

TIME AND US

DAILY

SUNSET SATURDAY: 06:00 PM
SUNRISE SUNDAY: 06:37 AM

LOCAL FORECAST OF SRINAGAR
Partly Cloudy Clear Sky. Maximum & Minimum temperatures will be around 27°C & 07°C respectively.

SATURDAY

- OCTOBER, 14, 2017
- 23 MUHARRAM 1439 AH
- ISSUE: 239
- VOLUME: 03
- PAGES: 08

WEATHER TEMPERATURE

STATION	MAX TEMPERATURE	MIN TEMPERATURE
	ACT	ACT
SRINAGAR	25.9	6.9
JAMMU	32.8	18.3
LEH	10.0	4.2
KARGIL	19.0	4.6

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

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FIRST SECTION OF FOUR LANE SRINAGAR-QAZIGUND HIGHWAY OPENED

AMIT SHAH DEFENDS SON, SAYS THERE IS NO QUESTION OF CORRUPTION IN JAY'S

VISTARA KICKS OFF DIWALI SALE, OFFERS FLIGHT TICKETS STARTING FROM RS 1,149 FOR

PAKISTAN HOPE TO SUBDUE REJUVENATED SRI LANKA IN ODI RUBBER

As a follow up, Mehbooba directs early completion of Charar i Sharief projects

Srinagar, Oct 13: As a follow up to her visit last week, Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti convened an inter Departmental meeting of officers to discuss and pace up the beautification of Charar i Sharief here today. She also reviewed the arrangements put in place by the administration for the coming urs of Hazrat Sheikh Noor ud Din Wali (R.A.).

Minister for Public Works, Naeem Akhtar and Vice Chairman, Wakf Board, Peer Muhammad Hussain were present in the meeting.

The Chief Minister directed immediate start of fencing work in the area and standardization of architectural pattern for the same. She also asked for devising a holistic drainage project for the town and its proper execution at the earliest.

Mehbooba Mufti laid stress on beautification of the shrine complex by developing more green spaces, adequate maintenance of rest rooms



and creation of more parking space near the shrine. She also directed starting a plantation drive in and around the town which would not only stabilise the karewas in the area but also provide much more green cover to the shrine and adjoining ar-

eas. The Chief Minister was informed that after her intervention by directing release of Rs. Two crore for completing the work on the shopping complex, the project would be

▶ See **Mehbooba**...Pg 02

SEVERAL LEGISLATORS MEET CM

Apprise her about dev needs of their constituencies

Srinagar, Oct 13: Several members of the State Legislature met the Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti here today and apprised her about the problems of their areas and constituencies.

The legislators informed the Chief Minister about the developmental pace in their constituencies and brought many of their issues into her notice.

The legislators who met ▶ See **CM**...Pg 02

Braid chopping incidents continue to spark protest



Srinagar, Oct 14: Life was badly affected in parts of Srinagar city due to restrictions imposed by authorities to stop possible protests against braid chopping incidents.

The call for protest was given by Joint Resistance Leadership against the unabated incidents of hair cutting.

All the school, Colleges and Universities remained closed while restrictions remained in vogue in parts of old Srinagar city. However, life remained in uptown areas of the city.

Reports said that no Friday congrega-

tional prayers were allowed at Jamia Masjid Srinagar while Mirwaiz Umar Farooq remained under house arrest.

In Batamalloo area after a fresh braid chopping incident, people took to streets and held a massive protest against the incident. Locals said that the braid of the woman was chopped off after she was tied by a rope.

A protest against braid chopping incidents was organized by Joint Resistance Leadership at Abiguzar Srinagar. Scores of activists participated in the protest that culminated

▶ See **Braid**...Pg 02

MILITANTS ESCAPE AFTER FORCES CORDON OFF HIDEOUT

Pulwama, Oct 14: Police on Friday said that the militants hiding in a forest area of Tral managed to escape from their hideout after firing indiscriminately on the government forces.

"Once the forces were laying the cordon of the hideout, the hiding militants fired indiscriminately upon the forces which was retaliated but taking advantage of dense forests/terrain the militants managed to escape from the said hideout," said a statement, issued by the police.

"The search operation in the area is still on," it added. The statement said that the operation was launched after a Jaish militant arrested last night in Tral said that

▶ See **Militants**...Pg 02

Authorities impose restrictions, Mirwaiz put under house arrest

Stone pelting incidents reported in few parts: IGP

Srinagar, Oct 13: The district administration Srinagar on Friday imposed restrictions in Srinagar parts falling under the jurisdiction of seven Police Stations to thwart any possible protest against the braid chopping.

The protest call Friday prayers were given by the Joint Resistance Leadership (JRL) comprising of Syed Ali Geelani, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Muhammad Yasin Malik.



The restrictions under section 144 CrPc were imposed

in Srinagar parts falling under the jurisdiction of seven Police Stations including Rainawari, Khanyar, Nowhatta, Safakadal, M R Gunj, Maisuma and Kralkhud as 'precautionary measure'.

Witnesses said that the Police and paramilitary troops were deployed in large number in downtown areas to thwart any anti-braid chopping incidents.

▶ See **Restrictions**...Pg 02

THRASHED BY LOCALS POLICE TAKES CUSTODY OF TRIO AFTER BRAID CHOPPING INCIDENT

Baramulla, Oct 13: Police on Thursday night rescued three persons who were taken as braid choppers by locals and thrashed after a fresh hair cutting incident in Boniyar, Uri town of North Kashmir's Baramulla district.

Police said they are questioning the suspects and investigation is in progress.

Locals told news agency CNS that during evening hours the braid of a woman was chopped off by unidentified miscreants and shortly after the incident a Sumo (JK05C-9395) vehicle was chased by agitated protesters. Three men on board entered into a school while the fourth one managed to escape from the spot.

"The locals caught hold of these three men and they were thrashed while the Sumo vehicle was damaged. The

▶ See **Thrashed**...Pg 02

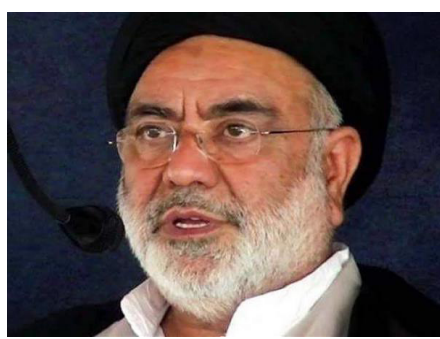
Government not serious in exposing braid choppers: Aga Hasan

Srinagar, Oct 13: Stating it is the responsibility of State Government to identify and expose braid choppers, senior separatist leader and president Anjuman Shari Shian Aga Syed Hasan Almosvi Alsaifi has said that the callous and insensitive approach of the government is adding fuel to the fire.

Addressing people at Central Imambara at Budgam on Friday, Aga Hasan said that blamed government for its shoddy investigation and for making contradictory statements on braid chopping.

He said government is trying to trivialize braid chopping instead of unraveling the mystery behind these incidents.

"Braid chopping is not just an assault on the body of a woman but on her dignity. This



amounts to a grave human rights violation against women folk of Kashmir and this falls into a pattern. This is a trick to instill fear among people in Kashmir," he said.

▶ See **Aga**...Pg 02

THREE BEGGAR WOMEN MISTAKEN AS BRAID CHOPPERS IN SRINAGAR, RESCUED UNHURT: POLICE

Srinagar, Oct 14: Police on Friday said that they rescued three beggar women who were mistaken as braid-choppers in Babademb area of Downtown Srinagar.

An official said that around noon, Police Post Banamohalla was informed of the "capturing" of three beggar women, including two unmarried girls and a lactating mother.

"Police rushed to the spot and took the ladies to the office of the SDPO Maharajgunj. All the three ladies were in tremendous fear and shock and were weeping bitterly," he said.

On inquiring in the presence of some locals, who were already present in the office, the elder woman in the group broke into tears.

▶ See **Police**...Pg 02

Is braid chopping a game? Mehbooba's remarks confusing: Sagar

'Woman CM fails to ensure safety of our womenfolk'

Srinagar, Oct 13: Opposition National Conference (NC) Friday asked the government to come clear whether the braid chopping incidents in Kashmir is 'a game', saying the remarks of Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti are quite confusing.

NC General Secretary and MLA Khanyar, Ali Muhammad Sagar told KNS that the Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti's statement, over the braid chopping incidents, is confusing.

"I fail to understand that if the Mehbooba Mufti is claiming that such incidents are an attempt to undermine the dignity of a woman then why her government fails to ensure



the safety and security of the womenfolk," he said.

▶ See **Sagar**...Pg 02

CERTAIN STATES LAGGED DUE TO GOVERNANCE DEFICIT: PM

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi today said India does not lack in ideas, resources and capabilities but certain states and regions have lagged behind due to a "governance deficit".

He was speaking at the closing session of the Conference of Governors at the Rashtrapati Bhawan here, a PMO statement said.

He said various government schemes for the benefit of the poor are better implemented in areas where good governance exists, the statement added.

Giving examples of schemes such as Mission Indradhanush, the prime minister said the Governors can

▶ See **PM**...Pg 02

Prudent public expenditure policy key to arresting economic slowdown: Dr Drabu

'Govt creating new framework for expenditure management policy, reorienting state budget'

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 13: Minister for Finance, Dr Haseeb Drabu today said a prudent public expenditure policy will play a growth-inducing role in stopping the economic slowdown.

"Due to the economic slowdown and the absence of private investment, public expenditure policy will play a growth-inducing role in reinvigorating the economy. Although options are limited



but they do exist in the form of investment or stimulus package," Dr Drabu said. Chairing a high-level preparatory meeting of the Finance Department officials for Budget (2018-19) here, the Finance Minister said in the

context of J&K, the irrational policy of making provisions for spending on asset creation without factoring in the budgetary allocation results in liabilities and a directionless expenditure policy in the long run.

"The government is re-looking at the ways of spending money and reorienting the way we think about budget, which triggered this

▶ See **Drabu**...Pg 02

INFRASTRUCTURE ALONG BORDER WITH CHINA TO BE ENHANCED

NEW DELHI: Close on the heels of Dokalam standoff, the defence ministry has decided to significantly enhance infrastructure along the nearly 4,000 km-long Sino-India border including around the areas of dispute.

The decision was taken at the Army's commanders conference which extensively deliberated on the Dokalam face off with China besides analysing all possible security challenges on the northern border, official sources said.

Director General Staff Duties Lt. Gen. Vijay Singh, briefing on the outcome of the conclave which was attended by top defence ministry officials among others, said it was decided that there would be considerable

▶ See **Border**...Pg 02

LAL SINGH DIRECTS FOR FACE LIFTING OF LAKHANPUR

JAMMU. OCTOBER 13—Minister for Forests, Ecology and Environment, Choudhary Lal Singh today directed district administration Kathua to immediately start the face lifting of Lakhapur, adding that Government is committed to provide good environment to the visiting pilgrims and tourists at the gateway of Jammu and Kashmir State.

The Minister was interacting with the officers after inspecting the site for developing a rotary in the main town area.

District Development Commissioner Kathua, Ramesh Kumar besides other senior officers of PWD, Excise, Municipal committee Lakhapur and revenue officers were present on the occasion.

It was appraised that the district administration has identified seven marla land near Lakhapur tool post for construction of rotary and installing the statue of Maharaja Gulab Singh.



The Minister directed the DDC to immediately start the construction work of rotary on the identified land. He said Government is committed to develop Lakhapur gateway of the State with state of art facilities. He said there is no constraint of funds.

The Minister also directed the District Administration to construct road dividers for smooth traffic movement in the town. He appealed the people to cooperate with the district administration for developing the area on modern lines.

Later, several deputations hailing from Lakhapur and adjoining areas met the Minister and put forth their demands. The Minister gave patient hearing to them and assured for early redressal of projected problems.

CHIEF SECRETARY REVIEWS ANNUAL DARBAR MOVE ARRANGEMENTS

SRINAGAR. OCTOBER 13: Chief Secretary B B Vyas on Friday reviewed the arrangements in connection with shifting of offices from Srinagar to Jammu on the eve of Annual Darbar Move in a meeting with senior officers.

Chief Secretary emphasized upon putting in place all necessary measures including security escort to ensure smooth movement of darbar move vehicles upto their respective destinations. He instructed that extra buses and trucks be kept available during the move days besides adequate number of cranes, mobile workshops, recovery vans, medical mobile teams, ambulances/medical aid facilities be deployed en-route along with necessary equipment and staff to meet any exigency.

Chief Secretary asked the BEACON, Sampark and NHAI authorities to ensure good condition of Srinagar-Jammu

National Highway, particularly during the move days. IGP Traffic/RTO, Srinagar was asked to ensure that taxi operators do not overcharge the move employees travelling from Srinagar to Jammu during the move days.

Chief Secretary asked Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs department to issue temporary ration cards and gas connections besides ensuring timely supply of rations, LPG to the move employees.

Chief Secretary asked the concerned officers of the Estates department and Jammu Municipal Corporation to inspect employee residential colonies and ensure that necessary facilities were in place including cleaning up water storage tanks and launching an intensive sanitation drives in all colonies. Chief Secretary directed the concerned officers to ensure complete sanitation along with fogging & fumiga-

tion, availability of electricity and potable drinking water in all residential colonies of the move employees. He asked Divisional Commissioner, Jammu to fix colony wise responsibility on Municipal Officers in regard to sanitation.

Estates department was asked to establish control room/grievance cell to attend to and address various day to day issues in residential quarters. Home Department was asked to ensure setting up a BSNL counter in the premises of Civil Secretariat Jammu.

Chief Secretary also directed the IT department to ensure that LAN/Internet connections and Biometric Attendance System in Jammu Secretariat are fully functional by the time move offices reopen on 6th November, 2017. He also directed deployment of security in all residential colonies both in Srinagar and Jammu.

Divisional Commissioner, Jammu was asked to take a meeting on 1st November, 2017 with the officers deputed in the advance parties and ensure that offices start functioning on the opening day itself without any hassles. Director Estates was asked to ensure that all rooms in the Civil Secretariat Jammu are handed over to the advance parties by 31st October, 2017. Administrative Secretaries were asked to brief the advance parties of their respective departments to ensure installation of all computers, telephones, placement of files and proper custody of the trunks/furniture. Chief Secretary also asked Director Estates to ensure that 3rd Floor of the Civil Secretariat, Srinagar, which houses the office of the Chief Minister & Chief Secretary, remains fully functional during the winter months for use whenever necessary.

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MEHBOOBA

completed in full within the shortest period. Mehbooba Mufti asked the Minister for Public Works to visit the town at the earliest to assess more beautification and sanitation needs of Charar i Sharief and the shrine of Hazrat Sheikh Noor ud Din Wali (R. A.), which she described as the fountainhead of tolerance, amity and brotherhood in Kashmir.

The Chief Minister directed designation of Deputy Commissioner, Budgam as the Project Authority for supervising the early completion of development projects of Charar i Sharief town. She directed adoption of an integrated approach for the completion and execution of developmental and beautification projects of the town.

Regarding the coming annual urs, the Chief Minister directed the Wakf Board authorities and District administration to make foolproof arrangements for the devotees. She directed completion of the face-lifting of the shrine complex on top priority before the urs.

Also the Chief Minister directed installation of more LED lamps for extra illumination at the shrine within a day's time. Besides, she also directed the Urban Development Department to dispatch units of mobile toilets to the town for the urs days.

Principal Secretary to Chief Minister, Rohit Kansal; Commissioner-Secretary, Housing & Urban Development, Hridesh Kumar; Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Baseer Ahmad Khan; Deputy Commissioner, Budgam, Haroon Malik; MD, JKPC, Dileep Thusoo and other senior officers were present in the meeting.

It may be recalled that the Chief Minister had visited Charar i Sharief during her Budgam tour on October 09 and directed release of Rs. Two crore for completion of work on the shopping complex besides pacing up other developmental works at the shrine and in the town.

CM

Mehbooba Mufti included MLA, Karnah, Raja Manzoor; MLA, Rajouri, Ch. Qamar; MLA, Shangus, Gulzar Ahmad Wani and MLCs, Vikramaditya Singh and Ashok Khajuria.

Vice Chairman, Gujjar Bakerwal Board, Choudhary Zafar and Vice Chairman, SC/ST Board, Bushan Dogra also met the Chief Minister and briefed her about the activities and issues of their boards.

The Chief Minister assured the legislators and VCs that their demands would be looked into by the Government on priority.

BRAID

peacefully. The protesters demanded action against braid choppers and alleged that police have miserably failed to nab the culprits.

A protest was also staged by people at Hyderpora Srinagar. The protest was organized by Syed Ali Geelani led Hurriyat Conference.

Clashes erupted in Sopore town in northern part of Kashmir's Baramulla district after the braid of a 40-year-old woman was chopped off in Khushel Matu village.

Reports said the woman (name withheld) was in the kitchen of her home when unknown person sprayed something on her, knocking her unconscious, and chopped her braid. She was later taken to SDH Sopore.

Soon after the incident, hundreds of people assembled at main chowk area of the town and staged a protest demonstration against the incident.

However, police lobbed scores of tear smoke shells to disperse the protesters, which triggered clashes in the area.

Reports said that a complete shutdown was observed in Sopore town as a mark of protest against the incident. All the shops and business establishments remained closed in the town while transport remained off the roads.

Clashes erupted in South Kashmir's Pulwama district after Friday congregational prayers. Reports said that large number of people protested against braid chopping incidents. Youth pelted stones on the government forces who however, exercised restraint.

ESCAPE

four of his associates were hiding in Pastuna forests of Tral.

Earlier, forces launched a search operation and took help of choppers after gunshots were heard in the forest area in

Tral area in south Kashmir.

"Forces have been rushed to the area and they are conducting searches as they suspect the presence of militants," said an official.

RESTRICTIONS

The roads leading to the restriction bound areas were sealed by the forces with erecting concertina wires on the roads. Nobody was allowed to move in the restriction bound areas," witnesses said.

The forces were also seen patrolling in the armoured vehicles throughout the day.

The Central Kashmir's Jamia Masjid, situated in Nowhatta area of downtown were sealed by the authorities for the third consecutive week today.

"The authorities didn't allow the mandatory Friday prayers in the Jamia Masjid today," local said.

Besides, the Jamia Masjid's head preacher, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq continued to remain under house detention.

Sources said that the Mirwaiz was once again barred to address a gathering at Jamia Masjid here.

Meanwhile, the locals at Batamaloo area in Srinagar and Ajas in Bandipora district protested against the fresh braid chopping incidents, who alleged that the authorities have failed to ensure safety of Kashmiris.

The Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti on Thursday termed such incidents as an attempt to create mass hysteria and to undermine the dignity of the women in the state.

She also stated that the steps have been taken in this regard while her regime would also find the motives behind these incidents.

Earlier, the state Police asserted that 100 incidents of braid chopping occurred in Kashmir so far while ruing the "lack of co-operation" from the members of public.

They have also announced a reward of Rs six lakhs for credible information about the braid choppers.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir Range, Munir Ahmad Khan told KNS that stone pelting incidents were reported in a few parts of Srinagar including Saida Kadal and Wanbal area of Nowgam today.

He said that barring these stone pelting incidents, the situation remained peaceful.

THRASHED

locals took them as braid choppers and thus manhandled them," said a local from Breniyal village where this incident occurred.

Police rushed to spot and managed to rescue the three men.

On Friday morning, according to reports as a Taveera vehicle (JK01M-6903) carrying the relatives of the alleged accused approached to police station, the locals attacked the vehicle and caused damage to it.

Police rushed to spot and fired tear-smoke shells to disperse the mob. When the mob continued to pelt stones, government forces fired some shots in air.

Station House Officer Police Station Boniyar, Faisal Ahmed Khan while confirming the incident said that prima facie it seems the trio who are currently in lock-up had arrived in the area as guests to a family. "We are still investigating the case," he added.

AGA

"On one side government says it is mass hysteria, and on other it announces rewards for those who catch hold of the culprits," he said.

Agas Syed Hasan said that those involved in such heinous crimes should understand society will not spare them and besides such acts will counterproductive for those on whose behalf they work.

"People in Kashmir suspect some agencies are behind braid chopping. This suspicion is growing with each passing day.

People in Kashmir have been given a feeling that New Delhi looks at them with so much of contempt that braid chopping seems to be another weapon they are being attacked with," he said and asked state government to be sensitive and expose these criminals who are playing with the honour of women.

POLICE

"She said that they were from Nagrota Jammu and her husband is a labourer," said the official.

The woman said her husband was injured after some "miscreant boys" beat him in Bemina after alleging him to be a braid-chopper.

She told the police that her baby was suffering from an ailment and was under treatment. "She was begging for procuring food for her family. The other two girls were with her. Their bags were searched for hair cutting tools but nothing could be found," said the official while lauding the locals for "every possible co-operation".

The women were identified as Razia, wife of Sharif Malik, resident of Nagrota, presently Tengpora; Rubeena, daughter of Mushtaq Malik, resident of Nagrota, at present Pampore and Muskaan, daughter of Mohd Sidiq Malik, resident of Nagrota, at present Pampore.

Later, the women were left after legal formalities, said the official.

SAGAR

Earlier Mehbooba Mufti had said that the braid chopping incidents are an attempt to create mass hysteria and undermine the women dignity in the state. She had also said that her government will also investigate the motives behind these incidents.

"The Chief Minister's statement is totally confusing. Is braid chopping a game," he questioned, adding that Mehbooba must come up with the facts behind these incidents.

"The people of Kashmir are worried due to the government's failure in tracing the culprits behind these incidents. The protest by the locals is the outcome of administration's failure," he said, adding that if the locals are creating law and order situation that is the fault of administration as two months have passed but the government is still clueless in this regard.

"The CM claims to find out the motives behind these incidents are welcoming. But the words are not enough to control the situation. The statement should be implemented on the ground," he said.

The MLA Khanyar further said that the government should investigate the matter thoroughly so that the people could heave a sigh of relief.

PM

facilitate greater effectiveness of government initiatives. In order to strengthen the unity and integrity of India, he urged the Governors to involve themselves in initiatives such as 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' and 'Run For Unity'.

In his opening remarks at the conference yesterday, Modi had said that the Governors can become catalytic agents for change in the society while upholding the sanctity of the Constitution.

He mentioned the target of 'New India' by 2022 and emphasized that this can be achieved only by making it a people's movement.

DRABU

exercise. Earlier, we used to have 29 heads for demand for grants with no meaning from public expenditure policy point of view. Now, these have been combined into five sectors of demand for grants to give them some meaning," Dr Drabu said.

The Finance Minister said he had very fruitful meetings with his cabinet colleagues on resource allocation for Administrative Services, Infrastructure Development, Social Development, Economic Development and Finance. He said the state budget will become a pure public expenditure document in coming years.

"We will synergise some expenditure and the administrative secretaries must identify broad focus areas of expenditure in their respective departments to evolve a directional expenditure policy. In certain cases, two departments can coalesce to do such an exercise together," he said.

Citing an example, Dr Drabu said the school education and social welfare departments can work together to implement the mid-day meal scheme. "Similarly, the Information Technology and School Education department can work together to install solar panels on a cluster of schools which will address the festering electricity shortage at schools across the state," he said.

Dr Drabu said the focus of next year's budget will be on completing the existing projects and maintenance of ca-

pacities. "Identify the projects pending from last more than 10 years, those pending for between five to ten years and the ones which are being executed for less than five years. You work out the cost of completion so that the finance department can take a view. If you can complete even half of the existing projects, it will be a huge achievement for the government," he told the administrative secretaries.

"Instead of taking last year's budget and giving the figures a 10 percent hike, break the expenditure allocation to align the expenditure with the priorities of the minister. Second, try to improve the system of delivery and create new framework for expenditure management policy. Unless expenditure is not backed by DPR, we shall not take them into consideration in the budget," he said.

The Finance Minister said the spending capacity of J&K is limited and there are enormous institutional constraints and leakages due to which the outcome of public expenditure in the form of asset creation is limited.

"The reforms initiated by the government will not work unless the principles of financial management are not followed. We need to have a decisive expenditure strategy. But there has been spread too thin across that for next thirty years, the ongoing projects will go nowhere," he said.

Dr Drabu said the departments must keep provision for maintaining capacities of assets in capital expenditure. "Each department must start the process of insuring their prime assets starting with civil secretariat, high courts, assembly, major hospitals and the state's iconic colleges, etc. Besides, we will also start geo-tagging of our assets," he said.

The meeting was attended by the Principal Secretary to Finance, Navin Choudhary, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister, Rohit Kansal, Administrative Secretaries of various state departments and senior officers of the finance department.

BORDER

"heft" towards road construction activities in the northern sector.

He said the commanders also examined organisational changes of some of the formations to enhance existing capability, indicating that the Army leadership was looking at bolstering its current operational preparedness to meet any contingencies.

In his address at the week-long conference which began on Monday, Chief of Army Staff Gen Bipin Rawat asked the commanders to be prepared for all eventualities at all times.

In this regard, he also emphasised the need to accord priority to procurement of arms, ammunitions and equipment, Lt. Gen Singh said.

Official sources said capacity enhancement along the Sino-India border was a major focus area and the conclave decided to boost infrastructure along the entire stretch with China including around areas of dispute.

Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also addressed the conference and lauded the swift and effective response of the Army in dealing with external and internal threats.

The minister emphasised "the need to guard against inimical forces and talked about the need for jointness and integration of all the services in effectively dealing with emerging challenges," said Singh.

Troops of India and China were locked in a standoff in Dokalam since June 16 after the Indian side stopped the building of a road in the disputed area by the Chinese Army. The 73-day-long face-off ended on August 28, and days later Rawat had said that China has started "flexing its muscles". He warned that the situation in India's northern border could snowball into a larger conflict.

On boosting infrastructure, Singh said "four passes to Niti, Lipulekh, Thangla 1 and Tsangchokla have been decided to be connected by 2020 on priority." All these passes are in Uttarakhand.

It was decided that additional funds will be allotted to the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), a defence ministry entity, to carry out infrastructure projects.

He said a roadmap for intra sector connectivity within central sector and inter-sector connectivity with neighbouring areas have been discussed.

"The issues that were highlighted or discussed during the conference related to infrastructure and capability development along the borders," Lt. Gen Singh said.

He said Sitharaman also affirmed that the morale and welfare of armed forces personnel shall remain a priority area for the government. The minister also stressed on the capability enhancement of the Army in a time bound manner.

Rural people to get affordable life insurance services-Manoj Sinha

New Delhi, October 13: The Minister for Communications Shri Manoj Sinha today launched the Sampoorna Bima Gram (SBG) Yojana and an initiative for expansion of clientele base of Postal Life Insurance. Talking to media after launching the schemes here, the Minister said that the vision of the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to provide banking services through the postal network needs to be taken forward to provide affordable life insurance services to people living in rural areas of the country. He said that all villages under the Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana will be brought under its ambit.

The Minister said, under Sampoorna Bima Gram (SBG) Yojana, at least one village (having a minimum of 100 households) will be identified in each of the revenue districts of the country, wherein endeavour will be

made to cover all households of that identified village with a minimum of one RPLI (Rural Postal Life Insurance) policy each. Coverage of all households in the identified Sampoorna Bima Gram village is the primary objective of this scheme.

Shri Sinha said, under the scheme expansion of clientele base of PLI, it has now been decided that benefits of PLI will no more be confined to Government and semi-Government employees, but will also be available to professionals such as Doctors, Engineers, Management Consultants, Chartered Accountants, Architects, Lawyers, Bankers etc. and to employees of listed companies of NSE (National Stock Exchange) and BSE (Bombay Stock Exchange). The decision has been taken to enlarge the cover of social security and bring maximum number of people under

the protection of Postal Life Insurance (PLI). He said that the postal policies have low premium and high bonus, unlike the Private ones.

The Minister added that the Government is committed to the cause of complete wellbeing of citizens of this country. Expansion of clientele base of Postal Life Insurance (PLI) and ensuring coverage of Rural Postal Life Insurance (RPLI) to all households of Sampoorna Bima Gram villages in each district of the country is a step in that direction. These two major initiatives being undertaken by Department of Posts will serve as an instrument of securing lives of people as well as enhancing financial inclusion.

Postal Life Insurance (PLI), introduced in 1884, is one of the oldest life insurance schemes for benefit of Government and semi-Government employees. Rural Postal Life Insurance (RPLI), introduced on March 24, 1995 on recommendations of Malhotra Committee, provides insurance cover to people residing in rural areas, especially weaker sections and women living in rural areas. Low Premium and High Bonus is the unique feature of PLI and RPLI schemes. As on March 31, 2017, there were 46.8 lakh PLI and 146.8 lakh RPLI policies across the country.

The insurance industry in India has undergone transformational changes after liberalisation of the insurance sector in the year 2000, subsequent to setting up of the insurance regulator Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI). In such a competitive scenario, it is felt that there is an urgent need for Postal Life Insurance (PLI) / Rural Postal Life Insurance (RPLI) to redefine itself.

PM's remarks at the closing session of the Conference of Governors

New Delhi, October 13: The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, today spoke at the closing session of the Conference of Governors at Rashtrapati Bhawan.

The Prime Minister thanked the Governors for the various inputs given during the course of the Conference.

The Prime Minister said that India does not lack in ideas, resources and capabilities, but certain States and regions have lagged behind due to a governance deficit. He said

various government schemes for the benefit of the poor, are better implemented in areas where good governance exists. Giving examples of schemes such as Mission Indradhanush, he said Governors can facilitate greater effectiveness of government initiatives.

In order to strengthen the unity and integrity of India, the Prime Minister urged Governors to involve themselves in initiatives such as Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat; and Run For Unity.

The Finance Minister, Shri Arun Jaitley holds bilateral meetings with his US

New Delhi, October 13: On the sidelines of the World Bank and IMF Meetings, the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley today held bilateral meetings with the US Treasury Secretary and the US Commerce Secretary in Washington D.C., and discussed the Indo-US Economic Cooperation, in particular, how Bilateral Trade and Investment can be improved between the two countries. The Finance Minister highlighted the structural reforms India has undertaken through a series of bold measures, including the Goods and Service Tax (GST), Financial Inclusion and action against the shadow economy. The Finance Minister Shri Jaitley also highlighted the contribution skilled Indian profession-

als have made to the US economy, and that this must be suitably appreciated by the US side. He made a strong case for reforms in H1B/L1 visa processes and social security contribution so that high calibre Indian professionals serving American interest are not unfairly deprived of their well-earned money.

Earlier, the Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance, Shri Subhash Chandra Garg delivered a Key note Address on Micro Pension where he dwelt on the big challenge of convincing policy makers and the potential young persons needing pension after their active life. He appreciated the efforts of organisers in bringing a well-researched book as country

and thematic reforms action needed to realise the dream of providing pensions to over 1.2 billion people world-wide. Secretary (DEA) also met with the CEO, World Bank; CEO, Global Infrastructure Hub and the Executive Vice President and CEO, MIGA besides the India World Bank team led by Vice President South Asia.

The Finance Minister, Shri Arun Jaitley is currently on a one week official tour to Washington D.C. to attend the Annual Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank and other associated meetings. He is accompanied by Dr. Urjit Patel, Governor, RBI; Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Shri Subhash Chandra Garg and other officials.

Inland Waterways Authority of India raises Rs. 660 crore through Bonds

New Delhi, October 13: The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) has raised Rs. 660 crore as "GOI Fully Serviced Bonds". The resources raised by way of bonds are in addition to the budgetary support from the Government of India. The Government had taken a de-

cision to enable IWAI to raise Rs 660 crore through GOI Fully Serviced Bonds in 2017-18. The IWAI had engaged arrangers, credit rating agencies, registrars and trustees prior to raising the Bonds. Both CRISIL and CARE rated the proposed instrument of IWAI as "AAA: STABLE".

The e-bidding for raising the bonds was organized on 11th October, 2017 on the BSE Portal with the issue size of Rs. 300 crore and Green Shoe option of Rs. 360 crore. The issue was oversubscribed and the entire amount of Rs. 660 crore has been raised in single tranche at a coupon rate of 7.47

percent. The proceeds from the Bonds are intended to be utilized by IWAI exclusively for capital expenditure for development of National Waterways (NWS) under National Waterway Act, 2016 during 2017-18. The principal and interest in respect of the EBRs worth Rs. 660 crore shall be

financed by the Government of India by making suitable budgetary provisions in the Demand for Grants of the Ministry of Shipping to meet the bond servicing requirements as and when the need arises. The interest payment will be on semi-annual basis and the principal on maturity.

First section of four lane Srinagar-Qazigund Highway opened

Project to be completed by Dec 2017: Naem Akhtar

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 13: Terminating as the beginning of an era of unprecedented connectivity, Minister for Public Works Naem today inaugurated the first section of the prestigious four lane Srinagar-Qazigund Highway project. The Minister said that the new highway will go a long way in connecting South Kashmir with Central Kashmir and subsequently to other areas. The Minister was accompanied by Minister of State for Forest, Ecology and Environment, Animal & Sheep Husbandry, Cooperative and Fisheries Zahoor Ahmad Mir, DC Pulwama, CE R&B, representatives of Ramky and National Highway Authority of India and other officials.

The first section comprises of 9 km of road length from Gallander to Lasjan Bypass. The Minister said that with the inauguration of the



first section of highway the vehicles will be able to reach their destination in minutes and it will also minimize the traffic jams at the Panthachowk junction.

The Minister said that the highway construction was marred due to multiple reasons over the years and now the progress is visible. He said that despite some hiccups the highway construction is going on at satisfactory pace. He said that the entire highway starting from Qazigund to Lasjan Bypass will be commissioned by December 2017.

The four lane highway

comprises of five sections. Qazigund Bypass (total 3.85 kms, completed length 3.00 kms), Bijbehara Bypass (total 12.7 kms, completed 10.00 kms) Awantipora Bypass (total 7.34 kms, completed 4.00 kms), Pampore Bypass total 9 kms, completed 9 kms) and widening of existing Highway (31.37 kms, completed 29 km).

The Minister said that every effort should be made to complete the project before December deadline. "The commissioning of the highway will be dawn of an unprecedented era of connectivity. It will cut down travel time and

make journey safe and pleasant," said Akhtar. "It will also boost our economy besides being able to cope with the rush of tourists."

The Minister said that the next mega project will be connecting North Kashmir with central Kashmir by four lining of Srinagar Baramulla highway. He appealed the people to treat the new infrastructure projects as their own and protect them from encroachments and damage. "The highways are for people to use and it should be their duty to safeguard them," said Akhtar.

Mehbooba for synergised approach to improve traffic management in the State

Stresses on twin approach of ultra modern public transport, strict traffic law enforcement to achieve the goal

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 13: Asking for undertaking major reforms in the urban mobility sector, Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti today asked for a synergised approach by Transport Department, Traffic Police and Municipal authorities to improve the traffic management system in the State.

Chairing a review meeting of the Transport Department here today, the Chief Minister directed adoption of a twin approach of ultra-modern public transport facility coupled with strict implementation of traffic laws to ensure that the desired results in this regard are achieved.

Minister of State for Transport, Sunil Sharma was present in the meeting.

The Chief Minister asked for clearly delineating the inter and intra district transport facilities for which she



suggested use of colour coding scheme. She asked for improving the condition of footpaths and clearing these from the encroachments so that a free pedestrian path is ensured along roads.

Mehbooba Mufti directed procurement of zero pollution low floor buses so that these become a preferred and convenient choice for the commuters. She also asked for developing bus bays for stoppage and pick and drop of passengers without any disruption on the traffic movement.

The Chief Minister directed strict enforcement of traffic laws to prevent accidents. She specifically di-

rected ensuring use of helmets by the bikers while driving and crackdown against rash driving and those who do not possess licenses. She also directed to enforce use of parking slots by the drivers rather than parking on the roads. For this, she asked Traffic Police to undertake an intense awareness campaign.

Mehbooba Mufti was informed that the Department is on the path of achieving cashless transactions and a large number of Departmental services have been made online, thereby removing any chances of corruption. The registration numbers would soon be given through vehicle dealers and Traffic Police

would also start chalking the erring drivers through online mode. Moreover, 72 traffic junctions are being improved and provided with intelligent traffic light system, the meeting was informed.

The meeting was told that 72,454 vehicles were registered by the Department last year and at present there are 14, 88,190 vehicles registered with the Department. There are 70 driving schools running in Jammu and 57 in Kashmir province and for their technical audit, training of their trainers and preparation of driving manual matter has been taken up with IIT. Besides, an Inspection and Certification Centre is being developed at Jammu, the meeting was informed. Chief Secretary, B B Vyas; Vice Chairman, JKSRTC Haji Perwaiz Ahmad; Principal Secretary to Chief Minister, Rohit Kansal; Commissioner-Secretary, Housing & Urban Development Department, Hridesh Kumar.

Sports imperative for overall development of youth: Kohli

UDHAMPUR, OCTOBER 13: The Inter School Handball Tournament for under 17 Boys/Girls concluded here today at Sports Stadium.

The tournament was organized by the State Sports Council Udhampur in collaboration with KC Gurukul Public School, Jakhur, Udhampur.

Minister for Fisheries, Animal Sheep Husbandry, Mr Abdul Ghani Kohli was the chief guest on the occasion while Deputy Commissioner, Udhampur, Ravinder Kumar was the guest of honour.

Lauding the efforts of the organizers, Kohli exuded confidence that the mega event will help in achieving the objective of overall development of youngsters and generate awareness among them about the importance of sports. He exhorted upon the youth to put in their best and strive for excellence in play field without compromising their academic pursuits.

He said that sports are not only imperative for mental and physical growth of the children but it opens up many opportunities for a bright



career.

He appreciated the sportsmanship of participating teams and called upon the youth to regularly take part in sports. He further urged upon the organizers to hold more such events in future to mould the budding sports

talent in the district.

While speaking on the occasion, the DC appreciated the efforts of students and their coaches for showcasing excellent sports talent. He said that such sports events will help to promote the spirit of sports spirit

among the youth.

On the concluding day, the last match of Girl's category was played between Army Public School Udhampur and KC Gurukul Public School Jakhur Udhampur which was won by Army Public School Udhampur.

Besides in Boy's category, Bhrm Rishi Bhawra Shanti Vidyapeeth (BRBVP) Udhampur defeated Army Public School Udhampur in neck to neck match.

The Chief Guest distributed trophies and medals among the winners and runner up team.

Later, District Social Welfare Officer Udhampur, Rachna Sharma deliberated on Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and stressed on the education of the girl child.

Senior Superintendent of Police, Rayees Bhat, Joint Secretary J&K Sports Council, Shiv Kumar Sharma, Vice Chairman District Sports Council Udhampur, Rahil Gupta, District Officers of the various departments and number of sports lovers were also present on the occasion.

3-day Pahalgam Festival attracts tourists, locals

Festival is aimed to attract tourists in winter months, will also organize food festival at Hyderabad and Lucknow: MD JKTDC

PAHALGAM, SRINAGAR 13: The ongoing 3-day Pahalgam Festival that began at the tourist resort on Thursday witnessed a huge participation from tourists as well as locals. The festival is organized by J&K Tourism Development Corporation (JKTDC) to attract tourists in the off-season and also promote local culture and local food.

MD JKTDC Sarmad Hafeez said, "Pahalgam is primarily a summer destination however such events would attract the tourists in fall and winter months also. This event is an invitation to traveler across country and outside the country to visit the Valley and Pahalgam in winter months also."

Sarmad Hafeez said local food preparations have been the major attraction of the festival at Pahalgam. Number of food varieties were prepared by local chefs at the lawns of the Pahalgam Club overlooking flowing River Lidder bringing many food aficionados of the locality together. The prepared foods include Carp fish cooked with radish and collard which is one of the most cherished delicacies in Kashmir mostly prepared in winter months. The other prepared dishes include grilled trout of river Lidder topped

with mouthwatering mutton barbecues.

Products of the Valley's famed handicrafts like papier-mâché, wood carving, willow works, embroidered namda, and chain stitch items besides horticulture produce like apple, pear, dry fruits and honey were also showcased during the festival.

The festival also features painting and photography exhibition of the Valley's beautiful landscape. Photographs including landscape and buildings depicting local architecture were put on display.

During the festival cultural programs were held at Pahalgam Club. Local artists performed various cultural programs and skits which mesmerized the audiences. The audience was also enthralled by the melodious voice of Valley's famous singer Rashid Jehangir and Shazia Bashir who sung famous Kashmiri numbers. JKTDC also plans to organize more such festivals at other tourist destinations like Gulmarg and also outside the state.

"Our food is very famous and is also tasty. We want to showcase our local food outside the state. We will organize food festival at Hyderabad and Lucknow," Sarmad Hafeez said.

DAILY
Time and US
SRINAGAR
J&K
Editorial

THE WILL TO DIE

The debate on allowing euthanasia as a means to protect the dignity of patients in a vegetative state has crystallised into a key question before a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court. Should the law allow 'living wills'? These are advance directives that people can lay down while being sound of mind, on whether they should continue to get life-sustaining treatment after they reach a stage of total incapacitation, that is, a vegetative state. The question is fraught with legal, moral and philosophical implications. The court will have to resolve the question whether the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution, which according to an earlier verdict does not include the right to die, is being voluntarily waived by a person giving such an advance directive. A living will, at the same time, may relieve the close family members and caregivers of a terminally ill patient of the moral burden of making a life-ending decision. Does a living will imply that the state has come to accept a patient's autonomy and self-determination to the point of legalising a wish to die? For doctors, does it mean an abandonment of their obligation to preserve life? Under U.S. jurisdiction patient autonomy is paramount, and many States have laws allowing advance directives, even the nomination of a 'health care proxy' who can decide on behalf of the patient. Should India follow suit?

While reserving its verdict, the court has indicated that it may lay down comprehensive guidelines on operationalising the idea of living wills. The government has opposed the concept of an advance directive, arguing that it would be against public policy and the right to life. The government is rightly concerned that the idea may be misused and result in the neglect of the elderly. If the U.S. had a Terri Schiavo, India had its own Aruna Shanbaug, both of whom were at the centre of right-to-die arguments. In the latter's case, the Supreme Court, in a landmark verdict in 2011, ruled out any support for active euthanasia, but laid down a broad legal framework for passive euthanasia, or the withdrawal of life support subject to safeguards and a fair procedure. In the present case, the court may have to draw up stringent safeguards for certifying living wills, preferably by a judicial officer, and lay down the exact stage at which the advance directive becomes applicable. The court's observation that it would kick in only after a medical board rules that a person's condition is incurable ought to be sufficient reassurance for those concerned about its possible misuse. The present law provides for advance directives regarding treatment of mental illness, so the concept is not new to Indian law. Living wills, if sanctified in law, should come with robust safeguards.

DRY ACCOUNTS

THE JAN DHAN YOJANA, THE GOVERNMENT'S FLAGSHIP SCHEME THAT, ALONG WITH AADHAAR AND THE MOBILE, AIMS TO ACHIEVE FINANCIAL INCLUSION OF THE POOR HAS RUN INTO TROUBLE BECAUSE OF ZERO-BALANCE ACCOUNTS AND LOW INCOMES OF THE ACCOUNT HOLDERS. BY AKSHAY DESHMANE

IN late 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi officially launched the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), which was among the select flagship schemes he announced in his first Independence Day address from the Red Fort. At its official launch some days after the announcement, 1.5 crore bank accounts were opened for people living below poverty line.

The Prime Minister said about the first welfare programme of his government: "The one and half crore families and individuals who have joined [opened their bank accounts] are keeping their first steps into the mainstream economy. This is, in itself, a significant victory which will provide momentum to the country's economic system. Economy is the most important unit in the battle against poverty. If [the poor] remain untouched from it [economy] then, I don't like using this expression, but I feel I should say that this is financial untouchability. Forty per cent of the people, who can't become stakeholders in the country's economy, cannot benefit from it, then how can we be successful in our work of removing poverty?"

He even compared it with Mahatma Gandhi's battle against social untouchability. He said, "So, it is our goal that if Mahatma Gandhi tried to eradicate social untouchability we have to [strive to] achieve freedom from financial untouchability. Every person will have to be connected with the financial system and, keeping this in mind, we have put all our strength into this campaign."

Subsequent to the scheme's launch, the government started a "national mission on financial inclusion". Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, writing in a "mission document" on Jan Dhan Yojana, said the intended goal was "to provide all households in the country, both rural and urban, with access to the financial services, like bank account with RuPay debit card, access to credit, remittance, insurance and pension. Thus, the mission not only brings the excluded sections into the financial mainstream but makes the transfer of benefits of various subsidy schemes of the government more efficient." Eventually, this effort was to serve as the enabler for the government's Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) policy, which seeks to use technology to deliver welfare and cut down leakages.

Much of the initial attention of the government system seemed to be focussed on opening a large number of bank accounts, a focus that earned it a place in the Guinness Book of World Records at the time of the scheme's official launch in August 2014.

The world record was registered under the title, "Most Bank Accounts Opened in one week in a financial inclusion campaign". The company's website states: "[T]he bank accounts were opened under the PMJDY by 36 banks across India. During the week

of 23-29 August 2014, 18,096,130 bank accounts were opened, being the highest number of bank accounts in seven consecutive days between 16-29 August 2014. The evidence for the number of bank accounts opened is based on the data obtained from the core banking system (CBS) of various banks."

Speaking with journalists in early 2015, Arun Jaitley described the efforts taken at enumeration and reaching out to 21 crore of the total 25 crore households in the country by bank employees. The remaining 4 crore-odd households could not be reached since they were located in left-wing and other kind of extremism-affected areas, he said. But, by and large, these efforts yielded good results, he said and claimed, "Most of India today is included in the banking system." However, he conceded that only 28 per cent of these accounts were "operational" and had some money. To ensure that the remaining accounts were active, the government planned to transfer money to beneficiaries of various welfare schemes in their bank accounts.

Many efforts to reflect a higher number of active accounts have been made since then. By December 2016, government data show, only around 24 per cent of the accounts were of zero balance. But there is no official data made available after this on the scheme's website.

In fact, in the past three years of the scheme's existence, available evidence suggests that its performance has been, at best, mixed and certainly far from realising the lofty ambition of comprehensive financial inclusion that it set out to achieve. This measure started as an initiative of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)—Basic Savings Bank Deposit Account—in 2005 under the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. It involved opening a "no frills" bank account with an ATM card for account holders, most of whom were poor. Jan Dhan added "incentives" such as accident insurance cover of Rs.1 lakh, overdraft facility of up to Rs.5,000 after six months and life insurance cover of Rs.30,000.

Even these incentives did not end the controversial practices banks followed to overcome the two significant problems in the scheme: dormant accounts and duplicate accounts. Dormant implied accounts without any activity and with zero balance. Duplicate implied that the Jan Dhan account holder had a second bank account in his name. Former Rural Development Minister Jairam Ramesh, in an interview with The Hindu Business Line last year, claimed that 40 per cent of Jan Dhan accounts were "second accounts". The suggestion was that accounts were opened just to show high numbers in official records. The biggest controversy of Jan Dhan centred on the "1 rupee trick" followed by several banks. First exposed in a journalistic investigation by



The Indian Express in September 2016, it showed that in order to cut the number of "zero balance" accounts and show some activity in them, bank officials themselves deposited Re.1 in these accounts. At least two public sector banks reportedly acknowledged the existence of the practice. The scale of this practice was also significant. The newspaper's investigation, conducted through the Right to Information applications, showed that 1.05 crore accounts in 18 public sector banks had Re.1 deposits.

Several recent academic research papers have also been less than enthusiastic about the scheme for the above described reasons. One of the most recent and original research papers is by a group of four researchers affiliated with the RBI, Reserve Bank Staff College, and Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur. It was published in the Economic & Political Weekly in September. The study was done in 25 slum locations spread across nine districts of the national capital and had a sample of 600 slum dwellers. The researchers sought to understand the constraints that caused "involuntary exclusion" of the poor from banking services and estimate what could be the "incremental increase" if these constraints were addressed.

They observed: "Much ground has been covered with regard to calibrating the supply-side of the financial inclusion drive, especially in the form of the RBI's financial inclusion plan and Government of India's Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana. Given its relevance, however, there is a need to assess the use of banking services among the people, especially at the bottom of the pyramid, to be able to understand the constraints that prevent them from using the formal banking/financial services on offer."

The researchers found "economeric evidence that there are constraints—in terms of income and occupation—that are holding Delhi slum dwellers back from using banking services. In order to enable effective

financial inclusion, we recommend the removal of constraints on demand for financial services by enabling the lower strata of society to earn more. We also recommend customising financial products for identified occupations, improving financial literacy and being agnostic about gender."

While the poor in Delhi appeared less eager to adopt robust use of the formal financial institutions, the top leadership of the government seemed to take refuge in data to celebrate the policy's "success". In a blog written on the third anniversary of the PMJDY, Arun Jaitley announced the arrival of a veritable revolution in financial inclusion. He wrote, "...as it turned out, PMJDY and the other schemes were only the first step because in turn they have unleashed the 'JAM' revolution. JAM, a term coined, and a vision conceptualised, by our Chief Economic Adviser, is nothing short of a social revolution because it has brought together financial inclusion (PMJDY), biometric identification (Aadhaar) and mobile telecommunications. Today, about 52.4 crore unique Aadhaar numbers are linked to 73.62 crore accounts in India. As a result, the poor are able to make payments electronically. Every month now, about 7 crore successful payments are made by the poor using their Aadhaar identification."

Further to his description of the "JAM Revolution", Jaitley wrote, "The JAM social revolution offers substantial benefits for government, the economy and especially the poor. The poor will have access to financial services and be cushioned against life's major shocks. Government finances will be improved because of the reduced subsidy burden; at the same time, government will also be legitimised and strengthened because it can transfer resources to citizens faster and more reliably and with less leakage. Within reach of the country is what might be called the 1 billion-1 billion vision."

Regulating the gig economy

► Vidya Ram

Within a day of Transport for London's extraordinary and unexpected decision in September to not renew the licence of taxi app titan Uber, hundreds of thousands had signed a petition launched by Uber, which argued that banning the app would "put more than 40,000 licensed drivers out of work and deprive millions of Londoners of a convenient and affordable form of transport." The petition also sought to play on the fears around Brexit and London's future, suggesting the move by TfL — and backed by the city's Mayor Sadiq Khan to whom TfL is accountable — showed the city was "closed to innovative companies."

While London was far from the first city to crack down on Uber — the app cannot operate in Spain, and it has pulled out of Hungary due to legislation introduced last year — the narrative that Uber had put out suggested a number of things: that this was a matter of lobbying by London's influential black cab sector, which has long protested the entry of the taxi-app into the city.

With fares particularly for long distance, cross city trips considerably lower, and with a far lower bar for entry compared to the black cabs (whose ardu-

ous journey to pass The Knowledge, which every black cabbie must go through has even been documented in a 1979 film), Uber appeared to pose an existential threat to Britain's famous black cab industry. The narrative also sought to spin the move as one against multicultural London. Figures published by TfL earlier this year reveals that while 67.6% of taxi drivers identified as white British in London and the surrounding suburban regions, just 6% of drivers of private hire vehicles (into which category Uber falls) identified as such, with 3,280 (out of over 117,000) identifying as of Indian origin. Was the move by TfL a rebuff to multicultural London and a protection of the status quo, the frozen in time black cab lobby? Some even argued the ban was a blow for immigrant passengers, suggesting that many, including women with headscarves, had a far higher chance of hailing an Uber than they did a black cab. There can be little doubt that race and Britishness is implicit in some of the criticism of Uber, including from parts of the black cab lobby: while direct reference to the background of the drivers themselves is rarely made, much of the campaigning has been around the angle of safety, playing on unspoken prejudices. In other cases, the "British-

ness" of the black cab as an institution has been emphasised by some critics. Tommy Robinson, a former leader of the far right English Defence League, was among those to take to Twitter in the wake of the ban to link Uber to immigration. "Would London be trying to ban Uber if its drivers were white and English?" asked Human Rights Watch's Executive Director on Twitter, linking to a New York Times article that focussed on the immigrant angle of the row.

However, to suggest this were the case is to ignore the long running complex relationship between London and the company which has been operating in the city since 2012. The relationship has been marked with tensions right from the start, characterised by Uber's attempts to stall London's efforts to step up regulation, for instance. Proposals to toughen up the regulation were significantly watered down, partly thanks to lobbying from former senior cabinet members, and, as emails seen by the Financial Times revealed, TfL's annoyance with the degree to which Uber appeared to take it for granted. The safety concerns were well known too: in August, The Times obtained a letter from a senior police officer raising questions about Uber's strategy for reporting sex attacks

and other serious crimes, with one case involving a driver who went on to commit a more serious attack, after being kept on by Uber even after they had been reported to the company.

Uber is not the first minicab company with which TfL has played hard ball. Several years ago TfL fought back at attempts by Addison Lee, a premier minicab company that once dominated the London scene, to allow minicabs to travel in the bus lane, all the way up to the European Court of Justice.

There is, as some noted in the wake of the Uber ban, a certain irony in the company bemoaning the fate of the drivers when it had spent much time and resources attempting to distance itself from them: last year it lost the right to treat the drivers as self-employed, which had till then enabled them to be exempted from rules around minimum wage pay, holiday pay, among other things. Conversations with drivers ahead of the ban would have revealed the mixed picture that Uber presented to them: while many were grateful to have had the opportunity to move away from traditional minicab firms, that often gave them little flexibility over hours or other means of employment, the earnings potential was very limited, as was their potential

for flexibility in the role. Concerns about the gig economy (an economy centred around individuals doing individually paid, odd jobs) have been present in Britain as much as they have elsewhere. A report earlier this year by a parliamentary committee warned that some companies were using "self-employed workforces as cheap labour," to excuse them from responsibilities towards their workers and other liabilities, with implications for the individual and beyond. "The ease with which companies are able to classify their workforces as self-employed both fails to protect workers from exploitation, and potentially increases strain on the welfare state." However, many attempts to regulate it have fallen to individual or union campaigns, such as a recent victory scored by workers at London's SOAS, where passionate campaigning by workers and students led to the university bringing work that had been outsourced in-house, thereby making some of the lowest paid workers entitled to the benefits available to others.

Unsurprisingly, Uber has attempted to distance itself from claims that it was part of the gig economy, insisting it was a "powerful" piece of technology that gave drivers access to passengers, in a recent appeal hearing related to the case.

However, it is far from the only controversy it is in the midst of: public interest barrister Jolyon Maughan has initiated proceedings against the company alleging it is undercharging VAT on the taxi services it offers. His public fundraising campaign to pursue the case has exceeded its fundraising target of £100,000. "What is anti-business is allowing resentment to build against businesses who raise a metaphorical middle finger to society," he tweeted following Uber's scathing criticism of TfL that followed the ban.

September 30, the date when Uber's licence theoretically expired, has passed uneventfully. While some drivers are fearful of the future, in London there seems to be a certain level of confidence that the ban is unlikely to be the end of the story, particularly with some concessions from Uber, for example on Greybull, the software used by the company which TfL warned could be used to "stop regulatory bodies from gaining full access to the app and prevent officials from undertaking regulatory or law enforcement duties." However, there are far wider questions that remain, particularly around how governments and public bodies deal with the opportunities and challenges thrown up by technology and so-called innovation.

India eyes airport in Sri Lanka, near Chinese Belt and Road outpost

India is in advanced talks with Sri Lanka to operate an airport on the southern tip of the island, where China has invested heavily as part of its Belt and Road initiative, a Sri Lankan minister said.

Sri Lanka's civil aviation minister, Nimal Siripala, said the country had been looking for alternative investors in the Hambantota area, where China has built a seaport and is in discussions to build an investment zone and a refinery.

"It was during this time India came up with a proposal," Siripala said Monday. "They were ready for a joint venture with the Airport and Aviation Services Limited," he said, referring to the state-run company that runs Sri Lanka's main airport in the capital Colombo and the one in the south, in Mattala.

The town of Hambantota sits near one of the world's busiest shipping lanes and is an important part of the Belt and Road initiative, aimed at building trade and transport links across Asia and beyond to Europe.

China runs the seaport with a 99-year

lease and was planning to expand its footprint in the area with the refinery, which would be Sri Lanka's largest, and an investment zone of about 6,000 hectares (15,000 acres).

Beijing's projects, backed by loans extended by the Chinese government and initiated by a previous Sri Lankan government, have faced widespread opposition in Sri Lanka.

Local residents facing eviction to make way for the projects have staged numerous protests. Other critics say the Sri Lankan government signed up for unnecessary and loss-making projects, pushing the country into long-term indebtedness.

India has offered to set up a joint venture with Sri Lanka to manage and expand facilities at the loss-making Mattala airport, which sits adjacent to the Hambantota seaport, according to Siripala and an Indian government source, who requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

There was no immediate response from the Indian foreign ministry to a request for comment on the airport deal.



The initial investment would be \$293 million, of which India will provide 70% on a 40-year lease, according to a Sri Lankan cabinet paper reviewed by Reuters that details the Indian plan to make the airport viable.

The airport, built at a cost of \$253 million by China, which also provided \$230 million of funding, gets one flight a day, from Dubai, and has been dubbed the world's emptiest airport for its long, empty corridors.

The Indian government source said India had proposed establishing a flying school and a maintenance hub at Mattala to boost airport revenues while it builds up traffic. There are also hopes the airport could be a destination for Indian tourists.

"We are trying for a large integration of the Sri Lankan and Indian eco-systems, we want to boost tourism in our two countries," the source said.

China said it was not aware that Sri

Lanka was considering allowing India to manage the airport. China also put in a bid to operate the facility, but the two sides failed to agree on financial terms.

"China hopes the relevant country does more to play a constructive role in increasing mutual trust and cooperation between nations in the region and promoting regional peace, stability and development," the Chinese foreign ministry said in response to an email request for comment.

OLD BONDS

India and Sri Lanka have centuries-old ethnic and cultural bonds, but these frayed amid New Delhi's support for Sri Lanka's Tamil minority during the island's 26-year civil war, which ended in 2009.

China was among the first countries that stepped in to help in the post-war reconstruction of Sri Lanka, building roads, power stations and ports.

By 2014, Chinese navy submarines were also docking in Colombo, raising alarm in New Delhi and prompting a push by the administration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to claw back

influence in the region.

The Indian source said New Delhi would allow Sri Lanka to determine the size of the Indian stake in the airport venture and whether it would involve state or private companies.

However, some opposition groups are concerned that turning to India is equally fraught with risk.

Dullas Alahapperuma, an opposition member of parliament, said the government was making a mistake by handing over national assets to China and India in Hambantota.

"In the end, there could be dangerous consequences," he said.

On Tuesday, police detained three opposition MPs protesting in Hambantota against the airport lease plan. The three included Namal Rajapaksa, the son of Mahinda Rajapaksa, the former president who signed the construction deal with China.

Siripala, the aviation minister, said any deal to give India the right to manage the airport was purely commercial and would not compromise Sri Lanka's security interests.

Amit Shah defends son, says there is no question of corruption in Jay's company

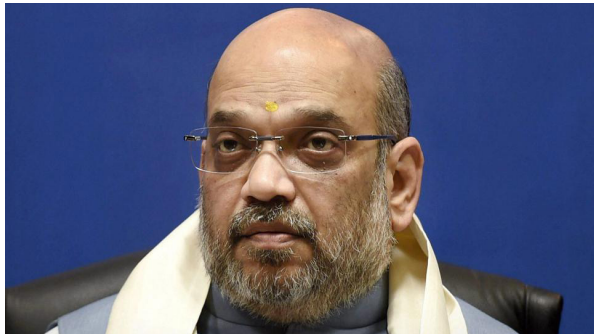
Bharatiya Janata Party national president Amit Shah said on Friday there was no question of corruption in his son Jay's company and it had not received government land or contract worth even a rupee.

He was referring to a report in the news portal The Wire, which claimed that Jay's business fortunes zoomed after the BJP came to power in 2014.

The BJP president also hit out at the Congress, saying it did not file a defamation suit despite facing several corruption charges while his son Jay Shah has moved the court over the allegations against him.

"The question of corruption does not arise (in Jay's company)," Shah said in response to a question on the report.

"I want to raise some questions here. Congress has faced many allegations of corruption. Have they ever filed a criminal defamation or a Rs 100 crore civil defamation suit.



Why could they not gather the courage to file such a suit?" Shah asked at a programme organised by Aaj Tak channel here.

Jay, he said, has filed a defamation suit and asked for an inquiry (by approaching the court) as had the BJP.

"As far as the company is concerned, it has not done business worth a rupee with the government. It has not got government land worth a rupee, it has not got any government contract worth even a rupee.

"The company has not taken commission like in the

case of Bofors," Shah said, referring to Bofors gun pay-off scandal that had rocked the then Congress government in the 1990s.

The company, he added, dealt in commodities like rice and millets.

"They are saying that the turnover of the company was Rs 80 crore, but they are not showing that it incurred a loss of Rs 1.5 crore. This is a high volume low profit business. Where is money laundering in it?" Shah asked.

Replying to a query on the loan given to the company, Shah said, "You have to un-

derstand first that it was not a loan, but a letter of credit. We were given credit to lift material against cash deposits. Jay's cash was lying in the bank and we have paid the loan with interest."

The Congress has demanded a judicial inquiry into the matter and removal of Amit Shah as BJP president.

The BJP has rejected the charges against its chief's son, who has termed the report "false, derogatory and defamatory."

On October 9, he filed a criminal defamation suit in a metropolitan court in Ahmedabad against seven respondents, including the author of the article and editor of The Wire.

The Congress raked up the issue during its recent campaigns in Gujarat, where elections are due in December.

Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi repeatedly raised the issue during his roadshow in the state.

Darjeeling: Police officer shot dead in clashes with Bimal Gurung's supporters

An assistant sub-inspector was shot dead on Friday morning as police raided a forest to catch Bimal Gurung, the leader of Gorkha Janmukti Morcha who is wanted by the Bengal government over deadly clashes and a 104-day shutdown that crippled the Darjeeling region this summer.

Gurung's GJM has been demanding a separate Gorkha state, and an unrest that flared on June 8 has till now claimed the lives of 13 people. The last death was on August 31 of a protester in a rally in Darjeeling.

The clashes began inside a forest at Lapchey Bustee, about 20 km from Darjeeling town. Unconfirmed reports said a few more people could have died in the clashes.

According to police sources, the person confirmed dead was Amitabha Mullick.

GJM is an ally of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

In addition to clashes with police, its members forced a



urged the hill people to hit the roads in lakhs on that day. "If I need to die, I will do so before the people," Gurung said.

Gurung's announcement came in the wake of the Centre's move to discuss the state of affairs in the Darjeeling hills. The state government, too, is supposed to hold the bilateral meeting at the state secretariat on October 16.

104-day shutdown in the hill region that crippled the local economy that relies heavily on the summer tourism.

The strike ended 16 days ago but the state government has not relented efforts to catch Gurung, who has been charged under laws relating to terrorism.

Acting on intelligence that he may be hiding in the forest near Lapchey Bustee below Patleybas, the headquarters of the GJM, a police contingent raided the spot.

Clashes began around 5 am and continued till last reports came in at 10:00 am. Sources said a GJM supporter was also wounded.

Earlier, police believed Gurung was hiding in Sikkim for a large part of the 104-day-long bandh that started on June 15.

Friday's clashes threaten a fragile peace in the region.

On Thursday night, Gurung told the local media that he will appear before his supporters on October 30, and

The state government has already appointed Binoy Tamang and Anit Thapa, two leaders expelled from the GJM, as the chairman and vice chairman of board of administrators in the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA), the semi-autonomous body to run the affairs in the hills.

There is a virtual split in the GJM with Binay Tamang leading a faction that is backed by the state government. Gurung leads the other faction.

For Congress and BJP, road to Lok Sabha win may be through Himachal Pradesh

The upcoming assembly election in Himachal Pradesh holds immense political significance for the Congress as well as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Though Himachal Pradesh is a small state that does not wield much influence over national politics, it currently happens to be one of the two territorial entities in the country (the other being Gujarat) that will indicate which way the 2019 Lok Sabha polls are likely to turn.

The Congress ruled the state for three continuous terms from 1963 to 1977, until Shanta Kumar of the Janata Party broke its monopoly to form the first non-Congress government in Shimla. Since then, the pendulum of power in Himachal Pradesh has been swinging between the Congress and the BJP.

In order to make a comeback in the hills, the saffron party is cashing in on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's supposed charisma and the various schemes rolled out during his three-year rule at the Centre.

Modi, who has served as its party in-charge for state affairs in the years gone by, repeatedly visited Himachal to bolster the BJP poll campaign. National president Amit Shah also focused on improving the party's political prospects by holding a series of rallies, meetings and conventions in the hill state.

The Himachal polls may well be the litmus test for Shah's organisa-



tional skills. He has succeeded in keeping intra-party squabbles among ambitious leaders at bay thus far.

The party is yet to announce its chief ministerial face in Himachal Pradesh, although veteran leaders such as Prem Kumar Dhumal, Jagat Parkash Nadda and Shanta Kumar have made covert attempts to project themselves as prominent choices.

It may be recalled that the party had lost in 2012 – scoring just 26 in the 68-member legislative assembly – primarily due to the factional fight between Dhumal and Shanta Kumar. It faced rebellion in as many as 18 seats, and two made it to the assembly as independent candidates. The party's vote share had slumped by 5% in the previous election.

Harish Thakur, head of the political science department at the Hi-

machal Pradesh University, gave credence to the idea that the state polls are crucial from a national point of view. "Besides judging the performance of the state government, voters will also evaluate the gap between the promises made by the Narendra Modi government and what was eventually delivered," he said.

Meanwhile, a troubled Congress is counting on its old war horse – six-time chief minister Virbhadra Singh – despite the corruption and disproportionate assets cases that are bearing him down.

Modi has himself attacked Virbhadra for corruption and "misrule", and the harried Congress leader will find emerging successful difficult with so much time wasted shuttling between Delhi and Shimla in connection with his cases.

This time, Virbhadra also faces a challenge from within. State party chief Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has managed to cling on to the post despite stiff opposition from the veteran leader. Infighting between the two reached a point where Virbhadra threatened to stay away from election campaigning unless Sukhu was brought to heel. Wary of losing such an influential leader, the party leadership stepped up efforts to placate him.

However, it would be premature of the BJP to believe that the battle is already won. A veteran of many political upheavals, Virbhadra's ability to fight back has been his biggest strength in a career spanning over 50 years. Virbhadra, a scion of the Bushar royal family, is keen on passing his political legacy to his son – state Youth Congress chief Vikramaditya Singh – this time around. At 84, Singh may be contesting the assembly elections for the last time.

While the Congress is facing anti-incumbency, the BJP is concerned by public distress over factors like inflation, demonetisation and economic disruption due to the newly introduced Goods and Services Tax.

Himachal Pradesh has always witnessed bipolar politics. Though 2008 seemed like it could be an exception, with the Bahujan Samaj Party entering the state in a big way, it ended up winning just one seat. Its lone legislator, Sanjay Chaudhary, later joined the BJP.

Congress' DNA reeks of corruption: BJP slams party over solar scam in Kerala

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday bashed the Congress over the solar scam and said that the 'whole DNA of Congress reeks of corruption.'

Addressing the media here, Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said that taking measures against corruption has never been a part of the DNA of Congress, adding that the opposition party leaders, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, have done nothing to curb the never-ending corruption in the party.

Speaking about the solar scam, Ravi Shankar Prasad said that the commission that was set up by Congress leader Oommen Chandy, found only him guilty of the scam.

"Many other Congress leaders were also found guilty in the scam," Prasad said.

He added that the BJP demands a proper, fair and time-bound inquiry be done in the Kerala solar scam case. "The United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government has corruption inscribed in all its elements. First, there was the 2G Spectrum scam, then the Common Wealth and Adarsh Scam also happened," he added. "It has been three years since our government came to power, and not even one case of corruption has come forward. But the previous government's scams have still not ended," said Ravi Shankar Prasad.

Ravi Shankar Prasad has alleged that another Rs. 600 crore scam in Uttarakhand has come forward against the Congress.

Chandy and his staff members - Tenny Joppen, Jikkumon Jacob, and gunman Salim Raj - had allegedly helped the prime accused in the solar scam, Saritha S. Nair and Biju



Radhakrishnan, cheat the clients.

On October 11, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan directed an enquiry against former chief minister Oommen Chandy and others in connection with the case.

The chief minister's directive came days after the Commission headed by Justice G. Sivarajan, which probed the multi-crore scam, submitted its final report to him.

The case relates to swindling of lakhs from several people by Saritha S Nair and her live-in partner Biju Radhakrishnan after promising to set up solar panels. They were business partners of Team Solar Renewable Energy Solutions Private Limited, a Kochi based firm.

Radhakrishnan is another accused in the case. They were arrested in October 2013 and in December 2016. The Judicial Magistrate Court in Perumbavoor had sentenced the duo to three years in prison and a fine of Rs. 10,000 each. During investigation, the former chief minister and some of his cabinet colleagues were accused of taking a huge sum of money as a part of the deal. Chandy had deposed before the Commission in December 2016, saying that the charges against him were politically motivated.

MANY PROSTATE CANCER PATIENTS UNSURE ABOUT DIFFERENCES IN TREATMENT OPTIONS

Many patients with localized prostate cancer don't understand the differences between their treatment options, a new study suggests.

"Prostate cancer is the most common male cancer in Western Europe, but this study shows that men facing treatment have a poor understanding of how their treatment decision will affect their lives," Marie-Anne Van Stam of the University Medical Center Utrecht in the Netherlands

told Reuters Health in an email interview. "This means that they are often not able to understand the differences in outcomes and side effects among the different treatment options, and end up making decisions on instinct."

Options for treating prostate cancer that hasn't spread include removal of the prostate gland, radiation therapy and active surveillance, in which doctors monitor the cancer but don't treat it unless it grows.

While radical prostatectomy is the most invasive approach, it does not reduce the risk of disease recurrence compared to radiation therapy. Patients who undergo surgical treatment face a higher risk of urinary incontinence and erectile dysfunction, while radiation treatment is associated with bowel and urinary problems, the researchers note in the journal *BJU International*.

Van Stam and her team analyzed questionnaires completed by 474 prostate cancer patients who had just received information about their treatment options from a urologist. Just over one-third of the patients were aware that cancer recurrence was just as likely with surgery as with radiation, while 39 percent were aware that prostatectomy increased the risk of incontinence. Twenty percent knew that 10-year mortality is similar with active surveillance, radiation and surgery. Forty-five percent of the survey



respondents thought that patients on active surveillance always wound up receiving radiation or therapy later on. In fact, according to Van Stam, only half of patients on active surveillance require definitive treatment. Patients who spoke to a nurse specialist or radiotherapist in addition to the urologist had a better understanding of the differences between treatments. "This finding encourages the incorporation of a nurse specialist and/or multidisciplinary consults in routine care," Van Stam said.

"We don't expect patients to become experts in prostate cancer, this is a once in a lifetime thing for them," she added. "So the facts need to come from clinicians. However, we note for example that almost no clinical guidelines include a clear overview of the differences in the risks of side effects among treatment, or sections on communicating with patients, and this needs to change."

INDIAN GIRL DIES AFTER EATING PANCAKE

In a strange incident, a nine-year-old Indian girl died from an allergic reaction after taking a single bite of a pancake, made by her father in Harrow, northwest London, according to a report published by *The Independent*. The girl, Nainika Tikoo, who was allergic to dairy, had reportedly asked her father, Vinod, to add blackberries to her dairy-free pancakes on May 20.

The girl had never tried the fruit before, and just after taking one bite of the blackberry pancake, she turned "completely blue" and collapsed. Even though her father immediately tried to treat her with an EpiPen and paramedics arrived

at her home within seven minutes of the incident, Nainika suffered a cardiac arrest.

The girl later died days after being admitted in hospital as her family took the decision to withdraw life support. According to the report, the girl's mother Lakshmi Kaul said her daughter's death was a "nightmare we will live and relive every single moment of our lives remaining."

"On a Just Giving page, set up to raise funds for allergy research after the incident, her mother wrote, "We knew she was allergic to dairy and she had asthma so we looked after that for the last 9 years. We had only one major incident in these 9 years with a few minor incidents intermittently."

97 Million Underweight Children Lived in India in 2016 Lancet Study

According to the latest study, published in the renowned journal *Lancet*, about 97 million underweight children lived in India in 2016. New findings reveal that, last year, India had the highest population of "moderate-to-severely" underweight children and young adults aged between 5-to-19 years in the past four decades. However, there was a decline in the number of underweight children from 24.4 per cent of girls and 39.3 per cent of boys in 1975 to 22.7 per cent and 30.7 per cent in 2016 respectively.

For the study, the team analysed weight and height measurements from nearly 130 million people aged over 5 (31.5 million people aged five to 19, and 97.4 million aged 20 and older) from 1975 to 2016. An estimated 192 million children were found to be moderately or severely underweight worldwide in 2016. Being underweight has been associated with a higher risk of infectious diseases. Researchers suggest that making healthy, nutritious food more available at home and school and creating regulations and taxes to protect children from unhealthy foods can help in dealing with this situation. While



blocks that help strengthen cells, break down food into energy, fight infection, and transport oxygen. Milk, eggs, soy, quinoa, buckwheat and chia seeds are some great sources of good quality complete proteins. They are the most

important source of energy for the body. They help your child use up the fat and protein for building and repairing body tissues. Add more complex carbs in their diet in the form of whole grains, fruits like bananas, starchy vegetables and dairy products. This mineral is essential for strengthening their bones and teeth during the growing phase. Of course, milk is the best way to get their daily dose of calcium but you can try some other foods too like ragi, chia seeds, green leafy vegetables, almonds and chickpeas. Iron helps in building blood that carries oxygen required by every cell in the body. It energizes your child from within and keeps him active. Fruits like pomegranate, apple, oranges, and peach are good sources of iron which your kids will like. Vitamin C not only helps in building your child's immunity and keeping infections away but it also heals internal wounds, builds bones and promotes blood flow. Broccoli,

tomatoes, mangoes, lemon, oranges and bell peppers contain high amounts of Vitamin C. Making your children understand the importance of a balanced diet can really help them in the long and keep them hale and hearty.

Stress, now the primary reason for cardiovascular ailments



While the negative impact of stress upon health is being widely emphasised to raise awareness, a report by ICICI Lombard has revealed that 64 percent of cardiologists feel that stress is the main cause of cardiovascular ailments. Moreover, 68 percent of doctors contend that any age group could be vulnerable to heart disease, it said. Financial issues, relationships, job,

health problems, societal pressures – the list of things in life that cause us stress are endless, but the fact remains that we are always under pressure, which can lead to further health problems, sometimes even death. The study steers off the traditional path by contradicting popular belief that improper diet and lack of exercise are responsible for heart disease. The study,

which was conducted among 50 cardiologists, also revealed that age was not a determining factor with 68 percent of doctors contending that any age group could be vulnerable to heart disease. Generally, people think that the 41-50 age group is most susceptible to cardiac ailments. Among other findings, 74 percent of doctors said heart disease could affect people

with any body type, while most people thought only the overweight were vulnerable. Cardiologists said 'high cholesterol' foods were the primary cause of heart disease, and not oily and fatty foods as people would think.

According to doctors, extreme fatigue in males and chest pain in females are the symptoms to look out for in a possible heart attack.

The cardiologists are unanimous in their view that those who exercise regularly are less vulnerable to heart disease, though 86 percent said men were more susceptible than women, it noted. Interestingly, the doctors more or less concurred that residents of Mumbai and Delhi were more prone to cardiac conditions than their counterparts in other cities – underscoring the fact that stress brought on by a hectic lifestyle was chiefly responsible for heart disease.

"The growing incidence of heart disease among the young and middle-aged is a wake-up call for people to take charge of their health by making small changes in their day-to-day habits and lessen the risk of heart ailments," said Sanjay Datta, chief underwriting claims and reinsurance, ICICI Lombard. Among other findings, the report said 62 percent of cardiologists believe 20-25 years to be the ideal age for buying health insurance and an average coverage of Rs 4.15 lakh for heart-related diseases.

Mental Illness Awareness Week: 5 Foods That Affect Your Mental Health



You may have heard that – you are what you eat and many health experts agree with this notion. The growing menace of mental health problems indicates that something is wrong – either with our lifestyle or with our diet. Your brain is constantly fed with nutrients or chemicals that you derive from what you eat and have a direct impact on its functioning. By shaping your diet, you can definitely improve your mental health. On the contrary, there are some foods that are known to trigger depression and anxiety and it helps to try and avoid them as much as you can. In the spirit of commemorating Mental Illness Awareness Week, here are five foods and ingredients that can wreak havoc with your mental health and you should be aware of. When you consume too much sugar your blood glucose levels shoot up and the levels of a certain

type of protein that controls the growth of neurons and synapses declines. This makes your brain work at a sub-optimal level, making it more vulnerable to trigger

depression. Alcohol is known to exacerbate the symptoms of depression and anxiety. Alcohol affects the working of the central nervous system which is responsible for processing information received through our five senses.

It is also a known fact that alcohol often acts as a depressant. Hydrogenated oils and saturated fats: Processed or packaged foods usually contain hydrogenated oils, saturated fats and trans fats. They may clog the arteries and block blood flow to the brain, thus affecting the way it functions. Foods with High Sodium: Extra sodium in your body can affect your neurological system and.

BEING FARSIGHTED COULD BE AFFECTING CHILDREN'S EARLY LEARNING



US research has found that preschoolers and kindergartners who are farsighted could be at risk of falling behind at school due to the condition affecting their concentration. Carried out by researchers from the Ohio State University, the team looked at 244 children with moderate farsightedness and 248 children with normal vision.

The children were tested to evaluate their attention, visual perception and the ability to integrate visual perception and motor skills. The results showed that the children who were moderately farsighted – which was determined using eye exams at the start of the study – were significantly more likely to have poorer scores on the attention-related tests. Although some of the children were able

to focus their eyes and make up for their farsightedness, others were not, and therefore struggled to see close-up. This led to lower scores on tests of visual attention (the ability to zero in on some visual stimuli and ignore others), visual perception, and visual-motor integration (eye-hand coordination or copying skills). Although an estimated 4 to 14 percent of preschoolers have moderate farsightedness, also known as hyperopia, glasses aren't always recommended for the condition as some believe vision correction isn't the right option for children of this age. However Marjean Taylor Kulp, one of the authors of the study, commented that the results add to the growing evidence that farsightedness could be affecting learning.

MERU CABS TERMS UBER, OLA 'UNIFIED MONOPOLY', MOVES COMPETITION PANEL SOFTBANK'S FUNDING IN FIRING LINE

New Delhi: Indian taxi company Meru Cabs has stepped up its legal challenge against local competitor Ola and US rival Uber, alleging the firms are abusing their market position, and believes that planned investments in both by Japan's SoftBank underscore its view.

The head of Meru Cabs said the company has filed four new complaints with the country's antitrust watchdog, claiming that Uber and Ola are abusing their dominance in four different cities by burning vast sums of investor funds to distort the market.

"Even before there is any merger or alliance between the two through global investors, there is already a unified monopoly," Meru's CEO Nilesh Sangoi said.

Though Meru lost an earlier antitrust suit versus Ola, lawyers and industry sources said that moves by SoftBank - already a major investor in Ola - to pour some \$10 billion into Uber along with other investors could strengthen the local cab service's case.

Sangoi told Reuters that Uber and Ola have been altering driver incentives and passenger fares in tandem. "Our existing cases get strengthened" with the SoftBank investment, he said, but



added the Japanese firm's plans weren't cited in the latest complaints. Ola, Uber and SoftBank declined to comment for this article. The new Meru complaints have not previously been reported. Ola on Wednesday said it has raised \$1.1

billion from investors led by China's Tencent Holdings and SoftBank.

Ola operates in over 100 Indian cities and Uber in about 30, and both firms have burnt millions of dollars to lure riders and drivers in a bid to outdo each

other. Meru was the only major organized player until a few years ago and currently operates in 24 cities. But it has no direct backing of large foreign investors and it has previously filed anti-competitive cases against Uber and Ola.

In July, the Competition Case of India (CCI) ruled against Meru on its allegations that Ola was abusing its dominance in Bengaluru city's taxi market. It ruled Uber too was a significant market player and there was no concept in current law to establish collective dominance of companies. A Meru source said a SoftBank investment in both Uber and Ola may change that scenario.

Mohit Saraf, a senior partner at Indian law firm Luthra & Luthra, said while SoftBank's Uber investment would spark antitrust issues in India, the CCI would need to assess whether Uber and Ola dominate the overall taxi market which is replete with local operators of yellow-and-black coloured cabs. Another source aware of the legal challenges said the CCI would need to delve into how much control SoftBank has at Ola and Uber, if the deal goes through, and the extent to which the Japanese firm has a say in their operations.

The antitrust cases in India, nevertheless, are set to further intensify the showdown between ride-hailing firms and local players in India's \$12 billion taxi market. Uber is already bogged down by anti-monopoly concerns in neighbouring China, where the commerce minis-

try last year began investigating its deal with Didi Chuxing that created a roughly \$35 billion giant dominating the China car-hailing market. Chinese media in July said the probe was ongoing. Softbank's ride hailing plans

SoftBank is poised to take two board seats at Uber should plans succeed to buy up shares from both existing investors and current and former employees in the coming weeks.

People close to the firm are divided on whether SoftBank wants to consolidate rivals or simply cross-pollinate lessons'

among the group. SoftBank aims to do one or the other, said an Uber investor who has held discussions with SoftBank. SoftBank has previously failed to consolidate investments in India with its attempt to fold Snapdeal into Flipkart earlier this year falling'

apart in July. SoftBank Vision Fund CEO Rajeev Misra recently told India's Economic Times he hopes'

"to make peace" between Uber and Ola in the country. A Singapore-based banker said SoftBank was playing a "high risk strategy" which could turn out to be very profitable if it works out. "The losers will be the old-style cab companies."

FEDERAL RESERVE POLICYMAKERS' DIVIDE WIDENED OVER INFLATION AT SEPT MEET



Washington : Federal Reserve policymakers had a prolonged debate about the prospects of a pickup in inflation and slowing the path of future interest rate rises if it did not, according to the minutes of the U.S. central bank's last policy meeting on Sept. 19-20 released on Wednesday.

The readout of the meeting, at which the Fed announced it would begin this month to reduce its large bond portfolio mostly amassed following the financial crisis and unanimously voted to hold rates steady, also showed that officials remained mostly sanguine about the economic impact of recent hurricanes.

"Many participants expressed concern that the low inflation readings

this year might reflect... the influence of developments that could prove more persistent, and it was noted that some patience in removing policy accommodation while assessing trends in inflation was warranted," the Fed said in the minutes.

As such several said that they would focus on incoming inflation data over the next few months when deciding on future interest rate moves. Nevertheless, many policymakers still felt that another rate increase this year "was likely to be warranted," the Fed said. U.S. stocks and yields on U.S. Treasuries were little changed following the release of the minutes. Fed Chair Janet Yellen has repeatedly acknowledged since the meeting that

there is rising uncertainty on the path of inflation, which has been retreating from the Fed's 2 percent target rate over the past few months. However, Yellen and a number of other key policymakers have made plain they expect to continue to gradually raise interest rates given the strength of the overall economy and continued tightening of the labour market. "The majority of Fed officials are worried that core inflation might not rebound quickly, but that isn't going to stop them from continuing to normalise interest rates, particularly not when the unemployment rate is getting so low," said Paul Ashworth, an economist at Capital Economics. The call to not lose faith in gradual rate rises was echoed on Wednesday by two Fed policymakers. Kansas City Fed President Esther George urged her colleagues to be less fixated on the 2 percent inflation target and argued further rate hikes are necessary to ward off unwanted inflationary pressures.

"Low inflation, in itself, is not a problem in an economy that is growing and operating at full employment," George said. Likewise, the San Francisco Fed's John Williams said that low unemployment also made him believe inflation was likely to move back to the Fed's target. In the minutes, several Fed officials noted that the

interpretation of inflation readings over the next few months would likely be complicated by a temporary increase in energy costs and prices of other items affected by storm-related disruptions.

The central bank has increased interest rates four times in its tightening cycle which began in late 2015. The Fed currently predicts one more rate rise this year and three the next. Fed officials have also largely shrugged off a weak jobs report for September that came out last week,

pinning the decline in employment on Hurricanes Harvey and Irma temporarily displacing workers. Policymakers anticipated a weak reading, according to the minutes, but felt the recent storms would not knock the economy over the medium term. Underlying detail in the monthly payrolls snapshot pointed to tight labour markets boosting wages.

Annual wage growth accelerated to 2.9 percent while the unemployment rate fell to a more than 16-1/2-year low of 4.2 percent.

The annual increase in wages in September was the largest since December 2016 and the unemployment rate is now below the Fed's median average forecast for the fourth quarter. That could give heart to policymakers who had mainly forecast that the tight labour market would soon boost wages.

Vistara kicks off Diwali sale, offers flight tickets starting from Rs 1,149 for economy



New Delhi : If you don't cash in on the festive period, are you even a legit business? Almost every company that has an online presence is offering deals and discounts. So, how can airlines fall behind? Announcing their sale for Diwali, Festival of Flights Sale, Vistara is offering airline tickets for as less as Rs 1,149 for the economy class on select routes.

The sale has live today and will continue till Friday, October 13. If you are planning to book in the next two days, you can avail cheaper tickets for up till March next year. The sale covers routes to and from major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Kolkata and to and from smaller destinations like Leh, Guwahati, Bhubaneswar, Jammu, Srinagar and Kochi. Vistara has listed the prices of some routes on its website and mentions that the fares are 'all-inclusive'. The cheapest route for economy class listed by Vistara is from Jammu to Srinagar, which is Rs 1,149, while Delhi to Chandigarh is Rs

1,199. Delhi to Leh is Rs 2,099 and Delhi to Goa is Rs 2,999. As for the premium class, Jammu to Srinagar is Rs 2,099, Delhi to Chandigarh is Rs 2,599, Delhi to Leh is Rs 4,199 and Delhi to Goa is Rs 4,999

To avail cheap prices, one will have to book the ticket at least 15 days in advance. Once the seats are sold out, the fares will go back to the normal rates.

However, a report in Mint mentions that airlines have slashed their prices owing to low demands. The report mentions that usually, people flying to different cities to be with family and friends during Diwali means that airlines see a spike in sales. Somehow, this year it has been the other way around.

Flight rates have dropped by 40-50 per cent. Even online travel companies like MakeMyTrip are offering tickets on reduced prices. MakeMyTrip co-founder Keyur Joshi tells Mint that aviation is the bellwether of the economy and low fares during festive season is a sign of a general slowdown.

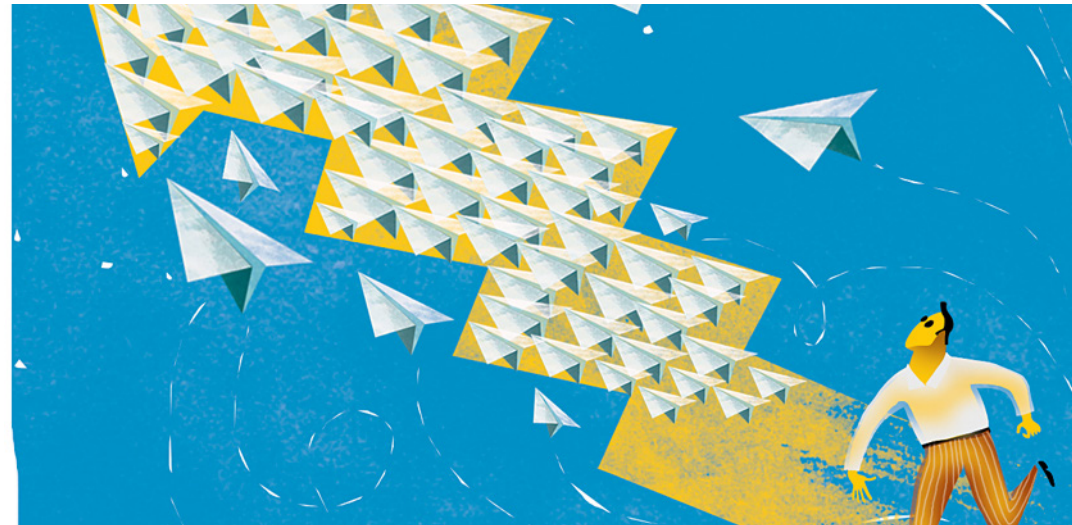
India to send three lakh youths to Japan for industrial job training



India to send three lakh youths to Japan for industrial job training, informed Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Petroleum. (File Photo) India to send three lakh youths to Japan for industrial job training, informed Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Petroleum. (File Photo) India will send three lakh youths to Japan as part of a bilateral technical training programme, announced Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan. Pradhan informed the media that Indian recruits will receive training in Japan for a period of three to five years. "The trainees will be provided with accommodation and job opportunities in Japan," added Pradhan. According to the plans of the BJP-led central government three lakh youths will be sent for on-job training for 3-5 years as part of government's skill development programme. He added, "The financial costing of the skill training if Indian technical interns will be taken care by Japan." A Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between

How to get the mojo back Here's a plan to double Indian exports and get it up to a trillion dollars in five years

New Delhi: When Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with his Economic Advisory Council for the first time yesterday, reversing the current economic slowdown was top of the agenda. A surge in demand for products and services would be a certain cure for most of the Indian economy's current afflictions: low capacity utilisation, low investments, low production, low job creation or low GDP growth rate. And there is no better way to pump up demand than catering to orders from all over the world. India can target an export turnover of a trillion dollars by 2022, up from the current \$440 billion. Meeting this target will need taking seven steps. One: Promote manufacturing of products the world buys most - bulk drugs, organic chemicals, engineering, electronic and telecom equipment, and so on. For this, the government would need to announce sector specific incentives and tax breaks and then rope in an anchor firm for each product group. Anchor firms kick-start operations and achieve high growth using their global network and money. They also persuade others to join the network. Also promote textiles, leather and other labour-intensive products where manufacturing is shifting from China to lower cost countries. A manufacturing push will also help



in diversification and growth of the services sector, which today is mainly the story of IT services exported to the US and EU.

Two: Invest in Global Value Chains (GVC) ready trade infrastructure. India does not produce electronic, telecom and high-tech products as its port-customs infrastructure does not guarantee quick entry and exit of goods. This is critical as parts and sub-assemblies of such products are manufactured in many countries and delay in shipment at one port disrupts manufacturing schedule in another country. To improve, India needs to automate port and

customs operations and allow green channel clearances for most consignments. Match the turnaround time of ships with the best global parameters. This will shorten queues, ensure quicker transactions and allow better use of infrastructure. India must also set up a new online platform for processing all regulatory and commercial requirements of exporters. The platform should allow exporters to file all information/documents online doing away with the need to deal with customs, DGFT, shipping companies, sea and airports, and banks separately. Three: Focus on improving product qual-

ity. Many Indian products fail quality tests due to traces of pesticides, pathogens, illegal dyes, etc. India needs to redesign its quality infrastructure to help firms move to higher quality standards and protect the country from substandard imports. Institutions responsible for developing standards, setting guidelines for inspection, testing and quality certification must adopt global best practices. We also need to set up more globally accredited testing laboratories, enhance the capacity of Indian testing laboratories and sign Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRA) with partner

countries for accepting each other's products. India's agriculture exports will gain most with these measures. Four:

Reduce cost differentials. Indian exporters pay 5% extra on domestic transport, 5% extra on capital, 2% extra due to working capital blockage caused by GST, and 3-5% extra due to higher Real Effective Exchange Rate (REER). This 15% extra compared to developed country counterparts makes Indian products less competitive. Government meets part of the cost disability through the export schemes which also need recast to conform to WTO norms. The biggest current worry is 'GSTN' glitches that threaten to block the refund of GST paid for next many months. A reduction in cost disability and resolution of GST issues will set exports on the growth track. Five: Protect interests of exporters in foreign markets. India has 500+ USFDA approved pharmaceutical units,

yet Indian drug quality is always ridiculed and suspected. Big Pharma pushes the US government to apply the harshest possible measures to discourage entry of pharmaceutical products from India. Even high-quality products from India face routine rejection in China and many other countries.

Pakistan hope to subdue rejuvenated Sri Lanka in ODI rubber

DUBAI: Pakistan are counting on a change in format and players to overcome a resurgent Sri Lanka in the five-match One-day International series starting here at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Friday.

Pakistan were upset 2-0 in the preceding Test series but they are hoping to change their fortunes and carry the limited-overs form which helped them win the eight-nation ICC Champions Trophy held in England in June this year.

They only have skipper Sarfraz Ahmed, batsmen Haris Sohail and Babar Azam and fast bowler Hasan Ali from the Test series, while experienced all-rounder Mohammad Hafeez and opener Ahmed Shehzad amongst the 11 who joined the squad. Wicketkeeper-batsman Sarfraz feels the pressure of losing his first Test series but promised a better performance in the limited-overs matches.

"Obviously, when you have a first Test series as captain, and you lose it, pressure will be there," said Sarfraz who played a match winning 61 not out against Sri Lanka in the Champions Trophy group match.

"But we will try and get out of that. Our ODI team is balanced and our record is very good. We will have some senior players returning and I hope we'll play better cricket."

Pakistan also have a young crop of fast emerging players in opener Fakhar Zaman — who hit a century in the Champions Trophy final against India — leg-spinner Shadab Khan, all-rounders Imad Wasim and Faheem Ashraf, and pacers Rumman Raees, Junaid Khan and Usman Shinwari. Their pace spearhead Mohammad Amir was ruled out of the series with a



shin injury sustained in the second Test in Dubai.

Pakistan's loss in the Test series was their first in the UAE in 10

attempts since they were forced to play at a neutral venue amidst security fears sparked after 2009 terrorists' attack on the Sri Lanka

team bus in Lahore. But their ODI record in the UAE has been abysmal, having lost nine of the 12 series since

2009, only winning twice against Sri Lanka and once against the West Indies.

Sri Lanka have come from wretched ODI form, having lost 16 of their last 21 games, winning four with one no result. That included a 5-0 whitewash against South Africa and India and first-ever series defeat against minnows Zimbabwe.

That defeat against India last month put pressure on skipper Upul Tharanga.

"We lacked consistency. We didn't bat, bowl or field well. We were outplayed by India. I am disappointed with our batting effort," said Tharanga whose team failed to reach 250 in any of the matches.

The remaining ODIs are in Abu Dhabi (Oct 16 and 18) and Sharjah (Oct 20 and 23). Teams (from):

PAKISTAN: Sarfraz Ahmed (captain), Ahmed Shehzad, Fakhar Zaman, Mohammad Hafeez, Babar Azam, Shoaib Malik, Imad Wasim, Shadab Khan, Faheem Ashraf, Hasan Ali, Usman Shinwari, Rumman Raees, Junaid Khan, Haris Sohail, Imam-ul-Haq

SRI LANKA: Upul Tharanga (captain), Dinesh Chandimal, Niroshan Dickwella,

Lahiru Thirimanne, Kusal Mendis, Milinda Siriwardana, Chamara Kapugedara, Thisara Perera, Seekuge Prasanna, Nuwan Pradeep, Suranga Lakmal, Dushmantha Chameera, Vishwa Fernando, Akila Dananjaya, Jeffrey Vandersay

Umpires: Sundaram Ravi (India) and Ahsan Raza (Pakistan)

TV umpire: Richard Kettleborough (England)

Match referee: Andy Pycroft (Zimbabwe).

India's Nehra retires from international cricket

NEW DELHI: Indian fast bowler Ashish Nehra on Thursday announced his retirement from international cricket and the Indian Premier League (IPL) after an injury-plagued career.

Nehra, 38, who is part of India's Twenty20 squad in the ongoing series against Australia, will bow out after the first T20 against New Zealand on Nov 1 at his home ground in New Delhi.

Nehra, who has suffered a series of injury problems and last played for India in February, said he wanted to go out on top and in front of his home fans. "It is always good to retire when people are asking why, rather than why not," he told reporters in Hyderabad ahead of the third T20 against



Australia on Friday.

"I have spoken to the team management as well as the chairman of

selection committee. It can't get bigger than getting to retire in front of your home fans where I played my

first Ranji Trophy game 20 years ago," he added.

India will host New Zealand for three ODIs and three T20 matches starting on Oct 22.

The left-arm quick has collected 157 ODI wickets plus 44 Test and 34 T20 scalps during his 18-year career, since making his debut in the five-day format in 1999.

The Delhi native was a vital part of India's 2003 World Cup campaign in South Africa, where the team ended up as runners-up to Australia.

He is best remembered for his figures of 6-23 against England at Durban during the 50-over tournament. Nehra was also a part of India's World Cup-winning squad in 2011.

England can't win Ashes without Stokes: Waugh

SYDNEY: Test great Steve Waugh says England can't win the Ashes without Ben Stokes and the bad boy all-rounder would have been dumped immediately if he was Australian.

England vice-captain Stokes was arrested last month in Britain on suspicion of causing actual bodily harm and suspended from internationals until further notice following an apparent fight outside a nightclub.

He was included in their Ashes squad but the England and Wales Cricket Board last week said he would not travel with the rest of the players when they leave on Oct 28. No final decision on his involvement has been made.

Former Australian captain Waugh, at the helm in 57 Tests for 41 victories, said England will not be the same threat without Stokes. "If he doesn't come, I don't think they can win the Ashes," Waugh told Sky Sports Radio late Tuesday.

While Stokes is yet to be charged, he remains under investigation, and Waugh hit out at England's failure to immediately drop him from the Ashes squad.



"I think if it was anyone in the Australian side, they wouldn't be picked. You can't do that these days in public. It just didn't look good and it's a bad image for the game," he said. "I think they [England selectors] are pretty keen for him to play in Australia... he's probably their best player, so it would be a real shame if he's not out here."

He is an explosive middle-order batsman and a dangerous right-arm fast medium bowler, and not being in Australia will pile more pressure on the likes of the experienced Stuart Broad and Jimmy Anderson.

"Without Ben Stokes, we'll win," said Waugh. "It's too much pressure on Broad and Anderson, and they're getting a bit older, and I can't see them playing five Test matches straight."

With focus on Ashes, did India tour come at a wrong time for Australia

HYDERABAD: As Travis Head sat for the pre-match press conference ahead of the T20I series decider, he faced a barrage of questions from Australian journalists — not on the match against India, but on the Ashes. So much so that the team media officer interrupted, saying, "Something on tomorrow's game too?"

The journalists' curiosity was understandable as much of the talk ahead of the T20I series, and the India tour in general, focused on how Australia are going to fare after this tour in the Ashes against England, starting November 23.

The team selection for the series also reflected the same sentiment. Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood were not rushed from injury rehab for the India tour. The former is currently playing in the JLT one-day Cup, Australia's domestic ODI competition, while the latter will play in the Sheffield Shield commencing on October 26.

Another fast bowler, Pat Cummins was also rested for the T20I series and will play three Sheffield Shield matches for New South Wales in the lead up to the Ashes.

Even captain Steve Smith will play in the Sheffield Shield after returning just ahead of the T20I series, due to a shoulder strain.

The Australian team doctor Richard Saw said an MRI scan "excluded serious injury". He went on to add that "the best course of action is for him to not continue to aggravate his shoulder and allow it to recover". With Australian team not risking any of their top players for this India tour, it clearly shows where their priority lies. Ex-Australian player and current selector-on-tour Mark Waugh, in an interview, perhaps explained his sentiment on the tour quite clearly.

"It's got to be said, it's not an ideal time to be away from Australia," Waugh told Sky Sports Radio on Thursday. "This series has been a bit spread out. It would have been better probably if it was a week or two shorter."

He, however, quickly added: "This one-day tournament and T20 tournament has been to about eight different places, so there's been a lot of travel. But they're (players) coping pretty well."

Even David Warner, who spoke about the tough schedule ahead of the second T20I in Guwahati, echoed a similar thought.

"I just know that when we are available, we are going to play. It's a very tough schedule as it is for every single country. You have basically got to pick and choose and decide when to rest your big player..."

It's quite hard as a player to understand why, but these things are put in place years in advance. That's why I play the game and not sitting there trying to administer everything," he said.

With teams focusing on their respective aims in terms of major series/tournaments, perhaps contextualising and scheduling a bilateral series properly should be the focus.

Maria Sharapova trounces Stefanie Voegelé to reach Tianjin Open semi-finals

RUSSIA: Maria Sharapova moved a step closer to claiming her first title since returning from a doping ban by outclassing Stefanie Voegelé to reach the semi-finals of the Tianjin Open. The five-time grand slam champion needed only an hour and four minutes to wrap up a 6-3 6-1 victory on Friday.

Sharapova will play defending champion Peng Shuai in her first semi-final since reaching the last four in Stuttgart on her comeback from a 15-month suspension six months ago.

The unseeded Russian has not dropped a set this week and recovered from an uncertain start to see off Voegelé.

Who took advantage of three unforced errors and a double fault to break in the first game of the match but that was as good as it got for the qualifier.

Sharapova lost just one point on serve in the first set after failing to hold in the opening game, breaking to level at 1-1 and again to lead 5-3 before serving out the set.



The former world number one bossed the second set, surging into a 4-0 lead as she wasted no time in dispatching Voegelé.

Peng stayed in the hunt to retain her title on home soil with a brutal 6-0 6-1 demolition of Sara Sorribes Tormo.

The third seed took just an hour to move into the last four, losing only nine points on serve in a quarter-final which was something of a non-contest.

Aryna Sabalenka and Sara Errani will meet in the other semi-final following victories over Zhu Lin and Christina McHale respectively.

Ireland to make Test debut against Pakistan next year

DUBLIN: Ireland will play their first-ever Test match against Pakistan on home soil next May, the country's cricket chiefs announced on Thursday.

Afghanistan and Ireland became full members of the International Cricket Council (ICC) in June, taking the number of countries who play the five-day format of the game from 10 to 12.

Since then Cricket Ireland has been looking for the right opponent for the historic first match.

"We are excited to welcome Pakistan to Ireland for our inaugural Test match next year," said Cricket Ireland chief executive Warren Deutrom.

"It has been our wish to make our Test debut in front of our own fans within 12 months of becoming a Test nation, and against a big team, so I'm delighted."

Pakistan are currently seventh in the Test rankings but were top of the pile as recently as last year.

"There is a lot of work to do from now to ensure that it will be an oc-



casional to remember but we, and I'm sure our players and fans, can't wait to rise to it," Deutrom added.

Irish captain William Porterfield welcomed confirmation of

the match, saying: "It's fantastic news for Irish cricket. It's going to be a bit special and it's always great to be a part of history."

"There's a special affinity between

ourselves and Pakistan going back to the 2007 World Cup and they've been regular tourists here over the past decade.

"Test cricket is the pinnacle of

our sport and I know how much this game will mean to not only the players but all involved with Irish cricket. It'll be another step on what has been an incredible journey for our sport in a relatively short passage of time."

The exact date and venue for the match -- agreed during an ICC meeting in Auckland, New Zealand, this week -- have yet to be confirmed.

Cricket has been played in Ireland for nearly 200 years but it was not until 1969 that they made the rest of the world game take true notice when they bowled out the West Indies for just 25 at Sion Mills in a televised match.

Ireland have since established themselves during the course of several World Cups, recording ODI wins over Pakistan, West Indies and England.

Afghanistan and Ireland joined an exclusive club that also includes Australia, England, South Africa, New Zealand, the West Indies, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe.