



on Sunday



Navy MiG-29K  
crashes in Goa,  
pilots eject safely  
page 9



Om Birla convenes  
all-party meeting  
ahead of winter session  
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Chinese troops join  
Hong Kong clean-up  
as protesters retreat  
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Shami, Ashwin and  
Umesh bowl India  
to innings win  
page 17



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NEARBY

72% turnout in Rajasthan urban local body polls

JAIPUR  
Nearly 72% voters exercised their franchise in the elections to 49 municipal bodies in Rajasthan on Saturday, with a maximum of 91.67% turnout in Nasirabad municipality of Ajmer district. Polling took place peacefully, barring stray incidents of violence which left a few persons injured.

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## Congress to hold 'Bharat Bachao' rally on Nov. 30

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Congress announced on Saturday that it would hold a mega rally at the Ramlila Maidan on November 30 as a culmination of its State-level agitation against the policies of the Narendra Modi-led government at the Centre.

Earlier, the party had announced protests across all districts between November 5 and 15 against the Centre's

economic policies.

However, following the Ayodha verdict and the imposition of Section 144 of the IPC in some districts, the party had suspended a few programmes in some States.

"The agitations will be completed before November 25," said Congress general secretary in charge of organisations K.C. Venugopal.

DETAILS ON ► PAGE 10

## Sena confident of CM post, will skip NDA meet

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

The stalemate in Maharashtra politics continued on Saturday, with the nascent alliance of Shiv Sena, Congress and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) calling off a meeting with Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari at the last minute, ostensibly due to other commitments.

However, talks between the three parties over government formation continued. Sources said the three parties had formalised the common minimum programme, which has been forwarded to the respective central leaderships for final approvals. After approvals, it would be released to the general public for feedback.

Sena leader Sanjay Raut said the party remains confident of installing someone to the top post.

DETAILS ON ► PAGE 10

## 'Why summons not served on Dow Chemicals?'

Court pulls up MHA for company's failure to appear in Bhopal gas tragedy hearing

SIDHARTH YADAV  
BHOPAL

A Bhopal court has asked the Union Home Ministry to explain why it has repeatedly been unable to summon the Dow Chemical Company to appear before it in a case relating to the Bhopal gas tragedy.

The U.S.-based firm failed to appear before the court of the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, Bhopal, on November 13 despite being issued a show-cause notice in May. For the sixth time since 2014, the court's notices had gone unheeded.

"We issue a show-cause notice on the Under Secretary, IS-II division, the Union Home Ministry, to appear before us on January 20 to explain why it had been unable to serve summons on the firm," said Prakash Da-

mor, Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate.

The direction came in response to an application moved by the Bhopal Group for Information and Action, a rights group working for the survivors, providing legal assistance to the Central Bureau of Investigation in the CBI versus Warren Anderson and others case.

### Repeated reminders

In the application, Rachna Dhingra, a member, claimed that the U.S. government had "wilfully ignored or obstructed all notices sent by the Ministry of Home Affairs" to make the firm appear in the court. This was despite reminders sent to it by the Ministry in September and October.

Anderson was the chairman of the Union Carbide

Corporation in 1984, when a methyl isocyanate leak from its pesticide plant here killed thousands and caused diseases in lakhs. After it was acquired by the Dow Chemical Company as a wholly owned subsidiary in 2001, the firm's assets and liabilities (civil as well as criminal) were deemed to be transferred as well.

Stating that India and the U.S. were in a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty since 2001, M.K. Chahar, Under Secretary at the Centre, wrote to the group in September that "prompt actions are taken by the legal cell of the Ministry on each request of the service of summons".

The request for summons was sent to the U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) on May 30, the day it was received by the Ministry from the CBI,

wrote Mr. Chahar. In July, the U.S. government confirmed its receipt adding it was "under review" by Linda McKinney, trial attorney.

The CBI, in a submission before the court on November 12, claimed the Ministry had sent reminders to the DoJ requesting "expeditious steps for the service of summons". However, it said, the service report, which details the progress of the service of summons, was still awaited.

"Mr. Anderson died a free man as the Centre was unable to get him extradited from the U.S. Now, it's the same situation all over again," said Ms. Dhingra. Alleging that the U.S. had been violating the treaty, she said the Centre had not found the courage to call them out for the "fear of losing out on foreign investment".

## Police advise women against visiting Sabarimala

Action at Pampa base camp indicates govt. decision not to escort pilgrims



New season: Pilgrims thronged the Ayyappa temple on Saturday as it opened amid tight security. ■ H. VIBHU

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala police on Saturday advised at least two women under the age of 50 against trekking up to the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple from the Pampa base camp.

The police response to the arrival of the women pilgrims at Pampa was widely perceived as a clear indication of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government's

modified stance that the law enforcement authorities were under no legal compulsion to escort women to worship at the Ayyappa temple.

The women were part of a 15-member group of pilgrims from Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh.

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SAFIR IN NAVODHANA  
RAMAKRISHNA SAMITI ► PAGE 8

POLICE TO PURSUE CASES ► PAGE 8

## 'Severe' air pollution in Capital gone with the wind

AQI still 'very poor'; Delhiites to breathe better till Nov. 19

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The air quality of the Capital improved to the 'very poor' category on Saturday, chiefly owing to faster winds, after four days of 'severe' pollution.

The air quality is expected to improve further till November 19 and then deteriorate again from the next day, said government-run monitoring agency System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR).

Delhi's AQI was 357 (very poor) on Saturday, down from 458 (severe) on Friday, according to the 4 p.m. bulletin by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), which is the average of the past 24 hours. The suburbs of Ghaziabad (347), Greater Noida (309), Gurugram

(360), Faridabad (358) and Noida (338) also recorded a dip in pollution levels.

### Ban lifted

The ban on the operation of coal-based units in the National Capital Region and industries in Delhi that do not use piped natural gas was lifted as the air quality improved on Saturday. At a review meeting of the CPCB-led task force on Saturday, it was also decided that hot-mix plants and stone-crushers would remain closed in the NCR.

SAFAR said strong boundary-layer and surface winds were flushing out the accumulated pollutants in the city. However, the average level of PM 2.5 – deadly respirable particles – was still three times (181.2 ug/m3) the safe limit (60ug/m3) as per In-

dian standards, in Delhi and NCR at 6 p.m. on Saturday, according to the CPCB. The safe limit set by the World Health Organization is (25 ug/m3).

The contribution of stubble burning in neighbouring States to Delhi's pollution was 5% on Saturday, down from 10% on Friday and 25% earlier this week. It is very less compared to the high of 44% recorded earlier this season, as per SAFAR.

"The AQI is expected to improve to the lower end of 'very poor' by tomorrow [November 17] and 'poor' category by November 18. The SAFAR extended range forecast indicates that increasing trend [higher levels of pollution] will start again from November 20," SAFAR said.

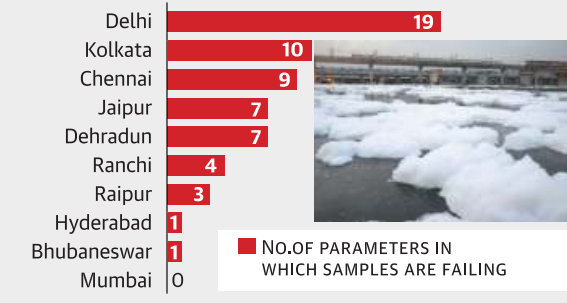
(With inputs from PTI)  
BURNING FIELDS ► PAGE 4

## Delhi has the most unsafe tap water

Only Mumbai meets BIS standards

### Pollution capital

Water in Delhi ranked the most unsafe in India as the samples failed in 19 out of the 28 parameters. Samples from Mumbai were found to meet all parameters



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

If it wasn't enough that Delhi air is among the world's most polluted, a new study has now shown that the city's tap water is the most unsafe among 21 State capitals.

The national capital is at the very bottom of the list, in a ranking based on tap water quality released by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) on Tuesday.

It is among 13 cities where all tested samples failed to meet the BIS norms for piped drinking water, including Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, Jaipur and Lucknow.

In fact, Mumbai is the only city where all samples of tap water met all the tested

parameters under the Indian Standard 10500:2012 (specification for drinking water) so far.

Under its flagship Jal Jeevan Mission, the Centre aims to provide safe piped water to all households by 2024, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi promising to spend over ₹3.5 lakh crore on the scheme in his last Independence Day speech.

However, the study, conducted by the BIS for the Union Food and Consumer Affairs Ministry, showed that even in urban areas, which are connected to the piped water network, there is no guarantee that the water is safe for consumption.

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Rajat Sharma. ■ FILE PHOTO

forts and energy were constantly consumed by the urge to improve Delhi cricket, help cricketers at all levels and ensure that the capital city had better infrastructure and facilities.

It was frustrating that a lot of Apex Council members, including the office-bearers, couldn't agree with me on this basic requirement and

preferred to dwell on their own vested interests," he said in a statement.

### 'A loud alarm bell'

Promoted by the late Arun Jaitley, whom he called a "friend and guide", Mr. Sharma said he had the option of serving out the remaining two years of his tenure as DDCA president amicably but decided against it. "I would have let down my members and hurt my self pride if I didn't bring forth the real picture within the DDCA," he said.

Mr. Sharma drew the attention of Delhi's cricket fraternity by adding, "My resignation is a loud alarm bell that will remind the members, BCCI, present and former cricketers, media, that the deep-rooted malaise of getting tenders, con-

tracts and selection discrepancies is still very much active and working."

### CAC lends support

Mr. Yashpal Sharma and Mr. Valson drove home the point that they had accepted the offer to be part of the CAC with the sole aim of bringing in transparency in selection matters. "The CAC spent its entire energy in trying to safeguard the DDCA from vested interests, various pulls and pressures but it was becoming a tedious process," said Mr. Yashpal Sharma. "We wanted to back cricketers to the hilt and decide on policies which keep them as priority. Most importantly, we wanted to ensure that merit alone earned a player his place in the team," said Mr. Valson.



DELHI ☀️ Timings			
SUNDAY, NOV. 17			
☀️ RISE	06:45	🌇 SET	17:27
🌙 RISE	21:41	🌇 SET	11:00
MONDAY, NOV. 18			
☀️ RISE	06:46	🌇 SET	17:27
🌙 RISE	22:43	🌇 SET	11:52
TUESDAY, NOV. 19			
☀️ RISE	06:46	🌇 SET	17:26
🌙 RISE	23:47	🌇 SET	12:40

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	29	15
Safdarjang	29	15
Palam	29	16

**Delhi Palam Today**  
**29°C** Dry weather will prevail. Night will be cool. Pollution level is likely to decrease.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
**28°C** Shallow fog and mist will prevail during morning hours. Day will be comfortable with a few clouds.

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## Congress blames BJP for slowdown

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Saturday organised a ‘Halla Bol’ rally to protest against the BJP for “economic slowdown” and “large-scale unemployment” in the country.

Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee (DPCC) chief Subhash Chopra said, “The country is facing its worst economic crisis since Independence due to the anti-people policies of the Narendra Modi government. Educated young people have no jobs and 74% of people in the 18-23 age group are unable to join colleges.”

DPCC spokesperson Mukesh Sharma said, “The Halla Bol agitation will be intensified in the coming days and will continue till November 25.”

# Honda workers’ strike heralds emergence of collective leadership

The automotive belt is no stranger to protests by workers, but this is arguably the first time that contractual employees are taking the lead and unions are backing them

ASHOK KUMAR  
GURUGRAM

“The production in entire Manesar will come to a halt if your demands are not met. Be firm. If the Honda management stops supplying food to the striking workers inside, we will make alternative arrangements. Let’s take this fight to a logical end,” a stout middle-aged union leader from Napino Auto and Electronics Limited addresses the striking workers of Honda Motorcycles and Scooters India Private Limited (HMSI) on a service road outside Gate No.1 of the company’s plant in Manesar Sector 3 on Thursday afternoon.

While most of the workers squat in a semi-circle facing him, the rest stand behind him listening attentively and occasionally bursting into loud sloganeering, hailing the workers’ unity and denouncing Honda management. A few others hover around the food and juice vendors, and a *jalebiwala*, just a stone’s throw away, least bothered about the now “routine” rhetoric by union leaders for the past over one week. A lone water tanker parked at a distance also attracts a good number of workers.

It is the twelfth day of the contractual workers’ strike in the country’s prominent two-wheeler company on Saturday, but none of sides are ready to blink first, leading to an impasse. And what had

begun as a mark of resistance by a handful of contractual workers against the management’s diktat, asking them to proceed on a three-month-long leave on November 5 citing slowdown, has now gradually snowballed into a full-fledged “workers’ movement” in this automotive belt – with a real threat of a spillover.

The plant has been shut indefinitely and around 2,500 contractual workers, including 1,800-odd workers inside the plant, are holding a round-the-clock sit-in.

The trade and workers’ unions have also jumped in to the fray, handing over memorandums to the district administration and expressing solidarity with the striking workers.

“The company has retrenched around a 1,000 contractual workers over the past few months citing slowdown, with the assurance to take them back after three months, but it did not happen. The contractual workers held a hunger strike before Diwali on this issue and the management assured that they would formulate a policy on the matter. But again 200 workers were told to go on leave on November 4. The workers decided to stand their ground suspecting that they might never be called back to work,” said a permanent worker, who has come to the spot to express solidarity with the striking

workers.

The permanent workers joined ranks with the contractual employees after the plant was shut “till further intimation” on November 11. The workers’ Charter of Demands is also pending with the company for around 18 months now, adding to the unrest among them.

“Our demand is simple. Regularise all those who have been working for more than 10 years and duly compensate the retrenched workers. The company has opened three new plants over the past 15 years, it is all our hard work,” said a contractual worker.

### A new trend

Though the automobile industrial belt – spread till Neemrana in Rajasthan along the National Highway-48 – is no stranger to strikes, protests and dharanas, Inqlabi Mazdoor Kendra central committee member Shyambir Shukla, a labour rights activist, sees the emergence of a new trend with the contractual workers taking the lead and the unions backing them up.

“Never before has a workers’ movement has been led by contractual workers. It was always the permanent workers and the unions taking the lead and the contractual workforce supporting them. But the trend has reversed with this movement. It marks the beginning of the



The contractual workers of Honda Motorcycles and Scooters India Private Ltd. have been on strike since November 5. ■ ASHOK KUMAR

end of individual leadership and heralds the rise of collective leadership,” he said.

One of the reasons for the reversal of roles for the permanent and contractual workers is the growing number and prominence of the latter in production, and the failure of the unions to speak for them.

“While the salaries of permanent Honda workers have increased from ₹3,000 to ₹70,000 since 2005, the contractual workers are still paid ₹15,000 per month. The unions in the automobile sector have mostly been acting in collusion with the management to contain the anger of the contractual workers, but failed to work for their welfare,” said Mr. Shukla.

Besides, the unions too have weakened over the years because of dwindling numbers and role of permanent workers. In several companies, the permanent workers comprise only 15%-20% of the workforce.

In fact, around 15 companies, mostly with active workers’ unions, have been shut down in the region over the past one year rendering thousands jobless, but no

voices were raised.

On the flip side, the contractual workers lack the legal immunity unlike the permanent workers.

### Economic slowdown

Bellsonica Auto Component India Employees’ Union vice-president Ajit Singh said the Honda workers strike was also the first instance where the protest had stemmed from the economic slowdown and not aimed directly at the company’s management.

“While all other movements in the region earlier, including the Maruti hunger strike in 2011, were directed against the company with the demand to form a union or seek implementation of the Charter of Demands, the present crisis has its roots in the economic slowdown. It has more political hues to it,” said Mr. Singh.

### Use of social media

The striking Honda workers using social media platforms to spread word about the protest is another highlight. Former BBC journalist Sandeep Rauzi has been running the protest-related news on

his year-old YouTube channel and Facebook page “Workers Unity”, helped by a team of over a dozen former journalists.

He said their efforts had helped in lending voice to the striking workers, especially when the mainstream media had chosen to stay away from it. He laments that none of the major Hindi news channels had carried the news about the protest.

“Our social media campaign is not just putting pressure on the mainstream media to give space to this protest, but has also been successful in creating pressure on Honda, adversely affecting its brand value worldwide. No doubt, the voice of the workers is now reaching the common man directly. The six videos and live coverages of the protest over these days have garnered several lakh views on different platforms and reached around 50 lakh people, which is a huge number,” said Mr. Rauzi.

He added that the workers also trolled actor Akshay Kumar, Honda’s brand ambassador, on Twitter.

Former Haryana CPM

State Secretary Inderjit Singh said that the current stalemate at Honda is essentially an equation of no-holds-barred privileged position enjoyed by the management and the army of desperate job-seekers at the receiving end.

“Apart from this unequal equation, the power of the State is also at the beck and call of the company, a fact endorsed by the massive police force ready to act inside the Honda premises where the retrenched workers continue to hold a sit-in. It is paradoxical that the BJP-JJP ruling alliance has proclaimed the formation of the Common Minimum Programme, purportedly honouring the election promises made by both the allies, including 75% jobs for the youth from Haryana, but is keeping a tacit silence when the youths are being thrown out of jobs in flagrant violation of laws of natural justice and basic tenets of human rights,” said Mr. Singh.

### No response

HMSI declined to comment on the queries sent to it regarding the strike.



IN BRIEF  
One held for robbing man at knifepoint

NEW DELHI  
A 30-year-old man, identified as Jawed alias Sunny, has been arrested for allegedly robbing a man of ₹12 lakh at knifepoint in north Delhi's Kotwali area. The police said that the victim, Irshad Ahmad, was on Geeta Colony flyover when he was robbed by two men.

Foreign national found dead at hotel

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 43-year-old foreign national was found dead in a hotel room in central Delhi's Paharganj on Saturday morning. Police said that she suffered a cardiac arrest.

A senior police officer said that the deceased has been identified as Polly Anne Tuialii of New Zealand. She had come to India with her partner John Ferguson, an Australian national, on Friday. "We have been told that they had checked into the hotel on Friday and were here to get married," the officer said.

A hotel staff said that the woman was found unconscious around 7.30 a.m. "The man came and told us that the woman is in the washroom and he wants to use another washroom. We provided him with the same. When he went back to the room, he saw her in an unconscious state and informed us. We went and checked after which we informed the police," said a hotel staff.

The woman was taken to the hospital where she was declared brought dead.

"She is suspected to have collapsed due to cardiac arrest. Embassy has been informed and a post-mortem will be conducted," the officer said.

BJP to play PM Modi card to woo voters in Delhi Assembly polls

'Ek vote, teen sarkar' will be party's slogan, pledging benefits at city, civic, central level

JATIN ANAND  
NEW DELHI

'Ek Vote, Teen Sarkar' (One Vote, Three Governments) will be the BJP's slogan for the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls. The party is seeking to garner the electorate's support yet again in the name of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ability for governance to return to power in the Capital after a gap of close to three decades.

At public meetings, the party has already begun propagating the benefits of welfare schemes that the citizens are likely to get – in a comparatively shorter period of time – if the same party is in power at the Centre, the State and municipal levels of governance and in-charge of administration, according to insiders.

With efforts in this regard scheduled to be stepped up



Manoj Tiwari

over the coming days, the slogan, according to a party source, also aims at raking up the issue of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's "politics of confrontation" which, party insiders said it believed, had paid political dividends to the Opposition party both during the civic elections in 2017 and the Lok Sabha elections earlier this year.

"We are going to tell the

people of the Capital that how the push of a single button in favour of the BJP can ensure that not just one but three separate governments working exclusively for their benefit can stand by their side," Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari said.

Hits out at CM

"Not only are the benefits of all the welfare schemes initiated by the BJP-led Centre being prevented from trickling down by the power-hungry Chief Minister of Delhi, but also the good work and policies of the BJP-ruled civic bodies are also being rendered ineffective by the same individual. The push of one button can change all that for the better," Mr. Tiwari added.

The north east Delhi MP said, in its second term the Modi government had pro-

vided toilets to 13 crore houses and distributed 10 crore free gas connections even as Mr. Kejriwal had "deliberately obstructed" the Ayushman Bharat health scheme and the PMAY housing scheme in Delhi because Mr. Kejriwal, "neither works nor allows others to work."

He alleged that civic bodies, for instance, had purchased water sprinklers at a cost of ₹130 crore to control pollution in a move, which should have been the prerogative of the Delhi government.

"But the Delhi government did not release funds due to the corporations. The Central government gave ₹120 crore to the corporations to purchase machines to do away with the garbage mountains, which will be done away with shortly," he added.

Rickshaw puller murdered following argument, 1 held

Accused stabbed victim multiple times for using abusive words

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 40-year-old rickshaw puller was allegedly stabbed to death during an argument in outer Delhi's Nangloi area on Friday night. The accused has been arrested, the police said.

DCP (Outer) A. Koan said that the victim Kanhaiya, a rickshaw puller hailing from Rajasthan, was murdered by Neeraj alias Guthli (22).

The police said that

around 10.50 p.m., a PCR call was received at Nangloi police station informing that a person was lying injured and unconscious in Swarna Park. The police rushed to the spot but by then the man was shifted to Sanjay Gandhi Hospital where he was declared brought dead.

The police said that a case under Section 302 (Punishment for murder) of the Indian Penal Code was registered and an investigation

was taken up.

During investigation, it was revealed that Kanhaiya was stabbed by Neeraj after the two had an argument. "Teams were formed to nab him and he was arrested. He is a resident of Swarna Park area," the officer said.

During interrogation, Neeraj allegedly told the police that he stabbed the victim multiple times following an argument over the victim using abusive words.

FIR filed in JNU vandalism case

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police on Saturday registered an FIR in connection with the defacement of the pedestal of Swami Vivekananda statue located on Jawaharlal Nehru University campus. A senior police of-

ficer said that a case has been registered under Section 3 of the Delhi Prevention of Defacement of Property Act. The case has been lodged two days after the JNU administration filed a complaint seeking action against the accused.

Sisters arrested for theft

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Two sisters have been arrested for their alleged involvement in cases of theft in south Delhi, the police said on Saturday.

DCP (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said that the women – Lalita (25) and her younger sister Damini (22) are from Madhya Pradesh.

The police said that the first case was registered on November 5 at Kotla Mubarakpur police station in which the complainant reported a theft of ₹50,000 inside a bank. The second case was reported from a temple in Chhatarpur the same day in which the complainant stated that he withdrew ₹50,000 after which he went

to the temple and while returning, he found the money missing. A case was registered at Mehrauli police station.

CCTV footage was scrutinised and two women were found moving in a suspicious manner. The suspects were identified and surveillance was mounted. "A tip-off was received that the women were in Pushp Vihar after which a trap was laid and they were apprehended," Mr. Thakur said, adding that the stolen money was recovered from them.

During interrogation, they allegedly told the police that they visited cities during festival and marriage seasons and targeted people in crowded places.

Airline fined ₹1.3 lakh over missing luggage

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum here has directed Indigo Airlines to compensate a complainant by paying over ₹1.31 lakh after the passenger's luggage went missing during a flight from Dubai to Delhi.

The consumer panel also directed compensation of an additional amount of ₹20,000 towards the harassment caused to the complainant apart from the compensation towards the lost baggage.

The directions came when the consumer panel

was hearing a plea moved by Dubai resident Smita Renwal, who contended that after reaching Delhi from Dubai, only one of her two luggage arrived.

"On reaching the Delhi Airport she found that one baggage was untraceable which she handed over to the Indigo executives at the time of check-in. On advice of the [airline] executives, a written complaint was given by the complainant. It is stated that she visited India to attend the last rites of her grandfather," the consumer panel observed while noting the allegations made by the complainant.



BJP is fooling residents of illegal colonies: AAP

Party observes Dhoka Diwas

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Saturday held ‘Dhoka Diwas’ across the city, protesting against alleged frauds done by the BJP in “fooling” residents of unauthorised colonies in the name of registration.

AAP held protests, rallies and jan sabhas across different parts of the city and party leaders, including Cabinet Ministers, MPs, MLAs, councillors and volunteers took part in the agitation against the BJP, the party said.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia led the ‘Dhokha Diwas’ protest at Sangam Vihar, Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh led the protest at Burari and Cabinet Minister Gopal Rai at Bawana.

“The BJP is following the footsteps of the Congress party. Earlier the Congress cheated the residents of unauthorised colonies by distributing provisional certificate in the name of

registration. Now, the BJP is doing the same kind of fraud by initiating an on-line registration process. If the BJP is really willing to regularise the unauthorised colonies in the Capital then they should immediately start proper registration process and stop this gimmick of online registration,” said Mr. Rai.

“Today, in this Dhokha Diwas, we are reaching out to the people of unauthorised colonies and exposing the lies of the BJP. We do not want the residents of unauthorised colonies to be cheated again by the BJP,” said Mr. Sisodia.

“The Aam Aadmi Party is working for the development of the residents of unauthorised colonies from the time it came to power. Projects worth nearly ₹6,000 crore, which include laying water pipelines, sewage lines, building of roads, and other development works are going on at the colonies,” he added.

DELHI TODAY

**Talk:** An evening of Bengali humorous short stories written by Shibram Chakraborty, Sanjib Chattopadhyay, Baidyanath Mukhopadhyay, will be presented by Sampa Das, Sukhanshu Chatterjee and Ashim Ranjan Chakrabarty at Amaltas Hall, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m.

**Dance:** Bharatnatyam Arengetram of Anoushka Chowdhry and Jeetu, both disciples of Guru Rashmi Khanna at Triveni Kala Sangam, 205 Tansen Marg, 6.30 p.m.

**Music:** IHC Morning Ragas will feature a sarangi concert by Ustad Moi-

nuddin Khan from the Jaipur Gharana. Accompanied by Momin Khan on the sarangi and Ustad Amram Khan on the tabla at Amaltas Hall, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 10.30 a.m.

**Music:** Carnatic Music – Vocal and instrumental by various young talents at C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, India International Centre (IIC), 10 a.m.

**Screening:** “Enchanted Mamalapuram”, an English documentary film will be screened at Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m.

(Mail your listings for this column at cityeditor@delhi@thehindu.co.in)

Burning fields: farmers say they are helpless

Despite a Supreme Court order against stubble burning, paddy growers are continuing with the practice in Punjab. They say they are aware of the consequences but do not have any other viable option

NIKHIL M BABU  
BARNALA (PUNJAB)

On a November morning, Charanjeet Singh, a 64-year-old farmer in Pakhoke village in Punjab’s Barnala district, was sitting outside his house reading a Punjabi newspaper when he noticed something startling: his name had appeared in an article along with three other villagers in a list of FIRs filed by the police for a “crime” that has become rampant across Punjab at this time of the year – stubble burning.

Behind the house, wheat had already been sown in parts of the 24 acres of his charred field.

“*Nahi jalana chahiye, par kya karen, aur koi hal Nahi hai. Majboori hai* (The stubble should not be burnt, but what else can we do, there is no other solution. I am helpless),” the sexagenarian said sitting on a cot. Mr. Charanjeet is a fourth-generation farmer growing paddy in his fields.

And he is not alone. Across Barnala, more than two dozen farmers whom *The Hindu* met gave the same reason why they burn paddy stubble: “*Majboori*”. Any other method to dispose of the crop residue would cost the farmers thousands of rupees per acre in the form of labour, rent and machines and transport cost. A ₹1 matchbox is the most economical solution for them to prepare their field for the next crop.

At least 10 million metric tons of the 20 million metric tons of paddy stubble generated in Punjab every year is burnt by farmers, according to the State government.

**Wind movement**  
The north-westerly wind carries the smoke from the stubble burnt in Punjab and Haryana to Delhi, contributing to the city’s air pollution in a range between 0% and 53% (in the last two years), as per the central government-run monitoring agency SAFAR (System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research).

The issue has become pol-



Up in smoke: A farmer burns paddy stubble in Barnala district, Punjab. ■SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

itical over the years with the AAP government in Delhi blaming the Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh governments for the pollution the city faces and the central government also getting involved in the blame game.

The number of stubble fires in Punjab fields between September 23 and October 13 has grown from 44,845 in 2018 to 48,689 this year – a rise 8.5%, according to the Central Pollution Control Board. On the other hand, the number of fire counts in Haryana in the same period has reduced by about 20%.

Most farmers said they came to know from television and newspapers reports that stubble burning contributed to pollution in Delhi, but they did not have any other option.

**Attempts to stop burning**  
Punjab was traditionally not a rice-growing State. Earlier, it used to grow maize and cotton among other crops in Punjab. Following the Supreme Court order, the Punjab government has decided to pay ₹2,500 per acre to all small and marginal farmers who did not burn their stubble. But the process will take time. Two other Supreme Court directives to the governments – to collect stubble and give machines free of

as fodder to cattle (they feed them wheat stubble) and thus disposing of the residue becomes a problem, said experts.

In the 1980s, the farmers started using combine harvesters to cut paddy and it left longer stubble, about 50-60 cm long, in the fields, compared to cutting by hand, which left behind 5-10 cm long residue. The longer stubble led to increase in burning of stubble.

The government has started providing different machines to treat the stubble at 50% subsidy to individual farmers and 80% subsidy to farmers’ groups.

The Supreme Court on November 4 termed the air pollution in Delhi-NCR “worse than Emergency” and directed the governments of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to immediately stop the farmers from burning the stubble.

However, a week later, *The Hindu* spotted dozens of burning fields in Barnala, Punjab. Following the Supreme Court order, the Punjab government has decided to pay ₹2,500 per acre to all small and marginal farmers who did not burn their stubble. But the process will take time. Two other Supreme Court directives to the governments – to collect stubble and give machines free of

cost to small and marginal farmers – are yet to kick off.

On November 13, as Mr. Charanjeet talked outside his house in Punjab, the air pollution levels breached the ‘severe’ category in Delhi, forcing the authorities to shut all schools in the city for the next two days.

**‘Unhappy’ seeder**  
Mr. Charanjeet said that he has been burning the stubble for the last 35 years, except for 2018 when bought a ‘Happy Seeder’ at a subsidised rate of ₹1.6 lakh.

The Happy Seeder is one of the machines the government has been pushing as a solution to stubble burning. It can be attached to a tractor and can sow the wheat seed with the paddy stubble still standing in the field.

Last year, after harvesting, Mr. Charanjeet used another machine, ‘straw chopper’, to cut the standing stubble into small pieces and evenly distribute it on the field. He then sowed the wheat using ‘Happy Seeder’.

“The crop germination did not happen properly and the layer of stubble caused pest infection. I suffered a loss of about ₹2 lakh last year,” Mr. Charanjeet said, adding, “so, I set the field on fire this year”. On November 14 afternoon, on a side of Barnala Road, Gurcharan

Singh, 43, and his two sons were setting fire to paddy stubble in parts of their 50-acre field. He said he too had tried Happy Seeder, but wasn’t happy with the machine at all.

“We have another 30-acre field where we sowed wheat using Happy Seeder amid the paddy straws which were about 50-cm-long. The produce was less by about two quintal per acre,” he said. “Also, I couldn’t use the stubble from wheat for cattle as the paddy straw got mixed with it,” he added.

While many of the bigger farmers, who used the machines, faced problems, smaller famers said they could not afford the machines and their running cost.

**Solutions at hand**  
In Mehal Kalan village, the farmers said that the government’s decision to give ₹2,500 for not burning stubble was announced through loudspeakers at the local gurdwara.

Pointing to a field that was on fire, Avtar Singh, 55, who owns a one-acre land, said: “The decision [incentive] came very late. Almost 90% of the farmers have already burnt the stubble in their fields.” “Since everyone else has burnt the stubble, the few who are left are not going to take care of the residue by spending their own money,” he added.

Barnala District Commissioner Tej Partap Singh Phoolka admitted that stubble burning was happening in the district but said it was less than last year as many farmers had adopted different techniques.

“We have filed 73 FIRs and have issued 539 challans, but the farmers’ associations are really strong here and they have announced a dharna here tomorrow [November 15],” he said.

He said the ₹2,500 incentive announced by the government will go a long way in stopping stubble burning. “Next year, I feel, the burning of stubble will come down by about 80%,” he

said.

“The farmer will have to fill up a form after harvest, declaring that he has not burnt the stubble. Then there will be an inspection by the Revenue Department. After that the form will go to the registrar of cooperative society and the money will be deposited in the farmer’s bank account,” he said.

“The farmers can get the money immediately or it may take up to two months,” Mr. Phoolka said.

**Monetary incentive**  
“We have been requesting the Central government for the last five years to provide ₹100 per quintal [of rice] to all farmers, small and big, if they do not burn the stubble. But they have not accepted it. We are also asking them to take the burden of rice from Punjab and procure maize instead at a fixed price,” Punjab Agriculture Secretary Kahan Singh Pannu told *The Hindu*.

“A combination of these two is the only solution to prevent stubble burning. How many people can we put behind the bars,” he asked.

The farmers said that they can treat the stubble in situ by using a combination of different machines if they get the incentive from the government. “We have the idea [how to treat stubble in situ], but we do not have the money,” said Mr. Charanjeet.

Asked if he is convinced that the government would pay the farmers, he shook his head and said: “*Kuch Nahi hoga. Sarkar kuch Nahi karegi* (Nothing will happen. The government is not going to do anything).”

Most farmers across Barnala said they were not sure if the government would actually pay the money.

Mr. Avtar Singh of Mehal Kalan said that if the government goes back on its promise, it will only worsen the situation. “Now that the government has made the promise, if it and does not pay the farmers, they will never believe the government and the burning will go on.”

Pollution check: Vice-Chairman of DDA inspects projects

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

In a bid to curb pollution levels in the Capital, Delhi Development Authority (DDA) Vice-Chairman Tarun Kapoor on Saturday inspected DDA projects and other infrastructure in Dwarka.

“During the visit, the officials were directed to take steps, including clearing debris lying on the streets, clearing construction and demolition waste and prevention of dust generation,” read a statement issued by the Delhi Development Authority.

Officials were also directed to ensure that underconstruction sites were covered and water sprinklers were used to prevent spread of dust.

‘Not the time to do politics, must work together to tackle pollution’

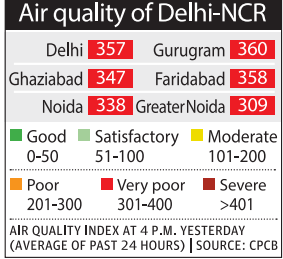
Kejriwal replies to Javadekar’s tweet demanding apology

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal took to Twitter on Saturday to appeal to Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar to work together to find a solution to the problem of air pollution.

Responding to one of the Union Minister’s tweets demanding an apology from Mr. Kejriwal for supporting the ‘chowkidaar chor hai’ slogan against Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the Lok Sabha elections, the Delhi Chief Minister said it was not the time to indulge in politicking but to tackle pollution.

Mr. Javadekar’s tweet came in the wake of the Supreme Court rejecting petitions seeking a review of its judgment on the Rafale



fighter aircraft deal. “@ArvindKejriwal those who supported the slogan ‘chowkidar chor hai’ should also apologise,” Mr. Javadekar tweeted.

Responding to the Union Environment Minister, Mr. Kejriwal, in Hindi, tweeted, “Sir, this is not the time to do politics but to curb pollution together. All governments should work together to provide relief to the people. The Delhi government and the

people of Delhi are doing everything they can do to curb pollution. We need your support, sir.”

Meanwhile, Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari led a demonstration against the “objectionable comments and propaganda” by Mr. Kejriwal against Mr. Modi at the Hindi Bhawan.

“The decision of the Supreme Court has proved that Rahul Gandhi and Kejriwal indulged in propaganda against our Prime Minister and due to this every citizen of Delhi feels insulted. In order to cover up his failures, the Chief Minister has used objectionable words again and again against the Prime Minister and hence he must apologise to the people of the country and Delhi,” Mr. Tiwari alleged.

Work on at BJP HQ despite ban, says AAP

“This shows party’s concern for pollution”

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Saturday criticised the BJP over “ongoing construction” at its headquarters in Delhi despite a Supreme Court ban on all such projects due to high level of air pollution.

“BJP headquarters construction on full swing in the heart of Delhi while SC has banned all construction activity across NCR till further orders. Hippocrates!! [sic.]” AAP chief spokesperson Saurabh Bharawaj tweeted.

AAP Minister Imran Hussain also attacked the BJP over the issue.

“Construction is the fifth largest source of air pollution in Delhi. The BJP displays its efforts and concerns for air pollution in Delhi yet again. Construction of BJP HQ in

**BJP headquarters construction on full swing in the heart of Delhi while SC has banned all construction activity across NCR till further orders. Hippocrates!! [sic.]**

SAURABH BHARAWAJ  
AAP chief spokesperson

full swing despite SC’s ban,” Mr. Hussain said.

AAP MP Sanjay Singh questioned whether the BJP was “above the Supreme Court”. “If the SC has taken the problem of pollution seriously and stopped all construction work, then how is construction work going on in the BJP office? Has the BJP pledged to increase pollution in Delhi?” asked Mr. Singh.

Govt. harassing people through odd-even: BJP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP on Saturday accused the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government of subjecting the Capital’s citizens to harassment through the enforcement of the odd-even scheme.

BJP Rajya Sabha MP Vijay Goel has announced that he will stage a sit-in against the extension of the scheme, at Jantar Mantar on Sunday. He said that Delhiites were badly suffering due to increasing in pollution, which Chief Minister Arvind Kejri-

wal had “completely failed” to control.

He added that even the Supreme Court had termed the scheme “a flop.”

Expressing concern over increasing pollution in the city, Mr. Goel claimed that the Supreme Court had “reprimanded” the Kejriwal-led government and pointed out that the odd-even scheme was “not a proper solution for controlling pollution”.

The third edition of the scheme was in place from November 4 to 15.

NGT warns of action against chiefs of pollution boards

Green panel pulls up authorities for not curbing pollution in industrial clusters

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has pulled up authorities for not complying with directions to curb pollution in industrial clusters, and warned of action against senior officials of respective State Pollution Control Boards.

Taking note of a report furnished by the Central Pollution Control Board, the Bench said: “The status report does not refer to compliance of directions for enforcement of [relevant environmental norms] by

prohibiting operation of polluting activities and assessing and recovering compensation on “polluter pays” principle, including interim compensation.”

While observing that inaction on the part of authorities is “at the cost of Rule of Law”, the Bench added that accountability for compliance of orders needs to be fixed. “On default, the Tribunal will have no option except to proceed against the chairmen and member secretaries of the State Pollution Control Boards and pollution control commit-

tees, by way of coercive action. Such action may include replacement of persons heading such PCBs/PCCs or directions for stopping their salaries till meaningful action for compliance of order of this tribunal,” the Bench said.

**Consolidated report**  
The green panel has also directed the apex pollution control body to furnish a consolidated report on the action taken reports provided by all the States.

“The CPCB may also revise its mechanism for ex-

pansion and new activities by red and orange category of industries in critically or severely polluted areas consistent with the spirit of the earlier orders of this tribunal and principles of environmental law to bring down the pollution load and ensure that activities do not further add to such load,” the Bench said.

The directions came when the green panel was hearing a matter pertaining to remedial action to be taken for curbing pollution in already identified polluted industrial clusters.



Three killed as boiler explodes in Bihar

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
MOTIHARI (BIHAR)

Three persons were killed and as many injured after the boiler of a plant exploded in Bihar's East Champaran district on Saturday, police said.

The incident took place when the boiler of the plant of an NGO at Bangra Nagar panchayat area exploded while workers were preparing mid-day meal to be supplied to schools, Sugauli Police Station SHO Rohit Kumar said.

Sugauli Circle Officer Gyan Prakash said the NGO was engaged in supplying mid-day meal in government schools, after preparing the food at its centralised plant. The injured have been admitted to the local primary health centre, Mr. Prakash said, adding one of them was later referred to Patna Medical College and Hospital.

Rajasthan urban local body polls peaceful, 72% turnout

Stray incidents of violence reported from Bharatpur, Banswara, Bhiwadi, Beawar

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
JAIPUR

Nearly 72% voters exercised their franchise in the elections to 49 municipal bodies in Rajasthan on Saturday, with a maximum of 91.67% turnout in Nasirabad municipality of Ajmer district.

Polling took place peacefully, barring stray incidents of violence which left a few persons injured.

An inebriated person damaged an EVM in Churu, after which the apparatus was replaced.

The voter turnout touched 80% at some places in 24 districts where the polling was held. A total of 7,944 candidates were in the fray for election of 2,100 ward councillors. Over 33 lakh voters were eligible for exercising their franchise, for which



Physically challenged persons show their voter ID cards at a polling station in Pushkar on Saturday. •PTI

3,479 polling booths were set up across the State.

The results will be declared after counting of votes on November 19, while the election for chairpersons and deputy chairpersons of the urban local bodies will be held on November 26 and 27, respectively.

Chief Electoral Officer Shyam Singh Rajpurohit said the supervisors were given the responsibility to look after the law and order at their allotted centres. However, the Congress and the BJP workers clashed with each

other in Bharatpur, Banswara, Bhiwadi and Beawar.

**Four injured**

Four persons were injured in the fight with lathi and stones between two rival groups of party workers in Bharatpur. Tension prevailed in Jhunjhunu after allegations of bogus voting, while the police dispersed two groups hurling stones at each other in Sikar.

Energy Minister B.D. Kalla cast his vote in Bikaner, while Tourism Minister Vishendra Singh exercised his franchise in Bharatpur and Minister of State for Technical Education Subhash Garg in Bharatpur. The Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly, Gulab Chand Kataria, cast his vote in Udaipur. *(With inputs from PTI)*

U.P. CM seeks report on Minister threatening police officer

Opposition parties attack Adityanath govt. over audio clip

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday asked for an inquiry report on a purported audio clip in which State Minister Swati Singh allegedly threatened a police officer here.

"A report in this connection has been sought from the SSP, Lucknow, and will be submitted to the Chief Minister at the earliest," State DGP O.P. Singh said.

In the audio clip that surfaced on social media, the Minister can be heard questioning Lucknow Cantt. Cir-

cle Officer Binu Singh about an FIR filed against Ansal Developers and expressing displeasure over it.

**Zero tolerance?**

The Opposition parties, including the Samajwadi Party and the Congress, have attacked the Adityanath government over the clip, questioning its claim of zero tolerance on corruption.

In the audio clip, Ms. Singh can be heard telling the CO that a 'fake case' had been filed and that there were orders from the 'higher-ups' that no case will be

registered against the An-sals. She is also apparently saying that the case in question is a high-profile one and that the Chief Minister is aware of it. She is heard asking the CO to 'sit with her' and resolve the matter if she wanted to continue working.

The Samajwadi Party, in a tweet, said: "The matter is high profile and is under the cognizance of the Chief Minister. What inquiry will you do? 'Come and sit down' is this the zero tolerance for corruption which the Chief Minister is not tired of speaking about? Shame!."

Food on the go



Stranded truck drivers cooking meals along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, which remained closed due to landslides, in Ramban on Saturday. •PTI

AIMPLB meets Muslim parties

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
LUCKNOW

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board on Saturday held a brainstorming session here with different Muslim parties over the Supreme Court verdict in the Ayodhya case, ahead of a crucial meeting to decide whether to go for a review of the top court's judgment.

The parties met AIMPLB general secretary Maulana Wali Rahmani and apprised him of the Ayodhya issue, said Board secretary Zafaryab Jilani.

They said that the Supreme Court decision is "not understandable" and so there is a need to go for a review, Mr. Jilani said.

Farmers clash with U.P. police

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
UNNAO (U.P.)

Farmers, demanding better compensation for their land acquired for a residential project here, clashed with the police on Saturday when government officials visited the site to clear encroachment.

**Several injured**

Several farmers were injured as police lathi-charged the protesters, used tear gas and water cannons. Many policemen, including the Additional SP, were also injured as the protesters threw stones at them, District Magistrate Devendra Kumar Pandey said.

The farmers are demanding better compensation for their land acquired for the Trans-Ganga City project, an upcoming township near Kanpur.

Mr. Pandey, however, said the farmers have been adequately compensated.

"There is a faction of anti-social elements who are misleading the farmers and others for their selfish motives, despite the fact that their grievances have already been resolved," he said.

**Two arrested**

Those who threw stones are mostly anti-social elements, Mr. Pandey said, adding that two people have been arrested in connection with the incident.

Local BJP MLA Pankaj Gupta, who went to the spot on coming to know of the clash, asked officials to resolve the matter.

BJP, AJSU candidates pitted against each other in Jharkhand

Of the 19 AJSU Party picks, 15 will be clashing with BJP leaders

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
RANCHI

After its NDA ally, the All Jharkhand Students' Union or the AJSU Party announced its candidate against BJP Minister Amar Kumar Bauri from Chandankiyari, the BJP on Saturday hit back with its nominee on a seat from where the AJSU Party Minister is in the fray.

**Fourth list**

In its fourth list of three candidates announced on Saturday, a copy of which was released to the media, the BJP nominated Mochiram Bauri from Jugsalai (SC) seat against AJSU leader Ram Chandra Sahis, who is the Water Resources Minister in the State.

The other two names of the BJP in the fourth list are Sudhir Sundi (Jagantapur-ST) and Reeta Devi Munda (Tamar-ST), taking the party's total contestants to 72 for the five-phase polls to the 81-member Jharkhand Assembly.

The AJSU Party, headed by Sudesh Mahto, has already announced 19 candidates, 15 of whom will be clashing with the BJP contestants along with others.

The 15 constituencies where the AJSU and the BJP candidates will be pitted against each other along with rest of the nominees include Chandankiyari, where Mr. Mahto's party has fielded former Minister Uma Kant Razzak against Mr. Bauri.

The elections are scheduled between November 30 and December 20 in Jharkhand and counting will



AJSU Party chief Sudesh Mahto with former Ranchi Congress president Pradeep Balmuchuu in Ranchi. •FILE PHOTO

JD(U) names 12 more candidates

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
RANCHI

The Janata Dal (United) on Saturday announced its second list of 12 candidates including the party's Jharkhand unit president Salkhan Murmu and a son of former Congress leader Bagun Sumbarui.

Mr. Murmu has been fielded from Majhgaon (ST) while Vimal Kumar Sumbarui has been nominated from Chaibasa (ST). Mr. Sumbarui is a son of former Bihar Minister and Congress leader Bagun

Sumbarui, who died last year.

The senior Sumbarui had also been a member of the Lok Sabha between 1977 and 1989 and 2004 and 2009. He represented the Lower House from Singhbhum (ST).

The other 10 candidates of the JD(U) are new faces.

The JD(U) headed by Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, which is contesting the Assembly elections on its own, has so far announced candidates for 25 of the total 81 seats.

take place on December 23.

Ruling NDA allies – BJP and AJSU Party – who have been part of all the governments of the coalition in Jharkhand since it was carved out of Bihar in 2000 have not achieved seat-shar-

ing agreement so far despite several rounds of talks between the leaders of the two parties at different levels.

The BJP has named 72 candidates so far and only nine seats are left out of the total 81 Assembly segments.



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## BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

## INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL

## BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

## BRIDES WANTED

## BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED

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Bengali

Bhojpuri

Bihari

Chhattisgarhi

English

Gujarati

Haryanvi

Hindi

Kannada

Kashmiri

Konkani

Malayalam

Manipuri

Marathi

Marwari

Nepali

Oriya

Parsi

Punjabi

Saurashtra

Sindhi

Tamil

Telugu

Tulu

Urdu

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Business

Defence

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**BRAHMIN**, 35, 173 cms, Businessman, BE, Masters in Industrial Management, Lives in Chennai, Father is a Businessman. Family is financially well off. Looking for a likeminded and well educated match from the same community. Contact: 9360019628

**BRAHMIN**, 35, 180 cms, Researcher, Ph.D. Lives in Netherlands. Father is a Professional. Family is financially well off. Looking for a likeminded and well educated match from any community in India/Abroad. Contact: 7871502020

**BRAHMIN**, 31, 175 cms, Management Professional, B.Tech, MBA, Lives in Mumbai. Father is a Professional. Family is financially well off. Looking for a likeminded and well educated match from the same community. Contact: 9360204567

**INTER CASTE/CASTE NO BAR**, 27, 188 cms, Consultant, MBA from LSE, Lives in Chennai. Father is a Businessman. Family is financially well off. Looking for a likeminded match from any mother tongue and any community. Contact: 9381823520

**NAIDU**, 29, 173 cms, BE, Operation Engineer, MBA, Lives in Chennai. Father is a Businessman. Family is financially well off. Looking for a likeminded and well settled match from any community. Contact: 9381823520

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## ‘How will supply help when there is no demand?’

Former Bengal Finance Minister suggests measures for combating slowdown

**BISHWANATH GHOSH**  
KOLKATA

Veteran CPI(M) leader Asim Dasgupta, who served as West Bengal’s Finance Minister for nearly quarter of a century, has said that the Centre should work together with the States in combating the economic slowdown.

“The current economic slowdown has resulted from the fall in the purchasing power of the common people,” said Mr. Dasgupta, who served as the State’s Finance Minister from 1987 to 2011.

“What the government needs to work on is improving the demand and not supply. The measures taken by it in the recent times, such as announcing a corporate tax relief of ₹1.45 lakh crore, are aimed at improving supply. How will more supply help when there is no demand?” he said.

Mr. Dasgupta, who was instrumental in initiating land reforms in Bengal, suggested a series of measures the Centre could undertake to increase demand. One of

them is land reforms (fixing a ceiling on the amount of land that can be held by an individual and distributing the excess land to the landless) because smaller lands, according to him, are better utilised. He also called for a hike in the fair price charged by farmers.

**Irrigation sector**

Among the things that are immediately “doable”, he said, is an allocation of an additional ₹10,000 crore to the irrigation sector (to the

current ₹9,900 crore); a 10% hike on the food subsidy of ₹1.7 lakh crore; pumping in another ₹40,000 crore to MNREGA (current budget ₹60,000 crore), and spending ₹15,000 crore on an MNREGA-type programme for the urban population.

“These measures, if you do the maths, will cost about ₹1 lakh crore. Where will this money come from? It can come from the ₹1.45 lakh crore that has been set aside as corporate tax relief,” Mr. Dasgupta said.

## New Assam NRC Coordinator goes on leave

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
GUWAHATI

The new State Coordinator for the exercise to update the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam has

gone on leave a week after his appointment.

Hitesh Dev Sarma, who was appointed on November 9 as the replacement for Prateek Hajela, went on a

month’s leave from Friday, two days before the retirement of Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi.

The Supreme Court under Mr Gogoi has been

monitoring the NRC exercise since Prateek Hajela, an IAS officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre, was appointed its Coordinator in October 2013.

## Arunachal Cabinet meet on Monday to discuss CAB

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NAMSAI (ARUNACHAL PRADESH)

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Saturday said the State government will hold a Cabinet meeting on November 18 to discuss the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB), which is likely to be tabled in the Winter Session of Parliament.

Mr. Khandu, participating in the National Press Day celebrations here, said the special Cabinet meeting will deliberate on the recommendations of the Consultative Committee on CAB set up by the State government.

“The committee had convened a number of meetings with political parties, students’ bodies and community-based organisations to seek their opinion on CAB, and prepare a comprehensive report on the issue. The report has been finalised, which will be discussed in the Cabinet meeting, and the stand of the government will be communicated to the Centre,” he said.

Mr. Khandu said the Arunachal Pradesh government will never work against the interests of the indigenous people of the State, and ensure that their rights are protected.

“The Centre has made its stand clear on the Bill that it will not affect the tribal States,” he said.

THE HINDU

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**IN BRIEF**  
**Chief Justice of India visits Tirumala**  
TIRUMALA  
Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi arrived here on Saturday as part of his two-day visit to the famous shrine. He was accompanied by wife Rupanjali Gogoi. Justice Gogoi's visit to the temple town comes a day ahead of his demitting office. Justice Gogoi also offered prayers at the temple of goddess Padmavati. On his arrival, TTD Additional Executive Officer A.V. Dharma Reddy accorded him a warm reception.

**Injured loco pilot dies of cardiac arrest**  
HYDERABAD  
Loco pilot L. Chandrasekhar, 36, who was rescued from the mangled coach of the Multi-Modal Transport System train, which rammed another train outside the Kacheguda railway station in Hyderabad on Monday, died after he suffered cardiac arrest and sepsis on Saturday. His condition was critical right from the point he was rushed to CARE Hospitals. Doctors said he had suffered multiple injuries in the accident, which left 17 passengers injured.

**Two wild elephants captured in Mandya**  
MANDYA  
In an operation that lasted nearly four hours, Forest Department officials on Saturday tranquillised and captured two wild male elephants near Kalenahalli in Pandavapura taluk of Karnataka's Mandya district. The pachyderms had been raiding crops in the vicinity of Kadaba and Kalenahalli villages in Pandavapura as well as some villages in K.R. Pet taluk since three days, said Forest Department officials. Five trained elephants from the Dubare elephant camp were also used in the operation.

# Kerala's renaissance panel split over changed Sabarimala policy

While Pulayar Maha Sabha slams government, SNDP supports it

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM  
The Left Democratic Front (LDF) government's stance that it is under no legal obligation to escort women of menstruating age to Sabarimala appears to have opened a rift in the Kerala-sponsored Navodhana Samrakshana Samiti (Renaissance Protection Committee).

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan formed the Samiti in the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha election, purportedly to counter what the government perceived as a dangerous right-wing drift in society. Samiti general secretary and Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha (KPMS) president Punnulla Sreekumar took strong exception to the government's "modified" position. The Supreme Court, he said, had not set aside its September 28, 2018, verdict upholding the right of women of all age groups to worship at the Ayyappa temple. By backing off from its legal obligations, the LDF government had handed its critics a victory, he said. Mr. Sreekumar said the V.S. Achuthanandan government in 2007 and later the Pinarayi Vijayan government in 2016 had filed affidavits in the Supreme Court stating that age or gender should be no bar for women to worship at Sabarimala. The government's changed position gravely undermines the renaissance ideal of gender equality that led to the formation of the Samiti against the backdrop



**The big moment:** Devotees in the queue with their offerings, waiting to worship Lord Ayyappa at Sabarimala on Saturday. ■ H. VIBHU

## State police to pursue all cases booked during protest last year

**M.P. PRAVEEN**  
KOCHI  
The Kerala government's decision not to allow entry of women of menstruating age into the Ayyappa temple at Sabarimala till the Supreme Court takes a final call on a batch of review petitions may have little bearing on the thousands of cases registered in connection with the violent protests that took place across the State during the last pilgrim season. During the period from October 17, 2018, to January 4, 2019, the Kerala police

registered 2,012 cases spread over multiple stations as violent mobs engaged in protests against the State government's decision to implement the Supreme Court verdict to throw open the temple to women of menstruating age. "We will pursue all those cases to their logical conclusion," a police officer said. Altogether 67,094 persons were arraigned as accused, out of which the police identified 10,561 accused. Among the accused,

nearly 63% were Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) activists, while the Sabarimala Karma Samithi and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and other right wing-affiliated organisations accounted for nearly 14% each. Notwithstanding the State government's decision to wait for the decision of the seven-member Bench, the police remain sceptical of what lies in store for the coming pilgrimage season as the verdict allowing the entry of women of menstrual age has not technically been stayed.

of the mustering of reactionary forces to thwart the government's implementation of the court's decision, he said. In stark contrast, Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam general secretary and Samiti chairman

Vellappally Natesan backed the government's latest view. Mr. Natesan interpreted the Supreme Court's latest ruling to refer a slew of legal questions regarding the case to a seven-member constitutional Bench as a "stay" on the 2018 order.

Devaswom Board Minister Kadakampally Surendran stated on Thursday that it was not contingent on the administration to allow women activists at Sabarimala unless they arrived with a warrant from the Supreme Court for State assistance.

### Lessons for life



**Emergency procedure:** In an attempt to set a world record, as many as 35,000 students were given training in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) in Kochi on Saturday. ■ THULASI KAKKAT

## Excise CI booked for assaulting woman

Argument with shopkeeper turns ugly

**STAFF REPORTER**  
CHITTOOR  
The A.P. police on Saturday registered a case against a Circle Inspector (Excise and Prohibition) for allegedly assaulting a woman at the Vadamalapeta mandal headquarters on Thursday last. According to information, CI (Puttur) Mohan was cautioning roadside shops adjacent to a wine shop not to sell water and soda bottles. An argument ensued between him and a woman shopkeeper. Soon, the incident took an ugly turn, leading to the CI allegedly assaulting the woman in public view. The woman reportedly took the matter to the notice of Nagari MLA R.K. Roja, who informed Chittoor SP Senthil Kumar about it. Soon after, the police registered a case.

Police sources confirmed the incident, saying a case had been booked under Section 509 of the IPC (intending to insult the modesty of a woman). The episode turned into a hot topic among the police and excise personnel in Chittoor district. Deputy Commissioner (Excise and Prohibition) Nagalakshmi told *The Hindu* that the issue would be looked into by the Excise Superintendent of Tirupati and the Nodal Deputy Commissioner in Kurnool. Shopkeepers along the roadside in Vadamalapeta and Puttur alleged that on the pretext of raids, Excise personnel routinely harassed them and forced them not to sell water and soda bottles though their shops were located at a distance from the wine shops.

## Kerala on track to eliminate TB by 2025

It will now have to focus on strengthening diagnostic services, say monitors

**C. MAYA**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM  
The sixth Joint Monitoring Mission (JMM 2019) of the Union government and the World Health Organization on the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP) has lauded Kerala for being right on track to achieve TB elimination by 2025. However, the last mile is the toughest and as Kerala moves on to TB elimination, the State will now have to focus better on strengthening its diagnostic services and the training component so that every case in the community is picked up. Hence, more molecular diagnostic services (CBNAAT/Genexpert machines) are needed, the JMM team, which met the Health Minister and the

**Kerala lauded for**

- Integration of RNTCP into health system
- Involvement of leadership of local bodies
- Patient-centric programme, involvement of community
- Partnership with private sector

**Areas for improvement**

- Strengthen molecular diagnostic services by adding more CBNAAT machines
- Upgrade of IRL BSL 3 lab is a pre-requisite for TB elimination
- Training and capacity building in clinical, managerial and epidemiological skills
- Interventions for management of latent TB and preventive therapy

**AMY PIATEK, JOINT MONITORING MISSION TEAM LEADER**

Principal Secretary here on Saturday, suggests. The last time a JMM visited Kerala was in 2002. The sixth JMM, comprising 24 members, is visiting Kerala as part of the mid-year assessment of India's National

Strategic Plan for TB Elimination, 2017-25. "The seamless integration of the RNTCP with the State's health system and the manner in which every health worker is owning the programme is something that I

have not witnessed elsewhere," Amy Piatek, Senior TB Technical Adviser, US Agency for International Development (USAID), and JMM team leader, told *The Hindu*. "True commitment — from programme implementers as well as administration — is what we witnessed in Kerala. There are challenges ahead because the last cases are the hardest to find. What you need to do is continue to look at the data on hand critically and focus on epidemiology," Ms. Piatek added. The JMM team felt that the State has allowed its Intermediate Reference Laboratory (IRL) in the capital (where advanced tests are done) to languish and that very little has been done to improve the technical capacity or human resource.

## Market on a roll as chilli scales new heights

Analysts attribute price rise in A.P. to spurt in demand from overseas buyers

**P. SAMUEL JONATHAN**  
GUNTUR  
The upswing in the price of famed Guntur red chilli (Gunturu 'sannalu') has come as a pleasant surprise to the stakeholders. "Teja," a special variety, is being sold for ₹20,000 a quintal, even in the August-December low season when chillies are stored in about 100 cold storages in adjoining villages. The high season is between February and May, when the lanes of Asia's largest market yard in the city are crammed with trucks and autorickshaws laden with chillies from all over Andhra Pradesh. During the low season, the premium varieties stacked in cold storages command a high price and those who wait for longer pe-



**Bumper harvest:** Andhra Pradesh accounts for more than 65% of chilli production in the country.

riods are rewarded. All premium varieties, including 'Teja', '334', and Badiga, now command an average price in excess of ₹170 a kg. Trade analysts feel that the soaring demand for Guntur chilli is due to a range of

factors, including a spurt in demand from China, Bangladesh, Thailand and Sri Lanka, who prefer it for its pungent character. "After many years, Guntur chilli is getting a record remunerative price. During

2014-2018, the price was low as there was excess production in other countries. But this time, they are unable to meet the demand," said Kothuri Sudhakar, an exporter. **A.P. on top** The soaring prices are attracting farmers from neighbouring districts and exporters too have been evincing interest in buying chilli from Guntur. The arrivals have been in the region of 65 lakh quintals till date in this season, compared to 60 lakh quintals in 2018-19. India is among the world's leading producers of chilli, along with China, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Andhra Pradesh accounts for more than 65 % of the production in the country.

## Striking RTC staff made decision difficult: MD

'Workers' strike destabilised the State'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD  
Two days after striking Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) workers expressed readiness for negotiations, the corporation said even if they resumed duties voluntarily, it would be difficult to take a decision on their continuance. In an affidavit submitted to the Telangana High Court, TSRTC's MD in-charge Sunil Sharma stated that the workers had destabilised the State with their strike for over 40 days and created problems for themselves. Asserting that going on strike even on 'flimsy grounds' had become a trend with workers, the MD said statistics established that TSRTC workers went on strike more frequently than employees of any other corporation or those of the go-

vernment. The corporation would be sending wrong signals if the doors were opened to TSRTC employees to join at their will and wish even after they had gone on strike at their whims and fancies, Mr. Sharma submitted. "This will affect overall discipline in the industry and also provoke and incite employees in other sectors as well," he said. Claiming that the strike was being used as a tool for the benefit of a few union leaders, Mr. Sharma said the stir was not in the interest of the workers. "The unions through their leaders and leaders of the rival political parties are threatening, intimidating and trying to terrorise the authority," Mr. Sharma asserted. The strike had created an atmosphere of general indiscipline and insubordination, he added.

footage, a blurry image of the accused was released to the media. The police picked up about half a dozen suspects, with features similar to the image of the suspect. When the police tried to reach one of the suspects, identified as Patan Mohamad Rafi alias Rafi alias Giddu, 25, he was found missing. It was found that Rafi was an accused in two criminal cases, which included an attempt to rape a five-year-old girl in 2009 and an attempt to molest a 12-year-old girl. With suspicion growing

against Rafi, the police intensified the probe against him. A lorry cleaner by profession, Rafi reportedly escaped to a remote location in Chhattisgarh on the pretext of carrying a tomato load. The police took the help of the lorry owner in persuading Rafi, who was wary of returning, to come to Madanapalle. After he was convinced that he would be safe from the police, Rafi arrived on the outskirts of Madanapalle on Saturday, only to be nabbed by the special police party. He reportedly confessed to killing the girl.

ment representative at the BTC. A steward told *The Hindu* that the recent spells of rain had softened the track at certain spots and the committee had instructed the team maintaining the track to fix it. "Probably, the team had not done a thorough job," he said, adding that



**Cause for concern:** A file photo of the Bangalore Turf Club race course. On Friday, a horse fell, leading to vandalism.

## Turf Club officials inspect track with jockeys, trainers

Members accuse managing committee of criminal neglect

**STAFF REPORTER**  
BENGALURU  
The Bangalore Turf Club Managing Committee held a joint inspection of the race track with senior jockeys, trainers and stewards on Saturday, a day after a horse fell down leading to vandalism by punters. The report is expected on Monday. The fact that the jockeys had raised concerns about the track not being in its best condition following a mock race on November 9 has now turned into a controversy, with senior members accusing the committee of criminal neglect. "When the jockeys had flagged the issue, the managing committee should have rescheduled the race till the issue was satisfactorily fixed. Their negligence has led to a horse being put to sleep and the lives of jockeys being at risk," said a former govern-

ment representative at the BTC. A steward told *The Hindu* that the recent spells of rain had softened the track at certain spots and the committee had instructed the team maintaining the track to fix it. "Probably, the team had not done a thorough job," he said, adding that

heavy rain three days before the race probably affected the track further. The jockeys, in their letter to the managing committee, sought another mock race after November 9 but it was not held. "In hindsight, we must have held that. We will take this as a learning experience," he said.

## After 10 days, lorry cleaner held on charge of killing 5-year-old in A.P.

**STAFF REPORTER**  
CHITTOOR  
Ten days after the alleged murder of a five-year-old girl near Madanapalle in Andhra Pradesh, a special party formed by Superintendent of Police S. Senthil Kumar on Saturday nabbed a 25-year-old youth on the outskirts of Madanapalle in connection with the case. The body of the girl, who came to attend a wedding with her parents at Angallu village of Kurabalakota mandal on November 7, was found behind the function hall the next morning. With the help of CCTV

footage, a blurry image of the accused was released to the media. The police picked up about half a dozen suspects, with features similar to the image of the suspect. When the police tried to reach one of the suspects, identified as Patan Mohamad Rafi alias Rafi alias Giddu, 25, he was found missing. It was found that Rafi was an accused in two criminal cases, which included an attempt to rape a five-year-old girl in 2009 and an attempt to molest a 12-year-old girl. With suspicion growing

against Rafi, the police intensified the probe against him. A lorry cleaner by profession, Rafi reportedly escaped to a remote location in Chhattisgarh on the pretext of carrying a tomato load. The police took the help of the lorry owner in persuading Rafi, who was wary of returning, to come to Madanapalle. After he was convinced that he would be safe from the police, Rafi arrived on the outskirts of Madanapalle on Saturday, only to be nabbed by the special police party. He reportedly confessed to killing the girl.





IN BRIEF

**Pak. air traffic controller saves Jaipur-Muscat plane**  
ISLAMABAD  
An air traffic controller from Pakistan saved a plane with 150 people flying from Jaipur to Muscat. After facing abnormal weather conditions in Sindh area, the controller directed the flight through the remaining journey in Pakistani airspace. PTI

**NGT for more assistance for mining victims' kin**  
GUWAHATI  
The National Green Tribunal (NGT) is expected to recommend more compensation to the kin of the 15 miners who were killed in a flooded rat-hole coal mine in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district in 2018. The families were given ₹3 lakh each - ₹2 lakh from the PM's Relief Fund and ₹1 lakh from the State government.

**Siblings killed as father tries to avoid pothole**  
COIMBATORE  
Two girls were fatally run over by a lorry after they fell from the motorcycle their father was riding on Saturday morning. R. Venkatesh, their father, was trying to avoid a pothole in Coimbatore's Rathinapuri when the kids fell from the bike. The deceased have been identified as V. Gayathri, 9, and V. Keerthana, 7. While Keerthana died on the spot, Gayathri succumbed to her injuries at the hospital.

**Thieves strike at judge's house, steal trees**  
REWA  
A gang of five thieves struck at the residence of Arun Kumar Singh, a district court judge and chopped off four sandalwood trees from the premises, before decamping with the logs, police said on Saturday. Police said Justice Singh and his family members were asleep when the incident took place, adding that the thieves cut the trees after threatening the judge's police guard at gunpoint. PTI

# Dam victims seek rehabilitation

Fishermen hit by rise in water level of the Narmada

**STAFF REPORTER**  
BHOPAL  
Hundreds of farmers, potters and fishermen from 178 villages that were submerged by the backwaters of the Narmada, marched to the office of the Narmada Valley Development Authority in Bhopal demanding rehabilitation and alternative employment on Saturday.  
Ever since the Sardar Sarovar dam downstream was filled to the brim, the Narmada has developed an erratic current and an unstable course, posing a challenge to fishermen in Madhya Pradesh.  
“When the backwaters swelled, the catch dwindled dramatically. And now, several species have become extinct in the river,” says Mansarovar Verma, 53, a fisherman of Chikhaldia vil-



**On the edge:** Farmers, potters and fishermen displaced by the Sardar Sarovar Dam project taking out a rally in Bhopal on Saturday. ■ A.M.FARUQUI

lage in Barwani district.  
“We don't want contractors from outside to take over water bodies. Local fishermen have a traditional right to them,” said Medha Patkar, of the Narmada Bachao Andolan, who led the rally and then staged a dharna with the protesters.  
**Fall in catch**  
“Water has entered forests, and dead leaves are detrimental to fish. Furthermore, garbage from submerged vil-

lages has caused a large-scale pollution of the river,” said Mr. Verma.  
He now catches 2-4 kg of fish a day, earning only up to ₹400 a day. Three months ago, he netted 8-10 kg, bringing home ₹1,000 a day.  
“We want compensation or land for the loss incurred. We don't want to work for a fishing contractor, who'll set terms for us,” he said.  
Earlier, a drop in the wa-

ter level after the monsoon gave them an opportunity to cultivate muskmelon and watermelon on the river banks around the month of January. After the water level rose, this too became impossible.  
The government has opened 32 societies for fishermen in Dhar, Barwani and Khargone districts, which share the river's banks, to dispel the fears about contractors taking over fishing.

# Navy MiG-29K crashes in Goa, pilots eject safely

The engines failed after suffering a bird-strike

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI  
A Navy MiG-29K fighter jet on a routine mission crashed after an engine failure due to a bird-strike in Goa on Saturday morning. The two pilots, Capt. M. Sheekhand and Lt. Cdr. Deepak Yadav, ejected safely.  
Around noon, the aircraft encountered a flock of birds after take-off from the naval air base at Dabolim, the Navy said in a statement.  
“The pilot observed that



**Close shave:** The left engine of the aircraft had flamed out and the right engine caught fire. ■ ATISH POMBURFEKAR

the left engine had flamed out and the right one had caught fire. Attempts to recover the aircraft by following the standard operating procedures were unsuccessful due to the nature of emergency,” the statement said.  
The pilot pointed the aircraft away from populated areas and both the pilots ejected safely, the statement said. There was no loss of life or property.  
A Court of Inquiry has been instituted to investigate the cause of the accident.

# Dalit man who was forced to drink urine dies

Police have arrested four people

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHANDIGARH  
The 37-year-old Dalit man who was allegedly beaten and forced to drink urine succumbed to his injuries on Saturday, nine days after the incident in Punjab's Sangrur district.  
Jagmail Singh was undergoing treatment at the Post-graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research in Chandigarh. He is survived by his wife, two daughters and a minor son.  
Singh is said to have had an altercation with Rinku and a few other persons last month. The victim, in his complaint, alleged that one of the accused invited him

# Odisha locals protest against steel plant

**STAFF REPORTER**  
BHUBANESWAR  
Several villagers in Odisha's Jagatsinghpur district on Saturday demanded scrapping of an integrated steel, cement and captive power plant proposed by Sajjan Jindal-led JSW Utkal Steel Limited.  
The project is proposed to come up on land which was previously acquired for the steel project of South Korean steel major POSCO. After the South Korean company shelved its project, the State government brought the entire land parcel under its land bank scheme.  
“This is illegal. The State government should have returned the land to people as no project could be set up within five years of its acquisition. The new project will jeopardise livelihood of locals,” said Manorama Khatua, a villager.



**Forecast for Sunday:** Moderate to dense fog likely in isolated pockets over Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, east Arunachal Pradesh, south Assam and Meghalaya.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala.....	—	30.0	18.0	Kozhikode.....	16.6	33.0	25.0
Ahmedabad.....	—	32.0	20.0	Kurnool.....	—	31.0	23.0
Aizawl.....	—	26.0	14.0	Lucknow.....	—	29.0	15.0
Allahabad.....	—	31.0	14.0	Madurai.....	0.5	33.0	25.0
Bengaluru.....	—	27.0	20.0	Mangaluru.....	—	37.0	24.0
Bhopal.....	—	29.0	15.0	Mumbai.....	—	33.0	23.0
Bhubaneswar.....	—	31.0	18.0	Mysuru.....	—	29.0	21.0
Chandigarh.....	—	26.0	15.0	New Delhi.....	—	29.0	15.0
Chennai.....	1.0	32.0	25.0	Patna.....	—	31.0	17.0
Coimbatore.....	—	32.0	23.0	Port Blair.....	10.6	31.0	25.0
Dehradun.....	—	28.0	13.0	Puducherry.....	10.2	32.0	23.0
Gangtok.....	—	17.0	11.0	Pune.....	—	31.0	18.0
Goa.....	—	34.0	24.0	Raipur.....	—	30.0	18.0
Guwahati.....	—	31.0	19.0	Ranchi.....	—	27.0	13.0
Hubballi.....	—	28.0	21.0	Shillong.....	—	22.0	11.0
Hyderabad.....	—	30.0	20.0	Shimla.....	—	18.0	9.0
Imphal.....	—	26.0	11.0	Srinagar.....	—	—	—
Jaipur.....	—	29.0	17.0	Thiruvananthapuram.....	4.0	33.0	25.0
Kochi.....	—	32.0	25.0	Tiruchi.....	—	33.0	24.0
Kohima.....	—	24.0	12.0	Vijayawada.....	—	31.0	23.0
Kolkata.....	—	31.0	21.0	Visakhapatnam.....	—	31.0	24.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing							Yesterday
CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>2</sub>	CO	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>	CODE	
Ahmedabad.....	124	154	46	118	116	...	■
Bengaluru.....	13	79	96	—	85	...	■
Chennai.....	8	13	33	74	—	...	■
Delhi.....	20	112	46	401	337	...	■
Hyderabad.....	3	60	42	164	132	...	■
Kolkata.....	9	66	40	241	171	...	■
Lucknow.....	10	43	35	365	—	...	■
Mumbai.....	11	119	34	181	153	...	■
Pune.....	75	12	57	139	110	...	■
Visakhapatnam.....	9	48	37	111	110	...	■

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

**SO<sub>2</sub>:** Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

**NO<sub>2</sub>:** Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

**CO:** Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

**PM<sub>2.5</sub> & PM<sub>10</sub>:** Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

# Govardhan Mutt out of Odisha govt.'s purview

Of the four mutts set up by Adi Shankara, it is the only one governed by a State Act

**STAFF REPORTER**  
BHUBANESWAR  
The Govardhan Mutt of Puri, one of the four key mutts established by Adi Shankara, the prominent Hindu saint, is all set to be kept out of the Odisha government's administrative purview.  
The Govardhan mutt is the only such mutt currently controlled by a State Act. The three others - Sharada Mutt at Sringeri in Karnataka, Dwarka Mutt in Gujarat and Jyotir Mutt at Joshimath in Uttarakhand - function autonomously.  
The Odisha Hindu Religious Endowment (Amendment) Bill, 2019 tabled by the Naveen Patnaik government in the ongoing winter session of the State Assembly was passed on Saturday.

have been kept out of their respective State Endowment Acts and the management of the said mutts has been vested with the respective Shankaracharyas,” said Pratap Jena, State Law Minister, while tabling the bill.  
Mr. Jena said that it was expedient to amend clause xiii of Section 3 of the Odisha Hindu Religious Endowments Act, 1951 (OHRE) to exclude Govardhan Mutt and endowments attached from the definition of religious institutions.  
There are more than 18,000 Hindu public religious institutions in Odisha which are governed by the provisions of the OHRE Act.  
The Govardhan Mutt is one of the oldest mutts of Puri.  
According to the government, the position of the Sankaracharya of the Govardhan Mutt is important because of his involvement with the affairs of the Shree Jagannath Temple.  
The Sankaracharya heads the Mukti Mandap Pandit Sabha, which renders advices on religious affairs.

# Inspector threatens student for tweet

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
GHAZIABAD  
A police inspector in Bareilly district of Uttar Pradesh threatened a law student with the National Security Act and the Gangsters Act for tweeting against stubble burning.  
In a telephonic conversation that went viral on Friday, Surendra Singh Pachauri, SHO, Sheeshgarh, could be heard asking Ishaq Khan how he dared tweet about stubble burning without his permission.  
“Come to the police station immediately, else the NSA and Gangsters Act will be invoked against you,” Mr. Pachauri was heard saying.  
When Mr. Khan pleaded that he only pointed out about pollution in his neighbourhood and that he was a differently-abled person, Mr. Pachauri said he would “correct his disability.”  
SP (Rural) Sansar Singh said action will be taken against the police official.

# U.P. fines farmers for stubble burning

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
GHAZIABAD  
Facing criticism by the Supreme Court, district officials in western Uttar Pradesh are cracking down on farmers indulging in stubble burning and factories causing pollution.  
On Friday, the Mathura administration fined 288 farmers for ₹12.42 lakhs. The Gautam Buddh Nagar administration in Greater Noida booked 12 farmers in Dadri, just four days after 10 farmers were booked and fined ₹35,000 in the district. In Bulandshahr, three factories were sealed for burning tyres for generating oil.



FROM PAGE ONE

## Delhi has the most unsafe tap water



### Unsafe to drink

Samples from Delhi failed in 19 out of 28 parameters, the highest among major State capitals, followed by Kolkata and Chennai. Parameters in which the three cities failed were:

**Delhi:** Aluminium, Ammonia, Anionic detergent, Calcium, Chloride, Coliform, colour,

E. Coli, Iron, Manganese, Nitrate, Odour, PH, Phenolic compounds, Sulphide, TDS, total alkalinity, total hardness, turbidity

**Kolkata:** Aluminium, Barium, Coliform, colour, E. Coli, Magnesium, TDS, total alkalinity, total hardness, turbidity

**Chennai:** Ammonia, Boron, Chloride, Coliform, Fluoride, odour, TDS, total hardness, turbidity

While it is mandatory for bottled water manufacturers to meet quality standards, the BIS standard is voluntary for the public agencies which supply and distribute piped water.

The Ministry is writing to all State governments to develop a consensus on making the standard mandatory.

The BIS standard involves 48 different parameters. Samples are being tested under 28 parameters so far, leaving out parameters related to radioactive substances and free residual chlorine.

Samples are undergoing physical and organoleptic

tests (which identify odour, turbidity and pH levels), as well as chemical tests and virological, bacteriological and biological tests (which identify harmful organisms and disease carriers).

So far, only Delhi samples have been tested under the final category and have come out clean in that area. The capital's samples also conformed with parameters for toxic substances and pesticide residue. However, coliform and E.Coli samples were found in all Delhi samples, along with excess metals such as aluminium, manganese, magnesium, ammonia and iron.

## Police advise women against visiting Sabarimala

Women police officers at Pampa had, as part of established security protocol, verified the identity proof submitted by the group. They found two women were under the age of 50. The police apprised them of the dispute over the matter.

The police later claimed that the women had "of their own volition" abandoned their plan to trek to the Sannidhanam, and there was no compulsion on the part of the force.

Devaswom Minister Kadakampally Surendran had on Thursday said it was not contingent on the government to escort women activists to the Ayyappa temple unless they arrived with a warrant for the State's assistance from the Supreme Court.

The government had received the legal opinion that the State was under no juridical requirement to proactively ensure that women between the age of 10 and 50 worshipped at Sabarimala in the wake of the Supreme Court's decision to form a seven-member constitutional Bench to look into the case further.

State Police Chief Loknath Behera told reporters that he would seek further legal clarification from Advocate General C.P. Sudhakar Prasad on the issue.

Meanwhile, the State police said they were tracking the travel plans of women activists, including that of Trupti Desai who on Saturday reiterated her decision to pray at Sabarimala on Sunday.

# Sena confident of CM post, will skip NDA meet

Talks continue on Maharashtra govt. formation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

The stalemate in Maharashtra politics continued on Saturday, with the nascent alliance of Shiv Sena, Congress and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) calling off a meeting with Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari at the last minute, ostensibly due to other commitments.

However, talks between the three parties over government formation continued. Sources said the three parties had formalised the common minimum programme, which has been forwarded to the respective central leaderships for final approvals. After approvals, it would be released to the general public for feedback.

Reiterating the party's demand for the chief ministerial post, Sena leader Sanjay



**Wait continues:** Police and media personnel await developments at the Raj Bhavan in Mumbai on Saturday. ■ ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

Raut said the party remains confident of installing someone to the top post. "Undoubtedly, the government that we are going to form in Maharashtra will be under the leadership of a Chief Minister of Shiv Sena," he said.

### Seating in Parliament

Earlier in the day, the Shiv Sena was informed that its MPs – Mr. Raut and Anil De-

sai – would have to sit with the opposition in Parliament as the party has parted ways with the ruling NDA coalition.

Mr. Raut on being asked if the Shiv Sena would attend the NDA meeting in Delhi ahead of the winter session of Parliament, replied in the negative. "We will not go," he said. "There is a lot of difference between the old NDA

and today's NDA. Who is the convener of NDA today? Advani ji who was one of its founders has either left or is inactive."

NCP supremo Sharad Pawar has convened a meeting of his party's core committee in Pune on Sunday. Meanwhile the BJP concluded a three-day consultation meeting with newly elected MLAs at its party office in Dadar.

## Congress to hold mega rally in Delhi on Nov. 30

Farm distress, unemployment in focus

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Congress announced on Saturday that it would hold a mega rally at the Ramlika Maidan on November 30 as a culmination of its State-level agitation against the policies of the Narendra Modi-led government at the Centre.

Earlier, the party had announced protests across all districts between November 5 and 15 against the Centre's economic policies.

However, following the Ayodha verdict and the imposition of Section 144 of the IPC in some districts, the party had suspended a few programmes in some States.

"Today, we decided that the agitations at the district and State levels will be completed before November 25," said Congress general secretary in charge of organisations K.C. Venugopal.

### Culmination of effort

"We have decided to hold a massive culminating rally against the anti-people policies of the Central government on November 30 in Delhi's Ramlika Maidan. The meeting has decided to name it as "Bharat Bachao" [Save India] rally because people are suffering very much," he said.

The Congress held a meeting of its general secretaries, chiefs of frontal or-



K.C. Venugopal

ganisations, department heads and State unit chiefs on Saturday.

"The meeting was called to discuss the agitation programme... against the Central government's anti-people policies, especially economic slowdown, farmers' distress, huge unemployment and other issues," he said.

The Congress leader also said the party had also discussed the worrying finding of the leaked report of the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) that pointed to lower consumer expenditure even on food.

"Just like the unemployment data, the government may not release it but the expenditure on food going down is really alarming," said Mr. Venugopal. Asked if it would be a joint programme with other Opposition parties, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said "it will be a Congress programme".

## Vallabh to take on Jharkhand Chief Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Congress late on Saturday announced spokesperson Gourav Vallabh as the party candidate from Jamshedpur East constituency in the upcoming Jharkhand Assembly polls.

BJP leader and incumbent Chief Minister Raghubar Das has been the sitting member from Jamshedpur East, a constituency he has represented five times.

Mr. Vallabh, who taught at a prestigious management institute in Jamshedpur, recently shot to fame after he challenged BJP spokesperson, Sambit Patra, to give the number of zeros in a trillion.

The TV debate showing the verbal duel between the two spokespersons went viral on social media.

In the Jharkhand Assembly polls, the Congress has tied up with the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) as partner.

The elections to the 81 Assembly seats in the State will begin on November 30 and voting will take place in five phases, with the last phase scheduled for December 20.

## EC to set up T.N. Seshan chair at its institute

Former CEC's integrity remembered

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

In honour of the former Chief Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan, who passed away on November 10, the Election Commission of India (ECI) will establish and fund a chair at the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM), CEC Sunil Arora said on Saturday.

Making the announcement during his address at Ahmedabad's NIRMA University, Mr. Arora said: "Shri T.N. Seshan's enduring contribution to the cause of probity, transparency and integrity in various aspects of the electoral process in India has made his name synonymous with electoral best practices worldwide. In his memory, thus, the ECI would establish the chair."

The visiting chair on interdisciplinary approach to electoral studies at the Centre for Curriculum Development, IIIDEM, from 2020-2025, will be mentored by former CEC N. Gopalaswami, Mr. Arora said. The programme is target-



T.N. Seshan

ed at young academics with a record in electoral studies and related fields, he said. The chair will be expected to curate a national-level seminar on aspects of electoral studies and supervise the design and development of interdisciplinary modules for training at IIIDEM. Mr. Arora said the ECI's aim would be to make the programme fully functional by the next academic session.

Speaking about the ECI's efforts, Mr. Arora said the concept of absentee voters had recently been adopted in the electoral process. "We have a large number of overseas population and we need to devise a mechanism to facilitate their participation in the electoral process," he said.

## Unrelated case finds mention in HC order on Chidambaram

Entire paragraphs from a 2017 SC order reproduced

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The facts from an unconnected money-laundering case seem to have crept into a recent Delhi High Court order rejecting bail to former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram in the Enforcement Directorate case regarding INX Media.

In three instances, High Court judge, S.K. Kait reproduced paragraphs from a Supreme Court order of November 10, 2017. The Supreme Court order concerned the rejection of bail to Delhi lawyer Rohit Tandon in a money laundering case.

### Tandon bail case

Entire paragraphs from the Supreme Court order in the Tandon bail case can be found in Justice Kait's November 15, 2019, order in the Chidambaram bail ruling.

One of these instances is a paragraph which says "it is alleged that during the period from 15.11.2016 to 19.11.2016, huge cash to the tune of ₹31.75 crore was deposited in eight bank accounts in Kotak Mahindra



**Legal tangle:** Chidambaram is likely to move the Supreme Court in appeal against the Delhi HC order.

Bank in the accounts of the 'Group of Companies'. It gives details of Demand Drafts issued during 15.11.2016 to 19.11.2016 from eight bank accounts in the name of Sunil Kumar, Dinesh Kumar, Abhilasha Dubey, Madan Kumar, Madan Saini, Satya Narain Dagdi and Seema Bai on various dates. Most of the Demand Drafts issued have since been recovered".

### 'Fictitious names'

The seven names mentioned in the paragraphs are allegedly fictitious.

session of the 17th Lok Sabha," he added.

In the winter session, there will be 20 sittings in which the government plans to move nearly 40 Bills, including pending ones. Prominent bills include the Citizenship Amendment Bill 2019, Data Protection Bill 2019, a Bill to prohibit the sale of e-cigarettes and the Juvenile Justice Amendment Bill.

Opposition leaders are expected to raise the ground situation in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in the three months after the revoking of

## Pawar likely to meet Sonia today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Nationalist Congress Party leader Sharad Pawar are likely to meet in New Delhi on Sunday to discuss an alliance with the Shiv Sena to form a government in Maharashtra, sources said.

Sources said the draft CMP and allocation of

portfolios among the three parties would be discussed at the meeting. "Ms. Gandhi and Mr. Pawar will meet on Sunday evening to discuss the issues of government formation," an NCP source said. The NCP wants the Congress to be part of the government, rather than extend support from outside, to ensure stability, the sources said.

## BJP may do horse-trading: Sena

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

The Shiv Sena alleged on Saturday that the BJP now exuding confidence of forming government makes its intention of horse-trading under the guise of President's rule evident.

In its mouthpiece *Saamana*, the Sena also hit out at former Chief Minister

Devendra Fadnavis over his remark that the Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress alliance won't last beyond six months.

It also said that the new political equation was giving "stomach ache to several people". State BJP chief Chandrakant Patil had on Friday said they would soon form government.

# LS Speaker appeals to floor leaders for smooth functioning of House

Opposition tells the Chair that session should not only be a forum to pass Bills

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Ahead of the winter session of Parliament, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Saturday met the floor leaders of all the political parties and asked them to cooperate in ensuring that the Lower House functions smoothly.

Leaders of the Opposition parties said that while they were ready to ensure smooth functioning of the House, the Chair should also make sure that "the House doesn't become a forum only to pass government Bills, and issues affecting the common citizens should be allowed to be raised".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi joined the Speaker and other Opposition leaders for an informal interaction over tea but didn't attend the formal meeting. Leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and DMK's T.R. Baalu were among the senior Opposition leaders who took part in the meeting.

"As the House is answerable to the people, I hope parties will raise issues of public interest. There should be debate in the House, and for that it should function," Mr. Birla told reporters. "All parties have assured me that the session will be smooth and will be as fruitful as the first



**Meet and greet:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla and leaders of various parties leaving Parliament House in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

Article 370, the prevention of MPs from visiting J&K while allowing a delegation of the European Union, the economic slowdown and price rise of food items.

### Discussion needed

"We pointed out to the Chair how there were no discussions under rule 193 or calling attention motion in the last session," said a senior Opposition leader.

Trinamool leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay told the Speaker about the West Bengal Governor running a 'parallel administration' and Ba-

hujan Samaj Party (BSP) leader Danish Ali wanted Mr. Birla to immediately allow a discussion on pollution in north India.

"We are ready to cooperate in passing Bills but the Chair should also allow issues related to common citizens to be raised by the Opposition parties," Mr. Ali told *The Hindu*.

Responding to Opposition demands, Mr. Birla said, "I told them that after discussing these issues in the business advisory committee, we will try to take up as many as possible."

## AJL-Young Indian share transfer is corruption: BJP

Congress refrains from commenting

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A day after the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal upheld the withdrawal of I-T exemption to Young Indian, which has Congress president Sonia Gandhi and leader Rahul Gandhi as majority shareholders, the BJP on Saturday termed the transfer of shares by Associated Journals Limited (AJL) to Young Indian as "simply corruption".

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters, Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the tribunal had held that Young Indian was not eligible for I-T exemption granted to charitable organisations.

### Loans written off

Observing that the National Herald newspaper, which had been started by former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, had ceased publication in 2008, Mr. Prasad said its parent company, AJL, had been loaned ₹90 crore by the Congress. That loan was written off for ₹50 lakh when Young Indian took over AJL and the two Congress leaders got majority shares

in Young Indian, Mr. Prasad asserted.

"The BJP condemns this palpable, dubious transaction of undue enrichment. It is simply corruption," alleged Mr. Prasad.

### 'Veil lifted'

"Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi should stop talking about corruption. The veil has been lifted by the Court's decision... I want to ask both Rahul and Sonia Gandhi, will they tell the nation the truth about this entire engagement? Will they answer the questions of the people of the country?" asked the BJP leader.

Reacting to the I-T tribunal's decision and the BJP's comments on it, Congress spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said: "What is sub judice need not be commented upon. It may look like a setback to certain news channels, but I can assure you the majesty of law will prevail."

"The truth, out in the open, is that Young Indian is a not-for-profit company and neither Mr. Modi nor his cronies can change this inalienable truth," he added.



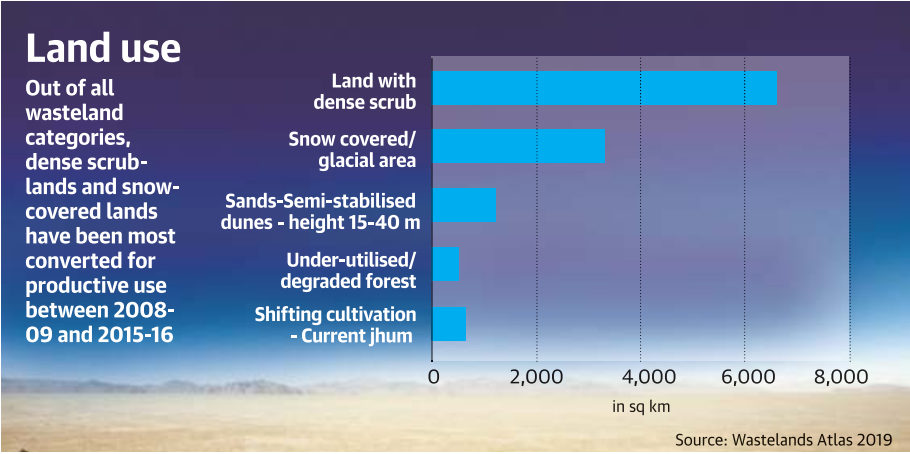
# ‘Wasteland conversion threatens livelihoods, ecological balance’

Environmentalists say the idea of a wasteland is a political construct

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ  
NEW DELHI

India’s conversion of more than 14,000 square km of ‘wasteland’ – mostly dense scrub, glacial areas, sands or marshland – into productive use between 2008-09 and 2015-16, and the government’s target to restore 26 million hectares of wasteland and degraded land by 2030 risks affecting the livelihoods of pastoralists, fishermen and nomadic farmers who are often dependent on these traditional “commons” lands, caution environmental policy researchers and social activists. These ‘commons’ also act as a buffer against floods, droughts and pollution for a wider popula-

tion, they point out. The Wastelands Atlas, prepared in collaboration with the National Remote Sensing Centre and released recently by the Land Resources Department uses satellite data to measure the extent of 23 different types of wastelands and tracks the impact of reclamation efforts. While 14,536 sq. km of wasteland were converted to productive use, the country saw a net conversion of 8,404 sq. km. Over half that land lies in Rajasthan, where a net change of 4,803 sq. km was seen, with large areas of scrub and sands brought under the plough and converted to cultivated cropland. The State also has extensive



solar parks set up in its wastelands, thus converting them to industrial use in the production of renewable energy. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar also saw high levels of net conversion. The government has been encouraging wasteland con-

version, pointing out that while India has 18% of the world’s population, it only has 2.4% of the land area. “In order to ensure food security, there is an urgent need to improve the productivity of existing cultivated lands and to bring additional land un-

der plough. The wastelands which are unutilised and have potential to produce food grain and provide vegetation cover may significantly contribute in this endeavour,” the department said in the Atlas. In a foreword, Union Mi-

nister of State in the PMO Jitendra Singh suggested reclamation and afforestation efforts, infrastructure and renewable energy projects as ways to convert wasteland to productive use, apart from conversion to cropland. Apart from government-driven efforts, simple encroachment by local residents could also result in conversion of wastelands. However, such conversions could impact livelihoods. Pastoral communities depend on common grazing land, gatherers and nomadic farmers depend on scrub forest and open scrubland for shifting cultivation, while fishermen can make a living off waterlogged and marshy areas. These areas protect unique biodiversity resources, which could be destroyed when development occurs.

“The idea of a wasteland is itself a political construct,” said Kanchi Kohli, a senior researcher at the Centre for Policy Research. “Many of these have been common areas for centuries and to regard them as unproductive is a problem. When you classify shifting cultivation or common grazing lands as wasteland and try to convert them into crop land, plantations or solar parks, it is endorsing a hierarchical idea of livelihoods. Why is the pastoralist considered less productive than the farmer?” she asked. In southern India, these areas have traditionally been called ‘poromboke’ land which is communally owned, cannot be bought, sold or built on. In Karnataka, the gomal lands are common grazing areas. In other regions, village forests and

pastures, or gram panchayat lands, have played a similar role from medieval times. “It was the East India company that first categorised these areas as wasteland, as they produce no tangible revenue,” said Nityanand Jayaraman, a Chennai-based social activist. He noted that Tamil Nadu’s capital city Chennai had paid a heavy price for converting wastelands such as the Pallikarai marsh or the Ennore creek backwaters, into industrial, built-up areas. “The flooding you have seen in recent seasons happened because marshland was treated as waste rather than a valuable buffer. The backwaters protect inland water resources from encroaching salinity and seawater inundation, as well as storing water for dry seasons.”

## ‘Washington is concerned over J&K’

Sustaining shared sense of democratic values is crucial to India-U.S. ties, says former Deputy Secretary of State

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

India must pay attention to concerns being expressed in Washington over Jammu and Kashmir, says William Burns, former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State and now President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, who has recently authored a book on American diplomacy.

You write in your book, *The Back Channel*, in some detail about the intense engagement between India and the U.S. over the civil nuclear deal. How would the relationship compare a decade later?

■ I think both of us – India and the U.S. – sometimes suffer from the tyranny of inflated expectations. Deals like the one on civil nuclear cooperation don’t happen often, and one can’t get accustomed to that in any major power relationship. Those were tough negotiations, but born of a recogni-

tion on both sides, for the first time, that we shared an interest in each other’s success. Today, I think the challenge is the day-in-day-out challenge of negotiating a complicated relationship with a lot of promise, but its share of irritants, over trade, over American policy in Afghanistan for example. I use the analogy that managing important power relationships are a lot like riding a bicycle – if you’re not peddling forward, it tends to fall over. I’m not suggesting we are in danger of falling over, but we need to keep peddling on both sides.

Does trade matter more than other issues now? Is the current impasse on trade bleeding into other parts of the relationship? ■ I think inevitably when you irritate one another on trade, it does bleed into other parts of the relationship, even where we are doing quite well, like on defence



William Burns

cooperation. It is possible to manage the differences, and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal has been in Washington to talk and I’m certainly hopeful we make progress. Both sides will need to make difficult choices, and we each have our own domestic political realities on dairy, agriculture etc.

There are now political issues over the U.S.’s stand on Jammu and Kashmir. There have been statements, and two Congressional hearings on the situation there, and several requests by the U.S. embassy to travel to Srinagar have been denied. Has the mood in Washington changed over

this issue?

■ I think there are concerns on the Hill (Congress) both amongst Democrats and Republicans with regard to Jammu and Kashmir that focus on two categories. One, the concerns over the potential for collisions – given the history between India and Pakistan – and second is a genuine concern about human rights and civil liberties issues, whether it is the suspension of civil liberties, the detention of political figures, the information blackout that existed.

This doesn’t represent doubts about the larger partnership with India, but it does involve anxieties about the resilience of an important part of that relationship, which are shared democratic values. I’d be quick to add that the U.S. lives in a glass house these days, and we aren’t setting a great example on tolerance and respect for diversity, but I do think that a number of geopolitical issues brought the U.S. and India together over the last two decades, and that sense of shared democratic values is also important. We are both societies that,

at our best, draw strengths from the diversity of our societies, and we are each struggling with that. And that’s why you are hearing those concerns on Capitol Hill and it’s worth paying attention to them.

President Trump has offered not once, but several times to mediate between India and Pakistan – an offer that was clearly rebuffed in New Delhi. As a diplomat who has worked this relationship, what did you think?

■ I’ve learned over the course of my work here that any Indian administration will contain its enthusiasm over mediation, particularly American mediation, and our agency is limited. So just throwing off that idea almost impulsively can set off all sorts of alarm bells that don’t do American policy any good, and also don’t help prospects for the relationship between India and Pakistan. There are things we can do quietly in both capitals that we should focus on. President Trump likes to throw out ideas like that, but it is an impractical one in this case.

## Relief sought for J&K apple growers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Hit by unseasonal heavy snowfall in addition to disruptions caused by political turmoil and the shutdown since August 5, apple growers in Kashmir are facing a crisis that must be declared a national calamity, said a delegation of farmers groups that visited the Valley last week. Growers should be eligible for help from the National Disaster Relief Fund, All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee leaders told reporters here on Saturday.

“Shutting down transportation and imposing curfews at the apple harvesting season was disastrous,” said V.M. Singh, AIKSCC convenor. Transport costs were almost doubled and losses were huge despite a bumper harvest. Other crops like pear, cherry and grapes could not be marketed either.

## Odisha withdraws brochure on Gandhiji

His death was termed ‘accidental’

STAFF REPORTER  
BHUBANESWAR

In the wake of widespread condemnation from political parties, civil society organisations and intellectuals, the Odisha government on Saturday admitted to having committed a mistake by describing Mahatma Gandhi’s death as ‘accidental’ in a brochure and withdrew it. The two-page *Aama Bapuji: Eka Jhalaka* (‘Our Bapuji: A Glimpse’), brought out by the government on the occasion of the Mahatma’s 150th birth anniversary, says he died at the Birla House in New Delhi on January 30, 1948 in ‘accidental sequence of events’. It was circulated in schools across the State. In a reply in the Legislative Assembly on Saturday, School and Mass Education Minister Sameer Dash said, “the government had neith-



The brochure was circulated in schools across Odisha.

er any intention to feed false information to students nor any plan to distort facts. The mistake was unintentional. We have already withdrawn the brochure. The person who had prepared the literature has been disengaged from the service. Explanation has been sought from another two government officers”. A newly printed corrected brochure would be distributed among students within a month and the present copies junked, he said.

## Prashant Kishor pulls up TMC MLAs for not doing enough

He asks them to popularise Mamata’s schemes

BISHWANATH GHOSH  
KOLKATA

On November 7, when MPs, MLAs and functionaries of the Trinamool Congress were summoned to the party headquarters in Kolkata, they thought they would be attending a routine meeting chaired by their leader Mamata Banerjee, the West Bengal Chief Minister. Only on reaching the venue did they realise that Prashant Kishor, the high-profile strategist hired by the party to boost its prospects in the 2021 Assembly elections, was waiting to hand them their report cards and pull up those who had been found wanting.

Two meetings were held on that day. The first, of party leaders belonging to the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Schedules Tribes (ST), lasted about two hours and was anchored solely by Mr. Kishor, with Ms. Banerjee choosing to be a spectator. The 294-seat West Bengal Assembly has 68 seats reserved for SCs and 16 for STs, and the party had fared poorly in these regions in this year Lok Sabha election. The second meeting, of the party’s elected representatives and office-bearers, lasted nearly 90 minutes and was chaired by Ms. Banerjee, with Mr. Kishor by her side.

‘Taken by surprise’ “The MLAs were taken aback that Prashant Kishor knew exactly what they had been up to. He pulled up those who were taking the directives of the Chief Minister – such as spending nights in villages – lightly. He also scolded those who were engaged in self-propaganda rather than promoting Ms. Banerjee and her welfare schemes,” a source who was present at both the meetings said. “This was probably the first time an outsider addressed what was meant to be a party meeting,



Trinamool Congress strategist Prashant Kishor

[Mr. Kishor’s] team seemed to have done their homework meticulously because he had precise information about the activities of the MLAs,” the source said, adding that two Ministers hailing from north Bengal were particularly picked out for admonishment. Mr. Kishor, according to the source, asked the MLAs to give a big push to the ‘*Didi Ke Bolo*’ (Reach out to Didi)’ initiative, which he felt was losing steam because of the lack of required interest shown by them. He asked them to popularise her schemes so that people could distinguish between the State and Central schemes. The MLAs, the source said, were asked to identify people who otherwise worked for the Trinamool Congress but voted for the BJP during elections. Ms. Banerjee, who has been worried ever since the BJP staged an impressive performance in the State in the 2019 elections, also asked the MLAs to pull up their socks and warned some of them that she was giving them one last chance, the source said. She asked them – according to the source – to avoid attacks on individual BJP leaders and focus on campaigning against the BJP government’s policies, such as the proposal for a National Register of Citizens in West Bengal.



# Sri Lankan presidential rivals welcome record turnout

Both Rajapaksa and Premadasa camps see the high numbers as good augury

**MEERA SRINIVASAN**  
COLOMBO

As voting ended on Saturday, the rival political camps of Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Sajith Premadasa in Sri Lanka's presidential election appeared confident that the high turnout would push their candidate past the required 50% mark. A second round of counting will be undertaken to tally preference votes if neither contestant secures over half the vote share.

"Going by the high turnout, it looks like there is a very strong anti-incumbency sentiment," said Namal Rajapaksa, legislator and nephew of Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa. "The fact that the whole country, including the north, has voted in large numbers shows that they all



**Future sealed:** Election officials bringing ballot boxes to the counting centre in Colombo on Saturday. ■ REUTERS

want to be part of this democratic process. It is a very healthy sign," he told *The Hindu*.

Cabinet Minister Mano Ganesan said it was "very encouraging" to see the large number of voters exercising their franchise.

"Sajith Premadasa is quite popular in the south and he

has proactively reached out to the minorities across the island in his campaign. We are hopeful that he will win," he said.

Mr. Premadasa is banking heavily on the minority vote, which is widely expected to go in his favour, since prominent Tamil (northeast and hill country) and Muslim

parties have backed him this election. Moreover, many Tamils and Muslims are still fearful of Mr. Rajapaksa, who is accused of war crimes – he has denied them – and is linked to reactionary Sinhala Buddhist groups that have stoked anti-Muslim violence in the past.

## Boycott call rejected

The high Tamil turnout in the north and east is also seen as a rejection of repeated calls for a boycott from some political leaders.

"It [turnout] means that the Tamil voter is very pragmatic and knows what is really good for the Tamil people in the given context," said M.A. Sumanthiran, Jaffna district MP and spokesman of the Tamil National Alliance.

# Chinese soldiers help clean Hong Kong streets after protests

Their presence could stoke further controversy over city's autonomous status

**REUTERS**  
HONG KONG

China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers in shorts and t-shirts made a surprising appearance in some Hong Kong streets on Saturday, briefly helping residents clean up debris after anti-government protests blocked roads, witnesses said.

The presence of PLA troops on the streets, even to help clean up roads near their base, could stoke further controversy over the Chinese-ruled territory's autonomous status. Saturday's clean-up followed some of the worst violence seen this year, after a police operation against protesters at the Chinese University of Hong Kong on Tuesday.

On Saturday night, police



**Civic role:** Personnel from the People's Liberation Army cleaning up a street in Hong Kong on Saturday. ■ AFP

fired tear gas while protesters threw petrol bombs, used slingshots, and fired arrows in clashes on streets outside the Polytechnic University.

Hong Kong has been rocked by more than five months of demonstrations by protesters angry at per-

ceived Communist Party meddling in the former British colony, which was guaranteed its freedoms when it returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Beijing denies interfering and has blamed the unrest on foreign influences.

Earlier, hundreds of pro-

China demonstrators gathered by the city's legislature and police headquarters, waving Chinese and Hong Kong flags. Some held up posters reading "Police we stand with you", while others chanted "Support the police".

Pro-China protests have so far attracted much smaller numbers than those angry at Beijing.

The authorities have since largely stayed away from at least five university campuses that had been barricaded by thousands of students and activists who stockpiled petrol bombs, catapults, bows and arrows and other weapons. Many protesters appeared to have left the campuses by late Saturday, though some remained behind to man barricades.

## ELSEWHERE



### Don't recall meeting Epstein victim: Andrew

**NEW YORK**  
Britain's Prince Andrew has said he does not remember meeting Virginia Roberts, one of disgraced U.S. financier Jeffrey Epstein's alleged victims, who claims she was forced to have sex with the royal. He has been heavily criticised over his links to Epstein. ■ AFP

### German woman, who joined IS, held on return

**BERLIN**  
A German woman accused of joining the Islamic State group in Syria and marrying an IS fighter has been arrested on arrival in Germany. The woman, identified only as Nasim A., travelled to Syria in 2014 and married an IS fighter. She was detained by Kurdish forces and held in Syria. ■ AFP

## Bolivia on the boil



**Face off:** Security forces clashing with supporters of Bolivia's former President Evo Morales, who resigned and fled to Mexico, in Sacaba on Saturday. Interim leader Jeanine Anez has said that Mr. Morales would have to "answer to justice" if he returns. ■ AP

# Trump asked about Ukraine investigations: Embassy staff

He allegedly pressed Sondland to seek Kiev's plan on Biden

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
WASHINGTON

A U.S. official testified on Friday that he overheard President Donald Trump asking about "investigations" he had requested from Ukraine later, suggesting that the pressure on Ukraine president at the centre of an alleged conspiracy to extort Kiev.

David Holmes said he heard a phone conversation in a Kiev restaurant in which Mr. Trump, on the other end of the line, pressed Washington's EU Ambassador Gordon Sondland for information on Ukrainian plans to probe former Vice-President Joe Biden.

Details of the conversation were included in Mr. Holmes's opening statement to impeachment investiga-



Donald Trump

tors, published by CNN. The revelation casts doubt on a major plank of the Republican Party's defence against allegations that Mr. Trump led a conspiracy to seek foreign help in the 2020 U.S. election.

Republicans have stated that the only direct evidence is the summary of a single July 25 phone call between Mr.

Trump and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky – which they say exonerates the U.S. leader.

Mr. Holmes, a career diplomat, said the Trump-Sondland call took place a day later, suggesting that the pressure on Ukraine amounted to a concerted effort rather than just one call.

Mr. Sondland told Mr. Trump that Ukrainian President "loves your ass", Mr. Holmes is said to have testified. "I then heard President Trump ask, 'So, he's gonna do the investigation?'" Mr. Holmes testified, adding that Mr. Sondland replied that Mr. Zelensky "will do 'anything you ask him to'."

Lawmakers who emerged from the deposition declined to provide further details.

# Protests erupt in Iran over petrol price hike, one dead

Demonstrations broke out after govt. announced increase in price by 50% for first 60 litres and 300% for anything above that

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
TEHRAN

One person was killed and others injured in protests that spread on Saturday across Iran after a surprise decision to impose petrol price hikes and rationing in the sanctions-hit country.

The death on Friday occurred in the city of Sirjan, where protesters tried to set a fuel depot ablaze but were thwarted by security forces, the semi-official ISNA news agency reported.

Demonstrations broke out hours after it was announced on Friday that the price of petrol would be increased by 50% for the first 60 litres and 300% for anything above that each month. The country also imposed petrol rationing, saying the move was aimed at helping needy citizens. The measure was expected to generate 300 trillion rials (\$2.55 billion) per annum, the authorities said. "Unfortunately someone was killed," Sirjan's acting

Governor Mohammad Mahmoudabadi said, adding it was still unclear if the civilian had been "shot or not".

"Security forces did not have permission to shoot and were only allowed to fire warning shots... which they did," he said.

It was a "calm gathering" exploited by some who "destroyed public property, damaged fuel stations and also wanted to access the oil company's main fuel depots and set fire to them", he added.

Fresh demonstrations were held on Saturday. "Some drivers protested by turning off their cars and creating traffic jams," he said. Under the scheme, drivers with fuel cards would pay 15,000 rials (13 U.S. cents) a litre for the first 60 litres of petrol bought each month, with each additional litre costing 30,000 rials.

President Hassan Rouhani said 75% of Iranians were "under pressure" and are entitled to the extra revenue.



People protesting against petrol price hike on a highway in Tehran, Iran, on Saturday. ■ REUTERS

# Car bomb kills 19 in northern Syria: monitor

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
BEIRUT

A car bomb killed 19 people, 13 of them civilians, in the Turkish-controlled town of Al-Bab in northern Syria on Saturday, a war monitor said.

The bomb, which struck a bus and taxi station in the town, also wounded 33 people, some of them seriously, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported.

Turkey and its Syrian proxies control several

pockets of territory on the Syrian side of the border.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the bombing but the Observatory said there had been persistent security incidents in the town since its capture by Turkish troops from the Islamic State group in February 2017. The town was one of the westernmost strongholds of the jihadists' self-styled "caliphate" which was finally eradicated by US-backed Kurdish forces in eastern Syria in March.

## SUDOKU

2	9			3	5			
	6		4		8			
5		8						7
	4					8	2	
			8		1			
	8	5					3	
8						6		2
			9		2		1	
			1	8			4	5

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

### Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

7	2	8	6	9	3	5	4	1
4	5	3	2	7	1	6	9	8
9	1	6	4	8	5	2	3	7
3	7	5	1	6	4	8	2	9
8	9	2	3	5	7	1	6	4
6	4	1	8	2	9	7	5	3
2	3	4	7	1	6	9	8	5
5	8	7	9	4	2	3	1	6
1	6	9	5	3	8	4	7	2

# Obama warns Democratic contenders not to lean too far left

He implicitly targeted Sanders & Warren, who called for a 'political revolution', saying their ideas may not resonate with voters

**LISA LERER**  
WASHINGTON

Former President Barack Obama offered an unusual warning to the Democratic primary field on Friday evening, cautioning the candidates not to move too far to the left in their policy proposals, even as he sought to reassure a party establishment worried about the electoral strength of their historically large primary field.

Speaking before a room of wealthy liberal donors, Mr. Obama urged Democrats to remember the long, combative slog of his primary campaign against Hillary Clinton in 2008, arguing that the 16-month battle ultimately made him a stronger general election candidate.

## 'I had a robust primary'

"For those who get stressed about robust primaries, I just have to remind you I had a very robust primary," he told the group of donors and organisational leaders in Wash-

ington. "I'm confident that at the end of the process we will have a candidate that has been tested."

Yet, he also raised concerns about some of the liberal ideas being promoted by some candidates, citing health care and immigration as issues where the proposals may have gone further than public opinion.

While Mr. Obama did not single out any specific primary candidate or policy proposal, he cautioned that the universe of voters that could support a Democratic candidate are not driven by the same views reflected on "certain left-leaning Twitter feeds" or "the activist wing of our party".

"Even as we push the envelope and we are bold in our vision, we also have to be rooted in reality," Mr. Obama said. "The average American doesn't think we have to completely tear down the system and remake it."

The comments marked an



**Reality check:** Former U.S. President Barack Obama speaking at the Obama Foundation Summit in Chicago. ■ AFP/FILE

extraordinary entrance into the primary contest by the former President, who has been careful to avoid even the appearance of influencing the direction of the race.

His remarks offered an implicit critique of Senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, who have urged voters to embrace "political revolution" and "big, structural change," as well as proposals once wide-

ly considered to be left to the liberal fringes of the party, including court packing and decriminalising illegal border crossings.

Even as Mr. Obama has attempted to stay out of the race, the primary candidates have engaged in a heated discussion over his legacy, debating whether to stick with Mr. Obama's architecture for health care policy or to pursue a single-payer system

and offering flashes of direct criticism over his record on immigration. At the same time, former Vice-President Joe Biden has made his strong support for Mr. Obama and his accomplishments a hallmark of his candidacy.

## 'Don't push too far'

Acknowledging that candidates must "push past" his achievements, Mr. Obama urged his party's candidates not to push too far. "I don't think we should be deluded into thinking that the resistance to certain approaches to things is simply because voters haven't heard a bold enough proposal and if they hear something as bold as possible then immediately that's going to activate them," he said.

The fact that Mr. Obama offered his reassurances at the annual meeting of the Democracy Alliance – a club of wealthy liberals who donate hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to recom-

mended political organisations – only underscored the intended audience of his message. In recent weeks, establishment-aligned Democrats, top donors and some strategists have expressed fears that the party lacks a strong enough candidate to defeat President Donald Trump.

Their concerns have prompted the late emergence of two experienced candidates, Deval Patrick, the former Governor of Massachusetts and a close friend of Mr. Obama, and Michael R. Bloomberg, both of whom entered the field after nine candidates had already dropped out.

Those worries are not necessarily shared by voters in early states.

"If you talk to the voters they don't feel the need for another candidate," said Kathy Sullivan, the former chairwoman of the Democratic Party in New Hampshire. ■ NY TIMES



IN BRIEF



**FM holds meeting on GST simplification**  
NEW DELHI  
Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday held a meeting with chartered accountants, traders and other stakeholders as part of efforts to further simplify Goods and Services Tax (GST) forms and make the filling process more user friendly. To highlight the problems faced by GST filers, the stakeholders attempted to file specific returns on a real-time basis in the meeting and tried to show where they were facing difficulties. PTI

**Vodafone Idea plans to monetise data centres**  
NEW DELHI  
Vodafone Idea said it was exploring the monetisation of data centres as part of its debt reduction plans. Apart from data centres, Vodafone Idea is planning to monetise its 11.15% stake in Indus Towers on completion of the Indus Towers-Bharti Infratel merger, and is also exploring monetisation of nearly 1.6 lakh km of fibre. “We believe this will provide us financial flexibility,” Vodafone Idea MD & CEO Ravinder Takkar said. PTI

**SPIC net rises 9.86% despite drop in revenue**  
CHENNAI  
Southern Petrochemicals Industries Corp. Ltd. (SPIC) has posted a 9.86% increase in standalone net profit for the second quarter ended September 2019 to ₹12.70 crore. Revenue dropped by 28.05% to ₹627.63 crore due to sluggish market conditions. “I am confident that our performance will pick up pace in the ensuing quarters,” said Ashwin Muthiah, chairman, SPIC.

CESC calls off demerger of power business

State regulator refuses nod for recast

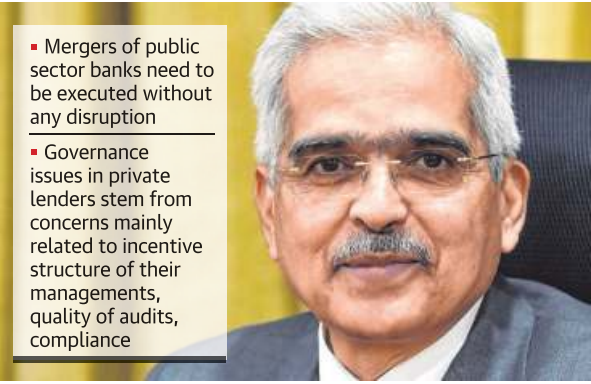
**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
KOLKATA  
CESC Ltd., the flagship company of the RP-SG Group, has called off its proposal on the demerger of its power business. The group’s power business comprises thermal power plants in West Bengal and Maharashtra, renewable power plants in Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, and power distribution franchisees in Rajasthan and Maharashtra. It will make “necessary application to the Kolkata Bench of the National Company Law Tribunal in this regard,” the company said in a regulatory filing. The demerger of the power business was part of a composite scheme of arrangement among CESC and 9 other firms.

Governance key concern for PSBs: Das

Lack of corporate governance has led to high bad loans, capital shortfalls, frauds, says RBI Governor

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
MUMBAI

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das on Saturday said corporate governance remained the central concern of public sector banks, the lack of which was responsible for problems such as high bad loans, capital shortfalls and frauds. Speaking at the first Annual Economics Conference of Amrut Mody School of Management, Ahmedabad University, Mr. Das termed corporate governance in public sector banks ‘the elephant in the room’ and said, “The role of independent boards in fostering a compliance culture by establishing the proper systems of control, audit and distinct reporting of business and risk



management has been found wanting in some PSBs, leading to build-up of NPAs.” On the issue of merger of PSBs, he cautioned that the process needed to be executed without any disruption. “I must, however, hasten to add that the merger process has to be executed without creating any disruption

in the normal functioning of these banks,” he said. The government had earlier announced the merger of 10 public sector banks into four, and the process is expected to be completed by March 2020. The RBI Governor said governance issues in private sector banks originated from

an altogether different set of concerns, which were mainly related to the incentive structure of their managements, quality of audits and compliance, and functioning of audit and risk management committees.

**‘IBC a game changer’**  
On resolution of stressed assets, Mr. Das said despite delays in resolution in the bankruptcy process, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 had been a game changer. “I am optimistic that these are teething problems in a new law. The real impact of the IBC is to be seen in fresh cases where I expect the law to provide an efficient avenue to effect a resolution,” he said. In this context, he said various efforts towards

resolution of stressed assets had resulted in non-performing assets (NPAs) of the banking system declining for the first time in March 2019 after a gap of seven years. “Fresh slippages declined and the system-level provision coverage ratio jumped to 60.5% from 48.3% a year ago,” he said, adding that the capital adequacy ratio of the banking system had increased to 14.3%, much higher than the Basel norms, which was also due to recapitalisation of PSBs to the tune of ₹2.9 lakh crore in the recent period. The RBI Governor also highlighted the steps taken over the years leading to the digital payments-to-GDP ratio rising to 8.6% at end-March 2019, from 6.7% at end-March 2016.

On a roll				Source: BSE
While the Sensex has risen nearly 12% so far in 2019, stocks of most listed insurance firms have outperformed the benchmark by a wide margin and have zoomed 50-70%				
	Share price as on (in ₹)			
Name	Dec.31, 2018	Nov15, 2019	% change	
ICICI Prudential Life	323.90	522.00	61.16	
ICICI Lombard GI	865.70	1,379.15	59.31	
SBI Life Insurance	596.45	1,002.10	68.01	
GIC	258.80	258.00	(0.31)	
HDFC Life Insurance	387.55	577.65	49.05	
Sensex (Points)	36,068.33	40,356.69	11.89	

Insurance stocks shine in financial sector

SBI Life Insurance surges 68% in 2019

**ASHISH RUKHAIYAR**  
MUMBAI  
A strong growth in new business, strong distribution franchise and a sustained shift towards high-margin segments have made listed insurance companies the green shoots in the otherwise battered financials space, where banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) are witnessing extreme volatility with a downward bias. In 2019, while the Sensex has risen nearly 12%, stocks of most listed insurance firms have outperformed the benchmark by a wide margin and have surged between 50% and 70% . SBI Life Insurance has been the best performer with its shares gaining 68% in 2019 till date. The stock surged from ₹596.45 in December 2018 to the current market price of ₹1,002.10. ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has also gained more than 60% in 2019.

towards protection and annuity products. “Insurers’ increased focus on traditional non-par savings products (annuities/guaranteed savings) along with protection has helped drive strong value-of-new-business (VNB) growth even as ULIP (unit linked insurance plan) premium growth moderated,” it said. “We believe the mix shift towards higher-margin segments is in early stages and will continue to drive strong VNB growth over the medium term, even as lower interest rates moderate the pace of sales of annuities/guaranteed interest rate products,” it added. The global financial major believes that life insurance players have “strong distribution franchises, good cost and persistency metrics, and are well placed to gain market share.” Morgan Stanley, however, added that the recent surge in stock prices has stretched the valuations “above mean levels” that could imply “limited upside” in the near term. General Insurance Corporation has been a laggard among listed insurance firms in 2019, though it touched its 52-week high of ₹333.85 on October 31.

Anil Ambani exits RCom board

Four others too resign; firm records Q2 loss of ₹30,142 crore

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
MUMBAI

Reliance Group chairman Anil Ambani on Friday resigned as the director of the bankrupt Reliance Communications (RCom). This follows the company’s reported consolidated loss of ₹30,142 crore, the second highest in corporate India after Vodafone Idea, whose quarterly financials came out on Thursday. Chhaya Virani, Ryna Karani, Manjari Kacker and Suresh Rangachar have also resigned as directors, the company said in a filing with the BSE on Saturday. The company recorded a humongous loss of ₹30,142 crore after provisioning for statutory licence fee and spectrum usage dues, following the recent Supreme



Anil Ambani

Court order favouring the Telecom Department on calculation of adjusted gross revenues. This compares with a profit of ₹1,141 crore a year earlier. “The resignation of Manikantan V. and appointment of D. Vishwanath as executive director and chief financial officer have been put up to the Committee of Credi-

tors [COC] for their approval... Since the company is under CIRP [Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process], the above resignations are being put before the COC members for their consideration,” said the statement. RCom had filed for insolvency and owes ₹47,000 crore to financial creditors. Last month, the company’s chief financial officer Manikantan V. had tendered his resignation. RCom had provisioned ₹25,588 crore for liability on account of licence and spectrum fee, leading to the massive loss. Industry biggie Bharti Airtel also reported a loss of over ₹23,000 crore due to similar provisions. RCom’s revenue from operations in the second quarter fell by 70% to ₹302 crore.

Hind Rectifiers to focus on opportunities in metro rail

Bets on electric locomotives for IR

**LALATENDU MISHRA**  
MUMBAI  
Hind Rectifiers Ltd., which manufactures a range of products for the Indian Railways and for industrial applications, is gearing up to develop new products and tap opportunities in emerging areas of metro rail and the overall mobility space, its CEO Suramya Nevatia said in an interview. The company, which produces converters, control electronics, transformers, rectifiers, inverters and semi conductor devices, has lined up a new range of products through enhanced focus on Research & Development (R&D). “Our main focus is Indian Railways. We want to develop technology which is more efficient, low cost and durable, which we can pro-

vide to Indian Railways. Through emphasis on R&D we want to be a technology company that does manufacturing,” he said. “Emerging areas for us is electric locomotives; Indian Railways is planning to increase the number of units from 650 to around 1,000 every year.” Apart from this, they are planning to acquire about 4,000 more passenger coaches, which is a big opportunity, he said. Besides, the firm is looking for large orders from the upcoming metro rail projects in the country. “The biggest opportunity for us is the Mumbai Metro. Apart from that, we are also looking at EMUs and mono rail,” Mr. Nevatia said. The company is also in the process of designing chargers for electric vehicles.

Wildcraft to make rucksacks for Army

It will supply 1.8 lakh units of 90-litre bags that can carry supplies for 30 days

**MINI TEJASWI**  
BENGALURU  
For the first time in the history of the Indian Army, a third-party firm will make rucksacks for its jawans. The private outdoor gear firm Wildcraft India has bagged an order from the Ministry of Defence to design, develop and deliver 1.8 lakh units of 90-litre rucksacks equipped to carry supplies for 30 days. “Our R&D has been accredited by the Ministry of Defence. All trials and final sampling of the product are over and the Ministry has given the go-ahead for production of rucksacks,” said Gaurav Dublish, co-founder of Wildcraft. Production of the gadget that comes with high technical specifications will be-

gin soon and delivery will be completed in 12 months. Siddharth Sood, also co-founder of Wildcraft India, said this work order came through a commercial tender and the company would design the rucksack as per the specifications given by the Army and the product will be proprietary to the Indian Army. Wildcraft is expecting more such orders from the Ministry on behalf of the Army, which has more than 1.4 million jawans. This is a ‘heavily-engineered’ accessory meant for jawans, who are exposed to extreme envi-

ronments and climatic conditions. These high torso bags will be made out of high grade nylon and will have high resistance to abrasion. They come with a lightweight alloy back



■ This is the first time that a third-party company will make rucksacks for jawans  
■ These bags are made using high grade nylon and will be resistant to abrasion  
■ They come with a lightweight alloy back frame so that they comfortably stay on the back of soldiers even after they are mounted with armament

frame so that they comfortably stay on the back of soldiers even after they are mounted with armament. The Indian Ordnance Factories, an industrial organisation under the Department of Defence, currently makes such bags for the Army. **₹1,000-cr in revenue** Wildcraft, which specialises in outdoor gear, clothing and footwear, said that in a couple of years, it would be a ₹1,000-crore revenue firm, up from ₹630 crore currently. It had raised \$11 million from Sequoia Capital for a 20% stake in 2013. Myntra and its parent firm Flipkart have also taken minority stake in Wildcraft for an undisclosed sum.





Fixing a minimum wage

Why is it necessary? How will the provisions of the Code on Wages, 2019, be implemented?

SURESH SESHADRI

**The story so far:** On August 8, the President gave his assent to the Code on Wages, 2019, that had earlier been approved by Parliament. The Code, which replaces four laws – the Payment of Wages Act, 1936; the Minimum Wages Act, 1948; the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965; and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 – seeks to regulate wages and bonuses for all workers employed by any industry, trade, business or manufacturer. While the Code is now law, the Ministry of Labour and Employment on November 1 published the draft rules for implementing the provisions and sought comments from stakeholders until December 1. Following the consultation, the Centre will notify the rules that will create the mechanisms to fix a floor wage that would then undergird the minimum wages for different categories of workers – unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled and highly skilled – that the States and Central government would have to set and enforce.

Why is the Code significant?

Minimum wages are accepted globally to be a vital means to both combating poverty and, equally crucially, ensuring the vibrancy of any economy. In the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis and the erosion of purchasing power worldwide, the International Labour Conference’s Global Jobs Pact of 2009 identified “the regular adjustment of wages, in consultation with the social partners” as a means of reducing inequality, increasing demand and contributing to economic stability.

The Code acknowledges that the aim in setting the floor wage is to ensure “minimum living standards” for workers and the draft rules incorporate criteria declared in a landmark judgment of the Supreme Court in 1992 as well as recommendations of the 15th Indian Labour Conference. These include the net calorific needs for a

An expert committee constituted by the Labour Ministry has recommended that a ‘need based national minimum wage for India’ ought to be fixed at ₹375 per day (₹9,750 per month)

working class family (defined as the earning worker, spouse and two children or the equivalent of three adult consumption units) set at 2,700 calories per day per consumption unit, their annual clothing requirements at 66 metres per family, house rent expenses assumed at 10% of food and clothing expenditure, as well as

expenses on children’s education, medical needs, recreation and contingencies.

The rules, similarly, cover almost the entire gamut of wage-related norms including the number of hours of work that would constitute a normal working day (set at nine hours), time interval for revision of dearness allowance, night shifts and overtime and criteria for making deductions. A separate chapter of the draft rules also deals with the payment of bonus while another lays down the guidelines for the formation of the Central Advisory Board as well as its functioning.

How will it impact the economy?

A lot will depend on the final floor wage or wages (there could be different floor wages for different geographical areas) that the Centre will choose to set based on its consultations with the Board as well as any State governments it opts to consult with. While a national minimum wage of ₹176 per day had been recommended in 2017, an expert committee constituted by the Labour Ministry had in February this year recommended that a “need based national minimum wage for India” ought to be fixed at ₹375 per day (₹9,750 per month). Additionally, the committee had mooted payment of a city compensatory allowance averaging up to ₹55 per day for urban workers. Earlier, in 2015, the Seventh Central Pay Commission had recommended setting the minimum pay for government employees at ₹18,000 per month. And just last month, the Delhi government set a minimum wage of ₹14,842 per month for unskilled workers after the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the local government, brushing aside the objections raised by a plethora of employers’ associations.

The Finance Ministry’s Economic Survey, in July, had in a chapter titled ‘Redesigning a Minimum Wage System in India for Inclusive Growth’ stressed the importance of establishing an effective minimum wage system. Such a statutory national minimum wage would have multiple impacts including helping lift wage levels and reducing wage inequality, thus furthering inclusive growth, according to the survey. For India to reap the much touted ‘demographic dividend’, robust wage expansion would ultimately be essential to help buoy consumption-led economic growth.

What lies ahead?

Trade unions, including the RSS-affiliated Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) and the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), have voiced their reservations with multiple aspects of the Code and plan to submit detailed feedback. The points of contention include the nine-hour working day definition, a lack of clarity in the rules on scope for upgradation of workers’ skill category and the lack of representation for trade unions in the wage fixation committee. The ultimate success of the Code will be determined by the extent to which the minimum wage set is both fair and actually implemented so as to benefit the millions of workers in the unorganised sectors of the economy.

What does the Places of Worship Act protect?

Why was it enacted in 1991? What was the cut-off date? Why was the Ayodhya site left out of its ambit?

K. VENKATARAMANAN

**The story so far:** When the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi dispute was at its height, in the early 1990s, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and other Hindu organisations also laid claim to two other mosques – the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi and the Shahi Idgah in Mathura. Although the radicals in the Hindu camp often spoke of reclaiming 3,000 mosques across the country, they threatened to start agitations only in respect to these two places of worship. In this backdrop, the P.V. Narasimha Rao government enacted, in September 1991, a special law to freeze the status of places of worship as they were on August 15, 1947. The law kept the disputed structure at Ayodhya out of its purview, mainly because it was the subject of prolonged litigation. It was also aimed at providing scope for a possible negotiated settlement.

What is the objective of the Act?

The aim of the Act was to freeze the status of any place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947. It was also to provide for the maintenance of the religious character of such a place of worship as on that day. It was intended to pre-empt new claims by any group about the past status of any place of worship and attempts to reclaim the structures or the land on which they stood. It was hoped that the legislation would help the preservation of communal harmony in the long run.

“We see this Bill as a measure to provide and develop our glorious traditions of love, peace and harmony,” the then-Home Minister, S.B. Chavan, said in the Lok Sabha on September 10, 1991. “The country’s tradition of amity and harmony came under severe strain during the pre-Independence period. After Independence, we have set about healing the wounds of the past and endeavoured to restore our traditions of communal amity and goodwill to their past glory,” he said. The Congress had promised such legislation in its manifesto for the 1991 Lok Sabha election. The President’s address to Parliament also contained a reference to it.

What are its main features?

The Act declares that the religious character of a place of worship shall continue to be the same as it was on August 15, 1947. It says no person shall convert any place of worship of any religious denomination into one of a different denomination or section. It declares that all suits, appeals or any other proceedings regarding converting the character of a place of worship, which are pending before any court or authority on August 15, 1947, will abate as soon as the law comes into force. No further legal proceedings can be instituted.

However, there is an exception to the bar on instituting fresh proceedings with regard to suits that related to conversion of status that happened after August 15, 1947. This saves legal proceedings, suits and appeals regarding change of status that took place after the cut-off date. These provisions will not apply to ancient and historical monuments and archaeological sites and remains that are covered by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958; a suit that has been finally settled or disposed of; and any dispute that has been settled by the parties or conversion of any place that took place by acquiescence before the Act commenced. The Act does not apply to the place of worship commonly referred to as Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. This law will have overriding effect over any other law in force, it said.

Is there any penal provision in the Act?

Anyone who defies the bar on conversion of the status of

Shared spaces

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad and other Hindu groups have in the past laid claim to Shahi Idgah, located adjacent to Krishna Janmabhoomi Temple in Mathura, and Gyanvapi Mosque, next to Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi



Krishna Temple, left, and Shahi Idgah, right, exist side by side. Security camps were added following the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992

PHOTOS: THE HINDU



A photo of Kashi Vishwanath Temple, left, and Gyanvapi Mosque, right, taken in 2012. Last October, part of the wall separating the two was demolished by a government contractor

a place of worship is liable to be prosecuted. The Act provides for imprisonment up to three years and a fine for anyone contravening the prohibition. Those abetting or participating in a criminal conspiracy to commit this offence will also be punished to the same extent, even if the offence is not committed in consequence of such abetment or as part of the conspiracy.

How did the Opposition react to the law then?

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) registered its strong opposition to the enactment. The BJP leadership denounced the Bill as another example of the “pseudo-

secularism” being practised in the country. It saw in it an intention to appease the minorities. In Parliament, the BJP also questioned Parliament’s legislative competence to enact the law as it pertained to places of pilgrimages or burial grounds, which were under the State List. However, the Union

government said it could make use of its residuary power under Entry 97 of the Union List to enact this law.

Did the Supreme Court refer to this Act in its Ayodhya judgment?

In its verdict, the Supreme Court commended the enactment as one that preserved the constitutional value of secularism by not permitting the status of a place of worship to be changed. The state has, by enacting the law, 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. It said the Places of Worship Act “imposes a non-derogable obligation towards enforcing our commitment to secularism.” The court observed that “non-retrogression

After independence, we have set about healing the wounds of the past and endeavoured to restore our traditions of communal amity and goodwill to their past glory. By and large, we have succeeded, although there have been, it must be admitted, some unfortunate setbacks



S.B. CHAVAN  
Home Minister of the day, in Lok Sabha in Sept. 1991

In providing a guarantee for the preservation of the religious character of places of public worship as they existed on 15 August, 1947, and against the conversion of places of public worship, 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



SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

is a foundational feature of the fundamental constitutional principles, of which secularism is a core component.”

It took note of attempts to change the character of places of worship by people taking law into their own hands, citing historical events. “Historical wrongs cannot be remedied by the people taking the law in their own hands. In preserving the character of places of public worship, 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,” it observed.

Was there a reference to this Act in the Allahabad High Court judgment on Ayodhya in 2010?

Justice Dharam Veer Sharma, one of the three judges on the Bench that decided the Ayodhya case in the High Court, referred to it with the following observation: “The Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 does not debar those cases where declaration is sought for a period prior to the Act came into force or for enforcement of right which was recognized before coming into force of the Act.”

However, the Supreme Court criticised this view, saying it was contrary to the scheme of the law. The conclusion of Justice Sharma is directly contrary to Section 4(2) of the Act, it noted, and rejected it as “erroneous.”

What is the present status of Gyanvapi and Idgah?

A district court in Varanasi had entertained a civil suit by a temple trust claiming the site of the Gyanvapi Mosque in the holy city, but the order has been challenged in the Allahabad High Court, citing the statutory bar on such suits that seek to alter the places of worship. The matter is still pending.

The Shahi Idgah in proximity to the Krishna temple in Mathura is the subject of an agreement between the Krishna Janmabhumi Sanstha and the Idgah Committee, under which the land belongs to the former and the management is with the latter.

What are the surveillance laws in India?

After the WhatsApp breach, what should the way forward be and why is a data protection law not in place?

JAYANT SRIRAM

**The story so far:** On October 30, many publications reported that phones of several dozen Indian journalists, lawyers and human rights activists had been compromised using an invasive Israeli-developed malware called Pegasus. Messaging platform WhatsApp, through which the malware was disseminated, has reported that 121 individuals were targeted in India alone. A lawsuit was filed against Israeli cyberintelligence firm NSO by WhatsApp and its parent company Facebook in a U.S. court in California on October 29, accusing it of using their messaging platform to despatch Pegasus for surveillance to approximately 1,400 mobile phones and devices worldwide. The NSO claims that it only sells the software to governments but the Indian government has denied purchasing it and has asked WhatsApp to explain the security breach.

Is surveillance of this kind illegal in India?

Yes. First, it’s important to explain that there are legal routes to surveillance that can be conducted by the government. The laws governing this are the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, which deals with interception of calls, and the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, which deals with interception of data. Under both laws, only the government, under certain circumstances, is permitted to conduct surveillance, and not private actors. Moreover, hacking is expressly prohibited under the IT Act. Section 43 and Section 66 of the IT Act cover the civil and criminal offences of data theft and hacking respectively. Section 66B covers punishment for dishonestly receiving stolen computer resource or communication. The punishment includes imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years.

How broad are the laws regarding legal surveillance?

The framework for understanding the checks and balances built into these laws dates back to 1996. In 1996, the Supreme Court noted that there was a lack of procedural safeguards in the Indian Telegraph Act. It laid down some guidelines that were later codified into rules in 2007. This included a specific rule that orders on interceptions of communication should only be issued by the Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs.

These rules were partly reflected in the IT (Procedures and Safeguards for Interception, Monitoring and Decryption of Information) Rules framed in 2009 under the IT Act. The rules state that only the competent authority can issue an order for the interception, monitoring or decryption of any information generated,



• GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

transmitted, received or stored in any computer resource (mobile phones would count). The competent authority is once again the Union Home Secretary or State Secretaries in charge of the Home Departments.

In December 2018, the Central government created a furore when it authorised 10 Central agencies to conduct surveillance – the Intelligence Bureau, the Central Bureau of Investigation, the National Investigation Agency, the Research & Analysis Wing, the Directorate of Signal Intelligence, the Narcotics Control Bureau, the Enforcement Directorate, the Central Board of Direct Taxes, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence and the Delhi Police Commissioner. In the face of criticism that it was building a ‘surveillance state’, the government countered that it was building upon the rules laid down in 2009 and the agencies would still need approval from a competent authority, usually the Union Home Secretary. The 2018 action of the Union government has been challenged in the Supreme Court.

What about the Supreme Court verdict on privacy?

The Supreme Court in a landmark decision in August, 2017 (*Justice K. S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) And Anr. vs Union Of India And Others*) unanimously upheld right to privacy as a fundamental right under Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution. It is a building block and an important component of the legal battles that are to come over the state’s ability to conduct surveillance. But as yet a grey area remains between privacy and the state’s requirements for security.

In the same year, the government also constituted a Data Protection Committee under retired Justice B.N. Srikrishna. It held public hearings across India and

submitted a draft data protection law in 2018 which Parliament is yet to enact. Experts have pointed out, however, that the draft law does not deal adequately with surveillance reform.

Do other countries have stricter laws against surveillance?

This continues to be a grey area around the world. Take the U.S. for example. Electronic surveillance is considered a search under the Fourth Amendment which protects individuals from unreasonable search and seizure. Thus the government has to obtain a warrant from a court in each case and crucially, establish probable cause to believe a search is justified. It also has to provide a specific time period under which the surveillance is to be conducted and to describe in particularity the conversation that is to be intercepted. There are very few exceptions, or exigent circumstances under which the government may proceed without a warrant.

After the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the USA PATRIOT (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) Act was passed. Under certain provisions in this Act, the U.S. government used phone companies to collect information on millions of citizens and these were part of revelations made by the whistleblower Edward Snowden in 2013. Many aspects of the PATRIOT Act, particularly those involving surveillance, were to lapse after a certain time period but they were re-authorised by Congress. It’s an issue the U.S. still struggles with and several rights groups argue that the Act violates the Constitution.

In October 2019, the U.K.-based security firm Comaritech did a survey of 47 countries to see where governments are failing to protect privacy or are creating surveillance states. They found that only five countries had “adequate safeguards” and most are actively conducting surveillance on citizens and sharing information about them. China and Russia featured as the top two worst offenders on the list. Number three on the list? India, primarily the report says, because its data protection Bill is yet to take effect and there isn’t a data protection authority in place.