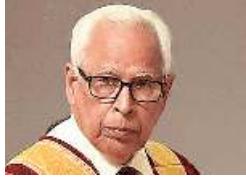




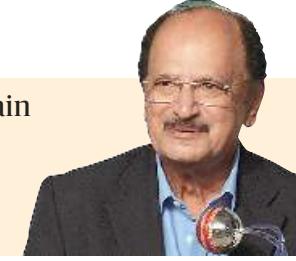
Can PM take on Rahul's challenge for Rafale debate, asks Congress
page 10



J&K Governor N.N. Vohra announces polls for urban local bodies
page 10



Turkey doubles tariffs on U.S. products, the lira rallies further
page 12



Former India captain Ajit Wadekar, 77, passes away
page 15

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NEARBY



Mohalla Clinics popular like Taj Mahal, says CM Arvind Kejriwal
NEW DELHI
CM Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said his government has made improvements in health, education and power sectors. "The way people from the world over come to visit the Taj Mahal, people from the world over are coming to see our Mohalla Clinics," he said.
DELHI METRO ▶ PAGE 1

India, China Armies meet in Ladakh

NEW DELHI
The Armies of India and China held a ceremonial Border Personnel Meeting to mark India's Independence Day on Wednesday.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

DELHI METRO ▶ 6 PAGES

Ashutosh resigns from AAP

Won't accept resignation, says party convener Kejriwal



DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI
Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Ashutosh on Wednesday announced his decision to quit the party citing a "very very personal reason," but party convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal refused to accept the resignation.

Mr. Ashutosh announced his resignation in a tweet.

In response, Mr. Kejriwal tweeted: "How can we ever accept ur resignation? No, not in this lifetime."

AAP spokesperson Saurob Bharadwaj said the party national convener and political affairs committee (PAC), of which Mr. Ashutosh had been a member, had urged him to reconsider his resignation. Sources said the journalist-turned-

name was among those considered, according to sources. During deliberations by the PAC, Mr. Ashutosh had disagreed with the selection of Sushil Gupta, a businessman who had been in the Congress till late 2017.

With the announcement of AAP national secretary Pankaj Gupta's name as Chandni Chowk in-charge in June, Mr. Ashutosh was unlikely to be the party's candidate from the constituency again.

The television journalist had joined the AAP in January 2014 and contested the 2014 Lok Sabha elections from Chandni Chowk constituency in Delhi.

Earlier this year, when the AAP was deciding on nominations for three Rajya Sabha seats, Mr. Ashutosh's

Ashutosh

politician was considering starting a new media venture.

His interest in getting out of politics and back into journalism was behind his resignation, a party leader said.

We serve the Lady of Justice, says CJI Misra

'It is easy to criticise an institution'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

After a year of facing dissent from within the Supreme Court judiciary and an impeachment motion by Opposition MPs, Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra on Wednesday said it is easy to criticise but transforming an institution into a performing one is the difficult part.

The Chief Justice said the institution (the court) refuses to bow to those trying to weaken it. Anyone trying to create a dent in the justice delivery system hurts the Lady of Justice, he said. "We

serve the Lady of Justice, the queen of justice... When the queen of justice sheds tears, possibly all of us will shed tears," he said in his Independence Day address on the court lawns.

On January 12, four senior-most judges of the court – Justices J. Chelameswar (now retired), Ranjan Gogoi, Madan B. Lokur and Kurian Joseph – had accused the recent Chief Justices of India of "selective" allocation of cases to certain judges.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

Umar taken to crime spot

SAURABH TRIVEDI

NEW DELHI

A Special Cell team on Wednesday took JNU student Umar Khalid to the Constitution Club here to recreate the sequence of events that ended with an attack on him on Monday.

DETAILS ▶ DELHI METRO PAGE 3

has worsened over the last 24 hours. His condition is critical and he is on life support system," Dr. Aarti Vij said in a press release.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several Ministers visited the former Prime Minister in the evening.

Mr. Modi reached the hospital at 7.15 p.m. and spent about 50 minutes there.

Vajpayee put on life support

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has been put on life support system as his health deteriorated on Wednesday, AIIMS said in a statement. "Former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee has been admitted for the last 9 weeks at AIIMS. Unfortunately, his condition

and 35 dams and barrages had to be opened to let out water from fast-filling reservoirs.

People residing along the banks of the Periyar were alerted to the possibility of flash floods, and evacuation procedures were in place.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan held an emergency review meeting with top officials at the government secretariat here in the morning and later spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the phone, seeking more men and material to help the State tide over the unprecedented floods.

MUNNAR, SABARIMALA CUT OFF; PAMPA SITUATION GRIM ▶ PAGE 7

Kerala reels under its worst floods

■ 24 killed, several missing as rain pounds the State

■ CM Pinarayi Vijayan seeks more Central help from Modi

Wet Wednesday

As rain lashed Kerala, operations were shut at the flooded Cochin International Airport (in pic). The State received the highest single-day rainfall (127.8 mm) in this heavy monsoon season, which has registered a 30% increase over normal average



776% the deviation from normal average (14.66 mm) on August 15 as Kerala received 127.8 mm rainfall on Wednesday

96% total storage % of the 16 major reservoirs in Kerala as the cascading rain swelled the inflows into the dams

35 reservoirs released water, following the increase in their storage. This resulted in floods in 12 districts

10 of the 21 flood monitoring stations registered water levels exceeding high flood level (3) or nearing that point (7), as of Wednesday evening

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A resurgent monsoon brought Kerala to its knees on Wednesday, with the State tottering under the worst floods in its history.

Submerged by floodwaters, cities and villages lay crippled as the circle of destruction widened.

As many as 24 were killed in rain-related incidents during the day and several missing, as the withering broadside unleashed by the monsoon rocked the State from one end to the other.

Towns and settlements were cut off by flash floods and landslips; train, air and road traffic were disrupted;

stream areas of the Mullai Periyar dam after the water level rose to the capacity mark of 142 ft, cutting off the State highway connecting Kotayam with Kattappana, the headquarters of Idukki district.

People residing along the banks of the Periyar were alerted to the possibility of flash floods, and evacuation procedures were in place.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan held an emergency review meeting with top officials at the government secretariat here in the morning and later spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the phone, seeking more men and material to help the State tide over the unprecedented floods.

Flights diverted

The Cochin International Airport at Nedumbassery suspended operations till Saturday after floodwaters entered the runway and the operations area.

Flights to Kochi were diverted to Thiruvananthapuram, Mumbai and Coimbatore.

Panic gripped the down-

A Buddha will travel back, after 57 years

London police recover 12th century icon stolen from Nalanda museum



The Buddha statue displayed at the High Commission of India in London on Wednesday. ■ AP

suspect criminal activity on their part.

Coming home

Detective Chief Inspector Sheila Stewart of the Metropolitan Police's Art and Antiques Unit, which was reinstated recently after its detectives had been seconded to the investigation into the Grenfell Tower fire here last year.

The case was taken over by the Metropolitan Police's Art and Antiques Unit, which was reinstated recently after its detectives had been seconded to the investigation into the Grenfell Tower fire here last year.

ASI help

The Archaeological Survey of India helped confirm the icon's identity.

Police said they believed the statue had changed hands several times before it was handed over to a London dealer to be sold. Both the dealer and the owner had cooperated with the police, who did not

"Cultural diplomacy"

High Commissioner Y.K. Sinha said the statue would be returned to where it came from.

Michael Ellis, Britain's Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism said it was an example of Britain's "cultural diplomacy" in action.

CM Y.K. Sinha

NDNE

IN BRIEF



Rain affects normal life in Odisha districts

BHUBANESWAR

Heavy rains continued to lash several parts of Odisha for the third consecutive day on Wednesday even as the IMD forecast more rains the next 48 hours with low-pressure area intensifying into a depression. Six southern districts – Kalahandi, Nabarangpur, Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada and Gajapati – recorded maximum rainfall. Two women died due to lighting in Angul district. The tragedy struck when they were working in paddy fields.

Two killed in separate accidents in Bengal

BARASAT

Two persons were killed on Wednesday in separate road accidents in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district, a police officer said. In the first incident, a cyclist was crushed under the wheels of a truck at Gouranga Road. The truck hit two vans before running over the cyclist, identified as 55-year-old Basudeb Ghosh. In another incident, two motorcycles collided near Ichapur crossing, killing Shyamsujan Mondal, 31, and injuring two others. PTI

Two girls drown in pond in Odisha village

BALASORE

Two minor girls, aged around nine years, drowned on Wednesday while taking bath in a pond in Odisha's Balasore district, a police officer said. Their bodies were found floating in the pond at Chakulia village around noon. The villagers retrieved the bodies and informed the police about the matter, the officer added. "Prima facie it seems that one girl slipped into the water and drowned, while the other died trying to rescue her," he said, adding that the bodies have been sent for post-mortem. PTI

I-Day high drowns extremists' boycott call in the Northeast

In Assam's Baksa district, 2,200 people march for 12 km holding 3.5-km flag aloft

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

A wave of demonstrative patriotism, capped by a 12-km march with a 3.5-km-long Tricolour, drowned separatist voices in Assam and elsewhere in the Northeast on Wednesday.

The region had approached the country's 72nd Independence Day under the shadow of guns with an umbrella organisation of extremists, led by the hostile again Khaplang faction of National Socialist Council of Nagaland, threatening to disrupt the celebrations. Members of the banned United Liberation Front of Asom-Independent protested "India's occupation of Assam" with blackened flags in Eastern Nagaland, a term used for Naga-inhabited areas of Myanmar.

A couple of black flags



A man dances with the Tricolour during the Independence Day celebrations in Guwahati on Wednesday. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

were also unfurled in Assam, including one at Milanjyoti ME School in Udaguri district. But these were promptly pulled down before official functions. The day was marked by public participation on a scale not witnessed in the last 30 years.

Hoisting the Tricolour was

unthinkable in western Assam's Baksa, one of the four districts under Bodoland Territorial Council, a couple of years ago because of the National Democratic Front of Boroland's terror run. But the people of Uparkhuti village in the district wanted to show the world they were no

longer living in fear.

'Celebration of peace'

At 11 a.m., some 2,200 people of the area celebrated their 'freedom' by marching 12 km holding a 3.5-km flag aloft. Half a dozen tailors had taken a fortnight to stitch the flag. "Peace has returned to these parts after ages and there was no better way of celebrating it," said Pavan Oli, secretary of the local Sunrise Youth Club that organised the march.

A similar rally was carried out in southern Assam's Silchar, though the length of the flag was 72 metres.

Arunachal Pradesh CM Pema Khandu on Wednesday said his government had decided to create three new districts – Pakke-Kessang, Lepa Rada and Shi-Yomi – in order to take governance to the people's doorsteps.

Odisha CM launches health scheme for 70 lakh families

BSKY to cover over 70% of State's population, says Naveen

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BHUBANESWAR

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik launched Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana, a health for all scheme, on the occasion of the 72nd Independence Day on Wednesday. The scheme provides health assurance coverage to 70 lakh families, covering more than 70% of the State's population, said Mr. Patnaik in his speech at the function held at Mahatma Gandhi Marg here.

Later, Mr. Patnaik went to the Capital Hospital where he inaugurated the BSKY Help Desk, released its logo and distributed the BSKY cards to the beneficiaries.

It may be recalled that the Odisha government had rejected the National Health Protection Scheme as it covered much lesser number of people in Odisha by adopting the 2011 census. The State government went



CM Naveen Patnaik inaugurates the Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana in Bhubaneswar on Wednesday. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

ahead with its own scheme with a coverage of up to ₹5 lakh per year per family. The amount is ₹7 lakh per family with women members.

In his address, Mr. Patnaik said the BSKY will be implemented with the money of the people of the State for "Healthy Odisha, Happy Odisha" regardless of the cooperation or non-cooperation of anyone.

Stating that his government has been focusing on welfare of all, particularly

farmers, women and youth, Mr. Patnaik said these sections are being provided loan at 1% interest.

Mr. Patnaik said the State had progressed in all sectors, with emphasis on infrastructure development, social security and empowerment of people.

After successfully hosting the Asian Athletics Championships last year, Odisha is all set to host the World Cup Hockey in November this year, he added.

Tea garden leaders claim cases filed against them

Over 'peaceful' protest on August 9

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

A section of leaders representing trade unions of north Bengal have alleged that the State police have lodged cases against them following a protest on August 9, and threatened larger resistance if the cases are not withdrawn.

Saman Pathak, general secretary, Darjeeling district, Centre for Indian Trade Unions, said the cases have been lodged against him and 10 other trade union representatives under Sections 505(l) (b) and 120 B of IPC. "It relates to a protest organised near Sonada

on August 9, which was completely peaceful," Mr. Pathak said. He warned that if the police try to proceed with the case, there will be resistance from workers.

More than two dozen trade unions had held a three-day industrial strike in over 200 tea gardens of Terai and Dooars from August 7 to August 9.

Cases have been lodged against Mr. Pathak, Laxman Pradhan, who heads the trade union wing of All India Gorkha League, J.B. Tamang, incharge of labour wing of Gorkha National Liberation Front, and Amar Lama of Jan Andolan Party.



No takers for ₹10 coins

notification about it, but these coins are no more accepted as means of transaction here," said Manoj Patnaik, a lawyer.

A similar rumour floated a few months ago sealed the fate of the smaller ₹1 coins in Berhampur. Now everyone in the city wants to pay with these coins but no one is ready to accept them.

Govt. notification
A few weeks ago, the administration had come up with a notification that these two coins are continuing as a mode of transaction. It also cautioned people against the rumours being spread about the coins.

with another notification in the near future.

The ₹10 and ₹1 coins are mostly transacted at small shops and trading centres. Some of them accept the smaller ₹1 coins after much argument, but the ₹10 coins are a strict no-no.

Balakrushna Dash, a trader,

said they do not accept these coins as the customers

do not accept them. Some

traders alleged that even the banks do not accept them.

Now people of Berhampur are transacting their ₹10 and ₹1 coins during their visit to places like Puri and Bhubaneswar. Prahlad Gouda, a resident, said he spent his stock of ₹10 coins in Puri during his visit to the holy city for the Rathayatra.

However, it had had little impact on the attitude of the people. According to Berhampur sub-collector S.S. Swain, if needed, the administration will come up

DELHI Timings		
THURSDAY, AUG. 16		
RISE 05:51	SET 19:00	
RISE 10:48	SET 22:39	
FRIDAY, AUG. 17		
RISE 05:52	SET 18:59	
RISE 11:46	SET 23:17	
SATURDAY, AUG. 18		
RISE 05:53	SET 18:57	
RISE 13:38	SET 00:00	

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 34 28
Safdarjung 34 28
Palam 32 27

Delhi Palam Today
34°C One or two spells of moderate rain are likely. Light winds are likely. Sky will be mostly cloudy.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
33°C There are chances of drizzle. Morning will be mild warm. A cloudy sky is likely to persist.

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IN BRIEF



Khattar announces slew of incentives

HISAR
Delivering his Independence Day address here, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Wednesday announced a slew of incentives for the people of the State, including the 'Ayushman Bharat-Haryana' health protection scheme. PTI

Uniforms for H.P. govt. school students

SHIMLA
The Himachal Pradesh government on Wednesday announced two sets of smart uniforms each to more than 9 lakh students of State-run schools. The announcement was made by Education Minister Suresh Bhardwaj. PTI

Four killed in Rajasthan road accident

JAIPUR
Four men were killed when their car rammed a stationary truck on Jaipur-Delhi highway here, police said. The accident occurred under Paniyali Police Station in Jaipur rural area when the victims were on their way to their home in Gurgaon, they said. PTI

No respite from rain in U.P., 4 killed

Major rivers flowing above danger mark, more rain likely in the State: Met office



Mirroring the Taj: Tourists visit the Taj Mahal as floodwaters are seen on its gardens following monsoon rain in Agra on Wednesday. ■ AFP

levels.

The Sharda river at Palia Kalan, the Ghaghra at Elgin Bridge (Barabanki), Ayodhya and Turtipar (Ballia), and the Rapti at Balrampur were flowing well above the red mark, it said.

The Met office said light to

moderate rain/thunderstorms occurred at a few places across the State since Tuesday, with heavy rain/thunderstorms at isolated places.

As per data recorded on Wednesday, Dhaurahara received 9 cm rainfall, fol-

lowed by Soraon and Karhal each with 7 cm, Bhogaon with 6 cm, Kakrahi and Salimpur with 5 cm each, Shardanagar and Ghorawal with 4 cm each and Regoli, Karwi, Balrampur, Chunbar, Ballia, Ghosi, Mahroni and Rath with 3 cm rainfall each.

Srijan scam: CBI files more FIRs

Alleged diversion and misuse of government funds

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation has registered two more FIRs against the office-bearers of Bihar-based Srijan Mahila Vikas Sahyog Samiti Limited and others for the alleged diversion and misuse of government funds. The agency has lodged 18 cases so far.

The then and present branch managers and employees of a Bhagalpur

Officer booked

The second FIR has been registered against the then Land Acquisition Officer of Bihar's Banka, Nazir, branch manager of the Bhagalpur Central Cooperative Bank Limited, branch managers of

the Bank of Baroda and the Indian Bank, besides all Srijan (Bhagalpur) office-bearers.

RJD charge

In June, the CBI had registered four cases in connection with the alleged scam. The FIRs are being registered on a reference from the Bihar government, after the RJD targeted its former JD(U) and the BJP alleging a cover-up.

U.P. town tense after clash over loud music

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA FAIZABAD

A group of kanwariyas and local residents clashed in Tanda town of Uttar Pradesh's Ambedkar Nagar district on Monday night over the playing of loud music, police said. The situation is tense but under control, DIG (Faizabad) Onkar Singh, said on Wednesday.

The dispute started when a girl, who was ill, is said to

have fainted due to the loud music being played by the kanwariyas who were passing through the area, Mr. Singh said.

The locals demanded that the volume be lowered, but the kanwariyas allegedly started playing objectionable songs and raising slogans. It resulted in a clash and stone-pelting that continued for half an hour, the DIG said.

Deoria SP, former district police chief shunted out

After DM's transfer, police force on the U.P. govt. radar

OMAR RASHID LUCKNOW

The Superintendent of Police of Deoria and the district's former police chief were both shunted on Wednesday more than a week after two dozen girls were rescued from an illegally-run shelter home following allegations of mistreatment and sexual exploitation of inmates.

In-principle approval was also received for the establishment of a Civil Enclave at Air Force Station Halwara, the Chief Minister said.

Key decisions

In other key decisions, Captain Amarinder announced setting up of a 30-bed hospital at Doraha in the memory of former Chief Minister Beant Singh. Further, ₹64 lakh would be provided for setting up a 10-bed mini-PHC at Jhordi village in memory of late Havildar Ishwar Singh of 36 Sikh Regiment, who fought in the famous battle of Saragarhi Fort, he added. (With PTI inputs)



Deoria SP Rohan P. Kanay.
■ RAJEEV BHATT

mise programme was held to sort out differences between quarrelling spouses.

Ground reports by *The Hindu* suggest that despite orders by the State government to shut down the shelter home, the local police and administration continued to send inmates there, including minor girls, as recently as mid-July, and engaged the shelter home owner in official functions, including one for a mass marriage programme in February 2018.

The shelter home was de-recognised in June 2017 after the Central Bureau of Investigation found financial irregularities in a probe.

Ashutosh Kumar has been appointed the new DIG of Basti Range while N. Kolanchi, SP Mahoba, is the new police chief of Deoria.

While an SIT is probing the entire incident, a probe is also under way under ADG Gorakhpur to investigate the role of the police.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has recommended a CBI probe.

Raje unveils welfare steps, extends milk scheme

State to celebrate September as 'nutrition month'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje unveiled a slew of welfare measures, including extension of the Annapurna milk scheme for schoolchildren, allocation of funds for new infrastructure and interest subsidy on farmers' loans, after unfurling the national tricolour at the Independence Day function here on Wednesday.

Addressing the gathering at Sawai Man Singh Stadium here, Ms. Raje said September would be celebrated as a "nutrition month", when awareness about health and nutritional aspect of food would be spread in both urban and rural areas. The free milk distribution in schools for the students of Classes I to VIII along with the mid-day meals will be extended from three days to all days in the week.

"Children registered in Anganwadi centres in the age group of 3 to 6 years, pregnant and lactating women and teenage girls will also be given milk for three



Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje at the Independence Day function in Jaipur on Wednesday. ■ PTI

days in a week. The State government will provide ₹100 crore for the plan, in addition to ₹203 crore for the Annapurna milk scheme," Ms. Raje said.

Ms. Raje, who is at present touring different parts of the State during her 'Gau-rav Yatra' ahead of the State Assembly elections, called upon the people to extend cooperation to the State government for achieving the goals of development. "Our government has formulated schemes and programmes

for public welfare. No aspect of development should be left out," she said.

New school buildings

The Chief Minister said the State government would spend ₹775 crore on constructing 94 new school buildings and 7,080 additional classrooms in 2,400 schools. Besides, the District Employment Officers will function as the District Skill & Vocational Training Officers to improve employability of youths.

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Harmony will ensure prosperity: CM

In his I-Day speech, Fadnavis dwells upon economic growth of the State

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has urged agitating sections of the society to come together for the sake of peace and development of the state. In his Independence Day speech, after unfurling the flag at the state secretariat here, Mr. Fadnavis said his government has done everything possible to extend benefits to the existing creamy layer of the reserved categories and backward classes.

The schemes meant for their welfare, growth, and jobs to the youth has been pushed by the government in all forms. Maharashtra has so far grown because fruits of economic growth were divided equally among all the section of the society, and this tradition must continue, he said.

Growth vital

"The economic growth of the State has been vital for development of backward and poorer sections of society. We must keep in mind that the unrest was never spread, and social harmony maintained because of this division," he said.

Maharashtra has been lately grappling with protests from various sections of the society agitating to demand reservations in jobs and education. Earlier this month, a combined bandh call was given by the Marathas, Dhars and farmers, all pressing for different sets of demands from the government.

Lauding the performance of the State even during times of farm crisis and drought, Mr. Fadnavis said Maharashtra's performance on the development, ease of business, liveable cities and

Protests galore

January 1, 2018: Violent protests erupt in Mumbai, Pune, and other cities across Maharashtra during celebrations to mark the bicentenary of a British-Peshwa war.



March 11, 2018: Over 35,000 farmers march 200-km for six-days to protest against government apathy.

July 15, 2018: Farmers in Maharashtra go on indefinite strike early to protest against a sharp fall in wholesale milk prices.

July 25, 2018: The Maratha Kranti Morcha gives a shutdown call to protest the death of the 28-year-old farmer over reservation in the State.

August 9, 2018: Agitating Marathas call for a State-wide shutdown to demand reservation.

investment indexes is commendable. The CM claimed his government has outdone the growth and progress made in the past 15 years in just three years of its tenure.

Committed to farmers

"In the 15 years of the past regimes, the government had bought grains worth ₹ 450 crore. We have already bought grains worth ₹ 8,000 crore in the last three years. This is our commitment to the farmers of this state," he said.

Goa CM announces employment policy

Says it will benefit local youth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PANAJI

Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar said in a video message on Independence Day on Wednesday that the State's youth will not face unemployment after a new policy is rolled out.

The proposed employment policy will offer incentives to industries for hiring local people, said Mr. Parrikar, who is in the U.S. for follow-up treatment for a pancreatic ailment. "With this, I hope that in the coming one or two years, there will be no unemployed youth in Goa," he added.

The policy will generate much-needed enthusiasm, Mr. Parrikar said.

He thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Union government for helping in the State's development and sanctioning mega-infrastructure projects worth ₹ 10,000 to 20,000 crore.

"With Mandovi and Zuari bridges, national highway expansion and Mopa airport the State is scaling new heights ... While the Mandovi (project) will be completed by December-end, other projects are set to be completed within next two years," he said.

Cosmos Bank fraud due to malware in system: NPCI

Says its own systems are secure, situation being monitored

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has said the recent incident of cyber attack in Pune-based Cosmos Cooperative Bank, that has caused an over ₹ 90-crore loss, is due to a malware attack on the bank's system.

Hackers transferred over ₹ 90 crore out on August 11 and 13 through the malware attack on the bank's server by cloning debit cards of the bank's customers. The transactions were carried through automated teller machines (ATMs) in 28 countries, including Canada, Hong Kong and India. Visa and Rupay debit cards were cloned. The bank registered an FIR with the Chhatshringi police station and has closed all its servers and net banking facilities.

"One of our network members has confirmed a



malware attack on their system," NPCI said, while reiterating that its systems are fully secured and that this issue has occurred within the bank's information technology environment.

Bharat Panchal, Head Risk Management, NPCI said, maximum transactions have been reported from outside India. "We wish to reiterate that our systems are fully secure and we are monitoring the situation continuously. We are there to support the bank in identifying large-scale attacks," Mr. Saran said.

Mahadayi ruling major victory: govt.

PRAKASH KAMAT
PANAJI

The Goa government on Tuesday claimed that the Mahadayi Inter-state Water Disputes Tribunal's ruling, was a "major victory" for the State. On Tuesday, the tribunal decided that Goa will allot 13.42 TMC of water from the Mahadayi river basin to Karnataka, as against the latter's demand for 36.55.

Goa Congress, however, called the verdict unfortunate and urged the State to appeal against it. Former chief minister Francisco Sardinha alleged that the verdict was manipulated by the BJP government at the Centre.

Rajendra Kerkar, senior environmentalist and leader of Mahadayi Bachav Abhiyan, an NGO which has been simultaneously fighting the case on the State's side, said, "This is a loss to Goa, and a setback to its environment and ecology."

Pink bollworm: State to take emergency steps

Will set up 16-member committee in each district for the same

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government has announced emergency measures to tackle the widespread pink bollworm (PBW) infestation in parts of the State. It will set up 16-member committees in each district to monitor relief measures and minimise economic losses to farmers.

The committees will function under the district collector.

Experts, farmers and representatives of seed companies will be on board as well.

The committees will

meet every 15 days to take stock of the situation and work on campaigns to create awareness, and if need be put in place emergency measures, senior officials of the State Agriculture Department said. "Of the total 42 lakh hectares of cotton crop the infestation has already damaged 83%, forcing us to implement, on a war footing, measures at the district level," an official said.

The State government served notices to 12 seed firms on notice after their products were found infest-

ed. The firms were supplying products in the districts of Aurangabad, Akola, Jalna, Buldhana, Parbhani, Hingoli, and Osmanabad. The government floated a cluster of compensation schemes for smaller farmers and passed a resolution demanding that seed companies take responsibility for giving compensation, even threatening to register FIRs if this was not done.

The farmers have raised concerns that the infestation would reduce the area under cotton crop by at least

10% resulting in low yield and drop in prices. Farmers' associations have alleged that the government has failed to react on time and create adequate awareness. "We have additionally moved a proposal to the Centre to give us financial assistance to the tune of ₹ 2,500 crore," said an official.

An estimated 35 lakh hectare of cotton crop has already been lost, which feeds on cotton fibre and bolls. The losses in Vidarbha and Yavatmal have been assessed at ₹ 3,414 crore.

IN BRIEF



Malayalam poet Chemmanam Chacko dies

KOCHI
Noted Malayalam poet and Sahitya Akademi awardee Chemmanam Chacko died in Kakkanad near here, his family members said on Wednesday. Chacko, 92, had been undergoing treatment for age-related ailments for quite sometime. He is survived by wife and two daughters. PTI

Three fishermen go missing in Alappuzha

KOCHI
Three fishermen from Vypeen near Kochi are reportedly missing after their boat sank about 14 nautical miles off the coast of Arthunkal in Alappuzha district. There were seven fishermen on board the boat, Anugraha, which was returning after four days at sea. A Naval helicopter was deployed for the rescue operation.

3-year-old leopard found dead in Hassan

HASSAN
A three-year-old leopard was found dead with bullet injuries at Galipura village near Holenarsipur on Wednesday. The villagers noticed the carcass and informed Forest Department officers. Sivaram Babu, Deputy Conservator of Forests, told *The Hindu* that the animal had been shot at.

Indigenously developed truck flagged off

MYSURU
The indigenously developed 150T Electric Drive Rear Dump Truck was flagged off on the BEML premises on Independence Day here on Wednesday. The truck has been developed to strengthen the 'Make in India' initiative. Deepak Kumar Hota, CMD, BEML flagged off the truck for use in the coal fields of Coal India Limited's subsidiary in Chhattisgarh.

+ Drunken men assault Srisailam Forest Officer

MARRI RAMU
HYDERABAD

Six drunken men from Hyderabad forced a forest officer to kneel down after 'abusing and assaulting' him for objecting to their consuming liquor in the reserve forest area of Srisailam in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh.

The bizarre incident, which began on Tuesday night, ended on Wednesday morning with the police picking up five of them. The sixth person escaped. One of the alleged attackers, Maggam Abhinay Reddy, is the son of a Hyderabad-based ex-MLC's sibling Hanumanth Reddy, Kurnool SP Gopinath Jatti told *The Hindu* over phone.

A video clip recorded by one of the accused, apparently to show off their 'high-handed' behaviour, went viral on social media. The accused were seen thrashing the officer.

A glimpse of the 72nd Independence Day celebrations in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka

₹5 lakh insurance for Telangana farmers

N. RAHUL
HYDERABAD

In his last Independence Day speech before the five-year term of the TRS government ends next year, Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao said that all the sectors that had crashed in Andhra Pradesh before bifurcation were revitalised in the new State of Telangana.

Telangana was a success story, overcoming the "tragedy left by destruction of the past". Yet, conspiracies to project the State as a failure and malicious attempts to disrupt people's unity continue, Mr. Rao said after unfurling the national flag at Golconda Fort.

Rythu Bima launched
At a colourful event organised for the occasion, over a thousand artistes staged performances reflecting the cultural traditions of the State.

Mr. Rao launched the Rythu Bima programme of



Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao inspecting the guard of honour at Golconda Fort in Hyderabad. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the State government, extending ₹5 lakh insurance to farmers, and government-subsidised bank loans of up to ₹80,000 for self-employment of backward classes.

Mr. Rao said that the government had brought political stability amid attempts to create disturbances.

The government gave a clean administration devoid of political corruption. The

economy was put back on rails. The average revenue growth of the State touched 17.12% in each of the four years, taking it to the top spot in the national development index.

Mr. Rao said the Centre was willing to grant the new zonal system in the State in public employment and education by amending the Presidential Order.

Voices trying to divide State silenced by strong will of Kannadigas'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Two issues that have haunted H.D. Kumaraswamy ever since he took over as the Chief Minister of Karnataka – demand for separate Statehood for North Karnataka, alleging neglect, and pressure to announce farm loan waiver at the earliest – were the key points in his first Independence Day address on Wednesday.

Reaffirming his commitment for working for the development of the entire State, Mr. Kumaraswamy said that "feeble voices" try-

"The government has ta-

ken a big step to help farmers through crop loan waiver in cooperative as well as commercial banks to the tune of ₹49,000 crore. Already crop loan in cooperative sector has been waived off, which will help around 20.38 lakh farmers. Soon, the government will issue an order to waive crop loan in the commercial banks," he said.

He added that though several districts had received good rainfall and dams were filled, 13 districts of the State were facing rain deficit this year.

Farmers from several dis-

tricts participated in the celebration as special invitees.

To celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Chief Minister said the government would be organising 1,000 theatre shows named "Gandhi-150, A Theatrical Journey." The State government had also decided to celebrate the 125th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's Chicago address.

He also used the occasion to pressure the Centre against its alleged plan to shift the Aero India show out of Bengaluru.



Karnataka Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy inspecting the Independence Day parade in Bengaluru. ■ V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

SC to decide if Polavaram design is as per tribunal award

To see if there is diversion of forest land

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has decided to examine whether the Polavaram project and its design, as approved by the Central Water Commission, is in consonance with the Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal (GWDT) award of 1980.

A series of 13 questions were framed by the apex court's Green Bench of Justices Madan B. Lokur and Deepak Gupta in a suit filed by Odisha against Andhra Pradesh in 2007.

The apex court has decided to look into whether the design of the project takes into consideration backwater effect and studies in the States of Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Telangana.

Fresh clearances

Crucially, the court has to examine whether the change in the design of Polavaram project, especially in so far as it raises the spillway discharge capacity from 36 lakh cusecs to 50 lakh cusecs, is so fundamental that it amounts to violation of the GWDT award,

and therefore, requires fresh statutory clearances to be obtained.

The personnel will be sent to collect the penalty. Failure to cooperate will lead to their vehicles being seized.

A whopping 60% of the offenders have ignored notices and failed to pay the penalty," said DCP (Traffic and Crime) Vikram Amathe. The police appealed to traffic offenders to pay the penalty as soon as they receive the FTVR.

Gauri murder: five suspects linked to Kalburgi case

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

Five of the 12 accused in the murder of journalist and activist Gauri Lankesh are suspected to have been involved in the assassination of scholar M.M. Kalburgi, who was killed at his Dharwad residence on August 30, 2015.

This information has revived the Criminal Investigation Department's investigation into the three-year-old case, which according to officials, had grown cold.

K.S.R. Charan Reddy, IGP, CID, said the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the Gauri murder had provided the input on the link between the cases.

"This information was revealed during their probe and interrogation of the said suspects. Some have even confessed to their role in the Kalburgi murder," said Mr. Reddy.

He, however, declined to name the persons or comment on the exact nature of their involvement. "We are preparing to seek custody of the five suspects and will do so at the appropriate time," Mr. Reddy said.

According to sources, Amol Kale – one of the key handlers believed to have provided the gun to Prakash Waghmare, who shot Gauri – is linked to the Kalburgi case.

The other persons of interest are Ganesh Miskin and Amit Baddi, both residents of Hubballi; Rajesh Banger from Madikeri, who allegedly provided arms training to some of the suspects in the Gauri case; and Amit Degvekar from Goa, who is directly linked to a right-wing organisation in that State.

Rush hour



Queuing up: As several people made a beeline for the IKEA showroom in Hyderabad on Wednesday, the area saw heavy traffic. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

Reviving a forest ruined by fires in Karnataka

Initiative to sow seeds undertaken by writers, progressive farmers and environmentalists in Tumakuru

S. BHUVANESHWARI
TUMAKURU

Every year in the months of June, July and August, writers, progressive farmers and environmentalists – all members of Pragnavanta Parisara Vedike – gather in Devarayanadurga reserve forest of Tumakuru district to sow seeds.

It's a tradition that was started nearly two decades ago, with one goal – to revive around 25 acres of forest that was stripped bare of thick vegetation due to constant fires.

Green drive

In doing so, they hope to not only increase the green cover but also provide a variety of vegetation to wild animals so that they won't be tempted to forage for food in cultiv-



Seeding the future: Members of the Pragnavanta Parisara Vedike at the Devarayanadurga Reserve forest.

ated cropland.

Most of the fires are man-made, usually by people in surrounding villages who be-

a few weeks ago, but despite their frequency, Vedike members remain steadfast in their goal. Last weekend, around 10 members sowed seeds of fruits, vegetables, local flora and millets.

"Peacocks, deer, bears, leopards and other animals are coming to the villages in search of food and destroy the crops grown by the farmers. Hence, for the past two decades we come to the forest and sow the seeds of honge, guava, papaya, vegetables, mango, jackfruit and Jambu," said Gangadharamurthy, member, Pragnavanta Parisara Vedike.

Cause for concern
Members regularly visit the area to see if the seeds they've sown take root. Setbacks are common. Mr. Gan-

gadharamurthy expressed concern over the increase in forest fires. One particularly bad incident destroyed young guava trees that he had planted years ago.

On Sunday, members had sown around 40 kg of seeds. "This year, we are also sowing seeds of millets, including ragi, pearl millet and foxtail, as a lot of peacocks are entering villages due lack of foodgrains," Mr. Gangadharamurthy added.

Kannada writer Mirja Basheer told *The Hindu*, "We create awareness among tourists, including students and youngsters who come to the Devarayanadurga reserve forest on weekends, and also give them seeds."

Members of the Vedike will stop sowing seeds after the first week of August.

Traffic fine to be collected at doorstep

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MYSURU

The city police is expected to launch a special drive under which beat police personnel will be sent to the houses of those who have violated traffic rules and ignored FTVR (Field Traffic Violation Report) notices.

The personnel will be sent to collect the penalty. Failure to cooperate will lead to their vehicles being seized.

"A whopping 60% of the offenders have ignored notices and failed to pay the penalty," said DCP (Traffic and Crime) Vikram Amathe. The police appealed to traffic offenders to pay the penalty as soon as they receive the FTVR.

Public hearing

This has also raised the question in the Supreme Court on the requirement for clearance under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 for the project. The Bench has listed the next hearing for September 6.

IN BRIEF



Khandu urges to make govt. schemes a success

ITANAGAR

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Wednesday exhorted the people to join hands with the government for successful implementation of the developmental programmes and policies it has undertaken. The schools of Arunachal are equipped to give the best facilities to students, the Chief Minister said. PTI

8 swept away while bathing in waterfall

SHIVPURI (M.P.)

At least eight merrymakers were swept away while bathing in Sultanganj Waterfall in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday, the police said. Over 40 others are stranded as of tonight, they said. PTI

Faith beckons



People taking a dip in Nagkund on Nag Panchami in Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh, on Wednesday. ■ PTI

Baig to mount PDP defence of Art. 35A

Senior leader to attend next Supreme Court hearing on August 27 with party's legal counsel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SRINAGAR

The Peoples Democratic Party on Wednesday said senior leader and MP Muzaffar Hussain Baig and party counsel will fight the legal challenge to the validity of Article 35A in the Supreme Court on the next date of hearing.

"Veteran PDP leader and MP from Baramulla, Muzaffar Hussain Baig, along with party's legal counsel will fight the assault being launched against the State's special position in the Supreme Court of India and will remain present in the court on next hearing slated to be held on August 27," Peoples Democratic Party chief spokesman Rafi Mir said on



Supporters of Awami Ittehad Party during a protest march in Srinagar against the petitions filed in the Supreme Court challenging the validity of Article 35A. ■ FILE PHOTO: NISSAR AHMAD

Wednesday.

Mr. Baig, an alumnus of Harvard Law School, served as the advocate-general of Jammu and Kashmir from 1987-89 before joining politics.

Mr. Mir said PDP president Mehbooba Mufti held a de-

tailed meeting with party's top leadership over the present political situation and measures needed to be taken to defend Article 35A in the apex court.

"It was unanimously agreed during the meeting

that the special position accorded to the State of Jammu and Kashmir by the Constitution of India needs to be protected on all fronts and that the party will remain in the forefront to defend it in the Supreme Court," he said.

Top lawyers

Mr. Mir said it was highlighted how the PDP while being part of the coalition with the BJP took "drastic and vital measures" for the defence of Article 35A and the government had engaged the top lawyers of the country for the purpose. Ms. Mehbooba emphasised that the fight to safeguard Jammu and Kashmir's special status will be carried forward with the same zest, he said.

The Supreme Court had, on August 6, said a three-judge bench would decide whether the plea challenging Article 35A should be referred to a five-judge Constitution bench for examining the larger issue of alleged violation of the doctrine of basic structure of the Constitution.

The bench comprising Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justice A. Khanwilkar had adjourned the crucial hearing on as many as five petitions "to the week commencing from August 27" on the grounds that they pertained to the challenge to a Constitutional scheme and could not be heard as the third judge, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, was not present on that day.

BJP's days are numbered, says Hooda

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Wednesday said that the Bharatiya Janata Party's days are numbered in the State as its anti-people policies are bound to bring about its downfall in the upcoming Assembly elections.

Mr. Hooda, who was addressing public meetings in different villages in Mahendergarh district during his 'Jan Kranti Yatra', said the policies of the BJP government at the Centre and the State have brought doom to the small businesses in the State.

'People lost jobs'

"Demonetisation broke the back of the business community and the GST destroyed whatever was left as lakhs of people across the State lost their jobs. When the Congress returns to power, we would simplify the GST and rid the State of Inspector Raj," he said.

Mr. Hooda said the Congress would raise the issues concerning the public in the monsoon session of the Vidhan Sabha which starts from August 17.

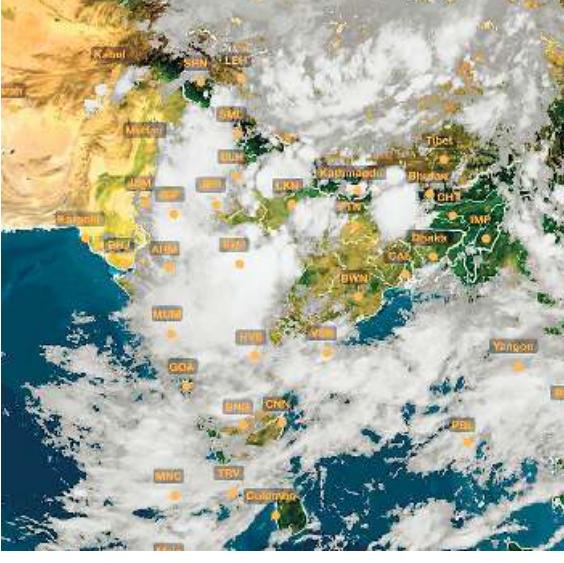
He said both the BJP and the Indian National Lok Dal were equally responsible for the plight of the people in the State.

The former Chief Minister said if voted to power, the Congress would implement the Swaminathan Commission recommendations so that farmers got a fair price for their produce; loans of farmers, Dalits and other backward sections would also be waived.

Old age pensions would be raised to ₹3,000 per month and power bills reduced to half, he added.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT (TAKEN AT 18.30 HRS)

Forecast for Thursday: Heavy to very heavy rain likely at a few isolated places over Coastal Karnataka, Vidarbha, Kerala, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, north Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, South Interior Karnataka, Sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim, Konkan & Goa, Marathawada, Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	15.7	36	26	Kozhikode	197.2	26.1	22
Ahmedabad	—	33	25.9	Kurnool	—	30.4	24.8
Aizawl	5...	29.8...	13.4	Lucknow	—	30.7	27.8
Allahabad	55.8...	34.3...	26.4	Madurai	0.6	35.2	24.2
Bengaluru	2.7	25.7	20.1	Mangaluru	3	28.2	23
Bhopal	—	28.4	23.8	Mumbai	0.6	29.1	22.2
Bhubaneswar	10.3	31.2	25.9	Mysuru	—	28.6	19
Chandigarh	—	34	26.2	New Delhi	4.2	36.4	28.3
Chennai	59.6...	31.1...	24	Patna	1.2	34.8	27.5
Coimbatore	8.7	29.5	22	Port Blair	0.2	29.7	2.7
Dehradun	—	33.4...	24.1	Puducherry	—	34.5	24
Gangtok	25.2	23.9	18	Pune	2	26.2	22.1
Goa	6...	29.8	24	Raipur	0.4	31	25.8
Guwahati	—	34.2	26.4	Ranchi	1.8	29.4	23.9
Hubballi	—	25	22	Shillong	5.5	26.2	19
Hyderabad	14...	26.9...	22.7	Shimla	0.4	24.1	15.4
Imphal	13...	29.5...	22	Srinagar	—	30.7	17.3
Jaipur	—	34.5...	26.9	Trivandrum	183.8	27.4	21.8
Kochi	90.5	25.6	22.8	Tiruchi	—	36.2	26
Kohima	—	27.8	19.4	Vijayawada	—	28	25
Kolkata	1.8	32.1	27.8	Visakhapatnam	60.7	28.4	25

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES	SO	NO	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	43	.57	2477	—	■■■
Bengaluru	.7	.29	62	...46	.73	■■■
Chennai	.5	.17	30	...31	—	■■■
Delhi	12	.38	57	67	.153	■■■
Hyderabad	15	.14	15	61	.92	■■■
Kolkata	.2	.24	59	11	.21	■■■
Lucknow	.7	.49	32	93	—	■■■
Mumbai	19	.28	57	64	.90	■■■
Vishakhapatnam	—	—	—	—	—	■■■

In the observation made at 4.00 p.m., Pali, Rajasthan recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 226

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

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

NO: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

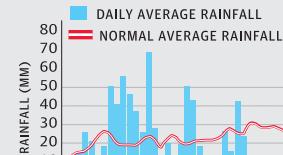
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

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

Seasonal high

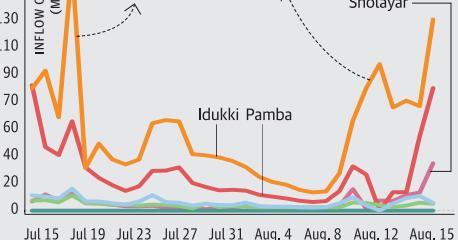
Between June 1 and August 15, the daily average rainfall exceeded the normal average on 40 of the 76 days

■ Actual average rainfall in Kerala reached 127.8 mm on Wednesday - a ninefold deviation from the normal - while the expected average on that day was just 14.6 mm

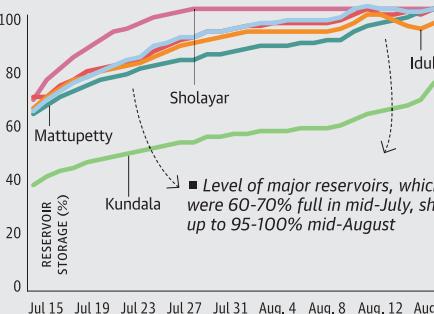
**Heavy inflows**

As rainfall increases, the inflow of water to reservoirs also increases, swelling their storage levels

■ Inflow levels across major reservoirs shot up first in mid-July and again in mid-August

**Filled to the brim**

The steep increase in inflows has led to storage levels in reservoirs nearing their maximum

**Spike in spills**

After storage levels peaked, the spills^a (excess water deliberately released from reservoirs) have increased, flooding nearby places

■ Despite heavy rains in July, the reservoir levels were only half full and there were no spills

■ But, in August, when heavy rains persisted, water discharge and spills increased correspondingly

**Red alert**

As per the CWC*, levels in 4 monitoring stations have touched "high flood level (HFL)" and at least 4 are in danger of following suit. Here are data from the 8 stations (there are 21 stations overall)

Station, River, District	Current (m)	HFL(m)
Vandiperiyar, Periyar, Idukki	797	794
Arangali, Chalakudy, Thrissur	8	8
Kalampur, Kaliyar, Ernakulam	16	15
Neelieswaram, Periyar, Ernakulam	11	11
Muthankara, Kabini, Wayanad	712	713
Kumbidi, Bharathapuzha, Palakkad	9	10
Mankara, Bharathapuzha, Palakkad	51	52
Malakkara, Pamba, Pathanamthitta	8	8

Source: Thiruvananthapuram - IMD, CWC, Kerala State Load despatch Center

Compiled by Vignesh Radhakrishnan, Varun B. Krishnan, Srinivasan Ramani | Designed by L. Balamurugan * Central Water Commission ^ Unlike discharges, spills are not meant for specific utilisation

Rain claims 24 lives in a day; Munnar, Sabarimala cut off

Centre rushes Army units to Kerala; people along Periyar river shifted

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

As many as 24 persons lost their lives in various rain-related incidents in Kerala on Wednesday, taking the toll in the latest monsoon spell to 64 since August 8.

Twelve people were buried alive in two separate landslips that followed incessant rain in Malappuram.

While nine persons were buried under a huge mass of soil at Peringavu near Vazhayur in the afternoon, three members of a family died in sleep when their house caved in at Kaithakunda near Pulikkal in the early hours.

Within hours, another tragedy struck at Peringavu, less than 10 km from Pulikkal. Nine people, including five of a family, were buried under a huge chunk of a broken hill that fell on them.

A joint rescue team led by Army personnel recovered the bodies of the victims after removing a huge layer of mud.

Picture of devastation
Central Kerala and the northern districts were a picture of devastation on Wednesday, with heavy monsoon rain inundating vast tracts of land. Swollen rivers breached banks and tore through settlements and farmlands. Widespread crop damage was reported across the State.

Munnar town in Idukki and Sabarimala in Pathanamthitta were cut off by raging floodwaters.

On a request for help from the State government, the Centre despatched Army units in three Air Force planes to Kerala to help the civilian administration tackle the crisis.

As emergency services toiled hard to rescue residents from flooded colonies, the

rescue teams, aided by mechanised equipment, were busy through the day sifting through landslips to bring out survivors.

The government has issued a red alert for Wayanad, Kozhikode, Kannur, Kasargod, Malappuram, Palakkad, Idukki and Ernakulam districts on Thursday after the weather office warned of heavy rainfall. A holiday has been declared for educational institutions in 10 districts and all public examinations have been postponed.

Munnar was isolated by landslips and the surging waters from the Mattupetty dam, fed by copious rain in the catchment areas. The water level in the Idamalayar dam also crossed the full reservoir level, while that in the Idukki dam crossed the 2,398 ft mark.

People along both banks of the Periyar river were shifted to safer places after the water level rose by more than 1.5 m on Tuesday.

The shutters of the Pampa, Kakki and Anathode dams were also raised to increase the discharge and stabilise the water level in the reservoirs.

Train services suspended

The Southern Railway had to suspend train services on the Thiruvananthapuram-Nagercoil route following a landslip at Eranian and that between Kollam-Shencottah. Train services on other routes were also regulated due to flooding of tracks. Landslips and flooding disrupted road traffic along the Kozhikode-Mysore route as well.

The current spell of rain is attributed to a depression over coastal Odisha which developed on Wednesday morning.



Moving to safety: (clockwise from top) Rescue personnel assisting people out of a flooded area near Kochi; family members shifting a 98-year-old woman from their flooded home in Upper Kuttanad village of Niramon; and rescuers evacuating people from a flooded locality in Thiruvananthapuram ■PTI, RADHAKRISHNAN KUTTOOR

Seeking help on social media



Water flowing downstream from the Idukki reservoir.
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

In a video posted on his Facebook page, he showed water rising up to the first floor of the house and also of several homes in the locality remaining submerged. The Fire Force finally launched two boats in Arambam for rescue operations.

According to Mr. Jacob, though he contacted the police and fire force personnel, they pleaded inability to help him as they did not have dinghies or boats to reach the inundated homesteads.

The situation was no different in parts of Idukki, Wayanad and Malappuram.

Mullaperiyar: T.N. not to reduce water level

T. RAMAKRISHNAN
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government has taken the stand that there was no need to reduce the water level of the Mullaperiyar dam below the present 142 ft.

In response to reports of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's letter to his Tamil Nadu counterpart Edappadi K. Palaniswami, requesting him to lower the level up to 139 ft, a senior official here said that the "entire inflow" would be discharged and the water level

maintained at 142 ft. The position was said to have been conveyed by the Principal Secretary (Public Works) S. K. Prabakar to his Kerala counterpart.

The stand of Tamil Nadu is based on the verdict of the Supreme Court in 2014, allowing it to store water up to 142 ft. Ten days ago, chairman of the SC-appointed panel, Gulshan Raj, visited the dam and stated that it was "strong enough" to store water up to 142 ft. He expressed satisfaction over the functioning of the dam.

Pampa flood situation grim



TDB representatives handing over paddy spikes for the 'niraputhari' ritual.

lines at Pampa were clogged with silt.

'Tantri' Kandararu Maheshwari Mohanaru could not reach the holy hillock owing to adverse conditions. Following this, Sabarimala 'melsanthi' A.V. Unnikrish-

nan Namboothiri performed 'niraputhari' rituals at the Ayyappa temple.

The 'tantri', who was taken to Sabarimala through the Pulmedu forest path, had to terminate the journey at the forest camp at Pulmedu. The temple was closed after the 'athazhapu' later in the evening.

The day also saw flood waters reaching the doorsteps of the Partha Sarathy temple at Aranmula. The first 11 of the 18 steps leading to the temple were submerged. The 12 km Puthenkavu-Thekkemala stretch was heavily flooded.

Rahul Gandhi reconstitutes Odisha Cong.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha and Odisha Assembly polls, Congress president Rahul Gandhi has reconstituted the party's State unit and appointed 14 vice-presidents and 24 general secretaries, besides other functionaries, the party said on Wednesday.

There are 13 special invitees to the Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee, comprising six former State party chiefs, statement issued by All India Congress Committee general secretary Ashok Gehlot said.

Allow videoconference between lawyer, accused'

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has directed legal services authorities and committees to extend videoconferencing in every criminal case whenever the accused is in jail.

"They shall extend the facility of videoconferencing between counsel and the accused or anybody in the know of the matter, so that the cause of justice is well served," a Bench of Justices A.M. Sapre and U.U. Lalit said in its order pronounced on August 14. The direction was made on appeals filed by murder convicts, one from Maharashtra and the other from Chhattisgarh,

who were sentenced to life imprisonment.

The court said both accused were represented by advocate Shikhlil Suri in the Supreme Court. Mr. Suri, who was entrusted with the appeals by the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee, had written to the Bench, insisting that he talk to his clients in jail before presenting their cases in the Supreme Court, the last court of appeal. Mr. Suri wrote that the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee had made it mandatory that legal services advocates get in touch with their clients, who were often too poor to afford a lawyer.

Two sadhus found murdered in U.P. temple

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

Tension prevailed in parts of Auraiya district of Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday after two sadhus were found murdered in a temple. One more was found seriously injured.

The sadhus were "over-powered" and attacked with sharp objects by unidentified persons on the intervening night of August 14 and 15, IG (Kanpur Range) Alok Singh said. They were found dead at the Bhayanak Nath temple in Kundarkot village, with their limbs stretched over the cots and tied with clothes.

The dead were identified

as Lajja Ram Yadav and Harbhajan. Ram Sharhan was critically injured and referred to a hospital in Etawah.

Residents blocked roads and indulged in arson and stone-throwing. The police resorted to a baton charge, lobbed tear-gas shells and reportedly fired in the air to disperse the mob. The Provincial Armed Constabulary was deployed in the area.

The bodies were sent for post-mortem. "The reason for the murders will be known only after investigation," Mr. Singh said. Station officer Akhilesh Mishra and constable Islam were suspended.



Making NHPM work

Extending health cover to the most needy is vital, and needs an infrastructure upgrade

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement on Independence Day that Ayushman Bharat, or the National Health Protection Mission, will be launched formally on September 25 sends out the signal that the government is finally recognising the linkages between health care and economic development. Political parties have not yet made the right to health a campaign issue, and the National Health Policy does not recommend such a right since it cannot be fulfilled. But there is increasing awareness that it is unsustainable for a country of 1.3 billion people to rely on household savings to pay for health care. The NHPM is an ambitious initiative, providing a coverage of ₹5 lakh per family a year to 10 crore families chosen through the Socio-Economic Caste Census, mainly rural poor and identified urban workers. State governments, which will administer it through their own agency, will have to purchase care from a variety of players, including in the private sector, at pre-determined rates. Reaching a consensus on treatment costs through a transparent consultative process is vital for a smooth and steady rollout. A large-scale Information Technology network for cashless treatment should be set up and validated. Since a majority of the families will be rural, and the secondary and tertiary public hospital infrastructure suffers from severe efficiency and accountability problems, State governments should upgrade the administrative systems.

National schemes on health provide an overarching framework, but the responsibility of executing them falls on the State governments. It is widely recognised that there are "nations within the nation" in India, given the population sizes, disease burdens and development levels of different regions. Clearly, the NHPM has a problem with the distribution of hospitals, the capacity of human resources, and the finances available for cost-sharing. Addressing these through the planned increase in public health spending to touch 2.5% of GDP, and 8% of State budgets, is the immediate challenge. With steady economic growth, meeting that policy commitment through higher investments will be a test of political will. Yet, it is also an opportunity to tap into a large labour pool for the new jobs that will be created, and to raise skill levels. Reducing the cost of universal health coverage is imperative, and it requires parallel investments in the neglected public sector. Private insurance can only be a short-term option, and it clearly has limitations. Less ethical institutions have been found ordering unnecessary treatments to claim insurance compensation. An ombudsman to deal with complaints from NHPM users should, therefore, be a priority. The Centre should extend the scheme to all children and senior citizens, and cover out-patient consultation and essential drugs to sharply reduce out-of-pocket spending.

Fear isn't the key

There must be caution about regulatory overreach while granting SEBI more powers

India's stock markets are booming, with the BSE Sensex touching new highs. The regulation of securities markets has evolved over the last two and a half decades since the setting up of the Securities and Exchange Board of India, but it is still a work in progress. Front-running, insider trading, shady accounting practices that are tantamount to window-dressing firms' performance, and other shenanigans to manipulate share prices continue. A panel headed by T.K. Viswanathan, a former Lok Sabha Secretary General, has now submitted recommendations to curb illegal practices in the markets and ensure fair conduct among investors. A key recommendation is that the stock market watchdog be granted the power to act directly against "perpetrators of financial statements fraud". In essence, this means SEBI can act not only against listed entities under its extant powers but also against those who aid or abet financial fraud – including accountants and auditors. The panel has suggested that SEBI, rather than the Central government, be given the power to grant immunity to whistle-blowers who help uncover illegal activities. It has mooted new ideas to address market manipulation, from better scrutiny of price-sensitive information to the creation of processes to expedite investigation into cases. It goes to the extent of recommending that SEBI be given powers to tap phone calls.

Greater executive powers, it is being suggested, can help the regulator take swifter action against offenders instead of relying on government bodies such as the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. Ostensibly, this could also free SEBI from various manifestations of political influence. Since SEBI is better placed to understand the complex nuances that financial market fraud entails, compared to other investigative agencies or even those in charge of implementing the Companies Act, it may also be better placed to enforce the law. A strong regulator serves as a good deterrent to truants in the market, but banking on fear too much could also scare away genuine investors. SEBI is widely considered to be one of the more efficient regulators, but it is not faultless. Last year, its order to impose restrictions on the trading of shares of 331 companies suspected of laundering money was seen as a hasty move taken under pressure from the government without a formal investigation. Given that SEBI is now considering a cap on trading by retail investors based on their assessed 'net worth', the committee's suggestion that it may consider any trading by players beyond their known 'financial resources' as fraud could lead to undue harassment of investors. Granting more teeth to enable the market regulator to fulfil its primary role of protecting investors is fine. But it is equally critical to empower it with the right tools so that a sledgehammer is not deployed to crack a nut.

Lessons in alternative histories

Both Gandhi and Nehru would have grasped that the Dalai Lama was speaking to India's present



SHIV VISVANATHAN

Around August 15 every year, Indians tend to get more correct and prickly. The 15th is a precious day for us. We demand a salute to our state and status as a great independent nation. Any critique is summarily dismissed, often at the cost to our own understanding of the nation and its possibilities.

Consider a recent event. It was the 60th anniversary of the Tibetan arrival in India. It marked a great moment for India. Jawaharlal Nehru, defying the Chinese, offers refuge to the Dalai Lama and lets him set up his government in exile. It was a moment of hospitality and generosity, a Nehruvian moment which one senses as lacking today in this time of the Rohingya crisis and the National Register of Citizens threatening to exterminate lakhs of people.

Offered as gratitude

No one has spoken with greater gratitude to India than the Dalai Lama. His rituals of thanks to India as a civilisation and to the Indian regime have been many. By welcoming him to India, we added to the sense of India. Yet, newspapers reported that in the anniversary speech, he said India had missed a moral opportunity – that Mahatma Gandhi, to avoid Partition, offered Muhammad Ali Jinnah the Prime Ministership, and Nehru objected because he wanted to lead India. The newspaper reports came out boldly and liter-

ally. A few days later, true to a spirit of correctness, the Dalai Lama withdrew his statement, saying that he had hurt feelings.

At a level of formal correctness, the matter is closed, but India is the loser because our prickly sense of arrogance blinded us to the possibility of the story.

The Dalai Lama was not criticising Nehru. He was merely pointing to glimpses of history beyond Nehru. He was being thoughtful, provocative, in a pedagogic way, because he was confident in himself and the people he was talking about. As a spiritual leader and as an astute politician, he was using the occasion to open us to new possibilities. Anyone living in India knows that our sense of nationalism has blinded us to alternative possibilities. We conceive of history as a fait accompli and with a dose of fatalism.

Yet, what the Dalai Lama is pointing out is that what we saw as a moment of closure had its openings. The greatness of Gandhi recognised it and pursued it with a desperation. Gandhi tried to thwart Partition by offering Jinnah something he would not have dreamed of. Gandhi offered him the possibility of a giant leadership, the possibility of being leader of a 'joint India-Pakistan'. Instead of Partition we could or could have had a united India. It was an act which required a surreal moral courage. It was an appeal to Jinnah to go beyond divisive politics. It was almost a utopian solution to a communal fissure.

The Dalai Lama suggests that Nehru refuted such a possibility. The historian in him must have seen it as impractical; the politician in him must have read it as in-



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sulting, wondering whether Gandhi had lost his sense of the bloody reality facing India. Jinnah, Nehru and Mountbatten were responding at the level of realpolitik. It is the level at which history took place and Partition became inevitable.

A moral imagination

The Dalai Lama understands history. As a political leader, he has an acute sense of it. But as a spiritual leader, he is suggesting decades after the event that history could have been transcended morally. He was suggesting that Gandhi had the moral imagination to gift Jinnah a stunning possibility. He was merely asking Jinnah to move beyond his pettiness. He was asking Nehru for a sacrifice beyond all his calibre and sacrifices. Looking back, one cannot discount the power of this possibility. In a futuristic sense, it might be India's greatest gift to Pakistan, a vision of a united nation. Nehru sacrifices his future and Jinnah's immediate greed becomes the glue in a moment of strife-torn politics. Consequently, there is no Partition. Pakistan does not become a military state. There is none of the idiocy of the genocide in Bangladesh.

Possibilities sound stupendous and the thinker is almost giddy. The Dalai Lama is merely invoking Gandhi's plea, a plea that might

have prevented two genocides. He is not condemning Nehru. He is only saying that Gandhi's moral imagination transcended the conventional grids of history.

The Dalai Lama's commentary is timely. He is asking a jingoistic nation state to think out of the box and create a situation where the ethical is experimental and theology goes beyond mere patriotic catechism, and looks at playful possibilities to questions which need answers even today.

The Dalai Lama, as a great teacher, is not only referring to a past as a forgotten fragment but he is also referring to the present and suggesting that the Gandhian conundrum has desperate relevance today. It could become the spiritual turning-point for rethinking Kashmir or even Assam. I am sure he knows that history cannot be reversed. I feel that like a Zen monk, he is ironically, tragically, asking if history has to be repeated so that genocide becomes an everyday way of life. Nehru and Gandhi would have grasped the point. I am not quite sure that the current regime peddling patriotism as a commodity would.

One must thank the Dalai Lama for his courage and the sheer relevance of his story. Exile along with spirituality makes his compassion more hard-headed. He is seeking imaginations beyond the current conventions of thought. There is a search for a realism which goes beyond the hard-hearted nationalism of today. He is suggesting that the national security state living on surveillance is too arid a concept. Compassion opens minds and opens us to the mind of the other. His was not a knee-jerk critique of Nehru, but he was imagining a Nehru beyond the current

pantheons of Nehru ambushing history instead of being ambushed by it; a Nehru who could have jump-started an unbelievable era of history. We could have had an alternative polity which would have been an experiment in pluralistic federalism. All the Dalai Lama is suggesting is that a playful civilisation like India must not be a blinded nation state. He is opening us to ideas that are futuristic and lifesaving. I think India needs to remaster the art of listening, the acuteness of debate and discourse from our spiritual past. We need to listen to the Dalai Lama. He was not insulting us or our hospitality. In fact, he was repaying it with gratitude, with laughter and humour, with sincerity.

The echoes today

The question is, will India respond? All he is suggesting is the civilisational creativity India showed to Tibetans as honoured refugees now be applied to Assam, the Rohingya. India does not have a Gandhi but his teachings are alive, and one needs to invent a Gandhian solution within a Nehruvian framework. For a spiritual leader, politics is the art of the impossible. The Dalai Lama is explaining that India's spirituality has the realism to show our humdrum politicians the magical everydayness of an alternative solution.

Shiv Visvanathan is an academic associated with the Compost Heap, a group in pursuit of alternative ideas and imagination

Questioning a crackdown

The case for restricting the manufacture of oxytocin is neither rigorous nor reasoned



PRASHANT REDDY T.

The decision of the Ministry of Health to restrict, from September 1, the manufacture of oxytocin only to the public sector unit, Karnataka Antibiotics and Pharmaceuticals Ltd. (KAPL), has sparked fears of shortages and a disruption of supplies of this drug. Oxytocin – which is considered to be a critical drug in maternal health care – is made primarily by the private sector. The restriction is because of alleged misuse of the drug by dairy farmers on milk cattle to stimulate milk production. Both studies have been cited by the Ministers of Health and Agriculture in Parliament while responding to queries about the adverse effects of the drug.

The allegations regarding misuse have been made by the Union Minister for Women and Child Development, Maneka Gandhi, for over a decade. Minutes of the meetings of the Drugs Technical

Advisory Board (DTAB) and the Drugs Consultative Committee (DCC) – (statutory bodies under the Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940) record several representations by Ms. Gandhi to the government to do something about the misuse. The minutes also cite experts from the medical and veterinary sciences who advised the DTAB that oxytocin is required in the treatment of both humans and animals. Further, two studies by the Central government, by the Indian Council of Medical Research and the National Dairy Research Institute, conclude that the use of oxytocin does not have an adverse effect on either people or animals. With cattle, the danger of misuse is that it may cause addiction, in which case cattle do not react to normal milk ejection stimuli. Both studies have been cited by the Ministers of Health and Agriculture in Parliament while responding to queries about the adverse effects of the drug.

Basis of official response

So why has the Health Ministry restricted the manufacture of the drug to only the KAPL? The official



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end of its judgment, the court directed the State government to consider the feasibility of restricting manufacture to the public sector.

While the State government appears to have ignored these directions, the Central government, for some reason, decided to adopt the judgment as the basis of its order restricting manufacture to the public sector. The fact is that the High Court sought a study of the feasibility of restricting manufacture to the public sector; it never ordered the restriction to be imposed. From a reading of the government's order under Section 26A of the said Act, it appears that the government has gone ahead to restrict manufacture without conducting any kind of feasibility study.

Going forward

While courts generally defer to the government when it comes to orders issued under Section 26A of the said Act, they can still set aside such orders if convinced that there is nothing on record to support the final decision. This standard of review was reiterated most recently

in *Union of India v. Pfizer* (2017), where the Supreme Court concluded: "If the power under Section 26A is exercised on the basis of irrelevant material or on the basis of no material, the satisfaction itself that is contemplated by Section 26A would not be there and the exercise of the power would be struck down on this ground."

An order restricting manufacture of a crucial drug such as oxytocin on the grounds of alleged misuse will have to be based on a study of the degree of misuse, the demand for the drug, the manner in which the proposed restriction will affect the supply of the drug, and also its impact on public health. The government has not conducted such a study. The Delhi High Court, which is hearing a challenge against the government's order, should signal to the government that regulation of drugs has to be rigorous and reasoned. It cannot resemble policy quackery.

Prashant Reddy T. is an Assistant Professor at the National Academy of Legal Studies and Research (NALSAR), Hyderabad

Two-way trade

Bilateral trade ties between India and Pakistan have undoubtedly remained hostage to the political vagaries of the relationship but only in a limited fashion (Editorial page, "The market across the border", August 15). In 1948-49, for instance, India accounted for 56% of Pakistan's exports – this despite the sovereignty of Jammu and Kashmir being disputed; Pakistan simultaneously sourced 32% of its imports from India. India continued to remain Pakistan's largest trading partner for the next several years.

Reflecting, once again, on the link between trade and political relations, India accorded Pakistan "Most Favoured Nation" (MFN) status in 1996. But trade can flourish only if India and Pakistan are able to sort out the festering issue of terrorism.

AKSHAYKUMAR SINGH, Ankleswar, Gujarat

Trade can flourish between the two neighbours but there are several irritants. The boundary dispute has still to be sorted out. The growing menace of state-sponsored terrorism looms large which

is affecting the creation of mutual trust between the two neighbours. If solutions can be found, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation can be a good platform for talks on the way forward. The leadership in both nations should aim to spread growth and prosperity in the region.

ANAND RANJAN, Patna, Bihar

■ The article was an eye-opener as far as value chain development in specific items of trade is concerned. But for such magic to happen, India and Pakistan have to find concrete solutions to bridge the trust deficit, security issues and trader concerns. People-to-people contact and trade can work wonders.

DEVENDR JHA, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh

Lateral entry

A bureaucratised process to select outside experts is self-defeating (Editorial page, "Making 'lateral entry' work", August 14). It facilely assumes that people will queue up to offer their services to the government. Therefore, the government should offer positions to identified outsiders based on

the background and experience of the shortlisted candidates. To function in a risk-averse system bogged by procedural rigidity will be a huge challenge for outsiders. It is not enough that experts bring fresh and bold ideas to public governance; the system should be flexible and quick enough to execute proposals to reap the benefits of innovation. Files take an inordinately long time to move across tables, with little to no accountability for delays caused as a result of lethargy and inefficiency. Time norms should strictly be adhered to for file movements with in-built accountability for lapses. The slothful administrative system needs to reinvent itself before exploring purported panaceas such as the induction of experts into the government.

V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN, Thiruvananthapuram

■ Lateral entry is not a new concept in public sector undertakings where professionals such as chartered accountants, engineers and those qualified in business administration are recruited – a practice

prevailing in most nationalised banks. Those who have attained this level by virtue of their seniority align themselves well with the lateral entrants and there has not been an instance of conflict of interest that has ever surfaced – at least enough to draw the attention of the media.

That said, a 'lateral entry bureaucrat' can be of no match to a serving civil servant whose administrative skills are enhanced by the experience he gains at field levels. Apart from the shadow of nepotism, red-tapism and corruption that follows all government bureaucracies, those who have gained access through lateral entry have to consistently prove their capability, credibility, trustworthiness and, most importantly, their integrity.

N. VISVESWARAN, Chennai

The DNA Bill

As one of the persons involved in the earlier stages of drafting of the DNA Bill that is now under consideration for enactment, I would say that the criticism of Helen Wallace of GeneWatch UK (OpEd page, "Decoding the DNA Bill"),

August 9) is condescending and somewhat hypocritical. The DNA Bill has been drafted based on the statutes in vogue for over two decades in other countries, including the U.K. and the U.S., but the only reference the writer makes to any of the other countries is to indicate the costs of DNA database management in the U.K. Why has she not mentioned that the criteria adopted by these countries for entry and storage of DNA data are so wide-ranging as to cover even larger categories of persons in conflict with the law than is envisaged in our draft Bill?

Or that GeneWatch UK has been unable to exert much influence on these matters in its own country of incorporation? My appeal to her is to please allow India too to progress.

J. GOWRI SHANKAR, Hyderabad

A word of advice

It appears that it has become a habit for Congress president Rahul Gandhi to level wild allegations against the BJP and the Prime Minister "Rahul lashes out at Modi, KCR", August 15 and "PM Modi has an anti-Dalit mindset, charges Rahul",

August 10). They also show his desperation and impatience. It is time that his colleagues, especially his party seniors, advise him not to be self-righteous and get carried away. Credibility and greatness are to be earned.

C.G. KURIAKOSE, Kothamangalam, Kerala

Playing Tests

Indian Test cricketers hardly ever play first-class matches at home, except for when they are out of form or are not in the T20 or ODI teams. When your best players face off against each other in a T20 tournament (IPL) and not the Ranji or Duleep Trophies, the results that we are now getting abroad are not surprising.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India needs to ensure that these players play a minimum number of Ranji and Duleep Trophy matches for them to be eligible for Test selection ('Sport' page, 'Between Wickets' – "The World No. 1 team ought to be made of sterner stuff" and "Don't give up on us", both August 15).

SAURABH SINHA, Bhilai, Chhattisgarh

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The roadmap to military reform

We need to understand the Indian Air Force's arguments on any piecemeal integration initiative



ARJUN SUBRAMANIAN



"Evidence shows that successful reform has always been driven by either a multipronged approach at all levels or a sequential one beginning at the top." Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa, Navy Chief Admiral Sunil Lanba, and Chief of the Army Staff General Bipin Rawat at India Gate, New Delhi, on the occasion of Army Day 2017. ■PTI

In the debate on reform in the Indian military, there is a need for clear policy-driven directives that meet India's national security needs and challenges.

A recent historical overview would indicate just how confused things are, which doesn't augur well for a 'leading power'. The initial flavour of the debate in the decades following the Group of Ministers' report, the Kargil Review Committee report, and the Naresh Chandra Committee report focused on a restructuring of higher defence organisation as the first step. This was intended to improve synergy among different tools of statecraft (bureaucracy, military, research and development, intelligence, internal security mechanisms, and more). When very little traction was seen in converting this into structural changes within the Ministry of Defence, and sharing of expertise, the debate shifted to the second tier of reform in the operational realm. This has unfortunately pitted the three services against one another in a series of turf wars that have ranged from control over space to control over cyber and special forces.

Targeting the IAF

When these turf wars did not result in the proposed space, cyber and special forces commands that were to complement the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff and the Andaman and Nicobar Command as stepping stones to integration, one more hat was thrown into the ring – that of standalone integrated theatre commands. Without considering any restructuring of higher defence organisation, creation of Chief of the Defence Staff, or debating whether these theatre commands would be accompanied by a dilution in the operational control of the respective service chiefs, the debate now largely targets the Indian Air Force (IAF) in a subtle manner as being the 'spoiler' in what is otherwise a largely consensual approach to integration.

It is important to reiterate some of the core arguments that the IAF has in opposition to any piecemeal integration initiative. If there is any service that is truly 'joint' in terms of participation in statecraft or military operations in tandem with other tools, particularly as first responders, it is the IAF. There has never been any recorded criticism or shortfalls in the contribution of the IAF reported by the Indian Army or Navy to the political executive at apex forums like the Combined Commanders' Conference. If the flying task of the IAF in terms of its distribution between joint and exclusive tasks is scrutinised, conservative figures would reveal more than 60% as being committed to the former. The IAF is cognisant of its pivotal role in determining the trajectory of any limited high-intensity conflict in any kind of terrain.

Capturing ground beyond a few kilometres or taking physical control of vast maritime spaces for prolonged durations are no longer sustainable operations of war as they arguably result in avoidable depletion of combat potential. This causes unacceptable attrition in limited but high-tempo operations. It is in this context that air power would offer a viable alternative by shaping 'battle spaces' adequately before the other services enter combat.

The creation of large Naval and Ar-

my aviation arms demonstrates the IAF's understanding that there is a need to complement its dwindling resources with air arms that could act as tactical responders at best till the IAF brings its cutting-edge skills into the area to act as a decisive sword-arm.

Apprehensions over reserves
With such a deep understanding of joint operations, it is impossible to imagine that the reservations expressed by the IAF leadership in supporting the creation of integrated theatre commands in isolation is tantamount to stonewalling. Dissection of the recently conducted exercise, Gaganshakti, would provide a quantitative analysis of this assertion. The main apprehensions of the IAF leadership not only revolve around how best to exploit its dwindling offensive resources if they are hived off to multiple theatre commands, but also how the limited availability of enabling equipment and platforms (AWACS, refuelers, electronic warfare platforms and more) could seriously jeopardise operations even in a single-adversary limited conflict. (This conflict could involve up to three of the proposed theatre commands, including the Indian Navy.) To explain the resource crunch, the U.S.'s Pacific Command (PACOM) and Central Command (CENTCOM) have their own air assets that are first sup-

plemented by reserve units from the U.S. in emergency situations; they are not pooled in from other theatre commands. So, where will our reserves come from when the mantra today in the IAF is 'to do more with less'?

It is not my mandate to argue why the Indian Army and Navy may be able to support the theatre command concept without much churning/diversion of assets. I will only say this: please listen to the operational argument offered by the IAF and carry out an independent analysis of how India's combat capability will be distributed if a theatre concept is to be viable.

India's armed forces have little experience in training, staffing and exercising Joint Task Forces based on at least a division-sized land component. Creation of three division-sized task forces for operations in varied terrain, including out-of-area contingency operations, could be mulled over. These would be commanded by an Army, Navy and Air Force three-star officer, respectively, reporting to the Chairman of the Chief of Staffs Committee. This could offer real lessons in integration.

The solution for reform

Along with these turf wars has been an out-of-the-box proposition that a bottom-up approach may be the answer to India's quest for integration. Historical evidence of military reform (in Prussia, the U.S., the U.K., France and now China) shows that successful reform has always been driven by either a multipronged and simultaneous approach at all levels, or a sequential one beginning at the top. Any other approach that leaves the bottom and the top unattended is fraught with risk.

National security reforms and restructuring are bound to have far-reaching consequences and call for political sagacity, wisdom and vision. Ideally speaking, a concurrent three-pronged approach to military reform would be ideal. Such an approach should respect the collective wisdom of past reports and take into account contemporary political and security considerations.

Arjun Subramanian is a retired fighter pilot from the IAF and a military historian. He is currently a Visiting Professor at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, U.S.

Probing an amendment

Recent changes to the anti-corruption law are very worrying



N. K. SINGH

In the monsoon session, Parliament passed certain amendments to laws on corruption, which could have a far-reaching effect. Among them, the focus here is on two aspects: one requiring prior approval for initiating investigation into allegations of corruption against public servants, and the other requiring prior sanction for prosecution of public servants.

Need for approval

Section 6A of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act has been amended, reiterating the requirement of prior approval for initiating investigation of corruption cases not only against Joint Secretaries and above, but all categories of public servants.



The only exception to this is cases of traps in which such public servants are caught red-handed while taking bribe. Also, till now under Section 19 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, previous sanction of the competent authority was required to prosecute public servants, under various sections of the Act. This safeguard has been extended to retired public servants.

One worrying factor is the amendment requiring prior approval of the government to even initiate an investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into allegations of corruption against public servants. Under the law of the land, the police has unfettered jurisdiction to initiate investigation into a crime or acts of corruption, once it gets credible information. There are Supreme Court rulings that even the courts can't interfere in this exercise of power by a competent investigating agency. However, political authorities have been trying to appropriate this power from the CBI. It first came in the shape of the Single Directive under the Rajiv Gandhi government, which was confined to senior officers only. A long legal battle was fought before the Supreme Court, challenging the legality of the directive. The court eventually set it aside, in what came to be known as the Vineet Narain case. The bench, headed by the then Chief Justice of India, J.S.Verma, had held that the Single Directive was liable to be quashed as untenable in law.

While arguing in the case, the Attorney General had sought to justify the Directive on the ground that it was the Minister's ultimate

responsibility to Parliament for the functioning of the agencies. On this point, the Supreme Court had said: "All the powers of the Minister are subject to the condition that none of them would extend to permit the Minister to interfere with the course of investigation and prosecution in any individual case and in that respect the concerned officers are to be governed entirely by the mandate of the law and the statutory duty cast upon them."

The court quoted with approval, as has been done in scores of cases, the caution administered by Lord Denning in *Regina v. Metropolitan Police Commissioner* (1968). Indicating the duty of Police Commissioner, Lord Denning stated: "I have no hesitation, however, in holding that, like every constable in the land, he should be, and is, independent of the executive... I hold it to be the duty of the Commissioner of Police, as it is of every chief constable, to enforce the law of the land... in all these things he is not the servant of anyone, save of the law itself."

The burden of the court order was that under the scheme of the criminal justice system and the rule of law, which we have adopted and have been practising, the police and the CBI are bound by the law and the Constitution to investigate a crime reported to them, if there is credible information. They have jurisdiction as per law and that the power to register and proceed with the investigation must remain unhindered. Once the investigation is complete and the police or the CBI is ready with the report on the investigation, other authorities come into play.

Political compulsions

But even after the Directive was set aside, the political class brought it back in the Central Vigilance Commission Act of 2003. This led to protests and was challenged before the court. In 2014, the Supreme Court set aside this provision of the Act. Inter alia, the court had observed, "The very power of CBI to enquire and investigate into the allegations of bribery and corruption against a certain class of public servants and officials is subverted and impinged by Section 6A." It also observed, "The scheme of Section 155 and Section 156 CrPC indicates that the local police may investigate a senior Government officer without previous approval of the Central Government. However, CBI can not do so in view of Section 6A."

The recent amendment, therefore, is retrograde in nature and is likely to be quashed if contested in the apex court.

N.K. Singh, a former Joint Director, CBI, is currently member the Janata Dal (United) National Executive

SINGLE FILE

Sanitised stories

Bollywood biopics are either adulterated or a whitewash, but there are some exceptions that give hope

KUNAL RAY


I saw *Sanju* on the day of its release and it left me cold. It reaffirmed my view that Bollywood rarely gets biopics right. Bollywood biopics are either adulterated or a complete whitewash because we don't like to see our heroes flawed. A flawed hero, after all, is Bollywood blasphemy.

Often these films are designed to give a new lease of life to the persons they are modelled on, or they transform into mouthpieces for the wronged central characters for whom they are making amends. Watch *Daddy*, based on the life of gangster-turned-politician Arun Gawli, or *Haseena Parkar*, based on the life of Dawood Ibrahim's sister, Haseena Parkar. These characters are not heroes by any stretch of the imagination, but if the film is a biopic, or is even loosely based on some real-life account, Bollywood follows a formula. Even *Mary Kom*, based on the boxer, or *Rang Rasiya*, based on the life of Raja Ravi Varma, furthers the myths created around the eponymous central character who is rendered a one-dimensional hero prototype. You ought not to think of these characters as regular people but as demigods or goddesses you must admire.

In fact, films such as *Mary Kom*, *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* (on Milkha Singh) and *M.S. Dhoni: The Untold Story* have spawned a new genre: the Bollywood sports biopic film. Make a tearjerker rags-to-riches story, eschew all mention of caste and gender politics, include inane songs and some adrenaline-pumping sports sequences, and you have a sanitised Bollywood biopic. These films are mere spectacles. They do not intend to ignite any dialogue, even about things that are wrong with the sports ecosystem in the country.

An exception is Anurag Kashyap's *Mukkabaaz*, which chronicles the struggles of a lower caste boxing champion. It is based on research on boxers from lower castes across U.P. and has begun conversations which will hopefully be sustained. The other exceptions in recent memory are *Shahid*, based on the life of lawyer and human rights activist Shahid Azmi, and *Dirty Picture*, based on the life of Silk Smitha. *Dirty Picture* features a deeply flawed female protagonist and exposes the abundant sexism in the film industry.

Coming back to *Sanju*, it is important to note that director Rajkumar Hirani and actor Sanjay Dutt are friends. In fact, Hirani almost single-handedly turned around Dutt's career with his much-lauded *Munna Bhai* franchise. Bollywood's proverbial bad boy did a role reversal in these films through his encouragement of Gandhigiri, which the audiences found most endearing.

I also often wonder what women are doing in these films. They are just straightjacketed ancillaries in a deeply patriarchal iconography.

But most of these biopics have silences woven into the script. Those, for me, are the real stories: to discover people for who they are and not showpieces meant for adulation.

The writer teaches literary and cultural studies at FLAME University, Pune



CONCEPTUAL

Lemons problem

ECONOMICS

This refers to a form of adverse selection wherein there is a degradation in the quality of products sold in the marketplace due to asymmetry in the amount of information available to buyers and sellers. Since sellers typically know more about any defects in the products that they sell to buyers, there is an opportunity for the sellers in the marketplace to sell low-quality products to unaware buyers. The idea was first proposed by American economist George Akerlof in his popular 1970 paper, "The market for lemons: Quality uncertainty and the market mechanism".

MORE ON THE WEB

Video: Monsoon deluge

cripples Kerala

<http://bit.ly/Keralaloodsvideo>

FAQ

The currency turmoil in Turkey

Its causes run deeper than Turkey's tensions with the U.S.

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

What happened to the Turkish lira?

The Turkish lira lost a fifth of its value against the U.S. dollar last week, hitting a new low on Monday before some recovery later in the week. The currency has lost over 40% of its value against the dollar this year.

What caused this?

The U.S. Treasury had recently sanctioned two Turkish Ministers in response to Turkey's continuing detention of American pastor Andrew Brunson on spying and terror charges. Mr. Brunson was detained in 2016 as part of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's crackdown following an unsuccessful coup against him. U.S. President Donald Trump also said last week that he would double import tariffs on Turkish steel and aluminium. While these tensions precipitated the lira's descent, there are

other underlying causes. The Turkish economy has been in overdrive, centred on a construction and consumption boom; inflation was more than 15% in July; and the country has had a high current account deficit and soaring foreign debt. A strengthening dollar and higher interest rates in the U.S. have compounded the lira's troubles. Mr. Erdogan's tightening grip on institutions has further exacerbated the situation.

How is Turkey reacting?

Mr. Erdogan has said that the U.S. has stabbed Ankara in the back. He also said that the lira would stabilise soon as there was no "economic basis" for its fall. The President urged Turks to boycott U.S. electronic goods, and slapped retaliatory tariffs on American cars and alcohol. The Turkish Interior Ministry is also probing 346 social media accounts for undermining confi-

dence in the economy. To calm markets, Turkey's central bank, on Monday, promised to provide the liquidity needed by banks. Finance Minister Berat Albayrak, who is also Mr. Erdogan's son-in-law, vowed to defend the lira. Turkish regulators also stepped in to curb foreign accounts from placing bets against the lira.

What are the wider financial ramifications?

On Tuesday, the Indian rupee breached the 70 mark against the dollar for the first time, largely caused by the lira's fall. Analysts have been concerned that the turmoil could hit other (emerging) markets. European banks that own significant stakes in Turkish lenders are also at risk. For now it looks like the lira is recovering but, longer term, Turkey will likely raise the already high interest rates, or it may even look to the IMF for financing.

FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO AUGUST 16, 1918.

Calcutta Moderates' Manifesto.

A manifesto signed by 29 leading moderate leaders of Bengal, including Messrs. Surendranath Banerjee, Prithvis Chandra Ray, Ananda Chandra Roy, Baikunthanath Sen, Ambica Charan Mozumdar, Sir Benode Mitter, Sir Nilratan Sircar and Mr. Provas Chandra Mitter, has just been published [in Calcutta] explaining at length the reason for the abstention of the moderate party of Bengal from the Special Congress to be held in Bombay a fortnight hence. They maintain there is a fundamental difference between the two schools of political thought, one recognising the limitations of the scheme based on the declaration of August 1917 and sincerity of its authors, while the other stand on the old Congress scheme and on absolute distrust. The manifesto deals with the resolutions of Madras and Bengal Special Conferences.

Child Murder Case. Accused Convicted.

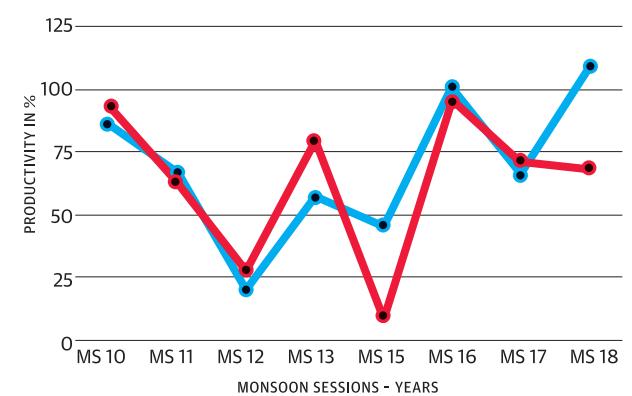
Major E.H.S. James, Sessions Judge, Civil and Military Station, to-day [August 14, Bangalore] delivered judgment on the Marwari child murder case in which Naga, a Hindu milkman, and Yesoda Bai, an Eurasian woman, were charged, the former with alleged murder and robbery and the latter with alleged murder, abetment of alleged murder and robbery. The case created considerable sensation in view of the fact that Yesoda Bai was the wife of a Hindu official of the Survey of India, and the mother of eight children and also in view of the extraordinary horrible nature of the crime as was revealed in the course of the trial.

DATA POINT

Taking care of business

The recently concluded monsoon session of the Lok Sabha was the most productive (110%) among all such sessions in the last nine years. Productivity is defined as the actual hours of sitting as a percentage of scheduled hours. The Rajya Sabha, on the other hand, was marred by disruptions and ended up with 68% productivity. Both Houses did much better compared to the previous Budget session of 2018, when productivity was a low 21% and 27%, respectively.

Productivity across monsoon sessions



FROM PAGE ONE

PM health scheme from September 25

"We tried to pass the Bill in the last session but there are those who have an interest in blocking it. It is my promise to my Muslim sisters that my government will try to get the Bill passed," Mr. Modi said.

Referring to the same session of Parliament, he expressed satisfaction at the passage of the SC/ST and OBC Bills.

Mr. Modi also emphasised the speed at which his government had moved on basic development work like providing power, housing and toilets in villages and small towns.

"Our government has added, in the last four years, double the number of direct tax payers from the last 70 years. I want the unsung tax payers of this country to know that my government is committed to ending leakage of public funds, and when you sit down for a meal be assured that a poor man and his family is also getting a meal under welfare programmes funded by your honestly paid tax," he said.

He spoke of anti-corruption measures and reassured taxpayers that their money was not being wasted in leakages of government funds.

Key legislation

The government has been struggling with its crackdown on corruption after bank scam accused Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi fled

India, but Prime Minister Modi pointed to several pieces of legislation passed by his government to tackle graft. "We have passed the banking reforms Bill, the bankruptcy code and the benami properties Act. We are a government that has the will to take tough decisions," he said, referring to what he termed a changed culture where those in Delhi's power corridors were finally removed from decision-making.

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He quoted Tamil poet Subramania Bharati to emphasise India's way to assuming some leadership in international fora. "India will show the world the way to freedom from all forms of slavery" he quoted from a poem by Bharati.

PM's speech hollow: Rahul

Modi failed to address key issues troubling the nation, says Congress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress president Rahul Gandhi unfurled the tricolour at the party headquarters on Monday in the presence of senior leaders, including former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and former party president Sonia Gandhi.

Though Mr. Gandhi did not speak to the media, he tweeted to "remember all those brave men and women, our freedom fighters, whose sacrifices and dedication helped us win our independence".

Reacting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Red Fort speech, the party dared him to accept the Congress president's challenge to have a public debate on issues such as the Rafale deal and other allegations of corruption, mob lynching and Chinese incursions.

A couple of days ago, Mr. Gandhi said, "Prime Minister won't be able to last a few seconds" if he accepted an open debate on Rafale.

The Congress's chief spokesperson, Randeep Surjewala, recalled how Mr. Modi,



Remembering the brave: Congress president Rahul Gandhi with other leaders during the flag hoisting ceremony at the AICC headquarters in New Delhi. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

in 2013, had created a Red Fort-like replica in Chhattisgarh from where he had challenged the then Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, to an open debate on issues such as corruption, threat to India's territorial integrity from China and Pakistan, the falling rupee and failing economy, the plight

of farmers and unemployment. "As Modiji addressed the nation for the fifth time today after taking over as the Prime Minister, we would like to ask him: are you ready for a debate on these very issues with Congress president Rahul Gandhi? Will you debate on the issue of corruption and Rafale and Vyapam and other corruption scams of your government about which you did not utter a single word from the precincts of the Red Fort," Mr. Surjewala asked.

The Congress described Mr. Modi's Independence Day address as "hollow" and devoid of truth and meaning for the common person as it did not talk about issues such as "women's safety, unemployment, growing atmosphere of hatred and discrimination".

Achche din is 'fake'
The Congress said people were now tired of the "fake" achche din (good days) promised by the BJP and are waiting for sachche din (truthful days).

Mr. Surjewala said the Prime Minister should not insult the contribution of millions of Indians by claiming that India got its rightful place in the world only after May 2014. There was a need to engage in a second struggle for independence from discrimination, unemployment, poverty, and from empty rhetoric and promises, he added.

India, China Armies meet in Ladakh
Stand-off at Demchok is yet to end

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Amid continuing transgression by China at Demchok in eastern Ladakh, the Armies of India and China held a ceremonial Border Personnel Meeting to mark India's Independence Day.

The meeting was held at Chushul-Moldo and Daulat Beg Oldie. The Indian delegations were led by Brigadier V.K. Purohit and Colonel Anil Kumar Sharma, and the Chinese delegations by Senior Colonel Wang Jun Xian and Lieutenant Colonel Li Ming Ju.

However, not far from the venues, a stand-off has been going on in Demchok since early July when Chinese troops intruded 300 metres into the Indian territory and pitched tents. Official sources said a group of Chinese soldiers entered the area, in the garb of nomads, and pitched five tents. However, four tents were removed within days, after India opened discussions between border commanders under the existing mechanisms.



One tent is still there, and the discussions are continuing, an official source said. The incident comes a year after the 73-day stand-off at the Doklam trijunction.

Transgressions are common along the unsettled Line of Actual Control.

The two countries have instituted several mechanisms to resolve such issues.

However, according to government figures, the number of transgressions by the People's Liberation Army into Indian territory has gone up from 272 in 2016 to 426 in 2017.

Army foils infiltration bid near LoC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

One soldier was injured as the Army foiled an attempt by infiltrators to enter the Naushera sector in the Pir Panjal Valley on Wednesday morning.

An Army spokesman said in Jammu that the troops noticed some movement along the Line of Control at 5.15 a.m. "On being challenged, the intruders opened fire on our troops, who responded in equal measure. One soldier sustained injuries and was

evacuated for treatment. His condition is stated to be stable," the spokesman said. "The White Knight Corps is keeping a strict and constant vigil across the LoC and all the security force are prepared to thwart any nefarious designs of Pakistan sponsored terrorists," he said.



Peace for all: J&K police taking part in Independence Day celebrations at Srinagar. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

Mainstream political parties welcome announcement on elections, but with a note of caution

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Mainstream political parties in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday welcomed, though with a rider, the announcement of panchayat polls made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Governor N.N. Vohra in their Independence Day speeches.

"In the recent past, all parties except the BJP had suggested postponement of the panchayat polls in view of the situation on the ground. Even the security establishment did not favour holding them now. We are ready to be part of the exercise only if the current administration provides a conducive atmosphere and security to the candidates," Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) spokesman Rafi Mir told *The Hindu*.

The PDP-BJP government,

which ruled the State from 2015 to this June, had to defer polls both for urban local bodies and panchayats twice in the past one year because of rising militancy and growing street protests in the

wake of civilian killings, especially in south Kashmir.

"We are hopeful the Governor took the security scenario into consideration and sought inputs from all security agencies before making

the announcement," Mr. Mir said.

National Conference provincial president Nasir Aslam Wani said the administration should not take a hasty decision.

"The Governor's administration has to ensure the situation is conducive on the ground for such an elaborate exercise," Mr. Wani said.

Other smaller regional parties asked the administration to move "cautiously as there was the threat of militant violence against potential candidates".

Jammu and Kashmir saw panchayat polls in 2011 after a gap of four decades. The fresh panchayat polls were supposed to be held in 2015.

The polls will elect over 33,849 grassroots representatives, including 4,130 sarpanches and 29,719 panchals. Besides, there are 80 urban local bodies.

Mr. Vohra on Wednesday announced that the elections to the urban local bodies would take place during September-October and the panchayat polls in phases during October-December.

'Simultaneous polls impossible this year'

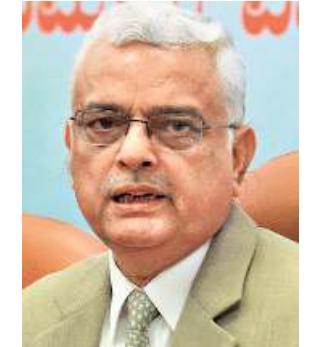
O.P. Rawat cites procedural issues

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Election Commissioner O.P. Rawat on Wednesday said the upcoming polls to four States were unlikely to be held together with that of the Lok Sabha in December due to various procedural issues and a shortage of election machinery.

"All the four States [Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Mizoram and Rajasthan] have to go to polls, which should be completed before December 15. All the VVPATs have to be delivered by November 30. The first-level checking [FLC] of machines will take one month. Even the machines to be delivered in October cannot be used as their FLC will be done by November 30. Therefore, in no way it can be done," he told *The Hindu*.

The current Lok Sabha continued to subsist and there was no talk about its dissolution as of now. Even



if the House were to be dissolved in September, the Commission had time till March for the preparations.

However, elections to the four Assemblies were due by December 15, he pointed out.

The term of the Mizoram Assembly ends on December 15, while those of the Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan Assemblies will end on January 5, January 7 and January 20 next year.

Centre may relax NRC guidelines

Time period for hearings on claims and objections likely to be extended

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Centre is mulling the relaxation of guidelines for migrant workers and labourers from other States who were not included in the final draft of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam that was published on July 30.

Under the revised standard operating procedure (SOP) prepared by the Centre that was filed in the Supreme Court a day ago, the nearly 40 lakh applicants not included in the final draft would get time till November 28 to file claims and objections. Earlier, the process of claims and objections



Claims can be filed till November 28. ■ AP

was to be done from August 30 to September 28. The court had asked the Centre to prepare a detailed SOP last week. The report was filed before the Supreme

Court Registry on Tuesday and it will be taken up for hearing on Thursday. The Centre informed the court that biometric details of the 40 lakh applicants will be recorded, and after the publication of the final NRC, legal residents of the country will be given Aadhaar numbers.

It said that during the course of the hearings by NRC authorities on disposing of claims and objections, the State government – in collaboration with the UIDAI – will undertake the process of biometric enrolment of all the applicants of NRC.

The government, which filed the SOPs to be adopted for disposing of claims and objections received is known.

objections, said that various organisations had made representations that adequate time period of three or four months be provided for filing the claims and objections.

The government said that Class-1 officers will be deployed by the State government and five hearings a day will take place or eight hearings for cases involving children aged 14 years or less. It said that though the hearings on claims and objections will commence from December 15, 2018, the timeline for disposal can only be firmed up once the actual number of claims and objections received is known.

'SP-BSP tie-up to fulfil the dream of Lohia, Ambedkar'

Akhilesh talks about 'united fight'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LUCKNOW With an SP-BSP tie-up on the cards for the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday invoked Ram Manohar Lohia and Bhim Rao Ambedkar – the icons of the two parties respectively – and talked about "fighting united" to fulfil their dreams.

"Lohia and Ambedkar had advocated a united fight for justice and unity for strengthening the country's future. We have got a chance to fulfil this dream," he told SP workers after hoisting the national flag at the party headquarters.

According to a parliamentary standing committee report tabled in Parliament last month, the Centre wanted to reduce the areas under the Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) in Assam but the State government did not concur.

Over the past two years, the Union Home Ministry has proposed reducing the areas under AFSPA in the northeast, only to face stiff resistance from the Army and the Defence Ministry. On Tuesday, over 300 Ar-

tists can be filed till November 28. ■ AP

tabled on July 19 said that with an improvement in the security situation in most northeast States, "the government should consider gradually reducing the area under AFSPA, especially in the States of Assam and Meghalaya".

Under Section 3 of the AFSPA, it can be invoked in places "where the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary".

AFSPA empowers the Army and Central forces personnel deployed in "disturbed areas" to kill anyone acting in contravention of

the law, arrest and search any premises without a warrant and provide cover to forces from prosecution and legal suits without the Centre's sanction.

Difference of opinion
The parliamentary panel report said there was some difference of opinion between the Government of India and the State government with regard to the areas to be declared "disturbed areas".

"The Committee is unable to comprehend the divergent perceptions of the situation in Assam. On the one hand,

the Ministry has asserted that there has been an improvement in the security situation in Assam and on the other hand, the area declared as disturbed area under the AFSPA has been increased on the plea that it is not the appropriate time to reduce the area.... This is a paradoxical situation that needs to be resolved," the report said.

The committee noted that the State government had notified the whole State as disturbed on the plea that it was not the right time to reduce the area under AFSPA.

Parliamentary panel says the Centre-State conflict over the extent of "disturbed" areas needs to be resolved

VIJAYA SINGH
NEW DELHI

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Festival of freedom: Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort; a motorcycle display by the Army in Bengaluru; and celebrations in high spirit in Guwahati. • SANDEEP SAXENA, V. SREENIVASA MURTHY & RITU RAJ KONWAR

Modi's big-ticket announcement is Ayushman Bharat

Health protection scheme for 10.74 crore beneficiary families and 50 crore Indian citizens

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

The healthcare sector has welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement in his Independence Day address that the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Abhiyaan, also known as Ayushman Bharat or the National Health Protection Mission (AB-NHPM), will be launched on September 25.

The government-sponsored health insurance scheme will provide free treatment for up to ₹5 lakh a family a year in any government or empanelled private hospitals all over India. Meant to help the poor and the economically deprived, the scheme will be available for 10.74 crore beneficiary families and about 50 crore Indian citizens.

Universal healthcare

Healthcare experts said Ayushman Bharat was an attempt to ensure that universal healthcare reached the weaker sections of society and it could raise the ratio of people availing primary and secondary healthcare.

"It is really good to see that the government is actively working on rolling out the policy on the ground.

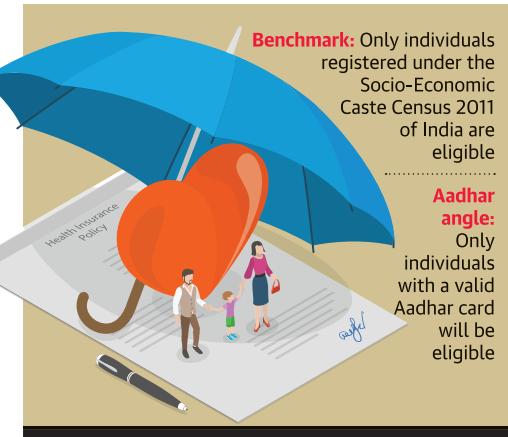
Insuring the masses

Key features of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Abhiyaan, to be officially launched on Sept. 25

Launch pad: The project will start on a pilot basis in 80-100 districts. October will see the second phase of expansion

Participants: 28 States/Union Territories have agreed to join the health insurance scheme. Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Odisha, Telangana and Delhi are yet to come on board

Identification: Beneficiaries will be required to use their registered mobile phone numbers as their ID number



WHO IS ELIGIBLE

Only financially weak and underprivileged members of the society will be eligible for the Scheme. A maximum of five members of such a family will get the insurance cover

said: "Today, nearly 80% of the healthcare in India is provided by the private healthcare system and to meet the burgeoning healthcare needs of Indian population through value-based medicine, the country needs a synchronised effort by both the private and public sectors."

"But the current framework of the scheme will not be beneficial for people who need tertiary care as the remunerations under the scheme will not be sufficient to avail value-based healthcare. Under the scheme, tertiary healthcare service providers will be forced to cut cost at every level, which will lead to offering substandard healthcare to patients under the scheme. They may not be able to avail the necessary medication, technology and clinical expertise to get the best outcome and will soon lose confidence in the system," Dr. Kumar said.

The healthcare sector has noted that the government should look at mandatory universal health cover for all sections of society, which will increase the pool and allow cross-subsidy between the government and the private sector.

The government has made this a technology-driven initiative, which is a great step to ensure transparency and effective implementation, and at a grander scale, this initiative would encourage more work in development of overall health infrastructure in the country," said Sanjeev Gupta of the Kusum Group of Companies, a pharmaceutical organisation.

"We welcome these steps taken by the government as growing healthcare infrastructure in the country will help 50 crore poor people access medicines and essential drugs. What we look forward from the government is a mechanism which encourages public-private partnership while ensuring that quality medicines reach the masses."

With human space flight, India to push frontiers

ISRO chief says most of the critical technologies are ready

MADHUMATHI D.S.
BENGALURU

Gaganyaan, the human space flight programme green-flagged and set for 2022 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is highly doable, Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation K. Sivan said here soon after it was announced on Wednesday.

V.R. Lalithambika, a specialist in advanced launcher technologies, will helm the project as Director of the Human Space Flight Project.

The mission is estimated at ₹9,000 crore. Most of the critical technologies and hardware required for the project are ready or have been demonstrated by its centres. ISRO would now stitch them up into a complete project and present a comprehensive project report to get a formal approval of the government, Dr. Sivan said. "We have tested the necessary critical technologies required for the human space flight programme and are confident of achieving it as stated by the Prime Minister," he said.

"We will now speed up the paper work and submit a project report for formal approval. We may immediately need around ₹2,000 crore for enhancing infrastructure and technologies at two or three centres and we will be asking for this amount," he told *The Hindu*.

When it achieves the mission, India would be the fourth nation to circle Earth after the Soviets, the Americans and the Chinese. In 1984, India's first astronaut Wing Commander (retd.) Rakesh Sharma orbited Earth as part of a Soviet mission.

2022: India's space odyssey

What is the Human Space Flight Project all about?



- In 2022, 3 Indian astronauts, mostly flight test pilots from the IAF, will circle earth for seven days from a distance of 300-400 km
- They will travel in a 7,000-kg crew capsule. A GSLV-MkIII launch vehicle will lift them to their orbit
- The flight will take off from a refurbished launchpad at Sriharikota
- The entire project could cost roughly between ₹7,000 to 9,000 crore

- Food, suits and other life systems for crew
- Astronaut selection & training
- Two unmanned trials, the first in two years
- Improved launchpad at SDSC, Sriharikota

A 15-year-old space dream coming true

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Chairman K. Sivan was heading the VSSC until January.

About three months ago, after the routine reviews of activities across centres, Dr. Sivan brought V.R. Lalithambika, who specialised in advanced launch vehicle activities at the VSSC, over to Bengaluru and named her the Director of the newly created office for Human Space Project. If ISRO was caught by surprise by the early date set by the Prime Minister, it hid that well; a top official had said at a premier science event last year that the HSP may happen in 2024. Until Wednesday's announcement, ISRO officials fought shy of talking about their most high-profile and expensive mission to date.

Many activities related to the Human Space Flight Project were helmed by the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) in Thiruvananthapuram and the Launch Vehicle Programme Office at the ISRO headquarters, Antariksh Bhavan, in Bengaluru. ISRO

A post-truth speech, says Yechury

Opposition leaders say Modi's address resembled an election speech

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW

The Opposition termed the Independence Day address of Prime Minister Narendra Modi an election campaign speech, packed with rhetoric and divorced from reality.

"It is a classic post-truth speech which was completely divorced from the ground realities and harps solely on propaganda. The Prime Minister absolutely did not mention anything about the killing of innocents by mobs and did not spell out steps that his government plans to take to stop it," CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said.

"He spoke of Ambedkar



and Subramanya Bharati. I want to ask him, who is working against the vision of these two men? It is the BJP and the RSS," CPI leader D. Raja said.

He slammed the Prime Minister for saying that development had been at a snail's

pace before 2014. "If that is the case, then he is also criticising his own party's government led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee from 1998 to 2004," he said.

NCP MP Majeed Memon said: "The Triple Talaq Bill is a farce and only a political instrument. If this government was keen on passing it, why was it not listed from the very first day of the monsoon session. Why put it up only on the last day of the session, which was a Friday, a day marked for private members' Bills?"

Manoj Jha, Rashtriya Janata Dal MP, said the Modi government had read the writing on the wall since the

PM's address was more like a campaign speech rather than a sombre Independence Day address.

Political style

BSP chief Mayawati dubbed it an "election speech" delivered in political style. Ms. Mayawati said Mr. Modi's speech failed to provide new energy to citizens and focused on boasting about the achievements of his own government. "It would have been better if the annual speech from the Red Fort was not used for political greed. But it seems like the BJP will never rise from its narrow-minded and malicious politics," she said.

Pranab writes an open letter

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former President Pranab Mukherjee unfurled the national flag at his official residence on Independence Day and wrote an open letter asking people to defend India's multi-cultural society.

"Our founding fathers, after much deliberation and drawing from our ancient ethos, envisioned a secular state, free of religious, caste or racial distinction. We must ensure that in every walk of life, the characteristics of a multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-racial society are defended," he said.

Breath of freedom amid constraints of security

National capital was on high alert, with entrances sealed and movement of heavy vehicles restricted

SAURABH TRivedi
NEW DELHI

Amid tight security, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on Independence Day.

Mr. Modi unfurled the national flag as a 21-gun salute resounded at 7.30 a.m.

The national capital was on high alert and a multi-layer security system was in place around the Red Fort. Various entry points were sealed and movement of heavy vehicles was restricted. The 3-km area across the Red Fort was sanitised for general vehicles. Buses, cars and government vehicles with valid passes were allowed to enter. NSG commandos and women commandos of the Delhi Police's SWAT unit were deployed



Long view: Security personnel at the Red Fort during the Independence Day celebrations. • SANDEEP SAXENA

for security in the Red Fort and outside.

"Multiple security units comprising Delhi police, paramilitary, Intelligence Bureau, military intelligence, NSG and other units were deployed for the Prime Minister's security," a senior police official said.

Students among the au-

since it was the Prime Minister's last speech of this term from the Red Fort, I do not want to miss it. I really appreciate Mr. Modi for his concern on women safety and supporting capital punishment for rape accused," said Neha Bhatia, a spectator.

Excited bunch

A group of differently abled children were accompanied by an interpreter who translated the Prime Minister's speech and other announcements to them live. "Children were excited to be part of the event. I and three other interpreters helped them to understand the speech.

"I always wanted to be a part of the Independence Day event at Red Fort and

to overcome language barrier for hearing and speech challenged people," said Sanskriti Bhatia, an interpreter from Sai Swayam Society.

As anticipated by the security agencies, Mr. Modi, after delivering his speech and moving out of the Red Fort in his cavalcade, got out of the vehicle to meet schoolchildren who had performed at the event. He interacted with them while security persons were seen having a tough time controlling the enthusiastic children who tried to shake hands with Mr. Modi.

"We have to form a new nation and achieve new heights," said Mr. Modi in his speech which ended with chanting of *Bharat Mata Ki Jai*.

Turkey retaliates against U.S. tariffs

Doubles taxes on some U.S. imports, including alcohol and cars; Washington warns of more steps

REUTERS

ISTANBUL

Turkey doubled tariffs on some U.S. imports, including alcohol, cars and tobacco on Wednesday in retaliation for U.S. moves, while the lira rallied further after the central bank's liquidity moves had the effect of supporting the currency.

Ankara acted amid increased tension between the two NATO allies over Turkey's detention of a Christian American pastor and other diplomatic issues, which have helped send the lira tumbling to record lows against the dollar.

The currency has lost nearly 40% against the dollar this year, driven by worries over President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's growing influence on the economy and his repeated calls for lower interest rates despite high inflation. It rebounded some 6% on Wednesday, briefly strengthening to less than 6 against the dollar, after the central bank squeezed lira liquidity in the market.



Show of support: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan with Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani in Ankara on Wednesday. ■ REUTERS

A decree signed by Mr. Erdogan doubled Turkish tariffs on passenger cars to 120%, on alcoholic drinks to 140% and on leaf tobacco to 60%. Tariffs were also doubled on goods such as cosmetics, rice and coal.

'Deliberate attacks'
The duties were raised in response to the U.S. administration's "deliberate attacks on

our economy", Vice-President Fuat Oktay wrote on Twitter. Last Friday, U.S. President Donald Trump said he had authorised higher tariffs on aluminium and steel imports from Turkey.

The U.S. was the fourth largest source of imports to Turkey last year, accounting for \$12 billion of imports, according to IMF statistics. Turkey's exports to the U.S. last

year amounted to \$8.7 billion, making it Turkey's fifth-largest export market.

The NATO allies have been at loggerheads over a wide range of topics, including diverging interests in Syria, Ankara's ambition to buy Russian defence systems and Andrew Brunson, a pastor on trial for terrorism charges.

Mr. Trump has repeatedly asked for Mr. Brunson's release, while Ankara said the decision was up to the court.

Pastor's appeal rejected

On Wednesday, a Turkish court in the Aegean province of Izmir, where Mr. Brunson is on trial, rejected the pastor's appeal to be released from house arrest.

Washington warned more economic pressures may be in store for Turkey if it refuses to release Mr. Brunson, a White House official said on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Qatar pledged \$15 billion of investment in Turkey on Wednesday that a government source in Ankara

said would be channelled into its banks and financial markets. The investment package was announced after Qatar's Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani met Mr. Erdogan in the capital, as Turkey grapples with a collapsing lira and a worsening commercial and political stand-off with NATO ally the United States.

Following the Qatar news, the lira firmed briefly to 5.8699 from 6.04 to the dollar, before easing back to 6.0500 by 1658 GMT. Turkey and Qatar have traditionally maintained good ties.

Ankara stood by Doha after Saudi Arabia and other Arab states severed diplomatic, trade and travel ties with Qatar last year, accusing it of financing terrorism, a charge Doha denies.

In another high-profile case, a Turkish court ruled on Wednesday to release from jail Taner Kilic, the local chair of Amnesty International, a researcher from the rights group said.

witness, another student named Ali Ahmad, said as many as 100 students may have been inside when the bomber struck, but officials have not yet confirmed the figure.

No claim

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, which was swiftly condemned by President Ashraf Ghani in a statement.

At least 25 killed as suicide bomber hits Kabul school

'He detonated himself inside the education centre in capital'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

At least 25 people, many believed to be students, were killed when a suicide blast ripped through a school in a Shia area of Kabul on Wednesday, officials said, the latest assault on Afghanistan's war-weary capital.



A man who was injured in Wednesday's suicide bombing in Kabul. ■ AP

Both the Taliban and the Islamic State group (IS) have carried out devastating, high-profile attacks in Kabul in recent months, but the Taliban quickly denied they were involved.

Grinding conflict
Afghanistan has been reeling from a recent upsurge in militant violence, including a massive, days-long Taliban onslaught on the eastern city of Ghazni.

At least 100 security forces were killed in the fight for Ghazni, officials have said, with unconfirmed fears that at least as many civilians died.

Afghan security forces, beset by killings, desertions and low morale, have taken staggering losses since US-led NATO combat forces pulled out at the end of 2014.

But it is ordinary Afghans who have taken the brunt of the violence in the grinding conflict, especially in Kabul.

Russia comes to the aid of China farmers

ATUL ANEJA
BEIJING

As the trade war between China and the U.S. escalates, Russia is coming to Beijing's rescue by offering a million hectares of land suitable for cultivating soybeans and other agri-products.

The Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post* has quoted Valery Dubrovskiy, director of investment for Russia's Far East Investment and Export Agency, as saying that several Chinese companies had already expressed interest in the deal.

"We expect most of the in-

vestment to come from China," he said. "We expect 50% from China, 25% from Russia and 25% from other countries like Japan and Korea."

In retaliation
Mr. Dubrovskiy pointed out that with the latest announcement, the entire three million hectares of arable land in Russia's Far Eastern Federal District is now available to foreign farmers. Apart from soybeans – of which China is the world's biggest consumer – the area can also be used for growing wheat.

China has curbed soybean imports from the U.S. by raising tariffs by 25% on a range of products, including the legume, in retaliation against a similar move by Washington in early July.

Stopped imports
Chinese Vice Agriculture Minister Han Jun had earlier said that since July 6, Chinese firms had "basically stopped" importing soybeans – a product that is used for making cooking oil, biodiesel and high protein meals for farm animals.

He had warned that the

U.S. would find it "very difficult" to regain the Chinese market, once Beijing found reliable alternative suppliers.

Despite Russia broadening its footprint in Beijing's food-security equation, analysts have pointed out that China may not be getting the best cultivable land in the Far East, which has already been parcelled to domestic farmers. Besides, a large influx may trigger local frictions, in view of the perception that Chinese farmers are using excessive fertiliser and pesticides for cultivation.

New Pakistan Parliament elects PTI candidate as Speaker

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's newly-elected Parliament on Wednesday voted an ally of Imran Khan as the Speaker of its lower house, kicking off the process of transition and handing over of powers to the new government.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidate Asad Qaiser was sworn in as the Speaker of the National Assembly, Parliament's lower house, Dawn News reported.

Mr. Qaiser, the former

rejected. The PTI emerged as the single largest party with 116 seats in July 25 elections.

Its number increased to 125 after nine independent members joined it and finally reached 158 after it was allotted 28 out of 60 seats reserved for women and 10 seats reserved for minorities.

The PTI has nominated Mr. Khan for the top post and he is scheduled to take oath on August 18 at the President House.



Asad Qaiser. ■ AP

U.K. attacker is a Briton of Sudanese origin: source

REUTERS
BIRMINGHAM

A man detained on suspicion of carrying out a terrorist attack outside Britain's Parliament is Salih Khater, a British citizen of Sudanese origin, said a European security source on Wednesday.

Police believe a car was deliberately driven into pedestrians and cyclists, injuring three people, before ramming a security barrier outside Parliament on Tuesday morning.

Khater is currently being questioned on suspicion of preparing acts of terrorism and on Wednesday was further arrested on suspicion of attempted murder, although police have said he is not cooperating with detectives. The security source said that Khater was from Birmingham, central England, and was not known to security services before Tuesday.

Nassar Mahmood, a trustee at nearby Birmingham Central Mosque, said that he had spoken to members of the local Sudanese community, and understood that Khater had gone to London for visa reasons. "We ascertained that he was there to gain a visa from the Sudanese Embassy to go back to visit Sudan," he told Sky News.

Israel detains prominent Jewish-American critic

He says questioning lasted for an hour

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM

A prominent Jewish-American commentator who has been critical of Israel's policies said on Monday that he was detained by Israeli airport authorities and interrogated about his political views before he was allowed to enter the country.

Peter Beinart, a contributor to *The Atlantic*, CNN and the Israeli daily *Haaretz*, considers himself a supporter of Israel, but has been an outspoken critic of the government's hard-line policies toward the Palestinians. In an interview, Mr. Beinart said he was pulled aside when he arrived with his family on Sunday to attend a relative's bar mitzvah. Mr. Beinart said he was sent to a small room where a security official asked about his political activities.

He said he was then asked about his participation in a nonviolent West Bank protest two years ago. He said the interview ended after he said he would not be joining any protests on his current visit. He was released after calling a well-known Israeli human rights lawyer. In all, he said he was held for over an hour.

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Catholic Church hid abuse of 1,000 children in Pennsylvania

Grand jury says there are likely thousands more victims

Laurie Goodstein
Sharon Otterman

Bishops and other leaders of the Roman Catholic Church in Pennsylvania covered up child sexual abuse by more than 300 priests over a period of 70 years, persuading victims not to report the abuse and law enforcement not to investigate it, according to a searing report issued by a grand jury on Tuesday.

The report, which covered six of the state's eight Catholic dioceses and found more than 1,000 identifiable victims, is the broadest examination yet by a government agency in the U.S. of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. The report said there are likely thousands more victims whose records were lost or who were too afraid to come forward.

It catalogues horrific instances of abuse: a priest who raped a young girl in hospital; a victim tied up and whipped with leather straps by a priest, and another priest who was al-



Bishop Lawrence Persico from Erie, Pennsylvania, apologised to victims. ■ AP

lowed to stay in ministry after impregnating a young girl and arranging for her to have an abortion.

High ranks

The scandal has shaken the Catholic Church for more than 15 years, ever since explosive allegations emerged out of Boston in 2002. But even after paying billions of dollars in settlements and adding new prevention programmes, the church has been dogged by a scandal that is now reaching its highest ranks.

The Pennsylvania report

comes soon after the resignation of Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, the former archbishop of Washington, who is accused of sexually abusing young priests and seminarians.

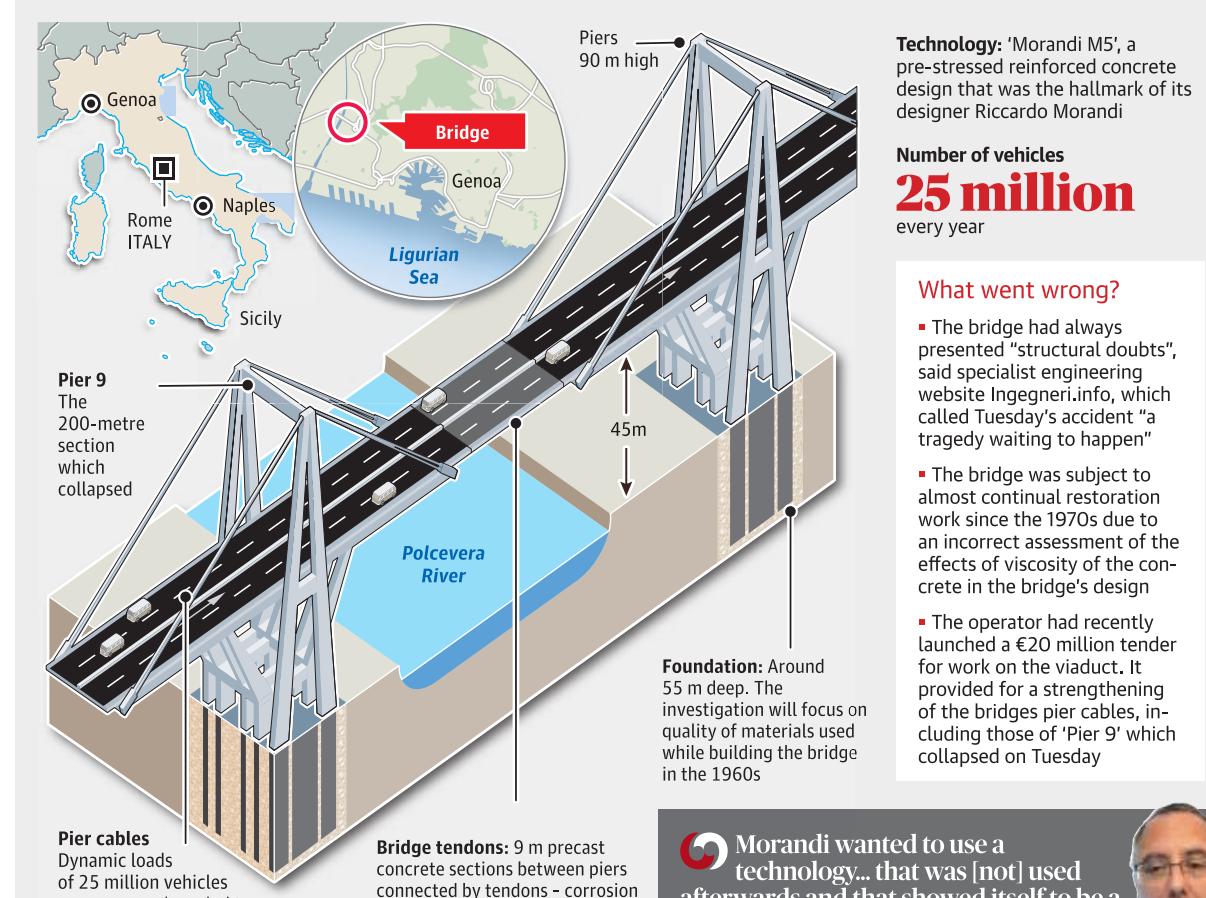
"Despite some institutional reform, individual leaders of the church have largely escaped public accountability," the jury wrote. "Priests were raping little boys and girls, and the men of God who were responsible for them not only did nothing; they hid it all. For decades."

The grand jury said that while some accused priests were removed from the ministry, the church officials who protected them remained in office or even got promotions. One bishop named in the report as vouching for an abusive priest was Cardinal Donald Wuerl, now the archbishop of Washington.

"Until that changes, we think it is too early to close the book on the Catholic Church sex scandal," the grand jury wrote. NY TIMES

Flawed design?

Genoa's Morandi motorway bridge, a 200 m portion of which collapsed on Tuesday, killing 39, has been riddled with structural problems since its construction in the 1960s



Transgender candidate wins U.S. primary

Hallquist, running for Governor from Vermont, is pitted against GOP incumbent

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Christine Hallquist won the Democratic gubernatorial nomination in the U.S. State of Vermont on Tuesday, moving a step closer to becoming the nation's first transgender Governor, U.S. media projected.

In another ground-breaking political moment, Somali-American State legislator Ilhan Omar claimed victory in her primary in Minnesota, putting her on track to become one of the first woman Muslim members of Congress.

"HISTORY MADE!" @christineforvt just became the first trans/non-binary gubernatorial candidate from a major political party in American history!

atorial candidate from a major political party in America history! The Victory Fund, an organisation that supports LGBTQ candidates, tweeted about Ms. Hallquist. But she still faces an uphill battle in the general election, when she is pro-

jected to face Republican incumbent Phil Scott, who has been in office since 2016.

The transition
Ms. Hallquist transitioned while heading the Vermont Electricity Coop, several years before launching her gubernatorial bid.

In 2015, "Christine made the decision, after years of holding it inside, to come out as her true self, a transgender woman, becoming the first business leader in the country to transition while in office," according to her campaign's website.

"Working to ensure that Vermont remains the special, inclusive and progressive

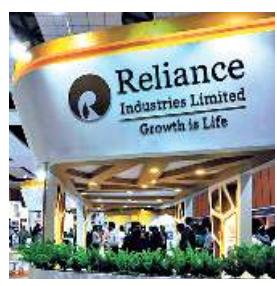
place that it has always been... is what motivates Christine to seek the honour..." it says.

In Minnesota, Ilhan Omar — a Somali-American State legislator — declared victory in her primary race, a result also reported by U.S. media. "Ilhan Omar has been declared the winner of the primary election in the race for Congress to represent Minnesota's Fifth District," a statement on her website said. "As the first refugee elected to Congress (and the second Muslim woman after Rashida Tlaib of Michigan), Ilhan will bring a unique perspective and new energy to our nation's capital," it said.



Christine Hallquist. ■ REUTERS

IN BRIEF



RIL halts gasoline exports from Jamnagar

SINGAPORE Reliance Industries has declared force majeure on gasoline exports from its Jamnagar site, four people familiar with the matter said on Wednesday, causing the profit margin from producing the fuel to jump to its highest since September. The force majeure follows an unspecified issue at a gasoline-producing fluid catalytic cracker unit in its export-oriented refinery, two of the people said. REUTERS

Panel to discuss TRAI proposal on Aug. 31

NEW DELHI The Telecom Commission, the apex decision making body at the telecom department, is likely to meet on August 31 to discuss Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's recommendation on spectrum allocation, according to official sources. Another DoT source said the latest recommendations on spectrum auction plan worth ₹4.9 lakh crore may not come. PTI

Patanjali to roll out Kimbo app on Aug. 27

NEW DELHI Baba Ramdev's Patanjali Ayurved on Wednesday said it would officially roll out its messaging app 'Kimbo' on August 27. The app, which is being touted as the 'swadesi' answer to Facebook-owned WhatsApp, will be unveiled by Union Minister Nitin Gadkari. In May this year, the firm had to remove the application from Google Play Store a day after its roll out received flak from social media over security and privacy concerns.

RBI scrutinising 200 stressed accounts

Exercise part of regular annual inspection, says official; Videocon, Jindal Steel among those under lens

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

As part of its efforts to contain rising non-performing assets (NPAs), the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has started scrutiny of 200 large accounts to assess the level of stress and provisioning done against them by respective banks.

The RBI is examining whether banks have followed prudent norms in respect of these stressed assets, a senior public sector bank official said.

The central bank is also assessing classification, provisioning and debt recast in respect of those loans, the official added.

This is a part of regular annual inspection of book of the banks that the central bank undertakes each year



Book check: The RBI is examining if banks have followed prudent norms in respect of the stressed assets. ■ AFP

after the closure of the financial year, another official said.

Some of the accounts include those of Videocon, Jindal Steel and Power, the official added.

This exercise comes at a

time when gross NPAs in the banking system have risen to about ₹10.3 lakh crore, or 11.2 % of advances, compared with ₹8 lakh crore, or 9.5 % of total loans, as on March 31, 2017.

Following the annual in-

spection of the last year, many lenders, including Axis Bank, Bank of India and Yes Bank, were caught for under-reporting of NPAs.

Under-reported NPAs

The lenders started reporting divergences since June last year for having under-reported NPAs in FY16. This was followed by a second round of disclosures, starting October, of under-reporting in FY17 by a few lenders.

In most cases, this led to shooting up of NPAs and an ensuing jump in provisions against dud assets. This eroded their bottomlines, and led to a sell-off in the stock causing erosion of wealth for investors.

Private sector lenders, which were reputed for their caution on the asset quality

front vis-a-vis the poorly governed state-owned peers, were the worst hit in this exercise.

Among others, mid-sized private sector lender Yes Bank was found to have under-reported gross NPAs by a whopping ₹11,000 crore in the two fiscals, while the third largest lender, Axis Bank, was found to have a divergence of more than ₹4,000 crore and ICICI Bank had over ₹5,000 crore on these accounts for FY16 alone.

Last year, RBI had tweaked the rules to make it compulsory for lenders to disclose under-reporting of bad assets. Before this there was a massive book clean-up through the asset quality review (AQR) in the previous year.

'Enough forex reserves to tackle volatile rupee'

'India's macro fundamentals resilient'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Union Minister Arun Jaitley said India has sufficient foreign exchange reserves to mitigate any undue volatility in the currency market. His comment comes a day after the rupee fell sharply to breach the 70-mark against the dollar for the first time.

In a series of tweets, Mr. Jaitley said that the developments were being monitored closely to address any situation that may arise in the context of the unsettled international environment.

Global risk aversion

"Recent developments relating to Turkey have generated global risk aversion to-

wards emerging market currencies and the strengthening of the dollar," he tweeted. The Union Minister added that India's macro fundamentals remained resilient and strong.

"India's foreign exchange reserves are comfortable by global standards and sufficient to mitigate any undue volatility in the foreign exchange market," he said.

Equity MFs see inflows of ₹10,585 cr.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

IN BRIEF



PVR eyes ₹500 cr. from SPI Cinemas by FY20

NEW DELHI Multiplex chain PVR Ltd. is eyeing ₹500 crore revenue from south India-based SPI Cinemas, which the former is in the process of acquiring, by FY 2019-20. SPI Cinemas, which operates 76 screens in 10 cities reported revenue of ₹309.6 crore in 2017-18. "We expect the SPI Cinema acquisition to contribute ₹500 crore revenue by FY 2020," Kamal Gianchandani, CEO, PVR Pictures & Head of Strategy and Planning, said. PTI

11 PE funds exit in July totalling \$376 mn: EY

NEW DELHI Indian PE funds have returned significant amount of capital to their investors and July 2018 recorded 11 exits totalling \$376 million, said an EY report. There were eight exits worth \$352 million in July last year, it said. Through exit route, PE investors realise the return on investment after a certain amount of time. Some of the exit routes include IPO, secondary buyout and through open market. PTI

Aluminium makers hit by coal shortage, says FIMI

NEW DELHI Aluminium makers are facing shortage of coal to run their captive power plants which has hit their refinery and smelting operations adversely, according to the Federation of Indian Mineral Industries (FIMI). Captive power plants of aluminium makers are not getting coal even as availability of railway rakes for coal transportation is also a major problem, FIMI Secretary General R. K. Sharma said. PTI

Tea exports to China, Pak. rise

Overall shipments increased to 112.1 million kg between Jan. and June: Tea Board

INDRANI DUTTA
KOLKATA

India shipped larger quantities of tea to two neighbouring countries – China and Pakistan – in the first half of 2018, when overall tea exports increased to 112.1 million kg, from 107.1 million kg in the year earlier period.

According to data with the Tea Board, total earnings between January and June 2018 was ₹2,177.1 crore, against ₹2,091.8 crore a year earlier, although the unit (per kg) price of the commodity was marginally lower both in rupee and dollar terms this year.

Drop in exports to Russia

Exports dropped to India's single largest market – Russia, as also the CIS countries



Brewing demand: Exports to Iran, a high value market, too rose from 10.9 million kg to 12.1 million kg. ■ THULASI KAKKAT

– which together imported 28.7 million kg against 31.2 million kg.

The opening up of the Chinese black tea market has thrown up opportunities for India. Exports to China, where India has been plan-

ning to take a delegation, rose to 4.4 million kg valued at ₹77.1 crore in the first half, from 3.7 million kg and ₹64.7 crore a year earlier.

India was able to score an increase in exports to Pakistan too – to 7.2 million kg

from 4.8 million kg, valued at ₹66.7 crore against ₹52.1 crore. Unit price, however, fell from ₹108 per kg to ₹92.8 per kg this year. Exports to Iran, a high value market, too rose from 10.9 million kg to 12.1 million kg.

Sujit Patro, secretary of the Indian Tea Association, said that the improved exports scenario was linked to the various delegations that Tea Board and ITA had taken to countries such as Iran and Egypt during the year. Quite a few more are lined up over the next two months.

Mr. Patro said while China holds considerable potential, certain non-tariff barriers make entry difficult although Chinese youth were showing preference for the Indian brew.

GMR to raise ₹2,950 cr. via equity, debentures

First-quarter loss widens to ₹238 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Act, 2013, the company added.

The board of GMR Infrastructure, late on Tuesday, approved raising ₹2,950 crore through issue of equity shares and debentures.

"GMR board has approved to raise up to ₹2,500 crore in one or more tranche(s), through issue of equity shares or equity linked instruments, debentures or any other securities as an enabling resolution as per the requirements of applicable laws," the company said in a statement.

GMR's board has also approved raising of funds, up to ₹450 crore in one or more tranche(s), through issue of optionally convertible debentures (OCDs) under Section 62 (3) of the Companies

The company's revenue fell to ₹1,747 crore during the three months ended June 30, 2018, from ₹2,674 crore in the year-earlier quarter.

The company's EBITDA for the June quarter almost halved to ₹436 crore as compared with ₹848 crore for the three-month period ended June 30, 2017.

Shares of GMR Infrastructure rose 0.56% on the BSE on Tuesday to close at ₹17.8. The company announced results after market hours.

Revenue declines

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Steel sector's growth trend to continue'

Auto, construction spurring demand'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAMSHEDPUR

Tata Steel Ltd. CEO and MD T.V. Narendran on Wednesday said the steel sector had been witnessing a positive growth and this trend would continue with improving economic activities across the world.

Talking to reporters after hoisting the Tricolour on the occasion of the 72nd Independence Day at Tata Steel works here, he said the current demand for steel in the country was more than expected, buoyed by robust performance of the automobile and construction sectors.

The demand for steel was projected to grow by 5-6%, but it had been 8%, Mr. Narendran said.



T.V. Narendran

He hailed the initiatives taken by the State and the Union government for the betterment of the steel sector.

On the stock market consistently hitting new highs, Narendran said it was primarily because of the inflow of domestic savings through mutual funds.

On-ground hurdles could hold up EVs: SmartE CEO

Registration with RTO a huge challenge: Goldie Srivastava

TCA SHARAD RAGHAVAN
NEW DELHI

While the governments at the Centre and States have taken proactive steps to encourage electric vehicles (EVs), on-ground hurdles such as high levels of corruption at the regional transport offices (RTOs) could hold back the sector, according to Goldie Srivastava, CEO of SmartE, an electric vehicle solution provider that has an exclusive tie-up with the Delhi Metro.

"We are glad to see significant steps taken by the Centre and states," Mr. Srivastava said in an interview. "But more needs to be done in terms of structural changes on the ground. Take the example of an RTO. The mechanism has been around for 60-70 years and I wouldn't shy away from saying they are hotbeds of corruption. Try getting a vehicle registered at an RTO without having to pay someone, and it's a miracle! Registering a whole fleet is a huge challenge."

SmartE has tied up with the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation to provide last-mile connectivity from the metro stations through e-rickshaws. The company, in collaboration with the DMRC, recently rolled out e-rickshaws at eight stations in Dwarka, over and above its existing services in Gurgaon and Faridabad.

"We are the last-mile partners for the entire Delhi Metro network," Mr. Srivastava said. "We are starting in certain stations in Dwarka now. We are also the preferred partner for the Gurugram rapid metro. We also have similar partnership with multiple RWAs in Gurugram to provide first-mile



Powering change: The income potential of e-rickshaws is attracting conventional auto drivers. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

connectivity to the stations as well." The four-seater e-rickshaws at the stations charge ₹10 for the first two kilometres, and ₹5 per kilometre over that.

"You have several choices to pay," Mr. Srivastava added. "You can buy a season pass for 12 rides or you can pay through any UPI wallet. The customer can also pay cash to the driver."

The company is also working on a system where passengers of the Delhi Metro can use their metro passes to pay for the e-rickshaw services as it is part of the commercial arrangement with DMRC to integrate the two services.

Business model

According to Mr. Srivastava, the company's fleet has seen remarkable growth since its incorporation in September 2014, and the business model is attracting erstwhile conventional auto drivers to join the e-rickshaw fleet.

"We started off with 30 vehicles in Western Delhi, which grew to 100 vehicles in about 6-8 months, and then in one year, we grew that by 10 times," he said.

"We are at close to 900 vehicles right now and plan to add 8,000 vehicles in 12-18 months and target a fleet size of 1,00,000 vehicles by 2022."

The fleet, prior to the Dwarka rollout, has transported about 25 million people in Gurgaon and Faridabad and transports about 55,000 people every day.

"If you look at the economics of a conventional auto to driver, on a given day, he does about 15-16 rides with an average wait time of 30 minutes between rides," he said. "The revenue generation and income potential is so much more lucrative with us, that now a lot of auto drivers are coming on."

"In an auto, the ride distances and frequency are erratic," Mr. Srivastava said. "The driver may start at Connaught Place and end up in Rajouri Gardens and might have to come back empty. In our model, we function on volume and predictable routes. The driver knows the ride will be only 5-6 km from a metro station and then back. He is able to earn much more in a 10 hour shift with us."

Kohli faces his biggest challenge yet

How he emerges from this series will greatly influence the way he is judged as a leader

INDIA IN ENGLAND

SHREDDUTTA CHIDANANDA
NOTTINGHAM

There has now been an avalanche of criticism, from Geoffrey Boycott's accusations of complacency and arrogance to former India captains' rage at the team's supposed failure to train hard enough.

Virat Kohli will have expected some of it but that will not make it any easier to take. India's loss at Lord's was Kohli's first innings defeat as captain. Conditions are hard, his batsmen are out of sorts, and there are still three Tests left. Keeping team morale high cannot be a simple task.

Kohli will have realised in January that this year was going to be his toughest yet as captain, with tours of South Africa, England and Australia to deal with. Before 2018, his only full Test series as captain outside the sub-continent was in the West Indies. He now finds himself embattled and under pressure; how Kohli emerges from this series will greatly influence how he is judged as a leader in the years ahead.

Puzzling selections

Kohli's batting has not been in question: as captain, he averages 65, as opposed to the 41 he does otherwise. What has come under scrutiny, however, is his leadership. Kohli's team selection has been at times puzzling.

In South Africa, India chose Rohit Sharma ahead of Ajinkya Rahane for the first two Tests and dropped Bhuvneshwar Kumar for the second when he had excelled in the first.

"Overseas, you go on current form, you go on conditions. You see which player



Need of the hour: Skipper Virat Kohli needs to quickly recover from the successive losses and turn things around. ■ AP

can adapt to certain conditions quicker than the other," head coach Ravi Shastri had said in Johannesburg.

Kohli himself had bristled at any criticism of his choices. "What's the best XI? You tell me and I will play that," he told a reporter during a press conference in Centurion.

Ahead of the first Test in Birmingham, Kohli spoke of going by his 'gut feel' to make decisions. "It all boils down to your gut feel. If five people on the table agree that this is the right thing to do for the team, then we go ahead with that, there are no ifs and

butts. There's no looking back," he said.

The next morning, Cheteshwar Pujara was dropped from the side, with Shikhar Dhawan preferred as opener while K.L. Rahul batted at three.

"You can have gut feelings of all sorts and you can be completely right or completely wrong," Mike Brearley said at Edgbaston. "So gut feeling is neither here nor there."

At Lord's, India fielded a second spinner in Kuldeep Yadav, while sacrificing a frontline pace bowler in Umesh Yadav.

There had been talk of the

surface being dry in the lead-up to the game but as he walked out for the toss on the second morning, with all the rain around and the dark clouds overhead, Kohli should have reconsidered choosing the left-arm spinner. It was a move that defied logic.

In the event, Kuldeep finished wicketless, having gone at nearly five an over. R. Ashwin too had a tough time, in conditions that offered him no help. England's one spinner, Adil Rashid, was not required to bowl a single over in the entire match.

At least this time, Kohli admitted he was wrong, saying

at the presentation that India got the combination "a bit off". There will invariably be changes for Trent Bridge and it will again be put to the captain – much to his annoyance – that over the 37 Tests he has led the side in, the same XI has never been fielded in successive matches.

It surely cannot help the confidence of batsmen like K.L. Rahul, Rahane and Pujara to know that their spot is perennially under threat.

Kohli is arguably the greatest batsman in the world today. Whether he will come to be regarded as a great captain too remains to be seen.

Ajit Wadekar passes away

He had led India to historic series wins in WI and England

G. VISWANATH
MUMBAI

Ajit Wadekar, who deployed his famous spinners to devastating effect and recorded historic series wins in the West Indies and England in 1971, passed away here on Wednesday. He was 77.

Failing health had restricted his movement and Wadekar was hospitalised in July too.

An official statement issued by Jaslok Hospital said: "Mr. Ajit Wadekar was declared dead on arrival at the Jaslok Hospital and Research Centre. He had been critically unwell for some time and was seeking treatment for the same."

India's greatest ever

Milind Rege, who played for many years under Wadekar in the Ranji Trophy, said:

"Wadekar was India's greatest ever captain. He showed the Indian team and Indian cricket how to win a Test series overseas. That's why he is the best skipper."

Dramatic happenings at



Wadekar with the Castrol Lifetime achievement award.
■ FILE PHOTO

the selection committee meeting to pick the captain for the 1971 tour of the West Indies resulted in him being named skipper ahead of Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi.

One of the five selectors did not turn up and the chairman of the then selection committee, Vijay Merchant, who had picked young players like Gundappa Viswanath and Sunil Gavaskar, used his casting vote to choose Wadekar.

He will always be known for the way he marshalled his spin resources, especially the likes of Bishen Singh Bedi, Erappalli Prasanna and S. Venkatraghavan who, between them, captured 48 wickets on the 1971 West Indies tour.

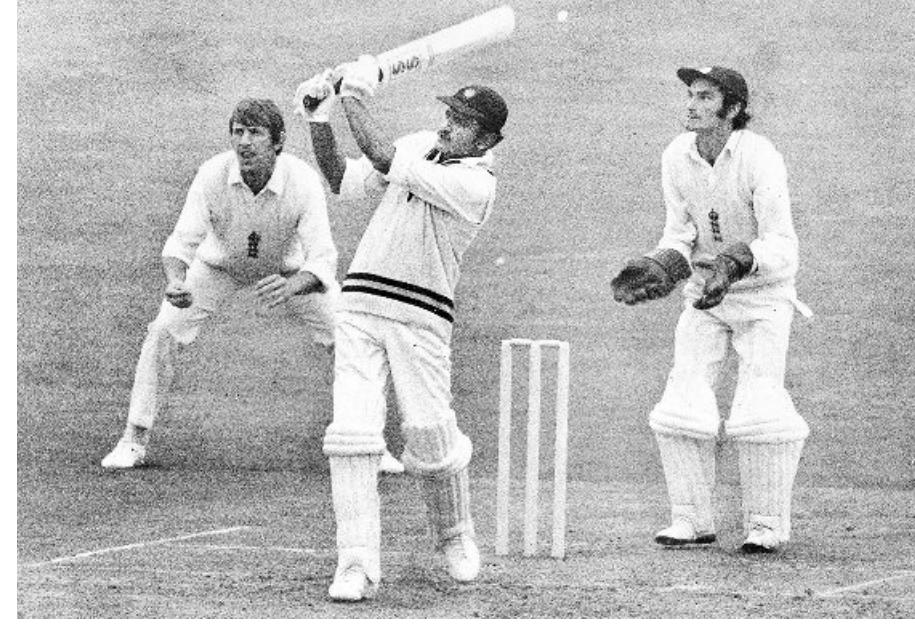
It was his tactical move to introduce left-arm spinner Salim Durrani which paved the way for the dismissals of Gary Sobers and Clive Lloyd in the second innings of the Port of Spain Test and eventually an Indian victory.

Tactical acumen

In the English summer of 1971, Wadekar employed leg-spinner Bhagwat Chandrasekhar and a strong close-in field, led by the sharp Eknath Solkar, astutely as India stunned the hosts for the first time at The Oval.

Wadekar also led India to a 2-1 win against England at home in the 1972-73 series.

The strokeful southpaw also starred in many victories for Bombay in the Ranji Trophy.



Leading from the front: Ajit Wadekar in full flow during the Oval Test in 1971. ■ THE HINDU ARCHIVES

Priya powers India Green to victory

SPORTS REPORTER
BENGALURU

Priya Punia top-scored with an unbeaten 46 as India Green defeated India Blue by seven wickets in a rain-shortened women's senior Challenger Trophy match at the Alur ground, near here, on Wednesday. **The scores:** India Blue 82 for five in 17 overs (V.R. Vanitha 35, Arundhati Reddy two for 13) lost to India Green 84 for three in 15.5 overs (Priya Punia 46 n.o.).

Saluting the nation



Independence Day: The Indian team hoists the tri-colour in London on Wednesday. ■ COURTESY BCCI/TWITTER

Stead named NZ coach

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WELLINGTON

New Zealand Cricket (NZC) appointed former Test batsman Gary Stead as the new Black Caps coach on Wednesday, with pundits describing him as a steady pair of hands to replace predecessor Mike Hesson.

Stead said he wanted to continue the improvement New Zealand had shown under Hesson.

Anand struggles

SPORTS BUREAU
ST. LOUIS

Viswanathan Anand failed to shrug off his indifferent form from the rapid event, slipping to the last place with 9.5 points after the ninth round of the St. Louis blitz chess tournament here on Tuesday.

Azerbaijan's Shakhriyar Mamedyarov and USA's Hikaru Nakamura shared the lead with 17 points each. **The standings (nine rounds, blitz):** 1-2. Shakhriyar Mamedyarov (Aze) & Hikaru Nakamura (USA) 17; 3. Fabiano Caruana (USA) 15.5; 4. Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra) 15; 5. Levon Aronian (Arm) 14; 6. Sergey Karjakin (Rus) 12.5; 7. Leinier Dominguez (Cub) 12; 8. Alexander Grischuk (Rus) 11.5; 9. Wesley So (USA) 11 and 10. V. Anand (Ind) 9.5.

Federer sails through

Kvitova overpowers Serena

MASTERS TENNIS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
CINCINNATI

Roger Federer posted a comprehensive 6-4, 6-4 win over Peter Gojowczyk in a first ATP Cincinnati Masters appearance since 2015.

Important results:

Men, second round: Leonardo Mayer bt Lucas Pouille 7-6(7), 6-4; Roger Federer bt Peter Gojowczyk 6-4, 6-4; Denis Shapovalov bt Kyle Edmund 6-4, 6-4.

First round: Milos Raonic bt Dusan Lajovic 6-3, 6-3; Robin Haase bt Filip Krajinovic 4-6, 6-2, 6-3; Marius Copil bt Philipp Kohlschreiber 6-4, 6-2.

Karolina Pliskova bt Agnieszka Radwanska 6-3, 6-3; Ekaterina Makarova bt Ana Bogdan 6-3, 6-2; Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova bt Aleksandra Krunic 6-1, 6-0.

First round: Ashleigh Barty bt Marketa Vondrousova 6-3, 7-5;

Ekaterina Makarova bt Ana Bogdan 6-3, 6-2; Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova bt Aleksandra Krunic 6-1, 6-0.

Nik Kyrgios bt Denis Kudla 6-2 (2), 7-5, 7-6(11); Borna Coric bt Daniil Medvedev 6-2, 6-3; David Goffin bt Stefanos Tsitsipas 7-5, 6-3; Mischa Zverev bt Daniel Dziemianowicz 6-3, 6-4.

Women, second round: Caroline Garcia bt Victoria Azarenka 6-4, 7-5; Petra Kvitova bt Serena Williams 6-3, 2-6, 6-3; Elina Svitolina bt Svetlana Kuznetsova 7-6(1), 4-6, 6-4.

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TV PICKS

KPL: 6.30 p.m.; Star Sports 2 (SD & HD).
Cincinnati Masters: 4.30 a.m. & 8.30 p.m.; Sony ESPN (SD & HD).

IN BRIEF



NBA releases Clarkson for Asian Games

MANILA Cleveland Cavaliers guard Jordan Clarkson will suit up for the Philippines at the Asian Games, the country's basketball federation announced on Wednesday. The NBA granted a "one-time exception" for the 26-year-old Clarkson and two Chinese players – Houston Rockets centre Zhou Qi and Dallas Mavericks forward Ding Yanyuhang – to represent their countries. AFP



Mandzukic calls time on Croatia career

PARIS Croatian World Cup hero and star striker Mario Mandzukic has announced his retirement from international football at the age of 32, the country's national soccer federation said. "I think the time has come for me now. I have contributed to the greatest success in Croatian football," Mandzukic said. AFP



Croatian goalkeeper Subasic retires

ZAGREB Croatia goalkeeper Danijel Subasic announced his international retirement on Wednesday. "The time has come after 10 years in the National team to say goodbye to my favourite jersey," Subasic said. AFP



Off she goes: Long jumper V. Neena came up with an effort of 6.38m in the AFI's confirmatory trials at Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday, helping her book a ticket to Jakarta. *FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

Tricolour hoisted at Games Village

To mark Independence Day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAKARTA / PALEMBANG

The Indian flag was hoisted by members of the contingent at the Athletes Village of the Asian Games at both Jakarta and Palembang, marking the country's 72nd Independence Day.

At Palembang, deputy Chef de Mission Balbir Singh Kushwaha hoisted the tricolour at a simple ceremony which was attended by around 25 athletes, mostly shooters and rowers.

Yassir Arafat, the Asian Games International Relationship & Protocol (IR & P) Coordinator at Palembang, was invited as the chief guest.

At Jakarta too, the Indian

flag was hoisted at a simple ceremony at the Games Village with athletes and officials in attendance.

The men's and women's handball teams are already staying in Jakarta since their competitions started before the opening ceremony on Aug. 18.

Hockey teams land
The men's and women's hockey teams arrived on Wednesday while the boxers are expected to reach Jakarta on Thursday.

"Happy Independence Day !!! ... sending you all Independence Day wishes from Jakarta," the men's hockey team captain P.R. Sreejesh tweeted after reaching Jakarta.

Bhupathi predicts a fruitful Indian campaign

India Davis Cup captain happy with the state of women's tennis in the country

ASHWIN ACHAL

VIJAYANAGAR

Davis Cup captain Mahesh Bhupathi expects the Indian tennis contingent to return with a bagful of medals from Jakarta.

Bhupathi, who attended the launch function of the Inspire Institute of Sport (IIS) here, stated, "We've always come back with a bagful of medals from the Asian Games. It will be the same case this time. We are going with a full strength team, except Yuki [Bhambril], who will miss the event. Ramkumar [Ramanathan] and Prajneesh [Gunneswaran] are playing really well, and so are Leander [Paes] and Rohan [Bopanna] in doubles. I'm expecting many medals."

Bhambril, India's best singles player and winner of two bronzes at the 2014 In-



For the future: Mahesh Bhupathi at the launch function of the Inspire Institute of Sport on Wednesday. *SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

cheon Games, has picked the U.S. Open over making the trip to Jakarta.

In general, competing for the country trumps making the big bucks at a Grand Slam event, Bhupathi said. "I think playing for India is a

big priority. This holds true especially for this Asian Games because guys like Ramkumar, Sumit [Nagal] and Prajneesh are all missing the U.S. Open qualifiers in order to play in the Asian Games. You guys know how

much money they are leaving on the table by not playing the U.S. Open qualifiers," he said. The multiple-time Grand Slam winner is also happy with the state of Indian women's tennis, with Ankita Raina (World No. 187) and Karman Kaur Thandi (197) both doing well.

Next step

"We have two girls in the top-200, and they will hope to take the next step and get into the top-100 in the next 12-18 months. These are exciting times, because for a long period, there was no one after Sania [Mirza]. Both Ankita and Karman have big potential," Bhupathi said.

Asked if there are enough top-level tournaments held in India, Bhupathi replied, "If you are good enough as a player, you will make it, no

matter where the tournaments are held. You want to make it easier by holding 40 tournaments in India a year, but that should not be the goal, because the player will not win when he/she goes abroad.

If you want to make it to the top-100, you must beat the Europeans in Europe and the North Americans in North America."

The 44-year-old was all praise for the Inspire Institute of Sport (IIS), a state-of-the-art facility run by the JSW Group. The inter-disciplinary training institute aims to produce Olympic champions from the nation.

"The athletes who make use of the facilities here are very fortunate. If I had a facility like this to use when I was young, life would have been so much easier."

New initiatives for high standards of officiating

Supervisor Nitin's idea is to bring seasoned officials' expertise to be shared



Making a point: Nitin Kannamwar has a word with Mikhail Kukushkin of Kazakhstan. *FILE PHOTO: KAMESH SRINIVASAN

a gold badge referee with loads of experience, Nitin has officiated in three Olym-

pics, two Youth Olympics and 41 Grand Slams, apart from numerous Davis Cup

and Fed Cup ties. "We will make sure that every chair umpire gets an evaluation from one of the seniors in the team, to improve his/her officiating skills," he said.

Rich experience

With so many seasoned officials who are regulars at Grand Slams assembling for the Asian Games, Nitin said that the attempt would be "to bring all their expertise and experience to be shared with all the officials by extensive supervision, monitoring, coaching and evaluation for all line umpires as well as chair umpires."

The main aspect of the initiative would be that a Chief

Evaluator with two assistants would be speaking to the officials as they come off the court "on any improvements of technique, positive/negative feedback and constantly monitoring them even off court to improve not only their performance but also image."

Most importantly, "we will have someone coming from the ITF Development team for four days to be with the Asian officials to be a mentor, coach and evaluator for the high level Asian Chair Umpires," Nitin said.

Anton D'Souza and Avaneeswari Gosavi will be the other Indian officials in Palembang.

'Will try my best to play a key role'

Tharangini — only South Indian girl in sepak takraw squad

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

HYDERABAD

For A. Tharangini, who hails from Palvancha of Khammam district in Telangana State, it has been a truly memorable journey.

She is the only girl from South India to make it to the Indian sepak takraw team for the Asian Games.



A. Tharangini.

of the Indian team with her powerful serve, blended with near-perfect technique, according to her coach.

Consistent performances, including a bronze each in the Senior Nationals in Kada-

pa, International championship and the Beach Asian championship are the reasons for her confidence ahead of her maiden Games.

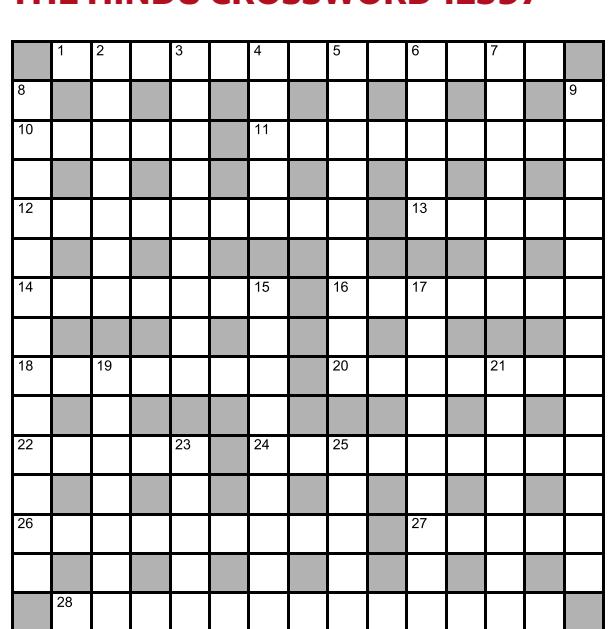
Excited

"I am excited and keen to repose the faith shown in . It will be the biggest challenge for me as I gear up to compete in both the team and regu events of the Asiad," said Tharangini.

"It is a matter of great pride and privilege for all of us here at the Sports School that our product will be representing India in Asian Games," said her coach.

Interestingly, experts feel India has a very good chance to win a medal in the Asiad.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12397



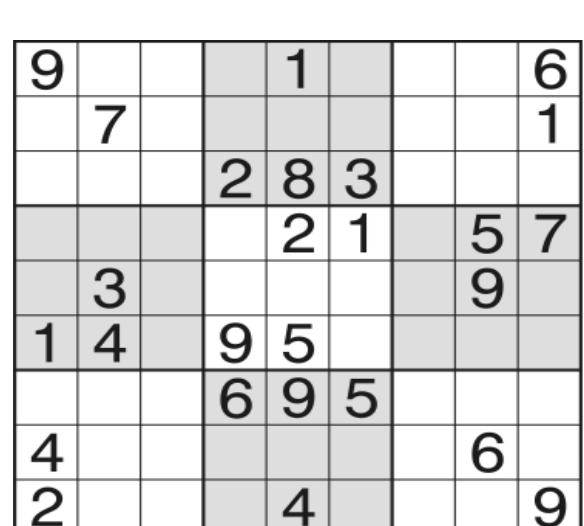
ACROSS

- 1 Follow others – get white dhoti laundered (2,4,3,4)
- 10 Drug starts once patient is under medication (5)
- 11 Masthead, oddly near a temple complex (9)
- 12 Girls on the beach, marking time perhaps (9)
- 2 Tries on ground and turns towards east (7)
- 3 Acknowledgement by one who's moving in (9)

(set by Arden)

- 13 About to change a set of principles (5)
- 14 Simple to cover cost, not only for the drug (7)
- 16 Computerises play, score gains momentum (7)
- 18 Sleep hard, that's mostly chemical (7)
- 20 Teacher not a sucker (7)
- 22 European city – one, one by one (5)
- 24 He gets the set price that is on contract (9)
- 26 Done by President to win a trick (9)
- 27 A camera to capture a muse (5)
- 28 Trained and is miles away from modern weaponry (6,7)
- DOWN
- 2 Tries on ground and turns towards east (7)
- 3 Acknowledgement by one who's moving in (9)
- 25 In the Pacific, a private island (5)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 12396

M	I	M	E	T	C	D	W	E	B	S	K
J	U	E	A	R	L	R	K				
S	U	R	E	B	O	N	E	S	A	G	
S	R	R	L	P	G	V					
I	M	A	N	E	C	S	R	O			
G	O	N	E	C	A	E	R	T	R		
T	E	R	E								
H	E	L	I	B	U	S	E	S	A		
E	E	L	I	T	A	A	F				
B	I	G	E	S	T	R	O	S	S	I	
O	I	A	J	U	A	M	L	G			
A	L	B	A	R	E	L	A	D	E		
T	E	L	E	I	N	T	R				
S	E	N	D	U	P	S	H	I	N	G	

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Dhruba's wise words

When Mahavishnu appears before Dhruba, pleased with the boy devotee's penance, Dhruba praises the Lord. Dhruba says that the Lord is present in everyone as Antaryami. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says He is inside us and commands us. Whatever we do, He is the One who enables us to do them. Now we may well ask whether the Lord then is responsible for all our wrong actions too. In fact, Duryodhana does ask this question, said Akkarakkani Srinidhi, in a discourse. He tries to justify his actions by saying that he was not the one who acted. It was the One inside him who prompted him to act the way he did. But this is a wrong argument, and is born of

Tennis world to vote on Davis Cup shake-up

The overhaul would help pump around \$25 million back into the sport

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LOS ANGELES

The most radical overhaul in the 118-year history of the Davis Cup could be given the green light on Thursday as the tennis world gathers in Florida to vote on sweeping reforms which have divided the sport.

Around 120 delegates at the International Tennis Federation's annual meeting in Orlando will decide whether proposals by federation chief David Haggerty are to be given the go-ahead.

Haggerty's plan will see the Davis Cup's sprawling existing format, stretched across the calendar year and played in all corners of the globe, condensed into a season-ending 18-nation event played at a single, neutral venue.

Haggerty said during a conference call on Tuesday that the overhaul would boost the ITF's ability to spread development funding across the globe, pumping around \$25 million back into the sport.

ITF's distinction
"The ITF is the only organisation that puts money into the development of the game," Haggerty said.

"And that's what this pro-

ject enables us to do. The money that we make will be put back to the nations for their development programs and the future of tennis."

The reforms have the backing of a \$3 billion partnership from the Kosmos investment group, founded by Barcelona football star Gerard Pique and supported by Japanese billionaire Hiroshi Mikitani.

The ITF maintains the new-look Davis Cup would boost the profile of the tournament, which was first held in 1900 when the United States defeated Britain at the Longwood Cricket Club in Boston, Massachusetts.

Under the new proposed format, 18 teams would play in the Davis Cup finale, split into six groups of three teams. Six group winners and two runners-up would then advance to the knockout rounds.

Unlike current Davis Cup ties, which comprise four singles and one doubles, ties would feature only two singles and a doubles game.

Federation chiefs say the revamped competition would effectively create a fifth Grand Slam event, increase prize money and allow the Davis Cup to attract top players by freeing up

space on the calendar. Yet, the changes have appalled some of the greatest names ever to grace the competition.

Past Australian Davis Cup captains and players including Rod Laver, John Newcombe and Lleyton Hewitt were united in condemning the proposed overhaul.

Death of the Cup

Newcombe, a five-time champion as a player, described the overhaul as "a recipe for the death of the Davis Cup as we know it."

"The Davis Cup is 118 years old and was the fore-runner that made tennis into an international sport," Newcombe said.

Haggerty however said on Tuesday that while "change is difficult sometimes," he had been encouraged by positive feedback from delegates in Florida this week.

"The mood is good. The reception has been very positive," he said. "We just want to do the right thing for tennis... The new model allows the ITF to fulfil the mission in a much better way."

"Having more resources to put behind the development of tennis is the most important thing for an international federation."

*AP
Divisive proposition: While the suggested reforms have split the world of tennis in two, ITF president David Haggerty insists the federation just wants to do the right thing for the sport.



Phenomenal Cruise wins feature event

HYDERABAD: Phenomenal Cruise (Suraj Narredu up) bagged the Independence Cup, the main event of the races held here on Wednesday (August 15). The winner is owned by M/s. P. Ranga Raju, C. Nanda Kumar & K. Ramakrishna and trained by D. Netto.

1 SIDDIPET PLATE (Div. I), (1,100m), maiden 3-y-o only (Cat. II) (terms): ACE ACE (Anjeel), 1, PalSY Walsy (Deepak Singh) 2, Promiseofhappiness (Deep Shanker) 3 and His Excellency (Hannam) 4. Not run: Tequila. 1-3/4 and 3/4. Im 8.47s. 8 (w), 7, 8 and 7 (p), SHP: 22, FP: 39, Q: 31, Tla: 106. Favourite: Ace Ace. Owner: Mr. M. Ramachandra. Trainer: Sequeira.

2 INDEPENDENCE CUP (1,400m), (1,100m), maiden 3-y-o & over, rated (Cat. II): PHENOMENAL CRUISE (Suraj Narredu) 1, Ans Ans (Akshay Kumar) 2, Tiger (Hannam) 3 and Western Wind (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/2, 1-1/2 and 2-1/4. Im 27.05s. 8 (w), 6, 8 and 11 (p), SHP: 39, FP: 115, Q: 84, Tla: 674. Favourite: Tootsie Roll. Owners: M/s. P. Ranga Raju, C. Nanda Kumar & K. Ramakrishna. Trainer: D. Netto. Trainer: Sequeira.

3 SIRCILLA PLATE (Div. I), (1,200m), 3-y-o & over, rated (Cat. II): CLASSY GUY (Nakhath Singh) 1, Honest Hunter (Ashhad Asbar) 2, Handsome Dan (P. Ajeebh Kumar) 3 and Lockhart (Sal Kumar) 4. 2-1/2, 5 and shd. Im 7.50s. 8 (w), 6, 8 and 11 (p), SHP: 18, FP: 47, Q: 25, Tla: 244. Favourite: Ajma Birju. Owner: M.A.M. Ramaswamy Chettiar of Chettinad Charitable Trust rep. by Mr. A.C. Muthiah. Trainer: Sathesh.

4 SIRCILLA PLATE (Div. III), (1,200m), 4-y-o & over, rated 26 to 46 (Cat. III): ROYAL GREEN (Akshay Kumar) 1, Be Sure (Nakhath Singh) 2, Handsome Boy (Hannam) 3 and Wannawin (Rohit Kumar) 4. Hd, hd and 1. Im 14.65s. 8 (w), 6, 8 and 7 (p), SHP: 16, FP: 259, Q: 76, Tla: 522. Favourite: Be Sure. Owner: Mr. M. Majid Ali Khan. Trainer: M. F. Ali Khan.

5 FATEH MAIDAN CLUB PLATE (1,400m), 3-y-o & over, rated 42 to 62 (Cat. II): DURANGO (Hannam) 1, Champion Bull (Jai Shankar) 2, Nayadeep (Anjeel) 3 and Vancouver (Kiran Naidu) 4. Not run: Top Link and Princess Hina. 1-4, 3-1/2 and hd. Im 28.32s. 8 (w), 5, 6 and 6 (p), SHP: 13, FP: 13, Q: 11, Tla: 14. Favourite: Durango. Owners: M/s. Zaveri Stud Farm Pvt.Ltd. rep. by Mr. Cham-

pkal Zaveri, Mrs. Bindu C. Zaveri, Ms. Harsha N. Desai & Ms. Niti N. Desai. Trainer: Deshmukh.

6 KOHIN PLATE (1,400m), 5-y-o & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh.

7 JACKPOT (1,400m), 5-y-o & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): JUMBLE EXPRESS (B. R. Kumar) 1, Rose Petal (G. Nares) 2, Exclusive Symbol (Arshad Alam) 3 and Apowerx (P. Ajeebh Kumar) 4. 1-1/2, shd and shd. Im 14.79s. 8 (w), 27, 14 and 7 (p), SHP: 62, FP: 5,455, Q: 2,293, Tla: 13,471. Favourite: Indian Aristocrat. Owners: M/s. Syed Nawaz Hussain, K. S. V. Shavakumar & P. A. Raju. Trainer: D. Silva.

8 & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh.

9 & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh.

10 & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh.

11 & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh.

12 & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh.

13 & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh.

14 & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh.

15 & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh.

16 & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh.

17 & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh.

18 & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh.

19 & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh.

20 & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh.

21 & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh.

22 & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh.

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25 & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh.

26 & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh.

27 & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh.

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31 & over, rated upto 30 (Cat. III): CARTOP SPRINT (Ajeet Kumar) 1, Carnival Express (Arshad Alam) 2 and Windfall (R. Ajay Kumar) 4. 1-1/4, Im 29.86s. 8 (w), 23, 16 and 7 (p), SHP: 37, FP: 1,061, Q: 767, Tla: 3,526. Favourite: Alishaan. Owner: Mr. A. K. Jaiswal. Trainer: Ravinder Singh

**New species of orchid found in Peruvian jungle**

LIMA
Botanists have discovered a new species of orchid in Peru's central Amazonian rainforest. "The new species of orchid was recently discovered in the Tingo Maria National Park", the parks service SERNANP announced. The orchid was given the name *Andinia tingomariana* and has been classified as belonging to the Andinia genus. AFP

**Mixing energy drinks, alcohol could be risky**

LONDON
Mixing alcohol with energy drinks could exacerbate the negative effects of binge drinking such as impairing judgement and increasing risky behaviour, a study has found. When zebrafish were exposed to alcohol and taurine, a key ingredient of energy drinks, they showed 'risky' behaviour, spending more time in the predator zone than in other groups. PTI

**Sleep deprivation triggers loneliness**

LOS ANGELES
Poor sleep can hamper your social life, say researchers at the University of California (UC) Berkeley. They found that sleep-deprived people feel lonelier and less inclined to engage with others, avoiding close contact in much the same way as people with social anxiety. PTI

Keeping Leh free of plastics

Women volunteers have played a key role in enforcing the ban in the town

REUTERS

LEH

Tsering Chondol, 60, remembers a time when the water that flowed through the town of Leh, high in the Himalayas, was pristine.

"We used to drink directly from the streams – until our land became a tourist hub," said Ms. Chondol, who heads the Women's Alliance of Ladakh.

More than 2,77,000 tourists visited Leh last year alone, the local tourism body said, twice the number of residents in the region.

Rigzin Spalgon, who heads Leh's municipal committee, said that a decade ago the city produced almost no waste. "All of a sudden we started generating more than 20 tonnes of waste and a lot of sewage per day," Mr. Spalgon said.

The steady environmental deterioration spurred more than 4,000 volunteers in the



Going green: Using a plastic bag carries a fine of ₹5,000 or up to one month in jail, or both. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Women's Alliance of Ladakh to take measures to tackle plastic waste.

Jammu and Kashmir, where Ladakh is located, has banned plastic bags. Using a plastic bag carries a fine of ₹5,000 or up to one month in jail, or both.

"We were able to make Ladakh free of plastic carry-bags all because of the ef-

forts of Women's Alliance of Ladakh. They initiated the whole process and later ensured that the ban on plastic bags works," said Mr. Spalgon.

People power
Enforcing plastic bans also depends on people power, said Shakil Romshoo, head of the earth sciences depart-

ment at Kashmir University.

"The reason why these bans don't make an impact in India is very simple: people are yet to get involved directly or indirectly in making these bans a success," said Mr. Romshoo.

"The ban on plastic carry-bags in Ladakh was successful because groups like Women's Alliance ensured people's participation in implementing the bans," he said.

In Ladakh, alliance volunteers – backed by the local council and the police – inspect shops and markets up to three times a year.

They also come armed with a solution: not only do they warn locals about the damage plastic bags do in the environment, but they sell handmade cloth bags as an alternative. The income generated helps the volunteers continue their conservation efforts.

'Earth to stay exceptionally hot until 2022'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

PARIS

Manmade global warming and a natural surge in Earth's surface temperature will join forces to make the next five years exceptionally hot, according to a study published on Tuesday.

The double whammy of climate change and so-called natural variability more than doubles the likelihood of "extreme warm events" in ocean surface waters, creating a dangerous breeding ground for hurricanes and typhoons, they reported in *Nature Communications*.

"This warm phase is reinforcing long-term climate change," lead author Florian Sevellec, a climate scientist at the University of Brest in France, said. "This particular phase is expected to continue for at least five years."

Should coffee carry cancer warnings?

Public hearing in California today

TIFFANY HSU

In every cup of coffee, there is a chemical linked to cancer.

That undisputed fact led a Los Angeles judge to rule this spring that coffee companies must provide cancer warnings to coffee drinkers. The ruling cast a shadow on a daily and often essential rite for millions of people around the world.



Roasting coffee beans produces acrylamide.

■ GETTY IMAGES

nuts. In its case, the group noted that roasting coffee beans produces acrylamide, a chemical that has been linked to increased cancer risk when given to rodents in high concentrations. In 1991, the World Health Organization rated coffee as being "possibly carcinogenic."

The reversal from suspected carcinogen to benign cup of joe is partly the result of more comprehensive scientific research. But it also reflects a rising concern that a blizzard of cancer warnings has desensitized consumers to serious health hazards.

The basis of the coffee lawsuit is a California law that requires companies to warn consumers if they are exposed to hazardous substances in products. The law, which has a nationwide impact because of the size of the State's economy, already faces threats from federal legislators and legal challengers. Immunity for coffee could further destabilise it.

WHO stand

In 2010, a small nonprofit group from Long Beach decided to take on California's coffee sellers, including Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts.

Coffee companies have said that attempts to strip acrylamide after beans were roasted were ineffective and warped the flavour.

They also tried to convince Judge Elihu M. Berle in Los Angeles County Superior Court that trace amounts of the chemical in coffee were not dangerous to consumers.

In March, justice Berle ruled that coffee had to come with cancer warnings and the coffee companies geared up for years of appeals. But in June, the WHO concluded that there was "inadequate evidence" that drinking coffee caused cancer, reinforcing earlier findings by a panel of experts.

The State's action comes amid an escalating backlash against what is often seen as ubiquitous consumer warnings.

The proposal is expected to be approved by the end of November. NY TIMES

Walmart, Ellen to launch fashion line

Dubbed EV1, it will feature 60 items

REUTERS

NEW YORK

Walmart Inc said on Wednesday that it would tie up with comedian and talk show host Ellen DeGeneres to launch a women's fashion line, its latest attempt to make deeper inroads into the apparel space and gain market share in the category.

The line, dubbed EV1, will feature nearly 60 items, ranging from denim, tees bearing Ellen quotes, accessories and footwear, all priced at \$30 or less, with new items seasonally. Denise Incandela, head of fashion, Walmart U.S. e-com-



merce, said in a blog post. With the latest move, the company hopes to attract the more affluent, younger and millennial customers, who usually do not shop with the retailer.

The partnership would kick-off on September 10.

In China, rainbow trout gets a new name: salmon

After fish farmers faced a crisis of consumer confidence

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BEIJING

When Chinese state TV accidentally revealed much of the "salmon" sashimi eaten in the country was actually rainbow trout, domestic fish farmers faced a crisis of consumer confidence. After fishing for a solution, they came up with an idea: to officially deem the rainbow trout a type of salmon.

Over the weekend, China's major rainbow trout producers, with the support of an industry group attached to the Agriculture Ministry, announced a new



standard to allow the fish to bear the "salmon" label. The move solves woes facing domestic producers after state broadcaster CCTV ear-

lier this year highlighted China's "freshwater salmon" fish farming on the Tibetan plateau.

Soon, comments piled up on social media, questioning how the "salmon" could migrate thousands of km from China's northwest to the ocean, as most salmon do after hatching. Academicians remain adamant the two fish are not the same. "You cannot call a rainbow trout a salmon," said Sigurd Stefansson, a salmon expert at the University of Bergen in Norway, noting they are related but not the same species.



As enshrined in our Constitution, "to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture" is the Fundamental Duty of every citizen of India.

n/gtcc

Managing Director,
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THE HINDU

DELHI METRO

THURSDAY • AUGUST 16, 2018

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Money matters

A court refuses to ask the police to return to a man ₹12 lakh in denomination of ₹2,000 notes seized after note ban [Page 3](#)



This Gold does not glitter

Despite a story based on India's first Olympic win, the film's nationalism fails to bring the goosebumps on [Page 4](#)



Cityscape wheelies

The prospect of a cycling tour in Delhi's 'Old City' is both terrifying and intriguing, but worth an experience [Page 5](#)



Into the great unknown

Gandikota's majestic canyon and Belum's dark caves make for a great weekend trip [Page 6](#)

IN BRIEF



Schools pulled up for not submitting safety reports

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has pulled up schools in the Capital for their "half-hearted" compliance with a Directorate of Education (DoE) order asking for submission of quarterly safety reports. The schools were also slammed for not following prescribed self-inspection rules to strengthen security readiness and alertness.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

3 accused identified in HSILDC shooting case

GURUGRAM

A day after a Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (HSILDC) land records officer was shot dead during land possession survey in Manesar, the Gurugram Police on Wednesday said the three accused had been identified. Though no arrests have been made, Gurugram Police spokesperson Subhash Boken said four to five teams have been constituted to arrest the accused.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Teenager gets 5-year RI for snatching wallet

NEW DELHI

Ruling that recovery of a stolen item was not important for conviction in a snatching case, a local court here sentenced a 19-year-old to five-year rigorous imprisonment for allegedly snatching a wallet containing over ₹84,000 on Mehrauli-Gurugram Road last year. The court also imposed a fine of ₹25,000 on the convict.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

People from abroad visit Mohalla Clinics, like they do Taj Mahal'

Kejriwal praises his govt for improvement in health, education and power sectors

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Hitting out at past governments, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday questioned why India was not a developed country over 70 years after attaining Independence from British rule.

Speaking at the annual Independence Day ceremony organised by the Delhi government, Mr. Kejriwal said if his government could carry out improvements in health, education and power sectors in the three years it has been in power, why could not the rest of the country.

"If the other States and governments of other parties do not know how to do it, we will send [Delhi Education Minister] Manish Sisodia for 10 days to fix schools. We will send [Health Minister] Satyendar Jain to improve hospitals," he said.

Govt project
Referring to the Aam Aadmi Party government's primary healthcare project, Mr. Kejriwal said, "The way people from the world over come to visit the Taj Mahal, people from the world over are coming to see our Mohalla Clinics."

India being recognised
He added that though India had come to be known for communal riots and crimes against women, it was now being recognised for good efforts like Mohalla Clinics.

A delegation led by form-



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal during the 72nd Independence Day address at Chhatrasal Stadium in the Capital on Wednesday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR (SEE ALSO PAGE 2)

er United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan would be visiting some Mohalla Clinics in September, he said.

Fallen behind

He added that India had in the past given the world "zero, the decimal point and the first plastic surgery", but had fallen behind other countries when it came to development after 1947.

For instance, Japan had rebuilt itself after the devas-

tation of World War II, he said.

Hits back at critics

Referring to criticism of his party and government, the Chief Minister said, "People say we are in a hurry. Yes, we are in a hurry."

After a speech that lasted for over 25 minutes, Mr. Kejriwal ended the programme by signing the song "Hum Honge Kamyab", with the children in the audience joining in.

If the other States and governments of other parties do not know how to do it, we will send [Delhi Education Minister] Manish Sisodia for 10 days to fix schools. We will send [Health Minister] Satyendar Jain to improve hospitals

ARVIND KEJRIWAL
Chief Minister

HC upholds MCI's decision of punishing doctor for negligence

Name to be removed from Indian Medical Register for 15 days

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has upheld the decision of the Medical Council of India (MCI) ordering removal of a doctor's name from the Indian Medical Register for 15 days for negligence during childbirth which left the mother with permanent paraplegia (paralysis of the legs and lower body).

Justice Vibhu Bakshu said that the woman was in the care of the doctor since prenatal period and as the treating doctor, "the primary duty" to identify any complication would rest with the doctor.

The High Court order came on pleas by proprietor of Deepak Nursing Home, Dr. Meena Harsinghani who is a gynaecologist and obstetrician and her husband Dr. Narayan Harsinghani, an anaesthetist by profession.

Case against husband
The couple had challenged the MCI's decision to remove their name for a period of 15 days in Dr. Meena's case and three months in Dr. Narayan's case.

The case stems from a complaint before the Delhi Medical Council (DMC) by a woman, who was admitted to the nursing home for labour pains during her second pregnancy in November 2008.

She was under Dr. Meena's care during her prenatal period.

After examination, she was informed by Dr. Meena that the foetus had passed stool in the uterus and that could be dangerous as the



Medical negligence during childbirth left the mother with permanent paraplegia. ■ FILE PHOTO

foetus could breathe the stool into his/her lungs.

The pregnant woman was rushed to the operation theatre in emergency. As the anaesthesiologists on the panel of the nursing home were not available, Dr. Narayan administered anaesthesia in the spine of the woman.

The woman delivered the baby without any further complications.

However, she complained of severe pain in the back. She was examined on the next morning, which was around 14-15 hours after the operation.

Permanent paraplegia
Subsequently, a consulting neurologist was called in who advised treatment like steroids and physiotherapy and advised an MRI in case of poor response to the steroids.

The MRI conducted on the woman found that she had suffered from epidural haematoma.

This was a post-spinal anaesthesia complication and had left the complai-

nant with permanent paraplegia.

Complaint filed

On the complaint filed by the woman, a disciplinary committee held that the two doctors failed to exercise reasonable degree of skill, knowledge and care, as was expected of an ordinary prudent doctor, in the treatment administered to the woman.

It noted that if the complication had been discovered at an earlier stage, the same could have been addressed to a significant extent.

It recommended that the names of the couple removed from the State Medical Register for a period of 15 days.

The MCI also stood by the decision of the disciplinary committee, but increased the punishment for Dr. Narayan to a period of three months.

The High Court upheld the decision of the MCI with respect to Dr. Meena, but quashed the portion of the enhancement of punishment in case of Dr. Narayan.

Take down videos against Patanjali, Internet giants told

HC order comes on plea that former employee is using social media platforms to defame company

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed social media giants such as Facebook, Google and YouTube to take down videos that contain alleged "slanderous and defamatory" statement about Baba Ramdev's Patanjali Ayurved Ltd.

Patanjali Ayurved Ltd. moved the court after the social media giants declined its request to remove the alleged defamatory contents without an order of the court.

Senior advocate Rajiv Nayyar, appearing for Patanjali, contended that his client "found videos containing slanderous, defamatory and absolutely false statements about plaintiffs, uploaded, disseminated and shared" on the social media sites.



Social media giants asked to remove defamatory videos.

■ FILE PHOTO

Mr. Nayyar submitted that Ms. Kumar was an ex-employee whose services were terminated on May 18 last year and she was indulging in

"nefarious campaign to defame" his client.

He submitted that the social media sites should have a "fair mechanism" to remove defamatory and slanderous contents upon receipt of a complaint by the affected person.

He argued that the stand of the social media giants to approach the court for removing such defamatory content was "unfair and reasonable" and puts the citizens to a heavy cost of litigation.

He said that by the time a

citizen approaches the court, "immense damage has already been done and such damage is irreversible."

Justice J.R. Midha directed Facebook, Google and YouTube to block access to certain weblinks submitted by Patanjali which contain the alleged defamatory contents.

The court also restrained Ms. Kumar from giving any interview in the print media, electronic media, social media or any kind of circulation, by which the content of defamation may be circulated in future, till further orders.

Modi goes back to his trend of long I-Day speeches

Despite unfavourable weather, scores of spectators gather to hear PM's address that lasted 82 minutes

SIDHARTH RAVI
NEW DELHI

Keeping his promise, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had delivered the shortest Independence Day speech in 2017. He had spoken for 57 minutes.

In his radio programme 'Mann Ki Baat' last year, Mr. Modi said he had received letters from people complaining that his Independence Day speeches were "a little too long" and promised to make a shorter speech. However, this year, his speech at the Red Fort lasted for 82 minutes.

Children get lucky
At least 3,500 students from about 36 schools in the city, 700 NCC cadets and about 150 differently abled students were present.

Sporting colours of the national flag, schoolgirls were made to sit in the formation of the Tricolour, with the middle section spelling 'Bharat'.

Fun activity
As a fun activity, autistic and wheelchair-bound students of Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya National Institute For Persons with Physical Disabilities, decided to count the number of times



Schoolchildren pose during the 72nd Independence Day celebrations at the Red Fort on Wednesday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Some students were seen elated after they got a chance to shake hands with the PM. With big smiles, they were seen rushing towards the waiting

television crews to get a little screen time.

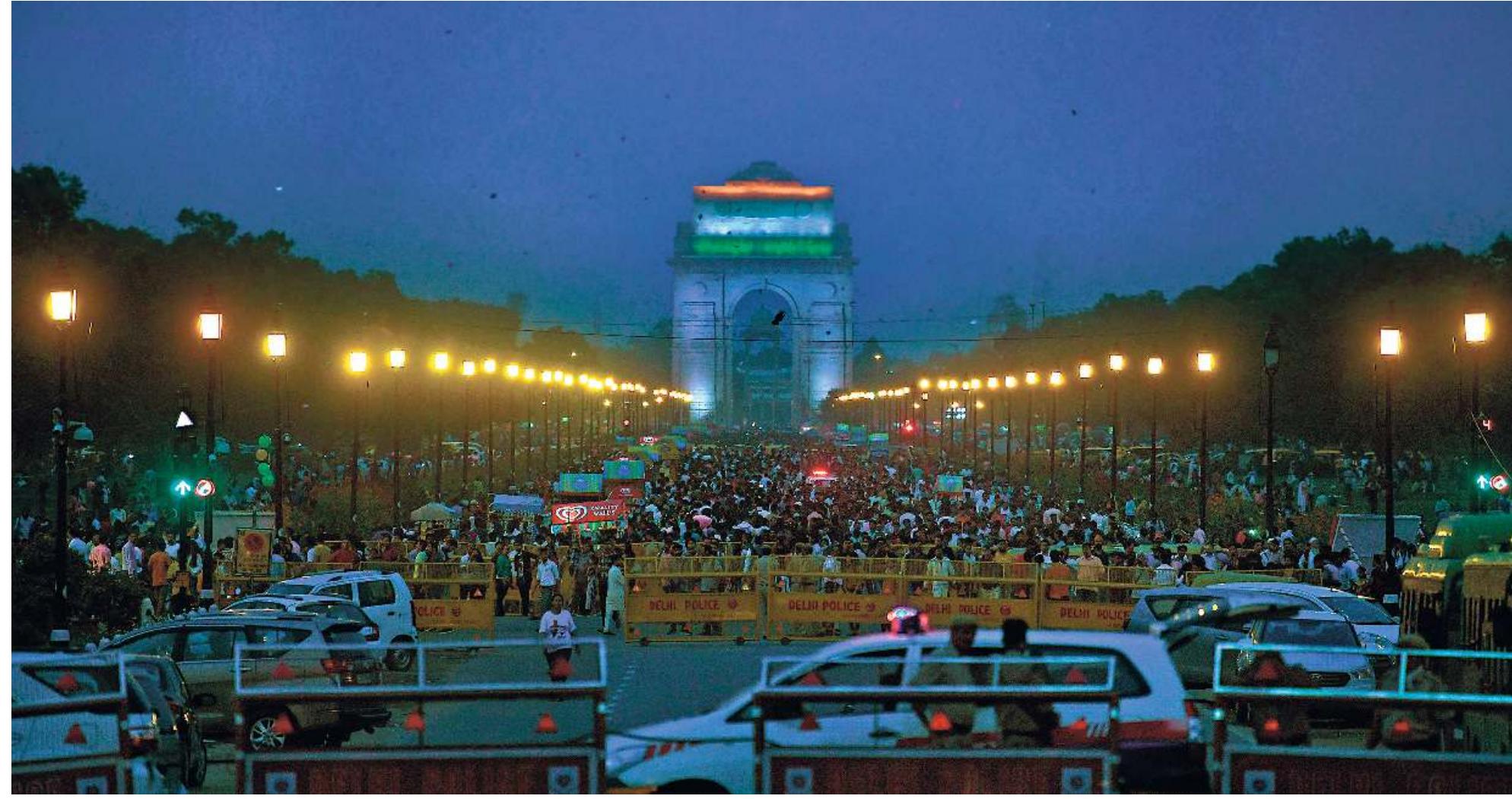
With temperatures at 33 degrees Celsius and humidity around 75%, the weather was unbearable for

some.
A photographer covering the event fainted and a soldier was seen stepping away from his ceremonial guard of honour to refresh himself.

As the Prime Minister's SUV cavalcade drew in, the public announcement system welcomed him with high praise, calling him "the one to bring this country to new heights". Waves of applause went up as the crowd spotted the PM on the screens put up around the enclosure.

His speech, initially punctuated with applause, soon saw a lull in the crowd. The applause, however, picked up vigour close to the end about 70 minutes into the speech. Mr. Modi ended his speech amid the chants of 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' and 'Vande Maatram'.

Enjoying the freedom



Crowds throng India Gate and Central Vista

NEW DELHI

An overcast sky and a cool breeze brought out Delhiites in huge numbers on Wednesday to mark Independence Day. The sprawling lawns of India Gate and Rajpath saw thousands of people strolling around, flying kites, eating snacks and buying tricoloured trinkets. Flower decorations put up at various spots in the area became popular photo spots for those looking to take some Independence-day themed selfies.

People also flocked to Central Park at Connaught Place.

Due to the influx of people into central Delhi, heavy traffic was witnessed on roads leading to India Gate and the Central Vista. Central Secretariat and Mandi House metro stations also saw huge crowds.

In order to ensure smooth traffic flow, the Delhi Traffic Police deployed personnel at several intersections. Teams were also assigned to ensure that any vehicles blocking the roads were promptly removed.

After sunset, the crowds got a visual treat when India Gate, and buildings at the Central Vista turned on the special lights that had been especially installed for Independence Day. STAFF REPORTER

Quality time: Thousands of people flock to India Gate (left) and the Central Vista (below) on Wednesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA



Govt pulls up schools for not submitting safety reports

Slams institutions for 'half-hearted' compliance with orders issued by the DoE

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has pulled up schools in the Capital for their "half-hearted" compliance with a Directorate of Education (DoE) order asking for submission of quarterly safety reports.

The schools were also slammed for not following prescribed self-inspection rules to strengthen security readiness and alertness.

"Despite serious endeavours by the DoE, other agencies and the High Court, the schools, which include some government schools, have responded with only half-hearted compliance. In case of some recognised private unaided/aided schools, the status of compliance is even more worrisome," read a govern-



The AAP government has said that incidents of assault on children is rising. ■ FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

If our schools are serious about providing foolproof safety and security to children, then they must ensure compliance

DELHI GOVERNMENT CIRCULAR

that there recognition may be withdrawn in case of repeated and deliberate non-compliance.

The circular noted that there was no respite in the number of physical, emotional and sexual assaults on school children, both on the premises of institutions and outside. In fact, such incidents are on the rise, it read. The schools were further reminded that they have to set up safety sub-committees and ensure organisation of monthly 'safety walks'.

with the directions issued."

The schools have been told to submit online safety reports to the DoE. Heads of government schools and estate managers have been warned of disciplinary proceedings in case of non-compliance. Aided and recognised private unaided schools have been warned

Over 600 evacuated

Issue amended notification on forest protection'

Green Tribunal gives environment Ministry four weeks to comply with order

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The water level in the Yamuna on Tuesday continued to flow above danger mark, with the authorities evacuating 613 people so far, officials said.

The east Delhi district administration said that the water level reached 205.72 metres at 7 p.m.

The danger mark is 204.83 metres.

Meanwhile, two women and two men had to be rescued after they were stranded on an ait in the Yamuna in north Delhi on Tuesday, said officials.



Kumar Goel said: "Counsel for the applicant submits that the stand of the MoEF shows that only an advisory was to be issued, which is not an adequate measure for strengthening forest protection and monitoring system to check illegal felling of trees for making charcoal."

An advisory is not an adequate measure for strengthening forest protection and checking illegal felling of trees for making charcoal

trees for making charcoal." "Once it is acknowledged by the MoEF that suggestions of the applicant is worth consideration, it [the Ministry] ought to have issued an appropriate notification amending the [relevant guidelines]," it noted.

The authorities have been asked to comply with in four weeks.

Earlier, the IISD had moved a plea seeking a ban on the use of charcoal as raw fuel material by industries. It had also sought preparation of a forest management plan. The Ministry had contended that following previous orders of the Tribunal, it had issued an advisory to all State governments to strengthen forest protection and set up a monitoring system to check illegal felling of trees for making charcoal.

'No refund if applicant withdraws from admission after deadline'

National consumer forum gives relief to IP University

SHINJINI GHOSH

NEW DELHI

The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) has held that a University Grants Commission (UGC) circular on refunding money to students who withdraw from admission is applicable only when the withdrawal is done within the specified period.

The directions came on an appeal by Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University against district forum order that had directed it to re-

fund the amount deposited by a student, who had withdrawn admission after the lapse of the specified time.

Setting aside the lower court's order, the NCDRC said: "The [UGC] circular disallows unjust enrichment of the university when a student withdraws from the programme, provided that the student withdraws by the last date stipulated, or before the scheduled date for joining the course."

"In the event of the student not joining the course

and the seat not being filled up, the student is not entitled to any refund since the university cannot be deprived of the fee which it had collected against the seat allotted to each student," said the apex consumer forum.

The NCDRC noted: "In the event of not joining the course, the student would be entitled to refund of the entire fee and other charges paid by him, provided that the seat vacated by him is filled up by the university."

IN BRIEF



Shashwat murder: CBI takes over probe

NEW DELHI
The CBI has taken over the probe into the murder of a resident doctor at St. Stephen's Hospital here last year, officials said on Wednesday. Shashwat Pandey was allegedly murdered by a colleague, who is on the run. The Delhi HC had handed over the matter to the CBI last month after the police failed to nab accused Suyash Gupta. Shashwat was found dead with his throat slit in the hospital on August 25 last year. PTI

Humid day in the Capital on Wednesday

NEW DELHI
It was a humid day in the city on Wednesday, with the maximum temperature settling at 35.6 degrees Celsius, two notches above the season's average. The minimum temperature was 28.4 degrees, two notches below normal. Humidity oscillated between 88% and 51%. The weatherman has forecast generally cloudy skies with light to moderate rain or thundershowers. PTI

Four vehicles catch fire on Noida road, no one hurt

NOIDA (UP)
Four vehicles parked on the roadside in Sector 62, Noida, caught fire on Wednesday night after an electric wire fell on them, said the police. The incident was reported around 10 p.m. "Due to a problem in the transformer, an electric wire fell on the vehicles parked nearby which caught fire," an officer said. The Fire Department was able to douse the flames and no one was injured. PTI

₹18 lakh burgled

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NOIDA

Burglary of ₹18 lakh was reported from a private builder's corporate office here in Sector 63 on Monday night, the police said on Wednesday.

The matter came to light on Tuesday, after which a complaint was made at Noida phase-III police station, they said. A police officer said four security guards employed by the firm have been named in the first information report (FIR).

"The lock on the office gate was found open and not broken. This suggests the thieves had inside help. The culprits took the safe containing cash, the officer added.

The police have lodged a case of burglary and started probe in the matter.

"Four persons have been named in the FIR. We are questioning people and also scrutinising footage from CCTV cameras for leads," the officer said.

DELHI TODAY

Talk: Architecture & Society Series: "Reclaiming India through its art forms: Comarashawmy and his writings" by Priyanka Jha, Ambedkar University, New Delhi. This talk attempts to invoke and read Ananda K Coomaraswamy's writings as those of one of the makers of modern India. Chair: M.N. Ashish Ganju at Amritas Hall, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m.

Talk: "Aarts Vatsayana & Kaituly Adharmic?" by Prof. Bharat Gupta, retired Associate Professor, University of Delhi at Lecture Hall, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), 1 Central Vista (CV) Mess, Janpath, 6:30 p.m.

Exhibition: "Nirityanjali 2018: Ek aur Prayaas" - an evening of kathak dance by the students of Swan Institute of Performing Arts at Kamani Auditorium, Copernicus Marg, Mandi House, 6:30 p.m.

Dance: "Nirityanjali 2018: Ek aur Prayaas" - an evening of kathak dance by the students of Swan Institute of Performing Arts at Kamani Auditorium, Copernicus Marg, Mandi House, 6:30 p.m.

Exhibition: "Ye hai Dilli meri Jaan" group show of paintings, drawing, photography, printmaking, digital art, ceramics and sculptures by the young artists from India at All India Fine Arts & Craft Society (AIFACS), 1 Rafi Marg, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Screening: Documentary film "At the Altar of India's Freedom - INA Veterans of Malaysia" (English/2017/30mins/English subtitled), directed by Choodie Shivaram. The documentary captures the stories of valour, sacrifice and the saga of the Malaysian INA veterans, at Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m.

(Mail your listings for this column at citeditor@thehindu.co.in)

Umar taken to crime spot to 'recreate' Monday's attack

JNU student calls for participation in a protest at Jantar Mantar against incident

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

A Special Cell team on Wednesday afternoon took Jawaharlal Nehru University student Umar Khalid to the Constitution Club here to recreate the sequence of events that ended with an attack on him on Monday. He escaped unharmed.

Mr. Khalid was standing near the gate of the club with friends when he was attacked. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Pramod Kushwah confirmed the development.

"A crime scene is recreated by the police to connect the dots and it helps them prove allegations in court. It will help the investigation because the sequence of events needs to be verified by surveying the crime spot," said a police officer who was part of the Special Cell team.

Stating that several Special Cell teams are working on the case, Mr. Kushwah said, "We have a photograph of the suspect and several other clues about him."

The police are also trying to determine if the attack was sponsored or self-motivated. Teams have been sent to adjoining States to gather clues about the attacker.

Meanwhile, calling for participation in a protest at Jantar Mantar on Thursday against the attack on him, Mr. Khalid tweeted: "I appeal to you to join this protest, not because the attack was on me...but because it can be on you tomorrow. The ultimate target here is democracy in the country [sic]."



Police personnel at the Constitution Club following the attack on JNU student Umar Khalid on Monday. ■ FILE PHOTOS: PTI, R. V. MOORTHY



International body condemns attack

Demands security for JNU student

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Scholars at Risk, an international human rights organisation and network working on academic freedom, has condemned the attack on Jawaharlal Nehru University student and activist Umar Khalid. The incident happened outside Constitution Club of India here on Monday afternoon.

The organisation has demanded security for Mr. Khalid, and upholding of the freedom of expression and association of the entire student community. "Scholars at Risk is gravely concerned about an appa-

rently targeted attack on a student in retaliation for non-violent exercise of the right to freedom of expression and freedom of association," the organisation said in a statement.

It added that in addition to harm to the immediate victim, such incidents have a chilling effect on academic freedom and freedom of expression.

"State authorities have a responsibility to ensure the security of members of the higher education community, to prevent future attacks and to hold perpetrators of violent attacks accountable," it said.

Banned entertainment



A snake charmer plies his trade on the occasion of Nag Panchami in New Delhi on Wednesday. Capturing snakes and using them for display and entertainment is banned under the Wildlife Protection Act. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

Court refuses to return ₹12 lakh to businessman

₹12 lakh in ₹2,000 currency notes was seized just after the 2016 demonetisation exercise

NIRNIMESH KUMAR
NEW DELHI

A court here has refused to direct the Delhi Police to return to a businessman ₹12 lakh in denomination of ₹2,000 currency notes seized just after the 2016 demonetisation.

The police had recovered the money in a bag under a car, where it was allegedly hidden by the businessman's helper after the amount was stolen from his shop.

When the businessman, operating out of Gandhi Nagar in east Delhi, approached the police for release of the seized money, they refused due to the denomination of the currency notes.

The businessman then approached a Metropolitan Magistrate court seeking release of the money but

his plea was dismissed.

Revision petition
Thereafter, he filed a revision petition against the Magistrate court order in the court of Additional Sessions Judge Ajay Gupta. He argued that he had collected the money in cash from his customers in denomination of ₹2,000 currency notes as it was easily available at that time.

Rebutting his argument, the judge said, "The revisionist has not placed any record of daily cash collection by which it can be inferred that on January 12, 2017, [when the police seized the money], the applicant had collected ₹12 lakh from his customers."

"In his application moved before the ACP, Gandhi Nagar, the revisionist stated that he

had arranged an amount of ₹12 lakh from his bank and other sources. But the report filed by Income Tax Officer reveals that no withdrawal had been made by the revisionist from the bank during the above period. Further, the Income Tax Officer reported that sale made in the month of December 2016 was ₹9,70,705, whereas sale in the previous and preceding

months was very low," the judge said.

"Demonetisation came into effect during November [2016]. It is beyond understanding as to how the sale of the revisionist increased during the demonetisation period.

As far as the submission that currency notes of ₹2,000 were easily available in the market is concerned, sale in the market was not that sound during that period. Withdrawal of such a huge amount was not possible during those days...

AJAY GUPTA

Additional Sessions Judge

months was very low," the judge said.

"As far as the submission that currency notes of ₹2,000 were easily available in the market is concerned, sale in the market was not that sound during that period. Withdrawal of such a huge amount was not possible during those days. The revisionist has shown his sale in odd amounts. There is no explanation as to how the revisionist was in possession of only ₹2,000 currency notes while the sale was also in odd amounts. Thus, the submission by the counsel for the revisionist is not well-founded," the judge said, dismissing the revision petition.

3 accused identified in HSIIDC shooting case

Police teams constituted to arrest the attackers

STAFF REPORTER
GURUGRAM

A day after a Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (HSIIDC) land records officer was shot dead during land possession survey in Manesar, the Gurugram Police on Wednesday said the three accused had been identified.

Though no arrests have been made, Gurugram Police spokesperson Subhash Boken said four to five teams have been constituted to arrest the accused.

Driver injured
The deceased has been identified as 52-year-old patwari Ishwar Singh. His driver Vi-jender sustained injuries in Tuesday's incident and is in the hospital.

Mr. Boken said several suspects from Manesar and its neighbouring villages had been detained for questioning in connection with the attack and their interrogation helped the police identify the accused.

The land in question is under the Central Bureau of Investigation scanner over allegations of huge losses to farmers due to irregularities. Former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda is an accused in the case.

Claiming that Ishwar was the sole breadwinner, his brother Mangat Ram demanded financial assistance and a government job to the



Victim Ishwar Singh.
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

recently directed the HSIIDC to take possession of the land, mostly owned by builders. Some portion of the land is also owned by the HSIIDC but farmers have been cultivating there illegally. The corporation has already taken "deemed" possession of around 340 acres.

A survey was being conducted for around 70 acres of land for the past two days. Meanwhile, Ishwar's body was handed over to his family at noon after the post-mortem. A contractual worker with the HSIIDC since the past decade, Ishwar is survived by his wife and three sons. He belonged to Shahpur village in Hisar.

Claiming that Ishwar was the sole breadwinner, his brother Mangat Ram demanded financial assistance and a government job to the

HSIIDC Managing Director T.L. Satyaprakash told *The Hindu* that the team had gone to survey the land for "deemed possession" and the police were not required for the exercise. Calling the incident "unfortunate", he said the department was cooperating with the police in the investigation. Mr. Satyaprakash added Ishwar's family was entitled to a compensation of ₹3 lakh as per the Chief Secretary's notification.

Teenager gets 5-year RI for snatching wallet

Court also imposes fine of ₹25,000 on 19-year-old

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Ruling that recovery of a stolen item was not important for conviction in a snatching case, a local court here sentenced a 19-year-old to five-year rigorous imprisonment for allegedly snatching a wallet containing over ₹84,000 on Mehrauli-Gurugram Road last year. The court also imposed a fine of ₹25,000 on the convict.

Pronouncing the judgment, Sessions Judge Ravi Kumar Soni rejected the contention of the defence counsel that recovery of money from Suraj's possession was not incriminating evidence.

Mr. Soni said the identity of the accused as a snatcher was the only relevant issue in a snatching case and even if it was assumed that nothing was recovered from the accused, it makes no difference

RAVI KUMAR SONI
Sessions Judge

let, Suraj, a resident of Uttar Pradesh, snatched it and fled towards Chakkarpur village. He was arrested the next day after Mr. Saini lodged a First Information Report. The police recovered ₹21,000 from Suraj.

Public Prosecutor Anurag Hooda contended that Suraj's arrest within 24 hours, recovery of ₹21,000 at his instance and his identification by the complainant in court within three to four months categorically proved that he was the snatcher. However, the defence counsel argued the wallet was actually snatched by a woman travelling in Suraj's autorickshaw. The defence also argued that

there was no occasion for the complainant to see the accused.

Mr. Soni said the defence counsel's contention that a woman was the snatcher seemed to be a mere afterthought as such a plea had not been put forward during cross-examination of the complainant. He added that the defence had not attributed any motive or enmity to the complainant for falsely implicating the accused.

The judge also accepted the prosecution's plea that the victim had the opportunity to see the snatcher since the incident took place during late hours and there was no rush. Mr. Soni also pointed out in the judgment that the fact Suraj had refused to join the test identification parade without an explanation showed he was aware the victim would identify him. Mr. Soni also quoted a Supreme Court order, 'Dana Yadav alias Dahu and others vs. State of Bihar' to reject the contention of the defence that Suraj's identification for the first time in court after a lapse of four months was inadmissible.

The complainant in the case, Rajiv Nagar resident Manjit Saini, was on the way home from Sikanderpur on May 27, 2017, around 1 a.m. when he stopped at a kiosk on M.G. Road to buy a cold drink. As he took out his wallet, Suraj, a resident of Uttar Pradesh, snatched it and fled towards Chakkarpur village. He was arrested the next day after Mr. Saini lodged a First Information Report. The police recovered ₹21,000 from Suraj.

Public Prosecutor Anurag Hooda contended that Suraj's arrest within 24 hours, recovery of ₹21,000 at his instance and his identification by the complainant in court within three to four months categorically proved that he was the snatcher. However, the defence counsel argued the wallet was actually snatched by a woman travelling in Suraj's autorickshaw. The defence also argued that

3 held for killing teen

His body was dumped in the Hindon

Akash and his friends were throwing pebbles in the river. The three accused were on the other side of the Hindon. Arun apparently got hit by a pebble. This led to a spat

POLICE OFFICER
the accused and Akash returned to the river.

"They had another argument, following which the accused slit Akash's throat and dumped his body in the river," the officer said. The body was found two days later from Bisrakh.

The accused have been booked under Sections 302 (murder) and 201 (causing disappearance of evidence) of the IPC and remanded in judicial custody, the police said. A knife and bloodstained clothes too been recovered, the police said.

The details of other sources has also not been provided," Mr. Gupta added.

'No explanation'

"As far as the submission that currency notes of ₹2,000 were easily available in the market is concerned, sale in the market was not that sound during that period. Withdrawal of such a huge amount was not possible during those days. The revisionist has shown his sale in odd amounts. There is no explanation as to how the revisionist was in possession of only ₹2,000 currency notes while the sale was also in odd amounts. Thus, the submission by the counsel for the revisionist is not well-founded," the judge said, dismissing the revision petition.

Later that evening, both



CM

B ND-NDE

Cityscape wheelies

The prospect of a cycling tour in Delhi's 'Old City' is both terrifying and intriguing, but worth doing for the experience

SUNALINI MATHEW

This isn't a tour to do if it's been 20 years since you've been on a bicycle. The actual riding isn't much – just over 5k, but the meandering through the mess is tricky. But cycling is a great way to cover more, in half the amount of time. It's also a first-hand look at what we've made our city into, and the immense potential that restoration can bring.

Gaurav Sharma is your guide (there are others who are a part of the group, but ask for him), though he explicitly tells you he isn't one, but is really a student studying to become a lecturer, showing people parts of the city they may not have seen. He has an MA in history and has studied Spanish. There's also a New Delhi tour on wheels, about 15 km and one in Mehrauli that's about 8 km long (book on Airbnb).

Sharma is a part of Spin Monkey, co-founded by Anchit Doegegar, as a city-cycling-tourism venture. An ex-banker, he decided to

convert his hobby into a profession, in October 2016.

Show up at Hotel Broadway at 5:45 a.m., don a helmet and a reflective jacket, sit astride a bicycle, all given by the company, and head out, following the leader. Kids over 10 years and 3 feet 8 inches can come along. The rear is brought up by Mohammed Aslam, who also has first aid and a bicycle-tool kit. He'll 'guard' the



gear when you pop in to a monument, and supply you with water when you're on the go.

The first stop is the city wall, a 100-metre-long intact part of the original that is thought to be about 10 miles long. Not many tour operators cover this, and it's the best part of the trip, so pause, take some pictures against the old stone walls almost four centuries old, peer down at the moat and marvel at how history lives amidst us, in Delhi. Look at the different-era bricks and stones used in construction.

English bond

There's stone (Delhi quartz, says Sharma) from the Mughal era and narrow British bricks (called Lakhor or English bond) used to build a ramp to roll up cannons. The original structure was constructed in 1648 when Shahjahanabab was inaugurated, and you'll see the later addition of the Martello Towers, as look-outs, added by the British, who established themselves in the walled



Just sit and watch: A view from Jama Masjid; a kulcha maker at work • SUNALINI MATHEW



Showing the way: (From left) Gaurav Sharma, Mohammad Aslam and Anchit Doegegar

As you ride down Daryaganj road, Sharma points out the differences between houses that had a Victorian influence (invariably white structures with Athenian or Roman arches) and those that didn't (Persian-influence arches built in the likeness of the Taj Mahal). We ride past Delhi Book House, and a building with Hang-

ing Bridge inscribed into it, so named because a pole of a bridge was hidden behind it.

Onto the Jama Masjid, India's second-largest mosque that can fit upto 25,000 prayer mats. Here, there's a bit of a song and dance about covering our fitness-gearred bodies in kaftans. This is a great place to sit and watch the

sun rise, even as the cleaner sweeps dust into your face (kaftan sleeve coming in handy). The solid wood and brass-clad doors with large iron hooks and chains are a sketcher's delight and the view from here, a photographer's. Being neither, we left quickly for the cool (air-conditioned) environs of the Sis Ganj

Gurudwara, built in the latter half of the 18th century, where Guru Teg Bahadur was beheaded (though we couldn't wait to get past the history and onto the prashad).

How do foreigners take to Old Delhi, we ask Sharma, who says they never complain, but look at it as an experience of a city waking up, though they are baffled by the traffic and people honking for no reason. "They feel they can cycle anywhere in the world after this," he laughs.

An experience it is, as we pass the kulcha-makers who start their day at 7 in the evening, and finish by 9 the next morning, kneading the dough, letting it rise, and then rolling and baking it in a wood-fired oven. We catch just the baking process, and you can stand and watch for hours, if not for the rat flitting around outside. Which is where the getaway bicycle comes in handy.

Victorian building

The last stop is Gododia Building. You go to the top (not the nicest experience going up), but it's fascinating once you're there. Sipping tea, you can look into the neat Fatehpuri mosque quadrangle with the boys sitting to study on a verandah of a madrasa. Or you can turn 180 degrees and look at the clutter and confusion in this old Victorian building that is now overcrowded with illegal construction and overwhelmed with time, burdened with too many people, too many stories.

The last stop is Bengali Sweets, where the poori-aaloo is way better than the chhola-bhatura, and the rasmalai is just the right amount of sweet. Gaurav talks about his academician grandparents and forms a connect when he says his grandmother was Tamilian.

Much like a homestay or a mom-and-pop shop, where a large part of the reason you go is the person who 'owns' it, a cycling or walking tour too depends on the person who's showing you around. So go, not because you've never seen old Delhi, but go, because Sharma brings to the experience a part of himself. Because you realise the city has seen so much, you forgive it for its shameless wear and tear. And because cycling is just plain old fun.

IN BRIEF



Man with a message

To celebrate Independence Day in a meaningful way, Milind Soman ran from Lodhi Gardens to India Gate in Delhi and used it as an opportunity to disseminate the message of health and fitness for women.

Motivating women to run, Milind Soman, founder of Pinkathon, said: "We strongly believe in inclusiveness of all and make sure that women can and should practice staying fit, wearing whatever they are most comfortable in.

The legacy and love of every Indian woman for sari is undeniable. We want to change the mindset of women. We want women to run in whatever they wear be it saris, salwar kameez or even the hijabs."

United Sisters Foundation organised Independence Day Run in traditional attire and promoted Bajaj Electricals Pinkathon Delhi.

+ 'An artist can't ignore society and tell a story'

National Award winner at 19, Riddhi Sen discusses playing a transgender character and his upcoming film with Kajol

KENNETH ROSARIO

For Riddhi Sen, winning the National Award for the portrayal of a transgender character is more of an achievement than being the youngest Best Actor at 19. "Nothing can be more pleasurable than winning it for those who are actually fighting a bigger battle every day in their lives," says the wunderkind, who was recognised for his performance in Kaushik Ganguly's Bengali film, *Nagarkirtan*.

The rarity of transgender protagonists in contemporary Indian cinema attracted a 17-year-old Sen to the role, three years ago. Belonging to a family of theatre actors, he learnt at an early age that an actor's performance precedes his public image. "An actor's primary and only job is to be different people," says Sen, who will be seen next in Pradeep Sarkar's *Helicopter Eela*.

Hard work paid off

After Sen signed *Nagarkirtan*, the project struggled to take off. "A lot of people were



Acting wunderkind Riddhi Sen with Kajol • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT •

not brave enough to produce the film," he recalls. As upset as he was over the looming uncertainty, he kept his preparation going, while simultaneously working on other assignments. He read

Lili Elbe's posthumous autobiography, *Man Into Woman: The First Sex Change* (2015), and met transgender people to learn from their experiences. "An actor creates

a lot of things from his emotional memory," observes Sen. "But this [character] is something you can't recreate in your mind because you haven't faced such a conflict."

Watching Rituparno Ghosh's

films hence helped him understand the inner turmoil of a trans person – their desires and fears. "What I tried to understand was the psychology, the pain of not being able to communicate your feelings to the society," he adds. For Sen, it's gratifying to see his dedication pay off. Head of the jury for the 65th National Film Awards, Shekhar Kapur rang up Sen after the ceremony to compliment him on his performance. "That was the equivalent of an award for me," he says.

Taking a stand

Sen, who hasn't shied away from taking a political stand (at the age of 15, he rejected Bengal government's prestigious award, the Mahanayak Samman on political grounds), holds a different opinion about the controversy that surrounded the National Awards this year. A number of recipients boycotted the ceremony, following reports that President Ram Nath Kovind will only present 11 of the 140 awards. "In the coming five years or ten

years, people will remember the films which won the awards," he says. "They won't remember from whose hand it was given. The National Awards are decided by [a] jury, not Mr. President or Smriti Irani."

Both on and off screen, social commentary is integral to Sen. "An artist can't ignore the society and tell a story," he says, adding that an actor must be well versed with history – of both cinema and society – to master the art. "I'm a huge fan of Martin Scorsese, and he said, 'We don't know where we are going if we don't have an idea of where we came from,'" says Sen. But there are times when the actor has found it challenging to be vocal about his opinions. "People say, 'you shouldn't be speaking out of your age'. But I respect a person not because of his age but because of his

qualities."

Balancing act

Shuffling between Bengali and Hindi cinema, Sen is excitedly looking forward to his September release, *Helicopter Eela*, where he plays Kalji's son.

The film is based on Anand Gandhi's Gujarati play *Beta, Kaagdo*. "It's a story about an aspiring singer and single mother," he says. "The mother-son bonding is at the crux of the film."

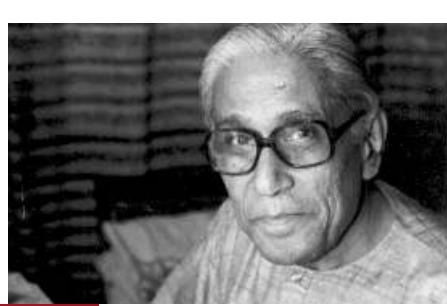
Besides movies, Sen is actively invested in theatre. He recently played a part in his father Kaushik Sen's play on Vincent Van Gogh, featuring Anjan Dutt and his mother, Reshma Sen.

He also plans to direct a short film soon. "I have a very keen interest in filmmaking and would pursue it," reveals Sen who counts Shoojit Sircar as one of his favourite Indian directors.

Sircar's urgency to tell a story attracts the 20-year-old actor, for whom passion is an indispensable quality.

I have a very keen interest in filmmaking and would pursue it

5 EVENTS WORTH-YOUR-WHILE



LECTURE

Memorial

In memory of Nemichandra Jain, a theatre critic and poet, Nemi Nidhi and Natarang Pratishthan organises the Nemichandra Jain Memorial Lecture - 2018. Minal Pande, senior journalist will deliver the memorial lecture on the topic 'Music and Politics'.

VENUE: Triveni Kala Sangam Auditorium, Tansen Marg, Mandi House

TIME: 6 p.m.



THEATRE

Kutiyattam

Sahapedia organises festival of Surpanakhankam. Inaugural address by Prof. David Shulman, Hebrew University, Jerusalem followed by Kutiyattam - Surpanakhankam from Saktibhadra's Ascharyachudamani, based on the Ramayana by Margi Madhu Chakyar and Indu G.

VENUE: Fountain Lawns, India International Centre

TIME: 6:15 p.m.



DANCE

Odissi

Utsav - Ranjana Gauhar's Odissi Dance Academy presents 13th edition of Saare Jahan Se Accha, 2018 a two-day festival of Indian classical dance. This festival is an annual cultural tribute by the artist fraternity to commemorate the spirit of India's Independence Day.

VENUE: The Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre

TIME: 7 p.m.



MUSIC

Concert

SPICMACAY (Society For Promotion Of Indian Classical Music & Culture Amongst Youth), a non-political voluntary youth movement, presents a musical evening. Flute recital by Pt. Hariprasad Chaurasia and Carnatic vocal recital by Sudha Ragunathan.

VENUE: Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Mehrauli Road

TIME: 5:30 p.m.



FILM

L'exercice de l'Etat*

Story of a French Minister of Transportation, who entered his career in public service as an idealist intending to use his position to serve the people with honour. But he is tasked with bringing forward the government's plan to privatise some train stations.

VENUE: M.L. Bhartia Auditorium, Alliance Francaise De Delhi

TIME: 6:30 p.m.



DEEPA ALEXANDER

He leans on his bicycle and looks down the stretch of road from Karu that runs into the rocky moonscape of Leh. Chortens line the sides, a brisk wind whips up the prayer flags strung like festive bunting and the glow of the setting sun bounces off the jagged Karakoram. Praphul Kumar has another 38 kilometres to complete his solo ride from Manali to Leh. He knows his triumphant entry into the Ladakh capital will be a quiet one, witnessed only by the dancing Milky Way that lights up the skies in this part of the world.

It's July, a month of chilly but largely favourable weather, but the 490-kilometre-long Leh-Manali Highway is distributed evenly between tarmac and slippery yak tracks flanked by dripping ice walls.

There are soldiers in Army trucks, tourists in buses, gangs of motorbikers and the odd adventurous cyclist who brave the blind hairpin bends and switchbacks that scallop this route, among the highest on Earth.

"I had earlier motored down with a friend," says Praphul. "We drove from Nahan in Himachal Pradesh via Udhampur,

Gulmarg, Drass, Kargil and Leh to Manali over a week. That's when we saw several foreigners, including a lady with a child who had his own cycle, on this stretch. So, when I got the chance, I decided to do it."

Constant companion

Praphul completed the route in five days, with a day for acclimatisation (which he wryly admits is not enough), on his green Trek Marlin 29er, an all-terrain bike. Carrying 15 kilograms, he cycled 10-11 hours a day in the mountains, covering 140 kilometres; called for more than just physical stamina and mental grit. It also required meticulous planning.

Praphul's travel journal is filled with hand-drawn maps, elevation of major towns along the highway, places to transit overnight, lists of bicycle essentials such as pumps and reflector tapes, suppliers, and entries on every day of travel.

Some of it makes for interesting reading, such as cycling through perilous mud tracks washed over by ferocious flowing streams, being held up by crossing herds of sheep and being lulled to sleep by bells of grazing yaks.

Eat, sleep, ride... How Praphul Kumar braved snowfields, razor-back mountains and spells of dizziness cycling solo from Manali to Leh on a Trek Marlin 29er, an all-terrain bike

The last horizon



The solitary cyclist: Snapshots from the ride through the Himalayas • PRAPHUL KUMAR



He also carried medicine to beat nausea, dry rations, the odd pair of trouser clips, knee caps and a sleeping bag.

"I set off at 6.30am the first day to climb Rohtang pass at an altitude of 3,980 metres. The roads are good on this stretch, although the weather was in single digits. The descent to Gramphu is steady but pretty steep," says Praphul, adding that the views are astounding when cycling on the roof of the world. "There is always the smell of wood smoke and the sound of gushing water. Some places required me to kick off my shoes

and wade barefoot through freezing water."

Praphul, who stopped only for small breaks, cycled from sunrise to sunset, and ensured he reached his next transit point, often a PWD guesthouse bordered by orchards and a lilac dusk, well before nightfall.

"It's important to keep hydrated or acute mountain sickness (AMS) can overwhelm you. By the time I got to Tanglang La (5,328 metres) I was nauseous, and had to administer myself Diamox and ORS, to fight it off. With no one for help in any eventuality and no satellite phone, it was a low point, but I had been warned sufficiently by family and friends," he laughs.

The off-road experience

The other challenges came with the constant ascent and descent, as Praphul cycled past Khokhsar with the Bhaga river playing hide-and-seek with the road; a spell of cold rain; taking a detour for hot local food and the odd cycle breakdown. "Beyond Baralacha La and Sarchu

where Himachal ends, it's almost offroad. The terrain also changes, the green tree line is gone and you are surrounded by high brown mountains. There's plenty of rocks, shale and scree, and suddenly you feel like you are riding a Boneshaker."

But this boulevard of broken dreams soon gave way to Gata Loops with its 21 bends that resemble a toddler's crayon squiggle. Beyond the flat Morey plains with the road bisecting it like a grey tear, lies Tanglang La. "It was snowing and the plains

were filled with nomads and their flock. It's a cold desert, a place to find something lost within us."

Praphul admits that doing the trip in a stipulated time was tough, and he even waved on many friendly foreigners who asked if he wanted to exchange his Trek for their motorbikes.

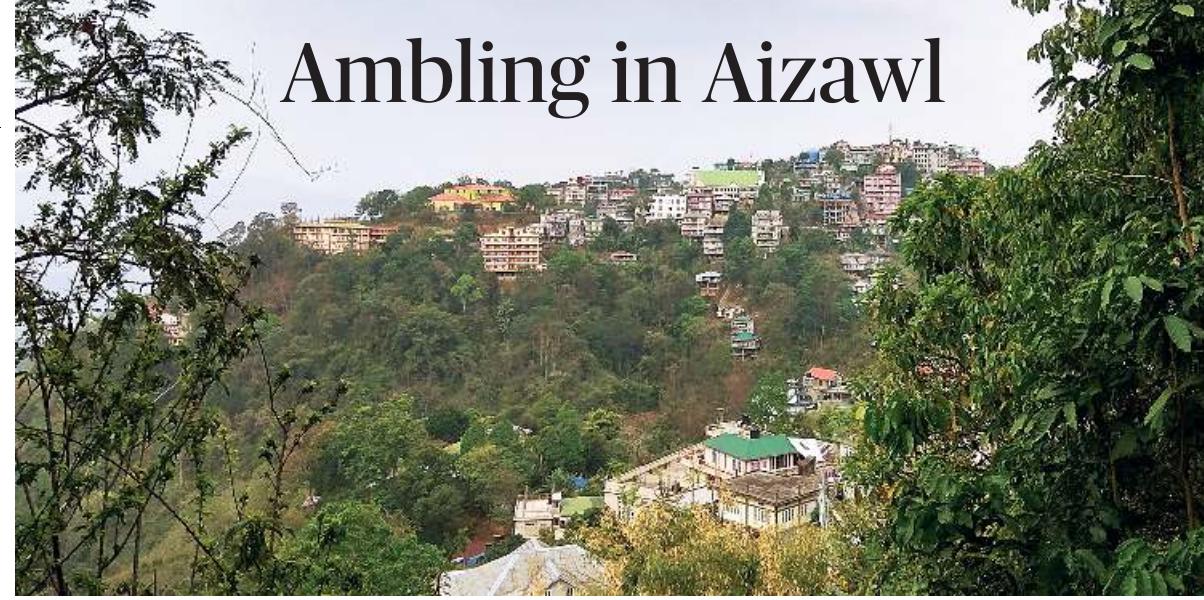
"It was a test of my capability. Given a chance I'll do it again. Alone," he says, adding that he hopes to someday cycle the Lahaul-Spiti route from Shimla, the Konkan coast and bookend India between Kashmir and Kanyakumari. "The best of journeys are those without maps. On a cycle."

It was a test of my capability. Given a chance, I'll do it again. Alone

TWO WHEELS AND A DREAM
Anne Mustoe, an English school mistress who took up cycling at the age of 54, and rode around the world twice, once in each direction, recounted her travels on those and other trips in a series of books.



Ambling in Aizawl



Notes from the Mizo capital, where life moves at the speed of a leisurely stroll

DHRITIMAN BORKAKOTI

On a recent trip to Aizawl, I whiled away a morning walking through the city centre. Despite the familiar press of crowds at Bara Bazaar, the old market district of Aizawl, it felt different from other Indian cities. The streets were cleaner. The air was crisper. And despite slow traffic on the narrow roads, drivers didn't erupt into a cacophony of blaring horns.

I wove my way between vendors in the main market, which, in the 1980s and 1990s, was famous for consumer products from East Asia smuggled in via Myanmar. Smuggled goods are no longer novelties, but stalls still manage to surprise with the items on offer: leafy vegetables to smoked fish, pirated DVDs of K-Dramas and Pixar animations – all dubbed/sub-titled in Mizo – to Chinese induction stoves.

From the market, I walked uphill to Millennium Centre, a multi-store mall, took a bus to the next stop, and then climbed up McDonald Hill. Along the ridge of the hill, opposite aptly-named High Field, is a memorial that marks the spot where the first church in these hills was erected in 1896. Next door is the Mizoram State Museum – not spectacular, but with interesting exhibits in the ethnological gallery on the first floor: drums, weapons, and rice-beer paraphernalia; and the textile gallery on the second floor: traditional textile, and the uniform of a Mizo National Army recruit. When I came out of the museum after a lazy hour, school students were playing in the field – it was time for lunch.

I walked down the hill, and turned towards Chanmari. The first restaurant I checked specialised in North In-



The hills are alive: A slice of the town; food in Aizawl leans heavily towards the unusual • DHRITIMAN BORKAKOTI

FACT FILE
Lengpui Airport, 30 kilometres from Aizawl, is connected by direct flights from Delhi, Kolkata, Guwahati and Imphal. The inner line permit, required for visiting Mizoram, can be obtained at the airport on payment of a fee of ₹120 and submission of an identity card and photograph. Pre-paid taxis are available from the airport to the city.

dian food; the second had a sign that read, 'Indian thali. No beef, no pork'. Then I found Red Pepper restaurant.

A large group of local students had occupied most of the tables – I read that as a sign of authenticity. The place is decorated in a tribal chic style with a couple of bamboo huts with thatched roofs inside the building.

With the guidance of the helpful staff, I ordered Mizo rice beer, smoked pork, vawks and white rice. The rice beer was fruity and frothy like a light lassi, with a sour aftertaste. The smoked pork was grilled more than smoked, but sweet and crunchy. Vawks just means pork in Mizo, but what I got was the highlight of the meal – a saucy and sour broth with pork and a leafy vegetable, possibly mustard greens.

Hunger sated, I walked to Chanmari bus stop, where I saw a promotional banner for the Chanmari Football Club. Aizawl FC might be the former

(2016-2017) national champion, but local pride in other teams is evident everywhere. Later, at an apparel store, I saw a sign that certified that the store was a 'proud Co-Sponsore (sic) of Chanmari West Football Club'.

With all the interest in football, I wondered where the grounds were on these steep hills – I hadn't seen any other than the High Field. I found my answer when I went to look at the city from the vantage point of the Aizawl Theological College, perched high on a ridge at the northern end of the city.

The panoramic view revealed fields on the bald pate at the top of hillocks, fields cut where the slope was gentle, and a ground squeezed into the narrow valley of a river between two ridges. Working around the constraints of the land is a feature of the city. Houses perch at the edge of the road, sometimes with three or four floors built from the road level down to the curve of the slope.

The next day on my flight back from Aizawl, I had a long layover at Kolkata and took a cab to town to enjoy a Bengali meal. Leaving the airport, the driver suddenly braked – a car had suddenly stopped ahead – and in response, the cabby pressed down hard on the horn, as if to remind me that I wasn't in Aizawl anymore.

Into the great unknown

Gandikota's majestic canyon and Belum's dark caves make for a great weekend trip

SUDHA UMAPATHY

"A gorge? Caves too?" This is the reaction I get when I tell people that I was on a weekend road trip from Chennai to Gandikota and Belum Caves in Andhra Pradesh. Almost equidistant from Chennai and Hyderabad, and a shade quicker from Bengaluru, this is a good place for friends or family to meet and enjoy time together.

Ten travel enthusiasts set out around noon and stopped for lunch at Amavathi restaurant on the Chennai-Nellore Highway. Armed with water bottles and snacks, we moved on, stopped for tea and decided to spend the night at Kadapa. Google directed us to the comfortable Manasa Inn. Breakfast was a king's meal, replete with South Indian breakfast items. The star though was the 'red chilli bomb chutney', a Kadapa speciality, which set the taste buds on fire.

It was then that I noticed our own desi ghee beckoning me to use a dash of it with the chutney, paired with the crispy vadai.

The final result was a sumptuous breakfast, and we felt ready to take on the day.

At certain spots one can just sit and gaze at the Penna river, that seems almost still

Filled with history

Gandikota is 86 kilometres from Kadapa, and we reached by 11 am. A combination of the architectural, geological and geographical significance of this land was an interesting revelation to us. Known as the Grand Canyon of South India, this place has attracted reviews by travel bloggers.

Gandikota has a fort, a gorge, and allows us to peep into the history of a bygone era. The fort is an easy climb, and spread across the area were two flights of stairs. There is a lot of scope for good photos within and from the top of the fort. The palace grounds housed two temples, a mosque, a granary, a temple tank, and a jail.

The highlight was the gorgeous Gandikota gorge. At certain spots, one can just sit and gaze at the Penna river, that seems almost still and resting peacefully at this point, after having flowed majestically through millions of years, thereby creating this huge



Rock of ages: A view of the Gandikota gorge (top); and Belum caves • S UMAPATHY AND LE GIRINATH

large gated campus with convenient parking space. There are many trees and it is breezy even around 3 in the afternoon. There is also a children's playground and decent toilet facilities.

Measureless to man

The charge to enter the caves is ₹65 per person, with no charge for cameras or mobile phones. It's like walking into a deep pit. There are sturdy steel stairs. The caves are large at first, and in some areas there is artificial lighting, lending the caves different hues.

The paths inside the caves have been levelled to facilitate easy walking, and there are stone benches to rest. Oxygen is through an artificial vent near the resting spot. And from that resting spot, there are caves to explore in different directions. There is a water source below, called the patala ganga with a lingam. The entry and exit to caves is the same. On our drive back, we chanced upon a large reservoir near Owk. We were drawn to the beauty of the water and the dusky clouds. When we reached home, we looked back at the memory of the sunflower fields, the chatter of friends, the climb down at Belum, the hike up at Gandikota and realised that it had been a fulfilling weekend adventure.

At Gandikota, the Andhra Pradesh tourism department runs the Haritha Resorts that offers rooms to stay and a restaurant. However, we gave it a miss to explore the lesser-known local restaurants and sampled spicy Andhra biryani, and curd rice.

Our next destination was Belum caves, which is 64 kilometres from Gandikota. The road is quite picturesque. The caves are situated within a