

NC leaders visit Farooq and Omar, seek their release before polls; PDP cleared to meet Mufti

NC team says Abdullahs 'pained' but well and in high spirits; PDP given time on Monday, defers visit

ADIL AKHZER & ARUN SHARMA
SRINAGAR, JAMMU, OCT 6

IN THE first major political development in the Valley post the scrapping of Jammu and Kashmir's special status, a 15-member National Conference delegation Sunday met detained leaders Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah in Srinagar, while the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) said it had got permission to meet PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti.

Emerging from the meeting, the NC said Farooq and Omar Abdullah were "pained and anguished about the recent developments" and ruled out participation in the coming local body polls till they were released.

Omar has been detained at Hari Niwas since August 5, the day the Centre abrogated Article 370. After spending over 30 minutes with the former chief minister and NC vice-president, the NC leaders drove to the resi-



Farooq Abdullah, wife Molly on the terrace of his house Sunday. AP US TEAM IN POK, PAGE 13

dence of NC chief Farooq Abdullah, who is being held under the stringent Public Safety Act. Separately, NC MPs Hasnain Masoodi and Akbar Lone also met the Abdullahs.

Farooq and Omar Abdullah emerged to see the NC leaders off, and Farooq was clicked waving to the assembled photographers.

While the PDP earlier said Sunday that a 16-member del-

egation comprising senior party leaders and former legislators would leave for Srinagar on Monday morning to meet Mufti, who is also under detention since August 5, PTI reported

EXPLAINED Bid to kick off political activity

WITH BLOCK Development Council elections less than three weeks from now, the government has for the first time allowed some political activity since the clampdown began. Letting NC, PDP leaders meet the Abdullahs and Mufti is a first step in rebuilding political space.

late at night that the meeting had been deferred. There was no official word on the reason, or when the PDP leaders would go now.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

SLOWDOWN Fund flows to commercial sector down 88%: RBI data

Hit by falling credit offtake from banks owing to weak demand, risk aversion

GEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 6

OVERALL FINANCIAL flows to the commercial sector have declined sharply, by around 88 per cent, during the first six months of the current financial year amid the slowdown in the economy.

According to the latest RBI data, the flow of funds from banks and non-banks to the commercial sector has been Rs 90,995 crore in 2019-20 so far (April to mid-September) as against Rs 7,36,087 crore in the same period last year. The commercial sector does not include farming, manufacturing and transportation.

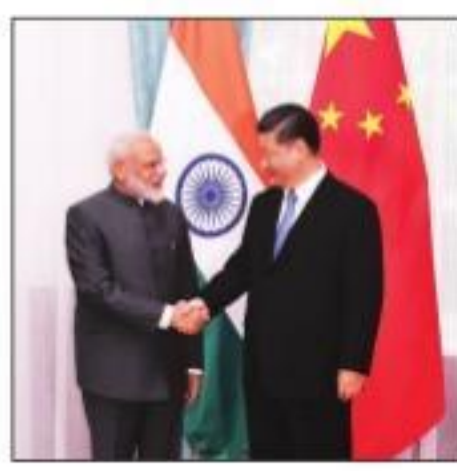
With the financial sector going through a turbulent phase, there was a reverse flow of Rs 1,25,600 crore from the commercial sector to non-deposit-taking NBFCs and deposit-taking NBFCs as against a flow of Rs 41,200 crore in the same pe-

riod last year.

Non-food credit flow from banks to the commercial sector also declined, from Rs 1,65,187 crore to a reverse flow of Rs 93,688 crore to the banks. Net issuance of commercial papers (CPs) subscribed by non-banks fell from Rs 2,53,669 crore to Rs 19,118 crore by mid-September 2019.

"Among domestic non-bank sources of funding, public issues of equity and private placement increased significantly. Among foreign sources, both external commercial borrowings and foreign direct investment (FDI) registered sharp increases. Notably, a new framework for external commercial borrowings was announced in January 2019 to improve the ease of doing business; subsequently, end-use provisions were also rationalised in July 2019," the RBI said in its Monetary Policy Report (October 2019).

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Modi and Xi in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in June. File

5 days to go, India awaits official word on Xi's visit

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6

FIVE DAYS to go for Chinese President Xi Jinping's likely visit to India for an informal summit with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, there is no official confirmation from Beijing on it.

The two leaders are expected to meet in Mamallapuram near Chennai on October 11-12. Sources said the next 24 to 48 hours are key to the announcement of the visit, stressing that the two sides have a very robust diplomatic communication in place. The announcement, sources said, would be done in coordination with each other once the confirmation comes through.

In 2018 too, the announcement of the informal Wuhan summit between Modi and Xi had been announced by then External Affairs minister Sushma Swaraj on April 22, five days before the summit took place on April 27 and 28.

New Delhi has made preparations in Mamallapuram to receive Xi, including sprucing up the temples around the town. As per the proposed schedule, Xi would arrive in Chennai on October 11 and leave the next day.

There are reports in Nepalese media that Xi may visit Kathmandu as well after his India visit, while PTI reported on Sunday from Beijing that Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan would be visiting China starting Tuesday.

On Saturday, India had lodged a "strong protest" with China through diplomatic channels over comments made by

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COURT SETS ASIDE 57 ORDERS BY FT IN MORIGAON Glaring gaps in orders: Gauhati HC indicts a Foreigners' Tribunal

ABHISHEK SAHA
GUWAHATI, OCTOBER 6

FROM DECLARING people as Indians in note sheets and foreigners in final orders to missing orders and duplicate rulings.

The Gauhati High Court has strongly indicted the functioning of the Foreigners' Tribunals that will take a final call on exclusions from the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, while setting aside 57 orders of an FT in Morigaon district.

The High Court said that "in the ordinary course, this would have called for some action, disciplinary or otherwise" against a former Member of the FT for inconsistencies in the orders that he passed.

The indictment assumes significance with the fate of 19 lakh



A Foreigners' Tribunal office in Barpeta, Assam. File

people who have not found a place in the NRC awaiting decision on their exclusion by the state's FTs. Assam has 100 FTs and 200 new tribunals are in the

process of being started to meet the burden of NRC exclusions — a further 200 FTs are scheduled to begin by the end of the year.

In the High Court order dated September 19, 2019, Justice Manojit Bhuyan said: "Therefore, in all the above 57 references of the Foreigners Tribunal No.4, Morigaon, the 'orders of disposal' are non est in the eye of law and liable to be set aside, which is accordingly done. All the above 57 references shall now be heard afresh from the respective stages. The Member of the Tribunal shall list the above references in the Notice Board of the Tribunal giving fresh dates. Fresh notice may also be issued to the proceedees."

The order said: "As discussed above, the disposal order in the above manner in respect of the

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Supreme Court sets up special bench, to hear Aarey plea today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6

A SPECIAL Bench of the Supreme Court will Monday hear a plea seeking stay on the cutting of over 2,600 trees in a portion of land in Mumbai's Aarey for the construction of a Metro Rail car shed.

The tree-cutting began amid protests Friday night after the Bombay High Court dismissed a petition challenging the corporation's decision to allow felling of 2,185 trees and transplantation of 460 for the project.

Sunday's letter, signed by the Union Minister, was heard at 10 am.

In Mumbai, meanwhile, a holiday sessions court granted bail to 29 people arrested Saturday for protesting the cut-

ting of trees for the project. The issue has also taken a political turn just two weeks ahead of state elections, with BJP ally Shiv Sena opposing the Metro move. The Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (MMRCL) has said that only two per cent of Aarey land will be used. The tree-cutting began amid protests Friday night after the Bombay High Court dismissed a petition challenging the corporation's decision to allow felling of 2,185 trees and transplantation of 460 for the project.

MORE REPORTS
PAGE 7

Jovial, friendly, pious: Shocked Kerala town recalls its 'serial killer'



SHAJU PHILIP
KODATHAI (KERALA), OCTOBER 6

WHEN THE bell chimed for the Mass at Lourds Matha Catholic Church in this village, 34 km from Kozhikode in North Kerala, on Sunday, missing in the pew on the women's side was one of the most religious members of the parish — Jolly Joseph.

On Saturday police arrested the 47-year-old on the charge of murdering her first husband, his parents, and three other members of his extended family here, over a period of 14 years, with cyanide in their food. Police say Jolly carried out the murders to



(Above) The Thomas home; Jolly allegedly killed 6 for property

take control of the family's property, and to live with a person of her choice.

Koodathai, her in-laws' village, is in shock at not just the allegation against the pious, cheerful and talkative woman with a wide network of friends but also how she appears to have got away with it for so long.

"Only last week we had returned together from a retreat

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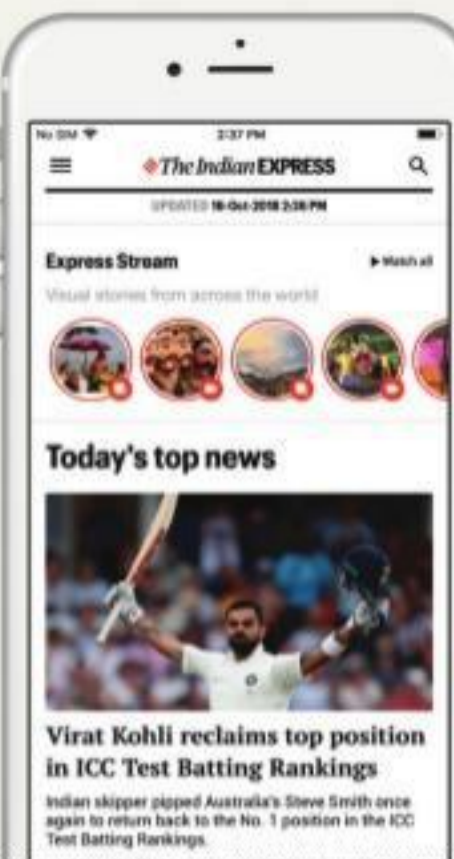
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EXPRESS AUDIO
How the 'Save Aarey' protests gained momentum

On this episode of 3 Things, we unpack the events that unfolded in Aarey on Saturday with protestors being arrested and detained, what action they plan to take next, and how this movement caught the attention of Mumbaikars



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VIDEO OF THE DAY



IDEA EXCHANGE: KUMARI SELJA
Selja on party's strategy for elections in Haryana and Maharashtra

FULL COVERAGE



AAREY FORESTS PROTEST
29 protesters released on bail, prohibitory orders in force

UP: Man killed in encounter, MP wants CBI probe

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE LUCKNOW, OCTOBER 6

HOURS AFTER a police inspector was allegedly attacked by a 25-year-old man accused of illegal mining, police said the latter was killed in an encounter in Jhansi early Sunday.

However, SP's Rajya Sabha MP Chandrapal Singh Yadav called the encounter fake and demanded registration of murder charges and a CBI inquiry.

Police claimed the deceased, Pushpendra Yadav, was killed in the encounter while his brother Ravindra and associate Nitin managed to escape. Inspector Dharendra Singh Chauhan, SHO of Moth police station, was admitted to Jhansi Medical College, after a bullet grazed his chin.

"On Saturday night, the SHO got a call from Pushpendra. He asked Chauhan to meet him," said Jhansi SSP Om Prakash Singh.

"As soon as Chauhan rolled down his window, a shot was fired at him by Pushpendra... The attackers fled in Chauhan's car. Around 2.30 am, the stolen car was seen... and when we tried to intercept it, shots were fired. We retaliated and Pushpendra was injured... succumbed in the hospital..." said Singh.

MP stops chicken sale at milk kiosk

MILIND GHATAI
BHOPAL, OCTOBER 6

THE MADHYA Pradesh State Livestock and Poultry Development Corporation has decided to stop sale of chicken at a kiosk that also sells milk in Bhopal.

The kiosk — with two separate counters and separate vendors — had been set up five months ago.

On Saturday, Sahakari Bharati, an organisation with links to the RSS staged a protest near the kiosk. "The chicken parlour and milk parlour are (already) separate... Until the new milk parlour is not set up further away or constructed, the chicken parlour will remain closed," read the statement, signed by the corporation's executive director, Dr T S Tomar.

FROM PAGE ONE

NC leaders

It would have been the first meeting of PDP leaders from Jammu province with Mufti since her detention.

The NC leaders had got permission on Thursday from the administration to meet Omar and Farooq.

Referring to the Block Development Council (BDC) polls announced for October 24, with results the same day, the leaders said the NC would not be a party to them. "In the present situation and circumstances, when the entire political leadership is behind bars — they are under house arrest or detained — the question of any political activity does not arise," Masoodi told *The Indian Express* after meeting the two party leaders.

On the Centre's promise to start releasing the leaders soon, Masoodi said, "Let them do it. So far, nothing has been done."

NC provincial president (Jammu) Devender Singh Rana, who led the delegation comprising ex-legislators of the party belonging to the Jammu region, said, "Any election to be held under such a situation will be meaningless... There is a complete lockdown. If the political process has to start, these people have to be released... See the case of the National Conference. Even if we want to contest the BDC elections... (in) the panchayats that exist... we have to get the (permission) signed by party president Farooq Abdullah... The party general secretary who has to propose the name out of a panel of prospective candidates is also detained... Let them be released, then the working committee of the party will meet and formulate a strategy."

Rana added, "We are happy that both (Farooq and Omar Abdullah) are well and in high spirits. Of course, they are pained and anguished about the developments, particularly the lockdown of the people, and we as a party appeal that for the political process to start and democracy to revive in Jammu and Kashmir, political deteneus anywhere and everywhere, whether from the mainstream political parties or otherwise who have no criminal records, may be released and the hearts and minds of the people of Jammu and Kashmir are won."

The brother of Union minister Jitendra

Singh Rana, Rana had himself been allowed to move out of home after nearly two months, on Wednesday, and approached the Governor to let an NC delegation meet the Abdullahs to decide the party's next political steps. He was among the nearly dozen non-BJP leaders in Jammu against whom restrictions were lifted Wednesday evening, following the announcement of the BDC polls. Mainstream politicians in Kashmir continue to be under detention.

Former PDP legislator and spokesperson Firdous Tak announced postponement of the party's visit to Srinagar to meet Mufti. Hours earlier, he had said that they had requested Governor Satya Pal Malik to let them meet the PDP chief, and that the District Magistrate, Srinagar, told them they could meet her in Srinagar at noon Monday. He had also said the PDP delegation would be led by general secretary Ved Mahajan.

PTI reported that sources within the PDP said the visit had been deferred because of the lack of unanimity on the composition of the delegation.

The Jammu and Kashmir State Election Commission had announced BDC elections in the state on October 24, to be held on "party lines". It will be the first time that the state will see BDC polls.

While the BJP and Congress have said they would contest, the CPM too has said it can't as long as mainstream politicians, including its former legislator M Y Tarigami, continue to be detained.

Congress chief spokesperson Ravinder Sharma said in Jammu Saturday that the party would participate in the BDC elections "for the sake of democracy" and "in the interest of the people".

Serial killer
centre after one-day meditation. She used to hold regular prayer meetings at her house," says P George, a member of Jolly's prayer group at the parish. George claims to have also spoken to Jolly about police opening probe into her first husband Roy Thomas's death recently. "Jolly said she had nothing to worry about."

Jolly's second husband Shaju Zacharias, a high schoolteacher whom she married in 2017, says, "She would often visit the cemetery where Roy and his family members were buried, to put flowers and light candles on their graves." Also calling her

Fund flows to commercial sector down 88 per cent, says RBI data

ECBs rose from an outflow of Rs 653 crore to a flow of Rs 54,073 crore and FDI from Rs 106,961 crore to Rs 152,119 crore during April to mid-September, according to the RBI data.

"Overall flow of financial resources to the commercial sector moderated mainly due to reduced credit offtake from banks reflecting weak demand and risk aversion," the central bank said. The RBI had cut the real gross domestic product (GDP) growth for 2019-20 to 6.1 per cent from 6.9 per cent in forecast in August, reflecting

the ongoing slowdown in the economy. Credit growth to services has decelerated sharply since January 2019. Of the incremental non-food credit flow during the year (August 2018-August 2019), personal loans accounted for the largest share, followed by services and industry. Within personal loans, credit offtake has been broadly concentrated in two segments — housing and credit card outstanding.

With muted credit offtake and decline in non-SLR (statutory liquidity ratio) invest-

ments, banks have augmented their SLR portfolios despite a reduction by the RBI. Banks held excess SLR of 6.9 per cent of net demand and time liabilities (NDTL) — or deposits — on August 30 this year as compared with 6.3 per cent of NDTL at March-end.

One year after the funding availability issues emerged for non-banks, timely access to funding remains a challenge for many of them barring those that are backed by strong parents. "Non-banks with wholesale-oriented loan books and without strong parentage con-

tinued to be most impacted in accessing funds. Overall, growth is expected to remain subdued in fiscal 2020," rating firm Crisil said in a report.

Various regulatory initiatives and measures taken to enhance availability of funds have improved market sentiment to some extent in the past few months. In an environment where access to funding has become a function of market confidence, the quantum and quality of liquidity cushion would become a key differentiator between non-banks, it said.

very religious, Shaju says, "She got uneasy if she ever missed a Sunday Mass."

Originally from Kattappana in Idukki, Jolly had a love marriage in 1997 with Roy, a trader, the eldest of three children of Tom and Annamma Thomas. While Tom retired as an Education Department clerk, Annamma used to work as a teacher.

Jolly and Roy had two sons, now aged 15 and 21.

Shahul Hameed, their next-door neighbour, says Jolly told everyone she was a lecturer at the National Institute of Technology Calicut (NIT-C). "People in the locality had a good impression of her... We came to know only now that she worked at a beauty parlour," Hameed said.

However, the villagers do remember that there was a property dispute after the parents died — Annamma, 57, in 2002 and Tom, 66, in 2008. Their deaths were attributed to cardiac arrest, but police now believe both were killed by Jolly. They left behind an acre of agricultural land, another plot of 40 cents, and a two-storey house.

Neighbours say after their deaths, Roy became an alcoholic and lost his mind. So when an autopsy revealed cyanide poisoning behind his death in 2011, after he had started vomiting and frothing from the mouth, everyone believed it was a case of suicide.

The fourth to die was M M Mathew, 68, Annamma's brother, who had insisted on the autopsy on Roy. He died in 2014. Six years after Roy's death,

Jolly married Shaju, the son of Tom's brother Zacharias Thomas. By then, both Shaju's one-year-old daughter Alphin and wife Sili were dead. Jolly is a suspect in these deaths too. While she was nearby when Alphin died in 2014, Sili died in her lap in 2016.

Neighbours recall a very low-key wedding, with Jolly continuing to stay at the Koodathai house with her sons, and Shaju at Pulikkayam, 13 km away, with his parents.

Shaju claims Sili's parents and Jolly pressed for the wedding. "But citing her big friend circle, Jolly never stayed with me. I would go stay with her at Koodathai occasionally."

It was two months ago that police first came knocking, following a complaint by Rojo, Tom and Annamma's younger son. A neighbour, Aysha, claims Rojo had long been suspicious. "When he came visiting (from the US, where he is settled), Rojo would not stay at the house or have food cooked by Jolly. He preferred a hotel."

Since Jolly's arrest, the Zacharias have distanced themselves from her. "Jolly has four brothers who live in Idukki. They can take care of her legal battle," says Shaju. She doesn't have a lawyer yet.

Kozhikode Rural S P K G Simon says the 47-year-old hasn't expressed any regret over the alleged murders. "Every killing made her more bold and courageous," he claims.

Police have also arrested M S Mathew, a salesman with a jewellery shop, and goldsmith Preji Kumar on the charge of supplying her the cyanide. According to the SP, Mathew knew why she wanted the poison, and Kumar gave it to him. Cyanide has various uses in making/polishing jewellery.

Jolly and Thomas's two sons are now with his sister Renji, based in Kochi. One of the sons told the media Sunday, "Let the truth come out... Those who commit a crime should be punished." Saying he didn't want to judge anyone, he added, "Things impossible to imagine or comprehend are happening in life."

Renji, a schoolteacher, said she was happy that "truth behind the death of her parents" was revealed. "We believed what Jolly said when my parents and brother died. I believe another person was involved in the murders. It's up to police prove it," she said.

Xi visit

The Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan in Kashmir, and "sought clarification" on what was seen as a departure from Beijing's stated position on Jammu and Kashmir.

Ambassador Yao Jing had said that China would stand by Pakistan on the resolution of the Kashmir dispute. "We are also working for Kashmiris to help

them get their fundamental rights and justice. There should be a justified solution to the issue of Kashmir and China will stand by Pakistan for regional peace and stability," he said, according to Pakistani daily *The Express Tribune*.

Yao has served in New Delhi as deputy chief of mission earlier. Delhi viewed his comments as a departure from Beijing's stated position of Kashmir being a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan, to be resolved by the two countries, and as interference in India's "internal matter" and "not keeping in spirit" with the proposed visit by Xi.

While there has been no official response from Beijing on Delhi's protest, Chinese government sources told *The Indian Express* on Sunday that China's position has been "consistent", and it always "endeavours to promote peace and stability in the region and hopes that both sides can solve problems through dialogue and consultations".

Earlier, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi had not come to India for the Special Representative-level talks, expected to be held on September 9.

On September 17, when External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar was asked about it during a press conference, he had said, "On this question of Wang Yi's rescheduling of visit, look... and this is not specific to this particular question... often people float dates. For me no dates are dates until (MEA spokesperson) Raveesh Kumar says so because you get speculation of various kinds... There was no rescheduling. So at this moment I think the National Security Advisor who is our Representative SR for these talks, he was preoccupied. It was one of those things which didn't happen. So I don't think more should be read into that."

On President Xi coming for the informal summit, Jaishankar had said, "I think you will have to be a little patient."

There have been a string of other statements and moves in the last few weeks impacting the environment between the two countries. Chinese Vice Minister in Foreign Ministry Luo Zhaohui, who was earlier the Chinese envoy to India, last week raised the issue of the Himigiri military exercises in Arunachal Pradesh with Foreign Secretary Vijay Keshav Gokhale.

On Saturday, Chinese Embassy spokesperson Ji Rong disputed a report in the media that the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi were held on the Indian Embassy premises in Beijing because the relevant local authority denied permission for it at the chosen venue, Chaoyang Park of Beijing.

Earlier, at the UN General

Assembly, Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi had raised the issue of Kashmir on September 27, the same day as Modi and Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan spoke on it.

Responding to Wang's statement, the MEA spokesperson had said, "We expect that other countries will respect India's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and desist from efforts to change the status quo through the illegal so-called China Pakistan Economic Corridor in Pakistan occupied Kashmir."

Gauhati HC

57 references shall have no legal consequences and shall not be acted upon by the Superintendent of Police (Border), Morigaon as well as by the Deputy Commissioner, Morigaon. All the 57 references shall now be treated as pending references."

When contacted, SP, Morigaon, Swapnaneel Deka, told *The Indian Express* that he has not received a copy of the order yet. The 19 lakh people were excluded from the final NRC published on August 31.

The High Court ruling came on a writ petition that was registered suo motu following an e-mail dated April 23, 2018, by Mousumi Deka, Member, FT No. 4, Morigaon, addressed to the Principal Secretary to the Assam government, and the state's Home and Political Department, with a copy marked to the Registrar (Judicial), Gauhati High Court.

The email stated that 288 references were shown disposed of by the earlier Member but detailed opinions signed by the Member were not available in case records.

Referring to the earlier Member, the High Court order said: "Before parting with the record, we express our disappointment over the way the Member conducted himself. This was not expected. In the ordinary course this would have called for some action, disciplinary or otherwise. We leave it at that."

Scrutinising the 288 cases, the High Court order stated that according to a report by the Deputy Secretary to the Assam government and its Home and Political Department, "anomalies were detected" in 57 cases.

The High Court order listed out the causes:
■ In 11 cases, judgments were not found on record.
■ In six cases, there is a mismatch between the judgment copies and order sheets. In three of these, the report said: "Proceedees are declared Indian in note sheet, but in opinion declared as foreigner."
■ In five cases, the report found dual judgments.
■ The report found that in 32 cases, the persons were de-

clared "foreigners" ex-parte but then declared Indians consequently without vacating the earlier order.

■ In two cases, inconsistencies and discrepancies in names were detected.

■ One case was left undisposed since the suspected "foreigner" had expired.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Aman Wadud, a lawyer who has represented several suspected "foreigners" at FTs and the Gauhati High Court, said: "This raises serious questions on the competency of FT members. They don't get any formal training before deciding the fate of people and their generations to come. They just get a few days of orientation. India has many brilliant judicial academies, what is stopping the government from training them there?"

Aarey plea

Rishav Ranjan, a fourth-year student from Greater Noida, stated: "...the 'Car Shed' is sought to be located in 33 hectare land at Aarey. This is on the banks of the 'Mithi River' and which has channels and tributaries flowing to it and emptying in the river. Its absence can flood Mumbai... The question is why should a forest which has 3,500 trees in it on the banks of a river be the chosen site for a polluting industry?"

Seeking a stay, the letter urged the Chief Justice of India to treat it as a petition as "by the time an appeal is filed in the Hon'ble Supreme Court (against the Bombay High Court order), we feel the part of Aarey will be cleared with all trees leading to irrevocable loss".

On Friday, while rejecting the plea by an activist and an NGO, which wanted Aarey to be declared a forest, the Bombay High Court asked them to approach the Supreme Court for relief.

Hours after the High Court dismissed the petition, between 100 and 200 protesters gathered at the Picnic Point in Aarey Colony between 8.30 pm and 11 pm. In the melee that followed, police claimed, several protesters entered the site and allegedly assaulted a police inspector and a male constable.

The letter to the Chief Justice of India claimed that activists, including students, had organised a "peaceful vigil" against the actions of the corporation and Mumbai Metro but were detained. Those who tried to protest were charged with a non-bailable offence and "abused and manhandled by Mumbai police", it claimed.

Ranjan, 21, is a student of Lloyd Law College — his Twitter handle describes him as the general secretary of Youth for Swaraj, which is linked to Swaraj Abhiyan of former AAP leader Yogendra Yadav.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Ranjan said that two of his friends, Shruti Nair and Kapil Agarwal, were among the 29 people arrested during the protests Saturday. "I have been involved in many environmental issues, and was keeping track of Aarey through my friends in Mumbai. My petition is an independent petition asking the court to stop the destruction in Aarey," he said.

Ranjan said his petition also seeks a response from authorities on the number of trees cut in Aarey.

In the letter, he urged the court to "protect Aarey without getting into technicalities as there was no time for preparation of proper appeal petition and over the scars of these young activists who are responsible citizens standing for serious environmental concerns".

(WITH INPUTS FROM LAXMAN SINGH, MUMBAI)

DELHI'S AIR GETS CLEANER! POLLUTION DOWN BY 25%

HEAVY FINES ON VIOLATION OF DUST CONTROL NORMS

25% प्रदूषण
हुआ कम
आओ मिलकर
100%
कम करें हम

DIP/Shabdarth/D/0163/19-20

WHAT BROUGHT DOWN POLLUTION?

- 24x7 electricity supply brought generator usage to near zero
- Heavy fines on construction sites in violation of dust control norms
- Implementation of Hon'ble Supreme Court's 'Graded Response Action Plan'
- Closure of Rajghat and Badarpur Thermal Power Plants
- Eastern-Western Peripheral Expressways reduced vehicular traffic
- Increase in Green Cover in Delhi

Year	PM 2.5 Levels*
2012-14	154
2016-18	115

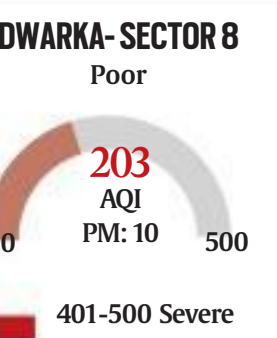
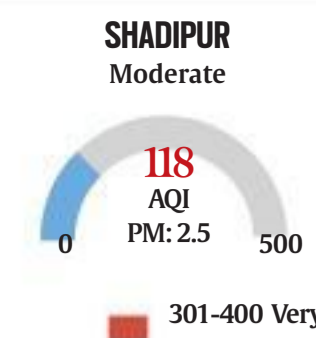
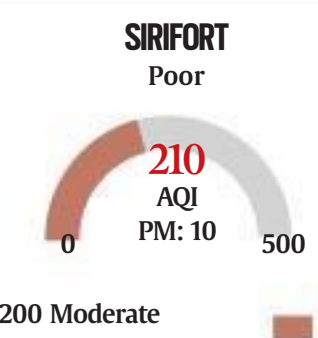
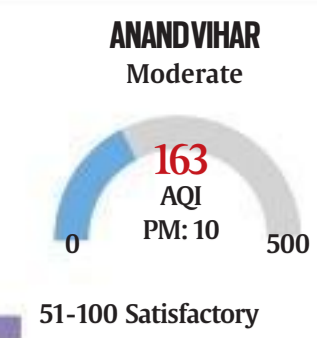
*Source: Central Pollution Control Board, Government of India

But we can't stop here! We have to make every possible effort to make Delhi pollution free





0-50 Good



51-100 Satisfactory

101-200 Moderate

201-300 Poor

301-400 Very Poor

401-500 Severe

BRIEFLY

76 properties attached in Shahberi

Noida: The Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority (GNIDA) attached 76 properties of three builders in Shahberi due to alleged irregularities in their construction. The properties include 74 flats, one shop and one plot registered in the name of three separate builders. The action comes in the wake of 86 FIRs being registered against builders who constructed flats in the region illegally. The cases were prompted after two buildings collapsed in August 2018, killing nine people.

1 dead, 3 hurt as DTC bus rams vehicles

New Delhi: One man died and three persons suffered injuries after a DTC bus rammed into six vehicles in West Delhi's Sagarpur Saturday night, police said. The driver, Anil Singh (42), was arrested from the spot. Singh told police the bus hit the vehicles because its brakes failed. According to police, Sumit Kumar (40), succumbed to head injuries at the DDU Hospital Sunday. Two of the victims suffered minor injuries and were discharged after treatment.

Man running Mother Dairy booth shot at

New Delhi: A 38-year-old shopkeeper was shot at, allegedly by three men, while trying to resist a robbery in North East Delhi's Karawal Nagar. The victim, Nahar Singh, runs a Mother Dairy booth in the area and suffered a bullet injury to his ear. Police said the incident took place around 9.30 pm on Saturday, and added that accused men fled with Rs 15,000 cash. A case of robbery has been registered against the accused, said police.

Kenyan woman jumps bail, arrested

New Delhi: Delhi Police have arrested a 36-year-old Kenyan woman from Mumbai's Naginpada area, 10 months after she jumped bail from the capital. The woman, Mariam, was arrested on the charge of drug trafficking with two other men in the capital on June 25, 2018, after 7.5 kg of heroin was recovered from her possession. She later jumped bail and went to Mumbai, police said.

3 snatchers nabbed

New Delhi: Police said three snatchers were arrested from West Delhi's Mayapuri during checking by the picket staff in the area. The accused told police they snatched mobile phones in West Bengal, which were later sold in Bangladesh. They also confessed their involvement in 100 snatchings cases in the capital. A total of 17 mobile phones were recovered from them. ENS

Wanted man arrested

New Delhi: Delhi Police's Special Cell has arrested a 38-year-old man from Mangolpuri, who was wanted in a case registered against him under the Arms Act, an official said on Sunday. PTI

NOT EXPECTING POLL TICKET: SAWHNEY
4-time Cong MLA from Chandni Chowk joins AAPEXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6

SENIOR CONGRESS leader and four-time MLA Parlad Singh Sawhney Sunday joined the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the presence of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal at the party headquarters, fuelling rumours about him or his son contesting assembly polls, scheduled early next year, from the Chandni Chowk constituency.

Speaking at the AAP headquarters, Sawhney (68), a close aide of former Delhi CM Sheila Dikshit, said he joined the party after considering the work it has done in the capital. He added that "he is not keeping any expectation of getting an election ticket".

He said, "Everywhere I go in my area, people jump up and say Kejriwal has reduced electricity charges and made water free of cost (up to a certain limit)."

"We now don't have to tell people who to vote for, they say they will vote for Kejriwal."

Sawhney was MLA from Chandni Chowk from 1998 to 2015. He lost to AAP candidate Alka Lamba in the 2015 assembly polls. With Lamba falling out of favour with AAP and return-



Parlad Sawhney (third from left) with CM Arvind Kejriwal and AAP MP Sanjay Singh at the party HQ, Sunday. Amit Mehra

ing to Congress last month, the Chandni Chowk seat is up for grabs, a senior party official said. The seat has been a Congress stronghold.

Between 1998 and 2015, Congress's Sawhney won the seat four times while BJP and AAP have won it once each.

Sawhney said he believes the AAP would win the upcoming election with a larger vote share than in 2015, when it won 67 out of 70 seats. Kejriwal said he was "very happy" that Sawhney and his team of ward members were joining AAP, and that this would further support their initiatives.

The CM added that three lakh CCTV cameras and two lakh street lights will be installed in the capital within six months.

He said that 1,000 mohalla clinics are being built in the city: "Because of the work done by the AAP, many people in other political parties are looking to join us. I appeal to all the good people in the country, whichever party they are in, that the opportunity has now come to join AAP."

Lamba, who returned to her parent party after a bitter falling out with AAP leaders, is being considered for the candidacy by Congress, sources said.

Live-in partner held for folk singer's murder

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NOIDA, OCTOBER 6

DAYS AFTER folk singer Sushma was shot dead outside her Greater Noida house by two assailants, police have arrested six men, including her live-in partner, for the crime.

According to police, the singer's live-in partner, Gajendra Bhati, allegedly planned the murder and executed it with help of two shooters.

"The accused shooters, Mukesh and Sandeep, were arrested after an encounter in Jewar. The two had been absconding since last week. Four others, including Sushma's live-in partner Gajendra Bhati, have been arrested. During investigation, it was found that he had a dispute with Sushma over property as well as personal problems. We are investigating the matter," said Vaibhav Krishna, SSP Gautam Budh Nagar.

According to police, Bhati and Sushma had been living together for four years after she got divorced. However, Bhati allegedly "didn't trust her" and also did not approve of her singing, police said. As a result of this, the duo would fight often,



Sushma was shot dead outside her house last week

said police.

According to police, Bhati was also involved in the first attack on Sushma in Bulandshahr two months ago. On the day she was shot dead, Sushma had gone to Bulandshahr for a follow-up in the same case.

"Bhati claimed that Sushma would pressure him to sign over his property to her and her son. This led to tension between the two. He claimed that he tried committing suicide in February last year due to harassment," said SSP Krishna.

Gajendra's relative, driver and acquaintance — Ajab Singh, Amit and Pramod — have also been arrested.

Sushma's younger sister Sonu, who was with her during

the shooting, said: "The accusations made by Bhati are baseless. We earn enough through our music and have never eyed anyone's property. The suicide bid by Bhati was a hoax to intimidate us," Sonu told *The Indian Express*. Both Sushma and Sonu hail from Bulandshahr's Nekpur and have been pursuing a career in folk singing for the past 10 years.

Greater Noida police have rewarded the Beta 2 and Star 2 teams with Rs 25,000 following the encounters.

Sushma and Sonu lived with Bhati in Greater Noida's Mitra Society. On Tuesday last week, she was shot five times as she was returning from Bulandshahr.

Both and Sushma and Sonu took to folk singing almost a decade ago and became popular in the region.

Sushma was well versed with classical and Ragini form of local music, according to her sister. She would also write lyrics for some of her songs and both sisters would feature in YouTube videos which fetched millions of views. Sushma would be invited to sing in religious functions around twice a week owing to her popularity.

Unable to find tenant, 62-yr-old hangs self

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6

A 62-YEAR-OLD retired bank manager allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself from a tree branch outside his rented home in South East Delhi's Amar Colony Friday night.

Police said a purported suicide note was recovered from the pocket of Satish Kumar Chawla's trousers, in which he allegedly wrote that he was depressed as he was unable to rent out the house he had purchased a year ago, said police.

Police said Chawla lived with his wife and son at a rented apartment in National Park. He had purchased a new house in the same locality a year ago, and was looking to put it on rent for the last eight months. Unable to find a tenant, he became depressed and allegedly committed suicide, said police. "He was rushed to Metro Hospital where he was declared dead on arrival," said Chinmoy Biswal, DCP (South East).

Police said they have ruled out any foul play. Chawla's wife is also a retired bank manager, and the couple worked for a national bank, said police. Their son works at an MNC.



DEFYING GRAVITY

Stunt performers ride cars on the 'Well of Death', one of the main attractions in the ongoing Ramlila fair in Noida, Sunday. Gajendra Yadav

DERC fines discoms for failing green norms

New Delhi: The Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) has fined power discoms in the city for failing to comply with green energy norms. In an order last month, DERC imposed a fine of Rs 1.71 crore on Tata Power DDL (TPDDL), and Rs 2.88 crore each on BSES Yamuna Power Ltd (BYPL) and BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd (BRPL). In a petition filed by Green Energy Association and Indian Wind Power Association, the three discoms were said to have not complied with renewable energy obligations (RPO) for years 2012-15.

According to the obligations,

a certain percentage of electricity purchased by discoms or other entities has to be sourced from renewable energy. "As per the regulations, around 15.5 per cent of the electricity consumption has to be from renewable energy," said a former member of the DERC. The fines are to be paid within a month.

A BSES spokesperson said, "In 2012-15, BSES discoms had sought deferment of RPOs as prices were high, even going up to Rs 15 per unit..."

A TPDDL spokesperson also said that the cost of renewable energy till a few days ago was very high. ENS

Jobless man poses as scientist, tricks woman into marriage

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6

A MAN allegedly tricked a woman into marriage by posing as a scientist from the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). Police said the man, who is unemployed and already married, allegedly showed the woman and her relatives fake documents to prove his background and employment, following which the couple married in May. The victim, who is a PhD student, filed a complaint against the accused, identified as Jitender Singh, at

Dwarka North police station on October 1.

In her complaint, the victim said that after the marriage, Singh told her that he was working with ISRO and was invited for a space mission from NASA in US. The woman's father even dropped Singh at the airport in September.

"Later, when the victim logged into her Netflix account, which she shares with her husband, she found that the GPS showed the man's location in Gurgaon. When confronted, he admitted that he was unemployed and already married," said a senior police officer.

During investigation, police found Singh never went to the US and had instead gone to his first wife in Gurgaon.

"Before our marriage, he showed us his MTech degree from IIT Kharagpur and work documents from DRDO. He told us that he will now work for ISRO. We met his parents and brother in Rewari before the wedding," the complainant said.

"A case has been registered against the man and his family members under IPC sections 419, 494 and 420. A team has been deployed to nab the accused," said Anto Alphonse, DCP, Dwarka.

Tiwari hits out at Delhi govt over 'water quality'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6

DELHI BJP president Manoj Tiwari and senior leader Vijender Gupta hit out at Delhi government Sunday, alleging that the water being supplied in the capital was of poor quality.

Last week, consumer affairs minister Ram Vilas Paswan had also said the quality of water supplied by the water utility was found lacking during a BIS inspection.

"After the BIS investigation report it has been proved that the water in Delhi is not potable..." Tiwari said.

Tiwari alleged the quality of water being supplied is poor

Kejriwal Sunday dismissed the allegations: "Union Jal minister (Gajendra Singh Shekhawat) has said that Delhi's water is better than European standards. These people are doing politics."

DJB officials said water quality in Delhi is not bad, and added that leakages in pipes lead to poor quality in particular areas.

At Mahila Haat, some vendors say sales hit

ANANYA TIWARI
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6

LOW FOOTFALL and high rents seem to have dampened the optimism of vendors at the Sunday book bazaar of Darya Ganj, which is being set up at the Mahila Haat near Delhi Gate for the past few weeks. The vendors at the Darya Ganj Sunday book bazaar were removed after a Delhi HC order.

Arvind Mishra, who runs a stall, said, "Back on the road we could make Rs 4,000-5,000 per day... Here, footfall has dipped."

Around 160 vendors set up shop at the Mahila Haat on Sunday as many protested at Asaf Ali Road against the eviction.

Manish Kapoor, a protester, said, "They evicted us without fol-



Vendors are charged around Rs 200 as rent at Mahila Haat

lowing due procedure as per Street Vendors Act." Officials at the North MCD said the site was chosen after deliberations with the vendors. The former president of the bazaar's welfare association, Subhash Chand Agarwal (80) said, "The Mahila Haat location is wrong... If they keep removing us it will lose its value."

NOTIFICATION ISSUED BY DELHI GOVERNMENT

Hospital boards to help persons with disabilities

ASTHA SAXENA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6

THE DELHI government has constituted boards in seven state-run hospitals across the capital to provide assistance to Persons with Disabilities (PWD), with "high support" needs. The board will be headed by the medical superintendent of the hospitals, members from the district social welfare department and a few specialists.

As per the notifications issued by the Law Ministry, "high support" means intensive support—physical, psychological and/or otherwise— which may be required by a person with a bench-

mark disability for daily activities, in order to take independent and informed decisions to access facilities and participating in all areas of life including education, employment, family, community life, treatment and therapy.

The hospitals chosen by the Delhi government are Guru Teg Bahadur, Govind Ballabh Pant, Lok Nayak, Deen Dayal Upadhyay, Dr Baba Saheb Ambedkar, Janakpuri Super Speciality Hospital and Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences (IHBAS). "The idea is to make the hospitals disabled-friendly by creating infrastructure like ramps, toilet railings and special lifts. Though we have created ramps and lifts in our hospital, the gov-



Lok Nayak is among the seven hospitals chosen by Delhi government

ernment is also focussed on creating a Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PMR)," said Dr Sunil Kumar, Medical Director, GTB hospital.

The board will have five reha-

ilitation specialists, and one specialist each from ENT, orthopaedic, ophthalmology, and paediatric department.

In a meeting held last month, social welfare and health department officials discussed the problems faced by disabled persons due to non-issuance of disability certificates. The officials also pointed out that persons with disabilities face many issues while applying for the disability certificate and UDID cards.

"In respect of non-availability of specialist doctors in designated hospitals, it was decided that hospitals may refer the patient to a private healthcare setup... On receiving the required reports from the private healthcare facility, the

certificate would be issued by the government hospitals. They would bear the expenses at the private hospitals through the Delhi Arogya Kosh," the government stated in its statement.

A committee was also constituted with social welfare director as chairperson and doctors as members to keep checks and balances of the issuance of disability certificates and UDID cards. The committee was asked to submit its report in two weeks' time. But, sources say, it has not met once since the orders were passed. "There's confusion regarding the government's plan... The ideas have been floated but not implemented," said a senior doctor who is part of the committee.



24x7 ELECTRICITY

LOWEST BILLS*

DELHI IS NOW THE CAPITAL OF LIGHTS

DELHI NOW HAS LOWEST TARIFFS

Upto 200 units/month		
City	Units	Bill**
Delhi	200	0
Noida	202	1374
Mumbai	194	1244
Bengaluru	175	1272
Punjab	188	1357

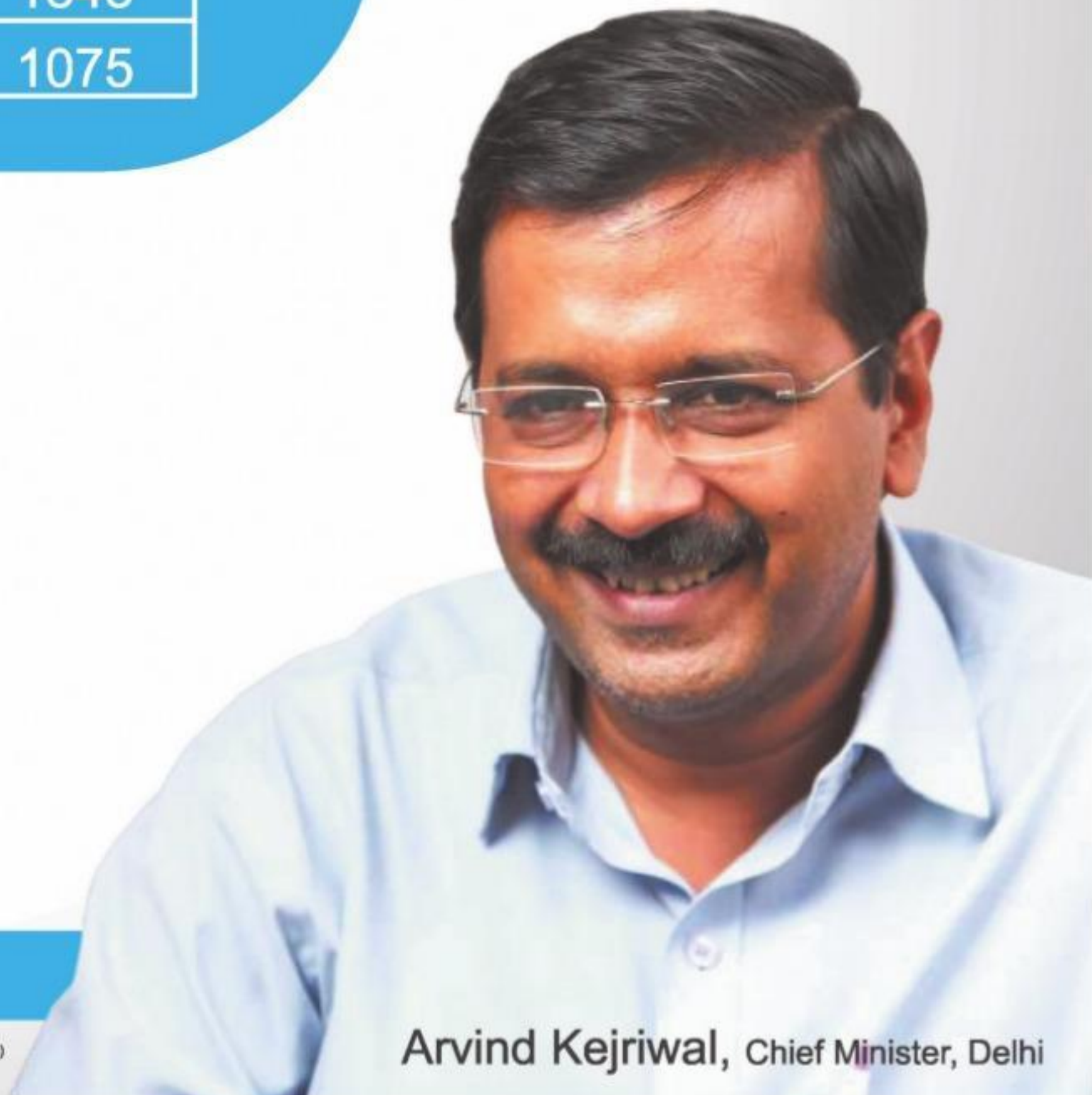
Upto 400 units/month		
City	Units	Bill**
Delhi	400	1319
Noida	331	2123
Mumbai	383	3095
Bengaluru	393	3385
Punjab	395	3122

SHARP DROP IN TARIFFS IN 5 YEARS

Consumption	100 Units	200 Units	300 Units	400 Units
2013	365	688	1265	1843
2019	0	0	527	1075



दिल्ली ने कर दिखाया



Arvind Kejriwal, Chief Minister, Delhi

दिल्ली सरकार Power Department, Government of NCT of Delhi

* In comparison with Noida, Mumbai, Punjab and Bengaluru
 ** The bill amounts are from specific consumers with sanctioned load less than 5KW. The bills from Noida are of April-May 2019, Bengaluru are August-September 2019, Mumbai (194 units) from January 2019, Mumbai (383 units) from October 2018, Punjab (395 units/month) from November 2018-January 2019 and Punjab (188 units/month) from June-August 2019

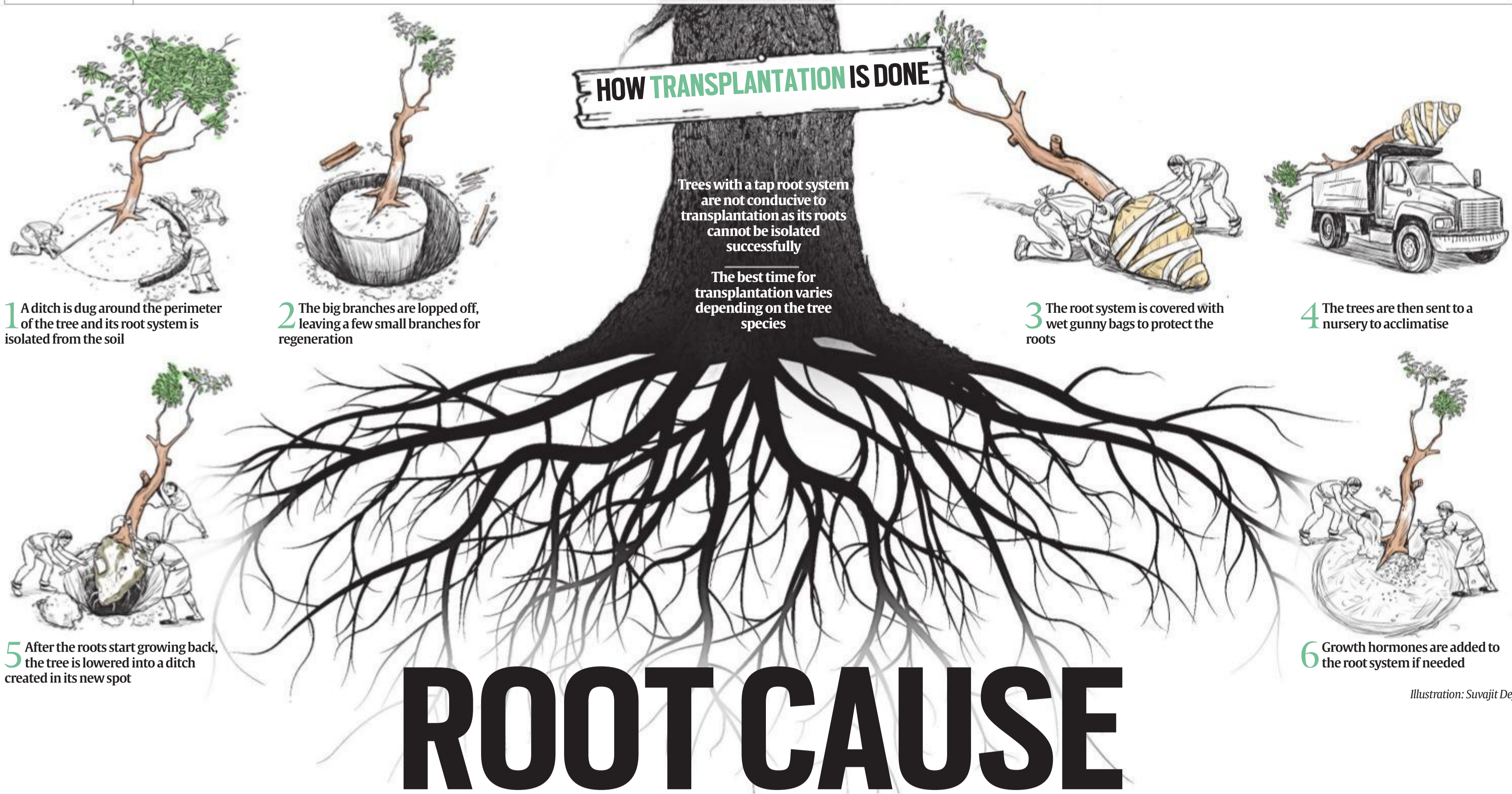


Illustration: Suvajit Dey

ROOT CAUSE

In Delhi, a spurt of projects that could clash with the green cover. In Mumbai, protests over trees being felled in Aarey Colony. In striking a balance between growth and saving a city's lungs, tree transplantation has emerged as a key option.

MALLICA JOSHI & SHIVAM PATEL explore whether it's a viable one

THREE TREES that made their way from Delhi University to the Yamuna Biodiversity Park nine years ago have a home at the edge of the park, which is among the capital's greenest areas. Staff here give special attention to these trees, reporting any problems to higher-ups.

In 2010, seven trees from Delhi University Rugby Stadium were among those supposed to be cut down during preparation for the Commonwealth Games. Officials had opted to transplant them instead.

A team from the Centre for Environmental Management of Degraded Ecosystems at Delhi University, headed by renowned ecologist C R Babu, carried out the exercise, transplanting the seven trees to the Park. Nine years later, Babu said, the experiment is not particularly a success.

"Survival rate and the quality after transplantation are not very encouraging," he said.

Out of the seven trees that were transplanted, three died. Three pipal trees and one bombax are still alive, but "only just". "If you look at the foliage of two pipal trees, it has not grown back much, even in nine years. It is like living with a handicap... The younger pipal and the bombax are doing better," said wildlife biologist Faiyaz Khudsar, the scientist-in-charge at Yamuna Biodiversity Park.

A favoured option

On October 1, Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said that 186 trees hindering the alignment of new buildings planned at Kasturba Nagar's government employees' residential area will be transplanted. The last week also saw 111 trees inside the Delhi Technological University being transplanted to make way for a new building. For the Dwarka Expressway, the process to transplant 5,717 native trees has already begun, and is expected to take three months.

The capital's push towards tree transplantation is evident.

And Puri's statement on Kasturba Nagar is particularly significant, since the area is part of seven government residential colonies that were supposed to be rebuilt. For the entire project, over 14,000 trees were proposed to be cut.

A citizen campaign against tree felling in the capital last year, much like the one in Mumbai against felling of trees in Aarey Colony, is what prompted the decision to rework the project and come up with a design that would spare a larger number of trees and allot more room for transplantation. The campaign in Mumbai, though, has failed to force a rethink.

But a citizen campaign against the project forced the ministry to redraw its plan and look at transplanting instead of felling trees.

It was around the same time, in February this year, that the Delhi government announced it was coming up with a tree transplantation policy. As per its draft, which was put on the government website for a month to invite suggestions, of the total number of trees required to be felled for a project, at least 80% will have to be transplanted, preferably in-situ. Of these 80%, a survival rate of 80% should be ensured. The practice of planting 10 trees for each one that is cut should continue to be followed, it said.

Tree transplantation, though, is not exactly new — and neither are the challenges that come with it. Among the first such projects to be carried out in the city was in 1972, when CPWD transplanted around 25 trees from Zakir Husain Marg and Moti Bagh to Pragati Maidan. According to senior CPWD officials, only about five survived.



In Kasturba Nagar. Union Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri last week said that 186 trees coming in the way of buildings planned at Kasturba Nagar's government employees' residential area will be transplanted. Praveen Khanna

"The *jacaranda*, *kusum* and floss silk trees didn't survive. A handful of *pilkhan* trees were the only ones that managed," said a CPWD official.

In 2011, five *mousari* trees were transplanted within the Lodhi Garden to give visitors a clear view of the *Bada Gumbad*. Between 2011 and 2017, the Delhi Forest Department granted permission to transplant 6,041 trees across the capital.

And this year, close to 6,000 trees are being transplanted for a single project, the Dwarka Expressway.

Whose job is it?

A forest department official acknowledged that ever since the tree transplantation policy was drafted in 2018, requests for relocation have gone up. Transplantation is usually considered if removal of a large number of trees is involved in a project, officials said. Since the forest department currently lacks manpower to carry out relocation on its own, agencies that approach it with requests are asked to make their own arrangements.

These arrangements usually come in the form of people who have been running nurseries and landscaping businesses in the city.

According to the draft tree transplantation policy, agencies that transplant trees have to be empanelled to make it easier for contractors to find them. The policy also includes a proposal to set up a separate transplant cell to look into finer details of the process and empanel the agencies.

Presently, the agencies that have to execute a project are tasked with finding someone who will take on the job.

At the Delhi Technological University last week, it was Kapil Arora and his firm A K Contractors who took it on.

"It is a complicated task. At DTU, the trees were transplanted within the premises. Each tree has been planted 6 metres from each other and transported just 1 kilometre away from the original location," said Arora. The firm carried out the first such exercise in 2006, when it transplanted a few trees from Mandir

WHAT THE TRANSPLANTATION POLICY SAYS

80% of total trees required to be cut in a project to be transplanted

- Technical agency to help formulate plan to preserve as many trees as possible on site
- All transplanted trees to be geotagged
- Payment for transplantation to be linked to survival rate. Survival rate set at 80%
- First priority of off-site transplantation to be PWD roads

Marg to a park nearby. Since then, Arora and his team have helped transplant trees in several government as well as private projects. He claims that the survival rate of transplanted trees is around 85%. "We monitor growth for 3-6 months. The longest monitoring period has been one year," he said.

But experts say that may not be enough. "We have monitored the growth of this tree for nine years and we know it is merely a shadow of what a *pipal* tree is. Is being alive the same as thriving? How can someone tell in 3-6 months if transplantation has been successful or not?" said Khudsar.

Several biologists and ecologists *The Indian Express* spoke to said transplantation should be the last option, to be considered only when all other avenues in project redesign have been exhausted.

What makes transplantation a fraught issue is the complexity and uncertainty involved, they said. A number of factors have to be considered, including the species of the

tree, its age, health condition, type of soil, distance to the relocation site, transportation and weather conditions.

"Not all species can be transplanted. Those with a tap root system cannot be isolated from the soil. *Ficus* species are easier to isolate and *pipal* is a hardy species that takes well to being transplanted on paper. But what happens on the ground is much more complicated. Trees above the age of 10 are much tougher to transplant, as are those that have a trunk girth of over 1 metre," Khudsar said.

"Everything can go well during the process but the tree could still die."

Trees of *ficus* species, such as *peepal*, *pilkhan*, *badh*, are considered to be "hardy" with a better chance of survival when transplanted.

Among the suggestions that the forest department received for the policy was to encourage trees to be transplanted in the same area where they have been uprooted from.

Other suggestions include the formation of an expert committee comprising forest officials and a horticulture officer of the project agency to consider which trees are viable for transplantation.

The approach taken by the forest department at present, which gives approval for transplantation as per the draft policy, is to encourage relocation of trees of indigenous variety. Wherever three invasive tree species — *safeda* (a type of eucalyptus), *vilayati kikar* (*prosopis juliflora*) and *subabul* (*Leucaena leucocephala*) — are found, the policy suggests they be cut and 10 native trees be planted to replace each one.

This policy has invited some criticism. In March, the Centre for Policy Research wrote to the Delhi government against it. In the letter, two researchers, Kanchi Kohli and Manju Menon, wrote: "It (the draft policy) seeks to legalise the transplantation of 80% of trees that stand in potential project sites. This is nothing but vacating trees on a mass scale to reduce the 'encumbrance' to building projects. Successive governments have routinely made such arguments to get rid of trees... This

is a very perverse logic in the name of protecting trees. If we accept that it is okay for trees to be vacated for real estate or other projects, soon the transplanted and afforested trees will have to make way for more projects."

An environment department official echoed this: "Both the Centre and state are portraying tree transplantation like it is some kind of magical cure for everything. But such things are usually an eyewash. The fact that, after citizens approached the High Court, the number of trees that were supposed to be cut for the government colonies redevelopment project came down drastically shows that there was always scope for a more eco-friendly approach. If we look at the history of compensatory plantation, we realise that the survival rate is very poor in unprotected areas. Transplantation is several times tougher."

Delhi's environment minister Kailash Gahlot did not respond despite repeated attempts.

Khudsar said a few years ago, when the road under the Miinto Bridge was flooded again, a study was commissioned to find out the reason. "It turned out that no one had studied the natural drainage pattern of the area before building the road. That is why, no matter what, cars floated there as it was the path that led rainwater to the river. It shows that we do not conduct any scientific study before finalising projects," he said.

Hit and trial

Nursery owners say the number of queries they get for transplantation has skyrocketed in the past year.

Sanjay Saini, who has a nursery in Lampur in Outer Delhi and who was given the contract to transplant trees for the Jaipur Metro project, said most queries are from government agencies. "We get at least one query a day these days. We were also approached by the NBCC for a project, but it is on hold currently. Plant type and weather are crucial when it comes to transplantation and younger trees can absorb the shock better," Saini said.

An ancestral business for him, Saini said he learned it on the job.

"We learned through hit and trial while working at the nursery. Sometimes it worked, at others it didn't. No one really teaches these things," he said.

According to Rehmat Khan, who has a nursery in Mehrauli, the one thing that has changed in the past one year is that people who would ordinarily cut a tree within their premises are now looking at options to transplant. "I see an increase in awareness for sure. People think before they file an application to cut a tree," said Khan.

According to Delhi government officials, suggestions received by the public are being studied and many will be included in the policy, including those relating to maintenance and protection of trees.

Some years ago, the road leading up to the Yamuna Biodiversity Park was widened. Khudsar said some trees were cut at the time and some planted nearby.

"It was later decided that a flyover should be built at the spot. This was within a window of four years. Could they not have thought ahead and built a flyover to begin with? The problem is that the environment and trees are the last thing we think about. People don't want them. You asked for the Metro, wider roads and hospitals and the politicians gave them to you. Did you ever ask for a jungle or a river? If you don't ask, you will not get it," he said.

7 GOVT & POLITICS



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



THE FOREIGN TRIP

RAHUL GANDHI'S decision to travel abroad in the middle of Assembly poll campaigns in Haryana and Maharashtra has triggered some speculation. Some Congress leaders believe he is not happy and link his trip abroad to the sidelining of his appointees. Ashok Tanwar, who quit the party Saturday, was always seen as a Rahul man. Tanwar had argued there was a conspiracy in the party to eliminate young leaders groomed by Rahul. Sources close to Rahul, however, reject that. They say he will return next Wednesday and hit the campaign trail in both states. They say it is a three-day trip and nothing more should be read into it. Reports that he was in Bangkok are not right, they said, but would not disclose where he is. Some party leaders believe he is in Cambodia on a meditation retreat.

VAASTU QUESTION

WHEN A Union minister was allotted a residence that housed a cabinet minister during the previous government, the latter came and showed him the works he had got done in the house. The former minister, who is also senior to him in the ruling party, explained to the new occupant that the works had been done keeping in mind required facilities for a cabinet minister. But, the junior minister said he would like to get everything changed because of the Vaastu advice he had received. But the senior said he too got the Vaastu checked before getting the house re-structured. This has left the former minister wondering, how can Vaastu factors be different for the same house now?

PLAYING THE HOST

AT A lunch hosted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina during the Navratri, Delhi served a vegetarian fare for the visiting delegation from Bangladesh. It had delicious Bengali delicacies like mochar chop, begun potol bhaja, motors shutir dhokar dalna, and sandesh trifle and gurer mishti doi as dessert. While the lunch was on, there was live music too — songs like *Raghupati Raghav, Hothon se Chhu Lo Tum* and Bengali numbers like *Tomar Holo Shuru* were sung.

With people like Giriraj out to attack us, no need for Tejashwi: Tyagi

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, OCTOBER 6

EXPLAINED
Posturing with eye on elections

FOLLOWING UNION Minister and BJP MP Giriraj Singh's criticism of the Nitish Kumar government over the recent waterlogging in Patna, the JD(U) has said that with "belligerent" people like Giriraj out to target the Chief Minister, there is no need of Leader of Opposition in Assembly Tejashwi Yadav.

The JD(U) has sought the intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president Amit Shah to "rein in" Giriraj, who represents Begusarai in Lok Sabha. JD(U) national spokesperson KC Tyagi told *The Indian Express*, "Such war of words between alliance partners does not bode well, especially when Assembly polls are due next year. Giriraj Singh has been attacking Nitish Kumar's governance credentials, which is USP of our leader. With people like Giriraj out to attack us, we do not need Opposition leader Tejashwi Prasad Yadav."

Tyagi said JD(U) has sought the intervention of the Prime Minister and the BJP chief in the matter.

"Such acrimony is not good for alliance. While other BJP leaders are not saying anything, we do not understand why Giriraj Singh has been so belligerent. We want clarity," said the JD(U) spokesperson.

Asked if the BJP cannot engage in constructive criticism, especially when NDA has been in power for 13 years, Tyagi said, "BJP can do it privately, but not before the media. It sends wrong signals about the alliance."

Giriraj said, "If my words cause any strain in the BJP-JD(U) relationship, I am ready to apologise but I will say what I observe. I am free to give my feedback as people's representative."

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar launched a veiled attack on Singh during JD(U)'s recent state executive council meet, saying that "some people would lose face after NDA wins 200 plus seats in the next Assembly polls."

THE BJP, it appears, wants to keep the JD(U) under pressure and target Nitish Kumar's tested poll plank, governance. Upset with its alliance partner for not supporting it in Parliament on the NRC, instant triple talaq and Article 370 issues, the BJP seems to be trying to keep Nitish on his toes. This, the BJP hopes, would help it bargain an equal number of seats to contest in the Assembly polls and also help it shrug off the image of a junior partner in the alliance.

Nitish re-elected JD(U) president

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6

BIHAR CHIEF Minister Nitish Kumar was on Sunday declared re-elected as the JD(U) president for another term. He has been the party chief since 2016, when he replaced veteran leader Sharad Yadav.

The party's national returning officer Aneel Hedge disclosed that Nitish was the only candidate for the post. The declaration of his election came as the deadline for the withdrawal of nominations for the post ended on Sunday.

Nomination papers on Nitish's behalf had been filed by his representative, Sanjay Gandhi, a member of the Bihar Legislative Council, on October 4. The Chief Minister could not come to Delhi owing to the flood situation in Bihar. The election, in case there was a contest, was scheduled for October 19.

Aarey tree-cutting: Sec 144 lifted, 29 protesters get bail

ABHA GORADIA & SADAF MODAK
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 6

A HOLIDAY court of the Dindoshi sessions court Sunday granted bail to the 29 people arrested on Saturday for protesting the tree-cutting at Aarey for the Mumbai Metro 3 project.

While granting bail, the court observed that most of the protesters arrested were students and women and that there was no need to keep them in jail.

While the bail hearing was scheduled to be heard on Monday, a holiday court that hears urgent matters on fresh remand applications, heard the pleas on Sunday. A senior officer said there was urgency in ensuring those arrested were released immediately, as the arrests, including of six women and students that led to them spending a night at prison, had invited public criticism.

Section 144 was also revoked late evening on Sunday.

"On hearing the rival submissions made by both sides and on perusing record, it appears to this court that, that the applicants were protesting in 'Aarey forest'. It is social issue also," additional sessions judge HC Shende said while granting the accused bail. They had been arrested and charged under sections including assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty and voluntarily causing hurt to deter public servant from his duty and unlawful assembly of the Indian Penal Code.

After they were sent to judicial custody on Saturday, lawyers representing them had moved for bail on grounds including that some were students who had to write exams on Monday. On Saturday court had granted permission to them for appearing for



Protest at a school in Mumbai on Sunday. Prashant Nadkar

their exams under police escort.

The holiday court directed all the 29 be released on a surety bond or personal bond of Rs 7,000 each. Other conditions included attending the police station once every fortnight and co-operate with the investigation. The police did not object to the bail plea either with the prosecutor submitting that a suitable order be passed by the court.

Earlier in the day, Aarey wore a desolate look as police did not allow vehicles to proceed towards the car shed area. People were asked to walk as the police continued to barricade entry points to Metro 3 car shed area at Aarey.

Meanwhile, parents, friends and relatives of the 29 people who were arrested on Saturday, gathered at a school in Goregaon (east) to condemn the treatment meted out to the protesters. "I don't understand why my son would assault a policeman. He only protested through songs. He has been utilising the right given to him by the Constitution. Given

his interest in environment, he got involved in the protests. When he came to know that trees are being felled, he could hardly eat. What wrong did the government see in this?" asked Vidya Poddar, talking about her son Divyang.

"The government has been restricting youth who want to do something for their country. For the sake of their future, the government should quash charges against them," she added.

Shobha Salve, whose nephew Siddharth Sakpale was among the arrested, alleged, "Haven't we taught them to save trees? Young environment activists are being arrested whereas policemen misbehave with young girls from the group."

Amrita Bhattacharjee, a member of Aarey Conservation Group which is coordinating on the issue, said, "It is unfortunate that protesters have been arrested on criminal charges. All charges against students and citizens need to be quashed as soon as possible."



Oppn to take up Aarey, corner Aaditya in Worli

VISHWAS WAGHMODE
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 6

Opposition candidates in Worli, from where Aaditya Thackeray is contesting, said that they will take up the Shiv Sena's failure in preventing Aarey tree felling as a poll issue.

They said that despite Sena's partnership with the BJP in the government, as well as in the ruling Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), the party couldn't stop the tree cutting even when people protested against it.

Suresh Mane, candidate of the Congress-NCP-led alliance in Worli, said that he would take up the issue during campaigning in Worli to expose "Sena's double standards" on the issue.

"We will tell the people how they have been deceived by Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray and Aaditya on Aarey issue despite their promise of not allowing tree cutting in Aarey," said Mane. Gautam Gaikwad, Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi's candidate, said "We are chalking out a strategy on how to take up this issue.

Abhijeet Bichukale, an independent candidate said, "If Aaditya is not able to save the trees in Aarey, then what is he going to do in Worli?"

'We say Bharat Mata ki Jai, for Cong it is Sonia Mata Ki Jai'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 6

"PEOPLE WILL have to differentiate between those who say *Bharat mata ki jai* and those who say *Sonia mata ki jai*", Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar said on Sunday while addressing a public gathering in support of the party nominee in Naraingarh Assembly constituency.

He was referring to a video in which Congress's Gurgaon candidate Sukhbir Kataria purportedly said that chant 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' will now be replaced by chants of "Sukhbir, Sonia, Bhupinder Hooda Ki Jai", which Kataria claimed on Sunday had been "edited" and misrepresented.

"Congress may now say that the video is fake, because it will annoy Sonia Gandhi. But if they say that the video is authentic, then people will get angry," said the chief minister, adding that the Congress is a party that "cannot think beyond the Nehru-Gandhi family".

Further attacking his rivals, he said, "Congress's former president said he resigned and announced that his successor should be appointed from outside the Gandhi family. But even

Will waive farm loans: Selja

New Delhi: The Congress will announce a loan waiver for the poor and farmers in the state if voted to power, Haryana Congress chief Kumari Selja has said.

In an interview to PTI, she said Congress would not announce its chief ministerial candidate ahead of the elections and the same would be decided by the party high command after the polls.

The state Congress chief said



Cong cannot think beyond Gandhi family: Khattar



after two months, the party still cannot find anybody to replace him and again appointed Sonia Gandhi as chief."

'Trying to pacify rebels'

The BJP is trying to pacify its rebels who were denied party tickets for the 2019 Vidhan Sabha polls. CM Manohar Lal Khattar Sunday hinted that efforts were on to persuade all those who had faced "heartburn" over not getting party tickets. The last day for withdrawal of nominations is October 7.

Cong leaders meet Hasina, Sonia to visit Bangladesh

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6

CONGRESS PRESIDENT Sonia Gandhi and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Sunday met visiting Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and discussed a wide range of issues, including relations between the two countries. Gandhi accepted an invitation by Hasina to visit Bangladesh for commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's liberation.

Hasina also extended her invitation to former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and the party's general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. Priyanka met Hasina separately along with mother Sonia after the formal talks. Singh and Congress foreign affairs department chairman Anand Sharma had with Hasina and Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abdul Momen, senior ministers and her advisers.

Priyanka was not part of the formal talks. She later joined her mother in meeting Hasina separately. "Hasina wanted to talk to Sonia and Priyanka alone, the three of them were alone for a



Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and former PM Manmohan Singh with Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina in New Delhi. PTI

while. Hasina had stayed in Delhi after her father's assassination... she has warm personal relations with the Gandhis," a source said.

Both sides avoided issues which are partisan, a source said when asked whether NRC issue came up for discussion. "Economy, regional issues, world issues... how to create opportunities for the youth... it was a wide ranging discussion," the source said.

Constable spits fire, triggers rights debate; CRPF clarifies

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6

THE CENTRAL Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has disapproved of the statements made by one of its constables in a debate on human rights and asserted that the force steadfastly abides by human rights.

In a debate organised by the National Commission for Human Rights (NHR), a woman CRPF constable argued that wombs that give birth to people like Afzal Guru (2001 Parliament attack case convict) should be destroyed and the Tricolour should be pierced through the heart of Kanhaiya Kumar, the former JNU students Union president.

While the debate was organised on September 27, a video of CRPF constable Khushboo Chauhan was leaked recently



Video grab of Khushboo Chauhan at the competition

and went viral on social media. It divided the social media community, with some praising her statements while others expressing shock at such disregard for human rights in an organised force such as the CRPF.

On Saturday, the CRPF issued a statement disapproving of what Chauhan said.

"She is speaking against the motion in a debate competition

organised by NHR. We in CRPF respect human rights unconditionally. She was asked to speak against the motion and has delivered a speech with brilliance but some portion should have been avoided. She has been suitably advised. We appreciate the respect and concern for CRPF," the statement said.

Chauhan bagged a consolation prize for her speech. The jury was headed by NHRC Secretary General Jaideep Govinda and other jury members included Sunil Krishna, former DG (Investigation), NHRC and Prof G S Vajpayee, Registrar, National Law University, Delhi, Justice P C Pant, Member, NHR, was the chief guest of the final round of the debate competition.

The topic of the debate competition was: "Terrorism and militancy in the country can be tackled effectively while observing human rights".

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The commencement date and last dates for submission of applications are as under:

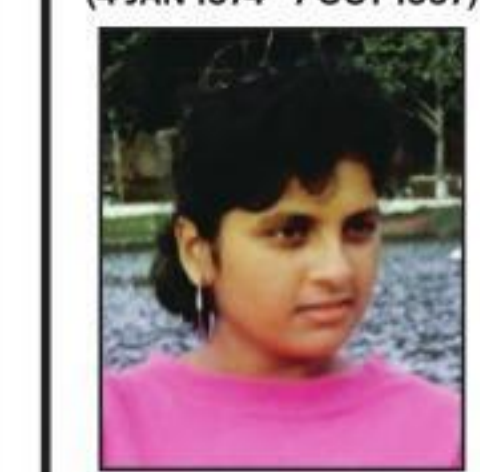
Date of Commencement of Online Application	09.10.2019 11.00 am
Last date of Online Application & Payment of Fees	07.11.2019 (up to 6.00 pm)
Last date of receipt of hard copy of online application at NIPER-A along with all enclosures	22.11.2019 (up to 4.00 pm)

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All are Welcome

**NORTH****JeM terrorist arrested in J&K's Baramulla**

Srinagar: A Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terrorist was arrested in Baramulla district of north Kashmir on Sunday, a police spokesperson said. Mohsin Manzoor Salhea, a resident of Arampora-Azadgunj area, was arrested on a credible input during an anti-militant operation in Baramulla town,

he said. According to the spokesperson, Salhea was affiliated with JeM and was wanted in two cases registered at the Baramulla police station this year, he said. Incriminating material, including arms and ammunition, were recovered from his possession, the spokesperson said. **PTI**



Air Force personnel perform a mock drill during a full rehearsal ahead of the 87th Indian Air Force Day, at Hindon airbase in Ghaziabad on Sunday. Prem Nath Pandey

EAST**51 Bru families return to Mizoram: officials**

New Delhi: As many as 51 families belonging to displaced Bru tribals, who have been living in Tripura as refugees, have returned to Mizoram in fresh efforts for their repatriation, officials said on Sunday. About 5,400 Bru families comprising nearly 40,000 people have been living in Tripura in different relief camps since

1997. "A total of 51 families have been repatriated to Mizoram from Tripura in the past three days," Tripura Additional Chief Secretary Kumar Alok said. The Central and Tripura governments are optimistic that Bru families would return to Mizoram during this final repatriation, as part of an agreement signed last year. **PTI**

WEST**Man kills self after losing Rs 78 lakh in online poker**

Rajkot: A man allegedly committed suicide after losing Rs 78 lakh while playing an online poker game in Gujarat's Rajkot district, police said on Sunday. Krunal Mehta (39) ended his life late Wednesday night, they said. "Our probe has revealed that he took the extreme step as he lost Rs 78 lakh while playing a poker game on his mo-

bile phone," police inspector Vikram Vanzara said. "We have recovered a suicide note from his home in which he purportedly stated that he borrowed Rs 78 lakh from his friends and relatives to play 'PokerBaazi'," he said. Mehta worked in an IT company and would often borrow money to play and lost vast sums, he said. **PTI**

SOUTH**Trainer aircraft crashes in Telangana; two killed**

Hyderabad: A pilot and a trainee were killed after their Cessna aircraft, that took off from an aviation institute here, crashed in a field in Vikarabad district of Telangana on Sunday, police said. The aircraft took off from Rajiv Gandhi Aviation Academy at Begumpet and was on its way to Kalaburagi district of Karnataka, a senior

police official said. Pilot Prakash Vishal (22) and trainee pilot Amanpreet Kaur (20), were killed on the spot after the aircraft crashed near Sultanpur village, he said. It was raining heavily at the time of the incident, police said. Aviation authorities are trying to find out the reason behind the crash, they said. **PTI**

TELANGANA TRANSPORT STRIKE**47,000 may lose jobs as KCR says won't take protesters back**

SREENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, OCTOBER 6

AMID THE strike by the employees of Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) since Saturday, Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Reddy has said employees who did not rejoin duty before a deadline set by the government — approximately 47,000 employees — will not be taken back into service, sources said Sunday. The deadline to rejoin duty was 6 pm on Saturday.

The unions are demanding a merger of TSRTC with the state government, increase in salaries, better working conditions and more recruitment.

The Chief Minister on Sunday chaired a meeting with Transport Minister P Ajay Kumar and senior officials. According to an official who attended the meeting, Rao said the unions have "committed a grave mistake by resorting to strike and blackmailing tactics" during the Dussehra season.

The official said Rao ruled out a merger of TSRTC with the government and said there should be a "permanent end to blackmail tactics and indiscipline".



At a bus station in Hakimpet, Telangana, on Sunday. ANI

"The CM categorically said there is no question of taking back employees who did not join duties before the deadline set by the government. He said currently there are less than 1,200 employees in TSRTC. The CM directed that as an immediate measure, 2,500 private buses should be hired and pledged so that people are not harassed," the official said.

The 1,200 employees either reported on duty before the deadline or were on deputation to other departments and did not join the strike.

"The CM wanted new em-

ployees appointed soon and said recruits should give an undertaking that they won't join any trade union. It was decided that 50 per cent of buses run by TSRTC would be private buses so that RTC becomes profitable. The CM wants TSRTC to be restored to status quo within 15 days," the official said.

According to the official, KCR had said TSRTC was incurring losses to the tune of Rs 1,200 crore and has Rs 5,000 crore in debt. "In such a bad situation, there is no question of any compromise... The strike is illegal and irresponsible. Now the state should find a

permanent solution," he quoted the Chief Minister as saying.

"In MP, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Manipur, there are no RTCs... When we are taking care so well, is there any need for them to go on strike?" he was quoted as saying. "When the CPM was in power in West Bengal, did they merge RTC with the government? Did they do that in Kerala? BJP is in power in many states, did they merge the RTCs with the governments? Did any Congress governments do it in any state they are ruling?..." the official quoted Rao as saying.

To implement the directives, a panel has been formed and it will submit its proposals on Monday.

Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in Assembly M Bhatti Vikramarka slammed Rao for threatening to sack workers who backed the statehood movement. "It is unfortunate that instead of listening to their problems... the CM is threatening to make them jobless. We will launch a statewide protest," he said.

BJP leader Krishna Sagor said Rao did not meet TSRTC leaders even once before taking such "brazen decisions".

Why Dy CM, Patna colony went under: Broken pump, no drain maps

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, OCTOBER 6

A WEEK after Patna saw heavy rain between September 28 and 30, and Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi had to be rescued from Rajendra Nagar after being stranded there for three days, the colony in the state's capital remains under water and without electricity.

As fears of disease grow in an area that is the city's hub of hospitals, and houses VIPs and bureaucrats, blame game is on between the Urban Development Ministry and Patna Municipal Corporation (PMC). With Union minister Giriraj Singh lending his weight to criticism of the government, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's defence that such people "have little knowledge about Patna geography and the fact that rains have been unprecedented", is cutting little ice.

Since making his way out from his family home in a boat on September 30, Modi has moved into his official bungalow, that he normally uses as an office. In his only remark on the incident, the Deputy CM said, "The Centre and state are fighting together to drain the water out." An aide said Modi initially waited for the water to recede. "But when the level reached over 5 ft, he contacted the Patna District Magistrate."

The Deputy CM was among an estimated 62,000 people rescued from Rajendra Nagar and the other most-affected colony, Kankerbhag. They included patients who were evacuated after water entered several hospitals.

With Patna already reporting about 200 dengue cases, the PMC has started spraying of DDT



Six days later, Rajendra Nagar in Patna on Sunday. PTI

and fogging in the areas cleared of water. However, with Rajendra Nagar still under up to 2-ft water, power connection has not been restored, while the repair of landline phones is affected due to digging for the on-going Namami Gange work. In Kankerbhag though, electricity and phone lines are up.

Surrounded by the Ganga, Punpun and Sone rivers, Patna saw 400 mm of rainfall between September 28 and 30, nearly double what it got last year in the same period. A planned colony, Rajendra Nagar is located in a low-lying area.

Patna Mayor Sita Sahu said the PMC had "done its job" before the monsoon, including clearing the nine "trunks" where the city drain chambers converge. Just before this year's rains, the PMC had acquired super sucker machines to clear the drains.

However, Bihar Urban Development Minister Suresh Sharma blamed inadequate de-

logging of the trunks as the reason for the waterlogging. "We have ordered an inquiry into the lapses... We have heard the PMC does not have even a drains map," Sharma said.

Sahu countered that it is the Bihar Urban Infrastructure Development Corporation (BUIDCO) that should have the drain maps, and that in the absence of the same, the PMC has to depend on old staffers who know the drain routes and locations.

A PMC official speaking on the condition of anonymity asked why the BUIDCO had not operationalised all the 39 sump houses (for draining of water), which it maintains, the first day of the rain.

The failure to operationalise the sumps on time cost Rajendra Nagar the most. Its drainage does not have a natural flow due to its location. "Given the heavy rain, all its chambers and trunks were full the first day itself. With the Saidpur sump house not operational till September 30, there was no escape for the water. The

rising levels of Ganga and Punpun rivers made the matters worse by slowing down discharge from the Rampur canal after the sump started functioning," said a PMC official.

In Kankerbhag, the transformer for the sump house was dysfunctional at the time it started pouring. This forced the BUIDCO to fall back on a low-capacity diesel pump. Officials said, mechanics from Kolkata had to be called to repair the transformer. By the time this was done, it was October 1, and Kankerbhag was under 3- to 5-ft water. Big pumps have about 500 HP capacity as against 100 HP normal pumps.

While no BUIDCO official was ready to come on record, Sharma said, "The inquiry would look into lapses on the part of everybody, including the BUIDCO."

Emphasising that "there had been no casualties", because of efficient rescue operations, Disaster Management Department Principal Secretary Pratyaya Amrit said, "We have been able to drain out water from most areas."

Officials said they didn't anticipate the downpour given the Meteorological Department's forecast of "mild to moderate" rains in that period, with Patna put under "yellow" and not "red" zone of a cyclonic circulation which was predicted to cause showers in 12 Bihar districts.

With old-timers calling it the worst waterlogging since the 1975 floods, the CM has again pointed to the "heaviest ever" rain in recent times. "Why do you people not question waterlogging in Mumbai and Delhi?... We are up to the challenge," Nitish said.

Rajasthan: RTI activist dies 'in police custody'**Pachpadra police station staff shifted**

HAMZA KHAN
JAIPUR, OCTOBER 6

ACTIVISTS HAVE alleged that an RTI activist died in police custody in Barmer's Balotra on Sunday. Following the death, all the staff of Pachpadra police station was shifted to district police lines.

Barmer SP Sharad Choudhary said that RTI activist Jagdish Goliyan, who was in his 40s, was picked up in preventive custody under Section 151 of the CrPC on Saturday, following an argument with two of his relatives over a land dispute. "He and his two cousins were picked up and were to be presented before the executive magistrate at the tehsil office on Sunday. While the other two were presented (at the tehsil office) and got bail, his condition worsened and he subsequently passed away," the SP said.

Goliyan had received death threats from one Gopal, Om and others and on Saturday, several persons, including Gopal and Om, reached his farm between 12.30 pm and 1 pm and assaulted the activist, Goliyan's mother alleged

in her complaint "Sometime after the assault, Pachpadra SHO Saroj Choudhary reached the spot and took Jagdish to the police station, but did not get him treated for internal and external injuries, which led to the death of my son," Devi alleged.

A case under IPC Section 302 (murder) has been filed at Balotra police station. The SP said that the cause of Goliyan's death is part of investigation. "We have initiated an inquest by an Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate under CrPC 176," the SP said. Pachpadra SHO Saroj and ASI Amra Ram did not respond to calls.

Following the death, activists Aruna Roy, Nikhil Dey, Kavita Srivastava and others raised the issue with state and local officials. "The magistrate, who was the local tehsildar, was informed by the police that he was suffering epileptic fits... (he) then ordered hospitalisation, where he died," they said in a statement.

"We are in the process of setting up a fact finding team, which will go into all the aspects of this incident and its background," the activists said

UNNAO CASE**Victim's uncle acquitted in robbery, illegal arms cases**

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, OCTOBER 6

THE UNCLE of the Unnao rape victim has been acquitted in two cases of robbery and possession of illegal arms, lodged against him in 1999.

A local court in Unnao on Saturday acquitted him and a Kanpur resident on "benefit of the doubt", said government counsel Rajeev Kumar.

The uncle — who is also a complainant in the July 28 incident in which a truck had rammied into a car, leaving the rape victim, her lawyer critically injured, and her two aunts dead — is facing six more cases. Earlier this year, he was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment in an attempt to murder case. He was shifted to a Delhi jail in August this year after the truck accident

on the directions of the Supreme Court.

According to his lawyer, the Government Railway Police (GRP) had lodged an FIR in Unnao against unidentified persons for allegedly robbing eight passengers of a train between Safipur and Makhi railway station on October 5, 1999.

In December of the same year, the GRP arrested the victim's uncle and a Kanpur resident and claimed to have seized some of the stolen items and a weapon from their possession, said his lawyer. Another case of Arms Act was then lodged against the uncle and the Kanpur residence. "The police conducted an investigation and filed a charge sheet in 2000. The trial began after Unnao police arrested the uncle from Delhi in November 2018 in another case," said his lawyer.

Wanted Kairana MLA declared absconder

AMIL BHATNAGAR
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6

A LOCAL court in Shamli on Sunday declared Kairana MLA Nahid Hasan an absconder, clearing the way for police to begin proceedings to attach his properties.

According to police, the SP legislator is evading arrest in 12 FIRs, including those relating to attempt to murder and extortion. "A public announcement was made in Shamli today in which the people were informed of Nahid Hasan's current absconding status. Eight cases

against him have been filed in Shamli while four are registered in Saharanpur. Nahid Hasan is accused of threatening people from the weaker sections of society. Several people have come forward with complaints. Several teams are working to trace his location. We will be looking to attach his properties as well," Shamli SP Ajay Kumar.

Hasan hails from an influential political family. His mother Tabassum Hasan has represented the Kairana Lok Sabha seat twice and his father Munawwar Hasan has been a member of both Houses of Parliament and also the Assembly.

Artist dies after assault by gardener at home: Goa Police

Accused dies of injuries he suffered during escape bid

SMITA NAIR
PANAJI, OCTOBER 6

GOA-BASED artist Shireen Mody (65) died on Sunday following an assault by her gardener Praphul Jena (65) at her residence, police said.

While escaping after the assault, Jena collapsed and suffered serious head injuries, leading to his death, they said.

According to police, a preliminary investigation suggests that Jena held a grudge against Mody. On Sunday, he allegedly called her to a shed behind her home at Arpora Vegas Vaddo in Anjuna police station area.

Senior Police Inspector

Navlesh Dessai said an altercation is believed to have taken place between Mody and Jena during which the latter hit the artist with an iron rod on the head. Police have recovered CCTV footage which shows Jena escaping after he hit Mody.

"We have established that when Jena escaped, he did not have any injury. It seems he suffered the injury when he collapsed after what seems like a fit. We have asked for the post-mortem report to ascertain the cause of death," said SP, North Goa, Utkrisht Prasoon. "For investigation, Mody is registered as murdered and Jena's case is of unnatural death," he added.

IG Jaspal Singh said, "We will

be filing charges, but here the case might not reach trial as both are dead."

After the assault, Jena is believed to have fled by jumping over a fence. According to the IG, after he collapsed, Jena asked an eyewitness to check on Mody. "He told the eyewitness, 'take care of her. I will be ok'. We are including that as his last statement," said Singh.

Both Mody and Jena were rushed to separate hospitals and were declared dead there.

Mody was an Overseas Citizen, who hailed from Mumbai and settled in Goa. Jena hailed from Assam and had been living at Mody's home for three years.

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6

HEALTH MINISTER Harsh Vardhan is set to announce this week a scheme that aims to bring down maternal and newborn deaths to zero.

The programme, named Pradhan Mantri — Assured and Safe Motherhood Initiative (PM-ASMI), will focus on providing quality medical services to pregnant women and infants at a public facility.

India has several ongoing schemes to ensure safe maternal and child health. These include Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram, which entitles pregnant women and infants to sev-

EXPLAINED Step towards meeting SDG goal

INDIA'S MATERNAL mortality rate has declined from 254 per 1,00,000 live births in 2004-06 to 130 in 2014-16. Between 2001 and 2016, the infant mortality rate came down from 66 per 1,000 live births to 34. With the National Health Mission putting infrastructure in place and the ongoing construction of health centres across the country, officials say it is now time to press the accelerator so that no mother or child is left behind and India is in a position to attain the Sustainable Development Goal for maternal mortality by 2030 — less than 70 deaths per 1,00,000 live births.

eral free facilities, including free drugs and diagnostics, free delivery, free diet during stay in

health institutions, free provision of blood, free transport from home to health institutions etc.

ices and assured management of complications. All of this will be done in an atmosphere that takes care of the dignity of women, takes into account their choices and preferences," said a senior official.

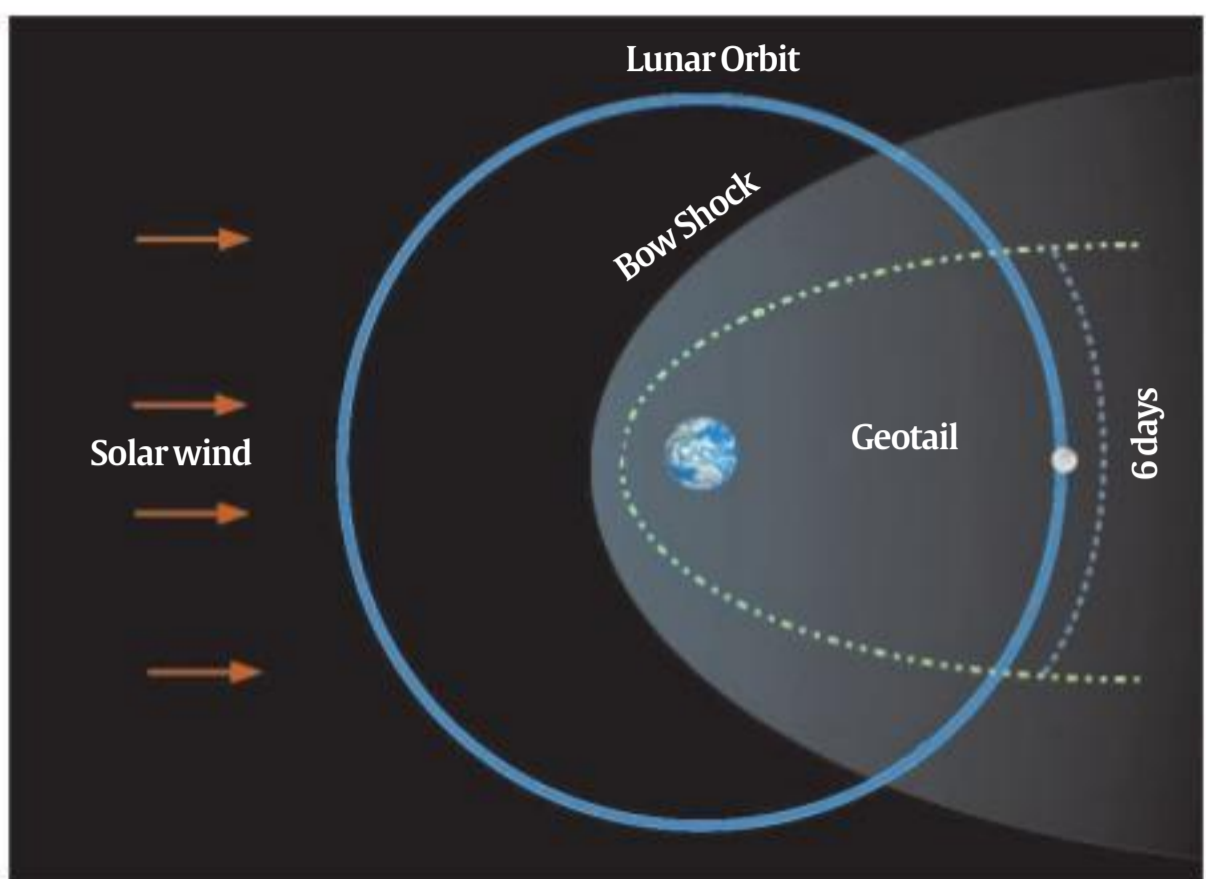
The ministry, along with the states, will undertake a massive publicity campaign to generate awareness about the scheme and also start a call centre for effective grievance redressal.

The idea is to ensure that every maternal death is registered, its causes analysed and lessons learnt implemented in the programme so that it becomes better.

Community engagement will also be a key component of the programme.

THIS WORD MEANS
GEOTAIL

A region formed by interaction between Earth and Sun. How is it helping Chandrayaan-2 learn about Moon?



Source: ISRO

LAST WEEK, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) tweeted that an instrument on Chandrayaan-2, CLASS, designed to detect signatures of elements in the Moon's soil, had detected charged particles during the mission. This happened in September, during the orbiter's passage through the "geotail".

The geotail is a region in space that allows the best observations. The region exists as a result of the interactions between the Sun and Earth. On its website, ISRO explains how the region is formed, and how it helps scientific observations.

The Sun emits the solar wind, which is a continuous stream of charged particles. These particles are embedded in the extended magnetic field of the Sun. Since the Earth has a magnetic field, it obstructs the solar wind plasma. This interaction results in the formation of a magnetic envelope around Earth (see illustration). On

the Earth side facing the Sun, the envelope is compressed into a region that is approximately three to four times the Earth radius. On the opposite side, the envelope is stretched into a long tail, which extends beyond the orbit of the Moon. It is this tail that is called the geotail.

Once every 29 days, the Moon traverses the geotail for about six days. When Chandrayaan-2, which is orbiting the Moon, crosses the geotail, its instruments can study the properties of the geotail, ISRO said.

For the CLASS instrument seeking to detect element signatures, the lunar soil can be best observed when a solar flare provides a rich source of X-rays to illuminate the surface. Secondary X-ray emission resulting from this can be detected by CLASS to directly detect the presence of key elements like Na, Ca, Al, Si, Ti and Fe, ISRO said.

Why state budgets matter

Together the states are more important than the Centre in increasing India's GDP. But RBI finds them cutting down expenditure and getting more indebted, which will hurt India's growth and job creation

UDIT MISRA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6

LAST WEEK, the Reserve Bank of India released its annual study of state-level budgets. With each passing year, understanding about state government finances is becoming more and more important. That's because of two broad reasons.

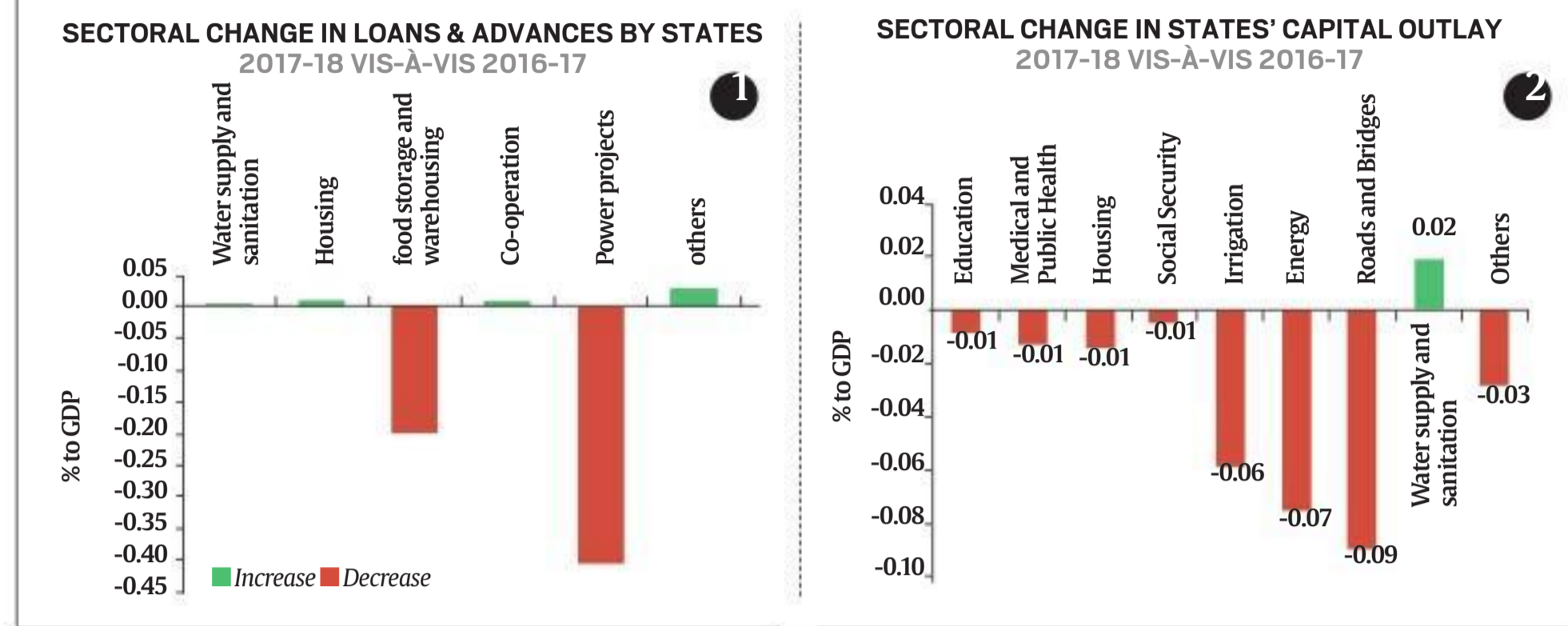
One, states now spend one-and-a-half times more than the Union government and, in doing so, they employ five times more people than the Centre. What these two trends mean is that not only do states have a greater role to play in determining India's GDP than the Centre, they are also the bigger employment generators. As such, it is crucial to understand their spending pattern. If, for example, their combined expenditure contracts from one year to the other, then it will bring down India's GDP.

Two, since 2014-15, states have increasingly borrowed money from the market — a trend captured in the fiscal deficit figure. In fact, their total borrowing almost rivals the borrowing by the Union government. This trend, too, has serious implications on the interest rates charged in the economy, the availability of funds for businesses to invest in new factories, and the ability of the private sector to employ new labour.

Why fiscal deficit matters

Suppose there is only Rs 100 in the economy that is available in the form of investible savings. This money could be borrowed either by private businesses (to invest in a new or existing venture) or by the government (to make roads, pay salaries etc.). Suppose again that initially, businesses borrow Rs 50 and the central government borrows Rs 50. If, however, state governments also start borrowing, say Rs 20, then private businesses will have only Rs 30 left to borrow and invest. Worse, this Rs 30 would come at a higher interest rate because the same number of people would be now vying for less money. That is why economy observers and businesses fuss over the fiscal deficit number the most.

There is another reason why states borrowing more and more should raise concerns especially when they borrow to meet unexpected policy goals such as farm loan waivers. Each year's borrowing (or deficit) adds to the total debt. Paying back this debt depends on a state's ability to raise revenues. If a state, or all the states in aggregate, find it difficult to raise revenues, a rising mountain of debt —



GROSS FISCAL DEFICIT (% OF GDP)

Year	% of GDP
2006-11 (average)	2.2
2011-16 (average)	2.4
2015-16	3.0
2016-17	3.5
2017-18	2.4
2018-19 (BE)	2.6
2018-19 (RE)	2.9
2019-20 (BE)	2.6

OUTSTANDING LIABILITIES OF STATES & UTS (DEBT AS % OF GDP)

Year	% of GDP
2013	22.6
2014	22.3
2015	22.0
2016	23.7
2017	25.1
2018	25.1
2019 (RE)	24.8
2020 (BE)	24.9

captured in the debt-to-GDP ratio — could start a vicious cycle wherein states end up paying more and more towards interest payments instead of spending their revenues on creating new assets that provide better education, health and welfare for their residents. In short, with each passing year, state government finances have become more and

more important not only for India's GDP growth and job creation but also for its macro-economic stability. That is why, the 14th Finance Commission had mandated prudent levels of both fiscal deficit (3% of state GDP) and debt-to-GDP (25%) that must not be breached.

What RBI found

The first thing of note that the RBI report has found is that, except during 2016-17, state governments have regularly met their fiscal deficit target of 3% of GDP (see Chart 3). On the face of it, this should allay a lot of apprehensions about state-level finances, especially in the wake of extensive farm loan waivers that many states announced as well as the extra burden that was put on state budgets after the UDAY scheme for the power sector was introduced in 2014-15. Under UDAY, state governments had to take over the debts of power distribution companies (discoms).

However, any relief on the fiscal deficit front is of limited value because most states ended up meeting the fiscal deficit target not by increasing their revenues but by reducing their expenditure and increasingly borrowing from the market.

Nothing brings this out better than what happened in 2017-18. As one can see from Chart 1, fiscal deficit for all states had breached the 3% (of GDP) mark in 2016-17. But in the very next year, states reduced the fiscal deficit by 109 basis points and brought it down to just 2.4%. But the bulk of this cut was achieved by cutting expenditure — and that too capital expenditure, which was cut by 86 basis points.

But this cut had a flip side. It adversely affected (Chart 1) the loans that state govern-

ments provided to power projects, food storage and warehousing. It also hurt (Chart 2) the states' capital budget allocation for key social and infrastructure sectors.

Impact on national economy

The RBI's report states that this reduction in overall size of state budgets likely worsened the economic slowdown that was slowly setting in since the start of 2016-17, when India had grown by 8.2% ... "There has been a reduction in the overall size of the state budget in 2017-19. This retarding fiscal impulse ... has coincided with a cyclical downswing in domestic economic activity and may have inadvertently deepened it," it states. It is noteworthy that 2017-18 saw India's GDP growth rate decline to 7.2% and it has been declining since.

Possibly the most worrisome observation by the RBI is that while states have met their fiscal deficits, the overall level of debt-to-GDP (Chart 4) has reached the 25% of GDP prudential mark. "A slightly stringent criterion as prescribed by the FRBM Review Committee and in line with the revised FRBM implied debt target of 20 per cent will put most of the states above the threshold," warns the RBI.

The trouble is states have found it difficult to raise revenues. As the report explains, "States' revenue prospects are confronted with low tax buoyancies, shrinking revenue autonomy under the GST framework and unpredictability associated with transfers of IGST and grants. Unrealistic revenue forecasts in budget estimates thereby leave no option for states than expenditure compression in even the most productive and employment-generating heads."

TIP FOR READING LIST

HOW MILK SHAPED HUMAN HISTORY

MOTHER'S MILK is known to be best, but it is the milk of other mammals that humans have cultivated for more than 10,000 years. The milk of domesticated animals was originally used as a source of products such as cheese or yoghurt, because humans could not digest lactose in those days — many still cannot — but as more and more humans evolved to become lactose-tolerant, they began to drink other mammals' milk itself.

Milk! A 10,000-Year Food Fracas, by historian Mark Kurlansky, looks at the history of humans' relationship with milk. The book can be seen, as *The New York Times* observes in its review, as "nothing less than an attempt to tell the history of the world via what is, let's face it, a bodily fluid". Kurlansky has written similar accounts of history in his earlier books *Cod, Salt and Paper*.

Milk! traces the liquid's history from antiquity to the present, and details its role in cultural evolution, religion, nutrition, politics, and economics. It starts with the ancient Greeks, who believed the goddess Hera's breast milk became the

Milky Way galaxy — a word that derives from 'gala', meaning milk. It goes on to at the time when families kept dairy cows, before milk went into mass production during the 19th century. This made milk a safety issue, with milk-borne illnesses a common cause of death. Today, "milk is a test case in the most pressing issues in food politics, from industrial farming and animal rights to GMOs, the locavore movement, and advocates for raw milk, who controversially reject pasteurisation", the publisher's note points out.

The NYT review describes the book as "often fascinating" ("Thomas Jefferson liked to serve ice cream on sponge cake with a lightly baked meringue on top"), sometimes mundane ("In addition to milk, cheese and porridge, the Dutch ate huge quantities of butter") and occasionally weird ("There are also records of women in the highlands of New Guinea breast-feeding piglets, pre-European Hawaiians breast-feeding puppies, and Guyanese women breast-feeding deer").

The Guardian calls it a "wonderfully wide-ranging study".



EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6

IN ITS latest monthly bulletin, the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service has said that the last month was the warmest September on record. This follows a trend over the last few months.

September stats

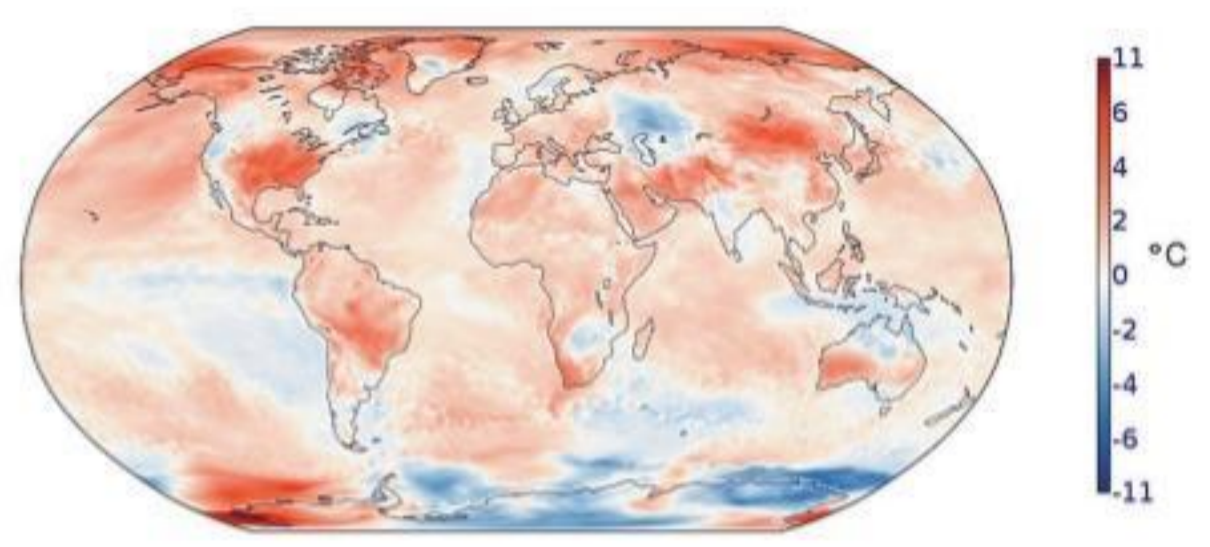
0.57°C WARMER (September 2019) than the average September during 1981-2010 — narrowly the warmest September.

0.02°C WARMER than September 2016, the previous warmest September.

Previous 3 months

0.54°C WARMER than average June during 1981-2010, June 2019 was the warmest

SURFACE AIR TEMPERATURE ANOMALIES FOR SEP-2019 RELATIVE TO 1981-2010



Source: Copernicus Climate Change Service/ECMWF

June on record (0.11°C warmer than June 2016, the previous warmest).

0.56°C WARMER than the average July (1981-2010), July 2019 was narrowly the warmest July — about 0.04°C warmer than July 2016, the previous warmest on record.

0.53°C WARMER than average August (1981-10), August 2019 was second warmest (about 0.04°C colder than August 2016).

Last 12 months

Globally, the 12-month period from October 2018 to September 2019 was 0.55°C warmer than the 1981-2010 average, Copernicus said. The warmest October-September period was 2015-16 (0.66°C above average). 2016 is the warmest calendar year on record, with a global temperature 0.63°C above the 1981-2010 average, followed by 2017 (0.54°C above) and 2018 (0.46°C above).

The importance of Sultanpur Lodhi in the life & work of Guru Nanak Dev

MANRAJ GREWAL SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 6

A SLEEPY town in Punjab's Kapurthala district, Sultanpur Lodhi, is at the centre of the 550th birth anniversary celebrations of Guru Nanak Dev, founder of the Sikh religion. It is here that the main anniversary programme will be held on November 12, with the Prime Minister expected to attend.

The Guru Nanak Dev link

It was in Sultanpur Lodhi that the Sikhism founder is believed to have attained enlightenment. The *janamsakhis* — birth stories or biographies of Guru Nanak Dev written towards the end of the 16th century — say he was a changed man after he took a dip in the rivulet Kali Bein that flowed through the middle of the town, and disappeared for three days.

Prof J S Grewal, historian and former vice-chancellor of Guru Nanak Dev University, said when the Guru resurfaced after three days, he uttered the seminal words, "Na koi Hindu, Na koi Mussalman"

(People are neither Hindu nor Muslim)". "He declared his own way. He had his own views about liberation. And it was after this that he started his mission."

The Guru also said he had seen the "navkhand". "Those days, geographers had divided the earth into nine continents. It is after this episode in Kali Bein that Guru Nanak said he had seen all the nine continents," Grewal said.

The duration of his stay

Guru Nanak was born at Rai-Bhoi-Di Talwandi in Sheikhpura district (now in Pakistan) in 1469. His father Mehta Kalyan Das is variously described as a revenue officer (*patwari*) or a chief accountant.

He moved to Sultanpur Lodhi between late 1480 and 1490 at the invitation of his elder sister Nanaki and her husband Jai Ram, who was in charge of the grain storage depot (Modikhana) of Daulat Khan Lodhi, the then *shiqdar* (commissioner) of Sultanpur Lodhi, who later rose to become the governor of Lahore.

There are conflicting accounts of the duration of his stay at Sultanpur Lodhi. While



historian Dr Ganda Singh writes he was there for 10 years between the ages of 18 and 27, Dr Hari Ram Gupta, another scholar, claims he was here from the ages of 16 to 30. But most scholars agree that he lived in the town for around a decade until 1500, when he decided to undertake his travels, called *udasis*.

Since the revenue from 40-odd villages in Daulat Khan's *jagir* was collected in the form of grains, Modikhana was akin to a



Gurdwara Ber Sahib. Wikipedia

treasury. Nanak also started working there.

Legacy of Sultanpur Lodhi

Historians say it was in Sultanpur Lodhi that Guru Nanak came into intimate contact with Islam.

The *janamsakhis* depict the tension between a section of the clergy and Guru Nanak following his enlightenment. His utterances were not received kindly by the *qazi*. He complained to Daulat Khan Lodhi

that Nanak was being blasphemous. Prof Grewal said Daulat Khan Lodhi also challenged Guru Nanak Dev to say the *namaaz* with him. "Lore has it that after the *namaaz*, Nanak told him your prayers will not be accepted because all along you were worried about your foal falling into an open well in your courtyard."

It is here that he said what you say is not as important as what you do.

Janamsakhis claim Daulat Khan Lodhi became very fond of Nanak and defended him against critics. When Nanak decided to leave the town in 1500, he is said to have urged him to stay. But Nanak said it was a call from the supreme being and not his decision. Over time, Bhai Mardana, who accompanied Nanak on all his travels, and Daulat Khan, came to be considered among his two principal Muslim followers.

Today the town is home to several gurdwaras in the memory of Guru Nanak. Most of them were commissioned during the Khalsa empire when the Sikh rulers staked out the places associated with Guru Nanak and built gurdwaras there. Gurdwara Ber Sahib, built by the side of an old tree that

is believed to be the one under which Guru Nanak would sit in meditation along the Kali Bein, was commissioned by Maharaja Jagatjit Singh of Kapurthala. The cornerstone was laid by Bhai Arjan Singh of Bagarian in 1937, and Maharaja Yadavinder Singh of Patiala presided over its completion in 1941.

Architectural history

Vikas Chand Sharma, an assistant professor of architecture at Chandigarh University, who has researched the architectural history of Sultanpur Lodhi, said it was a major centre of Buddhism from the first century to the sixth century when it was called Sarwanpur.

In the 11th century, the town was founded by Sultan Khan Lodhi, a general of Mohammad Ghaznavi. Sikander Lodhi, assigned the construction of Sultanpur to Daulat Khan in the 15th century. It was the central point in the trade route between Delhi and Lahore. Grewal said a footnote in *Babamama*, the autobiography of Mughal emperor Babur, mentions Daulat Khan Lodhi as the founder of the town.



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

GOOD GOING

But with Dhaka something's missing: Economic policy making in Delhi needs to be more sensitive to the regional dimension

PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH Hasina's visit to Delhi over the weekend highlights the deepening bilateral relationship with Dhaka and also its important structural consequence — growing interdependence with Bangladesh. India's foreign policy can claim great success for the former — relations with Bangladesh have never been as good as they are today. They are also the best when viewed in comparison with our other neighbours. But India's economic policy makers can be rather insensitive to the logic of interdependence. Hasina's visit saw agreements on expanding connectivity and transit, easing travel across the border, strengthening trade and investment ties, boosting development cooperation, putting the fledgling defence cooperation on a firmer basis and promoting regional cooperation. Even as Delhi celebrates the golden age in the relationship with Dhaka, however, it must heed some important warning signs.

That Hasina publicly complained, albeit in a light hearted manner, about the impact of India's recent move to ban onion exports on her kitchen, underlines the headaches in the neighbourhood that Delhi's economic decisions generate. Hasina was not objecting to the decision itself that has produced immediate onion shortages in Bangladesh. She was pointing to its sudden and unilateral nature. If Delhi had informed Dhaka in advance, Hasina said, her government could have made alternative arrangements for onion import. The problem goes deeper and reveals a lingering autarkic and anti-market orientation in Delhi's economic policy even as India's national strategy calls for regional integration. For example, governments in Delhi, both Congress and BJP-led ones, have long resisted export of cattle to Bangladesh where beef is a staple. In doing so, Delhi has created an incentive for cattle-smuggling across the border. Few in government had anticipated that the demonetisation of the Indian rupee at the end of 2016 might have consequences for Nepal and Bhutan that are so tied into the Indian economy. As India rises and integrates with Bangladesh, that is now one of the world's fastest growing economies, Delhi must get its economic bureaucrats to integrate the regional dimension into their national policy thinking.

Beyond onions, Hasina was also channeling growing anxiety in Bangladesh at India's implementation of the National Register of Citizens in Assam and the threats at the highest level about throwing foreigners (read Bengali Muslims) from the state. Given the deep political trust between PM Hasina and PM Narendra Modi, the problem appears to be under control. But the situation could easily get out of hand, become a major controversy in Dhaka's domestic politics, severely constraining Hasina's positive approach to India. The problem in Assam is part of the tragic legacy of the Subcontinent's partition in 1947 and the movement of people across the new frontiers in the east since then. As two strong leaders focused on problem-solving, Modi and Hasina must try and develop a long-term joint strategy that will facilitate national identification and generate a system of work-permits for legitimate movement of labour. Today's digital technologies offer solutions to difficult political problems that Delhi and Dhaka have inherited from the past. The markets demand it.

CROSSING THE LINE

For want of a multilateral regulator, the reach of European internet law now extends worldwide. It is deeply problematic

THE PAST OF the internet has caught up with its acrimonious present. The European Court of Justice has decreed that Facebook must comply globally with a takedown order issued by the national court of any of the 28 member-nations of the European Union. All because an Austrian politician was called a "corrupt oaf" online, and her national court agreed that it amounted to vilification. Europe sees itself at the cutting edge of internet regulation, and is impatient with America's inability or unwillingness to rein in the Silicon giants based on its soil. While Facebook is believed to have facilitated illegal intervention in politics in the US and UK, talk of breaking it up remains just that. But nothing can justify another nation or group of nations pinning on the badge of internet supercop. Such a projection of the laws of one country onto the world has not been seen since colonial times.

Concerns are being raised about the growing purview of European law online, but the ruling also sets a precedent for other nations, which are developing their own privacy and hate speech laws. Wait till a country like India, notoriously thin-skinned and a champion in filing takedown requests, starts wondering why Europe should have all the fun. Or consider a nation like Pakistan, where speech online is governed by blasphemy law. Imagine the consequences for the global conversation if local sensitivities were projected worldwide. Besides, as national laws clash, international disputes would be inevitable. The ruling of the European Court of Justice — which, incidentally, cannot be appealed — raises uncomfortable questions. It will only cause alarms, excursions and fulminations, and its only victim would be the freedom of speech.

The ruling has foregrounded a paradox that has been ignored for too long. The internet was originally spelled with a capital I, to indicate that it is a separate territory, abstracted from geography and its jurisdictions. But for decades, national laws have been applied domestically to digital communications, and issues are settled bilaterally between governments and courts on the one hand and providers or platforms on the other. Now, the European ruling against Facebook has crossed the line, projecting the laws of the bloc internationally. It calls attention to the need for regulation commonly agreed upon by nations, like the law of the high seas, and a multilateral mechanism or body to oversee regulation globally.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



Saffron side up

Ahead of assembly polls, BJP has rearranged Maharashtra's political field to its own advantage



GIRISH KUBER

MAHARASHTRA HAS NEVER seen such an intricate weave in its politics before this election. It is unprecedented as the state's polity may prove traditional caste biases redundant. Historically, Maharashtra has been a Congress bastion. The Congress had always enjoyed strong support amongst the state's Marathas who account for over 31 per cent of the population. But the Marathas are not only significant for their size. The community is synonymous with both money and muscle power. Maharashtra's cooperative movement, which distinguishes it from other states, is almost entirely controlled by the Marathas. Control of these cooperatives — be it sugar factories, dairies or banks — was always the key to power.

But not anymore. Devendra Fadnavis's rise and rise has changed the landscape. Fadnavis is a Brahmin — the community is just about 3.5 per cent of the state's population: Brahmins in the pre-Mandal era dominated the bureaucracy, but when it came to political power, they were not even on the fringes. The state has had just two Brahmin chief ministers, Manohar Joshi and the incumbent Fadnavis. Before the Maharashtra state came into being on May 1, 1960, there was B G Kher, who was CM of Bombay State. To break the Congress's hold over the Marathas, the BJP slowly won over OBCs, estimated to be around 30 per cent of the population. With Brahmins and upper castes already on their side, the BJP soon became a formidable force.

Then followed the breakdown of the Maratha power structure. To achieve this, the BJP adopted a two-pronged strategy: The ever-dangling carrot of Maratha reservation and engineering of near-en masse defections of leaders from the community. Fadnavis executed both with surgical skill. He dropped the reservation carrot at a time when the state was witnessing widespread Maratha mobilisations. Fadnavis's move to give reservation — though the order is yet to be cleared by the Supreme Court — not only nipped political unrest in the bud, but it eventually triggered a large exodus of Marathas to the BJP. In recent times, the BJP has wiped out the Maratha leadership, barring a few who had some gumption left — like Sharad Pawar — to take

on the "resourceful" ruling party. Those who initially refused to buckle were forced to change their mind, thanks to various investigation agencies. Now, the state BJP houses many such regional Maratha satraps who it earlier accused of corruption. More than comic relief — even as these once-upon-a-time "corrupt" appear on the BJP stage with saffron stoles — they offer a glimpse of an aggressive BJP.

Elections will prove whether such moves have been successful. They are unlikely to fail because the new-look BJP in Maharashtra has become a kind of conglomerate of winnable candidates, brought in from various parties. Though it will continue to serve the saffron juice, it will now have a dash of the Congress and NCP flavour.

Fadnavis has also skillfully — and completely — neutralised its troublesome ally, the Shiv Sena. In the saffron camp, the Sena dominated state politics as long as its founder, Balasaheb Thackeray, was around. Its marginalisation began with the Sena patriarch's demise, and today, it is a pale shadow of its former self.

Fadnavis kept the Sena at bay with the carrot-and-stick approach: The carrot of offering them "lucrative" posts, while the stick was the fear of breaking the party. It may sound strange, but today a large number of Sena MLAs owe their allegiance to Fadnavis, not to Uddhav Thackeray. Such was the Sena's plight that the BJP didn't even bother to show the courtesy of making a joint pre-poll announcement. Instead, it unilaterally announced its decision to contest 164 seats, leaving a mere 124 of the 288 seats to the Sena. The Sena, which demanded an equal number of seats initially, lost steam — it was compelled to accept whatever was left by the BJP. Between the two, the arrangement was that the Sena will play a bigger role in Maharashtra while the BJP will dominate parliamentary seats. That is history now, with the Sena conceding its space to the BJP. The election outcome may further marginalise the Sena. Though it is too early to predict, the upcoming election could permanently convert the Sena into the B-team of the BJP.

On the opposite side of the fence, the

Congress looks completely rudderless and demoralised. Not that it doesn't have capable leaders. What's holding it back is a complete absence of strategy. Like at the national level, it has failed miserably in creating its own counter-narrative, which voters can find credible. It is also rattled by the brazenness with which the BJP engineered defections. It appeared, for a while, that every Congress leader was up for grabs. And, barring a few, they were.

Adding to the Congress's crisis is its dilemma vis-a-vis Sharad Pawar and his NCP. While the Congress's Delhi leadership views the Maratha strongman as its secular saviour, the party's Maharashtra unit refuses to buy in to this charitable view. The misgivings the state Congress has about Pawar continue to spoil the chances of Opposition unity. It's rather unfortunate for India's grand old party that the leader it loathed till a few years ago is now its only hope in Maharashtra. But Pawar's problem is that his outfit is also an organisation of regional chieftains, many of whom have either joined the BJP or are scared of it, and hence, are reluctant to fight. Many of them have skeletons in their closets. The party has also failed to make inroads in cities, especially Mumbai and Thane, which have as many as 60 MLAs.

The Maharashtra Navanirman Sena made a promising start but soon faded into oblivion due to part-time politics by its founder, Raj Thackeray. The younger Thackeray displayed leadership qualities, but lost momentum even before the party could bloom. His early love for Narendra Modi, that later turned to hatred, also cost his party dearly.

Thus, the political situation in Maharashtra has become a conundrum for the voters. Candidates the people voted for the last time are now in the party they didn't vote for. And, the party that voters may want to see ruling the state, is filled with candidates who were punished the last time for the party they represented. With defections reaching unprecedented heights, saner voters will find it difficult to decide the lesser evil. That's certainly not a happy situation for democracy.

The writer is editor, Loksatta

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GANDHI, THE MINIMALIST

His critique of modernity shows millennials a more responsible consumption



IN GOOD FAITH

SREEJITH SUGUNAN

ASA MILLENNIAL who completed his schooling in India during the decade sandwiched between the ongoing and previous millennia, my early memories of Gandhi are largely hagiographic. It is only recently that the Indian public sphere embraced the vocabulary of thinkers like BR Ambedkar, Bhagat Singh and V D Savarkar, who were critical of the Gandhian project. By the time we were born, non-violence had become a common-sense ethic embedded within our constitutional morality and liberal-democratic ethos. One didn't really need Gandhi to point out the importance of being non-violent.

Alongside this quintessentially postmodern political irreverence came a renewed scrutiny of Gandhi's attitude towards Dalits in India, the Zulus in South Africa and more recently, towards his grand-niece Manubehn. Gandhi's moral hygiene is under attack in India, and allegations of casteism, racism and misogyny continue to be levelled against him.

Does Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence have significance for the millennial and post-millennial generations whose understanding and experience of politics are vastly different from those addressed by Gandhi in colonial India? The issues we face today are different and global in nature, be it the climate crisis, inequality or issues of identity.

Does Gandhi help us navigate these contemporary and urgent challenges? Yes, he does, but only if we start paying attention to the substantive aspects of Gandhi's critique of modernity. Minimalism or simple living is at the heart of Gandhi's idea of responsible living. Minimalism, as practised today, is focused on simplifying our life by implementing a philosophy of decluttering, whereby we remove distractions and reduce possessions that don't add value to our lives. And by doing this, we are able to focus better on our most important pursuits. The existential intentionality associated with this school of life makes it extremely empowering, especially at a time when our senses are constantly bombarded by attention grabbing algorithms and unending notifications. But the more important question remains: What values do we prioritise when it comes to intentional living?

Our answer has been to place freedom and happiness at the forefront of minimalism — freedom from "fear, worry, guilt, depression and the trappings of the consumer culture".

Gandhi also believed that minimalism led to freedom. But his minimalism differed, both in its form and substance. For Gandhi, minimalism was not a tool to find freedom. Minimalism was an end in itself and arose out of the ethical obligations to the "other", which included fellow humans, animals and nature. In this framework, freedom is achieved not in realising our best self but is implicit in those actions that recognise and respond to the other, especially the weak and the powerless.

actions that recognise and respond to the other, especially the weak and the powerless. Unlike the liberal self who can afford to be indifferent to the other, or the conservative self who is outrightly antagonistic, the Gandhian self trusts the other, even the "enemy", and acts out of love.

Gandhi's minimalism thus traverses a complex ethical web. It calls for intentional living by being conscious and considerate of the diverse and varied relationships we maintain with our own surroundings. It is not the passion of the self that is at the forefront of this minimalism but our responsibility towards the other. It is in this vein that Gandhi asks us to be "trustees" of this planet, not its owner. He reminds us to use technology as a means to increase our moral fibre, not shareholder dividends. He shows us how to be responsible consumers, in what we eat, wear and use, by being conscious of the unintended consequences of our consumption practices. And most importantly, he wants us to be self-sufficient or self-reliant as individuals.

Because it is only when we are not dependent on exploitative economic and social arrangements that we can inspire ourselves and others to not cooperate with systems that don't fulfill ethical obligations. Gandhi's minimalism hopes to thus liberate the other, and in the process liberate one's own self.

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OCTOBER 7, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

TEXTILE STRIKE
THE LONGEST EVER textile workers strike in Delhi has entered the 102nd day. Around 24,000 workers belonging to the capital's five mills have been on strike since June 27 on the call given by the Sangharsh Samiti comprising nine unions. During the agitation, over 700 workers have courted arrest, countless rallies have been organised, one "Delhi bandh" held, and another is scheduled for October 11. With elections around the corner, the political parties have belatedly begun to make sympathetic noises. Two governments — the Desai government fell about a month after the strike — have promised to help end the strike, but although the matter

has been referred to the Delhi labour tribunal, no immediate settlement is in sight.

SOVIET WITHDRAWAL
SOVIET PRESIDENT LEONID Brezhnev announced that the Soviet Union would withdraw up to 20,000 troops and 1,000 tanks from East Germany. At the same time, Brezhnev warned the US and West Germany that the Warsaw Pact "would not watch indifferently the efforts of NATO militarists" to station medium-range nuclear rockets in Western Europe. Brezhnev said the decision to reduce Soviet forces was aimed at speeding up the six-year negotiations on East-West force reductions in Central Europe.

CONG-CPM ALLIANCE
CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE member, Chandrajit Yadav, held talks with the West Bengal CPM leaders on the ensuing Lok Sabha elections. Yadav came as a special emissary of the Congress President Devaraj Urs to gauge the CPM's attitudes towards the Congress and explore the possibility of an electoral alliance. Yadav said that the CPM leaders had agreed with him that the prime need now was to fight the twin evils of authoritarianism as represented by Indira Gandhi and that of communalism of the Jana Sangh-RSS type. Yadav described today's talks as "breaking of the ice" in the relations between the two parties.

