

IN BRIEF



**Sumalatha visits BJP office, fuels speculation**  
BENGALURU  
The visit by independent MP Sumalatha Ambareesh to the BJP office in her constituency Mandya on Wednesday sparked speculation over her joining the party. However, the actor-turned-politician clarified that she had visited the office to thank party leaders for their support in the election.

**IMA case: supplementary chargesheet filed by CBI**  
NEW DELHI  
The CBI has filed a supplementary chargesheet against two accused in the I-Monetary Advisory (IMA) scam case. According to the CBI, Mohammed Haneeef Afsar Azezi and Khaleem Ulla Jamal were involved in luring people to make investments in IMA schemes on the pretext of high returns.

# Siddaramaiah removed from Congress Working Committee

Party appoints the former CM as Leader of Opposition in Karnataka Assembly

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI/BENGALURU  
Ending weeks of speculation, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) has appointed Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Siddaramaiah as the Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly. Former Minister S.R. Patil has been appointed Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council.

Meanwhile, the former Chief Minister has been relieved from the membership of the Congress Working Committee (CWC), the highest decision-making body of the party. In a tweet, he thanked Congress president Sonia Gandhi for both appointments and for his role in CWC so far. Mr. Siddaramaiah said that he had re-



Siddaramaiah

quested to be relieved of his role in CWC to work more effectively for the party within Karnataka. The decision was preceded by hectic lobbying between the "original" Congressmen and "migrants" for these posts. AICC general secretary Madhusudan Mistry had held deliberations with more than 60 leaders from

across the camps within the party in Bengaluru on Sunday. There were several contenders for the post, including senior leaders H.K. Patil and G. Parameshwara. Mr. Siddaramaiah retaining posts of both CLP leader and Leader of Opposition is being read as his victory, despite voices of opposition to him continuing to grow within the party, especially after the collapse of Congress-JD (S) government in Karnataka.

**'Inevitable to party'**  
"It shows that he is inevitable to the party in the State despite several other senior contenders," said a party source. However, a section of the Congress is reading him being relieved of CWC membership as a "re-

mand." According to this section, the reason is the growing complaints within the Karnataka unit. Many directly blame him for the fall of the Congress-JD(S) alliance government owing to his differences with the JD (S). "It could not have been business as usual after the July events. It was clear that Mr. Siddaramaiah's differences with Deve Gowda family destroyed the alliance," a Karnataka leader said. Mr. Siddaramaiah who shifted from the JD(S) to the Congress was handpicked by former Congress president Rahul Gandhi to be part of CWC and was once considered very close to him. Him being retained in both roles is also being read as a victory for the "Rahul camp" within the Congress.

# SC ruling in Sabarimala issue likely after Dasara vacation

65 petitions had challenged its September 2018 judgment

**KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL**  
NEW DELHI

A Constitution Bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi may pronounce its judgment on a series of petitions seeking re-consideration of the Sabarimala verdict, after the ongoing Dasara vacation.

The Supreme Court judgment of September 2018 had lifted the bar on menstruating women worshipping at the temple.

A whopping 65 petitions had challenged the authority of the Supreme Court to interfere in a "centuries-old" belief that the Sabarimala deity is a *Naishtika Brahmachari*, whose penance should not be disturbed by the entry of women worshippers of the menstruating age of 10 to 50 years. The Constitution Bench,



**Big challenge:** The petitioners have questioned the authority of the SC to interfere in the centuries-old belief.

which also comprises Justices Rohinton Nariman, A.M. Khanwilkar, D.Y. Chandrachud and Indu Malhotra, had reserved its judgment on February 6 this year after hearing arguments in an open court. Justices Nariman and Chandrachud gave separate opinions which concurred with the main judgment shared by former

Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justice Khanwilkar. The majority had condemned the ban as being akin to the social evil of untouchability. Justice Malhotra, however, dissented stridently. The lone dissent held that judges should not impose their personal views, morality or rationality with respect to the form of worship of a deity.

# ED records statement of Cong. MP D.K. Suresh and two others

Probe into money laundering case against brother D.K. Shivakumar

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate has recorded the statements of Congress MP D.K. Suresh and two others in connection with the money laundering case against his brother, D.K. Shivakumar. Among the persons whose statements have been recorded under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act are former Karnataka MLA K.N. Rajanna, who

heads the State Apex Cooperative Bank, and transporter Sunil Kumar Sharma. The ED had arrested Mr. Shivakumar in September, following investigations into a chargesheet filed last year by the Income Tax Department. Mr. Sharma was also named along with the Congress leader and former Karnataka Bhawan employee Anjaneya Hanumanthaiah and one Rajendra N. The I-T Department alleged tax evasion and "hawala" transactions running into crores. In the chargesheet the agency had said that a wide network had been set up to transport unaccounted cash.

The ED had earlier quizzed Mr. Shivakumar's daughter Aishwarya and Karnataka MLA Laxmi Hebbalkar. It claims to have identified 317 bank accounts in his name and that of his family members and associates. All the transactions made through these accounts are being scrutinised. The properties acquired by Mr. Shivakumar and his relatives are also being investigated. The Congress leader, who is currently in judicial custody, has denied the allegations, stating that he has already declared the assets to the authorities concerned.

# Kerala woman targeted more persons, say police

No clean chit for husband Shaju or any assurance given to make him approve; he will be interrogated

**STAFF REPORTER**  
KOZHIKODE

The Crime Branch squad investigating the Koodathayi serial murders has come across suspicious incidents in which the prime accused Jolly Joseph targeted five more persons, including those in her own family. It was found that five girls had a narrow escape from murder attempts at different times. Crime Branch sources said the girls were reportedly served food laced with poison and all of them exhibited signs of poisoning such as vomiting and dizziness. However, they all survived. The incidents came to light when a parent revealed



Jolly Joseph

his suspicion to the police. Two of the girls were reportedly her friends' children. Police sources said Jolly harboured a "hidden hatred" towards girls and reportedly treated them as a burden for

the families. The five suspected incidents would be probed after getting the custody of Jolly, 47, who is in judicial custody. The suspicious death of local Congress leader M. Ramakrishnan, who had financial deals with Jolly, would also be probed. He too had reportedly showed similar symptoms before he collapsed and died a few years ago. His son has filed a petition seeking an investigation. The sources said Shaju, Jolly's husband, was not given a clean chit or any assurance to make him an approver in the case. He would be interrogated for verifying some of the contradictions in his state-

ment and that of his wife. As of now, about 20 people who had links with Jolly and her financial deals are on the list of suspects to be questioned further in the case. A revenue officer and a few officials at the National Institute Technology, Calicut, may be grilled soon. Jolly, along with two of her aides, was arrested by the District Crime Branch squad on October 5. She was allegedly found responsible for the murder of her former husband Roy Thomas, father-in-law Tom Thomas, mother-in-law Annamma Thomas, and Annamma's brother Mathew Manchadiyil and two other relatives between 2002 and 2016.

The conspiracy was exposed after Rojo, son of Tom Thomas, filed a petition with the Crime Branch seeking a fresh investigation into the suspicious deaths in his family. **Astrologer missing** An astrologer who is suspected to have provided an amulet to Jolly is reported to be absconding. A visiting card along with the amulet was found in the pant worn by Roy Thomas at the time of his death. The astrologer, a resident of Kattappana town, had provided the amulet and a powder-like substance to Jolly. (With inputs from Idukki)



The images of superheroes Hulk and Thor superimposed on a photo of Mysuru Palace. ■MARVEL STUDIOS

# The Marvel of Dasara captures Thor and Hulk too

Fans and tourism industry excited

**LAIQAH A. KHAN**  
MYSURU

Fans of Marvel superheroes were elated after pictures of their favourite fictional characters Hulk and Thor standing in front of the magnificent Mysuru Palace appeared on the social media pages of Marvel Studios on Vijayadasami day. It may or may not be a new adventure planned by the makers of highly popular movies like *Avengers: Endgame*, *Incredible Hulk* and *Iron Man*, but the photo of their favourite superheroes superimposed against the backdrop of Mysuru Palace was enough to transport fans to a new world of fantasy. The greetings in Kannada "Dasara Habada Subhashayagalu" came as an icing on the cake. "Whether it is Rangnarok or Dasara, the power of Good remains! Dasara Habada Subhashayagalu #VijayaDashami #HappyDussehra2019 #MysuruDasara", said a post by Marvel Studios on its Instagram, Facebook and Twitter accounts. By Wednesday evening,

the post received more than 1,61,000 likes on Instagram, besides the 30,000 likes and 2,700 shares on Facebook while fans retweeted it almost 2,000 times on Twitter. It reportedly went viral even on WhatsApp. The tourism industry in Mysuru was also excited. The greeting from Marvel Studios is an indication that the popularity of Mysuru Dasara is not restricted to the region. "It is known all over the world," Janardhan, Deputy Director of Tourism, Mysuru, told *The Hindu*. The post by Marvel Studios will promote Mysuru Palace and the city among the tourists across the world, he said. Drawing a parallel between the fictional characters of Marvel Studios and the mythological characters in Dasara, Mr. Janardhan hoped that Mysuru could be featured by some well-known production houses in Hollywood like Marvel Studios to give the city a push on the global tourism map.

# Plea alleges illegalities in Polavaram

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Centre to consider as a representation a petition seeking action on complaints alleging large-scale illegalities and mismanagement in the execution of the Polavaram irrigation project in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice C. Hari Shankar disposed of the petition. The petition, filed by Pentapati Pullarao, has alleged that the Polavaram Project Authority, instead of assessing the cost independently, allowed the State government to increase it from ₹16,010 crore to ₹57,941 crore. Mr. Pullarao claimed that he and many other residents who lived near the project area had made complaints against the project to the authorities, but no action was taken till date.

# Smash hit



**Champion's visit:** Newly crowned World Badminton Champion P.V. Sindhu leaving the Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday. She was felicitated by the Kerala government and the State Olympic Association. ■S. GOPAKUMAR

# Proposed alternative to NH 766 tops in wildlife roadkills

Mananthavady-Gonikoppal Mysuru highway passes through the Tholpetty forest range of the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary



**Clear danger:** One of the roadkills recorded during the study on the proposed alternative route to the Kozhikode-Kollegal National Highway 766. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

**E.M.MANOJ**  
KALPETTA

A recent directive of the Supreme Court to study the possibilities of developing an alternative route to the Kozhikode-Kollegal National Highway 766 is a hot topic of discussion, but a recent study has found that roadkills on the proposed route is one of the highest in the country. The study was conducted by Dhaneesh Bhaskar, researcher at the Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI), under the guidance of P.S. Easa, former director, KFRI, on the Mananthavady-Gonikoppal Mysuru highway passing through the Tholpetty forest range of the Way-

nad Wildlife Sanctuary. The forest range, with an extent of 77 sq km, is also a major tiger habitat. **Sensitive to disturbances** "For large animals such as tigers and elephants, roads and railroads hardly pose any physical barrier. Most mammals, however, are sensitive to disturbances by humans. Smell, noise, and vehicle movement as well as experiences from human encounters may repel the animals from approaching the road corridor," Mr. Bhaskar said. The eight-month study recorded 2,426 roadkills during the period, including am-

phibians (2,213), reptiles (153), and mammals (57). Three birdkills were also recorded. The 2,426 kills belonged to 42 species belonging to eight species of amphibians, 19 species of reptiles, two species of birds, and 13 species of mammals. The highest number of roadkills was observed in September, he said. "Studies on roadkills are comparatively low in the country, but available studies show that the roadkill on the proposed alternative highway is high," Mr. Dhaneesh said. A five-month study on NH 37, adjacent to the Kaziranga National Park in Assam, a

few years ago recorded 68 roadkill cases. A six-month study on the State highways passing through the Nilgiri North Territorial Forest Division (19 km) and the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (15 km) in Tamil Nadu in 2013 reported 176 roadkills of 30 species. "It is suspected that the major reason for the roadkills on the alternative route is the unrestricted vehicle movements, especially during night hours, after the night traffic ban was introduced on NH 766 since 2009," Mr. Dhaneesh said. Moreover, speed-breakers have not been set up on the route to curb the menace, he added.



Sriram Venkitaraman

# Kerala govt. extends IAS officer's suspension

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government has extended the suspension of IAS officer Sriram Venkitaraman by 60 days. The 2013 batch officer had come under a cloud after the police implicated him in the controversial drunk-and-drive accident that caused the death of journalist K.M. Basheer on August 3. Chief Secretary Tom Jose told *The Hindu* that he had sought an explanation from Mr. Venkitaraman. The government had vetted Mr. Venkitaraman's clarification and decided that there was legitimate ground to extend the officer's suspension period. Mr. Venkitaraman is currently the subject of an ongoing criminal investigation by the Crime Branch. Mr. Venkitaraman had appealed to the government to reinstate him in service as per the provisions of the All India Service (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1996. The plea was perceived widely

as a precursor to an impending request to the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) for a favourable order to get himself rehabilitated in the civil services. The case had taken a severe turn last week after Basheer's colleagues and kin moved court accusing the police of having destroyed evidence by wilfully delaying the mandatory blood alcohol test on Mr. Venkitaraman by more than 10 hours. They alleged that the delay had helped Mr. Venkitaraman erase incriminating evidence in the case.