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KP STF TO QUESTION FOUR HELD WITH FIREARMS IN BIHAR **PG4**



5 CIVILIANS KILLED AS PAKISTANI TROOPS SHELL BORDER VILLAGES **PG6**



STUNNING FALL OF NAJIB RAZAK USHERS IN HOPES OF REFORM **PG11**



I'M NOT A FEMINIST, I BELIEVE IN EQUALITY: KAREENA **PG16**

RARE SHOW OF OPPN MIGHT AT KUMARASWAMY SWEARING-IN

Regional parties must come together: CM



Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee greets Sonia Gandhi as Bahujan Samaj Party leader Mayawati walks past during the swearing-in ceremony **PTI**

OUR CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU: Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was one of the key figures at the oath-ceremony of JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy on Wednesday.

Before the swearing-in, Mamata and her Andhra Pradesh counterpart Chandrababu Naidu pitched for all regional parties to come together for the development of a federal setup in the country.

The two leaders said they want to promote regional parties and strengthen them.

Both Banerjee and Naidu said they were happy that the leader of a regional party was assuming office and they were here to express their solidarity with the JDS.

"We are present here to support Kumaraswamy ji and his government, and we hope for the best," Banerjee told reporters with Naidu standing next to her.

"We will keep in touch with all the regional parties so that we can work for the development of the nation, development of the people and development of the federal set-up also," the Bengal chief minister added.

If states are strong, the Centre would also be strong, she said adding, "Our mission and vision is clear, that we can meet each other, we can talk



Karnataka Governor Vajubhai Vala administers the oath to JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy as Karnataka Chief Minister **PTI**

to each other, and we can go to every state and talk to each other that will give us more strength for the future of the country."

On his part, Naidu expressed happiness about a leader of a regional party taking over as the Chief Minister of Karnataka.

"I met Mamata ji and we all have come here to witness the swearing-in ceremony of Kumaraswamy. He is from a regional party, and we are really happy that he has become the Chief Minister of Karnataka," he said.

"We are expressing our solidarity, and also in the future, we will work together to protect ourselves and to

promote the nation, that's our agenda" he added.

Asked whether this is the coming together of a front against Prime Minister Narendra Modi or BJP, Naidu said "We want to promote more and more regional parties. We want to strengthen (regional parties). That is Mamata ji's and our party's mission, and that is how we are working."

The oath-ceremony of JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy on Wednesday was a unique public show of Opposition unity perceived as a possible harbinger of a broad-based anti-BJP alliance ahead of the Lok Sabha polls next year.

They smiled broadly, shook hands warmly, and even embraced each other at the bonhomie-filled event to herald the advent of the JD(S)-Congress coalition government in the state amid doubts about its longevity.

Disparate in ideology but united in the intent of dislodging the BJP-led NDA from power in New Delhi, a bevy of leaders, from UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and Congress chief Rahul Gandhi to NCP's Sharad Pawar, from Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to her arch-rival CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, attended the event. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was also one of the one high profile attendees.

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav and BSP supremo Mayawati, who have sewn up an alliance in Uttar Pradesh, were among the first to arrive on stage.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, who recently walked out of the NDA and is now a bitter critic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, his Kerala counterpart Pinarayi Vijayan, RJD supremo Lalu Prasad's son Tejaswini Yadav, former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren of JMM, DMK chief M Karunanidhi's MP daughter Kanimozhi, and RLD leader Ajit Singh were among those present.

Telangana Chief Minister K Chan-

drasekhar Rao had flown to Bengaluru on Tuesday to congratulate Kumaraswamy.

The top leaders on the dais exuded warmth and cordiality.

Mayawati and Sonia clasped each other's hands before the BSP supremo put her arm around the UPA leader's waist.

Tejaswini, the Leader of Opposition in the Bihar Assembly touched the feet of Sonia and Mamata Banerjee as a mark of respect.

The meeting and greeting ended with the leaders posing for a group photograph, holding each other's hands and raising them in a show of solidarity.

Kumaraswamy, the third son of JD(S) supremo and former prime minister H D Deve Gowda, was administered the oath of office and secrecy by Governor Vajubhai Vala on a huge dais outside the majestic Vidhana Soudha, the seat of power in Karnataka.

G Parameshwara, the state Congress chief and the party's Dalit face, was sworn in as Kumaraswamy's deputy.

Kumaraswamy will expand his council of ministers after the trust vote on Friday which he is expected to win without any hiccups. The Congress, which has 78 MLAs, is likely to get 20 ministerial berths and the JD(S) with 37 lawmakers. **See P5**



To celebrate the exciting six-year journey of millennium post, we come out with a special 28-page pull-out. We thank our readers, advertisers and well-wishers for being a part of this wonderful journey. It was scheduled to come out with our edition dated May 2, but due to unforeseen circumstances it had to be delayed.

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Govt can reduce petrol price up to ₹25 but won't do **P CHIDAMBARAM**

Ordinance for amendments to bankruptcy code cleared

Home buyers to be treated as financial creditors

MPOST BUREAU

NEW DELHI: The Cabinet on Wednesday approved the proposal to treat home buyers as financial creditors when a loan defaulter company is auctioned, a move that will help quickly recover investments in bankrupt real-estate companies.

The Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved promulgation of an ordinance to amend the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016 (IBC), Minister for Law and Justice Ravi Shankar Prasad told reporters here.

He, however, did not give details of the amendment proposed but official sources said the Cabinet has approved treating home buyers as financial creditors rather than operational creditors.

Financial creditors like banks get to recover their dues first when a company or its assets are auctioned. It, however, was not clear if the home buyer will have a right over the unfinished property he or she had invested in after getting back a part of the investment from the bankruptcy proceeds.

As has been the experience so far with loan defaulting companies referred for insolvency proceedings under IBC, the successful bid is hardly enough to cover for all the loans given by financial institutions and banks. They usually get a share in the proportion of their exposure. With home buyers joining the list, the pie would get smaller, and banks would have to take a bigger haircut in real estate companies.

On the positive side, home buyers



could recover some portion of their dues in case the builder defaults, as against the current scenario where buyers have to depend on the residual value after financial creditors are paid, which entails higher hair-cuts.

The amendment comes months after a new Section 29A was added into the bankruptcy code in November, introducing four layers of ineligibility for potential bidders.

It is based on recommendations of a 14-member government-appointed committee that had last month suggested a slew of measures, including addressing woes of home buyers and making recoveries easier for lenders.

Briefing reporters after the meeting of the Union Cabinet, Prasad said, "it's a new legislation...the Cabinet has approved it".

He, however, refused to divulge further details citing constitutional provisions.

The Insolvency Law Committee had last month recommended to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs that home buyers should be treated as financial creditors, which will allow them to participate in an insolvency resolution process equitably.

Nipah scare: Travellers asked to stay away from 4 Kerala districts

MPOST BUREAU

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Amid the outbreak of the Nipah virus, the Kerala government on Wednesday asked travellers to avoid visiting four northern districts of the state — Kozhikode, Malappuram, Wayanad and Kannur.

In an advisory issued by Health Secretary Rajeev Sadanandan, it was stated that travelling to any part of Kerala was safe. But if travellers wished to be extra cautious, they may avoid the four districts, it said.

"A few cases of infection by Nipah virus have been reported from Kozhikode district in Kerala. The infection remains highly localised, all cases being linked to one family," the advisory said. Surveillance by the government is being conducted in Kozhikode district, from where most of the cases were reported, and in the neighbouring districts of Malappuram, Wayanad and Kannur, it said.

"The Health Department is taking effective steps for management of reported cases and surveillance through tracing of the contact of these persons. The situation remains under control," the advisory said.

Meanwhile, 2,000 Ribavirin tablets, an antiviral medicine, have already reached Kozhikode. **See P6**

PROTESTS CONTINUE IN TAMIL NADU

High Court stays expansion of Sterlite copper smelter plant

MPOST BUREAU

CHENNAI: The Madurai bench of the Madras High Court on Wednesday stayed the expansion of the Vedanta's copper smelter plant in Tuticorin district, amid a continuing agitation against the plant.

A bench comprising Justice M Sundar and Justice Anitha Sumanth passed the order staying construction of Vedanta's (formerly Sterlite Industries Limited) second unit in Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu, on a petition filed by environmental activist Fathima Babu.

The bench also directed the Central government to submit within four months a report after holding a public hearing in the district to invite



public opinion on the plan for expansion.

Sterlite had got consent to construct the second unit, as the existing unit remained shut for nearly two months now after the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board refused to renew its approval to operate (CTO) the unit.

On May 17, the Pollution Control Board had reserved its

order for June 6 on an appeal by Sterlite Copper challenging its decision.

The High Court had on May 17 reserved orders on a PIL seeking quashing of the environmental clearance granted to Vedanta's copper smelter unit.

Fathima Babu in her petition had sought a stay on the environmental clearance to Vedanta's copper smelter unit.

She also wanted exemplary cost to be imposed on the company for damaging the environment. The petitioner submitted that Vedanta Limited should be restricted from carrying out activities in the lands on which the proposed copper smelter-unit II was being constructed. **See P7**

IFTAR SPREAD



People break their day-long fast during the holy month of Ramadan, near their roadside shops, in Kolkata **PTI**

ONE OF CONTEMPORARY CRICKET'S GREATEST BATSMEN CALLS IT A DAY

'Tired' AB De Villiers retires from international cricket

PRETORIA: One of contemporary cricket's greatest batsmen, AB de Villiers, on Wednesday called time on his illustrious international career, claiming to be "out of gas" after 14 years in the top league.

The 34-year-old former South African skipper said his jaded body was no longer in a position to take the rigours of international cricket after a staggering 420 matches across three formats with over 20,000 runs and 47 tons. He averaged over 50 in both the Tests and ODIs.

"I have decided to retire from all international cricket with immediate effect. After 114 Test matches, 228 ODIs and 78 T20 Internationals, it is time for others to take over. I have had my turn, and to be honest, I am tired," De Villiers announced through a video message on social networking site Twitter.

This is a tough decision, I have thought long and hard about it, and I'd like to retire

while still playing decent cricket. After the fantastic series wins against India and Australia, now feels like the right time to step aside," De Villiers' decision epitomised the age-old truth of sport — quit when people ask "why" rather than "why not".

While he remains a sought-after player in leagues across the world and could have played the shorter formats, the affable Proteas dasher didn't want to pick and choose.

"It would not be right for me to pick and choose where, when and in what format I play for the Proteas. For me, in the green and gold, it must be everything or nothing.

"I will always be grateful to the coaches and staff of Cricket South Africa (CSA) for their support through all these years. The most important thank you goes out to all of my teammates throughout my career, I wouldn't be half the player that I am without the support



throughout the years," said De Villiers. It's not about earning more somewhere

else; it's about running out of gas and feeling that it is the right time to move on.

Everything comes to an end. To the cricket fans around South Africa and the world, thank you for your kindness and generosity, and today, for your understanding."

In fact, de Villiers said that he didn't plan to play overseas, which means that he will not be seen in RCB colours in the IPL next season.

"I have no plans to play overseas. In fact, I hope I can continue to be available for the Titans in domestic cricket. I will continue to be the biggest supporter of Faf du Plessis and the Proteas."

De Villiers holds the records for the fastest 50 (16 balls), 100 (31 balls) and 150 (64 balls) of all time in One Day Internationals. The swashbuckling batsman is a three-time ICC ODI player of the year, clinching the trophy in 2010, 2014 and 2015.

De Villiers succeeded Graeme Smith as ODI captain after the 2011 World Cup.

He later took over the Test captaincy from Hashim Amla. However, he stepped down from the leadership of the five-day format in 2016 due to an elbow injury.

Cricket South Africa president, Chris Nenzani, paid tribute to the innovative batsman.

"AB is one of the all-time greats of South African cricket who has thrilled spectators around the world with his sheer brilliance, coupled to his ability to innovate and take modern-day batting in all three formats, but particularly in the white ball ones, to new levels.

"What is probably more important is the inspiration he has been to his teammates whether playing at the international or domestic level and the wonderful role model he has been to all our aspiring youngsters. He is going to be greatly missed wherever international cricket is played," he concluded. **AGENCIES See P15**



Must-have summer products for YOUR LITTLE ONE

In summer, the soaring temperatures can increase the risk of dehydration and irritation for your little one. Make sure you're using the right products to provide extra care for the baby's skin. Experts have listed few essentials for your kids:

► **Nappy cream:** It helps to protect a nappy area of the babies while preserving the hydro-lipidic balance of their skin. With specific natural ingredients for every stage of baby's change, it protects and soothe baby's delicate skin. Nappy cream creates a breathable protective layer to guard against irritation caused by the nappy and water wash outs. Ingredients like panthenol help to regenerate baby's skin and keep it healthy.

► **Perfume:** The scent of a baby is the best in this world. A perfume for babies adds a calming and fresh aroma to the baby's skin. With daily use, its sweet and delicate fragrance envelops baby in a soft and scented embrace. Always make sure that all fragrances are dermatology tested and contains skin-friendly natural ingredients.



► **Gentle body wash and shampoo:** For baby's daily bath, a mild body wash and shampoo enriched with goodness of oats is ideal to nourish your baby's delicate skin from the very first days.

► **Talcum Powder:** This is an essential part of a baby's skincare routine during summer season. The mild fragrance of it can add oodles of charm to your little one. It is suggested to use talcum powder with rice starch instead of regular talc for babies. It refreshes and protects baby's skin, leaving it soft,

cool and supple while allowing it to breathe naturally without clogging pores.

► **Sun spray and cream:** It is always important to protect your baby's skin from sun exposure. Sun spray and cream are easy to apply and protect baby's sensitive skin against all type of sun rays. Normal sun creams protect against only UVA and UVB. Therefore, please check that the sun cream you choose for your baby should protect not only against UVA and UVB but also IR (Infrared) and should be water resistant. Some sun protection cream comes with Vitamin E and Physalis extracts that nourish the skin deeply while protecting it.

► **Sunglasses:** You cannot restrict the little ones indoors all throughout summer. What you can ensure is to shield their eyes from UV rays. Add colours and style to his/her eyes, and do look out for big-sized sunglasses that offer extra shade. Do not buy roadside plastic shades which do not offer UV protection.

► **Hats:** These provide protection to the newborn's face and neck. Opt for hats that are not too heavy, wide-brimmed and are made out of natural fabric. For the naughty little ones you may tie it under his/her chin.

Choose the right type of socks with your shoes

BELIEVE IT or not but socks are also very important to the life of your shoes. As feet are prone to sweating, this can cause damage to the footwear, which highlights the importance of a good quality pair of socks so make sure you are opting for right pair. Experts share a few tips on how to choose the right type of socks with your shoes:



ing socks, classic black dress socks paired with a smart tuxedo and formal or brogue shoes will make you look classy and elegant.

► **Striped and Patterned socks:** Go for cotton and cotton blended striped and patterned socks for casual sneakers.

► **Matching up is important:** It is very important to keep the colour of your dress socks matching to your trousers for suits. Always Choose a pair of socks that are either a shade darker or lighter than the trousers.

► **No show socks:** No-show socks are best friends of Oxfords shoes, loafers and casual sneakers. Don't forget to buy a pair this summer.

quick-drying, cushioned crew socks will enhance the comfort.

► **For those looking for a visible, stylish option** should wear knee socks with ankle boots. Don't let more than 2-3 inches of your sock peek out over the top of your ankle boot.

► **If you prefer socks to stay hidden;** a pair of comfortable no-show socks with Casual sneakers should be your go-to. It covers enough

of the foot to stay in place while remaining out of sight. Best of all, they don't slip.

► **For a sports enthusiast,** who is very fond of running and playing or just walking around, sports socks paired with running/walking shoes will be the best pick. Sports sock absorbs sweat keeping the feet away from bacterial and fungal infection.

► **Play Safe and wear black:** If you are someone who doesn't know the art of wear-

Poor sleep makes parents lenient towards kids

MOTHERS WHO HAVE trouble sleeping may engage in more permissive parenting, that is parenting marked by lenient or liberal discipline, says a study.

This type of lenient parenting, especially during the adolescent years, may increase the risk of problematic or risky behaviour among children including affiliation with deviant peers, engaging in delinquent behaviour, or substance use and abuse, according to the researchers.

"We found that when mothers were not receiving enough sleep, or receiving poor quality sleep, it had an effect on their levels of permissiveness with their adolescents," said Kelly Tu from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the US.

"It may be that they're more irritable, experiencing impaired attention, or so over-tired that they are less consistent in their parenting. But on the plus side, we also find that mothers who are receiving adequate sleep are less likely to be permissive with their adolescents," she added.

The study, published in the Journal of Sleep Research, focused on the effect of maternal sleep on parenting of adolescents.

Tu explained that during adolescence - 11 to 18 years of age - parental involvement is an important factor regarding how well their kids are adjusting socially, emotionally and behaviourally.

"Given that permissive parenting may heighten the risk of adolescents' risky



234 mothers who were asked to wear actigraphs - a wristwatch-like device - for seven consecutive nights which tracked their movements at night and determined whether there was a disruption in sleep.

Simultaneously, the adolescent children of the participants of an average age of 15 years completed questionnaires about how they perceived their mothers' parenting.

The results showed that mothers who had a longer duration of sleep or who were able to fall asleep easily, had adolescents who reported lower levels of permissive parenting.

The study is significant as it points out the need for self-care and the importance of sleep, according to Tu.

behaviours, we wanted to take a step back to ask what's driving these permissive parenting behaviours, and to see if sleep could be a contributing factor," Tu said.

In order to examine maternal sleep duration and quality, the study included



Opt for fruits, vegetables infused beauty products

Fruits and vegetables possess a plethora of health benefits when included in beauty products hence always opt for those options that has such ingredients, say experts.

Here are some of the smart options in fruits and vegetables that can work wonders for skin.

► **Apricot kernel oil** is highly refined fruit oil extracted from apricot kernels that is a natural source of vitamin E and has been found to be very compatible with the skin

► **Avocado oil** is a rich, fatty acid emollient derived from the fruit of a tropical American tree also a natural source of vitamin A. The fatty acids and emollients found in avocado oil help to restore the natural moisture of the hair and the lipid barrier of the skin

► **Cucumber extract** is composed of proteins, lipids, vitamin C and minerals. This helps in the moisturizing of the skin while relieving puffy skin

► **Ginger root extract** is known to have antioxidants, helps to absorb extra oil and defend skin from damage caused by free radicals and environmental aggressors

► **Grape seed oil** has a high concentration of essential fatty acids and is an efficacious skin-nurturing ingredient

► **Orange extract** is known to have anti-oxidation benefits to protect skin and blocks damage caused by pollution that attaches to skin and help regulate sebum and to energize skin

► **Turmeric extract** is a part of the ginger family, turmeric is known to have anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory properties and has been historically used to treat skin imperfections and improve the brightness of skin

► **Lemons** are high in natural fruit acids and have the highest



percentage of vitamin C out of all the fruits. Its extracts from the fruit and essential oil (expressed from the peel) have astringent and antiseptic qualities that freshen, stimulate, and rejuvenate sluggish skin and add lustrous shine to the hair.

Beauty experts too feel that products that are made of natural ingredients, using carefully blended plants, flower extracts and fine essential oils are extremely effective for skin and hair-care concerns for all types of skin.

► **Green Apple:** green Apples have been nature's health fruit since the beginning of time with many nutritious and anti-oxidative properties. Apples are excellent detoxifiers and protectors to purify, refresh and revitalize skin and hair.

► **Cucumber:** Cucumber is one of primordial cooling and purifying plants in nature with many beneficial health benefits. It is known to reduce skin puffiness and tiredness, and to restore natural skin freshness and tone.

► **Papaya:** Papaya is a luscious tropical fruit known for its rejuvenating and healing benefits. Full of vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals, papaya can act as a youth activator and natural exfoliator to revitalise the skin without inflammation or irritation.



64 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES ARE FROM BENGAL

Boys outperform girls in WBJEE 2018

Toppers share their side of the story

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: Boys have outshined girls in the West Bengal Joint Entrance Examination 2018, the merit list of which was published on Wednesday, with schools from the city dominating the top ranks.

Ayushi Vidyanta is the sole female ranker who secured 10th position in the merit list. She is from FIITJEE, Vishakhapatnam. Avinandan Bose from South Point High School ranked 1st, followed by Dedipya Ray from Hariyana Vidya Mandir in Salt Lake and Archisman Saha from DPS Ruby Park.

The maximum number of students who have passed the examination are from West Bengal Council of Higher Education (WBCHE), accounting for 47% of the total number of candidates, while 28% students are from Central Board of Sec-



REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

STAT COUNT

- » 47% of the successful candidates are from WB Board, with 28% from CBSE, 13% from Bihar Board, 5% from ISC and 7% from others
- » Around 1,25,075 candidates had enrolled for the exam, out of which around 1,05,974 appeared

23.30 percent of the candidates are from Bihar, followed by Jharkhand with 8.20 percent.

Around 3.2 percent of the total number of successful candidates are from other states, while 0.9 percent and 0.4 percent are from Tripura and Assam. A senior official of the WBJEE Board said that out of the successful candidates, 77 percent are general category students and 23 percent others.

Around 5 workshops were held to smoothly conduct the examination. OMR sheets of the candidates were already uploaded prior to the publication of the results, so that candidates could go through the OMR sheets and challenge if there were any errors.

"The rank cards can be downloaded from the board's website, wbjeeb.nic.in, from this evening. Unsatisfied students who would want to check the calculation sheets (original

answer paper), can see them from our office against a payment of Rs 500 through bank draft," Chairman of WBJEE Board said.

According to a senior official of the WBJEE Board, mock counselling will be held between May 28 and June 2, to make the candidates aware about the procedure of counselling.

As it's a complicated process, the students must know the details before actually taking part in the counselling. The counselling would start among the successful candidates from June 4.

The WBJEE Board on Wednesday also announced the date of next year's West Bengal Joint Entrance Examination, which will be held on April 21, 2019. This year, the exam was conducted on April 22 and the result was published within 31 days.



Clockwise: Avinandan Bose (1st), Debojyoti Kar (5th) and Archisman Saha (3rd) with Shuvam Agarwal (4th) MPOST

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: Debojyoti Kar, who has ranked fifth in the West Bengal Joint Entrance Examination (WBJEE), is overwhelmed with his rank and also expressed his desire to be an IIT engineer, the result of which is yet to come.

Kar is a student of Apeejay School. He had never expected that he would be able to make it to the top 10 list. He said that he had performed well in the examination and expected that his name might feature in top 20 list of the successful candidates.

His aim, however, is to become an IIT engineer. He has appeared for the examination and waiting for its results to be published.

From his childhood, Kar had wanted to be an engineer. He is happy that he has secured a rank in the state joint entrance examination, but IIT would be his first choice.

He owed his success to his parents and also to the teachers of the institution who had trained him. "Hard work is the key to success" is the message Kar wants to convey to the students who will appear for the joint entrance examination in future. He also reminded that hard work and studying with a strategy have fetched the stellar result for him.

He used to study 3-4 hours every day when he used to go to school and the number of study hours used to go up to 7-8 when there was no school.

Avinandan Bose, who topped the merit list from South Point High School, was not available for interview as he is currently attending a summer camp in Mumbai. It was, however, learnt that like Kar, Bose is also awaiting results of some other examinations.

Dedipya Ray, ranked second in the examination this year, said that he had studied seriously but was never so bothered about the result.

He studied only to prepare for various examinations and was not very particular about the number of hours he used to devote for his studies. Mathematics and Physics were his two favourite subjects, where he laid maximum stress.

He has also given a message to the future engineering aspirants, saying that one should study round the year and suggested not to bother about the examination too much. "Serious work always brings fruitful result. Solving question papers of previous years is also one of the key factors behind success," he said. He was a student of Hariyana Vidya Mandir in Salt Lake.

Ayushi Vidyanta is the sole female ranker, who secured 10th position in the merit list. She is from FIITJEE, Vishakhapatnam. Shuvam Agarwal, Debojyoti Kar, Namon Biyani, Rittwik Gangopadhyay, Ranajay Midya and Abhishek Srivastava have ranked fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth respectively.

Finance dept to hold meet of Financial Advisors

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: The state Finance department is set to hold a high level meeting of Financial Advisors of all the state government departments on May 29. There will be a review meeting on issues like "budget matters, including adjustment of advance drawal on old head of account".

It may be mentioned that deputy financial advisors have also been directed to attend the meeting, along with the financial advisors.

The first quarterly review meeting of the financial advisors will be held in the state secretariat, in which senior officials of the state Finance department will be present and role of financial advisors for successful compliance of e-tender or e-auction provisions will be discussed.

At the same time, matters related to surrendering of unutilised funds will also come up in the meeting. The matters related to the Integrated Finance Management System (IFMS), along with issues related to the entry of sanctioned strength of staff in Human Resource Management System (HRMS) module will also be discussed. The state government had decided to nominate financial advisors as representatives of the Finance

Deputy financial advisors have also been directed to attend the meeting, along with the financial advisors

department in the board of directors of state PSUs, statutory corporations and state aided universities to ensure proper utilisation of fund allotted for different projects. The step was taken in June 2016 to ensure proper and timely utilisation of funds that the state government allots to carry out different development works.

Many other issues related to the activities of the Finance department and steps that need to be taken for better implementation of the projects going on in the state will be discussed as well.

It may be recalled that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had directed concerned officials of all the departments to be ready with all necessary tasks, so that work can be started without any delay after the Panchayat polls. So now, all the departments have initiated their work in full swing to ensure timely completion of the projects.

Housing dept to construct 30,000 flats for subsidence zone residents in Raniganj

PRITESH BASU

KOLKATA: The state Housing department is constructing 30,000 flats in which families residing in subsidence zone in Raniganj will be rehabilitated.

According to a senior official of the state Housing department, Eastern Coalfield Limited (ECL) has decided to take up the project following a study carried out by the Asansol Durgapur Development Authority (ADDA).

In the study conducted by ADDA, it was found that there was a need to rehabilitate around 30,000 families as they are residing at a high risk subsidence zone. So, the decision to rehabilitate the families to a safer place has been taken up.

It may be mentioned that Raniganj is a major coal-producing area and there are problems of subsidence due to underground mining.

The preliminary work of the project has restarted and September 2019 has been set as a target to complete the construction of all the flats.

The official of the state Housing department said that they will be

CLOSER LOOK

» There is a requirement of 300 acres of land to construct the 30,000 flats

» The department will be constructing four-storeyed buildings and there will be 16 flats in each of the buildings. Each of the flats will have an area of 39.13 square metre

constructing four-storeyed buildings and there will be 16 flats in each of the buildings. Each of the flats will have an area of 39.13 square metre.

There is a requirement of 300 acres of land to construct the 30,000 flats. ECL has already handed over 26 acres of land to the state Housing department to construct the same.

The state government has also handed over two separate plots of vested land to the Housing department for the project. The two plots that the state government has provided are of separate measurements. One of the plots is of 80 acres, while the other one is 52 acres.

So, at present, the housing department can develop the buildings on a total of 158 acres of land at three different locations at Rani-

ganj and Andal.

"We have estimated that 12,976 flats can be constructed on the 158 acres of land readily available with the Housing department at present," said an official of the department.

The official of the state Housing department said that ADDA had conducted the survey and had identified the families who need to be rehabilitated and the state Housing department is carrying out the project through ADDA.

"Our endeavour is to complete the work within the set target so that the people staying in subsidence zone at present can be rehabilitated as early as possible," the official said, adding that they are expecting that the remaining land, as per the requirement, will also become available soon.

Petition filed in HC over NEET fiasco

KOLKATA: A writ petition was filed at Calcutta High Court on Wednesday, pointing out the errors in the Bengali translation of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) question paper this year.

Apala Debnath, a medical aspirant, had filed the petition, drawing the attention of the court to the ambiguity and mistakes that had occurred in the examination. It was mentioned in the petition that there were 180 mistakes out of 180 questions in the Bengali version of the NEET question paper.

The medical aspirants who appeared for the examination with Bengali as the medium were confused by the ambiguity, meaningless and incomplete Bengali translation. Most of these students became nervous and hence could not answer the questions which were known to them.

It was not possible for the Bengali version students to finish all answers within 3 hours. The petitioner had also raised questions on the role of CBSE, which conducted the examination.

The petition also stated that the students of Bengal were compelled to appear for the examination with xerox copies of question paper and OMR answer sheet. Such incidents were reported on the day of examination as well.

The petitioner pointed out that such activities were the result of absolute negligence on the part of CBSE.

The petitioner moved to Calcutta High Court, seeking its intervention as neither the Centre nor the CBSE took any initiatives in this regard, particularly after Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wrote to the Union Human Resources Development Ministry, calling for a re-examination.

Following the incident, the city doctors had also written to the Chief Minister and Prime Minister, seeking their intervention.

Distribution infrastructure sees boost due to CESC investments

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: CESC has made substantial investments for upgrading the city's electrical distribution infrastructure as a part of the company's initiative to upgrade and modernise its electricity infrastructure to provide efficient and reliable electricity supply to the city in 2017-18.

In the generation sector, the Budge Budge plant of the company ranked amongst top performing power plant in the country (PLF greater than 90%) while Haldia power plant operating at a PLF of less than 86%.

In distribution CESC continues to achieve a load shedding free environment for

its customers. It continues to upgrade the distribution infrastructure and processes for enhancing the quality and security of supply.

CESC gives maximum stress on customer service and has taken several steps to ensure that the customers have hassle free interaction with the company. Live chat with MD are organised on regular intervals.

Online application has been introduced for new HT consumer. An existing HT consumer can now access details like e bills, consumption history, payment history, aggremental load history, security deposit position through the website.

HT consumers have also

been allotted a single point of contact in the rank of the deputy general manager for contacting CESC at any point in time.

The CESC has bagged several awards in 2017-18 for its achievement which include the prestigious Significant Achievement at the CII-Exim bank Award for Business 2017.

PBT, PAT and Total Comprehensive Income (TCI) for 2017-18 stood at Rs 1111 crore, Rs 871 crore and Rs 861 crore respectively compared to PBT of Rs 1101 crore, PAT of Rs 863 crore and TIC of Rs 824 crore for the previous year. YRD sales growth stood over 3.9% and the debt equity ratio remained well below 1. T&D loss significantly lower than the previous year.

After basketball & cricket, KPSI to set up self-defense academy

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: After successfully setting up basketball and cricket academies, the Kolkata Police Sergeants' Institute (KPSI) has decided to set up a self-defense Academy.

The decision has come with successful completion of the five-day-long workshop on self-defense for women, Tejashwini, which was organised by KPSI.

The closing programme of the workshop was held on Tuesday and Supratim Sarkar, Joint Commissioner of Police (headquarters), had attended the ceremony.

It may be mentioned that KPSI runs a basketball and a cricket academy. At present there are 93 people who undergo training in the basketball academy, while the number is around 150 in the cricket academy.

Well known basketball players and cricketers provide training in the academy on every weekend. Basketball training at Police Athletic Club's ground takes place in morning, whereas the cricket academy runs in the evening. As per the initial planning, the training on self-defense will be held from 10 am to 2 pm on every Satur-



PIC/MPOST

day and Sunday and women from 12 to 40 years can undergo the training.

It may be recalled that Kolkata Police had introduced project Sukanya to provide self-defense training to schoolgirls and in the past few years, thousands of girl students have received training under the project. Later, the project was also taken up by Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate, Barrackpore Police Commissionerate and Howrah Police Commissionerate.

The first batch of the training programme in all the police commissionerates has already completed their training and the preparation to initiate the same for the second batch is going on.

It may be recalled that project Sukanya was a brainchild of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The academy, that is expected to start from the next month itself, will help women from different walks of life undertake training on self-defense.

UNESCO team visits Hills to take stock of DHR's condition

AMITAVA BANERJEE

DARJEELING: A six member UNESCO team is on a visit to the Darjeeling Hills. They are here to take stock of the present condition of the world heritage Darjeeling Himalayan Railways.

A meeting was held between the UNESCO team and DHR officials at the Elysia Building, the DHR headquarters in Kurseong on Wednesday.

"This is a routine visit. However, the team is here after nearly 10 months," stated MK Narzary, Director, DHR.

Incidentally, DHR services were discontinued since June 11, 2017, after the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha announced a renewed agitation for Gorkhaland, which commenced with Union and state government offices, followed by a 104 day long bandh since June 15. Services resumed on October 28, 2017.

The Sonada and Ghayabari



stations were also torched by the agitators. "The UNESCO team discussed the condition of rolling stock, the tracks and the present state of affairs" added the Director.

The team will visit various DHR locations, including Darjeeling on Thursday. A UNESCO team is also working on a project and are preparing a Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) for the DHR.

In the year 1879, work first started on the DHR, then called the Darjeeling Steam Tramways. The stretch from Siliguri to Kurseong was opened on

August 23, 1880. The Siliguri to Darjeeling track was inaugurated on July 4, 1881.

The name of the rail company was then changed to Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Company.

The DHR does a 88 km stretch from Darjeeling to New Jalpaiguri. It starts at 398 feet at New Jalpaiguri in the plains and climbs up to 7,407 feet at the highest point at Ghoom.

It was inscribed a World Heritage Site on December 2, 1999. Recently, air conditioned coaches have been included in the DHR service from NJP to Darjeeling.

KP STF to question four held with firearms in Bihar

The decision to interrogate them comes after similarities were found in the modus operandi of Ishopore arms smuggling and Bihar firearms cases

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: The Special Task Force (STF) of Kolkata Police will interrogate four persons, who were arrested from Kasimbazar area in Bihar on Sunday, with a huge cache of firearms.

A preliminary investigation revealed that the four persons were arrested on their way back from Kolkata with the "partly finished" firearms.

Sources said a team comprising senior officers of the STF of Kolkata Police will visit Bihar to interrogate the arrested persons.

They were carrying around 40 partly finished pistols in bags containing vegetables. Acting on a tip off, a team of Bihar Police raided and arrested them, following a search operation when they got down from a bus at Kasimbazar.

Investigation revealed that they were taking the firearms



PIC/MPOST

to Munger, where the remaining work had to be carried out to give a complete shape to the pistols. The pistols were bought at a price ranging between Rs 2,000 and Rs 2,500 and after completion, the same would get sold between Rs 4000 to Rs 6000. After getting information that four of

them - Md Irfan, Md Intiaz, Md Mukhtar and Md Nasim - were returning from Kolkata with the "unfinished firearms", the STF officers decided to interrogate them, because a few days ago, Kolkata Police made a similar major breakthrough by arresting members of a racket, who stole "scrap firearms" from

the Rifle Factory Ishopore in North 24-Parganas. The same used to get smuggled to the Maoists and insurgency groups in the North East. All the four persons, who were arrested on Sunday at Kasimbazar, are residents of Bihar. Kolkata Police have so far arrested eight persons including four persons

from Bihar in connection with the Rifle Factory Ishopore case. So, now the STF of Kolkata Police would interrogate them on how and from where they procure the "unfinished pistols", along with questions on whether they have any connection with those arrested over the rifle factory case.

Sources said, at the same time, police here will also be questioning those arrested over rifle factory case regarding the four persons, who were caught on Sunday, and whether they were known to them.

It may be mentioned that in the case of the rifle factory arms smuggling, too, the arrested persons used to take scrap firearms to Bihar, where the same used to get repaired. The decision to interrogate them was taken as similarities were found in the modus operandi of both the cases.

TMC to go for state-wide protest against fuel price hike

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: Trinamool Congress and Trinamool Youth Congress will stage a state-wide protest against the abrupt increase of petrol and diesel prices.

It may be mentioned that the petrol and diesel prices touched an all-time high and it has shoot up in the past nine days. There will be a protest march from Subodh Mullick Square to Park Street on Friday and it will be organised by Trinamool Youth Congress.

In districts, the protest rallies will be taken out on Saturday and Sunday.

Partha Chatterjee, Secretary General of Trinamool Congress, said on Wednesday: "Trinamool Youth Congress will organise a protest rally from Subodh Mullick Square till Park Street on Friday against rising fuel prices. Party workers from all frontal organisations will participate in the rally."

In the same breath he said: "Protest marches will be held in every district on Saturday (May 26) and Sunday (May 27) against surging fuel prices."



REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had tweeted on May 20 in this connection: "We are very concerned about the rising prices of petrol and diesel. This will certainly affect prices all around. Common people, farmers and many will suffer."

A day after her tweet, there was a protest rally in Hooghly in this connection and common people had joined.

Now, the party and its youth wing are going to organise the protest rallies all across the state.

It may be mentioned that Trinamool Congress took several steps against anti-people decisions of the Centre and it was on April 1, Chief Minister criticised the Centre for the hike in petrol and diesel prices. The protest rallies have been organised as the hike in prices would soon leave an impact on the prices of essential goods and common people will get unnecessarily harassed.

It may be recalled that Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee had tweeted on Tuesday: "As we witness the magic

Two contractors held for attacking Vice-Chairman

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: Police have arrested two contractors, who had assaulted Sheikh Nazimuddin, Vice-Chairman of North Dum Dum Municipality on Wednesday afternoon.

The civic authorities have cancelled the licences of the two contractors.

Locals staged a demonstration on the road and put up a blockade, demanding immediate arrest of the contractors, who had heckled their beloved leader.

Saugata Roy, Trinamool Congress MP went to the spot and brought the situation under control. Nazimuddin said he met the contractors - Tapas and Bapi, who were engaged in laying an underground pipeline in his ward. As there was inordinate delay in completing the work, he asked to expedite the work and complete it.

The contractors told him that they would not work and when Nazimuddin was going towards the chamber of a municipal engineer, they attacked him from behind.

As the news spread, locals came out on the street and protested against the contractor raj. They demanded stern actions against the two contractors.

They put up a road blockade affecting traffic movement. A large contingent of police from Nimta police station arrived at the spot and tried to pacify the residents.

The road blocks were later lifted. Saugata Roy said the abuse of one of their party leaders by the miscreants inside the municipality office is most unfortunate. He said a meeting with the chairman of the municipality Kalyan Kar was held and it was decided that the licences of the two contractors will be cancelled.

Fire breaks out at multi-storeyed building on AJC Bose Road

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: A fire broke out at a multi-storeyed building on AJC Bose road near Mullick Bazar on Wednesday afternoon triggering panic in the area.

The fire took place on the third floor of the building, where spare parts of vehicles were stored. No casualty or injury has been reported in the incident so far.

Locals spotted smoke billowing out of the building at around 12 pm and reported the matter to the fire brigade.

The area was soon covered in black smoke and people started running from one place to the other for shelter.

Some people, who were in the other floor of the building, panicked and left the building. After being informed, the fire brigade officials rushed to the spot and as many as ten fire-tenders were pressed into action to douse the flames. Police cordoned off the entire area to check any untoward incidents.

Moulali bound vehicles were diverted due to fire incident. There was a huge traffic jam in the area. The situation became normal a couple of hours later. Locals also took part in the rescue operation. They rescued the people who were inside the building and removed them to prevent any accident.

They initially tried to restrict the fire from spreading to other rooms. The fire fighters later restricted the fire from spreading into the adjacent buildings.

The situation was brought under control within one hour. According to a preliminary investigation, police and fire officials suspect that some inflammable materials might have been stored which aggravated the situation. The exact cause of the fire and the extent of the damage are yet to be ascertained.

A detailed probe has been initiated in this regard.



PIC/MPOST

2 held over fake blood reports

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: Police have arrested two persons on charges of delivering a fake diagnostic report to a patient, where the test was not conducted in the first place.

On the basis of the complaint lodged by one Azhar Alam Ansari, a resident of Rajabagan, police have arrested the accused from Nadial on Tuesday night. The arrested persons are Vijay Kumar Jha and Santosh Kumar Shaw.

Police arrested Jha. During interrogation, Jha told police that he used to supply the blood samples and other details to



Santosh Kumar Shaw. Santosh Kumar Shaw was then arrested last night. Blank slips of Medical Life Diagnostic Centre and City MED Diagnostic Centre were recovered. They used to give diagnostic test results without actually performing the tests. They have been remanded to 2-day police custody.

OUR CORRESPONDENT

BALURGHAT: Most of the well-known eateries running in Balurghat have no 'Food Safety Licences'.

The matter came to light following joint drives conducted by the officials of the concerned district Food Safety Department and Balurghat Civic Body over the past two days.

It may be mentioned that the state Urban Development department has instructed all civic bodies to conduct raids at restaurants and eateries after a racket selling rotten and stale meat was unearthed in Kolkata.

The concerned officials have asked the owners of the restaurants and eateries to follow the food safety norms strictly, failing which they will close down the establishments.

During the drives, the officials found that the hotels and restaurants are being run flouting the mentioned norms. In most of the restaurants, the kitchens are being run in unhygienic conditions. However, no stale and rotten meat was found stored in the freezers.

Civic officials said the former Left board was largely responsible for the menace of flouting the food safety measures by the owners of those

eateries and running their establishments without any hindrance.

According to a civic official, the erstwhile Left board had only distributed registrations to the owners of those establishments for Rs 100 to start their trades.

District Food Safety Department official, Biswajit Manna said: "It is unfortunate that most reputed hotels and restaurants in town have no proper infrastructure. The kitchens are unhygienic. The establishments have no Food Safety Licences too. We have instructed to follow the rules and regulations immediately."

The chairman of Balurghat Municipality, Rajen Shill echoed Manna and said: "We will monitor the situation. Several drives will also be conducted at the eateries in Balurghat in future. We have talked to the officials of district Food Safety Department regarding the matter."

The officials said the raids will be held everyday and restaurants found not following the norms will be booked.

It may be mentioned that in Birbhum district, the civic officials have collected food samples from several restaurants and sent them to the laboratories for analysis.

Well-known eateries in Balurghat run without 'Food Safety Licences'

OUR CORRESPONDENT

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Passengers on Puri-bound train fall ill after eating stale food

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: Fourteen passengers of Howrah Jan Satabdi Puri Express fell sick after consuming the food supplied to them on train.

Shortly after the train left the station, the victims complained of nausea and acute stomach ache.

The Railways has ordered an inquiry into the incident. The passengers took the food at Bhubaneswar station.

Shortly after the train left, the victims complained of nausea and acute stomach ache.

Many also complained of sweating along with diarrhoea. The fellow passengers tried to treat them and finally contacted senior railway officials.

They felt nervous as no railway doctor was available on board. When the train reached Kharagpur, the victims were taken to the Railway Hospital where they were treated.

Senior railway officials said they will try to find out whether the ailment was because of the food supplied by the railways or they had taken something that were available on the station. They assured that those guilty will be pulled up.

The passengers alleged that stale food was supplied and despite being pointed out to the catering firm, those serving food refused to replace. They further alleged that the quality of food has gone down and no hygiene is maintained. However, the condition of the victims are stable after treatment.

Following Nipah outbreak in Kerala, state issues alert

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: Following the appearance of Nipah virus (NiV) in Kerala that has claimed 10 lives until now, state Health department is busy drafting advisories and has issued instructions to the state-run hospitals and medical colleges across the state.

A senior official at the state Health department said all the hospitals have been alerted. They have been asked to report immediately if any patient is admitted with flu like symptoms.

Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) has also asked its health centres to be alert. In case, a patient is having suspected symptoms, he or she must be referred to a hospital.

Fruit bats are among the carriers of the virus that is named after Kampung Sun-

gai Nipah, a Malaysian village that first witnessed an outbreak in 1998.

According to a senior physician in the city, people must refrain from visiting the southern state, particularly Kozhikode, suspected to be the epicentre of the fresh outbreak.

The incidents were previously reported in Siliguri. In case of an attack, the mortality rate is much higher than other diseases.

The tests are done only at the National Institute of Virology in Pune.

An ornithologist advised against the consumption of half-eaten fruits because health officials have suggested that the first patient in Kerala may have eaten mangoes that had residues of fruit bat saliva.

The doctors have advised that people must be cautious while having cut fruits.

Infected humans can

develop encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain. The symptoms, typically starting about 5 to 14 days after the NiV infection, include high fever, headache, drowsiness and disorientation that can advance to coma and death.

Some patients also have respiratory distress, doctors said.

According to the doctors, treatment options are limited in this regard.

The focus of NiV management should be on prevention. Strategies include intervention to prevent farm animals from acquiring NiV.

Experts said the healthcare workers should follow standard precautions, including washing hands and wearing gowns, caps, masks and gloves.

If anybody complains of headache, fever or similar symptoms, he or she must be taken to a hospital immediately.

HOME GROUND VICTORY



Kolkata Knight Riders supporters cheer during an IPL Eliminator match between KKR and Rajasthan Royals at Eden Gardens in Kolkata on Wednesday

PTI

Perceived as kingmaker, HDK becomes the king of K'taka

OUR CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU: "I will be the king and not the kingmaker," H D Kumaraswamy had said in the run up to the Karnataka polls.

His words proved prophetic as the 58-year-old Vokkaliga leader on Wednesday wore the crown despite his JD(S) finishing a poor third in the electoral battlefield.

On the margins of Karnataka politics for a decade, Kumaraswamy, the third son of JD(S) supremo and former prime minister HD Deve Gowda, was widely tipped to play a supporting role in government formation, but nobody gave him even an outside chance of landing the chief minister's chair.

As the counting of votes progressed on May 15, and it became clear that there would be no straight winner in the three-horse race for power, fate smiled on Kumaraswamy.

A badly bruised Congress, which failed to form its governments in Goa, Manipur and Meghalaya despite being the single largest party, moved in swiftly and declared it would unconditionally prop up a JD(S) government despite the party having only 37 MLAs, less than half the Congress's strength of 78. Kumaraswamy quickly lapped up the opportunity and staked claim to form the government.

Governor Vajubhai Vala, however, swore-in BJP's B S Yeddyurappa to form the government as the leader of the single largest party in the 224-member Assembly, whose effective strength is 221.

Vala's decision could only delay Kumaraswamy's ascension to the Karnataka throne, as Yeddyurappa, facing an imminent defeat during the trust vote, resigned within three days of being sworn in.

By a quirk of fate, 'Kumaranna', who served as the chief minister for 20 months in 2006-07 at the head of a JD (S)-BJP government, and his party, have been catapulted to the forefront of efforts for cobbling together a broad-based anti-BJP front ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. A galaxy of leaders including.... descended on Bengaluru to fete the leader, who until a few days ago was perceived would be just an also-ran.

Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown, goes the proverb. Though Kumaraswamy has managed to be back at the helm of affairs in Karnataka, managing the contradictions in the coalition may not be a smooth sailing for him after the JD(S) and Congress fought a bitter electoral battle in the state, particularly in the old Mysuru region.

Kumaraswamy had conceded yesterday that running the coalition government for the next five years would be a



Newly sworn-in Karnataka Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy greets Deputy Chief Minister Dr G Parameashwara after the oath-taking ceremony, in Bengaluru, on Wednesday

"big challenge" for him.

The first task for him would be a smooth expansion of his Council of Ministers, as the Congress would want to have a big share in the ministerial pie as it has more than double the number of MLAs the JD(S) has.

The BJP, with its 104 MLAs would be a formidable opposition, and would do everything to keep the government on its toes. The BJP, which dubbed the Congress-JD(S) alliance as "unholy", boycotted the oath-taking ceremony and observed

an "anti-popular mandate day", sending out a stern message that the bitter fallout of the split electoral verdict would continue to dog the state's politics for a long time to come.

Seen as an "accidental politician", Kumaraswamy's first love was films.

A fan of Kannada thespian Dr Rajkumar, he was attracted to cinema since his college days. He took up film-making and distribution, and produced several successful Kannada films, including the recently

released "Jaguar", starring his son Nikhil Gowda.

Kumaraswamy, who grew up in a political environment, entered electoral politics by contesting the Kanakapura Lok Sabha seat in 1996 and won. He subsequently lost both parliamentary and assembly elections. He got elected to the assembly for the first time in 2004, when the JD(S) joined the coalition government headed by Congress's Dharm Singh after the elections threw up a hung House.

In 2006, he rebelled and walked out of the coalition with 42 MLAs against the wish of his father, citing threat to the party, and formed the government with the BJP, becoming the chief minister during his very first term as MLA.

Under a rotational chief ministership arrangement, he helmed the state for 20 months. When the BJP's turn for chief ministership came, he reneged on the arrangement, and brought down the Yeddyurappa government within seven days.

In the election that followed in 2008, the BJP formed its government in Karnataka, its first south of the Vindhyas. Kumaraswamy's outreach to rural folk with 'gram vastavya' project under which he stayed in villages to understand their problems earned him popularity, but he also faced corruption taint in an alleged mining scam.

BJP taking no chances in Kairana, CM, ministers in campaign fray

ARUNAV SINHA



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is leading a pack of UP ministers campaigning in this communally sensitive Lok Sabha constituency which goes to the polls on May 28.

Yesterday, he and Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya campaigned in Saharanpur district, in which part of Kairana constituency falls. Tomorrow, they will hold meetings in Shamli district.

Opposition parties too are going all out for victory, which they feel will set the tone for the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, will campaign here for the joint opposition candidate, Rashtriya Lok Dal's Tabassum Hasan.

Her party's national vice-president Jayant Chaudhary has been regularly visiting the constituency since the announcement of the polls and is likely to remain in Kairana for the remaining few days till the end of the campaign.

Tabassum Hasan is contesting against BJP's Mriganka Singh, whose father Hukum Singh's death has led to this bypoll.

Apart from Adityanath and his deputy, the Bharatiya Janata Party has thrown in at least five other state ministers into the

fight for Kairana.

They include Dharam Singh Saini (minister of state for Ayush), Suresh Rana (Sugar-cane Development) Anupama Jaiswal (Basic Education) Surya Pratap Shahi (Agriculture) and Laxmi Narayan (Religious Affairs, Culture, Minority Welfare, Muslim Waqf and Haj).

Of these, Dharam Saini and Rana are MLAs from Nakur and Thana Bhawan assembly segments of the constituency. Anupama Jaiswal is the minister in charge of Shamli district, while Surya Pratap Shahi is the minister in charge of Saharanpur.

Laxmi Narayan Chaudhary has been roped in, since he hails from a farming background, a senior UP BJP leader said.

Apart from this, BJP MPs Sanjiv Baliyan, Raghav Lakhani Pal, Vijay Pal Singh Tomar and Kanta Kardam are also actively campaigning for Mriganka Singh.

The opposition is projecting

these visits as a sign of the jitters in the ruling party, which recently lost Gorakhpur, a Lok Sabha seat vacated by Yogi Adityanath himself when he became chief minister.

By sending so many ministers to a parliamentary constituency during a bypoll, the BJP has clearly displayed its nervousness, SP spokesperson Sunil Singh Sajan said.

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav is likely to hold one election meeting during the bye-elections, and his one meeting will prove to be quite enough for the BJP, he boasted. Apart from Akhilesh Yadav, SP's UP chief Naresh Uttam is extensively touring the constituency.

The party has deputed leaders and workers up to the booth level in these bye-elections, Sajan said.

UP Congress spokesperson Ashok Singh also took potshots at the BJP over the party's deployment for the campaign.

THAT BONDING



Congress leader Sonia Gandhi and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leader Mayawati during the swearing-in ceremony of JD(S)-Congress coalition government in Bengaluru, on Wednesday

OUR CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU: The BJP on Wednesday observed a 'black day' against the Congress-JDS government headed by HD Kumaraswamy ahead of its swearing-in, and gave a call to the "sidelined" Congress leaders in the new coalition to join the saffron party.

The BJP warned that it would hold a statewide 'bandh' if the new coalition government fails to fulfill its election promises.

Addressing the party workers who had gathered in large numbers to stage a demonstration near the statue of Mahatma Gandhi at Anand Rao Circle, BJP state chief BS Yeddyurappa condemned the coalition government as "an

opportunistic alliance."

"There is a farm loan of Rs 53,000 crore. You have said you will waive all the loans. Let us see whether you will actually waive all the farm loans. If you fail, we will observe a bandh all over the state," he said.

The state BJP chief said the Congress should immediately distance itself from the JDS or else the dream of Congress-free India will be a reality soon.

"Congress has lost its base in the state. With whom will the Congress go tomorrow? Will you go with Kumaraswamy?" said Yeddyurappa.

He also gave a call to Congress leaders, who felt offended for being sidelined in the new scheme of things in the coalition government, to join the BJP. "Congress leaders must



Karnataka BJP President and former chief minister B S Yeddyurappa with other state leaders shout slogans as they observe 'Anti People's Mandate Day' in Bengaluru on Wednesday

wake up. Those who felt cheated can come to BJP. If there is any party, which has faith in democracy, it is BJP. Let us build Karnataka as a model

state. I flay this coalition government," said Yeddyurappa.

Slamming the BJP for observing the "black day", JDS leader Kumaraswamy said,

"Having no concern for public is BJP's style of functioning. Their politics revolved around misleading people by organising events like black day, some kind of Yatra and fomenting passions. You cannot expect anything better from them."

Yeddyurappa had stepped down as Karnataka chief minister within three days of assuming office after failing to muster enough numbers, without facing the floor test on May 19.

The BJP had emerged as the single largest party with 104 seats in the assembly elections, with a fractured mandate.

With Yeddyurappa failing to take the floor test, the Congress and JD(S) claiming the support of 117 MLAs was invited to form the government by Governor Vajubhai Vala.

Time to defeat 'repressive Manuvadi' thoughts: Rahul

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: Attacking the BJP and the RSS, Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday alleged that Tamils are being brutally killed for not bowing to the Sangh philosophy and sought to put the blame for thrashing of Dalits in Gujarat on 'repressive Manuvadi thought' of the two organisations.

In a tweet targeted at the BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Gandhi also attached a news report video clip of Dalits being thrashed to death in Rajkot and Una.

"This soul-stirring video is a result of the Manuvadi thought. Before this disease spreads further in our country, we have to stop this. We will all together defeat this repressive thought of the BJP/RSS. It is time for change," he tweeted in Hindi.

This followed another tweet in Tamil in which the Congress chief alleged that Tamils were being killed as they refused to "bow" to the RSS philosophy. In an apparent reference to the continuing anti-copper plant violence at Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu, in which at least 10 people have been killed in police firing, Gandhi said he was with the Tamil people.

"Tamils are being brutally killed because they are refused to bow to the RSS philosophy. The bullets of RSS and Modi can never crush the spirit of the Tamil people. Tamil Brothers and sisters, we are with you!" he tweeted using the hashtag "SteriliteProtest".

The Congress had yesterday also tweeted that the gunning down of people is a "brutal example of state sponsored terrorism". "These citizens were murdered for protesting against injustice," he had said.



In a tweet targeted at the BJP and the RSS, Gandhi also attached a news report video clip of Dalits being thrashed to death in Rajkot and Una

Yesterday, the Congress president had also urged students to "rise", alleging their future was at risk as the prime minister wanted to appoint officers chosen by the RSS by "manipulating" the merit list in civil service examinations.

This message came in the wake of a proposal seeking to bring in major changes in the allocation of services to candidates who clear the all-India examination.

Asked to comment on this, BJP president Amit Shah had yesterday dismissed Gandhi's claim, saying he cannot help if the Congress chief sees the Hinduva organisation in everything. "Tell me where the RSS comes in this? The examination will continue as it does now, there will be no arbitrary control over who will pass it. It is about evaluating performance in training. It is anyway a suggestion and no decision has been taken? Where does the RSS come in this? He sees the RSS in everything. What I can do," Shah had said at a press conference.

Rahul hiding 'failures' behind veil of attacking RSS, says BJP

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: The BJP on Wednesday slammed Rahul Gandhi for targeting the RSS over the killing of 10 people in police firing in Tuticorin, saying the Congress chief was hiding his "failures" behind the veil of attacking the organisation.

Gandhi claimed that Tamils were being killed as they refused to "bow" to the ideology of the RSS.

In an apparent reference to the anti-copper plant violence at Tuticorin yesterday in which 10 people were killed in police firing, Gandhi said he was with the Tamil people.

BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra attacked Gandhi at a media briefing for drawing the RSS into the incident and said it underlined his "inexperience and immaturity", wondering what future the Congress would have with such



a president. "You can inherit presidency of a party but you cannot inherit wisdom and understanding," he said, taking a dig at Gandhi.

Patra also alleged, citing media reports, that senior Congress leader P Chidambaram was a director in the company, which was at the centre of the violent protests in the southern state, and asked Gandhi to seek clarification from him.

In India's federal structure, law and order is a state subject and the BJP-run central government has nothing to do with the police firing, Patra said, asking if Gandhi knew that.

In a jibe, he said Gandhi so

often errs by blaming the RSS for things happening across the country and the BJP would like to gift him Class VI civics book to learn about India's federal structure, Constitution and democracy.

What has happened is a matter of sorrow and Gandhi is trying to milk a sad incident for political mileage, Patra alleged.

He wondered if the Congress president would also blame the RSS for anti-Sikh riots of 1984 and the Emergency imposed in 1975 by the then Indira Gandhi government.

"He is not able to give a capable leadership to the Congress and believes that he can milk politically any situation to suit his political opportunism by drawing the RSS and the BJP into the battle," he said. Patra accused Gandhi of hiding his "failures" behind the veil of attacking the RSS.

Six BJP MLAs complain of getting extortion messages

OUR CORRESPONDENT

LUCKNOW: At least six BJP MLAs in Uttar Pradesh have filed police complaints that they have been receiving extortion messages on their phones asking them to deposit Rs 10 lakh in the sender's account, lest their families would be eliminated, police said on Wednesday.

The six lawmakers have lodged separate FIRs claiming that they have received these threat messages over the past couple of days and the sender, who happens to be the same person in all the cases, has

demanding the money be paid within three days, they said.

The MLAs who claimed to have received the messages are: Veer Vikram Singh (Meerapur Katra, Shahjahanpur), Prem Narayan Pandey (Taraganj, Gonda), Vinay Kumar Dwivedi (Mehnuan, Gonda), Vinod Katiyar (Bhognipur, Kanpur), Shahshank Trivedi (Maholi, Sitapur) and Anita Rajput (Debai in Bulandshahr).

"I got WhatsApp messages and calls demanding Rs 10 lakh. The sender said if I did not pay the money my family members will be eliminated," Katiyar said.

We have tied 'Ashwamedha' horse of PM, Kumaraswamy

OUR CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU: Karnataka Chief Minister H D Kumaraswamy today said the JD(S) along with Congress had succeeded in tying Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Ashwamedha' horse (victory horse) in Karnataka, fulfilling his aim.

"I had said after the Uttar Pradesh election results came out that my aim is to tie the Ashwamedha horse of Narendra Modi and Amit Shah (BJP President). Today both Congress and JD(S) together have tied their Ashwamedha horse

in Karnataka," Kumaraswamy said. Calling himself a "child of circumstances," Kumaraswamy said he decided to join hands with the Congress on the advice of several political leaders in the "national interest."

Speaking to reporters after being sworn-in as chief minister, he said "Probably, in the days to come, Amit Shah has to go to Narendra Modi with lifeless Ashwamedha horse, as we have tied their horse."

He said many people were having doubts about whether the coalition government would last and assured them

that he would provide a stable government. "There is doubt whether this government will last long. With my conduct and that of my government, I will ensure that this opinion will change. I want to make it clear to the people of the state," he said. Conceding that people had these doubts because the JDS broke away from the Congress in 2006 to form a government with BJP, Kumaraswamy said "...the nature of our (JDS, Congress) relationship thereafter has led to a doubt about our confidence in each other, and can we work together?"

Govt can reduce petrol price up to ₹25 but won't do: PC

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: Amid rising criticism over steep hike in fuel prices, senior Congress leader P Chidambaram on Wednesday claimed it was possible to cut up to Rs 25 per litre in petrol prices but the government will not do so.

In a series of tweets, the former finance minister said the bonanza to central government is Rs 25 on every litre of petrol and this money rightfully belongs to the average consumer. "Central government saves Rs 15 on every litre of petrol due to fall in crude oil prices. Central government puts additional tax of Rs 10 on every litre of petrol."

"It is possible to cut up to Rs 25 per litre, but the government will not. They will cheat the people by cutting price by Rs 1 or 2 per litre of petrol," he said on Twitter.

More than a week after

state-owned oil firms ended a 19-day pre-Karnataka poll hiatus on revising fuel prices, petrol and diesel rates have touched record highs.

Petrol costs Rs 76.87 per litre in Delhi and diesel costs Rs 68.08 a litre. In the last nine days, petrol price has risen by Rs 2.24 a litre and diesel by Rs 2.15. Rates vary from state to state depending on the incidence of local sales tax or VAT. The prices in Delhi are the cheapest among all metros and most state capitals. The central government levies Rs 19.48 a litre of excise duty on petrol and Rs 15.33 per litre on diesel.

State sales tax or VAT varies from state to state. Unlike excise duty, VAT is ad valorem and results in higher revenues for the state when rates move up. In Delhi, VAT on petrol was Rs 15.84 a litre, and Rs 9.68 on diesel in April. Now, it is Rs 16.34 on petrol and Rs 10.02 a litre on diesel.

NEW DELHI: The Congress on Wednesday said it will mark the fourth anniversary of the Modi government on May 26 as "Vishwasghat Divas" or Betrayal Day and "expose" the NDA's failures on various fronts in protests held across the country.

AICC general secretary Ashok Gehlot said the Congress and other like-minded parties would unite to defeat the Modi Government, which he described as "fascist and corrupt" and claimed was destroying the country.

"Everyone is full of angst against this NDA government. Be it farmers, youth, Dalits, the common man, all are suffering under this government," he said.

Gehlot also urged the prime minister to "stop lying" on issues and to try and create history instead of "distorting" it.

Along with the party's communications in-charge Randeep Surjewala, Gehlot said the Congress would mark four years of the Modi government with protests in every district of the country, besides press conferences addressed by senior leaders. The two leaders also released posters in Hindi and English for its "India Betrayed campaign" to be launched by the Congress on May 26. The Modi government was sworn in on this day in 2014.

"On the completion of four years of the BJP-led government on May 26, the Congress has decided to hold dharnas, protests in every district of the country to expose the BJP for its betrayal of the people's trust. The Congress will raise all issues due to which the common man is troubled by this government," Gehlot said.

5 civilians killed as Pakistani troops shell border villages

OUR CORRESPONDENT

JAMMU: Five civilians were killed and nine others injured as Pakistani troops rained mortars and opened heavy fire on Indian villages and BoPs along the International Border (IB) in Jammu, Kathua and Samba districts on Wednesday.

Wednesday is the 9th day of continuous firing and shelling by Pakistani Rangers along the IB and LoC in Jammu, Kathua and Samba districts in the northern Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir.

A senior police officer said two civilians were killed and six injured in the shelling and firing in Samba that started at 9 am.

Pakistani Rangers also targeted civilian areas and posts in Kathua district.

"There was heavy firing and shelling on civilian areas and posts along the IB in Hiranagar sector of Kathua district before dawn", a senior police officer said.

In the firing and shelling, three persons were injured and one of them succumbed to injuries on way to hospital, he said adding the injured have been admitted to hospitals.

He said over 100 border dwellers have been evacuated and put in safe shelters and an operation to evacuate others



A woman carries her son injured in cross-border firing to a hospital, in Jammu on Wednesday

PTI

is going on with use of bullet proof vehicles. The shelling is going on, he said.

In RS Pura, Arnia, Bishnah of Jammu district and Ramgarh and Samba sectors firing and shelling is going on since Tuesday night.

"In heavy shelling by Pakistan on Wednesday morning, a civilian was killed in RS Pura sector and another injured in Arnia sector", a police officer said. The injured person later succumbed to injuries.

Large number of people have

been evacuated from various villages in these sectors since last night, he said.

On Tuesday, 20 civilians were injured when Pakistani troops shelled Indian villages with mortar bombs.

Arnia town, which has been badly hit in Pakistani shelling, is deserted as most of the people have left their houses and taken shelter either in government camps or at the homes of their relatives.

Educational institutions in the affected areas remained

closed.

A senior BSF official said firing and shelling continued unabated overnight and has spread to all sectors along the border. He said Pakistani Rangers suffered several casualties with a number of their bunkers getting hit in the exchanges.

Over 500 people have reported at these camps set up in educational institutions and other government buildings. Adequate facilities are available at these camps.

The latest round of shelling

Ten civilians injured in J&K grenade attack

SRINAGAR: Ten civilians, including a 12-year-old boy, were on Wednesday injured in a grenade attack carried out by militants in Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag district, police said. The militants hurled the bomb at a security forces patrol party at Goriwan Chowk in the Bijbehara area of south Kashmir, they said. The resulting explosion caused injuries to the civilians, including the boy and a few women, police said. The injured were taken to a local hospital from where four were referred to Srinagar for further treatment. Security forces have cordoned off the area and have launched a search operation for the militants, police said.

started on May 15 when the BSF foiled two infiltration attempts by Pakistan-backed infiltrators in Samba sector and intensified a day after Pakistan "pleading" with the BSF to stop firing after being pounded with heavy artillery that left a trooper dead across the border on May 20.

CHILDREN BEAR BRUNT OF PAK HOSTILITY

10-yr-old killed, 2-yr-old battles splinter injuries

JAMMU: Thirteen-year-old Shivpaul was playing with his younger brother Krishan Lal Sharma when a Pakistani mortar shell exploded inside their house in Samba sector of Jammu and Kashmir.

Recuperating at the Government Medical College (GMC) hospital here Shivpaul asks only one question - about the well being of his brother. Ten-year-old Krishan Lal Sharma, however, was not as fortunate as his elder sibling. He died on the spot.

Their mother Champa was being treated at a local hospital.

In the GMC hospital emergency ward, close to where Shivpaul was recovering, 21-year-old Pooja, wife of an Army jawan, and her two-year-old son too were battling splinter injuries.

They were preparing to flee their home for safety when a shell tore through the roof and exploded in their bed room in the early hours, she said. Her daughter too was injured in the blast, Pooja added.

Eleven seriously injured patients were brought to the GMC hospital since this morning from different sectors as heavy shelling by Pakistani Rangers along the International Border in Jammu, Samba and Kathua districts entered the ninth day.

Five persons including the 10-year-old Sharma were killed in the shelling today, raising the death toll in the ongoing skirmishes to twelve including two BSF jawans and an eight-month-old boy.

The state has witnessed a spurt in Pakistani shelling and firing along the IB and the Line of Control (LoC). Over 700 such incidents were reported this year, which have left more than 44 people, including 18 security personnel, dead and scores injured. In another special ward, 50-year-old Santosh Kumari, resident of Londi village of Hiranagar sector of Kathua district, was mourning the loss of her husband.

It was around 5.30 am when a shell landed at our house and exploded with a big bang, critically injuring Devi, her husband Rampaul Sharma and two others besides killing several bovines. We immediately shifted them to a local hospital and after first aid they were brought here. However, Rampaul was declared brought dead, Ashok Kumar Sharma, younger brother of the deceased, told PTI.

A retired Army jawan, Ashok Kumar Sharma, criticised the central government for its "failure to ensure peace on the borders" and said the much-publicised underground

bunkers were nothing but an eye-wash.

Where are the promised bunkers? Our village has not even a single community bunker leave aside the individual bunkers for each family, he said.

The body of his brother was still lying in the hospital as the family could not decide whether to carry it back home for cremation or wait as heavy shelling was still on.

Surinder Singh (45), a resident of Naibasti area of Suchetgarh, said he was moving his cattle out of the firing zone when a shell exploded killing a friend and injuring him.

Singh received multiple splinter injuries in the upper parts of the body and was being attended by his brother, a soldier, and uncle.

BJP MLA Kuldeep Raj who had come to see the injured had to face tough questions from the border residents.

The education of our children is hit due to closure of schools owing to cross-border firing. We are unable to tend our land properly, attend our cattle and now even we are unable to get brides for our sons as people are reluctant to marry their daughters in our homes due to the fear of Pakistani firing, Darshan Lal, another border resident, said.

PTI

Throat-slit body of nurse recovered in J&K hospital

JAMMU: A 23-year-old nurse was on Wednesday found dead with her throat slit at the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi hospital in Reasi district of J&K, a senior police officer said. A murder case was registered against her male colleague, a resident of UP, who was also found in a serious condition near her body inside the laboratory of the super speciality hospital at Kakryal, Reasi Senior Superintendent of Police Tahir Sajad Bhat said. Hospital spokesperson Man Mohan Harjai said Vishali, who hails from Himachal Pradesh was on night duty at ITU of the hospital and at about 3.30 am took a break, after informing the concerned shift incharge.

MPOST

Pak Dy high commissioner summoned over killing of 7-month-old in cross-border firing

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: Pakistan's Deputy High Commissioner Syed Haider Shah was summoned and a strong protest was lodged on Wednesday over the killing of a seven-month-old infant in unprovoked ceasefire violations by Pakistani forces in the northern Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said it was conveyed to Shah that the "deliberate targeting" of innocent civilians by Pakistani forces using small arms and high caliber weapons is "highly deplorable and condemned in the strongest terms".

"Shah was summoned

today and strong protest was lodged at the loss of life of a seven-month-old infant in unprovoked ceasefire violations by Pakistan forces on May 21," the MEA said.

It said Pakistani authorities were called upon to investigate such heinous acts of killing innocent civilians and instruct its forces to desist from such acts immediately.

"Targeting of innocent civilians including young children is against all established humanitarian norms and professional military conduct," the MEA said.

It said the Pakistani side was also asked to end the support being given to cross border infiltration of terrorists,

including through covering fire.

"Our strong concerns were also shared at continued unprovoked firing and ceasefire violations across the Line of Control and the International boundary," it said.

The MEA said more than 1,088 such violations have been carried out by Pakistan forces at the Line of Control (LoC) and International Border so far during 2018, which have led to loss of 36 lives and injuries to 127 people.

"In 2018, Indian security forces have thwarted attempts by 53 terrorists to infiltrate and have neutralised five terrorists at the time of crossing the LoC," it said.

Kerala govt offers aid to kin of nurse who died of Nipah, job to husband

OUR CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Extending a helping hand to the family of nurse Lini Puthusseri, who died after contracting Nipah from her patients, the Kerala government on Wednesday decided to give a government job to her husband and Rs 10 lakh each to two of their children.

A decision in this regard was taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan here.

Sajeesh, Lini's husband, will be offered a government job based on his qualifications. Their two children, aged five and two, will be given Rs 10

lakh each from the chief minister's relief fund, a government press release said.

Of the amounts sanctioned for Lini's children, Rs 5 lakh each will be deposited in their bank accounts. The remaining Rs 5 lakh each will be deposited in such a manner that the interest amounts can be utilised by the guardian for the needs of the children, the release added.

The government also decided to give Rs 5 lakh each to the next of kin of the nine others who have lost their lives to Nipah. Lini, who was working in the Perambra Taluk hospital, had contracted the deadly virus from her patients who had sought treatment at the hospital



in the initial days.

Sajeesh, who was working in Bahrain, had rushed to Perambra on hearing about her illness, two days before her death.

Lini, who was aware about the seriousness of her illness, had scribbled an emotional last letter to Sajeesh saying, "I am almost on the way. I do not think I can meet you. You should look after our children

well," which had gone viral in the social media.

As Sajeesh struggles to come to terms with the loss, he gathered himself to thank the government for this gesture.

Three patients of a family from Soopykada village in Perambra had been initially admitted at the Perambra taluk hospital for treatment, where Lini was a nurse. The government also decided to provide Rs 5 lakh each to the next of kin who died of Nipah virus.

The virus has so far claimed 10 lives in Kozhikode and Malappuram districts.

Two more persons who died of high fever are suspected to have contracted the virus.

Apex court refuses to allow pregnant student to appear in DU LLB exam

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to allow a second-year law student of Delhi University (DU) to take her examination on Wednesday on grounds of lack of attendance owing to her pregnancy.

The student, who could not regularly attend classes due to an advanced stage of pregnancy, had sought its permission to appear in the exams scheduled this afternoon.

A bench of Justices AM Khanwilkar and Navin Sinha observed that the court was "very uncomfortable" in passing an order at 1 pm on a candidate seeking to sit in the examination scheduled an hour later.

"There is no point passing an order which cannot be complied with. The time is very limited," the bench said and dismissed the plea filed by Ankita



Meena, after the counsel for DU said she cannot be allowed to appear in the examination on Wednesday as it was difficult to make arrangements for her in such a short span of time.

"Discipline of academics has been lost completely. What is the point in having a cut-off date? All this will be lost if we entertain all this," the bench also observed.

The bench referred to the fact that a single judge of the Delhi High Court had already

passed an order in the matter and a division bench of the high court was hearing the appeal filed by student, who fell short of the 70 per cent attendance criteria due to pregnancy, seeking permission to appear in the ongoing fourth semester LLB examination.

The counsel for the student told the top court that she could not appear in three papers in the examinations but the apex court should allow her to sit in examination today.

However, the bench granted liberty to the student to pursue her pending appeal before a division bench of the high court.

"What is disturbing us is that suppose we pass an order now, we not very comfortable with it that the Supreme Court passes an order at 1 pm allowing a candidate to sit in her examination at 2 pm," the bench said while asking the student's counsel as to why she

had not applied for maternity leave earlier.

"We appreciate the point you have brought before the court. A single judge has passed an order based on the orders passed by the division bench which is binding on a single judge. In case of a special law and a general law, the distinction has to be kept in mind," the bench said.

Initially, the matter was taken up for hearing at around 11.50 am but the bench said it would not pass any order without hearing the DU's counsel.

DU counsel appeared before the court at around 1 PM and said, "we need sufficient time. Admit card has to be issued and it cannot be done right now".

When the student's counsel urged the bench to allow her to sit in the remaining two papers so that she could save one year, the bench observed, "the law is against you".

SC dismisses plea of former UP Min Angad

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed a plea filed by former Uttar Pradesh minister Angad Yadav challenging an Allahabad High Court order cancelling the bail granted to him and also vacating the stay on his conviction in a 1995 murder case.

A bench comprising Justices AM Khanwilkar and Navin Sinha refused to interfere with the high court's April 17 this year order and granted him liberty to request the high court to dispose of his pending criminal appeal within six months.

"We are not inclined to interfere with the impugned

judgement (of high court) cancelling the bail and recalling the order of suspension of conviction and sentence. The only relief that can be given to the petitioner (Yadav) is that he can request the high court to dispose of the pending criminal appeal within six months," the bench said.

Yadav had moved the top court challenging the high court's April 17 order.

The high court had passed the order on an application filed by the state seeking cancellation of bail granted to Yadav on November 23, 2000 after he was convicted by a trial court in a murder case lodged in 1995.

ED raids aviation consultant Talwar in FCRA money laundering case

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: The ED on Wednesday conducted multiple searches in Delhi and Haryana in connection with a case of alleged money laundering against aviation consultant Deepak Talwar, an NGO linked to him, and others for allegedly "misutilising" over Rs 90 crore funds taken through the foreign funding route, officials said.

They said the agency raided at least nine premises, including those of Talwar, after it registered a criminal case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), based on a CBI FIR of last year.

The teams are on spot at these locations in Delhi and Haryana and are looking to gather documents and evidences, they said.

Talwar, for a long time, is said to be out of the country and is reportedly in Dubai.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) case pertains to the allegations of misutilisation of foreign contribution (under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) which were received as part of the corporate social responsibility (CSR) scheme for the purpose of carrying out educational and social activities in India.

The agency is looking at the laundering of alleged tainted

funds in this case.

The CBI had conducted multiple searches in November last year in this case after filing a criminal case.

The CBI had then said that "the funds were allegedly received mainly from a foreign based company to the tune of Rs 90.72 crore in the bank accounts of a Delhi-based private firm/NGO registered under the FCRA, 2010, for carrying out social welfare activities in the field of education.

It had booked six entities - Delhi-based NGO Ms Advantage India, Ms Accordis Health Care Pvt Ltd, Talwar, Sunil Khandewal of Accordis Health, the MD of Accordis

Health Raman Kapoor, another consultant T Kapoor and other unknown persons.

The CBI alleged that Talwar and the NGO, in the name of purchasing ambulances and other articles, diverted the funds received from Europe's leading missile manufacturing company MBDA and the Airbus group. This, the CBI had claimed, was in alleged violation of the FCRA.

It had also said that FIR was filed against the accused based on a complaint of the Union Home Ministry.

The Income Tax Department has also been probing Talwar and others on charges of alleged tax evasion.

NATION BRIEFS

HOLY CROSS FOUND DESECRATED

PANAJI: A holy cross was found desecrated near a chapel in Raia village in South Goa, police said on Wednesday. The Christian religious symbol was found crushed to pieces on Tuesday night and a case was registered against an unidentified person in this connection on Wednesday, police said. "The complaint about the desecration was lodged by the chapel committee of Raia, after it found that the cross next to St Cajetan Chapel was crushed to pieces," a senior police officer attached to Maina-Curtorim police station stated.

IAF CHOPPER CRASH-LANDS IN J&K

JAMMU: An Indian Air Force (IAF) helicopter with four people onboard, including two crew members, today crash-landed at a helipad in Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir, a defence spokesman said. Two passengers and as many crew members onboard the helicopter are safe, the spokesperson added.

SONS PRESERVE WOMAN'S BODY

VARANASI: The body of a 70-year-old woman was kept hidden by her sons in their house in Varanasi for over four months for allegedly withdrawing her pension using her thumb impression, the police said. The body of Amravati Devi was recovered from the store room of her residence in Kabirnagar colony of the Bhelupur area after the neighbours informed the cops about a foul smell emanating from the house, they said.

ONE KILLED IN BOILER BLAST IN MAHA

NAGPUR: A 45-year-old worker died due to a fall while running away after a boiler blast at a farm owned by Union minister Nitin Gadkari's family near here, the police said on Wednesday. The deceased, identified as Pradeep Shriram, and two other workers were processing turmeric in a water boiler at the farm located in Dhapewada village on Tuesday evening, Kalmeshwar police station in-charge Chandrashekar Bahadure said.

FILLIP TO INFRA SECTOR IN MUMBAI

NEW DELHI: To give a fillip to construction and infrastructure sector, a mega show is being organised in Mumbai from May 24 to May 26 at Bombay Convention & Exhibition Centre, Goregaon. The show, which is being organised by UBM India, is supported by Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC), Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC), etc.

ANTI-STERLITE STIR

11 die in police action; TN govt sets up inquiry panel

OUR CORRESPONDENT

TUTICORIN/CHENNAI: The Tuticorin town in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu was on the boil again on Wednesday, with a man shot dead in police firing following fresh clashes between security personnel and locals, who are demanding closure of a copper factory over pollution concerns, a day after police action left 10 protesters dead.

In the line of Opposition fire, the state government constituted a Commission of Inquiry headed by retired Madras High Court judge Aruna Jagadeesan to probe the violence.

District Collector N Venkatesh has been replaced by the Collector of neighbouring Tirunelveli, Sandeep Nanduri, while Nilgiris district police chief Murali Rambha will take over from Superintendent of Police P Mahendran.

The Union Home Ministry has, meanwhile, sought a report from the state government on the circumstances leading to police firing on protesters demanding the closure of UK-based conglomerate Vedanta group's Sterlite Copper plant, which they claim had polluted ground water in the area, official sources said in New Delhi.

Taking cognizance of



Police personnel baton charge at protesters who were demanding the closure of Vedanta's Sterlite Copper unit, in Tuticorin, on Wednesday

the large-scale violence, the National Human Rights Commission issued notices to state chief secretary and the director general of police, asking them to submit a detailed report in two weeks, while the state's high court stayed the proposed expansion of the plant.

Enraged over Tuesday's killings, protesters took to streets on Wednesday morning, attacking police with stones, setting two government vehicles on

fire, and trying to storm into a hospital where injured were kept, prompting security personnel to baton-charge them and open fire, officials said.

Several people, including police personnel, were injured in clashes. Seeking to control the damage done due to police action, the government announced constitution of the Jagadeesan commission of inquiry.

"The panel will cover the law

and order incidents following the siege of the District Collectorate on May 22 by thousands of persons violating prohibitory orders," an official release said in Chennai.

Reinforcements have been rushed to Tuticorin from adjoining districts to assist the local police and civil administration in restoring calm in the strife-torn town.

A Madras High Court bench comprising Justices M

Sundar and Anitha Sumanth, meanwhile, stayed the proposed expansion of the plant on a petition filed by environmental activist Fathima Babu.

The bench also directed the central government to submit a report within four months after inviting public opinion on the expansion plan.

Sterlite had got consent for expansion, after the existing unit was shut two months ago by an order of the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board.

NHRC, citing media reports, observed, "It appears that the authorities probably failed to foresee the tragic violence which took place".

Noting that the agitation against the alleged polluting unit was on for more than three months, the rights body said effective precautionary measures and deployment of adequate number of police personnel could possibly have averted violence.

"It also appears from several media reports, including those on TV news channels, that the police resorted to firing on unarmed protesters without following the Standard Operating Procedure, which tantamount to serious violation of human rights and thus is a matter of concern," it said.

Dream big, aim high: Naidu tells students

OUR CORRESPONDENT

AGARTALA: Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu today exhorted students to "aim high and dream big" to achieve success in life just as former President APJ Abdul Kalam did despite having humble beginnings.

Delivering the 11th convocation lecture at the Tripura Central University here, Naidu said in fact, the President has proved to all of us that one can reach the highest position in the country through hard work, dedication, honesty and perseverance, irrespective of humble beginnings.

"This also holds true for Prime Minister Narendra Modi here, Naidu said.

Kalam used to distribute newspapers...he went on to become a great scientist. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had to support his family as a tea vendor, now he is the most powerful person in the world,

as per some reports. If you are disciplined, work hard and have aim, irrespective of humble beginnings, you can go high, Naidu said.

He advised the youths to look back at their roots, values and respect "mother, motherland and mother tongue and Guru".

"Speak only in mother tongue at home. Language is important to communicate. There should be no problem in learning English, but why should we forget our tradition, culture and art?" he asked.

He said one's mother tongue is like eyesight, and other languages are like spectacles.

He said students might be tempted to go abroad for education, but opportunities are there in India now as well as the infrastructure.

Naidu said the independence of Kashmir is not at all acceptable which has to be understood by all.

Rajasthan: IAS officers to read book on Modi's speeches

OUR CORRESPONDENT

JAIPUR: A book comprising PM Narendra Modi's speeches on "good governance" during his tenure as Gujarat's chief minister will be distributed among IAS officers in Rajasthan, a senior state official said on Wednesday. The copies of the book titled as "Chintan Shivir" have been sent by the Gujarat government and will be distributed among IAS officers after a formal approval by the state government, State Personnel Secretary Bhaskar A Sawant said.

"A file has been moved to seek permission to distribute the books among officers, the secretary, department of personnel said. She added that the books were sent to the chief secretary of Rajasthan by his Gujarat counterpart.

CBI books 17, including Sify staff, in SSC paper leak case

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: The CBI has registered an FIR against 17 persons, including 10 employees of Sify Technologies Pvt Ltd, in connection with the leak of paper for the graduate-level examination of Staff Selection Commission (SSC), officials said on Wednesday.

The agency carried out searches at 12 locations, including four offices of the Sify Technologies Pvt Ltd in Chennai, Noida, Mumbai and Okhla, New Delhi besides the residence of one of its employees, Sant Prasad Gupta in Sheikh Sarai area in New Delhi, they said.

The agency has also named seven students in the FIR who had appeared in the examination on the basis of the screenshot of the question paper which was allegedly leaked and became viral on social media.



According to the CBI, the examination papers were set in such a way that an examinee got the questions in a certain 'sequence' unique to the examination centres, which were termed as 'labs' in this case.

Going by the pattern of the questions leaked, the CBI managed to locate seven students who would have received those questions in that particular pattern.

These students have been named as accused and their complicity would be decided

'Govt to set up 4,072 mobile towers in Naxal-hit states'

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: As many as 4,072 mobile towers will be set up by the government in 10 Naxal-affected states to improve telecom network in such places.

A meeting of the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the Home Ministry's proposal here on Wednesday, an official said.

In the first phase, which was completed about two years ago, 2,329 mobile towers were installed at a cost of Rs 3,167 crore in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

The additional towers will strengthen the telecom network resulting in increased mobile penetration in the Left Wing Extremism-affected and other areas facing security challenges, the official said.

The operational expenses for running the towers will be part of the project cost.

Of the 4,072 mobile towers, 1,054 will be installed in Jharkhand, 1,028 in Chhattisgarh, 483 in Odisha, 429 in Andhra Pradesh, 412 in Bihar, 207 in West Bengal, 179 in Uttar Pradesh, 136 in Maharashtra, 118 in Telangana and 26 in Madhya Pradesh.



The expenses are expected to be borne by the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) of the Department of Telecommunications.

The objective of the USOF is to provide widespread and non-discriminatory access to quality Information and Communications Technology (ICT) services at affordable prices to people in the rural and remote areas.

Besides, the fund is aimed at providing effective and powerful linkage to the hinterland thereby mainstreaming the population of rural and remote parts of the country.

As of now, out of the 90 districts affected by the Maoists problem, 30 were termed as worst-hit. Union Home Secretary Rajiv Gauba had said that 44 districts in the country are no longer under the influence of Maoists or have negligible presence and most of the Left Wing Extremism (LWE) is now confined only to 30 worst-hit districts.

Railways inks three MoUs

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: The railways on Wednesday signed three agreements with two public sector enterprises and a joint venture company to ensure the continuation of projects across the rail network, a statement from the Ministry of Railways said.

The railways and the Braithwaite & Company Limited (BCL), a Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) under the administrative control of the Ministry of Railways, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the manufacture of new wagons, repairing of wagons, steel structural fabrication and manufacturing of cranes.

Under the MoU, the BCL has projected revenues of Rs 285 crore from operations and Rs 1,300 crore from wagon production.

The national transporter has signed another MoU with the RailTel Corporation of India Limited (RCIL), a CPSE under the ministry, for the implementation of several rail projects for doubling of lines, new lines, electrification etc.

The RCIL has projected revenues of Rs 1,200 crore from operations and set several other targets regarding CCTV cameras and wi-fi at stations and development of content on demand (CoD) services on trains.

The third MoU was signed with the Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation Limited (MRVC), a joint venture of the Ministry of Railways and the Maharashtra government.

Govt colleges in Punjab to offer skill dev courses

OUR CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH: As part of its campaign to provide employment to every household, the Punjab government will offer skill development courses in the state-run institutions and polytechnic colleges, Minister Charanjit Singh Channi said here on Wednesday.

The new initiative will give a fillip to the government's 'Ghar Ghar Rozgar' campaign and will offer courses lasting three to six months under the Punjab Skill Development Mission, Channi, the Technical Education and Industrial Training and Employment Generation minister said.

"Dropouts or semi-literates will also be able to take admission in these skill development courses and attain free training," he said.

The cost of the training is

Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000 per student but it will be borne by the government, he added.

In the first phase, the courses will be introduced in 22 government Industrial Training Institutes (ITI) and 10 polytechnics.

More colleges will be roped in later.

The institutional heads will have to submit a project report on the courses they plan to introduce.

Channi has instructed all the heads of colleges and polytechnics to seek suggestion from the representatives of the industrial sector in their areas to ensure that students get adequate employment opportunities once they pass out.

The institutes exhibiting credible performances would get special incentive besides being honoured, Channi said.

Lalu Prasad admitted to Mum hospital



OUR CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI: Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalur Prasad Yadav was on Wednesday admitted to the city-based Asian Heart Institute.

Prasad (69), who had undergone a bypass surgery a few years ago, had sought an appointment with renowned heart surgeon Ramakant Panda at the institute, sources close to his family had said earlier.

The former Bihar chief minister, convicted in fodder scam cases, has been granted a six-week bail by the Jharkhand High Court.

"A team of five doctors -- a general surgeon, physician, nephrologist, diabetologist and cardiologist -- has been put together to examine and treat him as required," the hospital said in a statement here.

Prasad, who was in jail since December 23 last year after being sentenced in a fodder scam case, was subsequently convicted and sentenced to jail in two more fodder scam cases.

Army Major briefly detained by J&K police after hotel scuffle

OUR CORRESPONDENT

SRINAGAR: An Indian Army Major, Nitin Leetul Gogoi, whose decision to tie a civilian to the bonnet of his vehicle in Kashmir last year sparked a row, was briefly detained by the police after an altercation broke out at a hotel, where he allegedly wanted to enter with an 18-year-old woman on Wednesday, according to a police official.

The Jammu and Kashmir Police has initiated an inquiry into the entire incident.

Gogoi told the police he had come for a "source meeting", the official claimed.

The incident happened

in the morning when Major Gogoi along with his driver, also an army man, and the woman approached the front desk of a hotel at Dalgate to check-in, the official said.

The booking was made on-line in the name of Leetul Gogoi for two guests for one night, the police official, who did not want to be identified, said. According to the police, which recorded statements of the hotel staff as well as the three persons, the major was informed that he could not enter the room with the accompanying woman, which led to an altercation between the staff and Gogoi's driver.

Immediately, other hotel

staff members caught hold of the army officer and his driver and called the police.

Inspector General of Police (Kashmir Range) Swayam Prakash Pani ordered a probe into the incident by the superintendent of police (north). Pani has directed that the report be submitted at the earliest, the official said. Police have asked for the hotel's CCTV footage as well as the room reservation form filled by the major, as part of its probe.

Srinagar-based Corps Commander Lt Gen. A K Bhatt was apprised of the situation, the official said. However, the official said the police has not registered any case.

Molasses leak: Notice issued to Chadha Sugar mill

OUR CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH: Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB) on Wednesday issued a notice to Chadha sugar mill in molasses leakage incident, seeking its reply on why action should not be initiated against it for the alleged violations detected by the probe committee.

A large number of fish were found dead in Beas on May 17 after molasses from the sugar factory leaked into the river in Punjab's Beas town, about 40 km from the Amritsar.

"Notice has been issued to the Chadha Sugar mill, Kiri Afghana in Gurdaspur to seek the reply of its representatives on the findings of the probe

committee report which found violations," a senior official said here today.

The sugar mill representatives have been asked to appear before the PPCB authorities tomorrow for giving their reply, the official further said.

A probe committee, which submitted its report to the state government yesterday, found violation in the storage of molasses, a byproduct in sugarcane processing, at the factory.

"There was a violation pertaining to the storage of molasses as the storage arrangements were not found to be as per rules," official said while highlighting the major violation found by the probe committee. The committee had a man-

date to investigate how and why this incident happened and what were the deficiencies and what action proposed to be taken to prevent such incidents in future.

Following the molasses spill, the state government had already sealed the mill and seized its security deposit of Rs 25 lakh.

The mill may also face action for contaminating the canal-based water under the northern India Canal Draining Act, the official added.

A state government official said that following the molasses leakage, the main priority of the government was to ensure potable drinking water to people living in Faridkot, Muktsar

and Fazilka districts where the water supply was canal based.

People were asked not to use canal based water which was contaminated because of the leakage and inlets of reservoirs were also closed, the official said.

Contaminated water with dead fish and snakes had also entered into Rajasthan through Indira Gandhi canal from Punjab, prompting the authorities to stop drinking water supply from the canal as a precautionary measure.

The Indira Gandhi canal supplies water to Hanumanagar, Sriganganagar, Bikaner, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and other districts in north and western region of the desert state.

PM meets all-woman crew of INSV Tarini

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: The first all-woman Indian Navy team to successfully sail around the globe called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday, a statement from his office said.

The Prime Minister congratulated the naval officers on the success of their mission, it said.

The expedition, Navika Sagar Parikrama, was the first-ever circumnavigation of the globe by an all-woman crew from India.

"During the interaction, the officers made a presentation on various aspects of the mission, their preparation, training, and experiences during the journey. The Prime Minister congratulated the crew on the success of



Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets the Indian Navy's six-member all-women crew of INSV Tarini, who circumnavigated the globe in over eight months, in New Delhi, on Wednesday. Indian Navy chief Admiral, Sunil Lanba is also seen

their mission. He encouraged them to share and write about their unique experiences during the journey," the statement said.

The team returned to Goa recently after circling the globe

in eight months on board the naval vessel, INSV Tarini.

Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Sunil Lanba was present on the occasion.

The vessel was skippered by

Lt. Commander Vartika Joshi.

The crew comprised Lt. Commanders Pratibha Jamwal and P Swathi and Lieutenants S Vijaya Devi, B Aishwarya and Payal Gupta.

SC to hear pleas challenging CLAT 2018 examination today

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court would Thursday hear the petitions challenging the Common Law Admission Test 2018 (CLAT) held on May 13 and asked the petitioners to place before it the orders, if any, passed by six high courts on similar pleas.

A bench of Justices A M Khanwilkar and Navin Sinha asked the lawyers appearing for the petitioners to serve the copy of their pleas to the standing counsel appearing for the respondents, including the Centre.

The petitioners told the bench that the high courts of

Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Bombay, Punjab and Haryana and Rajasthan, both the Jaipur and Jodhpur bench, were hearing separate pleas challenging the CLAT 2018 examination and notices have been issued in some of these matters.

CLAT is conducted for the purpose of admission to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in law offered at premier national law schools of the country.

The examination was organised by CLAT working committee and implementation committee and the National University of Advanced Legal

Studies (NUALS) and the 2018 results are expected to be declared on May 31.

"Have any reply, status report or orders been passed by any of these high courts? You find it out if you can. Just give us a compilation of orders, if any, passed by these high courts," the bench, which posted the matter for hearing tomorrow, told the counsel for the petitioners.

The petitioners have sought quashing of the CLAT 2018 examination besides a re-test alleging that several inconsistencies had cropped up during the test held on May 13.

EDITORIAL

Opposition in unity

The oath-taking ceremony of HD Kumaraswamy on Wednesday witnessed the participation of a galaxy of opposition leaders at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru. The JD(S) Chief Minister will now seek a vote of confidence in the Karnataka legislature on Thursday and after winning the trust vote, it will name the 34 ministers, 22 from Congress and 12 from JD(S), who will form a new Cabinet. The names of Congress ministers were finalised in consultation with Congress president Rahul Gandhi and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi in New Delhi on Monday. Kumaraswamy admitted that running a coalition government for five years is a tough challenge and that he would make a sincere effort to fulfil his role as the leader of the coalition government. BJP has boycotted the oath-taking ceremony and observed a 'black day' on Wednesday against the formation of Congress-JD(S) government. The party has dubbed the Congress-JD(S) as an unholy alliance driven by greed and power. Earlier, BJP legislature party leader BS Yeddyurappa had said that the alliance between Congress and JD(S) is an unnatural one and it will collapse due to its inherent weakness. He also said that he was sure that he would make a comeback. But ignoring the pressure on his government formation efforts, Kumaraswamy invited a host of top opposition leaders from across the country to his oath-taking ceremony and the opposition leaders obliged in unity. Apart from Congress President Rahul Gandhi and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and Leader of opposition in Bihar Assembly and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav attended Kumaraswamy's oath-taking ceremony. The coming together of the entire opposition at the Kumaraswamy's oath-taking ceremony signals to the fast-changing dynamics in national politics. While there were only three parties in the fray in Karnataka election, the entire opposition had its eyes set on the poll outcome. BJP, which remained 8 members short of winning a majority, was initially confident of mustering additional support, especially when the party was given 15 days' time by the Governor to prove its majority. But when the SC asked it to prove its majority within 24 hours, its leader BS Yeddyurappa resigned before the floor test, realising the fact that his party cannot manage the additional support required to win the confidence of the House. The Congress-JD(S) combine which managed to keep its flock together was then invited by the Governor to form the government. When the Karnataka Governor Vajubhai Vala invited BJP to form the government after the May 15 results which threw up a hung Assembly, Congress demanded that it should be given opportunity to form governments in Goa, Manipur, and Meghalaya where the party has emerged as the single largest party. In these three states, BJP has formed the government despite winning less number of seats than Congress by forging an alliance with local parties. The Governors in these three states recognised the BJP-led alliance as the single largest bloc in the respective legislatures and invited them to form the government. Through its agitation, Congress was able to convey the fact that irrespective of the poll results, BJP has been 'stealing governments' through the connivance of the Centre-appointed Governors.

Kumaraswamy's oath-taking ceremony acted as the perfect platform for regional leaders to show their intention that they are willing to come together in their fight against BJP. The idea of forming a federal alliance of regional parties ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha election is slowing taking shape with leaders of various regional parties using the Kumaraswamy's oath-taking ceremony to show up and reignite the talk on opposition's unity. Together, the opposition parties claim to represent the Dalits and minorities apart from their traditional support base. If the opposition could consolidate their support base and ensure that their votes are not divided, they can take on BJP successfully. The presence of Mayawati and Akhilesh Yadav at the opposition's spectacular show of strength in Bengaluru is of special significance. The two leaders set aside decades of animosity between their parties ahead of the Gorkhphur and Phulpur byelection in March this year. Going by the caste arithmetics, Mayawati offered her party's support to Samajwadi Party candidates in the byelection, leading to the victory of the SP candidates. At a time when there is no strong wave in favour of BJP in the country, if opposition parties remain united and take informed and judicious decisions about ticket distribution, they can surely put BJP in a difficult spot. However, Kumaraswamy's oath-taking ceremony will be remembered as the occasion that brought the entire spectrum of opposition parties on a single dais.

Of Saudi women

Female activists get arrested in Saudi Arabia. Even as the reforms initiated by the Crown Prince are on, this development is akin to taking a step forward and then two steps back. It seems just like the other day when Saudi women could enter a football stadium as spectators. And, now, this. Indeed, weeks before Saudi Arabia is due to lift a ban on female drivers, authorities in the kingdom detained four women who had campaigned for the right to get behind the wheel. Activists Loujain al-Hathloul, Iman al-Nafjan, Aziza al-Yousef and Aisha Almane were arrested, along with four male supporters, according to Saudi media outlets close to authorities. They have been accused of "suspicious contact with foreign entities to support their activities, recruiting some persons in charge of sensitive government positions, and providing financial support to hostile elements outside the country," state news agency SPA reported, quoting a state security spokesman. The spokesman said the women wanted to "destabilise the kingdom and breach its social structure and mar the national consistency." The statement did not name the activists, but local media did, with one headline branding them as "traitors." The arrests have raised alarm amongst women's rights campaigners and those monitoring the social reform agenda of the Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. "We are back to square one," Sydney-based Saudi activist and author Manal Al-Sharif said. "We used to live in a police state; if you speak up you go to jail. And, then, there would be a defamation campaign against you, saying all sorts of untrue things. We are seeing the same pattern again now." Understandably, Amnesty International condemned the arrests and the negative campaign against those arrested that followed in the local media. The broader political message here is that authorities are signalling that they are the ones in charge of the change. Human Rights Watch said that the arrests fall into a wider campaign of political repression. "Since 2014, Saudi authorities have tried nearly all peaceful dissidents in the Specialised Criminal Court, Saudi Arabia's counter-terrorism tribunal," the organisation said in a statement. The women along with other activists arrested have been calling for an end to Saudi Arabia's repressive guardianship system which requires women to acquire the permission of a male guardian for almost everything. Last year, the Kingdom began to ease some of the restrictions in that system especially those regarding education. Other recent social reforms include the opening of movie theatres, music concerts and allowing women into sports stadiums for the first time. It is not as if the Prince is unaware of such developments. He must act decisively to send positive signals to all concerned in his kingdom.



BARUN DAS GUPTA

President Xi Jinping said that "not a single inch of our land will be or can be ceded from China, which definitely includes South Tibet." Those familiar with Chinese strategic thinking and achieving strategic objectives will agree; the Chinese will never waver from the path of attaining their long-term objectives

Quote martial

I think the cost of energy will come down when we make this transition to renewable energy

AL GORE

Encroachment unabated

Following the South China Sea model, Chinese designs encroaching dangerously close to Arunachal Pradesh will worry India

A Hong Kong-based English daily reported last week that the Chinese are digging for gold and other minerals at Lhunze, which is right on the border of Arunachal Pradesh that the Chinese call 'South Tibet'. Nobody can object to the Chinese prospecting for minerals in their own land. But, what is a matter of immediate concern for India is that development of infrastructure etc. is taking place at a breakneck speed at Lhunze, which is a garrison town of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. That gold is available in the waters of some of the rivers of Arunachal like Noa-Dihing was known as far back as 1881. But the amount was so infinitesimal that it could not be commercially exploited. Whether the gold struck by the Chinese on their side is sufficient to be commercially exploited is not known.

What has added to India's anxiety is that the report quotes a Chinese academician at the University of Geosciences in Beijing saying that the Chinese troops had to retreat from Arunachal in 1962 because "we had no people there to hold the land." But now, with the 'significant increase' in the Chinese population in the Himalayas, there would be stable, long-term support for any military operation aimed at gradually driving out the Indian forces from Arunachal. "This is similar to what has happened in the South China Sea," the academician explained, where China has backed up its territorial claim by building artificial islands and increasing its naval presence.

Another academician, a researcher at the Institute of Geodesy and Geophysics in the Academy of Sciences in Wuhan, spoke in a similar vein. He said that what China had achieved now in the South China Sea was unthinkable a decade ago and he was sure that the same thing would happen in Arunachal also in the coming years. He quoted President Xi Jinping as saying that "not a single inch of our land will be or can be ceded from China, which definitely includes South Tibet." Those familiar with Chinese strategic thinking and achieving strategic objectives will agree. For all their protestations of friendship with India, the Chinese will never waver from the path of attaining their long-term objectives.

This means that though there is not a possibility of the Chinese mounting a military offensive against India, in the immediate future, it is very much on the



Chinese encroachment close to Arunachal will bother India

cards at a time and location of China's own choosing.

There is no doubt that we have been unconsciously remiss in fortifying our borders and improving our road and rail communication along the 4,057 km long Sino-Indian border despite the military humiliation we suffered in 1962. To give an example, during the UPA-II regime, a decision was made to build border roads in Arunachal, Ladakh, and Uttarakhand. But it is as recently as April 4, that the Minister of State for Railways told the Parliament that the Defence Ministry had 'identified' four strategic railway lines along the Sino-Indian border. 'Identified,' at long last! When will the construction begin, pray, and when it will be completed?

The MoS volunteered the information that the lines would be Misiamari-Tenga-Tawang (378 km), Bilaspur-Manali-Leh (498 km), Pasighat-Tezu-Rupai (227 km), and North-Lakhimpur-Bame-Silapathar (249 km); that the Ministry of Defence had 'provided funds' to the Railway Ministry "for carrying out final location surveys" and that "the undulating terrain of the young Himalayas and difficult geological conditions are affecting the pace of surveys undertaken." The MoS did not explain how the Chinese could overcome the

same difficulties on their side of the border and build a network of railways and roadways in Tibet.

In 2013, the Manmohan Singh Government made the decision to raise a Mountain Strike Corps (MSC) at a cost of Rs 64,700 crore, for defending our borders with China. The troops in the Corps were to be trained for crossing the border and taking on the Chinese in Tibet if the need arose. The raising was to be completed within seven years. The new government that came to power the next year initially thought that raising the cost was too high and needed to be pruned. Then it was said that the raising of the Corps was going on as scheduled. Last year, the Army announced that the raising of the second division of the MSC had just started.

Meanwhile, New Delhi seems to have realised that overdependence on the United States and its ally Israel for our defence needs will be imprudent. Washington wants us to import all our defence hardware from the Western powers. The dangers inherent in this policy seem to have been realised. India has turned, once again, to her traditional and all-weather friend Russia. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's current visit to Russia for an informal summit with President Putin points to that realisa-

tion. New Delhi's decision to go ahead with the acquisition of the S-400 Triumf anti-missile system from Russia, overruling Washington's demur, is a positive indication. In an actual war, dependence on the US is very risky, as was proved during the Kargil war of 1999, when the US withheld supply of some spare parts of naval helicopters urgently needed by the Indian Navy.

In the field of indigenous production of military hardware, however, India is far away from realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream of Make in India. One instance will suffice. The Kolkata Class stealth guided missile destroyers have been proudly shown up to have been indigenously built. What is not known to many is that only the vessel has been made indigenously. The wide variety of equipment it is fitted with is all imported. Its main gun is from Italy, the gas turbines are from Ukraine, LR-SAMs are from Israel and the BrahMos missiles are jointly developed with Russia.

Over the years, China has built a vast defence-industrial complex. We are lagging far behind. We have to redouble our efforts to attain a credible degree of self-dependence in manufacturing military hardware within a definite timeframe.

(The views are strictly personal)

MEETING ENERGY NEEDS

dear EDITOR

Excessive dependence on the use of fossil fuel-based energy resources have been causing the environmental degradation and this has led to global warming and Climate Change. While every effort made by the Government of India to roll out renewable power, the way forward for our country with a population base of 1.32 billions is that we must opt for coal gasification programme in a meaningful way and MoU with Poland by the Government of WB has major relevance in meeting our present and the future Energy requirements.

AMAR NATH BHADRA Via email

millenniumpost.in

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Redesigning Indo-Russia ties

India must be more receptive to Russia as together they could be pivotal in ensuring global peace and stability, argues Arun Srivastava

Both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin desperately needed the informal summit. If India needed a positive move towards strengthening bilateral relations, Russia desired a clear assurance about firming up cooperation, including defence, as well as global issues of common concern.

Though both leaders agreed that they hold the responsibility for maintaining global peace and stability, Modi was quite ecstatic of the outcome. He described his discussion with Putin as extremely productive. The change in the tone and tenor of his observation was important. His invoking former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee at least seven times in his opening remarks made it clear he expected more from Russia. Modi saying that the strategic partnership between India and Russia has been elevated into a "special privileged strategic partnership" has wider implications. Interestingly, the two leaders are yet to deliberate on extending the Indo-Russia civil nuclear cooperation to third countries.

Russia had nursed the feeling that India will speak out its mind on the US sanction against Moscow. The US had imposed the sanctions earlier this year under CAATSA for Russia's military intervention in Ukraine and for alleged meddling in the 2016 US Presidential elections. It is perceived in diplomatic



Modi and Putin's recent meet spells well for both India and Russia

circles that Modi's current Russia visit is different from the previous ones. Putin's invitation to Modi came within two weeks of his re-election as President. While the special and privileged strategic partnership between India and Russia is an important factor for global peace and stability, India will have to stop suspecting Russian intentions and moves. It is good that they recognised each other's respective roles as major powers with common responsibilities for maintaining global peace and stability. The proceedings of the summit, however, makes one doubt if India intends to use the outcome as a leverage tool to extract more from the US. It is not yet clear as to what

extent both the countries use the friendship and trust between them to create convergence on key global and regional issues. India must take the outcome in proper stride. Instead of looking on uncomfortably as Russia develops closer links with China and Pakistan, it must assess its attitude from a more holistic perspective.

The news from across the border that while Russia has promised to improve defence ties with Pakistan, the Putin government is keen to improve its South Asia relations and take its traditional strategic partnership with India to a new height, must be reassuring to Delhi. This is in sharp contrast to the perception that Russia has been against India's interest by pro-

viding patronage and protection to Pakistan.

Modi must refrain from looking at the Indo-Russian relationship from the skewed prism of Sangh ideology and perspective. Delhi must realise that an Islamic state like Pakistan is not in the interest of Russia. The Indian bureaucracy and policymakers are so heavily inclined towards the West that they turn and twist the facts to decry Russia. They are using the Russian arms sale to Pakistan as a part of this strategy.

Though India's US friends caution Delhi by inflating its fears over Russian arms supply to Islamabad, they prefer to maintain a stoic silence on United States giving Pakistan more than 45 billion dollars

in aid over the last 15 years. At a time of considerable tension in ties between Russia and the West, there is a stronger incentive for Russia to develop the non-Western vectors of its foreign relations.

Strong economic, diplomatic, and military support from China to Pakistan is an irritant for both India and Russia. A standoff in the border region between the two countries would adversely affect Russia. India and Russia have been trying to increase bilateral trade for the last two decades in order to develop a more positive relationship. India is the biggest market of foreign arms in the world; Russia has traditionally been among its largest suppliers. But, in the recent months, India has increasingly started depending on the United States and Israel for weapons. A string of military contracts has gone to the two Western suppliers, disappointing Moscow.

India, in the changed global perspective, must effectively respond to structural and geopolitical shifts and learn the skills to adjust to changing power dynamics. In the recent times, the geopolitical realities in the region have been changing. India ought to realise that its relationship with Russia has been a stabilising factor in a fast-changing regional and global order. India must continue to play this proactive role.

(The views expressed are strictly personal)

Finding Nemo

An alternative politico-economic vision is essential to strengthen the united opposition



PROF UJJWAL K CHOWDHURY

The failure of BJP to 'buy' a majority in Karnataka, unlike in Goa or the North-east, has emboldened the opposition to conceptualise an anti-Modi force across India. They showcased their unity in Bengaluru when Kumaraswamy took his oath as the Chief Minister of Karnataka. But, this entire coming together is based merely on anti-Modism and not on policies or a Common Minimum Programme. This cannot survive the test of time when the dust settles in Karnataka.

The talk of alternative political alignment is in the air. Congress strategists are fast developing a template to give an upper-hand to regional allies in their respective states, with the Congress taking an upper-hand in the Lok Sabha seat allocation in return. The goal is to unite the 69 per cent non-BJP voters across India, since BJP, in its best show in 2014, had received about 31 per cent votes, but came to power on the first-past-the-post basis, as Opposition parties ate away into each other's electoral constituency.

Delineating alternatives

Congress with its UPA partners are the first option. But, a national party with just 44 MPs in the Lok Sabha, ruling only three states, is not in any bargaining position, unless it wins in the impending Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan polls.

Second is the talk of a federal front by Mamata Banerjee, Trinamool (TMC) Chief Minister of West Bengal, in which she is ready to bring in every non-BJP party including Congress if Rahul Gandhi is not the face of the combo.

Third is the talk of a people's front by K Chandrasekhara Rao, the Telangana Rashtra Sangh (TRS) Chief Minister of Telangana, which believes in a united opposition alliance minus the Congress.

The fallacy in all three alternatives is that they are party-leader combos minus a combination of ideas or an alternative vision for governance. They finally want to stop the seemingly larger-than-life Narendra Modi and his lieutenant Amit Shah's phenomenal election machinery. They understand that another Modi government will bring an end to most of their political careers. A power-driven alternative based on multiple smaller and, at times conflicting identities, cannot fight another power-drunk ruling force



The Congress must delegate some power to regional parties for the Opposition to succeed

(Representational Image)

which is based on one over-arching identity, that of Hindutva.

First, an alternative force, a united opposition has to be one of Congress, regional and left parties, where Congress is ready to accommodate the leadership of regional parties and willing to give them acceptable roles at the Centre.

Second, an alternative has to arise in substance or content. If not, then naturally the positioning of Narendra Modi shall be, "All want Modi out, I want corruption out and development in." The media shall build a Presidential format narrative, of one honest strong man versus a bunch of dishonest dwarfs wanting to drag India down again. The Opposition would lose even before the game starts.

Throwback 1970s

Facing a severe anti-emergency backlash led by a motley group of united opposition forces, Indira Gandhi in 1977-79 bit the political dust in spite of trying to portray the 1977 general elections as "me versus they" and emphasising that "they want Indira out, I want poverty out". Modi is and will try the same tactics this time around in 2019.

Indira did not have the mastery in controlling the media, neither did she have an army of fake social media warriors, an emergency by perception and her practice was far

more openly anti-people – hence, she stood defeated. Modi is stronger on all these factors.

But, the then motley opposition formed a party, Janata Party which broke up in less than 30 months on questions of leadership, policies, benefits to various pressure groups and regions, etc. And, in this very failure of the 'united' opposition against Indira Gandhi, ironically, lies Modi's biggest hope of 2019. Without a new politico-economic vision, the current Opposition will also fail.

Tracing the alternative

First, uphold the Indian Constitution. The alternative force is not just of parties, though that is a visible face. It is an alternative approach to governance. For that, Save Constitution is a good slogan for the United Opposition, which was recently started by Sharad Pawar of NCP in Mumbai and Rahul Gandhi in Delhi.

Pledge to protect the Indian Constitution and its basic tenets – commit to true secularism where the state does not negate any faith but also does not become party to any faith. Pledge to uphold our sovereignty, respecting the rights of other smaller neighbours while protecting our geopolitical interests.

Pledge to uphold the socialistic welfare economy because the marginalised, with their per capita income far below the subsis-

tence level, cannot survive unless supported with minimum access to food, clothing, housing, public health and minimum assured education. Pledge to protect the democracy – leave media, entertainment, culture and education, to professional experts, not bureaucrats.

And, above all, pledge to protect legislatures by not short-circuiting their sessions; protect the independence of the judiciary by not interfering in their recruitment, postings, promotions and processes. Safeguarding the democracy must also emerge through police reforms, administrative reforms, judicial reforms, and electoral reforms, and through an all-out implementation of the institution of Lokpal, apart from protecting the independence of the Constitutional institutions.

Second, all communities need to be assured without being appeased that India is theirs. Hence, an alternative policy and measures need to be stated for faster socioeconomic assimilation of minorities through their reasonable participation in jobs, education, and across all walks of life. Mere reservation does not always ensure a dignified life.

If forest rights are not given to the tribal users of minor forest produce and land rights are not granted to the tillers, there cannot be any visible change in rural India.

Also, social assimilation will

need distinct ways and means to empower women, ensure their security in public places, raise conviction in cases of assault on women and enhance their socio-economic participation, along with the protection of sexual freedom.

Third, uphold an alternative economic vision for India. Structural changes are needed to achieve a slew of economic measures. These will include a viable Minimum Support Price and implementation of MS Swaminathan recommendations for agriculture, forced but gradual recovery of all NPAs (specially in cases of willing defaulters), strict banking autonomy with SOPs and ensured independence of RBI. There has to be a roadmap to recover black money in land, jewellery and foreign assets, and encourage start-ups and the digital economy, apart from investments in education and health (with tax holidays and infrastructural support).

This plan shall also underline a fair share of funds between the Centre and the states, respect for federalism and execution of a truly one nation one tax system through a uniform GST. Interestingly, it is important to increase investment in education and health together by up to 25 per cent of the total budget, while reducing routine administration and defence expenses. Happy people will ensure a happier nation.

The right noise that was started about sanitation, digital economy, entrepreneurship, mass skilling, infrastructure, public health, housing, and pollution by the Modi government, many in continuity of earlier UPA policies, need to be taken to the next level of execution.

Finally, there has to be a development plan for each LS constituency with specific proposals on table in the Manifesto of the United Opposition. And, each LS constituency must be given to that non-BJP party which has shown the best political strength in it in the last five years, to take on BJP on a one-to-one electoral fight. Overall, the national leadership can be decided later based on the performance of each party.

Fourth, win the battle of perception with a new leadership narrative. Modi stands tall in the battle of the media created a perception that 'There is No Alternative' as the PM stands against an army of political dwarfs, with no apparent personal corruption. The only way to combat it is to put forth an alternative qualitatively different narrative. Like, high-handed centralising Modi versus federal front of many regional parties and Congress. NDA sloganeering versus real action-plan on goals espoused. One tall arrogant dictator versus people's grassroots leaders. The selective chasing of corruption by the Modi government while all corruption charges on BJP functionaries go uninvestigated. One religion-high caste dominant narrative versus a united India approach. Arrogant elite governance versus consensus striving for bottoms up governance.

Let a collective leadership of a United Opposition, named People's Federal Alliance (PFA), evolve with a distinct Common Minimum Programme and approach to take India to a more holistic and sensitive people-centric development devoid of an overdose of rhetoric and aggressive emotions. It has an enormous opportunity since, in the best of his times, Modi received only 31 per cent of Indian voters' support, the remaining being a fractured support to all opposition parties together.

(Prof Ujjwal K Chowdhury is School Head, School of Media, Pearl Academy, Delhi & Mumbai, and former Dean of Media of Symbiosis and Amity Universities. The views expressed are strictly personal)

A motley opposition had formed a party, Janata Party which broke up in less than 30 months. And, in this very failure of the 'united' opposition against Indira Gandhi, ironically, lies Modi's biggest hope of 2019. Without a new politico-economic vision, the current Opposition will also fail

Macro lessons for India

It is essential to account for long-term structural changes that will ensure energy stability in the economy



TAPONEEL MUKHERJEE

Higher oil prices, the consequent inflationary pressures, and a weaker rupee have dominated recent news headlines. While short-term measures to deal with these macroeconomic trends are essential, it is also necessary to look at the long-term structural changes required to bring about stability in the Indian economy and reduce exposure to the vagaries of macroeconomic trends.

Environmental concerns alone do not drive India's renewable energy push today: Economic and financial compulsions are even more critical. Policies have helped expand the sector, but figures such as an expected \$105 billion crude oil import bill for the country for the financial year 2018-2019 (according to the Oil Ministry) give us an idea of the urgent need to further reduce our dependence on imported fossil fuel and find alternative sources of energy.

For 'energy independence', renewable energy is the elixir that the country needs and it will mean addressing more significant policy issues and creating a policy framework that supports 'energy independence' – factoring in a multitude of elements.

First, the proposed 70 per cent duty on imported solar cells and modules merit re-examination. While this is needed to encourage domestic solar cell manufacturers, such high import duties will also slow down solar energy expansion.

The critical question is: Will the economic gains from the proposed duty be more significant than the benefits of a vibrant and growing solar sector using cheaper imported (read Chinese) solar products? Critical evaluation of such



India must develop alternate sources of energy to reduce crude oil imports

(Representational Image)

questions will help frame coherent policies across the energy spectrum. Weighing competitive advantages of one policy versus another to create an overall framework that is consistent will help expedite renewable energy creation.

The fact that facilitating renewable energy expansion is critical not just from a financial perspective but also a national energy security perspective should inform such policies.

Interest rate policies also have a bearing on the renewable energy sector, and the sector needs to be cognizant of the impact that higher interest rates may have on debt funding for both current and future projects. Renewable energy auctions have seen tariffs nosedive over the last two years. While this is great for

the consumer, the question is whether the renewable energy sector in India is ready for a higher interest rate regime.

Renewable energy players must look at a careful analysis of converting floating interest rate loans to fixed rate loans and borrowing for longer durations where necessary to better prepare for a higher interest rate regime. India needs to ensure that the pace of renewable energy expansion is affected as little as possible from the rising interest rates.

With the expansion of the renewable energy capacity, it is essential for the energy industry and the government to take stock of the risks of stranded thermal power assets. The primary concern is how do we deal with thermal plant assets that aren't financially viable

anymore.

In a recent report titled "An Assessment of India's Energy Choices: Financial Performance and Risk Perception", Vinit Atal and Gireesh Shrivastava bring forth crucial points regarding the stranded asset risk.

As renewable energy increasingly becomes a greater source of energy at competitive price levels, the risk of stranded thermal plants goes higher. Unviable thermal power plants lead to more stranded assets, thereby adding to the NPAs for banks. Atal and Shrivastava hold that investors "perceive renewable energy power investments to be less risky than fossil fuel power investments."

The government needs to think of the long-term ramifications of the growth of renew-

able energy on existing thermal power plants and any new thermal power plants in the pipeline. Given the long-dated nature of power plant assets, closer scrutiny around asset viability is warranted to avoid a build-up of more NPAs.

India has made significant progress over the last decade in the renewable energy sector. However, given the rising energy needs and the dependency on energy imports, now is the time to push the energy "independence" agenda further and faster. Greater policy clarity, consistency in policies, and a focus on the broader economic mandate are urgently needed.

(The author heads Development Tracks, an infrastructure advisory firm. The views expressed are personal)

For 'energy independence', renewable energy is the elixir that the country needs and it will mean addressing more significant policy issues and creating a policy framework that supports 'energy independence' – factoring in a multitude of elements



tweet
RETWEET



POOJA BHATT
@PoojaB1972

I see nothing wrong with Arch Bishop Anil Couto's letter & everything wrong with the knee jerk response to it. The democratic & moral fabric of our nation is in tatters. Time we addressed that plainly. Attempts to gag & snuff out discourse that meanders from the prescribed must end.



SYED ATA HASNAIN
@atahasnain53

Compliments to MS Dhoni on CSK entering the IPL final. His analysis shows his cricketing brain. Faf was great but Thakur at the end played a great over too. 15 runs in 5 balls for a No 10 is no mean achievement.



BHAICHUNG BHUTIA
@bhaichung15

Great initiative by @Ra_THORe. Let me see your fitness too. Post your photos or videos. #HumFitTohIndiaFit



PAULO COELHO
@paulocoelho

Be gentle with yourself. You are doing the best you can

Summit with Kim may not happen next month: Trump

WASHINGTON DC: US President Donald Trump has said there is a "very substantial chance" that his planned summit with North Korea's Kim Jong-un may not happen next month and speculated that Chinese President Xi Jinping may be behind Pyongyang's new hard line.

North Korea last week warned that it may cancel the June 12 summit in Singapore between Kim and Trump if the US insists on it giving up nuclear weapons unilaterally.

Speaking to reporters at the White House while welcoming South Korean President Moon Jae-in, Trump said that North Korea must meet conditions for the summit to go ahead though if it did not, it might happen "later".

"We're moving along. We'll see what happens," Trump said in response to a question. "There's a very substantial chance that it won't work out. That doesn't mean that it won't work out over a period of time, but it may not work out for June 12," Trump said.

Trump said he believed Kim was "serious" about denuclearisation.

"I do think he is serious. I think he is absolutely very serious," he said, but declined to say whether he had spoken to Kim.

"They're hardworking, great people," he said of North Koreans.

"He will be extremely happy. He will be very happy," he said of Kim if the deal works out.

Earlier, Moon's national security advisor Chung Eui-yong told reporters that there were 99.9 per cent chances for the summit to happen.

"We believe there is a 99.9 per cent chance the North Korea-US summit (set for June 12 in Singapore) will be held as scheduled. But we're just preparing for many different possibilities," Chung told reporters.

"We're trying to understand the situation from the North's



perspective," he said when asked about changes in North Korea's rhetoric.

Trump also said that he was "little surprised" at North Korean leader Kim's "different attitude" after his second meeting with Chinese President Xi.

Xi and Kim met in the northeastern city of Dalian in an unannounced visit by the North Korean leader on May 8.

Trump said the meeting between the two leaders was not a great meeting as there has been a change in North Korea's attitude after that.

"I think that President Xi is a world class poker player. I probably maybe doing the same thing that he would do. But I will say this, there was a somewhat different attitude after that meeting, and I'm a little surprised," Trump said.

"Now maybe nothing happened, I'm not blame anybody. But I'm just saying maybe nothing happened and maybe it did. But there was a different attitude by the North Korean folks after that meeting. So I don't think it was a great meeting," Trump said.

Nobody knew about the meeting and all of a sudden it was reported that he was in China a second time, he said.

"The first time everybody knew about the second time was like a surprise. "And I think things changed after that meeting. So I can't say that I'm happy about it,"

Trump said in presence of South Korean President Moon. He also asked Moon for his views on the Xi-Kim meeting.

"Now President Moon may have a different opinion, I'd like to have your opinion on that. What you thought of the second meeting with President Xi, what is your feeling? You may have an opinion," Trump asked.

"I don't want to get him in trouble, he lives next to China. You know, he's not too far away," he said.

"The second meeting I think there was a little change in attitude from Kim Jong-un", he said.

"Hope that's not true, because I have a great relationship with President Xi. He's a friend of mine, he likes me, I like him. I mean that was two of the great days of my life being in China. I don't think anybody's ever been treated better in China in their history," he said.

Meanwhile, the White House said the US was preparing for the summit.

"We continue to prepare for the summit, and if they want to meet, we will certainly be ready," White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders said.

"President Trump rightly stated that if North Korea agrees to denuclearise, that it can be a bright future for them. But we remain clear-eyed in these negotiations, and we continue to prepare, and we'll see what happens," she said. AGENCIES

N Korea preps nuclear site demolition despite US summit doubts

SEOUL: Invited foreign journalists began a long journey up North Korea's east coast Wednesday to witness the slated destruction of the reclusive regime's nuclear test site, a high profile gesture on the road to a summit with the US that Donald Trump now says might not happen.



In a surprise announcement Pyongyang said earlier this month that it planned to "completely" destroy the Punggye-ri facility in the country's northeast, a move welcomed by Washington and Seoul.

Punggye-ri has been the staging ground for all six of the North's nuclear tests, including its latest and by far most powerful one in September last year, which Pyongyang said was an H-bomb.

The demolition is due to take place sometime between Thursday and Friday, depending on the weather.

The North has portrayed the destruction on the test site as a goodwill gesture ahead of planned June 12 summit between Kim and Trump in Singapore. But doubts have since been cast by both sides on whether that potentially historic meeting will take place.

Last week Pyongyang threatened to pull out of Washington pressed for its unilateral nuclear disarmament. Trump also said the meeting could be delayed as he met with South Korean leader Moon Jae-in in Washington on Tuesday.

"There are certain conditions we want to happen. I think we'll get those conditions. And if we don't, we won't have the meeting," he told reporters, without elaborating on what those conditions might be. Politically, Trump has

invested heavily in the success of his meeting with Kim, and so privately most US officials, as well as outside observers, believe it will go ahead.

But as the date draws near, Trump's divergence from his top aides, the differences between the two sides and these high stakes are coming into sharp relief.

Washington has made it clear it wants to see the "complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation" of the North. Pyongyang has vowed it will never give up its nuclear deterrence until it feels safe from what it terms US aggression.

"Everything is on thin ice," Koo Kab-woo, a professor at the University of North Korea Studies in Seoul, said.

"Trump wants a swift denuclearisation, something that will be done within his first term in office. In that case, he has to provide North Korea with a corresponding, swift security guarantee." Observers will be watching the nuclear test site destruction ceremony closely for any clues to the North's mood.

Experts are divided over whether the demolition will render the site useless.

Skeptics say the site has already outlived its usefulness with six successful nuclear tests in the bag and can be quickly rebuilt if needed. AGENCIES

'Pak ready to work with regional countries to eliminate terrorism'

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Wednesday said that the terrorism should not be identified with any religion, individual countries or nationalities and offered to work with regional countries to eliminate the menace from the region at a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) also attended by India.

Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua made the remarks while inaugurating a meeting of the Legal Experts Group of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation-Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (SCO-RATS) here.

Experts from the eight SCO member states - China, Kazakhstan, India, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Pakistan - are attending the meeting.

India's presence at the meeting assumes significance since it had boycotted the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit here in 2016 citing continuing support to cross-border terrorism from Pakistan.

"We now look forward to working with regional countries under the umbrella of SCO to effectively eliminate terrorism from our region. Pakistan fully supports and welcomes the efforts of SCO-RATS in the fight against 'three evils' of terrorism, extremism and separatism," Janjua said.

She said Pakistan is cognizant of the threats posed by terrorism, separatism and extremism to the region and beyond. Janjua said Pakistan lost thousands of its citizens and security personnel, with many more injured. It also suffered economic losses of over USD 120 billion.



India's presence at the meeting assumes significance since it had boycotted the SAARC summit in 2016 citing continuing support to cross-border terrorism from Pakistan

"But neither the human nor the financial losses have diminished my country's resolve to fight this menace. Through our comprehensive efforts, over the past several years, supported by a firm domestic political consensus, we have been able to turn the tide," she said.

She said that terrorism cannot and should not be identified with any religion, individual countries or nationalities. Janjua said the SCO holds special significance for Pakistan.

"We take pride in becoming a full member of the SCO last year - an organisation that offers a unique new model of inter-state cooperation for peace, security, connectivity and sustainable development," she said. Janjua said SCO holds tremendous potential for connectivity, trade, energy and economic development. It can lead to progress and prosperity

for the entire region. She said Pakistan with over 200 million people offers the SCO enormous opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation. "Pakistan's historical and cultural ties, as well as strong economic and strategic links with the SCO members, can act as an enabler in realizing the SCO's vision," she said.

Janjua said Pakistan as new member would continue to complement these efforts. "We support SCO consensus that as we engage in the fight against terrorism, we must respect the norms and principles of international law, UN Charter and shun double standards," she said.

She said Pakistan strongly believed that SCO-RATS is an ideal forum for exchange of views and best practices on countering terrorism and extremism. AGENCIES

Palestinians join world chemical arms watchdog

THE HAGUE: The Palestinians have joined the global arms watchdog's convention to halt the spread of chemical weapons, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons announced on Wednesday. "The State of Palestine deposited on 17 May 2018 its instrument of accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention," the Hague-based OPCW said in a statement. AGENCIES

Former South Korean president Lee slams corruption charges

SEOUL: Former South Korean president Lee Myung-bak on Wednesday defiantly described the corruption charges he faces as an "insult" at his first court appearance since his arrest in March.

The 76-year-old former CEO turned president -- who served from 2008 to 2013 -- faces multiple charges including bribery, abuse of power, embezzlement, and tax evasion.

The case against Lee means all four former South Korean presidents who are still alive have been charged or convicted for criminal offences.

TV footage showed Lee, wearing a dark blue suit with a badge with his inmate number "716" pinned to the lapel, being led into a courtroom in Seoul. He was uncuffed due to his advanced age.

"I stand here broken-hearted," Lee said in his opening statement.

He has been charged with accepting a total of some 11 billion won (USD 10.2 million) in



bribes between late 2007 when he was elected president and 2012, according to prosecutor documents.

These allegations include claims that the Samsung Group bought a presidential pardon in 2009 for its chairman Lee Kun-hee, who had been convicted of tax evasion and given a suspended jail sentence.

"I was appalled by the allegations that I received bribes from Samsung in return for a presidential pardon," Lee said. "This is an insult to me," he added. He claimed he had given the Samsung chief, then a member of the International

Olympic Committee, a special pardon so that he could lead efforts to host the 2018 Winter Olympics, which eventually took place in Pyeongchang.

Samsung allegedly paid six billion won (USD 5.6 million) in legal fees to a US law firm on Lee's behalf.

The firm was representing DAS, an auto parts company which prosecutors claim Lee owns in his relatives' names, which was involved in a costly court battle with a US businessman at the time.

Both Samsung and Lee have denied the allegations, saying they are groundless. AGENCIES

US: Government employee in China reported strange sounds, pressure

BEIJING: The State Department says a US government employee in southern China reported abnormal sensations of sound and pressure, recalling similar experiences among American diplomats in Cuba who later fell ill. The department says in an emailed notice to American citizens in China it didn't know what caused the symptoms in the city of Guangzhou, where an American consulate is located. It says it also didn't know of any other similar incidents in China, but was taking the reports seriously and has informed its official staff in China about it. In Cuba, the US reported that some of its personnel and family members experienced a range of ailments, some after hearing an unusual sound. AGENCIES

Everest's Hillary Step now a 'slope': Climbers

KATHMANDU: Mount Everest's Hillary Step -- a rocky outcrop just below the summit -- is now a slope, say climbers who recently returned from the mountain.

The condition of the rock face named after Everest's first summiteer Edmund Hillary has been the subject of intense speculation since climbers last year declared it had gone. Others disagreed saying fresh snowfall had caused the confusion.

Mountaineers returning from the summit this month have unanimously said that what was once a near-vertical 12 metre rock face is now a gradual snowy slope and makes the final ascent quicker and easier.

"The Hillary Step is not like we've known it to be," said Nepali guide Dawa Phinjo Lama Bhoté, one of seven climbers AFP spoke to.

"A big stone of about five metres is gone. The area is now easier to climb," added the seven-time Everest summiteer. The step formed part of a narrow, exposed ridge connecting Everest's south summit (8,749 metres) with the true summit (8,848 metres).

Hillary and Tenzing Norgay famously scrambled up the sheer step in 1953 when they became the first climbers to conquer Everest.

Since that first successful summit, all climbers summiting Everest via the southern route have used ropes to pull themselves up the formidable obstacle, before swinging one leg over a "saddle" at the top.

But straddling the top boulder and shuffling along the precipice is no longer necessary. "The Hillary Step has



changed. We now climb it on the right hand side going up a snow slope," said British climber Kenton Cool, who made his 13th summit of Everest last week.

"It clearly doesn't have the little corner between the snow and the rock that used to be there. There's not the rock on the top of the step that you used to go 'cheval' (straddle) and shuffle along."

Climbers say the disappearance of the step has left little more than an undulating ridge to the summit.

"The area of the Hillary's Step is a moderately steep snow ridge, but does not stand out more prominently than any other section between the south summit and main summit," said a climber who declined to be named.

Climbers began speculating in 2016 that a powerful earthquake in Nepal the year before could have radically altered the step.

Geologists, however, have questioned if the 7.8-magnitude earthquake was powerful enough to shift rocks near Everest's summit, which stands 450 kilometres east of the epicentre. AGENCIES

Climate change has emerged as another possible culprit. Some peaks in Europe's Alps have been dramatically altered by warming temperatures as ice has repeatedly melted and refrozen, loosening rock and causing landslides.

But Dr Jeffrey Kargel of the US-based Planetary Science Institute said Everest's extreme altitude would protect the Step from such a "freeze-thaw" cycle.

"It is far too cold near Everest's summit, even on sunny summer days and (at) high noon," said the climate change scientist, leaving the question of what has happened to the fabled rock hanging.

Nepali authorities -- who make millions from climbers paying to ascend Everest each year -- last year insisted it remained unchanged.

Head of Nepal's tourism department Dinesh Bhattarai this year stood by that claim, saying: "I have not heard anything different this year." Meanwhile, climbers said they were instructed by the department not to speak to the press about the fabled step, and warned they could face a mountaineering ban if they did. AGENCIES

Government of West Bengal
North Bengal Development Department
Branch Secretariat Uttarkanya, Fulbari, Jalpaiguri

ABRIDGED -e-Tender

e-NIT ref. no.	Name of work	Last Bid-submission	Date
Tender No.- 194 (2nd Call) of 2017-18	Construction of CC road at Madhya Kalanagin (Milk Basti) from jami Masjid to E.P. School under Gaisal-II GP, Islampur Block in the district of Uttar Dinajpur.(Length-411 m)	06/06/2018 up to 15:00 Hours	

Sd/- Executive Engineer
North Bengal Development Department

Details can be seen in the Official Website www.wbnorthbengaldev.gov.in
For all details and online tender submission visit <https://wbntenders.gov.in>

WEST BENGAL STATE ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY LIMITED
(A Govt. of West Bengal Enterprise)
Regd. Office: Vidyal Bhawan, Block-DJ, Sector-II, Bidhannagar, Kolkata - 700 091
CIN: U40109WB2000G0011473, incorporation@wbseidcl.com, www.wbseidcl.in

EXTENSION OF TIME

Ref. NIT No.: WBSECL/RE/DOUGY/SUB-STATION/2018-19/NIT-3 to 8, Dated: 25.04.2018 originally published in this newspaper on 30.04.2018. The schedule of Bid activities of following Sub-Stations at Ganesh Complex, Dist.- Howrah; Birudih, Dist.- Burdwan; Chakporohit, Dist.- Burdwan; Mondalgram, Dist.- Burdwan; Bhandaridih Dist.- Burdwan; Jougram, Dist.- Burdwan are hereby extended as follows:- A. Bid Submission End Date: 29.05.2018 (up to 12.00 hrs.); B. Bid Opening Date (Part-I: Techno-commercial): 31.05.2018 (at 13.00 hrs.); C. Bid opening Date (Part-II: Price): Shall be intimated later. All other aspects of the NIT will remain unaltered. Interested bidders can download documents from www.wbntenders.gov.in & www.wbseidcl.in

ICA - T3359 (4) / 2018

KMDA KOLKATA METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
EOI No.: SE(E/P)-I/2W-39/18/220

Assignment Title: Supply, delivery, commissioning of Tree Transplanter machine for operation in and around Kolkata, WB.

The Superintending Engineer (EM)-I, EM Sector, KMDA, Unnayan Bhawan, 6th Floor, Block-DJ, Salt Lake City, Kolkata-700091, West Bengal, India invites eligible manufacturers/their authorized dealer or agent to indicate their interest in providing the material and services. Interested respondents should provide information demonstrating their required qualifications and relevant experiences to execute the works. The respondents should have executed similar type of jobs in any Government/Govt. Undertaking/Autonomous Bodies/Semi-Govt./Statutory Bodies/Local Bodies/Corporate Sector.

The attention of the interested respondents are invited who have - Adequate experience in, Supply, delivery, commissioning of Tree Transplanter along with at least 1 year operation and maintenance (O&M) in any Government/Govt. Undertaking/Autonomous Bodies/Semi-Govt./Statutory Bodies/Local Bodies/Corporate Sector and shall be financially sound and stable.

The participant will be selected in accordance with the quality method at the discretion of the competent authority of KMDA. The interested respondents are requested to submit their details on **07.06.2018 up to 14.00 hours**. For further details please visit our website or above our office address. KMDA/126(22)/Headliners/03/18-19

Visit: www.kmdaonline.org

Government of West Bengal
North Bengal Development Department
Branch Secretariat Uttarkanya, Fulbari, Jalpaiguri

ABRIDGED -e-NIT

e-NIT ref. no.	Name of work	Estimated Amount	Last date of Bid submission
NIT-192(2nd Call) OF 2017-18	Construction of Two nos. Police Barrack (Building Block 'C' & 'D', Civil and S & P works) near Uttarkanya Campus Beside "Kanyashree campus" at Fulbari in the District of Jalpaiguri.	Rs. 1,31,07,228.00	15/06/2018 up to 15:00 Hours
NIT-203(2nd Call) OF 2017-18	CONSTRUCTION OF ROAD ROHMANI TO BANUHA VIA AT KEDARHAT G.P. UNDER MATHIASHANGA-I BLOCK IN THE DISTRICT OF COOCH BEHAR.(Road length : 1.00km with 1 No Slab Culvert).	Rs. 67,68,790.00	08/06/2018 up to 15:00 Hours
NIT-205 (2nd Call) OF 2017-18	Construction of new road and drainage work at Majhabari adjacent to Ramkrishna Sporting Club in different location connected from Ramkrishna Sporting Club to Anukul Roy house, from Mahadey Das house to Panchayat by-pass road, from Krishna Bhattacharya house to Chandri Sarkar house at Dabgram-II in the dist. Jalpaiguri.(Length:900 mtr. with drain on both the sides).	Rs. 73,30,331.00	11/06/2018 up to 15:00 Hours
NIT-208 (2nd Call) OF 2017-18	Construction of Bridge over River Giridihari(Netaji Setu) at Nagar Giridihari at Chanta G.P under Sitai Block in the District of Coochbehar (span -95 mtr (approx).)	Rs. 6,40,71,838.00	18/06/2018 up to 15:00 Hours
NIT-212 (2nd Call) OF 2017-18	Renovation of Concrete Drain and Construction of Drain Slab from Ghogomali Bridge to Pipelino along with Bank Protection work at Ghogomali Bridge over river Jorapani, SMC, Ward No.-37 under Jalpaiguri District.	Rs. 1,06,51,117.00	15/06/2018 up to 15:00 Hours

Sd/- Superintending Engineer
North Bengal Development Department

Details can be seen in the Official Website www.wbnorthbengaldev.gov.in
For all details and online tender submission visit <https://wbntenders.gov.in>

Stunning fall of Najib Razak ushers in hopes of reform

KUALA LUMPUR: Two weeks ago, Malaysia's Najib Razak was supremely confident of being elected prime minister for a third term.

Instead, in a dizzying political drama, he lost an unlosable election and spiraled into ever-deepening disgrace while Malaysians are being feted for advancing democratic values against their global retreat.

In a series of humiliations, the patrician and luxury-loving Najib and wife Rosmah Mansor were banned from leaving the country; truckloads of luggage stashed with cash and valuables as well as hundreds of expensive designer bags were seized from their home and other properties; and anti-corruption police questioned Najib for hours this week about a multibillion-dollar corruption scandal on his watch.

After 60 years of uninterrupted National Front rule, many Malaysians are optimistic they are ushering in an era of reform that echoes the democratic transformation of giant neighbor Indonesia two decades earlier.

The difference, they hope, is that it will continue to be accomplished without setting their multiethnic country in flames. A grouping of progressive Southeast Asian lawmakers has hailed Najib's defeat as a "bright spot amid dark times" of rising authoritarianism across



the region. The May 9 election that turfed Najib and his government despite an electoral system heavily engineered in their favor was a "quiet, dignified but defining revolution at the ballot box," said Malaysian rights activist and lawyer Ambiga Sreenevasan.

"Malaysia has now set the gold standard in Southeast Asia for bringing change peacefully

TURNONIL IN MALAYSIA

even through a flawed process," said Sreenevasan, who has been appointed by the new government to a reform panel.

Najib's ouster was in large part made possible by the return to politics of Mahathir Mohamad, premier for 22 years until 2003. Spurred by anger over the alleged looting of state investment fund 1MDB by associates of Najib, he emerged from retirement and joined with former political enemies to

campaign against the ruling coalition.

Despite Mahathir being mocked by Najib for his old age and authoritarian record, his reputation as a statesman who transformed a Southeast Asian backwater into a modern economy helped soothe voters' fears of possible chaos under a new government. Many Malaysians have been haunted for decades by racial riots in 1969 that killed more than 200 people.

Since he was sworn in as Malaysia's seventh premier and the world's oldest leader at 92, Mahathir has wasted no time in setting up his government and tackling the country's financial problems. Former foes he once jailed have been appointed to the cabinet, including the first ethnic Chinese to hold the powerful finance ministry post in 44 years. Malaysia also now has its first female deputy prime minister.

Mahathir facilitated a royal

pardon that freed reformist icon Anwar Ibrahim, who was jailed in 2015 in what he said was a conspiracy by Najib to crush his opposition alliance. Anwar, who is now the prime minister-in-waiting, was sacked by Mahathir in 1998 after a power struggle and jailed for sodomy and corruption.

The two men reconciled in 2016, united by their resolve to oust Najib.

Mahathir has said he needs one to two years to restore order before handing power to Anwar.

The top priority is getting to the bottom of the 1MDB scandal.

Najib started the fund when he took power in 2009 but it accumulated billions in debts. US investigators say 4.5 billion was stolen and laundered from 1MDB by his associates, some of which landed in Najib's bank account and 27.3 million of it used to buy a rare pink diamond necklace for his wife.

A former attorney general and senior anti-graft official, who were on the verge of pressing criminal charges against Najib in 2015 before they, respectively, were sacked and fled in fear of arrest, have been brought back to help investigate.

A 1MDB panel has been set up to liaise with foreign countries on how to retrieve the laundered billions.

New Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng said Tuesday that

Najib's government had conducted "an exercise of deception" over 1MDB and also misrepresented the country's financial situation to parliament. The same day, the anti-corruption commission official who previously led investigations into 1MDB gave a harrowing account of how the probe was suppressed by intimidation during Najib's rule.

"Malaysia will likely be one of the few Southeast Asian nations to put a former PM in jail," said Bridget Welsh, political science professor at the John Cabot University in Rome, who was in Kuala Lumpur to observe the polls.

Najib "made the mistake of thinking it was about him rather than the office he held," she said. Former Philippine President Joseph Estrada was jailed for corruption in 2007.

While the 1MDB crisis will keep officials busy, there are other worries for Mahathir and the new government.

Closer examination of the election results showed many from the country's ethnic Malay majority still didn't support Mahathir's alliance.

The conservative Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party made major gains by winning control of two rural northeastern mainly Malay states. Collectively with the National Front, they hold 43 percent of seats in Parliament.

AGENCIES

India, Pak entry into SCO increased potential for cooperation, says Xi

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping has said with the entry of India and Pakistan, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) has gained more potential for cooperation and more expectations from the international community.

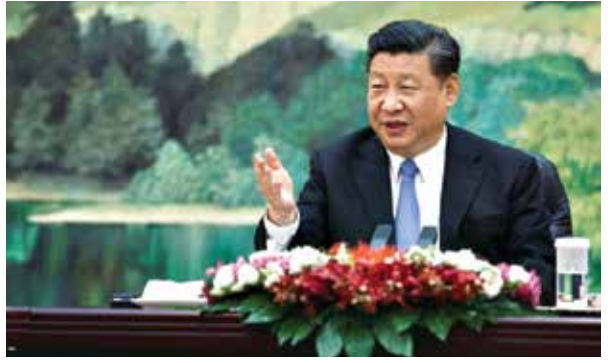
In his address to the representatives to the 13th meeting of Security Council Secretaries of the SCO here on Tuesday, Xi said maintaining regional security and stability has been the top priority of the bloc since it was founded.

"The SCO members have fought the 'three evil forces' of terrorism, separatism and extremism; prevented the overflow of negative effects from hot issues; and made important contributions to keeping regional peace, development and prosperity," Xi was quoted as saying by the state-run China Daily.

Xi pointed out that when the SCO accepted Pakistan and India last year as new members, it gained more potential for cooperation and more expectations from the international community.

Deputy National Security Adviser Rajinder Khanna, Pakistan's NSA Nasser Khan Janjua along with top security officials of the SCO member countries called on Xi after the conclusion of their two-day meeting here on Tuesday.

The security officials met ahead of the SCO summit in the Chinese city of Qingdao to be held on June 9-10. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is



scheduled to take part in the summit.

It will be the first summit of the SCO after India and Pakistan were admitted into the bloc last year.

The SCO, in which China plays an influential role, is comprised of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan.

Khanna, who is also the Secretary of the National Security Council Secretariat, on Wednesday called on Xi along with other Secretaries of National Security Councils attending the meeting.

In his address to the SCO security officials, Xi said the member countries have expanded areas of cooperation and enriched their experience in cooperation.

"Numerous challenges remain, including the 'three evil forces' plus drug smuggling and cross-border organised crime, each of which threatens the region. The risks require SCO members to handle the issues properly through correct judgments," he said.

The SCO members should uphold the strategic direction of security cooperation, continue to boost mutual strategic trust, enhance coordination of policy, uphold justice and jointly push the resolution of regional hot issues through political and diplomatic measures, Xi said.

Xi called on the other SCO members to build up their capacity for joint security operations and build an efficient law-enforcement cooperation network.

China will continue to integrate its national security with regional security, work with SCO members to build a new type of international relations with features of mutual respect, justice and win-win cooperation; and push to build a community of shared future for mankind, Xi said.

The SCO security officials during their meeting discussed with Xi issues like fighting terrorism and the "three evil forces", beefing up information security and maintaining social stability, the report said.

AGENCIES

Missing Indian-origin schoolboy in UK found

LONDON: A 15-year-old Indian-origin boy who disappeared from his school after he was reportedly accused of cheating when he scored 100 per cent marks in an exam has been found safe and well, British police said.

Abhimanyu Chohan went missing from King Henry VIII Independent School in Coventry on Friday after he scored 100 per cent marks in a mock test and was worried about getting into trouble.

West Midlands Police on Tuesday tweeted that he had been found "safe and well", the BBC reported.

On the day he went missing, Abhimanyu changed his clothes and walked out of school - he was caught on CCTV on the highway in the city.

Abhimanyu's father Varinder Chohan said his son had been worried about getting in trouble at school after accusations he had cheated on an exam paper.

His family believe he may have left Coventry and could have travelled as far as Oxfordshire - but he has no money, food or extra clothing.

"We just want him back safe, this is so unlike him. He's a bit of a high flyer, he's a smart kid but he's not street wise," Varinder said.

"We're worried he may have though the was in trouble because he got top marks on a mock exam paper."

"We think he might have seen the paper beforehand but we're not sure exactly what happened."

"He was allowed to sit a completely new paper, so I don't think there was even a major problem with the school. He is due to sit his General Certificate of Secondary Education's next year and is on course to do well."

AGENCIES

Pak teenager killed at Texas school laid to rest in Karachi

KARACHI: The body of a 17-year-old female Pakistani exchange student killed in the latest mass shooting incident in the US was on Wednesday laid to rest.

Sabika Sheikh was among 10 students and staff who were killed on Friday at Santa Fe High School in Texas. The alleged shooter is 17-year-old Dimitrios Pagourtzis, who is being held on capital murder charges.

She was on Wednesday laid to rest at the Azimpura graveyard in Shah Faisal Colony after funeral prayers were offered at Karachi's Hakeem Saeed Ground, Dawn News reported.

The body of the teenager arrived at cargo complex of Karachi airport this morning from Houston, Texas. The body was received by family members and officials of US Consulate at the airport.

Sabika was studying in Texas on a US State Department scholarship under the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) programme.

She had been attending classes at the school since August last, and said that getting accepted into the US programme to study was the best thing that ever happened to

her.

Sabika, the eldest of three sisters, was to return home in Pakistan in three weeks, by Eid ul-Fitr. Her host family said their time with her was "such a precious gift."

A memorial service was held for the young woman at a mosque Sunday night in Stafford. A memorial of flowers and messages for Sabika has been grown outside of the high school. Meanwhile, her father Abdul Aziz Sheikh, has urged US President Donald Trump to take action.

Her family was notified on Friday that Sabika was one of the 10 killed at the hands of a gunman inside of Santa Fe High School. Sheikh now has a strong message for the president.

"I would like to say to the Trump administration, kindly stop this type of incident," Sheikh said.



AGENCIES

Pak minister slapped by Imran's party leader

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's minister for privatisation Daniyal Aziz was slapped by a senior leader of Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf during a TV talk show.

A 36-second clip posted on Geo News website showed Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) leader Naemul Haque and Aziz mudslinging each other's party in the Aapas Ki Baat programme on Tuesday.

Then all of a sudden Aziz, in an aggressive tone, addressed Haque and said: "Am I afraid of you... afraid of thieves like you".

Haque lost his temper when Aziz called him a "thief". Aziz kept his cool after being slapped and just said: "How dare you slap me?" At this Haque retorted: "How dare you call me a thief?" Pakistan's former ousted prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supremo Nawaz Sharif said that "it showed culture of PTI".

This is not the first time Haque is getting involved in such trouble. In 2011, during a TV show, he threw a glass of water on Pakistan Peoples Party leader Jameel Soomro.

AGENCIES

Meeting US demands would enormously benefit Iranians: US Secretary of State

WASHINGTON DC: Days after he listed out a set of 12 demands to Iranian regime including giving up its nuclear weapons ambition, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said meeting these "simple requirements" would benefit the Iranian people to an enormous extent.

On Monday, in his first major foreign policy speech, Pompeo demanded that Iran give up its nuclear weapons ambition, stop its alleged destabilising behaviour in the region, and stop uranium enrichment, among other demands.

He also sought the support of European allies and other global partners and friends, including India.

"These are a set of simple requirements that the Iranian regime could quite easily comply with, and it would benefit the Iranian people to an enormous extent," Pompeo told reporters at a State Department news conference on Tuesday.

"Frankly, what we laid out seemed like a pretty straightforward set of requirements that we would put on any country in the world to stop malign behaviour that threatens other parts of its neighbours and other parts of the world," he said.

Pompeo, in a major speech,



threatened tougher sanctions against Iran.

Sanctions that had been lifted under the Iran nuclear deal -- which America pulled out of early this month -- are due to go back into effect, and they are expected to pressure an already shaky economy.

"This is just the beginning. The sting of sanctions will be painful," Pompeo said before a packed house at the conservative Heritage Foundation, a top American think-tank.

Interacting with reporters at the State Department, Pompeo re-emphasised that the tasks Iran needs to undertake aren't that difficult. "I've seen reports that these are a fantasy and they can't happen, but we ask for things that are really fairly simple that, frankly, most nations are doing," he said.

AGENCIES

'US committed to nuclear-free Korean Peninsula'

WASHINGTON DC:

The United States is committed to achieving denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula and creating conditions such that the North Korean regime no longer threatens the world, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has said. Pompeo made the comments after attending a White House meeting between President Donald Trump and the visiting South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Tuesday. "We are committed to achieving denuclearisation and creating conditions such that the North Korean regime no longer threatens the world," Pompeo said.

AGENCIES

Cameroon summons US envoy: Official sources

YAOUND: Cameroonian authorities summoned the US ambassador in the country on Wednesday, sources said, days after he accused government forces of abuses against separatists in English-speaking regions.

Government and diplomatic sources said that the foreign ministry had summoned Ambassador Peter Barlerin.

Barlerin alleged on May 18 that government forces had car-

ried out "targeted killings" and other abuses against militants demanding independence for two English-speaking regions.

"On the side of the government, there have been targeted killings, detentions without access to legal support, family, or the Red Cross, and burning and looting of villages," he said in a statement.

"On the side of the separatists," he also stressed, "there have been murders of gen-

darmes, kidnapping of government officials, and burning of schools".

The statement followed warnings by rights watchdogs over abuses in the conflict. It was issued after Barlerin met with Cameroon's President Paul Biya.

The crisis began in 2016, when activists in the Anglophone minority stepped up a campaign for greater autonomy. According to the Inter-

national Crisis Group (ICG) think tank, "at least 120" civilians and "at least 43" security forces have been killed since the end of 2016.

The Anglophone minority accounts for about a fifth of the country's population of 22 million. Biya has rejected the Anglophone demands, prompting radicals to make a full-blown but symbolic declaration of independence last October 1.

AGENCIES

MH370 search to end next week

KUALA LUMPUR: The search for flight MH370 will end next week, Malaysia's transport minister said on Wednesday, more than four years after the plane disappeared and triggered one of the world's greatest aviation mysteries.

The Malaysia Airlines jet vanished in March 2014 with 239 people -- mostly from China -- on board, en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing.

No sign of the plane was found in a 120,000 square kilo-

metre sea search zone and the Australian-led hunt, the largest in aviation history, was suspended in January last year.

After pressure from family members, the former Malaysian government struck a deal with US exploration firm Ocean Infinity to restart the search on the condition it would only be paid if the jet or its black boxes were found.

The firm, which deployed hi-tech underwater drones in its hunt, stood to make up to

70 million if successful.

Malaysia's Transport Minister Anthony Loke, part of the new government that came to power following May 9 elections, said the hunt was officially meant to finish in April but had been extended, and would come an end next week.

"The search will continue until May 29," he told reporters.

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad had said earlier that the contract with Ocean Infinity was being reviewed.

AGENCIES

Rohingya militants massacred Hindus in last year's turmoil: Amnesty

YANGON: Rohingya militants massacred Hindu villagers during last year's uprising in Myanmar's Rakhine, Amnesty International said on Wednesday in a report that sheds fresh light on the complex ethnic rivalries in the state.

The killings took place on August 25, 2017, the report said, the same day that the Rohingya insurgents staged coordinated deadly raids on police posts that tipped the state into crisis.

Myanmar's military responded to the insurgent raids with harsh reprisals that forced some 700,000 Rohingya Muslims out of the mainly Bud-

dhist country where they have faced persecution for years.

The UN says the army crackdown amounted to "ethnic cleansing" of the Rohingya, with soldiers and vigilante mobs accused of killing civilians and burning down villages.

But the Rohingya militants have also been accused of abuses.

Those include the mass killing of Hindus in the far north of Rakhine, where the military took reporters -- including AFP -- to witness the exhumation of putrid bodies from a shallow grave in September.

The militants, known as the Arakan Rohingya Salva-

tion Army (ARSA), denied responsibility at the time.

But Amnesty International said Wednesday that a new investigation had confirmed the group killed 53 Hindus "execution-style" -- mostly children -- in the Kha Maung Seik village cluster in northern Maungdaw.

"Accountability for these atrocities is every bit as crucial as it is for the crimes against humanity carried out by Myanmar's security forces in northern Rakhine state," said Tirana Hassan, crisis response director at Amnesty International.

Citing interviews with eight survivors, the rights group said dozens of people were rounded



up, blindfolded and marched out of town by masked men and Rohingya villagers in plain clothes.

"They slaughtered the men. We were told not to look at them... They had knives. They also had some spades and iron

rods," 18-year-old Raj Kumari told Amnesty.

He said he hid in the bush and watched as his father, brother and uncle were killed.

The report said that in a separate village nearby called Ye Bauk Kyar, 46 Hindu men, women and children disappeared on the same day. It cited information from local Hindus who believe they were killed by ARSA.

While Rakhine was home mainly to Buddhists and Muslims before the crisis, it also has a small but longstanding Hindu minority -- many of whom were brought in by British colonisers looking for cheap labour -- as

well as several other smaller ethnic groups.

"The killers fled to Bangladesh, there are many witnesses but we have not had any justice," Hindu community leader Ni Maul said from Rakhine state. "People have less interest in these killings," he added, compared to reporting on the atrocities against the Rohingya.

Myanmar has faced a flood of international condemnation for its persecution of the Rohingya, who are stateless and have been targeted by bouts of communal violence.

The government denies any widespread abuses and has accused rights groups of a pro-

Rohingya bias, while highlighting the suffering of other ethnic groups swept up in the violence.

"It is important that the international pressure on Myanmar won't favour ARSA's actions," government spokesman Htay said when asked about the Amnesty report.

But David Mathieson, an independent analyst, said the report should strengthen the argument for Myanmar to allow independent investigations into the crisis.

Authorities have severely restricted media access to the conflict zone and barred UN investigators from entering the country.

AGENCIES

Govt is working on long-term solution to fuel prices: Prasad

NEW DELHI: With petrol and diesel prices being hiked for the 10th day in a row, the government on Wednesday said it is working on a long-term solution to address the volatility and frequent revisions in rates.

The BJP-led government had in June last year junked a 15-year old practice of revising rates every fortnight and introduced daily revisions which worked well except periods immediately preceding an election.

There was a 19-day freeze in revising rates before Karnataka went to polls, and since the time the hiatus ended on May 14, rates have gone up by Rs 2.54 a litre in case of petrol and Rs 2.41 in diesel.

The 10-day relentless price increases built pressure on the government for cutting excise duty to give immediate relief to consumers but after a meeting of the Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Law and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad offered little insight if a reduction in tax was coming.

"(The) issue of frequent hike in fuel price is a matter

of debate and concern. The government is involved in this whole process, including the concern (about rise in prices) and also the uncertainty," he told reporters here.

With geopolitical situation leading to an uncertainty over the direction of international oil prices, "a new sense of urgency has developed", he said.

"The government is keen that instead of having an ad hoc measure, it may be desirable to have a long-term view which addresses not only the volatility but also takes care of the unnecessary ambiguity arising out of frequent ups and downs. That process is underway," he said.

The minister refused to elaborate either on the measures being considered or if a duty reduction was on cards.

On the question of excise duty, he said proceeds from such taxes are used for country's development including building of highways, digital infrastructure, electricity to vil-

lages, hospitals and education.

"So tax on fuel is linked with developmental issues. We understand that there is a com-



elling need for a long-term solution, structured solution (to deal with the present situation)," he said.

Asked about former Finance Minister P Chidambaram's criticism of the BJP government raising excise duty to take away gains arising from falling international prices, Prasad said he generally does not comment on the Congress leader's tweets "because ever since his party went out of power, he has become active on twitter".

"But I want to tell my media friends that they should tweet to Chidambaram and ask if his mathematics was so strong then how did his government go out

of power," he asked.

Chidambaram had in a series of tweets said that the fall in international oil prices between 2014 and early 2016 helped the government save Rs 15 per litre but the government put an additional Rs 10 on every litre of fuel.

"Central government saves Rs 15 on every litre of petrol due to fall in crude oil prices. Central government puts additional tax of Rs 10 on every litre of petrol," he tweeted.

"Bonanza to central government is Rs 25 on every litre of petrol. This money rightfully belongs to the average consumer."

"It is possible to cut up to Rs 25 per litre, but the government will not. They will cheat the people by cutting price by Rs 1 or 2 per litre of petrol," he said in another tweet.

The government had raised excise duty nine times between November 2014 and January 2016 to shore up finances as global oil prices fell, but then cut the tax just once in October last year by Rs 2 a litre.

Since May 14 when the state-owned oil firms ended a 19-day pre-Karnataka poll hiatus on revising fuel prices, petrol and diesel rates have been revised everyday, leading them to record highs. Petrol costs Rs 76.17 per litre in Delhi while diesel sells for Rs 68.34.

State-owned Indian Oil Corp (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL) were in April 2002 given freedom to revise rates of petrol and diesel on 1st and 16th of every month based on average rate of benchmark international petroleum product prices and rupee-US dollar rates in the preceding fortnight.

The revisions continued till just before the general elections in 2004 when oil companies went slow and after a Congress-led UPA came to power the entire process was reviewed as the international oil prices started moving up. Rates were revised on fortnightly basis but not all of the desired hike was passed on to the consumers and that increase not passed on converted into subsidy.

The UPA government finally freed petrol price in June 2010 and the diesel rates were decontrolled by the current BJP government in November 2014.

Prasad said the government had allowed complete freedom on pricing and on many occasions prices went down considerably. There are indications that a cut in excise duty combined with states being asked to reduce VAT is on the cards.

The central government levies Rs 19.48 excise duty on a litre of petrol and Rs 15.33 on diesel. State sales tax or VAT varies from state to state. Unlike excise duty, VAT is ad valorem and results in higher revenues for the state when rates move up. P11

Finmin ties up with e-commerce firms to give PMMY loans

MUMBAI: The finance ministry has joined hands with over two dozen e-commerce firms, including major players like Amazon, Flipkart, Ola and Uber, to provide easy finance to small entrepreneurs under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), a top government official said.

The three way partnership between lenders, industry and the government aims to facilitate small business loans.

PMMY is a flagship scheme of the government to provide loans of up to Rs 10 lakh to small entrepreneurs. The loans are being given by banks, small finance banks, non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and micro finance institutions.

The scheme aims to strengthen forward and backward linkages for robust value chains anchored by industries, aggregators, franchisors and associations.

"There are companies like Ola, Flipkart, Uber, dabbawalas, cable operators, Zomato, which have several small entrepreneurs as partners who require loans. We want to extend support to them under the Mudra scheme," financial services secretary Rajiv Kumar



PMMY is a flagship scheme of the government to provide loans of up to ₹10 lakh to small entrepreneurs

told reporters here.

"The bank looks for good entrepreneurs, the companies look for supporting their partners and we are just trying to connect these dots," he added.

Other companies participating in the scheme include MakeMyTrip, Oyo, Meru Cab, Big Basket, Carz on Rent, Habib Salon, among others.

Last financial year, the government had extended Rs 2.53 lakh crore credit under the Mudra scheme, taking the total credit extended in the last three years to Rs 5.73 lakh crore. P11

DoT brings mobile tower firms under licence for rolling out infra

NEW DELHI: DoT has brought infrastructure providers in category 1 -- mainly comprising mobile tower firms -- under licensing for rolling out networks and renting to service providers.

In an office memorandum dated May 22, DoT said: "With reference to Indian Telegraph Right of Way (RoW) Rules, 2016, 'licensee' includes infrastructure provider category 1 authorised to establish and maintain assets such as dark fibres, RoW, duct space and tower for the purpose of granting the same on lease/rent/sale basis to licensees of telecom services."

The RoW rules mandate all government bodies to provide permit to companies for rolling out telecom infrastructure in a time-bound manner at rates enough to cover their administrative and infrastructure restoration cost without levying any



additional cess or fee.

Category 1 (or IP-1) firms have been facing difficulties in rolling out telecom infrastructure as Department of Telecom (DoT) notification to get permit from government agencies included only licensed telecom service providers like Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio, Vodafone and Idea Cellular.

The telecom licence holder obtained permit to meet their infrastructure requirement and handed it over to IP-1 players for execution. On the other hand, IP-1 companies have objected to being included under the definition of licensee as they will be required to share 8 per cent

revenue with the government from communication services.

The Tower and Infrastructure Providers Association (TAIPA), with players such as Bharti Infratel, Indus towers, ATC towers, GTL Infrastructure, Reliance Infratel, and Tower Vision, said it appreciated the DoT decision on inclusion of IP-1 in the RoW rules.

The clarification was long pending and much needed and timely which will expedite the provisioning of telecom infrastructure in every nook and corner of the nation. The clarification will provide impetus, required thrust and augurs extremely positive for upcoming technologies like 5G, AI, IoT, "TAIPA Director General, Tilak Raj Dua said.

He added that decision will add impetus to realising the government's overarching initiatives such as Digital India and Broadband for All. P11

Telephone subscribers up by 2.24% in March

NEW DELHI: The number of telephone subscribers in India rose from 1,179.83 million at the end of February to 1,206.22 million at the end of March, a monthly growth rate of 2.24 per cent, data released by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) said on Wednesday.

The urban subscription increased from 669.63 million at the end of February to 681.61 million at the end of March 2018 and the rural subscription also went up from 510.20 million to 524.61 million during the same period.

The overall tele-density in India increased from 90.89 at the end of February 2018 to 92.84 at the end of March 2018.

Total wireless subscribers (GSM, CDMA & LTE) increased from 1,156.87 million at the end of February to 1,183.41 million at the end of



March, thereby registering a monthly growth rate of 2.29 per cent. The wireless tele-density in India increased from 89.12 to 91.09.

Wireline subscribers further declined from 22.97 million at the end of February to 22.81 million at the end of March. Net decline in the wireline subscriber base was 0.15 million with a monthly decline rate of 0.67 per cent.

During March, a total of 19.67 million requests were received for mobile number portability (MNP). IANS

CESC posts standalone net profit of ₹871 crore in FY18

NEW DELHI: CESC on Wednesday reported standalone net profit of Rs 871 crore in 2017-18 up from Rs 863 crore in the previous fiscal.

The company's consolidated net profit was Rs 1,155 crore in 2017-18 up from Rs 810 crore in the previous financial year.

However, the company reported one per cent dip in its standalone net profit at Rs 292 crore in the quarter ended on March 31, 2018, compared with a year-ago period.

The company's standalone net profit was Rs 295 crore in the quarter ended on March 31, 2017, a BSE filing said. The company's standalone total

income was Rs 1,843 crore in the quarter up from Rs 1,631 crore year ago, it said in a statement.

Besides approving financial results, the board has appointed Debasish Banerjee as Managing Director (Distribution) and Rabi Chowdhury as Managing Director (Generation) of the Company each for a period of five years with effect from May 28, 2018, in its meeting held on Wednesday. Both have been appointed by the board as additional directors of the company from the said date.

The appointments will be subject to the requisite approvals of the shareholders of the

company in the next annual general meeting. Banerjee was earlier the Chief Executive Officer of Reliance Energy. Chowdhury is the Managing Director of Haldia Energy Limited, a subsidiary of the CESC.

On expiry of his term of office as Managing Director, Aniruddha Basu has tendered his resignation as a Director with effect from May 28, 2018. Brij Mohan Khaitan, an Independent Director, has also tendered his resignation with immediate effect.

The company is engaged in generation and distribution of electricity and does not operate in any other reportable segment, it added. P11

PE investments in retail real estate touch ₹5,500 cr since 2015

NEW DELHI: Private equity investments in retail real estate segment have touched around Rs 5,500 crore since 2015 on increased interest for superior quality shopping malls, according to property consultant JLL India.

Increased investments would boost supply of retail space and it is estimated that about 90 shopping malls would come into the market by 2022 at major cities, it added.

"The Indian retail sector has attracted a cumulative of Rs 5,500 crore between 2015 and Q1 2018. Close to Rs 1,000 crore has been invested in the sector in Q1 2018 making it one of the best quarters for the sector in recent times," JLL said in the report Indian Retail: Stepping up the Game.

Private equity investments in retail properties stood at Rs 800 crore in 2015, Rs 3,000 crore in 2016 and Rs 700 crore last calendar year, the report said.

In 2018 so far, JLL reported two major deals in this segment -- Phoenix, CPPIB bought L&T land for Rs 650 crore in Bangalore, while Blackstone bought 85 per cent stake in Nitesh's Pune mall for Rs 300 crore.

The steady increase in interest from private equity investment companies, has propelled developers of retail malls to re-evaluate their portfolio and include three determining factors product, catchment and customer experience -- for success of any mall.

Private equity investors have shown confidence in the future trends of Indian retail real estate and have started to make large value as well



as long-term commitments towards the sector.

"It is estimated that the future pipeline of 5 years (2018-22) will be 90 malls spread over 34 million square feet. Of the expected new malls, 62 per cent will be in the category of superior malls while only 10 per cent will remain in the poor category. About 28 per cent malls in the next five years will be considered average," the report said.

JLL India CEO and Country Head Ramesh Nair said the developers are making use of past experiences and learning to create and superior quality malls.

"Some of the key factors determining the success of malls will be design, varied tenant mix, strength of catchment, infrastructure and amenities. But an increasingly influencing factor will be the mall's ability to counter shoppers' expectation for experience," he added.

Out of the upcoming supply, the malls under the superior category would do well as they have the right fundamentals, Nair said.

"We will continue to see stock consolidation as some of the weak properties will divert to non-retail uses like small offices, hospitals, educational, healthcare and survive," he added. P11

Tata Motors Q4 profit skid nearly 50% to ₹2,176 crore

NEW DELHI: Homegrown auto major Tata Motors on Wednesday reported 49.82 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at Rs 2,176.16 crore for the March quarter with its British arm JLR continuing to face challenges in the UK and Europe, in addition to one time impairment charge.

It had posted consolidated net profit of Rs 4,336.43 crore in the corresponding period of last fiscal, Tata Motors said in a BSE filing.

Its consolidated income from operations in the fourth quarter of 2017-18 was Rs 91,279.09 crore. It was at Rs 78,746.61 crore in the year-ago quarter.

The company said an exceptional debit of Rs 1,641.38 crore

Tata Motors Ltd. Q4 2017-18		Q4 2016-17		YoY Growth %	
		2017	2018		
Income	78980.8	91643.4			
Expenditure	73734.5	87695.5			
Op Profit	6246.3	3948.0			
PBT	5165.5	2307.7			
Net Profit	4336.4	2176.2		-49.82	
EPS (in ₹)	12.64	6.24			
Consolidated, Audited		PTI GRAPHICS			

was provided after it reviewed product development programmes in capital-work in progress and consequently provided for impairment during the quarter.

The two figures are not comparable due to GST implementation from July 1 last year, after which revenue from operations is reported net of GST.

During the quarter under review, Jaguar Land Rover's (JLR) net revenue grew by 4 per cent to 7,555 million pounds. Its wholesales were up 2.2 per cent.

While it has done well in global markets like China and North America, JLR faced major challenges of currency fluctuation and Brexit issue in the UK besides the uncertainty over diesel engines as it faced in Europe.

JLR will invest 4.5 billion pounds in 2018-19 on new models and technologies.

Tata Motors which has been on a turnaround journey for its domestic business said that in 2017-18 consolidated net profit was at Rs 9,091.36 crore as against Rs 7,666.56 crore in the previous fiscal, up 18.58 per cent. P11

ATF price hike may lead to increase in air fares: Experts

MUMBAI: The nearly 30 per cent increase in aviation turbine fuel (ATF) over the last one year could compel domestic airlines to go for an upward fare revision to offset the increased cost of operations, according to experts.

Since the jet fuel accounts for 45 per cent of an airline's cost of operation, the carriers could think of hiking the prices by up to 15 per cent, the experts feel.

While the airlines refused to come on record on the issue, executives of some private carriers said a call on how to offset the increase in the ATF was yet to be taken even though the situation demands hiking of the fares.

The ATF price has witnessed an increase of nearly 30 per cent over the last one year

and about 25 per cent in just last six months.

"There is an increase of 25 per cent in the jet fuel prices from last November till date and this definitely calls for the increase in ticket prices to meet some of the increased costs. But the question is who will bell the cat," said a private airline executive on condition of anonymity.

"We are in catch 22 situation as far as the issue of hiking fares is concerned. There is so much capacity in the market and then you have to fill the seats also," said a senior executive from another airline.

Commenting on the situation, Amber Dubey, partner from the aviation sector, thanks to low crude oil prices. It's time to give back a bit," he said.



cent increase in ATF prices over the last year."

He said the central and state governments should reduce the excise duty and VAT (value added tax) rates as soon as possible.

"The Union and state governments earned a bonanza from the aviation sector, thanks to low crude oil prices. It's time to give back a bit," he said.

Some state governments levy as high as 40 per cent VAT

absorb much of the fuel hike in the last one year but now they may be forced to pass on the impact, at least partially, to the travellers.

Nair estimated that in the last six months, airfares have already risen by at least 15 per cent, both on the domestic and international sectors.

However, the Sydney-based aviation think-tank CAPA sees a marginal rise in overall ticket prices, a phenomenon which is expected to last till June.

"We see a marginal increase in overall fares till end June but closer-to-departure fares (D7) may be higher than the overall average," said Kapil Kaul, chief executive officer and director, CAPA South Asia.

Kaul, however, feels that there was no scope for a rise in airfares during the Septem-

ber quarter, given the capacity (aircraft induction by airlines) profile of the domestic carriers.

"Fares in Q2 will see higher discounting than in the previous years driven by large capacity inductions," he added.

The domestic carriers have placed large aircraft orders with the world's two leading plane makers - Boeing of the US and Airbus of Europe - which are to be delivered over the next several years.

Airbus in March this year had said that it expects to deliver one aircraft per week on an average to Indian carriers over the next 10 years.

The twin impact on costs and revenue could impact airlines' bottomline, Kaul warned.

"We see a downward bias on full-year profitability estimates at this stage." P11

Walmart India, Flipkart top executives meet CCI; apprise of biz activities

NEW DELHI: Top executives of Walmart India and Flipkart on Wednesday met fair trade regulator CCI to explain their activities in the country, days after submitting an application seeking approval for their \$16-billion mega merger deal.

While there was no official word on the meeting, sources said it was a "courtesy call" by the executives of the two companies during which they also apprised the regulatory authority of Walmart's global sourcing from India, including from the farmers, and its work towards kirana stores and supplier development programmes.

Those present in the meeting included Walmart India president and CEO Krish Iyer and the company's senior vice president and chief corporate affairs officer Rajneesh Kumar, besides Flipkart CEO Kalyan

Krishnamurthy and its group legal head R Baweja, sources said.

In their meeting with CCI member Sudhir Mittal, the officials of the two companies briefly explained about their individual businesses, development programmes and other activities.

The meeting comes days after Walmart approached the Competition Commission of India (CCI) for approval of its proposed acquisition of a majority stake in e-commerce major Flipkart. In their application filed last week, the two companies have said the acquisition, proposed through Walmart International Holdings, deal doesn't raise any competition concerns. Mergers and acquisitions beyond a certain threshold require the approval of the CCI. P11

Dhanlaxmi Bank reports net loss of ₹17 cr in Q4



NEW DELHI: Private sector Dhanlaxmi Bank on Wednesday reported a net loss of Rs 17 crore in the quarter ended March of 2017-18 due to higher provisioning for bad assets. The bank had made a net profit of Rs 8.81 crore in the corresponding period of 2016-17.

However, the bank trimmed its losses when compared with (-) Rs 21.74 crore in the third quarter ended December 2017.

Bank's provisions and contingencies were raised to Rs 80.12 crore during the quarter, up by 170 per cent from Rs 29.65 crore parked aside in the same period of year-ago period.

Total income also fell in January-March quarter of 2017-18 to Rs 276.14 crore against Rs 296.34 crore in the same period a year ago. P11

HPCL registers highest ever profit in FY18

NEW DELHI: Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL), ranked 384 in Fortune Global 500 list and 48 in the list of Platts Top 250 Global Energy Companies in the year 2017, has registered outstanding physical and financial performance during the financial year 2017-18.

The Corporation achieved the highest ever profit of Rs 6,357 crores on standalone basis during the financial year 2017-18, as against profit of Rs 6209 crores during financial year 2016-17. Gross Sales during the financial year has increased to Rs 2,43,227 crores as against Rs 2,13,489 crores during the previous financial year.

Despite lower inventory gains in the current financial year 2017-18, the growth in Profit is mainly due to increased refining throughput, higher domestic market sales, better operating efficiencies & improved cracks.

During FY 2017-18, HPCL refineries at Mumbai and Visakh have maximized crude processing and recorded the highest ever combined refining throughput of 18.28 MMT with capacity utilization of 116 per cent, compared to throughput of 17.81 million tonnes achieved during 2016-17.

Both the refineries individually recorded their best ever crude throughput performance during the year. The refineries recorded combined distillate yield of 75.9 per cent with high-



est ever production of Motor Spirit (3.3 MMT), High Speed Diesel (7.3 MMT) & Lube Oil Base Stock (439 TMT). Excellent physical performance enabled HPCL achieve Combined Gross Refining Margin of \$7.40 per barrel during 2017-18 as compared to \$6.20 per barrel during 2016-17.

Aviation turbine fuel by 5.4 per cent, and Lubes by 1.6 per cent, compared to FY 2016-17.

During 2017-18, HPCL continued to be India's largest lube marketer for the fifth consecutive year in highly competitive lubricant business with a total market share of 44.5 per cent in the PSU category. The Company registered a Market share gain of 0.10 per cent in Motor Spirit (Petrol) sales.

In LPG segment, HPCL recorded a market share gain of 0.02 per cent in total LPG Sales and continued the market leadership in Non-Domestic bulk LPG sales with over 48 per cent market share. In I&C busi-

ness, HPCL surpassed 5 MMT sales volume mark for the second consecutive year.

HPCL reported Consolidated Profit after tax of Rs 7,218 crores during the financial year 2017-18 as against Rs 8,236 crores during previous financial year 2016-17.

The Consolidated Profit is lower due to shutdown taken by one of the Joint Ventures-HMEL to hook up its expansion project to increase its installed capacity from 9MMTPA to 11.25 MMTPA. Further Share of profit from MRPL for FY 2017-18 was Rs 338 crores as against Rs 589 crores during FY 2016-17. **MP05T**

MRPL, HPCL merger in FY19

NEW DELHI: HPCL is keen to takeover Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL) before the end of 2018-19 financial year as there are a lot of synergies arising from the merger, Chairman and Managing Director Mukesh Kumar Surana said on Wednesday.

Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC), India's biggest oil and gas producer, earlier this year completed the acquisition of HPCL for Rs 36,915 crore.

After this takeover, ONGC has two oil refining subsidiaries - Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL) and MRPL. A move is afoot to bring the two refining units under one umbrella.

Surana said standalone refineries, like MRPL with no marketing infrastructure, do not make big business sense.

For one, HPCL sells more petroleum product than it produces and bringing MRPL's 15 million tonne per annum (MTPA) refinery under the fold would help bridge the shortfall. It currently buys the shortfall in the product from other refineries, including MRPL.

"Having MRPL as part of HPCL will bring efficiencies," he said. "In principle it makes sense but modalities have to be worked out."

HPCL operates a 7.5 MTPA refinery at Mumbai and 8.3



CMD Mukesh Kumar Surana

MTPA unit at Visakh in Andhra Pradesh. Its subsidiary, HPCL-Mittal Energy Ltd operates 11.3 MTPA unit at Bhatinda in Punjab. MRPL would bring to it a 15 MTPA refinery, helping bridge the fuel shortfall it currently has.

Also, there can be synergies in crude oil procurement as well as in optimising refinery set-up. "Directionally it (merger

of MRPL with HPCL) makes value and sense... we are trying if we can do it within this fiscal," Surana said adding the merger could be either through share swap or cash buyout or a combination of both.

HPCL can acquire MRPL either by buying out ONGC's shares, which at Wednesday's trading price is worth just over Rs 12,300 crore. The other option is share-swap, wherein ONGC will get more shares in HPCL in lieu of it giving up its control in MRPL. A third option and more preferable is a combination of the two.

Modalities would be worked out and taken to board in due course of time, he said.

ONGC plans to maintain HPCL as an independent listed company under whom all its downstream units can be consolidated. **PTI**

Govt should review taxes on petrol, diesel: HPCL chairman

NEW DELHI: There is a need to review taxation on petrol and diesel to provide relief to consumers after rates touched an all-time high, HPCL Chairman and Managing Director Mukesh Kumar Surana said on Wednesday.

One trigger after another has led to the 10th consecutive day of increase in retail selling price of petrol and diesel, but there is no case for going back on benchmarking domestic rates against international prices, he said. Surana said he was not aware of any meeting called by Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan or anyone else in the government to discuss the rising prices. **PTI**

M Venkatesh appointed MRPL MD

NEW DELHI: M Venkatesh has been appointed as the Managing Director of Mangalore Refineries and Petrochemicals Limited (MRPL), an order issued by the Personnel Ministry said on Wednesday. Venkatesh is at present Director (Refineries) in the MRPL, a subsidiary of the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC). He has been appointed to the post for a period of five years with effect from the date of his assumption of charge of the post on or after June 1, 2018, or till the date of his superannuation, the order said. **PTI**



Govt accelerates exploration, drilling of coal in North East

NEW DELHI: The government has accelerated exploration and drilling of coal in the northeastern states of the country, according to a coal ministry official.

The ministry of coal is focussing on clean coal technologies for producing clean coal as it would stay on as a primary input for producing thermal power in near future, Anindya Sinha, project adviser in the Ministry of Coal, said.

"Government has accelerated to explore and drill coal in northern eastern part of the country, particularly in states of Assam, Meghalaya and Nagaland, given their prospective coal potentials," Sinha was quoted as saying in a release by PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The government has also issued directives to all coal companies to set up washeries at their coal mining plants to enable them generate 'Swachh Coal' or clean coal for energy generation as well as meet requirements of steel plants, he said in the release.

"A phased manner time table has been given to national companies to produce clean coal to address the issue of environment and ecology," he added. **PTI**

Cabinet approves Vikram maker Scooters India balance sheet restructuring

NEW DELHI: The Centre on Wednesday approved restructuring of the balance sheet of loss-making PSU Scooters India, which manufactures three-wheelers under the brand-name 'Vikram'.

The government's move is expected to clear a hurdle in the disinvestment process of Scooters India Ltd (SIL).

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi here. The restructuring will be achieved by way of reduction of equity of Rs 85.21 crore in the share capital of SIL held by the government against accumulated losses, an official statement said.

The reduction would be deemed to have taken effect as on March 31, 2013 and by way of freezing the interest on the non-plan loan of Rs 1.89 crore released to SIL during 2012-13 from the date of its release to the company and conversion into equity of the outstanding principal amount of Rs 1.89 crore.

With this approval, the balance sheets of Scooters India Limited from 2012-13 onwards will be regularised and further restructuring will be effected accordingly, the statement said. The government had earlier this year invited expression of



interest (EoI) to sell its entire stake with transfer of management control in Scooters India (SIL). In a global invitation, the heavy industry ministry had asked interested parties to submit the EoI on or before May 7, 2018. Scooters India Limited (SIL) is a PSU under the administrative control of the ministry.

The government had in principle decided to divest 100 per cent of its equity shareholding in SIL (which is equivalent to 93.74 per cent of the total paid-up equity share capital of SIL) through strategic disinvestment with transfer of management control.

The board of directors of SIL, in its meeting held on February 26, had accorded its consent to give off non-core land of 89.69 acres out of total land of 147.499 acres subject to approval of shareholders and other regulatory authorities as applicable. In 1975, SIL started its commercial production of scooters under the brand name of Vijay Super for domestic market and Lambretta for overseas market. **PTI**

Direct tax collections up 18% to ₹10.03 lakh crore

NEW DELHI: India's direct tax collections for the last financial year crossed the Rs 10 lakh crore mark, registering an increase of 18 per cent over the previous fiscal, the government said on Wednesday.

"During the last Financial Year 2017-18, net direct tax collections have crossed Rs 10.03 lakh crore mark which is 18 per cent higher than the collections during the FY 2016-17," the Finance Ministry said in a tweet.

It added that the growth rate of 18 per cent was the highest in the last seven years.

Last month, Finance Secretary Hasmukh Adhia said that India's direct tax collections for FY 2017-18 at a net of Rs 9.95 lakh crore grew at 17.1 per cent over the previous fiscal and had



The growth rate of 18 per cent was the highest in the last seven years

already exceeded the Budget Estimates (BE) figure.

He added that those figures were provisional and subject to change pending final collation of data of collections. **IANS**

Jet Airways Q4 loss at ₹1,036 cr

MUMBAI: Naresh Goyal-promoted Jet Airways on Wednesday reported a standalone net loss of Rs 1,036 crore in the March quarter due to rise in oil prices and weaker rupee.

The company had reported a net profit of Rs 602.42 crore in the year-ago period, according to the BSE filing.

The total income also declined by 3.44 per cent to Rs 6,055 crore during the quarter, against Rs 6,271.21 crore in the same quarter last year, as per the filing. Fuel expenses rose by 31 per cent to Rs 2,063.34 crore, against Rs 1,282.41 crore. For financial year 2017-18, the airline reported a standalone net loss of Rs 767.62 crore, against a net profit of Rs 1,482.52 crore, according to the filing. **PTI**

Vedanta Resources FY18 operating profit up 27%

NEW DELHI: Diversified global natural resources giant Vedanta Resources on Wednesday reported a 27 per cent surge in operating profit to \$4.1 billion for 2017-18 on higher output and increase in prices.

The LSE listed company, which produces aluminium, copper, zinc, lead, silver, iron ore, oil and gas and commercial energy, had registered group EBITDA (earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation) of \$3.2 billion in the financial year 2016-17, it said in a statement.

Its revenue increased by 33 per cent to \$15.4 billion driven by firmer commodity prices and volume ramp-ups.

The gross debt at \$15.2 billion saw a reduction of \$3 billion

in 12 months which included repayment of \$1.2 billion of temporary borrowing at Zinc India, the company said.

Vedanta Resources Plc Chairman Anil Agarwal said: "...increased volumes and prices underpinned a 33 per cent increase in revenues to reach \$15.4 billion, as well as a 27 per cent growth in EBITDA to \$4.1 billion."

Agarwal said the Group's focus on all-round improvement was complemented by improving markets and commodity prices. He added: "We reached record production levels at several of our businesses. We transformed our approach to developing our assets, which gives me confidence of efficient and productive ramp-ups." **PTI**

F-16 production can make India fighter jet export hub: Lockheed

WASHINGTON DC: Global aerospace giant Lockheed Martin on Wednesday said its proposal to manufacture custom-built F-16 fighter jets in India will make the country an export hub and give it access to an estimated \$165 billion fighter aircraft market over the next few decades.

Eying India's lucrative defence market, the American aerospace major said F-16 production would place India at

the centre of the world's largest fighter aircraft ecosystem, creating "unmatched" Make in India opportunities and export potential.

Vivek Lall, vice president, Strategy and Business Development, Lockheed Martin said F-16 Block 70 being proposed to India will be the most technologically advanced and capable F-16 fighter jet ever produced.

"F-16 exports could begin within five years of establishing



production in India. Depending on when India makes its selection, more than 200 F-16s could be exported from India, Lall said. The F-16 Block 70, he said,

brings the most modern avionics, a proven Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar, a modernised cockpit, advanced weapons, longer range with conformal fuel tanks, the Automatic Ground Collision Avoidance System (Auto GCAS) and an advanced engine with an extended service life.

Block 70 mission systems are completely new and leverage technologies from the F-35. Northrop Grumman's advanced

APG-83 AESA radar on the F-16 Block 70 provides F-16s with 5th Generation fighter radar capabilities by leveraging hardware and software commonality with F-22 and F-35 AESA radars, he said in response to a question.

"F-16 production in India would indeed be exclusive something that has never before been presented by any other fighter aircraft manufacturer, past or present, he said. **PTI**

AAI joins hands with IIT-Madras to research on Air Navigation Systems

NEW DELHI: In a bid to meet the aggressive air traffic growth, Airports Authority of India (AAI) has embarked upon creation of world class R & D Center at Hyderabad to develop in-house research capabilities in the field of airport and air navigation services. The Civil Aviation Research Organisation will be established at Begumpet Airport, Hyderabad over an area of about 27 acres with a budget of approximately Rs.1200 Crores spread over 12 years for R & D Infrastructure development and Rs. 31 Crores annually that will be spent towards research activities every year.

As a first step towards this, AAI has joined hands with Indian Institute of Technology Madras, to take up collaborative research on Air Navigation Systems. This would support AAI in addressing aviation infrastructure and air traffic management challenges for the common good of Indian Economy.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by A K Dutta, Member (Air Navigation Services), AAI and Prof Ravindra Gettu, Dean (Industrial Consultancy and Spon-



sored Research), IIT Madras in the presence of IIT Experts and top-ranking officials from AAI on Wednesday in Chennai.

This MoU provides for transfer of knowledge /skill by IIT Madras experts in the areas of Mathematical/Analytical/Artificial Intelligence/Data mining solutions that are essential to carry out research. AAI will be providing a unique opportunity to Researchers of IIT Madras by way of exposure to the new dimension of Air Navigation Services leading to innovative ideas in the field. This will ultimately open up many areas in the aviation arena to the start-up companies and other industries in India to introduce products under "Make in India" policy of the Government of India.

Speaking on this occasion, Guruprasad Mohapatra, Chairman, AAI expressed his happiness over signing of the MoU with IIT, Madras. He said that "AAI is managing around 130 airports and is the sole service provider of air navigation services. It is high time that we should focus on developing excellence in these fields through innovation and adoption of technologies to provide enhanced efficiencies and safe passenger and aircraft movement."

He further added that as part of AAI's ambitious plans to develop its own in-house capabilities to support indigenous AAI activities, AAI has taken steps to establish a state-of-the-art Civil Aviation Research Organisation at Hyderabad. Collaboration with premier educational Institutions

is one of the critical elements envisaged by AAI in the field of Research and Development.

Addressing the experts from both sides during the program, A K Dutta said that AAI exuded optimism that the partnership between the organisations would be a game-changer in Indian Aviation in the years to come.

Speaking about the importance of this joint R&D project, Prof Bhaskar Ramamurthy, Director, IIT Madras, said, "IIT Madras is eager to partner with AAI to bring in innovation in Airport and Navigation management to address the challenges in India Aviation Sector."

Speaking to the occasion, Prof Ravindra Gettu said, "IIT Madras is glad to collaborate with AAI, especially with their new research wing in the modernization of the air traffic management in our country."

Prof Ravindra Gettu further affirmed that the MoU would ensure synergy of capabilities of both the organisations in their respective domains, paving the way for mutually beneficial and lasting solutions in the ever growing field of Aviation. **MP05T**

PNB retirees urge confidence building measures by govt

NEW DELHI: The Pensioners and Retirees Association of the multi-crore fraud-hit Punjab National Bank (PNB) has called upon the central government to initiate "confidence building exercise" as recent developments have "demoralised bankers" and undermined the importance of state-owned lenders in the country's economy.

The demand comes after the investigating agencies probing the multi-crore Nirav Modi scam had named officials at all levels of the second largest public sector lender in their initial chargesheet.

According to All India PNB Pensioners and Retirees Association: "Naming officials at all levels for sanctioning loans, in cases of accounts turning NPA (non-performing assets) is very disturbing as any loan account turning bad depends on so many factors, which may not be directly attributed to them."

Recently, top executives of PNB have been implicated in a fraud committed by Nirav Modi by "influencing few of the employees of the bank". **MP05T**

"This is also very damaging... that they have been implicated for non-implementation of certain guidelines on SWIFT system issued in 2016," read the association's letter sent to the management on May 20 that has been reviewed by IANS.

"It is also a fact that these guidelines were not implemented in most of the banks and RBI has given revised deadline for implementation of these guidelines on SWIFT system in April 2018." The letter cited that "non-implementation of any guidelines cannot be treated even as misconduct", leave aside the criminal offence.

"It seems that decisions are being taken in haste, without considering its impact on importance of banks in the economy and in absolute disregard to set principles and morale of bank officials," the letter said.

"Bankers are feeling insecure and we urge upon the government to initiate the confidence building exercise without further loss of time, so that bankers start taking decisions confidently," the letter added. **MP05T**

CORPORATE KALEIDOSCOPE



NLCIL CMD S K Acharya honouring Smt & Shri K Arthanari (above 85 years old) retired General Manager (Civil) of NLCIL, on the occasion of NLCIL's 62nd Raising Day Celebrations, which was celebrated as 'Gratitude Day' at Lignite Hall, Neyveli, on May 22, 2018. Also Seen, Former CMD A K Ansari, Director (HR) R Vikraman



NBCC CMD Anoop Kumar Mittal was invited as the Chief Guest at a two day conference on Construction Industry Accounting & Financial Reporting organized by Committee for Professional Accountants in Business & Industry (CPABI). The aim of the conference was to provide a vital platform to finance and accounting professionals to gain understanding of Construction Industry and overcome the challenges confronting the industry



NEYMAR RETURNS TO TRAINING WITH BRAZIL
RIO DE JANEIRO: Paris Saint-Germain forward Neymar trained freely as Brazil began their preparations for next month's FIFA World Cup in Russia. Neymar has not played since suffering a cracked fifth metatarsal in his right foot in late February, reports said. He underwent surgery in the Brazilian city of Belo Horizonte on March 3 and is now in the final phase of his recovery, according to the Brazil team's medical staff.

ARGENTINA'S ROMERO TO MISS WORLD CUP
Buenos Aires: Sergio Romero, the goalkeeper of the Argentine team in the last two FIFA World Cups, has suffered an injury on his right knee and will be left out of the 2018 World Cup. "Argentina's goalkeeper, Sergio Romero, will be removed from the list of 23 players who will participate in the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia. The Manchester United player suffered today a joint blockage in his right knee," AFA said.

JAPAN SWIMMER KOGA AXED AFTER FAILED DRUGS TEST

TOKYO: Former swimming world champion Junya Koga has been kicked out of the Japan squad for this summer's Asian Games after failing a drug test, officials said Wednesday. The 30-year-old, who won the 100 metres backstroke world title in 2009, tested positive for traces of banned muscle-building substances, according to the Japan Swimming Federation (JSF).



KKR see off Rajasthan, make it to Qualifiers 2

KOLKATA: Skipper Dinesh Karthik (52) led from the front as Andre Russell (49 not out), Piyush Chawla (2/24) and Kuldeep Yadav (1/18) starred with bat and ball to help Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) see off Rajasthan Royals (RR) by 25 runs and reach Qualifier 2 of the Indian Premier League (IPL) here on Wednesday.

KKR will now meet Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) here on Friday to decide who faces Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in the final on Sunday.

Despite early hiccups, KKR posted 169/7 in 20 overs riding Russell's big hitting late on after Karthik had set the tone for the two-time champions at Eden Gardens here.

In reply, Royals could manage 144/4 even after Sanju Samson's belligerent 38-ball 50, containing four fours and two sixes and captain Ajinkya Rahane (46; 41b 4x4 1x6) kept their team in the hunt with a 62-run partnership off 54 balls for the second wicket.

With 74 needed from 48 balls, chinaman Kuldeep got rid of Rahane in the 15th over with Chawla then sending Samson back after he brought up his half century in 37 balls.

With the required run rate climbing up and set batsmen out, Royals, who have a thin middle order, could never recover.

Rahul Tripathi (20; 13b; 1x4, 2x6) helped Royals to a



brisk start by tonking Russell (0/22) for a six in the first over and thereafter smacking the usually economical Sunil Narine (0/39) for two back-to-back sixes in the fifth over. Rahane looked in effervescent touch at the other end, pulling and cutting M. Prasad Krishna flawlessly in the fourth over after surviving a review when he was given out lbw by the umpire off Chawla on 14, two overs earlier. Royals were 47/0 inside five overs before Tripathi — who also survived a review — inexplicably chipped a googly back to Chawla for a soft dismissal. In came Samson with the

well-set Rahane batting and the duo looked on course to chase down 170 before they got out in quick succession and it was all downhill from there on. Earlier, KKR rode on Karthik's well-paced fifty coupled with Russell's unbeaten 25-ball 49 blitz to recover from an early collapse. Russell came in to bat when KKR were trying to stem the rot through Karthik and Shubman Gill (28; 17b; 3x4 1x6) before the latter fell with the team on 106/5 in 14.2 overs. The big-hitting West Indian smoked five sixes and three fours in the last five overs to take 55 runs and help the pur-

ple brigade post a challenging score. Krishnappa Gowtham (2/15), Jofra Archer (2/33) and Ben Laughlin (2/35) got two wickets each for the Rahane-led side with leg-spinner Ish Sodhi conceding just 15 runs off his four overs. Royals' bowlers made early inroads to reduce KKR to 51/4 after eight overs when Karthik and Gill got together. **BRIEF SCORES:** KKR 169/7 in 20 overs (Karthik 52, Russell 49 not out; K Gowtham 2/15, Archer 2/33, Laughlin 2/35) beat RR 144/4 in 20 overs (Rahane 46, Samson 50, Chawla 2/24, Kuldeep Yadav 1/18) by 25 runs. AGENCIES

Flower to head ECB till Strauss' compassionate leave ends

LONDON: Andrew Strauss has taken a summer-long break from his role as director of England cricket with Andy Flower stepping into the role as a temporary replacement.

The former England captain's wife, Ruth, was diagnosed with cancer last December and is due to begin new treatment from Friday, due to which Strauss has been granted a period of compassionate leave to offer his full support.

"My wife was diagnosed with cancer in December," Strauss said in a statement on Tuesday. "We are very lucky, she has been very well up to now, although she is starting a new treatment on Friday which is going to more challenging for her, and as such I am going to be stepping back from my day-to-day duties while that treatment is going on."

"On a day-to-day basis, Andy Flower is going to be stepping in for me over the course of the summer. We all know about his qualities and his experience of both England and English cricket and he will fill in my shoes very adequately."

"I look forward to returning and grabbing the reins again. But, at this period of time, my focus has to be on supporting Ruth and my family at a challenging time for us," he added.

Since standing down as England's Test team director after the 2013-14 Ashes whitewash, Flower has been operating in a number of roles behind the scenes. AGENCIES

I have biological age of 23, says Cristiano Ronaldo

MADRID: Real Madrid forward Cristiano Ronaldo has no plans to slow down and feels a decade younger than his 33 years, the Portuguese declared ahead of the Champions League final with Liverpool, where he is targeting a fifth European Cup triumph. "Right now I have a biological age of 23," the five-times world player of the year said in an interview with Spanish television programme El Chiriquito broadcast on Wednesday. "I've still got a long time left, I can keep playing until I'm 41. I'm feeling good, happy. I can't complain. We are play-

ing another final on Saturday and the fans are behind Cristiano." Ronaldo is top scorer in this season's competition. If he hits the net against Liverpool on Saturday in Kiev, he will become the first ever player to score in four European Cup finals.

The Portuguese has had to take extra responsibility in attack this season for Madrid as Karim Benzema and Gareth Bale have struggled for form at various stages of the season. Ronaldo, however, did

not appear enthusiastic about press speculation linking Paris St Germain forward Neymar with a move to Real and gave his backing to his current team mates.

"I've been here for eight years and people always say 50 players are coming here but in the end no-one comes. In September people think lots of players are going to come but the ones who take us to finals are always the same ones," he said. "The best players are already at Madrid. Bale, Benzema, (Lucas) Vazquez, (Marco) Asensio. They are all here." AGENCIES

FIFA to lift ban on Libya

TRIPOLI: FIFA President Gianni Infantino has said that the ban on international football matches in Libya will be lifted soon. "The head of the presidential council (of the government) Fayez Sarraj, has received an official letter from FIFA president Gianni Infantino, on the demands to lift the ban on Libya hosting international matches, reports Xinhua news agency. "Infantino confirmed to have had the opportunity to review the report submitted by the (FIFA) committee on Libya, and expressed confidence that it will not take long for international matches to return to Libya," the media office of the Libyan government said in a statement. Infantino said the FIFA will reach a solution very soon. Infantino expressed appreciation for the urgent desire of the Libyan people and government to host international matches. A senior FIFA delegation paid a visit here in April to consider lifting the ban. FIFA has banned international matches in Libyan stadiums since 2013 due to the deteriorating security situation in the country. AGENCIES

AFC Cup: Bengaluru FC face Allyn Asyr FK in Inter-Zone semi-final

KUALA LUMPUR: South Zone champions Bengaluru FC will face Turkmenistan side Allyn Asyr FK in the 2018 AFC Cup Inter-Zone semi-finals as per the AFC club competitions draw held here on Wednesday.

While the Sree Kanteerava Stadium is set to host the Turkmenistan side on August 22, the reverse leg of the tie will be played at the Sport Toplumy Stadium in Balkanabat on August 29.

Having qualified for the competition as the Turkmenistan Yokury Liga champions in 2017, Allyn Asyr made their way to the Inter-Zone semi-

Should the Blues get past the Turkmenistan side, they will be up against one of DPR Korea's 4.25 SC and the ASEAN Zone tie winner between Singapore's Home United or Philippines' Ceres Negros, an identical clash from the last edition

finals with a thrilling 3-2 last round win over 2017 finalists FC Istiklol from Tajikistan, who incidentally got better off the Blues in the inter-zone final in the last edition.

Currently fourth in the Yokury Liga with four games in hand, Allyn Asyr will be a strong opponent for Bengaluru who will be led by a new coach after the club announced Albert Roca's departure last week.

Should the Blues get past the Turkmenistan side, they will be up against one of DPR Korea's 4.25 SC and the ASEAN Zone tie winner between Singapore's Home United or Philippines' Ceres Negros, an identical clash from the last edition. Earlier club CTO Mandar Tamhane was presented with the South Zone Champions trophy by AFC General Secretary Dato' Windros John having topped Group E for the second successive season. AGENCIES

Dipa still not 100%, need to fight fear factor: Nandi



NEW DELHI: Eyeing Asian Games glory nearly two years after a rare death-defying stunt in sport's biggest stage, gymnast Dipa Karmakar will still need to overcome the "fear factor" that plays out in the mind of an athlete following a career-threatening injury, feels her coach Bisweshwar Nandi.

A knee injury has kept the 24-year-old out of competition since her historic fourth-place finish at the 2016 Rio Olympics, in which she landed her "Prodnova" perfectly enough to emerge among the top eight. The recovery has been slow ever since she underwent an Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) surgery in April 2017, but now she is "almost there", and the Asian Games is still some months to go.

"I would say she is about 90 percent fit now. She will start taking full load from next month onwards," Nandi said. The coach had pulled Dipa out of the Commonwealth Games trial as she was nowhere near full fitness. AGENCIES

She was training back home in Agartala for the past one and a half month but the lack of foam pits meant she was not able to practice with full intensity.

Nandi confirmed that Dipa will resume training at the start-of-the-art SAI facility here from this week.

For years, the Indian gymnasts have been without a recognised federation, depending solely on SAI's support. The administrative crisis this time led to a delay in the start of the Asian Games training camp.

The competition level at Asian Games will be tougher than Commonwealth Games, where Dipa had won an unprecedented bronze four years ago. "You will have China, Japan and the two Koreas. They all boast of Olympic medalists. So I can't say whether she can win a medal. She has to peak at the right time and most importantly leave aside the fear factor that she might get injured again. AGENCIES

Indonesia to play U-23 friendlies against Thailand

JAKARTA: The Indonesian U-23 squad is scheduled to meet Thailand in two tryout matches at the end of this month and early next month in Indonesia, the country's football association said here on Wednesday.

The first match will be played at the sport stadium of the country's police academy (PTIK) on May 31 in the capital. The second one will be held on June 3 in the Pekan Sari sport Stadium of West Java province, said Ratu Tisha, secretary general of the country's football association, reported Xinhua news agency. The matches aim to boost the skill and performance of Indonesian football ahead of the Asian Games this year in the country. The 18th Asian Games are scheduled to be held in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta and in Palembang, the provincial capital of South Sumatra province from August 18 to September 2. AGENCIES

TENDER NOTICE
 The Superintendent, Serampore Walsh(SD) Hospital, Hooghly invites seal bid from bonafide, resourceful individual firms for procurement of medicines, Equipments & Stationary articles and Printing items for Serampore Walsh(SD) Hospital and Serampore Gouharati T.B.Hospital, Hooghly. for the year: 2018-2019. The sealed cover containing the bid document along with copy of valid trade license, GSTIN certificate, I.Tax clearance, PAN and Drug License(for medicine only). Interest Individual/Firms may contact with the office of the Superintendent, Serampore on all working days from 01.06.2018 to 15.06.2018 from 11 A.M. to 2 P.M.(Except Sundays and holidays) for purchase of bid document and terms and conditions in this regard. The tender will be opened on 15.06.2018 at 2.30 P.M.
 Superintendent Serampore Walsh(SD) Hospital

TENDER NOTICE
 Online tender is invited by the Superintendent Engineering, Bidhannagar Circle, P.W.Dte. Govt. of W.B., vide NIEt No. WBPWD/SE/BNC/NIEt-05/2018-2019 for the work of "Construction of International Standard Hockey Field and Grass Embankment Galleries within the compound of Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Kriangan, Salt Lake, Kolkata- Part-B: Underground Reservoir(Phase-V), Sinking of Tube well (10mm x 200mm)(Phase-VI), Grass Embankment Galleries(Phase-VII)" Estimated Amount: Rs.5,27,62,825.00 (Tender ID: 2018_WBPWD_172309.1). Last date of bid submission is 15.06.2018 upto 05.00 P.M. Intending bidders are requested to visit the website: <http://etender.wb.nic.in> and this office notice board. Corrigendum notice(s) of this NIEt, if any, will only be published in the above website.
 Sd/- SE, PWD, BNC ICA- T3368(3)/2018

Re-Tender Notice
 MSPV, NRS Medical College & Hospital invites Tender from reputed manufacturer/bidder for supply of orthotic kits and components at Regional Artificial Limb Fitting Centre. Details may be seen at website: www.wbhealth.gov.in.
 Sd/- MSVP, NRSMCH ICA-T 3349(3)/2018

WEST BENGAL STATE ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY LIMITED
 (A Govt. of West Bengal Enterprise)
 Read. Office: Vidyan Bhawan, Block-DJ, Sector-II, Bidhannagar, Kolkata-700 091
 Ctn - 1149109WB2007S56118473, eeserpmom@gmail.com, www.wbseid.in
 Online percentage rate e-Tender in two parts is invited by the Zonal Manager, Siliguri Zonal Office, WBSEID, for Tender Notice No. ZM/SIG/E/e-Tender/2018-19/02, Date: 17.05.2018; Tender ID: 2018_WBSED_172058_1. Name of Work: Supply of Single Tension hardware fittings for B & S type disc insulator for ACSR wolf conductors for 33 KV new/augmented line under IPDS to Siliguri Zonal Store at 2 (Three) Mile Sevoke Road, Siliguri; Estimated Cost: Rs. 53,80,794/-; Completion Time: 3 (Three) months. Documents Download Start Date & Bid Submission Start Date (online): 25.05.2018; Documents Download End Date & Bid Submission End Date (online): 15.06.2018 up to 15:00 hrs. The details can be obtained from www.wbtenders.gov.in and www.wbseid.in. ICA-T3360(3)/2018

West Bengal State Export Promotion Society Notice Inviting Tender
 Director & Member Secretary, West Bengal State Export Promotion Society invites e-tender from bonafide, reliable and experienced agencies/ organizations for enlistment of capable organization with this office up to 31/05/2021 for undertaking the work as indicated in col.3 of the following table related to all Urban Haat/Biswa Bangla Shilpi Haats of South Bengal and Expos / Fairs / Exhibitions and other programmes in South Bengal as per requirement.

Sl No	e-tender No.	Description of Work
1	WBSEPS/DMS/e-1/18-19/ electrical /S. Bengal	Temporary electrical & lighting arrangement, supply of Generator Sets and Sound System on hire basis
2	WBSEPS/DMS/e-2/18-19 /Gardng/ S.Bengal	Gardening / Beautification, supply of flower/ornamental plants tubs
3	WBSEPS/DMS/e-3/18-19/SC/ S.Bengal.	Sweeping and cleaning
4	WBSEPS/DMS/e-4/ S&WS /18-19	Sanitary arrangement and water supply arrangement.

Detailed e-Tender notice and corrigendum if any are available in the official website of West Bengal State Export Promotion Society : www.wbseps.com and Government of West Bengal e-tender portal: <http://wbtenders.gov.in>. Last date and time for submission of e-tender: 07/06/2018 at 5 pm.
 ICA T3355(3)/2018 Director & Member Secretary

e-Tender No. WTL/PAR/TPA/18-19/005
e-Tender invited for Selection of Third Party Auditor (TPA) for WBSWAN. The details available at <https://wbtenders.gov.in> & www.webeltechnology.com

Leverkusen sign Hradecky
BERLIN: Bayer Leverkusen have signed Lukas Hradecky from league rivals and German Cup winners Eintracht Frankfurt, both Bundesliga clubs confirmed on Wednesday. Leverkusen have bolstered their goalkeeping position with the signing of Finland international Hradecky, who penned a five-year deal, stipulated until June 2023, reported Xinhua news agency. AGENCIES

WEST BENGAL TRANSPORT CORPORATION LTD. (Formerly known as W.B.S.T.C. Ltd.) (A State Government Undertaking)
 37, Deshpriya Sasmal Road, Kolkata - 700 040.
 Telephone : (033) 2411-6737/2411-6388 FAX: (033) 2411-6737/2411-6586.
 E-mail: wbtct1989@gmail.com
 CIN: U63090WB1989SGC046333
 Memo No.404/WBTC(WBSTC) Dated Kolkata, 23/05/2018

ABRIDGED NOTICE INVITING TENDER
 E-Tender is invited for operation of Intra - State AC Deluxe Bus service from Different district head quarters of North Bengal to Kolkata under Banglathree Bus service. Last date of submission of tender is 06.06.2018. Details are available in www.wbtenders.gov.in.
 Jt.Managing Director

Government of West Bengal
 O/O The Superintending Engineer PWD South Western Electrical Circle Sahid Mangal Pandey Sarani, Midnapur-721101

Public Notice
 This is to inform consumers in the DAS notified area(s) of Darjeeling & Hooghly ("DAS Areas") that signals of the Disney Broadcasting (India) Limited (formerly known as UTV Entertainment Television Limited) channels comprising of-[Disney Junior, UTV Movies, bindass, UTV Action, Hungama TV, Disney Channel, Disney XD and Disney International HD] (collectively "Channels") (as applicable) are likely to be disconnected after three weeks from today to the following Multi System Operator(s)/ Cable Operator(s) ["Operator(s)"] on accounts of reasons stated below:
Non-payment of outstanding License Fees, Non-Submission of monthly Subscriber Report and Non-renewal of Interconnection Agreement:

Name(s) of Operator(s)	Address(es) of the Operator(s)
Cable Combine Communication Pvt. Ltd.	51, Haren Mukherjee Road, Near Income Tax Building, Hakimpara, Siliguri Darjeeling, West Bengal - 734001
Advance Multisystem Broadband Communications Ltd.	Khadina More-Behind SBI (ADB), Chinsura, Hooghly, West Bengal - 712102

All the area(s) serviced by the Operator(s) and its franchisees and affiliates will be affected.
 Issued by: Disney Broadcasting (India) Limited, First floor, Building No. 14, Solitaire Corporate Park, Guru Hargovindji Marg, Chakala, Andheri (East), Mumbai - 400 093, Maharashtra

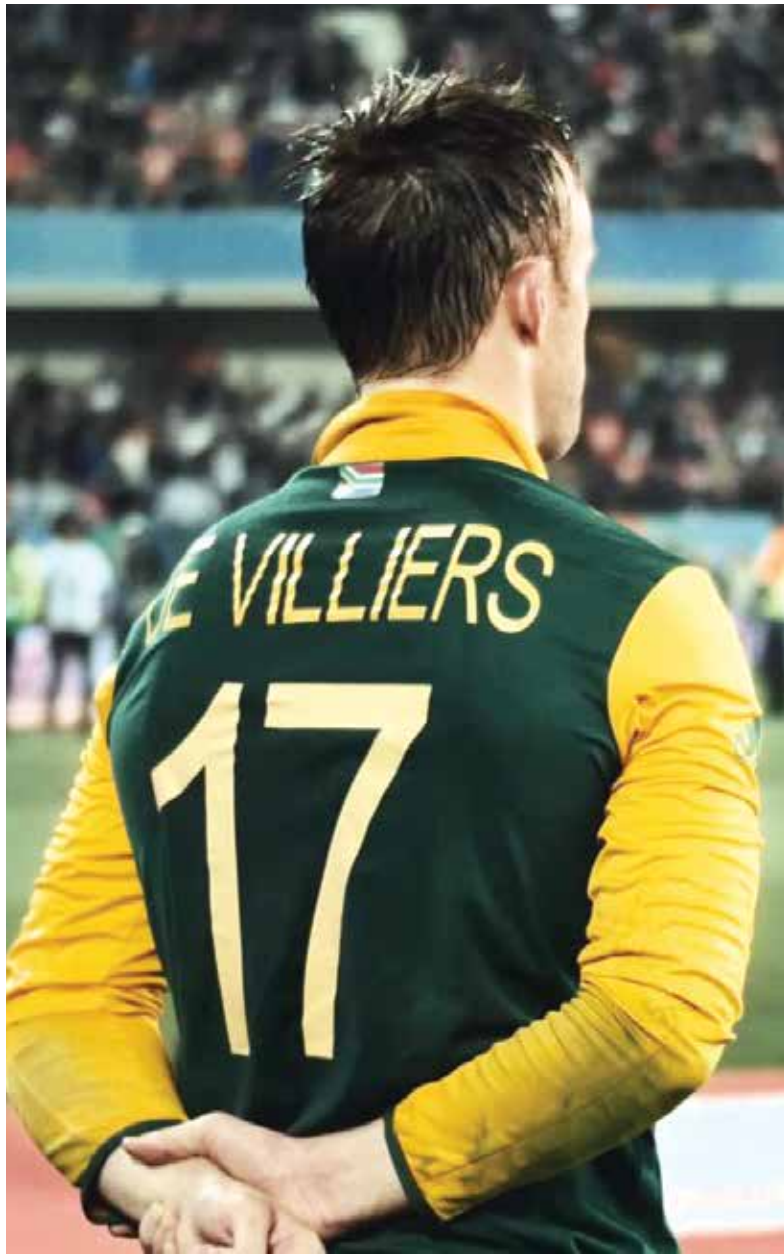
HERNANDEZ JOINS MEXICO TRAINING
MEXICO CITY: Star striker Javier "Chicharito" Hernandez, the all-time top scorer for the Mexican national team with 49 goals, joined up with the team for training here for the final stages of preparations for the upcoming 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia. AGENCIES

Notice Inviting e-Tender No. 03 of 2018-19 (2nd Call)
 Executive Engineer, Bankura Division, Social Sector, P.W.Dte. invites e-tenders for three no. works Construction of proposed conference hall at sumangalam home. Repair renovation works of bankura state welfare home & Outside painting, minor repairing work of meija degree college in the district of Bankura. Last date of submission of bid on 06.06.2018 up to 4:00 PM. Intending Bidders are requested to visit the website: <http://wbtenders.gov.in> for details.
 (Tender Id : 2018_WBPWD_172712_1 to 3)
 Sd/- Executive Engineer, Bankura Division, Social Sector, P.W. Dte. Memo No - 389(3)/ADV/int(BNK) Dt. - 23.05.2018

Government of West Bengal
 O/O The Superintending Engineer PWD South Western Electrical Circle Sahid Mangal Pandey Sarani, Midnapur-721101

ABRIDGED NIT
Notice Inviting e-Quotation No. - WBPWD/SE/SWEC/NIQ10/2018-19
Tender ID: 2018_WBPWD_172911_1
Name of Work: Construction of Auditorium and childrens park at Mahisadal (Itagara Gram Panchayet), Purba Medinipur-----
SITC of Stage illumination and crafting system.
Work Site : Purba Medinipur
Last date of submission of bid :- 06/06/2018 up to 16:00 Hrs
 Further details can be seen in the above mentioned office during working hours or in Official Website www.pwdwb.gov.in For all details and online tender submission visit <https://wbtenders.gov.in>

Cricket world shocked at de Villiers sudden retirement



NEW DELHI: The cricketing world on Wednesday reacted with shock and surprise at AB de Villiers' sudden decision to quit international cricket with Sachin Tendulkar leading the tributes.

"Like your on-field game, may you have 360-degree success off the field as well. You will definitely be missed. My best wishes to you always, @ABdeVilliers17," Tendulkar tweeted.

One of contemporary cricket's greatest batsmen, De Villiers, on Wednesday made a sudden announcement to retire from all forms of cricket with immediate effect, claiming to be "out of gas" after 14 years in the top league.

Congratulating De Villiers on his illustrious career, former India batsman Virender Sehwag said international

cricket will be "poorer" without the South African talisman.

"Congratulations @ABdeVilliers17, the most loved cricketer in the world, on a wonderful career. International cricket will be poorer without you, but you will continue to be celebrated by cricket fans around the world," Sehwag wrote on his twitter handle.

Veteran India off-spinner Harbhajan Singh echoed with Tendulkar.

"One of the world's finest and most versatile batsmen, retires today. He's played brilliantly till now and the world will surely miss seeing him on the field. @ABdeVilliers17," Harbhajan tweeted.

Former India batting great VVS Laxman added: "Many congratulations @ ABdeVilliers17 on a glorious Cricket

career. You enriched the game with your ability, presence and mannerisms and will continue to be a role-model for aspiring cricketers. Wish you a very happy post-retirement life."

De Villiers' former national teammate and ex-South African fast bowler Allan Donald said he was shocked at the decision but thanked the batting legend for his contribution.

"So shocked to here @ABdeVilliers17 has decided to call time on his international career. But that's just life and he feels it's time to move on. Thank you great man for your amazing Match winning Performances, Skill Captaincy and most of all your Humility," Donald tweeted.

Another of de Villiers' former teammate Mark Boucher added: "I remember this young guy on his 1st day out for Proteas... What an inspiration, person and player he turned out to be. Thank you for everything you have done and been for your country, teammates and fans @ ABdeVilliers17 #legend."

Former Sri Lanka skipper Mahela Jayawardena wished de Villiers on his post-retirement life.

"One of the best! Wish you all the best AB - amazing player but above all that great guy..." Jayawardena wrote on his twitter handle.

Former England captain Michael Vaughan said de Villiers was a great advertisement for the game of cricket.

"Such a shame for international cricket @ABdeVilliers17 ... But he has been an unbelievable advert to how I would have loved to have played all 3 formats .. GREAT GREAT Player ... Top 3 that I have ever seen .. #AB," Vaughan tweeted.

The Indian Cricket Board (BCCI) also took to twitter to wish de Villiers for his future endeavours.

"As the Proteas legend @ABdeVilliers17 calls it a day on his international career, we at BCCI would like to wish him all the very best for his future endeavours," BCCI wrote.

Out of favour India pacer RP Singh, who was once de Villiers' teammate in Royal Challengers Bangalore wrote: "The man who showed the world that batting 360 is an easy task. All the best for your future endeavours @ABdeVilliers17, thank you for all the unforgettable memories!"

Former Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi said: "Champion batsman! I always enjoyed seeing you bat, the innovations that you brought to the game were a joy to watch esp the sweep shot off fast bowlers. Always respected your enormous talent, a true great of cricket. Stay Blessed.

"One of my most cherished wickets! :) Most of the times it was a massive challenge getting you out. Congratulations on a wonderful career @ ABdeVilliers17." AGENCIES

Rooney to meet DC United bosses to discuss MLS move: Reports



LONDON: Everton forward Wayne Rooney will break from his family holiday to travel to Washington this week to meet bosses at Major League Soccer side DC United, reports said on Wednesday.

Rooney has reportedly agreed "in principle" to a \$17 million (£13 million) deal with the MLS club that would see the 32-year-old depart Everton, his boyhood club, just 12 months after rejoining them from Manchester United.

DC United coach Ben Olsen confirmed earlier this month that the club were interested in bringing Rooney to America but said the deal "is not done".

Sam Allardyce said before he was sacked as manager by Everton that Rooney had not asked to leave.

Rooney, currently on holiday in Barbados, is scheduled to be given a tour of the city and meet club bosses, said the Times newspaper.

The striker will also visit DC United's new stadium, Audi Field, and is likely to speak to Olsen during the "fact-finding" exercise, it said.

Rooney, who first burst onto the scene aged just 16 at Everton, was the club's top scorer this season with 11 goals but last found the net on December 18.

The former England captain left United last year on a free transfer following 13 trophy-laden years after becoming a peripheral figure under Jose Mourinho. AGENCIES

Iniesta signs with Japan's Vissel Kobe after leaving Barcelona

TOKYO: Spanish international midfielder Andres Iniesta has signed a deal with Japanese football club Vissel Kobe, Japan's state news agency NHK reported on Wednesday, confirming growing speculation about the player's move to the J-League after ending his 22-year-long career at FC Barcelona.

Iniesta, who was set to travel to Japan later on Wednesday, could be officially introduced on Thursday at an event in Tokyo, although Vissel Kobe refused to confirm the ceremony when contacted by EFE.

The two-time European champion and scorer of the only goal in Spain's victorious World Cup final victory against the Netherlands, played his last game for Barcelona on Sunday and



received an emotional farewell from the club and fans.

He is set to start at his new club after playing for Spain in the upcoming World Cup in Russia.

Hiroshi Mikitani, the owner of Vissel Kobe, is the founder and CEO of tech giant Rakuten, which is the major sponsor of FC Barcelona.

Iniesta is following in the steps of former Spanish nationals Txiki Begiristain, Andoni Goikoetxea and Julio Salinas, who played in the J-league in the 1990s. AGENCIES

Returning Serena Williams ready to deny Paris convention

LONDON: Convention would have it that to succeed on the gruelling clay courts of Roland Garros requires playing a stack of matches and having miles in your legs. But then Serena Williams has never been one to take too much notice of convention. The 23-times grand slam singles champion will be back at Roland Garros having missed last year's event as she prepared to have her first child, Alexis Olympia, who was born in September.

Following a tumultuous birth, when she needed emergency surgery after suffering a blood clot, just being back on the court is a remarkable achievement. When she returned to the Tour in March, playing in Indian Wells and Miami, she looked short of fitness and form, going out in the third round and first round respectively. Her coach, Patrick Mouratoglou, admits she returned too soon but the pair have been working hard together ever since.

At 36, Williams is chasing the record of 24 grand slam title wins, held by Austr-



lia's Margaret Court, and if she lines up at Roland Garros, she will be fitter, fresh and dangerous.

"Serena will play the French Open to win it," Mouratoglou told the WTA website recently. "Can she do it? Serena can achieve anything — after being her coach for six years, I'm even more sure of that statement." It was the arrival of Mouratoglou as Williams' coach in 2012 that sparked the most successful period of her career. AGENCIES

Tejaswini wins gold, Chain silver at Munich World Cup



NEW DELHI: Extending her brilliant run this season, seasoned Tejaswini Sawant nailed a gold in the women's 50m Rifle Prone event on the opening day of ISSF World Cup Rifle/Pistol stage in Munich.

Sawant shot 621.4 to pip younger teammate Anjum Moudgil, who shot 621.2 to win Silver in the event. Sawant had won a gold at the recently-concluded Gold Coast Commonwealth Games in Australia. Chain Singh also won a silver in the men's 50m Rifle Prone event, shooting a score of 627.9 to finish behind USA's Matthew Emmons, who took gold with a score of 628.9. Among other Indian, Shreya Saxena finished ninth in the women's Prone event with a score of 619.1 while in the men's event, Gagan Narang and Sanjeev Rajput shot scores of 621.7 and 621.2 to end in 32nd and 34th positions respectively. AGENCIES

Paul Casey throws down gauntlet to PGA rivals

WENTWORTH (UK): Paul Casey warned Rory McIlroy and the rest of the field at the PGA Championship they best not underestimate him on his return to competition from a back problem.

The 2009 PGA winner has been suffering from an inflamed back joint and had to withdraw from this month's Tournament Players Championship and has since undergone therapy on the ailment.

It was frustrating for the 40-year-old Englishman as he had been in good form on the US Tour this season, the highlight a win in the Valspar Open by one stroke from Patrick Reed, who was to go on and win the Masters a few weeks later, and legend Tiger Woods.

Casey, whose best performance in a major was tied for third in the 2010 British Open, said the old adage of beware the injured golfer could apply to him. "Yes. Normally injured golfers are somewhat prepared," said Casey at his eve of tournament press conference on Wednesday. "Yeah, I'm genuinely excited. I've been looking forward to this for a long time and when we looked at the schedule and I rejoined the Tour, you know, this was an

obvious event that I was going to put in. "With my past successes around this golf course, the quality field, you know, its stature in the world of golf is so important to me, and the fact that it's home and it's where I grew up, right around the corner in Weybridge."

Casey, who is seeking a 14th European Tour title, said it was watching golfing greats perform in the PGA Championship that inspired him to take up the sport.

"This event is really one of the main reasons why I became a professional golfer, coming down here and watching Seve (Ballesteros) and (Sandy) Lyle and Boon (Ian Woosnam) and (Bernhard) Langer and all those guys when I was a kid growing up. "It has a special place in my heart, so yeah, I can't explain how cool it is and how, touch wood, will be good for tomorrow to tee it up again."

Casey, who admits he has missed being able to work out whilst he has undergone the therapy, says qualifying for the European Ryder Cup team for the first time in 10 years — he was a member of two winning teams in the three he played in — is a major ambition this season. AGENCIES

ABRIDGED TENDER NOTICE
NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER No. NZRMC/WBSAMB/eT/01/2018-19
Dated : 21.05.2018

E-tender is hereby invited on Item Rate basis by two Bid systems for Construction of connected road from house of Subrata Saha, Daspara to Galaidari road (outside of Principal Market Yard on east) under Nadia Zilla R.M.C. Last Date of Download and Submission of tender 08.06.2018 up to 5.00 PM. Other details & conditions in connection with the e-tender may be seen under Organization West Bengal State Marketing Board at www.wbtenders.gov.in

Sd/-
Secretary,
Nadia Zilla Regulated
Market Committee
 ICA 69(3)

West Bengal Agro Industries Corp. Ltd.
 (A Government Undertaking)
 23B, Netaji Subhas Road, 3rd Floor, Kolkata-700001
 Phone : 2230-2314/2230-2315
 E-mail : wb_agro@vsnl.net/wbagroindustries@gmail.com
 Website : www.wbagroindustries.com

MeT No. AIC/PM/Project/MeT-03(2nd Call)/18-19/228 Dated 22.05.2018

Tender IDs : 1) 2018_WBAIC_172717_1 (for Mini Dal Mill)
2) 2018_WBAIC_172717_2 (for Moisture Meter)

e-Tenders are invited by the Project Manager on behalf of West Bengal Agro Industries Corporation Ltd. 23B, Netaji Subhas Road, 3rd Floor, Kolkata-700001 from bonafide and resourceful Manufacturer for supply of Mini Dal Mill & Moisture Meter to various destination within West Bengal. Tender document may be downloaded from <http://wbtenders.gov.in>. Document Download start date 22.05.2018 after 06.00 PM. Document Download end date 02.06.2018 before 04.00 PM.

Sd/-
Project Manager
 Date: 22.05.2018

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
Information & Cultural Affairs Department
Nabanna
 325, S.C. Chatterjee Road
 Howrah-711102

Memo No: 75-ICA(E) Dated: 23/05/2018
Notice for inviting e-Tender from resourceful and bonafide agencies in connection with organizing different exhibitions in different Districts for I & CA Deptt. from June 2018 to May 2019

e-Tender is hereby invited from resourceful and bonafide agencies in connection with organizing different exhibitions in different Districts for I & CA Deptt. The agencies must submit the proposal through e-tender portal at wbtenders.gov.in within 3 p.m. on or before 06/06/2018. Details of the Tender documents etc. may be downloaded vide tender notice no. (i) 31-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018 (ii) 32-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018, (iii) 33-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018, (iv) 34-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018, (v) 35-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018, (vi) 36-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018 (vii) 37-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018, (viii) 38-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018 (ix) 39-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018, (x) 40-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018 (xi) 41-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018 (xii) 42-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018 (xiii) 43-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018 (xiv) 44-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018, (xv) 45-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018 (xvi) 46-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018 (xvii) 47-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018, (xviii) 48-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018, (xix) 49-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018, (xx) 50-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018, (xxi) 51-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018, (xxii) 52-ICA(E) dated 22/05/2018. It will be two bid system and agency will be selected on the basis of eligibility criteria, Technical Evaluation followed by Financial Evaluation. Pre Bid meeting will be held on 29/05/2018 at 1:00pm in the Conference Room, Room No. 901, 9th Floor, Nabanna, 325, Sarat Chatterjee Road, Howrah-711102. Interested Bidder should have to attend the Pre-Bid meeting. It will be opened on 08/06/2018 at 3.30 pm (online) in the Conference Room, Room No. 901, 9th Floor, Nabanna, 325, S.C. Chatterjee Road, Howrah-711102.

Sd/-
for Director of Information
Information & Cultural Affairs Deptt.
Govt. of West Bengal
 ICA-T3399(3)/2018

Government of West Bengal
North Bengal Development Department
Branch Secretariat Uttarkanya, Fulbari, Jalpaiguri

ABRIDGED -e-NIT

NIT ref. no.	Name of work	Amount put to tender	Last date of Bid Submission
NIT-06 OF 2018-19	Strengthening of ceiling and special Acoustical works at VVIP room of Kanyashree at Uttarkanya, Fulbari, Jalpaiguri.(Civil & Electrical works).	3010039.00	08/06/2018 up to 12:00 Hours
NIT-07 OF 2018-19	Construction of Concrete road, Hume pipe culvert at approach in the premises of Pundibari Hat within Coochbehar-II block in the district of Cooch Behar.(Length: 286.00 m and width 4.00 m Concrete Road).	3404944.00	08/06/2018 up to 12:00 Hours

Sd/- Executive Engineer
 North Bengal Development Department
 Details can be seen in the Official Website www.wbnorthbengaldev.gov.in and <https://wbtenders.gov.in>

e-TENDER NOTICE
Memo no. 622 Dated: 23-05-2018

Notice inviting e-Tender no. WBPWD/EE/ DDD/NleT-03/2018-19. e-Tender are invited from eligible agency/contractors for 2 nos. Building Works Bid Proposal Submission closing date 06.06.2018. Tender ID: 2018_WBPWD_172962_1 & 2. All documents can be seen/obtained from the websites <https://wbtenders.gov.in> and office notice board.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
 Dakshin Dinajpur Division, PWD

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE, KOLKATA
ADMINISTRATIVE BRANCH, FORCE SECTION, KPD
18, LALBAZAR STREET, KOLKATA-700001

Employment Notice No. FRC/Recruit/05/2018 Date: 22/05/2018

Applications are invited from willing Men/Women candidates for engagement in 195 (one hundred ninety five) posts of Civic Volunteers under Kolkata Police in terms of Government of West Bengal, Home & Hill Affairs Department, Police Establishment Branch order no 2801-PL/PB/3P-31/2012(Pt-I) dated 07/07/2017.

Detailed information including method of selection, eligibility criteria and application form are available on Kolkata Police Website at www.kolkatapolic.gov.in. Last date of submission of application is 5th June, 2018 upto 05.00 P.M.

Date: 22nd May, 2018 Sd/-
Administrative Officer,
Kolkata Police
 ICA- 1019 (7)/2018

Government of West Bengal
North Bengal Development Department
Branch Secretariat Uttarkanya, Fulbari, Jalpaiguri

ABRIDGED -NIT

NIT ref. no.	Name of work	Last date & time of application
04 of 2018-19	Preparation nbbdbs@gmail.com Of Detailed Project Report (DPR) for proposed "Infrastructure Development of (G+2 storied college Building) jaigaon College under Kalchini Block, District Alipudiar" (college Building) jaigaon College under Kalchini Block, District Alipudiar"	08/06/2018 up to 02:00 PM

Sd/- Executive Engineer
 North Bengal Development Department
 Details can be seen in the Official Website www.wbnorthbengaldev.gov.in

KOLKATA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION e-TENDER

ABRIDGED NIT

The Director General (PMU), KMC invited quotation online percent rate two bid system for the following works:- (1) NIT No. KMC/PMU/MISC/18-19

Name of the work: **Fixing of hoardings in EKWMA area;** Estimated cost: **Rs. 19,55,359.00;** Earnest money: **Rs. 45,200.00;** Period of completion: **30 days.** The bid forms and other details shall be available on and from (2) NIT No. KMC/PMU/XIII/117/03/18-19

Name of the work: **Restoration and beautification of waterbody inside KMC drainage pumping station at drainage canal Road, in Ward No.117, Br-XIII;** Estimated cost: **Rs. 91,76,436.00;** Earnest money: **Rs. 1,85,000.00;** Period of completion: **120 days.** Last date and time of submission of bid: **15-06-2018-2:00 p.m.(for SL No. 1to 2).** The bid forms and other details shall be available on and from **19-05-2018 (4:00 p.m.) for SL No. 1 & 18-05-2018 (4:00 p.m.) for SL No. 2** from website <https://etender.wbnc.in> (for SL No. 1to 2).

148/18-19

“I wouldn't say I am a feminist, I would say I am a woman and above all, I am a human being”



I'm not a feminist, I believe in equality: Kareena

Bebo, who has always worked with A-listers of Bollywood, will next be seen in an unconventional flick with four girls

Actor Kareena Kapoor Khan, who will soon be seen in *Veere Di Wedding*, says she is not a feminist and believes in equality.

Asked about the idea of feminism, Kareena said: "I believe in equality. I wouldn't say I am a feminist, I would say I am a woman and above all, I am a human being. I am also proud to be known as Saif Ali Khan's wife, as I am to be Kareena Kapoor. So that is just the way I am."

Veere Di Wedding is a female buddy film about four girls living in an urban setting and their struggles in life. Kareena has always been vocal about her personal life, but in this film, she playing a character which is commitment phobic.

Asked about her role selection criteria, she said: "I think what made me take up this part is that for me, as a commercial

mainstream actor who is always used to work with mainstream actors, be it Shah Rukh Khan or Salman Khan... For me, it was very different to be part of a film with four girls.

"I think the story is something I got completely obsessed by and I thought it was really unique. As far as my character Kalindi is concerned, I think she is really cool and there is a reason why she is commitment phobic, which will be seen in the film," she said.

Known for working with A-list actors in Bollywood, this time she is paired with Sumeet Vyas. On this, she quipped: "I think I have chosen A-Lister heroine this time."

Sharing her funniest memories from the film's set, the actor said: "I think it would be throwing Sumeet Vyas off the moon in the film. That was quite funny because I have never done that in my career. I never had the opportunity



to throw a hero off from a moon. The film *Veere Di Wedding* will be released on June 1. IANS

CELEBRITY LIFE is not easy, says actor Ranveer Singh

NEW DELHI: Bollywood heartthrob Ranveer Singh loves all the attention. He admits being in spotlight is like living his dream.

The actor, who is fondly called the Hindi film industry's livewire, thanks to his infectious energy and smile, says being a celebrity comes with some responsibilities - which he is happy to embrace - but doesn't let any of it take away his focus from his first love, acting.

"Celebrity life is not easy. There is a lot of scrutiny. This is compounded with the coming of mobile phones and smart phones which have a camera. There is constant attention, sometimes too much of it," said Ranveer.

"But this is something you take in your stride. If you decided to be an actor, then with that kind of territory comes a lot of attention and I am only too happy to receive attention," he added. The actor, who made his debut in 2010 with the film *Band Baaja Baaraat* as a raw Delhi boy, says he was "an attention seeking kid while growing up".

"So, for me this is like living the dream. People aspire to be in the lime-light, so if you have been blessed with an opportunity to be there, then you should look at it as a positive. I don't feel any kind of pressure in any aspect of my life," said the actor, who lent his voice to Ryan Reynolds's Hindi version of Hollywood film *Deadpool 2*.

With celebrity status comes a certain responsibility - and Ranveer is learning to handle that.

"There are many things which you can do as a person who is not famous that you cannot do when you are a public figure. I have started understanding that slowly." IANS



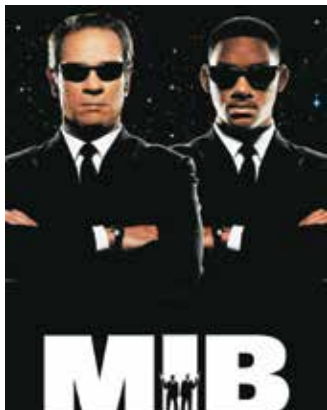
Liam might star in 'Men in Black' spin-off

LOS ANGELES: Actor Liam Neeson is in negotiations to join actor Chris Hemsworth and Tessa Thompson in *Men in Black* spin-off.

Filmmaker F. Gary Gray is directing the project, written by *Iron Man* screenwriters Matt Holloway and Art Marcum, reports *hollywoodreporter.com*.

Hemsworth and Thompson are not playing the same alien-fighting and world-saving characters portrayed by Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones in the initial film trilogy.

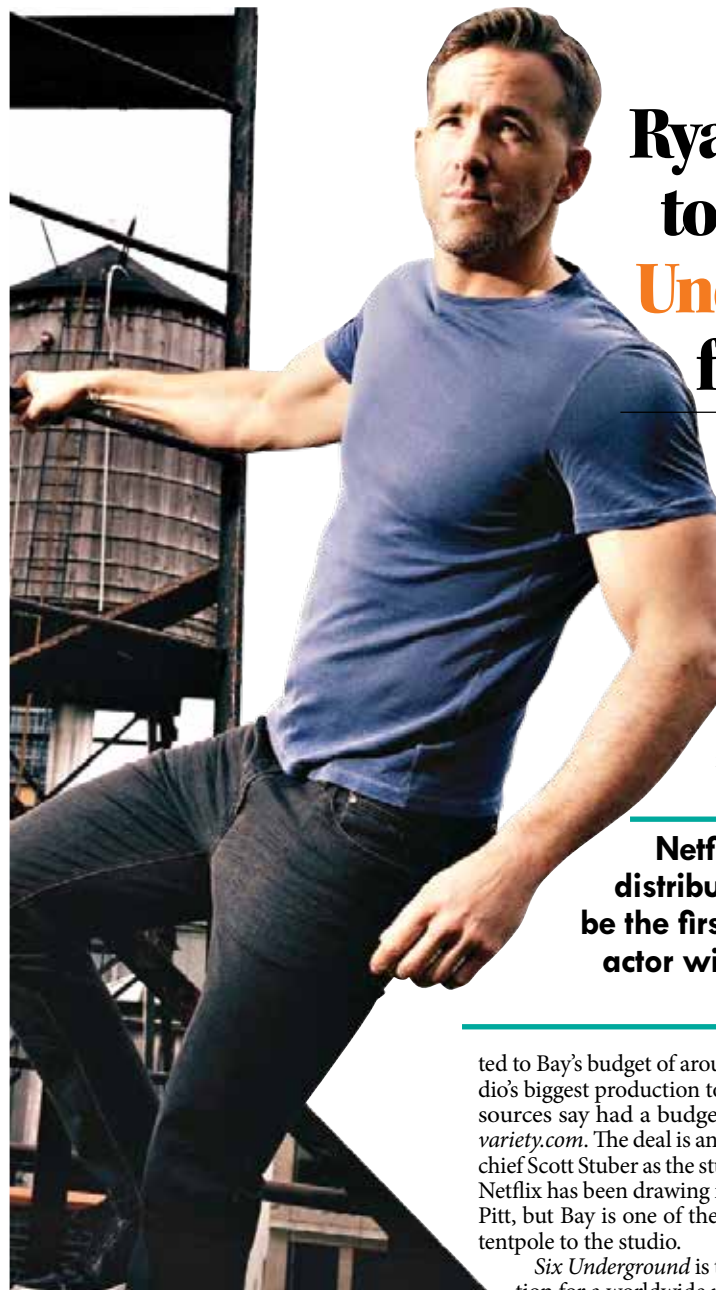
The new movie is set in the same on-screen world, however.



Plot details and the characters Hemsworth and Thompson will portray are being kept secret, but on the Neeson front, it is known that he will play the head of the Men in Black organization in London, where the story begins.

Walter F. Parkes and Laurie Macdonald, who produced the original movies, are back as producers, while Steven Spielberg is returning as executive producer.

The new Men In Black movie - which is expected to move on without any involvement from former stars Will Smith or Tommy Lee Jones is currently aimed at a June 14, 2019 release date. IANS



Ryan Reynolds to star in 'Six Underground' for Netflix

LOS ANGELES: Hollywood star Ryan Reynolds will be seen in Michael Bay's upcoming film *Six Underground* for Netflix.

Netflix will co-finance and distribute Bay's film. This will be the first time the director and actor will be working with the streaming service.

Bay's home studio, Paramount, was considered at one point, given their long-standing relationship.

Netflix won out after it committed

Netflix will co-finance and distribute Bay's film. This will be the first time the director and actor will be working with the streaming service

to Bay's budget of around \$125 million, making it the studio's biggest production to date, passing *The Irishman*, which sources say had a budget of around \$106 million, reports *variety.com*. The deal is another milestone for Netflix and film chief Scott Stuber as the studio continues to draw major talent. Netflix has been drawing more stars like Will Smith and Brad Pitt, but Bay is one of the first big-name directors to bring a tentpole to the studio.

Six Underground is targeting a summer start of production for a worldwide release in 2019 on Netflix. IANS

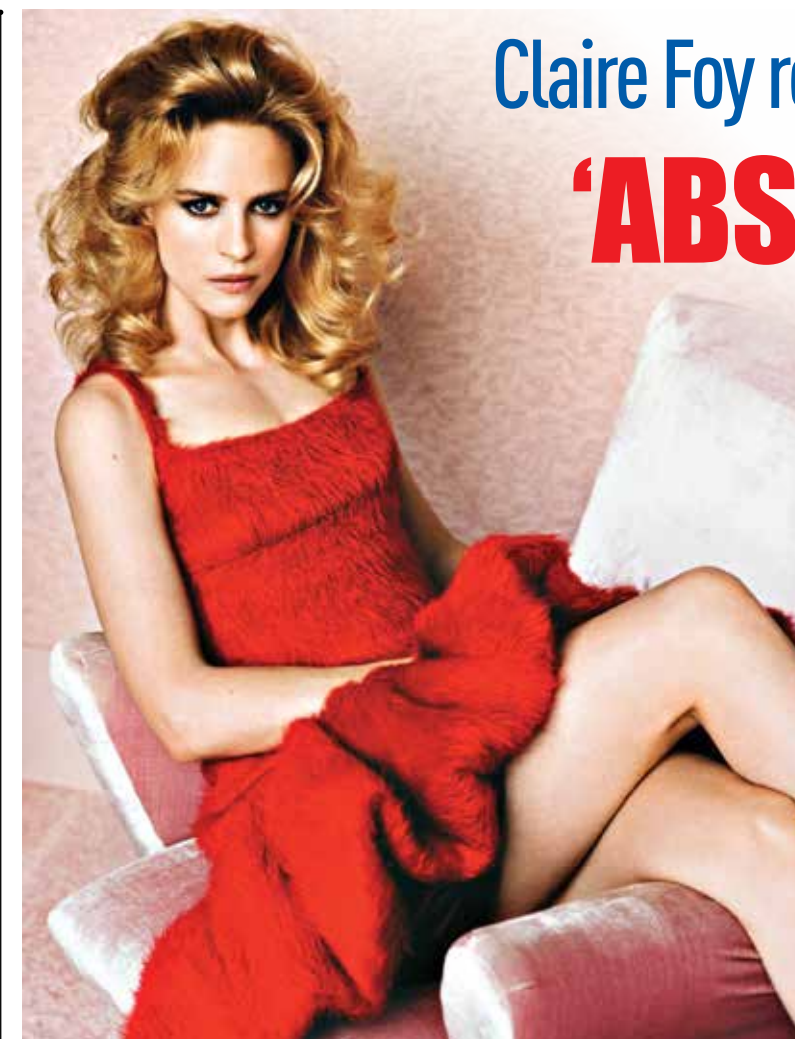
Claire Foy ready to push herself to 'ABSOLUTE EDGE'

Actor Claire Foy says playing Queen Elizabeth II in the Netflix series 'The Crown', has been life-changing for her as she now believes she can push herself to the edge of what she thinks is her ability.

"I did 'Wolf Hall' (mini series), I was really proud of it. It was sort of like, you can die happy. I've done the role I've always wanted to do, this is an absolute dream, I'm done. If I never work again or never do anything that's that standard again, I'm fine," she said. But she did work again.

Foy could not believe that

'The Crown' producers thought she was "that kind of actor" who would transform "beyond age and class". She credits motherhood with her ability to do so, saying because of her daughter, "I had so little attachment to who I had been, who I thought I was. It was a very odd experience where I didn't allow myself to set myself any limits or say I could or couldn't achieve anything." For the actor, playing the reigning British monarch changed her personal character as well. "I'm going to push myself to the absolute edge of my ability, or what I think I can do, and what I think I am able to do," Foy asserted. IANS



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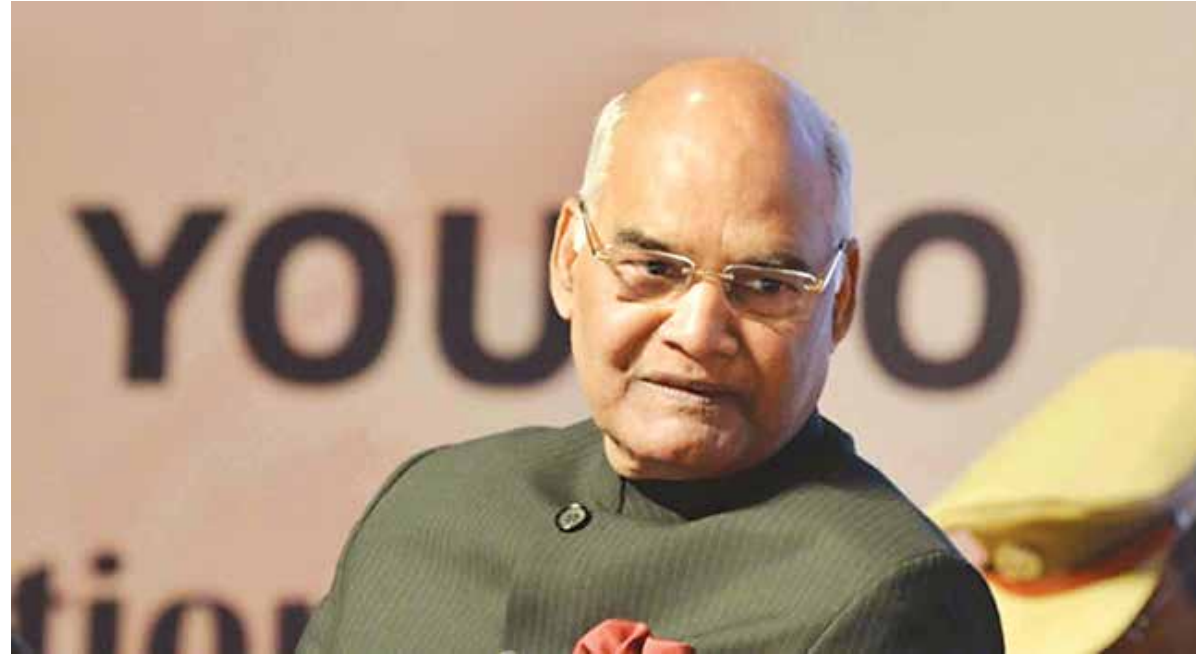
“Dharma and Dhamma have come home to the sacred soil of this ancient land of faith, wisdom and enlightenment”

Honourable President Ram Nath Kovind gave this inaugural address at the *International Conference on State and Social Order in Dharma-Dhamma Traditions*, on January 11, 2018, at Nalanda University, highlighting India's historical commitment to ethical development, intellectual enrichment & self-reformation

I am happy to be here for the inauguration of the *International Conference on State and Social Order in Dharma-Dhamma Traditions* being organised by the Nalanda University in partnership with the Vietnam Buddhist University, India Foundation, and the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. In particular, I must welcome the international scholars and delegates, from 11 countries, who have arrived here for this conference.

I understand this is the fourth *International Dharma-Dhamma* Conference but the first to be hosted by Nalanda University and in the state of Bihar. In a sense, the twin traditions of *Dharma* and *Dhamma* have come home. They have come home to the sacred soil of this ancient land of faith, wisdom and enlightenment – this land of Lord Buddha.

In the period of Lord Buddha, well before modern states and state boundaries, this entire region was known as Magadha. In those times, Sanskrit and Pali were the principal languages of communication. *Dharma* is a Sanskrit word and *Dhamma* is a Pali word. Their meaning is the same and they have the same root. While travelling through the Magadha region, Lord Buddha and his disciples rested in camps that grew into monasteries. These were called *viharas*. And from the word *vihara*, we get the name of Bihar.



► Honourable President Ram Nath Kovind at Nalanda University

Aside from the location, the timing of this conference is very appropriate. We are marking the 25th anniversary of the ASEAN-India Dialogue Partnership. The month of January is a celebration of India-ASEAN relations. This year on India's Republic Day, January 26, leaders from all 10 ASEAN countries will be guests of honour at the ceremonial events in New Delhi.

And, today, this conference stands testimony to the abiding friendship and shared values of India and ASEAN – as well as to the spiritual heritage and knowledge that belongs to both the subcontinent and to Southeast Asia.

This conference is an attempt at enhancing the understanding of the common roots and similarities of the diverse traditions of *Dharma* and

Dhamma. We know them by many names, but they guide us to the same truth. They emphasise the many roads, rather than any one road, that lead us to the same, desired goal. The deliberations at this conference will explore that essential truth. They will discuss and debate the role of *Dharma* and *Dhamma* in

Continued on Page 2



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Continued from Page 1

shaping ethical conduct and purposeful statecraft. These themes are universal and eternal. They have survived long periods of external challenge and self-doubt. And, they have shown a remarkable resilience through human history.

Nalanda University itself is an embodiment of this spirit. The ancient university that stood here was a marvel of knowledge and wisdom. It was located in this very region of India but had an international character. It attracted students, scholars and pilgrims from all over Asia. Similarly, today's Nalanda University represents the ever-lasting *Dharma-Dhamma* identity. And, it too is a cosmopolitan enterprise. The university's conceptualisation, founding and growth are the result of cherished efforts by India and a host of partner countries, particularly countries from the ASEAN family.

Along with several Indian scholars, I am told, this conference will hear the wise words of eminent international delegates. They have come from far-off continents, including both North and South America. But most of all, they represent the breadth and diversity of Asia – from Central Asia to Southeast Asia. Each of the countries and societies represented at this conference is unique and has special attributes. Yet, all of them are recipients, in some manner, of the *Dharma-Dhamma* tradition. All of them have received the message of Lord Buddha – a message that has travelled across Asia and beyond, and a message that is a binding force for all of us.

That journey of Buddhism as a pan-Asian creed and later a worldwide following began 2,500 years ago right here in Bihar. As such, the conference is a commemoration of a great phenomenon that has its origins right here in this region.



That voyage of Buddhism to the rest of the Asian continent carried more than just the *Dharma-Dhamma* tradition. It carried a rich cargo of knowledge and learning. It carried arts and crafts. It carried meditation techniques and even martial arts. Eventually, the many roads that the determined monks and nuns – those men and women of faith – carved out, came to carry both culture and commerce. They became among the earliest transcontinental trade routes.

Long before the term became popular, Buddhism was the basis for an early form of globalisation – and of interconnectedness in our continent. It promoted pluralism and diversity of thought. It gave space to multiple ideas and liberal expression. It emphasised morality in individual life, in human partnerships and in social and economic transactions. It urged principles of living, working and cooperating in harmony with nature and the environment. It inspired trade and business links that were honest, transparent and mutually beneficial to sister communities.

At the simplest level, the *Dharma-Dhamma* tradition tells us of the need and the importance for constant striving to improve oneself – to attain a higher calling and to reach a stage of enlighten-

» The Act East Policy aims at sharing not merely economic opportunities – but, an integration of the dreams and hopes of the hundreds of millions who live in India and in Southeast Asia. And, in other parts of Asia that are covered by the *Dharma-Dhamma* footprint

ment. It was the reaching of this enlightenment that led Prince Siddhartha to become Lord Buddha. Or for Ashoka, the warrior king, to become Dhamma Ashoka.

Anyone who has been touched by Lord Buddha has embraced a process of ceaseless and constant striving to become a better person as well as a more enlightened person. And, a person who has tried to rise above material ambitions and acquisitiveness. This is true for human beings, but it also applies to societies and nations. We must all appreciate the *Dharma* or the *Dhamma* of contentment.

It is estimated that more than half the world's current population lives in regions that have been historically influenced – and in many cases continue to be influenced – by the enlightenment that Lord Buddha attained and placed as a model before humanity. This is the thread that stitches us all together. This is the vision that must inspire us in the 21st century as well. And, this is truly what has been described as the Light of Asia.

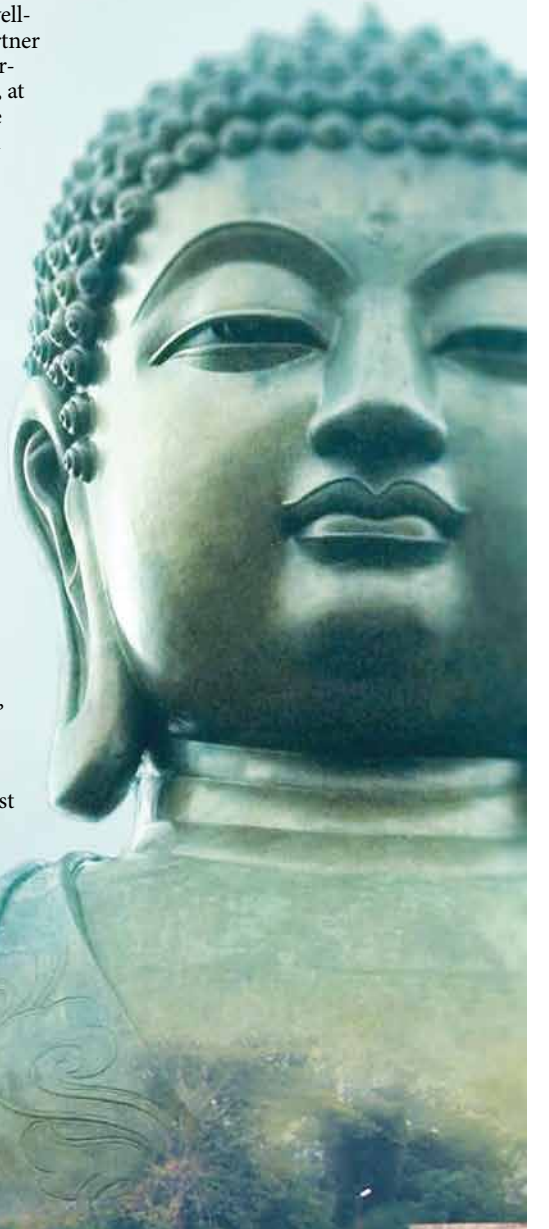
India's Act East Policy has to be seen in this context. It is much more than a diplomatic initiative. It is not targeted at just greater trade and investment. Of course, all of those aspirations are

extremely important for the prosperity and well-being of the people of India and of all our partner countries. Yet, the Act East Policy aims at sharing not merely economic opportunities – but, at an integration of the dreams and hopes of the hundreds of millions who live in India and in Southeast Asia. And, in other parts of Asia that are covered by the *Dharma-Dhamma* footprint. Our past has a common source – inevitably, our destiny too is linked. This conference and the new Nalanda University are symbols of that spirit we share. Our economic and diplomatic endeavours must draw from the same well-spring.

For the states of India's North-East and East – states such as Bihar – the spiritual, cultural and trade links that were so lovingly created by the monks of *Dharma* and *Dhamma*, hundreds and thousands of years ago, are much more than a historical memory. They are wired into society's DNA. They are a living reality that makes South-east Asia a natural and irreplaceable partner in the quest for development and prosperity, for peace and pluralism, at home and across our majestic continent. And, as such, for all of us here and in any area of human activity, *Dharma* and *Dhamma* are both a continuous, eternal journey – and a destination.

With these words, I am happy to declare the *Fourth International Dharma-Dhamma Conference* open. I wish all of you the very best for the rest of the proceedings.

Thank you, Jai Hind!
(Sourced from the website of the Honourable President of India)



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SIMPLIFYING DOING TRADE

In light of global trade protectionism, it is essential to account for an integrated view of logistics development

DR. BIBEK DEBROY, KISHORE DESAI, DIWAKAR JHURANI

Last month, President Donald Trump decided to defer a decision imposing tariff barriers on some European imports. A major trade war was averted, at least temporarily. This happened after hectic negotiations. Such was the gravity that both the German Chancellor and the French President travelled to the United States in person. While tariff threats are increasingly being used in the global markets, back home, the government is working hard on an alternate strategy to blunt the undesirable impact of such protectionist moves. The aim is to simplify doing business and make India one of the fastest and most cost-effective economies to trade with. This is the key to enhance our competitiveness and capture a higher share in global trade markets. Here are some specific details.

The key challenges first. Independent research suggests that it still takes a significant time for traded goods (exports and imports) to comply with border activities. What do we mean by border activities? They comprise activities such as documentation, obtaining clearances from customs or other agencies such as Animal Quarantine, FSSAI, Drug Quarantine etc., payment of duties and so on. World Bank's Doing Business (DB 2018) study points out that it takes more than five days for exports and more than 10 days for imports to undertake border compliance. In contrast, for most developed countries, this time is usually in hours, less than a day. Higher time translates to higher cost as well. It is, therefore, not a surprise that users (importers and exporters) find doing trade in India multiple times more difficult and costly than the developed world.

The reasons for such contrasting disparities are not surprising. Documentation requirements: cumbersome; multiple and sometimes overlapping. Stakeholders: too many. Dun & Bradstreet (D&B), a reputed data analytics company, recently did another independent study on the state of Port Logistics in the country. Their study made some important observations. Besides Customs, the total number of other government agencies (known as Partner Government Agencies – PGAs) that could be involved for final clearances could be as many as 19. In fact, the number of PGAs can go as high as 45. The number of pages in documents required for export totaled more than 100 pages. Also, the number of documents required to do business varied from port to port. To obtain a gate pass at the CFS, one can expect compiling anywhere between nine to 15 documents across ports. To obtain customs clearance, anywhere between three to 20 documents and between five to 14 to

obtain a Delivery Order (DO). All this despite the fact that the number of mandatory documents for imports and exports has been reduced to three each.

If Rome wasn't built in one day, so weren't the many procedures, agencies and documents that have complicated the state of affairs. Decades old procedures and systems have become a road-block in capturing a larger share in the global markets. Thankfully, processes are now changing and several things are going right. A series of policy actions are underway. On the infrastructure front, the Sagarmala and the Bharatmala programs promise to transform the physical connectivity networks. Once implemented, these initiatives will create a set of next-gen highways and expressways (also, new economic corridors) connecting major freight routes, multi-modal logistics parks, modern ports etc. This would drastically enhance the speed and efficiency of freight transport in the hinterland. The Indian Railways, on the other hand, is in its last lap of completing the Eastern and the West-

» The large cap-ex intensive programs have also been complimented by a range of softer policy and procedural reforms

ern Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) project. Once commissioned, we can all witness heavy haul freight trains running at 2X-3X the existing speeds.

These large cap-ex intensive programs have also been complimented by a range of softer policy and procedural reforms. Customs has implemented and operationalised a Single Window Interface for Facilitating Trade (called 'SWIFT') to facilitate clearances electronically. Direct Port Delivery (DPD) and Direct Port Entry (DPE) are being pursued to cut down cargo dwell time at key ports. The logistics sector has been included in the harmonised master list of infrastructure sub-sectors to attract more investment funds and at easier terms. A single window contact point for exporters and importers is being planned. A dedicated 'Logistics Cell' has also been created in the Department of Commerce for inter-departmental coordination and troubleshooting.

These changes are bearing results. In the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index (LPI), India jumped 19 spots recently, from a rank of 54 in 2014 to 35 in 2016. This is an index that captures perceptions of professionals engaged in the logistics sector. Interestingly, India's rank movement over the years is a sinusoidal one. In 2007, India was ranked 39, slipped to 46 in 2012. It further fell to 54 in 2014 before moving up in

2016. So, what worked? Though there has been tangible improvement in procedural areas, the real improvement was on the 'Infrastructure' sub-category, which translates to "quality of trade and transport related infrastructure (eg. Ports, railroads, roads, information technology)". That said, the writing on the wall is clear. We can't be complacent as challenges persist. But, if we do not change the way we have been doing things, the policy initiatives may not bring in the results they were intended to. Hence, while the ongoing measures should continue, what we need is to reorient the manner in which we have looked at the logistics space.

Actions that facilitate the convergence of various policy initiatives and consolidate stakeholders into a single platform could be the real game changer. Such actions could eliminate the multiplicity of procedural and documentation requirements and streamline the flow of information across stakeholders. Three ideas are suggested. First, develop an integrated logistics policy. This policy must define the overall development vision and outcomes for this sector; suggest changes to regulations, create a governance and institutional structure for monitoring outcomes, propose new interventions, address grievances etc. Second, set up an integrated national digital platform that provides end-to-end service; from regulatory information to cargo tracing to government-business and government-government interactions. This Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) system will cut through complexities and offer a round-the-clock solution to users. Singapore's Tradenet platform could possibly offer some clues about its structure and functionalities. Third, create a Logistics Performance Evaluation Tool that tracks real time delivery and health of this space. Such a tracker would not only monitor the key outputs (vis-à-vis targets) but will also throw light on the aspects that need the priority attention of policymakers. The push for change, thus, lies in integration and simplification.

What charms most of us are big-bang complicated reforms. Certainly, big-bang reforms have their own place. But equally important are those measures that fill in the gaps and join the dots. The ideas above fill a much-needed gap by emphasising the need to consolidate and streamline the existing re-engineering initiatives. This is crucial to create a simple, fast and cost-efficient trade ecosystem, something essential to sharpening our trade competitiveness. The World Bank launched its Doing Business (DB) study in 2002

and published its first report in 2003. It has several shortcomings and limitations that have been fiercely debated since sometime now. Still, in any case, DB has helped bring the urgency and importance of "simplifying

doing business" at the center of the national policy debate. (Dr. Bibek Debroy is Chairman EAC-PM; Kishore Desai is OSD, EAC-PM; Diwakar Jhurani is Young Professional, EAC-PM)



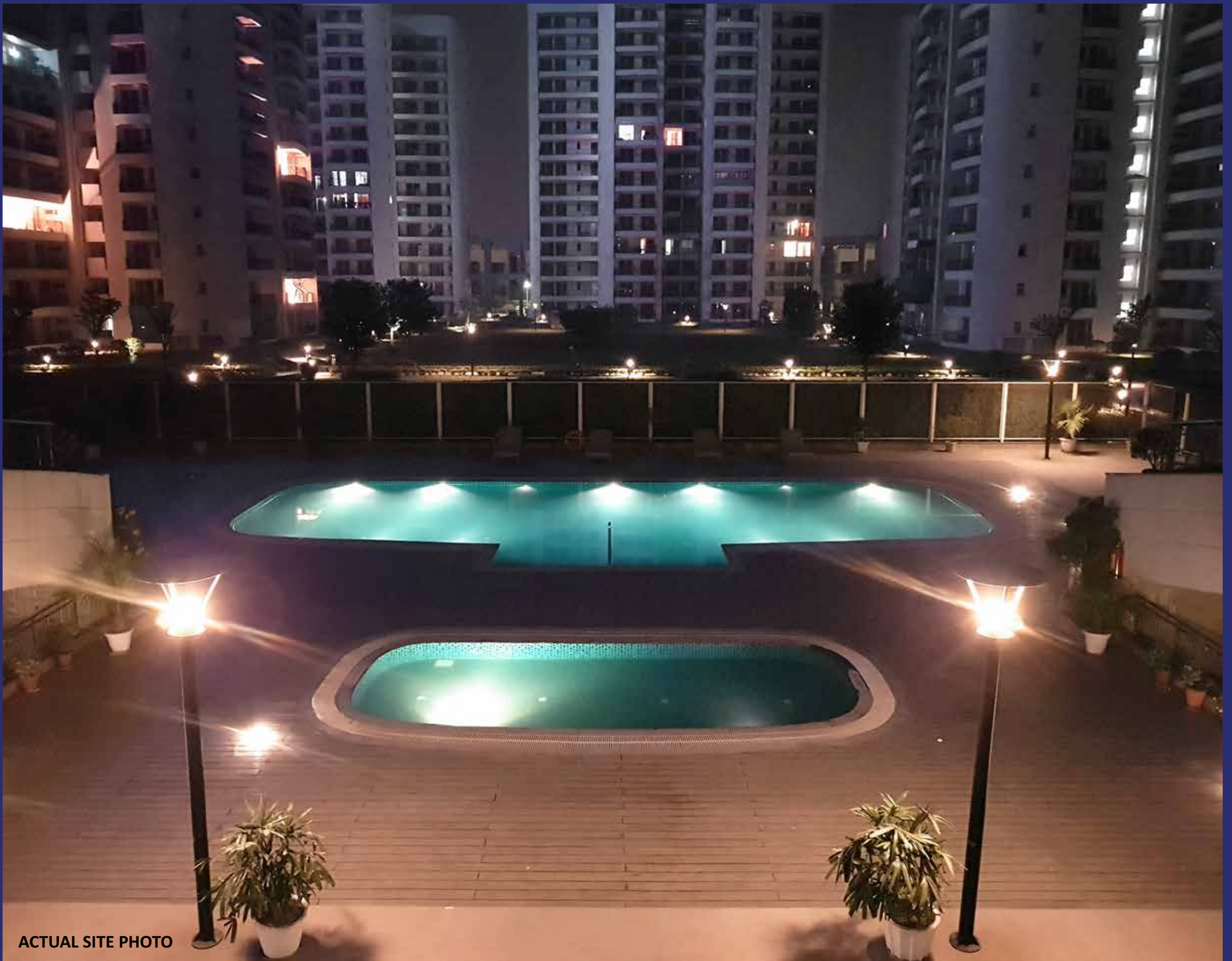
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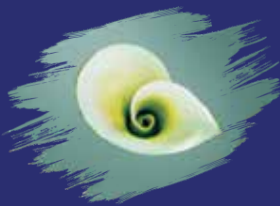
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NARENDRA MODI'S COMPELLING NARRATIVE

PM Modi's conviction, dedication and perseverance in shaping India's future inspires hope

DR. ANIRBAN GANGULY

Despite strong and continuous attempts by certain motivated sections to divert the governance narrative towards negativity and falsity, the narrative of governance espoused and established by Narendra Modi continues to be transformative in nature and substance. In the last four years that he has been at the helm, Modi has distinctly and substantially altered the governance narrative along with the political discourse surrounding it. He has clearly demonstrated and reflected that India is aspirational – that her politics needs to articulate that aspiration and eventually evolve systems, initiatives and outreach that must fulfil those hopes and aspirations.

Modi has attempted to give to both, politics and governance, a new dimension and level of discourse. Two kinds oppose it – those who have a political point to score against Modi, driven by a personal hatred for him and those who feel that they will be pushed into political irrelevance with the advent of the era of the politics of aspiration and performance. Both these sections have now found in each other camaraderie and a certain mutual dependence for their fight to survive politically. It is also for all to see that these two kinds have emerged as the most disruptive sections in Indian politics today.

Since Modi's style of communication, his outreach, his connect and interaction with people at large is vastly different from those who oppose him, people have begun to respond to his vision of transforming India, to his efforts to cleanse India and to his passion for transforming lives at the grassroots. Why is his approach different from others, espe-

cially from those parachuted dynasts and failed messiahs of the proletariat? It is because of his long, arduous and often torturous journey up from the grassroots to the top. Modi's passion and conviction for transforming ordinary lives, through fundamental efforts and initiatives that should have reached these citizens decades ago, stems from that early experience of his, a period when he had himself seen life from very close and struggled up its ladder.

Narendra Modi's transformative approach to governance has fundamentally altered lives, despite false propaganda by naysayers trying

to prove the contrary. The Congress's false propaganda that Modi's government and governance record has been anti-poor and especially anti-Dalit holds no water, the ground reality is different; it shows how, through some major governance initiatives, his approach has benefited the marginalised the most. The greatest beneficiaries of *Ujjwala* have been women from the ST community. Their lives have been transformed, it was a fundamental and yet profound change – this shift from smoke to smokeless cooking. The list is long, from affordable medicines, to support for start-

ups, to construction of toilets, to rapidly expanding connectivity, to reaching electricity, to opening up of smaller airports so that more and more people can fly – Modi's vision of governance has attempted to touch and transform the lives of those who have hitherto been neglected and relegated to the margins. For Modi, Deendayal Upadhyaya's formulation of *Antyodaya* is not just a slogan or a theoretical construct – he has striven to actualise it through his policies and outreach.

Those who wish for the Indian political narrative to remain hostage to

the ills of societal conflict and division, those who work hard to ensure that aspirational politics does not take root in the soil of Indian politics, those elements who are in politics by an accident of birth – all these elements see in Modi a decisive decimator who has shown determination and conviction to alter the terms of the game by making it more people-centric, more accountable and more action-oriented.

They see Modi responding to aspirations, they see him embodying the hopes of millions and they see millions responding to his call for transforming India's polity. This challenges their hollow and subversive narratives, in their desperation, they resort to subterfuge, with some among them trying to destabilise the judiciary, some others trying to fan the fires of caste conflict, some others going to a hostile neighbouring country and from there publicly calling for deposing Modi.

Modi has unnerved these entrenched interests so much and so badly that in their irrational hatred for him, in their frothing anger against his rootedness and acceptability, in their helplessness before his model, approach and philosophy of governance – because they themselves have none – these negative elements, habituated to practising the politics of self-alienation, are actually staring at their own political uncertainty. Modi's politics and approach to governance has pushed them into a *cul-de-sac*.

This marginalisation of elements practising negative politics is perhaps Modi's greatest contribution to the process of cleansing India's public life and its political discourse. It is this that makes him stand apart; it is this that continues to instill hope in the hearts of millions who wish to fulfil their aspirations and through them hope to see India emerge as great and undiminished. In this last year before the 2019 elections, Modi's pace, conviction, affirmation and certainty of India's future remains undiminished and inspiring.

(Dr. Anirban Ganguly is Director, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation (SPMRF), New Delhi)



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MEDIA: VARYING CONTOURS

Over time, the ever formidable Press has been reduced to shambles; yet, the crisis isn't as devastating as was once approximated

SUMIT MITRA

The recent release of Steven Spielberg's film, *The Post*, has brought to the public imagination issues relating to the power of the media and its vulnerabilities. The film potently depicts the tussle between former President Nixon and the owner-editor duo of the *Washington Post* newspaper, Katharine Graham and Ben Bradlee, played with great sensitivity by Meryl Streep and Tom Hanks. Set as a prelude to the Watergate years, WaPo won its battle in court to publish the Pentagon Papers, and so it heralded the onset of newspapers' glory days. "The Press was to serve the governed, not the governors," said Judge Hugo Black in the film, as in the Supreme Court's majority judgment.

The table has fully turned since then, but it will be wrong to put the entire blame on a Modi here or a Trump there. Nor is the media on the retreat universally. In the US and Europe, the enemies of liberalism came armed with social media driven by technology, and they've succeeded in scoring a string of spectacular electoral victories despite opposition from most of the Press and TV. But neither are the despots firmly ensconced in their throne nor have the Western media given up.

The media narrative is different in the 'developing' world, notably in India. The BJP, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party, no doubt has many political parties opposed to it, but the least of its worries is the media. There are a few exceptions, though, like some digital publications here and there, but the mainline newspapers and TV channels have long since lost two basic qualities of journalism, namely curiosity and courage. Many people still fancy the media as the 'watchdog' of democracy; in India, however, the canine metaphor may be utterly inapposite as the Indian media has ceased to bark, not to speak of biting.

It was a different animal in the past. The 'native' Press in the 19th century was under so much pressure from the British masters that it could be expected to only bow and scrape. Yet, it did not do so. In 1891, as Lord Lansdowne, the Viceroy, had chalked out a plan to annex the Muslim-majority princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, little did he know that an intrepid reporter of the nationalist *Amrita Bazar Patrika* newspaper would be nosing around his office and poking about his trash can and eventually chance upon his scribbles. As the news of Kashmir's annexation plan made a banner headline in the paper, the state's Hindu king screamed perfidy, as it ran against the earlier British promise to never disturb its independence. The Kashmir monarch ran to London, where he found support; Lansdowne had egg on his face.

After Independence, the Rajasthani successors to the Scottish and English owners of the Indian jute mills

and tea gardens also acquired control of the English newspapers they'd owned. On the other hand, the 'freedom fighters' who had owned the vernacular newspapers became the new Lalaji, more than willing to prostrate before the new master, clad in khadi kurta and 'Gandhi' cap. When the newly independent nation's first big-time scam broke out, involving Haridas Mundhra, a stock-market operator, using public funds of the recently created Life Insurance of India to fuel a bull run of friendly companies' shares on the stock market, the news was broken not by any newspaper but by Feroze Gandhi, Nehru's estranged son-in-law. During Indira Gandhi's rule, so worshipful of her did the large newspapers become that they overlooked, or closed their eyes, to the creeping entry of her younger son Sanjay Gandhi onto the centre-stage as the "extra-Constitutional authority". Later on, when Emergency was promulgated, the fundamental rights were suspended and lakhs were detained without trial, the top newspaper owners (and some of their journalist lackeys), instead of showing contrition for not being alert enough, were in competition with each other instead for their closeness to the 'rising son'. Even though the Press was muzzled by the authorities under Emergency powers, there was hardly any underground communication system and rarely any public-spirited journalistic enterprise to defy the fetters.

The Indian Express and *The Statesman*, of course, set an example by refusing to lend their pages to the daily trash being issued by the government's publicity wing, but that did not mitigate the drought of information on the Emergency regime. Hard news about it became available only after it ended, and a slew of inquiry commissions shone the spotlight on the crimes committed by paralyzing the legal framework. The supine disposition of the Indian Press did not escape the notice of even LK Advani, a minister in the post-Emergency Janata Party govern-

ment. Even Advani, who belongs to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), an authoritarian organisation that has little respect for free thinking, was aghast as he saw the media "crawl when they're asked to bend". Till some time back, India was blessed with some good judges who contributed to make the judiciary the only respectable institution amid a venal bureaucracy and a crumbling legislature. In 1984, in a case between *The Indian Express* newspapers and the

Union of India, a three-judge bench cautioned the Press that while they were entitled to the rights and protections that came with Freedom of Expression guaranteed in the Constitution, it must, in its turn, shun all kinds of favour and subventions that the state would be too willing to offer to journalists and their employers. The judgment put their authors' doubts rather graphically. "Secret payments of money, open monetary grants and subventions, grants of lands, postal concessions, Govt. advertisements, conferment of titles on editors and proprietors of

judges were worrying about have now become pole parking offences. 'Padma' awards have been showered on loyal journalists and huge tracts of land gifted to set-up their own media empires. That's the kind of largesse that Rupert Murdoch, the utterly amoral media mogul, is known to have sought from Deng Xiaoping, the late president of China. Over the years, though, the media has made itself incredibly lightweight. Who is running the Finance Ministry—the FM or some Gujarat-cadre officers? Is there a power tussle raging in the PMO? Who initiated the current 'resetting' of India's relations with China? Are there any thorny issues between Modi and RSS? Has Modi got a plan on Kashmir? If so, will it unfold before the 2019 election?

» The 'native' Press in the 19th century was under so much pressure from the British masters that it could be expected to only bow and scrape. Yet, it did not

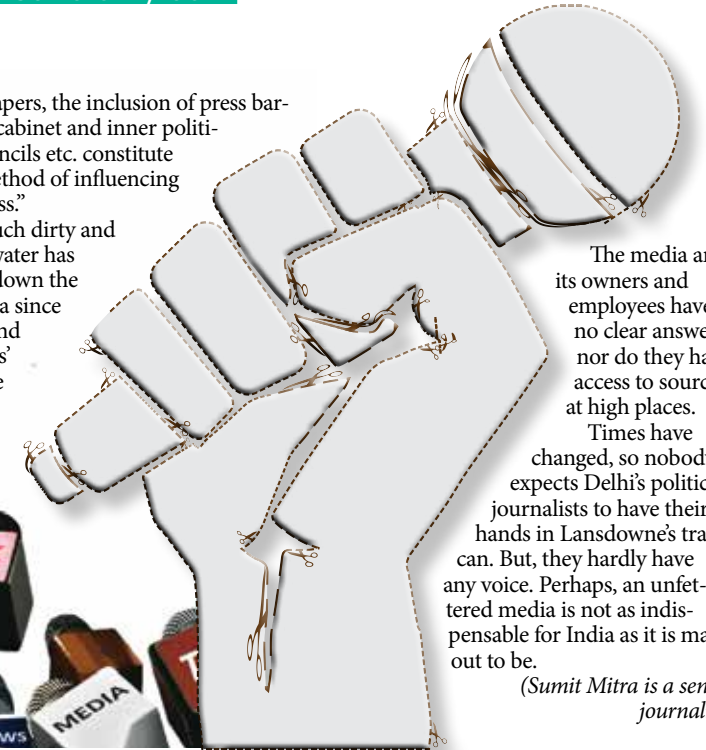
newspapers, the inclusion of press barons in cabinet and inner political councils etc. constitute one method of influencing the press."

Much dirty and slimy water has flown down the Yamuna since then, and the 'sins' that the

The media and its owners and employees have no clear answer, nor do they have access to sources at high places.

Times have changed, so nobody expects Delhi's political journalists to have their hands in Lansdowne's trash can. But, they hardly have any voice. Perhaps, an unfettered media is not as indispensable for India as it is made out to be.

(Sumit Mitra is a senior journalist)



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Airports

+

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अन्य
सिविल एन्क्लेव

Other
Civil Enclaves

=

129

हवाई अड्डे

Airports



DISSIPATING REGULATION

HOW CENTRAL BANKS FAIL

From the Greek fiasco to India's bank crises – it has been brought to light how freedom without sufficient accountability spawns the bedrock for tragedy

SUGATO HAZRA

Donald Trump is one of the most hated politicians in the world dominated by the liberals and commentariats. So, when he said during his presidential campaign that by keeping interest rates low the central banks had been “doing political things” nobody paid much attention. Those who support the independence of central banks and believe that monetary policy decisions must be kept outside the purview of politicians and elected representatives, do not feel that the Trump's statement is worth mentioning, forget about even discussing. Also, little or no attention is paid to Yanis Varoufakis, the Greek economist who was appointed finance minister during the Greek debt crisis.

When Varoufakis went to negotiate with the European Union for a bailout package, he was rebuffed. Evidently, Germans believed that the Greek crisis was primarily caused by the previous Greek governments' corruption, irresponsible borrowing and inability or unwillingness to collect taxes. They were staunchly unwilling to allow debt restructuring to precede reforms. Austerity was shoved down the throat of the democratic government of Greece – the technocrats of Europe had no sympathy for the people of Greece or its government. Varoufakis failed to use his desired trigger – default to expose the German and French banks so that the technocrats of EU baulked. His government was more keen to stay put in the EU than risk the collective wrath of the rest of Europe. Greece is not the UK, nor could they have a

referendum on leaving EU.

Failure of the elected government of Greece to negotiate their terms with the technocrats and the refusal of the EU to rectify its hidden malaise of failure to enforce even policies for all member nations remain unchecked. The only success has been that Greece has slipped out of the news headlines, as pointed out a recent Brookings paper. Greece is not the only country that lost out to the mandarins of the financial world. Nor will it be the last. The lesson from the Greek crisis is that, in “negotiation” what the owner of the purse says matters. Monetary policies of countries in a globalised economy are

based more on what is fashionable and most acceptable to the owner of the purse.

The rise of populism in many countries (including the USA and India) has led to the rise of a school of thought which recommends that politics should be brought back to monetary policy. It may sound inappropriate to the vast fraternity of freedom from populism but the question that cannot be winked at is that monetary policy impacts the lives of people and acts-interacts with the fiscal policy administered by the democratically elected governments. Why, therefore, in a democracy, would monetary policy decisions be left to a bunch

of technocrats? The other issue that cannot be brushed aside, more so in the context of India, is what role is entrusted to the technocrats of the central bank (RBI in our case) and how have they been performing? Take, for instance, the role of a central bank as a regulator of the financial sector, banking to be more specific in this context.

The global financial crisis of 2008 had its genesis in unchecked growth of credit instruments arising out of deregulation. In scripting the liberal rule that allowed banks to engage in hedge fund trading with derivatives, there worked a strong lobby which was joined by the US Federal Reserve chairman Allan



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Greenspan. Thus, a monster was created which worked beyond the realms of banking supervision eventually hurting people across the globe. There had been many financial technocrats like Greenspan in the history of modern finance.

RBI governor Urjit Patel, an accomplished economist who is not known for jumping for media attention, had lamented recently on the lack of the RBI authority to govern the public sector banks. Expressing anger and frustration over the Nirav Modi fraud in Punjab National Bank, Patel claimed that RBI did not have adequate supervisory power over the state-owned banks. This was refuted by the chief economic adviser Arvind Subramanian who put emphasis on taking good decisions as a source of credibility, not legal authority alone. What both Patel and Subramanian missed is the fact that under the Banking Regulation Act read along with nationalisation of banks act, the RBI has enough supervisory authority over the sector – private or state-owned.

Take one example – that is, the use of SWIFT. The Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) provides a network that enables financial institutions worldwide to send and receive information about financial transactions in a secure, standardised and reliable environment. The majority of international interbank messages use the SWIFT network. SWIFT sends payment orders, which must be settled by correspondent accounts that the institutions have with each other. Once sent through SWIFT, the correspondence bank does not need any other authentication to check the veracity of the message.

When banks use such a system, it does not need any lesson in rocket science to understand that it must ensure checks and balances while authorising its staff to use SWIFT. A primary one is linking every message sent through SWIFT with

the bank's daily balance sheet (CBS – core banking system). RBI had dutifully issued guidance on the same to all banks. The fact that in the wake of the PNB scam, RBI had reiterated its instructions and asked banks to ensure the linking of SWIFT with its CBS, illustrates that the RBI did not follow-up with inspection if its earlier instruction was implemented or not. The omission is glaring, since as the central bank, the RBI must ensure the value of the Indian Rupee-exchange rate and, by dismissing SWIFT link with CBS, just as a circular issued

» Those who join the cacophony of independence of the central bank are more interested in quizzing the top brass of RBI on inflation targeting and how fiscal policy had been hurting the task

without ensuring compliance, the RBI failed to discharge its assigned task. Subramanian is justified in pointing out, though not explicitly, that RBI had failed in using its authority when in 2016 it merely issued a circular on linking SWIFT with CBS but did not follow it up with an inspection. One must, however, appreciate Governor Patel that he did not pass on the blame to his predecessor Raghuram Rajan who should have followed up on the circular.

Those who join the cacophony of independence of the central bank, more so in India, are more interested in quizzing the top brass of RBI, on inflation targeting and how fiscal policy had been hurting the task. The dissenting voices asking for higher interest

rates get undue limelight without link with the macroeconomic objective. Scribes, after all, are responsible for good copies which necessitate headlines against populism. The point missed in the process is that populism is nothing but the choice of the majority at that point in time. Technocrats in RBI too fall for this anti-populism trap.

Time and again, we have seen the deputy governor looking after the department of banking operations (DBOD), delivering sermons but not following it up with action on ground. For instance, the then deputy governor SS Mundra, in January 2017, had said, "There is an increasing trend in incidents pertaining to the theft of personal information, abuse of ATMs and Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks on various banks. We have already witnessed an attempt to defraud a bank by abusing the SWIFT messaging system, which thankfully could be salvaged post-event without any apparent monetary loss. We also continue to receive information on several other cyber incidents – be it ransomware attack, ATM/Debit card incident or unauthorised access to bank servers. Phishing/Vishing also continue to haunt bank customers with such attacks becoming more and more sophisticated." He had also mentioned the Bangladesh Bank Robbery of 2016.

A brief outline of the Bangladesh case will help us understand the gravity of SWIFT misuse. The incident, took place in February 2016, when instructions to fraudulently withdraw USD one billion from the account of Bangladesh Bank, the central bank of Bangladesh, at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York were issued via the SWIFT network. Five transactions issued by security hackers, worth USD 101 million and withdrawn from Bangladesh Bank's account at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, succeeded. The Federal Reserve Bank of New York blocked the remaining thirty transactions, amounting to USD 850 million,

at the request of Bangladesh Bank.

The very fact that Mundra mentioned this incident and was also well aware of the attempted forgery through SWIFT in January 2017, brings one to the sad state of banking supervision by RBI. Despite its knowledge, the central bank did not care to check if its instruction on SWIFT usage had been implemented in letter and spirit by banks in India. It may escape the attention of scribes reporting daily but it is disheartening that the commentariat too never cared to check the omission and point out the failure of RBI in banking supervision. Seen from this background, one cannot help but dismiss the comments of Urjit Patel on the lack of authority as a diversionary tactic to exonerate RBI of its errors and omissions.

The high-handedness of EU banks in dealing with the Greek crisis, the failure of RBI in performing its assigned task of supervising banks in India (accumulation of bad debt too is a result of same sloppy supervision – but that is another story) and the agility of the commentariat in defending technocrats with no accountability, all compels one to accept that central banks – in USA, EU or in India – act more for a rigid theory than for the people who get affected. The elected representatives take decisions which are subject to review by the electorate every few years, while the technocrats in central banks retire and enjoy their high-paying lecture circuits. A retired central bank technocrat will receive more headlines than an analyst pointing out the failure of RBI in discharging its duty on SWIFT. Facts can take a backseat in the days of headline hunting instant judgment days. The economist turned Greece Finance Minister Varoufakis will merely end up lamenting that, "The worst slavery is that of indoctrinated happy morons who adore their chains and cannot wait to thank their masters for the joy of their subservience."

(Sugato Hazra is a senior PR professional)



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UNMISTAKABLE AREAS OF HOPE & DESPAIR

What needs to be investigated in contemporary Bengali cinema, without the blinkers that come from aggressive promotion, are areas of hope that are emphasised by stakeholders and bigger areas of despair rooted in inescapable realities

SWAPAN MULLICK

It is always tempting to grab the feel-good factor in order to sustain the prevailing climate of spurious optimism about Bengali cinema.

The latest opportunity was the announcement of the National Film Awards in which the best actor, still in his teens, will be in the exalted company of Amitabh Bachchan, Uttam Kumar, Kamal Haasan, Mammooty, Mohanlal and Akshay Kumar. It was an achievement that will perhaps remain unrivalled for quite some time.

Hence, it was quite appropriate that the announcement was greeted with handsome accolades for Riddhi Sen who has just started out on his acting career and stands out as a worthy inheritor of an excellent legacy handed down by his grandparents.

There are not too many actors who get noticed outside the mainstream. Both the appearance and the aptitude of the actor do not suggest a tonic shift in the way directors will be looking at him. But, there are clear indications that there will be bigger challenges. At least, the contributions that Riddhi will be making from now on could be derived from the perceptive roles that could well be written for him – perhaps to the extent of making a difference to the film as a whole.

All this doesn't undermine the fact that Riddhi has just begun a journey that is paved with uncertainties quite unlike the award winning stars, who could have relied on their confirmed constituencies. Director Anindya Chattopdhyay had the courage to break new ground in *Open Tee Bioscope* and Kaushik Ganguly's concern for the third gender in *Nagarkirtan* is a natural outcome of his relentless search for off-beat subjects. Both films served to test an actor who has found interesting opportunities outside Bengal as well. The question survives as to what extent a Kaushik Ganguly here and an Anindya Chattopdhyay there will sustain the potential of an actor who, by all accounts, would be disinclined to provide either inconsequential support in popular offerings by Arindam Sil, Anjan Dutt, Mainak Bhowmik, Srijit Mukherjee and the Shiboprasad Mukherjee-Nandita Ray team or, worse, stray into the realm of romantic pulp.

For talented actors with great promise, there is always the difficult choice to be made between "big" directors and bit roles, on the one hand, and the sprawling attractions of the market with abundant glamour, foreign locations and commercial rewards. After the national award, Riddhi would seem to be cut out for neither of

these categories. That is all the more reason why his future will be watched with great interest.

The larger question is what this means for the prevailing climate of Bengali cinema as a whole. Four national awards have gone to *Nagarkirtan* in different categories – acting, costume design, make-up and special jury recognition. In the Bengali language category, *Mayurakshi* was selected as the best for the year. If this is the sum and substance of Bengal's achievements, the sobering realities need to be digested. Four awards have gone to a director who is now the face of quality cinema and has notched up an enviable record with films like *Apur Panchali*, *Shabdo* and *Bisarjan*; while Atanu Ghosh's *Mayurakshi* is an outstanding original work that has to be satisfied with the ritual of an award in each recognised language. It is another matter that films made in Malayalam, Marathi and Kannada have revealed exceptional growth in terms of ideas and treatment. To that extent, *Mayurakshi* could easily have competed with the best on a national scale in its social and human concerns, as much as in its bold exploitation of visual metaphors.

One director who has lived up to his reputation and another who may have missed a bigger landmark don't add up to a cause for big celebration. What needs to be investigated, without the blinkers that come from aggressive promotion, are areas of hope that are emphasised by stakeholders and bigger areas of despair rooted in inescapable realities. Why there should be such an embarrassing distance between just a handful of productions that make the grade and



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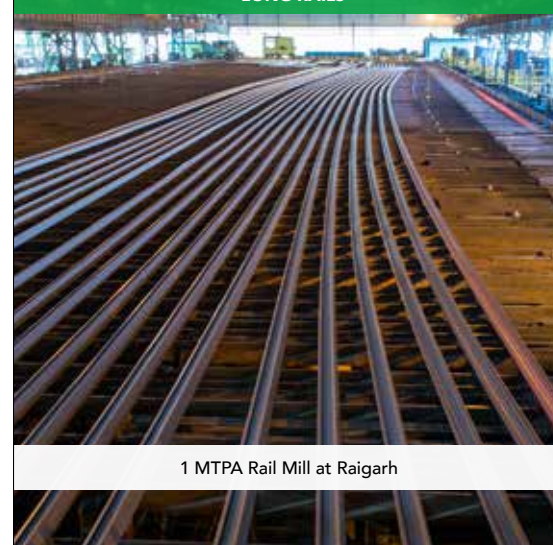


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the majority without the slightest chance, is a mystery that has not been solved. Some years ago, *Bhooter Bhabishyat* had found itself stuck in a miserable whirlpool of pre-release uncertainty (like many productions that never see the light of day), till it found its way belatedly to the theatres, took time to settle down and soon ran into a virtual stampede that lasted months and found resounding echoes. The trouble was that one miracle was considered to be the justification for a wave of misguided missiles that landed in deep waters. That, in brief, would appear to be the tragedy of an industry that pretends not to look at the reality but experiences it all the same.

Bengal has its own pattern of miracles that keep hopes alive. One such miracle is the transformation of stars with supposedly declining fortunes into full-time producers. One such phenomenon was Dev, whose misfortunes as an actor appeared to coincide with his success on the political front. It was then that he decided on an image makeover that provided him with a rewarding escape from distress. He converted himself into an actor-producer, found a new screen partner and began to venture into unknown territories. Some of these efforts like *Arshinagar* and *Buno Haans* fell flat though he had relied on the reputation of Aparna Sen and Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury. It didn't appeal to the audience. Then, a tactful cocktail of glamour and substance in *Chaamp* and *Cockpit*, his home productions, fetched better dividends and encouraged him to build on the jungle safaris that had already scaled new heights.

It will never be known whether the multi-core adventures in Africa and the Amazon, in films derived from the Bibhuti Bhushan Bandyopadhyay stories (where he played the incurable explorer Sankar), sustained the excitement of packed houses long enough to be considered authentic blockbusters. What was unmistakable was the energy and technical skill brought to the hunting expeditions in deadly terrain by director Kamaleswar Mukherjee in *Amazon Obhijan* that Bengal could never have imagined till then. Kamaleswar is one of the directors – the others include Suman Ghosh, Mainak Bhowmik and Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury – who had discarded their earlier careers to reinvent them-

selves as creative personalities after the passing of Rituparno Ghosh. They constitute the most promising minds that have entered Bengali cinema. It is a different matter that they claim only varying degrees of critical response. But that, in any case, was a departure from the insipid cocktail of mindless entertainment rooted in sizzling tunes, foreign locations, a desperate attempt to embrace new territories in the Bengali-speaking world, a crass creation of caricatures and cardboard types through actors like Jeet, Ankush, Yash Dasgupta, Mimi Chakraborty, Nusrat Jahan and Soham. Some of them may have been made for better things but opted for the easiest route to security in

» In the years when Bengal had run into a rough patch but for the repeated awards for Kaushik Ganguly, the Saradindu detective seemed to be the only answer to a declining graph

their careers. Dev should have provided the most striking proof that security on the screen is now – as always – an elusive concept.

Unlike Kaushik Ganguly and Atanu Ghosh who have persevered with their experiments, other directors with minds of their own have been less consistent. Suman Ghosh is based in the United States and grabs attention with potentially serious subjects in *Kadambari*, *Nobel Chor*, *Peace Haven* and *Dwando* and then grabs headlines for a minor tiff with the censors in a documentary on Amartya Sen. But there is yet no sign of his intellectual qualities being transformed into a settled cinematic identity. Mainak Bhowmik has revelled in his brand of supposedly intelligent absurdities which are now stuck at a point of urban mundaneness targeting a particular section of the audience. Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury almost looked like a one-film wonder (*Antaheen*) till Amitabh Bachchan rescued him in *Pink*. There is no idea when he will return to the soil that he can claim to be his own. His experience matches Anik Dutta's. The maker of *Bhooter Bhabishyat* has not been able to live up to those expectations though his last film, *Meghnadbad Rahasya*, promised to restore the exciting

twists and turns of his first film – only to get dissipated in an excess of pamphleteering.

It is a different story with Arindam Sil and Anjan Dutt. Both had found their own constituencies with reasonable success. The former began with stylised thrillers and discovered the possibilities of translating the contradictory elements of Sirshendu Mukhopadhyay's detective Shabar Dasgupta – an unconventional blend of a tough exterior and an engaging sense of humour – into a screen personality. His biggest asset was Saswata Chatterjee who had stormed into the national consciousness with his extraordinary depiction of the hired killer in Sujoy Ghosh's *Kahaani*. But things

began to take an ugly turn with Arindam Sil and Anjan Dutt (who had till then found a sense of fulfilment with his brand of musicals rooted in his own compositions) discovering a common interest in *Byomkesh*. In the years when Bengal had run into a rough patch but for the repeated awards for Kaushik Ganguly, the Saradindu detective seemed to be the only answer to a declining graph. Trouble started with Jishu Sengupta and Abir Chatterjee staking their respective claims to the detective's mantle and the latter adding to the confusion by stepping into the shoes of Feluda that no one was inclined to remove from the feet selected by Satyajit Ray. With a long history of excellence behind him, Soumitra Chatterjee has preserved a diplomatic silence on the turn of events. But the voices that really determine the future of meaningful cinema have not been silenced. The confusion may have eventually been managed by a convenient formula but the arguments on the screen depiction of detectives have not changed.

All this may not have happened if the inspirations drawn by filmmakers could be traced to the right sources. One of the most effective sources is the bank of literary mate-

rial. Unlike the situation prevailing half a century ago, the literary sources are far removed from cinematic sensibilities. In recent times, Shiboprasad Mukhopadhyay and Nandita Ray have made a conscious effort to revive the thinking cinema in *Ramdhenu* and *Alik Sukh*, both based on stories by Suchitra Bhattacharya. But the choice of contemporary writers hasn't been large enough to prompt a constant flow. The result has been an excess of uninspiring material bursting out of writing factories and, strangely enough, finding the required degree of commercial support. Out of the 70 or 80 films flowing from these filmmaking factories, not more than ten make the grade. It is a virtual washout but for selective gains derived from television rights. On the other hand, the Shiboprasad-Nandita team has struck a formula of commercial success after exhausting their literary sources. *Belasheshe* and *Praktan* have confirmed that the tenderness of a middle-class heart with all its improbabilities and social incongruities are better options than festivals and awards.

The best inspiration could have been drawn from the names that have done Bengali cinema proud over the past 60 years. But the prevailing wisdom would suggest that, while Satyajit Ray's films are ingrained in the consciousness of directors who throw in bits and pieces of the master's work into their films, the urban youth carry a different cultural identity. That could be one reason why the warmth of Tarun Majumdar's *Bhalobashar Bari* or the social relevance of Goutam Ghose's *Shankhachil* didn't find a comfortable environment. One would hope that the power of the market will not finally weaken the creative roots. The market has the devices to bring instant results in selective areas. Eventually, cinema is all about the creative identity that breaks the barriers of time and space.

(Swapan Mullick is a National Award winning film critic, a veteran journalist and currently Principal, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's Asutosh College of Communication and Management)



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THE UNIVERSAL RELIGION OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

In today's world of crisis and destruction, Swami Vivekananda's thesis of Universal Religion gains greater precedence in overcoming the wrath of mindless modernity and embracing the warmth of balanced progress

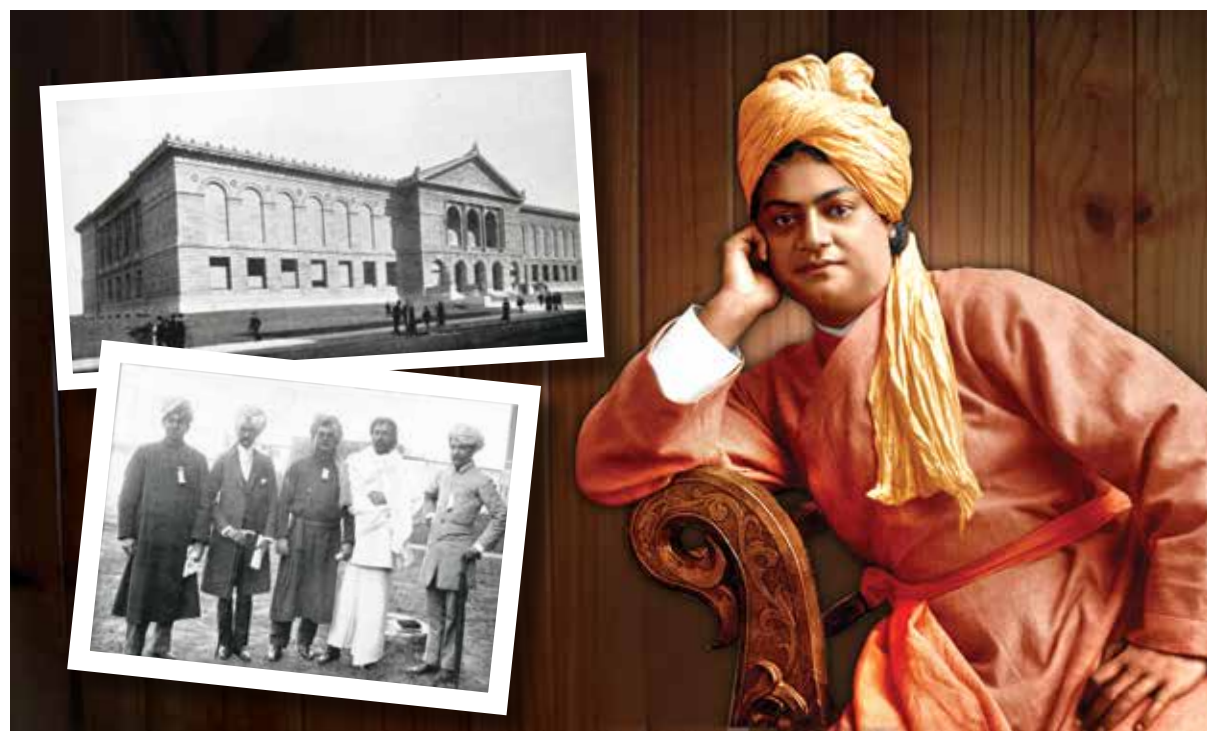


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TARUN GOSWAMI

2018 is the 125th anniversary of the acclaimed World Parliament of Religions which was held in Chicago in 1893. The Bengal government and Ramakrishna Mission have chalked out programmes to celebrate the occasion with utmost reverence. At RKM's invitation, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will visit Chicago to participate in the event. From September 12 to 19, the Bengal government will observe *Sanghati Week*, organising meetings, seminars and workshops across the country to propagate Swamiji's messages.

Now, the time has come to read, understand and assess the speeches that could combat the growing animosity visible among the followers of different religions across the world.

Swami Vivekananda was undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. The Parliament was a part of the Columbian Exposition, which was held to celebrate 400 years of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. An international fair was also held where artisans from different countries participated and exhibited their creations.

Swamiji's greatest contribution to world peace is the concept of Universal Religion. Now, if we read carefully, in the three speeches delivered by Vivekananda on September 11, 19 and 27 – we find that Swamiji had carefully unfurled his theory to present his thesis of Universal Religion.

On September 11, Swamiji delivered his speech at the inaugural session of the Parliament. It was a head-turner and he

became the real hero of the Parliament overnight. His magnetic personality, oratory magnificence and sharp logic had captivated the audience.

At the inaugural speech, Vivekananda had presented the first step, which was identifying the evils that had come in the way of attaining world peace. The evil was fanaticism and, because of this, people could not look beyond their own skin and

Brahminic or Buddhist, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these and still have infinite space for development," he said adding, "It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognise divinity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be centred in aiding humanity to realise its own true, divine nature." Swami was so confident about the success of the Universal Religion that he went on to say, "Offer such a religion and all the nations will follow you."

On September 27, Vivekananda addressed the valedictory session of the World



had failed to appreciate the greatness in others. Swamiji said, "Sectarianism, bigotry and its horrible descendant fanaticism have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often with human blood, destroyed civilisation and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now." The words are so relevant in today's world. Despite technological advancement and the spread of education, we have failed to eradicate fanaticism and fanatics pose the greatest threat to human civilisation.

On September 19, Swami presented the operative aspect of his theory. He read out a paper titled *Paper on Hinduism*. In the speech, he talked about Universal Religion at length and showed how it can save the world from destruction. It is absolute tragedy that we have confined Swamiji within the four walls of our temples and never tried to implement his vision in our practical lives. If we could, our social tension would have been vastly reduced.

Swami went on presenting his thesis and said, "The Hindu may have failed to carry out all his plans, but if there is ever to be a Universal Religion, it must be one which will have no location in place or time; which will be infinite like God, it will preach and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike; which will not be

Parliament of Religions. Because of his oratory brilliance and immense popularity, he became the most important figure in the Parliament and, the organisers thought that it was only befitting for him to address the valedictory session.

At the session, Swamiji presented the conclusion of his thesis. "If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world and that every system has produced men and women of most exalted characters. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: Help and not Fight, Assimilation and not Destruction, Harmony and Peace and not Dissension," he asserted. The speech ended with a thundering applause.

In the last 125 years since the Chicago convention, we have witnessed two World Wars where hydrogen bombs have demolished thousands of innocent people. Human beings were slaughtered mercilessly in the Korean War and the Vietnam War. Hatred and intolerance are on the rise. Every day the media brings stories of violence which shame the sensible and sensitive citizens. Now, the time has come to implement Swamiji's concept of Universal Religion in practical life. This is possible through service and unselfish work for others. It is good that people, though small in number, have come forward and are trying to implement the concept by establishing groups, schools, interactive bodies etc. As they have set the ball in motion, it can only be prayed with deep meditation that this step takes the form of a massive movement that will save the world from destruction and unhappiness.

(Tarun Goswami is Resident Editor, Millennium Post, Kolkata)



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To move towards a healthy society, the commercialisation of private healthcare must be undone and a robust doctor-patient relationship must be established

DR. ARUN MITRA

Expectations from medical professionals have always been steep and, any laxity, inexcusable. While everyone expects professionals, irrespective of their allegiance, to perform to the best of their ability, the expectation is all the more from doctors and medical practitioners. This is because a person comes to the doctor in distress for the alleviation of her/his physical or mental woes. In ancient times, healthcare was in the hands of faith healers who were believed to be blessed with divine powers. As time lapsed, traditional systems of medicine were modified across different parts of the world. With the advent of modern science, the medical system also underwent significant change. The present modern system of medicine bases itself on the human anatomy, physiology and studies any abnormality in them. It looks into the causes of the disease and, if required, accrues more information from diagnostics to reach a conclusion which guides the doctor regarding the course of treatment.

Till a few decades back, doctors were familiar with their patients' families and would often visit them from time to time. This proximity created mutual trust between the doctor and the patient. But, with the passage of time, this relationship has undergone radical change. Changes in the economic environment in the late-1980s brought in a more commercial and consumerist culture that was also reflected in human relationships. This also affected the attitude of both the patients and the doctors.

With the entry of the corporate sector in the field of health, which views healthcare in tandem with any other profit-making business displaying little empathy for the patient, the scenario has drastically changed. Vast sections of the society were marginalised from the reach of modern advanced care because, during this period, most institutions had developed in the private corporate sector. Public funding towards health remains very low, to the tune of 1.04 per cent of the GDP. This has adversely affected the primary healthcare services. The present government further reduced the already low health spending by 20 per cent. The new developments in technological equipment added to the cost of the treatment which further affected the already deprived sections in society from receiving advanced tertiary care. Even the middle classes began feeling the pinch of the high-cost of medical treatment.

During this period, pharmaceutical companies started luring some doctors with expensive freebies which added to the cost of drugs. The dealings

among some doctors for cuts and commissions for diagnostics and for referrals presented a serious jolt to the doctor-patient relationship, as the patients began suspecting doctors, believing they have earned far more than they deserved.

All this created a wedge between the patients and the doctors. The doctors who were till date viewed as second only to God started losing their respectability. People then began viewing them just as any other commercial businessman who would be ruthless and apathetic for undue profits.

It is also during this period that unscrupulous elements began gaining ground in society. They took advantage of the situation and often resorted to violence against the doctors on frivolous grounds. They even started blackmailing the doctors.

The whole situation now demands amelioration. Otherwise, if people lose faith in the person

to whom they are offering their body and mind for assistance, medical science will not be successful in passing on its required benefits to society. A concerted effort has to be made by all parties concerned.

The question of ethical healthcare has been seriously considered by a group of doctors and medical organisations. They formed the alliance of doctors for ethical healthcare (ADEH), to work together to bring back the lost glory of the medical profession. In its recently held national conference, ADEH came out with certain suggestions, which include the collective responsibility of governments, drug companies, medical professionals and the society at large. Various sections of the society including the government, the pharmaceutical industry, medical professionals and the civil society have to play a fundamental role in this.

The first and foremost poison is the commer-

cialisation of healthcare, which begins with the entry to medical college. With high tuition fees in the private medical colleges to the tune of nearly one crore rupees, it would be naïve to expect young doctors to behave like saints. The government should take steps to stop the commercialisation of medical education and legally ensure that fees charged in any private medical college are not higher than the amount charged by public medical colleges. Then, provisions must be in place to ensure the effective and comprehensive cost regulation of all necessary medicines, implants and consumables. The trade margin on any medical item should not be unreasonable.

Develop a system of Universal Health Care (UHC) in every state, which enables every resident to access good quality healthcare free of cost at the point of service, which provides secure and satisfying employment and remuneration to all doctors

and healthcare professionals; and, eliminate commercial pressures and malpractices. Towards this end, the public health budgets of central and state governments must be substantially increased and public health services must be strengthened in a comprehensive manner. Commercial insurance should not be involved in the proposed UHC and practices of private healthcare providers must be appropriately regulated and rationalised.

It is important that the medical professionals take the initiative of rebuilding their trust with the patients. They must ensure complete transparency in all components of hospital bills charged to patients. The practice of commissions, kickbacks and any unethical inducements to promote the hospital business has to be stopped.

The doctors should abide by the Indian Medical Council (professional conduct, etiquette and ethics) which prohibits them from accepting gifts, sponsorships and any kind of financial or non-financial incentives from drug companies. It also prohibits doctors from advertising themselves. The practice of commissions (cleverly called as an incentive) as referral charges, directly or indirectly, related to any kind of patient referrals must be stopped. They should develop the courage to speak up against the prevalent medical malpractices and promote ethical and rational practices among colleagues and within professional circles.

Patients and citizens should be more open. Do not view the doctor as a person with a tarnished conscience, but consider him as a person with highly-trained skills in healing. It is always better to settle the professional charges before the treatment through mutual dialogue with the health provider. Seek appropriate care, ask the doctor for information relevant to the patient's condition. Do not go by hearsay or advertisements. Whenever major procedures are advised (in non-emergency situations) it is always good to seek a second opinion to allay the anxiety, fear and any other relevant query. Violence is not the answer to any issue. These should be settled as per the law.

Every sector needs to be regulated, including medical care. But no regulation should be corporate driven, as this will decimate the small-scale sector, which, at present, forms the backbone of the healthcare delivery system. The Clinical Establishment Act is a welcome step. It would be better if doctors' bodies, public health activists and civil society organisations are consulted on its ultimate implementation.

(Dr. Arun Mitra is Senior Vice President, Indian Doctors for Peace and Development)



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Contemporary intelligentsia is passionately debating about what India needs today – its idea to be rediscovered, restructured or reinvented in totality

PROF. UJJWAL K CHOWDHURY

I had the privilege, over the last one month, of attending a couple of public discourses with many known intellectuals debating on whether India should reinvent its idea in totality or merely rediscover itself or instead opt for restructuring. While the ruling right-wing has been campaigning for a New India, as coined by Prime Minister Modi recently, and bashing the Nehruvian idea of India, Rahul Gandhi recently organised a 'Save the Constitution Rally' and called for rediscovering the Nehruvian idea of India which stands for unity in diversity.

'Reinvent, Recreate' Lobby

Apologists of the reinvention, decidedly from the right-wing, have an aggressive stance these days with a favourable government at the Centre and in a majority of the states.

One major argument of the reinvent lobby is that the Indian civilisation is 7000 years old, the Republic is 70 years old and there is a new government at the Centre with a decidedly new outlook. This outlook believes that the great ancient Indian culture "has been shackled for 250 years now, 180 years by colonialism and 70 years by agents of colonialism." Hence, recreating is reclaiming. The Indian economy which was 27 per cent of the global economy in the 18th century dropped to 3 per cent in the 1950s.

Macaulay's education policy of 1835 imposed English education and permanently infused a sense of inferiority among common Indians with regard to the English language, taken forward in the Nehruvian era after 1947. This has led to subservience to the West, the rise of a poverty-mongering idea of India, and an inward-looking socialism today which has produced more poor rather than solving poverty.

True scientific research and entrepreneurial forces have been restrained by this apologetic attitude. Central planning and a controlled economy are obsolete today; and, India's achievements, to date, are in spite of central planning and Nehruvian socialism, not due to these.

Indians do not look at themselves as they should. Universal spiritualism and brotherhood were embodied in Indian philosophy through *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (Whole world is my family). Kalidasa is comparable to Shakespeare, but not recognised. Aurobindo's discourse on the foundation of the Indian culture is still relevant. Indian civilisational ideas are even reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations today, but we are neither aware nor proud of the same.

Foreign recognition was important for some stature after independence, not anymore. "We should make our own role models and transition strategy." By 2050, even Price Water Coopers predicts that India will be the second-largest economy with \$46 trillion, ahead of USA, and behind China.

The reinvent and recreate lobby also opines that for everything that is true in India, the opposite is also true. "Why should there be one idea of India? Why singular? Why no million mutinies? The Constitution is a rule book about how we conduct our lives, and it can change with changing time. Did India begin in 1947? And, did the idea of India start only then, run by one family, written in one book, and fathered by Gandhi?"

'Rediscover' Lobby

The rediscover lobby, decidedly the Nehruvian apologists, are in turn questioning the much-touted New India, noting that it has witnessed the heightening of social disharmony, majoritarian dominance, cow vigilantism, fall of scientific temper and deterioration of the position of women. This lobby wants a return to Nehruvian idealism, protection of Ambedkar's Constitution and a rainbow coalition of many castes and communities (and, perhaps political parties too) to rule India.

India, with the vision of the founding fathers of the Indian Constitution, still survives – while Pakistan is virtually falling apart. Even after 101 amendments, the Indian Constitution is still the beacon of the Indian polity since it has traversed diverse social contradictions and ensured the rule of law, separation of power, independence of judiciary and a strong Union in a federal polity: all of which, according to this lobby, are being threatened in the right-wing vision of New India.

They say that the Constitution survived sub-national aspirations and regional demands. And, Nehru's Discovery of India is deeply spiritual – he married our culture to modern governance through the Constitution and ensured the growth of science and scientific temper – which is now under threat as seen by central ministers questioning Darwin's theory and saying that Internet existed in the Vedic ages or that Ganesha underwent a plastic surgery for his trunk.

A section of the rediscovery lobby also says that Western thinking is linear, ours is cyclical, not straight, and converging. And, hence reinforcing the idea of India is not necessarily the same of the past. Invasions in India, by whoever in the last 800 years, have led to a cultural mix and assimilation, making the country diverse and richer. It is this cultural parallelism that exists at the core of the existing idea of India and a centralised rightist narrative cannot be imposed upon it. Since recreation is linear, it does not reflect the truth in the land which believes in *Ekam satyam, viprah vahudha vadanti* (The truth is one, interpreted differently by different learned men).

This rediscovery lobby passionately puts forth that pluralism, sense of diversity and inclusivity are at the core of India today, reflecting our civilisational journey; and, hence, to maintain its nature of antiquity, continuity, diversity and assimilation, it cannot be reinvented or recreated.



Historians in the rediscovery lobby point out that in 1923, the Hindutva focused idea of India presented by Savarkar's ideas of *Pitrabhoomi* and *Punyabhoomi*, in effect accepting the two nation theory of Jinnah, put forth later in 1942, had been

rejected by the people in favour of multi-cultural Hindustan. The founding fathers of India today had called for the opening of windows and doors of our houses, but not to be blown off our feet.

This lobby questions the right-wing asking if Akhlaq's killing or Sambhulal killing Afroz or six

men raping and killing the eight-year-old Kathua victim are signs of New India. Why aren't the Muslim contributions from the medieval ages or the oldest Church of the world being recognised in this New India? And, what is this New India apart from an aggressive brand of masculinity and unethical corporate dominance?

Way Forward: Restructuring & Evolving the Idea of India

India, with the second largest Muslim population of the world, cannot be a Hindu Rashtra for sure. India, with 7 per cent and above GDP growth, cannot also play second fiddle to the Western economies. India, with 56 per cent of its population below 25 years of age and 67 per cent below 35 years, is surely a major force of the world's future talent pool and workforce.

While Sambhulal's heinous murder in Rajasthan or the Kathua girl's brutal rape and murder in Jammu cannot be allowed to represent the face of New India, we cannot also accept minority appeasement that uses Muslims, Dalits or tribals as mere votebanks without changing their socio-economic status, as shown in the Sachhar Committee report.

Hence, an evolution of the idea of India is surely needed – building upon self-reliance,

strengthening the conversation with our tradition and honouring diversity in every walk of life. The restructured or evolved idea of India needs to ensure strict secularism where the State has no role to play in religious matters (which are best left to individuals), and all religious conflicts should be seen only as law and order hindrances. On the other hand, this restructured India, moving ahead, must ensure the economic security of the marginalised (through Minimum Support Prices for farm produce, executing forest and tribal protection acts, executing women's protection, minimum wages and days of work protection and rural health protection acts).

Neither ultra-nationalism of the Hindutva variety, nor eulogy of rule by one family through appeasement: the idea of India needs an evolution to a re-structured identity which blends aspirations of the privileged with a dignified life of the underprivileged – irrespective of community, caste or gender. One party rule or multi-party coalition, India needs a programme of progress and sustainability; not a powerful arrogant leader nor a group of squabbling regional leaders.

(Professor Ujjwal K Chowdhury is currently School Head, School of Media, Pearl Academy; and has been earlier, the Dean of Symbiosis and Amity Universities, and Dean of Whistling Woods School of Communication)

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AN INDIAN SUMMER FOR INDIAN ART

From Ramgopal Kumawat's miniatures to Bharti Kher's provocative displays and further on to Dhanraj Bhagat's careful sculptures – art in India is a dynamic concoction of excellence and imagination



UMA NAIR

Where is Indian contemporary art going in 2018? Ask Peter Nagy, one of India's most avant-garde curators. He empties out an old palace filled with opulent furniture and punctuates it with contemporary Indian artworks that meld the minimalist as well as the magical. To Nagy goes the credit for discovering and nurturing the best names in the circuit – and, to top it all, he does not brag, he does not boast, he just puts his mind to curating some of the finest cutting-edge exhibitions in the country at Nature Morte. Nagy and Aparajita Jain have come together to create a stunning sculpture park at Jaipur.

Sculpture Park-Jaipur

The Park invites visitors to experience contemporary art on a mammoth scale, showcasing an ensemble of 55 sculptures, which will be on display for 11 months. Situated within the precincts of Nahargarh Fort – a historical, undulating sculpture in its own right, made of 18th century stones chiselled into form – the Park offers a clever juxtaposition. Nagy has handpicked the sculptures from the studios of 15 Indian and nine international artists who have a formidable repertoire.

Featuring works by artists such as Subodh Gupta, Thukral & Tagra, Bharti Kher, Stephen Cox and Evan Holloway – the Park



boasts of larger-than-life bronzes, beautifully carved out wood pieces and stone works. Only three pieces have been made from scratch for this space, "Everything else is borrowed and are older works," says Nagy. Some even date back three decades, including a 1984 bronze creation by the late French artist Arma Chisti.

Cane Sculptures - Mumbai

In Mumbai, the Chemould Gallery just had a brilliant show by installation artist Shakuntala Kulkarni. She has been dealing with the body, armour and cane sculptures over the past decade or so. Julus at Chemould was like a multimedia installation with videos,



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drawings, photographs and a few brilliant cane sculptures that were installed like pieces of jewellery in a white cube.

Baroda March in Mumbai

Rukshaan Art Gallery hosts the Baroda March every year since 2007. This year it brought together 40 artists from Baroda in works that stunned the eye and saved your soul.

Puppets and Miniatures

Ramgopal Kumawat, who hails from Jaipur, originally employs his interpretation of Rajasthani *katputli* puppets to comment on social hierarchies and the games people play. Kumawat creates visual puns by juxtaposing these puppets against everyday objects like the sewing machine or the pistol.

Despite their lively and delightful forms, the novelty of traditional puppet shows has clearly worn off over the years with a variety of modern entertainment taking its place. It was the poignancy of the fading interest in puppets, accentuated by the slight desperation of the puppeteer that caught Ramgopal's attention, tugging at his heartstrings and causing him to revisit his roots and traditions. It is the contemporary creation of his format that strikes – in the way he brings forward the miniature tradition with zest and colour.

Another artist who works with the miniature tradition is Ajay Dhapa, who creates carpets on canvas and places miniature characters on the carpet to comment on present-day social mores. The carpets are symbolic of the earth – they reflect present-day environments. But the miniature format characters are in an inverse proportion – they are minute even as they create conversations.

Dhapa is a lover of dogs, he includes them



in most of his works to add an element of humanism as well as humour. In *Everyone wants a good Dog*, the dog is represented as the boyfriend. Ladies come together and discuss prospective lovers. It is interesting to note that the ladies belong to the old school of miniatures adding a period style to the statement, even as we think of human traits that remain the same, while only life-style change.

Evanescent Elegance

Gulab Kapadia's watercolour on rice paper and canvas have about them an evanescent elegance. He represents one of the most popular professions of India. He says that though they belong to small-scale industries, they matter. Small business holders like vegetable and bangle sellers, cobblers, barbers, key-makers are Gulab's heroes in his visuals.

Gulab uses soft watercolour washes and layers them to create the vintage effect in an attempt to render their lives beautiful and meaningful. "Sometimes, different objects, materials from these environments serve as surfaces for creating the sense of remained traces of presence in absence through his painting," says Gulab. The beauty of the Baroda March was Rukshaan Krishna's eye for recognising the works of some of the best.

Dhanraj Bhagat at 100

Just opened at NGMA Bangalore is an epic showing of Dhanraj Bhagat, the sculptor who was Head of the Department at College of Art Delhi for more than two decades and created a series of works that transcended both abstraction and realism. In a brilliantly designed installation created exhibition by Adwaita Gadnaya and his team at NGMA Delhi, this show reads like a lesson in art history.

While it speaks to us about the passion



of the artist Dhanraj Bhagat, it also advocates the truth that mentors must practice their art all through their lives. The show has a series of works belonging to collectors, the family as well as a number of important works from the Delhi Art Gallery Modern collection. It unravels like a fascinating display of mother and child evocative works to a series of abstractions in wood and cement and even concrete. *Shiva Dance*, a minimalist work, and *Spirit of Work* of a woman and child, are two top of the line creations. A Durga created out of just wrought iron is another enchanting ensemble that speaks to us about the brilliance and devotion Bhagat had to his creations. Bhagat's studio has also been recreated in the show and, no doubt, art lovers in Bangalore will spend time appreciating and recognising a master. Amongst the works are a series of drawings and paintings too. The show also positions the new Director General Adwaita Gadnaya as a disciple of hard work and a historian in his own right – he has been culling the NGMA Archives to create shows that stand a class apart in terms of the historicity of the institution and the wealth of art that lies in its repository.

(Uma Nair is a senior Art Critic and Curator)



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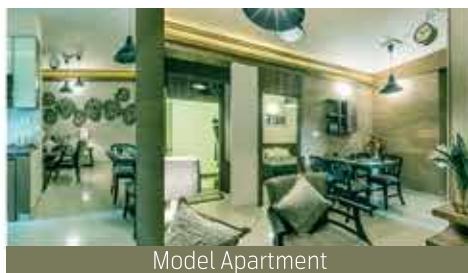


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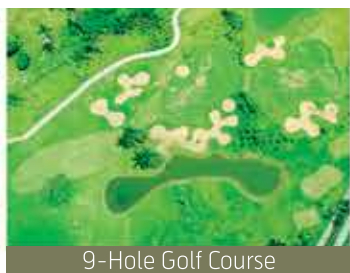
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PRADHAN MANTRI UJJWALA YOJANA

ENLIGHTENING RURAL LIVES

To rescue rural women from the ills of indoor smoke, PMUY has provided over a crore LPG connections to the deprived in an attempt to secure their health and ease everyday convenience

The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, which was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh, in May 2016 to provide clean cooking fuel to five crore women, has proven to be a great success as the number of applicants under the scheme has swelled to one lakh per day.

According to official data, about 1.27 lakh PMUY applications were received on April 10 and 1.55 lakh on April 13 – scripting the success story of the PM's flagship scheme implemented across the country under the guidance of Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

Under Ujjwala Yojana, 712 districts have been covered and 3,78,91,211 LPG connections have been released to BPL beneficiaries.

Aiming to expand its outreach and cover a wider spectrum of households, the government has extended the benefits of the scheme to various other sections of the population from April 1, 2018. The scheme has been opened to include all SC and ST households, beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Antyodaya Anna Yojana, forest dwellers, most backward classes, tea garden and ex-tea garden tribes, and people residing in islands or river islands.

Launched in May 2016, a sum of Rs 8,000 crore was allocated for the scheme along with the target to provide five crore LPG connections to BPL families with a support of Rs 1,600 per connection in the next three years. However, given the success of the scheme under which 3.57 crore LPG connections have already been released, in the 2018 Budget, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley made an additional allocation Rs 4,800 crore, further increasing the target to eight crore beneficiaries. The revised target would be achieved by 2020.

ACCOLADES

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative to provide a shield to women and children from smoke has been acknowledged by the World Health Organisation (WHO). The global health body has admired the objectives of the Ujj-



wala Yojana in its new pollution report.

"Countries are undertaking measures to tackle and reduce air pollution from particulate matter. For example, in just two years, India's Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana scheme has provided some 37 million women living below the poverty line with free LPG connections to support their switch to clean household energy use," said WHO in its report.

PM's INTERACTION

Over 100 beneficiaries of PMUY interacted with the Prime Minister at his residence in February.

During the informal interaction with PM Narendra Modi, the beneficiaries detailed how their lives had improved through the use of LPG cylinders. In response to their observations, the Prime Minister mentioned the Saubhagya Yojana, which has been launched to provide electrical connections to each home.

While emphasising on the need to end all forms of discrimination against the girl child, the PM exhorted the gathering to work towards ensuring cleanliness in villages. He said that this would improve the health of the entire village, in almost the same way as the Ujjwala Yojana had improved the health of their family members.

MAKING INDIA SMOKE-FREE

India is home to more than 24 crore house-

holds, of which, about 10 crore households are still deprived of LPG and have to rely on firewood, coal, etc as primary sources of cooking.

The smoke from burning such fuels causes alarming levels of household pollution and severe respiratory diseases among women and children. As per a WHO report, smoke inhaled by women from unclean fuel is equivalent to burning 400 cigarettes in an hour.

PMUY aims to safeguard the health of women and children by providing them with clean cooking fuel and preventing any compromise on their health.

Every Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana LPG connection is free of cost and includes the security deposit of a 14.2 kg LPG cylinder, pressure regulator, suraksha hose, DGCC booklet and administration and installation cost for a distributor.

Ensuring women's empowerment, especially in rural India, the connections would be issued in the name of the women of the households. PMUY is likely to result in an additional employment of over one lakh individuals and also provide a business opportunity of at least Rs 10,000 crore.

The launch of this scheme is also providing a great boost to the Make in India campaign, as all the manufacturers of cylinders, gas stoves, regulators, and gas hose are domestic. The launch of PMUY in Ballia was followed by the launch of the scheme in Dahod in Gujarat by Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and BJP president Amit Shah.

SPEEDY IMPLEMENTATION

Parallel efforts on multiple fronts and help from different quarters have ensured brisk implementation of PMUY. PMUY has been implemented by meticulous planning, in a time-bound and mission-mode manner.

There has been continuous engagement and support by the Ministry for regular follow-ups based on ground feedback. The Petroleum Ministry has been closely interacting with the Oil Marketing Companies and their District Nodal Officers (DNOs). Significant IT developments at Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) and National Informatics Centre (NIC) have also helped in its speedy implementation.

Daily MIS reporting on industry basis through PMIS; a dedicated website for PMUY (www.pmujiwalayojna.com); a toll-free number (18002666696) have also been employed.

Freedom fighters, ex-servicemen, other prominent personalities, NGOs and self-help groups have all been involved by the way of special drives. A 360° media campaign was launched in regional languages through newspapers, TV, radio, banners, hoardings/standees, social media, etc. to create awareness.

PMUY has endeavoured to protect the livelihood of lakhs of rural Indian women who are compelled to use traditional methods of fuel that are adverse to their well-being. In the process of implementing the scheme, the women of rural India are walking towards holistic empowerment.

712

Districts have been covered

3,78,91,211

LPG connections have been released to BPL beneficiaries

₹8,000 crore

Initial Budget allocation

₹4,800 crore

Additional allocation by FM Arun Jaitley in Budget-2018

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GST: INDIA'S GOLDILOCKS MOMENT

For the Indian Union – a union of states – GST heralds a necessary unifying ground, propagating an equitable idea of Indian-ness

HIMANSHU ARORA, VEDANTA DHAMIJA, PHALASHA NAGPAL

Article 1 of the Constitution, describes India as a "Union of States", containing all the usual features of a federation, i.e., a three-tier government, a division of power, a written Constitution and its supremacy. The Constitution, being federal in structure, divides all power – legislative, administrative, financial and executive – between the Centre and the states. The Constitution, under its articles 268 to 293, separates the financial power between the Centre and the states. The Parliament has the exclusive power to levy taxes on subjects enumerated in the Union List and the State legislature has exclusive power to levy taxes on subjects in the State List. Both the Parliament and state legislature can levy taxes on subjects in the concurrent list and the residuary power is vested with the Parliament of India.

The devolution of financial power was a prerequisite for building Indian-ness. One of the greatest challenges at the time of Independence was to adopt a stronger edifice of Indian-ness, where every citizen shares a collective sense of economic destiny, social equality and harmony, despite belonging to different beliefs and cultures that constitute the multi-cultural Indian fabric.

At the political level, democracy and elections are the most influential institutions that bind the country together. At an economic level, to strengthen the



Indian-ness, we need to develop a common market by removing barriers for the free flow of people and goods across state boundaries. The economic Indian-ness can be achieved mainly in two ways: first, by investing heavily in physical infrastructure and connectivity; second, by adopting a uniform tax regime (Goods and Services Tax) that can create a common market throughout. The previous system of indirect taxation has led to Balkanisation of the Indian market with multiple tax rates and states imposing protective tariff barriers to inter-state trade.

The rationale for adopting GST is the belief that all states of the Union of India are equal and are a part of a national project of balanced economic development with minimum interstate disparities. In a democracy,

all states of the federation have an equal responsibility towards the welfare of citizens. In an economically diverse country like India, where states are at different levels of economic development, it is essential that every citizen gets access to a common market without any blockades. The Constitution of India, under Article 14, provides equality to all its citizens, irrespective of their resident state emphasising that the individual citizen, rather than the state, is the locus of balanced development. This equality is the guiding principle of GST.

Adoption of GST is one of the most prominent economic accomplishments in the history of India's Fiscal Federalism. One of the critiques of India's growth story is its sluggish manufacturing sector, which has failed to create productive jobs for millions entering the labour market

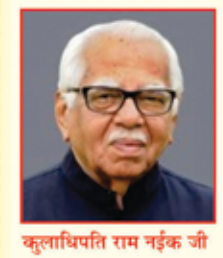
every year. To make India a global manufacturing hub, it is vital to create a business-friendly environment for foreign investors and companies. Some critical impediments hampering manufacturing growth have been the rigid labour laws and an uncertain and unpredictable indirect tax rate regime of the past. The pre-GST indirect tax regime is fuelled by the multiplicity of taxes, cascading effects and substantial compliance costs. They all increase the cost burden, making India's manufacturing sector uncompetitive vis-à-vis the world. The adopted GST structure is a destination-based tax substituting majority of indirect taxes levied by the Centre and the states, ending the regime of inefficient indirect tax structure and its cascading effects. Thus, it is a right step in the right direction to give a boost to manufacturing activity in India.

GST has also helped reduce the transaction cost associated with interstate movement of goods and enhanced overall tax revenues. As per the Finance Ministry, India collected Rs 7.41 trillion in taxes in the first



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कुलपति प्रो. एन. के. तनेजा

सुशासन की दिशा में बढ़ते कदम

चौधरी चरण सिंह विश्वविद्यालय, राष्ट्रीय राजधानी क्षेत्र का एक महत्वपूर्ण विश्वविद्यालय है। पिछले 50 वर्षों में विश्वविद्यालय परिवार के समस्त सदस्यों ने अपनी गहन निष्ठा, मेहनत और भविष्य दृष्टि संवारने का अथक प्रयास किया है। पौराणिक काल से ही महत्वपूर्ण यह क्षेत्र देश की आजादी के आन्दोलन में भी अपनी महती भूमिका के कारण विख्यात रहा है।

विश्वविद्यालय आधारभूत सुविधाओं की दृष्टि से प्रदेश व देश में अपना विशिष्ट स्थान रखता है। विद्यार्थियों को वर्तमान वैश्विक युग की आवश्यकताओं के अनुसार गुणवत्तायुक्त उच्च शिक्षा देने हेतु प्रयत्नशील है। वर्तमान में ज्ञान स्वयं ही संसाधन बन गया है। अतः ज्ञान सम्पन्न, मानव संसाधन विकसित करने के लिए विश्वविद्यालय पाठ्यक्रमों को अद्यतन कर वैश्विक आवश्यकताओं के अनुरूप बनाने हेतु प्रयासरत है। उच्च शिक्षा को जन-जन तक पहुँचाने के दायित्व का निर्वहन विश्वविद्यालय अपने सीमित संसाधनों में पूरी ईमानदारी व लगन से कर रहा है।

यह विश्वविद्यालय 222 एकड़ भू-क्षेत्र में विकसित है, जिसमें पृथक-पृथक विभागीय शैक्षणिक भवन, नवीनतम उत्कृष्ट उपकरणों से समृद्ध प्रयोगशालाएँ, आधुनिक सुविधाओं से युक्त पुस्तकालय, भव्य प्रेक्षागृह, विशाल प्रशासनिक भवन, सामुदायिक केन्द्र, चिकित्सालय, कम्प्यूटर केन्द्र, वातानुकूलित सभागार, मूल्यांकन केन्द्र, आठ छात्रावास, अभियांत्रिकी व विद्युत विभाग के पृथक-पृथक भवन, डाकखाना, बैंक, रेलवे आरक्षण केन्द्र, क्रीडा भवन, कुश्ती स्टेडियम, विशेष रूप से विकसित किए गए विविध खेल मैदान तथा कोर्ट, 400 व 1100 मीटर के दो एथलेटिक ट्रैक, तपोवन एवं साहित्य कुटीर आदि ढाँचागत सुविधाएँ हैं। विश्वविद्यालय परिसर घने छायादार वृक्षों से आच्छादित है।

उपलब्धियाँ

1. शिक्षा में गुणवत्ता बनाये जाने हेतु सभी विभागों द्वारा एकात्मिक गतिविधियों, संगोष्ठियों तथा व्याख्यान कार्यक्रम आयोजित किये।
2. सम्पूर्ण प्रवेश प्रक्रिया को ऑनलाइन कर परीक्षा व मूल्यांकन को समय से सम्पन्न करके व्यवस्था को पटरी पर लाना।
3. यूएनओ की आईसीआरआईएसएटी संस्था के साथ एमओयू साइन करना।
4. विश्वविद्यालय में मितव्ययता पर अंकुश लगाकर वित्तीय स्थिति को सुधारना।
5. सभी कॉलेज व संस्थानों की वेबसाइट बनाकर नेक से निरीक्षण के लिए प्रेरित किया गया।
6. छात्रों को अपने कार्यों के लिए कम से कम वि.वि. आना पड़े ऐसी व्यवस्था बनाने का प्रयास।
7. पी.एच.डी. प्रवेश परीक्षा का कार्य प्रारम्भ किया गया।
8. कृषि, विज्ञान, कला, शिक्षा विधि एवं अभियांत्रिकी व प्रौद्योगिकी संकाय आदि के तहत संचालित विभागों ने राष्ट्रीय व अन्तरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर विभिन्न क्षेत्रों तआम उपलब्धियाँ अर्जित की।
9. दीक्षान्त समारोह के उपरान्त स्नातक/स्नातकोत्तर के अन्तिम वर्ष के छात्रों को उपाधियाँ सम्बन्धित महाविद्यालयों से उपलब्ध कराना।
10. वि.वि. सम्बन्धित कॉलेजों में रेगिग रोकने के लिए यूजीसी के निर्देशों को कड़ाई से पालन कराना।

कैम्पस में संचालित सेल्फ फाइनेंस कोर्स व अन्य कोर्स

एम.फिल-जेनेटिक्स एण्ड प्लांट ब्रीडिंग, एम.फिल-हॉर्टीकल्चर, एम.फिल-बॉटनी, एम.फिल-गणित, एम.फिल-माइक्रोबायोलॉजी, एम.फिल-फिजिक्स, एम.फिल-सांख्यिकी, एम.फिल-तुल्यता, एम.फिल-इकोनॉमिक्स, एम.फिल-इंग्लिश, एम.फिल-हिन्दी, एम.फिल-इतिहास, एम.फिल-राजनिधि शास्त्र, एम.फिल-साइकलॉजी, एम.फिल-संस्कृत, एम.फिल-समाजशास्त्र, एम.फिल-उर्दू, एम.एससी-जेनेटिक्स एण्ड प्लांट ब्रीडिंग, एम.एससी-बॉटनी, एम.एससी-कैमिस्ट्री, एम.एससी-गणित, एम.एससी-माइक्रोबायोलॉजी, एम.एससी-फिजिक्स, एम.एससी-सांख्यिकी, एम.एससी-टैक्सिकोलॉजी, एम.एससी-जूलॉजी, एम.एड, एम.ए-इकोनॉमिक्स, एम.ए-इंग्लिश, एम.ए-हिन्दी, एम.ए-इतिहास, एम.ए-राजनिधि शास्त्र, एम.ए-संस्कृत, एम.ए-समाज शास्त्र, एम.ए-उर्दू, एडवांस डिप्लोमा इन रशियन लैंग्वेज एण्ड लिटरेचर, डिप्लोमा इन रशियन लैंग्वेज, सॉर्टिकिफिकेट ऑफ प्रोफिशियन्सी इन रशियन, एम.एससी-सीड साइंस एण्ड टेक्नोलॉजी, प्लांट प्रोटेक्शन, फूड साइंस, बायो-टेक्नोलॉजी, बायो-केमिस्ट्री, इण्डस्ट्रियल बायो-टेक्नोलॉजी, एप्लाइड माइक्रोबायोलॉजी, बायो-इन्फॉर्मेटिक्स, मेडिकल माइक्रोबायोलॉजी, इन्वायरनमेंटल साइंस, फूड एण्ड न्यूट्रीशन, ह्यूमन डेवलपमेंट एम.ए-व्यवसायिक हिन्दी, मास्टर ऑफ ह्यूमन रिसोर्स डेवलपमेंट, एम.एसडब्ल्यू, एम.ए-ज्योकी, टीवी-जर्नलिज्म, योगा, ज्योतिष, एडीएसीपी, डीपीएम एण्ड आईआर, बीपीएड, एलएलबी, सीपीएफ, बीएलआईएससी, एमफिल-पब्लिक एडमिनिस्ट्रेशन, एमफिल ज्योग्राफी आदि।

जी.पी. श्रीवास्तव (बी.सी.एस.)
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the governance structure of these respective countries. A single rate-based GST is best suited for countries that have either a unitary form of governance like China or are smaller in size like Singapore. Some countries that have a federal form of governance like Canada and Brazil have a dual structure GST, similar to India.

Similarly, a single rate across all commodities would have created havoc and inflation in the market, leading to regressive taxation. The products which were taxed at a lower rate in the pre-GST structure would have been taxed at a higher rate under GST and, luxuries which were taxed higher in the pre-GST structure, would have been taxed at a lower rate.

However, going further, the present form of GST is far from perfect, and certain issues need to be addressed. These include bringing in specifically excluded items under the GST net, simplifying the multiple GST rates and the return filing process, and strengthening the GST Council.

At the initial stages, some items have not been covered under GST. These include alcohol for human consumption, petroleum products, natural gas, real estate, construction and electricity. It is important to note that these items would be gradually brought under the GST net, and are different from 'exempted items' which attract a GST rate of 0 per cent. While they remain outside the GST purview, they con-

tinue to be taxed in the earlier way through the respective state/Centre taxes.

Historically, these items have contributed significantly to tax revenues of the states and the Centre (VAT and Central Excise Tax); therefore, it is a sound decision to allow GST revenues to stabilise before including these under the new

» GST is a work in progress, and the uneasiness among businesses is the short-term cost to be borne to appreciate the long-term benefits

tax regime. Discussions on bringing petroleum products under the ambit of GST have already begun at both the Centre and the state-level. This move is expected to lead to further rationalisation of rates of petroleum products in sync with the market-linked fuel pricing mechanism. Efforts should be initiated to also include the other items under the GST system to make the system more uniform.

The GST Council is one of the strongest federal bodies in India. While the sheer number of meetings of the GST Council has been criti-

cised as an exhibition of incertitude, it is best seen as a sign of swift action and commitment on the part of the Council to improve the system. Concerns flagged by various stakeholders have received due recognition as 376 changes have been made in GST since its inception through the amendment of rules, issuance of clarifications and circulars related to refund, exemption and rates.

The GST Council has also fared well to ensure harmonious indirect tax sharing between the Centre and the states, thereby promoting cooperative federalism in the country. It is also to the credit of the Council that this new tax has not depressed consumption or been inflationary. However, the issue of the GST Council making decisions based on consensus instead of voting needs to be looked at. The voting system in the Council requires 75 per cent of the weighted votes as majority; neither can the Centre with 33 per cent weighted votes, nor can the states with 67 per cent of the weighted votes, decide unilaterally on any agenda. This voting pattern has been a source of conflict in the past and has therefore not been invoked to make decisions. However, it is essential that decision-making relies on the stipulated voting pattern in order to strengthen the GST Council in its current form.

To make the GST ecosystem more effective, some provisions for redressal in case of deviation from recommendations must be designed.

Since its inception, the system continues to steadily plod towards perfection. It is a work in progress, and the uneasiness among businesses is the short-term cost to be borne to appreciate the long-term benefits associated with the unified tax regime. Such teething problems are commonplace with regime changes; and, knowledge dissemination and support services by various authorities are assisting in enabling a smooth migration. Going further, it is imperative that the issues pertaining to the multiplicity of rates as well as operational difficulties are simplified at the earliest to honestly realise the aforementioned benefits of 'one nation, one tax'. If the GST Council continues to move as expeditiously as it has in the past, the long road to attaining a perfect indirect tax regime in India will definitely not be a weary one.

(Himanshu Arora, Vedanta Dhamija, Phalasha Nagpal are Young Professionals, EAC-PM, NITI Aayog)



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THE MIDAS TOUCH

With Virat Kohli and MS Dhoni, RCB and CSK have benefitted immensely over the last eleven editions of IPL. But, the question arises: who among them is the more reliable finisher?

SRIDHAR VENKATESH

With the 2019 ICC Cricket World Cup just over a year away, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has its hands full with finalising the selection, as several worthy cricketers will be vying for a spot in the Indian ODI team, to win cricket's most coveted trophy.

However, a year is long enough for both, the selectors – who will need to analyse their choices and submit the final names of players to be sent to England – and players – who will have to improve their performances and impress the selectors. The 15-member team is unlikely to be announced before the next year. That leaves the selectors with plenty of time to sit on their choices before sealing the final list.

That being said, there will be several names that are most certainly going to make the cut. Among the names that will be picked without a shred of doubt are captain Virat Kohli and his predecessor Mahendra Singh Dhoni. Very few people question the fact that the Indian skipper is the best batsman in the world right now, across all three formats of the gentleman's game. In one day internationals, in particular, Kohli shines above everyone else. With an average of 58.10 in 208 ODIs and 9,588 runs, Kohli is unarguably the most prolific limited-overs batsman in the game right now.

However intimidating Kohli's numbers may be, there is no denying that MS Dhoni has won games with his bat and gloves for the Men in Blue, day in and day out, for over a decade. A deadly finisher, the likes of whom are rare to find, Dhoni has more than often snatched victory from the jaws of defeat and secured a win for India when it seemed almost impossible. And, if Dhoni was known for something other than his superior ability to finish off crunch games, it was for his superb captaincy and tactical genius.

However, at this time of the year, ODI cricket usually takes a backseat, as the Indian Premier League fever sets in on cricket lovers around the world. The T20 extravaganza is among the most watched sporting events, not only in India but the world over, with cricketers from various nations turning up to play for the 10 franchises. And, as expected, Kohli and Dhoni are the cynosure of all eyes whenever their respective franchises, Royal Challengers Bangalore and Chennai Super

Kings, take centre-stage.

Over the eleven editions of IPL, RCB and CSK have benefitted immensely from the contributions of these two men, as they finish off innings where the target seems barely attainable. However, the question often arises: who between Kohli and Dhoni is the best chaser in IPL history? The question may sound simple, but the answer can't be found by merely looking at the scorecards of the two teams.

CSK, who were crowned IPL champions twice, did not play the 2016 and 2017 seasons. Yet, coming back after a two-season break, they have been resolute in chasing down seemingly impossible targets, thanks to their charismatic captain MS Dhoni. Of the 33 occasions that CSK has managed to successfully chase down a target in the nine editions of IPL that it has played, Dhoni has carried his bat on 11 occasions, guiding his team to victory even when the target was massive. In these 33 games that CSK has won while chasing, Dhoni has also managed to score over 30 on eight different occasions, vital runs for the team whenever they have been chasing.

When similar statistics are compared for Virat Kohli, we see that the Bengaluru-based outfit has won 38 games while chasing, over the eleven seasons they have played. In these 38 games, Kohli has notched up over 30 runs on 17 occasions, more than twice that of Dhoni. Moreover, Kohli has remained not out during his team's wins on 15 occasions, four times more than Dhoni has.

Numerically, Kohli has been a more vital presence in his team's victory during run-chases than Dhoni has been for CSK. Add this to the fact that Kohli is currently the leader in the list of highest run scorers in the history of IPL, and you can see why the 29-year-old Delhi batsman is so highly valued by his franchise. In terms of centuries scored in

However intimidating Kohli's numbers may be, there is no denying that MS Dhoni has won games with his bat and gloves for the Men in Blue, day in and day out

the IPL, a rare feat considering the limited number of overs available to each side, Kings XI Punjab's Chris Gayle is unequalled; having scored six tons in the 11 consecutive seasons he has played in the T20 tournament. However, Kohli has his sights set on Gayle's record too, as he is just two centuries below and placed second on the list.

Despite all his personal feats, one major achievement continues to evade Kohli: the coveted IPL Champions trophy. Kohli has been an indispensable part of the Bengaluru outfit since the tournament's inception in 2008. And, since he took over the captaincy of RCB in 2014, his team has displayed commendable performances over the last five seasons, even finishing runners-up in the 2016 edition of the tournament. However, the IPL

winner's podium is yet to be marked by Kohli's footprints. And, perhaps that is where Dhoni has shown his mettle.

Having led Chennai since the team's inception, Dhoni has guided his team to the winner's podium on two successive occasions, in 2010 and 2011. Not only have Chennai been champions twice, they have also finished as runners-up five times; despite not having played two editions of the tournament.

This can be attributed to the core strength of CSK remaining stable over almost a decade. With players like Suresh Raina, Ravindra Jadeja and Murali Vijay, Dhoni has with him experienced and talented batsmen, who regularly chip in with more than useful contributions. CSK, has also, over the years, often had the most potent spin bowling line-up, with Jadeja troubling the opponents with his deadly accuracy and left-arm spin.

So far, the 2018 season of IPL has proven to be a more than a happy comeback for CSK, as they seem unstoppable on their way to qualifying to another playoff spot. RCB, however, have a lot to accomplish, as they are, for now, struggling at the sixth spot. But, as long as they have India's most prolific batsman on their side, RCB can still keep their hopes up.

(Sridhar Venkatesh is Senior Sub-Editor, Millennium Post)



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INDIANOIL'S CSR INITIATIVES

ENRICHING SOCIAL WELL-BEING

IndianOil's CSR initiatives are an attempt to enrich the society, upholding the welfare of its members and creating a healthy and wholesome nation

In addition to reaching essential fuels viz. kerosene, LPG, petrol, diesel, etc. to each nook and corner of the country, IndianOil has been engaged in a variety of social welfare activities across India. IndianOil's CSR activities have emphasised on the upliftment of certain key areas, including, 'Safe drinking water and protection of water resources', 'Healthcare and sanitation', 'Education and employment-enhancing vocational skills', 'Empowerment of women and socially/economically backward groups', etc. IndianOil's CSR projects are mostly undertaken in the vicinity of its establishments for improving the quality of community living, which invariably includes marginalised groups belonging to the underprivileged sections of society - Scs, STs, PHs, OBCs, etc. IndianOil, over time, has established a robust CSR legacy, which started much before the CSR legislation (Companies Act, 2013) came into force in 2014-15. For the year 2017-18, the entire budget allocation for completing the various projects was spent, thereby achieving 100 per cent budget utilisation.

IndianOil (AOD) Hospital, Digboi, Assam

Assam Oil Division Hospital, Digboi, established in 1906, is a 200-bed hospital equipped with an array of modern facilities. It caters to the population residing in the periphery of Digboi and other nearby areas of the North-East. Every year, about one lakh patients are treated at this hospital, out of which about 15 per cent are non-employee patients. This hospital registers about 4,000 patients for indoor admissions and conducts operative procedures on approximately 2,000 patients every year. Several health camps - both general and specialised - are also organised regularly by the hospital to reach out to the poor villagers in the vicinity, who have no access to medical consultations or treatment. During the year 2017-18, 14,669 non-employee patients were treated at AOD Hospital, Digboi.

Swarna Jayanti Samudaik Hospital, Mathura, UP

Swarna Jayanti Samudayik Hospital at Mathura (with 50 beds), established in 1999, provides medical treatment to



▶ Products used to make basket and mats, Digboi, Assam



▶ Vegetable seller in Ladakh



▶ CSR initiatives for free health camp for villagers in Digboi, Assam

residents near the Mathura Refinery. Two mobile dispensaries also frequent the villages in the nearby areas to provide free medical care to the villagers in need of medical attention. The hospital provides free treatment to the destitute and offers subsidised treatment to others. During 2017-18, 57,752 patients were treated at this Hospital, out of which, operative procedures were conducted on 767 patients.

IndianOil Assam Oil School of Nursing, Digboi, Assam

Assam Oil School of Nursing (AOSN), established in 1986, offers a three-year Diploma in General Nursing and Midwifery (GNM) to young girls with an intake capacity of 30 students per year. A four-year B.Sc. Nursing course was also started in 2014, with an intake capacity of 30 students per year. With this, the capacity has been doubled since 2016-17, as 60 students are being enrolled for two programs every year [30 for GNM and 30 for B.Sc.(Nursing)]. Before AOSN's inception, there was a dearth of qualified nurses in the North-East. AOSN is able to provide opportunities to young underprivileged

girls to bridge this gap and simultaneously provide them with stable careers and livelihood opportunities. 410 students have successfully completed the GNM course with a 100 per cent placement record. In FY 2017-18, 59 girls were enrolled under the GNM & B.Sc. courses.

Skill Development Institute (SDI), Bhubaneswar

Skill Development Institute, Bhubaneswar (SDI-B) was established on May 9, 2016, with an aim to provide opportunities for skilling and livelihood to the unemployed and underprivileged youth of Odisha, while simultaneously contributing skilled manpower to the industry. SDI-B started operations in two trades viz. Industrial Electrician and Welder in the pilot campus. With the increasing demand for skilled manpower in the market, SDI-B added three new courses viz. Fitter, Instrumentation and Computer Data Application (only for girls) in 2017-18. Since its inception, 284 students have successfully completed various courses and 80 per cent of them have been placed. A plan is underway to establish a permanent campus of SDI-

Bhubaneswar near Taraboi, Jatni, Odisha, which will be a mega-world-class model skill academy. Once functional, about 3,000 to 4,000 youth will be trained every year in 16 regular trades pertaining to the hydrocarbon sector and local industries. The objective is to train about 40,000 youth in the next 10 years, equipped with global employability skill sets.

IndianOil Multi Skill Development Institute, Digboi, Assam

IndianOil Multi-Skill Development Institute (iMSDI), Digboi, started operations in 2014 to provide vocational skill training to local youth in various industry-linked skills and competencies. Every year, about 400 beneficiaries benefit from this project. iMSDI offers short duration courses of three months each. The target beneficiaries include unemployed/underemployed/BPL youth of the North-East region with specific emphasis on the surrounding areas of Digboi. The short-term courses have been identified based on the job requirements of the member industries of CII, the implementing partner. During 2017-18, 237 youth were enrolled in various courses, out of which 176 stu-

dents have been certified.

Shikshak Dakshata Vikas Abhiyaan, Digboi, Assam

'Shikshak Dakshata Vikas Abhiyan', a unique teacher-training program (started in the year 2014), is being organised in coordination with the District Education department of the Government of Assam. There is a dire need to encourage children to attend school regularly and a teacher can play an instrumental role in making the classrooms more engaging and interactive. This program aims to improve the soft skills of the government school teachers, so that classrooms can be more interesting for the students. This is the first attempt by a PSU in the North-East to train teachers to positively influence students. During FY 2017-18, 225 teachers have been trained.

Kaushal Vikas Kendra, Barauni, Bihar

IndianOil's Kaushal Vikas Kendra, Barauni started functioning from March 2017 with an aim to provide skill training to the youth of the Begusarai district. At


present, skill training is provided in five trades viz. Plumbing, Masonry, Welding, Fitter and Electrical works. Candidates are mobilised through organised awareness camps in villages near IndianOil's Barauni Refinery. Priority is given to school dropouts and economically weaker sections of the society. Classes are organised in association with National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) under National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF). After the completion of training, assessment is done through NSDC authorised agencies, after which NSDC certificates are issued to the successful candidates. During 2017-18, 448 candidates have been enrolled under various trades, out of which 341 candidates have been certified.

Sarve Santu Niramaya, Digboi, Assam

IndianOil's unique CSR initiative titled 'Sarve Santu Niramaya' (Good health to all) was launched in December 2012, to provide free health consultation and free medicines for humans as well as livestock of the villages near Digboi Refinery. This was initiated with the belief that the health of livestock is as important as that of human beings, as livestock is a key livelihood generator for the villagers. During 2017-18, 28 Sarve Santu Niramaya camps were organised, in which 3,766 human beings and 23,496 cattle/poultry were treated and vaccinated.


IndianOil Gyanodaya

IndianOil Gyanodaya Scheme was launched in 2017, with the aim to provide scholarships to students pursuing two-year regular courses in Government ITIs and three-year regular courses in Government Polytechnics, on a merit-cum-means basis, to incentivise the students to display their best performance. The scheme aims to cover 36 Government institutes (18 ITIs and 18 Polytechnics) near nine IndianOil Refinery locations. 50 students per batch are selected from each institute every year. Each student is provided with a scholarship of Rs 1000/- per month for the entire duration of their regular courses. During 2017-18, 1308 students from 30 ITIs and Polytechnics have been selected for the scholarship. During the next five years, 9000 students will benefit from this scheme.



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THEATRE THROUGH THE AGES



An expressive weapon of revolution and a parallel celebration of cultural diversity – Indian theatre has traversed an enviable path since its inception many centuries ago

KAUSHIKIBRATA BANERJEE

From a beginner's literalism to the hieroglyphs of the newly learnt art called theatre, the Bengali *bhadrolok* has witnessed a revue of sheer drama, literature, song and emotion on stage for ages. But, what is more engrossing is how it all began in this land which saw the culmination of some serious creations and acceptance of the foreign along with a parallel interest in neural responses to painstaking learning of what came to be known as "theatre" in today's times. "All the world's a stage and most of us are desperately unrehearsed" — Irish dramatist Seán O'Casey.

Yes, and Bengal was unrehearsed. In the 18th century, at a time when there was a splurge of ideas, notions and deep penetration of foreign knowledge and culture, Bengal, from its rustic *jatras* or folk plays took a giant leap towards stage-theatres which were solely restricted to the European populace.

Folk theatre developed in various regional languages throughout India between the 14th and the 19th centuries. Some conventions and stock characters of classical drama (stage preliminaries, the opening prayer song, the *sutradhara* and the *Vidushaka*) were adopted, that witnessed lavish music, dance, drumming, exaggerated makeup, masks and a singing chorus. Thematically, it dealt with mythological heroes, medieval romances and social and political events, and was a rich store of customs, beliefs, legends and rituals.

The most crystallised forms are the *jatras* of Bengal, the *nautanki*, *ramlila* and *raslila* of North India, the *bhava* of Gujarat, the *tamasha* of Maharashtra, the *terukkuttu* of Tamil Nadu and the *yakshagana* of Karnataka.

Over the years, these *jatras* became more organised. With the spread of colonial values, drama came to be written in Indian languages and performed on stage by local actors in the last quarter of 19th century.

Bengali theatre, as such, came into existence with Russian adventurer Gerasim Stepanovich Lebedev. A multifaceted personality, a violinist and a translator as well, Lebedev translated a play written in English, Richard Paul Jodrell's *The Disguise*, a comedy in three acts, into Bengali. It was performed on stage, something new that came with scene settings, as viewed in European theatres of the time. The first Bengali drama was hence staged on November 27, 1795. Lebedev himself composed the music that served as an accompaniment with the verses being compiled by Bharatchandra Ray Gunakar, author of *Annadamangal* in the early 1750s. It is worth mentioning here that the theatre also witnessed the presence of female actors.

Lebedev, with his keen interest in language and performance, came to Calcutta, the then capital of the British Empire in 1793, as a traveller. He could speak and write in Russian, English and German. In Calcutta, he began to learn Hindi, Sanskrit and Bengali under the guidance of his friend Goloknath Das, a local schoolmaster. And, in return, the latter received lessons in violin and European classical music. Soon, Lebedev became a prominent figure among

local Bengali intellectuals. However, the English did not like his hobnobbing with the Bengalis and his theatre was set on fire. He was, eventually, forced to leave Calcutta in 1797.

Theatre, in Bengal, received a massive jolt. However, slowly, nationalistic tendencies in enterprising producers employed theatre as a forum for social and political ideals designed to influence opinions and raise social consciousness. Gradually, the medium became a weapon to promote social and political reforms.

A few Bengali theatre-lovers staged the- atres including Nabin Chandra Basu who

Bengali temperament. Khirodeprasad Bidyabinode's historical theatre *Prapaditya* had a huge impact on the audience. Khirodeprasad, DL Roy and Girish Chandra Ghosh were called the trio of Swadeshi theatres.

The first elements of realism were introduced in the 1920s by Sisir Kumar Bhaduri, Naresh Mitra, Ahindra Chowdhuri and Durga Das Banerji together with actresses Proba Devi and Kanka Vati.

In his Srirangam Theatre (shut in 1954), Sisir performed two of his most memorable roles — Mughal emperor Aurangzeb and

hury, Chhabi Biswas, Jahar Ganguly, Sarajubala Debi, Bhanu Bandyopadhyay, Robi Ghosh, Soumitra Chatterjee and Basanta Choudhury.

The new century brought in a fresh set of minds into the business. Bratya Basu, currently a minister in Mamata Banerjee's Cabinet, has a rich background of theatre and was involved with Bengali drama from a very young age. Son of popular theatre personality Bishnu Basu, Bratya authored *Ashaleen*, *Shahriyar*, *Aranyadeb*, *Chatushkon*. One of his plays that became immensely popular during his initial days was *Winkle Twinkle*. In 2008, Bratya formed a theatre group called Bratya Jon.

Represented solely by the folk forms for centuries, modern Marathi theatre evolved in the 19th century. At the behest of King Patwardhan of Sangli, Vishnudas Bhave composed *Sita Swayamvar*, which was performed on November 5, 1843.

Earlier, the Bombay Parsi firms, using Hindi and Urdu, toured throughout India. The Maharashtra theatre was developed by powerful dramatists like Khadilkar and Gadkari, who emphasised Maratha nationalism.

In the 1860s, came plays like VJ Kirtane's *Thorale Madhavrao Peshawe*. The status of women became a point of discussion by the 1870s, with lesser-known plays such as *Swairasakesha* propagating the shaving of hair by widows. But, gradually, the concept changed and pro-women plays came into existence, addressing issues such as child marriage, widowhood and girls' education. Bhave's *Gopichand* was staged in Bombay in 1853 and it became the first Marathi play to be staged in the city. Bombay was the place where the seeds of professional Marathi theatre were sown.

From Narayan Shripad Rajhans, better known as Bal Gandharva, Vasant Kanetkar and Satish Alekar to Atul Pethe, Makarand Sathe, all maintain an unobtrusive reserve that sums up the inherent nature of Marathi culture.

From the decline of the *sangeet natak* (Marathi musicals) in the 1940s to the highly energetic offerings by Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Elkunchwar and Satish Alekar in the 1970s, to the path-breaking Dalit and Kaamgaar (labourers) theatre of the 1980s, the modern Marathi theatre has had several milestones and limitations.

In the 1960s, Girish Karnad came to the fore with his plays that saw the immense use of history and mythology. In 1978, Prithvi Theatre, Mumbai's most iconic theatre hotspot, came into being. It was built by Shashi Kapoor in memory of his father Prithviraj Kapoor.

Today, with dedicated top-notch theatre festivals, international collaborations and an urge to experiment with different styles of drama, the journey of Indian theatre ahead is promising, long and as interesting as it was during its inception! (Kaushikibrata Banerjee is Associate Editor, Millennium Post)



staged *Vidya Sundar* in 1835, Tara Charan Sikhandar did *Vadrajun*. It was from the second half of the 19th century that the socioeconomic conditions of Bengal and the essence of nationalism were reflected in the plays. Michael Madhusudan Dutta (1824–73) was the first dramatist to consciously borrow the western concept and his form of playwrightship rendered an indigenous flavour to those compositions, which were mostly tragic and based on bitter contests. The style, diction, dialogues and characters were exuberant, Sanskritised and tuneful. His play *Sharmistha* needs a special mention here.

Dutta's contemporary, Dinabandhu Mitra (1843–87), projected social issues with subtle satire. His *Nildarpan* (Mirror of the Indigo), highlighting an English planter raping an Indian peasant woman, ushered in a new era in the history of Bengali theatre.

Actor-director-writer Girish Chandra Ghosh (1844–1912) founded the National Theatre in 1872, the first Bengali professional company and toured widely featuring *Nildarpan* in cities like Delhi and Lucknow. The firebrand speeches and lurid scenes of British brutality resulted in strict censorship of this production. Frustrated by the harsh restrictions, many playwrights turned their attention to historical and mythological themes with veiled symbolism. The heroes and villains of these plays represented the Indian freedom fighter against the British.

Girish's historical tragedies *Mir Qasim* (1906), *Chhatrapati* (1907) and *Sirajudaulah* (1909) deserve a special mention. DL Roy's (1863–1913) creations reflected the same spirit of nationalism in his historical dramas — *Mebarapatan* (The Fall of Mebar), *Shahjahan* (1910) and *Chandragupta* (1911).

The Star Theatre, built in 1883, along with Minerva and The Classic were the first institutions of commercial Bengali theatre. Here, the first motion pictures made by Hira Lala Sen were screened. Bengali theatre took a significant turn with the Swadeshi movement. A tendency to glorify the past became important to uplift

the shrewd Hindu philosopher-politician Chanakya. Sisir's style was refined by actor-director Sombhu Mitra and his actress wife Tripti, who worked in the Left-wing People's Theatre movement in the 1940s. With other actors, they founded the Bahurup group in 1949 and produced many of Rabindranath Tagore's plays including *Rakta Karabi* (Red Oleanders) and *Bisarjan* (Sacrifice).

Perhaps the most controversial and certainly one of the most complete theatre personalities that India has produced is Utpal Dutt. His plays, mixed with ideology, triggered widespread debate. Often called an "opportunist", "adventurist" or a "flaming comrade", depending upon how closely a given play toes the critics' thoughts, Utpal Dutt emerged as one of the finest actors both on stage and in Hindi films as well. His plays that were critical towards contemporary socio-political reality helped create Peoples Little Theatre which brought in a different kind of theatre culture in Bengal.

The IPTA (Indian People's Theatre Association) was reorganised in August 1967, at Bagbar Reading Library Hall. Earlier, the formation of the IPTA in 1943, following the launch of the Quit India Movement, was no mere coincidence. During this period, those who felt the need to participate in the political process attempted to strengthen nationalism through creativity and pursue social realism, thus invigorating progressive forces.

Against a backdrop of the Second World War, Bengal famine of 1943 and the repressive British rule, this association brought together legendary playwrights like Prithviraj Kapoor, Utpal Dutt, Shambhu Mitra, Bijon Bhattacharya, Ritwik Ghatak, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, Salil Chowdhury, Pandit Ravi Shankar, S Tera Singh Chan among others. The movement brought about by IPTA heavily influenced not only Indian drama but also cinema and music.

Other important names in Bengali theatre were Ajitesh Bandyopadhyay (founder of Nandikar in 1960), Bibhash Chakraborty, Manoj Mitra, Partha Pratim Chowdh-

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