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NEARBY

Woman fined for false sexual harassment plaint

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court imposed a cost of ₹50,000 on a woman for filing a false complaint of sexual harassment against her senior colleague. The court said there was no merit in the woman's petition in which she has challenged a 2012 order of an internal complaint committee. She had alleged that her colleague had misbehaved and made sexual advances at her in 2011.

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ISRO's lunar touchdown has dry run on soil fetched from Tamil Nadu

Chandrayaan-2's lander and rover were tested on a simulated surface

MADHUMATHI D.S.
BENGALURU

Newly designed cars are tested for road-worthiness on terrain where they would be driven, while new aircraft are test-flown in the skies. But where on earth did the Chandrayaan-2 mission's lander and rover, which will head for the moon on July 15, check out their legs and wheels?

More than a decade ago, even as the Chandrayaan-1 orbiter mission of 2008 was being readied, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) created a proto-Lunar Terrain Test Facility (LTTF) at its advanced satellite testing unit, ISITE, in Bengaluru. This, it did, by modifying a balloon research lab, about 30-40 m high, long and wide.

At the time, ISRO was grappling with the task of indigenously executing the cryogenic stage for its GSLV MkII rocket. Any thought of sending a moon lander was a distant dream of low priority. Equipping the LTTF and making it look and feel like being on the moon was the first challenge. It needed lunar 'soil' with almost all its features and texture, lunar temperatures, low gravity and the same amount of sunlight as on the moon.

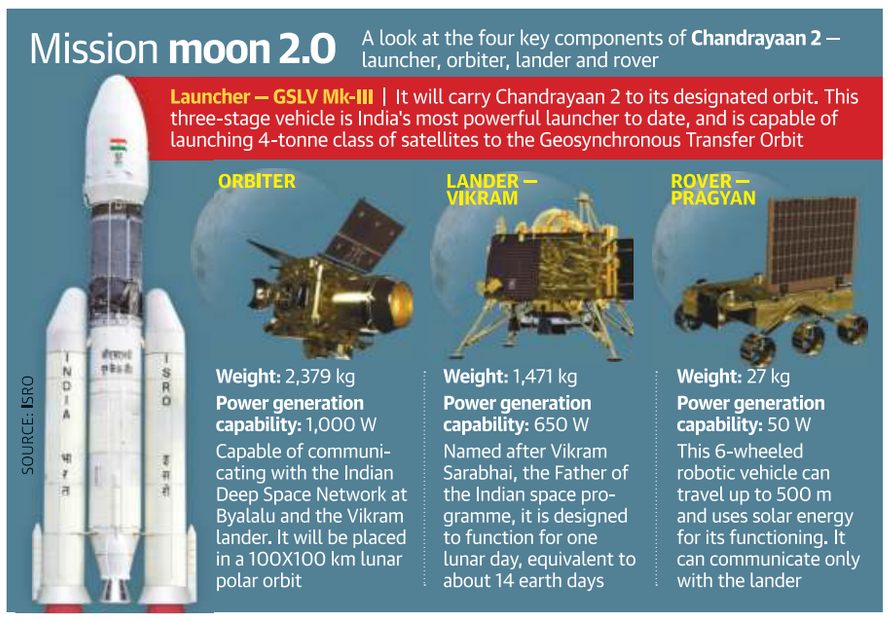
For recreating the terrain, an option was to import simulated lunar soil from the U.S. – at an exorbitant $150 a kg (the then prevailing price). The facility needed about 60-70 tonnes of soil.

ISITE's parent, the U.R. Rao Satellite Centre, or URSC (it was called the ISRO Satellite Centre or ISAC at the time) did buy a small amount of simulated lunar soil from the U.S., but soon decided to find its own solution at a lower cost.

M. Annadurai, who as URSC Director oversaw activities related to the Chandrayaan-2 spacecraft until he retired in August 2018, recounts that geologists of various national agencies had found that a few sites near Salem in Tamil Nadu had the 'anorthosite' rock that somewhat matches lunar soil in composition and features. The URSC's lunar soil simulation studies team zeroed in on Sithampoondi and Kunnamalai villages for the soil.

It turned out to be a ₹25 crore project: experts from the National Institute of Technology in Tiruchi, Periyar University in Salem, and the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, joined in, working without any fee.

TESTED ON 'CRATERS' ▸ PAGE 12



Water on wheels

Just in time: Chennai received its first water train from Vellore district on Friday. The train, carrying 2.5 million litres in 50 wagons, covered 200 km from Jolarpet to Villivakkam in four hours. Here, it is passing Vaniyambadi. ▪ C. VENKATACHALAPATHY

SC tells Speaker to defer call on Karnataka MLAs

Court orders status quo, schedules hearing for Tuesday

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday pressed the pause button in the legal battle for power in Karnataka, asking Assembly Speaker K.R. Ramesh Kumar to refrain from deciding on the disqualification or resignation of 10 rebel Congress-Janata Dal (Secular) MLAs for the time being.

The order comes just a day after the court asked Mr. Ramesh Kumar to meet the 10 MLAs at 6 p.m. on July 11 and decide on their resignations "forthwith or in the course of the remaining part of the day".

On Friday, a Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, ordered status quo and scheduled the hearing for Tuesday next.

In a spot: Karnataka Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, right, having a word with his deputy G. Parameshwara in the Assembly on Friday. ▪ K. MURALI KUMAR

The Bench's decision came after an hour-long hearing, in which Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy said the rebel MLAs had dragged the court into a "political thicket".

The Speaker, in turn, accused the legislators of feeding the court with a petition "full of blunders and distortions".

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DID CM STRIKE FIRST? ▸ PAGE 8
AFTERSHOCKS IN GOA ▸ EDITORIAL

IIP dips to 3.1% in May owing to slowdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Growth in industrial activity slowed in May to 3.1%, driven by an across-the-board deceleration, especially in consumer durables, according to official data released on Friday.

Retail inflation in June quickened marginally to 3.18% – from 3.05% in May – owing to a rise in food price inflation, a separate release said.

Growth in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) slowed in May from 4.32% in April. Within the index, the mining sector slowed to 3.16% in May from 5.07% in April. The manufacturing sector saw growth slowing to 2.46% from 3.98% over the same period.

Driven by increased demand during the summer months, the electricity sector saw growth accelerating in May.

Pak. asks India to pull back fighter jets

Airspace ban along eastern border extended until July 26

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has told India that it will not open its airspace for commercial flights until Indian Air Force fighter jets are removed from forward airbases, its Aviation Secretary Shahrukh Nusrat informed a parliamentary committee.

The country's Civil Aviation Authority also announced on Friday that the airspace ban along its eastern border with India has been extended for the fifth time till July 26.

Pakistan fully closed its airspace on February 26 after the IAF fighter jets struck a Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist training camp in Balakot following the Pulwama terror attack in Kashmir.

Mr. Nusrat, who is also the Director General of the CAA, told the Senate Standing Committee on Aviation on Thursday that the Indian government had approached Pakistan to open the airspace.

"We conveyed our concerns that first India must withdraw its fighter planes placed forward," Dawn News quoted him as telling the panel.

Review decision

A CAA official said the Pakistan government will review whether to open its space for Indian flights or not on July 26. "However, this issue is a bilateral one and no progress will be made till both Islamabad and New Delhi decide it mutually," he said.

Last month, for the fourth time, the CAA had extended the airspace ban till July 12.

"The Panjgoor airspace will remain open for overflying transit flights from the western side as Air India had already been using that airspace," the authority said in a notice on Friday.

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri told Parliament on Thursday that due to the closure of Pakistan airspace, Air India had to spend an extra ₹430 crore on longer routes.

Kiran Bedi asked to move Division Bench first

Supreme Court disposes of her appeal

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday disposed of a petition filed by Puducherry Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi for clarity on the issue of control over bureaucrats in the wake of a turf war between the LG's office and the Chief Minister in the Union Territory.

A Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, found that the LG had directly appealed in the Supreme Court against the decision of a single-judge Bench of the Madras High Court without first moving the High Court's Division Bench.

The court left it open for the LG to move the Division Bench. It did not agree with Solicitor General Tushar Mehta's repeated submission that the appeal would eventually reach the Supreme Court, so the case might as well be heard now by the highest court. Incidentally, the court on May 10 issued notice on the appeal against the single judge's decision.

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 12

Chinese men unfurl banner near LAC

Incident occurred at Demchok village

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR/ NEW DELHI

At least 11 men in civilian clothing on Friday morning drove close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in J&K's Ladakh region from the Chinese side and unfurled a big banner apparently "to counter the Dalai Lama's birthday celebrations in a nearby village on this side".

The incident, according to officials in the Army and the administration, occurred at Demchok village.

The officials could not confirm if the men were from the Chinese Army or from a nearby village.

"People in civvies drove down in two to three vehicles and came opposite the village where the celebrations were held and unfurled a long red banner, reading 'Ban all activity to split Tibet'," said the officials.

They added there was no attempt to intrude or "violate the sanctity of the LAC". It was an attempt at 'intimidating' the locals, added an official. "Phukche festival organised on the Dalai Lama's birthday is a regular feature in Ladakh," another official said.

CWC likely to decide on Cong. chief next week

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Ten days after Rahul Gandhi went public with his resignation as party chief, the Congress is yet to schedule a meeting of the Congress Working Committee to decide on his successor.

Sources in the party on Friday indicated that it could take place next week once there is clarity on the Karnataka political situation. Several party veterans had questioned the delay as well as the procedure of finding a replacement.

DETAILS ON ▸ PAGE 12

Homes lost, Malad wall collapse victims still in hospital

Many of the 41 persons admitted to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Municipal General Hospital 'fit for discharge'

JYOTI SHELAR
MUMBAI

Of the 41 persons injured in the Malad wall collapse and admitted to Kandivali's Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Municipal General Hospital, half are fit for discharge. But with no homes left to return to, the hospital has kept them as 'social admissions' till a shelter is arranged.

"It is a sensitive issue now," said medical superintendent Pradeep Angre.

"We cannot force these patients out as their homes have been destroyed. So we are treating them like social admissions. Some of the patients who could stay with relatives or friends have moved out but others are reluctant to leave," Dr. Angre added.

The wall of a reservoir in the city's north-western suburb came crashing down during the heavy rainfall on July 1, killing 29 people, injuring more than 100 others and destroying over 100 shanties in Kurar village.

The injured were rushed to Mumbai's five city government-run hospitals, with a majority admitted to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Municipal General Hospital.

Nowhere to go: Officials have requested the civic authorities to move such patients to a charitable home. ▪ JYOTI SHELAR

On Friday, Assistant Commissioner of P North ward, Sanjog Kabare, visited the hospital and collected details of the families who were there. "There is no clarity on how much time the rehabilitation procedure will take," said Dr. Angre. "We have requested the civic authorities to move the patients to a charitable home or a school till their rehabilitation is finalised so that they don't have to occupy hospital beds," he added.

Among those who have made the hospital a temporary home is Alka Sakpal, 50, who lost her eldest daughter in the disaster. Her two other children remain hospitalised, despite being fit for discharge. "Where will we go," asked Ms. Sakpal.

Madrasa students thrashed in U.P. for not chanting 'Jai Shri Ram'

FIR registered against four persons for Unnao incident

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

A group of madrasa students were assaulted and allegedly forced to chant 'Jai Shri Ram' purportedly by right-wing activists in Unnao, resulting in at least four of them being injured, police said on Friday.

The boys, all minors, were allegedly beaten with cricket stumps and bats, and also attacked with stones. "Almost all of them had their kurtas ripped by the miscreants," said Naeem Miswahi, the imam of the Darul Uloom Faize Aam Madrasa.

Around 10-12 boys of the madrasa were playing cricket at the Government Inter College grounds in Unnao on Thursday afternoon when four youth approached them and asked them to chant 'Jai Shri Ram'. When the boys refused, they were slapped and hit with the stumps, Mr. Miswahi said.

'Struck by a stone'

"When we did not chant [Jai] Shri Ram, they hit us more," said one of the boys whose head was struck by a stone. Another boy was injured in the foot, while one had his hand fractured in the assault, said Mr. Miswahi.

An FIR was registered against four persons at the Kotwali police station in Unnao. Circle Officer Umesh Tyagi said police were investigating the role of the accused persons and if they belonged to any right-wing group or political party. Three of the accused have been identified. Two persons have been detained for questioning, said Mr. Tyagi.

Unnao Superintendent of Police M.P Verma said that the investigation so far has not confirmed if the madrasa students were forced to chant 'Jai Shri Ram', but the incident is still being probed.

IN BRIEF

'Less funds given to fight vector-borne disease'

NEW DELHI

The government released only ₹2.15 crore of the ₹39.4 crore allocated to the SDMC to fight vector-borne diseases, creating problems for the civic body, said its Mayor Sunita Kangra on Friday. Leaders of the civic body said they would sit on dharna if funds are not released within a week.

Govt. conducts PTM in over 1,000 schools

NEW DELHI

Several parents flocked to over 1,000 government schools here on Friday to take feedback of their wards' performances at the mega Parent Teacher Meeting conducted by AAP dispensation. The mega PTM was put on hold after the BJP had accused the party of using the meetings as an opportunity to influence voters.

Air quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	272	Gurugram	216
Ghaziabad	294	Faridabad	164
Noida	294	Greater Noida	258

Good 0-50 | Satisfactory 51-100 | Moderate 101-200 | Poor 201-300 | Very poor 301-400 | Severe >401

AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) | SOURCE: CPCB

Woman fined ₹50K for false sexual harassment plaint

Plea in HC challenged internal complaint committee's 2012 order

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court imposed a cost of ₹50,000 on a woman for filing a false complaint of sexual harassment against her senior.

The court said there was no merit in the woman's petition in which she has challenged a 2012 order of an internal complaint committee (ICC).

"There is no merit in this writ petition which is dismissed with cost of ₹50,000 to be deposited by the petitioner [woman] with the Delhi High Court Advocates Welfare Trust within four weeks," Justice J.R. Midha said.

The court said the organisation, where the woman was working, is at liberty to initiate appropriate action against her for "filing a false complaint" against the man in accordance with the law.

The woman had also sought direction to the organisation to initiate independent departmental enquiry against the man and to also prosecute him. In her complaint, she had alleged sexual harassment by her senior in 2011. She had alleged that the man had misbehaved and made sexual advances towards her.

> **There is no merit in this writ petition which is dismissed with cost of ₹50,000 to be deposited by the petitioner [woman] with the High Court Advocates Welfare Trust within four weeks**
>
> J.R. MIDHA
> HC Judge

'Result of grudge'

To examine the complaint, an ICC was constituted where the man had denied the allegation and claimed that the complaint was the result of a grudge against him due to certain official work disposed of by him in her absence.

The committee had observed that the exact content of communication of the incident could not be established and gave benefit of doubt to the man.

The High Court, after going through the record of the inquiry proceedings, said it was of the view that the woman's complaint appeared to be false.

It said the woman had claimed that the incident took place in the presence of the staff and other members but during the inquiry proceedings, she could not give the name of any person present at that time.

Disqualification case: Assembly summons journalists

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Assembly has summoned reporters and editors of five newspapers, who had reported on two AAP MLAs joining BJP in May, as witnesses to appear before Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel.

A notice sent by the Legislative Assembly's Deputy Secretary (Legislation) asked witnesses to present themselves on the Assembly premises on July 20 over "disqualification proceedings on the grounds of defection of AAP MLA Anil Kumar Bajpai".

The notice said the Speaker has agreed to the "request for cross-examination" of AAP chief spokesperson Saurabh Bharadwaj and the "concerned editors/reporters he relied upon" in his petition seeking disqualification of Mr. Bajpai. The plea to the Speaker for Mr. Bharadwaj's cross-examination was filed by Mr. Bajpai during the hearing conducted on July 11.

AUD releases second cut-off list for UG courses

Marginal dip witnessed from first list

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The second cut-off list released by Ambedkar University Delhi on Friday witnessed a marginal dip in marks required for admission in undergraduate courses.

For students from outside the National Capital Territory (NCT) under the unreserved category, B.A. psychology (Hons) tops the subjects with the highest cut-off with 97.25%

The university extends an 85% reservation for students from the Capital while 15% is reserved for others.

For B.A. psychology (Hons), Delhi students need 96.5% to enrol for the course. Under the first list that was released on Tuesday, the varsity had sought 98.5% from students outside of Delhi while for NCT students, the cut-off was set at 97.75%.

The university states that 96.25% is required for students not belonging to Delhi to be eligible for admissions in the B.A. sociology (Hons) and B.A. social sciences (Hons) and humanities courses. However, for Delhi students, 93.5% is required for both the courses.

AUD extends 85% reservation for students from the Capital while 15% is reserved for others.

For non-Delhi students, 96% is the cut-off for B.A (Hons) economics while 94.75% is required for students belonging to Delhi. B.A. (Hons) mathematics has one of the lowest scores with 89.25% required for Delhi students while 92.5% is required for those outsides of the Capital.

Third list

While the third list will be announced on July 16, students seeking admission under the second cut-off list can enrol themselves on July 13 and July 15, at the Kashmere Gate campus.

DUTA writes to UGC, govt. on recruitment of professors

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) wrote to the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the government about the problems being faced due to implementation of reservations for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) in the recruitment of professors.

In the letter, DUTA president Rajib Ray suggested that it would be "academically wise" to defer implementation of EWS reservations till additional posts are sanctioned to the university. He also stated that the amount sanctioned by the UGC for the recruitment of professors is inadequate.

"It is woefully inadequate to ensure the maintenance of standards and quality," he said. The UGC has sanctioned about ₹42 crore for recruitment, he said, adding that the university's resources were under stress because the second tranche of posts to account for OBC expansion is yet to come as well as for the implementation of the choice based credit system (CBCS). Additionally, several professors are likely to face retrenchment in order to accommodate the new reservations, almost all of whom will also not be eligible for the EWS quota regardless of their family's income since the criteria are their own income.

DUTA also wrote to the Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia with regard to renewal of appointment of ad-hoc teachers being employed before the start of the academic session on July 20. This letter calls for the allocation of more funds to government-funded colleges.

Govt. notifies 511 auto stands

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Transport Department on Friday announced that it has notified 511 new auto stands across the city to facilitate commuters and address the issue of congestion.

The coordinates of the auto stands would be available on Google Maps to enable commuters to locate them, said Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot.

Govt.'s response sought on plea to allow EWS student to attend Class XI

School barred her for securing poor marks in Class X exams

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday sought responses of the city government and a private school here on a plea seeking direction to allow a student to attend Class XI and continue education under the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) category.

The petition, filed by the girl's father, alleged that the school was not allowing his daughter to continue her studies on the grounds that she secured poor marks in the Class X board examination. She had secured 61% in the CBSE Class X board examination.

The case has been posted for hearing on July 23. The plea said the girl has been studying in the school since the beginning under the EWS category and had appeared for the Class X exam this year. The plea also claimed that when her father had contacted the school principal, he was asked to pay the full fees. It added that the DoE has failed to take action against the school which has denied education to the girl and this was illegal, arbitrary and discriminatory.

LoP alleges red-tapism in teachers' appointment

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Vijender Gupta on Friday alleged red-tapism in the Delhi government's "dealing" with primary school teacher candidates with disabilities.

Alleging that these Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) received no "positive response" from the government for long, the LoP led their delegation to L-G Anil Baijal to petition their grievances, mainly related to not appointing them on reserved posts for physically handicapped persons.

DU faculty, police officers conduct meeting on anti-ragging measures

Surprise checks to be extended to cafeterias, hostels, PGs

SAURABH TRIVEDI
SAURAV SINHA
NEW DELHI

A meeting on anti-ragging measures was held at Delhi University's North Campus on Friday wherein stakeholders of all colleges in the city and some police officers discussed the efforts to sensitise students regarding the issue.

The meeting was attended by the Proctor, Dean of Students' Welfare (DSW), in-charge welfare of foreign students, principals, head of departments and anti-ragging committee members of different Delhi University colleges.

During the meeting, the police said each anti-ragging committee has a local SHO as their member. DCP (North) Nupur Prasad said they had a discussion with principals and other office-bearers of Delhi University over the safety and security of students.

A principal asking questions during the meeting on Friday. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The helpline numbers should be widely publicised, the officer said, adding that the students should be sensitised through social media platforms and campus announcements. Ms. Prasad said the surprise checking should not be limited to colleges but also extended to cafeterias, hostels and PGs.

"For the safety of students, there is a comprehensive security scheme in place. We have deployed all-woman patrol and additional officers in the campus area. We have 'Himmat Plus' app that ensures the safety of a person while availing public transport," said Ms. Prasad. The DCP said she will deploy additional police personnel, including women, for students from Northeast.

Dikshit announces names of block committee observers

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

DPCC president Sheila Dikshit on Friday announced the names of 14 District Congress Committee and 280 Block Congress Committee observers to short-list probable candidates for the post of presidents of the block committees.

"The observer will interact with former MPs, MLAs, municipal councillors, senior leaders and grass-root level workers before suggesting the probable names within 10 days," the DPCC said.

DELHI TODAY

Talk: Lecture on "Demystifying Dyslexia and Interventions for Young Children in Classroom" by Rama Tandon, senior Dyslexia Therapist, Vasant Valley School, at Seminar Rooms - I-II, India International Centre (IIC), 10:30 a.m.

Dance: "Guru Purnima Mahotsav", Kathak dance performances by Pradyuman Bhargav and his disciples at Triveni Kala Sangam, 205 Tansen Marg, 6:30 p.m.

Dance: Suramya Performing Arts presents Nritya Aradhana, an evening of Kuchipudi dance by Kuchipudi artistes of Delhi NCR, at Bipin Chandra Pal Auditorium, A-81, Chittaranjan Park, 6:30 p.m.

Exhibition: "Artistagram 2019", a group art show curated by Jyoti Kalra at Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 10 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Screening: "Ballad", a Japanese film will be screened with English subtitles at The Japan Foundation, 5A Ring Road, Lajpat Nagar IV, 2 p.m.

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

Four IndiGo officials get DGCA notice over safety

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

The DGCA has served a showcause notice to four senior officials of IndiGo for failing to ensure corrective training for pilots to avoid accidents, following a surprise inspection at the airline's facility in Gurugram.

The safety aviation watchdog Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has found lapses in the monitoring of Flight Operations Quality Assurance (FOQA), which is the process of collecting and analysing data from flights to improve safety of flights. These are collected for every flight and are basically pre-emptive measures taken to avoid accidents.

During a surprise check, the DGCA discovered that in a number of cases "the corrective training was either not carried out or delayed", records of such trainings were not maintained, action recommended were "inconsistent" with the severity of events, pilots are not "made available" to undergo training as well as absence of guidelines for carrying out this monitoring exercise.

The training sessions are conducted for pilots who are involved in "exceedances" or those who exceed the prescribed limits during a flight, for example the rate of descent or rate of rotation, etc.

Earlier, the DGCA had also served similar notices to officials of SpiceJet for safety lapses.

SC orders commencement of metro Phase-IV work

Over 100-km-long project to be built at a cost of ₹46,845 cr.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday ordered commencement of construction work on the Delhi Metro's fourth phase, which is over 100-km-long and is estimated to add around 18.6 lakh riders per day, after the Delhi government said it has agreed to give the go-ahead to the project.

The Phase-IV of Delhi Metro will consist of six corridors – Aerocity to Tughlakabad, Inderlok to Indraprastha, Lajpat Nagar to Saket G Block, Mukundpur to Maujpur, Janakpuri West to R.K. Ashram and Rithala to Bawana and Narela.

Of the 103.94 km to be constructed, 37.01 km will be underground while around 66.92 km will be elevated. The estimated cost of the project is ₹46,845 crore.

As per Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), its operational network is 343 km with current average daily ridership of nearly 28 lakh.

'Car-free travel'

The Environment Pollution Control Authority (EPCA), which recently filed a report in the apex court, has said that Phase-IV of the metro "will add significantly to the public transport infrastructure in the city. This combined with buses and last-mile connectivity [pedestrian and other facilities] would greatly improve the public transport network in the city and provide options

for car-free travel".

The EPCA report also said that the Phase-IV is projected to add "some 18.6 lakh riders per day".

A Bench comprising Justices Arun Mishra and Deepak Gupta was informed by senior advocate Aparajita Singh, assisting the top court as an amicus curiae in pollution matter, that the Delhi government has agreed to give the go-ahead to Phase-IV of the metro.

Cost sharing

The counsel appearing for Delhi government said however that issues regarding sharing of land cost and taxes still remain.

Additional Solicitor General A.N.S. Nadkarni, appearing for the Centre, said that financial pattern, similar to what was followed in earlier phases of the metro, was there for Phase-IV. He said the same pattern was followed for metro projects in other cities like Bhopal, Indore, Kanpur, Pana and Agra.

The apex court, while directing that fourth phase be implemented, said that issues concerning sharing of land cost and taxes between the Centre and Delhi government would be heard by it on July 19.

The Bench directed the authorities concerned to start the construction.

On July 8, the apex court had took note of the issues between the Centre and Delhi government over certain financial aspects of the metro Phase-IV and had said it would pass order in the matter as the "project cannot wait".

The amicus had told the Bench that as per the EPCA's report, the Phase-IV project is "critical" and the pending issue should be resolved soon. The amicus had referred to the EPCA report which said that the approval for "103.94 km Phase-IV of the Delhi Metro has been held up since 2014, when the project was submitted to the Union government for its approval".

AAP govt. for starting work on six corridors

NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government has asked for starting work simultaneously on all six corridors of Delhi Metro's Phase-IV project, Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said on Friday. Six corridors of the project were approved by Delhi government in December 2018; however, the Centre, in March 2019, dropped three, while allowing the rest.

Apex court refuses to stay govt. policy on CCTVs in schools

Court disagrees with plea's contention of privacy breach

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to stay a Delhi government policy to instal closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras in city government schools and live stream the feed to parents of students.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi did not agree with the submission that the installation and transmission of live feeds of CCTVs to the parents would infringe on the fundamental right to privacy as the children are incapable to give consent and the parents' approval has not been taken.

Earlier, the apex court had issued notice to the Delhi government on a PIL of 20-year-old Amber Tickoo, a third year law student at National Law University, challenging the decision of the Delhi government.

The live-streaming of CCTV feeds will be done to random people which will be a breach of privacy, the PIL had claimed. There were adolescent children in schools and it will be a breach of their privacy if the CCTV feed was live streamed, it said.

The plea had sought setting aside of the Delhi government's decision of September 11, 2017 for installing CCTV cameras in classroom and live streaming the CCTV feeds to the parents of children.

It contended that these decisions of the government were in direct contravention of the verdict of the apex court which has unequivocally upheld the Right to Privacy as a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Submit details of manual scavengers: HC

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday asked the city government and various civic authorities here to submit in affidavit details of manual scavengers who are directly or indirectly in their payroll.

The court said the affidavit should also highlight compliance with the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act and rehabilitation of manual scavengers. The HC Bench said the affidavits should be filed within two weeks and listed the case for hearing on August 28.

Lokayukta notice to Tiwari over 'classroom scam'

Seeks clarification from BJP leader

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Lokayukta's office has sought some clarification from Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Manoj Tiwari in regard to his complaint against Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and Public Works Department (PWD) Minister Satyendar Jain alleging a "scam" in the construction of classrooms at government schools.

Mr. Tiwari, through a notice, has been asked to present himself at the Lokayukta office for his submission on July 30.

The Lokayukta has registered Mr. Tiwari's complaint filed on his behalf by leaders and legal team of the Delhi BJP on July 4.

Mr. Tiwari and other leaders have on several occasions attacked the AAP government alleging "abuse of position" and "corruption" to the tune of ₹2,000 crore by Mr. Sisodia and other AAP leaders in the construction of over 12,000 classrooms at government schools.

The AAP hit back by sending a notice of criminal defamation to Mr. Tiwari and other BJP leaders.

Reacting to the charge, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Mr. Sisodia had dared Mr. Tiwari to get them arrested and challenged him to come out with a list of 10 schools in BJP-ruled States which could be compared with those run by the Delhi government in terms of quality.

SC to decide on NGT's power to take suo motu cognisance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to examine a legal question whether the National Green Tribunal (NGT), established in 2010 to deal with cases pertaining to environmental issues, has the power to take cognisance of a matter on its own.

A Bench of Justices S.A. Bobde and B.R. Gavai said it would decide the issue when the question regarding NGT's power to take suo motu (on its own) cognisance was raised before it.

IN BRIEF

Businessman held for vandalising fire tender

GURUGRAM

A 22-year-old businessman has been arrested for allegedly entering into a scuffle with firemen and vandalising a fire tender, along with his accomplices, in DLF Phase-III here on Friday, the police said. More persons are likely to be arrested in the case, said Assistant Commissioner of Police (DLF) Karan Goel.

Fire breaks out at hospital, six patients rescued

NEW DELHI

A fire broke out at ESI Hospital in west Delhi's Basai Darapur on Friday morning. No injuries were reported. . Delhi Fire Service Chief Atul Garg said they received a call around 9 a.m. informing them about a fire in the operation theatre on the third floor. Six fire tenders were pressed into service and six patients were rescued," Mr. Garg said.

Speed governors: govt. told to decide on plea

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed the government to decide on a representation by a commercial travel and tour operator seeking extension of time to instal speed governors in his vehicles.

Stabbed by former live-in partner, woman critical

Accused suspected her of being in another relationship

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 32-year-old Jawaharlal Nehru University staff was on Thursday stabbed multiple times by her former live-in partner who suspected her of being in a relationship with someone else, the police said on Friday.

The victim, identified as Pooja, a resident Kishangarh, was attacked by Varun Pandey (36) in front of J.D. Tytler School in south Delhi's Munirka when she had gone to pick up her daughter, they said.

Caught by locals

"Pandey was caught by the locals and later handed over to the police," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (South-West) Devender Arya.

Ms. Pooja was rushed to Indian Spinal Injuries Centre where her condition was stated to be critical. The knife used in the attack has been recovered from the spot, Mr. Arya also said.

> **It was revealed that the victim, a divorcee, had been in a live-in relationship with the accused for eight years... They were, however, living separately for the past two months**
>
> DELHI POLICE

During investigation, it was revealed that the victim, a divorcee, had been in a live-in relationship with Mr. Pandey for eight years, the police said. The accused is a resident of Khanpur, they said.

The accused and the victim were, however, living separately for the past two months, the police added. The DCP said that Ms. Pooja's daughter studies in Class III.

The accused suspected that Ms. Pooja was in a relationship with another person, the police said.

Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union president N. Sai Balaji has appealed to people to donate money and blood to the victim, who is the sanitation incharge at Shipra Hostel.

She is critical and is battling for life at the ICU of the Spinal Injuries Centre, Mr. Balaji said, adding that she urgently required blood and that the cost of treatment is coming up to at least ₹4 lakh.

"Ms. Pooja is a single mother. The man who stabbed her is also a JNU employee. This act of violence has shocked everyone," he said.

17-year-old stabbed to death in front of father

Personal enmity seems to be motive: cops

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 17-year-old boy was stabbed to death in front of his father in Rohini's Meer Vihar on Thursday night, the police said.

The accused have been identified, they said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Rohini) S.D. Misra said that the victim has been identified as Shamsher Alam who runs a vegetable cart with his father Mohd. Salim in a nearby market.

"The PCR received a call at 12.10 a.m. informing about the incident. The police reached the spot and conducted an inquiry. They found that Shamsher and his father were going home when the incident happened. Two persons caught hold of the man and the other stabbed the boy and fled the spot," he said.

However, the the victim's father was not attacked, added the DCP.

The victim was rushed to a nearby hospital where he succumbed to injuries.

Shamsher Alam. ▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The police said that the motive behind the murder appears to be personal enmity since the accused neither asked for money nor snatched his mobile phone.

Case registered

Mr. Misra said that a case under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code has been registered.

"The police are conducting raids to nab the accused," Mr. Misra added.

Two men arrested for duping people

Pretended to help them deposit money

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two persons have been arrested for allegedly cheating people on the pretext of helping them make deposits into their bank accounts, the police said on Friday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South-East) Chinmoy Biswal said that the accused have been identified as Jitender Mehto (32) and Baccha Lal Kumar (19), both labourers. They hail from Bihar's west Champaran and were arrested on July 4 when they had come to look for targets at a bank in Bhogal.

The police said that a man approached them on June 7 with a complaint saying that two persons swindled ₹45,000 from him on the pretext of helping him deposit cash in his account using a cash depositing machine.

During investigation, CCTV footage was examined and the accused were identified.

During interrogation, they said they used to work as labourers in West Bengal. They met one Babu, who was also from their village and used to work in Delhi, a few months ago.

Babu, who was into duping people, lured them to join him. They used to give Babu 20% of the money they made, the police said.

Modus operandi

Mr. Biswal said that the accused used to pretend to help their targets deposit cash and would secretly press the "add transaction" button on the machine and would tell them that the deposit was successful. However, as soon as the target leaves the premise, the accused press the "cancel" button, resulting in a failed transaction due to which the cash would come out of the machine, the police said.

17 foreigners detained for illegal stay flee

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NOIDA

Seventeen foreigners, who were detained in Greater Noida for allegedly staying in the country without valid travel documents, have escaped from police custody, officers said on Friday.

They were among the 60 foreign nationals from nine countries who were detained on Wednesday over invalid visa and passport documents and faced deportation, they said.

"Around 8.30 p.m. on Thursday, 17 of the foreign nationals escaped from the reserve police lines in Surajpur where they were lodged. They escaped after breaking open a bathroom window," Gautam Buddh Nagar SSP Vaibhav Krishna said.

Bank reports fraud of over ₹4 cr.; FIR lodged

Role of three employees under scanner

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Delhi Police has registered an FIR against unknown persons for allegedly siphoning off ₹4.24 crore from a bank after creating various accounts based on fake documents of government employees, said officials on Friday.

On Thursday, the police said they received a complaint from the assistant vice-president of risk management and control at HDFC Bank, Amit Sahni. He said that during scrutiny, they have detected fraud and identified 62 personal loans, including 38 credit cards, with an outstanding amount of ₹4.24 crore, which was disbursed to various customers in Delhi.

In his complaint, he said the fraudsters approached the bank posing as potential customers who had come to open a savings account. The accused then applied for personal loans and credit cards, which were introduced to them by three sales executives of the bank who helped the 'customers' with the forged documents. Following this, personal loans and credit cards were granted and issued by the bank on the basis of the forged employment documents submitted by the 'customers', Mr. Sahni said.

It has been found that the alleged accused introduced themselves as government employees – lower division clerk, upper division clerk, teachers, civic body officials, and other government officials. They provided fake bank statements, salary slips, certificates in support of their employment from their respective 'government offices'.

62 cases detected

The bank has provided the police with details of 62 such cases detected by them during their internal inquiry. They have also given the details of the three bank executives, who had sourced these accounts. The role of the executives is under the scanner, the police said.

"It has been found that loans were obtained from HDFC Bank on the basis of fake salary certificate and employment credentials of civic body schools and offices. An FIR has been registered under IPC Sections 420 [cheating], 468 [forgery for purpose of cheating] and 471 [using as genuine a forged] at EOW. The case is under investigation," said Additional Commissioner of Police (EOW) Suvashish Choudhary.

DDA told to pay ₹50 lakh for failing to curb pollution

Vice-Chairman to be summoned in case of non-compliance, says green panel

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Friday directed the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to deposit ₹50 lakh as performance guarantee over the urban body's failure to curb pollution on the Yamuna floodplains.

Directing the DDA to deposit the amount within two weeks, a Bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said that the DDA Vice-Chairman will be summoned in case of non-compliance of orders.

The directions came after the green panel took into consideration a supplementary progress report filed by a NGT-appointed monitoring committee that comprises former Delhi Chief Secretary Shailaja Chandra and former NGT expert member B.S. Sajwan.

As part of the Yamuna rejuvenation project, the DDA has notified 120 hectares of the Yamuna floodplain. ▪ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Observing that the efforts of the tribunal and the monitoring committee will remain futile in case of non-compliance by the various authorities, the Bench said, "No regulatory authority can remain a mute spectator and must play a proactive role in exercising their powers to sternly prevent such pollution. Any failure has to be dealt with strongly."

During the hearing, the counsel appearing for the DDA informed the tribunal that as a part of the Yamuna rejuvenation project, the DDA has notified 120 hectares of the Yamuna floodplain located downstream of the DND flyover.

In its report, the monitoring committee noted, "The 120-hectare floodplain, after restoration will store flood water, recharge flood water, buffer ambient temperature and serve as an important habitat for native fish and avian fauna."

The DDA also informed the Bench that it was in the process of removing encroachments from the floodplains on a regular basis.

Tax on compensation interest: CBDT asked to reply

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday sought response of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on a plea seeking quashing of the provision mandating tax deduction on the interest received on compensation by a road accident victim.

The court listed the case for further hearing on November 6.

The plea filed by advocate and social activist Amit Sahni sought setting aside of the CBDT's June 26 order by which it was held that the income tax levied upon the interest accrued upon compensation granted by the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal (MACT) is fair and reasonable.

Mr. Sahni said the receipts of compensation are non-taxable under the Income Tax Act and, therefore, the interest under the motor accident claims should not be made taxable. "The insurance companies deduct TDS on the interest accrued upon the compensation awarded by MACT and when the compensation amount is directed by the superior courts to be deposited in banks, the banks also deduct TDS upon the interest," the plea said.

Haryana told to deposit ₹20 cr. in escrow account

NGT recorded incapacity of authorities in dealing with legacy waste

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Following a plea seeking remedial action against the accumulation of legacy waste in Gurugram and Faridabad, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Haryana government to deposit ₹20 crore in an escrow account.

The green panel added that if the site is not cleared within six months then the amount will be forfeited.

A Bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel observed, "This tribunal has repeatedly recorded findings of incapacity and incompetence of the authorities concerned in dealing with the matter for scientific disposal of waste so as to ensure compliance of the statutory procedure under the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016."

The green panel has also constituted a committee comprising Haryana Chief Secretary and other senior officials of the Central Pollution Control Board and the State pollution control board.

"After removing of legacy waste from the entire or part of the land, the State may consider using part of the recovered land for integrated waste processing and treatment facility and for treatment, storage and disposal facility for hazardous waste," the Bench directed.

"At the periphery, a biodiversity park can be developed to improve the air quality and ambience. The committee may meet preferably within two weeks and plan to start further action within one month," it added. The NGT directed the Secretary, Urban Local Bodies of Haryana, to furnish an interim report within a month.

Amrapali chairman's plea dismissed by court

NIRNIMESH KUMAR
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has dismissed a revision petition by Amrapali Group chairman Anil Kumar Sharma against a subordinate court order for framing of cheating and criminal conspiracy charges in a case lodged by a home buyer in his Dream Valley project in Greater Noida.

Dismissing the petition, Additional Sessions Judge Sanjay Sharma-I said: "I find no illegality, impropriety or incorrectness in the impugned order. The trial court rightly directed for framing of charges against the revisionists for the offences punishable under Section 420/409/406/120B IPC."

"The trial court is directed to frame alternate charge for the offence punishable under Section 420 IPC and Section 406/409 IPC," the judge said.

Rainwater harvesting structures being set up in 136 govt. colonies

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

Underscoring the focus on water conservation in the Narendra Modi government's second term, the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) was in the process of setting up rainwater harvesting structures in 136 government residential colonies in the first 100 days, officials said on Friday.

Addressing CPWD officials at the organisation's 165th foundation day here, Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra said the agency had a target of either setting up or renovating the rainwater harvesting structures in 100 colonies within 100 days of the government coming to power.

Director General, CPWD, Prabhakar Singh, said while the agency had been given the target of covering 100 colonies, it was aiming to cover 136 colonies, of which 74 are in Delhi.

He said in areas where the water table was high, storage would be created for the rainwater.

Northern States to meet again over drug menace

Amarinder, Khattar discuss issue; Punjab to play host

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh met on Friday to discuss the issue of drug menace plaguing the region and decided to hold an inter-State meeting of all northern States on July 25.

According to an official statement, the meeting will be hosted by Punjab; besides Mr. Khattar and Capt. Amarinder, the Chief Ministers of Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Delhi, as well as the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi Lieutenant Governor and Chandigarh Administrator are expected to attend.

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh with Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar in Chandigarh on Friday. ▪PTI

Elimination of drugs

Capt. Amarinder said the Punjab government was committed to "the total elimination of drugs" being smuggled into the State not just across the border from Pakistan but also from within the country, especially Kashmir.

He reiterated his government's "zero-tolerance policy against drugs".

Though the problem of drug abuse is not as alarming in the State as it is in Punjab, yet the Haryana government has taken several steps for its prevention and also made the youth aware of its ill effects, said Mr. Khattar.

The first inter-State meeting was held in August last year and a decision taken to set up a centralised secretariat at Panchkula (Haryana) with nodal officers from each State to be deputed for sharing of intelligence and information.

Maharashtra, Haryana polls: revision of rolls from July 15

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Assembly elections in Haryana and Maharashtra later this year, election authorities in the States would be revising the electoral rolls from July 15 in order to give those eligible another opportunity to enrol.

Draft rolls

Writing to the Chief Electoral Officers of the States about the schedule of the second special summary revision in the States, the Election Commission of India on Thursday said the draft rolls would be published on July 15 and claims and objections could be filed from that date till July 30.

Special camps

After two special camps over the next two weekends (July 20-21 and July 27-28), the claims would be disposed of by August 13, ahead of publication of the final rolls on August 18.

People getting substandard wheat: AAP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The principal Opposition in Punjab, the Aam Aadmi Party, has alleged that the wheat being distributed by the State government to the beneficiaries under the 'Atta-Dal' scheme is not fit for human consumption.

AAP senior leader and Kotkapura MLA Kultar Singh Sandhwan, in a memorandum submitted to the Food and Supplies Minister Bharat Bhushan Ashu, has demanded an immediate investigation into the matter.

Mr. Sandhwan claimed he himself witnessed that the wheat being distributed in Faridkot's Kuharwala village, which falls under his constituency, was of poor quality and "unfit for human consumption".

'Difficult to get cards'

The MLA also said that people across Faridkot have been facing difficulties in acquiring the new 'smart ration cards', which the State government is distributing in preparation for the rollout of the 'Food for All' scheme in November.

Brides from PoK hold protest in Srinagar

Demand documents to cross the LoC

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Several brides from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) on Friday held a protest along with children in Srinagar to put pressure on the Centre and the State government to issue them travel documents to cross the Line of Control (LoC) and visit their families.

A bride from PoK addresses a presser in Srinagar on Friday. ▪NISSAR AHMAD

Wearing veils and carrying children in their arms, these PoK women, who married Kashmiri men when they went for arms training across the LoC in the 1990s, appealed to the governments of Pakistan and India to devise a mechanism "to allow free movement to them across the LoC".

'Address grievances'

"Many women from (PoK) are suffering from depression. We are neither given citizenship nor being deported back. Our grievances should be addressed by the government," said a bride from the PoK during a press conference in Srinagar.

She claimed that around 350 women and children used the Nepal route to return to Kashmir along with their husbands after availing of the rehabilitation policy of the Omar Abdullah government in 2010.

"However, since we came to this place, we are denied rights. We should be allowed to meet our families in Pakistan," said another bride.

An official said over 150 brides from PoK have settled in Kashmir along with their ex-militant husbands.

A J&K High Court judgment, issued in 1971 in the Mohsin Shah case, had observed that no deportation exercise could take place for such couples because "one person had merely travelled from one part of India to another".

JD(U) leader found dead in police station

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BIHARSHARIF

A local leader of the ruling JD(U) in Bihar was found dead in the toilet inside a police station, hours after being picked up for interrogation, evoking violent protests from residents of his village in Nalanda district.

Three policemen were arrested in connection with the Dalit politician's death, a communication from the district administration said on Friday.

Ganesh Ravidas (45) was found hanging from the ceiling of the toilet at Nagarnausa police station in Nalanda district on late Thursday night, official sources said.

Ravidas, who was the block president of the party's Mahadalit cell, was picked up for interrogation in connection with the kidnapping of a girl wherein he was not named an accused, the sources said.

Suicide prevention helpline: Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health,

Telephone: 011-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday, 10 am -7.30 pm

Crop loan disbursement goes online in Rajasthan

A boon for farmers in the desert State

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

An initiative for online crop loan disbursement, launched here over the week-end, is set to extend a major support to farmers in the State, while the introduction of cooperative mobile ATMs will give them money at their doorstep. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot inaugurated the new facilities here while affirming his government's commitment to farmers' welfare.

The facility was inaugurated by CM Ashok Gehlot.

Mr. Gehlot had announced establishment of a ₹1,000 crore fund for farmers' welfare in his Budget speech on Wednesday to pave the way for "ease of doing farmers". While the fund will be utilised for getting remunerative prices for agricultural produces, natural farming will be promoted to reduce input costs and encourage traditional methods with an expenditure of ₹10 crore.

'Establish enterprises'

Inaugurating the online disbursement facility, Mr. Gehlot called upon the farmers to go beyond farming and try to establish their own agriculture-based enterprises. He said the State government would support farmers in setting up food processing units, for which the requirement of land use change certificate would be waived.

The Chief Minister announced that crop loans worth ₹16,000 crore would be disbursed this year, adding that the process for sanctioning fresh loans to farmers had started after their existing debts were waived.

The State government will also open 'Nandi Shala' in every village panchayat to deal with the stray animal menace. Mr. Gehlot said there would be no shortage of seeds and fertilizers for both rabi and kharif crops and added that the new online system would simplify the process of distribution of loans and bring in transparency.

DELHI Timings

SATURDAY, JULY 13			
RISE	05:32	SET	19:22
RISE	16:19	SET	02:27
SUNDAY, JULY 14			
RISE	05:33	SET	19:22
RISE	17:17	SET	03:12
MONDAY, JULY 15			
RISE	05:33	SET	19:21
RISE	18:12	SET	03:59

THE HINDU
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Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	38	31
Safdarjang	38	31
Palam	39	31

Delhi Palam Today
37°C Marginally warm morning with dust suspension. Partly cloudy sky and moderate winds.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
36°C A spell of light rain is likely later in the day. Day will remain uneasingly warm and humid.

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Two schoolgirls killed in Arunachal landslide

ITANAGAR

Two girls were buried in their sleep and three others were injured after a landslide caused a boundary wall to collapse on the school hostel building in Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh, police said on Friday. The incident occurred on Thursday when 19 girls were asleep in their rooms, Tawang Superintendent of Police Sagar Singh Kalsi said. Chief Minister Pema Khandu expressed grief at the death of Genden Wangmu and Rinchi Lhamu, students of Class V and VI respectively, and announced an ex gratia of ₹4 lakh for their families. PTI

Floods hit 8.6 lakh in Assam

Nine deaths reported due to AES, JE; toll 165 since January

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Floods triggered by incessant heavy rain have affected 8.69 lakh people across 1,556 villages in 21 of Assam's 33 districts, officials said on Friday.

The day also saw nine people dying of Acute Encephalitis Syndrome and Japanese Encephalitis, taking the toll to 165 since January.

Two rivers of southern Assam's Barak Valley joined those in the Brahmaputra Valley in flowing above the danger mark. Much of the damage has been done by the Brahmaputra and seven of its tributaries.

Barpeta in eastern Assam is the worst affected district with 3.49 lakh people hit, followed by northeastern Assam's Dhemaji with 1.18 lakh people.

"District officials and the National and State Disaster Response Forces personnel have been evacuating people from the worst-affected areas. There are no reports of any casualty," a spokesperson of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority said.

"We have opened 68 relief camps in 11 districts where 7,643 people have moved in. We have also set up 48 relief distribution centres," the spokesperson added.

Data showed 27,864.16 hectares of farmland have been damaged while 3.72 lakh livestock have been affected.

The Northeast Frontier Railway reported disruption of train services due to sinking of track. This happened in Dima Hasao district, cutting off southern Assam, Mizoram and Tripura temporarily.

Officials of the National Health Mission said a total of 76 AES and JE cases were reported on Friday, out of which nine died at various government facilities. Three of them died of JE in Dibrugarh and Goalpara districts.

"There have been 1,280 AES and JE cases since January, of which 334 were JE positive. We are trying our best to minimise death, although 165 have died till date," a health official said.

Villagers travel on a boat through floodwaters in Murkata village of Morigaon district in Assam on Friday. • AFP

SC notices to Centre, Sikkim

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday sought responses from the Centre and the Sikkim government on a plea seeking quashing of the appointment of Prem Singh Tamang as the State Chief Minister on the ground that he was not qualified to hold the office as he was convicted of misappropriation of funds as a public servant in the past.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi also issued notice to Mr. Tamang. The apex court has also sought responses from the parties on a plea seeking stay on Mr. Tamang taking any major policy decision or other important governance duties as the State's CM.

The petition by Bimal Dawari Sharma of the ousted Sikkim Democratic Front Party alleges that Mr. Tamang was a "disqualified" person and ineligible to contest election till 2024.

BJP 'buying' MLAs with money earned during note ban, says Digvijaya Singh

Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister asserts that Congress government in that State was safe

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Criticising the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for the political crisis in Karnataka and Goa, senior Congress leader and former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Digvijaya Singh also accused it of amassing a fortune during demonetisation and using it now for 'buying' opposition party MLAs.

"The BJP and its leaders have earned so much money during demonetisation that they are buying legislators, just as one buys goods in a shop," Mr. Singh told reporters here after visiting the Vitthal-Rukmini temple in Pandharpur.

The Mumbai Police also came in for some criticism for refusing to allow Karnataka Congress leader D.K. Shivakumar to meet rebel MLAs staying in a Mumbai hotel.

"Mr. Shivakumar had come to Mumbai to meet his friends (the rebel legislators) who were not answering his calls. But Mumbai Police denied him the right to meet them," he said.

In this context, Mr. Singh asserted that the Congress government in Madhya Pradesh was safe. Chief Minister Kamal Nath has the support of 121 MLAs, he said and added that it was a mere BJP ploy to spread rumours of possible destabilisation.

Rahul deserves praise

Asked about Rahul Gandhi's resignation as president of Congress following the results of the Lok Sabha elections, Mr. Singh said he deserved to be praised for his willingness to take responsibility for the defeat.

"From 1968 to the present day, the Congress has split twice. Both times, the people as well as dedicated Congress workers have regarded the party helmed by a member of the Nehru-Gandhi family as the real 'Congress'. Given this sentiment, we had hoped Mr. Gandhi would continue leading the party. But now that he is clarified that no member of the family will be the president, the working committee should decide on a new leader," Mr. Singh said.

Digvijaya Singh

Chastising the Centre's economic policies, Mr. Singh said that the recent Budget made no mention of the unemployment figures and dismissed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's goal of the country becoming a $ 5 trillion economy as a "pipe-dream" dished out to hoodwink the people.

"There needs to be a sustained double-digit growth which is nowhere in evidence before one can think of economic growth in such bombastic terms. But with the industrial and manufacturing sectors lagging, this is not possible," he said, adding that the Prime Minister however, did know how to sell dreams to the people.

He again flayed the Modi government over the February 14 Pulwama terror strike, reiterating that the Kashmir Police had warned of an IED attack on Februaury 8 which was ignored by the Centre.

"The first statement from the government after the Pulwama strike was that 3.5 quintal explosives was in the vehicle [driven by the suicide bomber] which rammed the CRPF convoy. How did the government know the precise quantity of explosives? Was there any prior intelligence? If so, why was this input ignored?" Mr. Singh wanted to know.

On a question regarding his phone number cropping up in one of the letters recovered from arrested activists in the Elgaar Parishad-Bhima Koregaon case, he said: "My number is on the website... if the police think I was involved in terror acts, I dare them to arrest me."

Mr. Singh's cell phone number had allegedly surfaced in one of the so-called Naxal communications seized by the Pune city police in its multi-city raids, on June 6, on the homes of activists Surendra Gadling, Shoma Sen and three others in the Elgaar Parishad-Bhima Koregaon clashes case.

Hit by jolts, Congress struggles to get its house in order in Goa

Comes down with 17 MLAs in 2017 elections to just five now

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PANAJI

From emerging as the single largest party with 17 seats in 2017 to being reduced to just five MLAs now, the Congress has suffered a big meltdown in Goa, a State where it was once a dominant political force. The main opposition party suffered a jolt when 10 of its MLAs, led by Leader of Opposition Chandrakant Kavlekar, switched sides, and joined the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday.

In the last two-and-a half years, the Congress has lost 13 of its MLAs to the BJP, which now enjoys an overwhelming majority in the Assembly.

In the 2017 Assembly elections, the Congress won 17 of the 40 seats in the politically volatile State, which has a history of legislators switching loyalties and bringing governments down.

Though the Congress emerged as the single largest party, it was outmanoeuvred by the BJP, with 13 MLAs then, which moved swiftly to form a government with the support of regional parties and independent MLAs.

The desertion began when Valpoi MLA Vishwajit Rane resigned from the Congress in March 2017 soon after getting elected.

He joined the BJP on April 7, 2017, and was sworn-in as a minister five days later in the Cabinet led by the then Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar.

The Congress's strength was reduced to 16, but it still remained ahead of the BJP, whose tally rose to 14 after Mr. Rane was re-elected from Valpoi in a bypoll.

The Congress faced a second setback in October 2018 when its two more MLAs – Subhash Shirodkar (Shiroda) and Dayanand Sopte (Mandrem) – resigned and joined the BJP.

The strength of the Congress in the House was reduced to 14.

Meanwhile, the BJP, with the help of its allies, including the Goa Forward Party, the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP), and Independents, remained in power.

However, the BJP saw a drop in its tally when Parrikar (MLA from Panaji) and another party legislator Francis DSouza died after prolonged illness.

The saffron party's strength was reduced to 12.

The by-elections to four Assembly constituencies held in April-May 2019 saw the BJP winning three of them – Mandrem, Mapusa and Shiroda – while the Congress bagged the prestigious Panaji seat, represented by Parrikar for 25 years.

The Congress is now left with just five MLAs – four of them former chief ministers – just enough to hold on to the post of Leader of Opposition. MLAs Pratapsingh Rane, Luzinho Faleiro, Ravi Naik, Digambar Kamat (all former CMs), and Aleixo Reginaldo Lourenco are left in the party, which is struggling to survive in the coastal State.

'Political prostitution': Cong. MLA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PANAJI

Congress MLA Aleixo Reginaldo Lourenco on Friday called the switchover of his party MLAs to the ruling BJP as "political prostitution".

Led by Leader of Opposition Chandrakant Kavlekar, 10 of the 15 Congress MLAs in Goa joined the BJP on Wednesday. Mr. Lourenco is among the five MLAs left in the Congress, which had emerged as the single largest party after the 2017 Assembly polls.

"What has happened this time is political prostitution. We cannot talk about it," he told reporters in Margao after meeting Goa Forward Party (GFP) president and Deputy Chief Minister Vijai Sardesai. He said his meeting with Mr. Sardesai was "casual".

Mr. Sardesai and two other ministers from his party may be dropped from the State Cabinet to accommodate rebel Congress MLAs, who have joined the BJP, sources said.

When the dam thirsts for more

Grim situation: Jayakwadi dam in Aurangabad district, which serves irrigation purposes in the Marathwada region, has hit the below dead stock water level, according to the State government's water resource department. • YOGESH LONDHE

HC rejects plea of woman accused of misappropriating e-scholarship funds

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court recently dismissed an appeal filed by an employee of Mastek Company, who is alleged to have misappropriated over ₹7 crore allotted for a State scholarship provided to Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) students. The court said, "The offence is not merely an economic offence, but it has destroyed the social fabric and uplift of the students belonging to reserved categories."

Justice Sadhana Jadhav was hearing a plea by Sarika Kale challenging a sessions court order rejecting her bail on September 7, 2017, after a case was registered against her at Sadar Bazaar police station in Solapur.

The case was under Sections 408 (criminal breach of trust by clerk or servant), 409 (criminal breach of trust by public servant, or by banker, merchant or agent), 420 (cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property), 467 (forgery of valuable security, will, etc.), 468 (forgery for purpose of cheating), and 120b (punishment of criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code, and relevant sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

The advocate appearing for Ms. Kale told the court that she has been an undertrial for about four years and that her co-accused Aamir Mehboob Tamboli was released on bail on January 16, 2016, with a surety deposit of ₹50 lakh.

The additional public prosecutor contended that the financial scam was unearthed because of a query made by RTI activist Tupsaminder to the office of the social welfare department.

The investigation revealed that the amount of misappropriation had been pegged at ₹7,15,05,907.

The scheme for providing the scholarship to the students belonging to SC, ST, nomadic tribes, Vimukta Jati, and the Special Backward Class was formulated by the State. It is known as e-scholarship, and it has been implemented since the academic year 2011-2012.

The State government had hired Mastek Company for implementing the e-scholarship, and Ms. Kale was one of the employees involved in brining the scholarship to the students.

The HC said, "She (Ms. Kale) is the kingpin in this scam, who has played a lead role in cheating the State by engaging in a conspiracy in a planned manner. The offence alleged against her is serious. The circumstances of the present case do not warrant enlargement of Ms. Kale on bail because the offence is not merely an economic offence, but it has destroyed the social fabric and uplift of students belonging to the reserved categories."

Stall vendors can now sell to passengers on platforms

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

In a bid to provide better catering services and curb unauthorised hawking at stations, the Mumbai division of the Central Railway has permitted platform vendors to sell catering items directly to passengers on platforms.

The division has given permission to 180 platform vendors operating at 11 stations used by mail and express trains. "These stations are CSMT, LTT, Panvel, Roha, Thane, Asangaon, Igatpuri, Neral, Karjat, Lonavala and Bhiwandi Road. The decision has now come into effect," CR chief public relations officer Sunil Udasi said.

He said platform vending licence has been provided to existing catering licensees of the division for an additional fee. Until now, vendors were allowed to sell catering items only from their stalls, and were not supposed to reach out to passengers on platforms.

Mr. Udasi said the CR has planned to increase the number of authorised platform vendors, and is persuading existing catering licensees to have more platform vendors.

Australian students join hands with Tech Mahindra to combat climate change

AI-powered number plate recognition to check for vehicle emissions

JANICE SAJI
PUNE

A group of students from the University of Sydney, in collaboration with Tech Mahindra, will share their ideas on combating water and air pollution in the country as part of their month-long Industry and Community Project Unit (ICPU) in India to study and create solutions for climate change.

The students, who collaborated with Tech Mahindra's research arm, Makers Lab, will present an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered number plate recognition system that helps check for valid Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificates at the gates of Tech Mahindra's campus in Pune.

The system will allow Tech Mahindra to monitor and reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and help employees meet government regulations. The project is part of the company's AI 4 Action campaign to combat climate change.

Speaking about the project, the students' academic supervisor, Dr. Fabian Held said: "We have two groups of students working on air pollution and water scarcity. The groups started out unfamiliar with the problem barely a fortnight ago. From there, they did research to understand the various causal factors and the Indian context. From this they identified concrete parts of the problem and developed a prototype for specific solutions."

Dr. Held said one group presented a prototype of an AI system that could increase the PUC compliance rates of vehicles on Tech Mahindra's campuses. "It could be readily implemented and be made operational in a week's time," he said.

In a statement released by the team, they said in 1989, the government mandated PUC certificates for all vehicles on Indian roads. The PUC tests the emissions of a vehicle to make sure it follows standard pollution regulations. Despite these rules, they identified a high number of non-compliant vehicles as a major cause of air pollution.

Speaking about the AI system, Dr. Held said, "The AI system recognises cars as they enter the campus and looks up the cars' emissions in a database. This will allow Tech Mahindra to monitor and reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and measure the success of interventions. Moreover, the system will send out reminders about upcoming PUC checks and therefore help ensure that vehicles on campus are compliant with government regulations."

Nikhil Malhotra, Global Head of Innovation at Tech Mahindra, said, "Air pollution and water scarcity are some of the burning problems that are being addressed through this project." The ICPU held at Tech Mahindra's Pune campus is a first-of-its-kind interdisciplinary and inter-country project, he said, aimed at creating a sustainable future for all.

The students are also working on developing a predictive computer model for water management, which could be applied in different States across India, especially those hit by severe water crisis.

"We are working on a model that will feed vital data on populations, water levels, water usage, crop production and rainfall into a platform that shares useful information to urban and rural communities. It will estimate the risk of water shortage for individual regions and provide helpful information that can improve their water management. Having this information readily available will help identify areas like Chennai early and will allow communities and policy makers to take preventive action," said Christian Neoh, a student at the University of Sydney.

CM performs *puja* at Pandharpur temple

Last year, Fadnavis had to cancel his visit in view of Maratha agitation over quota

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Having successfully pacified the Maratha community by fulfilling their quota demand, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Friday morning performed the annual *puja* (worship) of Lord Vitthal and Goddess Rukmini at Pandharpur on the occasion of Ashadhi Ekadashi.

Last year, the quota agitation by Maratha outfits had compelled Mr. Fadnavis to cancel the visit despite performing the puja in 2015, 2016, and 2017. At the time, the CM had called off his visit to the temple town in view of the safety of lakhs of devotees gathered there.

It is a time-honoured tradition in the State for the CM and his spouse to perform the first worship at Vithoba temple, 210 km from Pune.

"I am extremely happy that I have the chance to perform this worship, which I think is also a kind of privilege. I sought the blessings of Vithoba (Lord Vitthal) to help our government in its efforts to aid farmers and fulfil the aspirations of the people," the CM said.

With the Assembly elections round the corner, Mr. Fadnavis was asked if he hoped to come to Pandharpur next year [meaning whether the BJP would win and whether he would be the CM again]. "We were blessed by Lord Vitthal and the people of Maharashtra last time [by winning the 2014 polls] and I am confident we will be similarly blessed this time as well," Mr. Fadnavis said.

On Thursday, the CM was felicitated by members of the Maratha community and 'warkaris' (pilgrims travelling to Pandharpur with palanquins bearing footprints of the saints, Dnyaneshwar [from Alandi] and Tukaram [from Dehu] communities).

While the Marathas lauded Mr. Fadnavis efforts in ensuring reservation for the community in government jobs and education, the *warkaris* thanked him for providing amenities throughout their pilgrimage, especially the distribution of over 5 lakh raincoats.

Auspicious: Pilgrims take a holy dip in the Chandrabhaga river on the occasion of Ashadhi Ekadashi in Pandharpur on Friday; (left) Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and his wife, Amruta, after the worship at Vithoba temple. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT • JIGNESH MISTRY

IN BRIEF

SFI activist stabbed on varsity campus in Kerala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

An activist of the Students Federation of India (SFI) was stabbed allegedly by office-bearers of the same party unit at the University College in the Kerala capital over a trivial dispute, leading to clashes and protests. The victim Akhil Chandran, a final year B.A. student, underwent a surgery. The police have booked six SFI activists on attempt to murder charges.

No privilege darshan at Tirumala on July 16

TIRUMALA

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams has said that it had dispensed with all privilege darshan formats extended to senior and special pilgrims and parents with infants on July 16 on the eve of the total lunar eclipse. The TTD, which has already cancelled Divya Darshan and online Sarva Darshan tokens, said Anga Pradikshanam tokens too would not be issued for July 17.

Karnataka CM to seek trust vote

Congress leaders say Kumaraswamy's surprise move stole BJP's thunder

NAGESH PRABHU
BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, battling a political crisis following resignations of 16 MLAs from the coalition parties – the Congress and the JD(S) – announced on the floor of the House on Friday that he would seek a trust vote.

Mr. Kumaraswamy is apparently keen to launch a first strike at the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party by moving a motion on a trust vote in the Legislative Assembly next week.

The CM's announcement in his opening remarks at the session on Friday, led to intense speculation among political parties.

Standing his ground: Karnataka Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy speaking in the Assembly in Bengaluru on Friday. ▪ K MURALI KUMAR

'Fear in BJP camp'

Some analysts see it as a move to steal the BJP's thunder. It has denied the BJP an opportunity to move a no-confidence motion.

A couple of Congress leaders believe that by announcing the decision on the trust vote, the Chief Minister has created a "sense of fear" among the State BJP's top brass and forced them to keep their flock together. The Chief Minister is confident of getting the support of a few Congress MLAs who have resigned, sources claimed.

With both the Congress and the Janata Dal (Secular) having issued whips to their respective members to attend the session, the trust vote would be a weapon for the governing parties.

Assembly Speaker K.R. Ramesh Kumar could disqualify the MLAs who abstain during voting on the motion. "The trust vote will provide evidence to disqualify absentee MLAs," a top Congress leader said.

While one leader said he was not sure if the Chief Minister would indeed carry out his announcement, unless a constitutional authority directs it, another leader said, "It all depends on the Speaker's privilege on fixing the time."

Mr. Kumaraswamy said he would not take any major policy decisions, given the current political situation.

Resort linked to ex-Minister fined ₹34 lakh

STAFF REPORTER
ALAPPUZHA

The Water World Tourism Company, promoters of the Lake Palace resort of which former Kerala Transport Minister Thomas Chandy is a director, paid a fine of ₹34 lakh to the Alappuzha municipality on Friday and submitted an application for renewing the licence of the resort, official sources said.

The State government issued an order on Thursday directing the municipality to issue licence to the resort after accepting the reduced fine of ₹34 lakh fixed by it. Earlier, the civic body had imposed a fine of ₹1.17 crore on the company for building 16 illegal structures at the resort.

However, the resort appealed against the decision and Urban Affairs Department regional joint director V.R. Raju, after an inspection, submitted a report to the government against the findings of the municipality and suggested the reduced fine.

Welfare schemes get lion's share in A.P. Budget

But no mention of growth engines

STAFF REPORTER
AMARAVATI

In its first-ever Budget, the YSRCP government has focussed largely on its election manifesto's *Navaratnalu* – the nine welfare schemes covering farmers, women, medical and health, education and the Special Category Status (SCS).

However, the Budget is nearly silent on many growth engines, industry and service sectors. Though it rued and said it had inherited the "worst financial positions from the previous government," it did not chart a road map to improve financial health.

A.P. Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy presenting the Budget on Friday. ▪ PTI

Biting the bullet

Presenting the Budget for 2019-20 in the Assembly on Friday, Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy said the government was compelled to make "some hard choices" between wealth creation and welfare programmes as the resource gap was more than ₹45,000 crore. The government tried to balance both, with a welfare bias.

"It is in this spirit, the government, faced with a choice, has decided to provide better nutrition to mother and child rather than provide viability gap funding to international flights to Singapore," he said.

Highlighting the precarious financial condition, he underscored the need for according the SCS to the State, which had the potential to be one of the leading States by 2022.

"In our great nation, parents never renege on their promises to children, while the reverse may be true. Parliament has given us birth and we appeal earnestly to grant us the SCS as per its assurance."

Amaravati gets ₹500 cr.

The government also named a slew of schemes after former Chief Minister Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy and a couple of schemes in the name of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. Of the outlay of ₹2,27,974.99 crore, more than ₹73,000 crore had been allotted to major and new schemes, including YSR *Rythu Bharosa* (₹8,750 crore), *Jagananna Amma Vodi* (₹6,455 crore), mid-day meal scheme (₹1,077 crore), YSR Arogyasri (₹1,740 crore), YSR *Gruha Vasathi* (₹8,615 crore), YSR *Pension Kaanuka*, YSR *Kalyana Kaanuka* (₹716 crore), subsidy on rice, village volunteers, Agrigold victims, interest-free loans to SHGs (₹1,788 crore) YSR *Bhima*.

The government allocated ₹500 crore for the construction of capital city Amaravati.

A tale of maternal love that goes beyond religion

Hindu man's Facebook post mourning death of Muslim foster mother goes viral

Love all: Sreedharan's Facebook cover photo.

ABDUL LATHEEF NAHA
MALAPPURAM

The death of an elderly woman at Kalikavu here in Kerala has left behind a tale of love that cuts across religion and parochialism.

The death of Subaida Thennad last Tuesday would have gone unnoticed by anyone outside her village had her foster son, Sreedharan, not put up a Facebook post saying "my Umma (mother) has honoured the summons of Allah. Please pray for her soul."

The 46-year-old's post opened a flurry of comments and discussions, unravelling one of the sweetest stories of religious harmony from the land of Mapilas.

The pious Muslim couple Subaida and Abdul Azeez Haji fostered Mr. Sreedharan and his elder sisters Ramani and Leela from the day their mother Chakki died. Mr. Sreedharan was hardly one year old then. They grew up in Subaida's house practising Hindu rites along with three of her own children.

"Our foster parents brought us up like their own and educated us. They got my sisters married off. Though we were taken in at an impressionable age, they never tried to convert us. For us, she is no foster mother; she is our own mother," he said in the post.

News of Subaida's death shattered him. He sat crying in his room in Oman, holding bottles of perfume he had bought for his beloved. He chose not to rush home as he lacked the courage to see her lifeless body. He wept and prayed for her.

"In these days of forced conversions and religious fundamentalism, such paragons of goodness have to be celebrated," says A.P. Ahamed, social worker and orator.

Two from Araku test positive for Anthrax

Panic spreads in Agency area

STAFF REPORTER
VISAKHAPATNAM

Two persons from Araku mandal here in Andhra Pradesh, who were admitted to King George Hospital with symptoms of cutaneous anthrax, tested positive for the disease on Saturday, sparking panic in the Agency area. The duo hail from Madagada village.

According to officials from the Health Department, anthrax can spread in three forms – cutaneous anthrax (through the skin), pulmonary anthrax (through inhalation), and gastrointestinal anthrax (through the stomach).

Agency areas mostly register cases of cutaneous anthrax, where anthrax spores get into the skin usually through a cut or a scrape, which can happen when a person handles infected animals.

"In the case of Araku mandal, both persons who tested positive for anthrax are said to have cut the meat bought from a weekly shandy," said Mr. Kalyan Prasad, an official from the Health Department and the Nodal Officer for Swine Flu. "After consuming such meat, there are chances of contracting gastrointestinal anthrax. Fortunately, it did not happen in this case as the spores might have been killed due to the high cooking temperature," he said.

Time for a break

Miles to go: Truck drivers having lunch under the shade of their vehicles near the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border at Parassala in Thiruvananthapuram. ▪ S. GOPAKUMAR

A massive challenge for cash-strapped Kerala

S. ANIL RADHAKRISHNAN
THIRUVANANTHPAURAM

Mobilising ₹36,506.88 crore from multiple sources for implementing the Rebuild Kerala Development Programme (RKDP) in the short, medium and long-term phases from 2019 to 2027 is the biggest challenge now before the cash-strapped State.

Critical key sectors need an investment of ₹8,709 crore for the short term from 2019 to 2021-22, ₹20,679.69 crore for the medium term (2021 to 2023-24) and ₹7,117.80 crore for the long term from 2024 to 2026-27 to help put the State's economy back on its feet after the devastating floods of 2018.

Of the ₹8,709 crore needed for executing projects under the short-term plan, the State has so far got commitment for a $500 million Development Policy Loan from the World Bank and another €180 million from the German bank KfW Development Bank.

₹3,000 cr. in donations

Around ₹3,000 crore has been mobilised through charity donations for executing projects under the Rebuild Kerala Initiative.

"The agreement with the KfW will be inked later this month and €90 million [₹720 crore] will be used to promote climate-resilient reconstruction of transport infrastructure, including bridges and roads," said V. Venu, Principal Secretary, Revenue, and Chief Executive Officer, Rebuild Kerala Initiative.

The State's Gross Domestic Product is estimated to be ₹8.75 lakh crore ($126 billion). Against this, the 3% limit for the State's borrowing works out to ₹25,000 crore ($37.8 billion).

Security issues delay Secretariat shifting

Plan awaits Telangana CM's nod; focus moves to installation of CCTV cameras

M. RAJEEV
HYDERABAD

The shifting of offices from the existing Secretariat complex here to the Burgula Ramakrishna Rao Bhavan located nearby is likely to take a few more days.

The Telangana government has sounded different departments located in the existing Secretariat complex about their imminent shifting to the new premises so that construction of the new complex is commenced at the earliest. But the plan to locate these offices in the BRKR Bhavan is said to be taking time as the officials are busy working out the exact coordinates of the offices housing VVIPs, including the Chief Minister, his Cabinet colleagues and the Chief Secretary from the security point of view.

The Chief Minister's Office, in particular, was initially planned to be located on the top floor of the BRKR Bhavan, but the idea was reportedly dropped as the top floor, particularly the side facing Tank Bund, was found to be vulnerable.

Slow progress: Office material belonging to the A.P. government being shifted in Hyderabad. ▪ NAGARA GOPAL

The plan is being modified accordingly and the offices would be shifted once Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao gives his final consent for the new plan.

Also, there has been delay in the shifting some offices of the heads of departments (HoDs) of the Andhra Pradesh government.

These offices had been under lock and key since the A.P. government shifted its functioning to Amaravati four years ago and shifting of the material began a couple of days ago.

More amenities

Senior officials said that the complex would, once fully vacated, be given a facelift with necessary amenities so that senior bureaucrats who would function from there for at least one-and-a-half years did not face difficulties.

Wide coverage

In addition to the amenities, the focus now is on installation of the CCTV camera network on the new premises. The existing Secretariat complex has close to 100 CCTV cameras, including some PTZ cameras, giving 360-degree coverage, at some vantage points.

Senior officials said the BRKR Bhavan would be equipped with fixed view CCTV cameras as they would be ideal for the new location which is smaller than the existing complex.

"It will take not more than a couple of days to install the CCTV network," said a senior official.

Crime Branch to probe use of mobiles in Kerala prisons

Follows contraband phone seizures in Viyyur and Kannur

G. ANAND
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Crime Branch (CB) has opened an inquiry into 23 cases of illicit use of mobile phones by inmates of central prisons in the State.

The government had ordered the investigation following a damning Prisons Department report that pointed to unchecked use of mobile phones by politically influential prisoners to orchestrate crimes ranging from gold smuggling to extortion rackets and hit jobs from within jail precincts.

The move also comes against the backdrop of allegations that prisoners convicted of crimes against political detractors of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) received preferential treatment in State prisons.

Officials said incarceration provided a strong alibi for convicted crooks to direct crimes from inside prisons and escape the law unscathed.

The CB probe headed by IG S. Sreejith aims to uncover the modus operandi to put an end to the trend. The inquiry is centred around the seizure of contraband mobile phones from prisoners in Viyyur and Kannur jails during a surprise shakedown by Director of Prisons Rishiraj Singh recently.

Jammers didn't help

Officials said attempts in the past by the Prisons Department to install jammers inside jails to block calls had come to nought. This was because phone service providers frequently shifted radio frequencies to provide better connectivity to people in the vicinity of prisons, who had been affected by the jammers. The alterations foxed the jammers set to fixed frequencies and punched holes in the blockade of radio waves by jails.

Moreover, blanket jamming of radio signals had created serious issues for local people. Many residents had complained to service providers that they could not even call emergency services or law enforcement.

The CB would investigate the provenance of the seized mobile devices and SIM cards. Investigators said preliminary evidence pointed to the tacit cooperation of prison officials.

The CB has also sought the help of phone companies to detect the use of contraband phones in prisons.

IN BRIEF

SBI waives RTGS, NEFT, IMPS charges

NEW DELHI

The State Bank of India has waived charges on NEFT and RTGS transactions through Internet and mobile banking from July 1. The bank, which has about 25% market share and over 7 crore internet banking users, has also decided to do away with fund transfer charges on mobile phones transactions using IMPS from August 1. PTI

CBI files case against NFR officials for graft

NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation has booked senior Public Relations Officer Dilip Chandra Bora and five other officials of the North-East Frontier Railway for allegedly sanctioning funds worth ₹157.40 crore between 2014 to 2018 for 5,842 tenders advertised in newspapers that were not in circulation. The agency said that while ₹4 crore was enough, the officials spent several times the amount on the advertisements.

Clarification

NEW DELHI

With reference to a July 9 report in *The Hindu*, on the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) naming 52 companies for not specifying plastic waste management plans, as required under the provisions of the Plastic Waste Management Rules (PWMR), 2016 (amended in 2018), Danone India, one of the companies mentioned in the story, said on Thursday that their name has been incorrectly included in the CPCB notice. Danone Food and Beverages India Pvt. Ltd ceased its operations in 2018 and therefore the PWMR didn't apply to them, the company said in a letter to the CPCB in November 2018. The CPCB, however, chose to include the company's name in their list of non-compliant companies in April 2019, and also published it on their website.

SC refuses to stay HC order on reservation to Marathas

Maharashtra restrained from implementing quota with retrospective effect

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday declined to stay a Bombay High Court judgment which upheld the reservation provided to Maratha community in education and government jobs in Maharashtra. However, a Bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi directed the State of Maharashtra to refrain from implementing the quota with retrospective effect from 2014.

The direction came after senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, for one of the petitioners, submitted that Maharashtra is moving to use the quota law retrospectively from 2014 to fill up about 70,000 government vacant posts.

The Bench issued notice on a batch of petitions, including that by NGO Youth for Equality, which have challenged the decision allowing 12-13% quota to Maratha community under the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) Act. They have argued that the move is seriously erroneous as the State law has breached the 50% cap on reservation fixed by a Constitution Bench in the Indira Sawhney judgment.

The Supreme Court has issued notice on a batch of petitions.

'Law defies equality'

The petitioners argued that the reservation law was enacted under "political pressure" and in "full defiance" of the rule of law and equality. According to the 102nd amendment to the Constitution, reservation can be granted only if the community is in the list prepared by the President. "Maharashtra government has made a mockery of the rule of law. It has also used its constitutional powers arbitrarily and purely for political gains," the petition said.

Will wait: Maharashtra

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Maharashtra government clarified that it is not looking to implement the quota for the Maratha community retrospectively and will allow admissions in educational institutions for the SEBC Maratha candidates until SC grants a stay.

Clarifying the government's stand hours after the SC's direction, senior BJP Minister Vinod Tawde said, "A lot of people are trying to spread misinformation regarding the reservation process and the judgement of the court given this morning."

Pilgrim's progress

People seen wearing masks of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal during the flagging off ceremony of the Mukhyamantri Teerth Yatra Yojna at the Safdarjung railway station in New Delhi on Friday. ▪SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi leaving a court in Ahmedabad after the hearing on Friday. ▪AP

Rahul gets bail in defamation case

Coop bank had challenged his remark

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

The Ahmedabad Metropolitan court on Friday granted bail to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in a defamation suit filed against him by the Ahmedabad District Cooperative Bank and its chairman Ajay Patel.

The local court accepted the bail application on conditions that either Mr. Gandhi be arrested or he appears in the court. The court granted the bail on a bond of ₹15,000 and posted the matter for next hearing on September 7.

Soon after he landed in Ahmedabad, Mr. Gandhi said he would appear in the cases filed against him by his political opponents, the RSS and BJP.

"I am in Ahmedabad today to appear in another case filed against me by my political opponents. I thank them for providing me with these platforms and opportunities to take my ideological battle against them to the public. Satyameva Jayate," he said on Twitter.

In August 2018, two separate criminal defamation cases were filed against Mr. Gandhi and Congress spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala for their remarks that Ahmedabad District Cooperative Bank (ADCB) had exchanged ₹745.58 crore in just five days during demonetisation in 2016.

"Within a mere five days of the implementation of the demonetisation drive, old denominations worth ₹3,118 crore were deposited in 11 district corporative banks that had links to BJP leaders. The most noteworthy of them was Ahmedabad District Cooperative Bank, whose directors include BJP president Amit Shah," Mr. Surjewala had said after the details of scrapped currency notes were released under the RTI applications.

He had further said that the bank, which is chaired by Ajay Patel, a close associate of Mr. Shah, received ₹745.58 crore from November 10 to 14.

On Friday, before appearing in connection with the criminal defamation suit, the Congress MP was welcomed at the Ahmedabad airport by state leaders of the party and he later visited Ahmedabad's famous Swati Snacks for lunch where he was seen interacting with people.

SC takes note of rise in child rape cases

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday registered a suo motu PIL on the rise in child rape cases and a corresponding lack of infrastructure and delay in the probe and trial of these cases.

A Bench led by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi said the Supreme Court had prepared a list of child rape cases in the past six months, from January to June 2019, and found that out of the 24,000 cases lodged in this period, only 900 had completed trial and disposed of.

The court appointed senior advocate V. Giri as amicus curiae and listed the case on Monday. The court said it wanted suggestions on the setting up of special courts, prosecutors and exclusive investigation of these cases to render victims speedy justice. The government, represented by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, also intervened with an assurance to assist the court in the endeavour.

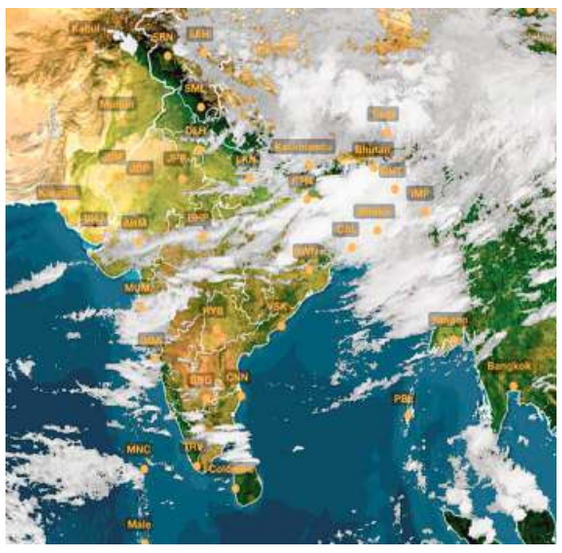
The Bench directed the apex court registry to register the case as a writ petition titled "In-re Alarming Rise in The Number of Reported Child Rape Incidents".

Chief Justice Gogoi said he had asked the registry to file a report on two aspects such as the total number of rape cases involving child registered across India since January 1 and the stage of investigation and the time taken to file a charge sheet as also the status of trials. Details were collected from all the States and high courts.

Referring to the data on sexual crimes against children, the court's report said that from January 1 to June 30, 24,212 FIRs have been filed across India. Of these, 11,981 are still being probed by the police and in 12,231 cases, the police have filed chargesheets.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Saturday: Heavy to very heavy rain likely at isolated places over sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim. Heavy rain likely at isolated places over Goa, Uttarakhand, eastern Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and central Maharashtra.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	40.6	31.0	25.0	Kozhikode	0.6	33.0	24.0
Ahmedabad	–	39	27	Kurnool	–	35.0	25.0
Aizwal	51.0	23.0	20.0	Lucknow	11.2	34.0	24.0
Allahabad	–	36.0	28.0	Madurai	0.4	37.0	26.0
Bengaluru	–	30.0	21.0	Mangaluru	2.1	28.0	23.0
Bhopal	–	33.0	25.0	Mumbai	25.4	31.0	24.0
Bhubaneswar	–	35.0	27.0	Mysuru	–	30.0	21.0
Chandigarh	21.8	32.0	25.0	New Delhi	–	38.0	31.0
Chennai	–	35.0	28.0	Patna	25.2	30.0	35.0
Coimbatore	–	33.0	23.0	Port Blair	–	32.0	25.0
Dehradun	39.0	30.0	24.0	Puducherry	–	34.0	25.0
Gangtok	36.4	20.0	17.0	Pune	3.4	29.0	22.0
Goa	143.4	27.0	21.0	Raipur	–	32.0	26.0
Guwahati	4.0	30.0	25.0	Ranchi	–	32.0	24.0
Hubballi	–	27.0	21.0	Shillong	22.4	22.0	17.0
Hyderabad	16.2	33.0	23.0	Shimla	–	22.0	16.0
Imphal	17.2	26.0	23.0	Srinagar	0.2	32.0	17.0
Jaipur	–	38.0	28.0	Thiruvananthapuram	–	33.0	25.0
Kochi	–	31.0	25.0	Tiruchi	–	38.0	26.0
Kohima	8.2	25.0	17.0	Vijayawada	7	37.0	26.0
Kolkata	–	34.0	28.0	Visakhapatnam	–	32.0	27.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing — **Yesterday**

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	96	131	.49	70	–	Moderate
Bengaluru	7	.63	.59	38	.154	Moderate
Chennai	8	.26	.38	85	–	Good
Delhi	19	.26	.32	112	.350	Poor
Hyderabad	47	.30	.14	47	.58	Good
Kolkata	8	.50	.16	70	.89	Good
Lucknow	4	.34	.53	90	–	Good
Mumbai	–	.17	102	29	.63	Moderate
Pune	–	8	.65	36	.36	Good
Visakhapatnam	10	.39	.23	36	.90	Good

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Siliguri, West Bengal, recorded a healthy air quality index (AQI) score of 35. In contrast, Sirsa, Haryana, recorded heavy pollution levels with an AQI score of 370.

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

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

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

Billboards hail Amartya Sen's view on 'Jai Shri Ram' slogan

The Nobel laureate had said it had nothing to do with Bengali culture

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Billboards highlighting Nobel laureate Amartya Sen's remark that the slogan of 'Jai Shri Ram' was alien to Bengali culture have surfaced at key traffic intersections in Kolkata.

Prof. Sen made the remarks during a seminar at Jadavpur University on July 5.

"I have not heard the 'Jai Shri Ram' slogan before. It is being used to beat up a section of people. I feel that this slogan has nothing to do with Bengal's culture," the billboards quote Prof. Sen as saying.

They further quote the celebrated economist: "I asked my four-year-old grandchild who is your favourite deity? She took a while and said: Ma Durga. So, the stature that Durga [Puja] enjoys here cannot be compared to Ram Navami."

An Amartya Sen billboard seen in Kolkata. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Prof. Sen was severely trolled by supporters of the Bharatiya Janata Party and other Hindutva outfits for arguing that the slogan [Jai Shri Ram] had been imported to disturb peace in the State. It is not clear who exactly has sponsored these billboards, which have been erected "on behalf of citizens". A section of the media reported that these have been put up at the behest of the ruling party in the State. The party leadership denied any links with the posters but welcomed the idea.

Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim said he was "aware of the billboards and appreciated" the effort on part of the civil society. "Civil society and citizens of Bengal have put up these posters and we support it," Mr. Hakim said.

Inquiry launched into death of man inside Kerala prison

The 68-year-old was arrested for financial fraud

STAFF REPORTER
ALAPPUZHA

A Crime Branch (CB) team led by DySP N.R. Jayaraj has launched a probe into the death of a 68-year-old person inside Mavelikara special sub-jail in March 2019. M.J. Jacob of Kumarakom, Kottayam was found dead inside his cell a day after his arrest.

The deceased was arrested by the Thiruvalla police in a case of financial fraud and forged documents. He was sent to judicial custody by a local court on March 20. On March 21 when the jail authorities reached the cell to take the inmates out in the morning they found him dead.

Sources said the case was being investigated as unnatural death. "Till now there is nothing to prove Jacob was murdered inside the prison cell. We will conduct a detailed probe," said an officer.

The case was initially probed by the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Chengannur. However, District Police Chief K.M. Tomy handed over the investigation to the Crime Branch after receiving complaints of dissatisfaction with the probe.

Earlier, a report filed by Judicial First Class Magistrate II (Mavelikara) Viveeja Raveendran on May 10 observed that the death of Jacob was a case of homicide.

The postmortem examination found a handkerchief deep down the throat of the deceased.

Lalu Prasad gets bail in one fodder scam case

But remains in jail due to other cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) president Lalu Prasad was on Friday granted bail by Justice Apresh Kumar of the Jharkhand High Court in a fodder scam case on two sureties of ₹50,000 each. He, however, will remain in jail in three other fodder scam cases.

The case is related to fraudulent withdrawal of ₹89,27,000 from the Deoghar treasury.

The court asked Prasad to submit his passport, but it was informed that the passport has expired.

"We requested the court to grant bail to him as he has already served nearly half of the jail term in the case and also on the ground of his old age and deteriorating health," his counsel Prabhat Kumar told journalists in Ranchi.

Earlier, on December 23, 2017 Prasad was sentenced to three-and-half years in jail in the case. Mr. Kumar said they would seek bail for Prasad in other cases as well on the same ground.

The grant of bail to Prasad has excited his party leaders. They said they always had hope in the judiciary and knew that sooner or later he would get justice from the court.

Aftershocks in Goa

By aiding defections, the BJP is shrinking opposition space in an unseemly fashion

The near liquidation of the Congress legislature party in Goa, close on the heels of a rebellion of Congress and Janata Dal (Secular) legislators in neighbouring Karnataka, is the latest aftershock of the national election results in May, but it is unlikely to be the last. The BJP's victory in the 17th general election was not unexpected, but its scale and depth appear to have thrown opposition politics into a tailspin. The Assembly election in 2017 had returned a hung Assembly in Goa, with the Congress as the single largest party at 17 of 40 seats. The BJP had only 13, but was quick to cobble together a coalition and form a government. As things stand, the BJP has 27 MLAs and the Congress only five, with the defectors set to escape disqualification under the anti-defection law since they constitute two-thirds of the strength of the legislature party – turning the verdict on its head. This split in the Congress was in the making since May 23 when the party lost three of the four by-elections that were held along with the Lok Sabha polls. Any hope of a bid for power in the State was dashed, and with the party's national standing continuing on a descending slope, the lawmakers did what opportunism impels. Any party is well within its rights to lure members of other parties, and after all, that is how political realignments take place. But by encouraging and welcoming defectors who had won the election on a platform that was its polar opposite, the BJP has further lowered the bar for legitimate democratic processes and expansion of the party.

Apparently learning from the cost of its indecision in Goa in 2017, the Congress had moved swiftly to offer the post of chief ministership to the JD(S) that had won 37 seats out of 224 in Karnataka in 2018. Initially hailed by many as a potential model to build an anti-Hindutva coalition nationally, the JD(S)-Congress coalition has exposed its inherent contradictions. There is little that the current spectrum of Opposition parties have to offer to build a better politics other than their tired dynasties. Opportunistic alliances, devoid of any fresh ideas or inspiration, could only augment the BJP's plank that its opponents have a dark history and a bleak future. Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi's abrupt renunciation of the post has forced a churn in the party, perhaps as was intended. It is, however, difficult to predict whether the party will emerge stronger from the churn: the withdrawal of Mr. Gandhi from the leadership is an opportunity for the Congress to rid itself of the dynasty tag, but equally it could be left rudderless for long in the absence of an obvious successor. If the party is looking for a youthful leader, there is none outside of the scions of other political dynasties. The Goa debacle is as much a harbinger of a further shrinking of the opposition space as it is of the continuing advance of the BJP into more regions and social groups. Grace in defeat is difficult to achieve; the BJP's behaviour perhaps shows that even in triumph it is not easy.

The climax

India fell at the last-four stage, and cricket will now have a new World Cup winner

The ICC World Cup awaits its Sunday climax with England taking on New Zealand in the final at Lord's. However, closer home, disappointment lingers over India's exit at the last-four stage. It is a conclusion that has shadowed the Men in Blue for a while as even in the 2015 edition when Australia and New Zealand were the co-hosts, India lost to the former. In the latest championship, it was New Zealand that stunned Virat Kohli's men at Manchester's Old Trafford in the semifinal. India was one among the title favourites and it enjoyed a red-hot streak studded with seven wins besides a loss to England and a washed-out fixture involving New Zealand. The league was topped with 15 points, and its top order led by opener Rohit Sharma, who amassed 648 runs, and a pace attack featuring Jasprit Bumrah, were in form. But there were flaws, primary among them being a flickering middle order. The top troika contributed 69% of the runs while the central core yielded a mere 30%. And once New Zealand seamers Trent Boult and Matt Henry dismissed Rohit, K.L. Rahul and Kohli to leave India hobbling at five for three in five overs, chasing 239 proved incredibly tough. The efforts of Ravindra Jadeja and M.S. Dhoni at best delayed the inevitable 18-run loss. Still, this is a squad that has the right ingredients and it will be able to cope with Dhoni's eventual retirement.

The stage is now set for England and New Zealand to correct some historical deficiencies. One thing is certain: the World Cup will have a fresh champion as neither team has ever won the title since its inception in 1975. The Old Blighty last played a World Cup summit clash at Melbourne in 1992, and at the same venue, New Zealand lost the 2015 final to Australia. Being the host, England is playing on familiar terrain and has the backing of its enthusiastic fans. Skipper Eoin Morgan, himself an attacking player, has a strong top order in openers Jason Roy and Jonny Bairstow with Joe Root stepping in at three. Ever since recovering from a sore hamstring, Roy with a strike rate of 117.03, has been sensational and he demolished Australia with a 65-ball 85. There is all-rounder Ben Stokes in the mix and speedsters Jofra Archer and Chris Woakes head-line a probing attack. From the opposition, New Zealand is expected to mount a strong counter. It has a supreme batsman and crafty leader in Kane Williamson. He and senior Ross Taylor have to shepherd the innings while a clutch of astute seam and swing bowlers helmed by Boult can test the very best. England has the edge but New Zealand, as it showed against India, can punch above its weight.

A case of confused thinking

The draft National Education Policy lacks the very abilities it emphasises — critical thinking and deeper understanding

ROHIT DHANKAR

The draft National Education Policy (NEP) 2019 recommends a restructuring of school years and the curriculum, in a wide-ranging manner. If properly implemented, many of the suggested changes may help education. These include flexibility and wider scope at the secondary level, space for moral reasoning, re-emphasis on the true spirit of the three language formula, a focus on the core concepts and key ideas in subjects, vocational courses, and also a focus of assessment on understanding. However, the draft NEP also recommends much that may have just the opposite effect. These are, for example, 15 subjects/courses at the upper primary level, three languages in early childhood education, and confusing statements on a number of curricular issues. The curriculum the draft NEP suggests at the upper primary level has started looking like a laundry list, perhaps because of a lack of a coherent vision and the curricular thinking it adopts.

India-centric aim?

The policy envisions an "India centred education system that contributes directly to transforming our nation sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society". The proclaimed "India centred-ness" of education is limited to recommendations on Indian languages and a mention of Indian knowledge systems. The operational vision is that of a "knowledge society", almost entirely contained in UNESCO-preached '21st century skills'. The democratic ideal is neither mentioned nor used in articulating the aims of education or curricular recommendation, though democratic values are mentioned in the list of key "skills" that are to be integrated in subjects.

The vision of a knowledge society directly leads to the objectives of curricular transformation "in order to minimise rote learning and instead encourage holistic development and 21st century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, scientific temper, communication, collaboration, multilingualism, problem solving, ethics, social responsibility, and digital literacy". The most important and educationally worthwhile term is "skill" and everything has to fit in within that; even ethics and social responsibility.

Shaping an individual

"The goal", according to the draft policy, "will be to create holistic and complete individuals equipped with key 21st century skills". This makes it quite clear what the definition of "holistic and complete individuals" means. After a host of curricular recommendations which includes new subjects/courses comes another statement which may sound like an articulation of curricular objectives or aims of education. Under the heading "Curricular integration of essential subjects and skills", it says: "certain subjects and skills should be learned by all students in order to become good, successful, innovative, adaptable, and productive human beings in today's rapidly-changing world. In addition to proficiency in languages, these skills include: scientific temper; sense of aesthetics and art; languages; communication; ethical reasoning; digital literacy; knowledge of India; and knowledge of critical issues facing local communities, States, the country, and the world".

The broad goals are to send out "good, successful, innovative, adaptable, and productive human beings"; not a critical, democratic citizen who may want to change the situation rather than adapting to it. The list of eight "skills" (*sic*) is supposed to "create" such individuals. And to enable such an aim, it is no wonder that everything is a "skill" which includes among others a "sense of aesthetics", "ethical reasoning", "compassion" and "curiosity". The phrase "Evidence-based and scientific thinking" is used together everywhere implying that there can be "scientific thinking" which is not evidence based. The policy assumes that "evidence-based and scientific thinking... will lead naturally to rational, ethical, and compassionate individuals". I wonder how "evidence based" this claim itself happens to be. How scientific thinking will develop "compassion" is beyond one's understanding. Further, it is interesting that "evidence-based and scientific thinking" is supposed to help create an ethical, rational, and compassionate individual but not a "logical and problem solving" individual as they are listed separately as "skills". I wonder what part of logical and problem-solving abilities remain outside evidence-based, scientific and rational thinking.

GETTY IMAGES

The comments made above may be seen as a case of nit-picking by some. However, a policy document is read and interpreted at many levels and influences educational discourse. A document which places much emphasis on clarity of understanding and critical thinking cannot itself afford to fail in meeting the same standards. Shoddiness of thinking at the national level does not encourage hope of proper interpretation and implementation of the policy. This is already reflected in some policy recommendations. Here are a few such examples.

Language teaching

The draft NEP rightly criticises private pre-schools for being a downward extension of primary school and of there being formal teaching in them. But it goes on to recommend preparing children for primary by prescribing learning the alphabets of and reading in three languages (for 3-6-year olds). All this in the name of "enhanced (*sic*) language learning abilities" of young children. Further the draft policy mistakes "language acquisition when children are immersed in more than one languages" with a "language teaching" situation where immersion is impossible in three languages. It then extends it unjustifiably to a learning of three scripts. It prescribes teaching script and reading in three languages to three-year-old children, but writing is supposed to be taught to six-year-old children. It also wants to introduce "some textbooks" only at age eight. One wonders why there is a three year gap between teaching reading and writing. If script and reading are already taught, then why withhold textbooks till age eight?

Here is another example of similar and confused thinking. The draft policy stipulates that the "mandated contents in the curriculum will be reduced... to its core, focussing on key concepts and essential ideas". This is to "yield more space for discussion and nuanced understanding, analysis, and application of key concepts". But it goes on to block more than the space vacated by prescribing six new laundry-list subjects/courses in addition to the existing eight. Some of these new courses such as "critical issues" and "moral reasoning" can be taught in a much better way in a revised curriculum of social studies as the context for both is society. Social studies needs more space in the upper primary curriculum. The subject has to be taught in such a manner that it connects with society and can be a very good way of introducing critical issues and moral thinking. Abstract moral reasoning is likely to have the same fate as so-called "moral science" that is taught in many schools. Similarly, "Indian classical language" and "Indian languages" can constitute a single rich subject rather than being split into two courses.

Missing link

Identifying key concepts and essential ideas are a matter of rational curricular decision making; not listing ideas as they come to one's mind. The absence of discussion on socio-political life seems to be another casualty in the emphasis on a knowledge society and 21st century skills. Social studies seems to be missing entirely as it has been mentioned once and then left out of the entire discussion on curriculum. In the end, the vision of the draft NEP rests on UNESCO declarations and reports rather than the Indian Constitution and development of democracy in this country; this in spite of wanting to make education India-centred. Thus, in the suggested curriculum changes, socio-political life is almost invisible.

All this goes to show that the draft NEP 2019 itself lacks the very abilities it emphasises, namely critical thinking and deeper understanding. It is a badly written document which hides behind a plethora of terms that are half-understood and clubbed under the overarching master concept of "skill". In short, the policy lacks depth and loses focus of the richness of secular democratic ideals by aiming for 21st century skills.

Rohit Dhankar is Professor, Azim Premji University, Bangalore and Secretary, Digantar, Jaipur

Game of chicken that can end in disaster

The confrontation between the U.S. and Iran in West Asia could snowball with damaging economic consequences

MOHAMMED AYOOB

On July 7, Iran announced that it would begin enriching uranium above a concentration of 3.67% permitted under the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), reached by Iran and the P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) on July 14, 2015.

This followed its July 1 announcement that it had breached the limit of the 300 kg of enriched uranium stockpile that was allowed by the JCPOA. It appears Iran's patience is wearing out.

These steps come in the wake of increasing tensions between the U.S. and Iran following the shooting down of an unmanned U.S. drone over the Strait of Hormuz in June. The circumstances surrounding this event and the locale of the downing are contested. However, it led to the U.S. President, Donald Trump, first ordering a retaliatory strike on Iran and then rescinding it at the last minute. It is possible that had this strike taken place it would have become the first act in a major military confrontation between the U.S. and Iran.

The mayhem could have spread to the entire West Asian region with Iran attacking strategic American, Saudi and Emirati targets around the Gulf and attempting to block the Strait of Hormuz in an effort to choke off the supply of Gulf oil to the international market. Further, Iranian allies in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria might have launched attacks against American troop concentrations as well as against U.S. ally Israel, thus inviting further American and Israeli counter-retaliation and dragging the U.S. into its third major war in the region.

The downward spiral in U.S.-Iran relations started with Mr. Trump's decision (announced in May 2018) to withdraw from the JCPOA against the advice of the U.S.'s European allies France, Germany, and the U.K. that are parties to the deal. The Trump administration followed it up with the re-imposition of stringent economic sanctions against Iran that were being gradually dismantled following the 2015 nuclear deal. These included sanctions against foreign companies doing business with Iran and against countries buying Iranian oil.

List of demands

Finally, the U.S. announced in April this year that it would not extend waivers granted earlier to eight countries (China, India, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, Italy and Greece) which had been the largest importers of Iranian oil. This decision was aimed at totally choking off the export of Iranian oil – the primary foreign exchange earner for Tehran – in order to bring Iran to its knees and force it to accept American demands spelt out by U.S. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo. These included further curbs on Iran's nuclear programme including total stoppage of uranium enrichment even at low levels permitted by the JCPOA and monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Further, Mr. Pompeo demanded that Iran stop all support to Hezbollah and Hamas which the U.S. considers to be "terrorist" groups, permit the disarming of Shia militias in Iraq, and stop aiding Houthis in Yemen fighting Saudi and Emirati forces in that country. Above all, Mr. Pompeo demanded that Iran end building of ballistic missiles and halt further launching or development of nuclear-capable missile systems.

All these demands went far beyond the limits placed on Iran by the JCPOA and most were unrelated to Iran's nuclear programme. Iran's government rejected these demands while still keeping the door open for negotiations, hoping against hope to draw the U.S. back into the nuclear deal. However, persisting and escalating moves by the U.S. during the past year now seem to have made it impossible for Tehran to simultaneously maintain the contradictory position of resisting American demands while continuing to comply with restrictions imposed on its nuclear programme by the JCPOA.

The stance of Iran's Hassan Rouhani government became increasingly untenable in the light of recent American actions. The latter provided the hardline opposition in Iran, composed of right-wing factions and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the opportunity to attack the government for conforming to an agreement that had been rejected by the U.S. and that had provided no economic relief to the Iranian people, the primary selling point in favour of the JCPOA. Moreover, the Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, whose support for the JCPOA was crucial, has for all practical purposes withdrawn his endorsement of the agreement in turn leaving the duo of President Rouhani and Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif without any protective political cover.

Tit-for-tat measures

Therefore, the Iranian government, in order to maintain its standing with the populace, has been left with no option but to undertake tit-for-tat measures, further heightening the political temperature in the Persian Gulf. This has turned the U.S.-Iran standoff into a game of chicken in which either one of the parties to the game blinks and concedes victory to the other or a "crash" becomes inevitable. The American-Iranian confrontation seems to be inexorably heading towards the latter outcome. If taken to its logical conclusion this scenario can turn out to be catastrophic for the entire West Asian region as well as for the international economy. Oil supplies from the Persian Gulf are likely to be greatly reduced if not totally eliminated sending oil prices skyrocketing, especially threatening the vulnerable economies of the global South.

Mohammed Ayoob is University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Michigan State University and Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Center for Global Policy, Washington DC

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.

Data on jobs

The article, "Jobless growth becomes systemic" (Editorial page, July 12), raises an issue being overlooked. The fact that the female workforce is the one to suffer the most is expected in a country which is predominantly patriarchal. Women do face a doublewhammy: of exclusion from the workforce and, once in the system, discrimination of various forms. More importantly, as far as the agriculture sector is concerned and a major contributor to the GDP, the fall in farmer numbers is distressing. We must not forget that this sector is also a key employment sector for rural women.

PINNENTY MRUDULA,
Bengaluru

■ The article needs to be read along with the Editorial, "Tread with caution" (July 12). The cold facts and figures of unemployment and the ills of diluting labour laws, euphemistically in the name of ease of doing business, do not augur well for the Indian working class. It will not be out of place to mention here a report, "State of Working India", which shows that 92% women and 82% men in the unorganised sector earn less than ₹10,000 per month. The Global Wealth Report of the Credit Suisse Research Institute (2018) shows that the top 1% Indians hold 51.5% of the country's wealth, the top 10% own 77.4% while 60% Indians fade away holding 4.7%. In the Budget speech, the Finance Minister described India Inc. as a creator of wealth, ignoring agriculturists and the rest – proof on whose side the government is. These disparities and income inequalities are bound to widen with the present government toeing the line of the affluent. Combined with a dilution of labour laws, one is sure to have a labour force facing a perennial threat of exploitation and retrenchment.

G.B. SIVANANDAM,
Coimbatore

■ The government appears to be a one-man led army, with a Utopian view of our country's future. The biggest issue now is a shrinking of the labour force and growing unemployment. Unemployment is a problem in urban and rural India regardless of gender. Though education levels may be improving, job opportunities are scarce. Finally, does the labour force have the skills/awareness of opportunities in various job fields?

KEZIAH MARIAM JAYAN,
Bengaluru

Tackling plastic

There is no doubt that plastic waste management is faulty (Editorial, Picking out plastic", July 12). Until such time as multinational companies take the lead in investing in plastic recycling systems, there is every reason to believe that plastic waste will be a major threat. There also a dire need of recycling cooperatives.

CHANDRASEKHAR V.,
Chennai

■ Some plastic packaging in this country comes with an instruction in a corner that it is recyclable and would fetch around ₹5 a kg. It also has the address of the manufacturer. However, this labelling is not as visible as it should be. As far as plastic recycling is concerned, the Hyderabad municipality has taken the lead. Some public parks use recycled waste plastic-based tiles.

LAKSHMI SWATHI G.,
Hyderabad

True picture

The Men in Blue are a blow hot, blow cold national cricket team who some pander to with a bout of hazy hurrahs. Potent threat, but for how long? Five years, a decade or till the cows come home? India has won league games against weak sides that the so-called batting juggernaut loves to annihilate, but with insipid bowling, right? India scraped through against Bangladesh and almost made a meal of it against Afghanistan. And if the Pakistan eleven had got it right, all the chest thumping nationalism could have turned into torturous self-flagellation. Except for a Jasprit Bumrah, Virat Kohli and a Rohit Sharma, the team disintegrates into bits and pieces against top quality sides. Propped up by a media frenzy and goals of personal aggrandisement, sample Ravindra Jadeja's cocky swagger on reaching his 50 when the team is yet to cross the hurdle. The team has a shallow and brittle character.

ANAND MATHEW,
New Delhi

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:
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Death by digital exclusion?

Many in Jharkhand have been denied food under the public distribution system as their ration cards have been cancelled in the mad rush for putting in place a digital system. While activists claim that some have died from starvation, the government denies this. **Shiv Sahay Singh** reports on the problems created by Aadhaar

A few weeks before Kaleshwar Soren, 45, died, he sold the last of his belongings, a Palash tree, for one and a half kg of rice. His ration card was cancelled in 2016 for reasons that are still not clear. As a result, the tribal had not received any foodgrain under the public distribution system (PDS) since then. Human rights activists claim that Soren, from Mahuadanr village in Dumka district of Jharkhand, died of starvation on November 11, 2018. The government denies this.

Jian Kisku and his wife Rasodi Hembram live in similar conditions next door. The couple has no ration card and has not received any foodgrain under the PDS. A few days ago, they sold a chicken that was bred in their backyard to buy 5 kg of rice, which they ate with the paste of a wild fruit. There is no telling where the next meal will come from.

Soren, Kisku and Hembram had 'priority household' cards that were later cancelled. Under the National Food Security Act, 2013, the PDS ensures 5 kg of foodgrain per person per month to those who hold these cards. Antyodaya families, or the poorest of the poor, are entitled to 35 kg of foodgrain per family per month under the Act.

These people are not exceptions. There are dozens in the village who claim that they are not receiving foodgrain under the PDS. Others who do receive foodgrain don't have a ration card; they have a ration card number scribbled on a piece of paper. It is on the basis of this that they get their foodgrain.

Kunti Nagasia and her son Rinku Nagasia live in abject poverty in Mahuadanr block of Latehar district, Jharkhand. The family has no ration card and is surviving with the help of neighbours. (Below) Family members of Santoshi Kumari, 11, who died of starvation after her family ration card was deleted for not being linked to Aadhaar. The family members show ration cards given to them under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana. • MANOB CHOWDHURY/ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A cruel joke

Mahuadanr is a remote tribal village about 300 km from Ranchi, Jharkhand's capital. The market closest to the village is a few km away in Lakadchowk, where the centre of attraction on a rain-swept afternoon is a giant LED screen mounted on a truck. The screen runs small video clips in the local language as well as in Hindi on how the "double engine growth" of the Narendra Modi government at the Centre and the Raghubar Das government in the State has taken Jharkhand to new heights.

Two days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit here to participate in International Yoga Day celebrations, hundreds of people gather in front of the screen to listen to how the Centre's Ayush and Yoga programmes can cure ailments. While people enjoy the spectacle, they don't appear to be interested in the message. Men drink hadia, the local liquor made of rice sold by over a dozen women who have brought the drink in plastic containers. While there are video clips on several schemes of the State government, including one to set up a tribal museum dedicated to tribal freedom fighter Birsa Munda, there is no video on the PDS, a lifeline for the tribals who comprise 26% of the population in the State. It seems like a cruel joke to them.

Right to Food activists in Jharkhand have listed in detail 20 deaths between September 2017 and June 2019 due to hunger and malnutrition because of alleged irregularities in the PDS and a few due to denial of social security pensions. The irregularities are manifold. From the deletion of ration cards to the problems in linking ration cards to Aadhaar, the system seems to create more problems than it solves, excluding many families rather than including them. Many activists also point out that the Socio-Economic and Caste Census of 2011, which helps identify PDS beneficiaries, is faulty and outdated.

The last in the series of deaths compiled by the activists was from Latehar district, where Ramcharan Munda, 65, died on June 6, 2019. While the administration is still investigating how Munda died, everyone including the ration dealer admits that ration was not delivered to Munda's village for several months. The curious case of non-delivery of foodgrain is what ails the PDS in one of the poorest States of the country.

Problems without Internet

For obtaining foodgrain and other essentials through the PDS in Jharkhand, a beneficiary has to meet several criteria. First, the family needs a ration card. Then they need to have Aadhaar cards. Next, the ration cards and Aadhaar numbers have to be linked. But it doesn't end there. In a majority of the ration shops of the State, delivery is through an electronic point of sale (EPOS) machine. It is through this machine that the biometrics of a beneficiary, mostly thumb impressions, have to be entered and verified from the server database. The EPOS machine works only if it is connected to the Internet. If the beneficiaries face no hiccups in any of these stages, they get their quota of foodgrain.

Something or the other can go wrong in any of these stages. In Lurgumikala village, for instance, the Internet failed. Due to irregular connectivity, the ration dealers of Mahuadanr block of Latehar began distributing ration offline – they made entries in a notebook or register after the ration was handed over to the beneficiary. Problems arose when the ration dealer, Ramrudra Prasad, 68, died and his job was transferred to his wife Manju Devi. This transfer somehow turned the system from offline to online. This meant that the dealer was required to distribute foodgrain by keeping the EPOS machine online and record the biometrics of every beneficiary. As there was no connectivity even after her husband's death and the EPOS machine would not work, for months Manju Devi collected foodgrain from the warehouse but did not distribute it. The foodgrain remained undelivered.

Ration dealers of the block say they have to feed all the information into the EPOS machine offline and then wait for Internet service to upload the data online. The senior-most ration dealer of the block, Ramdut Prasad, says he sends his son to the adjoining district of Simdega to upload the data. "Unless we upload the data we will not get foodgrain for the next month. Moreover the SIM in the EPOS machine is 2G, whereas we have 4G facility on our phone," he says.

The Internet problem in Latehar not only confuses ration dealers but also district officials. At the office of the District Collector, a young employee of a major hospital chain is struggling to write an application in Hindi. He is working on a pilot project on telemedicine in Latehar, but bad connectivity is posing some serious problems for him.

The District Collector, Rajeev Kumar, says there are several areas in the district, including blocks like Mahuadanr, Barwadih and Latehar, where connectivity is a major issue. Of the 592 ration dealers in the district, about 328 are distributing foodgrain offline. "But I cannot say that leakages will stop if the online system is fully functional," he says. "Even if someone uses his thumb and gets 2 kg of rice instead of 5 kg, what can you do?"

Jharkhand's Food and Supplies Minister Saryu Roy admits that the reports of deaths due to irregularities in the PDS are presenting the State in bad light, but says there is no going back on the online distribution of foodgrain. "There is no point in going back to the earlier system. If we go back, it will be regressive. What we can do to is to bring improvements in the existing system," he says.

To prevent deaths caused by irregularities in the PDS, some steps have been taken. Every ration dealer has been provided with an 'exception register' through which he can provide foodgrain to those whose names are not in the system. A protocol has been put in place to investigate the hunger deaths. This requires the district surgeon, the district supplies officer and any representative appointed by the District Collector to determine the cause of death.

A lab for experiments

At his residence in Ranchi, the Minister blames the overenthusiasm of bureaucrats for the "slippages" and "glitches" in PDS distribution. Roy refers to an order passed by a Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) of Chattrapur earlier in the day. The SDO had said that families not using the toilets built under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan programme would not get foodgrain under the PDS. Things took a turn for the worse, he says, when former Chief Secretary of Jharkhand, Rajbala Verma, in a video conference on March 27, 2017, directed that ration cards that were not linked to Aadhaar be cancelled.

Roy does not directly answer why Jharkhand has turned into a lab for all these digital experiments. He goes on to talk about another pilot project, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), in which money was being transferred directly to the bank accounts of PDS beneficiaries to enable them to buy ration. The project has been stopped, because that too came with many problems. The DBT scheme was tried at Nagri in Ranchi where about 12,000 people across 13 Panchayats received money to buy rations. Other than connectivity issues and money not landing in accounts on time, the DBT made things more complicated. Roy says: "While it took one day for a beneficiary to get foodgrain earlier, under the DBT the PDS beneficiary had to go to the bank, collect money, and then buy rations from the PDS dealer." After nearly a year of protests by people and Right to Food activists, the Jharkhand government finally decided to roll back the DBT scheme in October 2018.

A government in denial

While the government remains in denial about the deaths highlighted by Right to Food activists, the Minister admits that Santoshi Kumar, 11, died because her family ration card was deleted for not being linked to Aadhaar. Taramani Sahu, a foot soldier of the Right to Food Campaign, says she had raised this issue with the district authorities months before Santoshi died. The administration assured intervention, but that came only after the child's death. Twenty months after Santoshi died in Karimati village, her family has ration cards under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) scheme, which means that they are entitled to 35 kg of foodgrain a month.

Again, it was only because activists intervened that Koyli Devi got a shed built for rearing goats. Despite having a MGNREGA card, Koyli Devi has not got any work under the scheme. She works at a construction site at a nearby market. A Panchayat functionary says she has not applied for work under MGNREGA. The distress emerging out of patchy PDS distribution in the State is further compounded by poor implementation of 100 days of work guaranteed under MGNREGA.

A report sent by the Jharkhand government to the Director of MGNREGA at the Centre looks at 18 cases of alleged hunger deaths between 2017 and 2018. While there is no mention of whether the families got jobs under the rural job guarantee scheme, the document dated December 26, 2018, has one concluding sentence at the end of each of the 18 cases: "In this case the death does not appear to be linked with MGNREGA". The same report rejects hunger deaths in all 18 cases. While in the case of Santoshi the report points out that her death was due to an illness, in case of Soren it refers to a knee injury that occurred due to a fall he had almost two years before his death.

While in Santoshi's case the administration has ensured ration cards to the family, in several cases where similar allegations have surfaced, the families are yet to be enrolled in the PDS. For instance, Budhni Birajia of Amaotoli village in Mahuadanr block of Latehar district died on January 1, 2019. The family, which belongs to a particularly vulnerable tribal group and maintains that there was no food when she died, still does not have a ration card. Sanchi Birajia, Budhni's daughter-in-law who has to feed a family of five, says that the local ration dealer has spared a few kg of rice for her. In cases where the local dealers feel that denial of ration can lead to starvation, they spare a few kg of foodgrain to those who are not enlisted as PDS beneficiaries.

Siraj Dutta, a prominent face of the Right to Food campaign in Jharkhand, says that of the 20 who died, 11 were Adivasis and four were Dalits. Eleven of the deceased were women. In 13 cases, the inability to link Aadhaar to ration cards led to the denial of entitlements. Dutta says all the experimentation with the PDS in Jharkhand is aimed at doing away with "identity fraud", but studies from 2016 have shown that most of the leakages are "quantity fraud". Dutta and other activists claim that over 10 lakh ration cards were cancelled in the State when ration cards were linked to Aadhaar.

Abject poverty

Balram, a Right to Food activist, says, "Even if the digitisation is perfect and all the ration cards are linked with Aadhaar and all the EPOS machines are connected to the Internet, there will be many exclusions as the baseline data on which the ration cards have been issued are not correct." Given the debate around whether or not these deaths were linked to starvation, he points to the fact that a large number of people live in chronic hunger.

Balram's words ring true in different parts of State where people living in distress claim they do not have ration cards and are not getting foodgrain under the PDS. The argument of district collectors and officials is that the National Food Security Act only permits 80% of the population to be covered under the Act, 86% in rural areas and 62% in urban areas, and unless bogus ration cards are removed from the system, no new cards can be issued.

Not far from Budhni Birajia's house lives Kunti Nagasia with her son Rinku Nagasia. Rinku, who is about 10 years old, is the only earning member of the family. He gets ₹20 a day from doing odd jobs in the village. The family has no ration card. For years, they have not been getting any foodgrain under the PDS. Afsana Khatun, a volunteer with the Right to Food campaign, has raised the plight of the family with authorities and has also arranged for some medical help. Kunti has recently returned from a State-run hospital where she was undergoing treatment for tuberculosis. Rinku has also been diagnosed with the same disease. A peek into the single room hut reveals that the family is battling abject poverty. Two or three utensils and a few rags are all they own.

Kunti hurriedly points at a plastic gunny bag kept hidden under the rags. The bag contains rice. As in the case of Budhni's family, the ration dealer has been kind to spare a few kg of rice to Kunti's family as well. The neighbours have also been kind and given her four raw mangoes and half a kg of rice.

"Who will give us anything after this ends? We will eat it slowly," Kunti says. Kunti and Rinku cannot recall the last time they had eaten dal. They turn silent when asked about vegetables. For as long as they can remember, their meal has consisted of rice and salt. "If they die tomorrow, will you say that they died of TB or hunger," Afsana asks.

FROM PAGE ONE

SC asks Speaker to defer call on MLAs

"What was the basis of the Supreme Court's intervention? Your Lordships passed an ex-parte order against me yesterday... But what do these MLAs want? They claim the government has failed, so you (Supreme Court) help us fail it further. They claim there is 'malafide'. But these are just words. They claim the State administration has come to a standstill and there are scams. Do you know that one of them is involved in a scam named in their own petition," senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan, for the Chief Minister, submitted.

Mr. Kumar, represented by senior advocate A.M. Singhvi, said the MLAs did not disclose that disqualification proceedings were pending against them since February under the anti-defection law.

The Speaker asked whether the apex court had acted within the framework of the Constitution by putting him, a constitutional authority, on a deadline to meet the rebels and decide their resignation.

He said Article 190 of the Constitution gave the Speaker discretion to decide whether resignations tendered were voluntary and genuine. In a 10-page affidavit, the Speaker told the court that the resignations of the MLAs would be considered along with the disqualification proceedings for defection under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution. He would take a call in the spirit and letter of law.

Initially, Chief Justice Gogoi asked whether the Speaker was "challenging the power and authority of the court to pass orders."

"Is it the stand of the Speaker that the Supreme Court should stay its hands as far as the Speaker is concerned," the CJI asked.

But the Bench later acknowledged that "weighty" issues have been raised, including of judicial intervention and whether the Speaker was constitutionally obligated to decide the question of disqualification of the legislators before taking a call on their resignation letters.

The hearing began with senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, for the rebel MLAs, adopting an aggressive tone, saying the Speaker did not take a decision on the resignations after meeting the MLAs on July 11. Mr. Rohatgi said the Speaker instead held a press conference where he was heard asking "why the hell did the MLAs go to the Supreme Court and not come to me."

'Deliberate delay'

Mr. Rohatgi said the "game" is to delay action on the resignations and brazenly nudge events to culminate in the disqualification of the MLAs for not obeying their party's whip during the Assembly session which commenced on July 12.

He claimed the Speaker had returned the disqualification of eight out of 10 MLAs filed on July 10, but did not substantiate the claim with an affidavit in this regard. "The Speaker can be given two more days to decide on the resignations. If he does not want to decide at all, this is a case of contempt," Mr. Rohatgi submitted.

But the Speaker countered saying his meeting with the MLAs on July 11 was video-graphed. Mr. Kumar said the MLAs are on camera backtracking their claims that he had made himself "scarce" on July 6 when they came to tender their resignation at his office. The Speaker said the MLAs had misled the court.

"The MLAs during the course of the hearing admitted that they had never tendered their resignation to the Speaker personally. The MLAs also confirmed that they had neither sought time nor an appointment with the Speaker. They stated that it is wrong to state that when the MLAs had come to offer resignation, the Speaker escaped through the back door," the Speaker said in the affidavit.

First-timers brought to the fore in Lok Sabha

Biggest change is in the fact that parliamentary responsibilities and positions in parties are being delegated to new MPs

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

The 17th Lok Sabha may not have topped the figure of the previous one for first-term MPs, with 313 in 2014 compared to the 267 now, but in terms of prominence and opportunities, the first-time members have never had it so good.

The Lok Sabha sat late on two days this week, till 11.15p.m. on Tuesday to debate the Union Budget and till midnight on Thursday to discuss the demand for grants for the Railway Ministry, going by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla (himself a second-term MP) new policy that more and more first-timers should be given an opportunity to speak. But the biggest change is in the fact that parliamentary responsibilities and positions in parties are being delegated to new MPs, where it was once the preserve of experienced legislators with seniority strictly followed.

Margani Bharat, 36, a first-timer from the YSRCP (the fourth largest party in the House with 22 seats) is the chief whip of a group that has a former State Minister and Rajya Sabha member and a four-term MP in the mix.

Mr. Bharat told *The Hindu* that his appointment reflected Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jaganmohan Reddy's attitude that new leadership should be put forward. On how he is coping with being the chief whip in a situation where new MPs take months to come to grips with parliamentary procedures of even organising a visitor's pass for the House, he says that he keeps the rule book close to him at all times. "I'm coping by dealing with things one by one, we have a cooperative party group and I have also engaged a personal assistant who was earlier with a Union Minister," he said. He is clear about his brief with regard to his appointment, to give all party MPs an equal opportunity to speak. "I spoke on the Union budget, but we also have 15 out of our 22 MPs who are first-timers and many spoke in this session on several bills," he said.

Fresh outlook: BSP MP Kunwar Danish Ali. • PTI

Voicing views

Another first time MP who has got an important role is Kunwar Danish Ali of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). He has been appointed as the leader of the party's parliamentary group.

"I may be a first-timer, but I have been associated with former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowdaji and know a bit about parliamentary dos and don'ts," he said.

He noted that with 10 MPs, the BSP may not be allotted as much time as it would like, but the new policy of Speaker Birla has meant that many of his colleagues got an opportunity to speak in this session. "We take turns, and there is no domination by one speaker. This session was good in assessing what each MP's strength in terms of subjects is," he added.

The BJP too has appointed several first-time women MPs as additional whips to keep the flock of 303 MPs in order and they are learning on the job.

Railways cannot be privatised, says Goyal

'But it will invite investments for new technology'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

There is "no question" of privatisation of the Indian Railways, but the Railway Ministry will invite investments for new technology, lines and projects in the national interest, Railway Minister Piyush Goyal said in the Lok Sabha in response to the debate on Demands for Grants on Friday.

"There is no question of privatisation of the Railways. It cannot be privatised. However, if we have to increase the facilities in Railways, then obviously we need investments for it. We have taken a decision to encourage public-private partnerships and we will also corporatise some units. We should invite investments in the national interest if someone is ready to get new technology, new stations, projects and lines. The work for a Dedicated Freight Corridor started in 2007. From 2007 to 2014, they had not even managed one kilometre of track linking. We took on this work and in just five years, we have completed 1,900 km of track linking," he said.

> We have taken a decision to encourage public-private partnerships and we will also corporatise some units
>
> PIYUSH GOYAL
> Union Minister of Railways

Mr. Goyal took on the Congress to make his point that the Narendra Modi government had done much better compared to the previous United Progressive Alliance government (UPA) in giving a fillip to both infrastructure and railway safety.

The Modern Coach Factory in Rae Bareli (UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi's constituency) had not produced a single coach till 2014 when the National Democratic Alliance government took over, he alleged. The government, he said, wanted the coach factory to increase its manufacturing capacity to 5,000.

During the Minister's hour-long speech, there were frequent protests by Congress members. Their leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury accused him of misleading the House.

On the Railways' safety record, the Minister said that between 2004 and 2009, around 206 accidents took place every year, while the number was 153 between 2009 and 2011. During the BJP's tenure, it reduced to around 100 every year.

The Minister hit out at successive governments in West Bengal, saying several projects had been held up because the State was unable to provide land to the Railways. "The oldest project in West Bengal is running from 1974-75. The projects don't get completed because the government doesn't give us land. If they give us land, work will immediately start," he said.

Govt. in a spot over Bill seeking quota in RS

YSR Congress MP stages walkout

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

The government on Friday was caught in an embarrassing position as the entire Opposition backed YSR Congress MP Vijaya Sai Reddy's private member's Bill seeking reservations for the Other Backward Classes in the Rajya Sabha and the Assemblies on the lines of the reservations available for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

Mr. Reddy's Bill - The Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2018 (insertion of new articles 330A and 332 A) was introduced on June 21 and the debate concluded on Friday.

In a reply to the debate, Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said without any reservation the country had seen many OBC leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "Why do you want to box such great names under reservation," he said.

The government was stumped when on conclusion of the debate, Mr. Reddy sought a voting with the Congress and other Opposition parties backing his call.

Vijaya Sai Reddy

"My party YSR (Congress) has been supporting the uplift of the minority and the Backward Classes. In fact in our State Cabinet 65% of the ministerial berths have gone to the SCs, the STs and the OBCs. This is just in proportion to their population," Mr. Reddy said. He refused to withdraw the Bill despite repeated requests from the chair.

Cheering Mr. Reddy on, many Opposition members taunted the government calling it anti-Backward Classes. After much back and forth, Mr. Reddy staged a walk out. "Since the government is not co-operating and I don't think the rules of the House are being followed, I am walking out," he said.

IN BRIEF

Central Universities Bill passed by Lok Sabha

NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Friday passed the Central Universities (Amendment) Bill, 2019, with Human Resource Development Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal, who introduced the Bill, stating that preparations were on for filling vacancies in the next six months. The Minister said that the Bill provides for the establishment of a Central university and a tribal university in Andhra Pradesh.

In 2019, 872 cases of AES were reported in Bihar

NEW DELHI

Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Ashwini Kumar Choubey on Friday informed the Lok Sabha that as many as 872 cases of Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) were reported in Bihar in the year 2019 and 176 succumbed to the disease. He added that the Health Ministry has taken measures to support the state in the containment of AES cases and that constant monitoring was on. He added that officials from the Indian Council of Medical Research have visited Muzaffarpur.

Kiran Bedi asked to move Division Bench first

The Single Judge Bench verdict had curbed the LG's powers in interfering in the day-to-day administration of the Union Territory, especially when an elected government was in place.

The LG had argued that governance came to a standstill after the High Court decision in April held 'incessant' interference from the LG would amount to running a "parallel government."

The 150-page judgment had highlighted the significant differences in the powers conferred on the legislatures of Puducherry and Delhi under Articles 239A and 239AA of the Constitution.

Unlike Article 239AA, which imposes several restrictions on the legislature of Delhi, no such restrictions had been imposed explicitly on Puducherry under Article 239A, the High Court had held. "The above Article symbolises the supremacy of the Legislature above the Administrator in the case of the Union Territory of Puducherry."

Kiran Bedi

Rahul not quitting fight: Khurshid

Appeals to Congress colleagues to 'courteously find a way forward'

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

Rahul Gandhi continues to enjoy a 'larger than life image' among Congress workers and the next party president should be someone who can work in tandem with him, said former Law Minister Salman Khurshid.

The senior Congress leader admitted that the current state of affairs within the party appears to be "a little confused run to the finishing line' and appealed to his colleagues to 'courteously find a way forward' on the leadership.

"I am very clear that Rahul Gandhi is not walking away. He has said that he is going to be in the fight. Now, if he has said he remains in the fight, he will not be a little Salman Khurshid or a little somebody else. He will be the larger than life leader that he has been but he won't be president," Mr. Khurshid said in an interview with *The Hindu*, ahead of the release of his new book, *Visible Muslim Invisible Citizen*.

Salman Khurshid

"We should be looking for a leader who can work in tandem and not a replacement for Rahul Gandhi. I think it will be a mistake for a replacement while he is vigorous, determined and made a clear indication that he would be there to fight with the forces we want to fight," he observed.

'Companion leader'

Talking about the young versus the old debate that has broken out in choosing the next Congress chief, he said, "The ideological position must be let's have somebody who is really outstanding; somebody who is the best. It doesn't matter what their age is. Obviously, if you are very old then you cannot lead for the next 10 years. We already have a young leader in Mr. Rahul Gandhi and you need a companion leader who could lead for the next five or 10 years and build from where we are today."

"There is an Indian identity of Muslims. It can be progressive modern Muslim, it can be conservative Muslim, it can be an unbelieving or an atheist Muslim. And that's true of every Indian. When I come across somebody from Uttar Pradesh who is not a Muslim by birth but can speak Urdu better than I or can recite poetry, I see the Muslimness of that person. It's both Indianness and Muslimness of that person," he said.

CWC likely to decide on Congress chief next week

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Ten days after Rahul Gandhi went public with his resignation as party president , the Congress is yet to schedule a meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) to decide on his successor.

But sources in the party on Friday indicated that it could take place next week once there is clarity on the Karnataka political situation.

Several party veterans, including Karan Singh and Janardan Dwivedi, had questioned the delay as well the procedure of finding a replacement for Mr. Gandhi.

On Thursday, senior Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia in Bhopal had questioned the delay. "We have to search a new party president. A lot of time has elapsed. Now, we cannot allow more time to pass," he told reporters in Bhopal.

"Deciding about the party president would be a collective decision. The CWC would take a decision. We all have to take a decision together," he said when asked if he was in the race for the next president.

The party sources said senior leaders like Ghulam Nabi Azad, Ahmed Patel, Mukul Wasnik and Anand Sharma, who have held several meetings and reached out to other senior leaders and Congress Chief Ministers, have asked colleagues to give names in closed envelopes.

Tuki booked on graft charge

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered a corruption case against former Arunachal Pradesh CM Nabam Tuki for allegedly awarding government contracts worth ₹3.2 crore in violation of rules. The agency alleged that the contracts for developing parking places were granted when Mr. Tuki held the charge of Minister of Consumer Affairs and Civil Supplies in the State. Among those named are Mr. Tuki's brother Nabam Tagam, the then Director, Civil Supplies, N.N. Osik and then Chief Manager of United Commercial Bank Sohrab Ali Hazarika.

Health, sanitation should be focus areas: Modi

PM interacts with BJP women MPs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

As part of a series of interactions with BJP MPs, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday met with more than 30 of the 41 women MPs of the party at his residence, and urged them to focus on health, sanitation and eradicating malnutrition.

Sources present at the meeting said Mr. Modi listened to all the MPs patiently and said that every woman MP is an institution in herself. "Being women, he said, they have excellent soft skills that can help them connect effectively with the public," the sources added. The Prime Minister advised the women MPs to focus on health, sanitation and eradicating malnutrition among children.

The party's MPs have been divided into seven groups and Mr. Modi has already met parliamentarians belonging to the OBC, SC and ST categories, young MPs and those who were Ministers once, sources said.

Home Minister Amit Shah, who is also BJP president, and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi are the only Ministers who are part of these meetings.

Vikram lander tested over Challakere 'craters'

MADHUMATHI D.S.
BENGALURU

To simulate the lunar surface at the Bengaluru test facility, professional crushers broke down the rocks brought from around Salem in Tamil Nadu to the micro grain sizes sought by the ISRO-led team. Transporters moved the tonnes of this 'lunar earth' to ISITE, all free of charge, Dr. M. Annadurai, former U.R. Rao Satellite Centre (URSC) Director recalls.

These challenges were not there when he led the first lunar orbiting-only mission, Chandrayaan-1, as its project director. At the Lunar Terrain Test Facility (LTTF), the team spread the soil trucked in from Salem up to a height of about 2 metres. Studios were hired to illuminate the facility exactly as sunlight would play on the lunar terrain.

Getting set: Hoisting of the Vikram lander during the Chandrayaan-2 spacecraft integration. • ISRO

On the Moon, the metre-long rover, weighing 27 kg, must move for about 500 metres during its expected life of 14 Earth days (one lunar day). Rover tests began as early as in 2015.

The ISRO team had to reckon with the weak lunar gravity, about 16.5% of Earth's. The rover's weight was artificially reduced using helium balloons.

Previous missions by other countries have suggested that the southern part of the Moon is mineral rich with the promise of water, which was first confirmed by the Chandrayaan-1 mission.

Lunar south pole

ISRO Chairman K. Sivan recently said the Indian lander Vikram would be the first ever spacecraft to land at the lunar south pole.

It has two site options, the craters Manzinus-C and Simpelius-N.

For testing the lander, ISRO had a large test bed created at its new R&D campus at the Challakere Science City, some 400 km from Bengaluru. Vikram's set of sensors, called the Hazard Detection and Avoidance (HDA) system, is a critical part of the mission.

Sometime in 2016, the URSC created several artificial 'lunar' craters at the Challakere site.

Late that year the team put a test bed of lander sensors in a small ISRO plane and flew it over the craters to see if the sensors could read the terrain and find the right landing spot.

According to Dr. Annadurai, the success of the landing depends on the sensors' correctly guiding the lander to a safe site; and the fuel in the lander lasting for duration of the whole exercise.

IN BRIEF

SCS agreement should be binding, says envoy

NEW DELHI

The China-U.S. confrontation has made the situation in the South China Sea (SCS) more "complex and unpredictable," said Vietnamese envoy in India Pham Sanh Chau on Friday, speaking at a discussion organised by the Society for Indian Ocean Studies. Calling the Code of Conduct for the SCS under negotiation between the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China as the most positive development, Mr. Chau said it should be binding.

RIIN won't discriminate: Nagaland government

KOHIMA

The Nagaland government has said it will not take any decision that is discriminatory or goes against the interest of people or any community while preparing the Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN). The government assured the people that it would not take any hasty decision, Home Commissioner of Nagaland R. Ramakhrishnan said in a statement issued here on Thursday. The process will engage civil society and the citizenry of the state. PTI

ED launches probe into U.P. mining scam

NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate has initiated money laundering investigations into an alleged mining scam in Uttar Pradesh, based on two FIRs registered by the CBI. The CBI cases are against former State Minister Gayatri Prajapati, the then Principal Secretary Jiwesh Nandan, then Special Secretary Santosh Kumar in the Geology and Mining Department and the then District Magistrates of Fatehpur and Deoria, Abhay and Vivek, among others.

J&K police foil bid to smuggle explosives

SRINAGAR

The J&K police have aborted a major bid to smuggle around 150 kg of explosives, likely for militant outfits, from a cement factory located on the outskirts of Srinagar, close to the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway. The incident came to light on Wednesday when the caretakers of the cement factory reported the missing explosives to the police at Awantipora's Khrew area, which has vast forest cover nearby and is dominated by cadres of the Jaish-e-Muhammad outfit.

India, Pak. officials to meet at Wagah for talks on Kartarpur

Will discuss modalities to bridge the gaps in corridor project

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Indian and Pakistani officials will meet at the Attari-Wagah border on Sunday to discuss issues, including ways to bridge gaps related to the Kartarpur Corridor that is to be made operational by November, ahead of the commemoration of the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak.

The delegations will meet at Wagah in Pakistan to discuss issues of connectivity at the Zero Point, number of pilgrims and kind of travel documents to be allowed, government officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said on Friday.

India would also raise its concerns over the security aspect, the officials added.

New Delhi had earlier conveyed to Pakistan its serious concern over the presence of a leading Khalistani separatist in a committee appointed by Islamabad for the project.

"The meeting will discuss modalities of the Kartarpur Corridor and related technical issues," a government official said.

Way forward: Work progressing at the site of a passenger terminal complex, being built on 15 acres of land, at Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur district of Punjab. ▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The project is aimed at easing access for Sikh pilgrims from India to visit Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur in Pakistan, the final resting place of Guru Nanak. Work on a four-lane highway on the Indian side was in full swing, the officials said. The four-lane highway connecting the Zero Point of the Kartarpur Corridor to National Highway 354 is being constructed by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).

India is constructing a bridge at the Zero Point and has urged Pakistan to build a similar bridge on its side to ensure safe and secure movement of pilgrims and to address concerns regarding flooding, the officials said. The bridge is over a creek, of which a major part falls in Pakistan.

Pak. not for bridge

Pakistan had said it would build a mud-filled embankment, a structure that would not only lead to flooding in areas on the Indian side but also pose a threat to the structure of the bridge, the officials asserted.

The creek tends to flood during the monsoon when river Ravi swells.

Another proposal put forth by Pakistan was to build a causeway, the officials said, adding that it was unacceptable to India as it would not provide an all-weather road.

They said the construction work at the site of a passenger terminal complex at Dera Baba Nanak in India was proceeding apace. More than 250 labourers and 30 engineers were working at the site in three shifts, they added.

The terminal is being built on about 15 acres of land.

India, Russia discuss space cooperation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India and Russia on Friday explored the "possibilities for production of space systems in India" during the discussions between National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and the visiting Director General of Russia's space agency ROSCOSMOS and former Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin.

"Cooperation in futuristic technologies, including new space systems, rocket engines, propellants and propulsion systems, spacecraft and launch vehicle technology were also discussed," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

The discussions covered all aspects of India-Russia space cooperation.

Strategic approach

Both sides will take a strategic approach to "elevate bilateral cooperation to the next level keeping in mind the privileged partnership and India's priorities such as Make in India programme," the MEA said.

India, U.S. teams hold talks on trade ties

Enhanced engagement discussed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Commerce Ministry officials on Friday met trade officials from the U.S. and discussed ways to improve trade relations been the two countries.

"A delegation led by Assistant United States Trade Representative (AUSTR) Christopher Wilson visited India on July 11-12 to explore potential for enhanced bilateral trade and economic engagement with India under the new government," the Ministry said in a statement.

The U.S. delegation held bilateral talks on July 12 with the Indian delegation led by Sanjay Chadha, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce.

"The meeting aimed at providing new impetus to bilateral trade and commercial ties, in line with the mandate given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the U.S. President Donald Trump during their meeting at Osaka, Japan on June 28, 2019," the statement added.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal with a U.S. official on Friday. ▪ PTI

"Both sides discussed the broad contours of bilateral trade and commercial ties and agreed to continue their discussions for achieving mutually beneficial outcomes aimed at further growing the economic relationship and addressing mutual trade concerns," it said.

The U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) estimated that U.S.-India bilateral trade will grow from $143 billion to $238 billion by 2025. This growth will occur if trade grows by 7.5% each year, as has been the trend for the last seven years, it added.

The AUSTR also called on the Commerce Secretary and Commerce & Industry Minister during the visit.

Evidence gathered from social media secures conviction in Khalistani case

India collects proof from WhatsApp and Facebook servers in the U.S.

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

India got help from WhatsApp and Facebook servers in the U.S. to secure conviction in a 2018 Khalistani terror case.

Security agencies have been asked to focus on cases involving Khalistani elements as India seeks to restrict the movement of suspects based in the U.S., the U.K., Canada and Australia involved in the conspiracy.

"The convictions by courts can help us build our case against these pro-Khalistani groups and convince countries to choke their funds and restrict their movement," said a senior government official.

Security agencies have raised concerns on Pakistan using the yet-to-be-inaugurated Kartarpur corridor to push the Khalistani agenda from across the border.

One of the accused was part of a WhatsApp group, Referendum 2020. ▪ AFP

This week, a Lucknow court convicted five men for plotting to kill former Punjab Deputy CM Sukhbir Singh Badal, whose leadership they believed was responsible for several incidents of desecration of Guru Granth Sahib in the State in 2015. They also held Mr. Badal responsible for the killing of Sikh protesters in police firing in subsequent protests.

The five men looted weapons from a police station in Uttar Pradesh on October 2 last year to kill Mr. Badal, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) said.

One of the convicts Jarman Singh was part of WhatsApp groups that promoted Referendum 2020, an online campaign for Khalistan. The campaign was being advocated by Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), banned by the Home Ministry on July 10. An official said SFJ was being investigated in as many as 11 cases, including one registered by the NIA in January. U.K. resident Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, legal adviser of the SFJ, was named in the FIR.

The NIA found that Jarman Singh was "highly motivated and radicalised to the so-called cause of creation of Khalistan." It filed a chargesheet on April 11 and within three months the trial was completed.

A chargesheet filed by the NIA on April 11 said, "Jarman was in contact with international numbers of Dubai, Australia and Canada. He was a member of a WhatsApp group by the name of Referendum 2020."

The NIA said the accused "shared motivational songs on Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who was killed in Operation Blue Star in 1984."

"In order to have access to his chats, requests were forwarded to WhatsApp and Facebook Inc. to preserve the contents. In response to a request, Facebook and WhatsApp's legal division preserved the accounts as well as sent some information for further investigation," the NIA said.

India again abstains at UN vote, draws criticism

Stand in spite of SC scrapping Sec. 377

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

India on Friday abstained at the vote for extending the mandate of an important UN official who reports on violence and discrimination against sexual minorities.

India's abstention at the resolution for term-renewal of the Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva drew criticism from activists, especially since it came after the Supreme Court struck down Section 377 and decriminalised the LGBTQ community.

The resolution received support from most member countries at the Human Rights Council but India, Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameron, Congo, Hungary, Togo and Senegal abstained during the final voting. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, China, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Qatar and Somalia opposed the resolution. Earlier, India had abstained during the 2016 vote on the appointment of the Independent Expert. The current Independent Expert is Victor Madrigal Borlioz of Costa Rica.

The resolution received support from most member countries.

Activists pointed out that though India abstained, they were surprised to see that the Indian delegation had supported some amendments brought by countries that opposed the work of the Independent Expert. They chose Nepal and Philippines for supporting the resolution which was about opposing violence against the LGBTQ persons, which is essentially a form of gender violence.

The Resolution numbered L10 Rev 1 granted an extension of three years to the Independent Expert to carry on reporting on incidents of violence against the LGBTQ community all over the world.

NHRC notices on custodial deaths

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission on Friday issued notices to the Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand governments in separate cases of custodial deaths from suicide.

Taking suo motu cognisance of media reports, the NHRC sought a report from the Tamil Nadu Director General of Police about the custodial death of a man in the Cuddalore district on Thursday. The NHRC asked for the inquest report, the post-mortem examination report and the magisterial enquiry report in six weeks.

According to reports, the 24-year-old man was arrested at 9.45 a.m. on Thursday for withdrawing money using stolen ATM cards. He was found dead in a toilet at 10.45 a.m.

The NHRC also took suo motu cognisance of a custodial death of an 18-year-old man in Uttarakhand. According to reports, the man was arrested on charges of theft on Tuesday and he was found dead in the police lock-up.

Marwari BJP leader gets foreigner notice

I was born in Silchar in 1963, he says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A 56-year-old BJP leader with roots in Rajasthan has been marked a 'foreigner' after his name was excluded from the draft list of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) being updated in Assam.

Members of Pawan Kumar Rathi's family were surprised when his name figured among 1.02 lakh people filtered out of the draft NRC published in July 2018 and published in an additional exclusion list on June 26.

The Rathis had settled down in southern Assam's Silchar town from Bikaner district of Rajasthan before independence.

"The youngest of four siblings, I was born in Silchar in 1963. So this notice from the NRC authorities on July 1 was shocking," he said.

A local booth president of the BJP who had contested the Silchar civic polls on the party ticket, Mr. Rathi was in New Delhi when members of his family informed him about the notice saying he was a "declared foreigner."

"I went to our ancestral home in Bikaner's Kalu, collected copies of all documents I could find, had them signed by the village panchayats and returned on July 5 to appear for the hearing at the local NRC office the day after," he told *The Hindu* on phone.

Data entry operators at the National Register of Citizens in Assam. ▪ PTI

The panchayat leaders wondered how a man from the Marwari community could be a foreigner.

"This should not have happened since I had submitted some 40 documents including copies of my passport, Aadhaar card and other documents. The NRC officials said there was some kind of mistake," he said. None of the other members of his family are in the excluded list.

The SC is monitoring the NRC exercise whose deadline is July 31.

Poetry in Muslim 'dialect' kicks up a storm in Assam

It allegedly portrays the Assamese as xenophobic

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A group of people accused of portraying the Assamese as xenophobic through poetry, in a dialect associated with Bengal-origin Muslims, has asserted that controversy was being manufactured at a time when the National Register of Citizens (NRC) was being updated in Assam.

On Thursday, the Assam police registered an FIR against 10 people after receiving a complaint about a poem in 'Miyah' – a colloquial dialect of Bengal-origin Muslims – lamenting the citizenship challenges faced by religious minorities.

The poem, titled 'I am a Miyah', is written by Kazi Sharowar Hussain and translated into English by Shalim M. Hussain, both based in western Assam's Barpeta district. They are named in the FIR with eight others.

Pranabjit Doloi, a freelance journalist, filed the complaint on the basis of a viral video, which shows the poem being recited. "They have the freedom to write poems, but I have objected to their use of certain terms conveying to the world that the Assamese people are xenophobic and hate Muslims," Mr. Doloi asserted to *The Hindu*.

The poem was copied from poet Mahmoud Darwesh's work, the complaint said.

"The real intention of this poem is to motivate and provoke their community against the system. This is a threat to the Assamese people and national security. The poem talks of their men being gunned down, and women being raped. Assam has no such history, and Assamese people were not involved even in the Nellie [February 1983] massacre," he contended. He alleged that the poem was "copied" from 'ID Card' by Arabian poet Mahmoud Darwish, with certain words replaced for local effect.

The poet and the translator, who could not be reached for comment, however, issued a statement on Friday, rubbishing the charges made against them.

Protest poetry

"Miyah poetry began in 2016 as a series of poems opposing the use of the 'Miyah' as a slang word for Assamese Muslims of Bengal-origin," the group of 10 persons said. "Today, 'Miyah poetry' is an umbrella term for poems by many, mostly young poets, from within and even outside the Bengal-origin Assamese Muslim community. These poems include stories of humiliation and discrimination, love poems, poems spreading social awareness, etc.," they explained.

The current debate was "baseless" as a few lines written three years ago were taken out of context with malicious intent, they contended. "Not a single Miyah poem uses the word xenophobia," they asserted.

They trashed the allegation that Miyah poetry was a threat to the Assamese language. "This is an utter lie. A huge majority of the Miyah poems are written in Assamese, some in English and Hindi and a handful in local dialects... ," they said in the statement.

Turkey defies U.S. as S-400 arrives

Ankara could face American sanctions & be expelled from the F-35 programme; NATO raises concern

REUTERS
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ISTANBUL/BRUSSELS

Russia began delivery of an advanced missile defence system to Turkey on Friday, a move expected to trigger U.S. sanctions against a NATO ally and drive a wedge into the heart of the Western military alliance.

The first parts of the S-400 air defence system were flown to a military air base near the capital Ankara, the Turkish Defence Ministry said, sealing Turkey's deal with Russia which Washington had struggled for months to prevent.

The U.S. says the Russian military hardware is not compatible with NATO systems and that the acquisition may lead to Ankara's expulsion from an F-35 fighter jet programme.

"The delivery of parts belonging to the system will continue in the coming days," Turkey's Defence Industry Directorate said. "Once the system is completely ready, it will begin to be used in a way determined by the relevant authorities."

At least two Russian Air Force AN-124 cargo planes flew to Turkey on Friday morning, data from plane tracking website Flightradar24 showed. Turkish broadcasters showed footage of one plane parked at airbase and a second one landing at around 12.30 pm.

New hardware: Parts of an S-400 missile defence system being unloaded from a Russian plane at Murted airport near Ankara, Turkey, on Friday. • REUTERS

Deliveries to continue

Russia's Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation confirmed on Friday it had started delivering the S-400 systems and that the deliveries would continue in accordance with an agreed schedule, the RIA news agency reported. An unnamed military-diplomatic source was cited by Russia's TASS news agency as saying a second delivery would be carried out by plane soon. A third delivery of 120 guided missiles will be carried out by ship at the end of the summer, the source was quoted as saying.

Twenty Turkish servicemen received training from Russia in May-June and 80 more Turkish servicemen will receive training to use the S-400 system, the source was quoted as saying.

Turkey says the system is a strategic defence requirement, particularly to secure its southern borders with Syria and Iraq. It says that when it made the deal with Russia for the S-400s, the U.S. and Europe had not presented a viable alternative.

President Tayyip Erdogan said after meeting President Donald Trump at a G-20 summit last month that the U.S. did not plan to impose sanctions on Ankara for buying the S-400s.

Mr. Trump said Turkey had not been treated fairly but did not rule out sanctions. U.S. officials said last week the administration still plans to impose sanctions on Turkey.

Possible measures

Under legislation known as Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), which targets purchases of military equipment from Russia, Mr. Trump should select five of 12 possible measures.

These range from banning visas and denying access to the U.S.-based Export-Import Bank, to the harsher options of blocking transactions with the U.S. financial system and denying export licences.

NATO said on Friday that it was "concerned" by Turkey's acquisition of the S-400 system. The alliance has repeatedly warned Turkey that the Russian system is incompatible with other NATO weapons systems.

"We are concerned about the potential consequences of Turkey's decision to acquire the S-400 system," a NATO official said.

China to impose sanctions on U.S. firms for Taiwan arms sale

$2.2 billion deal violates international law, says Beijing

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

China on Friday said it would impose sanctions on U.S. companies involved in a potential arms sale worth $2.2 billion to self-ruled Taiwan – a move that has infuriated Beijing.

"The U.S. arms sale to Taiwan has severely violated the basic norms of international law and international relations," said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang in an online statement. "In order to safeguard national interests, China will impose sanctions on U.S. enterprises participating in this sale of weapons to Taiwan," he said.

The planned weapons sale, the first transfer of big-ticket United States military gear to democratically-governed Taiwan in decades, comes as ties between Washington and Beijing are already strained by a trade war.

Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen.

China views Taiwan as part of its territory and has vowed to one day seize it, by force if necessary.

Earlier this week, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said Beijing had lodged formal complaints through diplomatic channels expressing "strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition" at the potential weapons sale, which includes battle tanks and anti-aircraft missiles. China on Tuesday had also demanded that the U.S. "immediately cancel" the sale.

The U.S. later shrugged off China's complaints, responding that the equipment would contribute to "peace and stability" in Asia.

Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen is spending two days in the U.S. this week ahead of a trip to the Caribbean. The decision to let Ms.Tsai pass through the U.S. has drawn ire from Beijing, which voiced "firm" opposition to official exchanges between Washington and Taipei.

Mr. Geng told a press briefing on Friday that the U.S. should not provide a platform for "Taiwan independence separatist forces". "We urge the U.S... to not let Tsai Ing-wen pass through its territory," said Mr. Geng.

Russia's top missile system has many buyers

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
MOSCOW

The Russian Army began using the S-400 missile defence systems, designed to intercept and shoot down any threat from the sky, in 2007.

According to its producer, the state-owned Almaz-Antey company, it has a range of 400 km and can be deployed within just five minutes.

It consists of several vehicles: a command centre, various mobile radar stations and up to 12 launch vehicles that each carry four missiles.

Dozens of S-400s have already been deployed throughout Russia, from the country's most western point in the Kaliningrad exclave to its far eastern corners.

Four S-400s are also stationed in Crimea, the Black Sea peninsula annexed by Russia from Ukraine in 2014.

Two have been deployed to Syria, where Moscow intervened militarily on the side of the Damascus regime, to protect Russia's airbase in Hmeimim and the Tartus naval facility.

Who has bought it?

China was the first country to buy the weapon from Russia, ordering several S-400s for an estimated $3 billion. Deliveries began in April 2018 and the first tests took place at the end of June 2019. Few other details of the missile deal were made public.

India bought five S-400 systems for $5.2 billion. Their delivery is due to begin at the end of next year.

Around a dozen other countries – including Iraq, Qatar and Saudi Arabia – have shown interest in the S-400, in some cases as a means of putting pressure on the United States to lower prices on its weapons systems.

The S-400 is one of the most modern air defence systems in the world, and comes at a lower price than its U.S. competitor, the Patriot.

The U.S. and NATO have said the S-400 is incompatible with equipment used by other members of the alliance. Moscow has been able to use the S-400 as a political weapon: by selling the system to Turkey, it sows discord between Ankara and its NATO allies, whose ties are already strained.

Russia plans to launch the S-500, the successor of the S-400, in the 2020s.

Brazil President says he may appoint son as U.S. Ambassador

Cites 35-year-old's friendship with children of Donald Trump

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BRASILIA

Jair Bolsonaro is considering appointing his son Eduardo as Ambassador to Washington, the Brazilian leader has revealed, citing the 35-year-old's friendship with the children of U.S. President Donald Trump.

Mr. Eduardo, currently a member of Parliament, accompanied his father to a private meeting with Mr. Trump during a diplomatic visit to Washington in March. "In my opinion, he can be the right person and could present the message perfectly in Washington," Brazil's right-wing leader told reporters in Brasilia on Thursday.

Eduardo, son of Brazil President Jair Bolsonaro.

But the decision is up to Mr. Eduardo, he added, who would have to resign from Congress and secure approval by the Senate.

Mr. Eduardo, the third of the President's four sons, said he had yet to receive a formal offer but would accept the role. "If the president entrusts me with this mission, I would be ready to resign my mandate," he said.

"I speak English, I speak Spanish, I was elected with a record number of votes, I am chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee... I believe these credentials give me a certain qualification."

U.S. will consider '301 probe' on India, says trade official

Investigation is a precursor to trade measures

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

The U.S. will consider a "301 investigation", a probe employed as a precursor to tariffs and other trade measures against a country, against India if the trade issues between the two countries are not resolved quickly, Deputy U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Jeffrey Gerrish said on Thursday.

Mr. Gerrish also said India finalising data localisation policies could be deal-breaker across the board between the two countries.

His comments were made at a U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) event in Washington during a discussion with Susan Esserman, a former Deputy USTR in the Clinton Administration.

Jeffrey Gerrish

"We believe that we should utilise the full range of trade rules, including Section 301, where warranted. And we're certainly looking at these policies and practices that India has engaged in light of that. We are doing it in a very deliberate, thoughtful way and trying to determine what the best approach is here," Mr Gerrish said. "And we'll see where that goes. At this point, we're clearly in the very early stages of our engagement with the new Indian government and we want to see, of course, what the willingness is to address the trade issues that we have."

Mr. Gerrish declined to give a timeline for these actions but said issues would need to be resolved quickly.

However, Mr. Gerrish added that if the market access issues related to GSP (Generalized System of Preferences) were resolved quickly, it would be a confidence building step and would help the process.

Section 301 of the U.S. Trade Act (1974) was also to authorise a 2017 probe that resulted in tariffs on Chinese exports to the U.S. from July 2018. Earlier this week, the USTR announced a 301 probe against France on a digital services tax.

"We certainly recognise the pivotal role that India plays as a vibrant democracy in the region to a free and open Indo-Pacific region and the important strategic relationship that our two countries have and in everything we do, we approach it with that in mind," Mr. Gerrish said.

Child suicide bomber kills 5 at wedding

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KABUL

A 13-year-old suicide bomber blew himself up at a wedding early on Friday in eastern Afghanistan's Nangarhar province, killing five people and injuring 11 others, police officials said.

Among those killed was Malik Toor, a commander of a pro-government militia who had organised the wedding, police official Fayz Mohammad Babarkhil said. Officials said Toor was the likely target of the attack, which took place in Pachirwa Agham district of Nangarhar province.

No one took responsibility for the bombing, but the Taliban said it was not involved in the explosion, according to a statement posted on its website. Both the Taliban and the Islamic State affiliate have a strong presence in eastern Afghanistan, and the IS group is headquartered in Nangarhar province.

IN BRIEF

U.S. Labor Secretary resigns over Epstein affair

WASHINGTON

U.S. Labor Secretary Alex Acosta resigned on Friday, amid a backlash over a secret plea deal he negotiated a decade ago with Jeffrey Epstein, the financier accused of sexually abusing young girls. Mr. Acosta, 50, a former federal prosecutor, had been facing mounting calls to quit over the deal that saw Epstein serve just 13 months in a county jail. "I called the President this morning and told him that I thought the right thing was to step aside," Mr. Acosta said in a joint appearance with President Donald Trump. AFP

New Constitution calls Kim head of state instead of 'supreme leader'

Move seen as a step towards U.S. peace treaty

REUTERS
SEOUL

Kim Jong-un has been formally named head of state of North Korea and the Commander-in-Chief of the military in a new Constitution observers said was possibly aimed at preparing for a peace treaty with the United States.

North Korea has also long called for a peace deal with the United States to normalise relations and end the technical state of war that has existed since the 1950-1953 Korean War concluded with an armistice rather than a peace treaty.

Kim Jong-un

The new Constitution, unveiled on the Naenara state portal site on Thursday, said that Mr. Kim as chairman of the State Affairs Commission (SAC), a top governing body created in 2016, was "the supreme representative of all the Korean people", which means head of state, and "commander-in-chief".

A previous Constitution simply called Mr. Kim "supreme leader" who commands the country's "overall military force".

"Kim had dreamed of becoming the President of North Korea and he effectively made it come true," said Kim Dong-yup, a professor at Kyungnam University's Far East Institute in Seoul.

Hong Min, a researcher at Korea Institute for National Unification in Seoul, said the title change was also aimed at preparing for a potential peace treaty with the United States. "The amendment may well be a chance to establish Kim's status as the signer of a peace treaty when it comes, while projecting the image of the country as a normal state," he said.

MARKET WATCH

	12-07-2019	% CHANGE
Sensex	38,736	-0.22
US Dollar	68.69	-0.36
Gold	35,400	-1.11
Brent oil	66.78	0.00

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	415.30	2.40
Asian Paints	1361.95	29.50
Axis Bank	755.80	-10.60
Bajaj Auto	2722.55	10.85
Bajaj Finserv	7725.70	80.00
Bajaj Finance	3377.50	-73.55
Bharti Airtel	356.10	-4.65
BPCL	345.75	-4.80
Britannia Ind	2780.60	15.45
Cipla	556.80	4.40
Coal India	231.25	-3.65
Dr Reddys Lab	2628.60	-24.45
Eicher Motors	18955.30	-78.85
GAIL (India)	146.65	-0.80
Grasim Ind	916.05	-3.20
HCL Tech	1023.90	3.10
HDFC	2257.80	-4.10
HDFC Bank	2393.90	-13.25
Hero MotoCorp	2569.80	62.00
Hindalco	198.85	0.40
Hind Unilever	1713.20	-17.70
Indiabulls HFL	665.95	-6.20
ICICI Bank	427.05	0.50
IndusInd Bank	1509.50	-31.75
Bharti Infratel	262.95	-1.95
Infosys	726.75	5.25
Indian OilCorp	146.85	-1.05
ITC	275.05	-0.60
JSW Steel	267.90	0.60
Kotak Bank	1483.65	-1.30
L&T	1466.85	-28.35
M&M	631.90	-2.25
Maruti Suzuki	5971.45	-59.75
NTPC	127.80	-1.15
ONGC	149.70	-3.40
PowerGrid Corp	206.70	-1.90
Reliance Ind	1280.50	-1.05
State Bank	363.60	0.40
Sun Pharma	407.70	9.55
Tata Motors	159.30	2.50
Tata Steel	472.90	10.90
TCS	2107.60	5.05
Tech Mahindra	665.80	0.10
Titan	1101.20	4.20
UltraTech Cement	4565.85	26.75
UPL	630.05	-1.20
Vedanta	167.65	4.00
Wipro	258.95	-8.80
YES Bank	94.20	1.75
Zee Entertainment	350.70	-4.10

EXCHANGE RATES

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

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	68.48	68.80
Euro	77.01	77.38
British Pound	85.82	86.23
Japanese Yen (100)	63.22	63.51
Chinese Yuan	9.95	10.00
Swiss Franc	69.47	69.80
Singapore Dollar	50.33	50.57
Canadian Dollar	52.53	52.78
Malaysian Ringitt	16.64	16.74

Source:Indian Bank

BULLION RATES CHENNAI

July 12 rates in rupees with previous rates in parentheses

Retail Silver (1g)	41	(41.3)
22 ct gold (1 g)	3296	(3330)

Infosys raises revenue outlook; deal wins spur Q1 revenue

Tech bellwether's digital transformation business records 42% growth; net profit grows 5.2% to ₹3,802 crore

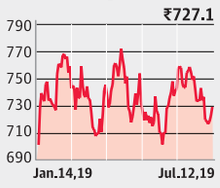
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Tech bellwether Infosys has posted 'encouraging' first quarter revenue numbers on the back of strong deal wins and robust growth in its digital transformation business.

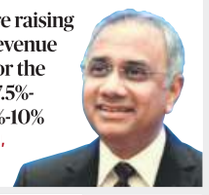
Buoyed by these, the company has revised its revenue growth guidance upwards for FY20.

However, the company said growing attrition had been a major cause for concern.

Mood upbeat



We are raising our revenue guidance for the year from 7.5%-9.5% to 8.5%-10%
SALIL PAREKH, MD & CEO, Infosys



Metrics	Q1 FY20	Q1 FY19	Growth (%)
Revenue from operations (₹ cr.)	21,803	19,128	14
Net profit (₹ cr.)	3,802	3,612	5.26
EPS (₹)	8.83	8.31	

Client focus

Addressing the media, at the company's Electronic City facility, Infosys CEO & MD Salil Parekh said: "We had a strong start to FY20 with constant currency growth accelerating to 12.4% on year-over-year basis and a digital revenue growth of 41.9%. This was achieved through our consistent client focus and investments which have strengthened our client relationships.

"Consequently, we are raising our revenue guidance for the year from 7.5%-9.5% to 8.5%-10%," he said.

For the quarter ended June 30, 2019, Infosys's revenue was ₹21,803 crore, a growth of 14% year-on-year (YoY) and 1.2% quarter-on-quarter (QoQ).

During the period, the company's operating profit was ₹4,471 crore, a decline of 1.5% YoY and 3.2% QoQ.

Net profit came in at ₹3,802 crore (₹3,612 crore) Operating margin stood at 20.5%.

Large deals

During the quarter, the company signed large deals worth $2.7 billion, the highest-ever in its history.

On deal wins, COO U.B. Pravin Rao said: "We had a good quarter as we continue to leverage our digital navigation framework to help our clients build and nurture their live enterprise. Segment growth was robust with all large regions and most verticals growing at double digits year-on-year in constant currency."

> Investments that have strengthened client relationships made growth possible
>
> SALIL PAREKH
> CEO & MD, Infosys

Its digital revenue in constant currency terms grew 41.9% YoY and services revenue 0.6%.

The company also said it was on track to complete its previously announced share buy-back of ₹8,260 crore. Till date, it has bought back shares worth ₹5,934 crore.

ADRs open higher

On the NYSE, Infosys's ADRs opened at $11.34 apiece, gaining 5.8% and recording a new 52-week high at $11.56, up from a previous close of $10.72

Infosys CFO Nilanjan Roy said: "Continuing our objective of improving shareholder returns, we have revised our capital allocation policy upwards," after considering the strategic and operational cash requirements. Accordingly, Infosys has decided to distribute about 85% of free cash flows, from the current 70%, cumulatively over a five-year period.

The distribution would happen through a combination of semi-annual dividends and/or share buyback and/or special dividends, the company said.

While responding to a query on access to cash, Mr. Parekh said: "Capital allocation was done to put us on a discipline. We will still have $3.5 billion on our balance sheet that can be spent on M&A, and the like."

Attrition blues strike

More staff at lower levels leave

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

People leaving its rolls seems to be a significant challenge for Infosys.

The company reported an increase in attrition rate to 23.4% compared with the 23% a year earlier and 20.4% a quarter ago.

Chief Operating Officer U.B. Pravin Rao said the first quarter, historically, had witnessed higher attrition because people left for higher education. In addition, Infosys had a higher percentage of involuntary attrition as well.

"A big part of attrition is at lower levels. We are doing multiple things to manage it. We are trying to address it in our compensation review exercise. We have a launched a new employee value proposition.

"We believe attrition will come back to a manageable level of 13-15%. Over a period of time, it should come down. We have not seen an impact of it in terms of deliverables."

As on June 30, Infosys had 2,29,029 employees against 2,28,123 in March quarter. The percentage of women employees stood at 37% against 36.7% in the March quarter and 36.5% in the year-ago period.

"But attrition reflects demand for talent across areas," added Mr. Rao.

CEA for balanced tapping into domestic, foreign savings

Cautions against over-reliance on foreign currency debt

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Chief Economic Adviser Krishnamurthy Subramanian on Friday sought to caution against a more-than-necessary reliance on foreign savings as a trigger for accelerating economic growth through more investments.

"If we have to invest for triggering a virtuous cycle, we need to tap into savings... domestic or foreign [and] there are trade-offs with any of those," he said, adding that tapping into more of the former would mean leaving less with the households for consumption.

Such a situation of falling demand could be offset through measures to increase exports.

Dependence on foreign savings, on the other hand, can create macro vulnerability, he said, adding that letting all or a large part of investment coming from foreign savings would mean exposing to vulnerability as it happened in the case of East Asian economies.

Krishnamurthy Subramanian

Underscoring the need for hitting the 'sweet spot' in meeting the investment requirement, Mr. Subramanian, who spoke at The Global ISB Forum on '$5 Trillion in Five Years: Can we do It?', said that exports were important in the context of driving demand. His observations follow the Union Budget speech in which Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said it was high time India not only got integrated into the global value chain of production of goods and services, but also became part of the global financial system to mobilise global savings, mostly institutionalised in pension, insurance and sovereign wealth funds.

She also said the government would start raising a part of its gross borrowing programme in foreign markets in external currencies.

Mr. Subramanian strongly advocated labour law reforms for more growth, citing the case of Rajasthan. On the system of extending assistance to small units, he said it was necessary to support those units that grew large as opposed to those that remained "dwarves."

Anshula Kant is World Bank MD and CFO

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON DC

The World Bank Group on Friday announced that Anshula Kant, an Indian national, had been appointed its next MD and CFO.

Ms. Kant will be the first woman CFO of the bank.

"Anshula brings more than 35 years of expertise in finance, banking, and innovative use of technology through her work as CFO of the State Bank of India," World Bank Group president David Malpass said via a statement.

"She's excelled at an array of leadership challenges including risk, treasury, funding, regulatory compliance and operations."

She will be responsible for financial and risk management and report to Mr. Malpass. She holds an Honours degree in Economics from Lady Shri Ram College and is a post-graduate in Economics from the Delhi School of Economics.

'Lower fiscal deficit will allow private sector to borrow more'

Finance Secretary Garg acknowledges liquidity concerns

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Finance Secretary Subhash Chandra Garg on Friday defended the government's decision to bring the fiscal deficit down to 3.3% this year, saying this would free up additional resources for the private sector to borrow and invest.

He also acknowledged the industry's concerns that payments by the government for services were delayed, creating a liquidity crunch in the system.

"There is a clear statement in the Budget that the private sector will drive growth," Mr. Garg said, while speaking at a CII event.

"If the government uses up all the domestic savings, then there is nothing left for the private sector."

Mr. Garg explained that a 1% relaxation in the fiscal deficit means an additional ₹2 lakh crore that can be used as investment.

Subhash Chandra Garg

"But this will mean that the current 80-85% of savings that is used by the government will become 90-95%," he said. "What will be left for the private sector? You will not have any money [to borrow]."

The Finance Secretary also said that one of the reasons that the Reserve Bank of India's rate cuts were not being transmitted by the banks was because they didn't have enough liquidity left to adequately lend to the private sector after accommodating government borrowing.

Therefore, he said that the decision for the government to start borrowing overseas was a good one because it would mean there would be more resources available for the domestic private sector to utilise.

Members from CII raised the issue of government bodies delaying payments to service providers, leading to a liquidity block in the private sector. Mr. Garg acknowledged this and said that the government was setting up a payments portal.

"It will take some time to set up (the portal), but it will increase transparency as to whose payments are delayed, how long, etc," he added.

Gangwal wants Centre to intervene in IndiGo mess, says won't rest till it's fixed

Bhatia group calls it a misinformation campaign, terms allegations 'hot air'

LALATENDU MISHRA
MUMBAI

Rakesh Gangwal, the co-founder of IndiGo, in a boardroom battle with partner Rahul Bhatia, has vowed to continue to raise the issue of lack of corporate governance at InterGlobe Aviation Ltd. (IGAL), the company that runs India's biggest airline, till it is sorted out.

"I am not going to rest till the issue is fixed. The government needs to look into it and the company needs a higher proportion of independent directors," Mr. Gangwal, told *The Hindu*.

"IndiGo is much bigger than its two promoters. Corporate governance has to improve in the company before it is too late," he added.

After filing a complaint with SEBI on Tuesday on the issue, Mr. Gangwal had camped in Delhi to meet officials of various government departments to sensitise them about the importance of corporate governance and induction of more independent directors on IndiGo's board.

Separately, a PTI report quoting a senior official said the Corporate Affairs Ministry had decided to examine whether memorandum, articles, agreements and resolutions by InterGlobe are in consonance with the Companies Act.

According to Mr. Gangwal, Related Party Transactions (RPT) entered into between IGAL and IGE Group companies, of which Mr. Bhatia is the owner, are improper and against corporate governance norms. Any deviation from high standards, which may now appear small, could potentially lead to disintegration of the airline, Mr. Gangwal felt.

Navigation alert: Any deviation from high standards may lead to disintegration of the airline, Mr. Gangwal said. ▪ V.V. KRISHNAN

The IGE Group, which has denied Mr. Gangwal's allegations as 'baseless, fact-free and insidious', came out with a statement on Friday 'deploring' the 'misinformation' campaign by Mr. Gangwal.

"Mr. Gangwal fails to cite a single concrete example where any act or omission has resulted in any loss or damage to IndiGo," it said.

"What are the facts put out by him to support his allegation of 'collapsing' corporate governance standards? Has there been any stripping of assets or profits? Has there been any misfeasance or fraud?," IGE Group asked, adding that the charges were only "hot air".

It said while Mr. Gangwal has 'harped' on 'unusual' rights being enjoyed by IGE at the carrier, the shareholders' agreement was negotiated several times and amended twice to comply with regulatory provisions.

It said disclosures were made in the IPO that IndiGo would remain a promoter-led company and the arrangements between the promoters were made public.

While IGE Group has stated that the RPTs are miniscule, on a decline and are estimated at only ₹150 crore, the RG Group said several such deals had been cancelled after they were flagged by Mr. Gangwal.

Happier times

The acrimony now playing out is in sharp contrast to the close friendship that once existed between the two. Mr. Gangwal was a top executive in the U.S. aviation industry, having worked in United Airlines, Air France and U.S. Airways; and Mr. Bhatia, who was then handling his family's General Sales Agent business, had ambitions to make it big in aviation.

DGCA issues notice

The DGCA has served a showcause notice to 4 senior officials of IndiGo for failing to ensure corrective training for pilots to avoid accidents, following a surprise inspection at the airline's facility in Gurugram.

It is learnt that the two met on one of Mr. Bhatia's visits to Chicago where Mr. Gangwal was working as VP-Planning at United Airlines. The acquaintance gradually turned to friendship.

In 2000, when Kapil Bhatia, director in IndiGo and Rahul Bhatia's father, wanted to start an airline, Mr. Gangwal advised them to stay away as the policy was not conducive. But in 2004, when the government announced the Open Sky policy, the Bhatias made the plunge. It was as per Mr. Gangwal's suggestion that IndiGo placed the order for 100 Airbus A320s.

Mr. Gangwal did not join the board, though he was entitled to, till IndiGo's IPO in 2015. This indicated the level of trust between the two friends. Meticulous planning by Mr. Gangwal, from aircraft acquisition to route planning; and flawless execution by Mr. Bhatia, who knew how to run the business in a difficult, regulated environment, has made IndiGo the carrier it is today.

(With inputs from Jagriti Chandra in New Delhi)

IN BRIEF

Audi India makes top-level changes

MUMBAI

Audi AG has announced top-level management changes in India to drive growth. Rahil Ansari, who is currently heading the Indian operations, has been transferred to the company's headquarters (Ingolstadt) in the finance division. Mr. Ansari will take the role of senior director, central sales controlling (global). Balbir Singh Dhillon, currently heading dealer development, has been elevated as head, Audi India.

Thyssenkrupp, Gainwell in distribution pact

MUMBAI

Thyssenkrupp Industries India has entered into an exclusive distribution agreement with Gainwell, a leading distributor for construction, mining and power solutions in north, east and northeast regions of India. The pact will empower Thyssenkrupp to strengthen its presence and deliver full range of crushing equipment and plants along with comprehensive services to customers in these regions.

Dr. Reddy's unit gets USFDA observations

HYDERABAD

An active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) plant of Dr. Reddy's Laboratories here has been issued a Form 483 with five observations, after an inspection by the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA). "The audit of our API manufacturing plant-2 at Bollaram, Hyderabad, by the USFDA has been completed today. We have been issued a Form 483 with five observations," Dr. Reddy's intimated the exchanges.

Ethanol pumps may be opened soon

Gadkari pushes for use of biofuels to slash country's ₹7 lakh crore oil import bill, reduce pollution

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Pushing for the use of biofuels like ethanol and butanol to help cut India's ₹7 lakh crore oil import bill, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said on Friday he would soon send a note to the Petroleum Ministry to allow opening of ethanol pumps in the country.

Mr. Gadkari was speaking at the launch of India's first ethanol-powered motorcycle – Apache RTR 200 Fi E100 by Chennai-based TVS Motor. Priced at ₹1.20 lakh, the two-wheeler will be available in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. The company had first showcased the concept in Auto Expo 2018.

Ethanol is domestically produced from renewable plant sources. It is non-toxic, biodegradable, as well as safe to handle, store and transport.

An oxygenated fuel that contains 35% oxygen, ethanol reduces nitrogen oxide emissions from combustion. It also helps reduce carbon monoxide emissions, particulate matter and sulphur-dioxide. However, there are no ethanol fuel stations in the country right now.

Clean and green: Union Minister Nitin Gadkari at the launch of India's first ethanol bike 'TVS Apache RTR 200 Fi E100.' ▪ PTI

> **Biofuels can be extracted from sugarcane. Sugar is surplus right now**
>
> NITIN GADKARI, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways

TVS Apache is the flagship brand of TVS Motor Company with sales of over 3.5 million units across the globe.

'Bring in three-wheelers'

Welcoming the company's move to launch an ethanol-powered two wheeler, the Minister asked TVS to work on bringing out an ethanol powered three-wheeler.

He added that the government would encourage such products to reduce pollution.

"Oil imports cost India ₹7 lakh crore every year, at the same time there is pollution also... but biofuels like ethanol and butanol can be extracted from sugarcane and used in vehicles and aircraft. Sugar is surplus right now and everywhere we have a lot of sugar refineries, which can alternatively be used for making biofuels which are not only economical and efficient, but also pollution-free," he said.

TVS Motor Company chairman Venu Srinivasan said, "Today, the two-wheeler industry is looking at green and sustainable future mobility solutions spanning across electric, hybrid and alternate fuels.

The company believes that ethanol-based products are an important option for our customers."

Strong drive: ITC may also invest in an FMCG start-up, says chairman Sanjiv Puri. ▪ RAJEEV BHATT

ITC will not scale back on investments: Puri

Says optimistic on demand picking up

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

ITC will not pull back from investments as it expects consumer demand to pick up in India, its chairman Sanjiv Puri said.

In a post-AGM press meet, Mr. Puri expressed optimism about a demand pick up, saying that structural growth drivers were all favourable for India, as are government reform measures. "Given the government's past reforms and the policy direction, demand will pick up... we are scaling up and not pulling back from investments," he said. ITC is currently implementing a ₹25,000-crore investment plan across FMCG, hotels and paper segments.

Right valuations

Mr. Puri, who took over as chairman after Y.C. Deveshwar's demise, said that to boost the non-cigarette FMCG business, ITC would invest and acquire companies "if right opportunities come at right valuations."

The multi-segment company launches around 50 products annually and has introduced 26 new items so far this fiscal. He said that from an annual consumer spend of ₹18,000 crore accounting for 25% of ITC's segment revenue, new FMCGs are projected to be on a high-growth trajectory. "However, profits are linked with gestation costs of new categories," he said, adding that although FMCG growth rate slowed down in the latter part of 2018-19, ITC was ahead of industry growth rates.

In the last three years, ITC has entered six new FMCG categories such as skincare, floor cleaners, hand sanitisers, chocolates, coffee and dairy. Some of these forays have been through acquisitions. "We are incubating portfolios," he said without elaborating.

ITC may also invest in an FMCG start-up, he said, adding that so far it had only invested in an Alternate Investment Fund and had committed support to another one that helped start-ups.

Mr. Puri added that ITC was also exploring opening of shops in high footfall areas, to showcase its new FMCG products. "We are not into retailing and do not want to compete with channel partners... but we are examining this proposal."

IndusInd Bank Q4 profit rises 38%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

IndusInd Bank has reported a net profit of ₹1,433 crore for the first quarter ended June 2019 against ₹1,036 crore posted during the corresponding year-earlier period on higher income.

The first quarter results include the operating performance of Bharat Financial Inclusion Ltd. (BFIL).

Consequently, net profit for the period is higher by ₹213.02 crore, said the lender. Net interest income stood at ₹2,844 crore against ₹2,122 crore. Non-interest income was ₹1,663 crore (₹1,302 crore).

The CASA (current accounts savings accounts) ratio stood at 43.04%.

Greenko inks pact with GIC, ADIA for $329 mn more equity funding

Capital will be used to fund company's business plan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Sovereign wealth fund GIC, through an affiliate, and the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA), have agreed to invest an additional $329 million in renewables firm Greenko Energy Holdings.

On Friday, the firm announced the signing of definitive agreements for a primary equity raising of $824 million. This includes a previously announced $495 million towards IREP (integrated renewable energy projects) equity commitment, from an affiliate of GIC and by ADIA.

Post the investment, GIC will continue to remain as the majority shareholder of Greenko, the company said.

> **Indian energy markets are transitioning from deficit markets to demand-driven contracts**
>
> ANIL CHALAMALASETTY, MD & CEO, Greenko Energy

The new capital is to be used to fund the company's business plan, which includes the capex of IREP projects as also other opportunistic and valuable acquisitions. Greenko has also issued warrants to its founders, which will bring in additional equity for the growth of the company when they are exercised over the coming months. With these proposed investments, the company's business plan will be fully funded for the next two years.

Greenko has an operational capacity of over 4.2 GW, diversified across wind, solar and hydro projects and over 7 GW is under construction.

Anil Chalamalasetty, MD & CEO, said Indian energy markets were transitioning from deficit markets to demand-driven contracts, requiring reliable, flexible and cost competitive energy. Greenko is focussed on building integrated renewable energy assets with storage to address these markets by competing with conventional energy assets, he said.

Dutch court administrator moves NCLAT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) on Friday agreed to hear a petition filed by a Dutch court administrator in the Jet Airways insolvency case as it stayed parts of a lower court order that declared overseas bankruptcy proceedings null and void. Jet is facing insolvency proceedings in the Netherlands as well and a bankruptcy administrator was appointed by the Dutch court.

A three-member NCLAT bench said it will clarify the law on action to be taken when there are two insolvency petitions filed against the same company in two different countries.

New Zealand showed that it can be a giant-slayer in the big battles

It is time for the hardest test now, and Williamson would have factored in a SWOT analysis of the imminent summit clash

K.C. VIJAYA KUMAR
LONDON

The World Cup wends it way back to London with its history, bustle, the subterranean maze of metro trains, a dry heat of 24 degrees above and the Wimbledon ballet of Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal. After 47 matches, including four washed-out ventures, in a long-winding campaign that lasted a month and a fortnight, England and New Zealand have withstood the vagaries of form and will face off in the final at Lord's on Sunday.

In the pre-tournament buzz, England was expected to press hard for the title while New Zealand stayed in the dark-horse corner. But as they consistently do in big-ticket events, the Black Caps persevered, progressed steadily, stayed under the radar, coped with losses and when it came to the big battles, showed that it can be a giant-slayer.

Leading by example: Kane Williamson, right, has marshalled his resources well and taken the Black Caps to the cusp of glory. ▪AP

Kane's army

- New Zealand has won only one out of its last five matches against England (Dunedin, March 2018)
- Boult is the team's highest wicket-taker in World Cups with 39 wickets in 18 matches
- Taylor is 78 shy of equalling Fleming's 1075 runs, the highest by a Kiwi in World Cups
- Williamson (548) and Taylor (335) have been their best batsmen. Guptill (167), Munro (125), Latham (108), Nicholls (36) and Neesham (213) have 649 runs combined
- Williamson and Taylor have put together 537 runs so far, including three 100-plus and two 50-plus partnerships. No other pair has managed more than one 100-plus and 50-plus association
- Boult (17) and Ferguson (18) have been the spearheads while Henry (13), Santner (6), Neesham (12) and de Grandhomme (5) have chipped in

Flummoxing the best

South Africa felt the heat and succumbed in the 2015 edition's semifinal at Auckland. In the latest version, it was India's turn to walk into an opponent, who firmly believed that contests are won on the basis of what is being done 'now'. History's sheets and weighty statistics may not have many alluring details of New Zealand's cricketing skills but it is a team that has flummoxed the best.

Even Clive Lloyd's mighty West Indians found touring New Zealand a taxing proposition. And when the great quartet of all-rounders – Ian Botham, Imran Khan, Kapil Dev and Richard Hadlee – graced the game, the last named Kiwi's prominence was a touch subdued when compared to the other three.

Blending with the environs perhaps comes naturally to a community which has coped with the old joke about there being more sheep than people in New Zealand. 'Stay low, give your best and have a laugh with your friends' seems to be the underlying credo and this no-frills attitude spills over into sport.

Kane Williamson's men enjoyed a perfect start in the current World Cup, defeating Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, South Africa and the West Indies before suffering losses against Pakistan, Australia and England. The momentum of those initial wins offset the lack of tailwind while the league phase concluded. It was just about enough for New Zealand to edge past Pakistan on the basis of net-run-rate after the two drew level at 11 points each.

The great heist

In the semifinal, New Zealand revived India's old nemesis – good quality swing and seam bowling and backed it with athletic fielding where limbs were stretched to the maximum and gravity was constantly defied. The parched-earth policy affected Virat Kohli and company, and New Zealand yet again had pulled off the great heist.

After that nerve-sapping tussle, most of the New Zealanders walked barefoot, allowed their kids to have a romp on the turf, families sauntered in and there was a spirit of a congenial village fair out on the greens. Williamson and his troops allowed the moment to sink in, seemingly slowed down the seconds and it was all about living in the present.

It is time for the hardest test now in which a host leaning on muscular batting, potent fast bowlers and hollering supporters, hopes to have its own moment of glory in the hallowed portals of Lord's. Williamson would have, by now, factored in a 'Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats' analysis of the imminent summit clash.

"On any day anyone can win," has been his preamble and in that generalisation, he has sensed an opportunity, a levelling of fortunes where terms like 'favourites' and 'underdogs' cease. He has led from the front both through runs (548) and in his gentle demeanour.

One more tilt at glory

Since we are in England, perhaps it can be mentioned that as a batsman, he has proved to be a right-handed version of David Gower and when it comes to leadership, the bearded, gently smiling, slow-talking Williamson has tapped into his inner Mike Brearley. Style and intelligence have found a common platform and equally, the New Zealand skipper has infused belief within his ranks and now, one more tilt at glory awaits.

Dharmasena and Erasmus to officiate

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LONDON

Kumar Dharmasena and Marais Erasmus have been named on-field umpires for the World Cup final featuring England and New Zealand at Lord's here on Sunday, according to an ICC release.

Rod Tucker and Aleem Dar are the third and fourth umpires while Ranjan Madugalle will be the match referee.

CoA to have WC review meeting

Vinod Rai. ▪FILE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON

The Committee of Administrators (CoA) will review India's World Cup performance in a meeting with skipper Virat Kohli and chief coach Ravi Shastri and the focus is likely to be on selections made for the big event.

The CoA members, led by chairman Vinod Rai, Diana Edulji and Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Ravi Thodge, will also have discussions with chairman of selectors M.S.K. Prasad on a roadmap for India for next year's T20 World Cup in Australia.

"We will certainly have a review meeting once the coach and the captain are back from their breaks. I will not put a date and time but we will speak to them. Also we will speak to selection committee head on road ahead," Rai said.

The CoA chief refused to divulge any further details.

Departs on July 14

The Indian cricket team, which lost in the semifinals of the ongoing World Cup, will head home on Sunday.

"All players have dispersed. They will assemble in London on Saturday. On 14th, everyone is returning from London. They will arrive in Mumbai."

Jofra has got a pretty good bumper: Carey

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BIRMINGHAM

Alex Carey revived memories of Anil Kumble briefly at Edgbaston here on Thursday. A wicketkeeper-batsman and an ace leg-spinner may be a contrasting mix but in nostalgia's swirl, the twain did meet. The link was a long bandage that the Aussie wrapped his face with much akin to what Kumble did years back after suffering a broken jaw in the West Indies.

A Jofra Archer bouncer struck Carey on the helmet and his chin got cut. The feisty player got the gash covered and soldiered on along with Steve Smith in a 103-run fourth-wicket partnership, though, in the end England won the World Cup semifinal.

Carey, who spoke late on Thursday night, downplayed his injury and was pragmatic about the team's loss. *Excerpts.*

Brave warrior: Alex Carey soldiered on despite receiving a cut after being hit by a Jofra Archer bouncer. ▪AFP

The bruise: It was one of those reaction things. The (helmet's) buckled clip fell off. Didn't have time to be scared, it was 'just catch the lid and play on'. Obviously Jofra has got a pretty good bumper and a few stitches is nothing to worry about. Six stitches.

Solid partnership: It was not the situation I would have liked to come in but it was good to get the opportunity. Smith was batting quite well. It was quite difficult at times and we were trying to absorb most of the pressure and get something on the board. It was nice to go up the order but we would have liked to start and finish better.

Dregs of defeat: We bowled tight for the first three overs but they are two players (Jason Roy and Jonny Bairstow) in good form and played well upfront. In a semifinal if you get anything on the board you are in the game. We wanted to take early wickets but Jason played really well. Obviously there is disappointment but if we look back at the last 12 to 18 months, how far the playing group has come is something we are proud of.

Last-four finish creditable: Cummins

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BIRMINGHAM

Just as defeat's shadow wrapped Australia after the defending champion was overwhelmed by England in the World Cup semifinal at Edgbaston here on Thursday, Pat Cummins emphasised that considering where the team was a year back, a last-four finish was a creditable achievement. The speedster spoke at the ICC's mixed media zone. *Excerpts.*

Pat Cummins. ▪AFP

The game: If you are defending 200-odd and you don't get an early wicket, they can play with a lot of freedom. We wanted to bowl with a lot of energy and get a couple of wickets. It didn't happen and it was pretty tough from there.

Lingering emotions: I am annoyed and peeved at the moment but I will wake up and be proud of where we have come from. Last 12 months, if you had told us we would be in the semifinal and come second in the group stage, we would have been really happy. Knockout stages, it happens that you get beaten by the better team on the day.

Final prediction? Probably England.

'Made no demands'

Offer to return was made casually to 'friend' du Plessis, says de Villiers

ABspeak: de Villiers has cleared the air about his 'comeback' for the World Cup. ▪ASHLEY VLOTMAN/GETTY IMAGES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JOHANNESBURG

Retired South Africa great A.B. de Villiers on Friday broke his silence on the controversy surrounding his international comeback that never happened, saying he had not demanded an 11th-hour return before the World Cup.

In a statement, de Villiers gave his side of the story after he was criticised for picking international assignments after announcing his retirement last year.

"I made absolutely no demands at all. I certainly didn't try to force my way into the World Cup squad on the eve of the tournament," he said. "During the weeks and months that followed (his retirement), there was no formal contact between Cricket South Africa or the Proteas and me. I didn't call them and they didn't call me.

"I had made my decision and the Proteas moved on, enjoying success under the expert guidance of coach Ottis Gibson and the outstanding captaincy of Faf du Plessis. Faf and I have been friends since we were at school together and, two days before the World Cup squad was announced, I contacted him for a chat. I had been in decent form during the IPL and casually repeated what I had said when asked a year earlier, that I was available if required...but only if required."

Rashid is Afghanistan's new captain

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KABUL

Star spinner Rashid Khan was on Friday appointed captain of the Afghanistan cricket team for all formats, while Asghar Afghan, who was unceremoniously removed as skipper before the World Cup, will be his deputy.

The Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB), thus, has put an end to the split captaincy before it even came to effect.

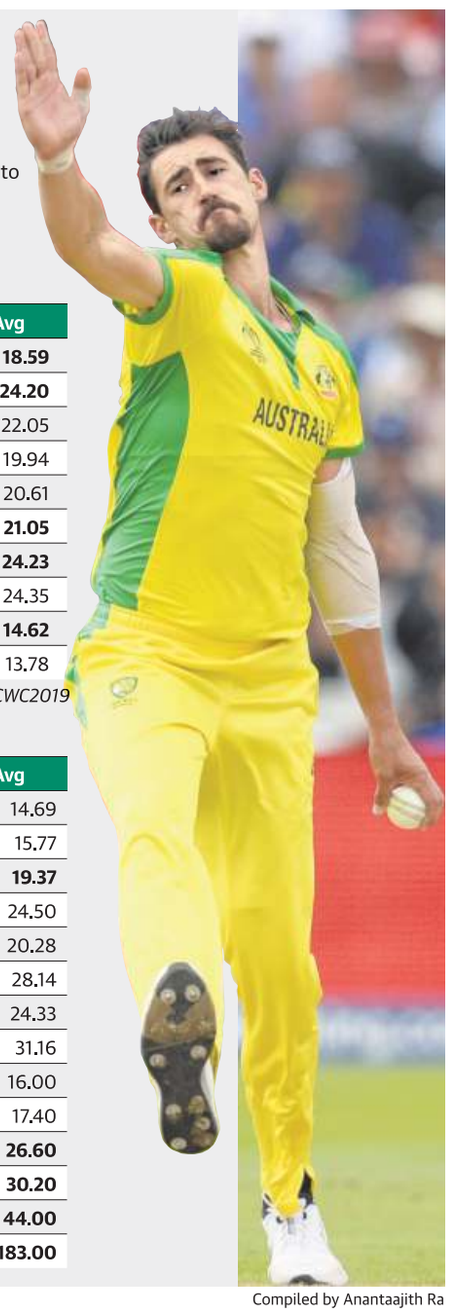
Chief selector Dawlat Khan Ahmadzai and CEO Asadullah Khan have been sacked following the team's winless campaign in the UK.

Former ACB media manager Lutfullah Stanikzai has been named the new CEO.

Rashid Khan.
▪FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

Left the right way to go

Mitchell Starc's record-tally of 27 wickets in an edition, eclipsing Glenn McGrath's 26 in 2007, reflects how left-arm pacers have had a big influence on CWC 2019. This is in stark contrast to the 2017 Champions Trophy, that was also played in England, when there was just one (Junaid Khan) in the top-10



WORLD CUP 2019

S.No	Player	Innings	Wkts	Avg
1	**Starc (AUS)**	**10**	**27**	**18.59**
2	**Mustafizur (BAN)**	**8**	**20**	**24.20**
3	Archer (ENG)	10	**19**	22.05
4	Ferguson (NZ)	8	**18**	19.94
5	Bumrah (IND)	9	**18**	20.61
6	**Amir (PAK)**	**8**	**17**	**21.05**
7	**Boult* (NZ)**	**9**	**17**	**24.23**
8	Wood (ENG)	9	**17**	24.35
9	**Shaheen (PAK)**	**5**	**16**	**14.62**
10	Shami (IND)	4	**14**	13.78

** Only Boult, among left-armers, has a game left in CWC2019*

CHAMPIONS TROPHY 2017

S.No	Player	Innings	Wkts	Avg
1	Hasan (PAK)	5	**13**	14.69
2	Hazlewood (AUS)	3	**9**	15.77
3	**Junaid (PAK)**	**4**	**8**	**19.37**
4	Plunkett (ENG)	4	**8**	24.50
5	Rashid (ENG)	3	**7**	20.28
6	Bhuvneshwar (IND)	5	**7**	28.14
7	Milne (NZ)	3	**6**	24.33
8	Pradeep (SL)	3	**6**	31.16
9	Tahir (RSA)	3	**5**	16.00
10	M. Morkel (RSA)	3	**5**	17.40
12	**Starc (AUS)**	**3**	**5**	**26.60**
13	**Amir (PAK)**	**4**	**5**	**30.20**
24	**Boult (NZ)**	**3**	**3**	**44.00**
48	**Mustafizur (BAN)**	**4**	**1**	**183.00**

Compiled by Anantaajith Ra

Bayliss not to renew contract

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

England head coach Trevor Bayliss has no intention of staying in the job, even if his side goes on to win the World Cup and the Ashes.

Bayliss, 56, is set to step down at the end of his current deal in September.

"I have always been a believer that four or five years is long enough, whether you are doing well or not," Bayliss told *BBC Radio*. "It is time for a new voice for the boys, to hopefully take them to another level."

Feeling great

"Four years ago after the last World Cup, which was not good for England, we set out and had planning to hopefully win the 2019 edition, and it feels great that now we have a chance to fulfil those dreams," he added.

"We had a chat in the changing room (at Edgbaston) afterwards and realised we have not won anything yet. There is going to be a lot of noise around 'you guys are the favourites' – we can't listen to any of that.

"We have just got to concentrate on the way we have gone about our cricket over the past four years."

Eleven years after epic, Federer conquers Nadal on Centre Court

The Swiss master avenges 2008 final defeat to his great rival, sets up title clash with Djokovic

N. SUDARSHAN
LONDON

It didn't quite reach the levels it had eleven summers ago here on Centre Court, but Roger Federer put on a display worthy of his rich grass-court history to beat Rafael Nadal 7-6(3), 1-6, 6-3, 6-4 and enter his 12th Wimbledon final.

In Sunday's title-clash, he will encounter World No. 1 Novak Djokovic's wiry, elastic genius which weathered a tough challenge from Roberto Bautista Agut 6-2, 4-6, 6-3, 6-2.

Vintage: Roger Federer attacked from the word go, beating Rafael Nadal in four sets to enter his 12th Wimbledon final. • MATTHIAS HANGST/GETTY IMAGES

Living up to the hype

The first set, though, lived up to the hype, as both players fought each other to a standstill. Federer, true to his word, attacked from the word go in order to hustle Nadal.

The Spaniard found himself a breakpoint down at 3-4, but found a way by pounding Federer's backhand side.

In turn, he pressured the Federer serve at 4-4, but the latter drilled an ace at 30-30 and held on. Inevitably, the set slipped into a tie-break where Federer made the play by reeling off five straight points from 2-3 and finished with a forehand winner.

Complete breakdown

Early in the second set, following a few nervous holds from both players, Nadal broke Federer to love to go 3-1 up.

The Swiss' serve broke down completely and a game as tightly wound as his is to the serve, it collapsed with Nadal taking the set 6-1.

But Federer regained his mojo in the third, able to summon the serve which had earlier given up on him.

He broke to 3-1, following up a great backhand winner with a forehand crosscourt before winning a net exchange. Nadal nearly broke back immediately, but Federer held on, even finishing on the right side of 25-shot rally to ward off a break point.

Federer's two subsequent holds were first-rate, for a combined loss of just one point.

Nadal's tactic of attacking Federer's backhand came undone, as Federer, with a larger racquet head, not just sliced but even drove many powerfully.

Overall, he hit 15 winners to just two unforced errors in that set.

The eight-time champion broke in the third game of the fourth and maintained it.

With Nadal serving at 3-5, Federer even had two match points, both of which the 12-time French Open champion saved with service winners. A nervous hold ensued with Nadal saving two more match points. But Federer wouldn't be denied the victory.

Compared to the electric setting that welcomed Federer and Nadal, Djokovic-Agut clash was played at room temperature.

Unlike a typical Spanish grinder, Agut wields a flatter stroke. Djokovic, perhaps mindful of this, hit with way more topspin than usual. But by the time Agut could get wind of it, Djokovic had broken twice to take the first set. However, Agut came into his own in the second, breaking to go 2-1 up, courtesy a delightful inside-out winner. He did squander the chance to take a 4-1 lead but didn't let his level drop.

Deceptive change

The 31-year-old often fell back on his inside-out forehand and such was his positioning that he could deceptively change direction and go for the inside-in too to drive it down the line.

The opening five games of the third set were tight. In the sixth game though, Djokovic pressured Agut's serve. At 15-15, an engaging all-court rally ended with the Serb reading a lob right and executing a remarkable on the turn pass.

The 32-year-old then pinned Agut to the backhand corner twice and knocked off volleys to break open the set.

Serving to gain a 4-2 lead in the fourth, the World No. 1 fell behind 15-40 but three good serves and a glorious down-the-line backhand to end 45-shot rally seemed to liberate him completely.

Djokovic had sunk his teeth into the match. The victory was had not long after.

Match stats

Nadal		Federer
10	Aces	14
4	Double Faults	1
64	First Serve %	69
6/11	Net Points Won	25/33
2/8	Break Points	2/10
32	Winners	51
25	Unforced Errors	27
117	Total Points Won	125

Saturday's showpiece
CENTRE COURT
WOMEN'S FINAL
7-Halep vs 11-Serena
(6.30 p.m. start, IST)

Halep faces her ultimate test against a formidable Serena

I am the best version of myself and I am desperate to win Wimbledon, says the Romanian

N. SUDARSHAN
LONDON

Serena Williams never forgets her losses. Asked to reflect on her past duels with Simona Halep ahead of Saturday's Wimbledon final, she didn't pick any of the nine victories, but chose the solitary defeat, back in 2014 at the WTA Finals in Singapore.

Halep had thrashed Serena 6-0, 6-2 in the round-robin stage. It didn't matter that Serena returned the favour within days, bagel included, in the final. The defeat is still the point of reference, as she looks to tie Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 Majors. "The key in our matches is that loss," the 37-year-old said. "She played unbelievable. That tells me that the level she played at, she can get there again. So, I have to be better than that."

Calm but crystal-clear

Apart from providing a fascinating insight into how Serena prepares for her biggest matches, it was indicative of her calm but crystal-clear thinking. With the body in sync – this is the fittest she has looked since returning from maternity break at the 2018 French Open – Serena seems primed for the success that eluded her in the finals at Wimbledon and US Open last year. "Looking back, to even be in those finals last year was unbelievable," she said. "Now I am in a different place. I just am more calm. Instead of having nothing to lose, I feel like I have things to lose. I really want to do it. It is not really about 24 or 23 or 25. It's really about giving my best effort no matter what."

For Halep it will be the ultimate test, but there are signs that she has started embracing such enormous challenges. She always had the tennis; someone who made a French Open final and Wimbledon semifinal back-to-back (2014) is not to be trifled with. But questions about her mental make-up abounded as she struggled to back that up with a breakthrough at a Major.

Quietly confident

The 2018 French Open, where she won her maiden title, has changed things and she is quietly confident. It has reflected on the court this past two weeks, as she has repeatedly cut to size formidable opponents.

The 27-year-old has moved as well as anybody on grass and on current form appears best placed to stonewall Serena's incredible ability to hit through the court.

"Compared to 2014, I have more experience and I am positive," Halep said.

"I don't give up anymore. Right now, I am the best version of myself and feel stronger mentally. It's a great feeling to face Serena in a Slam final. If you are able to win, it makes it sweeter. I am desperate to win Wimbledon more than stopping her [from getting the record]."

Mount 24 beckons Serena

Serena Williams is one victory away from clinching her 24th Grand Slam and pulling level with Margaret Court for most Majors. Standing between the American and history is the relentless Simona Halep

*The meeting between these two in the semifinal of the Indian Wells Masters in 2015 was won by Halep by a walkover after Serena withdrew from the contest due to a left knee injury

Head-to-head: Serena leads 9-2

THE BREAK-UP:

Round-wise:
Final (2 times): Serena leads 2-0
Semifinals* (3 times): Serena leads 2-1
Quarterfinals (3 times): Serena leads 3-0
Round-of-16 (once): Serena won
Round-of-64 (once): Serena won
Round-robin (once): Halep won

Surface-wise:
Outdoor clay (1): Serena won
Outdoor grass(1): Serena won
Outdoor hard (7): Serena leads 6-1
Indoor hard (2): Level 1-1

RANKINGS:
Seed: Halep (7), Serena (11)
WTA Ranking: Halep (7), Serena (10)

AT GRAND SLAMS:
Titles: Serena (23), Halep (1)
Head-to-head: Serena leads 3-0

BREAK-UP:
WIMBLEDON 2011:
ROUND OF 64: Serena won 3-6, 6-2, 6-1
US OPEN 2016:
QUARTERFINAL: Serena won 6-2, 4-6, 6-3
AUSTRALIAN OPEN 2019:
SEMIFINAL: Serena won 6-1, 4-6, 6-4

AT WIMBLEDON:
Titles: Serena (7), Halep (0)
Head-to-head: Serena leads 1-0
BREAK-UP: ROUND OF 64:
2011: Serena won 3-6, 6-2, 6-1

LAST MEETING:
AUSTRALIAN OPEN 2019
SEMIFINAL:
Serena won **6-1, 4-6, 6-4**

> Many of my matches against her were close. So I know that I have the chance to win. I respect a lot of what she has done and is doing. But I now feel stronger mentally facing her
> – HALEP

> There are so many impressive things about her. Her tenacity, ability to improve every time, ability to find power. Can't underestimate her. She's like a little powerhouse
> – SERENA

COMPILED BY AKHILESH KUMAR VEDAM

Griezmann makes it official with Barcelona

BARCA-BOUND

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BARCELONA

Barcelona announced the signing of Antoine Griezmann on Friday after the Spanish champions paid La Liga rival Atletico Madrid the €120 million release clause required to sign the World Cup winner.

"The player will sign a contract with his new club for the next five seasons, through to 30 June 2024, with a buyout clause of €800 million," Barca said in a statement.

Friday's announcement brings to an end a dispute between the two clubs and Griezmann, who had long aimed to move to the Catalan giants.

Griezmann joined Atletico in 2014 and has scored 133 goals in 257 appearances, lifting the Europa League in 2018.

He won the Golden Boot at Euro 2016.

The sale of Griezmann comes after Atletico stumped up a whopping €126 million to sign rising star Joao Felix from Benfica last week, making the 19-year-old one of the five most expensive players in history.

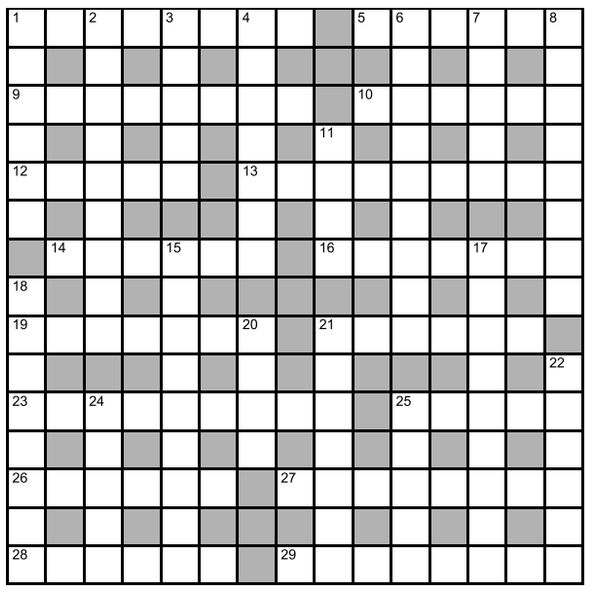
The Griezmann file

ATLETICO MADRID (2014-19)
133 goals in **257** appearances
TITLES
- UEFA Europa League 2018
- UEFA Super Cup 2018

FRANCE (2014-)
29 goals in **70** games
TITLES
- FIFA World Cup 2018
- Golden Boot in Euro 2016

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12677

(set by Lightning)



ACROSS

1 Steno following democrat earnestly at first to explain (8)
5 Layout of South Carolina border area (6)
9 Refining erratic breach (8)
10 King tucked into sauce quickly (6)
12 Poor gangster smuggled instrument (5)
13 Perhaps caught laid back southern lady inside (9)
14 Neglected German stormed around (6)
16 Supply tailless northern animal for occasion with 12 hour day (7)
19 Partial word in a liberal religious book (7)
21 Shift direction without acceleration, curse and vent partly (6)
23 Provided original covers for penultimate match (9)
25 Grave mistake including a recipe of toxic agent (5)
26 One new measure for arched section of foot (6)
27 Short stock of Tesla, perhaps (8)
28 Martial art class one thousand are joining upfront (6)
29 Time limit for the departed? (8)

DOWN

1 Joke about a working plant (6)
2 Security fraud sage corrected (9)
3 Rule of precipitation, say (5)
4 Secure father outside hospital in capital city (7)
6 Engineer uttered one command primarily with confidence (9)
7 Relieves leaderless kids (5)
8 A religious leader admits liberal with couple of unknowns in condition (8)
11 Tennis star has her captivated (4)
15 Funnily clung feet to bow (9)
17 Primarily Rama avatar in novel festival (9)
18 Gaming device that could bring pleasure (8)
20 Lorentz or Tesla abandoned physicist? (4)
21 Quiet from the time the French parted (7)
22 Admission to a main course (6)
24 Stingy person removing top third from title (5)
25 Exhaust energy replacing note in haste (5)

SUDOKU

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

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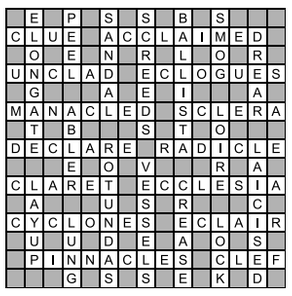
DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

Solution to puzzle 12676



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Benefits of Karma Yoga

The Gita clearly bats for Karma Yoga as the most effective practice that can make the jivatma eligible to gradually attain a pure state of mind, which is the springboard for salvation, pointed out Velukkudi Sri Krishnan in a discourse. When Arjuna shies away from his Kshatriya dharma and wishes to accept a life of renunciation, Krishna clearly exposes the folly in this escapist attitude. Renunciation is a state of mind that is very difficult to attain for the jivatma who is caught deeply in the worldly life.

Though, like Arjuna, many are keen to pursue jnana yoga or bhakti yoga rather than karma yoga, the senses, mind and intellect are drawn naturally to the world and this becomes the greatest obstacle. For, as long as the jivatma thinks that it is his birthright to enjoy the world of sense objects, there is no way out. Sadly enough, the atma within is totally enveloped by this desire for the attractions of the world.

Krishna explains that first of all one has to understand that desire or Kama is the only enemy that prevents the jivatma from apprehending the nature of atma swabhava as the essence of eternal bliss and consciousness. Undoubtedly, the senses are strong, the mind is stronger and the intellect still higher than the mind. But Kama is far stronger and subtler than all these and has already gained full control over them. By first enslaving the senses with the sense objects, it is able to easily dissuade any effort to identify the atma within as different from the body. If the jivatma has to overcome Kama, it has to turn away from the attractions of the material world and engage in karma yoga by renouncing actions and fruits. Proper understanding of the Lord's advice reveals that jnana and bhakti get subsumed in karma yoga.

TV PICKS

Wimbledon: Star Sports Select 1 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.
Formula One: British GP (Qualifying): Star Sports Select 2 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.
Football: Intercontinental Cup: India vs Korea, Star Sports 1 & 3 (SD & HD), 8 p.m.
Boxing: Vijender vs Snider, Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 4.30 a.m. (Sunday).

IN BRIEF

Sathiyan-Amalraj duo wins bronze

GEELONG (AUSTRALIA)
G. Sathiyan and A. Amalraj won the bronze medal, after losing to top seeds Jeoung Youngsik and Lee Sangsu of Korea 14-12, 11-9, 11-8 in the semifinals of the World Tour Platinum Australian Open table tennis championships, here on Friday.

Amandeep Drall triumphs

BENGALURU
Amandeep Drall won the 10th leg of the Hero women's pro golf tour, for her first Tour victory of the season, here on Friday.
The scores (top three): 213: Amandeep Drall (67, 75, 71); **217:** Gaurika Bishnoi (72, 74, 71); **218:** Gursimar Badwal (67, 77, 74).

Groenewegen wins seventh stage

CHALON SUR SAONE
Jumbo-Visma's Dylan Groenewegen won the seventh stage of the Tour de France in a bunch sprint after a pancake-flat 230-km ride from Belfort on Friday. Giulio Ciccone (Trek Segafredo) retained the leader's yellow jersey.

Prannoy to meet Sourabh in last eight

FULLERTON (USA)
H.S. Prannoy and Sourabh Verma registered hard-fought second round wins to set up an all-Indian clash in the quarterfinals of the US Open badminton tournament here.
The results: H.S. Prannoy bt Kwang Hee Heo (Kor) 21-16, 18-21, 21-16; Sourabh Verma bt Lakshya Sen 21-11, 19-21, 21-12.

Ex-BSFI secretary Kapur passes away

KOLKATA:
Former Billiards and Snooker Federation of India (BSFI) secretary C. Kapur passed away at a city hospital here late on Thursday night, according to a BSFI release. He was 86 and is survived by his wife, son and two daughters.
Kapur, who was a cuesports player in his younger days, served as the BSFI secretary for about three decades from early 1980s and was instrumental in taking the sport to various parts of the country. He also served as the secretary in the West Bengal Billiards Association.
"Kapur's contribution to cue sports and BSFI has been immense for over four decades. An exceptional person, he will be missed by the cue sports fraternity. We, at BSFI, offer our deepest condolences to his bereaved family. May his soul rest in peace," said BSFI president Uthappa M.C.

Nitten Kirrtane bags a double

RIZHAO (CHINA)
Former national champion Nitten Kirrtane won a double crown in the ITF seniors tennis circuit here. in Rizhao City, Shandong Province, China.
The results: Over-45: Singles (final): Nitten Kirrtane bt Wensheng Yang (Chn) 6-0, 6-1.
Semifinals: Kirrtane bt Ning Li (Chn) 6-1, 6-1;
Quarterfinals: Kirrtane bt Zhongdong Li (Chn) 6-0, 6-1.
Over-35: Doubles (final): Royson Kwan (Sgp) & Nitten Kirrtane w/o. Shan Gao & Yijian Liu (Chn).
Semifinals: Royson Kwan & Nitten Kirrtane bt Duan Jun Feng Cuan & Lei Jin (Chn) 6-4, 6-3.

Middle-distance runner Priya tests positive

CHENNAI
K. Priya, a National middle distance runner (800m) has tested positive in an out-of-competition testing recently. She had finished second in the Indian GP in Patiala in February. Her personal best is a 2:07.30 in the inter-State athletics championship.

Shreyas and Khaleel star for India-A in first ODI

The team prevails over West Indies-A in a low-scoring contest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
COOLIDGE (ANTIGUA)

Shreyas Iyer made a match-defining 77 before the bowlers, led by left-arm pacer Khaleel Ahmed, guided India-A to a 65-run win over West Indies-A in a low-scoring, first unofficial One-Day International here on Thursday.

India-A was in a spot of bother at 22 for three after opting to bat before Shreyas and Hanuma Vihari put on 95 runs for the fourth wicket and laid the foundation as the team posted 190.

At a time when the spotlight is on middle-order problems of the senior team following India's semifinal defeat to New Zealand in the World Cup, Shreyas made a case for himself with a timely knock that came off 107 balls and was studded with eight fours and a six.

Shreyas had the challenging job of repairing the innings after openers Rituraj Gaekwad and Shubman Gill, and skipper Manish Pandey departed inside the first eight overs.

Shreyas, in the company of Vihari, who made a patient 34 off 63 balls, resurrected the innings, but once the duo departed, the innings fell apart again.

West Indies-A skipper Roston Chase (four for 19) ran through India's lower-order with his off-spin.

Pacer Akeen Jordan (three for 43) too shone with the new ball for the Caribbeans.

Defending the total, Khaleel (three for 16 off eight overs) produced a fiery opening spell.

He was ably supported by the spin trio of Axar Patel (two for 16), Rahul Chahar (two for 32) and Washington Sundar (two for 37) as India-A bundled out West Indies-A for 125 in 35.5 overs.

The scores:
India-A 190 in 48.5 overs (Shreyas Iyer 77, Hanuma Vihari 34, Roston Chase four for 19, Akeen Jordan three for 43) bt West Indies-A 125 in 35.5 overs (J. Carter 41, Rovman Powell 41, Khaleel Ahmed three for 16).

Khaleel Ahmed. ▪FILE PHOTO

Shreyas Iyer ▪FILE PHOTO: V RAJU

The remaining fixtures

- **ODIs**
- July 14 and July 16, North Sound
- July 19 and July 21: Coolidge
- **Tests**
- July 24 to 27, North Sound
- July 31 to August 3, Port of Spain
- August 6 to 9, Tarouba

Vijender's US debut against Snider today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEWARK

Indian boxing star Vijender Singh will be back in action after more than a year when will take on American Mike Snider in an eight-round super middleweight contest here on Saturday. WBO Oriental and Asia Pacific super middle-weight champion Vijender holds a record of 10-0 (seven KOs). Snider's record reads 13-5-3.

"I think it's going to be a great show. I'm focused on my boxing career and my craft. I want to fight two more times this year, keep busy and work towards a world title opportunity," he said in a pre-bout press conference here.

"I am fully geared up for this fight and my strategies against Mike Snider are already in place as discussed with my team including trainer Lee Beard. I am ready to knock down Snider in the early rounds," he added.

On the other hand, Snider, who holds a record of 13-5-3, is confident of defeating the Indian boxer.

"My trainers looked at Vijender and watched several of his fights. They told me what he does well and what we can do to exploit his weaknesses. The game plan is going to come from my trainers and what they've seen," he said.

"There's always pressure on me because I never go off anyone else. I love winning fights people say I can't win. I always love proving people wrong. I've been doing that my whole life," he added.

The fight will be telecast live in India on Sunday at 4:30 a.m onwards on Sony Ten 1.

Vijender Singh ▪FILE PHOTO

Ramkumar in quarterfinals

SPORTS BUREAU
WINNETKA, US

Ramkumar Ramanathan beat USA's JC Aragone 7-6 (6), 6-3 in the pre-quarterfinals of the $54,160 Challenger tennis tournament here. Eighth seed Ramkumar will next challenge fourth seed Dennis Istomin of Uzbekistan.
The results: $54,160 Challenger, Winnetka, US: Singles (pre-quarterfinals): Ramkumar Ramanathan bt JC Aragone (US) 7-6(6), 6-3.
Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): JC Aragone & Bradley Klahn (US) w/o. Quentin Halys (Fra) & Ramkumar Ramanathan.
$15,000 ITF men, Tabarka, Tunisia: Doubles (quarterfinals): Jake Hersey (GBR) & Siddhant Banthia bt Mattia Bellucci & Giacomo Dambrosi (Ita) 6-2, 3-6, [10-8].
$25,000 ITF women, Getxo, Spain: Doubles (quarterfinals): Rina Saigo & Yukina Saigo (Jpn) bt Valeriya Strakhova (Ukr) & Rutuja Bhosale 6-4, 6-2.
$15,000 ITF women, Hua Hin, Thailand: Singles (quarterfinals): Himari Sato (Jpn) bt Sowjanya Bavisetti 6-3, 6-1.

Ajay Singh rewrites C'wealth records

Takes men's 81kg gold medal in the championships

SPORTS BUREAU
APIA (SAMOA)

Ajay Singh rewrote Commonwealth records in clean and jerk and total on his way to take the men's 81kg gold medal in the Commonwealth weightlifting championships here on Friday.

Ajay did 190kg in clean and jerk and 338kg in total to better Canadian Alex Bellemarre's records of 183kg and 337kg, respectively.

The medallists: Men: Elite: 81kg: Ajay Singh (snatch 148kg, clean and jerk 190kg, total 338kg, gold); Papul Changmai (135kg, 178kg, 313kg, silver).

89kg: R.V. Rahul (145kg, 180kg, 325kg, silver).

Junior and Youth: 81kg: A.S.R.K. Yadav (118kg, 146kg, 264kg, silver, gold).

Women: Elite: 87kg: P. Anuradha (100kg, 121kg, 221kg, gold).

What an effort! Ajay Singh set new Commonwealth marks in clean and jerk and total en route to gold in the men's 81kg category. ▪REUTERS

FIDE restores rating, AICF insists on apology

Players' cause receives a boost with Anand's effort to resolve the issue

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Days after the world chess federation (FIDE) restored the international ratings of 54 players, there seems to be no immediate end to the long-standing impasse between the suffering players and the All India Chess Federation (AICF).

Despite a nine-year old legal battle, the bone of contention now is the clause in the AICF's Players' "Re-registration Form" which reads, "I apologise for any contraventions committed by me of any of the directions, bye-laws/regulations of the AICF."

Clause challenged

The players, including Karun Duggal and Gurpreet Pal Singh, the prime activist, are challenging the clause. "AICF penalised the players for "violation" of its constitution in 2010 when there was no clause pertaining to participation in tournaments not authorised by AICF. The constitution was amended on June 8, 2011 and the said clause was included. Since we had not violated any of AICF rules, in force in 2010, where is the question of an apology now?" asked Gurpreet.

AICF secretary Bharat Singh Chauhan, however, was equally firm. "If you want to play in India, you have to be a registered player of the AICF. For those re-registering, there is a clause which seeks an apology. Rules can't be changed to please everyone," Chauhan asserted.

Grandmaster Abhijit Kunte had a point, "When the AICF has followed the directive of Competition Commission of India (CCI) and recently removed the clause pertaining to unauthorised tournaments, why should AICF insist on an apology?

Shot in the arm

On Friday, the players' cause received a huge shot in the arm when five-time World champion Viswanathan Anand said, "I am very happy that the players have gotten their rating back. I had spoken to the FIDE president (Arkady Dvorkovich) during the Shamkir event to help resolve the matter. I hope, in future, the federation and the players can resolve these issues by working together and open dialogue."

For the uninitiated, between October 28, 2010 and April 9, 2011, the AICF sent three lists of players totalling 120 to the FIDE and sought deletion of their international rating. The AICF found these players taking part in, what it described as, "unauthorised tournaments."

At the behest of AICF, FIDE eventually deleted the ratings of these players. Since then, a number of players returned to the AICF fold following its directive of submitting the prize-money won by them in those tournaments. Later, some others followed suit by tendering letter of apologies. In return, AICF wrote to FIDE to restore their ratings.

FIDE's latest decision to restore the ratings of the defiant Indian players has irked AICF. "We have written to the FIDE and opposed the restoration of ratings. It is true that FIDE removed the ratings (in 2010) at the behest of AICF. It is equally true that FIDE retains its right to restore ratings," agrees Chauhan.

FIDE's decision to restore ratings was mainly due to the efforts of British Grandmaster and its vice president Nigel Short. He understood the matter and backed the Indian players.

In Short's words, "Given that the court has already ruled in favour of the plaintiffs and against the AICF, it would be profoundly unjust and immoral to continue to deprive these chess players of their Elo ratings, unless or until an appeal court decides otherwise. To do so would be petty, vindictive and unbecoming of a great chess federation."

IOA forms governance panel for golf

Will aim to liaise with all stakeholders, ensure compliance of norms

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The crisis in Indian golf continues unabated with the latest being the Indian Olympic Association forming a Governance Committee to administer the sport.

In a letter to the Lt. General Devraj Anbu, the president of the IGU, the IOA has categorically stated that even though the Indian Golf Union (IGU) continues to be a member of the IOA, it would do so without voting rights, which would be restored only after a fresh set of office-bearers are elected as per a new, amended constitution in line with the National Sports Development Code 2011.

"IOA president Narinder Batra and secretary-general Rajeev Mehta met Antony Scanlon, executive director of the International Golf Federation, on May 6 in Gold Coast to discuss on working together to resolve the situation.

"It was then agreed that a golf governance committee would be formed to reform governance, liaise with all stakeholders, ensure compliance of norms and help IGU conduct elections," the letter states.

The committee will be chaired by Kavita Singh, president of the Women's Golf Association of India, and include Mukesh Kumar, Onkar Singh, Vir Srivastava and an IGF nominee yet to be named.

The committee will also oversee the participation of Indian athletes and officials in any Olympic Qualifier events in the interim.

Secretive Force for feature

BENGALURU: Secretive Force may score an encore in the Squanderer Trophy (2,000m), the main event of the race to be held here on Saturday.

1 MOUNT EVEREST PLATE (1,200m), maiden 3-y-o only, (Terms), 2-30 p.m.: 1. Altair (6) Irvan 56, 2. Ozark (7) Akshay K 56, 3. Sacred Kingdom (5) A. Merchant 56, 4. Star Sapphire (2) S.A. Amit 56, 5. Sun Splash (4) Neeraj 56, 6. Harbour Sunrise (–) (–) 54.5, 7. Heavenly Angel (1) Darshan 54.5, 8. Silver Swift (3) P.S. Chouhan 54.5 and 9. Winall (8) Sandesh 54.5.
1. WINALL, 2. HEAVENLY ANGEL, 3. SILVER SWIFT

2 GALILEE PLATE (1,600m), rated 15 to 35, 5-y-o & over, 3-00: 1. Raw Gold (4) M. Naveen 60, 2. Gold Mist (8) Sai Vamshi 59, 3. After Hours (3) Akshay 58, 4. Admiral One (7) R. Manish 57.5, 5. Fotogenic (5) S. Mubarak 57, 6. Inky Black (2) Arshad 55, 7. Track Striker (1) Akshay K 51.5 and 8. Extremelydangerous (6) T.S. Jodha 51.
1. RAW GOLD, 2. TRACK STRIKER, 3. GOLD MIST

3 BRAVE DANCER PLATE (1,200m), rated 00 to 20, 3-30: 1. First Step (–) (–) 60, 2. Savisa (8) S. Shareef 58.5, 3. Singhsaab (3) Md. Asif Khan 58.5, 4. Hunters Moon (2) Sai Vamshi 57.5, 5. Arrogance (1) Yash 57, 6. Dreams United (6) Irvan 57, 7. Croziet (5) R. Pradeep 56, 8. Duty Call (4) Arshad 55.5 and 9. Dallas (7) P.S. Chouhan 54.
1. SINGHSAAB, 2. DALLAS, 3. SAVISA

4 SQUANDERER TROPHY (2,000m), rated 60 & above, 4-00: 1. Booker Jones (4) Irvan 60, 2. Indian Pharaoh (2) Trevor 57.5, 3. Mr Handsome (3) S.A. Amit 55.5, 4. Point To Prove (6) Sandesh 55.5, 5. Secretive Force (1) Zervan 54.5 and 6. Angelino (5) Akshay K 52.
1. SECRETIVE FORCE, 2. ANGELINO

5 P.V. SHETTY MEMORIAL TROPHY (1,200m), rated 45 to 65, 4-30: 1. Castaway (5) P.S. Chouhan 60, 2. Gypsy (8) Mark 59, 3. Fair Warning (4) John 58.5, 4. Super Success (2) Vaibhav 58.5, 5. Cadillac (3) Sandesh 57, 6. Anfia (7) Akshay K 55, 7. Siyouni (9) M. Prabhakaran 55, 8. Treasure Delight (1) Yash 55 and 9. Dream Star (6) A. Ramu 54.5.
1. CASTAWAY, 2. TREASURE DELIGHT, 3. ANFIA

6 NANOLI STUD STAKES (1,600m), rated 30 to 50, 4-y-o & over, 5-00: 1. Australis (6) Trevor 60, 2. Foi Et Amour (2) Sandesh 58, 3. Amazing Skill (7) R. Manjunath 57, 4. Rare Rhythm (8) T.S. Jodha 57, 5. Astral Force (3) Antony 56.5, 6. Triggar (4) A. Ramu 55.5, 7. Candlelightqueen (1) P.S. Chouhan 53 and 8. High Admiral (5) Sai Kiran 53.
1. FOI ET AMOUR, 2. AUSTRALIS, 3. ASTRAL FORCE

Day's best: **SECRETIVE FORCE**
Double: **CASTAWAY – FOI ET AMOUR**
Jkt: 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6; Tr (i): 1, 2 and 3; (ii): 4, 5 and 6.

Deepika fourth in Olympic test event

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
TOKYO

Former World No. 1 Deepika Kumari was ranked fourth in the women's recurve qualifying round at the Tokyo Olympic Games test event here on Friday.

Deepika shot 668 out of a possible 720 points at the 72-arrow 70-metre round to qualify for the knockout round while Atanu Das was ranked 19th in the men's section.

Deepika's impressive show enabled India to get a fourth rank in the mixed pair event at the Yumenoshima Archery Field which is hosting its first international competition.

Laishram Bombayla Devi and Komalika Bari were ranked 11th and 48th respectively in the women's section, while Pravin Jadhav (30th) and Tarundeep Rai (52nd) in the men's section were the other Indians in the fray.

The test event will not have any team competitions. The week-long meet is entirely closed to spectators.

Deepika Kumari. ▪FILE PHOTO

Stimac looking for the right balance: Chhetri

Indian captain all praise for the Croatian's knowledge and approach

INTERCONTL. CUP

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA
AHMEDABAD

Skipper Sunil Chhetri said India was shaping well under a brave and knowledgeable coach like Igor Stimac, and hoped that the side will have a settled look before the qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup get underway in September.

"Every coach wants to decide the first 14 before every tournament. I am sure even our coach is looking for that. He is sorting things out and will have his list ready before the first week of September when we have the qualifiers," said Chhetri. "For now, he is seeing how the players are pushing each other for each slot. It's good that we are all fighting for a place and giving our coach the choices to have the right balance," he said ahead of India's crucial match against DPR Korea on Saturday.

Bravest coach

The captain was all praise for Stimac's approach, terming him the "bravest" coach he has seen in his long association with the National team and also the right man to encourage the youngsters.

"He is very knowledgeable and understands modern football. He works very hard with the team and is helpful to all players, be it seniors or juniors.

Chhetri. ▪FILE PHOTO

"The best part about him is that he is very brave, has not come with prejudices and wants to give everyone a chance, which is not very common among coaches," Chhetri said.

"This tournament (Intercontinental Cup) is very important for the team because it pits closely ranked opponents, allowing a fair assessment of our abilities."

When asked about the changes brought in by Stimac, Chhetri said, "the best system, I feel, is the one that is mostly adopted in the League.

"In the league (ISL), we see a lot of passing and build-up from the back and that's what we are seeing here with Stimac who wants the players to have possession of the ball and start the attacks from the back."

Syria's youth programme on right lines: coach

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA
AHMEDABAD

The apostle of peace and non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi's principles have had considerable influence as Syria looks to rebuild from the rubbles of war, says Fajer Ebrahim, Syrian National football team head coach.

"Reading Gandhi gives me peace of mind and, believe me, he has a huge following," said Ebrahim, sitting barely 2-1/2km from the Mahatma's Sabarmati Ashram.

Philosophical

"It really feels great to be here, at Gandhi's birth place. He was a great teacher and what he said about non-violence is fantastically universal," Ebrahim tries to put together his understanding of the Mahatma gathered from movies and books he could access in his country.

The 55-year-old coach, who has steered the Syrian national team in more than 50 matches in the last 13 years, links his philosophical inclination to the spirit of universal brotherhood that helped football survive the turmoil of war.

"Syria has made it to the Asian Cup twice, once at the start of the war in 2011 and then in 2019 when peace is settling. We had almost made it to the last World Cup, but narrowly lost to Australia in the continental play-offs. All this indicate that football is unaffected by political problems in our country," says Ebrahim, who was reinstated head coach earlier this year after his German predecessor Bernd Stange lost his job following Syria's Asian Cup exit.

"We are building a new generation of players. Keeping this in mind we have brought 19 players from our youth system here in a squad of 22," Ebrahim said.

No dearth of talent

"There is no dearth of talent in the country which is evident in the success of players like Omar Khribin, who became the AFC Player-of-the-Year (2017). We also have another prominent name in Omar Somah while there are many more Syrians in the prominent leagues in the Gulf," Ebrahim props up his claim that the youth development in Syria is continuing.

"You have a strong national team if your players are successfully playing in top professional leagues," Ebrahim adds.

Style and substance

Smriti Mandhana's batting isn't merely eye-catching, it's very effective — just 22, she sits atop the ICC's ODI rankings

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Watching Smriti Mandhana at her best is like watching poetry in motion. There is to her batting a lazy elegance that soothes the eye, warms the heart.

"She reminds me of Sourav Ganguly," says W.V. Raman, coach of the Indian women's team and someone who knows a thing or two about graceful left-handed batting.

Smriti is not just the most stylish batter in women's cricket but one of the most feared as well — she sits atop the ICC's ODI rankings.

"Becoming the world's best batter was something that I always wanted," says Smriti. "When I was little, my mother always used to ask me to persevere in whatever I did, and not to stop in the middle but to go on until reaching the top."

She has reached there at the age of 22, with 1,951 runs at an average of 42.41 and a strike-rate of 83.51 from 50 ODIs.

In demand

Striking at close to 120 in T20Is, she is also sought after by franchises in the leagues of Australia and England. She was the leading run-scorer and the 'Player of the Tournament' in the England and Wales Cricket Board's Kia Super League last year. She will re-join Western Storm for the upcoming edition, which begins on August 6.

Smriti is poised to carry forward the legacy of Mithali Raj, a world-class performer whose example has served as an inspiration for two decades, especially at moments when the game's survival faced challenges.

Women's cricket in India has come a long way from the dark ages when players travelled unreserved on trains and, on occasion, on bullock carts. Mithali and other brave women like Jhulan Goswami have made the path easier for their successors.

The inflection point, on the field, came against defending champion Australia in the World Cup semifinal in 2017 in England. An astonishing 171 not out off 115 balls by Harmanpreet Kaur — an innings regarded by many as one of the finest ever — not just took India to the final but also caught the imagination of a nation.

The turnouts at the Women's T20 Challenge in Jaipur recently (increasing from roughly 4,000 on the first day to about 15,000 for the final) were an encouraging sign of the game's growing popularity. But it can do with increased corporate interest. Smriti's ability to draw new fans can help with that. There is something about her batting: after watching it for the first time, you are keen to find out when India plays next.

"She could become the nation's sweetheart," says India-all-rounder-turned-commentator Reema Malhotra. Smriti could do for cricket what Sania Mirza did for tennis and Saina Nehwal for badminton — they put their sports in the limelight with their campaigns on court and in ad spots.

That will represent a remarkable achievement for someone who began her cricketing journey in Sangli, Maharashtra, not one of the game's big centres. Smriti's first inspiration was her brother Shravan. He was a promising batsman who played for the Maharashtra junior team. It was through him that Rahul Dravid presented Smriti with one of his bats.

Bat attack

She used that bat on international debut, against Bangladesh at Vadodara in 2013; she scored 39 off 36 balls, opening the innings in the final T20I. Some six months later, the bat helped her make much bigger news: Smriti hit a stunning 224 off 150 balls for Maharashtra against Gujarat in a West Zone Under-19 one-day game.

"Yes, that knock made people aware of Smriti's talent, but I was convinced she was special right from the time her father brought me to her," says her first coach Anant Tambvekar. "She was the first girl to train under me. A girl playing cricket in a conservative Maharashtra town like Sangli was very unusual. In a society where fair skin matters a lot in the marriage market, people were surprised a girl would want to spend so much time under the sun."

Smriti didn't mind that at all — the sun, or what people thought. "She was just happy to work for six hours every day," recalls Tambvekar. "She would train for four hours in the morning and return to the ground in the evening, after school, for another two. It was her timing that impressed me most. I am not at all surprised by the kind of success she has achieved."

Neither is Reema. "I had heard about this new kid and wanted to see her bat," says the former international from Delhi. "While I was in Guwahati, playing for Assam as a professional, I heard she was in the city for an Under-19 tournament. So I went to the ground to see her bat."

Smriti didn't disappoint her.

"She scored 150-odd and it was a brilliant innings," Reema reminisces. "She played those lovely Ganguly-like drives and lofts as well as cuts, straight drives, every shot in the book, in fact. I could sense that she liked to play long innings."

Smriti has been working on making her stay at the wicket even longer. "That is one of the reasons why I have been more consistent over the last year or two," she says. "I have worked on my shot selection and I have decided that I need not look good always when I bat. Even struggling is okay, if you struggle your way to a good score."

The spectator won't be bored, though, even when her batting goes through such periods. The strike-rate may come down a bit, but she still peppers her innings with those gorgeous strokes.

"Smriti is the best batter in women's cricket now," said Scott Styris, the former New Zealand all-rounder who is now an expert commentator. "The difference between her and the second-best is the size of Mumbai."

So, you would do well to switch on the television when Smriti arrives at the wicket the next time. You are unlikely to forget it in a hurry.

SHORT TAKES

Favourite innings

The hundred against New Zealand in the ODI early this year at Napier. I always speak to my dad while I am leaving the hotel for the match. Normally he would say, 'All the best,' but on that day, he said, 'Make a hundred today.' So whenever I wanted to hit a lofted shot, I would tell myself — 'Get a single, even the team doesn't demand a risky shot.' I didn't loft the ball until I reached 85.

Captaincy

I enjoy it. I see batting and captaincy as two different things. Anyway, whenever I bat I tell myself that I am the captain, even if I am not; that makes me more responsible.

How women's cricket has changed in India

Now people know our names. Earlier, people would say that off-spinner bowled well. Now they say Deepti Sharma bowled well.

Her approach to batting

Whenever I step onto the field, all I think of is what the team needs from me. If you think of the team, you will become consistent. Don't think of being consistent. When I tell my parents about people praising my batting, they would ask me to go and practise.

WORD PLAY

Sandbagging

● **What is it?** In sport, 'sandbagging' is a ploy in which competitors deliberately underperform in order to deceive opponents into a false sense of security, making them vulnerable to an ambush. It's controversial — many think it's an unfair way to gain an advantage.

● **How does it work?** In races and motorsports, competitors downplay their speed in heats and qualifying. They also hang back in the main-event, picking their moment to go full throttle. In golf and pool, players hustle others by pretending to be less competent than they are.

● **What is the term's origin?** There's no clear answer. One theory is that it draws from poker, which in turn draws from 19th-century gangs of ruffians. They allegedly used socks or small bags filled with sand to knock victims unconscious, hitting them before they saw it coming.

● **Is there another theory?** Yes. This draws from the practice of using sandbags to weigh things down. Rumour has it that drivers would use sandbags in preliminary races to slow their vehicles while still appearing to push hard. In the main race, they merely got rid of the bags.

ON THE BOX

■ **ICC World Cup:** SUN: Final, 3 P.M.; STAR SPORTS 1, 2, SELECT 1 & HD.

■ **F1 British GP:** SAT: Qualifying, 6.25 P.M.; STAR SPORTS SELECT 2 & HD.

■ **Intercontinental Cup:** SAT: India v Korea, 7.50 P.M.; STAR SPORTS 3, 1 & HD.

■ **US Open badminton:** SUN: 1.30 A.M.; STAR SPORTS 2 & HD.

■ **Wimbledon:** SAT: 6.30 P.M.; STAR SPORTS SELECT 1 & HD. SUN: 6.30 P.M.; STAR SPORTS SELECT 2 & HD.

STACKING UP

ICC Test Rankings

#	TEAM	M	PTS	RATE
1	India	32	3,631	113
2	New Zealand	23	2,547	111
3	South Africa	27	2,917	108
4	England	35	3,663	105
5	Australia	27	2,640	98
6	Sri Lanka	37	3,462	94
7	Pakistan	27	2,263	84
8	West Indies	29	2,381	82
9	Bangladesh	22	1,438	65
10	Zimbabwe	9	140	16

ODI Rankings

#	TEAM	M	PTS	RATE
1	England	52	6,420	123
2	India	55	6,745	123
3	New Zealand	41	4,590	112
4	Australia	49	5,470	112
5	South Africa	47	5,193	110
6	Pakistan	49	4,756	97
7	Bangladesh	43	3,873	90
8	Sri Lanka	51	4,009	79
9	West Indies	47	3,606	77
10	Afghanistan	40	2,359	59

T20I Rankings

#	TEAM	M	PTS	RATE
1	Pakistan	26	7,365	283
2	England	16	4,253	266
3	South Africa	16	4,196	262
4	Australia	21	5,471	261
5	India	28	7,273	260
6	New Zealand	16	4,056	254
7	Afghanistan	16	3,849	241
8	Sri Lanka	18	4,093	227
9	West Indies	21	4,747	226
10	Bangladesh	16	3,525	220

Men's Top Five

#	PLAYER	AGE	POINTS	EVENTS
1	Kento Momota	24	108,318	17
2	Shi Yuqi	23	89,261	16
3	Chou Tien Chen	29	79,118	19
4	Chen Long	30	75,840	16
5	Viktor Axelsen	25	75,228	14

Top Indians ▶

K. Srikanth
Rank 9

Sameer Verma
Rank 13

Women's Top Five

#	PLAYER	AGE	POINTS	EVENTS
1	Tai Tzu Ying	25	90,645	14
2	Nozomi Okuhara	24	90,336	20
3	Chen Yufei	21	87,165	16
4	Akane Yamaguchi	22	86,550	20
5	P.V. Sindhu	24	78,234	18

India's next best ▶

Saina Nehwal
Rank 8

Mugdha Agrey
Rank 68

F1 Standings

#	DRIVER	TEAM	POINTS
1	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	197
2	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes	166
3	Max Verstappen	Red Bull	126
4	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari	123
5	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	105
6	Pierre Gasly	Red Bull	43
7	Carlos Sainz	McLaren	30
8	Lando Norris	McLaren	22
9	Kimi Raikkonen	Alfa Romeo	21
10	Daniel Ricciardo	Renault	16
11	Nico Hulkenberg	Renault	16
12	Kevin Magnussen	Haas	14
13	Sergio Perez	Racing Point	13
14	Daniil Kvyat	Toro Rosso	10
15	Alexander Albon	Toro Rosso	7
16	Lance Stroll	Racing Point	6
17	Romain Grosjean	Haas	2
18	Antonio Giovinazzi	Alfa Romeo	1
19	George Russell	Williams	0
20	Robert Kubica	Williams	0

Men's Top Five

#	PLAYER	EVENTS	POINTS	AVG. PTS.
1	Brooks Koepka	44	490.12	11.14
2	Dustin Johnson	47	459.72	9.78
3	Rory McIlroy	47	405.22	8.62
4	Justin Rose	48	403.55	8.41
5	Tiger Woods	40	289.86	7.25

Top Indians ▶

Gaganjeet Bhullar
Rank 188

Shubhankar Sharma
Rank 201

Women's Top Five

#	PLAYER	EVENTS	POINTS	AVG. PTS.
1	Sung Hyun Park	50	415.13	8.3
2	Jin-Young Ko	54	392.35	7.27
3	Minjee Lee	56	370.37	6.61
4	Lexi Thompson	41	270.2	6.59
5	Inbee Park	34	212.16	6.06

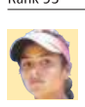
Top Indians ▶

Aditi Ashok
Rank 128

Diksha Dagar
Rank 336

Top Indians

ATP
Prajnesh Gunneswaran
Rank 93



WTA
Ankita Raina
Rank 171

ATP Rankings

#	PLAYER	AGE	POINTS	EVENTS
1	Novak Djokovic	32	12,415	16
2	Rafael Nadal	33	7,945	16
3	Roger Federer	37	6,620	16
4	Dominic Thiem	25	4,595	23
5	Alexander Zverev	22	4,405	24
6	Stefanos Tsitsipas	20	4,215	28
7	Kei Nishikori	29	4,040	22
8	Kevin Anderson	33	3,610	16
9	Karen Khachanov	23	2,980	26
10	Fabio Fognini	32	2,785	24
11	Juan Martin del Potro	30	2,740	15
12	John Isner	34	2,715	19
13	Daniil Medvedev	23	2,625	26
14	Borna Coric	22	2,205	22
15	Gael Monfils	32	1,985	21
16	Nikoloz Basilashvili	27	1,960	27
17	Milos Raonic	28	1,945	20
18	Marin Cilic	30	1,940	19
19	Stan Wawrinka	34	1,715	21
20	Matteo Berrettini	23	1,665	27

WTA Rankings

#	PLAYER	AGE	POINTS	EVENTS
1	Ashleigh Barty	23	6,495	16
2	Naomi Osaka	21	6,377	18
3	Karolina Pliskova	27	6,055	22
4	Kiki Bertens	27	5,430	25
5	Angelique Kerber	31	4,805	20
6	Petra Kvitova	29	4,555	19
7	Simona Halep	27	4,063	17
8	Elina Svitolina	24	3,868	19
9	Sloane Stephens	26	3,682	21
10	Serena Williams	37	3,411	12
11	Aryna Sabalenka	21	3,365	26
12	Anastasija Sevastova	29	3,296	24
13	Belinda Bencic	22	3,073	27
14	Marketa Vondrousova	20	2,775	15
15	Qiang Wang	27	2,752	23
16	Madison Keys	24	2,615	14
17	Julia Goerges	30	2,605	24
18	Johanna Konta	28	2,430	22
19	Caroline Wozniacki	28	2,418	18
20	Anett Kontaveit	23	2,335	23

Not amused: Vettel didn't agree with the five-second penalty in Montreal. After the race, he replaced the winner's marker board in front of Hamilton's car with the one for the second-placed driver.

A difference of opinion: Verstappen insisted that his move to pass Leclerc in the Austrian GP was fair. Leclerc didn't see things the same way.

Hard racing or dirty driving? It's complicated

Two controversial incidents in the space of 21 days this season have raised questions about what is fair in Formula One and whether the sport's stewards are consistent in their judgment of such issues

S. DIPAK RAGAV

Formula One is a sport of tiny margins – tenths and sometimes hundredths of a second determine pole, which in a race like Monaco could be the difference between first and second. So, it's no surprise that teams spend millions of dollars bringing upgrades to races for that elusive, marginal gain.

The margins are just as thin in wheel-to-wheel battles on the track; there is a fine line between hard, fair racing and disputed, unsporting driving. The question of exactly where this line lies has come up over the last three races this season, after incidents at the Canadian and Austrian GP.

It started in Montreal when Sebastian Vettel rejoined the track after going wide and, in the process, crowded out Lewis Hamilton, who was hoping to make the most of Vettel's mistake with an opportunistic pass for the lead.

But with the wall on his right, Hamilton was forced to brake hard and bail out of the move, having run out of space as Vettel got his car sorted after re-entering the track.

Vettel was deemed to have re-joined in an unsafe manner, forcing Hamilton to brake to avoid a collision, and the stewards handed out a five-second penalty. So, although Vettel crossed the line first, Hamilton, less than five seconds behind, took the win.

The Ferrari driver was furious with the stewards' decision; the world of F1 was polarised about whether it was correct.

Then, at Spielberg, an on-track incident involving eventual winner Max Verstappen and Charles Leclerc was investigated for hours before the stewards decided no further action was needed. Verstappen had made his decisive move over Leclerc, who ended up outside the track limits. The two incidents, coming as they did within the space of 21 days, caused quite the stir. Fans and former drivers decried the fact that races were being decided in the stewards' room and not on the track. They were of the view that excessive regulations had sanitised the sport, stripping it of its appeal.

WHAT THEY SAID

Back in the day, the driver on the outside would have to back out and realise when he's been beaten. Now, they can keep going, knowing that they can use the asphalt run-off and then hope that the argument about 'being squeezed off' wins in the stewards' room
KARUN CHANDHOK

Let's not forget that the driver on the outside can and should back off at one point, but obviously with asphalt run-offs no one does...hoping the guy inside gets penalised for forcing them off the track
PEDRO DE LA ROSA

I'm not a fan of passing on these decisions to people somewhere sat in a chair. I think we are the best to judge, in the car, and it's racing, you know, we're not fighting for the kindergarten's cup. We are all adults. Some older, some younger. But they should leave us alone
SEBASTIAN VETTEL

What I can say is, if I was in the lead and I made a mistake and went wide, I probably would have done the same thing. It happens so quick and you're just trying to hold position. And when I say I'd do the same, I would have tried to squeeze him too. That's ultimately what happened
LEWIS HAMILTON

[Vettel] had no choice. When you're on the grass you have no control and then when you re-join the track, 50 metres later, you still have a lot of [dirt] on the tyres, so there's not much you can do. The odd thing is ... they say it's no one's fault but there is a penalty. Honestly, I'm on no-one's side, I don't care, but what Seb did, the penalty and what's on the rules somehow doesn't match
KIMI RAIKKONEN

If those things aren't allowed in racing, then what's the point of being in Formula One? I think the second one I braked a bit deeper into the corner. We had a little contact of course, mid to exit of the corner but yeah, from my side I think it's racing. It's better than just following each other and having a boring race, isn't it?
MAX VERSTAPPEN

Subjective interpretation

The problem, of course, is that not all rules can be applied in black and white terms. The wording of some laws and the manner in which events unfold at high speed require subjective interpretation.

Vettel fell foul of Article 27.3 of the Sporting Regulation which states, "Should a car leave the track the driver may re-join, however, this may only be done when it is safe to do so and without gaining any lasting advantage."

In this case, when Vettel left the track, his tyres picked up dirt. A lot of drivers seem to agree that in such situations cars lack grip. Further, when he rejoined the track, Vettel bumped over a kerb that steered him to the wall and it took time for him to gain control of the car, by which time Hamilton had a look at a pass. But, with the wall on the outside, the Briton had to abort the move.

The stewards, having examined the evidence including CCTV footage, deemed that Vettel had the opportunity to leave a little more space once he was in control and instead chose not to. The extent to which the stewards relied on slow-motion replays isn't known, but some experts pointed out how they can deceive the eye when things are happening at 100mph and a very fine steering input can look like a big correction.

For the last few years, there has been a clear direction from the administration that stewards would be lenient in handing out penalties, which made the Vettel penalty even more of a topic, with drivers pointing out the contradiction in it. The apparent lack of consistency, despite there being a driver representative at every race to help stewards, is a concern.

This has renewed the call for a permanent driver representative to maintain a certain degree of consistency over the season, but it remains to be seen if these episodes spur some action on that front.

In the Verstappen-Leclerc incident, the former pushed the limits, braking late after having brought his Red Bull alongside the Ferrari. But he stayed in the middle of the corner rather than hug the apex like he had on the previous lap. On that lap, the space he had left allowed Leclerc to re-pass him. Subsequently, Verstappen ensured that Leclerc, who effectively lost the position under braking, had nowhere to go. Was it smart or dirty racing? Depends on whether you are Max or Charles.

These investigations – and the delays in the results being certified – detract from racing's natural, immediate thrill. But the drivers are not blameless and need to be adults about this, for they are the ones immediately on radio either crying about an injustice or pleading their defence. So, every time a driver says, "We should be allowed to sort it out on the track amongst ourselves," it rings hollow.

One thing F1 may want to take a look at is whether the regulations have kept pace with the changes in the sport. For example, former drivers Karun Chandhok and Pedro de la Rosa have pointed out how the replacement of several grass and gravel traps with asphalt run-off areas has altered driver behaviour and strategy. They are defending hard despite losing the position; often they go off the track and hope the argument that they were crowded out wins the stewards' approval later. Have the regulations factored this in and are the stewards in the loop?

Improving consistency

There is a case for updating and refining the system to improve the consistency of the decision-making. But even if that happens, there will continue to be incidents that provoke debate. And some of the decisions will continue to leave a bad taste in the mouths of drivers and fans, like they have this season.

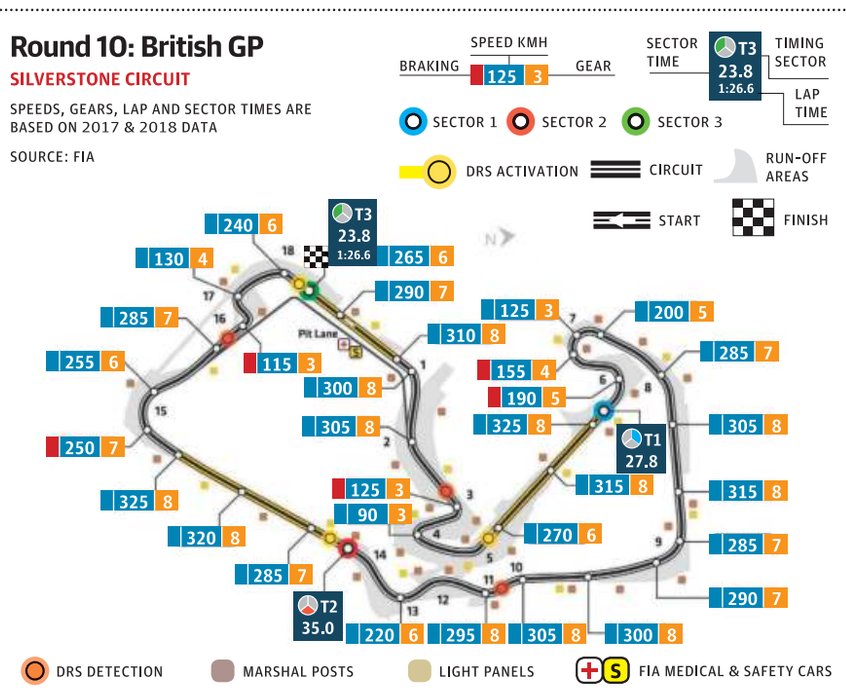
At least, it isn't all bad this time around. The incidents have added a bit of spice to what had become a dull and insipid season. If Ferrari and Red Bull can continue to challenge Mercedes' dominance at this weekend's British GP, without the stewards getting involved, the focus will shift back to the track.

Round 10: British GP

SILVERSTONE CIRCUIT

SPEEDS, GEARS, LAP AND SECTOR TIMES ARE BASED ON 2017 & 2018 DATA

SOURCE: FIA



NUMBER OF LAPS: 52 | CIRCUIT LENGTH: 5.891KM | RACE DISTANCE: 306.198 KM

RACE NOTES

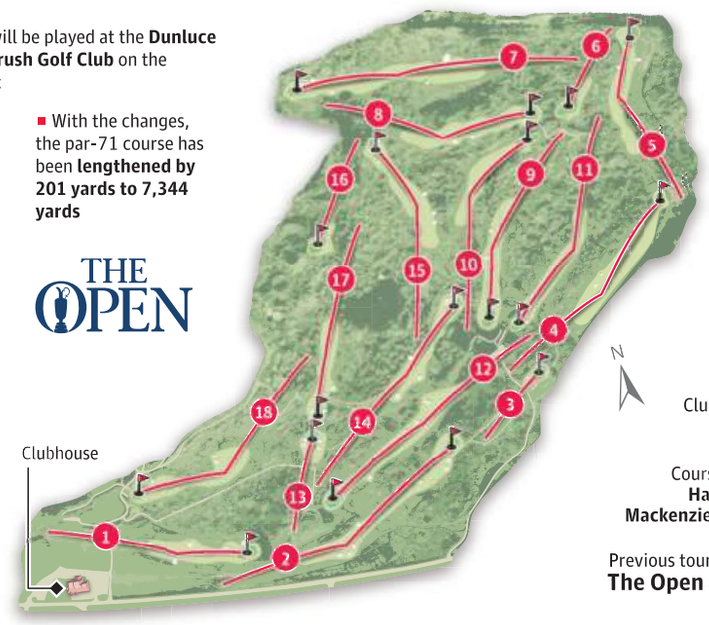
- Silverstone is an iconic track, characterised by fast, flowing corners — the Maggots, Becketts and Chapel sequence (turns 10-14), which drivers take flat-out, is especially thrilling
- As a result, the cornering demands of the circuit are among the highest of the year, along with Spa and Suzuka. The tyres have to withstand very high forces
- To cope with these demands, Pirelli has nominated the three hardest compounds in its five-tyre range: C1, C2 and C3
- The track has some slower, more technical parts in addition to the rapid sections, forcing teams to make some tricky decisions on how to set their cars up
- A resurfaced tarmac and the famously fickle English weather add to the mix of unknowns that drivers and teams will have to contend with
- It's a physically difficult lap for drivers, especially hard on the neck and shoulders. Drivers have, in the past, complained of aches well after the weekend

GAME THEORY

A stern test on the links

The Open Championship, golf's oldest Major, makes a historic return to Northern Ireland after 68 years. A formidable task awaits the world's finest players competing for the Claret Jug — the rugged links course at Royal Portrush constantly changes in both direction and elevation

- The 148th Open will be played at the **Dunluce Links** at **Royal Portrush Golf Club** on the County Antrim coast
- The **challenging course** has undergone major changes for the tournament, including **the introduction of two new holes**: the long par-5 seventh and the par-4 eighth
- With the changes, the par-71 course has been **lengthened by 201 yards to 7,344 yards**
- Nine of the holes have **new tees**, and **several new bunkers** have been introduced, including five on the new seventh hole and three on the new eighth



Club formed
1888

Course design
Harry Colt, Mackenzie & Ebert

Previous tournaments
The Open (1951)

Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Par	4	5	3	4	4	3	5	4	4
Yards	421	574	177	482	374	194	592	434	432

Hole	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Par	4	4	5	3	4	4	3	4	4
Yards	447	474	532	194	473	426	236	408	474

THE CONTENDERS

- **Brooks Koepka**, who has finished first or second in six Majors since 2017, leads the 156-player field. He is the bookmakers' favourite at 6-1
- **Rory McIlroy** (8-1), **Dustin Johnson** (12-1) and three-time Open champion **Tiger Woods** (12-1) are tipped to have strong performances
- **Jon Rahm**, at 20-1, is one to keep an eye on. The Spaniard won the Irish Open with a Sunday 62 to make a statement of intent

SOURCE: GRAPHIC NEWS, R&A CHAMPIONSHIPS LIMITED

PICTURE THIS

GONZALO ARROYO MORENO/GETTY IMAGES FOR FIVB

Beach ball

The FIVB Beach Volleyball World Championships is relatively new on the scene, but has quickly risen to be regarded as one of the highest honours to win in international beach volleyball.

The biennial competition began in 1997 in Los Angeles — the first official edition of the event after 10 unofficial championships, organised by the sport's governing body between 1987 and 1996 in Rio de Janeiro — and has since been held for men and women.

A 48-team structure has been maintained from the first edition, but now a prize pool of $500,000 for each category is on offer.

The 2019 edition held in Hamburg, Germany, concluded last weekend after frenetic, often acrobatic, action on the sands.

Russia beat home favourites and hopeful 'youngest-winners' Germany for the men's title while the Canadian women beat USA for theirs.

This year's tournament had another layer. With the 2020 Olympics — arguably the only bigger event than the World Championships — approaching fast, the athletes used the opportunity to stress-test their technique and strategy.

DELHI THE HINDU
SATURDAY, JULY 13, 2019

A sense of caution

While women may not have found justice in the Bollywood #MeToo cases, it took a village to rehabilitate the accused men, says Chohan, who saw things at close quarters as the joint secretary and Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) member of the Screen Writers Association (SWA). But she is not disheartened and feels there's been a larger shift in thinking in its aftermath. "There is a sense of hygiene. People are double-checking themselves. It is bringing in a sense of etiquette to the industry where earlier there was none. There is a visible shift in gender balance. Maybe it's corrective and conscious, maybe it's tokenism. But tokenism is better than tone-deafism," she says.

Girls aloud

Bollywood's women scriptwriters are breaking myths that women can't write action or thrillers. If you had to slot a gender to writing, it would be androgynous, they say

NAMRATA JOSHI

Over the last few years, there has been a whole narrative building around the significance of script, how it is the backbone of a film, screenwriter Juhi Chaturvedi tells me on a call from Lucknow. That is where her latest creation, *Gulabo Sitabo,* starring Amitabh Bachchan and Ayushmann Khurrana, is taking shape in the hands of director Shoojit Sircar. "If we are getting into a space where the most important work on a film is being done by women, then it makes me very hopeful and happy inside," says Chaturvedi, who moved to films from the world of advertising and has an enviable set of films like *Vicky Donor, Piku* and *October* behind her.

Let's accept that there has been a great under-representation of women writers in Bollywood. Then, let's also consider the fact that like any other field, screenwriting is being assailed, claimed and conquered by women. Not just *Gulabo Sitabo,* one of the most anticipated films ahead, Meghna Gulzar's *Chhapaak,* based on the life of acid attack survivor Laxmi Agarwal starring Deepika Padukone, has been co-written by Atika Chohan. The end of this month will find Prakash Kovelamudi's *Judgementall Hai Kya* written by author-screenwriter Kanika Dhillon in theatres. In the last one year, we've had *Raazi, Gully Boy, Manmarziyaan, Ek Ladki Ko Dekha To Aisa Laga, October, Andhadhun, Mukkabaaz, Bad- haai Ho, Kalank* and *Veere Di Wedding* with women featuring in the writing credits.

On the flip side is a sobering fact. That the biggest Bollywood hit of the year so far, *Kabir Singh*, has been by a man, of a man and for men. Meanwhile, the ghosts of #MeToo are still looming large in the industry. In the midst of popular representation of misogyny, how do women writers negotiate their rightful space? And where do we go from here?

Kabir Singh, the women's take

Dhaliwal: He stalks her, owns her. She still falls in love with him. She doesn't ask him to back off. That's not OK with me. No woman writer would've written it like that. Whatever a character, it's important to understand his/her motive. There is no explanation here. You are free to write whatever character you want. Just think why he is that way. It helps connect better.

Chohan: Misogyny exists; you can't discount it. It is deeply embedded even in romance and there is a need to chronicle it in a visceral, raw way. But here the female narrative gets relegated to the background. What about her journey? She is equally transformed in response. The story belongs to her too, but it [the storytelling] doesn't respond from a place of equality.

New points of view

Getting a foot in is not just about basking in the glory and recognition, more work and the money that rightfully comes along with it. For most, it's about introspecting about the present and gauging the road ahead. The consensus is that whatever may be the predominant narrative, the presence of women writers has led to an increasing diversity of voices and points of view, and also "tangible, nuanced characters and lived experiences", as Gazal Dhaliwal, writer of *Lipstick Under My Burkha, Qarib Qarib Single* and *Ek Ladki Ko Dekha To Aisa Laga* puts it. "As in all things, the more the representation, the better the presentation. In this case, the presentation of a world and a story and characters from the female point of view... The same could be said for all the under-represented – the queer voices, the regional voices," says Shibani Bathija, writer of *My Name Is Khan, Fanaa* and the recent *Kalank*.

For Dhaliwal, the most significant is the emergence of the female gaze. "Our blockbusters are all about seeing through the male gaze. *Gully Boy* was about experiencing a male character as a woman sees him. You get to see a side of him that you usually don't get to see. There is a degree of sensitivity and self-awareness to the manliness," she says.

The thinking and writing process itself is, however, perceived as "gender neutral" by most of the women practitioners. "The craft is not gender determined," says Chohan, who entered the industry after a stint in journalism and at the Film and Television Institute of India, with *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!* as her benchmark and its creators Dibakar Banerjee and Urmi Juvekar as her heroes.

"It's a myth that women cannot write action or thrillers or men can't write sensitive or complex female characters. If you have to slot the gender of the writer to a piece of writing, then it should be androgynous," says Dhillon, who has written *Ra-One, Manmarziyaan* and *Kedarnath*.

Impending course correction?

Chohan is perturbed about the "burden of feminism". "We are attuned to a certain kind of female narrative. I'm often approached as the item girl of radical feminist dramas," says Chohan. According to Bathija, women are as capable as men in propagating age-old gender biases, sexism and misogyny. "*Dum Laga Ke Haisha* has one of the finest female protagonists I've seen and that was written by a man. And when all the elements come together, then we get *Gully Boy* – with a female producer, director and writer(s), creating a distinct, memorable female hero who doesn't even need screen time to mark her strong, unique point of view. Lo and behold, the female lead tells the hero to go live his dream because she will bring home the bacon, or mutton in this case," she says.

The "gender" responsibility thrust on women could be because things have traditionally tilted the wrong way – both when it comes to their presence and representation. "A few years of drastic correction will make it veer towards the centre," hopes Chohan. "It's like being starved of carbohydrates, so you jump at carbs for a balanced diet," says Dhaliwal. For her, the ideal would be "when both men and women tell stories of both men and women with equal love and nuance". Having gone through a "transition" experience, she is in a unique space of equality and empathy. "I lived in a boy's hostel for four years of engineering. I've seen men closely, how they talk about women, with each other. They are wonderful as much as obnoxious," she says.

On a different note, Chohan resents the undue expectation of "quality" from women; that they should outdo and outshine their male counterparts. "Just because a film has been written by a woman, why is it not allowed mediocrity? Why do women have to be geniuses? Why are we not allowed our flaws?" she wonders.

Success is key, not gender

The comfort level for women writers has increased, what with many more women in the industry, specially directors. Also, though producers tend to inherently trust male writers more, in terms of sheer economics, a lot of bigger projects are getting entrusted to women. *Raazi* changed the rules of the game last year. Dhillon would like to see it in a broader frame. According to her, irrespective of gender, your influence and remuneration is directly proportionate to your film's success. "If you are delivering on certain parameters, regardless of your gender, you will get paid," she says.

Meanwhile, for now, beyond the debate, the writers are busy at work. Dhillon has a romantic thriller going on floors next, which will be produced by Colour Yellow films and Anand L Rai. Dhaliwal is writing a web series for RSVP Movies. Apart from *Chhapaak*, Chohan is working on two more exciting projects. She and Dhillon are collaborating on Ruchi Narain's *Guilty* being made by Dharmatic Entertainment for Netflix.

She is also working with Kanu Behl on his *Agra,* her first with a male director who she calls "feminist by default". "He has been looking at feminism through a male narrative, a narrative of patriarchy," she says.

Ultimately, be it men or women, the writers, for her, are fighters in the making: "Five years from now, we will be very powerful. It will all explode in the next two years." Till then, as Dhillon says, "it's back to the drawing board, cooking up new stories".

Double the DIPLOMACY

The just-arrived German Ambassador to India is first a professional musician

VANGMAYI PARAKALA

The year is 1971. A 15-year-old boy in Germany chances upon a telecast of The Concert for Bangladesh, taking place at Madison Square Garden in the United States. Despite the chaos of the day, so palpable even through the airwaves, this teenager senses a deep calm when Pandit Ravi Shankar and his band of musicians take the stage. At their own pace, not hassled by the energy of the audience, they tune their instruments. And then they start to play.

"This influenced not only me but thousands and thousands around the globe, in a way that we wanted to see India, where all this came from," says the boy, now 62, and on a sofa at his residence in the diplomatic enclave of central Delhi. This is Walter J. Lindner, the pony-tailed German Ambassador to India.

Noted Lindner in his studio in Shantipath; (below) as a young traveller • VANGMAYI PARAKALA & SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

After that concert, he had two impulses: one to stay with music, the other to visit India. He went on to train at the Richard Strauss Conservatorie in Munich where he learnt the piano, the flute, orchestra conducting. "Once you know the flute, you must learn the saxophone of course," he says. So he did, and then the guitar and subsequently, the bass. Finally, having saved money driving taxis and trucks in Germany, he found himself at the Berklee College of Music in Boston. Before Berklee, he visited India, backpacking through the country.

He recalls all of this having just returned from performing a guest-set as flautist with Grammy-award-winner Ricky Kej. This was as part of the opening ceremony of the first Gandhi-Mandela Peace Initiative at The Imperial Hotel in Janpath, where Kej and Lindner met for the first time during sound-check. They developed a relationship online, when Kej followed him on Twitter and invited Lindner to play.

His diplomatic career has taken him to around the world, and Lindner has made sure to connect with musicians of the region, through every posting. It's been only three months since he arrived in India, but he's already identified Sufi singers including Lok Sabha MP Hans Raj Hans, with whom to jam.

On the first floor of his official residence, Lindner has had the wall between two rooms taken down. In this space, he's set up a for a personal music studio. A huge Apple computer sits in the centre, with speakers, mixing equipment, and what feels like hundreds of wires. They're all plugged in neatly, waiting for collaborators to find time to jam.

Between 2006 and 2009, in Kenya, Lindner regularly organised an East African pop and rock festival in the gardens at his home. In New York, between 1998 and 2001, he collaborated with a Broadway R&B artist and brought out a record. During his posting in Turkey in the early '90s, he had a band doing an "East meets West" style with Arab instruments.

"Being a musician, you are open to many things, even-Bollywood," says Lindner, who keeps reiterating that he's a professional musician. He believes that diplomacy isn't about "long, intellectual speeches".

"I keep a certain distance from the diplomatic world of protocol and define my own kind of diplomacy – which is to really just connect with the people."

5 EVENTS WORTH YOUR WHILE

FOOD

Chocolate festival

In continuation of World Chocolate day, celebrated every year on July 7, Olive at Qutub is doing a week-long festival. The restaurant aims to set a record by making Delhi's biggest Giant Swiss Roll, which will be unveiled this Sunday. The festival also includes a menu of specially curated chocolate-based cocktails.

VENUE: Olive Qutub, Mehrauli
TIME: Noon - 3:30 p.m. & 7:30 p.m. - midnight

SHOW

Talent display

This Sunday, Narayan Seva Sansthan, a charitable organisation that runs hospitals for the specially-abled, is hosting its 13th Divyang Talent Show and Award Ceremony. Various groups of participants will exhibit talent in dancing, as well as physical prowess through demonstrations of wheelchair acrobatics.

VENUE: Siri Fort Auditorium, August Kranti Marg
TIME: 4 p.m.

EXHIBITION

Art

Colouring the Wounds Away, a solo show by Seher Hashmi Raza will showcase her most recent artworks. A professional fashion designer, Seher is also a poet and mental health activist, who has earlier participated in several group art shows. Her work mainly take the form of abstract figures, with trees and birds.

VENUE: Academy of Fine Arts and Literature
TIME: 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

GIG

Album launch

Goa-based artist Ditty is launching her debut album *Poetry Ceylon*, this Saturday. An urban ecologist, Ditty tries to fuse the memories of her experiences in Sri Lanka with experiences of her growing up years, surrounded by nature. At the launch, Ditty wll perform a few songs from her album with fellow artists, Shantanu and Dhruv.

VENUE: OddBird Theatre & Foundation
TIME: 8 p.m.

RETAIL

Pop-up festival

Vanity Wagon, a natural beauty market is organising Wow Monk Organic Circus, an organic retail pop-up festival. This three-day event, will bring together two prominent organic beauty brands Ruby Organics and Indulgeao Essentials, while also displaying a variety of ayurvedic beauty products.

VENUE: DLF Promenade, Vasant Kunj
TIME: 11 a.m. - 9 p.m.

FILM REVIEW

Death by righteousness

A salutary cause and the triumph of the underdog alone cannot make an engaging film

Wallowing in its mediocrity A scene from Super 30, with Hrithik Roshan ▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

NAMRATA JOSHI

Irony dies a painful death in a seemingly superfluous scene somewhere in the middle of *Super 30*, when a woman falsely accuses mathematics genius Anand Kumar (Hrithik Roshan) of sexual harassment. Of course, we might be told that it did happen for real, that Kumar had to actually face such a terrible obstacle in his greater cause of educating underprivileged kids for the Indian Institute of Technology's entrance examinations. But the sequence felt strategically placed, in what is supposedly a fictionalised account of Kumar's life. It's as if, in one swipe, Vikas Bahl was trying to exonerate himself of all the sexual misconduct charges that were heaped on him during the height of the MeToo movement. Treated casually, it felt like a broad attempt to shame and silence women for bringing such issues to light.

There is lot else that is really amusing about *Super 30*. Like the blue-blooded Roshan, as Kumar, talking of bringing down the hegemony of the privileged. Harping on how a king's son won't be the king. I could almost hear Kangana Ranaut spouting Bollywood's much reviled N word, i.e. nepotism through Roshan/Kumar. That's because the film itself remains a feel-good, facile, and boring look at class dynamics that barely touches upon the accompanying conundrums of caste.

By the book

A salutary cause and an inspirational story about the triumph of the underdog doesn't necessarily make an engaging film. More so when artificiality looms large – be it in the mounting, the dreadful brown-facing of fair-skinned actors or the faux Bihari accents of the urbane fellas. Everything feels rehearsed and consciously righteous. Roshan, in particular, seems to be working too hard at evoking earnestness, ending up being more himself than the character. The only one who seems to be improvising is Pankaj Tripathi as the education minister of Bihar. But it's sad to see him increasingly get patronised as a comedian rather than as one of India's finest character actors.

Being forgettable

The awakening of Kumar's consciousness is sudden and not well founded at all. The riddles-based *Home Alone*-like climax is more laughable than rousing. *Super 30* would've worked well had it stuck to being raw and rooted, or been a more whimsical take on the disenfranchised, like say *Lagaan*.

It prefers wallowing in its mediocrity, using some of the hoariest tropes of storytelling: the breaking of a cycle chain standing for the end of a life; the burning of an invitation letter from Cambridge signifying the death of dreams; or a storm portending life's upheavals. There is not a single memorable character in the entire lot of students. In fact, the staging of *Sholay* in English by the poor students felt uneasy and gratuitous, showcased for our privileged gaze.

There is lot of sensible talk about what's to be scared of when there is nothing to lose. "*Chhalaang Lagana*" (a long jump) is what the film advocates. Wish the film itself could take a small leap of faith, if not more, cinematically speaking.

Super 30

DIRECTOR: Vikas Bahl
STARRING: Hrithik Roshan, Mrunal Thakur, Virendra Saxena, Pankaj Tripathi, Aditya Srivastava, Vijay Varma, Amit Sadh
STORYLINE: A biographical film on mathematician Anand Kumar's educational programme of training 30 underprivileged kids for IIT

Toxic masculinity and casteism bookend six-month collections

While *Article 15* fares well, *Kabir Singh* carries the first half of 2019 into box office gold

DEBORAH CORNELIOUS

In spite of fewer hits in the first half of 2019, this year's box office collections are higher than 2018. Last year, we had *Padmaavat* (₹282.28 crore net), *Pad Man* (₹78.22 crore net), *Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweety* (₹100.80 crore net), *Baaghi 2* (₹160.74 crore net), *Raazi* (₹122.39 crore net), *Veere Di Wedding* (₹80.27 crore net) and Sanju (₹334.57 crore net).

This year has fared better though. After *Uri - The Surgical Strike* which opened in January at ₹8.49 crore net and made a whopping ₹244 core net, only *Kabir Singh* has managed similar numbers. The other successful films have been *Gully Boy* (₹134.21 crore net), *Total Dhamaal* (₹150.07 crore net) and *De De Pyaar De* (₹94.49 crore net). "If you look at January to June, last year definitely had more smaller better-faring films," explains Shailesh Kapoor of Ormax Media, a firm that specialises in trade insights. "However, there has been a 9% increase in 2019's revenue thanks to *Kabir Singh*'s collections."

The rise in numbers is in part due to a recent trend. Stars who ruled the collections over the last few years are taking a backseat. Now, new narratives have box office relevance.*Zero*, *Thugs of Hindostan* and *Tubelight*, all Khan films were crushed at the box office. Instead, lower-budgeted fresh approaches like *Raazi*, *Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweety* and *Gully Boy* have triumphed.

Two exceptions

One of the last films to be released at 2019's half-year mark, Shahid Kapoor's Hindi remake of the Telugu *Arjun Reddy* opened at an impressive ₹20 crore net. In the three weeks since its release the film has collected ₹243 crore net on a reported budget of ₹60 crore, released to more than 3,000 screens. "The film has done well everywhere," says Kapoor. "You'd expect a Shahid Kapoor film to be multiplex skewed but *Kabir Singh* has performed exceptionally well in single screens as well." Usually an urban film comprises about 75 to 80% of a film's collections, but in the case of Kapoor's film, about 40% of the accrued revenue has been contributed by non-multiplex cinemas.

Sreedhar Pillai, a trade analyst focusing on Southern markets, says the film is a blockbuster throughout the country, with an exceptional performance in South India, where usually a Hindi remake of a Telugu film wouldn't be so successful. "*Kabir Singh* would have run for a week at the most," says Pillai. "People loved the original and Shahid Kapoor is not popular in the South at all, only the Khans rule in this market." In spite of its glorification of toxic masculinity, as pointed out by several reviews and social media posts, *Kabir Singh* roped in audiences, most of who were curious about the controversies it generated. Plus, the film's music has been popular. "Tamil cinema is going through a bad phase at the moment and *Kabir Singh* is number one at the Chennai box office," says Pillai. "Bollywood has made deep inroads into Southern markets, which could not be penetrated earlier. Lots of people are accepting Hindi films because of English subtitles," he says.

Standing apart

The last film for June was *Article 15*, which has been made on a reported budget of ₹30 crore, with a screen count of 1,500. Riding solely on the shoulders of Ayushmann Khurrana, the socially-driven film opened at a respectable ₹4.75 crore net and in two weeks has made ₹47.49 crore net. As a reiteration to the 'content is king' principle, *Article 15* was expected to make nothing more than ₹3 crore net based on initial reports, according to Kapoor. Thanks to favourable social media chatter, those numbers rose mid-day. Contrary to popular belief, Khurrana's film did not poach ticket sales of *Kabir Singh*. "*Article 15* is driven by families and an older audience and *Kabir Singh* is entirely youth oriented. If they released in the same week, then *Article 15* would have gotten lost in the hype," says Kapoor. Unlike *Kabir Singh*, Khurrana's film on caste is getting most of its business from urban territories like Mumbai, Delhi, Pune, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Coimbatore.

July though, has begun with a whimper. *Malaal* has fared terribly, opening at ₹45,000 and making only ₹2 crore net. Hrithik Roshan's *Super 30* may continue the upward swing 2019 has been enjoying.

Kabir Singh is predicted to end its theatrical run between ₹260 to ₹280 crore net, while *Article 15* will mostly likely touch ₹60 crore net.

**Figures courtesy Box Office India*

Then there were two: *Article 15* co-existed *with Kabir Singh* in cinemas across the country ▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Box office collection

2018*	2019*
1,760	1,920

*January to June
Figures courtesy Ormax Media

IN BRIEF

R. Kelly arrested again on federal sex charges

WASHINGTON

Singer R. Kelly, 52, already facing sexual abuse charges, was arrested in Chicago on Thursday on a federal grand jury indictment listing 13 counts, including sex crimes and obstruction of justice. The Grammy winner was arrested in February on 10 counts in Illinois involving four women, three of whom were minor at the time. AP

Volkswagen rolls out final edition of Beetle

PUEBLA

German auto giant Volkswagen launched the final edition of its iconic "Beetle" car from its Mexican factory at a ceremony accompanied by a Mariachi band. The bug-shaped sedan rolled off the production line to rapturous applause on Wednesday, the last iteration of a model first manufactured in the late 1930s in Germany and 1954 in Mexico. AFP

Passengers ejected from seats on turbulent flight

HONOLULU

An Air Canada flight from Vancouver to Sydney made an emergency landing in Honolulu after 37 people were injured, nine seriously, during a sudden loss of altitude that sent people flying into the luggage compartments and aisles of the aeroplane. AP

Warming threatens Greenland's archaeological sites, says study

Changes in soil characteristics affect organic elements, ruins of Viking settlements

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
COPENHAGEN

In Greenland, climate change is not just a danger to ecosystems but also a threat to history, as global warming is affecting archaeological remains, says a study.

There are more than 1,80,000 archaeological sites across the Arctic, some dating back thousands of years, and previously these were protected by the characteristics of the soil.

"Because the degradation rate is controlled by the soil temperature and moisture content, rising air temperatures and changes in precipitation during the frost-free season may lead to a loss of organic key elements such as archaeological wood, bone and ancient DNA," the report, published in the scientific journal *Nature*, stated.

Researchers investigating the material found at an archeological site in Greenland; a bone point, right. ▪AFP

The team behind the study, led by Jorgen Hollesen, has been examining seven different sites around the vast Arctic territory's capital Nuuk, since 2016.

In addition to organic elements, such as hair, feathers, shells and traces of flesh, some of the sites contain the ruins of Viking settlements.

Projections used in the study, which are based on different warming scenarios, predict that average temperature could increase by up to 2.6 degrees Celsius, leading to "higher soil temperatures, a longer thaw season, and increased microbial activity within the organic layers".

"Our results show that 30 to 70% of the archaeological fraction of organic carbon (OC) could disappear within the next 80 years," Mr. Hollesen said. This means that these remains, some of which provide a glimpse into the lives of the first inhabitants of Greenland from around 2,500 BC, are at risk.

When findings were compared with previous surveys, they found evidence of ongoing degradation. "At some sites, we did not find any intact bones or pieces of wood, suggesting that these have disintegrated within the last decades," he said. In regions such as Alaska, ancient artefacts are emerging as the permafrost thaws due to rising temperatures.

David Bowie gets his barbie

In honour of 50th anniversary of his song *Space Oddity*

JULIA JACOBS

On Thursday, the world learned that Barbie is a Bowie fan.

With its release of a doll dressed as David Bowie's glittering alter ego Ziggy Stardust, Mattel said it was celebrating the 50th anniversary of *Space Oddity*, released in 1969.

The new Barbie doll wears a body-hugging metallic "spacesuit," calf-high red platform boots and silver earrings with dangling stars. Her dark red hair is slicked back like Ziggy Stardust's, and daubed on her forehead is the golden circle he wore. Her nails are painted black.

Male celebrities

It's a notably androgynous look for a doll that epitomised the stereotypes of feminine appearance in its earlier iterations.

In more recent years, however, male celebrity depictions have not just been reserved for Ken. Over the past decade, Barbie has dressed like Andy Warhol, Elvis and Frank Sinatra.

A Barbie doll modelled on Ziggy Stardust, an alter ego of David Bowie. ▪NYT

Bowie was known for his gender-bending style and sexual fluidity, and Ziggy Stardust was one of the most memorable experiments. He debuted the persona in 1972 with the album *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust* and the *Spiders From Mars*.

Author Christopher Sandford wrote in his 1998 biography, *Bowie: Loving the Alien*, that the alter ego was more than just playing dress-up. During an interview in 1972, Bowie asked American critics to call him Ziggy, and eventually he admitted that the character was taking over his personality.

Bowie, who died in 2016, has described Ziggy as a rock star who communicates with extraterrestrial beings in the face of a coming apocalypse on earth.

Ziggy's last public appearance was at a concert in 1973, which was filmed and released as a documentary later. NY TIMES

Google to probe leak of private conversations

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SAN FRANCISCO

Google said it was conducting an internal review after it discovered confidential audio had been leaked by a contractor of private conversations with its digital assistant.

The U.S. internet giant acknowledged "misconduct" in the leak of the Dutch language conversations by one of its language experts contracted to help refine its Google Assistant, the artificial intelligence-powered system for voice interactions.

Google made the announcement on Thursday following a report by Belgian broadcaster VRT that it could access fragments of conversations from smart speakers and other Google devices in Belgium and Netherlands.

The leak appeared to be from one of the language experts Google uses to help it refine its program. "We just learned that one of these language reviewers has violated our data security policies by leaking confidential Dutch audio data," Google product manager David Monsees said in a blog post.

"Our security and privacy response teams have been activated on this issue, are investigating, and we will take action. We are conducting a full review of our safeguards."

Taking in the view

Bare necessities: A black bear peers over a railing on the veranda of a resort in New Hampshire, U.S., just after sunrise. After an employee made some noise, the bear climbed down the stairs and returned to the woods. ▪AP/SAM GEESAMAN

Shoes may give art a run for its money at auction

First-of-a-kind sale of sneakers

REUTERS
NEW YORK

Sotheby's in New York announced on Thursday its first-ever auction dedicated to sneakers, underlining their fast-growing status as collectibles able to command tens of thousands of dollars.

Sotheby's is teaming up with streetwear marketplace Stadium Goods to auction 100 pairs of the rarest sneakers ever produced, including a sample of one of the first Nike Inc running shoes with a pre-sale high estimate of $1,60,000.

The Nike Moon Shoe is one of only 12 pairs created.

The Nike Mags sneaker. ▪REUTERS

It was designed by Nike co-founder Bill Bowerman.

Other shoes in the online sale, ending on July 23, include sought-after and limited-edition sneakers produced by Adidas, Air Jordan and rapper Kanye West's Yeezy collection.

'Robot umpires' debut in U.S. baseball league

Umpire wears an earpiece connected to iPhone and relays the call upon receiving it from a computer system

Umpire Brian deBrauwere, left, wearing an earpiece connected to an iPhone, which relays calls from a computer. ▪AP

ASSOCIATED PRESS
YORK

"Robot umpires" have arrived. The independent Atlantic League became the first American professional baseball league to let a computer call balls and strikes on Wednesday night at its All-Star Game.

Plate umpire Brian deBrauwere wore an earpiece connected to an iPhone in his pocket and relayed the call upon receiving it from a TrackMan computer system that uses Doppler radar.

"Until we can trust this system 100%, I still have to go back there with the intention of getting a pitch correct because if the system fails, it doesn't pick a pitch up or if it registers a pitch that's a foot-and-a-half off the plate as a strike, I have to be prepared to correct that," Mr. deBrauwere said.

It didn't appear Mr. deBrauwere had any delay receiving the calls at first but players noticed a big difference. "One time I already had caught the ball back from the catcher and he signalled strike," said pitcher Daryl Thompson, who didn't realise the technology was being used until after he disagreed with a call.

The umpires have the ability to override the computer, which considers a pitch a strike when the ball bounces and then crosses the zone.

In a first, AI program beats pros in six-player poker

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Artificial intelligence programs have bested humans in checkers, chess, Go and two-player poker, but multi-player poker was always believed to be a bigger ask. Mission: accomplished.

Researchers at Carnegie Mellon University, working with Facebook's AI initiative, has announced that their program defeated a group of top pros in six-player no-limit Texas hold 'em game.

The program, Pluribus, and its big wins were described in the journal *Science*.

"Pluribus achieved superhuman performance at multi-player poker, which is a recognised milestone in artificial intelligence and in game theory," said Tuomas Sandholm, a computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon.

According to the creators of Pluribus, the technology could be used to solve a "wide variety of real-world problems" that, like in poker, involve actors who bluff, or hide key information.

First, the program practiced against itself, learning little by little how to use poker moves to best advantage. Surprises cropped up. "Its major strength is its ability to use mixed strategies," said Darren Elias, who played 5,000 hands against it.

Firm says $32 mn missing in cryptocurrency hack

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TOKYO

A Tokyo-based cryptocurrency exchange said on Friday it had halted all services after losing cryptocurrency worth more than $32 million in the latest hack.

Remixpoint said its subsidiary BITPoint Japan discovered overnight that about $32.3 million in various digital currencies had gone missing. The apparent hack was discovered after an error appeared in the firm's outgoing funds transfer system on Thursday night.