar: Outrage over 'assault' on journalists

Newsmen demand govt's intervention

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR

The alleged thrashing of journalists by the police on Thursday invited sharp reaction from the fraternity in Srinagar, with journalists threatening to boycott all police functions in case no action is taken against the erring police officer.

The Kashmir Press Photographers' Association (KPPA), a body of photojournalists, said the police swooped down on the journalists who had gone to cover the separatist leaders' meeting at Srinagar's Hyderpora on Thursday.

### 5 journalists injured

The association spokesman said senior photojournalist Tauseef Mustafa, Mubashir Khan of Greater Kashmir, Farooq Javed Khan of the European Photo Agency (EPA), Shauib Masoodi of *The Indian Express* and Umar Sheikh of *Times Now* were injured in the "attack."

### 'Murder threat issued'

"A police officer assaulted and caught hold of Mr. Mustafa's throat and attempted to suffocate him. The officer abused the photojournalists and threatened

to journalists and threatened Mustafa saying he was from Special Operations Group and would not hesitate in killing a photojournalist," the spokesman alleged.

The journalists later staged a protest at Press Enclave in Srinagar and demanded action against the police officer.

"If no action is taken, the entire journalist community will participate in a protest march against the police brutality on Saturday and stop covering all the events of the Jammu and Kashmir Police," the spokesman added.

### Action condemned

Meanwhile, the Kashmir Editors Guild (KEG) strongly condemned the police action against newsmen.

"The KEG has taken a strong exception to the misuse of power for muzzling the media. This has, unfortunately, been a routine than an exception," a KEG spokesman said.

"We demand intervention by the government at the highest level to ensure that the State's principal arm does not exhibit an abnormal growth," he added.

## Leopards in Himachal recaptured

STAFF REPORTER  
SHIMLA

Three leopards that had escaped from the Gopalpur Zoo and had spread panic in Palampur town were recaptured on Thursday and were brought back to the zoos.

A spokesman of the State forest department said it was an act of sabotage by some miscreants who had cut the fence of the enclosures.

The infringement was noticed by the zoo staff on Wednesday morning and the three leopards were missing.

After a thorough search by the forest and zoo officials, the animals were captured from the nearby jungle.

### Trap laid

A trap was laid and meat pieces were strewn all over to lure the big cats back to the enclosures. They were tranquilised and locked inside, the spokesman said.

Some parents in Palampur did not send their children to the school on Thursday after news of the leopards escaping from the zoo spread. A police investigation has been ordered into the incident.

## Cancer hospital in Ranchi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
RANCHI

The Tata Group will open a cancer research centre and hospital in Jharkhand, a statement issued by the company read on Thursday.

The proposal to set up the centre had been made by Chief Minister Raghubar Das. He had told the Chairman of the Tata Trust that tribals in the State didn't have access to health facilities.

## Kanpur cold storage had no licence, 3 booked

Probe reveals facility was storing potato packets beyond its capacity; rescue operations still under way

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KANPUR

The cold storage in Shivrajpur, where an explosion claimed five lives, did not have a licence and three people, including its owner, have been booked in the case, the police said on Thursday.

On Wednesday, ammonia leakage from the gas chamber in the facility had caused a part of the building to fall.

Five labourers died and eight others were grievously injured in the incident, said Senior Superintendent of Police Akash Kulhari.

### 5 labourers dead

The deceased were identified as Sanjay Jadhav (28), Swadesh Katiyar (28), Bhumeshwar Ram (32), Rambali Ram (30) and Sanjay (30), said chief medical officer Dr.

Ramayan Prasad.

Except for Katiyar, who was a local, all the others hailed from Bihar.

District Magistrate Kaushal Raj Sharma said probe had revealed that the facility was storing potato packets beyond its capacity.

The Horticulture Department has also been asked to find out how the facility was working without a licence and

to bring to book the officials responsible for the accident.

### Inspections on

A three-member team has been constituted to inspect such facilities in the area, even as rescue operations at the accident site are under way.

Mr. Sharma said they were not ruling out the possibility of more people being trapped

under the debris.

Strict action will be taken against anyone found guilty, he added.

### Compensation likely

The DM also said recommendations would be made to the authorities for granting financial compensation to the families of the deceased. The injured are being treated free of cost.

## IN BRIEF



Importance of discipline among students stressed

MALDA (WB)

West Bengal Governor and Chancellor of Gour Banga University K. N. Tripathi on Thursday stressed the importance of discipline among students. Addressing the second convocation of Gour Banga university here, Mr. Tripathi said discipline is indispensable. He said the students and scholars who are passing out today, must remember that they are going to enter the job market. PTI

## Air Marshal Khosla visits Salua Air Force Station

KOLKATA

Air Marshal Anil Khosla, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Air Command (EAC), on Thursday visited the Salua Air Force Station in West Midnapur. Air Marshal Khosla who took over the command of EAC in January was on a familiarisation visit. Salua is an important radar base of the IAF, located near Kharagpur. PTI

## Biren Singh initiates process to lift blockade

IMPHAL

The newly appointed Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on Thursday initiated the process to lift the over four-month-long economic blockade in the state, a BJP leader said. The United Naga Council (UNC) has blocked the national highways 2 and 37 since November 1 last to protest the creation of seven new districts by the then Congress government in October last year. PTI

## Six persons arrested for group clash

KENDRAPARA (ODISHA)

The police on Thursday arrested six persons in connection with Wednesday's group clash at Baghilo village in the district. A large police force has been deployed in the village, said SDPO Kedarnath Sahu. PTI

## Protest outside Berhampur discom hdqrs

Against the alleged anti-labour policies of the power distribution company

STAFF REPORTER  
BERHAMPUR

Activists of the Bijuli Karmachari Milita Manch (BKMM) have started an indefinite dharna in front of the Southco headquarters in Berhampur to protest against the alleged anti-labour policies of the power distribution company involved in electricity distribution in south Odisha districts.

The BKMM comprises both serving and retired employees of the power sector. Acting president of the organisation, Panchanan Jena, who is leading the protesters, said it was high time that the Odisha government realised that privatisation of the power sector had been a failure leading to exploitation of both consumers and workers.

"During the time of privatisation in 1999, Southco had 2,69,000 electricity consumers, 73 sub-stations of 33/11 kV capacity and 4,400 employees. Now the number of electricity consumers has risen to 15 lakh in south Odisha with more than 150

## Heated exchanges in RS over child trafficking case

West Bengal CID had unearthed the racket in November last year



BJP leader Roopa Ganguly making a point in the Rajya Sabha in New Delhi on Thursday. •PTI

This led to heated arguments between members of the ruling party and the Congress.

Amid the heated exchanges, Mr. Kurien said if the name of an MP has been taken "directly or indirectly" by which people can understand who it is meant for, will be expunged.

The West Bengal Crime Investigation Department (CID) had unearthed the child trafficking racket during raids at homes and nursing homes in Baduria area of North 24 Parganas district and Behala in the southern fringes of Kolkata and some other parts of south Bengal in November last year.

In her special mention, Jharna Das Baidya (CPI-M) raised the issue of steep hike of ₹ 86 in price of non-subsidised LPG cylinder.

She said the "unprecedented" hike in the price has caused lot of hardship to consumers who have given up subsidy on LPG cylinders or those who have exceeded their annual quota of 12 cylinders and demanded that the hike should be rolled back.

Senior CPI-M leader Tapan Kumar Sen said millions of Central government employees are on strike on Thursday to protest against non-filling of vacancies, which has increased to 40 per cent of the total posts.

He also said the government has "betrayed" the employees by not honouring the commitments to trade unions that the minimum wages recommended by the Pay Commission would be revised upwards.

## Despite record paddy output, farmers in Ganjam suffer

Large-scale irregularities in procurement process alleged

STAFF REPORTER  
BERHAMPUR

rates," said RRS secretary Si-manchal Nahak.

The convener of OCSA, Rabi Rath, said the government should have taken into account the real state of production before fixing the target of paddy procurement. Mr. Nahak and Mr. Rath alleged that because of this, farmers of Ganjam district are not going to earn much from their paddy yield despite a bumper crop. (OCSA) - have alleged.

According to these organ-

isations, the 2016 Kharif paddy yield in Ganjam district is the highest in the past 20 years. Data from the agriculture department shows that during this Kharif season, paddy production was around nine lakh tonnes.

But ironically, the government target is to procure three lakh tonnes from Ganjam district.

This means that the farmers are being compelled to sell the rest of their produce to dubious traders at lower

president Trinath Biswal.

The peasants' organisations calculate that farmers in Ganjam district are losing income worth more than ₹ 20 crore due to irregularities in paddy procurement. They claimed that there were around six lakh farmers in Ganjam district and of them three lakh are share croppers. But for paddy procurement, only one lakh farmers have been registered.

## Irrigated land

As per government norms, 18 quintals of paddy is procured per acre of irrigated land and 12 quintals from an acre of non-irrigated land. At several places in Ganjam district, farmers have resorted to use of SRI or other scientific methods of agriculture due to which their yield is 25 to 28 quintals per acre.

Due to lack of proper machinery, the farmers are unable to sell off their paddy at good rates and at many places stored paddy has started to germinate," said RRS

Delay in opening of the paddy procurement mandis is also said to be a reason behind the distress sale by small and marginal farmers.

## HC stays Odisha's IOCL tax recovery notice

Asks working group to look into issue

CORRESPONDENT  
CUTTACK

chairmanship of Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry, to look into the concerns of raised by the government of Odisha and the IOCL within two months.

Odisha after unilaterally striking down a vital clause from the 2004-MoU signed with the IOCL had withdrawn the mutually-agreed tax incentive to IOCL and placed the tax recovery notice on the corporation. The clause related to grant of interest free loan to Odisha equivalent to the tax payable to the State on the finished products of the refinery during its first 11 years of commercial production.

## Medical negligence victim's wife gets government job

He had died at a private hospital in Kolkata last month

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday offered a job to the wife of Sanjay Roy, who allegedly died of medical negligence at a private hospital in the city last month.

Ruby Roy met the Chief Minister at Nabanna Building.

She later said that she had been offered a job in the State Tourism Department. Ms Roy was appointed Assistant Trainee Manager with a salary of Rs 20,000 per month.

"She talked to me like a

mother and said that since you are young, you should stand on your own feet," Ms Roy told journalists.

## Assurance on probe

She said the Chief Minister assured her that the investigation in her husband's death would continue.

After the death of Mr Roy on February 23, his family members had levelled allegations of medical negligence against the hospital.

The family members also alleged that the hospital authorities had asked them to make full payments of bill before he was shifted to the

State-run SSKM hospital.

## Road accident

Mr Roy was admitted to the private hospital on February 16 after a road accident.

On February 23, the family members wanted that the patient be shifted to SSKM hospital. The patient passed away at the hospital.

Following the incident the State health department had formed a committee to look into the matter.

The police have questioned the hospital authorities along with Rupali Bose, the director of the hospital in the eastern region.



Members of the Bijuli Karmachari Milita Manch staging a demonstration in Berhampur on Thursday. •LINGARAJ PANDA

sub-stations of 33/11 kV capacity. But the number of employees in the power distribution sector in the region has remained almost the same," said Mr. Jena.

## Number of consumers

With the increase in the number of consumers, the total number of employees with Southco should have been around 20,000 for proper service, he added.

At present, Southco is managing through outsourcing which is leading to

exploitation of the work force, said CITU leader Yudhisthir Behera, who also took part in the protest demonstration. In stead of using more trained field staff, Southco is only appointing managerial executives. Most of the field staffs are temporary employees who do not get basic labour rights prescribed by law. The majority of these temporary workers serve under outsourced firms and are ill paid. Although the government has decided to regularise

temporary employees after six years of service, this is not being done by Southco, said Mr. Jena.

Protesters demanded equal pay for workers serving Southco directly or under outsourced companies. They want all temporary workers to be regularised and provided all facilities recommended by labour laws. These temporary workers face injury and death during repair and maintenance of the power distribution system but are allegedly not compensated properly. The BKMM has demanded ₹ 20 lakh compensation for the families of workers who die in the line of duty and ₹ 5 lakh for workers who become invalid due to serious injury.

No power distribution company can provide proper service unless it has trained manpower and Southco should realise that, said Mr. Jena. According to him, by neglecting the workforce, Southco was also exploiting its power consumers, mostly those in the rural areas.

## HC acquits two of murder charge

They were found guilty of murder by the sessions court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KOLKATA

The Calcutta High Court on Thursday acquitted a man awarded capital punishment by a lower court and another sentenced to life imprisonment in connection with the murder of two women owing to lack of credible evidence against them.

A Division Bench comprising Justices Ashim Kumar Roy and M. M. Banerjee set free Avik Ghosh and Somnath Tanti, who had been found guilty of murder by the Sessions Court in June, 2015.

Ghosh had been awarded

death sentence by the then Alipore Sessions Court for the murder of his wife Mousumi and housemaid Parulbala, while Tanti, a man, was sentenced to life imprisonment.

## Found murdered

Mousumi was found murdered at her residence on September 27, 2010, at Oxytown in the Thakurpukur police station area on the south-western outskirts of the metropolis.

On a complaint by Mousumi's father Ghosh, Tanti and three others were charged with murder.

It was alleged that Ghosh

had employed Tanti and the three others to commit the crime and to make it look like a case of dacoity.

## Three acquitted

The Alipore Sessions Court had in June, 2015 found Ghosh and Tanti guilty of murder, while acquitting the three other accused persons. Ghosh and Tanti moved appeals before the HC, claiming they were innocent and were framed.

After hearing the petitioners and the prosecution, the Division Bench acquitted both the persons owing to lack of credible evidence against them.

Large-scale irregularities in procurement process alleged

rates," said RRS secretary Si-manchal Nahak.

The convener of OCSA, Rabi Rath, said the government should have taken into account the real state of production before fixing the target of paddy procurement. Mr. Nahak and Mr. Rath alleged that because of this, farmers of Ganjam district are not going to earn much from their paddy yield despite a bumper crop.

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# Mobile app developer kills self

Kaushal Bag's emergency app helped thousands stranded in 2015 Chennai floods

**SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE**

PUNE

A 21-year-old IT student, who developed an emergency mobile app that helped connect with thousands of people marooned during the 2015 Chennai floods, was found hanging in his house in Applewood Society in Khodanagar area of Nashik district on Wednesday afternoon.

Police said, Kaushal Bag, a second-year Computer Science student of K.K. Wagh Arts, Commerce, Science and Computer Science College, was alone at the time of the incident. The motive remains unknown. Bag's father, Yogesh, who has a travel agency, and mother, Deepa, an LIC employee, were at work.

The body was found by his younger brother who returned home in the afternoon. Bag was rushed to the



Kaushal Bag was a Computer Science student. ■ FACEBOOK

work connectivity and contributed in rescuing nearly 20,000 people stranded during the Chennai floods.

Many people used the app to send SMSes, which Bag and his colleagues routed to their server to identify the location of the stranded people. NGOs working on ground were immediately informed and rescue teams were sent. The app was a result of Bag's desire to help people without internet connection in their mobile phones reach out to friends in an emergency.

## A big hit

The app, in its initial stage, was also used during the 2015 Nashik Kumbh Mela to send automated SMSes to emergency numbers already saved on phones. The app was circulated through a free download link, but was not available on Google Play

Store. In January 2016, Bag launched as a women's safety app, which he developed with three colleagues. The app received an overwhelming response with more than 24,000 downloads across the country. Bag's innovations also drew praise from Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg on Facebook. The tech giant had also offered Bag a job as a Product Manager.

Last year, Bag applied for a patent for his innovation and in a tweet to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 20, 2016 he expressed his desire to 'to donate my application to all the sectors of India'.

Last month, Bag used Facebook Live to draw attention to a half-marathon organised by the Nashik Police. District Police Commissioner Dr. Ravindra Singh felicitated Bag after the run.

## Sloth bear killed in Gujarat

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

AHMEDABAD

A joint team of the Gujarat police and the forest department shot dead a female sloth bear near Balaram Wildlife Sanctuary in North Gujarat.

Deputy Conservator of Forest I.K. Barad said, "Since Sunday, the bear had killed three persons and injured five others in a series of attacks in a Banaskantha district.

Mr. Barad said forest official R.H. Patni was killed when entered the forest to trace and cage the bear. Among injured, two are forest department officials.

There are about 100 sloth bears in the sanctuary, which spread across 500 sq. km and falls in the catchment area of Banas and Sabarmati rivers.

# Congress says party not in flux in Chhattisgarh

Rahul Gandhi refuses to accept resignation of State leaders after party's drubbing in Odisha civic polls

**PAVAN DAHAT**

NAGPUR

The Chhattisgarh unit of the Congress party denied rumours of change in its leadership and claimed status quo would be maintained.

Speculation was rife in the State after B.K. Hariprasad, AICC general secretary in charge of Chhattisgarh, tendered his resignation on Wednesday.

Chhattisgarh Congress spokesperson R.P. Singh said, "Mr. Hariprasad was asked to continue in his post after an hour-long meeting in Delhi on Wednesday with Mr. Gandhi. Mr. Baghel and senior Congress leader Motilal Vohra also attended the meeting. Mr. Gandhi made it clear that there was no question of Mr. Baghel's removal."

On Wednesday night, on his return from Delhi, Mr. Baghel was given a rousing welcome by supporters at Raipur airport. Mr. Baghel asked party workers to ignore rumours in the media and on social media platforms. However, a senior Congress leader revealed on the condition of anonymity that the State leadership and Mr. Hariprasad could be replaced with new faces once Congress president Sonia Gandhi returned to India.



Speculation is rife about Ajit Jogi's return to the Congress.

dicted a possible return of former Chhattisgarh chief minister Ajit Jogi almost nine months after he quit the Congress to form his own party.

However, Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi put all speculation to rest by refusing to accept Mr. Hariprasad's resignation on Wednesday.

Chhattisgarh Congress spokesperson R.P. Singh said, "Mr. Hariprasad was asked to continue in his post after an hour-long meeting in Delhi on Wednesday with Mr. Gandhi. Mr. Baghel and senior Congress leader Motilal Vohra also attended the meeting. Mr. Gandhi made it clear that there was no question of Mr. Baghel's removal."

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# Goa murder victim was raped

Accused remanded in police custody till March 21

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

PANAJI

The Goa police on Thursday pressed charges of rape against the accused in the murder of 28-year-old Irish woman Danielle McLaughlin in Canacona in south Goa. A post-mortem conducted at the State-owned Goa Medical College Hospital near here confirmed that the victim was raped.

## A brutal murder

Umesh Gaonkar, Superintendent of Police in charge of the Crime Branch, told *The Hindu* on Thursday evening that the post-mortem report had confirmed cranio cerebral damage and constriction of neck as the reasons for death. "Rape was also confirmed," Mr. Gaonkar said.

Vikat Bhagat, a local history-sheeter and prime suspect in the case, was arrested by Goa police on



Farewell: Tourists pay their last respects to Danielle McLaughlin who was found murdered on a beach in Goa. ■ ATISH POMBURFEKAR

Tuesday night. Bhagat has been remanded in police custody for seven days till March 21.

The naked body of

McLaughlin was found in a field around 150 metres from the main road at Devbag in Canacona on Tuesday morning.

# Two Maoists killed in Chhattisgarh

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NAGPUR

Two alleged members of the outlawed Communist Party of India (Maoist) were killed in an encounter with the police in Narayanpur district of south Chhattisgarh on Thursday.

**Police teams alerted**  
The Anti-Naxal Operations unit of Chhattisgarh police in a statement said, "The Maoists planned to ambush a police team near Kukrajhar area of Narayanpur district. On a tip-off, police teams from Narayanpur were mobilised. In an encounter between Maoists and the police near Kukrajhar two Maoists were neutralised and their bodies were recovered."

The security forces also recovered two improvised explosive devices and a wireless set from the spot.

# Varsity postpones event where Yechury was invited to speak

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NAGPUR

Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad.

Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University Vice-Chancellor S.P. Kane has "indefinitely postponed" a programme involving a speech by Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary Sitaram Yechury

secretary Raman Singh."

Mr. Jogi also ruled out any possibility of his return. "Ajit Jogi doesn't look back. I have nothing to do with that party [the Congress]. It is not possible," Mr. Jogi told reporters at Raipur airport on Wednesday night after returning from Delhi.

Meanwhile, senior Congress leader and Leader of the Opposition T.S. Singh Deo said he would quit politics if Mr. Jogi returned to the Congress. "I don't think he will return, but the party high command takes all the decisions. It is not possible for me to work along with him," Mr. Singh Deo told reporters in Ambikapur.

The programme was "postponed" by the V-C two days before its scheduled date, attracting criticism from the organisers and writers and thinkers based in Nagpur who claimed that the V-C was forced to do so due to pressure from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's student wing, the

"We met the V-C and he told us that the programme has to be cancelled because of some unavoidable reasons. When I asked him about the reasons, he said some organisations called him and threatened to protest if Mr. Yechury speaks in the university. He did not name the organisation but it is clear that it was the ABVP," Pradip Aglave, head of Nagpur University's Ambedkar Thoughts department, told *The Hindu*.

**No response**  
When asked, the V-C said, "The programme has not been cancelled. It has been postponed for some administrative purposes. I would not like to speak more on this issue." Mr. Yechury did not respond to calls when contacted for his reaction.

## IN BRIEF



## Panel recommends one year suspension for Roja

VIJAYAWADA  
The Privileges Committee of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly on Thursday recommended that R.K. Roja, Nagari YSRCP MLA, be suspended from the House for one year. The panel said Ms. Roja did not express whole-hearted regret for the 2015 incident where she allegedly made derogatory remarks against Payakaraopet MLA Vangalapudi Anitha.

## 'Girl who killed herself was sexually abused'

KOLLAM  
The autopsy report on the suicide of a 10-year-old girl two months ago has put the Kollam rural police in a quandary after it revealed that the minor had been sexually abused. So far, the police has not arrested anyone in connection with the incident.

## Homicide ruled out in Kalabhavan Mani's death

KOCHI  
Even as the investigation into the death of Kalabhavan Mani continues, nothing suspicious about the possibility of Mani being poisoned to death has been revealed, said a statement filed by the government in the Kerala High Court. The statement was filed in response to a writ by Mani's brother seeking a CBI probe in the case.

## Rain damages standing crops in Telangana

NIZAMABAD  
Untimely rain and hailstorm on Wednesday damaged standing crops like maize, paddy and mango in 23 villages in Makloor, Navipet and Nandipet mandals of Nizamabad. While three houses were partially damaged, as many as 40 houses were completely destroyed by the rain.

## Hoard of old currency notes stumps police

₹2.84 crore cash seized in Hyderabad

YUNUS Y. LASANIA  
HYDERABAD

In the last five days, more than 30 people have been arrested in three separate cases for trying to exchange ₹2.84 crore in demonetised currency notes of ₹1,000 and ₹500 for legal tender. Though those arrested told the police that mediators who promised to facilitate the exchange had contacts with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), so far no links have been established by police.

**Desperate move**  
A police official said those who hoarded demonetised currency till now were desperately trying to get rid of it as the last date to exchange it with other RBI offices was drawing closer.

So far, three cases have been registered with the Banjara Hills, Begumpet and S. R. Nagar police stations, and 15, 17 and three persons arrested, sources said.

A highly placed source said the possibility of

## Kerala CM, Oppn. lock horns over VACB chief

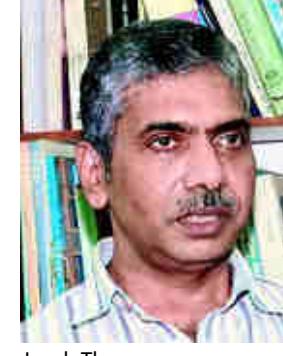
Pinarayi defends Jacob Thomas, says can't act on news reports

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the Opposition locked horns in the Kerala Assembly on Thursday over the allegations raised against Jacob Thomas and his continuation as Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (VACB) Director.

The United Democratic Front accused Mr. Thomas of suppressing vital details from his official asset statement and functioning as an intermediary for a land deal for a private company with Israeli links. Mr. Vijayan steadfastly defended him saying he would not act on the basis of news reports.

M. Vincent, who gave notice for an adjournment motion on the issue, alleged that Mr. Thomas bought 50



Jacob Thomas ■ FILE PHOTO

Mr. Vijayan said the government would go only by facts. The Finance Inspection Wing report on the purchases Mr. Thomas had made as Ports Director had been referred for legal opinion of the Director General of Prosecution. The government was bound to protect the freedom offered by the law for the functioning of an official, he said.

**'Cause for stalemate'**  
Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala said Mr. Thomas was the main cause for "administrative stalemate" in the State. Mr. Vijayan had failed to control the Vigilance. What concerned the Opposition was how the functions of Mr. Thomas were affecting governance, he said.

## Karnataka rationalist claims threat to life

Security for Narendra Nayak increased

RAGHAVA M.  
MANGALURU

Following complaints of an attempt on his life, lodged by Narendra Nayak, president of the Federation of Indian Rationalists' Associations, and campaigner against superstitious practices, the Mangaluru police have increased his security cover.

In a complaint filed with the Urwa police here on Wednesday, Mr. Nayak said about 7 a.m. two motorcycle-borne men came close to his car as he was approaching Lalbagh Road, and indicated that one of the tyres was punctured.

**'Attempt to attack'**  
He alleged that it was an attempt to make him alight from the car in order to attack him. He drove away without stopping, he said.



Narendra Nayak ■ FILE PHOTO

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Nayak said the manner in which the motorcycle-borne men approached him, indicated that they planned to harm him.

Mr. Nayak, who has been leading a campaign to bring the killers of slain RTI activist Vinayak Baliga to book, had received threats earlier and had brought it to the notice of the police.

## Ruckus in Karnataka House over diary issue

'Seized' from Congress MLC's house

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

The diary controversy led to a ruckus in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly on Thursday, leading to an early adjournment of the House.

Principal Opposition BJP wanted a discussion on the diary allegedly seized from the residence of a Congress MLC, showing pay-offs by the State Congress leaders to the party high command.

Noisy scenes and a dharna unfolded after Speaker K.B. Koliwad, who initially granted permission, withdrew it following objections by senior Ministers T.B. Jayachandra and K.R.

## Ramesh Kumar.

As soon as Leader of the Opposition Jagdish Shettar began to speak, Mr. Jayachandra raised objections drawing parallels with the Sahara case.

**'IT yet to finish probe'**  
He said the Solicitor-General of the then NDA government had expressed the view that it was not proper to consider "random and loose sheets" as evidence of payment.

Mr. Ramesh Kumar said it was not proper to allow discussion on the diary as the Income Tax Department was yet to complete its investigation.

## Trailer of Baahubali 2 sends fans into a frenzy

Fans in A.P., Telangana & Karnataka throng cinemas to get a glimpse of what is in store next month

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADAVisual treat: A still from *Baahubali-2* ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Even the trailer of *Baahubali: The Conclusion*, which was released on Thursday, took Andhra Pradesh and Telangana by storm, and evoked a good response in Karnataka too.

The film, a continuation of *Baahubali: The Beginning*, is slated to release in four languages on April 28.

Fans in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana thronged cinemas in large numbers for what they expected would be a 'visual treat'.

The trailer was released in about 20 cinemas in and around Vijayawada.

"It's extraordinary. It feels like a Hollywood project,"

said an excited G. Raghu Rama Raju, emerging from Annapurna theatre, Gandhinagar. A die-hard Prabhas fan, he saw the trailer all three times it was screened.

Delirious fans performed

a "palabhishekham" (milk offering) to the film poster and cut cakes.

The digital trailer, which was supposed to release at 5 p.m., had to be released earlier after it was leaked on social media.

It created quite a buzz among cinema-goers in Visakhapatnam, especially fans of Rana Daggubati, Prabhas and director S.S. Rajamouli.

"It appears bloodier, bigger and bolder than the first part. If the trailer can create such a frenzy, the movie is sure to set a record," said Srinivas Reddy, a Prabhas fan.

Nine single screens in Hyderabad screened the two-minute teaser between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m.

Mr. Rajamouli, along with Prabhas and Rana, kicked off another round of the promotional blitzkrieg with a press meet in Hyderabad, before releasing the Hindi

version of the trailer. He said the audience should expect more drama in the sequel, along with interesting action sequences. He rubbished reports of multiple climax scenes.

Six Inox theatres in Bengaluru organised stand-alone screenings of the trailer.

The two-minute, 20-second trailer was screened in close to 59 theatres across Karnataka, including Bengaluru and Mangaluru. A check on ticketing site BookMyShow showed that most of the shows were sold out early.

(With inputs from Visakhapatnam, Hyderabad and Bengaluru)

## IN BRIEF

Panel recommends one year suspension for Roja

The Privileges Committee of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly on Thursday recommended that R.K. Roja, Nagari YSRCP MLA, be suspended from the House for one year. The panel said Ms. Roja did not express whole-hearted regret for the 2015 incident where she allegedly made derogatory remarks against Payakaraopet MLA Vangalapudi Anitha.

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M. Vincent, who gave notice for an adjournment motion on the issue, alleged that Mr. Thomas bought 50

acres of land at Virudhunagar using the address of a businessman, and without revealing his identity as Kochi City Police Commissioner. He had not included the details of the land in his asset statement. The company had Israelis as partners, he said.

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Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala said Mr. Thomas was the main cause for "administrative stalemate" in the State. Mr. Vijayan had failed to control the Vigilance. What concerned the Opposition was how the functions of Mr. Thomas were affecting governance, he said.

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**'IT yet to finish**



## IN BRIEF



## MP cop mocked for obesity hospitalised

NEEMUCH  
The Madhya Pradesh police officer who was fat-shamed by writer-columnist Shobhaa De on Twitter has been admitted to a private hospital here after he took ill.

Inspector Daulatram Jogawat, the officer, was having fever for the last five days and his food intake had come down, said Dr Vipul Garg of Garg Nursing Home where he was admitted on Wednesday night. "The officer is responding to treatment and is out of danger," he said. PTI

## Power thefts totalling ₹51 crore in Haryana

CHANDIGARH  
Accelerating the campaign to curb electricity thefts in Haryana, the power utilities have detected 26,899 such cases involving an amount of ₹51.65 crore in the State in January and February. Of this, ₹16.75 crore was recovered from defaulters, officials said. The Uttar Haryana Bijli Vitran Nigam detected 13,855 cases of power theft costing over ₹29.26 crore, of which ₹11.82 crore was recovered, a spokesman of the utilities said. PTI

## Girl rescued within a day of kidnapping, one held

JAMMU  
A girl was rescued by the Jammu and Kashmir police within a day of her kidnapping by a youth, who has been arrested, an official said on Thursday. The accused was arrested in Samba district after a complaint was lodged by the girl's father, he said, adding the victim was allegedly kidnapped on the intervening night of March 14 and 15. Raids were conducted and acting on a tip-off, police rescued the girl from Papad belt of Mansar. PTI

# Now, SP alleges tampering of EVMs

After election defeat, newly elected MLAs demand that future elections be held using paper ballots

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LUCKNOW

Newly-elected Samajwadi Party MLAs on Thursday joined the chorus on "EVM tampering" allegations levelled by BSP chief Mayawati and AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal and demanded that future elections be held using paper ballots.

At the first meeting here of the new SP MLAs, the consensus was to go back to the traditional paper ballots in future to rule out possibility of any tampering of the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), party spokesman Rajendra Chowdhury said.

**'Collect proof'**

The MLAs felt that the party's drubbing at the hands of the BJP was because of EVM tampering and suggested all relevant proof should be collected to substantiate their charge, he said.

The SP, which ruled in Uttar Pradesh for five years after winning 224 of the 403 Assembly seats in 2012, had to be content with only 47 seats in its kitty this time, while the score of the BSP plunged from 80 to just 19 seats as the BJP and its allies



**Serious claims:** Newly elected MLAs arrive to attend the meeting of legislatures at the Samajwadi Party headquarters in Lucknow on Thursday. ■ RAJEEV BHATT

notched up 325 seats.

An angry Mayawati had on Wednesday decided to move court over alleged tampering of EVMs in the recent Assembly polls, an issue which led the Delhi Chief Minister to cry conspiracy.

Mr Kejriwal also said that before the 2014 Lok Sabha polls even some BJP leaders like L K Advani were not in favour of EVMs.

**Demand for probe**

SP national president Akhilesh Yadav had said on March 11, the day results were declared, "If questions have been raised by the

Bahujan Samaj Party on EVMs, government should probe it. I will also look at it on my level," he had told reporters.

The SP legislators at the meeting authorised Mr Yadav to decide the name of the leader of the SP Legislature Party, who in turn would become the leader of the Opposition automatically as the SP is the largest party in the opposition bloc.

**Demand for probe**

He also said that SP MLAs have been asked to highlight the BJP's "anti-people measures" after it takes over and continue their fight on principles of "samajwad" (socialism).

The meeting at the SP headquarters was attended by Mr Yadav, his uncle Shivpal Yadav, senior leader Azam Khan and party office-bearers.

However, there was no decision as to who will be the leader of the SP Legislature Party.

**Executive meet**

The meeting decided to hold the party's national executive meet on March 25, SP MLA Paras Nath Yadav told the reporters, adding that it was not a meeting that would be held to review the party's debacle, but a get-together of MLAs after Holi.

Mr Chowdhury said Mr Akhilesh Yadav congratulated the newly elected MLAs for winning elections in the "adverse scenario."

"When the PM and the BJP national president were trying to mislead and gag voice in democracy during elections, SP won 47 seats," he said quoting Mr Akhilesh Yadav.

He also said that SP MLAs have been asked to highlight the BJP's "anti-people measures" after it takes over and continue their fight on principles of "samajwad" (socialism).

# BJP looks to make inroads into Bengal

Says Mamta govt at tipping point

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA  
Indicating that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is keen to make inroads into West Bengal after its massive victory in Uttar Pradesh, the party's national general secretary, Kailash Vijayaraghavan, on Thursday said now their "focus will be on Bengal where the appeasement policy of the Mamata Banerjee government has reached a tipping point."

**Campaign in State**

The BJP is planning a huge campaign across 10 districts of the State where law and order has become a matter of concern, he said.

Over the past few months, the State BJP leadership has been grappling with a number of issues, including arrest of its leaders, the latest being the BJP Mahila Morcha leader Juhi Chowdhury, who is in custody for her alleged role in child trafficking.

The mandate in UP has injected fresh enthusiasm in the BJP. "It has boosted the morale of party workers. We are getting calls from

political activists of various parties who are keen to join the BJP," said former State president Rahul Sinha.

**Screening members**

The BJP leader, however, cautioned that the people from other parties should be inducted in the party after proper screening. A section of the BJP leadership feels that the investigation in the Sardaha and Rose Valley chit fund scams will shape the party's performance in the panchayat elections.

There is little doubt about the involvement of the Trinamool Congress leadership in the chit fun scam. We in the West Bengal BJP feel that the agencies should have done much more than what they have done in the past two years," a senior BJP leader said.

According to many in the party this is the opportune time for the BJP to corner the Trinamool Congress over corruption. If the party fails to capitalise on it the BJP is not likely to make any impact in Bengal in the near future, they feel.

## Six-yr-old Muslim girl tops Bhagavad Gita recitation contest in Odisha

The girl's mother stood by her throughout the competition which was held at a temple in Kendrapara

SATYASUNDAR BARIK  
BHUBANESWAR

At a time when a controversy is raging over 40 Muslim clerics taking exception to the singing by reality star Nahid Afrin in Assam, a six-year-old girl from the Muslim community has taken everyone by surprise with her immaculate recital of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita - a Hindu holy book - in Odisha's Kendrapara district. In fact, Firdaus won the

Srimad Bhagavad Gita chanting competition in a sub-junior group in Kendrapara this week. Showing exemplary courage, Arifa Bibi, mother of Firdaus, stood by her daughter throughout the competition held at a temple premises in Kendrapara.

**Considered taboo'**

"When we came across news of the participation of a Muslim girl in the recital of

the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, considered a taboo in the minority community, we took precautions keeping in mind the sensitive nature of the issue. We sought the consent of her parents. To our utter surprise, Firdaus' mother not only gave her consent, but also remained present all through the competition," said Akshaya Pani, one of three judges.

A total 46 children participated in the chanting

of the Gita.

**'Bright student'**

The participants were judged on their ability to memorise slokas, presentation, audience preference, voice and involvement in the recital. "Firdaus scored 97.5 out of 100 in the competition," said Mr. Pani.

Firdaus has been put up at Sobhaniya Sikshashrama, a residential school in Kendrapara town. Recital of

the Srimad Bhagavad Gita was part of the prayer class. Urmila Kar, headmistress of the school, said the girl is a very bright student.

"As a Standard I student, she cannot read slokas. But she has memorised the slokas chanted during prayer classes as we lay emphasis on moral education," Ms Kar said. Seikh Nuruddin, father of Firdaus, works in Mumbai while her mother is a homemaker.



**Word-for-word:** Firdaus memorised the slokas during prayer classes held in her school. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

IN BRIEF



Raje opens high-tech police control room

JAIPUR  
Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje on Thursday inaugurated a high-tech police control room, 'Abhay Command Centre', which is aimed at helping in surveillance, vehicle-tracking and mob control. It is equipped with facilities to conduct video surveillance, analyse call recordings and track vehicles. PTI

BJP UP chief Keshav Maurya hospitalised

NEW DELHI  
BJP Uttar Pradesh unit chief Keshav Prasad Maurya was admitted to RML Hospital on Thursday, following complaints of physical exertion, the authorities said. "He is currently under observation. If his condition remains stable, we will discharge him on Friday," said RML medical superintendent.

'People's Tribunal' on Bhangar stir

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA  
Under the banner of Bhangar Sanhati Mancha, locals of Bhangar in West Bengal – protesting against the construction of a power grid – along with activists and organisations will hold a 'People's Tribunal' in April to decide on the movement. The decision was taken at a convention organised by the Mancha on Thursday.

The convention comes a day after two leaders, one from CPI-ML (Red Star) and a leader of the Mazdoor Kisan Parishad (MKP), were arrested in connection with the agitation.

Sankar Das of the CPI-ML (Red Star) along with MPF leader Kushal Deb Nath were arrested on Wednesday.

## Industries get 6 months for retrospective green nod

Reprise available for projects that have already begun work

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

In what could cheer a vast swathe of industries, the Union Environment Ministry has given a six-month window and a "one-time opportunity" to industrial projects functioning without environmental clearance (EC) to apply for a back-dated green certificate.

The reprieve is for projects that started the work on site, expanded the production beyond the limit of EC or changed the product mix without obtaining prior EC, a press statement by the Ministry said late on Thursday.

This is not the first time the Ministry has spelt out a procedure to regularise this category of industrial offenders. The Ministry had laid out rules on 12.12.2012 and 27.06.2013 and laid down a process for granting



**One-time opportunity:** The notification lays down several conditions to obtain environmental clearance.

EC to such cases of violation.

However, the High Court of Jharkhand had passed an order dated the November 28, 2014, declaring some of the provisions void. The National Green Tribunal also ruled that the Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006 provides for prior environmental clearance, hence no procedure could be laid through the Ministry

orders for post-environment clearance.

Reasoning that units could not be allowed to continue pollution unregulated, the Ministry's latest notification, on March 14, lays down several conditions to obtain a clearance.

These include categorising all projects as 'grade A,' or the highest level of scrutiny now required.

## It's not so green for Kerala on tourism rankings

State at no. 18 in attracting domestic visitors despite aggressive marketing

S. ANIL RADHAKRISHNAN  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

It may be 'God's Own Country' and one of '50 places of a lifetime' to some, but Kerala has found it difficult to climb up the popularity charts among domestic tourists.

The Union Tourism Ministry's provisional figures for Domestic Tourist Arrivals for 36 States and Union Territories for 2016 has kept Kerala pegged at 18th position, unchanged from the previous year, despite an aggressive State marketing campaign and enhanced budgetary support.

Domestic tourist arrivals refers to holiday-makers who stay overnight in lodges, hotels, guest houses, paying guest facility, tented accommodation or even house boats. Sabarimala pilgrims



**Popularity dips:** A 5.67% increase in domestic tourist inflow in 2016 has not helped Kerala enter the top 10 list. ■ H. VIBHU

are also not included, officially in the Research Wing of Kerala Tourism said.

Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh score first and second ranks for the year. Madhya Pradesh is third, and Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra are in fourth, fifth and sixth positions. West Bengal pipped Telangana for seventh position, while Gu-

jarat and Rajasthan follow. Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Punjab, Delhi, Chhattisgarh and Himachal Pradesh are all ahead of Kerala, raising the pressure on tourism officials who have pursued aggressive marketing.

A 5.67% increase in domestic tourist inflow in 2016 compared to the previous year has not helped Kerala enter the 'top 10' list. With 1,31,72,535 domestic tourist arrivals in the year, the State famous for pictureque beaches, backwaters, hills and cultural finery stood rooted at rank 18.

**Industry sees handicaps**

Lack of extensive air connectivity, curbs on liquor sale and difficulties with holiday facilities, dining and entertainment block growth, said Chairman of the Confederation of Tourism Industry, Kerala, E. M. Najeeb. The private sector wants the State to improve infrastructure. The State's growth of 5.67% in domestic tourists is well below the 15.5% rise for all States and UTs during 2016, over 2015. Last year, the arrival numbers for States/UTs as a whole was 1,653 million, against 1,432 million in 2015.

### Lying in wait



**No way:** Stranded passengers wait for the reopening of the Jammu-Srinagar Highway in Jammu on Thursday. ■ PTI

## Armed Naxalites kidnap 3 villagers in Kalahandi

Accused the trio of providing information to security forces

STAFF REPORTER  
BHUBANESWAR

Armed left-wing extremists allegedly kidnapped three villagers from the Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary in Odisha's Kalahandi district on Wednesday night.

Security forces could not trace the abducted villagers though a massive combing operation had been launched soon after the news of the kidnapping broke on Thursday morning, sources said.

Around 20 left-wing extremists, including seven women members, raided the Karlapat village in search of Prasanna Majhi, a special police officer around midnight on Wednesday. Mr. Majhi, however, managed to



The extremists set the motorcycle of a villager on fire. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

give them the slip. Failing to find the SPO in his residence, members of the CPI (Maoist) set his bike on fire.

Subsequently, the extremists knocked on the doors of Hari Pradhan, accused of

brewing country-made liquor, and took him into their custody.

Their next target was Banamali Naik, also accused of selling country liquor. When extremists attempted to capture him, Naik's elder brother, Sudarshan Naik, resisted and the ultras kidnapped him as well. The extremists accused the three villagers of providing information to security forces, sources said.

"Special Operation Group and CRPF personnel are conducting searches. Extremists have kidnapped villagers out of frustration as their support base has eroded in the district," said Brijesh Kumar Rai, Kalahandi SP.

## Kerala a magnet for IS: Police

National conclave on community policing, deradicalisation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala's highly educated workforce has made it a magnet for Islamic State (IS) recruiters seeking to enlist professionals to their global jihadist cause, according to State Police Chief (SPC) Loknath Behera.

Addressing a national conclave on community policing and deradicalisation here on Thursday, Mr. Behera cited the 2016 'exodus' of 21 families from north Kerala to the IS as an example of the growing mastery of the organisation's online mobilisers.

Mr. Behera said the defectors included dentists, doctors, and engineers. The group was a zealous amal-

gam of radicals and recent converts. The police have tracked the group in virtual space to Afghanistan where they are fighting in the IS ranks.'

**Propaganda machine**

Local franchises of the IS had initiated the group's radicalisation process at a retreat in Sri Lanka. The slick online propaganda of the organisation targeted skilled youth. The IS propaganda machine used social media, encrypted mobile phone messaging platforms and the Net to market their surreal ideology. Kerala was particularly vulnerable to the seductive lure of the IS, given its high Internet, mobile and computer penetration.

Mr. Behera spoke elabor-

## Train blast accused in NIA custody

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) took custody of three persons arrested in connection with the blast on a train near Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh last week to ascertain their role and the group they were working for.

## Sentencing in Ajmer case tomorrow

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
JAIPUR

The National Investigation Agency special court here till March 18 the pronouncement on quantum of sentence to be awarded to two convicts in the 2007 Ajmer dargah blast case. The convicts got a reprieve for two days following an objection raised by their counsel.

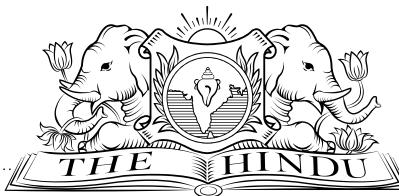
Bhavesh Patel, Devendra Gupta and Sunil Joshi were found guilty by the court on March 8 of carrying out the explosion in the dargah.

The sentence is to be handed down to Bhavesh and Devendra, as Sunil Joshi, a former RSS pracharak, was murdered in December 2007.

The explosion in the historic shrine on October 11, 2007, during Ramzan, had left three persons dead and 17 injured.

CM YK

AD-ND



## Going forward in Goa

BJP's challenges don't stop with the trust vote; it must end Goa's reputation for rent-seeking

**F**ractured mandates and post-poll coalitions are not new to Goa, which has had a history of political instability. This time round, after the counting of votes on March 11, the process became even more complex with the issue of government-formation being taken to court. With only 13 legislators in the 40-member Assembly, it was clearly going to be difficult for the BJP to stake a claim to power, but the single largest party, the Congress, was short of a majority too, winning 17 seats. Moreover, the Congress failed to get its own legislature party in order after the elections and was unable to make haste in choosing a leader and finding allies. Support was guaranteed to the BJP by the Marathawadi Gomantak Party, which had been an ally in the outgoing government. With the Goa Forward Party and two independents also hitching their bandwagon to the BJP, it was evident that the party had the upper hand. In the absence of a pre-poll alliance, it is arguable that the Governor should have invited the leader of the single largest party to try to form the government. But there was no likelihood of the Congress being able to command a majority in the House without the endorsement of the MGP or the GFP and independents, something that, notwithstanding its protestations, the party fully well realised. The Supreme Court's decision to not stay Governor Mridula Sinha's invitation to the BJP to form the government may have, at least partially, blunted the criticism that she acted in a partisan manner. With the BJP winning the vote of confidence in the Assembly, a certain post hoc legitimacy has been established, but there is no escaping the fact that this happened in the shadow of a controversy.

While the party will be relieved to have returned to power, the BJP's reduced tally in the Assembly elections is a reflection of a degree of dissatisfaction with its performance. Past State governments in Goa have had a reputation for rent-seeking and paying little regard to violations of environmental norms, especially by the construction, tourism and mining industries. The BJP, after coming to power in 2012, had promised to take steps to eradicate corruption and graft at various levels of the State's administration, but its efforts were found to be lacking. Goa's voters have this time clearly been looking for political alternatives, which is reflected in the success of smaller parties such as the GFP. That the senior BJP leader and Union Defence Minister, Manohar Parrikar, had to be roped in to take over as Chief Minister indicates that the party is aware of the challenges it faces in running a fresh government in Goa. Mr. Parrikar now has a chance to deliver on the pledge he made during his previous tenure, of delivering a better administration.

## Return to normal

By pointing to gradual rate increases, the Fed reassures markets and policymakers

**T**he U.S. Federal Reserve has resumed normal monetary service by raising interest rates for the second time in three months. The Fed's decision on Wednesday reflects its confidence in the continuing expansion and signals that its efforts to reflate the world's largest economy are largely on track – with overall inflation seen to be stabilising around its longer-run target of 2% over the next couple of years. Significantly, Chair Janet Yellen stressed that policymakers expect the strengthening economy would warrant "gradual increases" in the benchmark federal funds rate to ensure that the monetary policy stance remains accommodative of growth, even as price stability is ensured. This emphasis on 'gradual' provides a degree of policy predictability that markets, for now, can broadly factor in two more rate increases of one quarter of a percentage point each for the rest of 2017 – especially when coupled with a median projection for the signalling rate to reach 1.4% at the end of the year, from the current 0.75%-1.0% range. The statement has allayed fears of an accelerated rate normalisation, that could have triggered a sharp jump in outflows from emerging markets such as India. Investors worldwide are bound to feel more reassured that one of the world's key economic engines is in good shape and that should bode well for global demand. India's exporters, including of software services, are also likely to see a silver lining in the Fed chief's reference to a distinct firming in business investment, after having been soft in 2016, that has helped put business sentiment at "favourable levels".

Ms. Yellen also flagged caveats to the Fed's projections. Averring that policy is "not on a pre-set course", she pointed to the potential impact that changes in fiscal policy, among other factors, could have on the economic outlook. While acknowledging that it is still too early to anticipate exactly how the Trump administration's fiscal policies may unfold, the central bank is intimating that it will be closely monitoring the new dispensation's broad budget plans and remains ready to change policy tack if it were to perceive any risks to its price stability goals. There is also the matter of when the Fed may decide to initiate the process of normalising its balance sheet. Given that the central bank's holdings of Treasury bonds and mortgage-backed securities reached record levels in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, any plan to begin unwinding these holdings will need to be very carefully calibrated and communicated in advance to ensure that global markets don't witness a repeat of the 'taper tantrum' of 2013. Ms. Yellen stressed just that when she said the Fed "as a matter of prudent planning" had discussed issues related to an eventual change to its reinvestment policy and, while no decisions were taken, would ensure that the process be "gradual and predictable".

# Missing the spirit for the body

It is time that the Censor Board lost its authority to effectively ban films



PULAPRE BALAKRISHNAN

The Central Board of Film Certification, the 'Censor Board' to most Indians, has done it again. It has turned down yet another film. This one, *Ka Bodyscapes* directed by Jayan Cherian, has the distinction of having been viewed thrice by the Board. By its act the Board has lowered its credibility, and by association that of the Indian republic in whose name it acts. It is time that its authority to effectively ban films should go. This not because of its provenance – it is after all a vestige of colonialism – but because by refusing to certify the film in question, it has revealed itself as tendentious, driven by prudery, ignorant of India's history and unmindful of the Constitution.

### The narrative circle

As *Ka Bodyscapes* cannot be viewed in the cinema hall, and I was not fortunate enough to view it in the private screenings that have taken place in India, I must rely on descriptions of those who have watched it and on the statements of the Board that have made their way into the public domain via the media. So what is the film about? We get an idea from the writ petition filed in the High Court of Kerala seeking restraint on the CBFC's virtual ban. We are told that it revolves around three characters. Haris is a free-thinking artist who also happens to be a Muslim. He is in a relationship with Vishnu who comes from a family of right-wingers and is a Hanuman-bhakt himself, which presumably makes him



Hindu but does not bring acceptance from his family. They have a friend in Sia who comes from a conservative background and is as Muslim as Haris is. She chooses feminism and faces flak for it. On behalf of the director, the petitioners clarify that the film is about societal attitudes towards individual freedom and is not a critique of religion. Finally, the film is set in Kozhikode, a city the rooted cosmopolitanism of which belies its size.

Now, what are the Board's objections? I rely on what is reported in the media. Thus, on March 3, it was reported in *The Hindu* that the Board has objected that: "... the film is glorifying the subject of gay and homosexual relationship, nudity accentuating vital parts of male body (in paintings)... The film is explicit of scene offending Hindu sensibilities depicting vulgarity and obscenity through the movie." There is also recourse to the trope of 'law and order'. It is extraordinary for an order from a public body that there is no trace of reasoning to be found in all this. The Board appears innocent of both our storied past as a people or of the Indian

Constitution. Temple sculpture celebrates sexual union of every kind, which only the philistines miss. Moreover, there is no stricture against the depiction of nudity in Hinduism. Further, the Board appears to not have heard of court judgments which categorically reject the argument of 'law and order' as a criterion for banning a film. As for religious sensibilities, the Constitution gives an individual the freedom to practise his or her religion but not the right to be protected from any reference to it that may be interpreted as giving offence. All practices are open to scrutiny and no 'religious immunity' is on offer. India is a secular republic and, accordingly, no special rights are accorded to religion. Therefore, all Indians are subject to the laws of the land. Moreover, political rights are due only to individuals. It is by a strange anthropomorphism that sensibility is assigned to a whole religion. A more sensational instance of this was when Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* was banned under the Customs Act. By taking recourse to religion, the Board has left it easier to challenge its ruling.

There are three ways of seeing

*Ka Bodyscapes*. The first one is the construction that it is an affront to religion. Of the three, it is the most simplistic. Consider the imagery of Indra's youthful companions, the marut, as men in the sky who relish one another's bodies. Devout Hindus are not upset by this picture as they treat it as beside the point of their belief. The Board reveals its lack of understanding of so confident a religion when it rushes unsolicited to its defence. The second is to see it as a story of friendship between a Hindu and a Muslim directed by a Christian. The academic secularists would be made happy by this characterisation, but it gives primacy to religion, which is what the film is trying to get away from.

The most promising way of seeing the film is to see it as showing how Indians are rejecting social strictures to follow their instincts. I am entirely open to the possibility that whenever I do get to watch Jayan's film I might find it unappealing. Many films on the same theme clumsily purvey stereotypes, are historically inaccurate and politically naive. However, accounts are that this one at least presents gay relationships in a self-affirming way for a change.

### On other screens

In its design to torpedo the project, the Board may have unwittingly done more for the gay movement in India than they care to, for as Oscar Wilde had put it, "There is only one thing worse in the world than being talked about, and that is not being talked about." And, it may have scuttled the possibility of *Ka Bodyscapes* being watched in the cinemas, but there's always Amazon.

Pulapre Balakrishnan is professor of economics at Ashoka University, Sonipat and Senior Fellow at IIM, Kozhikode

# Leaving no one behind

The Vision 2030 document should formulate a disability-inclusive development agenda



ANKIT RAJIV JINDAL

The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) is formulating a Vision 2030 document. This document is coterminous with the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), all 17 of which equally affect persons with disabilities as they do any other citizen.

The National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People conducted a seminar in December 2016. The government, the private sector, and leaders from various development fields participated to take stock of the current situation and deliberate on how disability could be integrated in Vision 2030. A starting point was that the government, the NITI Aayog, and all the associated stakeholders should interpret the provisions of the SDGs in line with the requirements and spirit of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). What may a road map

for creating a disability-inclusive development agenda look like?

### A starting point

Disability is still seen as an opportunity for dispensing charity rather than as a development or a human rights issue. The knowledge of MPs and State legislatures must be refreshed on the rights, needs and issues of persons with disabilities based on the changing disability landscape, the UNCRPD, and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. The NITI Aayog must invest effort in building awareness for NGOs, academics, civil society, the private sector etc., in order to articulate a disability-inclusive development agenda.

Persons with disabilities must be seen as integral to the decision-making process and not as an afterthought. They must be mentioned in the outcome metrics defined for each goal, target or indicator, and these metrics must elaborate specific strategies for persons with disabilities. There must be seven-year checkpoints for ministries or departments to assess the outcomes. Fair and adequate representation of disability groups during the consultation process is imperative.

The NITI Aayog has mapped each

goal to a nodal ministry and each target with the government's key programmes and departments to make these targets accountable and realise them within a specified time period. However, disability is an issue that cuts across several ministries; it is not just a subject for the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. Our analysis indicates that there are 26 ministries where there needs to be a dedicated focus towards persons with disabilities and a specific cell to address their concerns. Specific budgets need to be allocated across initiatives and ministries to address the needs of persons with disabilities. The NITI Aayog too must have a dedicated cell which acts as a focal point and works with all ministries to monitor implementation and track progress across all initiatives for persons with disabilities.

The document must insist that data for persons with disabilities are appropriately collected, maintained and disaggregated. This must include all government initiatives that capture any data related to population or human resources or human development, including employment, education, poverty and hunger. While reporting from the SDGs' point of view, the NITI Aayog

must ensure that the process of data collection and disaggregation for disability must not be relegated to the silos of seven targets which explicitly mention persons with disabilities, or the additional six targets which mention people in vulnerable situations. In addition, there are universal targets, which must also be achieved for persons with disabilities. Our analysis indicates that there are more than 85 targets across 15 goals encompassing more than 100 indicators where there is a need to collect, analyse, disaggregate and report data for persons with disabilities. All data must be available in the public domain, and published in an accessible format and in a timely manner.

It is important for India to have the addition of a universally accep-

ted disability question(s) on all existing data instruments. The UN recommends the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability, while India has been using a different question. A standard question needs to be developed, taking into account the socio-cultural sensitivities of people with disabilities and their families. The NITI Aayog should call for a national-level consultation with cross-disability groups and arrive at a consensus on the right question, which should then be unified across all data instruments of all sources of demographic information, including the impending Unique Disability ID, the population census, civil registration, sample surveys conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation, Sample Registration System and for all social schemes.

The overarching principle of Vision 2030 is to "leave no one behind". We, as disabled citizens, are anxious to learn how this crucial document, which will encompass the SDGs 17 goals and 169 targets, will be inclusive of our needs and aspirations.

Ankit Rajiv Jindal is a marketing specialist, social entrepreneur and a disability rights activist.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### Blaming EVMs

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal seems to stir up some controversy or the other ("Kejriwal, Mayawati up the ante against EVMs", March 16). Now he says Electronic Voting Machines were tampered with. How has he come up with the pointed figure of having lost 25% of votes to the Shiromani Akali Dal-Bharatiya Janata Party coalition? If EVMs were tampered with, as alleged by him, how did he win the 2015 Delhi Assembly election with an absolute majority? Also, how did the Congress, and not the SAD-BJP coalition which was in power before the election, win in Punjab, if his claims are true? It is sad that Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati has also joined the blame-the-EVMs bandwagon. Faulting EVMs has become a fad for our politicians. In the past too, political veterans who lost elections questioned the conduct of polls and wanted India to revert to

the outmoded and cumbersome method of manual counting. All these objections were rightly put to rest by the Election Commission. To use that same excuse again for a loss is outlandish. An Indian Revenue Service official-turned-politician, and a Chief Minister, Mr. Kejriwal should be careful in airing such views.

R. SAMPATH,  
Chennai

That leaders are blaming EVMs for their losses is unbecoming of them. Their allegations are an insult to democracy, to the EC, and to the voters. Their accusations go against the grain of science, for Indian EVMs are considered to among the most tamper-proof in the world.

P.R. KRISHNAN,  
Thrissur

### Saffron sweep

The author has lamented the fact that "secular parties" were unable to offer any alternative to the

BJP's discourse of "communalised development" ("Saffron storm in Uttar Pradesh", March 16). By secular parties, she might have meant the Congress, the SP, and the BSP. But to be fair, there are no genuine secular parties in the country. All parties are either covertly or overtly playing the communal card for electoral gains. When an entire community votes en masse for a particular party or strategically votes to defeat a particular party, would that promote secularism?

Of course, it was wrong on the BJP's part to not give even a single ticket to Muslims in the U.P. election. The party's excuses or reasons for this are devoid of merit. It is a fact that Muslim votes have also contributed to the party's spectacular triumph. It is incumbent on the BJP leadership to ensure that Muslims have a justifiable representation in the incoming State

administration. If all the parties opposing the BJP come together with the sole aim of defeating it, these alliances will only be short-lived. It is time for the Opposition to stop deriding Prime Minister Modi, as mere anti-Modi politics has become futile and counterproductive. They need to come up with better and more acceptable alternatives.

C.G. KURIKOSE,  
Kothamangalam, Kerala

### Live proceedings

The Congress, which cried foul against the BJP for "stealing the Goa mandate" from it, has failed in keeping a small flock of 17 MLAs together ("Manohar Parrikar wins floor test with 22 votes in Goa Assembly", March 16). A welcome fact about the trust vote was that there was live coverage of the Assembly proceedings. As Manohar Parrikar claimed, no one was kept captive and everyone voted of their own volition. This is completely

different from what happened in the Tamil Nadu Assembly last month. All the MLAs who voted for Edappadi Palaniswami were brought from Koovathur before the trust vote and there were no live proceedings. Chaos reigned in the Assembly. Had the proceedings been made public, we would have known whose claim was correct given that different versions emerged from the DMK working president and the Governor. Tamil Nadu could do well to take a leaf from Goa's book.

SUBRAMANIYAN N.,  
Chennai

### Maternity leave

Private sector companies must keep in mind that a woman will not bear children every fiscal ("A lost opportunity", March 16). This means that whether in terms of money or absenteeism, the company would have to bear the cost maybe once or twice in the lifetime of a woman employee. The absenteeism problem can be dealt with if the company encourages the policy of working from home. If the Maternity Bill spoke about maternity leave too, how would the private sector ever make hiring decisions? Its costs would only escalate.

PEARL SAINI,  
Haryana

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:  
[www.hindu.com/opinion/letters/](http://www.hindu.com/opinion/letters/)

**CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:** >>The report headlined "Telugu actor's husband kills self" (some editions, March 16, 2017) erroneously referred to actor Jayasudha's husband Nitin Kapoor as the cousin of Bollywood actor Anil Kapoor.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-2841297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28552963; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturi Buildings, 859 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. No personal visits. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com).

LEFT, RIGHT, CENTRE

# Are injectable contraceptives advisable?



**SULAKSHANA NANDI**  
is national joint  
convenor, Jan  
Swasthya Abhiyan  
(Peoples' Health  
Movement, India)

← Instead of putting its efforts into improving the delivery of existing contraceptive methods, the government has recently chosen to introduce the injectable contraceptive, depot medroxyprogesterone acetate (DMPA), which is known to have adverse effects on women's health.

The articulation of population as a 'problem' or talking in terms of a 'population explosion' is deeply problematic, for it brings with it the spectre of 'control' and eventually, in a country like ours, control over women's body and fertility. Countries that have achieved lower fertility rates have done so due to economic and social development and improvements in public services, including health services. Simply put, if a family is convinced that their one child or two children will not only survive but be healthy, they won't have more children.

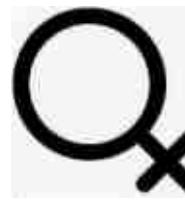
Women, even rural women, today want fewer children. However, they are forced to have more children due to several reasons that range from economic compulsions, lack of negotiating power within the family, to limited access to health services including contraceptive services.

Women's groups and various

health groups have been cautioning the government for decades against introducing injectable contraceptives in the public health system.

## Case against injectables

First, there are concerns regarding the preparedness of the government health system to implement this contraceptive method. DMPA may be easy to administer, but health workers need to be capable of assessing before administering it and of managing side effects that some women may experience. Also, DMPA requires administration once every three months. The Government of India guidelines on the injectable contraceptive mention side effects like



menstrual changes, irregular bleeding, prolonged/heavy bleeding, amenorrhea (stopping of menstruation), weight gain, headaches, changes in mood or sex drive, and decrease in bone mineral density.

Moreover, studies from Africa have shown that the risk of HIV infection may increase for women who have been administered injectable contraceptives. Second, the government needs to introspect whether existing methods have been made available to people through informed choice, in a safe manner.

## Gaps in the system

Regular stock-outs of oral contraceptives and condoms, lack of train-

ing to the auxiliary nurse midwife or ANMs on intrauterine contraceptive devices (IUCDs), instances of lack of informed consent for post-partum IUCD, and the rampant violation of the guidelines for sterilisation, which in 2014 led to the deaths of 13 women, all reflect gaps in implementing and monitoring such programmes. It is strange that while the existing contraceptive methods are not being provided properly, the government has gone on to introduce a method that raises so many questions and may prove to be more complicated in its implementation. Why didn't the government put all its efforts into promoting male vasectomy, for instance, which is a safer option and less of a problem for women?

By introducing DMPA in the pub-

lic health programme, the government also has to answer whose interests are actually being served. There are serious concerns that some agencies are pushing this for profit. Experience from the private sector, where these contraceptives had been made available previously, shows that very few women had opted for injectable contraceptives.

The government should have been more cautious in introducing this method. It appears that by introducing injectable contraceptives under the guise of 'expanding the basket of choices', the government actually aims to control women's fertility rather than uphold their reproductive rights.

As told to Anuradha Raman



**S.K. SIKDAR**  
is commissioner of the  
family planning  
division of the  
Health Ministry

→ This is about expanding the basket of choices.  
Injectable contraceptives are just an option

The Health Ministry is in the process of introducing injectable contraceptives in the National Family Planning Programme (NFPP), with the aim to expand the basket of choices available to women. Introducing modern methods of family planning is a major part of the reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (RMNCH+A) strategy to improve maternal and infant health indicators, with a special focus on delaying the first birth and the spacing between births. Including injectable contraceptives in the NFPP too appreciated in its 2006 judg-

ment, which set guidelines for female and male sterilisation services on that case. We take quality assurance seriously and are thus in the process of doing away with the camp approach in a phased manner. We have already introduced a permanent cadre of counsellors, to ensure there is information provided to the couple on all the contraceptives available in the basket of choices. Nobody can force this on women in this country, coercion is against the law and the programme is not target-driven. Injectable contraceptives are just an option.

We are trying to change the fact that female sterilisation remains the



more popular choice, accounting for over 75% of contraceptive use in India. It disempowers them. Sterilisation should be the last choice and we are trying to ensure that clients understand the consequences of undergoing a sterilisation operation in a language that they understand through our counsellors and service providers.

## Drug vetted

As far as the debate around the side effects of the injections is concerned, this drug has been rigorously vetted. The World Health Organisation and most professional bodies have advocated its use. Our

programme focuses on telling women about all the choices she has available, depending on her situation. We have post-partum methods, spacing methods for new parents, and the programme aims to help women select the option most suitable for them, depending on their situation in life. There has been concern about the effect of an injectable contraceptive on bone density and it has to be categorically stated that the bone marrow density is reversible. Global data show that the average number of doses a woman takes is around two to four at a stretch, which is sufficient for her to space her next birth, thereby giving her time to recover from the stress of childbirth and a chance for the child to get the

attention she needs to grow. We are also introducing injectable contraceptives in a phased manner. They will first be available only in medical colleges and district hospitals and then move downwards. The Health Ministry took this decision to not compromise on quality. We will only make injectable contraceptives available when we have the capacity to deliver counselling at the health facility. Further, the Ministry is painfully aware that male participation needs to increase. There is a programme specifically designed to increase male participation. Meanwhile, women still need to be offered all the choices that are available.

As told to Vidya Krishnan



**POONAM MUTTREJA**  
is executive director  
of the Population  
Foundation of India,  
a not-for-profit  
organisation working  
towards gender  
sensitive policies and  
programmes for  
family planning

↑ The real conversation we should be having is about prioritising men's participation in family planning

Family planning is a crucial public health programme, directly linked to the health of women, children and families. The government has estimated that if the current unmet need for family planning could be fulfilled within the next five years, India can avert 35,000 maternal deaths and 12 lakh infant deaths.

The real conversation we should be having is about prioritising men's participation in family planning. We need to stop referring to family planning and sexual and reproductive health and rights as wo-

men's issues. They are as much men's issues, society's issues, moral issues, ethical issues, and issues of social justice and human dignity.

## Address gender bias

Sustained engagement of men in health and family planning not just as clients of family planning and reproductive health services, but as responsible partners to women is the only way to address the severe gender bias in the programme.

In 2005, the National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS) revealed that 1% Indian men were opting for sterilisation services. In the last 10

years, this number has gone down to 0.3%. We need more doctors trained in providing vasectomy, more counselling for men instead of addressing only women. Evidence suggests that the involvement of men in family planning has many benefits. It can act as a catalyst towards improving maternal and child health indicators, increasing contraceptive uptake, and enabling women to exercise their autonomy and reproductive rights. However, the acceptance of male methods of contraception is marred by many myths and misconceptions, such as loss of virility and libido.

To address these challenges, a



systematic integrated approach with information, education and communication activities for men aimed at dispelling myths and misconceptions could result in a better uptake of contraceptives and an increased shared responsibility towards family planning.

## New methods, new fears

In 2015, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) announced the introduction of three new contraceptive methods – Progestin-only Pills, Centchroman and injectable contraceptives – to the basket of contraceptive choices. However, the introduction of DMPA

has led to concern in terms of the possible side effects of the injectable contraceptive and the likelihood of women making uninformed choices.

The Population Foundation of India has advocated strongly with the MoHFW to ensure full preparedness, including the training of service providers, for the roll-out of all new methods. It is critical to address the concerns raised on quality of care and counselling services.

The roll-out of injectables must be done by sharing evidence-based information on the benefits and side effects to ensure that a woman makes an informed choice.

There is a direct correlation between the number of contraceptive options available and the will-

ingness of women to use them. Studies indicate that an addition of a contraceptive method leads to an increase of up to 12% in contraceptive usage. Given that NFHS-4 data show that the use of contraceptives has declined, we must ensure that women and men are provided with more choices of contraception.

Women should not be bound to use a method due to lack of contraceptive choices, which would be a direct violation of rights. An expansion in the basket of choices is an effort to ensure that family planning doesn't become coercive due to lack of choices, and can cater to the needs of all individuals, keeping in mind affordability and accessibility.

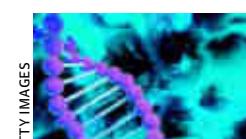
As told to Vidya Krishnan

**SINGLE FILE**

## An unedited mutation

While it might appear that we've cured ourselves of our eugenic baggage, science soldiers on

JACOB KOSHY



Whenever there's progress in the field of genetics, there's cause for worry. For some years now, these mixed feelings are being evoked by a gene-altering technology called CRISPR (clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats),

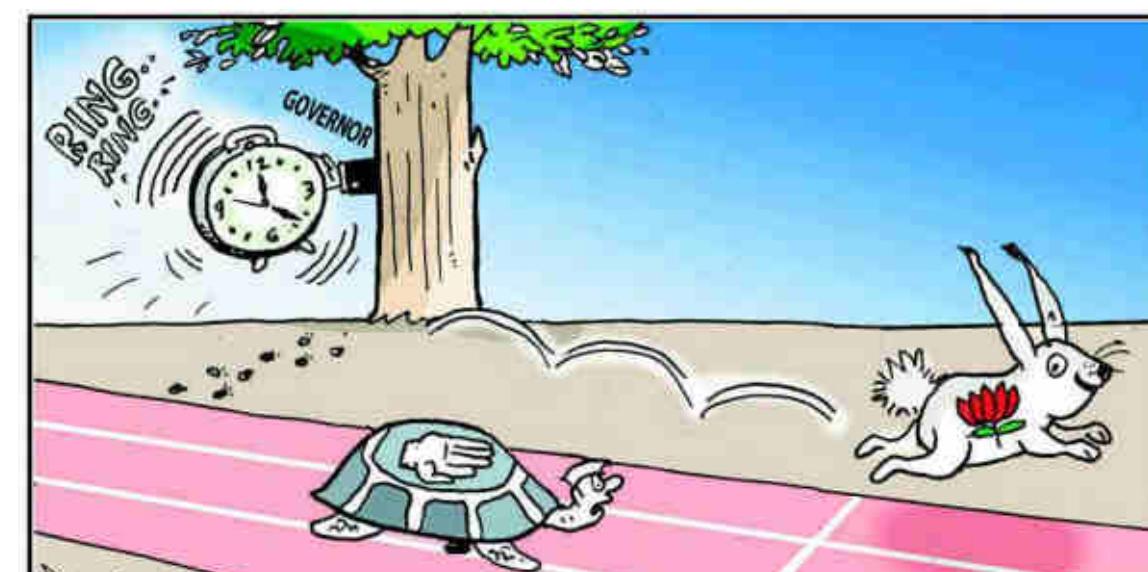
which refers to a suite of gene-editing techniques. It can be used to target specific stretches of genetic code and to edit DNA at precise locations, permanently modify genes in living cells and organisms, and possibly correct disease-causing mutations. So far, all of the CRISPR-related research is focussed on plants, animals and lifeforms far removed from the human universe. Last week, a team from China reported intriguing results from CRISPR-modified human embryos.

According to the *New Scientist*, the team has corrected genetic mutations in a few cells in three normal human embryos using CRISPR. Previous attempts have always been on abnormal human embryos and success rates (typically less than 10%) were too low to be viable. In this study, normal embryos, tweaked by deleterious mutations introduced by genetically diseased sperm, were corrected. The numbers involved are still low, but the fact that normal embryos seemed to be more receptive to gene-editing is a quiescently exciting development.

## Improving the human stock

Historians of genetic engineering technology, most recently Siddhartha Mukherjee, have warned that societies, nations and other human collectives have been obsessed with improving the human stock. While it might appear that we've cured ourselves of our eugenic baggage, science soldiers on to find genes for disease, and the modern personalised genetic test, now also available to the Indian affluent, hopes to warn Indians of 'disease' keep changing and while a warning about the fatal familial insomnia (that causes you to die of sleeplessness) may make a decision to abort easier, would a genetic basis for autism or early coronary heart disease make it morally compelling for a couple to terminate a foetus? Beyond ridding the body of known disease, would CRISPR-led tweaks to, say, increasing expression of certain genes that improve athletic endurance be acceptable, a kind of womb-level doping?

Another complication is that CRISPR-led attempts to correct certain genes can sometimes lead to nearby, off-target genes also getting altered (mosaicism). In the quest to correct aberrations, would it be worth the risk to fix what isn't broken? The Committee on Human Genome Editing said in a report last month that gene-editing techniques were too risky to be made widely available. While scientists and ethicists may have so far made the right political noises about restraining gene-editing technology, bruising patent battles are already underway over intellectual property rights to the CRISPR technology. That means commercial interest in it is already so high that there is enough incentive for commercial interests to organise lobbying efforts and bring in legislation to offer gene-editing as a product. CRISPR, yet, can't excise the Orwellian.



## CONCEPTUAL

### Umwelt/ Ethology

In German, Umwelt means "surroundings" and refers to how an organism mentally frames its world. The biologist, Jakob von Uexküll, coined the concept to argue that extrapolating human-centric models of the brain to understand animal cognition was a flawed approach. The eyeless tick, for example, climbs onto a grass stem and sensing butyric acid on the skin of a mammal, lunges, has its fill of blood, lays its eggs and dies. Its life goal and approach to achieving it constitute the tick's umwelt. Viewed this way, marking dogs, dolphins and chimpanzees as 'smart' and others as 'dumb as dodos' would not only be false but meaningless.

### MORE ON THE WEB

Understand a film's language before pointing a finger  
<http://bit.ly/MisledbytheBollywoodHero>

## ACT ONE

### The Governor's options

The Sarkaria Commission report spelled them out

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

The legal challenge of the Congress in the Supreme Court against the BJP's claim to form the government in Goa brings to fore a vacuum in the Constitution. In the case of a hung legislature, is the Governor bound to follow the constitutional convention to call upon the single largest party to form the government and prove its majority in the House? Or, as the court endorsed on Wednesday, can a political rival cobble together a post-poll alliance to form a majority that overcomes the single largest party and form the government?

The Manohar Parrikar government came to power on a first-come-first-appointed basis despite the fact that the BJP

came second in the Assembly elections. The Governor did not consult the single largest party, the Congress, before giving Mr. Parrikar the green signal. The SC, in turn, said the

Congress did wrong by not staking its claim to form the government. It had shown no proof to the Governor that it had the requisite numbers to prove a majority in the House. The debacle exposes the fact that there are no specific guidelines in the Constitution on who the Governor should invite to form a government in a State where rival parties with narrow majorities engage in a face-off.

The constitutional convention of inviting the single largest party in the case of a fractured mandate has been outlined by the Sarkaria Commission recommendations, which were affirmed by a Constitution Bench of the SC in *Rameshwar Prasad v Union of India* in 2005.

The Commission report specifically dealt with the situation where no single party obtained absolute majority. It provided the order of preference the Governor should follow in selecting a Chief Minister in such a fluid situation: (1)

An alliance of parties that was formed prior to the elections. (2) The single largest party staking a claim to form the government with the support of others, including independents. (3) A post-electoral coalition of parties, with all the partners in the coalition joining the government. (4) A post-electoral alliance of parties, with some of the parties in the alliance forming a government and the remaining parties, including independents, supporting the government from outside.

It is clear that the leader of the party which has an absolute majority in the Assembly should be called upon by the Governor to form a government. However, if there is a fractured mandate, then the Commission recommends an elaborate step-by-step approach and has further emphasised that the Governor should select a leader who, in his/her judgement, is most likely to command a majority in the Assembly.

The SC, in turn, said the

## FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 17, 1967

Madras to supply 18,000 tonnes of rice to Kerala

The Madras Government has decided to send 18,000 tonnes of rice to Kerala within the next four or five weeks to meet the difficult food situation in that State. This is the immediate outcome of a 90-minute conference between the Chief Ministers of Madras and Kerala held here [Madras] to-day [March 16]. The Madras Chief Minister, Mr. C.N. Annadurai, assured his fullest co-operation to Kerala, and the two leaders decided to solicit the help and co-operation of the Andhra Chief Minister as well. Though food was the main subject that figured at the conference, the two Chief Ministers also discussed other matters of mutual interest including diversion of the surplus waters of the west-flowing rivers for irrigation in Madras.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 17, 1917

## The defence force

A meeting of the graduates and under-graduates of Bombay University was held last evening (Bombay) to consider the question of forming a University Corps in connection with the Defence of India Force. The Rev. Dr. Mackichan, Vice-Chancellor of the University, presided and Principals of different colleges of Bombay and Poona took part in the proceedings. It was resolved to form a corps of University graduates and under-graduates irrespective of caste and nationality. A committee was formed with Captain Kirkwood as Chairman for taking steps to raising the corps and getting it affiliated with the Indian Force raised under the Defence of India Force Act.

## DATA POINT

### On balance, a healthy trade

An increase in exports (2.53%) and a relative decline in total imports (-3.56%) has helped to reduce trade deficit (by 16.3%) in dollar terms cumulatively for the period Apr-Feb 2016-17



FROM PAGE ONE

## Parrikar govt. sails through trust vote

Mr Kunclienkar rejected pleas of senior Congress leader Pratapsingh Rane to raise a point of order.

The motion was then put to vote and voting was conducted by asking MLAs to stand in favour.

Later Mr. Kunclienkar told *The Hindu* that vote count though declared by him on floor of the House was 22/16, the Legislative Secretariat will send the report to the Supreme Court by adding his vote, thus taking the strength of the ruling coalition to 23.

Thursday's session was convened specially for the Chief Minister to prove his

majority as per the Supreme Court directive after the Congress had challenged the decision of Governor Mridula Sinha on Tuesday to induct Mr. Parrikar and his nine Cabinet Ministers.

The Court had asked the Governor to direct Chief Minister to hold a vote of confidence on Thursday as against her initial directive to the Chief Minister to hold the vote 15 days of assuming office.

The Chief Minister, who is a member of the Rajya Sabha from Lucknow, could not vote in Thursday's proceedings.

## Cong. MLA defies whip, quits party

Mr. Kavlekar later told reporters that the party was unaware of Mr. Vishvajit Rane's absence and said he would be asked to explain his absence and action would be taken accordingly, as he had signed the party Whip.

"His father (senior Rane) also did not know why he was absent and about his whereabouts," said Mr. Kavlekar.

Earlier in the House, when protom speaker Sidharth Kunclienkar called out to members opposed to the confidence motion moved by Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar to stand up, the Congress could muster only 16 votes as

against its 17.

Mr. Rane, who had earlier taken oath as member of the House was absent from his seat during voting on the motion of confidence.

Asked whether he would join the Parrikar Ministry, he said it was up to the Chief Minister. On whether he would contest the re-election for Volpoor on a BJP ticket, he said the issue had not been decided.

Mr. Rane had publicly attacked AICC general secretary Digvijaya Singh and the Delhi emissaries of the party, holding them responsible for the failure of the party to form government despite emerging as single largest party.

## Health spending to be 2.5% of GDP

It also seeks to reduce neonatal mortality to 16 and still-birth rate to "single digit" by 2025.

### SC directive

In September 2016, the Supreme Court had directed the Centre to finalise the crucial health policy guaranteeing "assured health services to all".

The policy has come after a gap of 15 years to address the current and emerging challenges necessitated by the changing socio-economic, technological and epidemiological landscape.

As a crucial component, the NHP2017 proposes raising public health expenditure to 2.5% of the GDP in a time bound manner.

The Policy advocates a progressively incremental assurance-based approach but activists maintain that without a legal consequence, guaranteeing health is an empty assurance.

"Previous drafts of this policy proposed to make this a fundamental rights, failure to provide health would have legal consequences. Removing that section just makes this an empty promise. Such

assurances have been made umpteen times by different governments since 1980s. Further, while the policy promises to increase health spending to 2.5% of the GDP, it does not square up with the past three budgets of this government.

Money for all critical programmes has either stagnated or gone down in real terms," said Dr Amit Senapati, Convenor of the India Chapter of People's Health Movement, a non-governmental organization advocating universal health care.

The policy envisages a time-bound Implementation Framework with clear deliverables and milestones to achieve the policy goals. Under this policy, the government will be looking at ambitious targets like reducing Under Five Mortality (U5MR) to 23 by 2025 and MMR from current levels to 100 by 2020 and reducing infant mortality rate to 28 by 2019 and reducing neo-natal mortality to 16 and still birth rate to "single digit" by 2025.

## GST laws ready for State Assemblies

Apart from zero-rated goods, four tax rates of 5%, 12%, 18% and 28% have been proposed under the GST. The Council on Thursday approved the ceiling rates for the cess to be levied on top of the maximum GST rate of 28% on demerit or sin goods.

"The cess is to be levied on four or five commodities and the caps have been approved by the Council. For instance, the Council has approved a cap of 15% cess on luxury cars, but that is only for empowerment. These cars are currently taxed at 40%, so the cess may only be around 12%", the Minister said.

A similar 15% cess cap has been approved for aerated drinks as well, and Revenue Secretary Hasmukh Adhia said any other item that the Council decides to bring into the remit of the cess subsequently would attract the same ceiling rate of 15%.

The environment cess on coal, lignite and peat has been capped at the existing rate of ₹400 per tonne.

Pratik Jain, indirect tax leader at PwC India said industry still awaits clarity on whether some of the existing cesses such as Swachh Bharat cess will continue to operate.

**Next meet on March 31**

By the next weekend, officials are also expected to finalise four pending draft regulations relating to issues such as valuation under the GST regime, which will then be taken up by the GST Council at its thirteenth meeting on March 31 in the capital, the Minister said.

"Clearance of the model GST law is a warning bell for those who have not yet commenced their preparations for introduction of GST. It will be too short a time for the industry for preparation if the States are not passing GST law latest by second half of April," said Sachin Menon, national head (Indirect Tax), KPMG in India.

## Modi primes MPs for bigger battles

PM says, 'I will not sit back and rest, nor allow you to sit back,' signalling that the new target is 2019

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI



**Sweet prayers:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi being offered Tirupati prasadam by BJP president Amit Shah during the BJP Parliamentary Party meeting in New Delhi on Thursday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Party leaders were also asked to publicise Ambedkar's works and contributions. The BJP will also observe its foundation day on April 6 with programmes in every district office.

Pointing out that youngsters depended on their mobile phones more than on newspapers and TV channels to get information, Mr. Modi stressed on the need to

use this medium to reach them. He also asked the party leaders to contact students while they were still in Class XII.

Thanking the party for support during the U.P. polls, he also said that he wanted to also mention "woh jinjhon mooh lal nahin karaya" (those who didn't embarrass me) a pointed reference to motor mouths in

the party given to making unseemly comments.

### Next challenge

BJP chief Amit Shah too had a back to business prescription for the party, telling MPs that the next big challenge for the party was the 2019 General Elections, now less than two-and-a-half years away.

Mr Shah added that the

BJP's win underlined people's support for welfare schemes launched by the Central government and a brave decision like demonetisation. The BJP parliamentary party also passed a resolution thanking voters and party workers. Not all was just business – party leaders were also given *prasad* from the Tirupati Tirumala temple to mark the party's victory.

**BJP used money power: Rahul**

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi on Thursday accused the BJP of using money power in Goa and Manipur to "steal" the mandate of people and form governments.

"Congress party had won the elections in Manipur and Goa, but democracy was undermined by using money by the BJP. They [BJP] have stolen the mandate of the people," Mr. Gandhi told presspersons here on the sidelines of the swearing-in of Capt. Amarinder Singh as Punjab Chief Minister.

**Thanks Punjab voters**  
Mr. Gandhi expressed his gratitude to the people of Punjab for electing a Congress government.

"I would like to assure the people of Punjab that the State will rise to its true potential under the Congress government and Capt. Amarinder Singh will work hard to take the State ahead."

In both Goa and Manipur, the Congress has emerged as the single largest party, but the BJP quickly found allies to pass the halfway mark in both Assemblies.

## Choice of U.P. CM under wraps

BJP legislature party meet to be held in Lucknow tomorrow to elect a leader

NISTULA HEBBAR  
NEW DELHI

Nearly a week after the Assembly results in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the BJP has set a date for announcing the names of Chief Ministers of the two States.

The BJP's Uttarakhand legislature party group will meet central observers, Union Minister Narendra Tomar and BJP national general secretary Saroj Pandey, on Friday afternoon to elect a leader, the choice increasingly coming around to national secretary of the party Trivendra Singh Rawat, sources say.

State unit chief Ajay Bhatt announced in Dehradun that the swearing-in of the new Chief Minister would be held on Saturday.

The central observers for Uttar Pradesh, Union Minister M. Venkaiah Naidu and party general secretary Bhupendra Yadav, will be in Lucknow on Saturday to hold a



**Jubilant team:** Uttarakhand BJP leader Trivendra Singh Rawat celebrating the party's win in Dehradun last week. He is the front runner for the post of Chief Minister. ■ VIRENDER SINGH NEGI

BJP legislative party meet to elect a leader. The party's parliamentary board had empowered BJP president Amit Shah to name the Chief Ministers in these States.

### U.P. giving jitters

While the case of Utarakhand seems to be more or less clear (barring any last-minute surprises), Uttar Pradesh has been giving the

jitters to contenders and their supporters. State unit chief Keshav Prasad Maurya, a front runner in the race was, on Thursday, admitted to Ram Manohar Lohia hospital with low blood pressure and attendant complaints.

Another senior leader's aides irritated at queries about the fate of their boss for the Chief Ministerialship

stakes said, "Gaon basa nahin, lotere pehle aagaye (the robbers have arrived even before the village has been settled)," a comment on the fact that the name of the new Chief Minister is being held close to the chest, within a close circle.

Party president Amit Shah has consulted with his senior colleagues like Union Minister Rajnath Singh (who is also considered a contender for the post), Water Resources Minister Uma Bharti and Small and Medium Enterprises Minister Kalraj Mishra in the last week.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mr. Shah have both been in touch with RSS joint general secretary Krishna Gopal as well. "The RSS bigwigs are now in Coimbatore for the pratihadi sabha, so whatever had to be conveyed with regard to CM choices has been done," said a senior source in the party.

In the last week.

## Cong. to focus on State-level tie-ups

Seeks to replicate Bihar grand alliance

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday said that in the run-up to 2019, it would forge State-specific alliances to take on the challenge of a resurgent Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

This would include working towards building a stronger coalition in Uttar Pradesh with both the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP).

Saying this, Congress general secretary C.P. Joshi stressed, "Since 2014 (when the BJP won the general elections), the political narrative has changed and the manner of running elections has changed too. We need to frame a counter narrative to take on that challenge. But we will never change our ideology."

Dr. Joshi pointed to the urgent need to replicate the Bihar grand alliance in which the Janata Dal United (JD-U), the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and the Congress participated, and the understanding with the Left Parties in West Bengal in 2016.

Responding to a question on whether the Congress would ally with the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, he said it could be considered. Asked how that could be an option given he had just said the Congress would never change its ideology, Dr. Joshi said, "Ideology and electoral politics are two separate

things. There is a need to be pragmatic."

Dr. Joshi's controversial remark on the Shiv Sena comes in the midst of a raging debate in the Maharashtra unit of the Congress on the subject after the recent local elections there.

**Awaiting Sonia's return**  
Meanwhile, even as unhappiness with the party leadership was aired privately and publicly – if guardedly – Congress seniors said any official introspection on the election results and the party's failure to form governments in Manipur and Goa, would have to await the return of Congress president Sonia Gandhi who is now abroad for a medical check-up.

Congress communication chief Randeep Surjewala tweeted that party vice president Rahul Gandhi would also be travelling abroad to escort his mother back.

It is still not clear whether Mr. Gandhi will take over as party president soon, with some speculation that he may take over as Leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha, replacing Mallikarjun Kharge who is to take over as chairman of the parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC). If that happens, Jyotiraditya Scindia, currently Chief Whip may become Deputy Leader in the Lok Sabha, replacing Captain Amarinder Singh.

## Video of Azam Khan fuming at U.P. officer goes viral

SP leader upset that he was forced to walk on muddy path

## IN BRIEF



301 Indian fishermen in Pak. jails: Sushma

NEW DELHI  
Around 301 Indian fishermen are lodged in Pakistani jails, which has confirmed the presence of only 77. The government is making efforts to secure their release, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj has said. PTI

## Indus commissioners to meet in Lahore this week

NEW DELHI  
India's Indus Commissioner, PK Saxena, is expected to meet his Pakistani counterpart later this week in Lahore to discuss disputes over hydro-power projects in Jammu and Kashmir. This is the first time both countries will be meeting, as per the provisions of 60-year-old Indus Water Treaty, since talks were suspended last November terrorist attack in Uri, J&K.

## 'Over 100 hoax calls to airport, flights in 4 years'

NEW DELHI  
Over hundred hoax calls about bomb threats in flights and airports in the country were received in the past four years, the government told the Lok Sabha on Thursday. The number of hoax calls in 2016 stood at 54. PTI

## Two from T.N. held in Manipur on 'IS links'

IMPHAL  
Assam Rifles personnel have arrested two men from Tamil Nadu near Moreh in Manipur on suspicion of being Islamic State agents. Navid Mohammad and Abu Bakir reportedly said they had left Chennai on March 9 to meet an aunt, Amita, at Moreh. However, the local Tamil Sangam had told the police that there was no woman by that name.

## CAG pulls up I-T Dept. on shell companies

The firms allegedly indulged in concealed unaccounted-for income and generated black money

DEVESHE K. PANDEY  
NEW DELHI

The Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) has pulled up the Income Tax Department for not putting to use the tools at its disposal for effective action against shell companies that conceal unaccounted-for income and generate black money, specifically with respect to Maharashtra Sales Tax Department findings.

In its latest report, the CAG said the State department's website had a list of 2,059 suspicious dealers who had issued invoices involving tax evasion of over ₹10,640 crore.

The auditor had sought details from the I-T Department in Mumbai on the assesses and the ultimate beneficiaries, but despite

## AUDIT TRAIL

A CAG report has highlighted tax evasion by shell companies

**The CAG says the Maharashtra Sales Tax Department website has a list of 2,059 suspicious dealers who issued invoices involving tax evasion of over ₹10,640 crore.**

**TAX DEFAULTERS\***

15 lakh  
Registered companies  
6 lakh  
File annual returns

\*Figures for companies across India

- The CAG audit report on records of the Maharashtra Sales Tax Department from 2009-10 to 2013-14 said that 35 cases had PANs in the bogus purchase list of the State's Sales Tax Department
- Such assesses in the State did not file their returns or filed with meagre income/nil income
- At the instance of the PMO, a task force has been set up to take action against shell companies

1,555 hawala operators involving 39,488 beneficiary dealers who had passed on an input tax credit of ₹1,333 crore in three years.

The accused claimed and got input tax credit against the declaration of fake tax invoices without actual transactions involving the sale and purchase of goods. To evade detection, payments were made against the invoices by cheque or bank transfers and the amounts were later withdrawn from the accounts of hawala operators.

The CAG relied upon the MSTD data for analysis and found that the Income Tax Department had not even scrutinised all the assesses featuring on the list.

"The information regarding bogus purchases was not passed on to assessing officers ... the current provisions have not acted as a deterrent as there are no disincentive for giving and receiving accommodation

entries. Established companies have also resorted to the practice of obtaining bogus purchases, which shows that the present system of gathering evidence and acting thereon is ineffective," the report said.

## Inflated expenses

The shell companies are used to generating bogus bills showing inflated expenses on various counts.

They receive payments through the banking channel to project the transactions as genuine, and then return the rest to the ultimate beneficiaries after charging a commission. Unscrupulous tax consultants and chartered accountants are also involved in the setting up of such entities.

In 35 cases with PAN records, the auditor found that

assessees had either not filed their returns, or had disclosed meagre or no income, or had stopped filing the returns. "The Income Tax Department did not take any action to examine the veracity of the facts reported therein, nor did they fully follow the information provided by their own investigation wing," the report said.

The CAG report recommended that in cases of false disclosure, the department should have moved the Settlement Commission for withdrawal of immunity to the applicants.

Interestingly, the Finance Ministry – under which the I-T Department functions – told the CAG that there was no loss of revenue as each bogus purchase involved bogus sales also.

## Vacant posts in KVAs to be filled soon'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The government will fill over 10,000 vacant posts in various Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVAs) this academic year, HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar told the Rajya Sabha on Thursday.

He said the recruitment process for filling 6,206 vacancies of teaching staff of KVAs through direct recruitment had already been initiated and written exams were conducted in December 2016.

The recruited teachers would be posted to various KVAs in the country.

The Minister's statement comes just after the Union Cabinet approved the opening of 35 new KVAs.

## Punch-packed IIITs

The Cabinet also approved the introduction of the Indian Institutes of Information Technology (public-private partnership) Bill, 2017. The Bill will declare the existing IIITs in public-private partnership as 'Institutions of National Importance' with powers to award degrees.

"This will entitle them to use the nomenclature of Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) or Master of Technology (M.Tech) or Ph.D degree as issued by a university or institution of National Importance," a government release said.

"The grant of a formal degree in Information Technology, Engineering or Ph.D will enhance the prospects of the graduating students in the job market," the release said, adding that it will also enable the institutes to attract enough students required to develop a strong research base in the country in the field of information technology.

## Two Sufi clerics go missing on Pak. visit

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Nazim Ali Nizami – for the past two days.

According to diplomats, both the clerics had travelled to Lahore to visit the famous Data Darbar Sufi Shrine on Wednesday.

"One was stopped and went missing at Lahore airport while returning to Karachi. The other went missing from Karachi after he arrived from Lahore by air," a senior High Commission diplomat told *The Hindu*, indicating that the men may have been taken into "official custody".

At the Nizamuddin Dargah in Delhi, relatives said they had not heard from either of the 'Peerzadas' as they are known, since Wednesday.

## 'No rethink on Gilgit-Baltistan'

Delhi rejects Pak. move to integrate province, rebuffs comments on Assemanand



has suggested integration of Gilgit-Baltistan into the federal structure of Pakistan. The recommendation is unique as despite being part of Pakistan since the first India-Pakistan war of 1947, Gilgit-Baltistan is the only geographical unit which has so far not sent members to the Pakistan National Assembly. Gilgit-Baltistan is significant for Pakistan as it hosts a part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Asked about Pakistan having expressed concern over acquittal of Swami Asseemanand in the Ajmer Sharif blast case, Mr. Baglay said India completely rejects Pakistan's "efforts and intention to meddle" in our internal affairs, including in the judicial process.

The response from the MEA followed reports from Pakistan that a committee

Pakistan have economic corridor. Why can't we be partners to the corridor? Pakistan wants us to be part of the CPEC. We should join," Ms. Mufti had said. However, the MEA reiterated its opposition to the CPEC.

Asked about Pakistan having expressed concern over acquittal of Swami Asseemanand in the Ajmer Sharif blast case, Mr. Baglay said India completely rejects Pakistan's "efforts and intention to meddle" in our internal affairs, including in the judicial process.

On Wednesday, addressing a security conference in the capital, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti spoke favourably about the CPEC which passes through Gilgit-Baltistan. "China and

(With PTI inputs)

## Now, BJP sets eyes on Bengal

+ Alleges that 'appeasement policy of Mamata government is at a tipping point'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

After the massive victory in Uttar Pradesh, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is keen on making inroads into West Bengal, where the party is vying for the Opposition space.

The BJP's national general secretary, Kailash Vijayvargiya, on Thursday said that their "focus will be on West Bengal where the appeasement policy of the Mamata Banerjee government has reached a tipping point".

The BJP is planning a huge campaign across 10 districts of the State, where law and order has become a matter of concern, Mr. Vijayvargiya said.

Over the past few months,

the State BJP leadership has been grappling with a number of issues, including arrest of its leaders, the latest being the arrest of BJP Mahila Morcha leader Juhi Chowdhury.

## Riding on popularity

However, enthused by the landslide mandate the BJP clinched in U.P., the party is hoping to cash in on the party's popularity.

"It has boosted the morale of party workers. We are also getting calls from political activists from various parties who are keen on joining the BJP," said former State president Rahul Sinha.

The BJP leader, however, cautioned that people from other parties should be in-



Kailash Vijayvargiya

vestigation in the Saradha and Rose Valley chit fund scams shapes out.

"There is little doubt about the involvement of Trinamool Congress leadership in the chit fund scams. We, in the West Bengal BJP, feel that the agencies should have done much more than what they have done in the past two years," a senior BJP leader told *The Hindu*.

## Right timing

The time is apt for the BJP to corner Trinamool Congress on corruption, many party insiders say, and if the party fails in utilising this opportunity then it is unlikely that it will make any impact in Bengal politics in near future.

## Separatists call for J&amp;K poll boycott

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR

Kashmir-based separatist groups and the militant outfit Hizbul Mujahideen on Thursday called for a boycott of the upcoming bypoll for the Lok Sabha seats of Srinagar and Anantnag to be held next month.

In a joint meeting in Srinagar, top separatist leaders – including Syed Ali Geelani, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Yasin Malik – claimed that "elections were providing India an opportunity to mislead the world community."

The separatist leaders threatened to launch an anti-poll campaign. "We urge people to stay away from these elections. If we are allowed to meet the people, not a single vote will be cast," they added.

After the meeting, the separatist leaders were detained and disallowed any interaction with the media. The police also used force against local journalists in a bid to stop the presser.

Militant outfit, Hizbul Mujahideen, has also warned people against participating in the elections.

## Deoband will be turned into Deovrind: BJP MLA

Brijesh Singh stresses town's association with Mahabharata



Brijesh Singh

Jarauda Panda, pointing towards their association with the Mahabharata.

"This is not a new proposal but in the past also many people raised this. Everyone knows how centuries-old structures were found in villages such as Rankhandi, Jakhwala and Jarauda Panda," added Mr. Singh, who is the first BJP candidate to have won from the constituency in the past 21 years.

## Saffron sweep

Deoband is one of the five Assembly segments of Saharanpur which the saffron party swept, defying conventional wisdom as Muslims make up 30% of Deoband's electorate.

Mr. Singh said he had "nothing against Darul Uloom Deoband which is like those old religious Sanskrit schools. In its current form the town stands to symbolise only the Islamic seminary whereas historically Deovrind represented much more than that. I only want this town to get that identity back."

## ELSEWHERE



## May rejects Scotland's call for independence

LONDON  
British Prime Minister Theresa May on Thursday rejected a call by the Scottish government for a second referendum on independence before Britain leaves the EU – but did not rule out a vote entirely. "I say now is not the time," she said, arguing that all of Britain's energies should be put into the forthcoming Brexit negotiations. AFP

## Taiwan says capable of strike against China

TAIPEI  
Taiwan said for the first time publicly that it is capable of launching missiles at China, as the government on Thursday unveiled a major defence report. Delivering the four-yearly report to Parliament, Defence Minister Feng Shih-kuan replied "yes" when asked by a lawmaker whether Taiwan was capable of firing at mainland China. AFP

## Plea to disqualify Imran Khan rejected

ISLAMABAD  
The Election Commission of Pakistan on Thursday rejected a case of disqualification against Opposition politician Imran Khan in connection to his alleged offshore companies and sources of income. PTI

## Kremlin rejects involvement in hacking

MOSCOW  
The Kremlin on Thursday denied any official Russian involvement in cybercrimes after the U.S. indicted two FSB intelligence agents over cyberattacks on Yahoo that compromised 500 million accounts. "[There] can be absolutely no question of any official involvement by any Russian agency... in any illegal actions in cyberspace," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists. AFP



## Wilders in the wilderness?

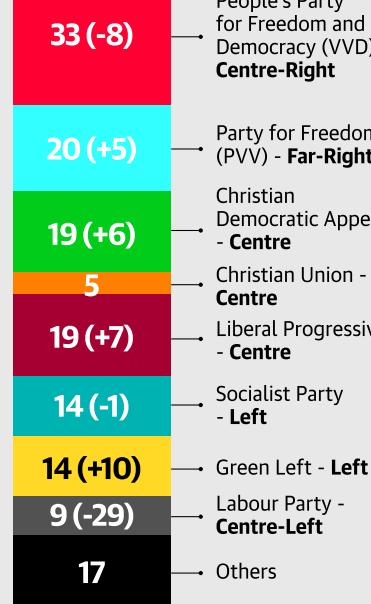
Prime Minister Mark Rutte's centre-right VVD has emerged the largest party in the Netherlands parliament as the far-right challenge led by Geert Wilders wilted

- 13 million** people were eligible to vote  
**80.2%** was the turnout, the highest in 30 years  
 • 28 parties were contesting  
 • Coalition talks could take months to finalise. In 2012, it took 54 days  
 • Since the current proportional representation system was introduced in 1918, no single party has approached the number needed for a simple majority. Hence, all Dutch governments have been those formed by coalitions
- Surprise winner**  
 • The unexpected winner was the Green Left, led by 30-year-old Jesse Klaver
- Setbacks**  
 • The Labour party, a coalition partner of the ruling VVD, slumped from 38 seats to nine  
 • PVV, Wilders' party, failed to live up to its year-long dominance in polls

Seats won\*  
(compared to 2012)

Total number of seats

150



\*Based on 97% of the votes counted

## Dutch voters reject far-right

PM Mark Rutte, whose party won most seats, is virtually guaranteed a third term

REUTERS  
AMSTERDAM

Dutch centre-right Prime Minister Mark Rutte fought off the challenge of anti-Islam and anti-EU rival Geert Wilders to score an election victory that was hailed across Europe on Thursday by governments facing a rising wave of nationalism.

The euro gained as the results of Wednesday's vote showed a clear win for Mr. Rutte, albeit with fewer seats than in the last Parliament. He declared it an "evening in which the Netherlands, after Brexit, after the American elections, said 'stop' to the wrong kind of populism".

The result was a disappointment for Mr. Wilders, who had led in opinion polls until late in the campaign and had hoped to pull off an anti-establishment triumph in the first of three key elections in the European Union

this year. A win for him would have been seen as a boost for French far-right leader Marine Le Pen, running second in opinion polls before a presidential election in April and May, and for populist parties elsewhere that want to curb immigration and weaken or break up the EU.

**Sense of relief**  
The sense of relief among European leaders was palpable. "The Netherlands are our partners, friends, neighbours. Therefore, I was very happy that a high turnout led to a very pro-European result, a clear signal," said German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who will run for re-election in September.

French presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron, expected to face Ms. Le Pen in a two-way run-off on May 7, said: "The Netherlands is



A demonstration in Berlin on Thursday in support of the results. REUTERS

showing us that a breakthrough for the extreme right is not a foregone conclusion and that progressives are gaining momentum."

With 97% of votes counted, Mr. Rutte's VVD Party had won 33 of Parliament's 150 seats, down from 41 at the last vote in 2012. Mr. Wilders' party was second with 20, and the CDA and centrist Democrats 66 tied

for third with 19 each, data provided by the ANP news agency showed.

Mr. Rutte is now virtually guaranteed a third term, leading a government that can be expected to continue tightening immigration policy in the Netherlands, already among the strictest in the EU.

A number of parties, including Mr. Rutte's and the third-placed Christian Democrats (CDA), have already adopted most of Mr. Wilders' anti-immigration platform, if not his fiery anti-Islam rhetoric.

With his strong second-place finish, Mr. Wilders warned Mr. Rutte that he had not seen the last of his Party for Freedom. "We were the third largest party of the Netherlands. Now we are the second largest party. Next time we will be number 1," Mr. Wilders said.

## U.S. lawmakers back green cards for STEM graduates

'Talent shortage is a big obstacle to economic growth'

VARGHESE K. GEORGE  
WASHINGTON

U.S. Senator Thomas Tillis said on Wednesday all international students who complete an advanced degree in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in the country should be given permanent residency in America. The Republican from North Carolina was supported by his Senate colleague from the State, Richard Burr, while speaking at an event organised by the U.S.-India Friendship Council (USIFC) and the U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC).

On Wednesday, U.S. District Judge Derrick Watson ruled that the State of Hawaii, in its legal challenge, had established a strong likelihood that the ban would cause "irreparable injury".

## Federal judges block Trump's new travel ban

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
HONOLULU

Federal judges have halted U.S. President Donald Trump's revised executive order to temporarily close U.S. borders to refugees and nationals from six Muslim-majority countries.

Mr. Trump vowed to fight the "flawed" ruling all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary, describing it as "unprecedented judicial overreach".

were it to go ahead.

Early on Thursday in Maryland, U.S. District Judge Theodore Chuang issued a similar nationwide injunction on a separate complaint filed by advocacy groups claiming that the amended order discriminates against Muslims.

Mr. Trump vowed to fight the "flawed" ruling all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary, describing it as "unprecedented judicial overreach".

have to be considered from the perspective of how they affect the American workers and middle class. "H-IB programme has been misused, and measures must be taken to stop that," he said.

## H-1B window

Meanwhile, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) said it would start accepting applications for H-1B visas on April 3. The base application fee for this year has been raised to \$460 from \$325 and petitioners no longer have 14 days to correct a dishonoured payment.

"If any fee payments are not honoured by the bank or financial institution, the USCIS will reject the entire H-1B petition without the option for the petitioner to correct it," the agency said in a statement.

In a rule that applies mostly to Indian companies, there is an additional \$4,000 fee for each H-1B petition. It is also unclear whether the USCIS has any plan to replace the existing system of lottery to select the 85,000 beneficiaries from at least three times more applicants.

## In budget, Trump puts military over diplomacy

Funds for State Department slashed by 28% for next fiscal

VARGHESE K. GEORGE  
WASHINGTON

In a vision that places military might above diplomacy to maintain American pre-eminence in the world, the White House on Thursday proposed to increase defence spending by \$54 billion and slash the State Department funds by 28% to \$37.6 billion in the U.S. budget for the next fiscal. "This is a hard-power budget, not a soft-power budget," White House Budget Director Mick Mulvaney said.

The cut in State Department budget could lead to fewer political appointees in leadership positions, and South, Central and East Asia bureaus could be bundled under a single assistant secretary. India is part of the South and Central Asia bur-



U.S. President Donald Trump signing an order earlier in the week. REUTERS

UN peacekeeping and climate change mitigation, and exchange programmes, all of which have been components of U.S. soft power.

The U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP), created by Congress in 1984 with the "proposition that peace is possible, practical and essential for U.S. and global security," has been completely defunded.

The Trump budget proposes to eliminate the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a body created by the Congress in 1967 to ensure universal access to non-commercial broadcast content to the public. CPB supports 1,500 public radio and TV stations across the country, among them, the National Public Radio.

These proposals will be effective only when the Congress passes the budget.

## Four JMB militants killed in raid

REUTERS  
DHAKA

Four suspected militants, including a woman, from a group that has pledged allegiance to Islamic State (IS) were killed in a shoot-out on Thursday when Bangladeshi police raided their hideout in Chittagong, a senior police official said.

Police said those killed were members of a faction of the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh group, known as New JMB, which they believe were linked to last July's attack on a cafe in Dhaka that killed 22 people, most of them foreigners.

Two policemen were wounded when the militants inside a two-storey building in Chittagong attacked them with at least a dozen grenades, said police official Mohammad Moniruzzaman.

## Shooting at French school injures four

GRASSE

REUTERS  
A teenage student opened fire on Thursday at a high school in southeastern France, wounding up to four people, in an attack carried out after he had watched U.S. mass shooting videos, officials said.

France's Education Minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem visiting the scene of the attack, in Grasse, said the attack, appeared to be "a crazy act by a fragile young man fascinated by firearms".

Separately, in Paris, an employee of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was injured in the face and arms when a letter bomb posted to the world lender's local office blew up as she opened it, police said.

## China should take a fresh look at ties with India: Report

ATUL ANEJA  
BEIJING

A leading Chinese daily affiliated with the People's Daily on Thursday signalled that China should take a fresh look at its ties with India following the recent assembly elections, which demonstrate the likelihood of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's long-term dominance over Indian politics.

An op-ed in the *Global Times* on Thursday said the BJP's "sweeping electoral victory in Uttar Pradesh" has "not only increased Modi's chance to win the 2019 general elections, some even predict he is already set for a second term".

It highlighted that since "Beijing-New Delhi ties have recently entered a subtle and delicate phase, observers

soon started to pay close attention to how the bilateral relationship will develop after Modi tightens his grip on power".

Signalling the need for re-thinking, the daily said China should read the changes in India as "an opportunity to give more consideration over how to make breakthroughs in Beijing-Delhi relations with a hard-line Indian government".

**Strong support**  
Long Xingchun, Director of Center of India Studies, China West Normal University, told *The Hindu* that the recent elections embody "the eagerness of the Indian people to pursue development and this has resulted in strong support for Mr. Modi". He added: "[Mr.] Modi is becoming a strong leader with people's support. This would enable him to make bold decisions to solve major problems with China."

Separately, a detailed analysis in the Shanghai-based Guancha Syndicate notes that the elections results show the "general trend of the BJP's rising momentum". It points out that Mr. Modi's distinct brand of "developmentalism" has a unique appeal, as voters are tired of old zero sum games and want to achieve caste reconciliation. The website lauds the "people orientation" in Mr. Modi's campaign which managed to mobilise women and breach the traditional "rich-upper caste-male" electoral formula.

## MARKET WATCH

	16-03-2017	% CHANGE
Sensex	29,586	0.64
US Dollar	65.41	0.43
Gold	29,100	1.56
Brent oil	51.81	-0.25

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
ACC	1422.00	1.60
Adani Ports	325.70	15.40
Ambuja Cements	235.40	2.40
Asian Paints	1087.55	23.50
Aurobindo Pharma	687.60	9.60
Axis Bank	513.65	1.95
Bajaj Auto	2936.40	63.30
Bank of Baroda	168.55	2.05
Bharti Airtel	360.65	-2.55
BHEL	168.85	1.95
Bosch	22927.00	142.25
BPCL	647.75	11.25
Cipla	601.40	1.20
Coal India	291.95	-0.75
Dr Reddys Lab	2751.70	12.10
Eicher Motors	24514.80	381.40
GAIL (India)	378.80	3.50
Grasim Ind	1050.55	2.00
HCL Tech	855.40	12.50
HDPC	1450.25	24.15
HDPC Bank	1417.35	-0.75
Hero MotoCorp	3348.00	-53.10
Hindalco	198.75	7.90
Hind Unilever	906.20	5.70
ICICI Bank	284.50	-0.65
Idea Cellular	112.95	-0.15
IndusInd Bank	1376.55	28.20
Bharti Infratech	310.50	1.60
Infosys	1028.85	16.90
ITC	268.45	0.25
Kotak Bank	851.40	7.25
L&T	1571.05	22.15
Lupin	1455.40	5.55
M&M	1320.90	-2.65
Maurit Suzuki	6155.45	18.10
NTPC	161.25	2.60
ONGC	191.80	1.10
PowerGrid Corp	195.10	2.15
Reliance Ind	1297.65	-7.30
State Bank	279.30	1.95
Sun Pharma	710.80	4.95
Tata Motors	480.95	7.50
Tata Motors DVR	292.85	6.40
Tata Power	86.20	1.15
Tata Steel	499.65	20.60
TCS	2520.90	22.60
Tech Mahindra	481.10	1.45
UltraTech Cement	4056.55	39.10
Wipro	500.55	5.75
YES Bank	1527.95	-1.10
Zee Entertainment	525.45	-0.15

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	65.21	65.53
Euro	69.93	70.28
British Pound	80.39	80.79
Japanese Yen (100)	57.51	57.79
Chinese Yuan	9.45	9.50
Swiss Franc	65.37	65.69
Singapore Dollar	46.50	46.74
Canadian Dollar	48.99	49.23
Malaysian Ringgit	14.69	14.78

Source: Indian Bank

## BULLION RATES CHENNAI

	44,195
Retail Silver (1g)	44.00 (42.80)
22 ct gold (1 g)	2,741 (2,714)

Source: Indian Bank

# U.S. trade nominee for 'aggressive' steps on IP

IPRs have been a bone of contention between U.S., India

VARGHESE K GEORGE

WASHINGTON

Incoming U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Robert Lighthizer told lawmakers this week that he would take "aggressive" measures to protect intellectual property rights in India.

IPR protection has been a bone of contention between India and the U.S. for years now, and several American companies and lawmakers have been pressing the administration for stricter measures.

**First question**

At the hearing for his confirmation as USTR in the Senate Finance Committee, the first question that Mr. Lighthizer faced was on India, from Chairman Orrin G Hatch. "Now what can we do differently to secure intellectual property rights protection in the country of India?" Mr. Hatch asked.

Lighthizer said, "I think we need a policy that is as aggressive as we can have. There are a whole lot of areas where we are at risk in intellectual property protection; including with India. Slow and inefficient patent protection, theft of intellectual property, insufficient property protection."

New Jersey Senator Robert Menendez said: "I think it's a great opportunity for us to build greater economic ties with India, but I have a real problem with their lack of protection of intellectual property rights..."

**Watch list**

The USTR annual report on IP rights has kept India on priority watch list for years now, even as U.S. companies have sought stricter measures. Sec 3 (d) of India's Patent Act prevents pharmaceutical companies from continually extending pat-



**Strong votary:** There are many areas where there is risk to IPR, according to Robert Lighthizer. ■ REUTERS

ents by making minor changes in the product and American companies find India's compulsory licensing provisions harsh.

The new trade policy released by the USTR earlier this month calls for measures to increase market access for American products and services.

American policy makers have problems with India's copyrights laws too, but India maintains that its IPR regime is compliant with WTO standards.

"There has been only one instance of issue of Compulsory License (CL), which should not warrant a discussion on unilateral trade sanctions especially as the action was TRIPS compliant," said Ridhika Batra, Director USA at Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

## AAI rejects AI plan to convert dues

**Food, drink giants plot fightback as rules tighten**

India's idea of 'fat tax' on 'junk' food worries foreign chains

REUTERS

NEW DELHI

Several food and drink multinationals and trade groups met in recent weeks to discuss how to lobby more effectively against Indian proposals for higher taxes and stricter labelling rules on fatty or sugary foods, sources familiar with the action said.

According to officials, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration has begun to look closely at policy proposals under discussion since at least 2015, raising concerns over the possible impact on the \$57 billion sector.

Alarmed by rising rates of obesity and diabetes, India plans to frame draft rules within a month requiring manufacturers to display the fat, sugar and salt content of products on packaging. It is



India is alarmed by rising obesity levels in youth. ■

also considering a nationwide "fat tax" for so-called "junk foods," a senior government official said, although that is unlikely to be rolled out in the near-term.

Last month, executives from companies including

PepsiCo, Nestle and Indian consumer firm ITC met trade groups in New Delhi to coordinate efforts and urge the Centre to resist pressure from health advocates, according to a source aware of the meeting.

The attendees, who felt their efforts to push back had been too piecemeal, talked about forming a core group to unify their message when engaging the government, the source said.

PepsiCo and Nestle in India did not comment directly on the meeting or its outcome. ITC did not respond to requests for comment.

All India Food Processors' Association, whose members range from street vendors to global conglomerates, said two industry-wide meetings were held in the month of February.

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Christopher LaFemina, analyst at Jefferies, said the mining sector, which spent last year putting its balance sheets in order, might be making an early return to M&A activity. Many had not expected that until next year.

"Our expectation has been that the mining sector recovery would comprise three separate phases," Mr. LaFemina said, referring to balance sheet recovery, then improved cash flow and finally M&A. "It is possible that Phase 3 is beginning now."

A full-scale takeover of Anglo American would be difficult as Vedanta, with a market capital of around 2 billion pounds, is much smaller than Anglo.

Zinc is potentially one of the strongest and is also a focus of miner-trader Glen-

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

State-owned Airports Authority of India has rejected a proposal by national carrier Air India to partially convert dues worth ₹2,300 crore into equity.

Air India, which is staying afloat on taxpayers' money, owes around ₹2,300 crore to the national airports operator. These dues are towards landing and parking charges as well as route navigation charges.

Recently, a proposal from Air India to convert the outstanding dues into equity was rejected, a senior AAI official said.

The national carrier was looking to convert around ₹2,000 crore of the total dues into equity for Airports Authority of India, the official added. When contacted, an Air India spokesperson declined to comment on the matter.

Vedanta seen too small to take over the £16.75 billion company in near term

REUTERS

LONDON

Indian billionaire Anil Agarwal said he was buying a £2 billion (\$2.45 billion) stake in Anglo American, sending the global miner's shares sharply higher and signalling a possible return to large-scale dealmaking in the sector.

Mr. Agarwal, who has majority control of Hindustan Zinc Ltd. through Vedanta Ltd., will make the investment via his family trust Volcan Holdings, Volcan said in a statement after market close on Wednesday.

Anglo American, which has a market value of around £16.75 billion (\$20.55 billion), refused to comment. It has also declined comment on reports that it has rebuffed previous approaches for a tie-up with Agarwal's Hindustan Zinc.

Agarwal's announcement said neither Volcan nor Ved-



**Widening horizon:** Mr. Agarwal will make the investment via his family trust Volcan Holdings.

anta intended to make an offer for Anglo American.

Last year, Anglo American's shares gained nearly 300%, making it the best performer on the London FTSE as the mining industry recovered from a slump in commodity prices in 2015 and early 2016.

In February, it said it would resume paying dividends and slow down asset

core, which this week increased its control of the market through a deal with Canada's Trevali.

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## R-Cap hives off health insurance

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Reliance Capital – the non-banking finance arm of Anil Ambani's Reliance Group – has decided to hive off retail health insurance from its general insurance business into a wholly owned subsidiary.

The board of Reliance General Insurance Company, a subsidiary of Reliance Capital, has approved the proposal which is subject to necessary regulatory and other approvals.

Reliance Health Insurance Ltd., the new company for health insurance business, will be a wholly-owned subsidiary of Reliance Capital, according to a company statement.

"The proposal will enhance management focus on health insurance and provide flexibility to the company to unlock value by bringing in global leaders in this space as strategic and equity partners," the company said.

Reliance Capital has appointed Ravi Viswanath, with over 20 years global experience in health insurance sector, as the chief executive officer of the proposed company.

## Start-up firms may soon find it easy to wind up</

## IN BRIEF



## Bandhan Bank signs pact with Avenues India

KOLKATA Bandhan Bank Ltd., has signed an agreement with Avenues India Pvt. Ltd., a payment solutions provider, to provide merchants seamless access to Point of Sale (POS) and payment gateway products. In addition, the two parties will cooperate and benefit from each other's networks, customers, systems, techniques and expertise for enhancing customer experience.

## Rane completes SasMos sale deal

CHENNAI Rane Holdings Ltd. (RHL), the holding company of Rane Group, on Thursday completed the sale of SasMos HET Technologies Ltd. (SasMos) to Lumpol International B.V., the Netherlands, for ₹43.5 crore. RHL has now exited SasMos, a supplier of aerospace and defence parts, by selling its entire stake of 45.26%. During 2015-16, SasMos made a profit of ₹1.12 crore, representing 1.71% of the consolidated profit of RHL.

## Royal Sundaram unveils two-wheeler insurance

CHENNAI Royal Sundaram General Insurance Co. Ltd., a subsidiary of Sundaram Finance, on Wednesday unveiled a 'two-wheeler long-term package policy'. The product offers extended protection for a period of 2 or 3 years upon payment of a single premium, unaffected by the annual rate increase and removing the hassle of renewing the policy every year. The policy will cover accidental loss or damage to two-wheelers.

# Shell to expand into renewables in India

Sees good opportunity in synergy with clean fuel sources



**Going green:** Shell says it plans to cut carbon emissions at its retail outlets by 50% ■REUTERS

## TCA SHARAD RAGHAVAN

SINGAPORE Royal Dutch Shell is looking at opportunities in India to build its renewable energy portfolio, especially in light of the country's renewable energy targets to be achieved over the next decade, according to Mark Gainsborough, executive vice-president, New Energies, Royal Dutch Shell.

"India has a very ambitious target for the growth of the renewable sector," Mr. Gainsborough told *The Hindu* during a clean energy forum organised by Shell during its 'Make the Future Singapore' event.

"I think India is a really important market for renewables in the future. There is a huge opportunity there. There is a lot of coal being burnt there, which is a challenge and we are interested in looking at opportunities in

India." "We already have a presence in the oil and gas business and potentially there is a good opportunity for us in the synergy with renewables," Mr. Gainsborough added.

"It is one of the biggest growth markets in terms of growth in demand in power. So anybody who is interested in power will be interested in India," he said.

## Storage technology

One of the key issues with renewable energy, Mr. Gainsborough added, was that storage technology is currently not up to the mark.

"Batteries have a long way to go. To be cost-effective storage, there needs to be a lot of work," he said.

"The lithium ion batteries we use are good for only very short duration storage. And what you need is much longer storage."

(The correspondent is in Singapore at the invitation of Shell)

## Firms must spend more on R&D'

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

Indian firms have to step up spending on Research and Development (R&D) activities to remain in the front line, said a top official of Mahindra and Mahindra (M&M).

"Companies must spend more and more in R&D to remain running," said Pawan Goenka, Managing Director, M&M, who was in Chennai to announce the four-day FISITA World Automotive Congress 2018, to be held in Chennai from October 2-5, 2018. "If you don't spend that kind of money in R&D, you will never remain at the front line." Talking to reporters he said: "Indian companies have made a great progress in auto industry in short period moving from thirteenth place to fifth in the world. It is a huge progress by any standard. But, we have not made any progress in technology development as we should have. It is nothing like R&D done in Korea or China."

Speaking at the forum, John Abbott, downstream director and executive committee member, Royal Dutch Shell, spoke about the critical role gas will play in India's energy mix in the coming years.

"Gas will play a very important role in helping India reach its aim of achieving 40% of its energy from renewables and clean sources by 2040," Mr. Abbott said.

"And biofuels will be key to the transport sector. Gas is cleaner during burning than coal and is the perfect partner for renewables. It is flexible and abundant."

Mr. Abbott said that Shell had planned to reduce its carbon emissions at its retail outlets by 50%, although he did not specify a timeframe for this.

The conference is organised by the Society of Automotive Engineers India and FISITA.

## Designed in India



**Youth appeal:** Japanese auto major Honda Cars on Thursday unveiled its compact SUV Honda WR-V priced between ₹7.75 lakh and ₹9.99 lakh (ex-showroom Delhi). This is the first model to be developed by Honda R&D, India, along with Honda R&D, Japan ■PTI

## Truck, bus drivers may soon need to attain 'fuel efficiency'

Drivers will have to undergo classroom training and a test

## SOMESH JHA

NEW DELHI

Truck and bus drivers will soon have to undergo training in fuel efficient driving at the time of applying for a new or renewed driving license.

Beginning April 2018, the Road Transport and Highways Ministry has proposed a training programme for drivers of heavy commercial vehicles to help them save fuel while driving which would include classroom lessons and driving performance tests.

Mr. Goenka said from 2003-2016, M&M's R&D spending had grown 26 times, while its revenue had increased 10 times.

During 2002, M&M invested 1% of its revenue in R&D and it increased to 4.5% during 2016. Last year, M&M clocked revenue of ₹40,885 crore.

The conference is organised by the Society of Automotive Engineers India and FISITA.



The driving test will be held on a 5-kilometre-long road.

vehicle, according to a draft notification to amend the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, dated February 21. According to the proposal, a driving performance test will be conducted first to evaluate fuel efficiency "in terms of kilometre or litre by using suitable set up and test

procedure."

Additionally, the applicant will have to undergo classroom training on importance of fuel efficiency "consisting of discussion on drawbacks or shortcomings or negative points as well as encouraging or worthy or positive or good habits noted or observed during initial driving test."

After the classroom or on-site training is complete, there will be another driving performance test to evaluate the improvement in fuel efficiency. The driving test will be conducted on a five-kilometre-long road with at least three speed breakers, according to the proposed notification.

Following the test, a certificate will be issued by the driving school.

# Smith, Maxwell put Aussies on the ascent

Their unbroken 159-run fifth-wicket stand presents a roadblock to India after the visitors elect to bat

S. DINAKAR  
RANCHI

For the bowlers, Steve Smith is a moving target. He walks around the crease, looks vulnerable on occasions, but invariably gets the job done.

It was business as usual for captain Smith at the JSCA Stadium here on Thursday. His unbeaten 117 was an innings of substance and character on a sluggish wicket and a fast outfield.

The explosive Glenn Maxwell often implodes. But then this talented cricketer, grabbing a lifeline handed to him in Tests, responded with a mature and superbly-paced unbeaten 82.

## Two to tango

It takes two to tango, and Smith and Maxwell combined to lift the Aussies from a troubling 140 for four to a more secure 299 without the loss of another wicket on the opening day of the third Test.

There wasn't much spin on the first day pitch – the little turn that the bowlers managed to extract was slow – but the odd ball definitely kept low. The first two days could be the best for batting here.

It was a difficult day for India. First Australia won what could prove a crucial toss. Then, India lost the services of its talismanic skipper Virat Kohli in the middle session.

The Indian skipper hurt his shoulder while diving to stop a racing ball close to the boundary ropes and had to leave the field. He will undergo a scan before the start of the second day.

Ajinkya Rahane led in Kohli's absence but the Indians did go off the boil subsequently. The intensity was not quite there.



**TERRIFIC TAKE:** On a day when wickets were hard to come by, Cheteshwar Pujara's catch to dismiss Shaun Marsh was a special one. • K.R. DEEPAK

The Aussies focused self and absorbed the pressure.

Under pressure and scrutiny after the 'DRS-gate' in Bengaluru, Smith faced 244 balls and struck 13 boundaries, blending defence with attack, and picking gaps with precision.

He has a flourishing back-lift that appears to start from fourth slip, however, Smith does bring the bat down straight and on time.

A tendency to move towards the off-side leaves the leg-stump exposed but when the bowlers change their line to exploit this supposed weakness, he flicks and whips them for runs.

## Seventh quickest

To put it simply, Smith is not an easy batsman to bowl at. On a day when he reached 5000 Test runs in only his 97th innings – he is the seventh quickest to achieve the feat in terms of innings played – Smith applied him-

self and absorbed the pressure. And he scored on both sides of the wicket, whether driving Ishant Sharma through covers, back-cutting R. Ashwin or drilling Umesh Yadav and Ravindra Jadeja through mid-wicket for the maximum.

The Indian bowling struggled as the day wore on. The bowling lacked the control and accuracy that could have created pressure on this surface.

The bowlers pitched on both sides of the wicket and were taken for runs. Without purchase from the pitch, Ashwin and Jadeja were lesser bowlers. There was hardly any bite for them off the pitch.

## Brilliant catch

Save the occasion when Ashwin got a delivery to drift in and had the left-handed Shaun Marsh brilliantly held, bat-pad, by Cheteshwar Pujara at short-leg, the spinners could not quite beat the Australian batsmen in the air.

He also drove Ashwin through wide mid-off with balance and poise and rocked back to pull Jadeja over mid-wicket for the maximum.

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## THIRD TEST, DAY 1, JSCA INTERNATIONAL STADIUM, RANCHI

AUSTRALIA - 1ST INNINGS	RUNS	BALLS	45	65
Matt Renshaw c Kohli b Umesh.....	44	69	7	.....
David Warner c & b Jadeja.....	19	26	2	.....
Steve Smith (batting) .....	117	244	13	.....
Shaun Marsh c Pujara b Ashwin.....	2	8	.....	.....
Peter Handscomb lbw b Umesh.....	19	47	2	.....
Glenn Maxwell (batting) .....	82	147	5	.....
Extras (b-4, lb-11, nb-1).....	16	.....	.....	.....
Total (for four wkts. in 90 overs) .....	299	.....	.....	.....

Fall of wickets: 1-50 (Warner, 9.4 overs), 2-80 (Renshaw, 22.3), 3-89 (Marsh, 25.1), 4-140 (Handscomb, 42.2).

INDIA BOWLING: Ishant 15-2-46-0, Umesh 19-3-63-2, Ashwin 23-2-78-1, Jadeja 30-3-80-1, Vijay 3-0-17-0

Toss: Australia.

In fact, Umesh Yadav's pace and reverse swing represented the biggest threat for the Aussies.

## Mean yorker

Umesh did strike twice, forcing the well-set left-hander Matt Renshaw to nick one that moved away from him and winning a leg-before shout against Peter Handscomb with a mean yorker.

In the morning, David Warner, his mind under a siege in these conditions, discovered yet another way to get out, knocking a full toss back to Jadeja.

Renshaw (44) looked good for more. He is calm at the crease, gets behind the line, and is comfortable off either foot.

India was on the offensive after lunch but ran into a roadblock in the form of Smith and Maxwell.

## CoA meeting in New Delhi today

G. VISWANATH  
MUMBAI

The Supreme Court-appointed Committee of Administrators (CoA), which will meet in New Delhi on Friday (March 17), have so far dealt with many matters that are of routine nature and also of much significance related to the International Cricket Council (ICC) and the tenth edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL).

The CoA also had an occasion to meet the Indian team at the annual awards function at Bengaluru on March 8, discuss central contracts with head coach Anil Kumble and also interact with support-staff members like Sanjay Bangar and R. Sridhar.

But the four-member committee is, perhaps, groping in the dark and trying to find a way out to address the enforcement of the Supreme Court order of July 18, 2016, that gave the go ahead for the implementation of the Justice Lodha panel report

on reforms in cricket.

Clearly, the full members of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) are in no mood to budge from their original stand and ignored the timelines set by the Justice Lodha committee.

No headway can be made until the 31 full members adopt the Lodha Committee written Memorandum of Association and Rules and Regulations.

Cut to the present, the CoA is expected to discuss the way forward for the implementation of the Lodha panel recommendations, IPL and ICC matters and other issues during the day-long meeting.

It's now believed that the CoA would like Vikram Limaye to be nominated for the ICC Board meeting in Dubai on April 26 and 27.

The CoA meeting has been scheduled three days before the Supreme Court takes up a few petitions filed by the BCCI full members on Monday, March 20.

## The final flourish



**Master at work:** Thirty years ago on this day in Bangalore, Sunil Gavaskar redefined batmanship with an outstanding 96 in his last Test innings, albeit in a losing cause, against Pakistan. As India kept losing wickets at the other end, the maestro's class act provided an object lesson to all aspiring youngsters on how to play quality spin on a minefield. • THE HINDU ARCHIVES

## Team awaits news on injured Kohli

Maxwell showed what he can do in Test cricket, says Renshaw



**Comic relief:** Wriddhiman Saha's intrepid attempts to go for what he – mistakenly – thought was a catch off Steve Smith's inside edge, ended with both the Indian 'keeper and the Aussie skipper on the ground and in a tangle. • K.R. DEEPAK

Sharma," he said.

On the ball getting lodged in Steven Smith's pads even as Indian wicket-keeper Wriddhiman Saha went for the catch, Sridhar said: "We all know the rules, right? Once the ball gets stuck between the pads, it is apparently a dead ball. And that pretty much ends the whole episode."

Asked about Glenn Max-

well's innings, Renshaw said: "He's a class player and showed us what he can do in Test cricket today."

"The first session tomorrow is a really big one. If we win that one that we go a long way in winning the match," he added.

## BCCI's clarification

Amid speculation that Kohli would be ruled out of the ongoing Test because of a shoulder injury – some unconfirmed reports claimed he had torn a ligament – the BCCI sent a release which said the Indian captain was recovering well and had "no serious concerns."

The Board said, "The BCCI medical team confirms that Indian captain Virat Kohli is presently undergoing treatment to recuperate from a strain in his right shoulder."

It added that "Kohli will continue to receive treatment, which will assist him to participate in the rest of the match."

## Who will helm the ICC now?

Manohar's sudden exit leaves a void in the apex body

G. VISWANATH  
MUMBAI

Even as the International Cricket Council (ICC) is trying to come to terms with Shashank Manohar choosing to suddenly leave without taking the ICC Special Working Group-recommended "constitution and financial changes" past the finish line, the stakeholders of the game are mulling over what is in store at the top level.

His exit has created a vacuum as not many among the present ICC Board have the stature to lead the body and perhaps even receive the backing of six Board members out of 10.

ECB's Giles Clarke, chairman of the ICC Finance and Commercial Affairs Committee, was one of the first to call Manohar on Wednesday, requesting him to withdraw his resignation; so did the ICC Board members – West Indies' Dave Cameron and Singapore's Imran Khawaja and ICC CEO, Dave

years' review, it will receive only \$20 million for eight years.

The changed rule, though, says that a resolution to change the membership status would require the support of seven full members.

Those who are fully conversant with the proposed changes believe that the governance and revenue-sharing models will be taken separately and clause-by-clause at the April meeting, and that the revenue model will receive two-thirds majority support.

## New proposal

Meanwhile, the BCCI has chosen to present a new proposal and this was conveyed by the Committee of Administrators' Vinod Rai and Vikram Limaye to Manohar on Tuesday.

Zimbabwe fears that in the event of it being relegated to associate category during the 'once-in-five-

# Federer tops Nadal in straight sets

Kyrgios ends second seed Djokovic's 19-match Indian Wells winning streak

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
INDIAN WELLS

Nick Kyrgios overpowered Novak Djokovic for the second time in as many weeks on Wednesday to book an Indian Wells quarterfinal against Roger Federer, who swatted aside old foe Rafael Nadal.

Kyrgios put on another stellar serving display in a 6-4, 7-6(3) triumph that ended three-time defending champion Djokovic's 19-match winning streak in the first Masters tournament of the year.

Federer, who added another chapter to a storied rivalry with Nadal with an epic Australian Open triumph in January, dismantled the Spaniard 6-2, 6-3.

It was the first time since their first meeting in 2004 that Federer and Nadal had met before the quarterfinals of a tournament. An oddity of the rankings had them and Djokovic – with 44 Grand Slam titles among the three of them – all grouped in the same quarter of the draw.

Djokovic was the first to fall, in the face of relentless aggression from World No. 16 Kyrgios.

Federer broke Nadal to

## Reiwein survives

PRINCIPAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

The sixth-seeded German Sami Reiwein came through a tough three-setter against third seed Vishnu Vardhan 6-7(7), 7-5, 6-3 to enter the semifinals of the \$15,000 ITF Futures tournament here on Thursday.

For nearly two sets, the match was neck-and-neck with neither player ceding an inch. The two drew each other into monotonously long rallies.

**The results:** **Quarterfinals:** N. Sriram Balaji bt Sidharth Rawat 6-3, 6-3; Prajneesh Gunneswaran bt N. Vijay Sundar Prashanth 6-3, 6-3; Sami Reiwein (Ger) bt Vishnu Vardhan 6-7(7), 7-5, 6-3; Karunudu Singh bt Haadlin Bava 6-2, 6-3.

**Doubles:** **Semifinals:** Sriram Balaji & Vishnu Vardhan bt Alexander Centenari (USA) & Reiwein 7-6(3), 6-0; Chandril Sood & Lakshmi Sood bt Jeson Patrombon (Phi) & Vijay Sundar 4-6, 6-1, [10-8].



**Running hot:** For the second time in two weeks, Nick Kyrgios overwhelmed Novak Djokovic with a combination of big serving and audacious shot-making. •AFP

open the match, and seized a second break and 4-1 with a blistering backhand service return winner.

A forehand volley sealed the set, and another forehand winner put Federer up a break at 2-1 in the second.

Federer was firmly in control as Nadal served to save

the match at 5-3. An unlucky netcord bounce, when Nadal's forehand clipped the net and rolled back, gave Federer a double match point, and with a backhand return down the line the 36th meeting between the two was his.

The win marks the first

time in the rivalry that Federer has strung together three wins over Nadal.

**The results:**

**Men: Fourth round:** Pablo Carreno-Busta bt Dusan Lajovic 6-4, 7-6(5); Pablo Cuevas bt David Goffin 6-3, 3-6, 6-3; Stan Wawrinka bt Yoshihito Nishioka 3-6, 6-3, 7-6(4); Dominic Thiem bt Gael Monfils 6-3, 6-2;

Jack Sock bt Malek Jaziri 4-6, 7-6(1), 7-5; Kei Nishikori bt Donald Young 6-2, 6-4; Roger Federer bt Rafael Nadal 6-2, 6-3; Nick Kyrgios bt Novak Djokovic 6-4, 7-6(3).

**Women: Quarterfinals:** Karolina Pliskova bt Garbine Muguruza 7-6(2), 7-6(5); Svetlana Kuznetsova bt Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-3, 6-2.

## Race walking team

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A nine-member Indian team will compete in the 20km Asian race walking championship in Nomi City, Japan, on March 19.

The Indian team will be spearheaded by Olympian K.T. Irfan and Priyanka.

**The team:** Devender Singh, Ganapathi Krishnan, Jai Bhagwan, Eknath Sambaji Turambekar, Sunil, KT Irfan Priyanka, Rani Yadav, Shanti Kumari.

## Inter-college T20 tourney

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The inaugural Women's Cricket League (WCL) inter-college T20 tournament began here on Thursday with Lakshimbai College registering a huge 10-wicket win against Bharti College.

On Thursday, host Lakshimbai College elected to field, dismissing Bharti College for just 23 runs, Kirthi and Vandana Chaturvedi picking up four wickets each. The two then opened the batting as well for Lakshimbai and completed the job in two overs without losing a wicket.

## Santhosh-Vidhu duo in quarterfinals

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

The duo of Santhosh Justineen and Vidhu Nair fought well in two consecutive matches to move into the mixed doubles quarterfinals of the all-India doubles ranking badminton tournament here on Thursday.

**Important results (pre-quarterfinals):**

**Men:** Bennet Antony & M. Arjun Kumar Reddy bt Chandrabhushan Tripathi & Subham Yadav 21-18, 21-14; Chetan Anand & V. Diju bt Abinash & Saran Raj 21-8, 21-9; Lokesh & Venbarasan bt Viplav Kuvala & Firoj Mulani 21-16, 21-9; Dilshad & Balasubramanian bt Kiran Kumar & Vasantha Kumar 21-12, 21-16; Arun George & Shivam Sharma bt Raj Kumar Chander & Kashish 21-11, 21-12; Venkatesh Prasad & Jagdish Yadav bt Bhaskar Chkrabarty & Aditya Nair 19-21, 21-10, 21-17; Vignesh Devlekar & Saurabh Sharma bt Anjan Buragohain 21-19, 21-11.

**Women:** Dimpal Hazarika & Sanghamitra Saikia bt Smaranika Singh & Ipsita Sinha 21-15, 21-17; Nisha Karanamchand & Kanwaljeet Kaur bt Sanchali Dasgupta & Esha Ghosh 17-21, 21-17; Sumitra Pujari & Manali Sinha bt Simran Singh & Anshumita Srivastava 21-10, 21-18; Dhanya Nair & Ashna Roy bt Pizza Bharali & Mohamraja Mukherjee 21-15, 21-10.

**Mixed doubles:** Santhosh Justineen & Vidhu Nair bt Uday Rajan & Anshumita Srivastava 21-15, 17-21, 21-12; Saurabh Sharma & Anoushka Parikh bt Varun Sharma & Kanwaljeet Kaur 21-14, 21-12; Jagdish Yadav & Riya Arokbar bt Sourav Chatterjee & Amrita Mukherjee 21-18, 21-17; Balasubrahmanyam & Agna Anto bt Siddharth & Manali Sinha 21-17, 21-9; M. Arjun Kumar Reddy & Dhanya Nair bt Shouvik Ghosh & Rupsa Ghosh 21-9, 21-9; Nikhilesh Sarma & Megha Bora Morchana bt Aditya Nair & Sanghamitra Saikia 21-16, 21-17.

## Youth side is shaping up well: AIFF CEO

Federation hopes the boys will work well under new appointee

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI:

The recent upheavals in the coaching staff notwithstanding, the AIFF is confident of the Indian team advancing past at least the first round in the under-17 football World Cup later this year.

Hosting a world-level FIFA event for the first time ever, the Indian football federation is hoping for its boys to put the sacking of coach Nicolai Adam behind them and perform under Luis Norton de Matos at the biennial competition. German Adam had been sacked last month after complaints of abuse by the players.

"I admit it was not the best thing to happen at this stage, and not the way we would have liked to prepare. But under the circumstances it was the best thing to do for us. Yes, it was not the ideal way; we had no other option. The good thing is that the players are shaping up very well and the team is in a much better state since

then," AIFF CEO Kushal Das said here on Thursday. Announcing Hero MotoCorp as the second national partner to associate with the Under-17 World Cup, Das also said that the team was high on motivation and confidence since de Matos took charge.

The team has been training in Goa under its new Portuguese coach ahead of its two practice games against Mali in Mumbai on April 6 and 9. "We have also had a men-

tal motivator with the team to keep them in the right frame of mind. He has already held a couple of sessions with the players, including one with the goalkeepers on Wednesday," Das said.

Post the Mali games, the Indian youngsters also expected to tour Europe for a series of practice matches, with the AIFF trying to set up games against the national under-17 sides of Portugal and England.

With just over 200 days

left for the under-17 World Cup to kick off, another round of inspection of the venues by FIFA is scheduled to be held in the last week of March, with the final rounds of inspections likely to be concluded by the end of May.

The under-17 World Cup will be held across six cities from October 6 to 28.

After announcing the partnership with Hero, FIFA's chief commercial officer Philippe Le Floch said that the world football body was open to more Indian companies coming on board, not just for events within the country but at global level as well.

He said: "Indian football is often spoken of as a sleeping giant. But from what I have seen, it is a giant all right but it's anything but sleeping."

"It was long overdue to have a FIFA event in India, but we are finally having one here. FIFA is a great supporter of football in India and we want it to grow and improve further."

**AIFF CEO Kushal Das, Hero Motocorp's Jay Narain, FIFA CCO Philippe le Floch and Tournament Director Javier Ceppi in New Delhi on Thursday.**

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## Governor General clinches main event

MUMBAI: Governor General ridden by A. Sandesh won the Kailashpat Singhania Trophy (1,200m), the feature event of Thursday's (March 16) evening races here.

The winner is owned by Mr. & Mrs. I. Nathani, M/s. Murad I. Nathani & Zain I. Nathani rep. Alpha Stud and Farms Pvt. Ltd. M.K. Jadhav trains the winner.

**1 ASTRAL FLASH PLATE** (1,400m), Cl. III, rated 40 to 66; **SAWGRASS** (C.S. Jodha) 1, Dancing Lord (Trevor) 2, Chizzler (Sandesh) 3 and Uncle Scrooge (Parmar) 4. NK. 13/4, 4-1/4. Im 24.25s. Rs. 40 (w), 12 and 10 (p). SHP: Rs. 24, FP: Rs. 66, Qs. 109, Tanala: Rs. 93 and Rs. 46. Favourite: Chizzler. Owners: Mr. Dilip Thomas rep. Rajagiri Rubber & Produce Co. Ltd. & Mrs. Bakhtawar B. Chenoy & Mr. Darius B. Chenoy rep. Enterprising Rac. & Brdg. Pvt. Ltd. Trainer: Bezan Chenoy.

**2 MADRAS RACE CLUB CUP** (Div. II), (1,200m), Maiden 3-y.o only: **LORD COMMANDER** (C.S. Jodha) 1, Manzana (Dashrath) 2, Shamwari (J. Chinoy) 3 and Turning Point (Trevor) 4. 1-1/4, sh. hd., 3/4, Im 12.95s. Rs. 35 (w), 13, 35 and 13 (p). SHP: Rs. 161, FP: Rs. 376, Qs. 1, 057, Tanala: Rs. 793 and Rs. 251. Favourite: Shamwari. Owners: Mr. Jaydev M. Mody rep. J.M. Livestock Pvt. Ltd. & Mrs. Bakhtawar B. Chenoy & Mrs. Darius B. Chenoy rep. Enterprising Rac. & Brdg. Pvt. Ltd. Trainer: Bezan Chenoy.

**3 MADRAS RACE CLUB CUP** (Div. I), (1,200m), Maiden 3-y.o only: **GENTILLESSE** (Neera) 1, Sassy Lass (Akshay) 2, Sereno (Trevor) 3 and Daughterofthesun (J. Chinoy) 4. 3/4, Lnk. 1/2, Im 12.45s. Rs. 29 (w), 12, 33 and 19 (p). SHP: Rs. 103, FP: Rs. 280, Qs. 324, Tanala: Rs. 1,488 and Rs. 1,148. Favourite: Kotor. Owners: Mr. & Mrs. Geoffrey B. Nagpal & Mrs. Charonne Nagpal. Trainer: San-

jay Kolse.

**4 RUNNING STAR PLATE** (Div. IV), (1,200m), Cl. IV, rated 20 to 46; **SLAM DUNK** (Hanuman) 1, She's a Tiger (Santosh) 2, Benefic (A. Gaikwad) 3 and Knight's Quest (Parmar) 4. Sh. hd., sh. 3/4, Im 12.73s. Rs. 36 (w), 15, 52 and 16 (p). SHP: Rs. 143, FP: C/F, Qs. 277, Tanala: Rs. 13, 447 and Rs. 1,153. Favourite: Slam Dunk. Owners: Dr. Mehl A. Nazir, Dr. Adi R. Nazir & Mr. Karl A. Nazir. Trainer: H.J. Antia.

**5 KAILASHPAT SINGHANIA TROPHY** (1,200m), Cl. II, rated 60 to 86; **GOVERNOR GENERAL** (Sandesh) 1, Ancient Glory (Neera) 2, Alishas Pet (C.S. Jodha) 3 and Nascar (Raghuvir) 4. 1/2, 1/3, 4, Link, Im 11.06s. Rs. 39 (w), 15, 16 and 12 (p). SHP: Rs. 40, FP: Rs. 123, Qs. 14, Tanala: Rs. 267 and Rs. 194.

Favourite: Allora. Owners: Mr. & Mrs. I. Nathani, M/s. Murad I. Nathani & Zain I. Nathani rep. Alpha Stud and Farms Pvt. Ltd. Trainer: San-

Jay Kolse.

**6 IBRAHIM A. RAHIMTOOLA TROPHY** (1,000m), Cl. III, rated 40 to 66; **ALPINE EXPRESS** (Sandesh) 1, Queen Credible (A. Gaikwad) 2, Rock In Rio (Dashrath) 3 and Cyclone (Neera) 4. 3/4, sh. hd., 1, Im 15.99s. Rs. 81 (w), 22, 18 and 16 (p). SHP: Rs. 57, FP: Rs. 598, Qs. 29, Tanala: Rs. 1,801 and Rs. 993. Favourite: Cyclone. Owners: Mr. Adi H. Shahiwala, Ms. Pinaz A. Shahiwala, M/s. Xerxes A. Shahiwala, Faridoon N. Gamadia, Mrs. Farzin V. Gaekwad, Mr. Christopher John. Trainer: Narendra Lagad.

**7 RUNNING STAR PLATE** (Div. II), (1,200m), Cl. IV, rated 20 to 46; **NEW ENGLAND** (C.S. Jodha) 1, Flag Flying (Raghuvir) 2, Angel Girl (Trevor) 3 and Pacific Dunes (Santosh) 4. Not run: Royal Classic 3/4, 1-1/2, Im 25.19s. Rs. 59 (w), 16, 12 and 12 (p). SHP: Rs. 41, FP: Rs. 72, Qs. 16, Tanala: Rs. 203 and Rs. 138. Favourite: Hunting Pleasure. Owner: Mr. Vijay V. Shah. Trainer: Narendra Lagad.

**8 P A D' AVOINE TROPHY** (1,400m), Cl. IV, rated 20 to 46:

**AEOLUS MAXIMUS** (Dashrath

## IN BRIEF



## Celtics roll over Timberwolves

LOS ANGELES Al Horford delivered 20 points and nine rebounds as Boston Celtics beat Minnesota Timberwolves 117-104 on Wednesday.

**Other results:** Trail Blazers 110 bt Spurs 106; Rockets 139 bt Lakers 100; Mavericks 112 bt Wizards 107; Jazz 97 bt Pistons 83; Heat 120 bt Pelicans 112; Pacers 88 bt Hornets 77; Grizzlies 98 bt Bulls 91; Kings 107 bt Suns 101; Bucks 97 bt Clippers 96.

## Yuki Bhambri in quarterfinals

SHENZHEN Yuki Bhambri beat Nikola Milojevic of Serbia 6-3, 6-1 to move into the quarterfinals of the \$75,000 Challenger tennis here on Thursday.

**The results:** \$150,000 Challenger: Irving, USA: First round: Oliver March (Aut) & Fabrice Martin (Fra) bt Dustin Brown (Ger) & Leander Paes 6-1, 3-6, [10-4]; Philipp Petzschner (Ger) & Alexander Peyer (Aut) bt Yen-Hsun Lu (Tpe) & Rohan Bopanna 6-4, 6-4.

**\$50,000 Challenger:** Shenzhen: Second round: Yuki Bhambri bt Nikola Milojevic (Srb) 6-3, 6-1.

**\$15,000 ITF women: Sharman El Sheikh:** Second round: Elixane Lechemia (Fra) bt Sainamitha 7-6(2), 6-2.

## TV PICKS

**India vs Australia:** 3rd Test, STAR Sports 1, 3 & HD 1, 3, 9.30 a.m.

**Sri Lanka vs Bangladesh:** 2nd Test, TEN 3 & TEN 1 HD, 10 a.m.

**Bundesliga:** SS Select HD 2, 12.45 a.m. (Saturday)

**La Liga:** Sony Six & Sony Six HD, 1.30 a.m. (Saturday)

**NBA:** Sony Six & Sony Six HD, 5.30 a.m. (Saturday)



## Monaco pips City

Oblak's heroics sees Atletico progress to the last-eight

## AGENCIES MONACO

Monaco swept into the Champions League quarterfinals and left Manchester City to pick up the pieces of another failed European campaign after a 3-1 victory on Wednesday sent it through on away goals.

Monaco needed to overturn a two-goal first-leg deficit but French prodigy Kylian Mbappe, Fabinho and Tiemoue Bakayoko scored on a memorable European night for the principality club, which underlined its growing status as one of the continent's most exciting sides.

City, which won the first-leg 5-3 in Manchester, was completely overwhelmed in the first half and fell two goals behind, but reacted after the break and Leroy Sane reduced the arrears as Monaco seemed to run out of steam.

Bakayoko, however, headed home in the 77th minute to ensure the Ligue 1 club was celebrating at full time after the tie finished 6-6 over two enthralling

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

## encounters.

It was the first time City boss Pep Guardiola had been eliminated in the competition's last 16, while City became the first team to exit the Champions League after scoring five goals in the first leg.

City, which has consistently been one of Europe's biggest spending clubs, has now failed to get past the last 16 in four of the last five years.

Leonardo Jardim's team, which was without the injured Radamel Falcao, started brightly and pressed high as Mbappe's pace forced City to sit deep.

The 18-year-old then opened the scoring, turning in Silva's low cross from the left from close range after eight minutes.

City barely set foot in Monaco's half and in the 29th minute, Fabinho fired home from Benjamin Mendy's inch-perfect centre.

City reduced the arrears in the 71st minute when Sterling's shot was parried by Subasic into the path of

Sane, who fired into the roof of the net. That put City in front on aggregate, but Monaco turned the tie back in its favour when Bakayoko headed home from a Thomas Lemar free kick.

## Stalemate

Atletico Madrid goalkeeper Jan Oblak was the hero as the Spanish side reached the Champions League quarterfinals for the fourth year in a row after drawing 0-0 with Bayer Leverkusen in an open last-16 second-leg at Madrid on Wednesday.

Slovenia international Oblak made an outstanding triple save to deny Julian Brandt and Kevin Volland in the second half and he made further impressive stops late in the game to shut out the Germans and secure a 4-2 aggregate success.

**The results:** Monaco 3 (Mbappe 8, Tavares 29, Bakayoko 77) bt Manchester City 1 (Sane 71) (6-6 on aggregate); Monaco won on away goals; Atletico Madrid 0 drew with Bayer Leverkusen 0 (Atletico won 4-2 on aggregate).

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In the 70th minute Ronald broke free on the left flank and hoodwinked two defenders to squeeze in a good centre, but Marvir couldn't connect with his header.

Goa had a chance to sew up the match in the 88th minute when Liston Coalco found himself free in the Bengal box as a high ball was relayed to him. But, with only the keeper to beat, the striker failed to control the ball and lost the opportunity.

Services got its stuttering campaign on track with a solitary-goal win over Chandigarh.

**The results:** West Bengal 0 drew with Goa 0.

Services 1 (Francis Zountunga 9) bt Chandigarh 0.

Bengal defence. There wasn't any marked change in the pattern of play in the second half.

Bengal's Debashish Pradhan induced a good save from Gomes in the 60th minute off a counter attack.



Battling it out: Goa captain Francisco Fernandez, left, and Bengal's Shaikhom Ronald Singh fight for possession.

minute. After Agnelo Gomes fumbled with a collection, Basanta passed the ball to an unmarked Manvir, who shot it out. The Goa attack was predictable, with moves emanating mostly from the left flank and it failed to test the

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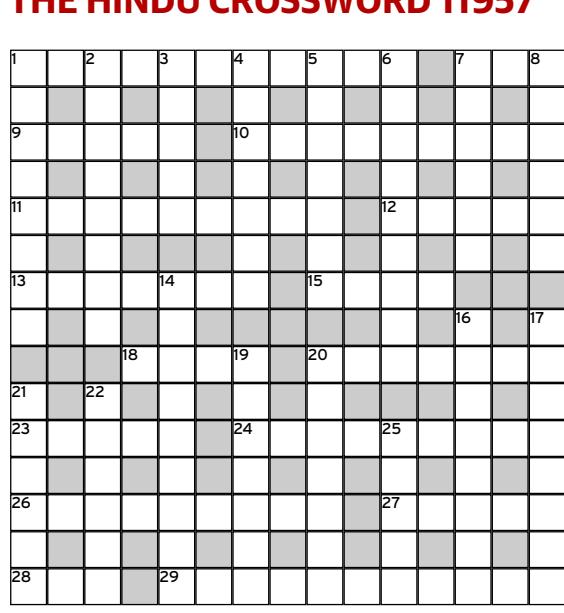
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## THE HINDU CROSSWORD 11957



## ACROSS

- Recruiter, volunteer fast to approach Supreme Court to get out (6, 6)
- Bird tied in tree tops (3)
- But termination withheld is unqualified (5)
- Opener's pager given by Spooner to apiarist (9)
- Duration of life is determined by desire, (11)

- It's realistic for outfielder to miss duke ball and get injured (4-4)
- Tardiness displayed by deadhead (8)
- Sues often to get chargeback in advance from support (5)
- Continue to sit clutching edge of the seat on reversing vehicle (7)

- Doyen's hurt, takes energy drug with half the vision perhaps (3-4)
- Mammal lobbed around a fish, perhaps, rejected (4, 5)
- Delete clue on page once (6)
- Crowd put out mostly at north Germany (6)
- I phone CIA in a frenzy to find old civilization (9)
- Supply cannula, no time to get man out (5)
- Layer of heroin found on nurse (3)
- Venues destroyed by a barrage of darts from a daredevil woman (11)
- Live TV broadcast in city (3, 4)
- Particle found in information transmitter is kind of square inside (7)
- Blemish on lawyer, book and charge 33% (6)
- Told Rod to head north (6)
- Obama caucus withholding a region of China (5)

## (set by Afterdark)

- Surfactant tension (10)
- Neatly arranged (10)
- Units treatment (10)
- Festivals (10)
- Feelings roller coaster (10)
- Restaurant ants (10)
- Alcove (10)
- Film decorations (10)
- Absent splashes (10)
- Never alone (10)
- Therefore alone (10)
- Me without need (10)
- Cash dispensers (10)

## Solution to puzzle 11956

- Surface tension (10)
- Neatly arranged (10)
- Units treatment (10)
- Festivals (10)
- Feelings roller coaster (10)
- Restaurant ants (10)
- Alcove (10)
- Film decorations (10)
- Absent splashes (10)
- Never alone (10)
- Therefore alone (10)
- Me without need (10)
- Cash dispensers (10)



## Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

## FAITH

## Righteous kings

Power and riches may result in friendships, but such friendships are temporary. The rich man is surrounded by a coterie of supporters, only because they want to seek favours of him. Lasting fame belongs to the virtuous and the generous. Even kings are no exception to this. Kings, known for their generosity, are remembered centuries after their departure from this world. Their memory is kept alive through literature. King Paari is remembered because he could not bear to see a creeper trailing on the ground without support. He provided his chariot as a stake to hold up the creeper. Manu Neeti Chola is remembered because he rendered justice to a cow over whose calf the crown prince had driven a chariot, killing the calf. The King, upon realising that his son was guilty of causing the death of the calf, did not hesitate to punish his son. Such a sense of justice was rewarded, when the calf and the prince came back to life, said Malayaman, in a discourse.

There lived a king called Ilavichikkko, who turned away poets, after insulting them. Maamoolar was a great poet, who was treated with disrespect by Ilavichikkko. Sometime later Ilavichikkko visited a neighbouring kingdom and Maamoolar went to the court of the king of that country. Maamoolar embraced Ilankandeerakkko, the king of this country. Ilankandeerakkko rewarded the poet generously.

Ilavichikkko thought Maamoolar would embrace him too, but the poet ignored him. Angered by this, Ilavichikkko asked Maamoolar why he had ignored him.

Maamoolar said that while Ilavichikkko's ancestors had been good kings, Ilavichikkko himself was haughty. No poet would seek the friendship of such a king. To this day Ilavichikkko is remembered as a wicked king, showing that only those who are humble are remembered fondly even after their death.

## Maiden ton for Nicholls

## AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE WELLINGTON

Pathan c Gandhi b Sai Kishore 27, Naval Shah c Aparajith b Crist 36, Swapnil Singh b Sai Kishore 9, Soaeb Tai (not out) 1, Lukman Meriwala st. Karthik b Sai Kishore 6, Atit Sheth c Karthik b Crist 0; Extras (lb-7, w-8): 15; Total (in 49.3 overs): 219.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-92, 2-123, 3-123, 4-138, 5-138, 6-182, 7-212, 8-212, 9-218.

## HAZARE TROPHY

Baroda lost two wickets at the same score thrice during the innings.

The loss of four wickets for 15 runs pegged Baroda back. After Irfan Pathan and Pinal Shah took turns to bolster its innings, the last four wickets in the space of just seven runs.

When Tamil Nadu chased, openers Kaushik Gandhi and V. Ganga Sridhar Raju fell to Atit Sheth in his successive overs. But Karthik dictated the course of the match with some clever placements and clean hitting without going for too many big strokes. Aparajith played second fiddle during their 60-run third-wicket stand.

After Aparajith holed out to Yusuf, Karthik carried on the good work with Vijay Shankar. The two steadily took Tamil Nadu closer to the target without being too aggressive.

**The scores:** **Baroda:** Kedar Devdhar c Rahil b Sai Kishore 46, Aditya Waghmode c & b Sundar 45, Krunal Pandya c Mohammad b Shah 30, Deepak Hooda b Sundar 0, Yusuf Pathan c Crist b Rahil 4, Irfan

Pathan c Gandhi 3 (n.o.), 67b.

**South Africa bowling:** Morkel 5.3-1-22-2, M. Mohammad 4-0-18-0, Rahil Shah 10-1-36-2, Washington Sundar 7-1-20-2, R. S. Kishore 10-0-59-4, Vijay Shankar 3-0-21-0, B. Aparajith 10-0-36-0.

**Tamil Nadu:** Kaushik Gandhi c Pinal b Sheth 19, V. Ganga Sridhar Raju b Sheth 15, B. Aparajith c Yusuf b Tai 28, Dinesh Karthik b Sheth 77, Vijay Shankar (not out) 53, Washington Sundar (not out) 26, Extras (w-2): 2; Total (for four wkts. in 47.3 overs): 220.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-11, 2-13, 3-21, 4-73, 5-101, 6-217, 7-221, 8-212, 9-266.

**Baroda bowling:** Irfan Pathan 8.3-0-49-0, Atit Sheth 8-1-36-3, Swapnil Singh 10-0-29-0, Lukman Meriwala 4

## IN BRIEF



Trump's ex-wife Ivanka pens book on raising kids

NEW YORK  
Donald Trump's first ex-wife Ivanka is writing a memoir on raising the U.S. president's eldest three children, Donald Jr., Ivanka and Eric, slated for release in September. *Raising Trump* will be a "non-partisan, non-political book about motherhood, strength, and resilience," publishers Gallery Books announced. **AFP**



Early years of Hillary Clinton soon in a film

LOS ANGELES  
A film showcasing the early years in the life of former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is in production. The independent movie, titled "When I'm a Moth", will feature actor Addison Timlin as young Clinton. The project will be co-written and co-directed by Magdalena Zyzak and Zachary Cotler. **IANS**



20 years after Diana's death, a royal visit

PARIS  
Britain's Prince William and his wife Kate will pay an official visit to Paris on Friday and Saturday, months before the 20th anniversary of the death of William's mother Diana in a car crash in Paris. The couple will be travelling without their children. **AFP**

## Teen scientist wins \$2,50,000

Indrani Das worked on treating neurodegenerative disease and brain injury

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON

Indian-American teenager Indrani Das won the top prize of \$2,50,000 (₹1.63 crore) in the Regeneron Science Talent Search competition in the U.S. for her research on treating brain injury and disease.

Ms. Das is a 17-year-old student living in New Jersey. Her work looked at boosting the survival rate of neurons. A contributor to neuron death is astroglosis, a condition that occurs when cells called astrocytes react to injury by growing, dividing and reducing their uptake of glutamate, which in excess is toxic to neurons.

In a laboratory model, she showed that exosomes isolated from astrocytes transfected with microRNA-124a both improved astrocyte uptake of glutamate and increased neuron survival.

Another Indian-American



Moment of pride: (From left) Arjun Ramani, Indrani Das and Aaron Yeiser at the Regeneron Science Talent Search awards gala. ■ SOCIETY FOR SCIENCE AND THE PUBLIC

teen, Arjun Ramani, took the third place, which carries a prize of \$1,50,000, for his project on networks using mathematical field of graph theory and computer programming.

The second prize of \$1,75,000 was bagged by

Aaron Yeiser for his development of a mathematical method for solving partial differential equations on complicated geometries.

The talent search, nicknamed the 'Junior Nobel Prize', is the oldest U.S. science competition for stu-

dents. It is organised by the Society for Science and the Public in association with medical firm Regeneron.

**Indian-Americans shine**

Of the 40 finalists of the science talent search, 13 were Indian-Americans.

Archana Verma took the fifth place award of \$90,000 for a software to study human genomes and cancer, and Vrinda Madan got the ninth place award of \$50,000 for her study of medications for malaria.

Prathik Naidu ranked seventh place (\$70,000) for a software to study human genomes and cancer, and Vrinda Madan got the ninth place award of \$50,000 for her study of medications for malaria.

Society for Science the Public President Maya Ajmera said the finalists "are all poised to become our future scientific leaders". More than 1,700 students took part in the contest.

## New Zealand river gets legal status as a person

Marks a win for the Maori tribe that lives by the waterbody

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WELLINGTON

A New Zealand river revered by the Maori has been recognised by Parliament as a "legal person", in a move believed to be a world first.

Under legislation passed on Wednesday, the Whanganui river has been formally declared a living entity.

"(It) will have its own legal identity with all the corresponding rights, duties and liabilities of a legal person," Attorney-General Chris Finlayson said.

The river, known by Maori as Te Awa Tupua, is the third longest in New Zealand.

Mr. Finlayson said the local Maori tribe had been fighting to assert their rights over the river since the 1870s, in New Zealand's longest-running legal dis-



In this file photo dated May 14, 2015 Britain's Prince Harry (second from right) paddles in a Maori war canoe on the Whanganui river during a visit to New Zealand. ■ AFP

pute. "This legislation recognises the deep spiritual connection between the Whanganui iwi (tribe) and its ancestral river," he said.

In practical terms, it means the river can be represented at legal proceedings with two lawyers protecting its interests.

## Eggs-tremely good



In a jiffy: A robot shows off its omelette-making skills at a technology exhibition in Bangkok, Thailand, on Thursday. ■ REUTERS

## Jules Verne's perfect timing unveiled

Handwritten draft of *Around the World in Eighty Days* to be published next week

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

PARIS

A long-lost manuscript of the classic adventure story *Around the World in Eighty Days* shows how Jules Verne timed the story down to the last minute.

The handwritten original draft – which will be published next week – shows how the French author worked out how long every hectic twist in the plot would take to ensure that his hero Phileas Fogg arrived back in London to win his bet with his friends at the Reform Club.

Verne, who wrote the story with a quill, noted the timings in the margins and



Jules Verne.

added them up at the end of each chapter.

The rediscovered manuscript was unearthed by researcher Jessica Nelson in the French national library

along with the contract Verne signed with his publishers.

"Several experts had told us that the original manuscript had disappeared," said Ms. Nelson, whose Saint Peres press has already published the manuscript of one of Verne's other great classics, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*.

**Write, rewrite**  
But Ms. Nelson would not be put off. "You can imagine our surprise when we were going through the Hetzel (publishing house) documents and to find Verne's handwriting mentioning Phileas Fogg and then falling

on the only surviving complete manuscript itself," she said. The other big revelation was the fluid manner in which Verne wrote, with few corrections.

Instead, Verne would cross out entire sections of the text and rewrite them completely.

Verne – who is often called the "Father of Science Fiction" – wrote the novel in 1872 during the dark days after France's humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian war, when he had been drafted into the coastguard.

The book recounts the story of the uptight protagonist slowly turning into a swashbuckling hero.

## U.K. grants doctors first licence to create 3-parent babies

Britain's Parliament had voted last year to approve the IVF treatment, which involves removal of faulty mitochondria

REUTERS

LONDON  
Britain's fertility regulator on Thursday granted doctors the first U.K. licence to create babies using a three-parent IVF technique designed to prevent inherited genetic diseases.

The licence, granted to a team of doctors in Newcastle, northern England, means the first child created in Britain using the mitochondrial pronuclear transfer technique could be born

before the end of this year.

Critics of the treatment say it is a dangerous step that will lead to the creation of genetically modified "designer babies".

However, the medical team at the Newcastle Fertility Centre said they were delighted with the decision "to help families affected by these devastating diseases".

**Cutting disease risk**

"Many years of research have led to the development

of pronuclear transfer as a treatment to reduce the risk of mothers transmitting disease to their children," said Mary Herbert, a professor of Reproductive Biology at the Centre.

"It's a great testament to the regulatory system here in the U.K. that research innovation can be applied in treatment."

The technique involves intervening in the fertilisation process to remove mitochondria, which act as tiny en-

ergy-generating batteries inside cells, and which – if faulty – can cause fatal heart problems, liver failure, brain disorders, blindness and muscular dystrophy.

**Genetically modified**

The treatment is known as "three-parent" IVF because the babies, born from genetically modified embryos, would have DNA from a mother, a father and from a woman donor.

It is designed to help fam-

ilies with mitochondrial diseases – incurable conditions passed down the maternal line that affect around one in 6,500 children worldwide.

Britain's Parliament voted last year to change the law to allow the treatments if and when they were ready for licensing.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), still had to approve each clinic and each patient on an individual basis before the treatment can be carried

out. Fertility specialists welcomed Thursday's decision.

Simon Fishel, managing director of CARE Fertility, said it was "excellent news" and "a milestone that all who care about medical health will welcome".

The world's first and so far only known mitochondrial transfer baby was born in 2016 after U.S. doctors working at a clinic in Mexico helped a Jordanian couple conceive using the treatment.

## Pastor unearths 706-carat diamond

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

FREETOWN

A pastor working in the mines of eastern Sierra Leone has unearthed a 706-carat diamond, the government said on Thursday, pledging to hold a transparent auction for the gem in a nation once tainted by "blood diamonds".

The huge diamond was discovered by pastor Emmanuel Momoh, one of thousands who seek their fortunes in the informal mining sector that domin-

ates the diamond-rich Kono region, the government said in a statement.

"A 706-carat diamond was presented to President Dr Ernest Bai Koroma yesterday evening," the president's office said Thursday.

"Receiving the diamond President Koroma thanked the chief and his people for not smuggling the diamond out of the country," it added, referring to the Tankoro chiefdom where Mr. Momoh uncovered the gem recently.