AYODHYA VERDICT FULL COVERAGE

PAGES 10-14, 17

RSS welcomes verdict, says Sangh role in temple movement done, it's over to government now



IDEA EXCHANGE PAGE 9

'TEMPLE ISSUE CHANGED COUNTRY'S CHARACTER... TELL PEOPLE HUMANISM ABOVE NATIONALISM'

ASHOK GEHLOT, Rajasthan CM



How does an athlete at the pinnacle of her career motivate herself for more? Boxing champion MC Mary Kom has the answer

CONSTITUTION BENCH DIRECTS CENTRE TO FORMULATE A

Temple gets site, mosque a plot



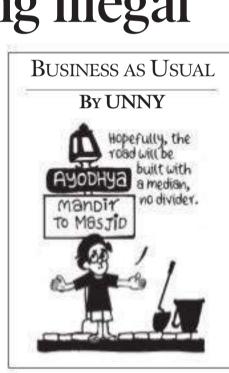
AFTER THE RULING: Justice Ashok Bhushan. Justice S A Bobde, Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, Justice D Y Chandrachud and **Justice S A Nazeer.**

5 judges unanimous on Ayodhya, call Babri razing illegal

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

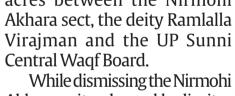
BRINGING TO an end a sevendecade legal battle over the title to the disputed Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid site in Ayodhya, an issue that roiled India and propelled the rise of the BJP, a five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, in a unanimous verdict Saturday, ruled that the entire disputed land be handed over to a trust to be constituted for construction of a Ram temple and that Muslims, in the name of "equity", be given five acres of either the acquired land near the site or at "a suitable prominent place in Ayodhya" for building a mosque.

Underlining that it had been "tasked with the resolution of a dispute whose origins are as old as the idea of India itself", the Bench of Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, Justices S A Bobde, D Y Chandrachud, Ashok Bhushan and S A Nazeer overturned the September 30, 2010 judgment of the Allahabad High Court which had ordered threeway division of the disputed 2.77



acres between the Nirmohi

Board suit was barred by limita-Bench said the High Court order was "legally unsustainable" and parties or secure a lasting sense



Akhara suit as barred by limitation but upholding the suits of the UP Sunni Central Waqf Board the High Court order had said the tion — and Ramlalla Virajman, the "dividing the land will not subserve the interest of either of the **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



Modi with Manmohan Singh

LIZ MATHEW NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

INVOKING THE fall of the Berlin Wall on this day 30 years ago in his address to the nation Saturday, hours after the Supreme Court verdict on the Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid title suit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said it was time to "unite" and "take everyone

a "golden chapter in India's judicial history", Modi said the unanimous verdict "shouldn't be seen

anyone behind".

No place for fear, bitterness in new India: PM

as a win or loss for anybody". Pointing out that November 9 was the date when the Berlin Wall was brought down, Modi said: "Today, the Kartarpur corridor was also inaugurated. Now

the Ayodhya verdict, so this date

Describing the judgment as

together... without leaving gives us the message to stay united and move forward."

Outside Hanuman

Garhi in Ayodhya, Saturday. Ritesh Shukla

Terming the verdict as a "new dawn", Modi said: "Now, the next generation will build a new India. Today is the day to forget any bitterness one may have; there is no place for fear, bitterness and neg-

ativity in new India." The Prime Minister also said the judgment will "further increase people's faith in judicial CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

AIMPLB SAYS NEITHER EQUITY, NOR JUSTICE Sunni board says won't go for review; Muslim parties cold to five-acre offer

ABANTIKA GHOSH, ASAD **REHMAN & SHAJU PHILIP** NEW DELHI, LUCNOW, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. NOVEMBER 9

AS THE All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) contemplates a review of the Supreme Court verdict on Ayodhya and whether to accept the five acres offered for a mosque in lieu of the disputed plot, there were differing voices within the community on the way forward.

Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board chairman Zufar Farooqui said the board, one of the main litigants in the case, would not file a review petition. "The board will not go in for any review of the apex court's order or file any curative petition," Farooqui said at a press conference in Lucknow, adding that "it would not look good" if any of

the Muslim litigants do not accept the verdict.

The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), which had split in 1992 over a "moderate" stand on the issue, also said it respected the judgment.

The AIMPLB, however, expressed "grave dissatisfaction" calling the verdict "neither equity nor justice". On an alternative plot for a masjid in Ayodhya, its counsel Zafaryab Jilani said, "You cannot exchange land for a mosque.' Another AIMPLB member AIMIM MP Asaduddin Owaisi said the offer of five acres should be rejected, while regretting the victory of "faith over facts".

The AIMPLB working committee will take a call on whether to file for a review, which must be done within 30 days. "If they so decide, we will file a petition," said Jilani, who is the AIMPLB secretary. The working committee will also take a **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

How the scales tilted in favour of temple parties

EXPLAINED

APURVA VISHWANATH NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

RELIANCE ON records of European travellers, lack of evi-

dence from the Muslim side to prove continuous, uninterrupted and exclusive possession prior to 1856, treating the outer and inner courtyard of the disputed

structure as one unit in a significant departure from the Allahabad High Court verdict — a

combination of these factors tilted the Constitution Bench verdict in the Ayodhya title dispute against the Muslim side.

The court, while using the "preponderance of probabilities" as a standard of proof, picks the claim of the Hindu side as more plausible than the

Muslim side. "The Muslim account of worship prior to 1856 is conspicuously silent as opposed to

the accounts of worship being **CONTINUED ON PAGE 12**

Rebuilding Babri Masjid to welcoming Ram temple, how Cong re-calibrates

MANOJCG NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

MINUTES AFTER the Supreme Court delivered its verdict on Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid title suit case, the Congress said Saturday it respects the decision and declared it was in favour of construction of a Ram temple. There was no mention of Babri Masjid, the rebuilding of which

Narasimha Rao had publicly unanimous one. Perhaps, learncommitted to in 1993 – or the ing from the experience of the fact that one side had several questions about the verdict.

The Congress, which sank into political insignificance in the Hindi heartland in the last three decades after it got caught in the Mandal (social justice) versus Kamandal (Hindutva) narrative, appeared to be circumspect and wary of the political fallout of the

then Prime Minister P V verdict especially since it was a last three decades, it subtly sought to move the present day Congress closer to the Congress of three decades ago.

> For, it was the Rajiv Gandhi government which allowed the opening of the locks of the Babri Masjid in 1986 and permitted Shilanyas there three years later. CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



CYCLONE BULBUL MAKES LANDFALL, 2 DEATHS IN BENGAL, **ODISHA**

PAGE 7

At Ground Zero, sigh of relief: bawal khatam hua

MAULSHREE SETH

AYODHYA. NOVEMBER 9



hope. But after the Supreme Court delivered its verdict on the Janmabhoomi-Babri Avodhva was that of relief.

Masjid title suit, the mood in "I cannot speak on behalf of

closed," Iqbal Ansari, who is one

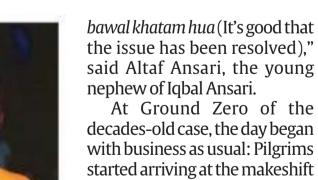
of the litigants in the case, told

The Indian Express. "Accha hai,

THERE WAS some fear and some



Prayers on the banks of the Saryu in Ayodhya. Ritesh Shukla



decades-old case, the day began with business as usual: Pilgrims started arriving at the makeshift Ramlalla temple and Hanuman Garhi, shops selling puja material opened on time, and the local priests were busy preparing for daily pujas. But as the verdict came

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Emotions blur borders as history marks Kartarpur opening

KANCHAN VASDEV & MAN AMAN SINGH CHHINA

KARTARPUR, NOVEMBER 9

A SURGE of emotions blurred the to one of the holiest shrines of

the Sikh community. Prime Minister Narendra

border Saturday, as over 500 Indian pilgrims crossed a 4.2-km stretch from Gurdaspur to the Durbar Sahib gurdwara in Pakistan's Kartarpur to mark the historic opening of the corridor

Modi flagged off the first jatha led by Akal Takht jathedar Giani Harpreet Singh, and prominent

leaders including former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, from near the Dera Baba Nanak shrine in Gurdaspur.

In Kartarpur, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan opened the corridor and unveiled a kirpan as the symbol for the gurdwara complex in Narowal district. "It was a good beginning to normalise relations between the two countries. It is a big day for us," said Manmohan Singh.

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said he was "overwhelmed to be a part of the first jatha as a humble devotee" and to see the fulfillment of a

70-year demand of the Sikh community.

As soon as the pilgrims crossed into Pakistan, they were greeted by Pakistan Rangers personnel. "It is as if we are meeting after the Partition. We are the same people. It's just that two generations have passed with the pain of Partition," a Pakistani immigration official told The Indian Express.

Welcoming the Indian pilgrims, including his cricketing friend and MLA Navjot Singh Sidhu, Imran Khan said that if the Kashmir issue was resolved, borders could open and trade



Pilgrims visit Kartarpur, Saturday. Neeraj Priyadarshi

would take place. "When I was elected Prime Minister, I told Modi that our biggest problem was poverty. I told him that if we open our borders, then trade will eliminate poverty," he said.

"If Modi is listening to what I am saying, then I would like to tell him that peace comes from justice, injustice can only breed antagonism," Khan said.

The Pakistan Prime Minister said that he could "see the happiness on the faces of Sikh pilgrims". "Kartarpur is like Medina for the Sikh community. Think how a Muslim would feel if he were able to see Medina from 3 km away but not able to visit it," Khan said.

Apart from the gurdwara itself, one of the main attractions for pilgrims from India was "Guru Nanak's well". "This is a corridor of hope. We have come from Italy to be a part of the first jatha," said Jagwant Singh, who reached India on the govern-

ment's invitation. Delivering an emotional speech on the occasion, Sidhu thanked Imran Khan for fulfilling the promise made by him in ten months. He also said that Modi and Khan had put a salve on the wounds of the Sikhs.

Apart from Manmohan Singh and Amarinder Singh, the Indian delegation included Union ministers Harsimrat Badal and Hardeep Puri, and Punjab ministers and MLAs. It also included former Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal, and his son and former Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal.

On the Pakistan side, the ceremony was attended by Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Pakistan Punjab province's Governor Chaudhry Mohammad Sarwar and Chief Minister Usman Buzdar.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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WHY SC REJECTED THE ALLAHABAD HC JUDGMENT ON AYODHYA DISPUTE

"Legally unsustainable... dividing the land will not subserve the interest of either of the parties or secure a lasting sense of peace and tranquillity," the Supreme Court said.

VIDEO OF THE DAY

AYODHYA VERDICT

The Supreme Court allotted the disputed Ayodhya land to a new Trust.

KARTARPUR CORRIDOR

FULL COVERAGE

Imran Khan opens Corridor, PM Modi flags off pilgrimage from

EXPRESS

How Tik Tok has changed social media in India

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

In the latest episode of the tech podcast, we discuss the changing face of social media in the country and why Tik Tok has caught the imagination of the country.

FROM PAGE ONE

Sunni board

call on whether to accept the five

There was palpable disappointment among AIMPLB officebearers and leaders of various Muslim organisations. "The court has exercised extraordinary powers to confer the title (to the Hindu side)...This is questionable...There are some parts of the judgment with serious implications for the secular fabric of the country. We hope no mosque will be touched in the future," Advocate M R Shamsad said, speaking on behalf of the AIMPLB, while adding, "We have always said we will abide by the judgment of the court. We regret that the other side never said

Replying to a question on the offer of five acres, Jilani said, "You cannot exchange land for mosque, it was not about land but about a mosque... This is neither equity nor justice." Appealing to all to "maintain peace", he added, "This is not somebody's defeat or victory, we will adopt whatever legal course is possible."

AIMPLB member Kamal Farooqui said, "It was never about land. They can take 100 acres from us if they want."

Owaisi said, "In my personal opinion we should reject the five-acre land because this is a legal fight. As former CJI Justice Verma said, the SC is supreme,

not infallible. This country is becoming a Hindu Rashtra." He added that he feared that this "victory of faith over facts" would ignite dispute over other mosques too.

The Sunni Central Waqf Board was non-committal on the alternative land. "It was not our demand that we want five acres. Since it has been granted, we respect the decision of the court. We will soon have a board meeting on this," Farooqui said, adding that Owaisi's stand was his personal

Given the verdict, the AIMPLB is also undecided over a review. A visibly disheartened member of the board's legal team said, "Is there really any point asking for review of a unanimous judgment?"

Jilani said, "Article 142 does not allow you to do this... We have a right to disagree but will never say there was any pressure on the court. Anybody may make a mistake. The SC has reviewed its judgment in many cases, if working committee decides, we will file a review."

In a statement issued in Malappuram, Kerala, saying it respected the verdict, IUML president Panakkad Sayed Hyderali Shihab Thangal said, "There should not be any tension or provocation." The party, which is an ally of the Congress at the Centre as well as in Kerala, will

hold a meeting in Monday to discuss the verdict.

Accepting the verdict, the Shahi Imam of the Jama Masjid in Delhi, Syed Ahmed Bukhari, said the matter should not be stretched further. "Muslims of India want peace. Before the court's order, all Muslims had said they would accept the order, whatever it be," the Imam said.

Even as he appealed to the community to maintain peace, Navaid Hamid, the president of All Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat, described as a "joke" the order to allot five acres for a mosque. "The government took 67 acres Muslim land and we are now being given five acres that we never demanded. Why should we take this consolation prize?... The judgment sets a dangerous precedent because it is not the duty of the government under our secular Constitution to involve itself with the construction of a temple or a mosque."

Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind president Arshad Madani said Muslims should not be disappointed, and must trust Allah. "We did what we could, at our level best," he said.

Syed Sadatullah Hussaini, president of the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, said that while some points of the judgment "are very important as they strengthen the Constitution of India and will help in maintaining law and order", they disagreed with many others, "especially the conclusion".

Shia cleric and AIMPLB senior vice-president Kalbe Sadiq said, "Everyone had said we will accept whatever the verdict is... We should now see what the future holds. Muslims should focus on issues like education. What has happened has happened."

'No place for fear' processes". "The halls of justice have amicably concluded a matter going on for decades. Every

side was given adequate time and opportunity to express differing points of view," he said.

"The Supreme Court's Ayodhya judgment is notable because it highlights that any dispute can be amicably solved in the spirit of due process of law. It reaffirms the independence, transparency and farsightedness of our judiciary. It clearly illustrates everybody is equal before the law," Modi said.

"Today, the world has also realised how vibrant and strong our democracy is. After today's verdict, the manner in which every section of society, every community, every religion, the entire nation accepted the verdict with open arms, this is a manifestation of India's age-old ethos, culture and traditions, as well as our inherent spirit of brotherhood," the Prime Minister said.

Modi signed off by extending his wishes for the festivals ahead, including Eid Miladul Nabi Sunday.

In his tweet earlier, Modi wrote: "Be it Ram Bhakti or Rahim Bhakti, it is imperative that we strengthen the spirit of Rashtra Bhakti. May peace and harmony prevail."

The ruling BJP, which aggressively championed the Ram temple issue while in Opposition, was measured in its response to the judgment.

Leaders of the party, which had adopted the VHP's temple agitation as part of the agenda in its Palampur resolution of 1989, hailed the judgment but without breaking into celebrations. They said it reaffirmed the "independence, transparency and farsightedness" of the judiciary.

Both the government and the party tried to project the verdict as a victory for the country, its her-

itage and its legacy. Maintaining that the verdict will "strengthen India's unity and integrity", BJP National President and Home Minister Amit Shah appealed to all communities and

Five-judge Bench unanimous on title

of peace and tranquillity".

The Bench said "on the balance of probabilities, there is clear evidence to indicate that the worship by the Hindus in the outer courtyard" of the disputed site "continued unimpeded in spite of the setting up of a grillbrick wall in 1857. Their possession of the outer courtyard stands established together with the incidents attaching to their control over it".

"As regards the inner courtyard, there is evidence on a preponderance of probabilities to establish worship by the Hindus prior to the annexation of Oudh by the British in 1857. The Muslims have offered no evidence to indicate that they were in exclusive possession of the inner structure prior to 1857 since the date of the construction in the sixteenth century."

"The Hindus never accepted the division of the inner and the outer courtyard. For the Hindus, the entire complex as a whole was of religious significance. A demarcation by the British for the purposes of maintaining law and order did not obliterate their belief in the relevance of the 'Garbh-Grih' being the birthplace of Lord Ram. This is evident from the witness testimonies which indicate that pilgrims offered prayer standing at the railing by looking towards the sanctum sanctorum."

It acknowledged that "exclusion of the Muslims from worship and possession took place on the intervening night between 22/23 December 1949 when the mosque was desecrated by the installation of Hindu idols" and "the ouster of the Muslims on that occasion was not through any lawful authority but through an act which was calculated to deprive them of their place of worship".

Noting that "during the pendency of the suits, the entire structure of the mosque was

brought down in a calculated act of destroying a place of public worship" and that "Muslims have been wrongly deprived of a mosque which had been constructed well over 450 years ago", the Bench said: "This Court in the exercise of its powers under Article 142 of the Constitution must ensure that a wrong committed must be remedied."

"Having weighed the nature of the relief which should be granted to the Muslims, we direct that land admeasuring 5 acres be allotted to the Sunni Central Waqf Board either by the Central Government out of the acquired land or by the Government of Uttar Pradesh within the city of Ayodhya. This exercise, and the consequent handing over of the land to the Sunni Central Waqf Board, shall be conducted simultaneously with the handing over of the disputed site comprising the inner and outer courtyards," it said.

"The Central Government shall, within a period of three months from the date of this judgment, formulate a scheme pursuant to the powers vested in it under Sections 6 and 7 of the Acquisition of Certain Area at Ayodhya Act 1993. The scheme shall envisage the setting up of a trust with a Board of Trustees or any other appropriate body under Section 6. The scheme to be framed by the Central Government shall make necessary provisions in regard to the functioning of the trust or body including on matters relating to the management of the trust, the powers of the trustees including the construction of a temple and all necessary, incidental and supplemental matters;

Possession of the inner and outer courtyards shall be handed over to the Board of Trustees of the Trust or to the body so constituted. The Central

Government will be at liberty to make suitable provisions in respect of the rest of the acquired land by handing it over to the Trust or body for management and development in terms of the scheme framed in accordance with the above directions."

"Nirmohi Akhara's claim to be a shebait stands rejected. However, having regard to the historical presence of Nirmohi Akhara at the disputed site and their role, it is necessary for this Court to take recourse to its powers under Article 142 to do complete justice. Hence, we direct that in framing the scheme, an appropriate role in the management would be assigned to the Nirmohi Akhara," it said. The Bench agreed with the

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) findings about a centuriesold structure of Hindu religious origin having existed beneath the disputed site and that the Masjid was not constructed on vacant land. But it noted that "mere existence of a structure underneath the disputed property cannot lead to a legally enforceable claim to title today". It upheld the Hindu claim

that Ramlalla was a juristic perbut rejected Ramjanmabhoomi's claim to the same, saying accepting the claim would extinguish all competing proprietary claims. It said that the Sunni Central Wagf Board had not been able to establish its case of adverse possession of the structure, nor able to prove waqf by user.

The Hindus, it ruled, were in "exclusive and unimpeded possession of the outer courtyard where they have continued worship" while the "inner courtyard has been a contested site with conflicting claims of the Hindus and Muslims".

Awarding the disputed site for construction of a temple, the Bench concluded that the inner and outer courtyards on the disputed site was "one composite whole" and that the railing erected outside the Masjid in 1856-57 to demarcate the area as inner and outer courtyards following communal riots "did not either bring about a sub-division of the land or any determination of title".

Referring to the construction of the Ram Chabutra in close proximity to the railings from where Hindus made offerings to the 'Garbh Grih', the Bench said "there can be no manner of doubt that this was in furtherance of their belief that the birthplace of Lord Ram was within the precincts of and under the central dome of the mosque".

The ruling said that though the dispute is over immovable property, "the Court does not decide title on the basis of faith or belief but on the basis of evidence. The law provides us with parameters as clear but as profound as ownership and possession. In deciding title to the disputed property, the Court applies settled principles of evidence to adjudicate upon which party has established a claim to the immovable property".

It also said "scriptural interpretations are susceptible to a multitude of inferences. The Court would do well not to step into the pulpit by adjudging which, if any, of competing interpretations should be accepted. Faith is a matter for the individual believer. Once the Court has intrinsic material to accept that the faith or the belief is genuine and not a pretence, it must defer to the belief of the worshipper. This, we must do well to recognise, applies across the spectrum of religions and their texts, Hinduism and Islam being among them. The value of a secular Constitution lies in a tradition of equal deference".

dition of mutual respect and unity among all that has defined our society through the ages."

An hour later, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi tweeted: "The Supreme Court has pronounced its verdict in the Ayodhya matter. While honouring this court verdict, we all should maintain mutual harmony. This is a time for brotherhood, trust and love among us all Indians."

Echoed Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. She said "all parties, communities, and citizens should respect the decision and maintain our centuries-old culture of living in togetherness. We all have to together strengthen mutual harmony and brotherhood."

But Randeep Singh Surjewala the party chief spokesperson, said the Congress was in favour of construction of a Ram temple. He said the Supreme Court has respected "belief and faith."

"The decision of the Supreme Court has come. Naturally, our reply to your question is in the affirmative. The Congress is in favour of construction of a temple for Lord Ram," he said replying to a question. Asked about the All India Muslim Personal Law Board's unhappiness, he said: "They have also said that they deeply respect the judgment of the Supreme Court of India. Of course, everybody has a right to their own legal remedies and they can always choose to exercise their remedies but, as far as the Congress goes, we have said what we have to say."

Attacking the BJP, he said the Supreme Court's verdict has opened the doors for construction of a Ram Temple and at the same time it has for once and for all shut the doors for BJP and others to use people's faith and belief for political gains.

Welcoming the verdict "on Ayodhya and the construction of Ram Temple," senior Congress leader Anand Sharma said: "Land for Mosque confirms that justice and equity have prevailed. Unanimous verdict is laudable as issues involved were not only legal and historical but also fractious, emotional and re-

ligious."

Speaking to The Indian Express, CWC member and former Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi said: "We never said that we are against construction of a Ram Temple. We only said it should be settled in a Constitutional manner." On the Congress's silence on the mosque, he said "The court has said it (demolition) was not lawful." Asked why the Congress was silent, he said: "What is need of saying now? There is no need. Now the question is the Supreme Court judgment. So, unnecessarily, why should we bring up old issues? There is a judgment, there is some settlement...we are welcoming it...we don't want to bring back old disputes again. Disputes have been settled, since it has come to an end, the Congress welcomes it.

On the mosque, he said: "We are for it also because as a whole, whatever the judgement has been given we respect it, we welcome it..the court has made it clear that 5 acres should be given for construction of a mosque."

Kartarpur

wanted "this message of love from Kartarpur" to reach Kashmir,

"The Berlin Wall came down on this day, November 9, and the LoCtoo can come down. PM Modi said thanks to Imran Khan for the Kartarpur corridor. As Foreign Minister, I say, Mr Modi you can also give a chance to Imran Khan to say thanks to you — by lifting curfew in Kashmir, by removing the communication blockade...,

religions to accept the decision of the court and remain committed to the slogan, "one India, great

India". The party's working president I P Nadda said the BIP "salutes the people of the country who have united and kept the social, cultural and spiritual fabric of the country intact". "This decision has given a clear message that we are united and the roots of democracy in India are very strong," Nadda said.

The responses were carefully calibrated after the top leadership had warned strictly against any celebrations. But the mood was in contrast to the apprehension within the party after the 2010 Allahabad High Court order, which divided the disputed land into three. Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, who had appeared as an advocate for Ram Lalla then, had said at the time: "...even (Justice) S U Khan has said that Ram Lalla will not be moved out from that place even when it will be divided into three".

At Ground Zero

through on smartphones at tea stalls and shops, a sense of foreboding took over with the stream of pilgrims thinning visibly, shopkeepers downing shutters and the talk turning to stocking up vegetables and LPG cylinders. "Curfew na lag jaye (Hope curfew is not imposed)," said a local resident at a tea stall.

"Devotees have stopped coming. Why should we keep the shops open?" said Angad Kumar Saini, who sells gift items near the makeshift temple. "The barricading and security checks have led to the fear that there might be a

curfew soon," he said.

Soon, security forces stepped up their vigil as some scenes of celebrations were seen near Hanuman Garhi, where crackers were burst and sweets distributed — and a sadhu was seen dancing with a flag in his hand. At Karsevakpuram, where a model of the proposed Ram temple is kept, a group of students from a Sanskrit school placed a big pot of kheer on wooden blocks for distribution.

"We are happy with the judgment and want the construction of the temple to start as soon as possible... and the trust (mandated by the court) to be formed as soon as possible," said Triloki Nath Pandey, who represented Ram Lalla Virajman in the case. "I am happy that 5 acres have

been given for the mosque. We have no reservations... there are already 30-32 mosques in Ayodhya. Our ancestors are the same...I am sure that Muslims will not only support the construction of the Ram temple but also offer their respects," said Pandey, who is also the organisation secretary of the VHP.

"Maintaining peace is of utmost importance and showing patience in expressing feelings," said Sharad Sharma, the VHP spokesperson in Ayodhya who is monitoring activity at the Parishad's temple workshop.

A few kilometres away, Iqbal Ansari said that he respected the court's decision and would not challenge it. "My father fought for it and it came down to me. I had said in the past and repeat today that the court's verdict is acceptable to us. I will not pursue the

case further," Ansari said. Ansari's nephew, Altaf, who

lives next door and drives an autorickshaw, said: "The land for the mosque will be given in Ayodhya itself. It's now the responsibility of the government."

As the day progressed, pilgrims from other parts of the state, and some from as far as Nepal, were scrambling to board buses to return home. By noon, most of the streets in Ayodhya town wore a deserted look. Santosh Tiwari, one of the

priests at the makeshift temple, said: "The number of pilgrims today has reduced drastically despite the fact that visitors are being allowed as per the routine schedule." A security personnel said, "Usually, about 14,000 pilgrims visit the temple by this time every day. But today, only about 800 have visited so far."

By evening, amid reports of calm, some shopkeepers were back in business, devotees gathered for the Saryu aarti at Naya Ghat, and traffic jams were seen in Ayodhya town..

Congress

Rajiv began his campaign for the 1991 Lok Sabha election from Ayodhya promising to usher in Ram Rajya. In 1991, the Congress manifesto for the Lok Sabha polls said the party was for construction of the temple without demolishing the mosque. Rajiv's Congress perhaps wanted to appropriate or defuse the Sangh Parivar's Hindu card.

Cut to 1991, Rao's Congress government enacted a law laying down that the religious character of a place of worship shall continue to be what it was on August 15, 1947. The attempt was to assuage Muslims who were getting apprehensive of

the Sangh Parivar's Kashi and Mathura agenda. By keeping the 'Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid' complex out of the ambit of the law, the Congress sent

a signal to Hindus too. The same Congress, however, held Rao responsible for the demolition of the Babri Masjid. Asked about his commitment to rebuild the mosque, Rao told India Today in January 1993, a month after the demolition: "We are not going back on that now. We have said we would see to it that it is rebuilt. That's all. There are so many other cobwebs we have to remove. The whole thing is in litigation. But then I had to make

was duty-bound."

Rao was purged. And the party, through the 1990s, spoke about the 1991 Central law. At the same time, ever since the mid-1990s, the Congress — wary of the electoral slide – was silent on both the temple and the mosque. The party recalibrated its line to support either a negotiated settlement "between parties to the dispute" or await for a judicial settlement. Today, it was, however, silent on the mosque and asserted it was in favour of construction of

the commitment to rebuild it. I

a Ram temple. The CWC met at party chief Sonia Gandhi's residence even before the Supreme Court began reading out its verdict. "The Indian National Congress respects the verdict of the Supreme Court in the Ayodhya case. We appeal to all the parties concerned and to all communities to abide by the secular values and spirit of fraternity enshrined in our Constitution and to maintain peace and harmony. It is the responsibility of each one of us to reaffirm our tra-

In his speech, Qureshi said he

he said. **FULL REPORTS ON** www.indianexpress.com

OTHER OFFICIALS BEING QUESTIONED, SAY POLICE

Manager of OYO hotel where 15-yr-old shooter was electrocuted arrested

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

CLOSE TO a month after a 15vear-old national-level shooter was electrocuted in the bathroom of an OYO hotel, the 37year-old manager of the premises was arrested and later released on bail. Police have issued notices to senior OYO officials to join the investigation and said more arrests could take place in the coming days.

Confirming the arrest of manager Sandeep Kumar, DCP (South East) Chinmoy Biswal said the investigation is still on.

The incident took place on October 13 at Collection O hotel, a mid-tier brand of hospitality



The victim, Priyanshu Kumar, died on Oct 13 at the hotel in Pul Prahladpur

start-up OYO Rooms, in South East Delhi's Pul Prahladpur. The teenager, Priyanshu Kumar, had

Amar Singh and students from his school in Dehradun on October 9.

"The boy's roommate, Yash Gupta, said they had shifted to the second-floor room due to some issues with the previous one. They had then complained about the water supply in their new room. Once hotel staff told them it was resolved, Kumar went to take a bath. Within minutes, his roommate heard a scream and a loud thud. When hotel staff gained access to the bathroom, he was on the floor," an officer said, adding that the hotel has been sealed after the incident.

During investigation, an electrician and a team of electrical experts from the Delhi government were called in to shed light on what had led to the boy's death.

"They found that there was no water supply at the hotel. So when the geyser was kept on without any water inside, it got short-circuited. Once water supply resumed and the boy went to take a bath, there was a surge of electricity and he was electrocuted moments after the water started flowing. We have found that there was a problem of electric current in the bathroom's other fittings too," said a senior police officer.

Police said the manager had been working with the hotel for the last two years. He was arrested after police lodged an FIR under IPC section 304A (death due to negligence), based on a

complaint by the victim's coach.

"We have served notices to senior officials of OYO and also questioned some of them. We have also questioned the staff who attended to the victim's complaint before the incident, and found negligence on part of the hotel manager and a room attendant, who is likely to be arrested in the coming days," a senior police officer said.

An OYO spokesperson said: "There have been no arrests. As the matter is under investigation, we have no comments or anv additional information to share at this time. Having said that, we shall at all times actively assist in any investigation by any enforcement authorities. Safety and security is our top priority."

> cial sciences, and has not been accessible since 2017. According to a source in DU's library system, the funds for these databases used to be provided till 2014 by the varsity administration from various budg-

SUKRITA BARUAH

vital research material.

neous processes.

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

DELHI UNIVERSITY has not up-

dated its subscription to over 40

online databases which provide

access to journals and other re-

sources, cutting scholars off from

rial in the university has taken

place through two contempora-

versity gradually stopped updat-

ing its subscriptions to 29 online

databases that it had direct sub-

scription to. These include IEEE

Xplore. which provides access to

material on computer science,

electric engineering and elec-

tronics, and has not been acces-

sible since 2016; Emerald

This drain of research mate-

Starting from 2015, the uni-

etary heads. "Around 39-40 databases continue to be made available through the limited funds which trickle in through a couple of grants. A standing committee on e-resources takes a call on which subscriptions to renew. In the larger interest, those chosen are



Subscriptions to more than

40 databases not renewed in

DU, research takes a back seat

For now, professors rely on their connections to help research scholars get access to resources they require

the less costly ones. Important ones such as Science Direct, at around Rs 90 lakh per year, are too expensive," the source said. Varsity's vice-chancellor Yogesh Tyagi and registrar Tarun Das did not respond to calls,

messages and e-mails with

Management Extra, which proqueries from The Indian Express. vides access to management Adding to this, in 2015, the journals, and not been accessiuniversity had decided to no ble since 2015; and Science longer subscribe to print editions Direct, which provides research of journals it was procuring onmaterial in physical sciences, life line. Now, though, even the online access has been lost. sciences, health sciences and so-

> The other source of databases for the university used to be through the UGC-run Infonet Digital Library Consortium launched in 2004, which provided free of cost access to 25 ejournal databases to universities which were a part of its network.

However, this dismantled and replaced by another consortium called e-ShodhSindhu. In October 2017, universities received a letter from the HRD Ministry stating that the programme would do "collective bargaining" for these

institutes for e-journals required by them. What this essentially meant was that the institutes would provide a list of e-journals its students and faculty need, the portal's Negotiating Committee would negotiate prices on behalf of them, and the institutes would pay the negotiated rates directly to the publisher. This requisition list was to be sent by November 10, 2017.

Delhi University never sent a requisition.

In the meantime, professors find themselves relying on their personal and professional connections to help research scholars under them get access to the resources they require.

"We have friends in other institutions so we have to ask them to help us access resources. If our students need something, we send them to other institutions. They also form friendships with students elsewhere who can help them get access. It is kept going through personal relationships. Access to journals and vital resources like SciFinder (which was available through the UGC digital consortium) is extremely important to research because it is needed to keep in touch with the latest developments in our fields," said a professor in the university's chemistry department.

The professor added that the effects of cutbacks on research facilities will begin to show in a few years: "The entire process of publication and completing a project takes time but the effects will tangibly show in about twofive years."

Air quality unlikely to improve before Monday

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

BAN ON coal- and fuel-based industries in Delhi-NCR has been extended till November 11, as air quality in the region is expected to remain in the 'very poor' and 'poor' category till Monday.

The Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA) Friday asked the chief secretaries of Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan to follow the directive after receiving recommendations from a task force led by the Central Pollution Control Board.

EPCA chairman Dr Bhure Lal, in the letter to the chief secretaries, said: "The task force has reviewed the weather conditions

that are likely to prevail over the region and it is their assessment that the air quality will not improve in the next 48 hours and

may even see a possible decline." Delhi's air quality reached a record high and crossed emergency levels last week when it was recorded at 494 in the 'severe' category last Sunday. After coming down to 407 the following day, the average air quality index(AQI) has fluctuated between 'very poor' and 'poor' categories. On Saturday, it was 283 ('poor').

The Supreme Court, in a hearing on November 4, banned construction activities in Delhi-NCR till further orders. As per the EPCA directive Friday, hot-mix plants and stone crushers are to remain closed till November 11.

All coal- and fuel-based in-



Ban on coal- and fuel-based industries has been extended **till Nov 11.** Prem Nath Pandey

dustries, except power plants, that have not yet shifted to natural gas or agro-residue are also to remain shut till November 11 in towns including Faridabad, Gurgaon and Ghaziabad.

The ban on such industries was first imposed from October 26 to 30. However, with NCR's air quality dipping in between, the directive has been extended a number of times and action has been taken against a number of non-complying industry units.

It is expected that the share of PM 2.5 pollutant from stubble burning in Haryana and Punjab in Delhi's air would increase by Sunday, with the central government's SAFAR monitoring system predicting it would go up to 12%, up from 8% on Saturday.

The increase in the share of

ited to change in wind direction. which is from the north at present but would change to northwest for the next three days. However, high wind speed predicted in the region is expected to flush out pollutants faster. SAFAR said, "Though the wind

stubble burning pollution is cred-

direction is going to be favourable for fire plume transport... the wind speed is forecast to be on the higher side for the next three days, under the influence of current Western disturbance."

The air quality monitoring agency also noted that fire counts observed Friday in Haryana and Punjab were 415, much less than last year's figure. On Tuesday, fire counts in the two states had reached the season's highest, with over 6.500 cases recorded in a day.

Transgender body seeks ban on sex reassignment surgeries on kids

ASTHA SAXENA

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

THE ASSOCIATION for Transgender Health in India (ATHI), which works towards mainstreaming of transgender people and their welfare, has written a letter to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Health Minister Satyendar Jain requesting them to ban sex reassignment surgeries on intersex children until they reach 18.

The association also called for a ban on the "two finger-test" — also called the virginity test — on transgenders, women and girls with disabilities who are victims of sexual assault.

Citing the Madras High Court order that has recently put a ban on sex reassignment surgeries on intersex infants and children, the group urged the Delhi government to implement the order in the city. "When an intersex person grows up, many times

the parents do not even tell them that they have been operated on in childhood. It's sometimes an accidental discovery for the child, and that can be very traumatic. This discovery can happen during puberty, sometimes post-marriage when they face infertility issues. They feel cheated as something was done to their body without their consent... If it is not life threatening, then it should be avoided till the child reaches 18 so that they can decide," said Dr Aqsa Shaikh of ATHI.

As per the World Health Organisation, intersex is a congenital anomaly of the reproductive and sexual system.

In 2014, the Supreme Court, in the landmark NALSA judgment, had said that such surgeries on infants and children should be banned. Earlier this year, the Madurai bench of the Madras High Court had reiterated the Supreme Court's stand, and suo motu asked the Secretary of Health and Family Department to ensure that this is done in the state.

"Surgeries are performed on intersex children for non-critical conditions after taking the family's consent. These are mostly for cosmetic reasons, to make sure these children fit into what is traditionally considered the 'normal genitalia'," added Dr Shaikh.

The association has also suggested to the department of health, social welfare and Delhi Medical Council to adopt measures to prevent sex reassignment or "sex normalising" surgeries, bullying, and stigmatisation against intersex children.

Delhi govt slaps Rs 90 lakh fine on polluting industries

New Delhi: The Delhi government has imposed a Rs 90 lakh fine on polluting industries and those contributing to environmental degradation in industrial estates, an official said on Saturday. According to the official, during the inspection by EPCA chairman Bhure Lal and MD of the Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd, it was found that industrial waste was being dumped in a few plots in Narela Industrial Area. PTI



4 THE CITY

WW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM
THE SUNDAY EXPRESS, NOVEMBER 10, 2019

Pace picks up to prepare for Delhi Assembly polls

SOURAV ROY BARMAN NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

OFFICIAL PREPARATIONS for the 2020 Assembly polls in Delhi have gained pace with government departments issuing repeated reminders to institutions under them to upload details of available manpower that can be put on election duty — a task which saw hiccups ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

Over the past week, many such reminders have been issued by the Department of Social Welfare, which has many welfare homes and schools for the differently abled, and the Department of Training and Technical Education, among others.

On November 8, the Department of Training and Technical Education wrote to the heads of 11 institutions, including DTU, IIIT Okhla and Ambedkar University, saying that details of manpower, sought through a letter on October 24, "is still awaited".

The Department of Social Welfare, on November 7, also wrote to its institutions, complaining that the required data has not been uploaded on the software — Polling Party Personnel Information System — despite reminders. Subash

Chand, the Deputy Director (Administration), warned that names of errant officers will be forwarded to the office of Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Ranbir Singh for "appropriate action".

According to officials, around 75,000 polling personnel are required for Assembly polls in Delhi this time. Personnel will be roped in from across Delhi government departments, the three civic bodies, New Delhi Municipal Council and some central government departments as well.

The term of the current Delhi Assembly expires on February 22. On August 8, the CEO office

On August 8, the CEO office had issued a memorandum detailing the "incomplete action on the part of nodal officers" ahead of the general elections.

"After the completion of General Election-2019,... it has been observed that many of the nodal officers... have not complied with the directions...

"Some of the departments have not even disclosed the information about the subsidiary departments/sections... This leads to shortfall in manpower data in elections... Incomplete action on the part of the nodal officers has been viewed seriously by CEO, Delhi, and he has directed to issue advisory... In case of any default in future, strict disciplinary action will follow," the CEO office wrote.



People who commute towards trans-Yamuna areas have been advised to use alternate routes. Praveen Khanna

Signature Bridge closed till Nov 15

New Delhi: Signature Bridge, which was closed on November 4, will now open on November 15. Vehicular movement was suspended for the removal of temporary platforms and a tower crane.

rary platforms and a tower crane.

Traffic Police have advised people who commute towards

trans-Yamuna areas to use alternate routes — Yamuna Bridge, Kashmere Gate, Loha Pul, Geeta Colony flyover, Vikas Marg, NH-24. "It is also strongly advised to avoid old Wazirabad Pul, Majnu ka Tila and Khajuri Chowk dur-

ing this time." police said. **ENS**

WILL IDENTIFY, INTEGRATE THEM EARLY

Move to mainstream kids with disabilities

SUKRITA BARUAH NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

EFFORTS ARE underway to formulate a state policy to identify disabilities in children at the earliest possible stage, to ease the process of integrating them in mainstream schools later in life.

This effort is being led by the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR), and the first step towards this was taken this week at a round table conference with various education and health stakeholders and experts.

According to DCPCR member Anurag Kundu, the aim is to be able to intervene early in the life of children to address their learning needs.

After the preliminary discussion, three primary levels have been identified at which screening has to be conducted — at birth itself to identify disorders; at the anganwadi or pre-primary school level, between the ages of 18 months and 3 years; and at the early school level, between ages 5 and 8.

"Disorders such as Down Syndrome and Cerebral Palsy are identifiable at birth, so we are trying to work towards a method The effort is being led by Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR)

through which the discharge of newborn babies (from hospitals) is only done after screening. Others can be identified when they are toddlers. Now, no one identifies these issues until around a decade later when the child starts under-performing academically," said Kundu.

According to Gita Dang, founder of Bridge2Inclusion, a platform that works to mainstream persons with special needs in workspaces, an early identification policy can go a long way in easing children into mainstream schools.

"The earlier we identify a case, the earlier we can know the scope of a problem and resources required and enable early intervention. This will give them a stronger opportunity to get into school and get mainstreamed. I also hope that we can work towards training mainstream teachers to be able to identify red flags in children between 3 and 6 years. That is far better than to try

and get them to play catch-up at the age of 14. Without early intervention, it can just be too little, too late," she said.

Kundu said the aim is to try and formulate a "nuanced, operationally feasible and technically sound" policy within the next six months.

A health department official said the next step should be to try and understand the work already being done in this regard.

"We need to understand what ASHA and anganwadi workers are doing currently and whether we are training them in this. Of course, after that we should have the mechanisms to implement and monitor screening at all three levels identified. On our side, we shall ensure that the requisite doctors and machinery is available at hospitals or polyclinics as will be laid down in the policy," said Shaleen Mitra, OSD to the health minister.

Starting 2018, all private schools in Delhi have been required to reserve 3% seats for children with special needs, but this has not been able to take off because of the low number of applicants and schools claiming they do not have resources to handle children with learning disabilities.

BRIEFLY

Man held for vehicle thefts

Gurgaon: Police claim to have solved six cases of motorcycle theft in the state with the arrest of one person, who hails from Palwal. The accused, Imran, was arrested while police were investigating a case of motorcycle theft registered at Sector 40. The complainant had alleged that he had parked his vehicle in front of a house in South City I on the afternoon of September 14, and it had been stolen by the evening. "The accused has been arrested on the basis of a tip-off from Jail road, Bhondsi," said an officer. **ENS**

Passenger held at IGIA with 10 bullets

New Delhi: A Goa-bound man was apprehended at the Delhi airport for allegedly carrying 10 bullets in his baggage. According to officials, R P Mishra was going through security check at the IGI Airport around 11 am on Friday when a CISF personnel detected "bullet-like objects" in his hand baggage. PTI

Kejriwal welcomes verdict, says keep calm

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

WHILE WELCOMING Saturday's Supreme Court verdict in the Ayodhya case, the Delhi units of all political parties called for peace going forward.

"After hearing the arguments of all parties, the five judges of the SC Bench gave an unanimous verdict. We welcome the SC verdict. The decades-old dispute has ended today. I appeal to all to maintain peace and harmony," Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal

Terming the judgment as "unprecedented and historic", Delhi BJP president Manoj Tiwari said he had asked the state unit to maintain restraint and avoid making controversial comments on the issue.

"Senior functionaries to mandal level leaders have been told not to violate the party line... This verdict is not a victory or defeat of any community, and they should maintain peace and harmony after the verdict," he said.

The BIP office, which otherwise remains abuzz on most days, was largely empty through the day on Saturday. Sources said there were instructions not to plan any celebration or distribute sweets. "There are no events planned as party leaders have been asked by the top leadership to not go overboard over the decision," said a senior leader. Senior BJP leaders also met RSS functionaries later in the day.

In a meeting, the Delhi Congress passed a resolution saying the party honoured the Supreme Court judgment.

"Constitution of the country is supreme for the Congress. The party honours the verdict of the Supreme Court on the Ayodhya issue," said Delhi Congress chief Subhash Chopra.

He also urged Congress workers to ensure harmony and brotherhood in their neighbourhoods, and maintain restraint when commenting on the verdict.

AYODHYA VERDICT

As police fan out, aman committees scan WhatsApp to keep peace intact

SHIVAM PATEL & SOMYA LAKHANI NEW DELHI. NOVEMBER 9

SHAHNAWAZ Shehzada (42) spent Friday night and all of Saturday scrolling through WhatsApp groups and forwarding a message he received from the Darya Ganj police, warning people not to share or react to provocative posts. "The police has its eye on every social media site," read the message.

As a member of the Jama Masjid Aman Committee, Shehzada is familiar with the drill any time a communal flareup is expected. Minutes after the Ayodhya verdict was delivered by the Supreme Court Saturday morning, Shehzada reached the Jama Masjid police chowki.

"All of us members are alert; if there's anything amiss, we have police personnel on speed dial. We have spoken to men, women, youngsters about maintaining calm and that the verdict, no matter what it says, should not disturb the harmony of the area ... we have been talking to residents



Policemen deployed at Jama Masjid, Saturday. Express

for 10 days now," said Shehzada. Across the city, Aman Committees, which comprise residents of an area across religions, have been working in tan-

dem with police to ensure peace. ACP (Darya Ganj) Veer Singh said, "We rely on police 'mitras' and groups such as Aman Committees at such times. We held a meeting with RWAs, tem-

ple priests and met the Jama Masjid imam too." Aman Committees were formed in the 1980s to maintain harmony in areas with mixed population.

At Haji Hotel, opposite Jama Masjid gate number 1, poet Ameer Dehlavi (90), hotel owner Haji Faiyazuddin (75) and their two friends huddled over cups of tea and watched a Hindi news

we must accept the verdict so peace prevails.' At 3 pm Saturday, the Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid called a press conference at his residence. "We accept the verdict by the SC. Hindu-Muslim issues should end and I hope the country moves towards harmony. I

channel online on a phone.

"Bachcho ko ghar pe hi rakhna

aaj," said Faiyazuddin over the

phone to a family member. Once

the verdict was announced, he

said, "Let's end the chapter now...

personally believe that the matter shouldn't go any further and there should not be a review petition. Let's end the chapter now. It is up to the Sunni Wakf Board to decide if they should take the five-acre land," he said. Around noon, a fleet of over

a dozen policemen on bikes whizzed past the Jama Masjid, while a group of 20 policemen and women walked the lanes of Ballimaran. "The bike fleet is called the Jaguar. We are ensuring visibility on the streets," said Singh.

Meanwhile, in East Delhi's Trilokpuri, where communal clashes in 2014 left 80 people, in-

cluding 15 police personnel, injured, the Aman Committee and strong police deployment kept things peaceful Saturday.

Riyazuddin Saifi, treasurer of the Hindu-Muslim-Sikh-Isai Ekta Committee, which became active after the 2014 clashes, said, "To prepare for the SC verdict, a meeting was held with police at the East district headquarters after which around 150 committee volunteers were deployed in various parts of Trilokpuri... they have been speaking to members of all communities and sensitising them about the need to maintain peace. If they feel something is amiss, they inform us, but nothing like that has happened so far."

Unlike in Old Delhi, additional police deployment was not in sight at South East Delhi's Zakir Nagar.

Faiyaz, a teacher, said, "All the maulanas and imams also told people at Friday's prayer gatherings that there should be no rumour mongering and provocation. Whatever the Supreme Court has decided will be respected."

According to police, district



Drones keep eye on sensitive areas in city

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

IN VIEW of the Supreme Court's verdict in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute, Delhi Police Saturday used drones to carry out surveillance in several sensitive areas.

"Drone surveillance, meeting with public, and area patrolling were conducted in several parts of the city including areas of North East Delhi. Prohibitory orders have been issued across the national capital to maintain public order." said a senior officer.

DCPs were alerted Friday night and told to mobilise maximum

staff to cover vulnerable areas. Senior officers, including Delhi Police Commissioner Amulya Patnaik, were on rounds at several areas with sizeable Muslim population, including Old Delhi.

"In addition to local police, 26 companies were deployed to bolster strength and visibility in sensitive localities. PCR vans, ERVs and Raftaar motorcycle patrols were also alerted to maximise patrolling," said Additional PRO Anil Mittal.

"Delhi Police is also planning elaborate police arrangements for Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi, to be celebrated Sunday," said Mittal. The procession will travel through several areas, including Sadar Bazaar and Jama Masjid.

Full house inside — and outside — Supreme Court

ANAND MOHAN J NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

AROUND 8 am, in the lush lawn outside the Supreme Court, an advocate from the Nirmohi Akhara had already taken his place in front of television cameras. "It is a 150-year-old fight, an ancient fight," he told mediapersons. "At the end of this, the nation will win."

Over two hours before the Ayodhya verdict was announced, the lawn outside the country's top court had become a venue for hectic conversations and speculation.

Around 9 am, VHP vice-president Champat Rai sat sur-



At the top court before the verdict, Saturday. Praveen Khanna

rounded by advocates. "For 30 years I have fought this fight. It is okay if I do not get into the courtroom to see the final stage," he told the advocates. He was one of many people denied entry inside the court as the crowd had swelled beyond capacity.

Hindu Mahasabha members called for the celebration of a "second Diwali" as Dharmadass, the main respondent on behalf

of Bhagwan Ram Lalla Virajman, tions, lawyers from the UP junior advocates rushed to touch his feet, he said: "Hanuman will deliver for us. Let us not think too hard."

As excerpts of the judgment started streaming in at 10.30 am, lawyers were glued to their phones. And as the verdict became clear, a clutch of lawyers rushed out of the SC towards the lawn.

One of them pulled out a red banner from his pocket with 'Jai Shri Ram' inscribed on it, and waved it around. Conch shells were blown, victory signs flashed, and chants of 'Jai Shri Ram' echoed outside the top court.

Removed from the celebra-

made an appearance. As some Central Sunni Wakf Board walked out of the SC. As reporters chased them, lawyer Zafaryab Iilani did not take questions.

One of the lawyers from the group walked over to a lawyer from the opposing side and congratulated him. Looking at his phone, Maulana Suhaib Oasmi of the Ayodhya Varta Committee said, "If they want to make a temple, let them do it. It is sad we had to come to court to sort out our differences."

As he heard his lawyer explain the verdict, Mahant Raja Ram Acharya, the plaintiff from the Nirmohi Akhara, said: "We have been marginalised and sidelined yet again."

Protest in JNU, ABVP opposes it with slogans

New Delhi: Almost 100 students of INU Saturday held a protest on campus against the Supreme Court verdict. This was countered by 30 activists of the ABVP, who shouted slogans of 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Mandir Wahin Banayenge' at the campus. They also lit and arranged divas to spell Jai Shri Ram.

The protest was organised by some individual students, with major student organisations and the JNU Students' Union distancing itself from it. However, leading activists of groups such as Fraternity and YFDA, and the Birsa Ambedkar Phule Students' Association were present. A few students from outside the campus, including from Jamia Millia Islamia, were also present.

As Afreen Fatima, JNUSU councillor from Fraternity, addressed the crowd and said "it was not about the land, it was about our faith", the ABVP started shouting slogans, moving right next to the protest site. Among the slogans raised was 'Ek hi naara, ek hi naam. Jai Shri Ram'. ENS



6 KARTARPUR CORRIDOR

SNAP SHOTS

Turbans all the way

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi looked dapper in a saffron turban, as did Lok Sabha MP from Gurdaspur Sunny Deol, who had tied a white turban. Punjab Governor V P Singh Badnore wore a turban in Rajasthani style. Saffron and peach were the twin colours of the day, and Union Cabinet minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal was resplendent in a pale orange Punjabi suit.

Langar for lunch

BEFORE DEDICATING the corridor to the nation. Prime Minister Modi shared langar with Badnore, Punjab CM Capt Amarinder Singh and state Congress chief Sunil Jakhar. Earlier, at the jan sabha, while he and former deputy CM Sukhbir Badal sat on the floor, Amarinder and former CM Parkash Singh Badal sat on a sette covered in white. In his speech, Modi had mentioned that the practice of langar was started by Guru Nanak.

Nanak's message

AT THE terminal, the Prime Minister was shown a video on the life and teachings of Guru Nanak. He also inspected a model of Kartarpur corridor. Finally, before he left, the entire crew of NHAI and LPAI gathered for a group photo with the PM.

PM meets ex-PM

THE INAUGURATION turned out to be quite a cheerful affair minus the stuffy protocol, as the Prime Minister walked up to his predecessor, Manmohan Singh, and his wife Gursharan Kaur, sitting in the front row at the ICP. The two were among the first to arrive. Manmohan Singh had been camping in Chandigarh for the last two days. Speaking to Pakistani journalists in Kartarpur, Singh said the corridor will bring the two nations together.

Appeal to farmers

BOTH MODI and Amarinder guoted verses of Guru Nanak to drive home the importance of safeguarding the environment to a largely rural gathering. The PM said, "Guru Nanak taught us to consider air as Guru, water as father, and earth as mother. Guru Nanak's teachings show us how to move ahead without exploitation of the nature, which leads to environmental problems and pollution." Amarinder was more direct and appealed to farmers, in the name of Nanak, to not burn stubble.

Coins and stamps

MODI RELEASED commemorative coins with face value of Rs 550. He also released a postage stamp. Earlier, the Punjab government issued 999 purity gold coins, minted and duly certified by gold refiner MMTC. The specially designed coins are available in 5 and 10 grams. Special coins also come as 50-gm silver coin. The coins, which are available with India Post, are much in demand.

PM Modi inaugurates corridor, flags off first jatha: Feeling what Sikhs feel after kar seva



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Union minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal and other leaders at Gurdwara Ber Sahib in Sultanpur Lodhi, before proceeding to inaugurate the Kartarpur Corridor. Gurmeet Singh

KAMALDEEP SINGH BRAR

DERA BABA NANAK (PUNJAB), NOVEMBER 9

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Saturdav inaugurated the Kartarpur corridor, flagging off the first batch of more than 500 Indian pilgrims, including former prime minister Manmohan Singh, Union minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal and Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh.

The corridor links Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan, the final resting place of Guru Nanak Dev, to Dera Baba Nanak shrine in Punjab's Gurdaspur district.

Modi flagged off the first batch of pilgrims led by Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Harpreet Singh through the corridor, which has been thrown open ahead of the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev on November 12.

He inaugurated the passenger terminal building of the corridor on the Indian side, also known as the Integrated Check Post, where pilgrims will get clearance to travel through the 4.5-km corridor.

Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister thanked his Pakistani counterpart Imran Khan for responding to popular sentiment and making the corridor possible.

Although the Union and state governments had planned separate functions at Dera Baba Nanak, a joint function was eventually held at Shikar Masian village, around 4 km from Dera Baba Nanak and near the Integrated Check Post, before the flagging-off ceremony.

Besides PM Modi and CM Singh, former chief minister Parkash Singh Badal, Union minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Ferozepur MP Sukhbir Singh Badal, Punjab Governor V P Singh Badnore and SGPC president Gobind Singh Longowal were present on the dais.

Calling it a historic occasion when a prayer by the Sikh community spread across the world had been answered, the Prime Minister said, "I am thankful to the Punjab government, SGPC and labourers for making this corridor possible. I am also grateful to Prime Minister Imran Khan Niazi for understanding the feelings of India over the Kartarpur corridor issue and working accordingly. I thank the labourers in Pakistan for completing this corridor on their side in record time.

Guru Nanak Dev belongs not only to India but to the whole world."

Shortly after Khan took over last year, the Pakistan Prime Minister's Office had issued a circular saying that his name "Niazi" should not be used in official communication. For many in Pakistan, the name "Niazi" carries memories of the military defeat in the 1971 war. Lt Gen A A K Niazi was the Pakistani general who had surrendered to the Indian Army in Dhaka after the 1971 Bangladesh war.

PM Modi further said, "It is my pleasure to dedicate the Kartarpur corridor to the nation. I am feeling what Sikhs feel after kar seva (voluntary service)."

The Prime Minister said Guru Nanak had demonstrated an ideal way of life. "He prayed, worked hard, and shared the fruits of his labour," he said, adding that the government is holding programmes across the world through its embassies to commemorate Guru Nanak's 550th birth anniversary.

Gurbani, he said, is being translated in several languages with the help of UNESCO.

"Many Sikhs sacrificed their lives for the independence of India. The Centre has taken several steps to recognise this. Jallianwala Bagh Memorial is being modernised. Now our focus is on Sikh students improving their skills. About 27 lakh Sikh students have been given scholarships," said Modi.

He said two more decisions of the Union government have also helped the Sikh community. "One is the removal of Article 370. It would now help the Sikh community in J&K and Leh get the same rights as other citizens. Similarly, the Citizenship Amendment Bill would make it easy for Sikhs to become citizens of the country," he added.

Addressing the gathering, the CM said, "They have been trying to create disturbance in Kashmir. And now their eye is on Punjab. I want them to hear that Punjabis will not tolerate any aggression. You will be neither successful in Kashmir nor in Punjab... I have warned them many times that if you come to fight, we will give you a befitting reply."

The SGPC conferred the Quami Sewa Award on the PM. "Khalsa Panth is thankful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the opening of Kartarpur corridor," SGPC president Gobind Singh Longowal said.





(Clockwise from top) At Kartarpur Sahib on Saturday; pilgrims outside the integrated checkpost before leaving for Kartarpur Sahib; Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu with Pakistan PM Imran Khan and BJP MP Sunny Deol at the inauguration ceremony.

Hailed as 'real hero' across border, Sidhu says he went to 'thank my yaar'

KANCHAN VASDEV

DERA BABA NANAK, KARTARPUR SAHIB, NOVEMBER 9

CRICKETER-TURNED-POLITICIAN Navjot Singh Sidhu on Friday stole the show across the border, with people crowding around him for selfies and calling him the "real hero" behind the Kartarpur corridor.

Clad in a royal blue suit and yellow turban, Sidhu got a warm welcome from Pakistan Rangers personnel and immigration officials of the neighbouring country when he reached there as part of the jatha flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Addressing a gathering on the gurdwara premises in Kartarpur, Sidhu thanked Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan for opening the Kartarpur corridor and asked him to work towards opening borders as a next step.

He said he had come to Pakistan specially to thank Khan. "I came to thank mera

yaar who transformed *mere babe da ghar* (my Guru's place) into a heaven in months,'

Hailing Modi and Khan, Sidhu said, "Punjabis on both sides suffered the pain of Partition. Modi and Khan have applied balm,"

The Amritsar East MLA resigned as a state minister earlier this year after a long face-off with Chief Minister Amarinder Singh.

Referring to his hug with Pakistan Army Chief Qamar Javed Bajwa, which had drawn criticism from Amarinder, Sidhu said, "I will thump my chest and say my *jhappi* (hug) bore fruit and got the doors of Guru's place opened. Brother, now open the borders. Why should we spread hatred and get sons of mothers killed while guarding the borders?"

He said Khan had won the hearts of Sikhs. "I may have political differences but I will give Modi a Munna Bhai MBBS ki jhappi (hug),"

he added. Earlier, the Pakistan Prime Minister retle bus. He and Sidhu were seen waving to the devotees outside the Darbar Sahib Gurdwara. At the gurdwara, youths vied with each

ceived the jatha and climbed on to the shut-

other to take selfies with Sidhu. Most Congress and AAP MLAs were also seen greeting him.

At the function on the gurdwara premises, Sidhu, Gurdaspur MP Sunny Deol and Jathedar of Akal Takht Giani Harpreet Singh were present.

Speaking at the function, Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi called Sidhu the "man of the match" of Kartarpur corridor and said he is the real hero for getting it opened.

Responding to a question that he was being given credit for the opening of the corridor, Sidhu said, "It has all been done by Baba Nanak."

After returning from Kartarpur Sahib, several people on the Indian side raised slogans praising Sidhu.

From proposal to inauguration: A 20-year journey

After it was first proposed by then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1999, it took 20 years of diplomatic and political efforts to open the Kartarpur Corridor linking Dera Baba Nanak shrine in India's Gurdaspur district to Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan's Kartarpur.

1522

Guru Nanak Dev, the first Sikh guru, establishes Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib; he is believed to have died in Kartarpur.

1999

FEBRUARY: Then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee proposes the Kartarpur Corridor after taking a bus ride to Lahore during a peace initiative with Pakistan.



2000

Pakistan agrees to allow Sikh pilgrims from India to visit the shrine visa-free (and without passport) by constructing a bridge from Indian side of the border to the shrine.

2019

MARCH 14: The first meeting between officials of India and Pakistan on the Kartarpur corridor takes place at Attari on the Indian side of the border.

MARCH 19: India and Pakistan hold technical talks, discuss coordinates.

MARCH 29: India conveys concerns to Pakistan over presence of a Khalistani separatist on Kartarpur panel. **APRIL 16: Experts and technicians** from Pakistan and India hold

technical meeting on corridor at Zero Point (Kartarpur). MAY 27: India, Pakistan officials

meet, discuss modalities for corridor. **JULY 8: Pakistan welcomes Indian**

media to attend second meeting

on corridor. **IUNE 11:** Pakistan allocates Rs 100 crore in 2019-20 budget for corridor project.

JULY 14: Pakistan and India hold second round of talks on the corridor at Wagah; India gives Pakistan a dossier on possible

Sahib pilgrimage.

AUGUST 30: Technical talks between Pakistan and India take place at Zero Point.

attempts to disrupt Kartarpur

SEPTEMBER 4: Third round of talks between officials from Pakistan and India on the corridor at Attari.

OCTOBER 20: Imran Khan announces opening of the corridor on November 9.

OCTOBER 21: India expresses 'disappointment' over Pakistan's \$20 fee for Kartarpur Sahib but ready to ink pact.

OCTOBER 24: India, Pakistan sign agreement to operationalise the Kartarpur Corridor. **OCTOBER 30: Pakistan issues**

Rs 50 commemorative coin to



mark Guru Nanak's 550th birth anniversary.

NOVEMBER 1: No need for passport for Sikh pilgrims from **India visiting Kartarpur, says** Pakistan PM.

NOVEMBER 4: Sikh separatists, including Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, feature in Pakistan's official video on Kartarpur; India objects.

NOVEMBER 5: Sikh pilgrims from India visit Kartarpur Sahib gurdwara in Pakistan, instal golden palanquin.

FRI GURU NAHAK

NOVEMBER 6: India asks Pakistan to clarify if passport will be required for Kartarpur visit amid

confusion over the issue. **NOVEMBER 7: Pakistan Army says** Indian Sikh pilgrims will require passport to visit Kartarpur; India says will stick to agreement on visits by Indian pilgrims.

NOVEMBER 8: Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Oureshi says will not charge \$20 fee from Indian pilgrims on Nov 9 and 12. **NOVEMBER 9: Prime Minister**

> Narendra Modi flags off the first batch of over 550 Indian pilgrims to Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, also inaugurates **Integrated Check Post**; Imran Khan inaugurates the corridor on the Pakistani side.



2018

AUGUST 15: Punjab minister Navjot Sidhu attends Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's swearing-in ceremony in Islamabad.

AUGUST 21: Upon his return, Sidhu says that Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa informed him that Pakistan would open the Dera Baba Nanak (Kartarpur) corridor on Guru Nanak's 550th birth anniversary.

NOVEMBER 22: Indian Cabinet approves the Kartarpur corridor from Dera Baba Nanak to the Pakistan border. NOVEMBER 26: Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu lays the foundation stone of Dera Baba Nanak - Kartarpur Sahib Corridor (up to the International Border) at an event at Mann village of Gurdaspur district in Punjab. NOVEMBER 28: Prime Minister Imran Khan lays the

DECEMBER 3: Pakistan opens immigration centre at

foundation stone of the 4-km corridor on the Pakistan



the Kartarpur border.





MEA slams Pakistan's Ayodhya remarks

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICENEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

INDIA ON Saturday rejected the "unwarranted" comments by Pakistan on Ayodhya verdict, even as Delhi briefed some foreign envoys in Delhi.

The Ministry of External Affairs official spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said, "We reject the unwarranted and gratuitous comments made by Pakistan on the judgment of the Supreme Court of India on a civil matter that is completely internal to India. It pertains to the rule of law and equal respect for all faiths, concepts that are not part of their ethos. So, while Pakistan's lack of comprehension is not surprising, their pathological compulsion to comment on our internal affairs with the obvious intent of spreading hatred is condemnable."

He was responding to comments by Pakistan's political leaders and Pakistan's Army spokesperson Major General Asif

Ghafoor on the Ayodhya judgment.
Officials in the Ministry of
External Affairs briefed some of
the foreign envoys in the Capital.
Top envoys of several countries,
including Russia, France and Iran,
were briefed, sources said.

The envoys were given a heads-up on the facts surrounding the judgment and the historical background behind it, they said. Some envoys of key strategic countries and India's close allies were briefed by Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale one-onone, they said.

"Although it is definitely an internal issue of India, we are very appreciative of the line of communication that the MEA is having with all of the diplomatic corp by giving us a heads up, informing us, and fully explaining the historical background behind this decision," Dean of Diplomatic Corps and Dominican Republic Ambassador Hans Dannenberg Castellanos said.

WITH PTI INPUTS



At Kakdeep in South 24 Parganas district, where ferry services were suspended ahead of Cyclone Bulbul's landfall. Partha Paul

Cyclone Bulbul makes landfall, two deaths in Bengal, Odisha

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE BAKKHALI, KOLKATA, BHUBANESWAR, NOVEMBER 9

CYCLONE BULBUL made landfall at Sagar Island in West Bengal's South 24 Pargana district around 8 pm on Saturday, accompanied by heavy rainfall and wind speed recorded between 120 and 140

km per hour.
There were reports of one death each in West Bengal and

neighbouring Odisha.

Hundreds of trees were uprooted and several mud houses collapsed in coastal areas of South 24 Parganas, and there were reports of powercuts, as electricity lines got snapped.

The Bengal government said 1.58 lakh people were evacuated from vulnerable areas.

The massive impact of the cyclone was mostly felt in South 24 Parganas and adjoining East

Midnapore districts. Earlier in the day, a 28-year-old reportedly died in Kolkata after a tree fell on him.

"It is likely to weaken gradually... As predicted, wind speed will be 50-60 kmph at the time of reaching Kolkata," said G K Das, Deputy Director General of Meteorology, Regional Meteorological Centre, in Kolkata.

In Odisha, which experienced heavy rain and high-velocity winds triggered by the cyclonic storm, one person died in a wall collapse in Kendrapara district, where some areas were pounded by heavy to very heavy rain, Special Relief Commissioner P K Jena was quoted by PTI.

Most places in coastal Odisha experienced light to moderate rainfall, Jena said, adding that paddy and other crops in 35 to 40 per cent area over 6 lakh hectare agriculture land have been damaged due to the downpour triggered by the cyclone. The cyclonic winds uprooted a large number of trees and electric poles, besides causing extensive damage to thatched structures and standing crops before veering away towards West

to PTI.

West Bengal Chief Minister
Mamata Banerjee, who held a
press conference at night after
the landfall, said that she would
spend the night at a special control room set up at the state secretariat, Nabanna, to monitor relief work, and asked people not
to panic.

Bengal, Jena said, according

Besides six teams of State Disaster Response Fund and 10 teams of National Disaster Relief Fund deployed for relief and rescue operations, the government has readied 1,335 civil defence personnel in case of any untoward incident.

NDRF and SDRF teams have been deployed in Jhargram, Kharagpur, Digha, Kakdwip in South 24 Paraganas and in North 24 Parganas. Districts of East and West Midnapore, Purulia, Birbhum, Bankura and North and South 24 Parganas were put on high alert.

Earlier in the day, all flight operations were suspended at Kolkata airport till Sunday morning after nearly 23 flights had to be cancelled from 11 am on Saturday due to rain and strong wind.

Ferry services in Kolkata and suburban areas were also suspended and will likely resume on Sunday, depending on weather conditions. Kolkata river traffic police kept alerting people throughout the day using loudspeakers. Schools, colleges and anganwadi centres have also been closed.

H D Sarma appointed new NRC coordinator in Assam

ABHISHEK SAHAGUWAHATI, NOVEMBER 9

HITESH DEV Sarma, a 1989-batch Assam Civil Service officer, was on Saturday appointed the new state coordinator of the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

An Assam government order dated November 9, which was signed by state Personnel Department Commissioner and Secretary K K Dwivedi, stated that Sarma, who was serving as secretary of the Urban Development and Finance Departments, "is transferred and posted as Secretary to the Government of Assam, Home and Political Department, and State Coordinator NRC, Assam, and in-charge of the Directorate of NRC, Assam".

The move comes after the incumbent, Prateek Hajela, was released from duty for intercadre deputation to Madhya Pradesh following a Supreme Court order.

Sarma said that he served as Executive Director of the NRC from 2014 to February 2017. "I



Hitesh Dev Sarma

will expect cooperation from everyone and can make any further comment only after I start working," he said.

Sarma is expected to start his second stint at the NRC directorate on Monday, which is Hajela's last day. With his prior experience at the NRC directorate, Sarma is expected to know the intricacies of the NRC process.

to an end after he sought relief from his responsibilities citing personal reasons. Sarma has uploaded posts

about issues related to the

said that Sarma's first stint came

A source at the NRC office

Citizenship Bill on Facebook. In a post on February 13, restricted only to his friends, he had said that there were "lakhs and lakhs of Bangladeshis in the NRC". In another post on November 15, 2017, Sarma had said, "Minority appeasement policy for the last seven decades has changed the definition of secularism."

The final NRC, published on August 31, had excluded a total of 19,06,657 people from the state.

On October 18, the Supreme Court ordered an inter-cadre transfer of Hajela to Madhya Pradesh "on deputation for the maximum period permissible under the relevant rules/regulations". People close to Hajela had said that he wanted to be transferred.

Hajela was earlier barred by the Supreme Court from talking about the NRC to the media.

His transfer followed his deteriorating relationship with the Assam government, and mounting criticism by the state units of various political parties, including the BJP and the Congress, over the last few months.

Maharashtra Governor to BJP: Indicate willingness, ability to form government

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 9

MAHARASHTRA GOVERNOR Bhagat Singh Koshyari on Saturday asked the BJP, the single largest party in the state, to "indicate willingness and ability" to form the government.

The BIP core committee will meet on Sunday to decide on the future course of action, the party said, adding that a reply will have to be sent to the Governor within the next 48 hours. Earlier in the day, Advocate General Ashutosh Kumbhakoni had met Koshyari at Raj Bhavan, sources said. The term of the state Legislative Assembly came to an end on Saturday midnight.

According to a statement issued by Raj Bhavan, the Governor has asked caretaker Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who is also the leader of the state BJP legislative party, to "indicate the willingness and ability of his party to form the government".

"Elections the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly were held on October 21 and the results were declared on October 24. However, despite the passage of 15 days, no single party or alliance of parties has come forward to form the government." the statement said. It added: "The Governor has therefore decided to explore the possibility of formation of government and today asked the leader of the elected members of the single largest party, that is BIP, to convey its willingness and ability to form the government."

Confirming that the party is set to meet on Sunday, senior BJP leader and Finance Minister Sudhir Mungantiwar said, "The mandate of people is for mahayuti (grand alliance). Therefore, we don't rule out the possibility of a BJP-Sena government coming to power."

The BJP won 105 seats in the

October 21 elections and its ally Shiv Sena bagged 56 seats. The majority mark in the 288-member Assembly is 145. Fadnavis resigned on Friday as the CM, blaming Sena for rebuffing all attempts to form an alliance government. He rejected Sena's claims that the BJP had agreed to share the CM's post in the event of both the parties coming to power in the state. However, Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray countered Fadnavis, saying such an arrangement was agreed to by BJP chief Amit Shah ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

Welcoming the move by the Governor, Sena MP Sanjay Raut said, "He has done the right thing by inviting the single largest party as per the Constitution... BIP has been saying that it will form the government. So, we hope it does so."

A senior BJP leader said, "We have adopted a wait and watch policy. At the same time, we are also exploring all options. But we are not in haste. Any government would be formed on our terms and conditions."

Insiders in BIP said that since Sena has not withdrawn from the NDA, the possibility of a Sena-BJP government cannot be ruled out. Moreover, Uddhav deciding to meet BJP veteran L K Advani after the Supreme Court verdict on Ayodhya is being seen as an attempt by Sena to mend ties, said sources.

Meanwhile, NCP spokesperson Nawab Malik said that the Governor should ensure that parties do not indulge in horse trading. "The Governor has invited the BJP to stake its claim. This process that has been initiated could have been done earlier as well," he added.

Malik claimed NCP will vote against BJP on the floor of the House. "If Sena votes against BIP, the NCP can then think about initiating the process of setting up an alternate government," he said.



Caretaker Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis with state BJP president Chandrakant Patil at a press conference in Mumbai. Express

All eyes on Congress top brass; Pawar calls party meet on Nov 12

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE MUMBAI. NOVEMBER 9

The Comgress, which won 44 seats in the Maharashtra polls, has shifted most of its MLAs to a luxury resort, Buena Vista, in Congress-ruled Rajasthan, after alleging that the BJP had been luring its legislators with money. Caretaker CM Devendra Fadnavis

On Saturday, hours before Mallikarjun Kharge rushed to

party's newly-elected MLAs. Kharge was accompanied by former chief ministers and MLAs Prithviraj Chavan and Ashok Chavan, as well as state Congress president Balasaheb Thorat.

Just as Congress president Sonia Gandhi has been reluctant to back a government formed by the Shiv Sena, many of the party's MLAs want to keep the BJP at bay at any cost, which has put pressure on the party leadership.

government from outside. In fact, some of the young MLAs and party's office-bearers in Maharashtra have aired an opinion that Congress could even join such a formation.

sit in the Opposition.

said a senior Congress leader.

BASHAARAT MASOOD

SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 9

ON THE night of August 4, the

'Save Heart Kashmir' WhatsApp

group buzzed for the last time –

a patient from Qazigund in south

Kashmir had suffered a major

heart attack and the doctors at

the peripheral hospital were

seeking advice from cardiolo-

gists in Srinagar. The patient

needed immediate thromboly-

sis (clot burst) and a referral to

on the group. The patient and

two other MI (Myocardial

Infraction or heart attack) pa-

tients were being referred to

Srinagar," said Dr Nasir Shams.

He is one of the coordinators of

'Save Heart Kashmir' — a volun-

tary initiative by doctors from

across Jammu, Kashmir and

Ladakh that has saved over 700

lives over the past year-and-a-

half by real-time management

of major heart attacks at the pe-

ripheral hospitals of the three re-

gions through a WhatsApp

went down and we lost track of

"It was then that the internet

"That was the last message

Srinagar.

Day after searches, CBI books 2 Karnataka officials for corruption

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE BENGALURU. NOVEMBER 9

THE CBI'S anti-corruption branch Saturday filed a fresh case in connection with the Rs 1.400-crore IMA Group scam against two Karnataka government officials for declaring the group's "sharia compliant" ponzi schemes as legitimate in return for bribes.

This is the third case filed by the agency since it was handed over the probe by the BIP government in Karnataka. The case against IAS officer B M Vijay Shankar and revenue officer LC Nagaraj was lodged under the Prevention of Corruption Act after the CBI received sanctions from the Karnataka government.

The IMA scam was allegedly perpetrated by businessman Mohammed Mansoor Khan, who bribed dozens of officials and politicians between 2016 and 2019 to ignore the fraudulent activities carried out by his firm under the guise of being compliant with Islamic norms.

Hundreds of depositors, mostly Muslims, were cheated of nearly Rs 1,400 crore through ponzi schemes.

Vijay Shankar, who served as the deputy commissioner of the Bengaluru Urban revenue district, and LC Nagaraj, an assistant revenue commissioner in the region, were earlier arrested by a Bengaluru Police SIT which initially probed the scam under the Karnataka Protection of Interest of Depositors in Financial Institutions Act, 2004.

Shankar and Nagaraj were paid Rs 1.5 crore and Rs 4 crore, respectively, by the IMA Group through Manjunath, a village accountant, "for forwarding a favourable report to the government with regard to an inquiry into the illegal activities of the IMA Group", the CBI said in a statement.

These three were among the several whose properties were searched at 15 locations across the country on Friday by the CBI as part of its investigations into

Among others whose prop-

appointed the commission in

February 2018 to probe the se-

quence of events that led to the

violence in Koregaon Bhima, in

which one person was killed. It

is also probing who or which or-

ganisations were responsible for

the violence, and has to identify

measures to prevent recurrence

commission has got two exten-

sions of four months each, an-

other extension of six months

and now, the latest extension of

Since it was constituted, the

of such incidents.

four months.

erties were searched were Bengaluru DCP Ajay Hillori and Additional Commissioner of

Police Hemanth Nimbalkar. The two IPS officers were among those who gave clean chits to the group's ponzi scheme at a time the govern-

plaints about the matter. The CBI had not named IAS officer B M Vijay Shankar and revenue officer LC Nagara in the two chargesheets filed since August as the SIT had not obtained the government's sanc-

ment received several com-

tion to prosecute them so far. "A clean chit was given by these officials to IMA, saying the firm does not come under the ambit of the Karnataka Protection of Interest of Depositors (KPID) in Financial Establishments Act, 2004 despite the police having no powers to verify the firm under the KPID Act," said sources in the SIT which initially probed the scam.

IPS officers Hillori and Nimbalkar have been extensively interrogated by the CBI in the past few weeks.

who escaped encounter in Kerala arrested

A MAN, who was allegedly injured and managed to escape when four suspected Maoists were gunned down in Palakkad

Tamil Nadu-Kerala border, they said.

Tamil Nadu special task force

a few people in using rifles for

Following this, the STF intensified combing operations to police said. During the search, STF personnel nabbed Deepak

Ayodhya verdict: Curfew in Kishtwar, Sec 144 imposed

AHEAD OF the Supreme Court verdict in the Ayodhya land dispute case, an indefinite curfew was imposed in Kishtwar town. while prohibitory orders under CrPC Section 144 were imposed in the rest of the Jammu province since Saturday morning.

Inspector General of Police for Jammu zone, Mukesh Singh, said, "Section 144 has been imposed in all districts of Jammu zone till further orders. All the schools and colleges have been closed."

Kishtwar Deputy Commissioner Angrez Singh said indefinite curfew has been imposed as a precautionary measure in Kishtwar town and adjoining areas and Section 144 of the CrPC has been imposed in remaining areas of the hilly district.

He added that the situation in the district was peaceful.

Across the region, concertina wires were back on the roads, with Central Armed Police Forces personnel deployed to check civilian movement. In all major towns, police vans made announcements, asking people to stay indoors in view of the imposition of prohibitory orders.

However, traffic along the Kathua-Jammu and Jammu-Srinagar national highway and other roads in Jammu region was normal and shops opened at some places.

ON A day when Governor Bhagat Singh Koshvari invited BIP to indicate its willingness and ability to form the new government, the Congress and NCP also stepped up efforts to prop up a non-BJP government.

has refuted the allegation.

the Governor extended the invitation to BJP, AICC general secretary (Maharashtra in-charge) Jaipur to hold consultation with

With Sharad Pawar's NCP re-

portedly not averse to partnering with the Sena if it walks out of the NDA, sources in the Congress said that the party is now weighing all options. While a section of senior leaders still believe that aligning or associating with Sena in any form would mean a compromise of Congress' secular identity and will hurt the party in future, another section favours the idea of propping up a Sena-NCP

Meanwhile, in the NCP camp, sources said back-channel discussions with Sena continued. Pawar, who has already held deliberations with Gandhi in this regard, has convened a key meeting of the party's MLAs in Mumbai on November 12. Pawar has so far publicly maintained that his party's mandate was to

The Congress, meanwhile, continues to remain wary of Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena. "Unless the Shiv Sena moves out of the NDA and gives a firm proposal regarding government formation, the Congress won't be in a position to formally act on it,"

department on November 8." **CHANDAN HAYGUNDE** This is the fourth extension granted to the two-member The state government had

Commission gets 4th extension

Koregaon Bhima Inquiry

PUNE. NOVEMBER 9

THE KOREGAON Bhima Inquiry Commission, which is probing the violence that broke out in Koregaon Bhima area of Pune district on January 1, 2018, has received yet another extension from the Maharashtra government. The current term of the commission had come to an end on November 9.

Advocate Ashish Satpute, the lawyer for the commission, said, "The state home department has informed us that an extension has been granted to the commission till February 8, 2020. A letter in this regard was issued by the

initiative that saved over 700

J&K Internet shutdown cripples

happened to them," he said. For the past three months, the initiative has come to a halt because the internet ban snapped their only line of com-

Now, with the number of patients with myocardial infractions at Srinagar hospitals dipping, doctors who are part of the group are wondering about the fate of patients in peripheral hospitals across the two Union territories.

munication — WhatsApp.

"Everyday, we were catering to about 55 critical patients. All the hospitals were connected across the Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. Several people in Haryana were also in touch. But for the last three months, we were not able to help anyone. We have no idea. God knows what is happening to such patients? We are really pained by this," said Dr Shams.

A group of doctors started the initiative and over time 120 hospitals and over 1,200 doctors were connected through the WhatsApp group.

Whenever a patient with

complaints of a chest pain was brought to a hospital in a remote village where no cardiologist is posted, the doctors would upload medical reports and inves-WhatsApp channel. Cardiologists and experts on the group — some of them abroad would then advise doctors on

the patients. We don't know what how to treat the patient. "There is a golden hour in

(medical) emergencies. We were able to cater to these patients in that golden hour," said Dr Shams. Based on 'Hub and Spoke'

model where the two tertiary care hospitals of Srinagar - Sheri-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) and Shri Maharaja Hari Singh (SMHS) Hospital - act as hub and the 120 peripheral schools as spokes, the initiative has helped to save 778 patients from major heart attacks, managed 2,723 minor heart attacks and 5,328 heart rhythm disorders.

"On daily basis, we used to discuss 50-odd ECGs for managing acute emergencies. There was timely management and timely referral and the tertiary care institute was kept in the loop that the patient is coming," said Dr Imran, a cardiologist at SKIMS, who is another coordinator of the initiative.

Now, Dr Imran said he had no way to gather information on patients in remote areas because of the communications blockade. "But one thing is sure... These days, we receive such patients mainly from two centres -Anantnag and Baramulla. From tigations on the dedicated all other district and sub-district hospitals, we don't receive any patients who need thrombolysis. The number of such patients has drastically decreased."

'Maoist trainer'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA COIMBATORE, NOVEMBER 9

district of Kerala late last month, was arrested on Saturday, police here said. The man, said to be a master trainer in Maoist activities, was nabbed from Moolakangal, a densely forested area on the

personnel were maintaining tight vigil on the border following possibility of some rebels infitrating the state in the wake of gunning down of four suspected Maoists near Attappadi in Palakkad district during two-day combing operations late last month. Police said a pen drive recovered from the place where the encounter took place revealed that a person, identified as Deepak Chandu, was training

shooting. flush out Maoists in tribal areas. from Moolakkangal.

in Jammu

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE JAMMU, NOVEMBER 9

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TOEA EXCHANGE NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

PM Modi blamed antisocial elements (for lynchings). If he had stood his ground and asserted that govt won't tolerate them, lynchings would have stopped... Now Bhagwat saab says lynching is foreign word"



WHY ASHOK GEHLOT

Serving his third term as Chief Minister, Ashok Gehlot's victory in Rajasthan last year gave the Congress party an electoral boost after a long time. The party's decision to choose Gehlot as chief minister, and not Sachin Pilot, who was being largely held responsible for the Congress's win in the state, showed that the veteran politician had the

central leadership's ear. The former Union minister believes that the Haryana election results — where satrap Bhupinder Hooda led the party's resurgence, after a tussle with Ashok Tanwar, considered close to Rahul Gandhi — have shown that the tide can turn in the Congress's favour anytime



"Till the Congress does not come out and protest on the streets, we will not move forward. All big parties — the CPI(M), CPI, BSP, JD(U) — should join the Congress on the field

MANOJ C G: In the Maharashtra Assembly elections, the Congress finished fourth, but saw a resurgence in Haryana. Following these results, what changes can we expect to see in the Congress?

Earlier, I had said that there won't be any change in the Congress after these state elections. An atmosphere had been created in the country...(But) Fortunately, people of the country have sent out a message. The results of the Haryana and Maharashtra elections... it's an extraordinary message. Earlier too, during Indira Gandhi's time, we got wiped out from all over North India and no one had a clue how it happened. But later, there was a wave in favour of Indiraji, and she became the prime minister. There have been several such instances in the past.

The Congress has almost no resources (now). We often hear that there is no democracy. The climate of the country is worrying. Two people are ruling the country — Amit Shah and Narendra Modi, and the country is moving towards oneparty governance. It's like China, where everyone follows the direction of one party. When (the BJP) says Congress*mukt* Bharat, it is clear that they want only one-party rule. But the country will never be Congress-*mukt*, they (the BJP) may eventually be wiped out. In every village, every home, every family in the country there are people who believe in the Congress ideology.

Everyone is sad, barring a few... Jobs and businesses are being destroyed. Instead of getting work, people are losing jobs. Automobile sector, real estate sector, small businesses... apart from big industrialists, everyone is struggling. There is both fear and anger among people. There is also an atmosphere of violence in the country, and that should not be the case in a democracy. Mob lynching is an example of this. The Prime Minister had once said that anti-social elements (are responsible for such attacks). Later, under pressure, he didn't say it again. If he had stood his ground and asserted that these (attacks) are by anti-social elements, and that the government will not tolerate them, then these incidents could have been stopped. The PM just said it once and then there was no discussion on it. Now (RSS chief Mohan) Bhagwat saab has said that lynching is a foreign word. These circumstances are only creating more differences between people of different communities and castes in the country.

MANOJ C G: But if people are angry and sad, why did they not give the Congress a majority in Haryana and Maharashtra?

We did not fight elections there (like we should have)... Another ploy is being used to finish democracy – going after resources of big parties. Earlier, people would give chanda (donation) to the Congress party... Also, no matter how big a *chanda* they gave to the BJP, the Congress did not raise questions over it. But now they (the BJP) are like how did you give so much *chanda* to the Congress? So everyone is scared.

MANOJ C G: But a year ago, when the Congress won in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhva Pradesh. didn't the party have the same resources?

There is a difference between then and now. The difficulties are only increasing. Till the time the Congress party does not come out and protest on the streets, we will not move forward. All big parties the CPI (M), CPI, BSP, JD(U) — should join the Congress on the field.

MANOJ C G: The CPI (M) and the CPI are still seen agitating on the streets, but the Congress is only seen on Twitter, Facebook, and press conference rooms.

According to me, when everyone comes out on the streets and there is an agitation, only then will the judiciary, which is working under pressure, the Income Tax Department, the Enforcement Directorate, the CBI, will all change on their own. And, you will also see the country's atmosphere and people's minds change. Only then will bureaucrats and agencies understand that change can happen anytime.

VANDITA MISHRA: In Haryana, in the last five years, the Congress has not taken up any issue and agitated on the streets. You improved your performance in the state, but do you

think that instead of doing anything actively on the ground, the Congress is simply waiting for its turn to return to power... For the cycle to continue?

About the cycle... It is not that Rahul Gandhi doesn't work hard. No one went to (campaign) in Maharashtra, but why

another old guard and regional

'Ram temple issue changed country's character... We need to tell people that humanism is above nationalism'

Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot says Haryana, Maharashtra poll results sent out "extraordinary" message; blames the atmosphere in the country, lack of resources and media for Cong defeats; says NYAY scheme announced late; and denies tension with Deputy CM Pilot



Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot with Deputy Associate Editor Manoj C G in The Indian Express newsroom. Abhinav Saha

do people still talk of Rahul Gandhi there? No one went and still the performance was such. It is the extraordinary common sense of the people... They understand what decision to take for the country and save democracy. That's why I salute the people of India.

VANDITA MISHRA: But people also say that when the central leadership of the Congress does not campaign, and in states where the local leadership is strong, the party performs well — like in Rajasthan and Haryana. So is it more important to pay attention to the regional leadership?

Some of it depends on the media also. The media itself is under pressure. There is such an atmosphere in the country about who knows what will (PM) Modi do? You can take bytes and write your stories, but only when you publish the stories will you be able to show that there is anarth (disaster) happening in the country.

After the general elections, when Rahul Gandhi said that he didn't want to be president of the party, it came as a shock to me. I must admit it... Rahul Gandhi interacted with students. He thought for the poor, for the country. But, one has to also look at the resources which are needed to take this message to the people. The BJP has all the resources. Before the Uttar Pradesh elections, to block other parties, they announced demonetisation. Such strategies are being used for elections now, people need to understand that. Issues of nationalism, surgical strikes are being raised during elections. Indira Gandhi also got Pakistani armymen to surrender, but she did not make a loud noise about it. You do surgical strikes before elections... People are not foolish. They are now starting to see through these things. This government will collapse.

RAVISH TIWARI: You said that the judiciary is not standing up for issues. Why do you say that?

The atmosphere of the entire country is now corrupt. It is the reason for the poor condition of the country. But, the times will change. The masses will rise. If you do not stand up, then history will not forgive you. I can assure you that under Sonia Gandhi the party is coming together. This is just the beginning. The Congress, which is one of the country's oldest parties and has made several sacrifices during India's Independence movement, is now being bombarded with insults on social media, including (its leaders such as) Jawaharlal

Nehru, who spent so many years in jail. Even Mahatma Gandhi wasn't accepted during the Independence movement. Babasaheb Ambedkar, who is now being hailed, was earlier shunned. The new generation knows nothing. They have no idea about the number of sacrifices that were made. History is being broken and twisted.

RAVISH TIWARI: But how will the country trust you to stay united when there is so much infighting within the **Congress?**

If I tell you the truth, you would not believe me. It all depends on the media. These things happen in big parties, it is no big deal. But trivial things that do not matter make headlines.

RAVISH TIWARI: But the party has also been speaking in different voices on most national issues, including abrogation of Article 370, the Ram Mandir etc. The vouth and the senior leaders all seem to have

different views. The issues that you mentioned, the youth and senior leaders are not divided on them. But I admit that in the atmosphere that has been created in the country, we have not been able to make our point as forcefully as we should have. The mandate that the BJP and the NDA government got from the people of the country, the atmosphere created because of that... There is talk of Hindutva in the country and people are accepting it! There is talk of nationalism... Are we not nationalist? Are only those who get a certificate from PM Modi and the BIP nationalists? There are many reasons for such an atmosphere to be created, they must be researched. But what I must accept is that

in such an atmosphere it becomes difficult to know and understand what the people of the country are thinking.

MANOJ C G: The Congress's 1991 general election manifesto said that the party was in favour of a Ram temple, without demolition of the Babri Masjid...

The Congress has always condemned riots. The way the issue of (Ram) temple was raised in this country, there's no doubt that it changed the character of the country. When it was raised 25-30 years ago, it divided the entire society along religious and caste lines. It's unfortunate. Let's talk about Rabindranath Tagore. The BJP also talks about him. He said humanism is above nationalism. If there is no humanity, how will there be nationalism? Who will make them understand this? This is our and your responsibility.

P VAIDYANATHAN IYER: In case of the Maharashtra elections, the central leadership of the Congress seemed very demoralised. The new Congress MLAs also complained that nobody from the central leadership came to campaign for them. Mallikarjun Kharge campaigned five times, Rahul Gandhi twice. If you had campaigned more, perhaps you would have got more seats.

I accept that the campaigns were not conducted with the enthusiasm with which they should have been conducted, whether in Harvana or Maharashtra. If there was campaigning, the results could have been different. (The sentiment) that whatever happens, we will do our duty, even if we don't remain the chief minister or minister, we will step in with full force to help... That could not happen. Also, when such an at-

"Modiji did Vibrant Gujarat. Kamal Nathji, Yogiji (held summits)... Very little investment comes. The atmosphere now is such that there is fear that even investment that is coming could go away

mosphere is created, the central leadership cannot come (to the state to campaign). The central leadership comes when it is in demand. When an atmosphere is created that suggests that we are bound to lose the elections, and that the BJP will win... to believe that yourself, that was a blunder. You should come to the field with full force; you never know when the public's mood might change. When it can change for Indira Gandhi, why can't it change for Modi? His aura, the arrogance of his body language, his thinking, or his comments... It will not take long for it to collapse.

MANOJ C G: The Nyuntam Aay Yojana (NYAY) scheme was a big poll promise in the Congress manifesto before the general elections. Why don't you implement it in states where the Congress is in power?

It was an ambitious scheme. I believe it was announced late. If it was announced on time, it's possible it would have had a huge impact.

VANDITA MISHRA: You have had a long stint in politics. Do you think you have had to change your political style in the times of Modi, as a politician and as Chief Minister?

Yes (laughs). Modiji hugs me whenever he meets me. I do not have any personal enmity against anyone. Our fight is on policies and programmes. The extraconstitutional authority that is the RSS... When the Congress was in power, it was said that Sonia Gandhi acted as an extraconstitutional authority. Then what is the RSS today? Does the media write about it? They are even deciding the names of chief ministers, ministers... This is happening for the first time in this country. You can see what is happening with the owners of media houses... Democracy is ending in the country.

HARISH DAMODARAN: When you were chief minister earlier, a lot of investment was made in the Neemrana region. What is happening now, are investments coming?

We are trying. We heard of Smart Cities, Skill India, Make In India... Modiji made such tall claims. It's a jumla government. Modiji did the Vibrant Gujarat Summits. Ask him how much investment came? Kamal Nathji (Madhya Pradesh CM) did a summit, Yogiji (Yogi Adityanath, UP CM)... Very little investment comes. Investment will only come when the climate of the country changes. The atmosphere now is such that there is fear that even the investment that is coming could go away.

SOMYA LAKHANI: The Congress is often criticised for entering the ring very late, whether it is on issues such as mob lynching, the economy or pollution? Why is that the case?

No, it isn't like that. Rahul Gandhi took the lead on the mob lynching issue. The Congress responded to everything in a timely manner. But you will have to accept that the Congress was pushed to the wall by the media. History and time will not forgive the media for it.

MANOJ C G: You are saying that the media did not support you. But when Rahul Gandhi stepped down, he said that the party did not support him.

You cannot make such comparisons. It can be about an internal matter of the party, do not generalise it. It was a matter of the country. Rahul Gandhi kept raising the (Rafale) issue. We also raised the issue but maybe not as per Rahul Gandhi's expectations. But shouldn't the media have raised such a big matter?

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M: Your government passed the anti-lynching Bill. But if you look at the Pehlu Khan case, even basic evidence was not sent for forensic examination. The family did not receive justice. You have brought a specialised law but the basic collection of evidence and its examination did not happen in this case, which is the job of the police. How do you plan to go about it?

The Pehlu Khan case was an issue of the previous government. A case was created against him. The high court exonerated Pehlu Khan and his sons. For the accused in the case, who had been released earlier, we formed a new SIT, whose report has been submitted. New challans have been issued. The earlier mistakes were corrected, which included not asking for the FSL report. I put the blame on the BJP... they created a fake case against Pehlu Khan and his family. No FSL report was sought. The high court said that Pehlu Khan was innocent and the FIR was dismissed. We are not going to leave this issue.

RAVISH TIWARI: When will the fight between you and Sachin Pilot be resolved?

No comments... There is no fight. A fight is when you accuse someone, and they argue with you. In this situation, both are silent, so there is no question of a fight.

The Idea Exchange was held on November 1, before the Supreme Court's Ayodhya verdict





UNITED IN SUPPORT



"This is the power of 136 crore people of India. We will express these powers through one India, best India... The way the decision has been accepted by the entire country shows the confidence of the people in each other. It also proves how we can take tough decisions by staying within the framework of the Constitution under difficult circumstances."

YOGI ADITYANATH

CHIEF MINISTER OF UTTAR PRADESH "The decision should be respected by all. This is the solution to the matter.

NITISH KUMAR, CHIEF MINISTER OF BIHAR

"BJP, RSS, VHP should have left the matter to the judiciary at that time. If they had done it, the country could have been saved from violence and bloodshed."

ASHOK GEHLOT, CHIEF MINISTER OF RAJASTHAN

"I respect the apex court's verdict from the bottom of my heart. Every temple, mosque, gurdwara, church belong to all of us. Nothing and no one is an outsider. We all are one."

TEJASHWI YADAV, **RJD LEADER**

"At this hour of victory, let us remember Shri Ashok Singhal. NaMo Govt must immediately announce Bharat Ratna for him."

SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY, BJP RAJYA SABHA MP

"I whole-heartedly welcome the historic judgment of the Supreme Court. This has brought joy and relief to people of both communities from a long-standing dispute."

SRI SRI RAVISHANKAR,

WAS PART OF MEDIATION PANEL APPOINTED BY SC FOR AMICABLE RESOLUTION OF THE DISPUTE

"Hindu brothers should set an example by helping Muslim brothers in construction of mosque."

RAMDEV,

FOR MINORITIES

YOGA GURU, ENTREPRENEUR

"It could not have been a better judgment. This verdict will be a symbol of national unity. It will set an example for brotherhood and fraternity."

GHAYORUL HASAN RIZVI, CHAIRPERSON, NATIONAL COMMISSION

"If the Gandhi murder case was retried by the Supreme Court today, the verdict would have been Nathuram Godse is a murderer but he is also a desh bhakt.'

TUSHAR GANDHI,

MAHATMA GANDHI'S GREAT-GRANDSON

INTERNET CURBS

37 held in UP, online posts taken down

KARISHMA MEHROTRA NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 10

FROM MAKING arrests to reprimanding those publishing "objectionable posts", police forces across the country cracked down on alleged social media violations in the run-up to the Ayodhya verdict. The day of the verdict also resulted in the most Internet shutdowns ordered on one day in the past year.

Most Internet curbs and social media-related arrests occurred in UP and Rajasthan. Shutdowns on Saturday were confirmed in the districts of Aligarh, Kota, Jaipur, Jhunjhuna, Alwar, Sikar, Dausa and Bharatpur, according to the UP and Rajasthan state police as well as the Software Freedom Law Center (SFLC)'s Internet Shutdown Tracker.

In New Delhi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday cancelled his pre-scheduled engagements and held a high-level meeting with key intelligence agencies to take stock of the security situation in view of the verdict.

Shah held a meeting with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, home secretary Ajit Bhalla and Director of the Intelligence Bureau Arvind Kumar at his residence in the morning. He also spoke to some CMs such as Yogi Adityanath in UP and Kamal Nath in MP informing them about the available reinforcements, in case they needed any.

A senior Home Ministry official also kept in touch with chiefs of state police forces and CAPFs during the day, a senior official said.

As per the office of DGP, Uttar Pradesh Police, 12 cases were registered and 37 people arrested during the last 24 hours in connection with "objectionable posts" on social media related to the verdict. Police said action was taken in the case of 3,712 social media posts, including getting posts deleted through direct messages and removing profiles.

UP Police lodged 8 cases against users who did not take down posts after being alerted by the UP Police, said UP Inspector General Law and Order Praveen Kumar. For overall breach of peace, 33 people were held in UP.

In Aligarh, four students were booked under Section 153 A for allegedly making derogatory comments on the court's decision. One is a student of Aligarh Muslim University and was booked for his Facebook posts. Police said none of the accused have been arrested and will instead be sent for counselling.

In Meerut, seven people were arrested six for allegedly bursting crackers and one for his Facebook post — for allegedly violating preventive measures set in place by the police.

Police cells monitoring social media across UP sent responses to 500 social media posts

on Saturday that they deemed to be "inflammatory" and asked users to take them down, according to Kumar.

In a memo to the UP Police personnel, the social media monitors were ordered to only direct message (DM) Twitter handles with objectionable posts, and any public posts by police must be authorised by those of higher rank. It also asks them to not take any action against those who are expressing their views.

The officers were given a ready-made statement to message offenders: "Your post can influence the social harmony. So please delete immediately or else legal action could be taken against you."

A note from Saharanpur's Deputy Inspector General directed senior police officials in Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, and Shamli to collect information regarding WhatsApp groups in which news is circulated. They were to collect details such as administrator name, group name, number of members, and mobile number of the admin.

UP DGP OP Singh also issued an appeal to the public to check the messages before forwarding on WhatsApp. Similarly, a notice in Jharkhand on November 5 warned that not only the administrator of a group with messages inciting violence, but those who forward such messages can also be charged.

According to police in Ghaziabad and Gautam Budh Nagar, 50 potential troublemakers were identified through social media presence on November 7. "If an inflammatory post is forwarded on a WhatsApp group, everyone on the chain, including the admin, is liable for action under the Gangsters Act," said BN Singh, Gautam Budh Nagar district magistrate.

Rajasthan police arrested one dozen people for objectionable social media posts, according to B L Soni, Rajasthan ADGP for Crime.

District Magistrates also used Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure to suspend Internet services in Goa, Jaisalmer, Bengaluru, and Bhopal, SFLC said.

The last time Internet shutdowns on this scale occurred on one day was during a "Bharat Bandh" by Dalit organisations against the SC verdict regarding the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. SFLC said suspensions occurred in UP, Rajasthan, and Punjab at that time.

"Internet shutdowns, where access to the Internet is completely blocked, violate the fundamental right of citizens to freedom of speech and expression that includes the right to access information," said Sundar Krishnan, Executive Director of SFLC.

INPUTS FROM AVANEESH MISHRA (LUCKNOW); DEEPTIMAN TIWARY, KRISHN KAUSHIK AND AMIL BHATNAGAR (DELHI)

Certain premises of SC's verdict questionable: CPM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

THE CPI(M) said that while the Ayodhya verdict has provided a judicial resolution to the "fractious" issue, "there are certain premises of the judgment which are questionable."

"The CPI(M) has always maintained that the issue should be resolved by a judicial verdict if a negotiated settlement was not possible. While this judgment has provided a judicial resolution to the fractious issue, there are certain premises of the judgment which are questionable," the CPI(M) said in a statement.

Pointing out that the apex court's judgment has itself stated that the demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992 was a violation of law, the party said that the "cases pertaining to the demolition should be expedited and the guilty punished."

"The court has also appreciated the 1991 Places of Religious Worship Act. Adherence to this law should ensure that no such disputes on religious places are again raised and utilized," the CPI(M) said.

The CPI called the apex court's judgment "reconciliatory."

"While upholding that all faiths are equal, the apex court has delivered this reconciliatory judgment. This should be seen in the larger perspective of ethics, justice and secularism. This should not be seen as a victory to any party or litigant and in the prevailing situation nobody should resort to any provocation," CPI General Secretary D Raja told The Sunday Express.

"It's a reconciliatory judgment. There are questions which need to be answered. They said the demolition (of Babri Masjid) was wrong... What does the court want to say?," Raja added.



ON ALERT

Security was stepped up in Varanasi ahead of the Supreme Court verdict on Ayodhya. Anand Singh

From backroom boy to Prime Minister, Modi's mandir journey

LIZ MATHEW

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

SINCE HIS first brush with Ayodhya three decades ago, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's political life has been enmeshed with the issue. Now, with the Supreme Court delivering its verdict on the decades-long dispute, Modi is heading the government that will oversee the construction of the Ram temple there.

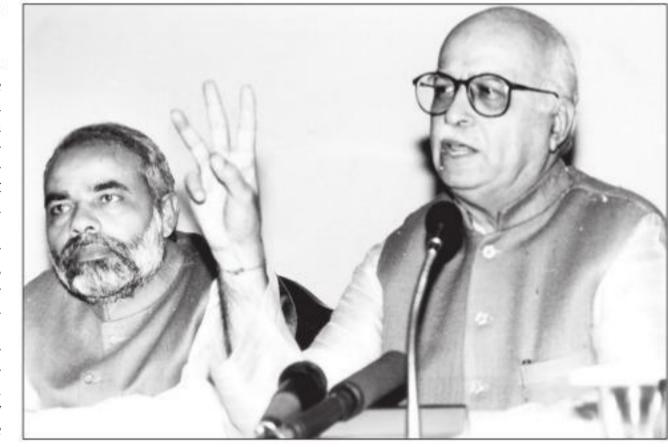
The BJP organisation man who coordinated a part of the first leg of the movement, is today the PM who, after the apex court verdict, urged the nation to build a new India without bitterness.

The RSS and its affiliate groups had initially decided to raise the pitch for construction of a temple at the site where the Babri Masjid stood, claiming that the 16th-century mosque was built by demolishing a temple at the birthplace of Ram. After the BJP's dismal electoral performance in 1984 — it got only two seats in the Lok Sabha — the party leadership along with its ideological parent decided to use the Ram temple issue in its efforts for national recognition as well as elec-

With the efforts yielding results — the party won 89 seats in 1989 — then BJP president LK Advani planned a Rath Yatra as part of the Ram temple movement. Modi, then a member of the BJP's national election committee, was tasked with coordinating the yatra from Somnath in Gujarat on September 25, 1990, to Mumbai.

In 2002, Modi had just taken over as Chief Minister of Gujarat when a train carrying more than 2,000 passengers, who were returning after kar seva in Ayodhya, were attacked. Fifty-nine kar sevaks were burned to death. The incident triggered riots in Gujarat, and more than a thousand people were killed, most of them Muslims. While Modi maintained that he did everything in his power to contain the rioting, his critics accuse him of indifference to the plight of Muslims.

The incident left a deep scar on Modi's image. Congress president Sonia Gandhi went to the extent of referring to him as 'maut ka saudagar' (merchant of death) during the 2007 Gujarat election campaign, and the term was used by Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, leader of BJP's ally Janata Dal-United, to break away from the NDA. The Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led NDA's defeat in the 2004



Modi coordinated a part of Advani's rath yatra. Archive

The developments helped Modi emerge as a prominent Hindu leader, and he took the Hindutva line in the following Assembly elections. However, he did not use the Hindutva plank during his campaign for the 2014 Lok Sabha elections

general election was also attributed to the dent in the BJP's image due to the Gujarat violence. Vajpayee told a television channel that the "impact of the Gujarat riots was felt nationwide... Modi should have been removed after the incident." However, Advani had called Modi a victim of the vilification campaign over the Gujarat riots.

The developments helped Modi emerge as a prominent Hindu leader, and he took the Hindutva line in the following Assembly elections. However, he did not use the Hindutva plank during his campaign for the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. With Modi riding on the development narrative, the BJP put the Ram temple construction under the subhead 'Cultural Heritage' in its election man-

ifesto, which stated: "BJP reiterates its stand to explore all possibilities within the framework of the Constitution to facilitate the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya."

Ahead of the 2017 Uttar Pradesh elec

tions, however, the issue was back on the

party's primary agenda. The Union govern-

ment in October 2016 announced the setting up of a Ramayana Museum in Ayodhya. During his first term as PM, Modi, who had several times before 2014 raised the issue passionately, did not even visit Ayodhya,

but held election rallies outside the temple city. As PM, he also refrained from referring to the temple issue. Addressing the nation after the Supreme

Court judgment was pronounced on Saturday, Modi highlighted that it was a unanimous verdict. He said: "Today is 9th November, the day when Berlin Wall was brought down. Today the Kartarpur Corridor was also inaugurated, (and) now the Ayodhya verdict, so this date gives us the message to stay united and move forward."

"The verdict has brought a new dawn, now the next generation will build a new India. Today is the day to forget any bitterness one may have; no place for fear, bitterness and negativity in new India," he said, adding that the message was about coming together to move forward.

SP says verdict 'step in right direction', BSP calls for harmony

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE LUCKNOW. NOVEMBER 9

SAMAJWADI PARTY chief Akhilesh Yadav termed the Supreme Court verdict on the Ayodhya dispute "an important step in the right direction of strengthening secularism,

rule of law and democracy". In a press release, Yadav said that the verdict would be remembered as "historic" and hoped that everybody would maintain peace and that no ne would hurt feelings of any

community or create any tension. "Since 1986, it has been the stand of the Samajwadi Party that the dispute should be resolved either through dialogue or through court...since the issue could not be resolved through dialogue, the SC had to give its ver-



SP Chief Akhilesh Yadav savs verdict must be accepted by all. Express

dict. As per Indian Constitution, accepting the Supreme Court decision is mandatory. Even this decision will be accepted by all," Yadav said.

"Jo faisley faslon ko ghatatey hain, woh insaan ko behtar insaan banate hain (Decisions which bridge gaps, make people better human beings," Yadav tweeted later.

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati also urged people to respect the verdict and maintain harmony.

"Under the secular Constitution of Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, the honourable Supreme Court gave a unanimous decision in the Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri mosque land dispute. Everyone should respect the verdict and further work should be done in this issue in harmonious manner...," the BSP chief tweeted.

BJP state chief attacks Mamata for 'silence' on judgment, Trinamool cites cyclone work monitoring the situation 24x7. We are taking

SWEETYKUMARI& ABANTIKA GHOSH KOLKATA. NEW DELHI. NOVEMBER 9

WEST BENGAL BIP president Dilip Ghosh welcomed the Supreme Court's Ayodhya verdict, calling it an ethical win for the party. Ghosh also questioned the Trinamool Congress's silence on the verdict.

"I would like to thank the apex court for the historic verdict. All of us should respect the judgment. We are hopeful that the temple would be built soon. Hundreds of karsevaks, who lost their lives during the Ram Janambhoomi movement, will now rest in peace," Ghosh said.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is yet to respond to the Ayodhya verdict. Trinamool leaders claimed that the state government was busy containing the effects of Cyclone Bulbul. The Chief Minister spent time until midnight on Saturday at the con-



Sources said CM told party leaders not to react to verdict. Express

trol room of the state secretariat reviewing evacuation efforts. However, according to sources, Banerjee had instructed party leaders not to react to the Ayodhya verdict in a

meeting held two days ago. "Cyclone Bulbul is about to pass through Bengal. Our State Administration is closely

all measures to tackle any contingency. Specia Control Rooms have been set up and NDRF-SDRF teams are deployed. Schools, colleges and anganwadi centres have been closed and more than 1 lac 20 thousand people have already been rescued from the vulnerable coastal areas," Banerjee tweeted a few hours after the verdict. "Ayodhya is a delicate issue for us. If we

welcome the judgment or stay silent, that will upset our core Muslim voters. If we criticise it, the bogey of Muslim appearsement will return. The Congress has given a balanced statement. It is possible that because the judgment is voluminous, it is currently being studied and the party will firm up its stand depending on how others react," says a source in the party.

Attacking the Chief Minister for her silence Ghosh said, "They (Trinamool) prefer silence when it comes to taking a stand on issues related to national and social interests... I would ask them to come out clean.a"





Court's questions—and answers





'This Court is tasked with the resolution of a dispute whose origins are as old as the idea of India itself...'

Why key challenge before court was two quests for truth?

The lands of our country have witnessed invasions and dissensions. Yet they have assimilated into the idea of India everyone who sought their providence, whether they came as merchants, travellers or as conquerors. The history and culture of this country have been home to quests for truth, through the material, the political, and the spiritual. This Court is called upon to fulfil its adjudicatory function where it is claimed that two quests for the truth impinge on the freedoms of the other or violate the rule of law...

This Court is tasked with the resolution of a dispute whose origins are as old as the idea of India itself... Though the significance of the site for the Hindus is not denied, it is the case of the Muslims that there exists no proprietary claim of the Hindus over the disputed property.

How reliable are the accounts of travellers?

The accounts of the travellers must be read with circumspection. Their personal observations must carefully be sifted from hearsay — matters of legend and lore. Consulting their accounts on matters of public history is distinct from evidence on a matter of title. An adjudication of title has to be deduced on the basis of evidence sustainable in a court of law, which has withstood the searching scrutiny of cross-examination. Similarly, the contents of gazetteers can at best provide corroborative material to evidence which emerges from the record. The court must be circumspect in drawing negative inferences from what a traveller may not have seen or observed. Title cannot be established on the basis of faith and belief above. Faith and belief are indicators towards patterns of worship at the site on the basis of which claims of possession are asserted. The court has evaluated the rival claims to possessory title in a situation in which the state has expressly stated in its written statement that it claims no interest in the land.

What is the significance of the ASI findings?

(i) Archaeological finds in the area of excavation reveal significant traces of successive civilisations, commencing with the age of the North Black Polished Ware traceable to the second century B.C.;

(ii) The excavation by the ASI has revealed the existence of a pre-existing underlying structure dating back to the twelfth century. The structure has large dimensions, evident from the fact that there were 85 pillar bases comprised in 17 rows each of five pillar bases;

(iii) On a preponderance of probabilities, the archaeological findings on the nature of the underlying structure indicate it to be of Hindu religious origin, dating to twelfth century A.D.;

(iv) the mosque in dispute was constructed up on the foundation of the pre-existing structure. The construction of the mosque has taken place in such a manner as to obviate an independent foundation by utilising the walls of the pre-existing structure....

Does an ancient Hindu temple exist beneath Babri Masjid?

1. The foundation of the mosque is based on the walls of a large pre-existing structure; 2. The pre-existing structure dates back to the twelfth century; and

3. The underlying structure which provided the foundations of the mosque together with its architectural features and recoveries are suggestive of a Hindu religious origin comparable to temple excavations in the region and pertaining to the era...

4. Since the ASI report dates the underlying structure to the twelfth century, there is a time gap of about four centuries between the date of the underlying structure and the construction of the mosque.

5. No evidence is available to explain what transpired in the course of the intervening period of nearly four centuries;

(Finally, the court concludes that no evidence is available in a case of this antiquity on the cause of destruction of the underlying structure and whether the pre-existing structure was demolished for the construction of the mosque.)

What is legal character of deity Ram Lalla vs Janmasthan?

The recognition of the Hindu idol as a legal or juristic person is... based on two premises employed by courts. The first is to recognise the pious purpose of the testator as a legal entity capable of holding property in an ideal sense absent the creation of a trust. The second is the merging of the pious purpose itself and the idol which embodies the pious purpose to ensure the fulfilment of the pious purpose. So conceived, the Hindu idol is a legal person. The property endowed to the pious purpose is owned by the idol as a legal person in an ideal sense. The reason why the court created such legal fictions was to provide a comprehensible legal framework to protect the properties dedicated to the pious purpose from external threats as well as internal maladministration.

... the recognition of Asthan Sri Ram Janam Bhumi as a juristic person would result in the extinguishment of all competing proprietary claims to the land in question. This conferral of absolute title (resulting from the conferral of legal personality on land) would in truth render the very concept of title meaningless. Moreover, the extinguishing of competing claims would arise not by virtue of settled legal principles, but purely on the basis of the faith and belief of the devotees. This cannot be countenanced in law. The conferral of legal personality by courts is an innovation arising out of neces-

sity and convenience. ... The conferral of legal personality on Hindu idols arose due to the fundamental question of who the property was dedicated to and in whom the dedicated land vested. In the present case, there exists no act of dedication and therefore the question of whom the property was dedicated to does not arise and consequently the need to recognise the pious purpose behind the dedication itself as a legal person also does

'The physical structure of a mosque did not shake faith, belief of Hindus that Lord Ram was born at the disputed site'

Who had possession of the disputed 2.77 acres?

The evidence indicates that despite the existence of a mosque at the site, Hindu worship at the place believed to be the birthplace of Lord Ram was not restricted. The existence of an Islamic structure at a place considered sacrosanct by the Hindus did not stop them from continuing their worship at the disputed site and within the precincts of the structure prior to the incidents of 1856-7. The physical structure of an Islamic mosque did not shake the faith and belief of Hindus that Lord Ram was born at the disputed site. On the other hand, learned counsel fairly stated that the evidence relied on by the Sunni Central Waqf Board to establish the offering of namaz by the Muslim resi-

dents commences from around 1856-7... Essentially, the setting up of Ramchabutra within a hundred feet or thereabouts of the inner dome must be seen in the historical context as an expression or assertion of the Hindu right to worship at the birth-place of Lord Ram. Even after the construction of the dividing wall by the British, the Hindus continued to assert their right to pray below the central dome.

Muslims have no proof to show 'exclusive' possession of the disputed structure.

...there is no evidence to the contrary by the Muslims to indicate that their possession of the disputed structure of the mosque was exclusive and that the offering of namaz was exclusionary of the Hindus...

Testimonies of both Hindu and Muslim witnesses indicate that on religious occasions and festivals such as Ram Navami, Sawan Jhoola, Kartik Poornima, Parikrama Mela and Ram Vivah, large congregations of Hindu devotees visited the disputed prem-

There can (be) no denying the existence of the structure of the mosque since its construction in the sixteenth century with the inscription of Allah on the structure. The genesis of the communal incident of 1856-7 lies in the contestation between the two communities over worship. The setting up of the railing in 1856 was an attempt by the administration to provide a measure of bifurcation to observe religious worship — namaz by the Muslims inside the railing within the domed structure of the mosque and worship by the Hindus outside the railing.

How placing idols under dome, demolition deprived Muslims?

The events preceding 22/23 December 1949 indicate the build-up of a large presence of Bairagis in the outer courtyard and the expression of his apprehension by the Superintendent of Police that the Hindus would seek forcible entry into the precincts of the mosque to install idols. In spite of written intimations to him, the Deputy Commissioner and District Magistrate (K K Nayyar) paid no heed and rejected the apprehension of the Superintendent of Police to the safety of the mosque as baseless. The apprehension was borne out by the incident which took place on the night between 22/23 December 1949, when a group of fifty to sixty persons installed idols on the pulpit of

the mosque below the central dome. This led to the desecration of the mosque and the ouster of the Muslims otherwise than by the due process of law. The inner courtyard was thereafter attached in proceedings under Section 145 CrPC 1898 on 29 December 1949 and the receiver took possession...

On 6 December 1992, the structure of the mosque was brought down and the mosque was destroyed. The destruction of the mosque took place in breach of the order of status quo and an assurance given to this Court. The destruction of the mosque and the obliteration of the Islamic structure was an egregious violation of the rule of law.

Why HC 'completely erred' in grant of its relief?

The High Court has adopted a path which was not open to it in terms of the principles formulated above. It granted reliefs which were not the subject matter of the prayers in the suits. In the process of doing so, it proceeded to assume the jurisdiction of a civil court in a suit for partition, which the suits before it were not...

In assessing the correctness of the decree of the High Court, it must be noted at the outset that the High Court was not seized of a suit for partition. In a suit for partition, it is trite law that every party is both a plaintiff

and defendant... The High Court was called upon to decide the question of title particularly in the declaratory suits. The High Court has completely erred in granting relief which lay outside the ambit of the pleadings and the cases

set up by the plaintiffs... We have already concluded that the three-way bifurcation by the High Court was legally unsustainable. Even as a matter of maintaining public peace and tranquillity, the solution which commended itself to the High Court is not feasible. The disputed site measures all of 1500 square yards. Dividing the land will not subserve the interest of either of the parties or secure a lasting sense of peace and tranquillity...

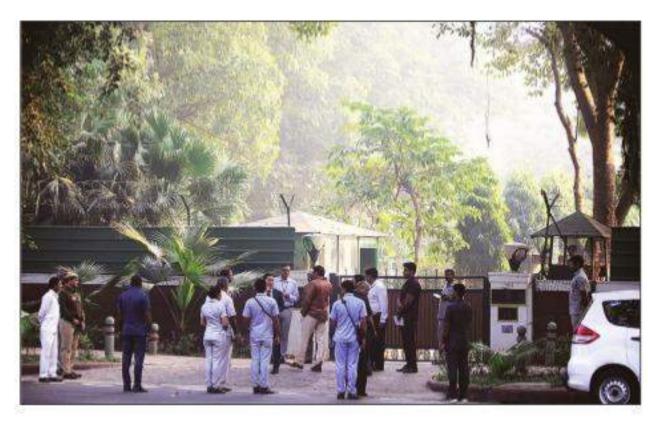
Why it was necessary to give Muslims alternative land?

The allotment of land to the Muslims is necessary because though on a balance of probabilities, the evidence in respect of the possessory claim of the Hindus to the composite whole of the disputed property stands on a better footing than the evidence adduced by the Muslims, the Muslims were dispossessed upon the desecration of the mosque on 22/23 December 1949 which was ultimately destroyed on 6 December 1992...

There was no abandonment of the mosque by the Muslims. This Court in the exercise of its powers under Article 142 of the Constitution must ensure that a wrong committed must be remedied. Justice would not prevail if the Court were to overlook the entitlement of the Muslims who have been deprived of the structure of the mosque through means which should not have been employed in a secular nation committed to the rule of law. The Constitution postulates the equality of all faiths. Tolerance and mutual co-existence nourish the secular commitment of our nation and its people.

'Court can't overlook entitlement of Muslims deprived of mosque through means (not befitting) a secular nation committed to rule of law'

Faith establishes birth place: A post script, unsigned



Security outside CJI Gogoi's residence in Delhi ahead of the Supreme Court verdict on Saturday. Praveen Khanna

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G NEW DELHI. NOVEMBER 9

WHILE THE ruling of the five-judge Constitution bench steered clear of interpreting scriptures and other material related to faith in adjudicating the dispute, one of the judges went into the question and concluded that the disputed structure was the birthplace of Ram as per faith, belief and trust of the Hindus.

"Faith and belief of Hindus as depicted by the evidence on record clearly establish that Hindus believe that at the birthplace of Lord Ram the Mosque was constructed, and (the) three-dome structure is the birthplace of Lord Ram," his ruling, an addendum to the judgment, stated.

It is not signed by the judge who authored it, nor is there any concurring sig-

For the purpose of evidence, the ruling divided the historic period into three: before 1528, when the mosque is said to have been constructed; from 1528 to October 31,

1858; and from 1858 until 1949. "Religious scriptures, which are main source of Hinduism, are the foundation on which faith of Hindus is concretised," the judge stated. "It is, however, true that Valmiki Ramayana does not give any description of place of birth, except that Lord Ram was born to Kaushalya at Ayodhya in

the Palace of King Dasratha." His version also referred to Skanda Purana, believed to have been constructed between 7th and 9th century. It then goes on to cite witnesses who quote the *Ayodhya* Mahatmya of Skanda Purana as saying that

Ram's birth place is the sanctum sanctorum. of them, Jagadguru Ramanandacharya Swami Rambhadracharya, stated that Ram's birth place is

clearly described in Ayodhya Mahatmya.

The additional version also refers to Janma Sakhies, which speak about the visit of Guru Nanak to Ayodhya for a darshan of Ram's birth place.

The addendum stated, "...it can, therefore, be held that the faith and belief of Hindus regarding location of birth place of Lord Ram is from scriptures and sacred religious books including Valmiki Ramayana and Skanda Purana, which faith and beliefs,

cannot be held to be groundless." For the period 1528 to 1858, the judge cited Ramcharitmanas of Tulsidas, composed during 1574-75 and said it refers to Ram's birth place. The judge noted that the court can take into consideration the Gazetteers under Evidence Act, 1872 adding that although the statement in Gazetteers will not be treated as conclusive evidence, the presumption of correctness

of that statement is attached to it. For the period 1858-1949, it cited Gazetteers, reports of the Archaeological Survey of India, books and other documentary evidence, which have been exhibited in the suits and other documentary and

oral evidence. The judge wrote, "The oral evidence.. clearly proves faith and belief of Hindus that Janmasthan of Lord Ram is the place where Babri Mosque has been constructed. Three-dome structure was treated as birth place of Lord Ram. Worship of the three-dome structure, parikrama of the entire premises by the devotees have been amply proved by oral

evidences led in the Suit... The addendum noted, "It is thus concluded... that faith and belief of Hindus since prior to construction of Mosque and subsequent thereto has always been that Janmasthan of Lord Ram is the place where Babri Mosque has been constructed, which faith and belief is proved by documentary and oral evidence discussed above."



Out of limelight, Advani welcomes verdict, says his stand 'vindicated'

ASTHA SAXENA NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

THE most prominent face of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, L K Advani remained out of limelight on Saturday, not venturing out of his house and waiting till the evening to issue a statement saying the Supreme Court order had "vindicated" his stand.

Prithviraj Road, residence of the BJP veteran, who turned 92 on Friday, was Uma Bharti, who came some time after noon. Also a prominent figure in the temple movement, she is accused along with Advani in the Babri demolition case.

Among the first visitors to the 30,

In his statement, Advani called the temple agitation "the biggest since India's freedom movement", and said it had made possible Saturday's verdict, "paving the

way for construction of a magnificent temple for Lord Ram". While welcom-

ing the apex court award of five acres of alternative land for a mosque, Advani appealed to all sections to work together country's national

'Time to leave unity and integrity".
"Now that the proacrimony behind'

longed Mandir-Masjid dispute in Ayodhya has come to an end, the time has come to leave all contention and acrimony behind and embrace communal concord and peace."

Saying Ram and Ramayana held a special place in India's heritage and Ram Janmabhoomi a special and sacred place in the hearts of its people, Advani added that it was gratifying that their sentiments had been respected.

Leaving Advani's house, Bharti said, "I came here to bow before Advaniji because he is the person who challenged the issue from the beginning. He had raised the issue in Parliament and it was the first time there was a discussion on national vs pseudo secularism on a national platform."

Senior BJP leader Murli Manohar Joshi, also an accused in the demolition case, said on Saturday that the trust responsible for construction of a Ram temple would have to be "considerate about keeping unity intact among people". Welcoming the verdict as historic, he said, "It should be accepted with an open mind by all communities."

Outside Advani's residence, 40-yearold Sarabjit Singh cut a solitary figure. A resident of Jangpura in Delhi, Singh, who carried a saffron flag, said, "Advaniji is the person behind all the work. I have come here to express my gratitude."



'I Came To Bow Before Advaniji'

Senior BJP leader Uma Bharti outside LK Advani's residence on Saturday. Both are accused in the Babri Masjid demolition case that is being tried in a CBI court in Lucknow. Renuka Puri

No Kashi, Mathura in near future: new Party-Parivar consensus

RAVISHTIWARI NEW DELHI. NOVEMBER 9

"Ayodhya toh bas jhanki hai, Kashi Mathura baaki hai (Ayodhya is a preview, Kashi and Mathura are next in line)," was the BIP and VHP's war cry of the early '90s at the peak of the Ram Temple movement leading up to the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992. After today's verdict that clears the way for a Ram temple at the site, sources in the Sangh Parivar said, this won't be invoked. At least,

Sources *The Indian Express* spoke to over the last few weeks and today suggest that both the party and the Parivar are on the same page against using the Ayodhya verdict to other temples beyond the Ram Temple.

"Kashi aur Mathura abhi vishay nahin hain. Pehle toh (Ram) Mandir banana padega. Bharat mein sabhi ke sahyog se bane, aisi ichha hai (Kashi and Mathura are not issues for the moment. First, we will have to build (Ram) Temple. We think it should be done with the cooperation of every Indian," said a senior RSS functionary. Saying that building the temple itself will take "a long time," he cited the example of the Somnath Temple which was inaugurated four years after Sardar Patel decided to pursue its resurrection.

"Nishchint…aisa nahin hoga (this is not going to happen, be assured)," said another senior leader after the Supreme Court judgment in response to the query on Kashi and Mathura adding, "this (Ayodhya) temple is our priority".

A similar suggestion was made by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, too, during his brief press interaction after the verdict was announced. "Sangh is not associated with any movement, it is associated with human development. Because of a historical backdrop, the Sangh got associated with this movement as an organisation. It is an exception. Now we will again be associated with human development and this movement will not remain of concern to us," Bhagwat said in response to a query whether the Sangh would reiterate its claims on mosques in Mathura and Kashi (Varanasi).

"Remember, not a single leader of significance has invoked Kashi and Mathura after Allahabad High Court ruling in 2010. It is an issue that Left liberals want to invoke to whip up passions for ulterior motives," said another senior RSS functionary early this month after the RSS held a closed-door meeting with the BJP and VHP ahead of the judgment. Many RSS sources present in the Sangh-VHP-BJP coordination meeting confirmed that Kashi and Mathura did not even

figure in their discussions.

Even the VHP echoed a similar sentiment after the verdict. "The VHP's complete focus is on the construction of the temple, a grand temple at Ramjanambhoomi; along with religious awakening. So we do not have time to raise another demand," said VHP working president Alok Kumar said when asked about Mathura and Kashi after today's verdict.

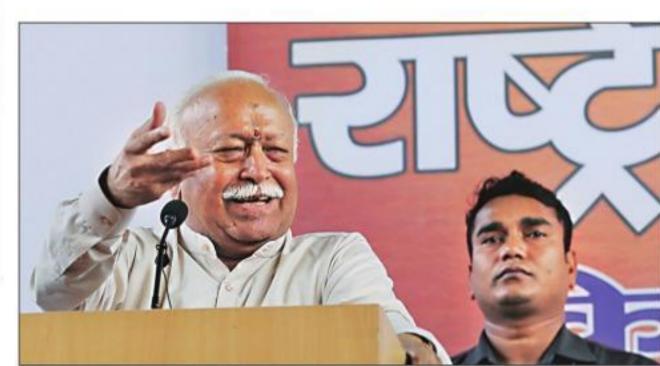
The BJP leaders, too, echo this.

"This is the culmination of the temple issue. I do not think the public is ready for a similar mobilisation for Kashi and Mathura yet. Public seems to have moved on," said a senior BJP functionary. The BJP leader, in this context, also underlined how the party resisted RSS pressure on enacting a legislation for Ram Temple last year.

"This issue (Kashi and Mathura) is not even being discussed...This is only about Ram Temple and there has been no discussion on anything else," said a source who was part of a conference addressed by RSS leaders Krishna Gopal, Ram Lal and Indresh Kumar the day before the verdict.

"Everyone should accept the verdict. We also... do not think that any one should object to democratic options like peaceful protests, raising the issue in Parliament or even approaching Supreme Court in appeal or review," said a senior RSS functionary.

RSS chief Bhagwat welcomes verdict, says Sangh's role over, up to govt now



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat addresses the media after the verdict. Anil Sharma

KARISHMA MEHROTRA NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

THE RSS on Saturday welcomed the decision of the Supreme Court granting the disputed land in Ayodhya to Hindus, but avoided spelling out its stand on the award of five acres to Muslims for a mosque in the temple town.

Addressing the media after the Supreme Court delivered its verdict on the Ayodhya temple-mosque title suit, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said the matter was now with the government and that the RSS wanted it to take initiatives that would resolve all disputes. He said the question of the allotment of land to Muslims would be dealt with once the process of implementation of the court order began.

During negotiations on the disputed land, Hindu groups have always maintained that if Muslims were to be given land for building a mosque, it should be out of the "cultural boundary of Ayodhya".

Bhagwat also skirted the issue of longstanding claim of Hindu groups over mosques in Varanasi and Mathura, saying the Sangh's association with the temple movement was an exception and that it was associated with "human development" and would continue to do so.

When asked about the five-acre land the court ordered to be given to Sunni Wakf Board "out of the land acquired" around the disputed site or in a "suitable, prominent place in Ayodhya", Bhagwat said, "We will read the judgment and interpret it. The land has to be given by the

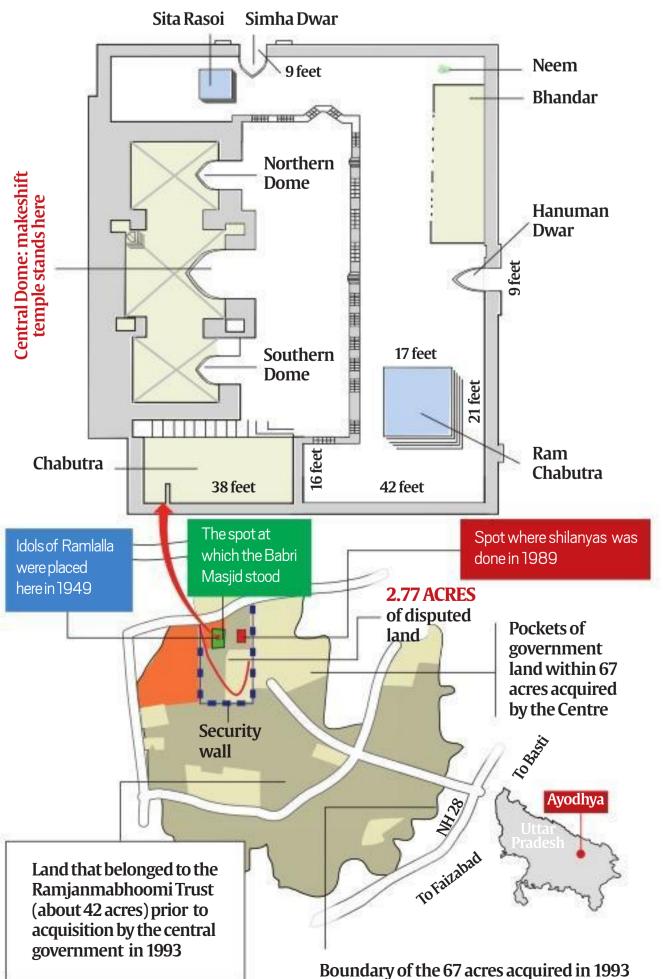
government, not by us... At one place, Hindu prayers are going on and at the same place something else is also happening... we are fine with it... but the society burns... This should end. This was our wish and it has been fulfilled."

When asked whether Sangh would continue to agitate over its claims on mosques in Mathura and Kashi (Varanasi), Bhagwat said, "Sangh is not associated with any movement, it is associated with manushya nirman (human development). Because of some historical backdrop, the Sangh got associated with this movement as an organisation. It is an exception. Now we will again be associated with human development and this movement will not remain of concern to us."

Earlier, in a prepared statement, Bhagwat welcomed the SC judgment and asked the nation to exercise restraint in its celebrations. "RSS welcomes the SC decision that has done justice to the faith and sentiment of the nation. After decades of struggle, a final legal decision has been arrived at. I urge the nation to express your happiness with restraint and within the boundaries of the law and the constitution. Forces which create discord among people and incite violence should not be patronised and kept away," Bhagwat said, expressing gratitude to the judges and lawyers. The RSS chief expressed hope the gov-

ernment would soon initiate the process to resolve the dispute on the lines of the order passed by the Supreme Court "Forgetting all past differences, we will together contribute in the construction of the grand temple," Bhagwat said.

The disputed site in Ayodhya



THE FOUR TITLE SUITS

The 2010 verdict of the Allahabad High Court stemmed from five civil suits filed by various parties staking claims, ranging from the right to worship at the disputed site to right to the title of the disputed place.

SUIT 1: A suit was instituted in 1950 before the Civil Judge at Faizabad by a Hindu worshipper, Gopal Singh Visharad, seeking a declaration that according to his religion and custom, he is entitled to offer prayers at the main Janmabhumi temple near the idols.

SUIT 2: On December 5, 1950, another suit was instituted by Paramhans Ramchandra Das before the Faizabad civil judge, seeking relief similar to those in Suit 1. Suit 2 was withdrawn on September 18, 1990.

SUIT 3: On December 17, 1959, the Nirmohi Akhara, a Hindu religious sect, instituted a suit through its Mahant before the Faizabad civil judge seeking to hand over the management and charge of the temple to the plaintiff

SUIT 4: On December 18, 1961, the Sunni Central Waaf Board and nine Muslim residents of Ayodhya filed a suit before the Faizabad civil judge seeking a declaration that the entire disputed site was a public mosque

On January 6, 1964, the trial of Suits 1, 3 and 4 was consolidated and Suit 4 was made the leading case.

SUIT 5: On July 1, 1989, a suit was brought before the Faizabad civil judge by the deity (Bhagwan Shri Ram Virajman) and the birth-place (Asthan Shri Ram Janam Bhumi, Ayodhya), for a declaration of title to the disputed premises and to restrain the defendants from interfering with or raising any objection to the construction of a temple. Suit 5 was tried with the other suits.

These suits, together with a separate suit by Hindu worshippers were transferred by the Allahabad High Court to itself for trial from the civil court at Faizabad.

FROM PAGE ONE How the scales tilted

offered by the Hindus," the court said.

Curiously, the court itself notes that contestations of the rival parties in fact begin from the 1860s while criticising the HC's conclusions on the precise year of construction of the Babri Masjid but picks a pre-1856 timeline to determine possession of the disputed land.

In criminal cases, the established standard of proof is for the prosecution to prove the beyond reasonable doubt. "Preponderance of probability" is a lesser standard of proof required in civil cases — and is generally accepted as probability to lean towards one side being greater than leaning to the other side.

The court looks at three timelines to determine possession of the disputed area to award the title – prior to 1856; between 1856 and 1934; and after 1934.

The possession of Muslims is accepted readily from 1856 — when Oudh was annexed by the British — relying on land revenue records, court documents and police reports during riots. However, the court notes that the mosque was constructed in 1528 "by or at the behest of Babur, there is no account by them of possession, use or offer of namaz in the mosque between the date of construction and 1856-7."

"For a period of over 325 years...since the date of the construction of the mosque until the setting up of a grill-brick wall by the British, the Muslims have not adduced evidence to establish the exercise of possessory control over the disputed site. Nor is there any account in the evidence of the offering of namaz in the mosque, over this period," the court said.

On the contrary, the court notes the travelogues of Tieffenthaler, William Finch and Montgomery Martin in the 18th century – prior to the construction of the grill-brick wall in front of the mosque — to provide a detailed account both of the faith and belief of the Hindus based on the sanctity which they ascribed to the place of birth of Lord Ram and of the actual worship by the Hindus at the Janmasthan.

The bench observes that as regards the inner courtyard, there is "evidence on a preponderance of probabilities" to establish worship by the Hindus prior to the annexation of Oudh by the British in 1857; it further points out that Muslims have offered no evidence to indicate they were in exclusive possession of the inner structure prior to 1857 since the date of the construction in the sixteenth

Since the Muslim side claimed adverse possession of the disputed site, the court held them accountable to prove uninterrupted, continuous and exclusive possession even before 1856. However, the Hindu side was not required to prove exclusive possession since the burden of proof lies on the party making the claim in a civil suit. Claiming of title through adverse possession, also known as squatter's rights, is when a party occupies a land for a period of time intending to possess it as its own.

"In assessing the title of the Muslims, the physical structure of the mosque is one fact to be taken into consideration. But a claim to possessory title has to be based on exclusive and unimpeded possession which has to be established by evidence," the court said.

Exclusive possession of a property requires a party to prove that no other claimant had access to the property. In the disputed site, Hindus had access by praying to idols under the Babri dome.

Lastly, the court treats the entire disputed site, the inner and outer courtyard as one "composite unit" to determine title.

But the 2010 Allahabad High Court verdict made a clear distinction between the inner and outer courtyard. While the outer courtyard area was awarded to the Nirmohi Akhara, the inner courtyard to the deity Ramlalla and a one-third share to the Waqf board within the disputed site. However, the SC treats the entire 2.77 acre dispute as one unit.

"Despite the setting up of the grill-brick wall in 1857, the Hindus never accepted the division of the inner and the outer courtyard. For the Hindus, the entire complex as a whole was of religious significance. A demarcation by the British for the purposes of maintaining law and order did not obliterate their belief in the relevance of the Garbh-Grih being the birth-place of Lord Ram," the ruling said.

Happy lived to see it: Dalit who laid the first brick

SANTOSH SINGH PATNA, NOVEMBER 9

"IT IS a historic verdict. It has sent out a message of peace and camaraderie to the world, said Kameshwar Choupal, the Dalit VHP leader who laid the first foundation stone for the proposed Ram Temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya in November 1989 — three years before the demolition of the Babri Masjid.

"We have nothing against the Supreme Court giving five acres for a mosque. We were only interested in the land for Ram Lalla Virajman... The verdict has come after 30 years but I am happy it came in my lifetime,' says the 65-year-old former BJP MLC who unsuccessfully contested the 2014 Lok Sabha elections from Supaul. He is now a member of the BIP state executive committee and hails from Supaul's Kamrail village.

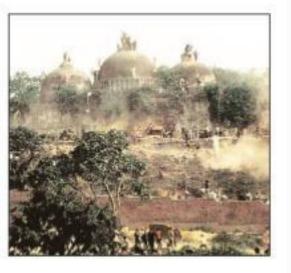
In 1989, as a 35-year-old Sah Sangathan Mantri of the VHP, Choupal, along with a thousand other people from various parts of Bihar had boarded "trains, cars and trucks" to reach Ayodhya.

"We stayed in a camp designated for people from Bihar. The Shankaracharyas and the entire Dharm Sansad was there. It was decided that a person from a deprived section of society would lay the first foundation brick. (Late) VHP leader Ashok Singhal told me I was chosen," recalls Choupal. "It was an emotional moment for me."

After 1989, says Choupal, he has been associated with every movement related to the Ram Temple and Ayodhya. Talking about the days leading up to the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992, Choupal says, "Lakhs of karsevaks had gathered at Ayodhya... We had been waiting for a decision. The demolition of the mosque was a spontaneous outburst... I was not part of it though," says Choupal.



TIMELINE



1885–86 The sub-judge and district judge of Faizabad dismiss a suit by Mahant Raghubar Das seeking to build a temple on land in Ayodhya adjoining the Babri mosque

1949 On December 22-23, idols of Lord Ram and other objects of worship appear under central dome of the Masjid

1950 Two suits are filed before Faizabad court by Gopal Visharad (Suit 1) seeking permanent mandatory injunction restraining Muslims from removing idols of Lord Ram

1959 Nirmohi Akhara files a suit (Suit 3) against Baboo Priya Ram Dutt for possession of the entire property arguing that they were dispossessed of the property in 1949 after the property was entrusted to Dutt

The UP Sunni Central Muslims of Ayodhya file a suit (Suit 4) against Gopal Visharad, Mahant of Nirmohi Akhara, and 22 others seeking a declaration of the title

1986 District Judge of Faizabad orders removal of barriers, locks and brick-grill wall for Hindus to worship the idols

1 Q Q C Bhagwan Sri Ramlalla LJOJ Virajman at Sri Ram Janam Bhoomi Ayodhya, Asthan Sri Ram Janam Bhoomi, Ayodhya file a title suit (Suit 5) represented by "next friend" Deoki Nandan Agarwala, a former judge of the **Allahabad High Court**

Allahabad HC holds that the three parties—Bhagwan Ramlalla Virajman, Nirmohi Akhara and UP Sunni Central Waqf Board — are in joint possession of the disputed 2.77 acres in the absence of a better title, and direct a three-way partition

Citing demolition, court says land for masjid upholds equity, just outcome



AIMPLB's Zafaryab Jilani (left) and Kamal Farooqui (right) along with other advocates addressing a press conference in New Delhi after the verdict. Amit Mehra

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M & **APURVA VISHWANATH** NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

WHILE MAKING over 30 references to the demolition of the Babri Masjid, and calling it "an egregious violation of the rule of law", which took place in "breach of the order of status quo and an assurance given to this court", the Supreme Court resorted to Article 142 of the Constitution to direct the Central government to allocate five acres of land in Ayodhya to the Sunni Central Waqf Board to build a new mosque.

The Article gives the court necessary powers for "doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it".

Saying "the damage to the mosque in 1934, its desecration in 1949 leading to the ouster of the Muslims and the eventual destruction on 6 December 1992 constituted a serious violation of the rule of law", the court said the rationale for granting land for the new mosque was based on "equity and good conscience" and the inadequacy of statutory law.

"Equity and good conscience play a supplementary role in enabling courts to mould the relief in order to ensure just outcome," the court said, while adding that the Sunni Waqf Board did not have evidence to show its possession of the Babri Masjid was 'exclusive'.

The observations are significant as they come against the backdrop of the parties, at the conclusion of the hearing, urging the court to "mould" the relief in such a manner that it reflects "constitutional values".

"The case canvasses the rule of law, religion and law and conquest, besides a myriad of conflicting interests. These cannot always be comprehended within the available statutory framework applicable to the present facts. This makes the role of the court even more sensitive as it must craft a relief that accords with justice, equity and good conscience," the court said.

The Supreme Court added, "Where positive law is silent and equity steps in to furnish a source of law, its content is informed by analogous provisions of the law that furnish(as) a useful guide. This ensures that equity operates within a larger legal framework informed by the values which underline the legitimacy of the legal system as a whole."

The bench also held that equity "as an essential component of justice" formed the final step in the just adjudication of disputes. "After taking recourse to legal principles from varied legal systems, scholarly written work on the subject, and the experience of the Bar and Bench, if no decisive or just outcome could be reached, a judge may apply the principles of equity between the parties to ensure that justice is done. This has often found form in the power of the court to craft reliefs that are both legally sustainable and just."

It added, "The complexities of human history and activity inevitably lead to unique contests — such as in this case, involving religion, history and the law — which the law, by its general nature, is inadequate to deal with. Even where positive law is clear, the deliberately wide amplitude of the power under Article 142 empowers a court to pass an order which accords with justice. For justice is the foundation which brings home the purpose of any legal enterprise and on which the legitimacy of the rule of law rests," the

The bench also refuted the claims of Hindu groups that the idols of Ram under the central dome of the Babri Masjid had existed before the intervening night of December 22-23, 1949. The court concluded that the idols were placed surreptitiously, ruling out the oral evidence given by witnesses from the Hindu sides.

The verdict clarifies repeatedly it cannot claim against "actions of the Mughal rulers against Hindu places of worship in a court of law today" and that the recourse for such claims is not found in law.

"Our history is replete with actions that have been judged to be morally incorrect and even today are liable to trigger vociferous ideological debate. However, the adoption of the Constitution marks a watershed moment where we, the people of India, departed from the determination of rights and liabilities on the basis of our ideology, our religion, the colour of our skin, or the century when our ancestors arrived at these lands and submitted to the rule of law," the court said.

24 mentions of 'secular' in verdict that underlines tolerance

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

IN TRYING to find a solution for a dispute between two religions claiming exclusive rights of worship over a piece of land, the Supreme Court emphasised on the secular and inclusive character of the nation and the Constitution several times.

Though the word 'secular' appears just 24 times in the over thousand-page judgment, it underlines the importance of the principle. In one of the operative paragraphs, the

Supreme Court verdict reads: "The Constitution postulates the equality of all faiths. Tolerance and mutual co-existence nourish the secular commitment of our nation and its people."

The Supreme Court opens the judgment by saying: "The lands of our country have witnessed invasions and dissensions. Yet they have assimilated into the idea of India everyone who sought their providence. whether they came as merchants, travellers or as conquerors. The history and culture of this country have been home to quests for truth, through the material, the political, and the spiritual. This Court is called upon to fulfil its adjudicatory function where it is claimed that two quests for the truth impinge on the freedoms of the other or violate the rule of law."

It mentions that "Parliament determined that independence from colonial rule furnishes a constitutional basis for healing the injustices of the past by providing the confidence to every religious community that their places of worship will be preserved and that their character will not be altered."

The State, it adds, has by enacting the Places of Worship Act "enforced a constitutional commitment and operationalised its constitutional obligations to uphold the equality of all religions and secularism which is a part of the basic features of the Constitution. The Act, it says, "reflects the commitment of India to the equality of all religions".

Independence from colonial rule, the judgment continues, "was a watershed moment to heal the wounds of the past" and "historical wrongs cannot be remedied by the people taking the law in their own hands". By ensuring that the character of places of public worship is preserved the Parliament has "mandated in no uncertain terms that history and its wrongs shall not be used as instruments to oppress the present and the future".

"Our history is replete with actions that have been judged to be morally incorrect and even today are liable to trigger vociferous ideological debate. However, the adoption of the Constitution marks a watershed moment where we, the people of India, departed from the determination of rights and liabilities on the basis of our ideology, our religion the colour of our skin, or the century when our ancestors arrived at these lands, and submitted to the rule of law," the court said.

Talking about setting legal precedents, the judgment mentions that "an attempt has been made in the jurisprudence of this court to demarcate the religious from the secular". The adjudication of civil claims over private property must remain within the domain of the secular if the commitment to constitutional values is to be upheld, it says, and adds that "over four decades ago, the Constitution was amended and a specific reference to its secular fabric was incorporated in the Preamble".

"At its heart, this reiterated what the Constitution always respected and accepted: the equality of all faiths. Secularism cannot be a writ lost in the sands of time by being oblivious to the exercise of religious freedom by everyone," the Supreme Court stated.

It has also expressed that the "value of a secular constitution lies in a tradition of equal deference".

Criminal trial: After 27 yrs, court looks at Kalyan proof

APURVA VISHWANATH NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

THE CRIMINAL trial to fix the liability of the 1992 demolition of the Babri Masjid, an act the Supreme Court referred to as "an egregious violation of the rule of law", is yet to find closure in a trial court in Lucknow.

The CBI has to prove charges against more than 47 BJP leaders and hundreds of unknown kar sevaks in the trial. The prominent accused include BJP lead-

ers L K Advani, Vinay Katiyar, Uma Bharti, Murli Manohar Joshi, Kalyan Singh; VHP leaders Ashok Singhal (deceased), Giriraj Kishore (deceased), Vishnu Hari Dalmia, Champat Rai Bansal; and Shiv Sena leaders Bal Thackeray (deceased) and Moreshwar Save (deceased).

After 27 years, the court is now examining evidence against Kalyan Singh, accused

No. 3 in the chargesheet. Singh, under whose tenure as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh the mosque was razed, is facing charges after he demitted office as Rajasthan governor, extinguishing his constitutional immunity.

The court has so far examined more than 300 witnesses and is now looking at the ev-

In April 2017, a bench of Justices PC Ghose and Rohinton Nariman of the Supreme Court had revived the criminal case by allowing the CBI to add a charge of criminal conspiracy against BJP leaders, including Advani, Joshi, Bharti and Kalyan Singh.

In a 40-page order, the court had said that the leaders and "lakhs of unknown kar sevaks" faced trial for the same offences rioting, promoting enmity among different groups, making statements conducing to public mischief and imputations, assertions prejudicial to national integration among

3-member mediation panel gets only a passing mention in Ayodhya verdict

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

THE SUPREME Court-appointed mediation panel headed by former SC judge FM Ibrahim Kalifulla, whose members spent over six months in an attempt to arrive at an out-ofcourt, amicable settlement in the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi case, found just six passing references in the verdict delivered on Saturday.

"In bringing together the disputants on a common platform for a free and frank dialogue, the mediators have performed a function which needs to be commended. We also express our appreciation of the parties who earnestly made an effort to pursue the mediation proceedings," the court said.

Apart from Justice Kalifulla, Art of Living Foundation founder Sri Sri Ravishankar and senior advocate and mediation expert Sriram



The panel was headed by ex-SC judge F M Ibrahim Kalifulla

Panchu were part of the panel. The court had restrained the media from reporting on the mediation process.

In March 2017, then Chief justice J S may be some litigation in courts.

Khehar had also said that the Ramjanmabhoomi issue "was a sensitive issue that involved faith and must be sorted out through talks". Justice Khehar had also offered to be the mediator.

The mediation proceedings began on March 8 and the final arguments in the case began on August 2, when no settlement was reached. As the hearings were about to conclude, the panel submitted a second report that some of the parties desired to settle the dispute.

The second settlement report was signed by Mr Zufar Ahmad Faruqi, Chairman of the Sunni Central Waqf Board. The Indian Express had reported that the settlement had four components, including an agreement between all parties to freezing the status of all places of worship, and to make a formal request to the Supreme Court to push for a freeze on all such matters on which there

Culture Minister congratulates ASI, says its report to come out as a book

Verdict says ASI findings, contested by mosque parties, cannot be dismissed as weak evidence

KAUNAIN SHERIFF, ANANTHAKRISHNAN G & DIVYA A NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL Survey of India (ASI) report, which was submitted in the Supreme Court after excavations at the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid site in 2003, will be brought out in the public domain in the form of a book, announced Union Culture Minister Prahlad Patel on Saturday.

Speaking to reporters at his residence, Patel also congratulated the ASI team which led the excavation. "I am grateful to all the experts who worked on the report," he said.

The ASI had carried out excavations at the disputed site in 2003 on the directions of the Allahabad High Court, and found features of a 10th-century temple beneath the site where the 16th-century Babri Masjid stood until its demolition in 1992.

In its verdict Saturday, the Supreme Court

said the ASI's findings could not be dismissed as conjectural and weak evidence, as prayed for by the Muslim side. "The report which has been submitted by the ASI is an opinion; an opinion nevertheless of an expert governmental agency... The process of drawing inferences from data is an essential element of archaeology as a discipline but to reject this exercise as conjectural and hypothetical would be a disservice both to the discipline and to the underlying process," the five-judge bench ruled.

However, while agreeing with the ASI that there was an underlying 12th-century structure of "Hindu religious origin" at the disputed site and that the mosque was constructed upon "the foundation of the pre-existing structure", the court stressed that there is "no specific finding" in the ASI report that that this was "a temple dedicated to Lord Ram". It also underlined that the ASI had not given any finding on whether any temple was

demolished to make way for the mosque. The judgment also noted that there was



Tight security near the disputed site in Ayodhya on Saturday. Vishal Srivastav

a gap of four centuries "between the twelfth century to which the underlying structure is dated and the construction of the mosque in the sixteenth century" and that "no evidence has been placed on the record in relation to the course of human history" for this period. The court rejected the Uttar Pradesh Sunni

Central Wakf Board's contention that a structure unearthed during the ASI excavation was part of an Idgah. "Initially, the defence that was urged... was that there was no underlying structure which was demolished for the construction of the mosque. Confronted with the findings in the ASI report, the Sunni Central

Wagf Board altered the stance and sought to claim that among the structures that came to be revealed... was an Idgah or Kanati Masiid." the judgment said.

The Muslim side had argued that the presence of lime-surkhi plaster on this wall was proof that the structure dated back to the Islamic period as lime surkhi was introduced by Mughal rulers. But the court referred to evidence that lime water was used in the 3rd century during the Kushana period in Takshshila and Pakistan.

The court also took into account travelogues and gazetteers. These included William Finch, an Englishman who visited Ayodhya in 1608-1611 and wrote that he did not find any building of importance of Islamic origin there, Jesuist missionary Joseph Tieffenthaler whose writings make a reference to the place of birth of Ram, and to the demolition of village Ramkot by Aurangzeb.

On scriptural evidence, the court said this is "susceptible to a multitude of inferences". "The court would do well not to step into the pulpit by adjudging which, if any, of competing interpretations should be accepted. Faith is a matter for the individual believer... The value of a secular constitution lies in a tradition of equal deference."

Speaking to The Sunday Express, Buddha Rashmi Mani, who led the team that carried out the ASI excavation, said, "Once the report is accessible to all, any doubts whatsoever in the minds of people will be cleared". "There is clinching evidence in the report about the existence of not one but three temple below the disputed site," he added.

While Mani's report had been hailed by those affiliated with the Sangh Parivar, the Muslim groups had criticised it. The Sunni Central Waqf Board had accused the ASI of being partisan in its excavation work.

Earlier too, in 1975-76 and 1979, the ASI had conducted excavations in Ayodhya However, these digs, led by BB Lal, had been outside the disputed area. Though the results were not published in that period, between 1975 and 1985 an archaeological project was carried out in Ayodhya to examine 14 sites referenced to in the Ramayana, including the Babri site. In October 1990, an article in RSS magazine Manthan by Lal claimed that they found pillar-bases of what may have been a temple at the site.

WORDLY WISE

BE GRACIOUS, MASTER, AND ALLOW THE WORLDS TO REST FROM TROUBLE NOW — VALMIKI, RAMAYANA

The Indian EXPRESS

∞ FOUNDED By ∞ RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

INDIA, A TEMPLE, AND A MOSQUE

All parties must respect, abide by SC verdict on Ayodhya. BJP, in power, has an added responsibility: Make it about future, not past

STHE RAMJANMABHOOMI-BABRI Masjid title suit in Ayodhya dragged on for over seven decades, it became clear that, in the end, it would have to be settled in court, resolution would have to come within the ambit of law and the Constitution. Politics had, far from facilitating any meaningful give and take, only deepened the polarisation. And mediation efforts outside the court had invited charges of bad faith. Closure would have to come, it became evident, not by the brute calculations of majority and minority, nor by taking the legislative route, but by invoking a higher principle. A solution would have to be situated in justice and due process, and all parties would have to respect and abide by it.

The Supreme Court verdict on Saturday, November 9, which recognises the Hindu claim over the disputed land, while directing the building of a mosque on a suitable plot elsewhere in Ayodhya, meets that promise, by and large. The unanimity of the five-judge Constitution bench led by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi is not an incidental artefact of the ruling — it is part of its essence. In the aftermath, it instantly lowers temperatures. And going ahead, it creates crucial room for all political players to speak to their constituencies.

But of course, even a unanimous verdict sparks questions. In a democracy, on a dispute as tangled and resonant with claims, complexities and ambiguities as Ayodhya, a tidy closure will always elude.

Admittedly, the nature of the task before the court was almost impossibly fraught and, to its great credit, it has tried to find a balance between pronouncing on a matter that involves faith, belief, contested history and bringing into play settled principles of evidence sustainable in law. It has recognised the Hindu claim over the disputed site because of the existence not merely of faith and belief but of "actual worship down the centuries". Crucially, however, the court has also acknowledged that the damage to the mosque in communal conflict in 1934, its desecration in 1949 when idols were installed on the pulpit below the central dome, and its destruction in 1992, "constituted a serious violation of the rule of law". Under exercise of its powers under Article 142 of the Constitution to do "complete justice", the court has, therefore, directed that 5 acres be handed to the Sunni Waqf Board by the Central government out of the acquired land, or by the UP government within the city of Ayodhya, simultaneous to the handing over of the disputed site to a trust.

The court prefaces its verdict by saying it has been "tasked with the resolution of a dispute whose origins are as old as the idea of India itself." It unambiguously underlines that "title cannot be established on the basis of faith and belief." But after invoking the Constitution and constitutional values of justice, fraternity, human dignity and equality of religious belief, the final settlement it makes is of a bare title suit. This raises a question: Could the act of judgment have been more an act of imagination of a more equal justice? Could it be that the Allahabad HC order of a three-way ownership of the disputed land offered a cue?

These questions have no immediate answers. But one thing is clear. The Supreme Court verdict must now be taken forward and built upon by all stakeholders. In his address to the nation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has spoken of a new resolve, a new dawn, of the need for India to leave behind past bitterness. The Opposition parties have signalled their acceptance of the verdict. There are signs of ferment among Muslim groups, with the IUML backing the ruling, but the Muslim Law Board expressing dissatisfaction. It is the right of the Muslim side of the dispute to ask for a review, but that decision must be taken calmly, wisely.

For the politics of secularism, the verdict brings the promise of freedom — from the burdens and dead-ends of a congealed dispute. It is now faced with the task of renewal — to find a new vocabulary, and to fill it with new issues and meanings. For the BJP, too, which used the Ramjanmabhoomi dispute and the demolition of the Babri masjid to propel itself to relevance and power, this is a moment of challenge: At a time when the judicial clearing of the path to the temple helps it to claim political vindication, as the ruling party at the Centre and a majority of states, in a country where almost half of the population was born after 1992, it needs to make the Ayodhya verdict more about the future, less about the past.

Ram's political triumph

The reconfiguration of Hinduism, where political rather than spiritual forces represent it, is now complete

PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

THE BIRTH OF the Ramayana, as we know it, is in an act of grief. A nishada hunter strikes down the male of a pair of krauncha birds. The unslain female bird utters a mournful cry. Unable to bear the separation, she too dies. This primal scene of crime, and the anguish it generates, prompts Valmiki to compose the Ramayana. But the deep sorrow of that crime haunts the story. Ram has his triumphal moments - vanquishing Ravana, establishing Ram Rajya. Ram always sides with duty, some exalted high ideal that makes his own desires irrelevant. That is his greatness. But there is also no escaping the fact that Ram himself never finds inner repose. His deepest moments of anguish arise precisely when he acts as a sovereign, overcoming his natural *karuna*, sidelining it for some kingly duty. It is almost as if his most political of acts, the banishment of Sita, is contrary to his own nature. It is when Ram acts as a political agent, that his torment is most pronounced. His political acts, sometimes, make him guilty of wrongdoing. He is saved, if at all, only by the forgiveness of Sita as Bhavabhuti perceptively noted. It is Ram in the end who is most in need of karuna. The fact that Ram politically triumphs is not always the moment that he is morally redeemed, or made whole. So Ram has triumphed politically.

The Supreme Court has declared that he, in his incarnate form, has sovereign rights to 2.77 acres of disputed land. Any other claimants to the land, especially the waqf board, cannot claim adverse possession to the land. The sovereignty of Ram's empire over the hearts and minds of Hindus has been resoundingly affirmed. He is an object of worship, a locus of faith whose importance cannot be denied. He has politically triumphed over all the deniers: Those who denied he existed, and those who denied that there was an attempt to erase his temples. He has triumphed because a way has been cleared for the central government to manage Ram's land, to create a grand structure to mark his divinity. His sovereignty, and our faith in him, can now be affirmed in legalese, and etched

The Supreme Court had a difficult job on its hands. It is a reflection on the state of India's politics that the idea that the pre-1991 status quo ante would be restored was ruled out right from the start. It is hard to imagine what Indian politics would be like if the Court had asked for the restoration of the Babri Masjid. So, the only two other options were a victory for the Hindu side, or some imaginative solution that did equal justice to all kinds of claims involved in this dispute. The Allahabad High Court judgment, flawed as it was, was very explicitly a balancing act: Divide the property, respect all faiths, and put the past behind us. In some ways, this judgment has gone for a corner solution. It does say, none of the claimants can prove adverse possession; it does recognise that the demolition of the Babri Masjid was an act of political vandalism. It provides compensatory relief for the waqf board. But in its operative part, this judgment is the opposite of the Allahabad High Court — no division of property; one faith nominally given priority over another, and an affirmation that long gone historical wrongs can continue to be the basis of new legal claims.

But will this moment of political triumph solve Ram's inner torment? Or will it only exacerbate it? We hope that the judgment, right or wrong, will depoliticise the issue. It has been settled. Let us move on. This would be the best option, a chance for Indian secularism to get a fresh start. But there are reasons to be nervous on three fronts: Psychological, institutional and politi-



C R Sasikumar

cal. For Hindu nationalists, this is a moment in a long historical struggle. They identify Hindus as subjugated. The demolition of the Babri Masjid was a cathartic moment, and the building of a temple will be the denouement for a long repressed civilisation.

Has that cathartic need now been satiated? Or will this simply embolden those who see politics as an apocalyptic conflict between Hindus and others, to assert their pride even more insistently? Second, in public form we all respect the unanimous view of the Supreme Court. But let us not pretend that, if not in this case, in a wider context, the Court's credibility is in serious doubt. Will marginalised groups read this as a loss of faith in the fairness of Indian institutions or not? Politically, does this judgment deepen the fusing of religion and politics? In some ways, the institutional fusion has been deepening for a while the political, legal and religious movements have all intermingled. But with a central government trust, now in charge of effectively building a temple,

the state is the medium through which Hindu sovereignty is now being exercised. The political reconfiguration of Hinduism, where political rather than spiritual forces now represent it, is now complete. We all ardently wish that India

moves on. The settlement should take the issue, and all allied psychological complexes of Hindu subjugation off the table. But here is an outlandish thought. A government trust will now determine how worship at the site will be materialised. Is it just possible that instead of a triumphal monument to Ram's political glory — for this is all that the temple will be under present circumstances – can we build something genuinely congruent with Ram's greatness? Something that marks a new kind of holiness not predicated on the revenge of history or the narcissism of group identities? Can we create a new liturgy that is genuinely inclusive of all religions, and looks to dawns of the future rather than glories of the past? What this might be can be left to more imaginative minds to devise. But such a gesture would be, in the face of this legal triumph, an even more poignant way to move on. It will save both secularism from identification with majoritarianism and Hinduism from identification with a prideful communal identity. The Court decision does not foreclose this option, and it would be entirely in keeping with Ram's karuna. No one disputed Ram. But making the fate of 2.77 acres of land a litmus test of respect for Ram, and for the fate of a civilisation, was an act of vandalism on Hinduism as well. Ram's political triumph should not leave him, like in Valmiki's Ramayana, with an inner torment, at war with his better more compassionate self.

> The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express

PEACE AND A TEMPLE

greatness?

The Ram temple struggle is over, let's hope for harmony for all now

A government trust will now

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RAM MADHAV

THE RAM TEMPLE at Ayodhya will soon be a reality, now that the legal hurdles have been removed by the Supreme Court.

Symbols of vandalism and iconoclasm at the most sacred places of Hindus, like Ayodhya, have been very big sources of embarrassment as the sentiments associated with such places are quite deep-rooted. It is not just about a temple or a mosque. There are any number of thriving mosques in the country. There are more than a hundred mosques in the vicinity of Ayodhya, many of them unkept. It is about the renewed sense of assertion of a nation.

Historian Arnold Toynbee talks about it in the context of a church in Warsaw pulled down by the Poles. "In the course of the first Russian occupation of Warsaw (1914-1915) the Russians had built an Eastern Orthodox Christian cathedral on this central spot in the city that had been the capital of the once independent Roman Catholic Christian country Poland. The Russians had done this to give the Poles a continuous ocular demonstration that the Russians were their masters. After reestablishment of Poland's independence in 1918, the Poles pulled this cathedral down... I do not greatly blame the Polish government for having pulled down that Russian church. The purpose for which the Russians had built it had been not religious but political, and the purpose had also been intentionally offensive", Toynbee said.

"Perhaps the Poles were really kinder in destroying the Russians' self-discrediting monument in Warsaw," he added. The Muslims should look at Ayodhya probably from the same perspective. They are saved by the Supreme Court from the embarrassment of defending the indefensible in the name of religion. It might be instructive for them to remember that Islam came to India from West Asia not just riding over the shoulders of invaders like Mahmud of Ghazni and Babur, but also through Sufi saints of the 13th century like Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, who came to spread the message of love and harmony. Ajmer Sharif is a standing testimony to the fact that India is an inclusive and pluralist

civilisation where all religions thrive. Hindus too would be making a mistake if they look at Ayodhya from a religious prism or from the prism of "avenging historical wrongs". Leaders of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement as well as the other Hindu organisations have also stressed upon it in their statements after the verdict. A similar historic event happened about 70 years ago: The Somnath temple, destroyed by Ghazni several centuries before the arrival of Mughal invaders, was rebuilt in 1950. The then president of India, Rajendra Prasad, had said, "By rising from its ashes again, this temple... will proclaim to the world that no man and no power in the world can destroy that for which people have boundless faith...

Our only aim is to proclaim anew our attachment to the faith, convictions and values on which our religion has rested since immemorial ages.'

Ram Janmabhoomi is about those values. Together, with a magnificent Ram temple at Ayodhya, shall rise a nation imbued with those values that Mahatma Gandhi, whose 150th birth anniversary we are celebrating, used to describe Ram Rajya. Ram epitomised values like respect, love and dignity. These values are not reserved for Ram's own people alone, but everyone including the enemies. When he encountered Ravan on the battlefield, he was said to have bowed to him in respect before aiming at him. For him, material wealth alone was not the ultimate goal in life. "Even if Lanka were to be a kingdom of gold, I shall consider my mother and motherland to be superior to it," he declared.

There were very few intellectuals appreciating the deeper message of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement in the 1990s, when it was at its peak, except for Girilal Jain, Arun Shourie, and a handful of others. The larger liberal intellectual establishment of the country was ferociously anti-temple, forcing Nobel laureate VS Naipaul to comment in an interview that, "It is not enough to abuse them or to use that fashionable word from Europe Fascism. There is a big historical development going on in India. Wise men should understand it. Rather, they should use it for intellectual transformation of India."

It was a long struggle that has finally seen its culmination today. Swami Chinmayananda, eminent spiritual guru, used to say: "This whole fight for Ayodhya is for 'Ayuddha' - non-war". Let us hope that with the rise of the Ram temple, this country shall see lasting peace and harmony.

The writer is national general secretary, BJP, and director, India Foundation



FAITH WINS OVER LAW

The Ayodhya judgment is a setback to evidence law with differential burden of proof being demanded from different parties

FAIZAN MUSTAFA AND AYMEN MOHAMMED

THE SUPREME COURT has tried to please everyone in its much awaited judgment on the property dispute in Ayodhya. The worshippers of Lord Ram have been given land for the construction of a temple at the very site where the Babri Masjid stood between 1528 and December 6, 1992.

The Nirmohi Akhara has welcomed the judgment as it will be given some representation in the trust that would construct the temple. The Sunni Wagf Board too must have the satisfaction that the highest court has accepted their central argument that the Babri Masjid was a Sunni, and not Shia, waqf property, and the same was not constructed after demolishing the Ram temple. Thus, the court has rejected the Hindu right's narrative on the Babri mosque. This false narrative not only was responsible for galvanising the ordinary Hindus, but also gave

some sort of legitimacy to divisive electoral politics. Similarly, Muslim grievances about the trespass in 1949 and the tragic demolition of the mosque in 1992 have been accepted by the court. In fact, the court has accepted that there was an injury caused to them — i.e. violation of their legal right. Accordingly, the court, invoking its extraordinary jurisdiction of doing complete justice, has given them almost double the land in Ayodhya.

The Ayodhya dispute did not begin in 1528 with Babur, the founder of Mughal empire, but in 1886 with litigation in the British courts over a chabutra (courtyard) that was constructed outside the Babri Masjid by one Mahant Raghubar Das in the late 1850s. When the British prevented the construction of a canopy over the chabutra, Das unsuccessfully litigated his cause in three judicial forums. Each time, the courts emphasised status quo

— that is, the Muslims would pray inside the Babri Masjid while the Hindus had limited rights to pray at the chabutra. Surprisingly, the apex court has rejected title of Muslims for want of proof of title document. This may have repercussions for several temples and mosques. The court rejected the revenue record and gazetteers as sufficient proof. Even the British grant papers were said to be sufficient only for proving the upkeep of the mosque.

In law, the phrase "status quo" means the situation at the time of the judgment must not be changed. The Babri litigation is a story of changing "status quo". On the night of December 22-23, 1949, trespassers placed Lord Ram's idol under the central dome of the Babri Masjid. In a few days after the incident, a new status quo would be sanctified by the local

Certainly in matters of freedom of religion, the court should not have any say, but deciding title suit on the basis of faith is a thorny proposition.

courts: Muslims were not allowed to pray inside the mosque, the idol would not be removed, and that Hindus would have a "limited" right to pray and pujaris would ensure daily bhog. By one act of criminal trespass, a mosque was converted into a temple.

On February 1, 1986, District Judge K M Pandey would order the unlocking of gates that acted as a "barrier' between the idols inside the masjid and the devotees who had come for the darshan. This decision had the blessing of then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who in order to mollify the self-anointed regressive Muslim leadership would subsequently introduce the bill to reverse the Shah Bano judg-

ment on February 25, 1986. The demolition of the mosque on December 6. 1992 was also the destruction of the rule of law. The SC has rightly criticised it and accepted that

it was in violation of the "status quo" order passed by it. Within a few hours of the mosque's demolition, a makeshift temple had come up at the structure's location. Within a month of the demolition, the Allahabad High Court allowed for darshan at the makeshift temple. In 1994, the Supreme Court, while dealing with the Acquisition of Certain Areas of Ayodhya Act, ordered the protection of the latest "status quo": No mosque but a makeshift temple and legally protected darshan at the site.

In 2010, the Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court ruled that the title suit must be decided as a question of joint-ownership of property. Muslims, the deity Ram Lalla and Nirmohi Akhara were to get one-third share of the disputed property. The Supreme Court has overruled this judgment and rightly held that it was

not a partition suit.

The judgment will be remembered for the victory of faith over the rule of law as the Supreme Court considered religious beliefs even in deciding a property dispute, and despite conceding that faith cannot confer title, it still went ahead to give property to worshippers on the basis of faith The court should not have any say in matters of freedom of religion, but deciding title suit on the basis of faith is a thorny proposition. In brief, it is the red letter day for the constitutional right to religion but a setback to property law and a setback to evidence law with differential burden of proof being demanded from different parties.

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JNU ESCAPE ARTISTES

THE FACT that Nobel prize winner Abhijit Banerjee was imprisoned in 1983 in Tihar for 12 days for participating in a dharna against the then JNU vice-chancellor has evoked interest. Sunil Gupta, the former legal adviser for Tihar Jail, in his new book, Black Warrant, provides an interesting postscript to the tale. Some 250 JNU students were arrested for arson and rioting, but amazingly, 170 students, including 55 women, managed to escape right under the noses of the jailors. A large number of visitors met the students on their first day in jail. In those days Tihar visitors were identified simply by a stamp on their wrists. The students took advantage of the hot and sweaty weather in May to transfer the stamp image from one wrist to another. The bumbling iail authorities did not notice that three times the number of visitors left the jail as had entered. They also discovered belatedly that the arrested students had all given fake names and police never bothered to verify their identities. So the escapees could not be traced. Incidentally, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was then a member of the Free Thinkers group, one of the two student bodies which organised the protest.

CRUMBLING HOUSE

The government's decision to convert the historic Parliament House, built in 1927, into a museum is not without reason. Signs of ageing of the iconic circular structure have been apparent for some time. In the 1990s, when Najma Heptulla was the deputy chairperson of the Rajya Sabha, a terrible stench sometimes pervaded the House. Eventually the drainpipes under the floor had to be dug up and diverted. During P V Narasimha Rao's tenure as prime minister, there was pandemonium in the Lok Sabha one day when a piece of cement fell off the roof. To keep away pigeons that regularly perched and cooed in the Lok Sabha's high ceiling, a large net was installed under the dome. Later, the windows of the dome were permanently shut to keep the birds out. Since a major gas fire in the kitchen, cooking in the heritage building has been forbidden. Food is now brought from outside and warmed on electric heaters. Thankfully the parliamentary staff seems to have successfully tackled the monkey menace. There was a time when simians roamed the circular verandahs.

Daunting Task

The Jal Jeevan Mission under the Ministry of Jal Shakti is envisaged to achieve for Narendra Modi's second tenure what the Swachh Abhiyan campaign did for his first. The mission's budget is a whopping \$51 billion and the goal is set very high. At present only 18 per cent of rural households have tap water connection and the



Ageing of the iconic Parliament building has been apparent for some time. File

aim is to provide the entire country safe drinking water. PM Modi hopes to replicate the success of WASMO (the Water Sanitation Management Organisation), which he established in Gujarat in 2007 as chief minister. Today, 78 per cent of rural households in Gujarat get water supply through taps. Modi has ensured that those recruited for the water ministry have domain knowledge. Secretary Parameswaran Iyer has focused on projects concerning water and sanitation through most of his career, including in the Swachh Bharat Mission, Additional

Secretary Bharat Lal is usually associated with his tenure as resident commissioner, Gujarat, and as joint secretary in Rashtrapati Bhavan, but he has worked earlier both with water projects in the Rural Development Ministry and with WASMO in Gujarat.

NOT SO MEEK

N C Saxena, who was a member of the National Advisory Council (NAC) during UPA time, in his recent book, What Ails the IAS, suggests that Manmohan Singh

as prime minister did not follow Congress president Sonia Gandhi's writ unquestioningly, as has been alleged. He notes that Singh and his adviser, Montek Ahluwalia, often differed with Gandhi. who chaired the NAC. The PM was not in favour of safety net programmes such as NREGA, for example, writes Saxena. Significantly, the NAC was not reconstituted immediately after the Congress returned to power in 2009 and, according to the book, Singh reluctantly revived it in March 2010. The Food Security Bill was delayed for two years by the then PM and the Act finally passed with modifications because of pressure from Gandhi, it adds. Saxena also points out that Singh did not renew the membership of three NAC members, including the outspoken Harsh Mander, in 2012 even though Gandhi herself acknowledged their valuable contributions.

FACES TO REMEMBER

Well-known artist and Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha MP Jogen Chowdhury, whose term expires next March, has put his years in Parliament to good use. He has sketched the faces of many colleagues in the House over the years, including Manmohan Singh, Smriti Irani, Sitaram Yechury, Amit Shah, Ghulam Nabi Azad and the late Arun Jaitley and Sushma Swaraj. The artist plans to compile his parliamentary sketches for a book. Chowdhury describes his experience as an MP as, "invaluable for an artist. It was like watching different characters on a stage".

An adda with the Finance Minister

WHILE WAITING for Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to appear at the Express Adda last week in the glittering ballroom of the St Regis Hotel, I got chatting with some important businessmen. I asked them what the mood was now in Mumbai's mighty corridors of commercial power. They said without hesitation, "The mood is gloomy. Nothing is happening at all on the investment front and the government is not paying its bills so there is no improvement on infrastructure... The NHAI cannot expect roads to be built if it doesn't pay its contractors." As soon as they finished talking, these worthy gentlemen looked nervously around and said that they would be grateful if I did not quote them. So they shall remain nameless. Suffice it to say that what they said is something I hear almost daily in this city, whether I am talking to big businessmen or small shopkeepers.

businessman who also requested anonymity, "We had hoped that Modi's first Budget after winning a second term would indicate signs of major reforms, but this did not happen. They say that the Budget was prepared by bureaucrats and handed to the Finance Minister to read out which is why there was nothing new in it. That is unfortunate. The situation in the private sector is so grim that solutions will only be found if Modi appoints an economic czar, like he has a political czar in Amit Shah." When I asked if Nirmala Sitharaman could become that czarina, he said she had done a good thing by lowering corporate taxes but not much else had happened. I arrived early at the Adda to get a

In the words of one big

seat close enough to the stage. I wanted a chance to ask the Finance Minister a question I have been longing to ask her about, something she said while imposing her super-rich tax in the Budget. She had said it would affect less than 5,000 super-rich Indians so she had no problem imposing it. I wanted to ask Nirmala Sitharaman if she was ashamed that in a country of more than a billion people there were only 5,000 super-rich Indians. So as soon as the floor was open for questions, I asked my question. She said she would like 'millions of Indians' to come into the super-rich bracket. What was she doing to make this happen, I persisted, and she said, "I have lowered corporate taxes, haven't I?" She smiled as she said this so I was not sure if she was being ironic or serious. But, the truth is that she will have to do much, much more as Finance Minister if we are to see that miserable figure of 5,000 rise to even 50,000 by the end of Narendra Modi's second term as Prime Minister. At the moment super-rich Indians are fleeing in their thousands to countries in which it is easier to do business.

The Prime Minister routinely announces proudly that India has gone up many notches on the international charts that measure the ease of doing business. If only he could wander unnoticed in the city that we grandly call India's commercial capital, he would discover that he has little to be cheerful about. There is a peculiar menace in the air that has intensified in his second term because petty officials in positions of huge regulatory power appear to believe that it is open season on businessmen. It is as if they are conspiring to ensure that India remains stuck in a sort of undeclared licence raj, that now comes in the form of regulations instead of licences. It is no surprise at all that investment has

not picked up. Unless it does, there is little hope that those 12 million new jobs that need to be created every year will begin to happen. Wherever I go these days, I meet fashionably dressed young men who have about them a restless, angry quality. When I stop to talk to them, they tell me that they are all educated and so do not think that they should become farmers. In any case, they say, there are too many people in every family already employed on the farm. They want real jobs, they say, jobs that will enable them to better their lives and better the lives of their children. The dream of prosperity that Modi sold them remains a dream. It is these restless, angry young men who are meant to be India's greatest asset and they are losing hope. If there is one single factor that could cause a sudden, sharp drop in Modi's immense personal popularity, some day soon, it is his seeming inability to chase away the dark clouds that continue to hover darkly over the economy. Modi's ministers who blame this enduring downturn on the global situation fool only themselves. Nobody believes

what they say.

When snooping brought down a CM and a PM

Flash back to the heady

when Rajiv Gandhi was

days of the late 1980s,

on the decline. And

Ramakrishna Hegde,

the charismatic Janata

was seen as a potential



AS ALLEGATIONS of illegal phone-tapping rock the Karnataka Assembly, with the CBI investigation revealing that police were snooping in on several public figures in the state, it's déjà vu all over again for politics in India. The recent WhatsApp row and the storm it has kicked up in political corridors — while the Opposition alleged that the government had a role in the snooping, the latter brought up the "bugging" of then finance minister Pranab Mukherjee's office during the UPA regime in 2011 — is only another version of this cloak-and-dagger drama that's old hat for Indian politicians.

Flash back to the heady days of the late 1980s, when Rajiv Gandhi, once hailed as 'Mr Clean' by the media, was on the decline. And Ramakrishna Hegde, the charismatic Janata Party chief minister of Karnataka, was in the ascendant, widely seen as a potential prime ministerial candidate from the non-Congress camp. His two consecutive victories in the 1983 and 1985 Assembly elections in Karnataka had alarmed all his rivals in

the Janata Party, who also nursed prime ministerial ambitions.

In 1988, media reports surfaced to the effect that Veerappa Moily, leader Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly, was Party CM of Karnataka, trying to lure some ruling Janata Party MLAs to the Congress. The reports prime ministerial were based on some tape-recordings. Moily, candidate from the instead of being apologetic for what was clearly an act of political impro-

priety, came out all outraged that he had been subjected to snooping.

With Hegde's detractors, particularly Subramanian Swamy, moving forward to politically ambush him, the allegation followed that Hegde had ordered the tapping of telephones of 51 politicians in Karnataka. The Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, empowered the Home Secretary to permit the Deputy Inspector General of Police (Intelligence) of the state concerned to intercept telephonic conversations of certain categories of people. Hegde's response was one of complete denial. "I practise value-based politics," he famously underlined.

Hegde failed to realise that the other

side was well prepared to take the matter to a conclusive end. The issue came up in Parliament, with Union Minister of Communications Bir Bahadur Singh announcing that some 50 telephone numbers had been tapped in Karnataka. He cited evidence, including orders signed by the DIG (Intelligence), for tapping telephones of people, to back his assertion.

On August 10, 1988, Hegde tendered his resignation and was succeeded by his party colleague S R Bommai. The political objective realised, everybody gave up on the issue. Though it did not mark the end of Hegde's political career, he ceased being a front-runner for the top job.

Three years later, in March 1991, allegations of snooping resulted in another casualty, triggering the collapse of the Congress-backed Chandra Shekhar government at the Centre, barely four months after it had assumed office.

The allegation that former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi was being spied upon by a couple of Haryana policemen was as bizarre as the arrangement of a 64-member breakaway faction of the Janata Dal enjoying power with the outside support of the 197-member Congress.

On March 2, 1991, the minders of Rajiv Gandhi caught two men, Prem Singh and Raj Singh, from a roadside spot close to 10, Janpath. They were sipping tea hawked by a small-time vendor, when some peo-

> ple suddenly descended on the scene and forcibly took them away. Dressed in plainclothes, the men confessed to being Haryana CID personnel. According to Haryana's political folklore, Rajiv Gandhi was tipped off by Ranjit Singh, younger brother and rival of then Haryana chief minister Om Prakash Chautala, who was among leading lights of Chandra Shekhar's Samajwadi

non-Congress camp Janata Party (Rashtriya). That was reason enough for Rajiv Gandhi to pull the rug

from under Chandra Shekhar's feet. The latter tried reaching out to the former to dispel all his misgivings, but in vain. Gandhi was insistent upon Chandra Shekhar's resignation. Left with no choice, Chandra Shekhar put in his papers four days later, on March 6, 1991.

As in the Hegde case, no one showed any interest in getting to the bottom of the snooping charge against the Haryana policemen. It was never disclosed, if at all, who had ordered them to spy on Rajiv Gandhi. And also, what information the two men had gathered or could possibly gather by standing in a bylane of 10, Janpath.

& WORK **VIJAYANTA ARYA**



'Do I have to go back, my children ask me'



Delhi Police personnel on protest in the Capital last week following a clash with lawyers. Express photo

THERE CONTINUES to be a lot of curiosity around women in police. Every time a girl opts for khaki, those around her raise their brows in concern. How will it be like, who will marry her, how will she raise a family, oh there are unlimited work hours, what about her safety?

I remember that as an under-training officer whenever I would be out at night for patrolling or surprise checks, my parents and particularly my father would call and ask, Tere naal kinne gunman ne (How many armed personnel do you have with you)?', and I would emphatically say 'Oh, there are many of us'. It's not easy for our caretakers to reconcile to the fact that their

tender ones, who till recently were under constant supervision, guidance and protection, must suddenly take on the world.

Once you wear the khaki, it becomes you, it is your soul, it is inseparable. Even if the journey of a khaki-clad woman is not easy, she gives the uniform a different dimension. When 'she' is khaki, it is the colour of courage, the colour of compassion, the colour of

confidence, and above all, the colour of sacrifice in the service of the nation.

In that role, a woman is a police officer, a daughter, a sister, a wife, a daughterin-law and a mother, all at the same time. Recent incidents in the capital and other parts of the country show that khaki faces challenges of varied kinds from innumerable quarters. And a woman police offi-

cer's professionalism and competence get judged every time she encounters a situation. There is a natural comparison with a 'male' colleague, and if he could have done it better.

Facing violent mobs is part of our routine duties, and at times, segments that are part of the crowd use the opportunity to rough up women officers, deriving sadistic pleasure from taking on women in positions of power, with khaki a vivid symbol of it. Also they look upon us as 'soft' targets. They think they can deter us from leading, from doing our duty, and compel us into retreating by violating our personal space.

A woman police officer's competence and professionalism get judged every time she encounters a situation. There is a natural comparison with a 'male' colleague, and if he could have done it better than her

wards making social spaces safer for them. As part of the job, like every policeman, we sacrifice own families. Most

However, they fail, as

they do not understand

that injury to any

woman or man in khaki

is not an assault on the

individual but a collec-

tive blow against every

one of us tied by the

thread of khaki. We take

pride in it, as we stand up

for crimes against

women and strive to-

days our children have gone to sleep by the time we reach home. There are no regulated meal times, not just for us but our families too. Asked about my children's ages and classes, I often take a minute before I can reply. The first question my children, aged seven and five, ask me when I get home is do I have to go back. They know that even if I am sleeping next to them at night, I may have to leave anytime because duty calls.

More than half the time police personnel have to seek extension for their children's school homework because we forget to look into their notebooks. My children are growing up without me, literally.

Since my husband is also in the police service (Devender Arya is DCP Southwest) our days are quite similar — endless, routineless. Quality family time is difficult to come by, simply because it is unusual for both of us to be home at the same time. There is no concept of a weekend because the week never ends. And on all occasions warranting celebration like festivals, we have to be extra vigil and alert. There is also a great deal of role reversal, with both of us playing mother or father depending on our availability. But, since police personnel have committed themselves to the service of the nation, I feel families have to be ready for these sacrifices.

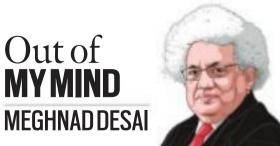
While all professions come with their share of hazards, this call for a little extra puts a police job apart. Every time we fall, we resolve to rise up, stronger than ever, surprising everyone, including ourselves.

I write this today, with all my love, for khaki and women in khaki. Dear colleagues, let no one bottle the genie, continue to make magic in everything that you do, wherever you go.

"Har ladai ki tarah, iss kashmkash mein bhi saath hain/Ek dusre se hum hain, hamare ik se jazbaat hain (Like every fight, we are together in this one too/It's not you and me who make we, but we are one and the same)."

Arya is a 2009 batch IPS officer currently serving as DCP, North West Delhi

Out of **MY MIND**



I WISH the contract to renovate the surroundings of the Raisina Hills, with Parliament, the North and South Blocks, had not been awarded before the recent Emergency on the air pollution front. Although Delhi air later changed from 'deathly' to 'poor', the viability of Delhi as a habitat needs to be questioned. Delhi is overcrowded, overbuilt, with far too many cars. There is no municipal governance one can discern which has any interest and/or effectiveness in environment control. The AAP government has stopped behaving like a bunch of teenagers and be-

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Dilli Chhodo: Time for a new Capital

gun to do serious work. But the Opposition behaves in a manner (with BJP leader Vijay Goel flaunting an SUV to defy odd-even regulations) which does not assure citizens (or even a frequent visitor like myself) that they understand the seriousness of the crisis facing Delhi.

The answer to the problem is at hand but requires boldness and an ambitious vision, which means Prime Minister Narendra Modi has to step in. There is a need to decongest Delhi. But this is also the right time, in the 70th year as a sovereign democratic republic, to ask whether India should have a brand new Capital free of the burden of memories of Old Emperors. Delhi is a capital city by accident. It is

at the gate of India, from where invaders used to come through the Khyber Pass. North India is landlocked and Delhi is crucial, for the North. Earlier empires had their capital in Pataliputra/Patna. From Alexander till Babar the conquerors came from the Northwest. The last conquerors came by sea and landed not in the North but on the coastal extremities. They only moved their imperial capital to Delhi less than a century ago. That proved a fatal choice and they did not last in their Lootyens Delhi for long.

The Republic of India has the most extensive territory, larger than any previous Empire it has seen — Hindu, Afghan, Mughal or British. It needs its own

Capital. The Capital should be centrally located, equidistant between North and South, East and West. It should be commissioned by the BJP/NDA government, and designed and built by whoever wins a global competition.

But where should it be? I have one suggestion, but there could be others.

There is in the Dandakaranya the ideal ample space to build a new Capital. It is ideal because it straddles North and South. East and West. It touches states from Maharashtra to Odisha, Chhattisgarh to Telangana. It is at the heart of India. Its 90,000 sq km will have ample space and a healthy natural environment to build a fantastic new Capital for new India.

Many nations build their Capital as exclusively for government business and keep their commercial centres separate. The US has Washington DC as a special city for national politics. Malaysia has a similar arrangement. Brazil commissioned Brasilia specially as a new capital away from São Paulo or Rio. Canada has

Ottawa, Australia Canberra. Delhi will always be there as it has been. But the British constructions of 1911-1930 can be abandoned and sold off along with Lootyens Delhi to finance the new Capital. With the political Capital gone, Delhi will breathe again. It can be a proper Union Territory, not mixed up with National Capital.

CHAPTER 1, LINE 1

The world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it. —VS Naipaul, A Bend in the River, 1979

EXPRESS EDITORS RECOMMEND

THE verdict on the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi case, heard by a five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, was announced on November 9. In light of the verdict, here is a list of books that throw light on the infamous demolition — and its long, disputed history—that brought the rifts in Indian society to the fore:

THE BABRI MASJID-RAM MANDIR DILEMMA: AN ACID **TEST FOR INDIA'S CONSTITUTION** — Madhav

Godbole: Godbole was Union Home Secretary when the Babri Masjid was demolished in 1992, and, in this book,

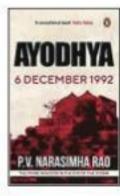


he speaks of what the wanton destruction signified for the country — a breakdown of law and order, but also a rupture with the Constitution. Godbole also ex-

amines the roles of three successive prime ministers — Rajiv Gandhi, VP Singh and PV Narasimha Rao whose lack of will he blames for the proportion the dispute eventually assumed.

AYODHYA 6 DECEMBER 1992 —

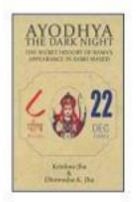
PV Narasimha Rao: It was an account he didn't want to share in his lifetime, which is why, it was only after his death that Narasimha Rao's version of the events that led up to the destruction of the Babri Masjid during his tenure as prime minister of the country was published. Rao's account, that



came out in 1996, begins with the mysterious appearance of the idols of Ram Lalla in the mosque in 1949, the opening of the locks in 1986 and the pre-

cipitation of the crisis in the '90s, including the roles played by various politicians to contain or abet it. He speaks of the efforts made by Mulayam Singh Yadav to stop the initial attempt to damage the structure and the way he was let down by the Kalyan Singh government eventually.

THE DARK NIGHT— Dhirendra K **Jha and Krishna Jha**: The writers examine the role of a little-known holy man, Abhiram Das, and the Hindu Mahasabha in placing an idol of the Ramlalla inside the mosque in December, 1949. In a thrilling piec-



ing together of events, they follow the trail of events that unfolded with the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi and precipitated with the placing of the idol in the

Babri Masjid, focussing on the culpability of the right wing in attempting to steer the nation into a direction quite different than what was enshrined in the Constitution by the founding fathers.

THREE HUNDRED RAMAYANAS: **FIVE EXAMPLES AND THREE** THOUGHTS ON TRANSLATION — **AK Ramanujan:** Controversially

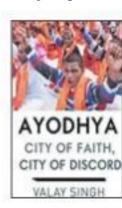
taken off the history syllabus of Delhi University in 2011, Ramanuian's account of the



transmission of the Ramayana across geographies is a finely researched rebuttal of the claim to a single, authoritative text. The epic has been dramatically al-

tered in the hands of women, tribals and folk communities. Ramanujan refers to versions as 'tellings', emphasising that each is a fresh text, expressing the reality of its creators.

AYODHYA: CITY OF FAITH, CITY **OF DISCORD — Valay Singh:** In this 2018 book, Singh holds accountable not just politicians but also faith



leaders on either side, the judiciary and the Parliament to resolve the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue. Singh is working with old material here but

what is refreshing is the analysis he offers, examining it in the light of contemporary political circumstances and how it stands to be manipulated further for vote bank politics.

The Shell Game

The unravelling of the India leg of the global off-shore investigation that took the world by storm

RITU SARIN, JAY MAZOOMDAAR, **PVAIDYANATHANIYER**

AVING ACCESSED the leaked data, the three reporters had embarked on the search in the spirit of 'feeling lucky' and entered, wishfully, names from a list of public figures in business and politics. To their surprise, some of these searches immediately returned positive. Soon enough, though, dawned the first of many sobering realisations. It turned out that most of these hits were inconsequential. Those names figured in the data dump because Mossack Fonseca staff themselves had searched for information on prospective clients who had approached them from around the world.

The innocuous 'World-Check', as it was called internally, was run every time the firm got a new client request to find adverse references on the person. The

EXCERPT

searches were structured such that they threw up partial name matches as well. For example, a global check on a prospective client named Rahul would return numerous results on all possible Rahuls, from Bajaj to Gandhi, in public life (incidentally, the records did have details of one Rahul Gandhi who served as chief financial officer of an energy company in Nevada, USA). Or, for example, a World-Check report on a certain Maneven Trading Limited contained a link to this photo caption: Salman Khan on Tuesday called Narendra Modi 'a good man', even 'a great man'. Clearly, the abundance of what seemed to be 'big names' in search results actually had nothing to do with Mossack Fonseca's client list.

Undaunted, the team of three dug in to process the leaked data the hard way — one file at a time.

The first break of the address hunt came from Ritu in the last week of February. It took some manoeuvring. When she reached an address in upscale Panchsheel Park found in several Mossack Fonseca documents, a palatial bungalow with high walls and a dozen uniformed security guards in a large guard room confronted her. But there was no nameplate outside. Evidently, the occupants of the bungalow wanted to live in anonymity. A casual question about who their employers were initially drew hostile stares from the guards and later a rude rebuff for disturbing them at their 'work', which was letting the owners' fancy cars zip in and out of the imposing gates.

Ritu thought it best to return to Panchsheel Park after a few hours when the shift of the guards changed. This time, she had her cover story ready. This was a challenge every reporter trying to confirm or discover identities of Mossack Fonseca's clients would face: how to cross the first hurdle of confirming an identity so that subsequent hard questions about their offshore interests could be asked. It was also an SOP (standard operating procedure) for



(From left) P Vaidyanathan Iyer, Ritu Sarin, Jay Mazoomdaar of The Indian Express Neeraj Priyadarshi

THE PANAMA PAPERS: THE UNTOLD INDIA STORY OF THE TRAILBLAZING GLOBAL OFFSHORE INVESTIGATION RITU SARIN, JAY MAZOOMDAAR, P VAIDYANATHAN IYER Vintage Books 248 pages ₹599

the reporters on the Panama papers assignments that even if the address and identity of a Mossack Fonseca client could be confirmed, say, via some form of Google search, physical verification of the site was a must to ensure a foolproof check.

When she came back to Panchsheel Park, Ritu told the guards she was preparing a telephone directory for the colony. Who should she put down for this house? The answer from this security guard was prompt: 'Don't you know, madam? This is the house of...'

As Vaidy entered the room, he smelt alcohol. (Anurag) Kejriwal took time to open up. First, he said he had little to do with offshore entities. When confronted with some details, he seemed to remember having opened an entity since he was in the business of metal trading. But then, Kejriwal and his wife were linked to three offshore entities and two foundations as well. Vaidy spent about an hour with him, and took elaborate notes on all the clarifications that he gave. Kejriwal said his political career would be affected if The Indian Express were to write about him. It took a while to convince him that his entire explanation would

be carried in the newspaper. He, however, was aware of the pitfalls. Though a chartered accountant had facilitated the setting up of the entities, he realised these could land him in problems and nothing really remained a secret. He said the entities were folded up in 2010.

Since the publication of the Panama Papers, Anurag Kejriwal has joined the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and changed his profile name on Twitter to Chowkidar Positive Kejriwal, just like hordes of BJP supporters did in the run-up to the general elections of 2019.

In March 2016, days before the Panama Papers investigation hit the stands, the ED sent a letter rogatory to Singapore seeking details on Advantage Strategic Consulting Singapore Private Limited, a subsidiary of Advantage Strategic Consulting Private Limited (India) where Karti Chidambaram held a majority stake before exiting in 2012. Looking into the details of the Singapore company, Jay spotted a direct connection between the investigations into Aircel-Maxis and the Panama Papers...

Curiously, a number of internal 'search reports' prepared by Mossack Fonseca referred to Karti Chidambaram's companies in India and Singapore as SOE or State Owned Enterprise! The irony of the son's association to state power was unmistakable.

The volume of potentially illicit wealth already unearthed by the agencies in the Panama Papers probe notwithstanding, the lack of transparency in how the income tax department and the Enforcement Directorate, and indeed the MAG (Multi-Agency Group) itself, picked individuals for either a search operation or subsequent prosecution has disappointed many. In their status reports submitted to the PMO and later to the Supreme Court, the MAG only provided the number of individuals raided and prosecutions filed, without naming anyone. With the investigating agencies working under a cloak of secrecy and all 'under investigation' matters being kept out of the ambit of the RTI Act, the identities of those sent notices and the details of offshore assets traced were not revealed. This, understandably, resulted in questions being asked as to whether the 'big fish' named in the Panama Papers had been let off the hook and only the 'small fry' were being dragged to court.

You Can't Go Home Again

A debut novel set in Kashmir about big ideas — identity, belonging and the perils of good intentions

HARSIMRANGILL

THE FIRST and last chapters of *The Far Field* begin with the same sentence. "I am 30 years old and that is nothing," the novel's narrator Shalini says. At the outset, it is an admission of a lack of wisdom, a form of naivete. "This country has changed every instant I've been alive...and I have been touched by none of it," she adds. By the end of the sprawling novel, keenly tuned to the events that she has both been witness to, and perpetrator of, the disclaimer takes on an elegiac note, imbued with a bone-deep weariness. In the 400 pages

between these twin statements, uncoils a mirrored story – of a childhood in the shadow of a mercurial parent, and of a land marked by a violent past and present, and an uncertain future.

Madhuri Vijay's debut novel, which won the Rs 25lakh JCB Prize for Literature this year and is on the shortlist for the DSC Prize 2019, is ostensibly about a journey. Three years after the death of her mother, an unpredictable woman capable of both casual cruelty and dazzling charm, impenetrable listlessness and fervent excitement, 24-year-old

Shalini sets out to Kashmir

THE FAR FIELD

Fourth Estate India

MADHURI VIJAY

444 pages

to find Bashir Ahmed, the only man who she navigate the sleep slopes of the mountains, believes ever truly connected with her mother; who knew how to handle her erratic moods — "Bashir Ahmed understood in about five minutes what took my father decades." The Kashmiri travelling salesman first arrives at their wealthy Bangalore home when Shalini is six, striking a bond with her volatile mother and loosening something within her. He visits regularly over the years that follow, regaling both mother and daughter with stories from Kashmir. For the young girl, whose entire existence orbits around a difficult mother, who affectionately calls her "little beast", it's also the

> biggest secret they share. Bereft and unmoored after her death, Shalini decides to pick at the threads of this secret, to track down the man who she last saw 11 years ago. Armed with clues from

Ahmed's stories and an envelope of cash from her father, Shalini eventually makes her way to the remote village in the northern part of Kashmir where he's from, and is taken in by his family — his taciturn wife, his son Riyaz, and daughterin-law Amina with whom she develops a firm friendship. As she eases into the rhythms of rural life, learning how to milk cows and she begins to find it "hard to believe I'd ever lived without any of them".

Shalini's decision is, of course, part of an established tradition of travel as purpose, of going somewhere new to find parts of yourself you never knew existed, to make yourself somehow better. Vijay's interest, however, lies far from leading her protagonist on an enriching Eat, Pray, Love journey through the mountains of Kashmir. What for Shalini is a land offering the allure of starting afresh is, for its residents, a place that holds a history — and continual threat — of violence, sandwiched between militancy and a statebacked military that acts with impunity and cruelty. In a place where young men routinely go missing without a trace, Shalini's naivete, inherent inwardness, and ignorance are, at their best, worthy of derision, and, at their worst, actively dangerous for those around her. "Heaven is not at all what you think," Riyaz tells our protagonist. It's a hint that the facade that Vijay has assembled so far with quiet grace and tremendous skill has been built for a heartbreaking final act that will see it crumble.

The Far Field is a book about big ideas the desire to forge an identity ("If I'm not your secret-keeper, your little beast, then what am I?" Shalini wonders), to belong, the keeping and revelation of secrets, the perils of good intentions — and devastating events, especially in its closing pages. It's a lot to ask of a novel, but Vijay knows exactly what she's doing. Precise, restrained and possessing a lightness of



The Far Field is Madhuri Vijay's debut novel

touch that eludes most writers, The Far Field is most thrilling in its heralding of a voice that is completely assured, and conveys a rare emotional wisdom while sidestepping any hints of the mawkish.

Even as I grew tired of our cloistered narrator at times — the other, arguably more interesting characters never quite emerge with equal nuance — Vijay succeeds most vividly in unspooling the harm that can be wrought by outsiders who have no claim to the history of a place. Quoting Some People, the heartrending poem on war by Polish

writer Wislawa Szymborska, the novel's epigraph states: "Something else is yet to happen, only where and what? Someone will head towards them, only when and who, in how many shapes and with what intentions? Given a choice, maybe he will choose not to be the enemy and leave them with some kind of life."

This choice has never been more relevant to Kashmir as it is today.

> Harsimran Gill is a Delhi-based independent writer

spans nearly 500 years, beginning with Babur and ending in the country's highest court. India's longest-running major title dispute has turned out to be both historic and historical — releasing medieval passions among large sections of the population, making and unmaking governments, and putting

that the possession of the inner portion (where the domes stood) by Muslims was always contested by Hindus. It also noted that the wall and the railing (around the disputed structure of the mosque) came about only to prevent a conflagration, and did not suggest any division of the site. The court

(along with Rajeev Dhavan) for the mosque side. Jilani has stayed with the matter for almost 30 years now. Rajeev Dhavan appeared pro bono in the Supreme Court, and added an edge to arguments.

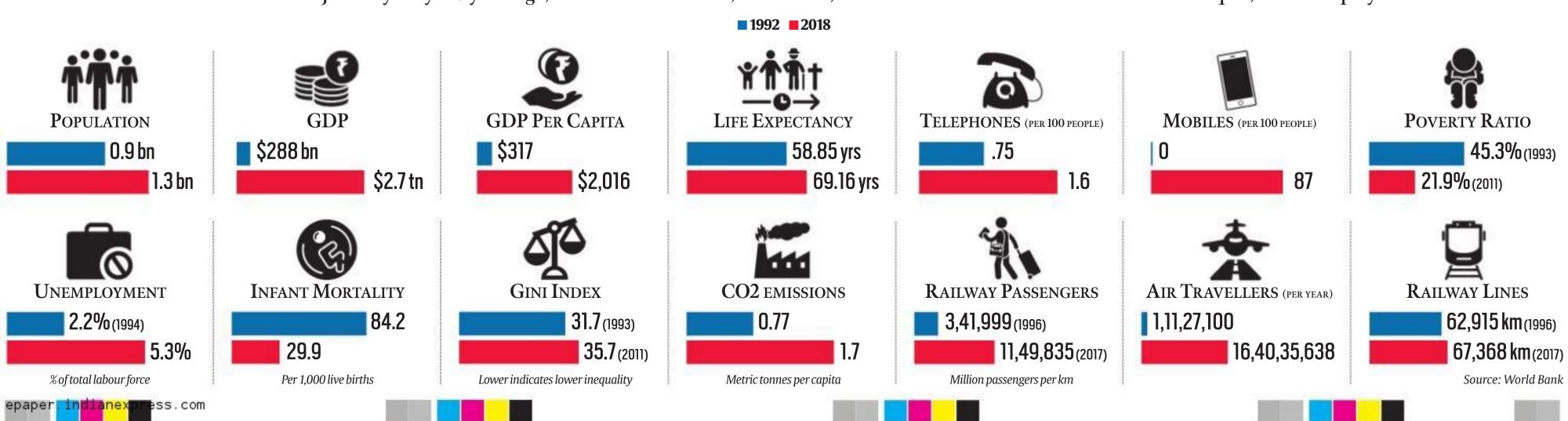
The order thanks both counsel among oth-

ers, in the end.

1992 to 2019: How India has changed in the years since Babri demolition

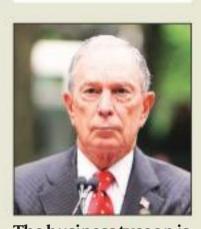
When a mob tore down the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya 27 years ago, India had no Internet, no mobiles, and a far smaller GDP. But it was also less unequal, and unemployment was much lower.

Illustration: Shyam Kumar Prasad



US health officials announced a breakthrough into the cause of an outbreak of vaping illnesses, reporting they have a "very strong culprit". The same chemical compound was found in fluid taken from the lungs of 29 patients across the country, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. The compound—vitamin E acetate—was also found in liquid from vaping devices used by many who got sick.

TOPOFTHE WORLD



The business tycoon is a former mayor of New York. Reuters

Bloomberg files papers paving way for US

presidential bid Washington: New York business tycoon Michael Bloomberg paved the way for a shot at the US presidency, registering as a candidate in the Alabama Democratic primary race before Friday's filing deadline. Although the billionaire has not publicly announced his run, his inclusion among a crowded field keeps his options open for mounting a concerted bid to topple fellow New Yorker Donald Trump. His name was posted among 17 candidates on the Alabama Democratic Party's website only hours before reg-

AUSTRALIA

istration closed.

3 dead, several missing in fires

Canberra: Wildfires razing Australia's droughtstricken east coast have left three people dead and several missing, more than 30 injured and over 150 homes destroyed, officials said Saturday. Around 1,500 firefighters were battling more than 70 fires across Australia's most populous state, New South Wales, with the most intense in the northeast, where flames were fanned by strong winds, Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said. A woman who was found unconscious and with serious burns Friday near Glen Innes died in a hospital, he said.

FRANCE

Bishops approve payments for abuse victims

Paris: French bishops have approved a plan to financially compensate people abused sexually within the church. Meeting Saturday at their biannual assembly, 120 bishops approved the creation of a church fund for victims. The archbishop of Reims, Eric de Moulins-Beaufort, said the payments will recognise the "silence, negligence, indifference, lack of reaction or bad decisions" faced by priests' victims. He said the bishops didn't decide on the size of the fund or how payments will be made. They will consider a more detailed implementation plan at their next gathering in April.

MASS ANTI-GOVT AGITATIONS RAGE ON

Pro-democracy lawmakers held in HK as tensions soar

Arrested over Parliament brawl as city mourns student who died during protests

EILEEN NG

HONG KONG, NOVEMBER 9

SEVEN HONG Kong pro-democracy lawmakers were either detained or faced arrest Saturday, a move that could escalate public fury a day after the death of a university student linked to months of anti-government protests in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory.

Protesters vented their anger over Chow Tsz-Lok's death and vowed not to give up their resistance at a police-approved prayer rally Saturday night, with frequent chants of "Hong Kong people, revenge" and "Free Hong Kong."

The 22-year-old died Friday, succumbing to injuries four days after falling from a parking garage when police fired tear gas during clashes with protesters. Although the circumstance of his death is unclear, many

DANIEL RAMOS

LAPAZ NOVEMBER 9

THE GOVERNMENT of Bolivian

President Evo Morales denounced

what it called a coup on Saturday,





(Left) Hong Kong lawmaker Gary Fan enters police headquarters after being notified of his arrest. (Right) At a vigil for student Chow Tsz-Lok in Hong Kong. Reuters, AP

blame police who have been accused of heavy-handed tactics including widespread use of tear gas and pepper spray since the unrest began in June.

Police said three lawmakers were detained Saturday and charged with obstructing the local assembly during a raucous

as some police forces carried out

acts of "mutiny" in support of op-

position protests amid a standoff

longest-standing leader, won the

election on Oct 20 but the vote

Morales, Latin America's

over a disputed election.

May 11 meeting over a nowshelved China extradition bill that sparked five months of protests calling for democratic reforms. The others received sum-

mons to turn up at police stations Saturday to face arrest. All seven are to appear in court Monday.

count had been inexplicably

halted for nearly a day, sparking al-

legations of fraud and leading to

cities on Friday night and there

were cases of police joining the

Bolivians marched in several

protests, strikes and road blocks.

Pro-democracy lawmakers slammed the government clampdown as a calculated move after Chow's death to provoke more violence as an excuse to postpone or cancel Nov. 24 district elections – polls viewed as a barometer of public sentiment amid the unrest. AP

Bolivia govt slams 'coup' as some police join stir protests, adding to the pressure on

Morales. In Cochabamba city, the

scene of recent violent clashes, po-

lice officers protested on the roof

of their headquarters in an appar-

ent act of disobedience against the

government. REUTERS

against him, arguing they were

Brazilian leftist icon Lula walks free from prison

AGENCIES

CURITIBA, NOVEMBER 9

BRAZIL'S LEFTIST icon Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva walked free from jail Friday, after a year and a half behind bars for corruption, following a court ruling that paved the way for the release of another 5,000 prisoners.

The former president pumped his fist in the air as he exited the federal police headquarters in the southern city of Curitiba and was quickly mobbed by hundreds of supporters and journalists.

In an impassioned address, Lula vowed to "continue fighting" for ordinary Brazilians and expose the "lying side of the federal police". His croaky voice was at times drowned out by the cheers of the crowd and by fireworks.

Lula's highly anticipated exit from the facility where he had been held since April 2018 came hours after his lawyers requested the immediate release of the 74year-old, who has been serving a nearly nine-year sentence for corruption and money laundering.

Late Thursday, the Supreme Court overturned a rule requiring convicted criminals to go to jail after losing their first appeal, and said a person would only be jailed after all appeal options were exhausted. Many of those affected by the ruling are political and business leaders caught up in a massive corruption probe dubbed Car Wash that began in 2014.

Lula has denied all charges



Brazil's former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, with his girlfriend Rosangela da Silva, speaks to supporters in Curitiba, Brazil, on Friday. AP



Firing up both the left and the right

LULA'S RELEASE from prison has already sent ripples through Brazilian politics. For the left, he is a charismatic icon, who as president from 2003 to 2010 presided over a period of economic growth and reduction of poverty. The Opposition is likely to be fired up by the release of a leader who once enjoyed 80% approval ratings and is seen by many to have been the victim of a politically-motivated investigation. His imprisonment last year, when he was leading in opinion polls ahead of the presidential election, helped propel farright candidate Bolsonaro to the top job. His release is likely to galvanise Bolsonaro's core supporters against someone they see as corrupt and also the biggest political threat to their leader.

politically motivated to keep him out of the 2018 presidential election that was won by far-right President Jair Bolsonaro.

Bolsonaro reacted to Lula's

release, saying the ex-president was "momentarily free, but guilty". He asked supporters on Twitter "not to give ammunition to the scoundrel".

US woman found

alive in desert

after weeklong

kidnapping

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES, NOVEMBER 9

A SUBURBAN Las Vegas woman

dragged to California by father-

and-daughter kidnappers was

found cold but alive after a har-

rowing, weeklong kidnapping

where she was raped, robbed

and left for dead in the desert

Shaniya Nicole Poche-Lawton, 22

dumped the woman off a high-

way near Edwards Air Force Base

north of Los Angeles, where she

was found by military personnel

early Wednesday, Los Angeles

County sheriff's Capt. Eduardo

Hernandez told reporters Friday.

"It's a vicious case,

Stanley Alfred Lawton, 54, and

authorities said.

Hernandez said.

Bangladesh orders massive evacuation for Cyclone Bulbul

18 lakh people told to leave homes

ANISUR RAHMAN DHAKA, NOVEMBER 9

AUTHORITIES IN Bangladesh on Friday ordered the evacuation of about 18 lakh people from low-lying coastal villages and islands as the country braced for a "very severe" cyclonic storm that is set to hit the country Saturday evening.

Officials from the disaster management ministry said thousands of people have already been moved to safe shelters as the evacuation process was underway particularly in 10 southwestern coastal districts, which are likely to face the maximum brunt of Cyclone Bulbul.

"By now, 3 lakh people have been evacuated and we plan to move 18 lakh people to cyclone shelters by the evening in the vulnerable regions," disaster ministry secretary Shah Kamal told reporters. He said Army troops were called in to supplement the cyclone preparedness.

The latest met office bulletin said Bulbul was 280 kilometres southwest of Bangladesh's southwestern Mongla Port and 315 km southwest of Payra Port while it was moving in a north/northeastern direction.

It said the maximum sustained wind speed within 74 km of the cyclone centre was about 130 kmph, and was rising to 150 kmph in gusts/squalls.

"Maritime ports of Mongla and Payra have been advised to keep hoisted great danger signal No. 10 (the highest)," the bulletin read.

Coastal districts likely to be inundated by storm surge of 5-7 feet high above normal astronomical tide

Under the influence of the storm and the moon phase, the low-lying areas of the coastal districts of Chattogram, Noakiiali, Laxmipur, Feni, Chandpur, Barguna, Bhola, Patuakhali, Barishal, Pirojpur, Jhalakathi, Bagerhat, Khulna, Satkhira and their offshore islands and chars are likely to be inundated by storm surge of 5-7 feet high above normal astronomical tide.

The Met Office said light to moderate rain or thunder showers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely to occur at most places in Rajshahi Dhaka, Khulna, Barishal and Chattogram divisions and at many places over Rangpur, Mymensingh and Sylhet divisions with moderately heavy to very heavy falls at places over the country.

Bangladesh's authorities earlier ordered a ban on the movements of ferries and boats in internal river routes alongside all fishing boats and trawlers over northern part of the Bay of Bengal, where the storm originated initially in the

form of low pressure. State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief, Enamur Rahman, told a news briefing in Dhaka that "adequate measures" were taken to tackle the storm. **PTI**

GERMANY MARKS 30 YRS SINCE FALL OF BERLIN WALL



marked the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall that separated East and West Germany, with President Frank-Walter Steinmeier thanking Eastern European neighbours for enabling a peaceful revolution.

■ Germany on Saturday

■The toppling of the wall, which had divided the Communist-ruled East and the capitalist West in Berlin for nearly three decades and became a potent symbol of the Cold War, was followed a year later by the reunification of Germany in 1990.

■ At the event, Chancellor Angela Merkel spoke of the need to defend European values.

Chancellor Angela Merkel and Parliament President Wolfgang Schaeuble place roses at the Wall memorial in Berlin. Reuters

'US wants UN to take up Dalai Lama succession'

Washington: The United States wants the United Nations to take up the Dalai Lama's succession in an intensifying bid to stop China from trying to handpick his successor, an envoy said after meeting the Tibetan spiritual leader.

Sam Brownback, the US ambassador-at-large for religious freedom, said he spoke at length about the succession issue with the 84-year-old Dalai Lama last week in the monk's home-in-exile of Dharamsala. Brownback said he told the Dalai Lama that the US would seek to build global support for the principle that the choice of the next spiritual chief "belongs to the Tibetan Buddhists and not the Chinese government." PTI

Facebook issues apology after black workers complain of bias

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA SAN FRANCISCO, NOVEMBER 9

FACEBOOK APOLOGISED on Friday after black employees anonymously shared feelings of workplace bias in an online post.

The post shared at Medium by a "FB Blind" profile laid out perceived slights by managers, white colleagues, and the human resources department.

"No one at Facebook, or anywhere, should have to put up with this behavior," corporate communications vice president Bertie Thomson said in response to a query.

"We are sorry. It goes against



FB's black employees had anonymously complained of bias in an online post

everything that we stand for as a company. We're listening and working hard to do better." Incidents described in the Medium post included being targeted for negative performance reviews or snide comments.

"On the inside, we are sad. Angry. Oppressed. Depressed," the post read. "And treated every day through the micro and macro aggressions as if we do not belong here."The anonymous post maintained that the atmosphere at Facebook has worsened in the past year when it came to non-white workers being recognised, empowered and treated equitably.

"The problem is not just with black employees of different genders," the post read.

"We are remaining anonymous because Facebook creates a hostile culture where anyone that is non-white is made to feel fear for their job and their safety to report any bad behaviours."

While officials said Lawton and Poche-Lawton knew the victim, authorities didn't provide a motive for the attack. It couldn't immediately be determined if the pair had lawyers yet who could speak on their behalf. The woman in her 40s was kidnapped in North Las Vegas on

October 30, Hernandez said. "It's at gunpoint, it's by force, the victim is then transported across state lines, held in a house inside of a room for at least a week," he said "At some point, she was sexually assaulted and then left for dead.' Authorities said the woman.

who was dumped in the desert without food or water, was suffering from cold and exposure when military authorities found her near the sprawling military base. She was treated at a hospital and released, and she has since returned to Nevada.

"She's very lucky to be alive." Hernandez said.

JUDGES DISMISS ARGUMENT OF CONVICT SERVING LIFE TERM FOR MURDERING A MAN WITH THE HANDLE OF AN AX IN 1996

US prisoner who briefly 'died' argues he has served his life sentence

NICHOLAS BOGEL-BURROUGHS NOVEMBER 9

WHAT DOES it mean to complete a sentence of life in prison? One prisoner claims he has done it by serving time until the moment of his death — plus another four years since — and said it is well past time to set him free.

The prisoner, Benjamin Schreiber, made that argument to an appeals court in Iowa, saying that when he briefly died in 2015, before being revived at a hospital,

he completed his obligation to the state. He asked the three-judge panel to let him get on with his life.

The judges rejected his argument this week, ruling that a lower court had been right to dismiss his petition. "Schreiber is either still alive, in which case he must remain in prison, or he is actually dead, in which case this appeal is moot," Judge Amanda Potterfield wrote for the court.

Schreiber, 66, was sentenced to life without parole after being convicted of murder for killing a man with the handle of an ax in 1996, according to The Des Moines Register.

He has filed several unsuccessful appeals, but in 2018 he argued in court in Wapello County that he had been resuscitated against his will, and that because he had, his "sentence has expired".

In March 2015. Schreiber, who is being held at the Iowa State Penitentiary, was taken to a hospital after having seizures and a high fever, according to his petition. The cause of his illness turned out to be large kidney stones, which led to septic poisoning. When he lost consciousness at



66-year-old Benjamin Schreiber was sentenced to life without parole. NYT

the University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics, a staff member called his brother, who told the hospital that although it could give Schreiber medicine to ease his pain, "otherwise you are to let him pass," according to Schreiber's petition.

Schreiber said he was resuscitated despite his brother's directions and his own do-not-resuscitate order on file with the Iowa Department of Corrections. The courts have not addressed whether he was wrongfully resuscitated. Schreiber's lawyer did not respond to requests for comment Friday, and a hospital

spokesman said he did not immediately have a comment.

Potterfield wrote in the ruling this week that because "life" is not defined by the state's code, the judges had given the term "its plain meaning," which they took to prescribe that Schreiber must spend the rest of his natural life incarcerated, regardless of whether he had been revived.

"We do not find his argument persuasive," Potterfield wrote, adding that the judges found it unlikely the Legislature would have wanted "to set criminal defendants free whenever medical

procedures during their incarceration led to their resuscitation by medical professionals."

Schreiber's plea was not without precedent. Jerry Rosenberg, who was convicted of murdering two New York police detectives in 1962, petitioned a court in upstate New York to let him go in 1988, arguing that he had died when his heart stopped during surgery.

The judge ruled against Rosenberg, too, writing that he did not legally die, "as his presence in this courtroom indicates," the Associated Press reported at the time.

Eve Brensike Primus, a professor who teaches criminal law at the University of Michigan Law School, said it was unsurprising that the theory had only been tried a handful of times. "The stars have to align

both the medical condition and the sentence the person is facing — for a person to even make this argument," she said.

Primus said that if people were considered legally dead before being resuscitated, it would create a web of problems, not just in criminal cases but also for insurance and inheritance claims. NYT

CRUDE WATCH

OIL RISES AFTER FALLING OVER 1%

New York: Oil prices edged higher, after falling more than 1 per cent, following comments from US President Donald Trump that he had not agreed to roll back tariffs on China. Brent crude futures rose 22 cents to settle at \$62.51 a barrel. **REUTERS**

RESERVES TOUCH \$446.09 BILLION FOR THE WEEK ENDED NOVEMBER 1

Forex reserves grow by over \$17 bn since Sept 20 to hit all-time high

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

A RISE in flow of funds by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), following the government's announcements to cut corporate tax rate and push growth in the economy, alongside stable crude prices and currency, resulted in a substantial jump in the foreign exchange reserves as it hit an all-time high of

ended November 1, 2019. According to the data released by the Reserve Bank of India, while the forex reserves grew by \$3.5 billion during the week ended November 1, 2019, it has grown by over \$17 billion since the week ended September 20, when it amounted to \$428.5 billion.

of \$446.098 billion for the week

The increase in reserves in the reporting week ended November 1, was mainly on account of a jump in foreign currency assets (FCA)—a major component of the overall reserves. The FCA increased by \$3.201 billion to \$413.654 billion in the week ended November 1, the RBI said.

BRIEFLY

Lakshmi Vilas

Bank Q2 net

loss at ₹357cr

New Delhi: Lakshmi Vilas

Bank (LVB) on Saturday re-

ported widening of net loss

to Rs 357.18 crore for the sec-

September 30, 2019. The

bank posted a net loss of Rs

132.31 crore in the July-

September of 2018-19.

NTPC Q2 net

quarter ended

EXPLAINED Recent govt measures boost sentiment

THE INCREASE in reserves in the reporting week ended November 1, was mainly on account of a jump in foreign currency assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves. The FCA increased by \$3.201 billion to \$413.654 billion in the week ended November 1, the RBI said.

Experts say the government's move to reverse its Budget decision about higher surcharge impact on FPIs, along with a cut in the corporate tax rate last month, has played a significant role in turning investors' mood.

Experts say the government's move to reverse its Budget decision about higher surcharge on FPIs, along with a cut in the corporate tax rate last month, has played a significant role in turning investors' mood and they have been investing in Indian markets. The inflow of funds has been aided by the US Federal Reserve's decision to cut interest rates.

Between September and now.

the FPIs have invested a net of Rs 34,776 crore (nearly \$5 billion) into Indian equities and the debt market. By contrast, they pulled out a net of Rs 8,874 crore between July and August (aggregate of debt and equity markets).

The rise in forex has also been supported by stability in crude oil prices. While crude stood at levels of about \$65 per barrel in mid-September, it came down to un-

der \$58 per barrel in the first week of October. At present, it is trading at \$62 per barrel.

The rise in forex reserves, alongside a softening of crude oil prices, comes as a breather for the country's rising external debt, which has risen significantly un the past couple of years — from \$485 billion in June 2017 to \$557 billion in June 2019. Experts say that if external debts are higher than the forex reserves, it makes the economy vulnerable to any oil price shock. However, as of now there is some relief on that account as forex reserves are climbing and crude oil prices continue to trade lower.

A rise in forex reserves will help improve the ratio of foreign exchange to external debt, which has deteriorated from a high of 106 per cent in June 2010 to 76.7 per cent in June 2019. It is important to note that even during the height of the global financial crisis in 2008, India's foreign exchange reserves, at \$310 billion, exceeded the then total external debt of about \$224 billion and provided a much larger coverage.

RISING FOREX RESERVES

Forex

Week

ended	(\$bn)
June 28	427.67
July 5	429.911
Jul 12	428.79
Jul 19	430.376
Jul 26	429.64
Aug 2	428.95
Aug 9	430.57
Aug 16	430.5
Aug 23	429
Aug 30	428.6
Sep 6	429.6
Sep 13	428.96
Sep 20	428.57
Sep 27	433.59
Oct 4	437.8
Oct 11	439.7
Oct 18	440.75
Oct 25	442.5
Nov 1	446.09

Goyal to meet USTR Lighthizer

to discuss issues on Wednesday

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

COMMERCE AND Industry Minister Piyush Goyal will meet his US counterpart, Robert Lighthizer, on Wednesday in Washington to discuss trade related issues, an official statement said on Saturday.

"On November 13, Goyal will have India-US bilateral meeting with his counterpart US Trade Representative (USTR) Robert Lighthizer to discuss the outstanding bilateral issues and to arrive at a shared understating on a mutually beneficial basis," the statement said.

Next day, the minister will hold a high-level industry interaction with business and industry representatives in New York City.

On November 12, Goyal is scheduled to have a meeting with representatives of the medical devices manufacturing com**ON THE AGENDA**



panies to discuss trade issues. He will also attend the 9th BRICS Trade Ministers Meet in Brasilia

on November 11. Discussions will be focussed on opportunities for enhanced intra-BRICS trade and investment cooperation, it said.

"Issues like cooperation in ecommerce, investment facilitation, MSMEs, Intellectual Property Right, will be discussed during the meet," it added.

Deliberations on the current global economic and trade environment, challenges facing the multilateral trading system, ways of advancing the BRICS trade and investment coopera-

COMMERCE MINISTER

Piyush Goyal will hold a

industry and business

representatives in New

the 9th BRICS Trade

on November 11.

York. He will also attend

Ministers Meet in Brasilia

high-level interaction with

tion will also take place. A Memorandum of Understanding will be inked among Trade and Investment Promotion Agencies of BRICS countries, which will help foster close collaboration. WITH PTI

'Aramco targets sale of 0.5% of state oil firm to retail investors in IPO'

REUTERS

DUBAI. NOVEMBER 9

SAUDI ARAMCO is looking to sell up to 0.5 per cent of the state oil giant to retail investors in its planned initial public offering (IPO), three sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.

The Saudi oil group has not vet revealed the size of its planned IPO or what proportion of the company it will float, although sources have previously said this could be 1-2 per cent.

Aramco declined to com-

It is expected to release more details about the company in an IPO prospectus document later on Saturday.

Assuming Aramco achieves a total valuation of \$2 trillion, the retail tranche could be worth around \$10 billion, the sources said on Saturday.

Aramco fired the starting gun on the domestic IPO last week after a series of false

rial prices, including in the oil and

gas extraction and ferrous metal

smelting industries. It aligns with

other indicators showing shrink-

ing manufacturing activity in

October, with the official

Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)

indicating contraction for a sixth

with Wuhan-based Changjiang

Securities, said the drag from the

real estate sector, which is suffer-

ing from a government crack-

down on sales speculation and

policy tightening on financing for

"Looking ahead, while a low

Zhao Wei, a macro analyst

straight month.

starts. It did not give details on how much would be sold or when the listing would happen, while expert valuations vary from \$1.2 to \$2.3 trillion. A government committee

has met in the past few months

with dozens of wealthy Saudi

individuals to secure pre-sale agreements, sources told Reuters last month. And the government has encouraged investors to repatriate cash held overseas to buy into the IPO to avoid drain-

ing too much liquidity from

the Saudi banking system, they

said. Reuters reported on October 17 that Aramco can take advantage of new market rules that allow issuers the flexibility to sell more shares to retail investors, likely exceeding the usual 10 per cent seen in re-

cent IPOs. "Local demand is strong," a second source said on Saturday, adding that this would lead institutional investors to think that up to 75 per cent of the IPO would be available for them.

net profit slips 27% to ₹627 cr

Oil India Q2

PRESSTRUSTOFINDIA NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

STATE-OWNED OIL India Ltd on Saturday reported a 27.2 per cent fall in its net profit at Rs 627.23 crore in the second quarter ended September 30, 2019. The company had registered

a net profit of Rs 862.01 crore in the corresponding period of the previous financial year. Total income fell to Rs

3.481.52 crore during O2FY20 from Rs 4,031.41 crore in same period of FY19, Oil India said in a regulatory filing. Turnover was down at Rs

3,213.61 crore for the quarter as against Rs 3,743.58 crore a year ago.

The EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization) margin — the reader of profitability ratio – stood at 43 per cent during the quarter, down from 44 per cent in the year-ago quarter.

The company realised crude oil at \$61.30 per barrel during the September quarter of the current financial year, down from \$73.42 a barrel vear ago.

rises 38% to demand ₹3,409 crore **BITMAIN TECHNOLOGIES:** New Delhi: State-run power

REUTERS

BEIJING, NOVEMBER 9

A SINO-US trade war could ease

somewhat but wider conflicts be-

tween the world's two largest

economies will continue. Lou

Jiwei, a former Chinese finance

ment, there could be compro-

mises in the trade war at a certain

stage, and we have seen signs of

compromising," Lou, now an offi-

cial with a body that advises

China's Parliament, told an eco-

on Thursday said China and the

United States had agreed to roll

back tariffs already put in place on

each others' goods if a "phase one"

deal was concluded, but the idea

Officials from both countries

nomic forum in Beijing.

"Look at the next develop-

minister, said on Saturday.

giant NTPC on Saturday posted an around 38 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit at Rs 3,408.92 crore in the quarter to September 2019, driven by higher revenues.

Indiabulls Real Estate Q2 profit jumps fourfold

New Delhi: Indiabulls Real Estate reported a nearly fourfold jump in its consolidated net profit at Rs 301.16 crore for the second quarter of this financial year. Its net profit stood at Rs 75.91 crore in the year-ago period. Total income rose to Rs 1,101.9 crore in Q2 from Rs 1,059.71 crore in the year-ago quarter.

Yamaha brings out BS-VI compliant bikes

New Delhi: India Yamaha Motor (IYM) on Saturday launched BS-VI compliant variants of FZ-FI and FZS-FI bikes, priced between Rs 99,200 and Rs 1.02 lakh (exshowroom). PTI

THE WE COMPANY: Owner Private companies seeking to launch on stock price volatility markets have abandoned a series of initial public **IS GLOBAL LIFESTYLE:** The

Failure to launch: The biggest IPO pull-outs of 2019

of office-sharing startup WeWork, scrapped its IPO in September, as concerns around the sustainability of its business model led to a lackluster response from investors

HOLDINGS: The US entertainment and talent

ENDEAVOR GROUP

agency company backed by Hollywood power-broker Ari Emanuel, abandoned its IPO in September following weak stock market investor

The world's largest designer

of products for mining cryptocurrencies let its application for a Hong Kong IPO of at least \$3 billion lapse in March, amid fears of

conflicts will persist:

Ex-China Minister

offerings (IPOs) this year after a string of highprofile startups failed to draw the expected interest from investors. Here are some of the most notable companies across the world that have pulled the plug on their IPOs in 2019



maker decided to pull its IPO in mid October, as it was not satisfied with the price offered by investors

has been met with opposition

from some quarters of the admin-

that hit stock prices and the dol-

lar, said on Friday he had not

strategy to contain China's eco-

nomic rise by preventing the

country from climbing up the

containment are inevitable and

that will be a long-term issue," he

said. But Lou also said it would be

difficult for the United States to

decouple from China, given the

potential disruption to global

supply chains and the impact on

ports will not fundamentally re-

The US tariffs on Chinese ex-

businesses.

solve its trade deficit.

"Containment and counter-

global value chain, Lou said.

Trump himself, in comments

Washington has adopted a

istration US President Trump.

agreed to a tariff rollback.

and its partners pulled a planned \$690.70 mn offering for lender Latitude Financial last month

Trade war to ease but China factory prices falter while

household appliances maker has pulled its initial

public offering of up to \$462.53 million, sources told Reuters last month, making it the third float delayed in Hong Kong so far this year

ALIGHT: The Blackstone Group-backed HR consultant, elected to postpone its IPO indefinitely in March after declining to accept a discounted valuation

GFL ENVIRONMENTAL:

The waste management firm said in early November it would cancel its IPO, after institutional investors pressed it to price its shares below the marketed range Note: Compiled by Reuters

WeWork to sell Meetup, cut jobs in turnaround plan

ASSOCIATED PRESS NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 9

WEWORK SAID late Friday it will

divest from several side businesses and cut jobs as part of a 90day plan to turn itself around, following its botched attempt to sell stock on Wall Street.

The office-sharing company will divest from five non-core businesses, including Meetup, the online community event organizer that WeWork bought in 2017, according to a newly released presentation first shared privately with investors in October. It will also sell its stake in women's coworking company The Wing.

An unspecified number of job cuts will target administrative employees, those working in growth-related positions and those at ventures the company expects to scale back. Layoffs will not include ₹₹community

teams" based within its shared office sites.

The document shows WeWork was still working to grow rapidly as its initial public stock offering unraveled in September, a crisis that left the company on the brink of bankruptcy and forced the ouster of co-founder Adam Neumann.

In the third quarter of 2019 WeWork added a record 108,000 desks at newly built shared of fices, leaving it now with substantially more space to fill even as it pursues a painful restructuring The newly added desks led to a slight dip in its average occupancy rate to 80 per cent, compared to 83 per cent the previous quarter.

New York-based WeWork now has 580,000 members in 600 locations across 122 cities in 32 countries. The company said 43 per cent of its members are larger companies with more than 500 employees.

Moody's downgrades Britain debt outlook to negative from stable

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE WASHINGTON, NOVEMBER 9

CREDIT RATINGS agency Moody's on Friday downgraded the outlook for Britain's debt, citing mounting policy challenges amid the Brexit debate.

The agency cut the outlook to negative from stable but kept the debt at the investment grade Aa2. The ratings agency Fitch had similarly put Britain on "negative watch" in February.

Pointing to "paralysis that has characterised the Brexit-era policymaking process," Moody's said London has "struggled to cope with the magnitude of policy challenges that they cur-

In addition, Britain's "economic and fiscal strength are likely to be weaker going forward and more susceptible to shocks than previously assumed," Moody's said in a statement.

Britons voted by 52 percent to leave the European Union in a 2016 referendum, but MPs have been divided over how, when and even if that result should be delivered. The political wrangling has forced two successive Conservative governments to ask the European Union to delay Brexit three times this year. It is now set for January 31.

Current Tory Prime Minister Boris Johnson hopes the snap

election next month will give him a majority in the House of

Commons to allow him to ratify his exit terms and finally leave the EU. "Over the longer term, institutional weakening may also impact the UK's economic strength, through its effect on the investment climate and on the UK's attractiveness to skilled and unskilled foreign labor," Moody's said.

"In recent years, we have already seen the negative impact this can have, and Moody's expects this negative influence will likely endure as the exit process continues and uncertainties persist during the subsequent phase of trade negotiations with the EU and with other nations."

inflation soars to near 8-yr high The factory deflation was **REUTERS** punctuated by falling raw mate-

BEIJING, NOVEMBER 9

CHINA'S PRODUCER prices fell the most in more than three years in October, as the manufacturing sector weakened on declining demand and a knock from the Sino-US tariff war, reinforcing the case for Beijing to keep the stimulus coming.

The producer price index (PPI), seen as a key indicator of corporate profitability, fell 1.6 per cent in October from a year earlier, marking the steepest decline since July 2016, the National Bureau of Statistics data showed Saturday. Analysts had tipped a contraction of 1.5 per cent for the PPI.

In contrast, China's consumer prices rose at their fastest pace in almost eight years, driven mostly by a surge in pork prices as African swine fever ravaged the country's

REUTERS

the bloc's banks.

nancial system.

BRUSSELS, NOVEMBER 9

THE EUROPEAN Union's largest

states are pushing for the estab-

lishment of a new supervisory

authority that would take over

from states the oversight of

money laundering at financial

firms, after a series of scandals at

Germany, France, Italy, Spain, the

Netherlands and Latvia said the

28-country EU needed a "central

supervisor" to tackle the flow of

dirty money within the bloc's fi-

European lenders were shut

The move comes after

In a joint statement,

PPI FALLS 1.6%

■ The producer price index, a key indicator of corporate profitability, fell 1.6 per cent in October from a year ago, marking the steepest decline since July 2016

■ Analysts say the rise in retail inflation could become a concern for policymakers looking to introduce measures to prop up demand

hog herds. Analysts say the CPI rise

measures to prop up demand. which excludes food and energy

could become a concern for policymakers looking to introduce

prices, pressures remain modest.

down over money laundering in

Latvia, Malta and Cyprus, while

top banks from the Baltic and

Northern Europe were involved

in dodgy transactions worth bil-

lions of euros of Russian dirty

money through the Estonian

branch of Danske Bank, in what is

seen as the worst money-laun-

dering scandal on the continent.

sor emerged after repeated fail-

ures by national watchdogs at

spotting and countering money

laundering, the statement said.

ests are at stake, there is a risk of

national supervisors being influ-

enced directly or indirectly by su-

pervised institutions or interest

groups," the statement said.

"Where large financial inter-

The need for an EU supervi-

However, core inflation,

developers, will also become more pronounced.

base from last year will provide some support in the next few months, PPI deflation is likely to continue as overall demand is still under pressure," said Zhao.

AIM IS TO TACKLE THE FLOW OF DIRTY MONEY WITHIN THE BLOC'S FINANCIAL SYSTEM

Germany, France want supervisor against money laundering WHY THE DEMAND?

■ The move comes after European lenders were shut down over money laundering in Latvia, Malta and Cyprus, while top banks from the Baltic and Northern Europe were involved in dodgy transaction worth billions

of dollars

The six countries said the new supervisor could be a new body or an existing watchdog, the European Banking Authority (EBA), which would need to be beefed up.

■ Along with Germany and France, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and Latvia are making the demand

■ The six countries said the new supervisor could be a new body or an existing watchdog, the European **Banking Authority**

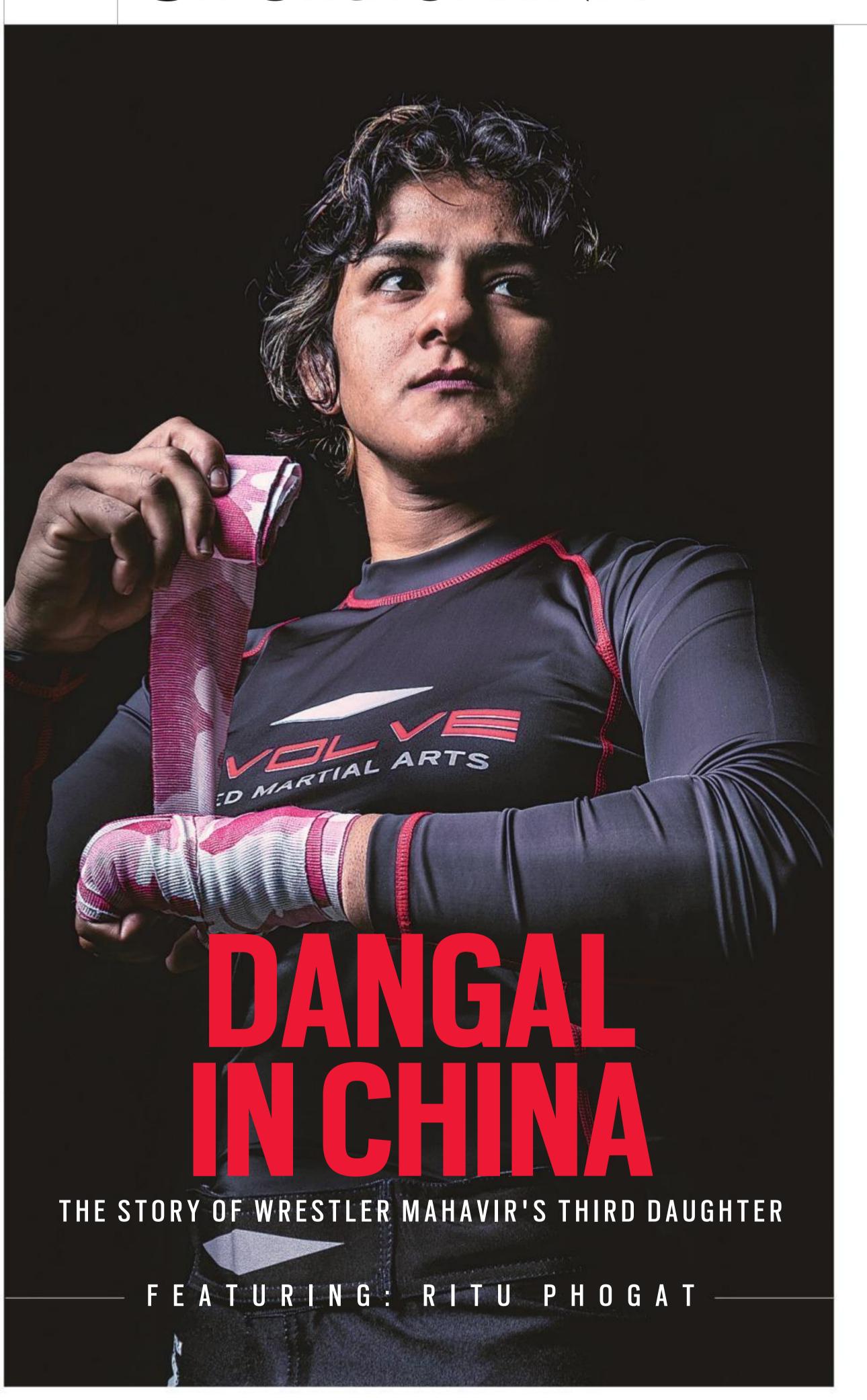
The call for change comes just few months after the bloc has agreed to overhaul EBA's mandate to give the watchdog new powers to tackle money laundering. That reform, proposed by EU Dombrovskis, a former prime minister of Latvia, quickly appeared as insufficient to many observers. The move marks a major

finance commissioner Valdis

shift in Germany's position. While France, Italy and Spain have been calling for months for stronger rules against money laundering, Berlin had opposed more ambitious changes in recent overhauls. The six states also call for

new anti-money laundering rules, in what would be the sixth review of those provisions, just one year after their latest overhaul was agreed in a reform now judged as "not decisive" by the six countries.

22 SPORTSLINE



Ritu was set to emulate her Olympian sisters as a wrestler, before MMA came calling. foreign land however took a while. Armed with new skills and desire to be different, she now prepares to fight in China, where Bollywood has made 'Phogat' a household name. GAURAV BHATT writes.

HE MOVIE had only been out three months, but Ritu Phogat's world had already been changed by 'Dangal'.

"It's not easy to get used to all this attention," said Ritu, jostling with the outstretched phones and the 'Phogat, Phogat' chants, alongside younger sister Sangeeta. This was the 2017 Bharat Kesari Dangal in Ambala. And while it was not the pair of Phogat sisters the crowd assembled had hoped for, the euphoria surrounding the Aamir Khan-starring film was palpable and engulfed the two twenty-somethings.

"Thoda adjust karna padta hai," Ritu had said sheepishly. "People know of (elder sisters) Geeta and Babita, and they realise that we are Phogat sisters too. It is their love, but it definitely adds to the pressure."

That weekend, when Ritu ran through the 48kg field, was more than two years ago. She has since traded the mat for the mixed martial arts cage. After eight months of training with Evolve MMA in Singapore, the 25-year-old will make her debut for the ONE Championship on November 16. She takes on Korean Na Hee Kim at the One: Age of Dragons event in Beijing.

That a Phogat is prize fighting in China is not fortuitous (as things in combat sports seldom are). Dangal, the film chronicling the life of wrestlers Geeta and Babita, starring Khan as father Mahavir Phogat, was a cultural revolution

ess.com

in China, minting ₹1,400cr, almost three times the haul in India. The film, dubbed *Shuai Jiao* Baba (Let's wrestle, dad), made 'Aamir uncle' and 'Phogat' household names.

"It's when you're abroad that you realise how big the film was," Ritu told *The Indian* Express during the training camp in Singapore. "There are many people here who have seen Dangal. My coaches, some other fighters training at the gym. It makes me happy that they identify me as a Phogat sister."

Ritu thus is mentally prepared for a Ambala redux in Beijing.

"I know that there will be some pressure because of it. Many people would go, 'look, that is the Phogat sister.' But when I enter the cage for the match, I would have to keep such things in the back. It's good to have that recognition, but this is all about charting my own path."

First Indian to get a silver at the U-23 World Championship (to add to a bronze earned earlier), and an Asian Championships bronzemedallist, Ritu fell one win short of a medal at last year's Senior Worlds. With cousin Vinesh moving up and booking the 2020 Olympics 53kg berth, the path seemed clear for Ritu to punch her own ticket in the 50kg.

Her decision to switch streams earlier this

year thus left the wrestling federation feeling wronged, with assistant secretary Vinod Tomar saying: "We have invested so much in Ritu. I hope she knows the consequences as she won't be able to represent India."

Funnily enough, that is precisely why Ritu says she took the MMA route.

"I used to watch all these interesting fights on YouTube, and I would look at all the names and thought, 'why isn't anybody from India competing?" says Ritu. "So when Evolve approached me with an offer, I said yes."

Just like that?

"Well, I had to ask papa first," laughs Ritu, acknowledging the taskmaster-father Mahavir Phogat. "I wouldn't have taken this step without him saying yes. All he said was, no matter what the game, you have to give it all. Full dedication."

Sister Babita says: "For our father, the fact that Ritu is playing a competitive sport mattered and not that she is leaving wrestling. Competing in MMA was a big step and we were happy that she has decided about her future and was certain what suits her. As a child too, Ritu was very fond of mixed martial arts and also liked sports such as judo and karate."

Blessings secured, off Ritu went to Singapore, a country where she won the 48kg gold at the 2016 Commonwealth Championships. Learning to live full-time in

"Initially, it was very tough. First time living away from family, that too this far. What to eat, what to do," says Ritu. "Par kuch paane ke liye kuch khona padta hai. I came here to accomplish something."

Babita says Ritu's sojourn acted like a 'Dangal' sequel, bringing the band back together.

"Papaji had no idea what MMA is but when Ritu showed her some videos, he said this is the same as wrestling but looks like it also needs more stamina and physical fitness," says Babita. "Since Ritu was on her own in Singapore, she would call us everyday and tell us about her training. So like wrestling, the whole family once again got together to help Ritu. We also watched MMA and shared inputs once we understood some of the moves."

Ritu was back in India late September for promotional commitments, but had to fly back for her first Diwali away from home.

"I was training on Diwali. It's okay, it wasn't like I didn't celebrate at all," said Ritu, alluding to the photos on her Instagram of *rangolis* and sprinklers. "There are many Indians here, in fact there are people from my own village. So I had fun with them, but the training remains the priority. Nothing else matters."

Food's no more a problem either. Cooking, Ritu says, is therapeutic after hours spent grinding away. And the desi delicacies served have made her apartment a hotspot for teammates.

"I can cook everything at home now. The routine and food I eat is exactly the same as India. I often have people at home on weekends, and they've started liking what I make... Kheer, halwa, choorma."



MMA comprises of striking and grappling. Striking could be as basic as boxing, or as layered as adding Muay Thai to the mix; grappling consists of wrestling, clinchfighting and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. Ritu's more comfortable with the latter. Evolve MMA

Jargon and gimmicks stripped aside, MMA essentially comprises two aspects: Striking and grappling. Striking could be as basic as boxing or kickboxing, or as layered as adding knees and elbows of Muay Thai — 'the art of eight limbs' — to the mix.

Grappling too comes in various forms. Ronda Rousey, 2008 Olympic bronze medallist in judo and women's MMA trailblazer, used lightning-quick hip-tosses to bring opponents down. There's also the Russian variant Sambo. but the most effective way of taking somebody to the ground remains good ol' wrestling.

The Evolve gym is the biggest chain of academies in Asia, and high-profile visitors include MMA greats such as Rich Franklin, Georges St-Pierre, Ben Askren and the Gracies.

At the Singapore facility, Ritu trains under WBA world champion boxer Drian Francisco and two-time Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu world champion Teco Shinzato. Wrestling, obviously, is not a primary concern. And between the new skills of ground grappling and striking, Ritu is more comfortable with the former.

"It's correct when they say BJJ is like chess. The training is so different, there are so many techniques," says Ritu of the art of maneuvering and manipulating limbs and joints to submit the opponent. "A person can be naturally quick to escape holds,

some take some time." What works for Ritu is that Shinzato says Ritu's wrestling background she has stamina for days and helps lay in the groundher wrestling is gritty. That work. "She has made she will compete at significant improvement in her ground atomweight (52kg) can affect game. Compared to the gas tank, but could also when she first joined us, amplify her natural strength. she better understands the concepts and techniques," says Shinzato.

"She's really good at takedowns because she's a wrestler. I try to capitalise on that."

Like any pure wrestler, Ritu will find it tough to battle it out from the bottom. With an opponent on top jockeying for position, flustered wrestlers give up their backs since laying on the mat conflicts with their inherent training. The opponent can then sink in underhooks for control and can go for chokes.

"This is the problem all wrestlers face but she's learning and has made tremendous improvements," says Shinzato. "Conversely, she has also quickly learnt how to submit people in Jiu-Jitsu."

Learning to strike was tougher. Wrestlers are tough but a well-placed kick/punch to the head/body can leave them shellshocked/breathless.

"It was tough in the beginning, and I got nervous. Didn't know what I'll do. In the sparring too, getting hit was tough," says Ritu. "But that's when you need to think 'you can't give up. Kuch kar dikhaana hai."

What works for Ritu is that she has stamina for days and her wrestling is gritty. That she will compete at atomweight (52kg) can affect the gas tank, but could also amplify her natural strength. Add to that the ability to get into scraps unafraid, and Ritu can hold her own standing up till she eventually takes the fight to the mat.

"She is strong, delivers hard punches and wants to learn," says Francisco. "When she first moved to Singapore, she didn't have any knowledge about striking. Now she's learnt the basics of how to strike, punch, kick and grapple."

The consensus among coaches is that Ritu "keeps a low profile, is humble and works hard. Those are some of the most important traits for any athlete to possess."

"Other guys sometimes just flow and go through the motion but she takes it upon herself to be a better fighter every chance she gets," says Shinzato. "As a coach, it's a great feeling because I can see how badly she wants this."

Ritu admits the family-like atmosphere in the camp and the revolving door of guest coaches keep the spirits up. The biggest motivator is however teaching people about the sport.

"This was the thing that got me from wrestling to MMA. People have this image that it's a new game, it's very violent. But I am here to show that it's a sport, like any other sport. And if you put in the work, you will succeed."

"Human cockfighting."

When MMA naysayers parrot the infamous pejorative by John McCain, they forget that the 2008 US Presidential candidate softened his stance over the years, going as far as to wishing the sport was around when he was a youngling

in the Navy. In essence, MMA has been around since hota hai." Ancient Greece as pankration. Twentieth cen-

tury was littered by various one-off exhibition bouts, but the sport came into its own in the 90s, with the formation of promotions such as Pancrase, Pride and UFC. In its early years, it was a petri dish for 'what if' freak-show match-ups between sumo and savate, boxing and jiu-jitsu. The rules were rudimentary and some styles mixed like water and oil, with grappling specialists ruling the roost.

Two decades later, the sport is more evolved and sanitised. Specialists still exist, but elite fighters are aces of all trades. Wrestlers however tend to dominate inside the cage. Five of the seven current male UFC champions were originally wrestlers. (Women division is dominated by kickboxers). Takedowns score big, but wrestling's util-

ity isn't just limited to points. The nature of the Olympic sport is such that every wrestler has years of full-body sparring and competition under their belt, and know how to alternate between explosiveness and conserving stamina. Indo-Canadian Arjan Bhullar, who won in

his ONE debut last month after four fights in the UFC, believes wrestlers are naturally tough and have a malleable skillset. "All fights start standing up, but wrestlers are used to adjusting," says Bhullar, who won

the freestyle wrestling heavyweight gold at the 2010 Commonwealth Games. "Wrestlers are very tough, and adapt to challenges after years and years of high-level

training."

Bhullar signed with ONE earlier this year due to the promotion's focus on Asia. "Not only did the UFC not have any plans

for India, they don't have a single Indian on stack. Doesn't look like it's an immediate concern, says Bhullar. "ONE announced these regional plans, we discussed it

before I signed and I'm excited to be leading that push. There's a story to be told in India. There's a long history of wrestling in the country, great boxing at an Olympic level. And the market's wide open, with over a billion people."

The 33-year-old believes Ritu's pedigree will help her make a mark.

"I'm excited for Ritu, I wished her luck," says Bhullar. "I have given her a few words of wisdom. 'Remember that you've been a top wrestler for so many years. Don't forget that That will always be your strongest suit'. I hope she is very successful, hope we can team up to bring the sport to India soon after."

Bhullar's career has circled that of the Phogats. At the Delhi CWG, he saw Geeta and Babita win gold and silver respectively.

"I remember watching the sisters there. Wrestling is a tight community, and everybody knows everybody when you are on the top. Even back then, we realised the barriers Geeta and Babita were breaking for women wrestlers in India with their medals," says Bhullar of the bouts which formed the climax of Dangal.

"You can say that I have seen the movie a couple of times," he laughs. "Aamir Khan did a great job. They used real wrestlers as parts in that movie, which was great as I could see see several familiar faces. From what I have seen around, I personally can say that the story has gone beyond the sport, it has transcended culture. The interest in women's wrestling has skyrocketed. Now, because of Bollywood, because of that movie, the world over knows about the Phogat family."

Which brings us back to Ritu's Dangal in

"We talked about her bout happening in China," says Babita. "Dangal was very successful in China, it got a very good reception from the people. People loved the story of our father and his struggles to train Geeta and me. In a way it is historic for us that Ritu is fighting in China and we are sure that Chinese people will support and cheer for her during the bout."

Pitched the idea of a 'Dangal' spin-off, centered on her MMA travails and this time based in China, Ritu titters: "I don't know about that Ineed to achieve something first. Like being the first Indian MMA world champion."

What about the 'other' World Championships? Ritu made it a point to stream all the bouts from September's wrestling worlds (and celebrated cousin Vinesh's medal but there's no itch to go back, as yet.

"I follow it all. All the events. But I am not thinking of going back to wrestling. Right now, MMA requires my compete focus. I want to achieve this goal first. Uske baad dekhti hun kya

(With inputs from Nitin Sharma)

Diluting cooling-off, disqualification clauses to top agenda at BCCI AGM

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY

KOLKATA, NOVEMBER 9

THE BCCI'S 88th Annual General Meeting (AGM) to be held in Mumbai on December 1, will consider some proposed amendments in the existing cricket board constitution, including a relaxation in the cooling-off clause for the president and secretary and other office bearers. It has also been proposed that the disqualification clause would be applicable to an office-bearer or an apex council member if he/she is sentenced to imprisonment by a court for a criminal offence for a period of three years and above.

"The proposed amendments to be considered in the item no.(H)(3)(To discuss and pass with or without modifications the proposed amendments to the Rules and Regulations of the BCCI) are enclosed herewith. The rest of the agenda papers will follow shortly," BCCI secretary Jay Shah mentioned in the AGM notice that was issued on Saturday.

As per the BCCI constitution, the Rules and Regulations can be amended "by a 3/4th majority of the members present" at the AGM or a Special General Meeting (SGM). But to put them into effect, the Supreme Court's approval is required. "Any such amendment will not be given effect to without the leave of the Hon'ble Supreme Court."

However, the board feels the existing rule is not practical and seeking the court's approval for an amendment in constitution wasn't part of the Lodha reforms, nor was mentioned in the Supreme Court's principal judgment. "The final constitution of the BCCI contains a requirement that any amendments to the constitution have to be approved by the Supreme Court. This was not part of the Lodha Committee reforms. This did not form part of the principal judgement of the Supreme Court dated 18th July 2016. By this provision the members' autonomy and right to seek legitimate changes would every time have to be approved by the Supreme Court. This is not practical," says the explanation given by the BCCI.

The existing BCCI constitution says an office bearer, who has held any post for two consecutive terms of three years each either in state association or in the BCCI (or a combination of both), will have to go for a threeThe proposed amendment will allow Sourav Ganguly to helm the BCCI for two consecutive terms. As per the present constitution, Ganguly will have to go for a three-year cooling-off after July next year.

year cooling-off before he/she becomes eligible to hold an office or work as a councillor/committee-member again.

The proposed amendment says: "A President or Secretary who has served in such position for two consecutive terms in the BCCI shall not be eligible to contest any further election without completing a cooling off period of three years. During the cooling off period, such 'Office bearer' shall not be a member of the Governing Council or of any committee whatsoever of the BCCI. The expression 'President' or 'Secretary' should not be permitted to be circumvented by being a member of any

other committee or of the Governing Council in BCCI, as the case may be."

Simply put, the proposed amendment aims at separating the cooling-off period for the BCCI and state association and if passed at the AGM by a 3/4th majority, will allow the cricket board president and secretary to hold their respective offices for six years at a stretch irrespective of their term as officebearers in state associations.

The explanation given for the proposed amendment is that the cooling-off clause, in its present form, is proving to be an impediment to selecting experienced hands.

"This restriction is proving to be a big blow to selecting talented and experienced hands. This also affects the continuity of the individual's ability to serve in administration unnecessarily. Hence, cooling off can be restricted to BCCI and the member state respectively," says the explanation.

The proposed amendment will allow Sourav Ganguly to helm the BCCI for two consecutive terms. As per the present constitution, Ganguly will have to go for a three-year cooling-off after July next year, as he has already served as a Cricket Association of Bengal office bearer for over five years.

Amendments have been sought in the disqualification clause as well, notably how a person will be treated if he/she has committed any criminal offence. The existing BCCI constitution says: "A person shall be disqualified from being an Office Bearer, a member of the Governing Council or any Committee or a representative to the International Cricket Council or any similar organisation if he or she: g) Has been charged by a Court of Law for having committed any criminal offence, i.e. an order framing charges has been passed by a court of law having competent jurisdiction."

The proposed amendment calls for disqualification in this case to be restricted to: "Has been convicted by a Court of Law for commission of a criminal offence and sentenced to imprisonment for a period not less than three (3) years." This means, two years behind bars for a criminal offence, for example, shouldn't be an impediment to hold a BCCI post.

Age 70 no bar

Further amendments have been sought in the disqualification clause, like the provision to allow a person aged 70 years and above to represent the BCCI at the ICC. "In order to protect the interests of BCCI which are being steadily eroded at ICC, people with experience of negotiation and personal interaction with other member na-

tions should be made the representatives, the explanation says. This amendment will allow former BCCI office-bearers like N Srinivasan, who are above 70 years of age, to represent the Indian

An amendment has also been sought to drop the IPL governing council members from the disqualification clause as the governing council is "only a committee of BCCI". The proposed amendment also says "holding any office or post in a sports or athletic association or federation apart from cricket' shouldn't be a bar.

CEO under secretary

board at the ICC.

The proposed amendments also aim to curb the chief executive's power. "The Management personnel, the staff and the CEO shall work under the direct supervision, control and direction of the Secretary".

Work in rapid progress

Satwiksairaj-Chirag chip away at the World No 1 'Minions' even as they lose 21-16, 22-20

SHIVANI NAIK NOVEMBER 9

THE TRICK didn't stop at rattling Marcus Fernaldi Gideon. Known to be slightly more vulnerable than his partner Kevin Sanjay Sukamuljo — and we are talking the barest of tiny margins here — Gideon (28) was the slimmest of openings for India's top doubles pairing to prise open the door. So, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty set about peppering Gideon with their attack in the semifinals of Fuzhou China Open.

The straightforward tactic of badgering the weak(er) link brought the Indians a bunch of points. But the real gains were made in drilling doubt in Kevin's mind and snaring points from right under his nose.

"We knew he's the weaker of the two and if he's put under pressure then Kevin gets irritated. Cause Kevin's the fancier guy," Chirag explains of badminton's most creative wizard, who can cover for his partner on a shaky day, but the effort eats into the 24-year-old's free-flowing genius.

On Saturday, Kevin had to whiz front and back and across the court to shadow Gideon and pounce in for desperate retrieves and have his back. Consequently, the Indonesians escaped against the serious Indian upstarts who this year are increasingly looking like bonafide top-five materials.

And so the count moved to 8-0, eight matches the Indians have lost against the World No 1 Indonesians. But each encounter has loosened one screw of their game, making the Indian pair look more threatening than last time. The 21-16, 22-20 loss might've prolonged the wait for their first win against the ridiculously talented Indonesians, but Satwik-Chirag are inching closer. This journey to topple the top pairing is as much fun as would be the destination of actually securing the win.

The Indonesians are called the 'Minions' for their bouncy, busy vibe and size, but together Kevin and Gideon are the smartest players in the sport. When they steal the moon, they aren't following blind orders from a 'Gru', and in fact their improvisations match their outrageous speed and skill and reaction times — which are innate.

So when the Indians led 18-16 in the second after a breakaway 21-16 opener from the Minions, Kevin brought on his disruptive weapon — the spin serve, and raced to three bunched points. Again at 20-all, and with Indians not showing signs of being rolled over, the younger Minion, varied the pace on his smash since the Indians had pounced on the harder one in the point before, and in all the frenzy got to match point with the softest of kills.

In the dying stages of the game, Indians brought out their scramble defense, but realised the Indonesians can crank up the pace at will and their plan of slowing things down to catch breath and sneak in variations might not always yield rewards.

Earlier, the Indians had proved they were up to the task of countering the Minions.



The loss in the China Open semifinal might have prolonged the wait for their first win against the Indonesians, but Satwik-Chirag are inching closer. PTI

They started hitting straight, but soon enough Chirag was scampering across and angling interceptions at the net.

There were avoidable errors — down to lack of poise and nothing wrong in the game technically. The flat game saw some eye to eye exchanges, with serve variations thrown in to make it a highly skilled encounter.

Crowding their returns on the forehand, the Indians were opening up yawning spaces on the other half of the court exploited at 9-10 in the first, after things had stayed even on 7-7.

Matrix-like returns

While Kevin hovered around the net, not much was going past his Matrix-like returns. Kevin Sukamuljo plays at a pace that moves the shuttle 2-times faster into the opponents court and one can only imagine what Satwik-Chirag saw whizzing at them in real-time. He is like one of the Marvel or DC enhanced beings with their blurring movements, and the epithet "Minions" does no justice to how quick he can get while staying busy.

Chirag went from silly errors to inspired kills, pumped up at times with his backhand taps as the Indians tried to hassle and hustle them away from the net and pin them to the back. The Indian attack got truly going in the second, though they couldn't string together a good enough lead to put solid pressure on the Indonesians, even while they sniped at Gideon. At 3-2 came a 52-shot rally where all four brought out some eye-popping returns, keeping the shuttle in play while down on their backsides and then from inches off the floor.

Indian defense, though needing a lot of improvement, has come a long way. And though they couldn't hit the shuttle down (again drawn into a pace and height that

And so the count moved to 8-0 the Indians have lost eight matches against the World No 1 **Indonesians. But each** encounter has loosened one screw of their rivals' game, making Satwik and Chirag look more threatening than last time.

Kevin dictated), Satwik and Chirag did well to pick some below-the-knee shuttles and frustrate the Indonesians.

Some serious training in gymnastics will do the Indians good for that low defense where the body is expected to curve into a C, while feet stay rooted and the racquet pointing at 90 degrees down keeps tossing them over the net. But Satwik and Chirag did well to shift the focus on Gideon, who looked stressed as the Indians threatened to break away from 13-12.

It was a series of well constructed points as Indians varied the pace, but stayed true to their attacking intent. "Yes we stuck to our game plan but Kevin came with his spin serve at 18-16 and took 3 points. But we came back level at 19-all and it was anybody's game then," Chirag said.

Inching closer

The anybody turned out to be Kevin and Gideon, but the Indonesians will be worried about just how many points Indians are conceding to unforced errors, which as time passes, the Indians will tighten and repair. "Yes we are inching closer. A win will be there soon. Just a little more smarter and then I guess we can beat them. But the idea was right today; just a few mistakes in execution," Chirag said.

The two top pairings with great success against the Indonesians are Mathias Boe and Carsten Mogensen (5-4 head to head) and Lee Yong Dae and Yoo Yeon-seong (0-3), and those four legends had an uncompromising defense.

A sturdy defense can help Indians switch their game – slow down and vary the attack to earn the lifts. For even a different game isn't enough on its own against the world's most exciting doubles pairing who crowds throng to watch and who put up a show like no-one else.

As India's top doubles pairing go about figuring most other combinations in the topten, and are left with the Indonesians and Japanese to negotiate, the country can quickly raise its bar to expecting dazzling results from Satwik and Chirag week in, week out. But the moon's there for the taking only if the Minions are beaten. That the Indians are mighty close, even if the losses pile up, is what makes Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty imminently watchable as the most-vaunted thing in Indian badminton.

Seasoned Tejaswini secures India's 12th Tokyo quota

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA DOHA, NOVEMBER 9

VETERAN TEJASWINI Sawant secured India's 12th Olympic quota in shooting but missed out on a medal in the women's 50m rifle 3 positions event in the 14th Asian Championship here on Saturday. Provided she is picked in the final shoot-

be her maiden Olympic appearance, having missed the bus in 2008, 2012 and 2016. The former world champion bagged the quota for next year's Tokyo Games by virtue

ing squad for next year's Tokyo Games, it will

of making the finals of the 50m rifle 3 positions event in the championship. Out of the eight finalists, six of them were ineligible for various reasons, giving India

one of the three available quotas in the event The 39-year-old from Maharashtra's Kolhapur reached the final at fifth position after shooting 1171 in the 12-shot qualifica-

tions across the three positions of kneeling, prone and standing. However, in the finals, Sawant fought well but had to be satisfied with a fourth-place

finish. The seasoned Indian shot 435.8 in the finals at the Lusail Shooting Range. India also won nine medals in all competitions through the day including three more

gold. Sawant's score was way above her previous best score in qualification in the new longer format introduced only in this current Olympic cycle, helping her finish fifth and ease into the eight-woman final. It also helped secure a quota place as six

other finalists had either booked their individual quotas or their respective National Olympic Committees (NOC) had already exhausted their limit of two quotas per event

Though she could not win an individual medal, she combined with Kajal Saini and

Gaayathri Nithyanadam to bag the team bronze. Sawant was third after the second series but fell behind in the later attempts, finishing with an 8.8. Sawant, who also competes in the 50m rifle prone, has won many medals including gold at the World Championship, World Cup and the Commonwealth Games.

In 2010, she became the world champion in the 50m rifle prone event in Munich with a world-record equalling score. She was the first Indian woman shooter to win a gold medal at the Worlds.

China's Mengyao Shi won the gold medal with 457.9, while the silver went to Yesugen Oyunbat of Mongolia (457.0). The bronze and the second available quota was won by Japan's Shiori Hirata (445.9). The third quota went to Thailand's Chotphibunsin Thanyalak, who was placed ninth in the qualification with 1168. The other Indians in fray, Saini and Nithyanadam finished 13th and 16th in the qualification individually, with scores of 1167 and 1165.

Leave Rishabh alone: Rohit, ahead of series decider

Nagpur: Stand-in India captain Rohit Sharma on Saturday strongly backed an under-fire Rishabh Pant, urging critics to "leave him alone" as he is only trying to execute the team management's strategy. Pant, whose shot selection has come under the scanner on several occasions, became the centre of unwanted attention due to his poor glovework in the second T20 against Bangladesh in Rajkot. He botched up a stumping of Liton Das with the third umpire ruling that his hands were slightly in front of the stumps, when he dislodged the bails.

"You know there is a lot of talk happening about Rishabh Pant every day, every minute. I just feel that he needs to be allowed to do what he wants to do on the field. I would request everyone to keep their eyes away from Rishabh Pant for a while," skipper Rohit said on the eve of the T20 series decider against Bangladesh here. "He is a fearless cricketer and we (team management) want him to have that freedom. And if you guys take your eyes off him for sometime, it will allow him to perform even better," added Rohit. Not so long ago, Pant was the preferred



Will Sanju Samson get a place in the XI in the third and final T20I?

choice in all three formats but Wriddhiman Saha played ahead of him in the three Tests against South Africa at home last month only on the basis of superior glovework. "He is a young guy trying to make his mark in international cricket. Every move he makes on the field, people start talking about him. It is not fair. I think we should allow him to play his cricket," added Rohit.

INDIA VS B'DESH, 3RD T20I: LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 & 3 – 7 PM ONWARDS

DEVENDRA PANDEY NOVEMBER 9

FIVE INDIAN cricketers will practise with pink balls at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) on Sunday as the home team prepare for the Day-Night Test against Bangladesh in Kolkata. The plan was to have at least two days of practice, but since the official supplier of the pink ball, Sanspariel Greenlands (SG), could only deliver the first batch of 60 pink balls on Saturday, the training would be restricted to Sunday. The Bangladesh team will get the pink balls on Monday in Indore, which would host the first Test, a red-ball affair. on November 14.

The decision to practise with pink balls was taken by Rahul Dravid, head of cricket at the NCA, in consultation with the Indian team management. Ajinkya Rahane, Cheteshwar Pujara, Mayank Agarwal, Mohammad Shami and Ravindra Jadeja are the five players who opted for the pink-ball practice after the option was put forward to the team selected for the two Tests against Bangladesh.

Some players such as Pujara, Hanuma

Five Indian players practise with pink ball today Vihari, Agawal and Rahane have played with pink ball in a Duleep Trophy game three seasons ago. However, the Indian board then had opted to use the Kookuburra ball. Now, the BCCI has decided to go with SG. In the 11 day-andnight Tests held so far, Kookaburra and Dukes pink ball have been used; this would be the first time pink SG balls would be used in a Test. There was talk regarding using the Kookaburra ball but Sourav Ganguly, the new BCCI president, said: "No, it can't be (used) because the series has to be played with same ball. It can't be two different balls in the same series."

As the Test team has to report in Indore by Monday, it was decided to go ahead with a one-day session under lights.

"The practice will be on centre wicket where practice will be done in form of match stimulation. Dravid, too, will be part of it. The Karnataka State Cricket Association will provide bowlers and fielders for the session. We wanted to have couple of days under night but due to unavoidable circumstances it was decided to have only one day," a source in the BCCI informed this paper.

It was Sourav Ganguly who had pushed

The decision was taken by Rahul Dravid, head of cricket at the NCA, in consultation with the Indian team management. Ajinkya Rahane, Cheteshwar Pujara, Mayank Agarwal, Mohammad Shami and Ravindra Jadeja are the five players who have opted for the pink-ball practice.

for the pink-ball Test. It was also Ganguly who, as the head of the Cricket Association of Bengal, was instrumental in arranging the first pink-ball game in India — a Super League final between Mohun Bagan and Bhowanipore in June 2016. That year, the BCCI then used the pink balls in the Duleep Trophy games. Bangladesh have played a domestic final with the pink ball, though

that was way back in 2013. India's decision to play with pink balls has been keenly followed in Australia

which is pushing for two pink-ball Tests against India next year Down Under. In 2018, India had turned down Australia's proposal to play a pink-ball Test. England's former captain Michael Vaughan had taken a friendly dig on that issue, tweeting: "Now India have agreed to play a Day/Night Test against Bangladesh surely they will agree to play 1 or 2 in Australia next year ... #JustSaying"

The pink ball is manufactured in similar way to the red ball but the treatment of leather is different. It's dyed, pigmented with a bright colour, and polished. The seam colour is black, though the nature of the thread is the same as the one used in red balls.

There have been some concerns about dew hampering the spinners but Ganguly dismissed those worries. "We will make sure there's no dew.

After all day/night one-dayers are played here. There's this dew treatment spray and all. Nothing will happen," he said. "Test cricket needs this push. Thanks to Virat (Kohli) also, he agreed straightaway. And even more to Bangladesh Cricket Board that they agreed at such a short notice. It's a good way forward."

SYED MUSHTAQ ROUND-UP

GROUP A

Meriwala takes five, Baroda beat K'taka

Visakhaptnam: Pacer Lukman Meriwala finished with career-best figures of 5 for 21 as Baroda beat Karnataka by 14 runs. **BRIEF SCORES**: Baroda 196 for 4 in 20 overs (Kedar Devdhar 52; Krishnappa Gowtham 2/22) beat Karnataka 182 for 9 in 20 overs (Rohan Kadam 57; Lukman Meriwala 2/21) by 14 runs Goa 202 for 4 in 20 overs (Snehal Kauthaankar 55; Vipul Krishna 2/47) beat Bihar 173 for 8 in 20 overs (Rajesh Singh 64 not out; Heramb Parab 3/21) by 29 runs.

GROUP B

Tamil Nadu beat Rajasthan by 39 runs

Thiruvananthapuram: Tamil Nadu beat Rajasthan by 39 runs on Saturday for their second straight victory. Tamil Nadu made 169 for 5 in 20 overs and restricted Rajasthan to 116 for 8. BRIEF SCORES: Tamil Nadu 169/5 in

20 overs (Dinesh Karthik 48, N Jagadeesan 48, Akash Singh 4/26) bt Rajasthan 116/8 in 20 overs (Mahipal Lomror 32, R Sai Kishore 3/19) Manipur 93 for 8 in 20 overs (Bashid Muhammed 24, M B Murasingh 1/5)

Bose 29, Rex Singh 3/26); UP 60 all out in 14.4 overs (Darshan Nalkande 5/18, S B Wagh 2/13) lost to Vidarbha 62 for 1 in 7.5 overs (A V Kolhar 29 not out, Faiz Fazal 25)

lost to Tripura 97 for 5 in 15.1 overs (UU

GROUP C

Hosts Chandigarh stun Maharashtra

Chandigarh: Hosts Chandigarh defeated Maharashtra as captain Manan Vohra (75*) anchored a 162-run chase.

BRIEF SCORES: Chandigarh 163/3 in 17.5 overs (Manan Vohra 75*, Bipul Sharma 36*) beat Maharashtra 162/8 in 20 overs (NS Naik 50*; Nirmohi 2/18) by 7 wickets; Railways 184/6 in 20 overs (M Ahmed 40*, T Pradeep 35*) beat Hyderabad 183/3 (Ambati Rayudu 77, BP Sandeep 74*) in 20 overs by 4 wickets

GROUP D

Surya scores 81 off 28 in Mumbai's win

Mumbai: Mumbai skipper Suryakumar

Yadav (in pic) scored an unbeaten 81 off just 28 balls as title favourites chased down Haryana's score of 153. BRIEF SCORES:

score of 153.

BRIEF SCORES:

Haryana 153/5

(Harshal Patel 33,

Rahul Tewatia

wickets.

29*; Tushar Deshpande 2-27) lost to Mumbai 154/2 (Suryakumar Yadav 81*, Aditya Tare 39) by eight wickets; Assam 101/8 (Pallav Kumar Das 33, Wasiqur Rahman 26*; Saransh Jain 3-13) lost to Madhya Pradesh 102/5 (Parth

Sahani 27; Abhilash Gogoi 3-24) by five

umar

Best Mode

Premier League's top-two sides, Liverpool and Man City, face off in a battle of grit and ingenuity

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE LIVERPOOL, NOVEMBER 9

Anfield on Sunday.

LIVERPOOL HAVE lived through many false dawns in the 29 years since last lifting a league title, but the class of 2019/20 have the chance to prove they are the real deal when reigning champions Manchester City visit

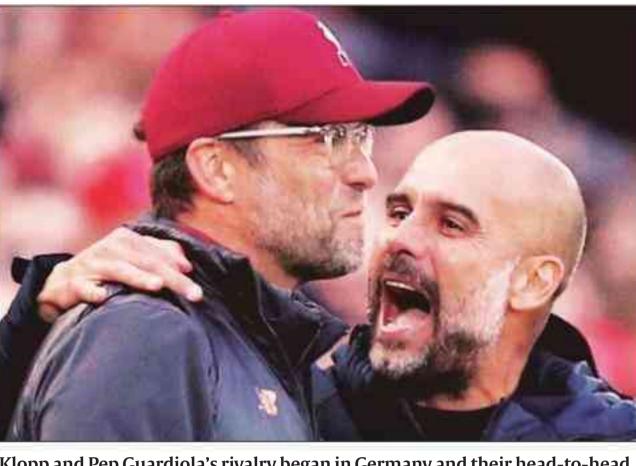
City's relentless hunger to push the bar to new heights under Pep Guardiola has kept Liverpool waiting. Despite posting the third highest points tally in English top flight history last season with 97, Liverpool lost out by a solitary point as City backed up their 100point campaign with 98 to retain the title.

Beset by defensive injuries, those standards have slipped slightly at the start of this season, allowing Jurgen Klopp's men to open up a six-point lead ahead of Sunday's battle between the top two.

"Last season we won the Premier League (against) the best contender I ever faced in my career," said Guardiola on Friday.

"Right now Liverpool are the strongest team in the world. Playing at Anfield, we know what it means for them and for all their rivals." Revitalised since Klopp took charge four years ago, Liverpool have not lost a home game in the Premier League since April 2017. Their solitary defeat in the last 50 league games on any ground came away to City in January in a titanic tussle that ultimately decided the title race.

The consistency of both sides has seen this fixture become English football's biggest game in recent seasons. In 2017/18 it was Liverpool who ended City's quest for an unbeaten league season and thrashed Guardiola's men 5-1 on aggregate in an ill-tempered Champions League quarter-final.



Klopp and Pep Guardiola's rivalry began in Germany and their head-to-head record is 7-7, with two draws. Reuters

"It's getting bigger and bigger," said Klopp.
"Man City is a pretty good football team.
Thank God there is a rivalry because that
means we are not in bad place as well."

While City have suffered shock defeats to Norwich and Wolves in the first 11 games of the season, Liverpool have had the air of champions in recent weeks with their ability to fight to the end for their rewards.

Late goals against Leicester, Tottenham, Manchester United and Aston Villa have earned Klopp's men an extra eight points in the past month alone. Now they have the perfect opportunity to press home their advantage against a City side further weakened at the back by an injury to goalkeeper Ederson.

The orratic Claudio Brayo who was sont

The erratic Claudio Bravo, who was sentoff for a characteristic charge from his goal against Atalanta in the Champions League in midweek, will start a Premier League game for the first time since May 2018. A longer term injury to Aymeric Laporte

has already destabilised City's title defence with midfielder Fernandinho forced to deputise at centre-back, while left-back Benjamin Mendy is still to find his best form after two injury plagued seasons.

"It's a big game, two really good teams

face each other. The best news is it's at Anfield," added Klopp.

Guardiola insisted all will not be lost in the case of his fourth defeat in five visits to Anfield as City boss, but knows how much of a mountain it would leave his side to climb.

"It never ends in November," said the Catalan. "It will be more difficult when you see a team like Liverpool, who lost once last season and is unbeaten this season.

"So you can imagine that they are not going to lose many games but the season is long, and a lot of situations can happen." AFP

'Sorry for killing that story'

French star Kylian Mbappe is out of Liverpool's price range, the Premier League leaders manager and long-time admirer Jurgen Klopp says. The 20-year-old Paris Saint Germain striker -- who was instrumental in France's lifting of the 2018 World Cup -- has been linked with Real Madrid.

This gathered momentum earlier in the week when Real's coach Zinedine Zidane remarked that Mbappe had always said it was his dream to play for the Spanish side.

Klopp had been keen to sign Mbappe in 2017 and met with the player and his entourage. However, he opted to join PSG for \$202 million.

PSG are seeking to extend his present contract and if they were reluctantly to allow him to leave are believed to want more than the record fee of £198 million they paid Barcelona for Neymar in 2017. "Buying this calibre of player is difficult," Klopp was cited in Saturday's The Times as saying. I don't see any club at the moment who can buy Kylian Mbappe. "I don't see any club. That is how it is. And we are involved in these clubs who cannot do it. Easy as that. "OK, from a sporting point of view, there are not a lot of reasons to not sign him." **LIVE:** Star Sports Network and Hotstar, 10:00pm onwards