

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

ECONOMY: A CRISIS OF CREDIBILITY
BY PRATAP BHANU MEHTA
PAGE 14

Rajasthan HC quashes case against Pehlu Khan, sons

HAMZA KHAN
JAIPUR, OCTOBER 30

THE RAJASTHAN High Court on Wednesday quashed a case of illegal transportation of cattle for slaughter against Pehlu Khan, a dairy farmer who was beaten to death by a mob of gau rakshaks in April 2017, his two sons, and the owner of the pick-up truck in which they were travelling.

"A bench of Justice Pankaj Bhandari quashed the FIR and the chargesheet against Pehlu Khan, his two sons (Arif and Irshad), as well as the owner of the pick-up (Khan Mohammad)," said advocate Kapil Gupta, who was representing the three.

"The FIR was registered against them under the Rajasthan Bovine Animal (Prohibition of Slaughter and Regulation of Temporary Migration or Export) Act, 1995. After investigation, police submitted the chargesheet against Arif, Irshad and Khan Mohammad. Police said they had found evidence against Pehlu Khan too but since he had died, the chargesheet did not name him," Gupta said.

"We prayed to the court to quash the FIR and the chargesheet on the ground that there is no evidence that

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WAS BEATEN TO DEATH BY A MOB IN APRIL 2017

CZECH REPUBLIC

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WhatsApp confirms: Israeli spyware was used to snoop on Indian journalists, activists

SEEMA CHISHTI
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

FACEBOOK-OWNED platform WhatsApp, in a startling revelation, has said journalists and human rights activists in India have been targets of surveillance by operators using Israeli spyware Pegasus.

The disclosure follows a lawsuit filed Tuesday in a US federal court in San Francisco in which WhatsApp alleged that the Israeli

NSO Group targeted some 1,400 WhatsApp users with Pegasus.

While WhatsApp declined to reveal the identities and "exact number" of those targeted for surveillance in India, its US-based Director (Communications) Carl Woog told *The Indian Express* that WhatsApp was aware of those targeted and had contacted each one of them.

"Indian journalists and human rights activists have been the target of surveillance and while I cannot reveal their



Carl Woog, WhatsApp Director. US Army photo

identities and the exact number, I can say that it is not an insignificant number," Woog said.

It is learnt that at least two dozen academics, lawyers, Dalit activists and journalists in India were contacted and alerted by WhatsApp that their phones had been under state-of-the-art surveillance for a two-week period until May 2019.

In the lawsuit against the NSO Group and QCyber Technologies, WhatsApp alleged that the companies violated US and California

laws as well as WhatsApp's terms of service which prohibit this type of abuse. It claimed that smartphones were penetrated through missed calls alone.

"We believe this attack targeted at least 100 members of civil society which is an unmistakable pattern of abuse. This number may grow higher as more victims come forward," it said.

The NSO Group, in a statement, said: "In the strongest



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh on Tuesday. PTI

SILENT ON INDO-PAK TALKS

Delhi and Riyadh underline: Reject all interference in internal affairs

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

IN A marked departure from the one they issued in February this year, the joint statement by New Delhi and Riyadh Tuesday made no mention on the resumption of dialogue between India and Pakistan.

In the joint statement issued Tuesday after the bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the two sides reiterated their "categorical rejection of all forms of interference in the internal affairs of countries", and the need for the international community to fulfil its responsibilities towards "preventing any attacks on the sovereignty of States".

While New Delhi views this as an oblique reference to Pakistan meddling in Kashmir, Saudis interpret this as Iran's

interference in their affairs.

The February joint statement, issued after Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's visit to India, had a full paragraph on India-Pakistan relations: "The two sides stressed the importance of regional stability and good neighbouring relations. His Royal Highness appreciated consistent efforts made by Prime Minister Modi since May 2014 including Prime Minister's personal initiatives to have friendly relations with Pakistan. In this context, both sides agreed on the need for creation of conditions necessary for resumption of the comprehensive dialogue between India and Pakistan."

Tuesday's joint statement was silent on India-Pakistan ties or a dialogue. And unlike February, when the joint statement said that the Prime Minister and His Royal Highness "condemned in the strongest

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PDP'S BEIG WHO MET NSA: AGREEMENT ON AN AGENDA CAN LEAD TO NEW PLATFORM OR REVIVE OLD ONE

J&K becomes UT today amid attempts to create space for political alternative in Valley

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 30

A NEW political alternative being catalyzed by the Centre is starting to take shape in Kashmir with some senior leaders such as PDP patron and former Deputy Chief Minister Muzaffar Hussain Beig and several young aspiring politicians ready to look beyond the abrogation of Article 370, and willing to start afresh a dialogue with the people and engage with New Delhi.

The first signs were visible when a group comprising three prominent politicians, some businessmen and activists met an unofficial delegation of Members of European Parliament (MEPs) at a lunch hosted by National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval in New Delhi Monday.

It is early days, but the Centre hopes this will restart conversations and slowly fill the political void created following the arrest of almost all notable politicians and prominent workers of mainstream parties in the Valley including the BJP's closest ally People's Conference. The Centre said these arrests were necessary in the wake of the August 5 decision to do away with the special status accorded to Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcate the state into two Union Territories on October 31.

Besides Beig, those who made it to the NSA's lunch

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EXPLAINED PAGE 13



A soldier consoles migrant labourers in Kulgam. Shuaib Masoodi

RELATED REPORTS, PAGE 8

15th finance panel may grant special award to J&K

PVAIDYANATHAN IYER
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

WITH ORDINARY financial relations between the Centre and the state of Jammu and Kashmir being completely transformed from Thursday, the Fifteenth Finance Commission is awaiting a reference from the President of India so that an award could be made for the new Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

"Some special dispensation for the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir is likely. This will be in the letter and spirit of the August 5 decision taken by the government," said a government source who did not wish to be named.

As a state, the size of Jammu and Kashmir Budget for 2019-20 stands at Rs 99,819.89 crore. So far, J&K, like all other states, used to receive a share in the devolution of taxes collected by the central government.

The Centre transfers 42 per cent of the total taxes it collects to states as per the recommendations of the Fourteenth Finance Commission. Among states, Jammu and Kashmir's share was 1.854 per cent of total taxes devolved. The award of the Fourteenth Finance Commission is for a five-year period ending March 31, 2020.

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'One after another, the bodies fell... I don't know how I am alive'

ATRI MITRA & ADIL AKHZER
MURSHIDABAD, KULGAM, OCTOBER 30

WHEN THE burst of gunfire ended in Kulgam on Tuesday, Jahiruddin (25) was left for dead. But he lived to tell the story of his survival to his wife back home in Sagardighi, in Murshidabad.

Jahiruddin, who married Paramita Bibi about two months ago, had left for Kashmir to work in the apple orchards and paddy

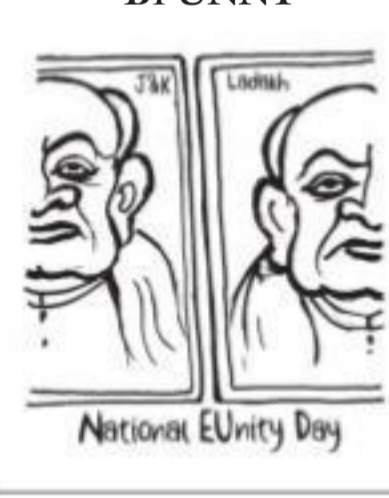
fields during the ongoing harvest season (October-December). But he, along with his fellow villagers, came in the crosshairs of militants on Tuesday — the sixth attack in a string of incidents targeting non-residents in South Kashmir after the Centre's decision to scrap J&K's special status under Article 370.

Jahiruddin was among the six labourers from West Bengal who were led out of their rented accommodation by militants in Kulgam district, and

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BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



As Delhi gasped for air, Punjab saw 3,105 farm fires in one day

MAN AMAN SINGH CHHINA
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 30

FARM FIRES in Punjab peaked a day after Diwali, October 28, with 3,105 instances of paddy crop residue burning being reported from across the state in a single day. That and the fallout of firecrackers in Delhi has taken the air quality index (AQI) in the national capital to 'severe' levels — on Wednesday, it stood at 419.

The worsening air quality sparked a war of words between Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his Punjab counterpart Captain Amarinder Singh.

At a press conference

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



NASA's Fire Information for Resource Management System highlights farm fires in Punjab, Haryana

MORE REPORTS PAGES 4, 27

EXPLAINED Pointing to the neighbours

THE EFFECT of farm fires on pollution in the National Capital Region has taken a political colour, with the Delhi Chief Minister saying the governments in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh aren't doing enough to address the problem. Whether his appeals to neighbours have an impact remains to be seen.

Everyone should accept Ayodhya verdict with an open mind, says RSS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

DAYS AFTER Prime Minister Narendra Modi reminded the country how the "government, political parties, social organisations, civil society, representatives of all sects" prevented attempts to create fissures in 2010 following the Allahabad High Court ruling on the Ayodhya title suits, the RSS Wednesday said "everyone should accept" the Supreme Court verdict in the matter with an "open mind".

A Constitution Bench, after hearing appeals against the

Allahabad High Court ruling on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid title suits, reserved its judgment which is expected before Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi retires on November 17.

The RSS, whose affiliates including the VHP spearheaded a campaign for a Ram temple in Ayodhya leading to the destruction of the Babri Masjid at the disputed site in 1992, also said that it is "everyone's responsibility that the atmosphere in the country should remain cordial" after the Supreme Court rules on the matter.

The RSS, in fact, is discussing

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WORLD



BREXIT: JOHNSON WINS HOUSE NOD FOR POLLS

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MAY DROP TIPU SULTAN CHAPTER FROM SCHOOL BOOKS: BSY PAGE 9

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

SEEMA CHISHTI
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

A DAY after he was appointed the next Chief Justice of India, Justice Sharad Arvind Bobde, the most senior judge in the Supreme Court after CJI Ranjan Gogoi who retires on November 17, spoke to *The Indian Express* on his priorities, ideas and the road ahead.

What is your Idea of Justice?

The common notion is that justice must be in accordance with law. But there is an element in justice called equity. Equity is

different. Equity is something you consider where does truth lie, what is the hardship that will be caused to litigants, what is the larger goal that will be achieved. So for instance, the law is that if by setting aside the impugned order, you will restore an order which is illegal, then you don't set it aside. Balance. So people normally mix up equity and justice.

There have been many different phases in the life of the Supreme Court since 1950... the dark phase of the Emergency, then the activism-phase of the 1990s. How do you see the role of

Supreme Court in a democracy?

The most important role is upholding the rule of law. And this is something which I even heard as the most important thing at a conference in Istanbul where many nations, which did not have a system like ours, but suffered a lot because of political upheaval. They said the most important thing a Constitutional court should do is uphold the rule of law. I think this is a universally recognised goal.

In 2019, what is the role of the Supreme Court in India?

Well, it can't be different

'Stop short of making rapid changes in areas where (court) does not have adequate knowledge... Justice Venkatchaliah told me... the slope of a drain should not be made steep suddenly because then the water will flow away and leave the rubbish behind'



Justice Sharad Arvind Bobde tries out his new camera at his residence in New Delhi on Wednesday. Tashi Tobgyal

from what I said about the rule of law. So the Court has to uphold the rule of law. Stop short of making rapid changes in areas where it does not have adequate knowledge, where it cannot foresee the consequences. Justice (M N) Venkatchaliah told me something very interesting in a conversation. He said the slope of a drain should not be made steep suddenly because then the water will flow away and leave the rubbish behind.

Other than clearing pendency, what will be your topmost priority when you assume office on November 18?

It might sound very blasé or very pedantic, but I think the only raison d'être for the judicial system is justice. All other steps are intended to achieve that. And priorities change. But I do want to use technology judiciously, to make life in the court rooms easier for all concerned.

Liberty, Equality and Fraternity: which is the one India needs more of today?

There is a lot of mix-up in terminology. For example, liberty is mixed up with licence/license. Equality is mixed up with pulling down people, fraternity is used

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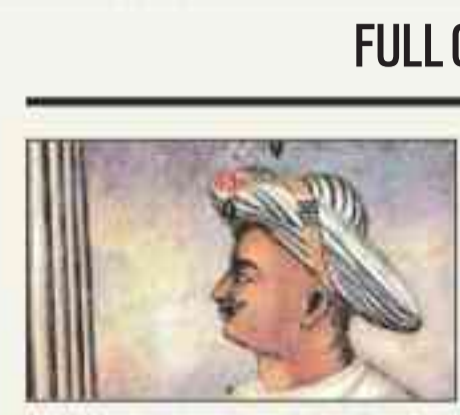
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HOW REAL KASHMIR FC IS PUTTING THE RIGHT FOOT FORWARD The football club from Kashmir is surprising everyone with their dream run and enthralling fans in the process.



VIDEO OF THE DAY DO'S AND DON'TS DURING PREGNANCY Dr Pratibha Singhal talks about all three trimesters



FULL COVERAGE TIPU SULTAN'S PLACE IN HISTORY "Removal" of Tipu from textbooks will alter the history of modern India

EXPRESS AUDIO Could most of Mumbai be under the sea by 2050? NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY In today's episode of the 3 Things podcast, we talk about a new study that states that rising sea levels could affect 3 times as many people by 2050

FROM PAGE ONE

Sena, BJP unwilling to give the home, urban development, revenue and finance departments. However, BJP sources said that if the Sena makes it a prestige issue, BJP may yield one of the three crucial portfolios — revenue, agriculture or irrigation.

"The BJP and Sena will form the government. The process of dialogue is underway. Everything will be resolved soon," Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said, after being re-elected as leader of the BJP legislature party on Wednesday.

BJP president Amit Shah, who is likely to arrive in Mumbai next week, is expected to meet Thackeray. "We have categorically conveyed to the Sena that 50:50 power sharing would be honoured through crucial portfolios. And it should not be weighed in terms of the CM's post or an equal number of berths," said a senior BJP leader who did not want to be named.

The BJP, according to sources, is not ruling out conceding 13-15 ministerial posts to the Sena. This will leave the BJP with 27-29 posts. BJP mediators said Sena leaders have assured that the party will set aside its demand for the CM's post, if the BJP "gives them crucial portfolios honourably".

"Shiv Sena also realises that it cannot put pressure beyond a point. After all, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has a Sena-BJP coalition. Despite its 82 seats, the BJP has given full power to the Sena, which has just 84 seats. The BJP can pull the plug any time," said a senior BJP leader.

In the 288-member Maharashtra Assembly, the BJP has won 105 seats while the Sena has won 56.

'...the bodies fell' sprayed with bullets. Five of them — Mursaleen Sheikh, Qamaruddin Sheikh, Rafiq Sheikh, Nizamuddin Sheikh and Rafique-ul-Sheikh, all from Sagardighi — died, and Jahiruddin was left for dead. On Wednesday morning, he spoke to his wife and mother — from SMHS Hospital in Srinagar — and narrated the hours of dread that began around 8 pm on Tuesday. Paramita said Jahiruddin had suffered "bullet injuries on both his legs and in the right lung".

"I don't know how he is now. He said he was in a lot of pain and couldn't move," she said. Speaking to The Indian Express, Jahiruddin said: "We were inside our room when a gunman came and asked all of us to come downstairs. Three more gunmen were waiting outside. We were taken to a nearby area and asked to stand in a line. Then they started firing at us. One after another, bodies started falling on ground. I don't know how I am alive".

"Accidentally, I was at the bottom of the pile of bodies. Only my leg was exposed," he told his wife. The five who fell on top of him were killed.

Besides Jahiruddin and the five victims, at least three others from the area are also working in Kulgam. They were away at the time of the attack.

Nader Sarkar, whose brother Sader Sarkar was among those who were away, said he spent a sleepless night after coming to know about the attack. "We were in tension the whole night. In the morning, we spoke to Sader. We advised him to return to the village as early as possible. We can relax only when Sader returns home," he said.

J&K new UT

include former minister Altaf Bukhari and Congress general secretary and former lawmaker Usman Majeed. They said they were there in their individual capacity, giving weight to the belief that a new political alternative is coming up. Two second-rung Congress leaders Feroq Andrabi and Channi Singh too met the European delegation in Srinagar.

"It is too early to say," Beig, who played an important role in bridging an alliance between PDP and BJP in 2015, told The Indian Express. "First, you should have some agreement on some agenda, then only you can form some political platform — either a new one will come up or an old one could be revived," he said.

"We will talk to political leaders, to civil society. We will keep our point of view before them," Beig said. "Then we will tell Government of India, not with belligerence — nothing will come out of belligerence — I believe we have to gently tell them we want statehood in future, not today or tomorrow, in the foreseeable future."

A former Parliamentarian,

Beig also said he was willing to talk to Bukhari, a prominent businessman who joined politics in 2014 and rose to become an important minister in the PDP-BJP coalition. Bukhari is one of the few mainstream leaders who had not been detained after August 5. A close aide of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, he was thrown out of the PDP by Mehbooba Mufti for his "anti-party" activities.

Congress's Usman Majeed is a former counter-insurgent who became a politician — once a part of the infamous Ikhwan in the Valley. In fact, the party has distanced itself from his decision to attend the NSA's lunch. "We have issued him a show-cause notice and asked him to explain his position. Show-cause notices have also been served on Andrabi and Channi Singh who met the MEPs in Srinagar," Congress state president Ghulam Ahmad Mir told The Indian Express.

The mainstream political parties see the meeting of the Kashmiri leaders with Doval as an attempt to install a new political formation in the Valley. "The Centre has been unambiguously saying that they want to replace the existing leadership in the Valley. Monday's meeting seems a step in that direction. New Delhi wants to foist another leader on us," said another senior Congress leader who did not wish to be named.

Apart from politicians, several businessmen and journalists including Sandeep Chattoo and Shamim Meraj, co-owners of the Real Kashmir Football Club, and Ayaz Gani, publisher and editor of Srinagar-based English daily Rising Kashmir, were also present at the lunch.

The government is also banking on the emergence of a new crop of political leaders from panchayats and municipal bodies. Touseef Raina, a young activist and aspiring politician from Baramulla who contested the municipal polls last year but lost, said: "If they (any new political alternative) have a good vision, a better understanding, ways to get Kashmir out of this mess, we would love to be part of such a party."

According to Raina, the political instability (in Kashmir) is because of the mainstream and the Hurriyat. "The aim of the mainstream politicians was to grab power, they believed in power politics but our politics would be pro-people. Though I am not part of any party or group, there are like-minded people with me who want to be part of the system," he said.

Mehraj Khurshid Malik, a south Kashmir resident and a computer engineer who unsuccessfully contested the parliamentary polls, is one of these young men being encouraged by the establishment. "There are lots of people, who think there is no other alternative than to build a new political front," he said.

Malik who claims to be putting together a group of over 1,000 activists said people have tried to ignore politics out of anger and vengeance. "We need to change that trend and the only way to change the trend is a new leadership. And before the elite again catch up with something, it is better that we come up with our own set of ideas, vision," he said.

Finance panel

According to sources in the government, as a Union Territory, Jammu and Kashmir will henceforth not be eligible for grant-in-aid and proceeds from taxes. As a state, it is estimated to receive Rs 1,25,000 crore from the Centre during the five-year award period — 2015-16 to 2019-20 — of the Fourteenth Finance Commission.

The President of India will make a reference to the Fifteenth Finance Commission to include the Union Territory of Jammu

'Reject all interference in internal affairs'

terms, the recent terrorist attack on Indian security forces on 14 February, 2019 in Pulwama in Jammu & Kashmir", there was no reference to the Pulwama attack. The joint statement said the "Indian side condemned the terrorist acts against civilian installations in the Kingdom". This was a reference to the drone attacks on Saudi oil fields. The joint statement said both sides expressed their rejection of all terrorist

acts and stressed the need to "prevent access to weapons including missiles and drones to commit terrorist acts against other countries". The February statement too called upon "all States to deny access to weapons including missiles and drones to commit terrorist acts against other countries". This time, on terrorism, it said the two sides stressed that "the extremism and terrorism threaten all nations and soci-

eties. They rejected any attempt to link this universal phenomenon to any particular race, religion or culture." In a new formulation, both sides called for "closer cooperation in the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Center", and also agreed on strengthening cooperation in combating terrorist operations, exchange of information, capacity building and strengthening of cooperation in combating transnational

crimes, within the framework of the existing bilateral security cooperation. The February statement on terrorism was stronger and more robust. At that time, both sides called upon "all countries to renounce the use of terrorism as an instrument of State policy". New Delhi had underlined this as a reference to Pakistan's military establishment. This time, that line is missing from the joint statement.

'Israeli spyware was used to snoop on Indian journalists'

possible terms, we dispute today's allegations and will vigorously fight them. Our technology is not designed or licensed for use against human rights activists and journalists." After doubts about this technology were first raised in May, the NSO Group said it put in place a 'Human Rights Policy' on September 19 which "further embeds human rights protections throughout our business and governance systems".

The NSO Group claims Pegasus has been sold only to government agencies. "We license our product only to vetted and legitimate government agencies," it said. Emails, phone calls and text messages to Home Secretary A K Bhalla and Electronics and Information Technology Secretary AP Sawhney for comments went unanswered. In September 2018, Canada-

based cyber security group Citizen Lab said: "We found suspected NSO Pegasus infections associated with 33 of the 36 Pegasus operators we identified in 45 countries" including India. The 2018 report goes on to point to an India link active from June

2017 to September 2018. "We identified five operators that we believe are focusing on Asia. One operator, Ganges, used a politically themed domain." Citizen Lab was approached by Arab human rights activists who suspected they were under surveillance. Incidentally, the NSO Group terminated its agreement with Saudi Arabia following the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi and emergence of links suggesting its spyware played a role in the tracking of Khashoggi before he was killed in his country's consulate in Istanbul.

THE PEGASUS METHOD TO MONITOR a target, a Pegasus operator must convince a target to click on a specially crafted 'exploit link' which allows the operator to penetrate security features on the phone and installs Pegasus without the user's knowledge or permission. Once the phone is exploited and Pegasus installed, it begins contacting the operator's command and control servers to receive and execute operator commands, and send back the target's private data, including passwords, contact lists, calendar events, text messages, and live voice calls from popular mobile messaging apps. The operator can even turn on the phone's camera and microphone to capture activity in the phone's vicinity. In the latest vulnerability, the subject of the lawsuit, clicking the 'exploit link' may also not be required and a missed video call on WhatsApp will have enabled opening up the phone, without a response from the target at all.

Sources at WhatsApp said while messages going to and from on their platform are encrypted and secure, the problem starts when a malware compromises the device itself, making it very vulnerable to breach of privacy, often endangering freedoms and sometimes lives.

case dragged on for two-and-a-half years under the BJP government, even though there was no reason to file a case against us. But the court's decision to quash it has now made us hopeful about our father's case, that he too will get justice soon."

In August, an Alwar court acquitted all the six accused in the lynching case. Earlier this month, the Rajasthan government filed an appeal in the High Court against the acquittal. The state government has set up a special investigation team (SIT) to probe and identify lapses and irregularities in the investigation.

Justice Bobde

in the sectarian sense, but as a nation I think all three are indispensable, they support each other and one cannot thrive without the other two. So, you cannot choose one of the three.

Supreme Court has expanded freedoms in the past few years. Your thoughts on the road ahead? Can we expect deepening of these freedoms, freedom of speech, economic issues, social justice?

Freedom of speech became a very important issue and does become a very important issue when there are too many regulations on activity. But liberating an individual from a certain rule can have an overall impact of loss of peace in the whole society, thus loss of freedom of the people at large. According to me, it is always that the freedom some people claim, that they can say anything about anybody, and justify it as their opinion without any basis and maliciously. I don't think that can be justified because the law has always been this. Freedom of speech is subject to the law of defamation, the law of contempt of court and there is nothing more beautifully expressed than the saying that your right to swing your arm ends where my nose begins. I think that is the thing.

Do you miss being an advocate? Are you jealous of lawyers when you see them now? Do you miss your past life?

(Laughs) No, no. I made this conscious decision to be a judge because I am a fourth generation lawyer and I have only seen lawyers in my life. I was the only black sheep who moved towards the judiciary in that sense, and I took a conscious decision as I found being at the Bar repetitive in its rewards. I felt I should answer the call.

On matters related to Kashmir, has the Supreme Court done enough?

I would rather not talk about it. Those matters are sub-judice.

You are hearing the Ayodhya title suit, as monumental a case and as intensely heard as perhaps the so-called 'Basic Structure' case was. How do you feel about being on that Bench?

I feel privileged to be hearing this. It has been an opportunity of a lifetime.

Do you feel embarrassed by the way the government has been treating the decisions of the Collegium in some cases?

Actually, it may not be a very popular opinion, but I have not seen the government not processing something for the sake of it. They get back with their views and we have to consider it again.

So it doesn't bother you?

No. Most of the time our view and the government's view coincides. It is only at certain times that the press writes about it, so it appears as a... Justice Venkatchaliah, again, said in his speech: a little bit of tension is good.

and Kashmir in its Terms of Reference and make an award for it. Sources said the Commission may visit the two new Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh before finalising its report.

The Finance Commission is scheduled to submit its report to the government before November-end.

Farm fire

Wednesday, Kejriwal said: "I request BJP to talk to their governments in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh and the Congress to speak to their government in Punjab to help out farmers and give them facilities to ensure they don't burn crop stubble. The people of Delhi are doing what they can to control pollution... I have spoken to several people, including farmers, over the past few days. The farmers are ready. They don't want to burn crop residue."

Singh hit back, calling the Delhi CM a "shameless liar" and termed Aam Aadmi Party's proposed protest outside the Punjab Bhawan in Delhi on Thursday as "an obvious political stunt with an eye on the upcoming Assembly elections in the national capital".

In a statement, Singh said, "The air pollution in the national capital is directly related to the rampant construction activity, widespread industrialisation and total mismanagement of the city traffic... By blaming others for his own lapses, Kejriwal is showing signs of his poor leadership."

"If stubble burning is the primary cause of Delhi's air pollution, as Kejriwal claims it to be, then how can he explain the atrociously high AQI in the national capital even during the months of December and January," he asked.

Data from the Punjab Remote Sensing Centre shows that between September 23 and October 28, 15,132 active fire events pertaining to stubble burning were recorded in the state. A total of 24,593 incidents

were reported during the same period in 2016; 16,533 in 2017; and 12,762 in 2018.

In Haryana, over 3,700 farm fires were recorded between September 23 and October 27 this year.

The total number of farm fires in Punjab so far this year stands at 26,830, and is expected to rise in the coming days. In 2017 and 2018, a total of 59,820 and 61,497 instances of crop burning were recorded.

On Wednesday, the share of pollutants in Delhi from farm fires in Punjab and Haryana touched the peak of the season at 35%. Delhi's AQI first touched the 'severe' air quality in real-time this year on Monday evening, a day after Diwali, when PM2.5 levels crossed the 250 micrograms per cubic meter air (µg/m3) limit prescribed by the CPCB.

The central government's System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (SAFAR) said the spike on Wednesday is "purely attributed" to pollution from stubble burning.

Speaking to The Indian Express, agriculture expert Devinder Sharma said the crisis cannot be resolved until farmers are provided with an economic stimulus package. He said farmers are ready to dispose of the paddy stubble without resorting to lighting fires if they are given Rs 3,000 per acre as labour cost. The Punjab government has, meanwhile, announced several measures to sensitise farmers. Nodal officers have been deputed in nearly 8,000 paddy growing villages across the state to spread awareness and keep an eye on post-harvest operations.

Governments in Punjab and Haryana have been providing 50-80% subsidy to farmers and cooperative societies to buy modern farm equipment for in-situ management of paddy straw, apart from running an awareness campaign against stubble burning. The governments have also been issuing challans against farmers found burning crop

residue based on the size of the land they own, under a 2015 order of the National Green Tribunal.

RSS

the matter at a two-day meeting of its senior functionaries that began in Delhi Wednesday. For this, the RSS has deferred the October 30-November 5 Haridwar meeting of its pracharaks who are on deputation with over three dozen affiliate organisations.

In a Twitter post, Arun Kumar, Akhil Bharatiya Prachar Pramukh of the RSS, said: "The Supreme Court is expected to deliver its verdict on Shri Ramjanamboomi case in next few days. Whatever be the verdict, everyone should accept it with open mind. After the judgment, it is everyone's responsibility that the atmosphere in the country should remain cordial. This issue is also being discussed in the meeting."

Sources said BJP president Amit Shah, working president J P Nadda and general secretary B L Santhosh were also present at the Delhi meeting.

The RSS, sources said, did not want pracharaks to leave their stations for the meeting in Haridwar in view of the awaited Supreme Court ruling. "They need to remain at their respective stations, maintain vigil and ensure peace and harmony following the verdict," sources said.

The RSS appeal for acceptance of the verdict with an "open mind" is significant given that it mounted pressure on the government last year, demanding a legislation for the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Pehlu Khan case

cows were being transported for the purpose of slaughter. And that these (two) cows were milch cows and the (two) calves were just one and two months old. Therefore, it cannot be said that these cows were being transported for the purpose of slaugh-

tering, which was the basic offence made out against them," Gupta said.

He said the court was convinced by their argument and quashed the FIR and the chargesheet.

On April 1, 2017, Pehlu Khan and the others were returning from a cattle fair on the outskirts of Jaipur when they were attacked by gau rakshaks in Behror, Alwar. Khan (55) succumbed to his injuries two days later.

An FIR (No. 253/2017) filed the same day at Behror police station, on a complaint by Sub Inspector Damodar Singh Gurjar, had accused Pehlu Khan and his sons of violating The Rajasthan Bovine Animal Act. They were charged under Section 5 (prohibition of export of bovine animal for the purpose of slaughter and regulation of temporary migration or export for other purposes), Section 8 (penalty for violation of Section 5) and Section 9 (punishment for causing hurt to a bovine animal/ abets the commission of such an offence) of the Act.

A chargesheet was later filed before the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate in Behror, embarrassing the incumbent Ashok Gehlot government.

Gurjar, in his complaint, had said that Khan and his sons could not provide a transport permit or a receipt, "hence it was found that the cows were being transported from Rajasthan to Haryana for slaughter."

Khan had bought the cattle from a fair organised by the Jaipur Municipal Corporation, which had provided receipts. Yuvraj Meena, Revenue Inspector, JMC, who was then in charge of the fair, had confirmed the authenticity of the receipts.

"We produced the JMC receipts before the HC, though they cannot be cited as a permit," said Gupta.

Speaking to The Indian Express, Pehlu Khan's son, Irshad, said, "We are very happy and satisfied that the FIR has been quashed, although it has come after two-and-a-half years. The

CYBER CELL PROBE ON

DCP loses over Rs 2 lakh to card cloning

MAHENDER SINGH
MANRAL

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

A DEPUTY Commissioner of Police (DCP) has lodged a complaint alleging that he has lost Rs 2.06 lakh after unidentified persons fraudulently made transactions from his debit card by cloning it. Police said no arrest has been made so far, and added that the accused made a transaction amounting to Rs 30,000 even after the DCP got his card blocked.

S K Tewari is currently posted as DCP (Supreme Court). "While at the Supreme Court complex on October 12, between 11.47 am and 12.30 pm, Tewari said he received multiple transaction messages on his phone, resulting in a total of Rs 1.76 lakh being deducted from his salary account. He saw the messages on reaching home at Vasant Kunj. He told police that some of the transactions were made at an online Apple store," a senior officer said.

Tewari approached the Cyber

Police said Rs 30,000 was withdrawn even after the card was blocked by the complainant

Crime cell, and was told to file a complaint. "The complainant blocked his card. However, hours later, he discovered the accused made another transaction worth Rs 30,000," an officer said. An FIR was registered under IPC sections 420 (cheating) and 419 (cheating by impersonation). Police said Cyber Crime teams are visiting all the ATMs and shopping places Tewari had visited in the last one month to look at CCTV footage and ascertain if the card was cloned there.

In August, five men were arrested for duping L-G Anil Bajjal's private secretary of Rs 1 lakh. The same gang had also cheated a JCP, who was duped when he furnished details such as his name, card number and CVV number to them.

Son falls asleep on the wheel, woman dead as car hits tree

New Delhi: A 54-year-old woman died after the car she was in rammed into a tree in South West Delhi's Delhi Cantonment area late Tuesday night. Police said the vehicle, a white Renault Kwid, was allegedly being driven by the woman's 24-year-old son, who fell asleep on the wheel.

The victim was with her son and her 78-year-old mother in the car. "The three were returning home to Dwarka from East Delhi's Pandav Nagar after celebrating Bhai Dooj with relatives,"

said DCP (South West) Devender Arya.

A case has been registered at Delhi Cantt police station. "The victims were rushed to a hospital where the woman was declared dead on arrival, while the other two are undergoing treatment," said police.

In the FIR, the man admitted "he fell asleep briefly while driving". Police said he works at an MNC and told them he "was tired after a long day but was still driving". **ENS**

HC cautions Delhi govt over Farishte scheme misuse

PRITAMPAL SINGH

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

THE DELHI High Court Wednesday pulled up administration of hospitals managed by the Delhi government, their staff and doctors for not giving a "damn" about their job, and observed "the attitude must go out."

The court was hearing a PIL by a school teacher from Karawal Nagar who, through advocate Prashant Manchanda, highlighted the "crumbling infrastruc-

ture and lack of medical facilities" in Delhi government hospitals, based on an inspection carried out at 35 institutions.

"These are government hospitals, for which they have worked hard to get this job. Later they do not give a damn," a bench of Justice G S Sistani and Justice Anup Jairam Bhambhani said, adding that "if they (doctors and other staff) do not fall in line, conduct an enquiry, throw them out".

"Because of this attitude, patients and their family members have to suffer. Often it is seen that

the people concerned are not on their seat and the patient needs to wait," the bench observed.

It also cautioned the Delhi government over the misuse of its scheme, Farishte Dilli Ke, a new initiative aimed at felicitating citizens who take accident victims to hospitals, and said, "where you are giving facilities, you should ensure that it is not misused". The court said if 10 people are benefiting from the scheme, there are over 40 who may misuse it.

The bench observed that the scheme can be misused through

Delhi govt's additional standing counsel said he will take up the issue with higher authorities to ensure 'no such schemes are misused'

touts. "The common citizen will not be able to avail the scheme. The Delhi government needs to take strict action against such misuse," it said, adding that the

Delhi government's intention is good, but it should not be that if a person falls in bathroom, he is admitted to a hospital as a road accident victim. It said the poor easily fall prey to touts, who promise they will take care of everything as long as a person gives his consent.

The Delhi government's additional standing counsel, Sanjoy Ghose, submitted that he will take up the issue with the higher authority to ensure "no such schemes are being misused and the government takes a serious

view on such misuse".

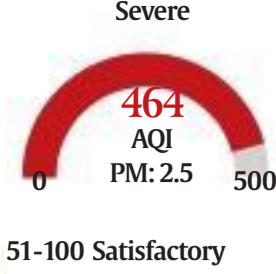
The bench added that in government hospitals, "there is no culture of punctuality" and the administration needs to put their house in order. "Attendance should be made mandatory for staff to ensure they are on their seat," the bench said, adding that hospitals should maintain hygiene and keep their equipment functional.

It also directed that the hospital staff be trained to sensitise them about dealing with patients and their families.

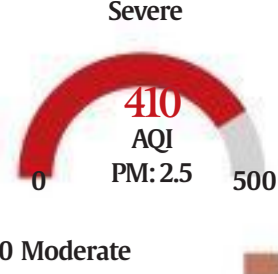


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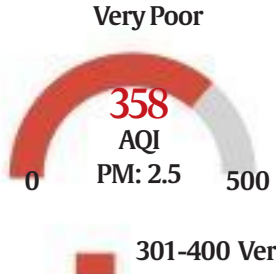
ANANDVIHAR Severe



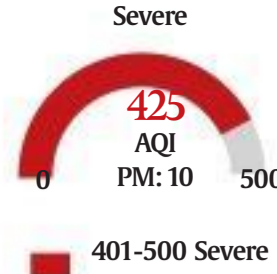
SIRIFORT Severe



SHADIPUR Very Poor



DWARKA-SECTOR 8 Severe



BRIEFLY

Man fakes abduction, arrested

Noida: A 52-year-old man was arrested for allegedly faking his own abduction in Greater Noida Wednesday. The man allegedly wanted to implicate a nagar panchayat chairman over a financial deal gone wrong, police said.

Man shot dead after fight

New Delhi: A 43-year-old man was shot dead, allegedly by one of his acquaintances after an altercation in Rohini. Jitender, an AC mechanic, was killed Tuesday and one of the suspects identified as Vijay (50), a property dealer, has been arrested, police said, adding that his three other accomplices have also been identified.

Under debt, bus driver tries robbing depot

New Delhi: Under financial debt, a bus driver Wednesday allegedly attempted to rob a cashier at Delhi Transport Corporation's Sri Niwas Puri Depot, where he had worked earlier, police said. He was overpowered by staff, who came to the aid of the cashier after hearing a gunshot. **ENS**

Rs 1,000 'seed money' for govt school students

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

Delhi government schools will roll out the 'field project' under the entrepreneurship curriculum over the next two months, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said Wednesday. Under the programme, the government will give seed money of Rs 1,000 to each child in classes XI and XII to develop a business idea or social intervention.

"Using this seed money, they shall try either to earn profit or increase social impact, as they have the confidence to do some entrepreneurial activities. Within the next two months, this project will be completely executed," Sisodia said.

The students, either individuals or groups, will be required to prepare a budget and plan to execute their projects.

"Students will execute the project outside school hours and execute it around school or in their communities. A maximum six-week timeline for the field project implementation has been issued which ends on 30 December 2019," a statement issued by the government said.

Teachers, along with students, will also be trained to ensure safety of students and meaningful participation.

"The detailed guideline is for teachers, students, team leads and parents. They will be oriented before students start working on their project. The guideline is aimed to help students learn to take responsibility of their own safety...," the statement said.

Rs 30 crore has been allotted to fund the ideas of 3 lakh students.

"Sometimes people think what will children do with Rs 1,000 that the government gives? What can they do? How do they do it?... If parents come to know about this path-breaking project, they will discuss it with their children. The involvement of the parents is very important," Sisodia said.

AIR QUALITY GOES FROM BAD TO WORSE

The choke's on Delhi



A tanker sprays water on the road in Anand Vihar to keep a check on dust pollution. *Praveen Khanna*

Authorities take stock, outdoor activities curbed in schools

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

AS AIR quality plunged to 'severe' category in Delhi Wednesday, pollution control authorities recommended extending ban on construction activities and shutting down coal-based and non-PNG industries in Delhi-NCR till November 2.

Meanwhile, in a circular, the Directorate of Education stated: "The present air quality condition in Delhi is a cause of concern for all... Outdoor activities and exposure in polluted atmosphere could have long-term detrimental effects on health of children". Therefore, parents may be requested to adopt preventive approach to safeguard their child's health, including using masks... All the heads of schools under DoE shall also ensure that no outdoor activities are organised till severe pollution condition persists."

Hot mix plants, stone crushers and construction activities such as earthwork, which have the potential to generate dust, are at present banned between 6 pm



The AQI has crossed the 400 mark

and 6 am till October 30. This could be extended from 6 pm to 10 am till November 2.

It was also recommended that authorities in Punjab and Haryana take measures to control crop residue burning in farms, which have increased in Punjab this year as compared to the last.

The recommendations were made Wednesday in a meeting of a Central Pollution Control Board-led task force on the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)—a series of measures aimed at controlling air pollution in Delhi-NCR.

CPCB member secretary Dr Prashant Gargava, who chaired the meeting, said, "The thing to note is that this Diwali we have been able to avoid an emergency situation in terms of air pollution that we had witnessed in last three years." The task force — comprising CPCB member secretary, NCR pollution control boards and medical experts — also recommended that coal-based industries, with exception of power plants, be shut till November 2 in NCR towns.

In Delhi, industries that have not yet shifted to use of piped natural gas are recommended to be shut till November 2, officials said, adding that frequency of mechanised sweeping and sprinkling of water to control dust emissions are to be increased.

A decision on the implementation of these recommendations will be taken by the Supreme Court-appointed EPCA. The CPCB Wednesday also summoned agencies, including the NCR municipal corporations, PWD and the DDA, and asked them to resolve all pending pollution complaints.

Construction work, crackers make Ghaziabad most polluted in NCR

AMIL BHATNAGAR
NOIDA, OCTOBER 30

GHAZIABAD'S AIR quality index (AQI) continued to remain in the 'severe' category Wednesday and stood at 478 at 4 pm, making it the most polluted city in NCR, according to data provided by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The AQI averaged around 459 Tuesday, with PM2.5 being the prominent pollutant. As per the report shared by the weather department, change in wind velocity in the coming two days is expected to disperse pollutants and dust particles.

"One of the major reasons for Ghaziabad having the worst index is construction happening in the city. One of the stations that measures air quality is situated

close to Delhi-Saharanpur highway, and records a large amount of pollution due to vehicular movement. The bursting of fire-crackers made it worse since dust particles have settled in the region. Once wind velocity picks up, the particles will be displaced," said Ankit Singh, assistant environmental engineer, UP Pollution Control Board.

According to officials, 25 tankers, including 15 sewage jetting machines, have been deployed by the Nagar Nigam to spray water in several parts of the city. The Ghaziabad Development Authority has deputed 19 more tankers for the purpose. Officials have been asked to share live locations and pictures of spots where water has been sprayed to maintain a record of places covered.

The UP Pollution Board recently put together a team of 28 engineers to report on polluting activities being carried out in the city, such as waste burning, crackers, fire, etc. The information is passed on to an integrated WhatsApp group that has officials from several government departments. A pollution board official flags the activity and the administration initiates action.

"Local factors contribute in several ways. Recently, there was a fire in a factory which was picked up by our monitoring systems. Such cases also impact the average AQI," said Singh.

Noida comes second to Ghaziabad in Delhi-NCR in terms of peak pollution, with its AQI averaging 445 for the last two days.

'Laser show next yr too, masks to be given soon'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

DELHI CHIEF Minister Arvind Kejriwal Wednesday said that Delhi is making all possible efforts to reduce pollution, but is choking because of pollutants from neighbouring states.

"Everyone can see how polluted the air is since yesterday. Delhi is choking because of the stubble-burning in Haryana and UP. I want to request the BJP to pressure its governments in both the states to provide facilities to farmers to stop them from burning stubble," the CM said.

The CM also said that another laser show, along the lines of the one held in Delhi for four days, will be organised at a larger scale next year. "We hope that next year, people will be excited about Diwali because of the laser show event. We are confident that 'Dilli Ki Diwali' will leave a mark amongst all the celebrations all over the world. As compared to previous years, fewer crackers were burst this year," he said.

The government will also start distribution of masks to school students on Friday. "We are procuring 50 lakh masks... we will distribute masks to every household through private and government school students. Every student will be given a packet with two masks each."



The CM at Wednesday's press conference. *Prem Nath Pandey*

City doctors warn: Don't self-medicate or follow last year's prescriptions

ASTHA SAXENA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

THE RISING levels of pollution over the last few years has made people switch to self-medication, according to doctors in the city. As per the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the air quality index (AQI) was recorded at 419, under the 'severe' category, at 4 pm Wednesday.

"People are opting for self-medication and that is troubling. Almost everyone has a nebuliser. Many people are using medicines out of last year's prescrip-

tion, which is wrong. People should not opt for self-medication... Easy availability of medicines and nebulisers is the reason behind the disturbing graph," said Dr Arvind Kumar, chairman, chest surgery, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital.

Air quality in the capital post-Diwali this year has remained in the 'very poor' category. According to the National Air Quality Index maintained by the CPCB, among the areas with the worst Air Quality Index (AQI) at 11 am in Delhi was Anand Vihar, with an AQI of 362. Last year, the worst AQI recorded in the capital was 642. In 2017, the AQI was

367. "The perceived reduction in levels is not the aim. Comparing the levels with the previous year is not the right way to measure the severity of the pollution levels. The pollution levels are still above the normal range. Many patients are coming in with severe symptoms of worsening asthma, sneezing, irritation in the throat, burning sensation in eyes, etc. The pollution is causing symptoms in both unhealthy and healthy people," said Dr Karan Madan, associate professor, department of pulmonology, AIIMS.

"Most patients coming to us are young. This trend is worrisome as younger generation is expected to be the most productive lot of the society. There are observable trends that more people are developing asthma-like symptoms in the last few years," added Dr Madan.

According to the Lancet Commission on Pollution and Health, contaminated water, air and soil are responsible for about nine million early deaths, which is about 16% of global deaths. About 92% of these early deaths due to environmental toxicity occur in the low- and middle-income countries, which include India.

In Delhi Police's new HQ, a throwback to the late '60s

SOMYA LAKHANI
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

IN 1968-69, an informal bidding war was on between the Delhi Police and the Border Security Force over a piece of land in Central Delhi's Jai Singh Marg, where both wanted to set up their headquarters. None got the land at the time, and in 1975, the Delhi Police headquarters moved to the Indraprastha Marg building, recalled Nikhil Kumar (78), who was Commissioner of Police from 1995-97.

Almost five decades after the bidding war, the Delhi Police is moving to a swanky building on the same Jai Singh Marg today. On the occasion of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's birth anniversary, Union Home Minister Amit Shah will inaugurate the new building, which is still under-construction, in the presence of L-G Anil Bajjal and Police Commissioner Amulya Patnaik. Spread across eight acres, it will be a 17-storey building with CCTVs, 12 residential flats for senior officers and conference halls.

For now, only four storeys are ready, said a police officer. "Construction work began in 2016 and in another three-four months, all departments will move to the new headquarters," said DCP (PRO) Mandeep Singh Randhawa. From November 1, Patnaik, the Special CPs and the Joint CPs will be working from the new building.

DCP (Land and Building) MA Rizvi said the new headquarters has space for over 800 vehicles. For the last 15 days, at least 40 SHOs and six Additional DCPs have been working out of the new building.

Vipin Kental, director, DFS,



Part of the new building at Jai Singh Marg is still under construction. *Praveen Khanna*

said the building will get a fire NOC when it is ready. "Right now, it's under-construction and not under our purview."

It was in December 1975 that the Delhi Police headquarters moved to Indraprastha Marg from Kashmir Gate. "The Indraprastha Marg building is not owned by Delhi Police and is shared with the PWD. We are in need of more space and that's why the shift," said a police officer.

Before the towering PHQ on Indraprastha Marg, which got a giant Mahatma Gandhi mural in 2014, the police headquarters was located at Kashmir Gate, near the single-screen Ritz Cinema. The first-ever headquarters — a single-storey building — was set up at that address in 1912.

During his tenure, Kumar worked from both Kashmere Gate and Indraprastha building offices. "I was Assistant Inspector General-2 in the '70s when the then DIG PS Bhandar got the new building allotted. I was in-charge of chalking out offices for various departments and spent many days at the new building before the move," he said.

Kumar said the Delhi Police manual was written at the Kashmere Gate office. "The building was called central police office at the time and not the Delhi Police headquarters as the police here came under the Punjab police. Space was an issue at the first-ever office, so a control room was set up on Alipur Road. In the late '60s, it was proposed that a new headquarters be built at Jai Singh Marg," he said.

Kumar said that models were built with the help of Delhi government architects and shown to the then-LG and Home Secretary. "BSF was headed by Khushro Faramurz Rustamji, who was a legend, and he too was eyeing the Jai Singh Marg plot where we wanted the headquarters... none of us got it but over 50 years later, the Delhi Police will finally have the address we had envisioned then. What joy," said Kumar.



A POLL PRAYER

Union Ministers Hardeep Puri and Harsh Vardhan, Delhi BJP president Manoj Tiwari, MPs Vijay Goel, Parvash Verma, Hans Raj Hans, Ramesh Bidhuri, and BJP leader Vijender Gupta at a Bhumi Pujan ahead of the assembly polls, at the party office Wednesday. *Prem Nath Pandey*

UP police in line of fire for illegally picking up inter-faith couple

PRITAMPAL SINGH
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

A DELHI High Court-appointed committee has rapped the Uttar Pradesh police for illegally picking up an inter-faith couple from the JNU campus in July 2018 and manhandling the husband while in custody, saying the woman was entitled to exercise her choice and freedom.

It is learnt that the committee members, in their report, said the woman, being an adult, was within her rights to marry who she wants: "She was living there of her own free will after marriage. She was entitled to exercise her choice and freedom, least affected by matters of faith."

According to a source, the report also said the woman was not illegally detained by her husband as alleged by her family.

UP Police had visited the campus after the 25-year-old woman's family lodged a complaint in Ghaziabad's Loni, alleging that she had been kidnapped by the 27-year-old man on June 28, 2018. The source said the couple were taken to Loni police station on July 3, 2018, against their "wishes and consent".

The committee, comprising retired Delhi High Court judge Justice SP Garg and former IPS officer Kanwaljeet Deol, was set up as the HC bench was not satisfied with the conduct of police personnel of Loni and Vasant Kunj (North) police stations in handling the case against the man.

The man, during hearing of

One side of Hero Honda flyover to stay shut till Dec 1

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GURGAON, OCTOBER 30

ONE SIDE of the Hero Honda Flyover in Gurgaon will remain closed till December 1, with officials carrying out "deck slab restoration" work along the stretch.

In an order issued regarding this, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Himanshu Garg stated, "One side of the main carriageway of Hero Honda Flyover on NH-48 in the direction Jaipur-Delhi shall remain closed for traffic from 31.10.2019 to 01.12.2019."

In the order, Garg added that the SHO, Traffic Police Station (1st), Gurgaon, will have the responsibility of implementing the order under the supervision of ACP Traffic Highway.

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), meanwhile, will erect barriers to execute the planned traffic diversion plan.

Elaborating on the diversions, traffic police officers said commuters travelling from Jaipur to Delhi will have to use the service lane and go straight, while those travelling towards Subhash Chowk will have to use the service lane and take a right under the flyover towards the junction. Traffic coming from Umang Bhardwaj Chowk towards Jaipur, meanwhile, will have to use the underpass and then take a U-turn after the structure, followed by a left towards Jaipur.

Those coming from Delhi and travelling towards Umang Bhardwaj Chowk, on the other hand, will have to take a left towards Subhash Chowk, followed by a U-turn to reach the junction through the underpass. Commuters coming from Subhash Chowk and going towards Delhi will have to take a left towards Jaipur followed by a U-turn under the flyover, said officials.

"Our personnel will be at the spot to facilitate and guide commuters," said Subhash Boken, PRO of Gurgaon Police.

Constructed at a cost of Rs 197 crore, the flyover had been opened to commuters in July 2017. Since then, however, the structural damage has come to light often, with concrete chunks falling off several times.

Day 2: CM hops on the bus, 2.48 lakh women travel free

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

A TOTAL of 2.48 lakh women travelled for free on Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) buses till 4 pm Wednesday — an increase of 28,000 as compared to the previous day, when the free bus rides for women scheme was rolled out by the Delhi government. In cluster buses, 72,105 women travelled for free Wednesday. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal also took the bus to assess the scheme.

Tuesday had seen 2.2 lakh pink tickets — meant exclusively for women travellers — being distributed on DTC buses. The pink tickets are meant to keep track of the number of rides as the government has to reimburse Rs 10 per ticket to the two agencies.

While 33% of the passengers who took DTC buses Wednesday were women, this number was only 20% in cluster buses. In all, 30.3% of those who travelled in buses till 4 pm, were women.

Damyanti Singh, a resident of Badarpur who works near Pragati Maidan, said she was not

sure if the scheme was available on cluster buses as well.

"I read about the scheme and since I take the bus to work every day, I was quite happy. But when I reached the bus stop near my house, a conductor said the scheme was available only in green buses (DTC). I had no idea that wasn't the case," she said.

According to available data, the highest number of pink tickets (37%) were issued in North Delhi. The lowest was in East Delhi at 31%.

Government officials said that there hadn't been a significant jump in the number of people using buses in the first two days of the scheme being rolled out.

Data shared by the government said that before the implementation of the scheme, the percentage of women taking buses was 33%.

"If we look at the overall percentage of women who took buses on day one, it comes to just a little over 34%. Till 4 pm today, this figure was not breached. By next week, we will start seeing the real impact... Some women are not aware of the scheme yet," said a transport department official.



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal interacts with women passengers on a DTC bus, Wednesday. ANI

JNU postpones polls to internal complaints body

New Delhi: JNU has postponed elections to the internal complaints committee (ICC), with the JNU Students' Union (JNUSU) claiming that this was being done as they didn't receive any nominations for student representatives. The circular, signed by Presiding Officer of the ICC Election Committee Neerja Samajdar, reads, "... the Competent Authority of the university has decided to postpone the ICC Election for the academic year 2019-20 due to administrative reasons." JNUSU said this is "a victory of GSCASH", the previous sexual harassment committee in JNU. **ENS**

6 GOVT & POLITICS



PROTEST MODE

THE CONGRESS is keen to turn the economic slowdown into a hot political issue ahead of Parliament's Winter Session. The party has already announced plans to hold a nationwide agitation, its first street protest after the defeat in the Lok Sabha elections, highlighting job losses, agrarian crisis, slowdown in the economy and the RCEP deal. The party has started consulting fellow opposition parties and farmers' and labour outfits to make it a joint, coordinated assault on the government. Congress president Sonia Gandhi is likely to meet opposition leaders in the first week of November in an attempt to put up a united front. The Congress believes the party's surprise performance in Haryana reflects growing disenchantment among the people over livelihood issues.

CHANGE IN TRADITION

DELAY IN approaching and getting confirmation in time from any of the several eminent people it wanted has cost All India Radio (AIR) to change an annual tradition. Since 1955, AIR has been hosting the annual Sardar Patel Lecture to commemorate India's first Information and Broadcasting Minister. The lecture, which was delivered by NSA Ajit Doval and union ministers Smriti Irani and Arun Jaitley in the last three years, was usually recorded at the time of delivery, then broadcast on AIR on October 31 — Sardar Patel's birth anniversary. This year though there is no lecture, but there will be a broadcast. The broadcast will include excerpts of speeches to be delivered on Thursday by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, a segment from Modi's latest Mann Ki Baat and AIR's new *Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat* song.

CLEARING THE AIR

ADVISORS TO erstwhile Governor of Jammu and Kashmir will put in their papers on October 31 as their position was co-terminus with the status of the state. On Wednesday, however, news of resignation of former CRPF chief K Vijay Kumar as advisor to the Governor fuelled rumours that he was resigning because he was much senior to the new Lt Gov of J&K G C Murmu. Finally, Vijay Kumar issued a clarification through a tweet. "Speculation rife on my 'resignation'... I have a clarification that my term as Adviser concludes & I carry good memories of my tenure..." he tweeted.

'NO JUSTIFIED GROUND TO EXTEND ED CUSTODY'

Chidambaram sent to judicial custody till Nov 13

ANAND MOHAN J & PRITAM PAL SINGH
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30



Outside the ED office in New Delhi on Wednesday. Praveen Khanna

A SPECIAL court in Delhi Wednesday dismissed the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) plea seeking one more day's custodial interrogation of former finance minister P Chidambaram and sent him to judicial custody in Tihar jail till November 13 in the INX Media money laundering case. The court observed that policy custody of 15 days is "not a ritualistic formality". The court said that sufficient time has been given for custodial interrogation of the accused. Special Judge Ajay Kumar Kuhar observed that "so far as the evasive replies of the accused (Chidambaram) are concerned, the right against self incrimination is protected by the law". "Article 21 of the Constitution of India and section 161 (2) of the CrPc, confers such a right on an accused to maintain silence," the judge said.

The ED's seven-day custodial interrogation ended Wednesday. The 74-year-old Congress leader has already been in the ED's custody for 14 days since his formal arrest on October 16. "No doubt the interrogation is the prerogative of the investigating officer but at the same time the provisions in Section 167 CrPc for 15 days police/ED custody is not a ritualistic formality which is to be completed in all the cases necessarily sans justification," the judge said. It further observed that the perusal of the case diary — from October 25 to 29 — would show that the accused has been confronted with some documents and e-mails. "But as per the submission of the Solicitor General

(Tushar Mehta), some more documents still remain to be shown to the accused. I think this exercise can be done as well while the accused would be in judicial custody," the court said. "I do not see any justified ground to extend the remand of the accused in ED custody..." the special judge said, adding that the Tihar jail authorities shall provide "adequate security to the accused considering that he is a protected person". "He may be allowed to carry his prescribed medicines. It shall be ensured that the accused is medically examined for his illness at the jail hospital and if required, in any multidisciplinary hospital like RML Hospital, Safdarjung or AIIMS Hospital," Judge Kuhar ordered.

The court allowed Chidambaram to carry his spectacles and asked authorities to provide him the facility of western toilet. It said that the leader should also be allowed home-cooked food inside jail, considering his medical condition. "However, the home food shall be delivered in the office of Superintendent, Central Jail, Tihar, who shall provide the same to the accused after necessary security checks," the order reads.

Ahead of SC ruling on Ayodhya, Congress works on its response

Party manifestoes of past Lok Sabha elections discussed by Congress leaders

MANOJ CG & RAVISH TIWARI
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

THE CONGRESS'S minority support base in North India had suffered a massive erosion after it failed to prevent demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992 despite being in power at the Centre. And the recent years have seen the emergence of the BJP with a Hindutva appeal. Struggling hard for revival against that backdrop, the Congress has cautiously begun an exercise to craft its response on the Ayodhya issue ahead of the Supreme Court's verdict.

The Congress was caught off guard by the BJP government's Jammu and Kashmir gambit. And it does not want to repeat the mistake. Hence, a meeting called by Congress president Sonia Gandhi last Friday, a day after Maharashtra and Haryana election results, saw a brainstorming on pros and cons of the upcoming verdict.

The Congress's stand should be "clear, simple and communicable" and the party should formulate its response timely, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi suggested, said a source present at the meeting. Sources said the group is likely to deliberate again since a final view on the Congress's position has not been arrived at.

While the Congress has time and again said it will respect and

EXPLAINED Caught off-guard on 370, wants no repeat

CAUGHT OFF-GUARD over the government's move to scrap the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370, the Congress leaders aired divergent voices that gave BJP an opportunity to corner it. With the change of leadership, the party under Sonia Gandhi appears to have started preparing its stance on crucial issues that may linger long in the political discourse. Ayodhya being one such issue, the party has begun an internal deliberation to be ready with a coherent stance when the verdict is delivered by the apex court.

abide by the Supreme Court verdict, sources said the party's response will depend on the wording and formulation of the order.

There are a total of four potential scenarios that may come out of the verdict — the apex court can uphold the 2010 Allahabad High Court order as a title suit, it can uphold the order and comment on the Ram temple issue, the court can modify the high court order as a title suit and it can modify it and also refer to the Ram temple issue.

According to party sources, the leaders were asked to think how the party would need to respond in each of these situations.

The sources said the Congress position on the issue during the stints of Rajiv Gandhi, P V Narasimha Rao, Sitaram Kesri and Sonia Gandhi and its manifestoes for 1991, 1996, 1998

and 2004 Lok Sabha elections also came up during the deliberations.

Having witnessed the BJP go from two seats in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections to 85 seats in 1989 on the back of support for the Ram temple movement, the Congress manifesto in 1991 prepared under the watch of the then party president Rajiv Gandhi had favoured "construction of the temple without demolishing the mosque" despite prefacing it with suggestions of a "negotiated settlement".

After Rajiv Gandhi's assassination and the election of Rao as Prime Minister, the government enacted the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 which sought to maintain religious character of any place of worship as it existed on the August 15, 1947. But this legislation was not applicable to the

'Ram Janma Bhumi-Babri Masjid' complex.

Next year, the Babri Masjid was demolished. This is widely attributed to be one of the important reasons behind the erosion of Congress support base in politically crucial UP and Bihar. The Congress manifesto prepared under the watch of Rao for 1996 elections tommotmed the 1991 Act that did not cover the disputed Ayodhya site.

In the 1998 elections, Congress president Sitaram Kesri denied a Lok Sabha poll ticket to Rao for his alleged failure to protect Babri Masjid as Prime Minister, signalling the Congress position on the Ayodhya issue.

The 1999 elections under Sonia Gandhi advocated the party's commitment to the 1991 legislation. "The Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 will be strictly enforced," the manifesto promised.

The last such reference to the issue was made in the Congress manifesto during 2004 Lok Sabha elections, when the party again called either for a negotiated settlement "between the parties to the dispute" or judicial settlement. That year, the Congress dislodged the NDA government and came to power.

The ongoing deliberations come against the backdrop of a long-felt assessment in the party that the BJP had successfully painted it as a Muslim party.

JD(U) says will welcome 'proportional representation' in govt at Centre

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

A WEEK after the BJP performed below its expectations in Maharashtra and Haryana Assembly polls, its Bihar ally JD(U) has suggested that it would like a "proportional representation" in the Narendra Modi government. The JD(U) holds 16 seats in the Lok Sabha.

Party secretary-general K C Tyagi said, "If NDA leaders, (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi and (Home Minister and BJP president Amit) Shah take an initiative for the JD(U)'s proportional representation in the government, we will welcome it."

Tyagi was speaking to the media after Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar addressed the JD(U) national council following his re-election as party president for a second three-year term.

The BJP had offered one Cabinet berth to the JD(U) after it returned to power in May. However, Nitish declined the offer of a "token participation". The JD(U) was upset over the fact that the BJP had offered it one ministerial position, the same it offered the IJP, which has six Lok Sabha members.

Tyagi pointed out that the JD(U) had accorded a proportional representation to the BJP in the state government even though the mandate of the 2015 Bihar Assembly polls was "against" the BJP. He said the JD(U) had also given the post of a deputy chief minister to the BJP. On the other hand, the JD(U) had to be content with the post of the deputy chairman of the Rajya Sabha at the Centre.



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was re-elected as JD(U) president at the party's central committee meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday. Praveen Khanna

The JD(U) suggestion, when seen against the backdrop of the current BJP problems vis-a-vis its Maharashtra ally, Shiv Sena, was indicative of a sense of unease among NDA partners. They were clearly dissatisfied with the present level of their share in power. On being asked about Sena-BJP differences, Tyagi said the Shiv Sena, Akali Dal and the JD(U) were founding members of the NDA. Prime Minister Modi and Amit Shah, he said, should lead an initiative to end all controversies.

Tyagi was dismissive of the demands by several BJP leaders for a National Register of Citizens in Bihar on the same pattern as in Assam. The NRC, he pointed out, was meant for Assam. "People make all kinds of com-

ments for being in news," he added.

Regarding frequent outbursts of Union minister Giriraj Singh, Tyagi said, "We don't give much importance to what other leaders say. For us, BJP means Modi, Shah, J P Nadda, Sushil Modi and its Bihar unit president Sanjay Jaiswal."

He said the JD(U) may have some ideological differences with the BJP, but it fully supports the party on the issue of national integration. Tyagi declared that there was no confusion as far as the JD(U)'s alliance with the BJP was concerned. "We will do even better (in the 2020 Assembly polls) than 2010 in Bihar," he said. The NDA won 206 of the 243 seats in the Assembly in 2010.

Peeved at RJD leader's arrest over FB post, Tejashwi alleges liquor mafia inside CM house

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, OCTOBER 30

A DAY after the arrest of an RJD leader from Madhubani over "objectionable posts" on Facebook criticising the state's liquor policy, Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Yadav Wednesday dared the Bihar Police to arrest him, saying that the liquor mafia "was having fun" inside Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's house.

The RJD leader who was arrested by Bihar Police IT Cell had



Those seen near the CM also drink'

said that liquor was easily available in state despite the ban imposed by the government.

"I am saying that the liquor mafia is having fun inside Nitish Kumar's residence. Those seen near the CM also drink. Is there anyone in the Bihar Police to arrest me? Ask these shameless and corrupt robbers of people's

mandate how many mafia have been born inside the CM's house as a result of the liquor ban," Tejashwi tweeted in Hindi.

Blaming the liquor ban for "deteriorating law and order", he later said it was imposed to send the poor to jails and make the police "corrupt and idle". "I want to know why not a single senior officer has been suspended despite huge recovery of liquor during ban... if this liquor law is so effective, why has its provisions been relaxed," he said.

JD(U) spokesperson and Bihar's Information and Public

JD(U) QUESTIONS EU MPS VALLEY VISIT

New Delhi: JD(U) leader Pavan Varma on Wednesday questioned the government's decision to allow 23 European Union MPs to visit Kashmir. Speaking to the media, Varma, a former IFS officer said, "There are several contradictions in the visit. On one hand, India is against internationalising the issue but on the other, we have allowed a visit by these parliamentarians in their personal capacity. Was it an appropriate time? What is the criteria for selecting these members?" he added. ENS

Relations Minister Neeraj Kumar told *The Indian Express*. "First, such language does not behave a leader of Opposition. Second, Tejashwi must not use pronouns and should rather directly name people for liquor law violations with facts and evidence. There is a toll-free number... where anyone can give information... he must stop making baseless allegations and should take some lessons from Deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi who had levelled allegations against Tejashwi with facts, forming the basis of IRCTC case against the RJD leader."

Merkel arrives on two-day visit today, 20 pacts on agenda

SHUBHAJIT ROY & VERENA HÖLZL
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30



Angela Merkel

ON A day Jammu and Kashmir loses its special status and stands bifurcated into two Union Territories, German Chancellor Angela Merkel will be the first foreign leader to visit India after the government's move on Jammu and Kashmir comes into force.

Merkel, who arrives on Thursday, will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi for bilateral talks on Friday. Calling India an "anchor of stability" in South Asia, German Minister for Foreign Affairs, addressing the German parliament ahead of a ministerial meeting with India taking place in Delhi this week.

Merkel and her ministers will be accompanied by a high-powered business delegation. It's the fifth time that both governments are holding ministerial talks. The delegation will represent 12 of 15 ministries, "something we only do with very few countries", Lindner said, stressing that Germany regards India as an important "anchor of stability" in the region.

"Germany shares very close ties with India and it is one such relationship that it shares with very few countries... All challenges to mankind, whether it is pollution or sustainable development or poverty, cannot be solved without cooperation with India," he said.

Lindner said India has a "strategic weight and importance" and there are many areas of cooperation which the two countries can explore. "The topics of discussions would include artificial intelligence, sustainable development, urban mobility, agriculture and football, among others," he told reporters. Merkel will be visiting Raj Ghat on Friday and also visit Gandhi Smriti, a museum dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi. She will also be interacting with Indian women who made an impact in the society, Lindner said. "The female personalities would include lawyers, bloggers and start-up owners," he said.

On the visit of European Union parliamentarians to Kashmir, Lindner said, "The EU has already said it is a private visit and that is our stand too. We didn't have any idea that they are coming to India and I know as much as you do."

During Merkel's two-day visit, the two sides are expected to sign upto 20 agreements to strengthen the bilateral cooperation in various areas such as the economy, digitalisation, sustainable development and climate protection as well as culture and education.

The German envoy underscored the fact that Merkel has a special focus on India. "The (German) Chancellor also has a keen interest in India," he told journalists in a meeting at his

MAHARASHTRA

State leaders' complain: Wanted more rallies by top Cong leadership

SANDEEP ASHAR
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 30

AT A post Assembly poll meeting of the Congress in Maharashtra on Wednesday, senior state leaders blamed the party's central leadership for staying away from the October 21 election campaign.

In the poll results declared last Thursday, the Congress finished fourth overall winning 44 seats. While this is one seat more than the party's tally in the 2014 state polls, several senior MLAs opined that "the party would have fared better had the central leadership played a more active role in the election campaign".

At the meeting, many pointed out that there were 19 seats where the party had lost by a margin of less than 10,000 votes. "A little more push from our side would have turned these in our favour. The election outcome would have been altogether different then," said a senior leader.

After some of the party's winning candidates and a section of senior leaders raised the issue, former Union minister and AICC general secretary Mukul Wasnik reportedly admitted to those present that the "party's central leadership had expected a near rout in the election going by the pre-poll media coverage".

While Congress president Sonia Gandhi and daughter Priyanka had stayed away from the campaign, Rahul Gandhi had campaigned in Maharashtra for just two days, addressing five rallies. Ghulam Nabi Azad, the Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha, whose name had figured in the star campaigners' list for the polls, also stayed away, while

AJIT PAWAR ELECTED NCP'S LEGISLATURE PARTY LEADER

Mumbai: Former Maharashtra deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar was unanimously re-elected the leader of the NCP's legislature party at the meeting of the newly-elected MLAs in Mumbai on Wednesday, clearing the path for his alleviation as Leader of Opposition in the Maharashtra Assembly. A resurgent NCP emerged as the largest opposition bloc in the 288-member House after it wrested 54 seats, up from the 41 seats it had won in 2014 election. ENS

former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh only addressed a party-organised lecture and a press conference in Mumbai. AICC (Maharashtra in charge) Mallikarjun Kharge, too, addressed just five public rallies.

On Tuesday, Maharashtra's Leader of Opposition in the outgoing Vidhan Sabha, Vijay Wadettiwar, had criticised the central leadership for "not giving adequate support" during the polls. "We had demanded more rallies by central leaders, but they did not pay heed to this," he told media in Nagpur.

State party president Balasaheb Thorat meanwhile, said, "While there is an opinion that we would have performed even better had we put more effort, this was a state election. *Rahulji aayein, bas ho gaya* (Rahul Gandhi came, that's enough)."

8 EXPRESS NETWORK



NORTH

Cops say man held for theft set himself on fire

Lucknow: A 23-year-old man, who was detained in connection with a theft case in Etmadpur area of Agra district on Tuesday, was hospitalised with 40 per cent burn injuries in Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital. Police said that he allegedly tried to commit suicide by setting himself on fire at the police outpost.

According to Agra police, Jafar went to the toilet where he set himself on fire using diesel. "Circle Officer of Etmadpur, Atul Sonkar, has been directed to conduct an inquiry into the entire incident. Action will be taken on the basis of the inquiry report," IG (Agra Range) A Satish Ganesh said. **ENS**



President Ram Nath Kovind at Jamia Millia Islamia's convocation, in New Delhi. He said the Centre's New Education Policy will help establish the country as a "knowledge superpower". **Amit Mehra**

EAST

Gaya BDO jumps to death, cops point to family issue

Patna: The Koch Block Development Officer has allegedly committed suicide by jumping from the second floor of his rented accommodation in Gaya. Though no suicide note was found, police said the BDO might have taken the extreme step because of "family problems". Rajiv Kumar Ranjan (33) was found dead on the ground

floor of his rented house at AP Colony under Rampur police station area of Gaya on Wednesday afternoon. Gaya Sadar Sub Divisional Officer Satyendra Kumar Gupta said, "Primary investigation suggests it is suicide. He had some family problems. We are waiting for postmortem report to get clear leads." **ENS**

WEST

Officer hurled casteist remark at me: Goa Dy CM's brother

Panaji: The younger brother of Goa Deputy Chief Minister Manohar Ajaonkar has accused a senior officer of making casteist remarks against him in Margao town near here. Rajendra Ajaonkar, president, Vegetable, Readymade and Cloth Vendors Association, on Tuesday filed a complaint with the Margao police accus-

ing Margao Municipal Council Chief Officer Siddhivinayak Naik of making casteist remarks against him. Naik refused to comment on the issue. Ajaonkar said the alleged incident happened he went to meet Naik in his chamber along with other members of the association. Police said they are investigating the complaint. **PTI**

SOUTH

Andhra orders legal action against 'defamatory' news

Amaravati: The YS Jagan Mohan Reddy government in Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday issued an order for taking legal action against "false, baseless and defamatory news", restoring a controversial government order kept in abeyance 12 years ago. While the 2007 order during late Rajasekhara Reddy's tenure as CM was limited to

print and electronic media, Wednesday's order made social media posts also liable for legal action. The order delegated power to the information commissioner for filing defamation cases against publishers and editors, but the latest order empowered secretaries of the respective departments as well to proceed legally. **PTI**



Family members of Murshalin Sheikh at their residence in Bahalnagar in Bengal's Murshidabad district. **Partha Paul**

'WHAT WILL I SAY WHEN MY RELATIVES ASK HOW I SURVIVED'

Bengal workers killed in Valley were to head home a day later

ADIL AKHZER
KATRASOO (KULGAM),
OCTOBER 30

THE FIVE labourers who were killed by militants in Kulgam district on Tuesday were set to return to their homes in Murshidabad district of West Bengal on Wednesday.

"We were supposed to go back home today. We had decided to meet in the morning and then leave for Jammu in a taxi. I still can't believe that they are dead. I met some of them last evening, and everyone was looking forward to returning home," said Sader Sarkar (46), another labourer from Sagardighi in Murshidabad.

While the five victims shared a rented accommodation with two others, Sarkar shared room with Bakar Sheikh, also from Murshidabad.

On Tuesday evening, Sarkar

and Sheikh had gone to the house of Nazir Ahmad, the owner of the farm where they worked, to collect their wages before leaving for home, when they heard gunshots. Ahmad advised the two to stay at his house for the night.

"As there were gunshots, Nazir Sahib didn't allow us to go out. We stayed with him, and didn't know what had happened outside," said Sarkar. They only got to know about the deaths on Wednesday morning. Sarkar's nephew was among those killed.

"In the morning, I called up my wife and told her that I am safe," he said. "There is only one question in my mind. When my relatives ask me how I survived, what will I tell them."

"People here are very nice. We never faced a problem all these years. God knows what happened this year. I will never come to this place again," said Sheikh.

On Wednesday, Sarkar and

Sheikh were seen pleading for help from villagers in Katrasoo. "Please help us return home," they said. The villagers escorted them to the local police station, from where they were set to be sent home.

On Tuesday evening, five labourers — identified as Murshalin Sheikh, Kamaruddin Sheikh, Rafique Sheikh, Naimuddin Sheikh and Rafikul Sheikh, all from Sagardighi in Murshidabad — were killed when militants barged into their rented accommodation in Katrasoo village, led them out and shot them about 200 metres away. Another labourer was injured in the attack, but is reported to be in a stable condition.

Inside their one-room accommodation, a few utensils, a box of apples, clothes and other belongings lay scattered.

"They were innocent, everyone here knew them. Nobody will support such violence.

Everyone is shocked, maybe this was aimed to create fear among the labourers," said Abdul Majeed, a villager.

"As soon we heard the shots, all our family members were confined to our room. Nobody dared to go out and check what had happened. After some time, some Army personnel came and told us to come out of our homes. We don't know who killed them," said Gulam Mohammed Bhat, another villager who lives near the room where the labourers stayed.

Deputy Commissioner, Kulgam, Showkat Ajaz told *The Indian Express* that the bodies had been sent to Murshidabad. "One survivor is accompanying the bodies," he said.

Police officers said the investigation so far indicated the involvement of the Hizbul Mujahideen. Meanwhile, some villagers have reportedly been detained.

'Kashmir has changed, will never go there again for better pay'

ATRIMITRA
BAHALNAGAR (SAGARDIGHI),
OCTOBER 30

LESS THAN a month ago, 32-year-old Kamaruddin Sheikh decided to go to Kashmir and work as a labourer there. The better pay in the Valley, he told his family, would enable him to ensure better treatment for his elder daughter Rahima (16), who is suffering from a kidney ailment.

On Tuesday night, police reached Bahalnagar village in West Bengal's Murshidabad district with news that brought the world crashing down on the families of Kamaruddin and four other migrant labourers from the village — the five were killed in a militant attack in Kulgam.

Kamaruddin's wife Roshenara Bibi (28) said, "He went to Kashmir on October 3. He thought that in the apple and paddy harvesting season there, he will earn double compared to what he makes here and that would help our Rahima's treatment. But it is all over now."

Since Tuesday night, when police came with the news, nobody in Bahalnagar has slept, say villagers. A pall of gloom envelops the village as it waits for the bodies of the five labourers.

Bahalnagar, located about 200 km from Kolkata, has about 250 families. Most families are under the poverty line and the majority of the villagers work as labourers. During the harvest season in Bengal, they work in the paddy field or in other odd jobs. At other times, they go to Kashmir or Kerala for better pay.

Besides Kamaruddin, those killed in the attack are Rafique Sheikh, Naimuddin Sheikh, Murshalin Sheikh and Rafikul Sheikh.

Rafique (52) was the sole earning member of his family and had been going to Kashmir for about two decades. He last spoke to his wife Samirun Bibi (40) on Monday and told her that he is preparing to return. Samirun said, "We have three daughters. Two of them are married. The third had some problems with her husband and now stays with me. His mother too stays with us. What will I do now?"

Sahir (34), the elder brother of Kamaruddin, has also been to Kashmir several times. "We have seen many terror attacks. But they never harmed labourers. What happened this time? The government should answer..." he said, adding, "Kashmir has changed. We will never go there for better pay again." **FULL REPORT ON**
www.indianexpress.com

Mamata demands probe, announces Rs 5 lakh relief

Kolkata: Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday demanded a thorough investigation into the killing of five labourers from West Bengal in Kashmir to find out the "real truth" behind it. Banerjee also announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh each for the families of the victims.

"We are totally shocked! Presently, there are no political activities in Kashmir and entire law and order is with the Government of India. We, therefore, demand a strong investigation so that the real truth comes out," she tweeted. **ENS**

Centre appoints two top officers for Ladakh

Jammu: The Centre has appointed senior IAS officer Umang Narula as the advisor to the Lt Governor of Ladakh and Inspector General of Police S S Khandare as the "head of police" of the Himalayan region.

The appointments will come into effect on October 31 when J&K will be bifurcated into the Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, as per the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act 2019.

Narula was earlier posted as principal secretary to J&K Governor Satya Pal Malik. **ENS**

Art 370 India's internal matter: EU MPs in J&K

ENS & PTI
SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 30

EU PARLIAMENTARIANS visiting Kashmir on Wednesday termed the dilution of Article 370 an internal issue of India and said they stand by the country in its fight against terrorism.

The delegation on Wednesday wrapped their two-day visit by briefing the media. The government allowed only select mediapersons to attend the briefing in Srinagar.

The 23-member delegation also condemned the killing of five labourers from West Bengal by militants in Kulgam district.

"If we talk about Article 370, it is India's internal matter. What concerns us is terrorism, which is a global menace and we should stand with India in fighting it. There was an unfortunate incident of the killing of five innocent labourers by terrorists. We condemn it," said Henri



Henri Maloosse speaks to the media in Srinagar. **PTI**

MPs being refused permission.

Several of the 23 MPs belong to right and far-right parties. MEP from Poland Ryszard Czarnecki said the international media coverage on Kashmir seems biased. "Once we go back to our countries we will inform them of what we saw," the Prawo i Sprawiedliwosc party leader said.

Newton Dunn from the Liberal Democrat party in the UK described the visit as an "eye-opener".

"We belong to a place Europe which is peaceful after years of fighting. And we want to see India becoming the most peaceful country in the world. And for that we need to stand by India in its fight against global terrorism," he told reporters.

"By calling us fascists, our image has been tarnished. It's better that one should know about us properly before tarnishing our image," said Thierry Mariani, a member of the Rassemblement National party in France.

Malooose from France.

Malooose, a former president of European Economic and Social Committee, said the team got a briefing from the Army and police as well as young activists and exchanged "ideas of peace".

Nicolas Fest, from the right-wing Alternative for Germany, told journalists separately that the government should address the "imbalance" of European parliamentarians being allowed to visit but India's opposition

Cong: Biggest diplomatic blunder, how did business broker get access to PMO?

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

THE CONGRESS Wednesday accused the BJP government of having "deliberately internationalised" the Kashmir issue by introducing a third party to assess the ground situation in Kashmir. The party asked how an "international business broker" like Madi Sharma, who is said to have played a role in organising the private visit of European Union parliamentarians to Kashmir, has access to the Prime Minister's Office.

Arguing that the visit of EU MPs was the biggest diplomatic blunder in India's history, the main Opposition party said the government has violated India's time-tested policy of Kashmir being an internal matter of the country. "India's time tested policy over last 72 years is that Kashmir is our internal issue and we will accept

Notice to 3 leaders in J&K

Jammu: The Congress issued a showcause notice to former minister and MLA Usman Majid, state general secretary Channi Singh and spokesperson Farooq Andrabi on Wednesday for meeting the delegation of visiting European Union parliamentarians without prior permission, and sought an explanation from them within a week. **PTI**

no interference or third party mediation of any nature... Modi government has committed the gravest sin of reversing this policy over last three days," Congress communication department head Randeep Surjewala said.

UT move on Patel anniversary is bid to manufacture history: CPM

New Delhi: As the decision to divide J&K into two Union Territories takes effect Thursday — birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel — the CPI(M) Wednesday targeted the government.

"By choosing this date the government is putting in place the Amit Shah formula of manufacturing history and eliminating the truth. It is a matter of record, including from the memoirs of Patel, that he was not only a party to, but also involved in the drafting of Sec 370. It was at his residence that on May 15 and 16, 1949, the discussions on the special status for the State were held between him, Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah," it said in a statement.

The CPI too targeted the government. CPI general secretary D Raja said, "They (government) are spreading lies as though Patel was opposed to Article 370. Patel was very much part of negotiations on Article 370 and party to its insertion in the Constitution." **ENS**

At centre of EU MPs' visit, think tank that backed all govts

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 30

IN THE eye of the storm over the Kashmir visit of the members of European parliament is a Delhi think tank called International Institute for Non Aligned Studies. The organisation brings attention to a subset of NGOs called GONGOS, or Government Organised Non Government Organisations.

IINS, which was set up in 1980, checks all the GONGO boxes. In the nearly four decades of its existence, governments formed by different parties and headed by different leaders came and went but IINS has been consistent in its support of every government from the time it came into existence. The think tank does not disclose the source of its

funding on its website. But it organises seminars and conferences at regular intervals which project India's position on international issues.

A dozen years after it was set up, its founder Govind Narain Shrivastav set up a newspaper in Delhi called *New Delhi Times*.

From the the 1980s, IINS has focused on the Non-Aligned Movement, participating as an "observer" at Non Aligned Meetings across the world, travelling to scores of capitals for summits, ministerial meetings and so on.

In the 1990s, IINS had a new pre-occupation. It was the decade when militancy in J&K was at its peak, with Kashmiri youth crossing over into PoK where they received arms and training and crossed back into the Indian side. IINS organised conferences on topics such as Democracy and

Human Rights, Media in Conflict Situations, Mass Media and Human Rights, Human Rights and Terrorism and the like.

More significantly, it sent a delegate/delegates to every session of UN Human Rights Council from 1994 (when it was the UN Human Rights Commission), attending both the NGOs conference as well as the main sessions. In this period, IINS also applied for "consultative status" to Economic and Social Council, a UN organisation that invites and encourages NGOs to apply for such affiliation in order to give them a voice and a "stake" in UN deliberations. It is the highest recognition granted to NGOs by the UN and allows them to take part in sessions across UN organisations.

IINS received this affiliation in the 1998. The website does not say who runs the organisation af-

ter Shrivastav's passing in 1998 but it has offices in New York, Geneva, and Vienna to coordinate its work with the UN.

According to the website, it also has a regional office in "five other countries".

Another Delhi think tank that raised Kashmir-related issues regularly at international forums in the 1990s was the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation, established in 1989. It was granted an affiliation as an NGO with "consultative status" to ECOSOC in 1995.

Headed by Professor R Warikoo, a Kashmiri Pandit who taught at Jawaharlal Nehru University, it is essentially a one-person operation. On its website, HRCF describes itself as "a national level multi-disciplinary research, cultural and development facilitative organisation set up by

eminent area specialists, environmentalists, development experts, literatures and cultural personalities" for "initiating, coordinating and promoting the systematic and micro-study of various issues pertaining to the Himalayan and Trans-Himalayan regions in South and Central Asia or parts thereof, connected with its environment, biodiversity, regional development, human resources, history, art and culture, language and literature, social structures, economies, human rights, peace processes, geopolitics etc."

Warikoo retired two years ago from JNU's School of International Studies. He brings out a quarterly journal called the *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, and has travelled many times to attend the sessions at the Human Rights Council at Geneva. He has also participated in NGO conferences there.

He was at the Human Rights Council session in Geneva this September, accompanying the BJP's Kashmir head Khalid Jehangir, who castigated Pakistan and said the Centre revoking the special status had nothing to do with religion.

"HRCF is a self-supporting non-governmental organisation set up in 1989 by eminent academics, litterateurs and cultural personalities and is devoted to study of Himalayan and trans-Himalayan region in South and Central Asia...I, as an area specialist on this region, have been running it with the support of fellow academics and colleagues. Due to lack of any political or official support, we have not been able to grow commensurate with our human capital and intellectual output, which is our strength," said Warikoo.

UP police 'crack' robbery case, say deceased involved

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, OCTOBER 30

AMID OUTRAGE over the death of a 52-year-old man after he was detained on Tuesday in connection with a robbery case, UP police said on Wednesday that the man was involved in the robbery plan.

They also arrested three people and recovered Rs 3.50 lakh of the loot from them.

The deceased, Sajjan Shukla, was detained early on Tuesday. He fell unconscious at Piparpur police station and died on his way to hospital, police had claimed.

However, Shukla's family had alleged that he was tortured by the police.

Amethi SP Khyati Garg on Wednesday said, "On October 5, a total of Rs 26 lakh was looted from UCO Bank's Bhadar branch manager Munish Kumar and cashier Anshu Singh at gun point by three assailants on a bike. Three arrested persons identified as Zakir Ali, Mohammad Anees and Sajid Ali were arrested Wednesday from Alampur railway crossing. A total of Rs 3.50 lakh in cash, a country-made pistol and a bike used in the loot were recovered."

Shukla had carried out surveillance of the area before the robbery, Garg said.

"Nadeem and Sahbaaz are absconding, while another will be identified after Nadeem is arrested..." she said, adding that the looted amount was distributed among the seven accused and Sajjan got Rs 3 lakh.

According to police sources, Shukla and Zakir were associates and were charge-sheeted in a 2008 case in which a car was

stolen from Gomti Nagar area of Lucknow. Sources added that Shukla's involvement in the case was established by calls made between those arrested and Shukla.

Meanwhile, a magisterial inquiry has been ordered into Shukla's death.

The Pratapgarh administration assured his family that their five-point demands, including a CBI probe, will be sent to the state government.

Other demands made by the family include the immediate arrest of the policemen facing murder charges, a weapons licence, job for both of Shukla's son and a compensation of Rs 50 lakh.

A murder case of murder was registered against policemen of Piparpur police station and the Amethi district Special Operation Group (SOG) on Tuesday after Shukla's death. While Garg had claimed that Shukla had committed suicide by consuming poison, the Piparpur station officer, Ravindar Singh, denied having any such information.

Shukla's family has alleged that he died of police torture and was poisoned by the policemen.

"My elder brother was killed in police custody, and therefore we protested peacefully with our demands. We decided not to cremate the body and kept it outside my house... Senior officials met us on Wednesday afternoon and assured moving ahead with our demand..." Om Prakash Shukla, the younger brother of the deceased, said.

Pratapgarh ADM Shatrughan Vaishya said that a memorandum of the family's demands has been forwarded to the Chief Minister's office.

May drop Tipu Sultan chapter from school books, says BSY

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, OCTOBER 30

KARNATAKA CHIEF Minister BS Yediyurappa on Wednesday indicated that his government is considering removing all references to the ruler of erstwhile Mysuru, Tipu Sultan, from school textbooks.

Yediyurappa, who had also cancelled state celebrations of the birth anniversary of Tipu Sultan — Tipu Jayanti celebrations were started by the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government in 2014 and were to be held on November 10 this year — said the BJP government is considering dropping everything linked to the 18th century king.

"We are going to drop everything and even in textbooks also we are thinking of cancelling (the chapter on Sultan)," Yediyurappa said at a media interaction. The decision comes on



BS Yediyurappa

the basis of a demand by Kodagu MLA Appachu Ranjan.

The MLA had last week written to School Education Minister S Suresh Kumar and Yediyurappa asking them to start consultations with department officials to withdraw Tipu Sultan's references from textbooks.

On July 30, the Kannada and Culture department of the state had ordered the cancellation of Tipu Jayanti celebrations on the

basis of a letter from Virajpet BJP MLA K G Bopaiah — the constituency lies in the Kodagu region.

In his July 29 letter, Bopaiah had sought cancellation of festivities saying they cause communal disharmony in the Kodagu region. Tipu Jayanti celebrations in 2015 were marred by clashes on communal lines between members from outfits like the Popular Front of India (PFI) and members of right-wing groups like the Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in the Kodagu region.

During the clashes, a 67-year-old VHP activist, D S Kutappa was killed and a PFI worker was shot dead by a coffee planter.

According to Kodagu folklore, Tipu Sultan is alleged to have tricked the Kodavas into believing he would surrender to them in the 18th century, only to capture unarmed soldiers at a meeting.

The Sultan, however, is considered by historians to be among the first freedom fighters to take on the British.

During a speech to mark the 60th anniversary of the Karnataka legislature in 2017, President Ram Nath Kovind had categorised the king among the formidable soldiers from Karnataka and said, "Tipu Sultan died a heroic death fighting the British."

The Opposition Congress has insisted that Tipu Sultan was a freedom fighter and a secular ruler. Former chief minister Siddaramaiah said removing references to Tipu Sultan would be distorting history.

"Removing lessons on Tipu from textbooks is distorting history. Tipu fighting the British is true or false? History should not be distorted. We have to teach children history and learn from it," the former state chief minister Siddaramaiah said.



Businessman Raj Kundra at the ED office in Mumbai on Wednesday. Nirmal Harindran

Iqbal Mirchi PMLA case: ED questions Raj Kundra for 9 hrs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 30

BUSINESSMAN RITU Sudan Kundra alias Raj Kundra on Wednesday appeared before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in Mumbai in connection with a money laundering probe against gangster Iqbal Mirchi, a close aide of gangster Dawood Ibrahim.

While the ED had asked Kundra, the husband of actor Shilpa Shetty, to appear in person before it on November 4, Kundra arrived at the ED office in Ballard Pier around 11 am on Wednesday. He was questioned by the agency for about nine hours.

The agency is investigating Kundra's alleged business venture with Ranjeet Singh Bindra and a firm called Bastian Hospitality. Kundra and Bindra are both on the board of the firm. The proceedings in the case are being conducted under the criminal provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Apart from this, Kundra and Shetty were also directors of a firm — Essential Hospitality Limited — which has received loans from RKW Developers Private Limited, a company owned by Dheeraj Wadhawan and also has Bindra on its board.

Kundra had earlier denied any wrongdoing in these busi-

ness deals.

Bindra was arrested by ED earlier this month as the agency alleged that he played a crucial role in the illegal dealing of properties to the tune of Rs 200 crore belonging to Mirchi. The arrests came over nine years after the alleged dealing of the three properties in 2010 and the subsequent death of Mirchi in 2013, who had allegedly purchased them in 1986.

The ED has alleged that Bindra was a broker between Mirchi's aide and Sunblink Real Estate Private Limited to whom the properties were sold to in 2010 for Rs 225 crore. Sunblink is run by the brother-in-law of Dheeraj Wadhawan.

2 kids adopted from MP shelter home sexually abused: US couple

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BHOPAL, OCTOBER 30

THE MADHYA Pradesh Police are investigating an allegation by a California-based couple that two of the four children it adopted from a centre in Rewa were subjected to sexual abuse.

The couple had adopted four children, including three girls, through the Central Adoption

Resources Authority (CARA) from a shelter home run by an NGO in Rewa in March. The couple wrote to the Central government a few days ago, alleging that two girls had confided in counsellors that they had been abused along with other children in the shelter home.

The adoption centre was shut down on Tuesday and the administration has shifted all the inmates to another shelter home

in Satna. The children were sent to the shelter home in 2017 after their father died in a road accident and the mother after a tuberculosis infection.

Rewa SP Abid Khan said no case has been registered so far and police are trying to verify points mentioned in the complaint. He said the police wanted to talk to the alleged victims through video-conferencing. The couple was initially not ready but

has now agreed to let the authorities speak to the children.

However, the director of the shelter home has denied the allegations. He said all stages of the adoption process, including medical examination and counselling, had been followed and the children handed over after court orders. He said the children were aged eight years or less and claimed they had received treatment for tuberculosis.

SCHEME FOR NON-RESIDENT KERALITES

Kerala to offer 10% dividend on deposits up to Rs 51 lakh

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
OCTOBER 30

THE KERALA government is planning to introduce a monthly dividend scheme for Non-Resident Keralites with an aim to utilise their deposits for infrastructure development in the state. To introduce the scheme, a Bill to amend the Non-Resident Keralites Welfare Rules was presented in the Assembly by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan Wednesday. Under the proposed Pravasi Dividend Scheme, a Non-Resident Keralite and his/her life partner will get regular monthly dividends for a one-time deposit till their death. The government would collect the deposits in the range of Rs 3 lakh to Rs 51 lakh and the amount would be handed over to agencies assigned for infrastructure development.

At present, the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) is the agency handling the scheme. The deposits would be collected through the Kerala Non-Resident Keralites Welfare Board. The investor would get a monthly dividend of 10 per cent from the fourth year of deposit. After the death of the depositor, the invested sum and the dividend of three years would be handed over to the nominee, which would mark the end of the scheme.

There are about 22 lakh Non-

EXPLAINED
A steep challenge

TO ENSURE 10 per cent dividend for deposits by Non-Resident Keralites, the government would be supporting the KIIFB, which would take up infrastructure projects. KIIFB, which has been so far funding projects mainly in the education and health sectors, would now have to find profit-making ventures to park NRK deposits. This new move comes even as the Pravasi Chitty scheme of the government to draw NRK investment has not received the expected response.

Resident Keralites, most of them in the Middle East. The remittance from Non-Resident Keralites to the state has touched Rs 85,000 crore, according to the Kerala Migration Survey conducted in 2018.

Presenting the Bill, Vijayan said the scheme would equally benefit the Non-Resident Keralites and the state government. The deposits would accelerate the growth of the state, he added. The Bill also envisages setting up companies and co-operative societies under Kerala Non-Resident Keralites Welfare Board.

NAGA PEACE TALKS

Centre's deadline ends today, extension likely

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

WITH THE Centre' deadline to conclude the Naga peace talks expiring on Thursday, Nagaland governor and the government's chief interlocutor for the Indo-Naga Peace Accord, R N Ravi, on Wednesday held back-to-back meetings with the NSCN-IM to reach an agreement.

Talks with the NSCN-IM have stalled over the issue of a separate flag and constitution for the Nagas. On Wednesday, sources said that an extension for the final agreement was ready. The meeting was ongoing at the time of going to press.

"We don't believe that the matter can be resolved by October 31, as PM Modi has desired... But this stalemate can definitely be resolved by the end of this year," said a source in the

NSCN-IM.

An umbrella body of Naga insurgent groups called the NNPG has been more flexible in its demands, foregoing the separate flag and constitution and instead, is pushing for increased seats in the Nagaland Assembly and both houses of Parliament and economic packages and accommodation for its cadres.

However, officials in the government and the NSCN-IM, have pointed out that "there can be no peace accord without the IM."

Meanwhile, the IM has claimed the NNPG was training 80 Kuki insurgents at an NSCN-IM unification camp in Manipur. "The volatile atmosphere in Manipur between the Kukis and the Nagas is because of the Kuki's claim of a homeland despite their historical refugee status and their opposition to the Naga political settlement based on the Framework Agreement..." it said.

SHIP STRANDED

Equipment to pump out fuel and cargo fell into the sea: CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PANAJI, OCTOBER 30

GOA GOVERNMENT'S efforts to salvage a tanker filled with naphtha — a flammable liquid — that was grounded off its coast last Thursday, might be delayed further as equipment that was to be used to empty the ship of the naphtha and the fuel fell into the sea, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said on Wednesday.

The unmanned tanker is named MV Nu-Shi-Nalini.

On Wednesday, the equipment had been airlifted from Mumbai by an Indian Navy helicopter and fell into the sea, officials said. "The equipment has dropped into the sea. It's our bad luck," Sawant told the media.

In a statement issued late evening, the Navy said, "The aircraft experienced increasing vertical oscillations. The aircrew attempted to control the aircraft, but keeping in mind the safety of the aircraft and likelihood of damage to the ship's deck as well as the risk of a fire due to the highly inflammable naphtha onboard, considered it prudent to jettison the load into the water next to the ship..."

Naval divers were deployed to recover the equipment. Sawant said the next step would be to replace the equipment and that the deadline to empty the ship would be extended by five more days.

FILM FESTIVAL JUST A FEW WEEKS AWAY

Goa promise to build IFFI Village before 50th edition still on paper

ATIKH RASHID
PANAJI, OCTOBER 30

FIVE YEARS after it announced a plan to build a permanent complex to host the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) and with the event's golden jubilee just a few weeks away, the Goa government is yet to award a contract for the Rs 1,100-crore 'IFFI Village' project, according to information received by *The Indian Express* in response to an RTI query.

Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG), the state government body which is a co-organiser of IFFI and has recently been entrusted with the IFFI Village project after another government body (EDC Limited) failed to make significant progress, has said it can start work on the project only after IFFI is concluded.

Over the last few years, the state's successive chief ministers

have been promising to ready IFFI Village before November 2019 when the 50th edition of the festival is scheduled.

While organisers have said they are expecting over 10,000 delegates for the golden jubilee edition, it's not clear where they will be accommodated as the existing infrastructure has a capacity of 2,500. Also, the availability of the biggest venue, Kala Academy, has come under a cloud due to structural issues. The state government is now looking at the possibility of hiring single-screen theatres near the venue.

IFFI Village, a convention centre was touted to end the trouble delegates go through due to inadequate seating capacity.

IFFI, the oldest film festival in Asia, started in 1952. Until 2003, it was hosted by different cities every year. It finally found a home in Goa after the festival was organised there in 2004. Goa was made



The state's successive CMs have been promising to ready IFFI Village before November 2019. Express

IFFI's permanent host in 2014 and as per an MoU signed between I&B Ministry and the state government, one of the key responsibilities of Goa government was to

"develop and construct a permanent festival venue having a seating capacity for around 12,000 delegates/invitees and other support facilities for organizing open-

ing and closing functions including film screenings".

Soon after a permanent venue was announced, the Goa government said potential locations have been identified. On March 31, 2016, the state cabinet allotted a 50-acre plot in Dona Paula. In September 2017, then chief minister Manohar Parrikar appointed EDC Limited, a state government undertaking, as a special purpose vehicle for the project and set IFFI 2019 as the deadline.

Documents inspected show there has been little progress since. The request for proposal for the project was prepared only in December 2018 and presented before the 'Empowered Committee'. Atender inviting bids was floated on January 28, 2019, only to realise that there was a legal glitch in the contract as the state's Additional Solicitor General Atmaram Nadkarni pointed out that in the current format, the

government may end up losing ownership of the land to the prospective concessionaire. This led to issuance of several corrigenda — six till July 2019 — with the last one pegging the bid opening date at October 28, weeks before the 50th IFFI.

In September, the Empowered Committee under current CM Pramod Sawant decided to take away the project from EDC Limited and hand it over to ESG, the government body set up for organising IFFI in coordination with Directorate of Film Festival.

As per the request for proposal, the project is to be undertaken in two parts — the first comprising mandatory deliverables such as theatres to screen films, multi-level car parking and other facilities. The second includes setting up commercial buildings such as hotels. While the first part is expected to require an invest-

ment of Rs 350 crore, the second is estimated to cost Rs 750 crore.

The project plan includes 11 auditoriums in IFFI Village with a capacity of 8,600. At present, IFFI infrastructure in Goa has a cumulative capacity of 2,539 seats.

Kiran Ballikar, Managing Director of EDC Limited, said, "It has been decided by the Empowered Committee to hand over the project to ESG. They will take the project ahead."

Subhash Phal Dessai, vice-chairman of ESG who is also a BJP MLA, said the delay has been caused due to EDC's "lack of experience" in handling such projects. "...EDC is a financial institution also doesn't have the relevant experience to implement such a project which is essentially a construction project," said Phal Dessai. He said that ESG will start work on 'IFFI Village' project only after the upcoming edition of the festival is concluded.

Chief justices of three HCs transferred

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

CHIEF JUSTICES of three high courts and judges of two others were transferred on Wednesday.

Justice Amreshwar Pratap Sahi, the Chief Justice of the Patna High Court, was sent to the Madras High Court. Justice Sanjay Karol, who was heading the Tripura High Court has been sent to the Patna High Court in place of Justice Sahi. Justice Ajay Kumar Mittal, who is heading the Meghalaya High Court, has been transferred to the Madhya Pradesh High Court.

Justice Rakesh Kumar, a judge of the Patna HC has been sent to the Andhra Pradesh High Court. Similarly, Justice Amit Rawal, a judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, has been sent to the Kerala High Court.

Tejas refund-for-delay scheme may not apply in cases of ‘act of God’

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

THE “COMPENSATION-for-delay” scheme of the IRCTC-run Tejas Express may not apply in cases of delay due to fog in winters, which may be termed “act of God”. The final decision on this is yet to be taken.

“Ideally delay due to fog should be termed ‘Act of God’ as is built into the insurance system. We will take a call on it. We may also increase the threshold for compensation from (delay of one hour to two hours etc. We will need to think about it,” MP Mall, IRCTC Managing Director, told *The Indian Express*.

The Lucknow-Delhi Tejas Express is India's first regular train run and managed completely by a corporate entity and not by Indian Railways through



Lucknow-Delhi Tejas Express is India's first regular train run and managed completely by a corporate entity. *Express Archive*

its zonal units. IRCTC will launch another Tejas service from Ahmedabad to Mumbai soon with the same facilities.

IRCTC paid Rs 1.62 lakh in

compensation to its passengers on the Lucknow-Delhi train on October 19 since it was delayed by over three hours. Going off schedule meant the train's re-

turn journey from Delhi to Lucknow was also delayed that day. This is for the first time that train passengers in India have received such damages due to lack of punctuality.

The money is being paid by insurance companies and the IRCTC pays the premium through ticket sales. If the train gets delayed by over an hour, the company pays Rs 100 per passenger, while a delay by over two hours entitles passengers to Rs 250.

Insurance claims are routinely rejected across the world over losses suffered due to “act of God” such as natural calamities.

Giving two trains to IRCTC is part of an “experiment” by Indian Railways to set a precursor to bringing in private players to run around 150 trains across India in the first phase.

MP govt plans to add eggs in anganwadi meals, Oppn hits out

MILIND GHATWAI
BHOPAL, OCTOBER 30

THE CONGRESS government on Wednesday indicated that it would include eggs in meals served to children at anganwadis, drawing a sharp reaction from the Opposition BJP.

Women and Child Development Minister Imarti Devi on Wednesday said the government was planning to introduce eggs in anganwadi meals to fight malnutrition. She added that eggs would also be served to pregnant women.

“Eggs will not be served to everyone but only to those who have no objection. What's wrong in serving eggs to the malnourished children?” she asked, adding that the idea was to fight rampant malnutrition in the state. “Those who don't eat eggs will be given milk and bananas,” she said.

The BJP however, said the move would be opposed strongly. BJP National general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya said termed

the move as interference in people's religious beliefs.

When it was in power in the state, the BJP had not allowed eggs to be served in anganwadis though the proposal had been brought before the government headed by Shivraj Singh Chouhan. At the time, Chouhan had said he would not allow it as long as he was at the helm of affairs.

Leader of the Opposition Gopal Bhargava and BJP MLA Rameshwar Sharma said they would oppose the decision because it was not proper to force vegetarians to eat eggs. “Forget eating eggs. Children and women don't even touch them. Vegetarians will keep away from anganwadis. Instead of reducing malnutrition, the decision will increase it,” said Sharma.

Pankaj Pradhan, national general secretary of Jain organisation Tarun Kranti Manch said, “Not everyone is a non-vegetarian but everybody eats fruit and vegetables. You can't introduce eggs in places of learning.”

India ranks 13th for impunity for killers of journalists

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

INDIA IS one of the 13 worst countries when it comes to impunity for killings of journalists, according to Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), an international non-profit working on press freedom across the world.

In its latest Impunity Index published on Tuesday, CPJ stated that between September 1, 2009 and August 31, 2019 there were 17 cases of unsolved murders of journalists in the country. India however is at the bottom of the impunity table of the 13 countries, as only countries with more than 5 unsolved journalist killings in the last decade are mentioned in the index.

The other twelve nations that are mentioned in the index, starting from the country where journalist killings have maximum impunity are Somalia, Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, Philippines, Afghanistan, Mexico, Pakistan, Brazil, Bangladesh, Russia and Nigeria.

According to the index, India did not see a single journalist being killed in 2019 till August 31. However, five journalists were killed in the country in 2018, of which four were murders with confirmed motives, and one was killed in crossfire. India had seen the same number of journalists being killed in 2016 and 2017, while four journalists were killed in 2015.

The bloodiest years for journalists in India since 1992, the year since CPJ data is available, have been 1997, with seven journalists being killed, followed by 2013 when six journalists were killed.

Kashmiri senior journalist and editor of Rising Kashmir Shujaat Bukhari, who was shot dead by unidentified gunmen last year is mentioned as being murdered for his work. Other journalists who are mentioned for being murdered in India in 2018 include Chandan Tiwari of Aj Newspaper, Sandeep Sharma of News World and Navin Nischal of Dainik Bhaskar. Doordarshan's Achyutananda Sahu is mentioned under the category of killed in crossfire after he was shot dead in a Maoist attack in October 2018.

AJL plot allotment case: Hooda, Vora get interim bail

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PANCHKULA, OCTOBER 30

A SPECIAL court in Panchkula Wednesday granted bail to former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda and senior Congress leader Motilal Vora in a money laundering case related to allotment of a plot to Associated Journals Limited (AJL) here.

Granting interim bail to the two leaders till November 6, the next date of hearing, Special Judge Jagdeep Singh also issued a notice to the Enforcement Directorate, seeking its response on their regular bail pleas in the case, said an advocate representing Hooda.

He said the court granted the bail subject to each of the two leaders furnishing a bond of Rs 5 lakh and surety of the same amount each.

Publisher of the *National Herald* newspaper, the AJL is run by Young Indian, which is controlled by the Gandhi family. The ED in August had filed the prosecution complaint against Hooda, Vora and the AJL under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The ED, in a statement, had said the AJL, Vora and Hooda "were directly involved in the process or activity connected with acquisition, possession or projection of Proceeds of Crime i.e. Plot No.C-17, Sector 6, Panchkula to the tune of Rs 64.9 crore".

Vora, a Rajya Sabha member, is a Congress general secretary while Hooda has been Haryana chief minister for two terms between 2005 and 2014.

On Wednesday, the counsel representing Hooda and Vora contended that they have cooperated with the investigating agency since the beginning and the case predominantly rests on documentary evidence, which is in possession of the ED. The advanced age of the accused was also cited as a ground for seeking bail.

The ED filed a criminal complaint of money laundering in this case in 2016 based on a CBI FIR, which had taken over the investigation into the case at the request of the BJP government in Haryana.

"Hooda, the then CM, Haryana/chairman HUDA, blatantly misused his official position and dishonestly allotted the said plot afresh... in violation of necessary conditions vide an order dated August 28, 2005," as per the ED.

Kerala Maoist encounter: CM says police fired in self-defence, CPI seeks judicial probe

SHAJUPHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
OCTOBER 30

WHILE CHIEF Minister Pinarayi Vijayan Wednesday told the Kerala Assembly that police had fired at the Maoists for self-defence, the ruling coalition LDF's ally CPI sought a judicial probe into the firing, which it alleged was a fake encounter.

Four Maoists were killed in an encounter with Kerala police commando force Thunderbolt at Attappadi forest over the last two days — three on Monday and another on Tuesday.

Replying to an adjournment motion moved by the



CM Pinarayi Vijayan, CPI state secy Kanam Rajendran



Opposition, Vijayan said police were forced to fire at Maoists for self-defence. He said police were forced to retaliate when the Maoists targeted them. On Tuesday, when police were searching for the dead, Maoists

hiding in the forest fired at the police and another Maoist was killed, he said. Police recovered several weapons, including AK-47, the CM said.

However, CPI state secretary Kanam Rajendran took strong

exception to the CM's version. "Thunderbolt had fired at the Maoists from a close range when they were having food at a tent. Senior Maoist Manivasakam was so indisposed that he could not even walk. There should be a judicial probe into this fake encounter. We have obtained reliable information that the encounter was fake. The capital punishment given by Thunderbolt could not be agreed to at any cost," Rajendran told the media.

He said the police version that Maoists had an AK-47 is unbelievable. "Not a single policeman was injured in the incident. Maoists are not enemies of Communism or revolution. They

are brethren gone astray. CPI agrees with the people's issues being raised by Maoists," the CPI state secretary said.

Meanwhile, relatives of the slain Maoists are exploring legal options. Relatives of Sreemathi alias Rama demanded another postmortem of the bodies. "Police denied us a chance to identify the bodies before the postmortem. They have violated all laid down procedures. We would appeal before the Palakkad district collector seeking a re-postmortem," said Vasanthi, Sreemathi's relative.

This was the third incident of Maoists being killed in a police encounter under the present LDF regime.

FB moves HC against order on Ramdev video

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

FACEBOOK INC approached the Delhi High Court on Wednesday against a single judge order directing the firm and other social media platforms to block or remove links to a video containing defamatory allegations against yoga guru Ramdev.

The social media giant's plea against the October 23 order was mentioned before a bench of Chief Justice DN Patel and Justice CHari Shankar for urgent listing. The matter is likely to be heard by a bench of Justices S Muralidhar and Talwant Singh on Thursday.

The single judge had also held that any defamatory post or



Ramdev

video online that harms an individual's right to privacy should be removed from websites not only in India but also globally.

The judge's direction came on a case filed by Ramdev over a video uploaded by an unidentified person on social media containing "defamatory, disparaging and threatening" statements against him and Patanjali Ayurved Ltd.

Malegaon blast accused Kulkarni provided paid police security, he wants it for free

CHANDAN HAYGUNDE
PUNE, OCTOBER 30

SAMEER KULKARNI, an accused in the 2008 Malegaon blast case, was provided "paid" police security for a period of one month from Wednesday. However, he later filed an application with the Pimpri-Chinchwad Police Commissioner, demanding that he be given security free of charge.

Kulkarni stated in his application that he cannot afford to pay for police security. He, however, paid Rs 1,772 to the police on Wednesday evening as charges towards the police guard



Sameer Kulkarni with his police guard. Express

provided to him for one day.

Residing in the jurisdiction of Pimpri-Chinchwad police commissionerate, Kulkarni, who is currently out on bail, said, "I got police

security at 10 am today. I was called to the police headquarters in Nigdi in the morning. Police asked me about my daily schedule. I told them that I visit Mumbai regularly for the Malegaon blast case trial. I had applied for police security during the time I addressed press conferences ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. But I am not sure about the reason behind police giving me security now. It might have been in the wake of the killing of former Hindu Mahasabha leader Kamlesh Tiwari."

"I was not told in the morning that I will have to pay for my police security... I cannot afford to pay so much for my security. So I gave an application around 8.45 pm to the police, requesting them to provide me security free of charge," said Kulkarni.

DCP Sudhir Hiremath said, "Kulkarni had filed an application seeking security. A due inquiry was conducted in this regard. Based on threat perception, we decided to give him police security for a period of one month on paid basis."



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FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY

RISING SEAS IN INDIA & WORLD: THREAT FRESHLY ASSESSED, WHAT CHANGES

AMITABH SINHA
PUNE, OCTOBER 30

THE NUMBER of people in India threatened by rising sea-levels is at least seven times more than previously estimated, a new research has revealed. The research, published in *Nature Communications*, has found large areas on the eastern as well as western coastlines under threat of rising sea levels, including Mumbai on the west and Kolkata on the east.

It says 36 million people along the Indian coastlines currently live on land that will fall below the annual flood level by 2050, exposing them to risks of flooding, damage to infrastructure, loss of livelihood, or permanent displacement. The previous estimate was of five million people in these areas being exposed to these risks.

How the study was done

Researchers Scott Kulp and Benjamin Strauss of Climate Central, an independent organisation of climate scientists, have reported that they have developed a new tool that measures elevation of land from mean sea levels with much greater accuracy than earlier models. Their study claims that previous methods to measure land elevation suffered from large errors in most of the world apart from the US, Australia and parts of Europe. Land elevation data in most of these other areas came from satellite measurements done by a NASA project called Shuttle Radar Topography Mission, or SRTM.

The study says the error in the measurements came from the fact that often the tops of trees or buildings were taken to be the protrusions of earth. Thus, SRTM measurements even in the coastal cities of the US often overestimated land elevations by as much as 15.5 feet on an average. Their new tool, called CoastalDEM (or Coastal Digital Elevation Model), which uses artificial intelligence and machine learning on 51 million data samples, brought down this error to less than 2.5 inches on an average, it says.

The threat projection

The study claims to remove over-estimations in the assessment of land elevations in coastal areas. As a result, it finds that much larger areas of land were threatened by rising sea levels because of climate change. Consequently, a significantly higher population group was at risk.

The study found that 300 million people, and not 80 million as estimated earlier, across the globe were currently living in areas that were below the annual coastal flood line. By the turn of this century, land that is now home to 200 million of these people would be permanently below the high tide line.

Almost 80 per cent of these 300 million people live in China, Bangladesh, India, Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand.



Old projection for 2050



New projection for 2050

A map of Mumbai based on the new study, and prepared by *The New York Times*, shows a much higher threat projection than earlier. *NYT*

China alone accounted for 43 million.

Vulnerable areas in India

The new tool has found that in particular, the western coastline near Bhuj, Jamnagar, Porbandar, Surat, Bharuch and Mumbai are much more susceptible to rising sea levels than earlier assessments. On the eastern side, almost the entire coastline of West Bengal and Odisha have been found under threat. Except for some areas near Kakinada, the threats to the coastlines of the southern states have not been affected by the new measurements.

The study has serious prediction for India for 2050. "By that year, projected sea level rise could push average annual floods above land currently home to some 36 million people. West Bengal and coastal Odisha are projected to be particularly vulnerable, as is the eastern city of Kolkata," it says.

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

THE STATE of Jammu and Kashmir will be officially bifurcated into the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh on Thursday, October 31. This was the date chosen after the bifurcation was announced in Parliament on August 5. Beyond the symbolic importance — October 31 is the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel — the day will mark the beginning of the functioning of the two UTs at a bureaucratic level. The period between August 5 and October 31 has been used by the state administration and the Home Ministry to put a basic bureaucratic structure in place to implement the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act.

What happens on October 31?

In terms of events, the Lieutenant Governors of the two UTs will take oath of office along with the Chief Justice of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court. Last week, the Union government appointed serving IAS officer of Gujarat cadre Girish Chandra Murmu as the LG of Jammu and Kashmir, and retired bureaucrat of Tripura cadre Radha Krishna Mathur as LG of Ladakh.

On the ground, the two UTs will get their own Chief Secretaries and other top bureaucrats, their own police chiefs and key supervisory officers. While Dilbagh Singh will continue to be DG of J&K police, an IG-level officer will head the police in Ladakh. Both forces will remain part of the J&K cadre which will eventually merge with the Union Territory cadre.

For full-fledged bifurcation, the Reorganisation Act gives a period of one year. Reorganisation of states is a slow process that at times can take years; issues relating to reorganisation of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, which was bifurcated into Andhra and Telangana in 2013, are still being brought to the Union Home Ministry for resolution.

What will happen to other officers already posted in the undivided state?

An appointment of posts in both Union Territories has been done. While the bureaucratic structures are in place, the staff of the state administration are yet to be divided. The government had asked all staff to send in applications for their preferred posting between the two UTs. This process is still on. The basic idea is to have minimum shifting between the two UTs, sources in the state administration said, with preference being given to regional affinities. "We would like to give people the posting of their choice between the two UTs. Those from Ladakh prefer being posted in the region and those from Kashmir and Jammu want to stay put. The only issue is there aren't enough Ladakhi staff to fill in all posts there. So some people from Jammu and Kashmir may have to go there. All of that is being worked out. It will take some time," a state administration official said.

As of now, the Home Ministry has issued an interim order to maintain the station of all staff in the lower bureaucracy as it is. "This is to ensure that the two UTs keep on functioning without any hiccups beginning October 31," said the official.

What happens to the laws that governed the state of Jammu & Kashmir?

Legislative restructuring is a work in progress, with a lot remaining to be done.

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

J&K state to 2 UTs: today, later

Bifurcation comes into effect on October 31, with immediate events including LGs, top bureaucrats, police chiefs taking charge. But reorganisation is a long process; a look at what more will remain to be done.

Villagers of Katrasoo in Kulgam on Wednesday, a day after militants shot dead five labourers from West Bengal. *Shuaib Masoodi*

LEGAL ISSUES TO WORK OUT

JUVENILE JUSTICE ACT
Central Act takes those above the age of 16 as adults, existing J&K Act's age limit is 18.

RESERVATION
Current laws in J&K state do not recognise reservation according to caste, have provisions for region-wise reservation.

OTHER LAWS
Land issues may need to be looked into, business rules have to be framed for both UTs, Civil Services Decentralisation Act may require changes.

While 153 state laws are to be repealed, 166 have been retained. Then there is the cosmetic exercise of repealing Acts that mention "applicable to all of India but not the state of Jammu and Kashmir".

As of now, the state administration has implemented all that is mentioned in the Reorganisation Act as it is. But it is also saddled with the massive legislative exercise of arriving at and making state-specific insertions into the 108 central laws that would now be applicable to the two Union Territories.

For example, the state used to have its own Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) which would now be replaced by the central CrPC. Unlike the Ranbir Penal Code, which is practically a replica of the Indian Penal Code, Kashmir's CrPC has many provisions different from the Central CrPC. "It will have to be seen if any modification needs to be done to suit the state. But a final decision in all these aspects would be taken by Delhi," an official said.

"Similarly, there are state-specific insertions that may be done in laws relating to the

protection of women and children that have been replaced by the POCSO Act of the Centre. Same is the case with the Juvenile Justice Act. Then there is the law relating to reservations in the state which has been retained. While the quota for economically weaker sections has already been added through an amendment, the Centre may want to make some insertions drawing from central Acts," another state administration official said.

Which are the laws that may require state-specific insertions?

A major bone of contention with regard to the Juvenile Justice Acts of the Centre and the state is the age limit. While the central Act takes those above the age of 16 as adults, the state Act's age limit is 18. The argument has been that given the special situation in Kashmir where teenagers are often found to be part of violent protests, the central Act could jeopardise the future of many.

As far as the state's reservation laws are concerned, they do not recognise reservation according to caste. The state has provision for region-wise reservation such as quota for those living near the LoC and the International Border and a quota for backward regions. While the state population includes 8% SCs and 10% STs, there are regional differences such as Ladakh having no SC population but a high tribal population.

"Then there are laws relating to land which may need to be looked into. There are issues relating to business rules which have to be framed for both Union Territories. There are also issues relating to employment as anyone can now apply for a job here. The Civil Services Decentralisation Act may require changes," the official said.

Section 96 of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act facilitates this: "For the purpose of facilitating the application in relation to the successor Union Territories, of any law made before the appointed day, as detailed in Fifth Schedule, the Central

Government may, before the expiration of one year from that day, by order, make such adaptations and modification of the law, whether by way of repeal or amendment, as may be necessary or expedient, and thereupon every such law shall have effect subject to the adaptations and modifications so made until altered, repealed or amended by a competent Legislature or other competent authority."

Sources said though all central laws have been extended to Ladakh, regulations have to be framed.

The Act also provides for an increase of seats in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly to 114. Given that the Act also provides for delimitation, the process for which has not yet begun, this may take more time.

How will assets be shared?

On September 9, the government constituted a three-member advisory committee under the chairmanship of former Defence Secretary Sanjay Mitra to divide the assets and liabilities of the state between the two Union Territories. The committee is yet to submit its report.

Three more committees — on personnel, finance and administrative matters — were constituted at the state level for the purpose of reorganisation. The three committees are learnt to have completed their work but their recommendations have not been made public yet.

A far more complicated task than sharing of assets is financial restructuring. "Because of the decision coming in August, the administration is saddled with a middle-of-the-year financial restructuring which is proving to be a massive bureaucratic exercise. It is going to take some more time to fully put things in place," an official said.

Notably, while the total budget for Union Territories is Rs 7,500 crore, the budget for Jammu and Kashmir is in excess of Rs 90,000 crore. This could also necessitate continuance of the Kashmir division in the Home Ministry, sources said.

Who are Kerala's Maoists, how they differ from their comrades elsewhere

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, OCTOBER 30

THUNDERBOLT commandos of the Kerala Police killed four alleged Maoists in back-to-back encounters over Monday and Tuesday in the Attappadi forests of the state's Palakkad district. The four individuals, including a woman, belonged to Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, police said.

This was the third encounter between police and Maoists in Kerala in almost three years. In March this year, police shot dead a Maoist activist who had allegedly gone to extort money at a resort in Wayanad district. In November 2016, two Maoists were killed in an encounter in the Nilambur forests in Malappuram district.

Over the last decade or so, Kerala has seen overt and covert Maoist activities in the northern districts of Kannur, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Palakkad, and Malappuram. In 2018, Wayanad, Malappuram, and Palakkad joined the Centre's list of 90 leftwing extremism (LWE) affected districts across the country.

Beginnings of Naxalism

The ripples of the Naxalbari uprising in North Bengal in the late 1960s reached Kerala as well. North Kerala, including Wayanad, was a hotbed of the ultra-Left movement, and A Varghese, a CPM leader who turned to Naxalism, and K Ajitha, who

is now a prominent feminist activist, inspired a series of revolts against landlords. The so-called 'Spring Thunder', however, suffered a blow when Varghese, who had won the hearts of tribals, was killed in an encounter — which was subsequently revealed to have been fake — in 1970.

Leaflets and addresses

The nature of Maoist operations in Kerala is different from that in other LWE-affected states. They have never targeted civilians or caused human casualties, and use the trjunction of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka — where a seamless forest cover and difficult terrain hamper policing — as a safe organisational and transit hub. Forest patches in Palakkad, Malappuram, and Wayanad are part of this trjunction.

Over the past several years, the Maoists set up three squads (dalams) in this area — the Kabani, Nadukani, and Bhavani dalams — and added a fourth, the Varahini dalam, in 2017. They typically enter villages or tribal hamlets bordering forests, address the local people, and distribute leaflets in an attempt to drive home the argument for an armed struggle against the state.

They have not, however, had any significant success in winning over youths in the tribal hamlets, for which several factors are responsible: the socio-economic profile and standard of living of tribals in Kerala is far better than elsewhere, and improved polic-

After the encounter in Attappadi forest of Palakkad district. *Express*

ing and greater socialisation of tribal youths make recruitment difficult.

The Maoists mostly return to the jungles after collecting provisions from the villages.

Some stray activities

There have been stray cases of Maoist attacks on resorts and stone quarrying units alleged to be operating illegally or encroaching

on lands of tribals. Forest outposts too, have been occasionally targeted. Police sometimes register cases against identifiable Maoists, based on complaints from local people.

In 2014, Maoists strayed from the villages and forest fringes to attack a KFC outlet in Palakkad. That same year, the Kochi corporate office of Nitta Gelatin India Limited (NGIL), a prominent Indo-Japanese industrial venture, was vandalised. After playing cat and mouse for several years, Maoists and the Kerala Police exchanged fire in December 2014 in a reserve forest in Wayanad. The deaths in the encounters over the last three years have not deterred the Maoists, who have been spotted at several places in North Kerala.

Big Maoist names

A prominent leader is R Roopesh, 50, of Thrissur district. At the time of his arrest in Tamil Nadu in 2015, Roopesh had been heading the Western Ghats Zone of the Maoist movement for several years, and faced some 30 cases in Kerala. His wife P A Shyna, who worked alongside him, was arrested, too. Shyna has been released on bail; Roopesh remains in judicial custody.

Murali Kannampilly, now 67, was arrested by the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad in 2015. The son of Kannampilly Karunakara Menon, a former diplomat who served as India's High Commissioner and Ambassador to several countries, Murali

Kannampilly was for long a key figure in the Maoist movement in Kerala. He was recently released on bail from jail in Pune.

The Cherukara Palli family of Pandikkadu in Malappuram is one of Kerala's prominent Maoist families. CP Jaleel, who was killed in Wayanad in March this year, belonged to this family. Jaleel's brother, CP Ismail, had been arrested in Pune along with Murali Kannampilly. A third brother, CPMoithen, operates in forests in Kerala, while a fourth, CP Rasheed, is a human rights activist associated with the Maoist front Porattam.

The brothers started out on an activist path with issues concerning Dalits and the environment, and subsequently embraced Maoism.

The lone target of the second of this week's double encounter in Palakkad, Manivasakam, was also a senior Maoist leader, and a member of the CPI (Maoist) Tamil Nadu State Committee. Manivasakam had been allegedly leading the Attappadi camp since the 2016 encounter in Malappuram, in which Kuppu Devaraj alias Ravanna, a member of the CPI (Maoist) central committee, was killed.

In Kerala from other states

According to intelligence sources, most of the Maoists operating in Kerala belong to other states. There may be some three dozen of them in number, along with a handful from Kerala. Several top Maoists

from other states, such as Vikram Gowda, have been spotted in the state. Six of the seven Maoists killed in the last three years (including in this week's encounters) were from other states. The presence of these Maoists is usually attributed to the intensified police action in other LWE states, which drives them to seek refuge in Kerala.

Sympathy and support

As Maoists have not shed civilian blood in Kerala, their movement enjoys significant support. Kerala Maoists get logistic and ideological backing from organisations such as Porattam and Ayyankalipada, as well as from human rights activists. Police killings of alleged Maoists and cases against them are invariably questioned, and human rights activists often conduct a parallel probe into encounter killings.

The CPI, an ally of the ruling CPI (M), has always questioned police action against Maoists. Senior CPI leaders attended the wedding of the daughter of Roopesh and Shyna. In 2015, Kerala High Court said that being a Maoist is not a crime, and no one could be arrested merely for being one. After this week's killings, CPI state secretary Kanam Rajendran took strong exception to the police action, and retired HC judge Kemal Pasha said the police might have been trying to divert attention from other issues. Human rights activists marched in protest in Kozhikode on Tuesday, and were arrested.



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

TASK IN THE VALLEY

As J&K map is redrawn, need to lift curbs on people, leaders grows more urgent. Till then, no new beginning is possible

AS THE DECISION to divide Jammu & Kashmir into two Union Territories takes effect, much remains to be done. The work of dividing the manpower and material resources of the state is far from over even as the two newly-created territories of the state which will now pass into history as the “erstwhile state of J&K” set off on different paths. Most importantly, there is no papering over the stark ground reality that the government is yet to allow the people of the Valley to speak out, and be heard, on decisions that affect them the most. In various domestic and international forums, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and a host of other senior government functionaries have described and defended the August 5 decisions as necessitated by the need to “develop” a state that had ostensibly lagged behind the rest of the country on economic and social fronts due to its special status. The government’s plans to bring J&K up to speed are not yet known. But clearly, any efforts in this direction would, crucially, need the participation of the people for whom this development is meant. Sooner rather than later, the government needs to free the political leaders and workers who have been detained, and allow people to freely express their views in the Valley.

The Block Development Council election has shown that wiping the slate clean and creating a new leadership is difficult, if not impossible, in situations as fraught as those that exist in the Valley. The BDC is elected indirectly, that is, elected panchs and sarpanchs of a particular block of villages vote to elect one among them as the head of that block council. But almost a year after the last round of J&K panchayat polls, many of these representatives of the people at the bottom-most tier of electoral democracy continue to seek refuge in a hotel in uptown Srinagar, away from their villages. The persistence of fear has only underlined the questions of legitimacy about an electoral exercise at the end of which many seats of panch and sapanch in the Valley lay vacant, and most of those elected were elected unopposed.

It remains to be seen whether and how the conversion of a state into two Union Territories resolves the 70-year-long troubled relationship between Kashmir and the rest of India, and between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. The killing of five migrant workers in Kulgam on Tuesday, the targeting of the most vulnerable in the Valley, coming on the heels of several other deadly attacks on non-residents, shows that peace may remain elusive even after the momentous changes bring the state directly under the control of the Union Home Ministry. It is easy to lose sight of this in the din and rhetoric on Kashmir, but the first step towards resolving a problem is to acknowledge it. Political alienation that has spread and deepened over generations is a large part of the crisis in Kashmir. Unless it is addressed politically, it will persist and continue to impose a heavy toll in the Valley, and the country.

THE RISING INSECURITY

Not enough jobs are being created. Those created are of questionable quality

THERE ARE SEVERAL pointers to the jobs crisis in India: One, the number of workers in the age-group of 18-30 employed under the MGNREGA rose to 7.07 million in 2018-19, up from 5.8 million in 2017-18 — signaling the lack of employment opportunities. Two, a study commissioned by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister says that even in the organised sector in India there was a preference in favour of “non-contractual” jobs between 2011-12 and 2017-18. Thus, not only are enough employment opportunities not being created for the millions entering the labour market and for those shifting out of agriculture, but even the jobs that are being added are of the “non-contractual” kind, calling into question the quality of jobs created.

Much of the labour force shifting out of agriculture between 2004-05 and 2011-12 found its way into the construction sector. But with the sector in the midst of a multi-year slowdown, employment opportunities are likely to have severely diminished. It is thus possible that the slowdown in economic activity, especially in the non-farm labour intensive sectors in both rural and urban areas, coupled with the terms of trade shifting against agriculture, would have pushed workers to seek employment under the employment guarantee scheme. The NSSO PLFS report also shows that youth unemployment (age group of 15 to 29) surged from 6.1 per cent in 2011-12 to 17.8 per cent in 2017-18, indicating that not enough employment opportunities exist. This slack in the labour market also reflects in the subdued wage growth. On the other hand, the jobs report indicates a shift towards informalisation of work relations even in the organised sector during this period. And as these “non-contractual” jobs are unlikely to provide any form of social security benefits, it raises questions over the quality of these jobs.

The Mudra programme was meant to help tackle the jobs crisis in India. As reported in this paper, Rs 5.71 lakh crore was sanctioned during the first three years of this programme through 12.27 crore loan accounts. Yet, only 1.12 crore additional jobs were created during this period, implying that every new loan did not create an additional employment opportunity. This inability to create enough quality jobs will have long-term repercussions for the Indian economy. India is in the midst of a demographic transition, but the data so far suggests that it has not been able to take advantage of it.

PINK BALL CRICKET

A new game is here. It must be played and consumed in moderation

ON NOVEMBER 22 at the Eden Gardens, Indian cricket will step into the unknown. The Test against Bangladesh will see the country embrace Test cricket under the floodlights, that many think is a cure for poor turnouts. Eden’s spectacular backdrop will come in handy to those tasked with re-advertising the game’s oldest format. With the sun slipping into the clouds, and as the Kolkata fans throng the stands, Eden will be the place to be.

The day and night format, many including the newly coronated Indian cricket board president Sourav Ganguly believe, is the way forward. Certainly, the afternoon start will be more convenient to the fans — students needn’t bunk schools and office-goers needn’t think of excuses to watch some of the game. Yet the move could hold some of the game’s intrinsic charm hostage. It also throws up an important question: Does cricket have room for a fourth format, another mutant wherein the tactics and strategies are vastly different? For instance, there would be less of the fabled first-hour intrigue and more of twilight mystery. It’s at dusk that the pink ball is said to begin showing its true nature. It’s the time when the floodlights merge with the twilight sun, forming a spectrum that begins to play tricks with the batsmen’s vision. Besides, the pink ball, with its extra lacquer, could assist more swing, and even on the subcontinent, batting first would not be the obvious choice for captains winning the toss. With batting becoming difficult, matches wouldn’t last till the fifth day. The joy of watching the ball exploding off the cracks or fleet-footed batsmen dousing them with supremely soft hands and cool heads might be a thing of the past.

For the sake of cricket’s heterogeneity and tradition, pink-ball cricket is best consumed in moderation. It shouldn’t be the staple — rather, the odd night out. While cricket officials must be concerned about dwindling Test crowds, and they need to devise counter-measures, the intrinsic joys of the game must be protected. The future of Test cricket shouldn’t call for an erasing of its past.



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

DESPITE THE PANTOMIME optimism that government functionaries and the media have to display, it is becoming impossible to disguise the sense of gloom surrounding the Indian economy. All agencies, from the Economist Intelligence Unit to the IMF are downwardly revising growth figures; the RBI’s consumer confidence index is at a new low. There are learned debates about whether this slowdown is structural or cyclical. There are debates over demand side or supply side solutions. There is general global uncertainty: The global economy is slowing, the possibility of geopolitical and trade shocks is still high. But there is one obvious fact we are paying less attention to: The pervasive loss of credibility in the Indian system.

UPA 2 undoubtedly left a mess. This government has tried a few things, some even laudable. But at the end of the day, it has to take responsibility for the fact that it has sustained an economy whose numbers are more of a mystery, whose critical sectors (real estate, banking and telecom) are in crisis, where tax cuts are confused with tax reforms, where the pressures on the fiscal deficit are immense, where reform is a knee-jerk handout to one constituency or the other, where regulatory capture is still a possibility, where no one quite knows what the systemic effects of corporate malfeasance are, where income growth is near stagnant for most people, where there are uncertainties about what trade and RCEP might mean for India, and you don’t have much of a mystery for why India is not growing.

But our credibility is not undermined by the crisis, as it is by the systemic denial this government has produced. It does not help when economic titans like Mukesh Ambani want us to take a bet on what they call “the leadership accelerator”. It is the case that the more you need to trust a leader, the less likely you trust other institutions. But this metaphor is doubly odd. It does not contemplate the possibility that a leader can accelerate a car and crash it into a wall, or if the car is stuck in quicksand, can suck it in even further. Privately, almost no one believes our growth is more than two to three per cent. Any society with a gap between what peo-

It’s credibility, stupid

On the Indian economy, no one knows what to believe. This makes the uncertainty of our moment more endemic

At the moment when everyone agrees that rural India bore the brunt of demonetisation, when the fiscal deficit and inequality are both high, corporate tax cuts and tax cuts for upper income brackets more generally are a crazy idea. If the structural diagnosis of our malaise made by Rathin Roy is correct, that this is a system largely geared to the consumption and investment needs of a hundred million, leaving the rest of the billion in the lurch, then all measures that reinforce the privilege at the top will be counter-productive. The other unintended consequence of undue tax cuts for the rich is that the political pressure for populist compensations increases rather than decreases as a result.

ple, and even professionals, say about the economy in private and what they are willing to say in public, will face a credibility crisis. Part of the problem with the Indian economy is that no one knows what to believe. This makes the uncertainty of our moment, more endemic and self-fulfilling.

The second credibility gap is baked in our political economy. Because the ideological mystification is so deep it has to be said over and over again. If Indian capitalism is stalling, it is not because the government gives in to populist pressures from below — you can always cite this or that relief for farmers or consumers as examples. But the impact of that pales into insignificance with the undue power exercised by the rich and the powerful to distort the system. As Adam Smith always pointed out, the biggest challenge is not saving the market from the state, it is saving the state’s credibility from being decimated by the privileged.

The credibility-undermining influence of the privileged can be seen in many ways. The rich can disproportionately claim exemptions from the state. At the moment when everyone agrees that rural India bore the brunt of demonetisation, when the fiscal deficit and inequality are both high, corporate tax cuts and tax cuts for upper income brackets more generally are a crazy idea. If the structural diagnosis of our malaise made by Rathin Roy is correct, that this is a system largely geared to the consumption and investment needs of a hundred million, leaving the rest of the billion in the lurch, then all measures that reinforce the privilege at the top will be counter-productive. The other unintended consequence of undue tax cuts for the rich is that the political pressure for populist compensations increases rather than decreases as a result. The fiscal deficit will be harder to contain. In short, if you are a country whose political economy is going to oscillate between bowing to blackmail from the rich, and indiscriminate populist spending to compensate, you are not on a sustainable path. Your credibility will be low.

The second baleful influence of the privileged is over the regulatory system. India is now in a peculiar situation, where two op-

posed trends are creating a credibility crisis simultaneously. On the one hand, there have been attempts to “clean up the system” as it were and in some cases, create mechanisms for an orderly exit. Some of the uncertainty is the result of this process, whether it is in banking, real estate or the creation of the bankruptcy process. But the confidence is diminishing whether the government has the bandwidth to create a legal and regulatory culture that can bring this process to fruition. Or will we end up in half measures, where the poison is revealed but no mechanisms to absorb it? More than economists, what the government needs is to train a critical mass of people across all institutions of economic governance — legal drafting, taxation, regulatory bodies, banking — who can create a credible regulatory culture. On the other hand, there is a perception that the system as whole is moving in a direction where a couple of groups will exercise disproportionate influence on the political system. We are at the risk of moving from decentralised to centralised and concentrated cronyism (centralised both in terms of givers and recipients of benefits). The combination of half-done clean-up of the old, and new cronyism at the top is not a recipe for credibility.

The third credibility gap is the private sector itself. We can rail against the government all we want, but the fact is that episodes like Ranbaxy, IL&FS, DHFL, shake the credibility of the entire system. The issue is not the number of companies that might have engaged in creative accounting; maybe that number is still small. But can you now tell what is kosher and what is not? What these episodes exposed was the fragility of accountability systems in the private sector: Whether it is the reputation of the big accounting firms, who are still getting off lightly, or of corporate governance. Failures in many of these firms have systemic consequences. So, risk aversion will increase and no one will bet on the future. Economies, as Keynes knew, turn on structures of credibility. We are frittering that away at every level, even in economics.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express



ALOK KUMAR AND RONALD ABRAHAM

A NEW KIND OF GOVERNMENT

Niti Aayog’s Aspirational Districts Programme is a laboratory for governance reform

THE ASPIRATIONAL Districts Programme (ADP) is one of the largest experiments on outcomes-focused governance in the world. Spread across 112 of India’s socio-economically challenged districts, the ADP is Niti Aayog’s flagship initiative to improve health, nutrition, education, and economic outcomes. Initial evidence suggests that the ADP has already contributed towards improving lakhs of lives. If successful, the ADP can present a new template for governance. It is therefore critical to try and get it right.

The ADP’s theory of change rests on three pillars: Competition, convergence, and collaboration. Competition fosters accountability on district governments for final outcomes (instead of inputs) using high-quality data. Convergence creatively brings together the horizontal and vertical tiers of the government. Collaboration enables impactful partnerships between government, philanthropy and civil society. Of the Aspirational Districts, Niti Aayog plays a mentoring role in 27 districts in eight states, home to about 60 million people. Twelve central government ministries have similarly adopted the remaining districts.

Health outcomes in the mentored districts reveal significant improvements between the first and second third-party household surveys (in June-August 2018 and January-March 2019). We see increases in registering pregnant women into the health system (from 73 per cent to 86 per cent), institutional delivery of babies (66 per cent to 74 per cent), and anti-diarrheal treatment via ORS (51 per cent to 67 per cent) and zinc (34 per cent to 53 per cent). These rates are significantly faster than the

usual trajectory for these indicators.

While a deeper mixed-methods analysis is required to clearly understand what explains these results, we hypothesise the following four factors play a role. One, pioneering state and district-level initiatives in both the ADP and non-ADP districts in areas prioritised under the programme. Two, spurred by competition on outcomes, local governments target their efforts and improve programme implementation and design. Three, the focus on outcomes enables local experimentation based on a firm appreciation of ground realities. Four, partnerships between various philanthropic and civil society organisations with district governments augment local capacity. While the initial evidence on the ADP’s impact has been encouraging, as is true of any programme of this scale and scope, there is always room for supplementing our efforts.

As our colleague Karthik Muralidharan has argued, “High-performing organisations are characterised by autonomy to front-level officials on [processes], combined with accountability for outcomes.” The ADP is built precisely on this mantra, and the district-ranking index can be improved further to fully reflect this. Some process-level indicators, such as on-time delivery of textbooks in schools, are part of the ranking index, based on which districts’ socio-economic performance is assessed. Textbook delivery may or may not be a problem in districts, and its role in improving learning outcomes may be tenuous.

A simplified ranking index — with few but carefully chosen output and outcome measures — will more clearly signal national devel-

opment targets, while providing autonomy to local governments.

High quality administrative data is critical to improve programme implementation and design at the local level. The poor quality of administrative data is usually due to capacity issues at the ground level as well as incentives to inflate performance. To help improve data quality, we use independent surveys to validate administrative data. Building each district’s internal capacity to produce reliable and actionable data, and promoting a culture of data use, can be made a priority for the ADP. ADP is a laboratory of various cutting-edge governance reforms. First and foremost, the programme has shifted focus away from inputs and budgets to outcomes, such as learning and malnutrition, at the highest echelons of the government. It has also introduced non-financial incentives to encourage government officials to deliver results and actively encourages forging partnerships with philanthropies and civil society to create better impact using the same amount of budgetary spends. The programme has also developed a lean data infrastructure that smartly exploits complementary strengths of administrative and survey data.

Each of these initiatives is a radical shift from the status quo in governance today. Therefore, it is critical to carefully document and learn from the ADP’s experiences.

Kumar (IAS) is Health and Education Advisor at NITI Aayog. Abraham is Partner and India lead at IDInsight, a knowledge partner for the ADP. Views are personal



OCTOBER 31, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

BANARASI REVOLT
CHIEF MINISTER BANARSI Das is virtually raising a banner of revolt against the Lok Dal leadership and preparing for a showdown on the issue of the dissolution of the UP Assembly to which he is totally opposed. As the organisational wing mounted pressure for the dissolution and simultaneous poll to the Lok Sabha and the Vidhan Sabha, the chief minister abstained from the meeting of the party functionaries, which was addressed, amongst others, by Raj Narain, working president of the Lok Dal. To ensure his majority in the cabinet in the event of the CFDP ministers pulling out of the government, the Das was busy trying to win over the wa-

vering ministers of the Lok Dal to his side and defeat the move in the cabinet.

SOVIET BORDER BASE
EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN intelligence agencies have reported that the Soviet Union has built an army base near Farah, 65 miles from the Iranian frontier, and expanded the Afghan air base at Shindand, 75 miles from the Iranian frontier. The agencies believe that the Russians want to build positions from which they can apply military pressure on Iran. Under the 1921 Soviet-Iranian treaty, the Russians have the right to intervene in Iran should internal developments appear to them as a threat to Soviet interests.

NO ASIAN HUSBANDS
HUSBANDS AND FIANCES of those not born in Britain will not be allowed to settle here even though they may be British citizens, according to a new proposed legislation. The exact nature of the legislation is not yet known. But the home secretary has privately told a group of Tory MPs that the proposed measure would not only considerably reduce the number of Asian men and women automatically allowed entry into Britain, but it would also, in part, fulfil the pledge contained in the Conservative Party’s election manifesto. Last year, 10,000 Asians from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh were allowed to settle in the UK they married British citizens.

15 THE IDEAS PAGE

Neighbour's duty

The current juncture in Pakistan is a good moment for India to speak up on Pakistan's internal developments. Demanding humane treatment for Sharif and Zardari is the least Delhi can do



C RAJA MOHAN

AS HE RATTLES the Pakistani establishment with a big march on Islamabad this week, the Deobandi leader, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, has been accused of fronting for India. Branding political opponents as "agents" of the other county is quite common in Pakistan and India. What is more significant, though, is Delhi's apparent reluctance to exercise India's natural leverage in Pakistan's domestic politics. Could, or should, that change?

But first to Maulana Fazlur Rehman, who heads the dominant faction of the Jamiat ulema-e-Islam in Pakistan. For more than three decades, the Maulana has lent some colour to the drab Pakistani politics. Even more important, he has survived in a political environment where longevity is not assured.

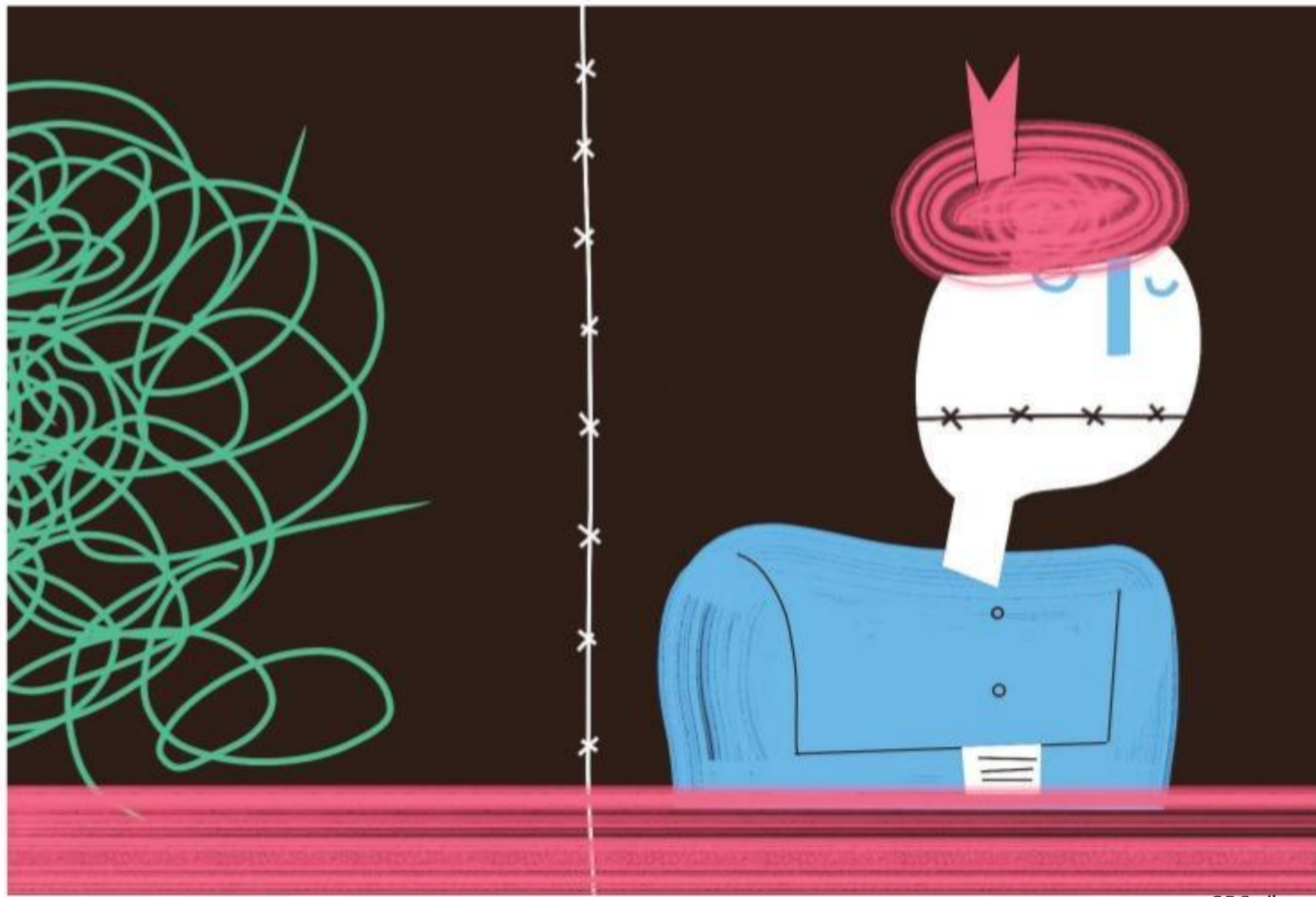
The Maulana is accusing Prime Minister Imran Khan of abject failure on all fronts. He is demanding that the PM resign forthwith and make room for fresh elections. The "deep state" or the military establishment (the miltabishment) was quick to caution him against the march. The Maulana has persisted for now and the big rally in Islamabad is scheduled for Thursday.

The deep state questions the timing of the anti-government protests by pointing to Pakistan's troubled external environment. In the east, Pakistan confronts the surprising Indian decision to change the constitutional status of Kashmir and in the west, Islamabad hopes to shape the political transition in Afghanistan and install the Taliban in power.

The call for political restraint has not had much appeal amid the worsening economic situation, especially after the implementation of the IMF regimen that Pakistan had accepted earlier this year. Meanwhile, the international Financial Action Task Force has warned of additional measures against Pakistan if it does not clean up its act on terror financing over the next few months.

Rehman probably did not intend it this way, but his march has coincided with the rapid deterioration in the health of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who has been in prison since last year. The three-time prime minister has endured some unbelievably harsh punishment meted out to him by the Pakistan government. If the miltabishment wanted to make a horrible example of Sharif, who had dared to challenge the writ of the army, Imran Khan has been willing to wield the hatchet.

Sharif was convicted by a judge who had been blackmailed into pronouncing the former PM guilty, denying him decent medical care, and preventing him from seeing his wife when she was on the deathbed in London. The government locked up Sharif's daughter and heir-apparent, Maryam, as she sought to mobilise the people against the army. For good measure, the deep state also detained Maryam's husband. Beyond the Sharif family, another leader of the Pakistan Muslim League and former prime minister, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, is also behind bars.



C R Sasikumar

None of this is really remarkable for Pakistan, where falling foul of the army is a crime in itself. Pakistan's deep state has the distinction of hanging one prime minister (Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto) and is widely suspected of organising and covering up the assassination of another (Bhutto's daughter, Benazir).

But the danger that Sharif might die in detention appears to have created a bit of a political panic. He has suddenly been given bail and admitted to hospital. Whether Nawaz Sharif survives or not, his sinking physical condition appears to have galvanised part of the political Opposition. The Pakistan People's Party, whose leader and former President Asif Ali Zardari is also in jail without any trial, is backing the march to Islamabad.

Delhi's official silence, amidst the deepening political and economic crisis next door, seems strange. It is not just the government, none of the main political parties are paying any attention to the unfolding brutalisation of Pakistan's politics or reflecting on its consequences for India.

Three broad reasons might be offered for India's silence on Pakistan's domestic politics. One is India's natural tendency towards self-absorption. Second is the unfortunate current temptation in India to see Pakistan as a black box. The intensification of tensions with Islamabad in recent years appears to have eroded Delhi's ability to differentiate between Pakistan's multiple institutions and political formations.

Third is the argument in Delhi that the dominance of the Pakistan army over its polity is immutable and therefore it is pointless for India to raise its voice against Rawalpindi's domestic transgressions. Associated with this is the proposition that if India wants any settlement with Pakistan, it has no choice but to deal with the army.

India, however, needs to question all the three propositions. On the first, India can't afford to turn its back on the domestic developments in any of its neighbouring countries. What happens inside Pakistan

Delhi certainly owes it to Nawaz Sharif and Zardari. Both leaders had made genuine efforts to improve relations with India when they were in power. They had often talked of putting trade and people-to-people relations above the Kashmir dispute. That they were open to a positive relationship with India is among the reasons that Rawalpindi punishes them today.

should always concern Delhi. Second, in treating Pakistan as a black box, Delhi limits its own policy choices. Delhi can't ignore the fact that even minor shifts in the correlation of Pakistan's domestic forces open at least some tactical space for India's policy.

Third, while the army's dominance over Pakistan's polity is real and unlikely to break down in the near future, India can't abandon all hope of internal change in Pakistan. Rather, Delhi must continuously strive to do what it can to encourage that change. Instead of insisting that the Pakistan army is the only credible interlocutor, Delhi must find ways to engage with all forces in Pakistan. It must keep channels of communication open with whoever in Pakistan is willing to talk.

The main policy question for Delhi is not about having formal talks with Islamabad. It is about leveraging the fact that India looms large over Pakistan's domestic politics. The current juncture in Pakistan is as good a moment as any for India to speak up on Pakistan's internal developments.

Demanding humane treatment for Sharif and Zardari is the least Delhi can do. Delhi certainly owes it to them. Both leaders had made genuine efforts to improve relations with India when they were in power. They had often talked of putting trade and people-to-people relations above the Kashmir dispute. That they were open to a positive relationship with India is among the reasons that Rawalpindi punishes them today.

Beyond the personal and ethical, it is in Delhi's interest to continuously remind itself and the world that India's problem is with the Pakistan army and not its political leaders. Having gotten nowhere with its efforts to engage the army in recent years, Delhi must do what little it can to strengthen the civilian and democratic forces in Pakistan.

The writer is director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore and contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The prime minister (Boris Johnson) has tried to manipulate opinion to give the impression that this election is for the benefit of the people, rather than for the benefit of himself and his party."

—THE GUARDIAN

New turn in the Valley

J&K's transition calls for a break from past political strategies, closer integration of people



J S SANDHU

JAMMU AND KASHMIR is passing through a major disruptive transition. The waves of change are being felt by those who were in power, and hence their unease is understandable. A major factor in Kashmir is the security situation, considering Pakistan's unabated support to anti-national elements. While in Srinagar, as the Chinar Corps Commander, I saw that the political class was falling short in countering the alienation, containing the growing radicalisation, and was not adequately addressing youth anger and consequent street violence. The "physicians" were unable, unwilling, complicit or negligent in treating the cancer. Invariably, the line of treatment involved Central rule, and this was resorted to periodically. But, the mindset was not being treated, and the cancer remained, curbed at times by potent therapy (security forces' actions). So, the treatment method has been surgically altered.

Was the existing structure adequate to control the increasing anti-Indian voices? In the last two decades, the National Conference and the PDP maintained control over Kashmir, whereas Jammu and Ladakh often tilted towards the national parties. The national parties continue to retain the loyalty of their votebanks in Jammu and Ladakh, with no substantive disillusionment. In Kashmir, election boycott calls of the separatists resulted in low voter turnouts, mainly by party cadres, indirectly facilitating the Abdullahs and the Muftis to retain power. The people's mandate, hence, remained unclear.

Additionally, major faultlines had developed between Kashmir and Jammu-Ladakh. The Jammu region always felt aggrieved due to the Kashmir-centric flow of state resources. And, the special status facilitated Kashmiri patronage-based political controls. Whether the growing radicalisation, unchecked anti-national influences, the security connotation, regional mainstream political hold and dynastic control warranted a "constitutional surgical strike" is worth analysing. My take is that we couldn't have let the cancer grow.

The political space in Kashmir is now being contested by new entrants. Dislodging existing political players is extremely difficult, and there are rare success stories. Sajjad Lone's People's Conference tried to be a viable political alternative, but could only make inroads in the Kupwara-Handwara area. Presently, the political base of NC and PDP is under pressure, due to various reasons. First, they did not contest the panchayat elections openly, hence most sarpanchs/panchs and associated grass root workers have newer affiliations. Second, their governance deficit is understood by Kashmiris fully, and the *awaam* is looking

for alternatives. Third, the administrative machinery is playing to the Centre's tune, and their patrons within the state bureaucracy stand diluted. The dilution of bias and networks with older politicians of the state bureaucracy should enable newer players to expand their following.

What are the likely prospects of these new players? Their major drawback is the lack of a united front. There are several youth brigade leaders, but many of them don't wish to work with other such aspirants. The lack of trust is evident among them — they don't wish to share the same platform even. So, like the proverbial "bundle of twigs" vs "separate twigs", these new entrants may become marginal players. They may merely dilute or denude the Assembly presence of the existing mainstream parties.

And interestingly, herein lies the political opportunity: The marginal presence of new and independent faces from Kashmir, including the People's Conference, can combine with the Jammu region's electoral winner(s) — probably a national party — to form the government. A delimitation exercise is also underway in J&K, and we may see a balance of power emerge between Jammu and Kashmir, in terms of representational mathematics as well. We may finally witness political power shifting to the south of Pir Panjal, for the first time in J&K. Notably, the Jammu region is better integrated with the nation and is largely nationalist, whereas the Kashmir region has nurtured an anti-India stance.

Political power in the erstwhile state rested in the Valley. The shift of political power to the south of Pir Panjal is advantageous to the country, as flow of industry and trade to the new Union Territory would be easier. Better integration would occur and national social welfare schemes can be drawn into J&K smoothly. At the strategic level, Jammu-based political power facilitates better integration of Jammu and Kashmir with the Indian nation.

But this has serious dangers too. Greater alienation would develop in Kashmir, adding fuel to the fear of Kashmiris — of being swamped by "outsiders". The turbulence in Kashmir would possibly aggravate, as they realise that their political power has reduced. It is, therefore, necessary to strike an optimal political balance between the Jammu and Kashmir regions, with sagacious leadership and deft handholding in the coming years. The Kashmiri Pandits (now based near Jammu) can be the bridge between the Kashmiris and the Dogra community of Jammu. It is imperative that existing mistrust between these two regions is assuaged. Possibly, the "people connect" can be developed through trade relationships, student exchange programmes and re-energising Kashmir's famed Sufi outlook. A thorny path, we will have to tread with care, maturity and by nurturing bonds.

The writer was General officer Commanding of the Indian Army's Chinar Corps in Kashmir. Views are personal

ISIS after Baghdadi

The killing of its 'Caliph' does not reduce the threat from the terror organisation



ANJU GUPTA

ON OCTOBER 26, during a raid by US Special Forces in a small compound in Barisha village in northwestern Syria, the top leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi blew himself in a dead-end tunnel. While the "reality and success" of the operation are being hailed as well as disputed by countries with boots on the ground in Syria — and the ISIS is yet to react — it is almost certain that Baghdadi is dead. As a "leader on the run" for more than five years, Baghdadi was more of a symbol for a (virtual) Caliphate. Yet, his killing will only be a short-term setback for the network.

Since the ISIS core had been preparing for this eventuality even while fighting to save the Caliphate, Baghdadi's killing is not going to make a difference to the threats posed by ISIS. Soon enough, the ISIS core will anoint a new Caliph, to whom all the wilayas (branches) and extremists and supporters will readily offer allegiance (bayat) to, while paying rich tribute to the "fallen hero". The ISIS network will also make serious efforts to mount "signature" attacks on chosen targets to prove its resilience, while local networks may mount smaller attacks, including lone-wolf attacks.

Within 18 months of the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq in December 2011, the al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) captured large territories across Iraq and Syria and morphed itself into ISIS. On June 29, 2014, the group declared a

Caliphate — a long cherished dream of global jihad and anointed a "descendant" of the Prophet, a doctorate holder, former prisoner at Camp Bucca and leader of AQI, Abu Bakr Baghdadi as the Caliph. Using slick propaganda on social media, the Caliphate attracted thousands of foreign fighters, including over 5,000 from the West.

Soon enough, riding high on bayats of extremists and terrorists from across the globe, ISIS announced "decentralised" wilayas and asked their supporters to join them if they could not travel to the Caliphate. This modus operandi paid rich dividends and has continued to keep the network going despite their losses. The US-led coalition launched Operation Inherent Resolve in October 2014 and cleared the last pocket of the Caliphate in Baghouz, Syria, on March 23.

Within less than a month, the ISIS claimed attacks in Sri Lanka — arguably the deadliest attacks after 9/11. On April 29, ISIS released the second video of Baghdadi. He hailed the revenge for Baghouz by "brothers in Sri Lanka". The rare video of Baghdadi was released to assure the cadres that it could hit their enemies anywhere at will.

Over 25-30,000 ISIS cadres have survived and many foreign fighters have escaped the Iraq-Syria theatre. Thousands of fighters and family members are being held in the Kurdish areas of Syria. ISIS sleeper cells across Syria and Iraq have mounted hundreds of at-

tacks this year. The decentralised wilayas, including in West Africa, the Philippines, Egypt (Sinai), Yemen, Afghanistan, Indonesia and Libya have become more active and are showcasing successes on social media daily. The open propaganda forums have been replaced by "invitation only" links on social media, making detection much harder.

The ISIS core may or may not take time in hailing the "martyrdom" of Caliph I and anointing Caliph II — invoking the Islamic history of martyrdom of Caliphs by "traitors and enemies". This will be much like the Afghan Taliban, which has been anointing their successive supreme leaders as the Amir-ul-Mominin. Since July-Aug 2019, the pro-ISIS social media has been circulating the name of a former Iraqi officer of the Baathist party, Al-Haj Abdullah Qardash, as in charge of day-to-day operations. He may well die or get captured. But it showed long-term planning by ISIS for its cadres. Given that ISIS boasted of Baghdadi's lineage from the Prophet to build his aura, it is quite possible that the group may name a Caliph with similar credentials.

The situation in Syria has become far more complicated with the US changing its rules of engagement to only "guarding" oil fields from ISIS and chasing its counter-terror targets in Syria. The weakening of Syrian Democratic Force's position vis a vis Turkey and the Assad regime will deplete its resources, hindering the capability to defeat ISIS. Coupled with sec-

tarian faultlines, public protests in Iraq and Lebanon, US/Saudi-Iran tensions, the region offers fresh opportunity for recruitment to both the ISIS and al Qaeda networks, which are deeply entrenched.

The ISIS has attracted foreign fighters from South Asia, mainly Pakistanis, Afghans, Malaysians and Bangladeshis. Though not many were known to have gone from Sri Lanka, the Easter attacks showed potential of violence even by a small group of committed cadres with support of the ISIS network. In Bangladesh three years ago, ISIS did create an effective but small network, with active support of western nationals of Bangladeshi origin. The security apparatus has broken up the network, but Bangladesh remains vulnerable.

Though less than 100-200 Indians are believed to have traveled to Syria and Iraq and much less to Afghanistan to join ISIS, this creates potential for more recruitment as well as aiding attacks on Indian soil or interests. The fresh round of radicalisation and recruitment that ISIS will surely embark on under its new leader, will pose further threats to India as well as to South Asia. A few weeks ago, ISIS propaganda has called for jihad pegged on sentiments around Kashmir and has specifically called for attacks on Indian interests in the Arabian Peninsula.

The writer is an IPS officer. Views are personal

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

UNFAIR BAN

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Shakib Al Hasan suspended for two years' (IE, October 30). The ICC's decision to ban Bangladesh's Test and T20 captain for two years from international cricket seems wrong. Al Hasan has been charged rightly for breaching the Article 2.4.4 of the ICC Anti-Corruption Code. But to ban a player for two years just for failing to report to the ICC that he had been approached by a bookie is unfair.

Tushar Anand, Patna

SECURITY BREACH

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Five West Bengal labourers killed in Jammu and Kashmir's Kulgam' (IE, October 30). That militants could kill five labourers despite the deployment of heavy security belies the claim of government that all is well in the Valley. It is inconceivable what the fate of the people will be once the security is scaled down. The government is busy in taking cosmetic measures such as inviting EU parliamentarians to gloss over its failures. Until it restores the basic fundamental rights of people, the optics management shall serve no good.

Deepak Singhal, Chennai

ONE-SIDED DECISION

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A visit, a diversion' (IE, October 30). In the past, the government has resisted attempts to internationalise the Kashmir dispute. This impromptu decision is a major departure in foreign

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301.

policy. The government could be intending to showcase its success but seems oblivious to the downside of internationalisation.

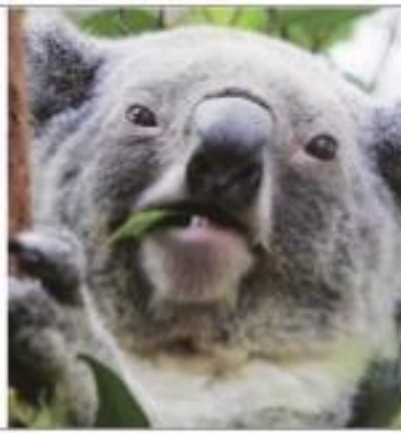
LR Murmu, Delhi

CORRIDOR OF AMITY

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Journey to a beginning' (IE, October 30). The Kartarpur corridor can help end animosity in Indo-Pak relations if both countries follow Guru Nanak's message. However, religious landmarks alone cannot lead to trust between the two countries. A thaw in relations between Pakistan and India seems optimistic when the Punjab government, the SGP and Akali groups could not find a common ground to celebrate this occasion.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

16 THE WORLD



AUSTRALIA
HUNDREDS OF KOALAS FEARED DEAD IN FIRES
Conservationists fear hundreds of koalas perished in wildfires that have razed prime habitat on Australia's east coast. Port Macquarie Koala Hospital President Sue Ashton said she hoped wildlife carers would be allowed to begin their search of the fire zone for survivors on Thursday. Even if 50% of the koalas in the area of the fire survived, it would mean 350 had died, she said.

TOP OF THE WORLD



Protesters remove their tents from a major highway north of Beirut, Lebanon. AP

LEBANON
Main roads reopen after PM resigns

Beirut: Some major highways in Lebanon reopened on Wednesday, after the Army urged protesters to lift roadblocks so that activities could return to normal following 13 days of demonstrations that paralysed the country and forced the Prime Minister to resign. Tuesday's resignation toppled the coalition government of Saad al-Hariri, who said he had hit a "dead end" in trying to resolve the crisis unleashed by the huge protests against the ruling elite. Early on Wednesday, troops cleared one major route north of Beirut after briefly scuffling with demonstrators.

PAKISTAN
Court bars regulator from taking action against anchors

Lahore: The Lahore High Court on Wednesday stopped Pakistan's electronic media regulator from taking any adverse action against TV anchors who challenged a directive, which barred them from giving their opinions during talk shows, until further orders, according to a report. Around 11 anchors filed a petition in the high court against Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority's (PEMRA) notification, saying the directive violated Article 19 of the country's Constitution, which grants every Pakistani citizen freedom of speech, Dawn reported.

BRAZIL
Bolsonaro denies links to murder

Brasilia: President Jair Bolsonaro angrily denied links to last year's assassination of a prominent Brazilian politician on Wednesday, after reports that a suspect in the murder investigation visited his residence before the killing. Marielle Franco, a popular leftist city councillor in Rio de Janeiro, was gunned down alongside her driver in March 2018 — a drive-by shooting that investigators described as a "summary execution." One of the two suspects in the murder apparently published a photograph of himself alongside Bolsonaro on his Facebook account, since deleted.

FIRST DECEMBER ELECTION IN BRITAIN SINCE 1923

Election to decide Brexit fate as Boris wins backing for Dec 12 poll

ALISTAIR SMOUT & WILLIAM JAMES
LONDON, OCTOBER 30

THE FATE of Britain's departure from the European Union could be decided in a December 12 election after Prime Minister Boris Johnson finally won parliamentary approval for a gamble that he hopes will break the deadlock over Brexit.

Johnson, who has failed to deliver on his "do or die" promise that Britain would leave the bloc on Oct 31, secured the election agreement just hours after the EU granted a third delay to Brexit.

The first Christmas election in Britain since 1923 will be one of the hardest to call in years. Brexit has variously fatigued, enthused and enraged swathes of voters while eroding loyalties to the two major parties.

When Johnson's predecessor, Theresa May, bet on an early election in 2017, she lost her slender majority in Parliament — a failure that ultimately prevented her from ratifying her Brexit deal in Parliament and sank her political career.

More voters switched between the two main parties at the 2017 election than in any ballot dating back to 1966, research by the British Election



PM Boris Johnson's call for a December 12 election was backed by Opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn. AP



“It's time to unite the country and get Brexit done.”
—BORIS JOHNSON
BRITAIN'S PRIME MINISTER

“This is our chance to build a country for the many not the few.”
—JEREMY CORBYN
LABOUR PARTY LEADER

Study showed. "It's time to unite the country and get Brexit done," Johnson told a meeting of Conservative lawmakers on Tuesday night shortly after securing the election to cheers from a Parliament he has accused of stopping him

from delivering the divorce. The election result, due to be announced in the early hours of Friday the 13th, could decide the ultimate fate of Brexit after almost four years of almost continuous political commotion in London that has shocked both

EXPLAINED
How an election could change Brexit

WITH THE EU having extended the Brexit deadline to Jan 1, and an election set to take place in the UK on Dec 12, the nature of Britain's exit from the bloc, and the question of whether an exit would take place at all, hang in the balance. This is because the two major UK parties have very different approaches to Brexit.

IF THE CONSERVATIVES WIN: The ruling Conservative Party is led by Boris Johnson, who has been a vocal supporter of Brexit. If his party wins, Britain is likely to leave the EU with the deal he has already negotiated with the bloc.

IF LABOUR WINS: The Opposition Labour Party has declared that it supports a second Brexit referendum. So, if Labour wins, it is likely to call for another vote on whether the people of the UK want to leave the EU. If that results in another nod for Brexit, then it is likely that the UK will try to negotiate a different withdrawal deal with the EU.

IF NEITHER GET MAJORITY: If either of the major parties forms a government with the support of smaller parties, then the Brexit saga could go on for a while longer. The other parties have views ranging from wanting a much greater separation from the EU to not wanting Brexit at all.

investors and allies. A five-year flurry of two historic referendums — on Scottish independence in 2014 and Brexit in 2016 — and two national elections in 2015 and 2017 delivered often unexpected results that ushered in political crises. The Conservatives are ahead of Labour by an average of about 10 percentage points in polls this month, indicating a majority in the 650-seat Parliament for Johnson, though pollsters admit their models are imperfect with turnout a key variable. REUTERS



Maha Vajiralongkorn

Thai king fires royal guards for 'adultery'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BANGKOK, OCTOBER 30

THAILAND'S KING has sacked four royal guards, two of them for "adultery", in a fresh wave of palace purges a week after his royal consort was stripped of all titles for "disloyalty".

Thai King Maha Vajiralongkorn, 67, ordered the dismissal of two male guards from the "bedroom section", the Royal Gazette announced late Tuesday. "They have committed inappropriate acts and adultery," the statement said.

The other two officers failed to meet the standards of the royal guard and were dismissed without compensation, according to the gazette.

Thailand's royal family is protected by a defamation law that makes scrutiny of its actions all but impossible within the kingdom.

But the purges have offered a rare glimpse into the palace.

The move comes after royal consort Sineenat Wongvajirapakdi was deprived of all royal titles three months after being appointed. She was accused of disloyalty and "acting against the appointment" of Queen Suthida.



HK BRACES FOR HALLOWEEN HAVOC

Students wear Guy Fawkes masks at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Reuters

■ Hong Kong is bracing for a possibly dangerous Halloween Thursday, when protesters, many wearing banned masks, plan to combine with fancy-dress clubbers in the party district of Lan Kwai Fong.

■ The protesters say they will march, without police permission, from a park in the Causeway Bay district through the heaving bar streets of Wan Chai to the steep foothills of the Peak above Central.

■ Every weekend, the bars in Lan Kwai Fong spill on to the streets even without the activists who have thrown petrol bombs at police, set fires and trashed buildings during five months of unrest.

IS mole may get \$25m US bounty on Baghdadi's head: report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 30

A WELL-PLACED informant is expected to receive some or all of the \$25-million US bounty that had been placed on Islamic State chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's head, the Washington Post reported on Wednesday.

Baghdadi's safe house in northwest Syria was stormed by special forces along with military working dogs and chased the world's most wanted terrorist leader as he tried to flee.

US commandos zeroed in on Baghdadi's hideout with the help of an extraordinarily well-placed informant, an Islamic State operative who facilitated the terrorist leader's movements around Syria and even helped oversee construction work on his Syrian safe house, the Post reported, quoting officials. Neither the man's identity nor his nationality has been revealed.

Citing unrest, Chile says can't host climate meet

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PUNE, OCTOBER 30

THE HIGH-PROFILE annual climate change conference has landed in trouble after hosts Chile said it would not be able to organise the meeting in view of the on-going civil unrest in the country.

Chile was supposed to host COP25 (the 25th edition of the annual Conference of Parties to the

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) from December 2 to 13 in its capital Santiago. It also cancelled the meetings of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation that were scheduled in November.

The UN Climate Change body said it was looking for alternative options to host the meeting.

"Earlier today, I was informed of the decision by the Government of Chile not to host COP25 in view of the difficult sit-

uation that the country is undergoing. We are currently exploring alternative hosting options," UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa said in a statement.

Chile has been witnessing largescale demonstrations that started with protests against a suburban train fare hike two weeks ago. It quickly developed into a mass movement demanding greater equality and better

public services. The annual climate conference takes decisions related to global response to climate change. COP21 in Paris in 2015 delivered the Paris Agreement, a new international arrangement to fight climate change. In the following years, countries were negotiating to finalise the rules that would govern the implementation of the Paris Agreement that will come into effect next year.

Transcript of Trump Ukraine call omitted key details: official

White House adviser testifies he tried to include those words in transcript

JULIAN E BARNES, NICHOLAS FANDOS & DANNY HAKIM
WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 30



Alexander Vindman had also testified that he expressed concern over the US President's call to his Ukrainian counterpart. AP

LIEUTENANT COLONEL Alexander Vindman, the top Ukraine expert on the US National Security Council, told House impeachment investigators Tuesday that the White House transcript of a July call between President Donald Trump and Ukraine's president omitted crucial words and phrases, and that his attempts to include them failed, according to three people familiar with the testimony.

The omissions, Vindman said, included Trump's assertion that there were recordings of former Vice President Joe Biden discussing Ukraine corruption, and an explicit mention by Ukraine's President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, of Burisma Holdings, the energy company whose board employed Biden's son Hunter.

Vindman, who appeared on Capitol Hill wearing his dark blue Army dress uniform and military medals, told House impeachment investigators that he tried to change the reconstructed transcript made by the White House staff to reflect the omissions. But while some of his edits appeared to have been successful, he said, those two corrections were not made.

Vindman did not testify to a motive behind the editing process. But his testimony is likely to drive investigators to ask further questions about how officials handled the call, including changes to the transcript and the decision to put it into the White House's most classified computer system — and whether those moves were meant to conceal the conversation's most controversial aspects.

The phrases do not fundamentally change lawmakers' un-

TESTIMONY DETAILS LOBBYIST BID TO OUST ENVOY TO UKRAINE

A REPUBLICAN former congressman turned lobbyist, Robert Livingston, repeatedly pushed for the dismissal of US ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch, an action later taken by President Donald Trump after he was urged to do so by his personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani, a US diplomat said in testimony on Wednesday. Catherine Croft said she got multiple calls from the lobbyist on this matter when she was a member of the National Security Council staff at the White House. REUTERS

DEATH WAS OFFICIALLY RULED SUICIDE

Epstein's injuries point to murder, says pathologist hired by his brother

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW YORK, OCTOBER 30

A FORENSIC pathologist hired by Jeffrey Epstein's brother said Wednesday that evidence suggested the disgraced financier had not died by suicide in his jail cell but had been murdered.

Michael Baden contradicted the official verdict of suicide by hanging given by officials in August, saying Epstein's injuries were "more indicative of homicidal strangulation".

"I think that the evidence points toward homicide rather than suicide," Baden, a former New York City medical examiner who was present at the autopsy, told Fox News. He said multiple fractures found in Epstein's neck — specifically the hyoid bone and thyroid cartilage — were "very unusual for suicide".

Epstein was found dead in New York's high-security Metropolitan Correctional Center on August 10 as he awaited trial on allegations that he trafficked



The wealthy financier was accused of sex trafficking

girls as young as 14 for sex. New York's chief medical examiner Barbara Sampson ruled that he had killed himself, a verdict that has been disputed by Epstein's lawyers and his brother Mark.

Her office did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Epstein, 66, was a multi-millionaire hedge fund manager who hobnobbed with countless celebrities over the years, including Britain's Prince Andrew and US President Donald Trump.

RECURRING BLAZES HIGHLIGHT VAST RICH-POOR DIVIDE IN STATE

Despair for many and silver linings for some in California wildfires

THOMAS FULLER, JULIE TURKEWITZ & JOSE A DEL REAL
SANTA ROSA, OCTOBER 30

AFTER A wildfire razed his spacious suburban home in the Sonoma hills two years ago, Pete Parkinson set out to rebuild. This time it would be an even better one. He reoriented the house toward vistas of a nearby mountain and designed a large kitchen with hickory floors and 16-foot windows under vaulted ceilings.

"We are now living the silver lining," said Parkinson, a retired civil servant who moved into his

new home 10 days ago. "It is a beautiful, brand-new home."

California's catastrophic wildfires have not discriminated between rich and poor. In recent years, tens of thousands of people lost their homes, from trailer parks to mansions. But the aftermath of the fires has produced a spectrum of misery and recovery, ranging from the wealthy, who with insurance money rebuilt houses sometimes worth more than the ones that burned, to those who lost everything and years later still have nothing.

Like access to quality education and clean water, natural disasters are another prism through

which California's vast income inequalities can be viewed.

A lawyerly knowledge of the peculiarities of the insurance industry, a pool of savings to fall back on and the time and grit to deal with the state's labyrinthine regulations have helped some in California bounce back from the infernos. Others have not been so lucky.

Jenn Wilcox worked at a residential care facility in the town of Paradise until Nov 8, 2018, when the town was incinerated by fire. After she narrowly escaped, the uninsured cabin where she was living was destroyed; she also lost her job. Her



Firefighters burned fuel around a home in Windsor, California, in an effort to save it from the Kincadee fire. NYT

life upside down, she split up with her boyfriend and returned to her home state of Georgia, where she is struggling to make ends meet as a home health aide. "I'm a refugee," Wilcox said. "I'm broke."

On Tuesday, firefighters in Northern California braced for the return of strong winds, hoping to avoid the further spread of the Kincadee fire, which has burned 75,000 acres in Sonoma County and was 15% contained. In Southern California, the Getty fire still burned while residents braced for extreme winds expected to reach 80 mph. Thousands of structures are threatened.

Karen Orlando, a real estate agent in the Sonoma Valley, has seen the rebuilding process in Sonoma County play out in distinct ways between "the really wealthy and then those who are just getting by".

Orlando said that for those with insurance and the means, rebuilding has been a kind of therapy after the trauma of losing a home; reclaiming those spaces is a way to soldier through grief, she said.

"Some people have decided to buy a lot maybe with a better view than what they had," she said. "Some people want to rebuild on the lot but now they get the

chance to build the home of their dreams. They get to pick out all the finishes and fixtures and imagine all the landscaping."

Fires this week in Southern California forced evacuations of celebrities like LeBron James and Arnold Schwarzenegger. James tweeted that he was driving around trying to find a hotel room after he fled his home.

Less visible has been the fate of those hard hit in towns like Paradise in the Sierra foothills, razed by fire last year, and Lake County, where 2,000 homes have burned over the past four years. In both places, incomes were strained even before the fires. NYT

17 ECONOMY

GOLD	RUPEE	OIL	SILVER
₹38,842	70.90	\$61.02	₹47,220

*Indian basket as on October 28, 2019

SENSEX: 40,051.87 ▲ 220.03 NIFTY: 11,844.10 ▲ 57.25 NIKKEI: 22,843.12 ▼ 131.01 HANG SENG: 26,667.71 ▼ 119.05 FTSE: 7,309.30 ▲ 3.04 DAX: 12,924.84 ▼ 14.78

International market data till 1900 IST

POLICY WATCH GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Centre planning cap on number of invoices for new registrants

To come into effect when new GST returns system is rolled out next year

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

TO PUT a check on fly-by-night operators and generation of fake invoices under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, the Centre is mulling limiting the number of invoices generated by new registrants. The cap on the number of invoices will be in line with the annual turnover of the businesses, which could then be raised on basis of credit history, a senior Finance Ministry official said.

The restrictions on the number of invoices are likely to come into effect once the new GST returns system is rolled out from April 1 next year. "We are detecting tax evasion through data analytics and artificial intelligence instead of randomly going on the street and trying to scare traders and businessmen. What we are doing is very, very targeted, non-obtrusive, non-manual approach. In most cases, it is based on concrete data analytics, solid information and in most cases we end up being successful. Now, we are going a step beyond — we will go further as to how to check the tax evasion from taking place," the official told *The Indian Express*.

"The use of Aadhaar is being brought for new registration. So, the fly-by-night operators will not be able to register and issue invoices, pass on input tax credit (ITC) and disappear. Now, at the time of registration itself these checks will be introduced. Any new registration will have some initial checks. There could be a limit on issuing the number of invoices for new registrants and if he needs a higher limit, then there could be a completely objective method to increase the limit depending upon the requirement and once he establishes his credit history, then these limits could be further increased," the official added.

The cap on number of invoices would be in line with the annual turnover so that small businesses do not generate large number of invoices seen for big companies to possibly generate a fraud trail for claiming ITC, as has been seen in some cases, officials said. Tax evasion under the GST regime has been a major concern for both the Centre and the states. As per government data shared in Parliament in July, a total of 9,385 cases of tax fraud involving an amount of Rs 45,682.83 crore have been detected by the tax authorities under the GST regime since its rollout on July 1, 2017. Out of this, 1,593 tax fraud cases involving an amount of Rs 6520.40 crore were detected in April-June, the first three months of this financial year.

The Centre recently amended rules to restrict ITC under GST to 20 per cent of the eligible amount for an entity if its supplier has not uploaded relevant invoices. There was no such restriction earlier and ITC was claimed by taxpayers on the basis of self-assessment.

The 20 per cent restriction on availing ITC was initially part of the recently introduced Section 43A in the Central GST (CGST) Act, which would be notified once new returns system would be rolled out next fiscal. However, discrepancies in ITC being claimed by businesses prompted the government to bring in this restriction first via changing the GST rules, another Finance Ministry official said. The recently introduced Section 43A of CGST Act relates to the procedure for furnishing return and availing ITC. Section 43A (8) states the procedure, safeguards and threshold of the tax amount in relation to outward supplies details have to be furnished by a registered person within six months of taking registration and the one who has defaulted in "payment of tax and where such default has continued for more than two months from the due date of payment of such defaulted amount, shall be such as may be prescribed."

Instead, the Fed said it will "monitor the implications of incoming information for the economic outlook as it assesses the appropriate path" of its target interest rate, a less decisive phrase. Fed Chair Jerome Powell will hold a news conference at 2:30 p.m. EDT (1830 GMT) to elaborate on the decision.

Kansas City Fed President Esther George and Boston Fed President Eric Rosengren dissented from the decision. They have opposed all three Fed rate cuts this year as unnecessary. The Fed's description of the US economy on Wednesday remained largely unchanged, with labor markets said to be "strong," and economic activity "rising at a moderate rate."

As in its previous policy statement, the Fed said it took the ac-

INDUSTRY BODY WARNS OF 'UNPRECEDENTED CRISIS'

'Breach of trust': Jio on COAI letter to govt on telecom sector

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

RELIANCE JIO Infocomm Limited (RJIL) on Wednesday criticised telecom industry body COAI for writing a letter to the government highlighting financial stress in the telecom sector without waiting to incorporate Jio's comments and acting in the sole interests of two competing players Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea.

Taking strong exception to the Cellular Operators Association of India's (COAI) Tuesday night communication to the government without waiting for its comments, Jio said in its letter to the association's director general Rajan Mathews that an unlikely event of failure of two operators "will not have an impact on the sector dynamics with existence of vibrant competition including presence of the PSUs and there is no restriction on entry by new operators."

In its letter to COAI on Wednesday, Jio accused COAI of "serious breach of trust" and said "it seems that there were extraneous considerations to send this letter, only on the behest of other two members. By such unwarranted behaviour COAI has just proved that they are not an industry organisation but just a mouthpiece of two service providers."

COAI on Tuesday urged a newly formed panel of secretaries to prescribe immediate relief measures to address stress situation in the telecom industry, especially after the Supreme Court's order

EXPLAINED It's incumbents versus new entrant Jio

THE TELECOM sector has become a two-way contest between incumbents Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea pitted against the newest and most aggressive player Reliance Jio.

The Supreme Court's recent order upholding the government's position on including revenue from non-telecommunication businesses in calculating the AGR of telecom companies, has led to divergent impact on these two sets of competitors, leading to a tug of war most recently from COAI's distress call to the government.

on adjusted gross revenue (AGR).

As per the order, telecom firms will be required to include non-core income for calculation of AGR, requiring them to pay the Centre as much as Rs 92,641 crore extra, including disputed demand, interest and penalty. Of the 15 old operators impacted by the order, only two private sector operators, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone-Idea, remain in service today, with the rest having folded up or merged.

Jio, the latest entrant and the most aggressive player in the sector, said it disagrees with intent, tone and contents of COAI's letter, which it argued does not represent industry views by any stretch of imagination. The COAI letter to the government said that in absence of an immediate relief by the Centre, two of the three private mobile operators — Airtel and Vodafone Idea, which provide

services to 63 per cent of the current subscriber base — will face "unprecedented crisis".

Attacking COAI's position, Jio said, "We are taking a strong umbrella at COAI exploiting the legitimate payout obligations to create an alarmist propaganda for the doom of the telecom sector in the country." It further said it disagrees with the "threatening and blackmailing tone" of COAI and accused the older operators of not investing sufficiently in the sector and "shedding crocodile tears" by claiming financial stress.

Jio said the older operators have not shown any inclination to modernise networks, while Jio promoters have made an equity investment of Rs 1.75 lakh crore.

The financial difficulties of the said operators is their own doing and effect of their own commercial decisions, Jio said, adding the

"government should not be obliged to bail them out of their own commercial failure and financial mismanagement".

Jio said that COAI's observations were not only factually incorrect and unwarranted, but tantamount to contempt of court.

"COAI's intent of using this as an opportunity to seek non-enforcement of the Supreme Court judgment and asking for relief is strongly objected by RJIL... These operators have the capacity and enough monetisation possibility to comfortably pay government dues," Jio said. It added that COAI, as an organisation "supposedly representing all operators", should stop blaming the apex court ruling and instead ask members to respect the judgment and "stop forum shopping for relief".

Seeking the Centre's immediate intervention to avert an unprecedented crisis, COAI also mentioned that one of its members has a different opinion on the matter and will present its comments separately.

As per a PTI report, the COAI warned that the impact of the crisis could be potentially catastrophic for the country, leading to curtailing of investment and deterioration of services and job losses, as well as shattering of investor confidence. The apex court had last week upheld the Centre's position on including revenue from non-telecommunication businesses in calculating the annual AGR of telecom firms, a share of which is paid as licence and spectrum fee to the exchequer.

Not sought debt recast from any lender: Vodafone Idea Care, Fitch action on telcos

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 30

VODAFONE IDEA on Wednesday said it has not approached banks for recast of its debt. "There has been reportage in some media alleging that Vodafone Idea has approached its lenders for debt recast. We categorically deny and dismiss this as baseless and factually incorrect," the company said.

"We have not made any request for debt recast to any lender or asked for reworking of payment terms. We continue to pay all our debts as and when these fall due," the statement added.

Meanwhile, Airtel said it is in best interest of all parties to form a "constructive mechanism" to ensure large levies are addressed in a "fair manner". WITHPTI

ally incorrect," the company said.

"We have not made any request for debt recast to any lender or asked for reworking of payment terms. We continue to pay all our debts as and when these fall due," the statement added.

Meanwhile, Airtel said it is in best interest of all parties to form a "constructive mechanism" to ensure large levies are addressed in a "fair manner". WITHPTI

New Delhi: Fitch Ratings on Wednesday placed Bharti Airtel's 'BBB-' Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating on 'rating watch negative' (RWN), in light of the recent Supreme Court order on AGR.

It also placed Airtel's and Bharti Airtel International

(Netherlands) BV's senior unsecured bonds and Network i2i's subordinated perpetual bonds on RWN.

Meanwhile, Vodafone Idea said that Care Ratings has downgraded its rating on 'long-term bank facilities' and non-convertible debentures. PTI

White House says it still aims to sign US-China trade deal next month

REUTERS
WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 30

THE TRUMP administration still expects to sign an initial trade agreement with China next month despite the cancellation of the APEC summit in Chile where officials had hoped to finalize the pact, the White House said on Wednesday.

The White House said that it appeared that the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum did not yet have an alternate location planned for its November 11-17 meeting after Chile earlier on Wednesday canceled its plan to host world leaders at Santiago.

"We look forward to finalising Phase One of the historic trade deal with China within the same time frame," the White House said.

The APEC summit was scheduled to bring together 20 world leaders, including US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping, on November 16-17.

However, riots, arson and protests over inequality this month — which have left at least 18 people dead, 7,000 arrested and Chilean businesses hit with losses of around \$1.4 billion — mean the summit stands cancelled, as does the COP25 global climate summit between December 2 and December 13.

The metro public transport system in the capital suffered nearly \$400 million in damages.

Chile's cancellation of the trade summit caught the Trump administration by surprise, a White House official told Reuters.

'Only 10% of stressed power assets resolved so far'

Progress on stressed thermal power asset resolution remained slow as only 10 per cent of affected generation capacity witnessed resolution despite several steps taken by the government and lenders, ICRA said

SUBDUED PLF LEVELS: Thermal power plants PLF (plant load factor or capacity utilisation) levels remain subdued with the increasing renewable generation and modest demand growth

ACQUISITION BY NEW SPONSOR: Around 10 per cent of the country's 40 giga watt (GW) stressed coal-based thermal power plants achieving resolution, mainly through acquisition by a new sponsor

UNCERTAIN RESOLUTION OF GAS-BASED ASSETS: Resolution of 12 GW stressed gas-based power assets continues to remain uncertain, given the



inadequate availability of domestic gas

MAJOR FACTORS AFFECTING RESOLUTION OF POWER ASSETS: Long time taken to achieve sustainable resolution Regulatory challenges in getting approvals for

projects Limited progress in signing of new long-term power purchase agreements (PPAs) Subdued thermal capacity utilisation levels Lower than expected improvement in financial position of distribution companies (discoms)

4.4% Growth in all India electricity demand in first half of FY20, falling from 6 per cent in corresponding year-ago period

7.4% Growth in electricity demand witnessed first quarter of FY20

57.7% All India thermal PLF in first half of FY20, falling from 59.5 per cent in first half of fiscal 2018-19

TARGET RANGE OF 1.50% AND 1.75%; THIRD CUT IN INTEREST RATES THIS YEAR TO HELP TACKLE TRADE WAR

US Fed cuts rates by 0.25%, but signals pause in easing cycle

HOWARD SCHNEIDER & LINDSAY DUNSMUIR
WASHINGTON/BEIJING, OCTOBER 30

THE FEDERAL Reserve on Wednesday cut interest rates for the third time this year in a move to ensure the US economy weathers a global trade war without slipping into a recession, but signaled its rate-cut cycle might be at a pause.

In lowering its policy rate by a quarter of a percentage point to a target range of between 1.50 per cent and 1.75 per cent, the US central bank dropped a previous reference in its policy statement that it "will act as appropriate" to sustain the economic expansion — language that was considered a sign for future rate cuts.

Instead, the Fed said it will "monitor the implications of incoming information for the economic outlook as it assesses the appropriate path" of its target interest rate, a less decisive phrase. Fed Chair Jerome Powell will hold a news conference at 2:30 p.m. EDT (1830 GMT) to elaborate on the decision.

Kansas City Fed President Esther George and Boston Fed President Eric Rosengren dissented from the decision. They have opposed all three Fed rate cuts this year as unnecessary. The Fed's description of the US economy on Wednesday remained largely unchanged, with labor markets said to be "strong," and economic activity "rising at a moderate rate."

As in its previous policy statement, the Fed said it took the ac-



US Fed Chair Jerome Powell will hold a news conference to elaborate on the decision. The US regulator's description of the economy on Wednesday remained largely unchanged, with economic activity "rising at a moderate rate." Reuters file photo

tion to reduce borrowing costs "in light of the implications of global developments for the economic outlook as well as muted inflation pressures."

The Fed said business investment and exports remained "weak."

The central bank and US economy are at an unusual juncture.

Unemployment is near a 50-year low, inflation is moderate, and data earlier on Wednesday showed gross domestic product grew at an annual rate of 1.9 per cent in the third quarter, a slowdown from the first half of the year but not as sharp a decline as many economists expected and some Fed officials feared.

But parts of the economy, particularly manufacturing, have stuttered in recent months as the

global economy slowed. Businesses have pared investment in response to the US-China trade war that both raised tariffs on many goods, and also made the world a riskier place to make long-term commitments.

While that has not had an obvious impact yet on US hiring or consumer spending, Fed officials felt a round of "insurance" rate cuts was appropriate to guard against a worse outcome.

The Fed cut rates in July and again in September, and by doing so hoped to encourage businesses and consumers with more affordable borrowing costs.

The approach was successful in the 1990s when risks developed during another prolonged period of economic growth. REUTERS

US economy slows marginally in Q3

REUTERS
WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 30

US ECONOMIC growth slowed less than expected in the third quarter as a further contraction in business investment was offset by resilient consumer spending, further allaying financial market fears of a recession.

As per the US Commerce Department's report, GDP rose at a 1.9 per cent annualised rate in the third quarter, as businesses maintained a steady pace of inventory accumulation, exports rose and the housing market rebounded after contracting for six straight quarters. The economy grew at a 2.0 per cent pace in the April-June quarter.

Third-quarter growth marked a further slowdown from the brisk 3.1 per cent rate

notched in the first three months of the year.

Meanwhile, the US Treasury yield curve flattened Wednesday after the Fed cut interest rates for the third time this year, but signaled that monetary easing could be on hold going forward. Yields rose, before retracing those gains as the market digested the news.

On the day, yields remains down, with the benchmark 10-year yield last 3.4 basis points lower to 1.801 per cent.

The two-year yield, which serves as a proxy for market expectations of rate cuts, was last down 1.2 basis points to 1.630 per cent. The spread between the two- and 10-year yields, the most commonly used measure of the yield curve, fell to 17.2 basis points from 19.2 at last close.

Sensex reclaims 40,000-mark on tax rejig hope, strong earnings

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU MUMBAI, OCTOBER 30



NEARLY FIVE months after the BSE Sensex hit the 40,000 level for the first time...

through also boosted market mood.

"The market is positive on expectation of fresh reforms from the government...

Results are adding fuel to the market despite weakness in other global markets...

Ajay Menon, MD & CEO, Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said, "The sentiment got a boost on hopes that the

government is likely to cut long term capital gains tax, dividend distribution tax and the securities transaction tax.

"Moreover, improved auto sales growth during the festival sessions, good quarterly results and stable oil and rupee rate have added fuel in the market.

Yes Bank, Maruti, IndusInd Bank, ICICI Bank and Bajaj Finance fell up to 2.41 per cent.

However, consumer durables, realty, metal and auto indices fell up to 0.98 per cent.

On the global front, markets awaited cues from the US Federal Reserve's policy decision.

Foreign portfolio investment is expected to pick up if the US Fed cuts the rate again.

NUMBER OF CONSUMERS WITH ACCESS TO CREDIT RISES 21.7%

'Growth in consumer credit market decelerates in 2nd quarter of 2019'

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU MUMBAI, OCTOBER 30

GROWTH IN India's consumer credit market continued to decelerate in the second quarter (Q2) with credit balances across all major credit products growing at a lower rate of 17.1 per cent year-on-year (YoY) in the second quarter of 2019 as compared to 23.5 per cent in Q2 of 2018.

According to TransUnion Cibil, a leading credit information bureau, growth in credit cards and personal loans significantly outpaced increases in auto loans, home loans and loans against property (LAP).

"Portfolio delinquency rates for most consumer credit products declined on an annual basis in Q2 2019, the exception being for LAP. However, it can happen that high origination growth can mask portfolio-level delinquencies," Cibil said in a report.

Non-banking financial com-

panies (NBFCs) remained under stress, with a recent portfolio shift to higher-risk unsecured credit, according to the newly-released TransUnion CIBIL Industry Insights Report (IIR).

"The NBFC liquidity crisis is becoming a serious concern, as it could have negative ramifications on wider economic activity," said Abhay Kelkar, vice president of research and consulting for TransUnion CIBIL.

"A healthy 30.2 per cent increase in credit card originations volumes in Q2 of 2019 led to strong 29.5 per cent growth in the total number of credit card accounts in Q2 2019. Over the same period, total credit card balances increased by 34.3 per cent," Cibil

'Portfolio delinquency rates for most consumer credit products declined on an annual basis in Q2 2019, the exception being for LAP. However, it can happen that high origination growth can mask portfolio-level delinquencies'

TRANSUNION CIBIL IN ITS INDUSTRY INSIGHTS REPORT

said. During Q2 2019, there was a shift in credit card originations to higher-risk tiers. In Q2 2019, 32.1 per cent of card originations were to consumers in below-prime risk tiers (subprime and near prime), compared to 26.4 per cent in Q2 2018.

Personal loan balances grew 35.0 per cent in Q2 of 2019, with origination volumes accelerating sharply, up 139.4 per cent in Q2 of 2019. NBFCs continued to be the primary driver of growth in this category.

Cibil said improvements in public sector (PSU) and private sector (PVT) bank personal loan delinquencies more than offset

an increase of 6 bps in NBFC delinquencies during the second quarter, resulting in an overall lower delinquency rate. "Credit card and personal loan balances in below-prime and mid-risk tiers had higher growth rates than the market overall," said Kelkar. "This indicates a greater willingness among lenders to relax their underwriting standards and extend more unsecured credit to higher-risk borrowers. This approach can certainly lead to growth, as we have seen, but it requires consistent and effective risk management strategies to be managed properly on an ongoing basis."

It said sluggish passenger vehicle sales continued to affect auto loan growth and serve as a drag on India's overall consumer credit market. Auto loan balances grew 10.9 per cent in Q2 2019, down significantly from growth of 23.3 per cent in Q2 of 2018. "Auto loans recorded the slowest rate of growth of all major lending categories in Q2 2019. Balance-level auto delinquencies of PSU and private lenders showed improvement in Q2 2019, reflecting those lenders' continued focus on lower-risk borrowers. Delinquencies of NBFCs increased by 7 bps," it said.

BRIEFLY

Chakraborty gets addl charge of Expenditure Dept

New Delhi: DEA Secretary Atanu Chakraborty has been appointed the Department of Expenditure Secretary, replacing G C Murmu who was named the first J&K lieutenant governor last week.

Reliance Gen Insurance scraps IPO plan

New Delhi: Reliance General Insurance, part of Reliance Group, has decided to withdraw its proposed initial share sale offer. PTI

Roadways will propel growth: VK Singh

New Delhi: The industry needs to explore new technological advancements to adopt road sustainability, said Gen V K Singh (Retd), Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways at an Assocham event. In a growing economy like India with a target to reach \$5 trillion by 2025, good roads will play a critical role in boosting industries and market accessibility, he said. ENS

Piramal Ent seeks nod to raise ₹1,750 cr

New Delhi: Piramal Enterprises is seeking shareholders' nod to raise Rs 1,750 crore from a Canadian investor by issuing CCDs. PTI

Aramco to keep 4.6 mn bl of oil in Indian storage

New Delhi: India will lease a quarter of its strategic petroleum reserve in Padur to Saudi Aramco to store about 4.6 million barrels of oil, a government official said on Wednesday. Aramco's IPO will come soon and it will be a decision taken by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's energy minister said. REUTERS

NPCIL admits malware attack at Kudankulam

New Delhi: The NPCIL on Wednesday admitted to a malware attack on one of the computers in Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant, a day after the plant authorities had asserted that cyber attacks on its systems are not possible.

HDFC acquires 9.89% stake in Bandhan Bank

New Delhi: HDFC has acquired a 9.89 per cent stake in Bandhan Bank as part of scheme of merger.

Now, OCIs can also subscribe to NPS

New Delhi: Overseas Citizens of India will now be eligible to apply for the National Pension System, the government said Wednesday. PTI

'Foreign airlines' flight operations in India to rise by 3% in 2019 winter schedule'

Air India seeks \$819 mn loan for 7 Boeing planes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

AIR INDIA is looking to raise \$819 million (over Rs 5,800 crore) to refinance existing bridge loans available for six Boeing 787 and one Boeing 777 aircraft.

The national carrier is yet to have long term financing facility for six B787 and B777-300ER, according to a tender document.

Bids have been invited from banks, financial institutions for refinance existing bridge loan facility worth \$819 million.

At current exchange rate, the amount will be more than Rs 5,800 crore. Air India had acquired 27 B787-800 planes and 15 B777-300ER aircraft. Out of them, 21 B787s are on sale and lease back while the remaining six are on short term bridge loans.

Among the 15 B777 aircraft,

IndiGo becomes member of global airlines body IATA

New Delhi: IndiGo on Wednesday announced that it has become a member of International Air Transport Association (IATA) which represents around 290 airlines across the world, comprising 82 per cent of global air traffic. PTI

one is on short term bridge loan.

Out of the total \$819 million bridge loan, an amount of \$135 million will be for B777 plane and the rest for B787s, as per the document.

The loan tenure would be "one year or till the long term take out financing is in place, whichever is earlier," it added.

'Warehouse leasing by auto firms dips as vehicle sales slump'

Leasing of warehousing spaces by automobile companies have declined by more than half during the first nine months of this calendar year due to slowdown in the auto sector, property consultant JLL said

GOVT LAND PREFERRED As automobile manufacturers prefer to go for government land, part suppliers and dealers which lease warehouses have become cautious in renting logistics space

THE SLOWDOWN in the auto sector has some rippling effect in warehouse leasing of late

WAREHOUSE LEASING from the sector is dominated by ancillary players, while original equipment manufacturers prefer to go for government land. Ancillary players with long-term plans have become cautious, said JLL



India CEO Ramesh Nair

24.1 MN SQUARE FEET Warehousing leasing during January-September, of which the share of auto and ancillary was only 3 per cent. In 2018, warehouse leasing

was 16.7 million square feet, with auto and ancillary accounting for 10 per cent

MAJOR AUTOMOBILE manufacturers like Maruti Suzuki India, Tata Motors, and M&M have undertaken

production cuts

OVERALL WAREHOUSING leasing will be higher this year driven by e-commerce and third-party logistics players, as per JLL

21%

E-commerce players' share in 2019 so far, which has risen from 20 per cent in the year-ago period

44%

Third-party logistics segment's share, a sharp jump from 28 per cent in the same period last year

Fiat Chrysler, Peugeot in talks over potential \$50 billion tie-up

REUTERS MILAN/PARIS, OCTOBER 30

TALKS BETWEEN Fiat Chrysler and Peugeot owner PSA over a potential tie-up that could create a \$50 billion car giant gathered pace on Wednesday, with one source saying a deal could be announced as early as Thursday.

The two groups said in separate statements they were holding discussions aimed at creating one of the world's leading auto makers, better placed to tackle a host of costly technological and regulatory challenges facing the global auto industry.

A deal could be announced as early as Thursday, a source familiar with the discussions said. A Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) spokesperson declined to comment on a timeline.

After ditching a proposed merger with Renault in June,

'Blackstone picks up 37.5% stake in edu-tech firm for ₹1,350 crore'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

PRIVATE EQUITY firm Blackstone has picked up 37.5 per cent stake in competitive examination preparation firm Aakash Educational Services Ltd for Rs 1,350 crore valuing the institution at \$500 million (over Rs 3,545 crore), according to sources.

Blackstone, which last week received approval from the Competition Commission of India (CCI) for picking up 51 per cent stake in Aakash Educational Services Ltd (AESL), is keeping options open to hike stake in the institute.

In a statement, the two companies said their partnership will help in building AESL as India's largest digitally enabled, omnichannel education company.

"The deal values AESL at USD 500 million and Blackstone has paid Rs 1,350 crore for the 37.5 per cent stake," a source said.

Standard Life sells 5% stake in HDFC Life for ₹5,750 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

UK'S STANDARD Life on Wednesday divested 4.95 per cent stake in HDFC Life Insurance Company for a little over Rs 5,750 crore through open market transactions.

The US-based Capital Group is among the buyers which picked up shares of the insurance firm.

According to bulk deal data available with the BSE, Standard Life (Mauritius Holdings) 2006 Ltd, one of the promoters of the insurer, sold 10 crore shares — amounting to 4.95 per cent stake — of HDFC Life. The shares were offloaded at an average price of Rs 575.15, valuing the transaction at Rs 5,751.5 crore, the data showed.

In August, Standard Life had sold 6.7 crore shares, representing 3.33 per cent of the total capital of HDFC Life, at Rs 481 per share.

US-based Capital Group is among the buyers, which picked up shares of the insurance firm

At the end of the September quarter, Standard Life held 19.69 per cent stake in HDFC Life, while the other promoter Housing Development Finance Corp Ltd (HDFC) owned 51.47 per cent, as per shareholding data on BSE.

Following the deal, shares of HDFC Life spurted 5.43 per cent to hit their 52-week high of Rs 643.50 in intra-day trade the BSE. The scrip closed at Rs 632.45, up 3.62 per cent.

In separate bulk deal data on the NSE, Value Line Pte sold 54.67 lakh shares of SBI Life Insurance Co Ltd at Rs 976.25 apiece, translating into a transaction size of Rs 534 crore.

Weighing incentives for states for farm reforms: Finance Commission chief

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

FIFTEENTH FINANCE Commission chairman NK Singh on Wednesday said the panel was considering working out a model to incentivise those states that undertake credible reforms in agriculture by easing or removing damaging rules, highlighting the immense potential of the sector as a driver of exports.

Singh said the Commission was also weighing a proposal to grant incentives to those states that improve rail connectivity, "designed specifically for the promotion of exports". He was speaking at a panel discussion, organised by the CII, following the release of the report of a high-level advisory group under economist Surjit Bhalla on ways to boost exports.

The Commission's criteria for awarding states for reforms in agriculture could include their proactive approach towards re-

viewing the archaic APMC law and the long-term land-leasing rules. Also, bolstering the ecosystem for enforcing contracts (where India ranked an abysmal 163rd among 190 countries in the World Bank's latest ease of doing business ranking) should be a key area of focus, according to Singh. These are among a plethora of stifling rules and regulations that have long hampered India's progress in agriculture and, in turn, dented its farm export prospects. The Commission, set up in November 2017, is gearing up to finalise its recommendations for the devolution of taxes and other fiscal matters for five years, starting April 2020.

Speaking on the need to change the people's mindset, including policymakers, about the urgent imperative of enhancing exports to sustain growth, Singh joked that while he had met heads of 27 of the 29 states, not even one of them dwelt upon the subject of exports in particular. FE

Boeing CEO pummelled on pay, 737 MAX flaws at US hearing

REUTERS WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 30

BOEING CHIEF Executive Dennis Muilenburg was repeatedly hammered by US lawmakers at a hearing on Wednesday over his compensation and key mistakes in the development of the 737 MAX that he newly acknowledged, in the wake of deadly crashes.

Enduring hours of scrutiny, Muilenburg said he had not offered to resign, nor submitted his letter of resignation to the board of directors as the grounding of the company's cash cow jet entered an eight month.

Back-to-back hearings in Washington in the Senate and

CAMBRIDGE ANALYTICA SCANDAL

Facebook agrees to pay \$644,000 penalty

REUTERS LONDON, OCTOBER 30

US ECONOMIC Facebook has agreed to pay a 500,000 pound (\$644,000) fine for breaches of data protection law related to the harvesting of data by consultancy Cambridge Analytica, Britain's information rights regulator said on Wednesday.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg has faced questioning by US and EU lawmakers over how the political consultancy obtained the personal data of 87 million Facebook users from a researcher. The Information Commissioner's Office issued the small but symbolic fine last year after it said data from at least 1



Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg

million British users had been among the information harvested by Cambridge Analytica and used for political purposes.

On Wednesday the ICO said that in dropping its appeal and

agreeing to pay the fine, Facebook had not made an admission of liability.

"The ICO's main concern was that UK citizen data was exposed to a serious risk of harm.

Protection of personal information and personal privacy is of fundamental importance," said ICO Deputy Commissioner James Dipple-Johnstone.

"We are pleased to hear that Facebook has taken, and will continue to take, significant steps to comply with the fundamental principles of data protection."

Facebook said it was pleased to have reached a settlement and the company wished it had done more to investigate the claims about Cambridge Analytica in 2015.

J&J's own expert found asbestos in Baby Powder

REUTERS NEW JERSEY, OCTOBER 30

EVER SINCE Johnson & Johnson disclosed this month that a government test had turned up asbestos in its Baby Powder, the company has attacked the validity of the result.

On Tuesday, for example, J&J announced that other labs it hired ultimately found no asbestos in samples from the bottle tested by the US Food and Drug Administration or from the same production lot.

In challenging the FDA's finding, however, the healthcare giant is casting doubt on one of its own experts. The private Maryland lab that found asbestos in Baby

Powder under a contract with the FDA is run by a paid expert witness for J&J.

Andreas Saldivar, laboratory director of AMA Analytical Services Inc, has served as a litigation expert on several occasions for J&J since 2017 in its defense against plaintiffs' claims that asbestos in talc caused their cancers.

He testified in a May 2018 deposition that testing he did in 2010 for the FDA showed no evidence of asbestos in Johnson's Baby Powder, helping to bolster the company's argument that its iconic brand is safe. Saldivar's lab began testing cosmetic talc products for the FDA again this year, and in September it found asbestos in an unmarked sample, later identified as Baby Powder.

Definitely I will spend some sleepless nights in the light of the recent incidents surrounding my comrade of 13 years. But I can also sleep in peace soon knowing fully well that he will lead us to the 2023 World Cup because the name is Shakib Al Hasan."

MASHRAFE MORTAZA
BANGLADESH'S ODI CAPTAIN

Bookie who brought down Shakib

Alleged fixer Deepak Aggarwal, who hails from Sonapat in Haryana but is now based out of Dubai, also runs a cricket academy in NCR

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

DEEPAK AGGARWAL, the alleged bookmaker named by the ICC as the man who approached Bangladesh star Shakib Al Hasan for inside information, had been a regular on the international cricket circuit and claimed to be a promoter of a planned T20 league.

A day after Shakib was banned for two years, those close to the ICC anti-corruption unit said Aggarwal hails from Sonapat in Haryana but is now based out of Dubai. He also runs a cricket academy in the National Capital Region.

"Aggarwal came on Dubai's ICC anti-corruption unit's radar because of his suspicious movement during a game in Abu Dhabi. After that he was put under surveillance and this brought to light his frequent interactions with Hasan," a source told *The Indian Express*.

It is learnt that Aggarwal started as an alleged bookie in Haryana but shifted to Dubai after suffering big losses. "We understand he isn't the kingpin of the match-fixing syndicate but works for a Gwalior-based bookie, who is also on the ICC radar. Aggarwal is a runner of sorts whose job is to get in touch with players and lure them into giving inside information about the games they are involved in. Since even the smallest league these days attracts thousands of betters, any kind of inside information helps bookies," the source said.

Detailing Aggarwal's modus operandi, the source said: "Aggarwal would follow players he had targeted wherever they were playing. In the initial meeting, Aggarwal would offer a hefty amount to players to be part of a league which he would say he was planning. Once he won their confidence, he would then inquire about team composition and possible scores."

The ICC's press release Tuesday about Shakib's ban confirmed Aggarwal's actions and movements. The global cricket body said that the first interaction between the alleged bookie and Shakib took place in mid-November of 2017 during the Bangladesh Premier League. Shakib was playing for Dhaka Dynamites. The all-rounder, when questioned by ICC, had said that a person who was known to him had provided his contact number to Aggarwal.

In January 2018, Aggarwal and Shakib had communicated over WhatsApp during the tri-series in Dhaka which involved Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe. On January 19, Aggarwal congratulated Shakib on WhatsApp for being named man of the match. This was followed by a second text: "Do we work in this or wait til (sic) the IPL." The reference to work was about providing inside information.

Aggarwal and Shakib continued to stay in touch during the tri-series. On January 23, the alleged bookie made another approach to Shakib for inside information. "Bro anything in this series," the WhatsApp message said.

Aggarwal again got in touch with Shakib in April during the IPL when the Bangladesh player was with Sunrisers Hyderabad. Aggarwal now wanted to know if a particular cricketer was in the playing XI. Aggarwal also asked Shakib for his 'dollar account' and spoke about bitcoins. Shakib, during this conversation, said that he wanted to meet Aggarwal 'first'.

Shakib, in his two interviews with the ACU in January and August this year, said that he did not accept or act upon any of the approaches he received from Aggarwal, in particular, did not provide any of the information asked for, and didn't receive any money or any other benefit from him.

Ganguly, Dravid, meet discuss NCA

New Delhi: BCCI president Sourav Ganguly on Wednesday met NCA head Rahul Dravid to chalk out a roadmap for the improvement of the academy, Indian cricket's biggest feeder line for many years. The long-time former India teammates discussed their plans for the academy with Ganguly also giving his inputs. The former India skipper, who took over the BCCI's reins last week, also visited the proposed land where the new NCA facility is supposed to come up. BCCI had signed a 25-acre deal with the Karnataka government in May and now it has got an additional 15 acres of land from the government for setting up the Centre of Excellence near the Bengaluru international airport.

The NCA, which was supposed to be the supply line of Indian cricket, has become a more of a rehabilitation centre, which even Ganguly acknowledged after taking over. It is currently situated adjacent to the Chinnaswamy Stadium. The land allocated for the construction of the new facility is near the Kempegowda International Airport in Devanahalli and is likely to accommodate three grounds, apart from indoor nets, administrative buildings, and the hostels. **PTI**



MINUS THE TALISMAN

Bangladesh T20 captain Mahmudullah arrives at the IGI Airport in New Delhi on Wednesday. Bangladesh will play the first T20I against India in New Delhi on Sunday. **PTI**

Changing bat, folding sleeves were signals player gave bookie before fixing in Karnataka league

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, OCTOBER 30

A FORMER opening batsman for the Bengaluru Blasters, M Vishwanathan, arrested by the Bengaluru police for fixing in the 2018 edition of the Karnataka Premier League, was tasked by the bookies with scoring less than 10 runs in 20 balls in a match against the Hubballi Tigers, the police probe has found. Vishwanathan scored nine runs in 17 balls in the said match.

Vishwanathan, 39, was arrested last week along with Vinu Prasad, a bowling coach for the Bengaluru Blasters, on charges of receiving Rs 5 lakh for slow batting in the August 31, 2018, game in Mysuru.

Vishwanathan signalled to bookies his 'agreement' to score less than 10 runs in 20 balls with a change of bat and the rolling up of his sleeves, police have alleged.

Vishwanathan and Prasad were lured into alleged spot-fixing in the 18th game of the KPL 2018 season by a Chandigarh-based bookie identified as Manoj Kumar alias Monty. He was introduced to Prasad by a player from the Shimoga Lions team Nishant Singh Shekawat, police have said in an initial report.

According to the police the spot-fixing,

After eight balls were bowled in the match Vishwanathan called for a change of bats and at the end of the third over rolled up his shirt sleeves. The change of bat and the lifting of the sleeves were pre-determined signals that had been agreed upon by the bookies and the player," police sources said.

which took place during the August 31st game was planned nearly a week earlier following a meeting between Prasad and the bookie Manoj Kumar at the lobby of a hotel in east Bengaluru.

A day prior to the match — during a practice session — Vishwanathan was instructed by Prasad about the deal, where he would have to score less than 10 runs in 20 balls and would communicate his participation in the fix by changing bats and rolling up his sleeves in the course of his innings.

Bengaluru Blasters were set a target of 118 runs in the truncated 18-over game by the Hubballi Tigers at the Srikantadatta

Wodeyar ground in Mysuru. The Blasters opener who had by then earned a reputation of being a power hitter, scored a laboured nine off 17 balls.

After eight balls were bowled in the match Vishwanathan called for a change of bat and at the end of the third over rolled up his shirt sleeves. "The change of bat and the lifting of the sleeves were pre-determined signals that had been agreed upon by the bookies and the player," police sources said.

According to the police probe in the case, the bowling coach Vinu Prasad was being influenced by multiple bookies during the KPL season to bring players into the fixing fold. Apart from the Chandigarh bookie Manoj Kumar, the police have also named two others — Venky and Khan — as being involved in trying to get players to be part of fixing.

The arrested Vishwanathan and Vinu Prasad have been booked for cheating and criminal conspiracy with regard to the KPL 2018 slow-batting episode. Police sources said they are investigating multiple incidents of alleged fixing that have occurred during the KPL seasons over the last couple of years and are carrying out arrests on the basis of strong evidence.

"Multiple bookies were involved in the fixing incidents and the names of several

bookies have come up and they are being investigated," police sources said.

The Bengaluru crime branch has since September arrested the owner of the Belagavi Panthers team Ali Asfak Thara, 40; a celebrity drummer in the KPL and other tournaments like the IPL and TNPL, Bhavesh Bafna, 26; and has named two Delhi bookies Sanyam Gulati and Jatin Sethi for involvement in the betting racket in the KPL. The police have also questioned Arvind Venkatesh Reddy, a real estate and hospitality businessman, who is the owner of the Ballari Tuskers KPL team, since 2017.

A member of the Ballari Tuskers team in the 2019 IPL fast bowler Bhavesh Gulecha, 26, has told the police that he was approached on behalf of bookies by Bafna, 26, the celebrity drummer, to underperform during a KPL match.

Gulecha has given a statement to the police saying he was approached by Bafna to give away more than 10 runs an over in a match in the 2019 KPL. The Bengaluru police have so far filed three different cases of illegal betting based on the KPL probe.

Earlier the police arrested Thara, for placing bets on KPL matches with a bookie based in Dubai. Thara is alleged to have influenced many players in the KPL to participate in the illegal betting racket.

World T20 qualifier: Scotland beat UAE, book ticket to Down Under

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
DUBAI, OCTOBER 30

SCOTLAND THRASHED United Arab Emirates by 90 runs on Wednesday in Dubai to book a place in next year's T20 World Cup tournament. Opener George Munsey belted 65 as Scotland made 198 in their innings. In reply, UAE were all out for 108, with nine balls left, after 18.3 overs as Mark Watt and Safyaan Sharif each took three wickets. Scotland joined Namibia, Netherlands, Papua New Guinea and Ireland, who had already booked their places but are still competing for the winner's trophy in UAE. The 14-nation tournament decides which six nations complete the 16-team field for the World Cup in Australia from October 18 to November 15 next year.

The final spot was being decided between Hong Kong and Oman in Dubai later. Scotland had struggled in group play and finished only fourth in their seven-team group.

Depleted UAE

"Not gone our way on this trip but nice to

Shakib's absence added motivation for Bangladesh: Mamudullah

AGENCIES
OCTOBER 30

BANGLADESH'S T20 skipper Mahmudullah Riyad said on Wednesday that Shakib Al Hasan's absence from the India tour will act more as motivation than handicap for the team.

A 15-member squad arrived in the national capital a day after one of their greatest players was handed a two-year ban (one-year suspended sentence) for failing to report three corrupt approaches.

"We have to play with our heart for the country," Mahmudullah was quoted as saying by ESPN Cricinfo. "I think this (Shakib's absence) will work as motivation for us. I think there's no greater honour than playing for the country. The responsibility to lead the side lies with me, so I will try to give it my all."

Fans protest ban

Hundreds of people staged a demonstration in a Bangladesh town on Wednesday against the ban. Shakib made a public appeal for support after being banned, unleashing a flood of angry anti-ICC social media posts from his fans.

Police said about 700 people took to the streets in Shakib's hometown of Magura, demanding the ICC revoke the ban.

"The protesters shouted slogans and marched along a highway. They also formed a human chain as part of their action against the ICC decision," said Saiful Islam, police chief in the western town.

Protesters carried placards saying that Shakib was the victim of a "conspiracy".

Smaller protests were held in the capital Dhaka, police said.

'Tough to come back'

Former Bangladesh captain and national selector Habibul Bashar believes it would be tough, if not impossible, for the banned all-rounder to regain his peak position.

"It is a tough ask. Shakib will be out of cricket for a year, which will be mentally tough for him... After one year, to first make a comeback and then strive to reach where you were before the ban is a tall order but not impossible," Bashar told PTI.

"Because the name of the player is Shakib, I have faith in his ability and talent. I have seen him make comebacks from rehabilitation and then very quickly get back into the groove," he added.

Former England captain Michael Vaughan demanded a harsher ban while Australia's Dean Jones wondered why Shakib did not report the corrupt approaches at a time when "players are well aware of the rules".

'No sympathy'

"No sympathy what's so ever for Shakib Al Hasan... Non what's so ever... In this era the players get briefed all the time about what they can & cant do and what that have to report straight away... 2yrs isn't enough... Should have been longer...," tweeted Vaughan.

"For all you abusing I have zero tolerance for corruption... It doesn't matter what team you play for.. Players these days know exactly what they can and can't do.. also know they have to report anything... if they don't they know the consequences," he added.

Former Pakistan captain Rameez Raja said the Shakib saga is a classic example of none being bigger than the game.

"So Shakib Al Hasan's ban has a lesson for all sports lovers and sportsmen: if you disregard the game and try to become bigger than the game by sidetracking the laid rules and protocols then be ready for a fantastic fall! Sad," wrote Raja.

Jones wrote: "How many times are these guys lectured? Before EVERY T20 and T10 and other Tournaments... The ICC and ACU officials brief them...#deafears."

Warner, Smith hand Aussies series win

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
BRISBANE, OCTOBER 30

DAVID WARNER and Steve Smith each smashed half-centuries as Australia hammered Sri Lanka by nine wickets to win the second Twenty20 in Brisbane on Wednesday and wrap up the series.

It was another massive wake-up call for the Sri Lankans, who arrived in Australia on the back of a 3-0 series win against Pakistan but have now been outplayed twice, after being crushed by 134 runs in Adelaide on Sunday. They must now regroup for the third and final match in Melbourne on Friday.

Warner and Smith came together after Aaron Finch was caught down the leg side off Lasith Malinga for a golden duck, and the pair produced a batting masterclass. Warner was unbeaten on 60 and Smith not out 53. Chasing 118 to win after Sri Lanka were restricted to 117 all out off 19 overs, they reached their target with 42 balls to spare.

"The bowlers did a terrific job, we bowled in the right areas and created chances and restricted them to 117, which wasn't enough on this wicket," said Smith.



Coming off an unbeaten century in the first T20I, Warner scored a scintillating half century (60* off 41 balls) in the second match.

"It's nice and easy batting at the other end from Davy. He's doing a terrific job. Played beautifully the other day and backed it up tonight as well."

Warner scored his first-ever T20 century when Australia crushed Sri Lanka on Sunday, and he brought that scintillating form into Brisbane.

In his first knock in the short format at international level since 2016, Smith was also

firing — producing some glorious drives and clever singles as he and Warner raced each other to see who could make 50 first. The explosive Warner won the battle, with his 14th T20 half-century coming off 30 balls, with seven fours. Smith soon followed, grabbing his third 50, off 32 balls, with six boundaries.

There was nothing the Sri Lankan bowlers could do against such quality batsmen, who were never troubled.

More responsible

"It's a tough side and I think with this kind of batting line-up our score wasn't enough," said Sri Lanka skipper Malinga. "We didn't get the score we expected and the batsmen will have to be more responsible. Shot selection is not that great and we didn't get any partnerships in the middle overs."

Two wickets from the towering Billy Stanlake, in for Mitchell Starc who was attending his brother's wedding, and a brace each for Ashton Agar, Adam Zampa and Pat Cummins kept Sri Lanka in check after they won the toss and batted.

BRIEF SCORES: Sri Lanka 117 in 19 overs (Kusal Perera 27; Zampa 2/20, Stanlake 2/23) lost to Australia 118/1 in 13 overs (Warner 60 not out, Smith 53 not out) by nine wickets



BATTLE CRY

A mural on the outer wall of the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, which hosts India's Tokyo Olympics qualifying games. *Hockey India*

Women at home... not quite

Team has made rapid strides, but federation's apathy has not helped matters as they seek Olympic spot

MIHIR VASAVDA
BHUBANESWAR, OCTOBER 30

RANI RAMPAL was 14 when she first turned out for India. In the decade since, she has become captain and is inching towards her 250th international appearance. Incredibly however, this weekend will be just the second time she will play a high-stakes tournament at home. For the rest of her teammates, the two-match series against the USA – the winner will qualify for the Tokyo Olympics – will be the first experience of playing a big match at home.

"The last time I played this kind of tournament at home, the 2012 Olympic qualifiers, it was mostly in front of empty stands in Delhi. This will be the first time all of us will play an important match at home," Rampal says.

For a country that attaches so much sentimental value to hockey – a sport that boasts of gender parity – the women's game has often been an afterthought. The cash-rich leagues, annual tournaments at home or expert coaching staff, have all been for the men; some of it because of market economics, but most of it due to the federation's priorities.

Things have changed for the better in the last few years, and the women players are now treated at par with their male counterparts. Yet, there are occasional not-so-subtle reminders of where the major priority lies. Like Hockey India's recent decision to withdraw the bid for the women's World Cup in 2023 and, instead, throw its hat in the ring to host the men's edition for the second time in a row.

Or, if one were to nitpick, the fact that a lower-profile men's qualifier between India and Russia getting a prime-time push-back this weekend ahead of the women's team's matches against the USA – a classic in the offing. The players, however, don't seem to hold any grudges. They are happy just to get a chance to play a high-profile match at home, something that none from the current squad have experienced. In that sense, strange as it may sound, the atmosphere at the 15,000-seater Kalinga Stadium will be as alien for India



Sjoerd Marijne's return has energised the women's team.

as it will be for the Americans.

Nothing, though, is more symbolic of the administration's attitude towards the women's team than last year's coach saga. In early 2017, Sjoerd Marijne, who was the coach of world number 1 Netherlands, took over the Indian team that had finished with a wooden spoon at Rio 2016, their first Olympic appearance in more than three decades. The dismal show – India did not win a single match at the Games – concerned few, though – their being there was a surprise in itself.

Changing perception

Marijne's task was to change this perception of the team. "In the beginning, it was bit of a struggle because I came from the number one (team) to the number 13. Things that were normal for me were not normal for the girls," Marijne says, in reference to the tactical limits and fitness of the team.

He collaborated with another Dutchman, analytical coach Eric Wonkink, and South

African physio Wayne Lombard to slowly turn things around. In a short time, they got the women to play with spunk rarely seen earlier. Even the hard-to-please Hockey India were impressed. So impressed, in fact, that when they were looking for a coach for the men's team, after Roelant Oltmans was sacked in September 2017, they did what few predicted – poach the women's coach.

Marijne was informed of this decision via a phone call when he was away with the women's team on an exposure tour to Europe. Former men's coach Harendra Singh was subsequently handed over the reins of the women's team, and led them to a bronze medal at the Commonwealth Games last year. The women, once again, played with intensity and ambition unlike any of the previous sides.

The men, meanwhile, did not buy into Marijne's ideas and as a consequence, they returned from Gold Coast without a medal. Soon after, in what felt like a promotion for Harendra and punishment for Marijne, their

roles were swapped. During that turbulent eight-month period, the women's team was destabilised as their coach was changed twice because Hockey India wanted the men to perform better. "I don't like when I cannot finish my work. And that was my disappointment," Marijne says about that phase. "It was a frustrating moment."

The women, who had gleefully taken to his ideas, were relieved when he returned. After the trust issues in the men's set-up, the Dutchman was welcomed in the women's team. "I still remember that one player came to my room and said, 'we are very happy that you are back'. I felt very happy at that moment," Marijne says.

Since then, the women's team's rise has been phenomenal. They came close to reaching the semifinals of a World Cup, losing to Ireland in the quarterfinals last year, and head into the Olympic qualifiers with some morale-boosting wins over Rio Games gold medalists Great Britain last month.

Most of it, however, has been achieved without an analytical coach after Wonkink's services with the women's team were discontinued almost a year ago. The analytical coach is the most important member of the support staff after the chief coach – he is the one providing live feedback on opponents' tactics and game-plan to the chief coach during a match and assists in mapping out strategies in training and before a match.

A bureaucratic delay in appointment is responsible for the post remaining vacant for such a long time. At the qualifiers, high performance director David John is likely to perform that duty. "I do two jobs now by working a lot of hours. The girls put in a lot of effort and I do the same," Marijne says.

That's been the story of the women's team – putting in hours of silent hard work that has brought them to a position where, for the first-time ever, they can compete at back-to-back Olympics. They being ranked higher than the USA gives them the advantage of playing at home. But they don't know what home feels like.

The winding road to realising the American dream

MIHIR VASAVDA
BHUBANESWAR, OCTOBER 30

THE USA hockey team's Road to Tokyo 2020 began on a golf course. On the first day of October, the players swapped their hockey sticks for golf clubs and indulged in a round of four-person scramble. The goal? Raise funds for their Olympic journey, starting with a trip to Bhubaneswar for a two-match, winner-takes-all qualifying tournament against India this weekend.

They may have won bronze medals at the Olympics (1984) and World Cup (1994), and finished in the top five at the Rio Games, but the American hockey team can't reach the Olympics, or even make it to qualifying tournaments, without private donations. Unlike India, there is no support from the government and, given the cut-throat environment, the US Olympic Committee pays for the bare minimum.

So, in the run-up to big events like the Olympics and the World Cup, there are up to five such fund-raising events, usually hosted by a players' parent. "It's a way to make a bit more money for our programme," says USA coach Janneke Schopman, a Dutch legend who is a two-time gold medallist, having won the 2006 World Cup in Madrid and the Beijing Olympics. "The funds from the golf event were used to kick-start our preparations for the upcoming season."

Money, or the lack of it, hasn't been the biggest hurdle for Schopman though. She belongs to a country where hockey is arguably the second-biggest team sport after football. For the last seven years, she has – in different roles – lived in a nation where the sport features nowhere in the public consciousness.

"It's hard to explain the sport, that's why we have to say field, right? In rest of the world you say hockey," Schopman says, referring to the more popular version of the sport in the US – ice hockey.

Schopman, 42, joined the USA set-up in 2012, soon after the London Olympics where the team finished at the bottom of the 12-team pile. Back then, the programme was overseen by Australian Terry Walsh, who later became Indian men's team coach. USA parted ways with him and brought on board former Great Britain player Craig Pamham, who was an assistant coach of the British women's team at the London Games.

Schopman was appointed Pamham's assistant. The duo converted the USA into a team that constantly punched above its weight. They won the gold medal at the 2014 Champions Challenge, defeated then world number 2 Argentina for the Pan American Games title, won a bronze at the 2016 Champions Trophy, finished fourth at the 2014 World Cup and fifth at the 2016 Olympics.

The turnaround

The turnaround was scripted in the agricultural hub of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, from where most of the players emerge. "It's the hotbed of the sport in the United States," USA Field Hockey Communications Manager Teryn Brill says. "Of the selected travelling roster of 20, 10 are from Pennsylvania. 17 of them are from the Northeast region (comprising New Jersey, New York and New Hampshire, among others but New Jersey is the most dominant region after Pennsylvania)."

Schopman explains that these are the only regions where hockey – a predominantly female sport in the USA – is played from an early school level right up to college. But the downside is that after college, there's nowhere to go, meaning the players retire at an age most players around the world begin their careers. "At college level, the player pool is very large. But if you don't make it to the national programme directly after college, there's no incentive to continue playing, which means many players retire when they are 22," Schopman says.



USA coach Janneke Schopman is a Dutch legend and two-time gold medallist. *Hockey India*



Road to Tokyo

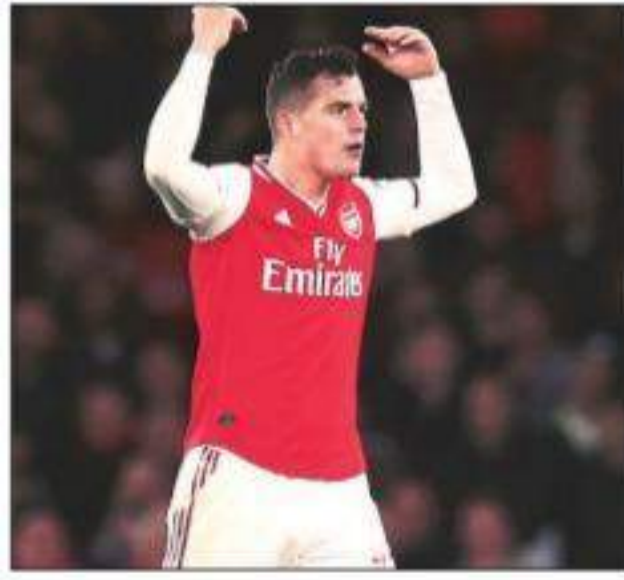
On November 1 and 2, the Indian men's team (rank 5) will play Russia, ranked 22, while the women (rank 10) will take on 13th-ranked USA in a two-match series. The winner of each match gets three points, while one point will be awarded to each team in case of a draw. The team with higher points after two matches will qualify for the Olympics. In case both teams are level on points, the team with the better goal difference will go through. If both teams are level on goal difference as well, a shootout will be held after the second match to determine the winner. This is the last chance for the teams to qualify for the Olympics.

The American aversion to hockey – field hockey – baffles Schopman especially since other sports that are similar in nature – lacrosse and ice hockey – continue to thrive. Several hockey players, in fact, have dabbled in these two sports. "In this country, people love the speed of games. They don't mind rules – American football is difficult to understand with all the rules, but they are not deterred by it. So yeah, one of my biggest dreams is to make hockey popular in this country," she says.

One way to do it is by winning a medal at the Olympics. Before that, however, they'll have to beat India who are going through a phase similar to USA's – finished 12th at the Olympics and then produced a string of good results. There have been murmurs in the hockey fraternity that USA's failure to qualify for the Olympics could have an adverse impact on the sport's future at the Games itself, given that hockey's spot isn't guaranteed on the Olympic programme after the 2024 edition. With the organisers now keen to reduce the size of the Games, there have been suggestions to make five-a-side hockey an Olympic event.

Would the failure to qualify for Tokyo 2020 nudge Los Angeles 2028 towards that move? "I would lie if I say it doesn't matter (qualifying for Tokyo). It is important for a country as competitive as the US," Schopman says. "The one thing I have learned from being here is that it is important for US to feature in every sport in the Olympics. So qualifying for Tokyo does matter, yeah."

[SPORTS BAR]



Arsenal to counsel Xhaka after fan feud

Arsenal will offer counselling to Granit Xhaka after the Gunners captain found himself in trouble for swearing at his own fans, according to reports in the British press. Xhaka cupped his ears and gesticulated towards Arsenal fans who booed him when he was substituted during Sunday's 2-2 draw against Crystal Palace at the Emirates Stadium. The 27-year-old appeared to shout "F**k off" at the crowd as he stormed towards the tunnel and pulled off his shirt. Arsenal manager Unai Emery admitted Xhaka was wrong to react that way and refused to confirm if he would remain skipper. Xhaka has held three meetings with Emery since the incident but the club are putting the player's welfare ahead of any quick decision over his future.

Ravinder settles for silver; Jyoti exits

Indian grappler Ravinder settled for a silver medal after going down to Kyrgyzstan's Ulukbek Zholdoshibekov in the 61 kg final at the Under-23 World Wrestling Championship here on Wednesday. The 22-year-old Indian suffered a 3-5 loss to Ulukbek, the current Asian U23 champion in 61 kg. Despite the loss, it was a creditable performance from Ravinder, who had won gold at the South Asian Games in 2016 and also a bronze at the Cadet Asian Championships in 2014. Meanwhile, Jyoti lost in the semifinals of the 50kg bout to Japan's Kika Kagata.

Thiem battles past Raonic in Paris

Dominic Thiem booked his spot in the Paris Masters third round on Wednesday by edging out Milos Raonic in a marathon encounter, while Greek star Stefanos Tsitsipas also progressed. Fifth seed Thiem had to dig deep to get past Raonic 7-6 (7/5), 5-7, 6-4 as the Canadian powered down 30 aces in a thunderous serving display. But Thiem, who has lost the last two French Open finals to Rafael Nadal across Paris at Roland Garros, saved nine of 10 break points to stay with his opponent before clinching the crucial breakthrough in game nine of the deciding set. "It was unbelievable today, his serve," admitted the Austrian after the match.



Federer said he wanted a fortnight's rest before resuming the season.

Federer to skip ATP Cup for 'family reasons'

Roger Federer has withdrawn from the ATP Cup, a new team competition to be held in Australia in January, citing "family reasons". "It is with great regret that I am withdrawing from the inaugural ATP Cup event," Federer said in a statement. "When I entered the event last month, it was a really difficult decision because it meant less time at home with the family and a fully intense start to the season. After much discussion with both my family and my team about the year ahead, I have decided that the extra two weeks at home will be beneficial for both my family and my tennis." The world number three, 38 years old, withdrew on Monday from this week's Masters 1000 tournament in Paris, two hours before the start also saying he needed to rest. The ATP Cup organisers tweeted: "@rogerfederer announced that he would not play the #ATPCup for family reasons and therefore Switzerland was removed" from the competition. The ATP Cup is a new competition, which competes with the revamped Davis Cup, will be held in Brisbane, Perth and Sydney.

Vaibhaav and Prakash enter second round

The Indian men's doubles pairing of Vaibhaav and Prakash Raj entered the second round of the SaarLorLux Open Super Tour 100 after beating Malaysia's Amri Ameer and Muhammad Idham Zainal Abi Syazmil here on Wednesday. Vaibhaav and Prakash notched up a thrilling 16-21 21-14 21-16 win over the Malaysian pair in 45 minutes. The Indian duo will next face fourth seeds Alexander Dunn and Adam Hall of Scotland. On the first day, India's Kiran George defeated China's Liu Hai Chao 21-17 21-13 to set up a clash with France's Toma Junior Popov, while BM Rahul Bhardwaj beat Belgium's Rowan Scheurkogel 21-15 21-9 in the opening round. He will face Germany's Kai Schaefer.



Williams goal helps ATK beat Chennaiyin

ATK got the better of Chennaiyin FC 1-0 in an ISL match at the Marina Arena here on Wednesday to go top of the points table. David Williams scored the all-important goal in the 48th minute to seal the win on a day when Chennaiyin FC did everything but score, much to the dismay of their coach John Gregory. Williams' strike was the ISL's 1,000th goal. The defeat meant that Chennaiyin are yet to find the back of the net so far in three matches this season. ATK, on the other hand, moved to the top of the points table with six from three games, including a 5-0 demolition of Hyderabad FC. Agustin Iniguez set up the goal for ATK with a diagonal ball down the right flank which was picked up by Prabir Das, who ran into the box and pushed it to Javier Hernandez.

Itoje: blending mind & muscle

The six-foot-five-inch English flanker is clued into racism in sport, politics in Africa and also jots poems

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
OCTOBER 30

IT IS difficult to overshadow an All Blacks World Cup loss. The strapping man who inflicted the defeat last Saturday, managed just that. The England forward **MARO ITOJE** while delivering an all-round display that earned him another MoM award, according to Euronews, "left commentators struggling to describe just how he managed to extend his telescopic arm up, over, round and through seemingly every All Black maul."

"Huge physicality, invaluable steals on the floor, immovable at the ruck, marauding legally through mauls — a nuisance from start to finish," England's former coach Sir Clive Woodward said of his performance. He praised not only his superman physique but also his talent for reading the game and his ball-handling skills. "There's a lot of skill and delicate touch in those big paws," Woodward said, praising his ability to shine under the most intense pressure.

The player of Nigerian origins, evokes chants of "Oh, Maro Itoje!" From England and Lions fans, the chant is likely to pick up at Yokohama this finale Saturday.

The Times gushes away about the architect of England's win over the All Blacks. Super Maro, the "chosen one" of English rugby, a one-man wrecking ball, Old Harrovian and liberal feminist, and slightly embarrassed poet. Their latest was 'clairvoyant' after he had declared ahead of semis: "This weekend feels like the time we're going to get them," his performance was described as "off the planet"

RUGGER WITH A RHYME

At 24, the 6ft 5in tower of pulverising rugby power is described as a 21st century renaissance man. His university courses at London's School of Oriental and African Studies, Times quotes, included state and politics in Africa and politics of development.

"His Twitter feed is mostly about rugby but also includes references to politics in Ghana, racism in sport, and feminism in football. On a list of books he recently recommended were Michelle Obama's autobiography, Becoming, and the rapper



Maro Itoje (top right) made a speech in Japanese during England's welcome ceremony at the Rugby World Cup in Japan.

Akala's bestseller Natives: Race and Class in the Ruins of Empire."

"Sportspeople are not robots," Itoje said in 2017. "They're not just confined to the area they are known for."

He might've quoted "Nature Boy" Ric Flair, a former world wrestling champion, to the effect that "to be the man, you've got to beat the man", but he's also reluctantly famous for scribbling poetry, as he gets foisted with the tag: Bard of Brawn.

Maro Itoje may deeply regret ever having told anyone he once scribbled down some poems while sitting in the team coach on the way to a match, writes Tom Harper. The England forward has been cursed ever since with labels such as "poet warrior", "poet in motion" and the "bard of brawn".

"People make it seem as if I'm William Wordsworth," he once joked to an interviewer. "I wouldn't mind if I had those skills."

His best-known poem — There Comes a Time, printed — was described by one newspaper's poetry critic as "a thoughtful, lyric piece". He was 19 years old and travelling to an away fixture in Newcastle when inspiration struck.

SHOTPUT TO LONG PULL

Born in London to middle-class parents from Nigeria, Itoje went to Harrow on a sporting scholarship, picked up three As in his A-

levels. Itoje was still a teenager when he was first picked out as a likely future England captain. He led the national side in the under-20 six nations tournament in 2014, scored a try in every game and was named England's player of the tournament.

Before focusing on rugby, the Saracens and Lions forward was ranked No.2 in the UK for his age group at shot put. "I had a few good years, I went to a few English Schools and I had a good time," said Itoje.

"I was ranked second in 2009 in the under-15 age group. I did it because I was pretty good and to be honest I think I could have made a career out of it — but rugby is so much more fun than shot put."

Itoje was Hertfordshire Schools champion three years running, twice finished runner-up at the English Schools and represented England at under-17 level.

"I lost three times in athletics in shot put, once to a guy who was older than me when I was competing a year up so I don't really count that — though I eventually ended up beating him," he added. He recalls particularly Luke Roach Christie.

"I don't know where he is now or what he's doing but every time he beat me it broke my heart."

Roach-Christie competed for England at the schools home internationals before leaving athletics after university.

FROM VAUXHALL TO MERC

In 2016, England coach Eddie Jones defied the critics to include Itoje, who was tearing up trees for Saracens, in his England team for the Six Nations, memorably comparing him to the most mundane of 1970s family cars.

"Maro is a young kid who has a good head on his shoulders," he said. "He's like a Vauxhall Viva now. We want to make him into a BMW. He's got a lot of work to do but he's got potential."

And some potential. Weeks later, as a 21-year-old winning his third cap, Itoje was named man of the match in England's Six Nations win over Wales, and 16 months after that he earned the same honour after the British and Irish Lions' famous second-test victory over New Zealand in Wellington.

He wants to look as unscratched as a Merc too. In a hilarious response to Jones' clarion call of earning more battle scars, Itoje chuckled, "I hope I don't have too many bat-

tle scars ... I would like to leave rugby blemish-free. I definitely don't want to end up looking like [the forwards coach] Steve Borthwick. That would be a sad day for me."

SLAMS RACISM

England's Maro Itoje had slammed racist abuse in football as appalling and abysmal and warned that rugby union should not consider itself immune from similar problems. Itoje was sickened by events in Bulgaria and urged rugby to do more to combat racism and discrimination of all kinds.

"You would think they wouldn't have to go through that. It sends a poor message about the game of football ... it's a shame because it's such a beautiful game and it's being tarred by people with racist thoughts and racist minds. It's terrible that players have to experience that when they just want to go out and play the game they love. I

it is important that those who are subject to this kind of abuse and discrimination speak up and highlight the wrongs and the issues. I also think associations and teams need to take a tougher stand. Punishment needs to be more severe because it is not acting as a deterrent, especially when they go abroad to places like Bulgaria. They need to make it crystal clear."

He has been appalled over the last two years with several incidents with Raheem Sterling, Dele Alli. Itoje's teammates Anthony Watson and Jonathan Joseph are friends of Tyrone Mings, among the targets of racist abuse before and during his debut for England in Sofia, and from Japan they were in touch with the Aston Villa player.

MARO ITOJE POEM

*There comes a time
When a boy must become a man
When fear must turn to bravery
When thoughts must turn to belief
When this belief must turn to action
When one must love and one must hope
When preparation turns to performance
When strangers turn to friends
When friends turn to foes
When joy fulfils your mind
When anger fills your heart
When one must stand up and lead
When one must sit back and listen
There comes a time, when the time must be taken*

Tokyo, IOC spar over marathon move

REUTERS
TOKYO, OCTOBER 30

THE INTERNATIONAL Olympic Committee (IOC) said on Wednesday it wants Tokyo to understand the reasons why it is switching the 2020 Games marathon to the northern city of Sapporo, a decision that has infuriated the capital's governor Yuriko Koike.

The IOC announced a plan earlier this month to move the marathon and race walking events to the northern island of Hokkaido due to concerns about heat in Tokyo next summer. John Coates, the IOC's Coordination Commission chief for the Tokyo Games, said at the start of a regular Coordination Commission meeting that he did not want to leave at the end of the week without gaining the people of Tokyo's understanding about the move.

"We owe it to the people of Tokyo to make sure they are fully briefed," Coates said.

Coates cited the example of the athletics world championships in Doha where the heat and humidity forced many athletes to drop out of the race despite the marathon being held at midnight. He said he had explained these reasons to Koike. Tokyo temperatures in July and August, when the city will host the Games, regularly exceed 30 degrees Celsius with high humidity adding to the discomfort.

Coates added that he wanted to form a four-party group comprised of the IOC, the Tokyo government, national government and the 2020 Organizing Committee to work out the details of the change. Koike, speaking at the same coordination committee meeting, repeated her stance that the races should remain in Tokyo.

"We consider it an unprecedented turn of events to make such an abrupt proposal with no consultation or discussion whatsoever with the host city Tokyo," Koike said.

Tokyo had invested a lot of time and money into preparing anti-heat measures and had even earned praise from IOC head Thomas Bach, she said. While the safety of the athletes was important, organisers could not ignore that many of them had been training and preparing for the Tokyo climate.

"The Games will not succeed without our trust in each other," she said.

Koike has said the capital was ready to make further adjustments, including changing the route and start time with some media reports saying to as early as 3:00 a.m.

The IOC has said temperatures in Sapporo, which will also host soccer games, are as much as five to six degrees cooler during the day. Organisers earlier this year had already moved up the starting times to 6 a.m. for the marathon and 5:30 a.m. for the race walk to avoid the blistering midday sun. When Tokyo hosted the Summer Olympics in 1964, they were held in October — an option no longer possible due to international sports schedules.



Rory McIlroy knows a fourth title of the year on Sunday could help him lay down a marker for next year. Reuters

Rory looks at Shanghai to regain top spot

REUTERS
SHANGHAI, OCTOBER 30

WORLD NUMBER two Rory McIlroy said he is motivated to get back into the winner's circle at this week's WGC-HSBC Champions tournament in Shanghai to further his quest to reclaim golf's top ranking. After securing a tied-third finish at the Zozo Championship in Japan last week, McIlroy will return to action on Thursday at Sheshan International Golf Club, playing alongside American Xander Schauffele and England's Justin Rose for the opening two rounds.

With world number one Brooks Koepka out of action with a knee strain, McIlroy knows a fourth title triumph of the year on Sunday could help him lay down a marker for next year. "I want to get as many world ranking points as I possibly can and try to close that gap on the number one," McIlroy, who has spent 95 weeks of his career ranked as the world's best, told reporters on Wednesday.

"I started this year maybe eighth or ninth in the world. If I play well the next few weeks, I'll have a great platform going into next year." McIlroy won his second and latest WGC event in 2015 and since then has had nine top 10 finishes in the tournaments, including a tied-fourth position in Shanghai in 2016. "I've always enjoyed WGCs," the Northern Irishman added. "I feel like the course suits my game and I like this tournament ever since I started coming here in 2009."

The WGC (World Golf Championships), four events held annually, are the highest-ranking tournaments in golf behind the four

With world number one Brooks Koepka out of action with a knee strain, McIlroy knows a fourth title triumph of the year on Sunday could help him lay down a marker for next year.

major and the Players Championship, and they offer comparable prize money. Rose, who won the Shanghai event — dubbed Asia's major — two years ago, is targeting another late surge in the European Tour's Race to Dubai standings.

The title proved to be a springboard in the final phase of the 2017 season before he was edged out in the final round in Dubai by Tommy Fleetwood in the race for the Harry Vardon Trophy, awarded to the winner of the Race to Dubai.

Rose, 29th in this season's European Tour money list, needs another run of strong results this season. This week's tournament is followed by three Rolex Series events. "It's been a good little hunting ground for me the last couple of years and it's a golf course I really enjoy," he said of Shanghai. "With the way the points are weighted with the prize fund in Turkey and Dubai, it offers me the opportunity to make a run."

Thailand's Jazz Janewattanond will make his WGC debut and lead the Asian charge at the event, which will feature 35 of the top 50 players in the world rankings. "It's always good each time you get a chance to step up your game and I'm just looking forward to tomorrow," he said.

27 THE RURAL TRACKING THE CHANGING INDIA IN ITS VILLAGES

CROP RESIDUE BURNING

Why Happy Seeder isn't a happy proposition

Stubble management machines, unlike tractors, lie idle for most time, making it an unviable investment

ANJU AGNIHORI CHABA
JALANDHAR (PUNJAB), OCTOBER 30

"THE MACHINE works well, no doubt. But what's the use if it runs for only 25-30 days and has to be parked in my shed for the rest of the year?" asks Palwinder Singh.

The 50-year-old from Sahari village in Gurdaspur district and tehsil has not one, but three Happy Seeders. The first of these tractor-mounted machines — which allows planting of wheat without the need for burning leftover straw from the previous paddy crop — he purchased in September 2017 for Rs 1.45 lakh and got 50% of that cost reimbursed by the Punjab government. Last month, he bought two more at Rs 1.70 lakh each as a member of a 15-farmer producer group, eligible for a higher 80% subsidy.

For farmers like him, who have invested in Happy Seeders, the issue is not about technology. The machine basically cuts and lifts the standing stubble from the combine-harvested paddy, drills the seeds of the succeeding wheat crop into the bare soil, and deposits the straw over the sown area as a mulch cover. Along with a Super-Straw Management System (S-SMS) attachment fitted into the combine — which ensures that any loose straw thrown also gets cut and spread evenly on the field — it is an effective solution to the problem of pollution caused by paddy stubble burning during this time of the year.

But the Happy Seeder can be a worthwhile investment "only if it covers 200 acres, even if for just 25-30 days from October 25 to November 25," says Palwinder Singh. That is the maximum sowing window for wheat, though planting ideally should not be before November 1 and not later than November 15. Last year, his machine ran only on about 150 acres and he had to spend Rs 10,000 on servicing to make it field-ready after an extended period of lying idle. The 150 acres included his 21 acres and the fields of other farmers, who were charged Rs 1,500 per acre.

For the current wheat sowing season, Palwinder plans to do 700 acres with all the three Happy Seeders. He has already covered 65 acres in the four days from October 27, but isn't very hopeful of meeting the target. He blames it on the Punjab government and "irresponsible" farmers: "How will my machine be viable if farmers continue to set their fields

on fire and the government does nothing about it?"

Latest data from the Ludhiana-based Punjab Remote Sensing Centre shows 19,869 cases of field stubble burning from September 23 to October 30 this year, which is more than the 15,028 recorded during the same period of 2018. "The authorities did not act till now, as they were more worried about the by-elections to four Assembly constituencies," alleges Palwinder. The first case of stubble burning this time was, in fact, lodged on October 24, three days after polling got over. It was against a farmer Gurjant Singh from Kokri Kalan village of Moga district and tehsil, who had apparently set fire to his three-acre field after using a paddy straw reaper.

The Punjab government has been sanctioned Rs 665 crore under a Central scheme for "In-Situ Management of Crop Residue". Under it, some 50,000 machines — 28,000 in 2018-19 and the balance this year — have been distributed in the state through approved manufacturers, with 50% subsidy being given on individual farmer purchases and 80% if bought by producer groups, cooperative societies or custom hiring centres. Palwinder Singh's producers' organisation has bought machinery worth nearly Rs 27 lakh: 11 Happy Seeders, two reversible mould-board ploughs (Rs 1.5 lakh each), two rotavators (Rs 1 lakh each), three cutters (Rs 50,000 each) and three zero-till drills (Rs 50,000 each). The total cost, net of the 80% subsidy, was about Rs 5.3 lakh.

The 50,000 machines sold in the last two years include around 14,000 Happy Seeders, 6,000 S-SMS, 8,000 choppers/shredders/mulchers, 7,000 rotavators, 4,000 reversible ploughs, 5,500 zero-till drills and 350 balers. While Happy Seeder and S-SMS enable direct wheat seeding, the others are used for cutting the paddy stubble into small pieces (chopper/shredder) and incorporating them into the field through deep tillage (rotavator/reversible plough), or harvesting and compressing into compact bundles (baler).

"I bought this only because of the subsidy. A tractor costs Rs 6 lakh, but it can be employed throughout the year for both farm and non-farm operations. Why will anybody spend Rs 1.7 lakh on a machine that is used for just 25 days to sow one crop?" points out Gaurav Kumar (34). This 16-acre farmer from Jhaloya village in Pathankot district and tehsil is awaiting transfer of the 50% subsidy on pur-



(Top) Farmer Palwinder Singh from Sahari village in Punjab's Gurdaspur district sowing wheat using a Happy Seeder; paddy stubble being burnt at a field in Haryana. Anju Agnihori Chaba/Praveen Khanna

chase of a Happy Seeder to his bank account. Like Palwinder, he hopes to make money from running it on other farmers' fields and is also disappointed at the government's "inaction" in preventing stubble burning.

Satnam Singh, who cultivates 18 acres at Rajian village in Amritsar's Ajnala tehsil, runs a custom hiring centre that houses two Happy Seeders, an S-SMS fitted combine, two rotavators, one reversible plough, one chopper and one mulcher. The total investment in these machines — most of them purchased before the launch of the Centre's 2018 In-Situ scheme — is over Rs 25 lakh, against which he has received Rs 10 lakh subsidy. "The government has given us the subsidy. Now, it should ensure strict implementation of the law against stubble burning. There is also a problem today that if wheat yields turn out low, farmers will blame it on Happy Seeder, when the real reason lies elsewhere," he notes.

Punjab farmers grow paddy and wheat on roughly 75 lakh acres. The 14,000 Happy Seeders already distributed, if they sow 7-8 acres each daily for 25-30 days, will cover only 24.5-33.6 lakh acres. The 6,000 combines fitted with S-SMS can, likewise, harvest 18-22.5

lakh acres at the rate of 12-15 acres daily over 25 days. Simply put, the existing machines — which incidentally attract 12% goods and services tax — are hardly enough to take care of the stubble burning problem.

So, does it mean flooding the state with more machines? These ultimately run on diesel, which then translates into the solution becoming a no less "burning problem"? Farmer leader and general secretary of the Bhartiya Kisan Union's Dakunda faction, Jagmohan Singh, proposes an alternative solution: "Give farmers a Rs 100-200 per quintal bonus on paddy and make it conditional on their not burning even a single straw. They will manage the stubble either through machines or going back to manual harvesting".

Meanwhile, there is a somewhat heartening statistic. In 2018, Punjab recorded 49,987 paddy stubble burning incidents, higher than the 43,660 for the preceding year. Yet, the actual area set under fire, according to the Punjab Pollution Control Board, fell from 18 lakh hectares to 14.05 lakh hectares. That holds out some hope for the current year as well. Even if the number of fires is up, their intensity is what probably matters more.

AGRICULTURE TRADE

It's only sugar 'n' spice for India's farm shipments now

Barring these two, exports of most commodities have taken a hit from global headwinds this year

HARISH DAMODARAN
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 30

AFTER SHOWING some revival in the last couple of years, India's agricultural exports are faltering again. Total farm exports during April-September, at \$ 17.29 billion, stood 9.1% lower than the \$ 19.02 billion for the same period of 2018-19.

The worst hit has been raw cotton, with shipments in the first half of 2019-20 nearly 76% down over the levels of April-September 2018-19. Moreover, the value of exports, at \$ 226.6 million, is below the imports of \$ 990.6 million, which are up 136%. This is the first time since 2004-05 that the country has turned net importer of the natural fibre.

Cotton exports from India had peaked at \$ 4.33 billion in 2011-12 and fell to \$ 1.62 billion by 2016-17, before recovering a tad to \$ 2.1 billion in 2018-19 and now crashing again. The bleak prospects for trade - global benchmark Cotlook 'A' Index prices are ruling at about 75.5 cents per pound, as against 86.5 cents at this time last year and the all-time-high of 244 cents reached in March 2011 — comes even farmers have started bringing their harvested kapas (raw un-ginned cotton) to the markets. Kapas in Rajasthan's Sriganaganagar mandi traded at an average of Rs 5,100 per quintal on Wednesday, below the government's minimum support price of Rs 5,450 for medium-long staple length varieties.

The other major product to post a sharp decline is rice. In 2017-18, India shipped out a record 128.75 lakh tonnes (lt) of rice. That included 88.18 lt of non-basmati (worth \$ 3.64 billion) and 40.57 lt of basmati (\$ 4.17 billion), below the 2013-14 high of \$ 4.86 billion). However, the current fiscal has seen a dip in both basmati and non-basmati earnings, with the slide more pronounced for the latter (see table 1).

India's basmati rice goes mostly to West Asia (Iran, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Kuwait and Yemen), United Kingdom and the US. The destinations for non-basmati are the relatively poorer African nations (Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ivory Coast, Liberia,



	2013-14	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	APR-SEP 2018	APR-SEP 2019
Vegetable oils	7,249.85	10,892.75	11,637.48	9,890.32	5,334.64	4,740.89
Pulses	1,828.16	4,244.13	2,908.33	1,140.76	445.72	670.81
Fresh fruits	1,273.44	1,682.88	1,942.92	1,987.58	921.97	875.44
Cashew	774.12	1,347.13	1,419.51	1,610.56	1,217.88	849.32
Raw Cotton	394.47	946.88	979.32	633.05	420.34	990.6
Spices	571.36	858.95	990.7	1,135.44	517.67	751.94
Sugar	392.18	1,021.81	936.52	449.03	255.66	170.05
Natural Rubber	906.41	652.57	829.15	873.26	464.53	402.45
Wheat	4.42	1,268.64	364.5	0.77	0.68	0.43
TOTAL*	15,528.94	25,643.4	24,890.9	20,920.34	11,142.39	11,225.26

*Includes other farm commodities. Source: Department of Commerce. (IN MILLION DOLLARS)

Guinea, Senegal, Somalia and Djibouti), Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. In basmati, the present slowdown has primarily to do with payment problems arising from the US trade sanctions on Iran, which accounted for \$ 1.56 billion out of India's \$ 4.71 billion exports during 2018-19. In non-basmati, too, China is flooding the African markets through release of its massive excess public stocks — besides increased price competition from Pakistan and Vietnam (in white rice) and Thailand (for parboiled) — is posing challenges. The non-renewal of a 5% MEIS (Merchandise Exports from India Scheme)

benefit after March 25 hasn't helped either. India, in 2011-12, emerged as the world's largest rice exporter and also came close to being the No. 1 in cotton (after the US). In 2014, the country even became the biggest bovine meat exporter. But now, it has dropped to No. 3 in cotton (behind US and Brazil) and bovine meat (behind Brazil and Australia). Buffalo meat exports, which surged from a mere \$ 341.43 million to \$ 4.78 billion between 2003-04 and 2014-15, have since slipped to \$ 3.59 billion in 2018-19 and continued their slide this fiscal. Even marine products, which had a good ride and touched \$ 740 billion in 2017-

	2013-14	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	APR-SEP 2018	APR-SEP 2019
Marine products	5,016.46	5,903.06	7,389.22	6,802.56	3,467.52	3,355.53
Basmati rice	4,864.69	3,208.6	4,169.56	4,712.44	2,247.34	2,031.33
Buffalo meat	4,350.23	3,903.49	4,037.11	3,587.15	1,890.65	1,599.87
Non-Basmati rice	2,925.05	2,525.19	3,636.6	3,038.16	1,577.02	1,017.31
Spices	2,497.22	2,851.95	3,115.37	3,322.45	1,587.69	1,962.71
Raw Cotton	3,637.53	1,621.11	1,894.25	2,104.41	929.59	226.6
Fruits & Vegetables*	1,563.88	1,684.51	1,687.59	1,732.21	797.08	745.44
Oilseeds**	1,291.67	1,355.23	1,174.35	1,156.76	554.08	480.73
Oilmeals	2,796.34	8,05.45	1,093.16	1,508.65	591.9	423.58
Castor oil	725.68	674.73	1,043.99	883.78	445.41	523.11
Coffee	798.8	842.84	968.57	822.34	429.86	392.64
Tobacco	1,011.35	958.69	934.25	981.34	492.97	485.64
Processed F&V	760.16	848.36	929.79	933.61	450.05	451.04
Cashew	848.65	793.49	927.47	658.3	314.21	282.73
Tea	798.76	731.26	837.36	830.93	386.11	444
Sugar	1,177.03	1,290.71	810.9	1,360.29	490.83	808.03
Guargum meal	1,979.63	463.35	646.94	674.88	355.38	260.23
Dairy products	727.52	253.73	303.05	481.55	180.57	152.23
Other Cereals	1,204.11	212.3	248.59	348.97	208.83	96.8
Wheat	1,569.03	66.85	96.72	60.24	20.84	29.21
TOTAL***	43,251.66	33,696.83	38,897.21	39,203.53	19,023.13	17,289.73

*Includes seeds; **Includes groundnut, sesame and niger; ***Includes other farm commodities. (IN MILLION DOLLARS)

18, have lost momentum. A similar story holds for guar-gum (a thickening agent used in shale oil/gas extraction) and oilmeals, whose exports today are a pale shadow of their 2012-13 peaks of \$ 3.92 billion and \$ 3.04 billion, respectively. The effects of it are also reflected in realisations for growers. On March 21, 2012, at the height of the shale boom, spot prices of guar-seed in Jodhpur scaled Rs 30,432 per quintal, compared to the current Rs 4,050 or so! Soyabean rates in Indore, at Rs 3,500 per quintal, are also nowhere close to their May 2014 average of 4,584.

The only two agri-commodities to have registered significant growth in 2018-19 as well as the current fiscal are sugar and spices. Sugar exports in 2019-20 are on course to match their previous 2011-12 record of \$ 1.84 billion — thanks largely to a subsidy ("lump sum assistance for expenses") of up to Rs 10,448 per tonne (it was approximately Rs 11,500 in the 2018-19 season).

Spices are an interesting case. The period after 2013-14 has witnessed an increase in both their exports and imports. The top export items within spices in 2018-19 were chilli (Rs 4,058.72 crore), mint products (Rs 3,471.09 crore) and cumin (Rs 2,924.73 crore). On the other hand, exports of pepper and cardamom (including their oils and oleoresins) were only Rs 1,017.70 crore and Rs 482.31 crore, even as imports of these traditional plantation spices amounted to Rs 875.36 crore and Rs 291.92 crore, respectively. Import of cheaper pepper from Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Indonesia has also led to prices in the Kochi market plunging below Rs 300 per kg for the first time. They are also much lower than the landed minimum import price of Rs 500/kg for black pepper fixed by the Narendra Modi government in December 2017. In cardamom, too, Guatemala has displaced India as the world's preeminent exporter.

During 2003-04 to 2013-14, a period coinciding with the previous United Progressive

Alliance regime's tenure, India's agricultural exports had soared from \$ 7.53 billion to \$ 43.25 billion, basically on the back of a global commodity price boom. The collapse of that boom, just about when the Modi government had taken over, resulted in the country's farm exports nose-diving to \$ 39.08 billion in 2014-15, \$ 32.81 billion in 2015-16 and \$ 33.70 billion in 2016-17, even as imports rose from \$ 15.53 billion in 2013-14 to \$ 21.15 billion, \$ 22.58 billion and \$ 25.64 billion in the following three fiscals. In the process, an agricultural trade surplus of \$ 27.72 billion in 2013-14 was reduced to \$ 8.05 billion by 2016-17.

Subsequently, exports did recover to \$ 32.90 billion in 2018-19, alongside a fall in imports to \$ 20.92 billion, led mainly by pulses and edible oils, while also helped by a part-reversal of the Modi government's earlier hard anti-inflationary and strong-rupee policy stance. That recovery has suffered a renewed setback, though, amidst strong global trade headwinds.

THE OPEN SKIES TREATY

Spying the end

Donald Trump is set to rip up another arms-control treaty

THE RUSSIAN TUPOLEV TU154 took off from Wright-Patterson air-force base near Dayton, Ohio, on October 22nd. As it headed north over Chicago and Milwaukee, taking in views of Lake Michigan, then west over South Dakota and Montana, a camera on its belly snapped photos of American military installations and civilian infrastructure. But this was not a covert spy operation. It was the eighth time this year that a Russian aircraft has flown over America under the Open Skies treaty, a pact that allows its 34 signatories to make unarmed reconnaissance flights over any part of one another's territory. Alas, the treaty may soon become the latest addition to the Trump administration's bonfire of arms-control agreements.

The concept of Open Skies germinated early in the cold war. In 1955 President Dwight Eisenhower suggested that America and the Soviet Union should not only exchange maps of all their military installations, but also allow the other side to fly over them to build confidence that an attack was not being planned. Nikita Khrushchev laughed off the idea as an "espionage plot". But when the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet Union dissolved, the idea was revived and the treaty signed in 1992.

It is, as Khrushchev suggested, a form of legalised spying known as co-operative monitoring. Countries may conduct a set number of flights virtually anywhere, as long as they give 72 hours' notice of the mission and a day's notice of the flight path. They can use only unclassified cameras of 30cm-resolution, which may be inspected. And they must share the product with any signatory who wants it. About 1,500 flights have been conducted to date.

For several years America has complained that Russia is not playing it straight. The treaty allows countries to keep planes 10km away from their borders with non-signatory states. Russia uses that exemption to stop others getting close to parts of two breakaway Georgian territories that it (but virtually nobody else) recognises as independent and therefore outside the pact. It has also placed a 500km limit, ostensibly on safety grounds, on the total length of surveillance flights above Kaliningrad, a small enclave wedged between Poland and Lithuania that bristles with missiles. In September Russia also denied a request to fly over its massive Centre-2019 military exercise, which consequently went unobserved.

European officials mostly consider these problems to be irritants that could be worked out. Not so the hawkish John Bolton, who until September 10th served as Mr Trump's national security adviser. Mr Bolton drew up a memo directing America to pull out of the treaty and lodged it in the national-security apparatus like a stink-bomb. Mr Trump is reported to have signed the directive a few



The Boeing OST OC-135B observation aircraft — one of the two modified Boeing planes used by the US to monitor Russian territory. Between 2002 and 2016, American observers flew over Russia 196 times. Reuters

weeks after Mr Bolton's departure without consulting the Pentagon, State Department or allies. But there has been no formal announcement yet and under the terms of the treaty, America must give six months' notice of its intention to withdraw.

An open-and-shut case

Even former officials who support the agreement acknowledge that Russia largely uses the flights to monitor the critical national infrastructure that it would seek to attack in a war. America has less need of planes to do this sort of thing because it has the world's most advanced spy satellites—a fact that Mr Trump demonstrated to the world when he tweeted a spectacularly detailed photo of an

Iranian rocket launchpad on August 30th.

But supporters of Open Skies insist that Russia's supposed advantage from the treaty has been overstated. "If they really wanted, Russia could basically collect nearly all they get from Open Skies flights via their national technical means, be it overhead or covert collection on the ground," says Thomas Moore,

an expert who formerly served with the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Moreover, the flights ensure that NATO and Russian officers meet routinely, building familiarity and trust when both are in short supply. "Not only do Western countries collect imagery from their overflight, they also get a feel for the blood pressure in the

Russian air force," notes Steffan Watkins, an analyst who studies the treaty.

But the treaty's most compelling rationale is that most of America's allies will never be able to afford multi-billion-dollar spy satellites in the first place. For a country like Ukraine, Open Skies flights might provide the only chance to peer at Russian troop movements across the border. As Russia conducts larger snap exercises, often without proper notification, such monitoring has grown in importance. Between 2002 and 2016 American observers flew over Russia 196 times, with only 71 Russian flights over America.

Concern is mounting about America's possible withdrawal from the treaty. George

Shultz, a former secretary of state, William Perry, a former secretary of defence, and Sam Nunn, a former Democratic senator, wrote on October 20th that pulling out would be a "grave mistake". The Pentagon and State Department are similarly worried and Robert O'Brien, Mr Bolton's successor, is said to be slow-walking the order. America's allies have been working the phones, urging Mr Trump to reconsider. However much the president may dislike the prospect of a Russian jet humming a few thousand feet above Washington, his allies will be telling him they love the idea of their own buzzing over Moscow.

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TRADE FINANCE IS NEARING A MUCH-NEEDED SHAKEUP

Time's up

The world's oldest and most intricate paper trail is about to be ripped up

EVERY DAY of the week thousands of visitors flow through Istanbul's fragrant Spice Bazaar. They are a varied collection, local shoppers mingling with camera-wielding tourists. So are the products on offer. While many delicacies on display are Turkish-grown, one trader gets his berries from Iran, his walnuts from Chile and almonds from California. Another, asked if she went all the way to China to buy her jasmine tea, says wryly: "Of course not. Importers ship it here."

Most commodities traded round the world still travel on merchant vessels. From Istanbul's hills you can see them placidly converging on Ambarli, Turkey's largest port. Less visible is the liquidity that makes those journeys possible. Four-fifths of global trade transactions, worth \$15trn a year, rely on specialised loans or guarantees. This hidden world of trade finance is huge but poorly understood. It has long needed a shake-up, and a nascent revolution promises to unlock trillions in fresh capital. But trade wars are putting that Big Bang in peril.

Trade finance is one of the oldest jobs in banking. Millennia ago merchants in present-day Turkey exchanged cloth or copper for engraved tablets promising a later payment in silver. Trade credit today may be more sophisticated, but it still tackles the same problem: that exporters prefer being paid at the time of sale (so they can finance more production), whereas importers would rather settle up after receiving the goods (so they can first raise the cash by reselling them). Each side rarely trusts the other to keep its end of the bargain.

Trade finance places banks in the middle. Typically, the importer's bank, once presented with a shipping bill or other proof, issues a "letter of credit" to the exporter guaranteeing payment. This allows the exporter to obtain credit from a bank, and then to repay the lender when the ultimate customer pays up. The loans are short-term, usually less than four months. And they are safe. Annual default rates on letters of credit

Since the financial crisis, regulators have made banks set aside more capital against risky or exotic lending. As a result trade finance is punished, because it often serves small firms in poor countries. Watchdogs also want lenders to stop dodgy flows of cash

averaged 0.08% of transactions in 2008-17, compared with 1.6% for corporate lending. When loans do sour, recovery is quick.

The work is as unspeakably tedious—thousands of small, similar deals—as it is steady. Annual returns on trade-finance instruments have an average volatility of less than 0.30%, compared with 4.44% for investment-grade bonds. Four-fifths of global transactions are processed by just ten banks, mostly in London, New York or Singapore. Borrowers rarely switch providers. Graduates would rather work on initial public offerings or multi-billion mergers. Business cards change, but not the cast. "It's very incestuous," says a senior banker.

All this explains why an industry that is global by definition is parochial and antiquated. From banks and insurers to warehouses and customs, processing trade credit requires the exchange of 36 original documents and 240 copies, on average; each of the 27 parties involved spends hours if not days fact-finding and form-filling. Less than a quarter of banks use electronic documentation. It is not, as Andrew Colgan of Mizuho, a bank, notes, "a screen-based market". Standards and terminologies vary across the industry, and even within banks.

Since the financial crisis, regulators have made banks set aside more capital against risky or exotic lending. As a result trade finance is punished, because it often serves

small firms in poor countries. Watchdogs also want lenders to stop dodgy flows of cash, and the cost of scrutinising customers makes small trade-finance deals unprofitable. So most lenders compete for big clients, says Joon Kim of BNY Mellon, a bank. Low interest rates have also crushed margins, which have shrunk by a third since 2014.

In response, banks have retreated. The top ten earned 19% of their transaction-banking revenue from trade finance last year, down from 27% in 2010, according to Coalition, a data provider. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) reckons \$1.5trn of financing proposals were rejected in 2018. "Country risk" was cited as a reason by 52% of banks. Nearly half of applications by small firms got nowhere. As supply chains move from China to poorer countries, rejections could rise to \$2.5trn by 2025, says the World Economic Forum. That hurts even big multinationals: many rely on the niche suppliers shunned by banks.

Luckily transformation is coming—on three fronts. First, thanks to the internet and easier international travel, buyers and suppliers know more about each other, which boosts trust. Many blue-chip importers are also keen to lengthen payment terms beyond what exporters can bear. This has fed the rise of "supply-chain finance" (SCF). It usually involves cutting out several steps in the chain, with exporters filing their invoices directly with the importer's bank, which pays them promptly minus a fee. Suppliers need not waste time and money amassing documents. They benefit from their patrons' stronger credit rating (as it is the buyer who eventually pays the bank). Last year banks earned \$21bn from SCF, a 12% rise over 2017. It now represents 18% of trade-finance deals.

Second, banks are starting to sell tranches of the loans they originate to third parties, while also acquiring slices of debt from others. That helps to diversify portfolios and increase lending capacity. Surath Sengupta of HSBC, a bank, says it will sell over \$30bn-worth of trade assets in 2019,



Impeded by protectionism and an economic slowdown, the IMF predicts global trade will grow by just 1.1% in 2019, down from 3.6% in 2018. So far that has put only a minor dent in financiers' revenues, in part because supply chains are being reshuffled. Reuters

up from \$2bn three years ago.

A profitable trade

Banks still account for over 95% of buyers in this secondary market. But institutional investors are starting to be lured in—thanks to technology, the revolution's third prong. With its many transactions, trade finance is an ideal training ground for machine learning. Platforms like Tradetec, a startup, allow banks to repackage short-dated invoices into rolling debt products. Algorithms crunch data to predict credit risks, so investors know what they buy.

More transparency and liquidity could lead data providers like Bloomberg to recognise trade finance as an asset class, bringing it onto the radar of big money managers. Fasanara Capital, a hedge fund with €750m (\$835m) of assets under management, has already invested in over 16,000 trade deals. Stenn International, another firm, aims to quadruple its trade-finance assets to \$2bn

within 18 months.

Yet danger looms. Impeded by protectionism and an economic slowdown, the IMF predicts global trade will grow by just 1.1% in 2019, down from 3.6% in 2018. So far that has put only a minor dent in financiers' revenues, in part because supply chains are being reshuffled, bringing global banks new business. But smaller lenders are more exposed. And competition for a shrinking volume of deals could push all lenders to lower interest rates.

That pool may shrink further as the credit standing of borrowers worsens. This year corporate defaults are expected to rise. Meanwhile trade-credit insurance claims are picking up, says Alexis Garatti of Euler Hermes, a firm that insures payments to exporters. This will probably mean rising premiums and more lenders fleeing to the safest borrowers, hurting margins further. "We should expect a mild version of a credit crunch," says Francesco Filia of Fasanara.

The trade war between America and

China threatens to erase other gains. Rising uncertainty in 2019, for instance, has led both traders and lenders to demand more paperwork. That feeds a resurgence in letters of credit, at the expense of supply-chain finance. The shift could accelerate as the trade war leads importers to source their wares from riskier markets, says Sukand Ramachandran of bcg, a consultancy.

Technological progress, at least, cannot be undone. But it can harden emerging divides. The birth of a single global standard—the 20ft container—revolutionised shipping. But partly because of tariffs, partly because fleeing consumer tastes require shorter supply chains, commerce is splintering into regional blocs. If digital standards also develop in silos, rather than as part of a global effort, that may prove impossible to reverse. Trade finance may yet see its container moment float away.

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KEEPING UP WITH THE TIMES

John Legend and Kelly Clarkson will sing the reimagined version of the oft-criticised Christmas classic *Baby, it's cold outside*, about a man convincing a woman to stay overnight. People are calling it sexist and an ode to date rape.

SNAP SHOTS



Her Story

THE FILM, *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982*, which chronicles everyday sexism has been topping South Korea's box office and has reignited a national debate over #MeToo movement, and feminism. Based on the novel, written by Cho Nam-joo in 2016, the story follows a woman in her 30s, who has to give up her dreams. Women are buying tickets in support of the cause without actually going to the cinema, a practice known as "sending one's soul".



A New Spin

TEN EPISODES of a *Game of Thrones* (GOT) spin-off called *House of the Dragon* have been ordered by HBO. The story is set 300 years before the events of GOT, which ended its eight-season run in May. It is based on George RR Martin's book *Fire & Blood* and will tell the story of House Targaryen. The network had scrapped plans for a GOT prequel starring Naomi Watts, whose pilot was shot in Northern Ireland earlier this year.

In Full Bloom

A new book tells of our fascination for flowers, seen in food and films, myths and memories

PALLAVICHATTOPADHYAY

FOR KOLKATA-BORN Jhelum Biswas Bose, flowers were intrinsic to her life, be it the 108 pink lotuses offered at Durga puja pandals or her mother's floral arrangements in the living room. In her book, *Phoolproof: Indian flowers, their myths, traditions and usage* (Penguin Random House; Rs 299); the 39-year-old beauty editor, and founder of the flower-based beauty brand Jhelum Loves, brings together history, recipes, and stories around flowers that we have grown up with. Some of the dishes include Parat Parantha with Marigold and Chicken Ghee Roast with Desi Gulab. Excerpts from an interview:

Your inclination towards the rose is evident in the book. There is also the story of Nur Jahan and Jehangir, and roses.

Nur Jahan was a very fiery lady. There is a story of how she slapped Jehangir in the court and people thought it was the end of her. But Jehangir lined garden pathways with rose petals and when the sun was at an angle, they gave off their fragrance. She walked from one end of the pathway and he from the other, and they met at the centre. This was a very romantic story and a representation of equality in their marriage.

Weddings have always been about flowers. Your book also mentions it.

Dressing up with flowers has been a tradition in many cultures, take garlands for example. They also form a vital link in Kalidasa's description of Shakuntala. A trend is the *phoolon wali mehndi*, which was popularised by Bollywood when *Queen* released, though floral jewellery has always been there. At weddings, nuptial beds too are decked with rajnigandha, mogra and gulab. The bride too

wears floral jewellery for their aphrodisiac appeal. Wedding jewellery lately have floral patterns on them.

Has Bollywood played any role in your research?

My muse for this book is from Bollywood and a person one most identifies with is Sharmila Tagore in *Kashmir Ki Kali* (1964). Even *Jab Jab Phool Khile* (1965), *Silsila* (1981), and *Kabhi Kabhie* (1976) were shot in Kashmir with floral backgrounds. The entire Yash Chopra offering had flowers so beautifully strewn around.

What formed the crux of your research?

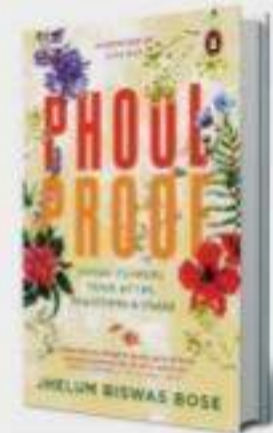
I went back to rereading fairy tales because flowers play such an important role, *Thumbelina* for instance. There is a wonderful book called *The Reason for Flowers* by Stephen Buchmann, which looks at different kinds of flowers. Dr Malti Khaitan's book *Flowers That Heal* tells us about the flowers in India. I also spoke to nutritionists and surprisingly not much nutritional research has been done on flowers, which is why we don't know how to consume flowers, other than our regular gobhi and broccoli. There are a lot of recipes with kachnar buds, moringa and pumpkin flowers. An ayurvedic doctor in Delhi introduced me to the text *Arka Prakasha*, written by Lankapathi Ravana. It's a commentary between Ravana and his consort Mandodari, where he mentions the many kinds of *arkas* (medicinal waters) and how to make them, and speaks about the various ways one can improve one's sensuality and sexuality.

How do you relate to flowers?

Flowers speak to you. Like any force of nature, they have an energy. That's why the flower water used in pujas are sprinkled to bless and ward off evil.



Jhelum Biswas Bose; her book on Indian flowers



Ljubomir Stefanov

A Sting in the Tale

Honeyland, an award-winning documentary, is a heartwarming story of a nomadic beekeeper as much as it is a warning about the industrialisation of nature's bounty

ANUSHREE MAJUMDAR

AT THE recently-concluded JIO MAMI Film Festival, when the screening of their remarkable observational documentary, *Honeyland* ended, Ljubomir Stefanov and Tamara Kotevska placed a bowl of honey on a table on the stage. Like bees, audience members swarmed to the front, buzzing with approval as they dipped and swirled wooden coffee stirrers in the amber liquid before bringing it to their mouths. A drop of gold on the tip of one's tongue, its sweetness warm and lingering, much like the film itself. In that moment, one felt as though the story of 55-year-old Hatidze Muratova, perhaps the last of the nomadic beekeepers of Macedonia, had come full circle.

"This story began more than four years ago. If you ask us how we found Hatidze — the bees brought us to her," says Kotevska, in a conversation after the screening of the documentary. Since its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in January, where it picked up three awards including the Grand Jury Prize (World Cinema Documentary), *Honeyland* has enthralled audiences at film festivals all over the world; at MAMI, it won the Golden Gateway Award in the international competition category.

Shot by cinematographers Fejmi Daut and Samir Ljuma, *Honeyland* begins with Hatidze's trek from her barren village to the hills nearby, where she cracks open crevices where wild bees flit between honeycombs. "In the beginning, we had been commissioned to shoot a video about a certain rural area in Macedonia by the Nature Conservation Programme. When we began our research, the first thing we noticed were the beehives, and they led us to Hatidze. Very quickly, it became clear to us that she was going to be the main topic. We became



Stills from the film; Ljubomir Stefanov; Tamara Kotevska (above right)

addicted to her story and tried finding ways to keep expanding the production schedule so that we could keep filming her," says Stefanov, who is an environmentalist, designer and photographer. "Hatidze always wanted somebody to tell her story, and she trusted us with it. This is very precious in documentaries. We shot 400 hours of material for approximately 100 days, shooting with two DSLR cameras in natural light.

There's no electricity in her village, so we depended on nature as much as she did," says Kotevska.

It would be unwise to categorise *Honeyland* as one thing or another — it is large and contains multitudes. On the surface, it is about Muratova's life in an abandoned village, filled with hardship and poverty, as she harvests honey from wild bees to sell in a nearby city. Living in a stone

hut with her ailing, bedridden 85-year-old mother, it is the story of two women bound by blood and circumstance, who must rally each other to make the most of what life has given them. When a Turkish family moves into the farm next to Muratova's house, cacophony and catastrophe enters her life in equal measure — Hussein, a father of seven, must feed his wife and children and the honey business offers him a chance to make a quick buck. "Half for them, half for us," says Muratova, in one of the early scenes in the film, when she extracts two out of four honeycombs from the wall of an abandoned farm, for she knows that her survival depends on the survival of the bees. But when Hussein hastens to increase his produce, only to wreak havoc on a fragile ecosystem that depends on sharing nature's bounty equally, *Honeyland* becomes a warning sign about the tenuous balance between industrialisation and sustainability.

"We chose not to intervene in any of the events that took place in the course of those four years. As documentary filmmakers, we are not there to change her reality, rough as it is; we believe that by showing it truthfully, we can send a wider message to the world," says Kotevska. Muratova's weather-beaten face and humility did not just captivate them; in 2017, the duo applied to the Sarajevo Film Festival under the 'Work in Progress' section, where they won an award of 30,000 euros. "We used the money to buy a house for Hatidze in a nearby village and fit it with modern appliances; we've also used some of the money to help Hussein's children with things for school, and farming equipment. Additionally, we've launched a project to help sell 30 gm jars of Hatidze's honey on our website," says Stefanov. It's a shame that the product only ships to the US, the EU, Canada and Macedonia — which makes tasting it at MAMI all the more sweet.

The Dark Space

Writer-director Ari Aster on being a rising star in horror films, their therapeutic effect and being afraid of the dark

EXPRESS FEATURES SERVICE

I'M BEING cheeky when I say this but isn't the role of the artist to take their sickness and put it into other people?," says American filmmaker Ari Aster, who has created a niche for himself in the horror genre with his features such as *Hereditary* (2018) and *Midsommar* (2019). He, however, considers his movies to be "pretty personal". While *Hereditary* can be seen as a "family drama", *Midsommar* is a "break-up" movie.

Speaking at a masterclass during the Mumbai Film Festival, the 33-year-old filmmaker says, "I didn't know how to be totally literal about personal stories and make kitchen-sink dramas. The genre is a filter through which I could get past personal material. It was a kind of disguise. The process ends up being therapeutic." *Hereditary*, which has the protagonist dealing with the death of her mother, is one of the most-talked-about genre films of 2018. A year later, Aster came up with *Midsommar*, a psychological nightmare that unfolds in the back-



drop of a Swedish midsummer tradition practiced by a commune.

So far, Aster has written everything, including the short films that he has directed. Mostly, his mornings are dedicated to writing. "I read a lot while I am writing. For me, structure is very important. At the beginning, it is a few scenes and set pieces, but outlining is very important." He usually takes around three months of fill up and create the entire script.



(Left) Filmmaker Ari Aster; stills from *Midsommar*, a 'break-up' movie as Aster calls it

Somehow, his scripts end up twice longer than they should be. *Hereditary* was three hours long, which is not an ideal length for the work of a debutante director in the horror genre. Even though the four-hour *Midsommar* was reduced to two hours for theatrical release, the producers A24 are releasing its director's cut that's three hours long. As for gore and grotesque scenes, the filmmaker wrestles with them. "There are times I write something and wonder if it's

fair. I was surprised that we got away with as much as we did to get the 'R' rating for *Midsommar*," says Aster, who has a couple more scary scripts that have not been made yet.

Usually, Aster shortlists everything before he starts shooting a new project. "I come up with blocking, camera sequence and shot-taking before I talk to my director of photography. I'm trying not to be dictatorial and loosen up a bit," says Aster, who has a



Masters of Fine Arts degree from AFI Conservatory in Los Angeles.

Aster, who grew up being afraid of the dark, had watched David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* and Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* by the time he was 11. "They felt kind of evil. But I kept returning to them." Later on, he became obsessed with people like Chris Morris, who he believes created "true satire". Though he does not get scared by movies, what really disturbed him was *The Baby of Mâcon*

(1993), directed by Peter Greenaway. "He is a perfectionist and a brilliant filmmaker but I never enjoy the feeling that he provoked in me while I watch his films. His movies radiate this misanthropic energy. There's a coldness to his movies that really disturbs me," says Aster. Even though horror genre is now associated with this writer-director, Aster one day wishes to direct a "romantic musical", a genre few are dabbling with, and is curious to know how that would turn out.