



India has registered an improved sex ratio, says health survey

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CPI leader and trade unionist Gurudas Dasgupta passes away

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Rohit Sharma looking forward to playing in India's first D/N Test

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**NEARBY**



City continues to choke under 'severe' pollution

**NEW DELHI**  
 A thick blanket of smog covered the Capital on Thursday with the air quality remaining in the 'severe' category for the second consecutive day. The level of PM2.5, which is a chief pollutant, was almost five times (286.7 ug/m3) the safe limit (60ug/m3) in Delhi and NCR at 8 p.m.

CITY ▶ PAGE 5

Over 100 govt. officials compulsorily retired

**NEW DELHI**  
 Over a hundred officials from multiple government departments in the Capital have been compulsorily retired as per the recommendation of review committees formed by L-G Anil Bajjal. The government said the step is in line with its aim to "strengthen the administrative machinery" for rendering citizen services in an "honest manner".

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

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FRIDAY REVIEW ▶ 8 PAGES (TABLOID)

## Inferno on wheels



Locals gather near a burning train near Rahim Yar Khan in Punjab province in central Pakistan on Thursday. At least 74 people were killed when gas cylinders used by passengers exploded. \*AFP/PAKISTAN'S PUNJAB EMERGENCY SERVICE RESCUE 1122 (REPORT ON PAGE 14)

## NSCN-IM back in talks on Naga peace deal, says Ravi

'Accord has not been finalised yet, but discussions on track'

**VIJAJTA SINGH**  
 NEW DELHI

Naga interlocutor R.N. Ravi said on Thursday that discussions to finalise the Naga accord were continuing and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) [NSCN-IM] had come on board.

Mr. Ravi, who is also the Nagaland Governor, told *The Hindu*, "The accord has not been finalised yet. Matters are under discussion. NSCN-

IM has come on board."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had been apprised of the latest developments and some kind of agreement with all groups, including the NSCN-IM, would be signed soon, a senior government official said. It is not clear if the accord would be signed before November 2 when Mr. Modi leaves for Thailand or upon his return.

On October 18, Mr. Ravi had said that the Naga peace

process would conclude by October 31, adding that there would be no separate flag or constitution for the Nagas as being demanded by the NSCN-IM.

He had also accused the NSCN-IM - with which the Centre had signed a framework agreement on August 3, 2015 - of delaying the talks to find a solution to the decades-old Naga issue.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

## Govt. questions WhatsApp after spyware is used for snooping

Those targeted include journalists, lawyers & Dalit and human rights activists

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
 NEW DELHI

The Centre has sought an explanation from messaging platform WhatsApp after the Facebook-owned company confirmed that some Indian users of its app came under surveillance using an Israeli spyware.

Most of those targeted in India were journalists, Dalit and human rights activists and lawyers.

WhatsApp filed a complaint in a U.S. court earlier this week attributing the intrusion to NSO Group, an Israeli technology firm, which claims on its website that its products are used "exclusively" by government intelligence and law enforcement agencies "to fight crime and terror".

A WhatsApp spokesperson confirmed to *The Hindu* that Indian users were among those impacted by the spyware and contacted by the company this week to assist them.

### Privacy safeguards

On Thursday, Information Technology Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the government had asked WhatsApp to "explain the kind of breach and what it is doing to safeguard the privacy of millions of Indian citizens."

He said government agen-

### All about Pegasus

What you need to know about the Israeli-origin spyware that got into the phones of activists and journalists via WhatsApp



### How does Pegasus come into your phone?

The code is transmitted via WhatsApp call. The code enters the phone even if the call is not answered

### Who were targeted?

According to reports, over 100 activists, lawyers, and journalists were targeted. Among them were several Indian lawyers and journalists

### What does it do?

It sends the target's contacts, calls and messages to its controller. It can also turn the phone into a spy device by switching on the camera or microphone

### Are you safe?

According to Kaspersky, Apple's iOS security update 9.3.5 seals iPhone's vulnerability. Google says it identifies infected phones and disables Pegasus

## Activists say they will move court

**SHARAD VYAS**  
**AJEET MAHALE**  
 MUMBAI

The spyware attack on WhatsApp users targeted over a dozen civil rights activists, lawyers and journalists in Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Goa.

The activists connected to the Bhima-Koregaon and Elgar Parishad cases said they would be approaching the court for action, while the Nationalist Congress Party demanded that Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari institute a probe. Among the individuals targeted in Maharashtra are lawyer Nihalsing Rathod, academic Anand Teltumbde, activist of the Kabir Kala Manch Rupali Jadhav, Dalit activist Vivek Sundara, former Ph.D student of Tata Institute of Social Sciences Ajmal Khan, human rights lawyer Jagdish Meshram, and Dalit activist Veera Sathidar, who also acted in the film *Court*.

MAHARASHTRA OFFICIALS  
 DENY ROLE ▶ PAGE 12

## Core sector output falls 5.2% in Sept.

Data reflect severity of the slowdown

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
 NEW DELHI

Output of eight core infrastructure industries contracted by 5.2% in September, indicating the severity of the economic slowdown.

As many as seven of eight core industries saw a contraction in output in September. Coal production fell steeply by 20.5%, crude oil by 5.4%, and natural gas by 4.9%. Output of refinery products (-6.7%), cement (-2.1%), steel (-0.3%), and electricity (-3.7%) too declined.

### Sole growth sector

The only segment to post growth in September was fertilizers, where production increased by 5.4%.

The eight core sectors expanded by 4.3% in September 2018, according to official data released on Thursday. During the April-September period, the growth of core industries slowed to 1.3%, against 5.5% in the year-earlier period. "This clearly indicates the severity of the ongoing industrial slowdown," In-



dia Ratings and Research said.

ICRA expects the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) to report a contraction of 2.5-3.5% in September. "Manufacturing may report a year-over-year contraction in September," it added.

Earlier this month, the RBI cut its GDP growth forecast for the current fiscal to 6.1% from the previous estimate of 6.9% after the first-quarter economic growth slipped to an over six-year low of 5%.

## LGs take charge in J&K, Ladakh

Valley sees complete shutdown

**AMIT BARUAH**  
 SRINAGAR

Jammu & Kashmir became the first State of the Indian Union to be reduced to a Union Territory (UT), with former IAS officer Girish Murmu being sworn in as its first Lieutenant Governor (LG) on Thursday. Bifurcated from the former State, Ladakh also became a UT, with former civil servant R.K. Mathur taking over as its LG in Leh.

The Kashmir Valley saw a complete shutdown as Mr. Murmu, a Gujarat cadre IAS officer handpicked by the Centre, became the executive authority of the UT, which will now be directly administered by the Union Home Ministry.

The Indian Union now has 28 States and nine UTs. Former Chief Ministers Farooq Abdullah, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti continue to be under detention from August 4, a day before the Rajya Sabha voted to end special status to J&K.

Hours before the swearing-in ceremony at the Raj



Girish Chandra Murmu being sworn in as the first Lt. Governor of J&K. \*PTI

Bhavan on the outskirts of Srinagar, this correspondent saw all roads leading to it being sealed off by security forces. There was heavy security in the area.

All shops and business establishments downed their shutters. In earlier weeks, shops were open in the morning and downed shutters by 10 a.m. But on Thursday, all of them were closed.

(With inputs from Peerzada Ashiq)

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

## Nirbhaya case convicts told to file mercy plea

Notice says they have exhausted all legal remedies; victim's mother hopes for justice

**SAURABH TRIVEDI**  
 NEW DELHI

The Tihar jail administration has sent notices to the four convicts in the Nirbhaya gang-rape case informing them that they have exhausted all legal remedies and are only left with the provision of applying for mercy before the President within seven days.

"All the legal proceedings regarding the case against you [convicts] have been completed. However, the only option remaining in your defence is 'mercy petition'. Hence, the jail administration

seeks to inform you that if you have not filed your 'mercy petition' before the President, you may do so within seven days of receiving this notice. If not, then it will be deemed that you do not wish to do so and the administration will begin further proceedings regarding your sentence," the notice states.

Even if one of the convicts applies for the mercy plea, it becomes applicable to all. Tihar jail Director-General Sandeep Goel said three convicts are lodged in Tihar, while the fourth one is in Mandoli jail.

The notices, in Hindi and English, were handed over to the convicts on October 29. They were read out to them and the process was video-graphed, he said.

### 'Convicts restless'

"After getting the notices, the convicts became restless. Following the procedure, the Tihar administration will inform the trial court which had pronounced the death penalty about the notices," said a senior jail official.

Reacting to the development, Nirbhaya's mother

said: "I welcome the move. I hope that after seven years, my daughter will get justice. It will be the biggest message to people who are involved in crimes against women."

The counsel for the convicts, A.P. Singh, said he got a call from Tihar Welfare Department about the notices. "I will first apply for mercy for convict Akshay Thakur and then the others," he said.

On July 9 last year, the Supreme Court had dismissed review pleas filed by three convicts - Mukesh, Pawan Gupta and Vinay Sharma.

## Honour 50:50 pledge: Uddhav

**TANVI DESHPANDE**  
 MUMBAI

Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday reminded the BJP to keep its word on power sharing in Maharashtra. Mr. Thackeray was speaking after a meeting of Sena MLAs elected senior party leader Eknath Shinde as legislature party leader.

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