

TIME AND US

DAILY SRINAGAR, KASHMIR

SUNDAY

● NOVEMBER, 19, 2017
● 27 SAFFAR 1439 AH
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WEATHER TEMPERATURE

| STATION | MAX TEMPERATURE | MIN TEMPERATURE |
|----------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | ACT | ACT |
| SRINAGAR | 7.6 | 2.9 |
| JAMMU | 22.0 | 11.2 |
| LEH | 6.0 | -6.4 |
| KARGIL | 9.0 | -6.0 |

SUNSET SATURDAY: 05:27 PM
SUNRISE SUNDAY: 07:08 AM

LOCAL FORECAST OF SRINAGAR
Generally Cloudy sky. Maximum & Minimum temperatures will be around 14°C & 2°C respectively.

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

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KAVINDER FOR COORDINATED EFFORTS TO EMPOWER GIRL CHILD

ISRAELI PM NETANYAHU TO BE IN INDIA FOR THREE-DAY VISIT FROM

FIVE POPULAR FINTECH PLATFORMS FOR HASSLE-FREE EDUCATION LOAN

BHAICHUNG BHUTIA OFFERS TO TRAIN MAJID KHAN

LeT chief's nephew among 6 militants, IAF commando killed in Hajin

Soldier, civilian injured; DGP terms encounter it a success

Srinagar, Nov 18: An Indian Air Force (IAF) commando and six militants including nephew of Lashkar-e-Toiba operational chief Zaikur-ur-Rehman Lakhvi have been killed in a fierce firefight at Hajin area of Bandipora district in north Kashmir today while a soldier and a civilian were injured.

Army's Srinagar based defence spokesman told news agency GNS that a Joint team of army, SOG and CRPF launched a cordon following specific inputs about presence of some militants at Chandergeer in Hajin. As such the joint team of forces intensified the combing operation, the hiding militants opened fire upon them triggering of an encounter, he said.

Director General of Police (DGP) SP Vaid said that six militants including nephew of Lakhvi have been gunned down in the encounter. "The encounter is now finished and was a success. Total of 6 LeT militants eliminated. Weapons and ammunition recovered.



One of the terrorist named Owaid is son of Zakir Rehman Maki and nephew of Zakir Rehman Lakhvi (master-

mind of Mumbai terror attacks)," he said in a tweet on micro-blogging website, Twitter.

The DGP also added in another tweet that LeT commanders Zargam and Mehmood have also been killed in the operation. He said all the six militants are Pakistani nationals. The defence spokesman said that two soldiers including an IAF Garud commando suffered injuries in the encounter and were hospitalized. However, the IAF guard succumbed to injuries in the military hospital, he said, adding that the search operation in the area is still going on.

Meanwhile, reports said that a civilian namely Ashiq Hussain, son of Ghulam Muhammad received a bullet wound in his leg and was immediately shifted to nearby hospital where from he was referred to JVC hospital Srinagar for specialised

See **LeT**...Pg 02

Thousands attend funeral of slain militant in Parimpora



SRINAGAR | NOV 18: Thousands of people attended the funeral of slain militant Mugais Mir in Parimpora on Saturday. People crowded to the place despite strict restrictions in most of Srinagar and schools locked for the day.

The people who attended the funeral prayers were shouting slogans in favour of Zakir Musa and against India, however, dispersed peacefully. Police had cordoned the main road but were permitting the movement. The mourners later dispersed peacefully.

Mir, who was initially termed to be a recruit of Zakir Musa's Guzwat-ul-Hind was finally claimed to be its member by Tehreek-ul-

Mujahideen. He was hit by a bullet that slain Assistant Sub Inspector Imran Tak had fired at him at Zakoor. Tak was also killed in the brief clash with the militants.

Though the exact details of Mir's killing are still not fully known, a general belief is that he was moving in a car when it was stopped by police at a naka party in Zakoor. It led to an instant clash between the two sides in which three persons were injured, two of them cops, the ASI and an SPO.

Generally it is believed that Mir had fled from the spot with his bullet wound and is believed to succumbed to his injuries later.

See **Funeral**...Pg 02

Sailan Massacre:

COURT ISSUES NOTICE TO J&K GOVT AND CBI

Srinagar, Nov 18: Jammu and Kashmir High Court has issued a notice to the state government and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the infamous Sailan massacre, a statement issued by Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Societies (JKCCS) said today.

The JKCCS statement said: "J&K High Court admitted a petition filed by the family members of the victims of the "Sailan massacre". The high court petition seeks further investigations in this case after a CBI court in Jammu by its order dated 25 August 2017, accepted the CBI investigations that declared the victim families as being untruthful and sought closure of this case."

"Notice has been issued to the government and CBI

See **Court**...Pg 02

Rajnath asks J-K Govt to shift juveniles from jails to remand homes

NEW DELHI: Home Minister Rajnath Singh has asked the Jammu and Kashmir Government to move all juveniles, arrested for pelting stones and other unlawful activities, from jails to remand homes and review their cases sympathetically, officials said.

The decision is considered to be an attempt to reach out to the people of Jammu and Kashmir by the central government after the appointment of Dineshwar Sharma as the Centre's special representative



to initiate talks with all stakeholders.

The issue was discussed in detail at Wednesday's meeting of the core group on Kash-

mir, chaired by the union home minister and attended by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval,

where it was decided to ask the Jammu and Kashmir government to work on the cases of juveniles.

After the core group meeting, the Jammu and Kashmir government has been asked to shift all juveniles, who were arrested for pelting stones and other crimes, to remand homes and review their cases sympathetically, a home ministry, privy to the development, told PTI.

The state government is expected to take the initiative

See **Rajnath**...Pg 02

59 illegal dairies:

COURT EXPRESSES ANGUISH OVER ALLOTMENT OF CATTLE POUND TO RETIRED BUREAUCRAT

Jammu, Nov 18: A Division Bench of the State High Court comprising Chief Justice Bader Durrez Ahmed and Justice Sanjeev Kumar have expressed deep displeasure over the allotment of a cattle pound situated at Gandhi Nagar, Jammu by the Jammu Municipal Corporation in favour of Ex-Joint Commissioner (Adm) Municipal Corporation Jammu namely R.S. Jamwal.

The Division Bench took serious view of the allotment made in favour of a Retired Officer of the Jammu Municipal Corporation for the land/space earmarked for cattle pound. The Division Bench after going through the records of allotment produced in the open court by Advocate Sheikh Shakeel Ahmed appearing for the PIL

See **Dairies**...Pg 02

Several deputations meet CM, put up demands

Seek Hill Dev Council for Pir Panchal, beautification of Kathua Rly Stn, Reasi Hospital upgradation, civic facilities' improvement at Bathindi

JAMMU, NOVEMBER 18: Several deputations met the Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti here today, brought their problems into her notice and sought their redressal.

A deputation of youth from Pir Panchal area sought Hill Development Council status for the region to pace up its developmental needs. They also sought creation of rest rooms along the Jammu-Poonch Na-



tional Highway and speeding up of work on Poonch campus of Jammu University.

See **CM**...Pg 02

Contempt petition:

COURT ISSUES NOTICE TO DIRECTOR ESTATES

Jammu, Nov 18: A Division Bench of the State High Court comprising Justice Alok Aradhe and Justice Sanjeev Kumar has issued notice to Director Estates, J&K, Tasduq Jeelani for filing his statement of facts in a contempt petition filed by a Specially Aabled lawyer of Suraj Singh seeking initiation of contempt of court proceedings against Minister Estates, J&K Government and Director Estates, for non-compliance of the directions of the Division Bench whereby Minister Estates had been directed to accord consideration to the claim of the Specially Aabled Lawyer/petitioner for Government Accommodation under the 5% discretionary quota vested with Minister for Estates.

See **Estates**...Pg 02

NC accords grand reception

Farooq reiterates grant of regional autonomy; assails divisive forces

Jammu, Nov 18: National Conference President Dr Farooq Abdullah on Saturday reiterated grant of regional autonomy to different regions in Jammu and Kashmir to assuage the aspirations of people.

"J&K is a unique state and needs special dispensation in terms of regional autonomy to satiate the urges of various regions", Dr Abdullah said while speaking at a grand reception accorded at Sher-e-Kashmir Bhawan on his re-elections as National Conference President.

Without naming the BJP, he lambasted the overt and covert attempts being made to

See **Farooq**...Pg 02



CLOSING SCHOOLS TO MANAGE SITUATION HAS BECOME A ROUTINE IN KASHMIR: TARIGAMI

'It has badly affected the education of students'

Srinagar, Nov 18: It has become a norm in Kashmir this year that whenever any violent incident happens, the Government orders closure of educational institutions to manage the situation. On Saturday, the Government ordered closure of educational institutions in Srinagar, apparently in the wake of a gun fight in Zakura area on Friday.

Due to long winter vacations, strikes, official holidays and other reasons, the academic calendar in Kashmir Valley is very short. Right from April this year, the Government ordered closure of schools and colleges dozens

See **Tarigami**...Pg 02

Government fails to make Mohra Power House operational

'Machinery is used for Ganderbal Power Project'

Srinagar, Nov 18: Government has miserably failed to make one of the oldest hydroelectric plants in South Asia, Mohra power house in Uri area of North Kashmir's Baramulla district operational. The power plant is lying defunct since 1992 while authorities claim that restoration process is on cards and it will take at least 4 years to make it fully functional. Reliable sources informed



news agency CNS that oldest machinery and tools present in the 9 MW Mohra Power

House are being stolen and shifted to Ganderbal Power House.

An official wishing anonymity said that valuable parts of machinery are being lifted and shifted to Ganderbal power house.

Pertinently, this year in June, the state government approved the proposal of the Power Development Department (PDD) to implement the 93-MW New Ganderbal hydro power project on the banks of the Sindh in central

See **Power**...Pg 02

PAK NSA ACCUSES INDIA OF CREATING 'TWO-FRONT SITUATION'

Islamabad: National Security Advisor Nasser Khan Janjua today accused India of creating a "two-front situation" for Pakistan, saying such a policy would be detrimental for regional peace and stability.

His statement came during his talks with visiting Special Representative of Germany for Afghanistan and Pakistan Markus Potzel who was accompanied by German Ambassador Martin Kobler here.

According to a statement by the NSA office, the two sides discussed the regional security situation and the prevailing situation in Afghanistan.

Janjua said that Pakistan wants peace in

See **Pak**...Pg 02

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LET

treatment. During the encounter, clashes erupted in the area between locals and government forces. The internet services in Bandipora district have been suspended as a precautionary measure, an official said.

FUNERAL

It was not immediately known if the police have detected the car and many arrest. IGP Kashmir, Munir Khan said on Friday that they have arrested a militant involved in the Zakoora encounter.

Nothing much was also known about how Mir's body was driven to his home. This is one of the rarest cases in which police did not know of the kill, till the body appeared.

The family kept the body at the home for the night as the belt mourned. Early morning, thousands of people from around the locality assembled and his funeral prayers were offered in the sprawling SFC's depot at PC Depot. He was laid to rest in a cemetery just behind the depot.

Fearing trouble, the authorities last night imposed restrictions in areas falling under eight police stations in Srinagar. It included Parimpora, Safa Kadal, M.R.Gunj, Nowhatta, Khanyar, Rainawari, Maisuma and Kralkhud belts. They also ordered closure of all the schools and colleges for the day, barring the examinations.

Besides, authorities also arrested JKLF leader Yasin Malik from his residence and sent him to the Central Jail Srinagar. They also restricted the movement of Mirwaiz Umer Farooq to his residence.

Meanwhile, IT minister Imran Ansari has announced that he will donate his one month's salary to the family of the slain police man. Reports said Tak was earlier attached to his security detail. DGP S P Vaid termed Ansari's initiative "encouraging".

The Srinagar district administration on Friday ordered imposition of restrictions under section 144 in eight police station areas of Srinagar city.

The police stations include Nowhatta, Khanyar, Rainawari, Safa Kadal and Parimpora, besides others. Besides, district administration spokesperson said that all the colleges and schools in Srinagar will remain shut for class work. However, the examinations will be held as per schedule.

"The admit cards of the students appearing in different examinations will be treated as passes," he said. Pertinently, a militant was killed in a brief shooting in Zakoora area of Hazratbal in Srinagar city this afternoon. The slain was identified as Mughais Ahmad, a resident of Parimpora.

COURT

to respond," it said.

"On the night of 3/4 August 1998, 19 civilians (13 female/6 male including 11 children) were shot to death at point blank range in their homes in Sailan village by 4 Special Police Officers (SPOs) and personnel of the 9 Para commando battalion (under the control of Major Gaurav Rishi), an elite commando unit of the Indian Army," said the statement.

"Jammu and Kashmir police officers, including then Superintendent of Police (Poonch), J.P. Singh, are also implicated in the crime and cover up."

"Following inaction by the police, the families approached the J&K High Court in 2011 and on 21 November 2012 the CBI was directed to re-investigate the case. On 27 August 2015 the CBI filed a closure report before the CBI court," added the statement.

RAJNATH

to shift the juveniles to remand homes and review their cases soon, the official said.

Top officials of ministries of home and defence, chiefs of intelligence agencies, besides Sharma also attended the meeting.

The Centre's special representative also briefed the union home minister and others about his first round of talks he had with various sections of the society there last week.

Sharma will again visit the state soon to continue his mission of holding a sustained dialogue process.

However, the anti-militancy operations in Jammu and Kashmir will go on even though the central government has appointed the special representative to initiate talks with all stakeholders in an effort to bring a lasting peace in Jammu and Kashmir with violence by Pakistan-based militant groups continuing unabated.

Director General of Police of Jammu and Kashmir S P Vaid had recently said that around 170 militants were gunned down by the security forces in Jammu and Kashmir this year.

Two Army soldiers were killed and a CRPF jawan suffered injuries in an encounter in Pulwama district of the state on November 2.

Three militants were gunned down in Pulwama in an encounter in which an Army jawan was also killed on November 6.

Three militants, including Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Maulana Masood Azhar's nephew, were gunned down by security forces in Pulwama district on November 7.

DAIRIES

directed the Commissioner Jammu Municipal Corporation to file a comprehensive affidavit explaining as to how and on whose orders the cattle pound at Gandhi Nagar, Jammu was closed and later allotted to the Joint Commissioner (Adm) Jammu Municipal Corporation.

These court directions were passed in a Public Interest Litigation filed by an NGO (SAVE) through its Chairperson Devinder Kour Madaan alias Rumpy Madaan seeking closure of 59 illegal/ unregistered milk dairies running within the limits of Jammu Municipal Corporation and also for regulating the functioning of existing 57 number of registered dairies as per the existing norms and guidelines issued by JMC under Section 44(n) of Jammu Municipal Corporation Act, 2000.

Advocate Sheikh Shakeel Ahmed with Advocates Rahul Raina, Suraj Singh and Supriya Chouhan appearing for the PIL drew the attention of the Division Bench towards the amended reply filed by JMC wherein it was submitted that JMC has one cattle pound situated at Dogra Hall, Jammu and capacity of the cattle pound is to accommodate 70/80 animals at a time. It was further submitted that all the Gowshalas running within and outside the limits of JMC have refused to adopt the animals due to non-availability of space and accordingly Deputy Commissioner, Jammu has been

requested for identifying/providing land so that animals of the un-registered dairies are shifted till the time such unregistered dairies are regulated and managed as per the norms framed by JMC.

Advocate S.S. Ahmed appearing for the petitioner NGO submitted that in both the replies filed by JMC a misleading statement has been given that JMC has one cattle pound situated at Dogra Hall, Jammu when the fact remains there is one more cattle pound at Gandhi Nagar, Jammu which has been illegally/ arbitrarily closed by JMC and has been allotted wide order No.JMC/ RB/1053-55 dated 10-02-2016 in favour of R.S. Jamwal (KAS) Joint Commissioner (Adm) Municipal Corporation Jammu.

The Division Bench after going through the norms framed by JMC issued directions in the open court to the Commissioner JMC to take action as per the norms against the illegal dairy units and further directed that licenses be issued to only those dairy units who conform to the norms framed by JMC. The Division Bench made it clear in its order that today's order may not be construed by Commissioner JMC to grant licenses but the licenses be issued strictly as per the norms referred as Annexure-D in the PIL.

The Division Bench also directed Commissioner, JMC to file a comprehensive affidavit within four weeks about the action taken against un-registered dairies and also the action taken on the applications received by JMC from Dairy Units for grant of license. The Division Bench further directed the JMC to explore the possibilities of identifying new places for more cattle pounds in Jammu City. Advocate Amita Khajuria appearing for the Chief Executive Officer, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, New Delhi apprised the Division Bench that a comprehensive reply to the PIL has been filed and Govt. Advocate Sanjeev Padha also informed the Division Bench about the filing of reply on behalf of Commissioner of Food Safety, J&K Government. Senior Advocate M.K. Bhardwaj with Advocates Ajay Vaid and Gagan Kohli appeared on behalf of the owners of 59 un-registered dairy units whereas AAG Rohit Kapoor caused appearance for State Pollution Control Board.

AAG Rohit Kapoor appearing for State Pollution Control Board assured the Division Bench that while issuing NOCs to the owners of the dairy units the norms governing the field and also the norms prescribed by JMC will be strictly adhered to and there will be no laxity in this behalf on the part of PCB. He further requested the Division Bench that a copy of the PIL be furnished to him and upon this Advocate S.S. Ahmed assured to provide the same during the course of the day.

The Division Bench looking into the importance of the PIL directed the Registry to re-notify the same on December, 21, 2017.

CM

The deputation also demanded setting up of more educational institutes in the region and introduction of Arabic and Persian languages in the Jammu University in view of the international demand of these languages.

Several deputations from Jammu city demanded improvement in basic civic amenities like link roads, drains, drinking water and electricity in the city areas. They specifically sought improvement of civic facilities in Bathindi-Sunjan area in view of the huge rush of people during winters.

A deputation of political migrants demanded proper accommodation facilities to them and appropriate share in the PM package for employment.

A deputation of people from Kathua demanded instructions to the concerned authorities for removing junk and industrial waste from the local Railway Station. They also demanded face-lifting and beautification of Kathua Railway Station besides construction of Kathua-Kharote road to improve connectivity in the area.

A deputation from Reasi demanded strengthening of facilities at the local District Hospital and establishment of a Maternity unit there. They also sought development of tourism in the area in view of huge rush of pilgrims.

A deputation of All J&K Graduate Engineers Association sought removal of stagnation in their promotions, timely regularisations and adoption of a mechanism of running grades. Another deputation of Laboratory Assistants of Education Department sought release of their pending salaries.

A deputation of retired employees of J&K Minerals Ltd. demanded release of pending COLA instalments and other pensionary benefits in their favour.

The Chief Minister listened patiently to the demands put forth. She assured the deputations that the issues raised would be got addressed in a time bound manner.

ESTATES

When this contempt petition came up for hearing Advocates S.C. Gupta and Sheikh Shakeel Ahmed appearing for Specially Abled Lawyer Suraj Singh submitted that despite the expiry of the time limit fixed by the Division Bench the Minister Estates, J&K Government has failed to consider the case of the petitioner for allotment of residential accommodation and the inaction on the part of the Minister for Estates has compelled the petitioner to knock the doors of the Court by invoking contempt jurisdiction.

The Division Bench after considering the submissions issued notice to Director Estates, J&K, Tasaduq Jeelani in the first instance and deferred notice to Minister for Estates at this stage and directed the Director Estates, J&K to file his statement of facts in the contempt petition.

The Division Bench on the request made by Advocate S.S. Ahmed also issued dasti notice to be served upon Director Estates, J&K and directed the Registry to list this contempt petition on 30th November, 2017 for further consideration.

FAROOQ

weaken Article 370 and said demand of autonomy is within the frame-work of the Constitution. He said National Conference will not allow the attempts of repealing Article 35-A to succeed. He said its fallout will be more disastrous for Jammu than other two regions of the State.

"The people will come here to take your land," he said accusing the party of raising the issue to make electoral gains and divide the people", he added.

Dr Farooq Abdullah questioned the audacity of Peoples' Democratic Party in advocating Self-Rule for Jammu and Kashmir, saying it could not safeguard the State's special status and surrendered fiscal autonomy over GST.

"What could have been our own prerogative over tax structure rests with the Central GST Council now", Dr Abdul-

lah said adding that the autonomy was the only viable solution in addressing to issues in Jammu and Kashmir.

He assailed the PDP for jeopardizing interests of the people and colluding with communal and anti-J&K elements. He said a worst type of nepotism has been unleashed by way of backdoor appointments, leaving youth of the state in lurch. He also hit hard at the coalition government for abandoning the border residents, who are stand exposed to harsher winter due to lack of shelter. He referred to his recent visit to various parts of Line of Control in north Kashmir including Teetwal and Machil and said the border dwellers were facing lot of problems due to failure of the government to provide better roads, communication, electricity facilities to them.

"The PDP-BJP alliance will have to pay for all its wrongs", the National Conference President said, adding that the people were suffering due to non-governance, development deficit and lack of accountability.

Referring to hysteria being created on war mongering, Dr Farooq Abdullah He said wars were no solution to problems as these leave trails of blood, death and destruction. The plight of survivors, the widows and the families, becomes precarious due to neglect and abject failure in ensuring their welfare, especially when compensations are released. This leads to differences in the families and at times end into suppression of widows. Therefore, the welfare of the families after losing their dear ones is the responsibility of the army and the government; he said adding that this entire gamut can be taken care by an independent commission.

Dr Abdullah referred to his visit to the bereaved family of Sohanlal Bhagat, killed in Manipur and said the family stands now totally shattered and devastated. He lamented that none of the ministers in Jammu and Kashmir Government had time to visit the family.

"This is how soldiers and their families are treated", he said and referred to the state funeral accorded by Himachal Pradesh to the soldier killed along with Sohanlal Bhagat in Manipur.

He sought constitution of a Commission to look into the plight of war-widows and families of the killed soldiers.

"Army chief General Bipin Rawat must work towards this and formulate a report on the condition of war widows to be tabled in Parliament", Dr Abdullah said while assailing those indulging in war mongering.

Referring to over-reaction on his recent statement on PoK, Dr Abdullah invoked the then Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee saying that the sanctity of the Line of Control could not be trampled by crossing over during Kargil incursion. He also referred to return of the strategically crucial Haji Peer, conquered in 1965 and said National Conference had not advocated for this but Indian nation as such took this decision. "However, if India wants to liberate the PoK, let them move towards LoC with guns", he said, adding that wars were not solution as these bring only death and destruction.

He cautioned against the machinations of those trying to divide people in the name of religion and said National Conference will not allow their agenda to succeed in Jammu and Kashmir, which is a shining symbol of harmony and tranquillity. He referred to threats being hurled in different parts of the country to different segments of society on communal lines for voting them, adding that this is a grave situation which will only promote polarization. The country will have to guard against such tendencies, as this nation belongs to all—Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, and Buddhists etc.

Dr Farooq Abdullah expressed concern over emergence of communal forces and said this harms the spirit of togetherness and tranquillity. He said India will progress only when the society at large maintains its time-tested heritage and isolates those creating wedge for petty political ends. He said political myopism can have dangerous ramifications for the country and emphasised the need for strengthening secular forces.

"We want strong India and not a fragmented nation", he said and pledged to fight the polarizing elements with full might.

He said unity among people and single entity of the regions is essential for harmonious growth of the state, adding that divisive politics can endanger the social fabric, cause disenchantment and vitiate communal harmony. He asked the party workers to work for forging amity between various segments of society and fighting divisive tendencies, as inclusiveness has all along been its fort.

Dwelling upon the prevailing political situation across the State, Dr Abdullah exhorted the cadre to be prepared for panchayat elections and chose public spirited honest representatives. He asked the women to participate for elections to democratic institutions at the grass roots level, as they were eligible to contest from 33 per cent reserved seats.

He said attempts would be made to divide the people once the elections draw closer.

"There will be conspiracies to divide the people on communal lines and split us but we have to remain alert and foil such nefarious designs. NC workers need to stand up at that time and safeguard everyone," he said.

He described the panchayat elections as the first test of the party, saying the government is yet to take a decision as Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti is making different statements about the situation at different places. "She says in Delhi there was peace in Kashmir but in the Valley she says otherwise to avert the elections", he said while referring to the parliamentary polls in March-April last.

"She is saying in Delhi that here is peace (in Kashmir), but on reaching Kashmir she is saying there is no peace and election is not possible because she knows very well that her brother will lose (the election from Anantnag parliamentary constituency," he said.

Provincial President Devender Singh Rana welcomed Dr Farooq Abdullah at the reception on behalf of the office bearers and workers of the Jammu region while senior leaders presented bouquets, profusely garlanded and greeted him on his re-election.

Prominent among those present on the occasion included Surjit Singh Salathia, Ajay Kumar Sadhotra, Sayed Ahmed Bukhari, Rachpal Singh, Abdul Gani Malik, Rattan Lal Gupta, Th. Kashmir Singh, Rampal, Sheikh Bashir Ahmed, Haji Mohd Hussain, Satwant Kour Dogra, Vijay Bakaya, Ajaz Jan, Shahnaz Ganai MLC, Dr. Kamal Arora, Mirza Abdul Rashid, Sheikh Abdul Rehman, Qazi Jalal-ud-Din, Brij Mohan Sharma, Ch. Rahim Daad, Bushan Lal Bhat, Bimla Luthra, Vijay Laxami Dutta, Ghulam Haider Malik, Bagh Hussain Rathore, Bushan Uppal, Shafayat Ahmed Khan, Tanveer Ahmed Kichloo, Jagjeevan Lal, Shamsad Shan, Sunil Verma, Romy Khajuria, Ajeet Kr Sharma, Dharamveer Singh Jamwal, Mohinder

Gupta, Shafiqat Mir, Mohd Arif Mir, Ram Parshotam Sharma, Ch. Rehmat Ali, Sanjay Gupta, Ravi Dogra, S. Sucha Singh, Jugal Mahajan, S. Gurdeep Singh Sasan, Ch. Haroon, Mohd Ayub Malik, Surinder Singh Bunt, Anil Dhar, Dhian Chand, Vipin Pal Sharma, Pardeep Bali, GH Malik, Dilshad Malik, Reeta Gupta, Rashida Begum, Daljeet Sharma, Issar Khan, Vijay lochan, Iftakhar Ahmad Choudhary, Mohd Shafi Malik, Nar Singh, Rohit Kerni, Rohit Bali, Reyaz Ahmed, Veena Oberoi, Rakesh Singh Raka, ML Munshi, Komal Manhas, MK yogi, Kr. Yashwardan Singh, Waqar Lone and others.

TARIGAMI

of times to manage the situation which has badly affected the education of students.

Closing down the educational institutions to manage the situation is unfortunate and the Government must do away with this practice. The students in Kashmir have been the worst sufferers of the prevailing situation and the Government punishes them further by forcing them to stay away from schools and colleges.

Snapping Internet services time-and-again has become another routine in Kashmir in recent times. Due to this not only business community suffers immensely, our students have to study without the Internet services in 21st century. As the board and university exams are ongoing, students are facing tribulations in internet surfing. It is like going back to Stone Age as students are deprived of every basic facility including internet services.

The Government's claim of making India digital is belittled due to routine Internet snapping. For how long this will continue?

POWER

Kashmir after nearly two decades of delay.

"Government is robbing Peter to pay Paul. On the one hand Government shows its seriousness to make Mohra Power House operational, while on the other it is depriving this Power House from precious machinery tools," the official added.

Former Minister Taj Mohiuddin said that restoration of Mohra Power House is almost impossible as it has completely destroyed by National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC) of India. "NHPC after using water of Mohra Power House for its own project almost have choked the water canal," he said.

Another official revealed that government had entered into an agreement with NHPC and under that agreement NHPC was bound to help in restoration work of Mohra Power House after using its waters, but those agreement papers went mysteriously missing.

Jammu Kashmir State Power Development Corporation Head, Dr Shah Faisal said that they have already got a NOC from NHPC for using their water. "Mohra Power House will be restored and it will take at least four years," he said.

Pertinently, Mohra power house was developed by JKSPDC in early 1905 and until 1992 it was operational. However, according to official sources, it became defunct following generational loss and subsequent increase in repairing costs in the aftermath of 1992 floods. The heritage project was constructed by European engineers in 1902-03 on the left bank of the river Jehlum on Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road at Boniyar in Uri.

Since 1992 no attention was paid towards the Mohra power house and finally in year 2015, JKSPDC hired Delhi-based consultant firm, Synergic India Limited, for upgradation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) to revive this prestigious project in view of its heritage value.

PAK

Afghanistan but the same is under stress due to involvement of India which wants to create a "two front situation" for Pakistan.

"India is self-seeking a two front situation which does not auger well for the region. All major powers of the world need to play their role in keeping the region stable and balanced," he said.

He meant to say that Pakistan was being stretched to fight militants on the western front with Afghanistan and face Indian army on the eastern border with India.

The NSA also said that for "regional peace and stability, it is imperative for both the countries to engage with each and resolve their disputes".

He said Pakistan and India should resolve their disputes for the sake of better future.

Janjua also said Pakistan wanted peace in Afghanistan and urged for political settlement of the Afghan issue.

"To end miseries of Afghanistan and its people, warring sides should seek a political solution to the conflict as the perpetual war of last 16 years has given us nothing but human miseries and sufferings," Janjua added.

JKSSB CONCLUDES COMPUTER BASED TEST FOR 500 POSTS

JAMMU, NOVEMBER 18: The Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board on Saturday concluded the first ever Computer based Written Tests (CBT) for about 500 posts of different departments wherein negative marking was also introduced for the first time.

Officials said the examinations were conducted at ten centers in two capital cities of Jammu and Srinagar from 14th to 18th November, 2017. Around 5500 candidates took this exam with lot of curiosity and enthusiasm.

For the first time, biometric registration was also carried out at all centers to prevent any impersonation. Officials said at one center in Jammu, a candidate was not allowed to take the exam whose admit card picture did not match with his biometrics. Further, one candidate was debarred and blacklisted for five years from all JKSSB exams, as per the guidelines, as he was found with mobile phone inside the examination hall in spite of explicit directions on the admit card. The exams were conducted for various positions like ECG Technicians, Anesthesia Assistants, X-ray Assistants, Junior Assistants, Election Assistants, Stenographers, Legal Assistants, Junior Pharmacists, Lab Assistants, Horticulture Tech-IV.

Kavinder for coordinated efforts to empower girl child

Attends Prize distribution function at GGHS Satwari Cantt

JAMMU, NOVEMBER 18: Speaker, J&K Legislative Assembly, Kavinder Gupta today said that coordinated and convergent efforts are needed for improving the child sex ratio and ensuring survival and empowerment of the girl child.

The Speaker said this while addressing students, educationist, and parents during a prize distribution ceremony at Government Girls Higher Secondary School Satwari Cantt, here today.

Kavinder Gupta while stressing on bringing about a change in the social perception towards female child, said that girls have created a niche for themselves in every field and it is important that we encourage them so that they achieve success with confidence and courage.

He said that the centre and state governments are paying special attention on checking the alarming child sex ration in the state with focused campaigns like the Beti Bachao Beti Padoos scheme and special social assistance scheme like Ladli Beti, among others.

He called for sensitizing the society about the alarming decline in sex



ratio adding that such programmes must be implemented on a mission mode. While calling to strengthen these initiatives, he said that all member of the society need to work in unison to empower our female child.

Responding to issues put forth by Principal, the Speaker assured that the works pertaining to construction of classrooms, washrooms and examination hall will be taken up shortly.

He said that initiative undertaken

by the central government like SBM and SSA provides unlimited funding for works and they focus on increasing the standards of education and promoting the cleanliness in the country.

On the occasion, the students presented a variety of cultural performances which showcased state's culture besides communicating a strong social message.

Appreciating the wonderful efforts of the students, Kavinder Gupta said

that special sports, cultural tournaments will be introduced in the institution with an aim to increase participation of the students in co-curricular activities and developing sports acumen. Besides, the cultural tournaments will also be aimed at creating awareness among students about state's heritage as well as inculcating patriotic spirit among them.

SDM South Sonu Pargal, Tehsildar South Anil Mangotra, Dy SP Dr Sunniya Wani, Vice Chairman Cantonment Board Hardev Singh, Member, Cantonment Board Bharat Bhushan were also present on the occasion.

Later, the Speaker attended a meeting of the Executive body of Swami Vivekananda Medical Mission Charitable Hospital.

Threadbare discussions were held regarding the functioning of the hospital, besides various issues pertaining to development of health care infrastructure at the hospital were taken up, in the meeting.

The Speaker assured of all necessary physical and financial help from his office, besides committing to take up all essential concerns with the Health Minister for early redressal.

Nirmal Singh, Naeem Akhtar, Ganga, Officials pay homage to Sub-Inspector Imran Tak



UDHAMPUR, NOVEMBER 18: Deputy Chief Minister Nirmal Singh along with Minister for Industries and Commerce, Chand Parkash Ganga were among those who laid wreath on the mortal remains of slain Sub-Inspector, Imran Tak who was killed by militants in Zakura area of Srinagar on Friday evening.

Dr Singh while paying tributes to the police officer here at DPL Udhampur expressed grief over the killing and extended heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family.

"Imran was a brave and sincere cop who laid his life for securing the lives of others," the Dy CM said, adding that the nation will always remain indebted to him for the supreme sacrifice and devotion to duty.

Recognizing the brave act of Sub-Inspector Imran Tak, DyCM said his name

will be recommended for prestigious Shaurya Chakra gallantry medal so that the future generations can take inspiration and follow the path tread by the brave police officers.

MLA Jammu West, Sat Paul Sharma; Chief Secretary, B B Vyas; Principal Secretary Home, Raj Kumar Goyal; DG JKP, Dr. S P Vaid; IGP Jammu, Dr. S D Singh, DIG Udhampur-Reasi range, DC, Ravinder Kumar, SSP, Director SKPA Udhampur, senior officers of civil administration, Police, Army and other paramilitary forces besides prominent citizens were present on the occasion who paid floral tributes to the martyred Sub-Inspector of J&K Police.

Later, the mortal remains of the slain cop were laid to rest at his native place Basantgarh.

64th Cooperative Week Celebrations

Public-Private Partnership key to robust cooperative movement: Dorjay

JAMMU, NOVEMBER 18: In connection with the celebrations of 64th Cooperative week, the Cooperative Department organized a mega function at Jammu and Kashmir Cooperative Supply and Marketing Federation Ltd. (JAKFED) under theme Public, Private Cooperatives partnership.

Minister, for Cooperatives and Ladakh Affairs, Chering Dorjay while speaking during the function, said that the theme about the function is apt for the cooperative movement as without consent of public-private partnership, cooperative is impossible.

Here reiterated commitment of the Government towards working for a vibrant cooperative movement by one and all which, he said, will immensely help in ensuring a sustainable growth and development in the State.

Addressing to the people present on the occasion, Minister said that the capital infusion of Cooperative banks has already taken up with the Finance Department as Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti is also taking very keen interest in recapitalization of these



banks. The Minister said that the main aim to celebrate the cooperative week is to highlight the achievements of the cooperative sector and to educate people about the basics of cooperative movement. "Cooperative Week helped to raise awareness of the co-operative enterprise model, motivating people to join the co-operative movement," he said.

On the occasion, the Minister said that these events give an opportunity to reflect upon the shortfalls/weaknesses and also provides an opportunity to deliberate upon the strategies to strengthen the inclusive cooperative movement.

He emphasized for dedicated work and exploring the means for strengthening the cooperative sector which of-

fers good opportunities of employment generation. He also put stress upon strengthen and revival of apex, primary, secondary and marketing societies which are defunct so that the cooperative movement may flourish.

Secretary Cooperatives, Bashir Ahmad Bhat also spoke on the occasion and stated that the Cooperative being a trustworthy and voluntary organization, is folded into multiple sectors and it is doing a tremendous job by providing better services to people at their doorsteps through medium of Housing Corporation Board, Banking, JAKFED, Cooperatives societies and other allied units.

Hestressed upon the functionalities of JAKFED to utilize their potential for overall

growth of cooperative sector besides to revive the cooperative movement to possible extent.

Registrar Cooperative, Peerzada Hafizullah Shah also spoke on the occasion and urged the officials of JAKFED to work with dedication and keep their activities at maximum to carry forward the mission of prosperity for each and all. He said that JAKFED is an important platform of cooperative movement which is associated with other vital sectors.

Vice Chairman JAKFED, Munish Sharma, Managing Director JAKFED, Deepika, Chairman J&K Cooperative Union, besides senior officials of the JAKFED, Cooperative department and beneficiaries were also present.

Sham Choudhary visits Sohanjana to review Mahayagya arrangements; Donates 500 blankets

JAMMU, NOVEMBER 18: Minister for PHE, Irrigation and Flood Control Sham Lal Choudhary today visited Sohanjana village to take stock of arrangements being made for smooth conduct of 'Gowgopal Mahayagya'.

The 12-day 'Gowgopal Mahayagya' is an annual feature which will commence from December 15 and conclude on December 26, 2017 at Sohanjana "the Samadhi sthal of Dwarkanath Shastri".

Assuring the management for extending full support from government for the smooth conduct of Mahayagya, the Minister also donated 500 blankets. Mahayagya is organized every year in which devotees from across the country come to participate. Minister said to ensure the smooth stay of devotees, it is duty of the government to take necessary measures and assured the management that steps will be taken to ensure smooth conduct of the Mahayagya.

While reviewing the arrangements, the Minister directed the line departments



for putting in place all the necessary arrangements well before the commencement of Mahayagya so that the devotees do not face any inconvenience during the Mahayagya.

He asked the concerned to work in close coordination to make the event successful.

He also directed the Rural Development Department to lay tiles and conduit pipes, and R&B department to take into hand the work of black-topping of local road for smooth plying of vehicles. He directed the PDD and PHE department for ensuring round-the-clock power and

tube-well and separate transformer, the Minister said that their genuine demands would be met in phased manner.

Among others, Chief Engineer PHE, Jammu, Superintendent Engineers, Executive Engineers, besides sectoral officers of line departments accompanied the Minister.

Lal Singh conducts public grievances redressal camp at Kathua

KATHUA, NOVEMBER 18: Minister for Forests, Ecology and Environment, Choudhary Lal Singh today asserted that three regions of the State have witnessed massive development in all spheres during the current regime and that the government is duty bound to provide all basic amenities to the people of the state.

The Minister was speaking at public grievances redressal camp held at Kathua, here on Saturday.

Chief Wildlife Warden Manoj Panth, Managing Director SFC Suresh Gupta, Regional Director Pollution Control Board Choudhary Showkat Ahmed, Regional Director Wildlife Senthil Kumar besides other senior officers of R&B, RDD, PDD and PHE were present on the occasion.

Choudhary Lal Singh said Government has taken several concrete measures to create durable infrastructure to upgrade the living standard of the people. He said government is committed to provide all basic amenities including road connectivity, education, health, drinking water and better lanes and drains in every area of the State.

The Minister said that Government is fully aware of people's development



related problems, adding that in this regard a new master plan has been prepared to meet all developmental needs particularly in far-off areas of the State.

Lal Singh asked the officers to bring new locality wise projects of

Basholi town so that the people of the area are provided modern line basic facilities. He asked them to come up with effective strategy for early completion of ongoing mega projects taken in hand, adding that Government has earmarked huge funds in this

regard. The Minister underlined the need for involvement of public representatives in execution of development works saying that they are the ears and eyes of the Government. He said that vast dimension given to growth and development viz road linkage, construction of bridges, safe drinking water, improved power supply, gardens and better lanes and drains has revolutionized the developmental profile of the state.

Choudhary Lal Singh said that various projects are in pipeline to provide facilities to rural and semi-urban areas at par with urban pockets. He said that Government is endeavoring

Kohli inaugurates Milk Village at Argi Govt to establish Milk Villages in all districts

RAJOURI, NOVEMBER 18: Minister for Animal, Sheep Husbandry and Fisheries, Abdul Gani Kohli on Saturday said that the Government is committed to set up Milk Villages in every area of the State for which he said he has directed the Department to formulate a comprehensive plan so that funds can be arranged for the purpose.

The Minister was speaking after inaugurating Milk Village at Argi in district Rajouri today. Member Parliament, Jugal Kishor Sharma was also present on the occasion.

Under this ambitious project of Animal Husbandry Department, 50 identified beneficiaries of the village would be provided 100% subsidy to establish dairy farm units on modern lines.

He said the aim of establishing Milk Villages is to bridge the demand-supply deficit of milk in the State in general and Rajouri district in particular. He further said that it will also provide an opportunity to Gujjars the main milk producer's group to grow up economically and contribute to the State.

The Ministers said that the Centre Government has provided liberal fund allocation under various sectors which he said will help these innovative schemes to promote the livelihood of Tribes considerably. He said the Government is committed to upgrade the living standard of the people of the State especially weaker sections of the society. He said by establishing Milk Village at different places in the State, this move will not only develop the standard of life of the community but it will boost the economy and social status of Tribes as well.



Referring to the developmental works under execution in Kalakote Constituency, the Minister said that construction of various developmental projects under different sectors are apace and on completion of these projects it will change the socio-economic conditions of the people of the area.

During his tour to district Rajouri, several deputations met the Minister and apprised him about their individual and collective problems which include construction of protection bunds, early sanctioning of IAY cases, up-gradation of education and health institutions.

The Minister gave them a patient hearing and assured them that their genuine demands will be resolved in a phased manner. In some cases, Kohli gave on the spot directions to the concerned for immediate redressal.

Time and Us

Editorial
SRINAGAR
& J&K

TIMELY RECOGNITION: ON THE MOODY'S UPGRADE

Moody's decision to upgrade India's sovereign credit rating by a notch after a gap of almost 14 years is undoubtedly a welcome recognition of the country's enormous economic potential. It has been driven by some of the recent structural reforms — including the implementation of a long-delayed nationwide goods and services tax (GST), and moves to address the logjam of mounting bad loans in the banking sector through an Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code. These are expected to help ensure a healthier enabling environment to realise this potential over the longer term. The ratings agency has said the reforms undertaken until now would "advance the government's objective of improving the business climate, enhancing productivity, stimulating foreign and domestic investment, and ultimately fostering strong and sustainable growth." And viewed in conjunction with the sizeable foreign exchange reserves, India's overall capacity to absorb shocks is now seen as much better. The market reaction — with the stock indices and the rupee posting handsome gains intraday — signals that local businesses and overseas investors see the upgrade as a vote of confidence in the economy and the policy approach to economic management and reforms, especially at a time when momentum has slowed to a 13-quarter low.

Still, as Moody's has flagged in explaining why it has opted to change the ratings outlook to 'stable' from 'positive', the "high public debt burden remains an important constraint on India's credit profile relative to peers." At 68% of its GDP in 2016, general government debt in India is significantly higher than the 44% median for other similarly ranked economies, according to the New York-based agency, which sees the debt-to-GDP ratio widening by about 1 percentage point this fiscal year to 69%. Moody's cites "the large pool of private savings available to finance government debt", the steps taken to enlarge the formal economy by mainstreaming more and more businesses from the informal sector, and measures aimed at improving spending efficiency through better targeting of welfare measures, as all broadly supportive of a gradual strengthening of the fiscal metrics over time. But it is this very same 'time' element that holds the key to how the macro-economic situation could evolve. With economists and monetary authorities warning of the likelihood of fiscal slippages as a consequence of farm loan waivers by States, the Centre's implementation of the pay commission's award and even weaker tax receipts amid teething issues with the GST, there is a danger that the government may end up missing its fiscal deficit targets in the near term. And therein lies the challenge. For the economy to capitalise on this upgrade, the political leadership must stay the reform course, electorally alluring temptations to resort to populism notwithstanding.

Is the Supreme Court facing an institutional crisis?

► Colin Gonsalves

The Supreme Court is definitely facing an institutional crisis of the kind that it has never faced before, mainly, but not exclusively, on account of the most ferocious attack ever on the judiciary by the executive. The current controversy regarding the contrary orders passed by different Benches ended rather amicably, and the institution is perhaps shaken up for the better.

This is a government whose main aim is to destroy the credibility of the judiciary and undermine its independence. Just as Indira Gandhi once wanted a "committed judiciary", the Central government today wants to safonise the judiciary. It doesn't want an independent judiciary. It doesn't want judges of integrity. It doesn't want thinking judges. It wants judges who will toe the line.

The most telling indicator of this assault on the judiciary is the non-appointment of judges. This defiance — and this kind of defiance has never happened, where the collegium sends a list of judges to be appointed and the government does not appoint them — is defiance of the highest order. But what is sad is that our judges have not been able to put their act together and insist on the appointment of judges. They could have done it on the administrative side. They can constitute a Constitution Bench on the most important issue of appointment of judges.

The Supreme Court could have given directions to this government to appoint judges according to whatever Memorandum of Procedure it decides. The time has come for judges to stand up. We are yet to see that determination in our judiciary. Frankly, lawyers across India are disappointed that a shortfall of judges has been there for so long and there is no sign of activity to rectify this by the higher judiciary.

On the question of corruption in the judiciary, I would emphasise the role of the executive in enticing judges with the allotment of houses and appointments to post-retirement statutory posts. The executive wants a judiciary that is beholden to it. Politicians and governments try their best to influence judges. Earlier, there used to be fear in approaching judges; today, it is not so.

We are living in a dangerous time. Judges are very often and very unfairly at the receiving end. They can't speak up. They can't appear on TV. In fact, the perception among many — and this tribe is increasing — is that there are more and more judges willing to cross the line. The stories one hears in the corridors of the court are unbelievable, though probably true. Recruiting people of integrity and vision is particularly important today when the executive appears invincible. This is exactly the time to show some spine.

When Benches are being constituted on triple talaq and liquor, surely a Bench can be constituted on the appointment of judges, judges' salaries, and to inquire about political interference in the judiciary? Why is the judiciary quiet in the face of such intimidation



by the executive? Why can't it evolve an enforceable code of conduct so that if any politician or party tries to influence a judge, this will be immediately reported and punishment be meted? The people and lawyers support the judiciary and expect judges to be resolute.

In public perception, the Supreme Court is a temple of justice. The Constitution describes the judiciary as one of the three pillars of our democracy. This expression is an embodiment of the spirit of the highest court of the country. It is mostly the Supreme Court, along with the High Courts, that comes to the rescue of the common person and ensures that his or her faith in the rule of law is not shaken.

What transpired in the apex court in the last few days definitely does not augur well for the nation, especially for the litigants, the Bar, and the Bench. Let me present the facts relevant to the present controversy. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered a FIR on September 19 in the Prasad Education Trust matter and the first PIL was filed by the Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reforms (CJAR) forum on October 30. This was mentioned on November 8 before Court No. 2 and was directed to be listed on November 10. Thus, there was no urgency in the matter. However, on November 9, a second PIL which was identical to the first, and not numbered, was mentioned before Court No. 2. It would have been a healthy legal practice to club both as the matter was being heard on November 10 by the same Bench, already constituted to hear the matter.

The FIR does not name any judge of the apex court and there are no allegations against any judge. Following K. Veeraswami v. Union of India (1991), no FIR could be registered

against a sitting Supreme Court judge without the approval of the competent authority.

What the petitioners did amounts to forum shopping and the test to determine that is laid down in Union of India v. Cipla Ltd. (2016). Two factors were spelt out: functional similarity and subterfuge on the part of a litigant/lawyer. Applying both, the second PIL is against the professional ethics of advocacy and a gross misconduct.

As to who has the authority to constitute a Bench, the Supreme Court held in State of Rajasthan v. Prakash Chand (1997): "The administrative control of the High Court vests in the Chief Justice alone... On the judicial side the Chief Justice is only the 'first among the equals'. He alone has the prerogative to constitute Benches of the court and allocate cases to the Benches so constituted... The puisne judges can only do that work as is allotted to them by the Chief Justice or under his directions."

Having enunciated that the Chief Justice is the "master of the roster", we need to examine whether he could pass an order on the administrative side to constitute a Bench (not comprising the Chief Justice) to hear these two PILs, or whether he should have recused himself even on the administrative side. This is clarified in D.C. Saxena v. Hon'ble The Chief Justice Of India (1996) where the Supreme Court held: "When imputations were made against the Chief Justice, the petitioner assumed, in our view, 'wrongly' that the CJI could not constitute Benches nor should he discharge the functions of Chief Justice until the matter is decided... This responsibility flows from the office and none including a litigant has the right to demand for contra position." The Bench did not initiate contempt proceedings either. The entire episode has

created an artificial divide and deeply wounded the Supreme Court. Notwithstanding that, the country's citizenry is aware that this great institution has the resilience to redeem itself.

The portentous developments in the Supreme Court need to be located in the context of a larger institutional power struggle that has been raging between the executive and the judiciary for over a quarter of a century. In 1993, through what is known as the Second Judges case, the Supreme Court appropriated the power to appoint judges to the High Courts and the Supreme Court by interpreting the word "consultation" in Article 124 (2) of the Constitution to mean concurrence of the Chief Justice of India for each and every appointment to the higher judiciary. The Supreme Court further reinforced the position in 1998 in what is called the Third Judges case, which, in fact, was a reference to the court from the then President of India seeking a clarification on certain aspects of the judicial appointments system, which is also known as the collegium system.

Since then, the executive has been 'itching' to wrest this power back from the judges. The discourse on purported judicial activism, the Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill, 2010 that lapsed on the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha, and the National Judicial Appointments Commission Act (NJAC), 2014 that was subsequently struck down by the Supreme Court with a majority of 4-1 as violative of the basic structure doctrine are but manifestations of that struggle for supremacy.

The Supreme Court's striking down of the NJAC has not been taken very kindly by the current National Democratic Alliance government. One mechanism that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his not-so-merry men have exploited to the hilt is the back door that the Supreme Court inadvertently left ajar by providing a role for the government in conceptualising the Memorandum of Procedure (MoP) that would regulate the process of appointment of judges to the higher judiciary. The government has skilfully utilised the protracted negotiations over the MoP to hobble appointments to the higher judiciary.

Concurrently, there is a sustained attempt to build 'one man' into that knight in shining armour, the incorruptible saviour who would deliver the nation from the cesspool of sleaze. This narrative is being implemented by tarring everyone else with a thick black brush — political opponents, institutions, even leaders within their own political realm. Law enforcement agencies are being ruthlessly and unscrupulously mis-utilised to execute this 'tar and defame' strategy.

The registration of an FIR against a retired judge of the Orissa High Court and some other persons, for allegedly attempting to influence through extraneous means proceedings in the Supreme Court, must therefore be viewed with circumspection if not scepticism. In K. Veeraswami v. Union of India (1991), the Supreme Court laid down the law clearly:

THE MANY PADMAVATIS

► Divya Cherian

As the release of Bollywood film Padmavati draws near, protests against it are reaching a fever pitch. Claiming to speak on behalf of all Rajputs, several political figures have objected to the portrayal of the title character of the film for two reasons — that it is a distortion of history and that it is disrespectful to Queen Padmini (appearing in some texts as Padmavati), who is deeply revered by the Rajput community. Recent scholarly work on the Padmavat, such as that of Thomas de Bruijn, Shantanu Phukan and especially Ramya Sreenivasan, makes possible an informed engagement with these claims.

The earliest known composition of the Padmini tale is Sufi poet Malik Muhammad Jayasi's Padmavat, dating to 1540. This tale is part of a new genre, the Sufi premakhyān ('love story'), that flowered from the 14th to 16th centuries in North India. Most of these tales feature a hero-king's quest for union with supreme truth and transcendent beauty — embodied in the texts by a woman of unparalleled physical beauty — and the difficulty of navigating the contradictory pulls of the spiritual and worldly domains. The Padmavat is perhaps the only one of these texts to be grafted upon a historical event, Delhi Sultan Alauddin Khilji's siege of Chittor in 1303. Writing more than 200 years after the event,

Jayasi's tale bears little resemblance to surviving historical accounts of the siege and instead appears to draw in details from contemporaneous events and places.

In Jayasi's composition, a parrot, Hiranman, tells the king of Chittor, Ratan-sen, of the unequalled beauty of the princess of Sinhal, Padmavati. Hiranman's description is enough to trigger in Ratan-sen a desire to attain Padmavati. He leaves behind his wife, Nagmati, becomes a yogi, and heads out, along with his men who also become yogis, on the arduous quest to the faraway Sinhal. With great difficulty, and only after he is ready to give up his life for the quest, Ratan-sen is united with Padmavati and marries her. Due to the pulls of his natal home and the suffering of his first wife, he returns to Chittor, bringing Padmavati along with him. While Ratan-sen works on building peace between Padmavati and Nagmati, a deceitful brahman, expelled from Ratan-sen's court, seeks revenge by going to Delhi and informing Khilji of Padmavati's stunning beauty. Piqued, Khilji decides to march upon Chittor to demand Padmavati. Ratan-sen refuses to part with her. With the Sultan's forces closing in, Ratan-sen dies of injuries sustained in a fight with a Rajput rival. Padmavati and Nagmati commit sati on Ratan-sen's funeral pyre while the remaining Rajput men go into the battlefield to be martyred. When Khilji manages to finally conquer the fortress, all that remains

of Padmavati are her ashes. His victory is thus rendered hollow.

Some manuscript copies explain the Sufi import of the tale by referring to Chittor as the body, Ratan-sen the spirit, Padmini the mind, Hiranman the spiritual guide, and Khilji as illusion ('maya'). Literary representations of Khilji in a polyvalent text such as the Padmavat and in future iterations of the tale then should not be taken as historical. The historical Sultan Alauddin Khilji, as we know him from accounts of his time, was a gifted statesman who strengthened the fisc of the Delhi Sultanate, expanded the frontiers of his kingdom, and capably protected North India from the expanding Mongol domain, a feat that many of his contemporaries could not accomplish.

As for Padmavati, there is no historical evidence that there was such a figure in Chittor when it was besieged, or that desire for a woman played any role in Khilji's interest in conquering the fortress. Padmavati/Padmini, then, is a literary artefact, as is the entire story of love and sacrifice at whose heart she is placed. Any depiction of Padmavati thus cannot be a distortion of history since, in our current state of knowledge, she never existed. Born as a figment of poetic imagination, she is free to be re-shaped in the hands of a different creator.

And indeed, the Padmavat was told and retold over the centuries and across the land. As historian Ramya Sreeniva-

san has carefully shown in her book, The Many Lives of a Rajput Queen, in each retelling, the contours of the story and the key characters within it, including Padmini, changed. Starting a few decades after the original composition, the Padmavat was adapted into Persian forms in North India and Gujarat, and Jain literati and bardic groups composed versions of it for Rajasthani courtly elites. In the 17th century, professional genealogists wove the Guhila house of Ratan-sen into the genealogy of their patrons, the Sisodia rulers of Mewar. By the 18th century, after the decline of the Mughal empire but before colonial conquest, the tale of Padmini was refashioned in Mewar to demonise Alauddin Khilji, also emphasising his Muslim identity and presenting the clash between the Rajputs of Chittor and the Sultan of Delhi as the resistance of Hindus against an encroaching, 'impure' Islam.

In the 19th century, Colonel James Tod, Political Agent in Rajputana of the English East India Company, was guided in his attempt to write the first authoritative history (by contemporary European standards) of the region by the philological, historiographical, and intellectual frameworks of his age, as well as by the political goal of stabilising the region by strengthening the hands of kings against rebellious chiefs. He selectively chose information from the range of pre-colonial sources at his disposal. He incorporated the courtly Ra-

jasthani Padmini narrative into his early 19th century history of Rajasthan, using it, along with other material, to cast Rajputs as a valiant, pure fighting race of Hindus that resisted Islamic conquest, just as Christians had done in the West. Bengali intellectuals of the nascent bhadralok were deeply impressed with the figure of the Rajput as presented in his account, not just for his selfless bravery but also for his resistance against a Muslim conqueror. As the earliest imaginings of an Indian nation — and a Hindu nation — began to take shape, Padmini became a token of the self-sacrificing, virtuous, and chaste Hindu woman that was to be at its heart. In this idealised form, her decision to annihilate her own body was celebrated for the preservation of her 'honour' (read 'chastity') through which was indexed the honour of her husband, her family, her community, and now, her nation.

In her journey from the 16th to the 21st century, Padmavati appears to have become increasingly shackled in the confines of patriarchy. In Rajasthani versions, Padmavati lost her autonomous voice, reduced to a prop on the edges of a scene largely occupied by the king and his courtiers. It was this Rajasthani Padmavati who was celebrated in 19th century bhadralok plays beginning to imagine a Hindu nation and who is today deified as the apotheosis of Rajput, and even Hindu, valour, purity, and sovereignty. Padmavati has been recast as

adhering strictly to codes of conduct applied to elite Rajput women. Allegations of disrespect and inaccuracy being levelled against the film are thus rooted in the expectation, by those familiar only with the Rajput or early Hindu nationalist adaptations, of a silver-screen Padmavati who observes the purdah and does not display any trace of sexuality. The current row over Padmini's portrayal only underscores that in the long arc of its history, the imagined Hindu nation holds in its heart the dutiful, chaste Hindu woman, who acquiesces to patriarchal controls and only exercises her agency within their bounds.

It is important to bear in mind, as Ms. Sreenivasan has shown, that at the same time that the Rajputs were articulating a new claim upon the Padmavat in the 17th century, other Padmini tales continued to be composed. A Sufi migrant from Bengal to the Arakan court (in today's Myanmar) composed his own version of the text in Bengali. In the 19th century, there were multiple Urdu adaptations of the tale printed in North India and an opera performed in 1923 in Paris. There have then been many Padmavatis, just as there were many Ramayanas. The tale, and its heroine, are then not the exclusive legacy of any single community. The effort of spokespersons of a single community, one that continues to exercise tremendous sociopolitical power, to freeze the text into a single, authorised version.

Israeli PM Netanyahu to be in India for three-day visit from Jan 14



NEW DELHI: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is scheduled to arrive in India for a three-day visit on January 14 as the two countries work towards a free trade agreement.

The two countries are also working on a proposal for the Heron TP, medium-altitude, long-endurance, unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) developed by Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) to meet multiple mission needs of the Indian armed forces.

Upon his arrival, Netanyahu will be received by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Ahmedabad, like he did China's Xi Jinping and Japan's Shinzo Abe.

Netanyahu will be in India till January 16, 2018 and from Gujarat he will travel to New Delhi. Agra is another proposed stopover for Netanyahu, the second Israeli Prime Minister to visit India after Ariel Sharon in 2003.

Indian officials preparing for the Israeli Prime Minister's visit said the two countries will likely focus on innovation, agriculture, water management and agriculture, apart from trade.

The bilateral trade between the countries, excluding defence is around \$5 billion.

"The trade is below potential between the two sides. Both have identified promoting business ties and investments as a key focus", said one of the officials on the condition of anonymity.

The Heron TP systems include maritime patrol radar, electronic support measures,

Electronic and communications intelligence and can also be installed with M-19HD multi-sensor electro-optical payload.

The real-time imagery and telemetry data collected by the payloads are transmitted to the ground control station using line-of-sight propagation and satellite communications (SATCOM).

The UAV allows for simultaneous operation of different payloads for multi-mission requirements. "We are working on this proposal", said an official. India officially recognised Israel on September 17, 1950 but the two sides started full diplomatic ties in 1992 under the Congress-government led by PV Narasimha Rao.

Moody's upgrade: Manmohan Singh says economy not out of the woods yet

KOCHI: The NDA government should not be "lured into false belief" that the economy is out of the woods, former prime minister Manmohan Singh said on Saturday, reacting to the Moody's upgradation of India's sovereign credit rating.

The US-based agency upped India's rating to Baa2 from Baa3 and changed its rating outlook to 'stable' from 'positive', saying the reforms will help stabilise rising levels of debt.

"I am glad that Moody's has done what they have done but we must not be, I think, lured into false belief that we are out of the woods," he said, reacting to a query on Moody's

rating, here. The economy needed strong purposeful guidance to move forward at the rate which the government itself says they want the country to move eight to 10%, Singh said on the sidelines of a national seminar on 'Macro Economic Developments in India: Policy Perspectives' organised by the Economics Department of St Teresa's College, Ernakulam.

His comments came in the wake of Finance Minister Arun Jaitley terming the Moody's upgrading India's sovereign rating after 13 years as "belated recognition" of reforms undertaken. Singh also cautioned that the soaring prices of the crude



oil could "hurt the fiscal system" of the country.

"Now the crude oil prices are \$62-64 whereas few months ago,

they were about 40-45. So it can hurt the balance of payment. It can also hurt the fiscal system as well," Singh said. Asked how different he would have implemented the GST, Singh said there was "undue haste" in implementing the new taxation system and blamed the bureaucracy for its lack of preparedness. "Both in administration and implementation, I think there is much to be desired and the very fact that the council has met so many times, they have now reduced rates of 211 items." That showed that there was undue haste in implementation and the bureaucracy had not done its homework, he said.

Chidambaram mocks Modi govt's sudden love for Moody's rating

MUMBAI: Mocking at government's elation over the sovereign rating upgrade by Moody's, ex-finance minister P Chidambaram said only a few months ago the regime had flayed the rating methodology. "Just some months ago, government had said the Moody's methodology was all wrong... A long letter was written by Shaktikanta Das (ex-economic affairs secretary) questioning Moody's ratings methodology, saying they've to revise their methodology as it's all wonky," he told the Tata Literature Live here on Saturday. On Friday, Moody's had upgraded the sovereign ratings by a notch to Baa2 with stable outlook, citing the Modi government's various reform programme and higher growth prospectus. The last rating upgrade was in 2004.

Ridiculing the way government has reacted to the upward rating revision, the senior Congress leader recalled that for the government "Moody's, whose methodology was all wrong circa 2016".

On higher growth, which was cited by the agency as one of the key reasons for the rating action, he said the same agency and government project growth at 6.7 per cent for the current financial year. "It was 8 per cent in 2015-16, 7.1 per cent in 2016-17 and will be 6.7 per cent in 2017-18. Is that North or South, you conclude," he said.

According to him, there are three key indicators -- gross fixed capital formation and within that private sector



investment; credit growth, especially for small businesses, and jobs -- which are critical to assess the health of an economy. "But the dashboard is flashing red on all these three indicators," he lamented. Reeling out numbers, Chidambaram said gross fixed capital formation is down 7-8 points from its peak and there's no sign of it recovering in the near future as well. Further, he said private investment is at its lowest in the past seven-eight years. In addition, several projects are stalled on one hand and may companies are on the other being referred to the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code. All these would lead to closures and downsizing and loss of jobs.

Secondly, the former finance min-

ister pointed out that credit growth has been the lowest in two decades. "It has crept up 6 per cent year-on-year, but for medium industries it has been negative credit growth... SMEs are struggling and have to find finances outside the formal lending system." He also referred to the criticality of job creation saying, "government is unwilling to come up with reliable and authentic data... CMIE (Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy), which is a quite credible agency, stated that between January and June 2017, as many as 19,60,000 jobs were lost."

The senior Congress leader also said over 90 per cent of jobs are in the SME sector which requires an urgent push to boost the economy.

Delhi's College renamed as Vande Mataram Mahavidyalaya



NEW DELHI: The chairperson of Dyal Singh College's governing body on Saturday asserted that the new name 'Vande Mataram Mahavidyalaya' is an inspiring name for the college.

Speaking to ANI, Amitabh Sinha, the chairperson of college's Governing Body said, "Notification was issued that Executive Council approved Dyal Singh evening college becoming a full-fledged day college. Then we had to give it a new and inspiring name, we decided it should be 'Vande Mataram Mahavidyalaya'."

This comment from the chairperson comes a day after the Executive Council approved Dyal Singh evening college to become a full-fledged day college.

"Notification was issued that Executive Council approved Dyal Singh evening college becoming a full-fledged day college. Then we had to give it a new and inspiring name, we decided it should be 'Vande Mataram Mahavidyalaya'," Sinha further said.

Earlier on September 21, Dyal Singh (Evening) College principal Pawan K Sharma had received a notification that the Executive Council has given approval to the evening college becoming a full-fledged day college.

Sharad Yadav questions EC decision on JD-U symbol, vows to fight on

NEW DELHI: Senior socialist leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sharad Yadav on Saturday questioned the Election Commission's decision to grant the "Arrow" symbol to the Nitish Kumar-led faction of Janata Dal-United and vowed to fight it both legally and democratically.

"The decision has not meted out justice. The EC's decision is just asking the person who built the building to vacate it. My lawyers are looking into the matter and will soon take a call. Our fight will continue," Yadav told reporters at a press conference in Delhi. He was responding to the Commission's decision in which it granted the "Arrow" symbol to the Nitish Kumar-faction after a three-month battle between the two warring factions of the JD-U. Yadav, a former president of the JD-U, said the EC's decision would not deter his fight to "save democracy". "We are not dismayed



with this decision. We knew the fate but it does not mean that we should end our fight. Our fight for party symbol is a legal battle but the real issue, for which we are fighting, is to save democracy. "The country runs on issues and on principles. They (Nitish-led faction) have insulted the mandate of 11 crore people of Bihar by joining hands with BJP. "They

have compromised with the issues and principles. We will continue our democratic fight," he said. Hinting that he could form a party in the future, Yadav said he has held discussions with Congress and his candidates would fight the Gujarat Assembly polls on "auto rickshaw" symbol. "Talks have been completed. The Congress is a driving force in

Gujarat and it would declare the seats and candidates," he said.

The Yadav-led faction of the JD-U is contesting the Gujarat elections under Chhotubhai Vasava's leadership. On being asked about ramifications of the EC decision regarding his disqualification case, which is pending before Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu, Yadav said: "There would be difficulties when you fight for the cause of democracy but I never bowed before anyone. You can see my biodata.

I have devoted my long life to politics but I never compromised on principles." Javed Raza, who is considered close to Sharad Yadav, said they are reviewing the EC order in detail and would soon decide the future course of action in consultation with their lawyers. "We do have the option of knocking the door of the High Court," he said.

Bihar court imposes Rs 1-crore cost on woman for 'frivolous' plea seeking grandchild's custody

BHAGALPUR: A family court in Bihar's Bhagalpur district recently granted the legal custody of a three-year-old girl to her father and imposed an exemplary cost of Rs 1 crore on the petitioner, the child's maternal grandmother, for "indulging in frivolous and vexatious litigation".

The court of principal judge SG Mishra ordered Geeta Devi to deposit Rs 1 crore for a fixed term in the name of the child, Bhavita, and handover the receipt to her father Ramesh G Murty, a resident of Ghaziabad in the national capital region (NCR).

The judge felt that if Devi and her immediate family members were left unpunished for "misleading the court", it would amount to encouraging wrongdoers.

The court passed the order on October 17, 2017, but the certified copy of the verdict was made available only this week.

Devi had filed the petition seeking custody of the child under provisions of Guardians and Wards Act, 1890, on September 9, 2014. In her petition, she said her daughter Mridula Lata had married Murty in 2004. Mridula died during child birth at a Noida hospital in NCR in May 2014 as she was "not properly taken care of" by her son-in-law, Devi said. She further claimed there was no female member in the family of Murty and therefore "I readily accepted my son-in-law's proposal of bringing up the child."

Devi said, adding that after she brought the child with her to Bhagalpur, Murty neither visited them to see his daughter nor met the expenses incurred on her upbringing. Murty's lawyer Ram Kumar Mishra said the allegations against his client were found to be false by the court. The court was satisfied with documents that showed Murthy was



very much concerned about the health of his wife during pregnancy, he said. The documents also proved that Devi had brought the child without Murty's consent, the lawyer said, adding that his client had registered a case of kidnapping against Devi and her family members at Indrapuram police station in Ghaziabad.

"During the course of the hearing in the case, the family court had ordered interim custody of the child to her father but Devi and her family members had managed to "escape" with the child, Ram Kumar Mishra added. Subsequently Murty moved the Patna high court over non-compliance of the family court's order.

The high court, however, said it would hear the matter after the final verdict of the family court, Ram Kumar Mishra said. The lawyer said Bhavita had been handed over to her father after court verdict.

Senior advocate Abhay Kant Jha, who represented the petitioner, said the verdict would be challenged in the Patna high court soon. While seeking the custody of the child, Devi had claimed that she could provide love, affection and all facilities for her proper upbringing," Jha added.

Smriti Irani hits out at Shashi Tharoor for his 'maharaja' remark amid Padmavati row

NEW DELHI: Union minister Smriti Irani took a jibe at Congress leader Shashi Tharoor for his reported 'maharaja' comments amidst a row over period drama Padmavati. Tharoor reportedly said on Thursday the "so called valourous maharajas" had scurried to accommodate themselves when the Brit-

ish "trampled" over their honour and were now after a filmmaker, claiming that prestige was at stake. Reacting to Tharoor's remarks, Irani tweeted, "Did all the Maharajs (kings) kneel in front of the British? What will Jyotiraditya Scindia, Diggajaya (Digvijaya Singh) and Amrinder Singh say on

Shashi Tharoor's comments?" Tharoor on Thursday had tweeted, "I'm dismayed that some BJP supporters are claiming I attacked Rajput honour... I spoke about the Maharajas who made their accommodations w/ the (with the) British. I have never made a communal comment in my

life." Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia on Friday lashed out at Tharoor over the 'maharaja' comment. Scindia was quoted as saying, "I think he (Shashi Tharoor) should study history, I am Jyotiraditya Scindia and I am proud of my past." Tharoor said people's sentiments must be respected in the

interest of India's diversity and harmony. "Rajput valour is part of our history and is not in question. BJP and its censors should take these concerns into account," he said. Sanjay Leela Bhansali's movie Padmavati is witnessing protests with some groups alleging that it tampered with historical facts.

People under stress tend to make risky decisions



feature poor decision-making, the researchers noted. "We found a microcircuit of neurons in the striatum that we could manipulate to reverse the effects of stress on this type of decision making," said Ann Graybiel, Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, the US. The researchers believe that this circuit integrates information about the good and bad aspects of possible choices, helping the brain to produce a decision. The team conducted a mice study, whereby rodents were allowed to choose between highly concentrated chocolate milk, which they like, under the presence of a bright light, which they don't, and an option with dimmer light but weaker chocolate milk.

A study has found that people going through stressful circumstances usually make risky and abnormal decisions under chronic stress.

Making decisions in this type of situation, known as a cost-benefit conflict, is dramatically affected by chronic stress. The study, published in the journal *Cell*, states that impairments of a specific brain circuit underlie this abnormal decision making and could further restore normal behaviour by manipulating this circuit.

If a method for tuning this circuit in humans were developed, it could help patients with disorders such as depression, addiction, and anxiety, which often

Before experiencing stress, normal rats and mice chose to run towards the dimmer light and weaker chocolate milk about half the time. As the researchers gradually increased the concentration of chocolate milk in the dimmer side, the animals began choosing that side more frequently.

The results found that stressed animals were far likelier to choose high-risk, high-payoff options.

Drug-resistant organisms causing spike in infectious diseases

Multi-Drug Resistant organisms that cause deadly infections are spreading resulting in community-acquired infections, reveals a new study by city's Sir Ganga Ram Hospital (SRGH).

The new findings are worrying because the organisms are resistant to latest generations of antibiotics, leading to high mortality.

The hospital analysed 201 patients with community-acquired infections for the study. It found their infections carry "classically hospital strains" which were drug resistant with high mortality.

Researchers said that these patients did not come in contact with any health facility in the last three months or more.

The study Association of high mortality with extended-spectrum-lactamase (ESBL) positive cultures in community acquired infections, was conducted by Department of Critical Care of SRGH.

ESBLs are organisms resistant to various newer generation antibiotics and can be easily transferred



in the community, the study said.

These resistant infections pose therapeutic challenges to doctors during treatment and may therefore be associated with high morbidity and mortality.

"The distinction between community-acquired and hospital-acquired infections is becoming increasingly blurred," said Sumit Ray, author of the study and vice-chairman of critical care at SRGH. "The main reasons for this are

the spread of classically 'hospital' strains, particularly resistant *Klebsiella* and *E. Coli*, into the community and vice versa, and repeated admissions of individuals to hospitals with long standing underlying diseases."

He said in addition, the contribution of antibiotic resistance due to easy availability of antibiotics, often used without medical supervision, has resulted in the increasing reservoir of potential infections.

"The resistance to high-end antibiotics by organisms contracted by patients in the community resulting in high mortality, seen in our study, is a cause for worry and needs further research and proper action plan," Ray said.

According to the researchers, the striking point noted in the results is the emergence of *E. coli* as most common bacteria in the community causing bacteraemia, respiratory and urinary tract infection. They are also causing higher mortality in ESBL positive producers as compared to ESBL negative producers. "A high percentage (63.44 per cent) of these *E. coli* was ESBL producers. This reflects the increased resistance pattern to high end antibiotics in hospital acquired infections due to inadvertent early use of third generation cephalosporins in the last decade, which is further trickling over into the community, because of plasmid-mediated transfer of its genetic materials during conjugation," the study added.

Physical activity, daily chores can help older women live longer

Completing the chores and errands of daily life may help older women, above the age of 65, in reducing their mortality risk, as older people expend more energy doing the same kinds of activities they did when younger, says a study.

The amount of physical activity older women undergo while performing daily tasks equates to 30 minutes of light physical exercises. The study, published in the *Journal of American Geriatrics Society*, noted that 30 minutes of light physical activity per day lowers the mortality risk by 12 per cent while an additional 30 minutes of moderate activities, such



as bicycling at a leisurely pace or brisk walking, reduced the risk by 39 per cent. At the same time, it can also prevent the risk of chronic

diseases. "Every movement counts," said Andrea LaCroix, Professor at the University of California in San Diego, the US.

"A lot of what we do on a daily basis is improving our health, such as walking to the mail box, strolling around the neighborhood, folding clothes and straightening up the house. Activities like these account for more than 55 per cent of how older individuals get their daily activity," LaCroix added.

The researchers followed 6,000 women, aged between 65 to 99 years, for a period of four and a half years. The women were recommended to wear a measuring

device called an accelerometer on their hip around-the-clock for seven days while going about their daily activities. The study found that women do not have to run marathons daily to stay healthy. But the paradigm needs to shift in terms of women staying physically fit. "Older people expend more energy doing the same kinds of activities they did when younger, so their daily movement has to accommodate for this.

Think of it as taking a pill (activity level) at different doses (amounts of time) depending on the age of the patient. It's not one size fits all," LaCroix noted.

Drug to treat schizophrenia could cure nerve disease as well



A common drug used to treat schizophrenia can be used to slow down the progression of nerve diseases as well, says a study.

This neurodegenerative disease normally leads to a progressive paralysis of the skeletal muscles and, on average, three years after the onset of symptoms, to death. After six years of research on several animal models and a few patients, the researchers discovered that the drug, pimozide, stabilises the disease in the short term. The study, published in the journal *JCI Insight*, found the medication to be safe.

"This medication alleviates the symptoms of ALS in animal models," said Alex Parker, a researcher at University of Montreal Hospital Research Centre in Canada. "Riluzole and edaravone, the drugs currently used, have modest effects. Other studies must be conducted to confirm our results, but we believe that we've found a medication that may prove to be more effective in improving patients' quality of life," Parker added.

Although pimozide has been well-known for 50 years, recent studies uncovered genetic links between schizophrenia and ALS. The researchers said that their next step is to conduct a phase-2 clinical trial on 100 volunteers in nine hospital centres across Canada. "At this stage, people with ALS should not use this medication," Lawrence Korngut, Associate Professor at the Cumming School of Medicine at the University of Calgary in Canada, said. "We must first confirm that it is really useful and safe in the longer term. It is also important to be aware that pimozide is associated with significant side effects. Therefore, it should only be prescribed in the context of a research study," Korngut added.

How parents may be exposing kids to second-hand smoke



Parents who smoke in front of their kids are more likely to believe that there is no presence of tobacco smoke in the air. However, they may be wrong as the dangers of second-hand smoking might still affect the young ones, finds a study.

The study, published in the journal *Nicotine and Tobacco Research*, stated that parents who smoke mistakenly rely on their own physical senses to gauge the presence of tobacco smoke in the air.

"This reliance on their own physical sensory perceptions leads to misconceptions of when and where children are exposed to tobacco smoke," said Laura Rosen, researcher at the Tel Aviv University in Israel.

"No one has previously put their finger on this exposure perception problem. This is important for the ongoing debate about restrictions on smoking in public places, since people may be exposed without being aware of it," Rosen added. The research team interviewed 65 parents and found many false assumptions and a lack of awareness of where and when the children were exposed to cigarette smoke.

The researchers then compared the participating parents' misconceptions of second hand smoke exposure with scientific findings from recent studies. They found that if the parents believed that if they did not see or smell the smoke, their children were not exposed. "Many parents believe they are taking adequate measures to protect their children from the damage of cigarette smoke. But we found that they are not even aware of some of the exposure, and therefore do not take sufficient measures to protect their children," the researchers noted.

Scientists make fundamental discovery on how to tackle allergies

A team of scientists has made a fundamental discovery about how our body's immune system clears harmful infections. The University of Edinburgh researchers identified a previously unknown mechanism by which the responses of key cells of the immune system are regulated.

The findings could inform research into improved treatments for allergies or chronic inflammatory diseases, such as lung and liver fibrosis, researchers say. Scientists made the discovery by studying how the immune system in mice fights off parasitic worms. These parasites provoke a strong immune response, enabling researchers to carry out in-depth studies of the defence mechanisms involved.

They found that chemical signals from infecting organisms activate cells



- called Th2 cells - causing them to multiply and express a key protein, known as EGFR. The cells then migrate from the lymph nodes - where they are stored - to the site of infection, where they

release defence proteins to expel the parasites. Researchers found that Th2 cells release defence molecules when they detect the damage caused by invading parasites, but can only perform this task if they express EGFR.

This safety mechanism - unknown until now - blocks the release of defence molecules in the absence of parasites, and thereby prevents tissue damage, the team says.

Lead author Dietmar Zaiss said: "We found an entirely new mechanism by which immune responses against parasites are regulated. These findings give us fresh insight into the functioning of local immune responses and should allow us to develop better vaccines against parasite infections."

The study is published in the journal *Immunity*.

Talc powder-cancer link: Johnson & Johnson win California lawsuit

Johnson & Johnson have managed to get out of a soup after a California jury ruled in the company's favour in a lawsuit by a woman who said she developed mesothelioma (a form of cancer) after being exposed to asbestos in the company's talc-based products including J&J's Baby Powder.

The Los Angeles Superior Court jury's verdict came in the first trial centering on claims that J&J's talc products contained asbestos.

The American multinational pharmaceutical company has been in the news for all the wrong reasons, lately and has been separately battling thousands of cases claiming those products can also cause ovarian cancer.

The lawsuit filed by Tina Herford claimed that she developed mesothelioma after using

J&J talcum powder products that her lawyers claimed contained asbestos.

Reuters watched the verdict through an online broadcast by Courtroom View Network. The jury also found in favor of talc supplier Imerys Talc.

Welcoming the verdict, J&J said it believed that setbacks dealt to individuals pursuing ovarian cancer cases had "forced plaintiff attorneys to pivot to yet another baseless theory."

"Johnson's Baby Powder has been around since 1894 and it does not contain asbestos or cause mesothelioma or ovarian cancer," J&J said.

Chris Panatier, Herford's lawyer, in an email cautioned against reading too much into a single verdict.

"It is a matter of time before juries begin holding them to ac-



count," he said.

The verdict came as a federal jury, separately, ordered J&J to pay \$247 million to six patients who said they were injured by defective Pinnacle hip implants.

Mesothelioma is a deadly

form of cancer closely associated with exposure to asbestos. It affects the delicate tissue that lines body cavities, most often around the lungs, but also in the abdomen and elsewhere.

Herford's lawyers contended

that internal J&J documents showed the New Jersey-based company for decades was aware of the presence of asbestos in the talc that was used in its products but kept selling them anyway.

J&J faces lawsuits by around 5,500 plaintiffs nationally asserting talc-related claims, largely based on claims it failed to warn women about the risk of developing ovarian cancer from the products. In five trials in Missouri involving ovarian cancer lawsuits, juries found J&J liable four times and awarded the plaintiffs \$307 million. In California, a jury awarded a now-deceased woman \$417 million.

But in October, J&J scored major victories when a Missouri appellate court threw out the first verdict there for \$72 million and a California judge tossed the \$417 million verdict.

Five popular fintech platforms for hassle-free education loan

NEW DELHI: The debt associated with attending a premium B-school or getting a foreign degree is overwhelming. For millions of young Indians, affording this dream is an obstacle and a pressing concern.

Moreover, with low credit penetration, it is extremely difficult for a middle-class family to arrange funds for their child's education.

This is where platforms providing education loans step in to make credit for young professionals and college students accessible and affordable. Education loan is the most cost-effective means to fund education if one is unable to get a full scholarship.

Though most banks provide an education loan, in today's era there are certain fintech players giving attractive offers on the same. Here is a list of five popular fintech players giving a push to the education dreams of students in India:

HDFC Credila
HDFC Credila funds students for higher education in India and abroad. With HDFC Credila, students can get their education loan pre-approved even before they start ap-



plying to Universities.

HDFC Credila has enabled numerous students to pursue higher education in their dream institute, with education loan approval even before the admission process.

InCred

InCred is a new-age financial services group founded with an aim to provide credit in a hassle-free manner, thereby furthering financial inclusion in the country.

The education loans provided

by the company seek to enable young Indians to meet their aspirations of higher education in India and abroad. These loans are designed to bridge the gap between personal potential and financial feasibility for students seeking education beyond K-12.

Vidya Lakshmi

Vidya Lakshmi is a first of its kind portal for students seeking education loan. This portal has been developed under the guidance of the Ministry of Finance, Ministry

of Human Resource Development, and Indian Banks Association with a view to enable all poor and middle class students to pursue higher education of their choice without any constraint of funds.

Avanse

A new age education finance company, Avanse through its customized solutions and flexible repayment plans aims to provide a hassle-free and 100 percent education finance to Indians, to study in India and abroad. The platform wants to encourage and mentor students through underwriting innovation, accessibility, and trustworthiness, enabling holistic development.

Faircent

Faircent's semi-secure student loan product helps students avail fast and easy personal loans at a reasonable cost. Under this product, college students can fund purchase of items such as laptops, books, mobile phones, etc. by registering their loan requirements on the platform at a reasonable rate with a flexible loan period ranging between six to thirty-six months.

Diageo sues Vijay Mallya for \$40 million payment

NEW DELHI: Diageo Plc. has sued businessman Vijay Mallya to recover a \$40 million payment made when he was ousted from United Spirits Ltd, the UK spirits maker's Indian unit, last year, Bloomberg reported on Friday.

Diageo filed the suit in London on Tuesday after setting out the grievances it has against Mallya in its annual report in August, the report said.

The spirits maker claims Mallya breached a \$75 million agreement, of which it had already paid out \$40 million, made when he stepped down as chairman of United Spirits in February 2016, Bloomberg said.

It's also seeking about \$141 million over questionable payments made by companies affiliated to Mallya. His son, Sidhartha, is also named in the suit, according to Bloomberg. Mallya flew to the UK in March 2016 as Indian lenders to his defunct Kingfisher Airlines Ltd moved in on him, following the payment made by Diageo, to recover Rs.9,100 crore they claim the airline owed them. The \$75 million payment Diageo agreed to pay over five years was part of a sweetheart deal under which Mallya agreed to leave United Spirits and not compete or interfere with it for five years. Diageo also said it would release Mallya from liabilities flagged in an internal report.

Diageo has amassed a 55% stake in



United Spirits since it first purchased a share of the Indian whiskey producer in 2013. "Diageo is pursuing substantial repayment and compensation from Dr Vijay Mallya and certain of his affiliate companies," Bloomberg quoted a spokeswoman for Diageo as saying in a statement. "They include seeking compensation from Dr. Mallya for breaches of the agreements announced in February 2016 that ended his association with United Spirits."

The Diageo suit comes as Mallya prepares for an extradition hearing in London next month over allegations that he committed a billion-dollar fraud.

Mallya, who has been released on bail, told Bloomberg in a phone interview on Friday that the Diageo suit was being reviewed by his lawyers and he would defend any action brought against him. He also denied the allegations related to the Indian fraud charges.

Trai asks Reliance Communications to give details on subscribers, unspent balance

NEW DELHI: The telecom regulator Trai on Friday asked Reliance Communications to submit details of its subscribers immediately and unspent balance of pre-paid customers by January 10.

"The Authority...interalia, directed M/s RCL (Reliance Communications Limited) to furnish compliance report of the direction by 10th January, 2018 together with the details of the number of subscribers successfully ported out, remaining subscribers

who could not port out and reasons thereof, and total unspent amount of such pre-paid mobile subscribers," Trai said in its direction to RCom. RCom will shut down voice call service from December 1 and its customers can move to other networks by the end of the year.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) has asked RCom to immediately share details of pre-paid and post-paid customers that were on its 2G GSM and CDMA



till October.

RCom, reeling under debt of around Rs 46,000 crore, decided to shut down its voice call services after it failed to close its wireless business merger deal with Aircel in October.

The company has proposed resolution plan for about Rs 40,000 crore through asset monetisation, issue of equity and carry forward some debt.

RCom has slipped in to loss from last four quarters mainly on account of intense tariff competition in the market.

Bitcoin investments new attraction for Indians, say experts

NEW DELHI: Experts involved or associated with the Bitcoin industry, maintain that it has emerged as a new attraction for Indians who are keen to augment their wealth, notwithstanding calls issued by the Supreme Court to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to put in place effective regulatory mechanisms to prevent money laundering in any form. Commenting on the thriving bitcoin scene in India, Zebpay co-founder Sandeep Goenka said, "Investing in bitcoin has emerged as a significant trend in the past few months. We have enabled Indians to buy an international asset in a large scale and help them contribute to increase in wealth."

According to Goenka and others involved in this industry, the key benefits that most Indians see are as follows: According to leading cryptocurrency exchanges in India, cryptocurrency is gaining popularity, primarily as a financial asset.

Many bitcoin startups in India believe remittances are a huge potential market for them.

Bitcoin transactions are more economical than digital transfers.

Bitcoin allows people to buy goods

and services and exchange money without involving banks, credit card issuers or other third parties. Despite an 8.9 percent drop in 2016, India has retained its position as a top receiver of bitcoin-related remittances worldwide, as per a World Bank report.

Many bitcoin startups in India believe remittances are a huge potential market for them. Bitcoin transactions are more economical than wire transfers. EthXpay co-founder Subharansh Rai said, "Bitcoin makes payments fast and inexpensive. Payment portals, like banks, levy transaction charges on beneficiaries. With bitcoin, there are no overhead costs or extra charges, making it a more appealing form of payment as workers get paid closer to real wages."

The global bitcoin trade volume is estimated to be about USD five billion a day. India's annual bitcoin trade volume stands at USD 20 billion. Zebpay claims that there are more than 1.5 million bitcoin users in India and 200,000 users are being added each month. Most users buy bitcoins as a financial asset. India's reluctance to encourage mainstream bitcoin usage is more pronounced in the light

of developments taking place in other parts of Asia. Japan continues to be a trendsetter for bitcoin use and South Korea is also showing a marked interest in blockchain, especially after electronics manufacturer Samsung announced in May that it was exploring corporate use for the software powering Ethereum. China and Russia view the digital coin business with scepticism and consider it to be illegal.

Rai said, "India is already three years behind USA, Japan and Hong Kong when it comes to crypto-currency adoption. We believe this technology will be a game-changer, probably even bigger than what the internet did for us in the 90s."

The current concerns by Reserve Bank India only accelerate our need to engage with authorities and regulators to generate awareness about blockchain, which powers the use of bitcoin and other crypto-currencies. "To regulate the flow of bitcoin, a Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra recently sent notices to the ministries of finance, law and justice, information technology, market regulator SEBI and the RBI to frame an effective mechanism. Cur-

rently, the RBI regards crypto-currencies as a violation of the country's existing foreign exchange norms. It has largely maintained a measured, cautious and vigilant approach about popularizing the use of bitcoin. Technology enthusiasts, however, believe that the craze for crypto-currency is on the upswing in India.

Recent positive reviews and growing customer acquisition levels have made bitcoin companies bullish about the market in India. "Investing in bitcoin isn't a get-rich-quick method. Investors must spend time educating themselves about bitcoin and the technology behind it, much like real estate or stock market," said Rai. Bitcoin was created in 2009 by a person using the alias Satoshi Nakamoto. The acquiring of bitcoins is hassle-free as several market places called "bitcoin exchanges" allow people to buy or sell it using different currencies. Mt. Gox is the largest bitcoin exchange.

The research conducted by Cambridge University in 2017 revealed that there are 2.9 to 5.8 million unique users using a crypto-currency wallet, most of them using bitcoin. Currently, 1 Bitcoin equals over Rs.48.

I-T dept seizes Rs 11 crore from entities in NSE co-location case

NEW DELHI: The income-tax department on Friday seized about Rs 11 crore cash as part of its searches in the tax evasion probe against a broker and others said to be involved in the high-profile co-location case. They said the cash, hidden in various wooden cavities of furniture and other items, was recovered and seized from the Delhi premises of a broker identified as Sanjay Gupta. Gupta did not reply to queries sent by PTI. His phone as well as that of his family members were switched off. A major chunk of Rs 11 crore seizure from three locations in Delhi was from the place of Gupta's business partner. Nearly Rs 10 crore was found in a cavity beneath a staircase at one of the premises that was searched, officials said. Besides Delhi, searches were also conducted at Mumbai, Kolkata and Bengaluru.



"Certain other incriminating documents have also been seized. The raids are still on," a senior official said. The department has been conducting searches in Delhi and Mumbai on few brokers linked to the NSE for the last three days and

the tax sleuths have said they recovered a number of documents and computer peripherals till now.

The premises of Chitra Ramkrishna, former MD and CEO of the exchange, as also that of others formerly associated with NSE were

also searched, they added. There was no immediate response to query sent to Ramkrishna. In the NSE co-location case, certain brokers, including Gupta's OPG Securities, operating on its trading platform allegedly got preferential access to servers of the exchange. A co-location facility provides early login and faster access to data feed of the exchange. Even a split-second faster access can yield huge gains for a trader.

The NSE and brokers being raided by the department have not commented on the action till now. Officials had said the action is based on "actionable inputs" suggesting tax evasion by a few entities linked to the NSE and also the co-location issue, where it is alleged that certain brokers operating on the trading platform allegedly made abnormal profits as a result of getting prefer-

ential access to the servers of the exchange. The co-location case is under the scanner of Sebi while the National Stock Exchange (NSE) earlier this week had submitted the forensic audit report on the issue, prepared by auditing firm EY, to the markets regulator.

EY was entrusted with carrying out the forensic audit into cash markets, currency derivative and interest rate futures platform. The nation's largest bourse had earlier engaged Deloitte for a forensic audit of its equity derivatives platform. In July, the NSE had approached the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) to settle the case through consent mechanism. The regulator has not responded to the proposal as yet, though.

The controversy has delayed NSE's IPO plans. Its rival BSE already went public in January.

Walmart India recognised among 100 best companies for women

CHENNAI: Walmart India, the wholly owned subsidiary of Walmart Stores Inc, was recognised among the 100 Best Companies for Women in India in 2017 as per a study. The study, was conducted by AVTAR Career Group and The Working Mother Media to identify companies with the most favourable policies and practices in promoting employment, retention and increasing participation of women in the workforce, a press release said.

The evaluation process was based on practices and policies followed by companies for increasing women's workforce participation, which the panel then weighed to select, score and rank the winners.

"We are delighted to be included in this prestigious list of top 100 companies for women in India...we are committed to having a fair share of women in the workforce.", Walmart India, President and CEO, Krish Iyer said.

"We formulate and implement practical strategies and solutions for advancement of our women associates through education, inspiration and opportunity.", he said.

Demonetisation, RERA and GST have been the Endurance Test for the Real Estate Industry

NEW DELHI: In his opening remarks at the annual CREDAI-MCHI property expo, Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Devendra Fadnavis, said, "It is absolutely safe to buy a house at the MAHA Property Expo organized by CREDAI - MCHI as all the projects are MAHARERA registered." He congratulated CREDAI - MCHI for organising the magnificent exhibition which presents entire gamut of real estate industry in Mumbai and MMR along with the opportunity to explore various home finance options all under one roof. "People of

Mumbai and MMR need the initiatives like Property Expo as buying a home is a lifetime investment and we Indians like to do lot of research while making a purchase. EODB and Maha RERA have been a success not because Government has done it but because of your (developer fraternity) participation in it," added Fadnavis.

He stated that if we work in isolation, nothing is going to succeed. Associations like CREDAI - MCHI took up issues with Government to ease various approval procedures and since



then every day we the government is improvising up on them. Today we are talking about ease of doing business among other cities of India; soon we will be competing with world cities.

The saying which goes for real estate industry: When going gets tough, the tough gets going. Toughness leads to endurance. "Demonetisation, RERA, GST have been your endurance test, now you will go northwards, just look up and landscape of Mumbai will change. From Government side I would like to reiterate that I am aware that

you still have lots of problems which I would like to trouble shoot. I still see you smiling in spite of all these problems, so keep smiling. That gives me inspiration to solve them. I am confident that real estate industry of Maharashtra will contribute most to the GDP in near future," expressed Fadnavis.

Speaking on the occasion, Mayur Shah, President, CREDAI - MCHI, said, "I would like to thank Hon'ble Chief Minister for implementation of MAHARERA which is the great achievement for the State of Maharashtra.

Maharashtra is the only state where complete implementation of RERA has happened and this is courtesy our dynamic Chief Minister. RERA Registration is completely online and no one had to visit RERA office even once. Last year industry grappled with Demonetisation, RERA and GST, this year we expect stabilisation to happen. Real-Estate industry will touch new horizons soon. The objective of CREDAI-MCHI MAHA Property Expo currently happening in BKC is to providing complete housing solutions under one roof."

Bhaichung Bhutia offers to train Majid Khan

NEW DELHI: Arjuna Awardee and Padma Shri footballer Bhaichung Bhutia on Saturday offered a training stint to Kashmiri footballer-turned-terrorist Majid Khan, who had surrendered.

The former Indian captain has written to the Jammu and Kashmir Football Federation offering training to Majid at Bhaichung Bhutia Football Schools in New Delhi.

"I was very sad to read reports of Majid joining a terrorist organisation. Football has provided solace to many over the years and I feel he requires a platform to play the 'Beautiful game,' again," Bhutia, the sole Indian Player to have played over 100 International matches stated.



The 40-year-old insisted that he wants Majid to get training under his coaches so that they could decide where the Kashmiri youth stands. "I have already touched base with the J&K Football Association offering him to train with Bhaichung Bhutia Football Schools in Delhi. I want him to train under my Coaches and then we can decide where

he stands as a player. I believe he deserves an opportunity and hence, felt best to open the doors for him," Bhutia said.

"I also read that he has been a promising Footballer since his childhood and has even won quite many trophies. Once you start kicking the ball again, you never know, your lives may just kick-off again. We want Majid to come back to normal life as early as possible," he added.

Majid, who had recently joined Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), surrendered before the First Rashtriya Rifles and is currently under the custody of Victor Force in Awantipora.

The Anantnag's footballer reportedly surrendered after his par-

ents' appeal.

Even the top police officer of Jammu and Kashmir appealed Majid to surrender and once again join the mainstream.

On Thursday, Inspector General of Police (Kashmir range) Munir Khan told, "A very serious counselling campaign is going on in Kashmir to discourage youth to join militancy and we will get positive results in near future. It is our sincere endeavour to ensure that these misguided youth come and join the mainstream."

He also informed the media that the government is preparing a new surrender policy for local Kashmiri militants.



Ahmad Shahzad to consult psychologist to regain form

KARACH: Pakistan opening batsman Ahmad Shahzad, who hasn't been able to perform consistently in the last few years, is planning to consult a psychologist to regain his form. He is going to consult a British psychologist Dr Taimoor after finishing National T20 Cup, reports the Express Tribune.

Shahzad, who made his ODI debut for Pakistan in 2009, started well in his career but the right-handed batsman has been struggling with form since past few years.

He also failed to display a promising show in the recently concluded Sri Lanka series in UAE and thus was replaced by left-handed batsman Imamul Haq in the ODI series.

It was also reported that Shahzad's poor

performance in 2016 World T20 led to a PCB committee suggesting a ban on him.

Seeing Shahzad's dip in form, Pakistan head coach Mickey Arthur advised him to consult a psychologist to regain the disappearing boost. Young Pakistan opener Ahmed Shehzad suffered a fractured skull after being hit by a Corey Anderson bouncer in a dramatic dismissal on the second day of a cricket test against New Zealand in Abu Dhabi. Shehzad also suffered a fractured skull after being hit by a New Zealand's Corey Anderson's bouncer in a Test match in Abu Dhabi and it is said that the Pakistan cricketer has been witnessing a bad form since then.

Shaun Marsh eager to grasp latest Australia chance in Ashes 2017/18

SYDNEY: Batsman Shaun Marsh is determined to grasp what he admits is probably a final chance to establish himself as a regular member of the Australia test side after earning an Ashes recall.

The 34-year-old, who has played 23 tests since his debut in 2011, was one of a couple of surprise inclusions in the Australia squad named on Friday for next week's opener against England in Brisbane.

Marsh secured his eighth recall to the test side with some solid form for Western Australia but conceded that failure on Australian cricket's biggest stage could end his test career.

"I'm not trying to think about it that way, it's another opportunity for me to get out there and play some good cricket for Australia," Marsh, who averages 36 in tests, told reporters in Brisbane.

"I know I've got some runs in me still to go, so I've just got to prepare well and just enjoy it, have a lot of fun and bat myself in."

Marsh has been opening for his state but is likely to bat in the number six spot against England having seen off the claims of brother Mitchell, team mate Hilton Cartwright and the incumbent Glenn Maxwell.

After playing in all four tests on the tour of India earlier this year Marsh was dumped for the following tour of Bangladesh in what was quite a blow given he was considered something of sub-continent specialist. His recall did not cause as much surprise at that of 32-year-old wicketkeeper Tim Paine, a pick criticised as "confused" by



spin bowling great Shane Warne, and Marsh himself was left with just one prevailing emotion.

"It's just excitement," Marsh added. "I hadn't really thought about it much over the last two or three months. I just thought if I played good cricket for WA then I might have a sniff. I just can't wait to get out there and have a crack.

"An Ashes series in Australia, it doesn't get any

better than that, I'm going to give it a red hot crack."

Injury has also played a significant role in Marsh's stop-start career but he said he was in good shape going into the five-match series.

"My body's in really good condition at the moment," he said. "I feel like I'm hitting the ball the best I have done for a long while so I'll go in with plenty of confidence."

Cristiano Ronaldo will find his scoring touch vs Atletico Madrid: Zinedine Zidane

MADRID: For Zinedine Zidane, the Madrid derby on Saturday is just what Cristiano Ronaldo and Karim Benzema need to break their scoring slump.

The Real Madrid forwards have been struggling in the Spanish league, with just two goals between them.

Ronaldo, while striking six times in the Champions League, has tallied only one in seven Liga appearances.

Benzema is having an even tougher time, with just two in 12 matches across all competitions. "It's true that this is not normal, but they just need to keep training and keep trying as they have been doing," Zidane says. "You don't need to tell Karim and Cristiano that they should train more, it's something they do. They will go out on the pitch and score, I am sure of it." Over his career, Ronaldo has thrived against Real's crosstown rival, Atletico. Ronaldo holds the record for the Spanish capital derby with 21 goals.



He scored a hat trick in his last league visit to Atletico, the final derby to be played at the former Vicente Calderon Stadium. Benzema's performances, however, have not been as impressive, with three goals in his last 14 league matches against Atletico. Zidane says Ronaldo and Benzema focused on recovering their scoring form last week during the international break, when they stayed at the

club. "We have been working on it," he said. "What I want is that my players, my forwards, play well, and tomorrow is a good match for them to keep trying."

Their scoring droughts have contributed to Real's irregular season.

Real is in third place and level on points with Atletico, which is fourth after having trouble winning at its new Wanda Metropolitan Stadium.

Atletico is also counting on Antoine Griezmann having a breakout. The France forward has struck just three times in 13 matches in this campaign. "Griezmann is the player who can singlehandedly decide matches for us," Atletico coach Diego Simeone says. "I have a good feeling ... we have yet to see the best of Griezmann." Both sides need a victory to keep pace with leader Barcelona, which visits Leganes hours earlier. If Barcelona wins, Real and Atletico will be starting at an 11-point gap by kickoff.

Cheteshwar Pujara notches up well-deserved fifty against Sri Lanka in Kolkata Test

KOLKATA: It was due on Friday but the rain had other plans. As the sun got out of bed and stretched itself on Saturday --- rising slightly late perhaps because it is the weekend --- Cheteshwar Pujara reached his 16th Test half-century on Day 3 of the first Test match between India and Sri Lanka in Kolkata on Saturday.

Fittingly it was off a boundary, his 10th and the first off a spinner. Ranga Herath was introduced from the Club House end and Cheteshwar Pujara swept his fifth ball to the fine-line fence to complete a well-deserved half century. It was an important personal milestone but more importantly it was one that India desperately needed to ensure that the first innings got a shade of respectability.

Eight of Pujara's boundaries have been on the off-side but when Dimuth Karunaratna strayed in line on Fri-



day, he was pulled. Ditto when Herath drifted on to the middle and leg.

However, Pujara was unable to build on his fifty as Lahiru Gamage produced an absolute peach of a de-

livery to dismiss him for 52. The ball nipped back in sharply off the deck and when Pujara went for the drive, past the gap to flatten off his stumps.

Sock stuns Zverev to prolong ATP Finals adventure

LONDON: Jack Sock became the first American to reach the last four of the ATP Finals for 10 years when he stunned world number three Alexander Zverev in a firecracker of a match on Thursday.

The world number nine, the first American to reach the final weekend at the season-ending tournament since Andy Roddick in 2007, triumphed 6-4 1-6 6-4 to prolong his London adventure.

"I didn't expect to be in London in the first place," said Sock, who qualified only this month after winning the Paris Masters. "Paris was a big step for me. Now to put myself in the position to play on the weekend is another big step forward, another confidence-booster."

Sock was so sure he wouldn't make it to the O2 Arena that he had planned to play a round of golf at Augusta this week.

Instead of working on his putting, Sock ground out a hard-fought victory over third seed Zverev, securing second place behind Roger Federer in the Boris Becker group and a Saturday semi-final date with Pete Sampras group winner Grigor Dimitrov. "That was a rollercoaster match. I didn't have the hottest start in the third but I kept in there and kept fighting," Sock said. Sock again played an entertaining match, complete



with another 'tweener and even a point penalty for smashing a ball into the crowd. But it was a

pair of errors from Zverev in the final game that gave Sock the match. Trailing 5-4 and at 30-all, Zverev double-faulted for the eighth time to hand Sock a match point. The 20-year-old German then put a forehand wide to end it. "Yeah, I choked," Zverev said. "It's quite easy. Won the second set 6-1. I was 1-0 with a break. He got a point penalty. I was down 1-4 within 10 minutes where I didn't put many balls in the court."

Six-time champion Federer had already won the Boris Becker group, having battled back to beat Marin Cilic earlier to post a perfect round-robin record at the event for a 10th time.

Just four months ago and only a few miles across south London, Federer was celebrating his record eighth Wimbledon crown after crushing Cilic in a brutally one-sided final. Cilic had been hampered by a blistered foot and the

Croat was reduced to tears during the match as his predicament sunk in. In their first meeting since that All England Club showdown, Federer frustrated the already eliminated Cilic once again as he fought back to win 6-7 (5-7), 6-4, 6-1. "It wasn't easy," Federer said. "I mean, look, it's a fast court. It's indoors. We've seen it now: When you miss a few too many opportunities you can really pay the price at this tournament."