



ED challenges bail to D.K. Shivakumar in money laundering case
page 10



U.S. asks India for a road map for normalcy in Jammu & Kashmir
page 15



Three arrested for human trafficking over London truck deaths
page 16

Abhimanyu Mithun's hat-trick headlines Karnataka's triumph
page 21



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

NEARBY



Kejriwal flags off 104 new standard-floor CNG buses

NEW DELHI
Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday flagged off 104 new standard-floor CNG buses, which the government said feature modern technology, including CCTV cameras, panic buttons and hydraulic lifts for differently abled passengers.

CITY PAGE 3

Air quality may dip to 'severe' after Diwali

NEW DELHI
Delhi's air quality is likely to spike to "severe" category in the early hours of Monday due to the effect of firecrackers on Diwali night. But it will be for a short period with about "half" the magnitude of Diwali in 2018, according to SAFAR.

CITY PAGE 7

Reply to plea for entry of women in mosques: SC

NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Friday gave the government a week to respond to a petition by a Pune couple to allow Muslim women to enter mosques and worship without gender discrimination. A Bench, led by CJI Ranjan Gogoi, asked the government to respond to the petition challenging the prohibition of entry of Muslim women into mosques as illegal and a violation of their dignity.

NATION PAGE 11

Sena sets terms, will talk only to Shah

With greater clout in *mahayuti*, the Thackerays are insisting on 50:50 formula

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP's parliamentary board has authorised party president Amit Shah to speak to Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray on the shape of the coalition government in Maharashtra after Thursday's Assembly election results.

The choice of negotiator from the BJP was conveyed by senior Shiv Sena leaders to the BJP, who said talks should be held at the "top level" and not, as had become the case, between BJP State leaders and Mr. Thackeray. This is one of the terms the Sena has put before the BJP. The second, and most important condition, is that of



Now for talks: Newly elected MLAs meet Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray at his residence in Mumbai on Friday. •PTI

having rotational chief ministership: the BJP will have its Chief Minister for the first two-and-a-half years and the Shiv Sena for the rest of the term. Sources in the Sena said both the senior Thackeray and son Aaditya are ada-

mant about this. Mr. Thackeray told a few well-wishers that he too "needed to run my party" and is not settling for anything less than the 50-50 formula.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

BJP, Sena vie for top post

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The deadline for government formation is still two weeks away in Maharashtra, but hectic parleys have begun in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Shiv Sena camps over who will be the next Chief Minister.

A day after the alliance regained control of the State by winning 160 seats, leaders of both parties staked claim to the post.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Murmu is Lieutenant Governor of J&K, Mathur will go to Ladakh

Incumbent Satya Pal Malik shifted to Goa as Governor

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind on Friday transferred Jammu & Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik to Goa and appointed Expenditure Secretary Girish Chandra Murmu as the Lieutenant Governor of J&K and Radha Krishna Mathur as the Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh.

The Centre withdrew the special status of Jammu &



Girish Chandra Murmu

Kashmir on August 5. The newly created Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh will come into existence on Oc-

tober 31. Though the appointments are made in the name of the President, the Home Ministry is the nodal Ministry.

The Centre also appointed former chief of the Intelligence Bureau Dineswar Sharma, who was the Centre's interlocutor for Jammu & Kashmir, as administrator to Lakshadweep.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

CBI: review bail granted to Chidambaram

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation has asked the Supreme Court to review its judgment granting regular bail to former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram in the case registered by the agency in the INX Media case.

A three-judge Bench led by Justice R. Banumathi had granted Mr. Chidambaram bail on October 22.

DETAILS ON PAGE 15

BJP, JJP join hands to form govt. in Haryana

Deputy CM post, RS seat for Dushyant Chautala's party

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister and BJP president Amit Shah, along with Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) leader Dushyant Chautala, on Friday evening announced that the two parties would form a government in Haryana.

The Chief Minister will be from the BJP and the Deputy Chief Minister from the JJP.

The JJP's support to the BJP allows the saffron party to cobble together more than adequate numbers to stake claim to form a government.



Win-win deal: JJP leader Dushyant Chautala, BJP working president J.P. Nadda, Home Minister Amit Shah and Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar in Delhi on Friday. •PTI

Comfortable numbers

The Assembly election results, declared on Thursday, left the BJP six short of a majority. While eight victorious Independents have pledged support to the BJP, the 10 MLAs of the JJP have made the situation most comfortable for the party.

It would also help the BJP to avoid accepting the support of Gopal Kanda, the controversial MLA of the Haryana Lokhit Party, out on bail in a case related to the suicide of air stewardess Gita Sharma.

"We respect the mandate given by the people of Haryana and have decided to come together to form the government," said Mr. Shah,

who returned early from a three-day trip to Gujarat to help seal the deal.

'Stable government'

Mr. Chautala said that the alliance hoped to provide a "stable and progressive" government, acknowledging that the two parties might have tread different paths in the past.

Sources said the deal might include two Cabinet and one Minister of State berths for the JJP and a Rajya Sabha seat, going forward.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

IT'S A LOST OPPORTUNITY FOR CONGRESS IN HARYANA PAGE 14
DAUGHTERS ARE WATCHING, SAYS CONGRESS PAGE 14

'Don't take Gopal Kanda's support'

BJP leader Uma Bharti on Friday opposed the party's move to take the support of Haryana Lokhit Party's MLA Gopal Kanda to shore up its numbers. "If Gopal Kanda is the same man due to whom a girl committed suicide and later her mother too, then we must, for the sake of morality and ethics, not take his support to form a government... The case is still in court and he is out on bail. Elections cannot be seen as a validation of his legal or moral position," the former Union Minister said in tweets. •PAGE 14

Apples to ashes



Laid to waste: Burnt trucks parked outside the police station in Chitragam village of Shopian district in Jammu & Kashmir on Friday. Terrorists on Thursday stopped three trucks, killed two drivers and set fire to the vehicles. •NISSAR AHMAD (REPORT ON PAGE 15)

In Haryana, a dozen MLAs face criminal cases

New Assembly has three more 'tainted' legislators than the previous one

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

As many as 12 MLAs in the newly elected 90-member State Assembly have criminal cases against them, according to a Haryana Election Watch and Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) report. Only nine MLAs had criminal cases against them in the previous House. Besides, only nine women have been elected this time, four less than in 2014.

Congress tops list

The Congress tops the list with four MLAs having a criminal record, followed by BJP with two. Both Indian National Lok Dal and Haryana Lokhit Party's lone winning MLAs face criminal cases.

The cases against all four Congress MLAs and HLP



Sirsa MLA Gopal Kanda

MLA Gopal Kanda are of a serious nature, the report said.

Three of the seven Independents who are set to play a pivotal role in government formation also have criminal cases registered against them, serious one in the case of two.

Analysis of educational qualifications has revealed

that 62 MLAs - 69% of the total strength - are graduate or above, and 27 have declared their qualification as between primary and senior secondary level. As many as 57 MLAs are aged between 51 and 70 and only 10 are below 40 years of age. Seventeen MLAs are between 41 and 50 years of age; the remaining six are in the 71-80 age group.

More crorepatis

The number of crorepati MLAs has increased from 75 to 84 since the previous Assembly - an increase of 10%.

While the 31 Congress MLAs have average assets of ₹16.32 crore, the corresponding figure for the 40 BJP MLAs is ₹12.04 crore. However, the Jannayak Janta Party's MLAs are the richest with average assets of ₹25.26 crore. Formed after a

split in the INLD, the JJP has 10 MLAs in the Assembly.

Each legislator in the present Assembly has average assets of ₹18.29 crore compared to ₹12.97 crore in 2014.

Richest legislator

Independent MLA Balraj Kundu from Israna has the lowest at ₹40 lakh. Mr. Kanda has declared the highest liabilities at ₹78 crore, followed by Badshahpur Independent MLA Rakesh Daultabad at ₹19 crore.

As many as 29 MLAs have been re-elected. The average assets of the re-elected MLAs has increased 24% from ₹13.73 crore to ₹16.98 crore over the past five years.

Gujarat firm wins consultancy bid to redevelop Central Vista

HCP Design, Planning and Management to be paid ₹229.75 crore for masterplan: Hardeep Puri

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

An Ahmedabad-based architecture firm that carried out the development of the Sabarmati riverfront in Gujarat in 2002 has been chosen to lead the Central government's ambitious revamp of Parliament and the Central Vista.

The Central government on Friday announced that it had chosen HCP Design, Planning and Management for its redevelopment of Parliament and Central Vista and the development of a new common central secretariat.

Detailed planning

The firm would now prepare a masterplan for the entire area, from the gates of Rashtrapati Bhavan till In-



Hardeep Singh Puri at a press conference on redeveloping Parliament and the Central Vista on Friday. •PTI

dia Gate, complete with detailed design for the existing buildings as well as new ones.

For these services, it would be paid a consultancy fee of ₹229.75 crore, Union Housing and Urban Af-

airs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said, adding that it was about 40% less than the initial estimate of ₹448 crore.

Mr. Puri said usually the consultancy fees are about 3% to 5% of the total project

cost. However, he said the final cost of the project would be determined by the tendering process for the projects, which he said would be on the ground by May 2020.

Central Public Works Department officials said the usual formula may not be applicable to this project, with two officials saying a rough estimate was ₹12,450 crore.

Public consultations

Before the masterplan and designs are locked in, Mr. Puri said the firm would have public consultations. The government has set the deadlines of November 2021 for the revamp of the 3-km-long Central Vista, March 2022 for the redevelopment of Parliament and March

2024 for the construction of the common central secretariat for ministries.

Speaking about the need for the revamp, Mr. Puri said the buildings, like Parliament House and North and South Blocks, were constructed around 100 years ago and did not have the space and amenities needed today.

The redevelopment of Parliament would add offices for all MPs and could include a new building connected to the existing heritage structure with a walkway, he said.

He reiterated that the Parliament, North and South Blocks would not be demolished, unlike some of the government offices constructed post-Independence, but their usage could change.

Activists cry foul as govt. notifies RTI rules

'Information Commissions will function like caged parrots'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Activists on Friday decried new rules under the Right to Information Act that have reduced the tenure of Information Commissioners from five years to three, saying the changes would affect their independence. The government had notified the rules on Thursday.

The Right to Information (Term of Office, Salaries, Allowances and Other Terms and Conditions of Service of Chief Information Commissioner, Information Commissioners in the Central Information Commission, State Chief Information Commissioner and State Information Commissioners in the State Information Commission) Rules, 2019 notified by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pen-

sions set the tenure of Information Commissioners at three years and gave the government the discretion to decide on "conditions of service" for which no express provisions are made in the rules.

The Chief Information Commissioner's salary has been fixed at ₹2.5 lakh and an Information Commissioner's at ₹2.25 lakh.

'Violation of procedures'

Reacting to the notification, activist Anjali Bharadwaj of the Satark Nagrik Sangathan said the government had amended the RTI Act in July and had not issued the prescribed rules for nearly three months after the amendment received the President's assent on August 1. She said the rules had been drafted and promulgat-

ed in a "completely surreptitious manner in flagrant violation" of the procedures laid down in the Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy of 2014.

"The policy requires all draft rules to be placed in the public domain for comments/suggestions of people. The draft was not available in the public domain and no consultations were held with members of the public," the citizens' group said in a statement.

Among new rules, the government has been given the "power to relax" their provisions, which raised "serious concerns that the government could potentially invoke these powers to determine different tenures for different Commissioners at the time of appointment", she said.

DELHI ☀️ Timings

| SATURDAY, OCT. 26 | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-----|-------|
| RISE | 06:28 | SET | 17:42 |
| RISE | 04:10 | SET | 16:46 |
| SUNDAY, OCT. 27 | | | |
| RISE | 06:29 | SET | 17:41 |
| RISE | 05:17 | SET | 17:26 |
| MONDAY, OCT. 28 | | | |
| RISE | 06:30 | SET | 17:40 |
| RISE | 06:23 | SET | 18:06 |

| Delhi Weather | max | min |
|---------------|-----|-----|
| Delhi City | 31 | 18 |
| Safdarjang | 31 | 18 |
| Palam | 31 | 18 |

Delhi Palam Today
32°C An easy morning with haze/smoke haze. A mainly clear sky will prevail.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
33°C A comfortable morning with haze/smoke haze. A mainly clear sky will prevail.

© Copyright SkyMet Weather 2019
All rights reserved.

Air quality of Delhi-NCR

| | | | |
|-----------|--------------|---------------|-----|
| Delhi | 284 | Gurugram | 280 |
| Ghaziabad | 303 | Faridabad | 260 |
| Noida | 284 | Greater Noida | 276 |
| Good | Satisfactory | Moderate | |
| 0-50 | 51-100 | 101-200 | |
| Poor | Very poor | Severe | |
| 201-300 | 301-400 | >401 | |

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

Diwali fails to bring cheer to traders: CAIT

'Less turnout even on Dhanteras'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) on Friday complained that the festive season had failed to bring cheers to retail markets due to continued "customer slowdown".

"The slowdown in commercial markets of the country continues even today and also hit the sales on Dhanteras, the day which is considered as the most auspicious day to buy gold or silver jewellery, utensils and kitchenware. There is gloomy atmosphere in almost all the outlets as people didn't turn up as expected," the union said in a statement, adding that market observers said that it is perhaps the most disappointing festival day in the last 10 years.

Pankaj Arora, head of the jewellery committee of CAIT said that gold and silver trade touched a record low



People during Dhanteras shopping in the Capital on Friday. •SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

on Friday with an unprecedented 35%-40% decline in sales. He added that the bare minimum sale of these goods were "namesake purchases" on account of Dhanteras.

CAIT president B.C. Bhartia attacked e-retailers for "unethical business practices", which he said had wrecked retail trade. Coupled with a liquidity crunch, Diwali held no meaning for traders this year, he said.

DUTA resorts to shutdown over 'privatisation agenda'

Students' groups extend support to the protesting teachers

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The university shutdown called by the Delhi University Teachers Association (DUTA) on Friday in protest against increasing "privatisation" received support from several quarters, including students' groups such as AL-SA, CYSS, KYS and SFI, the union said.

Members of the union also held demonstrations where the meeting of the university's executive council was taking place. On the agenda for the executive council meeting was DU's Institute of Eminence (IoE) status.

DUTA is against the IoE status granted to DU by the

The government would not fund the increase in expenditure and hence the university would be forced to resort to exorbitant fees

DELHI UNIVERSITY TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Union Human Resource Development Ministry as the association feels that it would increase privatisation.

In a detailed critique of the IoE scheme submitted to the Vice-Chancellor and members of the executive council, DUTA wrote on how DU would have to commit to enormous expenditure for

development of "world-class" infrastructure and to maintain tight student teacher ratio. "The government would not fund the increase in expenditure and hence the university would be forced to resort to exorbitant fees and 'blatant commercial activities'," the association said.

Members of the DUTA also met the V-C and members of the executive council to reiterate their demands and appeal to them not to allow the university to "succumb to the pressures of the government" in this regard. The union also protested the proposed introduction of the "guest teacher" policy.

Metro service only till 10 p.m. on Diwali day

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) on Friday said that the last train from the respective terminals will depart at 10 p.m. on Sunday due to Diwali while services will be normal for the rest of the day.

"On account of Diwali, the last metro train service on October 27 will be at 10 p.m. from terminal stations of all metro lines, including the Airport Express Line," read a statement issued by the DMRC.

The DMRC statement added, "Metro train services will run as usual for the rest of the day on Diwali from 6 a.m. onwards on all the lines and from 4.45 a.m. on the Airport Express Line."

Regularisation of colonies: parties attack each other

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday attacked the Aam Aadmi Party government for its decision to celebrate Diwali "with rich people in Connaught Place". The BJP is planning to celebrate the festival with the residents of unauthorised colonies.

However, commenting on the regularisation of unauthorised colonies, Delhi Congress chief Subhash Chopra and chairman of the Campaign Committee Kirti Azad said that both Delhi BJP president Manoj Tiwari and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal were indulging in shadow-boxing in the name of regularisation of colonies and were colluding to create a make-belief situation to fool the people with an eye on the upcoming Assembly elections.

BJP Rajya Sabha MP Vijay

Goel and South Delhi MP Ramesh Bidhuri said that the BJP's leaders will "share the joy" of the decision to regularise unauthorised colonies by celebrating Diwali with the residents of unauthorised colonies.

"For 15 years, the Congress betrayed the people of unauthorised colonies and now AAP is playing fraud with them," Mr. Goel alleged.

Meanwhile, the Congress cautioned the Poorvanchalis and others living in unauthorised colonies of Delhi not to be taken in by the hollow promises of the BJP and AAP and asked them to insist that the process of regularisation must be completed before the Assembly elections and that no development charge or circle rate should be collected from them.

Delhi govt. yet to give nod to prosecute Kanhaiya

Stalemate continues in sedition case

NIRNIMESH KUMAR
NEW DELHI

The stalemate over sanction for prosecution of former JNU president Kanhaiya Kumar and others for sedition continues, with no decision by the Delhi government on the Delhi Police's request.

The Public Prosecutor in the case on Friday submitted a letter written by the Home Department to the Prosecution Director informing the latter about the status of the police request to be apprised to the court.

The investigating officer of the case was not present for the hearing.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Manish Khurana (CMM) summoned the probe officer on December



Kanhaiya Kumar

11, the next date of hearing.

The police chargesheeted the accused persons in January, and the court has since been deferring cognisance of it.

The court on the last date of hearing had pulled up the AAP government for "delaying" the decision on the police's request.

Man held with 'gift box' containing firearms

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 27-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly supplying arms and ammunition in Dwarka, the police said on Friday.

DCP (Dwarka) Anto Alphonse said Gulfam from Uttar Pradesh's Badaun was carrying the weapons in a gift box to make it look like a Diwali present. "The police received a tip-off that Gulfam would be coming to Golf

Links Road to supply the weapons to members of Nandu gang after which a trap was laid and he was nabbed," Mr. Alphonse said, adding that the accused had fired at the police party but was overpowered.

"A gift box containing a huge cache of weapons were recovered from him," the officer said. A total of nine firearms, eight countrymade pistols and one revolver have been seized.

DELHI TODAY

Exhibition: "Festive Celebration", a solo painting exhibition by Ranjit Sarkar at Convention Centre Foyer, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Exhibition: "Explore in the Tradition", a solo exhibition of paintings by Megha Sharma at Triveni Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam, 205, Tansen Marg, 11 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Exhibition: "Opening Lines" the artworks of E.Alkazi, curated by

Ranjit Hoskote at Shridharani Gallery and Art Heritage Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam, 205, Tansen Marg, 11 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Exhibition: "Like a Leaf in Autumn", a solo exhibition of contemporary miniature paintings by Waswo X. Waswo and R. Vijay at Gallery Espace, 16 Community Centre, New Friends Colony, 10 a.m. - 7 p.m.

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

Kejriwal flags off 104 new standard-floor CNG buses

Vehicles feature CCTV cameras, panic buttons, among others

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday flagged off 104 new standard-floor CNG buses, which the government said feature modern technology, including CCTV cameras, panic buttons and hydraulic lifts for differently abled passengers.

“I want to congratulate the people of Delhi on the arrival of 104 new buses on the roads of the city. It is a huge step towards providing convenience to the people and will strengthen Delhi’s public transport,” Mr. Kejriwal said.

This is the second lot of buses from the total of 1,000 standard-floor CNG buses that started being delivered last month from the Delhi Transport Corporation depot in Dwarka. Earlier, he had flagged off 25 such buses in August.

“On one hand, new buses

will be running on the roads of Delhi and on the other hand, women will be able to access free bus rides starting from October 29. The government will also deploy bus marshalls within the next week to ensure the safety of women,” he added. According to the government, six of the new buses will be deployed on the Nangloi to Mehrauli route, six will ply between Najafgarh and Safdarjung Terminal, 20 between Nangloi and Badarpur Extension and 19 between Qutubgarh Border and Old Delhi. Similarly, 15 buses will ply between Uttam Nagar and Kapashera Border, 12 from Qutubgarh to Fatehpuri, 12 from Najafgarh to Azadpur, 8 between Kanjhawala and Azadpur in addition to 4 from Najafgarh to Narela. In addition to these, 1,000 low-floor AC buses are also being in-

ducted in the cluster scheme, read the government statement.

“The contract of 650 low-floor buses has already been awarded by the Department of Transport for three clusters and these will start coming from January 2020,” the statement said, adding that the tender for the remaining 350 buses was being floated soon.

The tentative schedule of induction of 650 low-floor AC buses entails the induction of 60 buses in January 2020, 104 in February, 130 in March, 160 in April and 196 in May. “The government is also inducting 1,000 electric buses. In the 1st phase, the tender for 300 electric buses was floated on October 15. The last date for submission of bids is November 13, 2019. The financial bid for 1,000 low-floor, AC, CNG-run cluster buses has also been opened,” it added.

Air quality likely to plunge to 'severe' category after Diwali

Impact to remain for a short period with about 'half' the magnitude of 2018 Diwali

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The air quality of Delhi is likely to spike to "severe" category in the wee hours of Monday due to the effect of firecrackers on Diwali night. But it will be for a short period with about "half" the magnitude of Diwali in 2018, according to government-run monitoring agency, System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR).

The level of PM2.5 (deadly respirable fine particles) is also expected to be less on Monday, a day after Diwali, than in the last three years.

"Higher boundary layer winds are likely to flush out the expected high impact of firecracker emissions," SAFAR said.

Meanwhile, the air quality of Delhi on Friday improved slightly to the upper end of "poor" category but is expected to fall to "very poor" category on Sunday. The Air Quality Index (AQI) was 284



The Air Quality Index was 284 on Friday, slightly lower than 311 on Thursday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

on Friday, slightly lower than 311 on Thursday.

"The highest impact of firecracker emissions is expected in the early morning of October 24 [1 a.m.- 6 a.m.]. In a normal course, the stubble burning induced impact is expected to be moderate," SAFAR said.

The boundary layer and surface winds are likely to in-

tensify by October 27 and may sustain for the next two days, which will not allow accumulation of pollutants due to stubble burning, said SAFAR.

SAFAR had considered two scenarios in its Diwali prediction: First, zero firecracker emissions and second, 50%

of average firecracker emission of 2017 and 2018. Under the first condition, the AQI will remain in "very poor" category on Monday and under the second it will spike to "severe", but the second condition is more likely to happen.

"We considered 50% of the average emission of 2017 and 2018 as only green crackers are allowed this year and their emissions are lesser by about 30-40%. On top of that due to increased awareness, we expect a dip of about 10% in use of firecrackers and hence the emissions are expected to be 50% less than last two years," a SAFAR official told *The Hindu*.

But, SAFAR also cautioned that pollution could be higher. "Combination of several rapidly changing weather parameters play a role in controlling the air pollution at this time and dynamics changes, even if one parameters behaves erratically," it said.

On Thursday, the GRAP Task Force recommended that hot mix plants, stone-crushers and construction activities that generate dust are prohibited from October 26 to 30 in Delhi and its satellite towns, a committee overseeing the implementation of GRAP said on Thursday.

Coal-based industries, except power plants, would also have to cease operations on those days in Delhi as well as the satellite towns of Faridabad, Gurugram, Ghaziabad, Noida, Greater Noida, Sonipat and Bahadurgarh.

PMO tells States to address stubble burning issue

Meeting held to oversee implementation of Graded Response Action Plan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has instructed Punjab and Haryana to address the issue of stubble burning. P.K. Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister chaired a meeting on Thursday night with members of a task force that oversees implementation of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), government sources confirmed to *The Hindu*.

Officers from these two States have committed to the PMO that they would im-

mediately deploy as much machinery as possible to address stubble burning.

The meeting was also attended by representatives of the Delhi government, municipal bodies of Delhi, experts from the Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi, The Energy Resources Institute and the Ministry of Environment and Agriculture

According to Friday's assessment by weather forecast agency SAFAR, the impact of stubble burning from Haryana & Punjab is "moderate but gradually increas-

ing." Experts had earlier said that this weekend is particularly crucial for air quality due to Diwali which will see bursting of crackers as well as heightened traffic.

Dip in AQI from Nov. The relative contribution of the particulate matter due to stubble burning has increased in the last week from the beginning of the month. However, experts said that a significant dip in air quality, primarily due to unfavourable weather conditions is forecast from November 1.

EPCA seeks intervention of apex court in pollution fight

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court-appointed Environment Pollution (Prevention & Control) Authority (EPCA) on Friday urged the apex court to issue "urgent" directions to Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan governments against polluting activities in those States.

The issues includes, massive quantities of plastic, industrial waste being dumped on vacant land and then burnt; dust from construction sites and industries visibly emitting black smoke among others.

Meanwhile, Delhi Chief Secretary, Vijay Dev, chaired a meeting on air pollution and directed officials to take necessary actions.

"The municipal corporations of Delhi were asked to use chemical dust suppressants on dusty areas on a pilot basis. Also the Chief Secretary ordered to increase mechanised sweeping and water sprinkling in all 13 hotspots," a government official who attended the meeting told *The Hindu*.

The official also said that the government will be forming teams to check the construction ban to be in place from 6 a.m to 6 p.m. from October 26-30 and also to intensify night patrolling.

Brother of air hostess aghast at Gopal Kanda's victory

'I still suffer seeing him being treated as VIP in courtroom'

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

The brother of the air hostess, who blamed former Haryana Minister Gopal Kanda before killing herself in 2012, is aghast over his political rehabilitation.

Seven-year-old case

The woman was found dead on August 5, 2012, at her Ashok Vihar residence in north-west Delhi. In her note, she had said she was ending her life due to "harassment" by Gopal Kanda.

"How can a man who has a 1,800-page chargesheet filed against him be a lawmaker? How can BJP take support from such a person who is a threat to society? He had destroyed my family and after coming to power, Gopal Kanda will do the same with others," her brother said. After the woman's death, Mr. Kanda was arrested on charges of rape

Recording of evidence in case to begin on Nov. 27

The case against newly elected Haryana politician Gopal Goyal Kanda for allegedly abetting suicide of an air hostess is dragging for seven years in a Delhi court, which is yet to complete recording of prosecution evidence. The court has fixed November 27 and 28 for recording of the prosecution evidence in the case.

and suicide. He was released on bail in 2013. "I have been suffering the loss for the past seven years. I still suffer when I go to a courtroom to see Kanda being treated like a VIP," he said.

"I am a commoner who has lost his sister and mother because of Kanda. I am not connected to any political party. I am requesting people he is approaching to

look at his past," he said, adding: "What about 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao'? We are giving the responsibility of women to a criminal."

The woman was working as an air hostess with MDLR Airlines, the managing director of which was Mr. Kanda. An officer said the case is under trial and he has been regularly attending all hearings.

"We have submitted the chargesheet with evidence. The case is in a fast-track court," said the officer.

BJP's Haryana in-charge Anil Jain said the party's top brass would take a call on the controversial MLA's support.

(With inputs from PTI)
Suicide prevention helpline: Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health, Telephone: 011-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m. -7.30 p.m.

Kanda is a test case for BJP: AAP

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party on Friday criticised the BJP for allegedly accepting the support of newly elected independent Haryana MLA Gopal Kanda. It said the BJP has become a "gangotri" for rapists and corrupt people.

AAP MP Sanjay Singh said

BJP Delhi leaders had earlier protested against Mr. Kanda. "Whether it horse-trading or creating pressure on the Opposition by putting an investigation agency behind them, the BJP and its national president Amit Shah have been indulging in all immoral acts. Whatever unethical actions may be taken to form

a government in any State, they are ready to do it," Mr. Singh said. AAP leader Atishi asked people to choose between AAP and the BJP which supports "rapists".

"What BJP leaders believe about Kanda today will decide whether the women of Delhi can trust the BJP or not," Ms. Atishi said.

Rajasthan results a major setback for BJP

Party loses Mandawa seat to Congress, had to be content with poll partner RLP's win in Khinvsar

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

The results of by-elections to two Assembly constituencies in Rajasthan have come as a major setback to the Bharatiya Janata Party, which lost the Mandawa seat to the Congress and had to be content with the Rashtriya Loktantrik Party winning the Khinvsar seat as its newly formed alliance partner. The massive defeat has exposed a rift in the Opposition party, which is facing resentment among its workers.

Congress candidate Rita Chaudhary won the Mandawa seat in Jhunjhunu district by a huge margin of 33,704 votes, defeating her nearest rival, BJP's Sushila Siga, while RLP candidate Narayan Beniwal scored victory in Nagaur district's Khinvsar by defeating Harendra Mirdha of the Congress by a margin of 4,630 votes.

Ms. Siga, pradhan in the



RLP candidate Narayan Beniwal (right) showing the election certificate after his victory in Khinvsar. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Jhunjhunu Panchayat Samiti, was earlier expelled from the Congress and was inducted into the BJP a few hours before she was fielded as the party's candidate. The BJP's decision left the party workers disappointed and they did not take part actively in her election campaign.

BJP State president Satish Poonia said on Friday that while the party workers

wanted Jhunjhunu MP Narendra Khinchar's son to be fielded from Mandawa, the high command was strictly against the culture of promoting the family legacy. Mandawa has been the Congress' bastion since the first Assembly election held in 1952 and the BJP won the seat only once, in 2018, when Mr. Khinchar was elected.

In Khinvsar, the BJP did not field any candidate and supported RLP's Narayan Beniwal, younger brother of Nagaur MP Hanuman Beniwal, with whom it had hurriedly formed an alliance just before the 2019 Lok Sabha election. With the younger Beniwal's victory, the entire credit has gone to Mr. Hanuman Beniwal, who has been three-time MLA from Khinvsar.

The thin margin with which Mr. Beniwal won also depicted the tough fight put up by the Congress in the constituency. Congress candidate Mr. Mirdha, belonging to the politically influential Mirdha family of Nagaur, displayed his capacity to sway the Jat votes, though he was denied the party's ticket in the 2019 Lok Sabha poll.

Former Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje, apparently miffed over the alliance with the RLP, distanced herself

from campaigning in both the constituencies. Mr. Hanuman Beniwal had floated the RLP a few months before the 2018 Assembly election after leaving the BJP following his differences with Ms. Raje.

Beniwal's accusation

Mr. Beniwal has accused Ms. Raje and her close confidant, former Minister Yunus Khan, of helping out the Congress candidates in both the Lok Sabha election and the Assembly bypolls despite the alliance with the RLP. "Senior BJP leaders should take strict action against Ms. Raje and Mr. Khan," he tweeted on Friday.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said the by-election results had "shown the mirror" to the BJP, which had raised misleading issues in the campaign rather than talking about people's problems and their real concerns.

VBA, AIMIM difference between Cong., NCP and victory in 20 seats

Votes polled by former allies similar to winning margin of Shiv Sena, BJP candidates

AJEET MAHALE
MUMBAI

Though the Prakash Ambedkar-led Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) fielded candidates in over 250 seats in the Assembly polls, not a single one of them emerged victorious when the results were declared on Thursday.

Meanwhile, VBA's former alliance partner, the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), contested 44 seats and was able to win only two seats. By going solo in the polls, the parties split the votes and stood in the way of the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) crossing the victory line in over 20 seats across the State. In several seats such as Nandgaon, Chandivali, Ulhasnagar, Pune Cantonment, Shivajinagar and Paithan, where the Congress and the NCP lost by slender margins, the votes polled by the VBA were often close to the margin of victory of the Shiv Sena or BJP candidate.

The VBA stood second in 10 seats and claimed the third spot in 23 seats in the State. In Nandgaon, the VBA polled 13,637 seats, where sitting MLA Pankaj Bhujbal of the NCP lost to the Sena's Suhas Kande by a margin of 13,889 votes. The party split votes in Jintur, Paithan, Ulhasnagar, Daund, Chalisgaon and Khadakwasla, where the NCP candidates lost by narrow margins.

Blow to fortunes

The AIMIM's entry into the electoral fray hit the NCP the hardest in Balapur. The AIMIM was contesting the seat for the first time and received the lion's share of the Muslim vote, polling nearly 44,507 votes. The NCP was relegated to the fourth position with 16,497 votes in the



Going separate ways: Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi chief Prakash Ambedkar (left) with All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen president Asaduddin Owaisi. The parties went solo in the polls. ■ FILE PHOTO

constituency, which was won by the Sena's Nitinkumar Tale. The VBA stood second with 50,555 votes.

The VBA and the AIMIM also adversely affected the fortunes of the Congress. The impact was felt the most in Chandivali, where Naseem Khan of the Congress lost by a slender margin of 409 votes. The VBA and the AIMIM had both fielded Muslim candidates and they polled 8,876 votes and 1,167 votes respectively.

The AIMIM entered into a direct contest with the Congress in Malegaon Central and won the seat for the first time. In Nanded North, AIMIM's Feroz Lala polled 41,892 votes, resulting in sitting MLA D.P. Savant of the Congress losing to Sena's Balaji Kalyankar by a margin of 12,000 votes. The VBA stood fourth in the constituency with 26,569 votes.

Two pairs of brothers enter Assembly

Vilasrao Deshmukh's sons, Dhiraj and Amit, NCP's Baban Shinde, brother Sanjay post wins

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

It is all in the family for a couple of newly-elected MLAs as two pairs of brothers have made it to the Assembly.

Late Congress leader Vilasrao Deshmukh's sons, Dhiraj and Amit, have emerged victorious from Latur Rural and Latur City respectively. In Solapur district, NCP's Baban Shinde and his brother Sanjay have won from Madha and Karmala respectively. While Baban retained his Madha seat, defeating Shiv Sena's Sanjay Kokate by a margin of 68,245 votes, Sanjay contested as an NCP-backed Independent in Karmala, defeating Sena re-

bel Narayan Patil by a margin of 5,494 votes.

Vilasrao Deshmukh, who was chief minister between 1999-2003 and 2004-2008, nurtured his home district in during his decades-long political career. For Dhiraj, it was a maiden win by a margin of 1.21 lakh votes, while Amit retained Latur City for a third consecutive term.

Among the Shinde brothers, Baban has been elected from Madha for a sixth term. Sanjay was the NCP candidate from the Madha Lok Sabha constituency, where he was defeated by Ranjit Nimbalkar, who switched over to the BJP from the Congress in May.



Jubilant: Amit Deshmukh (left) and brother Dhiraj (second from right) with Congress leaders Jyotiraditya Scindia and Sushilkumar Shinde during an election rally. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Diwali dampener: expect showers till Tuesday

TANVI DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

The city has been experiencing sporadic showers through the week, coupled with thunder and lightning. On Friday, a deep depression in Arabian Sea intensified into a cyclonic storm, Kyarr, over East Central Arabian Sea. It is located 370 km South-southwest of Mumbai, and will move northwards to Oman in the next five days. It is likely to intensify during the next 24 hours.

The India Meteorological Department has forecast rain or thundershowers in Mumbai, Thane, Palghar till Tuesday, with squally winds and high waves on the coast. Fishermen have been advised not to venture into the sea. Small-scale damage is expected in Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg and Raigad districts. Akshay Deoras, Ph.D. scholar at the University of Reading, U.K., tweeted, "(The cyclone) will drift away from #India later this week. Thus, no significant impacts are expected along the western coast of the country including #Konkan and #Mumbai. The #Konkan coast including #Mumbai will continue to witness somewhat cloudy #weather conditions along with chances of post-noon thundershowers in some parts at least till October 27."

Raut posts cartoon poking fun at BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut posted a cartoon on his verified Twitter account on Friday taking a dig at the BJP, its alliance partner. The cartoon shows a tiger (the Sena's symbol) wearing an analogue clock (the NCP's symbol) and sniffing a lotus (the BJP's symbol).

He captioned the post: "Bura na maano Diwali hai [Don't take offence, it's Deepavali]". Former chief minister Prithviraj Chavan also hinted on Thursday of the "interesting possibility" of the Se-



Sanjay Raut

na, the NCP and the Congress joining hands to upset the BJP's plans of forming the new government in Maharashtra. Mr. Chavan termed the Sena the "lesser evil" compared with the BJP.

IN BRIEF

**Tipu cannot be erased from textbooks: BJP MLC**

VIJAYAPURA
Days after MLA for Madikeri Appachu Ranjan demanded that lessons on Mysuru king Tipu Sultan be removed from school syllabus, Arun Shahapur, BJP MLC, (in photo) has said historical events and people should not be expunged from textbooks. He said kings such as Tipu Sultan should neither be glorified nor shown in poor light.

Two poachers arrested in Nagarahole tiger reserve

MYSURU
The Forest Department arrested two poachers in a late-night operation inside the Nagarahole tiger reserve on Thursday and seized guns, live cartridges and other materials from them. The accused were taken into custody.

ED moves SC against Shivakumar's bail

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate has moved the Supreme Court against the grant of bail by the Delhi High Court to Congress leader D.K. Shivakumar in a money-laundering case.

The agency said Mr. Shivakumar is an 'influential' person and could tamper with the evidence while on bail.

Mr. Shivakumar was recently allowed bail after having spent 50 days in custody since his arrest on September 3.

Justice Suresh Kumar Kait of the Delhi High Court, while granting bail, had remarked that Mr. Shivakumar was extensively interrogated by the probe agency since his arrest.

The ED has moved the top court even as the bail order had specifically instructed Mr. Shivakumar to coop-



D.K. Shivakumar

erate with the investigation and to not leave the country without the court's approval. The order also directed him to pay a personal bail bond of ₹25 lakh with two sureties of the like amount.

The HC had concluded that the Congress leader was hardly a threat to the probe and reasoned that he was not in power except as a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Accused in Walayar rape case acquitted

Prosecution fails to prove their involvement in the case

STAFF REPORTER
PALAKKAD

A POCSO (Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences) court here on Friday set free three men who had been accused of raping two sibling girls and abetting their suicide at Attappallam, near Walayar, in the district.

The case had run into a controversy as the police officers who investigated it initially faced allegations of helping the accused.

Additional district judge (I) S. Muraleekrishna, who is the POCSO judge in Palakkad, exonerated V. Madhu, alias Valiya Madhu, 27, from Attappallam; Shibu, 43, from Rajakkad, Idukki; and M. Madhu, 27, alias Kutty Madhu from Pampampalam, as the prosecution

failed to prove their involvement. There were five accused in the case. One of them, Pradeep Kumar, was earlier set free by the court. The fifth accused is a minor, whose trial will come up before a juvenile court next month.

'It is unbearable'

The girls' mother was apparently heartbroken on hearing the judgment. "It's unbearable," she said crying in despair. She said neither the lawyer nor the policemen had informed her about the date of the judgment.

The two siblings were found hanging in their house at Attappallam on different days in 2017. When the 13-year-old girl was found dead on January 13, 2017, her

nine-year-old sister was found hanging on March 4, 2017.

The police launched an investigation after the post-mortem reports said that both of them had been raped. A police team led by Deputy Superintendent of Police M.J. Sojan had carried out the final investigation and prepared the chargesheet.

The sub-inspector of the Walayar police station had faced suspension for ignoring pieces of evidence. A departmental inquiry had been ordered against a circle inspector and two Deputy SPs in connection with the case. The suicide of a man, who had been questioned by the police, added sensation to the case.

7 more held for Alliance varsity ex-VC's murder

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The Bengaluru police have arrested seven more people, including two women, who were allegedly part of the conspiracy to murder the former Vice-Chancellor of Alliance University, Ayyappa Dore. He was murdered while taking a walk at the HMT playground near his house in R.T. Nagar on October 15.

The accused have been identified as Kantharaju, 28, a drummer; Sunil Rao, 31, an executive in a private bank; his brother-in-law, Arun Kumar, 40; Fayaz, 29, a mechanic from J.C. Nagar; and Vinay, 24, cab driver also from J.C. Nagar.

The women have been identified as Fayaz's sister Rizwana, 38, and Salma, 28, a dance bar girl who was in a relationship with one of the prime accused in the case, Suraj Singh.



Ayyappa Dore was murdered while taking a walk near his house. • FILE PHOTO

"Four of the accused actively took part in the reconnaissance and attacked Dore with lethal weapons along with Suraj, killing him on the spot," said a police officer. Suraj had allegedly been promised ₹1 crore by the Chancellor and co-founder of Alliance University, Sudhir Angur, to murder Dore. Sudhir had also instructed him to murder his brother and varsity co-founder Madhukar Angur so that he could gain control over the varsity, the police said.

Bengaluru Blasters bowling coach, batsman arrested

New case shows that coach manipulated a 2018 game

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The alleged match-fixing and betting scandal that has been plaguing the Karnataka Premier League may be more widespread than believed. The Central Crime Branch on Friday arrested a Bengaluru Blasters bowling coach and a batsman formerly with the same team, for their involvement in another match-fixing case.

According to the police, the coach - Vinu Prasad - was in nexus with bookies and manipulated a game between Bengaluru Blasters and Belagavi Panthers in 2018. "It was on his instruc-



Ali Asfak Thara, owner of Belagavi Panthers, was arrested last month.

tions that the accused batsman, Vishwanathan, batted slowly, for which he was paid ₹5 lakh."

Vinu Prasad had taken several lakhs of rupees from bookies and paid Vishwa-

nathan from that. This was done to ensure a drop in scoreboard," said a senior police official.

This is the second racket exposed by the CCB, which in September had arrested Ali Asfak Thara, the owner of Belagavi Panthers, along with four others for allegedly running a betting racket with links in Dubai. "During the course of our investigations into that case, we got information about a similar racket and picked up Bengaluru Blasters bowling coach Vinu Prasad and batsman Vishwanathan," said Sandeep Patil, Joint Commissioner of Police.

CBI files FIR to probe killing of 2 Cong. leaders

Their kin had sought reinvestigation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation, on a direction by the Kerala High Court, has registered an FIR to probe the killing of two Youth Congress leaders in Kasargode earlier this year due to an alleged political rivalry.

Kripesh, 21, and Sarat Lal, 24, were murdered on February 17 at Periya village. The case was earlier instituted by the Bekal police, on a complaint from one K. Sree Kumar, a resident of Kasargode.

The complainant alleged that the two were killed by CPI(M) workers. A day later, the investigation was hand-

ed over to the Crime Branch. The probe team filed a chargesheet on May 20 against the accused persons, including Peethambaran. A and 13 others. The case was committed to the principal sessions court in Kasargode and 11 persons are currently in judicial custody. The remaining three are out on bail, according to the FIR.

The victims' parents had approached the High Court seeking a reinvestigation of the case by the CBI. On September 30, the court transferred the case to the central agency, while setting aside the chargesheet filed by the Crime Branch.

Supreme Court reserves verdict in Karnataka MLAs case

They had resigned to bring down the government: Sibal

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Noting that genuineness and motive are linked by an umbilical cord, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, for the Congress, said it is an open secret that the dissident MLAs offered their resignation *en masse* to bring down the Congress-Jana Dal (Secular) government in Karnataka.

The arguments in the Supreme Court came on Friday, the last day of hearing before a Bench led by Justice N.V. Ramana. The Bench reserved the case for judgment.

Mr. Sibal said the petitions, filed by the disquali-



The Bench, led by Justice N.V. Ramana, reserved the case for judgment.

fied MLAs, raised several questions of law impacting the polity of the country and should be referred to a Constitution Bench. "We are in politics. It is not an era of secrecy. In politics, we know

who is going where and what is happening," he said.

Mr. Sibal said the Speaker was entitled to an inquiry into the resignations submitted by the MLAs by going into the subsequent and preceding events. "There is an umbilical cord between genuineness and motive. He may get information prior and subsequent to the conduct of the MLAs," he said.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta on Thursday suggested that the Speaker take a fresh call in the case of 15 dissident Congress and Janata Dal (Secular) MLAs disqualified under the anti-defection law.



IN BRIEF
Experts urge Centre to eliminate trans fats

NEW DELHI
Consumer organisations and health experts have written to the Union Health Ministry asking it to advance the 2022 deadline for the elimination of trans-fatty acids in Indian food to 2021. Over 77,000 deaths annually are attributed to trans fats consumption in India.

Plea in Supreme Court for reforms to family laws

NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court asked the Centre to respond to a plea to delete certain provisions of family laws that allow exclusive custody of children to one parent after a marital separation. The petition, filed by Sulochana Rani, sought reforms to these laws and raised concerns about children going without the benefits of shared parenting.

'Details of harassment by M.J. Akbar bizarre'

NEW DELHI
Details of the alleged incident of sexual harassment by former Union Minister M.J. Akbar, when he was a scribe, against journalist Priya Ramani were "so bizarre" and "inappropriate" that it created a lasting image, the victim's friend Niloufer Venkataraman, in whom she had confided about her experience, told a Delhi court on Friday while deposing as a witness. PTI

E-auction of PM's mementos ends

NEW DELHI
The e-auctioning of mementos received by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which was organised by the Culture Ministry, drew to a close on Friday, with the highest bid of ₹25 lakh for a painting featuring the PM and Mahatma Gandhi, the government said. The proceeds from the e-auction will be donated towards the Namami Gange Mission. PTI

Efforts on to bring out toddler from abandoned borewell in T.N.

A tube has been dropped into the 35-foot-deep well to supply oxygen to the child

KATHELENE ANTONY
TIRUCHI

Hectic efforts are on to rescue a two-year-old child who fell into an abandoned borewell at Nadukattupatti near Manapparai in Tiruchi district of Tamil Nadu on Friday evening.

The boy, Sujith Wilson, was apparently playing when he slipped and fell into a seven-year-old borewell hole in front of his house around 5.30 p.m.

On being alerted, Fire and Rescue Services personnel from Manapparai, Salem and Namakkal rushed to the spot and launched a rescue operation with the help of locals.

A tube was dropped into the borewell to supply oxygen even as an earthmover was deployed to dig up a trench close to the borewell.

Rescue workers hoped to reach the boy by digging a



Rescue operation on to take out the toddler from the borewell at Nadukattupatti in Tiruchi on Friday. ■M. MOORTHY

tunnel but the process was suspended because of rocky terrain.

Soon, M. Manikandan, who had designed a device specifically for such rescue operations, arrived with his

equipment from Madurai later in the evening.

He along with other rescue workers began an operation to rescue the child using the device, which had been successfully used in a few

rescue operations earlier.

The borewell, said to be about 35 feet deep, was in a corn field and reportedly been closed but had been opened after recent spells of heavy rain.

A. Josephine, Sujith's aunt, told *The Hindu* that four boys, including her son, were playing in front of her house when the incident occurred. "Sujith had gone back home but decided to come back from in between the corn field. The borewell, which was among the crops, gave away," she said.

The family alerted the police after hearing cries from the well.

Health Minister C. Vijayabaskar, Tourism Minister Vellamandi N. Natarajan, Collector S. Sivarasu and senior police officials rushed to the spot and supervised the rescue operation.

Aircraft with P&W engine develops snag

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

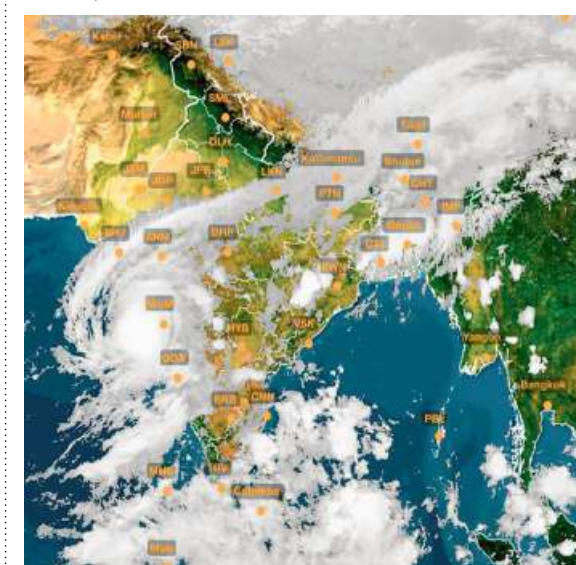
In yet another case of a Pratt & Whitney (P&W) engine stalling on an Airbus A320 neo, an IndiGo flight returned to Mumbai after one of its engines developed high vibrations and stalled.

The Coimbatore-bound IndiGo flight 6E-375 made an air turn back to the city within an hour of its take-off after the engine stalled midway, officials said. The pilot, however, managed to land the aircraft safely with the help of other engine.

Senior Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) officials confirmed the incident and said that the issue pertained to the engine's low-pressure turbine (LPT). The aviation regulator said it was probing the incident, and that prima facie it appeared that damage to the LPT blades had caused the engine to stop functioning.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Saturday: Heavy rainfall very likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Telangana, coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala. Sea condition is very likely to become phenomenal over east-central Arabian Sea. Fishermen are advised not to venture into these areas.

| CITY | RAIN | MAX | MIN | CITY | RAIN | MAX | MIN |
|-------------|-------|-------|------|--------------------|------|------|------|
| Agartala | 1.2 | 26.0 | 23.0 | Kozhikode | 25.4 | 32.0 | 24.0 |
| Ahmedabad | — | 33.0 | 19.0 | Kurnool | — | 32.0 | 23.0 |
| Aizawl | — | 23.0 | 19.0 | Lucknow | — | 30.0 | 18.0 |
| Allahabad | — | 27.0 | 17.0 | Madurai | — | 30.0 | 24.0 |
| Bengaluru | — | 27.0 | 20.0 | Mangaluru | — | 28.0 | 20.0 |
| Bhopal | — | 27.0 | 21.0 | Mysuru | 6.2 | 31.0 | 24.0 |
| Bhubaneswar | 143.8 | 28.0 | 22.0 | New Delhi | — | 31.0 | 18.0 |
| Chandigarh | — | 31.0 | 19.0 | Patna | — | 24.0 | 21.0 |
| Chennai | — | 30.0 | 26.0 | Port Blair | — | 31.0 | 25.0 |
| Coimbatore | 0.2 | 30.0 | 23.0 | Puducherry | — | 29.0 | 24.0 |
| Dehradun | — | 28.0 | 15.0 | Pune | 3.8 | 25.0 | 22.0 |
| Gangtok | 0.2 | 17.0 | 12.0 | Raipur | — | 25.0 | 22.0 |
| Goa | — | 114.5 | 26.0 | Ranchi | — | 2.0 | 22.0 |
| Guwahati | 4.6 | 23.0 | 19.0 | Shillong | — | 19.3 | 20.0 |
| Hubballi | — | 24.0 | 21.0 | Shimla | — | 20.0 | 10.0 |
| Hyderabad | 5.8 | 31.0 | 22.0 | Srinagar | — | 22.0 | 5.0 |
| Imphal | — | 29.0 | 21.0 | Thiruvananthapuram | 0.3 | 33.0 | 24.0 |
| Jaipur | — | 33.0 | 20.0 | Tiruchi | — | 0.4 | 31.0 |
| Kochi | 17.0 | 31.0 | 23.0 | Vijayawada | — | 33.0 | 25.0 |
| Kohima | 13.2 | 20.0 | 13.0 | Visakhapatnam | 15.2 | 31.0 | 25.0 |
| Kolkata | 41.4 | 26.0 | 22.0 | | | | |

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

| CITIES | SO ₂ | NO ₂ | CO | PM2.5 | PM10 | CODE | Yesterday |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|----|-------|------|------|--|
| Ahmedabad | — | 211 | 21 | 172 | 134 | — | — |
| Bengaluru | — | 26 | 21 | 97 | 77 | — | — |
| Chennai | — | 11 | 90 | 34 | 96 | — | In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Hisar, Haryana recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 333 indicating a severe level of pollution. In contrast, Guwahati, Assam recorded a healthy AQI score of 22. |
| Delhi | — | 10 | 84 | 16 | 342 | 306 | — |
| Hyderabad | — | 30 | 35 | 20 | 60 | 84 | — |
| Kolkata | — | 5 | 30 | 21 | 36 | 75 | — |
| Lucknow | — | 9 | 28 | 41 | 296 | — | — |
| Mumbai | — | 5 | 36 | 46 | 60 | 78 | — |
| Pune | — | 83 | 8 | 64 | 31 | 31 | — |
| Visakhapatnam | — | — | — | — | 62 | — | — |

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

SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

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

Mammoth effort



Back to safety: Forest officials and locals rescuing an elephant which had fallen into a well, near Birtula village of Sundargarh district in Odisha on Thursday. ■ANI

TRAI suggests captive use of spectrum for Railways

'It will not offer commercial services'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has recommended that 5MHz spectrum in the premium 700 MHz band may be allotted to the Railways, albeit only for captive use in areas such as passenger information display systems, live feed of video surveillance and IoT-based asset monitoring services.

In order to install an ultra-high-speed LTE-based communication corridor for train-ground and train-train communication, the Railways had asked the Depart-

ment of Telecommunications (DoT) to reserve 15 MHz of spectrum in the 700 MHz band. Following this, the DoT sought TRAI's recommendation on administrative allotment of spectrum to the Railways.

"Spectrum may be assigned to Indian Railways on administrative basis for captive use only and not to offer any commercial services such as WiFi onboard," TRAI said. The regulator also suggested that spectrum charges be levied on formula basis as prescribed by DoT for royalty charges and licence fee for captive use.

Reply to plea for entry of women into mosques: SC

Ban is unconstitutional, says a petition

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday gave the government a week to respond to a petition by a Pune couple to allow Muslim women to enter mosques and worship without gender discrimination.

A Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, asked the government to respond to the petition filed by Yasmeen Zuber Ahmad and Zuber Ahmad challenging the prohibition of entry of Muslim women into mosques as illegal and a violation of their dignity. They asked the court to direct the All India Muslim Personal Law Board and the Central Waqf Council to open the mosques to Muslim women.

Several parties have been named as respondents, including the National Commission for Women.

In April, when the petition came up for hearing, the court said it was compelled to hear the couple in

the background of the verdict in the Sabarimala temple case, in which the ban on women of a certain age was declared unconstitutional and discriminatory.

"There should not be any gender discrimination, and allow Muslim women to pray in all mosques, cutting across denominations. There is no such gender discrimination to offer worship in Mecca, the holy city," the petition said.

At present, women are allowed to offer prayers at mosques under the Jamaat-e-Islami and Mujahid denominations and are barred by the predominant Sunni faction.

The petition argued that such a bar was "violative of Article 44 of the Constitution of India, which encourages the state to secure a Uniform Civil Code for all citizens, by eliminating discrepancies between various personal laws currently in force..."

Treating cardiac cases through WhatsApp

The helpline was started in July

RAVIPRASAD KAMILA
MANGALURU

A helpline started by an interventional cardiologist in Mangaluru about three months ago to offer guidance on cardiac cases through WhatsApp helped a doctor in Neyveli in Tamil Nadu save a life three days ago.

The cardiologist Padmanabh Kamath opened the helpline (9743287599) in mid-July. Since then doctors working in rural, semi-urban areas with basic qualification, medical students, and people in general have been seeking his guidance, second opinion on cardiac cases. They post ECG and other reports on the WhatsApp number seeking expert guidance.

Dr. Kamath said he gets between 15 and 20 queries on the helpline daily. "So far, there have been about 2,000 queries," he said.

It was from Dr. Karthikeyan, a resident doctor at

NLC General Hospital in Neyveli. The doctor in the public sector hospital had sent an ECG report to Dr. Kamath for expert opinion. "The patient had suffered a heart attack and the doctor wanted someone to guide him in management of the case," Dr. Kamath said.

"I read the ECG and responded to that at 3.45 a.m. Dr. Karthikeyan acted on our advice and the patient was shifted to a higher centre within minutes after first aid," he said. "The patient was shifted to a tertiary centre in Puducherry and underwent a rescue procedure and is now out of danger," Dr. Kamath added.

"The helpline is really helping doctors, especially those in rural and semi-urban areas, seek expert opinion," Dr. Karthikeyan said, adding that the helpline showed how it addressed the non-availability of experts in the wee hours in a rural area.

CSIR offers free mapping of Indian genomes

There is already a backlog of at least 400 individuals for the project

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

Anyone looking for a free mapping of their entire genome can sign up for the IndiGen initiative, a programme managed by the CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (IGIB) and the CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB).

Those who do get their genes mapped this way will get a card and access to an app, which will allow them and doctors to access "clinically actionable information" on their genomes.

The programme is a culmination of a six-month project by the CSIR in which 1,000 Indians had their genomes scanned in detail. They were chosen from across the land to represent the width of genetic variability.

The aim of the exercise was twofold: to test if it's possible to rapidly and reliably scan several genomes and advise people on health risks that are manifest in their gene and to understand the variation and frequency of certain genes that are known to be linked to dis-



CSIR is also negotiating partnerships with several pathological laboratories.

ease. However, not everyone who signs up will be guaranteed a scan.

There's already a backlog of at least 400 individuals and in a year or so, CSIR

scientists say, partnerships it is negotiating with several pathological laboratories will see such scans being performed by companies for a price.

"As of today anyone can apply via our website," said Vinod Scaria, a senior scientist at the CSIR-IGIB who's associated with the initiative. "But there are already several to be scanned. Eventually the idea is that people will connect with laboratories via their doctors who will interpret their test for them. Much like a CT scan, for instance," he said.



A delayed imperative

The move to revive BSNL and MTNL and merge them comes at a crucial time for the industry

The Cabinet's approval this week for a plan to revive the loss-making public sector telecommunications providers Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. (BSNL) and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd. (MTNL) has come not a moment too soon. From having been monopoly providers of telephone connectivity, the state-run telcos have had to contend with sweeping change since the opening up of the industry to private players and entry of wireless telephony in the 1990s. In just over two decades, the mobile phone revolution has catapulted India to the second rank in terms of wireless subscribers, with only China ahead. But the radical transformation of the industry landscape – wrought by the runaway growth in user numbers, rapid technological advances, and bruising competition – has come at a substantial price. The private sector saw the relatively older, large firms using mergers and acquisitions to consolidate as smaller rivals found themselves unable to cope with bitter tariff wars and the capital costs of bidding for spectrum and upgrading their technologies. BSNL, for its part, was saddled with the legacy of having been a large-scale provider of jobs as well as state-mandated connectivity to remote corners of the country. It is in the fulfilment of the state's social objectives that the public sector enterprises (PSEs) racked up substantial costs, which the Centre's revival plan aims to help address.

The proposal includes the allotment of critical spectrum to the two PSEs for offering fourth-generation wireless services, including broadband. The Centre will fund the spectrum's cost through an infusion of ₹20,140 crore of capital while also bearing the related GST levy of ₹3,674 crore. And besides providing a sovereign guarantee on ₹15,000 crore of long-term bonds, which would help the firms restructure debt and partly fund expenses, the government will extend budgetary support of ₹17,169 crore for ex-gratia payments on a crucial voluntary retirement scheme. A lot will hinge on this VRS plan given that BSNL's workforce of over 1,65,000 employees end up cornering about 75% of the telco's total income. The Cabinet has also given an 'in-principle' nod for the two PSEs to merge, a move that would add market heft to the merged entity. A successful revival of BSNL will have far-reaching implications for the industry, this at a time when two of the three surviving private players are faced with not only sliding market share but a government bill of about ₹75,000 crore following the loss of a legal challenge. The reach of its network, especially in remote parts, makes BSNL a "strategic asset" that has national security implications given its role in serving the armed forces and responding to natural disasters. The revival plan, even if years late, is a clear recognition by the government of this indisputable fact.

Cutting risk

Though India has excellent polio immunisation coverage, there is no room for complacency

The world polio day on October 24 marked an important milestone in the war against polio when the Global Commission for the Certification of Poliomyelitis Eradication officially declared that wild poliovirus type 3 has been eradicated. The last case of wild poliovirus type 3 was seen in northern Nigeria in 2012. This is the second wild poliovirus to be declared eliminated – the first was in 2015 when type 2 wild poliovirus was declared as eliminated. With two of the three wild polioviruses eliminated, only type 1 wild poliovirus is still in circulation and is restricted to just two countries – Afghanistan and Pakistan. As on October 23, there were 18 cases of polio caused by wild virus type 1 in Afghanistan and 76 polio cases in Pakistan this year. While the number of cases reported this year from Afghanistan is quite close to the 21 reported last year, there has been over six-fold increase in the number of cases in Pakistan. Though India has excellent polio immunisation coverage and measures have been put in place to prevent the spread from polio-endemic countries, there is no room for complacency.

What does the official declaration of wild type 3 poliovirus elimination mean in the war against polio? Put simply, it opens up the possibility of switching from the currently used bivalent oral polio vaccine containing type 1 and type 3 to a monovalent vaccine containing only type 1. The globally synchronised switch in April 2016 from a vaccine containing all the three types (trivalent) to a bivalent vaccine was done to reduce the number of vaccine-derived poliovirus (VDVP) cases. Until 2015, the type 2 strain in the trivalent oral vaccine accounted for over 90% of VDVP cases globally. While the type 3 poliovirus in the vaccine is the least likely to cause vaccine-derived polio, it has the greatest propensity to cause vaccine-associated paralytic polio (VAPP). Though the risk of VAPP is small, it is caused when the live, weakened virus used in the vaccine turns virulent in the intestine of the vaccinated child or spreads to close contacts who have not been immunised. VAPP can be greatly reduced if there is a switch from the bivalent to a monovalent vaccine containing only type 1. Alternatively, the risk of VAPP can be reduced 80-90% if every child receives the bivalent vaccine and one dose of inactivated polio vaccine injection. Though India does not count VAPP cases, a 2002 paper and a communication indicated that India had 181, 129 and 109 cases in 1999, 2000 and 2001, respectively. A recent paper suggests that post 2016, India might have 75 VAPP cases annually due to global IPV vaccine shortage and "delay in IPV implementation in India's national immunisation programme".

India's big foreign policy shake-up

The Modi government's hyper-activism marks a clear break with the past. But is it also backed by an underlying vision?



HAPPY MON JACOB

India's foreign policy is undergoing a series of fundamental transformations in terms of its underlying narratives, processes and desired endgames. There is a conscious and consistent effort to break with the past, no matter how the outcomes might look eventually.

What could potentially make this change last longer than initially thought is that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has the mandate, the capability and the willingness to effect major changes and reconceptualise the country's external security orientation. And yet, one must ask: Does this really mark a fundamental policy shift or does it just amount to a slew of optics-friendly acts that are well-choreographed but not visionary?

Taking risks

One of the most striking features of the Modi government's foreign policy is its propensity for risk-taking – quite unlike most previous governments barring perhaps that of Indira Gandhi. Armed with a clear majority, the government is keen to play offensive, undoing the decades-old defensive Indian strategic behaviour. New Delhi's actions at Doklam; its surgical strikes against Pakistan in 2016 after the Uri terror attacks; and the Balakot air strikes in the wake of Pulwama attacks this February – notwithstanding the questionable material outcomes in all these cases – are examples of this new-found offensive streak and risk-taking tendency.

The August 5 decision by the Central government on Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) to read down Article 370 was also a risk-ridden move. When previous govern-

ments engaged in offensive behaviour, they couched it in normative language. Today, speech is act too.

A high-pitched rhetoric around Pakistan, J&K and terrorism complements the Modi regime's propensity for risk-taking even as these themes remain the mainstay of its foreign policy. There are un-failing invocations to these themes in almost all forums where India is represented as well as in bilateral meetings with countries ranging from the U.S. to New Zealand.

In an overstated manner, then, terrorism and Pakistan have come to dominate our foreign policy pursuits, instead of other forward-looking and system-shaping narratives. One wonders whether this unrelenting obsession would require compromises by the government in its negotiations with other countries in return for their pro-India stance, which is rapidly running out as days pass by.

The fixation with terror, Pakistan and J&K also means that the country's valuable political and diplomatic capital as well as its accumulated goodwill in the comity of nations would have to be spent on tactical goals.

Clarity at the cost of nuance

Mr. Modi's foreign policy, for the most part, has displayed unprecedented doses of clarity, though often at the cost of nuanced approaches to complex issues. New Delhi appears, and certainly claims, to know what it wants, is willing to pursue it doggedly, and to pay the associated costs. In politics and foreign policy, there has traditionally been some distance between rhetoric and reality, but in this case, rhetoric seems to closely resemble reality. While past governments tried to balance their rhetoric and reality – for instance, when it comes to India's relations with Israel – the present government's policy resembles its rhetoric, with on occasion rhetoric forcing policy choices. A clear



GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

example of this rhetoric-reality match is found in India's ties with the U.S. – the two are unprecipitatedly close and despite its nativist leanings, the present regime seems to offer no excuses or qualifiers for getting so close to a superpower, for it knows that hardly any challenges are posed to its foreign policy pursuits in the domestic sphere. Consequently, there is little talk of 'strategic autonomy'.

However, too much clarity tends to blur out some much-needed nuance. Take, for instance, New Delhi's apparent inability to play a noteworthy role in the emerging Afghan geopolitics at a crucial time such as this. It is imperative, as many commentators have pointed out, to engage the Taliban, which is bound to be a dominant actor in Afghanistan in the days ahead. And yet, New Delhi is unable to reach out to the group thanks, at least partly, to its hyper-ventilating and un-nuanced positions on extremism and terrorism. How can India talk to the Taliban and at the same time remain adamant that it won't engage the many militant groups or even the pro-autonomy voices in J&K?

India's foreign policy has traditionally been, for the most part, couched, if not always practised, in a normative grammar. It desired to practise a normative foreign

policy, often struggled to match its rhetoric with its actions, and more often seemed uneasy with the mismatch. As a consequence, New Delhi often refused to act with determination; the use of raw power for political outcomes was tempered with normative language when it did act; and deliberate ambiguity was deployed when this posed a moral dilemma. This moral sheen has seemingly come off now, by design.

New India's foreign policy has not only given up the Nehruvian normative angst but has even shunned the pretences of normative behaviour. Economic and military power today are seen as tools to gain advantage vis-à-vis others, be it neighbours or the larger international system. To that extent, there is a strong link between internal and external posturing, unlike in the case of most previous governments which made a deliberate attempt to be internally liberal and externally realist.

Weighing domestic costs

Foreign policy, for the Modi government, is a two-level game, to paraphrase political scientist Robert Putnam. While traditionally, foreign policy has had little impact on domestic political outcomes, today, given the manner in which external behaviour has been dom-

estically politicised, the leadership seems to weigh the domestic costs while making foreign policy decisions. More to the point, foreign policy decisions are often undertaken to cater to domestic opinion. To that extent then, audience costs will continue to determine Mr. Modi's foreign policy choices.

Being cognisant of the domestic political implications of foreign policy behaviour in the age of mass communication and social media is understandable. But the flip side is that it leads the leadership to a commitment trap as well as binds its hands when the external circumstances demand a change in behaviour.

Domestic politicisation of foreign policy also instils a 'winner-takes-all' mentality in the ruling dispensation, thereby shrinking the domestic space for consensus building. Looking similar to the Opposition, which domestic consensus building in a way leads to, doesn't help the government in the eyes of the public but looking different does win it brownie points. This is already making the Opposition irrelevant, and decision making is centralised.

Is there, however, an underlying vision to India's new foreign policy? For instance, does India's hyper-activism on the foreign policy front enable it to be a system-shaper and a global rule-maker or is it still a rule-taker? What, in that sense, are the big foreign policy achievements of this government à la, for instance, the India-U.S. nuclear deal of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) vintage? Are membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) or the UN Security Council in the offing? Or has our diplomacy resolved any of our key conflicts? For, after all, it's the foreign policy outcomes that we should not lose sight of.

Happy Mon Jacob teaches Disarmament and National Security at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

When the abstract destroys the physical being

Human rights should not be defined on the basis of religious, national or cultural differences



TABISH KHAIR

There are families in South Asian nations who would kill their child – usually a daughter – for the sake of 'family honour.' Here, the concept of 'family' is detached from its constituent: the daughter. In order to 'preserve' the concept of 'family,' such families actually kill their children – or, at least, rob them of a chance to lead the life that would make them happy. I, for one, have never understood how one can destroy the physical fact of a family – a child, who is always a link to the future for any family – for the abstract concept of a family.

But, of course, this happens at larger levels too. We kill or hound people who believe differently in our religion for the sake of that religion. We persecute and brutalise citizens who have a different vision of our nation for the sake of that 'nation'.

Caste violence

Recently, I read of Dalit children being beaten to death for defecating in the open. Apart from the

caste violence that this exposed, it struck me with force that the necessary movement to stop open defecation is being misunderstood by many Indians. It is being seen in terms of prestige, when actually it is a matter of health and welfare.

Open defecation is bad not because it reduces the prestige of our nation in the eyes of passing tourists or journalists. It is revealing that nationalists who claim to be inordinately proud of our 'Indianness' should be so inordinately conscious of the opinions of foreigners, usually white. No, open defecation is bad because of the health hazards it poses – not only in terms of diseases, but also in terms of what it does, physically, to those who do not have access to decent toilets. There are scientific papers that have highlighted the connection between open defecation and low nutrient levels in children. To brutalise someone forced by circumstances to defecate in public makes the concept of 'national prestige' more important than the person of national citizens. But what is a nation without its citizens? This is similar to killing a daughter for the sake of family honour.

One of the greatest drawbacks of idealist definitions of 'religion' or 'nation' is actually this: the concept takes over and destroys the



GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

human being. It is also in this context that one needs to be very adamant about not defining 'human rights' on the basis of religious, national or cultural differences.

Universal rights

If this sounds like a contradiction to what I have said about abstract concepts until now, let me rephrase it: just as a family cannot be separate from or above family members and a nation can only be its citizens, human rights have to be rooted in the actual biological existence of human beings in society. Various other rights may differ from society to society, but basic human rights have to be the same across all such differences. If differences of nationality, culture,

gender, colour, sexuality, etc. mean that basic human rights have to change across these categories, then we are basically arguing that the 'human' does not exist, or it exists only as an abstract concept, un-rooted in biological and other realities. This has often been the argument of racists in the past, and is sometimes assumed by extreme sexists today: the former have denied the 'humanity' of certain races, and the latter implicitly reduce the 'humanity' of women.

This has always been my main objection to those religious Muslims, some of them friends and even relatives, who justify a different standard of treatment for women. As long as these standards do not limit the human scope of women – which means their right to have the same access to shelter, food, inheritance, reproductive rights, education, and freedom of movement as men – I am willing to accept it, just as I am willing to accept the fact that in India we drive on the left while in Denmark we drive on the right.

But basic human rights – that is, access to shelter, food, inheritance and reproductive rights, education, and freedom of work and movement – cannot be denied on the basis of gender differences, just as they cannot be denied on the basis of 'race'. It is a pity that

today, in India, there are politicians who do not seem to realise this. To claim differences of basic human rights on the basis of difference of culture or nationality is to fall into the same trap than many Muslims have fallen into with reference to their understanding of their religion. And it is a double pity, because just as the sacred texts of Islam can be read in ways that are compatible with human rights, the history and cultures of India can also be read in ways that are compatible with human rights. The choice is always ours.

However, it is not a choice that many in power are willing to give to us. The reason for this is simple. I will illustrate it with reference to my original example: if you are a patriarch running your family with an iron hand, your power depends almost entirely in using the abstract and alienated notion of 'family' against the actual opinions, desires and experiences of flesh-and-blood family members. And you would be willing to occasionally sacrifice a family member to maintain this power. In that sense, finally, whether it is a family or a nation, human rights are inseparable from a full understanding of democracy.

Tabish Khair is an Indian novelist and academic who teaches in Denmark

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.

State voters choose

The results of Assembly elections held in Maharashtra and Haryana prove once again that parliamentary and State polls are completely different ball games and nationalism has few takers in State elections (Editorial, "Tamed victors," Oct. 25). The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was gung-ho about achieving 220-plus seats in Maharashtra and 70-plus in Haryana but fell well short. There are multiple reasons for the BJP's below-par performance: first and foremost is that issues at grass-roots level like agrarian distress and unemployment were overlooked. Jats consolidated against the

BJP in Haryana while the sugar belt rallied behind the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)'s Sharad Pawar in Maharashtra. The BJP must take this as a warning signal and do some course correction. On the other hand, resurgence of the Opposition will only strengthen democracy further.

BAL GOVIND,
Noida

■ It is the performance and capability of State leaders that count in Assembly elections. The Narendra Modi-Amit Shah team can only bolster the political capital built by the local leadership, it cannot swing public opinion in the party's favour if the performance of

a State government has been lacklustre. The BJP needs to seriously look at decentralising leadership by grooming State leaders who will have to shoulder the responsibility of winning the people's support by providing good governance while in power and articulating people's concerns in a responsible manner when sitting in the Opposition benches.

V.N. MUKUNDBARAJAN,
Thiruvananthapuram

■ Credit should be given to the AIADMK for securing impressive victories in the Assembly bypolls for the Vikravandi and Nanguneri constituencies, for the party had almost been written off after the demise of

Jayalalitha. Though local issues always dominate Assembly elections, the results show that Tamil Nadu people have not totally lost faith in the party. It can now hope to cash in on the swing in the people's mood and position itself for future contests. At the same time, the DMK should stop accusing its rival of having abused the state machinery, and instead introspect.

SIVAMANI VASUDEVAN,
Chennai

Prayers in schools

It is better to do away with prayers in schools because there are not many choices presented before schools make their selection. Moreover, at a tender age, students cannot evaluate the

many factors involved in a particular mode of prayer and it is always the school managements which decide on what is to be sung. And there is always a threat to native practices from a larger, politically active religious system which uses schools to further its views and methods. Instead of prayers, there should be a compulsory subject on faith and culture covering the basics of religions.

KARTHIK G.,
Chennai

As an alumnus of the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, I can vouch for the fact that the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad verse has been part of the morning prayer for a long time, perhaps since KVs were started. KVs are very secular, diverse spaces where every faith is respected. The institution's name should not be used to score political points.

RADHIKA K.S.,
Mangaluru, Karnataka

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

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS: >>In the Sports page report on Vijay Hazare cricket tournament quarterfinals (Oct. 22, 2019), the results of the matches were listed as *draw*. There cannot be a draw in a limited overs match. If the match is undecided, it is listed as NR (no result).

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

A lifeline called Jan Soochna

On September 13, the Rajasthan government launched Jan Soochna, a single window portal hosting information and databases on 32 different schemes of 13 departments. **Priscilla Jebaraj** reports on how the initiative is empowering people, especially villagers who have been denied entitlements

In early 2018, Tolaram Kumhar, 73, suddenly stopped getting his pension of ₹750 per month. "I went to the bank after a while, but they didn't have any answers. I didn't know what to do until Baluji came," he says, holding a creased booklet that documents the saga of his pension payments. Tolaram gestures to the man sharing the charpoy with him on a breezy October evening. "Baluji looked up information on his phone and found that I had been removed from the government's pension list," he says. Why? "Because they said I was dead."

Tolaram, who wears a torn blue T-shirt and a dirty white dhoti, spends most of his days in a small hut located high above the fields and grazing grounds of Thana village in Bhilwara district of Rajasthan. The land looks lush, but excess rainfall in this typically water-starved region has destroyed the maize crop this year, leaving marginal farmers and agricultural workers like him on the brink of destitution and deeply dependent on the government's pension scheme for basic sustenance.

It is people like Balulal Gujjar, popularly called Baluji, who have come to the rescue of people like Tolaram. Baluji is dressed in an intricately tied white dhoti, pleated white kurta-jacket, a silver neckband, and a red turban. He has been a social activist with the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) for half of his 62 years. Now an elected ward member in Thana, Baluji with his faded pink jhola is a familiar sight to villagers for 30 km around.

Baluji carries a well-used Samsung smartphone in his pocket, through which he accesses the Jan Soochna (public information) portal, which is the Rajasthan government's latest effort to offer wider and easier access to the State's increasingly digitised databases. The single window portal aims to increase transparency and accountability in governance. It has 82 different information request options for 32 schemes across 13 departments. It not only explains the schemes but also provides real-time information on beneficiaries, authorities in charge, progress, etc. Jan Soochna was launched with great fanfare by Congress Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot in Jaipur on September 13. Different elements of the portal have been on trial for more than two years, with gradual public access to databases being provided under the previous regime of BJP Chief Minister Vasundhara Rajse.

For example, in 2017, MKSS activists got access to a list of 10 lakh people across the State who had been excluded from the government's pension scheme when the payment system switched from the post office to Aadhaar-linked bank accounts. Overnight, the number of pensioners dropped from 68 lakh to 58 lakh. According to the government, almost three lakh of the excluded names were dead, while another two lakh were fake or duplicates.

By painstakingly tracking down names from the list of the supposedly dead, activists like Baluji found that thousands of people like Tolaram had been wrongly excluded. "We sent in the papers to show he is alive, and finally they restarted his pension three months ago," says Baluji. He navigates search queries and Excel sheets on his phone with a fluency that is enviable in a 62-year-old who has only studied till Class 8. "See, he got ₹8,000 worth of back pay, pensions unpaid for 11 months, on July 25, 2019," Baluji points to the screen. Tolaram cannot read the information there, but nods vigorously with a gap-toothed smile. "Overall, I have helped people who were denied pensions get more than ₹80,000 worth of unpaid pensions," says Baluji. In the neighbouring Bhim tehsil alone, more than 1,300 wrongly excluded names were added back to the pension scheme after a re-verification exercise. "It is only possible because we are able to see this information in detail," Baluji says.

Digital Dialogues, the beginning

Over the last five years, Rajasthan has been digitising and integrating databases, including flagship social sector schemes, using Aadhaar-based verifications and payments. In 2017, the Department of Information Technology and Communication (DoITC) began to host 'Digital Dialogues'. Bimonthly meetings were held with interested citizens including activists from MKSS and the wider collective of the Soochna Evam Rozgaar Adhikar Abhiyan, to discuss how to open access to such databases and present them for public use.

"Digital Dialogues was the real beginning of the Jan Soochna portal," says R.K. Sharma, an additional director who oversees the project. Sharma joined the DoITC in 1988, the year it was formed, and can speak at length about the State's efforts to use "technology for integrated service delivery" over the last three decades. "Through our discussions with citizens and activists, we developed this portal to share whatever real-time, individual-level data are



Balulal Gujjar, a social activist with the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, explains the Jan Soochna portal to Tolaram Kumhar (in blue) and Devi Singh in Thana village in Bhilwara, Rajasthan. (Below) An e-mitra plus operator in Bhim tehsil, Rajsamand district, Rajasthan. ■R.V. MOORTHY



needed by the common man, to reduce corruption and to increase transparency of governance."

In the month since its official launch, the Jan Soochna portal (jansoochna.rajasthan.gov.in) has had 3.3 lakh visitors and almost 15 lakh information hits. Apart from this, there have been another 50,000 information hits from the Jan Soochna mobile app.

The portal provides information in Hindi and English on universal social security, health and education schemes as well as welfare schemes specifically aimed at farmers, construction workers, miners and students. Land revenue records, case listings, and grievance redressal databases are also available. While some categories, such as forest rights, have very limited data, some others have a lot of detail — on individual beneficiaries and specific details of payment, for instance.

"This is a much-needed step inspired by the spirit of Section 4 of the Right to Information Act, which mandates governments to maintain computerised records and provide this information suo moto to the public, so that there is minimal need to file RTIs," says Nikhil Dey, an MKSS activist who has been at the forefront of the RTI movement. A recent NGO study of orders by the Central Information Commission in 2018 found that 70% of the original RTI applications requested information which should have been put out in the public domain already. "You have made people go through so much pain for digitisation, getting multiple cards made, giving their biometric data... At least, let them get some benefits from it. Through Digital Dialogues, we argued that the public has a right to all the information the government collects about them. There should be no password-protected login barring access to these databases," says Dey.

The role of facilitators

"It was activists like Baluji who gathered initial information on what data are most needed by marginalised villagers," says Vineet Bhambhu, earlier a U.S.-bound software engineer and now a grassroots activist, who helped lead MKSS conversations with the DoITC for Digital Dialogues. "We found that people mostly needed data on their own entitlements: food, pensions, job guarantee, educational scholarships, labour welfare benefits, health insurance, treatment for occupational diseases such as silicosis, land rights, etc.," he

says. Bhambhu points out that many poor people had no way to track what happened if payments had been diverted to a different bank account or if forest rights applications had been rejected. In other words, they had no way of finding out what happened to payments if they could not access the databases and processes that form the backbone of a particular scheme or law.

Take the case of Sovani Devi. A 45-year-old widow in Bherukeda Amner village in Rajsamand district, lack of information cost her a flock of goats, a loss she could ill-afford. Sitting in her bare courtyard, Devi is flanked by her sons, both disabled. Ram Singh, 18, cannot use his legs and drags himself around on his knees, while his 16-year-old brother Kishore can neither hear nor speak.

"Two years ago, I was diagnosed with a tumour in my uterus and I went to the hospital because I had Bhamashah [health insurance]," says Devi. The Bhagwan Mahavir Hospital, a private hospital, is empanelled as part of the State's cashless health insurance scheme, the Bhamashah Swasthya Bima Yojana, and should have treated a cardholder without payment. "But they said I would have to first pay for the operation and that I would get the money back only later," Devi says, showing the folder from the hospital, which is located in Deogarh town, 40 km away.

Faced with a demand for ₹15,000 for the operation plus additional charges for medication, Devi saw no choice. "I used up all my savings. I went back home and sold 12 [out of 16] goats for ₹30,000 and used that to pay the hospital," she says. Apart from the operation, Devi says she paid ₹8,600 for medicines, of which bills were provided for only ₹4,600. The rest of the money from the goat sale was soon gone too, in paying for food and travel, with a one-way trip to hospital by taxi costing ₹600.

After she recovered from the operation in June 2017, Devi made several vi-

sits to the hospital, but failed to recover her money. "I took all my papers, but they told me they have applied to the insurance company and nothing has come yet," she says. "Only when Vineet bhai looked on his computer, he found that the hospital had already got the money." Devi also says that after her operation, she put her fingerprint on a form that she could not read. Later she found out that the form falsely stated that she had not paid any money to the hospital as she was covered by the cashless insurance scheme. In March 2018, Bhambhu, armed with information from the Bhamashah database, accompanied Devi to the hospital and recovered ₹19,600.

"After that, my husband got cancer, so we had to use up the money for my husband's treatment. He died last year," Devi says, as her two remaining goats enter the courtyard along with her youngest child, 13-year-old Radha. "I never went to school, but my daughter has finished Class 8 and I want her to study till Class 12 at least. Without education, there is nothing," she says.

Strength of unity

For unlettered villagers, the Jan Soochna portal is of little use without facilitators like Bhambhu and Baluji. However, in Gomaka Badia village in Thana panchayat, villagers have also discovered the strength of unity when armed with

It was activists like Baluji who gathered initial information on what data are most needed by marginalised villagers. We found that people mostly needed data on their own entitlements: food, pensions, job guarantee, educational scholarships, labour welfare benefits, etc.

VINEET BHAMBHU
Activist



information. On a hot evening in May 2017, Baluji set up a projector in an open area in front of a small shop owned by Chun Singh, 67. Suddenly, the shopkeeper saw his own face flashing on the makeshift screen. "They had all the details about my ration card. For the first time, I found out that I was getting less foodgrain than I should have. There were five names on my card, so I was owed 25 kg of wheat every month, but I was only getting 10 kg."

The information obtained through Digital Dialogues showed that almost every family in the village was getting cheated by the local dealer, Paras. Outraged, a delegation of 22 villagers took their complaint to district authorities in Bhilwara. Following an investigation, the dealer was suspended and the 400-odd quintals he had swindled were distributed among the villagers.

"I got one bori [100 kg] of wheat. Now, we all know we must ask for the receipts every time we get ration," says Singh. Although an FIR was filed against Paras, villagers say that his proximity to the local MLA means that no further action is likely.

"The Jan Soochna portal is not about simply getting information for information's sake. It must be built into a wider ecosystem of accountability," says Bhambhu. Over the last two weeks, he has been part of a social audit of a welfare scheme for construction workers. Using their access to the government's database, teams visited workers across the Bhim tehsil of Rajsamand district, gathering complaints which were presented at a stormy *jan sunvai*, or public hearing, in Bhim town on Monday. Confronting the labour commissioner, senior police officials and the local MLA under a swaying tent, hundreds of workers testified to a corrupt nexus of agents and government officials swindling them. They said they had been denied thousands of rupees worth of benefits. "We did not know our rights. We had no other option, so we paid the agent, but he cheated us," said Ambalal, a worker from Sameliya village in Rajsamand district.

No middleman, yes middleman

In the Bhim block office, adjacent to the public hearing sit two expensive kiosks branded as e-mitra plus machines, which are meant to cut out the corrupt middleman and provide services and information directly to the user. The sleek orange and grey machines, which also host the Jan Soochna portal, look like ATM machines and cost ₹2 lakh each. Nearly 15,000 have been installed across the State.

However, neither of the machines in Bhim works during the public hearing. One sits amidst coils of wires which have not been connected. The block's informatics assistant Dalvir Khatik manages to switch on the other machine, but jerks his hand away as he gets an electric shock every time his finger meets the touch pad. Using a piece of paper as a makeshift protective glove, he manages to reach the Jan Soochna

They had all the details about my ration card. For the first time, I found out that I was getting less foodgrain than I should have. There were five names on my card, so I was owed 25 kg of wheat every month, but I was only getting 10 kg.

CHUN SINGH
Shopkeeper

portal, but it fails to cough up any information. It gets stuck on a 'loading' page.

"There is not enough signal for the Internet to work properly," Khatik says apologetically. "Imagine, if it is so bad in Bhim town, it's much worse in the village panchayats. At least, with the urban machines, they can be connected to Wi-Fi even if the speed is slow. Rural machines must be connected to Rajnet [the State operator]." Data available with the government show that in one year, only 10 transactions have been made on this particular machine. Of the 14,440 machines installed across the State over a year ago, 914 have never been used.

Khatik adds that all 37 of the kiosks installed in Bhim block have private operators who act as middlemen anyway. "There is no incentive for the operator to even login to the machine in many areas, because he can charge more for the same services without using it," he says. DoITC data show that the kiosks are used more frequently in urban areas mostly to print out digitally signed certificates and pay for phone and electricity bills. The Jan Soochna portal itself has been accessed only 16,000 times on these machines over the last month.

Little information

Although the Jan Soochna portal was launched with much publicity, information about it is still to reach many people in Rajasthan. "No one outside our office has heard the name of this Jan Soochna. But it is a new scheme, it will take some time to become popular," explains Khatik.

In the villages of Rajsamand and Bhilwara district, there is no visible publicity regarding the portal as yet. Even villagers who have personally benefited from the expanded database access are yet to hear the term Jan Soochna.

"We have put out advertisements in papers and are planning awareness programmes. So far, the entire expenditure on Jan Soochna has come from our own internal budget, but the DoITC has now proposed a budget of ₹5 crore over the next five years to maintain the software and popularise the portal," says Sharma. He sees the Jan Soochna initiative as the next step of the government's integrated service delivery efforts, a natural evolution of its franchisee-based e-mitras or service centres. He argues that e-mitras are the ideal facilitators for the Jan Soochna portal.

According to the MKSS activists who helped evolve the concept of Jan Soochna, e-mitra operators are often part of the problem, acting as middlemen who have a vested interest in blocking access to information. "We see Jan Soochna as a natural evolution of the RTI movement. This information is meant to back up an accountability and grievance redressal framework, and as such needs government-run information and facilitation centres," says Dey.

MKSS wants training on Jan Soochna usage to be imparted to front-line government workers at anganwadis and panchayats as well as grassroots social workers. Local databases need to be made visible offline as well, says Dey. "Specific data on ration beneficiaries should be painted on the walls of the ration shop itself, so it can be seen even by those who cannot go online," he says.

The DoITC is also seriously considering an MKSS suggestion that printouts of information from the Jan Soochna portal should automatically come with a digital signature, giving them the same legal validity as RTI responses.

At the Jan Soochna launch, the Chief Minister gave a big boost to the point of view that the portal is part of a wider RTI framework rather than a mere service delivery, reminiscing about his engagement with the early RTI movement. "About two decades ago, I reached the sit-in protest organised by social worker Aruna Roy and her companions demanding RTI. I agreed to their demands. Then, fortunately, we formed the government and Rajasthan became the first State of Indian to initiate for this law," he said.

As the Rajasthan experiment evolves, other States are already making plans to follow suit and are thus closely watching these debates. Just five days after the launch of Jan Soochna, the Karnataka government directed all departments with beneficiary schemes to begin sharing datasets in preparation for the launch of a similar portal. The real success of the story will depend on how well the Rajasthan government can help empower the marginalised with the biggest tool at its disposal: information.

FROM PAGE ONE

BJP, JJP join hands to form govt. in Haryana

Senior sources in the party told *The Hindu* that contrary to the public claims made by BJP leaders, internal surveys for Haryana had not painted a rosy picture for the party's prospects.

"Amit Shah was aware of this and he despatched at least 11 leaders of the party to designated 21 seats to micro manage polls, these were seats that were on the verge of being lost. He also asked Minister of State for Finance, Anurag Thakur, Dushyant Chautala's neighbour in Janpath in New Delhi to sound him out on possibilities of post poll support," said the senior office-bearer.

Mr. Chautala told Mr. Thakur that he would wait for the results, and consult with his father, Ajay Chautala, currently lodged in Delhi's Tihar Jail after being convicted in a teachers recruitment scam. He also completed the formality of a national executive meeting of his party on Friday afternoon and was authorised by that body to take decisions on support to the BJP on its behalf.

The meeting to seal the deal happened at Mr. Shah's

residence where Mr. Chautala arrived in Mr. Thakur's car and accompanied by him.

Those close to Mr. Chautala said support to the BJP was important for the fledgling party to save it from poaching later on by either the BJP or the Congress. The BJP will be holding a legislative party meet of its Haryana MLAs on Saturday morning.

Earlier in the day, outgoing Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar left for New Delhi to meet the Independent candidates and party's central leadership to discuss the permutations and combinations of forming the government.

Party sources said five Independent MLAs – Naypal Rawat, Sombir Sangwan, Dharampal Gonder, Rakesh Daulatabad and Randeep Golan – met Mr. Nadda and extended their support to the BJP.

Controversial former minister Gopal Kanda (MLA from Sirsa) of the Haryana Lokhit Party and two other Independent MLAs – Balraj Kundu and Ranjit Singh – have already announced their support to the BJP.

Sena sets terms, will talk only to Amit Shah

According to senior sources in the Sena, both Thackeray senior and son Aaditya are adamant about this.

Mr. Thackeray reportedly told a few well-wishers that he too "needed to run my party" and is not settling for anything less than the 50-50 formula.

The Shiv Sena is determined to stick to its guns and says that it was only fitting since through the elections, ally BJP too had not spared it.

"Nearly 12 Independents

who got elected are either BJP or Shiv Sena rebels, and there were more than 30 seats in which rebels spoil the show for *mahayuthi*. In the seat sharing, we were given seats which were legacy seats for the Congress or Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). In most cases, we were facing off against the NCP and the mobilisation of the previously somnolent NCP after the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) notice to Sharad Pawar hurt us directly," said a source.

BJP, Sena vie for CM's post in Maharashtra

Congratulatory posters sprang up in Worli projecting Aaditya Thackeray as the "future chief minister." Later in the day, the Shiv Sena leaders met party president Uddhav Thackeray to present a demand on the same lines, senior leaders said.

Among several other posters, the one indicating Mr. Aaditya as the would-be CM came up in the constituency which he had won by defeating Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)'s Suresh Mane by nearly 70,000 votes. BJP leaders said they were sure Devendra Fadnavis would continue as Chief Minister for the second straight term.

Senior Sena leaders pointed out the party was in a commanding position to bargain better berths in the Cabinet with ally BJP.

Party leader Sanjay Raut tweeted a cartoon depicting a tiger (Sena) with a clock (NCP) around its neck and sniffing a lotus (BJP).

The Sena mouthpiece *Saamana* also took a dig at the BJP by saying that while Mr. Fadnavis had claimed NCP supreme Sharad Pawar

was a failed wrestler, he proved to be more powerful proving that "Maharashtra does not accept arrogance of power."

"The sentiment of the worker is that Aadityaji should become the Chief Minister. We are holding a meeting with Uddhavji to present our demand but it is up to him to take a final call on it. We will abide by what Uddhavji, Amit Shah ji and Devendra Fadnavis ji have decided," said two-time Shiv Sena MLA and senior party leader Pratap Sarnaik.

Mr. Fadnavis has already said the final decision on the chief ministerial berth would be taken as per the 50:50 formula decided prior to the polls and as revised in the upcoming meeting of the party board.

Sena leaders said junior Thackeray was ready for the top job. "Aadityaji has travelled across the State and he has raised issues related to people for many years now. He is ready for the job and you will see he will emerge as the number one politician from the State," said Mr. Sarnaik.

Murmu is LG of J&K, Mathur to go to Ladakh

Mr. Murmu, a 1985-batch IAS officer of the Gujarat cadre, will retire as Expenditure Secretary from the Union Finance Ministry by this month-end. He had served as Principal Secretary to Narendra Modi when he was Gujarat's Chief Minister.

Mr. Mathur is a retired IAS officer of the 1977 batch. He had served as the Chief Information Commissioner, a post he demitted in November 2018.

They replace Mr. Malik, who oversaw the transition phase since the withdrawal of the special status.

Mr. Malik was the former Governor of Bihar before he was shifted to Jammu and Kashmir. He was also given the additional charge of Odisha for a brief period in 2018.

Mr. Kovind also appointed BJP leader from Kerala P.S. Sreedharan Pillai as the Governor of Mizoram.

It's a lost opportunity for the Congress in Haryana

BJP fell short of the majority mark, despite its high-profile campaign that harped on national security & clean governance

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Contrary to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's slogan of "Abki baar 75 paar" (more than 75 seats this time) in Haryana and the predictions of a landslide by most of the exit polls, the party fell short of even the majority mark in the 90-member Assembly.

The ground reports suggest that the issues of livelihood, farmers' distress, unemployment and economic slowdown took precedence over national issues in the State and thus there prevailed a strong anti-incumbency sentiment, among other things.

Hoping to romp home riding on the wave of nationalism in the wake of dilution of Article 370, the BJP in Haryana carried out a "high-profile

campaign, including seven rallies by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, harping on national security and resorting to Congress bashing, but the electorate was left unamused. The claims of the BJP leadership of a clean and transparent governance also failed to impress the voters.

As this dawned on the party campaign managers as well as on Mr. Modi, there

NEWS ANALYSIS

was an obvious shift from his earlier addresses. He began to talk about farmers, traders and youth towards the last leg of electioneering, but it was too late by then.

The Congress' rather "silent" campaign, on the other hand, led by two-time Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh



Chief Minister and BJP leader Manohar Lal Khattar arriving at Haryana Bhavan in New Delhi on Friday. ■R.V. MOORTHY

Hooda, his son and ex-Rohatak MP Deepender Hooda and State party chief Kumari Selja, successfully weaved a narrative around the farmers' distress, unemployment and tapped the discontent among the traders and the Congress employees.

Having already supported the dilution of Article 370 go-

ing against the party line, Bhupinder Singh Hooda not just managed to blunt the BJP's attack on the Congress over nationalism, but also made it a Hooda vs Khattar election to his advantage.

The Congress central leadership also remained strategically away from the campaign leaving it entirely to

Mr. Hooda. "Every vote to Congress candidate will be a vote for me," Mr. Hooda said at every rally, not forgetting to remind the audience as to how his government had waived ₹1,600 crore pending electricity bills of the farmers and allotted over three lakh plots to the Scheduled Castes.

The party's promise to increase old age pension and free electricity and free travel for women in Haryana roadways buses also caught the voters' fancy.

The much-talked about Jat and non-Jat divide in the State, especially in the wake of the Jat reservation agitation in 2016, also appeared to have been negated by the strong anti-incumbency, with the Congress gaining 10 seats along the Grand Trunk

Road belt, considered a stronghold of the BJP with a large non-Jat population. Nine of these seats were previously held by the BJP. The results even shocked the BJP leaders since the party had swept the municipal and Mayor elections in the belt less than a year back.

Of the 11 BJP Ministers in the fray, only three managed to win highlighting the extent of the electorate's anger.

However, the split in the Indian National Lok Dal and the much delayed change in Haryana Congress State leadership worked to the advantage of the BJP. The ticket distribution and the infighting among the BJP cadres, however, hit the party hard.

Haryana is a lost opportunity for the Congress and a lucky comeback for the BJP.

Daughters are watching: Cong.

Party slams BJP, recalls that Hooda had dropped Gopal Kanda from Cabinet

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Hours after Haryana Lokhit Party (HLP) chief Gopal Kanda and a few other newly elected Independent members of the Haryana Assembly (MLAs) pledged their support on Friday to the BJP for government formation, the Congress said "daughters of the country are watching if the BJP had prioritised 'power over women's safety'."

Former Lok Sabha member Sushmita Dev, who heads the All India Mahila Congress, wrote an open letter to Home Minister Amit Shah, questioning him for taking the support of Mr. Kanda, who is accused of harassing an air hostess and driving her to suicide in 2012.

"Shri Amit Shah ji, by tying up with a criminal like Gopal Kanda, questions are being raised about BJP's commitment towards women's security as well as morality. Today the country's daughters are watching



Seeking answers: Randeep Surjewala, Jairam Ramesh and A.K. Antony in New Delhi on Friday. ■SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

what's more important for you – power or women's security," Ms. Dev tweeted.

"Beti Bachao Gang of BJP is basically spineless and shameless. They boast about having a woman defence minister and finance minister and then accommodate rapists in their party," Ms. Dev said in another tweet.

In August 2012, a young air hostess, Geetika Sharma, of the now defunct airline,

MDLR – promoted by Mr. Kanda – ended her life and blamed the politician of harassment in a note she left.

A businessman-turned-politician, Mr. Kanda was then a Minister in the Bhupinder Singh Hooda-led Congress government after he supported the Congress government as an Independent MLA. Following the allegations, Mr. Hooda not only dropped him from the Cabi-

net but the State police registered a case of abetment to suicide and rape. Subsequently, the rape charge was dropped but the abetment case is in court.

Doublespeak: Surjewala

"I think you should look at the statements made by Narendra Modi and Amit Shah at the time when Gopal Kanda was a Minister in the [Congress] government in Haryana when we forced him to resign after registration of a case and also removed him from minister-ship," said Congress spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala at a press conference. "What was the stance of the BJP then and what sort of doublespeak is the BJP doing today?"

"They [the BJP] have no right to form a government...BJP has not been given a mandate to rule. Any government that the BJP forms will be an illegitimate and illegally constituted government," he said.

Poll results a wake-up call for saffron alliance, says Sena

Party paper *Saamana* heaps praise on NCP chief Pawar

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

A day after the results of the Maharashtra Assembly election returned the BJP-Sena *mahayuthi* with a reduced number, Shiv Sena mouthpiece *Saamana* took on Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

"Chief Minister had called himself a *pehelwan* (wrestler), but his strength fell short this time," said an editorial in the paper which heaped praise on Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar. "There is a lesson to be learnt from this defeat (in the Satara Lok Sabha seat, where the NCP won). Fadnavis said he was a powerful wrestler but Sharad Pawar proved more powerful," *Saamana* said.

The editorial said: "The Chief Minister said only lotuses will come out of EVMs but out of 164, 63 seats did not have lotuses... This is not *mahajanadesh*, that will



Aaditya Thackeray

have to be accepted. It takes a big heart to accept people's verdict... we have accepted it," the editorial said.

"The NCP has taken the biggest leap in the State. This mandate shows that being arrogant due to power is not good... The CM had called himself a strong '*pehelwan*' but it must be admitted that his strength lacked and 'ustaad' Sharad Pawar won the prize," the paper said.

The editorial also men-

tioned that the people of Maharashtra had rejected those who changed hats before the election such as Udayanraje Bhosale, for whom Prime Minister Narendra Modi had campaigned in Satara.

Stating that the saffron alliance had to introspect over the reduced mandate, the editorial admitted that the people of Maharashtra had rejected the politics of defection and poaching.

The Sena organ said the mandate had rejected the BJP's thinking that elections could be swept by engineering defections and splitting opposition parties.

Meanwhile, newly elected MLAs Aaditya Thackeray of the Shiv Sena and Rohit Pawar of the NCP are said to have congratulated each other. Speculation is rife that the Sena may choose to stake claim to power with the Congress-NCP if it does not get the CM's post.

Open to backing Sena: Cong. leader

Waiting for Sena's move, says Thorat

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Maharashtra State Congress president Balasaheb Thorat on Friday said if the Shiv Sena approached the party and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) to form a government, he would seek directions from the party high command.

"At present, the Sena has made no formal proposal to us seeking support to form a government. Therefore, I cannot comment on it. However, if such a proposal comes from them, we will seek the high command's directions on how to go forward," he said, hinting that the party was open to extending support to the Sena.

With the BJP falling short of seats, it is now dependent on the Sena to form the government. In the 288-member Maharashtra Assembly, the BJP won 105 seats compared to 122 in 2014, while the Sena won 56, a drop from its 2014 tally of 63.



Balasaheb Thorat

The simple majority mark in the Assembly is 145. With the NCP and the Congress winning 54 and 44 seats respectively, all three parties coming together can form a non-BJP government.

Mr. Thorat said if one took into account the number Independents backed by the Congress-NCP and smaller pre-poll allies, the Opposition's tally was 117.

"As a party, we feel we could have won more seats. However, the party accepts the verdict and is ready for the duties of an Opposition," he said.

Uttarakhand, Bengal bypolls on Nov. 25

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

By-elections to four Assembly seats – three in West Bengal and one in Uttarakhand – would be held on November 25, the Election Commission of India (ECI) announced on Friday.

The ECI said it decided to hold the polls to Kaliaganj, Karimpur and Khargapur Sadar in West Bengal and Pithoragarh seat in Uttarakhand "after taking into consideration inputs from the Chief Electoral Officers of Uttarakhand and West Bengal and various factors like local festivals, electoral rolls, weather conditions etc."

The ECI had decided not to hold the by-elections to the vacant seats in West Bengal along with the 51 other seats across the country that went to polls on Monday due to Durga Puja celebrations in the State.

Votes will be counted on November 28.

Congress says RCEP trade deal will jolt economy again

Party plans agitation against the agreement

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Opposing the signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the Congress on Friday said it will further open up the Indian markets to Chinese imports and described it as the "third big jolt" to the Indian economy after demonetisation and the Goods

and Services Tax (GST).

A day after its better than expected performance in Haryana and Maharashtra, the party also decided to organise agitation and awareness programmes against the RCEP and forge a common platform with other Opposition parties.

This Congress position on the proposed trade agreement among 16 countries including China, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and the ASEAN countries came after a meeting of the

leaders who are part of the Congress policy group.

The meeting that took place at Congress president Sonia Gandhi's residence also discussed other issues like the Citizen Amendment Bill (CAB), the winter session of Parliament and the Assembly poll results.

Sources said the Congress decided to strongly oppose the CAB when it comes in Parliament during the winter session.

But the meeting mainly focussed on the impact of sign-

ing the RCEP, especially on farmers and Indian enterprises.

"After demonetisation and GST, it will be the third big jolt to our economy when the Prime Minister goes to Bangkok next month and expresses India's agreement with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership," Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said, while addressing a press conference jointly with A.K. Antony, Randeep Surjewala and K.C. Venugopal.

"There is a text to RCEP and a context to RCEP. The text to RCEP is bad, the context is worst," he added.

In the backdrop of an economic slowdown, Congress leaders argued, easier imports from countries such as China, New Zealand, Australia would further adversely impact some key sectors like agriculture, dairy farming, steel industry, textile industry and the auto industry.

Mr. Ramesh claimed that the managing director of the Gujarat-based milk federa-

tion, Amul, has written to Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal expressing concern about import liberalisation of dairy products.

"Don't worry about Rahul Gandhi. He will come back with more strength," said Mr. Antony when asked why Mr. Gandhi had not commented on Congress' performance in the Assembly polls and added, "Sonia ji is our supreme leader. She is the Congress president and she will continue as long as the party wishes".

IN BRIEF



Angela Merkel to visit India on November 1

NEW DELHI
German Chancellor Angela Merkel will participate in the fifth biennial Inter Governmental Consultations during her visit to India on November 1, the Ministry of External Affairs has announced. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the visiting German leader will also hold meetings with the business leaders of both countries during the visit. Ms. Merkel will be accompanied by a delegation of her ministerial colleagues and officials. She will also hold talks with President Ram Nath Kovind.

'Pak. is contemporary epicentre of terrorism'

NEW DELHI
Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu hit out at Pakistan calling it a contemporary epicentre of terrorism, at the 18th summit of Non-Aligned Movement countries at Azerbaijan. The Vice-President was responding to the speech of Pakistan President Arif Alvi, who said that terrorism should not be identified by any nation, region or religion alone. Mr. Alvi also said that the withdrawal of the special status for Jammu and Kashmir was a direct assault on the right to self-determination.

CBI arrests NBCC official on graft charge

NEW DELHI
The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested a deputy general manager (DGM) of the National Buildings Construction Corporation (NBCC) Limited in Guwahati for graft, in connection with a contract worth ₹24.43 crore. The accused has been identified as Utpal Paul. "The case has been registered against the official and a chief general manager (CGM) of the NBCC, on a complaint alleging demand of ₹50 lakh as a commission of 2% of the contract value," said an official.

U.S. seeks 'road map' to restore normalcy in Kashmir

Demands release of detainees; asks Pakistan to take sustained and irreversible steps against militants in its territory

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA WASHINGTON
The U.S. has sought from India a "road map" to political and economic normalcy in Kashmir and immediate release of all political detainees even as it asked Pakistan to take "sustained and irreversible" steps against militants and terrorists in its territory.

Most of the top-level and second-rung separatists of Jammu and Kashmir have been taken into preventive custody while mainstream leaders, including former Chief Ministers Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti, have been either detained or placed under house arrest in view of the Centre's decision

to revoke special status to Jammu and Kashmir and splitting the State into two Union Territories.

"We continue to press for the release of detainees for the full restoration of everyday services, but most importantly, for road map to the restoration of political and economic normalcy," said Acting Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Alice G. Wells.

The U.S. remains "deeply concerned" about the situation in the Valley where the daily life of nearly eight million residents has been severely impacted since the decision to revoke Jammu and Kashmir's special status and



Easing tensions: The U.S. is concerned over the situation in the Valley where daily life has been hit, said Alice G. Wells. • AP

to "detain without charge" political leaders and restrict communications, Ms. Wells said in an interaction with reporters at Foggy Bottom

headquarters of the State Department. "We've seen progress, for example, four million prepaid mobile phone users have had service res-

tored, but SMS and Internet is restricted," she said. The prepaid services continued to remain barred.

Access for reporting

Noting that journalists have extensively covered developments in Kashmir, Ms. Wells said the role of some of the international reporters had been particularly important, but journalists continued to face challenges in access while reporting due to the security restrictions.

Ms. Wells said terrorist groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Hizbul Mujahideen "obviously are the problem". "In this vein, we welcome

[Pakistan] Prime Minister [Imran] Khan's unambiguous statement in September that anyone who crosses from Pakistan to carry out violence in Kashmir are enemies of both Pakistan and the Kashmiri people," Ms. Wells said.

"The constructive dialogue that we'd like to see between India and Pakistan must be based on Pakistan taking sustained and irreversible steps against militants and terrorists in its territory," Ms. Wells said.

On August 5, India withdrew the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcated it into two Union Territories.



Review bail granted to Chidambaram, CBI tells SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has asked the Supreme Court to review its judgment granting regular bail to former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram in the case registered by the agency in the INX Media case.

A three-judge Bench led by Justice R. Banumathi had granted Mr. Chidambaram bail on October 22. He is currently in remand with the ED in the INX Media case.

The review petitions will be heard by the same Bench, probably in chambers.

The CBI said the bail judgment of the apex court contained errors as it did not take into account the material placed on record to prove that Mr. Chidambaram, if allowed bail, would influence the witnesses in the case.

On the allegation that Mr. Chidambaram would tamper with evidence if released on bail, the Supreme Court had in its October 22 judgment said the case was based on documents already in the custody of the prosecuting agency. Hence, there was no chance of any tinkering with evidence.

The court had referred to how the CBI had alleged in the High Court that Mr. Chidambaram and his son, Karti, had approached two material witnesses for their silence.

The allegation was part of a sealed cover note handed over to the High Court.



Supplies stalled: Trucks loaded with apples parked along a highway near Qazigund in south Kashmir's Anantnag district on Friday. • NISSAR AHMAD

Two truck drivers shot dead in Shopian; two vehicles set on fire

Three others injured as terrorists open fire on vehicles

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA SRINAGAR
Terrorists on Thursday struck for the third time in 10 days in south Kashmir's militancy-hit Shopian district killing two non-Kashmiri truck drivers, who had gone to ferry loads of apples, officials said.

"It's an unfortunate incident. The truck drivers had ventured into interior areas

without informing the security forces," a senior official said. The bodies of two drivers had been recovered, while another injured driver was being evacuated to hospital in Srinagar, the official added.

Director General of Police Dilbagh Singh has said that terrorists fired at trucks near Chittargam in Shopian and injured three drivers.

The terrorists stopped the three trucks bearing registration number of Haryana, Rajasthan and Punjab and started indiscriminate firing at the drivers who made an unsuccessful attempt to flee the area. The terrorists also torched two of the trucks.

One of the dead has been identified as Mohammed Illiyas, a resident of Alwar in Rajasthan.

'PoK controlled by terrorists'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

Army chief General Bipin Rawat on Friday said that Pakistan-occupied Kashmir was controlled by terrorists, and sought to link it to Pakistan's strident criticism of India's decision to withdraw Jammu & Kashmir's special status. Gilgit-Baltistan and PoK have been under illegal occupation of Pakistan.

Pak. summons Indian envoy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ISLAMABAD

Pakistan on Friday summoned India's Deputy High Commissioner Gaurav Ahluwalia and condemned the "unprovoked ceasefire violations" along the Line of Control that killed three Pakistani civilians. Mohammad Faisal, DG (South Asia & SAARC), said the ceasefire violations are a threat to regional peace.

24 elected unopposed in BDC polls in Kashmir

Elections held in 310 blocks in State

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The maximum number of chairpersons of Block Development Councils (BDC) who were elected unopposed in Kashmir Valley were from the two worst militancy-affected districts of Shopian and Pulwama.

Of the 24 chairpersons elected without contest in 133 blocks in the Kashmir Valley, 10 were from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and 14 were Independents. In the block elections in Shopian, six BJP candidates won unopposed and, in Pulwama, two BJP candidates won without a fight.

Elections were held in 310 blocks in Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday. Thirteen winning candidates were women.

The elections of BDC chairpersons are indirect and they are elected by Panches and Sarpanches of a Panchayat falling within a particular block. The Congress, the National Conference and the Peoples De-

mocratic Party did not take part in the polls, the first to be held after the revocation of the special status of J&K in August. Most cadres of the political parties, except the BJP, are in detention. The panchayat elections were held in J&K in 2018 and total of 27,281 panches and sarpanches were elected. There are 12,776 vacant sarpanch and panch seats in J&K.

As many as 217 Independents won in the BDC elections, of which 101 were from the Kashmir Valley.

On Friday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted that the BDC polls held for the first time since 1947, "witnessed a historic turnout of 98%". "I am delighted to share that the BDC polls in Jammu, Kashmir, Leh and Ladakh were conducted in a very peaceful manner. There was no violence. This shows the people's unwavering faith in democracy and the importance they accord to grassroots level governance," he tweeted.

Brazil intends to allow Indians without visas

Facility is already available for citizens of the U.S., Canada, Japan and Australia

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Brazil is working to implement a policy to facilitate a faster entry for Indian travellers into the country, the Embassy of Brazil said on Friday after President Jair Bolsonaro said the Latin American power intends to allow Indian travellers to visit without a visa.

"The government of Brazil intends to bring in a policy to facilitate easier entry for Indian tourists and business persons from India as we want to boost people to people contact between the two countries and increase foreign investment into Brazil," said a spokesperson of the Embassy of Brazil here. The comments from the

embassy came hours after Mr. Bolsonaro announced that he intends to bring in measures that will allow greater contact with India and China and end visa requirements for the citizens of the two countries.

Brazil has already ended visa requirements for the citizens of U.S., Canada, Japan and Australia.

Mr. Bolsonaro first announced the evolving visa policy for Chinese and Indian nationals in his September speech at the UN General Assembly.

The announcement from Brazil came ahead of the upcoming BRICS summit that will be held in Brazil which is expected to boost intra-BRICS ties.

ELSEWHERE



16 dead in anti-Abiy protests: Amnesty

ADDIS ABABA
At least 16 people have been killed in violence in Ethiopia this week that began with protests against Prime Minister and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Abiy Ahmed, an Amnesty International researcher said on Friday. Fisseha Tekle said the violence had included instances of security forces opening fire on protesters but was increasingly taking the form of ethnic and religious clashes. **AFP**

N. Korea tells South to raze buildings at resort

SEOUL
North Korea on Friday told Seoul to come and demolish buildings at a tourist resort that were constructed by South Korean companies, days after leader Kim Jong-un called them "unpleasant-looking" and ordered their replacement. The flagship Mount Kumgang complex was once a symbol of economic cooperation between the two Koreas and drew hundreds of thousands of Southern visitors. **AFP**

Yemen govt. strikes deal with rebels

RIYADH
Yemen's southern separatists have struck a power-sharing deal with the internationally-recognised government aimed at ending a conflict simmering within the country's long-running civil war, sources on both sides said on Friday. The deal would see the secessionist Southern Transitional Council handed a number of Ministries, and the government return to the southern city of Aden, according to officials and reports in the media. Security Belt Forces — dominated by the STC — in August took control of Aden. **AFP**

Criminal investigation opened into Mueller's Russia inquiry

Move likely to raise alarms that the U.S. President is going after his perceived enemies

**KATIE BENNER
ADAM GOLDMAN
WASHINGTON**

For more than two years, President Donald Trump has repeatedly attacked the Russia investigation, portraying it as a hoax and illegal even months after the special counsel Robert Mueller closed it. Now, Mr. Trump's own Justice Department has opened a criminal investigation into how it all began.

Justice Department officials have shifted an administrative review of the Russia investigation closely overseen by Attorney General William Barr to a criminal inquiry, according to two people familiar with the matter.

The move gives the prosecutor running it, John Durham, the power to subpoena for witness testimony and documents, to impanel a



A file photo of former special counsel Robert Mueller testifying at a House Judiciary Committee hearing on the Russia probe.

grand jury and to file criminal charges.

The opening of a criminal investigation is likely to raise alarms that Mr. Trump is using the Justice Department to go after his perceived enemies. Mr. Trump fired James Comey, the FBI director under whose watch agents opened the Russia inquiry, and has long assailed other top former law enforcement

and intelligence officials as partisans who sought to block his election.

Mr. Trump has made clear that he sees the typically independent Justice Department as a tool to be wielded against his political enemies. That view factors into the impeachment investigation against him, as does his long obsession with the origins of the Russia inquiry. House

Democrats are examining in part whether his pressure on Ukraine to open investigations into theories about the 2016 election constituted an abuse of power.

The move also creates an unusual situation in which the Justice Department is conducting a criminal investigation into itself.

Mr. Barr's reliance on Mr. Durham, a widely respected and veteran prosecutor who has investigated CIA torture and broken up Mafia rings, could help insulate the Attorney General from accusations that he is doing the President's bidding and putting politics above justice.

It was not clear what potential crime Mr. Durham is investigating, nor when the criminal investigation was prompted. A Justice Department spokeswoman declined to comment. **NY TIMES**

3 held for human trafficking over London truck deaths

Some Vietnamese could be among the victims

**REUTERS
GRAYS**

The police investigating the deaths of 39 people in a truck near London said they had arrested three more suspects on Friday on suspicion of human trafficking amid signs that some of the dead may be Vietnamese.

As forensic experts began the process of identifying the victims, the Vietnamese embassy in London said families from the southeast Asian country had got in touch about missing relatives. There were growing concerns at least 10 of the victims could have been from Vietnam.

Hoa Nghiem from Human Rights Space, a civic network based in Vietnam, said that Pham Thi Tra My, 26, had sent a text message to her mother saying she could



People holding banners and candles during a vigil for the victims in London. **AP**

not breathe at about the time the truck container was en route from Belgium to Britain.

"Im sorry, mum and dad. My path abroad was not a success. I love you both so much. I cant breathe. I'm from Nghen Town, Can Loc District, Ha Tinh, Vietnam... I am sorry, Mom," the message said, according to Ms. Hoa who said it had come from Tra My's family.

She said Tra My had gone to China and was planning to reach England via France

and that the organisation was getting more alerts about possible Vietnamese victims in the refrigerated truck, which was found on Wednesday.

The police have said they believe the dead were Chinese but Beijing said the nationalities had not yet been confirmed. Chinese and Vietnamese officials are now both working closely with the British police, their respective embassies said.

"We owe it to those who have died to get this investigation right and speculation is not helpful," Essex Police's Deputy Chief Constable Pippa Mills told reporters. "It may in fact hinder our investigation and its progress."

On Friday, the police also arrested a man and woman, both aged 38, in Warrington, England, and a 48-year-old man from Northern Ireland at London's Stansted Airport. They are suspected of conspiracy to traffic people and manslaughter.

EU keeps Britain guessing on the length of its Brexit lifeline

**REUTERS
BRUSSELS**

The European Union agreed on Friday to London's request for a Brexit deadline extension but set no new departure date, giving Britain's divided Parliament time to decide on Prime Minister Boris Johnson's call for a snap election.

"There was full agreement on the need for an extension," an EU official said after Ambassadors from the 27 countries staying in the bloc met to discuss postponing Britain's exit, less than a week before the current dea-

line of October 31. "Work will continue over the weekend" and envoys will meet again in Brussels on Monday or Tuesday, the person said.

A day after admitting that he will not meet his "do or die" deadline of October 31, Mr. Johnson said it was up to the EU to decide on an extension.

"Of course October 31 is still possible — we could leave on October 31 — unfortunately it depends on what the EU says," he said, adding that if opponents frustrate his bid for an election on December 12 his minority go-

vernment would not engage in pointless "Brexitology" in Parliament.

France's stance
The EU envoys had been due to discuss the length of a third delay to Brexit but diplomats decided to hold off to let events play out in London.

One EU diplomat said France pressed the other 26 to wait and favoured a delay until November 15 or November 30 to keep pressure on the British Parliament to approve Mr. Johnson's deal or face a disorderly Brexit.

U.S. to deploy 'mechanised forces' in Syria

They will be used to guard Syrian oil fields, says Esper

**REUTERS
BRUSSELS**

The U.S. will strengthen its military presence in Syria with "mechanised forces" to prevent Islamic State fighters seizing oil fields and revenue, the U.S. Defense Secretary said on Friday, the latest twist in President Donald Trump's confusing policy on Syria.

Mr. Trump has been softening his pullout plans for Syria after a backlash from Congress, including among key Republicans, who say he



Taking over: Syrian government forces arriving in the northeastern city of Qamishli on Friday. **AFP**

enabled a long-threatened Turkish incursion against Kurdish forces in Syria who had been America's top allies in the battle against Islamic State.

"We are now taking some actions... to strengthen our

position at Deir al zor, to ensure that we can deny ISIS access to the oil fields," Defense Secretary Mark Esper told reporters during a press conference.

"We are reinforcing that position, it will include some

mechanised forces," Mr. Esper said. Mechanised forces usually include tanks and other military assets.

He did not say how many forces were currently in the region or how many additional forces would be sent.

The vacuum left by Mr. Trump's partial withdrawal has created an opening that Russia exploited by moving forces into the area.

Around 300 more Russian military police have arrived in Syria, the Russian Defence Ministry said on Friday, under an accord between Ankara and Moscow which halted Turkey's military incursion into northeast Syria.

Pakistan court grants bail to ailing Sharif

He has autoimmune disorder

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LAHORE**

A top Pakistani court on Friday granted bail to jailed former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who is undergoing treatment after being diagnosed with an autoimmune blood disorder which reduced his platelet count to dangerous levels.

A two-member Bench of the Lahore High Court, headed by Justice Baqar Najafi, heard the petition of PML-N President Shahbaz Sharif seeking the release of his elder brother from the custody of the National Accountability Bureau on medical grounds in the money laundering case and accepted it. According to the



Nawaz Sharif

order, Mr. Sharif will have to submit two surety bonds worth 10 million Pakistani rupees each for his release in the case.

However, Mr. Sharif will not be released immediately as the Islamabad High Court adjourned the hearing of his bail plea in a separate Al-Azizia steel mills case until Tuesday.

Gotabaya's party will boost ties with India, says manifesto

Sri Lanka will not 'cringe' before any foreign power, it says

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
COLOMBO**

Better relations with India and other nations in the region would be a vital part of Sri Lanka's foreign policy if SLPP's Presidential candidate Gotabaya Rajapaksa's comes to power, according to the party's manifesto that was released here on Friday.

Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP)'s manifesto also highlights improving relations with the member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) na-



Gotabaya Rajapaksa

tions on national security.

"We aim to foster better understanding with India, SAARC and BIMSTEC countries on regional security," an extract from Mr. Rajapaksa's manifesto released in the local Sinhala language

said. Sri Lanka goes to poll on November 16. A total of 35 candidates would be contesting the election — the highest ever in Sri Lanka's history.

Mr. Gotabaya, 70, who is the younger brother of the former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, is the main Opposition challenger.

The manifesto emphasises that Sri Lanka would not "cringe" before any foreign power in maintaining foreign relations and international trade.

"We will negotiate on equal terms as a sovereign nation to preserve the national pride," it says.

White House cancels Times, Post subscriptions

They are fake newspapers, says Trump

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON**

U.S. President Donald Trump has cancelled the subscription of leading American dailies *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, calling them "fake" and asked other federal agencies to do the same, according to a media report.

Mr. Trump's unusual move came days after he hinted of the same in an interview with the Fox News.

Officials in the West Wing on Thursday announced that copies of the two newspapers would no longer be delivered to the White House and the administration is moving to force other



Donald Trump

federal agencies to end their subscriptions to the papers, as well.

Not renewing subscriptions across all federal agencies will be a significant cost saving — hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars will be saved, White House Press Secretary, Stephanie Grisham, said in a statement.

Two dozen dead in Iraq protests

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BAGHDAD**

Two dozen demonstrators were killed in renewed rallies across Baghdad and Iraq's south on Friday by live rounds and tear gas, according to the Iraqi Human Rights Commission.

The demonstrations represent a second phase of a week-long movement in early October demanding an end to corruption, unemployment and an overhaul of the political system. More than 150 people had died then.

By Friday evening, demonstrations across the country had descended into violence that left 24 protesters dead and more than 2,000 wounded.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12765

(set by Arden)

| | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| | | | | | | | |
| 9 | | | 10 | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| 11 | | | | | 12 | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| 13 | | 14 | | 15 | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | 18 | | 19 | 20 | | |
| 21 | 22 | | | | | | |
| 23 | | | 24 | | 25 | | |
| 26 | | | | | 27 | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| 28 | | 29 | | | | | |

- 11 Russians refuse to save Communist leader, a handsome lad once (9)
- 12 Six footer on the cave (5)
- 13 Fashionable scene in a way could provoke (7)
- 15 Team in the movie will leave... (4)
- 18 ...so reject the monster (4)
- 20 Bird poster? (7)
- 23 Loves to be in the back, walking (5)
- 24 Drops in to replace engine part (6,3)
- 26 "Go away man" — head off in a state of total bliss (9)
- 27 Airlines in pair (5)
- 28 Not odd really in Cathedral town (3)
- 29 Used all remedies in Ireland (7,4)
- 4 Performer gets it raised — raised a bit (7)
- 5 I am outdated, that's the dilemma (7)
- 6 Endearing way to make a fruit juice (9)
- 7 Ghost of a gunner accompanied outside (6)
- 8 Crucial info without a well known economist (6)
- 14 It's different thing, being an amusement (9)
- 16 Shortly will begin shooting first shot of movie (4,4)
- 17 Pressure underground, church shows discretion (8)
- 19 Adopt and essentially checkmate (7)
- 20 Mosaic tile set up second time (7)
- 21 Hook say, a dumb blonde (6)
- 22 Subject of the lad getting brown (6)
- 25 Chose one person to eventually develop on all fronts (5)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

Solution to puzzle 12764

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | L | A | T | E | A | B | S | T | R | A | C | T |
| E | D | R | N | S | U | A | A | S | | | | |
| D | O | G | S | L | E | T | A | B | A | R | E | T |
| U | E | I | E | I | C | A | | | | | | |
| C | O | R | N | E | R | A | R | C | H | E | R | Y |
| E | E | L | M | O | C | E | S | | | | | |
| S | D | I | S | T | U | R | B | A | N | C | E | |
| C | O | N | S | E | N | T | S | A | N | D | I | G |
| U | E | K | R | S | N | O | R | E | | | | |
| B | O | W | K | N | O | T | A | L | S | O | R | E |
| A | T | T | A | M | A | N | D | I | A | C | | |
| C | O | M | M | A | N | D | I | T | O | D | D | Y |
| N | N | T | R | U | O | | | | | | | |

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

The crossword is also available online at crossword.thehindu.com

MARKET WATCH

| | 25-10-2019 | % CHANGE |
|-----------|------------|----------|
| Sensex | 39,058 | 0.10 |
| US Dollar | 70.90 | 0.17 |
| Gold | 39,240 | 0.56 |
| Brent oil | 61.52 | 0.18 |

NIFTY 50

| | PRICE | CHANGE |
|-------------------|----------|---------|
| Adani Ports | 398.95 | -0.20 |
| Asian Paints | 1796.30 | 5.80 |
| Axis Bank | 708.60 | 0.90 |
| Bajaj Auto | 3129.65 | -38.20 |
| Bajaj Finserv | 7972.15 | -118.85 |
| Bajaj Finance | 3987.25 | -38.90 |
| Bharti Airtel | 375.15 | 2.80 |
| BPL | 524.15 | 11.10 |
| Britannia Ind | 3267.10 | -16.70 |
| Cipla | 459.85 | 13.00 |
| Coal India | 205.85 | 0.65 |
| Dr Reddys Lab | 2794.95 | -30.35 |
| Eicher Motors | 21321.75 | 289.40 |
| GAIL (India) | 123.95 | -0.80 |
| Grasim Ind | 709.95 | 4.35 |
| HCL Tech | 1134.05 | 15.00 |
| HDFC | 2101.55 | -43.40 |
| HDFC Bank | 1229.00 | -7.10 |
| Hero MotoCorp | 2657.55 | -38.45 |
| Hindalco | 181.75 | 0.40 |
| Hind Unilever | 2145.10 | 11.75 |
| ICICI Bank | 469.10 | 14.35 |
| IndusInd Bank | 1272.05 | -10.95 |
| Bharti Infratel | 217.00 | -20.55 |
| Infosys | 637.45 | 2.10 |
| Indian Oil Corp | 142.10 | 0.80 |
| ITC | 247.70 | -1.35 |
| JSW Steel | 217.35 | -5.50 |
| Kotak Bank | 1588.60 | -24.60 |
| L&T | 1425.00 | -7.25 |
| M&M | 577.70 | -3.35 |
| Maruti Suzuki | 7471.15 | 79.75 |
| Nestle India Ltd. | 14803.35 | 137.35 |
| NTPC | 118.50 | -1.70 |
| ONGC | 139.55 | -1.15 |
| PowerGrid Corp | 202.95 | -1.15 |
| Reliance Ind | 1431.20 | -5.25 |
| State Bank | 281.55 | 19.05 |
| Sun Pharma | 417.50 | 11.55 |
| Tata Motors | 126.85 | -6.65 |
| Tata Steel | 362.25 | 2.35 |
| TCS | 2124.95 | 42.95 |
| Tech Mahindra | 720.95 | -5.40 |
| Titan | 1335.00 | -39.55 |
| UltraTech Cement | 4196.60 | -114.95 |
| UPL | 594.60 | -3.10 |
| Vedanta | 142.20 | -3.50 |
| Wipro | 253.00 | 3.40 |
| YES Bank | 52.15 | 3.85 |
| Zee Entertainment | 239.70 | 2.00 |

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on October 25

| CURRENCY | TT BUY | TT SELL |
|--------------------|--------|---------|
| US Dollar | 70.68 | 71.00 |
| Euro | 73.2 | 78.88 |
| British Pound | 90.63 | 91.05 |
| Japanese Yen (100) | 65.10 | 65.39 |
| Chinese Yuan | 10.00 | 10.04 |
| Swiss Franc | 71.25 | 71.57 |
| Singapore Dollar | 51.85 | 52.08 |
| Canadian Dollar | 54.08 | 54.33 |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 16.89 | 16.97 |

Source: Indian Bank

BULLION RATES CHENNAI

October 25 rates in rupees with previous rates in parentheses

| | | |
|--------------------|------|--------|
| Retail Silver (1g) | 50.6 | (49) |
| 22 ct gold (1g) | 3693 | (3663) |

Credit growth gets festive boost

Banks extend loans worth over ₹1 lakh crore during the last three fortnights

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

After being lacklustre for several months amid a slowing economy, credit growth is showing some signs of pick-up during the festive season with banks extending loans worth just over ₹1 lakh crore in the last three fortnights.

According to latest data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), bank credit growth was in positive territory on year-to-date basis, after several fortnights. For the fortnight ended October 11, loans grew by ₹21,645 crore, on the top of the ₹59,653 crore in the previous fortnight and ₹20,998 crore the fortnight before that. As a result, credit growth was 0.2% till October 11; the figure was

Rising offtake

| For fortnight ended | ₹ cr. |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Oct. 11 | 21,645 |
| Sept. 27 | 59,653 |
| Sept. 13 | 20,998 |
| Total | 1,02,296 |

| FINANCIAL YEAR SO FAR | | | |
|-----------------------|----------|---------|--------------|
| ₹ cr | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | YoY growth % |
| Increase in credit | 3,67,681 | 16,776 | 8.8 |

Source: RBI

in the negative zone for several fortnights.

Single digit growth

However, on year-on-year basis, credit growth is still in single digit, at 8.8%.

The healthy credit off take in the last three fortnights comes on the back of several

steps taken by the government which were implemented by the banks.

The Finance Ministry had asked public sector banks to organise "shamiana meetings" in several districts this month to extend loans to non-banking finance companies and retail borrowers,

like home buyers and farmers. Banks have tied up with several non-banking finance companies also for loan co-origination to extend credit facilities to the MSMEs. This helped banks reach last mile customers of NBFCs.

To boost credit flow that could help the economy recover, the RBI has reduced interest rates by 135 bps between February and now, which has allowed banks to lower their lending rates.

So far as deposit growth is concerned, banks have mobilised ₹31,070 crore of deposits during the fortnight ended October 11, RBI data showed. Deposits recorded 9.8% growth on a year-on-year basis and 2.9% in the financial year so far.

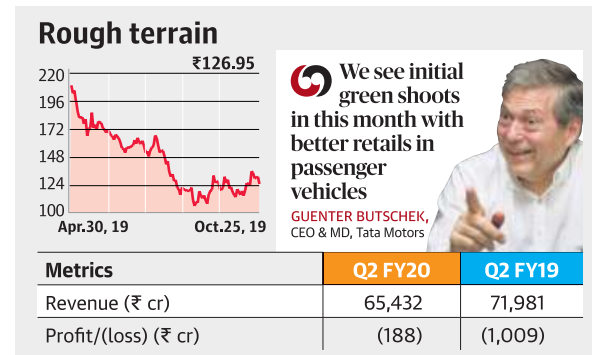
ICICI Bank exits GST Network

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

ICICI Bank has exited the GST Network, a company which facilitates collection of goods and services tax, by selling its entire 10% stake to 13 State governments for ₹1 crore.

The stake transfer will be completed by the end of March 2020, ICICI Bank said in a filing with the exchanges.

ICICI Bank has exited the company following the government's decision to make GST Network into a public sector entity last year. The Centre will own 50% stake in the GST Network and the rest will be held by States on a pro-rata basis, in the new structure.



Tata Motors narrows loss on JLR turnaround

Tata Sons to infuse ₹6,500 crore

Improved performance of Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) in China helped Tata Motors Ltd. to substantially reduce its consolidated second quarter loss to ₹188 crore compared with a net loss of ₹1,009 crore in the year-earlier period.

The company's revenue during the period under review decreased 9% to ₹65,432 crore against ₹71,981 crore. Volumes were down by 25% to 2,42,000 units.

P.B. Balaji, Group CFO, Tata Motors, said, "We have delivered a good set of numbers under the current circumstances. The turnaround of JLR has helped to offset the drop in sales of medium and heavy commercial vehicles of Tata Motors."

JLR reported revenue of ₹6 billion, up 8% over the same period last year.

Addressing challenges

"JLR has returned to profitability and revenue growth. This is a testament to the fundamental strength of our business. We are one of the first companies in our sector to address the challenges facing our industry," said Ralf Speth, CEO, JLR.

On a standalone basis, Ta-

tata Motors witnessed a sharp decline in sales of passenger vehicles and commercial vehicles. Revenue at ₹9,913 crore, compared with ₹17,644 crore, was down 44%. It reported a pre-tax loss of ₹1,270 crore against a pre-tax loss of ₹150 crore in the same period last year.

The company has reduced stock in the system worth ₹3,400 crore both from its inventory and from the dealers' end.

Guenter Butschek, CEO and MD, Tata Motors said, "The sharp market decline over the last few months has impacted our Q2 performance, which is disappointing. We are better prepared to tide over the current market challenges with proactive stock reductions. The focus is on retail acceleration and deep commitment to the turnaround journey. Now, we see initial green shoots in this month with better retails in passenger vehicles."

The board of Tata Motors Ltd. has also approved a preferential allotment of ordinary shares and warrants to the promoters, Tata Sons, for ₹6,500 crore.

This equity infusion by the promoters will reduce the company's debt which is currently pegged at ₹20,000 crore.

State Bank's profit trebles on one-time gain

Bank realises ₹3,484 crore from sale of 4.5% in SBI Life; asset quality improves as slippages decline

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

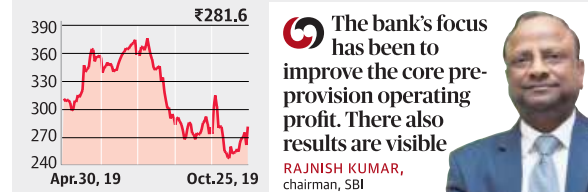
The second quarter net profit of State Bank of India (SBI) has more than trebled to ₹3,012 crore for the quarter ended September 30 from the ₹945 crore recorded in the year-earlier period, mainly due to one-time gain from stake sale in its life insurance arm.

There was a gain of ₹3,484.30 crore from sale of 4.5% stake in SBI Life Insurance Company during the quarter.

Net interest income rose 17.7% to ₹24,600 crore while net interest margin improved 42 basis points (bps) to 3.22%. Non-interest income increased 28.2% to ₹12,023 crore for the quarter.

"The bank has shown all-round improvement in the performance," said Rajnish

Bottom line boost



Kumar, chairman, SBI during the post earnings media interaction.

"[The] bank's focus has been on improving the core pre-provision operating profit. There also, the results are visible. This creates resilience to absorb any shock in

the asset quality," he said.

With slippages falling to ₹8,805 crore in Q2 compared with the ₹10,725 crore a year ago, the bank's asset quality has improved.

Gross NPA ratio was at 7.19%, down 276 bps year-on-year and 34 bps sequentially.

In absolute terms also, gross NPA has declined both on a year-on-year basis as well as sequentially. Loan loss provisions increased 8.4% to ₹11,041 crore.

Provisions

Mr. Kumar said the entire proceeds from the stake sale in the life insurance arm was used for provisions in two areas – one, stressed housing finance company (HFC) and two, in the power sector.

SBI has provided ₹900 crore for the stressed HFC, that is not an NPA.

The bank has an exposure of ₹7,000 crore towards the company. In the previous quarter, SBI had provided ₹500 crore for the same HFC.

Mr. Kumar said the provision coverage ratio of SBI is 81% and excluding advances

under collection accounts, it is over 62%. Commenting that the bank had been taking measures to add 'strength and resilience' to the balance sheet, Mr. Kumar said, "If I call it the Safest Bank of India, I will not be exaggerating."

"The long-term trend of the performance of the bank is in the right direction."

Domestic credit grew 8.43% year-on-year, which was mainly driven by retail advances, where the growth was 18.9%.

While some of the private banks that have announced their earnings so far have taken a one-time hit on deferred asset tax (DTA) due to change in corporate tax rate from 35% to 25%, SBI said the bank will make the adjustment during the course of the financial year.

CUMI posts marginal Q2 profit growth

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Carborundum Universal Ltd. (CUMI), a Murugappa Group firm, has posted a marginal increase of 2.13% in its standalone net profit for the second quarter ended September 2019 to ₹43.51 crore.

Revenue from operations slipped to ₹440 crore from ₹442.61 crore.

Revenue from abrasive, ceramic and electrominer segments remained almost flat at ₹464.57 crore against ₹464.73 crore.

The domestic abrasive segment posted a de-growth as it was hit by slowdown in key user industries. Ceramics division posted strong performance in due to higher volumes and better product mix of standalone business of CUMI Australia Pty. Ltd. and CUMI Middle East.

In a flip-flop, Odisha govt. retracts advisory on deposits

Move comes after RBI advises it against giving such direction

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

The Odisha State government retracted its advisory to various departments, cautioning them about depositing funds in banks, after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in a strongly worded letter, advised it against giving such directions.

The finance department of the Odisha government, in a communication to various departments on October 21, had cautioned them about depositing government funds in empanelled banks.

Citing media reports about the 'health' of banks and reminding that deposits are insured only up to ₹1 lakh, the State government said, "government departments, PSUs, or agencies have to be very careful while



keeping deposits in any banks and proper enquiry about the financial health of the concerned bank for making any deposit must be made. It shall be the personal responsibility of the concerned authority for such deposit." The advisory had not gone down well with the RBI, which had given assurance about the safety of the Indian banking system.

In a strongly worded note, the RBI warned that such ad-

visories coming from public authority may create unnecessary misgivings among public and could have unintended consequences for the financial system stability.

This prompted the State government to issue a clarification saying it does not have any view on the health of any particular bank. "That comes under the domain of RBI. There is no reason for anyone to get apprehensive about the financial health of banks in general," it said.

However, the latter also said the October 21 advisory was only meant to avoid opening of new accounts and shifting of government funds meant for welfare and developmental activities of government without any reason from one bank to another.

M&M arm to increase stake in Peugeot

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

Mahindra Two Wheelers Europe, a subsidiary of Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. (M&M), has entered into a share purchase agreement with Groupe PSA, to increase its stake in Peugeot Motorcycles (PMTC) from 51% to 100% for an unspecified amount.

Peugeot Motorcycles is headquartered in Mandure, France.

Earlier in January 2015, Mahindra Two Wheelers Europe had acquired a 51% equity stake in PMTC from Groupe PSA with the aim of growing the business in Europe.

Under M&M, the PMTC will drive its future growth in core markets such as the G7 (Europe), while expanding into new geographies, including select Asian markets.

3 law firms in U.S. file class action suit against Infosys

They represent tech major's investors

MINI TEJASWI BENGALURU

Three law firms in the U.S. – Bragar Egel & Squire, The Rosen Law Firm and Howard G. Smith – have filed class action lawsuits against Infosys.

A class action lawsuit is one in which a group of people with the same or similar injuries caused by the same product or action sue the defendant as a group.

Bragar Egel & Squire has filed a class action lawsuit in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York on behalf of investors that purchased Infosys Limited securities between July 7, 2018 and October 20, 2019.

Investors have time till December 23, 2019, to apply to the Court to be appointed

as lead plaintiff in the lawsuit.

The complaint, filed on October 23, 2019, alleges that throughout the class period, defendants made false or misleading statements and failed to disclose that: the company improperly recognised revenues to inflate short-term profits; that the company's CEO, Salil Parekh, bypassed reviews and approvals for large deals to avoid accounting scrutiny; and the management pressured the company's finance team to hide information from auditors and the company's board of directors.

The lawsuit filed by Rosen Law Firm seeks to recover damages for Infosys' investors under the federal securities laws.

RIL to set up subsidiary for digital platform initiatives

To invest ₹1.08 lakh cr. in firm; Jio to become net debt-free

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

Reliance Industries Ltd. on Friday said its board had approved the formation of a wholly owned subsidiary for digital platform initiatives and investment of ₹1.08 lakh crore in the unit.

The subsidiary will also acquire RIL's equity investment of ₹65,000 crore in Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd. (RJIL), it said in a regulatory filing. RIL said that the RJIL board had approved a scheme of arrangement between the company and certain classes of its creditors, including debenture holders, for transfer of identified liabilities of up to ₹1.08 lakh crore to RIL.

"Rights Issue of Optional Convertible Preference



Mukesh Ambani

Shares (OCPS) aggregating up to ₹1,08,000 crore for the purpose of payment of consideration for transfer of identified liabilities – WOS (wholly owned subsidiary) to subscribe to this issue," it added.

As a result, RJIL will become virtually a net debt-free company by March 31,

2020, with exception of spectrum-related liabilities, it noted. "This new company will be a truly transformational and disruptive digital services platform. It will bring together India's No. 1 connectivity platform, leading digital app ecosystem and world's best tech capabilities globally, to create a truly Digital Society for each Indian," RIL chairman and MD Mukesh Ambani said.

He added that given the reach and scale of its digital ecosystem, the company has received strong interest from potential strategic partners. "We will induct the right partners in our platform company, creating and unlocking meaningful value for RIL shareholders," he added.

‘Overall stressed assets have grown, unexpectedly’

INTERVIEW | AMITABH CHAUDHRY

Promoters giving up is fuelling trend, says Axis Bank chief

MANOJIT SAHA

Amitabh Chaudhry, MD & CEO of Axis Bank, explains why slippages to bad loans are expected to remain elevated and also discusses the strategy to increase the low-cost deposit share, in an exclusive interview. Excerpts:



We should be able to grow at 6-7 percentage points higher than the banking system

Slippages in the second quarter have stayed elevated. What was the reason?

■ We had a certain stock of stressed assets. What has happened in the economy and the fact that certain promoters are giving up saying 'we don't have enough money to fund our company', has led to a situation where overall stressed assets in the economy have grown, unexpectedly. The economy not doing well has further added to it.

As the ageing of the assets increases in a stressed book, if they are not coming out, chances are they are going to drop further.

We are trying to clarify that we are in the lending business, things will continue to come in the stressed book, but firstly, as a percentage of the overall advances, our stressed book is now coming down to historical lows. Overall stock is also coming down. In the last nine months, we have become more conservative. So, it is a conservative outlook of the stressed book.

Do you expect slippages to remain elevated?

■ We have said slippages are expected to remain elevated for a couple of quarters. We have not defined what that elevation means, we have just said they will remain elevated.

Is there any particular sector from where the slippages are coming?

■ No, it is all across. If you

look at the break-up, you will see it is more specific promoter-driven rather than a sector driven issue. We earlier used to have power and construction, roads as a big thing, but now most of them are behind us. Now, it is a promoter-driven issue.

Is the pace of resolutions through the bankruptcy process as per expectation?

■ If you look at some larger resolutions, Essar has still not happened. And now, what is happening is some of them who had won the bids are going back for further clarifications. First, reaching the stage of resolution is taking time. Then passing of the order is taking time. Then people are going back for clarification. Once every clarification is given, the execution by the winner is taking time. As a result, in many cases, I am seeing the winning bidder is losing interest – you thought a price is good enough. Now that the economy is not doing good, you are now thinking whether the bid was too high.

Axis Bank's loan growth was healthy, with domestic loans growing

Meet the designer who listens to trance, has left the 'Maharaja baggage' behind, is inspired by Art Deco and Mumbai's fisherwomen, and is ranked among the design elite

KRUTIKA BEHRAWALA

Viren Bhagat's creations can sit comfortably in the company of both modern designs and royal jewels. In 2014, the Mumbai-based jewellery designer's *jali* bangles were among several cutting-edge objects mentioned in the *Wallpaper** Design Awards list. Hailed for their use of material, the diamond bangles interpreted Mughal lattice screen motif using platinum, but with an industrial feel.

More recently, in June, three of his jewels, including a highly-architectural diamond and emerald bead brooch inspired by the Mughal flowerpot motif, sold for two to three times their estimates at Christie's Maharajas & Mughal Magnificence auction in New York. They were showcased alongside yesteryear objects such as *jighas* (turban ornaments), swords and the 'Nizam of Hyderabad necklace' – all from the (ruling family of Qatar's) Al Thani collection. "Most Indians carry the Maharaja baggage. I can relate to it, but it is also important to move forward," says Viren, 62. "My endeavour is to present jewellery in today's context by creating pieces that are modern and India-inspired at the same time."

Living by his rules

With an almost scholarly appearance (he is said to resemble his late father, Vajubhai Bhagat, an artist and lecturer at Sir JJ School of Art), the fourth-generation jeweller is fastidious – both in his work and his appearance (his crisp white shirt cuffs and collars just so). He also insists on keeping a low profile, which is one of the reasons why, outside of a small circle of high jewellery connoisseurs, he is virtually unknown. He is, however, generous with his time when it comes to sharing his passion. In the last few weeks alone, he has addressed crowds at Saffronart's biennial jewellery conference, Mapping a Legacy of Indian Jewels, and the AD Design Show.

Having carved a contemporary

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST INDIA



(Clockwise from top) an emerald and diamond brooch, a pearl and diamond earring, the flowerpot brooch, a diamond ring, and Viren Bhagat



Jewellery's quiet superstar



If I make a piece of jewellery with 40 pearls that I may have collected over 15 years, how do I quantify the value of the time put into the creation?



CHRISTIE'S

identity for Indian jewellery, the 'gem whisperer' (as he calls himself on Instagram) is regarded in the league of French luxury house Cartier and American jeweller, Joel Arthur Rosenthal (who, incidentally, is a close friend). His creations find a place in museums and private collections. But he follows his own rules: he never takes commissions, never repeats his designs, and creates only 60 pieces a year. "The passion to create so-

mething new drives me to work every day. I make jewellery to please myself," says Viren, who will be showcasing some of them next March, at TEFAF Maastricht in Netherlands, considered the foremost fair for fine art, antiques and design.

An early start

Born into a family that's been in the jewellery business for over a century, he was drawn to the craft at the young age of 11. He would observe his father and uncles interact with gemstone dealers and spend hours watching the setters and polishers at the workshop of his family's department store, Bhagat Brothers. "They taught me how to judge the colour, clarity and origin of the stones," he shares. Once the family business folded up, Viren, along with his brothers, Bharat and Rajan, opened a jewellery atelier in 1991. His sons, Varun and Jay, have also joined the business. "Sometimes, it takes six months to make a ring because of the time we spend on every detail. The younger generation doesn't have this kind of patience but, thankfully, my boys share my vision and passion," he adds.

Viren is open about the role his father played in shaping his design aesthetics, his sense of proportion and his interest in drawing. "He taught Akbar Padamsee and Tyeb Mehta, among other artists. On Sunday mornings, they'd visit him [at our house on Marine Drive] and argue about art for hours. Listening to them, I felt like picking up the pencil and realised that I could draw, too," he says. But he does not often speak about the other man who also encouraged him to embark on his journey – Italian jewellery designer, Gianni Bulgari.

While on a holiday in Europe in the late 1980s, Viren had visited the Bulgari store in Rome. "I gasped at what I saw on display. It was a defining moment in my life," he recalls. On returning to Mumbai, he sent a collection of his drawings to Bulgari by post. "Six months later, I got a reply saying he liked them and I could visit him in Europe."

Viren's hopes of working with Bulgari were dashed when the designer said he couldn't employ the young man for just a couple of years and teach him his secrets, only to have him return to India. But, as Viren later told *Vanity Fair*, Bulgari also told him, "I can see that you're talented and I'm sure that you'll be successful wherever you go." This stamp of approval, he says, "inspired me".

**Everyday inspirations**

Viren draws to scale and his inspirations range from Mughal miniatures to Art Deco, textiles, and everyday life. Peek at his Instagram, and odes to the geometry of Spain's Alhambra palace share space with Japanese signage. "On my morning run, I come across fisherwomen heading to the Sassoon Docks. It is amazing to see the way they dress, the jewellery they wear. That's inspiring, too," says the designer, who works with historic gems and a limited palette of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires, spinels and natural pearls.

Future challenges

Viren's design process begins every morning, drawing on white A5 paper with pencils that he sharpens to a point himself – "because my drawings are so precise" – while listening to trance music "to cut off all disturbances". "I pick a gemstone from the collection acquired on my travels and see if it matches the design [he once spent 10 years collecting 24 Burmese cabochon rubies for a necklace]. If not, I place the stone in front of me and create a design inspired by it." Most of the time, however, when he buys a stone, he knows what he will make with it.

At his workshop, the design dictates the cutting of gemstones. Closely supervising his craftsmen for three decades now, he has developed a strong relationship with them. "They turn my flat, one-dimensional paper designs into three-dimensional jewels. We work with a shared passion and, over the years, I've come to a level with them that there's telepathy," he says.

However, he admits there will be challenges, going ahead, "It is becoming tough to find the next generation of craftsmen. They don't wish to sit on a bench and work with their hands because of the technology available. I believe my sons will face this challenge even more in the future," he concludes.

The anatomy of HATE

SHUBHODEEP PAL

Despite the many horrors that have scarred human history, few exemplify the personification of hate as starkly as the slaughter of six million Jews by the Nazi party during World War II. In Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993), the protagonist saves about 1,200 Jewish lives from the Holocaust.

The film won seven Academy awards and further established Spielberg in the pantheon of great American directors. However, a question never stopped haunting him: why and how do humans become such despicable vessels of hate? The desire to dig deeper gnawed at him for years until he met Alex Gibney (Academy Award winner for *Taxi to the Dark Side*, 2007), and they decided to create a documentary called *Why We Hate*.

Soon, Geeta Gandhir, an accomplished documentary filmmaker with an Emmy award under her belt, received a call to join the project as a director, along with her mentor and friend, Sam Pollard. "When Spielberg, Alex Gibney and Sam Pollard call you, you don't say no," she

chuckles. "And, of course, the theme was timely; we're living in a polarised world. If we can educate people on this topic, maybe we can stop hate in its tracks."

Political undertones

Born to Indian parents who emigrated to America in the '60s, much of Gandhir's experience growing up as an immigrant informed her filmmaking, right from casual racism to being told point-blank to go back to her country.

"What's interesting is that my parents were allowed to settle here only because of the Chinese Exclusion Act which was in place until 1965," she says, adding, "It is ironic how America, historically made entirely of immigrants, treats immigrants today. The realities of white supremacy and xenophobia are there for us to see, especially with the current powers in charge."

Why We Hate takes a journalistic approach and draws on historical investigations and research in psychology, biology, and neuroscience. The six-part documentary traces the evolutionary basis of hatred and its impact on individuals and societies

In her new documentary, Geeta Gandhir draws from her experiences growing up as an immigrant to educate people about humanity's destructive emotion and how the internet fuels negative content

throughout history.

The filmmakers had help along the way in tackling such complex issues, and each episode features experts such as cognitive scientist Laurie Santos, evolutionary anthropologist Brian Hare, journalist and author Jelani Cobb, extremism expert Sasha Havlicek, international criminal lawyer Patricia Viseur Sellers, and neuroscientist Emile Bruneau.

Backed by science

But what exactly is hate? Gandhir says that it can be complex to define, but a clue can be taken from how scientists and experts talk about it. "Essentially, they begin by talking about love – not essentially in the romantic sense, but in the incredible ability of humans to cooperate, build societies, share resources and take care of each other," she says. "Hate is the antithesis of this. It is rooted in tri-

balism – refusing to share resources and committing violence of various degrees. This was a necessary survival tactic in the Stone Age, but in a global economy, we need to be more self-aware of how this affects our behaviour." Interestingly, what counts as hate is usually collectively determined by society. This comes with its own set of troubles.

"Consider slavery in America or the caste system in Hindu society," she says. "Both were normalised until people took a stand and said they weren't okay."

For Gandhir, the most interesting insight from her research was from the work of Laurie Santos about the persistence of tribalism in influencing our behaviour. "Santos talks about how we are born with a tribal filter which informs how we view the world. It forms a mechanism through which we identify with a certain group and, sometimes, without even being aware of it, we vigorously defend that group identity."

On the internet

When I ask her if we live in uniquely polarised times, she disagrees. "If you talk to our elders, they will tell you stories that will make your blood curdle: stories of slavery, rape, deliberate social exclusion of certain groups. We've come a long way from that." However, social media brings its own set of perils.

Whether it is by promoting hateful and negative content, or actively abetting genocide in countries such as Myanmar, she says the internet must be used with care and viewed with suspicion.

However, it is not all doom and gloom. Hate is not necessarily inevitable. Our inner wiring can be modified. One way to combat hate, says Gandhir, is to affiliate ourselves with as many different identities as possible. "The more groups we associate with, the less likely we are to hold staunchly to our membership of one particular group. I find young people today quite open-minded."

Why We Hate is on Discovery Channel and Discovery Channel HD

PRODUCT**Rug from rangoli**

The Ambiente, a rug atelier, has named its new collection 'Rugnoli'. The design inspiration for these hand-woven rugs are patterns of the classic, age old rangoli art. Made of wool, natural silk, viscose, Tencel, rayon, and jute, these rugs come in a variety of colours, including turquoise, silver-lilac, beige, yellow, eggplant-gold, and many more.

The Ambiente, near Huda City Metro station, Gurugram; upwards of ₹33,600

Contact us at delhimetro@thehindu.co.in

5 EVENTS WORTH YOUR WHILE**EXHIBITION****Photography**

An ongoing exhibition titled *Fight and Suffering* put together by the Museum of the Second World War in Poland and the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, recounts Poland's experience of World War II. It highlights the tragedy of war and the efforts that the Polish military made to regain the country's independence.

VENUE: Annexe Art gallery, IIC
TIME: 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

**DIWALI GIFTING****Festive special**

Cafe-o-Lait at Hilton Garden Inn has an exclusive range of premium homemade Diwali hampers for the festive season. Curated by their executive chef Manoj Rawat, the hampers contain Diwali cakes, gourmet chocolates, handmade cookies, butter cookies, masala cashewnuts, salted almonds, and more.

VENUE: Cafe-o-Lait, Baani Square, Gurugram
TIME: 11 a.m. - 11 p.m.

**FILM****Indonesian Cinema**

In collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, IHC will screen a 2016 Indonesian film, *One Sign of Symphony*. Directed by Alex Latief, this film focusses on a poor farmer's son and his struggles to overcome poverty and social conflict, and the challenges he faces to reach his dreams.

VENUE: Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre
TIME: 7 p.m.

**BAKERY****Gift hampers**

The Artful Baker has launched gift packages for this festive season. Curated by chef Ankita Sood, these hampers consist of an array of desserts and snacks like walnut brownies, banana salnut, almond and apple-berry loaves, oatmeal and cranberry, choco-chip cookies, blueberry muffins, cheese sticks, and more.

VENUE: Khan Market and Vasant Vihar outlets
TIME: 8 a.m. - 10:30 p.m.

**CONCERT****Western classical**

The Vienna Boys Choir is all set to perform on Monday evening at Kamani Auditorium. The concert will begin with pieces from the choir's historical roots, and renditions of classical favourites by Mozart, Rossini, and Schumann. This will culminate in interpretations of qawwali pieces by Amir Khusrow.

VENUE: Copernicus Marg, Mandi House
TIME: 7 p.m. - 8:15 p.m.

FILM REVIEWS

All about our feminist grandmothers

Saand Ki Aankh is a feel-good biographical film that pushes all the right emotional buttons



NAMRATA JOSHI

In the space of mainstream biographical films, *Saand Ki Aankh* (SKA) manages to achieve what *Super 30* could not. As opposed to the in-your-face, cringe-inducing righteous artifice of the life of mathematician Anand Kumar that was the latter, SKA comes across as spontaneous and easy-going in its celebration of Chandro and Prakash Tomar (Bhumi Pednekar and Taapsee Pannu respectively), the octogenarian sharpshooters from Johri village in Baghpat, who have been unwitting initiators of a unique feminist movement in the heart of patriarchy.

Yes, the bad prosthetics do irritate and irritate at the start, but slowly you begin to overlook the cakey make-up on the faces of Pednekar and Pannu and begin warming up to the place, its people, stories, struggles and, most of all, a matter-of-fact rustic sense of humour.

It is as real as it can get within the confines of the fantastical world of popular entertainment, be it the daily, dreary grind of the women in rural households, or their encounters with seemingly benign patriarchy that suddenly rears an ugly head at the slightest hint of a supposed rebellion.

In the sprawling Tomar joint family, three sisters-in-



Refreshing biopic A scene from *Saand Ki Aankh* (top); Pannu and Pednekar at promotions
*SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT AND PTI

law, perennially hiding their faces behind the *ghoonghat* (veil), have their own inventive ways of ending the night with their respective husbands. It's a weird, weird, weird, weird world where the men may not see their women's faces but keep siring child after child.

The women, however, have their own unique methods of poking at the male world and laughing from behind their veils at the government's attempts to 'emasculate' men. Dealing with patriarchy on a daily basis equips them with a unique talent – a steadiness, strength and composure –

Saand Ki Aankh

DIRECTOR: Tushar Hiranandani
CAST: Taapsee Pannu, Bhumi Pednekar, Prakash Jha, Vineet Singh

RUN TIME: 146 minutes
STORYLINE: Biographical film on the lives of arguably the oldest sharpshooters in the world – Chandro and Prakash Tomar, from Johri village in the Baghpat district of U.P.

that gets noticed by a young man Yashpal (Vineet Singh), who helps them hone it to become shooting champions and inspire other young village women too.

Director Tushar Hiranandani bats it straight and simple, strikes the right notes – emotions never spill into melodrama, and humour doesn't turn slapstick and there's a right mix of the rousing and the feel-good when it comes to the music, lyrics and dialogue. The takedown of men is gentle but sure-footed, as is the matter-of-fact display of the amount of physical labour the women are subjected to. Most of all, in the women's struggles, a helpful man remains a friend and an ally instead of becoming a saviour. The lack of virtue signalling is utterly refreshing. It's not just

the individual performances but the sum of the whole that matters.

The sorority in the Tomar household is heart-warming and Pannu and Pednekar jam perfectly. They are gutsy, inspiring and such good fun, all in equal measure. That posture of putting the hand on the waist and aiming for the bull's eye has such wonderful swag written all over it. All the male Tomars, led by Prakash Jha, do a fine job of portraying the daily chauvinism, and Vineet Singh does well in always remaining a step behind the shooter *dadis*.

The most compelling part about *Saand Ki Aankh* is not just to do with women liberating themselves but also ensuring the perpetuity of that hard-earned freedom. It's about self-realisation but also about paving the way for others and taking the first step so that their daughters and granddaughters find the going easier.

For many of us who have tread this familiar path, it's doubly inspirational to find a film that makes heroes of not just us but our mothers and grandmothers. Add to that the device of the *ghoonghat* and nail polish coming a full circle and you have an effective and affecting entertainer to light up your Diwali.

Dazed and utterly confused

Made In China suffers from an identity crisis, never knowing what it wants to focus on and achieve

NAMRATA JOSHI

Made In China is an utterly confused film. It is unsure about what it wants to focus on and achieve. It kicks off with enlightening the audience about the meaning of an aphrodisiac. Soon after that follows the murder of Chinese General Zhang who has been attending an Indo-China cultural summit in Ahmedabad. We then suddenly shift gear to the world of a failed Gujarati entrepreneur Raghu (Rajkumar Rao).

Whether it's emu eggs, roti makers or Nepali carpets, he just can't sell anything, but is suddenly sent off to China with his cousin for a random business deal. He returns to start his own aphrodisiac business with help from a sexologist Dr. Vardhi (Boman Irani).

The writing is painfully bad. Several strands in the film are picked up and left midway, unsorted and un-



Painfully bad The film's narrative has jumps; (below) the cast promotes the film *SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT AND PTI

explained. In fact there is a glaring disconnect between the film's many plot points along with random jumps in the narrative and characters that come and go at will. For instance, there's one helpful business guru in China (Paresh Rawal) and another villainous one in India (Gajraj Rao). One keeps wondering what they are doing in the larger scheme of things other than confounding the already existing confusion. The humour is anything but funny – the vital male organ being referred to as a child, for God's sake – and the emotions never reach out. All in all, *Made in China* is one big mess that even proficient performers like Rao, Irani and co. can't make much sense of.

Made in China

DIRECTOR: Mikhil Musale
STARRING: Rajkumar Rao, Boman Irani, Mouni Roy, Paresh Rawal, Gajraj Rao, Sumeet Vyas, Manoj Joshi

STORYLINE: A Gujarati entrepreneur, with a bad run of luck, finally finds success selling an aphrodisiac.

In the midst of all of this there is also a painfully self-conscious attempt at being radical. A wife smoking away while washing clothes and drinking on the sly in a prohibition state but later taking offence at her husband selling an aphrodisiac. Is this what subversion is about?

Coming quick on the heels of *Khandaani Shafakhaana*, *Made In China*, ultimately is yet another attempt to stress the fact that sex is not *ashleel* (vulgar) and that sex education is the need of the day. Now how could that have been made in China?



POOCH CAFE



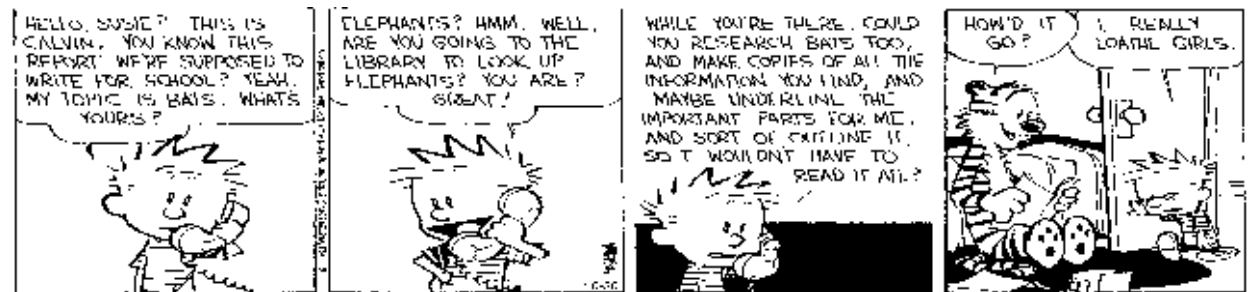
PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



TIGER



WUMO



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



HEALTH CAPSULES
by Bron Smith

HOW MUCH CAFFEINE IS CONTAINED IN THE MOST COMMON BEVERAGES?

ONE OF THE WORLD'S STRONGEST COFFEES IS DEATH WISH COFFEE AT 59 MG OF CAFFEINE PER FLUID OUNCE.

8 OZ. OF FILTERED COFFEE: 140 MG OF CAFFEINE; 8 OZ. OF INSTANT COFFEE: 100 MG; 8 OZ. OF BLACK TEA: 75 MG; 12 OZ. OF COLA: 40 MG; 1,250 ML CAN OF ENERGY DRINK: 80 MG; STARBUCKS HOT CHOCOLATE: 16 OZ.: 25 MG; MILK DARK CHOCOLATE ALMOND MILK, 8 OZ.: 4 MG; LIQUID CAFFEINE: 1 TSP.: 83 MG.

Health Capsules is not intended for use as a dietary supplement.

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13209

| | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|--|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | |
| 7 | | | | | | | 8 |
| 9 | | | | | 10 | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| 11 | 12 | | 13 | | | | |
| 14 | | | | 15 | 16 | | |
| | | | | 17 | | | |
| 18 | | 19 | | 20 | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| 21 | | 22 | | | 23 | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| 24 | | | | | | | |

© GUARDIAN NEWS AND MEDIA LTD., 2016

Across

- Peanut scale (anag) – put in concise form (11)
- For the most part (2,3,4)
- Type of bread (3)
- Dog (5)
- Rich tea, for example (7)
- Hinder (6)
- Goblin, elf or imp (6)

Down

- Largest living primate (7)
- Shafted weapon for throwing or thrusting (5)
- Tax-free savings account (3)
- Newly coined word (9)
- Famous people (11)
- Muggins (3)

3 Rectified (7)
4 Despicable – BBC, say (anag) (6)
5 Respiratory organs (5)
6 Greenish blue (9)
7 In good physical condition (8,3)
8 Timpani (11)
12 Capital letters (5,4)
16 Faint – finish military training (4,3)
17 Toil (6)
19 Shafted weapon used on horseback (5)
23 Cholera (3)

Solution No. 13208

INBLOOMDISG
MONALIBABA
BERSERKSFIM
E OF EXCLAIM
DINGO I O R O
D RETENTION
E T C A
SAFEHOUSE
HUMERIGHT
ADMIRER TOW
B I O E P I C U R E
BANDANANDE
Y G D L A G G A R D



OLIVER MEHLIS/PICTURE ALLIANCE VIA GETTY IMAGES

Stronger together: Fans gather at the Stadion An der Alten Forsterei to sing Christmas carols – a Union Berlin tradition dating back to December 2003. This has since been replicated at several Bundesliga clubs.

‘Different, Non-Conformist, Individual’: the story of Germany’s underdog, cult club

From a pocket of resistance during the East German regime to a fan-built club punching above its weight in the Bundesliga, 1.FC Union Berlin has come a long way. It faces its sternest football test this weekend – Bayern away

1.FC Union Berlin is no ordinary football club. The first East Berlin team in the German top flight, Union has a poignant past and a fanatical following that has done incredible things to keep it alive. It's a wonder that the club still exists; many of its fans can't believe even now that it will play Bayern Munich in the Bundesliga this weekend, given the hardships it has survived.



Saturday's game in Munich will train the spotlight on Union, which won promotion to the premier division for the first time in the club's history after defeating VfB Stuttgart in the relegation play-offs.

The Berlin outfit has already felled a giant this season – it stunned Borussia Dortmund 3-1 for its first Bundesliga victory in late August – but the prospects of an encore aren't bright.

Fighting chance

Although Union did its best in pre-season, stretching a little money a long way, signing 11 new players to give coach Urs Fischer a fighting chance of avoiding relegation, it doesn't exist on the same financial planet – and doesn't want to – as Bayern.

What Union does have is players with top-flight experience (Neven Subotic, Christian Gentner and Anthony Ujah) and a spirited defence that, after shipping four goals in the opening game against RB Leipzig, has

shown it can cope at this level. "Is there an easy fixture for us in the Bundesliga?" wondered coach Fischer before the Dortmund match. It's a familiar feeling for Union and its fans, who see themselves as underdogs standing their ground.

"Different, Non-Conformist, Individual" is how Union describes itself on its website – an identity that can be traced to its anti-establishment roots. Associated Press reported that the club was immensely proud of "its resistance to the East German regime, in contrast to its fiercest rival, Dynamo Berlin, which was Stasi chief Erich Mielke's club".

Dynamo won 10 straight East German titles (1979-88), but there were "allegations of match-fixing and politically influenced favours".

Union, meanwhile, became a place where the regime's critics

congregated – as Andrew Cherie, who helps run the 'Union in English' website, wrote, "Long-haired hippies in denim shorts were regulars on the terraces in the 80s as Union became a meeting point for free thinkers and dissidents... 'The wall must fall' was a popular cry when a free-kick was being taken."

Strong bond

Given those circumstances, it's no surprise that Union and its fans have forged an exceptionally strong bond, a bond that has helped the club stay afloat after Germany's unification and saved it from extinction.

In 2004, the German FA asked for a €1.5 million guarantee. Supporter and businessman Dirk Zingler answered the call, supplying a significant portion of the amount; at the same time, fans started the 'Bleed for Union' campaign, donating blood

Union's maiden Bundesliga season so far

Position: 14th (of 18)
Games: 8 | **Won:** 2 | **Drawn:** 1 | **Lost:** 5 | **Goals:** 8 | **Conceded:** 13 | **Points:** 7 | **Best win:** 3-1 vs. Dortmund | **Worst loss:** 0-4 vs. Leipzig

to raise money and supplement Zingler's contribution, which helped Union avoid bankruptcy. Zingler became club president, a position he still holds.

Fans to the rescue

In 2008, the fans again came to the rescue when the club needed to modernise its stadium, the delightfully named Stadion An der Alten Forsterei (Stadium near the Old Forester's House). According to reports, about 1,600 volunteers, many of whom had no expertise in construction work, sweated it out for an estimated 90,000 hours to rebuild the stadium and help the club save money.

Then, in 2011, Zingler told a German newspaper, "We've decided to sell our soul. To our own members."

He was speaking of a move to sell 10,000 shares or a maximum of 58% of the club to the fans to raise funds for improving the stadium's infrastructure; shareowners were to get a vote

on all major decisions affecting the stadium.

Union supporters are consumed by the idea of staying true to their values – the club hymn, sung by German punk legend Nina Hagen, has lyrics about never selling your soul – and so the decision to raise money from members, and not a corporate sponsor, resonated with the fan-base. But surviving at the top level, where football is a cut-throat business, will challenge Union's adherence to its ideals.

Reality check

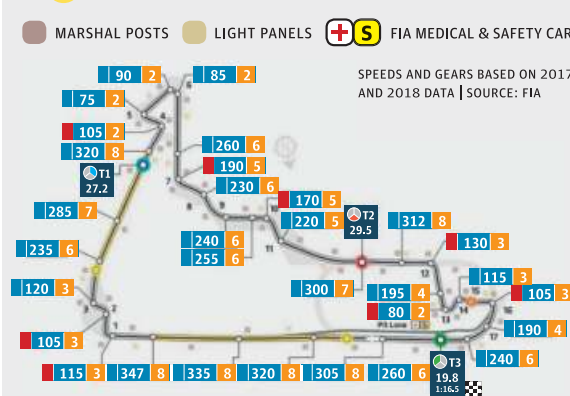
When Union signed a shirt-sponsorship deal with a Luxembourg real-estate company, for instance, rival fans and critics who found Union preachy let the club and its supporters know exactly what they thought. And when Union fans decided to greet RB Leipzig with silence at the beginning of the Berlin club's first Bundesliga game, protesting what they saw as Leipzig's corporate model, it caused many a snide remark.

Union fans are also grappling with what the club's time in the Bundesliga will mean for them. While some are ambitious and want to stay up, others are wary of the damage the demands of top-division football could cause to the club's identity. These are challenging times for Union and its supporters, but they have endured worse.

SPORTS BUREAU, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Round 18: Mexican GP

AUTODROMO HERMANOS RODRIGUEZ



NUMBER OF LAPS: 71
CIRCUIT LENGTH: 4.304KM
RACE DISTANCE: 305.584KM

RACE NOTES

- With a wide variety of speeds and corners, Mexico's layout is both challenging and interesting. As well as two very rapid straights, there's a twisty stadium section
- A third DRS Zone (not shown in the diagram above) has been added between Sectors 2 and 3. This will give drivers another opportunity to overtake
- The race is run at a higher altitude than any other, about 2,300m above sea level. So, teams have to deal with the challenges of thinner air – cars produce very little downforce
- The decrease in downforce means cars struggle for grip and slide more. This causes graining of the tyres, especially the softer compounds
- Pirelli, therefore, has gone harder with its compounds for the race this season, choosing the middle three of its five-tyre range

Sixth title in Hamilton's sights

The Briton needs to score 14 points more than teammate Bottas to win the championship in Mexico

Lewis Hamilton is closing in on a sixth world title, but a challenging weekend awaits him in Mexico.

The task in front of Hamilton is clear – he needs to score 14 points more than teammate Valtteri Bottas at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez on Sunday to clinch the drivers' world championship.

But things are seldom that straightforward. Hamilton and Bottas, the winner in Japan, will be able to race without any team considerations now that Mercedes has clinched the constructors' title. So, expect Bottas, as well as Ferrari and Red Bull, to go flat out to make Hamilton wait at least until Texas, the following weekend.

The 34-year-old Briton has also not finished in the top three at Formula One's highest altitude circuit, in Mexico, since he won in 2016.

If Mercedes struggles in the thin air, as it has for the past two years, then Ferrari and Red Bull can scent an opportunity. Red Bull's Max Verstappen is chasing an unprecedented Mexican hat-trick while Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel and Charles Leclerc have started the last five races on pole position between them.

What Hamilton needs

- A win with fastest lap and Bottas lower than third
- A win without fastest lap and Bottas lower than fourth
- Second place with fastest lap and Bottas lower than seventh
- Second place without fastest lap and Bottas eighth without fastest lap or lower
- Third place with fastest lap and Bottas lower than eighth
- Third place without fastest lap and Bottas tenth without fastest lap or lower

bastian Vettel and Charles Leclerc have started the last five races on pole position between them.

Since Mexico returned to the calendar in 2015, the winner has always come from the front row. Saturday's qualifying, therefore, will be crucial. REUTERS

GAME THEORY

Showdown in Shenzhen

The world's top eight tennis players will contest the season-ending WTA Finals from Sunday. A quick guide to the tournament, considered the fifth-most prestigious event of the year after the four Majors, and the contenders for the title:

TOURNAMENT FILE

First held: 1972
Most titles: Martina Navratilova (8)
2019 venue: Shenzhen, China
2019 surface: Indoor hard
Dates: Oct. 27-Nov. 3

Format: The players are split into two groups of four. The group stage is a round-robin league, each competitor playing the other three in the group. The top two advance to the semifinals (group winner plays the other group's runner-up). The winners of the semifinals meet in the championship match.

Groups:
RED GROUP: Ashleigh Barty, Naomi Osaka, Petra Kvitova and Belinda Bencic.
PURPLE GROUP: Karolina Pliskova, Bianca Andreescu, Simona Halep and Elina Svitolina.

THE CONTENDERS

Age: 23
2019 win-loss: 52-11 (82.5%)
Titles: 3 (French Open, Miami, Birmingham); **Runner-up:** 2 (China Open, Sydney)
Career H2H: v Pliskova 3-2 | v Osaka 2-2 | v Halep 1-3 | v Andreescu 0-0 | v Kvitova 2-4 | v Svitolina 0-5 | v Bencic 0-0
World No. 1
Best WTA Finals performance: First appearance
Key stat: Barty is second this year in % of Service Points Won (63.6%). Only Serena Williams (64.6%) has won a greater ratio of points in service games

Age: 27
2019 win-loss: 50-15 (76.9%)
Titles: 4 (Italian Open, Zhengzhou, Eastbourne, Brisbane); **Runner-up:** 1 (Miami)
Career H2H: v Barty 2-3 | v Osaka 2-2 | v Halep 3-7 | v Andreescu 0-1 | v Kvitova 1-3 | v Svitolina 5-3 | v Bencic 0-1
World No. 2
Best WTA Finals performance: Semifinals (2017, 2018)
Key stat: Pliskova leads the tour this year in aces (488) and is second in Ace % – 10.1% of her serves were aces (Serena, with 11.4%, tops the charts)

Age: 22
2019 win-loss: 39-11 (78%)
Titles: 3 (Australian Open, China Open, Pan Pacific Open); **Runner-up:** 0
Career H2H: v Barty 2-2 | v Pliskova 2-2 | v Halep 1-4 | v Andreescu 1-0 | v Kvitova 1-0 | v Svitolina 3-3 | v Bencic 1-3
World No. 3
Best WTA Finals performance: Group stage (2018)
Key stat: Osaka has a 100% record in finals this year, the best of any player who has made at least two WTA Tour title clashes

Age: 19
2019 win-loss: 48-5 (90.6%)
Titles: 3 (US Open, Indian Wells, Rogers Cup); **Runner-up:** 1 (Auckland)
Career H2H: v Barty 0-0 | v Pliskova 1-0 | v Osaka 0-1 | v Halep 0-0 | v Kvitova 0-0 | v Svitolina 1-0 | v Bencic 1-0
World No. 4
Best WTA Finals performance: First appearance
Key stat: Andreescu has the highest win % (90.6%) this year. The median ranking of her opponents was 35, the fourth-best in terms of opposition strength

Age: 28
2019 win-loss: 42-15 (73.7%)
Titles: 1 (Wimbledon); **Runner-up:** 2 (Madrid, Qatar)
Career H2H: v Barty 3-1 | v Pliskova 7-3 | v Osaka 4-1 | v Andreescu 0-0 | v Kvitova 3-1 | v Svitolina 4-4 | v Bencic 2-2
World No. 5
Best WTA Finals performance: Runner-up (2014)
Key stat: Halep is the only player in this year's WTA Finals field not to have a losing H2H against any of the other competitors. She also leads the year in % of Return Points Won (47.9%) and is in the top-5 in Break Point Conversion % (49.4%)

Age: 29
2019 win-loss: 37-13 (74%)
Titles: 2 (Sydney, Stuttgart); **Runner-up:** 2 (Australian Open, Dubai)
Career H2H: v Barty 4-2 | v Pliskova 3-1 | v Osaka 0-1 | v Halep 1-3 | v Andreescu 0-0 | v Svitolina 7-2 | v Bencic 4-1
World No. 6
Best WTA Finals performance: Champion (2011)
Key stat: Kvitova this year has won the highest % of points in service games (64.6%) when her serve has been put back in play by the returner. She also has the second-highest Service Games Won % (80%), just a fraction behind Serena (80.1%)

Age: 22
2019 win-loss: 48-20 (70.6%)
Titles: 2 (Dubai, Kremlin Cup); **Runner-up:** 1 (Mallorca)
Career H2H: v Barty 0-0 | v Pliskova 1-0 | v Osaka 3-1 | v Halep 2-2 | v Andreescu 0-1 | v Kvitova 1-4 | v Svitolina 2-1
World No. 7
Best WTA Finals performance: First appearance
Key stat: Bencic's hard-court record (74.6% win rate) this year was her best for any surface in 2019. What's more, she triumphed on the indoor hard courts at the Kremlin Cup; the WTA Finals will be played on indoor hard courts, too

Age: 25
2019 win-loss: 35-21 (62.5%)
Titles: 0; **Runner-up:** 0
Career H2H: v Barty 5-0 | v Pliskova 3-5 | v Osaka 3-3 | v Halep 4-4 | v Andreescu 0-1 | v Kvitova 2-7 | v Bencic 1-2
World No. 8
Best WTA Finals performance: Champion (2018)
Key stat: Last year's WTA Finals champion didn't make a single final this year (five semis, six quarters). But when she does reach a final, she is formidable: she is 13-2 over her career and unbeaten in the last nine title clashes

Karnataka emerges champion

Mithun's hat-trick scuttles Tamil Nadu's innings; rain curtails play, VJD method adopted

HAZARE TROPHY

ASHWIN ACHAL
BENGALURU
Karnataka claimed its fourth Vijay Hazare Trophy title with a comfortable victory over Tamil Nadu in the final at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium here on Friday.

The triumph was all the more sweet as it came in front of a sizeable home crowd. The host won by 60 runs, via the VJD method, after rain forced play to be called off 23 overs into the chase.

Well ahead

The VJD par score when the action stopped was 86 for one; Karnataka was well ahead at 146 for one.

Fine knocks from K.L. Rahul (52 n.o., 72b, 5x4) and Mayank Agarwal (69 n.o., 55b, 7x4, 3x6) ensured that the chase was always under control.

Karnataka found another star performer in fast bowler A. Mithun, who claimed a hat-trick in his five for 34 spell.

Mithun's burst brought the Tamil Nadu innings to a close at 252. In the 50th over, Mithun dismissed the dangerous Shah Rukh Khan with a low full toss hit to Manish Pandey at long-off.

Devdutt Padikkal then held on to a superb running catch at a sweeper cover to remove M. Mohammed. Mithun completed his hat-trick when last man Murugan Ashwin sliced a full delivery to cover.

It was a tame end to the visitors' innings, which mustered just 65 runs in the last 10 overs.

Tamil Nadu was going along smoothly when Abhinav Mukund (85, 110b) and B. Aparajith (66, 84b) were at the crease, the duo putting

on 124 runs for the third wicket.

Abhinav was strong off the back-foot, cutting and flicking with aplomb. Aparajith was as solid as ever.

Debutant left-arm pacer Prateek Jain broke the partnership, getting Abhinav to chop a short ball to cover. Aparajith was undone by a poor piece of running, keen on taking a double when his partner Vijay Shankar was not.

Vijay Shankar (38, 35b) and Dinesh Karthik (11, 18b) looked to finish proceedings in style, but it was not to be.

Rahul and Mayank then took centrestage. Mayank carried on from the terrific form he showed in the South Africa Tests, taking apart the bowlers with ease.

He got going with a lofted six over cover off Vijay Shankar, and stroked left-arm speedster T. Natarajan for three boundaries in the next over. Tamil Nadu simply could not stop the Mayank show.

Close call

Rahul, meanwhile, was composed and played without taking risks. He survived a scare on 33, when the third umpire ruled that Shah Rukh had not taken a catch cleanly at point.

Replays showed that Shah Rukh just about kept the ball above the ground, but the on-field umpires' soft-signal not out decision worked against the fielder.

The scores:

Tamil Nadu: Abhinav Mukund c Mayank b Prateek 85 (110b, 9x4), M. Vijay c Rahul b Mithun 0 (2b), R. Ashwin c Rahul b Koushik 8 (13b), B. Aparajith run out 66 (84b, 7x4), Vijay Shankar c Karun b Mithun 38 (35b, 2x4, 1x6), Dinesh Karthik c Rahul b Gowtham 11 (18b, 1x4), Shah-rukh Khan c Manish b Mithun 27 (23b, 1x6), Washington Sundar



In high spirits: The Karnataka team with the trophy. •G.P. SAMPATH KUMAR

c Manish b Koushik 2 (4b), M. Mohammed c Padikkal b Mithun 10 (9b, 1x4), Murugan Ashwin c Gowtham b Mithun 0 (1b), T. Natarajan (not out) 0 (0b); Extras (b-1, lb-1, w-3); 5. Total (in 49.5 overs): 252.

Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-24, 3-148, 4-178, 5-193, 6-224, 7-230, 8-252, 9-252.

Karnataka bowling: Mithun 9.5-0-34-5, Koushik 9-0-39-2, Prateek 9-0-55-1, Gowtham 10-0-48-1, Dube 6-0-47-0, Karun 6-0-27-0.

Karnataka: K.L. Rahul (not out) 52 (72b, 5x4), Devdutt Padikkal b Washington 11 (14b, 2x4), Mayank Agarwal (not out) 69 (55b, 7x4, 3x6); Extras (lb-3, w-8, nb-3): 14. Total (for one wkt. in 23 overs): 146.

Fall of wicket: 1-34.

TN bowling: Washington 6-0-51-1, R. Ashwin 2-0-11-0, Natarajan 3-0-17-0, Shankar 2-0-8-0, M. Ashwin 6-0-34-0, M. Mohammed 4-0-22-0.

Man-of-the-Match: A. Mithun.
Karnataka won by 60 runs by VJD method.

A feather in Mithun's cap

First ever hat-trick in a Hazare final



A. Mithun. •G.P. SAMPATH KUMAR

ASHWIN ACHAL

BENGALURU

Karnataka fast bowler A. Mithun recorded the first ever hat-trick in a Vijay Hazare Trophy final when he got Tamil Nadu's Murugan Ashwin to sky a catch to K. Gowtham at cover.

His five-for took him to the top of his team's wicket-taker list (20 wickets). Earlier in the day, Mithun had given Karnataka the perfect start by getting opener M. Vijay to edge an outswinger for a duck.

The pacer's fine performance set his side on the right path in the summit clash.

It has been a good start to the season for Mithun, who is now without his long-time

pace partner Vinay Kumar. With Vinay having moved to Pondicherry, Mithun has taken over the mantle of leader of the attack.

"When we go into a match, everyone knows their plans and strengths, so there's very little for me to say. If anyone needs any help, I go and talk to them. Prasad wants to play at the next level. If you have that mindset, you know what you are doing."

"Koushik is also bowling in good areas. I don't want to say much to him either," Mithun said.

On his hat-trick, Mithun said, "In the absence of (the injured) Prasad, as a senior, I had to take responsibility and do well."

Pandey lavishes praise on Padikkal

The Bengaluru crowd is always behind us, says the Karnataka captain

SPORTS REPORTER

BENGALURU

Karnataka captain Manish Pandey thanked the enthusiastic M. Chinnaswamy Stadium crowd for cheering his team to victory in the Vijay Trophy Trophy final against Tamil Nadu here on Friday.

"We were always glad to play in Bengaluru because the crowd is always behind us, right from the first ball. They're always here to back us."

"It may be small numbers, but anything beyond the 11 guys playing inside – any voice from outside – will definitely help. It's definitely an advantage," Manish said.

A great asset

Manish praised young opener Devdutt Padikkal, who made 609 runs to finish as Karnataka's highest run-scorer of the tournament.

"Devdutt is a great asset at the top of the order. The loss against Hyderabad hit him hard, because if he had batted through, we would have won the game."

"That match made him change his mindset to bat till the end and get the hun-

dreds," Manish said.

Extra responsibility

The 30-year-old has been in great form himself, scoring at average of 105. "At two-drop, I had to take extra responsibility and be there till the end."

"I'm a little sad that I didn't get to bat in the last couple of matches. I was very eager to bat, but I'm happy to sit here with the trophy," Manish said.

Tamil Nadu captain Dinesh Karthik stated that it had been an "incredible journey", considering that the team could not reach the knockout stage of the tournament in the previous two editions.

"It's been an incredible journey. At the start of the tournament, if you had said we would reach the final, I would have been very proud," Karthik said.

On Mayank Agarwal's attacking unbeaten 69, Karthik said, "An India cricketer who has done well against a top side like South Africa comes and plays at this level, he will make things look far easier than it really is."



In good nick: Mayank Agarwal carried his Test form to make an attacking unbeaten half-century. •G.P. SAMPATH KUMAR

Bumrah, Smriti win Wisden India awards



Jasprit Bumrah. •K. MURALI KUMAR



Smriti Mandhana. •G.P. SAMPATH KUMAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BENGALURU

Speedster Jasprit Bumrah and batswoman Smriti Mandhana are the two Indian names among five winners of the prestigious *Wisden India Almanack* Cricketer-of-the-Year award announced on Friday.

The other winners are Mayank Agarwal, Pakistan's Fakhar Zaman, Sri Lanka's Dimuth Karunaratne and Afghanistan's Rashid Khan.

The seventh edition of the annual cricket publication

features articles by leading cricket writers and Yuvraj Singh's recollections of the 2011 World Cup.

Smriti is the third Indian woman to win the award, after Mithali Raj and Deepthi Sharma.

Stalwarts Gundappa Viswanath and Lala Amarnath were inducted into the Wisden India Hall of Fame.

Cricket Country: *The Untold History of the First All India Team* by Prashant Kidambi was adjudged *Wisden India Book-of-the-Year*.

Ganguly bats for day/night Tests

Says skipper Kohli is also agreeable to the move

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Sourav Ganguly on Friday said that since India captain Virat Kohli favoured day-and-night Tests it would be easier to host the new avatar of the longer version of the game.

Speaking at a function organised by Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) to felicitate him, Ganguly said the impression that Kohli didn't like day-and-night Test was not correct.

"I am a big believer in day-and-night Tests. Virat Kohli is agreeable to it. The game needs to go forward," said Ganguly.

The former India captain, who was instrumental in hosting the first-ever day-and-night pink ball cricket at the Eden Gardens here in 2016 during his tenure as CAB president, said the five-day format needed support to survive.

"Nobody thought T20 cricket would be like this. I am a firm believer in day-and-night Tests. Test cricket is seriously challenged by T20 and 50-over cricket... I



Both Laxman and Azharuddin held out hope that Ganguly would do well as the BCCI chief. •DEBAJYOTI SARKAR

don't know when it will happen but I hope it happens."

While touching upon various issues, Ganguly said the conflict of interest issue needed to be "more realistic."

Ganguly stressed that he wanted the BCCI to be "credible and clean."

V.V.S. Laxman, who played for India under Ganguly's captaincy and then worked with him as a batting consultant at CAB, advised the BCCI chief to upgrade the National Cricket Academy (NCA).

"Recently I saw the most-depleted South African side. That's because their domestic structure is not strong.

Indian cricket is flourishing because our domestic structure is doing well. I want to know how NCA can be a centre of excellence so that we can have future champions?"

Mohammed Azharuddin, who was Ganguly's first captain in the Indian side and the current Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) president, expected the BCCI president to excel.

"I want Sourav, the BCCI president, to achieve more than what he has achieved as a player and a captain," said Azharuddin, while thanking people of West Bengal for their support to him all the while.

Southee to lead New Zealand

Hip injury forces Williamson out of England T20 series

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WELLINGTON

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson will miss the upcoming Twenty20 series against England after a recurring hip injury flared up, team officials said on Friday.

Paceman Tim Southee will lead the team in Williamson's absence, with the batsman hoping to return for a two-Test series in late November.

Coach Gary Stead said it was the same injury that affected Williamson during the Test series against Ban-

gladesh in March.

Stead said fast bowler Lockie Ferguson would play the first three fixtures of the five-match series and then be replaced by Trent Boult.

The series begins on Friday, November 1, in Christchurch.

The squad: Tim Southee (Capt.), Trent Boult, Colin de Grandhomme, Lockie Ferguson, Martin Gupthil, Scott Kugeleijn, Daryl Mitchell, Colin Munro, Jimmy Neesham, Mitchell Santner, Tim Seifert, Ish Sodhi, Ross Taylor and Blair Tuckner.



Tim Southee. •AFP

ATK thrashes Hyderabad FC

Returns to winning ways with a 5-0 win over the debutant

ISL

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA

KOLKATA

ATK returned to winning ways in style blanking debutant Hyderabad FC 5-0 in its first home outing of ISL-6 here at the Salt Lake Stadium on Friday.

David Williams found the target twice in the first half while Roy Krishna struck once as the host led 3-0 at the break. Second-half substitute Edu Garcia scored twice towards the end to secure the biggest win for ATK in the tournament.

ATK's last big win was 4-0 against FC Goa at the same venue in 2015.

ATK exploited the chinks in the Hyderabad defence to fashion the win. The host found the lead in the 24th minute when Williams reached a Javi Hernandez through-pass and slotted it past the opposition goalkeeper Kamaljit Singh.

Swift raids
With persistent drizzle, ATK used the conditions well to launch swift raids that unsettled a struggling Hyderabad defence.

ATK doubled the lead within minutes when Williams' former A-League



On target: David Williams scored twice in the first half for ATK. •RAJEEV BHATT

team Wellington Phoenix attack partner Roy Krishna found the back of the net. Williams set Krishna up with a square pass from the left flank and the Fijian striker fired an angular right-footer to send the ball to the inside end of the far post.

Just when Hyderabad was hoping to end its opening half suffering, ATK struck the third in the 44th minute through Williams, who found his second goal on an assist from Jayesh Rane.

The second half saw the host becoming a shade de-

fensive in a bid to preserve the gains of the opening session. However, the ATK attack came alive with the introduction of Spanish midfielder Edu Garcia, who replaced Javi Hernandez, in the 70th minute.

Garcia found the fourth goal for ATK in the 88th minute on a cross from winger Prabir Das and made it 5-0 four minutes into the injury time.

The result: ATK 5 (David Williams 24, 44, Roy Krishna 27, Edu Garcia 88, 90+4) bt Hyderabad FC 0.

Saina, Sindhu out; Rankireddy & Shetty in semifinals



One step closer: Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, right, and Chirag Shetty beat Kim Astrup and Anders Rasmussen to reach the last-four stage. •AFP

FRENCH OPEN

IANS

PARIS

Saina Nehwal's campaign in the French Open came to an end on Friday after she lost in the quarterfinals to South Korean teenager An Se Young in a hard-fought contest that lasted 49 minutes. Also making the exit was P.V. Sindhu, who fought hard but was not able to get past World No.1 Tai Tzu Ying. The Chinese Taipei girl won 21-16, 24-26, 21-17.

However, India's men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty reached the semifinals with a 21-13, 22-20 win over World No. 8 Kim Astrup and

Anders Rasmussen.

This is the second consecutive time that the pair has reached the semifinals of the Super 750 tournament.

Saina was chasing for much of the match, but she had game point at 20-19 in the first game. Young, however, took three consecutive points to win it 22-20.

The two went toe-to-toe in the second game with the Korean holding a slender 11-10 lead. After that, Young raced to 18-13.

Saina responded by taking four consecutive points to close the gap to one point again. It took two match points, but in the end, the 17-year-old prevailed over the former World No. 1.

Shtembuliak, Polina crowned champs

Indians remain medal-less; Karthikeyan, Aakanksha finish fifth

WORLD JR. CHESS

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Indians finished medal-less after the overnight leaders, Armenia's Evgeny Shtembuliak and Russia's Polina Shuvalova, performed to expectations to claim their maiden World junior (under-20) chess crowns here on Friday. On a day when Armenian boys and Russian girls won two medals, the champions took contrasting routes on their home-run. Polina, playing black, drew in just 30 moves against China's Song Yuxin and won the girls' title with a tally of 9.5 points from 11 rounds.

Seventh seed Shtembuliak took his time to overpower Russian prodigy Volodar

Murzin in 63 moves and raised his tally to an unsurpassable nine points.

Later, Armenia's Shant Sargsyan stopped Spain's Miguel Santos Ruiz in 95 moves in the sixth hour to take the silver. Sargsyan's compatriot Aram Hakobyan (8) claimed the silver following a 64-move draw with third seed Aravindh Chithambaram.

Iran's Mobina Alinasab (9) fought for 67 moves to beat Kazakhstan's Bibisara Assaubayeva for the girls' silver. The bronze went to Polina's compatriot Eliaveta Solozhenkina who prevailed in an 83-move marathon over teammate Dinara Dordzhieva.

After three years, India again finished without a medal. Second seed M. Karthi-



Champions: Evgeny Shtembuliak and Polina Shuvalova who won the World junior chess titles on Friday. • RAKESH RAO

keyan signed off with a win and took the fifth spot, like he did in 2016.

Among the girls, Aakanksha Hagawane was the best finisher. She won the last

round to take fifth place.

R. Pragganandhaa was held by K.S. Raghunandan while Luke Mendonca and Harsha Bharathakoti battled for 86 moves for a draw. N.

Priyanka lost a possible medal following a 53-move defeat to Ukraine's Marria Berdnyk. The round ended with a 218-move draw between Australia's Temur Kuybokarov and China's Wang Shixu. The six-and-a-half-hour deadlock ended when the Chief Arbiter intervened and declared the game a draw pointing out that 75 moves had been completed after the last pawn-capture.

Important results: Open: Evgeny Shtembuliak (Ukr, 9) bt Volodar Murzin (Rus, 7); Miguel Santos Ruiz (Esp, 7.5) lost to Shant Sargsyan (Arm, 8.5); Aravindh Chithambaram (7.5) drew with Aram Hakobyan (8); Temur Kuybokarov (Aus, 7) drew with Wang Shixu (Chn, 7.5); M. Karthikeyan (7.5) bt Igor Janik (Pol, 6.5); K.S. Raghunandan (7) drew with R. Pragganandhaa

(7); Leon Mendonca (7) drew with Harsha Bharathakoti (7); Arjun Kalyan (6.5) lost to Mihnea Costachi (Rou, 7.5).

Medallists: 1. Evgeny Shtembuliak (Ukr), 2. Shant Sargsyan (Arm), 3. Aram Hakobyan (Arm). **Leading Indians:** 5. M. Karthikeyan, 7. Aravindh Chithambaram, 9. R. Pragganandhaa.

Girls: Song Yuxin (Chn, 7.5) drew with Polina Shuvalova (Rus, 9.5); Mobina Alinasab (IRI, 9) bt Bibisara Assaubayeva (Kaz, 7); Mariia Berdnyk (Ukr, 8) bt N. Priyanka (7); Elizaveta Solozhenkina (Rus, 8) bt Dinara Dordzhieva (Rus, 7); Aakanksha Hagawane (8) bt Gabriela Antova (Bul, 7).

Medallists: 1. Polina Shuvalova (Rus), 2. Mobina Alinasab (IRI), 3. Elizaveta Solozhenkina (Rus). **Leading Indians:** 5. Aakanksha, 11. Priyanka, 13. Sakshi Chitlange.

Manav triumphs

EAST ZONE TT

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Manav Thakkar proved that he was exceptionally talented when he defeated his Petroleum teammate Harmeet Desai 4-1 to win the men's singles title in the UTT National-ranking (East Zone) table tennis championship here on Friday.

In the women's section, West Bengal's Krittiwika Sinha Roy upset top seed Sutirtha Mukherjee of Haryana 4-1 to clinch her maiden women's singles crown.

Manav gained a 2-0 lead before dropping the next to Harmeet (2-1). The latter appeared poised for a comeback leading 6-0 in the fourth game, but Manav refused to give up and narrowed the gap to 5-6.

With Harmeet a point away (10-9) from levelling

the game score, Manav won a nice rally to force a deuce and then won the next two points to go up 3-1. In the fifth game Harmeet, Harmeet made repeated errors to allow Manav take the title with relative ease.

The results:
Men: Final: Manav Thakkar (PSPB) bt Harmeet Desai (PSPB) 12-10, 11-4, 9-11, 12-10, 11-7. **Semifinals:** Manav bt Soumyajit Ghosh (Har) 11-5, 9-11, 11-8, 11-6, 9-11, 7-11, 11-4, Harmeet bt Sushmit Sriram (TN) 5-11, 9-11, 11-2, 11-5, 7-11, 11-7, 11-5.

Women: Final: Krittiwika Sinha Roy (WB) bt Sutirtha Mukherjee (Har) 11-7, 11-5, 5-11, 11-6, 11-8. **Semifinals:** Sutirtha bt Ahyika Mukherjee (RBI) 11-6, 8-11, 11-9, 11-6, 11-3, Krittiwika bt Prapti Sen (WB) 12-10, 11-9, 9-11, 14-12, 11-13, 11-8.

Mixed doubles (final): Manav Thakkar & Archana Kamath (PSPB) bt Akash Pal & Poyman-tee Baishya (WB) 6-11, 11-7, 11-7, 12-10.

It's Achievers vs Panther in the final

POLO

NEW DELHI: Daniel Otamendi scored three goals in guiding Rajnigandha Achievers to a 4-2 victory over 61st Cavalry in the semifinals of the Bhopal Pataudi Cup 8-goal polo tournament at the Army Equestrian Centre, Delhi Cantonment, on Friday.

In the final, to be played at the Jaipur Polo ground on Saturday at 3 p.m., Rajnigandha Achievers will play Jindal Panther which beat Sona Polo 6-5.

The results (semifinals): Rajnigandha Achievers 4 (Daniel Otamendi 3, Padmanabh Singh) bt 61st Cavalry 2 (Ravi Rathore 2).

Jindal Panther 6 (Simran Shergill 3, Venkatesh Jindal 2, Naveen Jindal) bt Sona Polo 5 (Abhimanyu Pathak 3, Raghav Rao 2).

Purav-Rameez lose

SPORTS BUREAU
HAMBURG

Purav Raja and Rameez Junaid of Australia lost 6-4, 7-6 (4) to Viktor Troicki and Nenad Zimonjic in the doubles quarterfinals of the €46,600 Challenger tennis here.

The quarterfinal entry was worth 15 ATP points and €550.

The results: €46,600 Challenger, Hamburg: Doubles: Quarterfinals: Viktor Troicki & Nenad Zimonjic (Srb) bt Rameez Junaid (Aus) & Purav Raja 6-4, 7-6(4).

Sports scribe dead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Veteran sports journalist and author K.R. Wadhwaney died at his home here on Thursday night. Wadhwaney, 90, was suffering from age-related ailments.

He is survived by wife and two children.

\$5,000 ITF men, Cancun: Pre-quarterfinals: Juan Sebastian Gomez (Col) bt Taha Kapadia 6-4, 6-1; **First round:** Cristian Rodriguez (Col) bt Siddhant Banthia 6-3, 6-4; Taha bt Fletcher Scott (US) 6-4, 6-1. **Doubles: Pre-quarterfinals:** Rikhardt Bierman (RSA) & David Volfscen (Can) w/o Kiranpal Pannu (NZ) & Siddhant Banthia.

\$60,000 ITF women, Saguenay, Canada: Doubles: Quarterfinals: Anna Morgina (Rus) & Holly Verner (US) bt Peang-tarn Plipuech (Tha) & Rutuja Bhosale 6-3, 3-0 (retd).

Wadhwaney began his career in Lucknow before moving to New Delhi in the 1960s. He remained active as a sports journalist for almost 50 years. After working in top organisations, Wadhwaney went on to become the Sports Editor of the *Indian Express*.

Ullas, Apoorva to lead Indian challenge

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India's top ultra runners, Bengaluru's Ullas Narayana and Delhi's Apoorva Chaudhary will lead the country's challenge in the IAU 24-hour World Championship in Albi, France, over this weekend.

Ullas qualified for the World Championship by covering a mind-boggling 250.371 kms during the 24-hour Stadium Run a couple of months back.

Among the women, Delhi's Apoorva covered 176.8kms to become India's top candidate.

The nine runners – five men and four women – have been selected by the Athletics Federation of India, and are being sponsored by IDBI Federal Life Insurance and NEB Sports.

Riya Bhatia – stepping up a level

Thanks coach Koon and his team for strengthening her

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

Lagos in Nigeria offers a special platform for Indian women's tennis for a launch to the next level.

In 2004, Sania Mirza, yet to be 18 then, won back-to-back titles in the \$25,000 ITF events, and won a doubles title from two finals, over a fortnight.

Two-time National champion Riya Bhatia stepped it up to win the title in Lagos last week, after having reached a semifinals the previous week.

Back training

"I was happy to win the tournament. I was trying to play my best," said Riya, who went straight back to the training base at the Impact Tennis Academy in Thailand, from Nigeria.

The tall and strongly-built Riya has a good game, but



Riya Bhatia with the trophy she won in Lagos recently. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

has not been able to render justice to it for long, as she was not able to channelise her strength with a cool mind.

She revealed her growing

mental strength by saving four match-points to beat compatriot Rutuja Bhosale in the semifinals.

"I didn't really focus on the score at that time. Was just focusing on one point at a time. The way we are trained at the academy, we never really think about the score. We focus on how to play the points," said Riya.

Grateful to Stephen Koon and his team of coaches, Riya observed that she was having a "better idea" of her game, and what she needs to work on.

"Each practice session has more intensity and purpose. Also, I feel I am in a better state of mind. You should be tough physically and mentally to prepare for the matches. It takes a long time of working hard to get results and these coaches – Steve, Skinny and Carlo – know when to be hard and

when to be easy," she said.

With five ITF \$25,000 tournaments lined up at home, Riya knows that she will get her chances.

"The goal to is stay fit, avoid injuries and keep competing. I have got to know my game better, and would like to work on rectifying errors so as to be ready for higher-level tournaments," she said.

Other pursuits

Riya, who is with Indian Oil, knows the importance of keeping her mind fresh by enjoying things other than tennis.

"I like reading books, watching shows on Netflix and listening to music. When I am back home, I really like spending time with my family. We watch movies together, go to yoga classes, swimming sessions and such stuff," she said.