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**COMMERCIAL DRIVERS** TO GET TRAUMA CARE, FIRST-AID TRAINING PG4



SHOW US AVERAGE PRISONER GETS SAME TREATMENT AS DUTT: HC PG6



RETAIL INFLATION, IIP GROWTH BOTH RISE TO 17-MONTH HIGHS PG12



'IT'S SO EASY TO MOCK SOMEONE NOWADAYS' PG1



## DEMOCRACY AT STAKE, SAY FOUR SUPREME COURT JUDGES

For first time in history, SC Judges revolt against Chief Justice of India



Supreme Court Judges Justice J Chelameswar, Justice Ranjan Gogoi, Justice Madan Lokur and Justice Kurian Joseph at a PC in New Delhi on Friday

**OUR CORRESPONDENT** 

NEW DELHI: On a day which will have a permanent place in the history of the Indian judiciary and Constitutional affairs, the four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court on Friday mounted a virtual revolt against the country's chief justice, warning that democracy is at stake and raising questions on "selective" case allocation and certain judicial orders. The unprecedented move by the four judges including Justice J Chelameswar, the second senior judge after Chief Justice Dipak Misra, sent shock-

waves across the judiciary and polity, bringing to fore the simmering differences between the country's top judge and some senior judges in the apex court in recent months. The Supreme Court currently has 25 judges.

Justice Chelameswar himself described as an "extraordinary event" in the annals of the Indian judiciary when the judges addressed a joint news conference during which he said "sometimes administration of the Supreme Court is not in order and many things which are less than desirable have happened in the last few

months." The judge accused Justice Misra of not taking any "remedial measures" on some of the issues which affected the functioning of the apex court that they had raised. Justice Misra became the CJI on August 28, 2017 and he is due to

retire from on October 2 this year. Unless this institution is preserved, "democracy will not survive" in this country, Justice Chelameswar said at the unscheduled press conference, in the first of its kind event in independent India, leaving uncertain how this open dissension in the hallowed institution would be resolved.

## 'Centre's extreme interference with judiciary dangerous for democracy'

### **OUR CORRESPONDENT**

KOLKATA: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee voiced "anguish" over the happenings in the Supreme Court on Friday where four top judges virtually revolted against the Chief Justice of India (CJI), saying that the development made people sad as citizens. She also said, "Extreme interference" of the Centre in the functioning of the judiciary is "dangerous" for democracy, but did not elaborate.

We are deeply anguished with the developments today about the Supreme Court. What we are getting from the statement of the four senior Hon ble Judges of Supreme Court about the affairs of the court makes us really sad as citizens," Banerjee, who is also the Trinamool Congress (TMC) chief, said in a tweet on Friday

"Judiciary and the media are the pillars of democracy. Extreme interference of central government with



judiciary is dangerous for democracy,

Reacting to the developments, the Congress said that democracy was in "danger". "We are very concerned to hear 4 judges of the Supreme Court express concerns about the functioning of the Supreme Court. #DemocracyIn-Danger," the Congress' official Twitter

## Chief justice is only first amongst equals... nothing more or nothing less'

Text of letter from 4 senior-most SC judges to CJI Dipak Misra

Dear Chief Justice,

It is with great anguish and concern that we have thought it proper to address this letter to you so as to highlight certain judicial orders passed by this court which has adversely affected the overall functioning of the justice delivering system and the independence of the high courts, besides impacting the administrative functioning



of the office of the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India (CJI). From the date of establishment of the three chartered High Courts of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, certain traditions have been well established. The traditions were embraced by this court which came into existence almost a century after the above mentioned courts. These traditions have their roots in Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence

One of the well settled principles is that the Chief Justice is the master of the roster with a privilege to determine the roster, a necessity in multi numbered courts for an orderly transaction of business and appropriate arrangements with respect to matters with which member/bench of this court (as the case may be) is required to deal with which case or class of cases is to be made. The convention of recognising the privilege of the Chief Justice to form the roster and assign cases to different members/ benches of the court is a convention devised for a disciplined and efficient transaction of business of the court but not a recognition of any superior authority, legal or factual, of the Chief Justice over his colleagues. It is too well settled in the jurisprudence of this country that the chief justice is only the first amongst the equals — nothing more or

## A-G K K Venugopal meets CJI Dipak Misra

NEW DELHI: Attorney General K K Venugopal on Friday said that the unprecedented move by four senior Supreme Court judges in holding a Press conference "could have been avoided" and the judges would now have to act in "statesmanship" to ensure complete harmony. Venugopal, who had a meeting with Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dipak Misra after the Press conference, spoke on much persuasion and expressed hope that all judges, including the CJI, would rise to the occasion and "wholy neutralise" the "divisiveness".

"What has happened today could have been avoided. The judges will now have to act in statesmanship and ensure that the divisiveness is wholly neutralised and total harmony and mutual understanding will prevail in future," he said.



**CITY** 

**EDIT** 

PRESIDENCY UNIV GETS ITS OWN MUSEUM

**NATION** SHIFT FOCUS TO CHINA: ARMY CHIEF

**BRIGHT PROSPECTS FOR 2018** 

**SPORT** 

8 **INTERNATIONAL** US HOPES PAK WILL 'TURN OVER' ULTRAS **BUSINESS** MODEL CONTRACT FARMING LAW SOON 13 INDIA AIM TO STAY AFLOAT AGAINST SA



# **Mamata Banerjee** Hon'ble Chief Minister

Bengal is redefining the ease of doing business in the nation. The state is surging ahead under the able leadership of Mamata Banerjee, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal.

The fourth edition of the Bengal Global Business Summit is taking place on the 16th and 17th of January, 2018, at the

country's largest convention centre in New Town, Kolkata. Captains of industries, thought leaders, foreign delegates, distinguished dignitaries and entrepreneurs are coming together in a state that favours business.

Join us, as we usher in a new era of growth and prosperity across multiple sectors. Come, be a part of this rising curve.



To participate, mail us at businesssynergycentre@wbidc.com















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# SVFTO LAUNCH 25 big ticket films

SVF, India's largest movie production house, will be producing 25 big ticket films over a period of three years. The aim is to take Tollywood to next level and serve as a platform to harness fresh talent

### **OUR CORRESPONDENT**

ringing cheer to movie lovers this new year, SVF, Eastern India's largest movie production house raised the curtain on SVF Stories - one of the biggest entertainment events Bengal has witnessed. At a glittering ceremony held in the city of Joy, Shrikant Mohta and Mahendra Soni, co-founders of SVF made an ambitious declaration of producing 25 big ticket films over a period of next three years (until 2020), allocating Rs 100 crores for the same – a figure

unheard of in Tollywood so far. 'SVF stories' aim at becoming an annual gathering, bringing notable personalities from the industry under one roof for announcing upcoming film projects of the production house.

As part of the 25 films, Arindam Sil is set to entertain the audience with two of his detective films, Asche Abar Shabor and Byomkesh Gotro, while Sandip Ray will be back with his Feluda and Professor Shonku O

The list includes some notable projects from National-award winning directors Srijit Mukherjee and Aparna Sen. While Srijit is coming up with *Uma, Kakababur Protyabarton and Ek Je Chhilo Raja,* Aparna Sen will be adapting the classic novel by Rabindranath Tagore - Ghare Baire, in a film titled as *Ghare o Baire*.

A good news for the fans of Raj Chakraborty is that he will be directing two of his most ambitious projects -Siraj Ud Daulah and Tong Ling. On the other hand, Anjan Dutt will enthrall the audiences with Finally Bhalobasha and Ami Asbo Phire.

SVF co-founder and director,





Shrikant Mohta said, "At SVF, we have always tried to do our bit to raise the bar for Bengali cinema. Our commitment of Rs 100 crores for producing 25 films over the next three years will not only aim at taking Tollywood to the next level but also serve as a platform to harness fresh young talent in the industry. In fact, with the super success of Amazon Obhijaan, we are excited and motivated to make the third part of the franchise even bigger."

The journey over the next three years will also see SVF's first film with brilliant filmmaker Mainak Bhowmik. Titled Generation Aami, this film by Bhowmik will be a 'coming audience to look forward to."

of age' story. Based

on Smaranjit Chakraborty's best seller novel, Birsa Dasgupta will return with a bang with *Crisscross* along with another film, Bibhaho Obhijaan- an emotional saga.

Debaloy Bhattacharya will be directing his next with a new take on Byomkesh: titled Bidaay Byomkesh.

Following the massive success of *Amazon Obhijaan* across India as well as internationally, SVF is all set to bring the third part in the Dev starrer Shankar franchise to be directed

For some peace and

by the doctor turned director, Kamaleswar

Mahendra Soni, SVF co-founder and Director said, "We are coming up with movies with diverse genre and themes for old and young alike. The next three years will also see many firsts - we will be expanding into Bangladesh with the release of the first film starring the Bangladeshi superstar Shakib Khan; Siraj-Ud-Daulah will be the first ever war film of Bengal. We will also have new talents debut in our films. There is plenty in store for the

### MOVIE OF THE WEEK

## Black humour hard sold

#### KAALAKAANDI'

Director: Akshat Verma; Cast: Saif Ali Khan, Sobhita Dhulipala, Akshay Oberoi, Isha Talwar, Deepak Dobriyal, Vijay Raaz, Kunaal Roy Kapur, Shenaz Treasurywala, Amyra Dastur, Neil Bhoopalam, Shivam Patil Rating:  $\star\star\star$ 



he title is Marathi slang – Kaala-Kaandi. It means, something that is not being done in the right manner or is horribly wrong. And as the title suggests, right from the first frame, we are reminded that nothing can go right for its characters.

What makes Kaalakaandi interesting, though, is its dark comedy, easy to relate situations and characters. It is one of the easiest films to love and one of the hardest to think of as a work of art. It approaches the notion of pure filmmaking as entertainment; it is a nearly flawless example of itself.

It lacks, a lesson or message and is content to show three sets of people facing a series of interlocking challenges they face one night.

Set in Mumbai, with a variety of quirky, pseudo characters awake after midnight, it reflects the unpredictable life in the city. But, they seldom find themselves intertwined in a bizarre series of coincidences

Boldly told, what happens to the characters apart from the nightmarish and bizarre nature of their experiences can only be described as screwball logic.

While the plot unravels like the pages of a thriller, the humour seems laboured. You witness this in the first scene and in the climax.

In the opening scene Saif Ali Khan is in his doctor's clinic where his doctor sugar coats his diagnosis with, "You do not suffer from ulcers, hence you don't have perforating ulcers. Instead you suffer from stomach cancer."

For a person who never experienced the excesses of life, this unpleasant bit of news hits like a ton of bricks. So when he returns home, where the wedding preparation of his younger brother Angad (Akshay Oberoi) is under-way, he sips

This sets the ball rolling for a rollercoaster cinematic experience.

In the second situation, Zubin (Kunal Roy Kapur) is in low spirits because his girlfriend is migrating to America. Just before her flight, as a farewell gesture and to celebrate the birthday of their friend Ann (Shenaz Treasurywala), they land up at a pub which predictably gets raided. How they escape from the clutches of the police and what fate has in store for them, forms the crux of their story.

In the third narrative, Vijay Raaz and Deepak Dobriyal, work as flunkies for the local gangster. After collecting the protection money from a film producer, how greed overcomes them, forms the crux of their fate.

What keeps the quirky characters afloat are the spunky, rustic dialogues that are gags by themselves. For instance, when Angad asks his older brother about his sexual preference, Saif in his typical style blurts out, "Madame Curie, curious," he asks this after Saif's escapades with a transgender. The dialogues between Saif and the transvestite also bear testimony to this.

On the performance front all actors have put their heart and soul into their characters and they shine on screen. Unfortunately the characters are twodimensional and cardboard thin. Of the supporting cast, Sobhita Dhulipala as Zubin's girlfriend, Amyra Dastur as Neha – Angad's fiance, Isha Talwar as the wedding photographer and Saif's love interest, Treasurywala as Ann along with Shivam Patil as her boyfriend Jason who calls himself "Jehangir Jehangir" have their moments of on screen glory.

Overall with good production quality, director Akshat Verma's attempt at this noir comedy is engaging but it goes without saying that the script material alcohol and tries a narcotic substance. tries to sell itself a little too hard. IANS

## Let that Punjabi suit do the talking this

WITH THE LOHRI FESTIVAL approaching, it's time for all you ladies out there to begin your fashion fiesta. Dont let the chilling weather take away the enthusiasm of the festival. Whether it is an Anarkali or a straight-fit kurta, go out there and have fun.

As suggested by experts, here are some ideas to jazz up your festive wear.

▶ Typical patiala style: This has been a favourite over the years, especially amongst newly-wed brides. Don a Punjabi-style patiala salwar kameez in bold colours with traditional zardozi work. A knee-length patiala suit is the ideal choice.

▶ Anarkali suits: This look is popular among fashionistas right now. It is an excellent combination of ethnic style and ease. You can pick an anarkali piece in bright hues. This voluminous outfit is high on grace and has a warmth attached to it.

▶ Long kurta with straight pants: If classic patialas or anarkalis are not your

HAIR COLOUR is not just used for hid-

ing grey hair anymore as people are chang-

ing the colour of their tresses according

to their mood and seasons. However, this

process needs a lot of care and attention so

why not opt for few homemade hair mask

recipes that



thing, then you can settle for a long kurta and straight-fit pants. With this style you are sure to set a new fashion trend for the Lohri function. Try a georgette or silk longshirt with embellishments and team it up with patterned pants.

Flared kurtas: If you love the flares, opt for knee-length flared kurtas in bright

Homemade hair masks for coloured hair

▶ Avocado plus almond oil: Avocado

is densely packed with nutrients and is a

super food that you should incorporate

into your diet. This creamy fruit can also

be applied on your hair to give it extra

softness and shine. Since colour treatments can make your hair dry and brittle,

a nutrient-rich and creamy fruit like avo-

cado can efficiently salvage your colour-

treated hair. Almond oil is also great

for hair since it contains Vitamin A and E, in addition to other

nutrients. Mixing

avocado and

to keep your locks strong and shiny. Hair care experts list five simple home-

made hair masks for you:

colours. This is turning out to be a hot favourite among the fashion brigade. Go for kurtas in gold and antique embroidery with a flowing sharara-style salwar.

▶ Jacket-style kurta: Try a kurta option in the jacket style, as it is not only elegant and stylish but will keep you warm

almond oil gives you a super food mix for

good for the health of your hair. You can

use the protein-rich eggs to bring the lost

shine and lustre back to your hair. If hair

colour has made your hair dry and frizzy,

egg masks can help you deal with these

issues effectively. Honey is a great humec-

tant and has over 22 amino acids, 27 min-

erals and 5,000-plus enzymes. It is also full

of anti-oxidants. Mix eggs and honey to

bring life back to your hair. and fight the

of banana and milk gives you the good-

ness of protein, good fats and calcium,

▶ Banana plus milk: The combination

among other nutrients. As

hair too.

plus

for hair.

good as this combina-

tion is for your bones,

it works wonders for

your colour-treated

fatty acids and is extremely beneficial

▶ Olive oil

honev: Olive oil is rich

Omega-3

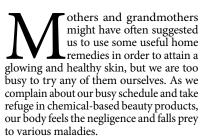
Omega-6

negative effects of pollution.

▶ Eggs plus honey: Eggs are extremely

your hair and brain.

**LAHARI BASU** 



Although it would be a crime to ignore how lovely we feel to be pampered, it only seems worthwhile and useful, when someone else steps in and takes charge of caring for your hair and skin. That is exactly how spa treatments make you feel: loved, relaxed and revitalised. One of the most valued spa destinations in the Capital, 'Healthy self's' elaborate arrangements at 'Eros Hotel' offers an array of options for you to choose from. Those who are looking for an effortless full-body clean-up may opt for the honey and lemon body scrub followed by a restorative facial or a full body massage.

Hopping in at 'Eros' with high hopes and welcomed by several smiling faces, one would feel that they are in the right place for a pleasurable treatment. As you lay down in the cosy room, and inhale Forest Essentials' aromatic honey and lemon body scrub, you already start feeling calm. Then, with some appropriate music, candle lights and a pair of trained palms tending to your limbs you might actually hear your inner self, smile in comfort.

Honey is known to soften and enrich the skin with nutrients, while lemon detoxifies and works as a de-tanning agent. With combined efforts of the two, you are left with a soft and supple skin, after you walk out from the shower. The oils of Neroli flower and lemon zest, work to combat stress and revitalises the body's energy

aesthetician's hands feel like a blessing putting you to sleep.

Washing off the scrub, a clay pack rich in Neem and citrus leaves is applied on the face to ensure a calm and cool layer. After a calming experience of a 10-minute rest, the clay mask is removed thoroughly leaving your face clean to breathe. An anti-oxidant rich cream with carrot, honey and olive is then applied to nourish and hydrate your skin.



The restorative facial is an intensive balancing treatment, to help relax damaged and irritated skin. Starting off with a cucumber and green tea face wash, the aesthetician uses an alcohol-free cucumber and marigold facial toner to balance the Ph level of your skin. Then a deep cleaning exfoliator containing carrot seed and red rice is used to massage and get rid of blackheads. With her unhurried and smooth massage-like movements on your face, the

Furthermore, the time spent on pampering yourself really pays off well in the time to come when you walk out confident, calm, and radiant. A treatment like this not only makes one feel refreshed and calm, but also enhances one's senses with the aromatic essential oils, and other alluring organic products. Feel the luxury, enjoy the peace and bask in the glorifying world of an exquisite pampering session at the Healthy self spa at Eros Hotel, Nehru Place.

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## Bengal celebrates heartily as 'the eternal youth' turns 156

**OUR CORRESPONDENT** 

KOLKATA: The 156th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda was observed all across the state on Friday. A special event was held at Narendrapur Ramakrishna Mission. Śwami Sarvalokanandaji and Ajitatmananda addressed the students and urged them to dedicate their lives for a greater

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee took to Twitter saying: "We observe this day as 'Vivek Chetna Utsab' in Bengal. May his life be an example for the youth of India to always work for the betterment of the country". Two students of the institution — Sarnava Mondol and Atlanta Ghosal spoke at the event. Rupak Midya, a student of Narendrapur Residen-

agement organised a day-long tial College, sang a song. Swami Vivekananda Instiprogramme at Aikatan in Salt Lake. Swami Vedagyananda,

**400 Gangasagar pilgrims** 

depart from city on vessel

Sagar Island.

From Kachuberia transit

point, pilgrims are once again

required to take bus or car to

reach the mela premises or

the confluence of river Ganga

and Bay of Bengal. But the

pilgrims, who avail the vessel

directly from Kolkata instead

of travelling by road, will not

be needing to keep changing

the mode of transport over and

over again. They will just need

to take bus or any other vehicle

the vessel on January 16 and

while returning, they will again start from Kachuberia to reach

using the inland waterways is

quite exciting as pilgrims can

enjoy the scenic beauty on both sides of the river while heading

The pilgrims will return on

The journey to Sagar Island

It may be recalled that dur-

ing her recent visit, Chief Min-

ister Mamata Banerjee had

availed the inland waterways

route to reach Sagar Island

ment has made an elaborate

arrangement to ensure safe and

hassle-free journey of pilgrims.

Sufficient number of buses have

been deployed to take passen-

gers up to the transit points in

the mainland from Kolkata and

again up to the confluence in

have also been deployed so

that pilgrims would not have

to stand in queue to go across

More number of vessels

The state Transport depart-

from Kolkata.

the island.

Muriganga river.

to reach their destination.

Sudip Bandyopadhyay attends a march to mark the 156th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda in Kolkata on Friday. Abhishek Banerjee (pic right) takes part in birth anniversary celebration of Swamiji in front of Vivekananda's residence on Friday

tute for Environment and Man-Bhaskar Gupta, noted academician and Arunava Majumdar,

A programme was held at Sovabazar Rajbati, where ruary 1897. A book on Swamiji

Belur Math since Friday morning. There was special police arrangement outside Belur People from different parts of the state started pouring into the place since morning and there were special arrangements to ensure that people do not face any trouble while The state government also organised several other programmes to pay tribute to Swami Vivekananda. Programmes were organised at all blocks. The state government has extended its support for organising Vivek Chetana Utsav in block level. A similar programme has also been

Keeping this in mind, many organisations held different seminars and symposiums with

ised across the state. Messages of Swami Vivekananda were spread among people through different programmes. Many senior political leaders and ministers, including the state Power minister Sovandeb Chattopadhyay, participated in the rallies. Aroop Biswas, the state Youth Services and Sports minister, paid floral tribute to Swamiji at Vivekananda Park opposite SSKM Hospital on Friday morning. Cultural events to mark the occasion were also organised at different places. Different competitions were also organised, in which students and youths participated. The Chief Minister has announced that characterbuilding programmes will be taken up in schools.

rah and the industrial estates in

other districts, including North

in BGBS, the same will also be

screened later in the districts,

so that entrepreneurs from dis-

tricts, who cannot turn up at

the international business sum-

mit, can become aware about

the opportunities and infra-

structure available across the

state for MSME sector. The film

will be used round the year to

attract more investment in the

in BGBS 2017, there was a pro-

posed investment of Rs 56,000

crore in the MSME sector. This

year, officials of the department

is expecting more proposals of

investment in the sector as the

It may be mentioned that

sector in Bengal.

After the film is screened

24-Parganas.

## Indo-Italian MoU to be inked in leather sector at BGBS

NEW BEGINNING



Italian Consul General Damiano Francovich

### **OUR CORRESPONDENT**

KOLKATA: The 4th edition of Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS) that will have Italy as the partner country, will witness an MoU in the leather sector, in which people involved in manufacture of leather products in the state will be imparted state-of-theart training and technological help that will make them produce stuff which is in demand in the international market.

Another major Italian company in machinery and steel sector, which is operational in the state will set up its branch office in Kolkata, strengthening local workforce.

Upbeat about the improved business environment in the state, Italian Consul General Damiano Francovich said on Friday, "Since last year, we have registered the intention of launching in Kolkata at least two new JVs between Italian and local companies: one in the railway sector, involving large companies and the other in the IT sector. We are expecting more than 30 Italian delegates, representing both big groups and SMEs, which are the backbone of Italian economy. This will be an opportunity for us to simulate the areas in which we can work together

The Consul General added that the delegation will be

multi-sectoral and the maximum representation will be from transport, infrastructure, metals and leather.

The organisation of the Italian delegation has been assured and coordinated by ArtValley, whose president is Francesca Bruni. It is an organisation that hosts projects and international forums for the promotion of specific cultural and geopolitical initiatives.

There are more than 400 Italian companies operating in India, but in the past, they have mainly decided to invest in other parts of the country. "In Bengal, we currently have some JVs between Italian and local companies and 100 per cent Italian investments operating in the manufacturing, food and chemical sector. We are confident that more Italian companies will be now interested in opening a presence in the state, following the efforts put in by the state to improve local business environment and foster investment attraction," Francovich said.

He added that there is a huge potential for growth of Italian investments in India in the next few years. "The additional growth potential will be directed to Bengal and initiatives like the BGBS are very helpful as this will act as a platform to know each other better, which is essential for investment and business," he said.

### Film to highlight Bengal's MSME potential in BGBS of the foundry park in How-

**OUR CORRESPONDENT** 

KOLKATA: A special film, highlighting the existing infrastructure and potential of Bengal in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector, is set to be screened in Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS). The BGBS is scheduled to be held on January 16 and 17. The 3 minute long film will be screened on the second day of the summit.

According to a senior official of the MSME department, Bengal at present tops the country in MSME sector and has a huge potential with massive improvement in infrastructure in the past six years. Out of the total eight sessions in the BGBS, there will be three session on MSME sector.

On the first day, the textile session of MSME will be held, while on the second day and infrastructure available in

Bengal at present tops India in MSME sector and has a huge potential with massive improvement in infrastructure in the past six years

of the international business summit, the session "Unleashing the potential of engineering sector" will be held. The interaction session where B2Bs will be held, will also be on the second day of the summit.

The film will be screened on the second day after the session on engineering sector. It has been prepared in such a way that it highlights the industry

the state for the MSME sector. The film will make one's concept clear about the types of industries existing in the state

organised in all the wards of

municipality and municipal

corporation areas, including

Kolkata. Rallies were organ-

Hundreds of people visited

Math to manage traffic.

returning back.

at present. "We are showcasing whatever exists at present. Nothing which is projected and is in the process of implementation, has been featured in the film. Moreover, stress has been given on making the film more informative within a short span of only 3 minutes, instead of featuring any popular film artistes to make it attractive," said an official, adding that it has been made keeping the fact in mind that delegates from different countries are going to watch it.

A lot depends on the film as one may wish to visit one of the industrial estates after watching it in the film with a purpose of investment to set up industry. The official said the film contains real footages

#### infrastructure has improved, opening opportunities for more investment.



French Consul General in Calcutta Damien Syed with Information and Cultural Affairs minister Indranil Sen during an event at Chandannagar

## KMC gears up to keep **Babughat pristine**

KOLKATA: The Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) has taken special measures to keep Babughat and its adjoining areas clean with a number of pilgrims camping there on the occasion of Gangasagar Mela. "Pilgrims have started to flock in large numbers at the temporary camps set up by the state government for the past one week and the numbers are increasing day by day. So, we have taken special measures to keep the place neat and clean," Member, Mayor-in-Council (Solid Waste Management ) Debabrata Majumder said. He added that the SWM department is working round the clock in and around Babughat and its adjoining areas, where these pilgrims have camped. "We have 48 movable compactors that are operational in the city. We have increased two such compactors. Eight battery operated vehicles are being used for garbage cleaning," Majumder added. It may be mentioned that the temporary toilets are being cleaned at regular intervals and three water vehicles with water tanks have been allocated for the purpose of this cleaning.

### ping Corporation jetty in Millennium Park at 7 am on Friday in MV Sarojini. Adhikari gave yellow roses to all the pilgrims who boarded the vessel and The vessel will take the pil-

**OUR CORRESPONDENT** 

KOLKATA: Around 400 Gan-

gasagar pilgrims left Kolkata on

a vessel that will directly take

them to Kachuberia transit

ment that has been made by the

West Bengal Transport Cor-

poration (WBTC) for the pil-

grims who are headed towards

Sagar Island to take a holy

dip at the confluence of river

Ganga and Bay of Bengal on

Transport minister, has seen

off the Gangasagar pilgrims

when they set out from Ship-

Suvendu Adhikari, the state

This is a special arrange-

point in Sagar Island.

Makarsankranti.

grims to Sagar Island and many of them are from Vrindavan and other parts of the country. They reached Kolkata a few days ago and on Friday morning, finally set out for Sagar Island.

According to a senior official of the state Transport department, it would take around 10 hours for the vessel to reach Kachuberia transit point from Kolkata. Usually, pilgrims need to take bus or any other vehicle to reach Lot 8 transit point in the mainland, from where they cross Muriganga river by a vessel to reach Kachuberia transit point in

### CBI raids homes, offices of Amanat boss, directors

KOLKATA: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Friday conducted searches in the houses and offices of senior officials including Chairman and Managing Director of a chit fund company Amanat Group of Companies.

Raids have been conducted at different places in the state, including Kolkata. The CBI officers searched the residence and office of the company's CMD Amanda Chandra. Raids were conducted at the residences and offices of other directors of the group as well. Several incriminating doc-

uments have been recovered.

It may be mentioned that a case had been registered under several sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) on charges of Criminal Conspiracy (120 B IPC) and Cheating (420 IPC) against the CMD and others directors of the Kolkata-based group. Preliminary investigation has revealed that the group has illegally collected huge amount of money from common people through different chit fund schemes.

## WBCPCR to get child friendly room in office

PRITESH BASU

KOLKATA: West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights (WBCPCR) is the first among such commissions in all other states in the country to have a child friendly space in its office, where children will feel relaxed to speak out freely in a "convivial atmosphere".

Usually, a child remains traumatised when he or she passes through any odd situation or if they fall victim to any mental or physical torture. So the need of a child friendly room was felt where they can be kept soon after being rescued. Since police undertake the rescue operations and need to take the children to police stations initially, child friendly rooms were set up in some of the police stations in Kolkata.

Now, a quite similar child friendly room is being set up at the office of WBCPCR at Ultadanga. The commission in Bengal is the first one among all such commissions in other states of the country to get a child friendly room as suggested in the Juvenile Justice (Care

and Protection of Children) Act. The room will be inaugurated by Sashi Panja, minister of the Women, Child and Social Welfare department, on Monday at 12 noon.

The necessity of the child friendly room in the commission's office was felt as children are often brought there for hearing. Many cases of Protection of Children from Sexual Offence (POCSO) are being heard in the commission, in case there is any allegation of improper probe, etc. At the same time, cases in which children suffer due to dispute between parents, are also heard in the commission.

"They would feel better if they sit in a child friendly room and can speak freely while recovering from a traumatised state. So, the decision to set up the room has been taken," said Ananya Chatterjee Chakraborty, Chairperson of WBCPCR.

Both the exterior and interior of the child-friendly room has been given a completely different look. Different cartoon characters have been painted on the walls of the room and bright colours have been used to paint the remaining portions of the walls. It will make the place attractive to children and would help them to feel free, forgetting the odd situations they had faced in the recent past.

There will be ample number of soft toys in the room, with which the children can play during their stay in the office of the commission.

## Policy to woo investors on the cards: Tourism department

**OUR CORRESPONDENT** 

**KOLKATA:** The state Tourism department is expecting to come up with a comprehensive tourism policy by this month, which will encourage investors to invest in the sector, which has huge employment potential.

"The draft of the policy has already been prepared. We will seek opinion from the industry and top companies working in the tourism sector before unveiling it. The week-long Destination East and the Bengal Global Business Summit that will have a session on tourism, will be utilised in taking feedback in this regard," state Principal Secretary, Tourism, Atri Bhattacharya said on Friday.

The state government, in collaboration with CII, will host the 8th edition of Destination East from January 18 to 25 at Biswa Bangla Convention Centre, New Town, in a bid to promote the East as a potential tourism hub. It may be mentioned that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has instructed the Tourism department to seek feedback from industrialists before finalising the tourism policy. "We want to ensure growth for the hotel and hospitality sector



through this policy," a senior official of the department said, adding that home stay tourism will also be a part of the policy.

As many as 102 overseas delegates from 30 countries, including 14 from the US, 12 from the UK and 12 from Russia, will gather for Destination East.

"Tourism is a great economic engine and job creator. Through Destination East, we are keen to showcase many tourism destinations in Bengal to the international tour operators, during the mega meet. We also aim to showcase Gajoldoba in North Bengal as a potential tourism destination. There is also an event lined up at

Gaioldoba," Bhattacharya said, adding that the aim is to enable the international tour operators/travel agents to take a close look at the dream project of the Chief Minister.

A team of 40 delegates will be taken to Gajoldoba on January 20, so that they can experience the place on their own and invest in the state. It may be mentioned that work for developing Gajoldoba as a new tourism destination has already started, with two high-end companies already taking plots to set up hotels there.

West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation has set up six cottages and another 4 will come up by

### TMC, BJP Youth Morcha supporters lock horns in city

KOLKATA: Girish Park and its adjoining areas in North and Central Kolkata turned into a war zone on Friday morning, BJP Youth Morcha supporters clashing at least four times, within 500 metres of Swami Vivekananda's ancestral home on his birthday.

According to police sources, tension was building up since Thursday night when BJP supporters reached Binani Bhavan at Pathuriaghat Street for their bike rally on Friday.

"They were foul mouthing some women folk while organising their bike rally. The BJP supporters were armed with sticks and as they marched, they ransacked some vehicles that were standing on the road. Some of our men who were peacefully celebrating Vivekananda's birth anniversary, were attacked by them," said Shashi Panja, minister of state for Women & Child Welfare.

The BJP supporters allegedly also entered a tradingcum-residential building located opposite the ceremony house and vandalised furniture. Trinamool Secretary General Partha Chatterjee İashed out at the BJP, terming their act as a desperate bid to hit the headlines. "State BJP leaders are desperate to hit the headlines. It is unfortunate that they chose Swami Vivekananda's birthday for this political drama," Chatterjee said.

A senior BJP leader, how-ever, alleged that some Trinamool goons attacked BJP supporters who were sitting in front of a tea stall at Binani Bhaban before going for the

A few hours after the clash, the BJP leadership in the state informed that Union minister Nitin Gadkari has cancelled his visit to the Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS) on January 16 and 17 in the wake of the incident.

Responding to Gadkari's decision, Chatterjee said: "The BGBS is being organised by the state government. Nitin Gadkari is a Union minister. Politics shouldn't have come in the way of relations between govSAVING ROAD ACCIDENT VICTIMS

## Commercial drivers to get trauma care, first-aid training

PRITESH BASU

**KOLKATA:** In a unique move to save people who receive injuries during any road accident, the Howrah City Police has decided to provide trauma care and first-aid training to drivers during its Road Safety Week.

In most cases, drivers of other vehicles passing through an accident site are the "first respondents" to attend and initiate rescue work besides informing

According to a senior police officer, the chances of survival of an accident victim depends a lot on how the "first respondents" handle the situation and take precautions while taking the victim to the nearest hospital.

It is often found that an accident victim could survive if proper precautions are taken on the way to hospital. There were many cases in which drivers of passing by cars had taken accident victims to hospitals in absence of ambulances at that monent.

So, it would be fruitful if drivers of taxis, auto-rickshaw drivers and drivers of app cabs are trained with practical knowledge on trauma care and first-aid.

Since soon after an accident, police reach the spot and call ambu-

to injuries in Nadia

**KOLKATA:** A housewife

from Nadia's Nakashipa-

ra, who had fallen victim

to an acid attack a month

ago, succumbed to her

injuries at a district hos-

pital on Friday. The battle

for life which continued

nearly a month came to

an end for the woman.

She was hurled acid by

a woman of the same

Bihar

**Acid attack victim succumbs** 

locality, who is found to be the former wife of the

victim's husband. Police said the victim, a resident

of Senpur area under Nakashipara police station

was walking along the side of a road with her hus-

band when the accused hurled acid on the couple.

The victim's husband suffered burn injuries on

his body but survived after receiving treatment

at Shaktinagar district hospital. The victim was

undergoing treatment at the same hospital for

nearly a month and had suffered more than eighty

percent burn injuries. After starting an investiga-

tion, the district police have arrested the accused

victim's husband had earlier married the accused

woman who was involved in the incident. Police

came to know from the investigation that the



Fire breaks out

at building in Parnashree,

none injured

**OUR CORRESPONDENT** 

**KOLKATA:** A fire broke out at

a house in Parnashree in south

Kolkata on Friday morning,

which later spread to two more

buildings situated adjacent to the

ing out of a two-storeyed build-

ing and they informed the fire

brigade. One fire tender was

pressed into action to douse the

flames. A portion of the building

was damaged in the fire. Police

also rushed to the spot and cor-

doned off the entire area. The

incident triggered panic among

the locals as the area was con-

gested. The inmates of the two

buildings were evacuated to

from spreading and brought the

situation under control within an

hour. Fire officials suspect that

an electrical short circuit in the

meter box might have caused the

the fire is yet to be ascertained.

Fire fighters restricted the fire

avoid any untoward incident.

Locals spotted smoke billow-

building that had caught fire.

lance to take victims to hospitals, drivers of ambulances and rank and file of the Howrah City Police will also be brought under the purview of the training programme on trauma care and first-aid.

The Road Safety Week in Howrah observed from January 17 to 24. As a part of it, the training programme will be provided on January 17 and 18. Experts from a private hospital

will provide the training on trauma care while Red Cross Society will give classes on first-aid. The training programme will continue for three hours from 1 pm

Each day there will be a batch of 50 people. On the first day, a batch of policemen will undergo the training while on the next day drivers will undergo the same.

A senior police officer said they will the officer said.

get practical training on how to handle a victim when he has already received injuries on certain parts of their body.

They would get to learn as to what they have to do on an immediate basis if they find a victim bleeding profusely or if someone is in a traumatised state and can't even speak out though is in sense after the accident.

The officer said the training programme is going to start from the Road Safety Week but it will be continuing even after that to bring as many as possible drivers under the training programme.

It was found that mishandling of an accident victim with injuries results in his/her death sometimes. But it will be checked with such initiatives, said the officer adding that "the programme of creating awareness among people through the Safe Drive Save Life campaign will continue as well besides the training camps."

Like all the previous years, there will be announcements on important intersections to make people aware about road safety measures. The training programmes will also help in creating awareness as ultimate target is to bring down the number of accidents,

## **Leopard Safari Park to** be completed within January next year

**OUR CORRESPONDENT** 

KOLKATA: The construction of Leopard Safari Park is expected to be completed within January next year which will see a rise in tour-

According to sources at the tourism department, the Bengal Safari introduced by the present government has already become popular and also attracted around 1.3 crore visitors in the last year. The officials of the department believe that the number may reach to 2 crore by the end of this year after the Leopard Safari comes up in Jalpaiguri. Apart from royal Bengal tigers, elephants, deer and various species of birds are available at the Safari Park. It may be mentioned that tiger Safari Park had a new look to the Eco Park already been inaugurated by the Chief Minister in Siliguri.

develop the leopard park. State Forest minister Binay Krishna Burman said the leopard park would soon be constructed on a 20-hectare land of the state forest departist influx from across the state. ment near the existing Tiger Safari Park. Tiger Safari has become a popular destination for the North Bengal bound

> According to a forest department official, Leopard Safari park will maintain international standards. It has been learnt that Rs 10 crore would be spent for the project in the initial phase. A senior forest department official said leopards that often enter residential localities would be rehabilitated in the proposed Leopard Safari. Several initiatives have been taken to give at Kunjonagar and the tiger rehabilitation centre at Khoy-

also charged under the UAPA.

## AVIAN AFFECTION



Technical Education, Training and Skill Development minister Purnendu Basu inaugurates the Bird Mela 2018 at Baguiati, organised by Club Baguiati Sports Council on Friday

## Thapa trains gun on Gurung, labels him **'BJP puppet'**

DARJEELING: A day after Gorkha Janmukti Morcha leader Bimal Gurung suddenly surfaced in Delhi and addressed media persons, back in Darjeeling, GJM leader Anit Thapa blamed his lack of far sight, political acumen and immaturity for the failure of three agitations. He even dubbed Gurung as a BJP puppet who has been working towards fulfilling his selfish political ambitions.

"On August 29, 2017, we had repeatedly told the then GJM president Gurung, that under the federal structure of the country, the state can only convene tripartite talks. Now after 5 months, he has finally realised this. A directionless agitation and 105-day-long bandh did not serve any pur-pose except harassing our own people. At that point, he had dubbed us anti and even threatened us, asking us to leave the Hills. Now his realisation has come a bit too late," scorned Thapa. Incidentally, West Bengal police has launched a manhunt for Gurung, who is wanted in numerous cases and

"Gurung is sitting in Delhi with a handful of his close confidants. He is working at the behest of BJP, trying to regain control of the Hills. However, we will not allow the disruption of peace and the call of bandhs in the name of Gork-

## **Presidency Univ gets its** own museum, to illustrate 200-year-old history



**SOUMITRA NANDI** 

KOLKATA: Various landmark historical events associated with the 200 years of Presidency University will be displayed at the museum of the university, which will be opened to mark the bicentennial closing ceremony of the university. Governor Keshari Nath Tripathi, who is also the chancellor of the university is expected to inaugurate the museum on January 19.

"There has been a lot of programmes over the year to mark the bicentenary of the university. We want to ensure that young generation has an idea about the contribution of this institution in the history of the country and particularly Bengal. We feel that this will be the best gift," university registrar Debajyoti Konar said.

It may be mentioned that the museum is being set up on professor at the History department will be acting as the curator of the museum.

"It will have a collection of lectures delivered by Rabindranath Tagore, the writings of Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen while he was studying in the fourth year of the university (erstwhile Presidency College)," an official of the uni-

Among the other things of interest, there will be documents pertaining to research carried out by eminent scientists like Jagadish Chandra Bose and Prafulla Chandra Roy. The attendance register of scientists like Meghnad Saha, Satyen Bose, will also be on display at the library. The third volume of Principia Mathematica by Issac Newton will also be available. A number of books that were published way back in 1621 and the contribution of the institution in the

## millenniumpostin is now available in everypart of Bengal

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1	Last Witahapore	HALDIA	Ayesha	9474306356
			Begum,Ranichak	717 1300330
		DIGHA	Kamal Lochan Panda	8906868884
2	West Midnapore	MIDNAPORE	Balaram Pandit	9932708271
3	Jhargram	JHARGRAM	Champa Maity	9547230220
4	North 24 - Parganas	BARASAT/NILGUNJ	B N Kundu	9836333630
		BARRACKPORE	Biswajit Ghosh	9830830798
		BASIRHAT	Uttam Biswas	9474574927
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		DURGAPUR WARIA	Joy prakash Ray	9563601176 /
				7864818860
		NIRSHA	Gopal Chatterjee	9386695330
		BARAKAR	Jai Bhagwan Singh	9334652173
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9	Howrah	HOWRAH CENTRE	Manik Lal Bag	9883393201
				/9732243933
10	Purulia	PURULIA	D.C.Nag	9434130550
11	Jalpaiguri	SILIGURI	Toton Saha	9832046238
12	Hooghly	CHINSURAH / CHAN- DAN NAGAR	B.Singh	9883108806
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14	Darjeeling	DARJEELING	Bitta Newspaper Agency	9434131515
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16	Alipurduar	ALIPURDUAR	Bablu Saha	9733166169
17	Kalimpong	KALIMPONG	Sandeep Jain	9832016738
18	Uttar Dinajpur	RAIGUNJ	Pradyut Karmakar	9434384154
19	Dakshin Dinajpur	BALURGHAT	Sujan das	8670582892
20	Malda	MALDA TOWN	Ashim Kr.Sarkar	7797919580
	•	Others District	List	
21	Jharkhand	RANCHI	Birendra Nath Singh	9431929279 /
				8409298763
		TATA NAGAR	Surender Singh	9835170495
		DHANBAD	S.K.Pandey	8409984151

### been closely working with Jaldapara forest. Hit by train, man left to die on road

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: The city on Friday witnessed an inhuman incident where a person, after being hit by a train, was left on the road nearly for an hour near the railway track situated close to Ramrajatala railway station in Howrah on Friday morning. The victim was unattended for nearly an hour and he was declared dead after being taken to a hospital. According to police, the victim, a middle aged man was trying to cross a level crossing adjacent to Ramrajatala station, when Santragachi car shed bound long distance train from Howrah knocked him down. Although locals passed through the area, none bothered to take the victim to a hospital.

The incident was not even informed to the railway police.

It is notified to all concerned that Settlement deed being No. 11/1980 in the name of Smt. Kanak Prova Mitra, has been lost on 20-11-2017 from the custody of my client Subhasis Roy Chowd-hury, of 20/C/4, S.C. Deb Street, P.O. Konnagar, P.S. Uttarpara, District - Hooghly, Pin - 712235, and the G.D. was lodged on 05-12-2017, vide No. 97. That if the said deed is found by any person or persons please deliver the same to the undersigned within Seven days from the date of publication of the notice. That if any person or persons deals, dispose or transfer the

tion shall he deemed to be invalid Mob.No 9331004603.

7765012713

schedule mentioned property unto

and in favor of any person or per-

sons in that event the said transac-

## Holiday fever: City dwellers throng weekend gateways on Vivekananda's birth anniversary



**OUR CORRESPONDENT** 

KOLKATA: Birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda has turned out to be a holiday for many of the city dwellers who thronged different places braving the chilly cold sweeping through the city on Friday.

Many others planned short trips after getting three consecutive holidays from Friday. Digha and Mandarmani beaches have recorded a staggering footfall on Friday with thousands of visitors from various parts of the state and outside visiting the place. After the state government gave a face lift to Digha, the seaside town has now become one of the favourite spots.

After becoming the Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee had taken a series of initiatives to turn it into a major tourist destination. With an increase in the number of people visiting Digha, the economy of the area has gone up as well. The state government has constructed a walkway along the beach in Digha.

Digha-Shankarpur Development Authority (DSDA) has also taken up an overall civic infrastructure development of the entire area.

Tourist influx has considerably increased this weekend because of the three consecutive holidays given to many working at various government departments.

Tourist places in the city also saw a rise in visitors. Children along with their parents visited Alipore zoo despite the chilly winter spell which has been sweeping through the

Eco Park, Victoria Memorial and Nicco Park have also seen a rise in tourist inflow on Friday. The number is expected to go up in next two

Meanwhile, the regional meteorological centre in Alipore predicted that the temperature may increase by a few notches in the next few days but the cold wave may continue to sweep through the city and districts for a few more days.

### **CBI** arrests former Railway official in fraud case

**OUR CORRESPONDENT** 

KOLKATA: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested the then Inspector of Works of South Eastern Railway of Bhubaneswar, who was at large for the past nine years, from DRM Chowpathy in Alipurduar on Friday.

The central investigating agency arrested the accused, Alok Ghosh, in connection with a case where he was allegedly involved with some others in "misappropriation of steel rods, cement bags, etc". It has led to a loss of Rs 27.35 lakh to the South Eastern Railways (SER). A case was registered against him by CBI on August 20 in 1999. The investigating agency has also filed a chargesheet in this connection on January 31 in 2002.

Names of the then Inspector of Works and four others appeared on the chargesheet and he was booked on various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) on charges of criminal conspiracy (120 B IPC) and cheating (420 IPC) and section 13(2) read with 13(1) (d) of Prevention of Corrup-

The Special Judge, CBI Cases, Bhubaneswar had issued a Non-Bailable Warrant against Alok on July 15 in 2008. The CBI officers had been in search for the accused and despite desperate efforts he had managed to flee quite a nunber of times when raids were conducted by

the investigating officers. Alok will be produced before the Court of Special Judge, CBI Cases, Bhubaneswar.

## Need to shift focus from Pak to China: Army chief

#### **OUR CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI: India needs to shift focus from its border with Pakistan to that with China. Army Chief Gen Bipin Rawat said on Friday, cautioning that the country cannot allow its neighbours to drift towards China, virtually asking the government to effectively implement its 'neighbourhood first'

Admitting that Chinese troops have been ramping up pressure along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), he asserted that China may be a powerful country but India too is not a weak nation.

In a media address on the eve of the Army Day, Rawat said countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan have to be kept on board as part of a broader strategy to deal with China, and India must make istan. These nations have to



PIC/ Naveen Sharma

"wholehearted" efforts to continue extending support to

"We cannot allow the neighbourhood to be drifted away from us --whether it is Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka or Afghanbe kept on board, and I think we have to put in our wholehearted effort to ensure we continue to support them," he said.

The Army chief's comments assume significance given that in recent past, China has been deepening ties with some South Asian nations and pro-

viding them with huge financial aid, which, some experts feel, may draw India's neighbours including the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Nepal towards Beijing. These countries have been traditionally close to New Underlining the need for

shifting attention from the western border with Pakistan to the northern frontier with China, Rawat said, "For too long, we have kept our focus on the western front. I think time has come for us to focus on the northern border. Therefore, our infrastructure development on the northern border has to be speeded up."

Referring to India shoring up ties with other countries, he said, "We are seeking support of other nations, group of nations in the region, to see that we are not isolated completely in a situation in Asia against an

made by educational institutions in the

country, Kumar, who is retiring later this

student satellites also that have been put

(by ISRO)," he told reporters at the post-

C40 lifted off at 9.28 am at the end of the

28-hour countdown from the first launch

pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre

ĥere, about 110 km from Cĥennai, and

After a perfect flight sequence, each of which was applauded by ISRO scien-

tists, the four-stage rocket first injected

the 710-kg Cartosat-2 Series Satellite for

earth observation into 505-km polar sun

launch briefing.

soared into a cloudy sky.

"Basically...the 100 satellites covers all

Earlier, in a precise launch, PSLV-

That is the next step that last year, India, Japan, Australia and the US had set the ball lateral coalition in the Indo-

He said there are other ever way they can.

The Army is concentrating more on the neighbourhood than beyond as this will enable India to balance the Chinese assertiveness, he said.

### Over 720 people detained under PSA in last 2 yrs, says J&K Govt

JAMMU: Nearly 726 people were detained under Public Safety Act (PSA) in Jammu and Kashmir in the last two years, the government said

In a written reply to a ing the year 2016 and all of

In 2017, 201 people were

is being taken and, therefore, you will find that a quadrilateral is formed." In November rolling for forming a quadri-Pacific region to pursue their common interests, a move seen as a measure to counter growing Chinese influence.

countries that are coming on board to support India in what-

"At the military level, we know that if there is a threat from China, we have to be prepared for it," he said, adding Îndia's military engagement with almost all nations of the region are of a high order.

today.

question in the State Assembly, Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti said that 525 people were detained under PSA durthem were released.

detained under PSA, out of which 124 people were released and 77 were under preventive detention, Mufti



### **NUMBERS** THAT MATTER

4,12,752 vacancies in central ministries, departments

2,22,159 vacancies in Indian Railways

59,622 posts vacant in all three forces

Development (HRD) Ministry had faced the ire of a Parliamentary committee over vacant posts of teachers in central universities. Besides, President Ram Nath Kovind had also expressed his concern over the vacancies in universities and asked for immediate recruitment. In May last year, the HRD Ministry in an RTI reply had revealed that 9,749 posts of teaching faculties were vacant in central universities.

According to the data provided by HRD Ministry, there is about 60 lakh approved posts of teachers in primary and secondary schools and out of this, 15 per cent seats are vacant, which translate into 10 lakh Recently Human Resource posts. The situation is grim policy."

in the primary education sector as there are about 9 lakh vacancies in primary schools and one lakh post of teachers is vacant in secondary schools. It's important to note that Centre is not responsible for filling the vacant posts as it comes under the purview of respective state governments.

Commenting on the issue, Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) general secretary Brijesh Upadhyaya said, "It's a hard fact that employment has never been a priority for the governments. It's the result of lack of concern of previous governments that even after 70 years of Independence; the country has no employment

### Chandrayaan-2 mission on schedule: ISRO

SRIHARIKOTA: The Indian Space Research Organisation on Friday said the Chandrayaan-2 mission is on schedule and flight models are going through various tests. In Chandrayan-2, the country's second mission to the Moon, ISRO is planning to rover to explore the lunar surface. "It is on schedule. We have to find out whether it is in March or not," ISRO Chair-

According to a latest report

of the Ministry of Personnel,

Public Grievances and Pen-

sions, there are total 36,33,935

sanctioned posts in different

ministries and departments

of the government, which

excludes sanctioned posts in

military services and out of

that 4,12,752 posts are lying

vacant in different depart-

ments while 2,22,159 vacan-

cies are in Indian Railways,

which is the largest employer

forces, there are 59,622 vacant

posts, out of which 9,259

vacancies are of officer level

and 50,363 vacancies are

of junior level. The highest

vacancy is in the Army which

is short of 27,864 employees,

while 16,255 posts are vacant

in the Indian Navy and 15,503

undertakings, it's been estimated that above 20,000 posts

are vacant. As per the report,

the Central universities of

the country are short of 5,928

teachers as similar numbers of

Similarly, in public sector

posts in the Air Force.

posts are vacant.

Similarly, in all the three

in the country.

man A S Kiran Kumar told reporters here in a response to a question. Speaking after the successful orbiting of 31 satellites, including weather observation Cartosat-2 Series craft, by the PSLV-C40, he said the Chandrayan-II satellite was getting ready at the ISRO Satellite Centre. The flight models were going through various levels of tests, he added. MPOST

## ISRO hits century; launches Cartosat 2 series Sat, 30 others

#### S VIJAY KARTHIK

SRIHARIKOTA: India on Friday reaffirmed its space prowess and commercial launch capabilities as it successfully launched its 100th satellite along with 30 other spacecraft including weather observation Cartosat 2 series onboard the Polar rocket from here.

This was PSLV's longest-ever mission. With the successful launch, including 28 satellites from foreign countries, by the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), ISRO put behind a rare failure it encountered four months ago.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) had suffered a setback after the failure of the earlier PSLV-C39 mission in August last year.

The previous mission to launch backup navigation satellite IRNSS-1H on board PSLV-C39 had failed after the heat shield did not separate in the final leg of the launch sequence, with the satellite getting stuck in the fourth stage of the rocket.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed ISRO scientists for the successful PSLV C-40 mission.

"The launch of the 100th satellite by @isro signifies both its glorious achievements, and also the bright future of India's space programme," he said a tweet.

A visibly relieved ISRO Chairman A S Kiran Kumar, on his final mission as the cniet of the space agency, said he was happy to provide Cartosat 2 Series as a New Year

"ISRO is starting 2018 with the successful launch... all satellites have been released. So far Cartosat performance is satisfac-



heat shield problem and an ISRO committee has addressed it and taken steps to ensure the vehicle was 'robust'.

ISRO's annals with a micro satellite, among becoming the 100th to roll out through ISRO Satellite Centre Complex (ISAC).

weather observation, navigation and experimental spacecraft, the 100 satel-



PSLV-C40 carrying Cartosat series along with 30 other satellites lifts off from first launch pad at Sriharikota, on Friday. The lift-off marks 100th launch by ISRO



He said the previous launch faced a

Besides ISRO's communication,

#### synchronous orbit about 17 minutes after India's nano satellite and 28 payloads from six countries, including the U.S and the U.K, totally weighing 613 kg were then released into orbit one by one in a space of about seven minutes. In a multi-orbit manoeuvre, micro satellite built by ISRO was placed in the orbit finally after the PSLV-C40 was brought down to 359.584 kms in polar Sun synchronous orbit by twice re-starting the fourth stage of the rocket, about 105 minutes after lift-off.

The fourth stage was finally shut off at Today's mission marked a milestone in about 2 hours 21 minutes, thus making the mission the longest ever by ISRO.

during the launch of SCATSAT-1 on-board PSLV-C35 in September 2016 in which the fourth stage engine was restarted and later cut off for launching the satellite. This mission had lasted two hours and 15 minutes, ISRO scientists said.

## 'Chief justice is only first amongst equals... nothing more or nothing less'

In the matter of the determination of the roster, there are well-settled and time-honoured conventions guiding the chief justice, be it the conventions dealing with the strength of the bench which is required to deal with a particular case or the composition thereof.

A necessary corollary to the above mentioned principle is the members of any multi numbered judicial body including this court would not arrogate to themselves the authority to deal with and pronounce upon matters which ought to be heard by appropriate benches, both composition wise and strength wise with due regard to the roster fixed.

Any departure from the above two rules would not only lead to unpleasant and undesirable consequences of creating doubt in the body politic about the integrity of the institution. Not to talk about the chaos that would result from such departure.

We are sorry to say that of late, the twin rules mentioned above have not been strictly adhered to. There have been instances where cases having far reaching consequences for the nation and the institution have been assigned by the chief justices of this court selectively to the benches "of their preference" without any rational basis for such assignment. This must be guarded against at all costs.

We are not mentioning details only to avoid embarrassing the institution but note that

such departures have already damaged the image of this institution to some extent. In the above context, we

deem it proper to address you presently with regard to the order dated October 27, 2017, in RP Luthra vs Union of India to the effect that there should be no further delay in finalising the memorandum of procedure (MoP) in the larger public interest. When the MoP was the subject matter of a decision of a Constitution Bench of this court, in Supreme Court Advocates-on-record Association and Anr Vs Union of India [(2016) 5 SCC1] it is difficult to understand as to how any other bench could have dealt with the matter.

The above apart, subsequent to the decision of the Constitution Bench, detailed discussions were held by the collegium of five judges (including myself) and the MoP was finalised and sent by the then Hon'ble Chief Justice of India to the Government of India in March 2017.

The Government of India has not responded to the communication and in view of this silence, it must be taken that the MoP as finalised by the Collegium has been accepted by the Government on the basis of the order of this court in Supreme Court Advocates-on-record Association (Supra). There was, therefore, no occasion for the bench to make any observation with regard to the finalisation of the MoP or that that issue cannot linger on for an indefi-

On July 4, 2017, a bench of seven judges of this court decided in Re, Hon'ble Justice C S Karnan [(2017)1 SCC1]. In that decision (referred to in RP Luthra), two of us observed that there is a need to revisit the process of appointment of judges and to set up a mechanism for corrective measures other than impeachment. No observation

judges with regard to the MoP. Any issue with regard to MoP should be discussed in the Chief Justices' conference and by the full court. Such a matter of grave importance, if at all required to be taken on the judicial side, should be dealt with by none other than a constitution bench.

was made by any of the seven

The above development must be viewed with serious concern. The hon'ble Chief Justice of India is duty-bound to rectify the situation and take appropriate remedial measures after a full discussion with the other members of the collegium and at a later stage, if required, with other hon'ble judges of this court.

Once the issue arising from the order dated October 27, 2017, in RP Luthra Vs UOI, mentioned above, is adequately addressed by you and if it becomes so necessary, we will apprise you specifically of the other judicial orders passed by this court which would require to be similarly dealt with.

With kind regards, Justice J Chelameswar, Justice Ranjan Gogoi, Justice Madan B Lokur Justice Kurian Joseph

### PM Modi, Rahul pay tributes to Vivekananda on birth anniversary

### **OUR CORRESPONDENT**

**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress President Rahul Gandhi were among the leaders who today paid tributes to Swami Vive-. kananda on his birth anniversary, which is also celebrated as National Youth Day.

"I bow to Swami Vivekananda on his Jayanti. Today, on National Youth Day I salute the indomitable energy and enthusiasm of our youngsters, who are the builders of New India," Modi said on Twitter.

Gandhi invoked Vivekananda to say that it was duty of all to encourage everyone in their struggle to live up to their own highest idea and strive at the same time to make the ideal as near as possible to truth.

"My tributes to Swami Vivekananda on his birth anniversary. #NationalYouthDay," he said on the micro-blogging site. Union Minister Nitin Gad-

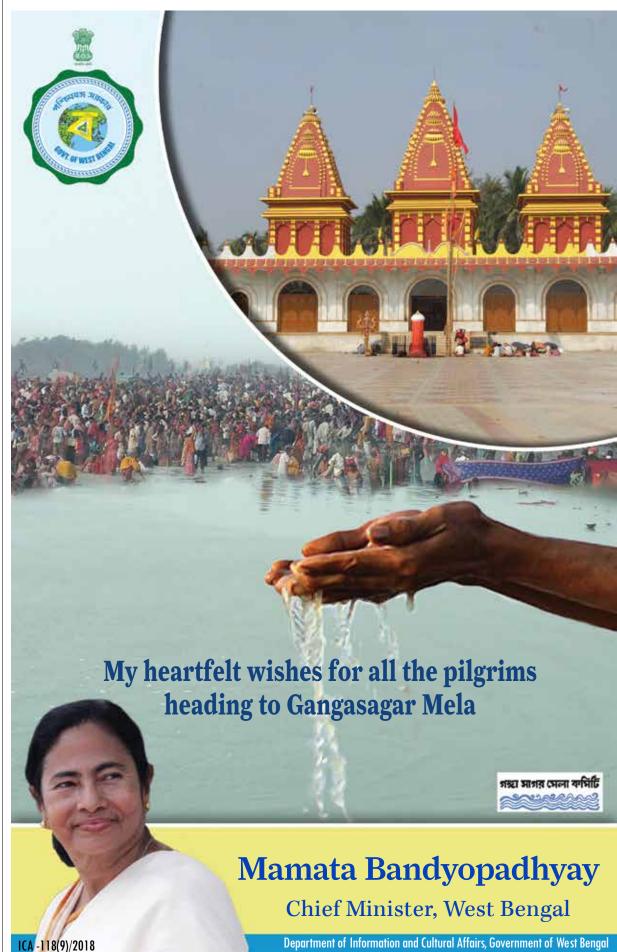
kari said he bowed before the

"youth force" of the coun-

try as he tweeted a picture of Vivekananda. Congress' chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala also invoked Vivekananda's message of "arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached" as

he paid respect to the spiritual

leader. "I bow before India's great saint, symbol of harmony and source of inspiration for the youth on his birth anniversary," Surjewala tweeted.



Kejriwal blames BJP,

**RSS** for caste tensions

AMU, BHU INCIDENTS

## Improve academic ambience: **UP CM tells Vice-Chancellors**

dents should be take care of,"

the chief minister said, sug-gesting installation of CCTV

He said security of new-

comers should be ensured,

incidents of ragging should be

checked and strict disciplin-

ary action should be initiated

against those involved in such

Centre like Stand up India,

Start up India, Clean India,

"Initiatives of state and

cameras in campuses.

#### **OUR CORRESPONDENT**

LUCKNOW: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday wrote to vice chancellors and principals of all universities and colleges in the state to ensure academic ambience in the premises so that students are not influenced by any propaganda or anti-social elements.

His letter comes against the backdrop of reports of alleged links of a Kashmiri research scholar of the Aligarh Muslim University with terror group Hizbul Mujahideen and recent incidents of eve-teasing and vandalism on the BHU campus.

"It is expected of the VCs and principals to maintain academic ambience in the premises of universities and colleges so that students are not influenced by any propaganda or anti-social elements," the chief minister said in his letter.

Adityanath also emphasised on better dialogue versity to avoid any confrontation and said the problems of students, if any, should be resolved on priority.

"It is expected of the VCs and principals to maintain academic ambience in the premises of universities and colleges so that students are not influenced by any propaganda or anti-social elements," he wrote.

"The activities of unscrupulous elements in hostels should be kept on watch and

national unity and integrity should be included in the syllabus and students should be told about moral values," Adityanath said. He also emphasised on

meeting between head of departments with parents and regular classes in universities and colleges, and suggested holding of seminars and conferences and inter- university programmes for grooming students.

A research scholar hailing from Kupwara of north Kashmir was expelled by the AMU authorities earlier this month in the wake of reports alleging that he may have joined a terror group after his photo appeared in the social media showing him with an AK-47

A team of senior AMU officials sealed the room of Mannan Basheer Wani (26) after they received a letter from the Superintendent of Police, Aligarh regarding the alleged

In Banaras Hindu University, several students, including women, and two journalists were injured a few months back in a lathi-charge by police in the campus. The trigger was a woman student of the Arts faculty alleging harassment by three men on a motorcycle inside the campus while she was returning to her hostel.

The violence erupted after some students, protesting against the incident, wanted to meet the vice chancellor at his residence. BHU's chief proctor O N Singh resigned taking "moral responsibility" for incidents of molestation and violence.

Last month, a group of BHU students torched a school bus and damaged half a dozen vehicles and an ATM cubicle inside the campus to protest the arrest of their leader, Ashutosh Singh - a member of the Samajwadi Party's student wing, for allegedly creating ruckus during a cultural event

### 55 candidates for bypolls in Rajasthan

#### **OUR CORRESPONDENT**

JAIPUR: Fifty-five candidates are in the fray for the January 29 bypolls to Alwar and Ajmer Lok Sabha seats and Mandalgarh Assembly constituency, after the scrutiny of nomination papers. Nominations of 15 candidates from Alwar, 26 from Ajmer and 14 from Mandalgarh were found valid, the state Chief Electoral Office (CEO) said on Friday.

Congress's Karan Singh Yadav, BJP's Jaswant Singh Yadav and 13 others, including 11 Independents, can fight the byelection from the Alwar parliamentary constituency, it said. In Ajmer, nominations of Ramswaroop Lamba of the BJP, the Congress's Raghu Sharma and 24 others, including 21 Independents, have been found valid, the CEO office said.

BJP candidate Shakti Singh, Vivek Dhakad of Congress and 12 Independents will be contesting the Mandalgarh Assembly bypoll, it said.

However, the exact number of candidates can be ascertained on January 15, the last day for withdrawing nomina-

enmity with Sawant on various

issues and allegedly planned his

official, the 62-year old former

corporator had stopped Wagh-

mare's "sources of earning".

Waghmare had filed some RTI

applications about construction

for allotment of a classroom of

a local BMC school to run his

classes, but his plea was turned

down allegedly due to Sawant's

Angered over Sawant's

influence, the official said.

Waghmare had requested

activities in the suburbs.

According to another police

murder, he added.

#### instigate riots, on the basis of caste and religion in India," he said. The Delhi CM also critiit had the highest tariff. cized the Maharashtra government which is ruled by the BJP for allowing private schools to flourish allegedly at the cost of government schools, saying that

schools had no right to rule. The AAP leader pointed out that when he became the chief

**NATION** 

a government that could not run

NEW DELHI: Delhi Chief

in Maharashtra. Addressing a

public meeting at Sindhkhe-

draja in Buldhana district of

Maharashtra after paying hom-

age to Jijabai, the mother of

warrior king Shivaji, the AAP

supremo said the Maratha king

had worked to achieve an all-

inclusive society. The meeting

was held on the occasion of

Jijabai's birth anniversary. "We condemn the Bhima

Koregaon violence which was

done after the attack by the BJP-

RSS supporters. BJP wants to



ago, the condition of the government schools was bad in the national capital. "Only the poor used to send their children to the government schools then. In three years, we have started 300 new state-of-the-art government schools with modern amenities," he said. Stating that his government had conducted an audit of the power companies in the national capital, Kejriwal said "today, Delhi has the cheapest power tariff", whereas earlier

He also emphasised in the agrarian crisis of India and said that a farmer movement is needed in this country. Talking about the development in the rural sector of Delhi he said, "We gave Rs 50,000 per hectare to the farmers in Delhi when they faced a crop-loss due to

## Stones hurled at Bihar Chief Minister's cavalcade; safe

#### **OUR CORRESPONDENT**

**BUXAR:** Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's cavalcade was on Friday pelted with stones while he was on his way to a village as part of the state-wide Vikas Samiksha Yatra. The chief minister was unharmed.

An unfazed Kumar, who went on to address a public meeting in Dumraon block, said, "Some people feel disturbed over my commitment to progress of the state. They try to mislead and provoke others but people should not get perturbed over such minor

the chief minister said over phone that some people had hurled stones at the cavalcade but it did not hamper the movement of the carcade.

He said the cavalcade moved ahead for the village where the chief minister launched 168 schemes worth Rs 272 crore before addressing public meeting.

It was not immediately known who were the persons who indulged in stone-pelting and what was their grouse.

The chief minister said, "My purpose is not to run government from the state capital but to assess ground realities



ties like roads, clean water and power reach every village, in fact, every locality, in the state. If anybody is trying to mislead people about my mission, the reality will speak for itself and the mission would never get

He also spoke at length

### about his mission of ban on sale and consumption of alcohol and the drive against dowry and child marriage as also measures being taken by the government for skill development

better job opportunities. The CM told security personnel deployed at the venue of the public meeting "do not worry about any protests. If some people want to raise slogans and show black flags."

of the youths so that they got

crossing the state as part of "Vikas Samiksha Yatra" to take stock of implementation of developmental programmes at

## RTI activist arrested in ex-corporator murder case

#### **OUR CORRESPONDENT**

MUMBAI: An RTI activist, who also runs a civil services examination guidance centre, was arrested on Friday in connection with the killing of former Shiv Sena corporator Ashok Sawant, police said.

Anil Waghmare, the alleged mastermind, was arrested from the city in connection with the murder of Sawant, Vinay Rathod, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone-XII), said.

The 43-year-old, who runs a civil services examination guidance centre in suburban Kandivli, is the fourth accused to be arrested in the case in which a minor has also been detained.

behaviour towards him, Waghmare hatched a conspiracy with other accused persons to kill the politician-cum-business-

### 65 people died of drug abuse in Mizoram in 2017

### **OUR CORRESPONDENT**

AIZAWL: At least 65 people, including 12 women, died from substance abuse in Mizoram last year, according to the records of the state Excise and

Narcotics department. Of the 65 drug-related deaths last year, 28 people died from heroin overdose while the rest died due to abuse of other narcotics, the records show.

An official of the Excise and Narcotics department said around 6.035 kilogramme of heroin, 13,400 Methamphetamine tablets and 1,59,471 tablets of Pseudo-ephedrine were seized during raids in 2017.

The department also seized 392 kilogramme of ganja (cannabis) and destroyed 4,127 ganja plants.

This year, one person has died due to drug abuse in the first week of January, the offi-

The state recorded maximum number of drug-related

deaths in 2004 with 143 people succumbing to addiction. The excise and narcotics department records show at

least 1,468 people have died from substance abuse in the

### TWO TRUTIYA PRASTUTI COMMITTEE **ACTIVISTS KILLED IN ENCOUNTER HAZARIBAG:** Two members of outlawed Trutiya

Prastuti Committee (TPC), a splinter group of the CPI (Maoist), have been killed in an encounter with security personnel near Donaikala village in Hazaribag district, police said on Friday. The district police found out from its sources Thursday that a group of TPC activists have assembled at a stone crusher site to extract levy, Superintendent of Police Anoop Birtheray said. "The miscreants tried to set ablaze equipment and beat up the labourers at the crusher but a joint team of district police and CRPF personnel rushed to the spot, forcing them to flee," he said. Undaunted, the TPC men then moved to another crusher unit nearby but the security personnel tailed them, Birtheray said. "The activists started firing indiscriminately as soon as it saw police approaching them. The security personnel retaliated, killing two rebels on spot," the SP said. Police have recovered the bodies and launched a massive search operation following the incident, he said, adding that the identities of the two activists were yet to be established. sTwo rifles, including an AK-47, 210 live cartridges, 4 magazines, mobile phones and Maoist literature were recovered from the site of the encounter, Birtheray added.

### **BSP MLA ANSARI BACK IN BANDA JAIL AFTER TREATMENT**

**BANDA:** BSP MLA Mukhtar Ansari returned to Banda prison after being discharged from a hospital in Lucknow where he was referred to following a heart attack on January 9, police said on Friday. Ansari was discharged last night from the hospital after his clinical parameters were found to be normal and he was brought back to Banda jail amid tight security, jailor Viveksheel Tripathy said. The 55-year-old Ansari, who was lodged in Banda jail in connection with various criminal cases against him, had suffered a heart attack while he was meeting his wife in the prison here. Reportedly, his wife too developed a chest pain during the meeting and was also referred to the hospital in Lucknow. The gangster-turned-legislator from Mau constituency has been in various jails in the state since 2015 under various sections of the IPC.

### FORMER SP MLA BOOKED FOR **KILLING, ABDUCTING MAN IN UP**

SAMBHAL: An FIR has been registered against former Samajwadi Party (SP) MLA Ram Khiladi Yadav and five others for allegedly abducting and killing a 45-year-old man, police said on Friday. The FIR was registered yesterday at Gunnaur police station against former MLA Yadav and five others for allegedly abducting Pan Singh and then beating him badly. "Singh was admitted to a hospital, where he died during the treatment on Jan 11," a police official said. According to the FIR lodged by victim's brother, the former MLA and others had an old enmity with Singh because of which they abducted him on January 10. Police said they are probing the matter for further details.

### **LOK SABHA SPEAKER MAHAJAN OFFERS** PRAYERS AT A TEMPLE IN SEYCHELLS



Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan visits the Arulmigu Navasakti Vinayagar temple, which is first and only Hindu temple in Seychelles, during the 24th Conference of Speakers and presiding officers of the Commonwealth in Seychelles from January 8 to 11

## Remove all illegal hoardings in Maha by to Yug Tulli Feb 23: HC to govt

**OUR CORRESPONDENT** MUMBAI: The Bombay High

Court on Friday directed the Maharashtra government to ensure that all illegal posters, hoardings, banners and sky signs in the state are removed by February 23.

Last year, the court had directed that the above exercise be completed by January this year, but granted an extension to the state on Friday, following a request by the latter.

A bench of justices Abhay Oka and A A Sayed gave a set of 21 directions to municipal corporations and municipal ward officers. It also directed the Commissioner of Police to provide two armed constables to the municipal officers of every ward in the city on a daily basis. These constables will accompany municipal teams at the ward level everyday in order to remove illegal hoardings.

The bench has also directed that an officer of the rank of police superintendent ensure that officers and beat marshals, hoardings.



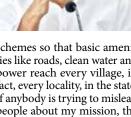
who are entrusted with night patrolling, keep a constant vigil and register FIRs against illegal posters, hoardings and sky

signs.
"It should not be difficult for the state to admit that there exists defacement of walls, public properties etc.

despite the fact that a clear law exists against the same.

"No genuine effort has been made by the state. By way of a last chance, we grant all authorities concerned time till February 23 this year," the bench said.

The state government was also directed by the court to appoint a two-member committee comprising senior officials from the Urban Development department to monitor the work of removing illegal posters, banners and



## Kamala Mills fire: **Court refuses** pre-arrest bail

MUMBAI: A sessions court here on Friday rejected the anticipatory bail application of Yug Tulli, the absconding co-owner of the Mojo's Bistro pub, in the Kamala Mills fire case.

Seeking pre-arrest bail for his client, Tulli's lawyer contended that the devastating fire at the Kamala Mills compound on December 29, which had claimed 14 lives, had started from the adjoining 1 Above

Hence, the owners of Mojo's Bistro could not be blamed for the tragedy, he argued.

However, the prosecution said that a report of the Mumbai Fire Brigade as well as eyewitnesses said the fire had started at Mojo's Bistro.

In its preliminary probe report, the Fire Brigade had said the blaze possibly started at Mojo's Bistro due to the flying charcoal embers of a hookah. The husband of Parul Lakdawala, one of the fire victims, had filed an intervention application, opposing the anticipatory bail plea of Tulli, saying that the latter was responsible for the death of his wife and



## normal in Tamil Nadu

**OUR CORRESPONDENT** 

returned to normal in Tamil Nadu on Friday after transport workers withdrew their eightday old strike over wage related

In a huge relief to the public, especially ahead of the harvest festival "Pongal" falling on January 14, buses were seen plying normally on roads since this morning.

The government has declared a holiday on Friday for schools and colleges in view of Pongal, resulting in five-day holidays for students.

CITU leader A Soundarrajan had last night announced that the indefinite strike was being "temporarily" called off, shortly after the Madras High Court appointed an arbitrator to settle their wage dispute with the government.

The strike is being temporarily withdrawn keeping in mind the welfare of the people of the state," he had said, adding that workers would resume work from this morning.



ment on wage revision.

While the unions wanted a 2.57 times hike, the government offered only 2.44, resulting in the stalemate. The workers struck work

citing other demands also like pending dues for serving and retired personnel. The strike had severely

crippled the public sector bus services causing immense hardship to the public, including office-goers in cities, though the government tried to maintain services by roping in temporary drivers and pri-

union, besides some others, had not participated in the

### Workers of the Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSTC), owing allegiance to 17 trade unions, including

### strike on January 4 following failure of talks with the govern-

The AIADMK-backed

## those affiliated to the DMK and Show us average prisoner gets same treatment as Dutt: HC



### **OUR CORRESPONDENT**

MUMBAI: The Maharashtra government said on Friday it can justify "every single minute" of parole or furlough granted to actor Sanjay Dutt, who was in jail in the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts case, prompting the Bombay High Court to ask if same rules

were applied to every inmate. A public interest litigation has questioned the "frequent" parole or furlough Dutt, sentenced to five years in jail in the case, got, and his early

release from prison in 2016. Parole is granted for special reasons, while prisoners are entitled to furlough as a matter of right.

Maharashtra Advocate General Ashutosh Kumbhakoni on Friday said, "Not even for a single minute or sec-

ond was Dutt out of jail in breach of law. We can account for every single minute that he was permitted to stay out of iail.

'We follow a strict, standard procedure for granting parole for every inmate. In times of RTI queries and public interest litigations, we take no chance," he said.

During a hearing last year, the state had told another bench of the high court that the actor earned early release by displaying exemplary conduct while in jail.

The court had, however, pointed out that Dutt got parole just two months into his sentence, and also a furlough at the same time, a concession other convicts rarely get.

Kumbhakoni said on Friday this

on account of medical emergencies in his family. "This was on account of his daughter's illness and his wife needing a surgery," Kumbhakoni said.

"In cases of medical emergency, we take between 24 hours and eight days to decide on applications of parole. In Dutt's case, we sent a police officer to interview the doctor who was to perform the surgery to ensure that this was a genuine case," the advocate general said.

The division bench of Justices S C Dharmadhikari and Bharati Dangre directed the state to submit an affidavit detailing the steps followed while granting parole and furlough to an 'average" inmate.

"You can show us that you follow the same procedure for all inmates.... concession was granted in July 2013 Else we'll have to issue directions," the

judges said, adjourning the hearing to February 1.

According to the state government's submissions, in view of Dutt's good conduct, it decided to release him on February 25, 2016, eight months and 16 days before he com-

pleted his five-year sentence. Dutt was convicted of charges of illegal possession and destruction of an AK-56 rifle that was part of the consignment of firearms and explosives to be used in the 1993 terror attack. He spent over a year and four months in jail as an undertrial, and about two-and-a-half years as a convicted prisoner between June 2013

and February 2016. During this period, he was out of jail for over five months on parole and

## SC judges: Legal fraternity says it's unprecedented, shocking

**OUR CORRESPONDENT** 

**NEW DELHI:** The decision of four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court to hold a press conference was on Friday termed as "unprecedented" by the legal fraternity, with some experts terming it as "shocking" while some others saying there could have been some compelling reasons for such a move. Some legal luminaries also said the turn of events had raised a question mark about the credibility of the judicial system.

Senior advocates K T S Tulsi, former union law ministers Salman Khurshid and Ashwini Kumar, former judges Justice R S Sodhi and Justice Mukul Mudgal expressed concern over the unprecedented press conference, while senior advocate Indira Jaising welcomed the move and congratulated the four judges.

BJP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Subramanian Swamy said when such judges come out to do a press conference, it is necessary to take them seriously rather than finding fault.

Swamy said the Prime Minister should take an initiative and contact the Chief Justice and the four judges to resolve the whole situation through the process of consultation.

However, Justice Sodhi questioned the move of the top judges approaching the media and asked how they can administer the Supreme Court through press conferences.

"I am so pained at the outcome of the things... It is appalling. How can you administer discharging a debt to history,



Supreme Court judge Jasti Chelameswar along with justice Ranjan Gogoi during a press conference in New Delhi on Friday

ference. Are you going to hold a referendum and ask people what is right and wrong," Justice Sodhi said. Justice Mudgal said the four senior-most judges were bringing the issues to light which according to them was necessary to be brought to the public notice.

He said they must have had compelling reasons to go public and "they are not publicity hungry judges and do not crave

for unnecessary publicity". Terming the presser as "a welcome step", senior lawyer Indira Jaising congratulated the four judges for the "bold move" and said: "As they said they are

Supreme Court by press connamely to let the nation know that something is going wrong and needs to be corrected."

She said the intention of the press meet was "to build a consensus to owe a debt of duty to the institution as a whole and ensure that this institution survives for you and me.'

Advocate Prashant Bhushan also termed the event as unprecedented and said the judges took extreme decision to hold press conference under compelling circumstances.

'These four judges are very responsible. If they are doing this, the situation would have definitely gone out of control. They said the CJI was misusing his administrative powers above suspicion," Tulsi said.

to allot all cases," Bhushan said. Senior lawyer KTS Tulsi said the step was quite shocking and one had never thought that "things would come such far compelling the four seniormost judges to adopt this

course of action." "I am sure they (four judges) have exhausted all other remedies. One could see pain on their faces while they were speaking. The whole matter is with respect to judicial propriety. The question is of natural justice. Whatever is the law for common man, it is applied much more rigorously as far as judges are concerned because they must always be

Similarly, former union minister and senior advocate Khurshid said there were some deep differences among the judges about how the apex court should function, terming it as a matter of anguish.

"I can only hope that conversation among the judges will not snap and will continue and that with accommodation and logic it will be settled. It has come too far," Khurshid said.

Former Law Minister Ashwini Kumar said it was "a sad day for Indian democracy."

"This press conference is a strike at the root of the institutional integrity of the higher judiciary. It has raised question marks about the credibility of the system as such and has directly cast aspersions at the head of the Indian judiciary.

"I think the people of this country who have had highest regard to the highest judiciary will now be forced to think aloud as to whether we have gone gravely wrong somewhere," he said.

Accompanied by three senior judges Justices Ranjan Gogoi, M B Lokur and Kurian Joseph, Justice J Chelameswar himself said "this is an extraordinary event in the history of any nation, more particularly this nation and an extraordinary event in the institution of judiciary ... It is with no pleasure that we are compelled to call this press conference.

"But sometimes administration of the Supreme Court is not in order and many things which are less than desirable have happened in the last few

## **Maintain dignity of the judiciary: Ex-Bombay High Court judges**

OUR CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI: With four senior Supreme Court judges on Friday launching a diatribe against Chief Justice Dipak Misra, former Bombay High Court judges said the dignity of the judiciary should be maintained in such trying times.

The joint news conference by the four judges, including Justice J Chelameswar, the second senior judge after the chief justice of India, was an unprecedented move and left the judiciary stunned. Reacting to the apex court judges' media briefing and their allegations, retired Bombay High Court chief justice Manjula Chellur said something must have triggered the four judges to go public with their claims.

'These situations are difficult. But what needs to be kept in mind is that this is not about just individuals. This is about the institution in totality," Chellur said. "All steps must be taken to ensure that the dignity of the judiciary is held high. Courts are the last place the public goes to resolve their disputes and problems," she said.

"I am sure Attorney General K K Venugopal and the Union

MLA's comment

JAMMU: Union Minister Jiten-

dra Singh on Friday tried to

play down the "Kashmiri mil-

itants are martyrs" remarks of

a PDP MLA, calling it a "stray

comment" and said the gov-

ernment was firm on its stand

controversy yesterday when he

described Kashmiri militants

shot dead in encounters with

security forces as "martyrs" and

"brothers" and also cautioned

against glorifying their killings.

by a stray person, it is not to be

given any importance. But as far

as we are concerned, a terror-

ist is a terrorist and a terrorist

only," Singh told reporters here

in reply to a question seeking

"Terrorism is to be dealt in

We have zero tolerance

his reaction over the remarks.

against terrorism and gov-

ernment is clear on this stand

and will continue to follow

this stand," he said. The union

amount to disrespecting the

rorist cannot be a martyr and

by making such an apologetic

statement about terrorists, who

engineer terrorist acts, amounts

to disrespecting security forces,"

said Singh. The PDP MLA's

remarks came as an embarrass-

ment for his party as its alli-

ance partner the BJP decried

the comments saying these

were "absolutely intolerable"

and demanded an FIR against

him. Singh said he was proud

of India's successful launch of

its 100th satellite along with

30 other spacecraft including

weather observation Carto-

sat 2 series onboard the Polar

rocket from Sriharikota on Fri-

day. "This is a matter of pride

for each one of us," said Singh.

with a the department for last

four years, it is a very pleasant

coincidence that I am associ-

ated with this department when

ISRO is scaling new heights," he

"Having been associated

"By saying anything, ter-

nation's security forces.

the way terrorism is dealt.

"If a stray comment is made

Aijaz Ahmed Mir stoked a

against terrorism.

law minister and others concerned will take into consideration all the factors and take a suitable decision," Chellur, who retired last month, said.

Ex-high court judge V G Palshikar termed the top court judges' allegations as an "unprecedented move" and said they should have refrained from going public.

'This is a black day in the history of courts. This should not have happened. There was no need to go to the public. They (four judges) should have raised these issues in a chamber meeting in the Supreme Court. We will now have to see what the chief justice of India does,"

Anoop Mohta, who retired from the high court last month, said the four judges have created history.

"This is like a volcano erupting. Such a thing has never happened," Mohta said, adding courts do not appreciate even when lawyers appear before the media with comments and opinions on the working of the judiciary.

Ex-high court judge Pramod Kode said this was a very serious issue.

'I hope all appropriate steps are taken to maintain the dignity of the judiciary," Kode said. He had heard the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts case as the trial

### What I had said would happen: A terrorist is just a terrorist: Jitendra MP chief minister on Padmavat Singh on PDP

**OUR CORRESPONDENT** 

BHOPAL: Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday indicated that the film "Padmavat" will not be allowed to be released in his state. The film is likely to release on January 25.

Asked if the film would be banned in Madhya Pradesh, Chouhan told reporters on Friday, "Jo Kaha tha, wo hoga (What I had said, will happen)." However, he did not clarify.

Chouhan was talking to reporters after attending a state-level mass 'Surya Namaskar and Pranayam' event organised to mark the birth anniversary of spiritual leader Swami Vivekananda.

The film has received a clearance from the Central Board for Film Certification after the change of title and some script modifications.

While speaking to some members of the Rajput community on November 20 last year, Chouhan had made it clear that the film would not be allowed to release in the state if it contains scenes "breaching the honour" of the Rajput queen Padmavati or features distorted facts".

"We will not tolerate any distortion of historical facts.

The entire country is speaking in one voice that historical facts were distorted (in the movie)," he had said. The film is mired in controversy after some Rajput groups opposed it. The period romance featuring Deepika Padukone, Shahid Kapoor and Ranveer Singh in lead roles was earlier scheduled to be released on December 1.

## **Detaining patients for unpaid** bills is illegal: High court

**OUR CORRESPONDENT** 

MUMBAI: The Bombay High Court on Friday asserted that detaining a patient in hospital over unpaid bills is illegal, and "every member of public" must be made aware of this.

A bench of Justices S C Dharmadhikari and Bharati Dangre directed the health department of the Maharashtra government to publish on its website the legal rights of patients and the penal provisions that can be invoked against errant hospitals.

"How can a hospital detain person who is declared fit otherwise on the ground of non-payment of fees? Such hospital is curtailing the personal liberty of a person.

"Every member of the public must be made aware that such action on the part of a hospital is illegal," the bench

The bench, however, refused to issue any specific regulatory order against hospitals, saying it is government's

however, refused to issue any specific regulatory order against hospitals, saying it is the government's job

"We can't commit a judicial overreach by issuing regulations on the issue. However, we must make it clear that we are sympathetic to the issue,"

Opining that the government should formulate a mechanism to protect such patients and their families, the bench said hospitals can always resort to legal remedies to recover their dues.

The high court was hearing a public interest litigation which cited two cases where patients were allegedly detained at private hospitals over disputed bills.

## Man held for using foul language against Bihar CM

PATNA: Police have arrested a man, who used foul language against Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and allegedly threatened to kill him along with his bodyguards in a video shared on social media, officials said on Friday.

An FIR was registered at Fatuha police station late last night on the basis of a complaint by a local resident in connection with the video clip, Patna Senior Superintendent

the video clip so it would not be proper to comment on its contents. But the matter will be thoroughly investigated and proper action will be

However, some local TV channels aired the video footage wherein Poyma was shown, purportedly, wearing tattered clothes and appearing inebriated, and threatening to blow up the chief minister and his bodyguards in a bomb

location of the mobile phone from which the video was originally shared after which Poyma was nabbed from Mosimpur Kurtha area.

Replying to a query, the SSP said "I have not yet seen

### e-Tender Notice Against N.I.T. No. 88 2ndCall / S.E.S.C.S.S. P.W.D. of 2017-18 Tender Reference No: WBPWD/SE Tender ID: 2018\_WBPWD\_148666\_ Name of Work: Re-construction

and widening of Gate no. 2 including construction of new Gates for School, Clinics and related approach oad, concrete culverts (3 nos.)

guard room etc. at the Mohanpú campus of W.B.U.A.F.S. (2nd Call Estimated Amount: Rs.1,80,53,076.00 Superintending Engineer, Southern Circle, Social Sector, P. W. Dte. 45 Ganesh Chandra Avenue, 5th floor, Kolkata – 700 013 (Ph no: 033-22360457) invites 1 (one) no. civi work for site in the district of Nadia hrough e-Tender. i) Bid Submission Upload End date (online) 02.02.2018 upto 18.00 Hrs. (IST) ) Details will be available in e Tendering Portal from the website nttps://etender.wb.nic.in\_directly Other details may be obtained from the office of undersigned at the above mentioned address during office hours of any working day.

Superintending Engineer Southern Circle, Social Sector, P. W. Dte

## Issue of Judge B H Loya's death serious: Apex court

**OUR CORRESPONDENT** 

**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court on Friday termed as a "serious matter" the issue of alleged mysterious death of special CBI judge B H Loya, who was hearing the Sohrabuddin Sheikh encounter case, and sought response from Maharashtra government on pleas seeking an independent probe

The top court said, "This matter requires bi-party hear-

ing rather than exparte". Mishra and M M Shantanagoudar asked Maharasthra Government counsel Nishant R Katneshwarkar to file reply by January 15.

At the outset, senior advocate Dushyant Dave, representing Bombay lawyers association, said the high court is seized of the matter and the apex court should not hear the pleas. "The Bombay High Court is seized of the matter and in my opinion the Supreme Court should not hear this matter. If the court goes ahead with the hearing, it may have implications before the high court,"

Senior advocate Indira Jaising, appearing for one of the petitioners Maharashtra-based journalist B R Lone, said that

**OUR CORRESPONDENT** 

NEW DELHI: Chief Infor-

mation Commissioner R K

Mathur has directed the Prime

Minister's Office to explain the

delay in transferring RTI appli-

cations to departments con-

cerned matters relating to the

appointment of information

commissioners, proposed RTI

tions of Commodore Lokesh

Batra (retd), who had sought to

know the details of the file not-

ings related to the appointment

of information commission-

ers, proposed RTI rules, 2017

and a travel bill of the prime

minister through his four RTI

applications.

The orders came on peti-

rules, among others.



she has also instructions from Bombay lawyers association that this matter should not be

heard by the top court. will look into the petitions but tions raised.

Advocate Varinder Kumar Sharma, appearing for another petitioner Congress leader Tehseen Poonawala, said this is a case where a mysterious death of a judge has taken place on December 1, 2014 and it needs to be investigated.

The bench then asked Katneshwarkar to file the mortem report and other relevant documents regarding the death of judge Loya besides taking instruction from the government. The bench posted the matter for further hearing on

Loya had died of cardiac arrest in Nagpur on December 1, 2014, when he had gone to attend the wedding of a col-

Explain delay in transferring

RTI applications: CIC to PMO

## 'sensitive' matter probed **OUR CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI: Describing the concerns expressed by four senior-most Supreme Court judges as "unprecedented and sensitive", key opposition par-ties on Friday demanded a probe into the issues flagged by them, including that of the mysterious death of judge BH

Congress president Rahul The bench, however, said it Gandhi said the points highlighted by the judges were extremely important and called for a probe into Loya's case by the "highest level of the Supreme Court".

The Congress said the PIL concerning the death of Loya must be entrusted to the senior-most judges of the apex court who should ensure that under their supervision there is a "thorough and impartial" investigation by an indepen-

Special CBI judge B H Loya, who was hearing the high- profile Sohrabuddin Sheikh encounter case, had allegedly died under mysterious circumstances in 2014. The apex court had yesterday agreed to hear two separate pleas seeking independent probe into the death.

BJP chief Amit Shah was

an accused in the case but was discharged.

SC row: Oppn wants

One of the four seniormost judges, who held an unprecedented press conference, had said that the matter involving Loya's death was one of the issues underpinning their differences with Chief Justice Dipak Misra.

"I think the points that have been raised by the four judges are extremely important. They have mentioned there is a threat to democracy. It needs

"They also made a point about judge Loya's case. I think that is also something that needs to be investigated It needs to be looked at

from the highest level of the Supreme Court," Gandhi told reporters here tonight. In his brief statement, Gan-

dhi said that all citizens who love the idea of justice and believe in the Supreme Court were looking at the developments, and therefore it was important that those were

A battery of senior Conpolitician-lawyers including Kapil Sibal, P Chidambaram, Manish Tewari, Vivek Tankha and Salman Khurshid were present at the

press conference. Senior party leaders Ahmed Patel, AICĆ general secretary in-charge of Maharashtra Mohan Prakash and its chief spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala were also present.

In its statement on the issue, read out by Surjewala, the Congress said it was perturbed by the developments and that observations made by the judges and the issues raised by them at their press conference were "extremely disturbing" and have a "farreaching" consequences for the values that are held sacred-safeguarding democracy and preserving the independence of the judiciary.

The Congress earnestly appeals that the Full Court of the Supreme Court should take up the issues raised by the four the judges and find solutions that are consistent with the traditions and conventions of the judiciary pointed out by the judges and that will preserve the independence of the judiciary," it said.

In the matter of assignment of cases, the established conventions and traditions of the courts must be followed and the selective assignment of cases must be stopped forth-

## Irreparable damage to judiciary: Hegde on SC crisis

HYDERABAD: Expressing deep anguish over four Supreme Court judges going public on issues related to the apex court, former Solicitor General of India N Santosh Hegde on Friday said he was "devastated" by their action which has caused "irrepara-

"As a retired judge of the Supreme Court, I feel

other, their cause is justified, (but) relief they are seeking is wrong...going to the media? No. Judiciary was always con-

Executive, and their faith lies only in Judiciary now, he said. The delay in disposal of cases is one of the things that allegations has further dented people's faith in the system, Hegde said. 'I feel very sad about it. I am sure they (the four judges)

are hurt with many things

which ought not to have hap-

pened. But for heaven's sake,

what they did was wrong. I don't think this damage can ever be repaired," he said. "It amounts to a Constitutional crisis now. And it will lead to all sorts of criticism from aggrieved people from the judiciary and people who have benefited from the judiciary will not speak about it. And in the long run, judiciary

is (will become) another sub-

ject matter of Tom, Dick and

Harry," he said. The former Karnataka Lokayukta and the retired Supreme Court judge said Judiciary is totally different from Legislature and Executive, and the four judges, by raising allegations in public, have brought them to the

## OUR CORRESPONDENT judges going public with their

ble" damage to the institution.

"For some reason or the

sidered as a family. Family disputes are never taken to the streets," he said. In democracy, people have lost faith in Legislature and

is causing concern to people and diminishing their confidence in the system, and

of Police Manu Maharaj said. "Pramod alias Poyma has

been arrested from Fatuha police station area following complaints about a video wherein he has used abusive language against the Chief Minister. The matter is being investigated," the SSP said.

Police began tracing the

#### According to the Right to Information Act, when an application is made to a public authority requesting for an information -- which is held by another public authority or the subject matter of which is more closely connected with

Batra said that he requested for the information pertaining only to the PMO's records.

Act states.

transferred.

as soon as practicable but in no

case later than five days from

the date of receipt of the application," Section 6(3) of the RTI

the functions of another pub-During the hearing, Batra lic authority, the application is

stated he has experienced that prolonged delays in provid-"Provided that the transfer ing information by the Cenof an application pursuant to tral Public Information Officer this sub-section shall be made (CPIO), PMO, has become a routine matter.

"They are doing this persistently, even after cautionary directions in his earlier cases. The appellant stated that the respondent has caused wrong," Mathur noted in his order citing the submissions of Batra.

## **EDITORIAL**

## Paradise troubled

hamin ast (If there is a heaven on earth, it's here, it's here, it's here). Mughal Emperor Jehangir is said to have said this when he visited Kashmir in the 17th century. Cut to the 21st century and we have a very different kind of Kashmir to deal with. While its virginal beauty — the alpine forest and the pristine streams — still remain by and large intact, the socio-political milieu is polluted and vitiated beyond repair. The decades of terror and militancy in the state has instilled a deep sense of fear and alienation among the local people. It has also brought negative publicity for the state and dented its image as a peace-loving Himalayan paradise blessed with vast lakes and stunning mountains. The Dal lake boulevard looks desolate, the multi-cuisine restaurants that dotted Srinagar's marketplace are all without business and the decorated autorickshaws with passenger area completely separated to offer more privacy to the honeymooning couples are missing from the streets. There are fewer celebrations and festivals are subdued. The paradise is in a state of shock. At the core of the problem is neighbour Pakistan, which has been fomenting unrest in the state by misguiding gullible youth, giving them training and logistical support to carry out anti-India operations. To keep Pakistan's interference in Kashmir under check, India has to deploy a large number of security forces along the Line of Control and elsewhere in Kashmir. The security forces have done a commendable job both in restricting Pakistan's nefarious designs and maintaining order and normalcy at the grassroots level. The many Shikaras with fascinating names in the Dal Lake and the enchanting large gardens spread across Kashmir, more notably in Srinagar, beckon the footloose and the tourists alike. But people can't visit the Indian Shangri La like ordinary tourists, for it has not seen normalcy in a long time. The peaceful, idyllic world of the ordinary Kashmiris is destroyed by the crossfire between the militants and the security forces. The Shikara, cable car and horse rides are unimaginable when the border areas witness cross-border firing as a routine, when security forces and the students face off every now and then, and when families receive dead and injured on a daily basis. The fun, the frolic, the scent of deodar, all have lost the magic. Just to illustrate how ironical the life can be for the ordinary Kashmiris, let's take the example of Ghalib Afzal Guru and Muhammad Naveed Aalam. Both these young boys have passed their Class XII examination with distinction, Ghalib scoring 88 per cent and Naveed 77 per cent. Ghalib is the son of Afzal Guru, who was executed in 2013 following his conviction in 2001 Parliament attack case. Naveed's elder brother Burhan Wani was a Hizbul Mujahedeen militant and a poster boy of Kashmir militancy. He was killed in an encounter with Indian security forces in July 2016. These two young boys have made the country proud by their stellar success despite the odds that they had deal with. The families behind these two meritorious students deserve unqualified recognition and appreciation. More recently, hours before the New Year eve, three heavily armed Jaish terrorists attacked the CRPF training camp in Awantipora. One of the three militants was identified as the 16-year-old Fardeen Ahmad Khanday, son of J&K Police constable Ghulam Mohammad Khandey. And another noteworthy youth joining the ranks of the militants is Aligarh Muslim University scholar Manan Bashir Wani, who is said to have joined Hizbul Mujahideen. Call it a quirk of fate or a fault of policymakers, the life of ordinary citizens, especially women and children, is marked with fear, anguish, and helplessness. Decades of militancy has left little for livelihood for the local people. The paradise has long forgotten the mellifluous music of the mountain; the people have lost touch with their routine of growing maize and grazing sheep. Bringing it back to normalcy requires mediation and the Centre has appointed a former Intelligence Bureau director, Dineshwar Sharma, as the official interlocutor in Jammu and Kashmir. And, in an important development, the state government has decided to allow full amnesty to local militants who have not indulged in any terror act as yet and are willing to come back home to their families. The government is also trying to engage the youth in gainful employments, sports and tourism so as to bring them back to the mainstream. Home to a wide range of holy places including the Amarnath cave and the Vaishno Devi temple, Kashmir is a shining example of India's pluralism and tenets of coexistence. From skiing to mountaineering, it offers immense possibility of adventure sports, a key revenue-generating tourism product. Ghalib and Naveed give us the hope that the future generating of the Kachmijis will regain and rectors the paradise. erations of the Kashmiris will regain and restore the paradise.

## Nature's fury

f Nature, by its mighty standards, decides to show that it is not in the least amused by man's irresponsibility and nonchalance, there can be unimaginable devastations. In recent times, environmentalists are getting more dismayed and anxious by natural catastrophes—they are even more exasperated that their warnings have been going in vain. 2017 will certainly be remembered for nature's anger that manifested itself in terrifying storms, hurricanes, wildfires, land and mudslides, high river levels, dormant volcanoes turning active, earthquakes and tornadoes yielding the most unpleasant of surprises. The trend has continued even in the first week and a half of 2018. California and its southern region is a case in point. The Governor of this West American State attributed the long-ranging wildfire, then the incessant rains followed by the raging mudslides, death and destruction, to the sea getting warmer and other manifestations of Climate Change. Someone like Al Gore who is famous for "An Inconvenient Truth" and its sequel can always turn around, shrug and say, "I told you so." For the last few decades, there have been enough warnings on the consequences of large-scale carbon emissions. These emissions have been the inevitable practice since Industrial Revolution. Now, they have assumed alarming proportions with greater industrial development. Add to this, the ever-growing and unmanageable human population. In 1800, the total world population was close to one billion. It grew to 7.6 billion in 2017 and, at this rate, it is likely to be climb close to more than eight billion in another three years. The more the people, the greater the demand for industrialisation, the lesser the green and forest cover, more depletion of natural resources and the worse. The celebrated Philosopher, Bertrand Russel, in his "Impact of Science on Society" tried to justify wars and natural catastrophes by arguing that these were the only way to check population. A modern day war with nuclear explosions would take a very heavy toll on both man and nature—that is why, before matters could get totally out of control, the Paris Climate Control Treaty came into being. Plenty of right-thinking countries were signatories. President Barack Obama played the leading role to show others the way. But matters changed as soon as his tenure ended. His successor, who was determined to remove the Obama legacy in every conceivable way, decided to look the other way. On Thursday, at the White House official media conference following the official meeting with the visiting Norwegian Prime Minister, President Trump declared that he would have nothing to do with the Paris accord on Climate Change because he was more committed to conventional fuel businesses like oil, gas and fossil fuel. When the Norwegian leader told him that their country depended on hydroelectric power for energy, he replied rather dismissively, "Good idea and good for you." The French President, Emmanuelle Macron, who is emerging as a very active leader of the Western world, is confident that he would be able to persuade his American counterpart to join others on the Paris Treaty. Here's hoping, even against hope, that he would succeed if only for man's survival against all odds.

## Bright prospects for 2018

The signs for investment growth in 2018 are positive as more funds flow in to industry



For domestic demand to be met from domestic production, it is essential that most of the cheap imports -from electric kettles to garden umbrellas and kitchen wares —be curbed. It could give a boost to domestic production and industries could start thinking of fresh investment to meet the surging demand

he World Bank had predicted higher growth for India in the next year. But that is not an isolated episode of global enthusiasm about the country's prospects. Earlier, credit rating agencies had upgraded India's investment worthiness. But for now, the World Bank study has indicated strong growth potential for India at plus-seven per cent for the next decade when China slows down. One can safely say that for a decade from now on, Índia should be the fastest-growing major economy, that is, unless the governments of the

day totally derail the process. But, growth presumes continuous investment. India had grown fast -at its highest at over eight per cent—when the investment rate was also very high. We have seen that plunge since. Along with the drop in investment rate, the overall growth rate has also slowed down. So then, the question is how do we sustain our investment levels from year to year.

Primarily, investment should rise when it is profitable for the investors; they see prospects of earning some money on their outlay. No one will invest for the sake of the country growing. It is the old Adam Smith rule that when everyone takes care of their own selfinterest overall societal development takes place. What are the conditions for fresh investments in the Indian econ-

First and foremost, the demand should be buoyant enough for industry to invest. Only when existing capacities are being used reasonably high, fresh investments can be forthcoming. The latest surveys indicate that capacities are not being used up satisfactorily and it is not as if output cannot be significantly increased without creating fresh capacity. The Index of Industrial Production and the sectoral capacity utilisation figures are showing just that.

Add to that, the production trends of the capital goods sector also are indicating that there is some slack in the economy. The capital goods sector can be used as a proxy for the level of investment, unless of course, all machinery and plant are being imported for industrial expansion. While it is true that some of the machinery items, particularly in the power and telecoms sectors, are being imported for balancing investment, other areas are not demanding



imported goods must be discouraged and local manufacturers encouraged

too much of fresh capital equipment. In some sectors of the economy, like ordinary consumer articles, a lot of domestic demand is being met by cheap imports from China. The huge trade deficit with that country, continuing for years now, simply indicates that. For domestic demand to be met from domestic production, it is essential that most of the cheap imports – from electric kettles to garden umbrellas and kitchen wares —which are all being imported, be curbed. It could give a boost to domestic production and industries could start thinking of fresh investment to meet

the surging demand. Second, the investment cycle could resume once more when funds are available and at reasonable rates. The bulging portfolio of non-performing assets of the major lenders is acting as a brake for the domestic industry. The bad debts on banks' balance sheets and the strict recognition norms now being implemented by the Reserve Bank of India have made the banks risk averse. First, they lack fresh free funds and second, they are being risk-averse and rather parking their funds in safe government bonds and undertaking treasury operations to remain profitable than offer their funds to borrowers.

Stressed balance sheets and the overburden of bad debts have skewed their

assets to liabilities ratios and they can hardly offer loans. So, the current programme of assets resolution of PSU banks -which have close to 85 per cent share in overall lending—should inject enough vitality to resume their core banking activities. The investment cycle could be expected to resume thereafter.

There are still some other positive developments which could help the process of private investment. The fledgeling corporate bonds market could work in disintermediation and channel funds directly into the corporate sector. While the development is too recent, yet it holds promise. There is a background to this. Since the demise of the so-called development finance institutions, namely the three development funding bodies Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI), Industrial Finance Corporation of India (IFCI) and the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI), long-term debt for project funding had withered away. Two of these turned into regular commercial banks and one had gone

In the absence of these DFIs, the industry was finding it difficult to get long-term project finance at reasonable rates. The commercial banks were giving mainly working capital loans and long-term loans could be raised from abroad

But only large companies could do that. Equity capital could then be the only

resource for funding long-term projects and it is not always possible to raise equity capital. Equity could be a costly form and it is also rather long-term in that you cannot raise equity for investment and wipe it out after a while. Debt funds are what is needed.

Corporate bond markets, once fully operational and liquid, could serve this function very well. The emphasis on developing India's domestic corporate bonds markets is a welcome move and could eventually meet industry's need for long-term debt funds effectively.

These are of course the financial aspects of investment. There are some physical areas as well. You cannot really invest unless the investment is really sought after. What is happening, however, in this country is that investment is deterred. Without getting land for setting up new factories or other facilities, no investment can happen however

much money is available. What is needed is a stable policy environment and commitment to basic economic goals. Without that, growth or development cannot happen even when that is the only way to raise the country to convert its potential.

(The views expressed are strictly personal)

Quote martial

The art of communication is the language of leadership

**JAMES HUMES** 

### A VERSATILE CM

As the first woman CM of West Bengal, Hon'ble Mamata Banerjee deserves praise for the D-Litt conferred upon her by the prestigious Kolkata University. Artistic affinity with which Mamata Banerjee developed herself amid her busy schedule, with regard to literature and painting, have already proven her excellence. Always encouraging art and people through lyceum, Mamata Banerjee has proven herself to be worthy of this award. Her perspicuous writings, musical pitch, and sense of painting have been admired by many. For a long time, she has been orienting herself with the intelligentsia in the country from whom she has learnt a lot.

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## Wearing patriotism on your sleeve There are a dozen things that should be made mandatory in order to show

true patriotism. Standing up for the National Anthem is not one of them



We are unpatriotic when we forget the social and secular fabric of India, when we enforce our views on people even though our Constitution awards various freedoms to individuals. We are unpatriotic when we spit out that despicable red 'paan/gutkha' masala on the walls of public offices

ow do we tell if someone is in love? Does he or she make public declarations of his undying affection? Nowadays, much of the declarations happen on social media anyway. How do we tell if someone is religious? Do they carry on their person various symbols of their faith? Not really, right? Love and religion are both personal. Some choose to flaunt it, others have a more silent expression of it. Neither can be seen through the singular spectrum of mass expression. If love and religion are expressed according to an individual's beliefs, how can expressions of patriotism be governmentally enforced?

A few days ago, I was at the vet's with probably over a dozen pet-parents and their fidgety pets. A movie playing on the telly had the National Anthem coming on. I stood up for it, some people looked at me curiously, but most continued with what they were doing. I consider myself a patriot; I believe in nationalism but not at the cost of forcing it down someone else's throat. I stand up for the National Anthem even in the privacy of my house; even when there is no one to watch me. It is my choice to do so. But does it make the rest any less patriotic?

On November 30, 2016, a bench of Justices Dipak Misra and Amitava Roy, had made it mandatory for the National Anthem to be played in cinema halls before the start of a movie and moviegoers would have to duly show respect by standing up. Did we really have to prove our patriotism before watching a movie? This week, the Supreme Court overturned the draconian order leaving it to the prerogative of the cinema halls. But the rider was that if the National Anthem is played then all, except people with disability, would have to stand up for it. Though the verdict was hailed as a victory for Kerala's Kodungallur Film Society (KFS) that had challenged the 2016 interim order, it still smacked of



Polluting roads and displaying civic sensibilities must be markers for judging patriotism

(Representational Image

judicially imparting patriotism among

Patriotism is best described as an attachment to one's homeland, its culture, its history, its diversity. It is not limited to showing respect to the National Anthem alone. I believe we are unpatriotic when we vandalise public property if our demands are not met. We are unpatriotic when we forget the social and secular fabric of India. When we enforce our views on people even though our Constitution awards various freedoms to individuals. We are unpatriotic when we spit out that despicable red 'paan/gutkha' masala on the walls of public offices; or when we urinate on the road even when there are public conveniences available. Or even when we desecrate monuments and old structures with graffiti. We are definitely not patriotic when we litter our roads and tourist attractions with all kinds of garbage. If that is not being unpatriotic, I do not know what else is.

Why not make civic sense mandatory as an expression of patriotism? Why not penalise all who disrespect the nation and its ethos by damaging its secular image, its heritage sites, its

public infrastructure? I would readily exhort people to follow these diktats rather than those ill-thought, myopic decisions such as making people stand up for the national song. Let us not be touchy about things that have little bearing on the ground. To improve the nation and our surroundings, and to show true patriotism, there are a dozen things that should be made mandatory; standing up for the National Anthem is not one of them.

(The writer is a journalist and media entrepreneur. The views expressed are strictly personal)

## Transforming the face of a Kingdom



**NILOVA ROY CHAUDHURY** 

The women of Saudi Arabia will be allowed to enter some of the country's sports stadiums, earlier an all-male preserve. A royal decree issued last September will allow women the right to drive in the country, beginning June. In further social transformations, the municipality

of the holy city

of Madinah will

be run by women

Under the firm leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salam, Saudi Arabia is denouncing its radical outlook to diversify its economy

here is a huge buzz through out Saudi Arabia as the hitherto conservative Kingdom - seen as the religious font of Islam and home to its holiest shrines - gets ready to welcome women into its sports stadiums beginning this holy Friday. The women of Saudi Arabia have entered 2018 with hope unlike ever before, for now, they will be allowed greater freedom and perhaps play select sports - and welcomingly, drive. These efforts to bring gender parity are among a series of sweeping social and economic changes being orchestrated by the young Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, to propel Saudi Arabia's position into a global leadership role in the 21st century.

The year 2017 was transformational for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with a series of initiatives designed to improve gender equality, promote economic diversification, root out corruption and make it more open and attractive to visitors. Behind a vast majority of these path-breaking initiatives was the motivation of Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the world's youngest defence minister, who, at 32, was elevated to the position of Crown Prince last June. The initiatives he has taken form a part of the "National Transformation Programme 2020" and the Kingdom's "Vision 2030", guidelines of which he had outlined last year.

The most momentous of these have been on gender equality. For the first time, girls in public schools will be allowed to play sports and receive physical education. The women of Saudi Arabia will be allowed to enter some of the country's sports stadiums, earlier an all-male preserve, while a royal decree issued last September will allow women the right to drive in the country, beginning June. In further social transformations, the municipality of the holy city of Madinah will be run by women. The women-only branch of the municipality will provide all the regular services offered by municipalities, including the issuance of licences for commercial activities and construction permits, inspection campaigns and investment opportunities, among others. These measures gained international recognition and Saudi Arabia was elected in 2017 to the UN Women's Rights Commission for a four-year term.



Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman is radically transforming deep-rooted Saudi ethos

Other than the major social impact, shrewd economic thoughts are behind these measures, as increasing women's participation in the workplace will boost the economy and combat corruption. The "National Transformation Programme 2020" aims to capitalise on the Kingdom's youth dividend by opening up the country to more employment opportunities through sports and entertainment and to empower women.

Opening the country to more entertainment, allowing musical concerts and even a Comic-Con event (a three-day festival of anime, pop art, video gaming and filmrelated events last year) was part of a wide-ranging boost to reform the

economy and society and restore what Prince Mohammed bin Salman called the "moderate" face of Islam. The plan involves changing the education curriculum, increasing women's participation in the workforce and investing in the entertainment and tourism sectors to create jobs for young people.

Equally far-reaching are the efforts to open up the Kingdom to outsiders, by offering tourist visas for foreigners, from this year, and creating facilities to promote the country as a tourist destination. The Red Sea project, which aims to offer an unparalleled tourist destination, will be developed along with leading global hospitality firms that will not be subject to the Kingdom's conservative rules. Over 18 million foreigners visited Saudi Arabia last year, almost all on pilgrimage to Mecca. As tourism is the country's second-most important sector, the Red Sea project will spearhead the diversification of the Saudi leisure industry.

Meanwhile, an ongoing nationwide anti-corruption drive culminated last November with the detention of four ministers, highprofile entrepreneurs and 11 princes, including a son of former King Abdullah and multi-billionaire Alwaleed bin Talal. This not only consolidated the Crown Prince's authority but clearly sent out a message that the royal family was not immune from facing the brunt of law. hitherto unthinkable in the King-

dom where the descendants of Ibn Saud were seen as a law unto themselves. That members of the royal family could no longer take their privileges for granted became more apparent when princes, protesting a cut in their water and electricity consumption payments, were taken into custody in the first week of 2018.

"Vision 2030" outlines the Crown Prince's intent to make the country the centre of the Islamic and Arab world, a hub connecting three continents and an economic and investment powerhouse. That Prince Mohammed bin Salman is King Salman's chosen successor and heads the Council for Economic Affairs and Development, which oversees the Kingdom's economic affairs and

also shapes its political and security policies, indicates that the manifold measures which he has initiated will be ultimately carried through. After taking over as Crown Prince in June 2017, Mohammed signalled his intent to fight radicalisation and combat terrorism, spearheading a boycott of Qatar over its alleged support to terrorism. In October, the prince said the return of "moderate Islam" was central to his plans to modernise the Kingdom.

After a horrific terrorist attack that killed over 300 people in Egypt, Mohammed declared a "war against terrorism" at the inaugural meeting of the 41-member Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC) in Riyadh in November saying, "We will not allow such elements to tarnish the image of Islam."

With global Climate Change measures intensifying moves towards less dependence on fossil fuels, the Crown Prince's Vision 2030 aims to drastically reduce the Kingdom's reliance on oil while reforming, diversifying and privatising the economy. The Crown Prince plans, this year, to sell about five per cent government stake in Aramco, the national oil company. He intends to create the world's largest sovereign wealth fund, worth up to \$3 trillion, with money generated by partially privatising Saudi Aramco. He also plans to create a \$500 billion business and industrial zone extending to Jordan and Egypt. The 26,500 sq km city, known as NEOM, will focus on industries including advanced manufacturing, biotechnology, energy, entertainment, food and water. It will be powered entirely by wind power and solar energy.

The country has also announced plans to build a massive entertainment city in Riyadh. The 334 sq km city, almost the size of Las Vegas, when ready, will offer cultural, entertainment and sporting activities. The Al-Qiddiya project will be a part of Saudi Arabia's diversification drive and subsequently boost economic development by creating major job opportunities for local men and women. The project perhaps best captures Prince Mohammed bin Salman's intent to radically transform the face of the Kingdom. IANS

(Nilova Roy Chaudhury is a senior journalist. The views expressed are strictly personal)

## **Catch-22 of Casteism**



aste conflict that

**KAVYA DUBEY** 

There is an implicit political need to perpetuate caste-based segregation. In several instances, caste leaders have indeed carved themselves a niche and have come much at par with the affluent. But their ascendance does not necessarily elevate the status of their community per se. The result is a fragmented vote bank

broke out recently t Bhima-Koregaon brings to the fore the one vexing concern that more than characterising the largely Hindu society of India, has been the flash point of Indian politics – at any level, at any given time. The symbolism of this celebrated historical event holds greater relevance today. The details of this episode point to the adherence to caste and communal identity, irrespective of the caste. When the fragile Maratha supremacy of the Peshwas was thwarted, it was this decisive (and very significant in modern times) Battle of Koregaon that led to the dissolution of the Maratha confederacy. The victory memorial

of this battle conspicuously acknowledges the Mahars in this crucial event. Historically an Untouchable community, the Mahars, given their traditional roles, attained a higher status among their class primarily owing to the security services they provided, among others. Mahars were degraded and resigned to the status of Untouchable during the reign of the Peshwas. It was under the British that the Mahar community woke up to its potential to rise and advance. They had a low-status but an important role to play in the traditional village system. Eventually, when many from this community migrated to the city, they turned to new occupation and worked in mills, docks, and railways. Inevitably, they aspired for higher status and

This community also lent its service to various armies over centuries. Adding to the evolution of this community, the British also recruited them heavily (until the Revolt of 1857). After 1857, the nar-



Scene of protest in Mumbai following riots in Bhima-Koregaon when two caste groups clashed over claims about a two-century-old historical event

rative changed. The British floated the 'Martial Race' theory which classified (discriminated) castes into martial and non-martial categories. To gain better control over India, this play for social appeal was much akin to the traditional varna (caste/class-based division) system of the Hindu society which acknowledges Kshatriya as the natural warrior in the social order. This reinstated some value to the defeated Peshwas. Besides, the conflicts within various parallel communities were ideal for the British to capitalise on the 'Martial Race' pretext and bring them under their fold.

This entire story serves a lesson. The connotation of such power play and clash goes beyond the narrow lines of communal conflict and stretches of time in history. As much as Caste is a communal identity, it is also a tool to sustain discrimination on any basis whatsoever. It is thus deployed as an organised method of marginalisation, subjugation, and oppression aimed primarily at the consolidation of the positions of the powers that be. It is hence, very much an instrument of power play which continues to be necessary in the present times. The spill-over of caste politics in recent times has added a novel texture to politics palpable on the national front.

There is an implicit political need to perpetuate caste-based segregation. In the fervour to break free from caste inequality and bring it at par with the 'forward' caste groups, new leaders have emerged to take the centre-stage but only to be supported by their respective caste groups largely. In several instances, these caste leaders have indeed carved themselves a niche and brought themselves much at par with the affluent in most economic aspects. But the ascendance of the leaders does not necessarily elevate the status of their community per se. The result is a fragmented vote bank. The Bhima-Koregaon episode asserted to be an orchestrated event is sufficiently explanatory of electoral motives for 2019.

Oppression, from historic times, as a method associated with caste, is a result of the malpractice to consolidate social power and position. Given the absence of any real compensation to the communities for ages of oppression they had been subjected to, the Band-Aid method of Reservation remains a matter that is literally politically untouchable. Caste groups are here to stay and caste is a ready identity up for exploitation by anyone depending on the purpose. A possible antidote to this is social inclusiveness and enabling individuals to come at a platform of equal opportunities; by way of celebrating the diversity of the Indian society despite the terror of Hindutva.

Interestingly, Mahar Regiment of the Indian Army is the only regiment that is composed of troops from all regions and communities of India, unlike other regiments which have some specifications with regard to recruitment. This is when the Military does not recognise the Indian government's Reservation system for recruitment! So, when casteism becomes a method of politics, does that not amount to anti-national?

(The author is Senior Copy Editor with Millennium Post. The views *expressed are strictly personal*)







PRASHANT BHUSHAN @pbhushan1

Truly unprecedented! Kudos to 4 seniormost judges of SC who addressed a Press Conf today to apprise the people about the extraordinary abuse of 'master of roster' powers by CJI in selectively assigning politically sensitive cases to hand picked junior judges for desired



KARUNA NUNDY

Proud of a court where four of the top five have the constitutional spine to speak of transparency and predictability in allocating cases. Had Justice HR Khanna not stood up during the Emergency, our constitutional identity would have been very different.



YASHWANT SINHA @YashwantSinha

What the judges are hinting at is loud and clear. Hope we get at the truth of Judge Loya's death.



**SANJAY JHA** @JhaSanjay

Dear Indian media; now is your time to stand up and fight to preserve Indian democracy. Let the men and the boys stand segregated.

## Trump blames 'shithole' countries for illegal immigrants to US

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump has expressed frustration over efforts of some US lawmakers to protect immigrants from Haiti and African countries, asking why America should accept citizens from "shithole" countries, triggering

Trump met senators and congressmen and pushed for immigrants from certain Asian countries who help America

"Why are we having all these people from shithole countries come here?" Trump was quoted by multiple media

The president was referring to African countries and Haiti, and then suggested the US should welcome immigrants from places like Norway, whose prime minister met with Trump on Wednesday.

His comments, which has been slammed by Democratic



by The Washington Post.

Trump, according to a White House official, also suggested he would be open to more immigrants from Asian countries because he felt they help the US economically,

The report said. Notably, Trump has been calling for merit-based immigration, of which people from countries like India could be a major benlawmakers, was first reported eficiary. Trump said this during status of people from certain

a bipartisan meeting of law-

makers in his Oval Office. "Certain Washington politicians choose to fight for foreign countries, but President Trump will always fight for the American people," said Raj Shah, the Principal Deputy White House Press Secretary without directly

referring to Trump's comments. Trump has been seeking to end temporary protection

lawmakers slammed Trump for his comments and described them as racist comment. "President Trump's com-

ments are racist and a disgrace. They do not reflect our nation s values. Immigrants from throughout the world of all races, nationalities, and religions have built this country and are contributing today to its improvement," said House Democratic Whip Steny H Hoyer. "These comments clearly reflect the President's true feelings on immigrants and make it extremely doubtful that he will work in an honest, decent way that reflects America s best values on legislation to protect DREAMers," Hoyer

"As an American, I am ashamed of the president. His comments are disappointing, unbelievable, but not surprising." alleged Democratic Congressman Luis Gutierrez.AGENCIES

WASHINGTON: There is a

slim chance of the first death-

row Indian-American pris-

oner being executed on the

scheduled date of February 23

because of a 2015 moratorium

on death penalty by Pennsyl-

vania Governor, officials said

uri, 32, in 2014 was given

death penalty for kidnap-

ping and killing a 61-year-old

elderly Indian woman and her

It was seen as part of a

"Our Governor has said

"I want you to know this

10-month grand-daughter.

botched kidnapping-for-ran-

that should an inmate not be

issued a stay of execution by a

court, he will issue a reprieve.

because the likelihood of the

execution taking place is slim,"

Sue McNaughton, Communi-

cations Director, Pennsylva-

nia Department of Corrections

som plot.

Raghunandan Yandam-

## UN calls Trump's Africa comment 'shameful'

GENEVA: The UN human rights office says President Donald Trump's reported use of an expletive to describe Africa and other countries could "potentially damage and disrupt the lives of many

Repeating the term attributed to Trump a day earlier, spokesman Rupert Colville says that "you cannot dismiss entire countries and continents as 'shitholes."

Colville said on Friday that the comments, if confirmed, were "shocking and shameful" and "I'm sorry, but there's no other word one can use but

He says Trump's reported



by potentially fanning xenophobia: "It legitimises the targeting of people based on who they are?

"This isn't just a story about vulgar language, it's about opening the door to humanity's worst side," he said.

Colville says Trump's reported comments "go against the universal values the world has been striving so hard to establish since World War II and the Holocaust."

## **US hopes Pak would** 'turn over' terrorists

today hoped that Pakistan would honour its commitment and do the "right thing" by turning over the terrorists to it, a Trump administration official

"I have a feeling, I am hopeful that Pakistan will do the right thing and turn over the terrorists and honour their commitment," Steven Goldstein, the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs told reporters at a news conference. Responding to questions,

Goldstein said the US has so far not heard from Pakistan on its reported decision to suspend its military and intelligence cooperation with it in retaliation of the Trump administration's decision to freeze all its security assistance.

"We would hope that Pakistan would come to the table and that they would turn over those terrorists that we have asked be turned over. We've indicated very clearly that we believe that can happen," Gold-

he said, has only suspended the aid; and the money has not been reallocated. "So now it is the job of Pakistan to take seriously their commitment to us, and most importantly to the people of Pakistan who would most be hurt by this, by any terrorist activity, and come forward. So, our position hasn't changed. They have not yet come forward," Goldstein

At a separate news conference, the Pentagon said that Pakistan has the ability to address terrorist threat inside the country.

"We believe that Pakistan has the ability to address this threat," Pentagon chief spokesperson Dana White told reporters at a news conference.

"This is an opportunity for them to take decisive action, and we look forward to working with them to encourage them to do so," White said in response to a question on recent development on US-Pak

## 'N Korea steps up tunnelling Execution of Indianat nuclear test site'

SEOUL: North Korea has stepped up tunnelling at its main nuclear test site, a US think tank said, even as tensions cool on the peninsula following the resumption of long-stalled inter-Korean

Satellite images showed increased activity at the Punggye-ri site, with mining carts and personnel frequently visible, and excavation waste piles growing, the respected 38North website said on Thursday.

"These activities underscore North Korea's continued efforts to maintain the Punggye-ri site's potential for future nuclear testing," it said.

The last five of Pyongyang's six nuclear tests have been carried out under Mount Mantap at Punggye-ri in the country's north-west, all of them at the North Tunnel. After a series of small earthquakes in the area, 38North said last October that the site may be suffering from the geological condition "Tired

elderly woman was killed.

ceasefire in Kot Kotera Sector.

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday summoned

India's acting deputy high commissioner over

alleged "unprovoked firing" by Indian troops

The Foreign Office claimed that a 65-year

Director general (South Asia and Saarc)

old woman was killed in Peer Khana village

yesterday after Indian troops violated the

Mohammad Faisal summoned the acting

Indian deputy high commissioner and "con-

demned the unprovoked ceasefire violations"

by Indian forces on January 11, the statement

continues to indulge in ceasefire violations."

He said "despite calls for restraint, India



Mountain Syndrome".

The syndrome refers to the effect of below-ground nuclear blasts on the surrounding rock, which is extensively fractured and becomes increasingly permeable. The latest pictures indicated the North Tunnel was "dormant" with water draining from its entrance, but that "tunnel excavation has been stepped up at the West Portal". Elsewhere at the site there was unusual activity with some 100-120 personnel lined up in formation in the courtyard,

Pak summons Indian envoy over 'ceasefire violation'

The images were taken in December, shortly before North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un gave a New Year speech warning US President Donald Trump of a "nuclear button" on his desk, while also offering to hold talks with Seoul.

The olive branch led to the first official dialogue between the two Koreas in more than two years, and an agreement for Pyongyang to send a delegation to next month's Winter Olympics in the South. AGENCIES

This unprecedented escalation in ceasefire

He said the ceasefire violations by India are

violations by India is continuing from the year

2017 when the Indian forces committed more

than 1900 ceasefire violations. Faisal claimed.

a "threat to regional peace and security and

may lead to a strategic miscalculation." AGENCIES

Last week, the Department of Correction signed an execution order that Yandamuri be executed through leth

tion on February 23. Yes, he knows about it. In fact, the official document was read to him at his cell door on the same date the notice was signed," McNaughton said in response to a question.

A native of Andhra Pradesh, Yandamuri had come to the US on a H-1B visa.

He holds an advanced degree in electrical and computer science engineering.

### likely to be deferred Last week, the Department of **Correction signed** an execution order that Yandamuri be executed through

lethal injection on

February 23.

origin prisoner

Following his conviction, he asked that death penalty be imposed upon him.

Later he appealed his sentence, but lost his appeal last Yandamuri is currently

lodged in Greene State Correc-

tional Institution, a maximum-

security prison in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania. However, McNaughton refused to discuss Yandamuri's health due to confidentiality reasons and a law that prohib-

its sharing such information. Now that an execution is signed, Yandamuri can only meet his immediate family itual advisor.

According to State officials, Yandamuri's execution could very well be delayed for long as no one knows when the moratorium on it would be lifted.

State officials are awaiting the results of a study conducted by the Pennsylvania Task Force and Advisory Committee on Capital Punishment, before moving forward with any exe-

## Japan to provide \$3 million to Myanmar for Rohingya return BANGKOK: Japanese's foreign

minister today urged Myanmar's civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi to guarantee the safe and voluntary return of Rohingya Muslims who have fled violence in troubled Rakh-While Foreign Minister

Taro Kono is visiting Myanmar, the Japanese government announced a grant of 3 million to Myanmar's government to help facilitate the repatriation of the Rohingya. Myanmar and Bangladesh signed an agreement on the repatriation of Rohingya refugees on Nov. 23, and Myanmar said it would start the process by Jan 23. The exact numbers and extent of the repatriation is still unclear.

"We have decided to provide the aid in response to the agreement between Myanmar and Bangladesh to represent an international message of support so that the repatriation can be carried out promptly," said Foreign Ministry official Shinobu Yamaguchi in a statement. Kono's three-day visit to Myanmar includes traveling to implementation of recommen-



Rakhine state.

Humanitarian groups and independent media are prohibited from traveling to the area freely. More than 650,000 Rohingya have fled to neighboring Bangladesh to escape a brutal crackdown in which security forces have been accused of systematic abuses tantamount to ethnic cleansing.

During a meeting today, Kono asked Suu Kyi's government to allow humanitarian and media access to the affected area, the resettlement of returned refugees, and the

dations made by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Kono also said Japan plans

to give further aid to improve humanitarian conditions and development in Rakhine state. "We are thankful to Japan for its willingness to support

and long term," Suu Kyi said at the joint news conference. Yamaguchi stressed that

the needs both for short term

Japan will monitor how the repatriation will be carried out. "The money will be paid in a

timely mann on the progress of repatriation, Yamaguchi added.

### Turkey tells citizens to reconsider travelling to US

ANKARA: Turkey has warned its citizens about traveling to the United States, in retaliation for a new US travel advisory about Turkey.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry on Friday urged citizens to reconsider travel plans to the United States, citing a series of terror attacks, violent incidents and "arbitrary arrests" an apparent reference to a Turkish banker who was arrested

India a heaven for photographers:



victed of helping Iran avoid US The travel warning came

urged its citizens to reconsider travel to Turkey, citing terror threats and arbitrary detentions under an ongoing state of emergency. The two NATO allies have

days after the United States

seen their ties deteriorate since a coup attempt in 2016 that the Turkish government blames on US-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen. Gulen denies

## Mallya granted bail till **Apr 2 in extradition case**

LONDON: The UK judge presiding over the extradition trial of Vijay Mallya has granted bail to the embattled liquor baron till April 2 as she heard arguments from the defence against the admissibility of evidence presented by the Indian government.

The extradition trial, which opened at the London court on December 4, is aimed at laying out a prima facie case of fraud against the tycoon, who has been based in the UK since he left India in March, 2016. Mallva was arrested by

Scotland Yard on an extradition warrant in April, 2017 and has been out on bail on a bond worth 650,000 pounds. Mallya's hearing yesterday

was expected to be one of the final hearings in the case but it remained inconclusive as the defence is yet to complete its arguments, which seek to demolish the Indian government's case.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) is expected to respond at the next hearing itself after the defence concludes its arguments. That hearing date is yet to be determined but expected within the

next three weeks. The 62-year-old was back



in the dock at Westminster Magistrates' Court in London as his defence team laid out arguments against the admissibility of much of the evidence presented by the Indian government.

Due to prior diary commitments, no date has been set for the next hearing on the matter and Mallya has been bailed until April 2. Both sides will determine a date to return to court to complete their representations on the admissibility of evidence in the case within the next three weeks.

During Thursday s hearing, Mallya's barrister, Clare Montgomery, argued that evidence that was claimed as a "blueprint of dishonesty" by the CPS was in fact a privileged conversation between Mallya and his lawyer about "legal advice in clear contemplation of litigation" and hence should be inadmissible. On a separate category

of evidence presented by the Indian government, Montgomery questioned the reliability of the investigating officers in

She pointed to over 150 pages of "near identical material" purporting to be statements of witnesses taken under Section 161 of the Indian CrPC.

Dismissing the nature and source of these witness statements, Mallya's legal team claimed they do not meet "obligations" under the India-UK extradition treaty to provide "proper" statements. AGENCIES

### Egyptian shutterbugs CAIRO: It was in 2001 that Egyptian photographer Ashraf Talaat visited India for the first time, and since then, he has made 16 trips to the country,

making it almost an annual ritual. Having visited and taken pictures in 52 countries, Talaat says no country

"inspired" him more than India. 'India is the most inspiring country. I took so many photographs there... more than any other country," he says. The photographer, who works with the National Geographic Magazine, was speaking at a recently held seminar on the sidelines of an exhibition -- "Colours of India" at the Egyptian Centre for International Cultural Cooperation in

Zamalek. "The north of India was a rich area for me as a photographer," said Talaat, whose photography expedition ranged across the colourful cities of Jodhpur and Jaipur in Rajasthan. The exhibition also features works by photographers Mona Abdel Karim, Ahmed Hayman and Ayman Gamal Eldin.

While Abdel Karim captures moments of Indian cultural celebrations in different venues across Egypt, Hayman's pictures draw parallels between the lives on the streets of India and his homeland.

Hayman who ventured into Chandni Chowk in Old Delhi, documented the quintessential elements of the bazaar like the spice market, and tuk-tuk driv-



With the wide range of subjects that the market has to offer,

Hayman admits he was spoilt for choice. 'It was a challenge to take pictures in India. Everything is worth a photograph... there are so many colours and characters.

"I had to absorb everything and then decide what I wanted to photograph," the photojournalist said.

Albeit Abdel Karim's collection

is dominated by photographs clicked in Egypt, the editor of Sawtulhind magazine calls India a "heaven for photographers".

"India has countless cultural colours as it features different art forms like dance, music and cinema. It is undoubtedly a heaven for photographers," she said. Eldin, founder of 'View finders photography club," however, chose to shine a light on the "essence" of the country's people and places by clicking India in monochrome

"It was a daring decision to take photos of the 'country of colours' in black and white," the freelance photographer said. Also attending the seminar was Sanjay Bhattacharya, India's Ambassador to Cairo, who called the show, "very exciting", as he praised the way the photographers reflected India in

### All jewels stolen from **Paris's Ritz** recovered

PARIS: All jewels worth millions of euros stolen from shops in Paris's landmark Ritz hotel have been recovered. a source close to the case said on Friday. Some of the loot was recovered on Thursday after the arrest of three of the thieves as they tried to flee the hotel and the rest was in a "bag seized on Thursday by police,' the source said. The gems and watches stolen were thought to be worth over four million euros (USD 4.8 million). The hotel was first opened

## Trump cancels UK visit, blames Obama

LONDON: Donald Trump has cancelled a "working visit" to the UK planned for next month to officially launch a new US embassy, blaming a "bad deal" struck by the previous Obamaadministration to relocate the base from central London to an "off location".

The US president launched his attack on Twitter against the embassy's move from Grosvenor Square in the posh Mayfair area of the city to Nine Elms, south of the Thames, in a 1.2 billion dollar project.

He wrote: "Reason I cancelled my trip to London is that I am not a big fan of the Obama administration having sold perhaps the best located and finest embassy in London for 'peanuts', only to build a new one in an off location for 1.2 billion dollars. Bad deal. Wanted me to cut ribbon-NO!".

US Secretary of State Rex



Tillerson will now step in for the launch of the new embassy site, which will open to staff on

The short visit by Trump in February was not the full State Visit proposed by British Prime Minister Theresa May on the invitation of Queen Elizabeth II, for which no date has yet been set.

Downing Street has

The new building will open on January 16. Citing security and envi-

was still the president.

ronmental reasons, the US State Department had agreed to sell the current embassy building in Grosvenor Square to the Qatari Diar Real Estate Investment Co, which intends to turn it into a luxury hotel.

On the embassy web page about the project, it said: "The project has been funded entirely by the proceeds of the sale of other US Government properties in London, not through appropriated funds".

Trump had also been scheduled to hold talks with Theresa May in No 10 Downing Street, with February 26 and 27 marked in the diary for

Downing Street had hoped to announce the dates this

## **Macron tells Trump to** respect Iran nuclear deal

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron told US counterpart Donald Trump on Friday that it is important for all signatories to respect the landmark Iran nuclear agreement, the French leader's office

Macron, during a phone call with Trump, stressed France's determination to see "the strict application of the deal and the importance of all the signatories to respect it," the Elysee Palace said of the 2015 accord.

President Trump, who openly despises the deal, is soon to decide whether or not to renew sanctions against

The White House said Trump had "underscored that Iran must stop its destabilising activity in the region."

On Friday, Trump is expected to announce that he continues to regard remaining in the Iran nuclear deal not to be in US interests. He first announced this in October

WASHINGTON: Leading immigrant rights activist Ravi

from Trinidad and Tobago,

was arrested on Friday during

ment (ICE) and ordered

local community in New York.

porters, including several

Îndian-Americans, gathered

outside the Jacob Javits Fed-

eral Building where he was

munity leader, a loving father,

and a steadfast immigrant

unwarranted and reflects the

Trump administration's preda-

tory behavior in New York City

immediately," said Congress-

man Joe Crowley, a top Demo-

of the New Sanctuary Coali-

tion of NYC, was detailed by

ICE authorities during a rou-

Ravi must be released

Ragbir, executive director

Soon thereafter hundreds

Ragbir arrived in the US

and across the country.

"Ravi is an acclaimed com-

His detention is entirely

detained

rights activist.

cratic leader.

tine check-in.

A large number of his sup-



and under the US Iran Nuclear Agreement Act (INARA) of 2015 he is supposed to inform Congress every 90 days.

One of the criticisms levelled at the nuclear deal is that it does nothing to address Iran's continuing ballistic missile programme and meddling in Middle East conflicts such as Yemen and Syria.

The French presidency stressed that the nuclear deal must be accompanied by reinforced dialogue with Tehran on both issues. Macron also brought up the issues of North Korea, following his recent visit

**Indian-descent activist arrested** 

in US, faces deportation

### **Trump likely** to meet **French prez** in Davos: WH

WASHINGTON DC: US President Donald Trump is likely to meet his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron at the WEF meeting in Davos later this month, the White House said. The two leaders also spoke over phone ahead of their Davos meeting. During the call, Trump underscored that Iran must stop its "destabilizing

activity".

## PLA steps up drills in plateau region post-Dokalam: Media

Chinese military have stepped up drills at home and abroad focusing their training on the plateau region post Dokalam, the official media reported on

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been executing military training instructions issued by President Xi Jinping on January 3 by conducting drills at home and abroad involving its ground forces, Navy, Air Force, rocket (missile) force and armed police, it said.

The People's Liberation Army's official media cautioned the troops on Thursday of imminent threats and to avoid complacency. The drills included by the Chinese navy at Djibouti base in the Indian Ocean, which was officially stated to be a logistics base.

The PLA Daily, official mouthpiece of the 2.3 million strong military, said China's most advanced military aircraft including the J-20 stealth fighter jet, the Y-20 transport aircraft, the H-6k bomber, and the J-16, J-11B J-10C fighter iets have all conducted train-

The J-20 is conducting air fighter planes including the tified, was quoted as saying by



J-16. The J-20 is also practising bevond-visual-range air combat, and other aircraft, including the Y-20 and the J-10C, are training at unspecified airports on a "plateau region" in order to improve their capability in long-range military transport and air combat, the PLA Daily

The "plateau region" refers to the Tibetan plateau which covered a long Line of Actual Control (LAC) between India and China.

"India's ground force has some advantages in quantity in the border areas, so if conflict happens, China's air force needs to seize domination of the skies and immediately crefor China," a retired PLA officer who used to serve in the air

the Global Times.

"So increasing military training in the plateau region is highly necessary," he said. The drills assumed signif-

icance as potential military conflicts in plateau regions have been on the rise since the border friction with India last year, the official said. China and İndia were engaged in a 73-day tense standoff at Dokalam in the Sikkim sector which ended on August 28.

The report highlighted a potential military conflict between India and China in the backdrop of hectic parleys between the two countries to improve relations. This included Chinese Foreign Minwith top Indian officials on the sidelines of Russia, India and combat training with other force and asked not to be iden- China meeting at New Delhi

## Bangladeshi bomber pleads not guilty in subway attack

Bangladeshi bomber Akayed Ullah has pleaded not guilty to the charges of detonating a homemade explosive device at a busy transit ĥub in New York City last month.

declined to comment on

Trump's cancellation of the

claim that the visit was can-

celled amid fears of mass pro-

tests as the embassy's plan to

move from Mayfair to Nine

Elms in London pre-dated the

Barack Obama administration

and was first reported in Octo-

ber 2008, when George W Bush

Sections of the UK media

working visit to the UK.

Ullah, 27, faces a litany of charges in the December 11 bombing in an underground walkway connecting two subway lines beneath the Port Authority Bus terminal.

When Manhattan Federal Judge Richard Sullivan asked Ullah his plea, he replied, "At this moment, not guilty." This was his first appear-

ance before a New York court. Days after his arrest he had appeared through video conference. Ullah faces life in prison if convicted of the attack

He was also injured in the explosion, and has been in federal custody since his arrest.

that injured five persons.

On Wednesday, a federal grand jury indicted Ullah with one count of providing and attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State and one count of using and attempting to use a weapon of

He has also been charged with one count each of bombing and attempting to bomb a migration and diversity lottery place of public use and a public

WASHINGTON: Accused transportation system; destruction and attempted destruction of property by means of fire or explosives; conducting and attempting to conduct a terrorist attack against a mass

> ment Akayed Ullah constructed a pipe bomb and detonated it in a mass transit hub in the heart of New York City to terrorise as many people as possible and to bring ISISinspired violence to American soil," said Acting Assistant

> Authorities said the explosion was an isolated attempted terrorist attack.

> Ullah posted on Facebook earlier in the day of the attack, "Trump you failed to protect your nation," according to a criminal complaint.

> He is expected back in conference. Ullah migrated from Ban-

> a family visa. uncle, who came to the US

through diversity lottery visa. Donald Trump has been

Ragbir, an Indian-descent a routine check-in with Immigration and Customs Enforcetransportation system. "As alleged in the indictimmediate deportation, irking

Attorney General Dana Boente.

court on April 13 for a status

gladesh some six years ago on He was sponsored by his

immigration building in downpushing for end to chain town New York City to show solidarity with Ragbir.

### from Trinidad and Tobago in 1991 on a visitor's visa. He became a lawful permanent resident in 1994.

According to New York Immigration Coalition, Ragbir has lived with the threat of deportation for nearly a decade, as the result of a 16-year old

conviction for wire fraud. He was placed into removal proceedings in 2006 and spent 22 months in immigration detention before being released in February 2008.

During immigration detention and since his release, Ragbir has worked tirelessly to end the use of immigration detention, stop deportations,

Previously, ICE officials had granted Ragbir prosecutorial discretion, including a stay of

removal that was in effect until next week.

Known as a fixture in the immigrant rights movement, Ragbir was awarded the 2017 Immigrant Excellence Award by the New York State Association of Black and Puerto Rican Legislators, given to those who show "deep commitment to the enhancement of their community."

ICE justified its decision and said he will remain in custody pending removal to Trinidad. "Over the last 12 years, Mr.

Ragbir's immigration case has undergone extensive judicial review at multiple levels of the nation's judicial gration courts and federal appeals courts," said Rachael Yong Yow, ICE public affairs

## Venezuela government, opposition in fresh talks on crisis

SANTO DOMINGO (DR): Delegates from the Venezuelan government and opposition met on Friday in the Dominican Republic for a third round of talks on resolving the country's protracted crisis ahead of this year's presidential election.

The two-day meeting, on the neutral ground of the Dominican Republic, comes after the government of President Nicolas Maduro threatened to ban key opposition parties from the

The opposition, in turn, threatened to resume street protests which cost the lives of 125 people last year.

The atmosphere was tense as

the talks got under way.

The head of the government delegation, communications minister Jorge Rodriguez, accused the opposition of paying lip service to the talks while planning to "return to the strategy of violence." "We do not need to go to the

Dominican Republic if they do not want to," he said on the eve of the talks. "Go to the streets. We will wait for them in the

Juan Andres Mejia of the Popular Will opposition party was pessimistic.

"Ît seems to be in the air that we will not be able to advance," said Mejia, whose party leader of which has yet to be set.



Leopoldo Lopez is under house arrest. He said the negotiations will only work if the government commits to free and fair presidential elections, the date

Maduro insisted the talks could yield a "preliminary deal," saying in a national address that he had instructed his negotiators to make progress.

"Let's not give the opposition

any excuses to run off looking for violence," he said.

Venezuela's all-powerful Constituent Assembly, loyal to Maduro, has ordered the three main opposition parties to re-register with the National Electoral Council (CNE) in order to take part in the presidential election.

The rule was imposed after the parties boycotted mayoral elections in December, saying they lacked transparency. The opposition want the

government to recognise their call for a more neutral CNE, international observers at the polls, the release of political prisoners and a later timeline

for the election. However, analysts believe it is likely the election will be in the first half of the year, as Maduro will seek to take advantage of opposition disarray evident in a string of electoral defeats late last year.

The government is demanding opposition recognition of the Constituent Assembly, set up by Maduro last year at the height of the opposition campaign to depose him. It has ruled with absolute powers since August.

Adding to the uncertainty around the talks, two of the countries that brokered them are threatening to pull out of the process: Mexico

India gives USD 45.27 mn aid to

develop KKS harbour in Lanka

### 6.0-magnitude quake hits Myanmar YANGON: A strong 6.0-mag-

nitude earthquake hit a remote region of central Myanmar early on Friday, the US Geological Survey said.

The shallow quake struck some 40 kilometres west of the town of Pyu, the USGS said. It was followed by three weaker tremors in the region, all of magnitudes 5.3, the survey reported. "There is a low likelihood of casualties and damage," USGS said, but noted that residential structures in the region are typically vulnerable to earthquake shaking. The epicentre was located in a sparsely populated region between the capi-

tal Naypyidaw to the north and commercial hub Yangon to the south, at least 150 kilometres from each.

Earthquakes are relatively common in Myanmar, where six strong quakes of 7.0 magnitude or more struck between 1930 and 1956 near the Sagaing Fault, which runs north to south through the centre of the country, according to the USGS.

A powerful 6.8-magnitude earthquake in the ancient capital Bagan in central Myanmar killed three people in 2016, also toppling spires and crumbling temple walls at the tourist des-

## Russia dismisses Democratic US Senate report as unfounded

MOSCOW: The Kremlin has dismissed a new report by US Senate Democrats describing Russian interference in the US and throughout Europe as unfounded and President Vladimir Putin accused the United States of "aggressive" overreaction. Some European politicians said they are mindful of Mos-

cow's meddling. The 200-page report commissioned by Sen. Ben Cardin of Maryland, the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, is the first from Congress to detail alleged Russian efforts to undermine democracies since the 2016 US presidential election.

Commenting on the report, Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said that "the accusations of alleged meddling levelled

against our country are absolutely unfounded."

Speaking in a conference call Thursday with reporters, Peskov said that "such paranoid concerns not only hurt bilateral relations, but the US itself." "When it grows into an

obsession, it doesn't create comfortable conditions for normal social development and life," Speaking at a televised meeting with Russian newspaper editors, Putin pointed at what

he described as US meddling in other countries' affairs, adding that "if they poke their nose everywhere they must be able to respond to certain challenges they provoke themselves."

"But please don't interpret it like a recognition of our meddling, we haven't meddled," he added. "I want to underline again -- it's sheer nonsense. There has been no collusion. no interference on our part."

"No one likes interference in their internal political issues and affairs; our American friends especially do not like it," Putin said. "We see their reaction to unreliable information about our intervention, how sharp it is, I would even say how aggressive it is.'

The Russian leader didn't specifically mention the Car-

din report. No Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee signed on to Cardin's inquiry, which directly blamed Putin for a "relentless assault to undermine democracy and the rule of law in Europe and the United

extended a fresh financial assistance of USD 45.27 million for upgrading Kankesanthurai (KKS) Harbour in northern Sri Lanka into a commercial port and strengthening the country's efforts to become a

regional maritime hub. Sri Lanka s Ministry of Finance and Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) signed an agreement in this regard on January 10, the Indian High Commission said. "An agreement for Indian

financial assistance for USD

45.27 million (LKR 6.9 billion)

for upgrading Kankesanthu-

rai (KKS) Harbour was signed

on January 10 in New Delhi by David Rasquinha, Managing Director, Export-Import Bank of India and RHS Samaratunga, Secretary to Treasury of Sri Lanka," the statement said.

The upgradation project would make KKS Harbour a full- fledged commercial port, further strengthening Sri Lanka s efforts to become a regional maritime hub, the statement said. It would also assist in recon-

struction efforts in northern Sri Lanka. In terms of the MoU

India s grant assistance. between India and Sri Lanka for rehabilitation of KKS Harbour, four out of the six phases



of the rehabilitation have cal studies, wreck removal and already been completed under disposal, dredging and hydrographic survey.

This includes preparation of The fresh assistance of USD Detailed Project Report (DPR), 45.27 million would be used works related to Geo-technifor the remaining two phases

involving works relating to the rehabilitation of the breakwater and existing pier, construction of a new pier for commercial cargo handling, installation of port infrastructure facilities, "The signing of the MoU is a reflection of the continued commitment of Government

of India to assist Sri Lanka in its development journey," the statement said. The KKS port was ren-

dered useless after the LTTE

attacked it during the civil war. The port was key in connecting the Jaffna peninsula with the rest of Sri Lanka and also

**Idea-Vodafone deal:** 

**NCLT** gives final nod

to \$23 billion merger

!dea

## Retail inflation in Dec shoots up to 5.21%, dashes rate cut hopes

NEW DELHI: Retail inflation crossed the RBI's comfort level and rose to 5.21 per cent in December on rise in prices of food items, egg and vegetables, dashing hopes of interest rate cut in the near future.

The retail inflation, based on Consumer Price Index (CPI), was 4.88 per cent in November. In December 2015, it was 3.41 per cent. The Reserve Bank has been asked by the government to keep inflation at 4 per cent, plus or minus 2 per cent, and its rise beyond the comfort zone will put pressure on the central bank not to cut interest rate (repo rate).

As per the data released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), inflation for the food basket increased to 4.96 per cent in December from 4.42 per cent in the preceding month. The data revealed that eggs, vegetables and fruits became costlier, while inflation moderated in case of cereals and pulses.

The Reserve Bank of India held its policy rate steady at 6.0 percent last month and said all possibilities were on the table, depending on how price pressures and growth panned out.

The RBI, which has a medium-term inflation target of 4 percent, has raised its inflation estimate to 4.3 percent to 4.7 percent for the six months through March. But some ana-

#### Nov factory output growth Consumer Price Inflation December 2017 Annual rate of inflation based on **Consumer Price Index** Base: 2012=100 Cereals and products 2.57 Meat & fish 4.22 Eggs 9.48 Milk and products 4.37 Oils and fats 1.43 Fruits Vegetables -23.47 Sugar and confectionery Spices -2.21 Non-alcoholic beverages Prepared meals 4.71 snacks, sweets etc. 4.85 Food and beverages Pan, tobacco and 7.76 figures)

4.80

8.25

December 2017: 5.21%

December 2016: 3.41%

ister Narendra Modi ahead of

his last full-year budget, due

on Feb. 1, as he hopes to win a

largest economy is expected

to grow at 6.5 percent in the

current fiscal year ending in

March, a continued rise in infla-

tion from 1.46 percent in June,

the lowest on record since 2012.

has alarmed policymakers in

While the world's seventh

second term in 2019.

**KBK Info**graphics

lysts feel inflation could overshoot its estimates.

Fuel and light

Miscellaneous 3.79

Consumer food 4.96

Source: Price illiance... Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation

Clothing and footwear

Sunil Sinha, principal economist at India Ratings, said the RBI was unlikely to change its policy stance soon.

"If the inflation pressure continues beyond this level, one can expect the central bank to change its policy stance to hawkish," he said. Rising inflation amid firm global crude oil prices is a major worry for Prime Min-

### hits 17-month high of 8.4% NEW DELHI: Industrial production growth zoomed to a 17-month high of 8.4 per cent in November 2017 on the back of robust performance of manufacturing and capital goods

The factory output, measured in terms of Index of Industrial Production (IIP), grew 5.1 per cent in November 2016, as per data released on Friday by the Central Statistics Office (CSO).

The previous high was recorded at 8.9 per cent in June, 2016. Meanwhile, the IIP growth for October 2017 has been revised downwards to 2 per cent from the provisional estimates of 2.2 released last

Manufacturing sector, which constitutes 77.63 per cent of the IIP, recorded an impressive growth of 10.2 per cent in November as compared to 4 per cent a year ago.

The industry group 'Manufacture of pharmaceuticals, medicinal chemical and botanical products' has shown the highest positive growth of 39.5 ing consumer goods (FMCG), showed an output growth of 23.1 per cent as against 3.3 per cent in November 2016.

production growth slowed to 1.1 per cent from 8.1 per cent a year ago.

growth too slowed to 3.9 per cent in November from 9.5 per cent in the corresponding month a year ago.

sumer durables, mainly white goods like TVs, refrigerators and washing machines, also slowed to 2.5 per cent from 6.8

fication, the growth rates in November 2017 are 3.2 per cent in primary goods, 5.5 per cent in intermediate goods and 13.5 per cent in infrastructure/ construction goods.

In terms of industries, 15 of the 23 industry groups in the manufacturing sector have shown positive growth during November 2017 as compared to the same month

However, the mining sector **NEW DELHI:** The National Company Law Tribunal has approved the proposed merger between Idea Cellular and Electricity generation Vodafone -- a move that brings both the companies closer to

culminating the deal.

"We wish to inform you that

arrangement among Vodafone

Mobile Services Limited and

Vodafone India Limited and

Idea Cellular Limited...," Idea

Cellular said in a regulatory

Both the groups can go ahead for the final approval

for merger from the Depart-

ment of Telecom after Voda-

fone's appeal for the scheme

by sector regulator Trai, Idea

and Vodafone jointly have over

As per latest data published

also gets NCLT nod.

note on Friday.

the Hon'ble National Com-Production growth of conpany Law Tribunal, bench at Ahmedabad, vide its order dated January 11, 2018 has sanctioned the composite scheme of amalgamation and

As per use-based classi-

40 crore mobile subscribers and together account for largest share in the Indian telecom segment.

Vodafone is expected to hold around 47.5 per cent stake in the merged entity and rest will be owned by Idea and promoter Aditya Birla Group.

The proposed merger of Vodafone India and Idea will create an entity with a revenue of around Rs 77,500-80,000 crore besides eliminating duplication of spectrum and infrastructure capex, as per

India Ratings and Research. Further, the spectrum of Vodafone India in seven circles and that of Idea in two, whose permits are expiring in 2021- 22, is together valued at around Rs 12,000 crore as per last auction price. These permits are not in common circles, and hence there could be potential spectrum capex synergies between the two compa-

nies, as per the rating agency. PTI

### **Tata Chemicals** completes sale of urea biz to **Yara Fertilisers**

**NEW DELHI:** Tata Chemicals on Friday said it has completed the sale of its urea fertilisers business to Yara Fertilisers India for Rs 2,682 crore.

The deal included transfer of all assets and liabilities (working capital) of the Babrala plant in Uttar Pradesh. It is the first foreign direct investment in the highly regulated urea sector.

Yara Fertilisers India is a subsidiary of Norway-based Yara International ASA.

In a regulatory filing, Tata Chemicals said: "The sale and transfer of urea and customised fertilisers business to Yara as contemplated in the scheme of arrangement has been com-

The sale has been completed after the receipt of requisite regulatory approvals, fulfilment of conditions precedent and sanction of the National Company Law Tribunal, Mumbai, it said.

The company has received the consideration of Rs 2,682 crore (subject to post completion working capital adjustments) from Yara on January 12, 2018, it added.

Yara s current turnover of \$40 million in India will increase to \$350 million, he added. The Babrala plant, which was commissioned in 1994, is the most energy-efficient plant in India with energy efficiency on par with Yara's best plants across

### at record highs for the second straight session on Friday as investors remained hopeful of upbeat corporate earnings despite lacklustre numbers from TCS. The BSE Sensex gained 88.90

MUMBAI: Benchmarks ended

points to end at 34,592.39, while the broader NSE Nifty finished at 10,681.25, up 30.05 points.

The indices suffered a bout of volatility mid-session following an unprecedented press conference by four senior judges of the Supreme Court where they mounted a virtual revolt against the chief justice and listed a litany of problems afflict-

NEW DELHI: Telecom reg-

ulator Trai on Friday slashed

international incoming call ter-

mination rate to 30 paise, from

53 paise, to curb the "grey route",

an official statement said. The

new rate will be effective from

the termination charges payable

by an International Long Dis-

tance Operator (ILDO) to the

access provider in whose net-

work the call terminates from Rs

0.53 per minute to Rs 0.30 per

minute," Trai said in a statement.

tion charge on operators from

whose networks calls have been

made, for transmitting them

Telecom firms levy termina-

"The Authority has reduced

February 1.

### **NSE NIFTY BSE SENSEX** Intra-day on January 12, 2018 Intra-day on January 12, 2018 ● High: 10,690.40 ● Low: 10,597.10 ● High: 34,638.42 ● Low: 34,342.16 Close: 34,592.39

Markets continue record run; post 6<sup>th</sup> weekly gains

However, buying momentum resumed soon, which propelled

Trai cuts ISD incoming call

termination rate to 30 paise

to the subscriber. The Telecom

Regulatory Authority of India

said the new rule "shall come

into force from the 1st February,

2018". In a background note,

it mentioned existence of grey

market which routes the ISD

calls made to India by setting up

illegal VoIP (voice over internet

protocol) gateways which needs

to curbed. Trai said the menace

ing the country's highest court. the markets to record levels. This was the sixth weekly gain

of grey route poses serious secu-

rity threat to the country apart

from causing significant leak-

age in the revenue accruable

to the country and its telecom

service providers, and, prolif-

eration of OTT (over-the-top)

route for the carrying interna-

tional voice traffic has many

the view that, while deciding on

the appropriate level of ITC in

the country, curbing the menace

of grey route should be a more

important regulatory priority

than facilitating the shift of the

international incoming traf-

fic from OTT route to carrier

It said: "The Authority is of

non-cost factors.

#### gained 438.54 points, or 1.28 per cent, while the Nifty rose 122.40 points, or 1.15 per cent. After opening on a strong

During the week, the Sensex

**India's Industrial Growth** 

Per cent change in Index

of Industrial Production over

corresponding month of the

previous vear

Base: 2011-12=100

percent, followed by 29.1 per

cent in computer, electronic

and optical products and 22.6

percent in 'manufacture of

is a barometer of investment,

grew by 9.4 per cent in Novem-

ber as against 5.3 per cent a year

ago. Consumer non-durables, which are mainly fast mov-

Capital goods output, which

other transport equipment'.

Nov 2017

8.4

Nov 2016

Manufacturing

Electricity

footing, the Sensex advanced to hit a fresh lifetime high of 34,638.42 on the back of continued buying by domestic funds and retail investors but later declined to 34,342.16.

It finally settled 88.90 points, or 0.26 per cent higher at 34,592.39, breaking its previous record closing of 34,503.49 hit in on Thursday's trade.

The broader Nifty finished at 10,681.25, up 30.05 points, or 0.28 per cent.

### Airtel, Amazon team up to offers 1-year prime membership

NEW DELHI: India's largest telecom operator Airtel on Friday teamed up with Amazon India to offer one year of Amazon Prime membership with its Infinity postpaid plan.

Airtel Postpaid customers both new and existing - who have an Infinity plan of Rs 499 or more will be able to avail one year Amazon Prime membership of Rs 999 value and unlimited access to Amazon Prime Video as part of their plan benefits, a statement said on Friday.

This would not come at any extra cost.

NEW DELHI: Come Febru-

ary and transporters will not

need separate transit passes for

moving goods from one state to

to them will be valid through-

## Govt willing to hand-hold young entrepreneurs: Modi

NEW DELHI/GREATER NOIDA: The youth of on Friday should become job creators and think out of the box, for which the government is willing to hand-hold them for setting up start-ups, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday.

He also said that while patience was a virtue, it should not stop the youth from coming up with innovative ideas for the benefit of the country and society.

Addressing the students of Gautam Buddha University in Greater Noida on the occasion of the inauguration of the 22nd National Youth Festival, Modi, via video-conferencing, said ning alone and if the person was committed to the path chosen, others would join him.

"Do not worry. Move ahead, take the first step. The government is with you," he said, referring to those youth planning to set up start-ups.

The prime minister assured them that they would not have to worry abut bank guarantees, loans and a heavy paper work as they would get all the help from the government.

"We will hand-hold you. Then, you yourself are capable of moving ahead," he told the

Movement of goods likely to be

easy with e-way bill from Feb 1

Referring to the Centre's Mudra scheme, Skill India and

Startup India funds, Modi said

there were enough platforms to help young entrepreneurs think out of the box and begin something new. He also urged the people to make sports an integral part of their lives.

in New Delhi on Friday

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses during the inquaural

ceremony of 22nd National Youth Festival - 2018 via video conference,

Speaking on the occasion, Adityanath said only the youth could change the system with new innovations.

He added that the Indian youth had several ideas, which could be used for the welfare of the people. Taking the name of Lord Rama and some reli-

chief minister said all of them were young when they chose the path of people's welfare and attained spirituality. "It is not important how

gious leaders, the Uttar Pradesh

long a person lives. How does he live his life and benefit the society is important. The youth is the symbol of the country's energy," he added. Union minister and Gautam Buddha Nagar MP Mahesh Sharma was also present on the occasion among other dignitaries. PTI

## Air India to take delivery of B777 planes on January 24, to fly VVIPs

take the delivery of the first of the two B777 aircraft, which will be used to fly the VVIPs, on January 24.

A team of pilots along with some senior ministry officials will be flying to the Seattle facility of plane maker Boeing via San Francisco on January 20 for this purpose, an airline source close to the development said.

The induction of the two Boeing 777-300ERs will replace the over 25-year-old jumbo jets, B747-400s - which are currently used to ferry president, vice president and prime minister.

The new aircraft, however, will be put to use only around July-August as the planes will immediately be sent back to the US for retrofit after the completion of registration formalities,

the source said. The retrofitting is expected to cost the nation around over

Rs 1,100 crore. "A team comprising four pilots -- two senior commanders and two first officers -- along



cials will leave for San Francisco on January 20 from where they will fly to Seattle," the source

They will fly back on 24 after taking the delivery and the new aircraft will arrive here on the eve of the Republic Day, the

source said. In 2006, Air India had placed orders with Boeing for 68 aircraft -- 27 Dreamliners, 15 B777-300 ERs, eight B777-200 LRs and 18 B737-800s.

Of these, the state-run carrier has already taken the delivery of 65 planes, including 12 B777-300ERs. Delivery of the remaining three B777-300 ERs is scheduled for next month, with two of them to be handed over to the disinvestmentbound carrier this month itself.

These planes, however, will

go back to the US for modifi-

six months to complete," the source said. Air India has tied up with

the UAE-based First Abu Dhabi Bank as well as Standard Chartered Bank and Mashreq Bank for short-term loans to finance these planes.

Last month, the airline had also floated tenders for securing loans worth over Rs 1,100 crore for their modification.



out India, GST Network said on Friday. Under the Goods and Services Tax rolled out from July last year, inter-state movement of goods beyond 10 kms, with a value of Rs 50,000 and above,

bill from February 1. GSTN CEO Prakash Kumar said: "Taxpayers and transporters need not visit any tax office or check post as the e-way Bill can be generated electronically in a self-service mode.

will mandatorily require e-way

"The new system enables generation of e-Way bill on the portal, through mobile App, through SMS and for large users using offline tool."

The e-way bill system has already been rolled out in four states -- Karnataka, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Kerala. These states together generate nearly 1.4 lakh e-way bills per day.



"The remaining states will join during next fortnight.

The period up to January 31 will be used as trial period for all stakeholders," GSTN said in a statement.

It said transporters who want to generate e-way bill can visit the 'ewaybill.nic.in' portal and register themselves by giving the GSTIN. Transporters who are not registered under GST can enrol themselves under e-way bill system by providing their PAN or Aadhaar to generate the eWay Bill.

issued to the users through online and SMS. 'Vehicle number can be

Alert messages are also

entered by those who generate E- way Bill or transporter and

they can also update the vehicle number in case of vehicle breakdown or transshipment," said GSTN, the company handling the technology backbone for GST roll out. There is provision for can-

cellation of e-way Bill within 24 hours of its generation.

"No E-way Bill is required for movement of goods in nonmotorised conveyance and also for certain class of goods like fruits, vegetables, fish and water," it added.

The e-way bill rules provide for random verification which can be done by a tax officer. However, he has to upload the requisite report within the specified time.

Also, if a transporter faces detention of more than 30 minutes, he can upload a report on the portal

Rules, Notification, User Manual, FAQs and Computer based tutorials (CBTs) are

available online. GSTN has invited suggestions from stakeholders on the e-way bill system.

### Bhel commissions 250 MW thermal unit in Bihar

NEW DELHI: State-run power equipment maker BHEL on Friday said it has commissioned a 250 MW thermal power unit at the Barauni Extension project of Bihar State Power Generation Company. Located at Barauni in Begu-

sarai district of Bihar, the project has two segments (units 8&9) of 250 MW each. Unit 9 is also in advanced stages of execution, and is expected to be commissioned shortly, a BHEL statement said. The project was awarded

to BHEL on engineering, procurement & construction (EPC) basis, including complete engineering, manufacturing and supply of equipment; erection & commissioning and civil works of all the plant utilities.

This project is being set up by BĤEĹ on the ash dyke of old thermal units, which calls for special civil engineering for ground improvements. The utilisation of the unproductive ash dyke for this purpose also addresses the issue of land scarcity.

## Centre to finalise model contract farming law soon

NEW DELHI: The Centre will finalise the draft contract farming law in the next few days after incorporating comments from the industry and stakeholders, a senior Agriculture Ministry official said on Friday.

A model contract farming Act has been put in public domain for stakeholders' comments.

'Suggestions from the industry and stakeholders have already come in. We would be able to harmonise them in the next few weeks," National Rainfed Area Authority (NRAA) CEO Ashok Dalwai said at an event.

The contract farming is the way forward as this will help monetise agriculture and horticulture wastage, which at present is substantially higher, he said in a statement.

Once the model law is ready, it will be shared with state governments for adoption, he said.

Dalwai was addressing a national conference on cold chain infrastructure organised by industry body PHD Chamber.

National Centre for Cold Chain Development (NCCD) CEO and chief advisor Pawanexh Kohli said the government was making serious efforts to replace traditional APMC markets with new model law called Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing (Promotion & Facilitation)

"This is likely to bear fruit in next one year," he said adding that agriculture is a state subject. Kohli shared that farm-

LONDON: The World Trade

Organisation needs to be pro-

tected, promoted and taken for-

ward and India has taken a lead

in this matter by hosting a mini-

ministerial meeting of the global

trade body to take it to a "new

level", Union minister Suresh

students and academics at the

prestigious London School of

Economics (LSE) on the sub-

ject of the 'Role of Trade and

Investment in Driving Sustain-

Commerce and industry minis-

ter said the World Trade Organ-

isation (WTO) had resulted in

unprecedented expansion of

interest alone and therefore we

invite all countries to partici-

pate...Some countries have ques-

tioned the WTO itself but that's

because we need a whipping

boy. In my opinion, we need

"India is not driven by self-

global trade.

Addressing a gathering of

Prabhu said here on Friday.



Once the model contract farming Act is ready, it will be shared with state governments for adoption. Right now it has been put in public domain for stakeholders' comments

#### ers can get remunerative price Budget for agri-research may go up 15% provided cold chains are integrated through superior mar-

This is the only way through which better pricing could be ensured for farmers, he added.

keting logistics.

According to the contract, the farmer is required to plant the contractor's crop on his land, and to harvest and deliver to the contractor a quantum of produce, based upon anticipated yield and contracted acreage. This could be at a preagreed price. Towards these ends, the contractor supplies the farmer with selected inputs, including the required techni-

WTO needs to be protected,

promoted: Suresh Prabhu

to make sure that this organisa-

taken forward," he said.

tion is protected, promoted and

more transparent as an instru-

quantity of trade but expand

global trade for the benefit of

must remain at the heart of

global trade, Prabhu warned

against voices calling to aban-

don the Doha development

round of WTO negotiations.

ment of bringing change...

people," he added.

"We can revisit each aspect

The idea is not to reduce the

Stressing that development

**NEW DELHI:** The government is likely to increase the budget allocation for farm education, research and extension by up to 15 per cent to around Rs 8,000 crore in 2018-19 fiscal

income, sources said. The Union Budget for 2018-19 will be presented on February 1.

as focus will on making rapid

strides in doubling farmers'

"There has been a minimum 10 per cent annual increase in the budget allocation for agri-

"The WTO has worked

pretty well in the course of the last few years and resulted in

unprecedented expansion of

global trade. It offers us the best

possibility of addressing poverty

and other issues," Prabhu said.

United Nations (UN), the min-

ister pointed to the fact that

unlike the UN every country has

a veto and attributed the failure

of the Buenos Aires round in

December last year to this veto.

countries would eventually

support India's stand on food

security, one of India's central

concerns in arriving at a mul-

tilateral agreement. "This is an

issue on which there should not

be any dispute at all. Govern-

ments have to protect against

malnutrition and hunger by

ensuring a public distribution

system for food. No one can

fault this view," Prabhu said. PTI

However, he expressed opti-

Drawing a parallel with the

sion purpose in last few years. We hope 15 per cent higher budget allocation would be made available for the DARE (Department of Agricultural Research and Education) for the next financial year," the sources said.

The funds will used on priority areas with an aim to address the country's key farm sector problem and make rapid strides in the direction of doubling farmers' income through use of technology and innova-

#### In the next fiscal, the Department of Agricultural Research and Education is planning to focus on using technology and agri-innovations in particularly 150 backward districts and build capacity of farmers in tribal areas.

It is also considering initiating programmes on use of sensors in agriculture, build and transfer post-harvest technology, use of animal cloning for commercial application, genome editing in select crops

## **New policy framework** must to address export finance issues: Govt

Comprehensive policy to promote agri exports on anvil

NEW DELHI: The commerce ministry is work-

ing on a comprehensive policy covering issues

such as logistics to promote export of agri com-

modities like tea, coffee, fruits and vegetables,

a senior official said. India is one of biggest

producers and exporters of agri commodi-

ties, and still holds huge potential to increase

shipments. "So, the possibility of value addition

and moving up in the global value chain is im-

mense. All important elements such as logis-

be part of the new policy," the official said. It

is important to have proper infrastructure to

promote exports. This move would help serve

the government's objective to double farmers'

income and increasing exports. The official said

they are studying global markets and trying to

understand where the potential is.

tics, certification and traceability of items would

**MUMBAI:** The country needs to spruce up its policy framework to address exporters' finance needs if we were to become a \$5-trillion economy, a top government official said.

To become a \$5-trillion economy, we need 40 per cent trade contribution and exports of at least \$1 trillion. To achieve this, we must actually gear up our policy framework and address the precise needs of export finance and institutions serving exporters," commerce secretary Rita Teaotia said here on Friday.

Addressing an industry event organised by trade lobby Assocham,' she said, banks and financial institutions need to become more sensitive towards small units, which contribute 30 per cent of exports in terms of value.



"We are facing several challenges on trade finance issues. Our policy framework is not entirely geared up to recognise credit availability.

"There is a large challenge for MSMEs and unless we address that, we are not going to become a significant global player," the top commerce ministry official said. The commerce secretary also stressed upon the need to spruce up banking policy to serve the needs of small manufacturers, services sector and exporters.

## Govt to use mobile application for on-the-spot power connections

NEW DELHI: The government will use a mobile phone application to provide on-thespot electricity connections to 4 crore families under Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar

Yojana (Saubhagya scheme). The app will allow officials to register and complete the documentation of unelectrified households in dedicated camps organised near their homes, stated a report submitted to Niti Aayog by Power Secretary A K Bhalla.

In September last year, the government launched the Saubhagya scheme to provide electricity connections to 4 crore households by March 31, 2019.

According to the report, the government will prioritise on the basis of infrastructure and unelectrified households in different areas. It has also decided on monitoring and reporting through dedicated web portal/ mobile application to achieve

NEW DELHI: With an aim

to create awareness about its

products from new and mod-

ernised mills, state-run SAIL

organised a seminar that was

attended by representatives

of infra companies and gov-

ernment departments, among

Structurals with State-of- the-

Art Technology' was held on

Thursday in Chandigarh, Steel

Authority of India (SAIL) said

seminar by SAIL to create

awareness about its new prod-

ucts from the company's new

and modernised mills. It was

attended by eminent archi-

tects, infrastructure develop-

ment companies, government

This was the second such

in a statement.

The seminar on 'New Age



highest level of efficacy.

The report states that the government will have a focused approach to achieve its target under the scheme because 90 per cent of unelectrified households are in seven states - Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Raj-

asthan and Uttar Pradesh. It said 80 per cent of task was concentrated in about 200 districts - Uttar Pradesh (65), Bihar (33), Madhya Pradesh (30), Odisha (20), Jharkhand

recently conducted in Nagpur.

After modernisation, SAIL said, its "new mills are

equipped to roll out more mar-

ket oriented products suited as

per the industry and retail sec-

and construction sectors. These

structurals have the capabil-

ity to be an important source

for making large structural like

Steel buildings, large godowns

and are useful in various steel

intensive industries, the PSU

it believes such initiatives will

The company further said

tor requirements".

**SAIL** organises seminar

to promote new products

(19), Assam (15), Rajasthan (8) and Telangana (3).

As far as village electrification is concerned, the task is almost complete as the number of villages remaining to be electrified will be 1,370 by May

The government had identified 18,452 unelectrified villages as on April 1, 2015 of which 15.981 have been electrified and 1,101 villages were found uninhabited or in graz-

### Palm oil imports flat at 7.22 lakh tonne: SEA

**NEW DELHI:** Palm oil imports remained flat at 7,22,857 tonne in December because of increase in the import duty, industry body Solvent Extractors Association (SEA) said on Friday.

The products of SAIL include structurals, plates, India, the world's leading vegetable oil buyer, had imported 7,23,158 tonne palm SAIL is ready to cater to the oil in December 2016. requirements of infrastructure

The country's total vegetable oil imports declined 10 per cent to 10,88,783 tonne in December 2017 compared to 12,09,685 tonne in the yearago period.

The share of palm oil is more than 60 per cent of the country's total vegetable oil imports. In November, the government raised the import duty on edible oils by 12.5 per cent to 15 per cent across the board. PTI

### departments and business also help raising the steel con-Jewellery sector urges govt to reduce gold import duty to 4%

MUMBAI: Looking to give a positive push to the gems and ewellery sector, industry body has urged the government to reduce the import duty on gold to 4 per cent and also address issues under the GST regime in the coming Buaget.

"Lowering the duty to 4 per cent from 10 per cent will not only boost customer demand and uplift business sentiment for the trade, but also help industry become more organised and compliant," All India Gems and Jewellery Trade Federation (GJF) chairman Nitin Khandelwal said in the representation to the government.

The reduction in import



duty will also help in the fight against black money, he added.

The 10 per cent duty on gold was levied to curb current account deficit (CAD), however, the country's trade deficit narrowed more than expected to \$12.96 billion in June, he said.

Further, Khandelwal said, there are some issues under the current GST regime, which is hampering the industry that the

government needs to look into. He said, under GST interstate supply of services by job workers (karigars) who are unregistered, that is, having turnover below 20 lakhs in a financial year should be

"Retail customers are reluctant to share their residence address, so we request the government to increase the invoice value to a minimum of 2,00,000 from the current Rs 50,000," he further added. The industry body also

asked the government to increase the cash purchase limit to at least Rs 1,00,000, which is kept at Rs 10,000.





Durgapur Steel Plant paid tribute to Swami Vivekananda on his 155th birth anniversary on Friday. His full size statues both at the steel township and also at the Center for HRD were garlanded on the day. DSP CEO A K Rath garlanded the statue at the township. A cross section of senior officials of DSP and residents of the township were present on the occasion and paid homage to Swami Vivekananda



BHEL Haridwar has successfully dispatched one more indigenously manufactured 800 MW supercritical Turbo Generator. This Turbo Generator has been sent for Krishnapatnam Thermal Power Project of Andhra Pradesh Power Generation Corporation (APGENCO). Director (Thermal) of APGENCO M P Sunder Singh formally dispatched the Turbo Generator by waving the ceremonial green flag



State-run Rural Electrification Crop (REC) on Friday said it has inked a pact with Tamil Nadu's power utility TANGEDCO to provide a loan of Rs 10,453 crore for setting up 1,320 MW Udangudi Stage-I power project. The loan agreement was signed in the presence of Electricity, Prohibition and Excise Minister of Tamil Nadu, P Thangamani and REC chairman and managing director P V Ramesh



Adult Education Centre was inaugurated at Pragatinagar (Kazipalli) under the drive for achieving 100% literacy. Chief Guest of the occasion, Somarapu Lavanya, Corporator, 46 Division, Ramagundam Muncipal Corporation inaugurated the centre which was supported by NTPC CSR-CD 2017-18

## TCS bags biggest-ever deal of over \$2 billion from US Transamerica

NEW DELHI: Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Friday said it has bagged a deal worth more than \$2 billion from the US insurance group Transamerica, marking its largest contract to date. The contract, which entails

transforming Transamerica's US insurance and annuity business lines, comes close on the heels of a mega deal TCS had clinched from television rating measurement firm Nielsen.

"The multi-year agreement (with Transamerica) is worth more than \$2 billion in revenues, the largest contract signed by TCS to date," TCS said in a statement.

The partnership enables Transamerica to rapidly enhance its digital capabilities, simplify the service of more than 10 million policies into a single integrated modern platform, it added. The announcement comes a day after TCS reported 3.6 per cent fall its its net profit to Rs 6,531 crore in the December 2017 quarter.

"TCS will provide valuable administration and quality customer service, and Transamerica will continue to engage with our customers, clients and advisors in the most meaningful ways to them by utilising our



and developing new solutions that help people save, protect, invest and retire," Mark Mullin, Transamerica President and CEO, said. The agreement is expected to lead to annual runrate savings of about \$70 million initially growing to \$100 million over time for Transamerica, the statement said. TCS said it will make job

offers to all of the applicable Transamerica employees currently supporting the life insurance, annuity, supplemental health insurance, and workplace voluntary benefits business lines.

This, it said, will ensure "a consistently excellent experience for Transamerica customers and protecting approximately 2,200 American jobs".

It added that employees transitioning to TCS will be given the opportunity to remain in the same US cities where they are currently based.



### **BCCI INVITES EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST** FOR IPL PARTNER RIGHTS

MUMBAI: The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has invited 'expressions of interest' for the Indian Premier League (IPL) partner rights. "The BCCI invites third parties to indicate their interest in acquiring any of the following rights: IPL Official Partner Rights, IPL Strategic Time Out Partner Rights and IPL Umpire Partner Rights," a media release said on Friday.

### **SAUDI WOMEN TO ENTER STADIUMS FOR** FIRST TIME TO WATCH SOCCER

RIYADH: Saudi women will be allowed for the first time to enter a sports stadium to watch a soccer match between two local teams, though they will be segregated from the male-only crowd with designated seating in the so-called "family section." The first stadium is to open its doors to women in the Red Sea city of Jiddah on Friday.

### **MOHUN BAGAN CONFIRM SIGNING OF** LEBANESE STRIKER AKRAM MOGHRABI

KOLKATA: Mohun Bagan on Friday announced the signing of Lebanese striker Akram Moghrabi for the remainder of the 2017-18 I-League season. Mohun Bagan, languishing at fifth place in the points table, parted ways with Liberian forward Anusmana Kromah on Thursday following a string of



## Series on the line, India aim to stay afloat against SA

CENTURION: Outplayed in the lung-opener, India will have to resolve a few selection puzzles and respond better to the sharp bounce when they square off against a redoubtable South Africa in the do-or-die second Test, starting here on Saturday.

India's record of nine consecutive series victories will be on the line from tomorrow after the hosts took a 1-0 lead in the three-match series by registering a 72-run win in the first Test in Cape Town.

It is only the second match in India's 12-Test long overseas schedule in 2018-19, and already they are faced with a must-not-lose situation in a bid to keep this series alive.

Surrendering a 2-0 lead to South Africa will not dent their No.1 ICC Test ranking, but that will be of little consolation when the postmortem of the performance is done back home.

In order to get this Test off on the right foot, the Indian team management will be looking to get their selection on the

On Thursday, 48 hours before the first ball is bowled, Team India held an intense practice session at the Supersport Park, which lasted just under four hours.

The usual suspects went about their job in predictable manner. Cheteshwar Pujara practiced catching at first slip; Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma batted in tandem at the nets, while Ajinkya Rahane stood a mute spectator for a major part of this session.

He did face some throw-



downs from assistant coach Sanjay Bangar towards the end, as did Shikhar Dhawan, but neither of them faced any real fast

K L Rahul, Murali Vijay and Pujara batted in adjacent nets, followed by Kohli and Rohit, and then Hardik Pandya and Wriddhiman Saha, pointing to another five-batsmen line-up.

It is in keeping with the team management's belief that this was the optimal choice for the first Test, never mind a lack of practice or collapsing for 135 in the second innings.

Rahul for Dhawan is the obvious change. Overall, the latter averages 43.72 overseas in 19 Tests, a touch more than his career average of 42.62 (29 matches). Take into consideration his record in Australia, New Zealand, England and South Africa in singularity, and

this comes down considerably to 27.81 (11 Tests).

On the South African soil alone, this plummets further to 18.00 in three Tests without a single half-century. His highest is 29 on the 2013-14 tour.

These figures are worrisome in themselves, let alone Dhawan's poor shot selection in both innings of the first Test. Rahul, in comparison,

allows for more solidity at the top given that he is comparatively a more technical batsman. Alternately, the Rohit-Rah-

The Indian skipper spelled out that this particular selection was based on form. Despite Rohit's twin failures 11 and 10 in Cape Town, it

ane conundrum isn't as simple.

doesn't make any sense for the think-tank to reverse this decision after just one match. The other conundrum is

regarding bowling attack. Hardik Pandya is a shoe-in after his previous showing, and it only leaves Kohli with four spots to play with. This is where the pitch comes in. On Thursday, the track seemed a hard and bouncy one with only a little sprinkling of green grass, quite

unlike the one at Newlands. There is a school of thought that a track replicating the one in the first Test could have seen India dropping the spinner altogether.

Instead, the good bounce and lack of lateral movement might just play well for batsmen on both sides. It would surely bring in the spinner as the match progresses.

As such, it remains to be seen if Kohli changes his pace combination. On Thursday, Umesh Yadav batted and bowled in the nets with vigour.

## **Ishant Sharma** is too erratic. says former India pacer

MUMBAI: Experienced seamer Ishant Sharma is too erratic and has failed to lead the country's pace bowling attack, feels former India pacer Raju Kulkarni.

"He (Ishant Sharma) has played 78 (79) Test matches, to play 78 (79) Test matches for India is amazing. But I don't think he has ever led from the front and that has been a problem with him," Kulkarni told reporters here on Thursday night. "He is too erratic, every-time he comes with new techniques, strategies, and that itself is very confusing for him," added the 55-year-old, who has played three Tests and 10 ODIs

Kulkarni spoke on the sidelines of a function organised by Legends Club at the Cricket Club of India here. Sharma, who made his Test debut against Bangladesh in 2007, has grabbed 226 wickets in 79 Test matches. The Delhi pacer has also picked up 115 wickets in 80 ODIs. "In the last two series, he (Sharma) was acting very stupidly, reacting to the situations badly, and I think every time he comes out with something different and that is not making him very consistent," the 55-year-old former right handed bowler said.

Kulkarni praised the present Indian attack but said fitness could be a matter of concern.

"The current scenario is very good as far as pace bowling is concerned. We have enough resources, enough good bowlers and they are very talented. The only problem for me is the fitness of the players, there is no

## Must not get surprised by the bounce in SA, says Kohli

CENTURION: Indian skipper Virat Kohli on Friday said the batsmen must not get surprised by the challenges offered by the bouncy wickets during the South African tour.

Kohli also said that reading bounce will be the key factor during the Proteas tour.

"We must not get surprised by the bounce here. We have to maintain composure when you get sudden change of bounce, which you experience in South Africa, Kohli told reporters here. "Here the bounce can be steep from length also. You need to mentally tune yourself to these things and accept that it is going to be a major part of batting in South Africa," he added. The Delhi batsmen also slammed the critics regarding their view on the selection of

Ajinkya Rahane. Before the start of the first Test in Cape Town, cricket experts were asking about Ajinkya Rahane's exclusion from the playing XI. But after

India lost the first game, now

many of those wanted Rahane

in the playing eleven.

"It's funny how things change in a matter of weeks, or just about five days. Before the first Test no one thought that he should be in the eleven and now suddenly people are looking at the other option," Kohli said.

Praising the Mumbai batsman, Kohli said: ""He (Rahane) is a quality player. He has done well in South Africa, in all conditions actually away from home. He is probably been our most consistent and

solid player away from home.' The skipper also hinted that the team might witness a few changes from the first Test. "As far as the opening combination goes, we will decide today at the end of practice what is it that we are going to go within this game. We might do something different also but there is definitely no need to panic," he said. Commenting on the pitch, Kohli said: "It looks likely a really lively pitch. It is exactly what we expected it to be and we actually wanted it to be that way so that both teams are into the contest provided they play some good cricket. This pitch will again test us to play our best cricket and that is something that we are looking forward to do."

### ON TOP OF THE WORLD



training, in Wengen, Switzerland

### S Korea proposes joint march, hockey team with North at Olympics

SEOUL: South Korea has proposed marching together with Winter Olympics opening ceremony and also forming a joint women's ice hockey team, a government minister said on

The proposal was made during Tuesday's inter-Korean talks, where North Korea confirmed it would attend the Pyeongchang Olympics following months of tensions over its nuclear weapons programme.

"We made various proposals including the fielding of a joint women's ice hockey team and a joint march into the Olympic stadium," South Korea's vice-sports minister Roh Tae- Kang said, according to Yonhap news agency.

The proposals were not made public at the time.

A joint march at the opening ceremony would be a stunning statement for the "Peace Olympics", which will open about 50 miles (80 kilometres) from the Korean border on February 9.

The two Koreas, who are still technically at war, marched together at the opening ceremonies of the 2000 Sydney Olympics, the 2004 Athens Games and the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin.

North Korea boycotted the 1988 Summer Games in Seoul, meaning Pyeongchang will be the first Olympics they have attended in the South. AGENCIES



## Sarjubala Devi claims gold in Nat'l Women's Boxing Championship

ROHTAK: Sariu Bala of Manipur and Sonia Lather of Railways won the titles in their respective weight categories at the 2nd Elite Womens National Boxing Championship here on Friday. Sarju, who successfully

defended her title in the flyweight category, used her experience to launch a tremendous fightback to emerge victorious after major setbacks in the three-round duel against Haryana's Ritu. Sarju seemed to have lost

her gripping as she slipped and let her opponent land straight punches which left her unsettled in the initial moments of the bout. However, a gritty Sarju wasn't going down without a fight as she came back from the initial hiccups and came into her own to land a few punches. But Sarju slipped again in the

second round and allowed her opponent to launch an attack and the pugilist from Haryana did just that.

But Sarju displayed superb resilience to get back at her opponent again to win the title via split decision with a 3-2 orated and experienced Sonia.



In the featherweight category, World and Asian Championship medallist Sonia Lather didn't break a sweat as she went past the defeated World Youth Boxing Championship gold medallist Shashi Chopra in a convincing manner.

Shashi, who won at the World Youth Boxing Championship last year, was left disappointed after she had to settle for silver against the highly dec-

senior level surely earned her a lot of plaudits.

But it was the Railways boxers who ruled the roost as Rajesh Narwal (48 kilogram), Pwilao Basumatary (64kg), Bhagyabati Kachari (81kg), Seema Poonia (82kg), Sonia Lather (57kg) bagged gold medals while Pavitra (60kg) narrowly lost out to Laishram Sarita Devi and settled for silver.

The Railways squad thus emerged with the highest num-

## 'Death bowling' concerns for unbeaten New Zealand

land skipper Kane Williamson has called on his bowlers to be more accurate in the final overs as they look to take an in the third one-day interna- a sign of a good team," he tional in Dunedin on Saturday.

New Zealand are already 2-0 in the five-match series but Williamson is not completely happy, especially with the bowling to lower-order

Pakistan rocketed from 141 for seven in the 37th over to make 246 for nine in game two, repeating a pattern that has been all too common in recent seasons where New Zealand have let the score get

away on them after a solid start. "We learnt a few lessons from the last game," Williamson said Friday.

'They bat very deep, the Pakistani side, and that

"To see their lower order come out and put together a partnership that gave them a total which could have been a tough chase... it's important that we learn from that."

Despite the big hitting, particularly by Hasan Ali and Shadab Khan who both made half centuries, New Zealand won the match in Nelson by eight wickets after the rain swept in. The hosts were

25 overs. The first match in Wellington, which New Zealand won by 61 runs, was also affected by the weather and game three in Dunedin on Saturday. If a result is achieved, a win would not only give them New Zealand the series but they would also equal their longest streak across all for-

mats of 10 wins.

NZ have Colin de Grandhomme back in their squad after the allrounder returned from bereavement leave, but Williamson said they would wait to view the pitch Saturday morning before settling on their playing XI. AGENCIES

### victory run VIZIANGARAM (AP): A superb ton by India discard haul by leggie Pravin Dubey helped Karnataka end Tamil Nadu's winning streak with a 78-run win in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy South Zone T20

Karun Nair,

Dubey shine as

K'taka ends TN's

tournament here on Friday. Nair's knock of 111 was instrumental in Karnataka posting 179 for 9 in 20 overs after being sent in to bat by Tamil Nadu skipper Vijay Shankar. Tamil Nadu was bowled out for 101 in 16.3 overs. No other Karnataka batsman crossed 20 even as Nair, who opened the innings, smashed eight fours and eight sixes in his 52-ball effort.

The only significant partnership was the one between Nair and R Samarth for the third wicket, which yield 83 runs. The centurion kept going despite the team losing wickets at regular intervals.

Rookie slinger Athisayaraj Davidson with a five-wicket haul played a huge role in restricting Karnataka to 179 after they looked set for a big score at one stage.

Nair was among his victims as he ran through the lower order to finish with 5 for 30.

Tamil Nadu was in early trouble during the chase, losing opener Abhinav Mukund (1) and the prolific Dinesh Karthik (0), who had scored three successive fifties, to a run-out in the first two overs.

Despite a 48-run partnership between M S Washington Sundar (34) and Shankar (20), things went downhill for Tamil Nadu after they were separated. Dubey, who ended Sundar's

stay, took three other wickets including that of the aggressive N Jagadeesan (16) to send Tamil Nadu hurtling to defeat. Meanwhile in matches

played at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh beat Hyderabad by six wickets riding on Ricky Bhui's 73, while Kerala outplayed Goa by nine wickets.

Three teams — Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra — have 12 points after four games while Hyderabad has 8 and Kerala (4).

## **India beat Pak in Blind Cricket World Cup tie**

**DUBAI:** Defending champions India convincingly defeated Pakistan by seven wickets in their Blind Cricket World Cup match at Ajman Oval CG here on Friday. Pakistan came into the game riding on back-to-back victories over Bangladesh and Nepal but they were no match for the strong Indian side. Sharp fielding and accurate bowling from India restricted Pakistan at 282/8 in the stipulated 40 overs. For Pakistan Md. Jamil (B3) and captain Nisar Ali (B3) had partnership of 137 runs for the third wicket before skipper Nisar Ali was bowled by Ajay Reddy for 63, Md. Jaimil remained unbeaten on 94. For India Ajay, Basappa, Suni, Rambir and Deepak took a wicket each. In reply Indians comfortably chased the target in 34.5 overs.

## Atwal's Team Asia takes historic lead on Day 1

### **V KRISHNASWAMY**

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Arjun Atwal is a very laid-back and relaxed player, who does not get flustered on or off the field. However, on Friday, as the third Eur Asia got underway, he admitted to having been the most stressed in his career. Yet he came through well, becoming the first Asian captain to hold a lead on Day One at 3 ½ to 2 ½ over Team Europe.

On a day, when a bunch of young heroes led the charge for Asia, India's experienced Anirban Lahiri and SSP Chawrasia were handed one of the two losses suffered by Team Asia. But Lahiri, taking it on his chin, quipped, "Tomorrow we begin afresh, that's the best part of matchplay."

Asia's heroes were a bunch of really young and promising players including by 18-year-old Phachara Khwongwatmai, the strapping 22-year-old Li Haotong, the baby-faced 24-year-old

Poom Saksansin and the highly articulate Asia No. 1 24-year-old Gavin

Poom was anchored by the superbly consistent Sunghoon Kang, whose five Top-10s in 2017 included four on PGA Tour, as they shot down Henrik Stenson and Alex Levy 5&4 with eight birdies in first eight holes and 11 in 14. Stenson and Levy won just one hole.

Green gave the locals a lot to cheer as he combined with Yuta Ikeda, with whom he shares a love for Japanese food to register a 2&1 win over the accomplished young European pairing, Matt Fitzpatrick, 23, and Thomas Pieters, 25. The match was evenly poised and had a bunch of birdies, and even an eagle from Ikeda, who gave a putting master class. With the match all square after 15, Green holed two great birdie putts on 15th and 17th to close it 2&1 and Asia were 2-1 up.

Meanwhile, Lahiri and Chawrasia

were having a totally off day. Lahiri had no birdies and Chawrasia had two, but on both occasions the Europeans, too, had birdies. Firing on all cylinders Fisher carried a slightly off Hatton through for a 5&4 and made it 2-2. That's when Asia pulled out another fine win. Tanihara and Phachara produced a high quality performance with 10 birdies. The seesaw match saw Asians led 1-up at the turn and it became 3-up as Tanihara birdied 10th and Phachara matched

him with a birdie on 13th. Though rookie Paul Dunne had an off day, Alex Noren birdied 14th and 15th to close the gap. Two halved holes later it was still 1-up for Asia before Tanihara holed a long putt on 17th to make 2-up.

In the fifth match Li Haotong and local Malaysian Nicholas Fung were 2-up at the turn, but Rafa Cabrera-Bello produced three birdies in a row to turn that to 1-up in Europe's favour. Haotong struck back to make it all

Haotong knocked in the clutch putt amidst massive cheers to win the hole and halve the match to make it 3 ½ to 2 1/2 for Asia. On the team showing, Arjun Atwal said, "These youngster were just too good. My stars included all youngsters

square at 13th, but Rafa won 14th and

it stayed 1-up for Europe as they came

to the 18th. With both Rafa and Wiesberger unable to hole their birdies,

from Poom to Phachara to (Gavin) Green and yes LI (Haotong) who holed that great final putt to halve his match? He added, "Lahiri's record shows

that he does not usually play badly two days running and I expect him and SSP to fight back tomorrow (Saturday). As for the pairings for foursomes, the players are comfortable and they wanted to keep it the same as they did in practice. Anirban and SSP go out against Fleetwood and Stenson



## After record move from Barca to PSG, Neymar likely to join Real Madrid for £357 mn

RAZILIAN football star Neymar could well smash his own transfer record with a sensational move to Real Madrid.

The 25-year-old made headlines when he switched from Barcelona to Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) for a staggering £198m last year. But if reports are to be believed, Neymar is now keen to move to the current La Liga and Champions League holders.

According to a report by Spanish newspaper Marca, the most expensive footballer on earth is the Galactico

KOZHIKODE: Indian Arrows contin-

ued their exciting journey in the Hero

I-League 2017-18 as they beat Gokulam

scored his first goal in the Hero I-League

on his birthday against Neroca FC, calmly

slotted the only goal of the match to con-

quer the team from the southernmost

Arrows coach Luis Norton de Matos

went back to his trusted players Boris Singh, Anwar Ali in the defence along

with Sanjeev Stalin. Local boy Rahul K P

was also handed a start by the gaffer.

Chennaiyin

FC set for

battle with FC

**Pune City** 

CHENNAI: Chennaivin FC

takes on FC Pune City in an

Indian Super League (ISL) game

here on Saturday with an eye on

a win and the top spot in the

standing, despite missing the

presence of coach John Gregory,

in two previous home games

with rival teams scoring in the

dying minutes, Chennaiyin FC

will be hoping to tighten the

defence and maintain focus till

the end and walk away with

games and will look to gain full

points at Marina Arena tomor-

row to consolidate its position

won the away match at Pune

Pasha, who addressed reporters

ahead of the game admitted that

conceding goals at the death

has cost them dear and called

for focus till the final whistle.

"It hurts us, hurts the players.

It's just lack of focus. We have

to play as a team in those last

moments. Players also under-

stand I think. It will not hap-

pen in the matches to come."

he said. He said Pune is strong

tain Henrique Soreno from

suspension will be a big boost.

Jeje Lalpekhlua and Raphael

Augusto have been at the fore-

front of CFC's scoring and will

be more than a handful for the

attack. We know they are a good

attacking side and will come

"We know Pune is strong in

Assistant coach Syed Sabir

1-0 early in December.

The former champion had

CFC has 17 points from nine

Having lost crucial points

owing to suspension.

three points.

Abhijit Sarkar (77 minute), who

Kerala FC 1-0 here on Friday.

state of India.

'most craved' for by club president Florentino Perez. Neymar too is keen on making the switch, but his cost will be an earth-shattering £357m.

This comes less than six months after he moved from Barca to PSG. At that time, Neymar had shared an emotional video with his millions of followers on social media, telling them that FCB would always be in his heart.

The Brazilian's camp has apparently been sending out signals that he wants to play at the Santiago Bernabeu one day. Having not made a massive pur-

Sarkar on target as Arrows beat Gokulam

Arrows took only two minutes to set-

tle down as Aniket Yadav bombed one

from inside the box which just flew over

the crossbar. Both teams were steaming

points but the defenders were carrying out

Arrows defenders, especially Boris did

Salah and Kivi tried to outwit the

Zequinha provides hope

for ATK as NorthEast suffer

Zequinha was the star of

the show, striking in the 73rd

minute to give his side the lead

and the winner. He had been

threatening for a while before

the ball graciously fell to him

after a period of pressure from

ATK. The Portuguese ham-

mered in a volley into the far

corner, his connection too

sweet to not find the back of

Hardik Pandya nowhere near Kapil Dev yet: Ghavri

If the first half was a slow

a pristine job to cancel the attackers out.

a tremendous job to tame Odafa Okolie

and the Nigerian ace striker couldn't find

any breathing space to make a positive

resilient youngsters from the flanks but

eventually, that trick couldn't earn many

impact in the match.

in their pursuit of some much-needed



chase since James Rodriguez in 2014, Madrid too are keen on reviving their

flown by Rahul.

duced Alajmi.

dividends for Bino George's boys.

Seconds after the changeover, Rahim

On the hour-mark, finally, George

The deadlock was finally broken by

Ali came very close to scoring the opening

goal of the match but Bilal Khan jumped

at the right time to get hold of the cross

replaced the off-colour Odafa and intro-

the young lad Sarkar in the 77th minute.

Rahul had a whizzing run down the left

'Galactico policy'. With the defending champions trailing Barca by a big margin in the La Liga points table, Perez wants to make a statement in the transfer market soon.

Although the likes of Harry Kane, Eden Hazard and Timo Werner are being looked at, Neymar seems to be the hottest target for Madrid.

The Spanish giants, though, are adamant to not go behind PSG's back to make the move. According to the report, Neymar could switch to Madrid

### Yuki inches closer to Australian Open main draw

MELBOURNE: Putting up a dominating show, Yuki Bhambri outclassed Spaniard Carlos Taberner to reach the third and final qualifying round of flank who tried his luck only for Bilal to the Australian Open, here on palm it away to Sarkar who put the Arrows

Bhambri, who is in good nick, routed the world number 183 6-0 6-2 in the second round of the men's singles qualifiers.

The 25-year-old Indian, ranked 122, won 54 points in the 57-minute contest, breaking his rival six times in the match.

Bhambri will now fight it out with Canadian Peter Polanksy for a place in the main

If Bhambri clears the final hurdle, it will be his third appearance in the Australian men singles main draw.

In 2015, as a qualifier, he had lost to Andy Murray in the first round and in 2016 he bumped into Tomas Berdych to make a first round exit.

Ramkumar Ramanathan, India's next best singles player in the rankings at number 139, will play his second round later in the day. The 23-yearold from Chennai is up against French man Gleb Sakharov,



#### with a bang. Danilo Lopes made easy work of Jordi Montel before taking a stinging shot from outside the box. Debjit Majumder was

affair, the second one started

equal to the task though, making a breath-taking fingertip save to deny the hosts. Montel made his presence felt at the other end though, when his header was a whisker wide. He then released Zequinha

on the left to cross for Robin Singh but Sambinha was in the way to stop the Indian striker from scoring. Lopes wasn't done mak-

ing Montel look like a bad

He was at the end of a Nirmal Chhetri long ball and Montel allowed the attacker to run in behind. His first time effort was as audacious as it was close to going in the back of the net. Zequinha and Lopes were ruling the second half. As the game went into end-to-end mode, the former cut in, like he so often does, and forced a fine save from TP Rehenesh. It was becoming inexplicable how the match was still goalless when Zequinha struck to break the

## Djoker to face tough **Australian Open draw**

**MELBOURNE:** Former world number one Novak Djokovic faces a brutal challenge if he is to win the Australian Open in his comeback to tennis.

Djokovic, 30, enters the 2018 Australian Open as the 14th seed, the first time he has been ranked outside the top 10 at the year's first Grand Slam in a decade, after missing much of 2017 with an elbow injury, reports Xinhua news agency.

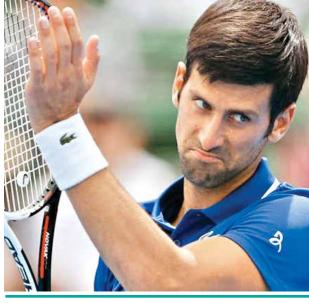
His hopes for a triumphant return at Melbourne Park were dealt a blow at the Australian Open draw on Thursday night with the Serbian set to face former top-10 player Gael Monfils in the second round before running into fourth seed Aleander Zverev and 2014 champion Stan Wawrinka.

Even if the six-time Australian Open champion should clear all those hurdles he could encounter 2017 champion Roger Federer in the semi-finals.

Federer, who turned back the clock to win two Grand Slams in 2017 after a five-year drought, on Thursday night described the season as "unbelievable".

"I don't usually like going to draws, I just want to see the sheet. But what a pleasure to be here on Margaret Court Arena. Last year was an amazing final and it's great to be back," he said.

A string of local hopes were also dealt difficult draws; 17-year-old Destanee Aiava will face world number one Simona Halep while fellow teenager Alex De Minaur, who has made



Even if the six-time Australian Open champion should clear all those hurdles he could encounter 2017 champion Roger Federer in the semi-finals

the semi-finals at both the Brisbane and Sydney Internationals, will play Tomas Berdych.

Berdych, the 17th seed, has never lost to an Australian at a Grand Slam in seven matches.

"He's a very talented player. Has a very high level. I'm just going to go out there, try to weather the storm, and try to play my game," De Minaur said.

Seeded women in the tournament were lucky to avoid the

threat of Maria Sharapova who is ranked 47th in the world after serving a doping suspension in 2017. China's Zhang Shuai was not as lucky, drawing 2017 US Open Champ Sloane Stephens as she attempts to recreate the success of 2016 when she made the quarter-finals of the Australian Open.

Peng Shuai, China's highest ranked tennis player, was drawn against a qualifier.

## Messi's 2 goals help Barcelona advance

MADRID: Lionel Messi put on minutes when the Uruguayan a masterclass in front of new recruit Philippe Coutinho as Barcelona trounced Celta Vigo 5-0 to ease into the Copa del Rey quarter-finals 6 -1 on aggregate.

Coutinho, dressed in a black shirt dotted with white stars, was in the stands at the Camp Nou for the first time since his 160 million-euro (192 million) move from Liverpool. It didn't take long for the Brazilian star to appreciate the playing riches on show on the pitch. "The first half was extraordinary," said Barca coach Ernesto Valverde.

Level at 1-1 after the first leg, the three-time defending cham-

Messi grabbed the opening two goals in the 13th and 15th minutes, both finished with a sublime first touch with his left foot, both created by Jordi Alba. Messi then returned the favour by setting up Alba to score past the hapless Sergio Alvarez in the Celta goal before Luis Suarez made it 4-0 on the night after 30

burst through the defence.

The tie petered out in the second half but French international Ousmane Dembele showed why Barcelona paid 105 million euros for him last year when he dribbled past three defenders from the halfway line before being denied by a desperate tackle. Dembele did have time to set up the fifth goal of the night three minutes from the end when his corner was headed home from close range by an unmarked Ivan Rakitic.

"It's luxury to have Leo in the side, he's the best in history. We always look for each other to score goals and today we done it twice," said Alba.

Earlier Thursday, Espanyol overturned a 2-1 loss in the first leg to defeat Levante 2-0 with Leo Baptistao and Gerard Moreno on target either side of half-time. Sevilla also progressed with a 2-1 win at home to second-tier Cadiz for a 4-1

### 'Priority now is to win gold at Commonwealth Games'

CHENNAI: G Sathiyan, currently the top ranked Indian table tennis player as per the latest ITTF rankings, has set new targets, including winning a gold at this year's Commonwealth Games and breaking into the top 20.

Having enjoyed a good run in 2017, Sathiyan is ranked No.49 and has edged past A Sharath Kamal (51).

This included winning the Spanish Open in November, his second IITF Pro Tour title, a feat which no other Indian has managed.

A gold medal at the Con monwealth Games in April is now his priority.

"I am happy that I have been able to surpass my own expectations, of breaking into the top-60 and breaking the top-50 barrier. I am on a high and have to keep improving and set tougher targets. One of my aims is to win gold at the CWG," he said.

He has jumped 19 places to reach a career-high world ranking of 49.

The Chennai paddler says what looked near impossible a few years ago (breaking into the top 100) has become a reality due to the hard work and mentoring by Olympian and former national champion S Raman since 2012.

"...I'm looking to break into the top-20 next year," he said.

The 24-year-old said one of the reasons for his success in 2017 was taking calculated risks and not worrying too much about the results, which gave him confidence to take on and beat top players.

#### and in the first innings of the opening Test against very difficult comparison, but (Hardik) he is nowhere South Africa last week. Some sports writers have near Kapil Dev right now," Ghavri said. The former compared Pandya to Kapil Dev. "He (Kapil) is being left-hand pacer was speaking at an event organised so modest to say — I read in the newspaper — that by The Legends Club to mark the 59th birthday of hard at us," Pasha said. AGENCIES Hardik Pandya is a better all-rounder than him. In Kapil Dev at the Cricket Club of India.

## **Del Potro floors** Ferrer to reach final



WELLINGTON: Juan Martin del Potro reached his third final in his last four tournaments when he beat David Ferrer in straight sets to set up an Auckland Classic decider against

Robert Bautista Agut on Friday. Del Potro, the 2009 US Open champion and Auckland winner, beat Ferrer 6-4, 6-4 to continue his strong form from the end of last season, which included victory in Stockholm and losing the Basel final to Roger Federer. The Argentine world number 12 now goes into a final against 2016 Auckland champion Bautista Agut, who came from behind in an epic a battle against Dutchman Robin Haase featuring three tiebreaks. After nearly three hours on court, the classic encounter was settled by a Bautista Agut lob that landed on the line, ending 6-7 (7/9), 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/5). "Unfortunately the match cannot have two winners and I'm so happy I won," said the the match.

### **Del Potro and** Ferrer's rallies were generally shorter as they slugged it out from the baseline

GUWAHATI: ATK held

their nerves to defeat North-

East United FC 1-0 in a vital

away victory in an Indian

Super League encounter, here

sixth place after nine matches

and suddenly gives them hope,

and takes some wind off the

sails of NorthEast United FC,

who had beaten FC Goa in

MUMBAI: Former India bowler Karsan Ghavri be-

lieves that in-form all-rounder Hardik Pandya is no-

where near legendary Kapil Dev yet. Pandya starred

with the bat in the Champions Trophy final last year,

their previous encounter.

The victory lifts them to

relieved Spaniard, who sank to his knees at the end.

"The end was unbelievable when I saw the ball in I went crazy, I was so happy."

The pair battled for nearly three hours, in a match highlighted by long rallies mixing powerful drives into the corners with cross-court floaters.

Every weapon in their armoury was on display, with Haase even switching his racquet from the right to left hand to reach shots swinging away down the backhand side.

Del Potro and Ferrer's rallies were generally shorter as they slugged it out from the baseline. After del Potro raced through the first set, Ferrer held break points when leading 2-1 and 4-3 in the second set as the Argentinian, seeded 12th in the Australian Open next week, struggled with his first serve. But both times Del Potro was able to rely on his running forehand to save himself and at 4-4 he broke the Spaniard before successfully serving for

## NAB passes orders to hold probe on corruption in PCB, PHF

KARACHI: The head of Pakistan's National Accountability Bureau (NAB), has passed orders for holding inquiry into alleged corruption and misuse of power in the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) along with Pakistan Sports

In a major development, a statement issued by NAB on Friday said that its chairman Justice (retd) Javed Iqbal has ordered the inquiry into alleged illegal use of resources in the three

'The NAB Chairman has ordered that these inquiries be completed in two months time,"

my view Hardik Pandya is nowhere near Kapil Dev,'

Ghavri, who opened the bowling with Kapil in several

Test matches, said on Thursday. "And even if he has

to reach there, he has got a long long way to go. It's a

Interestingly, earlier this week some top officials of the PCB including its COO also appeared before the Federation Investigation Agency (FIA) to record statements in allegations of misuse of power and resources in the board. Just few days back when the reports emerged about alleged corruption in sporting federations, Najam Sethi the PCB chairman

## Gold at CWG, Asiad our main targets: Hockey captain Manpreet

BENGALURU: India's hockey team captain Manpreet Singh on Friday declared that the side's ambition in 2018 was to win the gold medal in Commonwealth Games and clinch the Asian Games gold for the second consecutive time.

Manpreet felt that the bronze medal in the Hockey World League (HWL) Final in December 2017 gave them enormous confidence going into the new year which has as many as four major tournaments

With the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games, Champions Trophy, 2018 Asian Games, Asian Champions Trophy and the Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup, the team will be put through testing times — but Manpreet was certain the team's

"There is no doubt we are approaching this year with clear goals of winning in the CWG and defending our gold medal at the Asian Games. And it is important we convert our weaknesses into our strength before entering these major events," Manpreet emphasised on the eve of their departure to New Zealand where they will compete in the Four Nations Invitational Tour.

The team will play two separate five-day Series against Belgium, New Zealand and Japan starting on January 17 at the Blake Park in Tauranga followed by five-day Series at the Gallagher Hockey Centre in Hamilton that ends on January 28. With a young team that features stressed on the importance of this

tournament. "It is always good to start the season with some good matches against top teams. We have Belgium in our pool in the World Cup this year and as many matches we play against them, the better for us. With teams like New Zealand and Japan in the fray, this tour will certainly help us in our preparations for the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games," said the 25-year-old midfielder. "After the HWL Final, we recognized some of the areas that we were lacking in. We knew we can do better in defence, man-to-man marking in the circle and we did work on that in the **FUTURE PERFECT** 

## Under-19 World Cup: An opportunity like never before

**CHRISTCHURCH:** It's considered the stepping stone for the stars of the future and 16 teams, including three-time champions India, would be aiming to discover their Virat Kohlis and Steve Smiths when the ICC Under-19 World Cup starts off here on Saturday.

From Kohli to Smith, most modern-day greats have learnt the ropes in the biennial event, which has gained significance with every passing edition.

The boys not only become men here, they also become household names with millions following the live broadcast of the competition.

The event begins with Pakistan taking on Afghanistan, and hosts New Zealand facing reigning champions West Indies.

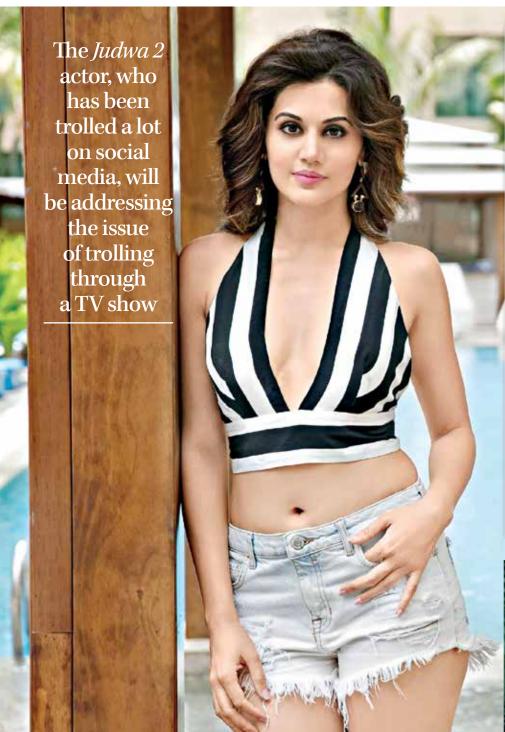
India, eager to prove themselves after their disastrous showing in the Asia Cup, open their campaign against Australia at Bay Oval, Mount Maunganui. The tournament's stature has risen

to such an extent that a great like Rahul Dravid, the current India U-19 coach, would love to have been part of it back in the day. "We never played this tournament in my day. After 1988 they didn't hold the tournament for 10 years, so I've no exposure of playing and being part of this tournament. I tell a lot of these boys that I think it's a terrific opportunity for them to be a part of this tournament," Dravid had said in the lead up to the event.

Countless number of U-19 players have gone on to represent their countries at the highest level. Each edition unearths oodles of talent and makes them overnight stars, be it Rishabh Pant or Alzaari Joseph from the previous edition in 2016 when threetime champions India lost the final to the

# It's so easy to mock

someone nowadays: Taapsee Pannu



MUMBAI: Actor Taapsee Pannu feels social media has given people the power to mock someone easily, and says that it can "genuinely crush someones confidence".

"I think with the power social media has given us, it is so easy to mock someone nowadays. What people don't understand is that it can genuinely crush someone's confidence. Just because a female does not walk by the conventional rules, people like to call her by different names which is highly upsetting," Taapsee said in a statement.

The actor, who has been trolled for flaunting a bikini and wearing short dress on social media, will be addressing the issue through TV show 'Troll Police', which brings celebrities and their trolls face-to-face.

Talking about it, she said: "I too have been trolled, and through 'MTV Troll Police', I really want to convey the message to youngsters out there that do not use internet ano-

nymity to shed the veneer of decency."

Taapsee, who now has 5 million-plus followers on *Instagram*, is a part of the show for the first episode. She will come face-to-face with Ashish, a student from Lucknow and a self proclaimed social media blogger who trolls her on social media platforms.
"It's humiliating! After achieving so much

for yourself as an independent woman, this is how you get appreciated by the men of our society. After reading all these comments, sometimes I feel that I have opted for a wrong profession. Going forward if you see any of your friend or relative trolling someone then please share this experience with them." The show will go on air on MTV on Saturday. IANS



**MUMBAI:** Having featured

in lead roles alongside Shah

Rukh, Kajol and Rani Muke-

when we used to work from 7 in the morning till 9 in the night on a daily basis without the comforts of sitting in an AC room. Somewhere down the line, you realise that work is God. You have to take it seriously everyday, it's the most important thing," she says. Much of the discipline, Kajol says, comes from her mother who taught her early in childhood that no work is lesser or bigger. "As a kid my mother made me sweep the house and clean the bathroom. She said if at any point you don't have servants in your house, you should be able to look after the house. Somewhere it gives you amazing work ethics. I've even made my kids broom the house so that they learn not to litter," she says. The actor launched Hin-

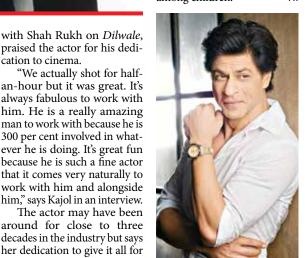
"I've come from a time

dustan Unilever Limited's new campaign 'A Playing Billion' to promote healthy hygiene habits among children.

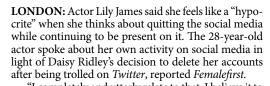
praised the actor for his dediin over half a dozen films and being considered one of the cation to cinema. most sought on-screen pair, "We actually shot for half-Kajol says working alongside Shah Rukh Khan is always a an-hour but it was great. It's always fabulous to work with pleaure as the superstar makes him. He is a really amazing the experience easier. Kajol and man to work with because he is Shah Rukh shot for a special 300 per cent involved in whatsequence for Aanand L Rai's ever he is doing. It's great fun because he is such a fine actor While Katrina Kaif and that it comes very naturally to Anushka Sharma will be seen

him," says Kajol in an interview. The actor may have been rji shot for a special sequence. around for close to three decades in the industry but says her dedication to give it all for work hasn't reduced.

in being a prop in big films



## Lily Jame's 'inner battles' with social media



"I completely and utterly relate to that. I believe it to be true, and therefore I am a hypocrite. I am on (social media), and I have a constant inner battle about it," James said. "I'm not on Twitter, I don't want to always have something to say, I want to save that for my life. Also I think, especially as a young person, you change your opinions every second, so (you shouldn't) put something down in concrete that's going to come back and haunt you," she added. The Baby Driver actor, however, sounded positive about Instagram.

'Instagram' you can use for all sorts of different reasons and that can be powerful. But I do worry about obsession and about perfection and about always presenting your life in a certain way, which is very untrue to how you go about your day," James said. "We go through all sorts of different emotions and Instagram makes it look like everything is perfect, and that's rubbish," she added. PTI



four former students of Franco, who once ran an acting school, said he pressured them to engage in sexually charged situations, including expectations of nudity and simulated sex acts.

The novel is a collection of confessional tales by anonymous actors, including Franco himself, blurring the lines between fiction and memoir. But in some chapters, Franco describes in graphic detail how he approaches

women. In one chapter, Franco described how he kept a steady stream of sexual partners: "I had something going with most  $\,$ of my female co-stars and worked up a routine so that I could see someone every night."

He said that because of his frequent travel, he managed to meet young women all over the

world. "One of my favourite approaches was to ask the young girls that requested to take a photo with me to email me a copy of the photo; that way I can give them my info very quickly in front of a crowd of fans and later work out a way



Fame in the recording category. The ceremony will take place next week at 6201 Hollywood Boulevard in front of Éastown. Sean "Diddy" Combs will join Hollywood Chamber President and CEO Leron Gubler to unveil the star.

"Mary J. Blige is one of the most popular singers of our generation. Fans will be thrilled to see her star on the Boulevard as her career milestones are celebrated on this very famous sidewalk," said Ana Martinez, producer of the Walk of Fame ceremonies.

The Grammy Award-winning artiste has been recognised for her acting work. Blige received the Golden Globe Award, Screen Actors Guild Award and Critics' Choice Award nominations for her role in Dee Rees' period drama 'Mudbound' as well as a Golden Globe nomination for Best Original Song for 'Mighty

Her debut album 'What's the 411?' was executive produced by Combs and spun off hits including 'You Remind Me' and 'Real Love'. Since then, she has released 12 additional albums that have garnered nine Grammy Award wins from her

meatier and more meaningful role in a film that does not feature a big actor. Though I do not judge an actor or a film on these levels," she told. The actor said the big projects that she did in the beginning of her career did not benefit her much. "Housefull 2 was a big film but it

the four girls, so I couldn't cash in on it completely. In Ready it was just a song. Veer was a dream debut, unfortunately the film did not do well.

"I received flak for looking like somebody else (she was called a Katrina Kaif look-alike) and the weight and all. Somehow, it did not work for me." Her next release is Vikram Bhatt's horror flick 1921 and she says, horror films have to be made intelligently. 'When Vikram makes a horror film, he has logic and reasoning to it. He





Born in the Bronx, New 'Prison Song', followed by Tyler York, Blige got her start in Perry's 'I Can Do Bad All by Myself'. She also starred alongmusic by signing with Uptown Records in 1989. At 18, she was side Tom Cruise, Alec Baldwin, and Russell Brand in 2012's the label's youngest and first 'Rock of Ages' and appeared female artist. in 2013's musical drama 'Black

> On the TV front, Blige has guest starred on 'How to Get Away With Murder, 'Empire' and '30 Rock'. She also played Evillene, the Wicked Witch of the West, on NBC's musical 'The Wiz Live!'.

Her film debut was in 2001's

LOS ANGELES: Actor James Franco's novel 'Actors Anonymous, which he penned in 2013, has resurfaced in news amid allegations of sexual misbehaviour against him. Passages from Franco's novel, describing how the actor-director allegedly seduced "young girls", began

circulating on social media, reports variety.com The Golden Globe winner has faced allegations of sexual misbehaviour from his former acting students.

The Los Angeles Times recently reported that five women, including LOS ANGELES: American singer-songwriter Mary J Blige has been honoured with a star on the Hollywood Walk of