

BOTH PARTIES EXPECT DEPUTY CM POSTS

After Sonia green light, Cong & NCP to join Sena-led govt in Maharashtra

Ahead of power-sharing deal, Uddhav meets Pawar; Cong heads to Mumbai

MANOJ CG & VISHWAS WAGHMODE
NEW DELHI, MUMBAI,
NOVEMBER 21

THE UNCERTAINTY over government formation in Maharashtra is set to end within the next 48 hours with the Congress and NCP reaching an understanding Thursday on backing a Shiv Sena-led government in the state. The two parties, sources said, will join the government and the nitty-gritty of the power-sharing formula could be finalised and announced before Saturday.

The Congress Working Committee met Thursday morn-

ing at party chief Sonia Gandhi's residence and gave the green signal for an alliance with the NCP and the ideologically incompatible Shiv Sena. Senior Congress leaders Ahmed Patel, Mallikarjun Kharge and K C Venugopal are expected in Mumbai Friday where, along with the NCP, they will finalise the power-sharing formula with the Shiv Sena leadership.

Late Thursday night, Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray and his MLA-son Aaditya met NCP chief Sharad Pawar at his Silver Oak residence in south Mumbai. Shiv Sena's Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Raut was also present at the meeting.

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Uddhav and Aaditya Thackeray at Sharad Pawar's Mumbai home, Thursday. Nirmal Harindran

Rich love electoral bonds: More than 91% donations over Rs 1 crore each

Together with bonds of Rs 10-lakh denomination, figure climbs to 99.7%

UDIT MISRA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 21

ELECTORAL BONDS with denomination of Rs 1 crore accounted for more than 91 per cent of the Rs 5,896 crore raised in the first eleven of the total twelve phases over which bonds were sold by select branches of the State Bank of India.

According to documents obtained by transparency activist Commodore Lokesh Batra (Retd) under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, bonds with a ticket size of Rs 1 crore (the highest available) and Rs 10 lakh accounted for almost 99.7 per cent of the total value of bonds sold in the first 11 phases between March 1, 2018 and July 24, 2019.

The other denominations — Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000 and Rs 1 lakh — accounted for bonds worth just Rs 15.06 crore. In terms of the number of bonds (see table 1), 11,782 bonds were sold, of which 5,409 were of Rs 1 crore denomination and 4,723 of Rs 10 lakh denomination.

The dominant use of high value bonds clearly shows that almost the entire money came from the wealthiest section of the society.

The RTI documents also show that over the 12 phases, just four cities accounted for 83 per cent of all electoral bonds by value. The SBI branches in Mumbai, Kolkata, New Delhi and Hyderabad (see table 2) together accounted for bonds worth

ELECTORAL BONDS SOLD: BY DENOMINATION

Denomination	Bonds sold
Rs 1 crore	5,409
Rs 10 Lakh	4,723
Rs 1 lakh	1,543
Rs 10,000	60
Rs 1,000	47
Total	11,782

DISTRIBUTION BY CITIES

Branch Name	Amount (in Rs crore)
Mumbai	1,880
Kolkata	1,440
New Delhi	919
Hyderabad	846
Total of all branches	6,128

INSIDE

HOW GOVT IGNORED RBI, EC OBJECTIONS

DIN IN THE HOUSE OVER POLL BONDS

Rs 5,085 crore of the total Rs 6,128.72 crore. Of this, Rs 6,108.47 crore has been encashed, with the balance Rs 20.25 crore being deposited in the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund. Almost 80 per cent of the bonds were encashed in New Delhi.

In House panels, NDA members wave rule book to skirt debate

RAVISH TIWARI
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 21

THE GOVERNMENT set up Parliamentary committees soon after the monsoon session following criticism from the Opposition over legislation being passed without scrutiny in the absence of these panels. But it seems to have found a way to skirt them. NDA members in many committees are using the rule book to stonewall scrutiny on issues that may raise uncomfortable questions for the government.

A Parliamentary committee is considered a forum for non-partisan deeper scrutiny of the issues of the day. Its members are drawn from all parties based on their proportional representation in the House, and the parties nominate their candidates.

There have been at least three such instances in three separate newly constituted panels — the Public Accounts Committee, the Standing Committee on Home Affairs, and the Standing Committee on Information Technology, headed by Congress leaders Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, Anand Sharma and Shashi Tharoor, respectively.

EXPLAINED

In non-partisan space, red flags

A PARLIAMENTARY panel is an extension of Parliament. To ensure non-partisan scrutiny of the executive, its proceedings do not happen in the public glare. Bills can come to it, the committee can also choose subjects. Barring select, highly contentious issues, committees are known to take a non-partisan approach. Dissent notes are not uncommon but objections at the very start are unusual.

On Wednesday, Tharoor cast a deciding vote to overrule objections from members from Treasury benches to the Standing Committee on Information and Technology discussing data privacy issues arising from the WhatsApp security breach.

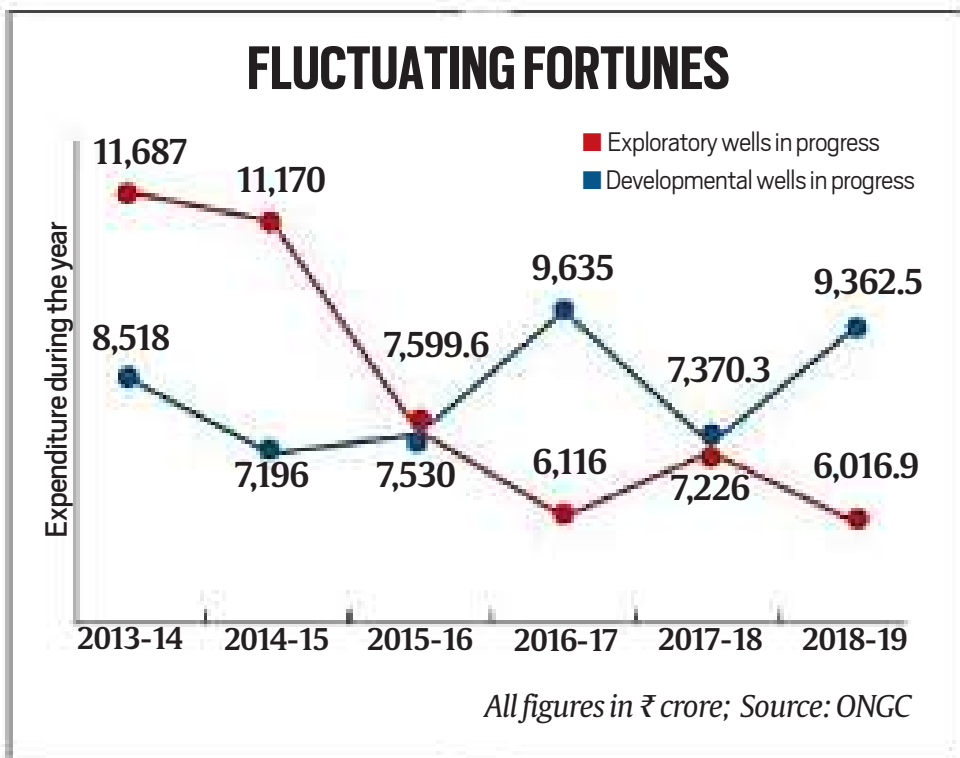
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ONGC cash reserves at record low, spend on exploration dips

SANDEEP SINGH & ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 21

THE DEPLETING cash and other bank balances of ONGC Ltd, India's main state-owned oil explorer that accounts for over 60 per cent of the country's crude oil production, finds a reflection in the overall capex spends of the upstream petroleum major.

ONGC's cash and balances dipped to touch a record low of Rs 504 crore in March 2019, down from Rs 1,013 crore in March 2018 and Rs 9,511 crore in March 2017 and Rs 9,957 in March 2016. While this slide in balances is precipitated by two deals involving ONGC's stake buys in downstream oil marketing company Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and Gujarat-based GSPC that dented the former's cash reserves, the government has maintained that ONGC has "sufficient lines of credit from banks and strong access to capital mar-



kets" to maintain its working capital requirements.

A closer examination of the data for the last six years, however, shows that ONGC's expenditure on exploratory wells has almost halved from Rs 11,687 crore in the year ended March 2014 to Rs 6,016 crore in the year ended March 2019.

This decline in exploratory

expenditure comes alongside a steady decline in domestic crude oil production. Data shows that domestic crude oil production has consistently declined between FY12 (38.09 MMT) and FY18 (35.68 MMT).

The expenditure by ONGC on developmental wells has, however, remained steady over the

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Answer each question on curbs: SC to J&K admin

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 21

THE J&K administration was in the spotlight Thursday when it was told by the Supreme Court that it will have to respond to each and every question raised on restrictions imposed in the wake of the August 5 announcement ending the special status of the state under Article 370.

The bench of Justices N V Ramana, R Subhash Reddy and B R Gavi, hearing petitions challenging the restrictions, told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who appeared for J&K, that he must answer all questions so that the impression does not go out that the government was not serious about the case.

Mehta told the bench this was not the case because the situation in J&K was improving every day. He said he was ready with a status report, as sought by the court, detailing the ground situation as on November 20. The data, he said, "reflects normalcy in Kashmir and not otherwise, as sought to be projected by the petitioners".

During the hearing, attempts by a lawyer to compare the situation in Hong Kong with that prevailing in J&K had the court inquiring if Hong Kong too faced

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In downtown Srinagar, Thursday. Shuaib Masoodi

In Jharkhand, Shah brings up Ram temple: Cong tried to stall

ABHISHEK ANGAD
RANCHI, NOVEMBER 21

SETTING THE tone for the five-phase Assembly polls in Jharkhand starting November 30, BJP president and Union Home Minister Amit Shah Thursday raked up the issue of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, abrogation of Article 370, committee for reservation of the backward and "70 years of Congress misrule" while underlining the "double engine" growth of Jharkhand under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Raghubar Das.

At two separate rallies in Manika and Latehar, Shah spoke of Modi's "strong" response to Pakistan following the terror attacks in Uri and Pulwama.

At one of the rallies, he asked



At a rally in Jharkhand on Thursday. ANI

the crowd: "Should the Ram temple be built in Ayodhya or not? Tell me, mothers and sisters. Every person in this country wants a Ram temple. But the Congress stalled the case." It was met with cheers of "Jai Shri Ram".

"We wanted a resolution to this dispute within the framework of the Constitution. Now see, how

with the blessings of Lord Ram, Supreme Court has cleared the way and a big temple will be constructed. Modiji is resolving age-old problems," he said.

He said that if the BJP government returns to power, it will form a committee to increase the percentage of reservation among the backward caste. He called it "social justice". The government, he said, has already undertaken an exercise for sub-categorisation of Other Backward Class.

On Kashmir, he said the Congress delayed abrogation of Article 370. "Batao 370 jaani chahiye thi ki nahi, zorse bolo jaani chahiye thi ki nahi? Aap sab ki baat maante huey, August 5 ko Modiji ne dhaara 370 hata diya (Tell me, 370 should have gone or not? Modi abrogated Article 370 after listening to all of you)."

Ayodhya ruling darkest spot in history but won't go for review: Jamiat

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 21

THE JAMIAT Ulama-i-Hind (JUH) faction led by Maulana Mahmood Madani has decided not to file a review petition on the verdict of the Supreme Court in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case. The JUH working committee that met on Thursday adopted a resolution describing the judgment as "the darkest spot in the history of free India" but said it wouldn't file a review petition as there was "possibility of further damage".

Earlier this week, the Jamiat faction led by senior Deoband teacher Maulana Arshad Madani and the All India Muslim

Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) had said they were in favour of filing a review petition within the 30-day period.

The Mahmood Madani faction of the Jamiat said it was not against others filing a review, adding that it only hopes such a move does not have any "negative effect". It also demanded that the government "open and allow Muslims to offer prayers in mosques controlled by the ASI (Archaeological Survey of India) which are undisputed".

The Jamiat resolution adopted on Thursday reads: "The working committee of Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind (JUH) holds the recent Supreme Court verdict on Babri mosque unjust

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NITIN SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 21

FROM SUPPRESSING ankle pain to overcoming PUBG addiction — two teenage shooters and one who just turned 20 showed the world how prodigiously talented they are at the ISSF World Cup Final with a haul of three gold medals in a single day, an unprecedented achievement for the country at the year-end event where only the best get entry.

Divyansh Singh Panwar and Manu Bhaker, both 17, and 20-year-old Elavenil Valarivan scripted history for India and

took the country to the top of the overall medals tally Thursday, surpassing hosts China. Divyansh (final score 250.1) and Elavenil (250.8) defeated their challengers by just 0.1 point to win their respective 10 metre air rifle finals.

Divyansh is the first since London Olympics bronze medalist Gagan Narang in 2008, and Elavenil since Anjali Bhagwat in 2003, to win gold medals in this event at the World Cup Final, where shooters qualify by accumulating points from four World Cups held through the year.

Manu, meanwhile, broke the junior world record with a score

of 244.7 to win the 10m air pistol event. For her, Thursday's final was all about overcoming pain as she beat multiple World Cup gold medalist Zorana Arunovic of Serbia.

"She has been struggling with ankle pain for a year and wears insoles to deal with it. Standing for long hours while training for 10m air pistol and 25m pistol events makes it unbearable sometimes. Many questioned her when there was a dip in form, but she has shown the world she can win against the best," her father Ram Krishan Bhaker, who is in the merchant navy, said.

Manu, who first hit headlines



(From left) Manu Bhaker, Divyansh Panwar and Elavenil Valarivan in Putian, China, Thursday. NRAI

by becoming the junior world champion in Suhl, Germany, last year, had secured the 2020 Olympics quota for India with a fourth place in Munich World Cup in May.

Divyansh was hooked to Esports and was a PUBG addict. When he took up the sport of shooting at the Karni Singh Range in Delhi, the Jaipur-based teen had to be weaned away from the phone screen. In April this year, he booked an Olympic quota for India in the 10m air rifle.

"Watching him shoot in the final made my heart skip a beat; the 0.1 margin was so narrow,"

called up my husband and told him that Elavenil will again ask for earrings," K Saroja, her mother, said.

Elavenil's medal underlines the country's strength in the women's 10m air rifle — the world number 1, 2 and 3 are all Indians, with Elavenil placed third behind Apurvi Chandela and Anjum Moudgil. The gold will add intrigue to the team selection for the Tokyo Olympics where only two shooters are allowed per event. India have won a record 15 quotas for the Games, and the medal spree means they will enter the Olympic year as hot prospects.