



NEARBY

Triple talaq Bill to be sent to Parliament again

NEW DELHI
The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2019, paving the way for the legislation to be introduced in the upcoming session of Parliament.

NEWS ► PAGE 12

Sitharaman, Jaishankar to get JNU's Alumni Award

NEW DELHI
JNU on Wednesday said it would confer its Distinguished Alumni Award on Union Ministers Nirmala Sitharaman and Subrahmanya Jaishankar.

NEWS ► PAGE 13

Coimbatore man held for ties with Easter attack mastermind

NIA probe nets six-member module propagating IS ideology on social media

VIJAYA SINGH
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday arrested a Facebook friend of Zahran Hashim, the mastermind of the Easter attacks in Sri Lanka, and detained five others in Coimbatore.

NIA alleged that the prime suspect Mohammed Azharudheen, 32, and his associates were "propagating the ideology of proscribed terrorist organisation Islamic State on social media with the intention of recruiting vulnerable youth for carrying out terrorist attacks in South India, especially in Kerala and Tamil Nadu."

NIA claimed Azharudheen was highly radicalised and was running a Facebook page called "Khilafah GFX." "We do not know if Azharudheen's acquaintance with Hashim was only limited

Cross-country links

■ Six suspects have been named in an FIR registered on May 30, when an NIA team was in Colombo. It was probing possible links between two IS-related cases registered by it in 2015 and 2018 with the Sri Lankan Easter attacks

■ Prime suspect Mohammed Azharudheen, 32, is a Facebook friend of Zahran Hashim, said to be the mastermind of the Easter attacks

■ Azharudheen was running a Facebook page called "Khilafah GFX". IS-inspired logos used by him were very popular on social media

■ Azharudheen and his associates were "propagating the ideology of Islamic State to recruit vulnerable youth for terrorist attacks in south India, especially in Kerala and Tamil Nadu"



ZAHRAN HASHIM

■ 14 mobile phones, 29 SIM cards, 10 pen drives, 3 laptops, 6 memory cards, 4 hard discs, an internet dongle, 13 CDs/DVDs, a dagger, an electric baton and 300 air-gun pellets have been seized from the premises of the suspects

to interactions on Facebook or went beyond it. We are questioning him but have named him and five others in the FIR. His online activities were under watch for a few months now," said

an NIA official. The residence and offices of the suspects were searched on Wednesday.

The other suspected members of the module have been identified as Ak-

ram Sindhaa, 26, Y. Shiek Hidayathullah, 38, Abubacker M., 29, Sadham Hussain, 26, and Ibrahim Shah, 28, all residents of Coimbatore.

Houses searched

The NIA conducted searches at seven places in Coimbatore, including the houses of the accused.

Mobile phones, an electric baton, 300 air-gun pellets and a large number of documents along with a few posters of the Popular Front of India (PFI) and SDPI pamphlets were seized during the search, the agency said. Agency sleuths also interrogated the accused during the raids that lasted for several hours.

(Inputs from Wilson Thomas and R. Akileish)

HE DESIGNED IS-INSPIRED LOGOS, SAYS NIA ► PAGE 12

Five CRPF jawans killed in militant attack in Kashmir

Security forces fired on in Anantnag



CRPF men shifting the body of their colleague at Anantnag in south Kashmir on Wednesday. • REUTERS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Five CRPF personnel were killed and one police officer was among four injured in a militant attack on security forces in south Kashmir's Anantnag on Wednesday afternoon. An unidentified militant was also killed.

A senior police official said two militants attacked a joint deployment of the CRPF and the police. The militants, who came on a motorbike, fired at the security forces

and lobbed grenades on a busy stretch near Oxford School on K.P. Road around 4.55 p.m. "Five CRPF jawans were killed and the body of one Pakistani militant was recovered from the spot. Another militant is believed to have escaped," said Inspector General of Police (Kashmir) S.P. Pani.

Another senior police official said one of the attackers was immediately spotted and "engaged in a stand-off fire".

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

Neither azaadi nor autonomy possible: Malik

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik on Wednesday said the ruling elite involved in corruption in the State "will face action soon".

Speaking at a press conference on the achievements of his government, the Governor also urged the youth to give up arms as "neither azaadi (independence) nor autonomy was possible".

"People of J&K were never told the truth by the leadership. Political parties exploited the people in the name of autonomy, azaadi etc. Neither autonomy nor azaadi is possible," Mr. Malik said.

"Now, in the name of jannaat (heaven), radicalised youth are being exploited," he said. "Kashmir is also a heaven, nurture it first," he added.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

Congress leaders meet sans Gandhis

Discuss upcoming Assembly polls

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

A group of senior Congress leaders met here on Wednesday to discuss the upcoming Assembly elections in Maharashtra, Haryana, Jharkhand and Jammu & Kashmir. Briefing the media after the meeting, chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala asserted that party president Rahul Gandhi would continue to lead the party.

"An informal meeting of Congress leaders was held today under the guidance of A.K. Antony," Mr. Surjewala said. "The preparations for the four election-going States - Maharashtra, Haryana, Jharkhand and Jammu & Kashmir - were discussed. We did not discuss anything else," he added.

Chaired by Mr. Antony, the meeting was attended by party treasurer Ahmed Patel, P. Chidambaram, Jairam Ramesh, leader of the



Ahmed Patel arriving for a party meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday. • PTI

Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad, Deputy Opposition leader in the Rajya Sabha Anand Sharma, Mallikarjun Kharge, general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal and Mr. Surjewala.

Mr. Gandhi and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi did not attend the meeting. Asked if Mr. Gandhi was out of town, Mr. Surjewala declined comment.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

New Agra Bar Council president shot dead

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

Darvesh Singh Yadav, the newly elected president of the Bar Council of Agra, was on Wednesday shot dead by a fellow lawyer on the premises of the Agra civil court. She was elected just two days ago.

Additional DGP (Agra zone) Ajay Anand said Ms. Yadav was shot dead by her associate Manish Sharma at a welcome ceremony in the Bar Council chamber.



Darvesh Singh Yadav

When the programme was on, Sharma stood up and fired thrice at Ms. Yadav with his licensed pistol. He

then turned the gun on himself. Ms. Yadav was rushed to a hospital, where she was declared dead. Sharma is in a "critical" condition.

Compensation sought

The Bar Council of India condemned the murder and demanded security for its members. It sought a minimum compensation of ₹50 lakh to the family of the victim, reported agencies. Samajwadi Party chief

Akhilesh Yadav took a dig at the Yogi Adityanath government for the incident and said rapes, murders and political killings were increasing at an alarming rate.

"The CM is chairing meetings upon meetings but the law and order situation is only deteriorating. Now the first woman head of the bar council of Agra has been shot. Even upholders of the law are not safe," Mr. Yadav said on Twitter.

Retail inflation at a 7-month high of 3.05%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Retail inflation in May moved marginally up to 3.05% mainly due to a rise in food prices, notably vegetables. This is a seven-month high; inflation in April was 2.99%.

Good news

However, there was good news on the industrial growth front with factory

output rising by 3.4%, which is a six-month high.

The growth was mainly driven by the electricity and mining sectors, with manufacturing growing by 2.8%.

"If you look, most of this growth [in factory output] would have been due to public expenditure," said D.K. Srivastava, chief policy adviser, EY India.

REPORT ► PAGE 15

Cyclone Vayu to be very severe: IMD

Wind speeds of 175 km per hour likely



To safe shores: Fishermen moving a boat from the Veraval port in Gujarat. • VIJAY SONEJI

MAHESH LANGA
AHMEDABAD

With cyclonic storm 'Vayu' inching closer to Gujarat, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) classified it as a "very severe" storm and predicted wind speeds of up to 175 km per hour during landfall on the Saurashtra coast around noon on Thursday.

An IMD update on Wed-

nesday evening said, "Vayu is about 280 km south of Veraval in Gujarat and likely to cross Gujarat coast between Dwarka and Veraval."

According to the Gujarat government, the cyclonic storm is likely to be extremely severe when it will hit the coast between Veraval and Dwarka.

2.5 LAKH EVACUATED ► PAGE 9

Move over walkie-talkie, Delhi police get hi-tech eyes and ears

Sound-enabled cameras, GPS devices being installed in all police vehicles

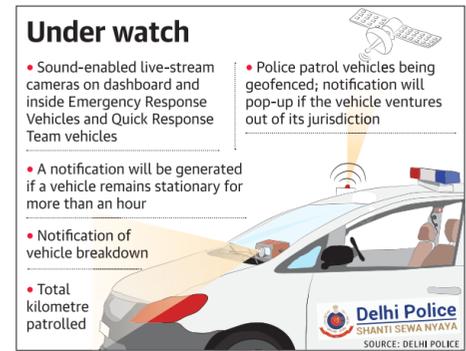
SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Sitting at the district headquarters, DCP (East) Jasmeet Singh looks at his computer screen to monitor the movement of 52 police patrol vehicles deployed under his jurisdiction.

In the video feed from one of the vehicles, he spots a constable whiling away time twirling his moustache. The DCP quickly picks up the wireless and orders the cop to resume his duties.

"A sound-enabled camera is also fixed inside the vehicles to keep an eye on the activities of the police staff sitting in the Emergency Response Vehicles (ERVs). We can monitor the movement of the police vehicles with the help of the technology and get their exact location of patrolling," said Mr. Singh.

In order to increase efficiency and visibility of district police staff, the Deputy Commissioners of Police of all 15 districts are installing GPS devices in all patrolling vehicles and live-stream



cameras in four-wheelers that are used as ERVs and Quick Response Team (QRT) vehicles.

Mr. Singh said the GPS devices are being fixed in all patrolling vehicles in east Delhi and as a pilot project they have installed a dashboard camera in an ERV.

Customised software

The software has been customised according to the requirement of each district.

"I can get details of vehicles that are moving, halting

or stopping due to breakdown. I can easily check the status of the vehicles and the police staff in them. The dashboard camera can help identify miscreants during law and order situation," said Mr. Singh.

The GPS-enabled vehicles are geofenced (virtual geographic boundary defined by GPS) under the limits of the police station that has deployed them.

"It helps to track if there is any misuse of police vehicles. The software notifies

every time the vehicle crosses the geofence. Instead of manually recording the odometer reading, the software keeps record of total running of vehicles. In case any vehicle patrols less than 50 km a day, it notifies the software user about the vehicle," said Mr. Singh.

The idea of installing live-stream cameras in police vehicles was first implemented in Kurur district by DCP Seju P. Kuruvilla around two weeks ago.

Mr. Kuruvilla said it has been done to strengthen the control room of the district. With the help of live-streaming of the situation, additional force can be sent on time before the situation turns volatile, he said.

"We were entirely dependent on walkie-talkie instruments to get details of patrolling staff, but with the help of GPS devices and speaker-enabled live-stream cameras, the communication has gone to the next level. Any crisis situation can be handled more professionally now," said Mr. Kuruvilla.

DU gets additional funds from UGC for EWS quota

To deal with increased intake

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

In order to help Delhi University cope with the increased intake of students on account of reservation for 'Economically Weaker Sections', the University Grants Commission has made an additional fund allocation of about ₹191 crore to the university and its colleges.

A letter dated June 10 states that the UGC has allocated ₹143.76 crore to DU under the heads of 'capital' 'salary', and 'recurring'. 'Capital' has got the highest allocation of ₹120 crore. An allocation of ₹47.24 crore has also been made to affiliated colleges under the recurring and salary heads.

The allocation has been made for the academic years 2019-20 and 2020-21.

The additional funds granted under the capital head are, however, to be sought from the Higher Education Financial Agency (HEFA), the letter states.

President of the Delhi University Teachers' Association Rajib Ray said that EWS quota are being used to tie infrastructure development of the university to loan-based funding. "This is unacceptable," he said.

DU has also been directed to submit its proposal for creation of posts as per requirement within the allocated funds. Claiming that the funds were inadequate, Mr. Ray said: "Till posts are sanctioned, imposition of EWS quota will cause displacement and the nature of appointment of additional teachers will be a matter of dispute." He also called for the formation of a standing committee to look into how the grant would be divided.

In order to accommodate 10% reservation, DU is increasing its intake by 10% this year and 25% in the next academic session. This year, the number of undergraduate admissions are expected to touch 63,000.

'DDU will focus more on research, innovation'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

To help improve its position in the NIRF rankings, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya College-College plans to focus on research and innovation, said principal Hemchand Jain.

While the college secured 13th position in the NIRF ranking in 2018, in 2019 its position dipped to 16. To encourage research, Mr. Jain said that teachers would be given special grants to undertake studies and will be given support to publish

their findings in peer-reviewed journals.

The college has also set up an 'incubation centre' to encourage entrepreneurship among its students.

The college is currently in its second cycle of NAAC accreditation which is expected to be completed in the next three months.

The college is among 12 institutions facing a fund crunch as a consequence of a tussle between the Delhi government and DU over selection of governing bodies.

Air quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	236	Gurugram	-
Ghaziabad	219	Faridabad	-
Noida	-	Greater Noida	252
Good	0-50	Satisfactory	51-100
Moderate	101-200	Very poor	301-400
Poor	201-300	Severe	>401

Source: CPCB

DELHI TODAY

Exhibition: Bahaar-e-dilli, a solo exhibition by Bahaar Jain and calligraphy in Urdu by Dr. Touseef Sheikh at Delhi 'o' Delhi Foyer, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Exhibition: "Spirituality", a solo painting exhibition by Sujata Agrawal at Convention Centre Foyer, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Exhibition: "Utsav", an art show of paintings, photography, digital arts and sketches at All India Fine Arts and Craft Society (AIFACS), 1 Rafi Marg, 11 a.m. - 8 p.m.

(Mail your listings for this column at cityeditordelhi@thehindu.co.in)

New app to help students

PALLAVI KESWANI
NEW DELHI

The U.S. Embassy organised its fifth annual 'Student Visa Day' on Wednesday and launched 'EducationUSA India', a mobile application to provide Indian students with "current, comprehensive and accurate information about studying in the U.S."

During the event, the embassy catered exclusively to students seeking admission to universities based in the U.S. and facilitated their visa process.

The app is available on both iOS and Android-based mobile phones.

Free ride scheme for women to be reality within 2-3 months: CM

Kejriwal says AAP govt. has picked a stopgap option proposed by the DMRC

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Wednesday that the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation had submitted a "concrete proposal" for the implementation of the AAP government's 'free metro travel for women' scheme.

A week after announcing the scheme, Mr. Kejriwal, at a press conference, claimed that "major progress" has been made in relation to the proposed initiative to subsidise fares for women passengers on buses and metro trains to the point of allowing such travel free of cost.

"I want to share some good news with the women of Delhi. The DMRC has submitted a concrete proposal on our scheme. Two options have been proposed by them for implementation of the scheme. One is a long-term plan that will take one year to implement and will involve changing of the DMRC's software, tokens and cards. However, the second option is a stopgap ar-



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his deputy Manish Sisodia addressing the media on Wednesday. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

range ment," the CM said.

"As per the second model, women shall be able to procure tokens at ticket windows and automatic ticket vending machines (ATVMs) by simply sharing their destination. There will be a separate entry gate for women, but their exit gates will remain common. The DMRC does not need to change its software," Mr. Kejriwal said.

According to Mr. Kejriwal, the government has decided to settle for the stopgap arrangement for implementation even as more "perma-

nent" solutions were also on the table as per the submission of the DMRC.

Two-step process

"Although the DMRC said that it needs eight months to roll out this model, we believe that we can work with the officials and implement the scheme in the next 2-3 months. Only two steps need to be taken by the DMRC — special tokens need to be printed and at 170 stations where ticket windows have been shut, they need to be reopened. We do not think

these steps will take more than 2-3 months," said the Chief Minister.

The Delhi government had asked the DMRC to submit a proposal regarding the implementation of the scheme within a week.

Mr. Kejriwal said that the proposal would need the approval of the Fare Fixation Committee, adding that the scheme was "pro-people" and that the Delhi government was well within its financial means to make the initiative a reality.

"The DMRC said it expects a 50% increase in women ridership after the rollout of the scheme, which means 45-50% of the riders will be women. This will mean a total financial commitment of ₹1,566.64 crore. The Delhi government has no objection to this...Approval from the Fare Fixation Committee is not required in this case as this is not a matter of fare fixation. However, if the DMRC thinks it is necessary, we will go ahead with it," the Chief Minister added.

Dikshit asks Kejriwal to probe benefits given to discoms

Congress delegation seeks rollback of fixed charges

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A delegation from the Delhi Congress headed by its chief Sheila Dikshit met Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday to request him to order a probe into how crores of rupees in the form of fixed charges were collected to benefit power distribution companies.

Ms. Dikshit said that over ₹7,401 crore that has been collected from the people of Delhi in the name of fixed charges and surcharge for pension funds should be either returned to the people or adjusted against electricity bills in the next six months.

Speaking after the meeting, Congress working president Haroon Yusuf said that the CM had agreed to order a probe into the matter. He added that the Congress had also demanded the immediate rollback of fixed charges and surcharge for pension funds being "illegally" collected from the power consumers.

"The AAP government's promise of providing 24-hour



DPC president Sheila Dikshit arriving at CM's residence on Wednesday. • R V MOORTHY

uninterrupted power supply has turned hollow as the people of Delhi have been going through a harrowing time due to frequent power cuts," Mr. Yusuf said.

Working president Rajesh Liloithia said that the Kejriwal government, instead of juggling with statistics to mislead the people, should address the ground reality, "which is very different from what the AAP government has been trying to project".

'Unable to explain'

AAP said that the Congress delegation was unable to explain the reason behind their

complaint on power pricing. Power Minister Satyendar Jain termed the allegations "baseless".

Addressing the media after the meeting, AAP chief spokesperson Saurabh Bharadwaj said, "When the CM asked Ms. Dikshit what was the basis of her calculations on electricity pricing in the city, she could not explain it. She looked at her colleague and former Power Minister of Delhi Haroon Yusuf for support... Unfortunately, none of them could explain what was the basis of their concerns."

Refuting the Congress allegations, Mr. Jain said, "During the reign of the Congress in 2010, they were charging ₹153 for 50 units. In 2013, this escalated to ₹264. Within three years, the bill went up by 73%. Today, for the same consumption, people have to pay only ₹128 which is approximately half the bill in 2013."

Meanwhile, a statement issued by AAP said that the Congress delegation failed to show any proof of the alleged scam claimed by them.

Peak power demand at 6,904 MW

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Peak power demand in Delhi touched 6,904 MW for the first time this season on Wednesday, according to electricity discom BSES. It was 6,792 MW at 11.52 pm on Tuesday.

With people preferring to stay indoors due to rising temperature, the discom expects peak power demand to touch 7,400 MW this year.

During last year's summer, the peak power demand had breached the 7,000 MW mark and touched 7,016 MW. This year, Delhi's peak power load in June has been higher than June 2018 on at least eight occasions, according to BSES analysis.

"The BSES discoms BRPL and BYPL successfully met the peak power demand of 2,951 MW and 1,580 MW in their respective areas," a spokesperson of the discom said.

Use of air conditioners in summers makes up 50% of the national capital's power consumption and electricity bills, the spokesperson added.

Autorickshaw fares in city raised by 18.75%

AAP govt issues notification; move to benefit owners, drivers of over 90,000 vehicles

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

With just a few months to go for the Assembly election in Delhi, the AAP government on Wednesday notified new autorickshaw fares effecting an 18.75% increase in existing rates.

The move will benefit owners and drivers of over 90,000 autorickshaws plying in the national capital,

who had played a crucial role in the rise of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

"Govt fulfils its key promise. Transport Department has notified revision of autorickshaw fares. After revision also, auto fares in Delhi to remain lower than other metro cities," Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot tweeted.

"Autorickshaw drivers will

be able to charge the revised rates after necessary recalibration of fare meters and it will take around 1.5 months," said a senior transport department official.

Revised rates

Under the revised rates, the metre down charge will be ₹25 for the first 1.5 km, instead of existing 2 km. The per km charge has been in-

creased from existing ₹8 to ₹9.5, which is a hike of around 18.75%.

The notification introduces waiting charge at the rate of ₹0.75 per minute if an auto is caught up at a traffic signal. Luggage charges will be ₹7.50. The notification on revised fare structure was forwarded to the State Transport Authority by the transport department.

BJP accuses AAP, Cong. govts of 'looting' public

Ensured profit for power distribution companies through 'backdoor' charges: Gupta

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday demanded the AAP government to rollback fixed charges, power purchase cost adjustment charges (PPAC), and pension trust surcharges which were leading to inflated electricity bills in the Capital.

It also accused the AAP and the previous Congress governments of "looting"

consumers to ensure profit for power distribution companies through "backdoor" charges and payments.

"The government should compensate electricity consumers for the financial loss on account of payment of these charges. These charges were levied by discoms in connivance with the Kejriwal government. According to conservative estimates, consumers have already been

made to pay ₹10,000 crore to discoms by way of levying of these charges through the backdoor," Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Vijender Gupta alleged.

"Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Power Minister Satyendar Jain and other AAP leaders are projecting a misleading and false picture with regard to power tariffs and fixed charges. The Con-

gress is shedding crocodile tears on the loot by discoms and is equally responsible for it during its 15-year rule," he said.

"The electricity tribunal and the Supreme Court had already held that power purchase cost adjustment charges are unconstitutional. But, it is still being collected from consumers as part of electricity bills," Mr. Gupta alleged.

IN BRIEF

**BJP MP acquitted in 2004 assault case**

NEW DELHI
BJP MP Ramesh Bidhuri has been acquitted by a Delhi court in a 2004 case of assaulting a man here. Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Samar Vishal noted that there were contradictions in the testimonies of the witnesses as he absolved Mr. Bidhuri, who represents South Delhi Lok Sabha constituency. **PTI**

Elderly siblings found dead at residence

NEW DELHI
A 90-year-old woman and her 80-year-old brother were found dead in their house in Bharat Nagar on Wednesday. The police ruled out any foul play and called it a natural death. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem. "The house was locked from inside. It seems the woman [Raj Kumar] died first. She took care of her paralysed brother who perhaps died later after getting no help," said DCP (North West) Vijayanta Arya.

Pickpocket arrested from metro station

NEW DELHI
A 50-year-old woman was arrested for allegedly pickpocketing in Delhi metro, the police said Wednesday. The woman, a resident of Jahangirpuri, was nabbed from Karol Bagh metro station on June 10, the police said. The accused used to keep a close watch on women passengers and target them.

Man who duped ex-CJI remanded in police custody**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

NEW DELHI
A man arrested for allegedly duping former Chief Justice of India R.M. Lodha of ₹1 lakh, by hacking his colleague's e-mail account, was sent to two-day police custody on Wednesday.

The judge allowed police the custodial interrogation of Dinesh Mali, nabbed from Udaipur earlier this month, said DCP (South Delhi) Vijay Kumar. The police may seek further custody since the investigation is still going on, Mr. Kumar said, adding that the accused was brought from Udaipur on Tuesday.

The incident came to light on May 30 after Justice Lodha, a resident of South Delhi's Panchsheel Park, got an email from retired SC judge B.P. Singh stating that his ID was hacked by some unknown person on the intervening night of April 18 and 19.

Tughlakabad yet to get proper water supply despite CM's promise

Residents depend on water tankers as supply remains way below demand

STAFF REPORTER**NEW DELHI**

Sporting a floral top, 10-year-old Khushi is rolling a grey-coloured 30-litre plastic barrel filled with water on a narrow lane of Sanjay Colony in south Delhi.

The fourth grader kicked repeatedly at the barrel to move it through the lane and used her hands whenever it got stuck. She was fetching water to her house from a tanker on the main road. "It is heavy and I can't lift it. That is why we roll it," she said.

Despite Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's promise to provide water supply through pipes to Tughlakabad residents within a week, a spot check revealed that the residents were yet to get proper supply through pipes.

In Sanjay Colony in Harkesh Nagar, a slum cluster Mr. Kejriwal had visited on June 2 before making the promise, people were still dependent on water tankers.

While people in B and F block said they got very little water supply for about 10 minutes each for the past three days, residents of A and D block said there had been no



Water woes: Residents of Sanjay Colony in Harkesh Nagar fill water from a DJB tanker. **FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR**

supply. Like Khushi, many children were seen fetching water from tankers. People complained that there was a water shortage.

"We tried delivering water [through pipes] there thrice, but the pipeline burst. We are working on it and it will be fixed in two to three days," said Dinesh Mohaniya, vice-chairman of Delhi Jal Board, which is responsible for water supply in the city.

More water tankers

When asked about some areas not getting water at all, he said, "Since the pipelines burst, the areas ahead of it

did not get water at all."

Residents said that the pipelines were laid about two years ago, but there has been no water supply through them. Almost over a dozen residents, *The Hindu* met, said that they get free water from DJB tankers and there are more water tankers since Mr. Kejriwal came to power.

On alternate days

The residents said they ration their use of water as the tanker comes on alternate days.

Jubeda Begum, 45, was standing outside her house in A block, next to two 200-litre plastic barrels used to

Water woes: We tried delivering water [through pipes] there thrice, but the pipeline burst. We are working on it and it will be fixed in two to three days

DINESH MOHANIYA
DJB vice-chairman

store water, as she complained of water shortage.

"We are always short of water. Sometimes, I have to 'polish' my son with little water before sending him to school," she said.

Ms. Begum, who works as a daily-wage labourer, said, "No one takes a bath twice a day here as there is not enough water. My husband cannot handle the heat and the water shortage, so he stays in the village during the summer and comes back during the winter."

The city faces water shortage with a requirement of about 1,120 million gallons per day (MGD) and an average water production of about 900 MGD. On certain days, the production peaks to 936 MGD but cannot be sustained at that level, according to DJB.

DJB files complaint after BJP team damages office property

Protesting against water woes, they had gheraoed CEO's room

STAFF REPORTER**NEW DELHI**

Delhi Jal Board (DJB) vice-chairman Dinesh Mohaniya on Wednesday said that a BJP delegation had damaged property at the agency's office during their sit-in protest, which started on Tuesday and ended on Wednesday morning.

DJB CEO Nikhil Kumar has filed a complaint with the police in this regard.

The delegation had come to meet the DJB CEO, but went on to stage a protest stating that they would not leave till the city's water woes are resolved.

Police assistance

"Around 3 a.m. on Wednesday, we [DJB officials] finally left the building with the help of extra police force," the DJB PRO said. Around 15 DJB officials were inside the CEO's room and the protesters were not allowing the officials to leave the room, according to the DJB.

"Around 35 people along with BJP leader Vijay Goel entered Mr. Kumar's office at 5.30 p.m. on Tuesday and refused to leave," an official who was inside the CEO's room had said. "We informed the police and the

Goel seeks DJB CEO's resignation

STAFF REPORTER**NEW DELHI**

After staging an overnight sit-in protest at the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) office here, BJP leader Vijay Goel on Wednesday demanded that the agency's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) be sacked "immediately" if he failed to address the issues of contaminated water and alleged water mismanagement in the Capital.

Alleging that the residents seemed to have "lost all hopes" for redressal of their grievances from Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Mr. Goel warned of gheraoing other

officials of the DJB if they continued to "indulge in corruption and negligence".

The BJP delegation put forth six demands, including the constitution of a task force to address the issue of contaminated water immediately, uploading public complaints on the DJB website, waiving off bills of consumers not receiving water or those receiving contaminated water, strict action against the "tanker mafia", the release of a summer action plan and the provision of water connections in every household in jhuggi-jhopri colonies.

SHO reached by 6.30 p.m.. Though the CEO promised to resolve the issue as soon as possible, the protesters kept demanding that the issue be settled 'now'. Around 1.30 a.m., we gave a written complaint to the SHO requesting him to depute extra force to help us exit the building," the official said.

Mr. Goel had said on Tuesday: "They [DJB] have no clue as to how many complaints they have received.

They don't have any knowledge of the areas where people are getting contaminated water or no water at all."

Mr. Mohaniya said that three BJP leaders were protesting separately on the issue of water. He said that they did not have any particular issue and were allegedly doing it as the three of them are in the race to become the BJP's chief ministerial candidate in the upcoming Assembly elections.

Man arrested for 'cattle slaughter'

Incident was reported in Harsh Vihar on Holi in March

STAFF REPORTER**NEW DELHI**

A 29-year-old man was arrested from north-east Delhi's Harsh Vihar on Wednesday for allegedly slaughtering a cow on Holi in March with the intention of creating communal tension, the police said.

The accused, identified as Imran, a resident of Ghaziabad, was hiding in Uttarakhand and had come to meet his family members near Loni from where he was nabbed in the morning, the police said.

Earlier, Imran's accomplices Parvaiz, Lukman and

Insallaham were nabbed by the police. A reward of ₹25,000 was announced on Imran's arrest, the police said.

The incident was reported on Holi on March 21. The residents of Harsh Vihar had approached the police after they found the cattle's dismembered parts and an animal foetus lying at a vacant plot.

The situation turned tense as the locals staged a protest against the alleged cow slaughter. The police pacified the protesters and the situation was brought under control.

A case was registered and a probe launched. Raids were conducted in Delhi and Uttarakhand and following a tip-off, Imran was nabbed, DCP (Special Cell) P.S. Kushwah said.

"During interrogation, he disclosed that the act was committed to disturb communal harmony and trigger a law and order situation in the Capital," the officer said.

Imran's family has a cattle business, he added. According to the plan, the accused slaughtered a cow and "mischievously" threw the body parts of the animal in Harsh Vihar, the DCP said.

Woman, friend attacked with 'acid'

They were on a motorcycle when the incident happened

STAFF REPORTER**NEW DELHI**

A 19-year-old woman and her friend were allegedly attacked with a chemical substance suspected to be acid by unidentified persons when they were travelling on a motorcycle in west Delhi's Vikaspuri, the police said on Wednesday.

The incident took place on Tuesday. The victim and her friend refused to give a

statement after the incident, the police said.

However, they approached the Vikaspuri police station on Wednesday and a case under relevant sections of the IPC was registered, Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Monika Bhardwaj said.

Her friend who suffered 10% to 15% burn injuries was discharged from hospital, the officer said. The girl was

also given first-aid treatment and was discharged on the same day, she said.

According to doctors, the woman and her friend were attacked with acid. However, they are awaiting forensic reports for final confirmation on the nature of injury, the officer added.

The police are also questioning a suspect in this connection. Further investigation is on, said the officer.



Motorists faced a hard time as a dust storm hit the Capital on Wednesday. **SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA**

Dust storm brings respite; rain likely today

Temperature drops by 7 degrees Celsius; flight operations hit due to strong winds

STAFF REPORTER**NEW DELHI**

A dust storm with gusty winds of 60-70 kmph blew across the city on Wednesday evening, bringing much needed relief from the heatwave witnessed over the past three days.

Traffic came to a standstill due to low visibility and strong winds. Motorcyclists were forced to park their vehicles and wait till the sit-

uation improved. There were reports of branches falling and hoardings being dislodged across the city. Flight operations were also hit due to the strong winds with nine flights being diverted between 6.40 p.m. and 7.15 p.m, an airport spokesperson said. The situation returned to normal by 7.45 p.m.

The Met Department said that temperature fell from about 40 degrees Celsius at 5

p.m. to around 33 degrees Celsius by 7 p.m. when the winds were at the peak. The weatherman had forecast that dust storms would hit the city in the evening on Wednesday and Thursday but said that the activity would be only in the evening and the days would continue to remain hot.

The city recorded a maximum temperature of 41.6 degrees Celsius on Wednesday

and a minimum of 31 degrees Celsius, both two and three degrees above normal.

The forecast for Thursday reads partly cloudy sky with the possibility of very light rain. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be between 43 and 29 degrees Celsius. The city is likely to come under the influence of another dust storm/thunderstorm on June 16 and 17.

Amitav Ghosh conferred Jnanpith Award

First English language writer to get the honour

PALLAVI KESWANI**NEW DELHI**

Author Amitav Ghosh was felicitated with the 54th Jnanpith Award for his "outstanding contribution to the enrichment of Indian Literature in English", on Wednesday.

Former West Bengal Governor Gopalkrishna Gandhi, who was the chief guest at the event, presented the award to the author. Mr. Ghosh is the first English language writer to become a Jnanpith laureate.

"When I started writing many years ago, I could not imagine that the Jnanpith Award would ever come my way. In those days, Indians who wrote in English would think of themselves as marginal, both to Indian and to



Gopalkrishna Gandhi presents the Jnanpith Award to Amitav Ghosh (second from right) on Wednesday. **SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA**

English literature," said Mr. Ghosh.

The Jnanpith award is the highest literary award in India and can only be conferred upon an Indian citizen. English language was added to the list of languages for consideration after the 49th Jnanpith Award.

"Even though I write in English, I draw constantly

from Bangla and its vast imaginative resources," he further said.

Mr. Ghosh's works has been translated in more than 30 languages. He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1990 for his book *The Shadow Lines* and the Padma Shri in 2007 for his services to literature and education.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Thursday: Heavy to very heavy rainfall likely at some places over Saurashtra Kutch, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Konkan, Goa, coastal Karnataka, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	37.0	28.4	28.4	Kozhikode	28.7	30.0	28.7
Ahmedabad	42.7	31.5	31.5	Kurnool	38.1	29.0	29.0
Aizawl	30.4	20.9	20.9	Lucknow	36.7	30.6	30.6
Allahabad	40.7	32.4	32.4	Madurai	38.6	27.4	27.4
Bengaluru	29.4	21.6	21.6	Mangaluru	14.5	32.1	25.0
Bhopal	43.7	30.6	30.6	Mumbai	0.1	33.5	27.7
Bhubaneswar	42.4	28.1	28.1	Mysuru	29.0	22.4	22.4
Chandigarh	0.3	42.0	30.8	New Delhi	41.6	31.0	31.0
Chennai	39.2	31.3	31.3	Patna	41.0	28.6	28.6
Coimbatore	2.8	32.0	24.0	Port Blair	21.1	28.4	24.1
Dehradun	4.8	39.0	22.7	Puducherry	38.8	29.4	29.4
Gangtok	4.2	25.1	16.7	Pune	31.2	25.8	25.8
Goa	33.3	31.0	24.0	Raipur	44.2	33.9	33.9
Guwahati	37.0	27.4	26.9	Ranchi	41.2	26.7	26.7
Hubballi	27.0	22.0	22.0	Shillong	3.9	24.2	17.4
Hyderabad	37.7	28.2	28.2	Shimla	8.9	26.7	17.4
Imphal	0.9	33.0	21.7	Srinagar	39.2	38.8	19.6
Jaipur	2.2	42.8	29.7	Trivandrum	17.8	29.7	23.6
Kochi	33.0	28.2	28.2	Tiruchi	39.9	28.6	28.6
Kohima	2.3	27.5	17.4	Vijayawada	43.6	29.5	29.5
Kolkata	36.5	29.3	29.3	Visakhapatnam	34.2	30.2	30.2

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	105	180	88	71	71	1
Bengaluru	16	50	36	54	54	2
Chennai	8	24	49	104	104	3
Delhi	29	51	45	148	298	4
Hyderabad	13	28	10	19	55	5
Kolkata	3	12	11	62	86	6
Lucknow	2	35	49	234	234	7
Mumbai	27	21	99	27	71	8
Pune	62	8	29	21	20	9
Visakhapatnam	26	68	47	126	126	10

Air Quality Code: **1** Poor **2** Moderate **3** Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.
PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Congress triumphs in local body bypolls in Rajasthan

Results indication of people's faith in State govt.: Pilot

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

The ruling Congress on Wednesday won eight seats in the by-elections to 17 wards of 11 urban local bodies held in a total of 11 districts of Rajasthan on June 10. While independent candidates supported by the Congress won two seats, the BJP registered victory in five wards.

By-elections were held to fill the vacant positions in certain wards of municipalities and municipal councils in Jaipur, Alwar, Bhilwara, Sri Ganganagar, Bharatpur, Churu, Karauli, Hanumanagar, Bundi, Dholpur and Sirahi districts. A total of 14 municipality and three municipal council wards were contested in these districts. The Congress candidates



Deputy CM Sachin Pilot.

won in Behror, Khairthal, Jahazpur, Indragarh, Sujangarh, Nohar, Shahpura and Hindon local bodies, while candidates supported by the party won at Gajsinghpur and Rawatsar.

Rajasthan Congress president and Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot said the

bypoll results were an indication of people's faith in the State government's welfare policies launched after the December 2018 Assembly elections. However, the Congress lost all the 25 seats in the State to the BJP in the recent Lok Sabha election.

We won more seats: BJP
 BJP spokesperson Satish Punia said the number of seats won by the party had increased as the BJP earlier held only three of the 17 wards where by-elections were held. He alleged that the Congress government had "misused the resources" to win the bypolls after its failure on the law and order, agricultural loan waiver and water and power supply fronts.

Strike by junior doctors enters second day

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

The strike by junior doctors at government-run medical colleges and hospitals in the State entered the second day on Wednesday. Junior doctors refused to withdraw their strike despite a series of meetings held by senior

health officials. The protests started late on Monday night after two interns at Nil Ratan Sircar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata were assaulted by the family members of a patient who passed away during treatment. Soon, doctors from other

government hospitals in the city and districts joined the stir.

During the day, Burdwan Medical College and Hospital witnessed violence between family members of patients and junior doctors. The hospital had kept its OPD and emergency shut.

Delhi Weather

	max	min
Delhi City	42	31
Safdarjang	42	31
Palam	43	32

DELHI ☀️🌧️ Timings

THURSDAY, JUNE 13
☀️ RISE 05:23 SET 19:20
🌧️ RISE 15:25 SET 02:29
FRIDAY, JUNE 14
☀️ RISE 05:23 SET 19:20
🌧️ RISE 16:26 SET 03:07
SATURDAY, JUNE 15
☀️ RISE 05:23 SET 19:20
🌧️ RISE 17:27 SET 03:47

Delhi Palam Today
42°C Dusty and windy day with partly cloudy sky. Day will be hot and night will be little warm.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
44°C Rise in temperature. Dry and hot weather with clear sky to continue. Heat wave like condition may occur.

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Punjab govt. seeks hike in MSP of crops

Will ease problems of farmers: CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

In a bid to alleviate the woes of the State's distressed farmers, the Punjab government has sought a hike in the Minimum Support Price of various crops for the 2019-20 rabi season from the Central government.

The State agriculture department has come out with a detailed proposal for hike in the MSP of wheat crop from ₹1,840 per quintal in 2018-19 to ₹2,710 in 2019-20, and barley from ₹1,440 to ₹1,974 per quintal.

Gram, mustard prices
 "The proposal, submitted to the Commission for Agriculture Costs and Prices, also seeks a hike in the MSP of gram from the earlier ₹4,620 to ₹5,631 per quintal, and of rapeseed and mustard from ₹4,200 to ₹5,384 per quintal," an official statement said on Wednesday.

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said the hike was necessary for promoting crops like barley, gram, rapeseed and mustard in the State, to give the much-needed push for crop diversification that would help arrest the deleting



Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh

groundwater table in Punjab.

"While the State government had taken all possible steps to ease the problems of farmers, including farm debt waiver, the Centre's intervention was needed to support these measures, especially in the matter of MSP which was under its control," he said.

Swaminathan report

The Chief Minister also reiterated his demand for full implementation of the M.S. Swaminathan Commission report to ensure the much-needed improvement in the agriculture system and better remuneration for the farmers.

NFR saves big through solar energy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The sun has helped the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) save big on energy expenditure without having to spend on installing solar panels.

The shift to solar energy at railway stations, level crossings, barracks, and other set-ups has coincided with the NFR's push for electrification of 6,242 km of its tracks till the farthest points such as Murkongselek near Assam's border with Arunachal Pradesh and Sabroom on the Tripura-Bangladesh border.

The NFR had during the 2018-19 fiscal commissioned solar panels generating a peak 2298 kW energy that helped it consume 23.07 lakh units less of electricity, leading to a saving of ₹1.88 crore.

"This was after paying two executing agencies — one from New Delhi and the other from Hyderabad — for the solar energy at rates fixed by them. It has been a win-win deal for NFR and the agencies which set up the solar panels and solar plants free of cost. The assets will be ours after 25 years," NFR spokesperson Pranav Jyoti Sharma said.

Monsoon session set to begin, Cong. has no leader in Assembly

This will be last session of the House before elections are held later this year

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

With just three days to go for the start of the monsoon session of the Assembly, there is no clarity in the Congress on who will be their legislative party leader. Neither the central leadership nor the State unit of the party has informed the CLP on the selection of the new group leader.

Following the resignation of former Leader of Opposition Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil, the CLP is left with no leader. Both at central and State level, the party is still struggling to recover from the drubbing it received in the Lok Sabha elections and the issue of choosing the



Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil's resignation triggered the crisis. • FILE PHOTO

new leader is pending for over 15 days.

"The decision to choose the group leader will be announced from Delhi. The central leadership has been apprised of the situation and

a decision will be taken soon," said Maharashtra Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant.

The State party leadership will be meeting in Mumbai on June 13 and 14 to discuss the Lok Sabha poll results in Maharashtra. It has already held similar meeting for Maharashtra and north Maharashtra regions and the next meeting will discuss the results in Konkan, Mumbai and western Maharashtra.

"We have no clue on what is going to happen in the Assembly or who will be chosen as the legislative party leader. This is the monsoon session and also the last before Assembly polls. We

need to be united and aggressive, but we do not know who is going to be our leader inside the House," said a Congress MLA, on condition of anonymity.

Former Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan, senior Congressman Balasaheb Thorat, Vidarbha's leader Vijay Vadettiwar are few of the names which are making rounds in the Congress circles. However, no decision has yet been taken. Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee president Ashok Chavan too had offered his resignation following the party's loss in Lok Sabha elections. That issue too has not been decided yet.

Riding a wave



Giant waves crash on the Donapaula jetty in Goa, on Wednesday afternoon. The jetty has been closed for tourists after being declared unsafe by the State government. • ATISH POMBURFEKAR

'10 Cong. MLAs wanted to join BJP in Goa'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PANAJI

The Goa unit BJP president Vinay Tendulkar claimed on Wednesday that 10 Congress MLAs had approached them to merge their legislative unit, but it was rejected.

Mr. Tendulkar dismissed as "baseless" the allegations made by Goa Congress president Girish Chodankar that "money and ministership" were offered to these MLAs.

"From our side, we do not want to destabilise any party. The 23 MLAs we have are enough to run the party. Earlier, 10 Congress MLAs had come to merge the party with the BJP. But the Central leadership rejected the plan. We clearly said no," he told the press.

Desai not my employee, says Shripad Naik in court

He was testifying in cheating case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PANAJI

Union Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik on Wednesday appeared before Panaji Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) Artikumari Naik as a witness in a cheating case filed against his alleged former staff Vinod Desai. In his deposition he denied that Mr. Desai was ever his staffer.

In November 2018, one Mervin Fernandes had initiated criminal proceedings against Vinod Desai after being duped on the promise of a government job. His lawyer Aires Rodrigues submitted in court that Mr. Desai, a resident of Old Goa, while flaunting his connection with politicians had duped hundreds of job seekers.

On being summoned by the JMFC to testify and give material evidence on what he knew about the case, Mr. Naik said on Wednesday that he has known the accused for the last 10 to 15 years and he also sometimes used to visit his house. However, Mr. Naik said, Mr. Desai was never employed by him though his father worked for him. He further testified that his office on September 26 last year had written to the Old Goa police station that Mr. Desai was not on their staff.

But another witness Sri-pad Bhosle in whose presence Mr. Fernandes had paid Mr. Desai the ₹2 lakh, testified to the contrary and said Mr. Desai was working at Mr. Naik's Sao Pedro residence in North Goa.

Pune police raid Fr. Stan Swamy's Ranchi home

Action is in connection with Bhima Koregaon-Elgaar Parishad case

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

A Pune police team on Wednesday searched the residence of human rights activist Father Stan Swamy in Ranchi in connection with the Bhima Koregaon-Elgaar Parishad case and for his alleged Maoist links. This was the second time the city police raided his house in Ranchi's Namkum area.

While electronic devices, including a hard disk and some other materials, were seized, the 83-year-old activist was not taken in custody.

The Pune police were assisted by the Ranchi police in the search that lasted nearly three hours, said sources.

Ashutosh Sekhar, Superintendent of Police, Ranchi (Rural), told *The Hindu*, "The search began after 7 a.m. and lasted nearly two-



An accused in Bhima Koregaon case being produced in court in Pune. • FILE PHOTO

and-a-half to three hours. The Maharashtra police team took some electronic material and some documents. They will examine this material and decide on the future course of action."

Raids were conducted by the police at Fr. Swamy's residence on August 28 last

along with that of six other academics and activists known for their dissentious views against the powers that be.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (Swargate division) Shivaji Pawar, the investigating officer in the case, told *The Hindu* that the police

seized some electronic devices and other material from Fr. Swamy's house. "We have not taken him into custody. We conducted this operation for gathering more evidence as a part of the ongoing investigation in the case. The materials seized will be sent for probe," he said.

Fr. Swamy runs a school for Adivasi children and a technical training institute in his residential premises. A vocal critic of the Jharkhand government, he is known for his work among the tribal people of the State through his NGO, Bagaicha.

In 2016, he released an expose following a Jharkhand undertrials' study, which showed that an overwhelming majority of the tribal people languishing in jails were falsely implicated and arrested for daring to protest.

IN BRIEF

**Jagan back in A.P. Assembly after 2 years**

AMARAVATI
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and YSR Congress Party president Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy returned to the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly after nearly two years. The YSR Congress Legislature Party at a meeting on October 25, 2017, decided to boycott the Assembly to protest against the Speaker's inaction against 20 MLAs who were elected on the YSRCP ticket but crossed over to the TDP. He set foot in the Assembly only after his party won 151 of the 175 seats and he became the Chief Minister.

Seven IMA directors surrender before police

BENGALURU
Hours before the SIT was formed to probe the multi-crore Ponzi scam, with thousands of investors alleging that they had been cheated by the IMA Group, the police on Wednesday arrested seven directors of the company. The accused — Ahmed, Arshad Khan, Nizamuddin, Nasir Hussain, Anwar Pasha, Waseem and Dadapeer — who were on the run, surrendered before the police. However, MD and CEO of the company, Mohammed Mansoor Khan, is still at large.

Gaffe over consent letters for medical colleges

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
The Kerala government landed itself in trouble on Wednesday after it issued consent letters to self-financing medical colleges to apply for an increase in MBBS seats for implementing reservation for the economically weaker sections (EWS), only to nullify them later after realising that the scheme was applicable to government medical colleges alone.

Karnataka announces waiver of commercial farm loans in one go

The decision will bring immediate relief to 9.8 lakh farmers across the State

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

In a surprise move, the Karnataka government on Wednesday announced that money towards farm loan accounts, which qualify under the ambitious farm loan waiver scheme in commercial banks, would be released in one go, thus completing the entire process.

In total, the scheme has benefited 28.48 lakh farmers, including 9.8 lakh in commercial segment.

The announcement is a departure from the decision to pay the amount in four instalments when the scheme was launched in 2018. Of the estimated ₹8,550 crore required to fund various types of loan accounts in commercial banks, the government has already released ₹3,930



H.D. Kumaraswamy

crore towards 7.49 lakh accounts.

Ready for disbursement

The announcement would mean that the government will have to release about ₹4,620 crore to complete the waiver process in commercial banks, of which about ₹1,219 crore is ready for disbursement. Net amount to be

leased by the government would be ₹3,397 crore. In the cooperative sector, the farm loan waiver is almost complete with the government releasing ₹8,759 crore towards loan accounts of 18.70 lakh farmers.

Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, who has come under attack by the Opposition over the delay in payment of money to loan accounts over the last few months, took to Twitter on Wednesday to make the announcement.

This move is set to benefit those farmers with regular loans, restructured loans, and loans that are overdue in commercial banks immediately.

The government, however, said that the decision on waiver of NPA loans and payment of interest on such

loans from January 1, 2018, would be notified later.

The Janata Dal (S)-Congress coalition government had earmarked ₹6,500 crore towards the loan waiver in the 2018-2019 Budget. Mr. Kumaraswamy in his Budget presented for the financial year 2019-2020 earlier in February had earmarked ₹6,500 crore and ₹6,150 crore for commercial bank and cooperative sector loan waiver, respectively.

Though Mr. Kumaraswamy had indicated earlier that the loan waiver could be completed much before the scheduled four instalments, the decision came after reports emerged that nearly 14,000 farmers, ineligible for the farm loan, had been paid due to errors committed by banks.

Kerala to have its own open university

All distance education, private registration programmes will come under one roof

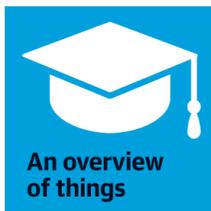
STAFF REPORTER
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala Open University (KOU), which has been proposed along the lines of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), will come into being from the 2020-21 academic year.

J. Prabash, Special Officer, KOU, submitted his report of prospective guidelines to Higher Education Minister K.T. Jaleel on Wednesday.

The open university will enable the government to bring all distance education and private registration programmes under one roof.

While admissions to distance education courses will be conducted by the respective varsities this year, the



• About 30,000 who completed the Plus Two programme of the Kerala State Literacy Mission stand to benefit from KOU

16 postgraduate, 7 undergraduate and 2 certificate courses are at present offered in the private registration mode in State universities

93,155 students pursue distance education courses offered by Kerala, Calicut and Kannur Universities

25,488 students pursue higher education through private registration mode in Kerala and Mahatma Gandhi Universities

process will be undertaken under the aegis of the KOU from the next academic year.

The existing distance education facilities of the univer-

sities will also become regional centres of the KOU.

Dr. Jaleel said the endeavour would not entail financial burden on the exche-

quer with the existing distance education centres to be utilised for conducting classes under the KOU.

Moreover, laboratories and other facilities of government and aided colleges would be utilised.

Yet to identify location

The government was yet to identify a location for setting up the university headquarters. The proposed university, which will offer courses in science and humanities, will ensure priority to vocational and skill development courses.

Besides the conventional courses, the university will also offer massive open online courses.



Gearing up: Scientists working on the orbiter vehicle and lander of Chandrayaan-2 at the ISRO's satellite integration and testing facility, in Bengaluru on Wednesday. *K. MURALI KUMAR

Chandrayaan-2 to be launched on July 15 from Sriharikota: ISRO

It is India's second mission to the Moon, says K. Sivan

MADHUMATHI D.S.
BENGALURU

Chandrayaan-2, India's second Moon mission, will be launched on July 15, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman K. Sivan announced on Wednesday. Chandrayaan-1 mission was launched about 10 years ago.

Chandrayaan-2, which will be launched at 2.51 a.m. from Sriharikota, includes a lander and a rover for the first time in an Indian space mission. The moon landing is planned for September 6 or 7. The spacecraft, with a mass of 3.8 tonnes, has an orbiter, the lander (Vikram) and the rover (Pragyan).

The mission costs ₹603 crore for the spacecraft system and ₹375 crore for the launcher, a GSLV-MKIII. The lander and the rover will have the Tricolour painted on them. The Ashoka Chakra will be imprinted on the rover's wheels.

The orbiter, with scientific payloads, would go around the Moon. The lander would soft-land on the Moon at a predetermined site and deploy the rover. Instruments on the lander and the rover would also carry out scientific experiments, the ISRO said.

The scientific payloads are expected to perform mineralogical and elemental

studies of the lunar surface.

The orbiter and the lander would be interfaced mechanically and stacked together as an integrated module and accommodated inside the GSLV MK-III. The rover is housed inside the lander.

After the launch into an earth-bound orbit by GSLV MK-III, the integrated module would reach the Moon orbit using the orbiter propulsion module, and subsequently, the lander would separate from the orbiter and soft-land at the predetermined site, close to the lunar South Pole. The rover would then roll out, the ISRO said.

Cyclone in Gujarat triggers a heatwave in Andhra Pradesh

Similar weather condition to prevail for the next four days

STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA

People in at least 18 stations across Andhra Pradesh reported heatwave and severe heatwave conditions on Wednesday, according to the India Meteorological Department.

The A.P. Weather Forecasting and Research Centre (AWARE) attributes the intensifying temperatures to transposition of moisture from high pressure to low pressure area following Vayu cyclone.

The IMD weather stations in Tuni of East Godavari and Machilipatnam of Krishna districts registered a departure of 6.4° Celsius from normal and maximum temperature hovered around 43.2°

Celsius and 42.2° Celsius respectively. Bapatla and Jangamaheswara Puram in Guntur, Kakinada in East Godavari, Kavali in Nellore, Narsapur in West Godavari and Vijayawada in Krishna districts also experienced heatwave conditions.

Laxminarasampet mandal of Srikakulam district registered the State's highest maximum temperature at 46.6° Celsius, according to a report by the A.P. State Disaster Management Authority. It is followed by Devarapalle of West Godavari at 46.2° Celsius.

While some mandals in six districts including Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur and Prakasam regis-

tered more than 45° Celsius of maximum temperature, some other mandals in Guntur, Visakhapatnam, Krishna and Nellore received very light to moderate rainfall.

Thunderstorms likely

The State, particularly in the districts of Coastal Andhra region, is most likely to witness similar weather conditions during the next four days. The IMD, in its forecast, warned of very likely heatwave condition at isolated pockets over Yanam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Prakasam and Nellore districts.

Also, thunderstorms with gusty winds and lightning are very likely in pockets of the Coastal Andhra region.

High waves to lash Kerala, says Met Dept.

Coastal areas put on alert; sea erosion triggers evacuation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Coastal areas across Kerala have been put on alert with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) warning that high waves are expected to lash the State coast till Thursday night.

The forecast is valid for the coastal stretch from Pozhiyoor in Thiruvananthapuram to Kasaragod till 9.30 p.m. on Thursday. Waves as high as 2.5 to 3.3 metres are likely to lash the coast, according to the IMD.

Vayu cyclone

Fishermen have been advised not to venture into the sea as strong winds are blowing from a westerly direction



Breaking barriers: Waves break over the seawall near the Subramania Swamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday. *S. GOPAKUMAR

along the Kerala and Karnataka coasts with the 'Very Severe Cyclone' Vayu moving on a north-northwesterly path in the Arabian Sea. While Kerala is not in the

path of the cyclone, sea conditions are expected to remain rough for the next few days. "Strong winds from a westerly direction speed reaching 35-45 kmph gusting

to 50 kmph are likely along and off Kerala coasts," the IMD said in an advisory.

Meanwhile, Kerala is likely to receive widespread rainfall on Thursday. The IMD

has issued an orange alert for Malappuram for Thursday, indicating the possibility of heavy to very heavy rainfall. Yellow alerts indicative of isolated heavy rainfall have been issued for Alappuzha, Ernakulam, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasaragod for Thursday.

Hundreds evacuated

In Malappuram, dozens of houses along the coast of Ponmani and adjacent areas were damaged as Arabian Sea ate into the coast at places where the seawalls were missing.

Hundreds of people living along the coast at Aliyarpalli, Marakkadavu, Muringazhi, Puthupponnani, Azhikkal, Veliyankode, Thannithura, Palappetty and Kappirikkad evacuated their houses following threat of sea erosion. In Ernakulam, the situation in the coastal village of Chellanam continues to be grim.

Defected MLAs warn Congress leaders

Our merger with TRS is legal, be ready to face defamation cases, they say

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

The 12 Congress MLAs who defected to the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) have threatened to file defamation cases against Telangana Congress leaders who are criticising them for crossing over to the ruling party.

At a press conference at the TRS Legislature Party (TRSLP) office here on Wednesday, the MLAs claimed that the merger of CLP with the TRSLP was legal and as per Constitutional provisions. The Congress leaders targeting them should be ready to face defamation cases for character assassination.

"We did not join the TRS individually, but had expressed our wish to leave the Congress and then join the TRS. We met as a group and decided to leave the party only on June 6 and we in-

HC notice to MLAs, Speaker

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court directed on Wednesday that notice be served on Telangana Assembly Speaker, the Election Commission of India (ECI) and the Legislature Secretariat on a writ petition challenging the recent merger of the Congress Legislature Party

formed the Assembly Speaker. He released the bulletin respecting our views as we comprised two-thirds of the existing Congress MLAs," said Rega Kantha Rao and Gandra Venkatarama Reddy.

Mr. Kantha Rao said the group also met Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao

with the Telangana Rashtra Samithi Legislature Party in the Assembly.

Tagging this writ petition filed by Congress MLA Mallu Bhathi Vikramarka and MP N. Uttam Kumar Reddy with two others, a Division Bench posted the matter for hearing after four weeks. The 12 Congress MLAs who joined the ruling TRS would also be served notice.

and requested him to admit them into the party. He refuted allegations that they were lured with money and contracts.

Mr. Venkatarama Reddy said they were not buffaloes or sheep to be purchased or kids to be threatened. "In fact, our decision has been approved by the people, gi-

ven the results in the local body elections," he claimed.

The MLAs also targeted the TPCC leadership, including its president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, and CLP leader Bhathi Vikramarka, saying people had lost faith in their leadership and the cadre was deserting the party.

Taking objection to the severe criticism against by the BJP, Mr. Reddy said even Prime Minister Narendra Modi had openly claimed support of 40 TMC MLAs in West Bengal. Some of them joined the BJP after the elections. Recently two MLAs of Maharashtra Gomantak Party joined the BJP in Goa.

The BJP leadership in Telangana should explain the mergers in Goa and Tripura and defections in Bengal. "Our decision is as per the Constitution and there was no need for resignations," they said in reply to a query.

A non-flower, but just as bright for insects

Bengaluru researchers use art to study pollinators, show results at London's museum

K.C. DEEPIKA
BENGALURU

The journey of food involves insect pollinators for 75% of crops, but what cues make them pick specific flowers?

Researchers from the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) here, who have co-published a study on why pollinators prefer some flowers over others, are turning to art to take their inquiry further.

Recent studies point to an alarming decline in insect populations, making the study important.

The scientists have teamed up with the Thomas Pausz Studio in an 'art-science' project that utilises art and design knowledge. This, they say, will help them develop better ways to attract dwindling pollinator



Unconventional flowers: Artefacts made using a 3D printer to study the preferences of insects. *THOMAS PAUSZ

populations. Their work is currently on display at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in London.

Colour or shape?

Researchers from Uppsala University in Sweden, Flinders University in Australia and NCBS, Bengaluru, looked at the preferences of pollinators across continents.

"We studied hoverflies,

highly prolific pollinators found on every continent except Antarctica. We replicated cues from flowers — colour, shape, size, odour — in the form of artificial flower lures," said Shannon Olsson from NCBS.

The team found some lures were attractive to hoverflies only in certain environments, but there was one flower lure that was attractive everywhere.

"This was exciting as it suggested the possibility of a universal lure. We didn't know which cues were important — colour, odour, shape, or more," she said.

Paper, films, UV light

The researchers approached artist Thomas Pausz at Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology to create the non-flower. "To translate ideas, we used paper, films and UV light," he said. The result is six 'non-flower' artefacts on show at the V&A alongside Virtual Reality films based on fractal geometries. "The structures echo scientists' findings — pollinators prefer flowers with many edges," said Mr. Pausz.

The actual artefacts were realised using a 3D printing machine.

IN BRIEF



High Court junks Sterlite's objection

CHENNAI
The Madras HC on Wednesday rejected all objections raised by Vedanta Limited to applications filed by politicians and anti-Sterlite activists to include them as respondents to the company's writ petition for reopening its copper smelting plant in Thoothukudi.

CBI conducts raids in illegal mining case

NEW DELHI
The CBI on Wednesday conducted searches at more than 20 places, including premises linked to former U.P. Mining Minister Gayatri Prajapati and former Lok Sabha MP Ghanshyam Anuragi, in connection with alleged illegal mining of minerals in Hamirpur district.

Two sisters raped at gunpoint in U.P.

MUZAFFARPUR
Two minor girls were allegedly raped by four men at gunpoint on Tuesday evening, police said. The men have been booked and efforts are underway to nab the accused, Alok Sharma, S.P. (rural), said. **PTI**

2.5 lakh shifted ahead of Vayu landfall

Armed forces, NDRF brace for the cyclone; Union Home Secretary chairs meeting of crisis managers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT AHMEDABAD

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has deployed 40 teams along the coastal areas of Gujarat and the union territory of Diu ahead of the anticipated landfall on Thursday afternoon of the severe cyclonic storm Vayu.

Apart from the NDRF, the government has also deployed the SDRF and other agencies while the Army, Air Force and the Navy have been put on standby for rescue operations along the coastal districts in Saurashtra. The Coast Guard has also deployed ships and aircraft to enable search and rescue operations.

NCMC review

Union Home Secretary Rajiv Gauba chaired a meeting of the National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC) where preparation for relief and rescue operations were discussed.

More than 2.5 lakh people have been relocated from the affected coastal areas to safer locations in more than 2000 shelters.

"It is expected at present that the impact of cyclone will start being felt from the



Red alert: Waves crashing against the coast at a fishing harbour ahead of the expected landfall of Cyclone Vayu at Veraval in Gujarat on Wednesday. **• REUTERS**

midnight on Wednesday. The intensity of the cyclone is seen increasing. As a precaution, the government is shifting the citizens so that we can achieve our aim of zero casualties. Food packets and medical aid is being provided," Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said addressing the media on Wednesday.

After making the landfall, the cyclone is likely to move along and parallel to the Saurashtra and Kutch coast, the India Meteorological Department has said.

Ahead of the cyclone, the government has suspended flight operations in all air-

ports in Saurashtra, cancelled or short terminated trains and also halted operations at the ports where signal 9 has been hoisted.

"Thirty six teams have been pre-positioned/deployed at Kutch, Morbi, Rajkot, Jamnagar, Dwarka, Porbandar, Gir Somnath, Amreli, Junagarh, Bhavnagar, Vadodara, Valsad, Surat and Gandhinagar, while four teams have been pre-positioned at Diu for prompt response," an NDRF release said.

"In addition, six teams each are being airlifted from Patna airport and *INS Rajali*

to Gujarat. This will raise the number of teams to 52 – 47 in Gujarat and 5 in Diu for assisting the local administration" it added.

All pilgrim places including Somnath, Dwarka and schools and colleges have been closed.

A total of ten columns of the Army each having a strength of about 70 persons have been deployed in Jamnagar, Gir, Dwarka, Porbandar, Jamnagar, Somnath, Morbi, Bhavnagar, Rajkot and Amreli, while another 24 columns have been put on standby to carry out rescue and relief operations

Chinese boats granted shelter at Ratnagiri port

MUMBAI
India has granted special permission to 10 Chinese boats to enter its waters and dock at Ratnagiri port with Cyclone Vayu expected to make landfall on the western coast on Thursday. The Coast Guard followed protocol and provided shelter to the boats. A Coast Guard official said, Coast Guard Inspector General K.R. Suresh said it is common practice for vessels to seek shelter at ports in nearby countries during a calamity.

AAI to suspend flights at 5 Gujarat airports

NEW DELHI
The Airports Authority of India on Wednesday announced that flight operations will remain suspended at five airports in Gujarat for 24 hours from midnight Wednesday in order to minimise the damage to airport infrastructure and to avoid inconvenience to passengers due to Cyclone Vayu. Flight operations will remain suspended in Porbandar, Diu, Bhavnagar, Keshod and Kandla airports, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) said. **PTI**

DRDO tests tech demonstrator

HSTDV will have multiple civilian use

DINAKAR PERI NEW DELHI

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Wednesday conducted the test of an indigenously developed Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle (HSTDV) along with several critical technologies.

"The DRDO launched a technology demonstrator vehicle to prove a number of critical technologies for futuristic missions from Dr Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha," the Ministry of Defence (MoD) said without identifying what the technology demonstrator was or if it met the objectives. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh witnessed the launch.

The missile was successfully launched at 1127 hours and it was tracked by various radars, telemetry stations and electro optical tracking sensors through its course, the MoD added.

The test was undertaken to validate several technologies including the HSTDV, a Defence source said. "Some technologies have been validated while some remained

inconclusive of which the data is being analysed," the source added.

In the test, a missile with the technology demonstrator vehicle mounted on it is launched and the vehicle is released only after the missile reaches a certain altitude and velocity, one official explained.

Former DRDO Chief V.K. Saraswat had said in 2008, as the Chief Controller, R and D (Missiles and Strategic Systems), that through the HSTDV project the idea was to demonstrate the "performance of a scram-jet engine at an altitude of 15 km to 20 km, is on".

"Under this project, we are developing a hypersonic vehicle that will be powered by a scram-jet engine. This is dual-use technology, which when developed, will have multiple civilian applications. It can be used for launching satellites at low cost. It will also be available for long-range cruise missiles of the future," he had stated.

In scram-jet technology, fuel combustion takes place in a chamber in the missile at supersonic speeds.

Mountaineers airdropped near AN-32 crash site for search, rescue operations

Nine are from the Air Force and four from the Army; two are civilians

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI

Mi-17 and Advanced Light Helicopters airdropped 15 mountaineers on Wednesday at a navigable point closest to the site of the Indian Air Force's (IAF) Antonov-32 transport aircraft crash in Arunachal Pradesh on June 3.

Nine of the mountaineers are from the IAF and four from the Army. Two are civilians. Officials said the well-equipped team of 15 camped overnight at the drop site due to the difficult terrain and weather. It would try to close in on the crash site and look for survivors on Thursday.

"The helicopters operated from Aalo [headquarters of the West Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh] and other bases," said Wing Commander Ratnakar Singh,



The team that was airdropped. **• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

IAF's spokesperson based in Meghalaya's capital Shillong.

An IAF chopper had on Tuesday located the crash at Lipo, about 16 km northeast of Tato, headquarters of Arunachal Pradesh's Shi-Yomi district. The site is close to Gatte village in the adjoining Siang district.

Shi-Yomi and Siang dis-

trict officials said it could take a few days to reach the crash site because the mountains are steep – Lipo is about 12,000 ft above mean sea level. Besides, the nearest Molo-Kaying road was washed away after rainfall on June 9, they said.

Siang's Deputy Commissioner Rajeev Takuk said five

local mountaineers and some villagers and hunters had been roped in for the search and rescue operation. The mountaineers included two Everesters – Taka Tamut and Kison Tekseng. They had followed the flight path of the AN-32 before it lost contact with the ground control over Payum circle of Siang district.

They scouted the western, southern and eastern parts in vain and were sent to the northern region [toward Lipo]," Mr. Takuk said.

Besides, the district authorities had engaged a large number of scouts for a daily fee of ₹800 each to locate the aircraft.

The AN-32 aircraft was going from Jorhat to the Mechuka Advanced Landing Ground near the border, on June 3, when it lost contact with the ground staff.

NIA arrests accused in FIF funding case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency has arrested a 44-year-old man, who arrived at the Delhi airport from Dubai, in connection with a case linked to the banned Pakistan-based outfit Falah-i-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF).

The Agency said Mohammad Arif Ghulambashir Dharampuria, a resident of Valsad district in Gujarat, was evading examination and arrest for long and a look out circular had been issued by the Agency against him.

Terror funds

This is the fifth such arrest in the case related to receiving terror funds sent by FIF operators to their associates through hawala operators to further their nefarious activities to create unrest in India, the Agency said.

Central teams arrive to fight encephalitis surge in Bihar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

In the wake of 11 deaths between January and June 8 this year in Bihar due to Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) against 48 reported cases, the Union government has deployed a multi-speciality team to take stock of the situation in the State.

"The team, which arrived on Wednesday, will review the surge in cases of encephalopathy/ encephalitis and assist the State in containment/ control operations. This is in addition to a Central team that is already in Muzaffarpur. They will also visit various hospitals to assess the situation and support the State government," said a senior Union Health Ministry official.

The State has registered a rise in cases of AES in Muzaffarpur and Japanese Encephalitis (JE) in Gaya.

The Central team consists

Two more children die in Muzaffarpur; toll hits 43

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA MUZAFFARPUR

Two more children died on Wednesday in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district, which is reeling under an outbreak of Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) or brain fever, taking the toll to 43. However, a top State health official maintained that the deaths were caused by

hypoglycemia and not AES.

Hypoglycemia causes abnormally low-levels of sugar in the blood or a deficiency of sodium or potassium in the body.

The Muzaffarpur administration said two children died at the Sri Krishna Hospital here on Wednesday, where 117 cases of AES have been reported since June 1.

of officials from the National Centre for Disease Control, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences and the National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme, among others.

"Currently, Sri Krishna Medical College and hospital in Muzaffarpur has 22 admit-

ted cases of fever, hypoglycaemia and unconsciousness. The Health Ministry is coordinating with the Ministry of Women and Child Development for distribution of nutritious food with glucose in the meals to prevent development of AES," says a Ministry release.

Caste Hindus say 'no' to Dalit anganwadi workers

SANJANA GANESH MADURAI

On June 3, M. Annalakshmi received an order from the Madurai Collector's office confirming her appointment as anganwadi worker in her village Valayapatti. Ms. Annalakshmi, a Scheduled Caste woman, appointed as a helper and a cook at the anganwadi centre, was transferred to Kilavaneri, a nearby village by the district administration the next day.

"The caste Hindus of the village went to the ICDS of-

rice in Tirumangalam taluk and said that their children would never eat food prepared by an SC woman," she said. The administration, fearing a backlash from the caste Hindus, immediately transferred her to Kilavaneri and another SC appointee M. Jyothilakshmi to Madhipanur. The latter, appointed as an anganwadi worker in the same centre, used to supervise the cooking.

The people who complained said they the presence of the two women "would pollute the food."

Navy hosts information sharing workshop

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy is hosting a maritime information sharing workshop under the aegis of the Information Fusion Centre - Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) at Gurugram.

Over 41 delegates from 29 countries of the IOR are participating in the two-day event which was inaugurated by Deputy Chief of Naval Staff, Vice-Admiral MS Pawar on Wednesday.

"In the course of two days, the workshop aims to

acquaint participants about IFC-IOR and its information sharing mechanisms and promote sharing of best practices in this field," the Navy said in a statement. This aims to yield better response to the myriad security and safety challenges that IOR faces, it added.

Issues such as maritime terrorism, piracy, human and drug trafficking, humanitarian assistance as well as disaster relief and the legal perspective of combating these challenges would be looked into.

'Enforcement of child labour laws lacking'

Time to act, says Labour Secretary

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NOIDA

The continuing presence of child labour in the country is a reflection of the fact that implementation of the laws at the State and district levels has been lacking, a top official of the Union Labour and Employment Ministry said on Wednesday.

Though the number of children engaged in labour had come down to 10.1 million, or 1.01 crore, according



A girl working at a chilli packaging unit in Nagpur.

to the 2011 Census, from 1.26 crore in the 2001 census, there was still a lot to be done to end the scourge, said Labour and Employment Secretary Heeralal Samariya on the occasion of

World Day Against Child Labour.

"Everything is in place, but if we still have child labour, it means that somewhere we are not implementing or enforcing at the field le-

vel... somewhere we are failing in enforcing the laws. It has to percolate down," he asserted.

"It is the time to act. At the delivery point, the district and State level, they have a lot to do," he said.

Speaking at the event, International Labour Organisation (ILO) Director for India Dagmar Walter said India had ratified conventions prescribing minimum age for employment (14 years in developing countries) and employment in hazardous conditions (18 years).

Ms. Walter stressed the need for a targeted approach to combat the problem.



Values to live by

PM Modi's call for inclusiveness in the Maldives and Sri Lanka is relevant in India too

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Male this month, his first trip abroad after his re-election, he delivered a speech rich in meaningful metaphors to the Maldivian Parliament. He referred to the ties that bind India to the Maldives, and which could be extended to other maritime neighbours in the Indian Ocean as well. Pointing out that the waves that wash the Indian shores are the same as those that reach the shores of the Maldivian island chain, Mr. Modi called them "messengers" of peace, friendship and trust that exist between the two countries. Going beyond geographical proximity, the speech spelt out common interests in maritime cooperation, democracy, pluralism, climate change, and in battling the twin scourges of terrorism and radicalisation. The agreements announced during the visit followed these themes as well: including MoUs on hydrography cooperation and sharing 'white shipping' information, and India's decision to fund a conservation project for Male's Friday Mosque built with coral in 1658. The Prime Minister expressed a resolve for the common fight against terrorism and radicalisation, which he called the "litmus test for today's leadership", and said "state sponsorship of terrorism" remains the biggest threat to all humanity today. On his next stop, for a few hours in Colombo, he spelt out the same message, making a detour after landing to visit the St. Anthony's Shrine in Kochchikadee, one of the sites of the Easter Sunday terror attacks that left more than 250 dead.

Mr. Modi's twin visits underlined several initiatives that he had promoted in his first tenure, including his commitment to "Neighbourhood First" and "Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)" for the Indian Ocean Region. Going forward, it is necessary to ensure that these themes receive constant attention through steady communication, and that relations are not allowed to fray as they did in the first few years of that tenure. The next imperative is the delivery of all projects that India has committed to, on time and within the budgets estimated, an area where India's reputation has suffered in the past. Finally, Mr. Modi chose to speak in Male about two important liberal values as common causes: democracy, which he called the Maldives a "glowing example of", and inclusiveness. He repeated his motto, *Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas aur Sabka Vishwas* (together with all, for the development of all and with the trust of all), and his outreach to the mosque in the Maldives and the church in Sri Lanka reinforced the words. These words must be buttressed by the power of example, as India's neighbours will see whether the same values that India hopes to see in its neighbourhood are implemented within the country.

Starting at three

Extending the right to education to younger children would be a welcome step

India's far-sighted Right to Education Act is making slow progress in mainstreaming equity, in the absence of a strong political commitment in several States. The proposal to extend its scope to younger children through early childhood education is, however, wholly positive. The move suggested in the draft National Education Policy to put children three years and older in a stimulating nursery environment is a welcome logical measure. The pedagogical view is that the pre-school phase is crucial to stimulate a child's curiosity and help her prepare for schooling at age six. The NEP proposal to infuse the existing child development schemes, which are primarily nutrition-oriented, with a learning component is in line with this thinking on holistic development. An extension of the RTE would be a big step forward, but in the absence of measures that will deepen equity, the law cannot be transformative. The Centre has to guarantee that in its totality, the Right to Education will encompass all schools bar those catering to minorities. This is necessary to achieve its moral goal of bringing quality schooling to all in the 6-14 age group; adding the early childhood section, now under the Ministry of Women and Child Development, will then be meaningful. Unfortunately, the evidence indicates that only 12.7% schools comply with the law's requirements, and at the pace seen since RTE became law in 2010, it will take decades to achieve full coverage.

Giving all children aged three and above the right to an education can become a reality only if the state is willing to live up to its promise of devoting more financial resources. An expenditure of 6% of GDP on education could have transformed the sector, given the large wealth generated since economic liberalisation. But far less is spent – for instance, 2.7% in 2017-18. The last years have cost millions a brighter future, but the draft NEP provides an opportunity to make amends. Bringing more children into the formal stream needs a well-thought-out road map. The Centre has to play a leadership role to ensure that States, some of which have done a poor job of implementing the RTE Act, are persuaded to implement urgent reform. The NEP's proposal to have well-designed school complexes, where pre-primary to secondary classes will be available, is in itself an ambitious goal that will require mission-mode implementation. Shortcomings in anganwadi centres must be addressed in the expansion plan. State governments will have to fill teacher vacancies and ensure that the training of recruits is aligned to scientific, child-oriented teaching methods. Education reform is vital to prepare for a future in which cutting-edge skills will be necessary for continued economic progress. Changes to the RTE Act that will prepare all children for a more productive schooling phase can help make India's educational system morally fair and more egalitarian.

A summary of fears and possibilities

Why the Narendra Modi government should be cautious about a majoritarian agenda



HARSH MANDER

In the heady first flush of a newly elected government, commentators often compose, as usually unsolicited counsel, optimistic lists of what the government should do in its first 100 days in office.

Ideologically-driven signals

I am in an entirely different frame of mind after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's emphatic victory in India's 2019 midsummer election. Instead of optimism I experience a mounting disquiet. This deepens when I observe Mr. Modi's choices for India's Home Minister and for the Minister for Human Resource Development.

I worry when against a backdrop of violent cow vigilantism, Animal Husbandry and Dairying is separated from the Ministry of Agriculture and carved into a separate ministry stewarded by three Ministers who have a history of hate speech and hard-line Hindutva politics.

The messaging is abundantly clear. The signals are of a much more openly ideologically-driven government than even the first tenure of Mr. Modi, one determined to advance its agenda of hard-line majoritarianism at all costs. This will play out variously in its approach to fraught questions such as citizenship, Kashmir, Hindutva terror, the Ram temple, and dissent. The government will feel mandated to rewrite history, decimate left-liberal universities, abandon the scientific temper, and amend cow protection laws to

make these more draconian.

A possible line of action

Therefore, my list here is different. It is of what I hope this government will not do, but intensely dread that it will. I do not fear that the letter of India's Constitution will be changed. But what will be torn to fragments would be its practice. I fear, first, an even more frightening rise in hate speech; and the hate violence that this will instigate and encourage. Lynching should not become an indelible part of the broken social contract, pushing Muslims further into underserved ghettos transacting their lives in everyday dread.

I fear that the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam will manufacture statelessness at a scale no country has known. There is no chance of Bangladesh accepting these so-called 'stateless persons'; so, they will continue to live in Assam: some in concentration camp-like detention centres, but most stripped of rights in local communities. This will create a Rohingya-like situation, with widespread social violence and routinised state repression. The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, if passed, will ensure that excluded Bengali Hindus will be absorbed as citizens, thereby barring only Muslims from citizenship. This will create a frightening cleavage between communities, reminiscent of Partition, and will be the most decisive death-blow to the Constitution of which the centre-piece is the idea of equal citizenship to people of every faith.

The suffering to millions of Assam's most disadvantaged peoples will then be spread to other parts of India, beginning with Bengal, where the lethal combination of the NRC and the Citizenship Bill will push many millions of India's Muslims into the vortex of dread



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

about their futures as Indian citizens, crushed by merciless and partisan state institutions.

Just as a spurious (and unconstitutional) link of citizenship with religion would be created, another bogus link of religion with terror could be re-established. All cases of Hindutva terror would be white-washed and alleged perpetrators such as Pragna Thakur and killers of rationalists such as M.M. Kalburgi and progressive journalists such as Gauri Lankesh will be freed from any taint, and the arrest of Muslim youth for terror will mount once again.

The three Ministers who head the newly created Animal Husbandry Ministry could design even more stringent laws against cow slaughter, with draconian punishments and the dilution of evidentiary standards. This would further encourage cow vigilante groups to extort and lynch Muslims and Dalits. Impoverished Muslim dairy farmers such as in Mewat and Uttar Pradesh, will be forced to abandon dairying, but will find it hard to survive with any other livelihood. Dalits will struggle to look for work which does not require them to skin cattle. The agrarian economy will flounder further. Tribal, Dalit and Muslim communities will lose access to their only source of cheap protein, as beef eating (and even eating meat of

buffaloes) will become too high risk an enterprise for poor communities.

The Kashmir Valley would burn with an even more muscular militarist approach to protests. But these smouldering fires could explode into terminal explosions of public rage if the Central government persists with its perilous resolve to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution which accords a special status to Jammu and Kashmir, and Article 35A which flows from this to enable it to sustain the demographic character of the State.

The Central government may use the pathway of legislation to pave the way for the building of a Ram temple in Ayodhya at the very spot where the Babri Masjid was demolished. The communal triumphalism which would accompany this could lead to a rash of anti-Muslim violence in every corner of the country like a raging forest-fire in a dry jungle, as in 1992 after the demolition of the Babri Masjid.

A relook at history

There could be a massive project to rewrite textbooks country-wide, to plant the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's (RSS's) version of history in literally millions of young minds. Ancient India will become a golden land in which every scientific accomplishment of the 21st century was already anticipated and achieved. Brahmanical violence against Dalits and Buddhists will be air-brushed. Medieval India will become homogenised as an era of unmitigated darkness, in which Muslim rulers oppressed their defenceless Hindu subjects and subdued their religion and culture. India's freedom struggle will discover many unknown Hindutva patriots, and others like Sardar Patel, Lal Bahadur Shastri, and even Mahatma Gandhi and B.R.

Back to Kashmir with an open heart

Any delay in holding Assembly elections in the State will only deepen the sense of alienation



V. SUDARSHAN

Before the 2019 general election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted that the problem in Jammu and Kashmir has been kept confined to "two-and-a-half districts" and that the panchayat polls (December 2018) were an indication of the enthusiasm in the State for democratic processes. It is surprising that he has been able to make this claim unchallenged. No one asked him which seven-and-a-half districts in the Valley are shining examples of a problem being satisfactorily solved. It is a kind of 'Alice in Wonderland' syndrome. Given the nature of prime ministerial interviews, often minutely scripted and choreographed, his advisers also seem to be suffering from this syndrome, characterised by a significant distortion of reality. The attempt to put off the Assembly elections till after the Amarnath yatra is a piece of this distortion.

Beyond the lockdown

Consider these developments in the State. On April 4, over a month-and-a-half after the Pulwa

ma attack (in February), an announcement was made that the National Highway between Baramulla and Udhampur would be closed to civilian traffic for two days a week to facilitate convoy movements. It did not get the attention it deserved in the national media, but many security planners were agast.

The highway is a lifeline for the local population, with many later roads and passes through more than two-and-a-half districts. The armed forces are so heavily deployed and the necessity for supplies and replenishments so constant that they use the roads more than two days in a week. If the ban now stands lifted, it was because it is untenable.

A sense of alienation

Like Alice in the Hall of Mirrors, Mr. Modi has presented us an illusion. He has slipped into the habit of telling various interviewers the official version of the way people in J&K are warming up to elections. He told one: "You have seen the peaceful manner in which panchayat elections (December 2018) were conducted in the Valley. It has enthused us and shown the love of common Kashmiris for democracy." To another he pointed out: "Local-level elections were not held for many years in the Srinagar Valley. Earlier governments were obstructions. Right now we



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

have conducted elections; 75% of the polling took place and there was not a single incident of violence. Hundreds of people were killed in panchayat elections in West Bengal, but there was not a single incident in Kashmir. Are conditions bad in Bengal or in Kashmir?"

The panchayat polls, held over as many as seven phases, were marked by the absence of the mainstream political parties such as the Congress or the National Conference or the Peoples Democratic Party. It is not prudent to interpret the enthusiasm here and project it on to the Assembly elections.

A parsing of the panchayat poll figures also shows a different reality, marked by astoundingly low polling in many wards, no representatives in hundreds of other wards, overall something that was

reiterated more effectively in the Lok Sabha election.

In the parliamentary constituencies of Baramulla, Srinagar and Anantnag, voter turnout dipped while in the Shopian and Pulwama areas there was hardly any enthusiasm. At dozens of booths no one turned out to vote, the most dismal voting figures since the late 1980s. That's how far back Mr. Modi's policies have set the clock. Not the best advertisement for a problem that is confined merely to two-and-a-half districts.

Worse, this low turnout was not the result of separatists trying to enforce a boycott. All of the Hurriyat leaders have been taken out of the reckoning. As there was not much violence, militants were not out in strength in trying to intimidate people from voting. The people were simply not interested in voting. A great sense of alienation and a rejection of democratic process alone explains this abysmal turnout.

Arresting the drift

Though the Prime Minister often says that he has taken the high road of his predecessor Atal Bihari Vajpayee (recall the former Prime Minister's 'Insiyati, Jamhooriyat, Kashmiriyat' formulation) there is little evidence of this on the ground and in the minds of Kashmiris. Only if the stage is set for an

early Assembly election can something be salvaged. By not holding Assembly elections soon, the two-and-a-half district problem is not going to be halved. The bulk of the Indian Army is not deployed in West Bengal because of some trifling two-and-a-half district problem. It is deployed in Kashmir. If the problem was indeed so small, it should have been easy enough to have held the Lok Sabha and the Assembly elections simultaneously in J&K. The results of the Lok Sabha election have confirmed the deep political divisions.

Yet now is the time to hold Assembly elections. It is easy enough to find reasons not to hold polls till an option suitable to New Delhi emerges: it is easy enough to cite the "tourism season" and the Amarnath yatra to put off the decision till November, when the capital shifts to Jammu. And so on. In the 1990s, when Governor's Rule was imposed for nearly seven years, militancy soared. The longer the decision is put off, the more young and educated people, who are already disillusioned with the way things are going in that area, are going to drift towards militancy. Now that the Prime Minister has made a conciliatory start, he should extend the same sense of inclusiveness to the Kashmir Valley, and begin anew.

We can debate the reasons why so many Indian voters chose Mr. Modi. But there can be no doubt that Mr. Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party view the mandate as one for consolidating the master plan of the RSS – the ideological mentor of the BJP – and thereby changing India forever.

My wish-list for the new government, therefore, is not of what it should do, but what it should not do. If any or all of this is what the new Narendra Modi-Amit Shah government actually accomplishes, then the country we give our children will no longer be a place of freedom and justice, or even ordinary kindness. I have very little hope, but I would be overjoyed if I am proved wrong.

Harsh Mander is a human rights worker, writer and teacher

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

GDP over-estimation

The former Chief Economic Adviser's startling revelation (Page 1, June 12) that GDP figures from 2011-17 were overstated – when growth was actually 4.5% – is a severe indictment of both the UPA and the NDA governments, but more the latter. This was apparently done to show that the economy was doing all right when the situation was not as bright as it was made out to be. This flies in the face of the government trumpeting its achievements and claiming that the country was the fastest growing economy. The sour note is that the former CEA took such a long time to come out with this when he should have done so while in office.

V. PADMANABHAN,
Bengaluru

Mr. Subramanian's argument needs to be

debated in order to come to an acceptable appraisal of the economy. In the recent past, there has been debate on the methodology adopted in estimating growth rate. Contradictory data relating to the growth rate only create confusion and erode our confidence. The unprecedented rise in unemployment, a fall in industrial production and manufacturing and the alarming issue of non-performing assets can all affect the growth engine. The government needs to take appropriate policy measures and in a transparent manner.

V.V.K. SURESH,
Guntur, Andhra Pradesh

It is often said that if a group of five economists get together, they will each come out with six different opinions. Therefore, Mr. Subramanian's "revelation" should not be a cause for surprise. The irony is that

during his tenure as the CEA, he "failed" to notice this irregularity. That such over-estimation happened under the watch of Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister – also an economist of repute – makes the issue more intriguing. The common man hardly understands the significance of GDP to an economy, leave alone getting to the roots of methodology or changes in it to estimate the GDP. It would be a pity if he is taken for granted and fed with imaginary figures to make him believe that we are a buoyant economy. Any government will only be willing to project a rosy picture of the economy. However, the reputation and credibility of economists would be under stress if they are inclined to tow the line of the government of the day, ignoring prescribed rules of computing economic data, which is also an unethical act. When there are such

variations advanced by different economists, one wonders how the budgeted estimates would prove effective in a large economy such as India's. Instead of attempting to come up with a defence, the government would do well to revisit the tenuous link between the estimate and reality.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai

The classroom today

The article, "Truth, technology and the teacher" (OpEd page, June 12), should be read by all those who are involved in making the children of India responsible and better citizens. Today, children, especially those of impressionable age, face a difficult time sorting fact from fiction. As for teachers, they are slowly becoming robotic. Smart boards can probably help supplement a teacher's work but cannot make him a smart teacher. It

is no surprise that children are unable to face the real world, as well-grounded and knowledgeable individuals.

N. NAGARAJAN,
Secunderabad

There is a misconception that educational technology is the panacea for all shortcomings in the achievement of educational goals. Under this false notion, effective teaching can be accomplished through the use of technological gadgets, with most private educational institutions vying with one another in advertising their 'smart' classrooms. No doubt technological gadgets such as radio, television, computer and the Internet can enhance learning and be valuable adjuncts to the teacher. But all these can only supplement a teacher's work and cannot supplant him. Ultimately, it is the teacher

who has to plan, decide and use the most effective tool in his or her teaching.

Unfortunately, teachers are being marginalised. Finally, even parents who always dream of instant results as far as their children are concerned have more and more complete faith in the 'drill master' in coaching centres than the regular classroom teacher.

A. PANNEERSELVAM,
Puducherry

Great humorist

In the passing of "Crazy" Mohan, Tamil Nadu has lost a redoubtable stage artist. His heart and soul were embedded in theatre first and cinema second. His "clean humour", a brand that will be hard to replicate, struck a deep chord with families.

MANI NATARAJAN,
Chennai

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Navigations in Bishkek

The regional aspirations of Central Asian countries contradict India's goals



P. STODDAN

At the 19th Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, India will have to navigate between two contradictory imperatives. While on the one hand it must act as a willing partner of regional cooperation led by China and Russia, on the other it must avoid being seen as a part of the 'anti-American gang'. It could also be seen as a paradox that India wants to fight against terrorism through a body that includes states that pose the biggest threats to Indian security.

Trade and terrorism

In Bishkek, Russia and Central Asian countries are likely to express "broad support" for China in its escalating tariff fight against the U.S. India is equally concerned about this trade war, but it is unclear whether it will join the others in slamming U.S. protectionism. New Delhi is seemingly confident of dealing with the U.S. without necessarily supporting China. For Chinese President Xi Jinping, whipping up anti-Americanism serves to stave off mounting opposition against his anti-corruption campaign and concentration of power. It is also notable that all SCO members barring India are enthusiastic supporters of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The summit is likely to have a muted agenda. SCO Secretary General Vladimir Norov has hinted at adopting documents to deepen multilateral cooperation and discussing non-conventional issues such as the fight against drug trafficking, cooperation in IT, environmental protection and healthcare. Terrorism is likely to be approached from the angle of improving the situation in Afghanistan and not necessarily of curbing the terrorist elements emanating from Pakistan. China is sure to offer its experiences of dealing with counter-terrorism, and the deradicalisation measures it has taken in Xinjiang. China's achievement in expanding its high-speed rail network to reinvigorate Xinjiang comes with enormous economic and security implications for Eurasia. China has also enhanced its military projection capabilities to meet any potential crises beyond its western frontiers.

Kyrgyzstan is the latest to create an



PM Modi and President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the SCO in China in 2018. •AP

international near-border trade centre in Alai district bordering China. If the regional countries switch to adopting the Chinese railway track gauge of 1,435 mm, then China will be successful in uniting Eurasia to challenge a united Europe. As the situation unfolds, China and Russia are adopting a new era of global strategic partnership. Where India fits in is the question.

On the sidelines

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with President Xi on the sidelines of the summit will be critical, especially as Mr. Modi is now being guided by his new External Affairs Minister. This meeting also comes after China's decision to withdraw its technical offer on listing Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The key concern for the two leaders is the impact of the U.S.-China trade war, but judging from the trends, both sides seem to be gearing up for a big settlement of pending bilateral issues.

Mr. Modi's meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin is important to save the S-400 contract deal against Washington's mounting threat to act under CAATSA. India and Russia have an ambitious economic agenda drawn up for 2019, and Mr. Putin might reiterate his invitation to Mr. Modi to be the chief guest at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok in September. It would be a good opportunity for India to explore Russia's Far East region not just for developing economic cooperation but also for exploring the prospects of transferring skilled labourers to offset Chinese demographic threats in the region. Russia is also keen that India joins the Arctic: Territory of Dialogue Forum.

India seems committed to work with in the SCO to develop a 'cooperative and sustainable security' framework, to

make the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure more effective, and participate in efforts to bring about stability in Afghanistan. Even though the regional aspirations of Central Asian countries contradict India's goals, these countries back India's proposal for a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. Mr. Modi is certain to bring up India's resolve to fight terrorism by drawing the SCO's attention to the attacks in Pulwama and Sri Lanka. But China would not like India to use the SCO to name and shame Pakistan.

India may stick to its position on BRI, but accelerating progress on the International North-South Transport Corridor, the Chabahar Port, the Ashgabat Agreement and the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway should be very much on the cards.

The Pakistan policy

The India-Pakistan stalemate endures but the environment has changed a little since India's air strikes in Balakot. Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has been less belligerent, but whether the Pakistani military is taking tougher measures to curb anti-India terror groups is not known. Mr. Khan will have to demonstrate clearly if he wants Mr. Modi to give diplomacy a chance should they meet on the margins of the SCO meet. Mr. Modi might chart a new policy course in favour of normalising ties, especially since India has scored a point with Masood Azhar being designated as a global terrorist at the UNSC.

Pakistan places high hopes on the SCO to regulate key regional security issues (Afghanistan and Kashmir) even though the SCO discourages bilateral disputes to be raised. Its other agenda would be to sell the Gwadar Port as a potential passage to landlocked Central Asian states, besides promoting the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor for regional economic integration and security cooperation.

To be sure, none of the institutional-level measures including the joint SCO military exercises have so far entailed any satisfactory results in jointly fighting against terrorism. Nevertheless, the SCO is relevant for India to garner support for reforms of the UNSC to make the latter more representative and effective. India has been lending support to the member countries' candidatures for non-permanent membership of the UNSC for a long time.

Phunchok Stobdan served as India's Ambassador to the Republic of Kyrgyzstan

A mix of all shades of red

It is time for communist parties to start thinking seriously about reunification



BINOY VISWAM

The 2019 Lok Sabha election was undoubtedly a calculated rightist takeover of the country; a victory so massive that its magnitude was beyond the expectations of even some in the Sangh Parivar.

A well-oiled machine

It is important to acknowledge that this victory was no overnight incident. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its various outfits were working assiduously towards this from 2014. About 6,00,000 well-trained *swayamsevak*s were deployed at the grass-roots level. Social media was used to effectively communicate the Sangh Parivar's message. Thousands of WhatsApp groups worked overtime. A section of the print and visual media aided the RSS, its organisations and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). This well-thought-out strategy and well-oiled machine worked – sometimes visibly, sometimes invisibly – and carried the idea of majoritarian politics all over the country – to cities, towns and villages.

The Election Commission (EC) uses the words 'free and fair' to talk about elections, but these words have become meaningless today. The EC was brought to its knees during this election. Money and muscle power also played a very big role in the BJP's victory. Electoral bonds were seen as a way of bringing accountability and transparency in political funding. But the use of electoral bonds has opened the doors to corporate India to influence the political structure. It is estimated that the BJP was the biggest beneficiary of the electoral bond scheme this time; it reportedly bagged 95% of the funds.

Social engineering was the favourite theme in the 2014 election as well as in 2019. This time, this theme was applied at the micro level. Religion and caste factors were used in a very clever manner, while real issues like unemployment, price rise, the chaos caused by demonetisation, the problems in implementing the Goods and Services Tax, and atrocities against Dalits and minorities were not discussed. History has shown us that rulers who fail to fulfil their promises use war and pseudo-nationalism as their road to victory. This



S. JAMES

was true of this election too. The BJP focussed on the air strikes carried out by the Indian Air Force on Balakot as well as on the 2016 surgical strikes. Questions about the Rafale deal were papered over in the name of nationalism and defence preparedness of the country. Truth was the biggest casualty in an enormous propaganda warfare.

Disunited Opposition

It was against all this that the Opposition had to fight. Ideologically, politically and organisationally, the BJP camp was well organised, whereas the Opposition camp was disunited. Even though almost all Opposition parties, including the Congress, talked about the necessity to defeat the BJP, none of them took the fight seriously on the battleground. Narrow partisan priorities and individual vanities overshadowed their electoral strategy. The Opposition parties were not concerned about securing the future of secularism in India. That the BJP increased its vote share from 2014 means that these Opposition parties need to seriously introspect. If these parties had been united, they could have won the battle. But due to lack of foresight, they missed the bus.

The Communist Party of India (CPI) had put forth the idea of a broad platform of secular, democratic forces and had campaigned for the same. But most of the secular and democratic political parties failed to understand the significance of such a platform. The experience in Tamil Nadu, where the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam took a commendable position to forge an alliance of like-minded parties, has lessons for the democratic forces.

The call of the CPI for the 'reunification of the Communist movement on a principled basis' has special significance now. Communists accept with humility that they are not such a big force to decide the destiny of the nation

single-handedly. They are aware of the serious setback faced in this election. The CPI and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) together have only five seats in the Lok Sabha, the lowest they have ever had in Parliament. Even in communist strongholds, both parties lost miserably. Naturally they are obliged to look deep into the causes of this shameful defeat. Communists are definitely not going to give up their struggles because of this electoral debacle. They have to be in the thick of things in the days to come – in all the mass struggles.

A glorious history

Communists have ample reason to be proud of their glorious history of struggle and sacrifice. It is the communists who put forth the agenda of complete independence before the freedom movement, for the first time. In free India, it is the communists who fought for the cause of the oppressed in all walks of life. It is the communists who first raised the slogan of bank nationalisation and called for the end of Privy Purses. It is the communists who fought against separatist forces in Jammu and Kashmir, and Punjab, for the unity of India. Hundreds of communists were martyred in those struggles. In Ayodhya, communists built the wall of love for communal harmony. Communists have championed the cause of secularism wherever and whenever communal forces have come out to undermine the Indian concept of unity in diversity. In the ideological fight against fascism, communists have always been in the forefront, even losing people like Govind Pansare. This great movement which was built on the blood, sweat and tears of the toiling masses cannot be brought down by an electoral defeat.

But the communist movement based on the science of Marxism has no right to close its eyes to the reasons for this setback. Ideologically, politically and organisationally it should introspect and it should do so keeping in mind a unified communist movement. More than five decades have passed since the Indian communist movement split. The communists have fought differently, the result of which is now before everyone to evaluate. At this juncture, the down-trodden who regard the red flag as the flag of hope urge all communist parties to think seriously about reunification.

Binoy Viswam is the secretary of the CPI National Council and Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha

SINGLE FILE

Three stalwarts of a State

Karnataka is poorer without A.K. Ramanujan, U.R. Ananthamurthy and Girish Karnad

DEVAKI JAIN



We have lost all three of them: A.K. Ramanujan, U.R. Ananthamurthy and Girish Karnad. These were the three brilliant thinkers and writers of Karnataka. Now Karnad has joined Ramanujan and Ananthamurthy. They all acknowledged the influence

they had on another.

I wonder whether there are other such small groups of writers in other States who are famous all over the world for their brilliance but who are also rooted in their own culture and language. Even if there are, I haven't noticed it. I haven't come across, say, three Tamil or three Bengali literary giants who were known in both English and Tamil, or English and Bengali, and who lived in the same period.

I bring this up because I think Karnataka is special. Its cosmopolitan nature has been built into it for decades. The erstwhile princely State of Mysore encouraged cultural diversity. We had R.K. Narayan (who was born in Madras and brought up in Mysore) and R.K. Laxman (a Mysorean) sending waves across India and the world with their writing and cartoons, respectively, which were so expressive of 'native' India and yet so relatable in the wider world. This princely State also had a modern touch. It had pioneers in building industrial enterprises. M. Visvesvaraya, for example, is well known across India for entrepreneurship. I believe that Mysore had a civilisational sophistication and an open mind to be able to encourage its 'native' civilisation but also open its doors to modernity.

Karnad studied at Oxford University, which is where I first met him. His brilliance meant that he could live and work anywhere in the world. But he chose to come back to Bangalore where he continued to produce excellent plays that built on our own folk literature and had philosophical underpinnings. Not only did he excel in this field, he was equally outstanding in the films in which he acted. He was also an institution-builder, an activist who hated religious chauvinism, and a friend.

I last met Karnad at the memorial meeting for Gauri Lankesh. He had a placard hung around his neck that read in English and Kannada, 'Me Too Urban Naxal'. After the protest, he dropped me home, all the way wearing tubes and carrying his oxygen cylinder.

Karnad's plays always contained in them, without definition or too much underlining, the moral consciousness of Indians. Perhaps I belong to their generation, but I have not come across new geniuses in Karnataka of the kind that we had in these three stalwarts.

Devaki Jain is a feminist writer and economist



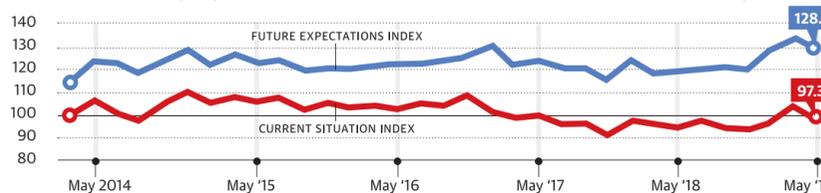
DATA POINT

Back to pessimism

Consumer confidence in various aspects of the economy – economic situation, employment, price levels, income and spending – registered a dip in last month's edition of the RBI's Consumer Confidence Survey*. Much of the decline occurred in segments which registered an uptick in positivity just before the election, in March 2019. By The Hindu Data Team

Up and down

The current situation index, which had shown a positive outlook in March 2019 after a gap of two years, relapsed in May to a score below 100 indicating "negative confidence". The future expectations index also slipped from its all-time high in March



Improvement ahead?

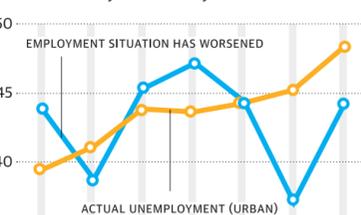
Consumers' perception of the general economic situation, income and spending remained optimistic. The outlook on employment and price levels was low in the past and has now worsened further

Variable	Current perception		
	Mar '19	May '19	Change
Economic situation	13.7	1.1	↓
Employment	3.9	-10.5	↓
Price level	-7.2	-77.3	↓
Income	10.2	8.2	↓
Spending	67	65.2	↓
Consumer Confidence Index	104.6	97.3	↓

↓ Positive sentiments with sign of deterioration
↓ Negative sentiments with sign of deterioration

Job outlook bleak

Deterioration in sentiments on employment contributed to the overall weakening of consumer confidence. This was in sync with the growth in the urban unemployment rate recorded by CMIE recently



* The survey took into account 5,245 responses across 13 major cities

FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 13, 1969

Industrial security force for public sector plants

Arrangements are now being finalised for the formation of an industrial security force in the public sector industrial plants in the country. Details of the force – including its strength, service conditions and financial implications – are being worked out by the Home and Finance Ministries in consultation with Ministries such as Steel and Heavy Engineering and Industrial Development and Company Affairs which are in charge of the units concerned. It is expected that the force will start operating in the Durgapur steel plant in the first instance. Later it will extend its activities to cover other units. On a rough estimate installations in public sector units in the country excluding railways and defence are worth about Rs. 5,000 crores. The proposed force will be an all-India force.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 13, 1919.

Indian Reform Bill. Mr. Montagu's Speech.

The Maharajah of Bikanir, Lord Pentland and a number of Indians were present in the Gallery to-day [of the House of Commons in London on May 4] when [Secretary of State for India Mr. Edwin] Montagu moved the second reading of the Government of India Bill. Mr. Montagu said: In discharging the highly important task of which he fully realised the responsibility, he desired to avoid entering into details of, the necessarily complicated and technical measure the series of elaborate documents, with which he had provided the House and which he would assume the House had mastered, would obviate much technical disquisition. Recalling the origin of the Bill, Mr. Montagu remarked that it was suggested in some quarters that the Bill arose spontaneously in the minds of the Viceroy and himself, without previous enquiry or consideration under the influence of Mr. Lionel Curtis.

CONCEPTUAL Condorcet's jury theorem

POLITICS
This refers to a theory which states that the wisdom of the crowds is usually better than that of experts in predicting the future. Decisions made through majority voting, for instance, are better than expert opinion. It is, however, important that a sufficient number of people are asked to participate in the vote to arrive at the right decision. Some believe that the accuracy of predictions can be further improved by limiting the size of the crowd. The theorem is named after French philosopher and mathematician Marquis de Condorcet who outlined it in his 1785 book *Essay on the Application of Analysis to the Probability of Majority Decisions*.

MORE ON THE WEB

This temple in Assam helps nurture 'extinct' turtle back to life

<http://bit.ly/AssamTurtle>

FROM PAGE ONE

Congress leaders meet sans Rahul and Sonia

He rejected speculation about an interim arrangement to appoint working presidents, clarifying that such an option was not being considered. "There is no question in light of my answer," he added.

"Rahul Gandhi was the president of Congress, is the president and will remain so; none of us are having any doubt about it," Mr. Surjewala said.

Observing that the 'core group' had been constituted during the Lok Sabha polls and that all groups had been disbanded since the elections had concluded, a party official said a "strategic committee" had been put in place.

Separately, Mr. Venugopal would soon be convening a meeting of the general secretaries in-charge of all States to take stock of the situation post the Lok Sabha

polls. According to party officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity, Mr. Antony had asked Mr. Surjewala to find out who had leaked information about a proposal to form a 10-15 member decision-making panel, which would work alongside the party president's office.

Senior party leaders are said to be anxious about the speculation on interim arrangements till there is clarity about Mr. Gandhi's continuation as party President. "The only finality in this issue will come when a Congress Working Committee is convened to either accept or reject Mr. Gandhi's resignation," said a senior Congress leader, who declined to be identified. "But we hope that he is persuaded to stay on."

(With inputs from Sandeep Phukan)

'Neither azaadi nor autonomy possible'

Mr. Malik said corruption in the State was more than in any other part of the country.

"There were two major cases of corruption, involving ₹150 crore each. I apprised Prime Minister Narendra Modi and got many deals cancelled where middlemen were offering kickbacks. Many powerful people, with access to the PM, were involved in it. Ruling elite in J&K has been a part of the corruption. You will hear big news soon involving former Ministers," he said.

Mr. Malik asked armed youth to lay down arms and "join me for dinner".

"I will hold a dialogue with them (militants) on futurity of violence. No violence can make India bend. Only dialogue can win hearts. We are open for that," said Mr. Malik.

"The Islamic State (IS) ideology has already been defeated where it started. The shelf life of militancy is short," he added.

Mr. Malik was flanked by Chief Secretary B.V.R. Subrahmanyam and other advisers.

Without naming the National Conference (NC) or Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Mr. Malik said local

President's rule in J&K extended

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

President's rule in J&K has been extended for six more months beginning July 3, Union Minister Prakash Javadekar said on Wednesday. A meeting of the Cabinet, chaired by PM Narendra Modi, gave its approval to the extension. Central rule has been in force since June 20, 2018.

parties "parrot the separatists and need to draw a line". He also questioned the regional parties' representative character, citing the 2% turnout in the Bijbehara Assembly segment recently. The segment is the hometown of PDP president Mehbooba Mufti.

The Governor also dispelled rumours on reported delimitation in the State ahead of Assembly polls or abrogation of Article 35(A) or Article 370.

"Delimitation is a rumour. People should not worry as there was no threat to the Articles," he said.

Five CRPF jawans killed in militant attack in J&K

"Subsequently, the attacker was killed. His identity is being ascertained," he added.

The five CRPF jawans of 116 Battalion, who were killed by the first volley of bullets were identified as Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Neeru Sharma, Constable Santinder Kumar, Constable M.K. Kushwa, ASI Ramesh Kumar and Constable Mahesh Kumar.

Station House Officer, Anantnag, Arshad Ahmed was among three security personnel injured and shifted to hospitals in Srinagar. "Ahmad was hit by bullets in the chest and may be shifted outside J&K for specialised treatment. His condition remains critical," said the police.

One woman also suffered

bullet wounds in the limbs, according to the Anantnag hospital.

This is the first major attack by militants since the Pulwama attack on February 14. It comes just weeks ahead of the commencement of the Amarnath yatra on the same route. The Khanbal-Pahalgam road, which came under the attack on Wednesday, is the main approach road to the shrine in Pahalgam.

Meanwhile, a spokesman of the Al-Umar Mujahideen outfit claimed responsibility for the attack.

National Conference vice-president Omar Abdullah and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti condemned the attack.

Bombay HC finds nothing against Gautam Navlakha

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday said prima facie there is nothing against activist Gautam Navlakha, who has been booked for his alleged involvement in the Bhima-Koregaon violence, and extended his protection from arrest till June 18. A Division Bench of Justices Ranjit More and Bharati Dangre was hearing a plea filed by Mr. Navlakha urging the

court to quash the FIR registered against him by the Pune police. The Bench was presented with some letters allegedly sent by senior Maoist leaders to Mr. Navlakha. After perusing the letters, the court said, "There is nothing against him in any of the letters. Based on the documents, we are of the opinion that there is nothing against him that supports any of the charges levelled against him."

Triple talaq Bill to be sent to Parliament again

Cabinet approves Bill to replace ordinance; it will be introduced in the upcoming session of the new Lok Sabha

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2019, paving the way for the legislation to be introduced in the upcoming session of Parliament.

The Bill, which would replace an ordinance, would, once approved, put a curb on the practice of talaq-e-biddat, or instant triple talaq.

"SabkaSaath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas" has been the pivot of NDA government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi," the Centre said in a statement, adding the government had fulfilled one of its promises.

"The Bill would ensure gender equality and gender justice to Muslim women. The Bill would also help in protecting the rights of married Muslim women and prevent divorce by practice of 'talaq-e-biddat' by their husbands.

The Bill had been introduced in Parliament in 2018 but had lapsed with the dissolution of the 16th Lok Sabha. The Bill declares the practice of triple talaq void and illegal, making it punishable by three years in jail and a fine.

Faculty reservations

Taking forward decisions made in the last months of the previous NDA government, the Centre has decid-



Women celebrating the passing of the Triple Talaq Bill by the Lok Sabha on December 28, 2018.

ed to introduce a Bill on faculty recruitment in central educational institutions in the coming session of Parliament.

The legislation would provide for 10% reservation for economically weaker sec-

tions (EWS) and restore an older system of reservation which would allow full representation of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes.

The Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Bill, 2019, was approved by the Cabinet on Wednesday, and will allow filling up of more than 7,000 existing vacancies by direct recruitment, according to an official statement.

The Bill will replace an ordinance approved by Cabinet in March, just before the Lok Sabha elections, which restored the earlier "200-point roster system" considering the university or college as a single unit for the purpose of faculty reserva-

tions. This had been a long-standing demand of Dalit and Adivasi activists and political parties, with a threat of electoral consequences if denied.

They had complained that the "13-point roster system" considering each department as a separate unit, which was mandated by a controversial Allahabad High Court judgement in April 2018 and upheld by the Supreme Court in January 2019, effectively made reservations negligible.

The new Bill will also pave the way for implementation of the 103rd Constitutional Amendment passed by Parliament in January, mandating a 10% quota in jobs and educational institutions to

economically backward sections in the general category.

The new Bill is "expected to improve the teaching standards in the higher educational institutions by attracting all eligible talented candidates belonging to SCs/STs/SEBCs/EWS" categories, the Centre said.

OBC categorisation

Cabinet also approved a two-month extension to the commission for examining sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) so that it could consult States and Union Territories on the issue.

The tenure of the commission, headed by retired Delhi High Court Chief Justice G. Rohini, has been extended till July 31.

Cabinet nod for Aadhaar as ID proof at banks, telcos

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a Bill to allow voluntary submission of Aadhaar as identity proof for use by private entities such as banks and telecom companies.

"The Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019," which will replace an ordinance, also gives a child an option to exit from Aadhaar on attaining 18

years of age. "The amendments proposed are the same as those contained in the Ordinance promulgated by the President on 2nd March, 2019," the government said in a release.

The Bill proposes deletion of section 57 of the Aadhaar Act that bars use of Aadhaar by private entities, while also providing for civil penalties for violation of rules.



Indian Medical Council Amendment Bill cleared

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Cabinet has approved the Indian Medical Council (Amendment) Bill, 2019 and the Homoeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Bill, 2019 - both of which had lapsed in the 16th Lok Sabha session. The Bills will be re-introduced in the next Parliament session.

The Medical Council Bill is aimed at bringing in transparency and quality in

the governance of medical education.

Homoeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Bill, 2019,

meanwhile, seeks to extend the period for reconstitution of the Central Council from existing period of one year to two years so that the tenure of the Board of Governors may be extended for a further period of one year with effect from May 17, 2019.

Eviction from govt. residences to be quicker

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Evicting those over-staying at government residences could become a quicker process, with the Union Cabinet clearing an amendment to the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act, 1971 on Wednesday.

"The proposed amendments would enable the estate officer to apply

summary proceedings for evicting unauthorised occupants from residential accommodations and to levy damage charges for accommodation held during the period of litigation," the statement said. This will prevent delay in making allotments to others.

The new Bill will replace a 2017 Bill and will be introduced in the upcoming Parliament session.



Battling it out: BJP activists clashing with the police in Kolkata on Wednesday. *AFP

West Bengal Governor calls for meeting to end political violence

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

West Bengal Governor Keshari Nath Tripathi has convened a meeting of the State's four major political parties - the Trinamool Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party, Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Congress - to urge them to maintain peace and harmony in the State. The meeting

will be held at the Raj Bhavan at 4 p.m. on Thursday.

Multiple incidents of violent clashes between supporters of different political parties have been reported from across the State following the announcement of the Lok Sabha election results, with several political activists killed in these clashes.

Meanwhile, the political

slug fest between the BJP and the Trinamool continued on Wednesday, with the BJP's march to Lalbazar, the headquarters of the Kolkata Police.

A scuffle between the marchers and police personnel marring barricades led to clashes that saw the police using water cannons and tear gas to disperse hundreds of BJP supporters.

Kovind's balancing act during polls

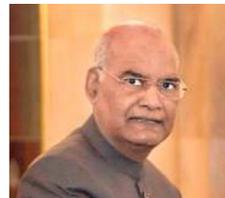
He addressed only 3 events outside Rashtrapati Bhavan in the 83-day period

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

Being above the fray in a partisan political environment is a delicate balancing act in public life. President Ram Nath Kovind seems to have addressed it by erring on the side of caution during the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls, with only three engagements outside Rashtrapati Bhavan in the 83-day period between the notification of the dates for the polls on March 10 to the government formation by May 31. This is of course not counting the 10 days he spent on a state visit to South America in the interregnum.

President Kovind's reticence seemed a counterpoint to the deeply bitter election campaign that threatened to wind up at the Rashtrapati Bhavan's doorsteps at every phase.

The three events he addressed were a function on university rankings, grassroots innovations (held in Ahmedabad, his only official



Ram Nath Kovind

trip outside the Capital in that period) and a visit to the National Police Memorial on a day when the Central Reserve Police Force's observes martyrs' day.

NEWS ANALYSIS

In the meanwhile, the bitter political campaign did spill over to almost washing up at the Rashtrapati Bhavan gates.

From a letter from armed forces veterans protesting the mention of the Army by BJP leaders which made the headlines, to one from Air Marshall Suri claiming that he wasn't a signatory to the

letter as was being suggested, to a third by another set of army men who found nothing wrong with the party's speeches. All three were set aside, the matter left to the ECI.

Polite rebuff

Delegations from political parties including the BJP seeking appointments, from the Congress party and the Trinamool Congress were politely rebuffed.

Chief among these requests was one from the BJP which was protesting the conduct of the polls in West Bengal and another delegation to have been led by then Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, which sought to convince the President of summoning an assortment of Opposition parties as a pre-poll grouping to stake claim to form the next government.

Even the national film awards function, scheduled for May 3, was postponed and the Information Minis-

try told to wait till the new government was in place.

While all Presidents are expected to be above the fray, was this an exercise of caution excessive? S.M. Khan, former press secretary to late President APJ Abdul Kalam, recalls that during the 2004 polls, Mr. Kalam had in fact addressed the nation over Doordarshan and AIR asking citizens to vote in large numbers and exercise their democratic right. "It is however true that during the poll period, even in the case of President Kalam there was a cutting back on public engagement. The degree of it, Mr. Khan adds, is a matter of an individual President's discretion.

The heat and dust of the polls now being over, President Kovind will be addressing both Houses of Parliament on June 20 for the first session of the 17th Lok Sabha. His cautious approach during the polls, a precedent for successors, and a sign of our times.

BJP rejigs parliamentary panel to include new MPs

New members mark generational shift in party

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday reconstituted its parliamentary party executive committee, which is the nodal committee for co-ordination of the legislative party while Parliament is in sessions, marking a generational shift in the party as perhaps for the first time L.K. Advani and Murlis Manohar Joshi are not part of it. Neither of the party veterans are MPs now.

Prime Minister Modi will be the Leader of the House in the Lok Sabha as well as of the BJP's parliamentary party; Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will be deputy leader of the parliamentary party in the Lok Sabha.

Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Thawar Chand Gehlot will be the leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha, with Railway Minister Piyush Goyal as deputy leader. Lok Sabha



Smriti Irani

MP from Bihar Sanjay Jaiswal will be the chief whip of the party in the Lok Sabha, with Narayan Panchariya as his Rajya Sabha counterpart. Mr. Gehlot replaces former Union minister Arun Jaitley in the post after the latter requested the leadership of relieving him from key posts due to health issues.

Irani elevated

Union Minister Smriti Irani's induction in the BJP's parliamentary party executive committee shows elevation within the party after she defeated Congress president

Rahul Gandhi from Amethi. Other special invitees from the Lok Sabha to the executive body are Nitin Gadkari, Ravi Shankar Prasad, Arjun Munda, Narendra Singh Tomar and Jai Oram.

From the Rajya Sabha, special invitees are J.P. Nadda, Om Prakash Mathur, Nirmala Sitharaman, Dharmendra Pradhan and Prakash Javadekar. BJP general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya has been reappointed as in-charge of the party's parliamentary office and Balasubrahmanyam Kumarsu as secretary.

The first meeting of the executive will be held on June 16 at 3:30 p.m., a day before the commencement of the first session of the 17th Lok Sabha session. The government has also called an all-party meeting on the same day in the morning which will be chaired by Prime Minister Modi.

Coimbatore man made IS-inspired logos: NIA

VJAJITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA), which arrested Coimbatore resident Mohammed Azharuddeen and detained five others on Wednesday, said Azharuddeen designed Islamic State inspired logos that were quite popular on social media platforms.

His Facebook page, however, said, "Khilafah Graphics - a page for Islamic posters" with the typical black and white IS flag in the background.

The Agency said the accused had shared "radical contents attributed to Zahrani Hashim - the mastermind of the Easter Sunda attacks in Sri Lanka - over the social media," adding that all of them used to follow Hashim's videos.

The case was registered on May 30 when an NIA team was in Colombo to probe two IS related cases registered by the agency in 2015 and 2018, with links to the April 21 Easter terror attack that killed more than 250 people.



APPEAL
Name of Patient: Ms. Bhavani, 10 years. Hospital Name: Christian Medical College. Diagnosis: Growth Hormone Deficiency. For her medical condition she will benefit from Growth Hormone Replacement Therapy. The cost of injection growth hormone will be approximately Rs. 48,000/- per annum.
We request Kind Hearted Philanthropists to save her. Kindly send donation by Cheque/D.D/M.O favouring Save Poor Lives A/c Bhavani S/S account No. 2000913487, State Bank of India, Raja Annamalaiapuram Branch, IFSC CODE: SBIN001855, which is exempted under 80G of I.T. Act.
Contact: SAVE POOR LIVES REGISTERED PUBLIC CHARITABLE TRUST, (ADMN DIVISION), Flat No. A4, Ceetros Garden, Ground Floor, Old No.76, Kamarajar Salai, Rajapuram, Chennai - 600 028, Ph: 044-42044165, Mobile: 9884607377, Email: savepoorlives@gmail.com. Our website: www.savepoorlives.com
DONATION GIVEN TO PATIENTS UPTO MARCH 2019 FOR RS. 4,26,89,335/- AND SCHOLARSHIP 7,30,800/-

IN BRIEF



SC dismisses petition of Sanjiv Bhatt

NEW DELHI
In a setback to sacked Gujarat-cadre IPS officer Sanjiv Bhatt, the Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to entertain his plea seeking examination of 11 additional witnesses in a 30-year-old custodial death case in which he is facing trial. **PTI**

Reach office on time, PM tells Ministers

NEW DELHI
Reach office on time and avoid working from home to set an example for others — these were some of the instructions given by PM Narendra Modi to the Council of Ministers on Wednesday. Mr. Modi also asked senior Ministers to hand-hold the new incumbents.

Amnesty not allowed to release Kashmir report

SRINAGAR
Authorities in Srinagar on Wednesday cancelled the permission granted earlier to Amnesty International to release its report on "misuse" of the Public Safety Act (PSA) in Kashmir. "The event was cancelled as the district administration denied permission," an Amnesty spokesman said here.

Pak. airspace won't be used for Modi's flight to SCO, says India

'He will fly via Oman, Iran and Central Asian countries'

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

India has clarified that Pakistan's airspace will not be used for the flight of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to reach Kyrgyz Republic.

The information came just before the Prime Minister issued a pre-departure comment that he would be holding several bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's summit in Bishkek.

"The government of India had explored two options for the route to be taken by the VVIP Aircraft to Bishkek. A decision has now been taken that the VVIP aircraft will fly via Oman, Iran and Central Asian countries on the way to Bishkek," said the official spokesperson to a query.

The *Hindu* had earlier reported that India had urged Pakistan to allow the aircraft to use the airspace of the country.

Subsequently, Pakistan had agreed to grant over-

India has actively participated in various SCO dialogue mechanisms since its full membership of SCO two years ago

The summit is expected to discuss the global security situation, multilateral economic cooperation, people-to-people exchanges and topical issues of international and regional importance. On the sidelines of the summit, I also plan to meet several leaders bilaterally

NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister



flight facility to the VVIP aircraft.

Pakistan had closed its airspace for all flights from India after the IAF carried out strikes in Balakot inside Pakistan on February 26. Diplomatic sources could not clarify when exactly Pakistan would lift the air blockade for Indian flights which is forcing airlines to take long detour for most of the West-bound flights.

No meet with Imran?

The route taken by Mr. Modi's aircraft has dampened the speculation of a possible meeting between the Indian leader and his Pakistan

counterpart Imran Khan. The SCO summit will be the first occasion where both the leaders will be seen together in a multilateral platform, after the weeks of high tension following the Pulwama terror attack and the Balakot air strike.

However, there is no indication of any such bilateral meeting though Mr. Modi announced ahead of his visit to Bishkek that he plans to "meet several leaders bilaterally".

The Ministry of External Affairs had informed that Mr. Modi would meet Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi

'Pak. airspace will be open'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan on Wednesday said it will "specially" open its airspace for the flight of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Bishkek.

Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan said the airspace will be opened as a "goodwill gesture".

Jinping on the sidelines of the summit but did not hint that a meeting with Mr. Khan was on the cards.

The flight of Mr. Modi which will be routed over the Arabian Sea and the airspace of Oman and Iran is expected to take eight to nine hours.

The duration indicates the extent of the problem that air connectivity between India and Central Asia has been experiencing since Pakistan blocked its airspace. The airlines from Central Asia have been taking up to four hours longer than normal travel duration since February 26.

Nirav Modi's bail rejected over fears he will abscond

Witnesses threatened, evidence tampered with: U.K. court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON

The U.K. High Court on Wednesday rejected Nirav Modi's bail application, his fourth attempt, as the diamond merchant fights his extradition from Britain to India in the nearly \$2 billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud and money laundering case.

In her judgment handed down at the Royal Courts of Justice in London, Justice Ingrid Simler concluded that there were "substantial grounds" to believe that the 48-year-old fugitive diamondaire would fail to surrender as he did possess the means to "abscond".

Reiterating similar concerns as those raised by the lower court in the U.K. during the previous bail hearings, judge Simler ruled that after considering all the material "carefully", she had found strong evidence to suggest there had been interference with witnesses and destruction of evidence and concluded it could still occur.

"The applicant has access to considerable financial resources, supported by an in-



Nirav Modi

creased [bail bond security] offer of £2 millions," the judge noted.

"It is difficult, in my judgment, to see how the U.K. is a safe haven as there is no case of him being tried here. There are still places in the world one can escape to, which are an even safer haven from the Indian investigating authorities," she said, countering his lawyers' assertion that he did not have any incentive to flee the U.K. as he saw it as a safe haven of justice.

'A serious case'

The judge stressed that while it was not for her to take a "definitive view" on the evidence, she had pro-

ceeded on the basis that the government of India had acted in good faith in what was "undoubtedly" a serious case and a "sophisticated international conspiracy" to defraud together with money laundering.

The judge concluded that it was "difficult to predict how Modi would react to developments in the extradition process, which raises a 'strong incentive' of failure to surrender before the U.K. courts to avoid returning to India."

"All 12 witnesses make similar allegations — they were threatened and kept in fear in all these circumstances, there is compelling evidence that the applicant [Modi] and those acting on his behalf have sought to interfere and destroy evidence," the judge said.

Modi, who was not produced before the court for the latest bail hearing, remains in custody at the Wandsworth prison in London and was due to appear for his next remand hearing at Westminster Magistrates' Court via videolink on June 27.

Two GRP personnel suspended for assaulting journalist in U.P.

SHO, constable had locked him up illegally

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh police on Wednesday suspended a GRP (Government Railway Police) station house officer and a constable in Shamli district for allegedly thrashing a journalist, locking him up illegally and urinating in his mouth.

The journalist, Amit Kumar Sharma, who works with Hindi news channel News 24, had gone to Dhimanpur in Shamli district to report on the derailment of a goods train when the incident took place.



The journalist being assaulted on Tuesday. **ANI**

Mr. Sharma said he was gathering footage when Shamli SHO Rakesh Kumar first threw his camera to the ground and then snatched his mobile phones. When queried on the reason for being targeted, Mr. Sharma claimed that the officer began beating him.

In a video clip that has gone viral on social media, the SHO's subordinates can also be seen assaulting the

journalist. Mr. Sharma said he was then taken to the police station and locked up. He alleged that the officer urinated in his mouth.

Taking cognisance of the footage, U.P. DGP O.P. Singh ordered the suspension of the SHO and constable Sanjay Pawar. Both were in plain clothes during the incident.

"Strict punishment shall be accorded to policemen misbehaving with citizens," Mr. Singh said.

Mr. Sharma alleged that the GRP had acted out of vendetta as he had recently covered a story exposing illegal vendor activity on trains plying between New Delhi and Saharanpur that was being run in collusion with GRP officials.

Prashant Kanojia released on bail

Five others remain in jail for posting 'objectionable remarks' against U.P. CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LUCKNOW

As journalist Prashant Kanojia was released on bail on Wednesday, the fate of five others — three journalists and two Gorakhpur residents — arrested for posting and sharing alleged objectionable remarks against Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath hung in balance.

The police are looking for one person each in Kannauj and Basti on similar charges.

With the Supreme Court breathing down the neck of the Uttar Pradesh government for putting Mr. Kanojia behind bars, the journalist was granted bail a day after the apex court order.

Mr. Kanojia was arrested for sharing a video about the



Let go: Prashant Kanojia addressing the media after being released from Lucknow jail on Wednesday. **PTI**

U.P. CM on his Twitter and Facebook accounts. According to the police, Mr. Kanojia's comments on social media had maligned the Chief Minister's image.

Officials said Ishika Singh, channel head of Nation Live,

and editor Anuj Shukla were arrested in Noida on June 8, two days after telecasting the controversial content "without verifying" its authenticity. The duo was remanded in judicial custody for 14 days. Nation Live editor Anshul

Kaushik was arrested in Noida on Monday night and sent to 14-day judicial custody on Tuesday on the same charges.

In a separate incident, a scrap dealer Peer Mohammad was arrested in Gorakhpur on Monday for allegedly making a fake "wedding card" of the U.P. Chief Minister go viral on social media.

In Gorakhpur itself, a nursing home manager, Ram Prakash, was put behind bars on Monday for allegedly making indecent remarks against Mr. Adityanath on social media.

Meanwhile, cases have been registered against two other persons on similar grounds, but they have not been arrested so far.

Woman sent to jail despite 1951 NRC link

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A 45-year-old woman was sent to a detention camp in Assam's Jorhat on Wednesday after being declared a non-citizen by a Foreigners' Tribunal (FT).

Members of her family said the tribunal rejected Dolly Roy's papers linking her to the 1951 National Register of Citizens as she had failed to turn up for three hearings before she was summoned to a Jorhat FT on Tuesday.

The tribunal also rejected the medical certificates that Ms. Roy produced to claim she could not attend the hearings because of illness, her son Sagar Roy said.

Will pursue Zakir Naik extradition: MEA

India files formal request with Malaysia, says country's judicial system is fair

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Stating that the fairness of the Indian justice system had never been in question, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Wednesday said the government had made a formal request for preacher Zakir Naik's extradition and would continue to pursue the matter with Malaysia.

The MEA statement came after Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad on Monday said the country reserved the right to disallow Naik's extradition to India if he was not going to be accorded justice.



Zakir Naik

In response to queries about Naik's extradition, the MEA spokesperson said: "India has extradition arrangements with many nations. In the past, there are numerous cases of successful extradition to India. The fairness of the Indian justice

system has never been in question. The Government of India has made a formal request for the extradition of Zakir Naik. We would continue to pursue the matter with Malaysia."

Sirul's case

As reported by *The Star*, a Malaysian daily, Dr. Mohamad said the situation was the same with Australia not sending Sirul Azhar Umar back to Malaysia. Umar, a former bodyguard, was sentenced to death in 2015 for the murder of a Mongolian model. "We requested Australia to extradite Sirul and they are afraid we are going

to send him to the gallows," Dr. Mohamad was quoted as saying.

He said Naik "in general feels that he is not going to get a fair trial [in India]."

The Enforcement Directorate, which is probing money laundering charges against Naik, is preparing to secure a non-bailable warrant against him on June 19. The court has already taken cognisance of a chargesheet filed in the case.

Based on the warrant, the Directorate can request Interpol to issue a Red Notice and also approach the Malaysian authorities seeking Naik's extradition.

Sitharaman and Jaishankar to get JNU's Distinguished Alumni Award

'Their achievements have made the university very proud'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Jawaharlal Nehru University on Wednesday said it would confer its Distinguished Alumni Award on Union Ministers Nirmala Sitharaman and Subrahmanyan Jaishankar.

The award will be presented at JNU's third convocation to be held in August.

"The Executive Council of the JNU approved a proposal to bestow the award on Finance Minister Ms. Sitharaman and



Nirmala Sitharaman and S. Jaishankar



External Affairs Minister Mr. Jaishankar, during the third convocation of the university to be held in August this year," registrar Pramod Kumar said in a statement.

"Their highly distinguished career and achievements have made the university very proud and they are a great source of inspiration for JNU students

and researchers. They will be the first recipients of the Distinguished Alumni Award," Mr. Kumar added.

Ms. Sitharaman completed her M.A and M. Phil degrees from the School of Social Sciences and School of International Studies respectively. Mr. Jaishankar completed his M.Phil and doctoral research in the School of International Studies, where he specialised in nuclear diplomacy, the university said.

Simmering unrest A cross-section of people in the autonomous territory of Hong Kong are protesting against a controversial extradition Bill that would allow suspects to be sent to mainland China**The Bill**

The government is pushing a Bill through its legislature to allow extradition of alleged criminals to jurisdictions with which Hong Kong does not already have a treaty, including mainland China.

The government says such a law is needed to plug existing loopholes and prevent Hong Kong from becoming a haven for fugitives.

Those accused of offences punishable by seven years or more in prison could be extradited. The power to take such an action would be with the territory's Chief Executive.

The immediate trigger

The Hong Kong government says the killing last year of a Hong Kong woman in Taiwan, allegedly by her boyfriend, hastened the move towards the drafting of the Bill.

The Hong Kong-based boyfriend cannot be tried in Taiwan as the territory does not have an extradition request with the country.

Relations with China

Under the 1997 handover agreement with Britain, China has agreed to a 50-year deal under which the territory is able to retain key liberties, such as freedom of speech and independent judiciary, not available in mainland China.

There are accusations Beijing is renegeing on that deal.

The only responsible thing to do now is for Carrie Lam to withdraw the evil bill, or at least to shelve it in order to solve the crisis

FERNANDO CHEUNG,
Pro-democracy lawmaker

What happens next?
Chief Executive Carrie Lam has shown no signs of backing down, refusing calls to shelve the Bill.

A vote was expected on June 20. But on Wednesday, in the face of the fresh protests, the city's legislature announced that it would delay a lengthy final debate.

The objection

China's opaque and politicised courts, where conviction rate is said to be as high as 99%, are a cause for major concern.

Many Hong Kongers fear that the law will be used to target Beijing's political opponents.

Above all, they fear an erosion of the 'one country, two systems' policy under which the sovereignty of Hong Kong was handed over by the U.K. to China in 1997.

**Violence erupts at Hong Kong protest**

Opposition to extradition Bill triggered unrest; police fire tear gas, rubber bullets at crowd

REUTERS
HONG KONG

Hong Kong police fired rubber bullets and tear gas at demonstrators, who threw plastic bottles, on Wednesday as protests against an extradition Bill that would allow people to be sent to mainland China for trial descended into violent chaos.

Tens of thousands of protesters had gathered peacefully outside the Chinese-ruled city's legislature before tempers flared, some charging police with umbrellas. Police warned them back, saying: "We will use force."



Police action: Protesters outside the Hong Kong government's office disperse after tear gas was fired on Wednesday. • AFP

10 wounded

Ambulances sped towards the protest area as panic spread through the crowd, with many people trying to flee the stinging tear gas, according to a witness. More than 10 people were wounded in the clashes, Cable TV reported.

Police used pepper spray, tear gas and batons to force the crowds back.

Civil Human Rights Front, which organised a protest on Sunday that it estimated saw more than a million people take to the streets in protest against the extradition Bill, accused police of using un-

necessary violence. The violence had died down by early evening under light rain, but tens of thousands still jammed the streets in and around Lung Wo Road, a main east-west artery near the offices of embattled Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam.

Opposition to the Bill on Sunday triggered Hong Kong's biggest political demonstration since its handover from British to Chinese rule in 1997 under a "one country, two systems" deal guaranteeing it special autonomy, including freedom of assembly, free press and independent judiciary.

China's meddling

But many accuse China of extensive meddling since, including obstruction of democratic reforms, interference with local elections and of being behind the disappearance of five Hong Kong-based booksellers, starting in 2015, who specialised in works critical of Chinese leaders.

Ms. Lam has vowed to press ahead with the legislation despite deep concerns in the Asian financial hub, including among business leaders, that it could under-

mine those freedoms and investor confidence and erode the city's competitive advantages.

In a brief evening televised address, Ms. Lam "strongly condemned" the violence and urged the city to return to normal as soon as possible.

In a separate interview recorded earlier on Wednesday before the worst of the violence, she repeatedly stood by the introduction of the Bill, and said the time was right for it to be debated. "I have never had any guilty conscience because of this matter, I just said the initial intention of our work is still firmly right."

The government said debate on the Bill that was due to take place in the city's 70-seat Legislative Council on Wednesday would be delayed until further notice. The legislature is controlled by a pro-Beijing majority.

'Easter suspects were funded by Rajapaksa-era intelligence unit'

Ex-Governor says the wing worked closely with the NTJ

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

A former Governor and prominent Muslim politician has accused the Rajapaksa government of being complicit while its military intelligence unit "worked closely" with the National Thowheeth Jamaath (NTJ), the radical Islamist organisation behind the Easter bombings.

Azath Salley was one of the two Muslim Governors who stepped down from office earlier this month, following a fasting Buddhist monk's demand that they resign over alleged links with Easter suspects. They have denied the accusation.

Testimony to PSC

Testifying before a Parliament Select Committee (PSC) probing the terror attacks, Mr. Salley said on Tuesday that he had informed top authorities in government about the activities of extremist elements several times. Further, he claimed that the Defence Ministry of the previous Rajapaksa administration had been funding the NTJ for some years now.

Following the April 21 attacks, some reports speculated that military intelligence under the Rajapaksa



Former Governor Azath Salley. • TWITTER

government had paid the NTJ and the Bodu Bala Sena (Buddhist Power Force), a hard-line group that has in the past been accused of instigating anti-Muslim violence. So far, investigators have not shared any evidence or documentation to substantiate the claim.

"Dr. Rajitha Senarathne [one of the members of the PSC] asked me if Easter blasts mastermind Zahran Hashim was among the Islamist radicals said to have been funded by military intelligence. I told the panel that I didn't know about Zahran, but reports say Abdul Razik was among those paid," he told *The Hindu* on Wednesday.

Mr. Salley was referring to R. Abdul Razik, a prominent member of the Ceylon Tha-

wheed Jamaath, a splinter group of the Sri Lanka Thowheeth Jamaath (SLTJ).

The PSC held its fourth sitting on Tuesday, amid escalating tensions between the executive and the legislature. President Maithripala Sirisena wanted the Speaker to scrap the PSC, on the grounds that it could hinder court proceedings on the Easter attacks.

Sirisena's concerns

In an emergency Cabinet meeting last week, Mr. Sirisena also raised concern over security officials providing evidence to the parliamentary panel in front of the media. Further, he sacked Chief of National Intelligence Sisira Mendis, who testified to the inquiry that the Easter attacks could have been averted.

The suspended Inspector General of Police and former Defence Secretary too told the committee that prior intelligence on the attacks had been available, pointing to serious lapses in acting on intelligence. As tensions appear to escalate between the President and Parliament — with the Speaker and PSC firmly backing its proceedings — President Sirisena cancelled the weekly Cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

More than 400 arrested at Russia rally

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MOSCOW

More than 400 people, including Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny, were detained in Moscow on Wednesday, a monitor said, as authorities sought to break up a rally urging police reform after the framing of a

journalist on drugs charges.

Many Russians had hoped to harness the widespread outrage over last week's arrest of respected reporter Ivan Golunov on trumped-up drugs charges to press for genuine reform of Russia's tainted law enforcement and justice systems.

But a much smaller crowd of protesters had turned up in central Moscow on Russia Day. OVD Info, which tracks arrests, said more than 400 people were detained.

Moscow police said earlier around 1,200 took part in the march and more than 200 people were arrested.

ELSEWHERE**Macron promises to send Trump a new tree**

PARIS
French President Emmanuel Macron promised to send a new oak to President Donald Trump after the tree he gave him during last year's state visit to the U.S. died. Mr. Macron said the death of the tree shouldn't be read as an indication of the up-and-down relationship between the two countries. • AP

U.S. President to meet Putin at G20 in Japan

WASHINGTON
President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that he would meet his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Japan later this month. He had said last month that he would meet with Mr. Putin, but the Kremlin indicated that there was no agreement on a bilateral meeting. • AFP

South Asia budget of U.S. is set to fall

Allocation for India to be raised and for Pakistan to be rationalised, says official

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

The U.S.'s top South Asia diplomat will testify on Thursday before the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) in a hearing on "U.S. Interest in South Asia and FY 2020 Budget".

The budget request for India will be increased and those for Afghanistan and Pakistan will be "rationalized" as per the statement Alice Wells, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia, will make. A copy of the statement was released by the HFAC.

The overall budget request of \$1.07 billion is 16% below the FY2019 request.

The annual exercise formally articulates the budget request to Congress but also, in reality, is a forum to discuss foreign policy in the region.

Ms. Wells will testify that the budget request for India



Alice Wells, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia. • THE HINDU

"reflects its pre-eminent role in the Administration's Indo-Pacific vision and our two countries' commitment to shared principles and values".

Coherent India policy

The Trump administration and the HFAC are not in agreement on how foreign policy in South Asia is being conducted. Significantly, a group of House Democrats had written to President Donald Trump in mid-May highlighting the fact that the State Department did not

have an Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia and said the Department had failed to come up with a "coherent" India policy (Ms. Wells is currently running the department in an acting capacity).

The statement talks about the growing bilateral trade with India, a deepening defence relationship but notes the challenges. The U.S. is looking to India to take stronger action on crimes based on religion — and this is expected to contribute to a stronger relationship.

"We look to India's democratically elected leaders and institutions to swiftly condemn acts of violence on the basis of religion and hold perpetrators accountable. This will help further India's security and economic interests and strengthen our bilateral relationship," the statement reads. "We took note of PM [Narendra] Modi's comments following his

re-election highlighting his government's commitment to inclusiveness..."

The statement also refers to market access issues and tariff and non-tariff barriers being "longstanding concerns".

Smaller budget

The State Department will make a smaller budget request for Afghanistan. Ms. Wells will testify that the U.S. is decreasing the size of its portfolio and calling for funds from other donors, such as the EU and the World Bank.

"The smaller request for FY 2020 for Afghanistan anticipates this more focused portfolio; however, significant prior year resources in the pipeline will allow us to avoid program disruptions as we transition to a smaller portfolio and have flexibility to respond to a political settlement," the statement reads.

China launches Internet 'clean-up' campaign

It will punish sites for 'illicit actions'

REUTERS
BEIJING

China has launched a campaign to clean up its Internet, state media said on Wednesday, amid a fresh wave of apparent censorship. Authorities have, in recent days, blocked more foreign media websites and shut down domestic accounts on social media.

The "rectification" effort was launched in May by the cyberspace administration, the Information Technology Ministry, the public security bureau and the markets regulator and will run until the end of the year, the official Xinhua news agency said.

The campaign will punish and expose websites for "illegal and criminal actions", failing to "fulfil their obligation" to take safety mea-

sures or the theft of personal information, it added. The campaign follows a series of shutdowns and blockages of certain websites and social media accounts.

Several foreign media beyond Beijing's control, such as *The Washington Post* and *The Guardian*, have not been accessible online since last weekend, adding to a list of blocked sites.

Online Chinese financial news publication Wallstreetcn.com said on Monday it took its website and mobile app offline at the authorities' request, but gave no details of the rules it may have broken.

Social media accounts ranging from those publishing politically sensitive material to financial news have also been shut.

Johnson begins leadership bid

No-deal Brexit will be a last resort, says the frontrunner

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Boris Johnson said on Wednesday that he would only take Britain out of the European Union (EU) without a deal as a "last resort", launching his campaign to be Prime Minister with a promise to unify a country deeply divided over Brexit.

Mr. Johnson is the favourite among the 10 candidates vying to succeed Theresa May. At a launch event in London packed with senior members of the ruling Conservative party, Mr. Johnson insisted that Brexit must happen on October 31.

He said Britain must prepare to leave with no new arrangements if need be, but softened his previous rhetoric, suggesting that this was "a last resort, not something that anybody desires".

However, Mr. Johnson of-



Boris Johnson. • AFP

ferred no details of how to break the deadlock in Parliament that prevented Ms. May from getting her deal through. He said a new government with "new optimism" and "total conviction about the way forward" could find a way.

The EU has insisted repeatedly that it will not renegotiate the terms of the divorce, while Parliament has voted against leaving without an accord. On Wednes-

day, a cross-party group of lawmakers made a fresh bid to block such a scenario.

Hammond's warning

Finance Minister Philip Hammond warned Mr. Johnson and other leadership rivals not to make promises on Brexit they could not keep.

In his speech, Mr. Johnson skipped over an underwhelming two-year stint as Foreign Secretary and instead drew on his eight years as Mayor of London, which he said gave him the experience to govern.

Conservative lawmakers will hold the first of a series of secret ballots on Thursday on the leadership candidates. They will whittle down the field to two by June 20, and that pair will then be put to a ballot of around 1,60,000 Conservative Party members.

MARKET WATCH

	12-06-2019	% CHANGE
Sensex	39,757	-0.48
US Dollar	69.34	0.14
Gold	33,570	0.6
Brent oil	60.75	-2.36

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	424.95	-1.35
Asian Paints	1425.45	-0.05
Axis Bank	813.55	-1.25
Bajaj Auto	2944.50	-42.65
Bajaj Finserv	8245.60	-25.05
Bajaj Finance	3505.85	-46.00
Bharti Airtel	359.90	-3.35
BPCL	381.00	-6.00
Britannia Ind	2996.90	16.60
Cipla	561.60	1.75
Coal India	257.00	-1.75
Dr Reddys Lab	2589.70	-16.15
Eicher Motors	20105.95	26.05
GAIL (India)	310.10	-4.00
Grasim Ind	888.30	-1.80
HCL Tech	1108.10	0.20
HDFC	2181.95	-7.90
HDFC Bank	2427.05	-21.35
Hero MotoCorp	2728.05	-48.10
Hindalco	199.30	-0.30
Hind Unilever	1847.10	7.30
Indiabulls HFL	621.05	-53.50
ICICI Bank	418.00	-3.35
Indusind Bank	1569.85	-20.75
Bharti Infratel	273.25	-9.90
Infosys	753.80	-1.10
Indian Oil Corp	162.55	0.05
ITC	279.95	0.10
JSW Steel	271.25	-2.10
Kotak Bank	1483.50	-24.20
L&T	1509.25	-15.05
M&M	632.20	-4.65
Maurti Suzuki	6852.00	-126.30
NTPC	134.40	-0.90
ONGC	170.85	1.60
PowerGrid Corp	191.15	-2.50
Reliance Ind	1332.15	3.00
State Bank	344.00	-3.10
Sun Pharma	391.40	1.45
Tata Motors	169.05	-1.70
Tata Steel	505.85	13.35
TCS	2260.90	8.10
Tech Mahindra	747.95	-14.15
Titan	1288.85	3.90
UltraTech Cement	4569.10	-15.65
UPL	1020.75	-13.75
Vedanta	170.10	0.75
Wipro	298.00	0.30
YES Bank	134.75	-4.80
Zee Entertainment	342.85	-3.35

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on June 12

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	69.14	69.46
Euro	78.29	78.65
British Pound	88.14	88.56
Japanese Yen (100)	63.80	64.10
Chinese Yuan	9.99	10.04
Swiss Franc	69.58	69.91
Singapore Dollar	50.68	50.92
Canadian Dollar	51.99	52.23
Malaysian Ringgit	16.62	16.72

Source: Indian Bank

Debt downgrades at a record high

Mutual funds have large exposure to such instruments thereby impacting NAVs

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR
MUMBAI

The recent downgrades of debt papers of well-known conglomerates are not isolated instances as the current year has seen a record in terms of the number of such downgrades of debt instruments.

Data from Prime Database shows there have already been 163 instances of such downgrades in the current year till date, which is more than twice compared to last year when 61 instances of downgrades were witnessed.

Some of the well known corporates whose debt papers have been downgraded in 2019 by rating agencies include Yes Bank, Wockhardt, Diligent Media Corp, Eveready Industries, Jet Airways and Peninsula Land apart from the prominent ones

Cause for concern

There have already been 163 instances of such downgrades in the current year till date, which is more than twice of last year

Year	Upgrades	Downgrades
2015	36	16
2016	29	14
2017	20	17
2018	105	61
2019	87	163

SOURCE: PRIME DATABASE



like Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group entities, Essel Group and the most recent instance of Dewan Housing Finance.

To be sure, the data has taken into account all kinds of downgrades and does not limit only to a downgrade to default rating.

Interestingly, the rise in the number of downgrades in 2019 has come with a cor-

responding fall in instances of upgrades, which was not the norm last year.

Rating upgrade

This year, there have been 87 instances of rating upgrade, lower than last year when over 100 debt securities saw an upgrade. "There has been a large number of downgrades in the recent months," said

R. Sivakumar, head, fixed income, Axis Mutual Fund. "It looks like we are still seeing the fallout of the IL&FS matter and so the market is quite cautious right now," he added. From an investor perspective, the increasing downgrades are a cause for concern as mutual funds have a large exposure towards such instruments and large instances of downgrades affect portfolio selection and thereafter the net asset value of the scheme.

"Till a few months back the spread between a AA and AAA rated instrument had dipped to 50 basis points, which was quite lower than the historical average. While currently it is around 150 basis points, the challenge is downgrades have increased thereby pushing up the risk curve," said Mr. Sivakumar.

IDBI Bank cuts MCLR by 5-10 bps across various tenors

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC)-owned IDBI Bank on Wednesday reduced its marginal cost of funds based lending rate (MCLR) by 5-10 basis points across various tenors, with immediate effect.

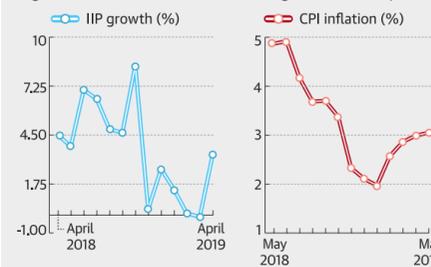
The lender has reduced its one-year MCLR or the minimum lending rate to 8.95%.

The one-year MCLR is the benchmark against which most customer loans such as auto, personal and home loans are priced.

New overnight, one-month, six-month rates are 7.90%, 8.15% and 8.60% respectively, the bank said in a release.

A picture in contrast

Industrial activity rebounded in April 2019 to a six-month high while retail inflation rose on a slight rise in food prices



SOURCE: CMIE

Industrial growth recovers, CPI inflation up

Food prices show slight increase

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Industrial activity rebounded in April 2019 to grow to a six-month high of 3.4%, driven by a turnaround across all the sectors measured, according to official data released on Wednesday.

Separate data release showed retail inflation in May 2019 accelerated marginally to 3.05% driven by a slight rise in food price inflation.

Growth in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) returned to positive territory in April following a contraction of 0.1% in March. Within the index, growth in the manufacturing sector stood at 2.8% in April compared with a contraction of 0.4% in the previous month. Mining sector saw growth accelerating to 5.1% from 0.8% over the same period.

"The recovery in the IIP is mostly due to the fact that with the new financial year having started, the government might have been able to spend through the approvals of the interim budget," D.K. Srivastava, chief policy advisor, EY India, said. "Those decisions that were postponed would have been

taken up and so, that would have spurred demand. If you look, most of this growth would have been due to public expenditure."

Election spending

"In April and May, the election spending would have also spurred demand," Mr. Srivastava added. "And in the first few months of the new financial year, there will likely be front-loading of government expenditure, and so, this growth could continue for about three months.

Retail inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) quickened to a seven-month high of 3.05% in May 2019, up marginally from the 2.99% registered in the previous month. Within the index, inflation in the 'food and beverages' segment accelerated to 2.03% from 1.38% over the same period. The fuel and light segment, however, saw inflation easing somewhat to 2.48% in May from 2.56% in the previous month. 'Pan, tobacco, and other intoxicants' and the 'clothing and footwear' segments, saw inflation easing marginally in May.

Jalan panel report on RBI reserves by June end

Bank has ₹9.6 lakh cr. surplus capital

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Bimal Jalan committee, which is looking into the size of capital reserves that the RBI should hold, will have one more meeting before finalising its report to be submitted to the apex bank by the month-end.

The six-member panel, under former RBI Governor Jalan was appointed on December 26, 2018, to review the economic capital framework (ECF) for the Reserve Bank after the Finance Ministry wanted the RBI to follow global best practices and transfer more surplus to the government.

The RBI has over ₹9.6 lakh crore surplus capital

with it.

"The ECF panel will meet one more time and will submit the report by month-end," an official told reporters here after the meeting.

The ECF panel was mandated to submit its report to the RBI within 90 days of its first meeting which took place on January 8. Following this, the panel was given a three-month extension.

Asked about the reason for delay in finalisation of the report, the official said, "There may be differences of opinion, but that is being discussed". Other members include Rakesh Mohan, former Deputy Governor of RBI and Finance Secretary Subhash Chandra Garg.

Stock exchanges to impose trading restrictions on Jet shares

'Firm couldn't provide prompt response on various rumours'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Stock exchanges will impose restrictions on trading in Jet Airways shares from June 28 as part of preventive surveillance measures to curb excessive volatility, according to a circular. Jet Airways suspended operations in April and lenders are working on ways to revive the airline.



5% price band."

Trade for Trade

In a circular, NSE said shares of the company would be shifted from "Rolling Segment to Trade for Trade Segment, wherein the settlement in the scrip will take place on gross basis with 100% upfront margin and

provide prompt responses to queries of exchanges regarding various rumours. The responses received "are not clear and satisfactory," it added. Also, the company is not in a position to consider and approve audited financial results for the year ended March 2019 and there are also observations made by the airline's auditor. "There are concerns with regard to continuity of flow of information about the company which is very vital for the appropriate price discovery in the scrip. Hence, trading in the scrip may not reflect the actual status of the company," the circular said.

According to the circular, the company has failed to

NMDC halts iron ore production at all its mines except Kumaraswamy

Protest by tribals brings production to halt in Chhattisgarh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
HYDERABAD

Barring Kumaraswamy Mines in Karnataka, production of iron ore by NMDC came to a standstill as the state-owned company halted production at Bailadilla Range in Dantewada in Chhattisgarh also due to protest by tribals.

The miner is losing 70,000 tonnes of iron ore production from Chhattisgarh and already losing 0.5 million tonnes per month from Donimalai mines in Karnataka since November last year, official sources said.

Earlier, NMDC suspended iron ore-mining from its Donimalai mine following the state government's decision to impose 80% premium on the ore sales from that mine in November 2018. Lately, the miner suspended pro-



Big blow: There is a production loss of about 70,000 tonnes of iron ore per day due to the tribal unrest in Chhattisgarh.

duction at Bailadilla Complex consisting of Bachel and Kirandul mining blocks in Chhattisgarh following the agitation by tribal groups against the iron ore mining on hills in the Deposit No.13, official sources said.

"There is a production loss of about 70,000 tonnes of iron ore per day due to tribal unrest at Bailadilla Range

in Dantewada in Chhattisgarh. The mining was suspended in Bachel mines since June 11 while it was stopped at Kirandul mines from June 7," the sources told PTI. Thousands of tribals, under the banner of Sanyukt Panchayat Samiti, resorted to protest against iron ore mining on hills in deposit no. 13 since June 7.

Reckitt picks PepsiCo exec as CEO

REUTERS

Consumer goods group Reckitt Benckiser has picked PepsiCo executive Laxman Narasimhan as its next chief executive, becoming the latest industry heavyweight to turn to a company outsider to tackle faltering growth and new media-savvy rivals.

Mr. Narasimhan, PepsiCo's global chief commercial officer, is the first external candidate to be appointed as CEO at Reckitt ever since it was formed in 1999. The 52-year-old takes over as CEO on Sept. 1, replacing Rakesh Kapoor, 60, who has led Reckitt for more than eight years and said in January he would retire this year.

Analysts welcomed the appointment, saying the new CEO would inject a fresh perspective to a company facing industrywide challenges to growth.

Easy money can't revive economy: SBI report

'More direct and quicker fiscal measures required to push sagging growth'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

State Bank economists have opined that an easy monetary policy will be ineffective to push the sagging growth engine and that what is needed is more direct and quicker fiscal measures.

The financial system is "in need for some serious repair" and the government should use the forthcoming budget for the same.

"... an easy monetary policy with a reasonable tight fiscal deficit will be ineffective in addressing the existing demand slowdown," they said in a note on Wednesday.

Support from the monetary policy – the RBI cut its key rates for the third time in 2019 and also changed the policy stance to accommodative last week to a nine-year low – is most welcome,



Policy support: RBI changing policy stance to accommodative last week is most welcome, the report said. *PAUL NORONHA

the report said, underlining the need for help on the fiscal front.

"We believe fiscal channel is more direct and quicker and financial system is in need of some serious repair," the report said, adding "the government would do better with reasonable fiscal deficit assumptions and should be very clear of the fiscal conso-

lidation path."

Plummeting growth

Growth plummeted to a nearly five-year low at 5.8% for the March quarter, pulling down the full-year GDP for FY19 to a low 6.8%.

Questions have also been asked about the growth numbers by Former Chief Economic Advisor Arvind

Subramaniam, who said the growth numbers during the Modi government's first innings till FY17 had been inflated by a whopping 2.5 percentage points.

All eyes are on the budget as regards the policies which the new government may adopt.

The ongoing crisis in the non-banking finance companies, which constitute up to a fifth of the overall lending in the economy, according to some watchers, needs immediate attention to revive the fortunes of the financial system, it said.

The note warned there were some "limiting factors" like the Food Corporation's massive borrowings from the National Small Savings Funds, which is already in excess of ₹2 lakh crore or 1 percent of GDP.

IN BRIEF

**Honda Motorcycle unveils BS VI Activa**

NEW DELHI
Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India on Wednesday unveiled its first BS VI-compliant two-wheeler — Activa 125 BSVI — ahead of the April 2020 deadline. "With the unveiling of new Activa 125 BSVI, Honda will begin this transition to BSVI emission norms," Minoru Kato, president and CEO, Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India said. The new scooter will be 10-15% more expensive than the BS IV version.

CavinKare unveils milkshake variant

CHENNAI
CavinKare has unveiled Cavin's Milkshake Lite with no added sugar to further strengthen its market share in the dairy segment. The ready-to-serve drink comes in three flavours — vanilla, strawberry and chocolate — in a 180ml tetra pack that is priced at ₹40 a piece. With this launch, we are aiming at a 3%-5% increase in our market share and further strengthen market position," said B.P. Ravindran, business head — beverages and dairy.

Canon India eyes 25% of inkjet printer market

NEW DELHI
Canon India is targeting a 25% market share of the inkjet printer market in India, which is pegged at about 1.8 million units, this year. "India is one of the fastest growing inkjet business for Canon, especially among emerging markets...in future, given the size of population and GDP rise, we see opportunities in the Indian market," Tamaki Hashimoto, group executive of consumer inkjet group and executive officer, Canon Inc., told *The Hindu*.

Wipro foresees tough challenges

Failure to develop new services, enhance existing ones will take a toll on business, says tech major

MINI TEJASWI
BENGALURU

Tech major Wipro anticipates tough challenges in the global marketplace that witnesses rapid technological changes and changing client preferences.

The company said its future success would depend on its ability to anticipate challenges in advance, enhance its existing service offerings and develop new product and offerings to meet changing client requirements.

Stressing the importance of cost management, it said any failure to cope with the evolving IT environment, particularly Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, cloud computing, etc., could have an adverse effect on the company.

"Our business will suffer if



Future tense: Failure to quickly respond to market changes may render its services obsolete, Wipro felt. ■G.R.N. SOMASHEKAR

we fail to anticipate and develop new services and enhance existing services in order to keep pace with rapid changes in technology and the industries on which we focus," the tech major said in its annual report.

The company said it would be unsuccessful in stimulating customer demand for new and upgraded products, or seamlessly managing new product introductions or transitions, if it failed to quickly respond to

market changes. Under such a situation, products, services or technologies that are developed by competitors may render its services non-competitive or obsolete, stated the company.

Elaborating on possible risk factors, the company in its stock market filing said, "Our failure to address the demands of the rapidly evolving information technology environment, particularly with respect to digital technology, the Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, cloud computing, storage, mobility and applications, analytics, augmented reality, automation, blockchain and quantum computing could have a material adverse effect on our business, results of operations and financial condition."

On cost cutting, Wipro said its cost management strategies would include maintaining appropriate alignment between the demand for services and resource capacity, optimising the costs of service delivery through automation and deployment of tools, and effectively leveraging its sales, marketing and general and administrative costs (SG&A).

\$330 mn on expansion

The tech major invested \$329.4 million towards purchase of property, plant and equipment during fiscal ended March 31.

Additionally, the company had contractual commitments of \$179.9 million related to capital expenditures on construction or expansion of its software development and other facilities.

PWC quits as auditor of two Anil Ambani firms

Not okay with response on observations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Anil Ambani-led Reliance Capital and Reliance Home Finance on Wednesday said Price Waterhouse & Co. (PWC) has resigned as statutory auditor of both the companies.

PWC has put in its resignation, with effect from June 11, 2019, citing unsatisfactory response to "certain observations" made by it as a part of the ongoing audit for fiscal 2018-19, the two companies said in their respective regulatory filings to stock exchanges.

Firms don't agree

Both Reliance Capital and Reliance Home Finance said they do "not agree with the reasons given by PWC".

While the board of direc-



Anil Ambani

tors of Reliance Capital has noted and accepted the resignation, Reliance Home Finance said its audit committee and board will meet on Thursday and decide upon the new auditor. PWC also stated that the companies said that they might initiate appropriate legal proceedings against the firm, according to the filings.

Indian Bank to focus on strong growth, profitability in FY20

Eyes increasing CASA deposits, fee income

N. ANAND
CHENNAI

Indian Bank will strive for strong growth this fiscal with focus on profitability, according to its managing director and CEO Padmaja Chunduru.

"The prime focus this year will be on increasing the current and savings deposits (CASA) and fee income, accelerating recovery in respect of impaired assets and containing the level of non-performing assets (NPA)," Ms. Chunduru said in her message to the shareholders.

"The growth in business should culminate in improv-



Padmaja Chunduru

ing the bottom line of the bank," she added.

During the current fiscal, the bank would strive for a healthy growth across corporate and retail, agriculture and MSME (RAM) segments. In FY19, the RAM sector con-

stituted 58% and corporate 42%. Plans were on to set up corporate branches for handling exclusive large borrower accounts with exposure of ₹50 crore or more at select metro centres to improve quality credit dispensation and bottom line, she said.

Going forward, focus would be on forging partnerships viz. co-origination of loans in collaboration with NBFCs, tying up with builders/vehicle dealers and tractor manufacturers and exploring cross-sell options through tie-ups with insurance companies for sale of Bancassurance products in life and non-life, she said.

'L&T offer price fair, reasonable'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The independent directors' committee (IDC), set up by tech firm Mindtree, has deemed Larsen & Toubro's (L&T) open offer as "fair and reasonable."

The IDC said the offer price of ₹980 was in accordance with regulations under Securities and Exchange Board of India (Substantial Acquisition of Shares and Takeovers Regulations, 2011), as per a filing.

The IDC said, considering the market prices for equity shares on June 10 in BSE and NSE were at ₹974 and ₹975 respectively, the offer price of ₹980 was fair and reasonable.

Blue Star eyes 10% market share in home water purifiers

Rolls out 34 models; to spend ₹30 crore on marketing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Blue Star Ltd. has drawn up plans to capture about 10% market share in residential water purifier segment by 2020-21 and enter the commercial water purifier segment soon, said a top official.

"We entered into residential water purifier segment during October 2016. We are aiming for 5%-6% market share this fiscal and double it by FY21," said B. Thiagarajan, managing director, Blue Star Ltd.

As per the plan, Blue Star would invest about ₹30 crore in advertising and



B. Thiagarajan

2016, the firm had sold 70,000 units and now it plans to sell 1.20 lakh units in FY20.

Various price points

For this, the company launched 34 new models, including variants that enrich water with essential minerals. It covers various price points starting from ₹7,900 to ₹9,900 in the ultra violet (UV) range.

According to Mr. Thiagarajan, the electric residential water purifier market was pegged at around ₹5,000 crore with a compounded annual growth rate of 8%-9%.

sales promotion in FY20, increase the number of stores to 5,000, raise the number of store sales representatives to 1,000 and service franchisees to 500.

Starting from October

Who will blink first — Indians or Kiwis?

It's a toss-up between Karthik and Vijay Shankar for the No. 4 slot; first big test for New Zealand



Intense focus: Virat Kohli has a batting stint at the nets under the watchful eyes of coach Ravi Shastri ahead of the Kiwi clash. • AP



K.C. VIJAYA KUMAR
NOTTINGHAM

The centre-square here at Trent Bridge was layered with multiple sheets on Wednesday. The ground staff scurried around, extending the covers, keeping an eye on the feathery rain that oscillated between persistence and the long pause. During one such break, the Indian team trained, not full-tilt but a gingerly trot.

The forecast hints at a few showers during Thursday's World Cup match featuring Virat Kohli's men and New Zealand. Ambiguity is linked only to the weather, while thankfully the other realm of confusion centred around Shikhar Dhawan was effectively dismantled. Batting coach Sanjay Bangar said that a final decision on Dhawan's availability would be taken only after 12 days and that rules out the injured opener with a bruised left-thumb from India's next set of four games.

The team-management is hoping that the southpaw would be fit in time for the big clash against England on June 30. As a consequence, K.L. Rahul will pair up with Rohit Sharma atop the order and, in the middle, either Dinesh Karthik or Vijay Shan-

kar would step in. Both had a long strike at the nets, only against throw-downs, as the outfield was deemed too soft for the regular bowlers to pound their feet.

In good shape

Except for the bad news about Dhawan, India is in good shape, having won against South Africa and Australia. Most of its cogs moved in unison and, with the skies remaining damp, it remains to be seen if Kohli will prefer speedster Mohammed Shami over spinner Kuldeep Yadav.

The venue is Stuart Broad's home ground and is known for a fair bit of bounce, though in recent times, especially in ODIs, the turf has gifted a bounty of runs — England scored 481 for

six against Australia last June.

India will be wary of New Zealand and Kane Williamson's men are known to punch above their weight in ICC tournaments. The Kiwis step in after registering three wins against Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. The fast bowlers, especially Lockie Ferguson and James Neesham, have been among the wickets and more importantly, in the warm-up joust against India at the Oval on May 25, New Zealand rode on the exploits of seamers Trent Boult and Neesham to skittle out the Men in Blue for 179. New Zealand won the game by six wickets.

It would be a bit extreme to invest meaning into a practice skirmish which largely served as an exploratory exercise for teams to finalise

India vs New Zealand - a World Cup timeline

1975, MANCHESTER

Abid Ali's rearguard, in the company of the tail, took India to 230 in 60 overs. But Glenn Turner (114 not out) took the Kiwis over the line with four wickets and seven balls remaining

1979, LEEDS

Asked to take strike, the Indian batsmen never got going and were bundled out for 182. With openers John Wright and Bruce Edgar adding 100, New Zealand breezed home in 57 overs, losing just two along the way

1987, BENGALURU

Tottering at 21 for three, Sidhu (75) re-erected the innings. Cameos from Kapil 72* (58b) and More 42* (26 balls) powered India to 252. Though Rutherford (75) and Jones (64) threatened to take it away, Maninder and Shastri bowled India to a 16-run win

1987, NAGPUR

Needing to win big to avoid playing Pakistan in the semifinal in Lahore, India found heroes in Chetan Sharma, who performed the first hat-trick in the World Cup and the first by an Indian in ODIs. Gavaskar then slammed his only ODI ton (103 n.o. 88b, 10x4, 3x6) as he and Srikanth (75) ensured the hosts cruised home in 32.1 overs, losing just one wicket



1992, DUNEDIN

India stuttered to 230, riding on the shoulders of Tendulkar (84) and Azharuddin (55). Crowe's brilliant move - having Greatbatch go full throttle in the first 15 overs - worked as the opener smashed 73 off 77 balls. The ice-cool Jones, with an undefeated 67, took the hosts home with four wickets and 17 deliveries remaining



1999, NOTTINGHAM

Deciding to bat first, riding on Ajay Jadeja's 76 India made 251. Then Matt Horne (74) and Roger Twose (60 not out) piloted the Kiwis to victory with five wickets to spare in the 49th over and qualify for the semis

2003, CENTURION

Once Zaheer Khan sent back Craig McMillan off the second ball of the match, it was a procession as the Kiwi batters couldn't come to terms with the Indian attack comprising Zaheer, Srinath, Nehra and Harbhajan. Despite losing three quick wickets, Kaif (68*) and Dravid (53*) chased down 146 with ease

Compiled by R. Narayanan

THE FACE-OFF					
India vs New Zealand					
TRENT BRIDGE					
HEAD-TO-HEAD					
	KOHLI	INDIA	NZ	TIED	NR
Overall	106	55	45	1	5
World Cup	7	3	4	0	0

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1, 2 & SELECT 1 (SD & HD), 3 P.M.

Kohli (Capt.), Rohit Sharma, M.S. Dhoni, K.L. Rahul, Ravindra Jadeja, Kedar Jadhav, Dinesh Karthik, Hardik Pandya, Vijay Shankar, Jasprit Bumrah, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mohammed Shami, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav and Shikhar Dhawan.

Lockie Ferguson, Matt Henry, Tom Latham, Colin Munro, Jimmy Neesham, Tom Blundell, Trent Boult, Tim Southee, Henry Nicholls, Mitchell Santner and Ish Sodhi.

Umpires: Marais Erasmus and Paul Reiffel; **Third umpire:** Bruce Oxenford; **Match referee:** Ranjan Madugalle.

Match starts at 3 p.m. IST.

Bangar backs Rahul to come good

K.C. VIJAYA KUMAR
NOTTINGHAM

Soft-spoken Sanjay Bangar's biggest cricketing moment occurred under the English skies. In the third Test at Leeds (Headingley) during the 2002 series, Bangar excelled as a make-shift opener. He scored a 68 and, more importantly, shared a 170-run second-wicket partnership with centurion Rahul Dravid. It validated Sourav Ganguly's brave decision to bat on winning the toss and the base was set for a fine triumph.

Shot at the top

Back to the United Kingdom, albeit in a new role as India's batting coach, it is now Bangar's turn to bolster the confidence of another player, who too has been pitch-forked into the opener's role. With Shikhar Dhawan ruled out with an injured left-thumb, it is but inevitable that K.L. Rahul will get a shot at the top of the order against New Zealand here on Thursday.

Speaking to the media on Wednesday, Bangar backed



K.L. Rahul... moving up • AP

Rahul to perform well and said that the ability to play across the line-up augurs well for the Karnataka batsman. "The advantage of playing in various situations is that you understand the game a lot better. If you look at the history of the game, some players have been very versatile.

"Here you can take his namesake Rahul Dravid, who batted at various positions, and it actually helped the team big time. It's a mental adjustment and any player, who is able to do that requires a lot of skill but ultimately it will enhance the position that he will bat in, and it will also help the team's cause," Bangar said.

In good rhythm

The former Railways cricketer also emphasised that despite the spectre of rain and disrupted practice schedules, India is in good rhythm: "When you come to England, you expect these things. So far, we have been lucky that we haven't had a game affected by the weather. So let's keep our fingers crossed. We have had a fair time to prepare ourselves because we spent a lot of time before our first match. The bowlers are in good rhythm and you don't really want to risk bowlers [at practice] in conditions where it's not really firm."

Haven't decided on the eleven: Taylor

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NOTTINGHAM

Ross Taylor said that New Zealand is prepared for all kinds of weather-induced contingencies. Ahead of Thursday's World Cup game against India, Taylor spoke to the media. *Excerpts:*

The playing eleven: There's a full 15 to choose from. We can't look too far ahead but there are obviously different permutations if the weather does play a part, be it a reduced game or a 50-over game.



Wet weather blues: England is a beautiful place, but it's not famous for good weather. There's still a long way to go in this tourna-

ment and I am sure there's going to be rained out games. There are times when forecasts have been wrong as well.

The pitch: Traditionally, it can favour the batters but I am sure the bowlers are going to have a little bit there. It hasn't seen the sun and we will have to wait and see what happens.

But first and foremost, it's a great place to play cricket, and I am sure any time we play India at a neutral venue, there will always be more Indian supporters than New Zealand.

Tim Southee's fitness: He is fine. All 15 are in contention.

As I said, with the weather around, we don't want to pre-empt anything, but if there are shortened games and what not, that's something the coach and captain will have to decide at the time, but we haven't made a decision on our final 11.

In Boult, the Indian top-order faces a challenge



Succeeding in long tournaments like the World Cup is not just about performing well in matches, but also about squad depth. How good are your replacement players, in case of an injury layoff?

We do not know the full extent of Shikhar Dhawan's injury yet, but it looks like he will stay with the squad in England. As it stands now, he will miss at least one match. In Dhawan's absence, K.L. Rahul should open the batting — he has the skills, and it is a wonderful opportunity to show the world how good he is. As for the No. 4 spot,

my choice would be Kedar Jadhav.

I'll go with Ravindra Jadeja as the replacement player, especially if it is a brown, dry pitch. Jadeja can whack it with the bat, and he's a very good bowler and fielder.

On Dhawan's injury, if it was really bad, it would have been operated on by now.

You can learn how to bat with a broken finger. We've all done it. You have equipment specialists now who can fix an extra bit of padding on your gloves. You can also take a little injection to get through the pain.

I'm involved with the design of different safety components — PVC, sweat band — used in batting gloves. Not many guys are pulling out of games with broken fingers these days. In my time, you learnt to put up with the pain. Dhawan is a tough nut, and as an opener, he will be used to getting hit on the fingers.

I get the feeling that if In-

dia had the final or semifinal coming up, Dhawan would have played.

Perhaps the team management wants to play safe, and look after Dhawan for the latter stages of the tournament.

In Trent Boult, the Indian top-order faces another concern. Boult is a strike bowler, with a good record against India.

You have to be mindful of the ball swinging back in and getting the leg-before decision.

I have no doubt that Ravi Shastri would have summoned many left-arm pacers to bowl in the Indian nets. They would have been asked to bring the ball back in with the brand new ball.

The good news is that Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and every other Indian batsman is in great nick. Apart from the Dhawan setback, everything is going very well for India.

(Tune in to Select Dugout on Star Sports Select 1)

Ton-up Warner delights; Australia survives scare

Amir's brilliant five-for checks the run-surge towards the end

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
TAUNTON

David Warner was not his usual destructive self but effective nevertheless, his first international century (107) since completing the ball-tampering ban, setting up Australia's 41-run win over Pakistan in the World Cup

here on Wednesday. Australia looked set for a total in excess of 350 while Warner and captain Aaron Finch (82) were at the crease, but Mohammad Amir (five for 30) staged a comeback with his best ODI bowling figures to bowl the defending champion out for 307 in 49

overs. Pakistan's innings ended at 266 in 45.4 overs but not before the duo of Sarfaraz Ahmed and Wahab Riaz gave the Australians a scare with a rearguard action that revived the hopes for a while. Pakistan was at one

stage tottering at 160 for six in the 30th over.

Next assignment

AUSTRALIA: June 15 vs Sri Lanka, The Oval, 3 p.m.
PAKISTAN: June 16 vs India, Old Trafford, 3 p.m.

Where they stand

Team	Mat	Won	Lost	NR	PTS	NRR
New Zealand	3	3	0	0	6	2.163
Australia	4	3	1	0	6	0.570
England	3	2	1	0	4	1.307
India	2	2	0	0	4	0.539
Sri Lanka	4	1	1	2	4	-1.517
West Indies	3	1	1	1	3	2.054
Bangladesh	4	1	2	1	3	-0.714
Pakistan	4	1	2	1	3	-1.796
South Africa	4	0	3	1	1	-0.952
Afghanistan	3	0	3	0	0	-1.493

*till the Australia-Pakistan match on June 12

INNINGS SCAN

AUS	PAK
2	Maidens 1
27	Fours 23
6	Sixes 7
146	Best stand 80 (3rd)
6.26	RR 5.82

PROGRESSION

AUS	PAK
56/0	10 overs 51/1
122/0	20 overs 110/2
191/2	30 overs 160/6
256/4	40 overs 230/7
--	50 overs --

TOP SHOWS

For	Batting	Bowling
Australia	Warner 107 (111b, 11x4, 1x6)	Cummins 3/33 (10)
Pakistan	Hafeez 46 (49b, 3x4, 1x6)	Amir 5/30 (10)



Driving force: David Warner's well-paced century helped Australia run up a 300-plus score against Pakistan. • AP

SCOREBOARD AUSTRALIA VS PAKISTAN

AUSTRALIA

Aaron Finch c Hafeez b Amir 82 (84b, 6x4, 4x6); David Warner c Imam b Afridi 107 (111b, 11x4, 1x6); Steven Smith c Asif b Hafeez 10 (13b, 1x4); Glenn Maxwell b Afridi 20 (10b, 2x4, 1x6); Shaun Marsh c Malik b Amir 23 (26b, 2x4); Usman Khawaja c Riaz b Amir 18 (16b, 3x4); Alex Carey lbw b Amir 20 (27b, 2x4); Nathan Coulter-Nile c Sarfaraz b Riaz 2 (3b); Pat Cummins c Sarfaraz b Hasan 2 (6b); Mitchell Starc c Malik b Amir 3 (6b); Kane Richardson (not out) 1 (1b); Extras (lb-10, w-6, nb-3): 19; Total (in 49 overs): 307

FALL OF WICKETS

1-146 (Finch, 22.1 overs), 2-189 (Smith, 28.4), 3-223 (Maxwell, 33.4), 4-242 (Warner, 37.5), 5-277 (Khawaja, 42.1), 6-288 (Marsh, 44.3), 7-299 (Coulter-Nile, 46.2), 8-302 (Cummins, 47.3), 9-304 (Carey, 48.3).

PAKISTAN BOWLING

Amir 10-2-30-5; Afridi 10-0-70-2; Hasan 10-0-67-1; Riaz 8-0-44-1; Hafeez 7-0-60-1; Malik 4-0-26-0.

PAKISTAN

Imam ul-Haq c Carey b Cummins 53 (75b, 7x4); Fakhar Zaman c Richardson b Cummins 0 (3b); Babar Azam c Richardson b Coulter-Nile 30 (28b, 7x4); Mohd. Hafeez c Starc b Finch 46 (49b, 3x4, 1x6); Sarfaraz Ahmed run out 40 (48b, 1x4); Shoaib Malik c Carey b Cummins 0 (2b); Asif Ali c Carey b Richardson 5 (8b); Hasan Ali c Khawaja b Richardson 32 (15b, 3x4, 3x6); Wahab Riaz c Carey b Amir 20 (2b); Shaheen Afridi (not out) 1 (6b); Extras: (lb-4, nb-1, w-9): 14; Total (in 45.4 overs): 266.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-2 (Zaman, 2.1), 2-56 (Azam, 10.5), 3-136 (Imam, 25.1), 4-146 (Hafeez, 26.6), 5-147 (Malik, 27.3), 6-160 (Asif, 29.6), 7-200 (Hasan, 33.5), 8-264 (Riaz, 44.2), 9-265 (Amir, 44.4).

AUSTRALIA BOWLING

Cummins 10-0-33-3; Starc 9-1-43-2; Richardson 8-4-0-62-2; Coulter-Nile 9-0-53-1; Maxwell 7-0-58-0; Finch 2-0-13-1.

Toss: Pakistan.

Man-of-the-Match: David Warner.

Australia won by 41 runs.

GRV — standing out in a galaxy of stars

The legendary batsman is a huge hit among Kannadiga fans with his World Cup commentary

VIJAY LOKAPALLY
MUMBAI

There is a galaxy of cricketers at the Star Sports Studios here commentating on the World Cup in various languages. Anil Kumble, Dean Jones, Scott Styris, Brian Lara, and Kevin Pietersen live it up with their anecdotal and predictive discussions in The DugOut.

The regional viewers are treated to excellent stuff from the likes of Venkataswamy Raju, L. Sivaramakrishnan, L. Balaji, Manoj Tiwary, Vijay Bharadwaj, Kiran More, Nikhil Chopra, Mohammad Kaif, R.P. Singh, Ranadeb Bose, and Saurashish Lahiri.

But the one man who is held in awe and sought after most is G.R. Viswanath, who is a huge hit with his Kannadiga fans. The legendary batsman, who played 91 Tests and hit 14 centuries, each a gem, teams up with Bharadwaj and G.K. Anil Kumar, with enriching comments on



Legendspeak: G.R. Viswanath and G.K. Anil Kumar regaling viewers with their Kannada commentary for the World Cup. *SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

cricket from his time.

Viswanath, who recently turned 70, is immensely popular because of his humility. As one of the officials connected with the project remarked, "He is much-

loved, much respected. Viewers, who have hardly heard him all these years, feast on stories of his time." He is the superstar among stars of contemporary cricket.

Not the one to talk about his batting, he can, when prompted repeatedly, recall most of his important innings with minute details, the shots he played to herald each century, his best and disappointing moments.

Missing 100 Tests sometimes ranks him but Viswanath, in his words, has "moved on."

For someone like Tiwary, every break has to be spent with Viswanath.

"I first interacted with him at a NCA (National Cricket Academy) camp and have been a huge fan of him since.

"For us, not watching him play obviously is a huge disappointment but I have heard stories about his batting from his colleagues. I am lucky to be able to spend time with such a legend," said Tiwary, who does revisit some of Viswanath's innings which are available on YouTube.

His wrists were his strength. "I developed

strong wrists in order to play the square drive and square cut because other shots would not fetch me boundaries. The ball would not reach the fence. I worked on making my wrists strong."

Much to the chagrin of the bowlers who would suffer at his hands, for Viswanath had the reputation of dominating the attack on hostile pitches.

Master of square cut

One reminded him of an iconic image from his career, feet in air, playing a rasping square cut.

"Against Michael Holding. Off the second new ball (at Port of Spain in 1976)."

He recalls that epic victory against the West Indies as the audience around him sits fascinated, the storytelling spilling into late evening with no trace of fatigue on the legendary veteran's face. We retire with a promise of more from the humble man, who is fondly referred as the original God of Cricket.

USA hopes to go all the way

India up against Japan in semifinals

HSF

UTHRA GANESAN
BHUBANESWAR

Before the Hockey Series Finals began here, when someone asked USA captain Ajai Dhadwal if his team was hopeful of going all the way despite strong competition from higher-ranked Japan, Poland and South Africa in its group, he simply smiled and said, "that's the plan."

The plan has worked perfectly for the side, even though it lost Dhadwal to a rib injury in the very first game.

USA drew with Asian Games champion Japan and upset South Africa to end on top of Pool B and earn a direct entry to the semifinals.

"The exciting thing about HSF is that it brings teams that are not as high ranked an opportunity to compete against the best in the world. Rankings matter but they are not the be and end of everything, it's important to keep your head down and try and get results with the strategies that you come up with," Dhadwal told *The Hindu* in an interaction.

Heartening results

For a team that has to not just fight for quality competition but also resources with other sports and the women's national team — that finished fifth at Rio — the results here have been heartening.

But what is more important, says Dhadwal, is the fact that the sport is spreading out of its traditional image of a subcontinental sport



Goal! Mexico's Ruben Martinez scores past the Uzbekistan defence. *BISWARANJAN ROUT

and making inroads into other communities.

"I think it is really important because then it will generate more number of those who want to play.

"On the West Coast Tom Harris very much pioneered hockey and even started the hockey ground at the Moorepark College.

"Pretty much half our team grew up playing in that area, plus there is a predominant population of non-subcontinental guys playing on the East Coast as well, so it's diversifying," Dhadwal said. Harris, incidentally, is in town for the tournament.

Part-timers

Like most other hockey players across the world, the USA team is made up of part-timers who earn a living doing other things.

Dhadwal himself is an assistant coach with the women's team at Rutgers University in New Jersey, although he was born and raised in Los Angeles and picked up the stick at five fol-

lowing in his father's footsteps, who played for Delhi and Indian Railways before moving abroad.

USA on Friday would take on South Africa for a spot in the final after the African champion beat Russia 2-1 in the quarterfinals on Wednesday to keep its Olympic dreams alive.

The other quarterfinal saw Japan thrash Poland 6-2, three of its goals coming in the third quarter, to set up a clash with host India in the last four.

The last time the teams met — at the Azlan Shah Cup — India had won 2-0.

The results: 7-8 place: Mexico 4 (Yamil Mendez, Roberto Garcia, Maximiliano Mendez, Alexander Palma) bt Uzbekistan 3 (Gaybullo Khaytboev, Ruslan Satlikov, Okhunjon Mirzakari-mov); QF: Japan 6 (Koji Yamasaki 2, Kenta Tanaka, Kenji Kitazato, Shota Yamada, Hirota Zenda) bt Poland 2 (Mikolaj Gumny, Mateusz Hulboj); South Africa 2 (Ruan Julius, Nqobile Ntuli) vs Russia 1 (Georgii Arusiia).

USA slams 13 past Thailand

Sweden starts off with a win

WOMEN'S WC

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
REIMS

The United States began its trophy defence in scintillating style with a 13-0 Women's World Cup thrashing of Thailand in a ruthless demonstration of strength to potential quarterfinal opponent and host France.

Three-time champion USA scored 10 goals in the second half on Tuesday as it eclipsed Germany's 11-0 win over Argentina in 2007 and shattered its own previous tournament best of 7-0.

Alex Morgan starred with five goals, Rose Lavelle and Samantha Mewis netted twice each and Lindsey Horan, Megan Rapinoe, Mallo-ry Pugh and Carli Lloyd also

got on the scoresheet in an embarrassingly one-sided Group F encounter watched by more than 18,000.

The Americans hit back after at suggestions they could have eased up and saved 34th-ranked Thailand from complete humiliation.

"This is a world championship so every team that is here has been fantastic to get to this point. To be respectful to opponents is to play hard against opponents," said USA coach Jill Ellis.

Morgan now has 106 goals for her country.

The results: Group F: Chile 0 lost to Sweden 2 (Asllani 83, Janogy 90+4); USA 13 (Morgan 12, 53, 74, 81, 87, Lavelle 20, 56, Horan 32, Mewis 52, 54, Rapinoe 79, Pugh 85, Lloyd 90+2) bt Thailand 0.



Running riot: Megan Rapinoe, right, and Alex Morgan were unstoppable in the USA's massive win. *AP

Verratti comes to Italy's rescue

Goal glut in Germany and France wins

EURO QUALIFYING

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

Italy needed a late winner from Marco Verratti to defeat a determined Bosnia-Herzegovina 2-1 in Euro 2020 qualifying on Tuesday, while Germany and France piled up the goals in lopsided victories.

Edin Dzeko fired Bosnia in front in Turin, but Lorenzo Insigne equalised shortly after half-time and Verratti curled home on 86 minutes to earn a fourth win in as many attempts for Roberto Mancini's side in Group J.

"I expected the difficulties, but we showed the strength and the conviction to overturn it," said Mancini.

"The important thing is that we are first in the group."

Rebound

World champions France rebounded from last weekend's defeat in Turkey with a trouble-free 4-0 win away to minnows Andorra.

He retained just four of those who began Saturday's 2-0 loss in Konya, handing first international starts to Kurt Zouma, Clement Lenglet and Leo Dubois.

Kylian Mbappe opened the scoring with a chipped finish on 11 minutes, with Wissam Ben Yedder and Florian Thauvin adding to their lead. Zouma bundled home a fourth on the hour as France reclaimed top spot in Group H after Iceland beat Turkey 2-1 in Reykjavik.

Iceland draws level

Two headers in the first half by centre-back Ragnar Si-



Winning strike: Marco Verratti, right, celebrates with Giorgio Chiellini after scoring the clincher. *AFP

gurdsson saw Iceland draw level on nine points with France as well as Turkey, for whom Dorukhan Tokoz scored a consolation.

Germany made light work of Estonia as Serge Gnabry and Marco Reus fired it to a thundering 8-0 victory in Mainz.

Gnabry and Reus scored two goals each, with Leon Goretzka, Ilkay Gundogan, Timo Werner and Leroy Sane also on target, as Germany ran riot to seal a third win from three games in Group C.

Perfect start

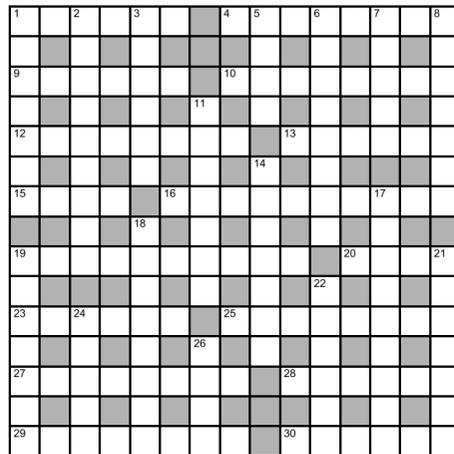
Belgium extended its perfect start to Group I with a 3-0 defeat of Scotland in Brussels.

Romelu Lukaku headed in an Eden Hazard cross on the stroke of half-time and bagged a second early in the second half, with Kevin De Bruyne thumping home

another at the death.

The results: Group C: Germany 8 (Reus 10, 37, Gnabry 17, 62, Goretzka 20, Gundogan 26-pen, Werner 79, Sane 88) bt Estonia 0; Belarus 0 lost to Northern Ireland 1 (McNair 86). **Group E:** Azerbaijan 1 (Shey-daev 29) lost to Slovakia 5 (Lotboka 8, Kucka 27, Hamsik 30, 57, Hanco 85); Hungary 1 (Patkai 80) bt Wales 0. **Group H:** Iceland 2 (Sigurdsson 21, 32) bt Turkey 1 (Tokoz 40); Andorra 0 lost to France 4 (Mbappe 11, Ben Yedder 30, Thauvin 45+1, Zouma 60); Albania 2 (Cikalleshi 66, Ramadan 90+3) bt Moldova 0. **Group I:** Kazakhstan 4 (Kuat 45+1, Fedin 62, Suyumbaev 65, Islamkhan 79) bt San Marino 0; Russia 1 (Ionov 38) bt Cyprus 0; Belgium 3 (Lukaku 45+1, 57, De Bruyne 90+2) bt Scotland 0. **Group J:** Liechtenstein 0 lost to Finland 2 (Pukki 37, Kallman 57); Italy 2 (Insigne 49, Verratti 86) bt Bosnia-Herzegovina 1 (Dzeko 32); Greece 2 (Zeca 54, Fortounis 87) lost to Armenia 3 (Karapetyan 8, Ghazaryan 33, Barseghyan 74).

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12651



ACROSS

- Meagre artist draws out a prickly fish (6)
- On Fools' Day, beds trees (8)
- Nonsense acting with a loud laugh (6)
- Turn Asia around to welcome European (8)
- Run out of fluorine? Iodine could be substituting (2,4,2)

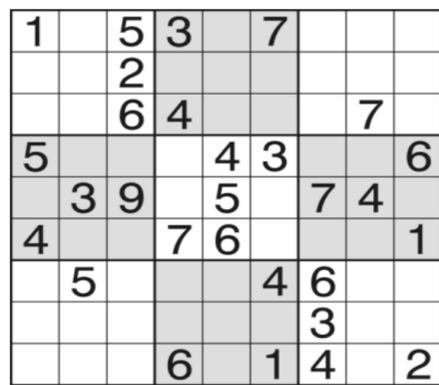
- Jam emptied out pending close of breakfast (6)
- Leather from yak's used for tailor-made tops (4)
- Bad co-stars spoiling TV shows (10)
- Sharing surname with cold and disgusting Mongolian (10)
- Posh car hired for money (4)
- Cryptic message on hot image being circulated (6)
- Royal buses assemble here? (8)
- It is possible that aid is distributed over different years (1,4,3)
- Trims the edge off dry fruits (6)
- Try 50-50? (2,6)
- Wail loudly to snatch her fruit (6)

DOWN

- Show house's substandard, not fine (7)
- Well-dressed lecturer delivered fulfilling drills (2,4,3)
- Sour food for the losers? (6)

(set by Scintillator)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to puzzle 12650



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



FAITH

Supremacy of bhakti

The Bhagavata Purana highlights bhakti marga as an easy means for spiritual progress and God realisation. The Lord Himself explains the supremacy of Bhakti and surrender in the episode of Ambarisha and Durvasa, pointed out Sri B. Damodhara Dikshitar in a discourse. The Lord speaks at length on the exclusive bond that is established between Him and His devotees. He is always subservient to His devotees who seek Him for His sake alone and do not desire anything else from life. Such devotees cannot be let down at any cost, He says. The pious are His heart and He resides forever in their hearts.

Ambarisha typifies the true devotee, steeped in his experience of faith and devotion to the Lord. This confers on him peace and tranquillity. He does not entertain hatred or attachment towards people, places and objects of the world. He lives, acts and thinks in a righteous manner with his whole being totally dedicated to the Lord. Ambarisha's act of taking a sip of sacred water as a token for completing the Ekadasi vrata he had undertaken is seen as a lapse in hospitality on the king's part and Durvasa gives vent to his anger. He creates an ogre to kill Ambarisha. The Sudarshana chakra, a gift from the Lord, acting as His deputy takes charge of the situation, kills the ogre and chastises the sage by giving him a terrible chase. Though it is the Lord's Chakra, He cannot recall it at the moment since He has not aimed it on Durvasa. Only Ambarisha can control it. So Durvasa gets back to Ambarisha and expresses regret for his anger.

Another aspect of the Lord's nature is also revealed in this episode. Though the Lord has no enemies, is always free from partiality and bears no grudge against any being. He cannot bear to see any devotee of His being wronged.

TV PICKS

ICC World Cup: Star Sports 1, 2 & Select 1 (SD & HD), 3 p.m.
FIFA women's World Cup: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 9.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Injured Froome out of Tour de France

ROANNE, FRANCE
Chris Froome will miss the Tour de France after hitting a wall and suffering severe injuries in a training accident at the Criterium du Dauphine on Wednesday, Team Ineos leader Dave Brailsford has confirmed. "It's clear he'll take no part in the Tour," Brailsford told French television while four time Tour de France winner Froome was being treated at the scene in a parked ambulance. "He is in a very, very serious condition," said Brailsford.

National crossminton in Ludhiana

NEW DELHI
The National Crossminton championship will be held at the Govind National College, Narangwal district in Ludhiana from June 27 to 29. The General Secretary of the All India Crossminton Organisation (AICO), Bilal Ahmad Khan stated that the championship will feature teams from 17 States. There will be team championship apart from singles, doubles and mixed doubles.



Jemimah Rodrigues to play in KSL

LEEDS
Jemimah Rodrigues has become the third Indian batter to play Kia Super League (KSL) after Yorkshire Diamonds signed her for the upcoming fourth and final edition of the league. Smriti Mandhana and Harmanpreet Kaur are the other two Indian cricketers who have competed in the T20 league hosted in England. The 18-year-old, who made her international debut in February 2018, has a strike rate of 123.57 in 25 T20Is.



Semenya wins 2,000m race amid IAAF fight

PARIS
South African Caster Semenya won Tuesday's rarely-run 2,000m race in Montreal amid her ongoing legal battle with the IAAF over its testosterone rules. The double 800m Olympic champion, who was racing for the first time since a controversial new gender ruling came into effect, finishing in 5min 38.19sec ahead of Ethiopia's Hawi Feysa & Adanech Anbesa. **AFP**

Tokyo or bust as Tiger eyes Olympic dream

PEBBLE BEACH (USA)
Tiger Woods is setting his sights on next year's Olympic games, driven on by the knowledge that he may not get many more chances to add a gold medal. "Olympic gold medal would be a hell of a feat," Woods said. "First I need to qualify. It would be exciting if I got a chance to represent the United States. Next time I'll be 48. I don't have that many chances of playing for the United States in the Olympics. So it will certainly be an honour if I were able to represent the United States." **AFP**

Tvesa Malik in the van

BENGALURU
Tvesa Malik shot an even-par 72 to take the opening day's honours as the final leg of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour commenced here. **The scores (top six after 18 holes):** 72: Tvesa Malik; 73: Millie Saroha; 74: Ridhima Dilawari; 75: Khushi Khanijau; 77: Gaurika Bishnoi; 78: Astha Madan, Sneha Sharan (A).

Chance for Koepka to create history

He is going for a third straight US Open; Woods returns to the scene of his signature triumph

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PEBBLE BEACH

The 119th US Open at Pebble Beach has the makings of a classic as Tiger Woods returns to the scene of a signature triumph to take on a new generation of stars led by two-time defending champion Brooks Koepka. Koepka, 29, has a chance to do what only one golfer has done before him – win a third straight US Open title. It's been more than 100 years since Willie Anderson accomplished the feat, and Koepka says there's no better place to chase history than Pebble Beach, where five prior editions have produced enduring Major championship memories. "It's just such a special place," Koepka said of the scenic course hugging the Pacific coast. "Just the history behind it. You look at the guys that have won here at Pebble, some of the greatest players that have ever played the game."

Jack Nicklaus won the first US Open staged at Pebble Beach in 1972. Ten years later it was Tom Watson and in 1992 Tom Kite. Woods triumphed in 2000 by a crushing 15 strokes – still a Major championship record – and Graeme McDowell ended Europe's 40-year US Open drought when he was the last man standing with a classic US Open total of even par 284 in 2010.

Defying history Koepka knows history is against his bid for a treble.



Prep time: Brooks Koepka getting ready for the third Major of the season at Pebble Beach. **•AP**

Woods triumphed in 2000 by a crushing 15 strokes – still a Major championship record – and Graeme McDowell ended Europe's 40-year US Open drought when he was the last man standing with a classic US Open total of even par 284 in 2010.

Defying history Koepka knows history is against his bid for a treble.

"I know the odds are stacked up probably even more against me now to go three in a row than to back it up," Koepka said, noting that "It's hard to win the same event three times in a row."

The last player to win the same Major three years in a row was Peter Thomson at the British Open from

1954-56. Having cemented his return from the injury wilderness with his 15th Major title at the Masters, Woods says he's "trending in the right direction".

The same can be said of three-time Major winner Jordan Spieth, who struggled to 11 straight finishes outside

the top 10 to start the season but has posted three straight top 10s coming into the third Major of the season.

Dustin Johnson, who pushed Koepka late before settling for second behind the American at the PGA Championship last month, also features among the contenders, and Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy arrives off an imperious seven-stroke victory at the Canadian Open.

Five-time major winner Phil Mickelson, who turns 49 on Sunday, reckons Pebble Beach offers one of his last legitimate chances to finally capture the US Open – the only Major to elude him.

Tricky course

Of course Pebble Beach, playing at par -71 and 7,075 yards, will have something to say.

"There's nothing like playing a US Open set up at Pebble Beach," Woods said. "The golf course is not overly long. It's not big in that regard, but man, it's tricky."

"The greens are all slanted, very small targets," he said, noting that staying below the hole would be crucial on the greens with a tendency toward bumpiness.

Nagal in third round

INDIANS ABROAD

SPORTS BUREAU
LYON

Sumit Nagal knocked out eighth seed Quentyn Halys of France 6-3, 6-2 on clay in the second round of the €92,040 Challenger here on Wednesday.

The results: €137,560 Challenger, Nottingham: Singles (first round): Saketh Myneni bt Mats Morang (Ger) 7-6(2), 6-3. **€92,040 Challenger, Lyon: Singles (second round):** Sumit Nagal bt Quentyn Halys (Fra) 6-3, 6-2.

\$ 54,160 Challenger, Columbus, USA: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Li Zhe (Chn) & Yasutaka Uchiyama (Jpn) bt Volodymyr Uzhytylovskiy (Ukr) & Arjun Kadhe 6-4, 6-3.

\$25,000 ITF men, Shenzhen, China: Singles (first round): Yu Hsiou Hsu (Tpe) bt Karunuday Singh 6-2, 6-1.

\$25,000 ITF men, Hong Kong: Singles (first round): Sidharth Rawat bt Andrej Glvac (Svk) 6-4, 6-4; Shintaro Imai (Jpn) bt Vijay Sundar Prashanth 6-2, 6-4; Maksim Tikhomirov

(US) bt Muthu Aadhiya Senthilkumar 6-2, 6-4.

Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Jayden Court & Alexander Crnokrak (Aus) bt Jose Fco. Vidal Azorin (Esp) & Vijay Sundar Prashanth 7-5, 6-3.

\$15,000 ITF men, Singapore: Singles (first round): Jesse Delaney (Aus) bt Atharva Sharma 6-0, 6-2; Aldan Cmhugh (GBR) bt Siddhant Banthia 7-5, 6-1; Thanapet Chanta (Tha) bt Jagmeet Singh 6-3, 6-3; Shahin Khaledan (Iri) bt Gokul Suresh 6-4, 6-4; Kelsey Stevenson (Can) bt Vidit Vaghela 6-1, 3-6, 6-3.

Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Congsup Congcar (Tha) & Kazuki Nishiwaki (Jpn) bt Kunal Anand & Jatin Dahiya 6-3, 7-5. **\$15,000 ITF women, Gimcheon, Korea: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals):** Shou Na Mu & Zhuo-ma Ni Ma (Chn) bt Man Ying Maggie Ng (Hkg) & Ashmitha Easwaramurthi 4-6, 6-1, [10-7].

\$15,000 ITF women, Amarante, Portugal: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Muskan Gupta & Sathwika Sama bt Emma Mazzoni & Juliette Mazzoni (Fra) 6-0, 7-6(3).

Vansh beats back Vitin's challenge

SPORTS BUREAU
KARNAL

Top seed Vansh Nandal was pushed by Vitin Rathee before prevailing 6-2, 2-6, 7-6(6) in the under-14 boys quarterfinals of the AITA Super series junior tennis tournament, organised by Chamunda Tennis Academy, on Wednesday.

In the girls under-14 event, top seed Chandni Srinivasan cruised to a 6-2, 6-0 victory over Ana Varshney. Riya Sachdeva, Sanjana Devineni and Samiksha Dabas made it to the semifinals of both the under-14 and under-12 events.

The results (quarterfinals): Boys: Under-14: Vansh Nandal bt Vitin Rathee 6-2, 2-6, 7-6(6); Parag Jain bt Lakshya Gupta 1-6, 6-4, 6-4; Bhavya Singhamar bt Aryan Deshwal 6-2, 6-2; Aditya Chauhan bt Hemant Dixit 6-2, 6-3.

Under-12: Krish Ajay Tyagi bt Mayand Tewary 6-3, 4-6, 6-1; Dhruv Ghanghas bt Hrisheek Vavilapally 6-3, 6-2; Akshat Dhull bt Rian Sharma 7-5, 6-4; Ekamjeet Singh Cheema bt Sehaj Sharma 6-2, 3-6, 6-1. **Girls: Under-14:** Chandni Srinivasan bt Ana Varshney 6-2, 6-0; Riya Sachdeva bt Suhani Gaur 6-1, 7-5; Sanjana Devineni bt Saijayani Banerjee 6-2, 7-5; Samiksha Dabas bt Dhvani Kavadi 6-0, 6-4. **Under-12:** Sohini Sanjay Mohanty bt Ana Varshney 6-3, 6-3; Sanjana Devineni bt Raja Sarvagya Kilaru 6-2, 7-5; Riya Sachdeva bt Saijayani Banerjee 6-1, 6-2; Samiksha Dabas bt Shatakshi Chaudhary 6-1, 6-2.

The results (first round): Amit Beniwal bt Chandril Sood 6-3, 6-1; Lakshya Gupta bt Shubham Malhotra 6-1, 6-7(8), 7-5; Parth Aggarwal bt Ashutosh Tiwary 6-3 6-2; Shashank Theertha bt Yugal Bansal 6-7 (2), 6-3, 2-1 (conceded); Neeraj Yashpaul bt Deepak Senthilkumar 6-3, 6-3; Kunj Kotak bt Fardeen Qamar 7-5, 6-4.

Rudraksh Mitra bt Vashu Gupta 6-3, 7-5; Garry Tokas bt Tanik Gupta 7-6(5), 6-4; Pranjal Tiwary bt Parshwa Bhavishi 6-1, 3-0 (conceded); Aditya Tiwari bt Medhir Goyal 6-1, 6-0; Aditya Vishal Balsekar bt Apuroop Reddy 6-1, 4-0 (conceded); Lakshit Sood bt Aakash Ahlawat 6-1, 6-2; Raghav Jaisinghani bt Nishant Dabas 7-5 (conceded); Vilasier Khate bt Akash Nandwal 7-6(2), 6-2; Vimalraj Jayachandran bt Vijayant Malik 7-5, 5-3 (conceded).

SAI's green drive
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
The Sports Authority of India (SAI) has swung into a 'clean and green' drive in centres across the country, following a directive from the Union Sports Minister, Kiren Rijiju, in an attempt to create a more environment-friendly atmosphere in the sporting arenas.

Saplings of trees, special in a particular region, will be planted in the 12 regional centres of SAI and in all the stadiums under its purview.

The idea is to increase the green cover in the campus by nurturing local plants that may bear fruits also. Rain water harvesting will be utilised to maintain the green cover.

Awareness workshops will be organised for the benefit of athletes to inculcate the principles of the 'clean and green' drive, which has emerged from the pledge taken by the Sports Minister on the World Environment Day this year.

Bedros shocked with Arpinder's poor run

ATHLETICS

STAN RAYAN
KOCHI

He is the Asian Games champion and was the first Indian to win a medal at the IAAF Continental Cup last year. But after a bit of a high last season, this year is turning out to be a very disappointing one for triple jumper Arpinder Singh.

The 26-year-old from Punjab, who has a personal best of 17.17m, was in poor form

as he finished eighth with a best of 15.78m in the Classic Permit Meeting de Montreuil near Paris on Tuesday. American Christian Taylor, the Olympic and World champion, won the event with 17.41m.

Earlier this month, Arpinder had won the gold in another meet in France, at Pezenas with a mediocre 15.85m.

"Yes, I'm shocked with Arpinder's performance. For somebody who has jumped

above 17m, he should be doing something like 16.70m," Romanian Bedros Bedrosian, the national coach for jumps, told *The Hindu* from Bucharest on Wednesday.

"I don't think he is aggressive enough during the jumps, he is probably not attacking enough. The last time I saw him, at the Asian Games in Jakarta (in September 2018), his technique appeared to be coming down."

Arpinder failed to qualify for the recent Asian cham-

pionships in Doha after finishing fourth in the Federation Cup in March with 16.34m and with the qualification standard for this September's World championships being 16.95m, he certainly has a lot of work to do.

"With such performance, I don't think he can qualify for the Worlds, but Arpinder is a fighter," said Bedros, who plans to return to India later this month after a long break.

Warriors face an emotional must-win test

Curry and Co. wants to give everything as a tribute to the injured Durant

NBA FINALS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
OAKLAND

Inspired by injured teammate Kevin Durant and facing an emotional must-win game, the Golden State Warriors is counting upon resiliency and fighting spirit to stay alive in the NBA Finals.

The defending champion, seeking a third consecutive title and fourth in five seasons, entertains Toronto Raptors in game six on Thursday needing a victory to pull level at 3-3 and force a game seven on Sunday at Toronto.

"We're going to have to will ourselves for another 48 minutes to stay alive," Warriors guard Stephen Curry said. "And whatever it's going to take from every single guy in our jersey."

"I don't know if there's going to be a speech in the locker room, if there's going to need to be words at all. We



Doing it for Kevin: Stephen Curry says Warriors will compete hard to try and level the series to honour Kevin Durant. **•AP**

understand the moment and I think we can rally."

"We'll be suiting up in front of Oracle Arena and with the amazing atmosphere and opportunity to play for him, and to kind of honour the sacrifice he made in terms of putting his body on the line," Curry said. "We're going to give everything we got. We're going to fight. We're going to compete."

Golden State guard Klay Thompson will give his efforts in tribute to Durant.

"It obviously inspires you to play harder knowing your best player can't be out there," Thompson said. "You think of him every time you dive for a loose ball or go for a rebound, because I know him and I know how bad he wants to be out there."

Only once in 34 opportu-

ities has a team that trailed 3-1 in the NBA Finals won the title, that coming in 2016 when LeBron James rallied Cleveland over the Warriors.

Adieu to Oracle Arena
The Warriors will be playing their final game at Oracle Arena, their home venue since 1971. They leave the NBA's oldest arena for a new \$1 billion home in San Francisco next season and hope to exit Oakland as winners after two earlier finals home losses to the Raptors.

For the Raptors, top scorer Kawhi Leonard says the secret is to keep doing what put them one win from the first title in their 24-season history and the first by any team from outside the United States. "Just try to come out and match that emotion and drive, come out and do the same thing, just be mentally focused, try to limit our mistakes and be the aggressor," Leonard said.



Kapil Dev.
•SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Kapil bats for Yuvraj's on-field farewell

BHRIGU BAGGA
NEW DELHI

India's 1983 World Cup triumph is written in golden letters and so is the name of the team leader – Kapil Dev. At a media interaction here on Wednesday, the legend, in recognition of another champion, expressed his desire for a proper on-field farewell for the just retired Yuvraj Singh.

Yuvraj, in his farewell press conference, had said that the BCCI had offered him a farewell match if he failed the yo-yo test. Yuvraj not only cleared the test but emphasised that his performance was to be the criteria for selection.

When asked, Kapil said, "I think I would love to see a player like him getting a farewell in the ground, not just saying I'm retired."

In his farewell message to Yuvraj, the former India captain said, "Yuvraj will be in my all-time XI whenever I sit down to make my team, [for] the way he played his cricket."

"The way he is looked up to, what he has gone through in life (beating cancer). I wish him even better than what he achieved on the cricket field. We need more players like him."

Kapil also revealed that he was working on his all time world XI which was a mammoth task. "I don't want to be dropping any legend of the game."

Kapil was present at the launch of fantasy gaming platform Apne II. He said playing outdoors should be the priority for everyone and joked that he ends losing when playing fantasy cricket with his grandchildren.

At the event, Roland Landers (CEO, All India Gaming Federation) quoted an interesting piece of statistics. "The Indian market is the fastest-growing fantasy sports market in the world, the market is projected to touch \$5 billion in the next two years."

'I kept thinking of all these walls'

Director Deepa Mehta on translating a 2017 novel *Leila* into a web series, dealing with moral policing, and shooting dystopian scenes

ANAHITA PANICKER

Discussing the renewed meaning of her chilling dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (published in 1985) in Trump's era for *The New York Times*, Canadian writer and activist Margaret Atwood drove one point home: "It can't happen here" could not be depended on: "Anything could happen anywhere, given the circumstances."

Prayaag Akbar's 2017 novel *Leila* paints a similarly bleak Indian dystopia that will be explored across six episodes for Netflix by creative executive producer and director Deepa Mehta, and co-directors Shanker Raman and Pawan Kumar. With her round spectacles resting on the table in front of her, Mehta chats with us, flitting between a throaty laugh when talking about the online outcry following the trailer's release, and a softer tone when expressing the unsettling way Akbar's novel resonated with her.

Disquieting prescience

The series follows a mother in search of her young daughter Leila, when they are forcefully separated under a totalitarian regime built on segregation. It's set in a polluted Aryavarta, circa 2040 that is reeling under severe water scarcity, and weaves the past and present through flashbacks and a disquieting prescience. The trailer elicited strong reactions online

— many called for people to unsubscribe from Netflix for showcasing what was being termed as "anti-Hindu" content. "Trailer ke baad outcry? (Outcry following a trailer?) I'm very impressed," smiles the director.

Citing the uproar with *Padmaavat* (2018) which ended in the Karni Sena withdrawing its protest after watching the film, Mehta says, "He [Sanjay Leela Bhansali] became a hero when the film came out. *Humara bhi yahi hoga*; we'll also become heroes!"

Mehta isn't new to furore aimed at policing her work. In 1998, the release of her film *Fire* saw theatres vandalised for showing a film depicting its lead characters (portrayed by Shabana Azmi and Nandita Das) in a lesbian relationship. A few years later, while shooting for *Water* (2007) in Varanasi, right-wing groups forced Mehta and her crew out for, "[running] down the image of widows in India". Eventually Mehta shot the film with a new cast under an assumed title in Sri Lanka, and five years after the Varanasi incident, it premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2005. Mehta says she deals with the noise with a sense of humour. "Really, what else is there to do?" she asks. "I certainly don't feel like I deserve to feel like a victim. I don't want to give

the power to anybody to make me feel like a victim," she shrugs.

Dipping into reality

With over four decades of experience in filmmaking, Mehta's work is vivid because it often draws from a pool of her experiences. *Earth* (1999), which is based on Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice Candy Man*, was a familiar landscape for the director, having been born in Amritsar, post-Partition. *Water* was inspired by an encounter with an old widow in Varanasi in 1996.

"I certainly can identify with Shalini," says Mehta about *Leila*'s protagonist, played by Huma Qureshi, "in



the sense that she was privileged, entitled, and leading a normal life — so what happens when that kind of privilege is taken away from you?" Mehta elaborates that it reminded her of the time she moved to Toronto after getting married and her grandmother voiced her concerns. "She told my mother, 'She doesn't even know how to cook, what will she

do?' So that privilege and very small, superficial entitlement like 'How are you going to survive without a cook?' is something that I thought of, but it became much bigger than that," shares the director. Mehta adds that it's this reassessment of privilege that Qureshi explores with nuance on screen.

Complex scenarios

It is this very understanding of privilege and deepening chasms between haves and have-nots that stands out in Akbar's novel. The director, who read the book when it was first published, says it was his lucidity that struck her: "It was simple — not simplistic — [il-

Bleak Indian dystopia (clockwise from left): Deepa Mehta; stills from the movie •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



lustration] of a very complicated world. And it was very chilling, and I kept thinking of all these walls: Trump talking about his stupid walls. It's such a reality that you are actually trying to keep people away by literal, physical embellishments. That's really scary."

While putting together *Leila*'s distressing universe was a challenge in itself, Mehta sheds light on what was trickiest. With everything shot on location, the director says that The Purity House, a place where "wayward" women are "corrected", was finally found in an old mansion in Daryaganj in Delhi. The Purity House segments, however, reminded Mehta

of a dystopian take on the widows' home in *Water*. When asked how she went about it, she laughs and says, "All these women [the characters in *Leila*'s Purity House] were drugged all the time, so [I managed]."

Mehta's next is also an adaptation: She will reimagine Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* about a young boy struggling with his homosexuality in war-torn Sri Lanka. When asked about whether *Exclusion*, a film with a star-studded cast that even had Amitabh Bachchan's name attached to it, will see the light of the day, she says, "Maybe someday."

Leila premieres June 14th on Netflix

IN OUR BACKYARD

The spotted owl

Revered in many myths, the bird is a common sight in Delhi



Bird on a wire The spotted owl is seen at heights, on wires and cables • ABHISHEK GULSHAN

ABHISHEK GULSHAN

Named after a Hindu god and Greek goddess, one would imagine that the Spotted Owllet, *Athene brama*, would be a towering majestic creature, but its length is 19-21 cm, depending on the sex — the females tend to be larger.

Athene, the goddess of wisdom, war and liberal arts, in Greek mythology, had a favourite bird: the owl, from her primitive role as the goddess of the night. Brama or Brahma is the supreme Hindu spirit. In Hindu mythology, the owl is a Vahan (mode of transport) of

Lakshmi, who is the goddess of wealth.

The Athene brama or the Spotted Owllet is one of the most commonly sighted owls in our backyard. It is a nocturnal raptor (a bird of prey) found in the Indian Subcontinent, except for Sri Lanka.

The owl is largely crepuscular (appearing as it does around twilight) and nocturnal, but is sometimes seen during the daytime. It normally comes out before dusk and retires by sunrise to its roost in a tree hole or branch, where pairs or small family groups huddle together.

Its prey includes mostly beetles, moths, other insects and it also preys on earthworms, lizards, mice and small birds. At dusk, it perches on electrical wires or street lamp posts, fences or other such vantage points to look for prey, pouncing on an unwary insect, or occasionally launching an aerial attack to seize a flying insect attracted to the light from street lamps.

Owls have

always had a powerful hold on our imaginations by being a part of myths, legends and fairytales. Irrespective of their aura, they are often considered bad omens, and this is hurting their survival. Owls as predators keep a balance in our ecosystem by keeping a check on rodent and insect population. Hence, this perception needs to change as all creatures have a role to play in the ecological system and hurting this delicate balance could harm us in the long run.

The writer is the founder of the NINOX - Owl about Nature, a nature awareness initiative. He formerly led a programme at WWF-India as a naturalist and is the Delhi-NCR reviewer for Ebird, a Cornell University initiative, monitoring rare sightings of birds in the region



RANJANI RAJENDRA

Overnight oats for breakfast have been in the market for a while but never really picked up in India. And millets just take too long to cook — or so most people feel.

Sanjeeta Krishnakumar, founder OGMO Foods, hopes to bust this perception with her range of overnight millets and oats. "I use rolled millets that require no cooking. Combined with spray-dried fruit powders and chia seeds, it makes for a great first meal," she says. You soak the mix in water the night before and pair it with fruits the next morning, for a wholesome start to the day. "Soaking whole grains has a lot of benefits. One of them being that it neutralises phytic acids and makes it easier to assimilate all the nutrients," says Sanjeeta, who has spent the last couple of years researching the benefits of soaked foods.

She began her career as a food blogger back in 2008 and worked with several restaurants and brands, creating recipes for them. By 2009, Sanjeeta began her career as a food stylist, working on shoots for several television commercials and campaigns. "But for the last two years I had been wanting to do something on my own; introduce what I've created into the market," she says. "I wanted to take it (overnight oats) a step further and include overnight millets into the mix as well. I'd been researching these and creating recipes to see what works best. I gave samples of whatever I made to friends to try."

Once she felt she'd got the recipes right, it was all about sourcing the ingredients. "I use barnyard and little millets in the products," Sanjeeta says. These are ideal, she says, for people who are on the go but don't

Breakfast in a jar

With a choice of overnight millets and oats, OGMO has the answer for people looking for quick, healthy meal options



Soak it in The overnight millets and oats can be paired with everything from fruit to curd • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

want to compromise on eating healthy food.

Launched in December last year, OGMO has on offer four products so far, two that use rolled oats, spray dried fruits, cocoa, cinnamon and jaggery, and two with rolled millets in savoury and sweet variants. "To the savoury overnight millets, one could even add curd to turn into curd rice." Sanjeeta is working on four more variants.

"All the products are made using natural ingredients and are preser-

vative-free. They are minimally processed and are made using simple ingredients. The idea, is to promote a clean label," says Sanjeeta. Plans are also afoot to move to a completely organic range of products soon.

Currently, OGMO is completely self-funded. "We're taking it slow. We want to first establish ourselves well in the market. Funding will come in later," she says.

Available online on Amazon, Flipkart and Better India, ₹45 upward

5 EVENTS WORTH YOUR WHILE



PERFORMANCE

Hindustani music

India International Centre is hosting a two-day summer festival of Hindustani music. Today, the first day of the festival, will see a Siddha Veena recital by Siddhartha Banerjee from Delhi. This will be followed by a Hindustani vocal recital by Meghna Kumar from Orissa.

VENUE: C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, India International Centre
TIME: 6 p.m. onwards



FOOD

Summer special

The All American Diner's special month-long summer menu will focus on ways to stay cool. On offer are a variety of cold soups and salads such as smoked chicken sausage soup, watermelon gazpacho, panzanella salad, and curried chicken and mango salad. The menu has been curated by their kitchen chefs.

VENUE: The All American Diner, IHC
TIME: 11 a.m. - 12 midnight



ART

Drawing exhibit

As part of the ongoing 24-day art festival called *AM - Identity Art Marathon 2019*, an exhibition of drawings organised by Untitled Creations, features *Pehchaan* by artist Abid Zaidi. Curated by Aakshat Sinha, the art works on display depict vultures, the birds of prey, and focus on their disappearing numbers.

VENUE: Aparna Art Gallery
TIME: 10 a.m. - 7 p.m.



FOOD

Breakfast menu

Nukkadwala, the fast food restaurant chain inspired by the many street foods of India, has come up with a variety of new breakfast dishes. On offer are typical breakfast dishes from across India's streets including kande pohe, matra kulcha, Parsi anda bhurji, egg rolls, medu vada, and tulsi tea, Meerut shikanji, and more.

VENUE: Nukkadwala, Saket
TIME: 10 a.m.

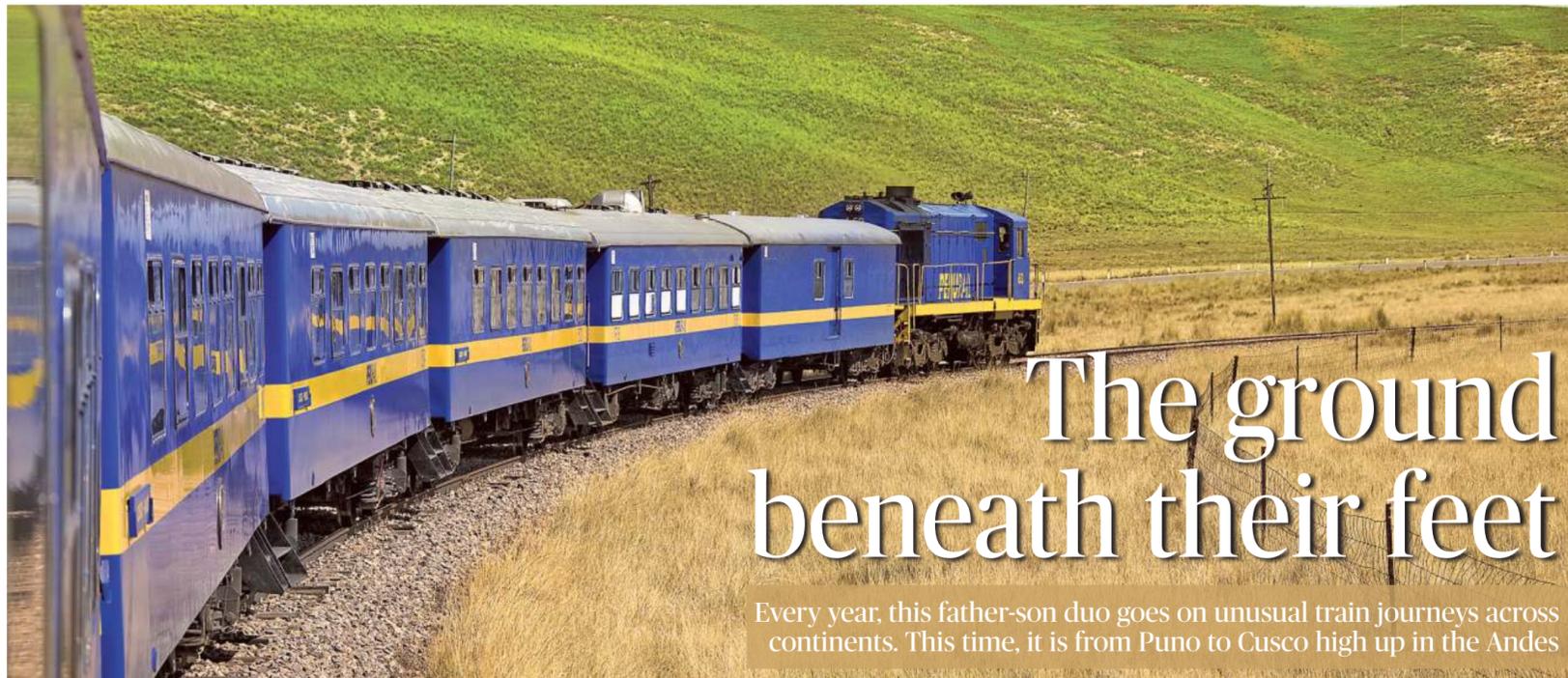


GIG

Desi Roots live

Hard Rock Cafe will host the band Desi Roots on Thursday evening. The band is coming together of seasoned professional artists who have been active in the music industry now for over a decade. The band will play Bollywood and pop numbers in addition to their sufi, folk, indie and rock tunes.

VENUE: Hard Rock Cafe, DLF Place, Saket
TIME: 9 p.m. - 11:30 p.m.



The ground beneath their feet

Every year, this father-son duo goes on unusual train journeys across continents. This time, it is from Puno to Cusco high up in the Andes

SRINATH SRIDEVAN

At 7 in the morning, in the freezing cold, my 10-year-old son, my wife and I, along with a large group of travellers, congregated at Puno Railway Station. My son and I are rail buffs; my wife is not. The rail journey from Puno on the banks of Lake Titicaca to Cusco in central Peru is considered a seminal experience for rail aficionados, and we were keen on doing this. Although my wife was apprehensive, the experience was incredible, and Peru Rail, which operates the route, takes great care to make sure that there is something for everyone, on this trip.

South America is home to the second-largest high-altitude plateau on Earth, the Altiplano. This surreal landscape comprises brown tree-less mountains that tower over the flat expanse, that stretches for hundreds of kilometres, at an altitude of over 12,500 feet.

The Altiplano contains Lake Titicaca, the highest navigable lake on Earth. Until recently, the railway line from Puno to Cusco, was the highest regularly-run passenger line on the planet.

Puno sits at the western end of the immense lake, the waters of which are an unusually deep hue

of blue. The Lupaças, who lived here many centuries ago, believed that the souls of the dead came to rest in the depths of the lake, only to be slowly lifted up by the warmth of the sun, to be re-born as stars.

The last carriage of the Andean Explorer is open to air, and an observation car. There is a live band in this car, who invited my son to play the maracas, while they played the Incan flute. The observation car is a huge party, with dancing and music.

On the menu

Peru Rail does an excellent job of keeping the passengers fed, with a non-stop supply of snacks. The most popular snacks are banana chips (identical to our South Indian banana chips), and Inca corn, which comprises heated, not popped corn kernels. An excellent three-course lunch is also served, which tries to showcase the local produce of Peru.

At precisely 7.30 am, to the ringing of the station bell, our train left Puno. The train itself is a slow one, taking nearly 12 hours to cover the distance of 380 kilometres. Soon after we leave Puno, the houses become smaller, and soon vanish altogether. We are in the Altiplano. There is nearly no



South American saga (Clockwise from above) The train that runs across the Altiplano, a view of Cusco, the church at La Raya • GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

vegetation and very little human habitation. The sense of loneliness here is overwhelming. The train slowly curves and grinds its way through the flat emptiness of this immense plateau.

By midday, the landscape changes and the mountains which were distant grow higher and nearer. The train runs through a near desert, flanked by

snow-capped peaks on either side. It belches thick clouds of smoke as it powers its way upward for the next hour or so and stops at a halt with an exhausted screech at La Raya, nearly 14,200 feet above sea level.

Edge of the world

La Raya was the highest passen-

ger station in the world, until Tanggula (on the Beijing-Lhasa line) took the crown, a few years ago. We all get off at La Raya, a desolate place, with an old church, and a few bystanders. There is no station master here; not even a station building. Don't these people understand we are

at one of the greatest railway sta-

tions on earth? There is a single board, proclaiming that we are indeed at 'The' La Raya. After a short halt, the bell rang, and we left La Raya.

The air, at this altitude, is noticeably thin, and most people are nursing mild symptoms of altitude sickness. Peru Rail served us 'coca tea' to enable us to beat

FACTFILE

NEAREST AIRPORT: Juliaca International Airport
RAILWAY STATION: Puno

BEST WAY TO REACH THE STATION: You can fly into Juliaca, spend a couple of days on the banks of Lake Titicaca and then board the Andean Explorer.

BOOK YOUR TICKETS VIA THE PERU RAIL WEBSITE: They take care to seat families and groups together — so this is a good option.

HEALTH TIPS: Puno and Juliaca are at an altitude of 3,830m (12,560 ft). So be prepared for altitude sickness. Remember to carry along meds.

All hotels keep checking your blood oxygen levels and have oxygen available for use. But it is a good idea to start having Diamox from a few days before.

You will probably need to continue this dosage all the way to Cusco and until you head to lower altitudes below 8,000 ft. Check with your doctor before you leave.

THINGS TO TAKE ALONG:

There is ample supply of food, drinks and fun on the train. So just take along a good camera and a warm jacket to keep you warm.

this. Coca tea is said to improve our oxygen content.

From La Raya, the track quickly drops back down to more human altitudes, and soon we are at the station of San Pedro, which is home to a natural hot spring. By dusk, the landscape had changed again, and we were now going through mountains with some short trees. Signs of human habitation appeared. Nameless towns flashed past our windows.

As night fell, we were nearing the ancient town of Cusco. Cusco lies in a broad valley. At one end is the enormous mountain, Ausangate. At the other end, are the ruins of the ancient Inca capital of Sacsayhuaman.

At 6.40 pm, (which was just about 10 minutes behind schedule) the train came to a halt at the Cusco Station. Thoroughly exhausted, we disembarked from the train, and emerged into the cold evening.

POOCH CAFE



PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



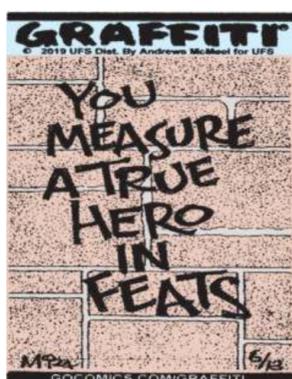
TIGER



WUMO



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



HEALTH CAPSULES
by Bron Smith

WHAT IS THE BEST KIND OF HONEY?

MANUKA *flower*

MANUKA HONEY FROM NEW ZEALAND IS A SUPERIOR HONEY DUE TO THE FLOWERS OF THE MANUKA BUSH THAT THE BEES POLLINATE. IT IS SUPERIOR TO OTHER HONEYS BECAUSE OF ANTIBIOTIC COMPOUNDS FOUND IN THE MANUKA FLOWER. IT ALSO HAS ANTI-OXIDANT AND ANTI-INFLAMMATORY PROPERTIES NOT FOUND IN OTHER HONEYS.

Health capsules to be attended to to be a therapeutic means.

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13095

1	2	3	4	5	6
7			8		
9		10		11	
12	13			14	15
16					
17		18		19	
20				21	
22				23	

- 4 Deceptive manoeuvre (5)
- 5 Most crafty (7)
- 6 Annul an act of parliament (6)
- 11 Light-hearted pastime (9)
- 13 Uproot by force (7)
- 14 Treat carelessly (7)
- 15 Diffidence (7)
- 16 Affection (6)
- 18 Cardinal point (5)

Solution will appear in The Hindu dated June 14, 2019.

Solution No. 13094

- Across
- 1 Horrified (6)
- 4 Less in number (5)
- 7 Fruit (6)
- 8 Stimulus (6)
- 9 Young elephant (4)
- 10 Object of abhorrence (8)
- 12 Young hooligans (11)
- 17 One present at an event (8)
- 19 Spanish painter, d. 1828 (4)
- 20 Insubstantial (6)
- 21 County town of Devon (6)
- 22 Snag (5)
- 23 Social position — prestige (6)
- Down
- 1 Give an ovation (7)
- 2 Co-operative (7)
- 3 Long drawn-out (9)

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

IN BRIEF

**Kohli is the sole Indian in list of top-paid athletes**

NEW DELHI
Cricketer Virat Kohli, the sole Indian in the Forbes list of the world's highest-paid athletes, is ranked 100th with estimated annual earnings of \$25 million. Football star Lionel Messi tops the list with \$127 million in earnings. PTI

**'Lovelorn fish turn gloomy when separated'**

PARIS
Researchers in France found that the Central American convict cichlid turn gloomy when separated. The tropical fish, known to be a loyal and monogamous partner, suffers from heartache when separated from its lover. AFP

**WHO emergency meet as Ebola spreads to Uganda**

GENEVA
The World Health Organization said on Wednesday that a key emergency committee would meet on Friday following confirmation that an Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo had spread to neighbouring Uganda. A five-year-old boy in Uganda has died of Ebola. AFP

Survey reveals 86% of Internet users fall victim to fake news

Lion's share of blame for its spread lies with the U.S., followed by Russia and China

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
OTTAWA

Eighty-six percent of Internet users have been duped by fake news – most of it spread on Facebook – according to a global survey published on Tuesday.

Respondents said they want both governments and social media companies to crack down on these activities, which are contributing to a growing distrust of the Internet as well as negatively impacting economies and political discourse.

The U.S. took the lion's share of the blame for spreading fake news, followed by Russia and China,



Fake news is most prevalent on Facebook, but also appears on YouTube and Twitter. •GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

according to the annual Ipsos survey of more than 25,000 Internet users in 25 countries.

Fake news appeared to be most prevalent on Facebook, but also appears on

YouTube, blogs and Twitter, the pollsters found.

The results showed people in Egypt were the most gullible while respondents in Pakistan were the most sceptical. It also revealed wide-

spread distrust of social media firms and growing concerns over privacy and biases baked into algorithms used by Internet companies.

The poll – which relied on both in-person and online interviews – was conducted between December 21, 2018 and February 10, 2019 on behalf of the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI). “This year's survey not only underscores the fragility of the Internet, but also netizens' growing discomfort with social media and the power these corporations wield over their daily lives,” CIGI's Fen Osler Hampson said.

A fake Zuckerberg video challenges Facebook rules

It shows him boasting about his online empire

CADE METZ
SAN FRANCISCO

Two weeks ago, Facebook declined to remove a doctored video in which Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, seemed to drunkenly slur her speech. Over the weekend, two British artists released a doctored video of Facebook's Chief Executive, Mark Zuckerberg, as a sly comment on the spread of false information online.

Posted to the Facebook-owned social network Instagram, the video shows Mr. Zuckerberg speaking directly into the camera, boasting of nefarious motives behind



Mark Zuckerberg

his online empire.

“Imagine this for a second: One man, with total control of billions of people's stolen data, all their secrets, their lives, their futures,” he appears to say. “I owe it all to Spectre. Spectre showed me that whoever controls the data, controls

the future.” Spectre is a reference to a fictional, evil organization in *James Bond* lore.

The two artists behind the video, Bill Powers and Daniel Howe, did not immediately respond to requests for comment on Tuesday evening. Stephanie Otway, a spokeswoman for Instagram, said the fake video of Zuckerberg would receive the same treatment as the fake video of Pelosi. “If third-party fact checkers mark it as false, we will filter it from Instagram's recommendation surfaces like Explore and hashtag pages,” she said. NY TIMES

Big B pays off loans of 2,100 Bihar farmers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan on Wednesday said he helped pay off outstanding loans of over 2,000 farmers from Bihar.

The 76-year-old actor took to his personal blog to share the news.

Mr. Bachchan said he called some of the farmers to his residence and donated the amount.

“A promise made done. The farmers from Bihar who had outstanding loans, picked 2,100 of them, and paid off their amount with an OTS with the bank. Called some of them over to



Amitabh Bachchan

Janak and personally gave it to them at the hands of Shweta and Abhishek,” he wrote on his blog.

The *Badla* star also said he was on his way to honour another promise he made to the families of the martyrs of the Pulwama terror attack.

How much plastic is in your diet?

‘People are ingesting 5 g of microplastic every week, equal in weight to a credit card’

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

People worldwide could be ingesting 5 g of microscopic plastic particles every week, equivalent in weight to a credit card, researchers said on Wednesday.

Coming mostly from tap and especially bottled water, nearly invisible bits of polymer were also found in shellfish, beer and salt, scientists from the University of Newcastle reported.

The findings, drawn from 52 peer-reviewed studies, are the first to estimate the sheer weight of plastics consumed by individual hu-



Humans consume about 250 g over the course of a year. •ISTOCKPHOTO

mans: about 250 g over the course of a year.

Another study calculated that the average American eats and drinks in about 45,000 plastic particles smaller than 130 microns an-

nually, while breathing in roughly the same number.

“If we don't want it in our bodies, we need to stop the millions of tons of plastic that continue leaking into Nature every year.”

In the last two decades, the world has produced as much plastic as during the rest of history, and the industry is set to grow by 4% a year until 2025, according to a report by Grand View Research.

75% plastic wasted

More than 75% of all plastics winds up as waste. A third of that – some 100 million

tonnes – is dumped or leaches into Nature, polluting land, rivers and the sea. On current trends, the ocean will contain one metric tonne of plastic for every three metric tonnes of fish by 2025, according to *The New Plastics Economy* report.

Plastic particles have recently been found inside fish in the deepest recesses of the ocean, and blanketing the most pristine snows in the Pyrenees mountains between France and Spain.

The authors have invited other researchers to build on their conclusions.

Priest, ex-slave, on path to sainthood



Augustine Tolton

REUTERS
VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis on Wednesday put Father Augustine Tolton, the first African-American Catholic priest who started life as a slave in the 19th century U.S., on the path to sainthood.

The Vatican said Pope Francis approved a decree recognising Tolton's “heroic virtues,” an early step in the sainthood process, after a five-year investigation in Chicago.

Tolton was born in Bush Creek, Missouri, on April 1, 1854, into a family of slaves owned by a white Roman Catholic family.

His father escaped bondage by serving in the Union army during the American Civil War and the rest of the family gained freedom in 1862 by crossing the Mississippi river into Illinois, a free State.

Although tutored by Catholics who recognised his intellectual prowess, he had to study for the priesthood at a papal university in Rome because no seminary in the U.S. would take him. He was ordained in 1886 and returned to Illinois to serve in black parishes in that state until his death in 1897.

The Pope on Wednesday granted Tolton the title “Venerable,” meaning that Catholics can pray to him for intercession with God.

Diving deeper



Marine life: A biologist inspecting corals growing on tables in the Red Sea as a part of research carried out by the Interuniversity Institute for Marine Sciences near the southern Israeli city of Eilat. •AFP

Solo, yet tutti: an app puts orchestra in your living room

‘NomadPlay’ is free and offers a catalogue of albums

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
AIX-EN-PROVENCE

It's a musician's dream – rehearse alongside a full orchestra, but in your own living room. And the immersive experience has been made possible with an app, courtesy French start-up, Digital Music Solutions.

“NomadPlay” is all down to an algorithm which separates out the sound components of a score to remove any instrument as desired, fading out an oboe or piano part for instance, and allowing the home musician to join the fray.

“When we were young we all practised with records to get the impression we were playing along with the Vienna or Berlin philharmonic. That was very gratifying,” internationally-renowned French violinist Renaud Ca-



Melody of innovation: French violinist Renaud Capucon practising with the new application ‘NomadPlay’. •AFP

pucon, 43, said.

“But it was a nightmare when our parents heard us play because it just wasn't the same thing!”

Now, thanks to the app, “you're accompanied by an orchestra all on your own in your room – it's extraordinary.”

The app can be down-

loaded for free on a phone or tablet and offers a catalogue of albums, ranging from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony to Schubert's Fantasia in F Minor. Amateurs and professionals buy the pieces for between five and €20 (\$5.60-\$22.50).

The concept is similar to that of karaoke.

No ‘Endgame’ for Avengers fan who watched film 110 times

Works for 10 hours, watches movie two times on weekdays

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LOS ANGELES

A Marvel fan in the U.S. is doing his part to help *Avengers: Endgame* become the highest-grossing movie in history – he's seen the superhero blockbuster a whopping 110 times, possibly setting a Guinness record.

“I work 10 hours, watch end game 2 times on weekdays at least 6 hours,” said Agustín Alanís in a message on Twitter on Monday.

Mr. Alanís, who lives in Florida, has been chronicling his trips to see the movie on Twitter, posting a picture of himself at each



A file photo of fans at a costume contest before the first screening of *Avengers: Endgame* in Los Angeles. •AFP

viewing with his ticket stub.

The latest mega-blockbuster from Marvel Studios has earned a worldwide total of \$2.732 billion at the box office so far, putting it within range of beating *Avatar*, which raked in \$2.788 billion to become the highest-grossing movie of all time.

Industry watchers, ho-

wever, say the movie has begun to lose steam with viewers and may end up in the number two spot for the foreseeable future – possibly until an eventual re-release.

That's unless more fans like Mr. Alanís make it their duty to ensure *Endgame* snatches the title from *Avatar*.

Surrogacy Bill pits progressives against feminists in U.S.

New York seeks to legalise surrogacy after Washington State and New Jersey did it last year

VIVIAN WANG

The proposal to legalise surrogacy in New York was presented as an unequivocal progressive ideal, a remedy to a ban that burdens gay and infertile couples and stigmatises women who cannot have children on their own.

And yet, as the State legislature hurtles toward the end of its first Democrat-led session in nearly a decade, the Bill's success is anything but certain.

Coercive to poor women Female lawmakers have spoken out against it. Prominent feminists, including Gloria Steinem, have denounced it.

Women's rights scholars have argued that paid surrogacy turns women's bodies into commodities and is coercive to poor women given the sizeable payments it can bring.

The Bill has the support of Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, and



Between 1999 and 2014 in the U.S., over 18,400 infants were born through gestational surrogacy. •GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

passed the State Senate on Tuesday. But it remains stalled in the Assembly, where several prominent female lawmakers have expressed firm opposition.

Assemblywoman Deborah Glick, who became the first openly gay member of the Legislature in 1991, said surrogacy rights were not the only marker for equality. “I'm not certain that, considering the money involved, that this is an issue for the

LGBTQ community to the state of New York.” “I think that's a mark of progress for our community and a mark of progress for human rights in general,” said Mr. Hoyleman, who is the State's only openly gay senator and has two daughters born through surrogacy in California.

In response to an ad The debate over surrogacy rights is relatively new, as it is inherently entwined with advances in reproductive technology. Its roots are in the infamous Baby M case, when Mary Beth Whitehead, a woman in New Jersey, answered a newspaper ad in 1984 to be a surrogate for a couple, Elizabeth and William Stern.

But after Ms. Whitehead gave birth to a girl, Baby M, she changed her mind: she wanted to keep the baby, who was biologically her daughter, as she had used her own egg for the pregnancy. A protracted legal battle

ensued. The Sterns won custody of the baby.

In the wake of that case, many States, including New York, banned surrogacy. But that trend has reversed in recent years. Washington state and New Jersey legalised paid surrogacy last year, joining about a dozen other states. Many other states allow it under certain circumstances or have no laws on the topic, effectively permitting it.

Between 1999 and 2014 in the U.S., more than 18,400 infants were born through gestational surrogacy, where the carrier is not related to the foetus, according to data from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Yet the opposite has happened globally. Surrogacy is illegal in most of Europe. And India – where “fertility tourism” brought in \$400 million a year – outlawed commercial surrogacy last year, over exploitation concerns. NY TIMES