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CM LEAVES FOR COOCH BEHAR. ALIPURDUAR TOUR TODAY PG3



MEGA DEFENCE **DEALS LIKELY DURING PM'S TRIP**



BRITAIN'S **CONSERVATIVES TO** FOCUS ON BREXIT,



SONAKSHI IN PLEASING



Quick News >>

Govt to ensure 60-yr limit followed for senior

MPOST BUREAU

tries, departments and also private agencies to adopt '60 years' as the uniform age criterion to define senior citizens as to address anomalies in extending benefits to the elderly. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is contemplating to bring in an amendment in the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (MWPSC) Act, 2007, to implement this change. The MWPSC Act defines senior citizens as any person who is a citizen of India and has attained the age of '60 years and above'.

The phrase '... and above' is being manipulated by several agencies to deny benefits under senior-citizen clauses by adopting different age limits, a government official said. "It came to our notice that several government departments have adopted different age criteria for extending the benefits and the concessions meant for the elderly. Similarly, some private insurance companies have set different age limits," the official said. The eligibility criteria for extending travel concessions to senior citizens by Air India was until recently 63 years. Last week, the national carrier lowered it to 60 years. According to the official, the Air India issue was taken up by former social justice minister Kumari Selja during the previous UPA government but had remained unresolved. The Social Justice Ministry again took it up recently with Civil Aviation Minister Ashok Gajapathi Raju, following which the age limit was revised.

Take care of students from Jammu & Kashmir

NARENDRA MODI



CITY

MINORS KILL FRIEND OVER CRICKET BET 3

SONU POSTS AZAAN VIDEO AMID ROW 7

EDIT

INTERNATIONAL

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EAST BENGAL RETURN TO WINNING WAYS 15

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ENERGY IN POLL' PG10

DOESN'T BELIEVE

EVERYBODY PG16

citizen benefit

NEW DELHI: The government wants minis-

In the Indian Railways, the eligibility for availing of concessions in the basic fares for women is '58 years and above' while for men it is '60 years and above'.



NATION

WHAT NEXT FOR TURKEY?

SAUDI KING'S SON NAMED US ENVOY 11

BUSINESS

SPORT

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US accuses TCS, Infosys of violating H-1B visa norms

THESE IT BIGGIES APPARENTLY CORNERED A LION'S SHARE OF VISAS

WASHINGTON: The US has accused top Indian IT firms TCS and Infosys of unfairly cornering the lion's share of H-1B visas by putting extra tickets in the lottery system, which the Trump administration wants to replace with a more merit-based immigration policy.

At a White House briefing last week, an official in the Trump administration said a small number of giant outsourcing firms flood the system with applications which naturally ups their chances of success in the lottery draw.

'You may know their names well, but like the top recipients of the H-1B visa are companies like Tata, Infosys, Cognizant -they will apply for a very large number of visas, more than they get, by putting extra tickets in the lottery raffle, if you will, and then they'll get the lion's share of visas," the senior official said, according to transcript of the briefing posted on White House

Responding to a follow- up on why Indian companies were singled out for a mention, the White House response said Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys and Cognizant were the top three recipients of H-1B visas.

"And those three companies are companies that have an average wage for H-1B visas

Jaitley flags H-1B concerns with US Treasury Secretary

WASHINGTON: Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has raised the issue of tightening of the H-1B visa regime with his US counterpart Steven Mnuchin during their first meeting and highlighted the contribution of Indian companies and professionals to the American economy. This was the second time Jaitley raised the H-1B visa issue with the American side during his visit here to attend the annual Spring Meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. He had also raised the issue with US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross earlier. During their meeting on Saturday, Jaitley and Mnuchin discussed a wide range of bilateral issues, in addition to the international cooperation against terror financing.

(a year). By contrast, the median who oftentimes use workers for Silicon Valley software engineer's wage is probably around \$ 150,000," the official said.

He said contracting firms

entry-level positions, capture the lion's share of H-1B visas. "And that's all public record."

All the three Indian firms refused to comment on the US The official said H-1B visas

presently were awarded through a random lottery with about 80 per cent of H-1B workers being paid less than the median wage in their fields. "Only about 5 to 6 percent, depending on the year, of H-1B workers command the highest wage tier recognised by the Department of Labour, there being four wage tiers. And the highest wage tier, for instance, in 2015, was only 5 percent of H1B workers," he

He said workers are often brought in well below market rates to replace American workers, again, sort of violating the principle of the programme, which is supposed to be a means for bringing in skilled labour.

"Instead you're bringing in a lot of times workers who are actually less skilled and lower paid than the workers that they're replacing," he said.

So if the current system that awards visas randomly without regard for skill or wage is changed to a skills-based awarding, it would make it extremely difficult to use the visa to replace or undercut American workers, he said. "Because you're not bringing in workers at beneath the market wage. And so it's a very elegant way of solving problems in the H-1B guest worker visa," he said. AGENCIES

FRANCE VOTES IN **ELECTION HUMDINGER**

MOST UNPREDICTABLE PREZ POLL IN DECADES

PARIS: France began voting on Sunday under heavy security in the first round of the most unpredictable presidential election in decades, with the outcome seen as vital for the future of the beleaguered European Union.

Polling stations opened at 0600 GMT and the last will close at 1800 GMT with estimated results expected shortly afterwards.

Far-right leader Marine Le Pen and centrist Emmanuel Macron are the favourites to progress to a run-off on May 7 but the result is too close to call in a deeply divided country. Le Pen, the 48-year-old leader of

the National Front (FN), hopes to capitalise on security fears that were catapulted to the fore of the campaign after the fatal shooting of a policeman on Paris's Champs Elysees avenue claimed by the Islamic State group.

Aiming to ride a wave of populism that led Donald Trump to the White House and Britain to vote for Brexit, Le Pen also wants to pull France out of the eurozone and has threatened to take the country out of the EU as well.

Her ambitions have led observers to predict that a Le Pen victory could be a fatal blow for the EU, already weakened by Britain's vote to leave the bloc. Macron, only 39, is seeking to become France's youngest ever president and has campaigned on a strongly pro-EU and pro-business platform.

Seeking to benefit from a worldwide move away from established political parties, the former banker and economy minister formed his



the move"), that he says is "neither to the left nor to the right."

But polls show scandal-tainted conservative candidate Francois Fillon, a former prime minister, and hard-left firebrand Jean-Luc Melenchon are also in with a fighting chance of finishing among the top two candidates and reaching the allimportant second round.

Hundreds of thousands of French expatriates in the US, Canada and South America cast their ballots on Saturday In the wake of the policeman's

killing on Thursday, 50,000 police and 7,000 soldiers have been deployed around France to protect voters. Analysts believe the attack so late in the campaign could shift the focus

from the economy to security and hand an advantage to candidates seen as taking a hard line on the issue. "If it were to benefit someone, that would clearly be Marine Le Pen who

has dominated this issue throughout the campaign, or Francois Fillon," said Adelaide Zulfikarpasic of the BVA polling institute. In the aftermath of the attack, Le

Pen called for France to "immediately" take back control of its borders from the EU and deport all foreigners on a terror watchlist. See also P11

2 BJP-ruled states among 7 opposed to all-India judicial service

NEW DELHI: Seven states, (first class) level which is not in including BJP-ruled Madhya consonance with the provisions Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh, of AIJS included in the Constihave opposed the formation of an all-India judicial service, a 60-year-old proposal which has received a fresh push from the Modi government.

Another BJP-ruled state, Maharashtra, wants recruitment for the all-India judicial service (AIJS) to be done in a particular manner which the Law Ministry feels is "not in consonance" with the provisions of the service included in the Constitution.

According to a Law Ministry note on AIJS circulated to members of a parliamentary consultative committee attached with the ministry, the governments of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Manipur, Odisha and Uttarakhand want major changes in the proposal formulated by the Centre.

"State governments of Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Punjab do not favour formation of AIJS. The Maharashtra government wants recruitment to be done at judicial magistrate

tution," it said. Besides these 13 states, "no response" has been received from the rest, the note states. Also, the high courts of Andhra Pradesh, Bombay, Delhi, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Madras, Patna and Punjab and Haryana have not favoured the idea. The Narendra Modi government has given a fresh push to the long-pending proposal to set up the new service to have a separate cadre for lower judiciary in the country.

There is also a divergence of opinion among state governments and respective high courts on the constitution of the AIJS.

One of the problems cited is that since several states, using their powers under Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and Code of Civil Procedure (CPC), have declared that the local language would be used in lower courts even for writing orders, a person, say selected from Tamil Nadu, may find it difficult to hold proceedings in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

OUR CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI: Prime Minister growth. Addressing the third meeting of the Governing Council of Niti Aayog, Modi also said the think-tank's long, medium and

told the meeting, which was attended by chief ministers, union ministers and senior

officials. The prime minister further said the vision of 'New India' can only be realised through the combined efforts and cooperation of all the states.

"Team India" has assembled here to discuss and reflect on ways to prepare the country for changing global trends, Modi

Noting that the chief minis-

States asked to speed up infrastructure development

Narendra Modi on Sunday called upon states to "speed up capital expenditure and infrastructure creation" to spur economic

short term action plans would benefit all the states. "Niti Aayog is working on a 15-year long term vision, sevenyear medium term strategy, and three-year action agenda," he

ters need not come to Niti for

approval of budgets or plans, he said the body had gone beyond relying on government inputs creation," he said.

and taken on board a number of outside specialists, experts and young professionals. The states too can contribute to policy formulation, he added.

Modi noted that while there has been a 40 per cent increase in overall fund allocation to states between 2014-15 and 2016-17, the percentage of funds tied to

Central schemes has declined

from 40 per cent to 25 per cent. States need "to speed up capital expenditure and infrastructure

and Services Tax (GST), he said the consensus on the new indirect tax regime will go down in history as a great illustration of cooperative federalism.

Talking about the Goods

GST reflects the spirit of 'One nation, One aspiration, One determination," he added. Bengal Chief Minister

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal were among those who skipped Niti Aayog's Governing Council meet here on Sunday.

However, the source said that Kejriwal sent Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia to represent Delhi, while Bengal finance minister Amit Mitra attended on behalf of Bengal CM Mamata

Among the opposition ruled states, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami attended the meeting.

Others who were present include Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti Sayeed and Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. Union ministers Nitin Gadkari, Rajnath Singh, Suresh Prabhu, Prakash Javadekar, Rao Inderjit Singh and Smriti Irani also attended the meet.

Does service charge reach staff: Ram Vilas Paswan asks hotels

MPOST BUREAU

NEW DELHI: Maintaining that service charge is voluntary, Consumer Affairs Minister Ram Vilas Paswan on Sunday said even if a customer pays it willingly, hotels should make public how much of the amount actually reaches to the

Last week, the government had approved new guidelines giving consumers the right to decide whether they wish to pay a service charge on hotel or restaurant bills.

"Some hotels say that they distribute 30 per cent of the service charge collected from customers to their staff. Does the service charge reach employees?" Paswan said.

At present, it is not known "how much or if at all fully or a part of the service charge" is distributed amongst the hotel

staff, he told reporters. "So, it is necessary that hotel and restaurants owners maintain a record and make it public," he noted.

Clearing the confusion over service tax and service charge, Paswan said that service tax is mandatory, while service charge is not and consumers should be aware of it.

As per the new guidelines, the service charge is not to be incorporated in a hotel and restaurant bill. In fact, the column of service charge should be left blank to customers to



fill up before making the final payment.

"Hotels and restaurants should not decide how much service charge is to be paid by the customer and it should be left to the discretion of the customer. If there is a mandatory levy of service charge, customers can file a complaint in the Consumer Court," he said elaborating on guidelines.

More awareness among consumers is need of the hour because other businesses offering services like salon are also levying a service charge, a senior Consumer Affairs Ministry official said.

Hefty fines and stringent

As per the new guidelines, the service charge is not to be incorporated in a hotel and restaurant bill

action against violation cannot be taken at present as the current Consumer Protection Law does not empower the ministry to do so.

However, the new Consumer Protection Bill under which an authority will be set up will have powers to take

Pak smugglers invent ingenious ways to smuggle drugs into India **CHANDIGARH:** Smugglers digarh Zone unit), Narcot-

from Pakistan are trying novel ways like throwing small contraband packets and using cross-border irrigation network to push drugs into the Indian side in Punjab.

"As it has become difficult to smuggle big packets of contraband of 1 kg and above, the smugglers are now trying to push heroin in small quantity like in 250 grams. They throw the packets from across the border during the night," BSF Inspector General (Punjab Frontier) Mukul Goel said.

The contraband is then picked up by the local smugglers here, he said. He said the Border Security

Force (BSF) has seized 65.561 kg of heroin so far in this year near the Indo-Pak border. Zonal Director (Chan-

ics Control Bureau, Kaustubh Sharma said supplying contraband in smaller quantities means less loss for the smugglers if the substance is seized by the security agencies. The BSF personnel also

found smugglers using tube wells for supplying drugs into the Indian side at Daoke area along the Indo-Pak border in Amritsar. The force this month seized

gled into Indian side through a water pipe. "The plastic pipe of a tube well was used to supply heroin in bottles as the field was located beyond the fence. A

5 kg of heroin which was smug-

string was attached to the bottles to help local smugglers here to pull them out," Goel said. The white-powdered her-

oin was packed in plastic bottles in such a way that it looked like 'lassi' (yoghurt based drink) apparently to hoodwink the BSF troops," an official said.

As the wheat harvesting

season is on, the local associates sometimes try to hide narcotic substances in the cavity of tractors, he said. The BSF is keeping a strict vigil near culverts and water channels to prevent the supply of drugs. The force is also coordi-

nating with the Punjab gov-

ernment as part of the latter's

campaign to end drug menace from the state. "We are working with the Punjab police in this regard,"

Goel said. After assuming office, CM Amarinder Singh had formed a Special Task Force (STF) to end drug mafia in the state. MPOST mp town



Walking up and down the stairs for even 10 minutes can make you feel motivated for the next time you have to sit staring at your computer screen

late the hurdles faced in a typical office setting, where workers spend hours sitting and staring at computer screens and do not have time for a longer bout of exercise during the day. For the study, participants on separate days either ingested capsules containing caffeine or a placebo, or spent 10 minutes walking up and down stairs - about 30 floors total - at a low-inten-



sity pace. "Office workers can go outside and walk, but weather can be less than ideal. It has never rained on me while walking the stairs," said O'Connor.

"And a lot of people working in office buildings have access to stairs, so it is an option to keep some fitness while taking a

short break from work," he said. Study participants were female college students who described themselves as chronically sleep deprived - getting less than six and a half hours per night of shut eve.

To test the effects of caffeine versus the exercise, each group took some verbal and computer-based tests to gauge how they felt and how well they performed certain cognitive tasks. Neither caffeine nor exercise caused large improvements in attention or memory, but stair walking was associated with a small increase in motivation for work. The study was published in the journal Physiology and Behaviour.



DAYINDAYOUT

What's on Around Town

(IM)POSSIBILITIES

A group show of paintings and sculptures of some of the most celebrated artists of the nation, the exhibition, (im) possibilities showcase how one can one can decipher the word impossibilities to read as i m possibilities. The names

showcased in this exhibition has already proved that impossible is nothing and it is a privilege to celebrate their (im) possibilities.

WHEN: April 13 - May 13 WHERE: Creativity Art Gallery, Hauz Khas Village

TIMING: 11 am - 7 pm

FRAMING THE LIVING

TRADITIONS

A collaborative photography project under the aegis of Neel Dongre Awards/ Grants for Excellence in Photography (2017) by India Photo Achieve

Foundation, will showcase five photographers presenting different living traditions like The Art of Making Tanpura in Maharashtra and Muga & Eri Silk cultivation in

Assam through distinctive artistic styles. WHEN: April 21 - May 2 WHERE: Kamla Devi Complex, IIC **TIMING:** 11 am - 7 pm

THE DANCE OF INDIA

Artist Sailesh Sanghvi will be showcasing his twelve works at the solo art exhibition. The collection shows the different types of dances across the India. The artist, in two different genres, acrylic canvas collages and paper collage, portrays the diversity of Indian dances in the cultural set-up through his work from street entertainment to staged performance.

WHEN: April 21–30 WHERE: Bikaner House, Pandara Road TIMING: 6 pm onwards

TRACING NARRATIVES

Tracing Narratives is a traveling exhibition that attempts to create a lens through which the spectators evaluated the world of landscape designs and its many connotations in the present

and near future. Future Institute is hosting the Delhi stop

of Tracing Narratives. WHEN: April 1-24

WHERE: India Habitat Centre **TIMING:** 11 am - 7 pm





effect," said J O'Connor.

study aimed to

CAN'T STOP MUNCHING on chocolates or other unhealthy snacks? Blame your DNA, say a larger waist size was linked to certain forms affect what we eat and our ability to stick with as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and canntists who have identified gene variants that influence our foods choices and dietary habits.

Researchers from Autonomous University of Madrid in Spain analysed the genetics of about 818 men and women of European ancestry and gathered information about their diet using a questionnaire.

They found that the genes they studied did play a significant role in a person's food choices and dietary habits.

of the oxytocin receptor gene, and an obesity associated gene played a role in vegetable and fibre intake, researchers said.

They also observed that certain genes were involved in salt and fat intake.

"Most people have a hard time modifying their dietary habits, even if they know it is in their best interest," said Silvia Berciano from

Autonomous University of Madrid. "This is because our food preferences and

For example, higher chocolate intake and ability to work toward goals or follow plans a person's risk for common diseases – such

"Ours is the first study describing how brain genes affect food intake and dietary preferences in a group of healthy people," she said.

Nobody is eating exactly what you are. It is determined by the specific demands of your genetic signature, and it perfectly balances your micronutrient and macronutrient needs.

The findings could be used to inform precision-medicine approaches that help minimise

cer – by tailoring diet-based prevention and therapy to the specific needs of an individual, researchers said.

"The knowledge gained through our study will pave the way to better understanding of eating behaviour and facilitate the design of personalised dietary advice that will be more amenable to the individual, resulting in better compliance and more successful outcomes," Berciano said. Pick banana, melon, cold milk to



How to protect

skin from sunburn

STOCK UP COCONUT oil. jojoba oil and drink a lot of water to keep sunburn at bay, say experts.

- ▶ Wear a sun block (at least SPF 30) especially in coastal areas or while you're in water as body tends to feel more burn in scorching heat when you are in water.
- You can use coconut oil on exposed skin after staying in the sun to soothe affected skin and avoid sunburns.



a lot of water. Make sure you have at least seven to eight litres of water in summer. Hydrated skin is less prone to sun damage than dry skin.

Wear the right clothes.

a stronger immune sys-

Keep your skin hydrated

not only externally but

also internally by drinking

tem against sunburns.

Sometimes, you have to go outside even during the peak hours in summer, so the best way to prevent sunburn is covering yourself with appropriate clothing. Long-sleeve shirts and pants cover more of your skin than tank tops and shorts so they can help block the sun's rays.

Use jojoba oil as it acts like a shield and helps in curing sunburnt skin. The fastest and safest cure for tanned skin is to apply

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void chances of acidity during the hot days by indulging in bananas, melons and coconut water, say experts.

BANANAS: It is the best antidote for acid reflux and is great for snacking purposes. Potassium in bananas produces mucous in the lining of the stomach, thus lowering the pH levels in the body. Also, bananas are high on fibre and a great source of roughage. Eating over-ripe bananas during summer is the best way to keep acidity at bay.

MELONS: Melons such as cantaloupe, musk melon and watermelon are high on anti-oxidants and fibre, and help avoid acid reflux and other stomach ailments by maintaining the mucous membrane. The cooling properties and high water content in these fruits help hydrate the

body and reduce pH levels. Other fruits such as apple and papaya are also great sources of fibre and aid in preventing acidity.

COCONUT WATER: This refreshing natural drink has cleansing properties that help flush out toxins from your body. Coconut water is also rich in fibre content and helps with regular bowel movements.

COLD MILK: Milk is another excellent way to combat acidity. Milk absorbs acid formation in the stomach, stopping any reflux or burning sensation in the gastric system. Anytime you feel an acid formation in the stomach or heartburn coming on, have a glass of plain cold milk without any additives or sugar.

BÚTTERMILK AND CURD: Besides milk, other milk products (except cheese) like curd and buttermilk also provide relief from acid-



ity. These products cool the stomach and the natural bacteria in them do not allow acid formation. They help in keeping the overall digestive system healthy. Having curd and buttermilk regularly after meals is a great way to avoid chances of acidity in the

SAY NO TO FOOD CARTS: Though these should be avoided

long run too.

all year are definitely a round, they strict no-no during summer season. Rise in temperature goes hand-inhand with water scarcity, which in turn means compromise on washing properly in the kitchen. And that can have a bad effect on your system when you eat food that is not washed properly before cooking or cooked by hands that have been not thor-

oughly cleaned. Gastroenteritis, amoebic dysentery and diarrhoea are common during this time of the

SWAP JUICE FOR WHOLE FRUIT INSTEAD: In summer, you often spot house flies especially in markets near food vendors. They are major germ carriers and thus, people should be careful when having juice outside. Instead of cutting fruits or blending them into juice you should rather try to eat whole fruits to keep infections at bay.

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NKDA all set

to weed out

Parthenium

from New Town

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: The New Town

Kolkata Development Author-

ity (NKDA) is all set to start

removing Parthenium from

New Town. But only rooting

out these harmful weeds is

not the only solution as these

plants often grow in vacant

lands. Concerned over the

harmful effects of Parthenium

hysterophorus, New Town Kol-

kata Development Authority

(NKDA), the civic service pro-

vider, discussed the matter with

director of agriculture to get

"The traditional method of

the ultimate solution.

CM leaves for Cooch Behar. Alipurduar tour today

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will be setting out for her tour to Cooch Behar and Alipurduar on Monday where she will be holding administrative review and public meetings and is expected to announce benefits to both the districts.

She will be holding the administrative review meeting for Cooch Behar district on April 24 and the next day she will be holding the public meeting. Again on April 26, the Chief Minister will be heading the administrative review meeting of Alipurduar district. On April 27, Banerjee will distribute benefits among people of Alipurduar and address a gathering.

According to the sources, the Chief Minister is going to announce different new projects for both the districts in the public rallies and at the same time she will also be inaugurating many projects.

In the administrative review meetings, the Chief Minister will be taking stock of the progress of the ongoing projects. Thus, officials in the district are busy in keeping themselves updated as they might have to give reply to questions related to progress of work of different projects to the Chief Minister. In Cooch Behar, Banerjee

SSKM to open computerised centralised ticket counters for OPDs

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: In a unique initiative, the SSKM Hospital in the city is going to open computerised centralised ticket counters for the Out Patient Departments (OPD) which will take off a lot of pressure.

Senior officials of the SSKM Hospital believe that once these computerised ticket counters are made operational, it will immensely benefit the people coming from various parts of the state.

Many patients who come to the hospital with serious problems were often asked to consult doctors at the OPD.

As a result, these serious patients have to stand in the long queues to get a ticket. Patients often have to wait for a few hours before getting their tickets. After getting their tickets from the counter, they have to wait for their turn to consult a doctor.

All the Out Patient Departments (OPD) sees huge footfall of patients every day. To reduce the long queue of patients at all the Out Patient Departments, the SSKM Hospital authorities decided to set up centralised ticket counters for the OPDs which will not only reduce the length of the queue but also help the patients to consult a doctor in lesser amount of time.

There will be as many as 10 counters at the centralised ticket counters.

It was learnt from the hospital sources that around 5,000-20,000 patients visit various OPDs on an average with most of them coming from the

districts. The patients often allege that they have to wait for nearly 5-6 hours to get their tickets. Thousands of patients from the far-off districts come to various departments of the SSKM, which is the only superspeciality hospital run by the state government. As a result of which there was always a tremendous pressure on all the Out Patient

Departments. A senior official of the hospital said that there is a sharp increase in the number of patients visiting various OPDs. As a result of this, the existing number of ticket counters is not enough to cope up with the situation.

As many as 10 new computerised counters will be made operational soon which will immensely help the patients and reduce the length of the queue.



will be inaugurating several new projects including some newly-built hostels, administrative buildings and bridges. It may be mentioned that the Chief Minister had given instructions to the officials to take up necessary steps to ensure timely completion of projects. Thus, the Chief Minister would also go through the details to find out whether the projects have been completed

It may be mentioned that the state government had taken

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: In order to uplift

the security measures, the dis-

trict administration of Malda

has decided to install surveil-

lance cameras across the town.

to install 55 such Closed-

Circuit Television (CCTV)

cameras across Malda town,

which would be maintained

by police. The top brass of the

police would get video footages

in their smart phones if vital

tion and district police were

concerned over the growing

incidents of crime in the town.

Later the decision to install

"Initially, we will install 55

The district administra-

incidents happen.

cameras was taken.

The decision was taken

55 CCTVs to be installed

in Malda town

up all necessary steps to ensure an overall development of Alipurduar district that came into existence as the 20th district in

In the last administrative meetings in both the districts, the Chief Minister had reviewed the projects including those that were taken up for development for the enclaves that came under the Indian territory in 2014. Thus, this time too she will be taking stock of the progress of the work taken up for the enclaves.

confluence of the Mahananda

and Kalindi rivers. There are 29

wards in Malda municipality

and the population is approxi-

way that no vehicle can enter

or leave the town without being

"seen." The district police have

installed cameras in strate-

gic locations including the

of the entire district will come

under video surveillance by the

lace recently where people

The important locations

"Several incidents took

mately 2.5 lakh.

police source added.

approach roads.

end of this month.

CCTVs across the town. Later have been arrested with fake

the number may increase," said Indian currency notes. CCTV

a police source. The Malda surveillance will help the cops

town measuring 13.25 square to investigate such crimes," said

KOLKATA: Bengal Governor Keshari Nath Tripathi

on Sunday sustained a minor injury after tripping

on the dais during a programme held here. Tripa-

tripping on the dais of a book release programme

held at the Gorky Sadan in the southern part of

the city. The Governor was climbing the stairs up

feet got entangled in the wires of the microphones

to the stage when he tripped, probably after his

and sound boxes, a Raj Bhawan official said. A

Governor has said he was fine, the official said.

Tripathi remained present at the programme, he

said adding, there will be a thorough check-up of

preliminary check-up has been done and the

thi sustained injury on top of his right eye after

km lies in eastern side of the a local resident.

Governor trips on dais,

sustains minor injury

squad on Sunday. Police will also be posted on the thoroughfares through which the Chief Minister's convoy will be passing.

Senior police officers in

both the districts were busy

beefing up the security arrange-

ments to avoid any untow-

ard incident during the Chief

Minister's visit. Policemen were

posted outside the venue of the

administrative review meeting

and frisking operations were

being carried out by officers of

both the bomb squad and dog

Amit Shah to begin Bengal campaign from Naxalbari

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Security is always a con-KOLKATA: BJP all India prescern here. Surveillance camident Amit Shah is all set to eras are really needed here," the begin his tour in Bengal from Naxalbari, the seat of ultra Left The decision was taken to movement in Bengal. install the cameras in such a

It has been learnt that he will come to Siliguri on April 25 from where he will drive down to Naxalbari to take part in "booth chalo" campaign to woo the voters of the area.

Political experts said Shah's move is very significant in view of the present situation. The BJP has bagged a good percentage of Left vote in the recently concluded Kanthi South second position.

As the BJP does not have strong organisation at the booth level, political experts feel that it would try to rope in effective CPI(M) workers and leaders who would use their machinery to organise the party at the booth level.

"If by using CPI(M)'s organisation it succeeds to do moderately well in the Panchayat election in 2018 by securing the second position in majority of the gram panchayats and second position in at least two Zilla Parishads, it will be a big pain for Trinamool Congress in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls."

Realising this, Mamata Banerjee in her speech at the organisational meeting of the party on April 21, had asked her party workers and leaders at the grassroot level to get in touch will the common people and organise movements to stop flight of CPI(M) cadres

Rs 250 cricket match bet **OUR CORRESPONDENT** KOLKATA: Police arrested two minor boys in connection with the murder of their friend

following a quarrel over nonpayment after losing a bet on a match of the Indian Premier League (IPL). The incident took place at Liluah in Howrah meet to bet on IPL matches. on Saturday and the boys were arrested late on Saturday night.

be produced before the juvenile court. They have confessed that the incident is an outcome of a scuffle over the bet on an

Police said that the boys will

A police officer said that there were four boys when the incident took place in a deserted area near a waterbody at Liluah and all of them are of the age group of 12-14.

Investigation revealed that the victim and three of his friends went to the waterbody like all other days on Saturday as they used to go their almost every day to watch people fishing in the pond. But it was known to none of their family members that they used to

Minors murder friend over

The victim had lost a bet to one of the three friends and he had to give him Rs 250. But he had no money to give and it got delayed by some days.

Meanwhile, the victim was to get Rs 750 from another friend as he had won another bet. The trouble broke out when the victim had cleared his due by giving Rs 250 to his friend but didn't get Rs 750 from the other friend. A heated altercation took place

among the victim and two of his friends with the fourth one standing there as an onlooker. It finally led to a scuffle and the victim was hit one his head by a heavy brick.

He died on the spot. Realising that they would get arrested, the accused boys dumped the body in a jungle and covered it with bricks. Their friend, who was not involved in the crime and witnessed the incident as a mere onlooker, was threatened by the two boys. They had even forced him to take an oath by touching the feet of the victim's body that he would not reveal it to anyone. But the matter came to light when the police initiated a search for the victim as his parents lodged a complaint with the police after he

getting rid of this menace is to uproot and burn them. This is a slow labour intensive method that creates smoke pollution. So I asked about the ultimate solution to this problem to director of agriculture, West Bengal. He advised us to use 5 per cent brine solution," said Debashis Sen, Chairman-cum- Managing Director (CMD), Housing

Infrastructure Development Corporation (HIDCO). În hydrology, brine is a form of salt water, namely, water with relatively high concentration of salt (usually sodium chloride). It is generally used to eradi-

cate weeds. "The workers from NKDA sprayed it over a 5 acre plot near the bus stand of Action Area I. After three days, the plants will begin to wilt and die. We will monitor the situation further before expanding," the CMD said.

"Some residents saw that our workers were spraying water on the Parthenium. They asked us the reason for watering these harmful weeds. The workers informed them that it was only brine solution which would kill these weeds," Sen added.

Meanwhile, HIDCO is drawing up a plan for residents' participation in keeping the New Town greenery intact.

"Any area in front of a housing estate or a business house will be offered for beautification and maintenance from the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) department," he fur-

DRI seizes smuggled gold worth Rs 4.88 cr, 2 arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: The officials of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) on Sunday arrested two gold smugglers from outside Mahatma Gandhi Road Metro station and seized gold biscuits weighing around 16 kg from their possession.

Acting on a tip-off, the senior DRI officials were the Metro station and identified the two accused who were carrying 140 gold biscuits under their clothes. The officials intercepted the accused redhanded when they were buying some cigarettes from a stall situated outside the MG Road

station this morning.
The accused remanded to judicial custody after being produced before a city court on Sunday afternoon. It was learnt that one person was carrying 60 biscuits while the other 40 biscuits taped around their bodies. They were wearing loosely-fit clothes so that none

The DRI officials came to know that the two accused had brought the gold biscuits from **Bangladesh**

were carrying under their clothes. The market value of these biscuits would be around Rs 4.88 crore.

The DRI officials came to know during interrogation that the two accused, residents of Nadia, had brought the gold biscuits from Bangladesh. They entered the country by using the international border at Nadia.

The investigating officials came to know that the accused took a Sealdah-bound local train from Ranaghat station and got down at Dum Dum station where from they took a Metro. They de-boarded the train at MG Road station. The accused were going to Burrabazar area, the DRI officials can guess what the accused came to know. They were also

The DRI officials are also trying to know the names of the other persons involved in the racket and also to confirm if it was a part of an international smuggling racket operating from the state. The DRI

trying to know if they had any

plan to smuggle these gold bis-

cuits to any parts of the country or outside. They, however,

suspect that some persons are

officials were also investigat-

involved in the racket.

ing if the accused were trving to sell off the gold biscuits to some persons in Burrabazar or not. According to preliminary investigation, police suspect that the gold biscuits were made in Switzerland and Dubai and later they were smuggled to Bangladesh.

These two accused were assigned to bring the gold biscuits from the neighbouring country. It may be mentioned that on April 15, DRI seized 11.5 kg gold worth Rs 3.47 crore from a hotel near Sealdah station and had arrested two persons for their

Beyond confinement: A musical evening to help lifers get inspiration to live a fruitful life

TARUN GOSWAMI

KOLKATA: Six lifers will take part in a unique musical programme at $\bar{R}abindra\,$ Sadan on April 27.

Madal, a group comprising women singers, will present the show along with Muktaberi, the cultural organisation of the convicts.

Final touches are being given to make the show a grand success. A rehearsal was held on Sunday at the Dum Dum Central Correctional Home.

Sujit Dolui, Giridhari Kumar, Paritosh Ghosh, Swapan Sardar, Sirajul Islam and Asim Dutta who have spent more than a decade behind the four walls of the correctional home will sing with the singers

Tapan Roy, noted folk singer and researcher, who has been giving training to the convicts for quite some time said: "It is through music that they have been trying to overcome depression. Along with singing, many of them have learnt to play instruments like dotara, dugi and the dhol. They have set an example before other convicts who have been showing a lot of interest to learn music." It may be mentioned that Pope John Paul II, himself a celebrated



from our soul the dirt of every day's life." The purpose of the programme is to encourage the convicts and present

them before the audience and show them how perfectly they perform with trained and professional singers and musicians. The audience will be enthralled to see them perform," added Roy. Altogether, as many as 22 songs will be presented that include patriotic songs, devotional songs, folk songs, Rabindra Sangeet and songs of Lalan Fakir. The latter's songs have been translated into Hindi to give them a national colour. They will present famous Rabindra Sangeet Ebar tor mora gange ban eseche.

Roy added: "Years of practice have made them perfect folk singers today. When they sing, other convicts come and listen to them and the whole atmosphere

changes. Through music, they get inspiration to live a good life."

The state government is giving all support to the correctional home authorities to provide them proper facilities. The convicts will be brought to the venue in a prison van and will be taken back to the correctional home after the programme is over. A few years ago HMV had brought out an album called Ore Manush comprising songs sung by the lifers.

It was Swami Divyanananda, a trustee and governing body member of Ramakrishna Math and Mission, who had first prepared schemes to bring back the convicts to mainstream in Malda correctional home. Divyanandaji, who was the secretary of RKM Malda, went to the correctional homes and took classes on meditation and also the initiative to give

Narayangarh: 18 'kachha' primary school buildings to be made 'pakka'

The area was a CPI(M) bastion since the

PRITESH BASU

the Governor later on.

KOLKATA: The Mamata Banerjee-government will reconstruct 18 primary schools which are "kachha" and lying in a shamble at Narayangarh Assembly constituency that remained with the CPI(M) for the past three

Hundreds of children go to schools everyday risking their lives as no one knows when most of the "kachha" structures would collapse and prove fatal for them. However, no measures have been taken in the past when CPI(M) state secretary and Politburo member Dr Surya Kanta Mishra was the MLA from the constituency till 2016.

The matter came to light after Trinamool Congress bagged the seat in the last Assembly elections when Prodyut Ghosh defeated Mishra. Paschimanchal Unnayan Affairs Department also carried out a survey to assess the present condition of the schools.

Officials, including engineers from the department, went to each of the schools and prepared a separate plan to build concrete buildings for the primary schools.

the schools. A blueprint has been chalked out to incorporate them in the structures.

A report in this connection has also been prepared which stated that there is a need of around Rs 10 lakh to repair each of the schools. The Panchayat Samity has also sent a resolution in this regard to the District

According to Ghosh, the matter has also been brought to the notice of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, state Education minister Partha Chatterjee and Paschimanchal Unnayan minister Shantiram Mahato.

Out of the 18 "kachha" schools, five are located in Narayangarh gram panchayat, three in Manya Gram Panchayat, two each in Kushbasan and Hemchandra Gram panchayats respectively and one each in Makrampur, Kunarpur and Belda-I Gram

It may be recalled that before 2016 Assembly elections, the Chief Minister had assured the people of Narayangarh that she would take projects for a comprehensive evelopment of the area.

The Chief Minister held her first meet-At present there are no toilets in most of ing after a landslide victory in 2016 Assem-

REBUILDING LIVES

bly elections in Narayangarh and announced party came to power in 1977 and had won in all the Assembly elections at a stretch from several projects for the area.

Interestingly, Mishra had won from the seat for consecutive five terms since 1966. But hardly any step was taken to reconstruct the "kachha" buildings to "pakka" ones. Those who used to support the Congress were either driven out of the villages or forced to join the CPI(M) fold.

The dilapidated condition of the primary school buildings reveal the story of sheer neglect by the ČPI(M).

Midnapore, that was once the most advanced district in education, has witnessed huge losses and has gone back under the

Ghosh further added: "Eighteen kachha schools in one Assembly constituency after 34 years of the Left Front government revealed that they hardly did anything for improvement of the education system in the state during their rule."

Shantiram Mahato, Paschimanchal Unnayan Affairs department, said: "Our MLA has brought the matter to our notice and decision has been taken to reconstruct the "kachha" buildings to "pakka" ones. Discussions are on about the funding of

the patient was rushed to R G Kar Hospital at around 3 am

on Sunday but the entire exer-

cise proved futile. The patient

expired on her way to the hos-

pital and was declared brought

dead by the doctors at RG Kar.

the local police.

The family members of the victim lodged a complaint with

Riya, a resident of Belgho-

ria, was admitted to the hos-

pital few days ago. The family

members accused the doctor

under whom she had been

admitted for the death of the

patient. The family members

of the victim on Sunday staged

a demonstration at the hospital

and demanded action against

the accused doctors. They

alleged that despite repeated

calls to the doctors by the staff

members of the hospital, they

did not visit the patient. They

alleged that medical negligence

by the doctors led to her death.

ordered a probe into the death

of the victim. Police have also

started an investigation in this

regard on the basis of the com-

plaint lodged by the victim's

Baranagar municipality has

medical negligence

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: Riya Ghosh (24),

a former national level volley-

ball player, died of alleged med-

ical negligence by Baranagar Municipal Maternity Home

(also known as Matri Sadan)

victim alleged that she gave birth to a baby boy on Saturday evening and later her condition

turned critical. But there was

no doctor to attend her and her

family members alleged that

the hospital authorities did not

provide them ambulance when

they were trying to shift her to

patient also alleged that the

doctor was requested several

times to attend to the patient

but their requests went in vain.

As a result, the family mem-

bers decided to shift her to

another hospital as her condi-

ties failed to provide an ambu-

lance to shift her and when

it was finally arranged by the

But the hospital authori-

tion became serious.

The family members of the

another hospital.

The family members of the

early on Sunday morning.

Another whip of squall, Former national level volleyball player dies of thundershower in city

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: The Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC), Kolkata, indicated heavy rainfall with squall on Monday and Tuesday evening due to the nor wester.

The latest Radar Observation indicates that thunderstorm is likely to affect certain parts of Purulia, Bankura and West Midnapur districts.

"It may be accompanied with lightening or hail or squall or moderate rain and strong winds reaching 50 to 60 km per hour or more," said a senior official at RMC, Kolkata.

Meteorologists spotted a cyclonic circulation on Bihar and the trough extended from there to north India. Another trough also extended from the same position to Odisha.

"Due to these weather features, light to moderate rains are likely over many parts of the northeast states, Sub-Himalayan West Bengal and East Bihar," Skymet weather, a private weather forecast

agency informed.
"Trough generally brings uninterrupted rainfall. It is an elongated region of relatively low atmospheric pressure. In this case, there are two troughs one had gone to Odisha and another towards Uttar Pradesh," another meteorologist explained.

The RMC predicted that the light rainfall may take place over Jharkhand, Gangetic West Bengal. "There is a strong possibility that rain will hit the city along with a few South Bengal dis-



tricts on Monday and Tuesday This rain accompanied by storm, will happen due to the cyclonic circulation formed on Bihar. This is actually known as nor'wester," the RMC official added.

Meteorologists indicated that there would be rainfall in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala as trough was spotted over Andhra Pradesh and South Chhattisgarh. "Down south, a cyclonic circulation spotted over South Chhattisgarh and adjoining Andhra Pradesh. A trough extended from this region

to North Interior Karnataka, western parts of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. South Karnataka, Kerala and interior Tamil Nadu will receive scattered afternoon shower till Tuesday. Bengaluru may also receive a spell or two of rain and thun-

derstorm," Skymet weather predicted. Meteorologists confirmed that the after effect of cyclone "Marutha" had failed to bring rain in the city last week. It may be mentioned that the meteorologists had earlier predicted medium rainfall last week. But only negligible

rainfall was recorded.

However, one person was killed and three others were injured as a nor'wester hit the city on Saturday evening disrupting rail and road traffic. Police said one person was killed and three others injured when a tree fell on a car near Airport Gate No. 1, on Jes-

While the driver of the car was declared brought dead at hospital, the three other occupants were admitted

family members on their own,

Actor Hiran averts major road accident near Kolkata

KOLKATA: Actor Hiran, who is also a Trinamool Youth Congress leader, averted a major accident near Ranihati More in Howrah on National Highway 6 on Sunday evening.

The incident took place when he was returning to Kolkata from Uluberia. He received injuries on his legs and was rushed to a hospital in Kolkata. Police said after speaking to the actor that a bus suddenly approached from behind at a high speed and it blew a loud horn when it was just metres behind Hiran's car. The actor somehow managed to take a slight right turn and the bus brushed past the car. After taking the slight right turn it was not at all possible for the actor to control the vehicle and hit against a divider. Locals helped the actor to come out of the car. Policemen posted in the area rushed to the spot and cordoned off the area. Soon after the accident, the police placed security barricades on the road to ensure that all vehicles slow down at OUR CORRESPONDENT

Housewife's body found hanging from ceiling

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: Mystery shrouds the death of a housewife whose body was hanging from the ceiling inside her parental house at Sathmukhi village of

Police said that the victim, Sufia Laskar (19), returned to her parental house a few days ago following some ailments. On Sunday, the family members of the victim found that her room was locked from inside and she did not open the door despite repeated knocks on it. They informed the matter to the local residents and the police. The police broke open the door and found the body hanging from the ceiling. The incident triggered tension in the locality.

Police suspect the victim might have been suffering from mental depression as a result of which she could have taken her life

The body was sent for the post-mortem. Police did not, ĥowever, find any suicide note. According to preliminary investigation, the police suspect that the victim might have committed suicide. They are yet to ascertain the reason. They are also investigating if anybody had instigated the victim to commit suicide.

Police said that the victim was married to a person from Natunhat area under Basanti police station around eight months ago. But few days ago, the victim came back to her parents' house. Police are investigating if she had any quarrel with anybody. In the course of the investigation, the police suspect that the victim might have been suffering from mental depression as a result of which she could have taken her life. The investigating officers are trying to ascertain the cause of her depression, if there was any. Police will also question the victim's husband and

One held for duping unemployed youth by assuring

them jobs **OUR CORRESPONDENT**

KOLKATA: Bidhannagar City Police arrested a person on charges of cheating several unemployed youth after assuring them jobs. The accused allegedly took huge amounts of money from the youth promising them that he will provide them permanent jobs in nationalised banks, gun and shell factories and Department of Post (DOP).

The investigators arrested the accused, identified as Rajib Biswas, on the basis of the complaint lodged by the victim with Baguiati police station.

"Biswas had started a company in Baguiati few years ago named Top Care Solution. His company was working as placement consultancy. Initially, there was no complaint against Biswas' company and many unemployed youth got job from that consultancy," a local source said. According to the some local residents, the problems had surfaced last year as several youth demonstrated in front of the consultancy office demanding their money back. "Biswas assured several unemployed youth of providing jobs in nationalised banks, gun and shell factory and Department of Post (DOP) and took the money. But he did not fulfill his promise and refused to return the money to the victims," said a source. However, investigators suspect that Biswas was connected to those involved in a relative's house. a fake job racket.

4 dead in 3 separate road accidents

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: Four persons were killed in three separate road accidents in South Bengal districts in the past 24 hours.

Two persons were killed and two others injured in a road accident in which two heavy trucks collided head-on at National Highway 6 at Bigha in Bankura on the wee

Police said the victims are yet to be identified. Preliminary investigation revealed that the one of the ill-fated trucks was from Uttar Pradesh while the other was from Andhra Pradesh.

After speaking to locals, who were witness to the accident, police came to know that both the trucks were at very high

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: The partly decomposed body of a 58-year-old man, who was a state

government employee, was found in his

Acharjee, was all alone in his house since

Tuesday as his wife and son had gone to

Police said the deceased, Subodh

house on Sunday morning.

had fallen asleep. One of the trucks was heading towards Bankura from Durgapur while the other was heading towards

A cops added that there was a sharp turn where the accident took place and according to an eye witness, driver of the Durgapur-bound truck couldn't control the vehicle when he suddenly found another truck approaching from the opposite direction after taking the sharp bend.

The trucks turned after the collision and the front portion of both the vehicles were badly damaged. Locals initiated the rescue work, later

to be joined by policemen and officers of the disaster management group.

They cut a portion of one of the trucks speed and they suspect that the incident took place as drivers of both the vehicles

They were rushed to a local hospital along

got foul smell coming from the house

and informed the police. Policemen from

Parnasree police station went to the spot

and found the house locked from inside.

house at Rabindranagar in Parnasree were

closed. The police broke open the door

and found Acharjee's body lying in the

dining room. The door of the refrigera-

Police sent the body for an autopsy

Some of their relatives stay in the same

tor was open and all the lights were on.

and informed his wife Krishna Acha-

rjee. The police will talk to his wife to get

area. They told the police that they had

seen Subodh for the last time on Thurs-

day. He was a state government employee

the exact cause behind the death, but they

suspect that he fell on the floor after feel-

ing sick and died as there was no one in

Though the police are yet to ascertain

and was posted at Writers' Building.

All the windows of the one storeyed

with the two injured persons who were admitted for treatment while two, who had severe injuries, were declared brought

The incident led to traffic congestion on the national highway. Police engaged cranes to remove the trucks and it took hours for the local policemen to clear the congestion on the thoroughfare.

In another road accident, a person was killed after being hit by a truck that was heading towards Digha in East Midnapore. Police said the truck had lost control and rammed against a tree. The police have identified the victim as Patal Rao. The driver and helper of the truck man-

A truck driver, identified as Shyamal Mondol, was killed in Nadia after his vehi-

58-yr-old state govt employee found dead inside home

KOLKATA: Bidhannagar City Police arrested two private bank employees who were allegedly involved in several bank fraud cases in the city. Anupam Bhoumik, the sales executive and Sutirtha Saha, the relationship manager were arrested and interrogated by the investigators on Saturday. They allegedly made fake bank accounts on the basis of fake identities to clear loans illegally.

The investigators got hold of the accused persons after getting information from one Ujjal Kundu, another accused of the case who was arrested a few weeks ago. Police came to know about Bhoumik and Saha while interrogating Kundu.

Bhoumik used to prepare fake identities of loan-seekers and Saha opened several fake bank accounts on the basis of those fake identities.

people easy clearance of loan without important documents like Aadhaar card, PAN or voter identity card," said a police source.

Investigators learnt that Ujjal Kundu, resident of Sodepur, North 24 Parganas was the kingpin of this racket. "Kundu used to make composite plans and pay huge amount of money to Anupam Bhoumik and Sutirtha Saha to execute his plan. Kundu took a good percentage from the illegally sanctioned loan," the source added. The investigators revealed that Kundu's activity was not restricted to Salt Lake only. He had managed to clear loans from some branches in Kolkata. Now, police would investigate that who had helped him to clear those loans outside Salt Lake. A police team including cyber crime specialists started probing the case and is on the lookout for the people who would soon be arrested.

Two private bank employees arrested for fraud

Both these accused were connected

Labhpur bomb battle: Eight more arrested



OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: Police have arrested eight more persons for their alleged involvement in the blast that had taken place at Darbarpur village of Labhpur in Birbhum on Friday.

Police have so far arrested 14 persons altogether in this connection. Four out of eight persons who were arrested by the police on Sunday were remanded to police custody for four days while the rest in judicial custody.

The arrested persons are Jasimuddin Seikh, Mirajul Seikh, Jalaluddin Seikh and Sitarul Seikh. They all were residents are Darbarpur village. The others are Seikh Rejaul, Muktar Seikh, Jamirul Seikh and Samiruddin Seikh who were from various parts of the district. Jasimuddin, Jalaluddin Samiruddin and Sitarul were remanded to four days' police custody after being produced before the Bolpur court on Sunday. The other accused were remanded to 14 days judicial custody. Police are yet to arrest the main accused who was grossly responsible for the incident. Eight persons were killed in an explosion on Friday while one injured person died in the hospital on Saturday. The accused persons in the face of interrogation told the police that they were innocent and that they were not involved

in the incident. Darbarpur village on Sunday remained calm with many male members of the families fleeing from their houses apprehending arrest. It was almost a bandh-like situation at Darbarpur village with the shops remaining shut on Sunday.

Some of the senior police officers visited the incident site on Sunday for the sake of investigation. Police are yet to come up with the final report on how the incident had taken place. Members of the state forensic laboratory on Saturday visited the blast site where nine persons were killed while making bombs and collected samples from there.

Local people alleged that illegal mining was still rampant in the area and it is the source of money for local goons. They alleged that rival groups in the area often engage in clashes. The bomb squad conducted raids at various places of Labhpur to ascertain if any bombs were still kept anywhere in the

Police said that there was a fight between two groups over taking possession of 'illegal sand mining' in the area. Meanwhile, the cops also recovered garments with blood stains from near a river. Police suspect that some of the bodies might have been removed from the spot by the accused immediately after the incident.

A police officer said that local people the house to help the person. 2 students washed away PC Chandra honours Nobel by high tide, search on laureate Kailash Satyarthi **OUR CORRESPONDENT** The incident

KOLKATA: Two schoolgoers are feared drowned in river Hooghly while they were shooting for a documentary on Bengali play Abak Jalpan. The incident took place at Charsarhati in Nadia on Sunday evening.

Police said that six to seven students gathered on the river bank for the shooting. There were students of different schools from Chakdah and Kalvani. Some of them were amateur photographers. They used to upload different photographs and videos on the internet to earn money.

With a similar purpose, they were making a documentary on Sukumar Roy's play Abak Jalpan. When two youth were standing on the bank with cameras, four of their friends went down to the river to give a shot. Suddenly there was high tide and four of them were washed away. Local people and boatmen jumped into the river

took place at Charsarhati in Nadia on Sunday evening

and managed to rescue two of the youth. But two of them are still missing.

Police went to the spot and detained three youth who were busy taking the shots and giving direction to the victims. A police officer said that divers have been engaged in search of the two youth but they are still missing.

In another incident at Krishnagar in Nadia, a loaded mini-truck fell into river Jalangi from a flyover on Sunday morning. Police said that the mini-truck was at a high speed and fell into the river after colliding against the railing of the bridge. Local people initiated the rescue work and rescued all the 13 people in the

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: P C Chandra Puraskaar 2017 was awarded to Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi on Sunday. Satyarthi, who has been at the forefront of the global movement to end child slavery and exploitative child labour since 1980, received the award at the Science City auditorium.

Swami Suparnananda Maharaj, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture was the chief guest along with the renowned author Sirshendu Mukhopadhyay as the guest of honour for the evening. A K Chandra, managing director of the P C Chandra Group and Prosanto Chandra, joint managing director, P C Chandra Jewellers were also present in the occasion.

This year the P C Chandra Puraskaar carries an honorarium of Rs 10 lakh which is tax exempted.

"This Puraskaar is given on the occasion of the birth anniversary of our founding father. Apart from being a great visionary, late Purna Chandra Chandra was also a man of great values," said A K



"We are extremely pleased and honoured that this year when we are celebrating the 25th year of honoring excellence, by awarding Satyarthiji. He is not only a great visionary but also a great human being.

Todav the world where we are living, needs men like him to make it a better place. The work which he is doing towards the betterment of each and every child inspires all of us," A K Chandra added.

Mega defence deals likely during PM's trip to Israel

MPOST BUREAU

NEW DELHI: A raft of mega defence deals including procurement of an air defence system for the Indian Navy are likely to be sealed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit to Israel which will be first by an Indian PM to the Jewish nation.

Ahead of the visit, which is likely to take place in July, Israeli envoy Daniel Carmon said it will be a "big" visit, reflecting the depth of cooperation between the two countries in a range of key areas.

The much-awaited deal for Barak-8 air defence missile systems for the navy and procurement of Spike anti-tank missiles for the Indian Army are expected to be firmed up during Modi's visit to Tel Aviv.

"India, Israel relations are big enough. The visit, when it takes place, will be a very very important visit. It will be one of the most important visits that Israel has witnessed in many many years," Israeli Ambassador Daniel Carmon said.

Modi's visit coincides with the establishment of 25 years of diplomatic relations between



Israeli President Reuven Rivlin shakes hands with PM Narendra Modi ahead of their meeting in Delhi (FILE PHOTO)

A number of other defence

deals are also likely to be dis-

cussed. Asked about specific

defence deals, the envoy only

said the relationship has gone

beyond buying and selling

and that the two countries are

now focussing majorly on joint

tions with India and the rela-

tionship has various facets

defence relations say the two

multi-billion dollar acquisition

deals are likely to be finalised

including defence," he said.

"Israel has very good rela-

People familiar with

research and development.

India is the largest buyer of Israel's military hardware and the latter has been supplying various weapon systems, missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles over the last few years but the transactions have largely remained behind the

In February, India had cleared a Rs 17,000 crore deal for jointly developing with Israel a medium-range surfaceto-air missile (MR-SAM) for the army. A formal announcement on the deal is likely to take place during Modi's

Indo-Israel ties more visible

under Modi govt: Israel

NEW DELHI: Appreciating

that Indo-Israel ties were more

"visible" after the Modi gov-

ernment has come to power,

Israel said on Sunday that

India's policy of not having a

"zero-sum game" while deal-

ing with the Jewish nation and

the Arab countries has sent a

strong message.

Ahead of first prime

ministerial visit from India,

expected to take place in

July, Israeli Ambassador here

Daniel Carmon also strongly

pitched for deeper coopera-

tion in strategic ties, spread

over wide-ranging sectors,

including, defence, security,

agriculture, education and

in Indo-Israel relations after

Prime Minister Narendra

Modi has come to power and

the Jewish nation respects that

ing a zero-sum game while

dealing with Israel and the

"India's policy of not hav-

change, Carmon said.

There is a lot of "visibility"

"The relations between India and Israel did not start in 2014, but what has changed is the visibility of things that we are doing together. What has changed is the very important and very much respected in Israel," Carmon said.

The Israeli Ambassador also said that there may be a change in the declaration and policy of India after the Modiled government has came

to power. The current NDA dispensation has been very open about its relations with Israel as compared to the Manmohan Singh government, which was cautious in openly flaunting India's ties with Israel.

As India and Israel celebrate 25 years of their diplomatic relations this year, Modi is expected to visit the Middle Eastern country in July during which the two sides are expected to finalise pacts in

TN farmers temporarily call off Jantar Mantar stir

NEW DELHI: Tamil Nadu farmers protesting at Jantar Mantar here "temporarily" called off their agitation on Sunday after over 40 days after Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami "promised" to meet their demands.

"The chief minister and the Union finance minister have the power to take a call on our demands. We have decided to call off the agitation for a period of one month based on the assurances given by our chief minister," farmers' leader Ayyakkannu told reporters.

"If the promises are not met, we would resume the protest in the national capital in a bigger way on May 25," he said.

Ayyakkannu said the decision was taken also based on the assurances given by Leader of Opposition in the Tamil Nadu Assembly M K Stalin, MDMK's Premalatha Vijayakanth, Tamil Manila Congress chief G K Vasan and the BIP's Pon Radhakrishnan.

The farmers, who have been staging a protest for the past 41 days demanding a Rs-40,000 crore drought relief package, farm loan waiver and setting up of the Cauvery Management Board by the Centre, had ear-



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami receiving a memorandum from the state farmers who are protesting for the last 39 days over their plight, at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Sunday

tion despite requests by several Union and state ministers apart from leaders of various regional political parties.

"We will be leaving for home today or tomorrow and we will be taking part in a statewide bandh on April 25 in Tamil Nadu," said Ayyakkannu.

Palaniswami, who took part in a Niti Aayog meeting here today, said he had submitted a memorandum containing demands of the farmers to the prime minister.

"Among other issues, we also raised the farmers' issue in the meeting with the PM," Palaniswami told reporters

Calling the agitation a "suc-

Centre had "undermined us and meted out step-motherly treatment". "However, the agitation has become a success and has caught the attention of people across the world. We received support from youths and farmers across the country," he said. During the course of the protest, the farmers have turned to increasingly desperate measures to direct attention

to their issues. They have shaved their heads and half their moustaches and kept mice and snakes in their mouths, conducted mock funerals, flogged themselves and even carried skulls which they claimed were of farmers who had committed

suicide due to debt pressure.

ISRO to increase frequency of launches to 12 per year: Kumar

OUR CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD: The Indian Space Research Organisation is trying to increase its capacity to deliver by scaling up the frequency of launches to 12 per year from the seven at present by building more satellites and lowering the cost of access to space.

"Earlier, we were doing 2-3 (launches) per year, then we increased it to 4-5, last few years we have been doing seven launches," space agency Chairman A S Kiran Kumar

NATION

HRD MAY FORMULATE COMMON HINDI

TEACHING SCHEME FOR VARSITIES

NEW DELHI: Universities and higher education

a "common Hindi teaching scheme" with recom-

institutions across the country may soon implement

mendations of a parliamentary panel in this regard

getting the president's nod. Also, universities without

All educational institutions shall also be asked to fix

dents in varsities and institutions in non-Hindi states,

in exams or interviews in Hindi, must be allowed the

option of writing answers in their mother language.

SURVEYS TO TRACE MISSING SPRINGS

NEW DELHI: Surveys to trace missing springs in hilly

pockets of the Himalayas from the region stretch-

ing from Jammu and Kashmir to the North East will

be conducted by the Centre to find a solution to

water woes of locals. This is the first such exercise

to be conducted by the Centre. The surveys will be

conducted in collaboration with state governments,

Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) has already

submitted a proposal to the ministry to conduct pilot

studies in Uttarakhand and Sikkim in the project's

first phase. Rejuvenation of springs, which will be identified as potential resources of water in the first phase, will take place in the second leg of the project, which is expected to take off "soon" after

the ministry approves it, they said.

officials in the water resources ministry said. The

The move may invite criticism and opposition from

several state universities with various groups of

students already petitioning President Pranab

Mukherjee against "forceful Hindi imposition".

IN HIMALAYAN STATES

where they are not given the option of appearing

Hindi department may be asked to establish one.

a minimum level of Hindi education. Besides, stu-

said. "Now, we are trying to go up to 8-9 PSLV per year, two GSLV-Mk II and one GSLV-Mk III. Total about 12 per year," he said.

ISRO is trying to increase its capacity to deliver by scaling up the frequency of launches by building more satellites, lowering the cost of access to space and also to do heavier satellite launches, the Chairman said.

The space agency is in the process of constructing a second vehicle assembly building to improve the turnaround



ISRO Chairman A S Kiran Kumar

time and throughput for the PSLV so that with the same launch pad ISRO can do more

Kiran Kumar said approval for a proposal to build a space station was yet to come.

ISRO plans to undertake the Chandrayaan-2 mission in the first quarter of the next calendar year, he said.

"It (Chandrayaan-2) is a fully Indian affair. There is no Russian participation in that," Kiran Kumar said.

"All the developments required for that, all the variable thrust engines, lander, rover....all that work is going on and we are getting ready for this launch," he said.

Now, apply for passports in Hindi

NEW DELHI: The Ministry of External Affairs has made a provision enabling people to apply online for passports in

The move comes after President Pranab Mukherjee recently accepted recommendations made in this regard by the Committee of Parliament on Official Language via its ninth report. The report was submitted in 2011.

The panel had suggested that bilingual forms should be made available by all passport offices and forms filled in Hindi should also be accepted. It had recommended that entries

in all passports being issued.

These recommendations have been accepted by the president recently, as per an official order.

People can download the application form available in Hindi, fill it in and upload it while applying for the passport.

The printout of filled-in form will not be accepted by 'Passport Seva Kendra' and Regional Passport Offices.

The panel on the official language had also recommended that information regarding passport and visa should be made available in Hindi on the official website of

"This recommendation is accepted," the order said.

The recommendation that the facility of working in Hindi is to be ensured on computers being used in passport offices, and that the work on computers should be done mainly in Hindi, has also been accepted.

The president has given approval for creation of posts of Hindi Officer in subordinate offices or embassies abroad.

"Vacant posts of Hindi (Officers) in offices/embassies should be filled as quickly as possible," as per the panel's suggestion which has now been

Overbooking seats: Govt for transparent mechanism

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: The government is considering steps to ensure transparency in the practice of overbooking seats by airlines amid public outrage over a US carrier force-fully offloading a passenger from a packed flight.

Overbooking of a flight has been a long-standing practice in the airline industry as seats are considered as a "time sensitive and perishable" product once the flight takes off.

While the practice is aimed at ensuring all seats are occupied in a flight, there have been concerns over the possibility of a passenger with a valid ticket unable to travel in

use of seats being oversold. The civil aviation ministry is looking at ways to bring in transparency in the practice of overbooking by airlines, according to a senior official.

Right now, there is no particular framework or system to have a clear understanding about the practice of overbooking.

Various ideas, including measures that can be put in place for cases where the ticket of a passenger who does not show up at the airport can be given to another passenger, are being discussed, the official said.

Another idea could be the parent manner within a speci-

on ways to bring in transparency in the practice of overbooking air tickets have been held among the ministry and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)

Want 16L paper trail machines in 2 yrs: EC to manufacturers

MPOST BUREAU

NEW DELHI: The Election Commission has set the ball rolling to buy over 16 lakh paper trail machines for EVMs in the next two years to be used in all polling stations in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

The Commission issued letter of intent to ECIL and BEL -- both PSUs -- on Friday, two days after the Union Cabinet cleared its proposal to buy 16,15000 voter verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) units at an estimated cost of Rs 3,173.47 crore. The poll panel has informed them that the machines would be bought during 2017-18 and 2018-19.

The Commission will buy 8,07,500 paper trail units each from the two manufacturers by Explaining the importance of the step, the

Chief Election Commissioner Nasim Zaidi said today that "this will enhance transparency and uphold the voters' right to know which party he or she has voted, thereby increasing voters' confidence in the free and fair electoral process."

The poll watchdog said in a statement that these machines be manufactured by both the PSUs only as per the design approved by the Commission based on recommendation of the Technical Experts Committee on EVMs con-

"The Commission shall closely monitor the production of VVPATs for timely delivery well to produce the over 16 lakh VVPATs.



before General Elections 2019," it said.

Sixteen parties had recently petitioned the EC to revert to paper ballot system for greater transparency. The BSP, the AAP and the Congress had attacked the EC on the issue of alleged tampering of EVMs. The VVPAT machines leave a paper trail

which helps an elector confirm whether the EVM has faithfully registered the vote has has cast to a particular candidate.

Between September, 2013 and March this year, the Commission has written 38 times to the government on the procurement of VVPATs, according to an affidavit filed by the poll panel in the Supreme Court on the issue.

The Supreme Court has asked the Commission to give a tentative time-frame by which it

can use VVPAT machines in all polling stations. The EC says ECIL and BEL need 30 months

Muslim litigants complain against letting person bearing 'trishul' into Ayodhya complex

Some Muslim litigants in the

Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid title suit case have complained to court appointed observers against the Faizabad administration for having allowed a person enter the disputed shrine premises bearing a "trident".

At a quarterly meeting of Muslim and Hindu parties under the observation of judges TM Khan and SK Singh, a delegation led by Khaliq Ahmad Khan handed over a memorandum to the observer judges seeking action against the authorities and an FIR against the person who entered the disputed complex bearing a trident.

The judges had been appointed by the Allahabad High Court as observers.

In the memorandum addressed to both the judges as well as the receiver of disputed site, the complainants said that norms had been violated in allowing a person to

"Supreme Court in its dif-

bolic religious activities at the disputed site. But the Faizabad administration allowed a person with a religious symbol, and the symbol is weapon. The Supreme Court's order has been violated", said Khan, a party from Muslim side in the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi case in the Supreme Court. The delegation included Haji Mahboob, Iqbal Ansari, Maulana Hasbullah, all party to the title suit pending before the Supreme Court. They demanded the lodg-

ferent orders has banned sym-

ing of an FIR against the person who entered in violation of norms and action against the authorities for allowing it.

The muslim litigants had raised yesterday over a 'sadhu' allegedly being allowed to enter the disputed complex bearing a trident to which the administration had said that the person was only carrying a replica of a 'trishul' and such religious enter the premises bearing a symbols were allowed. AGENCIES

possibility of auctioning the overbooked tickets in a transfied timeframe before take-off of the particular flight, the offi-Preliminary discussions

Missing files stumbling block in implementing RTI Act: CIC

MPOST BUREAU

sive plan should be devised to handle the issue of missing files which has become a "stumbling block" in implementing the Right to Information (RTI) Act, the Central Information Commission has told the Department of Personnel and Training. The Commission also made it clear that 'missing-files' is no defence and it cannot be used as an excuse to deny information. It has issued a showcause notice to officials of the Labour Ministry for giving the excuse of missing files allegedly for covering up delay in furnishing information or avoiding uncomfortable queries.

"What is the policy of Gov-

ernment of India or concerned

missing files? Under Section NEW DELHI: A comprehen-4(1)(c) of the RTI Act it is mandatory to publish all relevant facts while formulating important policies or announcing the decisions which affect public," Information Commissioner Sridhar Acharvulu held. He was hearing a plea by Balendra Kumar who had

filed an RTI application with the Ministry of Labour and Employment to which the Central Public Information Officer had said the "file was not traceable". "The Commission recommends DoPT to come up with comprehensive plan, policy and action program to tackle the issue of missing files which become a stumbling block in implementation of RTI, devise means

states to deal with the cases of



Information Commissioner Sridhar Acharyulu

and resources for implementing Public Records Act, 1993," he said. He said missing files could be a potential strategy to undermine the rule of law and criminal justice systems besides facilitating several white-collar criminals in the public authori-

Only a file which might

contain proof of irregularities or corruption would go missing, he pointed out.

Acharyulu said that according to the Public Records Act, the records officer shall, in the event of any unauthorised removal, destruction, defacement or alteration of any public records under his charge, forth-

with take appropriate action for the recovery or restoration of such public records. "In hundreds of cases of sec-

ond appeals, this Commission could not find that any public authority has a record to explain that any such appropriate action for recovery or restoration was taken," he noted.

He said the plea of missing file itself is the proof of denial of right to information of the appellant. "It is pathetic that the CPIO or his public authority, who attend the second appeals simply spell the man-tra of 'missing file' and keep silent," he said.

Acharyulu said there are instances of missing files in public offices where they have to permanently maintain certain public records.

to preserve and make accessible for verification, the records pertaining to education, such as BA BSc or MA, MSc, etc. Registration department also lost a registered sale deed, or will deed or marriage records," Acharyulu said. Acharyulu had ordered

"For instance a University has

disclosure of Delhi University records pertaining for 1978, the year Narendra Modi (now the Prime Minister) had passed out. He said if Government of India or a particular state does not have any policy to tackle the problem of missing files in public offices, that becomes the policy of the government not to have anything to do with it.

"That naturally affects the entire administration and public at large," he said.

PROJECTING INDIA'S SOFT POWER: GOM NEW DELHI: A ministerial group set up to examine the draft National Policy for Women has suggested the document cover issues relating to women living

TALK OF WOMEN ABROAD, THEIR ROLE IN

outside the country and highlight their contribution in projecting India's 'soft power' abroad. The Group of Ministers (GoM), chaired by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, has also suggested involving women in launching awareness drives on issues like public toilets for women and their health issues, including reproductive and nutritional needs. It also recommended that the achievements of Indian women post-Independence be properly acknowledged and their status and participation in new areas mentioned to underline their increasing role in various fields, a government official said.

NEW DELHI: The Sashas-

tra Seema Bal (SSB), a bor-

der guarding force, has drawn

a comprehensive roadmap to

put a check on human traf-

ficking menace from across

the Indo-Nepal border. The

paramilitary force, which has

been tasked to secure mainly

borders of 'friendly' nations,

has roped in NGOs working

against human trafficking and

gramme was started on April

10, the SSB was able to nab four

human traffickers and rescued

12 minors from the clutches of

human traffickers on three dif-

ferent locations on Indo-Nepal

border while crossing to India.

human trafficking that SSB has

registered from the period of

2014 till April 2017, a total of

1,146 victims have been res-

cued and 339 traffickers have

been apprehended.
"Human trafficking is just

another name for modern day

slavery, wherein the victim

involved are forced, coerced

and deceived into labour and sexual exploitations, the figures

are scary. A workshop was also

conducted by SSB in this regard

and now this has yielded results

by virtue of showing tremen-

dous coordination," said Arch-

ana Ramasundaram, the SSB's

first women Director General.

military force has also signed

a MoU with National Skill

Development Council (NSDC)

Apart from this, the para-

Out of total 222 cases of

A few days after the pro-

other all stakeholders.

SSB's roadmap to curb

human trafficking on

Indo-Nepal border

Install biometric system in all offices upto Block level: Yogi

OUR CORRESPONDENT

LUCKNOW: To ensure all government employees reach work on time, Ûttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath has instructed that a biometric attendance system be put in place in offices upto the block level.

Adityanath's instructions came during a meeting with officials of the rural development department late on Saturday night.

"Efforts should be made to ensure that a biometric system of attendance is installed upto the block level. Apart from this, a board be put up at every village panchayat, which will have information about contact details of the village pradhan and details of the ongoing works," Adityanath said as per an official statement.

The chief minister said that the targets of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana should be



Adityanath's instructions came during a meeting with officials of the rural development department late on Saturday night

to registration, uploading of left out," he said. photographs and approval of housing units for 5.73 lakh families eligible under this scheme must be completed at the earliest.

"The Centre will be requested to incorporate eli-All the works pertaining gible families, which have been

Emphasising on transparency in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme (MNREGS), Adityanath said that active workers should be linked with Aadhaar-based payment system.

pertaining to hand-pumps along with re-boring should be done," Adityanath said. He also said that 160 piped water supply schemes in 31 districts should be completed

> "Installation of new handpumps and re-boring of existing hand-pumps under the quota of MLAs and MLCs should be completed after taking their consent," he said.

to ensure water supply.

ing Water Programme, World Bank-aided 'Neer Nirmal' and

Rajya Grameen Payjal Yojana

address the problems of

drinking water scarcity in

Bundelkhand, repair works

"Apart from Bundelkhand,

among other schemes.

He also directed that Samagra Gram Vikas Department be merged with Rural Development department.

Ready to give 6-mnth honeymoon period to Adityanath govt: Cong

OUR CORRESPONDENT

LUCKNOW: The Uttar Pradesh Congress on Sunday said it was ready to give sixmonth "honeymoon" period to the Yogi Adityanath government before scrutinising its work and schemes, and promised to act as a "vigilant watchman".

The BJP government is in a honeymoon mode, and we are ready to give it a six-month honeymoon period after which the Congress will start scrutinising its work and schemes," UP Congress spokesperson Ashok Singh told PTI.

He also said that the party will act as a "vigilant watchman" and would not allow the BJP government to take any anti-people measures.

and sub-systems in tender

document for ensuring indig-

enous manufacturing of a min-

imum of 25 per cent of such

equipment - again either by

establishing a wholly owned

subsidiary in India or through

metro coaches are currently

operational in the country with

an immediate requirement of

1,420 and it's expected that

over the next three years more

than 1,600 metro cars would be

required. Notably, every metro

coach is estimated to cost about

In India initiative, the ministry

nine types of signaling equip-

ment from within the coun-

try and metro companies have

also been directed to develop

maximum possible local com-

technical support is available

ating in seven cities -Delhi,

Kolkata, Mumbai, Jaipur, Guru-

gram, Bengaluru and Chennai

with a total route length of

326 km. Metro projects with a

total route length of 546 km are

under construction in 11 cities

and projects with a total route

length of 903 km in 13 cities are

Presently, metros are oper-

within the country.

has stipulated procurement of

Further, to promote Make

Rs 10 crore.

A total number of 1,912

Indian manufacturers.

"honeymoon period" remark, state BJP spokesperson Manish Shukla said "The Yogi Adityanath government had never allowed itself to slip into the honeymoon mode. It was in working mode from day one. This can be easily substantiated by the late night departmental presentations made to the Chief Minister."

Singh, on the issue of the Congress' poor performance, said that the party was preparing for the polls to the civic bodies, and "is confident of put-

Anti-Kashmiri banners: UP



Navnirman Sena chief Amit Jani has been arrested in connection with the anti- Kashmiri hoardings that were put up in the city. Partapur police station in-charge Dinesh Sharma said Jani was arrested from the Delhi-Doon highway near Partapur bypass when he was on his way to Dehradun from the

Banners calling for boycott of Kashmiris and asking them to leave Uttar Pradesh had been put up by the organisation on NH-58 outside the colleges where students from the Valley study.

only the first step and it would launch a "halla bol" campaign from April 30 to "banish" the Kashmiris who do not leave the state on their own.

A case had been lodged against Jani following which

Yesterday, through his advocate, the organisation's chief submitted a surrender application before the special

Navnirman Sena's **Amit Jani arrested**



ting up good show". Speaking the low morale of the party workers, he said that when the results do not match with your efforts, "the morale and mood certainly takes a dip. But, I am sure that the clouds of despair will vanish, and we will bounce back strongly.'



capital last night.

he had gone missing.

Journalist Nora Chopra remembered **OUR CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI:** A condolence

meeting was held at the Constitution Club here on Sunday in the memory of veteran journalist Nora Chopra. Chopra passed away on Thursday at the age of 64, after prolonged

Senior journalists from various organizations attended the event and talked about Chopra's achievements.

Senior journalists Neerja Chowdhury, Zafar Agha, president of Press Club of India Gautam Lahiri and president of Women's Press Club of India Sovana Jain also attended the condolence meeting.

Chopra had more than three decades of experience in political journalism. She had been a weekly columnist with IPA for more than 15 years. Chopra started her career in journalism with The Pioneer and Northern India Patrika and later contributed to a large number of papers including The Telegraph, Rashtriya Punjab Keshari. Her political columns were widely read and she had wide contacts in political parties.

President Pranab Mukherjee expressed condolence on the demise of Chopra on Thursday, saying the nation has lost a veteran journalist who was inspiration to many. In a message to her son, Rahil Chopra, President Mukherjee said, "I am sad to learn statement.



about the passing away of your mother, Nora Chopra, whom I had known for long years.

"A senior journalist and columnist, Chopra was widely admired and respected for her journalistic skills. She had a long and distinguished career, especially with The Sunday Guardian. In her death, the nation has lost a veteran journalist who inspired many others," the President also mentioned.

"Please accept my heartfelt condolences and convey the same to the rest of your family members. I pray to the almighty to give you and the strength and courage to bear this irreparable loss," he

Congress president Sonia Gandhi also expressed condolence on the demise of the veteran journalist. Remembering her remarkable work and expressing solidarity with family and friends, Gandhi prayed for the departed soul, said an All India Congress Committee

Eight dead, six injured in UP road accidents

LUCKNOW (UP): Eight persons, including a couple, were killed and six others injured in three separate road accidents in Lakhimpur, Farrukhabad and Deoria districts of Uttar Pradesh today.

Three men, who were returning from a marriage ceremony in Sarsawan, were killed when a speeding truck hit their motor- bike on the Pilibhit-Basti state highway near Rajaganj in Gola area here. The incident took place in

the early hours killing Pramod (45) and Vijay Pal (40) on the spot while another person Vimal (28) was rushed to the hospital, where he succumbed Án FIR has been registered

and the police are trying to identify and locate the truck and its driver, officials said. In Farrukhabad, three persons were killed and five injured when a SUV lost con-

trol and fell into a ditch near

Birahimpur village on the

Aliganj-Kayamganj road here Ánil Saxena (50), his wife Vandana (45) and driver Durai (40) died on the spot in the incident while five others injured were rushed to the hospital, where their condition was

learnt to be stable. In the third incident at Deoria, two persons were killed and a child seriously injured after being hit by an unidentified speeding vehicle near Karamtar village on Sunday. AGENCIES

will have to buy 75% coaches made in India **DHIRENDRA KUMAR** The revamped norms also make it must to include identified list of critical equipment

Metro rail companies

NEW DELHI: The Make In India project, a flagship scheme of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has got a major shot in the arm as the Centre has approved standardisation of norms for procurement of metro rolling stock. The new norms mandate 75 per cent of metro car and 25 per cent of critical equipment and sub-systems production the country only.

The new mandatory tender conditions and standardised norms for equipment have been approved by Urban Development Minister M Venkaiah Naidu and the same have been circulated to all the metro companies to make them effective immediately.

According to a senior official, the initiative would help in encouraging setting up manufacturing facilities by increasing the volumes of procurement of reduction through economies

According to the new norms, minimum 75 per cent of the tendered quantity of metro cars would now be manufactured indigenously by either establishing an independent manufacturing facility in the country or partnering with Indian manufacturers, if the procurement is more than

IAS officer 'mad', abuses workers

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Kerala Power Minister M.M. Mani on Sunday drew flak for allegedly calling an IAS officer "mad" and made disparaging remarks about women plantation workers.

Opposition leaders attacked Mani, with two leaders of the BJP and the Congress demanding his resignation.

On Saturday evening, the Minister first took on IAS officer Sreeram Venkitaraman, who was involved in clearing usurped government land of encroachments in Mani's home district Idukki.

"In Idukki, most religious establishments are located on land that do not have clear title deed. He (Venkitaraman) is a mad man and should be sent to Oolampara (mental hospital in Thiruvananthapuram)," said Mani, who has waded into controversies with his uttrances in the past as well.

Later, addressing a public meeting in Idukki on Saturday night, Mani, a CPI-M leader, said he knew what all went on during the strike by 'Pembulai Orumae' (Women's Collective).

"It was a stage-managed protest led by vested interests. I know what all happened. When



ties were taking place in nearby forests," Mani said.

Angered by Mani's remarks, women plantation workers' leader Gomathy said they had launched a protest in Munnar town from Sunday afternoon. "Who is Mani to speak about

us? What does he know about us? We will not end our protest till the Minister apologises," a furious Gomathy said. The 2015 strike by women

plantation workers in Munnar had forced the then Oommen Chandy government to hike their wages. Congress leader Lathika Subhash said Mani had brought shame on Kerala.

"Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan should ask Mani to step down for his abusive words against plantation workers. I know the sufferings of these women," said Subhash. AGENCIES

to hone the skills of victims as well as potential victims to make them self-dependent by providing better employment opportunities to them.

As per the road map, the emphasis was put on the use of technology and software such as Impulse for better monitoring of the cases and also keep track of victims, their rehabilitation, and prosecution of offenders.

Nepal is primarily considered a country of origin - a source for human trafficking. Victims of trafficking from Nepal move to India or the Middle East or even to Europe. As per official Nepal figures, the Ministry of Women Children and social Welfare of Nepal had identified 26 of Nepal's 75 districts as trafficking prone. The majority are from the hills, ethnic and schedule castes.

India shares 1,751 km of porous borders with Nepal and 699 km of porous borders with Bhutan and the SSB has been tasked to guard Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bhutan borders by the Central government. The credit goes to SSB jawans that human trafficking has been considerably curbed after the deployment of SSB on these

Poverty is the prime factor behind girls of Nepal getting into the trap of traffickers as about 38 per cent of Nepal's population live on or below the poverty line. Apart from poverty and lack of employment historical, cultural factors also contribute to the current state.

NATION BRIEFS

RAJNATH OPENS CAPF'S FOOTBALL **TALENT HUNT TOURNEY**

NEW DELHI: The Central Armed Police Forces' under 19 football talent hunt tournament for boys and girls -Oorja – kicked off on Saturday in the presence Home Minister Rajnath Singh. The CAPF - BSF, CRPF, CISF, ITBP, SSB and the Assam Rifles have come jointly under the aegis of All India Police Sports Control Board to organise this three phase tournament starting from May 1.

VIT ENGINEERING ENTRANCE EXAM RESULTS OUT

VELLORE: Aashish Waikar, a student of Bhavan Vidyalaya Panchkula, Madhya Pradesh has secured the first rank in the VIT Engineering Entrance Examination (VI-TEEE)-2017 which was held from April 5 to 16 in 119 selected cities across India, as well as Dubai, Kuwait and Muscat. The entrance exam was held for admission to the various B.Tech programmes offered by VIT University at its Vellore, Chennai, Bhopal & Amaravati (AP). Releasing the results here on Sunday, VIT Chancellor Dr G Viswanathan said that a record 2,23,081 candidates had registered for the VITEEE-2017.

MP GOVT TO PROVIDE SUBSIDISED SO-LAR WATER PUMPS TO FARMERS

BHOPAL: The Madhya Pradesh government would soon provide nearly 18,500 solar-powered water pumps to farmers in the state at subsidised rates. "We are going to make available solar borewell and surface pumps fitted with remote monitoring system to the farmers under the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Solar Pump Scheme shortly," New and Renewable Energy Department Principal Secretary Manu Srivastava said. "The rates of solar pumps already arrived at after the bidding are the lowest in the country. The performance of each pump can be monitored on a real-time basis from anywhere in the world," he said.

BRAIN DEATH CERTIFICATION COMES UNDER GOVT SCANNER IN KERALA

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The Kerala government has made the presence of government doctors mandatory for the certification of brain stem deaths in the state hospitals. As per new guidelines, the presence of at least one doctor in government service is a must for certifying brain deaths, Health department sources said. The objective is to make the organ donation process more transparent and ensure that the certification procedure is in adherence to the international protocols, they said.

3 CHILDREN CHARRED TO DEATH AS SHANTY CATCHES FIRE

CHANDIGARH: Three children of a family were charred to death after their shanty caught fire in Jind in Haryana, police said today. Three others of the family, including the mother of the children, suffered serious burn injuries in the incident that took place after midnight last night, police said. The family hails from Muzzaffarnagar in Uttar Pradesh and some of its members were working as construction labourers in Jind, they said. "Two girls and a boy died in the incident and they were four months, six years and four years old respectively. Three others, including the mother of the children, are in a serious condition and have been admitted at Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences in Rohtak," Station House Officer, Police Station (City), Jind, Inspector Nar Singh said.

PM bats for simultaneous polls, Kerala Minister calls changing fiscal to Jan-Dec

MPOST BUREAU

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday pitched for conducting simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and the state assemblies and shifting to a January-December fiscal year.

Addressing the Niti Aayog Governing Council's third meeting, which was attended by several state chief ministers, Modi said for long, India had suffered from economic and political mismanagement. "Because of poor time man-

agement, many good initiatives and schemes had failed to deliver the anticipated results,' he said, adding there is a need to develop robust arrangements that could function amidst diversity.

The prime minister called for carrying forward the debate and discussions on holding simultaneous elections to Parliament and state legislatures.

On the Goods and Services Tax (GST), Modi asked the states to make legislative arrangements "without delay" for the rollout of the indirect tax regime from July 1.

The GST, which will subsume central excise, service tax, Value Added Tax (VAT) and other local levies, is scheduled to be rolled out from



PM Narendra Modi with BJP President Amit Shah during a meeting with BJP chief ministers at party office in New Delhi on Sunday

The consensus on GST reflects the spirit of 'one nation, one aspiration, one determination, Modi earlier said in his opening remarks at the meeting.

Referring to the change in the budget dates, he said in a country where agricultural income is exceedingly important, budgets should be pre-pared immediately after the receipt of agricultural incomes

He added that there have been suggestions to follow January to December as financial

The prime minister asked

the states to take the initia-

tive in this regard. Currently,

India follows April- March as

Later, briefing reporters about the meeting, Niti Aayog vice chairman Arvind Panagariya said the prime minister wants that "we should think of January-December financial year as this is appropriate from

the point of view of farmers". Modi also urged states, local governments and NGOs to decide goals for 2022 and work in mission mode towards

Referring to the issue of regional imbalance, which was raised by a number of chief ministers, Modi said the matter needs to be addressed on priority, both nationally, and

Take care of students from J&K: PM to CMs

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday urged all Chief Ministers to take care of students from Jammu and Kashmir in their respective states, a remark that assumes significance in view of some recent untoward incidents against them.

Modi's advice at a meeting with Chief Ministers here came after Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti raised the issue.

At the meeting of the NITI Aayog Governing Council, Modi "seconded" Mehbooba's suggestion that states should take interest in the students from Jammu and Kashmir who are studying in other states. The Prime Minister "urged states to reach out to these students (of J&K) from time to time", said a statement by the PMO quoting Modi's

concluding remarks. This comes days after Kashmiri students of Mewar University in Rajasthan were thrashed by some locals there.

14 arrested, case against over 200 for Agra violence

OUR CORRESPONDENT

AGRA: Fourteen persons associated with right-wing outfits were arrested after a case was lodged against over 200 persons for roughing up cops and causing damage at Agra's Sadar Bazaar and Fatehpur Sikri police stations on Saturday.

Activists of Bajrang Dal, Vishwa Hindu Parishad and other outfits had hurled stones and roughed up policemen including a senior officer yesterday demanding the release of 5 men who had been held for allegedly harassing some persons from the minority community.

We have arrested 14 persons in connection with the violence on Saturday, DIG Mahesh Mishra said.

Police officials said that they had registered a case against 30 members of right-wing outfits and over 200 other unidentified persons who were allegedly involved in the rampage at the Sadar Bazaar police station yesterday.

The charges include provisions dealing with rioting, unlawful assembly, dacoity, obstructing a public servant in discharge of his duty and causing damage by fire.

A flag march was also taken out early morning today in Fatehpur Sikri by the police.

Yesterday, there had been a tiff between two groups at Fatehpur Sikri, after which the police detained five persons.

But soon a mob of rightwing activists gathered at the police today began it crack-



Charred bike of a policeman which was torched by suspected Bairana Dal activists in their attempt to rescue five of their men from a police lock-up, in Agra on Saturday night

insisting that the police release

The arrested were brought to Sadar Bazaar police station from Fatehpur Sikri, after local Hindutya outfit members and BJP workers resorted to stone pelting and roughing up police personnel.

Circle Officer, Achnera, Ravi Kant Parashar was allegedly slapped by some unidentified person and an attempt made to snatch the pistol.

However, a mob also gathered outside the Sadar Bazaar police station where they thrashed a sub-inspector and set ablaze his motor-cycle as the right wing activists sought to pressurise the police into

releasing the 5 detainees. A BJP MLA was also alleged to be among the protesters though there were reports that he may have left before the violence began.

Following the violence, the

down on the rowdy elements and hunt is on for culprits who

have not been arrested yet. The incident occurred barely a few hours after the new Uttar Pradesh DGP Sulkhan Singh took charge and vowed to crush hooliganism.

Singh had also warned those who try to take the law into their hands in the name of cow protection or tackling eve- teasing.

In Agra, senior police officials said they would not bow to any pressure and action would be initiated against those involved in the rampage.

Activists of Hindutva

groups have been quite active in the area in recent times. On Saturday they had entered the Taj Mahal premises to protest against an alleged ban on saffron scarves. On Sunday activists of right-wing outfits took out a march through the city to protest against certain develop-

NEW DELHI: Heatwaves in Since last year IMD has the country are turning out to be particularly deadly with over 4,620 recorded deaths caused when the temperature crosses by the severe weather condition

in the last four years. Of that figure, a whopping 4,246 people died in Andhra

MPOST BUREAU

Pradesh and Telangana alone. According to the Ministry of Earth Sciences, in 2016, nearly 1,600 people died due to erratic weather conditions, of which 557 casualties were to severe heatwave.

2015 witnessed 2,081 deaths due to severe heatwave while 549 people died in 2014.

In 2013, the severe heatwave conditions killed 1,443 people, of which the unified Andhra Pradesh state registered 1,393 casualties.

The figures, however, are larger across the country as causes other than the direct reasons like heat stroke and dehydration are seldom accounted for, said Dileep Mavlankar, Director of Gandhinagarbased Indian Institute of Public Health that has been working with the Ahemdabad Municipal Corporation on a heatwave action plan.

"For instance, dehydration also leads to respiratory and renal failure, especially for those who are prone to heart and kidney ailments. Infants and the elderly top the list in casualties," he said.

"In 2010, Ahemdabad recorded 65 deaths due to heat-

wave, but in the same period, there were 800 more deaths," Malvalankar said.

started issuing heatwave alerts. A heat wave is declared

45 degrees Celsius. If the temperature rises 4 to 5 degrees above normal, then the condition is termed as a 'heatwave'. If the variance is over 6 degrees above normal, then it is classified as a 'severe heatwave'. With global temperatures on the rise, the instances of heat wave are increasing. MoES figures reveal that there were 74 days of severe heatwave on an average between 1961 and 1970. The figure declined

to 34 between 1971-1980. Between 1981-1990 and 1991-2000, 45 and 48 severe heatwave days were recorded respectively. However, there was a sharp increase in figures in 2001-2010 with the number of severe heatwave days peaking to 98.

The last decade is one of the warmest ever recorded.

With every year in the current decade registering warmer climates, it may be fast racing towards becoming the warmest 10-year period. The IMD has declared 2016 as the warmest year ever recorded since 1901.

Global warming is the obvious reason behind the severe heatwave, said Laxman Singh Rathore, former Director General of the India Meteorological Department, but local factors also aggravate the situation.

Blistering heat persists in parts of country, rains in some places

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Killer heatwave claimed

4,620 lives in last four years

NEW DELHI: Scorching heat continued in many parts of the country with Ongole in Andhra Pradesh sizzling at 45.5 degrees Celsius even as rainfall occurred at some places, including in Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

It was a moderately warm day in the national capital with the maximum temperature settling at 39.6 degrees Celsius.

The minimum temperature settled at 26.8 degrees Celsius, four notches above normal and the humidity level hovered around 19 per cent on the lower side and 56 per cent on the higher side.

Blistering heat persisted in most parts of Odisha, mainly in the western region with both Balangir and Titlagarh becoming the hottest places in the state recording a high of 44.8 degrees Celsius.

As the mercury breached the 43-degree mark in seven towns and the 40-degree mark in at least 12 places in the state, the MeT office said that heatwave conditions may intensify.

While Jharsuguda town recorded a maximum temperature of 44.1 degrees Celsius, it was 43.8 degrees Celsius at witnessed a slight respite from



A man sitting under a tap trying to cool down on a hot day, at the Allahabad Railway station on Sunday

Sambalpur, 43.7 degrees Celsius at Bhawanipatna, 43.5 degrees Celsius at both Sonepur and Hirakud and 42.1 degrees Celsius at both Angul and Talcher. Some areas of the coastal belt in the state, however, got some relief because of a thunder squall.

Two sunstroke deaths have so far been reported in the state, one each from Bargarh and Angul districts.

Ongole in Andhra Pradesh recorded a high of 45.5 degrees Celsius, while in Telangana's Khammam the maximum temperature was 44 degrees

In Rajasthan, most places

the simmering heat as maximum temperatures dipped by a few notches in the state.

Churu was the hottest place in the state recording a high of 40.6 degrees Celsius followed by Kota at 39.9 degrees Celsius, Jaipur and Bikaner both at 39 degrees Celsius and Jodhpur at 38.8 degrees Celsius.

Maximum temperatures hovered close to normal at most places in Haryana and Punjab, a day after many parts in the two states witnessed light rainfall.

In Haryana, Hisar registered a high of 39.6 degrees Celsius while Ambala recorded a maximum temperature of 38.9 degrees Celsius.

Sonu posts Azaan video amid row

OUR CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI: Bollywood playback singer Sonu Nigam, who is embroiled in a controversy for criticising sermons from the loudspeakers, has shared a video of Azaan.

The 43-year-old singer took to Twitter to post the over twominute-long clip, which he seems to have recorded.

Nigam captioned the video as, "Good morning, India". He, however, did not mention the time or place.

rom the loudspeakers as hoo liganism in a series of tweets.

This was followed by a fatwa being issued against Nigam by Kolkata-based cleric, Syed Sha Atef Ali Al Quaderi, who asked him to shave off his head for his tweets. In a surprising move, the singer had himself tonsured by a celebrity hairstylist at a press conference.

 \bar{N} igam had stressed that his tweets were against the use of loudspeakers in morning ser-



mons and not aimed at any particular religion.

"I only spoke against the use of loudspeakers. Everybody has On April 17, the singer had a right to his opinion. I have the described the loud sermons right to have an opinion and it Loudspeakers are not a necessity; they are not a part of any religion," he said.

> Amid the controversy, actress Kangana Ranaut said she has no problems with Azaan but felt what the singer said should be respected and discussed.

> While, lyricist and scriptwriter Javed Akhtar said that prayers at any place of worship

Death row convict among 3 complete IGNOU degrees

NAGPUR: Three prisoners of the Nagpur Central Jail - two of them serving life sentences and the third a death row convict - have completed BA and MA degrees from the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU).

Narayan Chaudhary (35), the death row convict, had enrolled with the IGNOU for MA (sociology) in 2012.

Similarly, Mahakalkar (30) and Shyamrao Waghmare (45), serving life sentences, had registered themselves with the ogy courses, respectively.

All three inmates have completed their degrees, a senior official of the university said. However, the inmates could not attend the IGNOU convocation held this month, where degrees were awarded to successful candidates, due to protocol and prison rules.

But they will be handed over their degrees at a func-



tion to be held in the jail premises soon, said Nagpur-based 745 prisoners from Nag- up in the jail premises by a since July 2010, he said, adding most of them opted for social science disciplines.

Prisoners are provided study material by the university like other students, he

DIG (Prisons), Eastern Region, Yogesh Desai, said jail authorities have launched initiatives to impart different skills to the inmates.

They are trained in traditional skills like fabrication Regional Director of IGNOU and carpentry, among others. P Sivaswaroop. As many as Besides, a facility has been set pur and Amravati jails have company called Sai Minda to

> Similarly, the IGNOU, in collaboration with Hero Motors Corp, will be starting a two-month course in auto mechanics, Desai said.

He said the inmates take a lot of interest in skill development courses as these will help them to get jobs or start their own business once they are released.

2015 to be able to financially support

her family. But soon after marriage, he started threatening her with divorce.

me and people molest me or behave inappropriately when I go for job inter-

views," Rubina, who has been living

away from her husband, said. "I have

Some of these victims have knocked

the door of the apex court seeking a

stringent law against these "oppressive"

practices, hoping to safeguard the future

of other women and balance gender

wana, a 33-year-old Railways employee

in Delhi. One of the petitioners in the

SC against polygamy, she married

Indian Air Force employee Mohammed

Khalid in 2012. But Khalid, it turned

out, had deceitfully married her by

concealing his two previous marriages,

which she discovered within a year of

their marriage. "I found two dependant

cards in my husband's bag issued by

the Air Force which carried names and

photographs of two women addressed

as his spouse," she said. When Rizwana

sought a divorce, Khalid held that Islam

allowed him to marry without divorc-

ing his wives.

Among those seeking change is Riz-

equations within the community.

nowhere to go."

"Society has completely ostracised

Why can't a woman live in peace in this country: SC

NEW DELHI: Why can't as per the medical report, she women live in peace in this country, a Supreme Court bench, apparently exasperated over growing crimes against women, has observed.

The observation came when a bench headed by Justice Dipak Misra was hearing an appeal filed by a man who was sentenced to 7 years in jail by the Himachal Pradesh High Court for allegedly teasing and compelling a 16-year-old girl to take the extreme step of committing suicide. "Why can't women live in peace in this country," the apex court said while reserving its verdict on the appeal.

Maintaining that no one can as she has her own independent choice, the bench, which also comprised Justices A M Khanwilkar and M M Shantanagoudar, said "a woman has a choice to love or not to love a person. No one can force her to love somebody. There is a concept of love and man has to accept it."

During the arguments, the counsel, appearing for the man, raised doubts over the girl's dying declaration, saying that

was unable to speak or write after being hospitalised. "The doctors said that she

was 80 per cent burnt and it was not possible for her to write dying declaration. She was unable to speak also. Her both hands were burnt. This dying declaration has to go. She was not in a position to say or write anything," the counsel said. To this, the bench told the man that as per her dying declaration, "you had created a situation which had compelled her to commit such act."

The man was initially acquitted by the trial court in July 2010 after which the state had approached the high court.

According to the police, the girl's father had lodged an alleged kidnapping and rape case against the man in which he was subsequently acquitted.

It had alleged that the accused used to threaten and eve-tease the girl and in July 2008, she set herself ablaze when her parents were not at home. She was taken to a hospital where she died during

From June, a mega app to answer all rail related queries

NEW DELHI: Come June, all your train travel-related queries will be answered through one mega application, likely to be named HindRail, which incorporates in it most of the existing railways' apps.

The Indian Railways is developing the new app to work as a full-fledged inquiry system providing information on arrivals, departures, delays, cancellations, platform number, running status and berth availability.

Besides, it will also offer booking of taxis, porter sei vices, retiring rooms, hotels tour packages, e-catering and other travel-related needs.

The Railways will offer all these services on a revenuesharing model with the service

Thus, the app will serve as a revenue-earning platform for the public transporter and is slated to have a business potential Rs 100 crore

Talaq, talaq: The lives torn apart

of the social media. For the 22-year-old Shahjahanpur resident, it was a form of refuge –an escape from a life torn apart by four years of a tumultuous marriage.

One chilly January evening this year, she was lost in a happy reverie, scrolling down her Facebook timeline, featuring mundane updates on love, life and poetry, punctuated with news, when a post hit her. It was from her husband. Talaq, Talaq, Talaq, it said.

Afrin read the three words over and over again as her three-year-old daughter scattered toys all over the bed, some of which fell to the floor with a loud jangle. It was merely the beginning of Afrin's trial. A day later, her mobile beeped with an incoming message. It read, "Talaq, Talaq, Talaq.

Her husband had expressed his determination loud and clear. As if the relentless torture with unending dowry demands was not enough, Afrin was

now being booted out. She was always happy as a child. But the incidents seem to have irreversibly changed her life," Afrin's mother, Fareeda Begum, told PTI from Uttar Pradesh's Shahjahanpur. Afrin has been taken to a relative's house, away from her maternal home, as the husband's family has been threatening to take her

daughter away, her mother said. Her husband's way to annul the marriage, which in Islam is a civil contract based on consent, has broken Afrin's spirit. And it is this form of termination that is at the heart of a raging dispute on

the practice of triple talaq. The issue came to the fore in February last year when Shayara Bano, a triple talaq victim, petitioned the Supreme



Court, seeking a ban on the divorce form, polygamy and nikah halala, a practice under which a divorced Muslim woman has to marry again, consummate the marriage and then break it if she wants to go back to her first husband. Thousands of Muslim women across the country have since formed pressure groups and spearheaded signature campaigns demanding the abolition of the practice.

Shayara's case has been clubbed with a clutch of similar petitions by the apex court, which will hear the matter from May 11. The Centre has already taken a stand against triple talaq.

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) claims Shariat upholds the validity of triple talaq under which a Muslim husband can divorce his wife by merely pronouncing the word "talaq" three times.

Talaq, or divorce, can be obtained in either of two ways.

Under 'talaq-ul-sunnat', there has to be a three-month period, called 'iddat', between the pronouncement of talaq by a husband and a lawful separation. But 'talaq-e-bidat' authorises a man to do so in a single sitting.

However, over the years, a campaign against triple talaq which experts say finds no mention in the Quran -has snowballed into a movement, riding on the woes of thousands of Muslim women whose husbands have walked off by just uttering these three words. Some took absurd routes, such as pronouncing talaq in text messages and, in recent times, on Facebook.

Like several others, Afrin has mustered the courage to approach the police against her husband who took advantage of the contentious provisions of the Muslim Personal Law.

As the debate on triple talaq, polygamy and nikal halala rages, these women from across the country are fighting a battle not just with the law board but within themselves as they find their lives weighed down by the stigma attached to divorces. Take 24-year-old Rubina, who mar-

Being a government servant may have made Rizwana financially independent, but it took away from her the right to alimony or any kind of monetary relief from her estranged husband. "In our country, women with government jobs are not entitled to alimony. Men want to marry a woman who holds a government job, then torture her for dowry and easily divorce her without ried an affluent man double her age, in the fear of liability," she said. AGENCIES

AIMPLB to adopt social media to clarify Sharia laws

LUCKNOW: In a bid to clear confusion over Sharia laws, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board has decided to tread the social media path and also explore the possibility of starting a TV news channel and newspaper. The board has decided to constitute a special social media committee, which will provide clear information about various issues pertaining to divorce, marriage, halala, warisana haq (inhertiance rights) and women's rights among other issues. It will also convey the board's stand on these contentious issues.

"Senior office bearers along with a large section feel the medium through which Sharia laws are being criticised, the same medium should be utilised to register our presence and also to present the right picture of things," AIMPLB senior executive member Maulana Yasin Usmani said. He said that in the executive meeting of AIMPLB in Lucknow on April 15 and 16, this issue cropped up and it was decided to form a social media panel.

triple talaq for not following norms UIIAIN (MP): A family court here has "nullified" the triple talaq given by a man to his wife on the grounds that due proce-

MP: Court nullifies

dure, as prescribed in Muslim religious texts, was not followed in the matter. Additional principal judge of the family court, Omprakash Sharma on March 9 observed that the procedure adopted by Tousif Sheikh to divorce his wife was "illegal" and "ineffective" and nullified the same.

Arshi Khan got married to Tousif from Dewas on January 19, 2013 and after some time he (Tousif) started demanding money from her. When his demands were not fulfilled, he started troubling her, the victim's lawyer Arvind Gaud said.

After some time the woman left her husband's place and returned to her parents' home. She later filed a case under the Anti-Dowry Act against Tousif, said Gaud. That case is still pending in the court, he said.

Meanwhile, on October 9, 2014, Tousif verbally divorced Arshi by stating talaq in Ujjain court premises, where they had come in connection with some

Later, he informed her through a notice that he had divorced her by stating talaq thrice while coming out of the court premises on that date.

Arshi challenged divorce on

the grounds that due procedure as prescribed in the Muslim religious text was not followed in the matter, Gaud said. The court in its order found discrepancies in it and said that Tousif had failed to mention in

his reply that through which

method 'Talaq Ahsan or Talaq Hasan' he had divorced his The judge said that he failed to give credible evidence of the presence of Arshi in the court premises as mentioned by him when he had pronounced talaq

thrice, while as per the religious

law, the presence of the woman in question is mandatory. The court also observed that no steps were taken by the parties concerned for any mediation on the issue as per religious law. The court took into account various decisions given by other courts on the issue before declaring the talaq as "illegal", "ineffective" and

"nullified" it.

EDITORIAL

Stakes are high in MCD elections

nlike previous occasions, the municipal elections in the national capital this time have generated a lot of interest in the media with many column inches and air time dedicated to it. However, going by the voter turnout, these elections have seemingly not generated much interest in the people. Overall the voter turnout just went past the 46% mark till 4 pm on Sunday. Nonetheless, in the days leading up to Sunday's elections to the three municipal corporations of Delhi, all the major players—the Bharatiya Janata Party, Congress, and the Aam Aadmi Party ran high-octane campaigns. The stakes for all the three parties involved are high. As per reports on the ground, the general narrative in these elections seems to suggest that the BJP and Congress are out to sideline the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP. For both the national parties, AAP represents the disruptive force that could threaten their hold over urban local bodies in Delhi. For AAP, however, it is all about consolidating the gains it achieved in 2015 Delhi Assembly elections when it won a whopping 67 out of 70 seats. The Election Commission will publish the results of these elections on April 26.

Fresh from its stunning victory in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, and four other states, besides significant gains in local body elections in Odisha and Maharashtra, the BJP is very keen on maintaining its electoral momentum. In the recent Maharashtra civic polls earlier this year, the party won in eight of the ten municipal corporations, sidelining the Congress and Nationalist Congress Party, besides putting its ally Shiv Sena on notice in the state. Following this successful political endeavour, the BJP displaced the Congress and emerged as the second largest party in the recent panchayat polls in Odisha. In the national capital, however, the equations are very different. Going by the actions of the previous and current Lieutenant Governors, it is very apparent that the BJP is still smarting from its stunning loss in the last Delhi Assembly elections, where it won just three seats. Despite party president Amit Shah overseeing the campaign personally and Prime Minister Narendra Modi staking his own credibility, the BJP lost rather badly in 2015. Thus, it has become imperative for Shah that the BJP maintains its hold over the municipal corporations of Delhi, which it has governed for the last ten years, and stop AAP in its tracks. But anti-incumbency is a real concern for the BJP. In light of these circumstances, media reports indicate that Shah micromanaged the party's affairs in these elections, roping in a whole host Union Ministers, Chief Ministers, and state leaders for the campaign. In a significant move, which indicates Shah's awareness of the massive antiincumbency his party faces in these elections, he decided not to issue any tickets to sitting councillors. On expected lines, this move has caused a lot of consternation among the local cadre, although Shah's reasons are very valid. There is a definite attempt to break away from the party's poor record in the municipal bodies over the past ten years. Under its tenure, the MCDs have suffered from grave mismanagement, besides facing allegations of corruption. The campaign has more or less avoided any mention of the party's achievements and instead focussed on promoting Brand Modi.

One of the BJP's major promises before the 2012 MCD elections was to fundamentally change and improve the sanitation system in the city, allied with a massive door-to-door garbage collection and waste segregation, and construction of public toilets at all busy spots, especially for women. In the five years since the elections and three years after Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Swachh Bharat Mission, the sanitation system outside the confines of the NDMC area has gone from bad to worse. The city has suffered from a series of strikes by sanitation workers because they were not paid their wages on time, leading to piles of garbage strewn all across Delhi that leaves behind a putrid smell. Reports state that the incidence of communicable diseases (dengue and chikungu nya) reached new highs high last year, while the MCDs barely spent any of the funds allocated to them under the Swachh Bharat Mission. In the recently conducted Swachh Survekshan in 2016, which is a survey published by the Ministry of Urban Development, it was found that less than 10% of Delhi's residents rate their city as clean. Less than 15% claim that they are always able to find a dustbin and just a quarter of the city is endowed with door-to-door waste segregation. Meanwhile, the state of public toilets in the city remains pitiable. For the most part, these toilets are dirty, unhygienic, and suffer from an inadequate water supply. Some of these toilets even pose safety hazards for women with no separate section for them, and in certain cases, there aren't any doors and lights. There are also over 1800 primary schools that are run by the MCDs. Once again, expert studies report that the state of education in these schools is rather poor with a significant number of students applying to other Delhi government schools from class 6 onwards unable to even inculcate basic reading skills. Most of the students in these primary schools are from lowincome households, and such neglect of their education, one would argue, is criminal. It is imperative to note that the MCDs handle a whole host of concerns, but it is education and sanitation that have garnered the spotlight.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his party have a lot riding on these MCD polls. After its sweep in 2015, the party should have been in pole position moving into Sunday's elections. A humiliating defeat in the recent Rajouri Garden by-poll, where its candidate lost his deposit, besides losses in the recent Punjab and Goa Assembly elections, have stifled the AAP's electoral momentum. With its plans for national expansion suffering a setback, the party has decided to turn its attention back to Delhi and tighten its grip on the city-state. Despite the hurdles placed before the AAP government by the Delhi High Court, successive lieutenant governors and the Centre, it has managed to achieve significant successes in the spheres of public health and education. The Delhi government's relentless pursuit on upgrading the quality of instruction offered in public schools has borne fruit, complemented well by the formation of School Management Committees (an institution mandated in Section 21 of the Right to Education Act) and activities like Reading Melas—part if its campaign for better learning outcomes. In the sphere of public health, the AAP government has set up Mohalla Clinics, which are aimed at providing basic healthcare facilities to the ordinary person's doorstep. However, as Padmapriya Janakiraman, a Delhi-based public policy researcher asks in a recent column, "But what use is a mohalla clinic if basic sanitation is not ensured? What use are model schools if the foundations laid in primary school are insufficient? And what use is the idea of mohalla sabhas if the municipality cannot be held accountable for my unusable colony road?" It is for these reasons that AAP is desperate for a win.

For the Congress, these elections present an opportunity for a revival in the city-state. Ever since the party's loss in 2013 and humiliation in 2015, and the subsequent rise of AAP in Delhi and BJP across the length and breadth of this country, the Congress has looked to regain its political relevance under the leadership of senior leader Ajay Maken. Like the BJP, the Congress has also included its top leaders in the campaign. What will be the outcome of these MCD elections? We will find out on April 26.

What next for Turkey?

All eyes on the country after Erdogan's victory in controversial referendum



One of the immediate tasks **Erdogan faces** is to rebuild ties with the West, severely damaged during the referendum campaign as he sought to manufacture diplomatic crises

to energise

his base

urkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's victory in a controversial referendum, by a razorthin majority for a Presidential form of government with sweeping powers, may not reflect popular consensus on where the country wants to move since the establishment of the republican form of government in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.

In fact, it reflects a deep urban-rural divide. Three major cities--Ankara, Izmir, and Istanbul voted "No".

There were strong indications that the voting was far from fair. International election observers criticised the decision by Turkish election officials to allow as valid more than a million ballots that had been cast without an official stamp. During the campaign for the April, 16 referendum authorities arrested a leading opposition politician against the "yes" movement and cracked down on journalists critical of the referendum.

Ever since coming to power as Prime Minister more than a decade ago, Erdogan had long wanted to change the constitutional make-up of Turkey from where the Parliament and Prime Minister held power with the President largely a ceremonial figurehead to a Presiden-

tial form of government.

Though the final result will be announced in the next few days, the country's electoral commission announced that with 99 per cent of votes counted, 51.3 per cent voters have voted in favour of the referendum and 48.7 per cent against it and the situation will more or less remain the same.

The constitutional amendments approved by the voters abolish the post of the Prime Minister and transfer executive power to the President, allow the newly empowered President to issue decrees and appoint many judges and officials responsible for scrutinising his decisions, limit the President to two five-year terms but give the option of running for a third term if Parliament truncates the second one by calling for early elections.

The country would continue to have a Parliament, which would essentially become similar to the US Congress. İt could override the President's executive decisions.

The result seems to indicate that Turkish people have grown wary of the parliamentary system over the years because coalition governments have



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

weakened the governance setup and the writ of the state.

The opposition Republican Peoples Party led by Kemal Kilicdaroglu warned after the result that the dramatic change would turn Turkey into a "one-man rule," while supporters of the new constitution believe that concentrating the executive power in the President will improve the decision-making process.

Erdogan's critics say his move to have a Presidential form of government is an example of how democratic process can, at times, throw up undemocratic results. It further diminishes the chance of Turkey's membership of the European Union.

Hailing the victory in front of a crowd of supporters in Istanbul, Erdogan said: "We are enacting the most important governmental reform of our history." He, however, gave no particular clues in his victory speech on how he plans to respond to his critics.

Erdogan's strategy seems to be intended to prevent Turkey from transforming into another religious state that could morph into a bastion of extremism, Arab News commented.

Erdogan, one of the most moderate Muslim leaders in the region represents the survival of a secular government in the Muslim world, has been acting as a de facto head of government since his election in 2014 despite having no con-

stitutional right to wield such powers. His position as the tallest leader in the country was further consolidated 2016. An unprecedented groundswell of his supporters rallied against the rebels and foiled the coup.

The referendum, apart from shaping Turkey's domestic politics in the years to come, will also have a significant effect on its foreign relations.

One of the immediate tasks Erdogan faces is to rebuild ties with the West, severely damaged during the referendum campaign as he sought to manufacture diplomatic crises to energise his base. After Germany and the Netherlands had blocked Turkish officials from campaigning in their respective countries having sizeable Turkish population, Erdogan had said both the nations had shown Nazi-like behaviour, drawing rebuke from German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

The West has reacted cautiously, but with some concern, over the referendum held under the emergency declared after the failed coup.

Some capitals, such as London, were holding fire until hearing the opinion of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which had an observer mission in Turkey. Others offered their first, cautious,

The EU urged the Turkish government to seek the broadest agreement after Erdogan narrow's victory on the sweeping constitutional changes that the opposition says risk authoritarian

"In view of the close referendum after a failed coup attempt on July 15, result and the far-reaching implications

of the constitutional amendments, we also call on the Turkish authorities to seek the broadest possible national consensus in their implementation," said a statement issued by European Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker, EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini and EU Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn.

Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz said on Twitter that "it shows how divided the country is; Collaboration with the EU will be even more

Turkey is officially an EU candidate nation, although its accession process has been moving at a glacial pace for years when it has moved at all.

"Strange to see democracy restrict democracy. The majority has the right to decide, but I'm quite concerned about new Turkish constitution," Danish Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen said via Twitter.

A NATO official said that the constitutional referendum in alliance member Turkey "is a matter for the Turkish people".

Turkey's disenchantment with NATO and the West and its receding EU accession hope are playing an important role in redefining the country's relations with Asian powers including India

which he is likely to visit shortly.

(M Shakeel Ahmed is former Editor, PTI. He has also served as West Asia Correspondent for PTI, based in Bahrain from 1988 to 1995. The views are strictly personal.)

Quote martial

My first wish is to see this plague of mankind, war, banished from the earth

GEORGE WASHINGTON

FOR THE EARTH

There is a pressing need to institutionalise the undertaking of solar power exploitation so the environment may be of better quality. Including renewable energy projects in priority sector and lending guidelines is indeed a very pragmatic and a much-needed move. While solar energy is an ideal solution to many problems pertaining to environment and economy, it is not feasible for a number of reasons. Though the returns may be remarkable, the setting up of a solar power plant and maintenance of that is no small task. This method of extracting resource is akin to harvesting rain water which is difficult to do on a small scale.

HARSHITA Via email

millenniumpost.in

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'Lal batti' off!

There needs to be a new set of rules to limit the use of beacons to only emergency services, suggests Somesh Goval

harsh truth is that 'lal batti' will be gone from the midnight of April 30, 2017. In a landmark decision, the Modi government has this time delivered the demonetisation blow to the snob value of the VIPs by abolishing the use of beacons atop their cars. Detailed instructions are awaited. Since colonial times, politicians and bureaucrats of all hues and shades have enjoyed this symbol of unquestionable authority which automatically makes accessible a plethora of privileges and freebies besides browbeating others on the road. It is natural for these people to be red-faced. Many such beneficiaries will raise the bogey of security and law & order situation in our country and need for free passage during travel to present their case for the continuation of this shining beacon of authority, arrogance, and privilege at the cost of the common man.

ome are red-faced.

Some see red. The

In our feudal system, anybody in any position of power has been identified with his car and the colour of batti on it. One is believed to have arrived socially, economically, and politically if he gets a sarkari car with a lal batti. Nowhere in the world are there elaborate instructions been issued about the colour and type of beacon as is in our beloved motherland. You have beacons of Red, Ember, Blue, and Yellow colour and these come with or without a flasher! Incidentally, the ember beacon was born to circumvent an Apex Court order banning the use of red and blue beacons by



so-called VIPs. A VIP with a red beacon with flasher holds higher pedestal than the other VIPs flaunting blue or ember ones. The departmental notes, reasons offered for allowing the use of these beacons, and claims for these beacons by one and all are ridiculous, to say the least, and can be the theme of a comedy show.

People in positions to decide such privileges have arrogated these entitlements shamelessly without assessing functional requirement. Whosoever could frame rules for these battis has ensured that they got the most potent flash-

ers in the brightest of the red. And the worst is that the use of beacons has not stopped with the VIP. It has been extended to the family and the extended family of the VIP. Privileges and entitlements at public places like airports, railway stations, toll plazas, and hubs of cultural and business centres have angered the common man who would like the elected representatives and the government servants to come out of the colonial mould of mai-baap and be the faithful

servants of the taxpayers. Ours is perhaps amongst a handful of countries where

anybody even without any official sanction can walk into a neighbourhood automobile shop and buy a beacon of his choice at a price. No questions are asked. This unreasonable and unjustified extension of lal batti culture and inclusion of a vast number of non-emergency services has rightly led to this outcry and strong public opinion against such flagrant misuse of privileges and entitlements.

Beacons have been used traditionally by the emergency services like the police, fire services, ambulances, and allied enforcement services.

A crane deployed to remove debris after a natural or human-made disaster employs a beacon to keep people away from harm's way and to warn them about the situation. A police car chasing criminals is well within its right to use the red/blue beacon. An ambulance carrying a critical patient must announce itself by using the beacon. But why does a bureaucrat or a police officer, a judicial magistrate, a politician or any other government functionary need a beacon to go to the workplace or to attend a social and private function? It will be good if the new set of rules on the subject limit the use of beacons only to emergency services. It is a bitter pill that India must swallow to grow as a mature society safeguarding principles of equality and fairness. The best would be to do away with sarkari cars by introducing handsome transportation allowance. Claims and counter claims

for initiating this positive move have already started flying thick and fast by political parties. The implementation may be easier in the Central establishments. But some states may take longer to fall in line. Closer watch will have to be maintained on all those who are going to be dispossessed of their prized beacons. Rules can be bent, broken and twisted to please those who matter. If not the beacon, better is to get a police escort car with beacons! Yes, that is a possibility in our free country.

(Somesh Goyal is an IPS officer of Himachal Pradesh cadre. The views expressed here are strictly personal.)

The unreasonable and uniustified extension of lal batti culture and inclusion of a vast number of non-emergency services has rightly led to this outcry and strong public opinion against such flagrant misuse of privileges and

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Livestock is a

major source of

livelihood for the

state's poor and

curbs on animal

trade will reduce

the income of the

rural population.

With the Yogi

government

promising to

Adityanath-led

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of farmers in the

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economy that

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can provide the

it is the livestock

Livelihoods at stake

Jitendra and Ishan Kukreti report on the economic implications of the Uttar Pradesh government's recent crackdown on slaughterhouses

ivestock rearing forms an integral part of the village economy, with both large and marginal farmers keeping animals to supplement their income and secure them against crop losses and other contingencies. According to the National Sample Survey Office report on agricultural households released in 2014, 12 per cent of the farmers' average monthly income of Rs 6,421 comes from livestock.

With no takers for his buffalo, the farmer whose wife killed herself may now have to let the animal go astray. "Feeding a cow or buffalo is an expensive affair. It requires at least five kg of dry straw worth Rs 50 every day," he says. The cost of keeping a buffalo, excluding manual labour and costly feed, comes to around Rs 30,200 a year, which is just half of a farmer's annual income of Rs 77,112.

Fearing that government action will make the sale of animal more difficult in the future, other farmers have begun distress-selling of their livestock, which means selling them off at throwaway prices. A 70-year-old marginal farmer from a village in Banda district walked 7 km to the weekly market only to find it "empty". He had come to sell his cow and calf for as low as Rs 2,500. "It is time to harvest the crop. We require cash to pay for labour and the transport of grains. But there are no buyers," he says.

Once the farmers sell animals, they pass through several hands before they land on our dinner plate. The largest group of those employed in meat sale consists of traders and intermediaries, who buy the animals from farmers and sell them to slaughterhouses.

Though the BJP government in UP insists it is following court orders, local media reports suggest that the ban has affected the licensed slaughter of buffaloes, goats, and chickens too. All is quiet at the weekly "Sunday" market in Banda town which sees a weekly trade of 150-200 buffaloes and some milch animals worth around Rs 20 lakh. Traders sit in groups and discuss news reports of violence against animal traders. "When the new government came to power, business first slowed down and then stopped," says the owner of the market. Another weekly market in Bakarganj in Fatehpur district is also empty on a Friday. More than 800 animals worth around Rs 2 crore is traded at the market every week. "I took a buffalo from a farmer in Himmatnagar village and walked 20 km to the market," says a 32-year-old trader from the district. "But there were no buyers. I gave it back to the farmer and asked him to wait till the situation improves."

The ban has affected some of the poorest and most oppressed communities in the Indian caste hierarchy. For instance, men of the Kaparia community, whose traditional occupation is broom making, are now mostly involved in the animal trade. On March 24,



a Kaparia group claimed that the police had seized their buffaloes and extorted Rs 40,000 without returning the animals. Now, other community members from a village in Banda district have decided to stay clear of animal markets. "We do not have money to pay the police. We will be sent to jail," says a Kaparia animal trader.

Shunned by most communities, the job of slaughtering is relegated to those who are at the lowest end of the social hierarchy. A slaughterer from the Muslim Qureshi community in Fatehpur district used to slaughter four to six buffaloes every week for Rs 500 each. But now, he fears the police will nab him. "On March 24, I was robbed by goons of Bajrang Dal while returning from the market. They were shouting and accusing me of cow slaughter," he says. There are 25 Qureshi households in his village. The village head did not allow Down To Earth to enter the village and claimed that all Qureshis had fled their homes. "I don't think the situation will improve soon, so I am asking them to look for another source of livelihood," he says. Yet, he admits that buffalo meat is an important part of the village diet. "It is cheaper than mutton, chicken, and fish. We cannot afford any other meat in our wedding feasts," he says.

Animal slaughter is practised by Hindu communities too. A Khatik slaughterer and meat shop owner says, "My shop was closed down even though I have a licence. There are rumours that I also sell cow and buffalo meat. But I sell only goat meat." The Chikwa community also slaughters sheep and goat for a living. And given India's peculiar caste system, the Chikwas can be either Hindu or Muslim. A Hindu Chikwa slaughterer and seller says, "My licence has not been renewed though I applied for it six months ago." A Muslim Chikwa slaughterer says business has collapsed since the ban. "We used to earn Rs 500 a day by slaughtering goats. Now our earnings have stopped."

Overall, the meat industry provides direct employment to more than 2.5 million people, according to the All India Meat and Livestock Exporters Association. The number of those indirectly affected by the ban is estimated to be much higher.

Incidents of vandalism and harassment have also affected those involved in the trade of milch animals. For instance, two trucks carrying 26 milch buffaloes were seized by vigilantes and shifted to open cowsheds on the outskirts of Banda town. The caretaker of the buffaloes says, "There is no facility of fodder and water for the animals at the shed. It will affect their milk yield and buffaloes will fetch a small price." The animals would have sold for more than Rs 12 lakh.

The slaughterhouse ban has impacted even tanneries. A man, who works at a tannery in Kanpur, cycles 60 km to and fro from Unnao every day. "There are no jobs in Unnao, and I have a family of six to feed," he says. All 50 households in his village in Unnao depend on Kanpur's tanneries, some of the oldest and largest in the country. The Small Tanneries Association estimates that illegal slaughterhouses provide around 40 per cent of all leather to small and medium enterprises and 10-20 per cent to big leather industries. The leather industry employs nearly half a million people in Kanpur alone.

A reality check

While the government must ensure that the meat industry meets all food safety and environment norms, it must caution against misinformation. BJP's election manifesto for Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections 2017 had stated that livestock numbers had fallen during the previous government because of illegal slaughterhouses. But the 19th Livestock Census of 2012 shows that Uttar Pradesh's cattle population increased by 2.4 per cent and buffalo population by 16 per cent compared to 2007.

Livestock is a major source of livelihood for the state's poor and curbs on animal trade will reduce the income of the rural population. A farmer from Banda says, "When the animals become unproductive, farmers replace them with productive animals. If the atmosphere of fear persists, the whole state will face the problem of stray animals and farmers will shy away from keeping milch animals. This will lead to a decrease in the state's milk production." With the Yogi Adityanath-led government promising to double the income of farmers in the next five years, it is the livestock economy that can provide the much-needed momentum. DOWN TO EARTH

(The views expressed are strictly those of Down to Earth.)

Relentless political drama in TN

Fragile accord to save ruling AIADMK emerges



The three-month

Tamil Nadu was

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government

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Chief Minister

resigned in

January and

long crisis in

factions of ruling AIADMK, a magnificent political structure that late J Jayalalithaa, popularly known as 'Amma', created in her lifetime, were nearly bringing down the edifice, before agreeing to a truce on April 22, though with substance yet to be negotiated. For months as the rival

wo power-driven

groups, merrily engaged in their games, governance in Tamil Nadu was at a standstill, a State wracked by the worst drought and widespread water crisis in a hot summer.

This unprecedented political crisis in Tamil Nadu, also fiscally strained and highly indebted, was viewed more as an opportunity by M K Stalin, DMK leader, with credible numbers to step into a potential vacuum. The only other expectant force thirsting for political space, BJP has been equally active, so much so that other state parties saw the hand of BJP at the Centre manipulating the course of AIADMK developments in Tamil Nadu including a tax raid.

Income tax authorities raided the residence of one of the Ministers Vijayabaskar who was allegedly trying to arrange distribution of Rs. 86 crores among voters in RK Nagar, a North Chennai constituency, where by-election had been called for April 12 but cancelled subsequently amid widespread reports of cash distribution to

Though denied by Central Ministers, Tamil Nadu matters critically for Prime Minister Narendra Modi both for the July Presidential elections and even more for his second enthronement in 2019, with a friendly AIADMK, given the significant numbers AIADMK command. (In 2014, the late Jayalalithaa took away 37 out of 39 TN seats in Lok Sabha). Both Panneerselvam (while in

office) and his successor of the



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswam

Sasikala faction, Chief Minister E Palaniswami, have had meetings with Modi on state issues. The three-month long cri-

sis in Tamil Nadu was triggered when Chief Minister O Panneerselvam resigned in January and raised a banner of revolt against efforts of Amma's closest aide V K Sasikala, already General Secretary, to take over leadership of Government. And with the support of a majority, Sasikala met the Governor to stake her claim.

Panneerselvam (OPS) had the backing of about a dozen MLAs and some MPs and other senior cadres, and claimed he was engaged in a "Dharma Yudh" to see that Sasikala (now in jail after a Supreme Court verdict) and her nominee and family member Deputy General Secretary TTV Dhinakaran were thrown out of AIADMK. He has other tough demands.

In recent weeks, some of the Ministers (Sasikala faction) and the Panneerselvam group began to realise that in the evolving political situation with serious problems ahead including local body elections to follow within two months, they must try to restore the original stature of AIADMK and stand united. Otherwise, the AIADMK Government cannot last its full term till 2021 and both factions will have to sink together.

Strangely, Panneerselvam, who hardly spoke or made decisions whenever Javalalithaa had asked him to look after her portfolios, turned quite hawkish this time and set stiff preconditions for talks with the Palaniswami group. Apart from sacking Sasikala and family from the party, which has been agreed to by the Ministerial side, he also wanted a CBI inquiry into the treatment and circumstances of her demise on December 5 in Apollo Hospital.

The Palaniswami Government, with a majority of barely five or six MLAs, is highly vulnerable to confidence votes demanded by Stalin - and 11 MLAs of rival camp could also switch sides - and the Party also needs the frozen "Two Leaves" symbol, for local body elections.

Palaniswami has taken the initiative and offered to step aside in favour of Panneerselvam (being restored as Chief Minister) while he would settle for the party's highest post of

General Secretary. Both groups have formed seven-member teams with leading party leaders on both sides to thrash out remaining, some undoubtedly tough, issues.

Dhinakaran, already having to fight old and new cases in different courts for FERA violation and also his alleged attempt to bribe EC to ensure allotment of AIADMK symbol to Amma DMK which he sought to represent in the byelection, seems to have taken the new development in stride. He is yet to take soundings from Sasikala, serving her four-year jail term in a Bengaluru prison.

Panneerselvam had at an early stage taken the factional battles to the Election Commission raising the legitimacy of Sasikala's appointment as General Secretary in the first instance and thereby he could claim AIADMK symbol "Two Leaves" for his group candidate who was to face Dhinakaran (backed by Ministers of the Edappadi Palaniswami Government).

The Election Commission has given time till June 16 to the two factions in the AIADMK to submit the documents and affidavits supporting their claim

of numerical strength in the party to claim the two leaves symbol. It is unlikely that RK Nagar by election would be held soon. The State electoral officer is under pressure from the High Court not to delay the local body elections deferred on more than one occasion, now likely by the end of May.

Radhakrishnan Nagar constituency had elected Jayalalithaa twice, once after her acquittal in the Disproportionate Assets Case by the Karnataka High Court in 2015 and again in the 2016 Assembly elections, which renewed her mandate for a second successive five-year term (2016-2021).

The unexpected cancellation of the RK Nagar bypoll was a shock not only to the rival camps battling for legitimacy, as the actual heir to Amma Jayalalithaa's legacy, but even more to the major opposition DMK leader Mt M K Stalin, who had hoped to wrest the AIADMK stronghold for his party and turn it a vote of no-confidence against the Palaniswami Government.

Stalin has been desperately attempting to rally all political forces, other than BJP and two factions of AIADMK, and emerge as the principal political voice of the State's interests, especially the distressed farmers in Cauvery delta, awaiting the waiver of loans and other relief measures to meet the water crisis enveloping Tamil

Now that the Palaniswami government ministers themselves have distanced themselves, Dhinakaran says he is no longer doing work of the party. The latter was expected to meet Sasikala and discuss the future course of action. A few voices are still being raised in her support here and there. Panneerselvam already tastes victory in his "Dharma Yudh".

(The views expressed are strictly personal.)



tweet RETWEET

RVIND KEJRIWAL



Reports from all over Delhi of EVM malfunction, people wid voter slips not allowed to vote. What is SEC doing?

ARUNA NUNDY

Voted. Who runs the corporation will make a real difference to health, education, our daily lives. #MCDElections2017



^^^^^



Looking at @ arvindkejriwal's tweets, it is amply clear that AAP is facing a Punjab / Goa kind of decimation in MCD also.

HASHI THAROOR

Blaring loudspeakers have about as much to do with religion as compulsory chanting of "BharatMata Ki Jai" has to do with genuine patriotism.



Maldives blogger stabbed to death in restive capital



A liberal blogger, Yameen Rasheed, was stabbed to death in the politically restive Maldivian capital Male, his family members and colleagues said today. He was 29. Rasheed was found in the stairwell of his apartment with multiple stab wounds to his neck and chest today and died shortly after being taken to hospital, family members said. His blog, The Daily Panic, had a considerable following and was known for poking fun at politicians in the nation of some 340,000 Sunni Muslims.

"With The Daily Panic, I hope to cover and comment upon the news, satirise the frequently unsatirisable politics of Maldives," he wrote on his blog. Rasheed is the third media personality to be targeted in the Maldives in the past five years. Blogger Ismail Rasheed, also known as Hilath, was stabbed and wounded by an unidentified attacker in 2012.

A journalist with the independent Minivan News, Ahmed Rilwan, was likely abducted in August 2014 and has been missing ever since. Exiled opposition leader and former president Mohamed Nasheed today demanded action on the latest killing of an independent journalist.

"President Nasheed is

demanding an inquiry with international participation so it can't be swept under the carpet as usual," a spokesman for Nasheed told AFP. Political tension has mounted in the Maldives after a failed bid by the opposition to impeach the country's parliamentary speaker late last month.

The regime of President Abdulla Yameen has arrested the last Maldives opposition leader not to be in jail or in exile as part of a major government crackdown on rival politicians, who narrowly failed to seize control

ARMY BASE ATTACK

Afghanistan declares

KABUL: The Afghan government declared Sunday as a national mourning day to pay tributes to scores of army personnel who died in a Taliban attack at a military base in Balkh province.

At least 10 Taliban militants disguised as army personnel on Friday sneaked in at 209 Shaheen Base Headquarters in Mazar-e-Sharif city, opening fire on unarmed and unsuspecting soldiers as they prayed at a mosque in the base.

"In order to pay tributes to the honourable and brave Afghan soldiers who martyred during Friday prayers in Shaheen 209 Corps mosque, the President declared Sunday as a National Mourning Day," a presidential palace statement said on Saturday.

The toll in the Taliban stealth attack continued to rise as of Sunday morning while there was no official statement on it. Local media cited officials as saying that the deaths have surpassed 150 and over 80 have been injured.

The toll was likely to rise as many of injured were in a critical condition, officials said. Several bodies were on Sunday morning handed over to their families or shifted to their

"Special prayers will be NATO troops.

held in the Presidential Palace mosque and at mosques across the country and the national flag will be at half-mast at home and Afghan diplomatic missions abroad," the statement said. The heavily armed militants in two military vehicles stormed the base after passing several security gates under the guise of carrying wounded persons to the base hospital.

The toll in the Taliban stealth attack continued to rise as of **Sunday morning**

President Ashraf Ghani on Saturday inspected the site and chaired an emergency security meeting at the base, ordering a serious investigation into the deadly attack.

He later visited the injured at the Corps hospital. "This terrorist attack is fully contradictory to all human values and Islamic teachings," the statement said.

The Taliban insurgency has been on the rampage since the beginning of 2015, as the Afghan forces assumed full responsibility of Afghanistan's security from the US and

'Britain's Conservatives to national mourning day focus on Brexit, energy in poll'

LONDON: Britain's ruling Conservative Party's election manifesto will focus on Brexit and domestic concerns, such as strengthening the economy and putting a cap on energy prices, Work and Pensions minister Damian Green said

'The manifesto will deal with two big issues facing the country - one obviously is the Brexit negotiations ... but the other half, which is equally important, is indeed the domestic agenda," he told ITV's Peston on Sunday program.

"There will be a lot about energy policy in the manifesto ... I think that people feel that some of the big energy companies have taken advantage of them with the tariffs."

Theresa May appeared on

course to win a crushing election victory in June after opinion polls put support for her ruling Conservative party at around 50 percent, double that of the opposition Labour party. May's decision to call a June 8 election stunned her political rivals this week and a string of polls released late on Saturday suggested the gamble had paid off, with one from ComRes showing the party of Margaret Thatcher enjoying levels of sup-



May, appointed prime minister in the turmoil that followed Britain's vote to leave the European Union last June, said she needed the election to secure her own mandate and strengthen her hand for the Brexit negotiations ahead. She is also looking to capitalise on the disarray swirling around the Labour party, which has been riven with internal divi-

sion over its leader Jeremy Corbyn. Voters also appear to be switching from the anti-EU UKIP party, which helped campaign for Brexit, to May's Conservatives, which will likely

"The announcement of a snap election has clearly focused the minds of the electorate," said James Crouch at pollster Opinium. In two other on Saturday.

polls, May's Conservatives also gained ground in Scotland at the expense of the Scottish National Party, potentially weakening the nationalists' demand for another independence referendum.

May has already warned her party not to take victory for granted, a message that was echoed by pollsters

National Grid confirmed that Britain had gone a full 24-hour cycle without using coal to produce any of the country's electricity, media

reports said. All electricity produced until late Friday night was generated from a mix of sources, but mainly gas fired and nuclear powered generating stations. Wind, biomass, and imported energy were also used on Friday, Xinhua news agency reported.

National Grid's Cordi O'Hara said: "To have the first working day without coal since the start of the industrial revolution is a watershed moment in how our energy system is changing.

"Britain benefits from highly diverse and flexible sources of electricity. Our energy mix continues to change and National Grid adapts system operation to embrace these changes." The 24-hour cycle started Thursday when a coal fires power plant at West Burton went offline.

'The 24 hour cycle was confirmed at 22.50 hours on Friday, after which we started to use coal-fired generation again. We can't (tell) when this new record will be broken," O'Hara said. AGENCIES

Labour leader Corbyn says could suspend Syria air strikes if elected

LONDON: The leader of Britain's main opposition Labour Party Jeremy Corbyn said on Sunday he could suspend British involvement in air strikes against Syria if he was elected prime minister at a June 8 election. The veteran peace campaigner, whose Labour Party is around 20 points behind the ruling Conservatives in opinion polls, set out his position on a range of security and foreign policies, saying he would look again at Britain's nuclear deterrent and was against using nuclear weapons. His comments were pounced upon by the Conservatives, who said that Corbyn posed a threat to British security and was the best reason "for sticking with the strong leadership of (Prime Minister) Theresa May". Corbyn told the BBC's Andrew Marr Show that he believed that "the only solution in Syria is going to be a political one". "I want us to say 'Listen, let's get people around the table quickly' and a way of achieving that - suspending the strikes, possibly." The leftist leader, whose views on foreign policy have often been at odds with those held by other lawmakers in his party, also said he would have to consider whether he would authorize a drone strike against the leader of Islamic State to limit civilian casualties. May, who said she had called the early election to shore up support for her divorce plan with the European Union and heal divisions in the country, looks set to win a large majority, with some polls putting support for her party at 50%. May decided to call a snap general election because she feared Jeremy Corbyn was on the verge of resigning, Downing Street sources have said. There had been growing expectations the Labour leader would stand down after what was predicted to be a bad performance for the party in local elections.

RACING WITH THE SUN



Runners make their way over Tower Bridge during the London Marathon on Sunday

Ready to strike US aircraft

carrier; warns Aus of nuke strike

if it toes US blindly: N Korea

China's Xi says be combat-ready amid South China Sea dispute

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping has underlined the need for building a combat-ready army and accelerate the building of the theatre joint combat command system, amidst the PLA flexing its muscles in the disputed South China Sea

Xi, the ruling Communist party's General Secretary and the Central Military Commission's Chairman, made the comments while inspecting the Southern Theatre Command of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) on Friday and stressed building a strong army which should also avoid being corrupt. Xi, 63, viewed as the most powerful leader heading the party, military and the government will complete his first five year term this year and expected to be re-elected for another five-year term during the 19th Party Congress to be held later this year.

He vowed to fight corruption and enhance the "sense of gain" among officers and soldiers of the 2.3 million-strong People's Liberation Army, the world's largest. Xi asked military personnel to strengthen their awareness in preparing for war, closely follow changes of situations and make unremitting efforts to enhance combat capabilities.

Xi required an accelerated building of the theatre joint combat command system, vigorous development of a new-type fighting force and simultaneous improvement of national defence strength and economic development, the official Xinhua news agency quoted him as saying. His com-

ments came amid China's maritime disputes with its South China Sea neighbours. China claims almost all of the South China Sea, including islands more than 800 miles from the Chinese mainland, despite objections from neighbours such as the Philippines, Malay-

> Beijing has also created artificial islands in the area, outfitting some of them with military features. The issue is a source of ongoing tension and anger in the region. In his speech, Xi urged all military personnel to resolutely safeguard the authority of CPC Central Committee, unswervingly follow the Party's leadership and combat corruption.

sia, Brunei and Vietnam.

He asked all military personnel to greet the 19th CPC National Congress.

38 Indians detained in UK for visa breach in factory raids

LONDON: Britain's immigration officials have detained 38 Indians, including nine women, for overstaying their visas or working illegally after conducting raids in two clothing factories in the city of Leicester.

The UK Home Office Immigration Enforcement team raided MK Clothing Ltd and Fashion Times UK Ltd in the city in the East Midlands region of England last week and held 38 Indians and one Afghan man. Of those detained, 31 had outstayed their visas, seven had entered the country illegally and one was working in breach of their visa conditions, Leicester Mercury reported. The officials took 19 people into detention pending their removal from the UK while remaining 20 were ordered to report regularly to the Home Office while their cases are dealt with.

"Using illegal labour is not victimless. It cheats the taxpayer, undercuts honest businesses and denies legitimate job seekers of employment opportunities, said assistant director Alison Spowage, from East Midlands Immigration

"The penalties for businesses that do not play

by the rules are rightly severe. This operation, one of the largest-scale my team has conducted, sends a clear message that we have the resources to tackle immigration abuse.

All of our operations are intelligence-led and I would encourage people with detailed and specific information about illegal immigration to contact us, she said.

Immigration officials were accompanied by Leicestershire Police and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) officers during the raids. The two firms could face fines of up to 20,000 pounds for each illegal worker if it is proven they did not take steps to establish their employees' legal status.

This translates up to 240,000 pounds for MK Clothing Ltd and 180,000 pounds for Fashion Times UK Ltd. The two factories are yet to comment on the raids.

Under UK immigration rules, employers are required to carry out details right to work checks on the employees they hire and are liable for hefty fines if they are found to have hired workers who do not have the legal right to

Sunday it was ready to sink a US aircraft carrier to demonstrate its military might, as two Japanese navy ships joined a US carrier group for exercises in the western Pacific. US President Donald

SEOUL: North Korea said on

Trump ordered the USS Carl Vinson carrier strike group to sail to waters off the Korean peninsula in response to rising tension over the North's nuclear and missile tests, and its threats to attack the United States and its Asian allies.

The United States has not specified where the carrier strike group is as it approaches the area. US Vice President Mike Pence said on Saturday it would arrive "within days" but

gave no other details. North Korea remained defiant. "Our revolutionary forces are combat-ready to sink a US nuclear powered aircraft carrier with a single strike," the Rodong Sinmun, the newspaper of the North's ruling Workers' Party, said in a commentary. The commentary was carried on page three of the newspaper, after a two-page feature about leader Kim Jong Un inspecting a pig farm.

North Korea has bluntly warned Australia of a possible nuclear strike if Canberra persists in "blindly and zealously toeing the US line".

North Korea's state new agency (KCNA) quoted a foreign ministry spokesman castigating Australian foreign minister, Julie Bishop, after she said the rogue nation would be subject to further Australian sanctions and for "spouting a string of rubbish against the DPRK over its entirely just steps for self-defence".

"If Australia persists in following the US moves to isolate and stifle the DPRK and remains a shock brigade of the US master, this will be a suicidal act of coming within the range of the nuclear strike of the strategic force of the DPRK," the report said."The Australian foreign minister had better think twice about the consequences to be entailed by her reckless tongue-lashing before flattering the US." However. Australia and New Zealand stiffened their rhetoric against North Korea on Sunday after the threat.

Fur coat worn by Titanic survivor sells for £150,000

LONDON: A fur coat worn by a first class stewardess when the Titanic sank in 1912 has been sold for £150,000 at an auction in the UK, almost double its original valuation of £80,000. Mabel Bennett, (33 then), was in her nightdress when the ship began to sink after hitting an ice berg. More than 1,500 passengers and crew died when the ship sank in April 1912, on its maiden voyage. She had put on the beaver lamb fur coat she owned to keep her warm as she boarded lifeboat, the Telegraph reported. Bennett died aged 96 in 1974 and was the longest living female member of the crew. She had passed the coat on to her great niece in the 1960s as she found it too heavy to wear. The fur coat and letter of provenance went under the hammer on Saturday at an auction at Henry Aldridge and Son in Devizes, Wiltshire. The coat had been on display in the US after it was sold by her

Pope Francis criticised for comparing refugee centres to 'concentration camps'

WASHINGTON: Pope Francis has drawn criticism from a Jewish organisation for comparing European refugee holding centres to "concentration camps". The pontiff made the comparison during a visit to Rome Basilica where he met with migrants on Saturday. Recalling his visit to a refugee camp on the Greek island of Lesbos last year, he talked of encountering a Muslim refugee from the Middle East who told him how "terrorists came to our country".

According to Reuters, islamists cut the throat of the man's Christian wife because she refused to throw her cruci-



fix on the ground Pope Francis said: "I don't know if he managed to leave that concentration camp, because refugee camps, many of them, are of concentration (type) because of the great number of people left there inside them". Soon afterwards, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) urged the pontiff "to reconsider his regrettable choice of words".

erected and used concentration camps for slave labour and the extermination of millions of people during World War II. There is no comparison to the magnitude of that tragedy. "We respectfully urge

migrants are currently living in

some European countries may

well be difficult, and deserve

still greater international atten-

tion, but concentration camps

they certainly are not," David

Harris, the head of the AJC,

The Nazis and their allies

said in a statement."

the pope to reconsider his regrettable choice of words,"

Russian election meddling probe will help US allies: Ryan

TALLINN: One of the reasons the US Congress has launched an investigation into Russia's alleged meddling in the 2016 US election is to "prevent the same kind of thing happening" to its NATO and other allies, US House Speaker Paul Ryan said on Saturday.

Ryan spoke at a news conference with Estonian Prime Minister Juri Ratas in Tallinn, the Estonian capital, during a visit by a bipartisan congressional delegation to the Baltic NATO member and staunch Washington ally.

While the Republican speaker

claimed that Russia's alleged meddling didn't affect the outcome of the election won by US President Donald Trump he said its actions "cannot be tolerated."

"One thing we know for certain is that Russia meddled in our election," Ryan said. "This is a foreign country try-

ing to meddle within the internal activities of a sovereign country or a democracy."

He stressed the US has a responsibility to share the results of the Russia investigation with countries like Estonia, which in recent years has faced aggressive Rus-



sian disinformation campaigns along with Baltic neighbors Latvia and Lithuania.

"What we're doing through our investigation process is to figure out exactly what is it they did and how they did it so that we can help, equip and assist our allies to prevent the same kind of thing happening to them," Ryan said.

He thanked Estonia a country of 1.3 million for its strong commitment to cyber defense and NATO, and for being one of the very few NATO members to spend two percent of its GDP on

'What we're doing through our investigation process is to figure out exactly what is it they did and how they did it so that we can help, equip and assist our allies to prevent the same'

"We're here to say thank you for meeting that pledge," Ryan said.

Estonia's relations with neighboring Russia have remained cold and uneasy since the former Soviet republic gained independence

Among other things, bilateral ties have suffered due to Estonia's success at catching spies working

Ryan was meeting with Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid later on Saturday with his eight-lawmaker delegation.

Estonia was the last stop in the delegation's European tour, which also included visits to Britain, Norway and Poland.

French vote for president in litmus test for Europe's future named US envoy

PARIS: France voted on Sunday in the first round of a bitterly fought presidential election that is crucial to the future of Europe and a closely-watched test of vot-ers' anger with the political establishment.

Over 50,000 police backed by elite units of the French security services patrolled the streets less than three days after a suspected Islamist gunman shot dead a policeman and wounded two others on the central Champs Elysees avenue. Voters will decide whether to back a pro-EU centrist newcomer, a scandal-ridden veteran conservative who wants to slash public spending, a far-left eurosceptic admirer of Fidel Castro or to appoint France's first woman president who would shut borders and ditch the euro. The outcome will show whether the populist tide that saw Britain vote to leave the EU and Donald Trump's election in the United States is still rising, or starting to ebb. A high level of indecision adds to nervousness.

Hanan Fanidi, a 33-year-old financial project manager, was still unsure as she arrived at a polling station in Paris' 18th arrondissement.

WORLD

ACCIDENT

FIVE PILGRIMS KILLED IN NEPAL

KATHMANDU: At least five persons have been killed

and 24 others injured when a bus carrying pilgrims

met with an accident in western Nepal, officials said

on Sunday. The bus, with nearly three dozen pilgrims,

it turned turtle in Mustang district yesterday, Chief Dis-

was headed for the famous Muktinath temple when

trict Officer Bhim Raj Pokharel said. Security person-

nel and a Nepal Army helicopter were rushed to the

spot for rescue and relief operations. The bus driver

caused due to the poor road infrastructure in the re-

a famous Hindu and Buddhist pilgrimage site as well

SCIENTISTS PROTEST AGAINST TRUMP'S

wearing lab coats, thousands of scientists from around

the US began gathering here to express their objec-

tions to the cutbacks in scientific research proposed

by President Donald Trump. The protest on Satur-

day, dubbed the March for Science and coinciding

around the world, but all eyes are on Washington,

where the organisers hoped to attract as many as

ROADSIDE BOMB IN SOMALIA KILLS 8

MOGADISHU: A Somali police official says a road-

side bomb in a remote town in Somalia's semiau-

tonomous state of Puntland has killed eight soldiers

and injured three others. Ahmed Mohamed told The

Associated Press that today's blast targeted a military

convoy in Galgala. Security forces have been battling

Islamic State-linked fighters in the region. There has

been no immediate claim of responsibility for the

blast, but the IS-linked extremists have carried out

75,000 people, Efe news reported.

SOLDIERS, POLICE SAY

such attacks in the past.

with Earth Day, is being held in more than 500 cities

SLASHING OF RESEARCH BUDGETS

WASHINGTON: Bearing protest signs and many

as a popular tourist destination.

was also injured in the accident which was apparently

mote mountainous region, the official said. Muktinath is

CARTE ÉLECTORALE

"I don't believe in anyone, actually. I haven't arrived at a candidate in particular who could advance things. I'm very,

very pessimistic," she said. Emmanuel Macron, 39, a centrist ex-banker who set up his party just a year ago, is the opinion polls' favorite to win the first round and beat far-right National Front chief Marine Le Pen in the two-person run-off on May 7. For them to win the top two qualifying positions on Sunday would represent a huge change in the political landscape. The second round would then feature neither of the mainstream parties that have governed France for decades. But conservative François Fillon is making a comeback after being plagued for months by a fake jobs scandal, and leftist Jean-Luc Melenchon's ratings have surged in

recent weeks. Any two of the four has a chance to qualify for the run-off. "It wouldn't be the classic left versus right divide but two views of the world clashing," said Ifop pollsters' Jerome Fourquet. "Macron bills himself as the progressive versus conservatives, Le Pen as the patriot versus the globalists."

The seven other candidates, including the ruling Socialist party's Benoit Hamon

US warship in west Pacific for Japan navy drills: Tokyo

TOKYO: The US supercarrier Carl Vinson started joint exercises with Ja-

pan's navy on Sunday, Tokyo's defence ministry said, as the warship passes

lag behind in opinion polls. By noon (6.00 am ET), turnout amid sunshine and clear skies across much of France was 28.54 percent, according to official figures -around the same as in the 2012 first round, in which almost 80 percent eventually took part.

Some polls had been predicting a much lower turnout, closer to the 70 percent that took the then National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen into the second round in 2002. Pollsters are unclear about what a low or high turnout could mean in 2017. President Francois Hollande and his predecessor Nicolas Sarkozy have failed through both of the past two five-year presidencies to tackle the high unemployment and sluggish growth. That issue, and the general trustworthiness of politicians, stands out, polls say, even though security has re-entered the debate since Thursday's killing of a policeman.

Some argue the incident increases Le Pen's chances; but previous militant attacks, such as the November 2015 killing of 130 people in Paris ahead of regional polls, have not appeared to have any impact

Saudi king's air force pilot son



RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has named an air force pilot son of King Salman as ambassador to its major ally Washington, with which ties are improving under President Donald Trump.

The change came among a series of orders issued by the king yesterday, who shuffled his cabinet and replaced the head of the army which for two years has been fighting rebels in neighbouring Yemen. "Prince Abdullah bin Faisal bin Turki removed as ambassador to the US Prince Khaled bin Salman bin Abdulaziz appointed ambassador," the official Saudi Press Agency reported, citing a royal order. Prince Abdullah had served in the post for just over a year, according to the website of the Saudi embassy in Washington. The United States and Saudi Arabia have a decades-old relationship based on the exchange of American security for Saudi oil. But ties between Riyadh and Washington became increasingly frayed during the administration of president Barack Obama. Saudi leaders felt Obama was reluctant to get involved in the civil war in Syria and was tilting toward Riyadh's regional rival Iran. The Saudis have found a more favourable ear in Washington under Trump, who took office in January and has denounced Iran's "harmful influence" in the Middle East. Washington provides some logistical and intelligence support, as well as weapons, for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. The kingdom also belongs to the US-led coalition against the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria. Prince Khaled, the new ambassador, is an air force pilot who flew missions as part of that anti-IS coalition, said Salman al-Ansari, president of the Saudi American Public Relation Affairs Committee (SAPRAC).

Ansari, whose committee is a private initiative to strengthen Saudi-US ties, described Prince Khaled as a "very organised personality, savvy, youthful, and active." Another son of King Salman, Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, 31, is second in line to the throne and is one of the kingdom's most powerful figures. He holds the post of defence minister and is pushing a wide-ranging social and economic reform programme. US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis visited Riyadh on Wednesday and said it was in Washington's interest "to see a

Indian-American named

dean of Kansas college

through the western Pacific after days of contention over its whereabouts. The strike group is in the region as tensions spike over North Korea's roque arms programme and concerns that Pyongyang is planning a sixth nuclear test as it pursues its goal of a weapon capable of reaching the US mainland. The Carl Vinson drills are expected to last several days and involve two Japanese warships, Japan's defence ministry said. It is the third time the Japanese navy has held exercises with Carl Vinson after two such drills in March. Washington has sought to clarify the aircraft carrier's whereabouts in recent days after President Donald Trump suggested it was steaming towards North Korea when in fact it was sent towards Australia. US Vice-President Mike Pence on Saturday said it would soon arrive in the Sea of Japan, days after vowing an "overwhelming and effective" response to any North Korean attack.

UK far-right party to make burga-ban a manifesto pledge

LONDON: The far-right, antiimmigration UK Independence Party is set to announce a ban on burqas in public places in its manifesto pledge for the

As part of a so-called "integration agenda" to be unveiled tomorrow, party leader Paul Nuttall will also vow to outlaw Sharia law to prevent any Sharia courts operating in Britain. The party wants to put Britain in line with France, Belgium and Bulgaria where the burga which covers the entire body including the face is outlawed, according to the Sun newspaper.

Nuttall believes garments such as the burga are a barrier to social harmony and a security risk. Under their plans, people with evidence of female UKIP will also call for

have been drawn up by the party s deputy leader and culture spokesperson Peter Whittle. Whittle said: "We are the House of Commons. AGENCIES ences," said April Mason,

party that speaks up about the threat we face from Islamism from without and within, at a time when the established pardenial or sheer cowardice".

why it remains relevant after Britain voted to leave the EU last year the very purpose it was

per cent in the 2015 general election to around 7 percent, according to recent polls.

a string of public showdowns and high profile resignations, including its only MP in the

HOUSTON: An Indianprovost and senior vice presi-American theoretical physdent. "He has shown remarkicist with interests in soft able leadership and valuable matter and statistical physics collaborative skills during his has been named the dean of tenure at Kansas State Unia top college in the US state versity." As dean, Chakrabarti will be the college's chief of Kansas. Amit Chakrabaracademic and administrative officer. "With the college's ti's appointment as the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences by the Kansas State talented faculty and amazing University was announced on April 14 after a national students, we can make more opportunities available to Ksearch, a statement by the uni-Staters in research and education in the arts and sciences. Since February 2016, Chakrabarti said.

"I am honoured to serve in this role to continue the college's success in research, scholarship and diversity."

Chakrabarti became head of the physics department in 2011, where he led a 30-faculty member team.

He was the recipient of the Presidential Award for Outstanding Department Head in 2016.

He has worked on diverse soft-matter systems, including liquid mixtures, polymers, liquid crystals, aerosols, colloids, nano-particles and most recently, self-assembly

US defence secretary Mattis visits strategic Djibouti

DJIBOUTI: US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis arrived on Sunday for a short visit to Djibouti, a strategically important country on the Horn of Africa which hosts the United States' only permanent military base on the African continent.

Camp Lemonnier, home to some 4,000 US soldiers and contractors, is vital to US military operations in Somalia against militant groups like Al-Shabaab, and also provides support for US operations in Yemen, where special forces regularly carry out drone strikes against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

China is also in the process of establishing its first overseas military base in the small port country just a few miles from the US camp, which has raised concern in Washington.

Mattis is scheduled to meet with Djibouti's president, Ismael Omar Guelleh, during his trip as well as with General Thomas Waldhauser, commander of US troops in Africa.

"For (the defence department) Camp Lemonnier and Chabelley are critical in terms of logistics. They support multiple US combat command", a senior defence official said, referring to an airfield close to the camp, from which the US military operates

Another senior defence official, also speaking on condition of anonymity, also played down any concerns about China's base construction.

"At this point I don't see why we should not be able to comfortably coexist with the Chinese presence, the way we do with the Japanese, the French..." the official told reporters last week.

the US Senate's armed forces committee in March that he had spoken to Guelleh "and expressed our concerns about some of the things that are important to us about what the Chinese may or

With a population of 875,000 people, Diibouti lies on the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a gateway to the Suez Canal, one of the world's busiest shipping routes.

The former French colony has launched major infrastructure projects aimed at turning it into a regional hub for trade and services, using money largely borrowed from China.

China has said it wants the base to support its UN peacekeepers in Africa.

> FORM NO. NCLT. 3A Advertisement detailing petition mpany Law Tribunal rules, 2016] Company Petition No. F.No. 36/14/2017/NCLT Notice of petition

A petition under section 14(1) of the Companies Act, 2013, for conversion of Indiamart Auto Services Limited (CIN U74899DL2006PLC145344) having registered office at 408 Ashirwad Enclave 104 IP Ext., Delhi-110092 was presented by the company through Mr. Manish of Manish & Associates, Company Secretaries in practice, (Authorised Representative) on the 14th day of March, 2017, and the said petition is fixed for hearing before Delhi bench o National Company Law Tribunal on 12th May 2017. Any person desirous of supporting of ppposing the said petition shou**l**d send to the Bench and petitioner's Authorised Representative, notice of his intention, signed by him or his advocate, with his name and address, so as to reach the petitioner Authorised Representative not later than 'two days before the date fixed for the hearing o the petition. Where he seeks to oppose the petition, the grounds of opposition or a copy of his affidavit shall be furnished with such notice. A copy of the petition will be furnished by the undersigned to any person requiring the same on payment of the prescribed charges for the same. Dated 21.04.2017

Manish Manish & Associates Company Secretaries in practice (Authorised Representative o petitioner Address: 201, Pooja Complex, Nirman Vihar, New Delhi-110092 Mail id: cssharmamanish@gmail.com

June 8 general election.



bound by law to inform police. postal voting to be abolished for most citizens amid fears it is being used for electoral fraud.

The sweeping measures

ties are mute either from fear, The new pledges come as the party faces an existential crisis of explaining to voters

The party's support has dropped from close to 13

position, Chakrabarti was It has also been dogged by of physics and the William and Joan Porter chair in physics. "I am excited to welcome between prominent figures Dr Chakrabarti as dean of the College of Arts and Sci-

> group Boko Haram had kidnapped 276 schoolgirls from a secondary school in Nigeria's northeastern town of Chibok in April, 2014. While some girls managed to escape, 21 were released last year after negotiations with the militant group. However, as many as 195 girls still remain missing even as the Nigerian Defence Minister General Manir Dan Ali was recently quoted as saying

versity said.

Chakrabarti, 57, has served

as the interim dean of the uni-

versity's largest college with

24 departments, and a broad

array of majors, secondary

majors and minors spanning

Dorhout, who is now vice

president for research at the

university. Prior to the interim

the head of the department

He succeeds Peter

many disciplines.

that it may take "years" to find all the Chibok schoolgirls kidnapped by the militant group. UNICEF regional officer Patrick Rose said the children in the lake Chad basin face a range of challenges.

"More than 1.3 million have been displaced, many have lost loved ones and witnessed extreme violence. They're struggling to get back to school, back to normal life. Several thousand children have been abducted by Boko Haram and need additional support to help the return to their families and find a sense hope," Rose said. On the relief works going on in

the affected countries both at the government and at the non-governmental level, he said humanitarian response is reaching millions of people with health care, water, food and education.

EVACUATED AFTER BOMB THREAT NEW YORK: The French consulate in New York, where

FRENCH CONSULATE IN NEW YORK

thousands of expatriates were registered to cast ballots in their presidential election, was briefly evacuated following a bomb threat, officials said. A suspicious vehicle prompted police to clear the building on Fifth Avenue across from Central Park, Consul General Anne-Claire Legendre said on Saturday. "After the Champs Elysees attack, the New York police department was told to be especially vigilant," she said. Dozens of people who were inside the building at about 5 pm (2100 GMT) waited on the sidewalk while authorities checked the vehicle.

'Rise in use of children in suicide attacks in W Africa'

NEW DELHI/DAKAR: The abduction of 276 Chibok girls by Boko Haram in Nigeria three years ago marked a defining feature in the conflict in the Lake Chad region which has since witnessed an increasing use of children in so-called 'suicide' attacks, says a UNI-CEF report.

Since January 2014, 117 children more than 80 per cent of them girls have been used in suicide attacks in Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon (the four together forming the Lake Chad basin/region), said the report 'Silent Shame: Bringing out the voices of children caught in the Lake Chad

crisis', released on the third anniversary of the abduction of girls."A defining feature of this conflict has been the increasing use of children in so-called 'suicide' attacks," the report said. The increase reflects an alarming tactic by Boko Haram.

So far, four children in 2014, 56 in 2015, 30 in 2016 and 27 only in the first three months of 2017 have been used to carry out bomb attacks in public places across Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon, the report said, adding that girls have been used in the vast majority of

The Islamic State-linked militant

New policy on steel after

Jaitley flags H-1B concerns with US Treasury Secretary

WASHINGTON: Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has raised the issue of restrictions on H-1B visa with his US counterpart Steven Mnuchin as India fears the curb would impact the movement of Indian IT professionals to America.

During his meeting with the US Treasury Secretary, Jaitley also highlighted the contribution Indian companies and professionals are making to the US economy.

President Donald Trump has signed an executive order for tightening the rules of the H-1B visa programme to stop its 'abuse' and ensure that the visas are given to the 'mostskilled or highest paid' petitioners, a decision that would impact India's USD 150 billion IT industry. The Indian IT industry has expressed serious concerns over this as these visas are mainly used by domestic IT professionals for short-term work in America.

Earlier, the finance minister raised the visa issue with US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross. An official statement said: "Iaitley raised the issue of H-1B visas for skilled professionals from India." Issues related to terror funding were also discussed in the meeting and the US Treasury Secretary and NIIF (National Investment their US operations.



Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin (right) shake hands with Finance Minister of India Arun Jaitley before a bilateral meeting during the World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings in Washington

appreciated the role of India in this regard, including Indo-US cooperation in Financial Action Task Force. These matters were discussed on Saturday on the sidelines of the Spring Meetings of the World Bank and IMF.

During the discussions, the statement said Jaitley pointed out India's ambitious reform agenda which is creating new opportunities towards a deeper economic engagement between both the countries in the years

"Critical economic issues like Indo-US investment initiative, infrastructure collaboration

and Infrastructure Fund), collaboration with the US for Smart Cities Development were deliberated upon during the meeting," it added.

The Indian minister also held bilateral meetings with the finance ministers of Sweden, France and Bangladesh.

The H-1B is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise in specialised fields. Indian technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year for

Delay in quota reforms to erode IMF's credibility: Jaitley

WASHINGTON: Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has expressed disappointment over the slow pace of IMF quota reforms and said any further delay would erode the legitimacy and credibility of the multi-lateral organisation.

The minister also underlined the need for enhanced surveillance by the IMF to address the rising vulnerabilities in the global monetary and financial systems.

"The emerging risks to the global economy call for enhanced surveillance by the IMF. The IMF needs to be sufficiently resourced to be able to fully discharge this responsibility. It also needs to function as a quota-based institution," he said at the meeting of the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC).

Given that there is a broad agreement on maintaining the current overall lending capacity of the Fund and that the IMF's existing resource pool is excessively tilted towards borrowed resources, there is a "dire need" for increasing quotas, he added. trading frameworks.

"We are disappointed that the deadline for completing the 15th GRQ (General Review of Quotas) has been pushed back to no later than the 2019 annual meetings," Jaitley added.

"Any further delay in the 15th GRQ will erode Fund's legitimacy and credibility, and will be against the spirit of the Articles of Agreement. I do hope that the deadlines now set will be honoured and adhered to," he said.

India has been pressing for IMF quota reforms as it would give more say to developing nations in the activities of the multi-lateral organisation. Also the quota reform would reflect the changed economic realities, specially with regard to the increasing prowess of the developing nations.

Commenting on increasing protectionism and its adverse implications, the finance minister called upon the IMF to lend strong and unambiguous voice in support of free trade and raise awareness about the benefits of rule based open multilateral

Cabinet nod: Steel Minister Central government will announce a new steel policy after getting the Cabinet approval, Union Steel Minister Chaudhary Birender Singh

said here on Sunday. "The steel ministry has received several suggestions on the draft of the Steel Policy which was in the public domain. After incorporating important suggestions, the policy will be placed before Cabinet for approval," Singh told a press conference at Rastriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), the corporate office of the Visakhapatnam steel plant.

He said the steel industry in the country has been under the stress for the last three years due to trends in the international markets and imports.

'The import has been reduced by 26 per cent due to the anti-dumping duty imposed by the Central government to save the Indian steel industry," the minister

He said the demand for steel in the country is on the rise and the performance of the industry has been improved in the last six months.

"The target for the production of steel in the country is placed at 300 million tonnes by 2030 from the present 120 millions tonnes. The steel pro-

of chief ministers on rationali-

sation of centrally sponsored

schemes, Swachh Bharat and

taken in areas such as agri-

culture, poverty elimination,

health, education, digital pay-

ments, disinvestment, coastal

zone and island development

with states to improve basic

services and infrastructure,

in districts and regions which

require specific attention.

He said that Niti will work

Reiterating the Niti's resolve

skill development.



duction in the country stood at 90 million tonnes last year," Singh said.

India is the third largest producer of steel in the world after China and Japan, he said, adding that the country will try to occupy the second position by improving its production in future.

"As per the 'Make in India' programme, steel produced in the country should be used domestically. There was a proposal that the requirement of steel for various ministries should be fulfilled from the domestic steel producers only.

This proposal will be placed before Cabinet for approval," he said.

Responding to a query on expansion of various public sector steel plants in the country, the minister said these units have sufficient

to facilitate partnership with

the states for transforming

India under the framework of

cooperative and competitive

federalism, Kant said the states

land available with them and they can go for expansion any

To a question on the allotment of the captive mines for the Visakhapatnam steel plant, Singh said the Ministry of Mines is looking into the matter and will take a

decision. He denied there was a proposal to merge the Visakhapatnam steel plant with the National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC).

Earlier in the day, the minister inaugurated a symposium on "Digital Economy for New India", organised by the VSP in Ukkunagaram.

During his address there, he highlighted the importance of digital economy in eradicating corruption and enhancing transparency. PTI

Govt may send

teams abroad

to study PF

investments

HYDERABAD: The Labour

Ministry is planning to send

teams of experts to other coun-

tries to study the investment

pattern of provident funds in

stock markets, Union Minis-

ter Bandaru Dattatreya said on

Make arrangements for speedy **GST** rollout: Modi to states

ter Narendra Modi on Sunday said the states should make legislative arrangements "without delay" for GST rollout from

Delivering the closing remarks at the third meeting of the Governing Council of Niti Aayog, he also urged states, local governments and NGOs to decide goals for 2022 and work in mission mode towards achieving them.

"The Prime Minister reiterated that the legislative arrangements at the state-level for GST should be put in place without delay," an official statement said.

The consensus on Goods and Services Tax (GST) reflects the spirit of 'one nation, one aspiration, one determination', Modi earlier said in his opening remarks at the meeting.

The GST, which will subsume central excise, service tax, Value Added Tax (VAT) and other local levies, is scheduled to be rolled out from July 1.

Parliament has already passed the supporting GST bills and the states are also required to pass their separate legislations for smooth implementation of the new tax regime.

Success rate

The prime minister also called upon states to use the Government e-Marketplace portal for procurement of goods and services as it would neip in reducing corruption and increase transparency in the government procurement.

He said the use of technologies such as BHIM and Aadhaar would result in significant savings for the states.

Observing that funds such as district mineral, CAMPA and the construction workers welfare would provide significant boost to the resources of the state, he asked Niti Aayog

to come up with a roadmap for better utilisation of such funds by the states.

Referring to the change in the budget dates, he said in a country where agricultural income is exceedingly impor-tant, budgets should be prepared immediately after the receipt of agricultural incomes for the year.

He added that there have been suggestions to follow January to December as financial

"He urged states to take the initiative in this regard," it

Niti presents 300 specific action points to rev up economy growth

NEW DELHI: Niti Aayog on Sunday came out with 300 specific action points for accelerating the economic growth of the country at its Governing Council meet here.

These action points formed part of a presentation made by Niti Aayog vice chairman Árvind Panagariya at the third meeting of the council held under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra

However, no specific details about the action plan were

The action points are part of the presentation on a 15year long-term vision accompanied by a 7-year strategy and a 3-year action agenda, an official statement said.

Panagariya, the statement said, "gave an outline of the draft action agenda circulated at the meeting, which had been prepared with inputs from the

He noted that there were over 300 specific action points that had been identified, covering a whole gamut of sectors.

The period of the 'action agenda' coincides with the period of the 14th Finance



Commission's award and will give stability to the funding estimates of both the Centre and states.

inputs and support of the states in taking the vision forward. Speaking on the occasion,

Niti Aayog ČEO Amitabh Kant apprised the gathering of the work done by the think tank for transforming the economy and cooperation with states in the sectors of education, health, infrastructure etc.

He also spoke about the work done by the sub-groups

should treat Niti Aayog as their outpost in Delhi. The Aayog, the statement said, is working on a plat-form for sharing best practices to strengthen the learning ecosystem.

It has partnered with a large number of top ranking institutions for knowledge sharing and ideation to nurture evidence-based policy making,

the statement added. Revenue Secretary Hasmukh Adhia, who made a presentation on GST, urged the chief ministers to expedite the enactment of State GST Act.

sion, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan touched upon areas such as irrigation, technology generation and dissemination, policy and market reforms, e-NAM, livestock productivity etc.

Niti Aayog member-agriculture Ramesh Chand elaborated on some of the steps needed for doubling farmers'

The EPFO cumulatively invested Rs 21,559 crore in Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs) up to March 31, 2017, with 10.6 per cent return on it to Rs 23,845 crore, he said. "There is a proposal to invest 10 to 15 per cent (of the annual investible amount) in the ETFs during the current year.

"The proposal will be taken up in the next meeting of the Board of Trustees. There should not be any objection to the proposal as the returns are good in ETFs in the long run," the Labour Minister said.

The retirement fund body's current investment limit in ETFs is 10 per cent. "What I want to do is to send special teams to Germany, Japan, Australia and South Korea and study the investment patterns in ETFs in their exchanges. In most of the countries, the investments in ETFs are in excess of 30 per cent," Dattatreya said.

"For example in Singapore, most of the Provident Fund amounts are invested in ETFs, the minister said.

A senior official from the Ministry of Labour and Employment said once the Board of Trustees approves the proposal, the EPFO will invest up to 15 per cent in ETFs for the next 2-3 years and analyse the pros and cons. Investible income is the net income of the EPFO from the investments it has already made in various forms, and also fresh

Four of 10 most valued companies add ₹32,394 cr in mcap

among Indian start-ups is NEW DELHI: Four of 10 most valgood: IT expert RIL gaining the most.

HYDERABAD: Mortality rate among start-ups in India is not alarming, and their success ratio is actually good and on par with global trend, said an expert in information technology (IT) industry.

"In the start-up industry (in India), if you look at ten companies at least three or four will succeed. It's a good rate. Globally, that's the norm.

"I don't think it (mortality rate) is alarming. Some of them had some challenges in the B2C space. But it's okav.

The nature of the industry is like that. Nothing alarming, former Chief Financial Officer of Infosys V Balakrishnan said.

On reports that valuations of top-listed IT companies in India are at record lows for nearly a decade, he said the industry is facing "too many headwinds and that it is reflecting in their valuation."

"But I think the IT industry is the only industry which is growing, has good cash flows, and return on equity is very good," he said.

There are very few industries in India with such a scale and good financial matrix, Balakrishnan said, adding "Once the headwinds somehow minimise, the market will see more value in those stocks."

ued listed companies together added Rs 32,394.14 crore in market valuation last week, with HDFC Bank and The week also saw some tem-

porary ups and downs in valuation chart. Reliance Industries (RIL) surged past TCS briefly two times to become the most valued company

However, at close of the session on Tuesday and Friday the IT major reclaimed the top position.

At close on Friday, TCS stood at number one position in the domestic mcap chart followed by RIL, HDFC Bank, ITC, HDFC, ONGC, SBI, Infosys, **IOC** and HUL

Also, in the past few days, a sort of musical chair game was played out between State Bank of India and ONGC for the tag of most valued

At close on Friday, TCS stood at

mcap chart followed by RIL, HDFC Bank, ITC, HDFC, ONGC, SBI, Infosys, IOC and HUL.

Among gainers, the market capitalisation (mcap) of HDFC Bank zoomed Rs 14,709.01 crore to Rs

RIL saw its valuation surging by Rs 11,509.72 crore to Rs 4,55,105.33 crore and HDFC added Rs 5,131.39 crore to Rs 2,39,435.79 crore.

The m-cap of IOC also moved up by Rs 1,044.02 crore to Rs 2,06,157.45 Among losers, six companies lost

a total Rs 29,117.26 crore in their market valuation last week. SBI's valuation plummeted by

Rs 7,177.22 crore to Rs 2,28,819.62 crore and that of ONGC tumbled Rs 6,673.28 crore to Rs 2,30,869.90

The m-cap of ITC witnessed a drop of Rs 6,559.59 crore to Rs 3,33,263.45 crore and HUL lost Rs

TCS saw an erosion of Rs 3,280.76 crore to Rs 4,55,405.31 crore and Infosys (Rs 1,768.65 crore to Rs 2,12,168.78 crore). Over the past week, the BSE Sensex fell 96.15 points, or 0.32 per cent, and the Nifty

for the second straight week.

3,657.76 crore to Rs 1,96,133.36 31.40 points, or 0.34 per cent, sliding

Govt order on child sexual content to create monopoly: ISPAI

NEW DELHI: The government order to block child sexual abuse content by using resources of a UK-based organisation will create monopoly and make it an expensive affair for companies, Internet service providers have said.

The Internet Service Providers Association of India (ISPAI) also demanded that the government should share the responsibility with industry as companies will pass on extra cost burden to consumers which would not be in the interest of 'Digital India'

"The order issued by Meity (Ministry of Electronics and IT) to block child sexual abuse material (CSAM) is creating monopoly of an organisation where membership varies between 1,000 British pound and about GBP 78,000 (Rs 84,000- Rs 64 lakh). Government should also share responsibility with industry," ISPAI President Rajesh Chharia said.

The government on April 18 directed Internet service providers (ISP) to block distribution and transmission of child sexual abuse content by

Service providers are required to adopt and implement UK-based Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) resources to prevent distribution and transmission of offensive content.

Chharia said that the solution to block CSAM should be developed in the country, and the order is different from what the government had discussed

with the industry. "We were under impression that any one body in India will



subscribe to the IWF and share it with other players as per rule till we do not develop an indigenous solution and the government will also provide support

"The order, however, says that every Internet company with ILD permit will have to approach individually to IWF. The IWF will charge fees based on subscriber base of a com-

pany which will make it expensive for individual companies," Chharia said.

The order was issued after the recommendation of an inter-ministerial committee

solutions to address the issue of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) following a Supreme Court order. The panel noted that most

that was constituted to suggest

of the CSAM is being hosted outside India and the websites or web links to access such unlawful content are dynamic in nature and frequently changing which makes it difficult to

block such content. The panel noted that no centralised mechanism exists in India to monitor online CSAM. When asked about obligation of Internet firms to check transmission of CSAM, Chharia said that Internet companies cannot get into 'deep packet inspection' on what is being transmit-

ted on to networks. "Deep packet inspection will lead to violation of privacy

and also is in violation to government's policy. We are committed to block CSAM but the responsibility should be shared by all, including government. ISPs will pass on extra cost burden to consumers which is not in the interest and spirit of Digital India movement," Chharia

The government has asked

all the ISPs to continue to observe the existing due diligence requirements prescribed by the central government under the Information Technology Act 2000 and rules and The publication or trans-

mission of material depicting children in sexually explicit act or conduct in electronic form is heinous crime, specifically prohibited by section 67B of the IT

Sebi lines up reforms for deeper markets, to check black money

MUMBAI: Capital markets regulator Sebi will soon put in place stricter norms to check any flow of black money into stock market though controversy-ridden P-Notes and also initiate steps for allowing mutual fund investments through e-wallets.

Besides, Sebi will consider this week new norms for allowing options trading in commodity derivative market, while rules would be relaxed for registration of foreign investors and for common license to brokers to deal in equities and commodities, sources said.

The board of the regulatory authority will meet on Wednesday here which would be its first meeting under chairmanship of Ajay Tyagi, who took charge as the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) Chairman on March 1.

Among a slew of reform measures, the Sebi board will also consider making it easier for banks and financial institutions to get shares of the companies they have exposure to by way of conversion of loan into equity -- a move seen as a major boost to the steps for handling the bad loan menace.

The Sebi board will also take stock of long-pending investigations and cases, involving some big corporates, and will consider putting in place an internal guidance note for deal-



Besides, it would also discuss the implementation of graded surveillance measures by the stock exchanges to check any manipulation of share price.

In the run up to his first meeting as Chairman, Tyagi has been meeting various groups of stakeholders in the capital markets and some of these interactions are scheduled even on Monday, through which he is looking to get a first-hand understanding of the issues faced in the marketplace and the expectations from the

In one of the major areas of importance, Sebi will consider the regulator to impose this new guidelines for dealing with offshore derivative instruments, commonly known as participatory notes (P-Notes), ing with quasi-judicial matters. which have been long seen sanctity. Following Sebi's mea-

as being possibly misused for routing of black money from abroad

While Sebi has tightened its norms repeatedly over the recent years to check any loophole, the government now wants the regulator to explicitly impose restrictions on resident Indians and NRIs from being 'beneficiary owners' of these

While Sebi has already put in place a mechanism for such restrictions, there was a view that the existing restriction are only in form of 'FAQs' of the norms and therefore the Finance Ministry has asked restriction through an amendment to the FPI (Foreign Portfolio Investment) Regulations in order to give greater legal

sures to check any misuse of P-Notes, the notional value of these instruments has declined over the years from 55.7 per cent of overall FPI investments in June 2007 to just 6.7 per cent in December 2016.

In recent months, the P-Note investments have fallen further, though there was a surprise uptick in the month of March - presumably due to it being the last month for availing of certain tax benefits for investments coming through some major offshore investment gateways.

There are also fears that the P-Note investments may start coming from other jurisdictions like the US, France and the Netherlands after tightening of rules for inflows from countries like Mauritius, Singapore and Cyprus.

Financial literacy must to get investors into markets: Tyagi

PATALGANGA (MAHARASHTRA): Financial awareness, and not tax incentives, is required to bring in more investors into the capital markets. SEBI Chairman Ajay Tyagi said on Sunday. "People should be (financially) aware. To take everyone along and to help them understand the potential of the market is a big task," he said. Tyagi was speaking at a function organised at the National Institute of Securities Markets (NISM) campus at Patalganga near Navi Mumbai. "Some people say to get people invest into capital markets, there should be some support in terms of tax. I don't support this." he added. Noting that it is crucial to spread financial literacy across the country, the senior IAS officer said, "India is a huge country and if there is participation only from some areas then something is not correct." He said people across the country should invest in the capital markets, and not just those from Mumbai and Ahmedabad. Pointing to a SEBI survey where investors thought derivatives are a safer instrument than bonds, the SEBI chief said the finding was disturbing. "The capital market are booming but if only some people participate in them, then it is unfair and wrong," said Tyagi, who took over as the SEBI chairman last month. The function was organised to felicitate the winners of National Financial Literacy Assessment Tests. NFLAT is conducted across the country for school students. So far, nearly five lakh students have taken the NFLAT since its inception.

HC seeks govt's reply on plea seeking capping of airfares



NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court has sought the government's reply on a plea seeking capping of airfares across the country so that flyers are not fleeced by airlines.

A bench of Acting Chief Justice Gita Mittal and Justice Anu Malhotra issued notice to the Civil Aviation Ministry and sought their response after it was informed that the government has failed to comply with its earlier direction asking them to decide the issue.

The court fixed the matter for further consideration on September 15. The counsel for the central government submitted before the court that airfares was beyond the control of the aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation. The court had on July 20 last year disposed the plea with direction to the ministry to consider the issues raised before it and pass an appropriate order in accordance with law within eight weeks.

The PIL filed through advocate Amit Sahni has urged the court to direct the authorities to frame "guidelines so as to the problem.

put a cap on airfares and prevent the private airlines from charging arbitrarily, irrationally and exorbitantly for air flights.

The advocate has stated that he had filed an RTI application seeking information regarding airfares and the ministry had replied that these were not controlled by the government.

Citing the Jat agitation in Haryana last year, the plea has said if there would have been a cap, the airlines could not have charged huge amounts.

"The private airlines companies have fleeced people even in emergent situations and the government has stood as a mute spectator," the plea has said, adding there was an "urgent need to regulate the upper limit of airfares so that the private airlines cannot fleece their customers as per their own wish."

Capping of airfares in the backdrop of passengers' complaints of arbitrary tariff hikes was recently ruled out by the government which had said competition among airlines would take care of

FPI net inflow at ₹18,890 cr in Apr

NEW DELHI: Foreign investors have pumped in a staggering \$3 billion in the Indian capital markets this month so far as regulator Sebi has raised investment limit for FPIs in government debt.

Most of the funds were invested in the debt markets during the period under Singh Sengar said.

"Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) investing more in debt is mainly due to two reasons. Sebi raised FPI investment limit for government debt and benchmark 10-year government bond yield rose to its highest in 7 months. These factors have made Indian debt instruments more attractive to foreign investors," Advisory-



Besides, earlier this month RBI Governor Urjit Patel said that banks still have scope to cut loan rates even though demonetisation has already helped faster monetary transmission into interest rates, which has further raised investors' sentiments.

According to the depository data, FPIs infused a net sum of Rs 1,132 crore in equities dur17,758 crore in the debt segment, translating into a combined inflow of Rs 18,890 crore (US 2.91 billion).

This comes following a record net inflow of Rs 56,944 crore (\$8.7 billion) last month, mainly on expectations that BJP's victory in the recently held assembly polls would lead to faster reforms.

In February, FPIs had made a net investment of Rs 15,862 crore in equity and debt markets. Prior to that, FPIs had pulled out more than Rs 80,000 crore between October 2016 to January 2017. With the latest fund mobilisation, total inflow has reached to Rs 87,517 crore (\$13.34 billion) so far this year in the capital markets (equity NEW DELHI: India is considers, tracksuits, gloves, furnishering to impose anti-dumping ing fabrics and carpets.

on acrylic fibre from 5 nations

duty on a certain type of fibre as the commerce ministry has started a probe on the imports of this commodity from the European Union, China, Belarus, Ukraine and Peru. notification.

The ministry's antidumping investigation arm - Directorate General of Antidumping and Allied Duties (DGAD) - has found "sufficient" evidence of dumping of acrylic fibre from these regions.

Indian Acrylics Ltd and Pasupati Acrylon have jointly filed an application for initiation of anti-dumping investigation. Acrylic fibre is lightweight, soft and warm with a wool like The directorate has initi-

ated "an investigation into the alleged dumping and consequent injury to the domestic industry," DGAD has said in a If established that dumping

has caused material injury to domestic players, the DGAD would recommend imposition of anti-dumping duty on imports of fibre from the European Union, China, Belarus, Ukraine and Peru. The period of investigation covers July-December 2016. Anti-dumping duties are levied to provide a level playing field to local industry by guarding against

India mulling antidumping duty $\ \ New \ life \ insurance \ premium$ grows 26% to ₹1.75 Lk crore

NEW DELHI: Life insurance firms in the country collected Rs 1,75,022.50 crore as premium from new policies in 2016-17, registering a growth of 26.2 per cent even as the total number of policies declined.

Insurance companies had collected Rs 1,38,657.31 crore in 2015-16, according to data from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai).

Interestingly, number of policies insured in the last fiscal fell to 2,64,56,645 from 2,67,40,088 in 2015-16, indicating high value policies subscribed by policyholders. Life



about 36 crore policies currently. There are 24 life insurance players in the country. LIC is the only state-owned life insurer, while rest are from the private sector. Insurance behe-

the largest in the world with est premium of Rs 1,24,396.27 crore (71 per cent of total premium) during 2016-17, up 27.4 per cent from a year ago, data showed. Rest 23 private sector players' new premium grew by 23.5 per cent to Rs 50,626.23

Govt aims 40% sown area under insurance cover in 2017-18 season



NEW DELHI: The government is aiming to bring 40 per cent of gross sown area of 194.4 million hectare under crop insurance schemes in 2017-18 season beginning July.

In 2016-17 crop year, about 26.28 per cent or 51.1 million hectare of gross area under crops was insured.

At present, crops are being insured under two schemes: Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS) and Pradhan Manthri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY). The PMFBY was launched last year.

"In first year of the implementation of the PMFBY, a substantial progress has been achieved. In 2017-18, the target for insured area is set at 40 per cent gross cropped area, which translates to 77.6 million hectare," a senior Agriculture Ministry official said.

The state governments, banks and insurance companies will be asked to adopt appropriate strategies to achieve the targets including notification of more number of crops and greater focus on non-loanees including utilisation of Common Service Centre (CSC) for this purpose, he

compulsory coverage of all eligible loanees and electronic transmission of premium on time, the official added. For timely settlement of

claims, the official said the government is making efforts to incorporate innovative technology like use of smartphone application to record the details of crop cutting experiments (CCE) digitally. "Some states like Tamil

Nadu, Chhattisgarh and Odisha have taken the lead in this direction. Unless this mode is adopted completely and successfully by all implementing States/UTs, issues of area discrepancy with sown area will remain and continue to compromise transparency and genuine relief to the farmers," he

The central government has put in place a mechanism to facilitate adoption of this new technology and is providing 50 per cent share of the cost involved in the purchase of smartphones. The capacity building has also been done on constant basis, he added.

Under the PMFBY, the premium to be paid by farmers is kept lower and claims are set-

Only 30% of recalled diesel vehicles rectified so far: VW

the exercise, German auto major Volkswagen has been able to rectify only 30 per cent of the 3.4 lakh recalled diesel vehicles it had equipped with defeat device that helped cheat emission tests in India.

Volkswagen Group India said the process has been delayed as it involves different brands, engines and models.

The company's headquarter has so far given approval for engine updates that cover almost 70 per cent of the vehicles which have been recalled

Overall, by the end of last month, 30 per cent of the entire lot of vehicles that is eligible for the update has been covered, a Volkswagen Group India Spokesperson said. In



December 2015, the group had announced recall of 3.4 lakh vehicles in India across its different brands, including Audi, Volkswagen and Skoda, sold from 2008 till end of Novem-

A government-ordered probe had found the automaker's EA 189 diesel engines were equipped with a defeat device that helped it cheat on emission tests. The company last year announced plans to update the engines of the recalled vehicles. On the slow progress of

several brands, various markets and models, different engine variants and gearboxes and various model years had to be considered while developing the updates. The technical measures were being defined and developed by Volkswagen Group at the headquarters in Germany.

"Once they were approved by the authorities in Germany, these updates were tested by the Indian authorities. All of this has been a lengthy process and that caused a delay," the spokesperson added.

The updates are tested by ARAI and only after their approval are they rolled out to customers. Final two approvals for updates are currently in the pipeline and are expected to be

Embraer, Air India to set up MRO in Secunderabad

NEW DELHI: Brazilian aerospace major Embraer has partnered with state-owned Air India to set up a maintenance and repair MRO facility to maintain its brand of private and business jets in the entire Southeast Asian region.

The airline's engineering subsidiary, Air India Engineering Services Limited, has been mandated this task under an initial pact signed recently, airline sources said.

The proposed facility is expected to come up at the Begumpet airport in Secunderabad in the southern state of Telangana, they said.

"Embraer came to us because they are planning to sell 40 aircraft in the region by 2018 and they need to have a maintenance system in place for those planes," said an Air India official.

"AIESL agreed to develop the Begumpet airport for this purpose, provided Embraer declares it as the preferred destination for MRO to all its customers," the official added.

Air India Engineering Services Limited (AIESL) has the requisite expertise in the fastgrowing Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) segment of the aviation sector as it already runs as many as six such facilities across airports in India, including one at Nagpur in Maharashtra in collaboration with US aircraft maker Boeing Inc.

As per the pact, Embraer will provide training as well as 'heavy discounts' to AIESL on

the Kingfisher House in March

this year, the SBI-led consor-

tium had set reserve price at

Rs 103.50 crore, 10 per cent

Finmin to hire 120 IT professionals to develop big data architecture

NEW DELHI: The finance ministry has decided to hire 120 senior IT professionals to develop big data architecture for monitoring public expenditure and plugging leakages.

The professionals will be hired for providing leadership role in the areas of advanced data techniques, develop Biz-Talk (to facilitate interface between numerous platforms), web designing, technical support to end users, and updating technical documentation, among others.

The move aims at strengthening the government's flagship Public Financial Management System (PFMS), a web based application for online financial management information. It tracks released funds and real time reporting of expenditure through treasury and bank interface.

The hiring, on contractual basis, seeks to bring transparency in public expenditure, speed up implementation of welfare schemes and plug leakages. In Budget 2017-18, government has earmarked Rs 300 crore for revamp of the PFMS with the overall objective of tracking the usage of funds till it reaches the last beneficiary.

The PFMS will link financial networks of the central and state governments and give real time reporting of expenditure at all levels of programme implementation.

The Department of Expenditure in the ministry has invited bids from agencies for recruitment of the professionals, initially for two years. Under PFMS, there is a plan to develop a mobile app for wider dissemination of information

Banks looking at bilateral pact to sell Mallya's House

ering making a fresh attempt to sell Kingfisher House here to recover their dues from Vijay Mallya, adopting a model followed in recent sale of the defaulter businessman's posh

Repeated attempts to auction the Mumbai property have failed to find a buyer, which was the case for sea-facing Goa villa as well until the banks entered into direct negotiations to clinch a bilateral pact with the buyer.

Banks have the option to sell the properties under their possession through a private agreement with a buyer, if at least two auctions of such properties failed.

"With the sale of the villa, at least a process has been initiated. We may explore the option of selling Kingfisher House through a bilateral agreement," a



banking source said. Earlier this month, the 17-lender consortium led by State Bank of India sold the Kingfisher Villa for Rs 73.01 crore to Sachiin Joshi of 73 crore. Viiking Media & Entertainment, after failing to sell it through

auction thrice since last year. The plush property situated at Condolim in north Goa was

sold through a private deal between lenders and Joshi. It was sold at just Rs 1 lakh above the last fixed reserve price of Rs

Mallya owes over Rs 9,000 crore to bankers, taken for his defunct Kingfisher Airlines but alleged to have syphoned off a good portion to his shell com-

Banks have the option to sell the properties under their possession through a private agreement with a buyer, if at least two auctions of such properties failed

Mallya has been declared a wilful defaulter and is wanted by authorities for default in payment of loans. Lenders have made four failed bids to sell the Kingfisher House, the erstwhile headquarters of Kingfisher Airlines located at Vile Parle near the airport. At the last auction of

panies in overseas tax havens.

lower than the third auction held in December 2016 when the reserve price was kept at Rs 115 crore. In the first failed auction of over 17,000 sqft Kingfisher House in March 2016, reserve price was fixed at Rs 150 crore but was lowered to Rs 135 crore for the second futile auction in

Mallya, who was arrested by the Scotland Yard last week as part of an extradition process out was released on bail within hours, owes over Rs 9,000 crore to lenders like SBI, PNB, IDBI Bank, BoB, Allahabad Bank, Federal Bank and Axis Bank, among others. He fled the coun-

try on March 3 last year and is

currently in London.



DHONI REMAINS THE MOST DESTRUCTIVE FINISHER: FLEMING

MUMBAI: Former New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming said Mahendra Singh Dhoni remains the best finisher of the limited overs game, hailing the World Cup- winning captain after he turned the clock back with a destructive knock. India's most successful captain in both Tests and ODIs cracked a 34-ball 61 to steer Pune Supergiant to a last-ball victory over Sunrisers.

CHINA BOWLED OUT FOR 28 IN WORLD LEAGUE QUALIFIER

BANGKOK: China were humiliated as they were bowled out for 28 by Saudi Arabia and crashed to a 390-run defeat in a World Cricket League regional qualifier in Thailand. Saudi Arabia piled up 418 all out off their 50 overs before China's outclassed batsmen collapsed in just 12.4 overs as extras top

MUMBAI INDIANS TO CELEBRATE SACHIN'S BIRTHDAY TODAY

MUMBAI: IPL franchise Mumbai Indians would be celebrating the birthday of cricket legend and their `icon player' Sachin Tendulkar who will turn 44 on Monday. The right-handed batsman was born here on April 24, 1973. "Mumbai Indians would be celebrating Sachin's birthday at the Wankhede stadium where the team will be taking on RSP" an MI source said.



IPL Preview: High-flying Mumbai take on Pune in Maha derby clash

MUMBAI: On a roll after a sixgame winning streak, high-flying Mumbai Indians will take on a resurgent Rising Pune Supergiant, their only conquerors in IPL season 10, in a potentially high-voltage clash here on Monday.

Pune's last-ball, six-wicket victory on Saturday at home against defending champions Sunrisers Hyderabad was followed just over a 100km away at the Wankhede Stadium here by Mumbai's stout defence of a small total on a bouncy pitch against the misfiring Delhi Daredevils.

thus, are in a perfect state of the Mumbai bowlers who

mind to seek revenge for their first leg loss to their Maharashtra rivals in their opening game in Pune, their only defeat in this season so far.

That the Pune victory over Hyderabad was piloted by none other than the iconic Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who smashed an unbeaten 61 not out in 34 balls to steer the side home in the last ball, will not be lost on the Mumbai think-tank.

The timely return to form by the talismanic former Indian captain, along with Pune captain Steve Smith's strong show so far in the tournament, makes Table toppers Mumbai, this duo formidable rivals for



Pune will be looking at MS Dhoni to replicate the form that he

rediscovered against Sunrisers showed great skills in defend-

outing with the bat for Muming a small total of 142 against bai against Delhi and they must Delhi. It was a rare, forgettable pull up their socks to confront

the threat posed by the Pune bowling attack on Monday. Particularly interesting will be the battle between Pune's South African leg-spinner

Imran Tahir and Mumbai skipper Rohit Sharma who once again fell to a wrist spinner yesterday against Delhi, playing across. Tahir had his number in the first leg clash in Pune and will be confident of causing the Mumbai captain's downfall on a track that offered excellent bounce and turn yesterday. Mumbai's major plus has been the depth in their batting and variety in bowling, as not many other teams are blessed with such a combination in the

league. Against Delhi, Mumbai batting failed to click although some batsmen like Kieron Pollard and Hardik Pandya got encouraging starts but could not convert them to big scores.

Although unlikely, Mumbai have the option of bringing back Ambati Rayudu -- who has started training with the team after recovering from his early-season injury. In bowling, Lasith Malinga has leaked runs in the previous two games, conceding over 50 each expectedly made way to Mitchell Johnson who bowled reasonably well and is expected to be retained against

Dark Knight: RCB exploit

chink in KKR's armour

Injured Dwayne Bravo ruled out of entire IPL season

RAJKOT: Gujarat Lions on Sunday suffered a setback after West Indies all-rounder Dwayne Bravo was ruled out of the 10th edition of Indian Premier League Bravo is yet to fully recuperate from his left hamstring surgery after sustaining an injury in December during the Big Bash League. Gujarat Lions Skipper Suresh Raina confirmed the development. The Gujarat franchise was expecting him to get fit during the later part of the season as he was travelling with the team while undergoing rehabilitation. "No Dwayne Bravo. He's been doing proper rehab and it might take three-four weeks, so he might be out of the tournament. So now we have to talk to the management and think about a replacement," Raina said at the toss.

Bowlers help Kings XI Punjab slay **Gujarat Lions**



Kings X1 Punjab players celebrate the wicket of Gujarat Lions batsman Ravindra Jadeja

RAJKOT: Kings XI Punjab produced an all- round performance to finally arrest their slide, beating Gujarat Lions by 26 runs in a one-sided Indian Premier League encounter,

here on Sunday. Courtesy Hashim Amla's 65 and Axar Patel 34, Kings XI Punjab notched up 188 for seven after being invited to bat.

The much-criticised bowling attack then joined the party restricting Lions to 162 for seven as they won a match after losing four consecutive games on the trot.

Kings XI Punjab now have six points from seven games while Lions remain at the bottom with four points.

The dangerous Brendon McCullum missed a in-dipping full- toss from Sandeep Sharma to be adjudged plumb in-front.

Skipper Suresh Raina (32) and Aaron Finch (13) added 40 runs at a brisk pace with the India international hitting a flurry of boundaries. But it was Mohit Sharma, who bowled one wide and full outside the off-stump and Finch's uppish drive was taken by Marcus Stoinis. But what changed the game completely was skipper Glenn Maxwell's brilliant catch at the deep mid-wicket boundary.

Raina played the customary swat over cow corner but Maxwell kept his balance as he

The pitch showed signs of being two-paced and KC Cariappa got Ravindra Jadeja to play early and dived in-front to grab the return catch.

The big-hitting Dwayne Smith (4) also got out cheaply, becoming Axar's second victim of the match.

Cariappa then trapped Akshdeep Nath (0) in-front of the wicket to make matters worse as Karthik waged a lone

contributions.

Brief scores:

Kings XI Punjab vs Gujarat

KXIP: 188/7 (Hashim Amla

65, Axar Patel 34, KC Cariappa

GL: 162/7 (Dinesh Karthik 58,

Suresh Raina 32, Andrew Tye

them bowled eight overs giving in the second last over. away only 60 runs and most The bowlers are lacking conimportantly got four wickets. Earlier, Amla's sublime touch was complemented by an Axar cameo that powered Kings XI Punjab to a comexplained.

petitive 188 for seven against Raina, Gujarat Lions. Amla hit 65 off 40 balls with nine boundaries and two sixes to set the platform while Axar's 34 off 17 balls enabled the Kings XI

Punjab to reach a fighting total after 20 overs. Shaun Marsh (30 off 24 balls) and Maxwell (31 off 18 balls) also made useful

Dejected Raina says bowlers need to step up

RAJKOT: After going down to Kings XI Punjab in an Indian Premier League (IPL) match on Sunday, dejected Gujarat Lions skipper Suresh Raina said his bowlers need to step up as they are lacking confidence in the middle.

Gujarat were beaten by Kings XI Punjab, who put up a strong all-round show to end their four-match losing streak with a 26-run victory.

Opening batsman Hashim Amla played a crucial knock of 65 as the visitors posted a challenging total of 188/7 in 20 overs.

Gujarat reply, could muster only 162/7, largely driven by Dinesh Karthik (58 not out) as the eighth-placed team succumbed to its fifth loss in seven matches.

can't ʻYou 190 every time. Bowlers have to do something. We haven't won any 4 p.m.

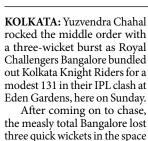
"It's a learning curve for us. Spinners have to step up," Raina said after the match.

"Nathu got cramps, Cariappa and Axar between so I had to bowl Smith fidence. They are not exe cuting on match day... they do well in the nets, but not on match day, he

> who scored runs off 24 balls, also blamed the wicket for the

"We thought we could still chase it down, but while we were batting, the wicket got slower and Sandeep (Sharma) and Mohit (Sharma) bowled good slower balls and made it hard for us to hit," the skipper said.

"At this stage, I can't say anything. We have to go there. Couple of injury issues, but we have to win more games, we can't just talk in training. We'll go to Bengaluru, regroup and hopefully



three quick wickets in the space of 14 runs with skipper Virat Kohli, AB de Villiers and Mandeep Singh all making their way back to the pavillion.

Earlier, Virat Kohli opted to bowl and was in for a shock as KKR's new opener Sunil Narine hammered Samuel Badree for 18 runs in the opening over, hitting three fours and

The next over, Gambhir had some tough time against Mills before using the Englishman's pace to guide the ball over third-man boundary. It was raining bound-

aries and sixes as KKR raced to 39 in three overs before Mills finally gave the breakthrough dismissing KKR skipper for 14 when the ball kissed Gambhir's bottomhand thumb and went to the wicketkeeper.



RCB's Yuzvendra Chahal with teammates celebrates the dismissal of KKR batsman Yusuf Pathan

to his new-found opening role pushing them to 65/2 in Powerplay but what unfolded next was a batting harakiri and the sellout Eden crowd switched loyalty Kohli and Co and kept chanting 'RCB, RCB'.

aries and one six before holing out at deep square leg off Stuart Binny in the last over of Power Play.

20 runs from 10 to 15 overs. alert ping out for his first wicket

Manich

Kohli introduced his ace spinner Chahal in the eighth and had him stumped over as the Haryana leggie while in the 12th over bowled his quota at one go and he

Chahal quickly altered his line seeing Yusuf Pathan (8) stepstruck twice to

a twin blow for KKR in four balls with addition of one run. **Brief scores:** Kolkata Knight Riders vs **Royal Challengers Bangalore:**

The home team lost five

wickets for 28 runs with

Chahal making the differ-

ence in his 4-0-16-3 spell

while Pawan Negi (2/15) and

Tymal Mills (2/31) added to

took wickets of Nathan Coul-

ter Nile (2) and Suryaku-

mar Yadav (15) in successive

balls in the 18th over while

Sreenath Aravind cleaned up

Kuldeep Yadav (4) to bowl

first time KKR were

bowled out by RCB who

would be sniffing a second win in a row, as it's a big ask for Gautam Gambhir to defend the

Having been smashed by

Narine in his first over, Badree

returned to trap Uthappa

LBW in his second spell.

KKR out in 19.3 overs.

This is for

Left-arm spinner Negi

their misery.

modest total.

KKR: 131 (Sunil Narine 34, Chris Woakes 18). PCR. Chahal (3/

Kohli-Gayle-AB trinity is talk of Kolkata at Eden

KOLKATA: "It's like a wedding function since we have arrived here at the team hotel," a Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) spokesperson gushed on Sunday morning, hours before the side's clash against Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) at the Eden Gardens here.

"Our team bus has been chased from the hotel and at the ground while entering for practice it was crazy," said the official, not authorised to speak on record.

"Especially for the big three." There are no points for guessing the triumvirate he was talking about.

Every time the RCB come

calling, the combined star power of Virat Kohli, AB de Villiers and Chris Gayle so mesmerise the home supporters that they even fleetingly forget their loyalties and burst into applause as hammer blows from the trio cross the boundary rope. "This has been the case every time RCB play here. The Kolkata crowd loves their cricket and they understand the level of these players and their pedigree. There is that fan boying that is unmistakable," a Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) office-bearer said.

While Kohli is the poster boy of Indian cricket right now and has a following of 15 million on Twitter, de Villiers wows the audience across the cricketing globe with his only-AB-can range of shots and match-winning abilities. Gayle termed the pair as "Batman and Superman" last year when together they gunned down a chase of 184 with Kohli cracking an unbeaten 51-ball 75 and De Villiers remaining not out on 59. If Gayle were to be put in the same bracket, it would certainly have been "Gayle-Man".

The burly West Indian who in his five innings at the Eden against KKR -- his former employers -- has plundered 339 runs with a hundred and two fifties, roared back to

form in RCB's previous outing against Gujarat Lions. Gayle unleashed mayhem, striking 77 off 38 balls as RCB posted 213 for 2, the edition's highest total, on a slow Rajkot pitch. Together with Kohli, the deadly duo form the cash-rich league's most successful opening partnership. "The match has come to Eden at the right time," quipped Avijit Maitra en route to the game with his friend.

"I am a Kolkatan and support KKR. But today, as a cricket lover, I am here to witness the magic of Gayle and Virat. It doesn't matter who wins," the 24-year-old from Tollygunge added.

Amir takes five as rain ruins Jamaica Test

KINGSTON: Mohammad Amir completed a five- wicket innings haul and West Indies captain Jason Holder reached a fifth half-century as the home side reached 278 for nine in their first innings on a rainruined second day of the first Test against Pakistan at Sabina Park. Only 11.3 overs were bowled in the entire day as inadequate covering from heavy overnight and early morning rain left damp patches on the pitch and a sodden area of the outfield, delaying the start of play by four hours. By the time the showers

returned in late afternoon with even greater ferocity, just 55 minutes play was possible during which Amir and Holder shone through the gathering gloom. After the home skipper and Devendra Bishoo extended their eighth-wicket partnership to 75 against the second new ball, Amir had Bishoo caught at the wicket for 28. He then bowled Alzarri Joseph without scoring to achieve his first five-wicket haul since returning to international cricket last year following a five-year ban for spot-fixing. Most impressive in the left-arm fast bowler's effort was his accuracy as reflected in figures of five for 41 off 24.3 overs before the showers swept across the ground and drove the players off the field for the last time for the day. Holder's defiance was also admirable, the captain reaching the half-century mark by hoisting debutant Mohammed Abbas for a straight six. He resumes alongside last man Shannon Gabriel on the third day, weather permitting, on 55 off 69 balls with two sixes and

seven fours embellishing his

Selection headache: It's Ashish Nehra or Mohammed Shami for Champions Trophy

NEW DELHI: The threemember selection committee will be fretting on India's bowling combination for the upcoming Champions Trophy with a clear toss-up for the fourth pacer's slot between Ashish Nehra and Mohammed Shami.

The cut-off date set by ICC for announcing the 15-member squad for the Champions Trophy in the United Kingdom is April 25 and it is expected that the squad will be named in the next few days.

The date of the selection committee meeting has not been finalised as some in the BCCI want the ICC issues pertaining to revenue sharing and governance to be resolved first.

While Ravichandran Ashwin is expected to start his training next week and, along with Ravindra Jadeja, looks an automatic selection in the spin department, it will be the fifth member of the pace attack who



will need some discussion.

Ashwin will get into the groove playing the two warmup games when India land in the United Kingdom.

Death-overs specialist Jasprit Bumrah, swing bowler Bhuvneshwar Kumar and speed merchant Umesh Yadav are certainties in the squad of 15 subject to fitness.

So is Hardik Pandya, who will be there as the pace bowling all-rounder. This leaves one slot in the pace department for which there are two contenders -- Mohammed Shami and

While Shami has been a potent bowler for India in Test



format, the last time he played an ODI match was during the World Cup semi-final against Australia at Sydney, back in 2015. In case of Nehra, it was even further back during the 2011 World Cup semi-final but the veteran left-arm pacer has since made another comeback

in 2016 in the shortest format,

where he has been quite a success. But there is a slight catch over here. According to top BCCI officials, skipper Virat Kohli wants Nehra to be a part of the bowling attack. His vast knowledge is a big help for the younger pacers, not to forget his brilliant match-reading

Umar likely to make a return in **Pak squad for Champions Trophy** KARACHI: Enigmatic Paki-

stan batsman Umar Akmal is expected to make a comeback in the Pakistan squad for the ICC Champions Trophy to be held in England in June.

After being dropped for the tour to the West Indies on fitness grounds, the national selectors and team management are now considering Umar for a berth in the the Champions Trophy squad. "Umar is a serious contender

for a recall but his elder brother, Kamran Akmal is unlikely to be picked for the tournament as the selectors and management were not impressed with his efforts in the limited over matches in the West Indies, a well-informed source said.

"Kamran got seven innings in the West Indies to make his mark but unfortunately he failed and the selectors are now contemplating bringing back Azhar Ali into the ODI side to open with Ahmad Shahzad," the source added.

Kamran had earned a recall to the national team last month after being on the sidelines since April 2014.

The source said that Umar is a serious contender as the selectors wanted a power hitter option in the top and lower

"Umar has also worked on his fitness since being dropped and has led Punjab well in the ongoing Pakistan Cup ODI tournament," he added.

Two rookie players who went to the West Indies for the ODI series and returned without playing a match, batsman Asif Zakir and all-rounder Fahim Ashraf are also expected to be given the axe for the Champions Trophy, a title Pakistan has never won since its inception in 1998. The source said that another all-rounder Aamir Yamin, who is doing well in the Pakistan Cup, could instead be given the allrounder's role in England but the selectors are yet to make a final decision on his inclusion. The selectors have to announce the 15-member Champion Trophy squad by the April 25 deadline. AGENCIES

Ibrahimovic suffers 'significant knee ligament damage'

LONDON: Zlatan Ibrahimovic's magical season with Manchester United appears over after the club announced he had suffered a serious knee injury in Thursday's Europa League clash with Anderlecht.

The club revealed that both the 35-year-old Swedish striker and Argentinian defender Marco Rojo had suffered knee injuries in the same match.

"Detailed investigations on the injuries sustained by Marcos Rojo and Zlatan Ibrahimovic during Thursday's Europa League match have confirmed significant knee ligament damage in both players that requires specialist opinions over the coming days," read the United statement on their website.

"Estimations of time to full recovery will only be possible once definitive treatment plans have been decided after these

Future uncertain

but Yogeshwar

not ready to

the time being.

the backburner.

hwar said.

"Retirement is something

that is not even on my mind.

I would like to make a come-

back to the international arena

before bidding adieu to the

sport. So, there are no plans of quitting any time soon," Yoges-

sion for his sport remains intact

and Yogeshwar wants to bring the curtains down on his glo-

rious career by winning one

last medal for the country. "I

injuries in the past one year or

so. Thus, my main focus is on

attaining fitness. And only after

I am completely injury-free, I

would be able to assess where

I stand and decide when I can

compete," he said. "I would cer-

tainly be returning to the mat

but when would that be, I am

not sure. Right now my aim is

to achieve full fitness and only

after that I would choose which

Despite being bogged down by numerous injuries, the pas-



extra-time -- but his goals this

season have been the main rea-

son for an improvement in the

BARASAT: East Bengal

club's fortunes, albeit without ever being title challengers. Ibrahimovic has defied many doubters since joining on a free transfer from Paris Saint-Germain last year, scoring 28 goals and inspiring United to victory

in the League Cup. Rojo's injury

is also a serious bodyblow to

United's depleted resources at the back with both England international central defenders Phil Jones and Chris Smalling expected to be out till mid May.

Ibrahimovic's one-year contract is up at the end of the season, meaning it is possible the Swede has played his last game for the club, with speculation linking him with a move to Major League Soccer. His loss is a blow to Unit-

ed's hopes of European success and their chances of securing a top-four finish in the Premier League. At times he has carried the team this season, his form earning him a PFA Player of the Year nomination. United travel to Burnley on Sunday knowing victory will see them cut the gap to fourth-placed Manchester City to one point, with the city rivals going head-tohead at the Etihad Stadium on

Mainz stun Bayern, Dortmund beat Monchengladbach in Bundesliga

BERLIN: Bayern Munich dropped points for the second time in a row as they were held to a 2-2 draw by FSV Mainz 05 while Raphael Guerreiro's late winner helped Dortmund to edge Borussia Mönchengladbach 3-2 at the 30th round in Bundesliga. Carlo Ancelotti's men bounced back twice to secure a two-all draw against spirited Mainz on Saturday, who extended Bayern's winless run to two consecutive games, reports Xinhua news agency.

Mainz caught a fairy tale start at outsold Allianz Arena as Bojan Krkic benefited on Arturo Vidal's misplaced pass to slot home the opener from the edge of the box with three minutes played.

Bayern recovered from the setback in the 16th minute when Arjen Robben made use of Franck Ribery's through ball to slot home from sharp angle into the far post corner.

However, the German giants had to run behind a deficit again after Mainz converted a foul-play penalty through Daniel Borsinski, as Joshua Kimmich felled Yoshinori Muto inside the box in the 40th minute.

After the restart, Bayern

piled on the pressure and eventually restored parity as Thiago Alcantara completed a solo run with a goal from 18 metres in the 73rd minute. The Bavarians pressed frenetically for the winner but all their efforts remained fruitless as Mainz kidnapped one point from Bayern. With the draw, Bayern remain atop the standings with a nine-point advantage. Borussia Dortmund recaptured the third place after getting the better of Monchengladbach following a 3-2 goal festival on the road. The "BVB" started highly motivated into the clash, knowing that a win would lift them

Rowllin Borges' pass caught

Ivan Bukenya by surprise and

Victor Amobi intercepted and

shot from inside the box. Sub-

hasish Roy Chowdhury got his

hand to it but the ball was sail-

ing into the net, only for the

skipper to jump in and fend it

broke the deadlock past the

half hour mark with a timely

header into his far side from

Rahul Bheke's cross down the

right flank. Six minutes into the

second half, half time substi-

tute Robin Singh's cross kissed

Moinuddin Khan's arms inside

the box and the Red and Golds

were awarded a penalty. Even

though it was Robin Singh who

converted from the six-yard

spot in the end, the second goal of the match did come with it's

fair share of drama as Wed-

son and Robin got into a tussle

amongst them to take the pen-

But Wedson Anselme

off for a corner.

mund needed only 10 minutes to break the deadlock, as Mahmoud Dahoud's foul to Christian Pulisic inside the box allowed Marco Reus to mark the opener from the spot.

Thomas Tuchel's men remained in control of the proceedings, yet Monchengladbach were able to equalise the scores through Lars Stindl, who utilised Andre Hahn's assist before the break. To make things worse for Dortmund, Monchengladbach turned the tides after the restart as Marcel Schmelzer cleared the ball into the wrong goal with three minutes into the second half. But Dortmund remained unimpressed and responded with Bundesliga top striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, who marked his 27th goal of the season only two minutes after his fielding to level the scores in the 59th minute.

Sampaoli set to be named **Argentina** coach: Reports



BUENOS AIRES: Jorge Sampaoli has agreed to leave Sevilla to coach Argentina's national football team.

The position was made vacant by the sacking of Edgardo Bauza earlier this month amid a poor run of results, reports Xinhua news agency.

According to the AS newspaper, Sampaoli will be officially announced as Argentina's coach when the European sea-

son ends in late May. Sampaoli, who guided Chile to victory at the 2015 Copa America, was appointed

the Sevilla boss in June. Spanish president club's Castro has been told of the

57-year-old's decision to leave, according to the newspaper. Sampaoli did not confirm or deny the reports when

asked about his future at a press conference. "I know that there is interest. I know that it is said that I am the chosen (one), but they will have to wait for the times

that correspond to not

harm anyone. Doing it now would harm Sevilla, Sampaoli said. Argentina are currently fifth in the 10-team America zone

advance to a play-

third. Both managers tried their hand at substitutions as Romeo Fernandes was introduced into the middle. Bikash Jairu got the third in the final minute of regulation time after Wedson's pass had the winger in an one vs one situation with Simranjeet Singh, which he got the better off. Krishna Pandit, who arrived in place of Manandeep Singh, scored one back for the Minervans in the dying embers of the game. Amobi as usualm beat off his markers with ease to release Pandit on the right with precision as Gurwinder was left for dead with the young striker launching the ball past a hapless Subhasish Roy Chowdhury inside the net.

Victor Amobi tried hard

bank a goal for himself but

failed to finish off in the final

With the win, East Bengal romped to thirty points on the penultimate gameday of the season. Minerva Punjab's doors of qualifying for the Federation Cup was permanently slammed shut as they won't better their current ninth place on the table with 12 points from 17 games, with Chennai City a place above them with 17 points.

AGENCIES

World Cup qualifying standings with four games remaining. Only the top four teams at the end of the qualifying tournament will earn an automatic slot in Russia. The fifth-ranked side will

off against the top nation

East Bengal return to winning ways

give up returned to winning ways in the I-League after a tumultuous few weeks which saw Trevor NEW DELHI: In the twi-Morgan dismissed as the head light of his career and prone coach with a 3-1 win over Minerva Punjab FC on Sunto injuries like never before, ace Indian wrestler Yogeshwar day. Wedson Anselme (31'), Dutt is still eager to continue Robin Singh (52') and Bikash and insists that the thought of Jairu (90+') scored for the Red and Golds while Krishna Panretirement has not even crossed dit got a late consolation for his mind vet. The 34-year-old, who won

a bronze medal in the 2012 With absolutely no interest Olympics, had announced that from the East Bengal supporters, The Red and Golds lined the Rio Games were to be his up without Chris Payne and last Olympics. But after failing in his endeavour to win a Robin Singh, with the Aussie medal there, his search for a striker not even featuring on grand swansong continues for the bench. Cavin Lobo made a return from injury as Thong-Being away from action for khosiem 'Semboi' Haokip was the last eight months and an thrown in to lead the line by assistant coach Ranjan Chaudinjury-prone body notwithstanding, the Haryana-grappler huri who was deputising for has put his retirement plans on injured Mridul Banerjee.

Surinder Singh chose to go in with a three man defence with Baoringdao Bodo featuring on the bench, barely 24 hours after he scored against Lonestar Kashmir in New Delhi in the U-18 I-League on



East Bengal's Robin Singh (centre) scored the second goal in the 52nd minute while Wedson Anselme and Bikash Jairu added to the tally

Holding a high defensive

caught the likes of Jackichand could define goalkeeper Arsh-Singh and Wedson Anselme deep Singh's dangerous tackle offside more than a couple on Jackichand, 10 yards away of times, who were wrecking from the box. Although he escaped a red card, there was havoc early on.

Meitei from handing him a

Meanwhile, Gurwinder Singh came to the rescue of his teammates with a goalline

alty in the first place.

Minutes later, Wedson tackled teammate Lobo in frustration still carrying the angst for the chance not given to him. However, he calmed down after Lobo made up with him as he fed more than a couple of balls

India's U-16 football team beats Al-Ahly in friendly

CAIRO: India's Under-16 football team beat Al-Ahly 2-1 in friendly match to win the India-Egypt Friendship Cup. Head coach of the Indian team Bibiano Fernandes expressed his happiness for the win and said the match was good as it was beneficial and a learning experience for both teams. "I'm really happy we have learned a lot of things. We are looking forward to build this team to the AFC," Fernandes said. He noted that the team was undergoing training to play in the Under-16 AFC tournament which will be held in Nepal. "They did a good job in terms of fitness and traveling and playing in another country. I'm really happy about this," he said after the match on Saturday.. Rohit Danu, who scored the first goal for India said that he was very happy for the win. "I'm very happy to score the first goal. I gained good experience is this match," he said.

Only an error in judgment no stopping referee Ajitkumar Bopanna wins Monte Carlo Masters title with Cuevas

MONACO: India's Rohan Bopanna and his Oruguayar partner Pablo Cuevas lifted their first ATP World Tour title together when they downed seventh-seeds Feliciano Lopez and Marc Lopez in a three-set battle in the final of the Monte-Carlo Rolex Masters here on Sunday. The unseeded Indo-Uruguayan pair outwitted the Spanish team in the Match tie breaker for a 6-3 3-6 10-4 win in 74 minutes.

It was the second title of tournament to take part in." the season for Bopanna hav-Yogeshwar has not coming won the season-opening peted since his heartbreaking loss in the first round of Chennai Open crown with the Rio Games in the men's compatriot Jeevan Nedunche-65kg freestyle. During his 0-3 zhiyan. "I'm really happy to win defeat to Mongolia's Mandaour first title together. I have come to Monte-Carlo so many khnaran Ganzorig at Rio de years, it's such a historic tour-Janeiro, Yogeshwar looked a pale shadow of himself. AGENCIES nament. We had a tough start



to the season, but it's great to have won. We came through some close Match tie-breaks this week and it's a good start to the clay season. I'm looking forward to the rest of the tournaments," said Bopanna. Cuevas said, "I am really happy, as I didn't started the season well. I'm happy to win with my partner in the first tournament on European clay and I hope for a good run through to Paris." Bopanna is now 16-24 in doubles finals and 4-4 in Mas- the Spaniards their first ser-Cuves' second Masters trophy, adding to the 2015 Rome Masters triumph with David Marrero. Marc Lopez, one-half of the Rio Olympic champion team, came under pressure in his first service game at 1-2, 30-40, when Bopanna feinted a switch at the net off a long rally to strike a forehand volley winner into space. Bopanna and Cuevas held onto the break and wrapped up a 28-minute set when Feliciano Lopez mistimed a forehand wide on Bopanna's serve at 40-15.

In the first game of the second set, Feliciano did well to hold as he recovered from 30-40, including two break points. At 1-2, 30-40, Cuevas over-hit a lob long to gift

Nadal wins historic 10th Monte Carlo title

enough for Feliciano, serving at 5-3, to strike two straight aces for a hold to 30. The greater weight of groundstroke by Bopanna and Cuevas was felt in the Match tie-break as the pair took a 6-0 lead, largely targeting the volleys of Marc. Although Team Lopez recovered to 4-8, Cuevas sealed the first match point opportunity with a forehand down the line that Feliciano could not return

They were trying to become the third Spanish team to win the Monte-Carlo title in the Open Era (since April 1968), joining Sergio Casal and Emilio Sanchez in 1988 and Rafael Nadal and Tommy Robredo

Chennai football referees chosen for **UEFA training in Geneva**

CHENNAI: India has become in becoming officials of the the only country from Asia to be invited for a UEFA training programme for referees in Geneva with three officials from here chosen for the key course which can pave the way for them to become FIFA referees. The All India Football Fed-

eration (AIFF) has selected city-based referee R Venkatesh and assistant referees R Manoikumar and P Vairamuthu for the programme being organised by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) from April 25 to May 4.

The trio will be representing India which was the only country from Asia to be given a chance to participate in the programme, Venkatesh said.

If they do well at the programme, they could get selected for the final development course, in Geneva again, in October, a big step forward sport's world body FIFA.

The three are upbeat about the course and said they hoped to learn by interacting with referees from various countries and also competing with seven other "teams (of three officials each)". Venkatesh said that it could be a big step in his dream of becoming a FIFA referee.

"Me and the two assistant referees will have to be at our best as we will be competing against referees from Europe. They will assess our knowl-

edge, fitness and game performance," he said.

Apart from the training and game performance, fitness would be assessed, the 26-year-old Venkatesh said and added that "the three of us would get an opportunity to referee in the Swedish league and lower divisions of the French league during the 10-day programme." AGENCIES

R afael Nadal captured an incredible 10th Monte-Carlo Rolex Masters crown on Sunday in beating fellow Spaniard Albert Ramos-Vinolas 6-1, 6-3 in the 76-minute final. Nadal's 29th ATP World Tour Masters 1000 title, one shy of record-holder Novak Djokovic (30), marks the first time in the Open Era (since April 1968) that any player has won a singles tournament on 10 occasions.

The victory also sees Nadal clinch his 50th clay-court crown (50-8), breaking the record he shared with Guillermo Vilas since 24 April 2016, when Nadal lifted his ninth trophy at the Barcelona Open Banco Sabadell.

His Serene Highness Albert II, Sovereign Prince of Monaco presented Nadal with the trophy after he improved to a 63-4 match record at the Monte-Carlo Country Club. World No. 7 Nadal earned 1,000 Emirates ATP Rankings points and will now travel to Barcelona, where he will look to further add to his legacy as the undisputed 'King of Clay', with



€820,035 in prize money.

Nadal has now won an ATP World Tour title for the 14th year in a row (since 2004) and has a 70-35 mark in title matches during his illustrious

Fourth seed Nadal, who had practised first-strike tennis on Court Rainier III hours before the afternoon final, put Ramos-Vinolas under immediate pressure in his first service game, but he

could not convert three break point opportunities. In targeting Ramos-Vinolas' backhand with his heavy topspin forehand, Nadal created space and in the fourth game secured a 3-1 advantage with a break to love. A second service break followed at 1-4, 15/40, when Ramos-Vinolas struck a forehand into the net. Nadal, who had been quick to move up the court for the short ball, clinched the 30-minute set

with an ace.

Ramos-Vinolas, attempted not to be pushed back farther behind the baseline, settled down in the early stages of the second set, but at 2-2 the relentless depth and pace of Nadal saw the World No. 24 get broken for a third time (to 30) with a mis-timed backhand that sailed long.

Nadal experienced a brief wobble when leading

4-3, dropping to 0/30, but clever placement ensured short responses for routine groundstroke winners. At 3-5, Ramos-Vinolas buckled under tremendous pressure. Having saved two championship points, courtesy of Nadal errors, Ramos-Vinolas hit a double fault on Nadal's third

championship point.

It was the pair's third
FedEx ATP Head2Head meeting (Nadal leads 3-0), following on from victories in 2013 and 2014 at Barcelona. Nadal extended his perfect 14-0 record of never having lost to a fellow Spaniard in an ATP World Tour final. It was the first all left-handed Monte-Carlo Rolex Masters final since 2010, when Nadal swept past his compatriot Fernando Verdasco, and the fourth all-Spanish final in the tournament's history – 2002 Juan Carlos Ferrero d. Carlos Moya, 2010 Nadal d. Verdasco and 2011 Nadal d. David Ferrer. Threetime former finalist and former World No. 1 Boris Becker watched Nadal's historic win

PSG beat Montpellier to move atop Ligue 1

PARIS: Edinson Cavani's 31st league goal of the season earned defending champions Paris Saint-Germain a 2-0 home win against Montpellier, sending the club to the top of Ligue 1 table past Monaco, who have two more games in hand.

It was also Cavani's 44th goal in all competitions this season. The Uruguayan striker put Blaise Matuidi's left-flank cross into the net at the 29th minute on Saturday, reports Xinhua news agency. Three minutes into the sec-

ond half, Cavani back-heeled Angel Di Maria, who fired a powerful shot outside the box for his fifth goal in last five games. In other games, Bordeaux moved up to fourth place with a 2-0 home victory over bottom side Bastia, who also faced points deduction due to fans' pitch invasion to attack their opponents in last weekend's home encounter

Ram Gopal Varma

Sonakshi

doesn't believe in

pleasing everybody

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This is why I've

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pressure'

16 mp Entertainment

MUMBAI: Actor Sonakshi Sinha says she believes in doing things on her own terms and conditions as she has realised that making everyone happy through her work is not possible. The actor says just like anybody else, she too went through a phase where she was going all out to please others while neglecting her own happiness. "There are times in life when you reach a saturation point, trying to

please everyone but yourself. Self acceptance is very important. For me, I've always tried to be as real as I can because that's the only way I

know,"Sonakshi said. "I learnt very early in life that you can't please everyone, so don't even try. work on my own Then you realise it's not worth it. I've to conditions and be happy in what I am doing, only then I'll be able to make others happy." Sonakshi feels this approach to life has helped her in the industry so far and not give in to the "pressure" of what

others expect her to do. "If you like me, great, if you don't, it's fine. Which is why I've been able to work on my own conditions, do the work I want to do and not succumb to any kind of pressure from anyone," she says.

While Sonakshi has featured in hit Bollywood pot boilers like *Dabangg*, *Rowdy Rathore* and *R Rajkumar*, it is her performance in movies like Lootera and Akira which have impressed the critics. Sonakshi is aware that there is an audience which wants her to experiment and feels she will try something new only when she wants to.

"I think it's very flattering that people understand what you're capable of and they expect that from you. It's very flattering when people say 'oh you should do stuff like that, there's so much you can do, your potential is so much.

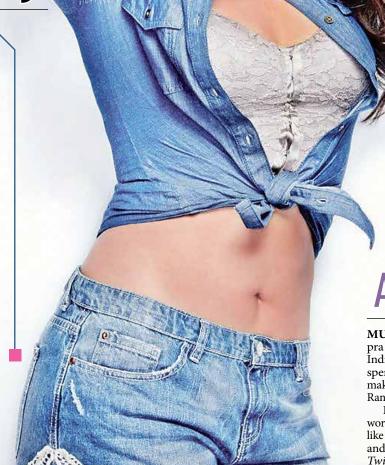
"It will happen in time, but just not on their (audience) time. It will happen on the right time, when I want it to happen and am ready to do it." In her career of more than half a decade, the

actor has witnessed both highs and lows, something which she says she learnt to deal with looking at her actor-turned-politicia father Shatrughan Sinha. "I've seen my father handle, success and failure, in a very dignified, calm and composed manner. He is unfazed by these things. The very fact that I've seen him do this, I have also imbibed the quality where things don't really faze me.
"It's okay if cer-

tain things didn't go as planned. We will try again with next

film. I don't get bogged down or bothered by these things (failure of films)," Sonakshi adds. The 29-year-old actor says in her family, she has been brought up in such a way that she treats failure and success equally. "When a film does really well, you won't see me going on rooftops and shouting about it; when it (film) doesn't work you won't see me sitting in a corner and dwelling about it.

"Life goes on, irrespective. Success and failure is part of everybody's life. Be it a student in school or even the prime minister, anyone. If there are no ups and downs, what kind of life is that?"





LONDON: Actor Vin Diesel says he was privy to a secret script to play the role of Groot in the upcoming film Guardians of the Galaxy Vol 2. The 49-year-old actor says he a great time voice acting the character as he knew what the talking tree was trying to say, reported

Daily Star.

have to try and convey what he intends to say and his emotions in those three words. "I actually had a secret script where I was told what Groot was trying to say. That made him a lot of fun to voice," Diesel says. The Fast and Furious 8 star adds it is always difficult to play the role.

"Groot is always challenging 'As an audience what you to play," he says. The sequel to

takes a dig at National Awards MUMBAI: Filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma has questioned the relevance of award functions, including the National Film Awards, by citing Aamir Khan's example. The 55-year-old director took to *Twitter*, where he called the actor "the greatest filmmaker" in the country and said his consistent absence from such events only reflects their importance today.

Fact that Aamir Khan, the greatest filmmaker of India does not attend any award events, including national award speaks, about those events," wrote Varma. The Sarkaar director further lauded Khan for continuing to deliver good content and not care about receiving awards.

The director, who often gets embroiled in controversies due to his remarks, said, "Highest quality films are made by Aamir and that he doesn't care to be measured by any Indian award committee, including National (Awards) speaks loud," he added. Recently, actor Akshay Kumar winning the National



Award for Best Actor for his role in crime drama Rustom was questioned

mini 'Dil Dhadakne Do' reunion

MUMBAI: Priyanka Chopra is on a ten-day visit to India and the actor was seen spending time with filmmaker Zoya Akhtar and actor Ranveer Singh.

Ranveer, 31, who has worked with Priyanka in films like Gunday, Dil Dhadakne Do, and Bajirao Mastani, took to Twitter to share the pictures from their reunion.

"Mama Zo and Madam Mercurial #mygirls @priyankachopra #ZoyaAkhtar," the actor captioned the photo of three of them chilling.

After Dil Dhadakne Do

Ranveer is all set to collaborate with Zoya once again for her next directorial venture *Gully* Boy, while Priyanka, 34, who has been busy with her projects in West, is yet to sign a Bollywood movie.



hear is, 'I am Groot', but he is the Guardians of the Galaxy will expressing himself and you hit the screens on May 5. Neelam Gill to accompany Bieber for India gig

glamorous about it. The 36-year-old actor, who drew inspiration from his past life as an exotic dancer for his role in the Magic Mike mov

Channing Tatum doesn't

miss life as a stripper

LOS ANGELES: Actor Chan-

ning Tatum says he does not

miss his former life as a strippe and insists there was nothing

> launched 'Magic Mike Live' at Hard Rock Las Vegas, says he has no desire to return to the stage, People reported magazine.

"I don't miss anything about stripping. I stripped in Tampa for like 25 girls, at best. It wasn't glamorous whatsoever,



based on the movies in Vegas. "People in general are coming because they know the movies and they think they're going to get something like they saw in the last film, and they're going to

decided to create a live show

get all that. "But I think they're going to get something else. We don't do live shows. We don't do that. With this, we didn't have any rules so we just started creating crazy s*** and no one told us that wasn't allowed."



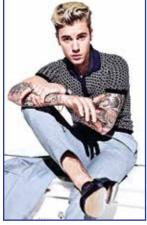
Fitch, is expected to arrive on

May 7 with Bieber, read a state-

ment from White Fox India -

the sole promoter of the tour

in the country. The model, who





has also worked with rapper Kanye West, is looking forward to explore different fashion and entertainment opportunities in

English actor-model Elarica Johnson, best known for her role in Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, is also set to host Bieber's India gig. Apart from India, the Asia leg of the tour comprises Tel Aviv and Dubai. Bieber is touring in support of his fourth album 'Purpose', which debuted at number one in over 100 countries and has sold over eight million copies worldwide.



'I'm not

afraid to

LOS ANGELES: Actor Freida Pinto says that speaking her mind can get her "into trouble" but she will still not shy away from sharing her views.

"I'm not afraid to speak my mind, and that can get me into trouble. For me (social and political activism) is the only thing that matters," Pinto says.

The 32-year-old, who stars in the Showtime miniseries 'Guerrilla', says she jumped at the opportunity to play the role of Jas, reported People magazine.

"As a female actor it is a lot harder to come across roles that explore every aspect of the character, not just her beauty. But Jas and I are similar in our passion," she says. Pinto considers herself

"really blessed" to have a career in Hollywood but is also aware of the fickleness of it all and how fleeting stardom can be. And despite any ups and downs she has had through her career, the actor says she would not go back and do anything differently.

AVATAR' SEQUEL release dates confirmed

LOS ANGELES: Filmmaker James Cameron and Fox have set the release dates for the four Avatar sequels, with Avatar 2 arriving on December 18, 2020. Avatar 3 will open December 17, 2021, followed by a three- year break for Avatar 4, set for December 20, 2024.

Avatar 5 will then open on December 19, 2025. The news was announced on the movie's official Facebook page. "Great to be working with the best team in the business! Avatar takes flight as we begin concurrent production on four sequels," Cameron said in the post. Cameron had announced a year ago at CinemaCon that he would make four Avatar sequels, promising that the films would start hitting theaters in 2018.

The filmmaker said last year that he had first envisioned two sequels but after meeting with the screenwriters, artists and designers, he realised that he had too much material for just



initially decided on three sequels, then jumped to four.

Cameron and Jon Landau are producing through their Lightstorm company. Returning cast includes Zoe Saldana, Sam Worthington, Sigourney Weaver, and Stephen Lang. The script was written by Cameron with Josh Friedman, Rick Jaffa, Amanda Silver, and Shane Salerno.PII

