

A Prayer and a Punch

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

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

CONSTITUTION BENCH DIRECTS CENTRE TO FORMULATE A SCHEME WITHIN 3 MONTHS FOR TEMPLE TRUST

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
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

BRINGING TO an end a seven-decade 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 three-way division of the disputed 2.77

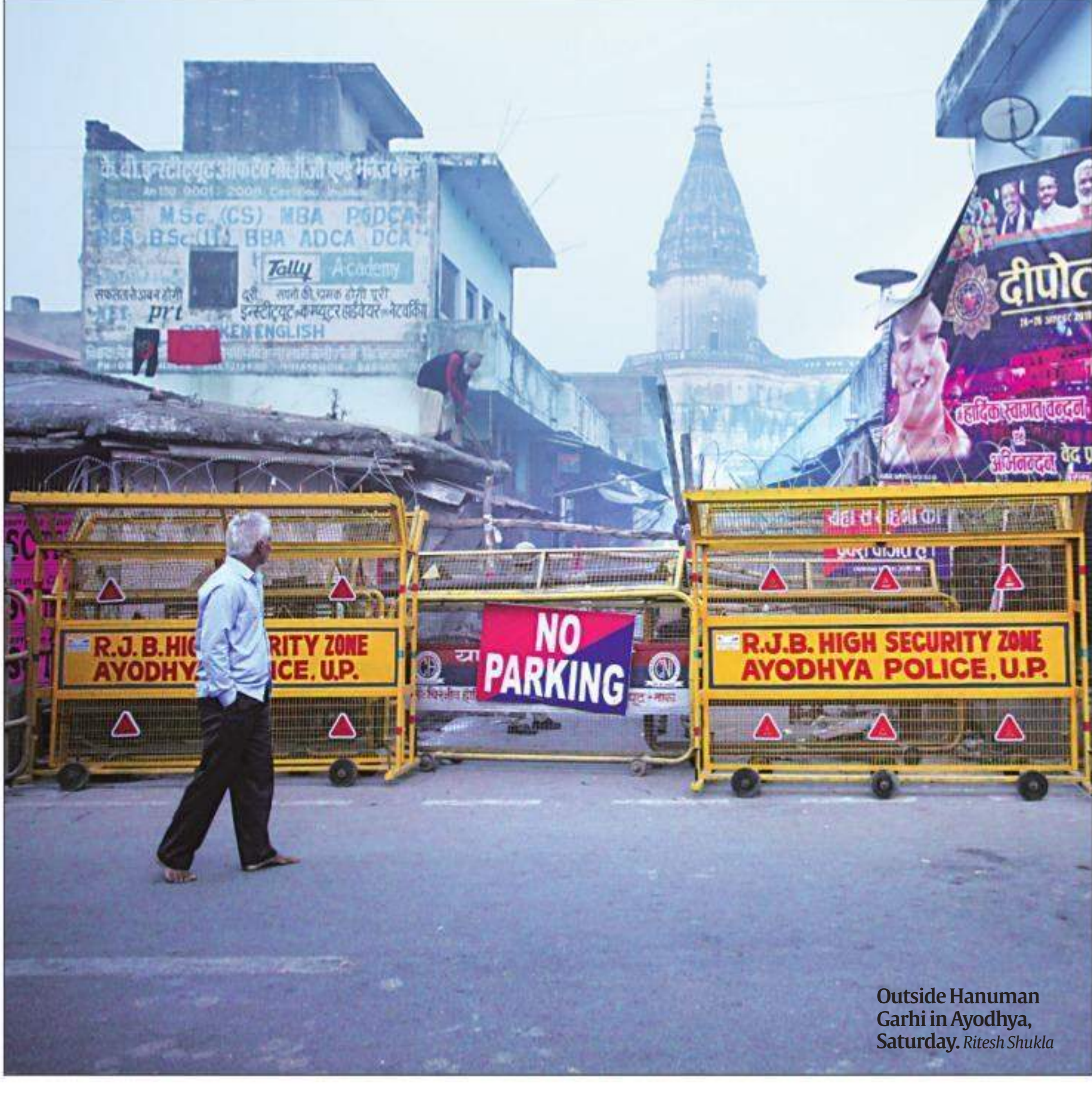
BUSINESS AS USUAL



acres between the Nirmohi Akhara sect, the deity Ramlalla Virajman and the UP Sunni Central Waqf Board.

While dismissing the Nirmohi Akhara suit as barred by limitation but upholding the suits of the UP Sunni Central Waqf Board — the High Court order had said the Board suit was barred by limitation — and Ramlalla Virajman, the Bench said the High Court order was "legally unsustainable" and "dividing the land will not subserve the interest of either of the parties or secure a lasting sense

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Outside Hanuman Garhi in Ayodhya, Saturday. Ritesh Shukla

No place for fear, bitterness in new India: PM



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 Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid title suit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said it was time to "unite" and "take everyone

together... without leaving anyone behind".

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

gives us the message to stay united and move forward."

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 negativity in new India."

The Prime Minister also said the judgment will "further increase people's faith in judicial

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APURVA VISHWANATH

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

RELIANCE ON records of European travellers, lack of evidence 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

then Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao had publicly committed to in 1993 — or 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

verdict especially since it was a unanimous one. Perhaps, learning from the experience of the 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.

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EXPRESS NETWORK



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

THERE WAS some fear and some hope. But after the Supreme Court delivered its verdict on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid title suit, the mood in Ayodhya was that of relief.

"I cannot speak on behalf of others but for me, the case is closed," Iqbal Ansari, who is one of the litigants in the case, told *The Indian Express*. "Accha hai,



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

bawal khatam hua (It's good that the issue has been resolved)," said Altaf Ansari, the young nephew of Iqbal Ansari.

At Ground Zero of the 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

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Emotions blur borders as history marks Kartarpur opening

KANCHAN VASDEV & MAN AMAN SINGH CHHINA
KARTARPUR, NOVEMBER 9

ASURGE of emotions blurred the border Saturday, as over 500 Indian pilgrims crossed a 4.2-km stretch from Gurdaspur to the Durrar Sahib gurdwara in Pakistan's Kartarpur to mark the historic opening of the corridor to one of the holiest shrines of the Sikh community.

Prime Minister Narendra 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 government'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.

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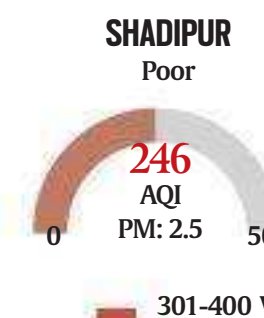
0-50 Good



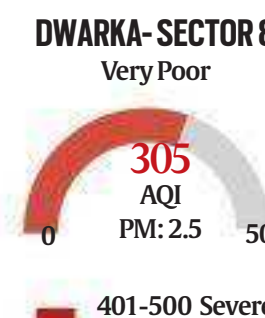
51-100 Satisfactory



101-200 Moderate



201-300 Poor



301-400 Very poor

401-500 Severe

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 15-year-old national-level shooter was electrocuted in the bathroom of an OYO hotel, the 37-year-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

come to Delhi with his coach 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 gov-

ernment 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 any 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."

SUKRITA BARUAH
 NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

DELHI UNIVERSITY has not updated its subscription to over 40 online databases which provide access to journals and other resources, cutting scholars off from vital research material.

This drain of research material in the university has taken place through two contemporaneous processes.

Starting from 2015, the university gradually stopped updating its subscriptions to 29 online databases that it had direct subscription to. These include IEEE Xplore, which provides access to material on computer science, electric engineering and electronics, and has not been accessible since 2016; Emerald Management Extra, which provides access to management journals, and not been accessible since 2015; and Science Direct, which provides research material in physical sciences, life sciences, health sciences and social 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 budgetary 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



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 queries from *The Indian Express*.

Adding to this, in 2015, the university had decided to no longer subscribe to print editions of journals it was procuring online. Now, though, even the online access has been lost.

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 e-journal databases to universities which were a part of its network.

However, this was 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 two-five 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

stubble burning pollution is credited 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 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**

Pace picks up to prepare for Delhi Assembly polls

SOURAVROY 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, IIT 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 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.

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 during 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 tweeted.

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 BJP 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

SHIVAMPATEL & 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 flare-up 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 tandem 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, temple 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

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... 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 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."



Police Commissioner Amulya Patnaik in Old Delhi, Saturday.

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.

According to police, district 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 in-

side 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, made an appearance. As some 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-

tions, lawyers from the UP Central Sunni Wakf Board walked out of the SC. As reporters chased them, lawyer Zafaryab Jilani 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 Qasmi 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 JNU 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 diyas 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 Birsra 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**

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 NHA 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 quoted 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 Saturday 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 AAK 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.

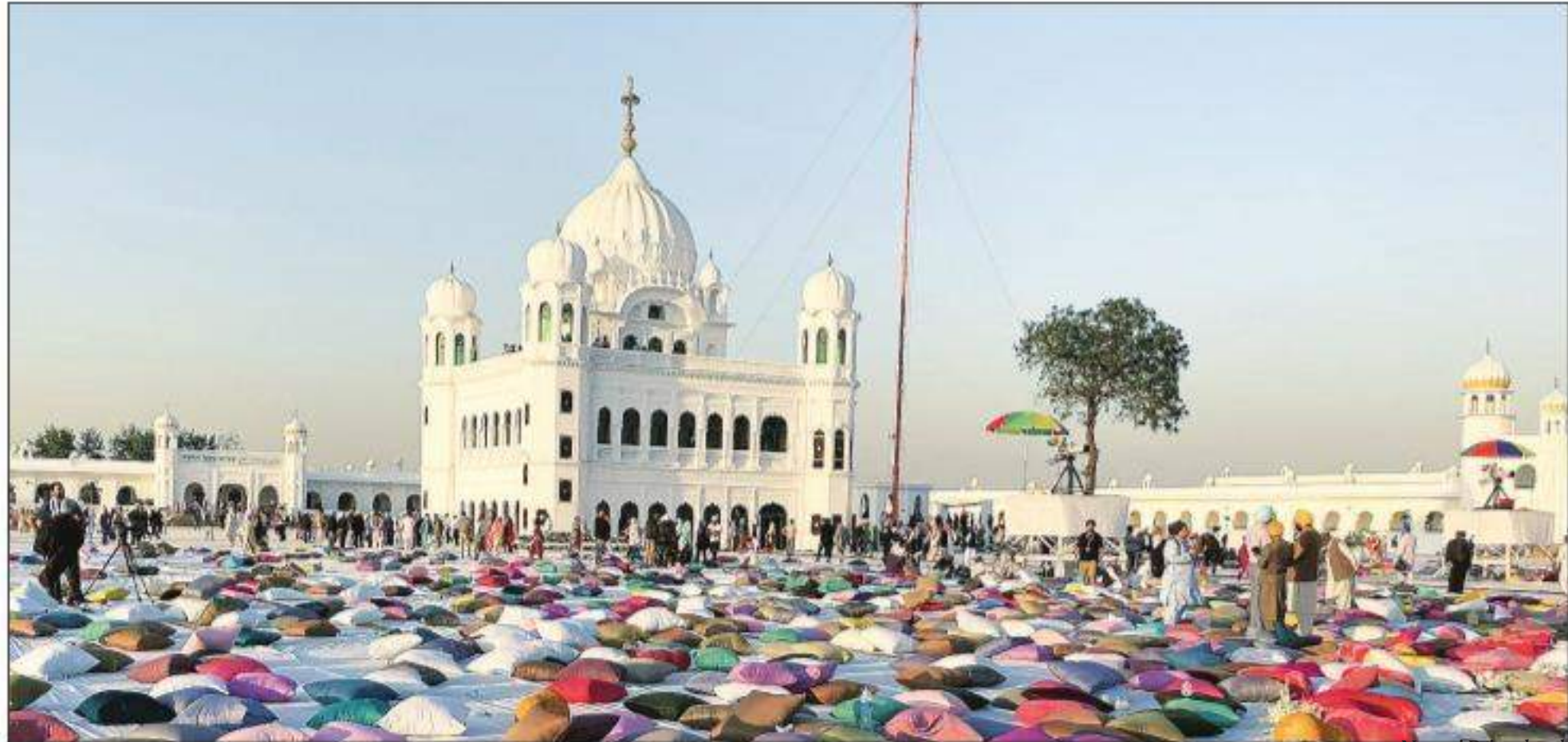
Gurbani, he said, is being translated in several languages with the help of UNESCO.

"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.



Neeraj Priyadarshi



Neeraj Priyadarshi



(Clockwise from top) At Kartarpur Sahib on Saturday; pilgrims outside the integrated checkpoint 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," he said.

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

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 re-

ceived the jatha and climbed on to the shuttle bus. He and Sidhu were seen waving to the devotees outside the Darbar Sahib Gurdwara.

At the gurdwara, youths vied with each 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.



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 foundation stone of the 4-km corridor on the Pakistan side.

DECEMBER 3: Pakistan opens immigration centre at the Kartarpur border.



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.

JUNE 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 attempts to disrupt Kartarpur Sahib pilgrimage.

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

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.

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 Qureshi 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.



MEA slams Pakistan’s Ayodhya remarks

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW 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-on-one, 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.

WITHPTIINPUTS



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 Bengal, Jena said, according 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.

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 unto-

ward 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 SAHA
GUWAHATI, 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.

A source at the NRC office said that Sarma’s first stint came to an end after he sought relief from his responsibilities citing personal reasons.

Sarma has uploaded posts about issues related to the

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 Koshiyari on Saturday asked the BJP, the single largest party in the state, to “indicate willingness and ability” to form the government.

The BJP 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 Koshiyari 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 to 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 BJP, 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... BJP 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 BJP 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 BJP, 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

ON A day when Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari invited BJP 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.

The Congress, 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 has refuted the allegation.

On Saturday, hours before the Governor extended the invitation to BJP, AICC general secretary (Maharashtra in-charge) Mallikarjun Kharge rushed to Jaipur to hold consultation with

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.

With Sharad Pawar’s NCP reportedly 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

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.

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 sit in the Opposition.

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,” said a senior Congress leader.

IMA SCAM

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 BJP 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 the scam.

Among others whose prop-

erties were searched were Bengaluru DCP Ajay Hillori and Additional Commissioner of Police Hemant Nimbalkar.

The two IPS officers were among those who gave clean chits to the group’s ponzi scheme at a time the government received several complaints about the matter.

The CBI had not named IAS officer B M Vijay Shankar and revenue officer LC Nagaraj in the two chargesheets filed since August as the SIT had not obtained the government’s sanction 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.

Koregaon Bhima Inquiry Commission gets 4th extension

CHANDAN HAYGUNDE
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 has 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

department on November 8.”

This is the fourth extension granted to the two-member commission.

The state government had appointed the commission in February 2018 to probe the sequence of events that led to the violence in Koregaon Bhima, in which one person was killed. It is also probing who or which organisations were responsible for the violence, and has to identify measures to prevent recurrence of such incidents.

Since it was constituted, the commission has got two extensions of four months each, another extension of six months and now, the latest extension of four months.

‘Maoist trainer’ who escaped encounter in Kerala arrested

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
COIMBATORE, NOVEMBER 9

A MAN, who was allegedly injured and managed to escape when four suspected Maoists were gunned down in Palakkad 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 Moolakkangal, a densely forested area on the Tamil Nadu-Kerala border, they said.

Tamil Nadu special task force personnel were maintaining tight vigil on the border following possibility of some rebels infiltrating 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 a few people in using rifles for shooting.

Following this, the STF intensified combing operations to flush out Maoists in tribal areas, police said. During the search, STF personnel nabbed Deepak from Moolakkangal.

Ayodhya verdict: Curfew in Kishtwar, Sec 144 imposed in Jammu

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, NOVEMBER 9

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.

Sector 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.

J&K Internet shutdown cripples initiative that saved over 700

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 cardiologists in Srinagar. The patient needed immediate thrombolysis (clot burst) and a referral to Srinagar.

“That was the last message on the group. The patient and two other MI (Myocardial Infarction or heart attack) patients were being referred to Srinagar,” said Dr Nasir Shams. He is one of the coordinators of ‘Save Heart Kashmir’ — a voluntary 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 peripheral hospitals of the three regions through a WhatsApp group.

“It was then that the internet went down and we lost track of

the patients. We don’t know what 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 communication — WhatsApp.

Now, with the number of patients with myocardial infarctions 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.

“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 investigations on the dedicated WhatsApp channel. Cardiologists and experts on the group — some of them abroad — would then advise doctors on

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 - Sher-i-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 all other district and sub-district hospitals, we don’t receive any patients who need thrombolysis. The number of such patients has drastically decreased.”

PM Modi blamed anti-social 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"

MANOJ CG: 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 one-party 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 CG: 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 CG: But a year ago, when the Congress won in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya 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 CG: 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



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



"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

'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 CG 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 *anarh* (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 youth 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 BJP 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 CG: 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 Haryana 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-

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 CG: 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 extra-constitutional authority that is the RSS... When the Congress was in power, it was said that Sonia Gandhi acted as an extra-constitutional 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 com-

ing 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 CG: 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



10 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,

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 FOR MINORITIES

“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 O P 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 BL 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, KRISHNA KAUSHIK AND AML 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 R 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 electoral growth.

With the efforts yielding results — the party won 89 seats in 1989 — then BJP president L K 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 sub-head “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 elections, however, the issue was back on the party’s primary agenda. The Union government 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.

BJP state chief attacks Mamata for ‘silence’ on judgment, Trinamool cites cyclone work

SWEETY KUMARI & ABANTIKA GHOSH

KOLKATA, NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

WEST BENGAL BJP 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

monitoring the situation 24x7. We are taking all measures to tackle any contingency. Special 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 appeasement 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.”

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 one 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 says 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 Ramjanambhoomi-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.

AYODHYA VERDICT



“ Court’s questions—and answers ”



Outside the Supreme Court on Saturday.
Praveen Khanna

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

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

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

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?

- 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.;
- 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;
- 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.;
- 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?

- The foundation of the mosque is based on the walls of a large pre-existing structure;
- The pre-existing structure dates back to the twelfth century; and
- 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...
- 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.
- 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 Bhumis 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 necessity 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 not arise.

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 residents 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 premises for *darshan*...

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...

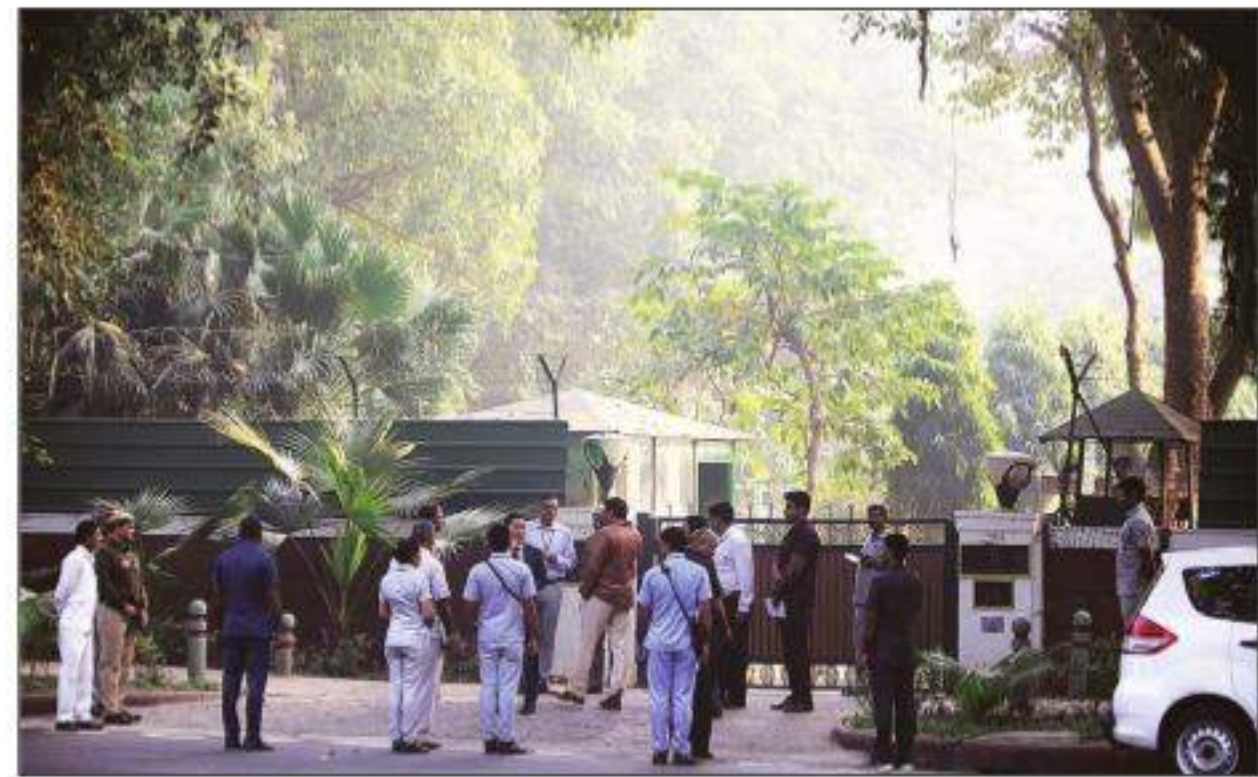
We have already concluded that the three-way bifurcation by the High Court was legally unsustainable. Even as a matter of maintaining public peace and tranquillity, the solution which commended itself to the High Court is not feasible. The disputed site measures all of 1500 square yards. Dividing the 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.

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 signature.

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.

One 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.”

12 AYODHYA VERDICT



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.

Among the first visitors to the 30, 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.

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 welcoming the apex court award of five acres of alternative land for a mosque, Advani appealed to all sections to work together to “strengthen the country’s national unity and integrity”. “Now that the prolonged 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-year-old 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 L K 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

RAVISH TIWARI
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 BJP 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, for now.

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.

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 Waqf 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 Bhumii, 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 claim 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

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 long-standing 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 government 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.

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.

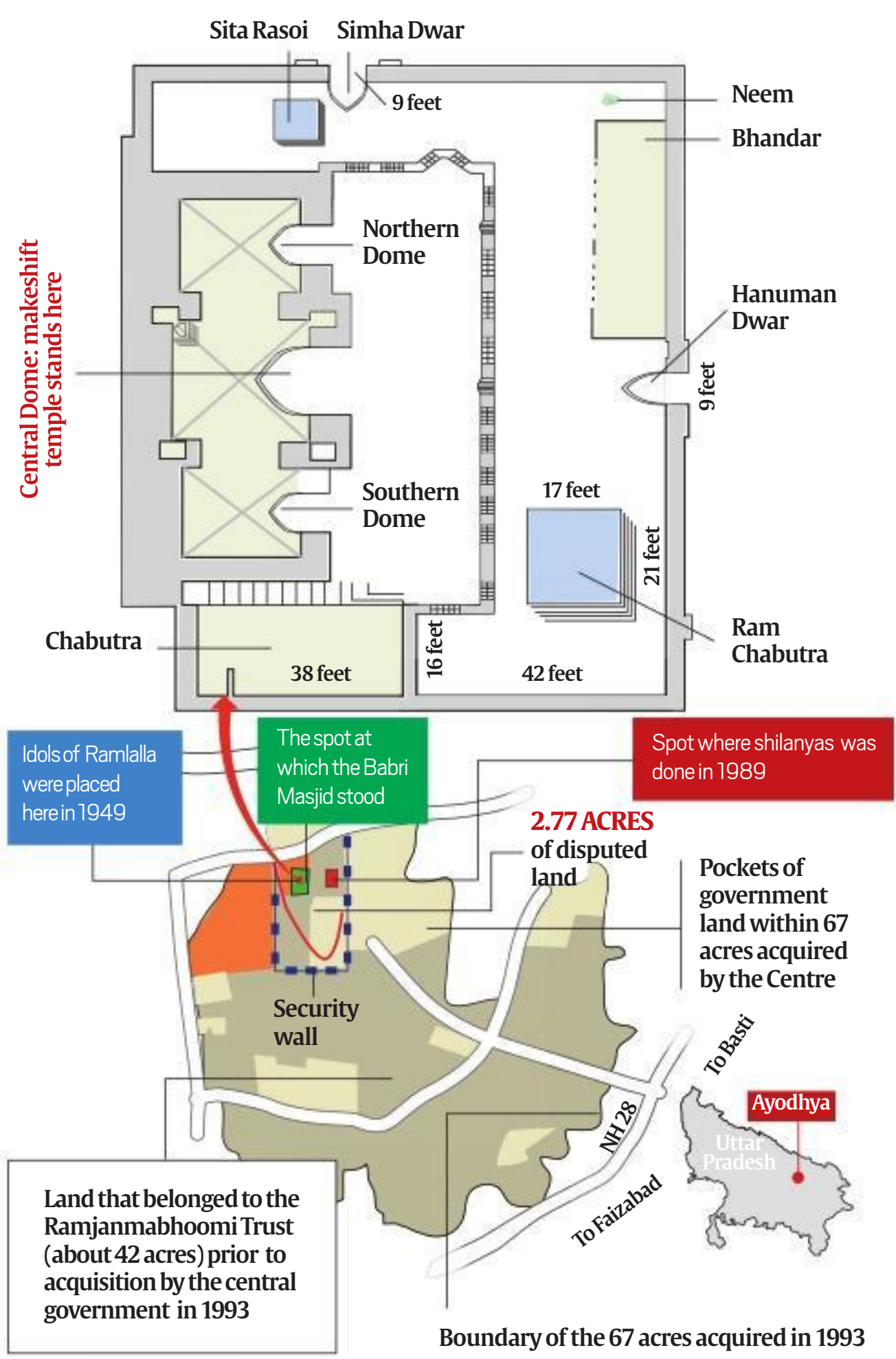
“We have nothing against the Supreme Court giving five acres for a mosque. We were only interested in the land for Ram Lalla Virajman... The verdict has come after 30 years but I am happy it came in my lifetime,” says the 65-year-old former BJP MLC who unsuccessfully contested the 2014 Lok Sabha elections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

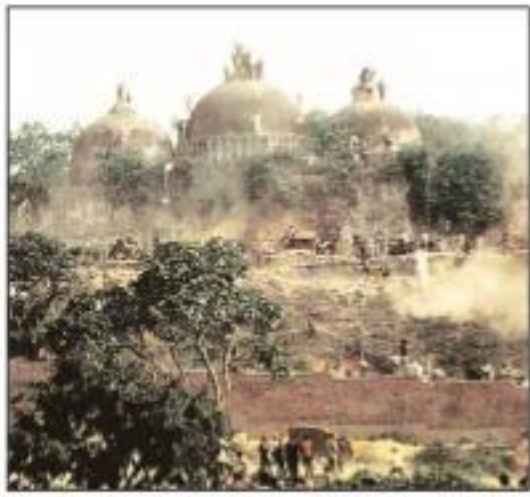
The disputed site in Ayodhya



13 AYODHYA VERDICT



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

1961 The UP Sunni Central Waqf Board, and 9 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

1989 Bhagwan Sri Ramlalla 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

2010 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 eq-

uity 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 court said.

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 leaders 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 Moreswar 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 evidence.

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 others.

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-of-court, 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 FM 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

Khehar had also said that the Ram-janmabhoomi 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 may be some litigation in courts.

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 & 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 held 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 Srivastava

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 Waqf 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

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

The Muslim side had argued that the presence of lime-*sarkhi* plaster on this wall was proof that the structure dated back to the Islamic period as lime *sarkhi* 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, Jesuit 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 B B 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.



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

AS THE 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.



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 tem-

ples. 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 in stone.

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-



CR Sasikumar

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?

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

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



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 re-establishment 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



FAIZAN MUSTAFA AND AYMEN MOHAMMED

FAITH WINS OVER LAW

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

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 Waqf 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 judgment 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.

Mustafa is Vice-Chancellor, NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad and Mohammed, a research scholar at NALSAR University of Law



16 BOOKS

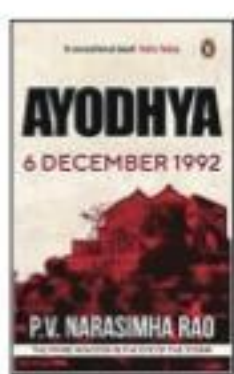
EXPRESS EDITORS
RECOMMEND

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 examines 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 precipitation 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— Dharendra 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 piecing 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.

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THREE HUNDRED RAMAYANAS: FIVE EXAMPLES AND THREE THOUGHTS ON TRANSLATION — AK Ramanujan: Controversially taken off the history syllabus of Delhi University in 2011, Ramanujan'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 altered 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.



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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

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, PVAIDYANATHAN IYER

HAVING 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.

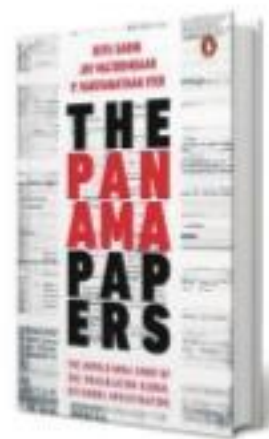
■ ■ ■

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 off-shore 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, PVAIDYANATHAN 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 off-shore 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 re-

ferred 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

HARSIMRAN GILL

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 25-lakh JCB Prize for Literature this year and is on the short-list 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

to find Bashir Ahmed, the only man who she 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 daughter-in-law Amina with whom she develops a firm friendship. As she eases into the rhythms of rural life, learning how to milk cows and

navigate the steep slopes of the mountains, 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 state-backed 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



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If there are questions around the Ayodhya Verdict that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

AYODHYA VERDICT

A to Z

The 1,045-page order – its context and contents – broken down

SEEMA CHISHTI, PVAIDYANATHAN IYER & MONOJIT MAJUMDAR
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 9

AYODHYA: In Faizabad district, Awadh, famous for its sunsets by the banks of the River Saryu. Its rich history and symbolism finds space in the writings of Tulsidas and Amir Khusrau. Buddha is said to have preached here, Jainism and Sikhism too have their imprint here. The Hindu-Muslim binary of the last century has, however, left little space for this history – and the identity of Ayodhya has been limited to its being the ground zero of the Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute.

BABRI MASJID: The three-domed mosque that Mir Baqi built in the name of Emperor Babur, in 1528 in the Jaunpuri style, has been at the centre of the dispute. Many on the Mandir side believe that the birthplace of Lord Ram was exactly at the spot on which the Babri Masjid stood until December 6, 1992. The Supreme Court concluded that the masjid was built over a structure which was “non-Islamic”.

CONSTITUTION: The court began its order by underlining the role of the Constitution. “Constitutional values form the cornerstone of this nation and have facilitated the lawful resolution of the present title dispute through forty-one days of hearings before this Court,” says paragraph 2 of the order.

DEMOLITION: At the time the Babri Masjid was demolished, UP had a BJP government, and PV Narasimha Rao of the Congress headed the government at the Centre. On Pages 913-14, the judgment says: “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.”

EQUITY: “Equity” appears 101 times in the order, including in the title of the section, ‘Applicable legal regime and Justice, Equity and Good Conscience’. The judgment quotes widely from legal scholars on Equity, and reads it into Article 142 of the Constitution: “The phrase ‘is necessary for doing complete justice’ is of a wide amplitude and encompasses a power of equity which is employed when the strict application of the law is inadequate to produce a just outcome... It is in seeking this ultimate balance for a just society that we must apply justice, equity and good conscience...”

FAITH: The judgment asserts the centrality of evidence to decisions, not faith and belief. However, a 116-page “Addenda” establishes the evidence of faith, ending with: “It is thus concluded on the conclusion that faith and belief of Hindus since prior to construction of Mosque and subsequent thereto has always been that Janamasthan 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.”

GOVERNMENTS: Central to the way in which a local land dispute grew into a critical moment in the history of contemporary India, is the role played by successive governments over a century and a half – from the British who erected a wall between the inner and outer portions of the Babri premises, to those of Rajiv Gandhi’s which ordered the locks opened and Narasimha Rao’s which acquired 67.7 acres in 1993. Each of these actions had powerful consequences, some of which have been recorded in the judgment.

HISTORY: The story of the Babri Masjid 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

to test founding principles of the modern Indian republic. Much of the order is about historical facts and interpretation.

IDEA OF INDIA: This evocative phrase which reflects the resplendence of Indian identity (also the title of political theorist Sunil Khilnani’s signature work), appears in paragraphs 1 and 2 of the judgment. The court said the dispute was “as old as the idea of India itself”, and observed: “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.”

JANMASTHAN: The court rejected the argument put forward by plaintiffs Bhagwan Sri Ram Virajman and Asthan Sri Ram Janmabhoomi that Janmasthan was a juristic person on the grounds that this would extinguish all competing proprietary claims to the land, and render the concept of title meaningless. The ASI reported the existence of a “very fine” Ram temple at Janmasthan, and the court noted that according to the ASI, “Babar’s Masjid... was built on the very spot where the old temple Janmasthan... was standing”.

KAR SEVAKS: Thousands of religious volunteers – *kar sevaks* – rallied behind L K Advani during his Rath Yatra in September-October 1990. Several *kar sevaks* were killed in police firing. Over 150,000 *kar sevaks* from across the country gathered at Ayodhya, and demolished the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992. Ten years later, on February 27, 2002, when many *kar sevaks* were returning from Ayodhya, the Sabarmati Express was torched near Godhra, killing 59. This sparked riots in Narendra Modi’s Gujarat, in which more than 1,000 were killed, most of them Muslims.

LAND: At the heart of the title dispute were 2.77 acres of land. The judgment begins with the mention of “a dispute between two religious communities both of whom claim ownership over a piece of land admeasuring 1,500 square yards in the town of Ayodhya”. The disputed land has been granted to the Hindus for the construction of the temple. The Sunni Central Waqf Board has been given 5 acres.

MODI: Now Prime Minister, Narendra Modi was one of the organisers of the Rath Yatra that Advani embarked upon on September 30, 1990 from Somnath in Gujarat. The yatra was brought to an abrupt end on October 30 after then Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav ordered Advani’s arrest in Samastipur. In later years, the Ram Mandir continued to fuel the BJP’s popularity, and Modi rode a wave in 2014 to catapult his party to pole position in Indian politics.

NIRMOHI AKHARA: One of the biggest and most powerful *akharas* of the Ramanandi sect has historically been associated with the spot, and argued the case vigorously at all levels for decades. It had been allotted one-third of the 2.77 acres by the Allahabad High Court in 2010, but the Supreme Court rejected its claim to *shebait* rights, and ordered that the *akhara*’s suit “is held to be barred by limitation and shall accordingly stand dismissed”.

OUTER COURTYARD: The wall erected by the British after Hindu-Muslim riots in 1856-57 divided the disputed premises into two parts: inner portion to be used by Muslims, and the outer courtyard to be used by Hindus. The Supreme Court relied on evidence pointing to exclusive ownership of the outer courtyard by Hindus, but observed 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

considered the inner portion and the outer courtyard as a composite whole, paving the way for a judgment in favour of a temple.

POLITICS: The Congress has been effusive in its praise of the judgment, a position that makes it difficult to distinguish it from the BJP. With the regional parties largely muted, the Left has been an outlier. If the demolition of the mosque in 1992 ushered in Hindutva 1.0, the reactions to the verdict appears to mark an era of broad acquiescence across most parties.

QUESTION: The Supreme Court pronounced judgment on appeals against the 2010 Allahabad High Court judgment that ordered a three-way division of the disputed land. The HC had considered questions on broadly eight issues, including who had the possession and title, whether the outer courtyard included Ram Chabutra and Sita Rasoi, and whether the mosque had been built on the site of an ancient Hindu temple. The Supreme Court heard arguments on broadly the same questions. (*Explained, November 6, 7*)

RAM LALLA: One of the five suits before the Court was in the name of the deity itself, Sri Ram Lalla Virajman, and the birthplace, Asthan Shri Ram Janmabhoomi. This suit was founded on the claim that the law recognises both the idol and the birthplace as juridical entities. The court did not accept the Janmasthan as a juridical entity. It awarded the title of the land to Ram Lalla, to be held by the Trust that the Court has sought to be set up within three months.

SANGH: The Sangh Parivar, including the RSS, VHP, and BJP, led the Ramjanmabhoomi movement, and demanded the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. The Sangh Parivar has long insisted that the temple is a matter of faith and not

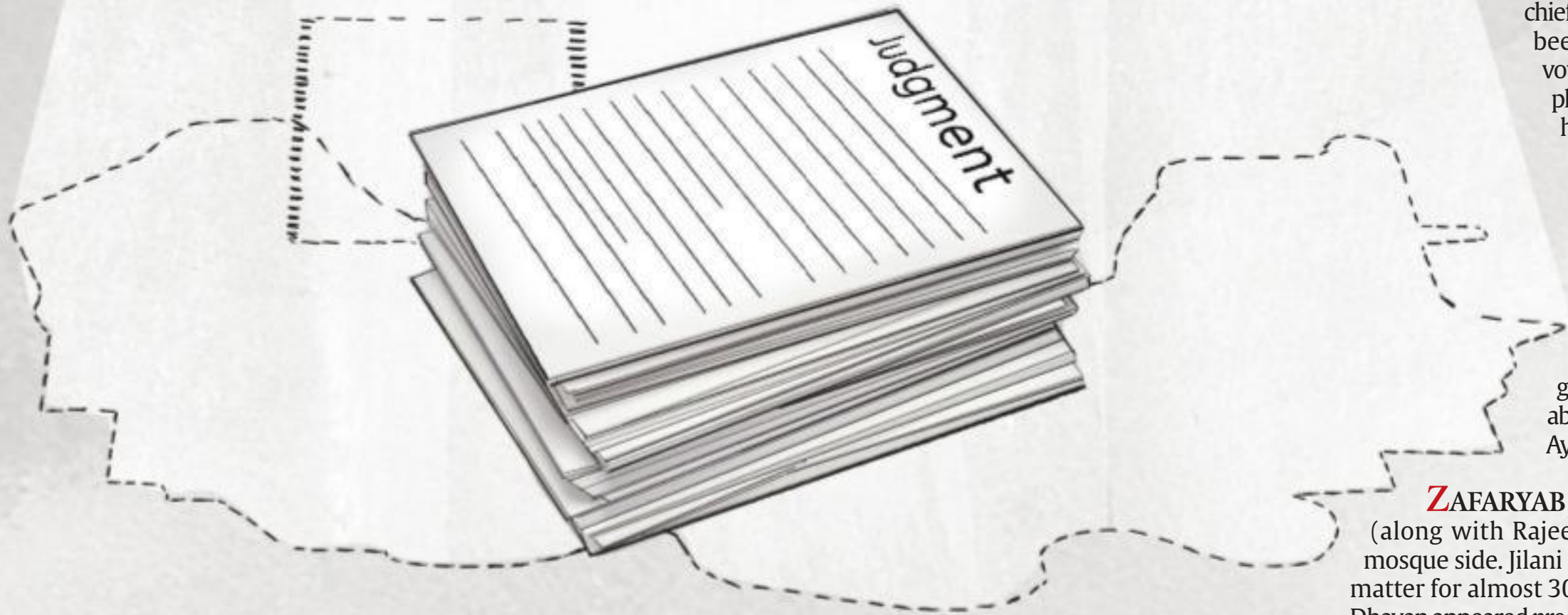


Illustration: Shyam Kumar Prasad

one for courts, a view that the SC, while giving the land to Hindus, rejected. The Ramjanmabhoomi movement propelled the BJP to power, and the RSS chief welcomed the order soon after it was passed.

TRUST: The court has directed the Centre to formulate within three months a scheme to set up a “Trust with a Board of Trustees or any other appropriate body” under The Acquisition of Certain Area at Ayodhya Act, 1993, with powers “including the construction of a temple”. The court has used its powers under Article 142 to direct that “appropriate representation may be given in the Trust... to the Nirmohi Akhara”.

UNANIMOUS: The Ayodhya verdict is most noteworthy for the unanimity of views of the five judges including the Chief Justice of India. Given the nature of the decades-long dispute, its political significance and religious overtones, the unanimous judgment serves to keep the temperature down. Unanimity, however, need not mean it is fair and equitable.

VIOLENCE: After the 1960s, there was a hiatus of sorts in communal rioting until the late 1980s, when Advani’s Yatra resulted in much blood being spilled. The demolition of the mosque resulted in riots that in which more than 2,000 died across cities. Mumbai saw riots lasting for more than a month.

WALL: A 6-7-foot grill-brick wall built by the British after the riots of 1856-57 marked a turning point over the use of the space by the two communities. It was intended to create a buffer between them and resolve the conflict. However, Hindus and Muslims ended up making multiple attempts to exclude each other from the site. Over time, it resulted in at least five suits, which were adjudicated by the Allahabad High Court on September 30, 2010.

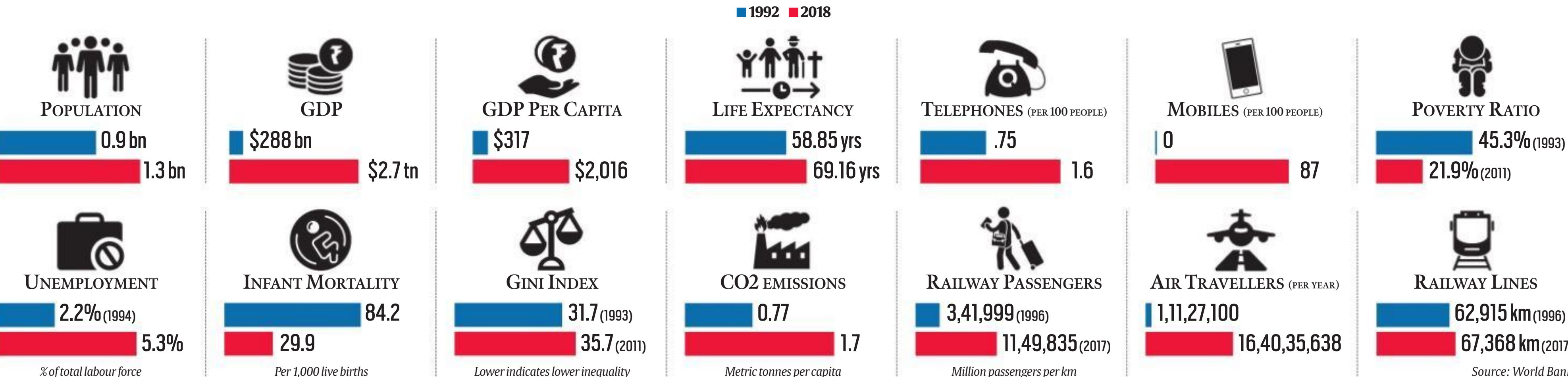
X FACTOR: There remain concerns that the verdict may not be able to achieve closure. Fears were expressed on Saturday that the judgment may trigger demands at other places, including Mathura and Kashi. The apprehensions are rooted in a wider context of the downgrading of Article 370, and the threats of a Citizenship Amendment Bill discriminatory to Muslims and a country-wide National Register of Citizens. How the Ayodhya judgment plays out remains to be seen.

YOGI: Yogi Adityanath’s predecessors at the head of the Gorakhnath Mutt, Mahants Avaidyanath and Digvijay Nath, were central figures in the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, and the UP chief minister himself has been a determined votary of the Ram temple. The Supreme Court has directed that the 5 acres of land for the Sunni Central Waqf Board should be allotted either by the Centre out of the land acquired in 1993, or by the state government “at a suitable prominent place in Ayodhya”.

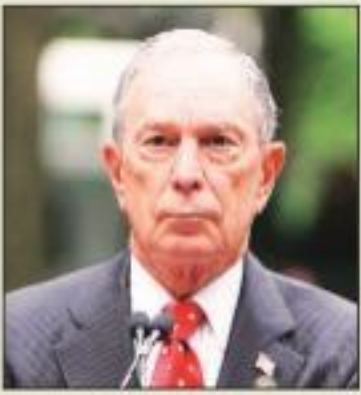
ZAFARYAB JILANI: The lawyer (along with Rajeev Dhavan) for the mosque side, Jilani has stayed with the matter for almost 30 years now. Rajeev Dhavan appeared *pro bono* in the Supreme Court, and added an edge to arguments. The order thanks both counsel among others, in the end.

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.



TOP OF THE WORLD



The business tycoon is a former mayor of New York. Reuters

USA
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 registration closed.

AUSTRALIA
3 dead, several missing in fires

Canberra: Wildfires razing Australia's drought-stricken 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



(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

May 11 meeting over a now-shelved China extradition bill that sparked five months of protests calling for democratic reforms.

The others received summons to turn up at police stations Saturday to face arrest. All seven are to appear in court Monday.

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

DANIEL RAMOS
LA PAZ, NOVEMBER 9

THE GOVERNMENT of Bolivian President Evo Morales denounced what it called a coup on Saturday,

as some police forces carried out acts of "mutiny" in support of opposition protests amid a standoff over a disputed election.

Morales, Latin America's longest-standing leader, won the election on Oct 20 but the vote

count had been inexplicably halted for nearly a day, sparking allegations of fraud and leading to protests, strikes and road blocks.

Bolivians marched in several cities on Friday night and there were cases of police joining the

protests, adding to the pressure on Morales. In Cochabamba city, the scene of recent violent clashes, police officers protested on the roof of their headquarters in an apparent act of disobedience against the government. REUTERS

USA
VAPING ILLNESSES: 'STRONG CULPRIT' FOUND

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.

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 74-year-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 against him, arguing they were



Brazil's former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, with his girlfriend Rosangela da Silva, speaks to supporters in Curitiba, Brazil, on Friday. AP

EXPLAINED

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 far-right 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".

GERMANY MARKS 30 YRS SINCE FALL OF BERLIN WALL



Chancellor Angela Merkel and Parliament President Wolfgang Schaeuble place roses at the Wall memorial in Berlin. Reuters

Germany on Saturday 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.

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.

'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.

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 harrowing, weeklong kidnapping where she was raped, robbed and left for dead in the desert, authorities said.

Stanley Alfred Lawton, 54, and Shaniya Nicole Poche-Lawton, 22, dumped the woman off a highway 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," Hernandez said.

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 Brenske 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

20 ECONOMY

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

ENS ECONOMIC 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 of \$446.098 billion for the week 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.

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.

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 in 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.

RIISING FOREX RESERVES

| Week ended | Forex (\$ 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 |

BRIEFLY

Lakshmi Vilas Bank Q2 net loss at ₹357cr

New Delhi: Lakshmi Vilas Bank (LVB) on Saturday reported widening of net loss to Rs 357.18 crore for the second quarter ended September 30, 2019. The bank posted a net loss of Rs 132.31 crore in the July-September of 2018-19.

NTPC Q2 net rises 38% to ₹3,409 crore

New Delhi: State-run power 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 four-fold 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-Fl and FZS-Fl bikes, priced between Rs 99,200 and Rs 1.02 lakh (ex-showroom). PTI

Failure to launch: The biggest IPO pull-outs of 2019

THE WE COMPANY: Owner 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

ENDEAVOR GROUP HOLDINGS: The US entertainment and talent agency company backed by Hollywood power-broker Ari Emanuel, abandoned its IPO in September following weak stock market investor demand

BITMAIN TECHNOLOGIES: 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

Private companies seeking to launch on stock markets have abandoned a series of initial public offerings (IPOs) this year after a string of high-profile 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



FERRETTI
The Italian luxury yacht maker decided to pull its IPO in mid October, as it was not satisfied with the price offered by investors

KKR & Co
The private equity giant and its partners pulled a planned \$690.70 mn offering for lender Latitude Financial last month

price volatility

JS GLOBAL LIFESTYLE: The 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 market range
Note: Compiled by Reuters

Trade war to ease but conflicts will persist: Ex-China Minister

REUTERS
BEIJING, NOVEMBER 9

A SINO-US trade war could ease somewhat but wider conflicts between the world’s two largest economies will continue, Lou Jiwei, a former Chinese finance minister, said on Saturday.

“Look at the next development, there could be compromises in the trade war at a certain stage, and we have seen signs of compromising,” Lou, now an official with a body that advises China’s Parliament, told an economic forum in Beijing.

Officials from both countries 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

has been met with opposition from some quarters of the administration US President Trump.

Trump himself, in comments that hit stock prices and the dollar, said on Friday he had not agreed to a tariff rollback.

Washington has adopted a strategy to contain China’s economic rise by preventing the country from climbing up the global value chain, Lou said.

“Containment and counter-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 businesses.

The US tariffs on Chinese exports will not fundamentally resolve its trade deficit.

China factory prices falter while inflation soars to near 8-yr high

REUTERS
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

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

hogherds. Analysts say the CPI rise could become a concern for policymakers looking to introduce measures to prop up demand.

However, core inflation, which excludes food and energy prices, pressures remain modest.

AIM IS TO TACKLE THE FLOW OF DIRTY MONEY WITHIN THE BLOC’S FINANCIAL SYSTEM

Germany, France want supervisor against money laundering

REUTERS
BRUSSELS, NOVEMBER 9

THE EUROPEAN Union’s largest states are pushing for the establishment 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 the bloc’s banks.

In a joint statement, 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 financial system.

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 transactions worth billions of euros of Russian dirty money through the Estonian branch of Danske Bank, in what is seen as the worst money-laundering scandal on the continent.

The need for an EU supervisor emerged after repeated failures by national watchdogs at spotting and countering money laundering, the statement said.

“Where large financial interests are at stake, there is a risk of national supervisors being influenced directly or indirectly by supervised institutions or interest groups,” the statement said.

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



COMMERCE MINISTER
Piyush Goyal will hold a high-level interaction with industry and business representatives in New York. He will also attend the 9th BRICS Trade Ministers Meet in Brasilia on November 11.

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 e-commerce, 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 cooperation 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 yet 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 comment.

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

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 draining 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 recent 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.

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 90-day 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 co-working 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.

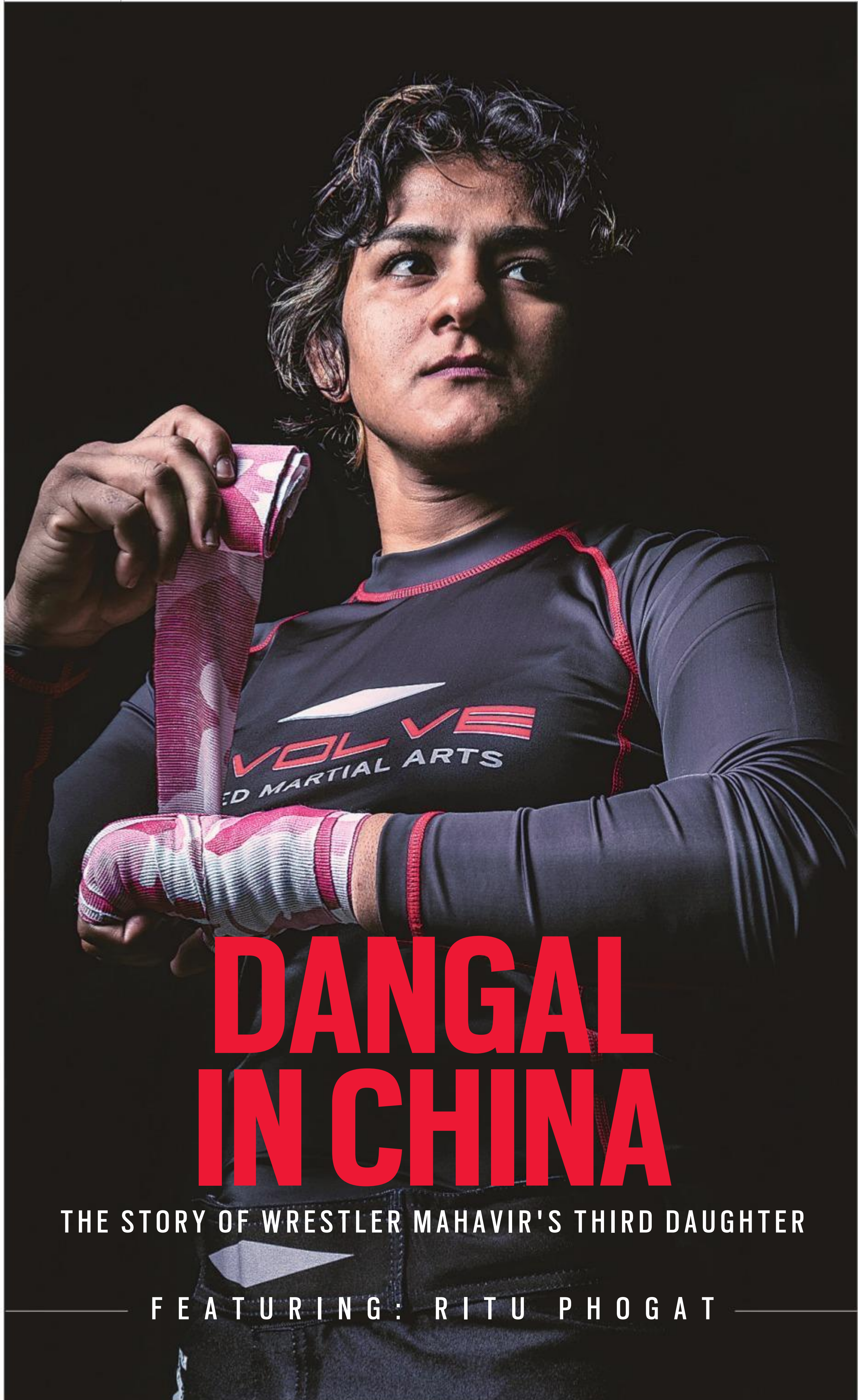
The document shows WeWork was still working to grow rapidly as its initial public stock offering unraveled in September, a crisis that left the company on the brink of bankruptcy and forced the ouster of co-founder Adam Neumann.

In the third quarter of 2019, WeWork added a record 108,000 desks at newly built shared offices, 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.

The move marks a major 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.



DANGAL IN CHINA

THE STORY OF WRESTLER MAHAVIR'S THIRD DAUGHTER

FEATURING: RITU PHOGAT

Ritu was set to emulate her Olympian sisters as a wrestler, before MMA came calling. Armed with new skills and desire to be different, she now prepares to fight in China, where Bollywood has made ‘Phogat’ a household name. GURAV BHATT writes.

THE 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 prizefighting 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

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 bronze-medallist, 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

foreign land however took a while.

“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, clinch-fighting 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 VBA 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.”

Shinzato says Ritu’s wrestling background helps lay in the ground-work. “She has made significant improvement in her ground game. Compared to when she first joined us, 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 shell-shocked/breathless.

“It was tough in the beginning, and I got nervous. Didn’t know what I’ll do. In the sparing 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.”

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.

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 utility 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 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 China.

“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. I need 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 complete focus. I want to achieve this goal first. *Uske baad dekhti hun kya hota hai*.”

(With inputs from Nitin Sharma)



SYEDMUSHTAQ
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) lost to Tripura 97 for 5 in 15.1 overs (UU 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)

GROUP C

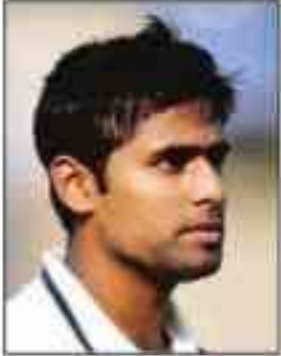
Hosts Chandigarh stun Maharashtra

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:** Haryana 153/5 (Harshal Patel 33, Rahul Tewatia 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 wickets.



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

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 Anfield on Sunday.

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 100-point 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 erratic Claudio Bravo, who was sent-off 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