

TIME AND US

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TUESDAY
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WEATHER TEMPERATURE		
STATION	MAX TEMPERATURE	MIN TEMPERATURE
	ACT	ACT
SRINAGAR	25.0	6.4
JAMMU	33.6	17.5
LEH	10.7	6.9
KARGIL	19.0	3.9

SUNSET TUESDAY: 05:57 PM
SUNRISE WEDNESDAY: 06:40 AM

LOCAL FORECAST OF SRINAGAR
 Partly Cloudy Clear Sky. Maximum & Minimum temperatures will be around 25°C & 06°C respectively.

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

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MALIK URGES PAKISTAN TO TRUST IN YOUTH ON EVE OF SECOND ODI

CM'S PUBLIC OUTREACH, FOLLOW UP

Mehbooba seeks status report on doctors' availability in rural areas

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 16: Taking a strong note of the reports of non-availability of specialist doctors in the far flung and rural areas, Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti today sought a status report within a week's time from the concerned Department and posting of requisite staff at the places where they are needed the most.

The Chief Minister gave these directions during a meeting to strengthen the availability of doctors and medical facilities in rural and far flung areas following her feedback from people who met her during her public outreach programmes recently.

Mehbooba Mufti, it may be recalled, has recently visited districts of Ramban, Kargil, Kupwara, Pulwama and Budgam during her public outreach programmes in which people had complained of non availability of doctors at the health centres in the far flung and distant areas.

Minister for Finance, Dr. Haseeb Drabu; Minister for Health & Medical Education, Bali Bhagat and Minister of State for Health & Medical Education, Asiea Naqash were present in the meeting.



The Chief Minister directed taking action against the doctors who do not report to duty in these areas. Besides, she also directed strengthening of the facilities by way of diagnostic equipment, ambulances and other testing facilities at the hospitals in rural and far flung areas.

Mehbooba Mufti also directed proper and adequate strengthening of district hospitals by way of posting of specialist doctors, in particular

gynaecologists, anaesthetists and paediatricians. She said strengthening of district hospitals would provide a one stop healthcare facility to people from all across in the district on one side, it would also enable lessening the burden on tertiary care hospitals in capital cities, thereby relieving patients of travelling long distances for treatment.

The Chief Minister directed construction and proper maintenance of

residential quarters for doctors at District and Sub District Hospitals. For this, she directed preparation of a proto type design with all the facilities of a decent living to be replicated all across. She said that till such time these residential quarters are ready, adequate rented accommodation be provided to specialist doctors to stay put at these places.

Chief Secretary, B. B. Vyas; See **Mehbooba...**Pg 02

Braid-chopping: No lie-detector tests of victims: IGP

Three arrested militants presented before Reporters

Srinagar, Oct 16: Police on Monday presented three alleged militants before reporters during a joint press conference organized by local police, Army and Para-military Central Reserve Police Force.

While seeking information from general public about the alleged bank robbers, Inspector General of Police, Kashmir Zone, Munir Ahmed Khan said that police arrested two militants who tried to snatch rifles from security personnel guarding protected persons.

Addressing a press conference here in Srinagar city, Munir Ahmed Khan said that two militants with an intention to snatch rifles from PSO's of protected persons in Kund Qazigund village of South Kashmir's Kulgam district fired some rounds to scare PSO's and the inhabitants of the area, but had to make a retreat after hue and cry raised by people.

"After this incident, joint nake by Army, Police and CRPF were established and two militants identified as Khurshid Ahmed Dar and Haziq Ahmed Rather both residents of Supat Kulgam were apprehended who were riding on a motor cycle. A pistol with live ammunition and a live grenade was recovered from them. A case vide FIR number 275/2017 under section 307, 120B was registered against the duo," IGP said.

The IGP also said that they also managed to arrest a militant involved in an attack



on the cavalcade of R&B Minister Nayeem Akhtar.

"On 21 September last month, a grenade was hurled on the cavalcade of R&B Minister leading to the death of three civilians and injuries to 30 others.

"Immediately after the incident, a man-hunt was started to nab the militants involved. A suspect namely Gulzar Ahmed Dar son of Ghulam Nabi of Nagbal Tral was apprehended who later on confessed to be involved in the incident," Khan said added that the arrested militant is affiliated with Jaish-e-Muhammad while a pistol with ammunition was recovered from him.

All the three militants were presented before the reporters during the press conference.

IGP also talked about the two See **IGP...**Pg 02

DETENTION OF MILITANT'S BROTHER SPARKED PROTEST AT IUST

Pulwama, Oct 16: The detention of a Student, who happens to be the brother of an active militant sparked protest at Islamic University of Science and Technology Awantipora on Monday.

Scores of students assembled at University Campus and demanded immediate release of the detained student. The protesting students said that Junaid Akhoun, pursuing diploma in Polytechnic college of the IUST was arrested by police from his house at Aarampora village in Awantipora area of South Kashmir's Pulwama district.

"We protest against the high-handedness of forces. The forces are harassing innocent students without any reason," said the protesting students.

See **Detention...**Pg 02

Braid Chopping fallout:

No let up in protests and clashes

Srinagar, Oct 16: With no let up in braid chopping incidents in Kashmir Valley, protests spark in many parts while life was paralyzed for several hours in Sopore and Pampore areas of Northern and Southern parts of Valley on Monday.

Reports said that youth enforced a shutdown and pelted stones on shops and vehicles in North Kashmir's Soporetown after a fresh braid chopping incident.

Reports said that a woman of Ningli area of Sopore,



in her fifties, said unknown persons chopped off her braid. This is the third such incident in the area in less than twenty-four hours.

On Sunday, two women said their braids were chopped off by unknown persons.

Reports said that youth took to streets and pelted the forces deployed in the town with stones.

They also enforced shutdown in the town by hurling rocks at the shops and vehicles. However, life returned to normal after a couple of hours while shopkeepers opened up their shops and transport plied normally.

Protesters here in South Kashmir, blocked Srinagar-Jammu highway near Awantipora, demanding arrest See **Protest...**Pg 02

TRADERS RESENT GOVERNMENT MOVE OF CONSTRUCTING A MARRIAGE HALL IN THE HEART OF BUSY GONIKHAN MARKET

Srinagar, Oct 16: The traders' community has resented the government move to construct a Marriage Hall in the heart of the bustling Gonikhan market here in Srinagar city. The traders have said that this will deprive them from parking space and furthermore, they will face enormous hardships during marriage season.

Srinagar Development Authority (SDA) has started work on the construction of a Marriage Hall at Bandook Chawani area of Gonikhan market. "It is not only the violation of Master Plan but also a move that will affect business of the traders. How can a Marriage Hall be constructed in a commercial and busy area like Gonikhan," said a group of traders to news agency CNS.

See **Traders...**Pg 02

Pakistan using cross border terror as state policy: Naidu

NEW DELHI: Stating that Pakistan was encouraging cross border terrorism against neighbors as a state policy, Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu on Monday urged the world community to isolate states that sponsored terrorism.

"Our neighbor has made a state policy to aid, fund and train terrorists," Mr Naidu said in his address at the 33rd raising day of the National Security Guard at the Manesar Garrison in morning.

Mr Naidu said it was high time that the international community put up a joint front against the menace. He stressed on the fact that terrorism knows no religion or boundaries and nobody should be allowed to get away with acts of violence in the name of ideology.



The Vice-President emphasised on the importance of information and its confirmation over other aspects such as arms and ammunition in anti-terror related operations, as intelligence forms the basis of how the counter action has to be executed. Replying See **Naidu...**Pg 02

GOVT TIGHTENS NOOSE AROUND TRAFFIC VIOLATORS

JK records 7 lakh traffic challans per year

Srinagar, Oct 16: Tightening noose around the traffic violators, the Jammu and Kashmir records around 2000 challans on an average daily.

An official of the Traffic Department told KNS that there has been increase in traffic challans for the last many years. "Strict directives have been issued to the traffic department to challan every traffic violator," the official said.

As per the official figures, the Traffic Department has challan 379319 traffic violators in 2010, comprising 59782 court challans and 319537 compound challans.

The number of traffic challans in 2016 reached to 662930 comprising 64610 court challans and 598320 compound See **Traffic...**Pg 02

PM Modi is ignorant about history: Azad

Aligarh: Taking a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, leader of opposition in Rajya Sabha and Congress general secretary Ghulam Nabi Azad said on Sunday that the PM did not know about the country's history.

"The Prime Minister claims that no development has taken place in the country in the past 60 years. Perhaps, he has not read history in school," said Azad, while addressing audience at the birth centenary celebrations of former PM Indira Gandhi organised in Aligarh. The Congress leader was the chief guest on the occasion.

"In 1940, the country was facing acute



famine, but today we are self-sufficient as far as grains are concerned. We made the country self-reliant through green revolution. See **Azad...**Pg 02

TATTAPANI SANS BASIC FACILITIES, LOCALS AGHAST

No roads, public conveniences, water scarcity irk visitors

Srinagar, Oct 16: Even though hundreds of visitors throng Tattapani to take a dip in the hot water spring, which is believed to possess healing powers for treatment of various ailments, the administration has failed to make the basic facilities available at the destination, resulting in immense hardships to the people.

According to KNS correspondent, Zahoor Andrabi, the Tattapani situated in Rajouri district of the state sans every basic facility including proper roads, public conveniences, drinking water and other related things.

Locals informed KNS that the authorities have spent See **Basic...**Pg 02

Finance Department for speeding-up expenditure to meet time-lines

Srinagar, Oct 16: The Finance Department has called for expediting the pace of expenditure by the Government Departments in view of early release of funds this fiscal in pursuance to the announcement by the Finance Minister, Dr Haseeb Drabu in his budget speech in the State Legislature January this year.

The Finance Minister had, in his budget speech, announced a slew of measures aimed at streamlining the



expenditure with systematic step towards bringing economic stability in the State. See **Finance...**Pg 02

KASHMIR'S LITERATI PLEDGES TO WORK FOR PROTECTION OF KASHMIRI LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

AMK's two-day conference turns out to be a grand Lit Fest

Srinagar, Oct 16: Literati from across the Jammu and Kashmir state Sunday pledged to redouble its efforts for preserving and promoting the Kashmiri language and literature keeping in view the cultural onslaught it was facing from different directions.

The resolve to work towards reintegrating the language into the day to day life was made by over 350 delegates from Kashmir valley, Pir Panchal, Chenab valley and Jammu at Bandipore. They had converged at Adbee Markaz Kamraz's 38th annual two-day conference that saw intense See **Pledges...**Pg 02

VC CHAIRS STATE ADVISORY BOARD FOR WELFARE, DEVELOPMENT OF SCS MEET

JAMMU, OCTOBER 16: Vice Chairperson, State Advisory Board for Welfare and Development of Scheduled Caste, Bhushan Lal Dogra, chaired a high level meeting to review various schemes and programmes being implemented by various departments for Welfare and Development of Scheduled Caste.

Secretary, Advisory Board Bharat Bhushan, All Board members and Sectoral Officers of Jammu District along with senior functionaries of Social Welfare, ICDS, Revenue, Rural Development, CAPD and Power Development departments, SC/ST/OBC Corporation, DIC, JKEDI, Khadi And Village Board, PHE, Agriculture and Police Department attended the meeting.

A threadbare discussion was held

on various issues including allocation and utilization of funds under Centrally Sponsored Schemes SCA to SCSP, scholarships, financial assistance, Anganwari Centres in SC areas, Ration cards, loan cases, allotment of plots/shops/ flats/land and other issues pertaining to concerned departments for welfare of SC community.

The meeting was held to review the implementation of decisions of last meeting of the Board held under the Chairmanship of Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti in which she advised the Vice-Chairman to hold regular review meeting on monthly basis at District level to check the progress on various schemes.

Vice Chairperson exhorted upon the officers of concerned depart-



ments to work with utmost dedication for betterment and uplift of Scheduled

Caste Community. The primary objective of the Board is to suggest ameliorative

measures for upliftment of the community, he asserted. He asked the con-

cerned officers to spread mass awareness among the people of SC Community regarding various welfare schemes and programmes launched by the Centre as well as State Government for their development. He further asked the concerned officers to take measures having far reaching impact on the welfare of SC community.

Besides raising various issues, the Board members also suggested valuable measures for overall progress and upliftment of Scheduled Caste Community.

VC directed for strict action against absent officials of Horticulture department, Municipal Corporation, JDA, Labour Commission and Custodian Evacuee Property.

Continue from Front Page.....

MEHBOOBA

Principal Secretary to Chief Minister, Rohit Kansal; Principal Secretary, Health & Medical Education, Pawan

Kotwal and other senior officers were present in the meeting. In a related follow up action on her public outreach programme at Ramban and Banihal two days ago, the Chief Minister has asked the Minister for Education to speed up the process of filling up of posts of Teachers, Masters and other vacancies in Education Department in the Ramban District. The people at Ramban had complained to the Chief Minister of vacant positions in Education Department at these levels and sought filling up of the same to strengthen the learning process in the district.

IGP

recent bank robberies, which took place at Mirhama Bihbehara and Ratnipora Shopian in South Kashmir's Anantnag and Shopian districts.

"The militants involved in these robberies are Rasik Nabi Bhat alias Owaise of Nowdal, Kirmana Mohalla Tral, Salia Muhammad Akhoun alias Rehan of Arampora Gorikadal Medora Tral, Muhammad Abad Bhat of Mantribugh, Ishfaq Ahmed Thokar of Paddarpora and Zubir Turrey of Shopian," he said and asked people to help the police in nabbing these militants.

While responding to a question, IGP, Munir Khan ruled out the lie-detector or polygraph testing of the braid-chopping victims in the Valley.

He said scientific examination of the victims would be conducted.

"We will collect samples to know what type of sprays have been used on the victims," Khan said.

He was flanked by Army and CRPF officers including Sachin Malik and Zulfqar Hasan. SP Awantipora Muhammad Zahid and SP Kulgam Sridhar Patil were also present during the presser.

DETENTION

Officials at the IUST informed that they have taken up the issue with the authorities.

Pertinently, the detained student is the brother of active militant Salia Muhammad Akhoun. Salia according to police is involved in a bank robbery incident that took place at Ratnipora area of South Kashmir's Shopian district.

PROTESTS

of culprits involved in braid chopping incidents. Eyewitnesses told news agency CNS that police rushed to spot to pacify the protesters who alleged that police have failed to nab the culprits so far. The protesters according to reports dispersed peacefully after getting assurances from police.

Eyewitnesses said that scores of students from Islamia College Hawal here in Srinagar city clashed with government forces after they hit to roads and staged protest against increasing braid chopping incidents.

Police used tear-smoke shelling to disperse the protesting students. The clashes disrupted vehicular movement on the roads for some time. Students alleged that government has not taken any steps to trace the criminals involved in such acts.

Protesting students also raised pro-freedom slogans. Clashes also erupted in Habakadal area of Srinagar city where protesters pelted stones on government forces who retaliated with tear-smoke shelling. Normal life was affected due to clashes and protests. Protesters were demanding the arrest of braid choppers. They alleged that braid choppers are people working for security agencies.

The life was disrupted in Maisuma locality of Srinagar city as well after protests and clashes against continuous braid chopping incidents. Shopkeepers lowered their shutters even in city centre Lal Chowk and Residency Road.

Police used pellets and tear-smoke shells to disperse rock hurling protesters. The clashes created panic in the area. A couple of persons including a photojournalist Suhail Ahmed was wounded. Suhail suffered pellet injuries.

Reports from South Kashmir's Pulwama district said that two fresh braid chopping incidents were reported from Nikus and Dangarpura villages of the district. The fresh incidents created fear psychosis among people.

Pertinently, over a 100 incidents of braid chopping have occurred in different parts of Kashmir Valley during the past month while the police is still clueless.

The victims have told their families and police that unknown persons cut their hair after knocking them unconscious with some spray.

The police have formed Special Investigation Teams to probe the incidents. However, so far the police and the authorities have been clueless.

The police have announced a reward of Rs six lakh for

credible information leading to arrest of any person behind braid chopping incidents. So far, no arrests have been made.

At several places, vigilante mobs have thrashed innocents mistaking them for braid choppers.

TRADERS

They said that the Marriage Hall will prove nuisance more than an asset. "It was better for government to create a parking lot instead of Marriage Hall, given the fact that meager population resides in the vicinity. Majority of the people have sold off their houses that owners have turned them into business houses now. We don't find any logic in setting up a Marriage Hall in the area," said a trader.

Vice Chairman, Srinagar Development Authority Abdul Majid Raina told CNS that Marriage Hall is being constructed on the demand of people. "They used to close the roads in marriage seasons and to give public a breather we took this measure," he said adding that land on which Hall is being constructed is owned by SDA.

"It will cost up to Rs 2 Crore and I don't think it will affect business in the area," Raina said.

NAIDU

to a question, he said, "Transparency and accountability along with information and confirmation are more important than ammunition," while he talked about the capacity building of the state police forces.

Mr Naidu lauded the NSG by saying that over the last 33 years, the anti-terror force have successfully handled terrorist & hijack situations and has played a defining role in Akshardham, Mumbai and Pathankot attacks. He said the NSG is now also training the state police forces as it will play a vital role in the strengthening and their overall capacity building.

The Vice-President said, "The capacity building of the state police forces is the need of the hour and the NSG is now training the state police forces."

He also released the postal cover of the NSG on its 3rd raising day and conveyed the greetings on the behalf of the nation saying that the entire nation was proud of them.

TRAFFIC

challans. This year, the Traffic Department till the end of July month challaned 286068 traffic violators, comprising 34333 court challans and 251735 compound challans. As per these figures, around 1,800 traffic violators are being challaned on an average daily in the state.

The Traffic Department officials said that the increase in number of challans implies that traffic department is collecting more revenue for the government.

However, the official said that in some states it has been recommended that 50 percent of all fines collected should be devoted to road safety activities.

The official said that most of the road accidents do happen because of traffic violations. "It is responsibility of everyone to check whether traffic rules are being followed."

According to the official figures of the Traffic Department, around 11,000 road accidents have been reported annually for the last two years in the state.

The actual number, according to police officials, could be much higher as many incidents go unreported. In 2015, 917 people lost their lives in 5,800 road accidents. In 2016, 958 lives were claimed and over 7,700 suffered injuries in road accidents in the state.

AZAD

We also created Bangladesh within 14 days. What has happened in the last three years?" said Azad, while motivating the Congress workers present on the occasion.

UP Congress Committee president Raj Babbar said, "We are not fake nationalists. Our leaders were (true) nationalists." Levelling corruption charges at the Prime Minister, he said, "PM Modi is not only a watchman or a servant. He has a share in everything."

Referring to the recent controversy involving BJP president Amit Shah's son, Jay Shah, Babbar said, "Shah-zada thinks that as his father is the king, he can do whatever he likes."

The UP Congress chief also came down heavily on UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath. "During (BJP's) 'Gujarat Gaurav Yatra', a poster boy was called from Uttar Pradesh, although in his own district, Gorakhpur, hundreds of had children." He also raked up the BHU incident and said that the law and order situation in UP had collapsed.

Meanwhile, Rajya Sabha MP Promod Tiwari lauded former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's move of nationalising banks. "In contrast, PM Modi snatched away money from the public," he said.

BASIC

hefty amount to construct 20 public conveniences for the visitors but are yet to be thrown open for the public, which results in immense hardships to the visitors.

"Besides, five Public conveniences were also constructed for the local Masjid purpose but those are yet to be handed over to public," the locals informed.

They alleged that construction of the public conveniences was only aimed to provide benefits to the contractor as in case the step could have been taken for the public then the administration would have thrown these toilets open for the general public.

The locals also alleged that the quarters made for the living purpose of visitors has become a public property of some 'blue-eyed' persons. "The blue-eyed persons are not showing any income of the quarters," the locals alleged.

They also said that besides, the place also sans proper roads and water scarcity. "We (locals) especially the visitors are being forced to face hardships to reach the destination due to the non-availability of proper roads," they said, adding that are usually face acute water scarcity, which force the womenfolk in the area to walk miles to fetch water.

"At present, the Tattpani is in shambles as the administration never bothered to pay their attention towards the condition of the area," they raved, adding that the administration must look into the matter and fulfill the genuine demands of the locals at the earliest.

FINANCE

aimed at streamlining and speeding up spending in the Government Departments, the Finance Department had for the first time in the fiscal history of J&K released 50% of the current year's budget allocation to all the Departments in February 2017 well in advance to ensure timely execution of the developmental works.

According to the order issued today, the decision conveyed in February 2017 itself is reiterated again that expenditure during the last quarter of the financial year 2017-18 shall be limited to 30% budget allocation on both Revenue and Capex side.

"All the un-utilized funds over and above 30% of the budgeted amount on both Revenue and Capex side as on 31 December 2017 shall be automatically forfeited and will not be allowed to be used for any other purposes," the order said adding that, as has been made clear in the Govt Order No: 28-F of 2017 dated: 08-02-2017, the expenditure should not be more 15% of the budget estimates in the month of March 2018.

The order further reiterated that all powers related to re-appropriation and re-distribution of funds vested in the Administrative Departments, HODS and DDOs stand withdrawn and any proposal for re-appropriation will be considered on merits in the Finance Department only in respect of savings to be utilized for authorized pending work done liabilities, salary shortfalls etc.

Payments in the last month shall be made only for goods and services already procured. No amounts shall be released in advance except in cases of advance payments to contractors under terms of duly executed contracts so that Government would not renege on its legal or contractual obligations, any loans or advances to Government servants etc or private individuals as a measure of relief and rehabilitation as per service conditions or on compassionate grounds and any other exceptional case with the approval of the Finance Department.

The order said that the rush of expenditure on procurement should be avoided during the last month of the financial year so as to ensure that all procedures are complied with and there is no infructuous or wasteful expenditure. The Director Finance/Financial Advisors have been asked to specially monitor this aspect in their respective departments.

"Proposals of Advance Drawal, Revalidation, Authorization etc. if any, pertaining to Financial Year 2017-18 shall be submitted to the Finance Department well before 28 February 2018. No such proposal shall be entertained by the Finance Department after 28 February 2018," it said adding that the proposals for parking of money in "Civil Deposits" in order to avoid lapsing of funds shall not be entertained and processed. "Issuance of Hundies stands already banned. The Departments are advised not to move any proposal in this regard.

Treasury Offices will not entertain any bill/cheque for payment after working hours on 29 March 2018, pertaining to the Financial Year 2017-18 and all the DDOs have been asked to plan their bill presentations accordingly at treasury.

"Under no circumstances, any Bill in respect of Financial Year 2017-18 will be received in the Treasuries on the last two working days of financial year i.e. 30 and 31 March 2018, the date on which only payments will be made and accounts reconciled," it said adding that the Administrative Secretaries must effectively supervise and shall be responsible for ensuring compliance of these fiscal measures.

"Financial Advisors shall assist the respective Departments in securing compliance with these measures and also submit regular report to the Department of Finance," the

order said.

LANGUAGE

discussions on various aspects of language and literature. While thanking the government for introducing Kashmiri languages in 9th and 10 classes they appealed authorities to remove bottlenecks and make language teaching student friendly. "Kashmiri and state in general was facing a critical time as an attempt was being made change its cultural foundation through different machinations" the participants felt.

While the inaugural session was presided over by noted writer and broadcaster Farooq Nazki, former IAS officer Mohammad Shafi Pandit presided over with Secretary J & K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages also in the presidium. AMK president Shujaat Bukhari outlined the future goals of organization saying, "this was just not an organization but it represented the concept of Kashmiri identity". "Our headquarter in Kanispora Baramulla which is being completed soon will not be just an office but the epicenter of the cultural renaissance" he said. In his annual report AMK general secretary Mohammad Amin Bhat highlighted the enormous work the organization has done. "We are sanguine that the Kashmiri language is now back in 9th and 10th class and our efforts bore fruit" he said. "AMK has evolved as an institution and the way it is encouraging young writers is something we should be proud of" said Mohammad Shafi Pandit. Nazki too hailed the organization for its tireless effort to bring Kashmiri language back in the school curriculum.

In his key note address on "Prof Mohiuddin Hajini and Kashmiri identity" Justice (ret'd) Bashir Ahmed Kirmani said that Hajini was just a Kashmiri. "His life can be divided into four spheres. His person, he as a translator, as a researcher and as a writer and language activist. But the under current was that he was a real Kashmiri. If you remove that then only a skeleton remains" he said adding that Hajini's sense of belonging to his motherland was exemplary. "He strived for exemplifying Kashmir and was proud of his heritage that is why he dedicated his life to Kashmir and Kashmir". But, Kirmani said some more work needs to be done to explore Hajini. "Prof Hajini was an epitome of simplicity but at the same time he was a hard task master who ploughed through his ideas and thoughts and made people to follow him" said Prof Zaman Azurdah. Prof Shad Ramzan, Saleem Beg, G R Sufi, Prof Altaf Pandit, Syed Shakeel Qalandar, Piyarey Hatash, Abdul Ahad Hajini and many others took part in the scintillating discussion that followed in open house debate.

The session "Protest in Kashmiri poetry" drew lot of fireworks after a young scholar Dr Nissar ul Nabi read a paper on the subject. Moderated by Showkat Sufi the discussion led to heated arguments with divergent views making it much more interesting. Nissar highlighted the protest which can be seen in Kashmiri writings. He quoted Rehman Rahi, Amin Kamil, Fayaz Tilgami, Aziz Hajini and many others. However, he was criticized for lopsided view and the discussants pointed out shortcomings in his paper. Session was presided over by Rafiq Raaz and Afaq Aziz, Zarif Ahmed Zarif, Aseer Kishtwar and Ayaz Rasool Nazki were discussants. Mushtaq Ahmed Mushtaq, Aziz Hajini, Shad Ramzan, Farooq Nazki and many others joined the discussion which many said was engrossing and productive.

Another important discussion on day two was on "Problems in teaching of Kashmiri in schools". Director Education Dr G N Ittoo presided over the session while as Director Academics J & K Board of School Education Dr F A Peer, Prof Bashir Bashir, Prof Mohammad Rajab Sofi, AMK vice president Farooq Rafiabi were in the presidium. "We are committed to implement the government decision of introducing Kashmiri in 9th and 10 classes in letter and spirit" said Dr Ittoo assuring full support in this regard. Dr F A Peer also assured the discrepancies in Kashmiri teaching and books would be addressed by the board. Dr Riyaz ul Hassan, Dr Nissar Nadeem and Shabir Hussain Shabir highlighted the problems in teaching of Kashmiri. An interesting debate ensued on the subject.

The valedictory session witnessed some emotional moments as AMK's prestigious award "Sharf-e-Kamraz" was given to prominent writer Dr G M Aajir who has been one of the founders of organization. Prof Mushtaq Siddiqui vice chancellor Islamic University of Science and Technology gave away the awards. "I want to dedicate this award to four pillars of AMK—Prof Mohiuddin Hajini, Prof Rashid Nazki, Mohammad Ahsan Ahsan and Atiqah Bano who are no longer in this world" said the humble writer. Literary Forum Bandipore also got this award received by its president Mubashir Nazki. AMK also started the "Best Book Award" for writers in north Kashmir and this year's award dedicated to Late Ali Mohammad Shabbaz was bagged by Abdul Khaliq Shams for his book "Gulshan e Anbia". Special number AMK journal Prave, dedicated to Prof Mohiuddin Hajini was also released besides "Tawi Aend Paek" by Piyarey Hatash. "We will explore the possibility of setting up Kashmiri language department at IUST" said Prof Mushtaq Siddiqui. Principal Secretary Higher Education Asgar Samoon was also honoured at the conference for his support to Kashmiri language.

Measures afoot to revamp JK's walnut industry: Basharat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 16: In bid to boost horticulture sector of the state, Minister for Horticulture, Syed Basharat Bukhari today said that multi-pronged approach needs to be adopted for ensuring better yield, brand building and marketing of the walnut produces across the state.

The Minister said this while chairing a meeting of officers to review measures to be taken to revitalize walnut industry of the state.

Vice-Chancellor, SKUAST Kashmir Nazeer Ahmad, Secretary Horticulture Manzoor Ahmad Lone, Director Horticulture Planning and Management Manzoor Ahmad Qadri, Director CITH Dr. Desh Beer Singh, Director Horticulture Jammu Bhawani Rakwa, CHO Baramulla Saif-ud-din and various other concerned officials were present in the meeting.

Seeking details regarding the status of fruit nurseries and presence of walnut species in these nurseries, the Minister was informed that there is need for developing controlled atmosphere conditions for walnut propa-



gate sapling to yield better fruit.

The Minister directed that Horticulture Department, SKUAST and CITH to take measures to develop three nurseries on modern with scientific inputs, besides constituting core group committee officials from each department who will look after the process of developing these nurseries in a balanced and controlled manner.

Director CITH apprised the Minister about the various activities performed by the Department, besides distribution of plants to improve the horticulture scenario of the state.

Bukhari directed the Director

CITH for submitting a detailed report regarding the plant distribution.

He said that the government has undertaken a holistic programme for ensuring the equitable and sustainable development of horticulture sector in the state. He said that Government has recently made HPMC Zero Debt and there is need for making the Corporation vibrant by taking innovative and sustainable measures.

He directed the HPMC officials to work in close coordination with experts of SKUAST and CITH to explore possibilities to produce walnut products, besides taking care of grading, shelf life and modern line pack-

ing practices of these products.

Bukhari also directed the concerned for submitting a detailed report regarding the nutritional and medicinal value of fruits found across the state.

The Minister said that the government is committed to achieve the objectives to enhance the production and productivity of quality fruit crops in the State to compete in the national and international markets with highest employment opportunities in horticulture sector.

Bukhari stressed on better marketing practices of horticulture produce of the State, he said that the department needs to work towards improving marketing facilities and building a strong brand.

He said that the Department should work together with farmers for promoting use of new technologies and better farming practices and assured that the government will support the effort of the department to develop the Horticulture sector on modern lines.

Special Summary Revision of Electoral Rolls

Post adequate staff, no transfer of functionaries relating with revision of Electoral Rolls till process is over: ECI to Govt

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 16: The Election Commission of India (ECI) has instructed the State Government, through a Circular, that the officers and officials connected with Special Summary Revision of Electoral rolls should not be transferred from their place of posting without prior permission of ECI during the period of Special summary revision in the State. The posting of substitute officers may be made with the consultation of State Chief Electoral Officers (CEO) and the CEO should consult the Commission where felt necessary. Stressing the need for initiating pre-determined activities for timely completion of revision process, the ECI has also sought massive participation of public and cooperation of political parties, rural & urban local bodies and NGOs.

The Commission has called for strengthening the infrastructure, deployment of adequate manpower and filling up of vacant posts relating to electoral rolls works.

The circular instructions of the Commission stated that no officer or official should be deployed against whom the Commission

has recommended any disciplinary action and the same is pending or against whom a serious criminal case is pending in any court of law. There should be provision of adequate funds for hassle-free and timely completion of summary revision process in the State.

As per the Schedule of Special Summary Revision of Electoral Rolls, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has fixed January 1, 2018 as the qualifying date to prepare accurate electoral rolls inclusive of all eligible persons as electors. Draft publication of Electoral Rolls on October 3, 2017, period for filling of claims and objections from October 3 to November 1, reading of relevant parts/section of photo electoral rolls in Gram Sabha/Local Bodies and RWA meetings and verification of names from October 4 to 18, special campaign dates with Booth Level Agents of Political Parties for receiving claims and objections have been fixed October 14 and 21, disposal of claims and objections by November 30, updating the database, merging of photographs, updating the control tables and preparation and printing of supplementary list.

National Workshop on 'Skill Development and Entrepreneurship' commences at IASE Govt intends to establish 15 new colleges in State: Altaf Bukhari

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 16: A week-long, National workshop on 'Skill Development and Entrepreneurship' today commenced at Institute of Advanced Studies in Education (IASE), MA Road here.

Around 40 participants from various universities of Jammu and Kashmir will participate in the workshop which is being sponsored by the Cluster University.

The Minister for Education, Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari who was the Chief Guest on the occasion praised the university authorities for organizing such workshop and choosing a theme which, he said, was important in the present times.

"Through these workshops, a participant gets a chance to put forward his opinion which leads to the better understanding of any issue," Bukhari said.

While speaking about the bringing improvement in education sector, the Minister said the government intends to establish 15 new colleges in the various uncovered areas of J&K that will cater to needs of students in those areas.

Praising the long service of Institute of Advanced Studies in Education, the Minister said that institute has been



contributing to the education since last seven decades. He said, the institution caters not only to the academic needs of school education but curricular and vocational aspects as well.

The organizers informed that the workshop will deliberate upon the various topics including learning about skills for entrepreneurship, imparting knowledge about local skills and entrepreneurship forming a part of state industry, learning about opportunities and challenges in natural dyeing, highlighting importance and composition of Pashmina wool, developing skill of Pashmina processing and weaving and other con-

cerned topics. On the occasion, Bukhari also felicitated students with certificates and mementos for securing positions in the photo competition, on the theme "Right Click" which was held in September.

The students who were adjudged as best debaters in inter-college debate were also felicitated by the Minister.

Later, Minister inaugurated photo exhibition in the college which was supervised by Contemporary Artist, Arshid Sualeh.

Annual Research Journal of Institute of Advanced Studies in Education "Research Compendium" was also released on the occasion.

On the occasion, Vice Chancellor Cluster University Srinagar (CUS), Prof. Sheikh Javid Ahmed, Registrar CUS, Prof. Mohammad Yaseen, Controller CUS, Mumtaz Ali, Workshop Coordinator, Prof. Seema Naz, Principals from various colleges and other concerned officials of education department were present.

The resource persons for workshop include Prof. (Dr) P.K Mishra from IIT (BHU), Varanasi, Dr. Anu Mishra (IICT) Bhadohi, Prof. (Dr) Sarfaraz Ahmad Wani from SKUAST Kashmir, Dr Syed Maqbool Geelani from IASE and Technical Expert, Aijaz Ahmad Shah.

Amitabh Mattoo discusses modalities for implementation of "Knowledge Initiative" in Jammu

Emphasizes students training from early stages

JAMMU, OCTOBER 16 -Advisor to Chief Minister Prof Amitabh Mattoo today chaired a high level meeting to discuss and work out modalities for implementation of "Knowledge Initiative in Higher Education and Primary Education" here today.

Vice Chancellor, Cluster University of Jammu Professor Anju Bhasin, Vice Chancellor University of Jammu Prof R.D Sharma, Registrar University of Jammu Meenakshi Kilam, Financial Commissioner (Coordination) Resident Commission, J&K Government K.B Aggarwal besides Head, Department of Urdu Prof Shohab Inayat Malik were present in the meeting.

Heads, Principals, teachers of various government as well as private educational institutions of Jammu division participated in the interaction.

Professor Mattoo, who is heading the working group constituted for preparation of a vision document for this Knowledge Initiative, stressed upon the participants to impart skills, teaching, learning research and innovation that will be drawn from global best



practices and traditional norms, preparing policies, guidelines and schemes to ensure full literacy and competitive employability through an optimal use of existing infrastructure and human resources in the State.

The Advisor emphasized upon the need of consulting academicians before the incorporation of integrated courses or the start of new courses in the curriculum. "This will help make the education system more pragmatic and result oriented", he added.

Mattoo said that students should be trained and motivated from the early stages of

their classes for various research programmes in their respective fields. He said that young minds are like raw clay which can easily be moulded and motivated to the desired destinations.

The participants put forth their suggestions regarding Knowledge Initiative and asked for introduction of area specific skill development and job oriented courses based on modern curriculum. He stressed upon the need of regular feedback from the concerned institutions so that the purpose of launching such innovative programmes is achieved. Other suggestions given by them included establishment

of cluster university in the twin districts of Rajouri and Poonch, strengthening of basic infrastructure in education sector, digitization of left over education centers, introduction of theatre and drama courses in colleges, adequate sports infrastructure, uniformity in HRA, research works on medicinal and related herbs and plants available in abundance in the state, guidance and counselling units at school level, promotion of organic farming, introduction of vocational courses in tourism, Animal and Sheep Husbandry in far off areas, revamping of teaching techniques, restoration of elementary teaching etc.

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

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 16: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Baseer Ahmad Khan today chaired separate meetings to review the progress made, so far, on Chief Minister's decisions and District Development Board (DDB) decisions for twin districts of Pulwama and Shopian.

Deputy Commissioner Pulwama, Ghulam Mohammad Dar and Deputy Commissioner Shopian, Mohammad Aijaz apprised the Divisional Commissioner about the progress achieved under Chief Minister's decisions and District Development Board (DDB) decisions for their respective districts.

DDC Pulwama briefed the Divisional Commissioner in detail about action taken report on Chief Minister's commitments which she had made to the general public during the recent public durbar held at Pulwama.

On the occasion, the Divisional Commissioner was informed that DPR amounting to Rs. 1.03 crore has been prepared for the additional accommodation for doctors on available land of CMO premises.

Regarding the construction of Community hall at Pulwama on CMO's office premises, a long pending demand of the people of Pulwama, Divisional Com-

missioner was informed a DPR for Rs.7.95 crore has been framed and submitted to Planning Department for the release of funds.

Regarding the extension of Fruit Mandi Pulwama, Div Com was briefed that land acquisition process has been completed and award formulated. But due to the paucity of funds disbursement could not be done. Div Com directed the DDC to take up the matter with Horticulture department so that requisite money is released.

With regard to upgradation of Naina Hospital to sub-district level, the meeting was briefed that the proposal for creation of additional staff has been submitted to the Administrative Department along with request to release Rs. 80.00 lakh as additionality for purchase of medical equipments.

Regarding construction of separate maternity hospital for Pulwama, Divisional Commissioner was informed that land has already been identified at Chandgam Pulwama. However, it was said that till maternity hospital is constructed, the same can be made functional on temporary basis in SDH Rajpora.

Similarly, regarding setting up of maternity hospital at Aripal Tral, it



was given out that recently Government has approved construction of new building for the said health institution.

Regarding augmentation of District hospital Pulwama, Director Health informed the meeting that Directorate

of Health Services has released funds to JK MSC Ltd. for procurement of C.T Scan for the hospital.

With respect to declaring village Naina and Dugripora as backward, DDC informed that the file along with all the requisite formalities has been submitted to Backward Classes Commission for further approval.

For creation of Social Welfare Office, R&B Sub-Division, Irrigation Sub-Division and ZEO Office at Litter, it was that a feasibility report for establishment of ZEO office has been submitted to Director School Education Kashmir and regarding the establishment of Social Welfare Office the matter has been taken up with Administrative Department.

With respect to the construction of Dogripora and Reshipora bridges, the meeting was told that the work on Dogripora Bridge is going on in full swing.

Similarly, DDC Shopian briefed the Divisional Commissioner in detail about action taken report on Chief Minister's commitments which she had made regarding the district.

The Divisional Commissioner stressed on time-bound completion of all the developmental works and CM's directions on priority. Calling for complete

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

He asked all the officers to put in extra efforts for judicious and effective utilization of funds besides removing bottlenecks hindering developmental works.

Divisional Commissioner directed both the DDCs to ensure expeditious execution of developmental works to extend desired benefits to the people. He also asked them for keeping a strict check on quality of works, adding that efforts should be made to create sustainable assets catering to area-specific developmental needs.

Director School Education, Director Rural Department, ADCs, ACRs, and ACDs of Pulwama and Shopian, SEs of R&B, PHE and PDD, Exens of PHE, PDD, R&B, CMOs, District officers of Education, Social Welfare, Transport, Forest, Agriculture, District Youth Service & Sports, Sheep Husbandry, Labour, Horticulture, Fisheries, Industries, Tehsil-dars, JKPC, and other concerned were also present in the meeting.

Time and Us

Editorial
SRINAGAR
J&K

TOXIC FARMING

Reports of farmers dying from pesticide exposure in Maharashtra's cotton belt in Yavatmal make it evident that the government's efforts to regulate toxic chemicals used in agriculture have miserably failed. It is natural for cotton growers under pressure to protect their investments to rely on greater volumes of insecticides in the face of severe pest attacks. It appears many of them have suffered high levels of exposure to the poisons, leading to their death. The fact that they had to rely mainly on the advice of unscrupulous agents and commercial outlets for pesticides, rather than on agricultural extension officers, shows gross irresponsibility on the part of the government. But the problem runs deeper. The system of regulation of insecticides in India is obsolete, and even the feeble efforts at reform initiated by the UPA government have fallen by the wayside. A new Pesticides Management Bill introduced in 2008 was studied by the Parliamentary Standing Committee, but it is still pending. At the same time, there is worrying evidence that a large quantum of pesticides sold to farmers today is spurious, and such fakes are enjoying a higher growth rate than the genuine products. Clearly, there is a need for a high-level inquiry into the nature of pesticides used across the country, and the failure of the regulatory system. This should be similar to the 2003 Joint Parliamentary Committee that looked into harmful chemical residues in beverages and recommended the setting of tolerance limits.

It is incongruous that the Centre has failed to grasp the need for reform in the regulation of pesticides, when it is focussed on growth in both agricultural production and exports. Agricultural products from India, including fruits and vegetables, have been subjected to import restrictions internationally for failing to comply with safety norms. It is imperative that a Central Pesticides Board be formed to advise on use and disposal of pesticides on sound lines, as envisaged under the law proposed in 2008. This will strengthen oversight of registration, distribution and sale of toxic chemicals. There can be no delay in updating the outmoded Insecticides Act of 1968. A stronger law will eliminate the weaknesses in the current rules that govern enforcement and introduce penalties where there are none. Aligning the new pesticides regulatory framework with food safety laws and products used in health care will make it broad-based. After the recent deaths, Maharashtra officials have hinted at the loss of efficacy of some hybrids of genetically modified cotton in warding off pests to explain the growth and intensity of pesticide use. The responsible course would be to make a proper assessment of the causes. It is also an irony that the Centre has failed to use its vast communication infrastructure, including DD Kisan, the satellite television channel from Doordarshan dedicated to agriculture, to address distressed farmers. A forward-looking farm policy would minimise the use of toxic chemicals, and encourage organic methods where they are efficacious. This will benefit both farmer and consumer.

THE RIGHT TO READ, AND BE READ

► **Suhrith Parthasarathy**

Tributes continue to flow acclaiming the Supreme Court for its judgment delivered in Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd) v. Union of India, where it recognised the existence of a fundamental right to privacy. The judgment has been hailed for its erudition, for its analytic rigour, and, more than anything else, for placing civil liberties at the heart of our constitutional discourse. But just weeks later, we're left grappling with the court's proclivity for illiberalism in Poojaya Sri Jagadguru Maate Mahadevi v. Government of Karnataka. On September 20, the court upheld a ban on a book without so much as considering the implications that such sanctions have on free speech. The order is the latest example in a litany of cases, going back to the court's inception, which calls into question the commonly held notion of our highest judiciary serving as a custodian of fundamental rights. In cases such as this one, the court doesn't see rights as trumps, but rather as abstract notions that lie at the state's whimsical behest.

Maate Mahadevi's book, *Basava Vachana Deepthi*, was banned in 1998, when the State of Karnataka invoked Section 95 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). This law allows the state to forfeit and suspend publications that it deems to be in violation of certain provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). In this case, the government found that the book's contents appeared to infringe Section 295A of the IPC, which criminalises speech that hurts religious sentiments.

Needless to say, both Section 95 of the CrPC and Section 295A of the IPC are remnants of India's colonial past, and ought to really have no place in a modern, liberal democracy.

Protecting the intolerant

Here, however, the law is only a part of the problem. The greater issue concerns its interpretation. In a just and tolerant society, one would imagine the courts would accord to rules of this kind the narrowest possible construal, allowing the greatest possible latitude to free expression. But, regrettably, the courts have distorted this vision. By refusing to interfere with the Karnataka High Court's verdict which had upheld the ban, the Supreme Court has effectively understood Section 295A as a shield that legitimately protects the intolerant against the merest hint of inconvenient speech.

In this case, Mahadevi's book was banned purportedly because she substituted the original words in Lord Basaveshwara's *Vachanas*. According to the government, she ought not to have changed the pen name of Basaveshwara from "Kudalasangama-deva" to "Lingadeva," as such a substitution would inevitably hurt the feelings and sentiments of the "Veerashaiva" community in the State. Her actions, the government claimed, militated against Section 295A, and, therefore, the ban on her book was entirely justified.

Now, the Karnataka High Court was certainly mindful of Section 295A's language. For an offence to be committed under the



provision, not only must the speech or expression in question insult or attempt to insult the religion or the religious beliefs of a class of citizens, but it must also have been made with the deliberate and malicious intention of outraging such religious feelings. Inexplicably, however, both these conditions, the court found, were met by the book.

Mahadevi, the court said, had no right to "impose her philosophy on others." "She can certainly publish a book containing her own philosophy, but certainly she cannot speak her philosophy through some other person who is held in high esteem by a particular class of society," it wrote. "The petitioner knows full well that if she were to preach that philosophy, it may not be acceptable to all and obviously for that reason, she wants to advocate or propagate her philosophy through the mouth of Lord Basaveshwara by effecting certain changes in the *Vachanas*... which support her philosophy." This supposed knowledge that her philosophy would not have otherwise been acceptable, and, therefore, that the author transmitted her own views through Basaveshwara's name was, for the court, an indication of Mahadevi's deliberate and malicious intent to cause religious hurt.

Free speech and tolerance

It's certainly plausible that the contents of *Basava Vachana Deepthi* run counter to Basaveshwara's *Vachanas*. It's also possible that in substituting Basaveshwara's pen name Mahadevi had violated the original author's intentions. But should not a meaningful right to free speech come with an attendant obligation for tolerance? For the Karnataka High Court, clearly not. In its belief, speech is valuable and deserving of protection only when it bears no conse-

quences. Religion, and religious conviction, in its view, are somehow exempt from the regular mandates of democracy. To the court, there exists a right not to be ridiculed or offended, a right that it placed on a decorated pedestal.

That Mahadevi's case is not an outlier, but that it typifies the malaise of censorship, that governments in India can ban books with such facile ease, ought to have represented good enough reason to merit the Supreme Court's intervention. If nothing else, this was an opportunity for the court to correct its own errors made in its 2007 judgment in *Sri Baragur Ramachandrapa v. State of Karnataka*.

There, the government had issued a notification banning *Dharmakarama*, a Kannada novel written by P.V. Narayana on grounds, once again, that certain paragraphs which probed the character of Akkanagamma, the elder sister of Basaveshwara, could hurt the sentiments of the Veerashaiva community. Quite remarkably, the court found there that once the State government exercises its power to forfeit a book under Section 95 of the CrPC, the onus shifts to the author to disprove the government's claims.

What's more, as the lawyer Gautam Bhatia has pointed out, in *Offend, Shock, or Disturb: Free Speech under the Indian Constitution*, in addition to the substantive concerns over Section 295A, problems also abound over the procedure contained in Section 95 of the CrPC, which allows governments to ban books on mere surmises. Under this law, as interpreted currently by the Supreme Court, the state doesn't have to present any evidence to show that religious feelings have actually been hurt. It is sufficient if it "appears" to the government that

such beliefs might be injured.

A ban on a book, howsoever pernicious its contents might be, should, under any circumstances, strike the court as a matter for serious consideration. Indeed, the court recognised this, in a short order delivered on October 13, when it dismissed a petition challenging the publication of *Kancha Ilaiah's* book, *Samajika Smuggluru Komatollu*. "Curtailed of an individual writer/author's right to freedom of speech and expression should never be lightly viewed," it wrote. While this order is certainly welcome, any reasonable analysis of the court's judgments shows us that it invariably tends to sing a different tune when faced with active bans imposed by the state, thereby shading its jurisprudence with more than a trace of caprice.

Democracy's animating force

As Ronald Dworkin said, the preservation of individual autonomy is an essential requirement of a legitimate government. Upholding bans on books strikes at this legitimacy, at the principles of justice that are meant to fortify the republic. The court must always recognise, as it has done in *Ilaiah's* case, that the right to freedom of speech is really the animating force of democracy, that it's a liberty central to achieving an equal society.

To hold otherwise, by upholding bans on books on plain conjecture, violates this vision. It allows the apparent intolerance of certain groups to trump an author's right to free expression.

Suhrith Parthasarathy is an advocate practising at the Madras High Court

The case for a public health cadre

► **Dharmesh Kumar Lal**

The idea of having dedicated personnel for public health management goes back to 1959 when advocated by the Mudaliar Committee, which observed that "personnel dealing with problems of health and welfare should have a comprehensive and wide outlook and rich experience of administration at the state level".

It was echoed too, in 1973, by the Kartar Singh Committee, which said that "doctors with no formal training in infectious disease control, surveillance systems, data management, community health related problems, and lacking in leadership and communication skills, with no exposure to rural environments and their social dynamics, nor having been trained to manage a facility or draw up budget estimates, were ill-equipped and misfits to work in public facilities".

It was also felt that "the medical education that [a doctor] receives has hardly any relevance to the conditions in which he would be required to work, either in the state-run health programme or even in private practice... since medical education is based almost entirely on the western model, and where he is more suitable for the conditions that

prevail in western countries than in his own."

The 12th Five Year Plan and the National Health Policy, 2017 have also strongly advocated establishing a public health management cadre to improve the quality of health services by having dedicated, trained and exclusive personnel to run public health facilities.

Ground zero

Tamil Nadu took the lead in this and there has been a discernible difference in the way health delivery is done there vis-à-vis Uttar Pradesh. For example, in U.P., even in a tertiary hospital, according to media reports, simple record keeping of oxygen cylinders is not followed.

Recently, Odisha, with the support of the Public Health Foundation of India, has notified the establishment of a public health cadre in the hope of ensuring vast improvement in the delivery of health care. Despite the creation of a public health cadre finding mention in various reports and Plan documents, such a service at the all-India level has still to translate itself into reality any time soon due to a series of complex factors.

Why have such a cadre? The idea is on the lines of the civil service — of having dedicated, professionally trained personnel to address the specific and



complex needs of the Indian health-care delivery system which is grappling with issues such as a lack of standardisation, financial management, appropriate health functionaries and competencies including technical expertise, logistics management, and social determinants of

health and leadership. Doctors with clinical qualifications and even with vast experience are unable to address all these challenges, thereby hampering the quality of our public health-care system. Now, doctors recruited by the States and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

(through the Union Public Service Commission) are to implement multiple, complex and large public health programmes besides applying fundamental management techniques. In most places, this is neither structured nor of any quality. In the absence of a public health cadre in most States, even an anaesthetist or an ophthalmologist with hardly any public health knowledge and its principles is required to implement reproductive and child health or a malaria control programme. Further, at the Ministry level, the highest post may be held by a person with no formal training in the principles of public health to guide and advise the country on public health issues.

With a public health cadre in place, we will have personnel who can apply the principles of public health management to avoid mistakes such as one that led to the tragedy in Uttar Pradesh as well as deliver quality services. This will definitely improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Indian health system. With quality and a scientific implementation of public health programmes, the poor will also stand to benefit as this will reduce their out-of-pocket expenditure and dependence on prohibitively expensive private health care. In the process, we will also be saving the pre-

vious resources of specialists from other branches by deploying them in areas where they are definitely needed.

The way forward

Such an exclusive department of public health at both the levels of the Ministry and the States will help in developing the recruitment, training, implementation and monitoring of public health management cadre. Doctors recruited under this cadre may be trained in public health management on the lines of the civil service with compulsory posting for two-three years at public health facilities. Filling the post of director general in the Health Ministry from this cadre with similar arrangements at the State level including the posts of mission directors will go a long way in improving planning and providing much-needed public health leadership. Financial support for establishing the cadre is also to be provisioned by the Central government under the Health Ministry's budget.

Lastly, another benefit will be the freeing up of bureaucrats and their utilisation in other much needed places.

Dharmesh Kumar Lal is a Senior Public Health Specialist at the Public Health Foundation of India, New Delhi. The views expressed are personal

When Pranab Mukherjee riled Congress chief Sonia Gandhi

NEW DELHI: Congress chief Sonia Gandhi was upset with Pranab Mukherjee for meeting with late Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray, despite being advised by her against doing so before his election as President of India in 2012, the third volume of his autobiography has revealed.

On the campaign trail, Mukherjee was visiting Maharashtra where Thackeray, who had unilaterally extended support to his candidature, had made "elaborate arrangements" for Mukherjee's visit to Matoshree, the Thackeray residence in Mumbai. Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Sharad Pawar, a coalition partner of the UPA-II government, had insisted that Mukherjee meet Thackeray.

Mukherjee, in the third volume of his autobiography, "Coalition Years: 1996-2012", justifies his meeting with Thackeray and shows how it was aimed at keep-

ing coalition partners like the NCP in good humour with Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Mamata Banerjee having already abandoned the UPA.

He recalls that his visit to Mumbai on July 13, 2012, was significant as Thackeray, whose party was part of the BJP-led NDA, had, without being asked to, extended support to Mukherjee's candidature, which was completely unexpected.

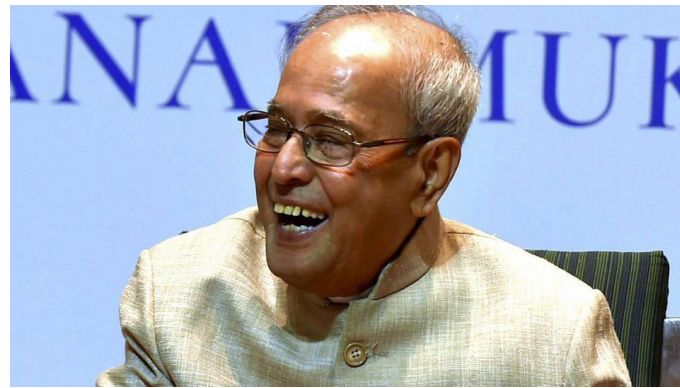
"I had asked both Sonia Gandhi and Sharad Pawar — who was instrumental, I think, in influencing Thackeray towards me — whether I should meet Thackeray during my visit to Mumbai. I had received several messages from him for an interaction at his residence. Sonia Gandhi was not enthusiastic about my meeting Bal Thackeray and (wanted to) avoid it, if possible. Sonia Gandhi's reservations about Thackeray were

based on her own perception of his policies," says Mukherjee.

He says that, expectedly, Pawar's advice was completely different. He insisted that Mukherjee meet Thackeray since he and his followers were waiting to receive the presidential candidate at his residence and had made elaborate arrangements for his visit.

"Pawar added that Thackeray would consider it a personal insult if I did not meet him during my visit to Mumbai. I took a decision to meet Thackeray despite Sonia Gandhi's disapproval because I felt that the man who had broken away from his traditional coalition partner to support my candidature should not feel humiliated. I requested Sharad Pawar to take me to Thackeray's residence from the airport, and he readily agreed to do so," Mukherjee writes.

He describes his meeting with Thackeray as "very cordial" during



which the Shiv Sena supremo jokingly said that it was but natural for the Maratha tiger to support the Royal Bengal tiger.

"I had known Thackeray as a politician with a sectarian approach, but at the same time I could not ignore the fact that the man had gone out of the way to support my candidature," the former President says, adding that the Sena support to his predecessor

Pratibha Patil in 2007 could still be explained because she was from Maharashtra.

"In my case, it was his deliberate decision to support me -- he even told me that he found me distinctly different from other Congress politicians. Whatever be the reason, I thought it was my duty to thank him personally for his support.

But when he returned to Del-

hi, he recalls, the following morning Girija Vyas called on him and informed him that Gandhi and her political secretary, Ahmed Patel, were upset about his meeting with Thackeray.

"I understood the cause of their unhappiness but, as I have explained, I did what I believed was right. I had to keep in mind the sensitivity of advice of Sharad Pawar — an important ally of UPA-II. Already Mamata Banerjee-led TMC had opted out of UPA and presidential elections. If Sharad Pawar became similarly disenchanted, it wouldn't augur well for the UPA.

The UPA had two more years in office as the ruling coalition; without the effective intervention and support of its partners it would not be possible for it to complete the term," he says.

He also recalls that Pawar was already unhappy over various is-

suces and the relationship among coalition partners was under stress.

"I did not want to give him further cause for unhappiness. However, I decided not to raise this issue either with Sonia Gandhi or Ahmed Patel, and left the matter at the stage," he says.

Similarly, he recalls that Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar, who was then an ally of the BJP, had promised support to Mukherjee and had asked him not to visit Bihar.

"He said it would be embarrassing for him if he received me at the airport and organised meetings with his MLAs since his alliance partner — the BJP — would not take it kindly. He told me that since he had openly declared his support for my candidature, and Sharad Yadav had, on behalf of his party, signed my nomination papers, there was no need for my visiting Patna," he says.

Rahul issues 'weather report' for Gujarat, forecasts 'jumlon ki baarish' ahead of election

NEW DELHI: Rhetoric will rain down on Gujarat, Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi said in a "weather report" ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to his home state on Monday.

Gandhi's dig comes in the wake of speculation that the prime minister may announce a host of sops for poll-bound Gujarat.

"Weather report: Ahead of elections, Gujarat will today have rain of rhetoric," he said on Twitter, using the phrase "jumlon ki baarish" in his Hindi tweet. The Congress vice president also tagged a Hindustan Times report headlined "As Gujarat waits for poll date, state gets projects worth



nearly Rs 12,500 crore" with his tweet. The Congress has accused the BJP and the government of "putting pressure" on the Election Commission to

not announce simultaneous polls in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh.

The Congress has alleged that if the Election Commission had announced assembly elections in Gujarat along with Himachal Pradesh, the model code of conduct would come into force with immediate effect, leaving no scope for the BJP to announce any sops for people in Gujarat. Assembly elections in Himachal Pradesh will be held on November 9 and results announced on December 18. The Gujarat elections have not been announced yet, though chief election commissioner AK Joti has said they will be held before December 18.

Row over Vyapam deaths a result of police goof-up: CBI

NEW DELHI: The controversy over Vyapam scam-linked deaths erupted as Madhya Pradesh police included the names of dead people as accused in its FIRs registered in the cases related to the admission and recruitment scam, the CBI has found.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was entrusted with looking into the alleged conspiracy to eliminate suspects booked in the admissions and recruitment scam in MP. The probe agency was asked to investigate deaths of 24 individuals.

Among the 24 deaths, 16 took place much before the deceased were booked in the scam by the state police, the probe has found, ruling out any conspiracy.

The remaining deaths were due to natural causes, the agency said.



The probe has found that there was nothing suspicious about 23 deaths in which 15 preliminary enquiries were registered by the CBI. All the 15 enquiries have been closed by the agency.

Congress influenced EC in 2012 Gujarat polls to stop Modi: Vijay Rupani

AHMEDABAD: Gujarat chief minister Vijay Rupani refuted on Sunday the Congress' charge that the Election Commission delayed announcing the dates for the assembly election in the western state under the BJP government's "pressure" and accused the opposition party of influencing the poll panel's decision in declaring the 2012 polls. "In 2012 (assembly election), the Election Commission ensured that at the behest of the Congress that the model code of conduct was in force for a record time to prevent (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi from working, because of which the state government could not take up development work," Rupani said at an election programme organised in Ahmedabad by news channel India TV.

The poll panel declared the dates for the assembly elections in Himachal Pradesh on Thursday but did not announce those for the Gujarat polls. Chief election commissioner AK Joti said the elections in Gujarat will be held before December 18, when the results of the Himachal polls will be declared.

The Congress on Friday attacked the Bharatiya Janata Party for "pressuring" the poll watchdog to delay the announcement of the Gujarat elections and alleged that "past practices, conventions and precedents" were being set aside to help the ruling party in the state. The opposition party alleged that the "delay" in announcing the election schedule was to enable Prime Minister Narendra Modi to act as a "false Santa Claus" to offer sops and use "jumlas" (rhetoric) during his October 16 visit to his home state.

The model code of conduct would have come into immediate effect in Gujarat had the poll schedule been announced, it added. "Congress was complaining that the BJP will advance the election because of the UP result... We

are not interfering in the process of the Election Commission... We are not delaying elections," Rupani said countering the Congress' allegations. "It is my responsibility to work for the public till the last day. Until the EC declares dates of elections, we will keep working for the public. There is nothing wrong in it. It is our right to work until the dates are declared," the chief minister said. Rupani said the opposition should raise an objection only when there is an interference in the election process.

"It is the right of the EC to declare the model code of conduct... (The opposition) wants the government to stop working. This is against democratic values," he said. Asked whether his party has lost the support of the Patidars, the chief minister said there is no place for the community in Congress.

"The community remains with us, they know where their interest lies. We are withdrawing cases against Patidars not to make them happy, but to resolve the deadlock by sitting with them, hearing their problems," he said and exuded confidence that Dalits will vote for the party. Rupani said his government took strong action against the people involved in thrashing Dalits in Una.

The government, he added, takes incidents of atrocities on Dalits seriously and immediate action follows against perpetrators.

He was referring to the incident in 2016 when four Dalit men were allegedly beaten up by cow vigilantes at Una town in Gir-Somnath district, triggering uproar across the country.

Rupani said his government does not support those doing wrong in the name of protecting cows.

"We will punish them. And along with this, we are also working for cow protection, and have made the harshest law of life sentence for cow slaughter," he said.

Taj Mahal has no place in Indian history, its creator wanted to wipe out Hindus: BJP MLA Sangeet Som

NEW DELHI: The Taj Mahal was built by someone who wanted to wipe out Hindus, controversial BJP MLA Sangeet Som has said, adding to a raging row over the iconic monument that draws crores of rupees in annual revenue.

Som, the MLA from Sardhana in western Uttar Pradesh, was speaking at a gathering in Meerut on Sunday. His remarks come days after the Taj Mahal, considered one of the seven wonders of the world, wasn't mentioned in a Uttar Pradesh tourism booklet and received no fresh funds in the state budget.

"Many people were disappointed when Taj Mahal was removed from Indian history. What history are you talking about? The creator of the Taj Mahal (Mughal emperor Shah Jahan) imprisoned his own father. He wanted to wipe out Hindus from Hindustan,"



Som is heard telling a crowd in videos. Shah Jahan never imprisoned his father Jehangir. It was Shah Jahan's son, the sixth Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, who placed him under house arrest at Agra Fort.

"It's unfortunate if we have such people in our history. I can guarantee that history will be changed," he added. "Uttar Pradesh government is trying to bring the history back on the right track. UP govt is trying to bring back the history of Lord Ram, Shivaji." The Taj Mahal is India's top tourism destination but has received a barrage of negative comments from

top BJP leaders, including chief minister Yogi Adityanath — who in June said the ivory-white marble mausoleum didn't represent "Indian culture". The 17th century structure has also seen a steady decline in footfall in recent years and is battling mounting pollution. This is not the first time the firebrand MLA has courted controversy for his provocative statements. He was earlier accused of making inflammatory remarks during the 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots but was recently cleared of all charges by a special investigation team. In the run up to the state elections earlier this year, he was also charged with instigating communal hatred after his supporters screened a documentary that allegedly polarised voters.

His recent comments have attracted strong reactions from social media users.

Trafficker who smuggled body parts of 125 tigers, 1200 leopards gets four year jail

BHOPAL: A notorious wildlife trafficker with international links, who was involved in smuggling body parts of 125 tigers and 1,200 leopards, was convicted by a Madhya Pradesh court along with four traffickers and awarded four-year rigorous imprisonment.

Madhya Pradesh forest department's special task force (STF) arrested Shamim, who hails from Kanpur, in February this year.

STF officials said he was involved in trafficking animal body parts in the international market via Nepal and Tibet.

Ritesh Sirothia, STF (wildlife crime) in charge, said Shamim, Badrilal Sapera, Mansingh, Prahlad and Raghuvir were convicted and sentenced to prison for four years along with a penalty of 10,000 each under provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

If they fail to pay the penalty, they will have to serve an additional jail term of 10 months each.



"During questioning, Shamim admitted that he was involved in the trade of 125 tiger and 1,200 leopard hides in Indian and international markets," Sirothia said.

He added that Shamim was also arrested in UP in 2004 with 456 nails of tigers and leopards.

Sirothia said Raghuvir alias Kalicharan was arrested in 1988 with 129 animal hides from Guna district but he managed to get away.

"In 2005, a case was registered against him in Ranthambore too. These convictions are a major success for us," he said.

With no morphine, 25 million die in pain each year: Report

Every year, some 25 million people one in ten of them children—die in serious pain that could have been alleviated with morphine at just a few cents per dose, researchers said Friday.

This represents nearly half of all deaths globally each year, they reported in The Lancet medical journal, warning of a "global pain crisis." The vast majority of people denied pain relief lived in low- and middle-income countries, which received less than four per cent of the 299 tonnes of oral morphine distributed around the world, said the team.

On the other side of the spectrum, abuse of opioid-based pain-killers was common in some rich nations, nowhere more so than the United States. "The pain gap is a double-edged sword with too little access to inexpensive opioids for poor nations and misuse by rich ones," said study co-author Julio Frenk of the University of Miami.

Opioids are drugs that include codeine and morphine for pain relief, but also heroin.

Not only was morphine harder to find in poor countries, it was also more expensive — at about 16 US cents for 10 milligrammes compared to three cents in rich nations, the report said.

"We estimate that the cost of meeting the global shortfall of about 48.5 metric tonnes of morphine-equivalent opioids is about \$145 million (122 million euros) per year if all countries had access to the lowest retail prices paid by some high-income countries," the team wrote.

This was "a fraction of the cost" of running a medium-sized American hospital, and "a pittance" compared to the estimated \$100 billion a year spent on the war on recreational drugs, said Frenk's colleague Felicia Knaul.

"The biggest shame is children in low-income countries dying in pain which could be eliminated for \$1 million a year," she said.

Cost was not the only problem, the team noted.

"Failure of health systems in poor countries is a major reason that patients need palliative care in the first place," World Bank president Jim Yong Kim said in a statement.

"More than 90 per cent of these child deaths are from avoidable causes."

The report was compiled by experts analysing the need for palliative care due to 20 life-threatening diseases such as HIV, cancer, heart disease, premature birth,

tuberculosis, haemorrhagic fevers, lung and liver diseases, malnutrition, dementia, and trauma injuries.

Of the 172 countries studied, 25 had essentially no morphine, while a further 15 had enough to meet less than one per cent of pain relief requirements.

A hundred countries could meet the standard pain relief needs of less than a third of patients, the study found.

"This global pain crisis can be remedied quickly and effectively," said Knaul.

"We have the right tools and knowledge and the cost of the solution is minimal.

"Denying this intervention is a moral failing, especially for children and patients at the end of life."

Another 35 million sick people who did not die also had no access to morphine to relieve serious pain in 2015, the report added.



Experts urge parents to ban their kids from watching television Here's why

While we try to keep our children away from watching violent and vulgar content on television, a study has suggested banning the idiot box for them altogether.

Television and screen time in general for kids has always been a highly debated topic. With technological advancement presenting us with the convenience of smartphones and tablets, children have familiarised themselves with the latest gadgets as well.

Many countries, in fact, urge parents to keep their children away from television and gadgets up till a certain age.

France, for instance, urges parents not to allow children under three to watch TV, and American paediatricians also favour a total ban on screen time until at least 18 months.

Carole Bienaime-Besse, who sits on France's TV regulator, the CSA, claimed Sunday that overexposing babies and small children to digital devices has become a "public health issue." "People are realising that

screens can cause addiction even among very small children, and in extreme cases autistic problems, what is called virtual autism," she said. "Silicon Valley also knows this. There are lots of educational apps for babies, but in the end the results are counterproductive," Bienaime-Besse said.

Studies show that "children overexposed to them are the ones who find it hardest at school," she said. France banned its broadcasters from targeting under-threes in 2008, and blocked Fox-owned BabyTV from launching there.

But some programme makers insist that bans do not work, especially with so many parents using television and devices to "babysit" their children.

"It is admirable, but probably unrealistic" to try to keep small children away from screens, said Alice Webb, who heads the BBC's children's arm, CBBC, and the CBeebies network for pre-school children.

"Those times are long gone. Digital is everywhere. This is a tide you cannot get ahead of," she told top TV executives Sunday at the MIPJunior gathering at Cannes on the French Riviera.

That said, the British public broadcaster is so worried about the digital "wild, Wild West" children are growing up in that it is holding a global summit in December to try to put heads together on how they might be better served and protected. "We need to have this conversation now because we don't want to be saying to ourselves in 10 years time, 'What did we do to our children?'" Webb told AFP.

She said the BBC aimed CBeebies at children from two upwards, "but we know children younger than that are watching.

So we have to be realistic about this, and bear those children in mind" knowing that the TV or a tablet may be their "babysitter." "We have games and apps that are about helping children develop the cognitive skills that a two-year-old needs. This is

about learning on screen and in the real world at the same time, it is not an either or and it's all about moderation," Webb argued.

For older children, Webb said it was "impossible to think we can control what goes online".

She said the only answer was to "teach children what is and is not for them... how to develop critical thinking and how to cope when they see things they don't want."

She said the BBC is setting up a new online resource called "Own It" to help children deal with the dangers and challenges of social media. While Instagram, Twitter and Facebook claim that only teenagers over 13 are allowed onto their networks, Webb said that in the UK 75 per cent of 10-year-olds and above are on social media.

Despite what the social media giants say, "statistics suggest otherwise and they are finding it harder to stand behind that line," Webb said.

Bienaime-Besse said regulators

need stronger powers so they can act against inappropriate online content in the same way as they do with traditional broadcasters.

"I think it is absurd that the likes of Facebook and Twitter are not regulated like other content suppliers."

And she was sceptical that the industry would regulate itself when it came to younger children.

However, "if you go to Silicon Valley, all the big tech executives send their children to Montessori schools without screens and just blackboards.

"And Steve Jobs of Apple did not allow his children to use an iPad." Bienaime-Besse said parents had to wake up to "what we are holding in our hands.

A child who cannot defend themselves should be protected from the harm that these very useful tools can bring. "Kids should become masters of technology by learning coding" rather than being slaves to it, she said.

Higher vitamin D dose may boost bone density in preemies

Higher dosage of Vitamin D in premature and preterm infants may prevent them from rickets, researchers suggested.

Rickets is a disease that leads to softening and weakening of bones in children due to Vitamin D deficiency. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations, all babies must receive routine vitamin D supplementation of 400 international units (IUs) per day.

However, raising the standard supplementation of 400 IUs of vitamin D to 800 IUs daily would reduce the risk of low bone density in premature babies, said researchers from the University of Nebraska in Omaha, US.

In the study, published in the journal Plos One, the team evaluated two groups of premature infants -- with doses of 400 and 800 IU per day of vitamin D -- born between 24 to 32 weeks gestation for over four weeks.

Premature infants with additional dosage of 800 IUs per day showed improvement in growth of bone density, compared to those administered with 400 IUs per day.

They also saw improvement in growth that significantly decreased



the risk of infants having very low bone density.

"We are hopeful that neonatologists will consider giving pre-term infants 800 IUs," said Ann Anderson

Berry, Associate Professor at the varsity.

"We know that even with standard vitamin D dosing, we were still seeing a fair number of preterm infants

who suffered from impaired bone health, yet this is another form of neonatal intensive care units therapy that can help decreasing that risk," Berry added.

Novel augmented tongue ultrasound for speech therapy

A team of researchers have developed a system that uses an ultrasound to display movements of tongues in real time, a finding which may help patients with tongue surgery to improve their speech.

The study showed that these movements, captured using an ultrasound probe placed under the jaw, are processed by a machine learning algorithm that controls an "articulatory talking head".

For a person with an articulation disorder, speech therapy partly uses repetition exercises. The practitioner qualitatively analyses the patient's pronunciations and orally explains, using drawings, how to place articulators, particularly the tongue: something patients are generally unaware of.

However, using the algorithm one can see the tongue, palate and teeth, as well as the face and lips, usually hidden inside the vocal tract, in the new system.

This "visual biofeedback" system, would produce better correction of pronunciation, and could be used for speech therapy and for learning foreign languages, said Thomas Hueber from the University of Grenoble in France.



The system, published in the journal Speech Communication,

Lets patients see their articulatory movements in real time, and in particular how their tongues move, so that they are aware of these movements and can correct pronunciation problems faster.

Further, the machine learning algorithm exploits a probabilistic model based on a large articulatory database acquired from an "expert" speaker capable of pronouncing all of the sounds in one or more languages.

This model is automatically adapted to the morphology of each new user, over the course of a short system calibration phase, during which the patient must pronounce a few phrases.

66 machines being used for counting demonetised notes: RBI

NEW DELHI: At least 66 sophisticated Currency Verification and Processing (CVPS) machines are being used for counting junked Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes that were deposited post demonetisation, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has said.

A global tender has been floated for the procurement of new CVPS machines, the central bank said in reply to an RTI query on details of such machines being used for counting demonetised notes in the country. "As on date 59 CVPS are in operation in RBI for the purpose. In addition to this, seven CVPS available with commercial banks are also being used," it said in response to the RTI application filed by a PTI correspondent.

It said seven CVPS machines were in the process of being leased, while seven others available with

commercial banks were also being used. Referring to leasing charges, the central bank said the information sought was in the nature of commercial confidence and therefore exempt from disclosure under Section 8 (i) (d) of Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005.

The Section bars "information including commercial confidence, trade secrets or intellectual property, the disclosure of which would harm the competitive position of a third party, unless the competent authority is satisfied that larger public interest warrants the disclosure of such information".

In Reserve Bank offices, 59 CVPS machines are used and each machine is operated by a set of five persons under a supervisor who supervises a cluster of machines, the bank said.

"Besides, a number of other



people are involved in forward and backward linkages of the processing," it said. The government had on November 8 last year banned the use of old Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes but allowed holders to deposit them with banks or use them with certain notified utilities. The notes deposited or collected are being counted by the central bank

at its offices to establish the total number of currency returned and to weed out fake notes.

In its annual report for 2016-17 released on August 30, it had said Rs 15.28 lakh crore, or 99 per cent of the demonetised Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes, have returned to the banking system. In the annual report, which was for the year end-

June 30, 2017, the central bank said only Rs 16,050 crore out of the Rs 15.44 lakh crore in the old high denomination notes have not returned. As on November 8, 2016, there were 1,716.5 crore pieces of Rs 500 and 685.8 crore pieces of Rs 1,000 notes in circulation, totalling Rs 15.44 lakh crore,

it had said. "Subject to future corrections based on verification process when completed, the estimated value of specified bank notes received as on June 30, 2017, is Rs 15.28 trillion," RBI had said in its annual report. While the counterfeit currency notes made for a minuscule number, RBI post demonetisation spent Rs 7,965 crore on printing new Rs 500 and Rs 2,000 and other denomination notes, more than double the Rs 3,421 crore spent in the previous year, it had said.

Airtel-Tata deal beneficial but raises integration risk: S&P

MUMBAI: Bharti Airtel's takeover of Tata Teleservices' consumer mobile business will bolster its subscriber and revenue market share but could raise integration risk at a time when the Sunil Mittal-led company is also combining operations with Telenor, S&P Global Ratings has said.

S&P said however that Airtel's rating is "unaffected" by its recently-announced acquisition of the Tata Group firm.

"...in our view, this deal increases integration risk for Bharti because the company will be simultaneously integrating the operations of Telenor India (acquired last fiscal) and Tata Teleservices over the next 12-18 months, while responding to the intense competition," it said. The S&P Global Ratings note added however that it expects Bharti to be able to manage the integration risk because it has successfully managed such deals in the past, particularly in the African markets. The deal will be neutral to Bharti's leverage in 2017-18 and 2018-19, it said. Airtel will assume a small portion of the deferred spectrum liability but not any debt obligation of Tata Teleservices. "We believe Bharti is committed to maintaining its credit profile and will continue to take steps to contain its leverage within our rating tolerances," it pointed out. The "cash free and debt free" acquisition will boost Bharti's India subscriber and revenue market share to 31.9% and 40.6% respectively. The subscriber and revenue market share stood at 27.7% and 34.8% respectively, in the three months ended June 30, 2017. Like many industry analysts, S&P too believes that the deal will help reduce the gap between Bharti and the new combined force of soon-to-be-merged Idea Cellular and Vodafone India. However in the same breath it cautioned that market share numbers are prone to significant changes, given the intense price competition in the Indian telecom sector.

Flipkart in talks to buy stake in BookMyShow

MUMBAI: Flipkart Ltd is in talks to buy a large minority stake in ticketing platform Bookmyshow, as India's most valuable internet firm seeks to improve customer stickiness and gain a higher share of spending by urban Indians, three people familiar with the matter said. The online retailer wants to invest fresh capital into Bookmyshow (Bigtree Entertainment Pvt. Ltd) as well as buy shares from some of its investors, the people cited above said on condition of anonymity.

Bookmyshow may be valued at \$500-700 million if the proposed deal with Flipkart goes through, the people said. Mint couldn't ascertain the amount that Flipkart plans to invest in Bookmyshow, which last raised Rs 550 crore in July 2016 from Stripes Group, Accel Partners, SAIF Partners and Network 18 at a valuation of more than Rs 3,000 crore. Accel is also an investor in Flipkart.

Flipkart had initially expressed an intent to buy Bookmyshow, one of the three people said. But the two other people cited above said a stake sale is more likely than an outright sale. Reliance Industries-owned Network18, which is the single-largest shareholder in Bookmyshow with a 39% stake, is bullish on the firm, the two people said.

Flipkart and Bookmyshow didn't respond to emails seeking comment. Bookmyshow, which caters to well-off people in urban India, is one of India's very few capital-efficient and profitable internet companies. For the year ended March 2016, the company reported a profit of Rs 3.1 crore on revenue of Rs 248 crore. In the last financial year, however, its sales growth took a hit because of a push by Paytm into movie tickets. But over the past few months, Bookmyshow has fought back and it still controls a majority of movie ticket bookings. The company, which also sells tickets for sporting events and plays, bought Burrp, a restaurant search platform, in July.

Flipkart is seeking a deal and business partnership with Bookmyshow partly to get a higher share of the spending by upper middle-class and rich Indians. Compared with the Prime subscription service of arch-rival Amazon India, Flipkart lacks an equivalent differentiator. By striking partnerships with the likes of Bookmyshow, Flipkart wants to offer a range of services to keep customers coming back to its platform, the people cited above said. Flipkart also plans to launch groceries this year in order to push repeat purchases by customers.

Having raised nearly \$3 billion in two tranches this year from SoftBank Group Corp, Tencent Holdings and others, Flipkart plans to pursue more M&A deals. Last month, Flipkart bought F1 Info Solutions, which offers repair services for mobile and electronics, for an undisclosed amount.

Flipkart is India's most acquisitive internet firm. Since starting out in 2007, it has bought or invested in more than 20 companies. Its largest acquisition was that of online fashion retailer Myntra for more than \$330 million in May 2014. Earlier this year, Flipkart also tried to buy struggling smaller rival Snapdeal (Jasper Infotech Pvt Ltd) for nearly \$1 billion in stock but that deal collapsed in August because of differences over valuation, deal structure and other things.

an equal opportunity employer, believes that women can perform any role with equal competence as that of a man.

"We have not restricted ourselves to defining certain roles or levels where we will employ women. Our diversity targets have been taken for the overall organisation and we are open to employing women across all roles and levels," she added.

When asked about the difficulty in finding women with the required skills in manufacturing, mining and engineering, she said the availability of women is gradually improving.

"It is supply-led demand to a great extent. Engineering institutes need to have more women and only then companies can

Wholesale inflation falls to 2.6% in Sept as food items soften

NEW DELHI: Wholesale inflation fell to 2.60% in September as prices of food articles, led by vegetables, softened.

Inflation, based on the wholesale price index (WPI), had soared to a four-month high of 3.24% in August 2017. It was 1.36% in September 2016.

The government data released on Monday showed that inflation in food articles tapered to 2.04% in September, as against 5.75% in August on an early basis.

Inflation in vegetable prices cooled to 15.48% in September, as against a high of 44.91% in the previous month.

Onion prices, however, continued to rule high with 79.78% increase in September. In egg, meat and fish segment the rate of price rise was 5.47%.

Inflation in manufactured products witnessed a slight increase at 2.72%, against 2.45% in August.

In fuel and power segment, inflation cooled to 9.01%, against 9.99% in August.

Fuel inflation has remained high in the past two months as petrol and



diesel prices continued to rule high relentlessly on global crude oil rates, while power tariffs shot through the roof on lower domestic production.

Pulses continued to witness deflation at 24.26%, likewise in potato at 46.52% and wheat at 1.71%.

The final print of July WPI inflation remained unchanged from provisional estimate of 1.88%.

Data released earlier this week showed retail inflation at 3.28% in September, unchanged from August, even as vegetable and cereal prices

softened. Besides industrial production grew at a nine-month high of 4.3% in August, mainly on account of robust performance of mining and power sectors coupled with higher capital goods output. Earlier this month, the Reserve Bank kept benchmark interest rate unchanged on fears of rising inflation while lowering growth forecast to 6.7% for the current fiscal.

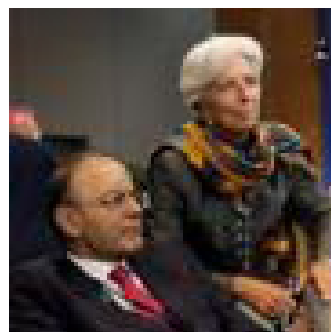
It also raised its inflation forecast to a range of 4.2 to 4.6% during remainder of current fiscal as against 4 to 4.5% previously

Indians on H-1B visas are not illegal immigrants, Jaitley tells US

MUMBAI: Indians coming to America on H-1B temporary visas are highly quality professionals and not "illegal economic migrants" and their position must thus be considered "appropriately" in future policy decisions, finance minister Arun Jaitley has told US officials in his recent meetings with them.

India is concerned about the changes in non-immigrant visa regimes that the Trump administration has been considering. And Jaitley made this case with treasury secretary Steven Mnuchin and commerce secretary Wilbur Ross, whom he met on the sidelines of the World Bank Group meetings.

"Indians are not some illegal economic migrants...about whom



there are concerns in America," Jaitley told reporters in an interaction on Saturday, winding down his week-long US visit. "These are very high quality, highly paid professionals. They have contributed immensely to the US economy, therefore they add value to the US economy."

He added: "When the US decides its own visa policy, they must decide in relation to these people appropriately."

The United States grants 85,000 non-immigrant, temporary work visas, called H-1Bs, to highly skilled foreigners every year hired by American companies, or those based here including Indian firms such as TCS, Infosys and others. Indian companies and Indians, hired by both Indian and American companies such as Microsoft, Google and Facebook, are major recipients of the visas.

President Donald Trump and key members of his administration including attorney general Jeff Sessions have said they believe

the H-1B visa regime had led to the loss of American jobs to foreigners brought to the United States on lower wages and benefits. Critics of the system have also alleged fraud. President Trump has ordered a review of the system, under his overarching vision of "Buy American, Hire American", to eliminate abuse and fraud and to ensure these jobs were not going to foreigners at the cost of Americans.

The president has also proposed a merit-based system for Green Cards, the permanent residency that comes with permission to work and a path to citizenship, by drastically trimming the family-based system currently in place, that could

benefit Indians hoping to come to US in non-STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields covered by H-1B.

India has long argued with the US that H-1B is not an immigration issue; that it's about free movement of trade and services and must be treated as such.

It has used the same logic to seek a better deal for L-1 visas that allowed US companies to bring foreigners from their overseas branches. Jaitley had raised this in his meetings with US officials as well.

The minister had made a "strong case" for these visa types, according to a statement from the finance ministry.

Tata Steel targets 20% women in workforce by 2020

MUMBAI: Tata Steel targets to have 20 per cent women in its workforce by 2020 as gender diversity ensures availability of different mindsets to deal with challenges, a top company executive said. "Gender diversity is essential, and not having it can be detrimental to business. A diverse workforce ensures that we have different mindsets dealing with challenges in different ways, and this helps us strategise better," Tata Steel Chief Diversity Officer and Chief Group HR Atrayee S Sanyal told PTI here. She said Tata Steel has a target to have 20 per cent women in its workforce by 2020, from the current level of 11 per cent.

"We are definitely planning to employ a large number of women in the coming years. Tata Steel, as

an equal opportunity employer, believes that women can perform any role with equal competence as that of a man.

"We have not restricted ourselves to defining certain roles or levels where we will employ women. Our diversity targets have been taken for the overall organisation and we are open to employing women across all roles and levels," she added.

When asked about the difficulty in finding women with the required skills in manufacturing, mining and engineering, she said the availability of women is gradually improving.

"It is supply-led demand to a great extent. Engineering institutes need to have more women and only then companies can



recruit women in these areas. We engage early with various

leading institutes that helps us capture the best women talent

in the early years of engineering," she added.

Further, she said, there is a need to devise policy interventions to offset the challenges which come with more women going for extended maternity.

"Our recent Take 2 policy aims at filling these gaps due to maternity and child care leaves by hiring women who are experienced professionals on project basis for short-term engagement.

"This is a mutual benefit as we have a good replacement resource for a woman and it also becomes a platform for those women looking to resume their careers," she added. She said when diversity is recognised and employees feel included, they have a better responsiveness to changing customer needs.

Everything, cumulatively,

helps us progress and develop as a company, she added.

"Workplace diversity attracts the best talent and retains the same. It builds a great reputation for the company.

A mix of people with diverse views encourages innovation and problem solutions, thereby leading to increased profitability and opportunities for business, she said. However, for this purpose the company will compromise on merit at any stage of selection or promotion. "Our recruitment sensitisation handbook clearly mentions that at an equal level of merit and competence, we would prefer a female candidate but we consider merit as the ultimate criterion for selection," she added.

Malik urges Pakistan to trust in youth on eve of second ODI

ABU DHABI: Experienced Pakistan batsman Shoaib Malik believes youngsters should be given the chance to carry a winning momentum into the second One-day International against Sri Lanka here on Monday.

Malik's swashbuckling 61-ball 81 and a return to form 103 by Babar Azam lifted Pakistan to 292-6 in the first one-day in Dubai on Friday before they kept Sri Lanka to 209-8 for a 83-run win.

The match was Pakistan's first since winning the top eight-nation Champions Trophy in England in June this year.

Formerskipper Malik said youngsters are developing fast.

"It's important to give youngsters consistent chances and by doing that we develop them and the team does well," said Malik,

who was declared man-of-the-match on Friday.

Malik said Pakistan have a potent bowling attack.

"We have good fast bowlers and the way they took wickets in the middle overs during the Champions trophy it helped us beat top teams

and here too they bowled well and got us wickets we needed," he said. Fast-rising paceman Hasan Ali — declared player of the Champions trophy with 13 wickets — finished with 3-36 while left-arm rumman Raees Khan took 3-49 to derail Sri Lanka. Pakistan will retain the same combination despite opener Ahmed Shehzad failing to score on Friday.

Sri Lankan coach Nic Pothas, meanwhile, is demanding his players snap a losing streak of eight consecutive games.

"We have not been very good in this format for a while now," said Pothas, a former South African wicket-keeper. "We have to find answers and find them quick."

Pothas wants his batsmen to deliver. "From a batting point of view, the currency of your batting is runs. If you don't keep making them, the shop is going to close down at some point. We have to ask the batters to take some responsibility." The top six batters managed 96 between them. One batter got 53 and you are not going to get too many," said Pothas of Lahiru Thirimanne who scored a half century.



Another clinical all-round display is what Pakistan will be hoping for in order to take the series further away from Sri Lanka's grasp. The wicket at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium is generally on the slower side, which means a lot of hard work for both batsmen and bowlers.

The last time Pakistan played an ODI at this venue, they had scored in excess of 300 against West Indies and had restricted their opponents to 172 with spinners doing the bulk of the damage.

The remaining matches will be played in Abu Dhabi (Oct 18) and Sharjah (Oct 20 and 23).

The two teams will also play three Twenty20 Internationals, two in Abu Dhabi (October 26 and 27) while the last is scheduled for Lahore on October 29.

But Sri Lankan players had shown reservations over going to Lahore for security fears and a final decision is expected later this week.

Pakistan Cricket Board has been endeavouring to bring international cricket back amidst improved security in the country.

Pakistan have been forced to

play its home games in United Arab Emirates since 2009 terrorists' attacks on the Sri Lankan team bus suspended international cricket in the country.

Teams (from):

PAKISTAN: Fakhar Zaman, Ahmed Shehzad, Babar Azam, Mohammad Hafeez, Shoaib Malik, Sarfraz Ahmed (captain), Imad Wasim, Hasan Ali, Shadab Khan, Rumman Raees Khan, Junaid Khan, Usman Khan Shinwari, Imam-ul-Haq, Haris Sohail, Fahim Ashraf. SRI LANKA: Niroshan Dickwella, Upul Tharanga (captain), Dinesh Chandimal, Lahiru Thirimanne, Kusal Mendis, Milinda Siriwardana, Thisara Perera, Akila Dananjaya, Jeffrey Vandersay, Suranga Lakmal, Lahiru Gamage, Chamara Kapugedera, Seekkuge Prasanna, Dushmantha Chameera, Vishwa Fernando.

Umpires: Shozab Raza (Pakistan) and Richard Kettleborough (England).

TV umpire: Sundaram Ravi (India).

Match referee: Andy Pycroft (Zimbabwe).

De Kock, Amla flay Bangladesh in record-breaking win

KIMBERLEY: Quinton de Kock and Hashim Amla smashed unbeaten centuries as South Africa cruised to a record-breaking 10-wicket victory over Bangladesh in the first One-day International at the Diamond Oval on Sunday.

Bangladesh won the toss and elected to bat on a flat wicket, setting their hosts a below-par 279 to win. South Africa reached 282 without the loss of a wicket and with 43 balls to spare. It was the seventh time that South Africa have won an ODI by 10 wickets and the third time they have achieved this against Bangladesh. It was, however, the highest total chased by any team to win by 10 wickets.



De Kock was the chief aggressor with 168 from 145 balls for a 13th ODI century that included 21 fours and two sixes.

The elegant Amla struck eight fours in his 110 from 112 balls, his 26th ODI ton, as the pair put on a South African record partnership for any wicket in the 50-over format.

Bangladesh's innings of 278 for seven was underpinned by a fifth ODI century for Mushfiqur Rahim (110 from 116 balls), who became the first player from his country to score a ton against South Africa in any format.

South African spearhead Kagiso Rabada was the pick of the bowlers with figures of four for 43 in his 10 overs. The second match in the three-game series will be played on Wednesday in Paarl, with the final game in East London on Oct 22.



FIFA U-17 World Cup: Brazil wonder kid Alan in no hurry to move to Europe

KOCHI: Brazil U-17 and Palmeiras starlet Alan de Souza Guimaraes is being widely regarded as one of the brightest footballing talents. The attacking midfielder played a key role in the wins over Spain and North Korea in the FIFA U-17 World Cup group stage, helping them qualify for the Round of 16. He was left out of the final group game against Niger as a precautionary measure, with him facing the possibility of a one-game suspension had he received a yellow card in that game. The highly skilful youngster had earlier this year attracted interest from Spanish giants Real Madrid as per reports in Spanish media outlets AS and Marca among others, with the club reportedly keen on signing him in 2018. Alan's agent Juan Figer was also seen meeting Real Madrid club president Florentino Perez and CEO Jose Angel Sanchez in March, leading to speculation that Alan would join compatriot Vinicius Junior in moving to the Spanish capital in 2018. Hindustan Times asked Alan about the reports linking him to Real Madrid, after his team's practice session at the Maharajas College Ground here.

"I am happy to hear something about this, but I don't think Palmeiras have received any offer till this point. For me, first of all, I prefer to make my history at Palmeiras and then I decide where I want to play in future," he responded. With Alan currently 17, he is not yet eligible for a move to Europe. Earlier, interest from Inter Milan had prompted Palmeiras to put a 50 million buy-out clause in Alan's contract, according to media reports. While it remains to be seen whether Real Madrid's reported interest translates into a concrete offer next summer, the Santiago Bernabeu hierarchy may not be entirely happy to know the player Alan idolises. "(Andres) Iniesta from Barcelona. I like to watch videos about him even before matches. He is an inspiration for me," Alan said. The diminutive No. 10 had started off in a defensive midfield role. That changed when he moved to Palmeiras. "When I arrived at Palmeiras, they realised that I was not that strong. They have a few rules for the defensive midfield role, and usually prefer players who are tall and strong. Since I am good in attack, they decided to put me in an attacking midfield role," he revealed. Since then, there has been no looking back.

Usman Khawaja criticises Australia's selection policy of constant changes

SYDNEY: Australia batsman Usman Khawaja has criticised the country's selection policy and says the constant team changes hampered his attempts to develop his all-round game.

The 30-year-old left-hander scored 55 runs in four innings during Australia's 3-0 test series defeat in Sri Lanka in 2016 before being dropped for the third test.

He then scored half-centuries in six consecutive home tests but did not play in the four-test series in India this year.

Khawaja was brought back for the first test in Bangladesh, only to be dropped for the second match of the series. "They never used to do it before, I'm not really sure why they do it now," Khawaja told ABC Radio of the selection policy.

"It creates a lot of instability in the team I reckon, going in and out for everyone.

"You hear things like 'the players are playing afraid' or whatnot, but that's what happens when you drop players all the time. We've been doing that a fair bit lately." The Pakistan-born cricketer has played 24 tests since making his debut in the 2011 Ashes series against England and has scored five hundreds, averaging over 45. The Queensland captain is in good form in domestic cricket and is expected to earn a place in Australia's top order in the Ashes series against England which starts next month.

"For some reason it seems like lately in Australia that the best players always seem to be the next guy in, which I don't totally agree with," he said.

"(It is) very hard to develop your game and play some consistent cricket if you're not getting consistent opportunities overseas, which I haven't been getting.

"It's frustrating but I've just got to focus on what's in front of me. I'd love to win an Ashes series - it's something I haven't been able to do yet."

Khawaja believes the Australian selectors already know what side to pick for the five-test series against England starting in Brisbane on Nov. 23.

"I think the Australian team is pretty stable," he said. "I'm confident the selectors already know what their make-up of the team is going to be for the first test. There might be a few positions up for grabs depending on what happens in the Shield games but I'm pretty confident they know what they're expecting."

Himanshu Rana to lead India U-19 team in Asia Cup cricket



NEW DELHI: Himanshu Rana will lead the 15-member Indian U-19 team while Abhishek Sharma will serve as his deputy in the fourth edition of the Asia Cup cricket, to be played in Malaysia from November 9-20.

India, who are also the defending champions, have won this tournament thrice.

"The All-India Junior Selection Committee has picked the India U-19 team for the

fourth edition of the Under-19 Asia Cup to be played in Malaysia from November 9-20. Team India is defending champions and has won the tournament thrice," the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said in a media release.

Meanwhile, the national selectors were also of the opinion that 17-year-old Prithvi Shaw, who recently scored a century (154) in the Duleep Trophy final, should play in the ongoing Ranji Trophy.

The India U-19 team is as follows:

Himanshu Rana (Captain), Abhishek Sharma (vice-captain), Atharva Taide, Manjot Kalra, Salman Khan, Anuj Rawat, Harvik Desai, Riyan Parag, Anukul Roy, Shiva Singh, Tanush Kotian, Darshan Nalkande, Vivekanand Tiwary, Aditya Thakare, Mandeep Singh.

Maria Sharapova eyes strong finish to season after winning Tianjin Open title

CHINA: Maria Sharapova is looking for a strong finish to a season that began with a doping ban and hit a high in China on Sunday when she won her first title in over two years.

The former world number one, who returned from the 15-month ban in April, defeated Belarusian teenager Aryna Sabalenka 7-57-6(8) in the final of the Tianjin Open on Sunday.

Sharapova said she was looking forward to building on the success

next week in Moscow at the Kremlin Cup, a tournament she has not appeared at since 2007.

"Obviously coming there with the title already means a lot, but I do really want to finish strong," said the Russian, who accepted a wild card for the event. "I don't remember the last time that I played three events in a row. But I will give it everything I have got and I know I have so many amazing fans there." The five-time grand slam champion said the Tianjin title,



the 36th of her career, was special. "It has been a couple of years

since I have held the winner's trophy. It is a great feeling," she said.

"When you start all the way from the beginning of the tournament and then you end up playing the final in a full stadium with so much enthusiasm and energy and you are the one that wins the last point, just everything falls into place.

"You have to appreciate those moments, never take them for granted."

Sharapova takes on Slovakia's Magdalena Rybarikova in the opening round in Moscow.