

TIME AND US

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FRIDAY

● SEPTEMBER, 15, 2017
● 23 ZHUL HIJAH 1438 AH
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STATION	WEATHER TEMPERATURE	
	MAX TEMPERATURE	MIN TEMPERATURE
SRINAGAR	27.0	14.3
JAMMU	33.5	21.7
LEH	23.0	12.4
KARGIL	27.0	9.04

SUNSET FRIDAY: 06:40 PM
SUNRISE SATURDAY: 06:14 AM

LOCAL FORECAST OF SRINAGAR
Possibility of Light Rain/Thundershowers. Maximum & Minimum temperatures will be around 27°C & 13°C respectively.

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

STATE | 3

BALI BHAGAT LAYS FOUNDATION OF RS 2.28 CR ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATION AT SDH

NATIONAL | 5

SC STAYS RAGHUNATH TEMPLE TAKEOVER, ISSUES NOTICE TO HIMACHAL PRADESH

BUSINESS | 7

SBI LIFE TO LAUNCH INDIA'S FIRST BILLION-DOLLAR IPO IN SEVEN YEARS

SPORTS | 8

SHARJEEL KHAN TO APPEAL FIVE-YEAR BAN IMPOSED IN WAKE OF PSL SPOT-FIXING SCANDAL

PDP was created after NC passed 'Autonomy' Resolution: Omar

'Work hard, help NC emerge as single largest party in next election'

Srinagar, Sep 14: National Conference (NC) Working President and former J&K chief minister, Omar Abdullah Thursday said the Peoples Democratic Party is a creation of agencies as the party was created after NC passed an Autonomy Resolution in J&K Assembly.

Omar said if NC would have been in power, the BJP led government would not even dare to talk about Article 35 A or the Article 370. "We would not even allow them to talk about Article 35A, if we would have been in the power," Omar said.

Omar said some people don't want that J&K should have their own flag or constitution. "They don't like when we take oath on our own constitution. If there is an attack on Article 35 A, it is because NC has weakened. NC is out of power," he said.



According to the KNS Correspondent, addressing party workers here, Omar said when National Conference was in full majority, the party passed a resolution seeking Autonomy for the state of J&K. "It created commotion in the corridors of Government of India. They

started seeing NC as a threat. This gave birth to the PDP," Omar said, adding, the autonomy resolution was the reason of the creation of PDP.

"We are losing our identity. No matter how many govt employees are in

OMAR TAKES JIBE AT MEHBOOBA
Says she is busy inaugurating projects started by me

Srinagar, Sep 14: While it is part and parcel of a system that any project work that remains incomplete in one government is inaugurated by its successive government once its completion.

Former J&K chief minister and Working President

See **Jibe**...Pg 02

LeT Commander Abu Ismail killed in Nowgam encounter: Police

'He was involved in Amarnath yatra attack on July 10'

Srinagar, Sep 14: Police today said that LeT Commander Abu Ismail and his associate, who were involved in the Amarnath yatra attack in July, were killed this evening at Aribagh, Nowgam in Srinagar outskirts.

According to the KNS correspondent, addressing a press conference at PCR, IGP Munir Khan said that police had "specific information" about presence of the two militants hiding in a house in Nowgam.

"Two hiding terrorists were killed in very brief encounter without any collateral damage," Khan said, adding two AK 47 rifles, UBGLs and other ammunition was recovered from the slain militants.

The IGP said that the two militants were identified as Abu Ismail, who was LeT commander, and Abu Qasim aka Chotta Qasim.



The press conference was jointly addressed by IG CRPF Ravideep Sahai, and army commander.

8 yatries were killed and 20 others were injured in the attack on Amarnath yatries at Khanabal in Anantnag on July 10, which evoked wide condemnation.

The IGP said that the operation was carried out jointly by army, CRPF and police in a coordinated manner.

See **Police**...Pg 02

SCHOOL DRIVER AND STUDENTS THRASHED BY ARMY IN KULGAM

Kulgam, Sep 14: A group of Army men allegedly thrashed a school driver and resorted to aerial firing after he entered into an argument with them in South Kashmir's Kulgam district.

Witnesses said that an army vehicle hit a private school bus at Wanpou village leading to a heated argument.

Shortly after the argument, the army men caught hold of the driver whom locals identified as Nazir Ahmed and assaulted him. The army action sparked protest against them.

Reports said that the driver was admitted in the hospital for treatment.

Shortly after the incidents, the students of the private school hit to roads and raised anti-India and anti-Army

See **School**...Pg 02

GST a business requirement, not just taxation system: Dr Drabu

FM asks District Administrations to assist traders in registering for new tax regime

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 14: Reiterating that GST is an essential business requirement rather than just a taxation system, Minister for Finance, Dr Haseeb Drabu today asked the District Administrations to assist local traders to register for GST at the earliest, especially in view of the upcoming festive season.

The Minister said this while chairing a meeting convened to review the progress



made with regards to bringing the traders under the ambit of GST in the state.

Minister of State for Fi-

nance Ajay Nanda, Chief Secretary BB Vyas, Administrative Secretaries for various departments besides other

concerned officers were present in the meeting.

Divisional Commissioner Kashmir and Jammu, besides Deputy Commissioner of various districts also attended the meeting through Video Conferencing.

Noting that upcoming festive season is the prime retail time for local dry fruit traders, Dr Drabu said that traders will require their GST

See **Drabu**...Pg 02

'OVER 5000 NEET, JEE ASPIRANTS GOT HELP FROM LIBRARIES'

J&K Libraries to soon provide study material for KAS/IAS aspirants

Srinagar, Sep 14: Much to the delight for the civil service aspirants and other candidates preparing for different competitive examinations, the Department of Libraries and Research is all set to provide requisite e-learning to the students.

In an exclusive conversation with KNS, Director Libraries J&K, Mukhtar-ul-Aziz, said to provide quality coaching and comprehensive solutions to the students aspiring to appear in NEET, JEE and CET, the department

See **NEET**...Pg 02

Congress's policy planning group to visit Valley on Saturday

30 delegations scheduled for meeting

Srinagar, Sep 14: Beginning its second leg of the visit, the Congress's Policy Planning group will meet 30 delegations during its two-day visit that begin on Saturday.

Led by former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, the 9-member group comprises of senior Congress leaders Dr Karan Singh, former Home Minister P Chidambaram, Leader of Opposition, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Ambika Soni, PCC president G A Mir, Nawang Rigzin Jora and Tariq Hameed Karra and Sham Lal Sharma.

The group will meet at least 30 delegations



of political parties, civil society groups, youth leaders, traders, hoteliers, businessmen, local

See **Congress**...Pg 02

'ED SUMMONS BILKEES SHAH AGAIN'

Extend Shabir Shah's judicial remand by 2 weeks

Srinagar, Sep 14: The Democratic Freedom Party Thursday condemned the extending of its incarcerated chairman Shabir Ahmad Shah's judicial remand by 2 more weeks.

A party spokesperson in a statement to KNS condemned the arrest of Shabir Ahmad Shah by Enforcement Directorate and prolonging of his detention.

Shah who was arrested on July 25 was on Wednesday produced before court via video conferencing and the judge extended his remand by further two weeks.

The spokesperson said Shah has been arrested on fabricated charges and his detention is being prolonged which is extremely condemnable.

See **ED**...Pg 02

Article 370 introduced temporarily, can be revoked through Cabinet decision: Subramanian Swamy

Kashmir is a problem of 'Nehruvian blunders': Jitendra Singh

Srinagar, Sep 14: Union Minister of State in Prime Minister's Office, Dr Jitendra Singh Thursday termed Kashmir issue as a problem of "Nehruvian blunders", while senior BJP leader Subramanian Swamy said Article 370 that gives special status to state of J&K in Indian union was introduced temporarily, and can be revoked through Cabinet decision.

According to media reports, speaking at function of the launch of two books on Jammu and Kashmir in Delhi, written by senior RSS functionary Indresh Kumar, Singh blamed first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru for the Kashmir problem.

"The history of Jammu and Kashmir has



been a "tale of mistakes" beginning from "Nehruvian blunders". There was no issue like Kashmir issue... Kashmir merged

See **Swamy**...Pg 02

POLICE RECOVERS CODEINE SYRUPS FROM SCHOOL TEACHER

Kupwara, Sep 14: Based on specific input, the special team of District Police Kupwara has recovered huge quantity of Codeine. The arrested accused person has been identified as Zahoor Ahmad Wani S/o Ghulam Rasool Wani R/o Lalpora, a teacher by profession.

While briefing the media persons SSP Kupwara, Shamsheer Hussain said that during the special drive against drug peddlers, the special team has so far recovered 11.6 Kgs of Charas, 2 Kgs of Heroine, 4.5 Kgs of Brown Sugar and huge quantity of codeine. He said that more arrest and recoveries are expected in near future so as to bust the whole racket involved in sale of banned drugs

See **Teacher**...Pg 02

Rana cautions against moves to trifurcate J&K, pitches for regional autonomy

Jammu, Sep 14: National Conference on Thursday strongly pitched for regional autonomy to Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, saying this will be effective counter to elements conspiring trifurcation of the State.

"In the overall ambit of autonomy, the regional autonomy is the only viable solution to assuaging political, economical, developmental and psychological aspirations of the three regions of the



State", Mr Rana said while addressing a press conference at Sher-e-Kashmir Bhavan

this afternoon.

To a question, he said the autonomy resolution passed

by the Jammu and Kashmir State Legislature is pending

See **Rana**...Pg 02

DC SRINAGAR REVIEWS PROCESS OF LAND ACQUISITION

Srinagar, Sep 14: District Development Commissioner, Srinagar Dr. Syed Abid Rasheed Shah Thursday convened a meeting of all the Collector of District Srinagar to review the progress of Land Acquisition/Structures coming under the alignments of Syed Meerak Shah Road, Khanyar Zaidal Pandach Road, Intersection Lasjhar Road, National Highway Road from Pantha Chowk to Narbal and widening of other projects falling under the Circular Road Project Srinagar.

The meeting was attended by Collector Syed Meerak Shah Road, Khanyar Zaidal Pandach Road, Collector PWD Srinagar, Collector, PDD, ERA and Collector

See **DC**...Pg 02

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY JAMMU GOES DIGITAL AS J&K BANK LAUNCHES MULTI FUNCTION CAMPUS CARD FOR STUDENTS

Jammu, Sep 14: Chairman and CEO J&K Bank Parvez Ahmed today unveiled the multi function Campus card for students at Central University of Jammu in presence of Prof Ashok Aima Vice Chancellor Central University, Mr. S.S Sehgal Executive president JK Bank, Prof Devanand Dean student welfare, Dr Ravi Kumar Registrar, Dr Dinesh Pandya Professor Incharge IIT Jammu and students of Central university of Jammu. The Unique and first of its kind in J&K state, Co Branded Card of JK bank and Central University is a chip based combo card which operates both as a Debit card and a Smart card. These type of cards are used globally in some educational institutions for multiple purposes such as Student ID card, Debit card and integrated access and attendance card.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman & CEO Parvez Ahmed said, "We at JK Bank share the thought process of Cross Pollination of resources of the Industry & Academia and are always ready to walk the proverbial extra mile to act as a catalyst in the development of the society especially in J&K state. We are seized of our responsibility not only to grow but also grow the market by creating an environment of business development by introducing the industry best practices in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The design and launch of Smart Campus Card on the request of the Vice Chancellor of the premier Central University is a perfect example of collaboration which has created this unique product arguable the first of its kind in our state."

The bank, he added cannot prosper in isolation which is the reason we are voluntarily and proactively engaging ourselves with the various stakeholders. We focus not only on our top and bottomline but also on being a good corporate citizen. This is the need of the hour in present era of fast changing world and the companies which do not focus on the well defined threefold bottomline of economic, environmental and social goals are running the risk of being rendered irrelevant.

Appreciating the Customized Curriculum of the Central University, Chairman & CEO JK Bank said, "I am glad that innovative courses are being offered in this university which are designed to include skill development, innovation and entrepreneurship. Setting up of an incubation centre right in the infancy of the university is a disruptive idea to benefit the social and business ecosystem." Our only interest, he added, in this context when we speak about the innovation ecosystem is that our state should not lag behind. The J&K state produces some of the finest examples of youth who are



winners in all spheres- be it public administration, sports, business and so on. So we must not lag behind in the area of innovation and entrepreneurship. Advising the students to dream big and use failure as launch pad for achieving excellence he quoted the examples of multi billion dollar companies like Google, Facebook and Snapdeal, which were conceived and set up by the promoter young men in the dormitories of the universities after failing to excel in academics. Recollecting experiences from his own life by delving on reflections of various stages, Chairman inspired the audience with confession of failures at various occasions but insisted that

his passion, determination, willingness to learn, do things differently attitude and firm belief in his own capabilities led him to where he is now. "These are the primary ingredients of success which you must possess to be big achievers in your life. You can do it and you must do it", he quoted. Sensitising the students about various social challenges, Parvez emphasized on respecting diversity, social values imbibed from generations and living in peace and harmony with surroundings.

Appreciating the professional and passionate leadership of JK Bank Chairman and his team in the Business Units, the Vice Chancellor Central University Prof Dr. Ashok

Aima congratulated the team of Bank and central university which made the launch of first of its kind smart campus card in record possible time. The team of JK bank he added has been instrumental in converting the central university as cashless and digital in true sense. The professional work ethics, leveraging of technology for business and responsible corporate citizen behavior are the hallmark of transformation of J&K Bank into a world class company.

Later, on the request of Vice Chancellor Prof. Ashok Aima, the Chairman and CEO JK Bank announced instituting a JK Bank Gold Medal for Male and Female overall toppers of the Central University of Jammu besides setting up an interdisciplinary JK Bank Research Professor Chair for Start Ups and Entrepreneurship to harness the synergies that are likely to emerge due to complementary organizational goals and competencies that can benefit the region with its largely rural economy. The Chairman and CEO also announced an ambulance for the benefit of the students of the Central University from the Bank's CSR Funds. "The request of the Vice Chancellor for providing direct recruitment to toppers of various disciplines will also be suitably examined," said the Chairman and CEO.

DDC KATHUA CHAIRS DLRC MEET

Stresses on priority sector lending

KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 14:- District Development Commissioner, Ramesh Kumar today chaired a meeting of District Level Review Committee (DLRC) to review the performance of various banks.

At the outset, DDC released annual activity report of Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI) Kathua for the year 2016-17.

ADC, Lead Bank Manager, LDO RBI, DDM NABARD, Director R-SETI, representatives of other banks besides senior officers of various departments attended the meeting.

Detailed deliberations were held on key issues including deposits, advances under priority sector, various government sponsored schemes and lending for the quarter ended June 2017.

The DDC took a threadbare review of Annual Credit Plan, CD ratio, SC-ST-OBC / KVIB / KVIC / DIC / PMEGP / NULM, NRLM Handloom / Handicraft and emphasized upon banks to expedite cases for linkage under various schemes to achieve set targets.

The DDC impressed upon the banks and line departments to ensure effective coordination in their working to give maximum benefit to the society at large. He exhorted that potential under Agri allied activities be tapped fully with focus on Horticulture, Dairy, sericulture etc.

The DDC asked the banks to adopt multi level approach to expand their outreach in far-flung areas for maximum coverage under social security scheme like Atal Pension Yojana, Suraksha Bima Yojana, Jeevan Jyoti Yojana, Sukanya Samridhi Yojna and PMFBY (Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna) etc and spread mass awareness on these important schemes having wider scope and benefit for general public.

The DDC called upon NABARD to extend full support for SHGs, JLGs among other issues. He also asked the bankers to link SHG on priority and achieve 100% coverage under KCC besides stressed on 100% DBT payments.

It was informed in the meeting that R-SETI Kathua conducted 92 courses till ending June 30-2017 in which 2177 candidates were trained under different trades. DDC exhorted upon the officers to create awareness regarding these vocational courses so that maximum number of eligible candidates can be benefitted.

Continue from Front Page.....

OMAR

our house. No matter how strong our house will be. We are losing our identity," he said.

Omar asked party workers to start preparing for the next assembly elections and strengthen the party at gross root levels, so that NC emerges as the single largest party. "If we emerge as the single largest party, then only we can work in a better way," he said.

"Become MLAs first. Stop worrying about ministries. Let NC win first then after we should care about the ministries. We all have to start working hard for it. We have win and ensure the victory of our fellow colleagues from a next constituency," Omar added.

Appealing youth to join National Conference, Omar said time has come when the youths should be allowed to settle in the party.

Omar recalled words of his grandfather Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah having told that Delhi wants to "create more and more divisions in Kashmir and create leaders in every Mohalla, so that the united voice of Kashmiris is suppressed. We are being divided into groups". "Today we are seeing it. Every community and Mohalla has its own leader," he added.

Others who were present at the occasion included senior NC leaders Ali Mohammad Sagar, Nasir Aslam Wani, Chowdhary Ramzan, Mohammad Akbar Lone, Mubarak Gul, Qaiser Jamsheed Lone, Tanveer Sadiq and others.

JIBE

of main Opposition party National Conference (NC), Thursday took a jibe at Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti for busy in inaugurating the projects that were started by him few years ago.

"To the victor go the spoils. @MehboobaMufti is busy inaugurating projects that I'd started a few years ago. Such is life," Omar wrote on micro-blogging site twitter.

On a micro-blogging site Twitter, Omar said, "To the victor go the spoils. Mehbooba Mufti is busy inaugurating projects that I had started a few years ago. Such is life.

Omar was reacting to a tweet of a Twitter user who alleged that BJP had reduced governance to 'tamasha'.

POLICE

"We were after these killers of yatries after they carried out the attack on July 10," he said.

SCHOOL

slogans.

Witnesses said that in order to disperse the protesting students who demanded action against the soldiers responsible for lawlessness, the government forces resorted to aerial firing and tear-smoking shelling creating panic in the area.

Couple of students have reportedly been wounded. According to reports a Class 10th student, whom school authorities identified as Sheezan Ahmed was injured due to tear-smoke shell and received at least 7 stitches in his head. The incident disrupted the vehicular movement on the road.

When contacted, Srinagar based Defense Spokesperson Colonel Rajesh Kalia said that he will check the facts and will react on the matter.

DRABU

registration numbers to be able to trade in national and international markets. In view of this, he directed the DCs to organize awareness cum training programmes to educate local traders, besides encouraging them to register for GST at the earliest.

Dr Drabu directed the Commercial Taxes department to focus on GST return filing and asked them to act as enablers and advisors in the field to facilitate filing of returns. Further, it was directed to train CSC/ Khidmat Center staff in GST filing procedure to facilitate local dealers.

It was informed in the meeting that delays in filing of returns will invite a penalty of Rs 100 per day.

The meeting also reviewed the status of PFMS implementation in the state. District Administrations were directed to ensure cent percent migration to PFMS for all centrally sponsored schemes by the end of October.

It was further informed that lack of action and compliance regarding this direction will lead to restrictions in fund flow.

The Minister also took note of the progress made on implementation of e-procurement in the state besides reviewing the public expenditure made by various departments.

NEET

shall made available all the material free of cost at all the government libraries across the state.

"Last year we provided free material at all our libraries for the aspirants of NEET and JEE. Around 5000 candidates visited the libraries and got benefited from it. Even several candidates qualified the examination as well," Aziz told KNS.

He said the initiative could be a game-changer for the students especially to the students living in far off area of the state.

"We are introducing digital libraries as well where all the material for civil services KAS and IAS will be made available. Even the aspirants can search books online," he said.

Aziz said the biggest advantage of the program is that it is in offline mode and need not to rely on internet connection all the time.

"The students will be continuously assessed online and they will be able to track their progress constantly," he added.

The main aim of the initiative is to bring the students of J&K par with students at New Delhi or other states. With this, student can study a topic repeatedly without need of worrying about a missed lecture.

Under this initiative, the research material, audio-video lectures of 100 IIT qualifiers will be made available to students free of cost at the libraries under this initiative.

CONGRESS

Kashmiri pandits, minority groups, saffron and fruit growers and students.

Among the political parties meeting the group are National Conference, CPI (M), PDF and others.

PCC chief Mir told KNS that on September 16 the group will hold an executive committee meeting of Congress part and then 16 delegations will meet them.

On the next day, 14 delegations are scheduled to meet the group in Srinagar, he said.

The group will hold Congress legislative party meet on September 17 morning before meeting the delegations.

"However, the invitation is open and anybody can meet them," he said.

Formed in May, the group visited Jammu last week and held closed-door discussions with the leaders of the Congress and other opposition parties.

Nearly 20 delegations representing cross-section of the society also met with the group.

The group, formed following the continuation of fragile political and security situation in the Valley, aims to hold dialogue with all stakeholders and help for peace building in the state.

The group, according to the sources, was constituted after the senior leader Tariq Hameed Karra urged the party high command to take concrete steps regarding the resolution of Kashmir issue.

ED

He said though Shabir Ahmad Shah is suffering from various ailments, he is being denied the basic facilities including the food prescribed by doctors. He said despite court orders Shah is being denied every basic facility in Tihar jail which has severely affected his health. He alleged that jail authorities are playing with his health.

The spokesperson said there is continuous threat to life of Shabir Ahmad Shah in Tihar jail. He appealed to world human rights organisations to take notice of such political vengeance meted out to Shah.

Meanwhile, after receiving continuous summons, Dr Bilquees Shah, the wife of Shabir Ahmad Shah, has finally left for Delhi to present herself before the Enforcement Directorate.

Dr Bilquies is getting repeated summons from ED since the arrest of her husband. Though she has already appeared before ED three times, she is repeatedly summoned.

The spokesperson while condemning such acts by ED said the people associated with a noble profession like medicine are unnecessarily harassed.

This is illegal, said spokesperson, adding that subjecting the family members of resistance leaders to mental torture is aimed at weakening the resistance movement.

SWAMY

with India through instrument of accession, similar to what other (princely) states did.

"The history of Kashmir in last 60-70 years has been a tale of mistakes beginning from the infamous Nehruvian blunders....our former prime minister went to United Nations...there was no need" Singh said, referring to Nehrus promise to the UN that a referendum would be conducted to allow Kashmiris to join either India or Pakistan.

Speaking at the event, BJP MP Subramanian Swamy said it was time that Article 370 bestowing special status to Jammu and Kashmir was abrogated. "Section 370 had been introduced temporarily and can be revoked through a Cabinet decision, he said.

TEACHER

and psychotropic substances which are involving the youth of the area. He also said that so far 31 accused involved in drug peddling/narcotic smugglers including four cross LoC narcotic smugglers have been arrested and investigation of cases registered is in progress. SSP also said J&K Police is committed to eradicate the drug menace from the society which is one of the commandments of J&K Police for the year 2017.

SSP Kupwara also appealed the local population to assist the police in its special drive so as to make the Kupwara drug free. Local people of the area have eulogized the role of Police for launching effective campaign against drug peddlers and sale of psychotropic substances which according to locals are adversely affecting and involving the local youth of the area who are future of region. SSP Kupwara also said that addicted youth should avail the free facilities of de-addiction created by J&K Police at de-Addiction Centre PCR Srinagar. In this regard he appealed the parents of addicted youth to come forward without any social stigma so that their future can be saved.

RANA

with the Centre and since there was no forward movement on that document, the issue of regional autonomy could not be taken to its logical conclusion. He said the doctrine provides a mechanism for empowerment of sub-regions and administrative mechanism at district level to take governance at the grass roots level, on the analogy of Ladakh Autonomous

Hill Development Councils.

Reiterating the party stand on Article 35A, the Provincial President exuded confidence that the BJP led NDA government will move an effective counter-affidavit, defending this provision, in the Supreme Court as per commitment made by Home Minister Mr Rajnath Singh during his recent visit to Srinagar and Jammu. He described the Home Minister's assurance as manifestation of the strong urge of people of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, reflected by National Conference.

Rana said regional autonomy together with well structured district councils will end the sense of deprivation and allegations of discrimination. "This will be in a sense complete involvement of the people in decision making", he added.

He said preserving Article 35A will be upholding the legacy of Maharaja Hari Singh Ji, who had enacted visionary state subject laws 90 years ago. This provision has more relevance now than ever before, especially for the Jammu region.

When asked on the demand of holiday on the birth anniversary of Maharaja Hari Singh Ji on ensuing September 23, the Provincial President said that he strongly support it and has made this clear on the floor of the Legislative Assembly also. He said that declaring a holiday will be respecting the sentiments of the people of Jammu.

Describing PDP-BJP coalition government as a total failure, the Provincial President retorted back to a question, "Government deficit is too mild a comment on the performance of the coalition as there is no governance across the state", he said, adding that the development has come to grinding halt with problems of people accumulating each day.

To a question on the observations of Congress Working President Mr Rahul Gandhi about the BJP having committed a strategic mistake by aligning with the PDP thus leading to large space to militants, Mr Rana said he would not like to comment on this but, "Yes, the militancy has gone up and the security situation is quite precarious". He referred to the deferment of Anantnag bypolls to Lok Sabha and just seven per cent polling in Srinagar parliamentary constituency and said this reflects the security environment. He said the PDP-BJP government has reversed the gains of normality that was witnessed in the state post 2010 unfortunate incidents till 2914 under Mr Omar Abdullah as Chief Minister.

He regretted over the meager and paltry package of Rs 2,000 crore for POJK refugees, saying this is just an eye wash of the recommendations of Rs 2025 crore package formulated by Omar led government. He said the border people were suffering adversely, as commitments made to them were not kept. He said the shelling from across the border and ceasefire violations have created a sense of insecurity and deprived border dwellers of leading normal life. "Economic, farming and other activities in the forward areas have come to grinding halt", he observed.

When asked about the stand of NC on Rohingyas, Mr Rana said that the party's position is well known. He said the Centre should take a call on this issue as per Foreign Nationals Act and in pursuance of UN Charter.

At the outset, Mr Rana expressed his solidarity with the media and decried the unfortunate incidents outside the Jammu Press Club. He said the scenario is deplorable, especially as the media has been shouldering its responsibilities objectively in very difficult situation. He cautioned against the attempts of muzzling freedom of press and said that the morning incident was not acceptable at all.

DC

Circular Road Project Srinagar.

He directed the Collector to ensure speedy disposal of all pending land acquisition cases so that development works of prestigious projects may not hamper for want of land acquisition. He further directed the collectors that the progress of each land acquisition case shall be reviewed weekly henceforth.

Swachhta Hi Seva: Unprecedented nationwide campaign on Swachhta: India responds to Prime Minister's Call

New Delhi, September 14: Starting tomorrow, the whole country will take up sanitation initiatives, for over 15 days, in an unprecedented campaign to highlight, once again, the jan aandalan that is the Swachh Bharat Mission. This follows an impassioned call by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, ahead of the 3rd anniversary of Swachh Bharat Mission that falls on 2nd October. The Prime Minister has named the nation-wide sanitation campaign from 15th September to 2nd October 2017 as "Swachhta Hi Seva". This is being coordinated by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, the convening Ministry for the Swachh Bharat Mission.

The objective of the campaign is to mobilise people and reinforce the "Jan Aandalan" for sanitation to contribute to Mahatma Gandhi's dream of a Clean India. Swachhta Hi Seva campaign will see large scale mobilisation of people from all walks of life to undertake shramdaan for

cleanliness and construction of toilets and to make their environments free from open defecation. There will be targeted cleaning of public and tourist places. The participation will range from the President of India to the common citizen and would involve Union Ministers, Governors, Chief Ministers, legislators celebrities and top officials. Celebrities, faith leaders, corporate honchos etc. are being mobilised to spearhead the campaign in their respective areas of influence.

Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation has made elaborate plans along with the State Governments to involve people from various walks of life and make this an unprecedented people's campaign. Reaching out to the poor and marginalised and providing them with sustainable sanitation services would be the hallmark of this campaign.

The campaign is scheduled to be launched by President of India on the 15th of September 2017 from

village Ishwarigunj in Kanpur that has attained the status of open free defecation status. The President would administer nation-wide "Swachhta Hi Seva" pledge thereby initiating parallel action in all the 250,000 plus Gram Panchayats and cities in India. The launch campaign will be joined by Sushri Uma Bharti, Union Minister for Drinking Water and Sanitation; Shri Ram Naik, Governor of Uttar Pradesh; Shri Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and 7 persons representing various sectors of society, who are involved in supporting Swachh Bharat Mission.

Arrangements have been made to ensure formal launch of "Swachhta Hi Seva" campaign in all States and Districts involving Governors, Chief Ministers, State Ministers, MPs, MLAs and District Collectors. Pledged will be taken and Shramdaans done in Panchayats and other places simultaneously.

Ministry of Drinking Water and

Sanitation has identified special dates during the campaign period. It includes three Sundays, 17th, 24th September and 1st October when people are being mobilised to do large scale shramdaan for toilet construction, cleaning of public places, bus stands, school and colleges, statues, hospitals and ponds in rural and urban areas. A special cleanliness drive is planned in 15 identified tourist places on 1st October 2017. Vice President, Shri M Venkaiah Naidu, is scheduled to visit a village in Karnataka on 17th September 2017, which is being celebrated as "Seva Diwas" and offer shramdaan for toilet construction and general cleanliness. A large number of Union Ministers, MPs and MLAs are also scheduled to offer shramdaan across the length and breadth of the country on this day.

On Seva Diwas, 17th September, Doordarshan has organised a World TV Premiere of "Toilet: Ek Prem Katha", a film that has an overwhelm-

ing message about access and usage of toilets on Doordarshan, at 11am. Community viewing of the telecast is being mobilised to effect positive behaviour change. Several media houses have voluntarily come out to mount special campaigns for Swachhta during the fortnight.

At the culminating event of the fortnight on October 2 Gandhi Jayanti, which is also the Swachh Bharat Diwas, national awards for essays, films and paintings, and other Swachh Bharat awards will be presented to Swachhta champions from across the country and all walks of life. The fortnight was preceded by a countrywide essay, short films and paintings competition, especially focused on schools, youth organisations, central police forces, besides general citizens.

The Ministry has created a special portal and web page on MyGov. In facilitating people to upload pre and post intervention photos of their shramdaan and other interventions.

President of India presents Rajbhasha Awards on the occasion of Hindi Divas

New Delhi, September 14: The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind presented the Rajbhasha Awards on the occasion of Hindi Divas at a function held in New Delhi today (September 14, 2017). He also launched the 'LLA Mobile App' in the presence of Shri Rajnath Singh, Union Minister of Home Affairs and Shri Hansraj Gagaram Ahir and Shri Kiran Rijju, Ministers of State for Home Affairs.

PM Modi and Japanese PM Abe lay foundation stone for India's first High Speed Rail project

New Delhi, September 14: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe today jointly laid the foundation stone for India's first high speed rail project between Mumbai and Ahmedabad.

Speaking on the occasion, at a large public meeting in Ahmedabad, the Prime Minister spoke of the high ambition and willpower of "New India." He congratulated the people of India on the occasion, and said that the bullet train project will provide speed and progress, and deliver results quickly. He said the Government's focus is on increasing productivity through high speed connectivity. The Prime Minister thanked Japan for the technical and financial help given to India, for this project. He praised Prime Minister Abe for the fact that this project is being launched within such a short time.

The Prime Minister said that this high speed railway would not only bring two cities closer, but also bring the people living hundreds of kilometers away, closer to each other. He said a new economic system is being developed along the Mumbai-Ahmedabad corridor, and the entire area would become a single economic zone.

The Prime Minister said technology is useful only if it provides benefit to the common man. He said the technology transfer envisaged in this project will benefit Indian Railways, and boost the "Make in India" initiative. He said the project would be eco-friendly as well as human-friendly. He said "high-speed corridors" would be regions for rapid growth in the future.

The Prime Minister said that the Government is working to ensure that infrastructure is developed keeping in mind futuristic requirements. He expressed confidence that everyone would work together to complete this project in the shortest possible time.

Media Reports regarding drought in 225 districts in 17 States, factually incorrect: Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare

New Delhi, September 14: Recently, some news reports have been published regarding drought warning for 225 districts in 17 States, are factually incorrect. The Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has been monitoring regularly the agricultural situation in the States. During the current monsoon season, the monsoon rains have been normal i.e. 738.8 mm against the normal of 782.2 mm as on 10.09.2017. The overall rainfall in the country is in the category of normal (-6%). The monsoon season in the country is from 1st June to 30th September. Many States particularly, NE States are receiving heavy monsoon rains.

The kharif crop coverage in almost all the States have been satisfactory and the rains during the period from 1-10 September, 2017 in Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, Odisha and Jharkhand have improved moisture in the soil. This wide distribution of rainfall has brightened the prospects of kharif production in current season. During 2017-18, the area sown under all kharif crops is 1041.17 lakh hectares against the normal of corresponding period of 1014.00 lakh hectares as on 08.09.2017. However, some areas experienced deficit rains after sowing of kharif crops. The States have already started assessment of impact of less rain in such areas. The Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has already given advisories to the States for life saving irrigation, in case of moisture stress. Though, there is deficit rainfall reported in 95 districts but sowing is normal and satisfactory. The current rainfall in first fortnight of September in many States will improve the situation. The yield is expected to be same as of last year. There is no drought like situation.

Operation Insaaniyat: Humanitarian Assistance to Bangladesh on Account of Influx of Refugees

New Delhi, September 14: A humanitarian crisis arose in Bangladesh due to heavy influx of refugees from neighbouring Myanmar. The government of India has decided to assist Bangladesh in this crisis by sending relief material. The Indian Air Force was tasked to airlift the relief material from India to Bangladesh. One C-17 Globemaster strategic heavy lift cargo aircraft was positioned at short notice at Delhi on 13 Sep 17 to airlift 55 Tons of relief material to Chittagong, Bangladesh. This aircraft was loaded overnight with relief material consisting of critical daily necessities viz., rice, pulses, sugar, salt, cooking oil, ready to eat meals, mosquito nets etc.

The C-17 carrying relief material departed early morning on 14 Sep 17 and routed via Kolkata to pick up additional load. The material was delivered at Chittagong, Bangladesh at 1245 hours on 14 Sep 17. One more C-17 is scheduled to airlift additional relief material to Bangladesh. The Indian Air Force rose to the challenge and played a pivotal role to further strengthen the close ties of friendship between India and Bangladesh.

Hanjura chairs SAIDC 65th board of directors meet

'New initiatives needed to make SAIDC commercially vibrant'

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 14: Minister for Agriculture, Ghulam Nabi Lone Hanjura today underscored the need for making fresh efforts for renewal of State Agro Industries Development Corporation (SAIDC).

Chairing the 65th meeting of board of directors of SAIDC at SKICC here, the Agriculture Minister said that there is need to infuse new initiatives in the functioning of SAIDC to make it more vibrant and commercial.

The Minister asked the concerned to take innovative initiatives for making the corporation profitable. He directed the officials for adapting better marketing of newly introduced products which in turn will increase the income of farming community also.

During the board meeting it was decided that SAIDC would prepare a business process "re-engineering plan" to put the corporation on path of profit making. The board members expressed the hope that the plan would help in making the corporation profitable. It was also decided that three refrigerated vans would



be purchased by the SAIDC during the year 2017-18. The vans would help in carrying fruits and vegetables to other states without any wastage to farmers. The Agriculture Minister directed the concerned for creation of post production agriculture infrastructure division in the corporation.

During the meeting, the Minister was informed that after implementation of new marketing policy, cattle feed plant Baribrahma Jammu has received orders for more than 85000 quintal of feed during the current year. He also informed that Rs 4 crore have been allocated to SAIDC

for restoration of flood damaged infrastructure.

During the meeting, the board of directors gave approval to make the sales centers of SAIDC at Katra, Sopore, Civil secretariat Jammu / Srinagar functional on franchise

model. The Minister was apprised that the corporation is facing tremendous problems due to the dearth of staff as most of its employees have attained the age of superannuation. The Minister assured that the matter would be resolved soon. Vice Chairman SAIDC Rashid Mehmood, Principal Secretary Agriculture production Sandeep Kumar Nayak, Director Agriculture Kashmir Altaf Ajaz Andrabi, Director Agriculture Jammu H K Razhdhan, MD SAIDC Rakesh Khajuria and other senior officers of the agriculture and its allied departments attended the board of directors meeting.

NSSO Srinagar Celebrates Hindi Divas

New Delhi, September 14: The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), Field Operations Division regional office Srinagar under the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, Government of India celebrated Hindi Divas. All the officers/officials of the Regional Office Srinagar, Sub Regional Office Baramulla and Anantnag were present on the celebration of Hindi Divas at conference Hall of National Sample Survey Office Regional Office Srinagar. Hindi Divas is celebrated across the country on 14th September every year to remember the historic occasion of the Hindi.

He also said that the Hindi language in India has a big history which belongs to the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European language family. After being an independent country, the government of India made a goal to standardize the mother tongue means the Hindi language with the grammar and orthography. Devanagari script is used to bring uniformity in writing. It is spoken in many countries of the world including Mauritius, Nepal, Surinam, Trinidad, Pakistan and some other countries. It

The Director National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), Field operations Division, Shri Altaf Hussain Haji (ISS) inaugurated the Hindi Divas. He said, 'Hindi Divas is cel-



ebrated across the country on 14th September every year to remember the historic occasion of the Hindi. He also said that the Hindi language in India has a big history which belongs to the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European language family. After being an independent country, the government of India made a goal to standardize the mother tongue means the Hindi language with the grammar and orthography. Devanagari script is used to bring uniformity in writing. It is spoken in many countries of the world including Mauritius, Nepal, Surinam, Trinidad, Pakistan and some other countries. It

is the language spoken as a mother tongue by around 258 million people and known as the 4th largest language of the world.

At Last, Shri Haji, Director National Sample Survey Office, Field operations Division Srinagar advised to all employees of this region to promote and implement Hindi as an official Language for official matters. The others officers also highlight the importance of the hind divas. Smt Kavita Singh Senior Statistical office handle the programme of Hindi Divas and Shri Mohd Amin Wani, Senior Statistical Officer presents vote of thanks.

DDC chairs 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' meeting

SHOPIAN, SEPTEMBER 14: The District Development Commissioner Shopian today chaired a meeting to review the performance and functioning of "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" scheme at Shopian.

Senior Superintendent of Police Shopian, Chief Medical Officer, Chief Education Officer, Project Officer ICDS, District Informatics Officer, Tehsil Social Welfare Officer, and other concerned officers were present in the meeting.

The DDC sought the date under different categories of age group from Health Statistics & Evaluation, Education and ICDS departments so that implementation of this scheme and other schemes of health and education on girl child are executed properly.

On the occasion the DDC stressed for involving all stakeholders in the programme. The DDC said that awareness programmes should be organized in every tehsil. He directed Chief Medical Officer to ask Ashas and Anganwadi workers to encourage women folk for institutional deliveries and avail benefits of various schemes.

Bali Bhagat lays foundation of Rs 2.28 cr additional accommodation at SDH Tangmarg

Also dedicates 8 ambulances to authorities provided by MLA

TANGMARG (BARAMULLA), SEPTEMBER 14: Moving firmly towards strengthening the health infrastructure, Minister for Health & Medical Education, Bali Bhagat today laid foundation stone of additional accommodation, Labour Room at Sub-District Hospital, Tangmarg to be constructed at an estimated cost of Rs. 2.28 crore.

The project is proposed to be completed in two phases, which comprises three floors, including basement, ground and first floor over 11,307 sq ft area. An amount of Rs. 1.40 crore stands released in favour of the J&K Police Housing Corporation, which is the executing agency for the project. September 2018 is the deadline for completion of the entire project.

Addressing a largely attended public meeting after foundation laying ceremony in the premises of SDH, Tangmarg, the Minister said that health is the topmost priority sector and Government is committed to further strengthen it in every nook and corner of the State. He said after the formation of the present Government, the health sector received tremendous boost and on-going projects were speeded up with the coordinated efforts. The Minister said that the work load in all the district hospitals has increased manifold, but manpower



component remained the same. He said now the Government has worked out the workload and requirement of manpower, including doctors and para-medics and process of creation of more posts has been initiated. The district hospitals will be fully equipped with to handle the rush of all kinds of patients to curtail the flow in tertiary hospitals. He said the necessary instructions have been issued to the concerned hospitals/doctors to maintain utmost restriction on making unnecessary referral to the tertiary hospitals, rather all routine cases will be treated locally. Only vulnerable/trauma cases will be referred to Government Medical College hospitals,

said the Minister. During the interaction with doctors and para-medics, the Minister called upon them to work with extra zeal and dedication and serve the patients as per medical ethics, adding that patients have high expectations from them and they must perform accordingly. He assured to improve working conditions in the hospitals for the staff.

Responding to the demand of the local MLA, the Minister announced one special Ambulance for the hospital to cater to the needs in hilly areas (snow bound areas). He also assured to post one Child Specialist and one Gynecologist new next few

days in the SDH. He directed the Director Health Services to do the needful.

MLA Tangmarg, Mohammad Abbas Wani in his address apprised the Minister about the status of health scenario in the area and called for further augmentation of services and filling up all vacant posts of doctors and para-medics. He maintained that Tangmarg is located in the close vicinity of world renowned tourist resort Gulmarg which is widely visited by domestic as well as foreign tourists and need focused attention of the Government to augment medicare services to handle the unprecedented rush of patients, especially in Tangmarg and Kunzar hospitals.

The Minister and MLA also dedicated eight ambulances to the CMO, Baramulla to be utilized in Tangmarg constituency. The ambulances have been provided by the MLA, Tangmarg, Mohammad Abbas Wani from his Constituency Development Funds.

Director Health Services, Dr. Saleem-ur-Rehman, CMO, Baramulla, Dr. B.A. Chalkoo, SDM, Gulmarg, Aziz Ahmad Rather, engineers of Police Housing Corporation, local leaders of PDP and BJP, besides large number of people from different parts of Tangmarg constituency were present on the occasion.

Time and Us

Editorial
SRINAGAR
J&K

A FORMAL BREAK

Finally, the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam is without its deeply polarising figure, the interim general secretary, V.K. Sasikala. As a close friend of Jayalalithaa, she had played a major role in the party's affairs for more than 25 years, evoking both fear and loyalty among the party's second line of leaders. Her removal was the precondition set by the O. Panneerselvam faction of the party for a merger, a first step before the party could reclaim its original identity and flag and election symbol. Whether the faction led by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami adopted this course out of political necessity or out of a genuine desire to keep Sasikala out of the party's affairs is now immaterial: the break with the Sasikala family is real. The consequences of her removal at the meeting of the general council of the party will be immediate: greater political legitimacy for the ruling faction's claim to be truly representative of the party's organisational support base and increased isolation of the Sasikala clan from the party. While there are many in the party, including ministers, who still sympathise with Sasikala, or feel a sense of gratitude towards her, the party will no longer be remote-controlled by the 'Mannargudi clan'. The newly evolved collective leadership in the party, with Mr. Panneerselvam as the coordinator and Mr. Palaniswami as the co-coordinator, and the abolition of the powerful post of general secretary, will be resistant to the influence of Sasikala and her nephew T.T.V. Dhinakaran.

However, the Sasikala group under the leadership of Mr. Dhinakaran commands the overt support of at least 18 members of the Assembly, enough to pull down the government. They have been hesitant to form themselves as a breakaway group either for fear of being disqualified for defection or in the hope that they might be able to capture the leadership of the parent party. The general council meeting could only have accentuated the differences with the Dhinakaran group. A reconciliation is close to impossible now, although Sasikala has not been expelled from the party. The changed equations within the ruling party, which no longer appears to enjoy the confidence of a majority in the House, should force Governor C. Vidyasagar Rao out of his inaction. Mr. Palaniswami should seek another vote of confidence as, even by the admission of his own camp he is well short of an absolute majority in the Assembly. The political gains from the merger of the two camps notwithstanding, Mr. Palaniswami might have risked the stability of his own government by patching up with Mr. Panneerselvam. Just as he ties up one end, things are beginning to unravel at the other.

STUDENTS OR MIGRANTS?

By VIDYA RAM

In January this year, Lord Hannay of Chiswick, a former diplomat and cross-bench member of the House of Lords, introduced an amendment to a controversial Bill on higher education seeking to remove international students from Britain's net migration figures and not treat them as economic migrants in Britain. The government had a duty to "encourage international students to attend higher education establishments covered by the Act". Lord Hannay said at the time that he hoped the move would help "turn the page" on an "unhappy period in our history where people thought we were a very closed and unwelcoming nation".

The legislation gathered much support in the House of Lords, and even as late as April hopes were high that the government would let the amendment pass. Then came the general election: in the run-up to the dissolution of Parliament before the election, the government toughened its stance and made it clear that it would not give way, erasing the amendment from the legislation. The developments were seen as a clear example of the commitment of Prime Minister Theresa May, a former Home Secretary, to keeping international students in the net migration figures, and therefore within the remit of the government's commitment to reducing net migration in Britain to the tens of thousands from the hundreds of thousands. In October 2015, while still Home Secretary, Theresa May outlined her commitment to a tough immigration regime. "While we must fulfill our moral duty to help people in desperate need, we must also have an immigration system that allows us to control who comes to our country... because when immigration is too high, when the pace of change is too fast, it's impossible to build a cohesive society," she told a Conservative Party conference. Turning to international students, she cited them as one of the reasons why net migration had continued to rise rapidly, insisting that while they were welcome, "too many of them are not returning home as soon as their visa runs out.... If they have a graduate job, that is fine. If not, they must return home. So I don't care what the university lobbyists say: the rules must be enforced. Students yes; overstayers no. And the universities must make this happen."

The thesis that tens of thousands of students were illegally overstaying their visa has been propounded by government figures over and over again, such as last year when Amber Rudd, the new Home Secretary, outlined plans for a consultation on an even tougher immigration regime for international students that could create a "two tier" system that made a student's ability to stay on and study dependent on the quality of the educational establishment they were attending. "This isn't about pulling up the drawbridge. It's about making sure students that come here, come to study," she insisted.



The figures the government was relying on were based on the International Passenger Survey (IPS), which has been in operation since 1961 and collects information from passengers entering and leaving Britain. However, while the data can provide a snapshot of those leaving and entering Britain, its utility as an accurate gauge of immigration figures has been deeply questionable for a while: the data are only gathered during daytime, while many flights with international students (including to India and China) depart outside these hours. These flaws have been repeatedly pointed out to the government, most recently in July when the Office for Statistics Regulation warned that the data based on the IPS survey did not "bear the weight that is put on it in public debate" and had to be collected as "experimental data". Reports last year suggested that figures from the exit checks that began in 2015 were likely to show a very different picture than that presented by the IPS data.

Last year, The Times reported that the government was sitting on a report that showed that just 1 per cent of international students overstayed their visa. Yet the government continued to maintain its tough stance. While both the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats included a commitment to removing students from migration figures in their election manifestos, the Conservatives stood firm. "We will expect students to leave the country at the end of their course unless they meet new, higher requirements that allow them to work in Britain after their studies have concluded," they promised, in a manifesto that pledged to tighten immigration rules for migrant workers as well as for those wishing to bring non-European Union (E.U.) spouses into Britain.

To those closely monitoring the issue, the government's stance seemed inexplicable: studies have shown that even in Britain, where immigration has been a highly charged issue, most members of the public do not see students in this vein. A poll com-

missioned by Universities UK found that only about 26 per cent of the public viewed international students as migrants and that over 60 per cent believed international students had a positive impact on the regions they lived in. A separate study by the body found that international students generated £25.8 billion for the British economy annually, supporting over 200,000 jobs across the country.

The government's approach also jars with its ambitions of becoming a post-Brexit great trading nation: India has made plain its concerns about the treatment of foreign students and that taking students out of the migration figures would be seen as a gesture of goodwill at a time when its relationship with Britain was in danger of becoming a transactional one, focussed on trade and business relations rather than on the "human bridge" the countries have vaunted. In this context, the significance of the revelations in mid August that the government's estimates of nearly a 100,000 students overstaying their visa illegally every year were way off the mark—with the figure more like 4,600, according to the data based on exit checks—cannot be underestimated. "A very large majority of students were identified as having departed before their visa or extension of leave expired or as staying legally by applying for and being granted further leave to remain in the U.K.," said the report by the Office for National Statistics. Analysis found that Indians were among the students more likely to depart the country before their student visas expired, with a small fraction leaving after their visa had expired.

Theresa May has insisted that they did not get the figures wrong but the estimates merely reflected the success of their strategy. The government has now commissioned a year-long study into the impact of foreign students—a move that has courted criticism for going over ground that has already been covered by others. It comes a month after the Home Office commissioned an investigation into E.U. migration, on which it

hoped to base its future immigration policy towards European nations—which drew criticism for not only being too late in the day (it will only report back months before Britain is due to leave the E.U. in March 2019) but also highlighting how much policy to date had been based on flimsy data. Given the huge weight put on limiting immigration by many in the campaign to leave the E.U. in the run-up to last year's referendum, it is all the more startling.

The government has all along insisted that it has no cap on international students and that it continues to welcome the "brightest and the best". However, there is little question that policies are far from aligned in the right way to attract students. Under changes brought in 2012, students have just four months after completing their degree to find a job while on their Tier 4 visa (making the switch from a Tier 4 student visa to a Tier 2 visa is much easier than getting a Tier 2 visa is for those coming directly from overseas) and have strict limits on the number of hours they can work during and after their degree. With the costs of employing those on Tier 2 visas rising rapidly for businesses (the Conservative Party manifesto pledged to raise the levy on companies employing migrant workers even further to £2,000 a year), the strategy has killed the attractiveness of a British education, besides making it economically unviable (many have in the past relied on being able to work in Britain to recoup some of the financial investment that has gone into it). But the government's tough line has also got a grimmer side.

The government had for several years been taking foreign students, workers and others to court with the aim of deporting them, alleging that they used fraudulent means to obtain English-language qualifications to stay in the U.K., after a 2014 BBC investigation found evidence of fraud at one Educational Testing Service (ETS) centre. In the years that followed, thousands of people who had gained their qualification via ETS at different test centres across the U.K. were accused of partaking in fraud, with the government relying on generic witness statements of Home Office officials, without providing any specific proof of fraud. Thousands were deported, while others who were unable to work or study left the country in a state of distress. Many saw the government's eagerness to push ahead with the programme as part of its efforts to reduce numbers. The tough regime, of course, is not limited to students: there are strict limits on bringing foreign spouses to the U.K., including high minimum salary thresholds for the British partner, often leaving families divided and children away from their parents. Little regard is given for long-standing links domestically. Earlier this year, a woman who had been married to a Briton for 27 years was deported to Singapore (she was subsequently allowed to return, though not before suffering considerable distress from the separation in the meantime).

Price of inequity

By T.S. SUBRAMANIAN

If the suicide of S. Anitha, a 17-year-old Dalit student from Tamil Nadu, is anything to go by, the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) has been excruciating and traumatic for thousands of students of the Tamil Nadu Board of Higher Secondary Education. Anitha, who scored 1,176 marks (out of 1,200) in the State board Plus Two examinations, could score only 86 out of 720 in NEET, which is based on the tougher Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) syllabus. Unable to join the MBBS course, she hanged herself at her home in Kuzhumur village in the backward district of Ariyalur on September 1.

After the jallikattu issue in January 2017 when thousands of students massed on the Marina beach in Chennai, Anitha's suicide became the rallying point for students and political parties agitating across Tamil Nadu with their demand to scrap NEET. As the protests gathered momentum, in a dramatic turn of events, the Supreme Court, on September 8, banned agitations against NEET.

In an interim order on a petition filed by the advocate G.S. Mani, a bench led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Mishra and Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and D.Y.

Chandrachud said the Supreme Court had ruled that NEET was the sole basis for admission to the MBBS and BDS courses and so protests and roadblocks against it and disruption of public life would amount to contempt of court. The court directed the State government to book anyone who instigated violence in the name of NEET.

Subsequently, the police denied permission for a large public meeting to be held in the evening of the same day in Tiruchi. But the organisers of the meeting went ahead with it, arguing that the Supreme Court had not banned peaceful protests against NEET. The meeting was organised by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Congress and the Vidulathai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) to condemn the Central and State governments which, they said, were responsible for Anitha's death, to demand permanent exemption for Tamil Nadu from NEET and to shift education from the Concurrent List to the State List.

The past eight months have been agonising for State board students who attempted NEET on May 7. Not knowing whether the State government would succeed in its efforts to get a one-time

exemption for students in the State from NEET for 2017-18, uncertainty and confusion prevailed. But hopes soared when the State Assembly passed two Bills unanimously on February 1 seeking permanent exemption from NEET for undergraduate and postgraduate medical and dental courses in the State and later, in August, when the Tamil Nadu government prepared a draft ordinance seeking a one-time exemption from NEET for 2017-18. The draft ordinance was prepared following the then Union Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's promise of the Centre's "cooperation" in this regard. But the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government led by Narendra Modi at the Centre resorted to subterfuge by not forwarding the two Bills to the President for his assent. It also did a volte-face on the draft ordinance issue. Even after the Union Law Ministry had cleared it, Additional Attorney General Tushar Mehta told the Supreme Court on August 22 that the Centre ultimately did not want to give an exemption to one State. After hearing the arguments for and against the ordinance, the Supreme Court on the same day directed the Tamil Nadu government to make public the rank list of students selected for admission to MBBS and BDS courses

through NEET.

When the State Directorate of Medical Education released the NEET list on August 23 in Chennai, Anitha was disappointed. Despite poverty, Anitha had worked hard to score 1,176 marks, with centums in physics and mathematics. Her father, T. Shanmugam, worked as a load man in the Gandhi Market in Tiruchi, 50 km from Ariyalur town. Her mother had died when Anitha was a child. She and her four brothers lived with their grandmother at Kuzhumur.

With a score of 196.5, Anitha would have got admission in a reputed medical college in Tamil Nadu if the State's earlier system for admissions was followed, that is, purely on the basis of marks in the Plus Two examinations. But that was not to be. She had pleaded herself as a respondent in a case in the Supreme Court against NEET. While in New Delhi to implead herself in the case, she told reporters: "I want to be a doctor. I will be assured of a seat if the admission is based on Plus Two marks." However, with the Supreme Court mandating in its orders on April 28 and May 9, 2016, that NEET would be the sole basis for admission to undergraduate and postgraduate medical and dental courses, she had no choice but to attempt NEET

on May 7, 2017.

As the CBSE syllabus is tougher than the State board syllabus, Anitha, who had no access to coaching centres financially or geographically, stood little chance of getting high scores in NEET. She was listless for several days after she found that her dreams were shattered. "I do not know what to do now," an anguished Anitha kept saying. On September 1 she took the extreme step.

Anitha's death enraged public opinion and sparked off students' protests in the State. At the vanguard of the agitation was the CPI(M); its student and youth wings, the Students' Federation of India (SFI) and the Democratic Youth Federation of India; the CPI; the DMK; the Congress; and the VCK. The Tamil Maanila Congress, the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and the Pattali Makkal Katchi also held protests. The Dravidar Kazhagam, the Periyar Dravidar Kazhagam, the Naam Tamizhar Katchi, the May 17th Movement, and Muslim organisations along with some fringe groups and film directors and actors also jumped into the fray.

College students boycotted classes and came out on to the streets. SFI activists burnt effigies of Prime Minister Modi and demanded the resignation of Chief

Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, who is heading a tottering government in the State. The agitators demanded the resignation of State Health Minister C. Vijaya Baskar. They were sore that while the BJP had played a "double game" in the issue, the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) government had given students the "false hope" that it would manage to get a waiver from NEET for 2017-18. They alleged that both Modi and Palaniswami had committed a "breach of promise" and "betrayed" Tamil Nadu on the issue.

Cadres of political parties and students took to the streets with renewed vigour on September 2. A hartal was observed in Ariyalur district. Hundreds of CPI(M) cadres squatted on the busy Anna Salai in Chennai, near the Head Post Office. Demonstrations were held at as many as 32 places in Chennai alone. There were agitations in places such as Chengalpattu, Kancheepuram, Villupuram, Tiruchi, Madurai and Coimbatore. Protesters everywhere demanded that NEET be scrapped because it went against the interests of rural students and militated against social justice. At various places demonstrators blocked trains, stopped road traffic, took out processions, carried aloft portraits of Anitha.

India, Japan sign pact on stem cell research

NEW DELHI: In the light of Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to India, the two countries have signed a host of agreements on Wednesday to further cooperation in science and technology, including research into stem-cells for making bone-marrow transplants more accessible. The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) already has an India-Japan cooperative programme that has Christian Medical College & Hospital, Vellore, and Kyoto University, Japan, as participants.

Though the DBT and Japan's National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST) have

been collaborating in these areas, they renewed the agreement for five more years on Wednesday.

"The aim of the programme is to develop infrastructure and expertise for India to be a competitive force in regenerative medicine and induced pluripotent stem cell biology.

The focus of the collaboration is on developing treatments for sickle-cell anaemia, Beta thalassaemia and brain disorders, and creating a haplobank relevant to Indian populations," said a press release. A haplobank refers to a specially maintained collection of embryonic cells that can, in theory, be di-

rected to become any kind of cell and thus progenitor of replacement organs.

Japanese scientist Shinya Yamanaka was a co-recipient of the Nobel Prize for medicine for discovering ways to reprogram mature stem cells.

"Through this programme, Indian scientists will be part of a global network that shares research into and knowledge of these aspects of stem cell technology," said K. VijayRaghavan, Secretary, DBT. "An immediate focus would be on using this to help in bone-marrow cells and transplants by identifying the genetic variants of such cells in Indian populations."



Hindi fourth most spoken language in world: Union Minister Harsh Vardhan



NEW DELHI: In the light of Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to India, the two countries have signed a host of agreements on Wednesday to further cooperation in science and technology, including research into stem-cells for making bone-marrow transplants more accessible. The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) already has an India-Japan cooperative programme that has Christian Medical College & Hospital, Vellore, and Kyoto University, Japan, as participants.

Though the DBT and Japan's National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST) have been collaborating in these areas, they renewed the agreement for five more years on Wednesday.

"The aim of the programme is to develop infrastructure and expertise for India to be a competitive force in regenerative medicine and induced pluripotent stem cell biology.

The focus of the collaboration is on developing treatments for sickle-cell anaemia, Beta thalassaemia and brain disorders, and creating a haplobank relevant to Indian populations," said a press release. A haplobank refers to a specially maintained collection of embryonic cells that can, in theory, be directed to become any kind of cell and thus progenitor of replacement organs. Japanese scientist Shinya Yamanaka was a co-recipient of the Nobel Prize for medicine for discovering ways to reprogram mature stem cells. "Through this programme, Indian scientists will be part of a global network that shares research into and knowledge of these aspects of stem cell technology," said K. VijayRaghavan, Secretary, DBT. "An immediate focus would be on using this to help in bone-marrow cells and transplants by identifying the genetic variants of such cells in Indian populations."

Dalits, tribals prefer loans for home than education

NEW DELHI: More Dalit and tribal families have been taking home loans over the past few years while the number of education loans has reduced, indicating a new pattern of investments among these communities. A note prepared by the department of financial services in the ministry of finance shows the amount disbursed in home loans in 2017-18, Rs 2,849.36 crore, has gone up by nearly 50% compared to 2015-16, Rs 1,954.57 crore. Sources add that the rise coincides with the government's renewed thrust on 'Housing for all' by 2022 and the banks' eagerness to disburse funds in an otherwise safer, booming sector.

"The PM also announced sops for Dalits and tribals on December 31, 2016. That further boosted the demand for loans in the housing sector," said a source. At a meeting of the parliamentary panel on the welfare of SC/STs, some members wanted to know if banks are still insisting on collateral in loans for Dalits and tribals.

"The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) regularly comes out with guidelines asking banks not to ask for deposits. This regular issue of guidelines perhaps indicates that some banks are asking for such deposits," said a member of the panel.



The rise in housing loans coincides with the construction of more houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna, a programme in which eligible recipients get money from the government to build their own house with a toilet.

"The government also has provisions for low-interest loans for the households in case they fall short of funds..." said a rural development ministry official who did not want to be named. Meanwhile, banks are shying away from opening their purses for educational loans because of rising levels of non performing assets (NPAs) — loans that do not

fetch returns. Lenders are not ready to offer loans to students who have decided to pursue courses which are purely academic in nature.

Those opting for courses like business administration, engineering, law or medicine have a higher probability of getting a loan. NPAs arising from education loans has risen to above 7% compared to 5.8% in 2014-15, several bankers said.

Failure to get admission in "good colleges and universities" makes it difficult for students to get loans. This rating of institutions is done internally by banks.

"Banks need to be prudent in their decision making, as they are commercial entities,

They need to maintain their balance sheets and therefore they need to take decisions which make commercial sense after all they cannot burn a hole in depositors money," Ashvin Parekh, managing partner, APA Services said.

"It (loans) should be linked to the repayment capability of the borrower... experience reveals that low-value loans are more default-prone," Soumya Kanti Ghosh, chief economic adviser, SBI said.

SC stays Raghunath temple takeover, issues notice to Himachal Pradesh govt

SHIMLA: In a reprieve to Kullu MLA and royal family scion Maheshwar Singh, the Supreme Court on Thursday stayed takeover of the Raghunath temple.

On September 1, the Himachal Pradesh high court had okayed the temple take over and quashed Maheshwar Singh's petition. Singh subsequently challenged the order in the apex court, which has issued a notice to the state government seeking a response to the petitioner's contention.

Earlier, the Himachal high court had observed that a writ petition cannot be filed in such cases. Referring to other similar cases, the court said there was provision of a civil suit for such cases. "This petition involves seriously disputed questions of fact and even otherwise the rival claims of the parties are such, which can only be investigated and determined on the basis of evidence, which may be led by the parties in a properly instituted civil suit rather than by a court exercising



prerogative of issuing writs," the high court had ruled. The state government issued a notification on July 26 to take over the temple. Kullu deputy commissioner had given seven days to Maheshwar Singh, the chief Kardar of Raghunath temple, to hand over the records of the temple located in Sulatpur Palace. In August last year, the HC had stayed the temple's takeover by the government after Maheshwar Singh approached the court. The state government had issued a notification under

the Himachal Pradesh Hindu Public Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowment Act, 1984, to take over the temple. After the government order to acquire the temple, a war of words escalated between political leaders. Maheshwar has been maintaining that the temple was his private property and hence the government cannot acquire it. However, chief minister Virbhadra Singh had argued that Raghunath temple was public property and the government had the right to acquire it.

V-P Venkaiah Naidu looks to cut down on Rajya Sabha din

NEW DELHI: Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu, ex-officio chairman of the Rajya Sabha, is holding consultations over his predecessor Hamid Ansari's stand against the passage of bills in a din, a move that might brighten the prospects of contentious bills that are often held up in the absence of political consensus. Opposition parties have stalled many bills in the Upper House where the ruling NDA is in a minority. Hamstrung by the lack of numbers required to get parliamentary approval of its proposed legislation, the NDA government often had to resort to money-bill route in the past, triggering strong objections from opposition parties. The Upper House does not have a decisive say in money bills. Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh has even gone to the Supreme Court, challenging the Lok Sabha Speaker's decision to certify the bill on Aadhaar as a money bill. With barely 21 months left in its current ten-

ure, the government is keen on pushing its reforms agenda, especially in the labour sector, to give a fillip to the economy. Sources said that Naidu was looking at precedents, including the period between 2004 and 2014 when the UPA government was in power, to see if Parliament passed bills amid disruptions by opposition lawmakers in the past. During the winter session in 2008, the Lok Sabha had passed many bills when the House was in disorder.

In the mean time though, the vice-president is meeting opposition leaders to try to build political consensus to ensure smooth functioning of the Rajya Sabha. The government has often argued for voting on contentious bills in the House, contending that many smaller parties favoured them but disruptions by a few didn't allow them to express their support. Naidu is also learnt to be examining the issue of expunction of unparliamentary words. There have been

questions about its effectiveness, given that on many occasions they are all over TV channels and social media for hours before the Chair expunges them.

Even as Naidu, who completed one month in office last Monday, has been holding extensive meetings to familiarize himself with his new responsibility, he has decided to lend his weight behind schemes and programmes such as "Swachh Bharat" and "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao". He will take part in the government's fortnight long programme, starting from September 15, to promote cleanliness.

The V-P is also examining the functioning of the Rajya Sabha TV, which incurs huge expenditures—of around Rs 75-80 crore annually. He is learnt to be reviewing the RS TV's contents and would like to have more programmes about states. He is also cleaning up the RS secretariat and is said to have ordered the removal of officials who got extension in violation of rules and procedures.

Why children are at risk of sexual violence in schools: We have rules, but no vigil

NEW DELHI: Two brutal assaults in quick succession shook the country and brought protesting parents out on the streets. A seven-year-old boy was found with his throat slit in a private school in Gurgaon, minutes after his father dropped him there. A day later, a five-year-old was raped in the washroom of her Gandhinagar school. The question that is now gaining currency is: how safe are our children? The answer is troublesome. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), 8,800 cases were filed under POCSO Act, the law dealing with sexual assault on children, in 2015. On an average, that is at least one case registered every hour. In 94.8% of the cases, the children identified a "known person" as their attacker. The NCRB does not classify cases on the basis of where alleged assaults took place but given that children spend ap-

proximately eight hours a day in school or in transit to school, the probability that they were attacked there is high. Some of the most prominent cases of child abuse in recent years have taken place at schools.

In Mumbai in January 2013, a three-year-old student of a posh Juhu-based ICSE school was sexually assaulted by a bus cleaner within the school premises. In Bangalore a year later, a six-year-old was allegedly raped by two staffers of a private school. Reactions to these incidents have usually been kneejerk.

The Bangalore City Police issued guidelines asking institutions to install CCTV cameras. School vehicles were fitted with GPS tracking devices, and managements were advised to run background checks on employees. In Mumbai, too, several schools deployed surveillance cameras, but the state is yet to come up

with a formal policy.

RULES YES, MONITORING NO "More than 30,000 of our teachers are trained every year in Delhi, and we always have a module on child abuse: how to recognise tell-tale signs, when and how to intervene, and how to prevent it," said Soumya Gupta, the director of education.

The Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) set out a few guidelines in 2013, including an order for every institution to put in place a Child Protection Policy.

Arun Mathur, who served as the chairperson of the DCPCR until earlier this year, thinks the guidelines are a good start, but believes there is still work to be done.

"The biggest problem is that nobody is monitoring it. There is no compliance that is being ensured. Nobody takes this seriously unless some incident happens... The prin-

icipal of every school, the director and deputy director of the DoE should ensure that a child protection policy is maintained and followed," he said.

A government school vice principal in Delhi agreed that while their school has a policy, little was being done to ensure that the rules—which restricted entry, required police verification for new hires, and dissuaded students to come to school too early or stay too late—were being followed. "Nobody has ever come to check if we have such a policy or not. It is usually up to the principal to ensure that it is there and it is implemented," said the vice principal.

"CCTVs are good, but they are not the answer to everything. There is always the question of privacy, because of which we can't have cameras in toilets, and these are the spaces where many such incidents have taken place," said Mathur.

Former minister Jayanthi Natarajan on ED's radar for abuse of power

NEW DELHI: Trouble mounts for former environment minister Jayanthi Natarajan as she is on enforcement directorate's (ED) radar for alleged abuse of her position as minister. Just four days back CBI had registered an FIR against Natarajan for illegal diversion of forest land in Jharkhand for mining by a private company, Electrosteel Casting Ltd.

Top sources in ED said that they have asked for the details of the case from CBI to probe if there has been any more laundering. ED is probing paybacks that Natarajan might have received for allowing Electrosteel to mine in the Saranda forests of Jharkhand, despite her predecessor Jairam Ramesh's and the forest advisory committee's rejections. Sources said that some of Natarajan's other decisions taken during her term as environment minister in favour of private companies are also under the lens.

Jayanthi Natarajan was the minister of state for environment and forest with independent charge from 2011 to 2013. Several of her decisions were criticized and the term

"Jayanthi tax" coined to refer to allegations of corruption under her.

According to the CBI FIR, the Jharkhand government in 2008 submitted a proposal of diverting 55.79 hectares of forest land for 'non-forest' use by Electrosteel. This was part of proposal to lease 192.50 hectares for mining in the Saranda forests. The forest advisory committee rejected the plan and a year later, Electrosteel resubmitted the proposal. But this time, Jairam Ramesh as environment minister rejected the proposal.

The company then wrote to the Prime minister in 2010 for reconsideration. And the proposal was again put before the advisory committee, which rejected it.

On July 13, 2011, Natarajan succeeded Ramesh in the ministry. A letter from the Jharkhand chief minister and a meeting with managing director of Electrosteel later, Natarajan in February 2012 approved diverting 55.79 hectares of forest land for mining by Electrosteel, allegedly ignoring all previous rejections.

FAIRNESS STEROIDS POSE SERIOUS RISKS

In the pursuit of becoming a few shades fairer, you may be inviting serious side-effects and potentially grave infections. Popular cosmetics and fairness creams are not the culprit here but topical medications which contain a "cocktail of harmful steroids" supposed to be dispensed only through a prescription. These drugs are increasingly becoming a popular source of attaining fairness egged on by societal pressure where fairness is widely believed to be a ticket for success in personal life, and, sometimes even social mobility. In fact such has been their misuse, that the government has classified all steroids for topical external application (ester, salt, preparation) under Schedule H, the category of drugs which need to be dispensed only through a prescription (not over the counter), and cannot be advertised. Under these new guidelines, there has to be a 5 mm thick red band on the tubepack of all Schedule H products, with the words 'Scheduled drugs' in black letters to be printed on it.

Certain topical medication containing a cocktail of harmful steroids, form part of the list of 344 fixed dose combinations, banned by the gov-

ernment last year, with the case now to be heard in the Supreme Court.

The sale of steroid creams is over half a billion dollar business, with almost two-thirds of which are sold without prescription. If the new law is seriously implemented and enforced, it will stop this unethical, dishonest and unhealthy business, Dr Koushik Lahiri founding chair, IADVL Taskforce Against Topical Steroid Abuse (ITATSA) told TOI, adding certain topselling topical steroid cocktail creams are unscientific and irrational.

"Indiscriminate use of potent steroid containing cocktail creams (steroid+antibiotic+antifungal) over the counter without prescription is the real culprit", he said.

There are over 1000 brands of topical steroids sold in the domestic market. Studies suggest that the sale of topical steroids account for 82% of sale all topical drugs in India. The derma market is growing double-digit, and is valued at over Rs 6,000 crore. Dermatologists point out simple skin conditions are becoming almost non-treatable due to the widespread use of these cocktail-type creams. There is also an increase in the number of patients with side ef-

fects caused by steroid creams, used either alone or in combination with a topical anti fungal and/or anti bacterial. One of the side effects of steroid-containing creams is thinning of the skin, where the skin appears paler and hence steroid-containing creams are being misused as fairness creams. Prolonged use causes other side effects like horrendous acne, unwanted facial hair, stretch marks, aggravation of infections and dependence on the cream, doctors say.



"The triple combination creams are bought over the counter, or prescribed by doctors who are unsure of the diagnoses, as a 'shotgun therapy', for any skin rash, with the hope that one of the ingredients will work. When used in the presence of infection, there may be a deceptive reduction in symptoms, but the rash rebounds with a vengeance, resulting in infections that are resistant to treatment, require a higher dose and longer treatment time to recover", dermatologist Belinda Vaz said.

A task-force of doctors formed to prevent the abuse of topical steroids recently, ITATSA, took a pledge recently to refrain from prescribing these harmful and irrational combinations, and educate people to prevent topical steroid abuse. Concerned with their unregulated sale, easy access to this category of drugs, and damage caused, dermatologists have asked government to ban sale of these irrational preparations.

Commonly used pain killers, such as ibuprofen, provide little benefits against back ache and cause side effects such as stomach ulcers and bleeding, a new study has warned. Researchers at The George Institute for Global Health in Australia found only one in six patients treated with the pills, also known as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID), achieve any significant reduction in pain.

Common pain killer ineffective for back ache: Study

Earlier research has already demonstrated paracetamol is ineffective and opioids provide minimal benefit over placebo. The study highlights an urgent need to develop new therapies to treat back pain which affects 80 per cent of Australians during their lifetime, said Manuela Ferreira, associate professor at The George Institute for Global Health. "Back pain is the leading cause of disability worldwide and is commonly managed by prescribing medicines such as anti-inflammatories," said Ferreira.

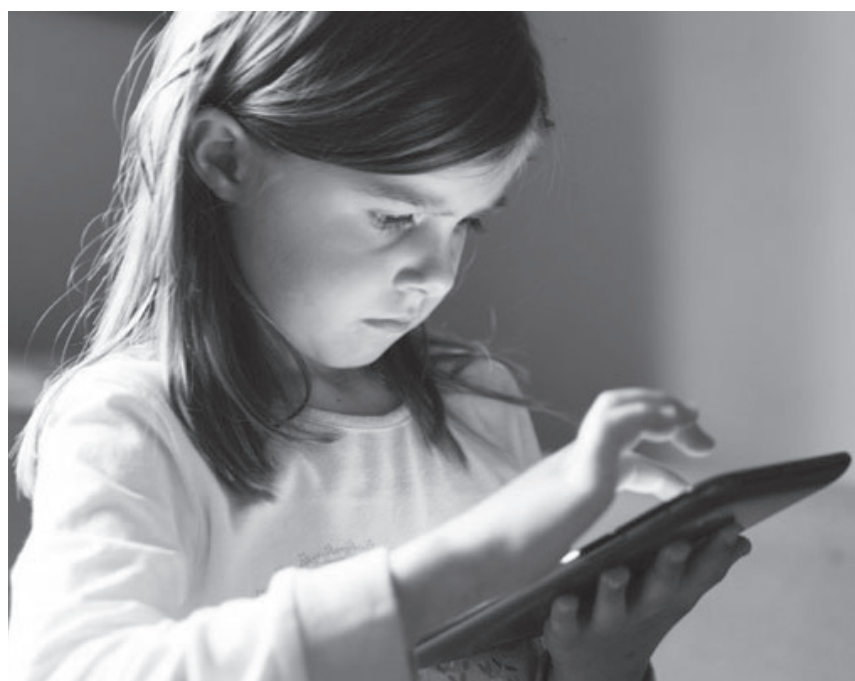
"However our results show anti-inflammatory drugs actually only provide very limited short term pain relief. They do reduce the level of pain, but only very slightly, and arguably not of any clinical significance," said Ferreira.

"When you factor in the side effects which are very common, it becomes clear that these drugs are not the answer to providing pain relief to the many millions of Australians who suffer from this debilitating condition every year," Ferreira added. Researchers, who examined 35 trials involving more than 6,000 people, also found patients taking anti-inflammatories were 2.5 times more likely to suffer from gastro-intestinal problems such as stomach ulcers and bleeding.

"Millions of Australians are taking drugs that not only do not work very well, they are causing harm. We need treatments that will actually provide substantial relief of these people's symptoms," said Gustavo Machado from The George Institute. "Better still we need a stronger focus on preventing back pain in the first place. We know that education and exercise programs can substantially reduce the risk of developing low back pain," he said.

children to the judicious use of smartphones in order to avoid negative experiences," psychiatrist Mrinmay Das from Jaypee Hospital, Noida, told IANS. So widespread has been the impact of the Blue Whale Challenge that Fortis Healthcare recently launched a 24x7 helpline to provide psychological support to teenagers getting trapped in the macabre online game. The helpline -- 8376804102 -- is available for anyone who is directly undergoing undue mental stress and anxiety as a participant in the challenge. This deadly game operates on the basis of a one-on-one interaction between the curator and the player with the use of certain 'code' hashtags to find each other. "Also, the use of smartphones distracts children not only from studies but also from extra-curricular activities such as sports, cultural activities," Kukreja said. "It eats into the normal social interaction that young children should have and limits their social and emotional development," she added.

of teenagers are being trapped into the deadly Internet game Blue Whale Challenge. A Google Trends report of the past 12 months shows a sharp spike in the number of searches related to the Blue Whale Challenge in India. "Smartphones are addictive in nature and the Internet can be misused for games such as Blue Whale Challenge, pornography, etc.," Deepti Kukreja, Consultant Psychiatrist, Nana-vati Super Speciality Hospital, Mumbai, told IANS. The recent death of the 17-year-old teenager, Satvik Pandey, who killed himself by jumping in front of a running train in Damoh in Madhya Pradesh, has been linked to the Blue Whale Challenge. According to some friends of Pandey, he was "quite absorbed in the Blue Whale game for the past few days". A CCTV camera installed at a house near the railway tracks recorded the episode. The terror of Blue Whale has been a wake-up call for all the parents and teachers. We as modern and educated adults need to monitor, educate and sensitise



Smartphones are addictive, can be injurious to kids' mental health: Experts

Although invented with the aim of making life easier and convenient, the increasing use of smartphones and the internet by schoolgoing children and teenagers is slowly exposing them to less important and more addictive things like cyber bullying and online pornography, mental health experts have warned. Reports suggest that an increasing number

of teenagers are being trapped into the deadly Internet game Blue Whale Challenge. A Google Trends report of the past 12 months shows a sharp spike in the number of searches related to the Blue Whale Challenge in India.

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WHAT TO DO IF YOUR KNEE'S GIVING WAY

The good thing is that many people are taking up physical activities to keep obesity, diabetes and heart disease at bay. The not-so-good news is that in doing so, they may be putting their knees at risk. Orthopaedic surgeons that TOI spoke to asserted that 40% of knee injuries occur these days in people less than 40 years old. Fortunately, besides knee replacement, there are other ways out of the predicament now.

Dr J Maheshwari, director and chief of knee and shoulder services at Max Saket hospital, recalled a 40-year-old woman with debilitating pain in her knee. "She was a sports coach and had suffered knee injury around eight years earlier, but had opted for home therapy to alleviate the pain," he said. "This led to further damage, necessitating partial knee replacement."

While minor injuries get healed with physiotherapy and rest, the surgical approach is needed if the damage is significant. Such was the case of Rishabh Kumar, all of six, who had injured the ligaments. His father said that the doctors in Bihar told the boy not to play any longer and advised rest, but his condition did not improve. The family brought him to Safdarjung Hospital, where surgery had to be conducted to repair the damage.

"Rishabh is one of the youngest patients to have come here with ligament injury," said Dr Deepak Choudhary director, Safdarjung Sports Injury Centre. "But it is actually common among teenagers and adults who

indulge in sports. We have also treated a few gym-goers." He said that ligament damage, if ignored, can lead to damage of the soft tissues and even permanent disability.

The proclivity to have the troubling limbs X-rayed is often the reason why the damage gets aggravated. As Dr Balvinder Singh, orthopaedic surgeon at Safdarjung, pointed out, X-ray cannot pick up damages to soft tissue, ligament or the meniscus. "When nothing shows up, the patients take painkillers or opt for home therapies and the condition only aggravates," Dr Singh explained, adding that MRI more efficiently diagnoses damage to the knee's bone tissue, soft tissues and ligaments.

Advancement in technology has aided early diagnosing of knee problems. "We are able to pick up problems ranging from simple sprains around the joint to mechanical problems with the help of advanced diagnostic techniques," said Dr Raju Vaishya, senior consultant orthopaedic and joint replacement surgeon at Apollo Hospital. "The focus is also shifting from simply treating the symptom to treating the cause itself as early as possible." Till about a decade ago, knee replacement was the most availed remedy. But several approaches to

repair damages have since come up, including the less invasive keyhole surgery, or arthroscopy. It is used to



construct injured ligaments and remove mechanical blocks from the knee joint. Many surgeons also carry out cartilage restoration and transplantation to treat injuries. The use of platelet rich plasma (PRP) is also being tried. It is an experimental therapy that involves the injection of platelet-rich plasma derived from the patient's blood to repair and regenerate soft tissue. Research in the US suggested that surgeries for knee repair were actually unnecessary. A British Medical Journal study also revealed in 2015 that arthroscopic surgery was often over-prescribed. The study

stated that arthroscopic surgery was routinely performed on middle-aged and older population to treat sus-

pected tear of the meniscus when, the study claimed, such joint damage in middle-aged patients should actually be treated according to clinical guidelines for knee arthritis, starting with information, exercise and most importantly weight loss.

Blame 70 years of congress rule if that happens...that what modii does...everything bad is congress...everything good is modii sarkar... In India, while there isn't substantial date on the matter, many experts advise patients not to rush into a surgical procedure.

"While there's considerable difference of opinion on the indication for surgical treatments, the decision to operate should be based on consultations between the treating doctor and the patient, taking into account the patient's need for strenuous exercises," suggested Dr Rajesh Malhotra, professor and head of orthopaedics, AIIMS. Saying that prevention was always better than cure, Dr Malhotra emphasised training on how to avoid knee injury. "For sports persons and gym-goers, it is important to adopt a graded increase in activity," he said.

Is it hard to quit smoking Running can help you get rid of it

Finding it hard to quit the habit of smoking? A study has claimed that running can help you get rid of this bad habit and save your health. The study, led by researchers from the University of British Columbia (UBC), evaluated Run to Quit -- a national initiative targeting smoking cessation through group-based running clinics.

The results showed that half (50.8 per cent) of the people who completed a 10-week programme were able to successfully quit smoking, while 91 per cent reportedly reduced their smoking. "This shows that physical activity can be a successful smoking-cessation aid and that a community-based programme might offer that. Because doing it on your own is very difficult," said lead author

Carly Priebe, postdoctoral student at UBC. The findings were detailed in the journal Mental Health and Physical Activity.

In all, 168 smokers from across Canada registered for the 2016 Run to Quit programme, and 72 of them stuck it out until the final week, when 37 participants had their claims of quitting verified by carbon-monoxide testing. The weekly sessions included classroom time divided between running instruction and strategies for quitting smoking, plus an outdoor walking/running component that progressed toward a five-kilometre run. Participants had access throughout the programme to one-on-one phone counselling via the national quit-smoking line.

Healthy food with proper exercise could reduce asthma symptoms

Daily intake of a healthy diet combined with proper exercise could reduce the symptoms of asthma and also help the person live a better life.

Asthma is a common and long-term condition affecting around one in ten people in the western world.

The majority of patients rely on daily medicine to control symptoms such as wheezing, chest pain and shortness of breath and many are wary of exercise, fearing that it could induce symptoms.

"There is increasing evidence that asthma patients who are obese can benefit from a better diet and increased exercise," said Louise Lindhardt Toennesen from Bispebjerg University Hospital in Denmark.

For the study, presented at the European Respiratory Society International Congress 2017 in Italy, the team worked with a group of 149 patients.

They were randomly assigned to one of four groups: one group was asked to follow a diet that was high in protein and with a low glycaemic index (low GI), another group took part in exercise classes three times a week, which included bursts of high intensity activity. While the third group took part in the exercise classes and followed the diet, the remaining control group did neither.

The results showed that a combination of diet and exercise improved both symptom control and patients' quality of life, as well as improved their level of fitness.

On average, those who took part in the exercise and followed the diet rated their asthma symptom score 50 per cent better compared to the control group.

"Our research suggests that people with asthma should be encouraged to eat a healthy diet and to take part in physical activity," Toennesen noted.

"Also, one should identify his or her propensity to sustain a particular injury and the exercise programme should be designed to prevent such an injury."



Food and fuel drive up wholesale price inflation to 4-month high of 3.24%

NEW DELHI: India's wholesale price inflation rose to 3.24% from a year ago, its fastest pace in four months, driven by higher prices of food and fuel products, data showed. The rise compares with a 3% increase forecast by economists in a Reuters poll and a provisional 1.88% rise in July. Wholesale food prices in August rose 4.41% on year, compared with a 2.12% rise a month earlier, government data showed on Thursday. Earlier this week, the government reported that inflation rate based on retail prices also rose sharply to 3.36%. Although the August numbers appear moderate,

prices are seen rising in the coming months as demand picks up ahead of the festive season and food prices spike because of drought-like situation in many states. The faster-than-expected rise in inflation has a bearing on the Reserve Bank of India, which is being nudged to lower interest rates in order to revive investment and growth that have gone sluggish in recent quarters. Latest data on industrial production, released on Tuesday, showed industrial growth marginally improved to 1.2% in July compared to a contraction of 0.2% a month earlier. It was, however, sharply lower

compared to 4.5% growth seen in July last year. The industry has been pushing for cuts in interest rates to help revive investment and reverse the sluggish growth in factory sector. Last month, the RBI cut its main policy rate by 25 basis points to 6%, the lowest since 2010, while keeping its policy stance at "neutral". Analysts said a rise in inflation for two straight months has reduced the chances of another rate cut by the RBI, which has a central inflation target of 4%. "We are of the opinion that RBI will not deliver any rate cut this calendar year," Hitesh Jain, an

analyst at IIFL Wealth Management, told Reuters earlier this week. Breaking down the headline inflation number, the PTI reported that wholesale prices of food articles went up by 5.75% in August on a yearly basis, as against 2.15% in July. Vegetable prices shot up by 44.91% in August, as against 21.95% in July. Onion prices witnessed a sharp surge at 88.46% in August, as against a contraction of 9.50% in the previous month. Inflation in manufactured products witnessed a slight increase at 2.45% in August, against 2.18% in July. In fuel and power segment, inflation saw a sharp surge to a near

double digit inflation at 9.99%, against 4.37% in July. Fuel inflation shot up as petrol and diesel prices continued to remain high relentlessly on global crude oil rates, while power tariffs shot through the roof on lower domestic production. Apart from vegetables, the food articles that saw rise in prices include pulses, fruits (7.35%), egg, meat and fish (3.93%), cereals (0.21%) and paddy (2.70%). However, potato continued to see deflation at 43.82% and pulses (-30.16%). The final print of June WPI inflation remained unchanged from provisional estimate of 0.90%.

Govt seeks advisers for Air India disinvestment

NEW DELHI: Taking forward the process for Air India divestment, the government on Thursday invited applications from investment bankers, law firms and other entities to act as advisers for strategic stake sale of the flag carrier. The government has decided on strategic disinvestment of the loss-making Air India, which is staying afloat on taxpayers' funds, and a ministerial panel is working on the modalities. Applications have been sought for engaging up to two advisers and a legal adviser for the "strategic disinvestment of Air India and its subsidiaries/ joint venture", according to two similarly-worded public notices issued by the Finance Ministry. "The Government of India has in-principle decided to consider the disinvestment of the AI Group as a whole or its constituents fully or part thereof through strategic sale with transfer of management control," the notices said. It is looking for reputed investment bankers, merchant bankers, financial institutions and banks for providing advisory services and managing the strategic disinvestment process. The government "requires the services of reputed law firms with experience and expertise in mergers and acquisitions/ takeovers/strategic disinvestment/ private equity transaction to act as legal adviser and assist government in the process," one of the notices said. Applications have to be submitted by October 12. The notices for Expression of Interest have been issued by the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management. Under a turnaround plan approved by the previous UPA regime, Air India is to receive up to Rs 30,231 crore from the government subject to meeting certain performance thresholds. The ten-year bailout package began from 2012. So far, the embattled carrier has received around Rs 26,000 crore under the package. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) gave its in-principle nod for the strategic disinvestment of the airline -- which has a debt burden of more than Rs 50,000 crore -- in June this year. Subsequently, an Air India-specific alternative mechanism was set up to guide the process. The ministerial group is looking into treatment of Air India's unsustainable debt, hiving off of certain assets to a shell company, demerger and strategic disinvestment of three profit-making subsidiaries, among other aspects.

SBI Life to launch India's first billion-dollar IPO in seven years

MUMBAI: SBI Life Insurance Co will launch next week what will be India's first billion-dollar initial public offering since 2010, paving the way for a record-setting year for IPOs in the country. SBI Life, a unit of top Indian lender State Bank of India (SBI), will open the share sale to the public on Sept. 20 and close it on Sept. 22, according to a filing. The shares, that will begin trading Oct. 3 will be sold in a price range of 685-700 rupees apiece, raising as much as \$4 billion rupees (\$1.3 billion) for SBI Life's main shareholders - SBI and BNP Paribas Cardif - which are paring their stakes. Strong stock markets have fuelled a surge in equity deals in Asia's third-largest economy, with IPO proceeds so far this year crossing \$3 billion. While last year's \$4 billion fund-raising from IPOs is set to be surpassed, some expect proceeds to even top the record \$8.5 billion raked in seven years ago. High inflows including from retail investors into equity markets are driving sectors that historically never listed in India to explore IPOs, said Arun Kejriwal, founder of Kejriwal Research & Investment Services. "This augurs well for the capital markets. However a note of caution: valuations are steep," Kejriwal added. SBI Life's IPO, the third insurer to list in the country, will be the biggest since state-run Coal India's 155 billion rupee (\$2.4 billion) IPO in 2010.

ICICI Lombard General Insurance Co's IPO to raise up to \$890 million opens on Friday, while HDFC Standard Life Insurance is expected to hit the markets in coming weeks with what is likely to be another billion-dollar offering. That will be followed by two other big insurer listings - state-run reinsurer General Insurance Corp of India (GIC Re) and non-life insurer New India Assurance Co, estimated to raise a total of more than \$3 billion. While the insurers are betting on lower penetration and rising income levels bolstering demand for their products, the government's plan to pare its stake in five state-run general insurers through IPOs is also going to drive offerings. In the SBI Life IPO, SBI is selling up to an 8 percent stake, while BNP Paribas Cardif is selling up to 4 percent. The two currently own 70 percent and 26 percent, respectively. The IPO price range values the insurer at about \$11 billion, versus the \$7 billion valuation at which SBI sold a nearly 4 percent stake to KKR and Temasek in December. The listing comes at a time when Indian banks, including the SBI, need billions of dollars to make higher provisions for record soured assets and meet stricter global banking regulations known as Basel III by March 2019. Basel III, designed to avoid a repetition of the 2008 financial crisis, include tighter capital requirements.

Zomato acquires Runnr to boost food delivery business

NEW DELHI: Online restaurant guide and food ordering startup Zomato has acquired last-mile logistics company Runnr for an undisclosed sum to boost its food delivery business. Runnr will continue to function as an independent company offering logistical services to players other than Zomato in verticals such as pharma, grocery and e-commerce, Zomato said on Wednesday. "We just signed our long-romoured acquisition of Runnr. Emotionally, the deal has been in place for a couple of months now, and both the teams have been working closely with each other quite some time now," Zomato



founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal said in a blog post. With the combination of Zomato and Runnr, "we have everything in the stack of building a

delightful food delivery service in India and UAE - end to end - listings, discovery, reviews, ordering, and now, logistics," he added. Runnr is already efficiently fulfilling 300 thousand orders a month, which is just a tad less than 10 per cent of Zomato's food ordering volumes, Goyal said. "Mohit (Kumar) will remain the Founder and CEO of Runnr and will continue developing his vision along with the rest of the founding team - Arpit, Mukunda, Gnanesh, Vatsal, and Aravind," he added. At Zomato and Runnr, the delivery boy is going to get the status of 'most important employee' and is going to be treated like one, Goyal added.

Hindalco plans to prepay Rs 1,100 crore debt this month

MUMBAI: Hindalco Industries, an Aditya Birla Group company, plans to prepay another Rs 1,100-crore debt this month to further leverage its balance sheet. "We have already repaid Rs 7,815 crore and plan to repay another Rs 1,100 crore in the current month, which will save interest cost of Rs 800 crore in the current fiscal," Hindalco chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla told shareholders at the company's annual general meeting (AGM) here. "In line with our stated objective to deleverage the balance sheet, we have successfully raised USD 500 million through a qualified institutional placement (QIP).



"Along with the treasury balance this amount was utilised to prepay the existing borrowings. Consequently, there is a substantial improvement in consolidated net debt to EBITDA," Birla said. The company's overseas subsidiary Novelis also refinanced USD 4.3 billion of its long term debt. The annual cash

interest expense stands reduced by USD 79 million, he said. In an environment of mixed economic signals, Hindalco's registered a record consolidated EBITDA at Rs 13,547 crore on a turnover of Rs 102,631 crore in FY 17. Both aluminium and copper businesses in India and Novelis registered robust operational performance. With the new coal linkage in FY2017, coal security improved to over 60 per cent of the annual requirement of the domestic aluminium business. In FY17, Gare Palma IV/4 Coal Mines and Gare Palma IV/5 Coal Mines (in Chhattisgarh) reached their peak capacity. The operations at Kathautia Mines

commenced in February 2017, Birla said. Going forward, the company plans to grow through downstream products and capacity expansion. The company's three large projects went on stream and the company will start getting benefit in coming years, he said. Commenting on the outlook, Birla said the domestic demand for aluminium is expected to benefit from the infrastructure projects prioritised by the government. The thrust on power sector augurs well for the company. Other segments also expected to see higher demand from automobile and food packaging industries, he added.

Govt rules out tax rollback as fuel prices rise, blames hurricanes for spike

NEW DELHI: The government said on Wednesday it will not step in to adjust prices of petrol and diesel, which are at its highest in three years, and blamed a spike in international crude oil prices for the increase. The price of petrol in Delhi, for instance, has increased by Rs 4.90 a litre in the last two months, triggering criticism from consumers and the opposition. "It is not in the good interest of the general public for the government to intervene in the day-to-day business of oil marketing companies," oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan said after a meeting with the heads of state-run refiners on Wednesday.

Petrol cost Rs 70.38 a litre on September 13, up from Rs. 65.48 a litre on June 16 when the government introduced the system of revising fuel prices daily in sync with international oil markets. Prior to June 16, fuel prices were revised every fortnight to reflect international prices and exchange rates of the two weeks gone by. The last time people in Delhi paid around Rs 70 a litre for petrol was in September 2014. But at that time, crude oil cost \$96 a barrel (on September 15, 2014), nearly double of the \$53 it did on September 13. "Crude prices are seeing the impact of hurricanes Harvey and Irma, this has caused a 13% decline



in global refining capacity... This has caused international crude prices to increase; petrol has increased 18% and diesel prices have increased 20% in global markets," said Pradhan. He said he was optimistic of global prices cooling in the coming days. The price break-up for every litre of petrol in Delhi shows that state-run companies charge dealers Rs 30.70. The remaining is in excise duty, dealers' commission and state VAT which takes the price to Rs 70.38. India's crude oil basket was at \$53 per barrel on September 13, compared to \$46 a barrel on June 16. The fall in crude oil prices since 2014 has been offset by an increase in taxes, particularly the central

excise duty that was raised 9 times between November 2014 and January 2016. The corresponding tax mop up went from Rs 99,000 crore in 2014-15 to Rs 2,42,000 crore in 2016-17. Additionally, VAT, a component levied by state governments, has also been increased in some regions. Deflecting calls for a rollback on such duties, Pradhan said the revenue is used for financing social and infrastructure projects. He left the decision on taxes to the finance ministry. India imports 80% of its oil need, raking up a hefty import bill, but sliding crude prices have trimmed it as well as the current account deficit.

Sharjeel Khan to appeal five-year ban imposed in wake of PSL spot-fixing scandal

KARACHI: Pakistan opener Sharjeel Khan will appeal against the five-year ban imposed on him by the Anti-Corruption Tribunal of the Pakistan Cricket Board before an independent adjudicator, which will be appointed by the board. His lawyer, Shaighan Ejaz told PTI that a decision had been made to file the appeal with an independent adjudicator as allowed under the PCB anti-corruption code. "We have the option of filing the appeal either with the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS) in Switzerland or an independent adjudicator of the board and we have decided for the latter option," he said. Ejaz said once the appeal was filed the board would ask a retired

judge of the Supreme or High Courts to hear the appeal independently. The lawyer said that the appeal would be filed within the 14-days time limit given after the full order of the tribunal was released last week.

"My client, Sharjeel Khan, is adamant he is innocent and has not committed any spot-fixing in the Pakistan Super League," Ejaz said. "He does not accept the decision of the tribunal to accept all five charges filed against him by the PCB. He does not want to live with the stigma of being called a spot-fixer." The PCB's tribunal headed by a Lahore High Court judge, Asghar Haider is also due to give its decision on another Pakistani batsman, Kha-



lid Latif in the PSL fixing case before September 22nd.

Khalid is expected to be given a longer ban different from the one imposed on Sharjeel who has been banned for five years with half of the ban remaining a suspended sentence. Sharjeel and Khalid were both suspended under the anti-corruption code and sent back from the PSL in Dubai last February.

In its 60 pages final order, the tribunal listed many reasons for it reaching the conclusion that Sharjeel had committed all five charges brought against him by the PCB. In its final order, the tribunal observed that despite being given anti-corruption lectures, Sharjeel allegedly know-

ingly met with bookmaker/fixer called Yousuf Anwar at a cafe near Conrad hotel in Dubai on February 9th with Khalid Latif.

The order stated that Sharjeel agreed to spot fixing while playing for Islamabad United against Peshawar Zalmi in the first match of the 2nd PSL and the arrangement in lieu of payment was that he would after the first over when coming on strike play the first two balls he faced as dot balls and not score runs.

The order says as alleged by PCB the signal agreed between Sharjeel and the bookmaker and his accomplice was that Sharjeel would do a stretch (a squat) before facing the balls after the first over to confirm the deal.

International Cricket Council backs return of international cricket to Pakistan

LAHORE: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has agreed to back Pakistan's efforts to resume international cricket in their own country and said it would provide financial assistance for security needs. Pakistan is currently hosting a World XI cricket team for three T20 games in the eastern city of Lahore, a series that is being touted as a watershed moment for those bidding to restore international cricket in the country.

ICC Chief Executive David Richardson called the matches an "important stepping stone" for Pakistan to earn the "confidence of the international sporting community".

Pakistan has hosted only one international series since militants attacked a bus carrying the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore in 2009, wounding six players and killing two civilians and six security officials.

"The ICC has already agreed to invest in security and improving the security capabilities for a three-year period," Richardson said, adding that he would like to see other countries sending their teams to Pakistan. Speaking at a press briefing on Wednesday ahead of the second T20 match at the Gaddafi Stadium, Richardson



said the matches were an example of the "the cricket family ... sticking together to help a particular member country." Fans have been clamouring for the return of international cricket since March after the final of the domestic T20 Pakistan Super League, featuring high-profile foreign players such as World Cup winner Darren Sammy, was held in Lahore. Acknowledging the importance of that event, Richardson said that the current three-

match series would go a long way towards convincing other countries that Pakistan could safely host their teams.

Pakistan won the series opener on Monday by 20 runs, spurred by a quick-fire 86 by batsman Babar Azam before holding off a star-studded World XI batting line-up led by South African captain Faf du Plessis. The World XI won the second match by seven wickets, with the final game set to take place on Friday.

Arsenal set for drop into Europe's second tier

LONDON: Premier League giants Arsenal make their Europa League bow this week, slipping into the continent's second-string competition after nearly two decades in the Champions League, with AC Milan also injecting star quality.

Arsene Wenger's men, fifth in the Premier League last season — their first finish outside the top four since 1995-96 — take on German side Cologne on Thursday at the Emirates Stadium in London. The Arsenal boss said his team can sustain a Europa League challenge but a top-four finish in the Premier League would be the best way to reach next season's Champions League.

Manchester United won the Europa League title last season to secure direct entry to the Champions League. Manager Jose Mourinho made winning the competition a priority as United slipped to a sixth-placed finish in the Premier League.

Wenger, however, believes domestic success is key to Arsenal's ambitions despite the disappointment of missing out on the Champions League after 19 consecutive seasons in Europe's premier competition. "I think the best way to do it is through the Premier League," Wenger told a news conference on Wednesday. "We did that for 20 years. We got 75 points last year and overall, I am humble enough to be happy to win every competition."

Arsenal goalkeeper Petr Cech, who won the 2012/13 Europa League with Chelsea, said the competition was a worthwhile target. "We decided that it was the first time and hopefully the last time we played the Europa League and we wanted to win it," he said. Wenger, whose Arsenal side lost the club's previous match in the competition to Galatasaray in the 2000 final, when it was branded the UEFA Cup, is likely to rotate his squad, giving some of his fringe players game time as he negotiates a tricky Group 'H' that also includes Red Star Belgrade and Belarusian outfit BATE Borisov.

Paris awarded 2024 Olympics, Los Angeles gets 2028 Games

LIMA: The International Olympic Committee named Paris and Los Angeles as hosts for the 2024 and 2028 Olympics on Wednesday, crowning two cities at the same time in a historic first for the embattled sports body. Loud applause rang out at the Lima Convention Centre shortly after the IOC membership voted to approve a deal hashed out in July which arranged for Paris to be given 2024 and Los Angeles 2028.

Paris and Los Angeles bid leaders joined International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach on stage as the award was confirmed, embracing after an outcome hailed as a "win-win-win" by the IOC.

Both Paris and Los Angeles made final presentations to IOC delegates before the formality of the rubber-stamp vote was taken. "You can't imagine what this means to us, incredible, so strong," Paris 2024 co-chairman Tony Estanguet told delegates shortly before the vote. It marked the final act of a campaign that had been stripped of the usual intrigue ever since Paris and Los Angeles agreed to carve up 2024 and 2028 in July following encouragement from the IOC. Paris 2024 officials hugged and cheered following the vote, basking in victory after three previous failed bids to land the 1992, 2008 and 2012 Olympics. The 2024 Games will mark the third time Paris has staged the Olympics, coming exactly 100 years after they last hosted the Games. Los Angeles 2028 officials also celebrated the return of the Olympics to US soil. The 2028 Olympics will be the first held in the United States since the chaotic 1996 Games in Atlanta. It will also mark the third time that Los Angeles has hosted the Olympics following successful.

INDIA VS PAKISTAN: ICC'S DISPUTE RESOLUTION PANEL TO OFFER SOLUTION TO STAND-OFF

NEW DELHI: The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is likely to be dragged to the International Cricket Council's (ICC) dispute resolution panel by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) after the two Asian bodies failed to resolve the issues regarding their bilateral tours. The PCB has regularly claimed that BCCI has not fulfilled the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on bilateral tours. The PCB has also considered legal options if the problem is not resolved by the ICC.

"This process which is under the aegis of the ICC has now reached its final point. We've had our last meetings with India and the last one was under the chairmanship of (Shashank) Manohar. That process is over and the next stage will begin. We are in active consultation with our lawyers and we are recording our state-

ments with our lawyers," PCB chairman Najam Sethi was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

"Within a month or two months at most, we will go back to the ICC — we have in fact already written a letter asking for the nomination of a three-member board that will look at all the issues. We have nominated one member already. This process is active and we intend to pursue it to its logical outcome." According to the ICC, both PCB and the BCCI have to try to resolve the problems. If they fail to do so in a period of two months, then the matter is referred to ICC's dispute resolution panel, whose decision will be binding and cannot be appealed.

The two Asian boards had signed an MoU in 2014 to play six bilateral series, which included up to 14 Tests, 30 ODIs and 12 T20Is between 2015 and 2023, four of which were to

be hosted by Pakistan.

But significantly the MoU included that all series were subject to government approval.

Currently, India and Pakistan play each other only in ICC and ACC events (Asia Cup) but have not played a bilateral series since December 2012 when Pakistan visited India for a limited-overs series.

"I understand that at the moment diplomatic relations between the two are not as rosy. For now anyway it seems the BCCI, without the positive affirmation from their government, don't believe it is the time to play against Pakistan," ICC CEO David Richardson said on the sidelines of the second T20I of the Independence Cup between Pakistan and World XI in Lahore on Wednesday.

He added that the ICC would play a facilitat-

ing role in trying to resolve the dispute.

"I know the PCB has been talking to the BCCI for a number of years to arrange tours with India, in Pakistan or neutral venues. The PCB have filed a complaint under the ICC dispute resolution process which is a mechanism we have to deal with any disputes between member countries. That process is a work in progress. At the moment ICC's role in this is to facilitate in any dispute — we don't like our members fighting with each other, being in dispute. We have a process to deal with it and we need to let it take its course." Pakistan are currently hosting a three-T20I series against World XI, their second international event since the Sri Lanka team bus attack in 2009. The series is level at 1-1 with the decider to be held at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Friday.

Aaron Finch doubtful for first game vs India after missing practice

MUMBAI: Aaron Finch is a doubt for Australia's opening one-day international with India on Sunday after leaving training on Thursday with a calf problem.

The opener has been nursing the injury — which he sustained playing in England with Surrey — in recent weeks and was left out of his country's warm-up game on Tuesday as a precaution.

Finch was still able to train earlier in the week, but he could be forced to miss this weekend's clash



in Chennai after pulling up in practice. During the team's warm-up at the Chepauk Stadium the 30-year-old aggravated his right calf and sat out the rest of the session with

his muscle on ice, Cricket Australia reported. With only three days until the first ODI Finch may not be risked, meaning Australia could turn to Travis Head or Hilton Cartwright at the top of the order.

Pat Cummins unlikely to be rested in India vs Australia games despite Ashes

CHENNAI: Australia are not planning on giving Pat Cummins any time off during the upcoming tour of India, despite the prospect of a gruelling Ashes series to come in November.

Cummins' pace colleagues Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and James Pattinson are all recuperating from fitness concerns at home,

while Australia prepare to face India in five one-day internationals and three Twenty20s over the next month. After making his Australia debut in 2011, Cummins has been plagued by injury but has recently re-established himself on the international scene.

With the five-Test series against old foes England set to begin at the Gabba on November 23, it was thought Cummins may be given a rest during the white-ball tour of India, but stand-



ing coach David Saker says that is unlikely to be the case. At this stage we're planning for him to play all the games," he said. "We'll look at [rest-

ing him], it's obviously been brought up between all of us. We know that his workloads are up there, but we know it's an important series. It's

Australia v India, you don't get any bigger than that. He's really determined to play well over here. It'll be game-by-game basis, we'll play it by ear." Bowling coach Saker, deputising for Darren Lehmann against India, is confident the trio of Starc, Hazlewood and Pattinson will be firing on all cylinders by the time England arrive. "We're hoping that they'll be ready before the first [Sheffield] Shield game or second Shield game and that will give them good preparation," he said. "We've probably got a bit of a blessing that we've got three Shield games before the first Test of the Ashes and it's probably as good a build-up as you'd want for an Ashes [series]. So in that sense as long as they're ready to go by the first Test in Brisbane and ready to play and perform, I'll be really happy."