

BRIEFLY

Five dead in Florida airport shooting

FORT LAUDERDALE: A lone shooter opened fire at the Fort Lauderdale, Florida, international airport on Friday, killing five people and injuring eight before he was taken into custody, officials said. The airport has suspended operations.—AP

Virat takes charge; Yuvi makes comeback

MUMBAI: Virat Kohli was on Friday officially appointed captain for all three formats and will lead the Indian cricket team in the upcoming limited-over series against England. Yuvraj Singh and Ashish Nehra, and newcomer Rishabh Pant have also been included in the teams for the ODI and T20 series.

SPORTS PAGE 17

Elderly woman brutalised

GURUGRAM: An 80-year-old woman was found murdered at her house in Sonapat district on Wednesday, with a plastic bottle stuffed inside her private parts.

CITY PAGE 3

METROPLUS MELANGE

4 Pages

GDP growth expected to be slower at 7.1% this year

Note ban impact to be factored into Feb. 28 estimate report

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: India's gross domestic output is expected to grow at a slower pace of 7.1 per cent in 2016-17 compared to the 7.6 per cent clocked in the previous year, Chief Statistician TCA Anant said on Friday.

But this doesn't factor in the impact of the Centre's decision to scrap high-value currency notes on November 8.

Data from seven months

Stressing that this estimate, which is in sync with the Reserve Bank of India's economic growth forecast, is largely based on data from the first seven months of the year, Mr. Anant said outcome-based numbers from the September to December quarter would be captured in the next growth projection to be released on February 28.

On growth forecasts by analysts emphasising a negative impact of the note ban, Mr. Anant said, "We don't produce ad hoc estimates in

IT'S OFFICIAL		
CSO's projection is mostly based on data available at the end of October, and doesn't factor in demonetisation		
GDP growth 2016-17 7.1% 2015-16 7.6%	Agriculture growth 2016-17 4.1% 2015-16 1.2%	Per capita net national income (current prices) 2016-17 ₹ 1,03,007 (rise of 10.4%) 2015-16 ₹ 93,293
Real GDP 2016-17: ₹ 121.55 lakh crore. Estimate of real GDP 2015-16: ₹ 113.50 lakh crore.	Final Consumption Expenditure 23.8% (2016-17) vs 2.2% (2015-16) The final consumption expenditure sees a spike since last fiscal	Gross Value Added (GVA) Will grow at 2016-17 7% 2015-16 7.2%

general... As a conscious approach, we do not use untried, unverified or unsubstantiated methods to make adjustments to GDP."

Two options

"In the absence of data, there are only two options: you can stay with existing structures and forecast them or, as a lot of people have done, make assumptions about what the structures are. But those are not statistical exercises so it is difficult to argue what the level of confidence in them would be," he said.

The gross value added (GVA) is estimated to grow 7 per cent in 2016-17 compared

with a growth rate of 7.2 per cent in 2015-16. The agriculture sector saw significant growth with its GVA estimated to grow 4.1 per cent in 2016-17 up from 1.2 per cent in the previous year. The service sector in aggregate is expected to grow 7.9 per cent in 2016-17, slower than the 8.1 per cent seen in the previous year.

Manufacturing, on the other hand, is expected to witness a slowdown, with the sector's GVA to grow 7.4 per cent in 2016-17 down from 9.3 per cent in 2015-16. The projection also factors in a huge jump in Government Final Consumption Expenditure,

SC refuses urgent hearing on budget

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday declined to grant urgent hearing for a petition to postpone the tabling of the Union Budget until after the Assembly elections in five States. A Bench told advocate M.L. Sharma that it would hear his petition in due course but not before. "There is no urgency in it." **PAGE 10**

which is expected to grow 23.8 per cent in 2016-17 compared with 2.2 per cent in 2015-16, part of which could be on account of rise in wage and salary payments, he explained. As for the impact of demonetisation on the next growth estimate, Mr. Anant said: "I don't think there is any method available that would lead to a higher level of confidence than what we have done. People have lots of expectations but it is a safe practice to stay with whatever is reflected in actual outcome-based data."

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RAILWAYS MAY GET 6% INCREASE IN BUDGET | PAGE 16

SC stays transfer and sale of 2G spectrum by Maxis

Firm's owner, three others had not complied with CBI court summons

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday stayed all transfer and sale by Malaysia-based Maxis group of companies of 2G spectrum, originally allocated to Aircel in November 2006.

A three-judge Bench, headed by Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar, then gave Maxis's controlling owner, Ananda Krishnan Tataranandam, and three others a two-week deadline to appear in court.

Besides Mr. Krishnan, the other three are M/s. Astro All Asia Networks Limited, M/s. Maxis Communications, based at Berhad in Malaysia, and Augustus Ralph Marshall, a director in Maxis and Astro. All four face charges in a case linked to the multi-crore 2G spectrum corruption scam, which is under trial before a Special CBI court in Delhi.

These four were among eight named by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in its charge sheet filed on August 29, 2014. They had not complied with repeated summons from the CBI court over the years.

To compel the appearance

IN THE DOCK	
Order follows non-compliance with CBI court's summons	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> T. Ananda Krishnan, Dayanidhi Maran, Kalanithi Maran and five others chargesheeted by CBI in the Aircel-Maxis deal case Maran brothers have been accused of putting pressure on Chennai-based telecom promoter C. Sivasankaran 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sivasankaran got 2G licences in 2006, and was allegedly forced to sell his stake in Aircel to Maxis Prime accused* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Augustus Marshall T. Ananda Krishnan M/s Astro Networks M/s Maxis Berhad
<p>You (Krishnan) cannot evade the process of law. You must come here from Malaysia and face the law — SUPREME COURT</p>	

* Four among eight named by the CBI in its chargesheet filed on August 29, 2014

of the accused, the Bench proposed to pass a restraint order against the accused from earning revenue from the use of their allocated 2G spectrum in case they did not turn up in court within the next fortnight. "We cannot tolerate a person using rare national resources like spectrum and not honouring the court's notice," Chief Justice Khehar observed.

Directive to Ministry

The Bench asked the Ministry of Communications to work out the modalities in case the restraint order is enforced, besides ensuring provisional arrangements for Aircel subscribers to get uninterrupted services from some other network provider.

The Bench proposed that, in case the accused chose not to appear in court, no monetary claims for the loss of its allotted 2G spectrum would be entertained.

"It is imperative to ensure, in our considered view, that the process of law should not be permitted to be frustrated by non-serving of summons on the accused," the six-page order of the Bench explained.

The court further asked the government to publish its order in two leading newspapers of Malaysia so that Maxis and others are officially apprised of the mandate. The Bench posted the next hearing on February 3.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12
SIVA HAILS STAY | PAGE 15

Aadhaar must for EPF pension scheme

SOMESH JHA

NEW DELHI: The Centre has made obtaining an Aadhaar number mandatory for 2.5 crore members of the Employees' Pension Scheme of 1995, one of the benefits available to Employees' Provident Fund subscribers.

The Labour Ministry said in a notification that those without an Aadhaar number will have to make an application to get enrolled by January 31, 2017.

The subsidy, equivalent to 1.16 per cent of the employee's salary upto ₹6,500, paid by the Centre towards the EPS, will no longer be credited till the Aadhaar number is shared with the authorities.

"Members and pensioners of the EPS desirous of continuing to avail pension and membership to the EPS by availing the Centre's contribution and subsidy under the said scheme, are hereby required to furnish proof of the possession of the Aadhaar

number or undergo Aadhaar authentication," a Union Labour and Employment Ministry notification on January 4 said. According to it, till a subscriber enrolls for Aadhaar, the Centre will provide pension subsidy under the scheme only after certain documents are produced, including identity certificate issued by the employer and a copy of the request made for Aadhaar enrolment.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

Girl's ears 'cut off' for resisting gang-rape

MOHAMMAD ALI

ASARA (BAGHPAT): A teenaged girl in Baghpat has alleged that four men of her village cut off her ears when she resisted their attempt to rape her. She also claimed that the police did not take any action when she approached them.

DETAILS ON PAGE 7

Metro Phase IV to connect peripheries

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI: Soon, six new metro corridors will come up in the city with the Delhi government clearing the Metro's Phase IV project on Friday.

Measuring around 103 km, these six new corridors will connect the peripheries of the city and make the airport more accessible.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, in a tweet, said the

decision will "go a long way" in reducing congestion and pollution in the city. "A big decision by Cabinet today [sic]," he tweeted.

The proposed six corridors are Rithala-Narela-Bawana (21.73 km), Janakpuri (West)-RK Ashram (28.92 km), Mukundpur-Maujpur (12.54 km), Inderlok-Indraprastha (12.58 km), Aerocity-Tughlakabad (20.2 km), and Lajpat Nagar-Saket (7.96

km). When Phase IV is completed, the total length of the metro corridor will cross 450 km.

Seventy two new stations will be built and the mega project, costing over Rs 50,000 crore, will be borne equally by the state government and the Centre, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said after the Cabinet meeting.

"The next clearance has to

be given by the Union government. Once it is done, work will start. The project will come up within six years of initiation of construction work," Mr Sisodia said.

As per the revised DPR, the Tughlakabad line was to stretch till Terminal 1 of the airport, but the proposal cleared by the Cabinet says it will end a station before.

SEE ALSO PAGE 4

Veteran actor Om Puri takes his final bow

KENNETH ROSARIO

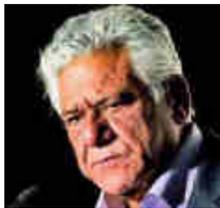
MUMBAI: The final rites of critically acclaimed actor Om Puri — known for being a prolific performer in parallel cinema as well as mainstream films — were conducted on Friday evening at the Oshiwara crematorium.

The 66-year-old veteran actor died of a heart attack at his Andheri residence in the morning. The news was first tweeted by Puri's close friend, filmmaker Ashoke Pandit.

A senior doctor at Cooper Hospital said the actor was brought to the hospital's casualty department around 10 a.m. on Friday by his ex-wife Nandita Puri. "He was immediately examined and declared brought dead," said the doctor.

Condolences from the Hindi film industry and political circles poured in on social media for the bearded family members of the actor. Members of the Hindi film industry who paid their tributes included actors Shabana Azmi, Vidya Balan, lyricist and poet Javed Akhtar, and film-makers Prakash Jha and Shyam Benegal.

Always a favourite of critics and viewers alike, Puri starred in over a hundred



Om Puri — PHOTO: REUTERS

films, including several international projects. Balancing parallel with mainstream cinema, Puri acted in a diverse range of movies like *Aakrosh* (1980), *Ardh Satya* (1983), *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro* (1983) and *Dharavi* (1992).

Puri had last lent his voice to one of the first releases of 2017, a small budget film *Prakash Electronics*. The Padma Shri awardee will also be seen in Konkona Sen Sharma's directorial debut, *A Death In The Gunj*, which will release later this year.

Born in 1950 in Ambala, Puri graduated from the FTII, Pune, where actor Naseeruddin Shah was his senior. He was also an alumnus of the 1973 class of the NSD, where Shah was a classmate.

(With Jyoti Shelar)

THE FACE OF THE COMMON MAN | PAGE 9



AAP's Jarnail Singh resigns as MLA to fight Badal
AAP's Jarnail Singh has given up his Assembly membership to contest against Parkash Singh Badal in Punjab polls **Page 4**



Crisis looms as sanitation staff go on strike
East Delhi residents could have a messy weekend, with the sanitation staff launching a strike on Friday **Page 4**

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FILM REVIEWS



A boy, a monster, and three stories

A poignant effort, *A Monster Calls* pulls out all the stops to make sure there are waterworks

DEBORAH CORNELIOUS

Rarely has a film been this proficient in forcing a viewer to enter the emotional universe of a protagonist. *A Monster Calls* is an adaptation of the book of the same name by Patrick Ness. It tells the story of 12-year-old Conor O'Malley (Lewis MacDougall), whose young mother (played by Felicity Jones) is suffering from terminal cancer. He's doing his best to be the man of the house, all to avoid living with his cold and distant grandmother (Sigourney Weaver). But for a while now, he's been having the same nightmare: the world

opens up to consume his mother. While he's trying his hardest to pull her up from the gaping earth, their hands separate and she falls into the void while he jerks awake teary-eyed, afraid and shaking.

In a fantastic turn of events one night, at exactly seven minutes past midnight, the yew tree in a cemetery near his house comes alive. The monster (voiced by Liam Neeson) that emerges is a mighty creature with burning hot insides, glowing red eyes and spiked branches for a spine. The monster claims that Conor has summoned him. Much to the young boy's confusion, the monster wants to tell him three

★★★★★

A Monster Calls

Director: J.A. Bayona
Starring: Liam Neeson, Sigourney Weaver, Felicity Jones, Toby Kebbell, Lewis MacDougall
Run Time: 108 minutes

stories and not devour him.

At first, we're just as puzzled as Conor is with the monster's stories. They're disconnected, wholly unrelated to what's happening with the young protagonist. But when the connection does arrive, it's a poignant one. The monster then be-

comes a metaphor for the bitter truth we must all swallow, one we're afraid and reluctant to. When Conor's truth is revealed to us, it's one that's simple, albeit much like the conflict we all have within us.

Conor's character is a beautifully complex one that director J.A. Bayona (*The Impossible* and *The Orphanage*) does justice to while bringing alive on the big screen. The 14-year-old Scottish actor playing the role does a fantastic job portraying the grief-stricken frustrated protagonist. He's perfect as the child the narrator describes as too old to be a kid and too young to be a man. But then again, all the actors do their part. Bay-

ona does his bit to bring out the essence of each role. He creates a vast and beautiful world for Conor to inhabit, replete with gloomy suburban neighbourhoods, sludgy hills and windy streets. Fernando Velazquez's score is the perfect accompaniment to what's unfolding on the screen, soaring at the right time and emotionally cajoling at other instances. The special effects team, too, has gone the extra mile to motion-capture Neeson as the monster. His body, made up of sinuous branches with hot lava insides, never once gives away its computer-generated origins.

A Monster Calls is a tear-jerker in every sense of the word. Try as you might

to swallow the lump that builds up in your throat during the film, it just won't work. Conor is a kid who's being bullied at school, pitied by his teachers, he has a mum dying of cancer, and a father who's torn between two families. When nothing seems to be getting better, there's a monster traumatising him with stories. It seems he just can't cut a break. In the midst of all this sadness, Bayona's doing his best to pull intensely at those heartstrings, let alone gently tug at them.

This film is like the good weep you'd like to have once in a while to cleanse your system. After watching it, despite its very bleak nature, you still walk out renewed.

No secret here: boring

Allied unimpressively flatlines from beginning to end

DEBORAH CORNELIOUS

At the get go, the *Allied*'s premise is intriguing. The film is set against the backdrop of World War II. The lead couple comprises two secret agents fighting the Germans, who meet and fall in love in Casablanca while on a mission to assassinate the German ambassador. Then the wife gets accused of being a German spy. All this, after they marry, have a daughter and settle into apparent domestic bliss. Seems like the makings of a great thriller. Now with director Robert Zemeckis, who won the Academy Award for *Forrest Gump*, helming the project, you'd be justified in having high expectations. Plus, when Brad Pitt and Marion Cotillard make up the couple, those expectations have

soared sky high. The build-up to *Allied*'s release has seen heavy-duty attention by the paparazzi, ensuring some level of curiosity. A rumoured affair between the film's leading co-stars allegedly led to Angelina Jolie filing for divorce from Pitt.

It's unbelievable, then, that no one noticed the glaring factors going against *Allied*'s reach for cinematic excellence. For his part, Zemeckis recreates 1940s Casablanca and London to be the visually dystopian war zones they were. The costumes are painstakingly accurate. He's also done well in capturing the wealth disparity the Moroccan city endured, with locals struggling to get by and the privileged living a life of luxury without rationing. What *Allied* didn't lack in is its direction, cinematography or soundtrack.



The problem lies in everything else: the actual story and its execution. For the first seemingly endless half of the two-hour-long film, a love story lacking in any chemistry unfolds. We're tortured with the mindless exchange between Max Vatan (Pitt) and Marianne Beausejour (Cotillard).

Vatan's expressionless efforts to seamlessly fit in with the clever double agent Beausejour's life in Casablanca should have been a lot more economical. Yet, we're subjected to stretched-out proceedings, including unnecessary social gatherings and pretences. *Allied* most certainly won't go down as

the pinnacle of either actor's career. What made matters worse is the censorship the film faces in India. All traces of adult content have fallen victim to the censor's hand. It has resulted in painfully amateur edits and a jarring cinema experience.

When Vatan is finally confronted with the twist —

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Allied

Director: Robert Zemeckis
Starring: Brad Pitt and Marion Cotillard
Run Time: 124 mins

his wife is suspected to be a German spy — surely then film's pace ought to have picked up. It doesn't though. At such a time, *Allied* had the potential to become a complex telling of a relationship and the pursuit of truth. Alas, everything plays out too predictably.

If the director's intention was for the audience to root for Pitt and Cotillard's onscreen love story, he failed. If we were supposed to be so invested that Beausejour's secret would be shocking, again, it was a colossal failure. In the end, *Allied* is a huge waste of anyone's time.

CINEMA

ENGLISH:

A MONSTER CALLS: PVR (Anupam, City Walk), Wave (Raja Garden, Noida), Cinepolis, Spice (Noida), SRS Cinemas.

PASSENGERS: PVR (Anupam, Shalimar Bagh, Vasant Kunj, City Walk, Naraina, Mahagun, Sangam), DT (Noida), Wave (Raja Garden, Noida), Satyam (Nehru Place, Patel Nagar), Cinepolis, Spice (Noida).

HINDI:

DANGAL: (Aamir Khan, Sakshi Tanwar): Abhishek Cineplex, Delhi, Shiela, Milan, Liberty, Regal, Ritz, Amba, G3S (Rohini), PVR (Plaza, Rivoli, Priya, Saket, City Walk, Naraina, Vikaspuri, Prashant Vihar, EDM), M2K (Rohini, Pitampura), Movie Time (Raja Garden, Pitampura), FUN (Moti Nagar, Pitampura, Laxmi Nagar, Karkardooma), DT (Saket, Shalimar Bagh, Vasant Kunj), Satyam (Patel Nagar, Nehru Place, Janakpuri), BIG (Odeon, Vaishali, Kaushambi, Noida), Wave (Raja Garden, Kaushambi, Noida), Spice (Noida), JAM Shipra, M4U, SRS Cinemas, Movie Palace, Movie Magic, Galaxie, Star X (Vaishali), Chaudhary (Ghaziabad), Movie World and Silver City (Ghaziabad), Inox and Q Cinemas (Faridabad).
(BOOKING ENQUIRIES: PVR 51513391; Spice Gold 01204389000; Satyam Cinemas 25797385; Delhi 23272903; Wave 51832222)

Gurugram gurdwara shows the way with 'green seva' initiative

ASHOK KUMAR

GURUGRAM: In view of the growing use of plastic and increasing pollution levels, Gurdwara Sadh Sangat in South City-I here has initiated a campaign to spread awareness on reducing waste for sustainable living.

The management committee has put up posters at four gurdwaras in Delhi — Bangla Sahib, Rakab Ganj Sahib, Sis Ganj and Moti Bagh. Titled "Let's Do Green Seva", the posters appeal the devotees to say no to disposables.

'Use pattals and dundas'

Given rapid urbanisation, a lot of people prefer to use and throw plastic and Styrofoam containers for *langar* (community kitchen) ceremonies. A huge number of devotees arranging these *langars* litter the roads with disposables, wrappers, etc. The posters urge the use of



GOOD MOVE: The management committee of Gurdwara Sadh Sangat has put up posters at four gurdwaras in Delhi. — PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

pattals and *dundas* (leaf plates and bowls), which are

biodegradable in stead of plastic disposables, and do

their bit in order to ensure clean the surroundings after @bubby581

religious events. The message conveyed through "green seva" posters is to check the increasing use of materials causing life-threatening environmental pollution.

Various efforts

Green sewaks of the gurdwara here have made efforts towards cleanliness themselves. These include taking biodegradable plates to the Municipal Corporation of Gurgaon's pilot composting plant, and processing and treating the "waste" from *langars* in environment-friendly manner by turning it into organic manure.

"The management committee felt that each person should showcase their green responsibility and bring about harmony with the environment by conserving natural resources, reducing water wastage and helping build clean and healthy living," said a committee mem-

Uber hikes fares by nearly 15 per cent in Delhi-NCR

NEW DELHI: Taxi aggregator app Uber has hiked its entry-level fares offering UberGO by up to 15 per cent in Delhi-NCR.

The United States-based firm has increased the ride time charge to ₹1.5 per minute from the earlier ₹1. Uber charges ₹6 per km for up to 20 km and ₹12 per km thereafter at a base fare of ₹60 for UberGO.

The ride time charges — calculated on the basis of the total time of the ride — for UberPOOL and UberX have also been hiked to ₹1.5 per minute.

Pricing structure

When contacted, an Uber spokesperson said: "Starting Thursday, we made some changes to our pricing structure in Delhi-NCR in order to serve the city better."

The prices are expected to go up by 10-15 per cent, the spokesperson added.

The US-based firm has increased the ride time charge to ₹1.5 per minute from the earlier ₹1

Uber had introduced "up-front fare" last year. As per this, the company calculated and showed rates depending on expected time, travel distance and local traffic. The fares fluctuated as per demand.

Affordable pricing has been one of the important factors driving on-demand taxi services in the country.

Uber was engaged in an intense battle in the Indian market with local rival Ola, as well as radio taxi operators like Meru.

The company, which operates in 29 cities in the country, counts India as its second largest market, after the US. — PTI

Still no notification on 298 schools

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI: It has been a week since nursery admissions for private schools began in the city. With January 23 as the last day for schools to accept applications, there is still no notification on the 298 schools built on DDA/government land. Many prominent schools in the city built on DDA land have to accept 75 per cent students from the neighbourhood.

Delhi HC orders

The Directorate of Education (DoE) had issued a statement saying that as per Delhi High Court orders, all private schools have to adopt the criteria of admission which must be clear, well-defined, equitable, non-discriminatory, unambiguous and transparent, but failed to comment on when the notification for the 298 schools would come out.

In case of grievance

The statement had also said that any grievance with regard to the admission process or complaints related to donation/capitation fee being charged by schools, non-display of criteria/procedure of admissions, non-availability of admission forms or any other complaint may be lodged on link doeptv.delhi.gov.in

The DoE had instructed all schools to display the total number of entry-level seats and clear cut criteria on their websites and notice boards in a transparent manner. "The schools must transparently declare and display the list of shortlisted children along with

January 23 is the last day for schools to accept applications for nursery admissions

breakup of marks allotted on each criterion. For clarification of grievances/doubts of parents, specific time has been given between February 16 and 18."

On the tenterhooks

Parents, however, are on the tenterhooks. Seema Bisht, a parent seeking admission at St. Mary's Public School, said: "Right now we don't have any idea about admission to 298 schools. I am filling up the form for other schools that have started the process and will submit it before January 23. I will decide after schools declare the result."

'Lots of confusion'

Though long lines outside schools were missing, Pallavi, a parent, added: "Though the government has announced online admissions, there is still a lot of confusion. That is why I decided to come to the school to take the form. I will submit it as soon as possible. I have not faced any problem so far."

Some parents are worried that the admission guidelines for schools built on government land may not be clear-cut and may require documentation that cannot be arranged for overnight. "Instead of taking the risk, I am applying to all the schools in my area. Better to have a seat in a lesser-known school than no seat at all," said a parent.

Jamia launches alumni network

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI: Jamia Millia Islamia on Friday launched the Global Jamia Alumni Network (GJAN) and invited all alumni to register with the network so that former students from different parts of the world can come together to strengthen their presence.

"Landmark event"

Vice-Chancellor Talat Ahmad called it "a landmark event in the history of the institution".

Beneficial relationship

The university informed that GJAN will promote the interest, welfare and educational goals of the university and its alumni, establish and maintain a mutually beneficial relationship between the two, and encourage lifelong engagement of the alumni and the university community at large.

DELHI

Jan 07, Sat
RISE 07:15 SET 17:40
RISE 13:17 SET 01:28

Jan 08, Sun
RISE 07:15 SET 17:41
RISE 14:02 SET 02:31

Jan 09, Mon
RISE 07:15 SET 17:42
RISE 14:52 SET 03:36

Delhi City Maximum 24 Minimum 11

Safdarjung

Maximum 24 Minimum 11

Palam

Maximum 25 Minimum 14



Delhi PalamToday 20°C

There are chances of one or two spells of rain over the city and NCR. A cool and cloudy day. The morning will be bitter cold.



Delhi PalamTomorrow 20°C

A cloudy sky is expected to persist with a bitter cold morning. A slightly cold day and a cold night are expected.

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SHROUDED IN MYSTERY

Mother expecting twins gets one baby

Woman alleges ultrasound report showed two live foetuses; DCW seeks response from hospital

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI: A 26-year-old woman has alleged that she was handed over only one child by the staff of Safdarjung Hospital despite giving birth to twins.

Identified as Hemlata, a resident of north Delhi's Darshan Vihar, the woman claimed she had got her ultrasound test done at a private diagnostic lab in November last year and the report said she was carrying "two live foetuses". However, when the delivery took place at the hospital on December 22, she was allegedly handed over just one child, a girl.

"When we asked the hos-



IN A MESS: Hemlata and her husband Vikas approached the DCW after they allegedly did not receive help from the police and hospital authorities. PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

When we asked the hospital staff about the other child, they said it must have been discarded with garbage

pital staff about the other child, they said it must have been discarded with garbage," said Vikas, the woman's husband.

Hemlata also alleged that she had seen a nurse taking

away the baby.

Hospital rubbishes claims

Dr A.K. Rai, Medical Superintendent of Safdarjung Hospital, however, dismissed the allegations, say-

ing they had "no substance". "The ultrasound report is questionable," he said.

On Friday, the woman approached the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) after her requests to the hos-

pital authorities and the police to probe the matter allegedly evoked no response.

Acting on her complaint, DCW chief Swati Maliwal shot off letters to the police and hospital seeking their response in the case within 48 hours. Ms. Maliwal asked the hospital to provide the details of the action taken on the complaint and of the staff present at the time of delivery.

'Register FIR'

Expressing apprehension that an organised criminal group was behind the incident, Ms. Maliwal sought copies of all complaints of a similar nature received by the hospital in the past one year.

Ms. Maliwal also recommended that the police register an FIR. Chinmoy Biswal, Additional DCP (South), confirmed that a complaint had been received from the couple on December 27. "The complaint has been sent to the hospital's medical superintendent for a report. Their report is awaited," said Mr. Biswal.

Bank official seeks bail in note conversion case

NIRNIMESH KUMAR

NEW DELHI: A suspended branch manager of a private bank here has moved a court seeking bail in a case of alleged irregularities in the conversion of old currency notes into new.

The official, Vineet Gupta, posted at the Kashmiri Gate branch of Axis Bank, submitted in his application that he had played no role in the conversion of the demonetised notes, and no article had been recovered from him by the Enforcement Directorate.

Banking on CCTV inputs

The counsel for the accused argued that even if there were violations of KYC norms in connection with the bank accounts of persons involved in the case, it did not require the custody of his client. Special Public Prosecutor Vikas Garg, appearing for the Directorate, opposed

the plea submitting that CCTV footage of the bank showed that co-accused Rajeev Kumar Kushwaha along with others had brought crores of rupees in mango cartons and deposited the same there.

Accused in custody

Gupta, Kushwaha, alleged to be the mastermind behind the floating of alleged shell companies, and suspended manager (Operations) of the bank, Shobit Sinha, are in judicial custody. The Directorate alleges that Kushwaha had used the identity documents of various persons allegedly to form shell companies through which cash deposits of ₹39 crore were made between November 10 and November 22 in close connivance with the two bank officers.

The latter had allegedly taken one per cent commission for the total amount of money deposited.

NDMC officials attacked during encroachment drive

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI: Officials of the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) were allegedly thrashed by some shopkeepers during an anti-encroachment drive at south Delhi's Sarojini Market on Thursday.

Jagbir, an enforcement inspector with the NDMC, told the police that the trouble began when he and his two colleagues tried to remove vegetables kept on the footpath outside a shop.

Two shopkeepers immediately entered into an argument with them and started hurling verbal abuses before one of them allegedly slapped Jagbir. When his colleagues tried to intervene, they, too, were allegedly assaulted

While one official was allegedly slapped, another's clothes were reportedly ripped off

and one of their clothes ripped off.

Case registered

The police were called and the officials taken for a medical examination. Later, a case of assault and obstructing a public servant from discharging his duty was registered at the Sarojini Nagar police station.

The traders at the market, however, claimed foul over the action taken by the officials.

"As per court orders, the NDMC can remove vendors who have

encroached on public spaces. The officials, however, entered shops and beat up people," said Ashok Randhawa, president, Sarojini Nagar Mini Market Association. He alleged that the officials had confiscated the wares of the shop that include plastic products and crockery, even though the shopkeeper offered to remove the articles stacked outside the premises.

Traders planning protest

He said the traders would soon hold a meeting to decide on a protest, including a "shutdown".

"NDMC inspectors have created an atmosphere of terror at the market," Mr. Randhawa added.

Molestation case: cops to release sketches of accused

NEW DELHI: Unable to identify the two men who had allegedly tried to molest a woman in north-west Delhi's Mukherjee Nagar, the Delhi Police will now prepare sketches of the accused and share these with locals to trace them.

The police have also decided to conduct a sensitisation drive in the area, which is a hub for students who prepare for competitive examinations like UPSC, banking and others. On the basis of the description given by one of the constables present at the spot, sketches of the two accused will be prepared and shared with the coaching centres, hostels and PGs located in the area, a senior police officer said.

Accused may be students

"One of our constables re-

members their faces and we will be getting their sketches put up in the area. There are high chances that they are students staying in the area who are preparing for competitive exams," the officer said.

A video of a mob running amok and attacking policemen with stones after they prevented two men from assaulting a woman on New Year's Eve here had surfaced on Thursday.

Two men in yellow and blue jackets allegedly tried to pull down a woman riding pillion on a motorbike near Batra Cinemas, investigators had said. Noticing the incident, the police had cautioned the two men, who appeared drunk, against indulging in hooliganism, and they were even caught, but after the crowd went berserk and at-

tacked the police, they managed to flee.

Mob out of control

There were around 20-30 policemen deployed in the area and when a mob of 250-300 people gathered, policemen had to retreat to a nearby police post, they said. The mob banged on the windows of the post and damaged them, prompting the policemen to seek reinforcement.

As soon as extra force came, the mob retreated but the police managed to catch hold of 24-25 people who were detained and were suspected to be involved in the stone-pelting.

"Their names and addresses have been taken down. A couple of them were people who run PGs and a few of those detained in-

cluded students," said a source.

The police are also trying to identify the girl whom the accused tried to molest. A case under relevant sections of the IPC for damaging public property, rioting, attacking a government servant and assault or criminal force to a woman with intent to outrage her modesty has been registered against unknown persons. Section 354 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty) of the IPC was included in the FIR on the basis of the statement given by Constable Anil Kaushik, who was also an eyewitness and was injured in the incident.

Sensitisation drives

The police are also conducting sensitisation ses-

sions by visiting coaching centres and talking to students. "We have also asked students to help us identify the accused. They have been assured that their identities will not be revealed and they will be rewarded suitably for helping the police," the source said.

On Thursday, the police had said almost 1,200-1,500 students had been questioned in connection with the incident, which had similarities with the Bengaluru mass molestation case.

"Almost 1,200-1,500 students have been questioned till now. The SHO of Mukherjee Nagar has also formed a WhatsApp group with the owners of coaching centres to ascertain the identities of the hooligans," a source privy to the probe had said.—PTI

DU professor assaulted by snatcher at petrol pump

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI: A Delhi University professor was allegedly assaulted by a snatcher after he failed to grab her bag at a refuelling station in east Delhi's Mayur Vihar.

The incident happened on Tuesday, when the victim was headed to college in her car.

Sharing her ordeal on Facebook, the woman wrote, "As I was boarding my car, a bike-borne man in an orange hoodie approached me, and tried to snatch my bag. When I pulled him and my bag back, he fell down and began abusing and

threatening me."

After that it was a "blur of slapping, punches" that caused her spectacles to break, she alleged.

Nobody to help

"I turned to the petrol pump agents and bystanders to note his vehicle number down. They simply looked away, even as the emboldened man came closer, punched me again and sped away," she wrote.

Once the assailant had escaped, some people lambasted the petrol pump agents and guards for not reacting.

"The police arrived after my call. I was then

informed that not all cameras at the station were working," she alleged.

The incident, however, was captured on the sole functional CCTV camera. The footage neither shows the assailant's face nor does it seem to have captured his motorcycle's registration number.

No clues yet

The police said they had registered a case on charges of causing hurt, criminal intimidation and doing acts with an intention to outrage the modesty of a woman. They are, however, yet to make any headway.

Elderly woman brutalised, killed

STAFF REPORTER

GURUGRAM: An 80-year-old woman was found murdered at her house in Sonipat district on Wednesday, with a plastic bottle stuffed inside her private parts.

The incident came to light when the victim's son went to wake her up in the morning.

Dr. Sumit Kaushik, who was part of a three-member medical board that conducted the post-mortem examination on the woman, said the bottle had damaged the woman's intestines.

"Never before have I come across such brutality. It was inhuman," said Dr. Kaushik.

Rape not ruled out

The ribs of the woman were also fractured, and an injury was found on the forehead as well.

Not ruling out rape, Dr. Kaushik said swabs were taken and sent to a laboratory in Karnal for examination.

Prahlad Singh, Station House Officer, Sadar police station, said a case had been registered.

The police, however, are yet to achieve a breakthrough.

Murder accused nabbed after 6 months on the run

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI: A 25-year-old man who allegedly stoned to death the live-in partner of a transgender person in north-east Delhi's Karawal Nagar in July and had been on the run ever since has been arrested.

The accused, Vinod, was carrying a reward of ₹25,000 on his head, said Joint CP (Crime) Ravindra Yadav.

Police on the trail

To gather information about him, a team of Crime Branch had even visited

Jharkhand, where the accused comes from.

He was finally arrested on Wednesday from Khajuri Chowk based on a tip-off.

The police said Vinod worked odd jobs and often spent his time with the deceased, Mahender Tomar. However, Tomar would allegedly often use derogatory terms for Vinod's wife. On July 14, a drunken conversation between them turned ugly during which Vinod allegedly used a stone to repeatedly hit Tomar on his head, killing him on the spot.

DELHI TODAY

Talk: Seminar on "Keys to Governance: Political Will", at Seminar Rooms I-II, Kamaladevi Complex, India International Centre (IIC), 6:30 p.m.

Talk: Lecture on "Hindu mantras and Christian prayers", at Conference Room - I, Main Building, India International Centre (IIC), 6:30 p.m.

Music: "Melodious Revival", tribute to legendary ghazal singers: Arvind Dixit to perform select ghazals of Mehdi Hassan, Jagjit Singh, Gulam Ali, Mukesh and Mohd Rafi, among others; Manoj Nagar on tabla, at Amatas Hall, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m.

Exhibition: "Timeless", an exhibition of ceramic sculptures by Usha Garodia, at Visual Arts Gallery, India

Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Exhibition: "Eternal", an exhibition of drawings by Bhaskar Singh, at Convention Centre Foyer, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Culture: Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam: Tirupavai Upanyasam by Dr. K. Ananthachariar at Lakshmi Nrisimha Mandir, Karol Bagh, 6:30 p.m.

Screening: Of English film "Papa Hemmingway in Cuba", at C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, India International Centre (IIC), 6:30 p.m.

Screening: Of Japanese film "Ogin - Love and Faith", with English subtitles, at The Japan Foundation, 5A Ring Road, Lajpat Nagar, 2 p.m.

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

Women allowed to carry knives in Metros

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI: Keeping safety in mind, the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has permitted women to carry small knives while travelling in metro trains.

"Women will now be permitted to carry knives that are less than four inches long. We realised that small knives are not a threat to security but required by women for their protection," said a senior CISF officer.

The agency has also decided to allow lighters and matchboxes in metro trains, as hundreds of these items are seized from passengers



GOOD NEWS: The decision has been taken keeping women's safety in mind. FILE PHOTO

daily during screening. However, one passenger will be allowed to carry only one lighter or matchbox.

Certain tools have also

been struck off from the list of items restricted from being carried in metro trains. The decision was taken after labourers frequently complained of inconvenience caused to them while travelling in metros.

CISF to maintain record

CISF officials will, however, maintain a register of the tools so that their owners can be contacted if required.

The order permitting these items in metro trains was issued by the CISF last September after reviewing the security threat posed by each of them.

Phase IV will offer more options to commuters

Narela and Bawana to be finally connected to rest of the Capital; numerous interchange stations to cut down travel time

SIDHARTHA ROY

NEW DELHI: With Phase IV of the Delhi Metro getting the government's approval on Friday, the metro network will now reach the peripheries of the Capital as well as provide better connectivity to the airport and many south and central Delhi neighbourhoods.

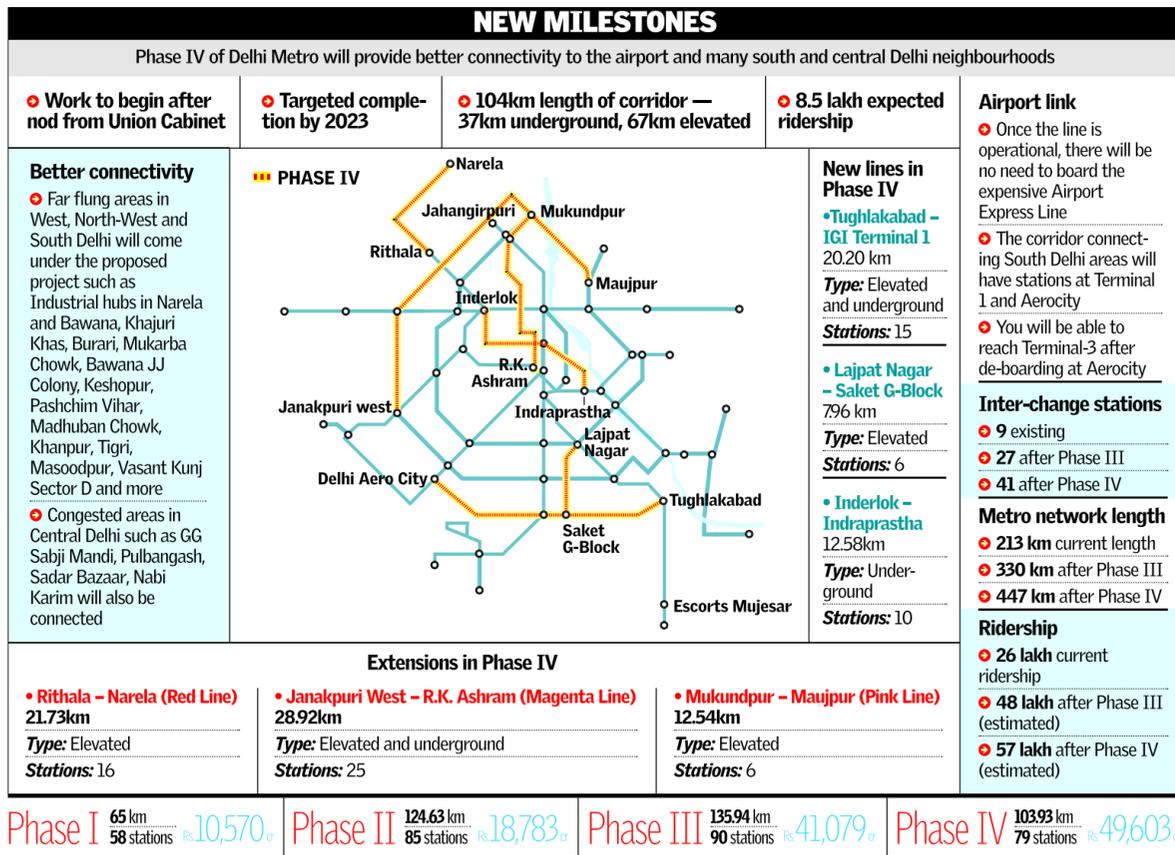
The first phase of the Metro connected the eastern part of the city to west and north Delhi with New Delhi. The second phase saw the lines extending further, touching the southern part of Delhi and entering NCR for the first time.

While the first two phases focused on radial lines reaching all corners of Delhi-NCR, the soon-to-be-completed Phase III will see these radials being connected by new lines, eventually forming concentric circles.

Bolstering the network

Phase IV of the Metro expansion plan, work on which might now begin soon, would further bolster the network by reaching far flung areas of the Capital, as well as improving connectivity in south and central Delhi.

Once Phase IV is completed, adding three new lines and extending three others, the Delhi Metro network will be one of the largest in the world. The total number of interchange stations will also go up to 41, from the 27 proposed after completion of Phase III. This will mean more options for commuters to change trains and cut down travelling time. So, while the expansion of the Delhi Metro will add to the daily footfall, the availability of more interchange options will mean equitable dispersal of passenger traffic and less crowding at the existing interchange stations.



The corridors that will extend the Metro network to peripheral areas of Delhi are the Rithala to Narela line, and Janakpuri (West) to RK Ashram line in north-west Delhi, Mukundpur to Maujpur line in north-east Delhi; and Tughlaqabad to Terminal 1 line, which will bring south-east Delhi closer to the airport.

The further extension of the Dilshad Garden-Rithala

corridor (Line 1) will see the Metro reach the outer sectors of Rohini, Barwala, Bawana and Narela.

The Narela sub-city, developed by the DDA, which is a ghost town at present due to lack of connectivity, is expected to see a boom.

The Janakpuri (West) to RK Ashram line will connect Paschim Vihar, Peeragarhi, Mukerba Chowk, Ashok Vihar to central Delhi areas

such as Sadar Bazar, Nabi Karim and RK Ashram Marg. The Maujpur to Mukundpur line will connect areas in north-east Delhi such as Yamuna Vihar, Bhajanpura and Maujpur to Burari in north Delhi.

Real estate boom

Areas such as Narela, Bawana or Burari have not seen much development in housing compared to many

NCR areas, despite being in Delhi, due to their distance from the centre of the Capital and lack of dependable public transport. The areas are likely to see a real estate boom once the Delhi Metro reaches them.

With the completion of Phase IV, Metro connectivity to the airport will also get a major boost. The Tughlaqabad-Terminal 1 corridor will provide direct con-

nectivity to the domestic terminal for residents of Ambedkar Nagar, Saket, Lado Sarai, Mehrauli and Vasant Kunj.

The Lajpat Nagar-Saket G Block will also mean that commuters taking the Violet Line will also be able to reach the airport easily, apart from residents of Sheikh Sarai, Chirag Dilli, Greater Kailash-I, Andrews Ganj and Lajpat Nagar.

E-rickshaws to provide last-mile connectivity

SIDHARTHA ROY

NEW DELHI: The lack of dependable last-mile connectivity has been a bane for Delhi Metro commuters, but a solution may be available soon in the form of GPS-enabled e-rickshaws with on-board CCTVs.

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) is in the process of tying up with operators that will procure, maintain and operate e-rickshaws to provide first and last-mile connectivity from Metro stations to neighbourhoods within a radius of three to four kilometres.

Unorganised transporters

Over the last few years, three-wheelers and unorganised transport mediums such as e-rickshaws and Gramin Sewa vehicles have flocked to Metro stations in Delhi-National Capital Region.

Though the unorganised modes of transport provide much-needed last-mile connectivity to commuters, they also lead to blockage of entry and exit points at the stations, apart from creating

pollution and giving an 'ugly look' to the stations, a DMRC official said.

'Safe and reliable'

The DMRC now plans to turn this unorganised medium into a more organised one by roping in operators who will regulate their movement to ensure dedicated, safe, secure and reliable four and last-mile feeder services to Metro commuters, the official said.

The e-rickshaws will be allowed to carry a maximum of four passengers and up to 40kg of luggage.

The DMRC also wants the e-rickshaws to have GPS and CCTVs installed to ensure safety for passengers, particularly women.

The DMRC also wants the vehicles to be equipped with a first-aid box and a fire extinguishers.

The official said that the e-rickshaws will be able to help in areas that feeder buses cannot access due to narrow or congested roads.

The DMRC will provide dedicated space at the Metro stations for the e-rickshaws.



CONVENIENT RIDE: The e-rickshaws will have CCTV cameras and a GPS. FILE PHOTO: RAMESH SHARMA

Award for people who help accident victims

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government on Friday approved the 'Good Samaritan Policy' under which ₹2,000 and an appreciation certificate will be given to people who help road accident victims and take them to the hospital. Announcing the

Cabinet's decision, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said that the scheme is intended to encourage people to take accident victims to a hospital.

₹2,000 award

"To encourage people to help accident victims, the Delhi government has

approved the 'Good Samaritan Policy'. Under the scheme, people, who are helping road accident victims, will be rewarded with ₹2,000 and an appreciation certificate by the government," Mr. Sisodia said.

The government had mooted the proposal in August last year after a

road accident victim in west Delhi's Subhash Nagar died to death because no one had helped him. The AAP government in April last year, had also decided to provide basic life support training to all auto-rickshaw drivers in the city. The idea was to have help at hand in case of a road accident.

Solution soon on DCW employees' salary: L-G to HC

NEW DELHI: The office of Lieutenant-Governor on Friday told the Delhi High Court that there could be a solution soon regarding the salary and appointment of employees hired by Delhi Commission for Women, even as the commission alleged that its autonomy was being affected due to this issue.

Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva asked the DCW to file a separate application for any grievance it has as the present petition was filed over non-payment of salary to the workers engaged in various cells for women. The court listed the matter for hearing on January 24.

The court on December 22, 2016, had come to the aid of 62 DCW workers, including acid attack victims, who were not paid salary since September 2016, by directing the commission to disburse 50 per cent of their four months' arrears.

Arrears disbursed

Today, the L-G's office said the orders of the court have been complied with and amounts have been disbursed.

The December 22 order had come on the workers' plea, filed through advocate Amita Singh Kalkal, seeking a direction to DCW to disburse salary which had not been paid since September.

The L-G's office had said that prima facie investigation by the Anti-Corruption Branch and other authorities had showed that the appointments of the employees were not done as per the law. — PTI

AAP's Jarnail Singh resigns as MLA to fight Punjab CM

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI: Aam Aadmi Party's Rajouri Garden MLA Jarnail Singh on Friday gave up his Assembly membership to contest against Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal from the Lambi constituency. "I sent my resignation to Speaker Ram Niwas Goel on Thursday," Mr Singh, a former journalist, told the media.

Yet to register in Punjab

Punjab goes to the polls on February 4. However, Mr. Singh is still a voter of Delhi and yet to register



Jarnail will fight from Lambi constituency in the Punjab Assembly polls. FILE PHOTO

himself in Punjab.

A section of the media had earlier reported that Mr. Singh's application to register himself as a voter from Sarawan Bodla village in Lambi constituency of Muksar had been rejected

on the grounds that he did not mention for how long he had been staying on the given address of his friend in the area.

January 9

Sources in the party said that the AAP MLA will get his name struck off the Delhi voter list and soon register himself in Punjab. "By January 9, he will apply in Punjab," said sources. AAP's Punjab Prabhari (State in-charge) and spokesperson Sanjay Singh in a statement said that Mr. Singh has. "Mr. Singh will definitely contest from Lambi and defeat Mr. Badal," he said.



SMELLY SITUATION: Garbage piles up in east Delhi on Friday after EDMC sanitation workers went on strike over delayed payment of salaries. PHOTO: SANDEEP SAXENA

Crisis looms as sanitation staff go on strike

DAMINI NATH

NEW DELHI: East Delhi residents could have a messy weekend on their hands, with municipal sanitation workers launching a strike on Friday over delay in payment of salaries.

The indefinite strike by the sanitation staff of the East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) could lead to garbage piling up on the streets and spilling out of *dhalao*s.

The EDMC, which has been plagued by a financial crisis for two years now, has been unable to pay staff, including 17,000 sanitation workers, their salaries for November and December. The sanitation workers,

RAISING A STINK

EDMC sanitation workers on strike again

EARLIER STRIKES:

- March 2015
- June 2015
- October 2015
- Feb 2016

who have gone on similar strikes several times over the past two years, held a protest outside Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia's office as well as the EDMC headquarters in Patparganj. The workers said that they would not end their strike till the salaries are paid.

The EDMC has said that it will not be able to pay the workers till funds from the Delhi government are disbursed.

'Services at a standstill'

EDMC Standing Committee chairperson Jitendra Choudhary said that sanitation services had come to a standstill.

"The removal of 2,500 metric tonnes of garbage a day from *dhalao*s has stopped, as well as sweeping of streets. This is an emergency. We have been trying to reach out to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Mr. Sisodia, but they are occupied with the Punjab elections," said the chairperson. Mr. Choudhary added that

BJP councillors of the EDMC may have to "join the protest". He said the EDMC had asked the Delhi Government to expedite the disbursement of the last instalment of grants for this financial year.

Release of funds

Sources said that the government may release funds for the civic bodies within a week. However, workers said that they would not end their strike on promises alone.

"We don't enjoy making Delhiites suffer, but we have no option. We have been brought to the brink of desperation," said Sanjay Gehlot, president of the Swatantra Majdoor Vikas Sanyukt Morcha.

Adding to the problem



AIR POLLUTION: A farmer burns vegetation near Bela State Kanchan Puri on the Yamuna bank on Friday. PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Payal, sons' appeal for govt accommodation rejected

AKANKSHA JAIN

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Friday dismissed the appeal of Payal Abdullah, the estranged wife of former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, and her two sons for a government accommodation on security grounds.

The court observed that "when Mr. Abdullah himself has shifted to a private ac-

commodation, there is no reason why the appellants can be treated differently".

Security concerns

A Bench of Chief Justice G. Rohini and Justice V Kameshwar Rao dismissed the appeal moved by Payal and her two sons against the August 2016 order by single judge asking them to vacate government accommodation 7, Akbar Road.

The appellants had pleaded that they are Z an Z plus protectees and the security cover would not be possible in their smaller private house in south Delhi.

'No basis for contention'

"Mr. Abdullah himself has shifted to a place in Nizamuddin where adequate security is being provided to him by the Delhi Police. Similar is the position with his

father Farooq Abdullah," the Bench said.

The court held that Payal Abdullah's contention that being Z and Z plus security protectees, they needed to be allotted accommodation by the central government, to be without any basis.

"Even the Ministry of Home Affairs has taken a stand that adequate security cover will be provided to the appellants," it noted.

Centre-Delhi row upsets HC

‘Why can’t the two govts resolve matters amicably without coming to court?’

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI: The High Court on Friday expressed its disappointment over a tussle between the Centre and the Delhi government over a repatriation of a bureaucrat and wondered why such matters are brought to the court rather than being resolved amicably.

Court’s observation

The court made the observation while hearing a petition by Speaker Ram Niwas Goel who has challenged former Lieutenant-Governor Najeeb Jung’s order repatriating Delhi Assembly Secretary Prasanna Kumar Suryadevara, an officer belonging to Newsreader-cum-Translator (Telugu) cadre, to All India Radio (AIR), his parent organisation.

Notices issued

The court issued notices to the Centre, Prasanna Kumar and the Delhi government seeking their replies by January 17, and asked the Centre not to insist on repatriation of the bureaucrat till then. The Centre accepted the same.

“A Speaker coming to



‘EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCE’: Speaker Ram Niwas Goel (centre) has challenged the order of former L-G Najeeb Jung (left) repatriating Delhi Assembly Secretary Prasanna Kumar Suryadevara to All India Radio. — FILE PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

court is an extraordinary circumstance. This should not be thrashed out in court. He is not such an officer that two governments [Delhi and Centre] should fight over him. Why cannot it be resolved amicably without either party coming to court,” asked Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva.

Mr. Goel has in his petition contended that the L-G cannot repatriate the officer

without his agreement, while also challenging the memorandums issued by AIR to Prasanna Kumar directing him to join his parent organisation immediately, failing which his absence would be treated as “unauthorised”.

L-G ordered repatriation

Prasanna Kumar has served in the office of the Lok Sabha Speaker for five years

HC disapproved of Speaker’s plea against L-G’s order over posting of bureaucrat in the Assembly

and that of the Rajya Sabha Chairman for over six years. He was appointed the Delhi Assembly Secretary in July 2015 for a tenure of one year on expiry of which AIR had directed him to return.

AIR then turned down Speaker’s request for his extension following which the L-G ordered his repatriation. The Speaker, however, refused to relieve him.

Conduct Rules violation?

AIR had also issued a show-cause notice to the bureaucrat on why action for “misconduct” should not be initiated against him over a newspaper article written by him in June - ‘Neither Office, Nor Profit’ - finding it “critical” of the Centre, which is in “violation of the Conduct Rules”.

This too has been challenged by Mr. Goel in his plea, but the court said the notice should be challenged by the officer himself and not the Speaker.

HC asks trial court to hear afresh plea against Sardar Singh

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Friday confirmed the interim order granting stay on the criminal proceedings against former Indian hockey team captain Sardar Singh, who is facing allegation of sexual harassment made by his estranged girlfriend, a British woman of Indian origin.



Justice Vipin Sanghi asked the trial court to consider afresh the plea of the woman. Singh had come the High Court challenging the trial court order directing the police to register an FIR on the complaint of the woman.

Interim stay

Singh was accused of sexual harassment, exploitation, mental, physical and emotional torture. In his plea before the High Court, Singh had submitted that the trial court did not give him a chance to be heard and no notice was issued before passing the order. On October 14, the High Court had granted interim stay on the proceedings before the trial court till January 8. It had also issued notice to the complainant and the Delhi Police seeking their stand on Singh’s plea.

‘No action’

The woman had approached the trial court alleging that the police did not take action on her complaint against Singh.

The allegations levelled against Singh also include attempt to murder, causing miscarriage without consent and criminal intimidation. In her complaint, the woman has alleged that the hockey player established physical relations on false promise of marriage and was also involved with other women.

NGT notice to Centre, Haryana on rail project

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has sought response from the Centre and the Haryana government on a plea by Gurugram residents against a railway overbridge project being constructed allegedly without prior environment clearance.

The Tribunal was hearing a plea filed by eight Gurugram residents seeking directions to restrain the authorities from cutting trees for construction of four-lane railway overbridge on Delhi-Rewari-Jaipur railway line near Palam Vihar-Bajghera Road.

A Bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice Swatanter Kumar issued notices to the ministries of environment and road transport, Central Pollution Control Board, the state government, Haryana Urban Development Authority and others while seeking their reply before January 12.

‘Unauthorised’ construction

The residents said the project was located near a residential township and claimed that the overbridge at Palam Vihar was being constructed without environment clearance. “The respondents have cut 60 trees and destroyed a green belt of about 35 feet, which was developed and situated in front of the houses of the applicants. Felling of 60 trees has caused severe dust pollution in the area,” the plea, filed through advocate Sunaina Valecha, said.

Notice to UP over garbage near Ganga

The green court has sought response before February 10

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

NEW DELHI: A National Green Tribunal (NGT) bench headed by its chairperson Justice Swatanter Kumar on Friday took note of the reckless dumping of garbage around the Ganga during the Kartik Purnima fair at Garhmukteshwar in Uttar Pradesh and issued notice to the State government to show cause why environmental

compensation be not imposed for indiscriminate disposal of waste.

The green court has sought a response before February 10.

"They shall show cause why environmental compensation be not imposed upon them for indiscriminate dumping of waste on the river bank of Ganga," the Bench said.

The tribunal was hearing a

petition filed by Uttar Pradesh resident Krishan Kant Singh and NGO SAFE, seeking a direction to organisers and the district administration to make proper arrangement for the fair so that the river is not polluted.

The plea, filed through advocate Rahul Choudhary, contended that Kartik Purnima Fair is held on the banks of the Ganga at Garhmukteshwar in the month

of November every year.

Many villagers attending the fair stay on the banks of the river, cook food and wash utensils at the same place, besides disposing plastic, thermocol, bottles, and other waste material and biodegradable material, the plea said.

The toilets made for visitors also discharge wastes directly into the river thereby polluting it, it said.

The plea alleged that the district administration has not taken any step to control the waste disposal and even after the fair, no steps have been taken to clear the solid waste.

The plea sought a direction to the respondents to clear the entire stretches of the river near Garhmukteshwar, Brijghat and Pooth in Hapur and village in Tigr in Amroha districts of UP.

Girl's ears 'cut off' for resisting gang-rape

MOHAMMAD ALI

ASARA (BAGHPAT): A teenaged girl in Baghpat has alleged that four men of her village cut off her ears when she resisted their attempt to rape her.

The girl also claimed that the police did not take any action when she approached them with her complaint.

The incident took place on January 4 and the victim belongs to Asara village under the Ramala police station of Baghpat district.

A case was registered under Section 354 of the IPC (assault or criminal force to a woman with the intent to outrage her modesty), Section 324 (voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous weapons and means) and Section 323 (punishment for voluntarily causing hurt).

The girl's mother told *The Hindu* that four men kidnapped her daughter from their house and took her to a nearby house where they allegedly tried to rape her.

Also claims that the police did not take any action when she approached them with her complaint

"When she resisted, they cut off her ears with a knife. When I reached the house after hearing my daughter scream, they beat me badly and ran away," she claimed. She alleged that the culprits threatened them the next day.

"We went to the police station but they did not listen to us," alleged the girl's mother, whose husband died a few years ago.

Local police officials said the victim and her mother were medically examined on Friday and they were trying to arrest the culprits.

"We have registered a case on the basis of victim's complaint. No arrest has been made yet but we are investigating the matter and will soon arrest the culprits,"

Ajay Kumar Sharma, the Circle Officer (Rural), told the media.

Mr. Sharma said he had instructed the officials to add relevant sections of sexual violence if the medical report confirms it.

But Mahmooda Chaudhary, the village head, dismissed the rape claims and said the culprits were the victim's cousins.

"It is a fight between the victim's mother and her deceased husband's brothers. A small fight started between the victim and her cousins in which her ears got hurt," Ms. Chaudhary told *The Hindu*. Her husband, Musharraf Chaudhary, said the matter would soon be "sorted out."

"We went to both the families and the medical expenses will be borne by the girl's cousins, they have no reason to worry," he said. Satyapal Singh, the BJP member of Parliament from Baghpat, denied the attempted rape and said the complaint was "an afterthought."

TMC MP Tapas Paul sent to jail

STAFF REPORTER

BHUBANESWAR: Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Tapas Paul was sent to jail after the Special Chief Judicial Magistrate (CBD) reserved its verdict on his bail petition here on Friday.

The CBI had produced Paul in the court of Special CJM (CBI) after his remand period ended on Friday. After hearing the bail petition, the Judicial Magistrate reserved his order and sent him to judicial custody till January 19. He would stay in Jharapada Special Jail, Bhubaneswar.

Last Saturday, Paul was arrested in Kolkata for his alleged involvement with the Rose Valley Group which was accused of defrauding gullible investors.

MP unwell

The TMC MP was first remanded in to CBI custody for three days and extension of another three day remand was granted subsequently. His lawyer of TMC MP argued that he was ill and would cooperate with the investigation.

During the past six days, Mr. Paul was quizzed by premier investigating agency about his involvement with the scam-tainted group. Subsequently, CBI grilled him Mr. Paul in presence of another TMC MP, Sudip Bandyopadhyay, who was arrested for his connection with the Rose Valley Group.

The State unit of BJP trained its gun at Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik saying a top Rose Valley executive had met him in his office.

Inside Patna



Nihang Sikhs demonstrate their horse-riding skills to mark the 350th Prakash Parv of Guru Gobind Singh at Gandhi Maidan in Patna on Friday. PHOTO: RANJEET KUMAR

Rajasthan Congress to 'expose' BJP

JAIPUR: Rajasthan Congress on Friday kicked off a State-wide campaign to "expose" the BJP's alleged misgovernance by holding a 'Pardafaash Rally' in Churu district.

Addressing a gathering in Sardarshahar town, State Congress president Sachin Pilot said despite having a majority in both the Centre and the State, the BJP government has failed to live up to people's expectations.

"They formed government by making false promises and misleading people. But now all are feeling

cheated as the promises have failed to realise. Winning elections doesn't mean you start dictating," Mr. Pilot alleged.

He claimed the demonetisation decision shows that the government has no sympathy with people who have suffered numerous problems after the move.

He said the Congress is ready to support the government in eliminating corruption and terrorism but the notes ban had failed. Even after 50 days, problems are as they were earlier, he said.

Taking a dig at Narendra Modi, Mr. Pilot said the Prime Minister talks about cashless economy and encouraging Paytm but termed it as risky as 60 per cent shares of the company were with China. Bank and personal details are vulnerable to crime, he said.

Ample money

Banks have received ample money post-demonetisation and now loans should be waived for the poor like it was done for top industrialists, he said.

Raising the issue of women's security, he said despite a woman being the State's chief minister, women are not feeling safe. Rape of a minor girl in Churu was the latest example of the poor law and order situation in the state, he said.

He said youth were facing unemployment and Rajasthan was lagging in development and leading in matters of atrocities. The government has shut 18,000 schools and is going to close another 800, he claimed. - PTI

Cong wants Badal govt dismissed

VIKAS VASUDEVA

CHANDIGARH: After Election Commission officials and the police raided a sub-jail in Fazilka and booked 25 people, including liquor baron Shiv Lal Doda, who reportedly has close ties with the ruling Shiromani Akali Dal, for holding unauthorised meeting inside jail premises, the Opposition parties have got fresh ammunition to target the ruling Badal government on the deteriorating law and order situation in the State ahead of the Assembly polls.

Punjab Congress leaders on Friday approached the Election Commission on the Fazilka jail incident alleging that the Badal government was influencing the probe into the incident and soft peddling the case.

"The police were trying to save the culprits by distorting facts," Congress leader Sunil Jakhar told reporters here, after submitting a memorandum to Chief Electoral Officer V. K. Singh.

Mr. Jakhar said in its memorandum, the Congress has demanded immediate dismissal of the Badal government in the light of the in-



Punjab Congress vice-president Sunil Jakhar handing over a memorandum to Chief Electoral Officer V. K. Singh in Chandigarh on Friday. - PHOTO: AKHILESH KUMAR

cident and conduct of the Assembly elections under President's rule to prevent any interference or disturbance in the poll process, besides handing over of the investigation into the case to a central agency.

Mr. Jakhar said the incident assumes even more significance in the light of recent Nabha jail break, where five gangsters had escaped from the high-security prison and not one had been rearrested.

"We urge the EC to take

the matter to its logical conclusion," he said.

Later, Punjab Congress president Capt. Amarinder Singh said the Fazilka incident had exposed the patronage criminals were getting under the Badal government.

Notably, 25 people, including those having allegiance to SAD, have been booked under Sections 448, 188 and 120-B of the IPC, following a raid by the EC officials along with local administration at the Fazilka sub-jail on late Wednesday.



The petition said the HC order amounted to wiping out breeds of indigenous roosters, which would affect the poultry market and self-sustenance of farmers. — FILE PHOTO: AP

SC stays order allowing seizure of roosters

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI: In a big relief for rural Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu before the Pongal/Sankranti festivities, the Supreme Court on Friday stayed an Andhra Pradesh High Court order allowing joint teams of police and district administration to barge into any premises and seize roosters primed for traditional fights. The fights are conducted by farmers as part of the Pongal/Sankranti celebrations.

A Bench of Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar and Justices N.V. Ramana and D.Y. Chandrachud was hearing a writ petition filed by industrialist Kanumuru Raghu Ramakrishna Rao against the December 26, 2016, order of the High Court of Judicature at Hyderabad for the State of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, giving a free hand to officials to disrupt the 6000-year-old "sport" held across 13 districts.

'Farmers threatened'

The apex court issued notice to the State government, the Animal Welfare Board of India, and the Director General of Police of Andhra Pradesh, among others, on Mr. Rao's petition.

The court directed them to file their counter-affidavits in four weeks.

The petition, filed through Supreme Court advocate Sateesh Galla, contended that the roosters were bred indigenously by farmers as a means of livelihood.

The High Court order and the resultant arbitrary "crackdown" by inspection teams on farmsteads in rural Andhra Pradesh had broken the backs of the farmers, leaving them in a state of constant fear when they should be rejoicing during the festival.

The petition said the order amounted to wiping out entire breeds of indigenous roosters, which would affect the poultry market and self-sustenance of farmers.

"It is important to protect the rights of birds as well as that of the human beings who breed them," it contended.

The petition said since December 26, when the order was pronounced by the High Court, police and officials had arrested farmers and seized rare breed of roosters from their owners and kept them in police custody.

"This is nothing but the abuse of democracy," it said. "The main source of income for the farmers is poultry. Can the authorities take away their right to livelihood guaranteed under the Constitution," the petition asked.

Barely a week on, another woman attacked in Bengaluru

The case is serious though it does not appear to be sexual assault, say police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU: In yet another alleged assault on the streets of Bengaluru, a woman in her mid-20s was attacked by a man while she was walking towards a bus stop at 6.30 a.m. on Friday.

This comes barely a few days after the molestation of a woman near her paying guest accommodation in Kammanahalli by two men.

Parts of Friday's incident — as in the Kammanahalli assault — were recorded on CCTV cameras that a shopkeeper had installed. The

footage shows a man, with his face covered, stalking the woman in a burqa and casually walking away.

The woman later told the police that when she fought back, she sustained multiple minor injuries. The man fled the scene when she started shouting for help and a stray dog in the area began howling. "Unnerved by the noise, the attacker fled. The area becomes busy in the morning. That is perhaps why he walked away," said the shopkeeper who had installed the cameras.

The victim, who works in a

private firm, was visiting her relatives who live near the Arabic College.

Immediately after the assault, she called her family members, who took her to a private hospital where she was treated in the outpatient department.

CCTV footage

They later collected the footage from the shopkeeper, shared it with a private television channel and filed a complaint with the K.G. Halli police.

The police believe the attack did not appear to be

sexual assault, but are probing the incident from all angles. "It does not reduce the severity of the case," said a police officer. "We believe that the man was trying to get her purse and pounced on her. The victim sustained minor injuries when she put up a fight. However, we are taking the attack seriously, and efforts are on to nab the culprit" said the officer.

Expressing displeasure over the incident, the shopkeeper said the assault was a disturbing trend as women from all walks of lives were being targeted by predators.

Vigilance registers case against Jayarajan, others

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (VACB) on Friday registered a case against former Industries Minister E.P. Jayarajan on the suspicion of having shown undue preference to his relatives in appointments to top posts in statutory Corporations and public sector units.

Additional Chief Secretary Paul Antony and Sudheer Nambiar, nephew of Mr. Jayarajan and son of CPI(M) central committee member P.K. Sreemathy, are also accused in the case. Investigators said the preliminary inquiry against the suspects had prima facie revealed a cognizable offence.

The findings warranted the registration of a First In-



E.P. Jayarajan

formation Report (FIR) against them to set in motion a full-fledged criminal investigation. Legal adviser, VACB, C.C. Augustine told *The Hindu* that the accused would be investigated on the suspicion of having conspired as public servants and abused their official status.

Goods train derails near Balharshah

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD: A coal-laden goods train derailed at 1 a.m., on Friday, 30 km from Balharshah, leading to cancellation and diversion of dozens of trains.

The spot where the derailment took place is about 345 km from the zonal headquarters of Secunderabad. The Kazipet-Balharshah section of the South Central Railway (SCR) is on the Grand Trunk line that links the north of India with the south.

This made matters worse for the railway machinery to restore the tracks, with the work being overseen by a dozen senior officials. General Manager, Southern Railway, Vashishta Johri, who is currently looking after the SCR, flew from Chennai to catch a special train from Secunderabad to reach the location.

In all, 11 express trains in-

The mishap involving the coal-laden goods carrier led to the cancellation and diversion of trains

cluding some important superfast trains were cancelled. Fifteen trains were partially cancelled. In the up direction towards New Delhi, 27 express and passenger trains were diverted while in the down direction, 18 trains were diverted.

Initial inquiries, senior officials said, had not revealed any specific reason for the derailment.

The Railways is keen on the restoration of tracks for the present, it is learnt. A detailed probe will be conducted by the Commissioner for Railway Safety.

Meanwhile, a helpline has been set up at Vijayawada with the number 0866-2575038, a press release said.

A tribal photographer turns the lens inward

Telangana man documents his Kolam community, without the bias of the outsider

S. HARPAL SINGH

JAINOOR (TELANGANA): Athram Babu Rao, a Kolam youth in the Komaram Bheem Asifabad district is a pioneer with the camera: he documents tribal life from the perspective of the community, rather than through an exotic lens.

Bheemal Pen puja (tribal worship of Bheem) on Thursday was the latest opportunity for him to wield the camera and he did that with gusto, clicking photographs of the unfolding religious events in his village.

"This is wonderful," he exulted. The 27-year old Intermediate dropout from Kondapatar village in Jainoor mandal of the district is the first professional photographer in his tribe of poor, minority aboriginal people. Their population of about 38,000 is scattered across



CULTURE CONNECT: Athram Babu Rao reviews a photo in his village taken as part of his project. — PHOTO: S. HARPAL SINGH

Adilabad and Mancherla districts.

The photographic journey for the youth began when he enrolled under Shinde Rajender, a professional photographer of Jainoor mandal, who has also trained about 20 Adivasi Gond youths in the art of taking pictures.

Babu Rao's priority was to project his community's customs and traditions, and he quit his part time job in Hyderabad to join Mr. Shinde as an apprentice a year ago.

"I saw photos of Adivasis taken by outsiders, which portrayed our people in a negative manner," he

recalled. He doesn't yet have his own camera.

"I borrow it from my studio to take pictures of major events in my village, and do feel disappointed that I do not own one. Having a camera would give me the freedom to visit even other Kolam villages to capture religious and cultural facets," he pointed out.

He has been a good student. "Ethnic youngsters are quick learners," Mr. Rajender said, endorsing Babu Rao's ability to shoot and edit the pictures.

The Adivasi boys who learnt photography with the Jainoor tutor are now busy chronicling scenes in the agency area and making a comfortable living. Most of them are 'mobile' and go to far off villages to click even passport size photos of tribal residents.



It's very hard to digest the thought that I will never see him again. He was the gentlest, most compassionate, genuinely considerate person I have ever known. I took vicarious pride in his tremendous achievements
— Naseeruddin Shah, actor

Let us remember that Om Puri was a star. He was popular as well as a great actor. He was one of the most skilled, most versatile actors of all time in India. He was second to none
— Sudhir Mishra, director



One of the finest actors of Indian cinema. A great human being and a very dear friend. It's a personal loss for me
— Vishal Bharadwaj, director



Seeing him lying on his bed looking so calm can't believe that one of our greatest actors #OmPuri is no more. Deeply saddened and shocked
— Anupam Kher, actor



It's really a great loss. Wonderful person, great actor and with such impressive body of work right from Satyajit Ray to any commercial Hindi film to films in US and Pakistan. He played all kind of roles
— Javed Akhtar, scriptwriter-lyricist

Om Puri: The face of the common man

Synonymous with parallel cinema movement, he was an acting giant

NAMRATA JOSHI

MUMBAI: It was just yesterday that I met Om Puri at the movies, on the big screen, albeit as a disembodied voice in a small film called *Prakash Electronics*. His booming, gravelly intonation was unmistakable in the film's voiceover. Among the many things about him, as one of India's foremost actors, I can't shake off the impact of his strong, emotive, expressive voice, especially as the cop Anant Velankar in Govind Nihalani's *Ardh Satya* (1983), rendering aloud Dilip Chitre's poem and slowly realising how it actually reflected his own doubts and dilemmas:

Ek palde mein napun-sakta, ek palde mein paush, aur theek taraazu ke kaante par ardh satya.
(Impotence balanced on one side of the scale, Masculinity on the other, And right on the needle in the middle of the weighing scale, A half truth)

Face of the marginalised

Ironically, the performance that made the viewers take note of Puri and implanted him in the viewers' consciousness most strongly and everlastingly was the one in which he barely spoke save that last, haunting scream of anguish. His vacant eyes, gritty face and sheer intensity of presence told the tale of extreme oppression of the underprivileged, victimised tribal Lahanya Bhiku, the role he became one with in Nihalani's *Aakrosh* (1980).

Those were the days of the zenith of Indian parallel cinema and Puri rode splendidly on the wave alongside virtuoso talent like Naseeruddin Shah, Shabana Azmi and Smita Patil among oth-

ers, and supported by directors like Shyam Benegal, Govind Nihalani, Ketan Mehta, Kundan Shah and Sudhir Mishra. He and Naseeruddin Shah have been a prime example of healthy rivalry and positive competition when it comes to cinema, both feeding off and contributing to each other's growth as actors. Both came with the thespian training of two rock solid institutes behind them — the National School of Drama in Delhi and the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune. The niggling personal issues, if there were any, cease to matter now in retrospect.

"He was like water, taking the shape of every vessel he was put in. He soaked in the generosity and creative influences in his life," remembers a friend. Some of Puri's most significant performances in this time were all about the deprived and the disadvantaged. Perhaps Puri's own struggles in childhood and youth in Punjab brought them alive with a rare verity. Take for instance, the control and dignity with which he essayed the trauma of an untouchable shoemaker in Satyajit Ray's TV film *Sadgati* (1981). Or the desperation of the poor land tiller in Shyam Bengal's *Arohan* (1982).

The "imperfect" face, which was initially perceived as his biggest drawback, eventually became his calling card, the blemishes only adding to the strong personality and depth of expression. It was in this ordinariness that gave Puri a face and identity to the common man on screen.

Staggering diversity in roles

When the parallel cinema movement ebbed, he was able to switch effortlessly to the mainstream as well. One of his earliest memorable roles was that of the cop in



• **Aakrosh (1980)** Essayed the role of Lahanya Bhiku, an oppressed villager who is so traumatised that he barely utters a word. The film is a social commentary on the country's corrupt judicial system



• **Sadgati (1981)** The TV film, by Satyajit Ray is a commentary on the caste system. Puri plays the role of Dukhi, a village shoemaker who approaches a Brahmin priest to get a date fixed for his daughter's wedding



• **Arohan (1982)** In this film, he played a village farmer, Hari, who suffers under a cruel landlord. He won his first National Award for this Shyam Benegal movie

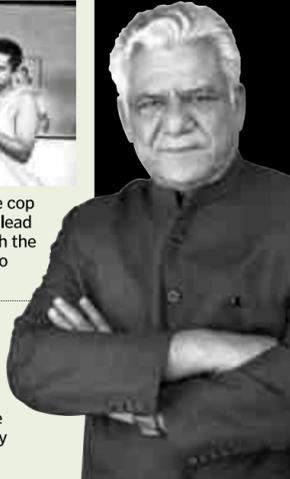


• **Ardh Satya (1983)** The cop drama features Puri as the lead protagonist, struggling with the corruption that threatens to consume his ideology

• **Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro (1983)** The cult comedy cemented Puri's abilities as an actor who could balance comedy as well as drama. He portrayed the role of Ahuja, the hilariously corrupt drunken builder

THESPIAN PAR EXCELLENCE

Om Puri's "imperfect" face added to his strong personality and depth of expression. It was this ordinariness that helped one of the finest actors in Indian cinema give identity to the common man on screen



• **Mirch Masala (1986)** He plays the wise sentinel of the village spice factory who refuses to let the lead protagonist, Sonbai (Smita Patil), get captured by the evil Subedar portrayed by Naseeruddin Shah



• **Tamas (1988)** Originally a television film, this period movie was aired as a mini series. Puri plays an untouchable man caught in religious conflict in his village. The film dealt with how the Partition affected families across the border

• **East Is East (1999):** As Zaheed 'George' Khan, Puri is the patriarch of a mixed-race family. His family's refusal to abide by his religious wishes causes severe cultural conflicts

• **Chachi 420 (1997)** Kamal Haasan's directorial debut, inspired by Mrs Doubtfire (1993) saw Puri effectively elicit several laughs as the womanising Banwari Lal



• **My Son the Fanatic (1997)** The British drama had Puri play the role of an immigrant Muslim taxi driver Parvez who, although secular himself, has to come to terms with his son's increasing radical Islamic beliefs

COMPILED BY DEBORAH CORNELIOUS

Rajkumar Santoshi's *Gayal* (1990) and then again in Rajiv Rai's *Gupt* (1997). Just as much as the intensity he got identified with, Puri's perfect comic timing made him win as many hearts. Most prominently as the corrupt, inebriated builder Ahuja in Kundan Shah's *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaron* (1983), especially in the one long scene with the dead body of Commissioner D'Mello (Satish Shah). Assuming D'Mello's coffin to be a broken down car, he tows him away to his farm house, a moment that makes one double up in laughter till date. He was as insanely funny as the womaniser Banwari Lal in

Kamal Haasan's *Chachi 420* (1997).

The strength of good actors lies not just in bringing author-backed roles to life but in how they make their presence felt even in smaller roles and cameos. One of my favourite Puri performances is in Sai Paranjape's *Sparsh* (1980). As the blind man Dubey, never once does he turn the disability into a caricature, as Bollywood is prone to, but lives his visual impairment physically, with all the inner turmoil and anxieties. Then he towered in the climactic moments of Ketan Mehta's *Mirch Masala* (1987), as Abu Mian, the guard of the spice factory,

who gives refuge to Sonbai and is the only man standing with the women against the arrogant subedar and the submissive village. He was the powerful Sanatan in *Maachis* (1996), the pivot on which rested Gulzar's problematising of the insurgency in Punjab, on how innocent youth were forced to turn "terrorists" at the altar of the "system".

Overseas triumphs

Puri was instrumental in being the ambassador of realistic Indian cinema abroad and ended up being part of a number of reputable and also some smaller foreign films, starting with a

small role in Richard Attenborough's epic *Gandhi* (1982). In Roland Joffe's *City of Joy* (1992) he is the unlikely poor migrant pal of Max, played by Patrick Swayze.

In Ismail Merchant's *In Custody* (1993), he is the Hindi professor who loves Urdu poetry. He acted alongside Jack Nicholson in Mike Nichols' *Wolf* (1994). Two smaller but significant turns were in Udayan Prasad's *My Son the Fanatic* (1994) where he is the liberal father of a hardliner son. And then in Damien O'Donnell's *East Is East* (1999), where he is the conservative Pakistani father unable to deal with the gen-

eration gap and cultural rift with his half British kids.

Last, but not the least, Puri was at the head of the quality content on television, in the glory days of Doodardshan, be it the sprawling Partition epic *Tamas*, *Bharat Ek Khoj*, *Yatra*, or the betel-chewing netaji in *Kakaji Kahin*. Somewhere in the midst of it all, the original platform — theatre — took a backseat. The last a friend remembers seeing him on stage was in a Punjabi adaptation of the play *Tumhari Amrita*, called *Teri Amrita*, with Divya Dutta.

Friends remember him the most as a caring person and a dogged nurturer to his son

Ishaan, who has a visual impairment. Sadly, the last few years for Puri had not been great. The explicit revelations in the book, *Unlikely Hero: The Story of Om Puri*, by his second wife Nandita Puri, broke him and the marriage as well. There was also a concomitant, unfortunate personal dissolution.

The only consequential presence in film of late was as the blacksmith sutradhar (narrator) in Rakeysh Om-prakash Mehra's *Mirzya* last year. And the last straw, perhaps, was how he was humiliated publicly for his contrarian views on the Indian armed forces on television.

But some good is still to come even in his absence. He is in perfect tune — laid-back, natural and full of good humour — as Bakshi Uncle with his onscreen better half, Tanuja, in Konkona Sen Sharma's upcoming debut feature as a director, *A Death In The Gunj*.

Meanwhile, my abiding memories of him are of a close encounter way back in 2010 at a film festival in Yamuna Nagar, Haryana. He was pleasantly surprised at the overwhelming number of women in the audience, pointed out that there were more "devis" than "devatas" in the hall. Though he was a bit guarded while speaking of the sex and nudity scenes in his own film *My Son the Fanatic*, he was extremely happy at the response of the "politically aware" audience to film-maker Seema Kapoor's (also his first wife) film *Haat - the Weekly Bazaar*, on the Rajasthani custom of Natha Pratha. "It's ridiculous to assume that small-town audiences are not ready for serious cinema. We have to give them an opportunity," he said. The audience lapped it up and went berserk clapping. After all, it was Puri walking the talk on what he has been the best on screen — their face, the face of the common man.

NHRC notice over 'mistreatment' of Dalit inmates in Gujarat

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI: The National Human Rights Commission on Friday issued a notice to prison authorities in Gujarat over reports claiming mistreatment and discrimination against Dalit prisoners at Amreli District Jail.

Taking suo motu cognisance of media reports, the NHRC said that the alleged instances of "victimisation" of prisoners belonging to "lower castes" amounted to a violation of their right to life, equality and dignity.

'Durbars'

As per the reports published on Thursday, a lawyer who had spent over 100 days in the prison while awaiting trial had come out with the stories of the Dalit prisoners. The so-called upper caste prisoners, who go by the name 'Durbars', would not let Dalit inmates drink water from the reverse osmosis plant in the jail, claimed the reports. The lawyer alleged that he was not permitted to drink from an earthen pitcher and asked to drink water from the tap in a toilet. The reports said that the Dalit prisoners were even made to wash clothes and utensils of other inmates. "Sometimes, the upper caste Durbars would wake up the Dalit undertrials at two in the night and ask them to massage their legs," the NHRC observed, adding that one of the Dalit prisoners who protested against the harassment was beaten up badly.

Steep hike in vehicle registration fee

States initially to collect the revised fee from motorists with effect from December 29 last year

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The Union government has increased steeply the fee for registration of all class of motor vehicles, driving licence and other services provided to motorists, under the guise of rolling out automation.

A 10-fold increase has been effected in the fee levied for registration of new vehicles. For registration of driving schools, the fee has gone up from ₹2,500 to ₹10,000.

Issue of learner's licence in Form 3 for each class of vehicle, learner's licence test fee and repeat test fee have all been increased from ₹30 to ₹150.

Fee for the renewal of driving licence has been increased from ₹50 to ₹200 and

that of international driving licence from ₹500 to ₹1,000.

To renew driving licence after the grace period, the fee is ₹300.

Motorists will have to pay ₹200 for change in address and any other particulars in driving licence. To appeal against an order of the licensing authority, one has to pay ₹500 instead of the existing ₹100.

Endorsing hire purchase, lease, hypothecation agreement for motor vehicles will now be costly. The fee has been increased from ₹100 to ₹500 for motorcycles, ₹1,500 for three-wheeler, quadric cycle and light motor vehicle and ₹3,000 for medium or heavy motor vehicle. Cancellation of lease agreement and issue of fresh Certificate of Registration are free.



A 10-fold increase has been effected in the fee levied for registration of new vehicles. — PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

The registration fee of three wheelers has been hiked from ₹300 to ₹1,000, stage carriers and lorries from ₹600 to ₹1,500. Imported motorcycles and motor cars have also not been spared.

The fee for conducting test for grant or renewal of

certificate of fitness has also been hiked. For motorcycle, it will be ₹200, three-wheeler and light motor vehicle (manual ₹400, automated ₹600) and ₹600 and ₹1,000 respectively for manual and automated for medium or heavy motor vehicle. The grant or renewal of

certificate of fitness for motor vehicle has gone up from ₹100 to ₹200.

The grant or renewal of letter of authority will attract ₹15,000 instead of the existing ₹5,000.

The issue of duplicate letter of authority will be ₹7,500 and appeal under Rule 70, ₹3,000.

The States have been asked to collect the revised fee notified in the gazette by the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways from motorists with effect from December 29 last year.

The Joint Transport Commissioner and Secretary, STA, Rajeev Puthalath said the MVD will have to collect the excess amount from those who had sought the various services from December 29.

Bengaluru-Delhi flight faces technical snag

STAFF REPORTER

A Bengaluru-Delhi flight of a domestic budget carrier faced a technical snag while landing at the Indira Gandhi International Airport. The aircraft, however, landed safely and the crew members and passengers are safe.

The incident occurred at 8.13 am on Friday when the SpiceJet flight -- SG 136 -- was approaching Delhi. Though sources at the IGI Airport claimed that the aircraft landed under full emergency conditions, the airline strongly denied that the flight

made an emergency landing at the Delhi airport.

"As per the procedure, the crew of SG 136 had informed the Air Traffic Control (ATC) of a technical problem. At no stage did the crew request for any emergency or priority landing," a SpiceJet spokesperson said.

"The aircraft made an uneventful landing at the Delhi airport. All passengers and crew are safe," he said. Airport sources, however, claimed that the ATC had declared full emergency for the flight and all safety measures were in place before the landing.

Prakash Parv: Opinion divided over Lalu's seating on floor



Lalu Prasad during the Prakash Parv of Guru Gobind Singh in Patna on Monday. — PHOTO: PTI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PATNA: A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar displayed camaraderie while sharing the stage in Patna, a senior leader of the Rashtriya Janata Dal, which is part of the ruling alliance in Bihar, fumed at party chief Lalu Yadav being made to sit on the floor during the event.

"People of Bihar unhappy" "Why was Lalu Prasad Yadav, the leader of an alliance party in the government, seated on the floor? It is a mahagathbandhan government in Bihar, so the leaders should have been there on the stage,"

senior RJD leader and former Union Minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh said. "It appeared that the State had a JD (U) government and not a coalition government. The people of Bihar did not like it."

At the makeshift gurdwara set up in Patna's Gandhi Maidan on the concluding day of the week-long Sikh festival of Prakash Parv, the RJD chief was seated on the floor along with his two Minister sons and many other dignitaries. However, two Union Ministers from Bihar, Ravi Shankar Prasad and Ram Vilas Paswan, were on the stage along with Mr. Modi and Mr. Kumar. But other Union Ministers like Ram Kripal Yadav and

Harsimrat Kaur were seen sitting on the floor in the VIP enclosure.

Later, Lalu Yadav and his sons had lunch with the Prime Minister.

Reacting to Mr. Singh's pincer, the State Congress president Ashok Chaudhury told journalists that the PMO should be asked why it made such a seating arrangement on the stage.

"The PMO should respond why it was so... Lalu Prasad is a leader of the biggest alliance party and his party was in rule for 15 years in the State," Mr. Chaudhury told mediapersons while sitting on a day-long protest along with party leaders against demonetisa-

tion in Patna.

Mr. Yadav, however, kept mum on the issue even though his son, Deputy Chief Minister Tejaswi Yadav, said: "Lalu Yadav zamini neta hain toh zamin par baithe the (Lalu Yadav is rooted to the ground so he was seated on the ground). Everyone sits on the floor in a place of worship, there was nothing unusual about it."

'Matter of protocol'

JD(U) spokesperson Sanjay Singh said about the seating arrangement: "It was a matter of protocol. Moreover, when RJD chief Lalu Prasad has no problem, why is Raghuvansh Prasad Singh so concerned?"



SATURDAY, JANUARY 7, 2017

Clamping down on ordinance raj

Both superior courts and constitutional functionaries have routinely deprecated the propensity of governments to take the ordinance route for mere political expediency. The temptation to use the power vested in the President and the Governors under Articles 123 and 213 of the Constitution is generally a result of one of the following three reasons: reluctance to face the legislature on particular issues, fear of defeat in the Upper House where the government may lack the required numbers, and the need to overcome an impasse in the legislature caused by repeated and wilful disruption by a vociferous section of the Opposition. The verdict of a seven-member Bench of the Supreme Court breaks new ground in highlighting the constitutional limitations on the cavalier resort to ordinances. The Supreme Court had already declared in 1986, in *D.C. Wadhwa*, that repeated re-promulgation of ordinances was unconstitutional. Now, in *Krishna Kumar Singh v. State of Bihar*, it goes deeper and concludes that the failure to place an ordinance before the legislature constitutes abuse of power and a fraud on the Constitution. It noted in this case that a 1989 ordinance by which the State government took over 429 Sanskrit schools in Bihar was promulgated several times until 1992, but not once tabled in the State Assembly.

The judgment widens the scope of judicial review of ordinances. The court can go into whether the President or Governor had any material to arrive at the satisfaction that an ordinance was necessary and to examine whether there was any oblique motive. The judgment will be welcomed by those who believe in constitutional propriety, legislative control over lawmaking and the larger ethical basis for the exercise of power in any circumstance. However, it is not always that the ordinance route can be neatly explained as a cynical move to privilege political expediency over parliamentary accountability. While contending that ordinances should be issued only to meet certain exigencies and under compelling circumstances, it is equally important to understand that disruption as a parliamentary tactic plays a significant role. A dysfunctional House sometimes constitutes a compelling circumstance in itself. Generally, it is the combination of Opposition obstructionism and government obstinacy in not making any concessions to those across the aisle that derails legislative business and leads to ordinances. The courts can only define the boundaries between the use and abuse of power, but it is up to parties in the legislature to observe the limits of constitutional propriety and show that they have both the time and the will to enact laws.

A remarkable captain

Mahendra Singh Dhoni is regarded as one of the country's most dashing cricketers, but his flamboyance is founded, almost ironically, on an inexplicably cool and calculated head. There are no means of divining why he chose to relinquish India's limited-overs captaincy when he did; his natural reserve ensures that his cards are almost always played close to his chest. In the context of where Indian cricket is at this juncture, it appears like an exceptionally clear-sighted decision, brave and selfless in equal measure. He has effectively said he will earn a place as a wicketkeeper-batsman. He has given the team management time to build to the next World Cup, in 2019; if he is not a part of that vision, he will not hold down a spot merely by virtue of being skipper. Given Dhoni's standing, he is probably the only one who could have made that call. It is unlikely that any selection panel will have summoned the courage to drop him. While his glove-work has not dipped significantly — he remains a predatory presence behind the wicket — his aura as a finisher has dimmed. Although he is no less capable with the bat, the almost eerie certainty one had that he will get the job done has dissipated. With age — Dhoni turns 36 this July — the greats do not necessarily lose their skill. But the consistency of execution suffers.

The legacy Dhoni bequeaths Virat Kohli is a team secure in its skin, certain it can win from any position. There was no better captain in the game's shorter forms than Dhoni during his time. He is the only skipper to have won all three major trophies — the World Cup, the World Twenty20 and the Champions Trophy. Michael Clarke and Brendon McCullum had greater attacking verve. They were certainly superior Test captains. But in the art of managing a finite innings, reading a contest's rhythm and its tactical contours, Dhoni had no equal. He had an intuitive feel for what could happen and the ability to get the best out of his resources, however bare. His greatest strength was his nerve. Where others tried to finish things quickly to pre-empt panicking, he took games deep. He raised the stakes, knowing he would not blink before his opponent. Remarkably, he managed to transmit this sense of composure to his team. He asked his bowlers to relax and stick to the plan; the responsibility of the result was his to bear. Few cricketers have stayed in the present as successfully as he has. Fortunately for Indian cricket, his successor is every bit as impressive. Kohli, moreover, will have access, should he choose, to all of Dhoni's considerable powers.

When banks are awash with cash

In an environment characterised by slowing growth, poor investor sentiment and NPA-strapped banks, the government has its task cut out. When private investment is skittish, public investment must step in



PULAPRE BALAKRISHNAN

There are many lessons to be learned from the two months of turmoil that we have witnessed since November 8, but one stands out. The government not only underestimated the capacity for inefficiency and wrongdoing of our commercial banks, but also appears to overestimate their ability to turn around a shocked economy. Up until the deadline of December 30, from across the country, we have had reports of money meant for release to the public in exchange for the old notes being siphoned off to the influential and those with the capacity to pay for this. So, while the ordinary citizen queued for hours over days, India's rich and powerful have had the newly issued currency notes in multiples of crores delivered at their doorstep. This could not have happened had bank officials not collaborated in this sordid exercise. On this score, the demonetisation, held out by the government as a means to ending corruption, faltered at the very outset. The diversion of notes meant for the public is only a variation on a theme that we have long witnessed in India whereby a commodity in short supply is cornered by those in charge of its distribution and sold to the highest bidder. During the Second World War it was food, then as the Indian economy quickened it was cement, and now, with the government reminding us that it is the fastest growing economy in the world, it is something as easy to manufacture as paper money.

Maximum government?

So the demonetisation meant to eliminate black money led directly to a black market for currency notes. A government claiming to provide "maximum governance" has lost credibility. What is far more unfortunate though is that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has got embroiled in the mess. Not only has it managed the transition with extraordinary incompetence, its Governor



ILLUSTRATION: SURENDRA

Unless firms are impressed with the demonetisation's potential, they are unlikely to unburden the banks of the deposits that have so copiously flowed in

having announced on November 8 that it had "ramped up" production of the new notes, but its officers have had to be suspended for abetting money laundering. The public had viewed the RBI as above the sectarian calculations of the political class and the brazen corruption associated with the government machinery. This has now been shattered. The Narendra Modi government has succeeded in turning one of our most precious institutions into yet another government department.

If this government is unwilling to acknowledge its responsibility for governance, we may turn to a consideration of its grand strategy. In a flexible narrative following the exchange of much of the demonetised notes, which belied the hope of their extinction, we are told that the exercise is

actually a grand success as its intention was to bring the money into the banking system! We may overlook the apology and look only at the arguments made by the government's spokespersons. Two are made. First, that a larger volume of deposits will spur lending and increase investment. And second, that once most of the cash has "come into the system", financial transactions can be tracked by the government.

That with banks flush with funds their lending will increase is based on a fallacy. For, so long as the bank is not loaned-up, i.e. its loans-to-deposits ratio is not at the maximum permissible, the volume of lending will be determined by the demand for loans. In fact, it is not obvious that even a lowering of the interest rate will lead to this. The economics profession has long recognised this. It had first been noticed in the U.S. during the 1930s. The rate of interest fell but private investment did not increase, precisely because there was a paucity of willing borrowers. It is this that had led Keynes to characterise the use of monetary policy to revive an economy as "pushing on a string". Or, you may recall the proverb, "you can take the horse to the water but you cannot make it drink". Essentially, private investors compare the cost of capital, represented by the rate of interest, to the expected rate of return on the project. In times of uncertainty the expected rate of return would have to be quite high for a project to be chosen. As there is so little that is objective to go by, expectations are now reduced to mere 'animal spirits'. Recent experience should have given us some idea of what to expect at present. Credit growth had been sluggish even before November 8. In fact, private gross fixed capital formation has been depressed for a couple of years at least, even though the RBI has lowered the policy rate twice in 2016. This had led the World Bank to remark that recent growth in India was being driven, quite unusually, by public investment and private consumption. Unless firms are so impressed with the potential of the demonetisation, they are unlikely to unburden the banks of the deposits that have so copiously flowed into them since.

But let us return to the role of banks. Well before suffering the ignominy of having some of their officers found with hands in the till, so to speak, they had piled up bad loans termed non-performing assets (NPAs). L'affaire Vijay Mallya has shown them to be of poor judgment when not actually corrupt. Can we now expect them to wake up and start lending efficiently on a scale high enough to make a difference to the economy? The timing of the announcement of a lower lending rate by the State Bank of India (SBI) should leave us wary of the possibility that the government will exert pressure on the banks to lend to boost demand and raise the level of activity in the economy. A 'political business cycle' with government pump-priming the economy before elections is said to occur in western democracies. In India the government has an extra lever in the form of a nationalised banking sector that can be forced to dance to its tune. The very poor lending decisions of public-sector banks commencing in UPA II have resulted in a high level of NPAs. Hopefully at least now the RBI will caution banks against 'throwing good money after bad' to please their political bosses.

The current priority is to remonetise the economy, and fast. The RBI and the banks must eliminate the cash crunch that has resulted in livelihood loss, especially in rural India. One would expect that this alone should keep them busy for much of the rest of the financial year. NPAs come in the way of banks expanding their loan portfolio. The government is yet to address this issue or to give its view on one of the solutions proffered, that of a 'bad bank', which must perforce be a public undertaking.

A task cut out

In an environment characterised by slowing growth, poor investor sentiment and NPA-strapped banks, the government's task is cut out. Dogma alone stands in the way of one recognising it. The macroeconomic strategy should now make use of fiscal policy. An occasion is presented by the budget for the year 2017-18. When private investment is skittish, one would reasonably expect public investment to step in. The budget for the present year did little for aggregate demand with the fiscal deficit down and the allocation for public investment merely inching forward. With the sops announced by the Prime Minister in his speech on New Year's Eve, there is the possibility that in its eagerness to display commitment to fiscal consolidation, the government may cut public investment. This is not mere speculation. In the year 2015-2016 capital expenditure had ended up at less than what had been budgeted.

Altogether, this government appears reluctant to expand public capital even though it is in short supply in the economy. For every demonstration that India has a higher cash-to-GDP ratio compared to the rest of the world, we can point to its lower level of public services, not to mention human development compared to even some of our neighbours. The government's zeal for squeezing cash out of the system is not based on any serious economic analysis of what the economy needs right now. Moreover, the Prime Minister had come promising minimum government. In this vein, he should leave the decision on the use of cash to the market, as his government is happy to do in some other crucial instances. There is nothing to say that the honest citizen should leave her money with the bank rather than under the mattress so long as she pays her taxes. The state must strive for accountability, always.

Pulapre Balakrishnan is Professor of Economics at Ashoka University, Sonapat, Haryana, and Senior Fellow, IIM Kozhikode, Kerala.

CARTOONScape



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

RIP Om Puri

The sudden demise of actor Om Puri is shocking and unfortunate ("Veteran actor Om Puri passes away", Jan.6). Since childhood, I have been an avid fan. I still vividly recall him in *Tamas*, a television film in the late 1980s, though I was still in school then. Puri may not have been the most attractive person but he still attained great success, notably in Bollywood, not as a hero or a superstar but as an actor who could essay every kind of role with perfection. His success story is an inspiration to those who don't have a model-like physique or conventional good looks, which are often demanded in the film industry. He proved that good acting can alone win one success.

Hemant Kumar,
Chandigarh

Om Puri was a representative of the wealth of talent in Indian theatre and cinema. Acting was his forte; it came naturally to him. His memorable performances in *Sadgati*, *Ardh Satya*, *Aakrosh*, *Maachis*, *AK-47*, *Disco Dancer* and *East is East* and his cameo role in *Gandhi* are still etched in our memories. He was a stage and screen actor, not a larger-than-life superstar with a huge fan following. His roles were essentially depictions of ordinary individuals, and they did justice to the human condition. With like-minded peers like Naseeruddin Shah, Puri

redefined the grammar of acting and made new-wave parallel cinema a significant medium of entertainment and edification despite his presence in mainstream commercial cinema too.

G. David Milton,
Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

Oh, what a fine actor Om Puri was! Inimitable in his looks and body language, he had an extraordinary voice. While his role in *Mirch Masala* is unforgettable, his performance in Govind Nihalani's *Tamas* was beyond description. He will be missed.

S.V. Venugopalan,
Chennai

Protecting our girls

Introducing self-defence in schools can help girls protect themselves in such situations ("Four arrested in Bengaluru molestation case", Jan.6). It looks like women will always be blamed, no matter what the situation, while no derogatory remarks will be made against the men who commit such horrifying acts. Imposing more rules on girls isn't the way to go, as many suggest, but we can equip them with the skills to fight back.

Kudur Rashmi,
Mumbai

There are several laws made to protect women in India, but implementation is really weak. We don't need more laws, we need to

change our attitudes. Every mother in this country should sensitise her son to respect women. Politicians and the judiciary should be setting examples by punishing culprits instead of doing things like blaming westernisation.

Veda Patil,
Gulbarga

Police reform

The author seems to suggest that reforms within the police force could infuse professionalism into it ("Keeping the streets safe", Jan.6). The basic flaw in law enforcement is that the police are under the control of the ruling party. It is futile to expect the lower echelons of the police to act impartially when some senior officers are not immune to political interference. Moreover, the politicisation of crime and criminalisation of politics are a toxic mixture that has weakened the independent functioning of the police. The only way to make the police accountable to the public and to insulate personnel from political interference is to implement the police reforms initiated by the Supreme Court in 2006.

We must also ask ourselves whether neighbourhood communities and society at large have no role in protecting women from harassment. The police cannot be present in every nook and corner of every city although patrolling can be intensified in the night. Civic responsibility to deter crime and

report its occurrence is something we seldom talk about. Community policing — a partnership between local communities and the police — can also be tried as a strategy to prevent crime.

V.N. Mukundarajan,
Thiruvananthapuram

Filtering out fake news

The spread of fake news through Facebook seems to be increasing day by day ("Being factual in the post-truth era", Jan.6). But it's not just Facebook; I see government orders, or what people believe are government orders, being shared on WhatsApp and other social media platforms every other day. People share information without verification, which can be dangerous. All social media platforms have a moral responsibility to filter out fake news.

Bharath Bhusan Akkera,
Hyderabad

This editorial reminds me of the 2013 communal riots in Muzaffarnagar. A video clip showing men, who were purportedly in a particular community's attire, lynching two boys was circulated on social media, inciting violence. It was later found that the incident did not take place in Muzaffarnagar. In another instance, a video of a woman being beaten and burned alive by a mob was circulated to

project the behaviour of an Indian mob. Again, it turned out that the video was not from here, but from Guatemala.

In both instances, there were undesirable consequences on the public psyche. In a country like India that already has communalism, religious polarisation and patriarchy, the post-truth world presents a momentous challenge which needs to be curbed in its initial stages before the country goes digital, a phenomenon which will bring about its own set of challenges.

Nidhish Kumar,
Ghaziabad

The goal of education

Moral degradation has spread its tentacles far and wide, including in our education system ("Teaching peace to humanity", Jan.6). The future generation is left to mechanically absorb factual knowledge, not wisdom. This race is a dangerous predicament. The ultimate goal of education — that of emancipating oneself — is wholly overlooked in the strictly syllabus-oriented education system of today. It is high time our educational setup underwent a massive revamp taking a cue from India's ancient Gurukul system, of holistic development encompassing physical, mental, societal and spiritual elevation of the soul.

Anjali B.,
Thiruvananthapuram

The sisterhood of wrestlers

A thousand akharas are blooming in Haryana as the State promises to nurture girls inspired by the Phogats and Sakshi Maliks, reports **Damini Nath**



It's 3.30 p.m. on a clear day. Balali village, in the Bhiwani district of Haryana, is slowly whirring to life after the siesta. There's a whiff of mustard in the air as the fields of yellow sway in the gentle breeze. The serenity, however, barely seeps in to a hall adjoining the rabi crop where 11-year-old Komal Sangwan is giving the mats a hurried sweep. In minutes, the hall would be packed with 20-odd children, Komal included, first warming up and then straining their sinews to instructions yelled out from the doorway.

The tough taskmaster in question: Mahavir Singh Phogat, father and coach to golden grapplers Geeta and Babita. The father-daughters' exploits, known in sporting circles for over half a decade, have entered the national conversation with the Aamir Khan-starrer *Dangal*, the Bollywood blockbuster that's scripting a new collections high at the box office each passing day.

The 'high notes' have been years in the making, literally. When he started training his two eldest daughters in 2000, Mahavir quickly became the black sheep of Balali. "My relatives, even my parents, would ask me, 'Aren't you ashamed that you are making *pehewans* (wrestlers) out of girls?' When I used to say that my daughters would make a name for themselves and make the country proud, people used to laugh," says Mahavir, as he sits outside the wrestling hall, Roxy, his pet pug, sleeping at his feet.

They laughed then, but the laughter turned to applause as Geeta and Babita went on to win the gold and silver medals respectively at the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi. Their sisters and cousins, Priyanka, Ritu, Vinesh and Sangita, also followed them into the sport, winning medals at international and national-level competitions.

Winds of change

Along with the Phogat sisters and Sakshi Malik, bronze medal winner at the Rio Olympics in 2016, young girls in the State are increasingly taking to the sport as evidenced by the throng at the small wrestling centre Mahavir built on his land, complete with a running track through the fields, and elsewhere in the State. "When I started training my daughters there weren't any akharas that allowed girls. Now, there must be at least 50 akharas that train girls," he says.

It's not just that attitudes are changing, the State has also been investing in sports infrastructure, even allocating Rs.1.5 crore in the 2016-2017 budget for wrestling mats and weight-training equipment for akharas. Apart from the State government's wrestling centres, the Sports Authority of India also has three training facilities for the sport in Haryana in Hisar, Bhiwani and Sonapat. But there is a lot more to be done. With the right assistance, Mahavir says he can churn out "many Geetas". The Haryana Sports Department itself estimates that Rs.2.5 crore is needed to strengthen akharas.

At any rate, in a State with the lowest sex ratio in the country and where women have at different points been 'banned' from using cell phones and wearing jeans, the sight of girls wrestling and excelling at the sport has started a conversation. Daya Kaur, Mahavir's wife, has seen it first-hand. "From the time my daughters started wrestling to now, I can see some change. But it's not the majority that has changed. Many still wish for a boy to be born, and take the birth of a girl in their family as a burden," she says, as she peeks into the wrestling hall while bracing up for the evening chores.

Nine-year-old Neha Sangwan, the daughter of Balali sarpanch Amit Kumar Sangwan, has been training with Mahavir for two years. "She can do 600 push-ups," says a village elder who is sitting outside and playing cards with friends. It's more like 100, clarifies Neha sheepishly.

Sarpanch Sangwan says the fact that young parents like him are encouraging their daughters to train with "Mahavir *pehewans*" is an indication of change in the village. "It's not just wrestling, but girls in the village are getting jobs in the paramilitary forces, in aviation and the government services. Wrestling will open up opportunities for my daughter," he says.

For girls like Neha, the next step is to move to a town as training centres there offer better facilities.

The Haryana Sports Department runs wrestling centres across the State, with the one at Rohtak's Chhotu Ram Stadium boasting of many famous students, including Sakshi Malik.



From the time my daughters started wrestling to now, I can see some change. But it's not the majority that has changed. Many still wish for a boy to be born, and take the birth of a girl in their family as a burden - **Daya Kaur, wife of Mahavir Phogat**



the change," he says, as girls as young as eight years old are being dropped off and picked up twice a day at the centre by eager parents.

The wrestling boom

If the number of girls who are starting to take up the sport is any indication, then wrestling is booming in Haryana. Coaches and training centres are finding it difficult to accommodate the rush.

At Rohtak's Maharshi Dayanand University, about 100 students train under former national-level coach Ishwar Chand Dahiya, who used to run the Chhotu Ram Stadium centre till his retirement a few years ago. It was there that he encountered Sakshi Malik and became her first coach.

At a cold early morning session at the university's wrestling hall, Kiran Ahlawat can't wait to get back on the mat. The 16-year-old injured her shoulder trying to impress the coach and now has to look on while the others practise. Wearing a pink hoodie and matching socks that peep out from a small hole in her shoes, Kiran is among 14 girls who train under Dahiya. "When I started training girls in 2003, even my relatives used to say 'he's gone mad'. But I did not treat girls and boys differently," says the genial coach as he watches over the students' morning session.

One of the beginners at the centre is 11-year-old Sakshi Malik. After her illustrious namesake became the first Indian

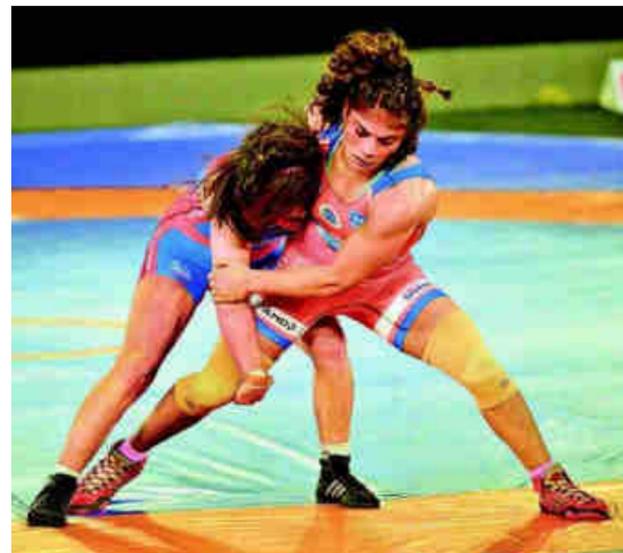
woman to win an Olympic medal for wrestling, Sakshi decided that she wanted to follow in her footsteps. Every morning before school, and every afternoon after classes get over, she makes her way from her village, Kharawar, which is about half an hour away.

For the twenty-somethings, the wrestlers are grappling with the pressure to get married, but not in the same way as their peers. Their families insist that they focus on their game, win accolades and then think of "settling down". Medals will give them an "upper hand" when it comes to prospective suitors, says a coach. For now, the mat is where their focus is.

Sudesh Malik, 22, who is from Bhainswal Kalan village in Sonapat district but lives and trains in Rohtak, knows exactly how things have changed for her ilk. Her parents had forced her to stop wrestling when she was younger. Only an intervention from her coach could get them to agree. "When I started winning, they stopped objecting. Now they support me completely. In fact, when I meet my friends from the village, they tell me that I have it the best. They're all married. They tell me not to get married," she says.

For Sudesh, who competes in the 74-kg weight class, the growing participation of girls has meant more competition. "Earlier, there used to be only five to seven girls in my weight class. Now, at national-level events, there are up to 25," she says.

Another wrestler at the session, 23-year-old Seema, says though wrestling gave her a "new life", life back in her village has not changed much. "They talk about us behind our backs. They say things like 'wonder what she is up to' and 'what kind of clothes must she be wearing,'" she says.



PACKING A PUNCH: "The assembly line coming out of Haryana augurs well for India's sporting ambitions in the global arena." (Clockwise from top) Mahavir Phogat trains young girls in Balali village, Bhiwani; Indu Chaudhary of Haryana Hammers in action against Bulgarian wrestler Elista Yankova in the Pro Wrestling League in New Delhi; a warm-up session at the Chhotu Ram Stadium in Rohtak; budding wrestlers, mostly girls, jog in Balali village. PHOTOS: AKHILESH KUMAR (HARYANA)/ V. V. KRISHNAN (NEW DELHI)

figure it out, speak to the authorities and ask for permission.

Meanwhile, Sudesh and Seema are grappling on one side of the mat when they bump into two young men who have also just gone to the ground. "Move to your side," yells one of the boys, pointing to the edge of the mat where the girls are supposed to practise. Seema and Sudesh roll their eyes and carry on.

Towards the end of the session, the young men and women practise with each other, as the coaches make sure that the doors and windows are closed. "I don't let anyone, apart from parents, hang around the hall. If they see girls and boys wrestling with each other, they'll create a ruckus. If this (points towards a girl and boy grappling) was happening in a village, there would be murder," says one of the coaches.

League of aspirations

In some time, it's Sudesh who asks to leave. The second edition of the Pro Wrestling League — a bid to professionalise the game on the lines of similar franchise models for cricket, hockey, badminton, kabaddi, etc. — is starting and she wants to catch the first match on TV. Coach Dahiya agrees, and tells all his students to watch "kushti on TV" as he wraps up the session.

The girls cycle frantically to Sudesh's one-room house to make it in time for the opening. With three teddy bears hanging on the wall and two dumb-bells on the floor next to the bed, Sudesh's room is far removed from the staid wrestling hall where she spends hours each day.

As Sudesh peels *amlas* (gooseberries) and a beetroot for juice (it's good for you after practice, she says), the programme begins. Seema and Sudesh watch the bouts, talk about which of

their favourites could win. As the day winds down, Sudesh gets a call from her father. She assures him that she's taking care of herself and not exerting too much — she hasn't competed in a "big competition" in about two years due to a knee injury. "But I'm getting better, getting the strength back," she says, as images from the K.D. Jadhav stadium in Delhi play on in the background.

For many of the young girls in Haryana's wrestling centres and akharas, getting to compete alongside international stars in a televised league is a new opportunity, complete with money, fame and the opportunity to learn. But life is no breeze for the young women who appear to have "made it".

Kiran and Indu Chaudhary have just completed their bouts on day three of the league. With the deafening roar of cheering fans and drums still ringing in their ears, the Haryana Hammers teammates catch a breath. "If we give our best, then young girls and their families can see the possibilities. It promotes the sport for the next generation," says Indu, who is from Meerut in Uttar Pradesh. Indu has had a tough bout and ended up injured. "Injury toh wrestler ka gehna hai," says Kiran, to which Indu nods.

Whether it is in the wrestling centres or the akharas or under the floodlights of a Delhi stadium, the assembly line coming out of Haryana augurs well for India's sporting ambitions in the global arena even as it equalises opportunities and alters societal attitudes along the way. There's a new-found can-do spirit stemming from the successes of the Phogat sisters and Sakshi Malik. Even in faraway Balali, where Neha Sangwan has set her sights on winning an Olympic medal. "Like Sakshi *didi*," she says. Only two notches better. "Gold."



FROM PAGE ONE

GDP growth likely to be slower this year

The problem, he pointed out, is that there is no formal indicator used in GDP estimates directly based on the nature of money supply. The impact of demonetisation will operate through a variety of indicators.

"The effect of demonetisation is very complicated and to talk about what the effect would be, when it would show itself, and how much it would be, to comment on that would be difficult at this time. The effect can be long term also, since if the economy's structures change, if behavioural practices change, or if we move towards a less cash system, then there will be changes in quite a lot of processes over time," he observed.

The Central Statistics Office has consciously not used data for credit flow and bank deposits for the month of November and has made projections using the figures from April 2016 to October 2016.



TCA Anant

"At the moment, the assessment we are giving on growth is that it is not possible to say if this drop is attributable to a particular policy change or not. What we are saying is: this is the growth we are estimating now with the data that is available. This is the best effort estimate for the full year," he said.

On the projection, rating agency CRISIL's research division said that it is likely to have an 'upward bias, especially in terms of government consumption growth and government services growth [of 12.8 per cent].'

Aadhaar now must for pension scheme

These documents will have to be submitted to the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation or EPFO along with either of the following documents: voter ID card, passport, PAN card, driving licence or a certificate of identity approved by a gazetted officer.

At present, the minimum pension under EPS is Rs 1,000 per month and an employee can receive pension only after minimum 10 years of service.

The Centre contributes 1.16 per cent of the employee's salary towards the scheme along with employer contribution of 8.33

per cent of the salary.

Employees are automatically enrolled under EPS if they are members of the Employees' Provident Fund scheme.

'Too short a notice'

"Not all workers have an Aadhaar number. We are not against the government's move to link disbursement of subsidy amount with Aadhaar number but the government has given a very short notice to get enrolled under Aadhaar and it should be reviewed," All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) secretary D.L. Sachdev said.

SC stays sale of 2G spectrum by Maxis

The apex court order is based on an application by NGO Centre for Public Interest Litigation (CPIL) to order the CBI and the Enforcement Directorate to prevent Aircel-Maxis from "attempting to quickly sell off its allotted spectrum, which is a precious natural resource belonging to the people of India, to Bharti Airtel and Reliance Communications for thousands of crores, and exit the market with huge sums of money."

The CPIL, which was a petitioner in the legal battle concerning the 2G scam before the Supreme Court, submitted that "if the deal between Aircel and Bharti Airtel and the deal between Aircel and Reliance Communications are allowed to go through, then that would allow Maxis to escape the arm of law and abscond with thousands of crores of money."

According to the FIR registered by the CBI, Sivasankaran (who had originally sought spectrum licence) was forced to sell Aircel. In March 2006, the Maxis group had bought 74 per cent stake in Aircel. The company got FIPB approval in May 2006.

In November 2006, the Department of Telecommunications issued to Aircel 14 Letters of Intent, all of which were converted into licences in December

Will look into Chidambaram's role, says court

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday gave an assurance to look into the question of alleged irregularity in the grant of FIPB clearance in the Rs. 3,500 crore Aircel-Maxis deal in 2006 by the then Finance Minister P. Chidambaram.

"We will deal with one issue at a time. At present, we are dealing with the issue of how to enforce our order," a Bench comprising Chief Justice J.S. Khehar and Justices N.V. Ramana and D.Y. Chandrachud said.

The observations came when BJP leader Subramanian Swamy said an illegality had been committed by Mr. Chidambaram in granting FIPB clearance to the Aircel-Maxis deal. The Bench said it would take up the issue in the next hearing scheduled on February 3. — Legal Correspondent

2006. Within three months of this development, Sun Direct received substantial investment from the Maxis Group (Aircel), which took 20 per cent equity. The FIPB approved this investment on March 2 and 19, 2007.

Al-Badr militant killed

PEERZADA ASHIQ

SRINAGAR: A wanted militant, Muzaffer Naikoo, alias Muza Moulvi, who had survived multiple cordons and called the shots along with Lashkar-e-Taiba operational commander Abdullah Uni for the past nine years, was killed in an operation near Srinagar on Thursday night.

Security forces launched an operation in Gulzarpura locality of Mochuwa on

Thursday following information about the presence of a top militant in the area. As the security forces were laying a cordon, the militant hurled a grenade in a bid to escape but his attempt was thwarted.

A police spokesman said Naikoo, had left the LeT to join Al-Badr a few years. The killing of Naikoo, a close associate of LeT commander Uni and another commander Abu Huzaifa, has put an end

Pro-poor plank now with Modi: Amit Shah

BJP chief hails surgical strikes across LoC and demonetisation

NISTULA HEBBAR

NEW DELHI: BJP president Amit Shah on Friday hailed the Modi government for its "historic decisions" of surgical strikes across the Line of Control into Pakistan following the Uri terror attack and demonetisation. "The Opposition is frustrated by the fact that the support of the poor which, for historical reasons, was with some other parties, has now shifted to the BJP and Prime Minister Modi," he said, addressing the BJP national executive here.

This is the strongest indication yet that demonetisation would be the main plank of the party in the run-up to polls in the five States — Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa, Manipur and Punjab. Mr. Shah said the BJP would win big in all these States.

Standing ovation

Human Resource Development Minister Prakash Javadekar, who briefed the media on Mr. Shah's speech and the proceedings of the national executive, said members of the party's parliamentary board (the highest decision making body) felicitated Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his



UPBEAT TEAM: PM Narendra Modi with BJP chief Amit Shah, party veteran L. K. Advani and Minister Arun Jaitley at the party national executive in New Delhi on Friday. — PHOTO: V. SUDERSHAN

"bold step" in demonetising high denomination notes. "The entire national executive gave a standing ovation to Mr. Modi while he was felicitated," said Mr. Javadekar.

Mr. Shah said both the surgical strikes by the Army and the decision to demonetise were reflective of the government's desire to go beyond the "business as usual" model followed by past governments. "We have not been given a mandate like this to just 'run the government' but to make a decisive change in the lives of the poor and disadvantaged" "With the surgical strikes, we demonstrated that when we said there would be zero tolerance of terror by this

government we meant it. With demonetisation, every penny is now accounted for and a mortal blow has been struck on black money and fake currency racket. In fact, so strong a move is this that a big fake currency racketeer from Pakistan committed suicide after hearing of demonetisation," Mr. Javadekar reported Mr. Shah as saying.

Without naming Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi or any other Opposition leader, Mr. Shah said its criticism of these "historic decisions" of the government stemmed from frustration that the ground had shifted. "One Opposition leader, after the surgical strikes even accused the Prime Min-

ister of 'khood ki dalali' [trafficking the blood of our countrymen]. That mode is not known to us, it must be known to people of that party," Mr. Shah said.

Widening tax base

The BJP chief also linked demonetisation with efforts to widen the tax base to have more money for public spending. "When a majority of your transactions leave a digital fingerprint, tax net will be widened and more money will be available. On an average, over the last 10 years, only around ₹4,10,000 crores to ₹ 4,70,000 crores has been available for development purposes, that will now change," Mr. Shah said.

Not at fault, says Amar Singh as SP feud continues

OMAR RASHID

LUCKNOW: Despite ongoing talks and meetings on Friday between the two factions of the Samajwadi Party over the leadership and symbol issues, there were no signs of a compromise from either side.

On the offensive, the Akhilesh camp dismissed any chances of a resolution through talks.

Speculations of a possible truce gained ground when Shivpal Yadav called on his nephew and Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav at his official residence. But there was no confirmation if the two leaders actually met, as Mr. Shivpal Yadav is said to have left a few minutes later.

The two then joined party supreme Mulayam Singh for a meeting at his Vikramaditya Marg residence. The Akhilesh camp, showcasing its greater bargaining power, is said to have pressed

for the "expulsion" of Amar Singh, who they hold responsible for the family feud, and the sacking of Mr. Shivpal Yadav as State party president.

The Akhilesh camp had already ousted the two leaders at a convention here last Sunday but Mr. Mulayam Singh later termed the decisions "illegal" and the meeting "unconstitutional."

Amid the impasse, Mr. Mulayam Singh announced that he would address a press conference at 4 p.m. However, it was cancelled within 10 minutes without any reason being given. It coincided with senior Minister Azam Khan, who is attempting to broker a peace, visiting Mr. Mulayam Singh's house.

'Not an obstacle'

Meanwhile, Mr. Amar Singh, who flew to Lucknow from Delhi on same chartered flight as Mr. Mulayam Singh and Mr. Shivpal



NO HEADWAY: Multiple meetings have failed to sort out the differences between Shivpal Yadav (right) and his nephew and U.P. Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav. — FILE PHOTO: RAJEEV BHATT

Yadav, termed as 'baseless' allegations that he was behind the crisis." He stressed he had goodwill towards Mr. Akhilesh Yadav and favoured a patch up.

"I want to clarify that I am not against his progress. I want to congratulate him and continue giving my bless-

ings. I did not come to U.P. and Lucknow to spread discord but want an agreement," Mr. Singh told a news agency.

His statement came amid speculations that he had agreed to resign from the party. There was however, no official announcement.

Meanwhile, Abhayram Yadav and Rajpal Yadav, the apolitical brothers of Mulayam reached Lucknow from Saifai, their ancestral village, and met Mr. Mulayam Singh.

Ramgopal claims numbers

Ramgopal Yadav, who orchestrated Mr. Akhilesh Yadav's show of strength and coup on January 1, said in Delhi that the latter had the signed support of 212 out of the party's 229 MLAs, 56 out of 68 MLCs, 15 out of 24 MPs. It was, however, not clear if he had submitted any documents to the Election Commission as required by the later. Mr. Ramgopal Yadav said the affidavits of 5,000 party delegates would be submitted on Saturday.

"Ninety per cent of party delegates and representatives are with Akhilesh Yadav. It is crystal clear, prima facie this [Akhilesh's faction] is the real SP, and that party be

allotted the symbol cycle," he added.

Kironmoy Nanda, SP vice-president, later claimed "We have already submitted the documents to the EC."

Strongly backing Mr. Akhilesh Yadav, Mr. Nanda said there was "no question of a compromise" as there "is no conflict" in the party. "Akhileshji is the president of the SP and Netaji the patron...some people want to create confusion. There is no compromise," he told *The Hindu*.

Accounts frozen

In another move, aided by legal eagles, the Akhilesh camp has told banks to freeze the Samajwadi Party accounts.

As a result, accounts with more than Rs. 500 crore belonging to the party, which till now was operational with the signature of Shivpal Yadav, have been put on hold. (With inputs from IANS)

NIA files charge sheet against Pak. national

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a charge sheet against Pakistani national Bahadur Ali, an alleged member of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), for allegedly planning to carry out terror activities in various parts of Jammu and Kashmir and Delhi. Ali was arrested on July 24 last year from the border village of Yahama village in north Kashmir.

The charge sheet has also highlighted the gaps along the Line of Control (LoC) as Ali and two other terrorists had been walking for seven days undetected before they reached their destination. The trio had entered India in the intervening night of June 12-13, 2016 and reached their destination only around June 20.

The charge sheet was filed before District Judge Amar Nath here as the NIA had registered a case against Ali.

According to the NIA charge sheet, investigations have established that Ali, a school dropout and originally a resident of Jia Bagga village of Raiwind in Lahore, was also provided a map depicting parts of Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). He was provided with the grid references (GRs) that had been recovered from his possession. Ali plotted these GRs on the map which was sent for examination to the Surveyor General of India at Dehradun which affirmed that the terrorist had plotted them correctly.

'Trained in map use'

"This clearly establishes that Ali is well conversant with the use of the map sheet and that he has received training in the subject. A GPS device was recovered from Ali at the time of his arrest. The data retrieved from the GPS device contained coordinates of the Mandak-



Bahadur Ali

uli 'launching pad' of LeT. The pocket diary recovered from Ali, among other things, contains the name of several towns in J&K, like Rafiaband, Kunzar, Tangmarg, Budgam, Poonch, Jammu and Udhampur, besides Delhi," the charge sheet said.

"Given the fact that Ali is a trained cadre of LeT, the inclusion of the names of these towns or cities in the diary indicates that he was tasked to carry out terror attacks at

He and his two associates infiltrated into India with arms and ammunition to launch attacks

several places, including in Delhi," the charge sheet said. NIA also sought an opinion of General Examiner of Questioned Document (GEQD) who had confirmed his ability to plot GRs on the Google maps and on the topographic sheets after which the agency slapped the charge of waging war against the country on Ali.

Ali has been in judicial custody since August.

'Lashkar conspiracy'

NIA alleged that Ali was part of the conspiracy hatched by Lashkar-e-Taiba, a proscribed terrorist organisation, based in Pakistan, to commit terror attacks in India.

NIA said that as part of

LeT's plan, Ali alias Saifullah Mansoor, along with his two associates Abu Saad and Abu Darda, all trained terrorists, infiltrated into Indian territory equipped with arms and ammunition, navigation equipment, combat material and other articles.

Abu Saad had sent a message to one of his handlers, "Walid Bhai" by pairing his mobile phone with his wireless set, a communication technique especially designed by LeT to avoid interception, it said. On June 22, the two left for getting some food from a village leaving Ali on a hill top. However, both were killed in an encounter and Ali shifted his base to another hillock "as a precautionary measure".

Next day Ali contacted 'Alfa-3', the LeT control station based in PoK, who directed him to continue his journey and reach the final destination where he met his local contact who provided him food and shelter, it said.

SC declines early hearing of plea to defer budget

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday declined to grant urgent hearing of a plea to postpone the tabling of the annual budget until after the Assembly elections in five States, including Uttar Pradesh.

A three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar told advocate M.L. Sharma that they would hear his petition in due course but not immediately.

"There is no urgency in it. We will lay down the law when the petition comes up before us in due course," Chief Justice Khehar told Mr. Sharma.

Party symbol issue

The petition has also sought a direction to strip the BJP of its lotus symbol on the ground that it violated the model code of conduct.

Stop India from fuelling terror, Pak urges U.N.

MUBASHIR ZAIDI

KARACHI: Pakistan's Ambassador to the United Nations Maleeha Lodhi on Friday submitted a dossier asking the world body to restrain India from interfering in and undertaking activities aimed at destabilising the country.

"Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi today delivered a dossier on India's

interference and terrorism in Pakistan to the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres along with a letter from Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz," a Foreign Ministry statement stated.

The Ambassador claimed that the dossier contains proof of India and its agency, RAW's interference in Pakistan and involvement in terrorism, particularly in Balochistan, FATA and Karachi.

"This is a follow-up to the three dossiers, which were shared with the United Nations in October 2015," Foreign Office said.

In the covering letter sent with the dossier, Mr. Aziz said the arrest of Indian RAW agent Kulbhushan Yadav from Balochistan and his confessional statement, admitting involvement in activities aimed at destabilising Pakistan, and support to terrorist elements, vindicated

Pakistan's long-standing allegation on India's involvement in such activities.

He stated that India was carrying out these activities in clear contravention of the U.N. Charter and the resolutions of the U.N. Security Council on counter-terrorism and international conventions. India's hostile intentions towards Pakistan were also borne out by recent statements of its leadership, the letter said.



Sartaj Aziz

@bubbly581

'160% rise in killings of Naxals in 2016'

VIJAYA SINGH

NEW DELHI: The Home Ministry flagged the operational efficiency of security forces in the Maoist-affected areas as one of its biggest achievements during a presentation before Prime Minister Narendra Modi this week.

The Ministry informed Mr. Modi that since the NDA government came to power in May 2014, there had been a 45 per cent increase in the efficiency of Central forces in operations against the Maoists. Mr. Modi has been conducting review meetings of 10 groups of secretaries as the NDA government completed two-and-a-half years in office.

In a presentation made by Home Secretary Rajiv Mehriishi, Mr. Modi and other officials were informed that the number of Naxal cadres killed in 2016 had been the highest ever in six

years. Eighty-four Maoist cadres were killed in 2015 and in 2016, the number swelled to 218, which was an increase of 160 per cent. There was also an increase in the number of police encounters, from 237 in 2015 to 316 in 2016.

Home Minister Rajnath Singh told a press conference earlier this week that demonetisation had increased the problems of Maoists and that they had weakened.

Violence down

He also said that Maoist-related violence was down by 40-50 per cent and the Ministry expected the situation to be normal in the next two-three years.

After the NDA government came to power, the Home Ministry sent an additional 14 battalions of Central police forces to the Maoist-affected districts. In all, 104



RED ALERT: Mangled remains of a vehicle after a Naxal attack in Jharkhand. — FILE PHOTO

battalions (each battalion has approximately 1,000 men) of Central forces are currently deployed in the affected areas, besides a large number of State police personnel.

"We consider the progress made in the Maoist-affected areas as one of the biggest

achievements of the Ministry and that is why it was showcased in front of the Prime Minister.

There are other areas also where the Home Ministry has performed well but we consider this as the most noteworthy," said a senior Home Ministry official.

The Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) has already given the go-ahead for an ambitious road project in the 44 worst-affected districts. Under this project, the government proposes to construct 5,412 km of roads and 126 bridges and it would cost ₹11,725 crore.

Redrawing 'Red Corridor'

The government is redrawing the 'Red Corridor' — the area affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE) — and may soon take off 20 districts from the list of Maoist-affected areas. The 106 districts which span 10 States — Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh — constitute the Red Corridor. Of these, 44 districts are said to be the worst affected. India has a total of 683 districts.

India lacks plan for global rescue: Study

'Evacuation missions depend on quick-fix solutions'

KALLOI BHATTACHERJEE

NEW DELHI: The government's plans for conducting emergency large-scale international evacuation is "ad hoc" and depends on "quick-fix solutions", a major think tank paper has stated. The paper authored for Carnegie India has revealed that despite conducting nearly 30 international evacuations, South Block does not have a standard operating procedure (SOP) for such missions and continues to depend on individual sacrifices from civil aviation, military and diplomatic services.

"As more than 11 million Indians now reside abroad, and more than 20 million now travel abroad each year, the government will no longer be able to rely on heroic, ad hoc efforts and quick fix solutions," said the author of the paper Constantino Xavier, pointing out the urgent need to craft an SOP on emergency evacuation.

Mr. Xavier's paper which coincided with the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (7-9 January, Bengaluru), stated that the U.S., the U.K., and the NATO have institutionalised non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO) doctrine. Among the developing countries, Brazil too has institutionalised an SOP. However, India is yet to do the needful even as public scrutiny increases on international crisis situations.

"When the lives and assets of Indians are at risk abroad, civil society organisations mobilise and lobby elected representatives and regional authorities to pressure the Central government to take a more proactive stance, which may hinder quiet diplomacy efforts... further endanger the safety of overseas Indians," the paper said, cautioning that public scrutiny of ad hoc plans could jeopardise missions.

The paper has suggested that the government consider setting up quick reaction teams.



ALL SET: Preparations under way for the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebration at the Bengaluru International Exhibition Centre. — PHOTO: SUDHAKARA JAIN

Bengaluru is set to host Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

STAFF REPORTER

BENGALURU: The stage is set for one of the largest gatherings of the Indian diaspora as the 14th edition of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas will kickstart on Saturday with participation of more than 6,000 delegates from 30 countries.

Many delegates, who have descended on the city, are seeing the event as a platform to meet people from different regions or to air their grievances even as efforts are being made to showcase investment opportunities in various states before potential investors.

During the three-day event, technological advancements and social innovations will be showcased to Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) looking for business opportunities in the country with the start up environment in Bengaluru being a highlight during the Youth Pravasi Divas on Saturday.

As many as 14 states, including the host state Karnataka, are showcasing their regions and business opportunities during the event that will also have high-level delegations from Portugal, Suriname and Malaysia among others. More than 1,500 NRIs and 400 floating NRIs will be a

part of the event. Karnataka Industries Minister R.V. Deshpande on Friday said that the venue was ready to host the mega event that being organised in Bengaluru for the first time.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will deliver keynote address on Sunday, and will later be meeting Non Resident Indian and Persons of Indian Origin delegations while President Pranab Mukherjee will confer Pravasi Bharatiya Samman awards to 30 achievers on Monday.

Foreign delegates

Portugal Prime Minister Antonio Costa and Vice-President of Suriname Michael Ashwin Adhin will be among the dignitaries participating along with the chief ministers of more than eight States.

Several delegations, including a delegation from Qatar, are here to get their grievances redressed. Kareem Abdullah, part of 140 member delegation from Qatar will be seeking among other things Aadhar cards to Indians. However, delegates like Asha Samant, an Associate Professor in Dental Medicine in the U.S., is looking for chances to contribute in the health sector in India.

Congress steps up campaign against note ban

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH: As Punjab prepares itself for the Assembly polls, the Congress is all set to scale up its anti-demonetisation drive in line with its nation-wide campaign, demanding immediate steps by the Modi government to rectify the situation triggered by 'note-bandi'.

Memoranda to DCs

Congress leader and former Union Minister J.D. Seelam on Friday said the party was submitting memoranda to all Deputy Commissioners in the State, demanding answers on the demonetisation move and its impact on the people.

"The memorandum against 'corruption and demonetisation', which has already been submitted to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, demands an independent inquiry into the corruption and bribery allegations in the Birla and Sahara papers cases. It also demands compensation for recouping the losses suffered due to demonetisation," he said.

Mr. Seelam accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of misleading people by projecting the drive as a battle against black money, terror financing and corruption.

"We want to know from him [Mr. Modi] how much black money had come into the banks as a result of demonetisation," he added.

Manmohan's comment

Pointing out that former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's description of demonetisation as 'organised loot and plunder' had come true, the Congress leader said it had plunged the country into an economic crisis, pushing it back by 10-15 years.

"The Modi government should admit its mistake and rectify the situation," he added.

Punjab Congress vice-president Sunil Jakhar said, "they were not against demonetisation but its poor implementation".

Heights of protest



CASH CRUNCH: Congress supporters being arrested for holding a protest against demonetisation at the Reserve Bank of India office in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday. — PHOTO: C. RATHEESH KUMAR

Mamata calls for a national govt.

STAFF REPORTER

KOLKATA: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday urged all the political parties to rise above "narrow differences" and form a national government in the greater interest of the country.

Appealing to President Pranab Mukherjee to save the country from the present crisis, Ms. Banerjee said, "I urge all the political parties to form a national government under a common minimum programme till the next general elections."

She welcomed the President's statement on Thursday that demonetisation could lead to a temporary slowdown of the economy.

'Vindictive govt.'

"I have never seen such a vindictive government at the Centre. They are breaking age-old institutions like the



FOR A GREATER CAUSE: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee after her administrative meeting with government officials in Kolkata on Friday. — PHOTO: PTI

Planning Commission and others. They are breaking the backbone of the government," the Chief Minister told reporters after an official meeting in the city.

Ms. Banerjee said she had "no objection" even if the national government was led by any senior leader of the

Bharatiya Janata Party apart from Mr. Modi.

'₹5,500 crore loss'

"It seems that there is no government. Democratic rights are being bulldozed (by the Centre). In the name of governance a reign of terror is going on in the coun-

try," she said. "In the last two months since demonetisation, we (West Bengal) have suffered a revenue loss of ₹5,500 crore. While more than 1.7 crore people have been adversely affected due to note bandi (demonetisation), 81.50 lakh people have become unemployed in Bengal," the Chief Minister said.

Stating that the figures were the result of a State government survey, Ms. Banerjee said the tea, jute, bidi and jewellery sectors have suffered the most in terms of job losses.

Pointing out that the agricultural sector was severely affected by the cash crunch with farmers unable to grow rabi crops, Ms. Banerjee said, "This will result in a price rise. When people do not have cash they [the Centre] are trying to introduce a cashless economy." (with inputs from PTI)

Amarinder dares Kejriwal for a fight

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH: Punjab Congress president Capt. Amarinder Singh on Friday dared Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to contest against him from any constituency of the State.

"I challenge him (Mr. Kejriwal) to contest against me from any seat of his choice. Mr. Kejriwal wants to become chief minister if his party wins...so why does not he openly declares his ambition and contest?" Capt. Amarinder Singh said, speaking to reporters here.

On the possibility of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD)

fielding former Army chief General JJ Singh (Retd) against him from Patiala, Capt. Amarinder Singh said he was looking forward to creating history by defeating the General.

"It will be the first time in the history of the Army that a Captain will beat a General," he said.

Responding to questions, the former Chief Minister denied that the delay in issuing tickets would impact the campaigning of Congress candidates, saying there was enough time for the polls.

"The final list of the party [candidates] is likely to be released on January 9," he said.

Amritsar LS bypoll on Feb. 4

CHANDIGARH: The EC on Friday announced that the by-election for the Amritsar Lok Sabha seat would be held on February 4, the day when Punjab goes to Assembly polls.

An EC official said the last date for filing nominations would be January 18 while counting of votes would take place on March 11. Scrutiny of papers would be done on January 19 while the last date of withdrawal is January 21.

The seat fell vacant after Congress leader Amarinder Singh's resignation after the SC pronounced that Punjab's law of terminating pact pertaining to sharing of water from the Satluj-Yamuna Link canal was invalid. — Special Correspondent

'Patidar stir has run out of steam'

MAHESH LANGA

GANDHINAGAR: The Patidar quota agitation in Gujarat has "run out of steam" and the community will support the Bharatiya Janata Party in the Assembly polls, claims Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani amid speculation that election in the State is likely to be advanced by a few months.

Though the Chief Minister has ruled out any possibility of early election, he has stressed that the State government and the party are "fully prepared to face the poll any time" in case the high command decides to advance it by 4-5 months. "I am confident that the BJP will win two-thirds majority whenever the polls are held."

"I can say with confidence that the Patels are with the BJP now. The government has initiated a dialogue with the Patidar agitation leaders and I am positive about its outcome," Mr. Rupani, who took over as Chief Minister



Vijay Rupani

after Anandiben Patel's sudden resignation in August 2016, told *The Hindu*.

"The government is prepared to consider their demands within the framework of the Constitution and the apex court rulings with regard to quota. We have asked the agitation leaders to give their suggestions," Mr. Rupani said, adding, "Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel is holding talks with the Patidar leaders to resolve the legally and politically contentious matter."

However, the Chief Minister declined to comment on

'The govt. has initiated talks with the Patidar agitation leaders. I am positive about the result'

23-year-old Patidar quota agitator Hardik Patel. His six-month 'exile' from the State is ending and he is preparing a massive show of strength on his return to the State later this month.

According to Mr. Rupani, the BJP won more than 75 per cent of village panchayats in recent 8,000 village-level elections which are not contested on party symbols. "If you analyse the village panchayat elections, you will get a sense that the Patidars have voted for those affiliated to the BJP."

"Not only the latest round of village panchayats, we also won a series of bye-elections of various local bodies across the State, which means that the people of the State are with the party," he

said, dubbing the rout in the district and taluka panchayats in November 2015 as an aberration.

Known as a protégé of national BJP president Amit Shah, the 60-year-old Mr. Rupani, who outsmarted a prominent Patidar leader Nitin Patel in the Chief Ministerial race in August 2016, is being seen as a "stopgap arrangement" for Mr. Shah, who was reportedly keen to return to State politics as Ms. Anandiben Patel's successor. "People may say I am a stopgap arrangement but the fact is the leadership has chosen me for this job and I have always accepted the party's decision and in future also, I will accept any decision of the party," he said replying a query on whether the Assembly polls would be fought under his leadership amid reports that the party may project an OBC leader ahead of the Assembly polls. "We have Modi and will contest the polls under his leadership."

RBI to provide Nepal ₹1 billion in ₹100 notes

KATHMANDU: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has agreed to provide ₹1 billion in ₹100 notes to the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) to ease the acute shortage of ₹100 notes faced by the Himalayan nation, a media report said on Friday.

The NRB's plan to import ₹100 notes was delayed due to the Indian government's move to demonetise ₹500 and ₹1,000 notes on November 8.

As the RBI was under pressure to manage cash after demonetisation, it had told its Nepali counterpart that Nepal may have to wait till the situation normalised in India, *The Himalayan Times* reported.

But, the RBI recently wrote to the NRB that it will be able to provide ₹1 billion in ₹100 notes, the paper said. The NRB officials have said the central bank is preparing to bring the amount within January. — PTI

May's U.S. visit to put 'special relationship' to test

VIDYA RAM

LONDON: British Prime Minister Theresa May is set to visit the U.S. and meet President-elect Donald Trump shortly after his inauguration this spring, it was confirmed on Friday. The visit — coming just months after her less-than-successful visit to India — will test the appetite of the world's largest economies for a post-Brexit Britain.

The enduring partnership between the two countries — famously described many decades ago by Winston Churchill as a "special relationship" — has gone through peaks and troughs. The Obama administration prioritised relations with other European nations such as Germany, describing Chancellor Angela Merkel last year as his "closest international partner" over the past eight years. Attempts to forge a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) also reflected the U.S.'s eagerness to broaden its relations with Europe beyond Britain. However, with the future of TTIP looking decidedly dim even before the U.S. election and the election of Mr. Trump, 2017 will throw up new opportunities — and challenges — for the relationship.

Cameron's comments

The May administration has been eager to distance itself from the stance of former Prime Minister David Cameron, who was less-than-complimentary about the then-presidential candidate. He described as "divisive, stupid and wrong" Mr. Trump's proposal that there be a temporary ban on Muslims entering the U.S. "It looks like we're not going to have a very good relationship, who knows," Mr. Trump told a U.K. television station last May.

However, following Mr. Trump's election. Ms. May



FUTURE UNPREDICTABLE: U.S. President Barack Obama and Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May in Hangzhou, China, in September last year. — FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

said Britain and the U.S. would "remain strong and close partners". "Britain and the United States have an enduring and special relationship based on the values of freedom, democracy and enterprise," she said.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson urged critics to refrain from prejudging the Trump administration, describing him as a "deal-maker" who stood to offer much to Britain.

Britain has already made a number of concessions to the U.S. when it comes to foreign policy: while Britain supported last year's UN resolution condemning Israel's expansion of settlements in occupied territories, Ms. May also publicly criticised John Kerry's speech condemning the government of Benjamin Netanyahu, in a move that surprised the Obama administration.

The position of the President-elect, however, remains unclear. While he, unlike his predecessor, was a big supporter of Brexit — repeatedly describing himself

as "Mr. Brexit" and drawing parallels between the forces that drove Brexit in the U.K. and his own rise to the power in the U.S. — his stances on a number of issues strongly contrast that of Britain, including on Russia and free trade.

While Britain is eager to position itself as open to building trade relationship outside the EU, Mr. Trump has adopted a protectionist tone on many issues. He has also injected the relationship with a level of unpredictability — suggesting via Twitter that Britain should consider appointing Nigel Farage as its Ambassador to the U.S.

Two senior advisers, Fiona Hill and Nick Timothy, had visited the U.S. to meet with the President-elect's team late last year, Bloomberg reported on Friday. Downing Street confirmed that meetings of key staff had taken place. "We are pleased to have been able to make that happen and the Prime Minister looks forward to visiting the new President in the spring," it said on Friday.

Intelligence chiefs confront Trump

This was a multifaceted campaign. Hacking was only one part of it, says James Clapper

WASHINGTON: U.S. spy chiefs were set to confront an openly dismissive President-elect Donald Trump on Friday with their evidence that Russia mounted an unprecedented bid to disrupt the U.S. elections by hacking his Democratic rivals.

The meeting comes amid high tension between the leaders of the U.S. intelligence community and their future boss, who has bridled at any suggestion that Moscow tipped the election in his favour.

"My hope is that when the President-elect receives his own briefings and is able to examine the intelligence, as his team is put together and they see how professional and effective these agencies are, that some of those current tensions will be reduced," President Barack Obama told Chicago's NBC affiliate on Thursday.

Obama briefed on report

After Mr. Trump first raised doubts early last month, Mr. Obama ordered the intelligence community to produce a comprehensive report on cyberattacks and Russian interference in the election.

Mr. Obama was briefed on the report on Thursday, and the intelligence chiefs were scheduled to detail it to Mr. Trump on Friday.

James Clapper, the director of national intelligence, National Security Agency chief Mike Rogers, Federal Bureau of Investigation director James Comey and Central Intelligence Agency Director John Brennan were expected to take part in the briefing.

Mr. Clapper told the Senate Armed Services Committee on Thursday that he had "very high" confidence in their findings.

"The Russians have a long history of interfering in elections, theirs and other people's," he said. "But we



GIVING EVIDENCE: James Clapper (left), the Director of National Intelligence, and Adm. Michael Rogers, director of the National Security Agency, attending the Senate Armed Services Committee hearing in Washington on Thursday. — PHOTO: NYT

have never encountered such a direct campaign to interfere with the election process as we have seen in this case."

"This was a multifaceted campaign. So the hacking was only one part of it, and it also entailed classical propaganda, disinformation, fake news."

'Russian officials involved'

Mr. Clapper, Mr. Rogers and Marcel Lettre, undersecretary of defense for intelligence, said in a joint statement that "only Russia's senior-most officials" could have authorised the operation, in which hackers stole Democratic Party files and e-mails. Those files were then disseminated via WikiLeaks, embarrassing the party and harming losing candidate Hillary Clinton's White House effort.

President-elect Trump has mocked via Twitter past intelligence errors of the CIA, FBI and other agencies, challenging them to prove that the hacking and leaks could be traced up to the top of Mr. Putin's government. — AFP

Grow up Donald, says Joe Biden in interview

WASHINGTON: U.S. Vice-President Joe Biden has a blunt suggestion for President-elect Donald Trump: It is time to "grow up."

Asked about a few of Mr. Trump's controversial remarks and tweets since winning the November election, Mr. Biden had some intemperate comments of his own. "Grow up Donald, grow up, time to be an adult, you're President," he told television station PBS in an interview broadcast on Thursday. "Time to do something. Show us what you have." Mr. Trump had earlier on Thursday described Mr. Biden as the "head clown".

Mr. Biden has indicated he will not step away from the political fray entirely when he leaves office with President Barack Obama on January 20.

Mr. Biden has already been chiming in on how Democrats should respond to their shock election defeat, suggesting a renewed focus on the working and middle class. — AFP

Hate crime charges against 4 after attack

CHICAGO: Four black people were charged with hate crimes on Thursday in connection with a video broadcast live on Facebook that showed a mentally disabled white man being beaten and taunted, threatened with a knife and forced to drink from a toilet. The assault went on for hours, until Chicago police found the disoriented victim walking along a street, authorities said.

Recorded on video

The suspects, who were jailed, can be heard on the video using profanities against white people and President-elect Donald Trump.

Police spokesman Anthony Guglielmi said investigators initially concluded that the 18-

Envoys appointed by Obama to be recalled

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's transition team has issued a blanket mandate requiring politically appointed Ambassadors installed by President Barack Obama to leave their posts by Inauguration Day, the U.S. Ambassador to New Zealand said. "I will be departing on January 20th," Ambassador Mark Gilbert said. The mandate was issued "without exceptions" through an order sent in a State Department cable on Dec. 23, he said. The order threatens to leave the U.S. without Senate-confirmed envoys for months in nations like Germany, Canada and Britain. *The New York Times* had reported. — Reuters

year-old man was singled out because he has "special needs", not because he was white. But authorities later said the charges resulted from both the suspects' use of racial slurs and their references to the victim's disability. It's also possible that the suspects were trying to extort something from the victim's family, police said.

The cruelty of the attack and the intense social media exposure prompted President Barack Obama to respond, calling it "despicable". "I take these things very seriously," he told a television on Thursday. But he said the assault does not mean that race relations have gotten worse. — AP

Mexico will pay U.S. back for the wall, says Trump

WASHINGTON: U.S. President-elect Donald Trump criticised news reports on Friday that U.S. taxpayers would pay for his planned border wall with Mexico, saying they were failing to report that U.S. funds used to start the project would be repaid by Mexico.

"The dishonest media does not report than any money spent on building the Great Wall [for sake of speed], will be paid back by Mexico later!" Mr. Trump said on Twitter.

CNN and other media organizations reported on Friday that Mr. Trump's transition team had signalled to congressional Republicans that he preferred to fund the border wall through the appropriations process as soon as April.

Mr. Trump said in his note on Twitter that initial U.S. funding for the wall would be to get it started more quickly and that Mexico would eventually repay the United States. — Reuters

China could own a third aircraft carrier

ATUL ANEJA

BEIJING: China is expected to "own" a third aircraft carrier in the near future, the *People's Daily* online reported, quoting a leading naval expert.

The website quoted Liang Fang, a military expert as saying that "the Chinese military's combat capability has grown by leaps and bounds in the past decade".

He added: "At present, China's second aircraft carrier is under construction. In the near future, the Chinese Navy is expected to own a third aircraft carrier strike group, capable of safeguarding territorial sovereignty and maritime rights."

Current carrier

A website affiliated with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) also relayed the report.

China has so far deployed Liaoning, its sole, aircraft carrier — an import from Ukraine — whose prime purpose is to impart training, so that a skilled core of personnel is developed, cap-



ASSERTIVENESS IN THE SEA: J-15 fighter jets seen on China's Liaoning aircraft carrier while preparing to conduct a drill in the South China Sea earlier in January. — PHOTO: AP

able of marshalling more combat-worthy aircraft carriers of the future.

"While the Liaoning is far from a game-changer in the naval balance of power in the region, it has been efficiently utilised as a training platform to educate the foundational core of officers, sailors and airmen that will build the future Chinese aircraft carrier force," says Brian Kalman, a military analyst, on the website South Front.

Analysts say that the focus on aircraft carriers marks a doctrinal shift, allowing

ment, the U.S. military clearly lacks stamina, and the country's insufficient military spending is proof of that. In addition, frequent problems with U.S. Navy Super Hornet, F-35C and other carrier-borne fighters have seriously hampered the aircraft carriers' combat capability."

U.S. deployments

The website highlighted China's assertiveness, in the wake of upcoming naval deployments in the western Pacific by the U.S. Navy.

"On the first day of the new year, a fleet headed by aircraft carrier Liaoning held drills in the South China Sea. Around the same time, news was released that the USS Carl Vinson, a nuclear-powered American aircraft carrier, would deploy from San Diego, California to the Western Pacific region."

China's second aircraft carrier, CV-17 is currently at an advanced stage of construction at Dalian Shipbuilding in northeastern China.

Russia begins military drawdown in Syria

BEIRUT: Russia's military said on Friday that it has begun scaling down its deployment to Syria, as the regime intensified its bombardment of a rebel-held district home to the capital's main water source. Moscow's intervention in September 2015 helped turn the tide in favour of President Bashar Al-Assad, whose forces scored a major victory last month with the recapture of opposition stronghold east Aleppo.

Russia, along with fellow regime ally Iran and rebel backer Turkey, is pushing for peace talks to be held later this month in Kazakhstan.

But escalating fighting near Damascus, including reported barrel bombings, has undermined a fragile week-old nationwide ceasefire and left the talks in doubt.

Russia's military said a naval group headed by aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov would be the first to leave the area under a drawdown ordered by President Vladimir Putin on

A naval group headed by aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov would be the first to leave the area

December 29. "The tasks set for the aircraft carrier group during its military mission have been fulfilled," said Russia's main commander in Syria, Andrei Kartapolov, quoted by Russian news agencies.

Aircraft on board the carrier conducted some 420 sorties and hit 1,252 "terrorist" targets during the two months that it was involved in the Syria mission, Mr. Kartapolov said. He said that Russia still had sufficient air defence capabilities thanks to its S-300 and S-400 systems deployed in the war-torn country.

During its deployment to Syria, the Soviet-built Kuznetsov was involved in a series of embarrassing accidents, with two jets crashing into the sea. — AFP

Mastermind of Dhaka café attack killed in raid

DHAKA: Bangladeshi police shot dead an Islamist extremist accused of being one of the masterminds of last year's deadly siege at a café during a pre-dawn raid in Dhaka on Friday.

The bodies of Nurul Islam Marzan and another man said to have been behind the murder of a Japanese national in 2015 were found after officers raided a property in Dhaka's Rayer Bazar neighbourhood, police said.

"Marzan and his associate Saddam [Hossain] died in an encounter with police," said Inspector General of Police A.K.M. Shahidul Haque. "He [Marzan] was the operational commander of the July café attack. He was one of the masterminds of it." Additional deputy commissioner Yusuf Ali said police had found the body of another "suspected extremist" alongside Marzan.

The country's security forces launched a deadly crackdown against Islamist extremists following the attack. — AFP

Eminent jurist Weeramantry dead

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO: Eminent jurist C.G. Weeramantry, who was the first Sri Lankan to be appointed to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, and acclaimed for his dissenting judgment on nuclear weapons, passed away here on Thursday. He was 90.

Justice Weeramantry began his judicial career in the 1950s, and became Sri Lanka's youngest Supreme Court judge.

He later served as a senior judge there before moving to Australia as the Sir Hayden Stark Professor of Law at Monash University.

In the early 1990s, the World Health Organization (WHO) sought an advisory opinion from the ICJ on the 'legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons'.

Staunchly opposing the possession of nuclear

First Sri Lankan to be appointed to the ICJ and acclaimed for his judgment on nuclear weapons

weapons, he observed: "My considered opinion is that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is illegal in any circumstances whatsoever. It violates the fundamental principles of international law, and represents the very negation of the humanitarian concerns which underlie the structure of humanitarian law".

He set up the Colombo-based Weeramantry Centre for International Peace and also served as president of the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms, a non-governmental organisation headquartered in The Hague.

Saudi women defy restrictions in video

MEGAN SPECIA

Three women in black niqabs covering their hair and faces skateboard down a street, their scarves and colourful dresses flowing behind them.

A catchy tune with provocative lyrics — "May all men sink into oblivion" and "If only God would rid us of men" — plays as the women alternately glide on in-line skates, cruise on scooters and parade down the street in vibrant outfits, all things taboo for women in Saudi Arabia.

The music video has rapidly spread across social media, viewed more than three million times since it was uploaded to YouTube two weeks ago, and it has prompted debate over the role of women in Saudi society.

In the video, directed by Majed al-Essa at 8ies Studios (pronounced 80s), a produc-



ACT OF REBELLION: In the video, which has been shared three million times, three women play basketball, sing and dance with swagger and confidence. — SCREENSHOT: YOUTUBE

tion company based in Riyadh, the women shooed baskets, wear neon-coloured sneakers and dance with a swagger and confidence that seems to dismiss the men who look on, all while covered nearly from head to toe.

The two men in the video, dressed in traditional Saudi garb, stare down the women from behind the wheel of a car. They wag their fingers as

the women cruise down the street. Many social media posts that discussed the video applauded its message, including commentary from dozens of Saudi women who shared the video on Twitter.

Ameerah al-Taweel, who is the former wife of a Saudi prince and has long been an advocate for women's rights, shared the clip with her 1.4 million followers.

The video, despite its fast

beat and bright colour palette, is anything but light, and it points a critical finger at the restrictions women face in Saudi Arabia. Activists in the country have long protested its patriarchal society that essentially prohibits women from travelling, marrying or attending college without permission from a male relative, who is called their guardian. — New York Times News Service

U.S. puts Osama's son on terror blacklist



WASHINGTON: The U.S. added Hamza bin Laden, son and heir of Osama bin Laden, to its terrorist blacklist on Thursday. Hamza, who is in

his mid-twenties, has become active as an al-Qaeda propagandist since his father's death in 2011.

The State Department order lists Hamza bin Laden as a "Specially Designated Global Terrorist", meaning that U.S. citizens are forbidden from dealing with Hamza. This also freezes any of his assets under U.S. jurisdiction. — AFP

Tokyo recalls Seoul envoy over statue

TOKYO: Japan recalled its Ambassador to South Korea on Friday to protest the placing of a statue symbolising victims of Japanese wartime sex slavery outside its consulate in the city of Busan last month.

Japan's chief government spokesman Yoshihide Suga also announced that Japan is

ordering home its consul-general in Busan and suspending discussions over a Japan-South Korea currency swap.

Mainstream historians say up to 200,000 women, mostly from Korea but also other parts of Asia including China, were forced to work in Japanese military brothels during World War II. — AFP

“Demonetisation drive has disrupted the ‘underlying strength’ of the economy”
Montek Singh Ahluwalia,
 Ex-Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission



SENSEX
 06-01-2017 **26,759**
 05-01-2017 **26,878**
119
 points

GOLD
 06-01-2017 **28,710**
 05-01-2017 **28,730**
20
 ₹/10gms

RUPEE
 06-01-2017 **67.96**
 05-01-2017 **67.96**
0.00
 ₹/₹

BRENT OIL
 06-01-2017 **56.68**
 05-01-2017 **57.01**
0.33
 \$/bbl

Rupee to decline to record low this year: Reuters poll

BENGALURU: The Indian rupee is expected to fall further against the U.S. dollar this year to a record low, hit by rising global bond yields and an economic blow from New Delhi's dramatic currency crackdown initiated two months ago, a Reuters poll found.

The rupee performed a bit better than most of its regional peers in 2016, weakening just over 2 per cent as India's economy, the fastest-growing in Asia, roared ahead for most of the year.

But capital outflows intensified toward the end of 2016 after Donald Trump won the U.S. presidential election and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the withdrawal of high-value bank notes.

Weaker rupee

The rupee is forecast to weaken to 68.50 a dollar in one month versus 67.73 at Thursday's close, the poll of nearly 30 foreign exchange strategists carried out this week showed.

It is expected to fall further to 69.50 by year-end.

That 12-month consensus is the weakest for several years and would mark a record low. Three months ago the view in a Reuters poll was for the Indian currency to trade at 67.73 in a year.

Tata Sons calls EGM on Feb. 6 to oust Mistry



Cyrus Mistry

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI: Tata Sons has convened an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) of its shareholders on February 6 to remove Cyrus Mistry, its ousted chairman, from the company's board of directors.

If removed as director of Tata Sons, the holding company, Mr. Mistry would be stripped of all executive and non executive roles of the Tata Group. A Tata Group spokesperson confirmed the meeting. "This was decided on the requisition of some of the Tata Sons' shareholders."

The meeting comes even as Mr. Mistry, through his investment firms, has petitioned the National Company Law Tribunal seeking dissolution of the board of Tata Sons in which Mr. Mistry's family has 18.4 per cent stake. The move is likely to win shareholders' nod.

SBI, HDFC Bank spar over M-wallet fee

The banks are yet to agree on how much State Bank will have to pay HDFC for a transaction

MANOJIT SAHA
 YUTHIKA BHARGAVA

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI: If you have a savings account with HDFC Bank and you want to transfer funds from that account to State Bank of India's mobile wallet, you won't be able to do so as of now.

This is because SBI and HDFC Bank are yet to reach an agreement on how much the former will pay the latter for such a transfer.

When funds are transferred to a mobile wallet from a bank account, the wallet company has to charge the bank, which is either a percentage of the amount transferred or a fixed amount.

According to HDFC Bank officials, SBI has not agreed to the fee it demanded for such transfer. "We have asked for 1.5 per cent fee per transaction — for the funds

transferred from our accounts to SBI's wallet — which the bank is yet to agree," a HDFC Bank official in the know of the matter said.

Security concerns

The country's largest lender is also not allowing its fund transfer from its bank accounts to standalone mobile wallets like Paytm and MobiKwik due to security reasons.

"We are not sure about their security," said Mrutyunjay Mahapatra, Deputy Managing Director & Chief Information Officer of SBI.

"Their security regime is not audited or inspected or verified by anybody," Mr Mahapatra said adding that HDFC Bank also does not allow their accounts to fund SBI wallets.

"Our customers' interest should be protected. We



WALLET WAR: SBI is also not allowing fund transfer to standalone mobile wallets on security concerns. — FILE PHOTO

don't want to expose our customers to frauds."

Asked about SBI blocking the wallet, MobiKwik CEO Bipin Preet Singh said the restriction had been there for a few months now.

"As an industry, we must define security standards — adherence of which should be mandatory to allow money flow from banking to non-banking financial insti-

tutions," Mr. Singh said.

Following the ban on high-value banknotes, digital payments have seen a sharp increase in business volumes.

According to RBI data, mobile banking transactions were ₹1.13 lakh crore in October and ₹1.04 lakh crore in September for the entire banking system, while in November the figure just for five banks alone was ₹1.24

lakh crore and in December it further went up to ₹1.36 lakh crore.

Medium-term roadmap

The Ratan Watal committee which was set up by the government had recently suggested a medium term roadmap for digital payments to grow substantially over the next three years from the current level of about five per cent of personal consumption and 20 per cent of all transactions.

"Inter-operability is a good thing as a concept and a step in the right direction towards a cashless economy," said Naveen Surya, managing director of payments solutions firm ItzCash and President, Payments Council of India, who was also a member of the Watal committee.

"Anything against this spirit is not good."

Tighter norms for e-manufacturing sops

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA

NEW DELHI: The Centre is likely to reduce the time frame for companies to avail sops in a scheme to boost electronic product manufacturing in the country at a time when tech majors such as Apple are seeking additional concessions to Make in India.

While the Modified Special Incentive Package Scheme provides for subsidy on investments made within 10 years of the project getting approved, the revised scheme that will be taken up for Cabinet nod next week is likely to bring this subsidy time frame down to five years, a senior government official told *The Hindu*.

The M-SIPS was notified



in 2012 for both new and expansion projects to attract investments in electronic manufacturing. The scheme provides for capital subsidy of 20-25 per cent, besides reimbursement of countervailing duty/excise for capital equipment for the non-SEZ units and also reimbursement of central taxes and du-

ties for some of the high capital investment projects.

The scheme was initially opened for three years till July 2015, and was later extended till July 2020.

"The reworked scheme is now ready. It will be taken up for approval at the upcoming Cabinet meeting next week," the official said.

Projects stuck

Several approvals under the scheme, considered key to the Centre's Make In India programme, have been stuck for nearly a year due to tussle between the Electronics and IT Ministry and the Finance Ministry after the latter raised concerns over the scheme being 'open ended'.

While the Finance Min-

istry has been pushing for a three year cap on implementation period for the scheme from the current 10 years, the official said proposal for Cabinet nod suggested a five-year term.

It is also likely that a cap will be put on the total incentives that can be disbursed under the scheme, a demand put forth by the finance ministry.

The electronics hardware production in India in 2014-15 is estimated at \$32.46 billion, representing a share of about 1.5 per cent in world electronic hardware production. During the year, domestic consumption of electronic hardware was at \$63.6 billion, of which imports accounted for 58 per cent.

SEBI eases rules for foreign fund managers

NEW DELHI: To make it easier for foreign fund managers keen to enter India, SEBI has notified rules allowing them to act as Portfolio Managers under a relaxed regulatory regime.

The move assumes significance in the wake of the government's announcement of taxation incentives for the offshore fund managers willing to relocate to India.

The regulator has made amendments to Sebi (Portfolio Managers) Regulations, 1993, to provide an enabling framework for registration of CFMs. It had also issued a consultation paper in June. — PTI

Siva welcomes SC stay in Aircel-Maxis case

K.T. JAGANNATHAN

CHENNAI: C. Sivasankaran, the original promoter of Aircel, welcomed the Supreme Court's stay in the Aircel-Maxis case and said Standard Chartered Bank (SCB) — which was the merchant banker to the deal — must compensate the Indian banks that had lent to Aircel.

Mr. Sivasankaran's suggestion came in the wake of the Supreme Court restraining Malaysia's Maxis Group from transferring 2G licences obtained by Aircel.

"I am glad that Supreme Court ruled against the sale of Aircel," said Mr. Sivasankaran, adding that he had been coerced into selling Aircel to the Maxis Group.

He estimated public sector banks had an exposure of



C. Sivasankaran

almost ₹15,000 crore to Aircel.

"I believe in the Indian judiciary, and respect its observations," he said.

The Department of Telecommunications should find a buyer who could take over Aircel's users, Mr. Sivasankaran suggested.

"The consideration should be used to settle bank dues of Aircel and Siva Group," he said.

Hindustan Zinc gets green nod for Zawar mines

NEW DELHI: Vedanta Group firm Hindustan Zinc Ltd (HZL) has got environment clearance for its ₹1,200 crore Zawar Mines expansion project in Rajasthan.

The world's second largest zinc producer wants to expand the production capacity of lead-zinc and ore beneficiation at its Zawar Group of underground mines located in Sarada district.

"The Environment Ministry has examined the HZL's proposal. Based on the recommendations of the expert advisory committee, the ministry has given the environment clearance for expansion of production capacity of its Zawar group of underground mines," an official said. — PTI

China grabs 50 per cent of India's smartphone market

MUMBAI: Chinese brands took their largest ever slice of the \$10-billion Indian smartphone market in late 2016, accounting for more than one in every two phones sold — a growing market share that ate into sales from top-selling Samsung Electronics.

Samsung, the single most popular smartphone brand in India, commanded a roughly 30 per cent market share just over a year ago. That slipped to 21 per cent in November, according to tech research firm Counterpoint, the last month for which data is available.

Thanks to low cost, improved technology and an advertising blitz, Chinese brands like Oppo, Lenovo, OnePlus and Gionee took a combined share of over 50 per cent, compared with just 19 per cent a year ago.

"Chinese brands are offering quality that is at par with Samsung, at a better price," said Manish Khatri, who owns two multi-brand smartphone outlets in Mumbai. "Of every 10 phones I sell, almost six to seven are



now Chinese brands."

Celebrity endorsements from Bollywood actors like Hrithik Roshan and Ranveer Singh, along with huge sponsorship campaigns by brands such as Oppo and Gionee of the wildly popular Indian Premier League cricket franchise have helped improve perception of Chinese brands — once derided for their low quality.

Bollywood, cricket

"In a country like India, there are two religions — one is Bollywood and the second is cricket," said Arvind R Vohra, Gionee's India head, noting that both avenues have helped popularize its brand.

Chinese brand executives said innovative product features such as powerful selfie cameras with flash, quicker charging and longer-lasting batteries have helped them thrive in India, one of the world's fastest growing smartphone markets.

In the large and ultra-competitive \$120 to \$440 mid-market smartphone segment, Chinese vendors have more than doubled their market share to 68 per cent, while Samsung has lost 14 percentage points since November 2015, according to Counterpoint.

"Being a global company is Samsung's biggest curse," says Neil Shah of Counterpoint, adding Samsung cannot compete on price like their Chinese rivals, who are focused more on low-cost markets. He said Chinese vendors' access to low-cost components and their expertise in designing metal casing for cheap phones has let brands like Oppo, OnePlus and Lenovo offer better quality products than Samsung. — Reuters



FAMILY SILVER: The stake sale may fetch the exchequer more than ₹1,000 crore. — FILE PHOTO

Centre clears 26% strategic sale in BEML

NEW DELHI: The Centre will sell 26 per cent stake in defence equipment manufacturer BEML, making it the first major PSU to be sold through strategic disinvestment, which may fetch the exchequer over ₹1,000 crore.

In a notification to the stock exchanges, BEML said that the Cabinet has given an 'in-principal' approval for strategic disinvestment of 26 per cent equity shares in BEML Ltd. out of government's shareholding of 54.03 per cent.

At the current market pricing of ₹999.50 a share, 26 per cent stake of BEML could fetch the exchequer over ₹1,000 crore. After the strategic sale, government stake in the PSU would come down to 28.03 per cent.

"The said shareholding would be sold to the strategic buyer/s to be identified by the government of India by following due procedure," BEML said.

The strategic sale approval is just the third in over 12 years.

In September, the Cabinet had cleared strategic sale of Bharat Pumps and Compressors Ltd., while in December it had approved sale of India's first pharma company Bengal Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals Ltd as well as Hindustan Antibiotics Ltd.

These PSUs will be the

first privatisation since sale of Jessop and Co in 2003-04 under the NDA government headed by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

These are among the public sector units that NITI Aayog has identified for sale of government's majority stake to private companies in order to bring in greater efficiency and professionalism in their functioning.

Established in May 1964, BEML operates on three major business verticals for associated equipment manufacturing — mining and construction, rail and metro and defence and aerospace. Its turnover has risen to more than ₹3,500 crore.

The PSU, under the administrative control of defence ministry, provides equipment support to Indian Army and other defence forces by manufacturing variants of Tatra vehicle for all terrain operation.

It also supports the aerospace operations by supplying ground support equipment such as Aircraft Towing Tractor, Multi Purpose Weapon Loader and Crash Fire Tender.

The government is targeting ₹56,500 crore in disinvestment proceeds this fiscal. Of this, ₹36,000 crore is to come from minority stake sale in PSUs and another ₹20,500 crore from strategic stake sale. — PTI

Exchange Rates

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m on January 06

Currencies	TT	TT
	Buying	Selling
U.S. Dollar	67.76	68.08
Euro	71.77	72.11
Pound Sterling	83.76	84.16
Jap Yen (100 Units)	58.44	58.72
Chinese Yuan	9.80	9.85
Swiss Franc	66.97	67.29
Singapore Dollar	47.28	47.51
Australian Dollar	49.74	49.98
Canadian Dollar	51.13	51.37
Swedish Kroner	7.52	7.55
Danish Kroner	9.65	9.70
New Zealand Dollar	47.60	47.83
Hongkong Dollar	8.74	8.78
Malaysian Ringgit	15.14	15.23
Kuwaiti Dinar	220.50	222.99
UAE Dirham	18.45	18.54
Bahraini Dinar	179.64	180.58
Qatari Riyal	18.66	18.67
Saudi Riyal	18.12	18.12
Omani Riyal	175.95	176.88

Source: Indian Bank

Bullion Rates

January 06 rates in rupees with previous rates in brackets

Chennai		
Bar Silver (1 kg)	40,440	(40,520)
Retail (1 g)	43.30	(43.40)
24 ct gold (10 g)	28,690	(28,580)
22 ct gold (1 g)	2,743	(2,735)
Delhi		
Silver	40,100	(40,600)
Standard Gold	28,710	(28,730)
Sovereign	24,200	(24,200)

SNIPPETS

Vodafone to offer unlimited 3G, 4G data for 1 hour

NEW DELHI: Telecom operator Vodafone announced a SuperHour scheme, under which it will offer unlimited 3G or 4G data for one hour at a starting price of ₹16 for pre-paid customers. It will also offer unlimited local voice calls (within network) with one hour validity for ₹7. "With SuperHour, you can use and download as much data as you like for one hour at a fixed, nominal price. Moreover, with unrestricted repeat purchase, you can make every hour SuperHour," Sandeep Kataria, Chief Commercial Officer, Vodafone India said in a statement. "Customers can also buy the SuperHour pack for making unlimited local Vodafone to Vodafone voice calls for only ₹7," the statement added. —PTI

IRCTC to unveil new app for booking tickets faster

NEW DELHI: Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) Limited will soon introduce a new ticketing app, which will have several features added on the existing one for faster booking of tickets. Equipped with latest technology, existing IRCTC Connect will now become IRCTC Rail Connect to facilitate booking of train tickets in a faster and easier way, a senior Railway Ministry official said. IRCTC, which handles online train ticket bookings, will formally unveil the IRCTC Rail Connect app next week to cater to the growing demand to make the ticketing app more user-friendly. The new ticketing app will be based on next generation e-ticketing system. — PTI

Coal India's FY18 output seen at 660 million tonnes

NEW DELHI: State-owned Coal India Ltd, the world's largest coal miner, is expected to raise its production to 660 million tonnes in 2017/18 fiscal year, Coal Secretary Susheel Kumar said. The miner is expected to achieve its 2016/17 production target of 575 million tonnes and aims to raise output to 1 billion tonnes by 2020, Mr. Kumar told a television news channel. With coal accounting for about 70 per cent of India's power generation, the country is the world's third-biggest producer and importer of the fuel, and government wants to boost domestic output to cut imports. CIL has failed to meet its output targets for years due to several reasons including strikes, accidents and protests. — Reuters

TRAI to review tariff rules, numbering plan

NEW DELHI: Telecom regulator TRAI will soon form a joint committee with telecom operators to review tariff rules, telephone numbering plan and work towards making its monitoring more transparent. "We will form a committee consisting of TRAI officers and telecom operators' representative to suggest which are the provisions that have become obsolete and need to be changed. This includes tariff order, regulations, licensing and others," TRAI Chairman R.S. Sharma told reporters after meeting telecom operators. TRAI has put forward five subjects before telecom operators that need to be reviewed. BSNL Chairman and Managing Director Anupam Shrivastava said that regulatory intervention is required in the area of infrastructure sharing to bring cost of operations down and improve service quality. — PTI

India, Kazakhstan agree to amend tax treaty

NEW DELHI: India and Kazakhstan signed an agreement to amend the two-decade old bilateral tax treaty under which information exchanged between the two can be shared with other law enforcement agencies. The protocol to amend the existing Double Taxation Avoidance Convention (DTAC) between the two countries provides internationally-accepted standards for effective exchange of information on tax matters, an official statement said. — PTI

Railways may get 6% increase in Budget

Finance Ministry pegs budgetary support at ₹48,000 cr.

SOMESH JHA

NEW DELHI: The Finance Ministry may grant the Indian Railways a more than six per cent increase in gross budgetary support to ₹48,000 crore, a figure that the operator of the world's fourth largest railway network wants raised further, according to official sources.

The Finance Ministry has pegged the budgetary support at ₹48,000 crore for 2017-18. The Budget, which is likely to be presented on February 1, will be the first time that the state-owned Railways will have its allocation announced in the Union Budget as the colonial-era practice of a separate Railway Budget has been dispensed with. While the public utility had sought ₹60,000 crore for the coming fiscal to rev up investments, the Finance Ministry had pointed out that the Railways won't have to pay any dividend from the coming year.

"The Finance Ministry has informed us in writing that they will be able to provide a gross budgetary support (GBS) of ₹48,000 crore for 2017-18," said a senior Railway Ministry official, who did not wish to be identified. "However, we had asked for a higher budgetary support of ₹60,000 crore and we are still negotiating with them."

Dividend waiver

The GBS will, however, be more than six per cent higher than ₹45,000 crore provided by the Finance Ministry in 2016-17. The increase in budgetary support is significant as the Indian Railways will no longer be required to pay dividend to the Finance Ministry for the capital in-



GREEN LIGHT: Railways will not have to pay dividend to Finance Ministry after the Budget merger in 2017-18. — FILE PHOTO

vested in it following the Budget merger from 2017-18.

The dividend waiver will allow the Railways to step up investment towards track renewal, maintenance, station improvement and passenger amenities.

In 2016-17, Indian Railways is budgeted to pay ₹9,731 crore as dividend, whereas the subsidy claimed by the Railways towards loss-making routes is estimated at ₹4,301 crore. As a result, the net dividend payment to the Finance Ministry is estimated at ₹5,430 crore in 2016-17 against the gross budgetary support of ₹45,000 crore.

The Indian Railways meets its planned expenditure through a combination of GBS, market borrowings and internal revenue generation.

Over the last five years, the GBS provided to the Railways has been substantially lower than its actual requirement. While the Railways had sought from the Finance Ministry budgetary support of ₹2,29,399 crore from 2012-13 to 2016-17, the actual GBS (including diesel cess) was 25 per cent lower at ₹1,67,511 crore. Railway Ministry offi-

cial opine that providing budgetary support lower than its demands might impact investment in key infrastructure projects planned for 2017-18. An official said the Railways is planning a plan outlay of about ₹1.35 lakh crore for the next financial year, higher than a record plan outlay of ₹1,21,000 crore in 2016-17.

'Generate surplus'

"It is a well accepted fact that due to inability of Railways to generate surplus and inadequate Gross Budgetary Support projects have been languishing leading to vicious cycle of time and cost overruns," the Railway Ministry told a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways that recently presented its ninth report in the Lok Sabha.

However, the Committee noted that annual plan sizes of the Railways had been disproportionate in the last four years due to lower generation of extra budgetary resources, lower materialisation of internal resources along with lower allocation of gross budgetary support.

Natco Pharma to introduce anti-cancer drug in U.S.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD: Natco Pharma Ltd in association with its marketing partner Breckenridge Pharmaceutical Inc. plans to introduce a generic version of anti-cancer drug Bendamustine Hydrochloride in the U.S. on November 1, 2019. The company got the final approval from U.S. Food and Drug Administration for the generic version of Bendamustine Hydrochloride powder for injection. The patent for Bendamustine Hydrochloride has been assigned to Cephalon Inc.

The Pennsylvania firm, which has been acquired by Teva, sells Bendamustine Hydrochloride powder for injection under the brand name of Treanda in the U.S. Treanda is indicated for treatment of chronic lymphocytic leukemia and non-Hodgkin lymphoma. It had U.S. sales of around \$133 million during the 12 months ended November 2016, the filing said. The Abbreviated New Drug Application that Natco and Breckenridge filed was with a Paragraph IV certification. When filed with the certification, it triggers a process under which the branded manufacturer is given an option to raise a case of infringement. During the case, a stay is granted and if the infringement is proven the ANDA dismissed. An approved ANDA with Para IV certification, in turn, provides the generic drug maker 180 days of exclusivity in marketing the new product. Natco and Breckenridge expect to share 180-day exclusivity with other ANDA first filers.

"Pursuant to the settlement of the Paragraph IV litigation, Natco plans to launch this drug on November 1, 2019 or earlier under certain circumstances..." according to the filing.

Centre plans to amend Plantation Labour Act



TURNING A LEAF: The proposed amendment seeks to exclude in-kind benefits from the definition of wage. — FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

INDRANI DUTTA

KOLKATA: The Centre is planning to amend the Plantation Labour Act (PLA), 1951 in a major way to exclude 'in-kind' components being regarded as wages.

It may be mentioned here that under the PLA 1951, plantation workers get various benefits either subsidised or free. These included rations, housing, education, firewood and medical facilities.

Accordingly, a large section of the mainstream tea industry bears the cost of providing these services. The industry does not pay statutory minimum wages, saying that the monetised value of the facilities provided compensates for this.

Daily pay-out

The tea industry, which is the largest among the plantation sectors (which includes coffee, rubber and spices), pays ₹137 in cash in Assam and ₹132 in West Bengal, with the industry maintaining that taken with the value of the 'perks', the daily-payout stands between ₹272 and ₹284.

In 2014, Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had come down hard on the tea industry for not paying minimum wages.

The proposed amendment is now seeking to "exclude from the definition of wage the in-kind benefits that were being hitherto in-

cluded," an industry source told *The Hindu*.

The Central and State governments rolled out a clutch of social sector schemes which can be implemented in the tea estates. This, they felt, would obviate the need for the industry to extend these benefits. The Centre now wants the plantation industry to share this cost with the government under the amended PLA.

Responding to these proposed changes, Azam Monem, chairman of the Consultative Committee of Plantation Associations (CCPA), told *The Hindu* that it was good that the PLA had been brought to the discussion table.

The Indian industry had long been saying that PLA puts them at a cost-disadvantage vis-a-vis international rivals. A 2009 Report of a Committee on the Cost Competitiveness of India Tea Industry, too had pointed out that the PLA had added to production costs and lowered competitiveness. Bijoy Gopal Chakraborty, Chairman of the Confederation of Small Tea Growers (part of whom are under PLA) said that any additional burden would kill the small growers-cum-owner segment.

"We are happy that the Centre is now discussing the PLA, but we will send in our comments by January 20 to propose that the changes are looked at from the employers' view point too."

Teletcast schedule
Chennai Open: Sony Six & Sony Six HD, 5 p.m.; **FA Cup:** Sony ESPN & Sony ESPN HD, 6 p.m. & 11 p.m.; **PBL:** STAR Sports 1, 3 & HD 1 & 3, 7 p.m.; **PWL:** Sony ESPN, 7 p.m.; **La Liga:** Sony Six & Sony Six HD, 8.30 p.m., 11 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Sunday); **Serie A:** Sony ESPN & Sony ESPN HD, 1.30 a.m. (Sunday); **NBA:** Sony Six & Sony Six HD, 5.30 a.m. (Sunday)

Always my captain
Thanks for always being the leader a youngster wants to have around him. You'll always be my captain @msdhoni Bhai — Kohli's tribute to Dhoni on Twitter

Award for Mahrez
Algeria forward Riyad Mahrez was voted African Footballer-of-the-Year after he inspired Leicester City to the English Premier League title last season.

Chelsea to China
Nigeria captain John Obi Mikel announced on Friday he was leaving English Premier League club Chelsea to join Chinese side Tianjin TEDA.

'Last opportunity' for Dhawan

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI: With Rohit Sharma yet to recover from a thigh injury, the selectors have decided to give Shikhar Dhawan another chance.
The Hindu understands that the committee spent some time discussing whether to look for a new opener before giving the left-hander 'one last opportunity' for the ODIs.
Ajinkya Rahane, who missed the last two Tests against England owing to injury, is also back. His and Yuvraj's inclusion could mean that either Manish Pandey or Kedar Jadhav could be out of the XI.
Rahane (Mumbai) will miss the Ranji Trophy final as he will don India-A colours for the warm-up game against England on Jan. 12.
The final will be held in Indore from Jan. 10 to 14.

The schedule
• Jan. 15: First ODI (Pune);
Jan. 19: Second ODI (Cuttack);
Jan. 22: Third ODI (Kolkata)
• Jan. 26: First T20 (Kanpur);
Jan. 29: Second T20 (Nagpur);
Feb. 1: Second T20 (Bengaluru)

Dhoni to play ODIs, T20Is under Kohli

CRICKET / Yuvraj and Hardik Pandya earn their spots in both formats against England

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI: M.S. Dhoni will play under Virat Kohli's captaincy in the India ODI and T20 teams during the upcoming series against England.
Yuvraj Singh's form in domestic cricket earned him the selectors' nod in both formats against the visitors.
Hardik Pandya figures in both squads after satisfying selectors about his fitness, following extensive tests at the National Cricket Academy.
Ashish Nehra is named in the T20 team and one warm-up game against the touring side.
Ajinkya Rahane will lead India A in the next match, where Rishabh Pant is the specialist wicketkeeper and Dhoni is a notable exclusion.
National selection committee chairman M.S.K. Prasad said Kohli was in touch via Skype with the senior selectors, assembled at the Cricket Centre, here, before the

teams were finalised.
The squads:
India ODI: Virat Kohli (capt), K.L. Rahul, Shikhar Dhawan, M.S. Dhoni, Manish Pandey, Kedhar Jadhav, Yuvraj Singh, Ajinkya Rahane, Hardik Pandya, R. Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Amit Mishra, Jasprit Bumrah, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Umesh Yadav.
India T20: Virat Kohli (capt), K.L. Rahul, Mandeep Singh, M.S. Dhoni, Suresh Raina, Rishabh Pant, Yuvraj Singh, Yuzvendra Chahal, Hardik Pandya, R. Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Jasprit Bumrah, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Manish Pandey and Ashish Nehra.
India-A (first warm-up game): M.S. Dhoni (capt), Shikhar Dhawan, Mandeep Singh, Ambati Rayudu, Yuvraj Singh, Hardik Pandya, Sanju Samson, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Ashish Nehra, Mohit Sharma and Siddarth Kaul.
India-A (second warm-up game): Ajinkya Rahane (capt), Rishabh Pant, Suresh Raina, Deepak Hooda, Ishank Jaggi, Sheldon Jackson, Vijay Shankar, Shabaz Nadeem, Parvez Rasool, Vinay Kumar, Pradeep Sangwan and Ashoke Dinda.



BACK IN THE MIX: Yuvraj Singh has been rewarded with the selectors' nod following loads of runs in the Ranji Trophy and new limited-over skipper Virat Kohli will hope the southpaw's fine form continues on the big stage. — FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

High drama ahead of selectors' meeting

G. VISWANATH
MUMBAI: The selection of two India-A teams for the warm-up matches against England and the Indian team for three ODIs and three T20Is was delayed by almost three hours in order to obtain clarity from the Justice Lodha committee as to whether BCCI CEO Rahul Johri has the right to convene the senior and junior national selection committee meetings.
While BCCI joint secretary Amitabh Choudhary had convened the junior selection committee to pick the India U-19 probables for the series against England U-19 team, Johri had convened the senior national selection committee meeting.
On Friday afternoon, Johri called the senior and junior selection committees and read out the e-mail received from Gopal Sankaranarayanan, secretary to the Justice Lodha committee. "Johri was good. He read out the mail saying that the selection committee (convened by the selection committee) can take place. There was a representative of attorney Amarchand Mangaldas, who explained in detail all that the selectors had to know," said a person who was following the developments from close quarters.
Sources revealed that officials thrown out of the BCCI contacted certain selectors and asked them to find out if the person who had convened the meeting had seen and understood the Supreme Court order and had the right to convene it.
The Supreme Court order of Jan. 2, 2017, had disqualified Anurag Thakur and Ajay Shirke as the president and secretary of the BCCI because they had proved to be impediments to the implementation of the reforms in cricket recommendations and stated that the senior most vice-president and its secretary would discharge their duties, provided they do not fall under certain restrictions put in place by the Lodha committee recommendations.
Choudhary's contention
BCCI jt. secretary Amitabh Choudhary believed that only he had the right to convene the meeting and that Johri did not.
Talking to *The Hindu*, Choudhary said: "The order of the Supreme Court is paramount. By its order, I was supposed to be discharging the duties of the secretary. I have completed nine years in Jharkhand, not even three years in the BCCI. So I asked the CEO not to go ahead with the meeting. But he has gone ahead. So I will go back home or wherever."

MSD is a natural captain: Prasad

NANDAKUMAR MARAK
MUMBAI: M.S.K. Prasad, chairman of the senior selection committee, evaded questions about the 'logistical reason' for the delay in team selection for the series against England.
Friday's assembly of senior and junior selectors at the Cricket Centre was the first meeting after the Supreme Court ruling left the Board without key officials, including president Anurag Thakur and secretary Ajay Shirke. Prasad clarified that the Rahul Johri, the BCCI CEO, was the convener.
Excerpts:
On burdening Dhoni with India-A captaincy
He is the best guy to look after the youngsters. We know what Mahi does. It is not about him stepping down or anything like that. He is a captain by nature; he leads from the front. Dhoni went to Zimbabwe also for the same reason and that is why he is named India-A captain.
On whether Virat Kohli was in



me, since I was there, that it was time to move on.
On the selectors' faith in Yuvraj Singh for the shorter formats
We should appreciate the way Yuvraj has played in the domestic circuit. All these days, we felt he has not played those long innings. In fact, he played some fantastic knocks, scored a double hundred, then he got runs on a dicey wicket at Lahl.
On the decision to include players with fitness issues (like Hardik Pandya, Ajinkya Rahane, Ashish Nehra)
They have come through extensive fitness tests at the NCA and that is the reason we are making them play in the practice games. We have gone through all the records and performances in domestic cricket, before deciding the teams. The selectors have tried their best to pick the best possible squads. Wicket-keeping is a thankless job, so is selection. The effort by this group of selectors should be appreciated.

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Fearless and frightening — look out for Pant

VIJAY LOKAPALLY
NEW DELHI: His firm handshake gives an indication of the power he boasts of.
It's more than firm, with a sense of confidence. It is the ability to express his game in the way he loves that sets Rishabh Pant apart.
His aggression at the crease is a nightmare for bowlers. "Crushing," says Delhi coach K.P. Bhaskar, who mentored Pant this season. "I have not seen anyone hit the ball so hard and so far. Rishabh has the uncanny knack of hitting good balls out of the park," said Bhaskar.
Steady in technique, Pant is evolving as a batsman, constantly improving and improvising his stroke-play. It is not easy because the opposition scrutinises your strong points and exploits the weaknesses.
"I think he is a step ahead of the bowler. He can read the situation and adapt without losing time. What I like most about Rishabh is that he is

fearless," noted coach Tarak Sinha, who spotted and propelled the youngster from Roorkee into international reckoning.
Hard work has been his forte. His awesome talent can break the opposition because his range of shots can be exasperating for the trying bowler. His batting has frills. And Pant loves it.
"His bat-speed can be frightening. The impact that his bat makes on the ball is the difference between Rishabh and the rest. His brilliant body balance and hunger for runs makes him such an exciting batsman to watch," avers Bhaskar.
Sinha, and Sonnet Club assistant coach Davendar Sharma, ensured Pant stayed focused. "His discipline is his strongest point," said Davendar.
That Pant was on the selectors' radar was known. As National selection committee chairman M.S.K. Prasad observed, "We have looked at



EXPLOSIVE: The young Rishabh Pant has the talent and range of shots to take the fight into the opponent's camp. — FILE PHOTO

longer format with time and he will get proper opportunities to achieve his best," noted Prasad.
"My only worry is he should not get carried away with his ability to play a wide range of shots," cautions Bhaskar. "He won't. I'll ensure that," assures Sinha.
A bright future beckons Pant as he takes his first steps in the fiercely competitive world of international cricket.
Englishmen arrive
MUMBAI: The Eoin Morgan-led England team arrived here on Friday for a three-match ODI series and as well T20Is. The side will have a practice session at the Brabourne Stadium, Cricket Club of India, on Sunday.
The visitors will start the tour with two warm-up games against India-A at the Brabourne Stadium on January 10 and 12 before travelling to Pune for the first ODI on Jan. 15. — Special Correspondent

I have contributed to the team scaling heights, says Ashwin

K.C. VIJAYA KUMAR
CHENNAI: Fresh from a rousing 2016 which culminated in him winning two ICC awards — Cricketer of the Year and Test Cricketer of the Year — R. Ashwin admitted to a touch of emotion over his success and also highlighted the tipping point that shaped his journey.
India's lead spinner reflected upon the Adelaide Test in December 2014. Ashwin was benched as skipper Virat Kohli plumped for leg-spinner Karn Sharma.
In a refreshing take on his then piquant situation, Ashwin looked inwards rather than apportion blame to others.
"In hindsight, it was a kick down my backside to tell me that I was not good enough," he candidly said at a press conference at Crowne Plaza here on Friday afternoon. That bout of introspection steeled Ashwin, and the rest is history.
The media interaction was

about announcing his signing up with ITW Blitz, a global talent management company, which will handle his endorsements besides finding synergies with his Gen-Next Academy and the R. Ashwin Foundation. Ashwin also spoke at length about cricketing matters.
Excerpts
Awards galore: The ICC Awards were the capping of a wonderful year or two for me. I have had two years of 50-plus wickets now. I also have contributed in a big fashion to the team scaling heights.
A mirror to the self: In 2014, what panned out (being dropped) in Adelaide was a shock for me. Probably, I had to look within myself. In that match in Adelaide, I gave myself this particular statement: "Change and improvement are directly proportional; one cannot exist or happen without the other."
An academy and a foundation: Back in 2010, I



FREEWHEELING: R. Ashwin was candid on many topics, cricketing or otherwise, during a media interaction in Chennai on Friday. — PHOTO: V. GANESAN

grammes across the world. Those are the partnerships that we discussed about (with ITW Blitz). Today is the day we launch the Ashwin Foundation. We are touching lives through eye donations. I am not a man for money.
A recap and a look-ahead: I didn't set any goals for 2016, apart from the fact that I wanted to be the most valuable player in the team and try and make sure that the team wins.
The only regret I have is lack of family time. Going into 2017 that will be an even bigger challenge.
Process is very important. Having a clear-cut plan, to execute those plans in the nets and be ready for the next day, and for the body to bowl those 30 to 40 overs, in a day or an innings, those are the things I am preparing for.
Dhoni's legacy: He has had an illustrious career as captain. I feel the question of will there be anyone to take

forward the Indian team in itself is wrong. Definitely someone will emerge, and Virat Kohli is no way lesser in captaincy and his Test records in the last year were very good. Can someone achieve what Dhoni has done? Well, it will be a Herculean task.
Wielding the willow: Sanjay Bangar (batting coach) has been very influential. I have another unconventional coach in Mr. Srinivasan, who works at my academy. Before every series, we tried to replicate all the bowlers in the opposite ranks.
Before the New Zealand series we replicated Trent Boult's left-arm over, but we missed out on his left-arm around and which was exactly how I got dismissed in Kanpur! It's a work in progress, we do different match scenarios. It's worked like magic so far.
Best phase as a bowler? It is one of the best phases, but wouldn't say this is the best. The best times could be ahead.

Pushing for a clean sweep

SYDNEY: David Warner clubbed the second fastest half-century in Test history to help fire Australia to the verge of a 3-0 series sweep over Pakistan at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Friday.
The tourists were 55 for one at close of play on the rain-disrupted fourth day of the third

Test, still 410 runs short of its unlikely victory target of 465.
In-form opener Azhar Ali (11) and night-watchman Yasir Shah (three) were at the crease at stumps after debutant Sharjeel Khan had chipped the ball to Warner at midwicket for 40 off spinner Nathan Lyon. — Reuters

SCOREBOARD

Australia — 1st innings: 538 for eight decl.
Pakistan — 1st innings: Azhar Ali run out 71, Sharjeel Khan c Renshaw b Hazlewood 4, Babar Azam lbw b Hazlewood 0, Younis Khan (not out) 175, Misbah-ul-Haq c sub b Lyon 18, Asad Shafiq c Smith b O'Keefe 4, Sarfarz Ahmed c sub b Starc 18, Mohammad Amir c Warner b Lyon 4, Wahab Riaz b Lyon 8, Yasir Shah c Smith b Hazlewood 10, Imran Khan b Hazlewood 0; Extras (b-3); Total (in 110.3 overs): 315.
Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-6, 3-152, 4-178, 5-197, 6-239, 7-244, 8-264, 9-315.
Australia bowling: Starc 26-7-77-1, Hazlewood 27-3-7-55-4, O'Keefe 20-3-50-1, Lyon 33-3-115-3, Cartwright 4-0-15-0.
Australia — 2nd innings: D. Warner b Wahab 55, U. Khawaja (not out) 79, S. Smith c Sarfarz b Yasir 59, P. Handscomb (not out) 40; Extras (b-3, lb-3, w-1, nb-1); 8; Total (for two wks. decl. in 32 overs): 241.
Fall of wickets: 1-71, 2-174.
Pakistan bowling: Imran 6-2-43-0, Yasir 14-0-124-1, Wahab 7-0-28-1, Azhar 5-0-40-0.
Pakistan — 2nd innings: Azhar Ali (batting) 11, Sharjeel Khan c Warner b Lyon 40, Yasir Shah (batting) 3; Extras (nb-1); Total (for one wk. in 16 overs): 55.
Fall of wicket: 1-51.
Australia bowling: Starc 4-0-18-0, Hazlewood 5-1-8-0, Lyon 5-0-27-1, O'Keefe 2-1-2-0.

Prannoy's win clinches it for Rockets



Mumbai Rockets's H.S. Prannoy fires in a return. — PHOTO: RAJEEV BHATT

RAKESH RAO
LUCKNOW: Notwithstanding Saina Nehwal's morale-boosting victory over in-form World No. 3 Sung Ji-Hyun 12-10, 4-11, 11-5 in 39 minutes, Mumbai Rockets stopped Awadhe Warriors 4-3 in a battle involving the two top teams of the Premier Badminton League here.
Once H.S. Prannoy won his 'trump' match against Wing Ki Vincent Wong to give Rockets a winning lead, Warriors salvaged two points from their 'trump' match, the mixed doubles.
For the record, after three outings each, Awadhe continued to lead the table with 14 match-points, with Mumbai — the only unbeaten team so far in the six-team league — second at 12.
Sung, in the form of her career, entered the match trailing 1-6 in head-to-head results

against Saina. The Indian carried the psychological advantage into this encounter as she battled from being 9-10 down to take the opening game.
But Sung did not take long to draw level. She jumped to 10-3 after winning four straight points and eventually converted her second game-point.
In the decider, Saina gave it her all, much to the joy of a vociferous and partisan crowd. Down 2-3 she took four points in succession to stay ahead at the mid-game interval. She returned to stretch the lead to 8-3.
Though the six-point sequence snapped, Saina was not to be denied on this day. She reached match-point when Sung netted following a long rally. Saina went on to convert the first of the five match-points when Sung sent the shuttle out.

In a match involving the top two Indians in world rankings, Ajay Jayaram surprised K. Srikanth after saving three match-points in the second game.
In a thrilling contest that set the pace for an exciting evening, previously unbeaten men's combinations Puangpuapech and V. Shem Goh-Markis Kido 11-7, 3-11, 13-11; Ajay Jayaram bt K. Srikanth 5-11, 15-14, 11-5; Sung Ji-hyun lost to Saina Nehwal 10-12, 11-4, 5-11; (T) H.S. Prannoy bt Wing Ki Vincent Wong 14-12, 9-11, 11-8; Nipitphon Puangpuapech and Nadiezda Zieba lost to (T) Savitree Amitrapal and Bodin Isara 8-11, 4-11.

BASKETBALL
Railways makes a last-minute entrance

K. KEERTHIVASAN
PUDUCHERRY: For the first time in several decades, the senior National basketball championships to be held here from January 7 to 14 will be without the Services men's team, which has won the title a whopping 29 times.
On the other hand, the Indian Railways teams (men & women) will take part in the Nationals. The decision was taken by the Basketball Federation of India (BFI) late on Friday.
BFI secretary Chander Mukhi Sharma took the call after reading the explanatory mail sent by the Railways Sports Promotion Board (RSPB).
"We had been in touch with the BFI. We did raise a lot of issues. The BFI has been gracious in allowing us to participate. We are very happy," RSPB secretary Rekha Yadav told *The Hindu*.
Even a couple of days back, BFI had requested the respective Sports Promotion Boards of Services and Railways to release the players for the senior Nationals provided they agree to pay the affiliation fees with penalty & arrears) to BFI after the Government of India recognises it and assure BFI that they would not take part in prize money tournaments not recognised by BFI, among other things.
Railways sources said there had been a miscommunication with BFI as the latter had not seen the reply sent to the president's (BFI) personal mail.
By that extension, Services, too, should be allowed to take part. However, Sharma said to *The Hindu*, "Services has not

addressed the issues which we wanted them to."
With funds from IMG Reliance not forthcoming since 2015, the Managing Director of Arise Steel, Aadhav Arjuna, who was roped in as the chairman of Pondicherry Basketball Association last year, has come forward to sponsor the tournament, much to the relief of BFI.
With fog affecting several parts of Northern India, teams such as Chandigarh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Delhi, UP, Haryana & Himachal Pradesh (all men & women), Uttarakhand (women) will be arriving (by train) in Chennai only on Saturday morning.
The future of some of the banned players, who took part in the "unauthorised" third edition of the UBA pro basketball league is likely to be discussed at the BFI AGM on January 14.



Chhattisgarh's Poonam Chaturvedi. — PHOTO: S.S. KUMAR

I-League to kick off under a giant cloud of uncertainty

FOOTBALL / East Bengal to meet Aizawl in opener

SHREEDUTTA CHIDANANDA

BENGALURU: The only thing he was certain of, Thangboi Singto said, was that his side was playing Bengaluru FC at 7 p.m. the next day.

The longer-term future of the I-League, the Shillong Lajong head coach noted with a smile, was far less clear to him. "I'm not the right person in the right place to talk about Indian football at the moment," he said here on Friday. "We are a big country and many surprises are always in store for us."

It is under a giant cloud of uncertainty that the tenth edition of the I-League begins on Saturday. This could well be the last time the competition is seen in its current avatar, before a merger of some sort with the Indian Super League. The shadow of this proposed union lingers over the I-League, but it does not dim the excitement around a new season of football.

East Bengal and Aizawl FC will meet in Barasat in the season's first game, ahead of Lajong's clash with BFC at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here.

BFC starts favourite

The reigning champion is one of the favourites for the title again, after its historic run to the final of the AFC Cup under Albert Roca.

New-look East Bengal sets sights on title

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: The memory of the last triumph in the country's topmost club league fading, East Bengal will look to give its best in the 10th edition of the I-League when it meets Aizawl FC at the Vidyasagar Stadium, Barasat on Saturday.

The 97-year-old club won three titles in the erstwhile National Football League before it was rechristened as the I-League a decade ago.

East Bengal has redrafted Englishman Trevor Morgan after a break of two seasons.

GENERAL

AICS seeks increase in sports budget

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

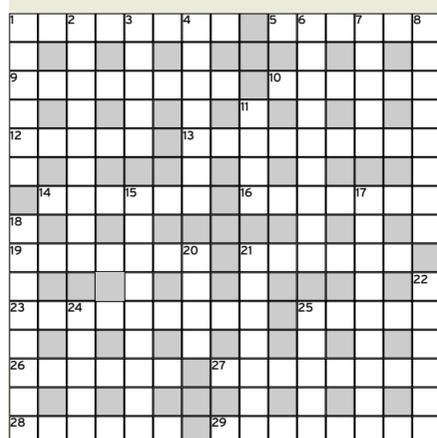
NEW DELHI: With a view to kick-start India's ambitious long-term sports development programme, the All India Council of Sports (AICS) has sought a huge increase in the country's sports budget.

While no specific amount was mentioned, AICF president Vijay Kumar Malhotra said the fourth meeting of the AICS, held here on Friday, decided to seek recognition for sports as a priority sector for development, targeting the next three Olympics from 2020 to 2028.

VARIETY

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 11898

(set by Lightning)



- Engineer left out negligent stroke (6)
- Keep up-to-date moving ahead in English city (9)
- Rip expression of silence by communist (5)
- First lady endlessly in delight with raise (7)
- Passes open sake cocktail (9)
- Old country characters in

- Perambur, Madras (5)
- Messed around flying new red kite (8)
- Indian vegetable in Chinese desert? (4)
- One in a satellite moving unto a star (9)
- First one caught in window support had to swing (9)

- Container where one can store (not old) mixture (8)
- Caught animal without fight (6)
- Paid charge to cut grass (8)
- Say you are breaking gas sensor (6)
- Put up stall (5)
- Turn 180 degrees from cafe (5,4)
- Relaxed by a joke (2,4)

ACROSS

DOWN

- Relaxed manner - it is needed to make a call (4,4)
- Relative missing Japan in short trip (4)
- Spoil resolve in grand duel (7)
- Joins logs (6)
- Tree with mega fruit gutted (5)
- Gent with choice to get posh house (5)

Lajong will seek to do better than the sixth place it managed last season, while DSK Shivajians, with a refurbished squad, will have greater ambitions.

10 teams

There are 10 teams now, with Punjab and Tamil Nadu represented in the league after a long time. "We keep on speaking about a pan-Indian league. It's great if you can spread out to every nook and corner of the country. Indian players will benefit," felt Singto.

Minerva Punjab FC, with the former AIFF Youth Development head coach Colm Toal as Technical Director, becomes the first side from that part of the country since JCT's exit from the I-League in 2011. The addition of Chennai City FC is a welcome one too; not since Indian Bank competed in the old NFL over a decade ago has Chennai seen top-tier football.

The experience of Dharmaraj Ramanan, Dhanpal Ganesh and Zakeer Mundampara should hold the team, keen on promoting local talent, in good stead.

Churchill Brothers, the only Goan club, and Aizawl FC, coached by the fiery Khalid Jamil, could struggle. What will worry them is not just that they could be relegated, but where they could be relegated to.

Bagan-Churchill match shifted to Barasat

KOLKATA: Mohun Bagan's opening I-League match against Churchill Brothers FC, which was originally scheduled to be held at the Rabindra Sarobar Stadium on Sunday, has been shifted to the Vidyasagar Stadium (Barasat) after the organisers failed to secure permission from the National Green Tribunal.

With Rabindra Sarobar being in a notified eco-sensitive zone, clearance from the Tribunal was necessary. The match date and time remains unchanged, according to a release from Bagan. — Special Correspondent

Bhutia for 'one state one unit'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA: Former India football captain Bhaichung Bhutia has backed the idea of one unit representing one State in a National sports federation.

In the context of the Justice Lodha Committee recommending 'one State one unit' for the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), Bhutia said it was ideal for the cricket body.

"As far as the football federation (AIFF) is concerned, I think the norms are more or less fulfilled. Every State has got one State (represented by) one unit, which is very important."

"Today BCCI has three units from Maharashtra and none from the northeast. Most

of the teams from the north-east cannot play Ranji Trophy which is very unfair," Bhutia told reporters during an interaction here on Friday.

Asked whether sports persons should get into sports administration, Bhutia, who is AIFC Technical, Coaching and Development Committee chairman, said, "Sports persons should come into administration. I have seen the administrative side. There are a lot of challenges involved with the administration of sports."

Talking about the I-League, starting on Saturday, Bhutia expressed happiness about the pan-India character of the event this year.

"There are teams from Aizawl, Chennai, Punjab and Ker-

Ice Glacier for Bangalore Oaks

BENGALURU: Ice Glacier, who is in fine fettle may score an encore in the Bangalore Oaks (2,400m), the chief event of the races to be held here on Saturday (Jan. 7).

False rails (width about 4.5m from 1,600m to the winning post) will be in position.

1 NATIVE CHIEFTAN PLATE (Div. II), (1,200m), rated 15 to 35, 5-y-o & over, 2-15 pm: 1. Flying Bullet (4) T.M. Prashanth 60, 2. Candice (9) Shobhan 59, 3. Scorching (8) Rayan Ahmed 58.5, 4. Atlantic City (2) A. Ramu 57.5, 5. Golden Friend (3) Nitin Singh 57.5, 6. Real Generous (7) Jagadeesh 57.5, 7. Arziki (12) Irvan Singh 56.5, 8. A Crown (5) Ramesh Kumar 56, 9. Perfect Queen (6) Md. Hesnain 56, 10. Just Fabulous (1) B. Harish 54.5, 11. Ignition (1) Arshad Alam 54 and 12. Shivalki Boy (10) T.S. Jodha 54.

1 Golden Friend, 2 Arziki, 3 Candice

2 RANGANATHITTU PLATE (1,400m), rated 15 to 35, 2-45: 1. Blazing Faith (4) Arshad Alam 60, 2. Ark Royal (5) Suraj Narredu 59.5, 3. Internal Affair (1) K. Raghu 58, 4. Trojan (1) Raja Rao 58, 5. Rock Steady (8) D. Patel 57.5, 6. Early Bird (2) A. Vishwanath 57, 7. Emancipation (6) M. Naveen 57, 8. Elegant Star (10) T.S. Jodha 56.5, 9. Jack Of Hearts (6) A. Imran

1 Bold Command, 2 Ace Bucephalus, 3 Coldstream

3 GREATER MUMBAI POLICE CUP (2,400m), Cl. IV, rated 20 to 46: **Winter Renaissance** (C.S. Jodha), 1. Rousseau (Neeraj) 2, Sovereigns (Zervan) 3 and Normandy (Sandesh) 4, 1. Sh. 3, 2m 33.76s. Rs. 105 (w), 19, 13 and 18 (p). SHP: Rs. 41, FP: Rs. 304, Q: Rs. 39. Tanala: Rs. 727 and Rs. 257. Favourite: Rousseau. Owners: M/s. D.R. Thacker & S.R. Sanas rep. Neel Light Agr & Bredg Pvt. Ltd., Mr. Tanmay A. Agashe rep. Reward Farming and Livestock Pvt. Ltd. & Mr. Siddharth D. Trainer: Intiaz Sait.

4 FERRARI PLATE (1,000m), rated 55 to 79: **Catalaya** (Santosh), 1. Queen Credible (C.S. Jodha) 2, Governor General (Sandesh) 3 and Golden Belle (S. Amitt) 4, 2. 3/4, 3/4, 58.87s. Rs. 28 (w), 17 and 14 (p). SHP: Rs. 35, FP: Rs. 43, Q: Rs. 17. Tanala: Rs. 55 and Rs. 31. Favourite: Queen Credible. Owners: Dr. Ram H. Shroff & Mr. Raj H. Shroff rep. Stride Livestock Pvt. Ltd. Trainer: M. Narredu.

5 INDIAN AIR FORCE TROPHY (1,000m), Cl. III, rated 40 to 66: **Incentio** (Daman), 1. Mizilla Gold (A. Gaikwad) 2, Bullion Express (Zeeshan) 3 and Wind Craft (T.S. Jodha) 4, 5. S. 3, 1/2, 59.52s. Rs. 176 (w), 32, 14 and 19 (p). SHP: Rs. 46, FP: Rs. 1212, Q: Rs. 1,449, Tanala: Rs. 1,561 and Rs. 2,223. Favourite: Phoenix Knight. Owners: Mr. Vijay V. Shah & Mrs. Pooja V. Shah rep. Vs Zaia Thoroughbred Racing & Breeding Pvt. Ltd. & Mr. Waahid Ali Khan, Trainer: Narendra Lagad.

6 ADVANTAGE PLATE (1,200m), Cl. V, rated 1 to 26: **Decan King** (Nadeem), 1. Super Bolt (Neeraj) 2, The Giver (A. Gaikwad) 3 and Wildhorn (Parmar) 4, 1/2, 3, 1/2, 1m 13.34s. Rs. 109 (w), 27, 23 and 21 (p). SHP: Rs. 47, FP: Rs. 987, Q: Rs. 128. Tanala: Rs. 2,265 and Rs. 971. Favourite: Isinit. Owners: M/s. P. Srinivasa Reddy & H.J. Antia. Trainer: H.J. Antia.

7 BYCULLA CLUB TROPHY (2,800m), 4-y-o & over: **Booker Jones** (S. Zervan), 1. Rodeo (C.S. Jodha) 2, Severus (Sandesh) 3 and Al Shamsheer (Bhawani) 4, 5. Sh. 3-1/4, Dist. 3m 01.79s. Rs. 28 (w), 12 and 11 (p). SHP: Rs. 22, FP: Rs. 100, Q: Rs. 22. Tanala: Rs. 71 and Rs. 18. Favourite: Severus. Owners: Mr. Rienzie M.K. Edwards & Mrs. P.P.M. Edwards. Trainer: S.S. Attaollahi.

Jackpot: 70 per cent: Rs. 4,10,606 (carried forward) and 30 per cent: Rs. 58,658 (3 tkts.).

Treble: Rs. 13,306 (2 tkts.). Super Jackpot: Rs. 33,437 (carried forward).

Rockets prevail

HOUSTON: Houston Rockets eked out a 118-116 win over Oklahoma City Thunder in the NBA here on Thursday night.

The results: Portland 118 bt LA Lakers 109; San Antonio 127 bt Denver 99; Phoenix 102 bt Dallas 95; Atlanta 99 bt New Orleans 94.

Houston 118 bt Oklahoma City 116; Toronto Raptors 101 bt Utah Jazz 93; Detroit 115 bt Charlotte 114; Indiana Pacers 121 bt Brooklyn Nets 109. — Reuters

ala. For the first time teams from maximum parts of India are taking part. It is good because football is reaching out to more places."

Bhutia was saddened to note that well-known Goan clubs Dempo and Salgaocar FC were not part of the current I-League season.

According to Bhutia, for its present form and combination, Bengaluru FC was the favourite to win the I-League.

"In terms of players and team, Bengaluru is the best. They have played the AFC Cup final and the players are more or less the same. Not much changes in the squad and they are a set team... For me East Bengal, Mohun Bagan and Bengaluru FC are the front-runners," said Bhutia.

Khan 56.5, 10. Happy Dancing (9) Md. Hesnain 56, 11. Ira (3) Mark 56 and 12. Rocket Man (7) A. Ramu 51.

1 Ark Royal, 2 Emancipation, 3 Rocket Man

3 MADRAS AUCTION SALE TROPHY (1,200m), maiden 3-y-o only, (Terms), 3-15: 1. Botswana Bolt (8) Irvan Singh 55, 3. Lawrence Of Arabia (1) David Alan 55, 4. Lord Buckingham (3) Cedric Segeon 55, 5. Master Of War (7) Jagadeesh 55, 6. Mulholland (6) Zervan 55, 7. Parting Shot (5) Sahanawaz 55, 8. Rum Runner (4) T.S. Jodha 55, 9. Astrild (1) R. Pradeep 53.5, 10. Golden Opinion (2) Sunil Samson 53.5, 11. Miniver Rose (9) P.P. Dhebe 53.5 and 12. River Angel (12) P.S. Chouhan 53.5.

1 Botswana Bolt, 2 Lawrence Of Arabia, 3 Lord Buckingham

4 NEW YEAR CUP (1,400m), 4-y-o & over, (Terms), 3-45: 1. Bold Command (9) Srinath 60, 2. Shivalki Star (6) Jagadeesh 59, 3. Auriga (5) Cedric Segeon 58, 4. Ace Bucephalus (4) Suraj Narredu 56.5, 5. Apache (2) Neeraj 56.5, 6. Coldstream (1) David Alan 56.5, 7. Calico Jack (3) T.S. Jodha 55.5, 8. Mickey Mouse (8) Arshad Alam 55.5 and 9. Sea Fahey (7) Zervan 54.

1 Bold Command, 2 Ace Bucephalus, 3 Coldstream

5 BANGALORE OAKS (2,400m), 4-y-o, fillies, (Terms), 4-15: 1. Adulation (5) Cedric Segeon 57, 2. Geranium (6) Neeraj 57, 3. Ice Glacier (1) David Allan 57, 4. Kristine (—) (—) 57, 5. Queen Of Windsor (7) P.S. Chouhan 57, 6. Star Nijinsky (2) Srinath 57, 7. Talladega (3) Suraj Narredu 57 and 8. Watchmyscript (4) Zervan 57.

1 Ice Glacier, 2 Watchmyscript, 3 Star Nijinsky

6 MALPE PLATE (1,400m), rated 60 & above, 4-45: 1. Dubai One (8) P. Surya 60, 2. Bonfire (3) Rayan Ahmed 57, 3. Super Success (5) Darshan 57, 4. Arcea Wonder (9) Srinath 56.5, 5. Force Ensign (1) Cedric Segeon 55.5, 6. Zuchero (10) Janardhan P 55.5, 7. Fabulous Touch (6) P.S. Chouhan 54, 8. Rafa (4) T.S. Jodha 52.5, 9. Secret Dimension (2) Irvan Singh 52, 10. Sionhan (7) Zervan 52, 11. Cool Baby (12) Jagadeesh 51 and 12. Native Elements (11) Arshad Alam 50.

1 R. R. Arcea Wonder, 3 Fabulous Touch

7 NATIVE CHIEFTAN PLATE (Div. I), (1,200m), rated 15 to 35, 5-y-o & over, 5-15: 1. Diamond Green (6) Srinath 60, 2. Indian Brahmos (2) Nitin Singh 60, 3. Danburite (10) Praveen Shinde

FP: Rs. 1,212, Q: Rs. 1,449, Tanala: Rs. 1,561 and Rs. 2,223. Favourite: Phoenix Knight. Owners: Mr. Vijay V. Shah & Mrs. Pooja V. Shah rep. Vs Zaia Thoroughbred Racing & Breeding Pvt. Ltd. & Mr. Waahid Ali Khan, Trainer: Narendra Lagad.

8 KANCHANAGANGA PLATE (1,400m), rated 30 to 50, 5-y-o & over, 5-45: 1. Expert (12) S. Imran 60, 2. Golden Diamond (2) S. Shiva Kumar 60, 3. I've Got Clout (6) T.S. Jodha 59, 4. China One (10) Srinath 58.5, 5. Desert Gilt (4) Nazerul Alam 58.5, 6. Possimpossible (5) Suraj Narredu 57.5, 7. Able Master (7) Darshan 56, 8. Leon (3) R. Pradeep 56, 9. Why Should I (8) Md. Hesnain 54.5, 10. Fotogenic (11) P.P. Dhebe 54, 11. Croziert (1) Praveen Shinde 53.5 and 12. Game Guy (9) Raja Rao 53.5.

1 Possimpossible, 2 Fotogenic, 3 China One

Day's best: **Ice Glacier**

Double: **Ark Royal** — Possimpossible

Jkt: 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8; Tr: (i): 3, 4 and 5; (ii): 6, 7 and 8.

CRICKET

Kiwis clinch series

MOUNT MAUNGANUI (NEW ZEALAND): Colin Munro produced a masterclass of controlled aggression to smash 101 off 54 balls as New Zealand coasted to a 47-run win in the second Twenty20 International against Bangladesh on Friday.

The comprehensive victory here gave New Zealand an unbeatable 2-0 lead in the three-match series, and follows its 3-0 sweep of the 50-over matches.

With Munro in sublime form, hitting seven 6s and as

many fours in his whirlwind innings, New Zealand posted a daunting 195 for seven.

Bangladesh in reply was all out for 148 in the 19th over. Sabbir Rahman and Soumya Sarkar made a bold attempt to run down the target after Bangladesh slumped to 36 for three in the fifth over.

The pair piled on 68 off 40 deliveries, including 21 off a Colin de Grandhomme over before a spectacular collapse in which seven wickets fell for 44 runs. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

New Zealand: M. Ronchi c Mosaddek Hossain b Mashrafe Mortaza 0, K. Williamson c Tamim Iqbal b Shakib Al Hasan 12, C. Munro c Nurul Hasan b Rubel Hossain 101, C. Anderson b Mosaddek Hossain 4, T. Bruce (not out) 59, C. de Grandhomme b Rubel Hossain 2, J. Neesham b Rubel Hossain 5, M. Santner run out 4, B. Wheeler (not out) 0; Extras (lb-4, w-3, nb-1): 8; Total (for seven wkts. in 20 overs): 195.

Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-42, 3-46, 4-169, 5-171, 6-190, 7-194.

Bangladesh bowling: Mashrafe 4-0-38-1, Rubel 4-0-37-3, Mustafizur 4-0-30-0, Shakib 4-0-32-1, Mosaddek 2-0-22-1, Mahmudullah 2-0-32-0.

Bangladesh: Tamim Iqbal run out 13, Imrul Kayes c Bruce b Santner 0, Sabbir Rahman c Boulton b Sodhi 48,

Shakib Al Hasan c Neesham b Wheeler 1, Soumya Sarkar c Munro b Boulton 39, Mahmudullah c de Grandhomme b Sodhi 19, Mosaddek Hossain c Santner b Williamson 1, Nurul Hasan c Boulton b Williamson 10, Mashrafe c Boulton b Sodhi 1, Rubul Hossain c Bruce b Wheeler 1, Mustafizur Rahman (not out) 0; Extras (lb-5, w-10): 15; Total (in 18.1 overs): 148.

Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-34, 3-36, 4-104, 5-118, 6-121, 7-144, 8-147, 9-147.

New Zealand bowling: Santner 3-0-14-1, Boulton 3-0-28-1, Wheeler 2-1-0-16-2, de Grandhomme 2-0-33-0, Sodhi 4-0-36-3, Williamson 4-0-16-2.

Toss: Bangladesh.

Man-of-the-Match: C. Munro.

New Zealand won by 47 runs.

59, 4. Hidden Hero (8) Rayan Ahmed 59, 5. Cool Springs (11) Shobhan 58.5, 6. Luc Divine (1) Nazerul Alam 58.5, 7. Ramon (5) P. Ramesh 57.5, 8. Cardigan Bay (7) A. Ramu 56.5, 9. Man Of Law (12) Raja Rao 56.5, 10. Beauty Is Truth (3) Irvan Singh 56, 11. Feet On Fire (9) Arshad Alam 55.5 and 12. Repsol (4) M. Kumar 54.

1 Indian Brahmos, 2 Diamond Green, 3 Cool Springs

8 KANCHANAGANGA PLATE (1,400m), rated 30 to 50, 5-y-o & over, 5-45: 1. Expert (12) S. Imran 60, 2. Golden Diamond (2) S. Shiva Kumar 60, 3. I've Got Clout (6) T.S. Jodha 59, 4. China One (10) Srinath 58.5, 5. Desert Gilt (4) Nazerul Alam 58.5, 6. Possimpossible (5) Suraj Narredu 57.5, 7. Able Master (7) Darshan 56, 8. Leon (3) R. Pradeep 56, 9. Why Should I (8) Md. Hesnain 54.5, 10. Fotogenic (11) P.P. Dhebe 54, 11. Croziert (1) Praveen Shinde 53.5 and 12. Game Guy (9) Raja Rao 53.5.

1 Possimpossible, 2 Fotogenic, 3 China One

Day's best: **Ice Glacier**

Double: **Ark Royal** — Possimpossible

Jkt: 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8; Tr: (i): 3, 4 and 5; (ii): 6, 7 and 8.

Kashmiri youths for Spanish club

NEW DELHI: The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has helped two Kashmiri teenagers to play for a Spanish league football club as part of its civic outreach programme in the valley.

Basit Ahmed and Mohammed Asrar Renbar, both 18 years old, were selected by a panel of three professional footballers. "We have tied up with Sociedad Deportiva Lense and the third division club in the *La Liga* has agreed to engage the players on contract for the position of central forward and right-winger for the upcoming matches in January," said Zulfikar Hasan, Inspector General, CRPF (Kashmir). — Special Correspondent

Maharashtra wins a thriller

BENGALURU: Maharashtra edged out Mumbai, via the one-over eliminator, in the Elite Group A of the senior women's T20 tournament.

The scores: Railways 171 for two in 20 overs (Mithali Raj 69 n.o., Poonam Raut 68) bt Kerala 67 for seven in 20 overs (Poonam Yadav three for 15), Maharashtra 102 for four in 20 overs (Teja Hasabnis 30, Anuja Patil 28) bt Mumbai 102 for six in 20 overs (Jemimah Rodrigues 53).

One-over eliminator: Mumbai nine for no loss in one over; Maharashtra 12 for one in one over.

Andhra drubs TN

AGARTALA: E. Padmaja scalped three for six, and S. Meghana scored an unbeaten 38 as Andhra beat Tamil Nadu by 10 wickets in the Plate Group A match of the BCCI senior women's T20 league here.

The scores: Tamil Nadu 80 for nine in 17 overs (E. Padmaja three for six) lost to Andhra 81 for no loss in 11.4 overs (S. Meghana 38 n.o., N. Anusha 36 n.o.). — Sports Bureau

VERY BRIEFLY

Aditya Mehta and Ravi Goenka defeated Dharminder Lilly and Sunil Saraogi 70(56)-9, 61-47, 56-35 to win the Kolkata Open pro-am snooker event at the Bengal Rowing Club, Kolkata on Friday. In the semis, Lilly and Saraogi got past Pankaj Advani and Rajesh Tulsian 61-47, 19-63, 20-62, 68-47, 50-41.

FAITH

Cycle of creation

Sage Brighu asks his father about Brahman, and his father says Brahman is that from which everything emanates, by which everything is sustained and where everything finally reaches. What sustains us? One could answer that it is food, for without food we cannot live. So Brighu, initially thinks Brahman is food. Then he thinks prana vayu is the Supreme One; then he thinks manas is the Supreme One and so on, until He realises that Brahman is Ananda — bliss. In verse seven of chapter nine of the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna talks of the pralaya or deluge, said Valayapeta Ramachariar in a discourse. At the time of the deluge, all entities created by the Lord enter into Mulaprakriti. When the next cycle begins, the Supreme One again creates similar entities.

The atma is indestructible and therefore it is oblivious that it is not destroyed during the deluge. But the atmas which enter the Mulaprakriti cannot enjoy anything. That is because they have no body. Only during the deluge, the atma has no body. At all other times, the atma has a gross body (sthula sareera) or subtle body (sookshma sareera).

Bautista Agut makes the final four

Bedene crashes out; Purav Raja and Divij Sharan make the summit clash

N. SUDARSHAN

CHENNAI: On Thursday, second seed Roberto Bautista Agut, when asked about his impending match against Mikhail Youzhny, said, "I'll make him run, I'll put more and more balls in play. If he wants to win, he has to fight." However, for more than a set and a half, it was the Spaniard who was left high and dry, down a set and a break, and had to literally rise from the dead to beat Youzhny 2-6, 6-4, 6-4 and enter the semifinals of the Aircel Chennai Open on Friday.

From 1-4 down, Agut reeled off five consecutive games to even it at one set all. Then the final set played out as a microcosm of the preceding two with both players trading early breaks and then staving off break points before the capricious match finally settled in Agut's hands.

It also soothed many an exasperated spectator who, having mostly witnessed the familiar trope of a top seed reaching the business end, were staring at the possibility of having four unseeded players in the semi-

finals. Agut's opponent will now be Frenchman Benoit Paire, who handed a crushing 6-3, 6-0 defeat to Aljaz Bedene. The other semifinal will be between Dudi Sela, who beat third seed Albert Ramos-Vinolas, and Daniil Medvedev, who overcame qualifier Jozef Kovalik.

In fact, the first match of the day between Sela and Ramos-Vinolas showed how lightweight the draw had become in the absence of Borna Coric and Marin Cilic. Not necessarily in terms of the quality of tennis, but in the measure of familiarity for the fans. Sela was the semifinalist here in 2010. But much of the crowd was stationed at the outside courts cheering for Kovalik, the giant-killer. However Sela, the journeyman, went about his job in his typical unhurried manner.

All of 5-foot-9, he makes do with excellent court coverage what he lacks in power. Against the Spaniard he maximised this. Whenever pinned to a corner, he sliced and moon-balled into the far corners, giving himself the necessary time to get back to position.

It also helped that Ramos-Vinolas himself was no trigger-happy player choosing instead to construct points patiently. Sela served with great preci-

sion and his one-handed backhand was almost always successful whenever summoned.

Last-year semifinalist Paire was full of flair against a visibly-tired Bedene. The usual dose of maverick shots first started with a tweener, remarkably executed not with his back to his opponent but while facing him.

After breaking to go 3-1 up, his subsequent hold contained arguably four of the best points he has played all week. Two terrific drop shots, a whipped cross-court forehand, and an off-balance back-hand winner all in a single game pointed to his improved focus. In the second set, he was at his ruthless best conceding just six points on the way to a bagel.

Later Purav Raja and Divij Sharan entered the final with a convincing win over second seeds Guillermo Duran and Andres Molteni (Arg) 6-4, 6-2.

THE RESULTS

Quarterfinals: Dudi Sela (Isr) bt Albert Ramos-Vinolas (Esp) 7-5, 6-4; Daniil Medvedev (Rus) bt Jozef Kovalik (Svk) 6-1, 6-4; Benoit Paire (Fra) bt Aljaz Bedene (Gbr) 6-3, 6-0; Roberto Bautista Agut (Esp) bt Mikhail Youzhny (Rus) 2-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Doubles: Semifinals: Purav Raja & Divij Sharan bt Guillermo Duran & Andres Molteni (Arg) 6-4, 6-2.



EMPHATIC WIN: Purav Raja and Divij Sharan took out Argentine second seeds Guillermo Duran and Andres Molteni in straight sets to enter the final. — PHOTO: R. RAGU

Saturday's schedule

• **Centre court: Singles:** Daniil Medvedev (Rus) vs Dudi Sela (Isr); Benoit Paire (Fra) vs Roberto Bautista Agut (Esp).

• **Doubles:** Rohan Bopanna & Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan vs Nicholas Monroe (USA) & Artem Sitak (Nzl).

• 5 p.m. start

Djokovic rallies to enter final

DOHA: Novak Djokovic saved five match points before beating Fernando Verdasco 4-6, 7-6(7), 6-3 and entered the Qatar Open final on Friday.

Other results: At Doha: ATP Qatar Open: Quarterfinals: Andy Murray bt Nicolas Almagro 7-6(4), 7-5; Tomas Berdych bt Jo-Wilfried Tsonga 7-5, 6-3; Fernando Verdasco bt Ivo Karlovic 6-2, 7-5; Djokovic bt Radek Stepanek 6-3, 6-3.

At Brisbane: ATP/WTA Brisbane International: Men: Quarterfinals: Stan Wawrinka bt Kyle Edmund 6-7(2), 6-4, 6-4; Kei Nishikori bt Jordan Thompson 6-1, 6-1.

Women: Semifinals: Alize Cornet bt Garbine Muguruza 4-1 (ret); Karolina Pliskova bt Elina Svitolina 6-2, 6-4.

At Auckland: WTA Auckland Classic: Semifinals: Lauren Davis bt Jelena Ostapenko 4-6, 6-4, 4-1 ret.; Ana Konjuh bt Julia Goerges 6-3, 4-6, 6-3. — Agencies

Federer excels but France advances

PERTH: A singles masterclass from Swiss champion Roger Federer wasn't enough to stop the French pairing of Richard Gasquet and Kristina Mladenovic winning through to the Hopman Cup final on Friday.

Federer thrashed Gasquet in under an hour, but it was the French who won the tie 2-1.

The results: Germany bt Britain 2-1 (Andrea Petkovic lost to Heather Watson 6-2, 7-6(3); Alexander Zverev bt Dan Evans 6-4, 6-4; Petkovic & Zverev bt Watson & Evans 4-2, 4-2). **France bt Switzerland 2-1** (Richard Gasquet lost to Roger Federer 6-1, 6-4; Kristina Mladenovic bt Belinda Bencic 6-4, 2-6, 6-3; Mladenovic & Gasquet bt Bencic & Federer 4-2, 4-2). — AFP

Not today, Martin: tennis god tells Klizan

S. DIPAK RAGAV

CHENNAI: In the list of ATP's biggest match comebacks of 2016, Martin Klizan belongs to the very top. In Rotterdam last year, the Slovakian saved five match points against Roberto Bautista Agut and another three against Nicolas Mahut on his way to winning the tournament.

In both the matches, he lost the opening set in a tiebreaker before winning the second likewise. He was called the 'escape artist' after his exploits.

On Thursday, a similar script unfolded in his second round match against Aljaz Bedene but this time around, he failed to close out the third set and crashed out of the Chennai Open.



Martin Klizan...Philosophical. — PHOTO: AP

In an interesting post-match presser, Klizan got philosophical, invoking the tennis gods, and gave off the air of a man who has become circumspect in not wanting to offend the higher powers. "I would say I didn't deserve to win. From the end of last season, I didn't give a lot of time to practice

and haven't focused.

"The match showed that I could come back again but the tennis god said "No Martin, you are not going to win today, you don't deserve to," said Klizan.

Not jinxing it

Ask him about his target for the 2017 season, Klizan starts off like every other tennis player on the tour, saying "it is about just saying healthy" before adding, "maybe I shouldn't say it. Last year I said the same thing and I was out for half the year."

Klizan, seeded fourth and ranked 35th in the world, was the Slovakian expected to be in the last eight, but Jozef Kovalik stole his thunder on Wednesday, beating top-seed Marin

Cilic. Klizan spoke fondly of his compatriot and close friend Kovalik.

"I sent a message to him asking him to keep up the good work. He is my good friend from the tennis circuit and I am happy that he won, he is improving," he said.

The 27-year old who also plays second division floorball (a type of floor hockey with five field players and a goalkeeper in each team) said he is not fixated on rankings and just wants to have fun. "I don't care about my ranking. If I play good, I will be in a good position. But then the question is 'what is a good position for you, good for me or good for Novak Djokovic?' So I just want to enjoy the game and play tennis."

Assam has it easy

RAMANATHAPURAM: Assam Hockey blanked Hockey Gujarat in the 7th National sub-junior hockey tournament for women here on Friday.

The results: B division: Assam Hockey 12 (Maxima Xalxo 4, Elina Tigga 3, Milka Surin 2, Munmuni Das, Songita Das, Purobi Phukon) bt Hockey Gujarat 0; Hockey Uttarakhand 2 (Komal Dhami, Swati Kumari) bt The Mumbai Hockey Association Ltd 1 (Swati Kumari).

Mumbai School Sports Association 1 (Sakshi Pagar) bt Hockey Rajasthan 0; Hockey Bhopal 9 (Priyanka Dogra 3, Kanchan Batham 2, Soni Ladwal 2, Ritu Maan, Sakschi) bt Telangana Hockey 2 (Kalpana Marri, Sri-latha Talwari); Hockey Coorg 12 (B.S. Bhumika 5, Padmavathy 3, G.S. Kavya 2, K.R. Bhumika 2) bt Hockey Jammu & Kashmir 0. — Sports Reporter

GOLF

Leadbetter bullish on India's prospects

S.V. SRIRAM

PUNE: Jack Nicklaus's record is safe for the moment, Tiger Woods is unlikely to break it. At least that is what David Leadbetter, a trendsetter in golf coaching, had to say during a media interaction at the launch of his David Leadbetter Golf Academy in association with the Oxford Golf Resort here on Friday.

"Everybody asks, will we see the old Tiger. Well you won't. Personally, I don't think he is going to break Jack Nicklaus's record. If he wins one more Major, it will be a tremendous feat.

"He is 41 now. And if you have had the amount of back and knee surgeries that he has had..." added Leadbetter as he trailed off.

Leadbetter was bullish on the sport's prospects in India. "Indians have a particular liking for ball sports like cricket and hockey. Both of these require good hand-eye coordination, and the swing of the arms. I think Indians should naturally gravitate towards golf, unlike say the Koreans or the Chinese."

Leadbetter, who is a big fan of cricket, also was not averse to the idea of changing the format. "T20 cricket has revolutionised the way cricket is

watched. But the problem with the powers that be in golf is that they are very traditional. They say, 'this has worked for so many years. So why change?'

"However, things like a six-hole game are coming up. So maybe in the future we could see things moving in that direction."

Speaking of new directions, golf in the Olympics had Leadbetter very excited. "It is good for the sport and Justin Rose's gold medal is great news."

One player who he watched at Rio was India's Aditi Ashok. "LPGA. That should be Aditi's aim. She has the talent and potential. But she needs to compete in America where the conditions are different and the competition tougher," said Leadbetter.

On the issue of technique and coaching, Leadbetter, who has broken many long-held beliefs and theories, wants to keep it simple and said, "Over analysis leads to paralysis."

Speaking at the launch, Anil Seolekar, Oxford Group chairman and a former president of the Indian Golf Union, said, "One of our passions at the academy is to develop the stars of tomorrow."

(S.V. Sriram was in Pune at the invitation of Oxford Golf Resorts)

PRO WRESTLING LEAGUE

Sakshi wins but Delhi loses opening match

UTHRA GANESAN

NEW DELHI: Sakshi Malik's first bout in the second season of the Pro Wrestling League was expectedly a one-sided affair but even she could not help her team Delhi Sultans avoid defeat as Jaipur Ninjas won 4-3 for its second win in as many matches.

The Rio Olympics bronze medalist won by technical superiority 16-0 in five minutes 34 seconds against compatriot Pooja Dhanda in the 58kg category.

Penalised for passivity in the first two minutes, Sakshi

stepped up her game to dominate, take down and rollover Pooja repeatedly to race to an 8-0 lead in the last 20 seconds of the first round.

It soon became 14-0 inside four and half minutes but a defensive Pooja kept stalling before she was pushed out of the competitive area for the final point that ended the bout.

By then, however, Jaipur had already taken the seven-game tie 4-1.

Delhi also suffered the absence of Bajrang Punia in the 65kg after he was blocked by rival captain Elizabar Odikadze.



Arctic pollutants threatening polar bears

The exposure of the Arctic ecosystem to persistent organic pollutants is toxic to the health of endangered polar bears, researchers warn.



India sent 14 billion messages on New Year

On New Year's Eve, 14 billion messages were exchanged through WhatsApp in India, the instant messaging app said on Friday.



Princess Diana's letters fetch £15,000

Hand-written letters from Princess Diana to a former royal aide have broken pre-sale estimates to fetch nearly £15,000 at an auction in the U.K.

U.S. First Lady picks Indian-American in education crusade

WASHINGTON: U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama has selected 16-year-old Indian-American Swetha Prabhakaran to serve in the inaugural Student Advisory Board of an education campaign, which seeks to provide educational opportunities for teenagers in America.



Swetha Prabhakaran.
— PHOTO: WWW.WHITEHOUSE.GOV

Swetha, whose parents immigrated from Tamil Nadu's Tirunelveli in 1998, was chosen for 'Better Make Room' campaign's Student Advisory Board in recognition of her efforts to educate youth in the field of computer sciences.

The board members will be traveling to the White House today to attend Michelle's School Counselor of the Year Ceremony.

Born in Indianapolis, she is among seventeen students selected by the White House to serve on 'Better Make Room' Student Advisory Board. The inaugural Board has 12 high school students and five college students.

Swetha, a senior at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Virginia, is the founder and CEO of Everybody Code Now!, a non-profit body working to empower the next generation of youth to become engineers, scientists and entrepreneurs.

She is the only Indian-American in the list. Two-thirds of the Board members are, or will be, the first in their families to attain a post-secondary degree.

"As proven leaders, organisers, changemakers, and innovators, these students will help the country achieve President [Barack] Obama's North Star goal, that our nation will once again lead the world in college completion rates," Better Make Room said in a statement.

Founded by Michelle, the board will work to create a college-going, college-persisting and college-graduating culture at their schools.

"I am deeply honoured to be able to serve on this board. Creating a college-going and college-graduating culture among youth is something we have worked to encourage through Everybody Code Now!," Swetha said. — PTI

London breaches annual air pollution limit in just five days

Campaigners term this a 'shameful reminder' of the severity of the city's crisis

DAMIAN CARRINGTON

London has breached its annual air pollution limit just five days into 2017, a "shameful reminder of the severity of London's air pollution", according to campaigners.

By law, hourly levels of toxic nitrogen dioxide must not be more than 200 micrograms per cubic metre more than 18 times in a whole year, but late on Thursday this limit was broken on Brixton Road in Lambeth.

Many other sites across the capital will go on to break the annual limit and Putney High Street exceeded the hourly limit over 1,100 times in 2016. Oxford Street, Kings Road in Chelsea and the Strand are other known pollution hotspots.

9,500 early deaths

NO2 pollution, which is produced largely by diesel vehicles, causes 9,500 early deaths every year in London. Most air quality zones across the country break legal limits and the crisis was called a "public health emergency" by MPs in April.

This week, scientists said one in 10 cases of Alzheimer's in people living near busy roads could be linked to air pollution.

The new mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has pledged new measures and to double funding to £875m over five



HIGH TIME: The film character 'Mary Poppins' wearing a pollution mask is floated by activists near the Elizabeth Tower, better known as 'Big Ben', in London on Friday. — PHOTO: AFP

years to tackle the problem. But the U.K. government's plans have twice been ruled illegal in the past two years and it has been sent back to the drawing board to develop a third strategy.

Alan Andrews, a lawyer at ClientEarth, the group that successfully sued the government, said: "This is another shameful reminder of the severity of London's air pollution and shows why the mayor has rightly made tackling it a top priority. It is absolutely essential that he now delivers on his promises and that the national government back him to the hilt."

Ultra-low emission zone

Mr. Andrews, who lives in Brixton, said Mr. Khan had promised an expanded ultra-low emission zone in 2019,



including one for Brixton Road.

"But this is not enough," said the spokesman. "The government needs to match the Mayor's commitment to improving air quality as quickly as possible."

In December, Paris, Madrid, Athens and Mexico City pledged to ban polluting diesel cars from their centres by 2025 and a number of cities outside the U.K. have already taken action such as banning cars on specific days or making public transport free. The government must produce a new national plan by April and ClientEarth said this must include clean air zones in many areas to stop the dirtiest diesel cars entering pollution hotspots.

'End perverse incentives'

ClientEarth also said the "perverse" financial incentives that encourage people to buy diesel cars rather than cleaner ones must be ended.

Both a national network of clean air zones and tax changes were proposed within government as part of its last plan, but were rejected by the Treasury.

This week new data also revealed that modern diesel cars produce 10 times more NO2 pollution than heavy trucks and buses per litre of fuel, which experts say is due to the much tougher testing faced by heavy vehicles. — The Guardian

STAR TREK

'Mozart of Madras' turns 50

Double Oscar-winning composer A.R. Rahman and his son Ameen celebrated their birthday together at his residence in Chennai on Friday amid family and close friends. Rahman turned 50. "Around midnight, his family made him cut a birthday cake. It is also his son Ameen's birthday [the same day], which makes the day even more special for Rahman," a source close to the 'Mozart of Madras' said. The source added that a party had been planned by the composer himself for industry friends on Friday evening. The maestro's fans on social media have been excited, with #ARR50 trending since Thursday night. — IANS



Being in love makes me happy: Khloe Kardashian

Reality TV star Khloe Kardashian has hinted that her relationship with Tristan Thompson has made her the happiest she's "been in years." The 32-year-old has had a difficult few years, particularly due to her split from ex-husband Lamar Odom and his health struggles following a drug overdose in October 2015. But as she looks forward to the coming year, Khloe said she was feeling better than she had done in a long time, reported *Contactmusic*. "At this moment, a few days into 2017, I feel incredibly clear and probably the happiest I've been in years," she wrote on her website. "It's such a great feeling that I have my happy back! It's from a genuine place and the most peaceful place I've been in for longer than I can even remember." Khloe didn't refer to basketball player-beau Tristan by name but she hinted that the athlete was largely responsible for her positive mental attitude. — PTI



DiCaprio to present Golden Globes award

Leonardo DiCaprio is one of the presenters at the 74th Annual Golden Globes ceremony. The 42-year-old Oscar-winner will be joined by *Bridesmaids* star Kristen Wiig at the star-studded affair. The news was announced on the official Twitter handle of Golden Globes. "We can confirm that Leo DiCaprio and Kristen Wiig will be presenters at the 74th #GoldenGlobes on Jan 8." He received the best actor award for Alejandro G Inarritu's *The Revenant* at last year's Golden Globes. He has previously won Globes for his roles in *The Aviator* and *The Wolf of Wall Street*. — PTI



Indian-origin blind man in U.K. fits camera on dog to film abuse

LONDON: A 37-year-old Indian-origin blind man in the U.K. has fitted his guide dog with a camera in an attempt to highlight the discrimination and abuse he faces daily while travelling around London.

Amit Patel lost his eyesight five years ago to an eye disease known as keratoconus. He gets around London with the help of his guide dog, Kika, to whom Mr. Patel recently attached a GoPro camera to film the discrimination he faces every day from fellow Londoners.

"The city is a scary place. It's like someone put you in the middle of Trafalgar Square, turned you in a circle and said 'find your way home'," Mr. Patel was quoted as saying by BBC.

The footage captured by his canine guide has not always shown a city willing to help him.

"The video came out of necessity. Kika was getting hit by peoples' bags and she was getting a lot of abuse. A woman stopped me one day and had a go at me for holding everyone up and said I should apologise, which was a real shock," he said.

Assistance from wife

The former doctor found a solution — attach a GoPro to Kika's harness and film every journey. Mr. Patel's wife, Seema, can then review the footage if it is felt there was something amiss about that day. And when alterations were made to a London train station, the camera came into its own.

"I asked for help and no one came. The video shows lots of staff standing around me and this one guy looking over many times," Mr. Patel said. "Eventually when the staff member actually came to me, the first thing he said was 'sorry I didn't see you' and that really bugged me," he said.

The footage was sent to Network Rail giving Mr. Patel the "valuable evidence" needed to lodge a formal complaint about an incident he could not see. The video had an impact and Network Rail investigated before giving further training to its staff. He learned he had keratoconus — a condition that changes the shape of the cornea — in the final year of medical school. — PTI

Vertical limit



BALANCING ACT: A member of the Edo Firemanship Preservation Association displays balancing skills atop a bamboo ladder during a New Year demonstration by the fire brigade in Tokyo on Friday. — PHOTO: REUTERS

Double delight from Indian telescope data

WASHINGTON: Astronomers, using data from India's Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT), have discovered two of the most powerful phenomena in the universe — a supermassive black hole and the collision of giant galaxy clusters about two billion light years from Earth.

The two phenomenon have combined to create a stupendous cosmic particle accelerator, researchers said. By combining data from NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory, the Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT) in Pune and other telescopes, researchers found what happens when matter ejected by a giant black hole is swept up in the merger of two enormous galaxy clusters.

"We have seen each of these spectacular phenomena separately in many places," said Reinout van Weeren of the Harvard-Smithsonian Centre for Astrophysics (CfA) in the U.S., who led the study.

"This is the first time, however, that we see them clearly linked together in the same system," said Mr. van

Weeren. This cosmic combination is found in a pair of colliding galaxy clusters called Abell 3411 and Abell 3412 located about two billion light years from Earth.

Clusters massive

The two clusters are both very massive, each weighing about a quadrillion — or a million billion — times the mass of the Sun. The comet-shaped appearance of the X-rays detected by Chandra is produced by hot gas from one cluster ploughing through the hot gas of the other cluster. Optical data from the Keck Observatory and Japan's Subaru telescope, both on Mauna Kea, Hawaii, detected the galaxies in each cluster.

First, at least one spinning, supermassive black hole in one of the galaxy clusters produced a rotating, tightly-wound magnetic funnel. The powerful electromagnetic fields associated with this structure have accelerated some of the inflowing gas away from the vicinity of the black hole in the form of an energetic, high-speed jet. — PTI

Google's experiments with virtually real art

FRANK ROSE

SAN FRANCISCO: In 1949, a *Life* magazine photographer named Gjon Mili made a pilgrimage to the French Riviera to see Pablo Picasso. Mili had come up with a way to photograph trails of light, and he wanted to shoot Picasso "drawing" in mid-air with a light pen — a process that would leave no trace except on film. Picasso loved it.

The result, published in *Life* and exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, was Picasso's celebrated series of "light drawings" of bulls and centaurs and the like — photographs that captured him in the act of creating the ultimate in ephemeral art.

Picasso is long gone. But some 68 years later, Google has been calling on dozens of artists, animators and illustrators with a high-tech update of Mili's concept — a virtual reality set-up that enables people to paint with light that actually stays where you put it, at least for viewers wearing a virtual reality headset. In place of Gjon Mili are Drew Skillman and Patrick Hackett, a pair of video game developers turned virtual reality enthusiasts who live in San Francisco.



HANDS-ON PALETTE: A cartoon being drawn using the Tilt Brush technique. — PHOTO: GOOGLE

hoping to develop a tool for drawing in three dimensions.

In April 2015, seven months after they had cobbled together a rudimentary system they called Tilt Brush, Google bought their company for an undisclosed sum — which is how Skillman and Hackett have come to be ensconced in the company's offices near the downtown waterfront here. With Google's support, Tilt Brush has attracted a team of developers and evolved into

a sophisticated tool for drawing, painting, even sculpting in space.

It was released in April as a free add-on to the new HTC Vive, an \$800 virtual reality system produced by the Taiwanese manufacturer HTC in partnership with Valve, a U.S. video game developer. Reviewers immediately dubbed it the Vive's killer app.

This is hardly the kind of reception the two inventors were expecting when they started working on it in Skill-

man's apartment, a 400-square-foot studio in South Park, the little neighbourhood that has been a hub for San Francisco's digerati since the 1990s.

Tilt Brush got its name because in its earliest versions, you would draw or paint on a two-dimensional surface that could be tilted in any direction in virtual space. But because the HTC Vive includes not just a virtual reality headset but also a pair of hand-held controllers and two tracking sensors that map your movement in space, the program was revamped to enable you to paint or draw anywhere within a room-sized area — no surface required.

Vast iceberg poised to break off Antarctica, say scientists

OSLO: A vast iceberg, expected to be one of the biggest ever recorded with an area almost the size of the U.S. State of Delaware or the Caribbean island State of Trinidad and Tobago, is poised to break off Antarctica.

A rift, slowly developing across the Larsen C ice shelf on the Antarctic Peninsula in recent years, expanded abruptly last month, growing by about 18 km. It is now more than 80-km long with just 20 km left before it snaps, scientists said.

'Wider break-up'

"The Larsen C Ice shelf in Antarctica is primed to shed an area of more than 5,000 square km following further substantial rift growth," scientists at Project Midas at the University of Swansea in Wales said in a statement.

The iceberg "will fundamentally change the landscape of the Antarctic Peninsula" and could herald a wider break-up of the Larsen



TIP OF THE ICEBERG: A rift, developing across the Larsen C ice shelf on the Antarctic Peninsula, expanded abruptly last month, growing by about 18 km. — REPRESENTATIVE PHOTO: REUTERS

Scientists fear that loss of ice shelves will allow glaciers inland to slide faster towards the sea

C ice shelf, it said. Ice shelves are areas of ice floating on the sea, several hundred metres thick, at the end of glaciers. Scientists

fear the loss of ice shelves around the frozen continent will allow glaciers inland to slide faster towards the sea as temperatures rise because of global warming, raising world sea levels.

Several ice shelves have cracked up around northern parts of Antarctica in recent years, including the Larsen B that disintegrated in 2002, scientists said. — Reuters