



**Citizens urge Prime Minister to act on religion-based violence**

Page 13



**India may cite Imran Khan's remark on active militants in Pak. at FATF**

Page 13



**Probe on Russia did not exonerate Trump, says special counsel Mueller**

Page 14

**Murtagh grabs five as Ireland bowls England out for 85**

Page 17



PRINTED AT - CHENNAI - COIMBATORE - BENGALURU - HYDERABAD - MADURAI - NOIDA - VISAKHAPATNAM - THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - KOCHI - VIJAYAWADA - MANGALURU - TIRUCHIRAPALLI - KOLKATA - HUBBALLI - MOHALI - MALAPPURAM - MUMBAI - TIRUPATI - LUCKNOW - CUTTACK - PATNA

## NEARBY



**Ajay Bhalla to be new Home Secretary**

DELHI/ AHMEDABAD  
The Modi government on Wednesday reshuffled over a dozen Secretaries. Ajay Kumar Bhalla, a 1984-batch IAS officer and currently Secretary, Ministry of Power, has been appointed Officer on Special Duty to the Ministry of Home Affairs with immediate effect.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 13

## In safe hands



Army personnel shifting villagers from flood-hit Sotiabari in Nalbari district of Assam on Wednesday. Over 60 people have died and 33 lakh affected due to the deluge in the State. •PTI (REPORT ON PAGE 9)

# BJP plans to stake claim sooner than later

Rebel MLAs in Karnataka have said they will be patient

NISTULA HEBBAR  
B.S. SATISH KUMAR  
NEW DELHI/BENGALURU

A day after the H.D. Kumaraswamy-led Janata Dal (S)-Congress government in Karnataka lost the vote of confidence, the BJP, with its status as the single largest party in the Assembly, indicated that it will be proceeding towards staking claim sooner rather than later.

A meeting of the State legislature party will be called in a day or two.

The BJP, having postponed a meeting of its legislature party and of the parliamentary board in New Delhi as it sought more clarity about the prospects of providing a stable government after last week's unsettling events, has decided, sources said, that since much depends on Speaker K.R. Ramesh Kumar on the question of rebel MLAs, no purpose would be served by allowing the grass to grow.

"We mulled over the matter and while earlier we were treading a little cautiously, we have come to the conclusion that now things will move a little faster in terms of staking claim. Rebel MLAs of the Congress have assured us that they will maintain the patience they have shown till now and we have a window of over a



**Waiting game:** Karnataka BJP chief B.S. Yeddyurappa outside his residence in Bengaluru on Wednesday. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

**'Will first rebuild JD(S)'**

Karnataka caretaker CM H.D. Kumaraswamy on Wednesday said his first priority was to rebuild his party. "I do not know about the future of the alliance with the Congress," he told reporters. ▶PAGE 8

**Congress yet to decide**

Karnataka PCC president Dinesh Gundu Rao said the party central leadership would take a decision on continuing the alliance with the JD(S). The leaders were yet to discuss the issue, Mr. Rao said. ▶PAGE 8

# Opposition wants select panel scrutiny of key Bills

Leaders meet to decide joint strategy

SOBHANA K. NAIR  
NEW DELHI

In a show of strength, Opposition parties in the Rajya Sabha told the government that they wanted seven key legislation, including the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2019, the Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, 2019, and

the DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2019, to be sent to a Select Committee of Parliament for further scrutiny.

All three Bills have been cleared by the Lok Sabha in the current session of Parliament.

The decision to insist on scrutiny of the Bills came at a meeting of floor leaders of Opposition parties in the Upper House on Wednesday. Sources said Opposition leaders were also working on

a joint letter that would oppose the way the two Houses of Parliament were being run and the stifling of their voices. "A draft has been prepared and we are in the process of getting signatures from everyone," a senior Opposition leader said.

In disarray after the results of the general election in May, the Opposition parties have regrouped in the last few days of the first session of the 17th Lok Sabha. On Tuesday, they held two

meetings. Sources said Opposition MPs would meet again on Thursday to formulate a coordinated strategy for the Rajya Sabha, where they have the numbers to counter the government.

On Wednesday, a first round of meetings was called by UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi. It was attended by MPs from the DMK, the NCP, the BSP and the two Left parties among others.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

**RTI Bill not moved in RS**

The government did not introduce the Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, 2019, in the Rajya Sabha, though it had listed it for Wednesday, as the numbers are stacked against it. It was cleared by the Lok Sabha on Monday amid strong protests by the Opposition. ▶PAGE 12

# Power poles should have spikes to keep away jumbos: panel

JACOB KOSHY  
NEW DELHI

Electric poles in forests and wildlife sanctuaries need to have spikes to discourage elephants from uprooting them and getting electrocuted, a committee set up by the Union Environment Ministry has recommended. Its suggestions were presented to the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL), an apex advisory board.

Elephant deaths from electrocution have emerged as a major challenge. *The Hindu* reported last November that 461 elephants were electrocuted from 2009-2017, or about 50 a year.

## Tragedy in A.P.

An elephant calf was electrocuted in Andhra Pradesh on Sunday and its mother, according to a report from a forest official, uprooted cables and power transformers, ostensibly in an act of rage, on Monday. The power was turned off and this didn't harm the adult pachyderm.

The committee's report, which was deliberated upon by NBWL members on July 18, recommends that as far as possible transmission lines should be buried underground and those overhead ought to be insulated and kept out of reach of elephants.

"A nationwide strategy should be developed and supported to undertake the long-term planning of electricity grid networks as a priority. Planning should include the use of state-of-the-art wildlife protection equipment, and burying low to medium-voltage transmission lines below ground where feasible," the report notes.

The Power Grid



The elephant calf that was electrocuted in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh on Sunday. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Corporation of India Ltd., (PGCIL), Central Electricity Authority (CEA), and State Electricity Boards (SEBs) have been asked by the committee to "immediately" fix sagging transmission lines and cables in protected areas. There ought to be a joint inspection of every transmission/distribution line passing through the protected areas or passing through the vicinity of protected areas frequented by wild animals) by officials of the Electricity and Forest Departments at least thrice a year, once before the onset of monsoon and once after monsoon to identify potential problem stretches, the committee says.

## Underground cable

"To prevent death of animals in the forest areas due to electrocution by the distribution lines, the distribution companies shall preferably use ABC (aerial bunched cables) or underground cable. In case of overhead lines, the clearance above ground of the lower conductor of 11 KV/33 KV overhead lines should be as per the CEA regulations," it says.

# Chandrayaan-2 gets first orbit boost

To head for the moon on August 14

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

The lunar craft Chandrayaan-2 had its first orbit raising manoeuvre on Day 3 since its launch on Monday, July 22.

At 2 p.m. on Wednesday, teams handling the spacecraft's movement did a 1.5-hour-long burn of an on-board motor.

They raised the orbit to the present 241.5 km x 45,162 km around earth, the Indian Space Research

Organisation said. Engineers conducted the exercises from ISTRAC (ISRO Telemetry, Tracking & Command Network) at Peenya in Bengaluru.

Chandrayaan-2, which is carrying a lander and a rover, will head for the moon on August 14.

"The spacecraft is scheduled to reach moon by August 20," the update said.

REAL TEST ON SEPT. 7 ▶ PAGE 9

# In M.P., two BJP MLAs back Congress

They voted in favour of an amendment to the CrPC in the Assembly

SIDHARTH YADAV  
BHOPAL

Stunning the Bharatiya Janata Party, which is exulting over the collapse of the government in Karnataka, two of its MLAs on Wednesday voted with the ruling Congress in favour of an amendment to the Criminal Procedure Code in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly.

Terming it a *ghar wapsi* (homecoming), Maihar legislator Narayan Tripathi told presspersons, "In the previous government, Shivraj Singh Chouhan had made tall promises in my consti-



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath addressing the media in Bhopal on Wednesday. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

tuency, but delivered nothing. There was also an attempt within the party to sabotage my election. The Congress is my old home,

and I am headed back to it. I will do whatever is the best for my constituency." The MLA had switched to the BJP in 2014.

With the positive vote of Beohari MLA Sharad Kol as well, the Criminal Law (Madhya Pradesh Amendment) Bill, 2019, was passed in the Assembly with the support of 122 MLAs, even though the ruling coalition has the support of 121 MLAs, including Speaker N.P. Prajapati, who did not vote.

The Congress enjoys the support of one Samajwadi Party, two Bahujan Samaj Party and four Independent MLAs, whereas the BJP has 109 MLAs in the Assembly.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

## IN BRIEF

## HC disposes of ex-DUSU president's petition

NEW DELHI  
Former DUSU president Rocky Tuseed on Wednesday told the HC that he does not wish to press his appeal against a single-judge Bench order upholding the Delhi University's decision to disqualify his candidature in 2017. PTI

## Air quality of Delhi-NCR

City	Index	Category
Delhi	164	Moderate
Gurgaon	112	Moderate
Ghaziabad	186	Moderate
Faridabad	146	Moderate
Noida	178	Moderate
Greater Noida	144	Moderate

Legend: 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

## DELHI TODAY

**Talk:** "A Post-colonial Representation of India in French Graphic novels", an illustrated lecture by Dr. Swati Dasgupta who teaches French at the Department of Germanic & Romance Studies, University of Delhi. The event will be chaired by Neera Kashyap at Conference Room-1, India International Centre (IIC), 6.30 p.m.

**Exhibition:** A solo paintings show by Parul Golchha Ranka at Triveni Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam, 205, Tansen Marg, 11 a.m. - 8 p.m.

**Exhibition:** "Spirituality, Serenity and Beauty", a solo painting exhibition by Gouri Seth at Convention Centre Foyer, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.  
(Mail your listings for this column at cityeditor@thehindu.co.in)

# HC rejects AAP rebel leaders' petition for recusal of Speaker

Party MLA had filed petition seeking their disqualification under anti-defection law

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday dismissed the pleas of two AAP MLAs – Anil Bajpai and Col. Devender Sehrawat – seeking recusal of the Assembly Speaker from the disqualification proceedings against them.

"We see no reason to impose any mathematical formula on the Speaker to decide the issue," a Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice C. Hari Shankar said adding that it was the prerogative of the Speaker to decide on the preliminary objection and disqualification petition.

"The Speaker has all the power and jurisdiction to decide the disqualification petition. It is not obligatory for the Speaker to decide in piece meal manner, that is, first the preliminary objection raised by the members of the House on the disqualification petition and the-



reafter, the disqualification petition," the Bench said.

## Order challenged

The two MLAs had challenged a High Court single-judge Bench order which dismissed their pleas for a direction to Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel to remove himself from hearing the petition for their disqualification under the anti-defection law.

On July 8, the single-judge Bench had held there was nothing wrong in the proce-

**The Speaker has all the power and jurisdiction to decide the disqualification petition**

HC BENCH

cedure adopted by the Speaker and rejected the MLAs' allegation of bias as also the contention that he should have first decided their application for recusal before going ahead with disqualification proceedings.

## Anti-defection law

AAP MLA Saurabh Bhargava on June 10 filed the petition seeking their disqualification under the anti-defection law for allegedly joining the BJP.

The Speaker had on June 17 issued notice to the two MLAs asking them to file their response by July 8.

The High Court had noted the submission of the Speak-

er that the MLAs would be granted two more days to file their response to the notice on the petition seeking their disqualification under the anti-defection law.

The MLAs have filed their response before the Speaker.

## Political inclinations

The duo had alleged that the Speaker is not supposed to have political inclinations, but was seen attending events and protests of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

They said the Speaker was even seen "dancing" in the Lok Sabha poll campaign of AAP candidate Atishi.

They alleged that in these circumstances, the Speaker might not impartially adjudicate the disqualification proceedings and the issue be sent either to the Deputy Speaker or a committee be constituted to hear the matter.

# DDA violated real estate laws, claims plea

High Court seeks response from RERA and urban housing body

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday sought response from the Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) and Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on a petition alleging that the land-owning body has not registered its housing scheme of 2017 and 2019 with the RERA.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice C. Hari Shankar called for the stand of RERA and DDA on the petition by the next date of hearing on November 19.

The HC gave the order after a public interest litigation filed by Abhijit Mishra, a financial economist, contended that the DDA violated the real estate regulation laws by not registering its housing scheme of 2017 and 2019 with the RERA.

The petition, filed through advocate Payal Bahl, has claimed that the DDA has not provided the RERA with the completion certificate and occupancy certificate of the projects under its housing schemes of

2017 and 2019. It said DDA was in default of the provisions of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016.

## Exemption not granted

"The DDA has not been granted exemption from registration of its housing scheme-cum-project under the statutory provision of the Real Estate [Regulation and Development] Act, 2016," the petition said.

"Thus, it was a deliberate and malicious attempt by the officers of the DDA to contra-

vene the laws of the land," it added. The plea has sought directions to the DDA to suspend the allotment process of the apartments under the its 2019 housing scheme until it completes the formality of registration of its project with the RERA.

It also sought for setting up of a committee to investigate and audit the quality standards of the real estate project of DDA's housing scheme of 2017 and 2019 for their structural integrity as per the National Building Code of India, 2016.

# IIT-D works towards globalising institute

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

IIT-Delhi organised a summit meeting on Wednesday to "globalise IIT-Delhi" and attract the best faculty and students for postgraduate and doctoral studies from across the globe.

IIT-Delhi director V. Rangopal Rao said that cultural diversity was very important for any higher educational institution and it was missing from leading Indian institutions.

"IIT-Delhi has taken steps to address this issue. We wish to produce students who develop a global outlook and become global players in their chosen field of work. Creativity also happens when unlike minds interact with each other," Mr. Rao said.

He added that IIT was targeting to have at least 10% foreign students in its Ph.D programmes and make them work on technology platforms that can serve global needs.

The institute said that its efforts over the past year have already seen an increase in the number of foreigners joining the IIT-Delhi's Ph.D programme and they hope will contribute to raising the quality of graduate programmes.

The meeting was attended by the Ambassadors, Education and Cultural Attaché of countries like Indonesia, South Korea, Mexico, Sweden, Argentine Republic, Bangladesh, Uganda, Namibia, Brunei, Gambia and Lithuania.

# 'Do we need to restrain Google from uploading India maps'

HC asks Centre as plea claims sensitive areas accessible on web

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Centre to see whether Internet search major Google should be restrained from uploading maps of India, including defence installations, on its web service.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice C. Hari Shankar issued the directions while disposing a plea highlighting that defence establishments that are closed for public are easily accessible through satellite images uploaded on Google Earth.

In the petition, lawyer Kishore Shukla has said only the Indian government had

the right to provide detailed maps of the country.

The plea also sought directions to the government to make available to the citizens its indigenous navigation system – NavIC – so that people do not depend on similar services provided by private entities.

The High Court asked the Central government to treat his petition as a representation and consider whether it was necessary to restrain Google India from publishing the detailed maps of India as was sought in the plea.

## Hostile nations

It said the government can issue necessary directions to

Google India in accordance with the law if required.

The petition claimed that the maps on Google were not only available to the general public, but also hostile nations. Mr. Shukla alleged that despite the Central government denying permission to Google to make available its Street View service, it continues to upload panoramic view of all Indian cities and areas bordering the LoC with Pakistan.

Mr. Shukla also claimed that according to one of the terrorists in the 2008 Mumbai attacks, Google images were used by them to study and do a reconnaissance of the city.

# 6 firms honoured with CSR Journal Excellence Awards

Union Minister felicitates the winners

STAFF REPORTER  
CHENNAI

Six companies – Tata Power, ReNew Power, Hindustan Zinc, Aditya Birla Capital Ltd., YES Bank Ltd. and Mahindra & Mahindra – emerged winners in the CSR Journal Excellence Awards.

Speaking at the event, Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmer Welfare, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Narendra Singh Tomar, said the role of agriculture in the scope of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in India was an important area that needed further impetus if India had to achieve its \$5 trillion economic goal, according to a press release.

## Six categories

In the third edition of awards, instituted by The CSR Journal, a digital and print news publication, there were six categories –

education and skill training, women empowerment and child welfare, agriculture and rural development, sports, health and sanitation and environment.

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, G. Kishan Reddy, felicitated the six companies chosen as winners this year.

## Illustrious women

Many illustrious women, including Sindhu Sapkal, social activist and founder-president, The Mother Global Foundation; Anurima Sharma, IRS Officer; Shalini Bharat, director of TISS; Roopa Moudgil, Inspector-General of Police, Railways; Vaishali Nigam Sinha of ReNew Power and Sarika Minda of Spark Minda Foundation were honoured, the release said.

MPs Sujay Vikhe-Patil and Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu were also felicitated.

# Plastic bags banned in 18 States: CPCB

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has informed the National Green Tribunal (NGT) that 18 States have imposed complete ban on the use of plastic carry bags while in five other States, a partial ban was imposed at religious and historical sites.

The CPCB told a Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice A.K. Goel that while 12 States and UTs have submitted the respective action plans pertaining to plastic waste management, seven others have not imposed the ban yet.

"Eighteen States have imposed a complete ban on plastic carry bags and products. Besides, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala and West Bengal have imposed partial ban on plastic bags and products at religious and historical places," it said.

## Carrying forward the legacy



Aleida Guevara, daughter of legendary revolutionary Che Guevara, during an event marking the 60th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, in New Delhi on Wednesday.

•SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

# 'Super 30' founder to conduct virtual classes for govt. schools

AAP government to make film *Super 30* tax-free in city

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Patna-based mathematician Anand Kumar said on Wednesday that he will conduct virtual classes for Class II and 12 students of Delhi government schools every month.

On a visit to experience a "Happiness class" at a government school, Mr. Kumar, who runs the Super 30 classes to train students for IITJEE, made the announcement.

## Source of inspiration

Education Minister Manish Sisodia who accompanied Mr. Kumar on his visit said that Delhi will make Hrithik Roshan-starrer film *Super 30* tax-free, so that teachers and students can be inspired



**Today, the condition of govt. schools across the country has deteriorated to such an extent that there is a huge gap between private and govt. schools**

ANAND KUMAR  
Patna-based mathematician

by the life of Anand Kumar. *Super 30* is based on the life of Mr. Kumar.

Mr. Kumar said, "I too had studied in a government school as a child. But today, the condition of government schools across the country has deteriorated to such an extent that there is a huge gap between private school and government schools.

But the government schools in Delhi give me hope," he said.

Mr. Sisodia said that he hoped that students would be inspired by Mr. Kumar's story as his life story was an example of how people use failure as a ladder to reach new heights through perseverance, courage and positive attitude.

# DoE calls for police patrol outside schools

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

To ensure safety, the Directorate of Education has directed all heads of schools to ensure that Delhi police personnel conduct random checking near the institutions during the time of closing or change of shift.

In a circular, the DoE said. "The task force on women safety in Delhi has been holding meetings to ensure that the actionable measures for women safety are taken. In one of the meetings, it had been decided that Delhi Police should intensify random checking around the schools." The DoE said that it has asked the schools to ensure that these checks take place and told them to send a report about it.

# Monsoon at its peak in city; heavy rain in the coming days

Showers likely to bring down temperature by several notches: Met officials

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Met department has forecast generally cloudy sky with moderate rain and thundershowers till July 27 and has said that July 25 and July 26 will see peak activity with one or two heavy spells of rain across the Capital.

The weatherman has forecast wet weather across northwest India as the monsoon trough will remain active over Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh and will combine with south-westerly winds to create a weather system that will bring heavy rain.

"Wide spread rain/thundershowers will occur over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh between July 24 and July 27 due to this system," the Met department said.

The rain is likely to bring down the maximum temperature in the city by several notches. On Wednesday, the maximum temperature was recorded at 37.8 degrees Celsius which was three degrees above normal for the season. The minimum was 29.2 degrees Celsius. On July 24, the maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to fall to 33 and 25 degrees Celsius as a result of the rain fo-



**Open your umbrellas:** Skies opened up on Wednesday evening bringing some relief from the heat in the Capital. ■SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

recast.

Several areas in the city also received rain in the evening on Wednesday. The official data showed that the city between 9 a.m. and 5 30 p.m. received 0.2 mm of rain.

## Rain deficit

Private weather forecaster Skymet Weather has said that currently, Northwest India is rain deficient by 21%. Haryana saw a deficit of 31% and Delhi 64%. It added that Punjab is the only State which is rain surplus by 2%.

"These good spells are very likely to bring down the deficiency levels of Haryana and Delhi, whereas Punjab will see a further rise in rain surplus. In wake of the monsoon activities, temperature will subside by three to four degrees across North India which will give a major relief from the ongoing hot and humid weather conditions," Skymet weather said.

## Wind, lightning

It added that rain will be accompanied by strong winds with a speed of 50-60 kmph.

Lightning strikes are likely to occur in some parts because of the formation of convective clouds.

The Met department said that overall, the city received 167.7 mm precipitation against the long-term average of 221.9 mm since June 1 when the monsoon season started (a deficiency of 24%), according to India Meteorological Department data. The wettest day was on July 22 when the Safdarjung weather station recorded 50.2 mm rainfall, the heaviest this season.

## Man shot dead by bike-borne assailants

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 36-year-old man was shot dead allegedly by unidentified motorcycle-borne assailants in north-east Delhi, the police said on Wednesday.

The victim Imran was travelling alone in his car when some unidentified men intercepted his vehicle and opened multiple rounds of fire at him at Durgapuri Chowk on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday, they said.

The police said that the victim was rushed to a nearby hospital where he was declared brought dead. The deceased was a resident of Shahdara and worked in an iron shop owned by his father, they added.

DCP (Northeast) Atul Kumar Thakur said that a case has been registered and a suspect has been apprehended.

The police suspect personal enmity to be the motive behind the murder, Mr. Thakur added.

The deceased had been involved in three cases, including that of murder and attempt to murder, the DCP added.

## Delhi should be spelt as Dilli: Goel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

BJP leader Vijay Goel demanded on Wednesday that the name of the national capital be spelt 'Dilli' in English instead of 'Delhi'.

The Rajya Sabha MP was speaking during the question hour of the ongoing budget session.

In response to Goel, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said after receiving any such proposal, his Ministry would forward it to the department concerned and a decision would be taken on the response received thereto.

## 2 pose as vigilance officers, swindle money from BSES customers

Duo threatened people on imaginary fault in meters, arrested

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Two men were arrested on Wednesday for demanding money from BSES customers by posing as members of the discom's vigilance team, the police said.

Brijesh Sharma (30), a resident of Sangam Vihar, and Sanjay Kumar (43), a resident of Tughlakabad Extension, were nabbed from M.B. Road, the police said.

According to the police, the two had deployed sources to gather information on faulty meters. They would visit residential and commercial buildings and check the meters, posing as BSES vigilance officials. They would threaten the custom-

ers on real or imaginary fault in their meters to get money from them.

Sharma and Kumar would then seize the installed meters and ask customers to pay a hefty fine, Deputy Commissioner of Police (South), Vijay Kumar said.

## Paid bribe

Most of them wanted to settle the matter by paying a bribe but some refused to pay money to the duo. When a customer refuse to pay, Sharma and Kumar would seize the meter but return it after a few days, the officer said.

Most of them did not file police complaints and chose to pay bribe, he said. Howev-

er, a few customers filed FIRs about meter theft, the DCP said.

Following the complains, the police conducted an inquiry and nabbed the two. Fake identity cards of BSES, 42 broken seals of electricity meters, one stolen meter, equipment used for breaking the seal and removing meter, documents, three mobile phones, a car and a motorcycle have been seized from them, the police said.

Sharma was previously involved in a similar case in R.K. Puram, the police said. They said that they are verifying whether the two were involved in other cases as well.

## From the rubble



An abandoned four-storey building collapsed in central Delhi's Nabi Karim on Wednesday. No one was injured in the incident. ■SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

## Delhi court orders framing of charges against Darda, 4 others in coal scam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has ordered framing of cheating and other charges against five accused, including former Rajya Sabha MP Vijay Darda, in a case pertaining to the allocation of Maharashtra's Bander coal block to AMR Iron and Steel Pvt Ltd. It however discharged former Minister of State for

Coal Santosh Bagrodia and L.S. Janoti, who was then working as a section officer in the Ministry.

Special Judge Bharat Parashar also ordered putting on trial Darda's son, Devendra Darda; former coal secretary H.C. Gupta; Nagpur-based AMR Iron and Steel Pvt Ltd and its Director Manoj Jayaswal in the case.

The court said in its order on Tuesday that prima facie charges for the alleged offences of criminal conspiracy, cheating, criminal misconduct and taking gratification for exercise of personal influence with public servant were made out against the five accused.

The court put up the matter for further hearing on July 30.

## 4 held for robbing restaurant chain manager of valuables

Accused offered him lift, took away cash, laptop and phone

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GURUGRAM

Four persons were arrested for allegedly beating up the manager of a multinational pizza restaurant chain, robbing him of thousands of rupees in cash and valuables before dumping him at an isolated place in Sohna, by offering him a lift.

The accused, Shahrugh, Furkhan, Zahir and Hanif, all belonging to Nuh, are being questioned to ascertain their involvement in more such cases.

According to the police, Kunwarpal, district manager of a pizza restaurant chain, was waiting for a conveyance to his house at Ambedkar Chowk in Sohna on July 18 evening when a white car pulled over near him seeking passengers to Palwal. Three persons, including the driver, were seated in the car. One more person

... the accused asked him about his e-wallet balance. When he [victim] refused to share the details, they threatened to kill him

POLICE

standing at the stop boarded the vehicle for Palwal. Seeing this, Kunwarpal also got into the vehicle. After travelling for a few minutes, the four allegedly beat up Kunwarpal and overpowered him. When he raised an alarm, the accused hit him with a spanner, gagged him and blindfolded him. They snatched his mobile phone, laptop, wallet and cash. The accused then took him to the fields and forced him to share his debit card PIN and the balance. He was left in the fields with his limbs tied and two of the accused

keeping a guard. The remaining two went to an ATM kiosk and returned after two hours with ₹55,000.

"He was again put into the car and the accused asked him about his e-wallet balance. When he refused to share the details, the accused allegedly threatened to kill him. Two hours later, they dumped him at an isolated place," said the police.

Following the incident, he reported the matter to the police on July 19 and a case was registered at Sohna City Police Station. The accused were arrested from Old Alwar Road on July 23. A country-made pistol, a cartridge and the car used in commission of crime were seized.

The police suspect the involvement of the accused in more such cases. They were produced before a court on Wednesday and taken on police remand for interrogation.



## 2 constables dismissed for Mukherjee Nagar assault

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Two Delhi Police constables have been dismissed from service for thrashing a tempo driver during a scuffle in Mukherjee Nagar on June 16.

The order of dismissal of constables Satya Prakash and Pushpendra Shekhawat reads: "The said personnel need to be awarded an exemplary punishment which should set an example for others to learn and desist from such aggressive and unprofessional act, which shows Delhi Police in a bad light."

## 'Women's strength in Delhi Police is just 11.65%

Of 80,115 personnel, 9,341 are women, says Union Minister Reddy in Rajya Sabha

SAURABH TRIVEDI  
NEW DELHI

Women's representation in Delhi Police is merely 9,341 out of the total strength of 80,115, Union Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy said on Wednesday.

Replying to a written question on the strength of women personnel in Delhi Police in the Rajya Sabha, Mr. Reddy said, to augment representation of women in the police force in all the Union Territories, including that of Delhi Police, government of India on March 2015 approved 33% reservation



for women in direct recruitment in non-gazetted posts - from constable to sub-inspector.

"Delhi Police had reported that in pursuance of the above approval, 2,624 women personnel joined the

police force and 441 women personnel underwent basic training till date. The current strength of the Delhi Police as on June 30, 2019 is 80,115, out of which 9,341 are women, which is 11.65%," said Mr. Reddy in his reply.

The reservation policy being implemented in direct recruitment posts of Sub-inspector and Constable will further augment women's representation in Delhi Police, he added.

## All-woman stations

On being asked about the details on whether the govern-

ment proposes to set up all-woman police stations in Delhi, Mr. Reddy replied that a Special Police Unit for Women and Children (SPUWAC) already exists to deal with cases/matters related to women and children. The unit is also notified as a police station to deal with crime against women, particularly matrimonial disputes. Two police stations, predominantly manned by women, have been opened in the North and South Campuses of Delhi University for the security and safety of women, he said.

## Accused in drunk driving case released on probation

Gets reprieve as he is sole breadwinner

NIRNIMESH KUMAR  
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has set aside two months imprisonment to a man and released him on probation in a drunken driving case, saying that he is not a previous convict and has children to maintain.

The court also quashed the suspension of his driving licence for six months.

Additional Sessions Judge Deepak Jagotra released accused Munsharif on an appeal against the punishment by a Metropolitan Magistrate Court.

## Conviction on merit

The convict had not challenged his conviction on merit. He only challenged the sentence.

"Without going into the merits of the case, keeping in view the facts and circumstances of the matter and especially considering the fact that appellant is the sole breadwinner in his family and has minor children to maintain and he is not convicted by any court of law prior to the trial court, the interest of justice

would be served if appellant Munsharif is released on probation of good conduct in view of Section 4 of the Probation of Offenders Act, 1958, instead of sending the appellant to imprisonment for a period of two months," the Judge said allowing his appeal.

"In view of the foregoing reasons, the appellant is released on probation of good conduct on his executing a bond in the sum of ₹10,000 with one surety in the like amount for a period of six months from the day of executing the bond before the trial court," the Judge stated.

"It is made clear that in violation of the above, appellant shall appear to receive and serve out the sentence as per law before the trial court. Order regarding suspension of driving licence of appellant for six months is also set aside and the trial court is directed to return the driving licence of the appellant. It is made clear that there is no change in the fine amount [₹3,100] and the same shall remain as it is," the court said.

## Govt. order on minimum wages for nurses upheld

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday upheld the AAP government's direction to private hospitals and nursing homes of the city to pay minimum wages of ₹20,000 to nurses working there as recommended by an expert panel set up by the Central government.

The decision by Justice C. Hari Shankar came while rejecting the challenge of an association representing private hospitals and nursing homes against the June 25 order of the Delhi govern-

ment's Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) directing them to implement the expert panel's recommendation within three months.

The court said the time (of three months) for implementation or enforcement of the order would start from Wednesday. It, however, gave the defaulting private hospitals a limited protection from cancellation of their registration by directing the DGHS to first grant them an opportunity to present their views and defence.

## Five robbed by bike-borne men at gunpoint

Incident took place at a gas agency godown; accused flee with ₹1 lakh

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A group of assailants barged into the premises of a gas agency godown in east Delhi's Trilokpuri and robbed five people of ₹1 lakh at gunpoint on Wednesday, the police said.

No one was injured in the incident, they said.

The police said that the incident took place around 3.30 p.m. A gas cylinder delivery boy, the manager of the gas agency, his assistant and two customers were standing near the entry gate of the godown when seven-eight men arrived on three-four bikes. The accused had their faces covered.

They threatened the victims with countrymade pistols and robbed them of money and two mobile phones, DCP (East), Jasmeet Singh said.

When other customers gathered, the accused fired a shot in the air and fled, he said.

A case has been registered

and multiple teams have been formed to trace the persons involved in the incident, the DCP also said.

Separate teams are scanning footage of CCTV cameras installed in the area to get any clue about the accused or the route taken by them while escaping, the police said.

## Regularisation of colonies: city govt. sends suggestions

We have accepted almost all terms of the Centre, says CM

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has sent 12 suggestions to the Central government related to the regularisation of unauthorised colonies in Delhi, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said here on Wednesday.

Mr. Kejriwal said, "The proposal came a week ago from the Central government. We were given 15 days to respond, but we have sent our comments within seven days. We have accepted almost all the terms of the Central government. But we have also sent some suggestions."

He said that 1,797 unauthorised colonies will be regu-

larised in the first phase and the others in the second phase. "We want this scheme to be implemented as soon as possible so that the people of Delhi can get their rights. We are fine with the conditions that the Central government had put before us," Mr. Kejriwal said.

One of the suggestions, which aimed to include more people, read, "Till July 1, 2019, how many unauthorised colonies have been built? Make a list of them and declare them regularised in the second phase."

"We are working hard to provide all unauthorised colonies of Delhi with roads, drains, sewer and water. I

am extremely happy that the Centre has taken a decision to regularise the unauthorised colonies of Delhi. The Centre has also made it clear that it is ready to implement it [regularisation] soon and we are also ready to get it done as soon as possible. The time is not far for the residents of the unauthorised colonies to get a dignified life and their due rights," he said.

On Tuesday, Union Minister Hardeep Puri hit out at Mr. Kejriwal for attempting to "take credit" for the proposal. "He [Kejriwal] has been quick to take credit for something he has been obstructing," he said.

## South, East body Mayors inspect wards

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Mayors of the South and East Delhi Municipal Corporations on Wednesday undertook inspections at various wards in their jurisdiction to review civic upkeep.

South Delhi Mayor Sunita Kangra inspected four wards in the west zone, met residents at Tagore Garden, Keshopur, Tilak Nagar and Mahavir Nagar and sought feedback on services provided by the civic body. East Delhi Mayor Anju Kamal insepcted Patparganj ward with area councillor and senior officials. She appealed to the residents to cooperate with officials in maintaining cleanliness. She also inspected a school in the area.

## Municipal councillors pay homage to Sheila Dikshit

'Set an example for women leaders'

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Municipal councillors from various political parties paid homage to former Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit at a meeting of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation on Wednesday.

Women councillors from the BJP, including Veena Virmani and Poonam, said that Dikshit stood as an example for women leaders and was an inspiration for them.

'Cordial behaviour'

Other BJP councillors spoke of the cordial way in which the former Chief Minister of Delhi would deal with officials and hailed it as an example to conduct themselves.

Regardless of which political party one belonged to, she would meet eve-

ryone with courtesy and listen to all of them properly, they said.

Congress councillor Mukesh Goyal spoke about Dikshit with teary eyes.

Praising her work in developing the infrastructure of the city, Mr. Goyal said that the use of CNG during her funeral was reflective of how she replaced diesel vehicles with CNG in the city.

On account of paying homage to different individuals who had passed away, no work has been undertaken in the last three House meetings of the North civic body.

Acknowledging this, Mayor Avtar Singh said that henceforth, to pay respects to the departed, the House will adjourn for half an hour and then resume work.

**DELHI** ☀️ **Timings**

**THURSDAY, JULY 25**

☀️ RISE 05:39 SET 19:17  
🌙 RISE 00:00 SET 12:46

**FRIDAY, JULY 26**

☀️ RISE 05:39 SET 19:16  
🌙 RISE 00:23 SET 13:42

**SATURDAY, JULY 27**

☀️ RISE 05:40 SET 19:16  
🌙 RISE 01:03 SET 14:40

**Delhi Weather**

	max	min
Delhi City	38	29
Safdarjang	38	29
Palam	38	29

**Delhi Palam Today**  
32°C Moderate to heavy rain and thundershower with isolated very heavy spell and gusty strong wind will occur many places over the area.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
30°C Moderate rain and shower with gusty wind will continue over the city and NCR. A pleasant rainy day likely.

© Copyright Skymet Weather 2019  
All rights reserved.

**THE HINDU**  
DISCLAIMER: Readers are requested to verify and make appropriate enquiries to satisfy themselves about the veracity of an advertisement before responding to any published in this newspaper. THE PUBLISHING PVT. LTD., the Publisher & Owner of this newspaper, does not vouch for the authenticity of any advertisement or advertiser or for any of the advertiser's products and/or services. In no event can the Owner, Publisher, Printer, Editor, Director, Employees of this newspaper/company be held responsible/liable in any manner whatsoever for any claims and/or damages for advertisements in this newspaper.

# Punjab on alert after heavy rain forecast

DCs told to remain prepared for any untoward situation

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHANDIGARH

Amid forecast of heavy rain in the northern States over the next two days, the Punjab government has directed the district administrative heads across the State to remain prepared to handle any untoward situation.

The State's Department of Revenue, Rehabilitation and Disaster Management issued the advisory to all Deputy Commissioners on Tuesday.

**CM's tweet**

"Punjab will be witnessing heavy rainfall in the coming days as reported by the Indian Meteorological Department @IMDWeather. Have directed all DCs to be on war footing & ready to deal with the situation on the ground (sic)," Chief Minister Amarinder Singh tweeted on Wednesday.



CM Amarinder Singh

The India Meteorological Department has issued a warning of heavy rain in the State on July 25 and 26.

"Another active monsoon wet spell of moderate to heavy intensity is likely to commence in Punjab and Haryana, including the capital Chandigarh, from late July 24. It will increase in intensity and spread during July 25 and 26 subsequently, covering almost all parts of these States," said the IMD

forecast.

Districts adjoining the foothills in Punjab, including Pathankot, Gurdaspur, Nawanshahr, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Patiala, Sangrur, Fatehgarh Sahib, Mohali, besides districts in south-eastern and north-eastern parts of Haryana are likely to witness heavy rain during this period, the forecast added.

"The catchment areas of the river Ghaggar, Yamuna, Beas, Ravi and lower catchment of the Sutlej are also likely to receive heavy rain," stated the forecast.

In Punjab, about 50,000 acres of crop were lost in Patiala and another 10,000 acres in Sangrur due to a breach caused in the catchment area of the Ghaggar as a result of flooding caused by incessant rain earlier.

(With PTI inputs)

# Hoshiarpur DC orders action against press owner

Over rape convict's photo on hoarding

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
HOSHIARPUR (PUNJAB)

Hoshiarpur Deputy Commissioner has ordered action against a printing press owner for putting the picture of a 2012 Delhi gang-rape convict on a hoarding that sought to encourage people to vote.

Deputy Commissioner-cum-District Election Officer Isha Kalia on Wednesday said she had handed over the investigation to Additional Deputy Commissioner Harpreet Singh Sudan after the matter was brought to her notice.

The State Election Commission too has sought police action against the printing press owner.

It has come to light that the printing press and the officers concerned of the Election Department did not check whose photo was being printed on the flex hoarding.

The DC said she has re-

commended to the Chief Electoral Officer of Punjab that departmental action be initiated against the erring officials who failed to notice the serious lapse.

She further said that in the future, no poster or banner would be printed without approval from a senior official.

**DCW notice**

On Monday, the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) had issued a notice to the Election Commission over the hoarding. The Election Commission had then sought a report from the Chief Electoral Officer of Punjab.

The victim's mother had apprised DCW chief Swati Maliwal of the matter, saying a picture was being circulated on social media wherein the photograph of Mukesh Singh, a convict in the rape case, was displayed on official hoardings in Punjab.

# Lightning claim 23 lives

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
PATNA/RANCHI

At least 23 people were killed and three others injured in lightning strikes in Bihar and Jharkhand, police said on Wednesday.

Thirteen people died in Aurangabad, East Champaran and Bhagalpur districts of Bihar, while in Jharkhand, 10 people lost their lives in Jamtara, Ramgarh

and Pakur districts. Of the seven deceased in Aurangabad district of central Bihar, four persons, including a woman, were killed on Tuesday night in the Goh police station area, Station House Officer Venkateshwar Ojha said.

In East Champaran, two persons died in their sleep when lightning struck the asbestos roof of their house.

# 'It will take a while to believe I am a free man'

Released after 23 years, three Kashmiris acquitted in Samleti case reach home

**PEERZADA ASHIQ**  
SRINAGAR

Three Kashmiri youth, released by the Rajasthan High Court after being proven innocent in the 1996 Samleti blast case, returned to the Valley on Wednesday after 23 long years of imprisonment with a sense of disbelief.

Mohammed Ali Bhat, a resident of Srinagar's Hassanaabad area, chose to visit a local shrine first instead of home as he drove into the congested locality in the old city.

"I had given up on ever meeting my family. It feels

like a dream to see my family again," said Mr. Bhat, a carpet seller who was arrested from Nepal in 1996.

However, he lamented the fact that his parents had died during his years of incarceration.

**'A dream come true'**

Relatives stood in lines and showered flowers as another released person, Latif Ahmed, a resident of Shamswari area of Khankha-e-Moula, reached home. "It's a dream come true. It will take a while to believe I am a free man," said Mr. Ahmed. He was also arrested in Nepal in

1996.

Mr. Ahmed's father is also no more. He said he was worried about "innocent people from Kashmir still languishing in jails without trial, especially in the Jaipur Jail".

The third released youth, Mirza Nisar Hussain, a resident of Namchabal, Fateh Kadal, reached home with curious neighbours swarming his house for a glimpse. "I served 23 years in jail. Finally, the court reached the conclusion that we were innocent. This is the reality with which we want to piece together our lives again,"

said Mr. Hussain, who was just 17 years old in 1996 when he was arrested in Nepal.

Welcoming their release, Tehreek-e-Hurriyat chairman Ashraf Sehrai expressed sadness over the fact that "it took 23 years to come to a conclusion that they were innocent".

**'Credibility in question'**

"This puts a question mark on the credibility of the investigating agencies. We hope it will start the process of unconditional release of other political prisoners too," said Mr. Sehrai.

# Nod for settlement of bills

For clearing arrears of water schemes

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHANDIGARH

The Punjab Cabinet on Wednesday approved a one-time settlement for clearing pending arrears of the rural water supply schemes across the State.

**Action plan approval**

The Cabinet also gave in-principle approval for a Four-Year Strategic Action Plan - 2019 to 2023, to set Sustainable Development Goals for the departments of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Water Supply and Sanitation, PWD (B&R) and School Education.

"The action plan will set

key performance parameters for government officials to enable integration of the departments into the development process of the State. It was also decided to approve their integration into the State budgetary process," added the statement.

It was also decided at the meeting to reduce the minimum land requirement for setting up private universities in the State from 35 to 25 acres.

**Assembly session**

The Cabinet also decided to summon the next session of the Punjab Vidhan Sabha from August 2 to 6.

# Rat snake tortured to look 'more appealing'

Mongoose hair pierced through its head

**OMAR RASHID**  
LUCKNOW

A handful of mongoose hair forcibly pierced through its head – that's the unusual state in which a rat snake was recovered from outside a temple in U.P.'s Mathura district from the "illegal custody" of a snake charmer.

The snake was fitted with mongoose hair to give it "a more appealing look", said Wildlife SOS, a wildlife conservation NGO, which described it as a "most horrifying sight".

**16 snakes seized**

A total of 16 snakes were seized from snake charmers outside three different temples in Mathura and Vrindavan.

Wildlife SOS carried out the anti-poaching operation jointly with the State forest department.

Apart from the rat snake, 11 cobras, three red sand boas and a juvenile royal snake were rescued from outside the Galteshwar and Rangeshwar temples in Mathura and the Gopeshwar Mahadev temple in Vrindavan.

The snakes are currently under the care and treatment of Wildlife SOS, which said the snakes were "in dreadful condition".



Snake charmers are taking advantage of people's devotion: Wildlife SOS

The recovery of the snakes coincides with the month of Shravan as per the Hindu calendar, considered auspicious by devotees of Lord Shiva, the NGO said.

"Due to Lord Shiva's frequent depiction with a serpent coiled around his neck, snake charmers will often display their snakes at such gatherings [temples], to take advantage of people's devotion and scam them into giving them money," it said.

Kartick Satyanarayan, co-founder and CEO of Wildlife SOS, said: "Venomous snakes like cobras have their fangs extracted and their venom glands are painfully gouged out or punctured, thus disabling the snake's only means of defence, feeding and digestion."

# Man killed by leopard

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
UDAIPUR

A 40-year-old man has been killed by a leopard in a village here, police said on Wednesday. Devi Lal Meena was asleep in the balcony of his house in Bara-Bhangla Ghat village on Tuesday night when the leopard attacked him and dragged him away, they said.

## Odisha policemen attacked by villagers

Team in plain clothes was trying to nab abductor hiding in house

PRADIP DAS  
CUTTACK

In a case of mistaken identity, a group of irate villagers attacked a police party in plain clothes and vandalised the number-less vehicle in which it entered Kapursingh village, about 20 km from Cuttack under Gurudijhatia police station, while chasing a group of alleged abductors on Wednesday morning.

According to reports, the team from Jagatpur police station was chasing the abductors following a tip-off that a minor girl from Choudwar locality had been ab-

ducted and was being taken to Angul in a vehicle. The abductors entered Kapursingh village and one of them went inside a house and locked himself in.

The policemen from Urban Police Department broke open the door and apprehended the abductor, but the villagers who had gathered near the house prevented them from taking the accused. They even attacked the police party, including Jagatpur police station IIC (inspector-rank officer) Pradip Naik. The villagers sensed foul play when the police-

men failed to show their identity cards. As a scuffle ensued between the villagers and the police, the abductor managed to flee the spot.

The local Gurudijhatia police reached the spot after being informed about the incident and rescued the captive policemen. "A case has been registered by the Gurudijhatia police on a written complaint filed by inspector Naik and one person has been arrested for obstructing the policemen from carrying out their duty," said Superintendent of Police, Cuttack (rural), R.B. Panigrahi.

## 1 dead, 3 missing in mine mishap

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
TALCHER

A coal miner has been killed and three are feared trapped after a dump slide at an opencast mine in Talcher coalfields here, an official said on Wednesday. Nine workers were injured in the accident, he said.

The miners were working on earthmoving machines in the Bharatpur mine of the Mahanadi Coalfields when the accident took place around 11.30 p.m. on Tuesday. The body of one miner was recovered on Wednesday. An operation is under way to rescue the other three.

## BJD wins Patkura poll

Defeats BJP by 17,920 votes; Congress finishes a poor third

PRAFULLA DAS  
BHUBANESWAR

Odisha's ruling Biju Janata Dal on Wednesday won the Patkura Assembly constituency by defeating the BJP by a margin of over 17,000 votes. The Congress finished third in the election held on July 20.

BJD nominee Sabitri Agarwalla bagged 96,017 votes, while BJP's Bijoy Mohapatra secured 78,097 and lost yet another battle to enter the State Assembly. Jayanta Mohanty of the Congress secured only 2,104 votes and lost his deposit.

### Mohapatra's loss

Mr. Mohapatra, who won from Patkura four times – 1980, 1985, 1990 and 1995 – was a member of late Biju Patnaik's Council of Ministers in his last term as Chief Minister.

Although he was a founder-member of the BJD, Mr. Mohapatra failed to contest the 2000 Assembly polls when the party cancelled his ticket at the last minute. He



Supporters of Biju Janata Dal take out a victory procession in Bhubaneswar on Wednesday. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

lost all elections in the subsequent years.

Polling in Patkura, which was initially scheduled for April 29 as part of the simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in the State, was first adjourned due to the death of the BJD nominee and former Minister Bed Prakash Agarwalla, the husband of Ms. Agarwalla.

The Election Commission had fixed May 19 as the next date of polling, but it was postponed again due to Cyclone Fani that hit the State's coast on May 3.

The seat witnessed high-voltage campaigning, with

senior leaders from the three major parties holding meetings to woo voters. BJD president and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik campaigned for Ms. Agarwalla for a day, apart from engaging a majority of his Ministers and party MLAs to ensure the defeat of Mr. Mohapatra, often referred to as his *bête noire*.

Ms. Agarwalla thanked the people of Patkura for electing her. BJD leaders and workers celebrated the victory by taking out a procession from the BJD headquarters in Bhubaneswar to Naveen Niwas, the residence of their party president.

## Smuggling of cattle along Bangladesh border drops

SHIV SAHAY SINGH  
KOLKATA

Cattle smuggling along the 4,096-km India-Bangladesh border has dropped almost by half since 2016. Detailed figures reveal that in 2016 about 1,28,440 cattle heads were seized, while the figure dropped to 83,378 in 2017 and 51,592 cattle heads in 2018.

The number of cattle seized along the border is an indication of the volume of illegal cattle trade running into thousands of crores of rupees. Till June 30 this year, about 23,208 cattle heads were seized along the border by the BSF. The details of the seizures were tabled in Parliament in response to a question by BJP MP from West Bengal Arjun Singh. The South Bengal Frontier of the BSF, which guards 915 km of the border from Sunderbans to Malda, continues to account for 60% to 70% cattle heads seized.

## 'Navlakha was in touch with Hizbul, Kashmiri separatists'

Police tell court about 'bilateral talks'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

Activist Gautam Navlakha and the Naxal groups he was allegedly associated with were in touch with Hizbul Mujahideen and Kashmiri separatist leaders, the Pune Police claimed before the Bombay High Court on Wednesday.

A Division Bench of Justices Ranjit More and Bharti Dangre, meanwhile, extended the protection from arrest granted to Mr. Navlakha till further orders.

Mr. Navlakha, along with a few other activists, is facing a case for alleged links with Naxals. He has moved the court seeking that the FIR against him be quashed.

Aruna Pai, the counsel for the Pune Police, said documents recovered from the laptops of co-accused Rona Wilson and Surendra Gadling showed that Mr. Navlakha and the various Naxal groups he was associated with had conducted "bilateral talks" with Hizbul leaders.

"[Navlakha] has been liaising with banned terrorist organisations including Hizbul Mujahideen since 2011," she claimed.

Ms. Pai further alleged that between 2011 and 2014, Mr. Navlakha was in touch with Kashmiri separatist



Gautam Navlakha

leaders Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Shakil Bakshi.

Mr. Navlakha was booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and other offences. On July 5, the high court had granted him interim protection from arrest till July 23. On Wednesday, it extended the protection till further orders.

While Mr. Navlakha's lawyer Yug Chaudhary denied all the charges, Ms. Pai contended that protection from arrest was coming in the way of investigation.

According to the Pune Police, inflammatory speeches at the Elgar Parishad conclave held in Pune on December 31, 2017, led to violence near the Bhima Koregaon war memorial in Pune district the next day.

The arguments will continue on Thursday.

## Have no problems with Sena's ambitions for the CM post: BJP

Patil says everyone has right to aspire, BJP's leader will be picked by Shah, Fadnavis

SHARAD VYAS  
MUMBAI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has said it is not fazed by the Shiv Sena's chief ministerial aspirations in the run-up to the Assembly elections in the State.

Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrakant Patil said the alliance partner has the right to hold ambitions for the CM post as long as the BJP's own wishes are acknowledged by the junior partner.

When asked if the Sena was trying to project Yuva sena chief Aaditya Thackeray as the next CM during the party's Jan Aashirwad Yatra across the State, Mr. Patil said there was nothing wrong with the Sena holding an 'aspiration' for the coveted post. "Everybody has the right to demand and the right to have aspirations. Every organisation and individual should have ambition or their efforts turn listless. The Sena is right in aspiring for the CM's post, but it has not conveyed the feelings to us yet," Mr. Patil, the State Revenue Minister said at a press conference on Wednesday.

The BJP, meanwhile, has not finalised the chief ministerial candidate yet, he said.

The BJP's Maha Janadesh Yatra scheduled for next month is being seen as a move to counter the Sena's

tour of the State, which has fuelled speculation that Mr.



**Uneasy alliance?** There has been speculation that the Shiv Sena is projecting Aaditya Thackeray (right) for the chief minister's post. • FILE PHOTO

Thackeray is being prepared for the role of CM.

### 'Different tours'

Mr. Patil said, "Both yatras are different and not likely to cross paths, physically or ideologically. As far as the race for the post of chief minister is concerned, our leader will be decided by Home Minister Amit Shah and Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. However, both parties are aspiring to secure a win for the coalition."

The BJP's month-long yatra will be flagged off by Mr. Shah on August 1, while it

would be concluded during an event likely to be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "We have sent invitations to both leaders and are confident of their participation," Mr. Patil said.

The Opposition, meanwhile, has alleged that the road show, in which Mr. Fadnavis and the State Cabinet will cover 152 of the 288 Assembly constituencies, will hamper governance. Mr. Fadnavis is likely to address 150 rallies.

Mr. Patil said ministers have been asked to clear seven to eight files when on the

road. "The CM will attend the last Cabinet meeting in September. He is more than capable of running this government on the move. There is no basis to this criticism," he said.

The road show will cover 1,232 km in Vidarbha, 633 km in north Maharashtra, 1,069 km in Marathwada, another 812 km in western Maharashtra, and 638 km in Konkan. "We will convey the message of our work to the people. The idea is to ask the voter to consider the government's performance in the past five years," Mr. Patil said.

## Congress to hold division-wise meets to fix candidates

Ready to talk to VBA, says Thorat

ALOK DESHPANDE  
MUMBAI

The Congress will hold division-wise meetings from Thursday to decide the possible candidates for the Assembly elections and finalise the seats to be contested by the party. It will also hold a meeting in Navi Mumbai to take stock of the Konkan division.

"I will visit each and every division of Maharashtra to understand the party's strength on the ground," State Congress president Balasaheb Thorat said.

The party has received over 900 applications seeking candidature for the polls, which Mr. Thorat said is a positive sign. "Not every election is the same. We lost the Lok Sabha election, but we are confident of making a comeback exactly as we did in 1980. The people still trust us and the growing number of applications seeking a party ticket is an indication of that," he said.

The Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) held deliberations on seat sharing for two consecutive days. "We are confident about contesting the polls together. We also want all secular and progressive forces in the State to join us," Mr. Thorat said.

When asked if the Van-



Balasaheb Thorat

chit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) leader Prakash Ambedkar would be a part of the seat-sharing discussions, Mr. Thorat said the Congress is always ready for talks.

"We have informed the VBA that we want to hold talks and I am confident we will soon be doing so," the State Congress chief said.

Last month, the VBA had ridiculed the Congress, and had made an offer of 40 of the 288 Assembly seats in the State to the Congress. The Congress had termed the offer non-serious.

Meanwhile, the Congress and NCP leaders said the alliance talks will continue for some time to sort out certain issues and chalk out a strategy to accommodate all the allies.

## CM stabbed allies in the back: Sardesai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PANAJI

Goa Forward Party (GFP) president Vijai Sardesai has accused Chief Minister Pramod Sawant of "backstabbing" the allies, and questioned the rationale behind the "wholesale defection" of Congress MLAs when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led State government was stable.

He also said there was a contrast in the working styles of late chief minister Manohar Parrikar and Mr. Sawant. Mr. Sardesai on Tuesday said the 10 Congress MLAs committed "political suicide" only to get three GFP legislators removed from the cabinet.

After the Congress MLAs joined the BJP, Mr. Sawant dropped three members of then ally GFP, including Mr. Sardesai who was the deputy chief minister, and an independent legislator.

## Double whammy



**Devastated:** Saandu Toge, a 90-year-old farmer from Vahigaon village in Phulambri taluka, Aurangabad district, destroys his second crop following poor rainfall — known as the extreme step of 'Vakhar' in the community — as other frustrated farmers watch on helplessly on Wednesday. • YOGESH LONDHE

## Minor girl raped, killed in Pune

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PUNE

A two-and-a-half-year-old girl was allegedly raped and killed in Pune, a police official said on Wednesday.

The girl, the daughter of a labourer, was abducted from a shanty at a construction site in Pimple Saudagar area on the city's outskirts while her family members were asleep, he said.

When the girl's family members were unable to trace her, they lodged a missing complaint with Sangavi police.

"Her body was found in the same area on Tuesday. The autopsy report revealed she was sexually assaulted before being killed," the official said.

Some people from the area have been detained and are being questioned, police said.

## Soon, travel in Goa on water taxis

Govt. to replace old ferry boats, upgrade ramps, jetties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PANAJI

In a first, the Goa government is planning to ply 'water taxis' in its inland waterways, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant told the Assembly on Wednesday.

While tabling the performance budget of the River Navigation department (RND) for the financial year 2019-2020, Mr. Sawant also said ferry boats operating on solar power would be introduced on different routes. "Water taxis will be introduced for Panaji to Old Goa route with the help of experts," said the document.

Though details of the proposed service were not mentioned, the department said it was considering replacing three old ferry boats with new ones and procuring new and fast solar energy-operated hybrid ferry boats between Chorao and Panaji or Aldona and Panaji, both in North Goa.



• SURAJIT

The department also plans to upgrade existing ferry ramps and jetties and provide better facilities on all the ferry routes. The RND has a fleet of 34 ferry boats which cater to different inland routes, connecting islands to the mainstream areas.

The House was informed that a consultant has completed a techno-feasibility study of these facilities and actual construction (of jetties) will start later this year.

The performance budget document states that during

the previous financial year, more stress was laid on improving the existing ferry services.

The Central government's Sagarmala project has also funded reconstruction of nine jetties in Goa, the document said.

A flagship programme of the Ministry of Shipping, the Sagarmala project aims to promote port-led development by exploiting India's 7,500 km long coastline, 14,500 km of potentially navigable waterways and its strategic location on international maritime trade routes.

## Foreign tourist footfall up in coastal State

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PANAJI

The number of foreign tourists visiting Goa has gone up in last three years, State Tourism Minister Manohar Ajgaonkar said in the Assembly on Wednesday.

However, the number of those arriving in the coastal State by chartered flights has marginally gone down, he said in a written statement in the House. "Total 9.33 lakh tourists arrived in Goa last year as compared to 8.9 lakh in 2017 and 6.8 lakh in 2016," he said. Except for those coming from Russia, there has not been a decrease in chartered flights coming to Goa. But the number of tourists arriving by these flights has reduced marginally," the minister said.

For the tourist season 2017-18, a total of 2.47 lakh foreign tourists arrived by chartered flights, but the number decreased to 2.18 lakh in 2018-19, he informed the House.

Mr. Ajgaonkar said the tourism department was making all efforts to attract foreign visitors to Goa.





IN BRIEF



**Industrialist Pramod Mittal held in Bosnia**

**SARAJEVO**  
Pramod Mittal, the younger brother of steel magnate Lakshmi Mittal, was arrested on Wednesday in Bosnia for suspected fraud and "abuse of power", in a case related to the running of a coking plant, a prosecutor said. AFP

**T.N. Congress to protest amendments to RTI Act**

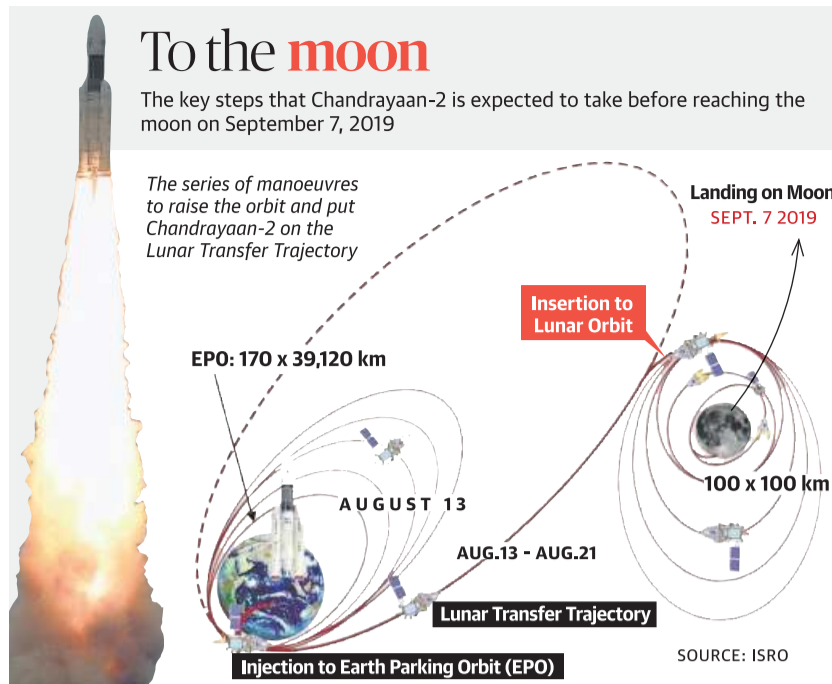
**CHENNAI**  
The Tamil Nadu Congress Committee's RTI Department is planning to soon hold a protest in Chennai against the amendments made to the Right to Information Act by the Centre. TNC president K.S. Alagiri said the amendments regarding the tenure and appointment of Information Commissioners were a means of controlling the actions of the officials.

**CVC pulls up officials for delayed references**

**NEW DELHI**  
The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has pulled up Chief Vigilance Officers (CVOs) and administrative authorities of all government bodies for undue delay in sending references to officials accused in various cases, who are to retire soon, after concluding disciplinary proceedings against them.

**'Cut off water on farms if used for other purpose'**

**CHANDIGARH**  
Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Wednesday ordered that tubewells, located on agricultural plots acquired and used for farm houses or development of colonies, be disconnected. An official statement said that the Chief Minister has directed the Secretary, Water Resources to identify and make a list of such connections.



**WAY FORWARD**

- Till August 13, Chandrayaan-2 will spend the next three weeks making 5 increasingly larger elliptical orbits of the moon
- Between September 1-3, the spacecraft will be in a circular orbit and Vikram, the lander, will separate from the orbiter
- On September 7, the Vikram lander will have a soft landing so that it doesn't kick up a lot of lunar dust which could damage the instruments. This process is called the "15-minute window of terror", a first for the Indian Space Research Organisation

It risks becoming a 'flyby', just enough to rotate in the moon's orbit

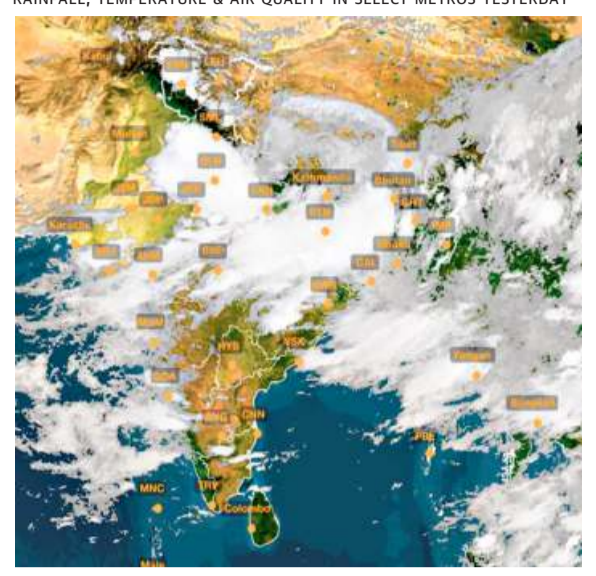
From August 13 to August 21, it will be entering into the lunar orbit. The final orbit of Chandrayaan-2 will be like a massive slingshot that will — assisted by onboard engines — haul the spacecraft into the moon's sphere of influence. However, the craft will have acquired so much momentum that it will need to be slowed down, else

SOURCE: ISRO  
COMPILED BY JACOB KOSHY

**Real test for moon mission on Sept. 7**

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU**  
Between now and August 14, lunar spacecraft Chandrayaan-2 will go around the earth in an ellipse. It would have four more manoeuvres to raise the orbit at the far end of the oval. On August 14, it will get moon-bound in the early hours with a manoeuvre called the 'trans-lunar insertion', ISRO said. The real test of Chandrayaan-2, the soft-landing on lunar surface, is slated for the early morning of September 7, Day 48.

**WEATHER WATCH**  
RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



**Forecast for Thursday:** Heavy to very heavy rainfall very likely over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh & Delhi, West Uttar Pradesh, Konkan & Goa, West Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, East Rajasthan and Gangetic West Bengal.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	.....	35.2	26.6	Kozhikode	17.4	27.0	23.4
Ahmedabad	.....	40.5	28.5	Kurnool	6.6	34.0	24.6
Aizawl	.....	33.0	—	Lucknow	47.6	31.7	23.8
Allahabad	4.6	38.0	27.5	Madurai	.....	39.3	27.2
Bengaluru	0.2	25.8	20.0	Mangaluru	60.4	26.8	22.4
Bhopal	.....	36.1	27.8	Mumbai	84.2	27.5	25.1
Bhubaneswar	.....	36.0	26.5	Mysuru	8.4	27.0	19.1
Chandigarh	.....	36.6	29.0	New Delhi	.....	37.8	29.2
Chennai	39.1	35.2	25.0	Patna	.....	15.2	31.4
Coimbatore	.....	33.8	22.0	Port Blair	.....	1.2	30.7
Dehradun	1.6	33.7	26.7	Puducherry	.....	0.1	35.6
Gangtok	.....	28.8	19.7	Pune	.....	29.4	23.4
Goa	.....	120	29.3	Rajpur	69	33.6	26.4
Guwahati	.....	6.4	32.9	Ranchi	.....	31.4	25.2
Hubballi	.....	26.0	21.0	Shillong	.....	9.5	24.7
Hyderabad	.....	32.5	24.4	Shimla	.....	25.0	17.6
Imphal	.....	2.7	30.1	Srinagar	.....	33.6	21.2
Jaipur	.....	39.8	21.7	Thiruvananthapuram	10.4	31.8	23.2
Kochi	.....	25.4	30.0	Tiruchi	.....	37.3	27.0
Kohima	.....	5.2	25.0	Vijayawada	.....	85.4	36.1
Kolkata	.....	36.2	28.3	Visakhapatnam	.....	35.4	28.0

**Animals 'reclaim' abandoned quarries**

Denizens of Kaziranga are returning to habitats in Karbi-Anglong hills after the closure of stone mines

**RAHUL KARMAKAR GUWAHATI**  
Animals fleeing the floods in the Kaziranga National Park (KNP) are 'reclaiming' migratory paths in the Karbi Anglong hills south of the park that had been blocked for years by illegal stone quarries.

underwater during the monsoons. However, animals fleeing the floods were confined to a small patch at the foothills after the stone-crushing machines came up at the quarry about four years ago.



**In search of safety:** A rhinoceros inside the Kaziranga National Park in Assam. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

The Assam Forest Department banned stone mining in the hills of the Karbi Anglong district south of KNP on April 30 after the Supreme Court on April 12 ordered the closure of quarries. The ban followed a petition by environmental activist Rohit Choudhury against the quarries that caused noise pollution and contaminated streams flowing into the park.

"The hills are part of the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape. The noisy quarries had hindered the movement of animals to higher altitudes, offering 750 sq. km. of refuge and fodder. Animals moving toward the areas during this flood after a long gap underlines the efficacy of the SC-mandated ban," KNP Director P. Sivakumar said.

**Natural refuge**  
The hills of Karbi Anglong south of the highway that marks the southern boundary of the park, have been the natural refuge of animals whenever much of KNP goes

This year, the floods have claimed 205 animals, including 18 of the endangered one-horned rhinos so far. Most have drowned while 16 hog deer and one sambhar were run over by vehicles while trying to cross the highway for the relative safety of the hills.

"We found elephants, deer and other animals in and around the Dhing quarry, less than two kilometres from our range office. Our staff spent three nights looking for a rhino that went up the hill near the deserted quarry before returning after the animal made its way back to the national park," said Pankaj Bora who heads the Bagori Range of KNP.

Officials of the park's Burapahar Range spotted tiger pug marks close to a quarry near the Silimkhowa village. The quarry is along the Maloni animal corridor. KNP officials said the water level in the park had fallen by 162 cm in the last 24 hours. But heavy rain forecast of eastern Assam and Arunachal Pradesh could result in more floods.

**Fresh wave of floods kills 6 in Assam**

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI**  
A fresh wave of floods during the past 48 hours, particularly affecting western Assam, killed six people on Wednesday taking the toll due to drowning and rain-induced landslides to 75. At least 800 domestic animals and fowls were washed away while 205 either drowned or were hit by vehicles while fleeing the Kaziranga National Park in eastern Assam. An elephant was also reported killed in western Assam's Manas National Park. The toll due to Japanese Encephalitis increased to 118 with a person each dying in Goalpara, Jorhat, Lakhimpur and Sivasagar districts on Wednesday.

**Centre notifies pension scheme for small traders**

**DAMINI NATH NEW DELHI**  
The Centre's pension scheme for small traders has been notified and is being introduced on a trial basis this week, with the formal launch of the scheme likely to be done by Prime Minister Narendra Modi soon, according to Union Labour and Employment Ministry officials. On Wednesday, the Ministry posted the Gazette Notification dated July 22 for the Pradhan Mantri Laghu Vyapari Maan-dhan Yojana 2019 on its website. The scheme, which was among the campaign promises of the BJP, was one of the proposals cleared by the Cabinet at its first meeting. While the scheme would be applicable from Monday, the online portal for applicants would be rolled out



"in a day or two," an official said. Applicants could, however, apply through the 3.5 lakh common service centres, which were set up for the government's other pension schemes including the one for unorganised workers. Under the scheme, those who are self-employed and working as shop-owners, traders, rice mill owners, oil mill owners, commission agents, real estate brokers, small hotel owners and other small traders will be eligible for pension.

**ICMR's new move to aid data collection**

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**  
The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)'s National Institute for Medical Statistics (ICMR-NIMS), in partnership with Population Council, launched the National Data Quality Forum (NDQF) here on Wednesday. NDQF will integrate learnings from scientific and evidence-based initiatives and guide actions through periodic conferences. Its activities will help establish protocols and good practices of data collection, storage, use and dissemination that can be applied to health and demographic data, a note from ICMR said. The launch was attended by representative from academic institutions, technology partners and others.

**Sand mining: SC seeks reply from Centre and five States**

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**  
The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought a response from the Centre and five States to a plea for a CBI probe into rampant illegal beach and river sand mining, which was causing severe ecological imbalance, disturbance in water tables and land degradation. A Bench led by Justice S.A. Bobde issued notice to the Centre, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh on the alarming extent of illegal sand mining activities with scant regard to the Sustainable Sand Mining Management Guidelines of 2016. "Unscientific mining has caused degradation of land, topographical disorder and damage to land use patterns in and around mining regions," said the petition filed by M. Alagarsamy through advocate Pranav Sachdeva. The plea said armed miners "run the racket" and caused a loss of thousands of crores of rupees to the public exchequer. The 2010 Guidelines had not been implemented in consultation with the States to maintain sustainable mining practices and to check illegal activities which harmed the ecology, it noted. Mr. Alagarsamy referred to media reports saying investigation in Tamil Nadu revealed illegal mining of one crore metric tonnes of beach sand from Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Kanniyakumari districts.



A sand mining site in Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu.

**Prince of Arcot to lead haj delegation this year**

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI**  
The Prince of Arcot, Nawab Mohammed Abdul Ali, will lead the haj delegation this year. The nomination was communicated through a letter from Union Minister for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Wednesday. The Prince of Arcot, along with Syed Ghayorul Hasan Rizvi, Chairman, National Minorities Commission, as Deputy Leader, will lead the delegation to perform haj and Ziarah (visit to Holy Prophet's Mosque, Madina). Sahiba Sayeeda Abdul Ali, Mr. Ali's wife will go along. The delegation will leave for Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on August 5 for 21 days. It will return after the pilgrimage on August 26.



Nawab Mohammed Abdul Ali

**Dhoni finds mention in Amrapali ruling**

He was once brand ambassador of the group, which has cheated home buyers

**KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL NEW DELHI**  
The July 23 270-page judgment of the Supreme Court against the Amrapali group of companies for defrauding homebuyers contains a few paragraphs under a sub-heading, 'M.S. Dhoni'.



M.S. Dhoni

enter into an agreement on behalf of the group. The agreements include one dated November 2009 in which Dhoni would "make himself available to the Chairmen for three days along with one representative of Rhiti Sports." There is, however, no documents held on record for compliance of this condition. Another sponsorship agreement of March 2015 is about the group's "right to advertise as logo space at various places in the IPL 2015 for Chennai Super Kings."

resolution in favour of Shri Arun Pandey, signatory of Rhiti Sports Management Private Limited, is attached with the agreement." It concluded that the details clearly show that, "These agreements are sham ones. We feel that homebuyers' money was diverted illegally and wrongly to Rhiti Sports Management Private Limited and should be recovered from them as the said agreements in our opinion do not stand the test of law."

The former Indian cricket captain was once the brand ambassador of the Amrapali group. His name finds a mention in the forensic auditors' report submitted in the court on the doings and "bogus expenses" incurred by the group. Its summary is now a major part of the scathing verdict pronounced by a Bench led by Justice Arun Mishra.

crore paid from the Amrapali group to Rhiti Sports Management Private Limited from 2009-2015. This amount was paid on account of agreements executed by Anil Kumar Sharma, CMD, for and on behalf of Amrapali group with Rhiti Sports Management Private Limited. However, the auditors found no resolution on record authorising him to

The report, which is a part of the judgment, said, "It is observed that this agreement is on plain paper and executed only between Amrapali and Rhiti Sports Management Private Limited and there are no signatories on behalf of Chennai Super Kings to this agreement. No

The report concluded there was prima facie violation of the FEMA (Foreign Exchange Management Act), fraudulent activities and money laundering involving the Amrapali group. The court had directed the Enforcement Directorate to conduct a probe and fix liability on persons responsible



## Wait, gain

The BJP stands to gain by not rushing in to fill the space vacated by a fractious coalition

The fall of the Congress-JD(S) coalition government in Karnataka, at the culmination of weeks of political skulduggery, hardly marks the end of uncertainty and the beginning of stability for the State. The crisis in the ruling coalition had crippled governance, even as allegations of bribing and kidnapping of legislators by the Opposition BJP emerged. The coalition tried every trick to hold its flock together, but to no avail. However delayed, the inevitable happened on Tuesday as the government led by H. D. Kumaraswamy lost a trust vote in the Assembly. In a House shrunken by the resignation of several coalition MLAs, the BJP, which had won 105 seats in the 2018 election, had a majority. Its protestations notwithstanding, the BJP has been instrumental in engineering the rebellion. Regardless of the claims of both sides, it would be difficult to concede that their slugfest had to do with any principles. The legislators who resigned from the Assembly have demonstrated a remarkable disregard for the people's mandate, and their excuses for doing so are shallow and dishonest. This drama must end, at least now.

Though it had not won a majority, the BJP, as the single largest party was invited to form a government after the 2018 election. The Supreme Court intervened to enforce an early trust vote that the BJP failed to win, paving the way for the government that has now collapsed. The BJP never ceased its machinations to drive a wedge in the coalition, and now wants to form a government. Seventeen coalition MLAs abstained from the voting, and most of them had resigned already. The status of their resignations and questions regarding their disqualification are now subjects of scrutiny by the Speaker and the Supreme Court. Many of the questions are without precedent and complicated, but they need to be settled urgently. Until then, it would be undesirable to form a new government. It would be facetious for the BJP to claim a majority in the House with its strength reduced by schemed absenteeism of members or vacant seats. Nothing in the statute prevents the BJP from staking claim, but it should not pursue that path. Instead, it should wait until fresh elections are held for all vacant seats. It is possible that the BJP could repeat its performance in the Lok Sabha election and win most of these seats. It needs at least eight more MLAs to cross the half-way mark in the House that has a strength of 224 elected members. No government with the support of fewer than half the total strength could be deemed to have a mandate. Waiting might be in the BJP's best interests. The party has an opportunity to demonstrate that it wants to form an alternative government not because of any desperation to wield power, but because it wants to ensure political stability and restore good governance.

## Undermining RTI

Amendments should not downgrade the status of information panels

Any amendment to a law is bound to be viewed with suspicion if no fundamental need is seen for the changes it proposes. Amendments passed by the Lok Sabha to the Right to Information Act are so obviously unnecessary that naturally many see an ulterior motive. It is difficult not to concur with activists who contend that the amendments pose a threat to the freedom and autonomy of Information Commissions at the Central and State levels. The Central Information Commissioner, the corresponding authorities in the States (State Information Commissioners) and other Information Commissioners at both levels are statutory functionaries vested with the power to review the decisions of public information officers in government departments, institutions and bodies. The amendments propose to modify the status, tenure and conditions of appointment of these Commissioners and empower the Union government to set their tenure and remuneration. While the original law assured incumbents of a fixed five-year term, with 65 as the retirement age, the amendments say the Centre would decide their tenure. In one stroke, the security of tenure of an adjudicating authority, whose mandate is to intervene in favour of information-seekers against powerful regimes and bureaucrats, has been undermined. The original legislation says the salary and terms and conditions of service of the CIC are the same as those of the Chief Election Commissioner, equal in status to a Supreme Court judge. Similarly, the other Information Commissioners at the Central level have the same conditions of service as Election Commissioners. At the State level, the SIC has the same terms and conditions of service as Election Commissioners, while other Information Commissioners are equated with the Chief Secretary of a State.

The government claims its aim is to 'rationalise' the status of the authorities. It argues that while the Chief Election Commissioner is a constitutional functionary, the CIC is only a statutory authority. And while the CEC is equal in status to a Supreme Court judge, it would be incongruous for the CIC to enjoy the same status as the CIC's orders are subject to judicial review by the high courts. This is a fallacious argument as even the Election Commission's decisions can be reviewed by high courts. Protecting citizens' right to information is a cause important enough for adjudicating authorities to be vested with high status and security of tenure. Given the extent to which the RTI Act has empowered citizens and helped break the hold of vested interests over the administration, the law has always faced a threat from many in power. The RTI Act was a consensus law and a product of public consultation. The present amendments have not been put to any debate. The government would do well to drop the Bill or at least send it to a parliamentary select committee for deeper scrutiny.

# Having the last word on 'population control'

There should be a clear understanding that offering choices and services rather than outright state control works best



JAGDISH RATTANANI

On July 11, World Population Day, a Union Minister expressed alarm, in a Tweet, over what he called the "population explosion" in the country, wanting all political parties to enact population control laws and annulling the voting rights of those having more than two children. Just a month earlier, a prominent businessman-yoga guru wanted the government to enact a law where "the third child should not be allowed to vote and enjoy facilities provided by the government". This, according to him, would ensure that people would not give birth to more children.

Both these demands are wayward and represent a warped thinking which has been rebutted rather well in the Economic Survey 2018-19. The Survey notes that India is set to witness a "sharp slowdown in population growth in the next two decades". The fact is that by the 2030s, some States will start transitioning to an ageing society as part of a well-studied process of "demographic transition" which sees nations slowly move toward a stable population as fertility rates fall with an improvement in social and economic development indices over time.

### Dangerous imagery

The demand for state controls on the number of children a couple can have is not a new one. It feeds on the perception that a large and growing population is at the root of a nation's problems as more and

more people chase fewer and fewer resources. This image is so ingrained in the minds of people that it does not take much to whip up public sentiment which in turn can quickly degenerate into a deep class or religious conflict that pits the poor, the weak, the downtrodden and the minorities against the more privileged sections. From this point to naming, targeting and attacking is a dangerous and short slide. The implications of such an approach are deep and wide but not easily understood because the argument is couched in sterile numbers and a rule that, it would seem, applies to all sections equally. On the contrary, what is suggested is the ugliest kind of discrimination, worse than physical attacks or social prejudice because it breaks the poor and the weak bit by bit, and in a very insidious way.

### Policy of choice

The fig leaf of population control allows for the outrageous argument to be made that a family will be virtually ostracised and a citizen will be denied his or her basic rights if he or she is born as the third child. This has of course never been public policy in India.

In fact, a far-sighted and forward-looking National Population Policy (NPP) was introduced in 2000 when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the Prime Minister. The essence of the policy was the government's commitment to "voluntary and informed choice and consent of citizens while availing of reproductive health care services" along with a "target free approach in administering family planning services". This is a position reiterated by various governments, including the present government on the floor of both Houses of Parliament. For example, in March 2017, the then Minister of State



GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

(Health and Family Welfare), Anupriya Patel, in a written reply in the Lok Sabha noted that the "family Planning programme in India is target free and voluntary in nature and it is the prerogative of the clients to choose a family planning method best suited to them as per their reproductive right".

The then Health Minister, J.P. Nadda, has said pretty much the same thing. About a year ago, he articulated the "lifecycle framework" which looks to the health and nutrition needs of mother and child not merely during pregnancy and child birth but "right from the time of conception till the child grows... carrying on till the adolescent stage and further". This argument is not about denying services but about offering choices and a range of services to mother and child on the clear understanding that the demographic dividend can work to support growth and drive opportunity for ordinary people only when the population is healthy.

### Crucial connections

Thus, family health, child survival and the number of children a woman has are closely tied to the levels of health and education of the parents, and in particular the woman; so the poorer the couple, the more the children they tend to

have. This is a relation that has little to do with religion and everything to do with opportunities, choices and services that are available to the people. The poor tend to have more children because child survival is low, son preference remains high, children tend to be a helping hand in economic activity for poorer households and so support the economic as well as emotional needs of the family. This is well known, well understood and well established.

As the National Family Health Survey-4 (2015-16) notes, women in the lowest wealth quintile have an average of 1.6 more children than women in the highest wealth quintile, translating to a total fertility rate of 3.2 children versus 1.5 children moving from the wealthiest to the poorest. Similarly, the number of children per woman declines with a woman's level of schooling. Women with no schooling have an average 3.1 children, compared with 1.7 children for women with 12 or more years of schooling. This reveals the depth of the connections between health, education and inequality, with those having little access to health and education being caught in a cycle of poverty, leading to more and more children, and the burden that state control on number of children could impose on the weakest. As the latest Economic Survey points out, States with high population growth are also the ones with the lowest per capita availability of hospital beds.

In fact, demographers are careful not to use the word "population control" or "excess population". The NPP 2000 uses the word "control" just thrice: in references to the National AIDS Control Organisation; to prevent and control communicable diseases, and control of childhood diar-

rhoea. This is the spirit in which India has looked at population so that it truly becomes a thriving resource; the life blood of a growing economy. Turning this into a problem that needs to be controlled is exactly the kind of phraseology, mindset and possibly action that will spell doom for the nation. It will undo all the good work that has been done and set the stage for a weaker and poorer health delivery system - exactly the opposite of what a scheme such as Ayushman Bharat seeks to achieve. Today, as many as 23 States and Union Territories, including all the States in the south region, already have fertility below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman. So, support rather than control works.

### Scars of the past

The damage done when mishandling issues of population growth is long lasting. Let us not forget that the scars of the Emergency are still with us. Men used to be part of the family planning initiatives then but after the excesses of forced sterilisations, they continue to remain completely out of family planning programmes even today. The government now mostly works with woman and child health programmes. Mistakes of the Emergency-kind are not what a new government with a robust electoral mandate might like to repeat. So it is time to ask some of the prejudiced voices within the government and ruling party not to venture into terrain they may not fully understand.

Jagdish Rattanani, is a faculty member at SPIJMR and co-author of the advocacy book, 'Population: Questions That Should Be More Frequently Asked' (Through The Billion Press)

## Shifting strategic concerns

What India needs to do as the U.S. and China get busier in the subcontinent



ZORAWAR DAULET SINGH

The U.S. President Donald Trump's latest gaffe has introduced another thorn in what is now clearly an unsettled India-U.S. relationship. His claim, on Monday, that India sought U.S. mediation in Kashmir will pinch the Narendra Modi government more because it strikes at a vital interest: India's territorial integrity. But if we had been more attuned to international shifts, we would have noticed that structural trends in South Asia have been changing over the past several years. While India's hand is not as strong as we sometimes believe it to be, there might be opportunities to leverage the international situation further down the road.

### Perceived advantage

If we step back and evaluate the India-Pakistan equation over the past five years, what stands out is that both sides proceeded from a perception that each holds an advantageous position. India's confidence emanated from Mr. Modi's electoral victory in 2014 that yielded a strong Central government and expectations of stable ties with all the major powers. Mostly overlooked in India, Pakistani leaders too have displayed confi-

dence that the international environment was moving in a direction that opened options for Pakistan that were unavailable in the previous decade. This included the renewed patterns of Pakistan's ties with the U.S. and China, with the latter reassuring Pakistan and, most importantly, the Army on their respective strategic commitments and bilateral partnerships. In the U.S.'s case, this appears to have been undertaken discreetly to avoid ruffling India's feathers, with the result that the enduring aspects of U.S.-Pakistan ties remained obscure, but still very real. In the past few days, the resilience of that relationship has come out into the open. Let us not ever forget that this is a military alliance forged in the 1950s. Historically, U.S. policymakers have always sought to restore the alliance with Pakistan whenever Islamabad's ties with China became stronger. India has borne the brunt of this recurring geopolitical dynamic.

Much of Pakistan's contemporary leverage can of course also be traced to the ongoing phase of the Afghan conflict. It fended off the most dangerous phase when U.S. policy might have shifted in an adversarial direction, or instability in the tribal frontier areas might have completely exploded. Thus, the Pakistan Army perceives itself in a position of strength where Washington, Beijing, and even Moscow have recognised Pakistan's role in a future settlement on the conflict in Afghanistan. So, both India and



LUYI/PIRE/PHOTO ARCHIVES

Pakistan perceive themselves to be in a comfortable strategic position. At any rate, the evolving roles and interests of third parties are becoming significant again, and how Delhi leverages the international environment will determine the success of its overall policy.

### Pakistan's benefactors

Both the U.S. and China have overlapping interests in regional stability and avoidance of a major subcontinental conflict. While each maintains deep ties with Pakistan for different reasons, it is unclear to what extent their longer term interests coincide with India, which seeks a structural transformation in Pakistan's domestic politics and external behaviour. The U.S. and China appear content with, or probably prefer, a Pakistan with a strong Rawalpindi, along with competent civilian governance structures and an elite with a wider world view. A Pakistan that looks beyond South Asia could be a useful potential partner in burden sharing, ironically for both the U.S. and China. For Washington, the Pakistan Army is an in-

surance card for persisting security challenges such as regime survival for U.S. client states in West Asia as well as for the containment of Iran. For China, a stable Pakistan can be a partner in the Belt and Road initiative and future continental industrial and energy corridors. As the writer Andrew Small underlines, Beijing's large economic investments "come with some clear expectations about the choices that Pakistan's political and military leadership make about their country's future".

In sum, both the U.S. and China seek a strong, stable and secure Pakistan that controls its destabilising behaviour because that undermines their wider regional interests. For the U.S., a revisionist Pakistan pulls India inward and away from potential India-U.S. cooperation on Asian geopolitics. For China, it undermines its industrial and connectivity projects in Pakistan, while negatively impacting India-China ties. Hence, evolving interests of the great powers in South Asia might not necessarily portend an adverse geopolitical setting for India in the medium term. This is even more plausible if the widening comprehensive national power gap between a rising India and an unstable Pakistan make the latter's traditional role as a balancer or spoiler unattractive in the eyes of the great powers. As Pakistani scholar Hussain Haqqani predicts, "You can try to leverage your strategic location as much as you like, but there will come a

time... when strategic concerns change."

So, while it is reasonable to forecast that both the U.S. and China benefit from a more normalised Pakistan, India's policymakers should also remain clear-eyed that neither country would be willing to expend much strategic capital in an ambitious policy to reorder the domestic scene or civil-military relations in Pakistan. In any case, Indian statecraft is essential to reorient perceptions of the great powers. Maintaining that India has the right and the capacity to adopt an active defence posture - that is, blocking the flow of cross-border terror by proactive operations on the Line of Control (LoC) along with reserving the option for more ambitious punitive strikes in response to major terrorist attacks on Indian military targets - would play an important part in shaping how third parties view Indian interests and thereby assume constructive roles in managing Pakistani behaviour.

If India ever asks third parties to assist in the region, it should be for a cessation of Pakistan's proxy war in Kashmir, and, once an atmosphere of peace has been established, to persuade Pakistan to accept the LoC as part of a final territorial settlement similar to the offer by Indira Gandhi in the 1972 Shimla negotiations.

Zorawar Daulet Singh is a fellow at the Centre for Policy Research and author of 'Power and Diplomacy: India's Foreign Policies During the Cold War'

## 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.

### Karnataka politics

The Congress-JD(S) coalition government in Karnataka fell under the weight of its contradictions (page 1, "Kumaraswamy govt. loses trust vote", July 24). Nobody expected it to complete a full term of five years because a lack of trust and mutual understanding between the Congress and the JD(S) was palpably evident in its functioning. The BJP-engineered defections were only a catalyst. It appears naive to look for sinners and saints in an 'all is fair' no-holds-barred game of chasing political power. The Congress party needs to be reminded that it sowed the seeds of a political culture of political desertions by fence-sitters and other opportunists who sold their loyalty to the highest

bidder in the 1970s. It is pointless to catastrophise the political churn in Karnataka as the demise of democracy. We should be more worried about the real threats such as the criminalisation and plutocratisation of politics.

V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN,  
Thiruvananthapuram

■ Elections will make no sense if a person who is elected on a party ticket resigns, joins another party and in the process topples the very party on whose ticket he was elected. This is a clear example of money power having its say. Instead, the seat should be declared vacant and fresh elections held within a month. Otherwise the menace of floor-crossing will remain. Also, the law relating to anti-defection has not served

its purpose. In fact, it legitimises group defections. One would have thought that the BJP, with its massive electoral majority, will focus on governance. On the contrary, the ugly feature one is witnessing is other political parties that are in power in States not being allowed to govern. We are heading towards a totalitarian State. It is for the people to decide.

N.G.R. PRASAD,

K.K. RAM SIDDHARTHA,  
Chennai

■ The felling of the coalition government in Karnataka through orchestrated resignations is nothing short of a murder of democracy. One wonders how much money might have been spent on these kinds of defections and from where such money comes from

even after demonetisation. It is time the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution is amended to make all kinds of defections illegal, including 'two-thirds mergers'. Elected members should understand that the people's mandate is not saleable property. After Karnataka, we could be in for more drama - in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

K. MUHAMMAD ISMAILY,  
Koduvally, Kerala

### India-Pakistan ties

It is fine to be trying out a religion-based solution ("Editorial page, "A bridge across the India-Pakistan abyss", July 24). But nothing can move forward unless there is trust. Trust is the basic foundation which is completely absent in India-Pakistan ties.

VAISHALI MISHRA,  
Mumbai

### Six runs to England

Expert opinion that the second run, in the ICC World Cup final, should have been disallowed because the fielder, Martin Guppitt, had released (thrown) the ball even before the batsman had crossed each other in the process of taking that second run gains credence because of the deflection of the ball from the bat which resulted in a boundary for England ('Sport' page, "An error of judgment", July 22). The second run, even according to the rules of the game, would have been perfectly legal if the batsman was neither run out nor if there

was a bonus boundary because of the deflection. It was, admittedly, too much to expect the on-field umpire to check so many aspects in his decision-making process. But that did not prevent the third umpire from intervening after television replays and informing the on-field umpires about the 'mistake'. It is sad that technological aids were not used when it mattered most which makes it even more baffling to read that the umpire does not regret the error of judgment.

V. LAKSHMANAN,  
Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:  
www.hindu.com/opinion/letters/

### CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

The opening paragraph of the report headlined "Perfect launch for Chandrayaan-2" (July 23, 2019) had termed the launch as India's first-ever interplanetary mission to be spearheaded by two women. It should have been moon mission.

The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

# Making Chennai a water-wise city

There is a compelling need for a paradigm shift in the way the ongoing water crisis is being viewed



T. RAMAKRISHNAN

The public discourse on Chennai's ongoing water crisis has been along predictable lines. Source augmentation, deepening of waterbodies and giving rainwater harvesting a renewed emphasis are among the suggestions being made, apart from demand-side management. But these ideas, however well-meaning they may be, have their limitations. There is a compelling need for a paradigm shift in the way the water crisis is being viewed.

When it comes to source augmentation, in the last 40 years, a couple of major projects were taken up for Chennai to tap both fresh water and sea water.

The Krishna Water Supply Scheme or Telugu Ganga Project (1996) and the New Veeranam Project (2004) were implemented using two important inter-State rivers – the Krishna and the Cauvery, both of which depend on the southwest monsoon (June-September).

Though the Krishna Water Supply Scheme, if realised fully, can take care of at least half of the Chennai Metropolitan Area (CMA)'s projected water demand of 1,721 million litres a day (MLD) for 2020, Tamil Nadu has not received the assured quantum from Andhra Pradesh even once in the last 20+ years. As regards the Cauvery project, the 'upper-riparian attitude' of Karnataka determines the flow to Tamil Nadu. In effect, realisation of water by Chennai hinges on nature and inter-State ties, both of which are, more often than not, unpredictable.

## Tapping stone quarries

Another source since 2017 for the city has been the abandoned stone quarries located on the outskirts, from where water is drawn for public water supply after treatment.

Further, two desalination plants of 100 MLD each were commissioned in 2010 and 2013. Work has begun on another desalination plant of 150 MLD while steps are on to set up another 400 MLD unit. However, given the costs and environmental



An operator filling his water tanker at a Metrowater station in Chennai in June. Even if there are bountiful monsoon years, it is unlikely that the southern metro will become a water-surplus city. ■ GETTY IMAGES

concerns, it is unlikely that Chennai can afford to stretch this option beyond a point.

Deepening of tanks and lakes, a popular option, is easier said than done. Issues such as the costs involved in removing and transporting the silt and inadequate disposal arrangements have bothered the authorities to such an extent that nothing much has been done.

As regards rainwater harvesting (RWH), it cannot be a panacea and site-specific requirements will have to be kept in mind while putting up RWH structures. The model of storing rainwater and reusing it may demonstrate the efficacy of RWH.

Many of the options being suggested to overcome the distress situation faced by Chennai have been tried out in the past. Yet, just one bad monsoon has pushed the city to yet another water crisis. This scenario may get repeated in the future too.

Even if there are bountiful monsoon years, the prospects of Chennai becoming a water-surplus city are remote. An official document prepared a few years ago estimated that the CMA, which covers not only Chennai Corporation but also nearby municipalities, town panchayats and village panchayats, will have a shortfall of 1,089 MLD in 2020. Even assuming that the southern peninsula experiences good southwest and north-east monsoons this year, the gap can

sewage on a daily basis, the installed capacity of sewage treatment plants (STPs) is just 23,277 MLD. This means that only 37.5% of sewage generated can be treated. As per a conservative estimate, Chennai generates about 930 MLD of sewage, whereas its STPs can handle 727 MLD. With rapid urbanisation, the space for new plants is hardly available in peri-urban areas of Chennai, a scenario applicable to any other city in India. As a result, the city's rivers and canals have been reduced to carriers of raw sewage. Over and above these reasons, one of the targets set under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by UN member-countries in 2015, is to halve the proportion of untreated waste water.

## Non-consumptive use

There are numerous ways through which waste water can be treated at the point of generation. Several Information Technology companies, located outside the city limits, have adopted the concept as they have their own STPs and use the treated water for non-consumptive purposes such as gardening and flushing toilets. Some high-end residential apartments too have begun implementing the idea.

Realising the potential benefits, Chennai Metrowater has at last launched work on establishing two tertiary treated reverse osmosis plants of 45 MLD each. The process will involve sewage treatment in three stages and will use reverse osmosis system through which most of the dissolved solids and bacteria will be removed from the treated sewage.

Besides, projects are on to experiment with the idea of conjunctive use of fresh water and treated sewage – mixing treated sewage with fresh water by letting it into the lakes of Porur and Perungudi. These are only some modes of water treatment, the scope for which is enormous and still untapped.

All said, a wise society cannot allow itself to become complacent once the rainy season starts. The present debate needs to be taken forward so that waste water is reused and recycled in an imaginative and optimal way. This way, Chennai can take pride in being a water-wise society.

ramakrishnan.t@thehindu.co.in

# Contentious remedies for a clear, structural malady

The NEP's proposals will not ensure equity in health care



GEORGE THOMAS

The primary objective of medical education should be to provide a cadre of personnel to take care of the health needs of the country. In addition, any education policy in the modern world has to take into consideration social objectives, for example equity and justice in enrolment and access. That apart, certain fundamental questions need answering too. For instance, how many years of training are required for a medical professional? What should be the purpose of a basic degree in medicine? Is specialisation required? If so, how much and how is it to be done?

The draft New Education Policy (NEP) speaks about equity, inclusiveness and sustainable development at many points, starting from the preamble. However, it is by no means clear that its recommendations will fulfil these objectives, especially in the field of medical education. For example, on page 300, it states that fees in medical colleges, both public and private, will be left to be decided by the institutions themselves. However, just a few pages later, it asserts that the cost of education should be lowered.

At another point, the policy document states that all private institutions should be not-for-profit. It appears that the committee that drafted the report hoped that this recommendation, as well as the regulatory apparatus suggested by it, by itself will take care of the problem of profiteering. However, what gives it such confidence is hard to understand given that the present policy too is to consider higher education a not-for-profit enterprise but has become a very large driver of the black economy, according to several reports. Though the document states at several points that no student should be deprived of education due to lack of finances, the solution it suggests is scholarships.

## Confused thinking

The fact that on the one hand, the cost of education is sought to be lowered and on the other, fees are allowed to remain unregulated, betrays confused thinking. With the National Medical Commission Bill regulating fees only for 50% of seats in medical colleges, it looks like the commitment to equity is merely a pious homily.

At several points in the policy document, the need for a flexible education system has

been stressed. One part of this flexibility is in the possibility of multiple entry and exit points. One can understand having a National Entrance Examination for admission to undergraduate courses. However, it is absolutely clear that having a National Exit Examination for MBBS as the mode of entry to postgraduate courses is neither flexible nor fair. Can a student be expected to take the exit examination multiple times if the initial score is not good enough? Are all medical colleges across the country of the same standard to ensure a level-playing field? Sealing the student's fate once and for all through an exit examination is certainly not just.

## High level of centralisation

The objectives of autonomy and adaptation to local needs are contradicted by the high level of centralisation in medical education by the National Medical Commission. The document considers separation of the functions of regulation, funding, accreditation and standard setting as absolutely necessary. However, the National Medical Commission has sought to arrogate to itself many of these functions. Further, the recommendation that diploma courses should be expanded in order to provide "intermediate specialists" lacks focus. What are these intermediate specialists supposed to do?

Multiple postgraduate courses have been started without any clear rationale. The MBBS degree has been debased to such an extent that it is considered merely a necessary requirement for postgraduation. One of the main drivers of the thirst for a postgraduate degree is the lack of adequate respectable employment opportunities for an MBBS graduate. The overwhelming privatisation of health-care delivery in India has led to the concentration of personnel in those parts where the public has the capacity to pay. Having a postgraduate degree has a multiplier effect on employability, income and respectability for the doctor. How useful it is for the society is questionable.

The policy document does not recognise that the main driver of inequity in health care is the presence of a large, poorly-regulated, for-profit sector. Private interests have ensured regulatory capture in health-care policymaking. It appears that the National Education Policy has not escaped this capture, hence the clear disconnect between the repeated exhortations to ensure equity and quality and the recommendations which will achieve neither.

Dr. George Thomas is an orthopaedic surgeon at St. Isabel's Hospital, Chennai

# Island of hope in the midst of global measles resurgence

Sri Lanka has become free of the viral infection

R. PRASAD

On July 9, Sri Lanka became the fourth country in the Asian region – after Bhutan, The Maldives and Timor-Leste – to eliminate measles. Amidst an increase in the number of cases worldwide, especially in Europe, this came as an encouraging development. Measles is considered as eliminated when a country interrupts transmission of an indigenous virus for three years.

However, the viral infection has, since the beginning of 2018, seen a resurgence in 49 of the 53 countries in the World Health Organization (WHO)'s European Region. A total of 1,60,000 cases and more than 100 deaths were reported from these 49 countries between January 1, 2018 and May 30 this year.

The number of cases reported last year in the European Region, the highest in this decade, was thrice the number reported in 2017 and 15 times the number for 2016. With nearly 78,000 cases reported in the first five months of this year, indications are that the number will surpass last year's.

Ironically, the sharp increase in the region came despite vaccination coverage for the second dose being at a record-high of 91% in 2018. So what could have caused the spike? According to the WHO, the vaccination coverage has "not been uniform across the region nor high enough to ensure herd immunity" to break the transmission cycle.

## Pockets of low coverage

Further, though the coverage is high at the national level in many countries, there are pockets of low coverage in them, causing an "accumulation of susceptible individuals" that goes largely unnoticed till such time an outbreak occurs.

So how did Sri Lanka manage to accomplish this at this juncture even though, worldwide, there has been a 300% increase in the number of cases in the first three months of this year, compared to 2018? The answer lies in an increased, and a wider, vaccination coverage for both doses.

While global coverage for the first dose of vaccine has remained stagnant at 85% and for the second dose, it is still at 67%, the coverage for Sri Lanka has been above 95% for both the first and second doses. The vaccine is provided to children under the routine national immunisation programme.

## Regular vaccination campaigns

The island nation, where measles is a notifiable infection, has also carried out periodical mass vaccination campaigns to reach the small pockets of unimmunised children. Sri Lanka also has strong surveillance in place.

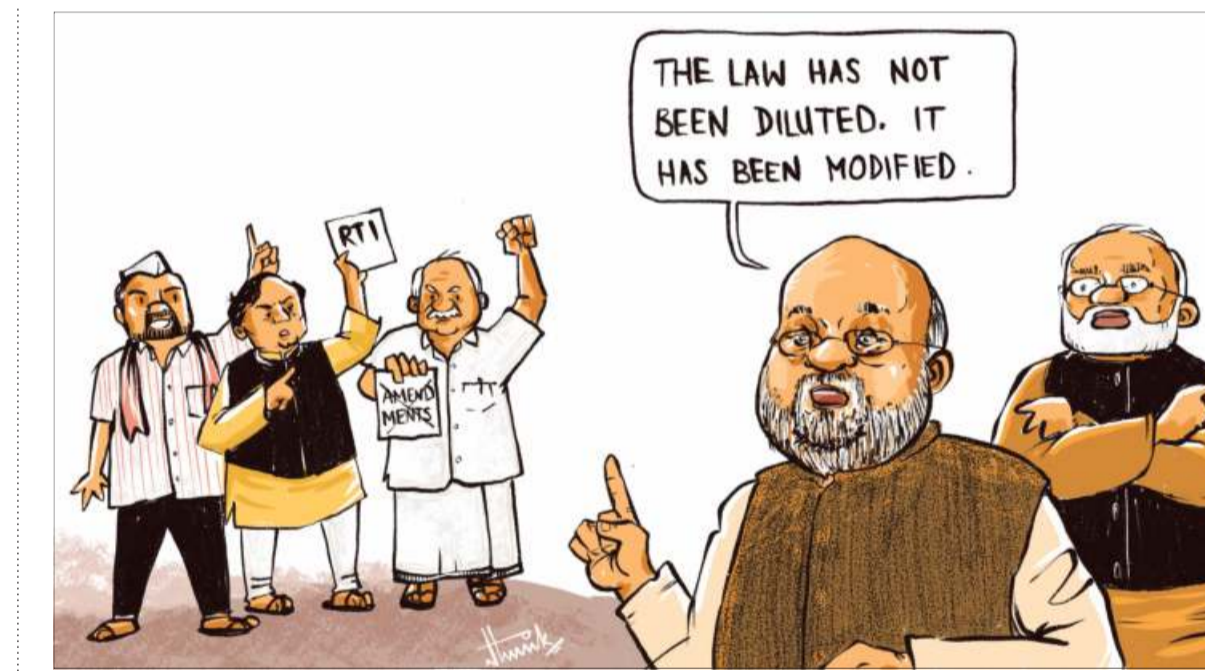
However, the country did encounter a few bumps in its path. In 1984, it introduced measles vaccine in the national immunisation programme and set the goal of eliminating the infection. Though local outbreaks were reported, the annual incidence declined till the year 1999.

During Sri Lanka's measles epidemic of 1999-2000, nearly 15,000 cases were reported following which a two-dose vaccine schedule was introduced, resulting in a sharp decline in incidence. The country reached an elimination target of less than five per one million people in 2011.

But in 2012, the measles immunisation schedule was changed following which babies no longer received measles vaccine at the age of nine months but a measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine on completing 12 months. Following this, in 2013, the country witnessed its last major measles epidemic. Besides other reasons, the change in immunisation schedule was seen as a possible cause.

The MMR vaccine schedule was again changed following a sero-survey data. Babies now began receiving the first dose at nine months and second dose at the age of three years. The country reported its last case of measles caused by an indigenous virus in May 2016.

prasad.ravindranath@thehindu.co.in



## DATA POINT

### Race to the South

Never before in history has a country even attempted to soft-land an object near the moon's South Pole. If all goes well, India's Chandrayaan-2 will achieve this feat on September 7, 2019. The South Pole is suspected to harbour reservoirs of ice, proof of which will have massive impact on future missions. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan

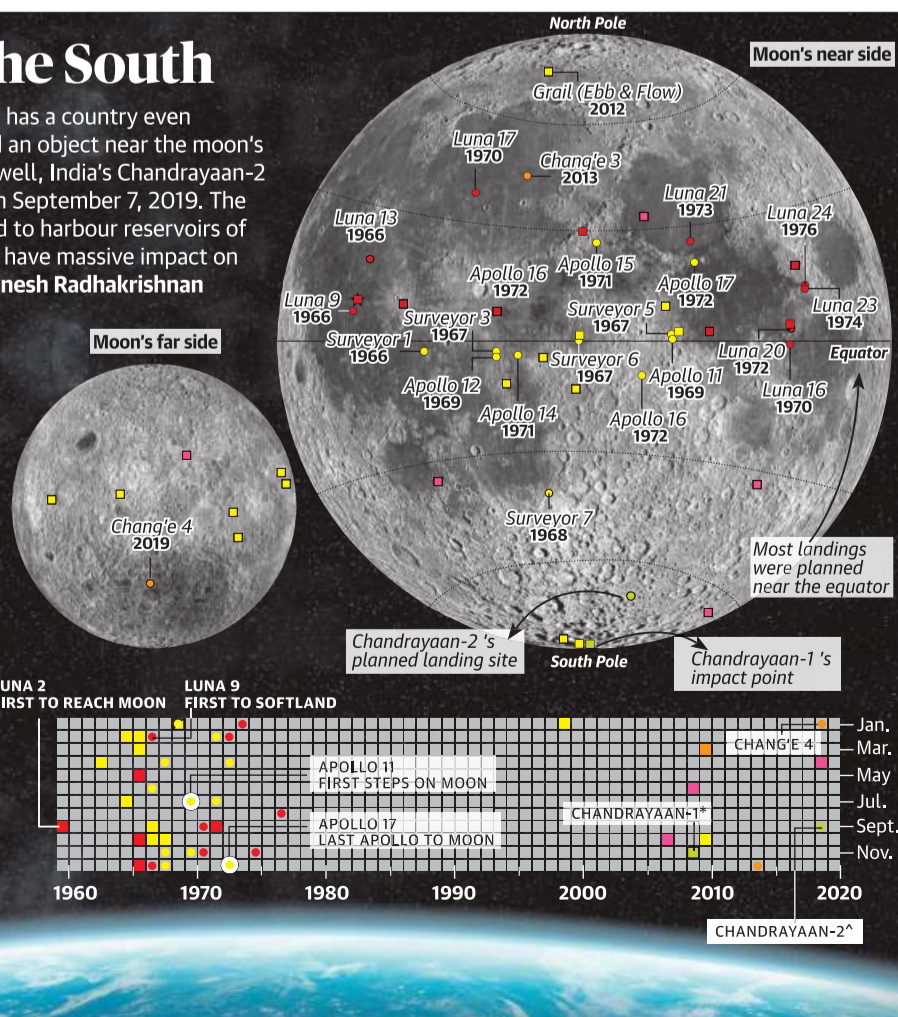
#### Landing sites

The two moon maps show soft-landing ● and crash/impact ■ sites of spacecraft sent by various nations

- United States
- U.S.S.R./Russia
- China
- India
- Others\*

#### Missions' timeline

The graph shows soft-landing and crash/impact dates of spacecraft on the moon from 1959 to 2019. The colours/shapes denote the same as the moon maps



\*VIA AN IMPACT PROBE; \* PROPOSED; # EUROPE (ESA), JAPAN, ISRAEL, S. KOREA | DESIGNED BY L. BALAMURUGAN | SOURCE: NASA, REUTERS

## The Hindu

### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 25, 1969

#### Yahya yet to respond

The Pakistan President Gen. Yahya Khan has not yet sent a reply to Mrs. Indira Gandhi's letter sent through Mr. Kewal Singh, the External Affairs Secretary, who went to Islamabad recently to sign the Kutch Agreement. The Prime Minister had, in that letter, urged an early normalisation of Indo-Pakistan relations at least in the cultural sphere. General Yahya Khan made no comment even on her renewed proposal for the appointment of a joint Indo-Pakistan body at any level to consider all outstanding problems between the two countries. The Prime Minister's letter, dated June 22, was placed on the table of the Rajya Sabha to-day [July 24] by the Deputy Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Surendra Pal Singh, in reply to a question whether India proposed to enter into any meaningful discussions with Pakistan. Deploping the almost total lack of contact now between the peoples of India and Pakistan whose destinies were inextricably intertwined, Mrs. Gandhi suggested that it would help to remove misunderstandings and misconceptions if both countries eased the regulations for travel between the two countries, encourage greater cultural contact in the field of letters, art, music, science and sport.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 25, 1919.

#### Leper problem in India.

The Rev. Frank Oldrieve, Secretary of the Mission to lepers in India, delivered an interesting and instructive lecture last evening [July 22] at the Regent's Park Hall [in Dacca] on "The Leper Problem and How to Solve it". The Lecture was illustrated by magic lantern pictures. His Excellency Lord Ronaldshay, who presided, in introducing the speaker made reference to the great service the mission has been rendering to humanity. His Excellency said that it was a matter for regret that very little attention was being devoted by the people to the disease of leprosy, whereas malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases had engaged so much of their attention. Out of a total of more than Rs. 44,00,000 of the annual expenditure, only a small fraction was received from the public. There was an exhibition of pictures showing the infectious character of the disease and the relief work that the mission has been carrying on in the different centres in India. The total number of lepers in India would be nearly 150,000. The Rev. Oldrieve said that the disease was not hereditary but according to expert opinion it was infectious.

FROM PAGE ONE

## BJP plans to stake claim sooner than later

"Having said that, the fate of the 15 MLAs is important to ensure the stability of any future government, and that no more blackmailing ensues," said a senior minister in the Union Cabinet involved in party affairs in the State.

BJP chief Amit Shah meanwhile held consultations on Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning with party leaders including BJP working president Jagat Prasad Nadda, general secretary (organisation) B. L. Santhosh and Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi.

The BJP State circles are abuzz with speculation that the high command wants to take Karnataka affairs under its tight control as it did with respect to the Lok Sabha polls. This is in the wake of a series of political controversies and instability that gripped its erstwhile government in Karnataka from 2008 to 2013 that saw three Chief Ministers.

Meanwhile, the BJP State unit is waiting for signals from its high command for holding the legislature party meeting and formal declaration of Mr. Yeddyurappa as its legislature party leader.

## Opposition wants select panel scrutiny of key bills

Ms. Gandhi, it is learnt, urged the opposition to ensure better floor coordination. She also said the opposition should have a joint strategy for both Houses.

The seven Bills that the opposition has demanded be sent to a standing committee are the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights of Marriage) Bill, 2019; Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, 2019; Code Wages Bill, 2019; Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code Bill, 2019; Inter State River Water Disputes (Amendment) Bill, 2019; DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2019 and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill 2019.

Pointing out that not a single Bill has gone to a select or a standing committee in this session, which has had highest productivity so far, clearing 15 Bills, Leader of Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad said, "In every session more or less, Bills go to the standing committee but this is the first session where not a single legislation has gone for scrutiny."

Trinamool Congress leader Derek O' Brien said the Opposition is not necessarily opposed to all the Bills but wants to improve the process.

He said, "As Opposition parties, we have informally made a list of seven such Bills; not all, but of seven such Bills, which have had no parliamentary scrutiny either through a Select Committee or the Parliamentary Standing Committee."

### Change of strategy

The Opposition that united on the issue of seeking a response from Prime Minister Narendra Modi on U.S. President Donald Trump's statement on Kashmir on Tuesday, and walked out of both Houses of Parliament, decided to tweak its strategy on Wednesday.

"We weighed both the issues, the Trump statement and the lack of Parliamentary scrutiny. It was felt that the latter is of greater consequence so for now we are keeping our demand for clarification from PM aside," a senior Opposition leader said.

## In Madhya Pradesh, two BJP MLAs back Congress

Later in the day, Chief Minister Kamal Nath, sitting with the dissenting MLAs, told reporters, "The BJP claims we are a minority government which can fall any day. But today, during the voting on the amendment, two of their MLAs voted in our favour."

The developments come hours after Mr. Nath and Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Gopal Bhargava argued over the stability of the government. Mr. Bhargava hinted at the government's wobbly foundation, given the Congress lost the trust vote to the BJP in the Karnataka Assembly on Tuesday. On the floor of the

house, Mr. Bhargava said one instruction from the top leadership of the BJP was enough to topple the Congress government in the State within 24 hours.

Stating that the Congress was ready to prove its majority any time, Mr. Nath hit back: "The number one and two at your top are wise. That's why they are not giving any orders."

Contrasting Mr. Bhargava's statement, former chief minister and BJP leader Shivraj Singh Chouhan in June had said his party was not attempting to dislodge the government. It may fall on its own "due to infighting".

## 'Communal attacks are on the decline'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Minister of State (MoS) for Home G. Kishan Reddy informed the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday that communal incidents have declined and there was no need to bring a new legislation to curb such incidents.

Mr. Reddy also revealed that post-2017, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) has stopped recording "communal incidents" as there were several discrepancies when the data was compared with that of States. He said communal incidents have come down from 823 in 2013 to 708 in 2018. He said "mob lynching" has happened in various States at different points of time and as per available data "there is no common pattern of mob lynching in the country."

## 'CIC orders won't be taken seriously'

Panel members express apprehension, former members urge Bill's withdrawal

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

NEW DELHI

With the RTI (Amendment) Bill having been passed by the Lok Sabha and now pending introduction in the Rajya Sabha, several Central Information Commission (CIC) members – past and present – have warned that the changes would have a chilling impact on the implementation of the RTI Act as originally envisioned.

"There is definitely a concern that our directives will not be taken as seriously by the government's officials [if the amendments are approved as law]," a current CIC member said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "Today, we issue orders even to Secretaries of the Government of India. There is some kind of implicit fear. But if the status of the Commission is brought down, why would

# UAPA Bill cleared amid walkout

Opposition says it's draconian, objects to designation of individuals as terrorists

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

"We are bringing in laws that will end terrorism in the country, and we promise that the government will never misuse it. Terrorism has to be dealt with, with strict laws," Home Minister Amit Shah said in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. He was speaking during the debate on amendments to the Unlawful Activities Prevention (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

The Bill was later passed in the Lower House with 284 votes in favour and eight against after the Opposition walked out in protest, terming it draconian and demanding that it be referred to a standing committee for scrutiny. The provisions of the Bill allow the government to designate individuals suspected to have terror links as "terrorists".

While this was vehement-

ly opposed by Opposition leaders, Mr. Shah said: "There is a need for a provision to declare an individual a terrorist. The UN has a procedure for it, the U.S. has it, even Pakistan has it, China, Israel, European Union... Everyone has done it."

He said if a terror organisation was banned, a terrorist could easily set up another.

### 'Potential misuse'

Several Opposition leaders, including Trinamool Congress's Mahua Moitra, objected to the changes saying the law could be misused to target individuals.

"If the Centre wants to target someone, they will get them somehow with the help of some law. Opposition leaders, minorities, right activists and others, if they disagree with the homogeneous idea of India that this govern-



Amit Shah

ment is trying to thrust upon us, the Opposition runs the risk of being labelled as anti-national," Ms. Moitra said.

"Why is the Opposition called anti-national every time we disagree with the government on issues of national security, policing," she asked.

Replying to the Opposition's allegations that anyone who questioned the

government is termed anti-national, Mr. Shah said no one would harass genuine social activists.

"There are in fact many social activists who are doing good work... But we will smash the Urban Maoists. Let me make it very clear – the government has zero tolerance towards them and we need tough laws to prevent this," the Home Minister said.

"The amendments that we have brought in will help us take four steps ahead of terrorists and their dubious plans and that is what our country needs now," he added.

The Home Minister also accused the Congress of double-speak, pointing out that they had brought in the law to control terrorism and then followed it up with amendments in 2004, 2008 and 2013.

## 'Modi, Trump did not discuss Kashmir'

Says Rajnath; Opposition demands that Prime Minister issue a clarification himself

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, the Deputy Leader of the Lok Sabha, categorically stated in the House on Wednesday that no discussion on Kashmir held at the meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Japan recently.

There was no question of any mediation on the issue, he said amid Opposition demand that Mr. Modi himself issue a clarification.

### Opposition walks out

Mr. Singh made the statement even as the Opposition staged a walkout over the issue after major protests during Question Hour that spilled over.

He said that when India talked to Pakistan, it would not be limited to the issue of Kashmir but include Pakis-



Minister Rajnath Singh in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. •PTI

tan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

U.S. President Trump said on Monday that Mr. Modi had asked him to play the role of a mediator on Kashmir. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar made a statement in both Houses of

Parliament on Tuesday that the Prime Minister had made no such request.

Earlier, during Question Hour, members of the Congress, the DMK and a few other parties came to the Well demanding the presence of Mr. Modi in the

House and a statement from him.

When the Zero Hour began, Speaker Om Birla allowed Congress leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury to speak and also asked him to stay put in the House when the government replied to his statement. Mr. Chowdhury said the entire country was "confused" following the statement.

"...Nothing wrong if we are seeking a statement from the horse's mouth. The Prime Minister must come to the House and make a statement," he said.

The Opposition staged a walkout as Mr. Singh started delivering his statement, however.

Mr. Singh said that the Opposition had promised to listen to the government, but by walking out, they had "broken their promise".

## Modi promises museum for ex-PMs

Remembers Chandra Shekhar; pitches for 'new political culture'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said his government will establish a grand museum dedicated to all former Prime Ministers, as he pitched for a "new political culture" to get rid of "political untouchability".

Speaking at the launch of a book on former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar written by Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh, Mr. Modi, in an apparent attack on the Congress, said a section of political class tried to erase the memories of former Prime Ministers.

Referring to the padyatra carried out by Chandra Shek-



PM Narendra Modi at the book release event in New Delhi on Wednesday. •SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

har across the country, he said efforts were made to malign it by levelling allegations that it was funded by businessmen.

He also said attempts were made to malign the image of B.R. Ambedkar and Sardar Patel after Independence.

Mr. Modi said if today's generation is asked about Morarji Desai and Lal Bahadur Shastri, they hardly know about them. "They were intentionally erased from the memory of people... But with blessings of all you I have decided to set up a grand museum of all former Prime Ministers in the country," he said.

Mentioning names of I.K. Gujral, Deve Gowda and Manmohan Singh, Mr. Modi said everyone of them contributed and this should be acknowledged.

## RS bids farewell to five T.N. MPs

They draw praise from Venkaiah, Ghulam Nabi Azad

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday bid farewell to five members from Tamil Nadu who completed their six-year terms. They are V. Maitreyan, K.R. Arjunan, R. Lakshmanan and T. Rathinavel of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and D. Raja of the CPI.

"The House will certainly miss their various, sometimes aggressive, progressive presence and their unwavering commitment to issues pertaining to the State of Tamil Nadu and also to national issues of importance," Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu said.

## POCSO Bill cleared; O'Brien recounts trauma

Speak up on child abuse, says MP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday approved the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill, 2019, that incorporates amendments including provision of the death penalty for aggravated sexual assault on children, besides providing stringent punishments for other crimes against minors.

The Bill, which also provides for fines and imprisonment to curb child pornography, would now be sent to the Lok Sabha for its approval.

Earlier, during the discussion on the Bill, Trinamool MP Derek O'Brien recounted the abuse he had experienced as a boy. Observing that the abuse often started at home, he said that when more people in public life spoke about abuse, the easier it would be for children to speak up.

"I was sexually molested as a 13-year-old on a bus in Kolkata. After tennis practice, wearing short pants and a T-shirt, I got on to a



Derek O'Brien

crowded bus... A man ejaculated on the shorts. I didn't speak about it," Mr. O'Brien said. "We need to use this forum to reach out to people. The more we talk about it, the more children will be saved," he added.

### Unanimous decision

Applauding Mr. O'Brien, Union Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani said that it was often difficult for men to come out publicly to proclaim that they too could be victims of sexual abuse. "The fact that an MP today shared what he faced at age 13... 46 years later, tells us what an imprint sexual abuse leaves on a child," Ms. Irani said.

Support for the Bill was unanimous in the House.

## Bill to ban unregulated deposit schemes passed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha passed the Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2019 by voice vote on Wednesday.

The Bill would protect the poorest investor, said Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs Anurag Singh.

The proposed laws would have provisions to combat three different types of offences – running unregulated deposit schemes, fraudulent default in regulated deposit schemes, and wrongful inducement in relation to unregulated deposit schemes.

"The opening of 36 crore

bank accounts in Jan Dhan Yojana has linked the poor to our growing economy. There is ₹1 lakh crore in deposits in these accounts," the Minister said.

Meanwhile, DNV Senthilkumar (DMK, Tamil Nadu) said the government must understand why people were being pushed to opt for these schemes.

"If you look at the demographic that takes part in such schemes, it is always the labourers and the daily-wage earners. Banks impose a high fee on all transactions, including a fine when a person is not able to keep a minimum balance," Mr. Senthilkumar said.



V. Maitreyan broke down in the Rajya Sabha while speaking on Wednesday.

Leader of the Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad lauded Mr. Maitreyan for choosing politics to serve the nation despite being a specialist in oncology. He said he could have easily earned a lot of money, but chose to serve

the people through politics.

Mr. Maitreyan remembered former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, who he said reposed faith in him and sent him to the House for three consecutive terms. He thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his guidance, and noted that he acted as a bridge between his leader and the Prime Minister.

Mr. Raja said, "I wish our Parliament should remain as the one visualised by Dr. Ambedkar and the framers of our Constitution...I may be retiring from this House for the time being, [but] I will be working for the country and the people."

## Govt. avoids confrontation on Right to Information Bill

Despite being listed, it was not introduced in Rajya Sabha

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Avoiding an immediate confrontation with the Opposition, the government did not introduce the Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, 2019, in the Rajya Sabha, though it had listed it for Wednesday, as the numbers are clearly stacked against it.

The Bill was cleared by the Lok Sabha on Monday.

Fifteen Opposition parties have signed a resolution moved by Trinamool leader Derek O'Brien to send the Bill to a select committee. The signatories include the Biju Janata Dal and Telangana Rashtra Samithi, which have been keeping equidistance from the Opposition and the ruling parties.



Ghulam Nabi Azad

On the RTI amendment Bill, the Opposition with the support of the BJD and the TRS has 120 votes against the government's 115.

According to sources, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi met Leader of the Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad on Tuesday after which the government took a call not to push through the Bill immediately.

Sources, however, did not give any indication on

whether the government was prepared to send the Bill to a select committee or whether it is just buying time to work out the arithmetic in the Upper House.

When the Rajya Sabha met for the post-lunch session, Mr. Azad and Mr. O'Brien said the Bill had to be sent to a select committee. Opening the debate, Mr. Azad said the Bill in its current form diluted the powers of the State- and national-level Information Commissions. "Whether the Bill comes tomorrow or day after, it has to go to a select committee," Mr. Azad said.

The Bill will allow the Centre to set the tenure and salaries of both State and Central Information Commissioners.

IN BRIEF



**Group of Ministers on MeToo reconstituted**

**NEW DELHI**  
The government has reconstituted the Group of Ministers on Me too, headed by Home Minister Amit Shah to strengthen legal frameworks against sexual harassment at workplace. Other key members are Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' and Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani.

**Miners' health body merged with NIOH**

**NEW DELHI**  
The National Institute of Miners' Health, an autonomous institute under the Ministry of Mines, has been dissolved and merged with the Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Occupational Health, Ahmedabad, under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, with all assets and liabilities, as per a Cabinet decision announced on Wednesday.

**Trinamool MPs seek change of State's name**

**NEW DELHI**  
A 12-member delegation of the Trinamool Congress comprising MPs of both Houses met Prime Minister Narendra Modi to press for changing the name of West Bengal to 'Bangla', as cleared by the State Assembly in July last year. "We met Prime Minister and requested him that the necessary legislation to change the State's name to Bangla should be done in this very session," Trinamool's Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien said.

**'IAF inducted 8 women fighter pilots since 2016'**

**NEW DELHI**  
The Indian Air Force has inducted eight female fighter pilots since 2016, the Government informed Parliament on Wednesday. In 2015, the Centre had approved the entry of women into the fighter stream on an experimental basis for a period of five years. There are 1905 women officers serving in the IAF as on July 1, 2019, Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik said in a reply in the Lok Sabha.

# 30,000 militants active in Pak.: Imran

India is likely to raise issue at the Financial Action Task Force meeting in October, say sources

**SUHASINI HAIDAR  
VIJAITA SINGH  
NEW DELHI**

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's dramatic admission that "30,000 to 40,000" militants – trained in Afghanistan and Kashmir – are still operating in Pakistan, may become a serious issue for Islamabad with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), government sources in New Delhi said.

They indicated that India was considering making the remarks a part of its submission ahead of the next meeting in October of the international terror financing watchdog.

Speaking at a think-tank in Washington on Tuesday, Mr. Khan said though Pakistan's government had launched a "National Action Plan" against terrorism after the Peshawar school attack in December 2015, implementation began only after his



**Straight talk:** U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Pakistan PM Imran Khan addressing the media on Wednesday. •AFP

government came to power last year.

"Until we came into power, the governments did not have the will to [implement the National Action Plan], because if you talk of militant groups, they still have about 30,000-40,000 people who are armed and who

have been trained in some sort of a theatre, who fought either in Afghanistan or maybe in Kashmir," Mr. Khan said at the United States Institute of Peace, in the first clear admission by Pakistan that thousands of terrorists and training camps which have been active in Kashmir,

still operate in Pakistan. Later in the day, Mr. Khan also pointed to the existence of at least "40 militant groups" in the period after the 9/11 attacks in 2001.

**'Owning up'**

In New Delhi, government sources said they were "glad" the Pakistani Prime Minister was "owning up" to the existence of these groups.

"It is, however, equally important for the Pakistani leadership to act on this knowledge by destroying the breeding ground of terrorists in areas under the control of Pakistan by taking credible and irreversible action," an official told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Khan's remarks contradict the Pakistani army's position on the existence of terror groups. In April this year, after FATF strictures spurred a crackdown on religious extremist institutions,

the Pakistan army spokesperson had said there were "no terrorist organisations" in the country.

**FATF fodder**

Government sources pointed out that the numbers given by Mr. Khan were considerably higher than those submitted by Pakistan at the FATF. Pakistan could face a "blacklisting" in October if it fails to comply with commitments on ending terrorism according to its action plan. In Schedule-4 of Pakistan's "Anti-Terrorism Act", which details banned organisations, the government has listed only 8,000 active militants.

"[Mr. Khan's statement] has opened up the question of effectiveness in Pakistan's much publicised compliance of the FATF Action Plan, and would allow countries like India to raise the issue at FATF," a source added.

## Jaishankar not attending Brazil BRICS meeting

V.K. Singh will participate instead

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI**

The July 25-26 visit of External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar to Brazil was cancelled on July 24 as the government remained occupied with the situation that emerged after U.S. President Donald Trump claimed Prime Minister Narendra Modi had asked him to mediate on Kashmir.

Sources said instead General (retd.) V.K. Singh, Minister of State for Road, Transport and Highways, will go to Brazil.

Mr. Jaishankar's visit was announced last week during which he was expected to hold both bilateral and multilateral meetings with the BRICS nations. It was planned as a significant interaction as it came a year after both sides observed the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic



S. Jaishankar

ties. Both sides are expected to celebrate the 75th anniversary of bilateral ties in 2023.

Mr. Narendra Modi is scheduled to participate in a BRICS summit in Brazil's capital Brasilia during November 13 and 14.

Diplomatic sources expressed surprise over Mr. Jaishankar cancelling his visit. They indicated that it had come against the backdrop of the controversy over Mr. Trump's claim.

## Sugar mills back move to build 4 mn tonne buffer

ISMA welcomes Cabinet decision to raise sugar cane MSP

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI**

The Centre has decided to expand the buffer stock of sugar and simultaneously halt the trend of raising the minimum support price for sugar cane to correct demand-supply imbalances, stabilise retail prices and reduce payment arrears from mills to farmers.

The two decisions taken by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Wednesday, were welcomed by the sugar industry.

A series of bumper harvests over the past few years, combined with higher rates of sugar recovery from sugar cane, resulted in production vastly overshooting domestic demand and led to a crash in retail prices. Estimates suggest that the country will produce 32.95 million tonnes of sugar in the current marketing year, as against the annual domestic



There have been a series of bumper harvests in the past few years. •REUTERS

are still above the ₹15,000 crore mark.

**FRP unchanged**

The Cabinet has now decided to maintain the status quo by keeping the FRP unchanged at ₹275 a quintal for the next sugar marketing year, which begins in October. This decision is in line with the recommendation of the Commission on Agricultural Costs and Prices, the Centre said in a statement.

"The FRP has increased quite steeply in the past few years and sugar cane has outstripped the returns from other crops. This decision will restore some balance," the Indian Sugar Mills Association said in a statement. "It will benefit sugar mills because 70-75% of the cost of producing sugar is only on account of sugar cane. At the same time, it will help keep cane price arrears under control."

demand of just 26 million tonnes.

At the same time, the Centre has been regularly increasing the Fair and Remunerative Price, the minimum price that mills must pay to sugar cane cultivators, an important vote bank, especially in Uttar Pradesh. As a result, payment arrears shot up to ₹25,000 crore earlier this year, and

## Mamata using violence, says Sushma

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI**

Former Union Minister Sushma Swaraj on Wednesday launched a frontal attack on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for "allowing political violence for the sake of power" even after having been a victim of such violence herself.

Ms. Swaraj was speaking at a "People's tribunal on political violence in Bengal" organised by the India Foundation (a think-tank close to the BJP) where testimonies of victims of political violence in the State were heard.

"It is sad that for grabbing power, political parties are murdering people for no fault of theirs but merely political beliefs. I am surprised that these incidents happened under a leader who herself faced such violent atrocities under the CPI(M). Mamtaji told me that my people have been mutilated in political violence," she said.

## Citizens urge PM to act on religion-based violence

Letter highlights growing number of attacks on minorities

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA**

Expressing concern over the "lynching of Muslims, Dalits and other minorities", a group of 49 eminent citizens have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking his intervention to prevent the violence.

The letter dated July 23, also said "the Hindutva's key slogan 'Jai Shri Ram' has become a provocative 'war cry' leading to law and order problems and many lynchings take place in its name."

**Slogan misused**

"These are not the Middle Ages! The name of Ram is sacred to many in the majority community of India. As the highest Executive of this country you must put a stop to the name of Ram being defiled in this manner," the letter urged the Prime Minister. Among the signatories to



Ramchandra Guha

the letter from filmmakers, actors, musicians, authors, academicians and activists are Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Shyam Benegal, Ketan Mehta, Gautam Ghosh, Anurag Kashyap, Aparna Sen, Anjan Dutta, Mani Ratnam, Bengali thespian Soumitra Chatterjee, Konkona Sen Sharma, Parambrata Chattopadhyay Subha Mudgal, Anupam Roy, Amit Chaudhuri, Ashis Nandy, Ramchandra Guha, Tanika Sarkar and Binayak Sen. "The lynchings of Mus-

lims, Dalits and other minorities must be stopped immediately. We were shocked to learn from the NCRB [National Crime Records Bureau] reports that there have been no less than 840 instances of atrocities against the Dalits in 2016 and a definite decline in the percentage of convictions," the letter noted.

It also says that 254 religious identity based hate crimes took place between January 1, 2009 and October 29, 2018 of which "90% of [religious identity based hate crimes] were reported after May 2014, when your government came to power."

The letter argues that "there is no democracy without dissent" and said people should "not be branded as 'anti-national' and 'urban Naxal' and incarcerated because of dissent against the government."

## 1,300 out of VIP security duty

However, about 3,000 CAPF personnel will still be part of the set-up

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI**

As many as 1,300 security personnel have been freed of VIP duty following a comprehensive review of the protection provided to 350 dignitaries, including politicians, by the Union Home Ministry this week, a senior government official said on Wednesday.

These security personnel were drawn from forces such as the Central Reserve Police Force, Central Industrial Security Force, National Security Guard and the Delhi Police.

Nearly 3,000 personnel of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) would still be part of the Central VIP security set-up.

A number of those who



A number of VIPs will be secured by the State police forces.

have been taken off the "central" list of VIP security would be secured by the State police forces.

In cases where such a protectee is in Delhi, the Delhi Police would take care of his or her security requirements, the official said, adding that the review was a

regular exercise and would not compromise the security of the individuals. The top level 'Z' category NSG cover of former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav; and 'Z' cover of former Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad; cover of BJP MP and former Minister Rajiv

Pratap Rudy, former BJP members Kirti Azad and Shaughan Sinha, newly appointed Himachal Pradesh Governor Kalraj Mishra, former Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar, two granddaughters and a grandson of former President Pranab Mukherjee, and daughter and grandson of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has been taken off the list or has been removed. BJP Rajya Sabha member O.P. Mathur; Acharya Pramod Krishnam, who unsuccessfully contested from the Lucknow parliamentary seat on Congress ticket; RSS leader Indresh Kumar; former BJP MP Udit Raj; and sitting BJP MP from Etawah Ram Shankar Katheria have also been taken off from the list.

## Punjab drug haul case goes to NIA

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI**

The Home Ministry on Wednesday directed the National Investigation Agency to take over the ₹2,700-crore Punjab drug haul case, whose prime suspect died under mysterious circumstances at the Amritsar Central Jail this week. The Ministry said this was a case of "narcoterrorism" in which involvement of an international drug racket in Pakistan and Afghanistan had come to light.

## Ajay Bhalla to be Home Secretary

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
AHMEDABAD**

The Modi government on Wednesday reshuffled over a dozen Secretaries. Ajay Kumar Bhalla, a 1984-batch IAS officer and currently Secretary, Ministry of Power, has been appointed Officer on Special Duty (OSD) to the Ministry of Home Affairs with immediate effect. He will take over as Home Secretary from incumbent Rajive Gauba and will have a fixed two-year tenure till August 2021.

Subhash Chandra Garg, Secretary, Economic Affairs, and designated as Secretary, Finance, in the Ministry of Finance, has been shifted to the Power Ministry as Secre-



Ajay Bhalla

tary. Gujarat-cadre IAS officer Atanu Chakraborty has been made Economic Affairs Secretary.

Anshu Prakash has been appointed new Secretary, Telecommunications, in place of Aruna Sundarajan, who is superannuating

on July 31.

Another Gujarat-cadre IAS officer P.D. Waghela has been made Secretary, Pharmaceuticals, while his batch mate and currently chief of the Airports Authority of India Guruprasad Mohapatra has been made Secretary, Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, in the Ministry of Commerce. R.S. Shukla is new Secretary, Parliamentary Affairs, and G.V. Venugopal Sarma will be Member-Secretary in the National Disaster Management Authority.

The government has promoted a dozen IAS officers of the 1986 batch to Secretary level.

# I did not exonerate Donald Trump, says Mueller

The Special Counsel, however, says that they 'did not reach a determination as to whether the President committed a crime'

**REUTERS**  
WASHINGTON  
Former U.S. Special Counsel Robert Mueller on Wednesday said in dramatic U.S. congressional testimony he had not exonerated President Donald Trump of obstruction of justice and defended the integrity of his inquiry under repeated attacks by conservative Republican allies of the President.



**Straight talk:** Robert Mueller said his inquiry was conducted in "a fair and independent manner". •REUTERS

Mr. Mueller initially testified he would have sought to indict Mr. Trump were it not for a Justice Department policy against charging a sitting President. But hours later he corrected himself and said "we did not reach a determination as to whether the President committed a crime."

The former FBI director, who spent 22 months investigating what he concluded was Russian interference in a "sweeping and systematic fashion" in the 2016 U.S. election to help Mr. Trump and the President's conduct, appeared for more than three-and-a-half hours before the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee.

Mr. Mueller then appeared before the House Intelligence Committee for more questioning. Democrats control the House, while Mr. Trump's fellow Republicans control the Senate.

The Judiciary Committee's Democratic chairman, Jerrold Nadler, praised Mr. Mueller and said no one, including Mr. Trump, is "above the law." The Intelligence Committee's Democratic chairman, Adam Schiff, ac-

used Mr. Trump's 2016 campaign of "disloyalty to country". But Mr. Trump's Republican allies on the committees tried to paint Mr. Mueller's investigation as unfair to the President, with Louie Gohmert heatedly telling him "you perpetuated injustice" and conservative Congressman Guy Reschenthaler calling the manner in which the inquiry was conducted "un-American."

Mr. Mueller's 448-page re-

## 'A national embarrassment'

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
WASHINGTON  
President Donald Trump on Wednesday described Robert Mueller's testimony to Congress as an "embarrassment" to the nation, mocking his Democratic rivals for asking the former Special Counsel to appear on Capitol Hill.

"I would like to thank the Democrats for holding this morning's hearing," Mr. Trump tweeted. "Now, after

3 hours, Robert Mueller has to subject himself to #ShiftySchiff - an Embarrassment to our Country," he added, referring to the Democratic Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, Adam Schiff.

Just before Trump's tweet, his spokeswoman Stephanie Grisham weighed in. "The last three hours have been an epic embarrassment for the Democrats," she said.

port, released in redacted form on April 18, did not reach a conclusion on whether Mr. Trump committed the crime of obstruction of justice in a series of actions aimed at impeding the inquiry, but did not exonerate him.

Democratic Representative Ted Lieu asked Mr. Mueller during the first hearing whether the reason he did not bring a criminal indictment against Mr. Trump

was the Justice Department's policy against bringing criminal charges against a sitting president. "That is correct," Mr. Mueller said.

But Mr. Mueller at the outset of the second hearing backed off that testimony. "I would like to go back to one thing that was said this morning by Mr. Lieu who said, and I quote, you didn't charge the president because of the OLC opinion." That is not the correct way to

say it. As we say in the report and as I said at the opening, we did not reach a determination as to whether the President committed a crime."

Mr. Trump has claimed that the Mueller inquiry resulted in the President's "complete and total exoneration." "Did you actually totally exonerate the President?" Mr. Nadler asked Mr. Mueller. "No," Mr. Mueller replied. Mr. Mueller, accused by Mr. Trump of heading a "witch hunt" and trying to orchestrate a "coup" against the Republican President, said his inquiry was conducted in "a fair and independent manner". Mr. Trump has accused Mr. Mueller of having conflicts of interest. Mr. Mueller noted that Justice Department ethics officials confirmed he had no such conflicts.

"Over the course of my career, I have seen a number of challenges to our democracy. The Russian government's effort to interfere with our election is among the most serious," Mr. Mueller said.

# China says it wants security & stability along India border

Ties with India improving, signals paper

**ATUL ANEJA**  
BEIJING

China's military on Wednesday signalled that ties with India were improving, but warned the U.S. that it should not test Beijing's one-China policy over Taiwan.



Chinese President Xi Jinping

A white paper titled 'China's National Defence in the New Era', released by the Chinese Defence Ministry, said Beijing was striving to promote security and stability along the India-China border. It has also created "favourable conditions" to peacefully resolve the Doklam military standoff - a reference to the military tensions between the two countries in the summer of 2017.

China has "taken effective measures to create favourable conditions for the peaceful resolution of the Donglang (Doklam) standoff", the paper said.

But on the U.S., with which China is already engaged in a trade war, the white paper has gone ballistic, specially regarding the status of Taiwan, over which Beijing asserts its de jure sovereignty.

Beijing has called Taiwan "the most important and sensitive issue in China-U.S. relations".

### 'We will fight'

Addressing a press conference after the paper's release, Defense Ministry spokesman Wu Qian said the threat of Taiwan separatism is growing. He warned that attempts by those seeking Taiwan's independence were futile. "If anyone dares to separate Taiwan from

China, the Chinese military will certainly fight, resolutely defending the country's sovereign unity and territorial integrity."

Tensions between China and the U.S. heightened earlier this month, after the State Department cleared \$2.2 billion worth weapons sales, including 108 General Dynamics Corp. M1A2T Abrams tanks and 250 Stinger missiles, apart from other weapons.

In turn, China has threatened to impose sanctions on U.S. companies engaged in arms trade with Taiwan.

The paper pointed out that the U.S. deployment of a missile defence system in South Korea had severely undermined the regional strategic balance.

China also stressed its resolve to counter supporters of separatism in Tibet as well as the Xinjiang region.

The paper accused the U.S. of adopting "unilateral policies", adding that Washington "has provoked and intensified competition among major countries, significantly increased its defence expenditure, pushed for additional capacity in nuclear, outer space, cyber and missile defence, and undermined global strategic stability".

## In peace push, Imran says he will meet the Taliban

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
WASHINGTON

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Tuesday he would meet with the Taliban after returning to his country, as part of efforts to end 18 years of war in Afghanistan.

Mr. Khan spoke in Washington on his first official trip to the U.S.

He said he had also spoken with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, and now, when he goes back, "I will meet the Taliban and I will

try my best to get them to talk to the Afghan government."

Speaking at the U.S. Institute for Peace, Mr. Khan said he had been contacted by the Taliban "a few months back", after his election win in July 2018, but did not take a meeting at that time because Kabul was not in favour of it.

The militants reached out to him "because I always maintained there was no military solution" to the war in Afghanistan, he said.

## Facebook fined \$5 bn for privacy violations

It has been asked to submit to new restrictions

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
WASHINGTON

U.S. regulators on Wednesday slapped a record \$5 billion fine on Facebook for privacy violations in a settlement requiring the world's biggest social network to "submit to new restrictions and a modified corporate structure."

Federal Trade Commission Chairman Joe Simons said: "Despite repeated pro-



promises to its billions of users worldwide that they could control how their personal information is shared, Facebook undermined consumers' choices."

"The magnitude of the \$5 billion penalty and sweeping conduct relief are unprece-

ented in the history of the FTC. The relief is designed not only to punish future violations but, more importantly, to change Facebook's entire privacy culture to decrease the likelihood of continued violations."

The agreement establishes an independent privacy committee within Facebook's board of directors, "removing unfettered control by CEO Mark Zuckerberg over decisions affecting user privacy," the FTC statement said.

Two commissioners of the five-member FTC dissented

in the settlement, saying the penalty was insufficient. "The proposed settlement does little to change the business model or practices that led to the recidivism," FTC commissioner Rohit Chopra said.

In a separate agreement with stock market regulators, Facebook agreed to pay a \$100 million penalty for making "misleading disclosures regarding the risk of misuse of Facebook user data" in an investigation into the hijacking of data by political consultancy Cambridge Analytica.

### IN BRIEF



#### 13 dead, 35 missing after China landslide

**BEIJING**  
Thirteen people have died and 35 are missing after heavy rain triggered a landslide in China's southwestern Guizhou province, state broadcaster CCTV said on Wednesday. AFP

#### Human sacrifice rumours fuel Bangladesh lynchings

**DHAKA**  
Eight people have been killed in vigilante lynchings in Bangladesh sparked by rumours on social media, mostly Facebook, of children being kidnapped and sacrificed as offerings for the construction of a megaproject, the police said on Wednesday. AFP

## British PM Johnson brings in new team for Brexit challenge

Indian-origin Priti Patel appointed Interior Minister

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
LONDON

New Prime Minister Boris Johnson sacked most of Britain's Cabinet on Wednesday as he took office vowing to get a new divorce deal with the European Union or leave without one by October 31.

The former London Mayor has pledged to break the political deadlock that has left Britain in crisis and forced his predecessor Theresa May to delay Brexit twice. But he faces opposition from within his own Conservative party and across Parliament to his threat of a "no deal" exit,



Priti Patel

while EU leaders warn they will not renegotiate the divorce agreement they struck with Ms. May.

Within hours of taking office, Mr. Johnson signalled his new approach by sacking around a dozen Ministers, while several others announced their resignations.

"We are going to fulfil the repeated promises of Parliament to the people and come out of the EU on Oc-

tober 31, no ifs or buts," he declared outside Downing Street.

His first Cabinet appointment was Sajid Javid, the son of Pakistani immigrants who has been moved from the Interior Ministry to become Finance Minister. He replaces Philip Hammond, who quit hours earlier.

Brexit hardliner Dominic Raab, who like Mr. Johnson quit Ms. May's government over her strategy, was named Foreign Minister to replace Jeremy Hunt.

Indian-origin Priti Patel, another fierce Brexiteer who had to resign from government in 2017 after holding unofficial meetings with top Israeli officials during a holiday there, was named as Interior Minister.

## UN meeting with Sri Lanka judges blocked

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Parliament has blocked a visiting UN human rights expert from meeting with judges hearing war crimes cases, citing fears of foreign interference.

Clement Voule, an envoy of the UN Human Rights Council, was to discuss civil rights protections in Sri Lanka. But Opposition leader Mahinda Rajapakse told Parliament on Tuesday that Mr. Voule's plans to meet with judges overseeing cases of military excesses during his tenure amounted to foreign interference.

On Wednesday, Speaker Karu Jayasuriya said he had "stopped the meeting".

## We will deploy Army if Hong Kong seeks it: China

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
BEIJING

China issued a stark reminder on Wednesday that its Army could be deployed in Hong Kong if city authorities requested support in maintaining "public order" after weeks of protests.

Hong Kong has been plunged into its worst crisis in recent history after millions of demonstrators took to the streets - and sporadic violent confrontations between the police and pockets of hardcore protesters.

The demonstrations were triggered by a bill which would have allowed extraditions to mainland China but have evolved into a call for wider democratic reforms.

Beijing has labelled the protests as "extreme illegal violence", but has left it to

the city's semi-autonomous government to deal with the situation.

Chinese Defence Ministry spokesman Wu Qian said at a news conference in Beijing that the Ministry has been "paying close attention" to the situation in Hong Kong.

Asked how his Ministry would handle it, Mr. Wu noted that there are "clear stipulations" in Article 14 of Hong Kong's garrison law - without elaborating. According to the article, the city's authorities may ask, "when necessary", the Central government for assistance from the garrison "in the maintenance of public order and in disaster relief".

This is the first time Beijing has hinted that it could use its Army to deal with the unrest in Hong Kong.

## 'No IS links to Sri Lanka Easter attacks'

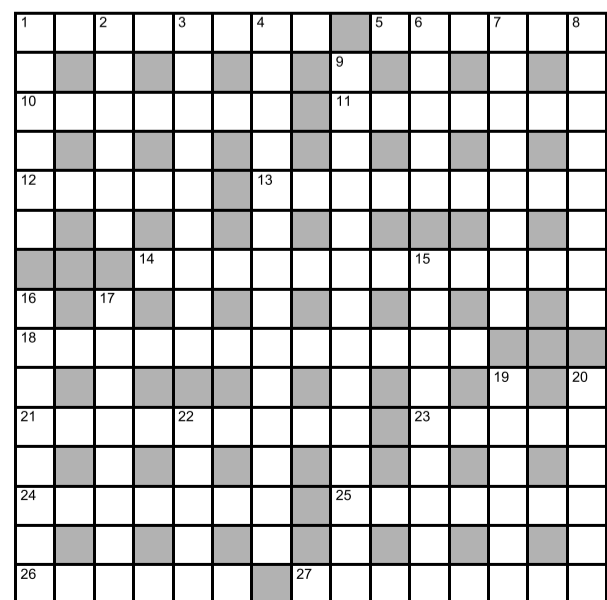
**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Easter attacks were carried out by local Islamists who drew inspiration from the Islamic State but were not linked to it, an investigator said on Wednesday.

Ravi Seneviratne, the head of the Criminal Investigations Department, told a Parliamentary panel that the suicide bombers "followed the IS ideology, but our investigations have not shown any link between them."

He said the remnants the local group identified as National Thowtheeth Jama'ath had persuaded IS to claim the attack two days after the deadly events in Sri Lanka.

### THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12687



#### ACROSS

- Justify seizing incorporated territory (8)
- America almost destroyed peninsula annexed by Russia (6)
- Slight commotion around dais perhaps (7)
- Wise men love quests to gain knowledge essentially (7)

- Bodily cavities conserved by organ transplant (5)
- He knocks over maids with élan? (6,3)
- Fast means of protest? (6,6)
- Clashing with policeman? Bit idiotic (12)
- Give up a small sum of money to snatch in America (4,1,4)
- Cherish a perfectly maintained physique (5)
- Silly inane Republican takes time to get on board (7)
- Perplexed fool arrests a lot incorrectly (2,1,4)
- Creeps loiter aboard steamer (6)
- Reports of guru in trouble (8)

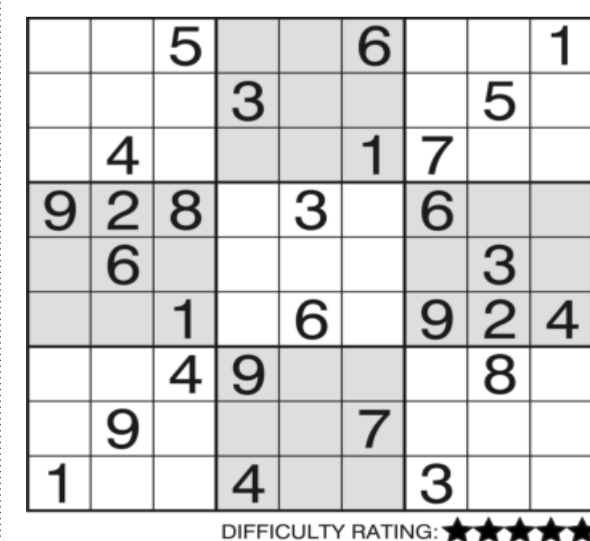
#### DOWN

- Dolt every so often interrupts a fruit vendor (6)
- Unit about to meet for a type of inspection (2-4)

(set by Dr. X)

- Where dirt might be isolated from external influences (2,1,6)
- Fires cheat to lessen issues (14)
- Forcibly seize ecstasy found in party (5)
- Character retained by messieurs to assist dairy worker (8)
- One who agrees with simpleton on board (8)
- Request strip club in headquarters? That is touch-and-go (10,4)
- Charms fellow in fancy A-list society (9)
- Love to canoodle around new exotic den (8)
- Approached brilliant director to take charge (8)
- Musical composition about a queen's garment (6)
- Stops crates filled with ecstasy (6)
- Associate delivered succulent plant (5)

### SUDOKU



**Solution to puzzle 12686**      **Solution to yesterday's Sudoku**

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

### FAITH

## Experience of reality

The credo 'Brahma Satyam Jagat Mithya' epitomises the entire Advaita teaching of Adi Sankara. It states that Brahman alone is Satyam, the only Reality; all else, including the entire jagat, is Mithya, that is 'non real.' In Brahman, which is of the essence of Sat, Existence, Chit, Consciousness and Ananda, Bliss, all else is subsumed. In a discourse, Nanniam Sri Rajagopala Ganapadigal drew attention to the Dakshinamurthy Stotra that teaches and inspires one to analyse the reality behind all human experience. This exercise can make one realise the true essence of the immortal self as the only everlasting consciousness and hence the only Reality. Like a magician or a great yogi the Lord is able to bring into existence the entire creation when He casts the spell of Maya. Like a sprout within a seed, the entire universe appears as manifold within the concepts of Time and Space that lend it extraordinary credibility.

What an infinite variety in the form of colour, shape, guna, etc is there to keep us engrossed in this world? Such is the power of Maya that what is not real is made to appear as real and what is real is well hidden behind this seemingly authentic display. It can make a single object appear as two or many. This is the greatest catch that is the cause of delusion. Then we think the experience of joy and sorrow is also real. A jnani knows that the universe is equal to a city perceived in a mirror where the images projected are not true and that worldly experience has only a dream like existence. When one wakes up, the dream is no more. The Lord's Maya is the most difficult to cross and keeps us tied to the world. Viveka jnana that can sift the real from the unreal alone can overpower Maya and this is gained only through God's grace.

MARKET WATCH

	24-07-2019	% CHANGE
Sensex	37,848	-0.36
US Dollar	68.98	-0.06
Gold	35,870	0.42
Brent oil	64.14	-1.66

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	380.80	-18.95
Asian Paints	1483.40	-54.05
Axis Bank	712.30	-15.70
Bajaj Auto	2522.60	-1.25
Bajaj Finserv	7065.30	-105.05
Bajaj Finance	3173.55	-103.35
Bharti Airtel	338.90	-4.70
BPCIL	349.10	-9.95
Britannia Ind	2641.45	-88.75
Cipla	518.75	-10.15
Coal India	216.85	-1.20
Dr Reddys Lab	2599.05	-0.30
Eicher Motors	16381.05	-717.40
GAIL (India)	136.65	-1.95
Grasim Ind	878.45	-5.05
HCL Tech	1021.30	10.35
HDFC	2184.25	45.75
HDFC Bank	2280.90	17.40
Hero MotoCorp	2403.40	-65.90
Hindalco	197.25	-5.85
Hind Unilever	1728.65	35.30
Indiabulls HFL	611.70	-28.85
ICICI Bank	408.50	-3.45
IndusInd Bank	1362.00	-54.75
Bharti Infratel	264.15	2.35
Infosys	786.30	-3.75
Indian Oil Corp	147.95	0.60
ITC	270.85	0.20
JSW Steel	255.25	-8.05
Kotak Bank	1497.20	3.20
L&T	1387.35	-22.15
M&M	550.00	-9.10
Maruti Suzuki	5768.00	-105.75
NTPC	131.85	-1.20
ONGC	143.60	-1.00
PowerGrid Corp	209.80	-0.65
Reliance Ind	1259.10	-14.45
State Bank	339.60	-2.60
Sun Pharma	425.55	-4.70
Tata Motors	151.25	-4.95
Tata Steel	446.00	-13.85
TCS	2096.80	-15.65
Tech Mahindra	660.45	-10.75
Titan	1087.40	-11.75
UltraTech Cement	4442.85	-96.60
UPL	617.05	-28.10
Vedanta	165.05	-3.05
Wipro	264.20	-0.30
YES Bank	89.15	-1.50
Zee Entertainment	379.60	18.80

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on July 24

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	68.78	69.10
Euro	76.65	77.02
British Pound	85.96	86.37
Japanese Yen (100)	63.65	63.95
Chinese Yuan	10.00	10.05
Swiss Franc	69.79	70.13
Singapore Dollar	50.42	50.67
Canadian Dollar	52.38	52.62
Malaysian Ringgit	16.70	16.80

Source: Indian Bank

BULLION RATES CHENNAI

July 24 rates in rupees with previous rates in parentheses

Retail Silver (1g)	45	(44.5)
22 ct gold (1 g)	3340	(3332)

# GST Council may reduce tax on EVs

Members likely to discuss easing of solar sector levies and rates for lotteries at Saturday's meet

TCA SHARAD RAGHAVAN  
NEW DELHI

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council, at its 36th meeting on Thursday, is likely to reduce the tax rate on electric vehicles, ease tax issues for the solar sector and deliberate on the tax rate on lotteries.

The meeting, which will take place over video conference, is unlikely to take up any other issue since the members prefer to discuss them in person, officials in the Council said.

"The government seems committed to its vision of popularising electric vehicles in a big way and is likely to reduce the GST rate on EVs," said Archit Gupta, founder and CEO ClearTax. "This seems like a comprehensive approach with tweaking of both direct and indirect taxes."

On the direct tax side, the



Charging for the future: The government seems committed to its vision of popularising EVs, says Archit Gupta. ■ REUTERS

government had, in the Budget, announced an additional income tax deduction of up to ₹1.5 lakh on the interest paid on loans taken to purchase electric vehicles.

In its last meeting, the Council had asked the Fitment Committee to look into

the matter of reducing the GST rate on electric vehicles from 12% to 5%.

**EV ecosystem**  
"The rest of the ecosystem required for functioning of EVs such as charging stations and availability of electricity

should also be considered," Mr. Gupta added. "Reduction of GST on batteries may also be on the cards."

The Council is also expected to discuss the tax incidence for the solar sector.

At the moment, according to a notification issued earlier this year, 70% of the cost of a solar plant is considered as goods and is taxed at 5%.

The remaining 30% is considered as services and is taxed at 18%. Solar manufacturers have approached the Council saying that the break up of goods and services is more along the lines of a 90-10 split rather than 70-30.

As such, they have requested that the Council amend the notification to incorporate this. This is likely to come up for discussion on Thursday.

"It is necessary to appropriate the right proportion of goods and services to solar

projects as the present allocation makes such projects incur more tax costs, which again cannot be passed on as input tax credits," said M.S. Mani, partner at Deloitte India.

**Merger of lottery rates**

The third issue the GST Council is expected to discuss is the tax rate on lotteries. Currently, State-run lotteries are taxed at 18% while State-authorized lotteries are taxed at 28%.

Lottery owners have requested the Council to merge the two rates, and also consider bringing that rate down to 12%.

The Council had, in its last meeting, said it would approach the Attorney General of India for his view on the matter. Those inputs have reportedly been received by the Council and will be discussed on Thursday.

## C.R.L. Narasimhan no more

Ex-associate editor's column 'Financial Scene' widely read

K.T. JAGANNATHAN  
CHENNAI

C.R.L. Narasimhan, former associate editor who also served as the business editor of *The Hindu*, passed away here on Wednesday after an illness, aged 71.

Before joining *The Hindu* in December 1993, he was with the State Bank of India group. A former merchant banker, CRL (as he was known to many in the field) quickly repositioned himself in his new role as a journalist. CRL, the financial writer, was tempered in his writing.

Yet, he was effective in pushing across his viewpoint. His writing style was simple, subtle and reader-



C.R.L. Narasimhan

friendly in terms of articulation. His understanding of the financial sector often pitchforked him into a privileged position of providing informal, but critical, feed to policy planners on assorted issues affecting this crucial sector. He ran a weekly column titled 'Fi-

ancial Scene' which used to appear every Monday in the Business Review pages of *The Hindu*.

A popular column, it had wide readership and elicited quite a response — formal as well informal — from discerning readers across the spectrum.

His knowledge of business and finance aside, what stood out in CRL was the consistency with which he churned out his column week after week with very few misses, even when he was going through trying times. He was tenacious in the face of persistent health issues. A jovial person, CRL had the uncanny ability to relate to people.

## Indices witness longest losing streak since May

Financial, auto majors lead losses

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

The equity benchmark indices lost ground for the fifth consecutive session on Wednesday, making it the worst losing streak since May as investor sentiment remained jittery amid selling by foreign investors, weak corporate numbers and the International Monetary Fund cutting India's growth forecast for 2019-20 to 7% from the earlier 7.3%.

The 30-share Sensex lost 135.09 points, or 0.36%, to close at 37,847.65.

The index has lost a total of 1,368 points in the last five sessions. The losses in the index were primarily led

by financials and auto majors like Tata Motors, Hero Motocorp, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finance, IndusInd Bank, Maruti Suzuki India, Yes Bank and M&M.

The broader Nifty fell 59.75 points or 0.53% to 11,271.30.

"The super-rich tax on FPI has had negative impact while poor quarterly results and below normal monsoon have dampened sentiments," said Siddhartha Khemka, head — Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

Provisional numbers show that foreign investors sold shares worth nearly ₹1,400 crore on Wednesday.

## DCC okays ₹3,050 cr. penalty on Airtel, Vodafone Idea

Telcos did not provide points of interconnection to Jio

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Digital Communications Commission (DCC) on Wednesday approved the cumulative penalty of ₹3,050 crore that regulator TRAI had imposed on Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea for not providing points of interconnection to Reliance Jio when it entered the market.

Both Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea are likely to legally challenge the "arbitrary" decision.

The inter-Ministerial body had, at its meeting in June, approved the imposition of penalty recommended by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). It had,



however, asked the sectoral regulator to review the levy given the financial stress in the sector. TRAI stuck to its earlier recommendations. "The DCC has accepted TRAI's recommendation on penalty on Airtel, Vodafone Idea. It will send the same

recommendation to the competent authority [Department of Telecom] in government for their decision," a senior government official said after the meeting.

An Airtel spokesperson said given the forced consolidation due to the financial stress in the sector, this decision will place further burden on the already stretched balance sheets of operators.

Vodafone Idea said in a statement, "This issue pertaining to points of interconnection has been examined by the DoT, various parliamentary and judicial authorities with no case for any default established."

## IDFC First Bank posts ₹617 cr. June quarter loss

'Loss on exposure to two NBFCs'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Private sector lender IDFC First Bank posted a ₹617 crore loss for the April-June quarter due to its exposure in two NBFCs downgraded by rating agencies recently.

"The bank reported a net loss of ₹617 crore for the quarter ended June 30, 2019, primarily due to additional provisioning for two identified stressed corporate loans to a housing finance company and a financial services company [recently downgraded by credit rating agencies], taking the provision coverage on these accounts to 75%," IDFC Bank said in a statement, without naming the

companies. The bank said that the provisions on these accounts was adequate and it did not expect to take any more provisions on this account in the near future.

The gross NPA ratio increased to 2.66% as compared to 2.43% during the same period of the previous year.

IDFC Bank had merged with Capital First, a retail-focused NBFC in December last year to become IDFC First Bank.

"The net interest margin for the bank pre-merger was 1.56% which has now crossed 3.01% in Q1-FY20, within six months of the merger," the bank said.

## Brokerages bet on HUL despite slowest growth in 7 quarters

'Company best suited to gain once the macros fall in place'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Hindustan Unilever Ltd. (HUL) may well have reported its slowest growth in seven quarters, but market participants remain bullish on the country's largest pure-play fast moving consumer goods company, whose growth is often looked upon as a barometer of the broader consumer sentiment.

Brokerages like Citi, Jefferies, CLSA, Motilal Oswal, Edelweiss and HDFC Securities among others have all said that while low growth is a concern, the company is best suited to gain once the

macros fall in place. Some of the brokerages, while marginally lowering the target price, are betting on factors like continuous margin expansion, steady earnings, complete integration of GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare (GSK) portfolio and expected recovery in rural demand.

**'Steady outcome'**

"HUL's business model has ample levers to flex, to ensure a reasonably steady outcome, despite challenging macro," stated Citi in its latest report while maintaining its neutral rating on the stock.

In a similar context, Jefferies said that the company "continues to execute better than peers on most parameters" while increasing earnings per share estimates "to reflect higher margin trajectory given benign input costs".

While Jefferies has increased the target price for the stock from ₹1,820 to ₹1,900, Citi has marginally lowered its target price from ₹1,850 from the earlier ₹1,867. On Tuesday, HUL announced its first quarter numbers, reporting a 7% growth in volume with the net profit rising 15% at ₹1,755 crore.

## Some Enfield dealers not to get HDFC Bank funding

They are well-capitalised, says lender

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Private sector lender HDFC Bank has stopped inventory financing for some dealers of Eicher Motors' Royal Enfield motorbikes as those dealers are well capitalised. These dealers have been communicated about the action.

HDFC Bank clarified that the communication on loan curbs was to dealers and not for retail finance.

"It has been sent to dealers who are well capitalised and do not need bank's funding. Moreover, they comprise a minuscule percentage of the total dealer base," HDFC Bank said.

Out of about 915 dealers of Royal Enfield, the step has been taken for about 10 dealers, auto mobile industry sources said.

The move comes at a time when the automobile industry is grappling with falling



sales and Royal Enfield is no exception.

In June 2019, Royal Enfield sold 24,12% fewer units at 55,082 units as against 72,588 units sold in June 2018. On a month-on-month basis the fall was 8.52% indicating the overall slump in the automotive sector.

Data from the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) shows that auto companies sold 16.28% fewer passenger vehicles in June 2019 compared with a year earlier. Two wheeler sales are down 11.7%.

## India rises in global innovation ranking

Jumps five places to rank 52 in the Global Innovation Index 2019

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

India has jumped five places to rank 52 in the Global Innovation Index 2019, up from the 57 it had in last year's rankings.

India's rise in the rankings has been a consistent trend over the last few years. It had ranked 81 in 2015, which rose to 66 in 2016, 60 in 2017 and 57 in 2018.

"The performance improvement of India is particularly noteworthy," the report, brought out by the UN World Intellectual Property Organisation, INSEAD and CII, said.

**Most innovative**

"India continues to be the most innovative economy in central and southern Asia — a distinction held since 2011 — improving its global rank to 52 in 2019.

"India is consistently among the top in the world in innovation drivers such as



Union Minister Piyush Goyal with Director General of World Intellectual Property Organisation Francis Gurry. ■ AFP

ICT services exports, graduates in science and engineering, the quality of universities, gross capital formation — a measure of economy-wide investments — and creative goods exports," the report added.

The report also highlighted that India stands out in

the world's top science and technology clusters, with Bengaluru, Mumbai, and New Delhi featuring among the top 100 global clusters.

"Given its size — and if progress is upheld — India will make a true impact on global innovation in the years to come," the report

said. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, who released the report, said that India's hope of increasing the size of the economy to \$5 trillion cannot happen without significant innovation.

"Invention comes naturally to India," Mr. Goyal said.

"Aryabhata invented the zero, which probably is the mother of all inventions involving science and mathematics and astronomy.

"We are happy that India has made significant progress to the 52nd rank in the Global Innovation Index 2019. We are happy that our culture of innovation is coming to the centre stage," he added.

Mr. Goyal also said that India must be a responsive country and work in mission mode by engaging with academia, the private sector and government agencies to improve the quality of citizens' lives even in the remotest parts of the country.

## 'India, China to overtake U.S. in tech innovation'

They will surpass U.S. by 2035: survey

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

India and China will surpass the U.S. as the World's Centers of Tech Innovation by 2035, according to Bloomberg New Economy Global Survey, which gathered views from 2,000 business professionals in 20 markets, including India, on the state of the world as the balance of global power shifts towards new economies.

Indian respondents are particularly confident in China and India's future role as global innovation centers — with 64% of those surveyed agreeing the countries will surpass the U.S. by 2035. Respondents also expressed strong enthusiasm for self-driving cars, with 65% agreeing they will dominate the future automobile market. From India, Mukesh Ambani, Natarajan Chandrasekaran and Nandan Nilekani are advisers to

the Bloomberg New Economy Forum (BNEF).

Overall, data shows that business professionals in emerging countries are more optimistic than those in developed markets about change, and have markedly higher expectations for the role that technology will play in the economy, business and daily life in decades to come.

**More optimistic**

"It is noteworthy that emerging economies are more optimistic than developed markets about the power of technology to shape a better world by the year 2035," said Andrew Browne, editorial director of the BNEF.

"Developing countries in general see technology more as an opportunity while the developed world has a greater sense of technology as a threat."

## IN BRIEF

**DHFL defaults on ₹8.07 crore bond repayments**

**NEW DELHI**  
Beleaguered housing finance company DHFL again defaulted on bond repayments to the tune of ₹8.07 crore on July 23, according to an exchange filing. The company on July 23, 2019 defaulted on '8.84 per cent, secured non-convertible debenture (NCD) for 3 years' with a total default amount of ₹8.07 crore, DHFL said in a regulatory filing on Wednesday. P71

**Syndicate Bank posts lower loss of ₹980 crore**

**BENGALURU**  
Syndicate Bank has posted net loss of ₹980 crore in the first quarter of fiscal 2019-20 as against a net loss of ₹1,282 crore in the year-earlier period. The bank's overall provisioning for bad loans and contingencies for the quarter also fell to ₹1,969.09 crore from ₹2,326.82 crore. Total income rose to ₹6,080.69 crore from ₹5,637.51 crore a year ago, the State-owned bank informed the media on Wednesday.

**Fitch downgrades Tata Motors' rating**

**MUMBAI**  
Fitch Ratings has downgraded the long-term issuer default rating (IDR) of Tata Motors Ltd. (TML) to 'BB-' from 'BB.' "The outlook is negative," Fitch ratings said in a statement. "The downgrade reflects the reduction in Fitch's expectations for TML's profitability and free cash generation in the next two to three years, it said. Fitch said it revised its estimates as business risks had increased for the company.

# U.S. to effect steep hike in EB-5 charges

Minimum amount required for the visa will go up to \$9,00,000 from the existing \$5,00,000

**MINI TEJASWI**  
**BENGALURU**

The U.S. is all set to effect a steep increase in EB-5 visa charges.

As per information available on the website of US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the minimum amount required to be invested in the Targeted Employment Areas (TEAs) in the U.S. will go up to \$9,00,000 (₹6.2 crore), an 80% hike from the existing \$5,00,000 (₹3.5 crore).

Also, the fees for standard investment (in urban areas) will go up to \$1,800,000 (over ₹12 crore) from \$1,000,000 (₹6.8 crore).

**First such move**

The new EB-5 fee structure, the first such move since the inception of the programme in 1990, will come into effect



**Dream visa:** EB-5 is currently the easiest channel to get green card and permanent residency in the U.S. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

from November 21.

Several high networth professionals, students, entrepreneurs and families in India have been exploring EB-5 in the last three decades as it is the easiest

channel to get a green card and permanent residency in the U.S. As per USCIS Acting Director Ken Cuccinelli, "Nearly 30 years ago, Congress created the EB-5 programme to benefit U.S. work-

ers, boost the economy, and aid distressed communities by providing an incentive for foreign capital investment in the United States.

"Since its inception, the EB-5 programme has drifted away from Congress's intent. Our reforms increase the investment level to account for inflation over the past three decades and substantially restrict the possibility of gerrymandering to ensure that the reduced investment amount is reserved for rural and high-unemployment areas most in need.

This final rule strengthens the EB-5 programme by returning it to its Congressional intent," he added, explaining the logic behind the fee hike. Interestingly, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has also taken away the power of defining

TEAs from the State governments and given it to the Federal government.

"Moving control over determining TEAs to the Department of Homeland Security is an integrity move that would prevent the gerrymandering of unemployment data that has allowed affluent areas like Manhattan in New York and Beverly Hills in California to qualify for EB-5 investment," commented Matt Hogan, VP, project development, CMB Regional Centres, Illinois, an EB-5 advisory firm.

**Scramble for EB-5 visas**

India will witness a scramble for EB-5 visas in the next few months, before the new rules kick in.

Post November, the demand will go down drastically, said immigration experts.

## HC order on coastal road a setback for L&T, HCC

Firms executing ₹14,000-cr. project

**PIYUSH PANDEY**  
**MUMBAI**

The Bombay High Court's decision to quash the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) clearances given to the Mumbai Coastal Road project has come as a huge setback for Larsen and Toubro (L&T) and Hindustan Construction Company (HCC).

The firms were executing the ₹14,000-crore project to connect Kandivali with Marine Lines in South Mumbai.

S.N. Subrahmanyam, MD & CEO, L&T said, "It is a setback for us. I worry why such action has been taken. We have been awarded the project in a fair and transparent manner. It's for the government to go to the Supreme Court."

The 29.2-km-long, eight-lane expressway was ex-

pected to reduce the travelling time from Kandivali to Marine Lines from 120 minutes to just 40 minutes.

R. Shankar Raman, Group CFO, L&T, said, "A silver lining in the dark cloud is that it has happened upfront. More marquee the project, more activism is expected."

L&T had been awarded ₹7,500 worth of contracts while HCC, in a joint venture with Hyundai Development Corporation, was executing ₹2,126 crore of contracts.

An HCC official said that the company is awaiting directions from its client, MCGM (the nodal agency), which had already filed a special leave petition in the Supreme Court against the Bombay High Court order.

## KVB Q1 profit rises 59% on lower provisioning

Net NPAs, however, increase to 4.94%

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
**CHENNAI**

Private sector lender Karur Vysya Bank reported a 59% increase in its standalone net profit for the first quarter ended June 2019 to ₹73 crore on lower provisions.

During the quarter, the net interest margin stood at 3.49%, net interest income remained flat at ₹584 crore, non-interest income rose 7% to ₹270 crore while core fee income declined marginally by ₹7 crore to ₹168 crore. Operating profit declined to ₹445 crore from ₹460 crore.

Provisions and contingencies contracted to ₹330 crore from ₹423 crore.

The bank's gross non-performing assets (NPAs) rose



to 9.17% of gross advances representing ₹4,511 crore from 7.44% while net NPAs increased to 4.94% of net advances to ₹2,322 crore from 4.50%.

The provision coverage ratio stood at 59.05%.

Total business increased to ₹1.11 lakh crore, a growth of 5.17%, the bank said.

## Cox & Kings defaults on ₹174-cr. CPs

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
**NEW DELHI**

Tours and travel services firm Cox & Kings on Wednesday said it had defaulted on commercial papers (CPs) worth ₹174 crore.

This is another instance within a span of four weeks that the beleaguered firm has defaulted on meeting financial obligations.

"The company is working closely with its lenders to optimise its strong asset base globally and bring the situation back to normal as soon as possible," Cox & Kings said in a regulatory filing. Earlier, on July 16, the company had said it defaulted on payment on unsecured commercial papers worth ₹45 crore.

## Rane (Madras) profit plunges on slump in auto sector

Expects declining trend to continue in the near future

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
**CHENNAI**

Leading manufacturer of steering and suspension products and die casting components Rane (Madras) Ltd.'s standalone net profit for the first quarter ended June 2019 plunged 75.9% to ₹3.2 crore on lower volume.

Total net revenue stood at ₹297.2 crore against ₹347.5 crore.

"The first quarter was a difficult quarter with significant drop in demand across vehicle segments in India. We expect this declining trend to continue in the near future. The management is working on various initia-



L. Ganesh

tives to reduce the impact of volume drop in RML India business.

Rane Precision Die Casting is working on ramping up new businesses and improving the operational per-

**The board gave its approval for enhanced investments of up to \$30 million in RPDC Inc., USA**

formance," said L. Ganesh, chairman, Rane Group.

The board approved enhanced investments of up to \$30 million (against \$20 million approved earlier) in its step-down subsidiary RPDC Inc., USA over the next five years.

The investment would be made either directly or through Rane (Madras) International Holdings BV, The Netherlands.

## Tube Investments' net up 62.9%

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
**CHENNAI**

Tube Investments of India Ltd.'s (TII) standalone net profit for the first quarter ended June 2019 rose 62.9% to ₹88 crore.

The firm's revenue dipped 8% to ₹1,252 crore due to contraction in the in auto sector, the company said in a statement.

TII generated a free cash flow of ₹83 crore during Q1 which was 120% of the net profit, the company said.

TII surrendered 32.39 lakh equity shares under the buy-back scheme announced by Shanthi Gears Ltd. and clocked a profit of ₹19 crore on the transaction. This was shown as an exceptional item.



# Murtagh's sensational five-for rips England apart

Ireland takes a 122-run first innings lead on the opening day after bundling out the host for 85

## LORD'S TEST

IANS  
LONDON

Ireland ended England's World Cup honeymoon in dramatic style on Wednesday, bowling out the host nation for a derisory 85 on the first day at Lord's as it eyed one of the biggest shocks in Test history.

Tim Murtagh took a stunning five for 13 in nine overs on a ground where he plays for Middlesex.

Ireland then consolidated its position by making 207 in reply for a first-innings lead of 122 with Andy Balbirnie top-scoring with 55.

Ten days after England won the World Cup at the same ground against New Zealand and a week ahead of the Ashes, Ireland exposed their batting fragility in brutal fashion.

Just three England batsmen made it into double figures – Joe Denly, who top-scored with 23, debutant Oly Stone and Sam Curran – in an innings that was over inside 24 overs on a baking day in London.

It was the fourth time in 34 Tests that England had lost all 10 wickets in a session – a worrying sign ahead of the five-Test series against Australia.

### Classic demonstration

The 37-year-old seamer, who recently took his 800th First Class wicket, gave a classic



**Wrecker-in-chief:** Tim Murtagh exults after knocking back the stumps to dismiss Jonny Bairstow. ■ STU FORSTER/GETTY IMAGES

demonstration of his skill after England captain Joe Root won the toss and batted on an emerald green pitch prepared by Irish groundsman Karl McDermott.

"I'm not quite sure what's happened in the last two hours," an elated Murtagh said during the lunch interval.

"It's a dream just to play here in the first place. But to

get on the honours board... It's a fantastic first session for us."

England's collapse followed its 77 all out against the West Indies in Barbados in January.

### Deep trouble

The home side was soon in deep trouble despite Root's insistence that they did not

want to "sleepwalk" into this

match, with bigger challenges ahead.

Test debutant Jason Roy, fresh from his World Cup heroics, fell for five when Murtagh, short of express pace but remorselessly attacking the top of off-stump, squared him up, with first slip Paul Stirling holding the ensuing edge.

Debutant Mark Adair (three for 32) had his first

Test wicket when Denly was leg before wicket and he also captured the prize wicket of Root, plumb lbw for two.

When Jonny Bairstow was bowled for a duck off an inside edge by Murtagh, England was 42 for five.

### On the honours board

And when Murtagh had Moeen Ali caught behind for a duck, the seamer had a

## SCOREBOARD

**England – 1st innings:** R. Burns c Wilson b Murtagh 6, J. Roy c Stirling b Murtagh 5, J. Denly lbw b Adair 23, J. Root lbw b Adair 2, J. Bairstow b Murtagh 0, Moeen c Wilson b Murtagh 0, C. Woakes lbw b Murtagh 0, S. Curran c McCollum b Rankin 18, S. Broad c Wilson b Rankin 3, O. Stone b Adair 19, J. Leach (not out): 1; Extras (lb-5, nb-2, w-1): 8; Total (in 23.4 overs): 85.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-8, 2-36, 3-36, 4-42, 5-42, 6-42, 7-43, 8-58, 9-67.

**Ireland bowling:** Murtagh 9-2-13-5, Adair 7.4-1-32-3, Thompson 4-1-30-0, Rankin 3-1-5-2.

**Ireland – 1st innings:** W. Porterfield c Leach b Curran 14, J. McCollum b Curran 19, A. Balbirnie b Stone 55, P. Stirling lbw b Broad 36, K. O'Brien (not out) 28, G. Wilson c Root b Stone 0, S. Thompson b Broad 0, M. Adair b Curran 3, A. McBrine b Broad 11, T. Murtagh c Burns b Stone 16, B. Rankin b Moeen 7; Extras (b-10, lb-6, w-2): 18; Total (in 58.2 overs): 207.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-32, 2-45, 3-132, 4-138, 5-138, 6-141, 7-149, 8-174, 9-195.

**England bowling:** Broad 19-5-60-3, Woakes 10-2-34-0, Stone 12-3-29-3, Curran 10-3-28-3, Leach 3-0-26-0, Moeen 4.2-1-14-1.

**England – 2nd innings:** J. Leach (batting) 0, R. Burns (batting) 0; Total (for no loss in 1 over): 0.

**Ireland bowling:** Murtagh 1-1-0-0.

**Toss:** England.

place on the honours board for all those who take five wickets in a Test innings at Lord's.

# CoA refers Raman's selection to Ombudsman

Process followed in appointing coach of the women's team under scrutiny

G. VISWANATH  
MUMBAI

The Committee of Administrators (CoA) has recently referred former India player W.V. Raman's selection as coach of the Indian women's team to the BCCI Ombudsman Justice (Retd.) D.K. Jain. The CoA had resolved to approach the Ombudsman after its meeting in Delhi in April.

The process followed for Raman's selection last December divided the CoA members Vinod Rai and Diana Edulji with the latter calling it "unconstitutional".

Diana had contended that when the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) comprising Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly and V.V.S. Laxman was in place, there was no need to appoint an Ad-hoc Committee in Kapil Dev, Aunshuman Gaekwad and Shantha Rangaswamy.

Representing the CAC, Laxman had told the CoA that they needed time and also their role to be put in black and white. But Rai went ahead and constituted the Ad-hoc Committee.

### Queries raised

The questions that were asked then were: Whether the CoA had the authority to appoint an ad hoc committee, whether Raman, the batting coach at the NCA



W.V. Raman. ■ PHOTO: K. PICHUMANI

could have been asked to travel with the women's team to the West Indies and whether the three-member ad-hoc committee attracted the conflict of interest rule, being part of the steering committee for the formation of the Indian Cricketers Association.

The CoA – which now has three members now with the addition of Lt. Gen. (ret.) Ravi Thodde – would want Jain to give his opinion soon, because, it is keen to continue with the same panel to choose the head coach and other support staff of the men's team.

It appears that the BCCI GM, Operations, Saba Karim, has already spoken to the three former India players.

# 'Disappointed not to get picked'

Shubman Gill vows to keep performing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

He was expecting an India recall after a stellar show in the 'A' series and even though Shubman Gill is disappointed by the snub for the West Indies tour, the youngster is not ready to "spend time thinking over it."

Gill, along with Manish Pandey and Shreyas Iyer, was tipped to make it to the limited overs squad but despite being adjudged 'Player of the Series' with 218 runs and three half-centuries, he was the one to miss out.

"I was waiting for the Indian senior team to be announced on Sunday and I expected to be selected for at least one of the squads. It was disappointing not to get picked but I am not going to spend time thinking over it. I'll keep scoring runs and performing to the best of my ability to impress the selec-



Shubman Gill. ■ FILE PHOTO: AKHILESH KUMAR

tors," Gill told 'CricketNext' website.

The Punjab youngster is pretty satisfied with his performance in the just-concluded A series which India won 4-1.

"It was a fantastic series for me and team as well since we won with a 4-1 mar-

gin. Personally, I would have liked to carry on and score at least a couple of hundreds in those fifties. But I will learn from this experience," said Gill, who has played two ODIs in New Zealand before the World Cup.

Having spoken to Rahul Dravid, the biggest takeaway for Gill from the limited overs series has been playing as per the demands of the conditions rather than depending on his natural flair.

### Biggest lesson

"The biggest lesson that I have learned from my first West Indies tour is to try to curb my natural game depending on match condition.

"It's important to block the good balls as well and remain at the crease for as long as possible. Person who is set at the crease needs to bat through the difficult period," he said.

# Bowlers put India-A ahead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

India-A seized momentum in the unofficial first Test against the West Indies-A with pacer Mohammed Siraj and spinner Shahbaz Nadeem reducing the host to 126 for five on the opening day, here on Wednesday.

After winning the ODI series 4-1, India-A extended its domination of the hosts after they opted to bat at Sir Vivian Richards Stadium.

Siraj sent back both the openers – Jeremy Solozano (9) and Montcin Hodge (16) – in a confident start for India while his pace colleague Shivam Dube saw the back of rival skipper Shamarh Brooks (12).

Brooks was caught by wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha, who is playing his first competitive match after a long injury lay-off.

Left-arm spinner Nadeem then swung into action to further tilt it in India's favour as he dented the middle order. Nadeem first dismissed



Shahbaz Nadeem. ■ FILE PHOTO: B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Roston Chase (25), who was caught by Saha, and then clean bowled Jahmar Hamilton (16).

West Indies-A was reeling at 97 for five at that time but Rahkeem Cornwall (15 batting) and Jermaine Blackwood (29 batting) took the side past the 100-run mark without further damage.

**The scores:** West Indies-A 126 for five in 40 overs. (J. Blackwood 29 batting, Roston Chase 25, Mohd. Siraj two for 43, S. Nadeem two for 37) vs India).

IANS  
NEW DELHI

Former South Africa cricketer Jonty Rhodes has applied for the position of India's fielding coach after the BCCI invited application for the position of head coach and support staff for the Indian team.

Speaking to IANS, a senior BCCI functionary confirmed that Rhodes has applied for the position of fielding coach and while he hasn't



Nuwan Kulasekara. ■ FILE PHOTO: AFP

worked with any national team, he is eligible because he has coached Mumbai Indians for nine seasons.

"Yes, Rhodes has applied and while it is true that he hasn't coached any international team, he has been involved with Mumbai Indians for nine seasons and, as per the eligibility criteria, you need to have worked with an IPL team for three seasons if not an international team," the functionary said.



Jonty Rhodes. ■ FILE PHOTO: SUDHAKARA JAIN

# Kulasekara calls it a day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
COLOMBO

Sri Lankan seamer Nuwan Kulasekara has decided to call time on his international career, finishing as the third highest wicket-taker among his country's pace bowlers after Chaminda Vaas and Lasith Malinga.

The 37-year-old had 199 scalps in 184 ODIs while he

took 66 wickets in 58 T20 matches in a career spanning over 15 years. He also played 21 Tests, taking 48 wickets.

Kulasekara last represented Sri Lanka in an ODI against Zimbabwe in Hambantota in July 2017 and hasn't played any competitive match since March 2018.

# Milak crushes Phelps' 10-year-old record

## WORLD SWIMMING

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
GWANGJU (SOUTH KOREA)

Chinese giant Sun Yang suffered defeat on Wednesday after an emotional week in which he has clashed with rival swimmers over doping allegations, while Hungarian teenager Kristof Milak shattered Michael Phelps's 200m butterfly world record.

Triple Olympic champion Sun had already retained his 200 and 400m crown in Gwangju but he finished a distant sixth in the 800m final behind Italian Gregorio Paltrinieri, who claimed gold in seven minutes, 39.27 seconds from Norway's Henrik Christiansen.

A brutal schedule looked to have taken its toll on Sun, who has been involved in angry confrontations with Australian Mack Horton and Britain's Duncan Scott after they snubbed him at two different medal ceremonies in response to bombshell claims made in a FINA doping panel report.

The leaked document alleged that Sun destroyed blood samples after he was visited by testers last year.

After taking bronze behind Milak, South Africa's Chad le Clos weighed in as



**Elated:** Kristof Milak, who was in elementary school when Michael Phelps set the 200m butterfly record, celebrates. ■ QUINN ROONEY/GETTY IMAGES

the sample-smashing row rumbled on.

"They should all be banned for life, the guys that have cheated," he sniffed. "What Duncan did was fantastic."

### Exhausted

"I was exhausted," winced the Chinese idol. "My legs and arms felt sore – the hardest part is juggling a tight schedule but I'll have to do that at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics."

An 11-time world champion, Sun accused Horton of "disrespecting China" by refusing to step onto the podium for the winner's national anthem after the 400m final

at the weekend.

And Sun, who has complained privately of being shunned by other athletes in Korea, went eyeball to eyeball with Scott after Tuesday's 200m medal presentation.

Meanwhile, Milak stormed to gold in the men's 200m fly, clocking a blistering 1:50.73 to obliterate Phelps's 10-year-old mark.

### Unprecedented

Elsewhere, Italian Federica Pellegrini retained her 200m freestyle title in 1:54.22, while Britain's Adam Peaty completed an unprecedented hat-trick of world doubles in the 50 and 100m breast-

stroke as he romped to gold in the one-lap final in 26.06.

**The results: Men: 800m freestyle:** 1. Gregorio Paltrinieri (Ita) 7:39.27s, 2. Henrik Christiansen (Nor) 7:41.28, 3. David Aubry (Fra) 7:42.08.

**200m butterfly:** 1. Kristof Milak (Hun) 1:50.73 (WR, Old: 1:51.51, Michael Phelps, 2009), 2. Daiya Seto (Jpn) 1:53.86, 3. Chad le Clos (RSA) 1:54.15.

**50m breaststroke:** 1. Adam Peaty (GBR) 26.06, 2. Felipe Lima (Bra) 26.66, 3. Joao Gomes (Bra) 26.69.

**Women: 200m freestyle:** 1. Federica Pellegrini (Ita) 1:54.22, 2. Ariarne Titmus (Aus) 1:54.66, 3. Sarah Sjostrom (Swe) 1:54.78.

**Mixed 4x100m medley relay:** 1. Australia 3:39.08, 2. USA 3:39.10, 3. Great Britain 3:40.68.

## PKL

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

Bengal Warriors scored a thumping, 48-17 win over UP Yoddha in the league phase of the Vivo ProKabaddi League Season-7 at Gachibowli Indoor Stadium here on Wednesday.

It was a remarkable performance by PKL debutant Mohammad Nabibakhsh, who overcame a false start when he was 'self-out' with his first raid, to cap a Super-10 from 11 raids. And, with captain Maninder Singh and K. Prapanjan joining the party, all the UP defence could do was watch hopelessly as the rivals picked points at will, especially in the second session.

For the losers, Monu Goyat was the main scorer with five points from 14 raids.

### Steady start

Earlier, it was a slow and steady start by Bengal outfit which overcame an early deficit with UP Yodha actually leading 3-0 to start with.

Maninder, who was not as flamboyant as the other big names in his raids, was efficient with four points in the first half.

The Bengal defence, with Rinku Narwal and Baldev Si-



**Remarkable:** Debutant Mohammad Nabibakhsh, who overcame a false start when he was 'self-out' with his first raid, capped a Super-10 from 11 raids. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

ingh being exceptional, was equal to the task backing their raiders, though Jeeva Kumar's over-enthusiastic tackles saw him concede a couple of points.

### First all-out

Just when it looked to be a close contest with the scores tied six-all at one stage in first-half, Bengal scored the first all-out of the game to widen the lead to 11-7 and soon Maninder scored two points including one bonus to further increase the lead to 13-8.

It was then Shrikant Jhadav's turn to slip and concede a 'self-out' to the disappoint-

ment of the UP camp. But on the other hand, K. Prapanjan of Bengal was good in raiding to pick a couple of points to help Bengal lead 17-9 at the break.

On resumption, Bengal went on the offensive, scoring 18 points in the first nine minutes which included the second all-out and also a super raid by Nabibakhsh fetching three points.

With Bengal scoring the fourth all-out with Nabibakhsh being the star performer and defender Baldev Singh finishing with seven points from eight tackles, including a High-five, UP was

nowhere in the game.

### Dabang pips Titans

The Desai brothers – Siddharth and Suraj, with the latter scoring the highest points (18) for a debutant in the PKL history – came good for Telugu Titans but it was not enough as the team suffered its third straight defeat, losing to Delhi Dabang 33-34.

For the winner, raider Naveen Kumar scored 14 points from 20 raids.

**The result:** Bengal Warriors bt UP Yodha 48-17; Dabang Delhi bt Telugu Titans 34-33.

**Thursday's match:** Dabang Delhi vs Tamil Thalaivas, 7.30 p.m.

# Evenly-matched teams promise close title-race

Dabang opens defence against Paltan; Focus remains firmly on home-grown talent



**Time for a selfie!** A. Sharath Kamal, Bernadette Szocs, Alvaro Robles, Harmeet Desai, Benedikt Duda and Manav Thakkar during a press conference in New Delhi on Wednesday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

## UTT LEAGUE

RAKESH RAO  
NEW DELHI

Rising cost and limited pay-off seems to have led to the formation of six refurbished franchisees – with lesser number of players – to battle it out in a shortened format of the cash-rich Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT) league, beginning at the Thyagaraj Stadium here on Wednesday.

Over the next 18 days, the teams vie for a prize-fund of ₹2 crore. The winner on August 11 will receive ₹75 lakh and the runner-up, ₹50 lakh.

Unlike the previous two seasons, the action will be limited to the Capital.

This is clearly to cut out the travelling expenses and other related costs involved in taking the league to different cities.

To limit the duration of each tie to around two

hours, the number of matches have been reduced – from seven last year to five this year – by cutting down two singles, one each for men and women.

In spite of all the pruning, the focus remains firmly on the home-grown talent, with each team comprising four Indians and two overseas players.

Each tie comprises two women's singles, two men's singles and a mixed doubles.

A player can feature in one singles and one doubles. The mixed doubles combination should have one Indian and one overseas player. Unlike last year, this edition will feature singles involving two Indians.

### Well balanced

Since there was no players' auction and those in the fray were drafted into six teams, all teams appear well balanced.

## The battlelines

Teams	Players	Coaches
Chennai Lions	A. Sharath Kamal, Tiago Apolonia (Prt), Madhurika Patkar, Petrisa Solja (Ger), Anirban Ghosh, Yashini Sivasankar	A. Muralidhara Rao, Peter Engel (Ger)
Dabang Delhi	G. Sathiyam, Jon Persson (Swe), Krittika Sinha Roy, Bernadette Szocs (Rou), Parth Virmani, Naina	Sachin Shetty, Vesna Ojstersek (Svn)
Puneri Paltan	Harmeet Desai, Chaung Chih-Yuan (Twn), Ayhika Mukherjee, Sabine Winter (Ger), Ronit Bhanja, Selena Selvakumar	Parag Agarwal, Francisco Santos (Prt)
RP-SG Mavericks	Sanil Shetty, Benedikt Duda (Ger), Manika Batra, Matilda Ekholm (Swe), Manush Shah, Prapti Sen	N. Ravichandran, Zoltan Batorfi (Hun)
Goa Challengers	A. Amalraj, Alvaro Robles (Esp), Archana Kamath, Cheng I-Ching (Twn), Siddhesh Pande, Shruti Amrute	Arup Basak, Bettine Vriesekoop (Ned)
U Mumba	Manav Thakkar, Kirill Gerassimenko (Kaz), Sutirtha Mukherjee, Doo Hoi Kem (HKG), Jeet Chandra, Moumita Dutta	Soumyadeep Roy, Jiaqi Zheng (USA)

Teams to vie for a prize-fund of ₹2 crore. The winner will receive ₹75 lakh and the runner-up, ₹50 lakh

Number of matches have been reduced – from seven last year to five this year. Two singles, one each for men and women, have been cut down

Each tie comprises two women's and two men's singles and a mixed doubles. A player can feature in one singles and one doubles. The mixed doubles combination should have one Indian and one overseas player

The action will be limited to New Delhi. This is clearly to cut out the travelling expenses and other related costs involved in taking the league to different cities

Defending champion Dabang Smashers is now Dabang Delhi. With spearhead G. Sathiyam in fine form, Romania's top-ranked woman Bernadette Szocs and Sweden's No. 3 Jon Persson in its fold, Dabang faces new entrant Puneri Paltan in the inaugural clash.

### Formidable

Sharath Kamal-led Chennai Lions, too, looks formidable. Portugal No. 2 Tiago Apolonia, Madhurika Patkar and Germany's top-ranked woman Petrisa Solja can all contribute to take the team to the title.

Taipei) and World No. 62 among women, Sabine Winter (Germany), Paltan is capable of upsetting the calculations of other contenders.

### Dark horse

The proverbial 'dark horse' could well be Goa Challengers. Served by World No. 8 woman Cheng I-Ching (Chinese Taipei) and Spain's No. 1 Alvaro Robles, Goa can safely bank on A. Amalraj and Archana Kamath.

For Kolkata-based RP-SG Mavericks, Manika Batra and Germany No. 5 Benedikt Duda hold the key. Left-hander Sanil Shetty, who had a good 2017 UTT season, along with Sweden No. 1 woman player Matilda Ekholm make the team a serious title-aspirant.

Debutant U Mumba boasts of top ranked Kazakh Kirill Gerassimenko and Hong Kong's No. 1 woman player Doo Hoi Kem, besides Manav Thakkar and Sutirtha Mukherjee.

### Dark horse

The proverbial 'dark horse' could well be Goa Challengers. Served by World No. 8 woman Cheng I-Ching (Chinese Taipei) and Spain's No. 1 Alvaro Robles, Goa can safely bank on A. Amalraj and Archana Kamath.

Since most teams are evenly matched, the race to the title promises to be close one.

## Bopanna & Carreno Busta in quarterfinals

### SPORTS BUREAU

HAMBURG  
Rohan Bopanna and Pablo Carreno Busta of Spain beat former World No.1 Nenad Zimonjic of Serbia and Rudolf Molleker of Germany 6-3, 5-7, 10-3 in the doubles first round of the €1,855,490 ATP-500 tournament here on Wednesday.

**The results: First round: €1,855,490 ATP-500, Hamburg, Germany:** Pablo Carreno Busta (Esp) & Rohan Bopanna (Ger) bt Rudolf Molleker (Ger) & Nenad Zimonjic (Srb) 6-3, 5-7, [10-3].

**\$777,385 ATP, Atlanta, USA:** Kwon Soonwoo (Kor) bt Prajnesh Gunneswaran 6-7(4), 7-5, 6-0.

**Doubles:** Taylor Fritz (USA) & Cameron Norrie (GBR) bt Marius Copil (Rou) & Leander Paes 7-6(2), 6-4.

**€586,140 ATP, Gstaad, Switzerland:** Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan & Purav Raja bt Denys Molchanov (Ukr) & Igor Zelenay (SVK) 6-4, 6-2.

**\$25,000 ITF men, Nonthaburi, Thailand:** Alexander Crnokrak (Aus) bt Sidharth Rawat 6-3, 6-2; Naoki Tajima (Jpn) bt Niki Poonacha 6-4, 4-6, 6-1; Manish Sureshkumar (Kaz) & Arjun Kadhe bt Soichiro Moritani (Jpn) & Pol Wattanakul (Tha) 6-2, 6-3; Billy Harris (GBR) & Vladyslav Orlov (Ukr) bt Dusty Boyer (USA) & Karunudu Singh 6-4, 6-4; Niki Poonacha & Manish Sureshkumar bt Kunal Anand & Shahbaz Khan 6-2, 6-3.

**\$25,000 ITF women, Porto, Portugal:** Gabriella Da Silva Fick (Aus) & Magali Kempen (Bel) bt Shrivalli Rashmikaa Bhamidipaty & Sathwika Sama 6-3, 6-1

## Cottrell 'salutes' Indian blind cricket team

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
JAMAICA

West Indies pacer Sheldon Cottrell paid rich tribute to the Indian blind cricket team, the reigning world champion, when the cricketers visited him at his Army base camp in Jamaica.

It's Indian blind team's maiden visit to Jamaica, where it will lock horns with the Jamaican blind team in a series, featuring three ODIs and two T20Is. Cottrell posted his pictures with the players.

"The Indian Blind Cricket team have made an historic visit to Jamaica – I met them at my work place – my army base Up Camp Park. #salute to these men and their achievements," Cottrell tweeted. "You can follow the World Champions here - @blindcricket ...," read his tweet.



**Nice gesture:** Cottrell had words of praise for the Indian blind cricket team. ■ COURTESY: COTTERELL/TWITTER

## All eyes on Malinga as Lanka meets Bangladesh

Improvement in ODI rankings at stake in the series beginning on Friday

### CRICKET

ANI  
DUBAI

After a downgrade performance in recently concluded World Cup, both Sri Lanka and Bangladesh will look to improve their ODI rankings in the three-match bilateral series beginning in Colombo on Friday.

Seventh-placed Bangladesh can increase the lead over Sri Lanka when the teams face off in a three-match series.

### In the focus

Retiring fast bowler Lasith Malinga is in the focus as Sri Lanka and Bangladesh players prepare for their first series after the World Cup.

Malinga, who will retire from ODIs after the opening match, is the second-highest ranked bowler from his side in 35th position, with 552 rating points.

He is nowhere near his



**One last time!** Lasith Malinga will look to go out with a memorable performance to cap a 15-year ODI career. ■ AP

peak in terms of rankings, but the 35-year-old would like to go out with a memorable performance to cap a 15-year ODI career.

The only bowler to have taken three ODI hat-tricks, Malinga attained a career-high points tally of 675 after a memorable spell of three for 22 against Bangladesh in Colombo on July 2007.

His highest ranking was seventh in November 2011,

achieved against Pakistan in Dubai.

Spinner Akila Dananjaya is the highest-ranked bowler from Sri Lanka in the 21st position, while Angelo Mathews and Niroshan Dickwella are the leading batsmen for the home side, in 35th and 42nd positions, respectively.

In the absence of World Cup star and world's top-ranked all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who has been rest-

ed from the series, Bangladesh batsmen Mushfiqur Rahim (19th) and Tamim Iqbal (27th) will be leading the charge among batsmen, while Mustafizur Rahman (15th) and Mehidy Hasan Miraz (17th) would be looking to move towards the top 10 in the bowlers' list.

### Eighth spot

Currently, Sri Lanka is at the eighth spot with 79 points whereas Bangladesh are at seventh place with eleven points more than the Lankan team.

Bangladesh can increase the lead over Sri Lanka from 11 to 16 points with a 3-0 win while losing the series by the same margin could see them slip to ninth position, behind the West Indies on decimal points.

While if Sri Lanka clean-swept Bangladesh in the series they will gain three points and finish with 82 points at the same spot.

## Lanka reduces squad to 16 for Bangladesh ODIs

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka on Wednesday reduced its original 22-strong squad to 16 for the three-match ODI series against Bangladesh here. Lasith Malinga, who will retire after the first ODI, will be replaced in the squad for the next two matches by Dasun Shanaka.

**The squad:** Dimuth Karunaratna (Capt.), Kusal Perera, Avishka Fernando, Kusal Mendis, Angelo Mathews, Lahiru Thirimane, Shehan Jayasuriya, Dhananjaya de Silva, Wainudu Hasaranga, Akila Dananjaya, Lasith Malinga, Nuwan Pradeep, Lahiru Kumara, Thisara Perera, Isuru Udana and Kasun Rajitha.

## Buffon denies Inter

Juve legend makes crucial saves in shootout; Ronaldo scores free kick

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
NANJING

Matthijs de Ligt scored an own goal 10 minutes into his first Juventus start before veteran goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon inspired it to a 4-3 penalty shootout win over Inter Milan on Wednesday.

It may only have been a friendly between the Italian arch rivals, but tempers threatened to boil over at times, especially in a feisty second half in stifling Nanjing.

The game ended 1-1 after 90 minutes, with Cristiano Ronaldo drawing Juventus level with a deflected second-half free-kick following De Ligt's own goal.

Then the 41-year-old Buffon – more than twice De Ligt's age – sprang to the fore in the shootout, making a triumphant return to the Serie A champion after a year with Paris Saint-Germain.

New Juventus coach Maurizio Sarri said he could "accept mistakes" – for now.

"The feeling is that we can improve a lot, especially in the offensive part of the game," he said.

"It is about changing the way of thinking and it is not easy to happen in a short time."

Sarri started the 19-year-old in the "Derby d'Italia" but the central defender got off to the worst possible beginning, directing the ball past goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny with his knee to give Inter the lead.

De Ligt was largely untroubled thereafter before being substituted at the break.

### Ronaldo roughly treated

It was only a pre-season friendly as part of the International Champions Cup, but Antonio Conte's Inter dealt out some rough treatment to Ronaldo.

Three times in the first half, in a match played in sweltering conditions in eastern China, the Portuguese forward was sent sprawling to the turf.

There was a flashpoint in the 51st minute when Juventus substitute Merih Demiral – who was to score the winning penalty – lashed out while waiting for his side to take a corner.

## Besieged Bale scores in comeback win

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WASHINGTON

Bale shrugged off uncertainty over his Real Madrid future on Tuesday as his second-half goal helped the La Liga giant rally for a friendly win over Arsenal.

Madrid clawed back from two goals down to finish 2-2 and eventually prevail 3-2 in the penalty shootout in the International Champions Cup exhibition tournament.

Welsh star Bale didn't play in Madrid's 3-1 loss to Bayern Munich in Houston on Saturday, manager Zinedine Zidane saying on Monday he declined to dress for the match as the club pursued options for off-loading him.



**Reminding his worth!** Gareth Bale was focal to Real's comeback amid speculations of leaving the club. ■ AFP

Zidane said at the weekend he thought it would be "best for everyone" if Bale's departure could be arranged quickly – comments Bale's agent branded "disrespectful" of a player who helped the side to a Spanish league title and four Champions Leagues since arriving from Tottenham six years ago.

Zidane insisted on Monday that he meant no disrespect, and Bale duly came in at halftime on Tuesday and made a statement.

"He had a good game and I'm happy for him," Zidane said. "I do not know what's going to happen, for now he's with us. It did not change anything."

## Tokyo unveils 2020 Olympics medal designs

They are made from recycled materials collected from old electronics

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
TOKYO

Tokyo Olympic organisers on Wednesday unveiled medals designed to reflect the "energy" of athletes as the city marked a year to go until the opening ceremony of the 2020 Summer Games.

The medals, which will be made from recycled materials collected from old electronics, are intended to "resemble rough stones that have been polished and which now shine," organisers said. The gold, silver and bronze awards each have a rough, almost meringue like surface on the outer ring, encircling a smooth, shining centre.

"The medals collect and reflect myriad patterns of light, symbolising the energy of the athletes," the organisers said.

The medals were unveiled at a ceremony marking the year-to-go countdown until the Tokyo 2020 Games, with International Olympic Committee chief Thomas Bach praising the city's readiness.

"I can truly say I have never seen an Olympic city as prepared as Tokyo, with one year to go before the Olympic Games," Bach said.



**First Look:** Fans, sponsors and politicians were all present at the event as organisers showed the 2020 Olympics medals for the first time. ■ REUTERS

"All the elements that make a truly outstanding Olympic Games are in place," he added, predicting "an amazing experience" for athletes.

The Olympic medals design was chosen from more than 400 entries from professional designers and design students.

"I never dreamed that the design I submitted only as a memorial to this lifetime

event would be actually selected," designer Junichi Kawanishi said.

"I hope the medals will be seen as paying tribute to the athletes' efforts, reflecting their glory, and symbolising friendship."

Ryohei Miyata, who chaired the board that chose Kawanishi's design, said the medals showcased Japanese metal moulding techniques.

The medals will come on

ribbons that use traditional Japanese chequered patterns and graphics that symbolises kimono layering techniques.

The medals, which will weigh in at between 556 and 450 grams each, are being manufactured from metal extracted from mobile phones and other small electronics donated by the Japanese public as part of a campaign to make Tokyo 2020 eco-friendly.

TV PICKS

**England vs Ireland:** Only Test, Sony ESPN, 3.30 p.m.  
**Ultimate Table Tennis:** Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 7 p.m.  
**PKL:** Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.  
**TNPL:** Star Sports 3, 7.15 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Filipe Luis joins Flamengo

**RIO DE JANEIRO**  
Brazil Copa America winner Filipe Luis has joined Flamengo as a free agent after four seasons with Atletico Madrid, the Rio de Janeiro club announced on Tuesday. The veteran 33-year-old left-back has signed a two-year deal until 2021. He joined Atletico in 2010 where he spent a total of eight years, interrupted by a season with Chelsea. AFP



Newcastle breaks the bank to sign Joelinton

**BERLIN**  
Newcastle United has signed Brazilian forward Joelinton from Hoffenheim, the Premier League club said on Tuesday in what is the biggest transfer fee in its history. The 22-year-old will wear Newcastle's number nine shirt — made famous by Alan Shearer among others — after agreeing to a six-year deal reported to be worth up to €45 million. AFP



Pochettino hails Son Heung-min

**SHANGHAI**  
Tottenham Hotspur manager Mauricio Pochettino heaped praise Wednesday on Son Heung-min and said he regarded the South Korean superstar as Asia's answer to David Beckham. "We can see how people love Sonny in Asia, he's an icon. We joked a bit, but I compare him with David Beckham. But I'm not surprised and it's good to see how people love him and how important he is to people," he said. AFP

CONMEBOL punishes Argentina football chief

**ASUNCION (PARAGUAY)**  
South American football's ruling body CONMEBOL on Tuesday sanctioned Argentine federation president Claudio Tapia over an attack on a Copa America referee. Tapia saw red after Argentina led by Lionel Messi was knocked out 2-0 in the semifinal by eventual winner Brazil. In a letter to CONMEBOL Tapia complained of "serious and gross refereeing mistakes" which he claimed had penalised Argentina. AFP



Hathurusinghe asked to step down

**COLOMBO**  
Sri Lanka's head cricket coach Chandika Hathurusinghe has been asked to step down after the ongoing ODI series against Bangladesh. Sources in Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) said its secretary Mohan de Silva has written to Hathurusinghe asking him to resign. Hathurusinghe was under pressure to quit after Sri Lanka's dismal showing in the recent World Cup. The 51-year-old was appointed in December 2017 after he left his job with the Bangladesh team. PTI

# Sindhu makes short work of Han Yue

Prannoy stuns eighth seed Srikanth; Sameer bow out

JAPAN OPEN

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA TOKYO**  
P.V. Sindhu and H.S. Prannoy moved into the second round of Japan Open with contrasting wins over the women's and men's singles events here on Wednesday.

Fifth seed Sindhu, who came out second best in last week's Indonesia Open, took 37 minutes to get the better of the unseeded Chinese Han Yue 21-9, 21-17 and set up a clash against Aya Ohori of Japan.

It was curtains for eighth seed K. Srikanth, whose poor run of form continued as he crashed out after falling to compatriot Prannoy earlier in the day. Prannoy stunned the higher-ranked Srikanth 13-21, 21-11, 22-20 in a match that lasted 59 minutes at the BWF World Tour Super 750 tournament.

Srikanth, who holds a superior head-to-head record

against Prannoy, started off well clinching the first game before the unseeded Prannoy came back strongly to take the second game. The decider went down to the wire before Prannoy had the last laugh. He will face Rasmus Gemke of Denmark in the second round.

**Inconsistent**  
Srikanth, a former world No. 1, has been struggling for consistency this season. He made a second-round exit from the Indonesia Open last week.

It was disappointment for Sameer Verma as well as he lost to Denmark's Anders Antonsen in straight games. The unseeded Indian lost 21-17, 21-12 in a contest that lasted 46 minutes.

It was good news for India in the men's doubles competition as Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty defeated the English pair of Marcus Ellis and Chris Lan-

gridge 21-16, 21-17 to enter the second round.

But the women's doubles combination of Ashwini Ponappa and N. Sikki Reddy crashed out 21-16, 21-14 to Korea's So Yeong Kim and Hee Yong Kong.

The Indian mixed doubles pair of Pranaav Jerry Chopra and Sikki Reddy also bowed out, losing 21-11, 21-14 to the top seeded Chinese duo of Zhend Si Wei and Huang Ya Qiaogang in just 26 minutes.

**The results (first round): Men:** H.S. Prannoy bt K. Srikanth 13-21, 21-11, 22-20; Anders Antonsen (Den) bt Sameer Verma 21-17, 21-12. **Doubles:** Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty bt Marcus Ellis and Chris Langridge (Eng) 21-16, 21-17.

**Women:** P.V. Sindhu bt Han Yue (Chn) 21-9, 21-17. **Doubles:** So Yeong Kim and Hee Yong Kong (Kor) bt Ashwini Ponappa and N. Sikki Reddy 21-16, 21-14.

**Mixed doubles:** Zhend Si Wei and Huang Ya Qiaogang (Chn) bt Pranaav Jerry Chopra and Sikki Reddy 21-11, 21-14.



Clinical display: H.S. Prannoy made the most of K. Srikanth's poor form to advance to the second round. •MATT ROBERTS/GETTY IMAGES

## Meiraba, Malvika begin with wins

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI**

Malvika Bansod punched above her weight while Maisnam Meiraba had to work hard for a win as the individual events began at the Badminton Asia junior championships at Suzhou, China on Wednesday.

Junior world No. 14 Meiraba, who was India's best-performing Indian in the team event, needed 59 minutes to beat Korea's Sang Yong Park 21-18, 17-21, 23-21.

The in-form Meiraba, who had won the Russian Junior White Nights tournament before coming to the continental event, faces the top seed and world junior champion Kunlavut Vitidsarn in

the boys' singles second round.

Malvika, ranked 83rd, scored a resilient 21-11, 19-21, 21-19 upset win over world No. 40 Thi Anh Thu Vu of Vietnam in 54 minutes. She too faces the top seed Phitayaporn Chaivann in a tough second-round clash.

Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian was relentless in his 21-1, 21-10 demolition of Bangladesh's Md. Abdul Hamid Lukman while Sathish Kumar Karunakaran held off a late surge from Sri Lanka's Lochana de Silva for a 21-9, 21-17 victory.

Unnati Bisht and Ashi Rawat posted breezy wins to make their way into the second round. Bisht sailed

past Malaysia's Isabel Liu Bei Yi in just 24 minutes. Rawat needed one minute more to take care of Taipei girl Yeo Ying Chee 21-13, 21-10.

**The results (first round): Boys:** Maisnam Meiraba bt Sang Yong Park (Kor) 21-18, 17-21, 23-21; Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian bt Md. Abdul Hamid Lukman (Ban) 21-1, 21-10; Sathish Kumar Karunakaran bt Lochana de Silva (SL) 21-9, 21-17; Siddhant Gupta bt Praful Maharajan (Nep) 21-10, 21-3.

**Girls:** Malvika Bansod bt Thi Anh Thu Vu (Vie) 21-11, 19-21, 21-19; Unnati Bisht bt Isabel Liu Bei Yi (Mas) 21-12, 21-13; Ashi Rawat bt Yeo Ying Chee (Tpe) 21-13, 21-10; Aditi Bhatt bt Hye Jin Choi (Kor) 21-17, 23-21.

## Major Mir Mujtaba Hussain Memorial Cup for Agni

**HYDERABAD:** Agni (Zervan up) won the Major Mir Mujtaba Hussain Memorial Cup, the feature event of the races held here on Wednesday (July 24).

The winner is the property of M/s. Prakash Babu, V. Krishna Das & Rajesh Sanghani and trained by D. Netto. Jockey Suraj Narredu scored a treble on the day.

THE RESULTS

**1 RANI LAXMI BAI PLATE (Div. I), (1,200m), maiden 3-y-o only (Cat. II), (Terms):** PRINCE VALIANT (Ajeth Kumar) 1, Mehrzad (S.G. Prasad) 2, Angel Tesoro (P. Sai Kumar) 3 and Augenstein (R. Ajinkya) 4. Not run: Son of Sardar. 5/3/4, 1/2 and 2. Im, 13.41s. ₹ 22 (w), 7.7 and 20 (p), SHP: 14, FP: 47, Q: 22, Tla: 653. Favourite: Mehrzad.

**2 CUPID PLATE (1,100m), 5-y-o & over, rated upto 25 (Cat. III):** AGILIS (A.A. Vikrant) 1, Composure (C.P. Bopanna) 2, Cowboys Delight (Umesh) 3 and All Star General (Deepak Singh) 4. 4-1/4, nk and shd. Im, 8.35s. ₹25 (w), 7,

12 and 6 (p), SHP: 35, FP: 139, Q: 72, Tla: 325. Favourite: Cowboys Delight.

Owner: Mr. N. Shyam Sunder. Trainer: Faisal Hassan.

**3 RANI LAXMI BAI PLATE (Div. II), (1,200m), maiden 3-y-o only (Cat. II), (Terms):** TOP SAGA (Suraj Narredu) 1, Premier Action (Umesh) 2, Flamingo Fame (N. Rawal) 3 and Sterling King (S.G. Prasad) 4. 3/4, 1/4 and 1. Im, 14.58s. ₹16 (w), 7, 18 and 27 (p), SHP: 65, FP: 169, Q: 104, Tla: 5,849. Favourite: Born Greek.

Owner: M/s. Guralp Singh, Mohd. Rasheed Ali Khan & Mirza Ayub Baig. Trainer: Faisal Hassan.

**4 FOND HOPE PLATE (Div. II), (1,400m), 5-y-o & over, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II):** MOZAMBIQUE (Ashhad Asbar) 1, Hope Is Eternal (Ajeth Kumar) 2, N R I Symbol (Kuldeep Singh) 3 and Shandara (Ajit Singh) 4. 2, 1/4 and 1. Im, 26.41s. ₹9 (w), 6, 10 and 7 (p), SHP: 23, FP: 43, Q: 34, Tla: 131. Favourite: Mozambique.

Owner: M/s. Five Stars Shipping Co.Pvt.Ltd.rep. by Mr. & Mrs. K.N.

Dhunjibhoj & Mr. Z.K. Dhunjibhoj and Mr. Berjis Minoo Desai. Trainer: Laxman Singh.

**5 WARANGAL PLATE (1,600m), 4-y-o & over, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III):** BALIUS (Suraj Narredu) 1, Wings Of Eagles (B.R. Kumar) 2, Alta Vita (Afroz Khan) 3 and Dandy Man (S.G. Prasad) 4. 1/3/4, 2-1/4 and 4-3/4. Im, 39.99s. ₹11 (w), 6, 17 and 14 (p), SHP: 44, FP: 71, Q: 78, Tla: 807. Favourite: Balius.

Owner: M/s. Y. Damodar & Ashok Kumar Gupta. Trainer: R.H. Sequeira.

**6 FOND HOPE PLATE (Div. I), (1,400m), 5-y-o & over, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II):** TOP LINK (Suraj Narredu) 1, Tootsie Roll (Umesh) 2, Vijay's Empress (Gaurav Singh) 3 and Bayrd (B. Nikhil) 4. 1, 2 and 4-1/4. Im, 27.16s. ₹11 (w), 6, 7 and 7 (p), SHP: 17, FP: 37, Q: 24, Tla: 93. Favourite: Top Link.

Owner: Mr. Mir Firasath Ali Khan, Mrs. Bindu Laxman Singh & Mr. Mir Saqafath Ali Khan. Trainer: Laxman Singh.

**7 MAJOR MIR MUJTABA HUSSAIN MEMORIAL CUP (1,200m), 3-y-o & over, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II):** AGNI (Zervan) 1, Rahil (Gopal Singh) 2, Lockhart (Ajeth Kumar) 3 and Dancing Doll (G. Nares) 4. 3/4, shd and 1-3/4. Im, 13.69s. ₹8 (w), 6, 8 and 28 (p), SHP: 18, FP: 27, Q: 24, Tla: 705. Favourite: Agni.

Owner: M/s. Prakash Babu, V. Krishna Das & Rajesh Sanghani. Trainer: D. Netto.

**8 ARISTOCRACY PLATE (1,400m), 3-y-o & over, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III):** CONSIGLIORI (Surya Prakash) 1, Zamora (Ashhad Asbar) 2, Havelock Cruise (Kiran Naidu) 3 and Spice Up (Nakhat Singh) 4. 1/4, 7-3/4 and 3-1/4. Im, 25.83s. ₹16 (w), 8, 6 and 7 (p), SHP: 21, FP: 44, Q: 23, Tla: 78. Favourite: Consigliori.

Owner: The Utd.Rac. & B'Stk Breeders Ltd. & Mr. Aditya P. Thackersey. Trainer: Deshmukh. Jackpot: ₹186 (3,130 tkts). Runner up: 28 (8,702 tkts). Mini Jackpot: 86 (685 tkts). Treble (i): 317 (155 tkts), (ii): 50 (854 tkts), (iii): 37 (1,716 tkts).

## AITA Trust selects 16 players for aid

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**

The AITA Trust announced the selection of eight boys and eight girls for the annual scholarship of ₹1,00,000 each, at the DLTA Complex here on Wednesday. Even though there were top-10 players in the initial list of 32 players, the selection panel clarified that ranking was not the sole criteria.

All selected players were presented the first instalment of ₹50,000. They were told that the remaining money would be paid in the third and fourth quarters.

Addressing the players on behalf of the AITA Trust, V.K. Batra said that the next initiative would be to form the teams with players in the 14 to 18 age group to compete in the ITF junior circuit.

Difficult exercise

Coach Balram Singh, who headed the selection panel, said it was a difficult exercise to arrive at the final list. Another member of the panel, Davis Cupper Vishal Uppal said that meeting to finalise the names lasted three and a half hours. "Those who have not

been selected, don't be disappointed. I want to see you as better players next year. You are at the start of your career, and everything depends on how much hunger you have to work hard day in day out," said Vishal.

To the parents, Vishal said, "this journey is long. Like the players, you are all infant tennis parents. Keep motivating the kids and keep enjoying their tennis."

Coach Nar Singh also emphasised that there was no reason "to lose heart" and that it was important to keep getting better.

Executing the first step of the vision project, Prashant Menon of the AITA Trust said that it was wonderful to host the players and parents. He sought suggestions to improve further and serve Indian tennis better.

**The selected players: Boys:** Yuvan Nandal (Har), Aayush Bhat (Kar), Manas Dhamne (Mah), Nitish Balaji (TN), Arunava Mazumdar (WB), Sampri Sharma (Cht), Ayushman Arjeria (MP), Rushil Khosla (UP). **Girls:** Shruti Ahlawat (Har), Suhitha Maruri (Kar), Ruma Ashutosh Gaikaiwari (Mah), Kundana Sri Bandaru (TN), Sweta Samanta (WB), Riya Sachdeva (Del), Amishi Shukla (MP), Veda Raju Prapurna (TS).

## Kaavya stuns Sai

**SPORTS BUREAU CHANDIGARH**

Kaavya Palani of Tamil Nadu knocked out top seed Sai Bhojar of Maharashtra 6-3, 3-6, 6-0 in the under-16 girls' quarterfinals of the AITA Super Series junior tennis tournament at the CLTA Complex here on Wednesday.

In the under-16 boys' quarterfinals, Ajay Singh beat third seed Dhanya Shah 6-3, 6-3.

**The results (quarterfinals): Boys: Under-18:** Krishan Hooda bt Karan Parashar 6-2, 6-2; Shashikant Rajput bt Dhanya Shah 6-3, 6-0; Bhupender Dahiya bt Divanshu Hooda 6-4,

6-3; Uddayvir Singh bt Torus Rawat 6-3, 7-5.

**Under-16:** Arjun Kundu bt Ajay Kundu 6-3, 3-6, 6-0; Lakshmi Arunkumar bt Sarthak Gandhi 7-5, 6-4; Ajay Singh bt Dhanya Shah 6-3, 6-3; Kartik Saxena bt Sukhpreet Singh Jhoje 6-1, 6-0.

**Girls: Under-18:** Lakshmi Arunkumar bt Harleen Kaur 6-3, 7-5; Sandeepi Singh Rao bt Tanushri Pandey 6-2, 6-2; Kaavya Sawhney bt Paavani Pathak 6-1, 7-5; Vanshika Choudhary bt Aditi Singh 6-3, 6-4.

**Under-16:** Kaavya Palani bt Sai Bhojar 6-3, 3-6, 6-0; Lakshmi Arunkumar bt Paavani Pathak 3-6, 6-3, 6-1; Tanushri Pandey bt Suhani Sabharwal 6-1, 6-2; Sanvi Ahluwalia bt Nandini Dixit 6-2, 2-6, 6-3.

## There is no stopping Bhakti Kulkarni

Vanitka sees off Michelle Catherina; Meenakshi moves into third

**NATL. CHESS KARAIKUDI**

WGM Bhakti Kulkarni of Air India scored a fine win over WIM P.V. Nandhidhaa of Tamil Nadu to stay firmly on top of the table, with 7.5 points, after the eighth round in the 46th National women's chess championship at the Chettinad Public School here on Tuesday.

It was a closely-fought game between the two till the 30th move when Nandhidhaa provided her opponent with a winning chance. Bhakti grabbed it with both hands to seal the game in 39 moves.

Meanwhile, Delhi's Vantika Agrawal defeated Michelle Catherina of Tamil Nadu in just 24 moves to remain in second position. Playing the black side of the



Ruthless: Bhakti Kulkarni sealed victory following a mistake by P.V. Nandhidhaa after the 30th move. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Queen's Gambit decline variation, Michelle miscalculated a bishop sacrifice on the 18th move and that was more than enough for Vantika. Air India's WGM S. Meenakshi ousted Pratyusha Boddha of Andhra Pradesh to move to the lone third spot.

Top seed Soumya Swami-

nathan (PSPB) and third seed Divya Deshmukh of Maharashtra got past Kiran Manisha Mohanty (LIC) and Nityata Jain (Madhya Pradesh) with ease. Mrudul Dehankar, on the other hand, pulled off a stunning win over Srijia Seshadri.

**Important results (eighth round, TN unless specified):** P.V. Nandhidhaa 5.5 lost to Bhakti Kulkarni (AI) 7.5; Vantika Agrawal (Del) 7 by Michelle Catherina 5.5; S. Meenakshi (AI) 6.5 bt Pratyusha Boddha (AP) 5.5; Soumya Swaminathan (PSPB) 6 bt Kiran Manisha Mohanty (LIC) 5.

round, TN unless specified):

P.V. Nandhidhaa 5.5 lost to Bhakti Kulkarni (AI) 7.5; Vantika Agrawal (Del) 7 by Michelle Catherina 5.5; S. Meenakshi (AI) 6.5 bt Pratyusha Boddha (AP) 5.5; Soumya Swaminathan (PSPB) 6 bt Kiran Manisha Mohanty (LIC) 5.

Divya Deshmukh (Mah) 6 bt Nityata Jain (MP) 5; Srijia Seshadri 5 lost to Mrudul Dehankar (Mah) 6; Bagyashree Thipsay (Mah) 5.5 drew with Mary Ann Gomes (PSPB) 5.5; Potturi Saye Sreezza (TS) 5 lost to K. Priyanka 6; Swati Ghate (LIC) 5.5 drew with Harshita Guddanti (AP) 5.5; Sakshi Chitlange (Mah) 5.5 bt P. Bala Kannamma 5; Priyanka Nutakki (AP) 5 drew with Aarthie Ramaswamy (AI) 5; Nisha Mohota (PSPB) 5 drew with Rutuja Bakshi (Mah) 5; Sanskriti Goyal (UP) 5 drew with Isha Sharma (Kar) 5.

Abhirami Madabushi (TS) 4.5 lost to V. Varshini 4.5; Neha Singh (Bih) 4 lost to S. Vijayalakshmi (AI) 5.

## Messi handed one-match suspension



Lionel Messi. •AFP

**ASSOCIATED PRESS ASUNCION (PARAGUAY)**  
Lionel Messi was suspended from Argentina's first qualifying match for the 2022 World Cup and fined \$1500 by South American soccer's governing body.

CONMEBOL said its decision on Tuesday resulted from Messi's red card during Argentina's 2-1 win over Chile on July 6 in the third place match of the Copa America.

South American qualifying starts in March.

## Matteo Trentin rides solo to victory

It is the Italian's third career stage win at the Tour

**TOUR DE FRANCE GAP (FRANCE)**

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
Italian rider Matteo Trentin used a solo attack to win Stage 17 of the Tour de France on Wednesday after pulling clear of a group of breakaway riders.

It was Trentin's third career stage win at the Tour, but first since 2014.

Trentin rode at the front for most of the stage after taking part in a breakaway that formed just after the start of the 200-kilometre hilly ride from Pont du Gard to Gap.

The European champion moved clear of the leading group about 14 kilometers from the finish at the bottom of the Col de la Sentinelle. He was first at the summit and went all out in the downhill leading to Gap.

Kasper Asgreen was second, 37 seconds behind,



Key stage: The hilly trek to the foothills of the Alps was the last opportunity for riders without ambition in the general classification to fight for a stage victory. •AFP

with Olympic champion Greg Van Avermaet completing the podium.

"I was scared of Asgreen and I was right because he finished second after getting a free ride in the break," Trentin said.

"His tactic was to wait and wait, and so I went for it because he's also strong on the climbs and fast in a sprint."

The overall contenders crossed more than 20 minutes behind but there was not any significant change in the overall standings as Trentin and his breakaway companions were not a threat. Julian Alaphilippe of France has the yellow jersey, with defending champion Geraint Thomas in second place overall.

Having started the popular hashtag seven years ago, Vex King grew into a social media 'mind coach'. Now, the Britain-based desi, with roots in Uganda has a book out

VANGMAYI PARAKALA

We don't know much about Vex King. Yet we know everything about him. We're not privy to his real name, but we know he's had a rough childhood: he lost his father early to tuberculosis, and his biggest inspiration is his mother. We know that despite missing each other a bunch of times, Vex and his now wife got together nearly a decade ago.

The social-media 'mind coach', with his big follower base (of 367k on Instagram; 40k on Facebook; 55.5k on Twitter), popularised the hashtag #GoodVibesOnly. He says he lives on the "outskirts of London", still holding on to whatever he can about himself. It's not like his posts demand an overshare; a lot of them are in fact generic messages about self-love, self-acceptance, but in context of his longer captions, they feed into the online world's thirst for 'authentic', 'raw' content.

Vex's popularity is testament to the fact that self-care is the new self-help. While a lot of us might have grown up with Stephen Covey's 7 Habits series, and somewhat older readers remember the classic *Self Help* by Samuel Smiles, the push there was on how you could be useful, productive, efficient.

And now there's *Good Vibes, Good Life: How Self-Love is the Key to Unlocking Your Greatness*, by Vex King. The book, a handy, palm-sized Bible of sorts for the millennial and post-millennial to navigate life, is a stark departure from the traditional self-help. It tells us to slow



# THE MAN BEHIND #GoodVibesOnly

down, take stock of internal and external developments, and be kinder to ourselves.

If you've dwelt on your life even a little bit, you'll find yourself nodding as you read along. At the same time though, you're also left wondering at the obviousness of it all. "Staying true to yourself", "Choose real friendships", "Check your own behaviour", and "One thought is all it takes," are some of the book's chapters.

In an email interview, Vex talked about why he felt the need to do a book despite massive online following, about #GoodVibesOnly that was his original claim to fame, and the ways in which we are asked to cope with life. Edited excerpts.

**Do you recall when you first started the Good**

**Vibes Only movement on social media?**

It must have been around 2012. I was learning a lot about vibration and energy, and realised that higher states of vibrations can help you manifest a good life. Therefore, I thought this phrase would be good to promote. I decided to start a Twitter page after the movement and it grew to over 200,000 followers very quickly. I then decided to push it on other platforms and slowly, I began seeing more people use it.

**You have such a huge following on social media. Why did you feel the need for a book too?**

There's only so much you can say on social media. I want this book to serve as a life guide – so people could pick it up any time they

needed a bit of wisdom, positive reminders or an energetic boost. Nothing compares to physically having a book available at hand where all the information you need is in one place, and easy to navigate through.

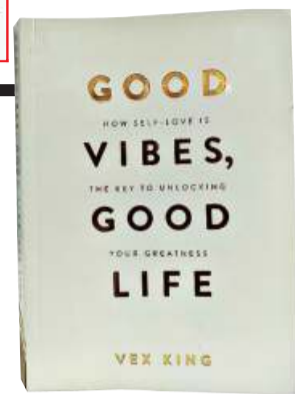
**How did the book deal come through? And how long did it take for you to put it together?**

A literary agent saw how much impact my Instagram posts were making, and so she approached me to ask me if I was interested in writing a book. At this point, I already had a manuscript ready to self-publish. The planning of the book took me two months. The writing took me two weeks. The editing process took one and half years, from start to finish.

**In the book, you talk about not feeling guilty if we need to cut off from toxic family members. This can be empowering, yet, a big taboo. Have you received any feedback on this?**

The reason I actually wrote the section is because I get at least 100 messages a week discussing how much their family is hurting them and not knowing what to do. Many are young girls claiming severe abuse. This topic is always tricky to write about, but is much needed. We are told that family is everything and we should put blood first, but often they can be the biggest reason for mental health problems. The general feedback I've got is gratitude – a lot of people said it was a much-needed topic to discuss.

**Self-care social** (Clockwise from extreme left) Vex King; insets of his Instagram and Twitter feeds; the cover of his new book



**You have a bit about leaving a toxic workplace. Lately, there's a sense that people are too sensitive to critique. What's your take on the subjective parameters for what is toxic and what is not?**

In the office, we have to be self-aware so we can recognise the difference between something that is unhealthy for us and something that requires action. If your manager asks you to work harder, they may be asking because you haven't put enough effort to reach your potential. To frame this as a toxic demand comes from a perspective of entitlement, instead of understanding you need to and can do more. However, if your manager asks you to work harder in an unjust and malicious manner, you may rightly identify this as a behaviour you do not need to settle for. While this is not always the most practical advice, I do feel your gut (that calm sense of knowing which is not triggered by your conditioning) always knows best.

**You have a section titled "The Universe is Supporting You". Do you think such truisms only exist to make us feel okay about the overwhelming unpredictability of life?**

The truth is, we'll never really know. But, it's the most empowering way to live life, otherwise we will constantly feel sad when life doesn't manifest exactly as we imagined, as we wanted it to. That's why detachment is so important. To retain happiness, you must let go and have faith that what's meant to be a part of your life, will eventually be a part of it, even if it isn't how you initially imagined it.

*Good Vibes, Good Life: How Self-Love is the Key to Unlocking Your Greatness, ₹399, Hay House India*

**PEOPLE**

**Cutting prints**

This little-known artists' club in Delhi wants to help you learn the art of print-making



A three-year-old artist-run co-working space in Lado Sarai, called Print Club Delhi, has recently opened its doors to those who want to learn the art of printmaking. With facilities for screen-printing, etching, woodcut, linocut, and plate lithography, the club's aim is to "promote printmaking as an artform to the public," says Harmeet Sodhi, 31, the founder of the initiative.

The team also includes co-founder Arushree Suri, 31, master printer Swarna Sagar, 32, and an instructor and technician Taran, 24. If your association with the art goes back to 18th-century landscapes of India courtesy British artists Thomas and William Daniells, or in more recent memory, to eminent artist KG Subramanyam's works, the Club will bring together a more contemporary way to engage with and understand the art.

"Printmaking these days has become very experimental where artists are using mixed media, bringing prints, painting and sculpture together. Artists are also combining different types of printmaking together – like screen print on etching, or screen print of cyanotype, and video art with traditional prints," says Sodhi.

Together, the group has been doing a fair amount of outreach through workshops at NGOs and government schools, through a trust they've set up, called the Printmaking Foundation of India. In the recent past, they've also collaborated with prominent art spaces like the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, the Triveni Kala Sangam, and Studio Khirki for classes and workshops. In parallel, they've been working with established names like the multimedia artist Sumakshi Singh, and Gurugram-based anonymous artist, Princess Pea for projects.

Passionate about promoting toxin-free printmaking as an artform, the Print Club Delhi has also made their own water-based screen printing inks from scratch. "We hope to promote this in schools and art colleges soon," Sodhi says.

*Print Club Delhi's upcoming workshop is on dry-point etching, 27th and 28th July, 11 a.m. - 4p.m. At Print Club Delhi, F313 Lado Sarai, New Delhi. ₹3,000, all materials included. To register: 8860010532. Open to all.*

VANGMAYI PARAKALA

**IN OUR BACKYARD**

ABHISHEK GULSHAN

Much like human beings, Oriental White-eyes are social birds. You'll see them congregating in flocks as small as 10 or much larger, everywhere – even in your backyard. You'll even see them in mixed flocks, with birds from other species.

These are small birds with green to yellowish-green upperparts, dark beaks, and a prominent white eye-ring. The males and the females look alike.

They thrive in a variety of habitats (scrubs, groves, gardens, orchards, forests), climate zones, and altitudes. In fact, they're known to be good colonizers, even adapting well to disturbed habitats (such as cities).

The scientific name, *Zosterops palpebrosus*, describes the bird as having a prominent eye ring. *Zosterops* translates to "girdle eye", from the Greek words *zoster* (girdle) and *ops* (eye). *Palpebrosus* means they have prominent eyelids. White-eyes are mostly ar-



boreal (living in trees), as they move through trees and bushes, foraging for food, while constantly calling out to other flock members in the form of a feeble soft nasal 'cheer'.

When they travel in mixed flocks, birdwatchers refer to the groupings as 'mixed-hunting parties'. Such a flocking might improve feeding efficiency or

provide better protection from predators.

The flocks dissipate to an extent, from February to September. This marks the breeding season, when the pairs have to nest and take care of the young ones, before being ready to join the flock again. The nest is built in a compact cup-shape, made of cobwebs and plant fibre.

When in forests, the Oriental White-eyes have been observed to be insectivores, but when in cities, they are often seen feeding on fruits like mulberry. Their preference of food changes from habitat to habitat, depending on the availability of ready sources in the areas. They are often found on

flow-ers for nectar and insects, which are likely to be around these flowers. This makes the Oriental White-eye an important pollinator. And because of the pollen, their foreheads sometimes assume an orangish-red colour (from the usual yellow).

Despite their adaptive na-

# SOCIALLY ADEPT

The Oriental White-eye moves in flocks, and can be found in a variety of settings, from gardens to scrubland, and even disturbed habitats



**The survivor** The Oriental White-eye • ABHISHEK GULSHAN

ture, the population of the Oriental White-eyes is declining. This is especially due to habitat degradation, a drop in food base (fruiting trees and insects), and also due to the increase in the number of bigger birds like bulbuls and crows, who are even more adept at adapting to their environment.

*The writer is the founder of NINOX - Owl About Nature, a nature-awareness initiative. He is the Delhi-NCR reviewer for Ebird, a Cornell University initiative, monitoring rare sightings of birds. He formerly led a programme at WWF India.*

**SHOUT-OUT**

**Call for Toto**



Toto Funds the Arts, the 15-year-old recognition for young talent in music, photography, and writing, has opened its call for submissions for 2020. Instituted in memory of Angirus 'Toto' Vellani, who was passionate about music, literature, and films, the non-profit foundation will give out eight awards this year.

The categories include one award for music (cash prize of ₹60,000), two for photography (₹50,000 each), two for creative writing in English (₹50,000 each), one for creative writing in Kannada (₹50,000) and two for short films (₹50,000 each).

While the music award will be supported by Anmol Vellani, the English creative writing awards are supported by The Jamun and Salmin Sheriff. The Kannada writing award by Bhoomija Trust, the photography awards by the Art & Photography Foundation and the short film awards by O2 Financials. Winners will be chosen by an independent panel of jurors.

*For details about eligibility, application process, and the deadline for each category visit Totofundsthearts.blogspot.com, or email sarita.tfawards@gmail.com.*

**For a listing, or to be featured here, email us at delhimetro@thehindu.co.in**

**5 EVENTS WORTH YOUR WHILE**



**CONCERT**

**Sitar and veena recital**  
There are two musical performances lined-up this evening, as part of IIC Double Bill concert. The first is a classical duet by Subrata De on the sitar and Subhasis Basu on the bansaveena. This will be followed by a Hindustani vocal recital by Aditya Sharma from Chandigarh.  
**VENUE:** C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, India International Centre  
**TIME:** 6 p.m.



**FASHION**

**Lifestyle show**  
Fashion designer Mallika Jain is hosting a one-day fashion and lifestyle exhibition which will feature jewellery, accessories, kidswear, resort wear, health, wellness, and beauty products. The show will have brands like Skin Food, Abhika Creations, The French Darzee, Ultra Violet, Home Proud, ANIQ, and more.  
**VENUE:** Hyatt Regency, Bhikaji Kama Place  
**TIME:** 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.



**MUSIC**

**Hindustani classical**  
IHC is hosting a musical evening as part of the birth centenary celebrations of vocalist Aacharya Chinmoy Lahiri. A sitar recital by Prateek Chaudhuri accompanied by Shubh Maharaj on the tabla, will be followed by a duet by Shyamal Lahiri and Mandira Lahiri, with Akhtar Hassan on the tabla and Anirban Das on the harmonium.  
**VENUE:** Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre  
**TIME:** 7 p.m.



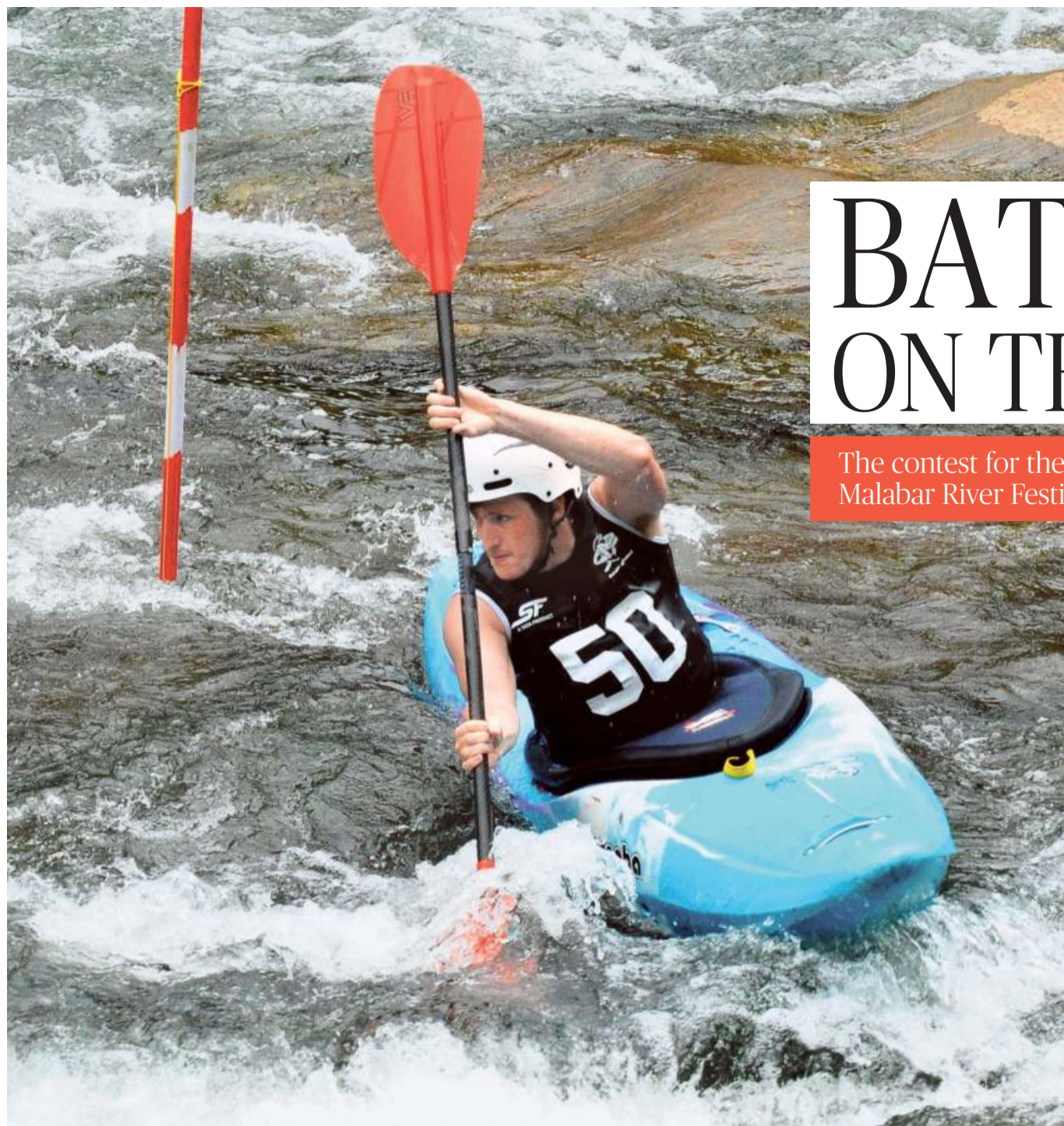
**STORYTELLING**

**Musical comedy**  
Vasant Kunj Social, in collaboration with Immense Artists Collective will host *The Millennial Storytellers*, a musical black comedy. Featuring filmmakers Kanishka and Deepa, with various other artists, this narrative will follow the story of a mime, who was once in love, before his world was turned upside down.  
**VENUE:** Ambience Mall, Vasant Kunj  
**TIME:** 7 p.m.



**THEATRE**

**English play**  
Director Madhav Mehta will stage *Kasturba Panda Ki Pantie* this evening. This is a solo performance, featuring actor Farhad Colabavala. The play follows the story of Kasturba, a frustrated wife of failed businessman and gambler, Ranjan Panda. The play also exhibits Colabavala's mono acting skills.  
**VENUE:** The Piano Man, Sector 15, Gurugram,  
**TIME:** 6 p.m.



# BATTLE ON THE RAPIDS

The contest for the Rapid Raja-Rani title begins at the Malabar River Festival in Kozhikode



**Paddle up** Kayakers on the river and winners, Joe Rea Dicken and Bet Morgan from UK, of the 2017 Rapid Raja and Rapid Rani titles ■ RAMESH S KURUP AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SIDRA AHMED

With the onset of the monsoon, the rain-fed Iruvazhinji and Chalippuzha rivers in Thusharagiri welcome kayakers from around the globe to battle the fierce rapids that tumble down the Western Ghats. The 7th edition of the Malabar River Festival (MRF), an adventure-tourism sport event featuring International Whitewater Kayaking Championship in Kozhikode, is set to welcome over 120 kayakers, including national and international champions from 12 countries.

To be held from July 26 to 28, the festival is organised by the Tourism Department under the aegis of the Kerala Adventure Tourism Promotion Society (KATPS) and the Kozhikode District Tourism Promotion Council (DTPC). The competition would be held in categories for amateurs and professionals and offers prize money of ₹10 lakh.

The narrow streams in Thusharagiri, with the combination of big water, continuous rapids and mild temperatures, make it an attractive destination for white water kayakers.

“Unlike in the northern states where the water is extremely cold, which makes it difficult to stay in for long, the streams here are ideal for kayakers,” says Manesh Bhaskar, CEO, KATPS, pointing out that the region was ranked among the five best destinations for white water kayaking in 2018.

“The contestant who scores the highest would be crowned as ‘Rapid Raja’ and ‘Rapid Rani’ and would be awarded with attractive prize money,” says Paulson Arackal, coordinator of the festival. The festival is known for

pulling crowds, with people thronging on either banks of the stream, cheering participants. This year, a crowd of over 35,000 is expected, and a global reach of around two million through live streaming of the event on YouTube and Facebook.

“Whitewater kayaking as a sport is comparable to Formula 1 racing, people make an extra effort,” says Kaushiq Kodithodi of Jellyfish Watersports, who has been conducting the beginner’s race for the last two years.

A few kayakers have already



moved to the rivers and started training. Nidhin Das, who is participating for the fourth time, feels that the competition seems to be easier this year. Amit Thappa, who won the title of ‘Best Asian Paddler, 2018’, is excited and looking forward to the event for which he has practised hard.

Meanwhile, wayside food joints to big resorts are gearing up for the flow of customers. Destination Manager, DTPC, Mathew KD, says business flourishes in Thusharagiri this time of the year.

A food joint near the Chalippuzha, run by a gregarious *chechi*, is a popular hangout. Each evening, as paddlers and spectators return, they are welcomed with *chechi’s sugiyan* (a tea-time snack in Kerala made of green gram, coconut and jaggery filling), *pazham pori* (fried plantain) and *ela ada* (coconut and banana encased in rice flour and steamed in banana leaves). The taste of her food and stories of the competition are memories that travellers carry back until they return next year.

**Tourist attractions nearby**  
Approximately 10 km from Kodenchery, adventurous nature lovers are welcomed with boisterous waterfalls. The Thusharagiri waterfalls, with three adjacent mist-capped peaks, are a wonderful destination for nature lovers, while the falls on Kuttady river are not very far.

## GRAND WATERWAY

The Colorado River, US, is the quintessential whitewater rafting experience on every adventurer’s bucket list. This waterway wanders for more than 277 miles with the most famous stretch passing through the iconic Grand Canyon.



## IN BRIEF



## Smoking can trigger severe leg pain: study

**NEW YORK**  
Researchers have found a strong link between smoking and peripheral artery disease — a circulatory condition in which narrowed blood vessels reduce blood flow to the limbs — and this elevated risk can persist up to 30 years after quitting smoking. The study was published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*. IANS



## An apple carries about 100 mn bacteria: study

**LONDON**  
Besides containing fibre and vitamins, an apple also carries about 100 million bacteria, and whether these microbes are good or bad for health may depend on how the fruit was grown, says a study. It shows that organic apples harbour a balanced bacterial community — which could make them healthier and tastier than conventional apples. PTI



## Polish magazine issues anti-LGBT stickers

**WARSAW**  
*Gazeta Polska*, a magazine close to Poland's right-wing government, distributed anti-LGBT stickers with its latest issue on Wednesday. The stickers had a large black cross over an LGBT+ rainbow motif, captioned "This is an LGBT-free zone". AFP

## 'Large-scale burning of grasslands detrimental to invertebrates'

Study from Eravikulam National Park says 'prescribed' strategy to conserve threatened ungulates adversely impacts other species

E.M. MANOJ  
KALPETTA

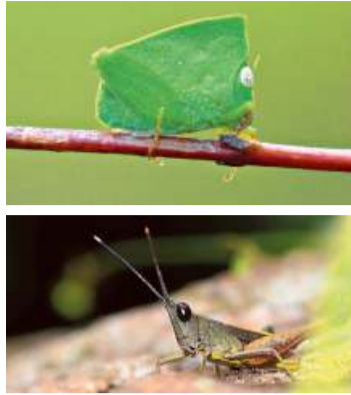
A recent study on "prescribed burning" of large tracts of grassland for the conservation of threatened ungulates in the Eravikulam National Park (ENP), a biodiversity hotspot in the Western Ghats, reveals that such burning is detrimental to endemic invertebrates, including grasshoppers.

Grasshoppers are sensitive to grasslands management and an indicator of grasslands quality, health and restoration success.

"As grasshoppers represent a major faunal component of grasslands, effects of fire on them can be easily



**Unintended effects:** A researcher, left, collecting grasshoppers from the burned areas of Eravikulam National Park; at right, two species of grasshoppers. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



studied in grassland habitats," Dhaneesh Bhaskar, researcher, Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI), said.

"The endemic and wingless creatures are sensitive to environmental change and exhibit a high extinction risk.

Hence, their response to fire management is of high interest," Mr. Dhaneesh, who is also a member of the IUCN

Grasshopper Specialist Group, said.

Traditionally, the grasslands of the park are managed by prescribed "cold" burning (cold season burning) with the help of the local tribal community, P. S. Easa, former director, KFRI said.

Burning is practised on 90 sq. km. of the park by dividing it into 50 hectare grids to ensure palatable fodder for the Nilgiri tahr and has been practised since the British colonial time, Dr. Easa, a member of the team said. However, the impact of burning of Nilgiri tahr habitats on other biota has never been documented, he added.

The recovery plan for the

animal stresses the need for systematic monitoring of the impact of fire on its habitats in the ENP.

Since the target of the management is to improve the status of mammal species, the impact on other groups, especially invertebrates, has been neglected, Mr. Dhaneesh said.

Though prescribed burning was experimentally introduced in the Parambikulam Tiger Reserve (PKMTR) recently, another habitat of the Nilgiri tahr, it was practised on a smaller scale (10 m. x 10 m.).

There are 130 species of grasshoppers reported in Kerala, of which 54 species

were found in PKMTR and 18 species were found in the ENP, he said. It is suspected that prescribed burning in the park for the past many decades is a major cause for the decline of grasshoppers, he said.

The study suggested that the interval of burning should be extended to more than five years, and the area of burning should be made only in small plots of 25 m. X 25 m. or 50 m. X 50 m., with unburned adjacent areas between plots.

The findings have been published in a recent edition of *Biodiversity and Conservation* (Springer Nature), an international journal.

## Milky Way's violent birth decoded

It was shaped as a result of collision with another smaller galaxy 10 bn years ago

REUTERS  
PARIS

The Milky Way, home to our sun and billions of other stars, merged with another smaller galaxy in a colossal cosmic collision roughly 10 billion years ago, scientists said on Monday based on data from the Gaia space observatory.

The union of the Milky Way and the so-called dwarf galaxy Gaia-Enceladus increased our galaxy's mass by about a quarter and triggered a period of accelerated star formation lasting about 2 to 4 billion years, the scientists said. "Yes, indeed it was a pivotal moment," said astronomer Carme Gallart of Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias in Spain, lead author of the research published in *Nature Astronomy*.

Galaxies of all types, including the Milky Way, began to form relatively soon after the Big Bang explosion



The merger of the Milky Way progenitor galaxy and the dwarf galaxy Gaia-Enceladus roughly 10 billion years ago, left, and the current appearance of the Milky Way galaxy, right. ■REUTERS

that marked the beginning of the universe some 13.8 billion years ago, but were generally smaller than those seen today and were forming stars at a rapid rate. Subsequent galactic mergers were instrumental in configuring galaxies existing now.

High-precision measurements of the position, brightness and distance of around a million stars within 6,500 light years of the sun, obtained by the Gaia space

telescope, helped pinpoint stars present before the merger and those that formed afterward.

Certain stars with higher content of elements other than hydrogen or helium arose in the Milky Way, they found, and others with lower such content originated in Gaia-Enceladus, owing to its smaller mass. While the merger was dramatic and helped shape the Milky Way, it was not a star-destroying

calamity. "This crash was big in cosmic terms, but if it was happening now, we could probably not even notice at a human or solar system level," she said.

"The distances between stars in a galaxy are so huge — a galaxy is basically empty space — that the two galaxies intermix, change their global shape, more star formation may happen in one, and maybe the small one stops forming stars.

## Netflix unveils mobile-only plan for India at ₹199 per month

Users get access to ad-free and downloadable content

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Video-streaming firm Netflix on Wednesday announced its most affordable plan of ₹199 per month in India as the U.S.-headquartered firm seeks to "get Netflix on as many devices as we can" amid rising competition from services such as Hotstar and Amazon Prime Video. The plan, however, can be used for viewing content only on a smartphone or tablet.

"India loves its mobile phone. Our members in India watch more on their mobiles than members anywhere else in the world... We are investing heavily in mobile. We want to broaden the audience of Netflix," Ajay Arora, director, Product Innovation at Netflix said.

The mobile-only plan has



70% of Netflix users in India watch at least one film a week. ■AFP

been especially tailored for India. With this plan, users will have access to the standard definition (SD), ad-free content and an option to download it on to their smartphones. "Netflix members in India are among the highest downloader of content globally... Almost half out members in India downloaded at least one film or episode-in-series in June 2019," Mr. Arora said.

Talking to *The Hindu*, Nigel Baptiste, director, Partn-

er Engagement, Netflix said, In India, more people sign up for Netflix service on mobile phones than anywhere else in the world. "They then move on to discover Netflix on other devices as well."

"Every bit of friction between our members and content, we want to eliminate. So, whether it is adding more payment methods, different price plans, working with different partners, we will get there. Where we are is a far cry from where we want to be, and we continue to be on that journey," Mr. Baptiste said.

He added that 70% of Netflix users in India watch at least one film a week. "As a percentage of overall time spent of Netflix, film viewing in India is the highest for any country worldwide."

## India's first dragon blood-oozing tree

Researchers discover *Dracaena cambodiana* in West Karbi Anglong district

RAHUL KARMAKAR  
GUWAHATI

Assam has added to India's botanical wealth a plant that yields dragon's blood — a bright red resin used since ancient times as medicine, body oil, varnish, incense and dye.

A trio of researchers led by Assam forest officer Jatindra Sarma has discovered *Dracaena cambodiana*, a dragon tree species in the Dongka Sarpo area of West Karbi Anglong. The team's report has been published in the latest issue of the *Journal of the Botanical Research Institute of Texas*.

This is for the first time that a dragon tree species has been reported from India.

"We found the dragon tree species on hilly rock crevices within a 0.05 sq km area. It took us four years of fieldwork and study to classify the plant as a dragon tree species whose sap turns bright red after coming in



*Dracaena cambodiana* is an important medicinal plant as well as an ornamental tree. ■SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

contact with air," Mr. Sarma, Northern Assam Circle's Chief Conservator of Forests told *The Hindu* on Tuesday.

The report has been co-authored by Hussain Ahmed Barbhuiya of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre and Santanu Dey of Nagaland University's Department of Botany.

In India, the *Dracaena* genus belonging to the family Asparagaceae is represented by nine species and two varieties in the Himalayan region, the northeast and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

But *Dracaena cambodiana* is the only true dragon tree species, the study said.

## Quarry threat

*Dracaena cambodiana* is an important medicinal plant as well as an ornamental tree. It is a major source of dragon's blood, a precious traditional medicine in China. Several antifungal and antibacterial compounds, antioxidants, flavonoids, etc., have been extracted from various parts of the plant.

"Recent overexploitation

to meet the increasing demand for dragon's blood has resulted in rapid depletion of the plant. For this reason, the species is already listed in the inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of China," Mr. Sarma said.

The population size of the dragon tree species in Assam was estimated to be fewer than 50 mature individuals. "The habitat of the plant is severely fragmented due to open excavation of a stone quarry and there is continuing decrease in its area of occupancy and number of mature individuals," he said.

The *Dracaena* seeds are usually dispersed by birds. But due to the large fruit size, only a few species of birds are able to swallow the fruits, thus limiting the scope of its natural conservation. The study advocates conservation programme for *Dracaena cambodiana* in view of its medicinal, ornamental and ecological values.

## Undersea museum



**Fish tank:** Sunken Jordanian Armed Forces' battle tanks on the bed of the Red Sea off the coast of the southern port city of Aqaba. Jordan on Wednesday opened its first underwater military museum. ■REUTERS

Shonali Bose's *The Sky is Pink* makes it to the TIFF first list

Of the Gala films, half of the titles are directed or co-directed by women — a record number for the programme

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Shonali Bose's *The Sky Is Pink*, starring Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Farhan Akhtar and Zaira Wasim, will have its world premiere in the Gala Presentation section at the 44<sup>th</sup> Toronto International Film Festival that runs from September 5-15 this year.

Produced by Ronnie Screwvala's RSVP and Siddharth Roy Kapur's Roy Kapur Films, in association with Ivanhoe Pictures and Ms. Chopra Jonas' Purple Pebble Pictures, the film is the love story of a couple, spanning 25 years, told through the lens of their teenage daughter, diagnosed with terminal illness.



**A tale of love:** A still from *The Sky Is Pink*. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

After *Amu* and *Margarita with a Straw*, this is Ms. Bose's third film to premiere at TIFF. "*The Sky Is Pink* is a deeply personal and an incredibly special film for me.

At its core, this is an extraordinary story of what it means to be a family," she said.

"*The Sky Is Pink* is a story that I connected with from the minute I heard it and in

Shonali's hands, it's been crafted into a moving, beautiful film that will renew our faith in love and life... I'm looking forward to being back at TIFF to showcase our small package of love to the world," said Ms. Chopra Jonas.

## A story that resonates

Mr. Screwvala, whose film *Mard Ko Dard Nahin Hota*, directed by Vasun Bala, won the People's Choice award in Midnight Madness section at TIFF last year, said that "*The Sky Is Pink* is a story for audiences across the globe."

"From the moment that Shonali shared this incredible story with us, we knew that it had the potential to

resonate with audiences around the world," said Mr. Roy Kapur of his first production at Roy Kapur Films.

The film is slated to release worldwide on October 11, 2019.

Meanwhile, *Radioactive*, the Marie and Pierre Curie biopic directed by Marjane Satrapi of *Persepolis* fame, will be the Closing Night Gala Presentation at TIFF with its world premiere on September 14. The film is based on the graphic novel by Lauren Redniss, *Radioactive: Marie & Pierre Curie, A Tale of Love and Fallout*.

"I love that we are closing off the festival with a story helmed by a woman about a strong woman at the fore-

front," said Joana Vicente, TIFF co-head and executive director, adding, "Rosamund Pike gives an unforgettable performance as the legendary scientist. Her nuanced performance illustrates the struggle Curie endured that ultimately led to her defying all the odds."

## Contemporary treatment

"Marie Curie was a revolutionary, both as a scientist and as a woman in Science," said Cameron Bailey, TIFF Co-Head and Artistic Director. "Her story deserves the vital, contemporary treatment *Radioactive* delivers. Marjane Satrapi's singular voice as a filmmaker always surprises; here, she guides

the always outstanding Rosamund Pike to one of her strongest performances, capturing the brilliance and fire of a remarkable mind," said Mr. Bailey.

"This film is a celebration of Madame Curie — an extraordinary woman — and its message could not be more timely," said Ms Satrapi. The festival opens with the Canadian film, *Once Were Brothers: Robbie Robertson and The Band* by Daniel Roher.

The first round of titles — 18 Galas and 38 Special Presentations — were announced today. Of the Gala films, 50% of titles are directed or co-directed by women — a record number for the programme.

## Rushdie in 2019 Booker longlist

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LONDON

British Indian novelist Salman Rushdie's yet-to-be-published novel *Quichotte* has made it to the longlist of this year's Booker Prize. Mr. Rushdie, 72, had won the Booker in 1981 for *Midnight's Children*.

Canadian writer Margaret Atwood, who had earlier bagged the award in 2000 for *Blind Assassins*, is another former winner on the list. Her 2019 nominated work, *The Testaments*, is a sequel to her acclaimed book *The Handmaid's Tale*. This year's list was chosen from 151 novels published in the U.K. or Ireland.