

NEARBY



City's air quality plunges to 'very poor' category

**NEW DELHI**  
The Capital's air quality worsened from 'poor' to 'very poor' on Thursday mainly due to light showers witnessed during the day. The air quality is expected to improve on Friday if the Capital gets more rainfall as predicted.

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BJP, Cong. blame AAP govt. for onion prices

**NEW DELHI**  
The Delhi units of the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress on Thursday held the ruling Aam Aadmi Party responsible for the rising prices of onions in the city.

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FRIDAY REVIEW ► 8 PAGES  
(TABLOID)

# 4,000 security forces sent to Ayodhya

Ministry of Home Affairs sends advisory to all States to maintain law and order ahead of SC verdict

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Ahead of the long-awaited Supreme Court judgment on the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi litigation, the Centre has sent around 4,000 personnel of the Central Armed Police Forces to Ayodhya.

The Ministry of Home Affairs also issued an advisory to all States to maintain “law and order” with the verdict expected to be announced in a few days.

“We have sent an advisory to all States, asking them to keep a watch on law and order as the verdict is set to be announced,” said a senior government official.

Title suits

The appeals against the 2010 Allahabad High Court’s judgment on the title suits – filed by both Hindu and Muslim parties – were heard on a daily basis by a five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court



Tension in the air: Security personnel manning Naya Ghat in Ayodhya on Thursday. ■PTI

for 40 days. The court has reserved judgment, and a verdict is expected before November 17, when Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi will retire.

The Railway Protection Force (RPF) has identified 80 sensitive stations and asked its personnel to keep a tight vigil.

The seven-page advisory

sent to all zonal headquarters asked RPF personnel to specially maintain security at places of worship inside or near the railway station’s compound and asked the ca-

retakers to not leave them unattended.

The RPF cancelled leave of its staff and the personnel will be engaged in providing security cover to trains.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath held a videoconference with police officers in charge of all districts and reviewed the security preparedness to tackle any law and order situation.

‘Riot control scheme’

Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police O.P. Singh asked district police chiefs to enhance foot patrolling in “vulnerable areas” that have been identified.

The police have also been asked to prepare a “riot control scheme” for each area that will include measures for “access control” and “transportation plans” in emergency situations.

MORE REPORTS ON ► PAGE 13

## Cat hole



No escape: A tiger is seen trapped between rocks in the Sirna river in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra on Wednesday. The animal is said to have sustained spinal injuries after it jumped 35 feet off a bridge into the river. Despite efforts by forest officials, the tiger died on Thursday. ■PTI

## Karnataka cricketers held in betting scam

Got ₹20 lakh to bat slow in KPL: police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

The Central Crime Branch (CCB) here on Thursday arrested Ballari Tuskers players C.M. Gautam and Abrar Kazi in connection with the match-fixing and betting scam in the Karnataka Premier League.

The cricketers have been accused of receiving ₹20 lakh from bookies to bat slow in the 2019 KPL final between Ballari Tuskers and Hubli Tigers on August 31, which the latter ultimately won by eight runs.

Gautam, who captained the Tuskers, is a veteran wicket-keeper and the highest-profile player yet to be arrested in the KPL scandal.



Caught out: C.M. Gautam, left, and Abrar Kazi.

Both he and Kazi, an all-rounder, are former Karnataka Ranji Trophy players. Gautam, in fact, has even featured for India-A.

“They ensured that the KPL final match was lost,” said Joint Commissioner of Police, CCB, Sandeep Patil.

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## Don’t want to break ties with BJP, says Uddhav

But ally must keep its word on CM’s post: Sena chief

TANVI DESHPANDE  
MUMBAI

“I don’t want to break the alliance (between Sena-BJP) but BJP should keep its word. If they are willing to do that, they should call me,” Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray reportedly told party MLAs at a meeting in Mumbai on Thursday.

At the meeting, Mr. Thackeray reportedly told his MLAs, “I am not doing this to corner BJP. If the BJP agrees to implement what was agreed, they should call me. Whether first half or se-



The guide: Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari referring to the Constitution in Mumbai on Thursday. ■PRASHANT NAKWE

cond half of the [Chief Minister’s] term was never the case.” The MLAs also passed a resolution allowing Mr. Thackeray to take all decisions related to government

formation. After the meeting, the lawmakers were moved to a hotel in Bandra.

56 SENa MLAS MOVED TO BANDRA HOTEL ► PAGE 12

## Allow UN observers into Kashmir: Finnish Minister

‘MEP team that visited Srinagar lacked expertise’

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

Dismissing the Members of European Parliament (MEPs) who visited Kashmir as lacking “expertise”, Finland has asked India to allow UN observers and Delhi-based diplomats to travel to the Union Territory and assess the situation there.

Finland currently holds the EU Council Presidency.

Finland’s Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto, who held meetings in New Delhi with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday, said



Finland Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto during an interview. ■SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

he had raised “concerns” over the situation in Jammu & Kashmir, including about “human rights, freedom of speech and the detention of politicians”.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

## RBI to probe IDBI breach of client privacy

MANOJIT SAHA  
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is probing a suspected breach of client confidentiality by IDBI Bank. The allegation is that the bank gave access to its client data to the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), which owns 51% stake in the bank.

According to documents reviewed by *The Hindu*, the IDBI Bank has done a backward integration of its systems with LIC, aimed at bringing synergy. This will give LIC access to data of the Bank’s 246 lakh clients. The RBI identified the issue during an inspection.

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## Govt. to revoke Aatish Taseer’s OCI card

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE  
NEW DELHI

The Union government on Thursday night announced that it would revoke the Overseas Citizen of India card of author and journalist Aatish Taseer over what it said was his attempt to “conceal information” that his father, Salman Taseer, was of Pakistani origin. In an official statement, the Home Ministry said he had “failed to dispute the notice” it had sent asking him to explain the lapse.

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## Kartarpur: passports, OCI cards needed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Indian passports and Overseas Citizen of India cards will be necessary for pilgrims visiting the Kartarpur Sahib shrine for the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, the External Affairs Ministry said on Thursday.

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## Police-lawyers meetings remain inconclusive

Two IPS officers transferred on HC direction; lower court lawyers to continue stir

SAURABH TRIVEDI  
NEW DELHI

Lawyers walked out of a coordination meeting called at the Delhi Police officers’ mess in Civil Lines on Thursday over “communication gap” with the police. Five other meetings held between lawyers and policemen at the district courts in Dwarka, Saket, Karkardooma, Rohini and Patiala House – in the presence of district judges – also proved inconclusive, said a police officer.

The meetings were in line with a Delhi High Court suggestion for meetings to resolve issues amicably in the aftermath of the clash between lawyers and policemen at Tis Hazari last week.

Representatives of the Coordination Committee of All District Courts Bar Associations of Delhi turned up at the Civil Lines venue under the impression that they would be meeting the top brass of Delhi Police. It turned out that Joint Commissioner of Police (Central Range) Rajesh Khurana had called the meeting with representatives of the local bar association to discuss “administrative issues” at Tis Hazari.



Lawyers stage a hunger strike against Delhi Police at Tis Hazari Courts in New Delhi on Thursday. ■SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

ri. “We have told the police to call a proper meeting with senior officers in attendance,” said a lawyer.

Separate meeting later

Regretting the misunderstanding, Delhi Police clarified that issues pertaining only to North District courts were to be discussed in order to resume normal functioning at Tis Hazari.

A separate meeting will be held at a higher level to address the larger issues, it said.

At the Dwarka meeting, the bar association conveyed to the concerned DCP that

any decision over calling off the strike will be taken by Bar Council of India. Representatives also said that they cannot guarantee the safety of policemen visiting courts.

Lawyers at lower courts will continue to abstain from proceedings on Friday in protest against the non-arrest of the policeman who had allegedly shot at a lawyer during the Tis Hazari violence. Sanjeev Nasair, former president of Delhi Bar Association, said that the lawyers’ coordination committee would not call off their agitation till the accused policeman was arrested.

Officials said on Thursday that two IPS officers have been transferred on the Delhi High Court’s direction in the aftermath of the clashes. Special Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) North Sanjay Singh has been transferred to the licensing and transport department and Additional DCP (North) Harinder Kumar Singh has been appointed DCP, Railways, they said.

On Thursday, Delhi Police Commissioner Amulya Patnaik met Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla and Intelligence Bureau Director Arvind Kumar at the Ministry of Home Affairs in North Block and briefed them about the Tis Hazari incident.

The IB has sought a report within a week on the protest staged outside Delhi Police Headquarters on Tuesday and about who fuelled it.

Mr. Patnaik also went to the house of a constable who was injured during the November 2 clash and assured him of all support.

(With inputs from Nirmimesh Kumar)

SEE ALSO ► PAGE 4



# Report: lack of transparency in High Courts is worrying

RTI rules of courts very inconvenient, says Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A new study by Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy has found that there is a “yawning gap” between the judiciary’s pronouncements on the Right to Information (RTI) Act and the manner in which the High Courts are implementing it.

The report *Sunshine in the Courts* has remarked that the RTI rules of several High Courts provide for a relatively inconvenient procedure when compared to the RTI rules of the Government of India.

“The lack of good quality proactive disclosures by several High Courts on their websites marks the failure of the High Courts to discharge a specific statutory obligation imposed under Section 4(1)(b) of the RTI Act,” the report said.

It added that the lack of administrative transparency, especially financial transparency, within High Courts was a matter of grave concern.

“In particular, the lack of transparency in financial matters of the High Courts

Most High Courts do not proactively publish details about their budgets and expenditure. Even fewer High Courts are willing to provide copies of their budgets and audit reports under the RTI Act

REPORT BY VIDHI CENTRE  
FOR LEGAL POLICY

is very worrying. Most High Courts do not proactively publish details about their budgets and expenditure. Even fewer High Courts are willing to provide copies of their budgets and audit reports under the RTI Act,” the report said.

### ‘Illegal clauses’

The report found that despite the law being crystal clear on the limits of delegated legislation, several High Courts have included patently illegal clauses in their RTI Rules. It pointed out that despite Section 8 of the RTI Act restricting the number of grounds for de-

nying information to citizens, the RTI rules of several High Courts have included additional grounds for rejecting requests for information.

“High Courts at Bombay, Delhi, Gauhati, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, Orissa, Punjab and Haryana, Rajasthan, Sikkim and Tripura have created additional grounds for non-disclosure of information,” it said.

On the convenience index, the Vidhi report noted that while several High Courts did recognise convenient modes of payments like postal orders, the High Courts of Allahabad, Chhattisgarh, Gauhati, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Rajasthan and Sikkim, did not recognise it.

It said that the High Courts of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, prescribe only court fee stamps as relevant mode of payment. “Not only are court fee stamps different in each State, they are usually available at fewer locations than postal orders, which are available in all

post offices across the country,” it said.

Additionally, the report stated that the Gujarat High Court does not mention any mode of payment, which increases uncertainty for RTI applicants.

The report remarked that it should be a matter of concern to see the judiciary lagging behind the Centre when it comes to abiding by the letter and spirit of the RTI Act.

“The fact that the RTI rules of so many High Courts have provisions that run the risk of being declared ultra vires the RTI Act coupled with the fact that nine High Courts and most District Courts have not bothered to make any of the disclosures under Section 4(1)(b) of the RTI Act, is indicative of serious systemic issues within the administrative side of the judiciary,” the report said.

“It is also telling that on our convenience index, not a single High Court was able to match the convenience offered by the Government of India’s RTI Rules,” it concluded.

## Civic bodies told to maintain breastfeeding rooms

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has asked the civic bodies to maintain their 100 breastfeeding rooms and set up more as early as possible.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice C. Hari Shankar also asked the Delhi government to finalise its draft policy on setting up baby-care rooms – for breastfeeding and changing diapers – in public places.

With these directions, the court disposed of a petition filed on behalf of a mother and her newborn seeking breastfeeding facilities in public places. It noted that since the draft policy was ready and feeding rooms had been set up across the Capital, with more on the way, there was no further need to monitor the issue.

The government had told the court that its draft policy on baby-care rooms has been placed in the public domain to invite suggestions.

It added that the draft policy was circulated to all landowning departments and other public-dealing departments for comments.

The petition had sought breastfeeding facilities in public places away from “censuring and dishonourable looks”. It had contended that not providing such facilities amounts to “hampering” women’s right to privacy.

## Light up dark spots, HC tells civic body, discom

They are crime hotspots, notes court

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday directed the North Delhi Municipal Corporation and power discom TPDDL to identify “dark spots”, or poorly lit areas, which are vulnerable to crimes, and ensure they are well illuminated.

A Bench of Justices G.S. Sistani and A.J. Bhambhani also issued a notice to the Energy Efficient Systems Ltd. after BSES said the company works in the field of conservation of power as well as lighting of streets.

The HC was hearing a petition initiated by it in 2012 after the December 16, 2012,

gang-rape case.

During the hearing, it said crimes of snatching and assault were on the rise and “dark spots made victims more vulnerable”.

Advocate Meera Bhatia, who is the amicus curiae in the case, said that the court had in 2017 directed the setting up of a panel to monitor and ensure women’s safety and sought that the panel be asked to submit a report of the work it has done.

The Bench has asked the panel to file a report.

Meanwhile, the Delhi government told the court that all police stations, except two, have operational CCTV cameras.

## 53 stones removed from salivary duct

Elderly Iraqi woman undergoes two-hour procedure

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Doctors at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital recently operated on a 66-year-old Iraqi woman and removed 53 stones from her salivary duct and gland.

Varun Rai, the hospital’s ENT consultant, said the biggest challenge was to remove the stones without causing any injury to the gland or the 3 mm-wide duct.

The stones were painstakingly removed one by one using forceps in a procedure that lasted two hours. “After extensive review of worldwide literature, a single parotid gland having more than 25 stones within the parotid duct has not been previously



The stones that were removed from the salivary duct and gland.

■ \* SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

reported,” said Dr. Rai.

The patient, who is from Baghdad, was suffering from recurrent attacks of pain and swelling of the right parotid gland whenever she ate something. “After consultation she was diagnosed as having multiple stones in her right

## Set up basic facilities on e-ways: HC

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has asked the National Highways Authority of India and the Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation to ensure that basic amenities are available on the Eastern and Western Peripheral Expressways.

The HC said that facilities such as toilets, petrol pumps, and emergency facilities should be maintained by the authorities.

The HC’s order came on a petition seeking facilities, including eateries, on the Kundali-Manesar-Palwal Expresswa and the Kundali-Ghaziabad-Palwal Expressway.

parotid duct... the largest stone was 8mm stuck midway in the duct,” the hospital said.

Back home, the woman had been advised by doctors to undergo a radical procedure to remove the gland, which would have left a scar on her face and could have resulted in face paralysis.

Dr. Varun noted that the patient came to India after hearing a procedure called sialendoscopy, in which a small endoscope is inserted into the duct of the gland and the cause of obstruction is directly addressed. “She underwent the procedure in the last week of September,” said Dr. Rai. The patient has now been discharged.

### DELHI TODAY

**Talk:** Lecture on “Victory of the Spirit over Raw Power: Vaclav Havel’s lessons from Mahatma Gandhi” by Prof. Surendra Munshi, former Professor of Sociology, Indian Institute of Management, Kolkata, as part of ongoing Gandhi Matters series at Seminar Rooms II - III, Kamaladevi Complex, India International Centre, 6:30 p.m.

**Talk:** Women Empower India series: Lecture on “Emerging role of Women in the tourism industry” by Dave Mann, S.S. Sarna, Shalini Goyal Bhalla, and Rahul Singh, at Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m.

**Music:** The third and concluding day of “Sangeet Samaroh” festival will feature a sitar recital by Pandit Purbayan Chatterjee, followed by Hindustani vocal recital by Pandit Rajan and Sajjan Mishra at Kamani Auditorium, Mandi House, 6 p.m.

**Exhibition:** “Labyrinth: Earth. Environment. Climate Change”, a solo show of recent artworks by Anu Jindal at Main Art Gallery, Kamaladevi Complex, IIC, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

**Exhibition:** A group show of paintings, drawings, graphics, sculptures, digital art and photography by artists members of AIFACS at All India Fine Arts & Crafts Society, 1 Rafi Marg, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

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



DELHI ☀️ Timings			
FRIDAY, NOV. 08			
☀️ RISE	06:38	🌃 SET	17:32
🌃 RISE	15:28	🌃 SET	02:38
SATURDAY, NOV. 09			
☀️ RISE	06:38	🌃 SET	17:31
🌃 RISE	15:59	🌃 SET	03:30
SUNDAY, NOV. 10			
☀️ RISE	06:39	🌃 SET	17:31
🌃 RISE	16:29	🌃 SET	04:22

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	23	18
Safdarjang	23	18
Palam	23	18

**Delhi Palam Today**  
27°C A misty morning is likely. A cloudy sky is likely. Light rain is likely at one or two palaces.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
28°C Haze/ smoke haze is likely in the morning. Moderate north westerly winds will blow. A sunny sky is likely.

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**THE HINDU**  
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Air quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	309	Gurgaon	284
Ghaziabad	325	Faridabad	312
Noida	328	Greater Noida	318
Good	Satisfactory	Moderate	
0-50	51-100	101-200	
Poor	Very poor	Severe	
201-300	301-400	>401	
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) [SOURCE: CPCB]			

# AQI worsens from ‘poor’ to ‘very poor’ due to light showers

Air quality expected to improve today if the Capital gets more rainfall

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

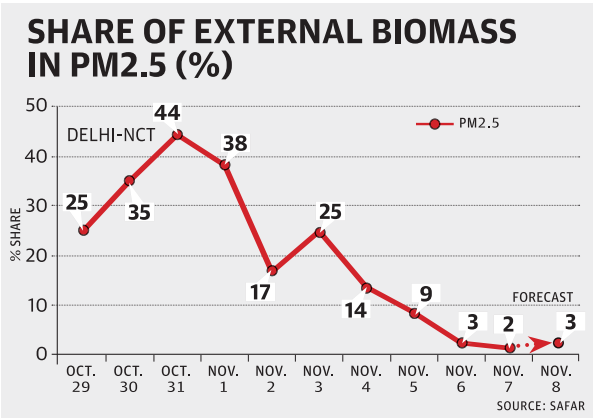
The Capital's air quality worsened from 'poor' to 'very poor' on Thursday mainly due to light showers witnessed during the day. The city's Air Quality Index (AQI) on Thursday was 309, up from 214 (poor) on Wednesday, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The air quality is expected to improve on Friday if the Capital gets more rainfall as predicted.

"It only drizzled in Delhi on Thursday and this increased the humidity. Due to free water molecules in the air, chemical reactions took place leading to the formation of secondary aerosols, which increased the PM2.5 [deadly respirable particles] level in the air," said an official of the government-run monitoring agency SAFAR (System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research). "If there had been good rainfall, then it would have washed away the pollutants. But the drizzling increased the pollution," he added.

**Stubble burning** Meanwhile, the contribution of stubble burning in neighbouring States to the



The city's Air Quality Index on Thursday was 309, up from 214 on Wednesday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY



city's air pollution was only 2% on Thursday and is expected to be 3% on Friday, said SAFAR. The contribution of stubble burning was

as high as 44% earlier this season. The air quality is expected to deteriorate on Saturday as the wind direction

**☁️ If there had been good rainfall, then it would have washed away the pollutants. But the drizzling increased the pollution**

OFFICIAL FROM SAFAR

will change, bringing in smoke from stubble burning, it said, adding: "The effective biomass fire counts observed [in Haryana and Punjab] on November 6 were high [3,534] but the wind direction was not favourable for any stubble fire plume intrusion [into Delhi]."

**Farm fires** The monitoring agency said PM2.5 level in Delhi does not increase just because the number of farm fires increases in neighbouring States, as it depends on other factors too. On November 3, the PM2.5 level in the city hit 625 ug/m3 – the highest this season, though the number of farm fires was around 3,000. On November 6, the PM2.5 level hovered around 100 ug/m3 even though the number of farm fires increased to 3,534, said SAFAR. The safe limit for PM2.5 is 60 ug/m3.

## ‘BJP should apologise to people for lying’

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party on Thursday said the Centre has informed the Supreme Court that despite improved air quality in Delhi, the pollution spiked after Diwali due to stubble burning. The party said the BJP should now apologise to the people for defaming the efforts of the government.

"Today, I want to expose the lies of the BJP as in the Supreme Court, the Centre has submitted that there is an increase in the good to moderate days in Delhi. This means that the government's claim that pollution in the city has come down is now being accepted by the Centre," said AAP chief spokesperson Saurabh Bharadwaj. He said the Centre, in its

affidavit, had noted that in Punjab a target had been set to supply 7,600 machines to farmers that could curb stubble burning. The government had received applications from 7,829 people, but it only distributed machines to 2,657 people, he said. "Today, the BJP should say sorry to the people of Delhi for their lies," said AAP MP Sanjay Singh.

## Four SDMC employees suspended for negligence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Two officials and two sanitation workers of the South Delhi Municipal Corporation were on Thursday suspended by authorities for alleged negligence of duties in carrying out activities meant for curbing pollution, said officials.

An assistant engineer and a sanitary inspector were suspended by Deputy Commissioner of Central Zone Aman Gupta for "not performing their duties in and around Okhla pollution hotspot," they said. An inspection was carried out by authorities in the pollution hotspot area on Thursday and on Wednesday night, a senior official said.



BJP leader Vijay Goel and party workers on their way to meet Deputy CM Manish Sisodia on Thursday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

## Goel protests outside Sisodia's residence

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

BJP MP Vijay Goel on Thursday cycled to the residence of Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia to gift him a bouquet of stubble as a sign of protest against the Aam Aadmi Party's claim that stubble burning led to spike in pollution levels in Delhi. "Mr. Sisodia did not meet us as he does not answer questions about the government's efforts in reducing

pollution in the last five years. Not even once in the last five years has the government tried to cooperate with the seven MPs from Delhi or the Centre," he said, adding that if pollution had reduced by 25% and the cause was stubble burning, "then what is the need to introduce the odd-even?". He asked the government to inform Delhiites about the work done on pollution, "apart from wasting money on advertisements".

## Odd men out



**Even chance:** A total of 694 motorists were fined for violating odd-even rule on Thursday, said authorities. Of the total challans, 454 were issued by the police, 148 by the Transport Department and 92 by the Revenue Department. The rule will continue till November 15. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

## JMI student attacked by ‘snatchers’ inside bus

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 23-year-old student from Jamia Millia Islamia was attacked allegedly by two men inside a cluster bus in south-east Delhi, the police said on Thursday. The incident happened on Wednesday afternoon when Mohammad Asad Shah was travelling in a bus with his

friend Krishan Chand, they said. The duo had boarded the bus from Sarai Jullena when Shah saw some a few men, whom he suspected to be snatchers. His brother Ansar said: "Asad recognised the men as those being involved in incidents of snatching. One of them had snatched his phone a couple of months ago and

my brother had recognised the accused man in the bus." Asad alerted his friend about the presence of the accused men in the bus. After this, the duo tried to nab the accused when they attacked him with a surgical blade and deboarded the bus, his brother said. Asad is undergoing treatment while his friend was discharged after first-aid. DCP

(South-East) Chinmoy Biswal said the accused were waving the blade when the bus stopped and the impact was such that the weapon caused injury to the victims. A case has been registered and investigation is under way. The university proctor said the SHO of New Friends Colony has assured him of a thorough probe.

## Kejriwal flags off 100 standard-floor buses

A total of 3,000 buses will hit the roads in next 6-7 months, says Chief Minister

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal flagged off 100 standard-floor buses at Rajghat Bus Depot on Thursday. "A total of 3,000 buses will hit the roads of the national capital in the next 6-7 months, out of which 1,000 will be electric buses, which will be the biggest such deployment so far. The buses are equipped with CCTV cameras, alarm buttons, hydraulic lifts for the differently abled and other modern



The new buses at the Rajghat Bus Depot on Thursday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

advancements," he announced during the event. Talking about relaxation of the ongoing odd-even scheme on November 11 and

12, the Chief Minister said: "We respect the sentiments of the Sikh community. Many Sikh organisations have requested relaxation of the scheme on November 11 and 12 as it is the 550th Guru Nanak Jayanti. We will have a meeting in this regard and take a decision." He said that the government will also take care of the maintenance of the buses. "Earlier, we used to face issues with last-mile delivery of various services. Budgets have been sanctioned even

by the previous governments for maintaining schools and hospitals, but only this government has worked on maintaining schools and hospitals with that budget. In the same way, this government will ensure timely maintenance of all the features of the buses," Mr. Kejriwal said. A total of 129 buses were flagged off in October, the government said. "A total of 1,000 low-floor AC buses are also being inducted," read an official statement.



Plea in HC  
against Delhi  
police officers

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

A petition filed before the Delhi High Court sought action against agitating police officials who were sitting on a dharna after the Tis Hazari Courts clash incident.

The plea, filed by lawyer Rakesh Kumar Lakra asked the Centre to initiate departmental inquiry against the police personnel and said that they contravened their official duties.

It alleged that the police officials were protesting and agitating in public, which was in contravention of their official duties.

**Top officers named**  
The plea names the Union of India, the Delhi Police, its Commissioner Amulya Patnaik, Deputy Inspector General of police of Arunachal Pradesh Madhur Verma, Deputy Commissioner Aslam Khan, Superintendent of Police of NIA Sanjukta Prashar and IPS officer Meghna Yadav as parties in the case.

Ex-officers urge L-G, CP not to take  
‘coercive action’ till probe is over

Letter says police top brass should assure subordinates of complete support

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

Concerned over the clash between Delhi police personnel and lawyers at the Tis Hazari Courts, an association of retired police officers on Thursday wrote to Lieutenant-Governor Anil Bajjal and Commissioner of Police Amulya Patnaik, terming the incident “demoralising” and urged them not to take any “coercive” action till the completion of the judicial inquiry.

The Delhi Police Retired Gazetted Officers Association (DPRGOA) said the police top brass should “adequately assure” the personnel of their complete support.

“Senior officers of the organisation may boost the morale of the force by extending their complete support and adequately assuring them that the rule of law will prevail,” DPRGOA president Karnal Singh said in a statement.

**The suspension and transfer of police officers should be challenged as no action has been ordered against erring lawyers**

**LETTER BY DELHI POLICE RETIRED GAZETTED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION**

Mr. Singh is a retired IPS officer who headed the Enforcement Directorate and had several stints in the Delhi Police. The letter comes two days after thousands of Delhi Police personnel laid siege to the Delhi Police Headquarters on Tuesday.

The police protest was launched over two alleged attacks on their colleagues by lawyers, first on November 2 (last Saturday) at the Tis Hazari Court Complex over a parking dispute, and the second on November 4 (Monday) outside the Saket Courts. At least 20 police

personnel and several advocates were injured in the first clash.

Ordering a judicial inquiry into the November 2 incident by one of its retired judges, the Delhi High Court, at a special sitting on November 3, directed Commissioner Patnaik to transfer two senior officers – Special Commissioner Sanjay Singh and Additional DCP Harender Kumar Singh – during pendency of the investigation. An ASI was suspended and departmental action was initiated against a constable. The court also ordered that no coercive action be taken against any lawyer on the basis of FIRs lodged by police officers.

“The direction of no coercive action against lawyers requires to be amended to no coercive action against anyone till the completion of the [judicial] inquiry. The suspension and transfer of police officers should be

Police plan overhaul  
to address resentment

Decision taken after Tuesday’s protest

**SAURABH TRIVEDI**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police is planning to overhaul its grievance redressal system in a bid to tackle resentment among lower-rank personnel, said a police officer on Thursday.

“The [police] protest staged on Tuesday is evidence of resentment among subordinates due to various issues. We have a grievances redressal system but we need to overhaul it so that a policeman can approach any officer with his issues. During the protest most of the police personnel complained of ill-treatment by superiors, claiming that they refuse to listen to their grievances and punish them for no reason,” said the officer.



Thousands of policemen had gathered at the Delhi PHQ at ITO on Tuesday. •FILE PHOTO

“We are a disciplined force. Tuesday’s incident showed that there is perhaps a disconnect between higher and lower ranks. We have to bridge that gap because we are a family. All district DCPs have been instructed to overhaul their grievance redressal cell and send a report to the police headquarters,” the officer added.

The officer said no action has been ordered against any protester and nor will it be done in future. “We have to introspect and analyse where the fault is. We already have a lot of channels through which any policeman can approach any senior police officer but they need review and update,” he said.

‘Woman officer  
was thrashed  
during clash’

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

A woman officer and two other senior officers were allegedly thrashed during the Tis Hazari Court Complex clashes and a loaded pistol of a male constable has been missing since the violence last week, sources said on Thursday.

In two separate CCTV footage, North district DCP Monika Bhardwaj is seen being thrashed by a mob inside the Tis Hazari Courts. In another footage, additional DCP Harinder Singh and ACP Civil Lines Ram Meher Singh is seen being thrashed by a mob on November 2.

In one of the many videos that surfaced following the incident, lawyers are seen purportedly harassing the woman officer, who is flanked by other police personnel and trying to control a group of lawyers.

Later, she can be seen running, with some lawyers trying to catch hold of her while some policemen try to shield her.

Woman gets one year  
in jail for cheque fraud

Told to pay ₹6 lakh to complainant

**NIRNIMESH KUMAR**  
NEW DELHI

A Sessions court here has upheld a one-year jail sentence for a woman in a cheque bounce case. It also directed her to pay ₹6 lakh to the complainant as compensation.

The accused had challenged a Metropolitan Magistrate court judgment holding her guilty and sentencing her to one year in jail and ₹6 lakh fine, submitting that she had issued the cheque to the complainant as a security for a ₹50,000 loan.

According to the complaint, the accused had taken an interest-free loan of ₹6 lakh from the complainant with the promise that she would repay it within three months.

However, when the complainant submitted the cheque issued by the accused in his favour for repay-

ment of the loan amount, the bank refused to honour it citing that the account did not have sufficient money.

The accused did not pay back the money even after being served a legal notice by the complainant following the bounce of the cheque.

The accused took contradictory stands in the trial. At the time of framing of charges, she admitted to taking a loan of ₹50,000 from the complainant, but kept mum on the purpose for which she had issued the cheque. But in her statement under Section 313 of the CrPC she said that the cheque was issued as a security for the ₹50,000-loan, noted Special Judge Neelam Singh.

The complainant duly discharged his liability in showing that the cheque was issued by the accused for discharge of her loan liability, the Judge said.

BJP, Cong. blame govt. for rising onion prices

Vijender Gupta says govt. created crisis by conniving with wholesale dealers

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The State units of the BJP and the Congress on Thursday held the Aam Aadmi Party government responsible for the rising price of onions in the city.

While Delhi Congress chief Subhash Chopra led a march to the Delhi Secretariat, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Vijender Gupta, led a delegation to Raj Niwas to meet Lieutenant-Governor Anil Bajjal.

Mr. Gupta said the anti-people attitude of the Arvind Kejriwal-led government and its failure to tackle the problem of shortage of onions was forcing people to buy the bulb for ₹100 per kg.

**‘AAP did not listen’**  
“The AAP government did not listen to the Centre when it repeatedly requested it to buy onions for ₹15.90 per kg out of its buffer stock,” Mr. Gupta said.



Congress workers protest against Delhi government over the rise in onion prices, on Thursday. •SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

He alleged that the government deliberately created an onion crisis by conniving with wholesale dealers. Mr. Gupta requested the L-G to order an inquiry and investigate the “onion scam” committed by the Kejriwal-led government.

“The AAP government, which flagged off 70 mobile

Meanwhile, thousands of Congress workers – some of them wearing garlands made of onions – hit out at the Centre and State governments for rising prices.

Mr. Chopra said onions were selling at over ₹100 per kg, and that both the AAP and BJP governments were unmoved by the plight of the people.

“The AAP and BJP governments need to be reminded that the people of Delhi had thrown out the BJP government in the city in 1998 over rising onion prices. The people of Delhi need to vote out the AAP government, which has woefully failed to control not only the price of onions, but other essential commodities,” Mr. Chopra said.

The Delhi Congress chief further alleged that hoarders had created an artificial shortage with the blessings of the BJP and AAP governments. He claimed that the godowns “are full of onions”.

Fresh onion crop will  
stabilise prices: vendors

‘Old produce was being sold till now’

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

The vegetable vendors in the city reported on Thursday a dip in the price of onions due to the availability of fresh crop in the markets.

The vendors said red onions from Rajasthan had entered the market, which had helped stabilise the price. “The prices had shot up as old produce was being sold due to the non-availability of new supply,” said Ramkishan, a vegetable vendor.

He added that the old produce had come from Pune and Nashik.

The price of the bulb had recently touched ₹100 per kg.

“This rise in price happens every year between October and November and lasts for about a month. But this year, it was

especially due to floods in Kholapur and other parts of the country – from where the onions come,” said Dilip Kumar, a vendor.

Another vendor Akhram Khan said the last time he had witnessed such a hike was seven years ago. He, however, dismissed allegations that there was artificial inflation created by political parties, given the seasonal nature of the problem.

“No one is at fault. The prices of vegetables vary every day based on factors such as transport, labour, and floods,” he said.

Mr. Khan, however, believed that governments could intervene by making buffer stock available during an annual spike in onion price. “People who can afford to stock up can make a lot of money during this time,” he added.

‘Commercial complex above Bhikaji  
metro station planned in 2012’

It was not an afterthought as alleged in plea, DMRC tells NGT

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation on Thursday told the National Green Tribunal that the construction of a commercial complex above Bhikaji Cama Place metro station was planned in 2012 and was not an afterthought, contrary to the allegations made in a plea.

The NGT was told that the space concerned was allotted by the Land and Development Office on a permanent basis.

“Property development

by the DMRC is in line with global examples as metros are highly capital-intensive projects. The commercial activities, apart from enhancing the appearance and ambience of the stations, will add to non-fare box revenue of the DMRC. It will also attract more commuters to the metro system,” it said.

Earlier, the NGT had ordered a status quo on the construction of the complex after a plea alleged that the space was designated for parks, as per Master Plan for Delhi (MPD)-2021. The plea

had alleged that the “illegal” construction was in violation of MPD-2021.

The DMRC contended: “Development control norms for metro stations and railway stations/terminals in MPD-2021 stipulate that metro stations along with Property Development [composite development] up to a maximum area of three hectares shall be permitted in all-use zones, except in recreational and regional park or Ridge, Heritage and Lutyens’ Bungalow Zone.”

Big thunder, little rain



Slipping spree: Motorcyclists skid during a mild drizzle in Azadpur on Thursday. •SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Festival on  
traditional  
Indian  
perfumery

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

Delhi Tourism is organising a festival on attar and *sugandhi*-making, at Dilli Haat, Janakpuri, between November 8 and 10 to bring traditional Indian perfumery to the fore.

In a statement about the festival, Delhi Tourism said that capturing the essence of flowers, spices and other natural sources and the art of making attar has been passed down through ages with rituals and practices. The festival hopes to showcase the age-old skill.

“The three-day festival will highlight the ancient and rich heritage of India in the field of natural perfumes and essential oils with sale-cum-exhibition from attar traders and makers from Kannauj. The festival will provide ample shopping opportunities for fragrance lovers who are interested in Indian perfumes, attar, exotic agarbattis, dhooopathis, scented candles, essential oils and other scented products,” Delhi Tourism said.

The festival is being organised in association with Fragrance and Flavour Development Centre, Kannauj, Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises. The festival will also host lectures on attar, sugandhi and aroma therapy, perfume-making trials and will showcase the art of making handmade leather bottles.

DU students protest construction  
of 39-storey building near campus

Protesters block entrance to metro station, raise slogans

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

Delhi University students on Thursday held a protest march near the site of a proposed 39-storey building coming up near Vishwavidyalaya metro station.

The Delhi University Teachers’ Association, Delhi University Students’ Union, and the university administration have opposed the construction on the grounds that it could compromise the privacy of women’s hostels in the area.

The students blocked the entrance to the metro station and raised slogans against the Delhi Metro Rail Corpo-

ration before being dispersed by security personnel, said the protest organisers. The construction by a private builder is reportedly being undertaken on a land that originally belonged to the Ministry of Defence. It was transferred to the DMRC and finally to the builder.

Member of the newly formed Campus Development Committee, Rasal Singh, said the university was united over the issue. He said that the building would “bulldoze the teaching-learning culture of the university”. “Government authorities must take serious cognisance... and immediately

stop the construction of this illegal building,” he added.

Earlier in the day, students’ groups started a “solidarity through food” campaign at the North Campus, serving *litti chokha* to all in an attempt to garner support against the construction. Jagannath Jaggu, a student of M.A. (Buddhist Studies) and organiser of the event, said that they are trying to unite people living in the university area.

Mr. Jaggu said that the e-rickshaw drivers’ association have extended their support to the campaign. He added that more such events will be held in the coming days.

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI

The Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) administration on Thursday appealed to students agitating against a draft hostel manual, which allegedly has provisions for fee hike and dress code, to end their protest as it is affecting the academic activities.

The administration said it is “highly concerned” that some students have continued their agitation for days

and accused the agitators of “repeatedly issuing propaganda materials with offensive and abusive language often”.

“These agitations have affected normal life of a large number of innocent students from across India who are unable to concentrate on their studies, complete academic assignments and prepare for their examinations,” it said in a statement.

While the administration persistently tried to engage

the hostel presidents in constructive dialogues, the agitators have sought to confine the provosts and hostel presidents and prevent them from having any discussion by raising extraneous issues, the university said.

Students not part of the protest have become victims of incessant propaganda and campaigns in hostel messes, it said, adding many are pressured to join the agitation.

“The administration ap-

peals to the agitating students to stop their propaganda and falsehood campaigns, and spare the vast majority of innocent students who want to concentrate on their studies,” it said.

The students’ union has been on a strike against a draft hostel manual approved by the Inter-Hall administration, saying the manual has provisions for fee hike, dress code and curfew timings.



# Punjab Assembly passes Bill on CM Amarinder’s advisers

All six of them, Cong. MLAs, now excluded from the ‘office of profit’ category

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA CHANDIGARH**  
Amid vociferous opposition, the Punjab Assembly on Thursday passed a legislation excluding the six ruling Congress MLA appointed as advisers to the Chief Minister from the office of profit category.

The Punjab State Legislature (Prevention of Disqualification) Amendment Bill, 2019, was presented in the House by Punjab Minister Brahm Mohindra on the concluding day of the special session of the Vidhan Sabha here.

Chief Minister Amarinder Singh was not present in the House on Thursday.

With this amendment, six Congress legislators – Amrinder Singh Raja Warring, Kuljit Singh Nagra, Sangat Singh Gilzian, Inderbir Singh Bolaria, Kushaldeep Dhillon and Tarsem Singh DC – will not be disqualified for hold-



CM Amarinder Singh

ing the office of profit.

The Punjab government had appointed six Minister-rank advisers to CM Amarinder Singh.

Five of them were given the status of a Cabinet Minister while the sixth legislator was given the rank of the Minister of State.

Four MLAs – Kushaldeep Singh Dhillon, Amrinder Singh Raja Warring, Sangat Singh Gilzian and Inderbir Singh Bolaria – were designated as advisers (political

while Kuljeet Singh Nagra was appointed as the adviser (planning).

Tarsem Singh DC was given the designation of the adviser (planning) with the rank of the Minister of State.

After the Bill was presented, the Leader of the Opposition and AAP MLA Harpal Singh Cheema criticised the State government, saying the move violated provisions of the Constitution and put additional burden on the exchequer.

### ‘Financial burden’

Demanding the withdrawal of the Bill, Mr. Cheema said how would the State government bear the financial burden on account of these appointments when it had “no money” to fulfil its poll promises and pay pending dearness allowance of its employees. After raising slogans against the government, members of the the AAP

staged a walk out in protest against the legislation.

Akali leader Parminder Singh Dhindsa, who also opposed to the law, said it was against the 91st amendment to the Constitution, which stated that the total number of Ministers should not exceed 15% of the total strength of the State Assembly.

“The State government brought this law to make its favourites happy. If they are so capable, then the government should have made them Ministers,” said Mr. Dhindsa, demanding the withdrawal of the Bill.

He further said the legislation was not “legally tenable”.

Lok Insaaf Party MLA Simarjeet Singh Bains also chastised the State government for bringing the law, pointing out that the State had a debt burden of ₹2.50 lakh crore and was unable to pay salary to its employees.

# Migratory birds found dead in Rajasthan’s Khichan

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA JODHPUR**

Thirty-seven demoiselle cranes were found dead at Khichan in Phalodi subdivision of Jodhpur on Thursday morning.

Three of the carcasses

were sent to Machia Biological Park for a medical examination to ascertain the cause of their death.

According to Sevaram Mali, a bird lover, the migratory birds were found dead at different places.

“We received information in the morning that some birds have been spotted dead near Vijay Sagar. When we reached there, we found 15 carcasses,” said Mr. Mali.

Later, they received information about the death of

more birds near Ratari Nadi.

On reaching their, they found 16 carcasses. Six birds were found dead at other locations.

A medical board examined the dead birds but failed to reach a conclusion.

## SHO surrenders in graft case

Laxmi Chauhan had allegedly embezzled ₹70 lakh

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GHAZIABAD**

Absconding Uttar Pradesh policewoman Laxmi Singh Chauhan, accused of embezzling ₹70 lakh, surrendered in an anti-corruption court in Meerut on Thursday along with constable Dheeraj Bhardwaj, who was allegedly her accomplice.

Ms. Chauhan was on the run for more than a month and according to local sources used every possible ‘connection’ to steer clear of the charges.

The surrender came after the Allahabad High Court rejected her appeal for anticipatory bail and the U.P. Police declared an award of ₹25,000 each on her and seven accomplices. The process of attachment of their properties had also started.

Hailed as ‘Lady Singham’ for her presence on social media, Ms. Chauhan was



Laxmi Singh Chauhan at the Meerut anti-graft court

posted as SHO at Link Road police station in Ghaziabad when she embezzled ₹70 lakh while solving, ironically, a case of embezzlement.

According to the police, on April 22, CMS Info System company lodged an FIR of stealing money meant to be loaded in ATMs across the city against its employee Rajiv Sachan. The company claimed that Mr Sachan stole a sum of ₹75.50 lakhs.

During recovery on September 24, when the accused was arrested with an accomplice, the amount was found to be ₹1.15 crore but Ms. Chauhan showed only ₹45,81,500 as the recovered amount. Later, a CCTV footage showed Ms. Chauhan allegedly transferring a ‘bag’ from a government vehicle to her private car.

### Raid at residence

On September 27, a team led by the then SP (City), Shlok Kumar, raided her residence and recovered ₹1.12 lakh and a bag of CMS Info System from there.

Soon, Sudhir Kumar Singh, Senior Superintendent of Police, Ghaziabad, suspended her and a case under Section 409 of the IPC and the Prevention of Corruption Act was registered against her and seven constables.

## Zero tolerance: 7 policemen retired in U.P.

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA LUCKNOW**

As part of its ‘zero-tolerance’ policy against corruption, the Uttar Pradesh government on Thursday gave compulsory retirement to seven police officers for not performing their duties effectively, officials said.

The officers are from the Provincial Police Service and of 50 years of age or above, an official statement said.

“Following orders of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the State government has given compulsory retirement to seven police officers on recommendations of a screening committee set up for the purpose,” Additional Chief Secretary, Home, Awanish Awasthi said.

The U.P. government has in the last two years forcibly retired more than 200 officials and employees.

## Conviction of disqualified MLA stayed

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA JABALPUR**

In a relief to disqualified Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Prahlad Lodhi, the Madhya Pradesh High Court on Thursday stayed his conviction in a criminal case and granted him bail.

On October 31, a Bhopal court had sentenced the Pawai MLA and 12 others to two years in jail for attacking Raipura tehsildar (revenue official) R.K. Verma in August 2014 for seizing a tractor smuggling sand.

Following the order, Madhya Pradesh Assembly Speaker N.P. Prajapati disqualified Mr. Lodhi on November 2.

The High Court stayed the trial court’s order till January 7, 2020, said Mr. Lodhi’s lawyer and former advocate general R.N. Singh.

## PM inaugurates Himachal global investors’ meet

‘Unwanted laws and govt. interventions hamper progress’

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**

States are now competing with each other to provide enabling ecosystems for investors, rather than a competition of concessions and discounts, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday while inaugurating the two-day Rising Himachal Global Investors Meet in Dharamshala.

“Prime Minister said that in the last few years States have realised that this competition of offering discounts or concessions to industrialists were of no benefit to anyone - either to the State or to the Industrialists. He said it is essential that there is an enabling ecosystem for investors to invest in the States, where it is free

of the Inspector Raj and the need of permits at every stage,” a statement from the Prime Minister’s Office said.

He added that unwanted laws and government interventions helped in slowing down progress. Citing the changes made by his government, the Prime Minister said India had improved 79 places in the Ease of Doing Business Rankings from 2014 till 2019.

“Every year we are improving in each parameter. Improvement in these rankings means that our Government is making decisions after a thorough understanding of the needs at the grass roots level for the industry,” he said.

Speaking about the Himachal Pradesh government’s

steps, including single-window clearance, he said the State has a huge potential for conference tourism.

Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur said the State government had a target of attracting investment of ₹85,000 crore and had been able to sign 603 MoUs worth ₹92,439 crore, a Himachal Pradesh government statement said.

### Pharma research hub

Mr. Thakur added that the government was interested in developing the State as a research and development hub for pharmaceuticals.

He also said that the State government would soon set up an investment promotion authority to facilitate investments.

## Minister slaps defamation notice on UPCC chief

‘Allegations against me indecent’

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA LUCKNOW**

Uttar Pradesh Power Minister Shrikant Sharma on Thursday sent a defamation notice to UPCC chief Ajay Kumar Lallu giving him an ultimatum to apologise within 24 hours for making “indecent allegations” against him regarding the ₹2,600 crore EPF scam in State power department.

“The notice has been sent to the Congress leader by the Energy Minister for making wrong and indecent allegations against him in connection with the case,” PRO in the energy department Ankush Tripathi said.

In case Mr. Lallu does not offer an apology, a case will be registered against him under the IPC, the Minister warned.

**BANGALORE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY COMPANY LIMITED**  
(Wholly owned Government of Karnataka Undertaking)  
(CIN-U04010KA2002SGC030438)

**BRIEF TENDER NOTIFICATION** (Through e-Procurement Platform)  
BESCOM invites Tender through e-Procurement for the following:

Sl. No.	Enquiry No:	Name of the Material
1.	BCP-1182/ 2019-20	Execution of Action plan works on Total Turnkey basis under rate contract in BMA (South & North) Zone for 2 years

Bid Documents available from : **14.11.2019 to 16.12.2019, 15:00 Hrs.** Last date for submission of Bids : **16.12.2019,15:00 Hrs.**  
Opening of Technical Bid Document : **17.12.2019, 15:15 Hrs.** The Bidding Documents can be downloaded through the e-procurement portal from the website <http://www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in>  
Aspiring bidders need to register in the e-procurement portal. Further, bidders can obtain the assistance of the e-procurement help desk at 080-25501216, 25501227.  
Sd/-  
For Electricity Related Complaints Call: 1912 The General Manager (Ele.),  
Download BESCOM MITHRA Mobile App. (Procurement), BESCOM.

## Dhankhar bats for Ayushman Bharat scheme in Bengal

Governor says health matters should be ‘above politics’

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday batted for implementation of Central government’s Ayushman Bharat scheme in the State saying “matters of health should be kept above politics”.

“I have been the Governor [of West Bengal] for less than 100 days and I have received between 2,000 and 3,000 applications from people all over the State seeking medical assistance. I examined all [applications] and found that they were eligible for benefits under the Centre’s Ayushman Bharat scheme,” the Governor said at an event in Kolkata.

Mr. Dhankhar said he finds it incongruous why a Central scheme that makes available such a



Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar. ■FILE PHOTO

great facility, which has been recognised all over the world, is not being adopted for the benefit of the people of Bengal.

**Bengal programmes**  
The Trinamool Congress government in the State had pulled out of the Ayushman Bharat scheme, stating that the programmes launched by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee were enough to cater to the health requirements of the people

of Bengal.  
“If I can get 3,000 applications in three months, it reflects the state of affairs. I would therefore urge those concerned to work in harmony. Health should be above politics,” the Governor said.

Ever since he assumed charge in July this year, Governor Dhankhar has questioned the functioning of the State government on several issues, including law and order and education system. Though there was a thaw in relations after Mr. Dhankhar visited the residence of Ms. Banerjee on Kali Puja, the comments and counter comments have continued.

Ms. Banerjee refused to make any comments on the Governor’s remarks during a press conference.

## Bru refugees end road blockade

State govt. assures of ration supply to relief camps

SYED SAJJAD ALI  
AGARTALA

Protesting Mizoram Bru refugees in north Tripura withdrew their indefinite road blockade on Thursday after the State government announced its decision to restore ration in relief camps.

A group of Ministers headed by Deputy Chief Minister Jishnu Dev Varma held a meeting with the refugee leaders at the

protest site in Kanchanpur, 180 km north of here. “The issue is not so big that we cannot settle here. You will be getting ration materials from tomorrow [Friday],” Mr. Dev Varma said addressing hundreds of protesters.

The blockade entered eighth day on Thursday. The police and the administration initially threatened to use force to

break it, but relented after instructions from the State government.

Mr. Dev Varma said the State government would provide ration on its own and the Ministry of Home Affairs-funded relief operation remained suspended. The MHA adopted the harsh decision after its latest arrangements to repatriate the refugees to Mizoram failed to make headway.





Congress MLA Vishwajeet Kadam hurt in car accident

SHOUMJOIT BANERJEE  
PUNE

Congress legislator Vishwajeet Kadam had a narrow escape when the car he was in met with an accident in Pune late on Wednesday.

Dr. Kadam, an MLA from Sangli's Palus-Kadegaon constituency, suffered minor injuries after his car rammed into a tree, injuring him and his driver while severely mangling the vehicle.

In a statement issued on Thursday, Dr. Kadam said: "While en route from Mumbai to Pune, I met with a minor accident last night after my car hit a tree. I have sustained minor injuries on my left shoulder. Fortunately, nothing untoward happened and both the driver and I are safe. All requisite medical tests have been done and there is no cause for alarm."

Dr. Kadam was elected unopposed from the Palus-Kadegaon Assembly seat in the bypoll held on May 28 last year. The election had been necessitated following the death of Dr. Kadam's father, former minister and senior Congressman Dr. Patangrao Kadam.

Online booking must for Goa Raj Bhavan visit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PANAJI

Two days after the Goa tourism department announced that Raj Bhavan would be closed for public temporarily due to "security reasons", the Governor's office said those who make advance online bookings will be allowed to visit.

Don't link RSS chief to government formation in State, says Gadkari

'Devendra Fadnavis will head the new government'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NAGPUR

Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday said RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat should not be linked to the government formation moves in Maharashtra.

He also said a decision will soon be taken on government formation in the State, and since the BJP won more number of seats than the Sena, the Chief Minister will be from his party.

Speaking to reporters here, the Lok Sabha member from Nagpur also ruled out his return to his home State to assume the top job.

"Devendra Fadnavis will head the new government," Mr. Gadkari said.

To another query, he said, "RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat or the Sangh have no relation with all this. It won't be appropriate to link the RSS chief to the goings on (over government formation)."



Union Minister and Lok Sabha MP from Nagpur Nitin Gadkari is confident of a solution to the deadlock in the talks between BJP and Shiv Sena. ■FILE

Amid the impasse over government formation, farm activist Kishore Tiwari, who joined the Shiv Sena ahead of the Assembly polls, recently said Mr. Bhagwat should depu- te Mr. Gadkari to resolve the power-tussle between the BJP and the Sena.

He said people were wor- ried over the Sangh's "si- lence" on the issue.

Mr. Gadkari said the BJP and Shiv Sena have got peo- ple's mandate to form the

new government and very soon a decision will be taken.

"The BJP has won 105 seats, obviously the chief mi- nister will be of the BJP. The party that has won more seats in Assembly polls will have the chief minister's post," he said.

However, Mr. Gadkari said he was hopeful that the dea- dlock between the BJP and Shiv Sena will get resolved.

"Maharashtra will have the BJP-Sena government un-

der the leadership of Deven- dra Fadnavis. The mandate is for 'yuti' (grand alliance), so there will be some solution to the deadlock," he said. "Mr. Fadnavis has been ap- pointed leader of the BJP's le- gislature wing. The govern- ment should be formed under his leadership," Mr. Gadkari said.

He also said that talks with the Sena were on and there will be a solution "for sure", he said.

He also ruled out his re- turn to the State to take up the top post. "There is no question of me coming to Maharashtra. I am working in Delhi," he said.

The BJP and Shiv Sena are locked in a tussle over the issue of the Chief Minister's post, resulting in a stalemate in government formation despite results of the October 24 Assembly polls giving the alliance a combined seat strength of 161.

Pune court to rule on Navlakha's anticipatory bail plea on Nov. 12

'Don't take any coercive action against accused till then'

SHOUMJOIT BANERJEE  
PUNE

The Pune Sessions court on Thursday reserved orders on the anticipatory bail plea of Delhi-based author and civil rights activist Gautam Navlakha for November 12.

Mr. Navlakha is named as an accused by the Pune City police in the Elgaar Parishad case and is probing him, along with 21 other promi- nent lawyers, academics, Dalit and human rights ac- tivists, for alleged links with the outlawed Communist Party of India (Maoist).

Additional Sessions Judge S.R. Navandar heard the ar- guments of both the prose- cution and the defence on Mr. Navlakha's plea.

Opposing the bail, dis- trict government pleader Ujjwala Pawar dubbed Mr. Navlakha an "anti-national" who she alleged was trying to unite the banned CPI (Maoist) with the outlawed Hizb-ul-Mujahideen terror group.

Ms. Pawar sought Mr. Navlakha's custody to ena- ble the authorities to ascer- tain the 'damage' caused by the accused's alleged links with the Maoists and the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen.

"As the material seized from his [Mr. Navlakha's] possession shows him to be an active member of the banned Maoist organisa- tion, we need his custody to determine how many youths were recruited by the accused as well as the nature of funding given to the outlawed group," the go- vernment pleader asserted.

She also submitted some of the 'material evidence' to the court in a sealed envelope.

Taking objection to this, defence counsel Ragini Ahuja said that if the mate- rial was indeed recovered from Mr. Navlakha's posses- sion, it must be shared with the defence in order to gauge its veracity.

Ms. Ahuja further submit- ted that there was no in- criminating evidence to prove Mr. Navlakha's invol- vement in any illicit or an- ternational activity as alleged by the authorities and the prosecution.

"Despite the authorities'



Gautam Navlakha.

claim of Mr. Navlakha's name being mentioned in the so-called Maoist com- muniqés, there is no evi- dence to prove he was com- plicit in any 'terrorist' activity. His work as part of fact-finding missions in strife-torn areas is com- pletely legal," Ms. Ahuja argued.

After hearing both sides, Judge Navandar said that he would pass an order on Mr. Navlakha's plea on Novem- ber 12 and asked police not to take any coercive action against the accused till then.

The Bombay High Court had on Monday directed Mr. Navlakha to approach the Pune court for anticipatory bail.

The activist had accord- ingly withdrawn his anti- cipatory bail plea in the High Court and filed a plea before the Pune court the next day.

In September, the Bom- bay High Court had refused to quash the Pune police's case against Mr. Navlakha. The case is registered under sections of the Unlawful Ac- tivities (Prevention) Act (UA- PA) and various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which include charges of 'sedition'.

However, the high court had at the time extended Mr. Navlakha's interim relief from arrest by three weeks, allowing him to appeal in the Supreme Court.

On October 4, the apex court had extended Mr. Nav- lakha's protection from ar- rest till October 15.

It later extended by four weeks the interim protec- tion while granting him per- mission to approach an ap- propriate court to seek anticipatory bail.

This interim relief period expires on November 11.

On August 28 last year, the Pune City police had carried out a second coun- trywide crackdown in connection with the Elgaar Par- ishад and Bhima Koregaon violence case by searching residences of seven other academics and activists known for their dissenting views and work among the dispossessed.

The houses of Mr. Navlak- ha along with those of prom- inent activists Sudha Bha- radwaj, P. Varavara Rao, Vernon Gonsalves, Arun Ferreira, Anand Teltumbde and Father Stan Swamy were searched at the time.

Ms. Bharadwaj, Mr. Rao, Mr. Gonsalves and Mr. Fer- reira are presently in Pune's Yerwada jail along with ad- vocate Surendra Gadling, Shoma Sen, Rona Wilson, Mahesh Raut and Sudhir Dhawale.

The Pune City police's case rests on an FIR regis- tered at the city's Vishram- baug police station (in Janu- ary 2018) under sections 153 (a) [Promoting enmity be- tween different groups on ground of religion, race, etc] and 505 1 (b) among others in connection with the 'Elgaar Parishad' held at Pune's Shaniwarwada Fort on December 31, 2017, as part of the bicentenary cele- brations of the Bhima Koregaon battle.

The FIR, based on a com- plaint by one Tushar Dam- gude in the immediate after- math of the Bhima Koregaon clashes of January 1, 2018, was initially lodged against six participants in- cluding Mr. Dhawale.

Those named in the FIR were members of the Kabir Kala Manch – a radical Dalit cultural troupe.

The complainant had ac- cused the KKM activists of making a number of "in- flammatory" speeches and delivering "socially divi- sive" presentations during the course of the troupe's performance and recitals at the 'Elgaar Parishad', which lasted almost eight hours and witnessed the partici- pation of thousands of per- sons from more than 250 progressive social outfits in- cluding several left-leaning and Ambedkarite groups.

The wait continues



No news: With the stalemate over government formation in the State continuing, Shiv Sena party workers and journalists gather outside Matoshree, residence of party president Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday. ■VIJAY BATE

BJP to be blamed for crisis: Congress

'Party seems to be on wait and watch mode till Sena blinks'

ALOK DESHPANDE  
MUMBAI

A day after fault lines in Maharashtra Congress were visible over the issue of ex- tending support to Shiv Se- na, the State leadership blamed the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for the continu- ing crisis.

"The BJP is responsible for the mess in the State. It had given the word to its ally in Maharashtra. It did not fulfil the promise neither it treated its ally with care. The BJP is holding out the threat of President's Rule in Maharashtra. Whom are they threatening? Because of the BJP, entire State has



Balasaheb Thorat

landed in a difficult po- sition," said State Congress president Balasaheb Thorat.

Mr. Thorat alleged that the BJP has already started using all dirty tricks to poach MLAs of other parties. "The BJP was using all

its tricks even before the elections. Now that they are falling short of numbers, it is resorting to the same meth- ods," he claimed.

Leader of Opposition Vi- jay Vadettiwar too blamed the BJP for leading the State towards constitutional cri- sis. "If the BJP has emerged as the single largest party in the State, then it is the party's responsibility to stake claim and form the govern- ment. By not doing so, the party is pushing the State to- wards President's Rule. They are responsible for the present condition of the State," he said.

Meanwhile, a day after

announcing a three-day tour to areas affected by exces- sive unseasonal rains, Na- tionalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar is likely to cut short his tour and return to Mumbai on Friday morning. The five- year term of the present As- sembly ends on November 8 midnight.

"It seems the BJP is not going to stake claim and is ready for President's Rule. The party seem to be on wait and watch mode till Se- na blinks. It will not form the government with minority mandate," said senior jour- nalist and political commen- tator Sanjay Jog.

Goa village withdraws tax on taking pictures, video

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PANAJI

The panchayat of a village in Goa on Thursday an- nounced withdrawal of a tax imposed on tourists clicking pictures and shooting videos in its jurisdiction.

The move came hours af- ter Tourism Minister Mano- har Ajaonkar said his de- partment has not granted permission for imposition of such a tax and assured an in- quiry into the issue.

Located just 9 km from Panaji in North Goa, Parra is the ancestral village of late chief minister Manohar Par- rikar and is known for its scenic beauty and main road lined with coconut trees.

Deliah Lobo, sarpanch of Parra, told reporters that

Swachhta tax imposed in the jurisdiction of the village panchayat has been with- drawn "as of now".

The matter came to light on Wednesday after some Goa-based activists took to social media to highlight that Parra panchayat had been levying tax on clicking pictures or shooting videos in its jurisdiction.

A sign board put up prom- inently on the main road of the village reads: "Swach-hta Tax/Mission Clean Parra Tax will be levied on all film shoots and photo shoots. Tax will vary for individuals and commercials."

Mr. Ajaonkar on Thurs- day disapproved of the move, saying it does not have government sanction.



IN BRIEF



**Fulfilled promise to AgriGold victims: Jagan**  
GUNTUR  
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has said that he has fulfilled his promise of doing justice to victims of AgriGold Chit Fund scam within five months of assuming office. Mr. Jagan on Thursday set in motion the process of giving back the money to those who had deposited ₹10,000 or less in AgriGold.

**Suspect in tahsildar's murder succumbs**  
HYDERABAD  
Kura Suresh, 37, who allegedly set ablaze Abdullapurmet tahsildar Ch. Vijaya Reddy in her office here over some land dispute on November 4, succumbed to his burns on Thursday. Suresh, a farmer from Gouravelli village in Telangana's Rangareddy district, entered Ms. Reddy's chambers and doused her with petrol and set her ablaze. He was also on fire when he came out of the room.

# Kerala rules out CBI probe into armed police recruitment exam

CM backs hiring 'other' candidates on the rank list

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM  
Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has ruled out a CBI probe into the charges of irregularities in the examination conducted by the Kerala Public Service Commission (PSC) for recruiting civil police officers (CPO) for the Kerala Armed Police (KAP), Kasaragod Battalion.

He, however, promised to recommend that the commission issue provisional recruitment advice memo to other candidates on the rank list.

Replying in the Assembly to a notice for an adjournment motion by Anoop Jacob for a CBI probe on Thursday, Mr. Vijayan said the commission being a constitutional body, the government had limitations in intervening in its functioning. But it was committed to pro-



Pinarayi Vijayan

tecting the interests of other candidates on the rank list.

**Denies charge**  
Mr. Vijayan denied the Opposition allegation that the accused got bail, thanks to the police laxity in filing the chargesheet. He said the court granted bail on its conviction. The police had arrested the accused and the Crime Branch probe in the

## PSC to go ahead with recruitment process

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM  
The Kerala Public Service Commission (PSC) will discuss the interim inquiry report submitted by the Crime Branch on Monday and expedite steps to fill the vacancies of 2,752 civil police officers in the Kerala Armed Police. Commission chairman

M.K. Sakeer told *The Hindu* here on Thursday that the Crime Branch probe had found that the examination system had not been breached. "The commission would go ahead with the recruitment process, so that the hopes of the candidates who sat for the examination are not dashed, he said.

case was progressing. There was a delay in getting the forensic report, he said.

Mr. Jacob alleged that the accused, SFI activists, were enjoying political protection of the CPI(M) and the delay in filing the chargesheet was proof of this.

He accused the Crime Branch of trying to help the accused and demanded a CBI probe to expose the ma-

fia behind the scam. Mr. Vijayan sought to allay the concerns of the candidates and said the government was pursuing the case seriously to protect the credibility of the commission. Based on the Chief Minister's reply, Speaker P. Sreeramakrishnan denied permission for the notice and the Opposition walked out in protest.

## Heated arguments at panel meet on Tipu Sultan

**STAFF REPORTER**  
BENGALURU

A meeting convened on Thursday by a special committee to deliberate on whether lessons pertaining to Mysuru ruler Tipu Sultan should be dropped, retained, or modified in school textbooks saw heated arguments that went on for over two hours.

The committee, comprising officials and experts, has been asked to submit a report within a fortnight, but experts have sought a month's time.

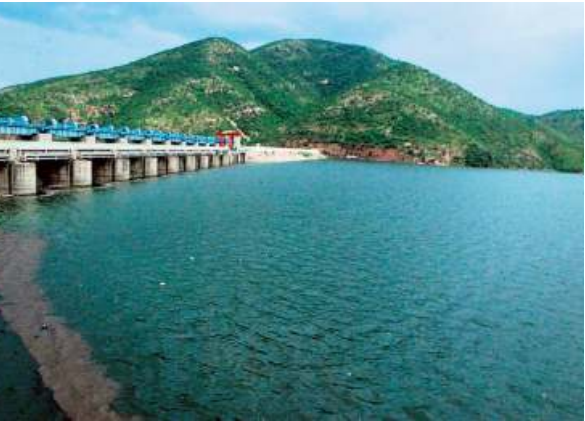
The meeting was convened after Madikeri MLA Appachu Ranjan of the BJP wrote to the Karnataka government demanding that the lessons on Tipu be removed, alleging that the ruler was a "fanatic". At the meeting, Mr. Rajan made a presentation and urged the officials of the Karnataka Textbook Society and subject experts to remove the lessons.

An official of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) said the committee would scrutinise the documents presented by Mr. Ranjan and then give their opinion.

As many as 10 members were present at the meeting, which included officials of the Karnataka Textbook Society, subject experts who were part of the textbook revision committee, and Mr. Ranjan and his lawyer.

Mr. Ranjan maintained that all lessons pertaining to Tipu should be removed and said he had submitted all documents that showed Tipu was a "cruel ruler."

However, a source, who was at the meeting, felt that Mr. Ranjan's claims were not backed by adequate documents.



**Full capacity:** The Somasila reservoir in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh is brimming with water. ■K. RAVIKUMAR

# Chennai can bank on A.P. for water

Nellore reservoirs have good storage

**S. MURALI**  
NELLORE

Chennai city, which grappled with severe drinking water shortage, can be assured of its full quota of Krishna water from Andhra Pradesh this season, as major reservoirs in Nellore district have comfortable storage.

The Kandaleru reservoir, which augments drinking water supply to the metropolis, has built up a healthy storage of over 40.82 tmcft water with the Krishna in spate in several spells.

"There will be no hitch in ensuring Chennai's quota of 12 tmcft water in two spells ahead of the 2020 summer," said sources in the Telugu Ganga project.

Cities and towns dependent on the reservoirs in Nellore district for drinking water supply, which included Nellore and Tirupati, Srikalahasti, Venkatagiri and Kavali, will have no problem in ensuring the precious liquid, as the Somasila reservoir, which replenishes water to Kandaleru, is now full to its capacity.

**Combined storage**  
The district has a combined storage of 119.56 tmcft in-

cluding 74.62 tmcft in Somasila, which gets replenishment from the Kundu and the Krishna rivers, said Nellore Circle Superintending Engineer.

"We will have no problem in ensuring water to grow two crops under the Penna, Somasila, Kandaleru irrigation systems," he told *The Hindu*.

With the release of more than 1 tmcft each day from the Somasila to the Kandaleru reservoirs, the latter could be expected to reach surplus in a month or so, he said.

The discharge from Kandaleru, which still had a flood cushion of 27.21 tmcft, was maintained at 3,566 cusecs of water.

**Farmers happy**  
Farm activity picked up briskly in 8 lakh acres in the district after a long gap.

The farmers are a happier lot as they will also be able to go for a second crop during summer.

The district, which was in the grip of drought last year, is all set to receive fresh downpour in the wake of a new weather system developing in the Bay of Bengal this week.

# Reconsider stand on RTC strike, HC tells Telangana

One more straw on your back will not make the State bankrupt: CJ

**MARRI RAMU**  
HYDERABAD

Observing that a king should be like father figure to people, the Telangana High Court on Thursday asked the State government to reconsider its stand on the strike of the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) workers.

As Advocate General B.S. Prasad and Chief Secretary S.K. Joshi said the workers



**Forceful eviction:** People protesting in Hyderabad being taken away by the police on Thursday. ■G. RAMAKRISHNA

were "not budging a bit," the HC said the State, being mightier, should take the in-

itiative to hold talks. "More learned and more mightier persons should be more po-

lite and more sparing," Chief Justice Raghvendra Singh Chauhan said.

When the AG said the State had already appealed to the workers to resume duties, the CJ said giving an option of either do this or that cannot be an appeal. "Was it a promise or threat?" the Bench asked.

The CJ said both sides should negotiate and ensure the people were not put to difficulties. "But the government is not willing to walk the extra mile," the CJ said. The Bench expressed displeasure over the government's response over its pre-

vious request to release ₹49 crore to concede four of the 45 demands of the employees. "When the government had borrowed thousands of crores of rupees for an irrigation project, why not an extra straw on your back? One small straw would not make the State bankrupt," the CJ remarked.

The hearing was posted for Monday.

Employees and workers unions of the TSRTC began the strike on October 5, demanding merger of the RTC with the government, recruitment to various posts, among others.





**Woman dead, 20 injured as van falls into gorge**  
KODAIKANAL  
A woman was killed and 20 others were injured after a tourist van from Gujarat plunged into a gorge while on its way from Kodaikanal to Palani on Thursday.

**Govt. plans new rules for private security firms**  
NEW DELHI  
With private security agencies becoming one of the major job generators in the country, the government plans to frame new rules for the sector's development and employees' welfare. The Ministry of Home Affairs, in a notification, has invited from individuals and organisations suggestions on the draft Private Security Agencies Central (Amendment) Model Rules, 2019. PTI

**CRPF jawan killed in encounter with Naxals**  
NEW DELHI  
A Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawan was killed in an encounter with Naxals in Chhattisgarh on Thursday, officials said here. The encounter took place in the Tonguda-Pamed area of Bijapur district at about 4 a.m., they said. The State police was out for an operation in the jungles, the officials said. Some Maoists are also suspected to have been killed in the exchange of fire, they said. PTI

JEE: TMC to protest against Centre's 'bias'

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA KOLKATA**  
Escalating her fight with the Centre over alleged bias against regional languages in conducting JEE (Main) tests, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Thursday her party will hold State-wide protests against it on November 11.  
She also asked other States to organise similar protests.  
The TMC supremo is up in arms against the Centre over inclusion of only the Gujarati language in the JEE (Main) examination held for admission to engineering colleges.  
She claimed States were not consulted about it, a charge dismissed by the National Testing Agency (NTA), which conducts the examination.

Kerala on its way to achieve 100% Internet penetration

It has the second highest coverage, report shows

**VARUN B. KRISHNAN CHENNAI**  
Kerala's Finance Minister Thomas Isaac tweeted on Thursday that the Kerala Fibre Optic Network project, pegged at ₹1,548 crore, would provide Internet to every household in the State. "For 20 lakh BPL households it will be free," the tweet read.  
The project is slated for completion by December 2020.  
However, going by data in a recent report by the Internet And Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), Kerala is already halfway to its goal of 100% coverage.  
According to the report, titled 'India Internet 2019,' the State's Internet penetration rate is the second highest in the country (54%), next only to Delhi NCR with 69% penetration.  
The Internet penetration rate (defined as number of individuals aged above 12 per 100 population who accessed the Internet in the last month; survey period Ja-

Maharashtra tops in justice delivery

Report brings to light key issues across four pillars: police, judiciary, prisons and legal aid

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**  
Maharashtra has topped the list of 18 large-medium States in the overall first-ever ranking of Indian States on justice delivery, followed by Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Haryana.  
In this category, Jharkhand, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are at the bottom, while among seven smaller States, Goa leads the group.  
This is according to the India Justice Report 2019, released on Thursday by the Tata Trusts in collaboration with Centre for Social Justice, Common Cause, and Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, among others.

**Public data**  
The report is based on publicly available data from different government entities on the four pillars of justice



**Cloudy skies:** According to IMD, moderate rainfall is expected due to Cyclone Maha's impact. •EMMANUAL YOGINI

'Bulbul' likely to bring heavy rain to Odisha  
RAF teams sent to coastal districts

**STAFF REPORTER BHUBANESWAR/AHMEDABAD**  
The cyclonic storm 'Bulbul' over east-central Bay of Bengal may skip Odisha coast, but the State government has taken no chance and has kept its coastal districts prepared for the storm, which is likely to bring heavy rainfall.  
While three districts – Jagatsinghpur, Balasore and Puri – announced closure of schools on Friday, schools will remain close in nine districts on Saturday.  
"We have sent two units of Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force each to nine districts and units of National Disaster Response Force have moved to six coastal districts," said P.K. Jena, Special Relief Commissioner on Thursday.  
"The cyclonic storm 'Bul-

### Justice meter

While Maharashtra emerged as the overall topper among large/medium States in justice delivery, Tamil Nadu and Kerala fared better in individual categories

\*Scores out of a total of 10 points

#### Policing

- Tamil Nadu topped with a score of 6.49\*
- U.P. was at the bottom with a score of 2.98, whereas Bihar got 3.77

#### Judiciary

- Tamil Nadu was on top with a score of 6.99 | Bihar was the worst performer with a score of 2.41, while U.P. scored 3.7, Karnataka 3.76, Uttarakhand 4.17 and Jharkhand 4.3

#### Prisons

- Kerala ranked on top with a score of 7.18
- Jharkhand fared the worst with a score of 3.46, whereas Uttarakhand scores 3.72, Punjab 4.35, Andhra Pradesh 4.35 and U.P. 4.42

#### Legal aid

- Kerala topped with a score of 6.58 | U.P. fared the worst, followed by Uttarakhand, Bihar and Odisha

delivery – police, judiciary, prisons and legal aid.  
Releasing the report, Justice (Retd.) Madan B. Lokur called it a pioneering study and said: "The findings establish beyond doubt very serious lacunae in our justice delivery system. It is an excellent effort to mainstream the issues concerning our

justice system, which in fact affect every aspect of society, governance and the economy."  
The report highlights the fact that even the best performing States scored less than 60% in their performance on capacity across the police, judiciary, prisons and legal aid.

The country has about 18,200 judges with about 23% sanctioned posts vacant, notes the report, adding that women are poorly represented in these pillars, constituting just 7% of the police.  
"Prisons are over-occupied at 114%, where 68% are undertrials awaiting investi-

Railway vendor faces flak for recruitment ad on caste lines

IRCTC reprimands firm after backlash on social media

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI**  
A railway vendor, which aluded to caste preferences in its recruitment advertisement, has been ticked off by the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) after severe backlash on the social media.  
Brandavan Food Products sought 100 male candidates for three posts: train catering manager, base kitchen manager and store manager.

In the recruitment advertisement it said candidates should belong to "Agrawal



The advertisement said candidates should belong to "Agrawal Vaish Community."

Vaish Community" and have a "good family background," besides educational qualification of '10+2'.

Woman raped in moving car in Odisha

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA BHUBANESWAR**  
A woman was allegedly raped in a moving car and dumped in a critical condition near a college in Odisha's Khurda district, police said.  
Bhubaneswar DCP Anup K. Sahoo said the accused was arrested. "We cannot say for sure if more than one person was involved," SP (Rural) Ajay Pratap Swain said.

Family alleges starvation death in Jharkhand

State Food Minister denies charge

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA RANCHI/GIRIDIH**  
A family in Jharkhand's Giridih district has alleged that one of its members died of starvation. But the State's Food and Civil Supplies Minister Saryu Roy on Thursday said official reports failed to prove the claim.  
The Minister said a perfectly laid out protocol to prevent death due to starvation is in place in the State.

Two women among winners of Infosys Prize

Recipients chosen from six categories

**STAFF REPORTER BENGALURU**  
A professor from the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, is among the six winners of the Infosys Prize 2019, which were announced by the Infosys Science Foundation here on Thursday. The winners' list also included two women.  
The recipients, who were chosen from 196 nominations for their contributions in six categories – Engineering and Computer Science, Humanities, Life Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, Physical Sciences and Social Sciences – will receive a gold medal, a citation and a prize purse of \$1,00,000 (or its equivalent in rupees) each.

**The winners**  
The winners are: Engineering and Computer Science: Sunita Sarawagi, Institute Chair Professor, Computer Science and Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay; Humanities: Manu V. Devadevan, Assistant Professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Mandi; Life Sciences: Manjula Reddy, Chief Scientist, Centre for

Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad; Mathematical Sciences: Siddhartha Mishra, Professor, Department of Mathematics, ETH Zürich; Physical Sciences: G. Magesh, Professor, Department of Inorganic and Physical Chemistry, Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru; Social Sciences: Anand Pandian, Professor, Department of Anthropology, Krieger School of Arts and Sciences, Johns Hopkins University.  
Trustees of the foundation, including S.D. Shibulal, Kris Gopalakrishnan, Narayana Murthy, Nandan Nilekani, K. Dinesh and Sri-nath Batni shared the dais.  
"We have to increase the overall spending on research. The government plans to increase this to 1%. The private sector needs to do something too. The other area is translation, where the spending is very little. Industries are not involved with academic institutions. Industries should come forward to pay for proof of concept," said Mr. Gopalakrishnan, adding that youngsters should pursue fundamental research enthusiastically to solve problems plaguing India.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

**Forecast for Friday:** Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Odisha, Kerala, Mahe, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal. Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning likely at isolated places over interior Karnataka. Sea condition likely to be very high over central and adjoining northwest Bay of Bengal; rough along and off Odisha coast.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	31.0	20.0	Kozhikode	—	34.0	25.0
Ahmedabad	0.2	31.0	23.0	Kurnool	—	33.0	24.0
Aizawl	—	25.0	14.0	Lucknow	—	29.0	18.0
Allahabad	—	30.0	17.0	Madurai	—	35.0	25.0
Bengaluru	—	30.0	19.0	Mangaluru	5.3	32.0	23.0
Bhopal	—	31.0	20.0	Mumbai	—	32.0	25.0
Bhubaneswar	—	31.0	22.0	Mysuru	—	30.0	20.0
Chandigarh	7.6	26.0	16.0	New Delhi	—	23.0	18.0
Chennai	—	33.0	26.0	Patna	—	31.0	17.0
Coimbatore	—	33.0	23.0	Port Blair	10.5	31.0	23.0
Dehradun	—	27.0	14.0	Puducherry	—	31.0	24.0
Gangtok	—	19.0	11.0	Pune	—	7.8	31.0
Goa	1.6	33.0	24.0	Raipur	—	31.0	21.0
Guwahati	—	32.0	20.0	Ranchi	—	26.0	15.0
Hubballi	—	28.0	21.0	Shillong	5.8	23.0	12.0
Hyderabad	1.9	32.0	21.0	Shimla	—	5.6	12.0
Imphal	—	27.0	14.0	Srinagar	1.7	10.0	5.0
Jaipur	1.9	28.0	18.0	Thiruvananthapuram	—	34.0	25.0
Kochi	—	32.0	25.0	Tiruchi	—	35.0	26.0
Kohima	—	26.0	13.0	Vijayawada	—	33.0	23.0
Kolkata	—	29.0	21.0	Visakhapatnam	—	31.0	25.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)  
**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**  

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>2</sub>	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE	Yesterday
Ahmedabad	—	—	33	—	—	—	—
Bengaluru	5	29	56	345	—	—	—
Chennai	14	31	49	316	—	—	—
Delhi	22	63	88	361	298	—	—
Hyderabad	7	48	38	233	—	—	—
Kolkata	9	73	36	265	174	—	—
Lucknow	14	38	42	417	—	—	—
Mumbai	9	62	116	—	28	43	—
Pune	85	10	74	63	63	—	—
Visakhapatnam	38	58	38	218	139	—	—

  
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.  
**PM2.5 & PM10:** 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





## Real estate shelter

The Alternative Investment Fund could help revive the stressed sector

From first looks, the long-awaited package to support the real estate sector, cleared by the Cabinet on Wednesday, appears well-designed. The ₹25,000 crore Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has expanded in both size and scope from the earlier one announced in September. And the variables are clear such as the unit sizes that will be supported. The AIF will provide funds to bail out stalled real estate projects with unit size of less than ₹2 crore a unit in metros and ₹1 crore in other places. The Centre will contribute ₹10,000 crore, with the State Bank of India and Life Insurance Corporation of India providing the balance. The fund, to be managed by SBICAP Ventures, will offer support to viable projects with a positive net worth and registered with the Real Estate Regulatory Authority. What makes the scheme good is that it will also apply to projects that have been declared as non-performing assets by banks and to those lined up before the insolvency court. Apart from real estate promoters, this will also aid lenders, mainly finance companies and banks, whose funds are locked up in these projects. According to Ms. Sitharaman, over 1,600 projects involving some 4.58 lakh housing units are stalled for want of funds. There are also unsold units across the country with one market estimate putting their value at over ₹4 lakh crore. Most of the stalled projects are solvent but stuck for liquidity and with support from the AIF, can be completed, unlocking value not just for buyers but also precious cash for the project promoters and their lenders.

The real estate sector is not only one of the biggest provider of jobs but also has a huge multiplier effect in the economy. Industries ranging from cement and steel to paints and sanitaryware stand to reap the benefits of a healthy real estate sector. This is apart from banks and financial institutions. While the AIF is a good idea, it is important that it is implemented without glitches. Too many good ideas have suffered due to bad implementation. The critical part will be identifying the genuine projects in need of support and ensuring that biases do not creep in. Also important will be attracting more investors into the AIF. The Finance Minister said that sovereign funds and other private investors have shown interest. These need to be followed upon quickly and money should be released from the AIF right away so that the trickle-down effect is felt before the end of this financial year. Along with private money in the AIF will also come return expectations that need to be managed. The government, through its latest move, and the Reserve Bank of India with successive rate cuts and liquidity infusion, have set the stage. The real estate industry now has to do its part.

## Junking fast food

Enforcement is key in preventing school children from accessing unhealthy food

In a welcome step, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has notified a draft regulation aimed at prohibiting the sale and advertisement of food rich in fat, sugar and salt to schoolchildren inside the school premises and within 50 m around it. It comes in response to the 2015 order from the Delhi High Court directing the central agency to frame norms to promote healthy diets in schools. Besides prohibiting the sale of junk food, the FSSAI requires schools to simultaneously encourage and promote a safe and balanced diet. In a bid to shield the children from consuming unhealthy food items and snacks, the FSSAI prohibits food companies that manufacture such items from advertising or offering for free such foods in school premises and within 50 m of the campus. To thwart food companies from luring children to consume foods rich in fat, sugar and salt, the companies are prohibited from using their logos, brand names and product names on books and other educational materials, as well as on school property such as buildings, buses, and athletic fields. As a general guidance to provide wholesome food, the agency recommends the use of a combination of whole grains, milk, eggs, and millets; it also listed a set of general guidelines for selection of food products that can be offered in schools.

Even as malnutrition accounted for over seven lakh (68%) deaths in children under the age of five years in 2017 in India, there is rising obesity in schoolchildren in many States. According to a July 2017 study, India, with 14.4 million, had the second most number of obese children among 195 countries. A recent study found 23 States to have child overweight prevalence more than the national average, with six States having a prevalence of over 20%. Several studies have shown how a western diet affects the composition and diversity of gut bacteria and sets the stage for many metabolic diseases. Hence, any attempt to reduce and discourage the intake of unhealthy foods, which is a major cause of unhealthy weight gain in children, should be welcomed. The challenge will be in enforcement, particularly in preventing the sale and promotion of unhealthy food near schools. For instance, despite the sale and advertisement of tobacco products within 100 yards of a school being prohibited, violation is more the norm than the exception. Shops that sell tobacco products very often also sell many of the packaged unhealthy foods that the FSSAI now wants to ban. The onus of inculcating healthy eating habits also starts at home. Besides taking steps to reduce the intake of unhealthy food, both schools and parents should ensure children get adequate physical activity, which is increasingly being neglected for various reasons. It is a combination of healthy food and regular physical activity that will go a long way in bringing up healthier children.

# The theory of the Islamic State

The IS will be defeated only when its ideology is overcome in a region free of interventions — a tall ask for the moment



STANLY JOHNY

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is dead. But the Islamic State (IS) is not. The death of its “Caliph” is certainly a blow to the terrorist group. But the IS is ideologically stronger to survive the fall of its leader, and the geopolitical conditions that led to the rise of the group remain more or less intact. Much has been discussed about these conditions. Geopolitical tensions, civil conflicts and foreign interventions have been a source of power for jihadist groups such as the al-Qaeda and the IS. Remember, Osama bin Laden was a nobody before the Americans and their allies started bankrolling and training the Afghan mujahideen against the Soviet Red Army. The Taliban, which rose to power from the civil war-stricken Afghanistan was hosting the al-Qaeda when it carried out the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Virginia. The al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) rose from the ruins of the Iraq that was destroyed by the American invasion. And the AQI morphed into today’s IS, exploiting the chaos Syria fell into in the wake of the civil war. While these are the objective conditions behind the rise of terrorist-jihadism, what is its subjectivity? Do these groups have an agency?

### Brothers with arms

Though the al-Qaeda and the IS are cut from the same cloth, there are tactical and strategic differences in their operations. The al-Qae-

da was basically a hit-and-run organisation until the IS changed the landscape of terrorism. The group would carry out attacks and then retreat to the deserts, caves or mountains where it was hiding. It did not expose itself to the conventional military might of its enemies. Barring certain pockets that al-Qaeda-affiliated groups now control, such as Syria’s Idlib, the group largely remains a hit-and-run organisation. The IS, however, took insurgency a step further. It started holding on to territories it captured, established a proto-state in those territories and called it the Islamic State. While the al-Qaeda also wants to create a global emirate, the IS took steps to implement its world-view. It declared a Caliphate, trying to revive an Islamic institution that ceased to exist following the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War. And by doing so, Baghdadi tried to place himself in the long list of Islamic Caliphs, the rightful leaders of the *ummah* (the global Muslim community).

Violent jihadism is inherently anti-modern and very unpopular among Muslims across the world. It is because of their unpopularity that these groups are involved in extreme violence. With their asymmetrical barbarity, jihadist groups have sought to overcome not just the shortcomings in their military capabilities but also the lack of their political capital. For Baghdadi’s group, violence was both a means and an end in itself. The puritanical interpretation of Islam by the IS has echoes from Salafi Islam. The Salafis follow the “pious forefathers” of Islam. For them, man cannot interpret the holy book or the Hadith. But Salafism itself is not a monolith. It can be a spiritual way of life. There are



Salafi organisations whose members dedicate themselves to a “pure” Islamic way of life and have nothing to do with violence. But for groups such as the al-Qaeda and the IS, Salafism is a political ideology to attain power. And since they cannot attain power through mass movements, popular elections or revolutions, they turn to violent jihadism as a vehicle to reach that goal, which makes them Salafi-jihadists.

### ‘Pure’ Islamic State

Unlike the al-Qaeda, the IS’s operations were not confined to carrying out suicide attacks in the West or West-backed countries. It wanted to create a “pure” Islamic State where the “true” believers can come and live. These “true believers”, for the IS, were Sunni Muslims alone and who followed the IS’s diktats. The Shias are in this worldview, considered “*rafidha*” (rejectionists, who “reject” the first three Caliphs of the Sunni Islam), and therefore merit second class status. In areas under their control, the minority communities had to pay minority tax to the state for protection. They could not publicly practise their religion. In the IS worldview, homosexuals were to be thrown off high-rises, the fingers of smokers had to be chopped off, slavery permitted

# ‘Unwriting’ history, creating myths

Accounts from the past suggest that Sardar Patel played a key role in the incorporation of Article 370 in the Constitution



KARAN THAPAR

What I like about history is that if the event is sufficiently far back in time, and we no longer remember how it happened or who did it, we can spin any story and present it as fact and most people will not be any the wiser. However, if you do it too publicly or loudly there’s still a danger you could get found out. Did that happen to the Prime Minister and Home Minister on October 31 when they extolled their de-operationalisation of Article 370? Let me place the facts before you and then judge for yourself.

### Patel and Article 370

Speaking in Delhi, Amit Shah said “the unfulfilled dream of Patel was realised when 370 was repealed”. Narendra Modi was even more explicit. He said Patel had inspired him to take the decision to dilute Article 370 and added, “I dedicate the decision to Sardar Sahab.”

Even though neither explicitly said so, it was widely inferred the two men were suggesting Valabhhai Patel, first Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of independent India, was against Article 370 and wanted it repealed. This was his unfulfilled dream. This is why the Prime Minister dedicated its dilution to him. And

remember they were speaking on October 31, Patel’s birth anniversary.

Now, let’s see how history records Patel’s stand on Article 370. Srinath Raghavan, the author of *War and Peace in Modern India: A Strategic History of the Nehru Years* and a professor at Ashoka University, says the first meeting to draft Article 370 took place at Patel’s home on May 15 and 16, 1949. More significantly, Mr. Raghavan says when N.G. Ayangar, the minister responsible for negotiating with Jammu and Kashmir’s Prime Minister (as he was then called) Sheikh Abdullah, prepared a draft letter for Nehru to send to Abdullah summarising the contours of the agreement – of which, incidentally, Article 370 was the core – he first sent it to Patel with the following note: “Will you kindly let Jawaharlalji know direct as to your approval of it. He will issue the letter to Sheikh Abdullah only after receiving your approval.”

Let’s ponder over that letter. It says Nehru would only tell the Sheikh they had an agreement on the Kashmir clauses, including Article 370, after Patel wrote to him to say he was in agreement with them. In effect, this gave Patel a veto. If he had said he was not happy with it Nehru presumably would not have written to the Sheikh indicating his acceptance. I assume this is why Mr. Raghavan told *The Telegraph* (August 13, 2019) that Article 370 was “Sardar Patel’s formulation through and through.”

Equally importantly, Mr. Raghavan says it was Patel who con-



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vinced the Congress Legislature Party to accept Article 370. Since in 1949 the CLP was the majority of the Constituent Assembly, this also means he convinced the Assembly to accept.

### Special status for Kashmir

Let me now cite another source on Patel’s attitude to Article 370. I shall quote from page 517 of Rajmohan Gandhi’s seminal biography of Patel called *Patel: A Life*. After writing Patel “suppressed” his own opinions, it’s important to focus on what Mr. Gandhi says of the decision taken by Patel “in October 1949, while Nehru was abroad, when the Constituent Assembly considered Kashmir.” Read what follows carefully: “Patel, who was functioning as Acting Prime Minister, acquiesced in a special status for Kashmir, inclusive of concessions that went beyond what Jawaharlal had accepted before his departure”. Mr. Gandhi writes that Abdullah pressed for these concessions “and the Sardar did not stand in the way”. Patel presumed that these concessions “seemed to represent Nehru’s wishes which (he) did not want to repudiate in Jawaharlal’s absence”.

and music and films forbidden. The concept of “nation-states” is also alien to the IS world-view, for whom the world is the Caliphate and where the *ummah* should be living under the leadership of their rightful Caliph.

In effect, the IS has stood opposed to everything modern liberalism offers – individual freedom, equality, liberty are all completely denied by the group. The IS also frowns upon and denies critical thinking, demanding only loyalty to its cause. At the same time, where the IS succeeded in exploiting the contradictions within modern societies – the contradictions that were swept under the carpet by the roadroller of nationalism. The identity crisis of Muslims, especially young Muslims, in liberal societies, is what the IS tapped into using modern communication technologies. It offered a violent, alternative, vengeful vision to trap these people, while in Muslim-majority societies, western aggression was used as propaganda for recruitment. The IS managed to do this while holding on to territories that it captured within Iraq and Syria. It was for the first time in decades that a group claimed to have established a caliphate by erasing the borders of modern states (Iraq and Syria in this case) and by calling upon followers to migrate. The IS succeeded in attracting tens of thousands of people to its “Caliphate” – from Tunisia to India and the U.S. It was also opposed to the diversity of Islam terming Shias, Ismailis, Ahmadias and Alawites as non-Muslims. Syncretic traditions of Islam such as Sufism were branded anti-Islam by the IS. Even if Sunni Muslims did not buy into the IS version of Islam, they could be excommunicated (*takfir*) and

killed according to its worldview. It is no surprise that most of the IS’s victims in the Arab world were Muslims.

### Problems in the anti-IS fight

The IS’ Caliphate has now been destroyed and its leader gone. But there are two problems in the fight against the IS. One, the objective conditions that led to the rise of the IS remain intact in West Asia and the larger Arab world. The group still has affiliates and arms in several parts of the world such as Afghanistan, Egypt and Nigeria. The recent Turkish incursion into northeastern Syria is threatening even the limited advances made in the fight against the IS. The Shia-Sunni sectarianism that the IS tried to exploit is still burning across West Asia. Two, the IS will be defeated only when its ideology will be defeated, which is a tall ask. The IS is not an organisation that was created by “western imperialism”, but an organisation that used the chaos created by “imperialism”. It will continue to do so even after all these setbacks – this includes even the rump of the IS. The group does not need a standing army of thousands of soldiers to attack civilians through suicide blasts. For them, violence is linked to their survival. If the IS goes silent, it becomes irrelevant in the global jihadist landscape and all its talk of the expansionary Caliphate will come to an end. It is like Macbeth. The group will retain its need to kill in order to survive. To stop the group, its organisational and ideological apparatus has to be taken down in a region that is free of foreign interventions and repressions. For now, this looks a distant possibility.

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the Maharaja’s son, Karan Singh, in support of this. “The Sardar told my father gently but firmly... my father was stunned. He emerged from the meeting ashen-faced, while my mother was fighting back her tears.”

The second insight is more telling. It comes from Pheroze Vincent’s article for *The Telegraph* of August 13. It concerns Syama Prasad Mookerjee – the founder of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, from which the BJP was born – and the decision to refer Kashmir to the United Nations, which Mr. Shah has roundly and repeatedly criticised. On August 7, 1952 this is what Mookerjee said in the Lok Sabha: “It has been said that I was a party when the decision was taken to refer the Kashmir issue to the UNO... that is an obvious fact.”

So, doesn’t it seem that Mookerjee, a member of Nehru’s cabinet at the time, did not dissent? Otherwise in 1952, two years after he parted company with Nehru and a year after he formed the Jan Sangh, wouldn’t he have said so? Instead, this is what he told the Lok Sabha: “I have no right and I do not want to disclose the extraordinary circumstances under which that decision was taken.”

After all that, let me leave you with a *bon mot*. They say great men write history. One of the greatest, Napoleon, dismissed history as “a myth.” Well, in India great men can also ‘unwrite’ history. Or, as Napoleon would have put it, they create myths.

Karan Thapar is a television anchor

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### Opt-out as loss

\*India’s decision to opt out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership was not the right decision, especially from an economic angle. It is true that there were political compulsions such as opposition from farmers, industrialists and other stakeholders. But an attempt should have been made to take them along by explaining the benefits that would accrue to Indian agriculture and industry and the need to adopt better methods of farming and better technology for industry. India should strive to constantly improve its standards rather than do away with competition. It should also be noted that the Indian consumer would have benefited immensely in the form of better

products at cheaper rates. In the long run, the farmer, by adopting better and cost effective farming techniques, would have eventually been able to meet the competition. It is the same with our industries too. The government should rise to the occasion to improve standards and face competition rather than stifle it and thereby slow down innovation and the advent of better technology.

JACOB DILIP TITUS,  
Thiruvananthapuram

■ The RCEP could have been a potential gamechanger for India by providing it the opportunity to be a part of a larger supply chain and also help increase exports. It would have provided greater economic integration with east and southeast Asian

nations. Instead of a defensive strategy, India should now go forward for a more expansionary approach by improving the competitiveness of local industries and the agriculture sector.

SIMRAN AGARWAL,  
Jaipur

■ Let us not forget that there were some industrial and business bodies that wanted India to join the RCEP. As a bloc that comprised the ASEAN countries, China, Australia, New Zealand, it would have made business dealings with member countries much easier. The long-term impact of being protectionist is likely to be adverse. Incidentally, it was India that was one of the promoters of the concept of “regional co-operation”. By turning inwards and

restricting access to its domestic market, India has gone backwards as far as economic opportunities and development are concerned. We must not forget that the Central government and governments in northeast India have been talking about an “Act East” policy for some years. Will this outlook now come to naught?

A. BHUYAN,  
Nagaoon, Assam

■ The economy is getting globalised faster than we care to admit. Economic blocs not only ensure a guaranteed quantum of business for a stable economic base of members but also help leverage the strength in numbers against other competitive entities. Trading blocs tend to hone skills in productivity and

innovation in competitive environs within and without a group. Cocooning and dithering on the likes of the RCEP ensures a loss of both. IT may be our mainstay in exports today but it is ever vulnerable to technology bursts. Whereas manufacturing and the likes of leisure services provide huge employment, and flip to the GDP with better wealth distribution. Governments tend to operate on a five-year timeframe and perspective. The economy is a 30-year cycle. We had big reforms in 1990. The next one is due now and trade must get eminence.

R. NARAYANAN,  
Navi Mumbai

### Sixty years in cinema

From “Kalathur Kannamma” to “Viswaroopam”, Padma Bhushan awardee Kamal

Hassan has tasted success as an actor, singer, producer, director and script writer. A multifarious personality such as him is the pride of world cinema.

K. PRADEEP,  
Chennai

■ No doubt Mr. Haasan is a very talented actor, but there are other issues and plenty of other news that demand media coverage. One wonders whether the media, including *The Hindu*, has gone overboard.

R. SIVAKUMAR,  
Chennai



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# Should online political advertising be regulated?

PARLEY

Micro-targeting could have potentially damaging results in the context of political advertising

On October 31, Twitter announced that it will no longer carry political advertisements as the power of Internet advertising “brings significant risks to politics, where it can be used to influence votes”. On the other hand, Facebook has said it will not fact-check political advertisements as it does not want to stifle free speech. In a conversation moderated by **P.J. George**, **Pranesh Prakash** and **Kiran Chandra** discuss how platforms and constitutional authorities can deal with the challenges posed by online political advertising to democracies. Edited excerpts:

**We have always had political advertising. What is it that makes online political advertisements different or maybe even problematic?**

**Pranesh Prakash:** There are two things that make online political advertising different. One is targeting. Online advertising allows, especially on social networks, for a kind of targeting that wasn’t possible at the same level before. Earlier, if you wanted to target a particular segment of people for your political messaging, you could find out what kind of magazines they subscribe to and put fliers in those magazines. But you couldn’t engage in personalised targeting based on multiple attributes that is possible through platforms like Facebook and Twitter. The second is the invisibility of this kind of advertising. If there’s a billboard in the real world, everyone gets to see it. However, if there’s targeted advertising on a social media platform, not everyone gets to know of it.

**Kiran Chandra:** App-based organisations have designed advertisement models to specifically allow targeting. Facebook, for instance, allowed you to choose a person from a particular caste and also from a particular class in the same caste. If somebody wants to look at an advertisement for an Audi, they can go to one class of newspapers or look at billboards in some localities; the very existence of the product is not opaque to society. But targeted advertising makes it possible for

two people connected to the Internet from the same source, using the same equipment, studying in the same school or college, working in the same workplace, and living in the same habitat to get two different advertisements. And micro-targeting has got potentially damaging results in the context of political advertising, particularly for elections. These platforms make it possible to go from manufacturing consent to manipulating consent. A person is continuously fed with information to vote for a particular party.

**Twitter said it will no longer carry political advertisements, considering the repercussions seen in the U.S. in the past elections. On the contrary, Facebook says political advertisements are necessary and that people should see if their politicians are lying. How culpable is a platform in the case of a problematic online political advertisement?**

**KC:** Platforms, particularly Facebook, have been washing their hands of the issue saying they are only intermediaries providing space; that the content is being generated by the people to be consumed by the people, and they have no role to play. But this is false. If you look at the complete business model of Facebook, Google, or any of the platforms, they clearly provide micro-targeting, or allow people to be manipulated for a particular purpose. So, these platforms can’t just wash their hands of the issue. In the Maharashtra election, you saw a lot of advertisements coming out which are untraceable. How can this happen without the platform itself allowing for such a possibility? The Election Commission (EC) needs to step in on all these issues. These corporations need to be very transparent in the context of elections. They need to bring out all the ways in which advertisements are displayed and also the money associated with it.

When somebody publishes it [an ad] on a Facebook wall, it is as good as publishing it in a newspaper. So, all the legislation that apply now for reasonable restrictions and free-



**The Election Commission should bring the largest platforms together to get transparency commitments from them.**

**PP:** I completely disagree with Kiran on a number of points. For instance, those who are running a platform shouldn’t automatically be liable for what people are seeing on those platforms. The people who are actually saying things should be liable, not necessarily those who are carrying it without knowing what they’re carrying most of the time. Kiran also mentioned manipulation. The job of all advertising is to manipulate. The job of newspapers is to manipulate public opinion. And there’s always money associated with this. Newspapers carry advertisements as well. You don’t necessarily know who has paid for each ad in the newspaper. What online platforms are able to provide is actually greater transparency in this regard, at least based on what Facebook is attempting to do with its ad library. Calling this manipulation doesn’t quite work. Because then you have to specify why certain categories of things you think of as manipulating, while other categories you think of as influencing.

Second, as far as I know, Facebook does not ask for your caste. Nor does it actually allow advertisers to use caste as a category for advertising. To address the larger question of whether to carry political advertisements or not, I don’t think there are simple answers. For instance, in different jurisdictions there are different rules as to whether different kinds of media are allowed to carry political advertisements or not. In the U.S., all broadcasters are required by law not to censor on the basis of the content of political advertising. Which means that broadcasters in the U.S. cannot say to a candidate, ‘this advertisement that you’ve sent to us contains a lie and we’re not going to associate ourselves with the lie and we’re not going to carry it’. Now, when a platform like Facebook says that it will voluntarily adopt a similar standard as applies to broadcast organisations by law, all hell breaks loose. And again, there might be good reasons for it. But to say that political advertising should not contain lies, and hence should be censored, is not a viable opinion across the board.

**KC:** I would like to clarify one thing here. There is a clear distinction between Facebook asking your caste and Facebook allowing you to micro-target people based on their caste and class. In 2016, I created an advertisement with a tag called Brahmin bags and it allowed inclusion and exclusion based on caste and economic status. And now, after this had been made an issue for the last three years, Facebook says

that advertisers can select topics that are specific to a particular caste. For instance, Dalit topics, Iyengar topics, etc. So Facebook, in its design, allows such kind of sensitivities to be used for micro-targeting. And one should not confuse general advertising with political advertising. If the advertisement is just about manipulating for buying a particular product, that has something to do with the business houses; even if one agrees with it or not. But when you speak about political advertising, when people come to participate and engage in a democratic process, the EC and The Representation of the People Act (RPA) mandate that people should be allowed to take a very clear stand, to look at what has happened in the last five years, and decide how to vote, freely and fairly. That is why the RPA clearly lists a certain set of things for free and fair elections, where even the use of money and manipulation should not be allowed to happen. Yes, the U.S. has a different context. American democracy is different from Indian democracy. We have got our own statute. This methodology in which these platforms have got their business models and are engaging deeply in subverting the Indian democratic process is a serious cause of concern. The EC should come up with new methodologies, if the existing ones are not sufficient.

**Can you elaborate on how the EC can play a role in this?**

**KC:** We brought these issues to the notice of the EC prior to the 2019 general election. The EC said it does not have enough manpower to deal with this situation for now. The EC does not have power over the police or the administration; but once the elections are on, it has the capability to take in different departments and ensure that such subversion of the democratic process does not happen. A fundamental problem with the EC’s method is that it said it was in discussion with the digital platforms to make more people vote in the election. And that itself is problematic. How is it going to be done? The EC should make public the way in which this advertising is being conducted, the money associated with it, and the people who are being reached with it. For instance, if we look at TV channels for ads dur-

ing primetime, there is a mechanism, like TRP ratings, which allows them to understand and evaluate the target sections. If you look at the Maharashtra election, the advertiser itself is not known. Have people been sent communal messages? Have people been targeted based on caste, which can disqualify the contestant? The EC should reach out to the Government of India and look at the departments that are capable of handling this. If they don’t exist, it should start creating infrastructure that will be able to look into all these aspects. Also, concrete guidelines should be given to these digital platforms. And whatever comes in contradiction, or comes in the way of implementing the RPA, the EC should stop the platforms from doing it.

**PP:** For me, it’s not clear to what extent I would draw a distinction between advertising and other things which the EC has not been able to curtail, such as paid news and political ownership of media, which allow for very skewed viewpoints to be expressed. But insofar as what can be done about online platforms – and again, only online platforms which deal in advertising – the biggest source of online political messaging in India is WhatsApp. So, excluding the elephant in the room from this discussion, what the EC could do is bring the largest platforms together to get transparency commitments from them. Then this information needs to be made publicly available, so that the invisibility which happens with targeting gets countered. The second thing... Given that elections are geographical in nature in India, if you want to engage in advertising, you have to do it on the basis of geography, not on the basis of specific kinds of attributes of a person. And let’s also be aware that most of these attributes or guesses about people that these platforms are making are based on what people post on social media platforms, what they click. So, the one thing that can be done on a global level is transparency and restrictions on various targeting but anything else such as limitations on, say, lying in political advertising, I don’t think that can or should be sold on a global level. It’s dependent far too much on each country and their models and how they interpret freedom of expression.



**Pranesh Prakash**  
is a member of the Board of The Centre for Internet and Society



**Kiran Chandra**  
is General Secretary of the Free Software Movement of India



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## Changing the status quo

The Home Ministry’s move to merge the Assam Rifles with the ITBP is a step in the right direction

M.P. NATHANAEL

The Ministry of Home Affairs has proposed that the Assam Rifles should be merged with the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and serve under the operational control of the MHA. At present, the Assam Rifles, a Central paramilitary force, is under the administrative control of the MHA and operational control of the Army, i.e. the Ministry of Defence. The Army is opposed to this proposal.

### History of Assam Rifles

Formed as Cachar Levy in 1835 to assist the British rulers in maintaining peace in the Northeast, the Assam Rifles, which had just about 750 men, proved its capability and efficiency. This necessitated its expansion. The unit was converted into the Assam Military Police Battalion with two additional battalions in 1870. They were known as the Lushai Hills Battalion, Lakhimpur Battalion and Naga Hills Battalion. Just before World War I, another battalion, the Darrang Battalion, was added. They all rendered great service by assisting the British in Europe and West Asia during the war. These battalions were then renamed Assam Rifles. They continued to be regular armed police battalions, but with the ‘Rifles’ tag, which was a matter of honour for their competence, on par with any regular Army battalion.

It was after the Chinese aggression in 1962 in Arunachal Pradesh that the Assam Rifles battalions were placed under the operational control of the Army. Assam Rifles personnel who were acclimatised to the region were better suited for operations then. It needs to be remembered that one of the major causes for India’s defeat was the fact that the regular Army units were not used to the extreme weather. The decision taken then was in keeping with the requirements. This is not the case any more.

All Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) are acclimatised to almost every region of the country now due to country-wide deployment of all CAPF battalions. The operational role performed by the ITBP at 18,700 feet in Ladakh is testimony enough to its capability to guard the border in any part of the country. It needs to be

noted that back in 2001, the Group of Ministers had stated that the principle of ‘One Border, One Force’ should be strictly adhered to. If ITBP can guard the India-China border in Ladakh, there is no reason why it cannot guard the India-China border in Arunachal Pradesh and beyond.

The concept of having two masters for an organisation – one for administrative control and another for operational control – is not only absurd but also leads to problems of coordination. Therefore, the Home Ministry’s move to merge all its 55,000-strong Assam Rifles with the ITBP is a step in the right direction.

### Opposed to the move

The Army argues that the Assam Rifles should be merged with it, to ensure national security. It requires no wisdom to conclude that the Army would lose its promotional avenues once this paramilitary force is merged with the ITBP, as it would be directly under the control of the Home Ministry. At present, nearly 80% of officers’ ranks from Major upwards are held by Army officers on deputation. A Lieutenant General of the Army holds the post of Director General of Assam Rifles. It is natural for the Army to oppose the move.

For the time being, the Chief may be appointed from among IPS officers. But for the tussle between the IPS and the CAPF officers, consequent to the CAPF being brought under the fold of Organised Group ‘A’ Service this year, it would be the direct officers of Assam Rifles who will eventually take up the top posts.

The Home Ministry, under Rajnath Singh, took up the issue of merger with the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS). The matter is in the Delhi High Court now after retired personnel filed a petition saying they were facing difficulties in drawing pension because of dual control. The merger issue needs to be taken up on priority by the CCS so that doubts are cleared. The modalities of absorbing the officers should be worked out to stall any situation of a vacuum being created once the deputationists are repatriated to the Army.

M.P. Nathanael is Inspector General of Police (Retd), CRPF



## NOTEBOOK

### The art of seeing while not looking

Journalists learn to expect stories in unlikely places and situations

PRINCE FREDERICK

A lot can happen when you aren’t “looking”. That can be the tag line for the business of news-gathering. Meaningful stories routinely happen off the field. Delays set you up for the unexpected moment. What seems a dead-end at first often opens into a rabbit hole of new discoveries.

So, in time, news-gatherers learn to expect stories in unlikely places and situations, and try to perfect the art of seeing while not looking. The antenna is up all the time, even during exasperating delays.

Many summers ago, while returning from a satisfactory assignment at a remote coastal area of Tamil Nadu, I realised the best had been reserved for the last.

After what looked like an aeon in getting a cab, I was well on my way back home, when, at Koovathur on East

Coast Road, I chanced upon a young sloth bear being led by a leash. Getting the cab driver to stop, I had a chat with the animal’s “owner”. The bear had been trained in buffoonery to keep the begging bowl tinkling. The animal was being led from town to town. The teenager with the sloth bear in tow was from Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. Following the report about how the bear had been whisked away from the wild and forced to lead an unnatural life, I learnt that the animal was rescued by the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department. The delay in getting a cab had ensured I was at the right place when the unexpected arrived.

On another occasion, this time in Chennai, I made a serendipitous discovery of a ruthlessly abused raintree, against the backdrop of a broken-down car that had me cool-

ing my heels in a space I would not have otherwise set foot on. In its lower trunk, the tree had a hole wide enough for an adult of moderate size to crawl through. Miscreants had set fire to the tree during midnight revelries involving purchased spirits. The issue had to see the daylight. Three cheers to cars that leave you stranded midway to an assignment!

In a news-gatherer’s life, serendipity knows no duty hours, and can knock on a door that is supposed to let only family in, and keep everything else out.

When my daughter was around two years old, I took her for a short drive on an off day. The two-year-old being demanding as only two-year-olds can be, it turned out to be a marathon drive. Significantly, it ended near a paddy field, an oasis of green in a “grey concrete desert”. The area had been sucked into a real

estate boom, and the story was about how one farmer was sticking to his field and practising agriculture when all others had sold theirs.

On the downside, keeping the news-gathering antenna on overtime can make you look gauche. I learnt this the hard way. Once at a party, I looked beyond an exquisite pair of shoes at what appeared to me as a must-do story – an anachronistic but engaging floor design that looked earthier and more personal than the new ones.

“Nice!” I exclaimed. A friend sitting next to me smiled approvingly.

“They don’t make such floors anymore, do they?” I added.

The next moment, I noticed her face change colour, from soft-pink to crimson-red. She was wearing a new and expensive pair of shoes, and was proud of the new purchase.

## The Hindu

### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO NOVEMBER 8, 1969

### Karunanidhi on split in Congress

A poor mother puts by money the hard way, saving a paisa here and a paisa there, so that she can buy an article her child covets. But the moment she gives the article to the baby it lets it slip into a gutter. The mother is sorry not because the article is gone but because all her efforts have gone to waste. If Mahatma Gandhi were alive to-day to see the Congress edifice built by him going to pieces, he would also have the same feeling of wasted effort. This analogy was drawn here [Madras] today [November 7] by Mr. M. Karunanidhi, Chief Minister, while speaking at a Gandhi centenary function organised by the Southern Indian Regional Council of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India. He said Gandhiji had advocated the dissolution of the Congress Party as soon as Independence was achieved. Ironically enough, the very year of Gandhi centenary had been chosen by some people to liquidate that party. The Chief Minister said the best homage they could pay to the Mahatma was to follow his principles of peace, non-violence and truth in order to preserve freedom and democracy in the country.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO NOV. 8, 1919.

### Indian Address.

London, November 1. – A Deputation of Indian Moslems presented an address to the Shah at Buckingham Palace this afternoon, in the course of which, they said that, though they came from India, they represented a great Moslem brotherhood which knew no barriers of nationality. They referred to Persian influence on Indian manners, dress, language, customs and poetry, and prayed to Allah to protect the Shah, that Persia might recover from the trials of the late dreadful years and resume her proper place among the great peoples of the world.

Replying, the Shah said that, if Persia had influences on India, it was no less true that Indian influences were felt in his country. Referring to Anglo-Persian relations, the Shah said that the unity of interests and mutual respects were daily increasing. Persia had in the past been a barrier against the invasion of western countries from the east. He now hoped that Persia would become a bridge by which commercial intercourse between western lands and the heart of Asia might be maintained in a like manner. Western ideas and culture could be passed on after they had been assimilated and fashioned to form suitable eastern mentality.



FROM PAGE ONE

## Karnataka cricketers held in betting scam

“They were involved in fixing a second match against Bengaluru Blasters. We have taken the accused into custody and further investigations are on to ascertain if more players are involved in the scam,” Mr Patil said.

A senior officer, who is part of the investigation team, said the police have information on the involvement of more players with bookies.

On Tuesday, the police arrested cricketer Nishanth Singh Shekhawat, who last featured in a KPL match in 2018 for Shivamogga Lions.

According to the police, Shekhawat was the link between bookies and Vinu Prasad, a Bengaluru Blasters bowling coach, who was arrested in October along with batsman Vishwanathan, formerly with the same team.

City police Commissioner Bhaskar Rao said the scam has brought the game into disrepute.

“Investigations have revealed that the bookies have dominated the KPL and controlled the players at every step. The CCB officials probing the case are under immense pressure as many people associated with cricket

field are trying to influence and interfere with their investigations,” he said.

### Suspended by KSCA

Following the arrests, the Karnataka State Cricket Association announced that Gautam and Kazi had been suspended from all forms of cricket with immediate effect.

“The KSCA is committed to organizing cricket tournaments which are fair and transparent. As a responsible association, the KSCA intends to act without delay against any franchise/players/match official/sup-port staff who have been involved in any illegal activity,” it said in a press release.

The KSCA has already suspended Ali Asfak Thara, the owner of the Belagavi Panthers franchise, who was arrested on charges of betting.

“In case they (Belagavi) are found guilty, their franchise will be terminated,” read the press release. The Association has warned that franchises, players, officials and support staff who are arrested for their involvement in any illegal activity will be suspended.

# Restrictions in J&K based on wrong assumptions: Sibal

He tells SC that the government has created a problem by its own hand

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

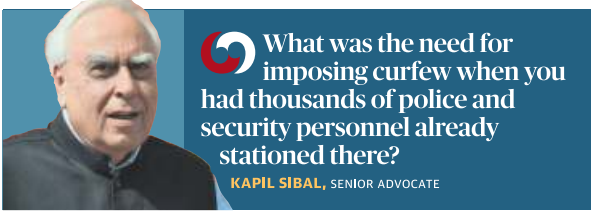
Senior advocate Kapil Sibal on Thursday submitted to the Supreme Court that seven million Kashmiris had lost their fundamental right to move freely on August 4 merely because the government had “assumed” that the entire populace of Jammu and Kashmir would be opposed to the abrogation of J&K’s special status under Article 370 of the Constitution.

“They [government] created the problem by their own hand,” Mr. Sibal told a three-judge Bench led by Justice N.V. Ramana.

“Then should they [government] have waited for riots to take place,” Justice B.R. Gavai asked.

“Now, why do you assume there would be riots? So, it is all in your mind, and seven million people lost their rights,” Mr. Sibal replied.

“If there is danger to public tranquillity, can’t the court have the power to exercise restrictions under Section 144 [of the Code of Criminal Procedure],” Justice Gavai asked Mr. Sibal.



tice Gavai asked Mr. Sibal.

“Why did you assume the entire population would be against you,” Mr. Sibal responded. “How can you just assume that there would be trouble and abrogate the fundamental rights of seven million people? You need solid material facts to support your apprehension,” he added.

Justice R. Subhash Reddy then asked Mr. Sibal what “material facts” would suffice to authorise restrictions.

“If a situation of disturbance of public tranquillity actually happens, then impose [Section] 144,” Mr. Sibal replied. “On August 4, there was no such situation except in the mind of the government. They assumed. Besides, what was the need for imposing curfew when you had thousands of police and

security personnel already stationed there?” he wondered.

On Wednesday, senior lawyer Vrinda Grover, for *Kashmir Times* editor Anuradha Bhasin, had pointed out how the police authorities use the term ‘anti-national elements’ in their prohibitory orders without identifying anyone in particular. “So are they classifying the entire population of J&K as anti-national elements – a term which defies legal definition?” she had asked in court.

### Basic needs overlooked

Mr. Sibal said the government, while restricting the fundamental rights of the people, neglected to look after their basic needs, like livelihood or availability of adequate public transport to

reach hospitals, banks, etc. The senior lawyer said it was the duty of the State to ensure that those in need were protected despite restrictions.

To this, Justice Reddy said that during curfews, in some circumstances, people do tend to suffer.

“So, what is the duty of the State? It is to protect the rights of the people like farmers, orchard growers, cancer patients,” Mr. Sibal responded.

“Not allowing me to carry on my trade is an unreasonable restriction, not allowing me to go to the hospital is an unreasonable restriction, stopping me at the airport is an unreasonable restriction... How will information coming in from the rest of the country to Kashmir cause a riot? Restrictions without attendant performance of obligations by the State is not justified. You can restrict my life, but you have to facilitate it also,” Mr. Sibal argued.

“Everything is odd [in J&K], there is no odd-even,” Mr. Sibal quipped.

## 7 killed in heavy snowfall in Kashmir Valley

Normal life paralysed, traffic hit

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR

Seven people were killed as 16 hours of incessant snowfall paralysed life in the Kashmir Valley on Thursday. Surface and air traffic was completely disrupted.

This season’s first heavy snowfall started on Wednesday night and continued all day on Thursday, triggering avalanches in many places and turning the narrow tracks on the hill slopes dangerously slippery.

An official said two Army porters were swept away by avalanches during the night. The bodies were recovered on Thursday. They were identified as Mohammed Isaac and Manzoor Khan, residents of Zihama village in Kupwara.

### Highways blocked

Traffic on all major highways connecting the Valley to the rest of the country, including the three linking Srinagar with Jammu, Poonch and Kargil, was disrupted. Nearly 2,000 vehicles were left stranded on these highways, officials said.

No flight was able to land or take off from the Srinagar airport due to snow on the



A taxi owner removing snow from his vehicle in Srinagar on Thursday. •PTI

runway and low visibility, officials said.

The State capital recorded over one foot of snowfall and the upper reaches of Kupwara, Shopian, Ganderbal and Baramulla three to four feet.

Two soldiers were killed when their vehicle met with an accident in the Langate area of Kupwara due to poor visibility, officials added. “Around 90 houses were damaged due to snowfall in Kupwara,” Deputy Commissioner Anshul Garg said.

Snow has inflicted major damage to electricity lines, both 35,000 kV and 11,000 kV, resulting in the disruption of power supply across the Valley.

## RBI to probe IDBI breach of client privacy

The RBI identified the issue during an inspection and has initiated a probe.

In January, LIC completed the acquisition of 51% stake in IDBI Bank from the government. In order to chalk out synergies for the deal, a task force was formed, comprising senior officials from both entities.

Sources said IDBI Bank sharing information with LIC was a breach of customer confidentiality since they are two different entities.

IDBI Bank, however, denied any system integration. “IDBI Bank has not carried

out any backward system integration with LIC. The confidentiality of customer data is fully ensured,” it said in response to a query by *The Hindu*.

An e-mail to LIC remained unanswered.

RBI norms say, “Banks shall maintain secrecy regarding customer information which arises out of contractual relationship between the banker and the customer.”

In January this year, LIC completed the acquisition of 51% stake in IDBI Bank from the government.

## Congress steps up attack on govt. over economy

Priyanka cites rising HI-B rejections

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday targeted the Narendra Modi government over its economic policies with the charge that while citizens were reeling under hardship, leaders were enjoying themselves.

Ms. Vadra took a dig at the Prime Minister by stating that the issue of HI-B visas to Indian professionals had declined ever since his “Howdy Mody!” event in Houston during his recent trip to the U.S.



Priyanka Gandhi Vadra

jections of HI-B visas for those Indians wanting to work there,” the Congress leader said in another tweet.

### ‘People are suffering’

“The state of the economy in the country is bad. The service sector has fallen flat. Employment is decreasing. Those ruling are busy in themselves and the people are suffering on every front,” she said in a tweet in Hindi.

“The question that everyone should ask the BJP government is that who is being benefited during their tenure. The Prime Minister went to the United States and held his ‘Howdy Mody’ event but America increased the number of re-

### CWC meet

Congress leaders have stepped up their attacks on the government on its economic policy as the party’s 10-day campaign against the central government gathers steam.

The Congress Working Committee will discuss the economic slowdown and other political issues including the impending Ayodhya judgment on Sunday, ahead of the winter session of Parliament.

# 56 Sena MLAs moved to Bandra hotel

We have an alternative and Sena has numerical strength, says Sanjay Raut

TANVI DESHPANDE  
MUMBAI

Amid speculation of horse-trading ahead of the deadline for government formation in Maharashtra, the Shiv Sena on Thursday moved its 56 MLAs and eight Independents who are supporting it, to a hotel in Bandra.

The move followed a meeting of the lawmakers with Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray at his residence Matoshree.

Sena MLA Gulabrao Patil said MLAs are not vegetables to be bought and sold.

Shiv Sena MLA Abdul Sattar, while arriving at Hotel Rangsharda, said, “We have been ordered not to leave Mumbai. All 64 MLAs [56 of Sena and eight Independents supporting Sena] will be staying together here. In the meeting, all MLAs have given all rights to party chief Uddhav Thackeray. We want a Shiv Sena Chief Minister.”

After several MLAs had reached Hotel Rangsharda, senior Sena leader Sanjay Raut and Rajya Sabha MP held a press conference where he said the Shiv Sena



Resolute stand: Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut addressing a press conference in Mumbai on Thursday. •VIJAY BATE

has an alternative (to BJP) and when asked how the party would install it’s CM, he said that Sena has numerical strength and it will be clear on the floor of the house.

### ‘No change in position’

“There is no change in Shiv Sena position [that CM should be from the party]. All Sena MLAs have supported this position. They have agreed to accept Uddhavji’s

decision. We want our CM, that is our position. Henceforth, a Sena CM will lead the State,” Mr Raut said. He added that those creating political uncertainty were causing losses to the State.

“Uddhavji has said he will not do the sin of breaking alliance, even if an alternative is available. He still has the same position. But the mandate is for Sena-BJP. In 2014, BJP tried to bring in a minority government. But in 2019,

situation is different. Unconstitutional acts, intimidation will not work now,” he further added.

Asked about Sena MLAs being put up in a hotel, Mr. Raut said, “MLAs have come from across the State. They don’t have government accommodation. That is why, they have been put up there. Also, Uddhavji wants all of them to stay together. What if they are needed to go somewhere at once?”

Earlier, speaking to Sena MLAs, Mr. Thackeray said, “I am not trying to cut off ties with BJP but if it is not staying true to its word, then I will declare my decision at the right time. But if they are denying everything, what is to be discussed?”

He also demanded to know if the BJP is trying to prove he was lying by denying power-sharing formula, referring to caretaker CM Devendra Fadnavis’ comments to reporters that the equal sharing of the CM’s post was never decided. Mr. Thackeray has suspended direct talks with the BJP after Mr. Fadnavis’ statement.

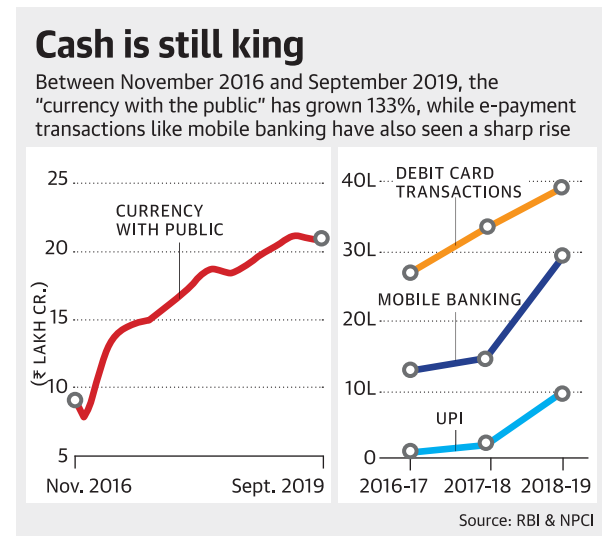
T.C.A. SHARAD RAGHAVAN  
YUTHIKA BHARGAVA  
NEW DELHI

Three years since demonetisation, the level of cash with the public has grown faster than the GDP growth of the country, even as digital payments – especially those on the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) platform – have seen robust growth.

Reserve Bank of India data show that the public held ₹20.49 lakh crore in cash as of September 2019, the latest data available, which is 13.3% more than the figure for the corresponding month of 2018. The data show that the cash held by the public made up 96% of the money in circulation, with most of the rest deposited in banks. In December 2016, one month after demonetisation and the enforced deposits in banks, this percentage stood at 83%.

### ‘More convenient’

“Post-demonetisation, there was no option but to turn to digital modes of payments. That has changed now,” Kunal Bajaj, head, wealth management, MobiKwik, told *The Hindu*. “However, what it did was help convert a lot of users... People realised



that it is much more convenient, secure and much more seamless especially for online purchase.”

As a result, the value of transactions made through the four most popular modes – UPI, debit cards, mobile banking, and prepaid instruments – has seen robust growth over this three-year period. Players in the digital payments space do acknowledge, however, that it will still take a few years to move most people away from cash transactions and onto digital platforms.

“We are seeing a very

strong customer adoption for digital payments, and this will need sustained efforts for a few years to get more and more customers on-board,” Hemant Gala, head, payments, banking and financial services, PhonePe, said. “This is a journey of adoption... with focus on products and right use cases we will see a significant share of payments moving from cash to digital.”

The best-performing of these instruments is clearly the UPI, which has overtaken debit cards in the volume of transactions and is

swiftly catching up with them in terms of value of transactions as well.

According to the RBI’s annual report, the number of UPI payments in 2018-19, at 535 crore, for the first time surpassed the number of debit card transactions (441 crore).

As of September 2019, there have been 496.5 crore UPI transactions in 2019-20 compared with 735.7 crore debit card transactions.

### Catching up

In terms of value, ₹9.03 lakh crore worth of transactions were conducted on the UPI platform in the first six months of the financial year 2019-20. While this is still significantly lower than the ₹20.49 lakh crore worth of debit card transactions in this period, it still represents a huge catching up. In 2016-17, the year of demonetisation, the value of UPI transactions (₹6,947 crore) was only 0.25% of the value of debit card transactions.

To put the growth of UPI transactions in perspective, the first half of 2019-20 has already seen a higher value of transactions completed on the platform than in the entire year of 2018-19!

## BJP delegation meets Maharashtra Governor

Party sought Koshiyari’s view on issue

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

A delegation of the BJP met Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari on Thursday to discuss legal options in the wake of the delay in government formation in Maharashtra. Without staking a claim to form the government, the delegation, led by BJP State president Chandrakant Patil apprised Mr. Koshiyari of the ongoing power-sharing tussle with the Shiv Sena, and requested a legal opinion on the stalemate from him.

Mr. Patil said they had in-

formed the Governor that the mandate to form the government was with the BJP, the Shiv Sena, Republican Party of India (Athavale), and other parties that have been part of a pre-poll alliance.

“This alliance was also part of the State government for the past five years, between 2014 and 2019. This time, the government formation has taken a bit longer than usual, and so we wanted to seek a legal view from the honourable Governor,” said Mr. Patil, after meeting Mr. Koshiyari.

### Indo-Pak tensions

Mr. Haavisto also called the tensions between India and Pakistan “unsustainable” and advised the two sides to begin dialogue for a “final settlement” of the Kashmir

conflict. The comments from the Finnish Foreign Minister are a part of a growing number of calls to the government for more transparency over conditions in Jammu and Kashmir after the decision to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution.

Last Friday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, during her visit to Delhi, referred to the situation for ordinary Kashmiris as “unsustainable”.

During the interview, Mr. Haavisto spoke about plans for further economic cooperation between India and Finland, especially on developing green technologies to combat climate change, and air pollution challenges, which he said, he had experienced himself during his visit.

Finland holds the EU Council Presidency at present, which is a rotating position, and Mr. Haavisto discussed the resumption of the Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA or FTA) between the EU and India with Ms. Sitharaman.

(Full interview at <http://bit.ly/FinlandFMInterview>)

**APPEAL**

Name of Patient: **Ms. Hemani Sadhwani, 6 years.**  
Hospital Name: **Christian Medical College, Thalassemia Major.** This is a type of Blood Disorder which can be cured by Bone Marrow Transplantation. The best option for her would be to undergo **Allogeneic Peripheral Blood Stem Cell Transplant (PBSCCT).** The Estimated Cost of PBSCCT at this Hospital is approximately **Rs. 14,00,000/-.** We request kind hearted Philanthropists to save her. Kindly send donation by Cheque / D/D / M.O favouring **Save Poor Lives** and on the back of Cheque write **A/c Ms. Hemani Sadhwani S/B Account No. 200008913487, State Bank of India, Raja Annamalaiapuram Branch, IFSC CODE: SBIN0001855, which is exempted under 80G of I.T. Act.**  
Contact: **SAVE POOR LIVES REGISTERED PUBLIC CHARITABLE TRUST, (ADMIN DIVISION) Flat No. A1, Ceebros Garden, Ground Floor, Old No. 76, Kamarajar Salai, Raja Annamalaiapuram, Chennai-600028. Ph: 044-42044165, Mobile: 9848607377, Email: [savepoorlives@gmail.com](mailto:savepoorlives@gmail.com)**  
Our website: **[www.savepoorlives.com](http://www.savepoorlives.com)**  
**DONATION GIVEN TO PATIENTS UP TO MARCH 2019 FOR Rs. 4,26,89,335/- AND SCHOLARSHIP 7,30,800/- OCTOBER DONATION GIVEN Rs. 3,83,150/-**



# Anxious Ayodhya awaits Supreme Court verdict

While opinion is divided on the outcome, almost every resident says peace must prevail and the ruling will be accepted

**OMAR RASHID**  
AYODHYA

A sense of anxiety prevails in Ayodhya as it awaits the Supreme Court verdict in the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi dispute case. And this can be felt at the Tedhi Bazaar intersection close to the outer precincts of the disputed area, which is barricaded by yellow grille.

Haji Mehboob, one of the litigants in the case, lives opposite the Ram Janmabhoomi police station, barely 100 metres from the intersection, where two-wheelers and pedestrians are being checked before entry. There is a similar quiet inside the compound of his house, where he is seated on a chair conversing with two associates as two armed police guards look on attentively.

“What Allah will do is for the best,” says Mr. Mehboob, 73, the second generation of his family involved in the case that first came about after the idols of Ram Lalla were placed “surreptitiously” in 1949.

Mr. Mehboob appeals to all residents, especially Muslims, to maintain calm and not give in to any kind of provocation, and repose faith in the court. “The administration has promised us nothing will happen, the security is tight and no Muslim need to migrate out of fear,” he says.



**Job at hand:** Policemen on a patrol close to the disputed site. • OMAR RASHID

Several Muslims in the area say that even if the verdict comes in their favour, any discussion on a mosque can wait, and it is peace first.

While the opinion on the issue is divided along communal and political lines, on the outside, almost every resident says the court verdict will be accepted. The most common opinion among the majority community is the belief that the disputed site will be awarded to them.

**Boost for business**

Amar Singh, who runs a ration shop, is confident that the verdict will come “in favour of Lord Ram” and trans-

form the town. “If a Ram temple won’t be built in *Ram ki Nagri*, where else will it be built,” he asks.

However, as long as the land is not handed over to the Muslim side, he is willing even to accept status quo. “Even if the court says, let the site remain unused or build a hostel or a hospital, I am fine with that,” he says.

Like several other traders and shopkeepers, Suphal Chand Maurya, who migrated from Purulia district of West Bengal 45 years ago, feels the construction of a Ram temple will usher in a new wave of business.

Mr. Maurya runs a Bengali

sweets shop near the famous Hanuman Garhi Temple.

Mahendra, a doctor who runs a clinic a few paces away, says that over time the locals have started “falling for dreams” that the town will transform into a tourist hub if a temple is built. “Let us hope the Constitution wins,” Dr. Mahendra says.

One of the most prominent faces of the legal case was Hashim Ansari, who was known as a propagator of a peaceful solution and one of the last persons to have personal knowledge of the case from the early years of Independence.

But after he died in 2016,

## Social media under watch

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
GHAZIABAD

Ahead of the verdict, the police are vetting social media accounts to spot trouble-mongers. Ajay Sahni, Senior Superintendent of Police, Meerut, has asked the cybercell team in the district to look into the accounts making disparaging comments. “In the past 24 hours, we have taken down 10 accounts,” said Avinash Pandey, SP (Rural).

aged 95, the mantle was passed on to the junior Ansari. Iqbal Ansari propagates the same argument in favour of peace.

“In 70 years, we did whatever we could,” says Iqbal, whose room has the photographs of his father and the Babri Masjid framed on the wall. “Those who believe in the Constitution will obey the court”.

**Outsiders blamed**

Like most Ayodhya residents, irrespective of their religious identity, he blames “outsiders” for vitiating the atmosphere in Ayodhya in the past and believes the

‘Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb’ or pluralistic culture of its people will not be affected by the verdict if such elements are kept out.

Shahid Ali, president of the Ayodhya Urs committee, says both Hindus and Muslims are anxious because curfews affect them both. “If there are no pilgrims, it is a crisis for livelihood for both communities,” he notes.

While many see an opportunity in the construction of a temple, some shopkeepers sense it could be a double-edged sword. Raj Bahadur Yadav, who sells pan at Tedhi Bazar, while hoping for a permanent end to the dispute, fears that if a temple is constructed, his kiosk could be demolished in the name of beautification of the vicinity.

Nanku Yadav, who runs a popular tea shop nearby, is concerned that a split or indecisive verdict could reignite the issue politically at the local level.

**Ban orders**

As prohibitory orders under Section 144 have been imposed in the district, the police say that keeping “outsiders” and mischief elements will play a role in maintaining law and order.

The State has requested the Centre for paramilitary forces.

# Centre to revoke Taseer’s OCI card

‘He tried to conceal information’

**SUHASINI HAIDAR**  
KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE  
NEW DELHI



Aatish Taseer

The Union government on Thursday night announced that it would revoke the Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) card of author and journalist Aatish Taseer over what it said was his attempt to “conceal information” that his father, Salman Taseer, was of Pakistani origin.

In an official statement, the Home Ministry said he had “failed to dispute the notice” it had sent asking him to explain the lapse.

**Given a chance**

“Mr. Taseer was given the opportunity to submit his reply/objections regarding his PIO/OCI cards, but he failed to dispute the notice,” the Ministry said.

In its August 13 notice, which *The Hindu* has accessed, the Ministry said Mr. Taseer had failed to disclose that his father, the former Governor of Pakistan’s Punjab, was of Pakistani origin, and had only provided only details of his mother and veteran Indian journalist, Tavleen Singh. In his reply on September 6 to that notice and another dated September 3, Mr. Taseer said his parents had never been le-

gally married, and his mother was his sole legal guardian. “Their relationship occurred when they were both residents in the United Kingdom, and Salman Taseer stated (accurately) that he was a U.K. citizen and passport-holder,” Mr. Taseer said in his reply sent to the Indian Consulate in New York, which was acknowledged by Deputy Consul-General Shatrughna Sinha.

Sources said Mr. Taseer was expected to challenge the government’s move. He had come under criticism from members of the BJP for an essay in May 2019 for the *Time* magazine that accused the Modi government of following divisive policies.

The Ministry said its decision had nothing to do with the article.

(With inputs from Vijaita Singh)

## Sidhu cleared to attend inaugural

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
ISLAMABAD

The Union government gave political clearance to Congress MLA Navjot Singh Sidhu on Thursday to take part in the inauguration of the Kartarpur Corridor scheduled for Saturday, official sources said in New Delhi.

Mr. Sidhu had sought permission from the Ministry of External Affairs to attend the event following an invitation by Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Pakistan said on Thursday that it had issued a visa to him.

A ruling party spokesperson said Mr. Sidhu, a friend of Mr. Khan since their cricketing days, had accepted the invitation.

# Kartarpur pilgrims need passports, OCI cards

Ministry clarifies after Pakistan Army contradicts Imran statement waiving passport requirement

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Indian passports and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cards will be necessary for pilgrims visiting the Kartarpur Sahib shrine for the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, the External Affairs Ministry said on Thursday.

The statement sought to clarify the confusion that had arisen after the spokesperson of the Pakistan Armed Forces contradicted Prime Minister Imran Khan’s statement waiving the need for passports for Indian Sikh pilgrims.

On November 1, Mr. Khan declared in a social media message that he had waived the requirement of Indian passports for the Sikh pilgrims. “Just a valid ID,” he



**Hard at work:** Workers adding finishing touches to the shrine of Guru Nanak Dev at the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib. • AFP

said, would be sufficient for the Sikhs to visit Kartarpur Sahib. This was, however, contradicted by the spokesperson of Pakistan Armed Forces, Major General Asif Ghafoor, earlier this week. In a TV interview on Wednesday, Maj. Gen. Ghafoor said the entry of Indian pilgrims would be “legal and based on passports”.

“The reports from Pakistan are conflicting. Some saying [passports are] needed and

some saying the opposite. As of now, we have an MoU and that has not been changed and that MoU cannot be changed unilaterally by Pakistan. According to that document, there is a need for passports [for Indian citizens] and persons of Indian origin need to carry OCI cards,” Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said. He said the same documents would be required for subsequent travels by pilgrims after the November festivities.

**‘India refused offer’**

However, following the Indian statement, the spokesperson for Pakistan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Faisal said in a social media post: “As a special gesture, Pakistan announced concessions on the

auspicious occasion of 550th birth anniversary of Baba Guru Nanak to facilitate pilgrims. This has been refused by India.”

**‘Sentiments disregarded’**

In a follow-up statement, Dr. Faisal said not availing the passport-free travel offer from Pakistan was “India’s choice” and he accused the Indian government of disregarding Sikh sentiments.

India and Pakistan signed an agreement on October 24 laying down the rules to be followed during the celebrations at Kartarpur that are expected to see thousands of pilgrims from all over the world. Mr. Kumar said Pakistan had maintained silence about the list of delegates that India had submitted under the agreement.

# Pakistan targets soldiers with profiles of ‘gurus’

Army identifies 150 fake accounts

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The Army has identified over 150 fake profiles on social media being run by Pakistan Intelligence Operatives (PIOs) to trap Indian soldiers for intelligence gathering, sources in the Army said on Thursday.

“Against the backdrop of virtual honey-trapping cases, the Army issued an advisory in mid-October on the *modus operandi* of PIOs as part of their attempts to gain intelligence through social media and other means,” an Army source said.

**No calls or messages**

The advisory asked soldiers to refrain from taking calls or getting in contact with fake “babas” and “gurus”

who are in fact PIOs out to trap them.

The Army has also cautioned soldiers against taking calls or messages on social media from fake insurance agents or Military Nursing Service nurses who are in fact female PIOs, the source said.

**Two arrested**

On Wednesday, lance naik Ravi Verma and sepoy Vichitra Behera were arrested by the Rajasthan police for passing on sensitive information after they were virtually honey-trapped by PIOs on social media. Sources said the investigation revealed that the jawans were in touch with a Facebook ID with the name of ‘Seerat’, posing as a woman.

# Govt. clears Justice Kureshi’s appointment

He will head the Tripura High Court

**KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL**  
NEW DELHI

The government is learnt to have cleared the Supreme Court Collegium’s recommendation to appoint Justice A.A. Kureshi as the Chief Justice of the Tripura High Court.

The Collegium had initially in May recommended Justice Kureshi for appointment as the Chief Justice of the Madhya Pradesh High Court. But the government, in back-to-back letters on August 23 and 27, had raised objections to the proposal. Following this, the Collegium recommended his appointment to the Tripura High Court in September.

A source said the recommendation had been cleared at the government level and sent to the President for the issuance of the warrant of appointment.

On Thursday, a petition filed by the Gujarat High Court Advocates Association came up for hearing before a Bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi. The case was adjourned to November 13. The Chief Justice said the case would come up next before a Bench led by Justice S.A. Bobde, Chief Justice of India-designate.



Justice A.A. Kureshi

Gogoi said such intrusions would not “augur well” for the institution.

Chief Justice Gogoi had recorded in the order that matters of judicial appointments, postings and transfers go to the “root of the administration of justice”.

Justice Bobde, in an interview to *The Hindu*, had dismissed questions about the perceived delays in governmental clearance of Collegium recommendations, saying “machineries operate at their own speed”. The Collegium has also stopped giving reasons for its recommendations in its recent resolutions published on the Supreme Court website.

Recently, Justice V.K. Tahilramani chose to resign as the Madras High Court Chief Justice when the Collegium proposed her transfer to the Meghalaya High Court. The Supreme Court was compelled to issue a statement that her proposed transfer was in the best interests of administration of justice.

## ‘We can’t be complacent after IS leader’s death’

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy has said that despite the elimination of Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, “...there is no room to assume that the caliphate would cease to survive”. The leader of the terror outfit was killed in a U.S. raid on his Syrian safe house last month. The outfit seeks to establish an Islamic caliphate.

Mr. Reddy made the statement in Australia, where he is attending a ‘No Money For Terror’ conference, organised by the Australian government. Seventy other countries, including Pakistan, are taking part in it. Norway, Australia and New Zealand called for checking the flow of money to right-wing terror groups. A New Zealand Minister pointed to the murder of 51 worshippers at two Christchurch mosques in March.

Pakistan said it was aligning with the global community, especially the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), to redesign its anti-money laundering and counter-terror financing network, said an official who attended the conference.

“India, being a victim of cross-border terrorism, advocates zero-tolerance of terror... Despite the killing of Osama bin Laden in 2011, several active affiliates of Al Qaeda still exist in many parts of the world,” Mr. Reddy said. He announced that India would host the next edition of the conference.



# Iran resumes uranium enrichment at Fordow plant

This marks Tehran's fourth step away from the 2015 nuclear agreement

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
TEHRAN

Iran resumed uranium enrichment at its underground Fordow plant south of Tehran on Thursday in a new step back from its commitments under a landmark 2015 nuclear deal, raising alarm from Western powers. Engineers began feeding uranium hexafluoride gas into the plant's mothballed enrichment centrifuges in "the first minutes of Thursday", the Iranian Atomic Energy Organisation said.

The suspension of uranium enrichment at the long-secret plant was one of the restrictions on its nuclear programme Iran had agreed to in return for the lifting of sanctions. Iran's announcement that it would resume enrichment at the Fordow plant from midnight (2030 GMT on Wednesday) had drawn a chorus of concern from the remaining parties to the troubled agreement.

The resumption of enrichment at Fordow is Iran's fourth step away from the



**Deal in danger:** Centrifuge machines in Natanz uranium enrichment facility, Iran, in a photo released on Tuesday. **AP**

agreement. The United States called for "serious steps" to be taken in response to the move. "Iran's expansion of proliferation-sensitive activities raises concerns that Iran is positioning itself to have the option of a rapid nuclear breakout," U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement.

Uranium enrichment is the sensitive process that produces fuel for nuclear power plants but also, in highly extended form, the

fissile core for a warhead. Iran is now enriching uranium to 4.5%, exceeding the 3.67% limit set by the 2015 deal but less than the 20% level it had previously operated to and far less than the 90% level required for a warhead. Iran has always denied any military dimension to its nuclear programme.

**IAEA inspection**  
It has been at pains to emphasise that all of the steps it has taken are transparent and swiftly reversible if the

remaining parties to the agreement find a way to get round U.S. sanctions.

"All these activities have been carried out under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency," the Iranian nuclear organisation said.

A source close to the United Nations watchdog said that it has inspectors on the ground in Fordow and would report "very rapidly" on the steps taken by Iran.

Iran revealed on Thursday that it had withdrawn the credentials of one IAEA inspector last week after she triggered an alarm at the gate to Iran's other enrichment plant at Natanz, raising suspicion she was carrying a "suspect product". It did not specify what the product was or whether it had actually been found in the inspector's possession. But it promised that its representative to the IAEA would deliver a detailed report on the incident at a special meeting on Iran held at the agency's headquarters in Vienna.

## Border with Nepal not altered: India

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

India on Thursday said the new map of the country did not revise anything as far as the border with Nepal is concerned. The response came after Nepal's Foreign Ministry complained that the map depicted Nepali territory of Kalapani as part of the Indian State of Uttarakhand.

"Our map accurately depicts the sovereign territory of India. The new map has in no manner revised our boundary with Nepal. The boundary delineation exercise with Nepal is ongoing under the existing mechanism. We reiterate our commitment to find a solution through dialogue in the spirit of our close and friendly bilateral relations," said Raveesh Kumar, spokesperson, Foreign Ministry.

Nepal on Wednesday had formally protested over the issue. A press release by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs there said Kathmandu is committed to protect Nepal's territorial integrity. "Nepal is clear that Kalapani is a part of Nepali territory. We are committed to protect the international boundaries of Nepal and for that we have diplomatic dialogue with friendly Nepali Foreign Ministry declared," said the press release.

## China hints at cancelling U.S. tariffs

REUTERS  
BEIJING

China and the United States have agreed to cancel in phases the tariffs imposed during their months-long trade war, the Chinese Commerce Ministry said on Thursday, without specifying a timetable.

An interim U.S.-China trade deal is widely expected to include a U.S. pledge to scrap tariffs scheduled for December 15 on about \$156 billion worth of Chinese im-

ports, including cell phones, laptop computers and toys.

**Phase one trade deal**  
Tariff cancellation was an important condition for any agreement, Ministry spokesman Gao Feng said, adding that both must simultaneously cancel some tariffs to reach a "phase one" trade deal. "In the past two weeks, the lead negotiators from both sides have had serious and constructive discussions on resolving various core

concerns appropriately," Mr. Gao said. "Both sides have agreed to cancel additional tariffs in different phases, as both sides make progress in their negotiations." He did not give a timeline.

In what could be another gesture to boost optimism, China's state agency Xinhua reported late on Thursday that the Chinese customs and the Ministry of Agriculture are considering removing restrictions on U.S. poultry imports.

## Angry Mormons bury their dead in Mexico

Family was possibly caught in crossfire, say investigators; relatives reject the claim

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
RANCHO LA MORA

At a ranch in a wooded valley of northern Mexico, Howarth LeBaron gazes mournfully at his three surviving children. Days ago, they lost four of their siblings and their mother in a massacre.

"There are no words for what happened to them," he says, watching the children as they play with a toy unicorn and dinosaur. "There are no words."

His wife Rhonita and four of her children were among nine victims killed on Monday in a hail of bullets in an attack authorities have blamed on a drug cartel.

They were driving in three cars on a rural road between Sonora and Chihuahua, a region bordering the U.S.

As it prepared to start



**State of mourning:** A funeral in La Mora, Mexico, for three persons killed by drug cartel gunmen earlier this week. **AP**

holding funerals for the victims on Thursday, this small community voiced grief and anger at the Mexican government. They say a gang attacked them deliberately. The families have stood up in the past to the powerful drug cartels that control this

lawless region. Some 30 houses make up the small ranch community in a valley ringed with pines.

The families are part of a large group of U.S. Mormons who emigrated to Mexico in the late 19th century, fleeing persecution for their tradi-

## Tamil party endorses Premadasa for President

TNA says the Rajapaksas' record on power devolution has been 'dismal'

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's main Tamil party, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), on Thursday officially endorsed presidential candidate Sajith Premadasa, ahead of the November 16 poll.

The TNA, which represents Tamils of the war-affected north and east, said it based its decision on the past track records of the two main candidates — Mr. Premadasa and Gotabaya Rajapaksa — and on a reading of their respective manifestos. In the event of a likely close contest between them, Tamil (from the north, east and hill country) and Muslim votes could prove crucial in determining the winner, who requires a vote share of 50% plus one. The minorities are widely credited with propelling the current



**Poll talk:** Sajith Premadasa at a rally in October. **AP**

Maithripala Sirisena-Ranil Wickremesinghe government to power in 2015.

Over 8.5 lakh people in the Tamil majority-Northern Province are registered to vote, while nearly 12 lakh are registered to vote in the Eastern Province, that is home to Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese. A total of 16 million Sri Lankans will get to vote in

the country biggest election in less than two weeks.

The people expected the newly elected President to be "genuinely committed" to democracy, opposed to authoritarianism and totalitarianism, the protection and preservation of the independence of the different institutions of governance, the protection of fundamental

rights and human rights, justice and equality for all citizens irrespective of ethnicity or religion, TNA leader R. Sampanthan said in a statement endorsed by all constituent parties.

Terming the Rajapaksas' track record on human rights and power devolution "dismal", the TNA referred to Mr. Premadasa as a "leader with clean hands", though a few other Tamil parties in the north have raised questions over Mr. Premadasa's specific position on power devolution.

However, taking "all factors" into account, "particularly past performance on vital fronts and future performance based upon their respective manifestos," the TNA has urged all people, particularly the Tamil people, to vote for Mr. Premadasa.

## 'All 39 truck victims were from Vietnam'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

All 39 bodies found in a refrigerated truck outside London last month have now been identified as citizens of Vietnam, British police and Vietnamese officials said on Thursday.

The Vietnamese Embassy said it was "in deep sorrow" over the confirmation that the 31 men and eight women discovered dead in a truck on October 23 were from the country. Essex Police had initially said the victims were believed to be Chinese nationals, until several Vietnamese families came forward to say they feared their relatives were on board.

## Ex-Twitter employees spied for Saudi Arabia, alleges U.S.

They gave private data on the kingdom's critics to Riyadh

REUTERS  
WASHINGTON/SAN FRANCISCO

Two former employees of Twitter and a third man from Saudi Arabia face U.S. charges of spying for the kingdom by digging up private user data and giving it to Saudi officials in exchange for payment, a complaint from the Department of Justice shows.

Ali Alzabarah and Ahmad Abouammo, who used to work for Twitter, and Ahmed Almutairi, who then worked for the Saudi royal family, face charges of working for Saudi Arabia without registering as foreign agents, according to the complaint

filed against them on Wednesday. The indictment points an unusually public finger at Saudi Arabia, a U.S. ally that maintains warm ties with President Donald Trump despite its bad human rights record.

Saudi Arabia has not yet publicly remarked on the complaint.

King Salman met with the Director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Gina Haspel, in the capital Riyadh, the state news agency said on Thursday. It gave no details on the topics discussed at the meeting, which was also attended by the Saudi Foreign and Inte-

rior Ministers and the U.S. Ambassador.

According to the complaint, Mr. Abouammo repeatedly accessed the Twitter account of a prominent critic of the Saudi royal family in early 2015. At one instance, he was able to view the email address and telephone number associated with the account. He also accessed the account of a second Saudi critic to get personally identifiable information.

Mr. Almutairi, for his part, is accused of acting as a go-between for the Saudi government and the Twitter employees.

## Documents show how FB harnessed user data

Partners like Amazon got special access

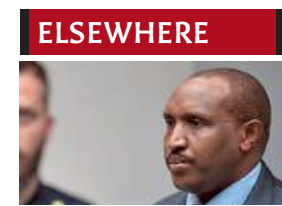
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SAN FRANCISCO

Leaked documents from a civil suit against Facebook show how the social network aimed to employ user data as a tool for bargaining and to manipulate competitors, NBC News reported on Wednesday. Some 7,000 pages of documents reveal how Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg and his team harnessed users' personal information to reward partners by giving them preferential data, while depriving rivals of the same sort of information, it reported.

NBC said the emails, notes and other documents dated as far back as 2011 and were supposed to be kept out of the public eye pending the civil case in California. They show, for example, how Amazon received special data access after purchasing advertising on Facebook, while an app called MessageMe was denied data after growing so large it became a competitor.

While acting out of self-motivation, Facebook planned to portray the moves as protective of user privacy, the documents showed. The lawsuit was filed by a now defunct startup called Six4Three.

The suit accuses Facebook of abusing its power over user data, although most of the documents filed in the case have been sealed by a judge at Facebook's request.



### ICC hands 30-year-jail term to Congo warlord

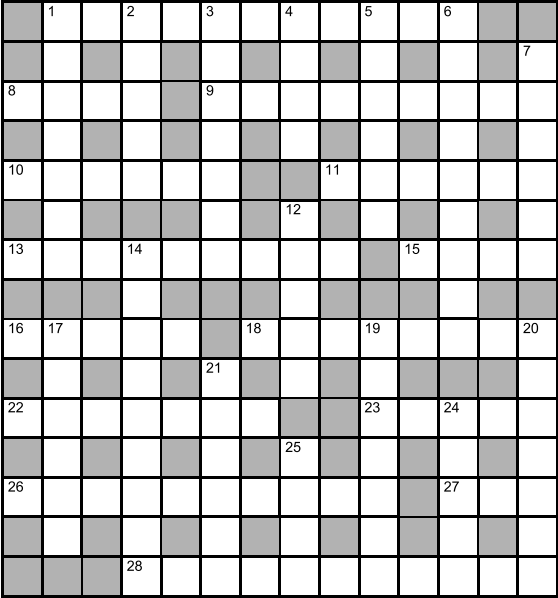
THE HAGUE  
International Criminal Court judges handed Congolese rebel chief Bosco Ntaganda a 30-year jail term for war crimes on Thursday, the highest ever sentence passed down by the tribunal. **AFP**

### N. Korea slams Abe as 'idiot and villain'

SEOUL  
North Korea slammed Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe as an "idiot and villain" on Thursday after he condemned the North's latest missile test. Pyongyang last week tested what it called "super-large multiple rocket launchers" but Japan said they were likely ballistic missiles. **AFP**

## THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12775

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



To play an interactive version of this crossword online, scan the QR code

### ACROSS

- 1 Article with a picture originally relating to a medical condition (11)
- 8 One at the helm of European space station (4)
- 9 Sounds that move you (5,5)
- 10 Door to get me in a cell (6)
- 11 A team with IT working in one go (2,1,4)

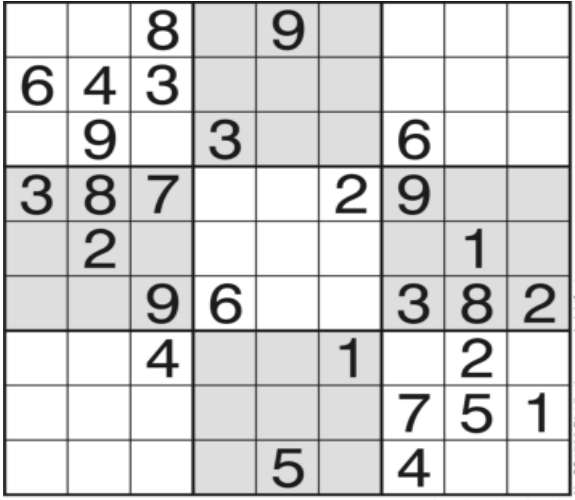
### DOWN

- 1 Independent member ain't worried about ones that are beaten (7)
- 2 Equal with no power — strange (5)
- 3 A garment daughter's wearing for lecture (7)

(set by Vulcan)

- 13 Old American in green-upholstered luxury car (9)
- 15 Speed of system ports (5)
- 16 Sure about securing couple of billions to build monastery (5)
- 18 Go with request that's absurd and ridiculous (9)
- 22 Definite or indefinite number (7)
- 23 Order from home with depression (6)
- 26 True, actors travelling around the city (10)
- 27 Standard time for break (4)
- 28 It's indecent — with fellows making this noise (4,7)
- 4 It erupts quiet naturally from the inside (4)
- 5 Tax worry stopping agreement (6)
- 6 Too many bad clues, not satisfactory basically (9)
- 7 Business house entirely set (4,2)
- 12 Trap a poacher lastly sets in 3 different directions (5)
- 14 Defeat apparent before end of match and series (9)
- 17 A week extra long at the start as a rule (6)
- 19 Journey's over, left one city (7)
- 20 Shake's ingredients as used by runner — vegan (7)
- 21 Sadism always intrinsically bad (6)
- 24 Chief Editor backing Arsenal (5)
- 25 Refusal, when voiced, understand (4)

## SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

### Solution to puzzle 12774

U	P	B	E	A	T	T	E	N	N	E	R
A	S	H	I	A	O	A					
P	H	I	A	O	A						
A	S	H	I	A	O	A					
B	A	D	G	E	R	T	H	E	R	E	M
G	A	I	R	G	E						
H	E	R	C	U	L	E	A	N	P	I	E
L	A	I	D	O	R	I	G	I	N	A	T
I	M	P	U	N	I	T	Y	G	R	I	S
E	S	G	M	S	D	P					
I	N	T	E	R	M	E	N	T	E	D	I
I	L	E	S	E	A	C					
A	S	S	E	T	S	T					

### Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

## FAITH

### Muruga's many names

Daksha performs a yaga, to which he invites all the devas but does not invite Lord Siva, his son-in-law. Dakshayani, Siva's Consort, goes to her father's yaga, overruling Siva's objections. She is insulted and she immolates herself. She is then reborn as Parvati, who is devoted to Lord Siva and yearns to marry Him.

The Lord, meanwhile, is engaged in tapas. Because of the Lord and His Consort being separated, there is no procreation in the world. The celestials want them to unite. So, they send Kama, the God of love, to bring about their union. Kama shoots his arrows to make Siva romantic. But when His penance is disturbed, Lord Siva burns down Kama by opening His third eye. The Lord's third eye is known to destroy evil and bring about good for the world. It was this eye that brought forth a spark that resulted in Lord Muruga, said R. Narayanan in a discourse. The spark from Lord Siva's third eye is deposited in Saravana Poigai by the river Ganga. The spark takes the form of six babies. Parvati embraces them, and they fuse into one form.

Because He was carried by Ganga to Saravana Poigai, Muruga is called Gangeya. Because the spark from which Muruga emerged was deposited in Saravana Poigai, Muruga is also called Saravana. Because He was raised by the Kritikas, He is Kartikeya. Because He has six faces, He is Shanmukha. In his Kandar Alankaram, saint Arunagirinatha praises the six faces and twelve arms of Muruga, which come to the rescue of the world. Because His star is Vishaka, Muruga is also called Vishaka. He is eternally young, and so He is Kumara. He is Devasenapati, because He is commander of the celestial forces. He explained the pranava mantra to His father, Lord Siva, and so He is Swaminatha.