

TIME AND US

DAILY

Srinagar, Kashmir

TUESDAY

● SEPTEMBER, 26, 2017
 ● 05 MUHARRAM 1439 AH
 ● ISSUE: 223
 ● VOLUME: 03
 ● PAGES: 08

WEATHER TEMPERATURE		
STATION	MAX TEMPERATURE	MIN TEMPERATURE
	ACT	ACT
SRINAGAR	28.7	11.7
JAMMU	31.8	22.6
LEH	24.2	10.3
KARGIL	26.0	6.4

SUNSET TUESDAY: 06:24 PM
 SUNRISE WEDNESDAY: 06:23 AM

LOCAL FORECAST OF SRINAGAR
 Partly Cloudy Sky. Maximum & Minimum temperatures will be around 29°C & 11°C respectively.

RNI NO: JKENG/2015/62397 • PRICE RS.3/- (AIR SURCHARGE FOR DELHI, JAMMU & LADAKH 50/- PAISA)

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PRIME MINISTER TO ADDRESS VALEDICTORY SESSION OF ASSISTANT SECRETARIES

RAHUL GANDHI HAS UNDERMINED INDIA'S IMAGE, SAYS BJP

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY EYES LIMITS TO HERBICIDE LINKED TO CROP DAMAGE

KOHLI URGES HIGH-FLYING INDIA TO BE 'RUTHLESS'

Shutdown affects normal life in Kashmir

'New Delhi using NIA as a 'tool' to suppress Kashmiris'

Srinagar, Sep 25: Scores of traders Monday staged a peaceful sit-in at Pratap Park Srinagar against the alleged NIA harassment. The traders were protesting against the summoning of Kashmir Traders and Manufacturers Federation (KTMF) president Yasin Khan by the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

Khan was asked to present himself at NIA headquarter in Delhi on Monday. "We would continue our peaceful protest until Yasin Sahab leaves the NIA headquarter," said a protesting trader.

Kashmir Traders Federation Spokesperson Ajaz Shahdhar while expressing discriminatory harassment of members of the business community by investigating agencies, said the NIA has turned the principle of "presumption of innocence until proved guilty" on its head by treating all persons of interest in this manner.

Eyewitnesses said that a protest was staged in Tral town of South Kashmir's Pulwama district against



the recent civilian killings and the NIA alleged harassment.

Meanwhile, normal life was affected due to shutdown that was called by traders and supported by Joint Resistance Leadership. Business establishments including the shops in

city centre Lal Chowk and its adjoining areas remained shut while in old Srinagar city, authorities had imposed restrictions to maintain law and order.

Life was also affected in other parts of districts and towns due to shutdown.

▶ See **Life**...Pg 02

FIVE FRESH INCIDENTS OF HAIR CHOPPING IN SOUTH KASHMIR

Mehbooba directs DGP to constitute special team

Srinagar, Sep 25: Five fresh incidents of hair chopping in South Kashmir's Kulgam and Anantnag districts created fear psychosis among the locals, especially girls on Monday.

Two incidents have been reported from Chak Path Dooru and Magray Pora Achabal in Anantnag while at Aminu, Ashmoji and Manzagam Koril in Kulgam, the hair of three girls were chopped off by

▶ See **Chopping**...Pg 02

CM's two day tour of Kupwara

Mehbooba inaugurates Panzgam-Manzagam bridge, SDH Langate

Also lays foundation of Khumriyal, Bategam, Hafrada roads; listens to peoples' problems



KUPWARA, SEPTEMBER 25: On the second day of her two day visit to this frontier district, Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti today laid the foundation of several road projects besides inaugurating Panzgam-Manzagam Bridge and Sub District Hospital at Langate. She also laid the foundation of model villages in Kunan-Poshpora and also met a large number of people to know their difficulties.

Mehbooba Mufti laid the foundation of improvement and upgradation of 25 kilometre long Khumriyal Rang road which would

be built at a cost of Rs. 30.38 crore. The construction of road is expected to benefit around two lakh people of 50 villages in the catchment area. The project is expected to be completed within three working seasons.

The Chief Minister directed pacing up of work on the road and its completion within the deadline period.

At Bategam, Mehbooba Mufti laid the foundation of 11 kilometre long Gushi-Bategam-Halmatpora-Salkote road which

▶ See **Mehbooba**...Pg 02

BALI, CHOWDARY AND SETHI LIKELY TO BE AXED:

BJP likely to induct some new faces in the Council of Ministers

Srinagar, Sep 25: Some of the 'under-performer' ministers from BJP in Jammu and Kashmir will likely to be shown the door while some new faces from the party may become the part of the combined BJP-PDP Government.

Party sources told news agency CNS that reshuffle of BJP Ministers in Jammu and Kashmir is on cards and in this regard party high command led by party National president Amit Shah will take a final call.

If party sources are to be believed, Bali Bhagat, Shayam Lal Chowdary and Priya Sethi will be shown door while

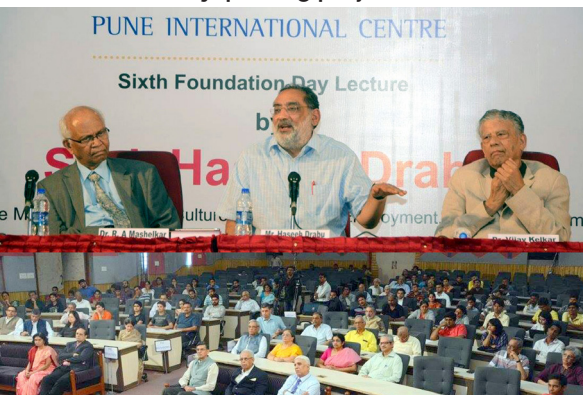
▶ See **Bali**...Pg 02

India's intellectuals alien, insensitive to JK's pestering pain: Dr Drabu

Fin Min castigates news channels for cherry-picking prejudicial issues on Kashmir to garner TRPs

PUNE, SEPTEMBER 25: The apathy of Indian thinkers and policymakers in understanding the trials, tribulations and social evolutions in Jammu and Kashmir is one of the reasons for the pestering problems confronting the state, Minister of Finance Dr Hasheeb Drabu said.

"More than political alienation in Kashmir, it is the disengagement of Indian civil society that needs to be addressed which is a corollary



of Indian intellectual's apathy towards J&K. But it gives us

immense satisfaction that these past few years have heightened awareness on J&K across the country," the Finance Minister said.

Delivering the keynote lecture 'Growth Prospects for Jammu & Kashmir' at the 6th foundation day of Pune International Centre (PIC) here last evening where he was invited as the Chief Guest, Dr Drabu said the Indian thinkers and policymakers

▶ See **Drabu**...Pg 02

MURDER ACCUSED ESCAPED FROM POLICE CUSTODY STILL AT LARGE

Srinagar, Sep 25: Even after the expiry of 13 months, Police have failed to nab the murder convict who escaped from SMHS Hospital Srinagar in June last year where he was brought for medical check-up under police custody.

Nazar Muhammad Dar, son of Ghulam Mohiuddin Dar, resident of Rakhshalina Budgam was convicted in a case under FIR number 169/2011 under section 302, 364, 387, 120 RPC (registered at Pampore police station). He was brought to SMHS Hospital for medical checkup from Central Jail. The convict went to toilet and never returned. From past 13 months the murder accused is roaming free, even on the directions of Principal Sessions Judge, Police

▶ See **Murder**...Pg 02

Div Com reviews progress on CM's commitments, DDB decisions for Srinagar

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 25: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Baseer Ahmad Khan today convened a meeting to review progress made so far on Chief Minister's decisions and District Development Board (DDB) decisions for district Srinagar.



District Development Commissioner Srinagar, Syed Abid Rashid Shah, Officers from the R&B, JKPC, ERA, Health, Education, PHE, I&FC, R&B, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry,

Sheep Husbandry, RDD, Sports Council, SMC, UEED, PDD, PHE, Animal & Sheep

▶ See **Div Com**...Pg 02

2 months on: 'KIDNAPPED' MINOR GIRL STILL UNTRACEABLE

Pulwama, Sep 25: From last two months a hapless family from Kakapora town of South Kashmir's Pulwama district has been wandering from pillar to post to locate their 'abducted' minor girl, while police according to locals has miserably failed to bring the culprits to justice.

A family from Loolipora, Kakapora headed by Muhammad Yousuf Bhat arrived here in Press Enclave Srinagar on Monday. "My Class 7th daughter was kidnapped one Bashir Chopan of Muqam Chadoora on 18 July this year and since then she is untraceable. She had gone to fetch flour but was kidnapped by Bashir Chopan with the help

▶ See **Girl**...Pg 02

Road connectivity to remote areas Govt's priority: Kohli

Asks NABARAD to expedite work on road projects in Kalakote



RAJOURI, SEPTEMBER 25: Minister for Animal, Sheep Husbandry and Fisheries, Abdul Ghani Kohli today said that improving road connectivity to remote areas is priority

of the Government, adding that connecting villages and remote areas holds key to socio-economic transformation of the State.

▶ See **Kholi**...Pg 02

KULGAM VILLAGE REELS UNDER DARKNESS AS PDD FAILS TO PROVIDE ELECTRICITY

Will take up the matter with higher ups: Executive Engineer SD DH Pora

Srinagar, Sep 25: A village in Kulgam district has been reeling under darkness from decades as the Power Development Department (PDD) has failed to provide it electricity even as it has erected poles and wires under Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana (RGGVY) scheme in the year 2009.

Soipathri village in Noorabad assembly segment represented by PDP MLA Abdul Majeed Paddar continues

▶ See **Kulgam**...Pg 02

JK to adopt best practices of West Bengal Govt in consumer affairs: Zulfkar

KOLKATA, SEPTEMBER 25: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs and Information, Choudhary Zulfkar Ali has said that Jammu and Kashmir Government will adopt best practices of West Bengal Government regarding consumer affairs to ensure effective working of public delivery mechanism in the State.

The Minister, who is on a tour to West Bengal to know



about success story of the State in Consumer Affairs and Legal Metrology, met West Bengal Minister for Consumer Affairs & Self Help Groups, Sadhan Pande.

Zulfkar was briefed in detail about the overall functioning of the West Bengal Consumer Affairs Department through a power point presentation. It was said that the Department has been divided into three Divisions viz Consumer Affairs, Legal Metrology and Consumer Foras. He was also informed about the functioning of consumer wing which deals

▶ See **Zulfkar**...Pg 02

DEPENDENCE ON PRIVATE HOTELS, GUEST HOUSES LIKELY TO END

Govt to build down accommodation for Darbar Move employees

Srinagar, Sep 25: To save crores of rupees to the state exchequer, the government has been building its own adequate accommodation for the Darbar Move employees in the state, officials said.

The Government is accommodating Darbar Move employees in quarters of Estates Department that as per

▶ See **Hotels**...Pg 02

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LIFE

Reports of shutdown poured in from South Kashmir's Pulwama, Anantnag, Kulgam and Shopian districts. In North and Central Kashmir also a shutdown was observed. Shops remained closed, however, private and public transport plied on the roads.

CHOPPING

unknown persons.

The latest victims are Sumaira Jan, daughter of Muhammad Azad Khandey of Ashmoji Kulgam, Khushboo Jan daughter of Muhammad Rayees Beigh of Manzagam Koril in Kulgam, Khushbu Jan daughter of Muhammad Iqbal Lone of Aminu Kulgam, Uzma Jan daughter of Nazir Ahmed Lone of Chekh Peth Dooru and Saneez Hussain daughter of Muhammad Hussain Zargar of Magray Pora Achabal.

As reported already 12 incidents of braid chopping in Kulgam district alone has been reported in a week's time.

A police hand out said that in view of increasing incidents of braid cutting in the district, a serious note has been taken by district police Kulgam to curb this tendency.

"SP Kulgam has constituted a special investigation team to investigate braid cutting cases on fast track basis and bring culprits to book. People are appealed to come forward to help police in speedy investigation."

The handout reads that a dedicated phone number 7051510660 shall remain functional at PCR Kulgam 24*7 for informing police about such matters.

"People are advised to immediately inform police about any such incident. At the same time, general public is requested not to pay heed to rumours being floated by anti social elements."

Meanwhile, Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti has directed Director General of Police (DGP) to constitute a Special team to identify and bring to justice the persons behind the mysterious hair chopping incidents which came to fore in Kulgam district and other places of the State.

Mehbooba Mufti has asked the DGP to speed up the probe in such cases which have caused panic among young girls and their parents.

MEHBOOBA

would be constructed at a cost of Rs. 15 crore and would also be completed within three working seasons. The construction of the road is expected to benefit around 80 souls in the catchment areas.

The Chief Minister also laid the foundation of Hafrada-Asthanwari-Hatchmarg-Tumina-Marsari road. The 15 kilometre long road would be constructed at a cost of Rs. 19 crore. She also laid the foundation of Model villages at Kunan-Poshpora to be developed at a cost of Rs. 33.12 crore. The villages to be developed are Kunan, Poshpora, Hanjipora and Babagund and these would be having all the basic facilities for healthcare, education, drinking water, power, irrigation and other allied facilities.

At Panzgam, the Chief Minister inaugurated 160 metre long Panzgam-Manzagam bridge which has been constructed at a cost of Rs. 7.04 crore and it would connect the two historic villages with each other for which the people have been craving for so long.

Later, Mehbooba Mufti also inaugurated Sub District Hospital at Langate which has been constructed at a cost of Rs. Seven crore. The 30 bedded hospital is equipped with all modern techniques of patient care including operation theatre, post operative care, labs, dental chair, diagnostic equipments etc. and is expected to benefit around 90 thousand people of the area.

The Chief Minister went round the hospital and also interacted with people. She directed construction of a ramp and carving out of a maternity unit with all the facilities.

Minister for Rural Development & Law, Abdul Haq Khan; Minister for Public Works, Naeem Akhtar; Minister of State for Health & Medical Education, Asia Naqash; Member, Rajya Sabha, Fayaz Ahmad Mir; legislators, Er. Rasheed, Bashir Ahmad Dar, Raja Manzoor and Javid Mirchal; heads of various Departments, officers of District administration and people in large numbers were present on these occasions.

Earlier in the day, the Chief Minister, continuing with her public outreach, interacted with a lot of people and many deputations who briefed her with their problems and difficulties.

Mehbooba Mufti assured them that their genuine grievances would be fast paced for redressal by her Government.

BALI

the portfolio of Lal Singh will be altered. Sources added that the party high command is not satisfied with the performance of some of the Minister's and they will be shown the door.

A party leader on condition of anonymity said that party State president Sat Sharma and legislator from Doda Shakti Parihar may likely get new portfolios. "During his recent visit to Jammu and Kashmir, the party national general secretary Ram Madhav interacted with party leaders and workers. Fingers were raised over the working style of some of the Ministers. Madhav had actually come here to get the first information about the functioning of the party and he in fact met Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti to inform her about the BJP plan of reshuffling their ministers," the leader said.

If sources are to be believed, Sukhmandan Kumar who was earlier removed from the portfolio of Public Health Engineering may like to be inducted into the cabinet again.

"All the BJP MLAs and MLCs have flown to New Delhi to attend the crucial meeting," sources added.

The BJP, which won 25 seats in the 2014 Assembly elections from Jammu, has eight Cabinet and three ministers of state, including Deputy Chief Minister Nirmal Singh.

DRABU

never engage in Kashmir and they are, therefore, unable to understand and often misinterpret the real problems confronting the State and its people.

Noted scientist Raghunath Mashelkar, economist Vijay Kelkar and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

"Kashmir has been left far too much to be looked through security prism only. There is no independent thinking on why people in Kashmir are reacting the way they are. JK had the finest, most radical and comprehensive land reforms done by a non-communist regime anywhere in the world, yet there's no book on land reforms in JK by an Indian scholar while

there are hundreds of books on land reforms in Kerala, Bengal, etc.," Dr Drabu said.

"Why hasn't any Indian scholar written on political and social implications of these land reforms? The finest work on Kashmiri carpet and Kashmiri Shawl is done by an American and a Swiss respectively. There is a unique way in how social structure is organised in Kashmir but the Indian intellectual has stayed away from it," he said.

Regretting the role of some TV news channels for negatively portraying the situation in Kashmir, Dr Drabu said random slogan of secession lights up television screens across the country. "From Indian civil society's point, the biggest concern is political and how politics is being played out in J&K. But no one ever mentions this kind of complete apathy of Indian civil society or secession of Indian intellectuals from the society in J&K," he said.

The Finance Minister said one of the biggest failures of the past governments in Delhi has been to not link changes in J&K to evolutions taking place in India's federal structure and other larger trends.

"India as a nation and not merely as a State has to intervene, react and resolve. Civil society is more powerful and has a more important role in this regard. It can make great changes. It has to relook some of things we have been thinking on J&K in the framework of empowered federalism," he said.

Dr Drabu said Kashmir issue has now become a social issue and in addressing it, the Indian civil society has much larger role than the government of India. "The way the political problem has seeped into J&K's social fabric and how it is changing everything in it, Indian civil society needs to take cognisance of it and play a bigger role in recreating the bits of cultural, social and historical uniqueness of J&K which are being lost almost on a daily basis," he said.

"The loss of our heritage, a unique blend of Sufi-Reshi tradition, is a big loss to the cultural heritage of India, if not the subcontinent and the world," he added.

The Finance Minister said India has moved from coercive to cooperative federalism and later into competitive federalism and, it is possible to find a resolution to problem of Jammu and Kashmir through a model of empowered federalism. "The way forward in addressing political alienation in Kashmir is not possible by having an enclave of federalism in a unitary structure. We have to change that approach," he said.

Dr Drabu said people of Jammu and Kashmir react with hope to changes around them and they have never articulated anything against the civil society of India. He said the biggest failure in addressing the issue has been to see it in isolation of the larger trends and changes that have taken place in India's democracy, political structure, federalism and ideological paradigms.

"Kashmir is seen as a dissenting idea of autonomous or empowered federal unit within the nation state of India, but its preservation is important to retain democracy and diversity in India. No change has impacted the framework within which the Indian intellectual understands J&K," he said.

Commenting on the growth of the region, he said J&K's handicrafts, arts, agriculture and tourism can play a crucial role in the growth of the State's economy.

MURDER

in August this year issued a look out notice in this regard and case vide FIR number 12/2016 under section 224 RPC stands registered at Police Station Karan Nagar.

The police had arrested the accused and his associates for murdering an under graduated student Kaleem Qadri of Gousia Colony Pampore.

According to police report: in October, 2011, one Javaid Ahmad Qadri son of Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din resident of Gousia Colony Pampore lodged a missing report of his son Kaleem Qadri in Police Station Pampore. The search of the missing youth was started during which it transpired that he has traveled towards Srinagar in his Car Ford Figo (JK01Q-1711) after dropping his father at Frestabal.

At about 10:30 PM, father of the missing youth informed the Police Station that he received a phone call from the mobile number of his son and the caller identified himself as kidnapper belonging to Lashkar-e-Toiba outfit and threatened him not to inform the Police. The kidnapper demanded a ransom of rupees one crore for release of his son.

During investigation of the case, the finger of suspicion went towards one Nazir Muhammad Dar son of Late Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Dar resident of Rakh Shalina Nowgam Budgam who was last seen with the missing youth in the car.

A Police party was dispatched to the residence of Nazir Muhammad Dar to call him for questioning.

During sustained questioning, he revealed that he was close friend of Kaleem Qadri but since past few weeks some strains were developed in their relationship. Nazir Muhammad Dar developed ill intentions towards the missing youth as he belonged to a well off family and hatched a conspiracy along with his brother Younis Ahmad Dar and his friend Javaid Ahmad Bhat to kidnap Kaleem Qadri and demand ransom from his father.

Acting upon the conspiracy already hatched, the missing youth was lured by Nazir Muhammad Dar to move towards Srinagar where he promised him to sell his I-Pad against a good amount. On reaching Lasjan bridge, the other two accomplices namely Javaid and Younis also boarded the Car and moved towards Nowgam. Enroute, the deceased Kaleem Qadri was strangled to death in the vehicle itself by a waist belt which was brought by the accused with them.

Thereafter they moved towards village Wapora of district Budgam and wrapped the dead body in a bed sheet that was already brought by the accused persons along.

The accused put the dead body in the Dickey of the vehicle and moved towards Bemina, Shalteng area to kill the time as the accused were waiting for the darkness to descend, so as to dispose off the dead body at some place, out of the sight of public.

At about 9:30 PM they brought the body at Sheerbagh Lasjan where it was loaded on a boat and thrown in the middle of the river tying some stones with it. The car of the deceased was taken to Jawahar Nagar and was parked on bandh near Foot Bridge.

Having parked the vehicle, the accused Nazir Muhammad Dar made a phone call to the father of the deceased telling him that the vehicle is parked near foot bridge. He was also told not to inform Police and demanded one crore ransom money for which a call will be made next morning.

On the instance of the accused Nazir Muhammad Dar, one I-Pad and a mobile phone Black Berry of the deceased

were recovered from the house of accused.

The dead body of the deceased youth was fished out from the river near Lasjan.

Those arrested for murdering innocent Kaleem Qadri included

Nazar Muhammad Dar and Mohammad Younis Dar sons of Late Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din resident of Rakh Shalina, Javaid Ahmad Bhat son of Mohammad Ishaq resident of Rakh Shalina Tangan and Abid Hussain Bhat son of Ghulam Muhammad Bhat resident of Tangan Nowgam.

After the escape of the main accused, the Director General of Police Jammu and Kashmir Dr SP Vaid directed DIG South Kashmir to constitute a special team to get the fugitive arrested. The DGP also directed police to investigate the role of doctors who frequently used to send the accused for medical check-up at SMHS Hospital. The DGP also has directed the police to investigate the role of those policemen who were accompanying the accused.

A police official said that they had sent a special team to Punjab after receiving information about the presence of Nazir Dar there. "We are in touch with the police of different states and hopefully he will be arrested," he said.

"I want police to nab the culprit without anymore delay. He should be brought to justice for murdering my teenager innocent son," Javaid Qadri, the father of the deceased youth told news agency CNS.

DIV COM

Husbandry and other concerned attended the meeting.

The DDC briefed the Divisional Commissioner in detail about the status of various developmental works in the district till August 2017.

On the occasion, the Divisional Commissioner was informed that Under CM's commitments, Rs.10 crore were approved for construction of extension block (Noor Khana) of Peer Dastgeer Sahib (R.A) Shrine, Rs 6.29 crore for the construction of fire station near Community Hall, Jamia Masjid and Rs 1.70 crore for the land acquisition for beautification works of Khan Kahi Moulla Shrine. It was said that out of total 200 commitments made by the CM around 122 have been fulfilled, while the rest are under implementation.

The Divisional Commissioner stressed on time-bound completion of all the developmental works and CM's directions on priority. He said the summer capital needs focused attention vis-à-vis proper sewerage and drainage network, restoration of encroached public spaces to de-congest city center, improving connectivity by way of upgrading roads, Jehangir Chowk-Rambagh and TRC flyovers, revival of water transport, Smart city project, Metro project and dredging of river Jhelum.

The meeting was further informed that under the district Capex Plan 2017-18, around Rs113.26crore were approved for development schemes.

Improvement in Lift Irrigation Scheme Takanwari, augmentation and improvement of water supply in various areas of Amira Kadal and Batamaloo Constituency, acquisition of land/ structures around Gani Memorial Stadium, Rajouri Kadal for its development, developmental works under progress in R&B, Health, ERA, JKPC, PDD, PHE, AMRUT scheme, Smart City Proposal, I&FC, Sports, Community Halls, SADP works, MPLAD scheme, CDF scheme and other works were reviewed threadbare in the meeting.

It was informed that UEEED has completed work on 5530 meters of drainage system out of 16,900 meters target.

The Div Com directed the revenue officials to fast-track all land acquisition cases so that bottlenecks in widening of roads in the city are removed. He directed DDC Srinagar to constitute a team which will randomly inspect all developmental works in the capital city and submit the report on monthly basis for their timely completion.

Khan also directed the sectoral officers of concerned Departments to send weekly progress report of developmental works to DDC Srinagar and also work in close coordination with other Departments for hassle free completion of under construction projects in the capital city.

Calling for complete synergy between various Departments involved in infrastructure building and implementation of various welfare schemes, the Div Com stressed on strict adherence to timelines for completion of all ongoing projects so that the people at large can benefit.

He directed the FCS&CA Department to ensure proper storage of food grains and other essential commodities in view of coming winter season. He also directed PDD for the buffer stock of power transformers and PHE to ensure additional water tankers to meet any exigency.

GIRL

of his few associates," Bhat told news agency CNS.

He said a formal FIR stands registered against the culprits at police station Kakapora, however, the main accused is still at large. "After police failure, the Chief Judicial Magistrate Pulwama Mr Javaid Aalam directed SSP Pulwama to constitute a five member Special Investigating Team headed by a DySP. The SIT has been constituted but the case is still bogged down," he said.

The family members believe that it is a human trafficking case that needs to be solved at an earliest.

When contacted, a police official said that they have got some leads and hopefully the culprit will be arrested soon.

KOHLI

The Minister was speaking at meeting which he chaired to review the progress of road projects under National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) in Kalakote Constituency of Rajouri district.

He directed the NABARD officers to accelerate the pace of work on all ongoing road projects in the Constituency.

Chief General Manager NABARD, Engineers of various wings of NABARD and concerned officers attended the meeting.

On the occasion, the Minister said that better roads would not only make travel and transportation easy but will also provide a boost to the agriculture and horticulture sectors and improve the living standards of the people of far-flung areas.

He said that the road projects taken in hand by NABARD in Kalakote, once completed, will also give a fillip to tourism activities in the area as many beautiful destinations of Rajouri district will be linked with the road network.

The Minister emphasized on improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in remote areas and exhorted upon the officers to ensure that the quality norms

are strictly adhered to and timelines are met so that there is no cost escalation and the projects are completed well in time.

He hailed the efforts of the NABARD for completing various projects in a time bound manner and asked them to work with utmost dedication and zeal.

Later, several deputations called on the Minister and apprised him about their problems and issues. The Minister gave them a patient hearing and assured them that their problems would be redressed in a phased manner.

KULGAM

to reel under darkness in the modern day world as the department has failed to provide electricity to the village.

According to KNS correspondent, the villagers said that under RGGVY scheme the NC-Congress government erected electric poles and wires in the village in 2009, but the department failed to completely implement the project, leaving 150 families under darkness.

Sources informed KNS that the government under RGGVY scheme spent lakhs of rupees over erecting poles and wires to the village but the mission to provide electricity to them was left midway.

"The authorities are ignoring us at all fronts," the locals lamented, adding that they approached to their legislator and the PDD authorities several times but to no avail.

"We appeal to the MLA and PPD higher ups to look into the matter and redress their genuine grievances at earliest," they demanded.

Executive Engineer Kulgam, Nisar Hussain told KNS the centrally sponsored scheme was left midway by the government, which resulted in the stoppage of work.

"I will take up this matter with the higher ups and the department will start the work to provide electricity to the village in the within 20 days," he said.

ZULFKAR

with safeguarding the interest of the consumers and assists in the redressal of consumer grievances as per the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. He was told that one State Commission with an additional 3 bench along with 23 District Fora covering all the districts are currently functioning which have jurisdiction of compliant value upto Rs 20 lakh.

He was also briefed about Confonet scheme implemented by the Department in West Bengal in the backdrop of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 with quasi-judicial machinery like Consumer Forums at the district level and Consumer Dispute Redressal Commissions at the State and National Level. The project aims at serving all sections of its wide target audience through the various services offered by it and provides information on Consumer Rights and Protection, Online Cause Lists, Online Judgments, Online Case Status and Case History etc.

Speaking on the occasion, Zulfkhar Ali praised the West Bengal Government for adopting such mechanism to address the issues of consumers. He also lauded WB Government for introducing Consumer Affairs subject in curriculum of 6th, 7th and 8th standards in Schools. He said that such practices need to be implemented for awareness among the school children to make them sensitive about the subject.

The Minister said that Jammu and Kashmir has also focused attention towards consumer affairs and need of the hour is to focus more on the subject. He said that everybody is a consumer and Government desires to strengthen consumers and make them aware about their rights.

HOTELS

officials, are "inadequate" to meet the requirement of the employees. They are entitled for the government accommodation as per the laid down norms.

For rest of the employees, the Government is hiring private hotels and guest houses which cost crores to the state exchequer.

An official of the Estates Department told KNS that government was building the adequate accommodation for the Durbar Move employees in twin capitals of the state.

"We have a proposal for construction of 400 flats at Pampore. We have taken possession of 32 flats and employees have been shifted there," the official said.

He said that the department was in the process of acquiring 150 kanals of land near Tulsibagh.

He said that the Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for construction of 32 flats in Jammu last year. He said the process for construction of 24 and 16 flats at two separate places in Jammu region was going on. "We have also conceived a project for construction of one block each in civil secretariat Srinagar and Jammu," he said.

"The Government is spending over Rs 90 crore annually on private accommodations being hired for Darbar Move employees," the official said.

The official said that the Government has to provide accommodation to over 6000 employees for six months both in Srinagar and Jammu. Government had decided several times to utilize state land effectively where additional accommodation could be developed for these employees. "The building of own accommodation will end the practice of hiring private hotels and guest houses," he added.

MP NAZIR LAWAY GIVES RS 10 LAKH TO IUST FROM MPLADS

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 25: Member Parliament, Nazir Ahmad Laway today announced Rs 10 lakh from his Member Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) to Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) Awantipora for development of infrastructure at the School of Business Studies in memory of late Ratandeep Kour, a student of the varsity who was killed in a grenade blast at Tral last Thursday.

The announcement was made by Laway during his meeting with Minister for Works, Naeem Akhtar here today.

He said the IUST authorities will be asked to develop infrastructure at the varsity's SBS in memory of late Ratandeep alias Pinky who fell victim to the grenade blast in Tral.

Minister of Tribal Affairs Inaugurates National Workshop on Minimum Support Price for Minor Forest Produce

New Delhi, September 25: Minister of Tribal Affairs Shri Jual Oram inaugurated the National Workshop organized by TRIFED on "Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Minor Forest Produces (MFP) scheme - Taking it to the next level for a Fair and Equitable Deal to the Tribals" Ministers of State for Tribal Affairs Shri Jaswantsinh Sumanbhai Bhabhor and Shri Sudarshan Bhagat were specially present to grace the occasion. Ms Leena Nair, Secretary, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Shri Pravir Krishna, Managing Director, TRIFED and senior officials were also present on the occasion. Senior level functionaries of Government of India from the Ministries of Tribal Affairs, Rural Development, Textiles, Forests and Environment and over 100 senior officers from all the States also participated in the day-long Workshop.

Shri Jual Oram, Minister of Tribal Affairs said that this workshop is a step to expand the horizon of the scheme of providing Minimum Support Price for Minor Forest Produce. This scheme is already implemented in 9 States and today it is expanded nationwide. This workshop will help to expand the scheme nationwide. He also said that MFP collection centres should also be depots of daily requirements to sell items of daily need to the tribals. He said that after minerals, MFP could be the largest generation of revenue. He emphasised on the use of social media and new technology to help the tribals to sell their products at best prices.

Shri Sudarshan Bhagat, Minister of State for Tribal Affairs said that Minimum Support Price provided to Kisans have helped them overcome the vagaries of the market price fluctuations for their produce. Similarly providing Minimum Support Price for Minor Forest Produce will help Tribals for their progress and development. At present Minimum Support Price will be given for 24 Minor Forest Produce but gradually efforts will be made to increase the number of Minor Forest Produce.

Shri Jaswantsinh Sumanbhai Bhabhor, Minister of State for Tribal Affairs said that he is very happy about these type of workshops and this step will help tribals to develop in all their fields. Similar efforts were made by this Government for developing vulnerable

people like women, villagers and poor.

Ms. Leena Nair, IAS, Secretary, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India said that This workshop is a clarification call for understanding the gaps in the scheme of providing Minimum Support Price to Minor Forest Produce and making course correction. She also said that this Scheme should be implemented through women's self help group because women play important role in this business. She emphasized that Haat Bazaars must be strengthened.

Shri Pravir Krishna, Managing Director, TRIFED said that This workshop aims at expanding the horizon and taking it to all the States. MoU with Amazon is a step towards expanding the reach of the 'Tribe India' brand to next level to National & International markets through e-commerce.

TRIFED Signs MoU with Amazon: Marketing of Tribal Handicrafts Scaled-up for Empowerment of Tribals

In order to have institutional support to marketing initiatives, TRIFED has formally signed an MOU with M/s Amazon Seller Services Pvt. Ltd for sale of tribal products through leading e-commerce giant www.amazon.in at a mutually agreed terms & conditions.

As a part of the MOU, exquisite authentic tribal art and craft items crafted and sculpted by tribal artisans from all over the country will be showcased on the online portal www.amazon.in for sale. The aim is to promote tribal handicrafts like handloom products, cane and bamboo products, tribal jewellery, Dhokra craft, tribal weaves and embroidery, tribal paintings etc by cashing in on the online retail space reach to boost sales.

All customers on www.amazon.in and the Amazon mobile shopping app have easy and convenient access to over 65 million products across hundreds of categories. They benefit from a safe and secure ordering experience, convenient electronic payments, Cash on Delivery, Amazon's 24x7 customer service support, and a globally recognized and comprehensive 100% purchase protection provided by Amazon's A-to-Z Guarantee. They can also enjoy Amazon.in's guaranteed one-day, two-day delivery, Sunday and Morning delivery on products fulfilled by Amazon

"TRIBES INDIA" showrooms managed by TRIFED, offer a wide range of Tribal Products from different parts of the country, which include Metal Craft, Tribal Textiles, Jewellery, Tribal Paintings, Cane & Bamboo, Pottery, Gifts and Novelties, Organic and Natural products sourced from tribals at their places of habitats from higher Himalayas (Bhutia tribes in the Uttrakhand, Bodh & Kinnaura tribes in Himachal Pradesh) in the North and (Toda & Irula Tribes in Nilgiri Hills) in the South and from North Eastern States (Tangkhu Naga, Bodo, Konyak & Dimasa Tribes) to the desert of Rajasthan and Rann of Kutch (Bhil, Garasia, Rathwa, Gamit Tribes) in the West. There is fabulous collection of tribal paintings mainly Saura from Orissa, Gond from Madhya Pradesh, Warli from Maharashtra and Pithora from Gujarat.

From a single store in 1999 at Delhi, now TRIFED has established a chain of 42 retail outlets and tie-ups with 13 State level Emporiums. The idea is to provide opportunities to the tribal artisans of the country to market their products on a sustained basis. TRIFED plans to expand this network to other cities as well so as to provide a larger market for tribal products.

Background: A National Workshop on Minimum Support Price for Minor Forest Produce Scheme was organised by Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED). Tribals constitute 8.6% of our population. Minor Forest Produce is very important to tribals economy. There is lack of proper storage facility and logistics. It is, therefore, important for the Government to intervene for supporting them. The MSP for MFP Scheme provides a safety net for these tribals. Although the Scheme was launched in 2014 it had mixed result for various reasons. Some states did well but in several other States the Scheme is yet to take off. The State has to play the role of an active player and not remain a mere spectator. The Scheme needs to be taken to the next level through value addition and synergy with the programmes of other departments. Minor Forest Produce (MFP) is a major source of livelihood for tribals who belong to the poorest of the poor

section of society. The importance of MFPs for this section of the society can be gauged from the fact that majority of 100 million tribals depend on MFPs for food, fodder, shelter, medicines and cash income. It provides them critical subsistence during the lean seasons, particularly for primitive tribal groups such as hunter gatherers, and the landless. Tribals derive 20-40% of their annual income from MFP on which they spend major portion of their time. This activity has strong linkage to women's financial empowerment as most of the MFPs are collected and used / sold by women. MFP sector has the potential to create about 10 million workdays jobs annually in the country.

Government of India has taken a number of initiatives for socio economic development of tribals like introduction of Forest Rights Act, PESA Act and has been implementing schemes for development of MFP by providing financial support to State TDCCs and TRIFED for market development of MFPs. Recognizing the critical importance which MFP hold for tribals and its potential to create large scale employment opportunity thereby, helping in reducing poverty and increasing empowerment of tribals particularly women and poor people of the poorest and backward districts of the country, Govt. of India has now decided to introduce an ambitious scheme of providing fair price for the MFP collected by tribals through Minimum Support Price (MSP).

The scheme has been started with the objective of providing fair price to MFP gatherers, enhance their income level and ensure sustainable harvesting of MFPs. The MSP scheme seeks to establish a framework to ensure fair prices for the produce collected by them, assurance of buying at a particular price, primary processing, storage, transportation etc while ensuring sustainability of the resource base. It is a holistic scheme for development of MFP trade and covers 24 non-nationalized / non-monopolized MFPs namely,

Karanj Seed, Mahua Seed, Sal Leaf, Sal Seed, Lac (Rangini & Kusumi), Chironjee, Wild Honey, Myrobalan, Tamarind, Gums (Gum Karaya), Kusum Seed, Neem Seed, Puwad Seed, Baheda, Hill Broom Grass, Shikakai, Guggul (exudate),

Bael (dried & without crust), Nagarmotha, Palash Kesuda (Flower), Shatavari (dried), Madhunashini, Kalmegh, Tamarind (de-seeded).

The scheme is applicable for implementation in all the States across India. Any de-nationalized MFP / items removed from the purview of monopoly procurement in future will also qualify for coverage under the Scheme. Similarly, any nationalized / monopolized procurement MFP will disqualify for coverage under the Scheme. However, if any State willingly wants any nationalized items to be included in MSP, then it shall have to change its nationalized status accordingly.

Government of India has extended financial support for part of working capital requirement of State Implementing Agencies and also share losses, if any, with the State Governments in the ratio of 75:25. It is expected that State level agencies which were not participating in procurement process due to fear of incurring losses will now aggressively pursue procurement and marketing of identified items under MSP as they are assured of financial support as well as substantial sharing of losses. It is expected to increase quantum of MFP procurement substantially thereby benefiting tribal people. The Scheme also envisages training of tribal MFP gatherers on sustainable harvesting and value addition activities including facilitation for marketing of the produces so that natural resources can be optimally utilized in a sustainable manner.

The scheme seeks to institutionalize various medium & long term aspects of sustainable collection, value addition, market infrastructure development, knowledge base expansion of MFPs, market intelligence development etc. Strengthening the bargaining power of Gram Sabhas / Panchayats and their involvement shall also be addressed and taken care of during implementation of the scheme.

Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India is the Nodal Ministry for implementation of the scheme which will announce Minimum Support Price (MSP) for the selected MFPs with the technical support from TRIFED. TRIFED will act as the Central Nodal Agency for implementation and monitoring of the

scheme through State level implementing agencies. State designated agencies will undertake procurement of notified MFPs directly from MFP gatherers (individual or collectives) at haats notified procurement centers at grass root level at prefixed Minimum Support Price and ensure full & timely on the spot payment to MFP gatherers.

Value Addition assumes critical importance in ensuring remunerative prices to the tribals in the renewed approach. Two stage value addition would be the cornerstone for enhancing livelihood income of the tribals under the scheme. The grassroot level procurement is proposed to be undertaken through SHGs associated with Implementing Agencies. Convergence and Networking with other Govt departments / scheme shall be undertaken to utilise the services of existing SHGs, Aajivika etc. These SHGs shall be appropriately empowered to undertake the procurement operations on scientific and systematic lines. The SHG members shall undertake preliminary value addition like cleaning, grading, drying & home level primary processing under the direction and supervision of State Implementing Agency. The stock after preliminary processing shall be supplied by these SHGs to the storage of State Implementing Agencies. For higher value addition of MFPs, Big Corporates shall be involved under PPP model. This PPP model will be based on utilising Private entrepreneur skills in undertaking processing as well as marketing of the produce and Central / State Government support in terms of creating infrastructure and providing enabling environment for undertaking value addition of systematic scientific lines. These will be sophisticated large value addition hubs managed by Private entrepreneur. The entire operation shall be monitored through State level committee headed by Chief Secretary and district level committees headed by District Collector for effective implementation of the provisions of the scheme. The scheme will touch the lives of tribal people involved in collection of MFPs across all the States and help optimum utilization of natural resources in a sustainable manner. This scheme will be an important milestone in economic development of tribals.

Mir Zahoor reviews Pampore, Awantipora, Khrew Municipal Committees functioning

8 parks to be developed in Pampore: Minister

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 25: Minister of State for Forest, Environment, Animal, Sheep Husbandry, Cooperative and Fisheries, Mir Zahoor Ahmad Monday said that the families living in village Kandzila MC Awantipora in district Pulwama to be covered under 'Housing for All'.

This was decided in an officers meeting chaired by the Minister convened to review the overall progress of construction of different works carried by the Municipal Committees of Pampore, Awantipora and Khrew here today.

The Minister asked the authorities of Urban Local Bodies (ULB) Department to conduct special survey of the area and prepare a Detailed Project Report (DPR) in this regard and start work on the project immediately. He asked them to construct individual latrine points to all in the

village and also instructed them to install 5 LED lights there.

It was decided in the meeting that the Department will provide two Hopper Vans each to Municipal Committee Pampore and Khrew soon to meet out the required needs.

Taking stock of working of Municipal Committee Pampore, the Minister asked the concerned to start construction work for up-gradation and development of 8 Parks in the Pampore and ensure timely completion of their work.

The Minister asked the concerned to demolish all illegal structures in Pampore Town and ensure that there should be no encroachment on State land.

While discussing the achievement registered in Municipal Committee Awantipora, it was informed in the meeting that 40 LED lights with an estimated cost of Rs 1.30

lakh were installed and the construction work on various ongoing developmental works under Integrated Development of Medium Towns (IDMT), Urban Development Sector (UDS), Normal and Constituency Development Fund (CDF) are apace in the area.

The Minister asked them to work with utmost dedication and speed up the pace of work on all ongoing works and complete them in a stipulated time frame.

Mir Zahoor directed the ULB Department to start construction work on Shopping Complex at Awantipora for which he announced for release of an amount of Rs 5 lakh out of CDF. He also asked them that the shopping complex should be modern and Mall type.

Detailed discussions were also held on status of works executed under different heads in Municipal

Committee Khrew during 2017-2018. It was informed in the meeting that 80 LED lights were repaired and 60 LED lights were installed in the area. It was also given in the meeting that 12 different types of works were taken up at an estimated cost of Rs 86.68 lakh in Khrew area and the construction work on these projects are apace.

Mir Zahoor directed for construction of public Park and Shelter Shed at Khrew. He also asked authorities of MC Khrew to speed up the tendering process of all developmental works within a week's time.

The UEED authorities informed the meeting that a drainage scheme project Khrew stands already submitted to the concerned quarter for accord of their approval.

During the meeting, issues of Zaffron Sumo Associations were also discussed and the Minister

directed the concerned to settle their genuine issues on priority.

Addressing the meeting, the Minister said that the present Government headed by Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti was taking appropriate measures for upgrading the civic facilities in all Municipal Committees of the State. He said special focus is on the development of roads, cleanliness, improvement of drainage system and equal attention is being paid for the beautification of the towns. He asked the officers to redouble their efforts and ensure that the available funds should be utilized in full and judiciously. Mir Zahoor also asked them to achieve the fixed targets of the current fiscal in full. The meeting was attended by the Director, ULB Kashmir Riyaz Ahmad and other Senior Officers of Local and Urban Development Department and UEED.

Prime Minister to address Valedictory Session of Assistant Secretaries

New Delhi, September 25: The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will address Valedictory Session of the Assistant Secretaries (IAS-2015 batch) here tomorrow. This is the third batch of IAS Officers to have commenced their career with a stint in the Central Government.

All the 175 Officers were designated and posted as Assistant Secretaries by the Government of India in 42 Ministries (58 Departments) of the Central Government for three months from July 03, 2017 to September 29, 2017 after their Phase-II training at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie.

During their three-month central deputation they were provided a holistic overview of the functioning of the Central Government through individual projects, group projects, concurrent review of projects suggested by earlier batches with a view to providing exposure of office functioning of Government of India to the young IAS officers at a very early stage in their career.

The Officers were assigned important desks related to Policy and Flagship Programmes of the concerned Ministries and Departments. They were groomed by mentoring from nine sectoral Groups of Secretaries. The Assistant Secretaries made presentations of the key learning before their Mentor Groups where 35 presentations were shortlisted. Eight of the shortlisted 35 have been selected for presentations to be made before the Prime Minister.

The objective of this Initiative is to provide exposure of Government of India functioning to the IAS officers at a very early stage in their career. As primary implementers in the field, this exposure also facilitates a broader macro-perspective when they work in the field.

Chief of the Air Staff to Address Pacific Air Chiefs Symposium At Hawaii

New Delhi, September 25: Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa, Chief of the Air Staff is on an official visit to USA from 26-28 Sep 17 to attend Pacific Air Chiefs Symposium at Hawaii. The visit is intended to further strengthen the existing defence cooperation between the Air Forces of the participating countries in the Pacific region. In addition to the hosts, there would be Air Chiefs from 18 countries including Australia and Japan attending the Symposium.

During his stay at Joint Base Pearl Harbour - Hickam, Hawaii, the CAS would be addressing Air Chiefs from various Air Forces attending the Symposium. In his talk he will delve on the Indian Air Force's perspective on the challenges to Regional Security. The Symposium is aimed at strengthening relationships, enabling engagement in productive exchanges and promote understanding of joint issues and challenges.

Swachhta Hi Seva: ADC Bandipora inaugurates cleanliness drive

BANDIPORA, SEPTEMBER 25: Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Bandipora, Khursheed Ahmad Sanai today visited Laherwalpora and Hari Bathe areas situated on the banks of Wullar Lake and inaugurated sanitation drive under 'Swachhta Hi Seva' campaign.

The ADC was accompanied by Deputy Chief Education Officer, officers of the district administration including Rural Development Department, Municipality, Revenue, Media Persons, locals and school children.

On the occasion garbage from various areas was collected and



disposed off. The ADC said that the aim of visiting the village is to carry

forward the nationwide sanitation campaign which started on Septem-

ber 15 to every village of the district. He said district administration is covering all the 21 villages situated at the banks of Wullar Lake. He urged upon the locals to take active part in the sanitation campaign.

The ADC also visited Bilal Ahmad Dar of Laherwalpora, who was appointed as brand ambassador by SMC Srinagar for his continuous efforts in collecting plastic and gar-

bage from the Wullar Lake. He interacted with his family members and announced that the district administration will bare all expenses for the continuation of education of Bilal.

He also visited High School at the village and addressed the students there and asked them to carry the message of importance of cleanliness to their homes.

During the visit, various deputations also met the ADC and projected their demands. The ADC directed the concerned to be prompt in addressing the grievances of the people.

DAILY Editorial
Time and Us
SRINAGAR J&K

The faltering economy

A set of weak economic numbers has left the Central government scrambling to do something to set things in order. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley last week promised appropriate action to revive the economy without going too much into the details of what could be in store. There is, however, talk that increased fiscal spending to the tune of ₹50,000 crore or more may be approved by the government to make up for lack of private investment. This comes after the expansion in gross domestic product slowed to a multi-year low of 5.7% in the first quarter of 2017-18, and industrial output growth dropped to 1.2% in July, compared to 4.5% a year earlier. In addition, retail price inflation jumped to a five-month high of 3.36% in August from 2.36% in July, further dimming the prospects of a monetary stimulus from the Reserve Bank of India to help boost the economy. The demonetisation of high-value rupee notes in November, and the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax this year seem to be the most proximate causes behind the lacklustre growth numbers released so far. But, as many have pointed out over the last few months, the economy has been decelerating for the last five quarters. In such a case, demonetisation and GST have merely brought to the fore a more fundamental weakness in the economy.

Increased fiscal spending is unlikely to provide more than short-term relief to this problem, as it will not address any of the production bottlenecks in the economy. In addition, any loosening of the fiscal deficit target will affect India's standing among global investors and project the image of a government resorting to fiscal stimulus to make up for the lack of more meaningful reforms. The real antidote to the current slowdown, on the other hand, is known all too well. The various rigidities in the market for land and labour have been holding back the economy for decades now, stopping investors from risking their capital on large-scale projects needed to boost growth. Further, the overall unease involved in doing business in the country and the even larger uncertainty looming around the rules that govern the conduct of business have seriously held back growth. It is no surprise then that, as reflected in the sluggish credit offtake numbers, private investment has failed to make sufficient use of the country's relatively high private savings rate. But successive governments have found it easier to kick the can down the road rather than enact politically uneasy reforms needed to address the problem facing the economy. India's major macroeconomic numbers, despite the recent worsening of the current account deficit, are still quite stable compared to a few years ago. The government must rise to the challenge and enact tough structural reforms, instead of finding an easy way out through the fiscal door.

NEW SLAVE TRADE

By VIKHAR

FOUR years ago, Aryan Lama, then 17, was working as a driver in Kakarbhitta in Nepal. He intended to marry Roshni, the girl of his dreams. Looking to augment their incomes, the couple reached Siliguri in northern West Bengal where they met an agent who lured them with promises of secure jobs and substantial salaries. Little did they know that they were on their way to becoming bonded labourers in south India. They were brought via Delhi to Tirupattur, a town in Vellore district in Tamil Nadu, where they were put to work in an agarbatti factory.

After a few days, Lama was separated from Roshni, whom he has not seen again. For three years, he laboured in Tirupattur before he was moved to a similar factory on the outskirts of Bangalore. Promised a salary of Rs.6,500 a month, he was given nothing except basic food and a place to sleep. He had to work 18 hours a day and was not allowed to leave the premises of the factory, where he had to share his sleeping quarters with more than 100 other workers.

Lama was finally rescued on May 28, along with 106 other trafficked workers, from the jail-like conditions in which they had been held. Lama told Frontline: "We were not allowed to talk to one another or leave the premises, [which were] guarded by Rottweilers. We were also beaten very regularly. My work was to pack the rolled agarbattis, and the food that they gave us was fit only for pigs!"

The rescue was conducted by a team led by the Karnataka Police's Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU), including members of an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) called International Justice Mission (IJM). The AHTU is a constituent unit of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) while the IJM works on issues of bonded labour. This was the largest rescue conducted in a single raid in Bangalore. Of the 107 bonded labourers, 43 came from West Bengal and 40 from Assam, while 22 came from Jharkhand and two from Nepal.

Two other workers who were rescued that day were Bablu Lakda and Panchu Kujor, both 35 and members of a Scheduled Tribe (S.T.). They were brought to Bangalore 20 months ago from a tea plantation in Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. "We were promised wages of Rs.9,000 a month when the agent recruited us, but forget that, they did not even give me medicine when I was suffering from typhoid. I couldn't even inform my relatives about my precarious state as they never let us call our relatives back home," Lakda said.

More than 200 kilometres away, in the rural hinterland of southern Karnataka, Malinayaka, 55, was having a rare off day because of severe illness. He lives in Udbur colony, which is part of Annur gram panchayat in H.D. Kote taluk of Mysore district. A member of the Nayaka Scheduled Tribe, Malinayaka had borrowed Rs.60,000 from his Vokkaliga landlord 12 years ago to conduct the wedding of his eldest daughter. He gets paid a lump sum of Rs.18,000 during the Ugadi festival every year when oral contracts are renewed. His fellow workers, on the other hand, are paid Rs.200 a day. He cannot seek work elsewhere or leave his



village without clearing his loan. Malinayaka has worked as a bonded labourer for 45 years of his life with three different landlords.

Between bouts of coughing, he described his life as a bonded labourer: "I've been working for 12 years now in lieu of repayment. My day begins at six in the morning and continues till late at night. Work is especially tough when the tobacco plants need to be roasted. Elephants are also a menace when crops are ready to be sown and sometimes I have to stay up in a watchtower through the night to scare them away. There are no holidays. On days when I cannot turn up for work, my son is supposed to work."

Malinayaka's case is not unique. This correspondent met three other jeethas, as bonded labourers are called in Karnataka, in the same taluk, who were bonded to their landlords for various time periods after having taken advances ranging from Rs.20,000 to Rs.50,000. Often, there is a system of patronage in place enforced by caste hierarchy where the labourer feels obligated to work for his landlord. The lack of a written agreement and the illiteracy of the bonded labourers enable landlords to exploit them.

The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act (BLA) of 1976, defines, in a lengthy paragraph, the "bonded labour system" as a system of forced labour under which the debtor enters into an agreement with the creditor in consideration of an advance (usually) and in return offers his labour free or for nominal wages. He also forfeits his freedom of employment and the right to move freely and to sell his labour at the appropriate market rate. Both the case studies discussed above, from urban and rural Karnataka, are clear examples of bonded labour. The case of Malinayaka is the traditional and more commonly understood version of bonded labour while the case of Lama and other rescued labourers is an example of the mutating form of bonded labour in the unorganised sector, where trafficking with the intention to exploit is the major feature. Both these forms of bonded labour are widely prevalent in Karnataka. In a 2013 report, the Walk Free Foundation, an international organisation working for the eradication of slavery, said: "The country with the largest estimated number of people in modern slavery is India, [with] between 13.3 million and 14.7 million people enslaved." Slavery here refers to bonded

labour. Jan Breman, a Dutch sociologist with expertise in labour issues, estimates that close to 50 million people are trapped in debt bondage labour in India. Siddharth Kara, a fellow on Human Trafficking with the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and author of *Bonded Labour: Tackling the System of Slavery in South Asia*, makes a more modest estimate of 11.7 million bonded labourers in the entire country. These varying estimates, while clearly pointing to the wide prevalence of bonded labour in India, also show how difficult it is to accurately estimate the extent of bondage.

Karnataka figures high on the list of agricultural bonded labourers. The Annual Report of the Ministry of Labour and Employment (2008-09) shows that 63,437 bonded labourers have been released in the State since the BLA came into effect. This is only second to the figure of Tamil Nadu, where 65,573 bonded labourers were released in the same period. On the other hand, larger States such as Uttar Pradesh (28,846) and Madhya Pradesh (13,317) had fewer bonded labourers released. Two contrasting inferences can be drawn from these data: either Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have a much higher incidence of bonded labour or the BLA has been more stringently implemented in these States when compared with larger States in north India. Existing information does not provide sufficient data to arrive at either conclusion convincingly.

A dedicated organisation in Karnataka, the Jeetha Vimukti Karnataka (Bonded Labour Free Karnataka), which has been active since the mid-1990s, has made substantial contributions in identifying and releasing bonded labour. Jeevika, as the organisation is commonly known, has a presence in all districts of the State (down to the gram panchayat level) and draws its activists from families of bonded labourers. This is one of the reasons for its success in identifying bonded labour, as its activists empathise with and recognise cases of bonded labour. Their strategy is to visit a particular village at night and discuss issues of agricultural labour. Its activists are trained in understanding bonded labour in the context of the prevalent caste hierarchies of the region. Jeevika claims to have facilitated and secured the release of several thousand bonded labourers since 1993. Basavaraj, its Mysore district convener, said 842 bonded labourers were officially freed in H.D. Kote taluk between 2001 and

2014. Kiran Kamal Prasad, the coordinator of Jeevika, said, "Bonded labour in agriculture in Karnataka still has some remnants of the traditional form involving the patron-and-client relationship. Most of it is now reduced to economic transactions. Thus, bonded labourers, 85 to 90 per cent of whom belong to S.C. [Scheduled Caste] and S.T. communities, are vulnerable to the worst form of exploitation from within the feudal system as well as the capitalist system which agriculture has become a part of."

The Karnataka Action Plan on Bonded Labour, 2008, referred to the National Sample Survey (NSS) data that estimated that 6 per cent of agricultural labour in Karnataka was bonded. When calculated using Census 2001 data, this would amount to around 3,73,617 workers, Prasad said. "If we include bonded labour that is increasingly found in occupations in the unorganised sector like brick kilns, stone quarries, etc., the present number of bonded labour in Karnataka could be around six lakh," Prasad added.

This number is difficult to verify independently as there is no nodal entity in the State that keeps track of bonded labour across agricultural and other unorganised sectors. While the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR) Department keeps track of bonded labourers in agriculture, the AHTU is responsible for looking at issues of trafficked labour. The formation of the AHTU in 2013 at the State level after the amendment to Section 370 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which deals with the trafficking of persons for exploitation, has significantly improved the detection and subsequent rescue of trafficked bonded labourers in Karnataka.

Esther Daniel, a Bangalore-based director of IJM, gives a pointer to the number of trafficked labourers. She says she has personally been involved in missions in seven districts in southern Karnataka that rescued close to 2,500 labourers over the past eight years. This is only the tip of the iceberg. "The trafficked labour comes from Odisha (mainly from the impoverished Balangir district), Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Chhattisgarh. Within Karnataka, we find that a lot of migrants from backward districts in north Karnataka are trafficked and made to work in appalling conditions," she said. Trafficked bonded labour is heavily used in brick kilns and rock quarries around Bangalore. Within the city, rescue operations have been conducted in bag-making and agarbatti-manufacturing units and rice mills.

Official freedom is secured when the labourer is given a release certificate by the Deputy Commissioner (Collector) of the district. The certificate is accompanied with a lump sum Rs.20,000 (equally shared by the State and Central governments) to kickstart the rehabilitation of the labourer. Often, the compensation payment is delayed. In Nanjanyana Colony of Kasaba Hobli in H.D. Kote taluk, for instance, 11 bonded labourers belonging to the Adi Karnataka caste (a Scheduled Caste belonging to the Holeya Dalit agglomeration in the State) were given release certificates in 2012, but their compensation remains unpaid. With limited employment options in the village, they have to seek employment again from hostile landlords.

Call drops to an older age

Mini Kapoor

You have to be of a certain age to feel at your heart each time smartphones are made smarter. This month, when Apple unveiled its iPhone X with facial recognition software obviating the need for a passcode for a user to open her phone, it was not just questions of security and surveillance that presented themselves. This way of intimately locking a phone to its (presumably) owner threatened to take us yet another step away from an older civility of sharing the use of a communication device.

An object now obsolete
Mobile phones have, no doubt, made getting around our world much easier. As Robin Jeffrey and Assa Doron wrote in their detailed account, *Cellphone Nation: How Mobile Phones Have Revolutionized Business, Politics and Ordinary Lives in India*: "The cheap mobile phone is the most disruptive device to hit humanity since shoes." There is no need to list these revolutionary changes, as we could probably chant them in unison together, with no prior coordination. It is, however, bracing to be reminded of an object that's been made almost obsolete with this revolution: the phone booth.

In a slim, pocket-sized book in the Object Lessons series, called *Phone Booth*, Ariana Kelly interweaves the history of this once "ordinary" thing with philosophical questions of privacy and sanctuaries as well as copious references to popular culture to convey a sense of what is being lost. As an aside, in India we experienced the truly liberating consequences of the public phone via the public call offices (or PCOs) with which the telecom revolution swept our landscape, so that when someone says pay phone, it's that particular shade of yellow that lights up in our minds and not the sound of the coin-drop facility as in older times. But no matter where you are and what the shape of the telephone box or kiosk you were exposed to, all the talk continues to be centred on how to repurpose not just the actual booth, but also the idea. She lists them. As public Wi-Fi hotspots. As local libraries, as in London. As ATMs. Even as a work of art, as the public graffiti artist Banksy so strikingly managed when a broken red telephone box lying flat with a hammer on its side, and a pool of "blood" on the ground, appeared on a London sidewalk.

Kelly, who teaches literature and comparative religion in the U.S., however, opens the book with a description



of an abandoned phone booth put to a more therapeutic use, and one based on the notes, advertisements, and pointless messages that one found at these spots. "Standing in a garden in Otsuchi, a small town in the Iwate prefecture, on the east

coast of Japan, there is a nonworking telephone booth that has nevertheless been used by more than ten thousand people since the spring of 2011," she writes. The reference is to the massive earthquake and tsunami that killed

15,000 people and devastated the lives of hundreds of thousands more. A local resident set up the booth as a place to leave a message for lost ones, calling it "Phone Booth of the Winds". There was an unconnected rotary dial telephone instrument, but the mode of communication was paper and pencil, inviting visitors to leave messages "and trust that the wind will carry the contents to their intended recipients." It was a measure of the installation's powerful effect that when it was damaged by inclement weather some years later, she says contributions poured in for its repair.

The phone booth, in its era, was many things, and Kelly counts them evocatively. It was a sanctuary. It was a place of privacy — and her account of Howard Hughes, the wealthy aviator-entrepreneur made yet more eccentric by an obsessive-compulsive disorder, touches our anxiety about the ease of surveillance in the cell phone age. As his disorder became more acute, Hughes became fearful that he could be tracked, and he had his staff install a series of phone booths in his living quarters. Yet, it was also a shared space: you did not have a care about the antecedents of who used the phone before or after you.

In fact, the phone booth assumed a

certain awareness about those waiting to use the phone, so that conversations were clipped to allow the next person her call. It assumed a certain posture: "Virtually no one stands up straight; nearly everyone leans, usually against the triangular shelf beneath the telephone, or against the wall of the booth itself. They follow the line of the telephone, which follows the line of the face. It is an angle of nonchalance, absorption, self-importance, seduction; they are on the verge of sliding."

Compare this with the clumsy posture of the mobile age, while walking for instance. Do a time-lapse photograph of a busy sidewalk, with an older-era demographic of nobody talking on the phone, and there will be a certain grace to the trajectory. With folks talking as they walk, however, that flow of the sidewalk changes, as Alexandra Horowitz describes so well in *On Looking: Eleven Walks with Expert Eyes*: "[Pedestrians] no longer follow the rules that make walking on a crowded sidewalk go smoothly: they do not align themselves (they swerve); they do not avoid (they bump); and they do not slip behind and between others (they blunder)."

And this was written in the time before augmented reality!

BHU lathi charge: Sack VC and set up a probe, says Congress

The Congress on Monday hit out at the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh over a lathi charge on women students of the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and demanded the immediate sacking of the Vice Chancellor and a judicial probe by a sitting High Court judge into the incident.

Congress spokesperson Manish Tewari questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's silence over the "preposterous and shocking" incident, and asked what his stand was on the "atrocities" perpetrated on the students in Varanasi, his parliamentary constituency.

Describing the VC as "incorrigible" and "insensitive", Mr. Tewari asked Mr. Modi if such a person could head an institute of academic excellence like the BHU. "We demand that the President of India, who is the visitor of the university, immediately take cognisance of what has happened in BHU and sack the vice chancellor," he told reporters here.

Attacks BJP rule in Uttar Pradesh
Attacking the BJP and its rule in Uttar Pradesh, Mr. Tewari said the government had been a "failure" on all fronts and accused it of "shedding crocodile tears".



"We demand an inquiry by a sitting High Court judge that should go into all the facts and circumstances as to how this atrocity was perpetrated and hold all those persons who were responsible for ordering this lathi charge to account," Mr. Tewari said.

The former Union minister recalled the words of nationalist leader and BHU founder Madan Mohan Malviya, saying those who set up the university created a very secular and pluralistic centre of learning that catered

to all communities.

He said at the time of its creation, Malviya had said, "India is not a country of the Hindus only; it is a country of the Muslims, the Christians and the Parsis, too. The country can gain strength and develop itself only if people of different communities in India live in mutual goodwill and harmony".

Questions Modi's silence
The Congress leader, while questioning Mr. Modi's silence, asked, "We

would like to know from the Prime Minister of India where does he stand on this atrocity which has been perpetrated on women students in his own parliamentary constituency".

He also asked Mr. Modi whether a person who is "so insensitive" to the genuine concerns of students deserved to be the university VC.

"The incorrigible vice chancellor of this university, rather than being sympathetic to the students, turned around and told the girls that if you are so conscious of your modesty, why do you step out after 6 O'clock in the evening," Mr. Tewari claimed.

He said rather than empathising with them, the university "colluded in the most barbaric lathi charge".

He also took a dig at the BJP's 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' campaign and said the incident was the "perpetration of the most unspeakable atrocities" against the students who were protesting against alleged molestation and were seeking a safer campus.

A number of students, including women, and two journalists were injured in a baton charge by the police in BHU where a protest against alleged sexual harassment turned violent on Saturday night.

Committee headed by UP Chief Secretary to probe BHU incident, says Governor

Uttar Pradesh Governor Ram Naik on Monday said a committee headed by the Chief Secretary has been constituted to go into the protest in the Banaras Hindu University campus over an alleged eve-teasing incident.

A number of students, including women, and two journalists were injured in a baton charge by the police in the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) where a protest on Saturday night against an alleged eve-teasing incident turned violent.

"A committee has been constituted under the chief secretary. Necessary action will be taken on the basis of its report. The committee will see as to how the police had behaved and examine other aspects," he said.

Mr. Naik was responding to queries from media persons here about the incident.

The governor described the incident as sad. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has already ordered a probe into the incident.

In the wake of the violence, the university has advanced the puja holidays from



tomorrow till October 2. Earlier, the holidays were to have started from September 28.

Violence erupted after some students, protesting against the alleged eve-teasing incident of Thursday, wanted to meet the Vice Chancellor at his residence on Saturday night, according to police and university sources.

A BHU spokesperson said some students wanted to "forcibly" enter the VC's residence but they were stopped by the security guards of the university. Subsequently, there was stone pelting by "outsiders" who had joined the students. Police then used batons to control the situation.

Mulayam rules out forming new party as of now

Samajwadi Party (SP) patron Mulayam Singh Yadav on Monday ruled out forming a party "as of now", ending speculation that he may part ways amid the continuing battle for supremacy in the party, which he formed 25 years ago.

Blowing hot and cold, the 77-year-old SP patriarch said his blessings were with his son Akhilesh Yadav though he did not agree with the decisions made by him.

"I am not forming any party as of now," Mr. Mulayam said at a press conference in Lucknow.

Speculation was rife in political circles that he is likely to announce a new outfit at the press conference along with the virtually defunct Lok Dal, while retaining the 'samajwadi' tag in its name.

"Baap bete me kab tak matbhed rah sakta hai, koi nahi keh sakta" [No one can say for sure how long differences will remain between father and son]," he said to a question.

Shivpal absent
Interestingly, Mr. Mulayam's brother and comrade-in-arms Shivpal was not present at the press meet.

When asked about his absence, Mr. Mulayam said he was away in Etawah-Mainpuri — the Yadav bastion — for some important work.

Both Mr. Mulayam and



Mr. Shivpal were sidelined by Mr. Akhilesh ever since he snatched the crown of SP chief from his father at the party's national convention on January 1.

Mr. Mulayam said his son had promised to leave the post of party president after staying at the helm for three months but he did not do so. "People who cannot stand by their words cannot succeed," he said, adding, "jo baap ka na hua wo kiska hoga" [one who cannot side with his father, will be of no one]," he said.

Asked as to whether he was with Mr. Akhilesh or Mr. Shivpal, Mr. Mulayam parried a direct reply, saying, "I am with samajwadi people."

"Time for Opposition unity"

He said that when people were suffering from back-breaking price rise and the BJP had "failed" to fulfil its promises in the past three

years, "it is high time for all like-minded people to unite".

On being asked to comment on Mr. Akhilesh terming disgruntled leaders as "fake samajwadi", Mr. Mulayam said, "only he can tell who he is talking about."

As soon as Mr. Mulayam's press conference ended, Mr. Akhilesh tweeted, "netaji zindabad, Samajwadi Party zindabad".

Ahead of the press meet, strains were palpable as Mr. Mulayam and Mr. Shivpal had stayed away from a state convention of the party on Saturday, saying they were not invited.

Posters at the SP convention here did not have pictures of Mr. Mulayam and Mr. Shivpal, giving ample hints about their place in the party.

Last week, Mr. Mulayam replaced Akhilesh loyalist Ram Gopal Yadav with Mr. Shivpal as the secretary of

the Lohia Trust, the venue of Monday's press conference.

Mr. Shivpal announced in June that he would float a 'Samajwadi Secular Front' "to fight communal forces".

Saturday's convention saw a realignment of forces within the SP. Senior leader Azam Khan attended the event and lashed out at the "people who have betrayed the party", in an apparent reference to Mr. Shivpal, his one-time friend and confidant.

Surprise presence

Another surprise presence was that of MP Beni Prasad Varma, whose inclusion in the party last year was said to have triggered the battle within the family.

On Sunday, in his address, Mr. Akhilesh cautioned his supporters against "fake samajwadis".

As in the past, Akhilesh, however, struck an emotional note when he said, "Netaji [Mr. Mulayam] is my father and this party belongs to him. His blessings are with us and we will carry forward his legacy. My father has always been with us and will remain with us."

Taking full control of the party after being crowned as its head and allotted the 'bicycle' symbol by the Election Commission on January 16, Mr. Akhilesh has been going full throttle consolidating his grip over the party.

Rahul Gandhi has undermined India's image, says BJP



BJP president Amit Shah countered the offensive mounted by Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi, during the latter's tour of the United States, by asserting that the ruling party believed in the politics of performance rather than dynasty.

Mr. Shah was addressing a meeting of the BJP's extended National Executive in New Delhi including all lawmakers from the party, and chief ministers and deputy chief ministers of States where BJP is in power singly or in coalition.

Railway minister Piyush Goyal briefed the media about the speech which, apart from

this counter to Mr. Gandhi, lauded the Narendra Modi-led government over its performance in the economic, diplomatic and internal security policies.

"The BJP president gave a befitting reply to Mr. Rahul Gandhi armed with facts and figures. He (Rahul Gandhi) should answer what the Congress has given the country apart from scams amounting to Rs 12,000 crores and a politics of appeasement."

"The BJP believes in the politics of performance and is oriented to improving people's lives through governance. That is why the President of India, the vice presi-

dent, the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha are all people who have made it to these posts on the basis of merit," Mr. Goyal quoted Mr. Shah as saying.

"We welcome competitive politics, the longer Mr. Gandhi is in public life the better for us," said Mr. Goyal as an aside.

Campaign in Kerala, West Bengal
Mr. Shah also announced a fortnight-long campaign between October 13-17 to be undertaken by the party in Kerala to protest against political violence allegedly by the Left-led government in the State.

West Bengal and Kerala were clearly flagged as areas

where the party sought to increase its footprint and both opposition-led State governments were criticised by the BJP chief for turning a blind eye to political violence.

The BJP chief also gave details of his organizational tour, of up to 110 days, that he undertook after the last National Executive of the party in Bhubaneswar.

Out of 9,60,000 polling booths across the country, the party has managed to deploy its own workers in 7,63,947. The National Executive also thanked the 4,600 full time workers who spent six months in various States for this purpose.

Lalu Prasad skips CBI questioning in IRCTC hotel scam, seeks 15 days time

RJD chief Lalu Prasad on Monday again skipped questioning by the CBI, the second time in a month, in a case against him and his son Tejashwi Yadav over alleged irregularities in issuing contracts for two IRCTC hotels in 2006 to a private company.

Lalu Prasad's advocate, through a letter, informed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Monday afternoon that his client would not be able to join the investigation in response to the summons issued on September 22 seeking his presence at the CBI headquarters here.

"His advocate submitted a letter to us on behalf of the leader seeking two weeks' time to appear before the investigators in the IRCTC case," a CBI official said.

The CBI on September 22 issued fresh summons to Lalu Prasad and his son to appear before the agency on September 25 and 26.

Earlier, the CBI summoned the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief and his son, the former deputy minister of Bihar, on September 7 to report at its headquarters in Lodhi Road area of south Delhi for



questioning on September 11 and 12.

The CBI had on July 5 filed a corruption case against Lalu Prasad, his wife Rabri Devi and Tejashwi Yadav for alleged irregularities when Lalu Prasad was the railway minister from 2004 to 2009.

The contracts for two Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) hotels at Ranchi and Puri were handed over to Sujata Hotels company owned by Vijay and Vinay Kochhar in lieu of an alleged bribe in the form

of a plot of prime land in Bihar, the CBI said.

According to the CBI, Lalu Prasad allegedly granted illegal favours to Sujata Hotels through the IRCTC, and the tender process for the development, maintenance, and operation of the

two hotels was manipulated in exchange for the three-acre plot in Patna where a mall is coming up.

The CBI, which registered the case under charges of criminal conspiracy, cheating under the Indian Penal Code and sections of Prevention of the Corruption Act, claimed that the kickbacks were paid through a 'benami' company owned by Sarla Gupta, wife of RJD MP Prem Chand Gupta.

The CBI FIR alleged that Vinay Kochhar sold three acres of land in Patna through 10 sale deeds on

February 25, 2005, for Rs 1.47 crore to Delight Marketing Company in which Sarla Gupta was a director.

The FIR alleged that the land was sold at a price below circle and market rates and was falsely shown as agricultural land to evade substantial stamp duty.

During the CBI's preliminary inquiry, the agency purportedly found that the said land was sold by the Kochhars to Delight Marketing, and payment was arranged through Ahluwalia Contractors and its promoter Bikramjeet Singh Ahluwalia.

The Enforcement Directorate, which is also probing the financial irregularities in the case, have questioned Ahluwalia and also summoned Sujata Hotels owners for questioning.

The ED had, on July 27, registered a separate case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act following the CBI FIR and is probing allegations against Lalu Prasad and others for alleged transaction of money through shell companies.

Former home secretary Rajiv Mehrishi takes over as CAG of India

Former home secretary Rajiv Mehrishi took over as the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India on Monday.

Mehrishi succeeded Shashi Kant Sharma, who demitted office on Friday, officials said.

President Ram Nath Kovind administered the oath of office and secrecy to Mehrishi, 62, at a function in Rashtrapati Bhavan, which was attended by Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi among other dignitaries, they said.

According to the officials, Mehrishi's appointment was recently cleared by the government.

Mehrishi, a 1978 batch (retired) Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of Rajasthan cadre, completed his two-year fixed term as the home secretary last month.

Sharma had taken over as the CAG on May 23, 2013. He was defence secretary prior to his appointment as the CAG. Mehrishi will have a tenure of about three years.

The CAG is appointed for a term of six years or till the incumbent attains the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.

As a constitutional functionary, the CAG is primarily entrusted with the responsibility of auditing the accounts of the Union government and of the state governments.



CAG reports are laid before Parliament and legislatures of the states.

Mehrishi, who hails from Rajasthan, holds Master of Business Administration degree from the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow (UK).

He also possess Master of Arts (MA) and Bachelor of Arts (BA) degrees from Delhi University.

Mehrishi has held several posts in his state cadre Rajasthan and in the Centre. Before his appointment as the home secretary, he worked as economic affairs secretary and chief secretary of Rajasthan.

Mehrishi has also worked as secretary in departments of chemicals and fertilisers, and Overseas Indian Affairs.

The joy of Puja platter

I have not met Aunty Iti, but I sure would like to. I can imagine what her dining table would look like – laden with some of the best known dishes of Bengal, from fish and mutton preparations, to fries and cutlets, stuffed vegetables and chutneys. Being a card-holding feminist – let me remind new readers that I protested in front of a Miss India pageant many years ago – I do not belong to that school of thought which states that the best chefs are always men. Though some of my best friends are men who cook, and rather well, I hold with high regard women who have been cooking delicious stuff – and writing about it, too. Consider all these names from Bengal – Bunny Gupta, Jaya Chaliha, Minakshie Das Gupta, Chitrita Banerjee, Satarupa Banerjee. I rely on their books whenever I want to try out something interesting from Bengal.

And now I think I need to get some recipes out of Iti Aunty, who is based in Kolkata and is known to wield a mean ladle. I had a special thaala – that's thaali in Bengali – curated by her at the Monkey Bar the other evening, and have been licking my fingers ever since. The festival – on from tomorrow (September 24) to September 30 – is a Puja special that also seeks to celebrate what is called pate puja in Bengal, or worshipping the stomach.

I am, as you know, very fond of the Monkey Bar. The CP outlet has shut down, but the one in the Vasant Kunj Market is so full of life that I feel years younger whenever I am there. There's loud music, no doubt, but the lights that glitter from funky chandeliers, the great menu and the friendly staff all make for a very happy meal.

And I had a very, very happy meal when I was invited to try out 'Iti Aunty's Pujor Special Thaala'. There are three kinds of platters on offer – with fish (₹ 1299 plus taxes), with chicken (₹ 1199 plus taxes), and vegetarian (₹ 999 plus taxes). Every thaala has in common aloor dom, a Bengali variation of dum aloo, flavoured with cumin and other spices, begun kasundi, which is an eggplant dish with a sharp mustard flavour, plastic chutney, cooked with raw papayas, and tomato chutney.

I opted for the fish thhaala which also included fish kachori, bhoona khichri with fried mourula fish, steamed prawns wrapped in pumpkin leaves, fish cutlet and kamala bhetki. Each one was delicious.

The gravy in the kamala bhetki was lightly flavoured with oranges, so it was mildly sweet, as Bengali food can be. The prawns were sharp with mustard and the fish cutlet – with mashed boneless fish mixed with potato, crumbed



and fried – was just right.

I have had various kinds of kachoris, or Bengali kochuris, but the fish kochuri was one of a kind, with a filling of mashed

bhetki. The kachori, soft and puffy like a puri, was absolutely superb. I enjoyed the khichri immensely, too. It had been cooked with the fragrant gobindo bhog

rice and moong dal, flavoured with ghee and topped with fried onions and fried mourula fish.

Mourula is a small fish that I think

is best eaten when fried with just a coating of salt, chillies and turmeric. Here they had put a besan batter around the fish. The problem with the fish is that it has to be eaten fresh off the kadhai, because if kept out for a while, it goes limp in this weather.

The kasundi – a strong and mildly bitter mustard sauce – gave the begun kasundi a nice kick and I happily finished off the plastic chutney – so called because of its light, translucent look.

The chicken thaala includes mughlai porotas, flaky, fried bread that Calcutta is known for, bhoona khichuri with chicken meatballs, chicken chop, chicken kosha and omelette curry, which is a great Bengali favourite of omelette pieces in a light gravy.

The vegetarian thaala has luchi, or maida puris, parwal stuffed with cottage cheese, dhokar dalna, steamed dal cakes in gravy, sukto, a light vegetable mix, mildly bitter and sweet, steamed rice, apart from the four common dishes.

The platter didn't come with a sweet. I told Chef Himmat, the man on the spot, he'd have a mini Bengali rebellion at hand if there was no dessert. I got a call yesterday to say that mishti doi has now been added to the platter – which I think is a great idea.

This may sound corny, but I have just two words for the festival – De taali.

Home is where food is

It's strange what you miss in different places, especially in terms of food. Travelling from one place to another means arriving in the particular culinary pleasures offered by that destination, but it also means that a new sector of deprivation opens up simultaneously. If you happen to be visiting somewhere for a short period, then this is fine: you enjoy the local foodings in all their pomp and peculiarity, and then you move on before the lack of this or that makes itself felt. The problem arises when you go somewhere for a stretch, say, for a couple of months, and bits of your taste-bud operating system begin to experience small glitches.

Within India, coming home to Calcutta, I can find some of the best variations of north Indian dishes, the vegetarian items as well as the biryanis, kebabs and the meat and chicken gravy dishes, but I can never find the perfect naan or lachha parantha that I get in Delhi or its environs. Vice versa, there was no question of getting decent Bangla food in either Delhi or Bombay, barring enclaves like Chittaranjan Park. This much is easy to understand: while some taste-things manage to travel from their home base, others don't. While some foods drop roots (including supply chains for ingredients that need to be brought from the original territory), others find it impossible (example, think how idli-dosai have become equally 'authentic' all over India).

Half a meal
The next thing that's also more or less understandable



is what happens when you carry with you some precious food to eat far away from its point of origin. So, you come home to your warm tropical city and quickly refrigerate the four kinds of French cheese you've brought back. You call friends over, they bring wine, bread, crackers, and you open the cheese. There is the pleasure of serving and eating foodstuff that are once again rare, but there's something missing. Maybe it's the exact bread that goes with the cheese or maybe it's the taste of the wine, but you end up feeling that you've had a sort of half or three-quarters meal, with bits missing in the middle.

Flip it around and things abroad can get similarly strange. There is the well-worn joke which starts with the question, "Hey, where do you get the best Indian food in Paris?" Theansvergoes: "Head for Gare du Nord, take a Eurostar train to London King's Cross, come out and turn right. Drummond Street with its

desi eating joints is right there." Paris may have some of the best food in the world, but a cosmopolitan hub of international cuisine it is not, especially as far as affordable subcontinental food is concerned. If Paris is lacking in this regard, Berlin is even worse. The city is now full of boards proclaiming 'Indisches Restaurant', but if you're a desi, you want to avoid most of these. Spending some time in Berlin, I got lucky: around the corner from where I was staying was a small Indian restaurant run by a Bangladeshi man who spoke fluent, idiomatic Hindi. We struck up a cordial relationship and my friend would make sure the dishes he served me and my companions were as fresh and non-industrial as possible. While far from great desi khana, coupled with my own cooking this was good enough to tide over my home food cravings.

Germany, a cornucopia of food

However, as I kept sternly reminding myself, I wasn't in Berlin to miss Indian food. Germany has some of the best bread, great cheese and sausages, and, along with the Czechs and Belgians, simply the best beer on the planet. Besides, the huge Turkish presence means a wealth of doner and "kebab" shops; other West Asian and Asian populations provide a whole variety of reasonably priced non-European grub. Added to this, there are, of course, the usual suspects of variously priced burger joints and pizzeria and pasta. If you want a change from the beer, European and non-European wine is widely available at much cheaper prices than in the U.K. and certainly back home. All in all, Berlin (and a couple of other parts of Germany that I visited) is a cornucopia of food and drink. Nevertheless, after nearly two months, I began to feel some sense of missing that I couldn't quite place.

Popcorn, smoothies and other tricksters

You wait impatiently as movie-goers in front of you in the queue order sugar-loaded soft drinks and butter-covered popcorn. You are on a diet, so you responsibly settle for unbuttered popcorn. "One large popcorn," you order, mentally patting yourself on the back.

To compensate, you decide to flavour your popcorn with some chilli-cheese masala and ensure that every single kernel of popcorn is coated with the masala.

Ha, the bliss of crunching through deliciously coated popcorn as the hero bashes up the villain. The cherry on top: you have the satisfaction of having indulged in a healthy snack. Sounds familiar?

Now here is the shocker. Your low-calorie snack was in fact a bomb. "A large tub of popcorn, approximately around 20 cups, would be around 960 kcal," says Dr Preeti Raj, Founder & Chief Nutritionist at Wootu Nutrition.

"It is also high in salt and fat depending on the quantity of oil that was used in the preparation and the flavours added," she says, adding that portion-control is a must with this so-called "healthy" popcorn.

Bengaluru-based nutritionist Shalini Manglani Alwani agrees. "Serving size is the issue, really." If you can't stick to the recommended serving size, it is best to avoid it completely, especially if you are trying to lose some weight, she says.



You know these, the sort you can microwave in 3-4 minutes flat and settle down to a healthy breakfast. Or so you think. Not so fast, say experts. "Instant oats have a much higher glycemic index than regular oats," says Raj. While rolled and steel-cut oats are really rich in fibre, which is why they give you the satiety they do, the highly-processed instant variety have far less soluble fibre and cause an instant insulin spike. Additionally, those flavoured versions of instant oatmeal are chock-full of sugar and preservatives, definitely a bad idea.

Gave up your idli and sambhar for breakfast cereals that promised to melt away your kilos? Think again. Apart from the high sugar and the high salt content of these cereals, they are also fortified

to compensate for the nutrients lost during processing. "Such artificially-added nutrients are not easily absorbed by the body," says Raj.

Portion size is another problem here, says Alwani. "The box gives the calorie count of one serving which is 30 gm. But ads on television show people eating a huge bowl of cornflakes," she says, pointing out that this bowl will contain multiple portions.

Feeling smug because you have got rid of refined flour by replacing your white bread with whole wheat bread? Not so fast. According to Raj, it is impossible for store-bought bread to be baked with just whole wheat.

"Refined flour is surely an ingredient with only the proportion varying," she says. The best way to choose your bread? "Check the ingredient

label. Each slice should have at least 2 gm of fibre," she says.

You know that breakfast smoothie with 3 fruits and a tiny helping of honey? Bad news, says Raj. "A smoothie with more than one fruit is already a sugar overload, even if you skip the additional sweetener such as sugar or honey," she says.

A healthier option? "Stick to one fruit, add more vegetables, skip the honey and do not strain out the fibre," she adds. How can fruits with just the water removed be unhealthy? It's all relative. Healthier than a burger, not as healthy as fresh fruit. "The drying process often results in loss of nutrients and doubles the sugar," says Raj. Nuts have a very high fat content, adds Alwani adding that 2-3 pieces a day is better than a handful.

RAISING THE BAR

Drink more and pay less. This is the premise of Bar Bar at Phoenix Marketcity in Whitefield. Happy hours was common place, so Bellona Hospitality applied the concept of wholesale pricing, uniquely to a bar. More people on a table with more



drinks, lesser the bill.

And not just that, there is also the E-Savings calculator tab which would enable the customer to see his or her savings while ordering.

The drinks menu is divided into three slabs – popular, premium and luxury containing a selection of spirits like whisky, vodka, rum, gin and even liqueurs. If the entire group or table sticks to a category and orders at one go, they can hit MWP (Maximum Wholesale Price). MWP drinks are as low as ₹99.

But it isn't that the restaurant has only experimented with the price factor. The reason you are paying for – drinks and food also come with quirky fun twists. Since we are talking about drinks, let's continue with that.

The most exciting is Bartender's

Bottles. Priced at ₹750, a bottle of cocktail (750 ml) comes accompanied with bar snack, garnish and three glasses. An interesting take on pitchers in different flavours like the fruitier fruit loops, lynchburg lemonade and others.

Other cocktails include watermelon coolishka, a vodka, watermelon, lemongrass and lime concoction, spiced pear mojito with pear, rum and cinnamon, The Hawaii with vodka, pineapple, cardamom, and Red bull.

The bites are as interesting as their drinks menu. Take your pick from jalapeno cheese popcorn, baked cheesy masala crab, nuts and crunch bhel, double cooked pork belly and for the Bengaluru junta – Mangalorean mutton sukka where you bite

into the succulent meat to meet a host of wonderful flavours. A section is dedicated to tandoor with kebab platters like paneer aachari, tandoori broccoli and tandoori potatoes.

Do try some of their thin crust pizzas and burgers for they are delightfully innovated by chef Paul Kinny. Choose from red curried shrimp, sundried tomatoes, meatball, baby arugula, pulled pork burger, Caribbean cottage cheese and oats burger. In mac and cheese burger, meet the worlds of pasta and burger.

There is also a live BBQ pit in the open air section which serves mixed barbecue platters, shoots and roots for vegetarians, oink oink with four kinds of pork delicacies and ranch and wharf offering

shrimps and fish preparations.

For the main course, you can opt for laksa curry fried rice, fish & chips, pork Goan vindaloo and others. You can round off your meal with options like chocolate ganache fondue, sundae, baked New York cheesecake, salted caramel & espresso tart and tiramisu jar.

Space and design
Bar Bar is a spacious gastropub marrying elements of industrial design with retro. There is a live stage and DJ console, a mini library and a projector for live sport and film screenings. Some very thoughtful interventions include a storage wall for guests to keep aside their shopping bags, hooks on the table to hang purses also make it very different from the rest.

U.S. environmental agency eyes limits to herbicide linked to crop damage

The U.S. environmental agency is considering banning spraying of the agricultural herbicide dicamba after a set deadline next year, according to state officials advising the agency on its response to crop damage linked to the weed killer.

Setting a cut-off date, possibly sometime in the first half of 2018, would aim to protect plants vulnerable to dicamba, after growers across the U.S. farm belt reported the chemical drifted from where it was sprayed this summer, damaging millions of acres of soybeans and other crops.

A ban could hurt sales by Monsanto Co. and DuPont which sell dicamba weed killers and soybean seeds with Monsanto's dicamba-tolerant Xtend trait. BASF also sells a dicamba herbicide. It is not yet known how damage attributed to the herbicides, used on Xtend soybeans and cotton, will affect yields of soybeans unable to withstand dicamba because the crops have not been harvested.

The Environmental Protection Agency discussed a deadline for next year's sprayings on a call with state officials that addressed steps the agency could take to prevent a repeat of the damage, four participants on the call told Reuters.

A cut-off date for use in spring or early summer could protect vulnerable plants by only allowing farmers



to spray fields before soybeans emerge from the ground, according to weed and pesticide specialists.

Monsanto spokeswoman Christi Dixon told Reuters that the agency had not indicated it planned to prohibit sprayings of dicamba herbicides on soybeans that had emerged. That action "would not be warranted," she said. The EPA had no immediate comment.

EPA officials made clear that it would be unacceptable to see the same extent of crop damage again next year, according to Andrew Thostenson, a pesticide specialist for North Dakota State University, who participated in

the call. State regulators and university specialists are pressuring the EPA to decide soon on rules guiding usage because farmers will make planting decisions for next spring over the next several months.

Tighter usage limits could discourage cash-strapped growers from buying Monsanto's more expensive dicamba-resistant Xtend soybean seeds. Dicamba-tolerant soybeans cost about \$64 a bag, compared with about \$28 a bag for Monsanto's Roundup Ready soybeans and about \$50 a bag for soybeans resistant to Bayer's Liberty herbicide. Already, a task force in

Arkansas has advised the state to bar dicamba sprayings after April 15 next year.

"Catastrophic for Xtend" "If the EPA imposed an April 15 cut-off date for dicamba spraying, that would be catastrophic for Xtend — it invalidates the entire point of planting it," said Jonas Oxgaard, analyst for investment management firm Bernstein.

Monsanto has projected its Xtend crop system would return a \$5 to \$10 premium per acre over soybeans with glyphosate resistance alone, creating a \$400-\$800 million opportunity for the company once the seeds are planted on an expected 80 million acres in the U.S., according to Mr. Oxgaard.

By 2019, Monsanto predicts U.S. farmers will plant Xtend soybeans on 55 million acres, or more than 60% of the total planted this year. About 3.1 million acres of soybeans vulnerable to dicamba were hurt by sprayings this summer, accounting for 3.5% of U.S. plantings, according to the University of Missouri.

Chemical companies have blamed the crop damage on farmers misusing the herbicides. Specialists, though, say the weed killers are also risky because they have a tendency to vaporise and drift across fields, referred to as volatility.

Agri Ministry data show record vegetable yield

In recent weeks, the prices of vegetables such as tomatoes and onions have more than doubled reportedly because of short supply, but the data released by the Ministry of Agriculture on Thursday show a record production of vegetables, including tomato.

The third advance estimate for 2016-17 suggests that production of fruits and vegetables has been to the tune of 300 million tonnes, an increase of 4.8% over last year.

The production of tomato, whose prices have sky-rocketed in recent weeks, is estimated to be 19.5 million tonnes, 4.3% higher than the previous year.

And the States that have seen a good yield are Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha and Gujarat.

Onion, another politically sensitive crop, has seen a marginal increase in production at 21.7 million tonnes in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Gujarat.

However, among the horticultural crops, potato recorded the most impressive growth.



At 43.4 million tonnes, potato has seen a 11.1% over the last year in major growing States like Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Punjab, Bihar, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh.

More area covered The area under cultivation of fruits and vegetables has marginally gone up. In 2015-16, it was 24.5 million hectares, but this year (2016-17), it has gone up to 25.1 million hectares.

Good monsoon last year ensured a record high for grain production, and the overall grain production stood at 275.68 million tonnes during the 2016-17 crop year that ended in June.

Monsanto fights to sell Arkansas farmers herbicide linked to crop damage

Monsanto Co. filed a petition on Thursday asking Arkansas agricultural officials to reject a proposed date next year that would end sprayings of the herbicide dicamba, which has been linked to crop damage across the U.S. farm belt.

A state task force recommended last month that Arkansas bar sprayings after April 15, 2018, to protect plants vulnerable to the chemical, after farmers complained that soybeans and other crops were damaged when the weed killer drifted away from where it was sprayed this summer.

The recommendation amounts to an "unwarranted and misinformed ban on dicamba" because the chemical is designed to be sprayed during the summer over genetically engineered crops, according to Monsanto.

The deadline "is not based on scientific data, much less on any scientific consensus" about crop damage attributed to the chemical, the company said in a filing with the Arkansas State Plant Board.

Monsanto, BASF and DuPont sell dicamba herbicides under different brand names to be sprayed on top of growing U.S. soybeans and cotton modified by Monsanto to tolerate the weed killer. Chemical companies have blamed the damage on farmers misusing dicamba.

Specialists, though, say the weed killers are risky because they have a tendency to vaporize and drift across fields, a process known as volatility. High temperatures can increase volatility.

In July, Arkansas tempo-



rally banned the use and sale of dicamba herbicides after farmers said the chemical was drifting off target. Monsanto, in its filing, said weed scientists who investigated the reports of damage from dicamba predicted it would probably not cause significant yield losses.

The company also called into question the objectivity of Arkansas weed experts Jason Norsworthy and Ford Baldwin, whom Monsanto said advocated bans on dicamba. Monsanto said in its petition that Baldwin works as a paid consultant for Bayer Crop Science, which makes glufosinate, a competing herbicide, and that he is serving as a retained expert witness for plaintiffs in a lawsuit against Monsanto involving dicamba.

With its petition, Monsanto submitted an affidavit from Baldwin stating that he works as a consultant for corporate clients including Bayer and endorses a competing weed control technology called glufosinate.

"Baldwin spoke at the first task force meeting in support of a statewide ban on dicamba herbicides in 2018," Mon-

santo said in its petition.

Baldwin, a private weed consultant and former weed scientist for the University of Arkansas, told Reuters he did not speak in favor of the April 15 ban at the meeting. He declined further comment.

Monsanto also included advertising literature on Bayer's LibertyLink product that quoted Norsworthy saying: "The next best technology is already available in the LibertyLink system."

Norsworthy, a University of Arkansas professor, could not immediately be reached for comment.

Bayer, which is seeking to buy Monsanto for \$66 billion, told Reuters that Baldwin and Norsworthy "are two of the preeminent weed scientists in the country." "Their voices along with other scientists are critical to ensuring sound science that supports the regulatory system," Bayer spokesman Jeff Donald said.

Monsanto's petition also requested the Arkansas plant board change its regulations to allow farmers in the state to use the company's dicamba weed killer, called XtendiMax with VaporGrip, on crops engineered to withstand

it "in 2018 and beyond."

Arkansas previously blocked XtendiMax herbicide because the company did not provide testing data that state officials wanted. The plant board said it had received Monsanto's petition and may consider the company's requests at meetings this month.

Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson has repeatedly encouraged the board to vet the science behind dicamba sprayings when making its decision, said J.R. Davis, spokesman for the governor. "Agriculture is the state's number one industry, and the governor understands the importance of getting this right," he said.

Monsanto may take legal action against the board if it denies the petition, Scott Partridge, the company's vice president of global strategy, told Reuters. The April 15 deadline "puts Arkansas farmers at an incredible disadvantage," he said.

Monsanto's dicamba-resistant soybeans, called Xtend, will be the company's biggest ever launch of a seed with a biotech trait. U.S. farmers planted Xtend soybean seeds on about 20 million acres this year, and Monsanto is targeting that by 2019, farmers will plant Xtend soybeans on 55 million acres, or more than 60 percent of the total acreage planted with soybeans this year. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is separately considering banning sprayings of dicamba herbicides after a set deadline next year because of this summer's crop damage, state officials advising the agency told Reuters.

Saying Tata to a public model

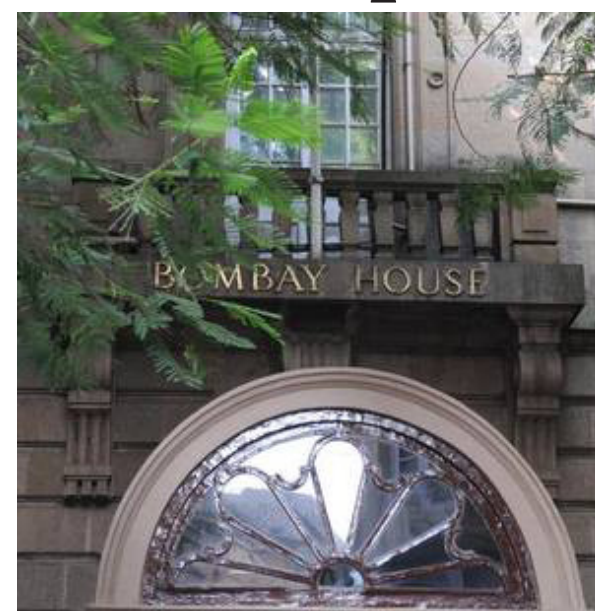
In a significant move, an overwhelming majority of shareholders of Tata Sons, the holding company of the \$105-billion cars-to-software group, last week voted in favour of changing the legal status of the firm to a private limited company from a deemed public company.

The move by Tata Sons, no doubt, has to be cleared by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT). Nonetheless, the significance of Tata Sons' move is not lost on the avid watchers of India's corporate scene. It has introduced an additional dimension, especially since it comes almost a year after Ratan Tata, the patriarch of India's biggest conglomerate, ousted Cyrus Mistry as the chairman of the group in what was billed as one of the biggest surgical strikes in India's corporate world.

Much earlier, in 2015, the 106-year old T.V. Sundram Iyengar and Sons (TVS and Sons) Ltd., the holding company of TVS Group, converted into a private limited company from a public company.

The action by these two venerable institutions can be a pointer to the way businesses will be run henceforth in India. In a way, it also signifies a certain sense of discomfort and trust deficit in the operating environment which forces enterprises to expend precious management time and resources on issues other than running the businesses.

The Companies Act of 2013 may have a lot to do with the new-found business route. For, the new norms have made disclosure requirements much more stringent for public limited companies. "This move



will help Tata Sons reduce the cumbersome disclosure on its day-to-day activities required under the Companies Act, 2013," said Suresh Surana, founder, RSM Astute Consulting Group.

"It will also give more control in the hands of promoters as Tata Sons will also not need shareholders' approval for selling any of its undertakings, borrowing money to invest in trust securities and appointing people to key positions," Dr. Surana said.

The conversion is bound to have a significant fallout on the Indian corporate world. Read especially in the context of the current ongoing imbroglio at the Tata empire, a private structure is a sure-shot route to secure the organisation from the ill-directed adventures of its members.

A private structure puts restrictions on share transfers and sale. In a public company, for instance, a shareholder can sell his/her stake to anyone, including its rivals, or

in other words, to people whom the current promoters might not be comfortable with. In the demat era, it has become even more easier to palm off one's shares. However, this is not possible in a private limited company. This may yet prove a push-factor for many companies to contemplate conversion into private entities. Tata Sons, it is reckoned, will continue to have independent directors on its board like earlier even though a private limited company is not required to have such positions. The fact, however, is that on conversion into a private company, the board shall have more power in terms of decision-making.

Not surprisingly, Mr. Mistry, whose family still owns just over 18% in the holding company, has opposed the move.

The move will restrict his family's freedom to sell its stake. And, it may have to drive a hard bargain with the Tatas who will have the first right of refusal under the ambit of

the private limited company.

S. Santhanakrishnan, an expert on corporate law and governance and also a director on the board of Tata Global Beverages, defends strongly Tata Sons' move to become a private company.

"Earlier you had the option of being a public company, deemed public company or a private limited company. Now, under the Companies Act of 2013, you can only be a private limited company or a public company. They have chosen the route of being a private company," he said. There is absolutely nothing amiss in the move, according to him.

"You can use a toll road or a non-toll road to reach your destination. Both are right means to achieve your objective. The choice is yours. So, why make a noise about it?" queried Mr. Santhanakrishnan. The group always upheld a high level of corporate governance standards and integrity, he said. "Whether it is a private limited company or a public company, all the dividend pay-out goes to trust, and, therefore, to charity," he pointed out.

Ease of doing business The law is not moving in sync with the ease of doing business. It has made doing business more complex. Hence, going through the private company route makes sense.

While the Companies Act 2013 had many welcome changes, it made the compliance aspect excessive. "The choice of being public or private is based on your choice of ease of doing business," said Mr. Santhanakrishnan. "There can't be a living-in relationship in a corporate set-up. It needs the patronage and identity of the parent."

Change in fiscal consolidation roadmap to hurt investor sentiment: UBS report

The government has been under pressure to support the economy but any change in the fiscal consolidation roadmap can hurt global investor sentiment, says an UBS report.

According to the global financial services major, global investors view India favourably not just for its growth outlook, but also because of its robust/stable macro story reflected in falling inflation and stable currency.

"A 0.2% GDP boost is not that material for growth per se. A change in the

fiscal consolidation roadmap has potential to hurt sentiment among global investors," it said.

While the government can use the fiscal push to revive growth, the quality of government spending (investment vs consumption) matters more, UBS said.

The Central government is already walking a "tight-rope" to meet the 2017-18 fiscal deficit target of 3.2% of the GDP.

Moreover, it has to make up for the shortfall of 0.2% of GDP on a lower RBI dividend transfer and there is also un-



certainty regarding tax collections under GST in the near term.

India's economic growth slipped to a three-year low of 5.7% in April-June as disruptions caused by demonetisation spilled over to the third straight quarter amid slowdown in manufacturing activities. The government has been under pressure to support the economy following the slowdown. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has promised "appropriate actions" at the "right time" to revive the slowdown-hit economy and said the

government is seized of the problem of private investment not picking up.

The report noted that part of the slowdown in economic growth comes from a temporary disruption due to the goods and services tax (GST) implementation and demonetisation, and growth is likely to normalise over upcoming quarters.

However, underlying demand momentum remains weak, as growth has been mostly supported by consumption while investment lags.

Kohli urges high-flying India to be 'ruthless'

Captain Virat Kohli has called on his players to be "ruthless" after the crushing one-day series win over Australia took India top of the world one-day rankings to add to their number one Test status.

A five-wicket win in the third game of the five-match series on Sunday gave India an unassailable 3-0 lead over Steve Smith's Australia.

It also stretched India's winning streak to a record 12 matches across all formats.

Kohli's side have been on a roll for the past year since regaining the number one Test spot with a 3-0 home whitewash of New Zealand.

The in-form captain has led from the front with 1,137 runs in 21 ODIs this year, ahead South Africa's Faf du Plessis as the highest one-day scorer in 2017.

Kohli praised his team after the latest win against the once mighty Australians, who have been outplayed in India. Smith's team also lost a Test series 2-1 in India this year.

"Credit to the whole squad for the series win, but the journey stops only after the final game," said Kohli, the top ODI and T20 batsman in the In-



International Cricket Council (ICC) ratings.

"We may give opportunities for people from now, but all 15 guys know that we got to be ruthless once we step onto the field," Kohli added.

The series has seen new Indian stars emerge, with all-rounder Hardik Pandya and left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav making an instant

impact.

While Pandya's crucial 78 led the team's run chase in Indore, Yadav impressed with his maiden hat-trick in the second international.

However, legendary spinner Bishan Singh Bedi believes India have not been tested by opposition teams, barring the Champions Trophy final in June against Pakistan which they lost

by 180 runs.

India won 10 of their 13 Tests on home soil in the 2016-17 season and then went on to rout hosts Sri Lanka over nine games in all three formats.

"Realistically speaking Indians are not even fielding their best XI and beating the opposition hands down, whether it is Sri Lanka or Australia," Bedi said.

"We are loving the ratings, but if we are a little more pragmatic then you will realise that the Indian team in the last year or so haven't been stretched by the opposition.

"Just that one game in the Champions Trophy final against Pakistan, other than that we have not seen them in a tight situation.

"We will get to know the character of the team when they come out of a tight situation," Bedi added.

Left-arm spinner Axar Patel returns to the Indian squad in place of Ravindra Jadeja for the final two ODIs that will be played in Bangalore and Nagpur on Thursday and Sunday.

Patel, who sprained his ankle at the start of the series, will join Chahal and Yadav as the third spinner in the 15-man squad.

Pandya inspires India to series win over Aussies

INDORE: Hardik Pandya hit an aggressive half-century to lead India to a series-clinching five-wicket win over Australia in the third One-day International in Indore on Sunday.

Pandya's 72-ball 78 and his crucial fifth-wicket stand with Manish Pandey, who remained unbeaten on 36, helped the hosts chase down their 294-run target with 13 balls to spare.

Openers Rohit Sharma and Ajinkya Rahane put together a 139-run stand to lay a solid foundation for the team to take an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-match series.

But it was the Indian bowlers who set up the comfortable victory after opener Aaron Finch's blazing century, restricting the visitors to 293-6 at the batting-friendly Holkar Stadium.

In reply, Sharma, who hit 71, and Rahane, who made 70, combined the right dose of caution and aggression to give the Australian bowlers a hard time.

Sharma hit a huge six off Kane Richardson early in the innings that sailed out of the ground to signal his intent. He registered his 33rd ODI fifty with another six off Ashton Agar.

His 62-ball knock was laced with six fours and four sixes before he top-edged a delivery from Nathan Coulter-Nile and substitute fielder Hilton Cartwright made no mistake at deep mid-wicket.

Rahane soon followed his partner back to the pavilion after Pat Cummins, who was brought back for his second spell, trapped the batsman lbw as Australia tried to check a



rampaging India.

Kohli tried to take charge during his 56-run stand with Pandya but lost his wicket to left-arm spinner Ashton Agar.

Richardson got Kedar Jadhav caught behind for two as India suddenly found themselves in trouble at 206-4.

The 23-year-old Pandya, who survived a dropped chance by skipper Steve Smith off Agar on 41, then showed maturity as he and Pandey took control of the situation.

Earlier, India's bowlers fought back strongly after Finch smashed 124 on his return to the side after a calf injury, forged a 154-run second wicket stand with skipper Steve Smith, who made 63 — giving the visitors hope of a 300-plus score.

But pacesman Jasprit Bumrah and left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav claimed two wickets each to rattle the middle order.

Finch's 70-run opening stand with David Warner, who made 42 before being bowled by Pandya, set the tone for Australia's early dominance after they elected to bat.

New Zealand name initial nine players for India tour

New Zealand have announced a nine-member core team for next month's limited over series against India with six players to be added later from their A side currently touring.

Allrounder Jimmy Neesham and batsman Neil Broom were dropped from the squad after they failed to fire during the ICC Champions Trophy in June.

"The nine we've picked have made up the core of our ODI team for a while and all of them have experience playing in India," said Coach Mike Hesson.

"With a number of our top guys already playing in India, it's helpful to be able to select the squad in two parts. With six spots left, there's an obvious incentive for the players



in New Zealand A to perform and put their best foot forward."

New Zealand will play three ODIs, starting with the opening match in Mumbai on October 22. It will be followed by Three Twenty20s.

Talking about the omis-

sion of Neesham and Broom, Hesson said the duo might have missed out but they still have the opportunity to make a comeback during the home summer.

"It will be disappointing for James and Neil, but we've talked through the areas that we'd like to see them

work on and if we see development they'll certainly both come into the reckoning come the home summer," he said.

"Neil was really effective for us batting at three or four last season, but we have quality, established batsmen in those positions and we'd like to see Neil develop his game further to show he has the skills to bat at five.

"Jimmy needs to go back and really dominate domestic cricket with both bat and ball. We know Jimmy is a talented player, but we've spoken with him around improving the consistency in all areas of his game," he added.

The team will depart for India on October 12.

England sensitive to effects of four-day Tests

BRISTOL: The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) insisted on Sunday it had 'no firm position' on playing four-day Tests, adding they were 'sensitive to the potential effects of any change to the traditional format'.

It had been reported that English cricket chiefs were in favour of reducing Tests from their current five days to four to fit in with modern trends such as Twenty20 which have made shorter-form cricket ever more popular.

Cricket South Africa have announced plans to stage a four-day Test against Zimbabwe at Port Elizabeth starting on Dec 26, although the move is still subject to International Cricket Council approval.

There is a view that moving to four days would, as is the case with professional golf



tournaments, ensure two good 'corporate' days on Thursday and Friday while increasing the chances of matches finishing in prime television viewing time at the weekend.

Advocates also argue that a move to four-day Tests would give players more time to rest between matches in what are increasingly crowded fixture schedules. Supporters of four-day Tests have said teams would bowl more overs in a day to compensate for the loss

of a fifth day. But critics point to how many Test sides struggle to bowl the scheduled 90 overs in a current standard day's Test play as evidence of how a move to four days could reduce the amount of playing time.

England staged their inaugural day/night Test against West Indies at Edgbaston last month — a match that ended inside three days after the tourists lost 19 wickets in a

day.

"ECB has no firm position on the staging of four-day Test matches," said a spokesman for the national governing body on Sunday. "We can see benefits that more compact scheduling might deliver but are sensitive to the potential effects of any change to the traditional format.

"Careful consideration is required to support the right decisions for the wider game, and on-field matters are key," he added.

"We would welcome more insight on the effects for players and fans in order to help the game make a fully-informed decision on any proposal," the spokesman said.

"It is important that cricket is prepared to innovate in all formats of the game where it can help drive interest, accessibility or improvement.

Mark Coles appointed coach for Pakistan women's cricket ahead of NZ series

Kiwi coach Mark Coles has been appointed to coach the Pakistan women's cricket team ahead of their series against New Zealand women next month, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Najam Sethi confirmed on Monday.

Coles, who was appointed at the suggestion of Pakistan head coach Mickey Arthur, has held several coaching jobs in New Zealand's Northern Districts region and is currently on leave to pursue his international interests.

Coach has expressed the hope to improve the Pakistan women's cricket team, which he says has been "developing really nicely".

The Pakistan women's team will take on their New Zealand counterparts in a three-match One-day International series kicking off on October 31 in the United Arab Emirates.

Coles will arrive in Lahore in early October for a training camp, before heading to UAE for the series, stuff.co.nz reported.

All three games will be staged at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium with the second and third scheduled to be played on November 2 and 5.

The Pakistan women will also play four



Twenty20 International matches against the White Ferns on November 8, 9, 12 and 14.

The Pakistan women's cricket team has been struggling in recent times and lost all seven matches it played during the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup in June.

Following the winless world cup campaign, the PCB had decided to make drastic changes in the women's cricket team setup and in the national team.

The team was also hit by a rift between coach Sabih Azhar and Captain Sana Mir after the coach in his post world cup report said he was not satisfied with Mir's performance and leadership. In response, Mir had said in an open letter that she did not intend to play with the team under the current setup of team management.

Wave of protests grip NFL after Trump urges fan boycott

A wave of protests swept across the National Football League on Sunday as President Donald Trump escalated his feud with players who kneel during the US national anthem to draw attention to racial injustice.

Trump ignited a firestorm of criticism after comments on Friday in which he described NFL players who chose to take a knee through renditions of "The Star-Spangled Banner" as "sons of bitches" who should be fired.

The US leader doubled down on those remarks in an early morning tweet, urging fans to boycott the NFL as long as the protests continued.

"If NFL fans refuse to go to games until players stop disrespecting our Flag & Country, you will see change take place fast. Fire or suspend!" Trump wrote.

Yet players throughout America's most popular sport took a defiant stance just hours later, kneeling, linking arms or raising clenched fists during the anthem.

More than 150 players could be seen kneeling or sitting in the 14 games that took place Sunday, easily the largest such demonstration since former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick first



began protesting in 2016.

One of the biggest protests took place in the nation's capital, where almost the entire lineup of the Oakland Raiders team sat on their bench ahead of their game with the Washington Redskins.

A day of demonstrations began at the London game between the Jacksonville Jaguars and Baltimore Ravens at Wembley Stadium, where a large number of players from both teams knelt.

In Nashville, neither the Seattle Seahawks nor the Tennessee Titans took to the field to observe the national anthem.

"We will not stand for the injustice that has plagued people of this colour in this country," Seattle players said in a statement just prior to kickoff.

"Deeply disappointed"

In Foxborough, around 15 members of the Super Bowl champion New England Patriots took a knee during the anthem.

Star quarterback Tom Brady stood but linked arms with his teammates.

Reports said the protests were greeted with scattered boos as some fans chanted "Stand up!" Patriots receiver Brandin Cooks, who scored

the game-winning touchdown, later explained his decision to kneel, rejecting accusations it was unpatriotic.

"A lot of people think we're disrespecting the flag and the military, but my father was a marine, my uncle was a marine, family fought in the Vietnam war — I have the utmost respect for the men and women that fight for our freedom," Cooks told reporters.

In Chicago, the Pittsburgh Steelers chose to remain in their locker room during the anthem ahead of their clash with the Bears.

Buffalo Bills star Lesane McCoy, who stretched on the turf during the anthem, said: "I can't stand and support something where the leader of our country is acting like a jerk."

In Detroit, meanwhile, the singer of the national anthem Rico LaVelle dramatically dropped to his knee at the end of his rendition.

At least eight Detroit Lions players were seen kneeling during the anthem while others linked arms.

Trump responded to the protests on Twitter. "Standing with locked arms is good, kneeling is not acceptable," he wrote.