

TIME AND US

DAILY SRINAGAR, KASHMIR

TUESDAY

- NOVEMBER, 21, 2017
- 02 RABI-AL-AWAL 1439 AH
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WEATHER TEMPERATURE		
STATION	MAX TEMPERATURE	MIN TEMPERATURE
	ACT	ACT
SRINAGAR	11.2	0.3
JAMMU	22.1	-4.0
LEH	5.1	-6.9
KARGIL	9.2	-6.2

SUNSET TUESDAY: 05:26 PM
SUNRISE WEDNESDAY: 07:11 AM

LOCAL FORECAST OF SRINAGAR
 Generally Cloudy sky. Maximum & Minimum temperatures will be around 13°C & 0°C respectively.

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

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JK RECORDS 2ND HIGHEST GROWTH RATE IN INDIA DURING 2015-16

CONGRESS' DEFEAT DIRECTLY PROPORTIONATE TO RAHUL'S ELEVATION:

CENTRE SEEKS RS 13,000 CRORE SURPLUS FROM RBI, NO SPECIAL DIVIDEND

VIRAT KOHLI, RAVICHANDRAN ASHWIN ONLY TWO INDIANS IN VVS LAXMANS DREAM TEST XI

Will ensure all facilities to JK Hajj pilgrims: Union Minority Minister

'Pilgrim's safety and facility Centre's priority'

Srinagar, Nov 20: A day after Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti urged the Centre to provide more facilities to Haj pilgrims in the state during the pilgrimage next year, the Union Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi Monday maintained that the Government of India would do the needful to ensure more facilities for all Hajj Pilgrims of 2018 including those of Jammu and Kashmir.

"There was a remarkable improvement in arrangements of Hajj in the last few years. I believe that there is always room for further improvement. My Ministry is committed to make Hajj arrangements more comfortable, better and cost-effective for the pilgrims including the pilgrims of the Jammu and Kashmir State," Abbas Naqvi told KNS from New Delhi.

The Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti has pleaded for extending more facilities to the Hajj pilgrims of the State during the coming annual pilgrimage.

In her letter to union Minister for Minority Affairs, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, the Chief Minister has detailed the facilities being provided to Hajj pilgrims at Srinagar embarking point and beyond. She has sought further strengthening of the same in future.

The Chief Minister has said the facility of embarkation at Srinagar saves a lot of time and cost of the pilgrims from the State and sought continuation of the same.

Naqvi further told KNS that his ministry will make sure the better process of hiring of accommodation, transport, catering and other allied



facilities. "The government of India would provide all possible support to the state governments including the Jammu and Kashmir government for facilitating the guests of Allah in per-

forming Hajj comfortably and securely," the minister maintained.

It is to mention here that Union Minister for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi recently announced the process of Haj 2018.

The minister told KNS that this time the Central Government has announced Haj process one month before in comparison to the last year. "This will provide enough opportunities for all the concerned agencies to make preparations well in advance so that world class facilities to the Haj pilgrims are ensured. Haj 2018 related process has started and People are applying for Haj 2018 from 15th November."

Naqvi said that Haj 2018 will be performed according to the new

▶ See **Hajj**...Pg 02

Proud of my officers, Jawans for doing excellent work: DGP

Jammu, Nov 20: In the series of programmes to reach out to the far off districts of state Director General of Police Dr. S.P Vaid today visited Kulgam where he addressed a police Darbar, met respectables of area and also chaired a security review meeting of officers.

During his interaction with the respectable citizens of Kulgam District, Dr. Vaid hailed the support of Kulgam people in fight against drugs and also sought their assistance in curbing other social crimes in the district. DGP promised to look into the grievances put forth by the people attending the meeting.

DGP while chairing the Darbar of Jawans at Police Line Kulgam said that he is proud of his officers and Jawans who have done excellent work in Kulgam & elsewhere particularly in South Kashmir and hoped that policemen will continue to work with same dedication and enthusiasm to restore peace and normalcy in the valley.

While referring to the welfare measure, DGP said that welfare of policemen and their family has always been on priority and added that many welfare schemes has been introduced in recent times. He said more welfare schemes including increase in ex-gratia at par with central security forces, Rank promotions of Head constable to inspector have been submitted to the government and hoped that these will be considered...



ANOTHER 'MILITANT' JOINS FAMILY

'It was not a surrender or arrest, Says IGP Munir Khan

Kulgam, Nov 20: Days after footballer Majid Khan of Anantnag district laid down arms, another youth from South Kashmir has shunned militancy and returned to his family.

Reports said that Naseer Ahmed of Chimmara village of Kulgam district contacted his family and wished to return back. He had reportedly joined militant outfit Hizbul Mujahadeen a month ago.

SSP Kulgam said that youth had

▶ See **DGP**...Pg 02

MILITANT KILLED IN TRAL

Adil had escaped from encounter site at Saimoh when Sabzar was killed

Tral, Nov 20: A Hizbul Mujahadeen militant Adil Rashid Chopan was killed in a brief shootout at Gulshanpora Gujjarbasti area of Tral town in South Kashmir's Puwama district on Monday.

Adil was killed after a group of militants reportedly fired upon a patrolling party. The Government forces launched a search operation and during the exchange of fire, the militant was killed.

Srinagar based Defense spokesperson Colonel Rajesh Kalia confirmed the death of Hizb militant and said that combing operation was launched to track down the militants.

Eyewitnesses told news agency CNS that when the death of the militant spread in the town, youth in different areas took to roads and pelted stones on government

▶ See **Militant**...Pg 02

Continuing with her public outreach, Mehbooba convenes public grievances camp at Kathua

Announces release of Rs. 60 lac for High school building LohaiMalhar; Rs. 50 lac each for GB hostel Bani, improvement in Billawar drinking water, irrigation facilities; Rs. 30 lac for setting up transformer bank in disstt., Rs. 20 lac for MC Kathua

KATHUA, NOVEMBER 20: A day after conducting her Public Outreach programme at Samba, Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti visited Kathua and convened a grievances redressal camp here today. During the camp the Chief Minister listened to scores of deputations and hundreds of people who apprised her of their develop-



mental needs and sought their redressal. Minister for Forests, Environment & Ecology, Choudhary Lal Singh and legislators of the District were present on the occasion. The deputations in

▶ See **Mehbooba**...Pg 02

PEOPLE 'FROZE' DURING NOCTURNAL SEARCH OPERATION IN SOUTH KASHMIR

Pulwama, Nov 20: People irrespective of age and gender were made to sit in the lawns in freezing conditions at a South Kashmir village during a nocturnal search operation on Sunday night.

Combined forces including 50 Rashtriya Rifles, Special Operation Group of Jammu Kashmir Police and Paramilitary Central Reserve Police Force cordoned off Dar Mohalla area Samboora village of Pulwama district.

The siege was laid after Forces received inputs about the presence of militants in the area.

Locals told news agency CNS that irrespective of age and gender people were asked to come out from their houses and were made to sit in the lawns in freezing conditions.

▶ See **People**...Pg 02

HC to hear plea against Farooq Abdullah over his PoK remarks

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court today agreed to hear a PIL seeking action against National Conference President Farooq Abdullah for his reported controversial remarks on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

A bench of Acting Chief Justice Gita Mittal and C Hari Shankar listed the matter for tomorrow after the counsel for the petitioner sought urgent hearing of the plea.

The bench earlier declined to hear the matter today itself saying there was no "crisis" or urgency. "It cannot be done today. Why can't it wait for tomorrow or day after tomorrow," the bench told the petitioner.

The plea, filed by Delhi-based Maulana Ansar Raza who claims to be a social activist,



has sought "immediate investigation" and "arrest" of the Srinagar MP alleging that he has favoured Pakistan and insulted India. It has alleged that Abdullah has been making "such controversial remarks and statements

▶ See **Farooq**...Pg 02

CONGRESS SPOKESPERSON BLAMES GOVT, PDD FOR ERRATIC POWER SUPPLY

Expresses concern over difficulties confronting students appearing in exams

Srinagar, Nov 20: Expressing serious concern over the unscheduled curtailment of Electricity at a "large scale" across the valley, the J&K Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) Spokesperson Farooq Andrabi has lashed out at Govt especially State's Power Dev. Department for failing to ensure electricity even as per their official schedule.

Andrabi also expressed serious concern over the difficulties confronting students appearing in exams shortly saying that children are not able to study to their satisfaction, which is going to affect their exams.

▶ See **Congress**...Pg 02

Monga expresses serious concern over unabated cycle of violence in Kashmir

'BJP-led Govt's policies have proved an utter failure'

Srinagar, Nov 20: While expressing serious concern over the unabated cycle of violence which is consuming precious lives day in and day out, Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) Vice President and MLC N Monga Monday said that BJP-led Center Government's policies in the state have proved an utter failure.



In a statement issued to KNS, he said,

"Whether a security personnel, a civilian or a militant is killed, it is a human life which is lost. The cycle of death and injuries continues unabated in the Valley. For how long this will continue? Kashmir's security situation has deteriorated from bad to worse in last one and half years but there is no sign of accountability from Modi led Government."

▶ See **Monga**...Pg 02

PARIMPORA SHUTS FOR 3RD DAY TO MOURN THE KILLING OF LOCAL MILITANT

Hajin and adjoining areas observe shutdown for 2nd day

Srinagar, Nov 20: Parimpora area of Kashmir capital Srinagar city observed a complete shutdown for the consecutive 3rd day on Monday to mourn the killing of native militant Mugees Ahmed Mir.

Mir was killed in a brief shootout in Zakura area in the outskirts of Srinagar city with government forces. A Police Sub-Inspector Muhammad Imran Tak was also killed in the shootout.

Reports said that all shops and business establishments remained shut while a large number of people continued to flock at the residence of the slain militant to express their solidarity with the bereaved family.

▶ See **Shuts**...Pg 02

Geelani grieved over number of militant casualties this year

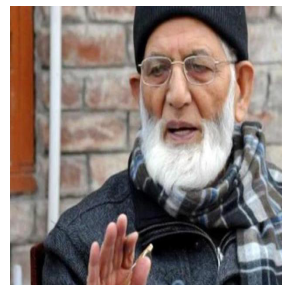
Terms it 'a big loss'

Srinagar, Nov 20: Hurriyat Conference (G) chairman, Syed Ali Geelani on Monday expressed shock and grief over reports about the number of militant casualties during current year, saying 'it is a big loss and a national tragedy'.

While referring to the reports, Geelani in a statement issued to KNS said that authorities admit and it is synonymous to the fact that they

are carrying the occupation through their military might and added that people while resisting unconstitutional and illegal occupation, have since past 71 years presented more than 6 lakh souls.

"India has waged war on innocent civilians," said Geelani and while referring to the instrument of accession, endorsed by then Maharaja, added that it is neither valid nor authentic.



Geelani said that as per guidelines laid in independence and partition plan, the Maharaja's and kings had no

right to exercise their will regarding the future course or decide political destiny of their domain or states and added that people had right to decide their destiny and future status of their states.

Geelani referring to the historical events of past, said that "Hari Singh was not an authority to annex or instrument an accession with India or any country as he was

▶ See **Geelani**...Pg 02

JK DOCTORS CONSTITUTE 'DOCTORS COORDINATION COMMITTEE'

Dr. Mohammad Yousuf Tak is its Convener

Srinagar, Nov 20 (KNS): Doctors in the state Monday came together and formed a single amalgam of different associations to work for the improvement of health care in the state and to raise and make efforts for resolution of their issues pertaining to their jobs and appointments.

The doctors associations formed J&K Doctors Coordination Committee (JKDCC) and these associations included Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK), Doctors Association Jammu (DAJ), Society of Consultant Doctors (SCD), Society of Dental Surgeons Jammu and Kashmir (SDSJ), Chenab Valley Doctors Association (CVDA),

▶ See **Doctors**...Pg 02

NAEEM AKHTAR FOR PROVIDING ALL-WEATHER CONNECTIVITY TO HILLY AREAS

GOOL (RAMBAN), NOVEMBER 20 – Reiterating government's resolve to provide all-weather road connectivity to the hilly areas, Minister for Public Works, Naeem Akhtar said no stone will be left unturned to complete the ongoing road projects in Gool by April, 2018.

While responding to various demands raised by the locals during a public meeting at Gool, the Minister said the road projects under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) will be started within a fortnight and Government Degree College, Gool will be completed next year.

Deputy Commissioner, Ramban Tariq Hussain Ganai, Superintendent Engineer, PWD (R&B) Udhampur Circle N.D Khwaja, Superintendent Engineer, PWD (R&B) Doda Niaz Bandy and other senior officers of the department were present on the occasion.

Stressing on the need to provide employment avenues to the educated youth, the Minister informed that a team of Khadi and Village Industries Board (KVIB) will visit the area to educate the youth to develop readiness for exploring new entrepreneurial avenues that shall open vistas of financial independence for them.



During the meeting, the locals demanded construction of roads from Boltitop to Mahkul, Srunda to Thathar, Jabbar to Mahakund, link road to Chachua and Gool Bypass road. They also sought

upgradation of Government Higher Secondary School at Thathar and augment healthcare facilities in the region.

The Minister also visited Godha Gali and directed the con-

cerned to intensify the efforts for conservation and preservation of this historical place which has the potential to be a major tourist attraction of the area. He asked the DC, Ramban to prepare the rev-

enue papers and remove encroachments, if any, so that the matter of notification of land can be taken up with the Archives Department for its conservation.

During his day-long tour, the Minister interacted with the villagers at Shajroo, GarhMorh, Jamaslan, Chaklas and Dharam. The people demanded construction of road from Suligali to KundMorh, link road from Garh to Mulass, upgradation of drainage system at Jamaslan Gali, road from Chaklas to Saldhar and road from Dharam to Gool at the respective places.

The Minister also inspected the

ongoing construction work of GDC, Gool which is being constructed on 83 kanals of land at the cost of Rs. 628 lakh. He directed the officers to make the rooftop of the building solar enabled to use solar energy for power and heating purposes, besides constructing a library block in the college.

At Sangaldan, the villagers demanded engagement of local youth in the Railway projects. Responding to this, the Minister directed DC, Ramban to take up the matter with the Railways and ensure that the locals get employment opportunities in their projects.

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HAJJ

Haj Policy. "The high-level committee, constituted to frame the new policy, has already submitted its report and Minority Affairs Ministry has been looking into its recommendations. The new Haj policy aims to make Haj pilgrimage more comfortable, smooth and transparent. Pilgrims' safety and their facilities are our priority," he said.

Naqvi has further said that government of India has already launched a new Haj Mobile App, based on modern facilities and technology. "This app will make Haj application process easier and comfortable. Applying for Haj, enquiry and information, news and updates and e-payment are main features of Haj Committee of India Mobile App. Application for Haj can be made directly from the app. Registration fees can also be made through this app," he said.

Naqvi said that the new Haj policy includes maintaining the reservation for people above 70 years of age wish to go for Haj and allowing women over 45 years of age in a group of four or more for Haj without a male relative or "Mahram".

"For the first time, for Haj 2018, details of total expenditure to be incurred by the pilgrims are given in the Haj application form. This is a step towards transparency. Haj application form for 2018 also contains the embarkation points-wise detailed air fare comparison which will be beneficial for the pilgrims as for the first time they will get option for embarkation points of their own choice," he said.

Naqvi said that Haj 2017 was very successful and smooth as the Central Government had completed all the necessary preparations well before time in cooperation and coordination with concerned agencies. "A total of 1,24,940 Haj pilgrims performed Haj 2017 by 454 flights between 24th July to 28th August through Haj Committee of India. About 45,000 pilgrims went through private tour operators. India's Haj quota for 2017 had been increased significantly by Saudi Arabia Government to 1,70,025," he said.

The Union minister added that hajj pilgrims from India went to Saudi Arabia from 21 embarkation points- Delhi, Mumbai, Goa, Guwahati, Lucknow, Mangalore, Varanasi, Srinagar, Kolkata, Gaya, Ranchi, Bhopal, Bangalore, Nagpur, Ahmedabad, Aurangabad, Chennai, Cochin, Jaipur, Indore, Hyderabad. From Srinagar 8103 pilgrims went to Hajj in 2017," he maintained.

DGP

Earlier, DGP inaugurated Gymnasium and DySP DAR office at District Police Lines. While dedicating the Gymnasium to the Jawans, DGP advised the policemen to take care of their health by taking balanced diet, yoga and other physical activities.

Dr. Vaid later chaired a high level security meeting with officers of South Kashmir. While addressing the meeting, Dr. Vaid stressed upon the officers to continue their excellent coordination among all security agencies to deal with militants and other anti nation elements. DGP directed the officers to keep major focus on the drugs and ensure that people involved in the illicit trade of drugs are booked.

Earlier, senior officers of South Kashmir gave detailed briefing regarding the overall security situation and enumerated strategy adopted to continue fight against the militancy and other crimes.

Inspector General of police, Kashmir Zone, Muneer Ahmad Khan, DC Kulgam, Talat Parveez Ruhela, SSP, Kulgam, Shridhar Patil, 2IC 18th BN CRPF, Rajeev Lochan, CO 24 BN CRPF, Sumant Kumar Jah, CO 163rd BN CRPF, Daljeet Singh, CO 1st RR, Col. Aiman Mukharjee, CO 62 RR, Col. Monu Sudhan, Addl. SP Kulgam, Ajaz Ahmad and other senior officers of Kulgam District attended the security review meeting.

ANOTHER

disappeared from his village in last week of September. A missing report about his disappearance still stands registered in Damhal Hanjipora police station.

Inspector General of Police Kashmir Zone told news agency CNS that Nisar has neither surrendered nor apprehended. He said the youth contacted his family and wished to come back.

"The youth is with us and family is in touch with him," IGP said.

This is the second incident of such nature. Last week, footballer turned militant shunned militancy and returned to his family. Though he is still with Police but IGP has already clarified that no charges will be pressed against footballer Majid Khan.

Both DPG and IGP have been making vehement appeals to militants to return to their families. In Kulgam on Monday, Police Chief requested parents to persuade militants to return to the families. He said police will take care of these militants with love and affection.

MILITANT

forces. They added that clashes erupted in different areas of the town including Larow, Batagund, Gulshanpora and Lurgam.

Pertinently, the slain militant had managed to escape from encounter site in May this year when top militant commander Sabzar Ahmed Bhat and his close aide Faizan Ahmed were killed at Saimoh village of the town.

Adil Rashid, a resident of Larow village of Tral town of Puwama in South Kashmir was a teenager who had suffered

injuries in Saimoh encounter but had managed to flee from the encounter spot after people rushed to help him escape.

The video's and photographs people flocking around him after the encounter had gone viral and were widely shared by netizens.

MEHBOOBA

general thanked the Chief Minister for reaching out to people to know their developmental needs and addressing them on spot.

The demands put forth by the deputations during the day long public outreach programme included improvement in drinking water and irrigation facilities in the district particularly in kandi areas, launch of a special employment drive for the people of border areas, start of work on Panjirthi multipurpose project, drug de-addiction, special recruitment drive for border people, check on industrial pollution, construction of flyovers and an auditorium in the town and solid waste management plant in the town.

A deputation of people from Kathua town sought removal of junk from the local Railway Station. They also demanded construction of road from Govindsar station to Kharote and upgradation of local Girls Primary School. They also demanded that the share of local people in the Ranjit Sagar Dam be released to them from the Punjab Government. They also sought early construction of Ravi Canal, ban on material extraction from the canal and pacing up of work on the local Medical College.

Deputations of people from Bathind, Jakole and other areas of kandi belt complained of shortage in drinking water and irrigation facilities.

Several deputations from Billawar also sought augmentation of irrigation schemes in villages of Dramin, Palam and other villages. They also sought improvement in the power distribution in the area besides release of pending payments of SDRF and NREGA. A deputation of people from Gudu Fulail sought rationalisation of administrative units and opening of a CAPD sale outlet there.

The Chief Minister directed release of Rs. 50 lac for replacement and upgradation of machinery equipment of lift irrigation and drinking water schemes in the area.

Deputations from various villages of Bani sought construction of tourist huts at Daggar, conceiving micro hydel projects on Khag and Sevanallas, establishment of a Kendriya Vidyalaya at Bani, upgradation of Bhandar and Sagrota High Schools to Higher Secondary schools, completion of work on the Manjeeri Park in the town and upgradation of Bani High School to Higher Secondary School and completion of the Gujjar Bakerwal hostel at Bani.

Deputations from Lohai Malhar area of Bani sought construction of additional accommodation at the local High School.

The Chief Minister announced immediate release of Rs. 50 lac for completing work on the Gujjar Bakerwal hostel at Bani. She also announced release of Rs. 60 lac for raising additional accommodation at the High School, Lohai Malhar.

A deputation of Gujjar & Bakerwal community sought setting up of a cattle mandi in the District besides activating the Wool Board. They demanded conduct of a survey of tribal population in the State besides setting up tribal schools in their habitations and extension of BPL concessions to them.

Deputations from Hiranagar sought posting of adequate staff at local health centre and PHC at Koota. They also demanded posting of an Additional Deputy Commissioner for pacing up development activities in the area besides compensation for the land occupied by Army and other security establishments and construction of bunkers for the border people. They also demanded augmentation of drinking water and power supply.

The Chief Minister directed enforcement of complete ban on extraction of material from river basins and slapping of PSA against people found involved in drug peddling. She also announced release of Rs. 20 lac in favour of Municipal Committee, Kathua for strengthening civic infrastructure in the town. She also directed the Deputy Commissioner, Kathua to launch an anti-encroachment drive on rivers, canals, water bodies and other public places.

The Chief Minister also announced release of Rs. 30 lac for creating a transformer bank in the district to stabilize power distribution network in the district.

A deputation of people from Basohli sought completion of work on the receiving station at Sheetal Nagar, improvement in drinking water facility and making the Basohli Development Authority functional.

The Chief Minister listened to the demands of the deputations throughout the day and it continued till late in the evening. In many of the cases Mehbooba Mufti gave on spot directions for the redressal of the grievances which was hailed by the deputations.

Principal Secretary to Chief Minister, Rohit Kansal; Divisional Commissioner, Jammu, Dr. M K Bhandari; IGP Jammu zone, Dr. SDS Jamwal; senior officers from the Chief Minister's Secretariat and Planning Department; heads of several Departments; Chiefs of many Engineering wings; DIG, SKR, Rafeequl Hassan; Deputy Commissioner, Kathua, ; SSP, and officers of District administration were present on the occasion.

This is the third public outreach programme of the Chief Minister in the Jammu province. Earlier, she conducted a similar public outreach programmes at Ramban and Samba. The public outreach programmes launched by the Chief

Minister have evoked an interesting response from the public who come up with their problems for an on the spot redressal.

Mehbooba Mufti has already conducted such programmes at Pulwama, Kupwara, Budgam, and Baramulla in Kashmir Valley during which hundreds of people apprised her about their problems and difficulties.

PEOPLE

"My 11 month baby almost froze while my 70 year old mother started crying due to adverse weather conditions," said a local adding that the search operation concluded at around 2 am of Monday morning and till then people shivered in open air.

When contacted Srinagar based Defense Spokesperson Colonel Rajesh Kalia said that they didn't ask people to come out from their houses. "We always ensure that people feel at ease during any search operation," he said.

FAROOQ

by which the nation and its people feel ashamed of such persons being Indian citizens".

The petition, filed through lawyer Nawal Kishore Jha, has said the NC chief should be tried for penal offences including sedition and treason under the IPC and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the Intelligence Bureau be also asked to probe the entire issue.

Abdullah had on November 11 said that PoK belonged to Pakistan and "this won't change" no matter how many wars India and Pakistan fight.

"I tell them in plain terms — not only the people of India, but also to the world — that the part (of J&K) which is with Pakistan (PoK) belongs to Pakistan and this side to India. This won't change. Let them fight how many wars they want to. This won't change," Abdullah had said.

CONGRESS

In a Statement issued to KNS, Congress Spokesperson Farooq Andrabi sought clarity from the Govt over the un-scheduled curtailment of Electricity, which is badly hitting the students and the public in general. He said PDD must remain committed to it's official schedule, which is not happening, as a result people are facing great hardships due to unprepared curtailment on the part of PDD.

Adding that PDP BJP ruling dispensation has miserably failed to ensure basic facilities to people, Farooq Andrabi said that Govt must take effective measures to ensure basic facilities to people especially electricity, Kerosene and other type of essentials required, as that, winter season is going to be very harsh, for that Govt must be ready to tackle the situation arising out of Snowfall etc.

Andrabi urged upon the Govt to ensure Electricity and other basic facilities to people, on war footing basis.

MONGA

this year is alarming and has the potential to deteriorate the situation further, if the right steps are not taken by the Central and the State Governments immediately. Given the rising toll of casualties and no visible efforts by New Delhi to engage stakeholders in a meaningful dialogue, people are worried about the possibility of a breakout of another deadly spell of violence," Monga said.

"Government time and again says that this number and that number of militants have been killed. But in this, they forget how many security personnel and civilians also lose their lives. Violence is no solution," he said.

The Congress leader said despite Center's decision to appoint Dineshwar Sharma as 'special representative' on Kashmir, the interlocution process has been surrounded by confusion. "Different ministers gave different statements and Central Government has not stated anything about his mandate. The Centre has to be very serious about the process and make public what kind of mandate has been given to Sharma. After his visit to the state earlier this month, it seems the process has failed," he said.

Monga said if centre wants to have result-oriented negotiations, it needs to be very serious. "The interlocution process is a half hearted efforts of GoI," he said and advised Sharma to do a proper homework about whom to meet and how to approach them.

SHUTS

Meanwhile, Hajin town of North Kashmir's Bandipora district also observed shutdown against the killing of six Lashkar-e-Taiba militants.

Six militants and an Indian Air Force Commando were killed in a fierce gun battle at Chandergar area of Hajin Town on Saturday evening. Reports said that Hajin and its adjoining areas including Chandergar, Shahgund, Hakhbara, Soudnara, Markundal, Vijpara and other areas.

"All shops and business establishment remained shut while transport is also off the roads," said an eyewitness

GEELANI

fleeing and leaving towards Jammu. Therefore, there is no constitutional, legal, political or moral status of this so-called instrument of accession."

"Despite their tall claims and parroting about being a great democratic country, they are depriving 15 million people from their birth right," Geelani said.

Hurriyat Chairman said how Indian authorities can think

that the nation that has suffered and presented such great sacrifices, will bear the burden of forced occupation.

Geelani suggested authorities in New Delhi to allow people to exercise their right to self-determination, saying that their predecessors have made commitment in all international forums.

"This is the moral responsibility of India to fulfil their commitment and allow us to live peaceful life," said Geelani. Geelani while paying tributes to all martyrs said that these youths while laying their precious lives, are nourishing a sacred cause with their blood and in his appeal to people asked to safeguard their sacrifices and stay away from those strengthening forced and illegal occupation.

Geelani paid tributes to Ali Kadal martyrs and said "we are duty bound to follow their mission till its logical end."

Meanwhile, deeply concerned and grieved about the devastating fire incident at Islamabad (Anantanag) in which 13 residential houses and 18 shops were gutted, Geelani said that widespread destruction has left more than a dozen families shelter less in these cold days of winter.

He appealed the affluent class of the society to generously donate to help these victims so that their sufferings are minimized to some extent.

DOCTORS

Resident Doctors Association (RDA), Srinagar and RDA Jammu and Private Practitioners Association.

Dr. Mohammad Yousuff Tak will be Convener, J&K Doctors Coordination Committee (JKDCC).

"JKDCC is an amalgam the above associations in which the doctors across State have come under one umbrella to resolve their long-pending issues," Dr tak told reporters here during a press conference.

The members today in meeting in Srinagar unanimously agreed upon to raise following grave issues to stress upon the Government to resolve these issues in a stipulated time: Ordinance on offence against on duty doctors or damage to hospital infrastructure to be made a non-bailable offence; Caderization of Medical Officers and Dental Surgeons; Caderization of Consultants; Rationalization of posting; Posting and Transfer policy to be followed in letter and spirit; Departmental promotion of Medical officer, Dental Surgeons and Consultants at regular intervals in time bound manner; APRs even of previous years of Medical officers, Dental Surgeons and Consultants to be signed by sitting respective Directors and Commissioner Secretary; Hassle free sanction of earned leave for doctors; Change of nomenclature of Dental Surgeons into Medical Officer (Dental) / Dental Officer as followed in other states; Geriatric OPD/Geriatric wards in each district hospital for old age patients; Proposal for attaching a medical officer with each consultant so that he/she can be well trained and can manage the patients who need specialized treatment in case Consultant remains busy with other patients on when consultant goes on leave; Announcing annual awards to those doctors who excel in each specialty; Rooms for Consultants, Medical Officers, Dental Surgeons in each hospital of state; Non-interference in routine duties and rosters of doctors by Tehsildars/SDM or officials from other department; Proposal for treating post graduate training course as in-service duration for doctors who are PSC confirmed; Restoration of seniority in administrative levels with equal share to consultants, medical officers and Dental surgeons in proportion ratio of 2:2:1; Identity Cards of doctors to be treated as curfew pass; Two and half day salary for all doctors as is given to paramedical staff. Since doctors whether Medical Officers, Dental Surgeons or Consultants do not avail gazetted or non-gazetted holidays. Medical officers are put on night duties and consultants have to attend 24 x 7 call duties various district and sub-district hospitals. Increased special pay given to doctors from 800 to 4000 and must be given to consultants also; Creation of new dental surgeon posts as no dental surgeon posts have been advertised for last more than 10 years. The number of unemployed dental surgeons has swelled to more than 3000 with the state of Oral Health Services in shambles; Rural allowance - More allowance to doctors working in far flung areas than working in Capital cities; Equal pay for equal work : Doctors whether Medical officers, Consultants & Dental Surgeons working under National Health Mission (NHM) scheme should get equal salary as given to PSC confirmed Doctors; Policy for regularization of doctors employed under NHM scheme as early as possible; Risk allowances and high risk vaccination to doctors; Career incentives to doctors in the form of special medical course trainings, fellowships; Reservations of 50 percent posts at newly upgraded medical colleges for consultants working in health and possessing the required criteria; Increasing the sanctioned strength of consultants and senior consultant at all District hospitals without any political centered distribution as has been in past; Special economic package/Land lease for full time Private Practitioners for opening of Clinics/Hospital or Nursing homes which will relieve the burden on Government regarding health care as employment generation will be created.

JKDCC demanded NEET center to be set up in Srinagar also and removal of pay anomaly among doctors.

The meeting was attended by office bearers of all associations including Founder DAK, Dr Khalid Parvez, Dr Suhail Naik, President DAK, Dr Owais H Dar General Secretary DAK, Dr Mir Mushtaq (Spokesperson JKDCC) at the end thanked all the members present in the meeting who spared their precious time in order to make the meeting successful.

Governor chairs Committee of Board Meeting to discuss issues relating to mule owners/handlers operating on the tracks to Shrine

JAMMU, NOVEMBER 20: Governor N. N. Vohra, Chairman Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, chaired a meeting of the Committee of the Board (comprising Jammu based Members of the Board) to discuss issues relating to mule owners/handlers operating on the track between Katra and Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine. The Meeting discussed a note prepared by the Chief Secretary, in compliance to the directions of the National Green Tribunal (NGT), in the matter Gauri Maulekhi Vs. State of J&K and Ors.



The meeting, held at the Raj Bhavan Jammu, was attended by Shri B.B. Vyas, Chief Secretary (and Member of the Board); Dr. S. S. Bloeria, Dr. Ashok Bhan, Mr. H. L. Maini and Maj. Gen. (Retd) Shiv Kumar Sharma, all Jammu based Members of the

Board. Dr. M. K. Kumar, Additional CEO of the Shrine Board, participated in the discussions.

The Meeting discussed the NGT's directions and the issues relating to the rehabilitation of mule operators and agreed as below:

(i) For the satisfactory manage-

ment of the pilgrimage to the Holy Cave Shrine the availability of a given number of ponies shall necessarily be required, to meet the requirements of the pilgrims.

(ii) In the context of the complaints/protestations organized by the pony operators (in the wake of NGT's direc-

tions to State Government), which were supported by political parties/leaders, the CoB were of the view that, for ensuring the peaceful conduct of the Yatra the State Government should take an overall view in the matter, particularly keeping in mind that a much larger number of pony/mule operators support the Shri Amarnathji Yatra. CoB also noted that ponies were in demand by tourists visiting Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Sonamarg and other places of tourist attraction.

(iii) In view of (i) and (ii) above, CoB urged Chief Secretary to timely seek the State Cabinet's directions in the matter. Governor emphasised the need for a holistic/harmonious view being arrived at for time bound measures being taken to ensure the best possible rehabilitation of all the registered mule owners/handlers.

Div Com reviews Eid Milad-un-Nabi (SAW) arrangements

SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 20: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Baseer Ahmad Khan today convened a meeting to review the arrangements for the forthcoming Eid Milad-un-Nabi (SAW).

Deputy Commissioners of Anantnag, Shopian, Budgam, Ganderbal, Pulwama, Leh, Kargil, Kupwara, Baramulla and Bandipora districts participated in the meeting through video conferencing while Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Chief Engineers of various departments, SSP Traffic, SP Hazratbal and officials of Wakf Board, Health Department, SMC, FCS&CA attended the meeting.

Addressing the meeting, the Divisional Commissioner directed for making all essential commodities available and all facilities to be provided uninterrupted. He directed for immediately making a Control Room functional under the supervision of ACR at

Dargah Hazratbal. He directed the officials of PDD to ensure uninterrupted power supply to all the congregation sites in the Kashmir division during the entire period. He also directed for the restoration of street lights in and around these areas. He said that the largest congregation will be held at Dargah Hazratbal and additional staff will be deployed wherever needed.

The Div Com directed the officials to make all street lights functional at the Hazratbal and keep a Genset on standby condition in case there is a power failure. The Divisional Commissioner also directed for making provision of safe drinking water, adequate supply of ration, healthcare facilities, fire fighting arrangements, parking facilities and ensuring cleanliness at Hazratbal Shrine and at all other Masjids and shrines where a large number of devotees are expected to arrive.

JK records 2nd highest growth rate in India during 2015-16

Marks positive shift in various socio-economic parameters

JAMMU, NOVEMBER 20: At an impressive growth rate of 14.7 percent in 2015-16, Jammu and Kashmir ranked 2nd in the latest India Today annual 'State of the States' ranking. The state has also been positioned itself at 11th in the overall ranking of large states.

J&K has achieved 2nd ranking in other two key areas including Education and Environment.

Launched in 2003, this annual exercise by India Today is based on objective data sourced from government and other authentic sources to gauge the performance of Indian states across various parameters such as economy, health, agriculture, education and infrastructure.

Regarded as the gold standard in measuring the socio-economic performance of the states, the study reveals that Arunachal Pradesh has topped the growth ranking as 'Fast and Furious' marking the highest growth rate in the nation in 2015-16 at 16.5% followed by J&K at 14.7%, with Goa, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh also making to the top five states.

Achieving significant milestones in implementation of various developmental initiatives, Jammu and Kashmir has marked positive performance in this comparative study and has received accolades and recognition in various fields including education, environment & cleanliness, inclusive development

besides cutting into top 10 states in health, law & order, economy and infrastructure.

As a result of focussed attention by the government to education sector both in qualitative and in quantitative terms, Jammu and Kashmir has been ranked 2nd among all the large states based on improvement in parameters including average student to classroom ratio, transition rate from primary to upper primary, number of girls enrolled in primary, pupil teacher ratio, lesser dropout rate, number of schools and colleges per lakh population.

The study also makes the way for J&K to achieve the 2nd ranking in environment and cleanliness following the state of Telangana and 4th

ranking in inclusive development category. J&K also received top accolades for marking huge improvement in environment and cleanliness in the large states category between 2010-11 and 15-16.

The state has been ranked 7th in the public health, 6th in law & order and 10th in both economy and infrastructure.

With accruing 9th position among the top states, with the lowest percentage of population below the poverty line, J&K has managed to be counted as one of the prosperous states in the nation. Currently state's 10.4% population is below poverty line as compared to the 5.1% of Goa, 7.1% of Kerala and 8.2% of Sikkim which have topped this category.

Mir Zahoor reviews status of KLC related developmental works at Pulwama

PULWAMA, NOVEMBER 20: Minister of State for Forest, Environment, Animal & Sheep Husbandry, Cooperative and Fisheries, Mir Zahoor Ahmad, today chaired a meeting of officers at Mini Secretariat, Pulwama. The Minister took the review of Kahcharai Land Compensation (KLC) related developmental works being executed at Lehpura and Chandhara.

The Minister was apprised about the latest status of various on-going developmental works by District Developmental Commissioner, Ghulam Mohammad Dar through a power point presentation.

Different delegations of the people who were present at the meeting highlighted their grievances regarding Kahcharai Land Compensation (KLC) related developmental works. The house was informed that the work on



certain developmental projects have been put on hold in lieu of court directions as a few residents in the villages have taken the matter to the court.

The Minister directed the concerned authorities to expedite the developmental works in both the villages and redress the grievances of the people at an earliest. Taking stock of the funds released under KLC, Mir Zahoor directed the concerned to make

judicious use of available funds. The Minister also appealed the people to build a consensus among them and set aside the differences if any so that developmental works are completed without any further delay due to litigations and other bottlenecks.

Later on, Minister chaired a separate meeting to review the arrangements for the upcoming festival, Eid Milad u Nabi. The Minister stressed upon

the officers of PDD & PHE for providing uninterrupted electricity and drinking water supply to the people, besides ensuring proper street lighting. He directed Municipal Authorities to ensure proper sanitation and cleanliness at all the places particularly in and around the mosques.

Among others, ADC, Joint Director Planning, ACR and other district officers from various departments were present during the meeting.

Bali Bhagat inaugurates live operative workshop on Endometriosis

MLA Batamalo0 donates ambulance to SKIMS Hospital, Bemina

SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 20: The Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology of SKIMS Medical College & Hospital, Bemina today organised a CME (CSEP and a Live Operative Workshop) on Endometriosis demonstrating the live surgeries.

The workshop was inaugurated by Minister for Health & Medical Education, Bali Baghat, who was Chief Guest on the occasion. MLA Batamalo0, Noor Mohammad Sheikh, Director Health Services Kashmir, Dr Saleemur-Rehman, Director SKIMS, Prof. A.G. Ahanger, Vice Chairman, Selection Committee, SKIMS, Prof. M.S. Khuroo, Principals SKIMS Medical College and Hospital Bemina, Prof. Riyaz Ahmad Untoo, Dean Academics, SKIMS, Prof. Altaf Kirmani, Organizing Chairperson, ENDOCON 2017, Prof. Rifat Ara were also present on the occasion.

Experts from outside State which include Dr B.B. Dash and Dr. Ajay Wakhloo demonstrated the live surgeries.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister stated that the Government has taken measures to strengthen the medical education and health care institutions of the State. He complimented the Principal, Dr. Reyaz Untoo for his tireless efforts and putting the SKIMS Medical College on fast track



development and assured full support from the Government for the development of SKIMS Medical College, Bemina.

Bhagat said that it is his dream to see SKIMS Medical College as a top-notch College in the State. He said efforts are being put in to amalgamate the newly constructed 250-bedded Maternity & Child Care Hospital with

SKIMS Medical College-Hospital, Bemina which will enhance its overall functioning.

On the occasion, MLA Batamalo0, Noor Mohammad Sheikh donated an ambulance to SKIMS Hospital Bemina from his constituency development fund.

In his address, he complimented the hospital administration who un-

dertook the task of operating a large number of emergency patients referred from Government L. D. Hospital in May 2017 when fire broke out in there.

He assured full support for the amalgamation of newly constructed 250-bedded Maternity & Child Care Hospital with the SKIMS Medical College, Bemina.

The Organizing Chairperson of the Workshop, Prof. Rifat Ara, HOD Gynaecology & Obstetrics, SKIMS Medical College, Bemina explained the importance of the workshop and stated that such surgical procedures are being done in a few centres of the State.

Prof. M. S. Khuroo said the need of the hour to strengthen the institution by putting in collective efforts and creating better patient care services both in quality and quantity.

The Principal of the College, Dr. Reyaz Untoo, explained the measures taken for removal of the deficiencies pointed out by the MCI like faculty, staff and infrastructural deficiencies. Many faculty posts that got filled up through proper selection and more than hundreds of para-medical vacancies filled up through proper selection which resulted in the removal of deficiency pointed out by the MCI on account of faculty and other categories of staff.

Measures afoot to make PDS transparent, pilferage proof: Zulfkar

Minister launches PoS Machines at Rajouri

RAJOURI, NOVEMBER 20: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs and Tribal Affairs Chowdhary Zulfkar Ali today said the government has undertaken a slew of measures to ensure digitization of Public Distribution System to make it more transparent, accountable and pilferage proof.

The Minister said this after launching a POS machine under e-PDS Project at Government Sale Depot, Alpha Gate Rajouri.

Present on the occasion were Commissioner Secretary FCS & CAs M. D. Khan, DDC Dr. Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, Controller Legal Metrology R.K. Katoch, Nodal Officer e-PDS Project Arun Kotwal, AD FCS & CAs Javid Iqbal and other officers of district administration.

Speaking on the occasion, Zulfkar Ali informed that in the first phase, 15 ration depots in the district are being brought under the ambit of e-PDS Project and in the next three months it will be replicated in all fair price shops across the district once the cent percent Aadhaar Seeding of all rationees is completed.

He further informed that POS machines are connected to a server that uploads every transaction on the portal and can be monitored in any part of the country anytime. These Aadhaar linked POS machines also display price, scale and credentials of the consumer which leaves no space for any malpractice in the system, he added.

"The government is mulling to provide pulses at highly subsidized rates through ration depots besides provision of laptops at



these depots so that these can become centers of other activities like ticketing, form filling etc." Zulfkar informed.

He exhorted that the Government has adopted best practices of the country and applied technology such as GIS tagging of depots, online allocation of food grains, digitization of records and GPS linking of trucks utilized for transportation of food grains to make the distribution chain transparent and to arrest the remotest chance of pilferage and black marketing.

Referring to very few complaints received on Online Grievance Redressal Portal in spite of 28 Lakh rationees in the state, Zulfkar expressed satisfaction that the present dispensation, in short span of two and half years, has been successful to assess the issue of shortage of food grains in the state.

Later, the Minister laid foundation stone of Rs. 1 crore attendant Sarai at District Hospital under Tribal Sun-Plan. He directed the concerned to immediately start the construction work on the Sarai and set a deadline of 4 months for completion of the project so that it can be put to use for public.

Asiea visits Hazratbal shrine, reviews Milad arrangements

SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 20: Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, Asiea Naqash today visited Hazratbal shrine to take stock of the arrangements put in place for upcoming Eid Milad-un-Nabi (SAW).

On the occasion, the Minister chaired a meeting to review the arrangements and facilities made for devotees who will be visiting the Hazratbal shrine during Milad days starting 19 November.

Deputy Commissioner Srinagar

Syed Abid Rashid, CEO J&K Wakaf Board Fayaz Ahmad, I.G Traffic, Jagjit Kumar, DIG Central, RTO, Chief Engineer PHE, PDD, General Manager SRTC and officers from SMC, Police, Traffic, Fire & Emergency Services, Health, and SRTC attended the meeting.

During the meeting, the Minister was informed that SRTC would ply an adequate number of special buses for women from Lal Chowk to Hazratbal. She was informed that Health Department would

set up 5 medical camps with all healthcare facilities.

The meeting was told that SMC will deploy 110 workers for round the clock sanitation in and around the shrine beside 4 mobile toilets will be put in place at different locations.

Officials of PDD assured that they will provide uninterrupted electricity besides repairing defunct lights in the area and would also keep 60-70 KV generators available to ensure uninterrupted



power supply to the shrine.

The meeting was told that PHE will provide round the clock water supply and additional two water tankers would be kept available

in the Shrine premises and more tankers will be provided if the need arises. The Minister directed the authorities of R&B department to repair all potholes and choked

drains around the shrine.

The I.G Traffic said that they will make public traffic route plans to prevent traffic jams and besides parking spaces will be earmarked

as usual where devotees can park their vehicles.

The D.I.G Central assured of providing two more companies of lady constables in addition to already existing 70 constables besides installing of more CCTV cameras outside the shrine to prevent any law and order situation.

The Minister asked all the departments to ensure all arrangements well in time to facilitate the devotees paying obeisance at the shrine.

Time and Us

Editorial
SRINAGAR
& J&K

JUDICIAL SAFE ZONES

It has long been recognised that children testifying as witnesses find the courtroom experience intimidating. In many cases, they are victims themselves, and may be deterred from deposing fully and confidently in the formal atmosphere. The Supreme Court's direction that within three months there should be at least two special deposition centres under every high court's jurisdiction is a positive step towards ensuring a conducive and protective atmosphere for vulnerable witnesses. This takes forward the principle already contained in laws relating to children. For instance, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act provides for child-friendly procedures during a trial. Under this law, the officer recording a child's statement should not be in uniform; also, during court proceedings steps must be taken to ensure that the child is not exposed to the accused. The court is allowed to record a child's statement through video conferencing, or using one-way mirrors or curtains. At present, Delhi has four such deposition centres, backed by guidelines framed by the Delhi High Court. The amicus curiae in a criminal appeal before the Supreme Court had suggested that such special centres are needed in criminal cases that involve vulnerable witnesses. The Bench, setting aside a high court's acquittal of a man accused of raping a hearing and speech impaired girl and restoring the trial court's conviction, agreed such centres are needed with safeguards.

The Delhi High Court's guidelines are inspired by the UN Model Law on Justice in Matters Involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime. The main objectives include eliciting complete, accurate and reliable testimony from child witnesses, minimising harm, and preventing 'secondary victimisation'. Secondary victimisation, or the harm that occurs not due to a criminal act but through the insensitive response of institutions, systems and individuals, is something that vulnerable witnesses often experience in cases of sexual violence. The creation of special centres would have to imply much more than a safe space for recording the testimony of vulnerable witnesses. It should also mean that multiple depositions and hearings at which they have to be present are avoided. In particular, they should not have to needlessly wait for their turn or be subjected to procedural delays. For now, the term 'vulnerable witnesses' is limited to children, but the principle may have to be expanded to include adults who may be equally vulnerable to threats and an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. Victims of sexual violence and whistle-blowers whose testimony against powerful adversaries may endanger their lives require a conducive atmosphere to depose. Ideally, every district in the country would need a special deposition centre. The infrastructural and financial burden may be huge, but the state will have to provide for it to abide by the overarching principle of protecting vulnerable witnesses.

SUCH A LONG LEGACY: ON INDIRA GANDHI

► Neera Chandhoke

The term populism has acquired considerable currency these days, and is widely used to describe a distinctive mode of politics. Though populist leaders are democratically elected, they betray scant respect for the procedures and institutions of democracy, civil liberties, and dissent. Appearing like a veritable messiah onto the stage of politics, they attack elitism, establishment politics, and corruption. Disdaining the rules of constitutional democracy, they prefer to concentrate power in their own person, and directly speak to and for an inchoate entity called the people. Populism neatly captures the political style of Donald Trump in the U.S, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, and Narendra Modi of India. These leaders have attracted attention, but their populist politics can prove dangerous for democracy.

STANDING UP TO 'BIG MEN'

Consider Indira Gandhi, whose birth centenary it is on Sunday. She single-handedly wrote and enacted the script of populism in India, amidst a struggle for the control of the Congress party. Jawaharlal Nehru had steered the party to impressive victories in the first three elections to Parliament after Independence. This gave the government an edge over the party leadership. Nehru's death in 1964 restored power to the 'big men' in the Congress. They were more than familiar with political strategies, and were adept at manoeuvring their way through the thickets of politics.

They decided to put Indira Gandhi, who had acquired a fair deal of popularity, in her place. Her biographers tell us that she was unbearably patronised by the 'Syndicate' peopled by powerful Congressmen — Atulya Ghosh, K. Kamaraj, S.K. Patil, N. Sanjiva Reddy, S. Nijalingappa and Biju Patnaik. As a member of Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's cabinet, Mrs. Gandhi was handed the inconsequential Information and Broadcasting Ministry, was heckled in Parliament and was disparagingly referred to as a 'gonggi gudiya' (dumb doll) by Ram Manohar Lohia.

Yet, when Shastri passed away the Congress, wracked by political rivalries, decided that Mrs. Gandhi should be the next Prime Minister. She was sworn in as the first woman Prime Minister of India on January 24, 1966. From the late 1960s to her assassination in 1984, the same woman who had been regularly belittled by her male colleagues dominated the party as well as the country. And these 'big men' who had assumed that they would control power in a government headed by a mere woman vanished into the mists of time.

TURNING POINT IN 1967

The story of Prime Minister Gandhi's ascent in politics begins in the 1967 elections,



when she campaigned for the party across the country. She travelled thousands of kilometres in an open jeep, addressed crowds, and secured acclaim. She quickly grasped that older power equations in rural India had given way to palpable tensions between the landed and the landless. Displaying considerable political acumen, and a great sense of timing, Mrs. Gandhi positioned herself firmly for the poor — garib — the new politically significant factor in Indian politics. Appealing directly to this section of Indians, and deploying dexterously the slogan 'garibi hatao' (remove poverty), she assiduously forged and nurtured a national constituency over the heads of regional leaders. After Mahatma Gandhi it was Indira Gandhi who was seen as the saviour of the poor, and over time as 'Mother India.'

Following distinctively pro-poor policies, she nationalised 14 commercial banks in 1969, and abolished the privy purses of the erstwhile royals. In the process, she exposed the pro-rich stand of existing leaders, their incompetence and their advancing age that pre-empted any radical move. Shortly thereafter the party split, and Mrs. Gandhi became the undisputed leader of the dominant wing of the party. In retrospect, 'garibi hatao' rhetoric appears unpretentious and simple. But used for the first time in Indian politics to directly address the concerns of the poor, it contributed to the consolidation of authority. In the 1971 elections, the Congress came back to power with an overwhelming majority. And Mrs. Gandhi secured the sort of legitimacy her father had enjoyed.

Mrs. Gandhi was adept at emotionally mobilising the masses. The electoral successes of her party gave her the authority to select which leader she catapulted into, or dismissed from, ministerial posts. Under her

leadership, India secured food self-sufficiency, and made gigantic strides in developing nuclear and space technology. The Indian Army won a decisive victory over Pakistan in 1971, and opposition leaders began to hail her as Durga, the vanquisher of all evil.

Conversely her disdain for procedures and parliamentary proprieties led to the rapid decline of democratic institutions. Prime Minister Gandhi changed the rules of Indian politics by calling for a committed judiciary and a committed bureaucracy. Above all, she changed the Congress party. As her stature rose in the eyes of Indians, her party declined dramatically. The same Congress that had specialised in addressing, negotiating, and resolving demands of different groups within the framework of its organisation became captive to the leader. This was at a time when popular expectations of parties and of the government had escalated.

By the late 1960s, disgruntlement had coalesced rapidly under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan. Mrs. Gandhi imposed an internal emergency from 1975 to 1977 in response. Civil liberties were suspended, opposition leaders were jailed, petty rulers censored films, with songs of Kishore Kumar banned from All India Radio. The government tried to legitimise the Emergency by issuing a 20-point programme for economic and social reform. This did not work. The Emergency regime was voted out in the 1977 elections.

A BRAVE WOMAN

The saga of Indira Gandhi tells us of a woman brave enough to breach ramparts fortified by the old elite, establish her own brand of politics based on a direct and unmediated relationship with the electorate,

succeed in banishing the very men who had at one time treated her patronisingly and shabbily, and become a loved Prime Minister. Her politics epitomised populism. However, her efforts to marginalise opponents and party colleagues bred a bitter harvest. By the mid-1970s she had become suspicious of everyone, and could rely on no one except her son Sanjay. The consequences were disastrous: the imposition of the Emergency that pulverised political life in the country. Mrs. Gandhi was voted back in 1980 but she seemed to have lost her ability to judge the political moment, and mislaid her famed acumen. The decision to storm the Golden Temple was a historic blunder. The Prime Minister who moved the hearts and minds of millions would die at the hands of her own guards in 1984.

She left behind a shaky legacy, on the one hand personalisation of power and on the other diminished institutional capacity. The results were painfully evident in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. After her death, bloodthirsty crowds ran amuck to kill and maim innocent citizens of India. The country paid heavily for political populism in the form of personalised power, neglect of institutional propriety, disdain for procedures that contain the otherwise unabashed exercise of power, and the reduction of ministerial colleagues to courtiers. Have we learnt anything from this history of the rise and fall of one of the most admired leaders of Indian politics? Or are we going to let the past repeat itself again and again, in the fascination for populist politics. For it is not the populist leader, but the country which has to pay the wages of populism.

Neera Chandhoke is a former Professor of Political Science at Delhi University

Recipe for that perfect moment

► Shivangi Rai

Three of us were sitting on the last rock down at the end of the jagged Dalmatian cliff-side. It wasn't such a difficult trek down, to be honest. The rock terraces snaking down this absolutely precious hole-in-the-wall bar called Buza bar, were dangerous only for the truly inebriated.

We were almost at that stage but not entirely. A giggle here and a snort there and almost a tumble later, we were at the desired spot. The rock was wet from the constant assault of waves and promised a cold throne.

But we had not risked our lives and limbs and made it so far down (it was barely five steps now that I think of it) to be dissuaded by the possibility of wet posteriors. Sitting down led to a bit of an argument as it was a curved rock and nobody wanted to sit on the pointy bit.

But as is the way of the world, the smallest of us size-wise had to make the sacrifice and occupy the decidedly uncomfortable peak. That settled, not to everyone's satisfaction of course, we finally did what we had planned to do the moment we had spied that tiny rock from the terracotta cliff side balcony of Buza Bar. We took our shoes off, rolled our trousers up and dipped our feet in the liquid emerald called the Adriatic. Three of us hissed in unison as it was December and no amount of glittering Dubrovnik sun could have warmed the

seas.

But after a while the water felt just the right degree of cold. Maybe it was the locally brewed concoction that we had had by the buckets at Buza earlier that kind of took the edge off. Whatever be the case, the cold waves swinging our feet under the water back and forth in a hypnotic rhythm, soothed in many unexplainable ways.

I am not sure how long we sat there. It could have been an hour or four. All I remember is that we still had much of the city left to see. It was a spot that wasn't on our list. We had stumbled upon it while walking in the old town along the old city castle walls. There was this sign board that pointed right and read "cold beer and a beautiful view". We were tempted by the first promise a tad bit more than the latter. So we followed the sign and suddenly came upon this innocuous looking gate carved into the walls. It looked like a pass to the gallows, to be honest. But then, past those dubious looking gates something shiny caught the eye. It was our first glimpse of the glorious Adriatic seducing us with its thousands shades of blue and green.

As if that was not enough, the sun was at the perfect angle in a cloudless sky, catching every rising wave and making a momentary jewel out of each of them. Three of us had 'awestruck' written on our faces in different ways — mouth hanging open to eyes bugged out to "Oh (read profanity of your choice)!" And



that gate was what led us to the Buza Bar, whose stocks we went through like

thirsty fish, clicked quintessential pictures for social media and then finally settled on the pointy wet rock.

Surreal feeling

Our feet in the water, the sun on our faces and an endless blue-green sea for view, it felt surreal. It was a truly perfect moment. Time had slowed down but at the same time it was flying away too fast. I was breathing slow and blinking less to seize all I could, to feel all I could. I felt this weight in the proximity of my heart — the weight of a perfect moment. I knew I was in it but I feared what if I don't experience this again. It was a strange limbo of an emotion. That deep contentment accompanied by the foreboding of its loss.

I couldn't take it any longer so I expressed my fears to my companions. What if this is it? What if I never experience this ever again and only get to relive it in memories? At first both of them scoffed at my whimsies as all true friends would, and wondered if I was more plattered than they had thought. But I guess I looked seriously worried so one of them said reassuringly: "Don't worry about it. Three of us are going to have million such moments in the future. But more importantly, the next time we will ensure that you are stone cold sober and not ruining this for us with your whining."

My alleged best friends snickered and I curbed my impulse to push both of them into the freezing sea for mocking such a profound train of thought.

But it wasn't long before I was laughing with them at my own 'corniness'.

And it slowly dawned on me that I was wrong. This wasn't my first perfect moment. I have had several before. And with these very same disloyal friends who were now busy amusing themselves at my expense.

Sitting on a bench in Connaught Place eating bhel, soaking up the national capital's winter sun and laughing at all the overdressed Delhi aunts. Ordering 'sub of the day' at Subway because we never had enough money at that time to buy the sandwich of our choice. Doing an all-nighter, just talking for straight 12 hours and sleeping only because we wanted to pretend we weren't crazy.

I guess the recipe for a perfect moment is not very complicated, after all. First, it almost always catches you unaware when you least expect it. It is unencumbered by weight of expectations. Second, the setting may or may not matter. It does help if one is near a beach or a mountain but this not an essential requisite.

But the most important ingredient, without which no moment can even come close to perfection, is having goofy, up-to-no-good old friends who know you in and out and are always ready to ruin that perfect moment with the most imperfectly timed sniggers.

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BJP releases third list of candidates for Gujarat polls

AHMEDABAD: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday released its third list, consisting of 28 candidates, for the upcoming Gujarat Assembly polls.

The BJP announced the names of the candidates on Twitter. Yesterday, the party had released the second list, consisting of 36 candidates, and had earlier released a first list - of 70 candidates.

Overall, the party has announced 134 candidates for election to the 182-member Gujarat Assembly, which is to be held in two phases on December 9 and 14.

The names were finalised by BJP's Central Election Committee, which met on Wednesday.

The meeting, chaired by BJP president Amit Shah, was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Rajnath Singh and Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj among others.



Congress' defeat directly proportionate to Rahul's elevation: Jitendra Singh

NEW DELHI: Union Minister of State (independent charge) on Prime Minister's Office Jitendra Singh on Monday said the promotion of Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi as party chief is directly proportionate to the defeat of the party.

Speaking to ANI, the Union Minister said, "This is a peculiar phenomena of the Congress Party. Each time the Congress loses an election, Rahul Gandhi gets an elevation. The defeat of the Congress in an election is directly proportionate to the promotion of Rahul in the party hierarchy."

He added that after 2014 Lok Sabha debacle, Rahul became the vice-president of the party after he was elevated from the post of general secretary.

"Now after Gujarat's debacle he

will move on to become president of the Congress Party. We have nothing to say about Rahul's elevation as it is their internal matter. We are confident of the victory with each passing day. Rahul Gandhi's campaign in Gujarat is a blessing in disguise for us. It offers Gujarat an opportunity to judge where each one of us stand," Singh said.

The Congress Working Committee (CWC) today announced the schedule to elect the next party president, paving the way for Rahul's coronation just before the Gujarat elections. The CWC meeting was chaired by current party president Sonia Gandhi at her 10, Janpath residence earlier this morning.

The 47-year-old vice-president of the Congress is set to succeed his mother, Sonia, and is expected to be elected unopposed like she has



been for the past 17 years.

The Congress will issue the poll notification on December 1 and if anyone would want to contend for

the succession to the party presidency, he/she will have to file nomination papers by December 4. The party will scrutinise the

nominations on December 5 and allow contender(s), if there any, to withdraw the nomination by December 11. Election, if there is any contender, would be held on December 16 and results will be announced on December 19.

The Congress said if there is no other contender for the post, the party would announce Rahul's candidature on the last date of scrutiny, i.e. December 5. In October, Sonia had said Rahul Gandhi would be elevated soon.

Sonia has been the Congress President since 1988, making her the longest-serving chief of the party. She has been unwell in recent years and has scaled back her public engagements, which brought Rahul more to the forefront.

Rahul became the party's vice-president in January 2013.

Panel set up to recommend pay hike for lower court judges

NEW DELHI: The government has notified the appointment of a commission to recommend hike in salaries of judges of lower courts.

The Union cabinet had last week granted its approval for the formation of the second National Judicial Pay Commission.

The commission would be headed by Justice P Venkatrama Reddi, retired Supreme Court judge. R Basant, a former judge of the Kerala High Court, is the member of the panel, the notification issued by the law ministry said. The commission would make its recommendations to the state governments, preferably within a period of 18 months.

The judges and judicial officers of subordinate courts got the last pay



hike in 2010, a three-fold jump, from their salaries decided in 1999. The 2010 hike was applied retrospectively from January 1, 2006.

The current entry level salary for

a junior civil judge is Rs 45,000 while a senior judge gets nearly Rs 80,000. The commission will submit its recommendations in early 2019 and the hike again is expected to be given

with retrospective effect. The move comes after directions from the Supreme Court in May. The first judicial pay commission, headed by Justice Jagannatha Shetty, was set up in March 1996 and it submitted its report in November 1999.

The Supreme Court had appointed a one-member committee under Justice E Padmanabhan, a retired high court judge, who submitted his report in July 2009 recommending the three-fold hike.

The recommendations of the commission will help in promoting efficiency in judicial administration, optimising the size of judiciary etc. and to remove anomalies created in implementation of earlier recommendations.

Delhi HC notice to Centre, Bengal govt on Mukul Roy phone tapping charge

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Monday directed the Centre and the West Bengal government to file in a sealed cover their responses on a plea by BJP leader Mukul Roy alleging that his phones were being tapped by the state police.

Justice Vibhu Bakhru asked the Centre, state government and Roy's telecom service providers -- MTNL and Vodafone to file their affidavits stating whether Roy is being monitored or his calls are intercepted by any of the agencies.

The court said if this is being done, then also file the reason in sealed cover.

The court asked them to file their affidavit in two weeks and listed the matter for December 7.

During the hearing, counsel for the Centre and the West Bengal government opposed the petition saying if at all any cause of action arises, it should be at the court in West Bengal.

The former Trinamool Congress MP had alleged that while he was in West Bengal, he had always found that the local police were monitoring his movements. Roy, who left his old party to join the BJP earlier this month, had sought direction to his telecom service providers to produce before the court orders, if any, issued by the Centre or the state government to intercept telegraphic messages originating from or received by the leader or any of his relatives.

Development should remain focus in Gujarat, BJP will try to digress: Rahul at Congress meeting

NEW DELHI: Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi on Monday asked party workers to remain focused on development for the Gujarat elections, and warned that the BJP would try to divert attention from the issue.

Speaking at a meeting of the Congress Working Committee here, Rahul Gandhi said the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would try to divert attention from



the key issue of development in Gujarat. A party leader told IANS that Gandhi said "we should not digress from the agenda of development"

The Congress Working Committee in its meeting on Monday morning fixed December 16 as the date for electing its next president, setting the stage for the expected elevation of Rahul Gandhi, replacing his mother Sonia Gandhi.

Ira Joshi appointed Doordarshan News director general, Ghanshyam Goel made DAVP DG

NEW DELHI: Press Information Bureau director general Ira Joshi was on Monday appointed as the director general of Doordarshan News following the retirement of Veena Jain, according to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

PIB director general Ghanshyam Goel has been made the new DG of

Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity (DAVP), replacing Esther Kar, who was put on "compulsory wait", a ministry order said.

Jain, who was appointed as the Doordarshan News DG in May 2015, had retired in August this year and All India Radio's News Services Division DG Sitanshu Kar was given

the additional charge of the post. In the order issued on Monday, the ministry said Joshi has been appointed the new director general of Doordarshan News.

Doordarshan News is currently producing news content in Hindi, English, Urdu and Sanskrit languages.

Alwar attack: Two companions of killed cattle trader held on cow smuggling charges

JAIPUR: Police in Rajasthan's Alwar have arrested two men, who were travelling with murdered cattle trader Umar Mohammed, on charges of smuggling cows, officials said on Monday, as their families and activists accused the force of siding with the attackers.

Tahir Khan and Javed Khan alias Jabba were transporting cows along with Mohammed through Alwar on November 10 when alleged cow vigilantes opened fire at them.

Mohammed died on the spot and his mutilated body was found dumped on railway tracks in Ramgarh area. Khan was injured in the attack after being hit by bullets on his shoulder and Javed managed to escape. All the three men are from Ghat Mika village in the western state Bharatpur district.

"During interrogation, Khan and

Javed have said that they bought the cows from members of the Rewari community near Dausa. Such purchase is illegal as mostly stray cows are herded and sold by the community members without any valid documents," Anil Beniwal, assistant superintendent of police, Alwar (south), told the Hindustan Times on Monday. They surrendered on Sunday and have been booked under the Rajasthan Bovine Animal (Prohibition of Slaughter & Regulation of Temporary Migration or Export) Act, 1995 and Rules, 1995, said the police.

Earlier, the police arrested Bhagwan Singh Gurjar and Ramveer Gurjar in connection with the case.

"The arrested men had spotted the trio driving the empty pickup in the morning and identifying them as cow smugglers, planned to rob

the men when they returned in the night. That's how the attack on the men happened," claimed Beniwal.

Four other men are absconding, said Beniwal. The police had earlier denied that there was any connection between the killing of Mohammed and the recovery of a badly damaged pickup van with cows found about 15km away the same day.

But after two days of investigations, Alwar superintendent of police Rahul Prakash said the two incidents were linked and that Mohammed's killers were "anti-social elements". But he refused to use the so-called term cow vigilantes, who have over the past year become synonymous with a string of attacks on cattle traders across India.

The police have maintained that the three were smuggling cows and both parties opened fire on

each other on November 10. They have also said that Mohammed and Khan had past cases of cow smuggling and other offences registered against them.

Mohammed's relatives, however, say cow vigilantes are responsible for his murder and alleged that the police were hand in glove with them. Activists have strongly condemned the arrest of the two men. "I think that the police are playing politics and it is a travesty of justice that instead of arresting the four absconding people, who attacked Mohammed and the two men, they have arrested the victims themselves," said Kavita Srivastava of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUC).

Srivastava added that the incident has shown that it is unlikely that victims of lynchings in Rajasthan

will ever get justice.

Mohammed's killing is reminiscent of the murder of cattle trader Pehlu Khan who was waylaid and lynched by cow vigilantes near Alwar on April 1 this year. Khan had documents to prove he wasn't smuggling cows.

Focus on cow protection, especially by vigilante groups, has risen since the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government took power three years ago, and several states ruled by the saffron organisation made laws to punish cow slaughter. So-called cow protectors have targeted cattle and meat traders, transporters and even farmers walking their animals - violence that has killed several people, mostly in BJP-ruled states. Critics accuse the vigilantes of using cows as a pretext to target Muslims and Dalits.

'Padmavati' controversy politically planned to destroy freedom of expression

KOLKATA: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday said that the 'Padmavati' controversy is the calculated plan of a political party to destroy freedom of expression.

The Chief Minister tweeted, "The Padmavati controversy is not only unfortunate but also a calculated plan of a political party to destroy the freedom to express ourselves. We condemn this super emergency. All in the film industry must come together and protest

in one voice." The chief minister's stand in favour of Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 'Padmavati' comes amid protests against the release of the film by the Rajput community and some Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders across the country.

An organisation of Kshatriyas in West Bengal wrote to her, demanding the removal of the ghoomar dance and some other scenes from the film, saying they are "objectionable".

BJP leader from Haryana Suraj Pal Amu on Sunday declared a bounty of Rs. 10 crore for beheading actress Deepika Padukone and director Sanjay Leela Bhansali.

Speaking at a private event, Amu threatened actor Ranveer Singh of breaking his legs after the latter had expressed his unhappiness at the mounting protests by fringe groups like Rajput Karni Sena.

The leader also questioned the silence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the issue. He said the Rajput community was used as a vote bank by the saffron party and added that he is ready to quit the party but will not bow down on the issue.

Meanwhile, Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya yesterday said 'Padmavati' will not be allowed to be released in the state unless its "controversial portions" are removed.

The Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led Madhya Pradesh government has also banned 'Padmavati' in the state.

The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) has turned down the application by makers of 'Padmavati' seeking to expedite Certification process of the movie.

'Padmavati' has been facing protests over

alleged distortion of historical facts in the film.

Meanwhile, the film fraternity has come out in support of Bhansali and the team, with many leading artists calling it an attack on "creative freedom". The Supreme Court will today hear a plea filed by senior lawyer Manohar Lal Sharma seeking direction to delete certain objectionable scenes from the movie.

In the plea filed on Friday, Sharma also sought prosecution of the filmmaker.

Earlier on November 10, the apex court rejected the petition filed against the release of Bhansali's magnum opus 'Padmavati', saying the CBFC has not yet issued a certificate to the movie.

RSS workers led the attack against mayor: Kerala CM



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Sunday alleged that the attack on city mayor V K Prashant was "well-planned" and led by RSS activists. "The attack was deliberate and without any provocation," he said in a Facebook post after visiting the mayor at the medical college hospital in Thiruvananthapuram.

Prashant and four councillors of the ruling CPI(M) and BJP were injured when they clashed on Saturday during a discussion on installing high mast lights in the city.

Condemning the incident, Vijayan said the government would take strong steps against those behind the attack on the mayor. "RSS workers, accused in several cases entered the visitors' gallery. In the well-planned attack carried out without any provocation, BJP councillors also joined in. RSS took the lead in the attack," the chief minister said.

Vijayan said he was informed by doctors treating the mayor that the latter had suffered serious injuries on the back of his neck. If the attack had been a bit more severe, the mayor's backbone would have been injured, leaving him paralysed, the Left leader said.

He also said that a section of media had reported the incident as a minor scuffle, which was "not right".

The incident was unfortunate and strong action would be taken against those behind the attack, Vijayan said, adding BJP women councillors attacked LDF women councillors. CPI(M) state secretary Kodieryi Balakrishnan also hit out at the RSS-BJP over the incident.

Congress leader V M Sudheeran and CPI state secretary Kanam Rajendran were among those who visited the injured mayor and enquired about his health.

Police said two cases have been registered against the BJP and CPI(M) councillors.

9 things people WITH DEPRESSION WANT US TO KNOW

Many attempts are being made lately to de-stigmatize depression. Many people, and even celebrities, are becoming vocal about having gone through or going through depression, but that hasn't solved the problem enough. Yet, we have people who believe depression is only a sad state of mind that can be cured by asking a person about his health twice. For many, still, it is a shame and cannot happen to their kin. And there are some, who still live in denial of its existence.

There are things that people who face it want us to know. It isn't easy, it never was, and maybe, we are making it tougher for them. The least we can do is understand at least an edge of what they go through.

"Depression isn't a bad phase or a bad mood. Neither is it just a bad



day. It lives with us every single day and we deal with it as best as we can." "There may NOT be any reason for our depression. We could be rich, famous, poor, everything or nothing. The fact is - it doesn't matter."

"We understand you care but you don't understand certain things. A fun trip or marriage won't cure us of our depression." "It is not just in the mind; it also drains us physically. It DOES have physical repercussions."

"We may seem cold and distant to you but we need our friends the most now, than ever." "You may call us 'Negative Nancies' behind us but we understand. We sometimes can get too much to deal with but chances are, we are trying our best not to hurt you." "We may have some days not that sad. We can in fact be happy, feel okay and do things normally. But that doesn't mean we are 'over it.'"

"Try not to be too hard on us. Most probably, we already are pretty hard on ourselves." "And finally, remember that being depressed is not a choice. We didn't choose to be like this."



Soda, meat up breast cancer risk in teens

Teenagers who consume a diet high in soft drinks, red and processed meat and low in vegetables may be at increased risk of developing breast cancer.

Researchers collected data from about 45,204 women who had participated in a questionnaire in 1991 about their diet in high school, when participants were 27 to 44 years.

"Because breast cancer takes many years to arise, we were curious whether such a diet during the early phases of a woman's life is a risk factor for breast cancer," said Karin Michels, professor at University of California. Each woman's diet was given an inflammatory score

using a method that linked diet with inflammatory markers in the blood.

During 22 years of followup, 870 women were diagnosed with premenopausal breast cancer and 490 were diagnosed with postmenopausal breast cancer. Researchers then divided the women into five groups based on the inflammatory score of their adolescent diet.

Those in the highest score group had a 35% higher risk for breast cancer relative to those in the lowest score group. Based on early adulthood diet, those in the highest inflammatory score group had a 41% higher risk.

Consuming walnuts may be beneficial for sperm health

Eating a walnut-enriched diet with 75 grams of walnuts every day may improve sperm vitality (movement) and morphology (form) — markers of semen quality, which is a predictor of male fertility — in men who added walnuts to their diet compared to men who did not, a study has found.

The findings showed that mice that consumed a diet containing 19.6 per cent of calories from walnuts (equivalent to about 2.5 ounces per day in humans) had significant improvements in sperm quality by reducing lipid peroxidation — a process that can damage sperm cells. "The study found that eating walnuts can actually help improve sperm quality, likely by reducing peroxidative damage in sperm cells," said lead researcher Patricia A. Martin-DeLeon from the University of Delaware in Newark, US. Cell damage harms sperm membranes, which are primarily made up of polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs). However, eating walnuts, the only tree nut that are predominantly comprised of PUFAs, may help reduce that damage as one ounce of walnuts contain 13 grams of PUFAs out of 18 grams of total fat, the researchers said.

"The findings suggest that walnuts may be beneficial for sperm health," Martin-DeLeon added. For the study, the team took healthy male mice as well as mice that were genetically predetermined to be infertile (Pmca4-/- gene deletion) were randomly assigned to a walnut-enriched diet or a control diet without walnuts that was followed for 9-11 weeks. Among the mice that consumed walnuts, fertile mice experienced a significant improvement in sperm motility and morphology and the infertile mice had a significant improvement in sperm morphology. Both groups experienced a significant reduction in peroxidative damage. However, investigators were unable to reverse the adverse effects on sperm motility in the infertile mice because of the genetic deletion in this group

CONTRACEPTIVE USE DOWN 3% IN 10 YEARS

The use of contraceptives has declined by 3% in the last 10 years, the latest health survey conducted by the government across the country showed. However, the decrease in contraceptive prevalence does not add up with other indicators in the space like decline in total fertility rate and increased awareness about use of contraceptives. The data also showed an increasing trend in use of pills and condoms.

According to the fourth National Family Health Survey-4, conducted on 6 lakh households, prevalence of contraceptives dropped from 56.3% in 2005-06 to 53.5% in 2014-15. While the use of modern methods also declined marginally, the decline was mainly triggered by a drop in sterilisation rate. Male sterilisation, which was already low, dropped from 1% to 0.3% between NFHS-3 and NFHS-4. Moreover, rate of female sterilisation also witnessed a decline from 37.3%

to 36%. Use of modern methods dropped from 48.5% to 47.8% during the period. Health ministry officials said the "incongruous" data was mainly because of sociocultural reasons. "People often hesitate to answer questions related to use of contraceptives. We do not get correct responses and often silence is taken for negative. We agree that the data is incongruous," an official said.

Health secretary C K Mishra said, "The health ministry will conduct a detailed study to assess the situation so that it can take immediate steps if required."

India's total fertility rate (TFR), reflective of the country's population control mea-

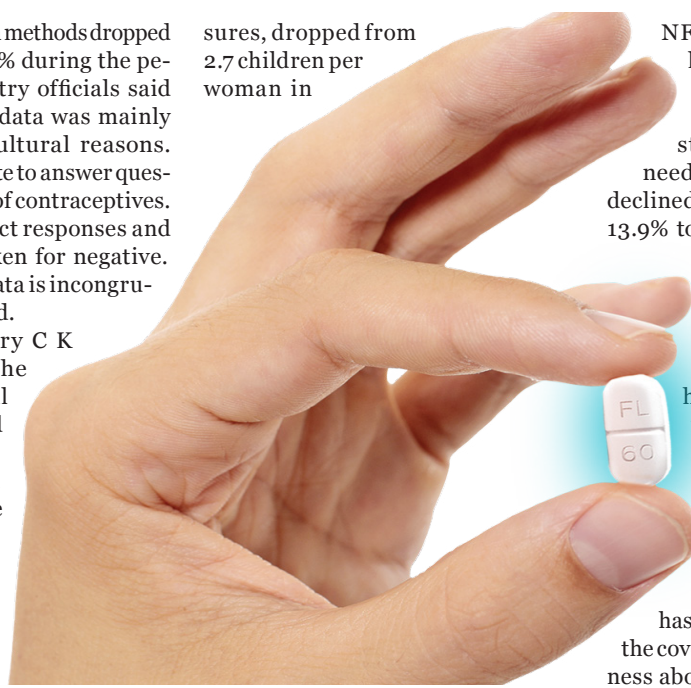
sures, dropped from 2.7 children per woman in

NFHS-3 to 2.2 children in the latest survey. The survey also noted a considerable decline in the TFR in each of the 30 states in India. The unmet needs for family planning also declined over the last decade from 13.9% to 12.9%. India has been attracting criticism from the international community for its poor mix of contraceptive methods. The huge share of female sterilisation coupled with poor adoption of other modern contraceptive methods have raised concerns about women's reproductive rights and health.

Of late, the government has taken several steps to improve the coverage and create more awareness about family planning, mainly

in rural areas. To ensure greater thrust on spacing methods, the health ministry has also created specific schemes for Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) to ensure spacing in births. Under the schemes, ASHAs provide counselling to newly married couples to ensure delay of two years before having their first child after marriage and couples who already have a child are encouraged to have a spacing of three years after the birth of the first child. The ministry is currently implementing such schemes in 18 states.

This is also reflected in the findings of the survey. It shows health workers talked to more female non-users about family planning now than a decade ago. The government is also trying to increase the basket of contraceptives and making them available under the national family planning programme.



DID SEAWEED HELP US BECOME HUMANS?

Eating seaweed might have provided the key nutrients that helped Homo sapiens evolve millions of years ago, suggests new research.

Modern brains cannot function without nutrients like magnesium and zinc and, according to some studies, it is likely that the access to certain essential nutrients influenced the evolution of the human brain so that it could become the brain we have today. "Nutrients needed for this transition from a primitive ancestor to modern Homo sapiens were (and still are) available in seaweeds," said study co-author Ole G. Mouritsen, Professor at University of Southern Denmark.

"Seaweeds could be found and harvested in abundance on shores, and for a foraging lifestyle, a rich coastal environment would be a



significant source of a consistent supply of these nutrients," Mouritsen said. Seaweed — large marine algae, or macroalgae — is also rich in vitamin B12, iodine and polyunsaturated fatty-acids which are essential for brain development.

In their review, published in the Journal of Applied Phycology, the authors noted that the human

lineage is estimated to have diverged from our closest living relatives, the chimpanzees, around five-seven million years ago. "However, the changing patterns of resource distribution associated with the extensive drying and expansion of the African savannahs between 2.5 and two million years ago have been the impetus for a shift in for-

aging behaviour among early members of the genus Homo.

"Foraging over longer distances for food would have contributed to bipedalism and a different body stature as increasingly larger ranges had to be traversed, and in the case of our primitive ancestors, this would undoubtedly lead to significant changes in diet," the authors said.

Coastal areas may very well have attracted early hominoids in search of food. "Our ancestors would find foods like fish, crustaceans, snails, seaweeds, bird eggs and perhaps occasional dead marine vertebrates. But they probably did not have the necessary rudimentary understanding of seasonal tidal cycles and their influence on shellfish availability," the researchers said.

What happens to your brain when you give up sugar

Anyone who knows me also knows that I have a huge sweet tooth. I always have. My friend and fellow graduate student Andrew is equally afflicted, and living in Hershey, Pennsylvania -- the "Chocolate Capital of the World" -- doesn't help either of us.

But Andrew is braver than I am. Last year, he gave up sweets for Lent. I can't say that I'm following in his footsteps this year, but if you are abstaining from sweets for Lent this year, here's what you can expect over the next 40 days.

In neuroscience, food is something we call a "natural reward." In order for us to survive as a species, things like eating, having sex and nurturing others must be pleasurable to the brain so that these behaviors are reinforced and repeated.

Evolution has resulted in the mesolimbic pathway, a brain system that deciphers these natural rewards for us. When we do something pleasurable, a bundle of neurons called the ventral tegmental area uses the neurotransmitter dopamine to signal to a part of the brain called the nucleus accumbens.

The connection between the nucleus accumbens and our prefrontal cortex dictates our motor movement, such as deciding whether or not to take another bite of that delicious chocolate cake.

The prefrontal cortex also activates hormones that tell our body: "Hey, this cake is really good. And I'm going to remember that for the future."

OBESITY, THE GROWING HEALTH CONCERN IN INDIA AND THE NEED TO TACKLE IT

In India, there is a common saying, which many families brag about, "Hum khate-peete khandan se hain," meaning they belong to a family where there is abundance of food and beverages. The underlying meaning is also that if the family members, as well as the children, are overweight, it's because of good food. The saying evokes a sense of pride from belonging to a well-to-do family and living a good standard of life, as well as aspiring others to follow suit. Perhaps this attitude is what has led the country to be known as the obesity capital of

the world, and that's definitely not something we should take pride in. The shocking fact is majority of the population are unaware of the dangerous ill-effects of being obese. It's not just about the physical expansion which is caused by obesity, this lifestyle disease paves the way for diabetes, heart disease, kidney problems, liver failure, and many others. In a survey done by a leading hospital in New Delhi, it found that around 80.7 per cent of people residing in Delhi-NCR region were suffering from obesity - though 78.5 per cent



continued to consider themselves as having normal weight.

Obesity is a condition which is defined as having a BMI (body mass index) greater than 30. BMI

is calculated by taking a person's weight in kilograms, divided by the square of his height in meters (kg/m²). The range between 25 to 30 is considered as 'overweight'.

1. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), a Government health survey, has found that the number of overweight men in the country has doubled over the past decade. In case of women, one in five women is now overweight.

2. While maximum cases of obesity affect urban upper and middle class families, the rural population has also showed a significant number - 14.3 per cent men were found to be obese.

3. Since India is a developing country, one may assume that malnutrition is one of the major

factors causing death. But in reality, it is obesity that is affecting and causing dangerous diseases among millions.

4. Childhood obesity is also on the rise globally. Even children, as little as under the age of five, were found to be suffering from obesity.

A WHO report states that the number of obese and overweight children under five has nearly doubled since 1990 to 10.3 million. There are various factors involved - no physical activity, junk food, sugary drinks, etc.

Centre seeks Rs 13,000 crore surplus from RBI, no special dividend

NEW DELHI: The government has not asked the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to pay any special dividend and is only seeking Rs 13,000 crore of surplus lying with the central bank, economic affairs secretary Subhash Chandra Garg said.

In August, the RBI had paid a dividend of Rs 30,659 crore for the fiscal ending June, 2017. It was less than half the Rs 65,876 crore it had paid in 2015-16. The government had budgeted for a Rs 58,000 crore dividend from the RBI in its Budget for this fiscal year. "There is no proposal at this stage to ask for any special dividend. What is being discussed is to only ask for what the RBI earned this year but did not distribute. That is about Rs 13,000 crore. That's what the government has suggested the Reserve Bank to transfer," Garg told PTI. RBI's profit was about Rs 44,000 crore, of which Rs 30,000 crore has been distributed and Rs 13,000 crore it

retained towards risks and reserves. So the government has made a suggestion that the Rs 13,000 crore may also be transferred, he said.

The government had last month announced an unprecedented Rs 2.11 lakh crore capital infusion in PSU banks, which are grappling with high non-performing assets (NPAs). Asked about the contours of the recap bonds, Garg said "the recapitalisation package is in the final stages. The Department of Financial Services is working on it and soon we would see all these aspects being addressed". Of the Rs 2.11 lakh crore, Rs 1.35 lakh crore would be infused through recapitalisation bonds and the remaining Rs 76,000 crore through budgetary support and banks diluting equity in capital market.

Credit rating agency Moody's had last week upgraded India's sovereign rating after a gap of over 13 years citing reform push and steps being taken by the government to



solve the high NPA problems in the banking sector.

Bad loans in the sector have soared to Rs 10 lakh crore.

Garg said Moody's has acknowledged the reform process and believes that India is in a position to control its debt and put its banking sector in order. "The kind and quality of reforms, the boldness of reforms, the structural, fundamental needs of reform is what has persuaded

measures to clean up non-performing loans as reform steps which would foster sustained economic growth.

On privatisation of Air India, Garg said it is progressing "reasonably steadily" and the plan about how to privatise has also been broadly worked out. Asked if it would happen in the current fiscal, Garg said, "I won't put a timeline on when this is likely. Air India is not just one company, there are other assets."

The government has 'in-principle' decided to disinvest the Air India group as a whole or its constituents fully or part thereof through the strategic sale with transfer of management control.

Air India has a debt burden of more than Rs 50,000 crore.

The Cabinet, in June, had decided on strategic disinvestment of the loss-making Air India, which is staying afloat on taxpayers' funds, and a ministerial panel is working on the modalities.

7.5-8 pct GDP growth expected this year: NITI Aayog VC

NEW DELHI: NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar on Monday opined that the outlook for India's GDP is projected to be around 7.5 to 8 percent this year, with an estimate of 6.2 percent growth for this quarter.

Further, Rajiv claimed that disinvestment of national carrier Air India is slated to take place in the next 12 months. "It is difficult for the disinvestment procedure to be done by March. However, we are expecting this to be completed in the next 12 months," he told ANI.

With the recent changes in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) rates to be levied on various commodities, Kumar opined that petroleum and electricity should be brought under the ambit of the taxation scheme.

"In my opinion, there should be only three tax slabs under the GST- 0, 15 and 28 percent. Also, electricity and petroleum should be brought under the GST," he said. Rajiv further said the government needs to focus more on areas such as infrastructure, productivity, affordable housing, irrigation, and social spending. He also said the ratio of capital versus revenue expenditure needs to be maintained at the current level.

Hiring to remain stagnant until beginning of next fiscal

NEW DELHI: The hiring outlook in the private sector is expected to stay muted till the beginning of fiscal 2018-19, an ASSOCHAM assessment, based on its feedback from members, indicated. It was necessitated as India's corporate sector placed most energies on rationalising costs, including the wage costs, and tried to deleverage its balance sheet. "The focus right now is how to deleverage, consolidate, exit from non-core businesses and achieve lean and mean balance sheets. Going forward at least in the next quarter and a half, the corporates would be busy improving their margins and reducing their debt costs, even as the top line growth may take a backseat," the paper noted. It further observed that given the current circumstances, the fresh hiring prospects do not look bright maybe, for the two quarters. However, it is expected to pick up in the next fiscal, with wage cost control as the key area of priority in the short term. It noted that most of the churning is taking place in telecom, financials (including private sector banks, non-banking finance companies), Information Technology, realty and infrastructure.

Significantly, as the PSU banks would also bring down their employee cost to their operation ratio, post re-capitalisation by the government, the fresh hiring may also come down there as well, it said.

"Though the Moody's upgrade has given a sentiment boost, the next two quarters would be challenging for the private sector. But things would then improve and some of the pain points of the present like high debt, slow consumer demand, should ease from April, 2018. In any case, barring any untoward event, the fiscal 2018-19 would be better than the current financial year," said D S Rawat, Secretary General of ASSOCHAM.

Furthermore, the boom in the stock market, though being triggered by a huge liquidity play, is also reflective of the uptick in the economic growth going forward.

The market is at ease even with higher valuations, riding on the hopes of a pickup. The problems surrounding the Goods and Services Tax (GST) should be settled in the next few months, the paper noted.

The optimism also stems from India's sound macro indicators like moderate inflation, stability in foreign exchange, robust foreign exchange reserves and an improving trend line in exports.

However, a thing to watch would be crude oil prices, which could be a spoiler if they move up significantly from the present level.

Sensex loses sheen; IT, metal stocks weigh



MUMBAI: The market got off to a muted start today on weakness in IT and metal stocks after participants took profit amid sluggish global pointers.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell 54.59 points, or 0.16%, to 33,288.21 in early session. The gauge had gained 582.36 points in the previous two sessions.

Also, the wider 50-share NSE Nifty shed 22.10 points, or 0.21%, to 10,261.50.

Traders went about pocketing profit in those shares that have run up recently. Asia remained weak.

Among major Sensex losers, Cipla, ICICI Bank, Infosys, Tata Steel, M&M and SBI fell by up to 0.99%, pulling the index down. Japan's Nikkei fell 0.56%, Shanghai Composite 0.97% and Hong Kong's Hang Seng 0.19%.

The US Dow Jones Industrial Average ended 0.43% lower on Friday.

Card transactions soar 84% in Sep 2017 to Rs 74,090 cr: Report

MUMBAI: The debit and credit card transactions have jumped to Rs 74,090 crore in September this year, up a hefty 84 per cent as compared to the same month last year when it stood at Rs 40,130 crore, thanks to the government push for non-cash payments, says a study. The transaction volume at all points of sale (POSes) clipped higher by 86 per cent to 37.8 million in September this year over the same period last year when it stood at 20.3 million, European payment solutions provider Worldline said in a weekend report quoting the Reserve Bank data.

In September 2016 the number stood at 20.3 million, it added.

"With demonetisation, people were pushed to use non-cash modes of payment for everyday expenses. Even after the cash is back to the pre-demonetisation levels, there is a visible growth in

card transactions," Deepak Chandnani, chief executive of Worldline South Asia & Middle East, told PTI.

The push to increase cards usage started with the Prime Minister Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) in August 2014, the survey said. Total number of cards as of September 2017 stood at 853 million. Of this, 33.3 million were credit cards and 819.8 million were debit cards.

There was a marked spurt, especially for debit cards, which shot by 39 per cent in 2015 because of the new Jan Dhan accounts. Post-demonetisation, growth has been averaging at 22 per cent, the survey added.

The growth of credit cards from 2016 to 2017 has been 24 per cent, higher than the average growth but consistent with the trend of the past few years, the study said. Between 2011 and 2016, credit cards have seen a steady 9 per cent increase.

The study further said digital payment companies have seen a substantial jump in business following the government's push towards cashless transactions after the note-ban last November, and the major contributor to this growth was online payments. According to RBI, after the note-ban, digital transactions rose 31 per cent from last November to this September.

Growth rate of the digital payments industry, which was earlier in the range of 20-50 per cent, has accelerated post-demonetisation to over 40 per cent.

As of September, the number of transactions on the unified payments interface (UPI) jumped 85 per cent in a month. The rise in UPI adoption is also facilitated by the rise in smartphone users and increased availability of 3G and 4G data (89 per cent of total mobile data), the survey said.

India moves up one notch to 126 in GDP per capita terms: IMF

NEW DELHI: India has moved up one position to 126th in terms of GDP per capita of countries, still ranked lower than all its BRICS peers, while Qatar remains the world's richest on this parameter, as per IMF data. The data, which forms part of the latest World Economic Outlook report of the International Monetary Fund, ranks over 200 countries in terms of per capita GDP based on purchasing power parity (PPP).

PPP between two countries is the rate at which the currency of one country needs to be converted into that of a second country to ensure that a given amount of the first country's currency will purchase the same volume of goods and services in the second country as it does in the first.

India has seen its per capita GDP rise to USD 7,170 in 2017, from USD 6,690 last year, helping improve its rank by a position to 126th. Qatar remains top-ranked with per capita GDP of USD 1,24,930, followed by Macao at the second position with USD 1,14,430 and Luxembourg third with USD 1,09,190. Among BRICS countries, India has the lowest per capita GDP. Russia boasts of a GDP per capita of USD 27,900, while for China, it stood at USD 16,620, Brazil at USD 15,500 and South Africa at USD 13,400. Interestingly, as per a recent Credit Suisse report, India is home to 2.45 lakh millionaires with a total household wealth of USD 5 trillion. As per the IMF data, the richest 10 countries in the world in

per capita GDP terms also include Singapore (4th, USD 90,530), Brunei (5th, USD 76,740), Ireland (6th, USD 72,630), Norway (7th, USD 70,590), Kuwait (8th, USD 69,670), United Arab Emirates (9th, USD 68,250) and Switzerland (10th, USD 61,360). The US has failed to make it to the top 10 and is ranked 13th with a GDP per capita of USD 59,500 while the UK is ranked even lower.

According to a Fortune magazine report based on the IMF data, several top-ranking countries such as Qatar and Brunei "have fuel and oil propelling their economies", while investment and strong banking systems have helped propel economic growth in other countries like Iceland and Ireland.

Indian Oil launches nation's first electric charging station

NAGPUR: Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) has collaborated with app-based taxi aggregator Ola to launch the country's first electric charging station at one of its petrol/diesel stations in Nagpur.

This is a big leap towards contributing to the vision of 'Green India', the state-owned oil refiner said in a statement.

"Electric vehicles have the ability to solve some of the key issues we are currently facing with respect to vehicular pollution and air quality; and as a large-scale mobility platform, Ola can bring about a catalytic change," the statement said.

The electric charging facility was inaugurated at Indian Oil's Company-Owned, Company-Operated (COCO) fuel station at RBI Square, Nagpur, in the presence of senior officials, dealers and customers.

Nagpur is the first city to introduce electric public transportation model in the country when it introduced 200 electric vehicles, including taxis, buses, e-rickshaw and autos in May.

"As India's leading oil refiner and marketer, Indian Oil considers promoting ecological sustainability as part of its core business. Thus, this partnership with Ola is the right step forward as we re-imagine how India will commute in the coming years," Murali Srinivasan Indian Oil's Executive Director, Maharashtra said.

Banks allowed to hire machines, staffers for Aadhaar enrolment

NEW DELHI: The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has provided some "relaxation" to banks in procurement of enrolment machines and hiring private data entry operators for their Aadhaar centres, and hopes that banks will offer such services at stipulated 10% of the branches "at the earliest", its CEO Ajay Bhushan Pandey has said.

The Aadhaar-issuing body has allowed banks to hire private data entry operators and enrolment machines and expects the relaxation to speed up the opening of Aadhaar enrolment and updation centres at bank premises.

But the reprieve has been granted with the condition that banks will have to ensure proper supervision of enrolment and updation process within their premises.

"They (banks) wanted some relaxation so that they could hire operators for data entry, and also... hire the enrolment machines. So we have provided them this relaxation.



Now using that, they are going ahead and setting up the (enrolment) stations... they have assured that they will do this task as early as possible," the UIDAI CEO told PTI in an interview. Until now, banks had to procure enrolment machines on their own and place their own employees for the job of data entry, he

explained. So far, only about 3,000 branches of private and public sector banks have opened Aadhaar centres within their premises as against the targeted 15,300 branches that are required to do so. "The good thing is they are all catching up and they have started getting into this. Many of them have placed

order on GeM (Government e-Marketplace) portal and they are in the process of procurement," he said. Asked about the time it would take for banks to achieve the target of opening Aadhaar centres in at least 10 per cent of their branches, Pandey said, "It should be possible within next few weeks".

"The entire idea is that people should get the convenience as early as possible," he added. On whether the UIDAI would take action against the banks for not meeting the deadline of October 31 for opening such centres, Pandey declined to spell out the consequences saying that the authority will have to take a considered view on whether banks can demonstrate valid reasons for missing the deadline. "If they (banks) are able to demonstrate that they faced a genuine difficulty then appropriate view can be taken. At this stage, it is difficult to say what exactly will be the consequences," he added. The Bank Aadhaar Kendras are being set up with a view to make the Aadhaar verification process of bank accounts convenient for the people and also to have more Aadhaar centres across the country. According to UIDAI stipulation, 43 private and public sector banks have to open Aadhaar enrolment and updation centres in 15,315 branches.

We were never in discussions for merger with BigBasket: Grofers

NEW DELHI: Online grocery firm Grofers has denied holding merger talks with larger rival BigBasket, saying "just one meeting about business" last year between the two had been blown out of proportion.

Grofers founder and Chief Executive Alibinder Dhindsa said the company is focusing on growing its business as the online grocery segment is still at the nascent stage. Softbank-backed Grofers and BigBasket had reportedly been in talks for a potential merger that would have created one of the largest online grocery players, competing with the likes of Amazon.

"It was not (merger) talks, there was just one meeting about how the business is going and it just got blown out of proportion because of different reasons," Dhindsa told PTI. Emphasising that they never had talks regarding the merger, he said: "Right now, business is going good for us, we are going at a pretty good pace. So, why would we want to do any of that?"

Grofers, which has so far raised USD 160 million, is looking to take its revenue to about Rs 1,000 crore in 2017-18, betting big on investments and technology advancement in its warehouses and targeting new customers. In 2016-17, it had reported a revenue of Rs 235 crore. "In 2018, we will probably end up touching Rs 1,000 crore topline revenue. That's the target even if we grow at the current pace," Dhindsa said, adding that two big areas of investment for the company are warehousing for supply chain and automation inside to process the order at a quicker pace. He further said the company would be investing about USD 5 million in warehouse expansion in 2018.

Asia Cup U-19: Afghanistan dismantle Pakistan in final, create history

MUMBAI: Afghanistan's U-19 cricket team created history in the final of the Asia Cup U-19 tournament in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday as they dismantled Pakistan by 185 runs to win the tournament. It summed up a great tournament for Afghanistan, who had won three out of their four league games and had defeated Nepal, who had earlier beaten India in the league stages, in the semi-final. The result summed up a magnificent edition of the Asia Cup where the lesser powers of cricket in Asia stepped up to the plate. Pakistan chose to field first in the final but Afghanistan notched up a 61-run stand between Rahman Gul and Ibrahim Zadran. However, Ikram Faizi, the wicket-keeper and leading run-getter in this tournament, stitched partnerships with the middle order and notched up a magnificent 100 to boost Afghanistan to 248/7. In response, Pakistan were blown away by the duo of Mujeeb Zadran and Qais Ahmed as they dismantled the Pakistan batting line-up. Mujeeb picked up 5/13 while Qais Ahmed finished with figures of 3/18 as Pakistan were bundled out for 63 to lose by a massive margin. Mujeeb's haul summed up the domination of the Afghanistan bowlers in the tournament, becoming the second bowler to take a five-wicket haul. Earlier in the week, Mujeeb had taken 6/23 to bowl Pakistan out for 57. Speaking after the end of the match, Ikram, who was named the Man of the Match, said, "It was a tough wicket to bat initially but my captain told me to spend time in the middle and later on, it was easy for me to bat on."



Virat Kohli, Ravichandran Ashwin only two Indians in VVS Laxman's dream Test XI

MUMBAI: Former Indian cricketer VVS Laxman revealed his dream Test XI and just two Indian cricket team players - Virat Kohli and Ravichandran Ashwin - were able to find a place in the team. In a batting-heavy team that has Kohli, world No 1 Steven Smith, Joe Root, Hashim Amla, Kane Williamson and South African maverick AB de Villiers, the spot of a

specialist all-rounder is taken by Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan and not Ravindra Jadeja, despite his heroics in home Tests for India. The pace attack is dominated by Australians with Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc being the only two fast bowlers, as the team consists several options of spin bowling in Shakib, Ravichandran Ashwin, Joe Root and even

Kane Williamson.

David Warner, who has been the captain of IPL team Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) of which Laxman is a mentor, is the fourth Australian in the Dream Test XI despite his mixed performances in Test cricket in the Indian sub-continent. No cricketer from countries such as Sri Lanka, West Indies and Pakistan has managed

to find a place in Laxman's team, which was released by Indian broadcaster Star Sports without mentioning the captain.

VVS Laxman's Dream Test XI: David Warner, Hashim Amla, Kane Williamson, Virat Kohli, Joe Root, Steven Smith, AB de Villiers (wk), Shakib Al Hasan, Ravichandran Ashwin, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood.

Grigor Dimitrov targets Grand Slam glory after ATP Finals title

LONDON: As Grigor Dimitrov stood centre stage holding aloft the gleaming ATP Finals trophy and the tickertape rained down on Sunday it felt like a weight had finally been lifted from his shoulders.

It was not the grand slam title he wants most but the next best thing and it felt like a breakthrough moment for a player widely perceived as one of the game's under-achievers.

He played calmly and intelligently to beat Belgium's David Goffin 7-5 4-6 6-3 in a superb climax to the season.

Back in 2008 the Bulgarian won the junior Wimbledon title against Henri Kontinen, who won the doubles crown at the O2 Arena on Sunday, and it was not long before he was being dubbed the natural successor to Swiss great Roger Federer.

The 'Baby Fed' tag proved a burden, however, and Dimitrov, despite occasional forays into the upper echelons of the ATP rankings, could never consistently deliver results.

In 2014, when he beat reigning Wimbledon champion Andy Murray on Centre Court, it seemed he was ready. Dimitrov's run to the semi-finals at the All England Club meant he cracked the top 10 for the first time. But it proved a false dawn. Two years later his relationship with Maria Sharapova was of more interest than his tennis and he had slipped down to 40.

Something has clicked though and Dimitrov, now 26, began the year by reaching the Australian Open semi-finals and this time he has backed it up with the most consistent year of his career.

After qualifying for the ATP Finals for the first time, he swept through his round-robin group unbeaten, fought off a ferocious challenge from American Jack Sock in the semi-finals and on Sunday he overcame Goffin to claim the trophy.

He will end the year as world number three -- behind only Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer -- but crucially Dimitrov believes he is now 'locked-in' for an assault on grand slams.

"The important thing is just to stay on the ground and put your head down, work even harder," Dimitrov told reporters. "I just want to keep the same line. I don't want to get too hyped up because I've done well, now I'm number three in the world. No, this makes me even more locked in, more excited about my work, and for what's to come."

"Right now it's a great platform for me to build on for next year."

It's going to be amazing in the off-season. I know what I have to do in order to do good."

Dimitrov, coached by Murray's former hitting partner Daniel Vallverdu, is only the second ATP Finals debutant to win the title since John McEnroe defeated Arthur Ashe in 1978.

Yet rewind two years and he was struggling to play three good points in a row, let alone challenge for big titles.

Out of adversity, however, Dimitrov has finally realised what it takes to put the puzzle together.

"With the right mindset, right people, the right support, things happen. That period really helped me a lot," he said. "I think I needed that. Those six months were a complete struggle for me. In that moment I realised what I needed to work on, who are the real people around me. Little by little, drop by drop, here I am."

Mithali Raj 'mesmerized' by support for women's cricket in India

LUCKNOW: The popularity of women's cricket in India has grown a lot in the recent years. Fans lining up, seeking autographs and having selfies with women cricketers are now a reality. Indian women's cricket team captain Mithali Raj, who has been the torch bearer of this drastic change in terms of the popularity of women's cricket and the cricketers in India, herself was mesmerized by the support and response.

"I could have imagined a few people on our arrival to India after finishing runners-up, but I was amazed to see thousands of people, flashing cameras and celebrating. It took 45 minutes to reach the team's bus when we landed at the airport," said Mithali while addressing a ses-



sion at the Lucknow Literature Festival on Sunday.

Certainly, it's a great transformation. Life has changed drastically and it's good to see that now people of all ages recognize women crick-

eters and respect them like men cricketers in India," said Mithali.

"The change is good. Now women cricketers too travel in business class. There were days when even I after making my debut for India had

to travel second class in a train from Hyderabad to Mumbai," she added.

Advocating for proper support to women cricketers in India, Mithali emphasized that to keep this momentum going for the women cricket in India, schools and parents should also come forward. "Cricket for women at school level is a must as it's the place where one learns the basics. Moreover, parents should support their girl child to play cricket. It will help us have future women cricketers for India."

Another star at the women's cricket World Cup for India, Veda Krishnamurthy, whose aggression while batting has sparked comparisons with Virat Kohli, supported the move for a women In-

dian Premier League from next year. "This would help women cricketers in India grow. Not only the finances, but it will boost their confidence," she said. Veda, who also happens to be the second Indian women cricketer alongside Harmanpreet Kaur to play in next month's Women's Big Bash League for Hobart Hurricanes in Australia, admitted the aggression in her batting was genuine and that she enjoyed it.

"I grew up admiring Mithali, and it was really a proud moment for me when I got to play alongside her. She (Mithali) is a perfect captain as well as a nice human being too. I always find her to be a great motivator to all the women cricketers in India," she said.

Bolt enlisted to make Aussie cricketers 'explosive' runners

SYDNEY: Australia's cricketers have called on retired sprint king Usain Bolt to boost their running between the wickets during the Ashes Test series against England.

The Jamaican track superstar, the world record holder in the 100m and 200m and eight-time Olympic champion, is working with the Australian batsmen to improve their "explosiveness" off the mark.

"It's all about explosiveness, and that's one thing I've noticed with cricket they don't really have a lot of explosiveness when they're running," the world's fastest man told the Herald Sun newspaper.

"They seem to always take off at a slow rate. Getting that right will definitely help people."

Bolt, 31, who retired from athletics after August's World Championships in London, said he was trying to increase the awareness of running while batting.

Australian batsman Peter Handscomb said Bolt's tips were welcomed ahead of Thursday's first Ashes Test in Brisbane.

"He was giving us a few pointers on how to get a little bit faster," Handscomb said. "We'll give it a crack."

"He was trying to get us nice and low in the turn and in and out. The first couple of steps are key and if we can get them right, we'll be fast."

"Obviously he's the fastest man ever so if we can have the title with him, that'd be cool."

Bolt said had been busy after retirement preparing for a tilt at football, having been invited to train with Bundesliga side Borussia Dortmund.

"It's something that I want to do. I'm trying to get fit now," he said. "My doctor finally passed me after my hamstring problems at the world championships, so now I can start training." "I've started training while I'm here and trying to get into shape before I get home and next year I'll get a trial and we'll take it from there."

Superbike 'sabotage' mars JK Tyre -FMSCI National Racing season finale

NOIDA: The final round of the JK Tyre-FMSCI National Racing Championships at the Buddh International Circuit was marred by controversy after a racer alleged that his superbike was sabotaged at the pits, forcing him to pull out of the two races over the weekend. K Rajini, former national champion and international racer, made the allegation that someone tampered with his bike (2014 Kawasaki Ninja ZX10R) on Saturday, after he had taken pole for the JK Super Bike 1000cc race. He made Facebook posts as well, with photographs of the damaged parts. Yesterday, after qualifying, someone poured water inside my petrol tank with the intention of preventing me from racing," said Rajini, who is one of the few international motorcycle racers India has produced, having taken part in the Malaysia Super Series as well as Asian Road Racing Championships. "I use a specialised race fuel tank and so it could be opened without a key. My engine has been destroyed," added Rajini, who is semi-retired and runs a training academy for racers.

The 36-year-old added he has never faced or seen such a situation in his 17-year racing career. "It is a sad day for Indian motorsports," he added. "Bikes kept in a secured pit garage is tampered with. When you consider my experience and achievements, there was no need for me to race at the JK Championship. I just rode to set a new official lap record. But



jealous rivals didn't want that to happen."

However, the national governing body, Federation of Motorsports Clubs of India (FMSCI), is yet to investigate the matter as Rajini has not filed an official complaint.

"We can't take action on it or investigate it without an official complaint and the FMSCI is yet to receive any," said Sujith Kumar, two-wheeler racing commission chairman of the federation. "The FMSCI can't take action based on a social media post." Rajini justified not making an official complaint saying nothing could be done to reverse the damage done to his expensive bike.

"If I complain that will drag me into further controversy," said Rajini. "It will not change anything. The organisers should have ensured security for our equipment."

Then again, in racing pits, it is also the responsibility of the racers and their teams to keep their equipment safe. The BIC does provide internal security, but, to make things more murky, the CCTV cameras were, apparently, not working at the pits on Saturday.

Lehmann urges former greats to back under-fire Australia

BRISBANE: Coach Darren Lehmann on Sunday urged former greats to get behind the Australian team for this week's Ashes Test series opener against England following uproar over the selection of the squad.

Shane Warne led the chorus of disapproval of the 13-man squad, saying "Australia look confused", while his former leg-spin Test bowling partner Stuart MacGill lashed the selectors as "morons". Wicket-keeper Tim Paine was chosen for his first Test in seven years and 34-year-old Shaun Marsh was recalled to the Test side for the eighth time in controversial selections announced on Friday. Everyone is entitled to their opinion, aren't they?" Lehmann told reporters in Brisbane. "I'd just like all our players, ex-players, to be really positive about the Australian cricket team. Let's just get everyone from Australia behind the Australian cricket team and let's get moving forward." Paine is in the Test side despite not keeping in any of Tasmania's three Sheffield Shield games this season and spending much of the previous season as an understudy. Paine has not scored a first-class century for 11 years, while his first-class average, when playing, over the past three seasons is below 20. Despite the 32-year-old's lack of first-class cricket, Lehmann said selectors have seen enough of him to back him as the Test wicket-keeper. Paine took five catches and scored a half-century as captain of the Cricket Australia XI against England in Adelaide earlier this month and impressed when behind the stumps for Australia in

their Twenty20 series in India in October.

"We've watched him keep a fair bit," Lehmann said. "Obviously T20s and the chairman's game ... he's a high-quality keeper. I was very impressed with him down in the Adelaide game when he played against England. He's been in good form with the gloves, as he always has been, and he has been very good for us in the T20s."

The recall of Marsh has also drawn criticism and he is likely to bat at number six at the expense of an all-rounder in a conservative measure to shore up Australia's suspect batting. "We are really confident of where he is at as a player. He's in good form, so he'll do well," Lehmann said. "He's pretty calm. He's grown up a lot in the last few years and played some important knocks for us. He's really confident within himself."

Lehmann backed dumped opener Matthew Renshaw to bounce back from his Test axing. The coach said the decision hinged on a combination of Test debutant Cameron Bancroft's irresistible Sheffield Shield batting form and Renshaw's struggles with Queensland this season. "He was unlucky to miss out, it was a tough call. Obviously Bancroft with his runs just knocked the door down," Lehmann said. "But I'm sure he'll [Renshaw] be back. He's a really good player, he's just in a bit of a slump at the moment but he'll get out of that." Lehmann said also said Australia would not be distracted by reports from England that suspended all-rounder Ben Stokes could be cleared to play a part in the series by police this week.