

TIME AND US

DAILY SRINAGAR, KASHMIR

THURSDAY

● NOVEMBER, 16, 2017
● 24 SAFFAR 1439 AH
● ISSUE: 268
● VOLUME: 03
● PAGES: 08

WEATHER TEMPERATURE		
STATION	MAX TEMPERATURE	MIN TEMPERATURE
	ACT	ACT
SRINAGAR	15.6	2.2
JAMMU	23.9	11.9
LEH	13.2	-6.3
KARGIL	9.6	-5.2

SUNSET THURSDAY: 05:28 PM
SUNRISE FRIDAY: 07:06 AM

LOCAL FORECAST OF SRINAGAR
Mainly clear sky... Maximum & Minimum temperatures will be around 15°C & 2°C respectively.

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

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ASHISH NEHRA SET FOR SPECIAL DEBUT IN INDIA VS SRI LANKA SERIES

Mehbooba rushes to Srinagar, visits shrine complex to assess damage

Expresses satisfaction over shrine safety, praises local youth for preventing fire spread



SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 15: Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti this morning rushed here and visited the shrine of Hazrat Amir i Kabeer Mir Syed Ali Hamdani (R.A.) which has suffered some damages in a fire incident previous night. Cancelling all her engagements, Mehbooba Mufti air dashed to Srinagar early morning and straight away drove to the shrine of saint in the Shahr i Khaas. The Chief Minister went round various areas of the shrine complex to assess the quantum of damage. She sought a detailed appraisal from the local administration regarding the fire incident.

▶ See **Mehbooba**...Pg 02

Mehbooba directs safety audit of all shrines

Asks for early start of restoration works at Khanqah i Mou'la; praises local youth for their efforts to prevent fire spread



SRINAGAR, Nov 15: Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti today directed conduct of safety audit of shrines in the Kashmir Valley by the concerned Departments and immediately taking all fire prevention measures at these places. Chairing a high-level meeting to review the safety and protection of all the shrines of the Valley in the backdrop of last night's fire incident at Khankah i Mou'la, the Chief Minister directed all concerned Departments like Wakf Board, Fire & Emergency Services, PDD, PHE, Police, SMC and other related Department to jointly conduct the safety audit of all the shrines and come up with whatever precautionary measures are required to protect these places of reverence. Minister for Education, Syed Altaf Bukhari; Minister of State for Health like Wakf Board, Fire & Emergency Services, PDD, PHE, Police, SMC and other related Department to jointly conduct the safety audit of all the shrines and come up with whatever precautionary measures are required to protect these places of reverence.

▶ See **Audit**...Pg 02

Time to reverse extension of Central Laws to J&K: Dr Farooq

'Status-quo on Kashmir against interests of both India and Pakistan'

Srinagar, Nov 15: National Conference President and Member of Parliament, Dr. Farooq Abdullah on Wednesday said the time had come to start reversing the extension of all Central Laws that were extended to J&K after 1953 in continuation of the spirit of the State's unique political arrangement with the rest of the country. Addressing a rousing public meeting in Uri today, Dr. Farooq Abdullah also urged New Delhi and Islamabad to start a sustained, comprehensive dialogue on Kashmir as it was against the interests of both countries to prolong the political issue.

"The time has come to reverse the extension of all Central Laws that were extended to J&K post-1953 through pliant regimes that were installed in J&K through covert and undemocratic machinations to disempower the people of the State and rob them of their political identity. The erosion of the State's Autonomy is the genesis of the political problem in Jammu and Kashmir and created a sense of disenchantment and disillusionment in the people. It was this sense of betrayal, disenchantment and disillusionment that has fuelled the eruption of turmoil and unrest in Kashmir at various regular intervals in our history and this is what New Delhi needs to acknowledge. The restoration of Autonomy to J&K is non-negotiable", Dr. Farooq Abdullah said while speaking in Uri.

▶ See **Farooq**...Pg 02



Two militants arrested from South Kashmir

Kulgam, Nov 15: Government Forces Wednesday arrested two militants while one of them was apprehended in injured condition near the encounter site in Walten-gu Kund area of Qazigund Kulgam in South Kashmir.

A militant whom police identified as Shams Waqar was apprehended when ▶ See **Two**...Pg 02

'EXPEDITE PROBE AGAINST THOSE ALLEGEDLY INVOLVED IN CORRUPTION CASES': CVC TO DEPARTMENTS

Newly appointed Vigilance commissioner seeks list of cases

Srinagar, Nov 15: The State Vigilance Commission (CVC) has asked all the state government departments to speed up departmental inquiries against officials allegedly involved in corruption cases.

Sources told KNS that the move comes after the state government and commission, have noticed that many organizations were sitting over corruption complaints. "The commission has asked all public sector undertakings, government departments to speed-up investigation in ▶ See **CVC**...Pg 02

Naeem calls on Union Minister for Road Transport, discusses developmental programme

Gadkari approves Rs 1200 cr for up-gradation of major roads in JK

New Delhi, Nov 15: Minister for Public Works, Naeem Akhter today called on Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Shipping and Water Resources, Nitin Gadkari, and discussed the proposed developmental projects for Jammu and Kashmir.

During an hour-long meeting at his office here, Akhter briefed the Union Minister about various developmental programmes and initiatives taken by the current govern-



ment across the State. Akhter also gave a detailed presenta-

tion of the road communication projects under execution in the State. He also sought cooperation and help from the Union Minister on uplifting various developmental programmes, which include the construction of new roads and up-gradation of other developmental works.

The meeting was also attended by Minister of State for Public Works and Transport, Sunil Sharma, senior ▶ See **Naeem**...Pg 02

'Three J&K Ex-CMs busy in PoK(e) fight' WHAT CONGRESS DID SINCE 1947 TO GET POK BACK: OMAR TO AZAD

Srinagar, Nov 15: Former J&K chief minister Omar Abdullah lost no time to react to the remarks of another former J&K CM Ghulam Nabi Azad that "PoK is part of India.

Azad, also a former union minister and Congress national general secretary had said that Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) belongs to India. "PoK is an integral part of Kashmir while Kashmir is an integral part of India. And the fact is irrefutable."

Omar without losing any more time tweeted: "That's excellent news. Perhaps Azad Sb may like to explain what successive Congress governments have done since '47 ▶ See **Omar**...Pg 02

NC's favorite trick of political opportunism: Gani Vakil

NIA should investigate funding of all mainstream leaders: Charakh

Baramulla, Nov 15: President "Jammu Kashmir Bachao Tehreek" and Former Minister Abdul Gani Vakil today described the statement of Dr. Farooq Abdullah on Autonomy as National Conference's favorite method and trick to create confusion amongst masses for cheap political opportunism and take advantage of PDP-BJP's unnatural alliance to grab power in the State.



Vakil asked Farooq Abdullah that why he ▶ See **Vakil**...Pg 02

as the Chief Minister in 1998 push through Autonomy resolution but not the Autonomy Bill.

As per the statement issued to KNS, ▶ See **Vakil**...Pg 02

NC ADVICES GEELANI TO FORMALLY JOIN PDP NOW

'He divided Hurriyat at the behest of New Delhi'

Srinagar, Nov 15: National Conference on Wednesday said Ex-MLA Syed Ali Shah Geelani was accountable to the people of Kashmir for his failure to convert thousands of sacrifices into a concrete, acceptable resolution and had a personal political history as a former MLA that defied his moral sermons about the mainstream. In a statement issued from National Conference Head Office, 'Nawa-e-Subha' in Srinagar, National Conference State Spokesperson Junaid Azim Mattu said it was unbecoming of Geelani and his faction of Hurriyat to issue mercenary press statements against National Conference at the behest of PDP at a time when the State was faced with unprecedented ▶ See **NC**...Pg 02

Day-to-day issues neglected under political rhetoric: Tarigami

Says Kashmiris suffer immensely due to lack of basic amenities

Srinagar, Nov 15: While people in the state and especially in Kashmir Valley are suffering immensely due to the lack of basic amenities like electricity, water supply and health care, the ruling parties are trying to cover the basic issues under political rhetoric.

It has been happening for decades that day-to-day issues of people are being covered up by whipping up political rhetoric by the successive governments. Mis-deeds and non-performance of the government finds no space as political rhetoric gets highlighted. Major portion of the allocations made in the last budget is yet to be utilized as most of the on-



going schemes and projects are either defunct or work is going on at snail's pace. ▶ See **Tarigami**...Pg 02

JOINT RESISTANCE LEADERSHIP (JRL) CALLS FOR SHUTDOWN ON NOV 27

Srinagar, Nov 15: Joint Resistance Leadership (JRL) Wednesday alleged that authorities have been 'mis-treating' Kashmiri prisoners in different jails of Jammu and Kashmir and other states of India and has appealed people to observe a complete shutdown against it on November 27.

Addressing a joint press conference in Abi Guzar on Wednesday, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Yasin Malik asked people to observe Nov 27 as "black day".

They appealed for a shutdown on the day to demand an end to "ill-treatment" of Kashmiri political prisoners.

Police foiled a march led by separatist leaders and detained Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Muhammad Yasin ▶ See **Joint**...Pg 02

Martyr Sohanlal shown disrespect by J&K Govt: Rana

Seeks Rs 25 lakh ex-gratia, plot, job

Nagrota, Nov 15: National Conference Provincial President and MLA Nagrota Devender Singh Rana on Wednesday lambasted the Jammu and Kashmir Government for showing disrespect to Martyr Sohanlal Bhagat by not deputing any minister to attend his funeral.

"The brave-heart, son of soil, hailing from Sarah Pargalta, Bajalta in Nagrota Assembly Constituency, who ▶ See **Rana**...Pg 02



attained martyrdom in Manipal, deserved heroic send-

off for his bravery but the insensitive Jammu and Kashmir government chose otherwise", Rana said after attending the last rites of the martyr at his ancestral village.

The MLA Nagrota drew contrast to the martyrdom of Assam Rifles jawan Sohanlal Bhagat with his fellow jawan Inder Singh, who too attained martyrdom along with him when a suspected improvised explosive device (IED) ex-

ploded on November 13 at Chandel town in Manipur's Chandel district, and said the latter was given state funeral by the Himachal Pradesh Government at Mandi. "This is how the martyrs are respected", he added.

Rana, who along with the relatives and villagers of the martyr Sohan Lal Bhagat, were present when the army escorted his mortal remains ▶ See **Rana**...Pg 02

DELHI COURT FRAMES CHARGES AGAINST SHABIR SHAH, WANI

DFP terms charges baseless

Srinagar, Nov 15: A Delhi court on Wednesday framed charges against Kashmiri separatist leader Shabir Shah and Muhammad Aslam Wani in a money laundering case.

After the accused pleaded not guilty and claimed trial, Additional Sessions Judge Sidharth Sharma listed the matter for January 3 for recording of statement of the witnesses.

Shah was arrested on July 25 on charges of money laundering in a case dating back to 2005 when the Delhi Police Special Cell arrested Wani. ▶ See **Delhi**...Pg 02

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MEHBOOBA

Interacting with the members of the management committee and devotees, Mehbooba Mufti said the shrine of Hazrat Amir i Kabir (R.A.) symbolizes the pluralistic ethos of Kashmir society from which every citizen of the State draws spiritual solace.

The Chief Minister expressed her deep appreciation for the local youth who came forward and prevented the fire from spreading.

On the occasion, people of the area demanded installation of CCTVs in the shrine complex, availability of fire tenders in the locality, scientific protection to the wood structures at the shrine and expediting shrine expansion plan.

Minister for Education, Syed Altaf Bukhari; Minister of State for Health & Medical Education, Asiea Naqash; MLC, Khurshid Alam; Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Baseer Khan; IGP Kashmir zone, Munir Khan and other senior officers accompanied the Chief Minister during the visit.

Later in the day, the Chief Minister is expected to convene a meeting in this regard.

AUDIT

& Medical Education, Asiea Naqash and MLC, Khurshid Alam were present in the meeting.

Mehbooba Mufti directed installation of fire hydrants, smoke alarms, CCTVs and other precautions to prevent fire occurrence at any shrine in the State.

The Chief Minister, who is also the chairperson of the Wakf Board, directed immediate start of restoration work at the Khanqah i Mou'la shrine and complete it within the shortest period. She asked the INTACH to come up with the drawings within two days so that restoration work is started. She said money would be no constraint in the completion of restoration works at the shrine, which she described as civilizational soul for the people of the State.

Mehbooba Mufti noted with satisfaction that with the joint efforts of the local administration and people of the area, the fire at the shrine complex was not let to spread. She expressed her deep appreciation for the local youth who came forward and prevented the fire from spreading while directing the local administration to prepare list of such volunteers so that they would be suitably rewarded.

The Chief Minister was informed that regular prayers at the shrine would commence from Thursday after completing the cleaning, drying of floor and laying of new furnishing at the shrine.

The Chief Minister also directed the concerned agencies to expedite the restoration works at the Hazrat Peer Dastageer sahib shrine (R.A.) at Khanyar so that the devotees are facilitated at the earliest.

On the occasion, the INTACH and JKPC offered to do restoration job at the shrine free of cost in view of the importance of the shrine for the people of the State.

The meeting decided that Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar would monitor and supervised the restoration works at the shrine personally to get these completed in time.

Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Baseer Ahmad Khan; IGP Kashmir zone, Munir Khan; Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar, Dr. Syed Abid Rasheed; Chief Executive, J&K Wakf Board, Fayaz Ahmad Lone; heads of several Engineering Departments; Khudaman i Khanqah; and other senior officers were present in the meeting.

Earlier in the day, the Chief Minister, cancelling all her engagements at Jammu, air dashed to Srinagar to personally assess the damage caused by fire at the shrine. She went round various areas of the shrine complex to assess the quantum of damage and sought a detailed appraisal from the local administration regarding the fire incident.

Interacting with the members of the management committee and devotees, Mehbooba Mufti said the shrine of Hazrat Amir i Kabir (R.A.) symbolizes the pluralistic ethos of Kashmir society from which every citizen of the State draws spiritual solace. She expressed her deep appreciation for the local youth who came forward and prevented the fire from spreading.

FAROOQ

"The people of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh are the rightful and primary stakeholders and their political identity, honour and sense of dignity is supreme and no power on earth can rob them of their right to decide their political future. Our people have suffered immensely and rendered unimaginable sacrifices but never compromised on their aspirations and sentiments. Our people won't surrender before achieving their goal of an acceptable political resolution that takes into account their aspirations", Dr. Farooq Abdullah said.

Dr. Farooq Abdullah reminded Prime Minister Narendra Modi of his speech where he underlined the need to embrace the people of Kashmir as opposed to dealing with them operationally and militarily. "Prime Minister Modi should now take concrete steps to engage with the people of Kashmir with full dignity and respect for their sentiments in a sustained effort to resolve the Kashmir Issue. It is against the interests of both India and Pakistan to keep the Kashmir Issue unresolved and has staggering economic and political costs for both neighbours. If we want to usher the subcontinent into an era of peace, prosperity and economic progress – it is imperative to resolve the Kashmir Issue as per the sentiments and the aspirations of its people", the National Conference President added while speaking in Uri.

The National Conference President expressed disappointment over PDP's sellout over the crucial issue of the State's fiscal autonomy and said the extension of GST to J&K was a plot to deprive the people of J&K of their political honour. "PDP, in an effort to cling to power and ensure it remains in the Government, compromised on the State's fiscal autonomy and wreaked havoc with the State's remaining autonomy. Because of PDP our State Cabinet and State Legislature has been disempowered in matters of taxation and tax policy. Today we are all at the mercy of the Central GST Council and our handicrafts sector, our artisans and businessmen are facing insurmountable challenges due to PDP's sellout. This quid-pro-quo compromise by the PDP will have far-reaching economic and political implications for the State and its people", Dr. Farooq Abdullah added.

On this occasion Dr. Farooq Abdullah formally welcomed and admitted Dr. Sajjad Uri into National Conference, who

resigned from Government Service after twelve years of service with a goal of serving the people of Uri. "I welcome Dr. Sajjad Uri into the party fold and congratulate him for organizing such a rousing, successful public meeting. It is young, educated and passionate young men who will help in ushering our State into a period of corrective peace, growth and stability and I have full faith in Dr. Sajjad Uri's ability to serve the people with full honesty and dedication", Dr. Farooq Abdullah said.

Dr. Farooq Abdullah was accompanied by Senior National Conference Leaders including NC General Secretary Ali Muhammad Sagar, Muhammad Shafi Uri, Chaudhary Muhammad Ramzan, Muhammad Akbar Lone, Javed Ahmed Dar, Dr. Sajjad Uri and also Ghulam Hassan Rahi, Sardar Jagdish Singh Azad and the public meeting was also attended by senior office bearers and activists of the party's parent, women's and youth wings.

TWO

he was trying board a train while hours after this incident, another militant was caught near the encounter site.

A police official told CNS that the second militant was arrested when he was trying to flee from the encounter site in injured condition.

The official identified the arrested militant as Aqib Iqbal Malik alias Talha Bhai. He is the resident of Ringet village of Noorabad.

CVC

corruption cases. The commission has expressed desire that DVOs should review their respective pendencies and take expeditious action to bring them to a logical conclusion within the prescribed time limit," sources said..

"There is a long list of inquiries against government employees allegedly named in corruption cases. The commission has sought details of these cases so that they can be completed early, a senior SVC official on condition of anonymity told KNS.

Sources said that that the vigilance commission has also sought the list of corruption cases from vigilance organization. "The step has been taken in view of the reports that certain cases was closed halfway and could not see the light of the day. In the past even the cases which were under active investigation were closed not as per the principals of moral rules," sources maintained.

Sources said that there are number of pending complaints of corruption with Public Health Engineering/Irrigation & Flood Control Department, Public Works Department and Health Department, including corporations like JK SCIO, JK Cements, JK SIDCO. "The Vigilance commission has asked disciplinary authorities in these departments to regularly monitor the progress in such inquiries and ensure that these are completed within the prescribed time limit," sources maintained.

Sources said that it is interesting to see that how the commission will make up their mind to go after officials who have amassed wealth and property beyond their known income. "The commission must asked the authorities to gather information about the property and wealth of officers, officials from last many years so that it is ascertained who has resorted to unfair means to amass wealth and property," sources maintained.

NAEEM

officers of the central department, NHA and officers of the Jammu and Kashmir.

The Union Minister approved Rs 1200 crore for the upgradation of major routes across Jammu and Kashmir, assuring that all the possible help would be provided to the State for completing road projects.

Gadkari also announced a Skill Development programme in the State, which he said would focus on capacity building among the youth in the construction of the tunnels. He said that nearly a dozen of tunnels have been approved across the State so far, which would need highly skilled youth for construction. The Union Minister also assured that the major construction works would be handed over to the locals for participating in the mega developmental activities which include tunnels like Zojila, Highways, ring road for Srinagar and Jammu cities. He also asked the Minister to involve maximum local stakeholders for the four-lane process of Shopian-Qazigund-Srinagar and Kargil and Zanskar highways.

The Union Minister responded positively to the State request for reviewing of the constriction of national highways stretch between Banihal and Ramban to make it an all-weather road for the State. Gadkari also asked the Ministers to submit a proposal on the flood control measures in the State, especially in Kashmir region. He further stressed on creating viable environment for the in-land water transportation across the region. The Union Minister asked the State to work for the promotion and viable marketability of the handicraft and dry-fruit products of the State.

Later the Minister of State for Public Works and Transportation said that the State Government has submitted a proposal of Rs 13 crore regarding the restoration of the road between Batote and Kishtwar, which is witnessing enormous road accidents.

OMAR

to get it back."

Earlier, another J&K ex-chief minister Farooq Abdullah had said that PoK is part of Pakistan" and will remain with it while India will continue to control its part of Jammu and Kashmir."

Azad had added, "I don't want to comment on his (Farooq) statement... I wonder why he made such a statement. Probably state parties have certain compulsions which we cannot understand," he said.

The fact of the time is that Pakistani side of Kashmir and Indian side of Kashmir are divided by a Line of Control (LoC) since 1947. People in the divided regions demand resolution of the issue as per their aspirations.

VAKIL

he said had Farooq Abdullah as Chief Minister pushed through autonomy bill instead of autonomy resolution in the

assembly the issue of autonomy would have been resolved long back.

He said that no one can relegate this fact that it was during the tenure of National Conference when the then BJP led NDA Government rejected the Autonomy resolution in presence of Omar Abdullah and his father but for the fear of losing power the whole NC leadership remained silent to protect and safeguard the chair of Omar Abdullah as MoS for External Affairs.

Vakil was addressing a party convention at Dak Bungalow Baramulla today.

While addressing the gathering Former Minister said that on high moral grounds NC especially Dr. Farooq Abdullah should not speak of Autonomy because Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's 1975 accord changed the political dimensions of the J&K for ever and for the wellbeing of citizens of the State he must admit this truth and should not exploit them for so called Autonomy or conditions of accession with India. He said that at that point of time Sheikh Abdullah was in much better position to bargain with Union of India and thereafter nobody could enjoy this mandate. He made it clear that it is irony of Kashmir that Dynastic rulers, NC and PDP once come to power they forget Kashmir issue and the moment they are out of power their forgotten agenda gains priority besides these parties seem to be in secret pact of protecting and shielding their favorite corrupt stooges and never take any action against them. He appealed people to remain cautious and understand these things. Mr. Vakil also asked Farooq Abdullah that why he is only demanding tabling of report of New Interlocutor Dineshwar Sharma and not the report of previous three interlocutors submitted to previous governments Congress led UPA government during Omar led NC-Congress Coalition in the State. Farooq Abdullah is raising new demands to trigger new controversies just for the purpose of power politics Vakil added. On this occasion Mr. Abdul Gani Vakil appointed Youth Leader Hakim Rizwan Illahi as Youth Secretary Kashmir Province JKBT.

Gulchain Singh Charak, Patron Jammu Kashmir Bachao Tehreek and Former Minister presided over the Convention while addressing the Convention Charak appealed NIA to play its role honestly and also investigate the source of funding of all mainstream leaders of J&K who have managed to grab huge wealth disproportionate their known source of income and bring to fore the truth so that innocent people of J&K can identify the real culprits who want to keep the pot boiling for their petty political gains. He castigated both NC and PDP for exploiting, befouling and cheating innocent people of Jammu and Kashmir. He said that these parties forgot and drifted from their so called core ideologies for sake of power and said that so called Autonomy or Self Rule politics of NC and PDP is nothing but a political gimmick and a tool to enforce regional divide to arrange and manage the alliance of convenience to grab power

Addressing the gathering General Secretary Jammu Kashmir Bachao Tehreek and Ex. MLC Syed Rafiq Shah alleged that State government has completely failed on every front, corruption is rampant and miseries of common people are overlooked and government is doing nothing to resolve basic issues of people.

Besides others who addressed the gathering include Secretary JKBT Advocate Syed Gowhar, Youth Leaders Peer Gulraiz and Hakim Rizwan Illahi. Both the youth leaders urged people to come forward and raise their voice against the corruption. They appealed people to join JKBT which has an aim and objective to fight and eliminate dynastic rule, corruption, nepotism, favoritism from the J&K State. They alleged that in present dispensation corruption is rampant nobody is there to listen the voice of common man.

NC

challenges to its political identity and special status due to the PDP-BJP Alliance.

"For Ex-MLA Syed Ali Shah Geelani to think that he is beyond any accountability is ridiculous and conceited. He is more accountable to the people of Kashmir than anyone else. Thousands of young men in Kashmir sacrificed their lives based on a political sentiment and not for Ex-MLA Geelani's personal political agenda against the National Conference. These sacrifices were not made so that Ex-MLA Geelani could finally use the blood of our young to enter into covert, quid-pro-quo deals with the establishment and the PDP-BJP Alliance against NC. We understand instructions have been passed to conceal PDP's sell-outs as a price for the NIA taking it easy on Ex-MLA Geelani's family but the people of Kashmir cannot be fooled anymore. There is a limit to hypocrisy and deceit and our advice to Geelani Sahab is to openly and formally join the PDP now rather than being a proxy for the political party", the NC State Spokesperson said.

The NC State Spokesperson reminded Ex-MLA Syed Ali Shah Geelani that he had taken multiple oaths as a former MLA under the same democratic mainstream political system that he now abuses and was initially opposed to resigning as an MLA as evidenced by history. "Even during the period in our history when the entire Kashmiri nation was struggling for their political identity and rights, Ex-MLA Geelani chose to contest elections and became a part of the State's Legislative Assembly – often openly opposing the political movement for the restoration of the pre-1952 position. His arrangements with the Janta Party and the Indian National Congress at various crucial junctures in history are a matter of public record. Geelani Sahab should know that history doesn't start in 1989 and his own political history as a former MLA is as open to scrutiny as anything else. One fails to understand how the same system was noble and patriotic when Geelani was an MLA and how the same system is evil and treasonous when he decided to choose a path of violence on the shoulders of our youth", the NC State Spokesperson added.

"The urchin-like, obnoxious and vindictive language of Ex-MLA Geelani's press statements issued by anonymous 'spokespersons' sadly contradicts the 'stature' that he has chosen to confer upon himself and validate through a cloak of morality that he believes is unquestionable. Hurriyat-G's open, brazen bidding on behalf of covert agencies to save Geelani's son-in-law from the clutches of the NIA is another shameless and dark chapter in our history. If Geelani Sahab can go to any extent to save his son-in-law and other family members from facing accountability for their questionable financial dealings, why can't the people of Kashmir exercise their fundamental right to seek answers from him?", the NC State Spokesperson said.

"More recently, Geelani played a pivotal role in facilitating

the extension of GST to J&K as he openly termed it as a non-issue and stooped to the extent of warning the business and traders' community from agitating on an issue that concerned our fiscal and political autonomy. Had it not been for Ex-MLA Geelani and his tragic, shocking support to the PDP-BJP Alliance on GST, the Central Law could not have been extended to the State in this effortless manner. That too was a sell-out he made to save his son-in-law, Mr. Altaf Funtoosh (and consequently himself) from being exposed for shady pecuniary dealings that run into crores of rupees. While thousands of families sacrificed their sons and are now faced with abject poverty and penury, Geelani and his ilk have amassed millions in property and assets under various trusts and shell organizations. While Ex-MLA Geelani has a democratic right to seek accountability from others, everyone else has a similar right to question the grossly disproportionate assets of his family members and also understand the basis of the PDP-BJP Government's benevolence on his grandchildren – one of whom was given a customized, plump job at SKICC in violation of all possible recruitment norms and rules", the NC State Spokesperson further said.

The NC State Spokesperson said National Conference was a party that sought validation and endorsement from the people of the State and not from intelligence agencies and Brigadiers. "Our history and the valiant struggle of our founder is a matter of public record and our support at the grassroots level bears testimony to our commitment to uphold the honour and dignity of the State. We don't require certificates from Ex-MLA Geelani and are least bothered about his prejudiced, mercenary press statements but it is tragic that the blood of our youth is being sold to facilitate a personal agenda. Nothing could be more treacherous", the NC State Spokesperson said.

TARIGAMI

Major schemes in power development, water supply and health are in shambles and have virtually been neglected by the government. The J&K government has failed to resume work on several power projects and Restructured Accelerated Power Development and Reforms Programme (R-APDRP) project is in shambles. In chill winter, people are facing immense hardships as power plays hide-n-seek most of the times.

The Center's decision to drastically reduce funding for the state under National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) has created impediments in completion of several water supply schemes. Huge population of Jammu and Kashmir residing in rural areas continues to remain without safe drinking water as fate of 1638 water supply schemes is hanging in balance due to acute scarcity of funds.

Government needs to constitute a committee which can look into these lapses. Those officials who have deliberately surrendered the money without any genuine reason must be declared dead wood and should be dismissed from Government service.

JOINT

Malik along with other activists.

Reports said that shortly after addressing a joint press conference in Abi Guzar, Joint Resistance leadership Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Muhammad Yasin Malik tried to take out a march.

Amid pro-freedom slogans people led by these two leaders when tried to march towards city centre Lal Chowk, police swung into action and detained both the leaders and dozens of other activists.

After press conference both leaders led a protest march towards Lal Chowk which was intercepted by police near Biscoe School. On the occasion police arrested dozens of leaders and activists including Mirwaiz doctor Muhammad Umar Farooq, Haji Mohammad Yasin Malik, Ghulam Nabi Zaki, Mukhtar Ahmed Sofi, Showkat Ahmad Bakhshi, Mohammad Yasin Butt, Hilal Ahmed War, Mohammad Yasin Atee, Zahoor Ahmed Butt, Muhammad Sideeq Shah, Farooq Ahmad Sodagar, Nisar Hussain rather, Bashir Ahmad Kashmiri, Rameez Raja, Syed Imtiaz Haider, Muhammad Ashraf Changa, Shabir Ahmad Shah, Zahoor Ahmad, Meraj ud din Paray, Farooq Ahmad sheikh, Umer Aadil Dar, Shahid ur Rehman.

RANA

to his village last night at 10 PM, expressed anguish that the State Government did not show the minimum courtesy of ensuring the local police presence/escort when the martyr was brought home. Describing martyrs as pride of the nation, who sacrifice their today for our better tomorrow, Mr Rana condemned the callous attitude of the coalition dispensation in treating the martyrs nonchalantly. He said that martyrs represent the armed forces as well as the governments in the state and the Centre. Saying that no amount of money can compensate the irreparable human loss, the MLA Nagrota sought immediate ex-gratia of Rs 25 lakhs to the next of kin of martyr Sohan Lal Bhagat, a residential plot and job to one of his family members, as his wife is already working in the J&K Armed Police. He said this is the least the State can do for its brave-heart, hoping that necessary orders will be issues in this regard at the earliest.

The MLA paid tributes to the martyr, expressed solidarity with the bereaved family and prayed for peace to the departed soul.

DELHI

Meanwhile, Jammu Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party, has strongly rejected the charges against its incarcerated chief, Shabir Ahmad Shah.

"Shabir Ahmad Shah is being targeted for his just political stance about Kashmir dispute that is why first a media trial was launched against him and later he was booked under an old case which has already been decided by a court," a party spokesperson person said.

He said the government of India has started a campaign of character assassination against the well known resistance leader of Jammu and Kashmir so it is using old and already decided cases, the party statement said.

While expressing concern over the deteriorating health of Shabir Shah, spokesperson said that instead of providing him better health assistance, he is being harassed by so called charge sheets.

Asia Pacific Cert (APCERT) Discuss Building Trust in Digital Economy

New Delhi, November 15: First ever Asia Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team (APCERT) Open Conference in India and the first in South Asia was held in New Delhi on November 15, 2017. It was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Minister of Electronics and Information Technology, Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad in the presence of the Minister of State of Electronics and Information Technology, Shri K J Alphons. In their presence the Indian Compute Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) received the host country award from the APCERT, handed over by Japan CERT (JPCERT). CERT's from 22 digital Asia Pacific economies participated along with participation from USA, Europe, Industry, Academia, Government and Media totalling to over 350 professionals to discuss response mechanisms

in the complex and evolving threat landscape for Building Trust in the Digital Economy on the contours and vision laid down by the Hon'ble Minister of Electronics and Information Technology, Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad during the inauguration of the open conference on November 15, 2017. The Hon'ble Minister of Electronics and Information Technology made three significant announcements: He announced that under the government's programme of supporting PhD scholars in digital technologies, the government will offer PhD scholarships in cyber security to candidates from Asia Pacific, who do their PhD in any of the 100 leading universities of India, including IITs, IISc and other universities. He invited research scholars to explore doing their research in India.

The Hon'ble Minister mentioned that innovation in cyber security is a big focus of the Government. There are more than 100 cyber security product companies in India and it was proposed that in furtherance of the Public Procurement (Preference to Make in India) preference shall be provided by all procuring entities in the government to domestically manufactured / produced Cyber Security Products. He also said that the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology was in the process of working with Data Security Council of India to conduct Challenge Grant for cyber security as a means to encourage budding start-ups to develop innovative technologies. India was selected to be part of the steering committee of APCERT

along with 6 (Australia, China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Taiwan) other countries to shape the agenda for the next 2 years across the region. In India, cyber security professionals got an opportunity to attend a highly content rich technical conference, interact with the Asia Pacific incident response leaders in cyber security and the International community got to see the skills and depth of some of the cyber security start-ups from India. The spectrum of topics covered included setting up sectoral CSIRTS, Nation State exploits, vulnerabilities of block chain, secure communication in industrial internet, cyber crime in financial technology ecosystem, building a sharing economy, machine learning, malicious behaviour in encrypted traffic, mobile security and Artificial Intelligence.

Pre-ponement of introduction of BS -VI grade auto fuels in NCT Delhi

New Delhi, November 15: The Government of India has been making concerted efforts in line with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's Commitment at COP 21, to reduce vehicular emissions and improve fuel efficiency with an aim to reduce the carbon footprints and keep a healthy environment. India has followed the regulatory pathway for fuel quality and vehicle emissions standards termed as Bharat Stage (BS). The Ministry of Petroleum and natural Gas has successfully introduced the BS-IV grade transportation fuels across the country w.e.f April 1st 2017. With the launch of BS-IV grade fuel, a new era of clean transportation fuels has begun which will benefit all citizens of our country by substantially reducing pollution levels. Migration to BS-IV grade fuels shows India's resolve to cut down emissions.

As a next step in this direction, Government in consultation with stakeholders has decided to meet international best practices by leapfrogging directly from BS-IV to BS-VI grade by 1st April, 2020, skipping BS-V altogether. Oil refining companies are making huge investments in fuel up gradation projects to produce the BS-VI grade fuels. Taking into account the serious pollution levels in Delhi and adjoining areas, Petroleum Ministry in consultation with Public Oil Marketing Companies has decided for preponement of BS-VI grade auto fuels in NCT of Delhi w.e.f 01.04.2018 instead of 01.04.2020. OMCs have also been asked to examine the possibility of introduction of BS-VI auto fuels in the whole of NCR area w.e.f 01.04.2019. This measure is expected to help mitigate the problem of air pollution in NCT of Delhi and surrounding areas.

Combine Agricultural Technology with Information Technology to improve Agricultural Sector: Vice President

New Delhi, November 15: The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that combine Agricultural Technology with Information Technology to improve Agricultural Sector in the country. He was addressing the gathering after inaugurating AP AgTech Summit 2017, in Vizag, Andhra Pradesh today. The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Shri N. Chandrababu Naidu, the Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture, Sericulture and Agri-Processing, Andhra Pradesh, Shri Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy, the Minister for Human Resources Development, Andhra Pradesh, Shri Ganta Srinivasa Rao, the Minister for Endowments, Andhra Pradesh, Shri Pydikondala Manikyala Rao and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that agriculture plays a vital role in India's economy. Agriculture, along with fisheries and forestry contributes around 17 per cent of the Gross Value Added (GVA) during 2016-17 at 2011-12 prices, he added. The Vice President said that we have formidable challenges confronting us and we have set for ourselves a very ambitious target of doubling farmers' income by 2022. If we have to achieve this, the progress in various sources of growth has to be accelerated by 33 percent, he added. The Vice President said that business as usual will not do and we have to innovate, work with farmers to infuse knowledge and technology. We must use technology to enhance productivity and see that the economic benefits of

increased production reach all the farmers, he added. The Vice President said that growing needs of our country's increasing population require us to evolve our own home grown food security strategy. He further said that increased production and efficient distribution of food grains can move our country forward to achieve the goal of zero hunger and adequate nutrition for all. The AP AgTech Summit 2017 is an excellent opportunity for global leaders, start-up founders and technology experts to discuss innovative ideas for agricultural transformation in Andhra Pradesh as well as in the rest of India, he added. The Vice President said that technology can help improve farmers' lives in a number of ways - to know the health of the soil and help him choose

from a variety of crops that can be grown on the land; forecasting the seasonal conditions in advance; intensification and diversification of farming in order to increase productivity and farmers' incomes; diversify towards other allied occupations as well like dairy and forestry; conservation of water, rain water harvesting, construction of check dams, drip and sprinkler irrigation; infrastructure like rural roads, dependable quality power, godowns, cold storage facilities, refrigerated vans and market yards; food processing; timely credit facilities at reasonable interest rates and farmer-friendly insurance policies and the market. We need to work collaboratively and strategically to make a difference in the lives of our farmers and tap into the nature's bounty, he added.

Govt undertaking concrete measures for tribal development: Zulfkar

Minister inspects proposed site for Tribal Bhawan & Museum

JAMMU, NOVEMBER 15: Minister for Department of Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs and Tribal Affairs, Chowdhary Zulfkar Ali said that the government is mulling a comprehensive policy for welfare and development of tribal population. Minister stated this while inspecting the proposed site for prestigious project of Tribal Bhawan & Museum at Jagti here today. To be constructed on 24 kanals of land and at an estimated cost of 73 crore, the Tribal Bhawan/Museum will house the office of Director and Deputy Director of Tribal Affairs Jammu along with lodging and boarding facilities for the people and a museum to exhibit the cultural heritage



Zulfkar said that the present era demands for ensuring basic amenities to tribal people for which determined efforts are being made by the government. Stressing on adopting pragmatic approach, Zulfkar said that socio economic development of under privileged sections of the society is the priority of the government and various schemes have been launched to cater to their needs. The Minister was accompanied by Secretary, Tribal Affairs Kifayat Hussain Rizvi, Director, Tribal Affairs Mohammad Rafi, Secretary, Gujjar-Bhakerwal Advisory Board Mukhtar Ahmed along with senior functionaries of concerned departments.

Distt level credit review committee meet held in Budgam DDC proposes mixed farming as an alternative to brick kilns

BUDGAM, NOVEMBER 15: District Development Commissioner (DDC) Mohammad Haroon today said that it is important to promote sheep and cattle rearing as a source of livelihood so State's dependency on import of sheep for meat consumption would be reduced. Speaking about the brick kilns issue, the DDC said opting for mixed farming instead of brick kilns would prevent further deterioration of environment by reducing pollution and will have a positive impact on tourism as well. The shortfall due to the closure of brick kilns for construction purposes if any can be compensated by importing the same from other States and the displaced population can be encouraged to take up mixed farming, he added. The DDC expressed these views while chairing the 61st

District Level Review Committee meeting to review the progress made by line departments and banks for the half year of CFY as on September 2017 against the envisaged targets of Annual District Credit Plan of 2017-18. Officers of the concerned departments, DDMNABARD, representatives from RBI, Cluster Head of JK Bank and District Coordinators of various Banks and BDOs operating in the District attended the meeting. The meeting discussed in detail progress and achievements made by the banks in the implementation of various government-sponsored schemes like Kissan Credit Card, NULM, Housing for All, Handloom, Weavers MUDRA, and Artisan Credit Card Stand up India and Housing for All. Giving details about the performance of banks, as on



30th September 2017 operating in the District, Lead District Manager appraised the meeting that total deposits as on 30th September 2017 has reached from Rs 1784.71 crore (September 2016) to Rs 1972.97 crore, total advances as on 30th September 2017 has reached from 1345.86 crores (September 2016) to Rs 1650.42 crore, while as CD Ratio is 83.65% against the 75.41% of September 2016 thereby reflecting a growth of 10.93% over the same and 23.65 over and above the RBI benchmark of 60% which was appreciated not only by the representative from RBI and NABARD but also the DDC (Chairman). It was informed that under priority sector, the banks have disbursed Rs 352.44 crore against the target of Rs 582.79 crore and under non-priority sector Rs 195.13 crore has been disbursed against the target of Rs 187.24 crore. The growth although being up to mark and satisfactory, the DDC advised all the banks and line departments and BDOs to make an extra effort so that targets set are surpassed both

in physical and financial terms by the credit coverage of artisans, farmers, traders, skilled and unskilled youth through MSME and other government schemes. The Convener of the meeting LDM Budgam Syed Shafat Hussain advised and stressed on the need that banks and sponsoring agencies need to work in a well-coordinated atmosphere so that efficiency is brought in and masses are made aware about the advantages of the various employment generation schemes. The LDM asked for a feedback

from BDOs with regard to any special and particular economic activity going around in their blocks so that a special thrust can be given to that by framing a banking product to revive the same. The DDC Budgam urged the officers from banks and various line departments to focus on new sponsored cases and ensure timely sanction and disbursement of credit. He said that the main objective of the exercise should be to generate employment and strict action should be taken against any cases of diversion of loans. He also urged the concerned to present an analytical picture of data after reconciliation between various stakeholders so that tangible data of freshly sponsored cases is available and thereby allowing for better monitoring.

DLRC meeting held at Anantnag

ANANTNAG, NOVEMBER 15: A meeting of the District Level Review Committee (DLRC) for 2nd quarter of 2017-18 was today held at Dak Bunglow, Khanabal under the chairmanship of the District Development Commissioner, Anantnag, Mohammad Younis Malik. On the occasion, the DDC was informed that by the end of September, 2017, Rs 386104 lacs have been deposited out of which an advance of Rs 285498 lacs has been made making the credit deposit ratio of 73.94%. Under priority sector lending, a credit of Rs 544.67 crores has been extended in favour of 20581 beneficiaries against the target of Rs 1290 crores, thereby registering an achievement of 42%. Pertinent to mention that agriculture, micro & small enterprises, education and housing are the main components of priority sector and which should comprise 60% of the total lending. The meeting was informed that a total of 133 bank branches are operating in the district besides 83 Banking Correspondents (BC) while as new bank branches have been established at Peer Takiya, Hillar Arhama and Khanabal. Meanwhile, the DDC directed the bankers to establish BCs wherever, required. With respect to linking of Aadhar numbers with the banking accounts for availing benefits under different schemes, all the bankers have been directed to establish Aadhar linkage centres for enrolment. The District Social Welfare Officer was also directed to submit the validation list of the beneficiaries under different schemes to the banks for electronic benefit transfer. Regarding the skilling of the beneficiaries under different schemes, all the concerned officers were directed to ensure that training is provided by the RSETI. It was agreed that people need to be educated about different schemes, for which the Lead Bank Manager was instructed to devise a calendar of camps that need to be organised at different locations. The DDC was apprised that during the quarter, 54 Joint Liability Groups (JLG) were formed out of which 9 have been credit linked while as under Housing for All Scheme, 51 cases were sponsored to different banks out of while 11 cases amounting to Rs 36 lacs were sanctioned. It was decided that insurance cover to MGNREGS job card holders will be provided under PMAPY, PMJJBY and PMSBY for which the LBM was directed to take up the matter with Assistant Commissioner Development, Anantnag. Under Stand Up India scheme, 5 cases have been sponsored out of which 4 have been sanctioned by the J&K Bank and SBI. The DDC appreciated the sponsoring under this scheme as this is meant for the downtrodden sections of the society viz. women, SC and ST beneficiaries under which a loan of Rs 10 lacs to Rs 1 crore can be availed in manufacturing, services and trading sectors. The LBM requested all the bankers to come forward and sponsor cases under this scheme. Meanwhile, the DDC instructed all the officers and bankers to work in synergy so that tangible improvements are witnessed at the ground level. He said that due to lack of awareness, people are not coming forward to avail benefits under different schemes.

Mahanpur-Kuya village road to come up soon: Lal Singh

Minister distributes fair price shop licenses among unemployed youth

BASHOLI, NOVEMBER 15: Minister for Forests, Environment and Ecology, Choudhary Lal Singh today asked the R&B department to immediately prepare a detail project report for construction of road from Mahanpur bridge to Kuya village so that the residents of the area would have better road connectivity. This was stated by the Minister while interacting with the accompanying officers of Rural Development Department after assessing the development related issues of the people of Kuya village, here today. Choudhary Lal Singh informed that the Government has prepared a comprehensive plan to improve the drinking water facility from Mashka to Satwahin village of Basholi tehsil. He issued on-the-spot directions to the Public Health

Engineering Department to augment the drinking water facilities in areas with scarce water supply. He directed for installation of hand pumps, digging of deep drill tube wells and laying of water supply pipes upto tail areas of the Basohli town. He said the Government is committed to provide adequate drinking water supply to the people in every nook and corner especially hilly areas of the State. He said Government is making all out efforts to develop Basohli town with improved basic amenities. The Minister asked the RDD officers to prepare DPRs of left out lanes, drains and interior areas link roads of Basholi town adding that Government is committed to provide modern line basic amenities to the people of Basholi at par with Jammu



and Kathua city. Regarding upgradation of power infrastructure in Basholi town, he directed the PDD to upgrade the existing capacity of the transformers of the town so that improved power supply is provided to the people. Later, the Minister also inspected the ongoing construction work of five PMGSY roads including 5.8 km Jandrota to Khrana road link to be completed at an estimated cost

of Rs 4.25 cr, 3.5 km Dhoura to Dhodla road link having estimated cost Rs 2.85 cr, 7 km Tikri to Jamna road link having estimated cost of Rs 5.68 cr, 4.5 km Patra to Kashid with an estimated cost of Rs 4.56 cr and 3.4 km road link from Pepru to Khaddi to be completed with estimated cost of Rs 2.12 cr. The Minister said Rs 3600 crore PMGSY outlay for the State has been sanctioned for 10th stage which will improve rural road connectivity by providing all weather motorable roads. He added that several roads and bridges were taken up under Central Road Funds (CRF) which will help to give connectivity to uncovered habitations. During his tour to Basholi, the Minister interacted with various deputations hailing from Hatt, Gadodi, Sheetalnagar,

Kashid, Jandrota, Shara and gave patient hearing to their demands and problems. He passed directions to the officers to redress the issues projected by people related to the shortage of basic amenities. Ch Lal Singh gave a patient hearing to the public grievances and assured disposal of genuine demands in time bound manner. He directed the concerned officers to redress the demands highlighted by the people and issued strict instructions to all the field functionaries to mitigate the sufferings of the people on priority. Earlier, the Minister also distributed fair price shop licenses to the unemployed youth of Sabar and its adjoining villages. He also distributed Permanent Resident Certificates among the people of the Sabar village of Basholi.

DAILY Editorial Time and US SRINAGAR J&K

EASTERN PROMISE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the Philippines to attend the ASEAN-India summit, the East Asia Summit and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership summit has put India centre-stage in the Asian region now referred to as "Indo-Pacific". Equally, it puts the "Indo-Pacific" and ties with the U.S. centre-stage in India's Act East policy, in all three spheres: political, strategic and economic. Mr. Modi's arrival in Manila was preceded by the first meeting of the India-U.S.-Japan-Australia quadrilateral, a grouping first mooted in 2006 by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. It ended with statements on cooperation for a "free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region", a direct signal that it will counter China's actions in the South China Sea if necessary. Next, Mr. Modi's meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump saw a similar emphasis on cooperating in the Indo-Pacific, a term now widely adopted by the U.S. The 'Quad' doesn't just pertain to maritime surveillance, it also aims at enhancing connectivity in accordance with "the rule of law" and "prudent financing" in the Indo-Pacific together, a reference to American plans to build an "alternative financing model" to China's Belt and Road Initiative. Finally, Mr. Modi's speech to ASEAN vowed to bring India's economic and business ties with the region up to the level of their "exceptionally good political and people-to-people relations". This sets the stage for closer engagement ahead of the 25th year Commemorative Summit to be held in Delhi in January 2018, with ASEAN leaders also expected to attend Republic Day festivities.

The clarity in India's purpose in East Asia at this juncture is important, but the next steps are equally vital. To begin with, despite a government statement to the contrary, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the Quad, also called a "coalition of democracies" of the Indo-Pacific, is a front aimed at countering China's influence. As the only member of the proposed coalition that is also part of another security arrangement involving China and Russia, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, India's ability to balance its interests will be tested. Finally, while there will be much to navigate on the political front, Mr. Modi would be keen to keep a sharp focus on the economic tailwinds during his engagements in Manila. The 10 ASEAN countries account for about 11% of India's global trade. For the past few years India has joined the ASEAN "plus six", including China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, to discuss the RCEP free trade agreement. Talks have often run into rough weather over India's stand on visas and services access, while also holding out against free trade that could give China an unfair edge in goods trade. Mr. Modi's work is cut out as he clarifies India's pivot in east Asia.

An inconsistent United States, an assertive China and Asia's Hobbesian order

Harsh V Pant

United States President Donald Trump's marathon tour of Asia is in part to assert his global leadership credentials and in part to reassure a nervous region. Ever since he came to power, he has had great difficulty in articulating a coherent policy for Asia, a region where major structural changes are on the anvil. Major powers are rising, old equations are changing, nationalistic leaders are taking centre-stage, and the old normative order is collapsing. The certitudes of the past no longer apply, and so US' traditional allies are looking askance at Washington's seeming inability to respond to these challenges.

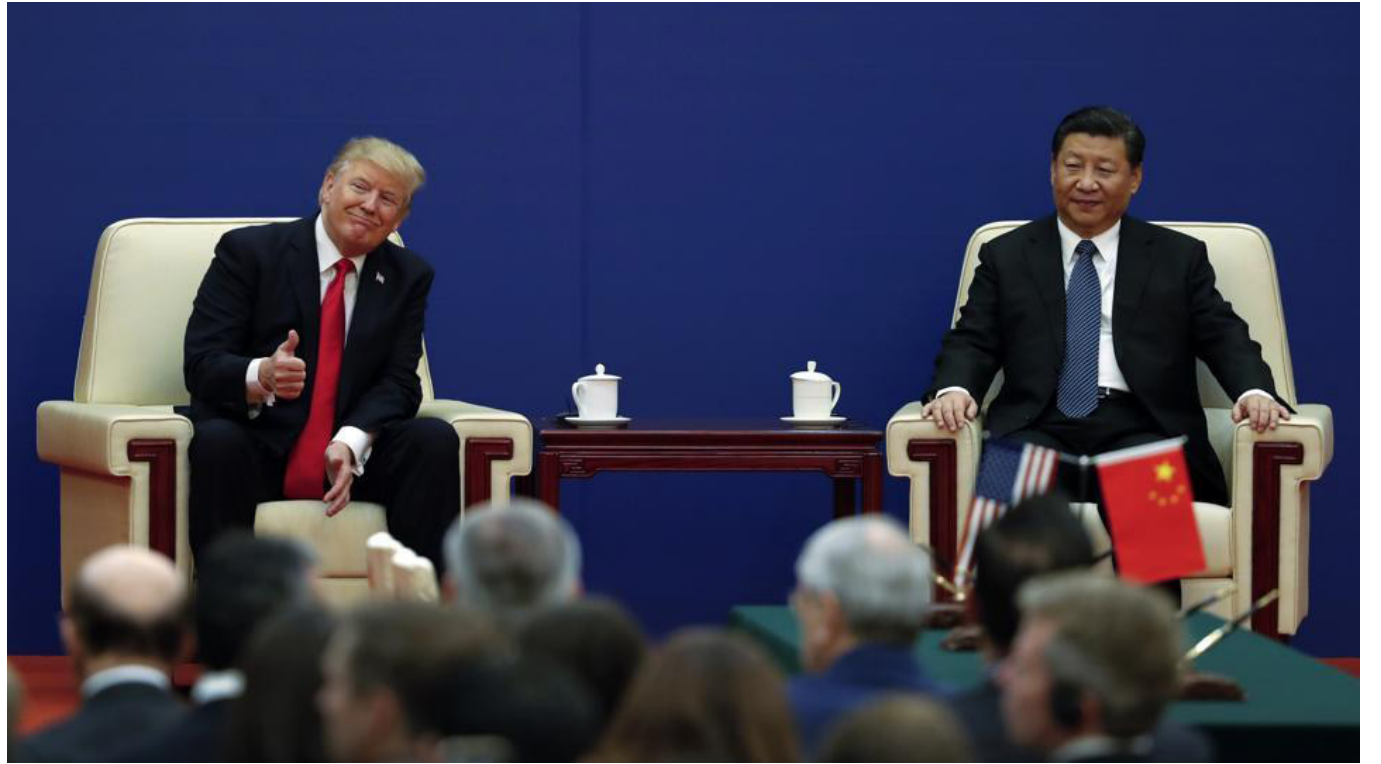
For far too long, the wider Indo-Pacific relied on the US as the region's security guarantor. In recent years, that assumption has been challenged like never before. Even Barack Obama initially was quite keen on a G2 with China where he assumed that a global condominium of Washington and Beijing could manage the choppy waters in Asia and beyond. Only after America's traditional allies — Japan and South Korea — made their displeasure clear, did the Obama administration backtrack. And then of course, Chinese aggression made it impossible to sell this G2 dream to the American elites. The result was a half-hearted 'pivot' to Asia, a 'strategic' re-balance to the region which was neither strategic nor a re-balance.

As China continued to make headway in consolidating its regional predominance under the imperial ambitions of Xi Jinping, America under Obama and now under Trump remains distracted by its internal debates. At a time when the focus should have been to craft a politically unified policy response to China, the Democrats and Republicans are still sparring over Russia. So not surprisingly, Trump's Asia trip was being watched carefully with every sign, every word being scrutinised though how seriously one should take Trump's words remains a mystery.

Trump's inchoate style has been evident when in Japan he repeated his mantra that the "era of strategic patience" with North Korea was over, underling that large Japanese orders for US-made military equipment will help it counter the threat from North Korean ballistic missiles. A day later, in a significant departure from his earlier rhetoric, in South Korea he suggested that Washington remains open to diplomatic efforts to resolve the standoff with North Korea.

Asia is having a trying time adjusting to these shifts.

Meanwhile, Chinese policy also changes but there is a method in its madness. After South Korea decided to deploy the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in July 2016, China lost no time in imposing



TRUMP HAD LITTLE LEVERAGE AS HE ARRIVED IN BEIJING TO FACE XI. THE ONLY CONCERN CHINA HAS IS THE POSSIBILITY OF A DEMOCRATIC QUAD EMERGING IN THE REGION, AN IDEA BEING PROMOTED BY JAPAN TO DRAW IN MAJOR DEMOCRATIC POWERS OF THE REGION, SUCH AS AUSTRALIA AND THE US. TRUMP'S CHAOTIC PRESIDENCY FADES WHEN COMPARED TO SEEMINGLY VISIONARY LEADERSHIP OF XI'S REGIME. THIS POSES DILEMMAS FOR REGIONAL STATES. BUT THE US, UNDER TRUMP, LOOKS UTTERLY DISINTERESTED AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, INCOMPETENT.

a series of unilateral sanctions targeting South Korean-based companies. It even encouraged a boycott of South Korean products and tried to limit Chinese tourism to South Korea with some estimates suggesting that an estimated \$8 billion loss was inflicted on Seoul's economy. Days before Trump's arrival, China reached out to South Korea, calling for a normalisation of ties, including an end to the Chinese boycott. Beijing's fear was that if not dealt with seriously, Seoul might move in with Tokyo and Washington.

Trump had little leverage as he arrived in Beijing to face Xi. The only concern China has is the possibility of a democratic quad emerging in the region, an idea being promoted by Japan to draw in major democratic powers of the region, such as Australia and the US. Trump's chaotic presidency fades when compared to seemingly visionary leadership of Xi's regime. This poses dilemmas for regional states. But the US, under Trump,

looks utterly disinterested and, more importantly, incompetent.

So in China, Trump lavished praise on Xi and then in his Apec speech targeted China for "the audacious theft of intellectual property". So while he harped on his 'America first' theology, Xi stressed the importance of globalisation. Given this reality confronting the region, major states in the Indo-Pacific are now beginning to articulate and work on their own responses. So while the Trans-Pacific Partnership is back on the table without the US, the Japanese proposal to revive the quadrilateral involving the US, Japan, India and Australia has got another lease of life.

Regional powers confront an increasingly assertive China and they don't have the luxury of distance to manage China's rise. Democratic powers of the region can shape the regional balance of power by working together to preserve the rules based order,

one which can enhance the broader regional security and prosperity.

China is luring the region and the world with its ambitions and the US is offering incoherence. This mismatch is at the heart of the present turmoil in the region. Though US secretary of state Rex Tillerson made it clear that the US will "never have the same relationship with China, a nondemocratic society, that we can have with India", there is still confusion as to how this view will be operationalised in American foreign policy.

New Delhi will have to rely much more on its regional partners and work towards shoring up the regional multilateral order, with or without the US. Otherwise, a real Hobbesian regional order awaits Asia.

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A CASE FOR IDLI-DOSA AS THE NATIONAL FOOD

I don't understand the logic behind some overenthusiastic people touting to make khichdi the national dish. First up, khichdi is not an Indian or even a subcontinental dish. It came to India 2200-2500 years ago from China.

The Asiatic Society in Mumbai has a torn book written mainly in Cantonese and a few passages in archaic Mandarin (the modern Chinese). The book suggests that a khichdi-type dish from the northern part of China was introduced to the Indian palate by the silk traders of China. It's worthwhile to mention that India and China had a long history of mutual commercial and philosophical interests; Confucius and Laotse were influenced by ancient Indian philosophers and sages.

Plagiarised dish
So it's better not to include and acclaim khichdi as an Indian dish, however Indian it may have become in over two millenniums. In other words, it's a plagiarised dish!

Now come idli-dosa. Can any other dish of the Indian subcontinent claim so much popularity and omnipresence like idli and dosa? Moreover, both are completely Indian, without any culinary influence of a foreign cuisine. Tandoori

chicken is Iranian, Bengal's rosasgula is of Portuguese origin, the roghan josh of Kashmir came from Afghanistan, fish curry came from Burma, and halwa (any type of it) came from the Arab peninsula (halwa itself is an Arabic word). Kabab came from Turkey (it is a Turkish word). The list is interminable.

So which dish is purely Indian and originated here on this subcontinent? Pat comes the answer: idli-dosa. Both the dishes are roughly 1,000 years old and have the stamp of originality that is typical Indian. Arab settlers bringing idli to southern India does not hold water any longer. It very much originated here in India.

Moreover, the ubiquitous presence of idli-dosa from Kashmir to Kanyakumari makes both the dishes worthy contenders of becoming the national dishes. You can get it in any nook and cranny of India, though the taste may differ according to the province's culinary influences.

The legendary British chef and culinary historian Gordon Ramsay called them an "international dish" because of dosa's aesthetically unique texture and idli's cheeky (pun intended) smoothness. He opined that idli and dosa were the



safest and tastiest foods conceived and conceptualised by humans. He further stated that an individual could survive on idli-dosa till death and the best thing

about both was that they never tasted dull and monotonous. One never gets bored with idli-dosa. You can eat it every day, yet will not get fed up.

Lord Mountbatten requested C. Rajagopalachari to send his Tamil cook to teach his English cook the nuances of making idli and dosa. His wife, Edwina

Mountbatten, was very fond of idli and dosa and she herself learnt to make it from Jawaharlal Nehru's cook, who was from Madurai. The Darjeeling-born Vivien Leigh who starred in Gone with the Wind had a masala dosa at perhaps the oldest South Indian restaurant on Park Street, Calcutta in 1932 and got hooked to it. She never forgot its lingering taste.

Nehru's South Indian secretary M.O. Mathai mentioned in his book Reminiscences of Nehru Age that Indira Gandhi loved to gorge on idlis.

On my visits to neighbouring countries and even countries such as Tunisia and Morocco in North Africa, I saw and had idli-dosa, though I also had seen the crocodile and baby-elephant meat-filling in a dosa in another African country, Burkina Faso!

The owner, an African, came to India in the late 1960s to learn food-processing in Kochi and innovated on dosa. But he didn't play ducks and drakes with idlis. Yours truly had the tastiest idli-dosa at a Malayali-Muslim migrant's restaurant in Chitral in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa of Pakistan.

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Delhi pollution: Khattar, Kejriwal pledge to prevent repeat of smog in 2018

CHANDIGARH: Chief ministers Manohar Lal Khattar of Haryana and Arvind Kejriwal of Delhi on Wednesday met for nearly 90 minutes here and agreed to take steps to prevent a repeat of smog in the National Capital Region (NCR) next year.

"We ... are happy to have had a very fruitful meeting at Chandigarh. We recognize our deep and shared concern over the recent episode of heavy smog in our NCR. We agreed upon the need for action on many measures aimed at preventing its re-occurrence in the winter of 2018," a joint statement said. "During discussions, we agreed that the serious health risk to which

such episodes of smog expose one and all require concrete and quick action on a number of fronts.

"We covered crop residue burning and vehicular pollution issues. We resolve to put in sustained efforts in pursuance of the jointly identified action points in the coming days, weeks and months," the statement added.

"We look forward to covering other sources of air and water pollution in our future discussions," it said. Speaking to the media after his meeting with Khattar, Kejriwal said: "We cannot control the direction of the wind. We all will have to make efforts to control air pollution."



Kejriwal, who had earlier blamed farmers of Punjab and Haryana for causing smoke and air pollution in Delhi, avoided blaming anyone.

Khattar said: "We have discussed a number of steps that can be taken to ease air pollution."

Both Chief Ministers did not take any question from the media. Kejriwal was earlier greeted by protests by activists of the Shiromani Akali Dal and Congress when he reached the Chandigarh airport.

Opposition leaders in Haryana criticized Khattar for agreeing to meet Kejriwal, saying the Delhi Chief Minister was raking up the

issue only to blame farmers in Haryana and Punjab for causing air pollution by burning stubble.

Kejriwal flew into Chandigarh along with Delhi environment minister Imran Hussain and environment department secretary Keshav Chandra.

He had earlier written to the chief ministers of both Haryana and Punjab and sought a joint meeting to find a solution to the problem that has led to widespread health concerns in the NCR.

But on Tuesday, Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh rejected Kejriwal's request and instead asked him to refrain from trying to politicize a serious issue.

Creamy layer case referred to Statute Bench

NEW DELHI: Reopening the debate on the application of "creamy layer" for reservations for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in government jobs, the Supreme Court on Tuesday referred the question to a Constitution Bench.

A Bench of Justices Kurian Joseph and R. Banumathi said clarity is required on the "application of creamy layer in situations of completing claims within the same races, communities, groups or parts thereof of SC/ST communities notified by the President under Articles 341 and 342".

This question on the application of creamy layer principle in SC/ST quotas comes 11 years after a five-judge Constitution Bench in the M. Nagaraj judgment of 2006 had decided that

creamy layer should be excluded from the reservations for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in government jobs. Legal experts note that the Mandal Commission and E.V. Chinniah cases had confined the creamy layer concept to the Other Backward Classes section.

The two-judge Bench's order is based on a batch of petitions for clarity on Article 16 (4), which deals with the State's powers for providing for appointments or posts for "any backward class of citizens"

On Article 16 (4A), which arms the State with power to make provisions for quota in promotion with consequential seniority to SC/ST communities; and finally Article 16 (4B) on unfilled reservation vacancies.

Goa CM Parrikar tells schoolkids about his 'adult movie' experience

PANAJI: Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar on Tuesday shared at a Children's Day function here his experience of watching an "adult movie" in his youth.

Parrikar was interacting with school students when one of them asked what kind of movies the former Defence Minister watched during his younger days. "We would not just watch movies, we have also watched adult movies of that era," Parrikar replied. "You are seeing more things on TV now than what was shown on adult movies back then."

"There was a popular (adult) movie. I was an adult at that time. Me and my brother had gone to watch it. During interval, when the lights came



on and I realised that my neighbour was sitting next to me. This neighbour used to chat with my mother every evening. I told myself, we are dead,"

said Parrikar. The Chief Minister, who is known for peppering his speeches with anecdotes, said that both he and his brother Avdhoot ran away from

the movie hall, leaving the movie midway. On the way home, he came up with a plan to "pre-emptively" handle the crisis.

"When we reached home I told my mother, we had gone for a movie and we did not know that the movie was vulgar... We left it (movie) midway. And very casually I told her, that our neighbour was also there and kept quiet," he said.

"The next day, the neighbour excitedly called my mother to tell her that Manohar and Avdhoot had gone for an (adult) movie. My mother asked him, I know which movie they went for, but why did you go for the movie? You have to pre-empt certain things," Parrikar summed up.

Law ministry proposes new laws for better ease of doing business rankings

NEW DELHI: The Union ministry of law and justice has prepared three draft bills to make amendments in key laws to further improve India's ease of doing business (EOB) rankings and "promoting India as a business and investment-friendly destination", a source has said. The ministry is pushing for changes in the law in the upcoming session of Parliament, which is expected to be short, and the proposals will come up before the cabinet in the coming days, a top official told Hindustan Times. Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants the government to work on turning India into an alternative destination to Singapore for international arbitration, officials and ministers have said in the past.

The World Bank had released its rankings for 192 countries on October 31 in which India finished at the 100th rank, up 30 places from last year, which the government described as a quantum leap. The ministry has recommended that the Commercial Courts, Commer-



cial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of High Courts Act 2015 should be modified to reduce the pecuniary jurisdiction of commercial courts from Rs 1 crore to Rs 3 lakh, enabling the resolution of a larger number of commercial disputes and faster. The ministry also wants to amend the law to enable setting up of commercial courts in territories over which only high courts have original civil jurisdiction. Delhi is one such state and the time and money spent on commercial dispute resolution in the capital is key to the EOB rankings. The government is keen to bring in a statute and set up a New Delhi Centre for Arbitra-

tion, the official said, adding, "We are working on the final nomenclature." A high powered committee set up under Justice BN Srikrishna in August recommended that the government should take over the International Centre for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ICADR) and use it to turn India into a hub for international arbitration. "The new rankings make it clear that India is becoming a paradigm of best practices in the regulatory framework for business. We have now started work on breaking into the top 50," a source in the ministry involved with the process said. The law ministry, apart from working on the key area of enforcing contracts,

also "facilitate other ministries and departments through legal advice and by rendering adept services in bringing several legislative & administrative proposals which eventually helped in improving India's ranking in the report," a document prepared by the legal affairs secretary Suresh Chandra said. Earlier this year, Chandra chaired four different meetings with representatives of different ministries, lawyers and law firms on the Indian side. A meeting was also held between law ministry officials and a WB team on the issue on May 30.

The ministry's note was prepared based on the meetings. "The indicator of 'enforcing contracts' measures the time and cost for resolving a commercial dispute through a local court of the first instance, and the quality of judicial processes index, evaluating whether each economy has adopted a series of good practices that promote quality and efficiency in the court system," it added.

Video conferencing facility in all Bihar jails by next year: Nitish

HAJIPUR: Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar on Wednesday said all jails in the state would have video conferencing facility by next year for conducting speedy trial of undertrial prisoners.

"By next year, all the jails in the state will have video conferencing facility and there will be no need to send prisoners to courts during trial proceedings. This will ensure speedy dispensation of justice," Kumar said after inaugurating a slew of prison reform initiatives at Hajipur, 20 km north of Patna.

The reform initiatives inaugurated by Kumar including the state's first green building of Bihar Institute of Correctional Administration (BICA), enterprise resources planning (EPR) system in all the 55 jails, telephone kiosks in 30 prisons and canteens in eight central jails of the state.

Kumar said the reform initiatives launched on Wednesday were based on the concept of bringing changes in the attitude of undertrial and convicted prisoners.

"Bihar is the first state which set up an open jail at Buxar. Tents and blankets made by prisoners at this jail are rated as one of

the finest. During my Vikas Yatra across the state in 2009, I had stayed at various places in tents made by prisoners of Buxar jail," the chief minister said.

Kumar also distributed appointment letters to some of the new recruits of the prison department and asked them to work efficiently for improving the living condition of jail inmates.

The chief minister also asked the inspector general of prisons and other officers to upgrade Hajipur jail, a stone's throw away from the newly inaugurated BICA.

Earlier, Kumar was welcomed by home secretary Amir Subhani. While IG (prisons) Anand Kishor gave details of the new initiatives, chief secretary Anjani Kumar Singh outlined their benefits.

Among others present on the occasion were Vaishali and Mahnar MLAs, director general of police PK Thakur, Tirhut divisional commissioner HR Srinivas, Tirhut inspector general Sunil Kumar, principal secretary to CM Chanchal Kumar, Vaishali district magistrate Rachna Patil and superintendent of police Rakesh Kumar.

Farmers can't give up stubble burning completely: Punjab CM Amarinder

Chandigarh: Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh on Wednesday said "farmers cannot be expected to give up crop residue burning completely", till the time they are provided viable solutions. The statement comes on a day when Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal met his Haryana counterpart Manohar Lal Khattar to discuss air pollution and stubble burning.

Asserting that a long-term solution was needed to arrest the problem of crop residue burning, the Punjab chief minister said the state government was looking for affordable solutions for this problem. Notably,

farmers of Punjab and Haryana have been blamed for the rising air pollution level in northern states including Delhi triggered by their stubble burning.

"We are engaged in spreading awareness among farmers on the need to stop burning the stubble, not just for the sake of others but also for their own sake, as



Amarinder Singh told PTI in an interview. The Punjab CM has refused to meet Kejriwal after the latter sought a meeting with him in Chandigarh.

He urged the AAP national convener to refrain from trying to "politicise" such a serious issue.

Amarinder Singh said he failed to understand why the Delhi chief minister was trying to force his hand, knowing well that any such discussion on the issue would be "meaningless and futile".

The Punjab CM has been pressing hard for intervention of the Centre to convene a meeting of chief ministers of the affected states along with the Union ministers for agriculture, food and environment to find out a long-term solution to stubble burning issue. Amarinder Singh had even suggested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to give a bonus of Rs 100 per quintal as an incentive to farmers so they can manage the crop residue scientifically.

they are the worst affected by the air pollution triggered by such burning." "However, till we are able to offer them viable solutions, we cannot really expect them to completely give up burning crop residue since it's a matter of their livelihood and survival,"

ICJ election could have bearing on Indian 'spy' Kulbhushan Jadhav's case

NEW DELHI: The outcome of India's effort to secure a second term for Dalveer Bhandari at the International Court of Justice could have a significant impact on the case of Kulbhushan Jadhav, sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court. Bhandari, who was elected to his current seat in 2012, appeared to be better placed than his British rival on Monday but the complicated election process involving the UN General Assembly and Security Council remains deadlocked.

If for some reason, India fails in its efforts to secure Bhandari's re-election, it will have to go through the process of nominating an "ad hoc judge" to the 12-member ICJ tribunal that is hearing the case of Jadhav, whose death sentence was put on hold by The Hague-based court. Article 31 of the ICJ's statute states that if the panel includes "a judge of the nationality of one of the parties, (the



other) party may choose a person to sit as judge". An ad hoc judge can also be chosen if the panel includes "no judge of the nationality of the parties", according to the article. In October, Pakistan nominated former chief justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani as its ad hoc judge in the panel that will resume hearing Jadhav's case in December.

Experts believe India could be at a disadvantage if Bhandari does not get re-elected as there may not be an Indian representative on the tribunal at a crucial stage when the panel begins

considering the "memorials" or written submissions made by New Delhi and Islamabad on Jadhav.

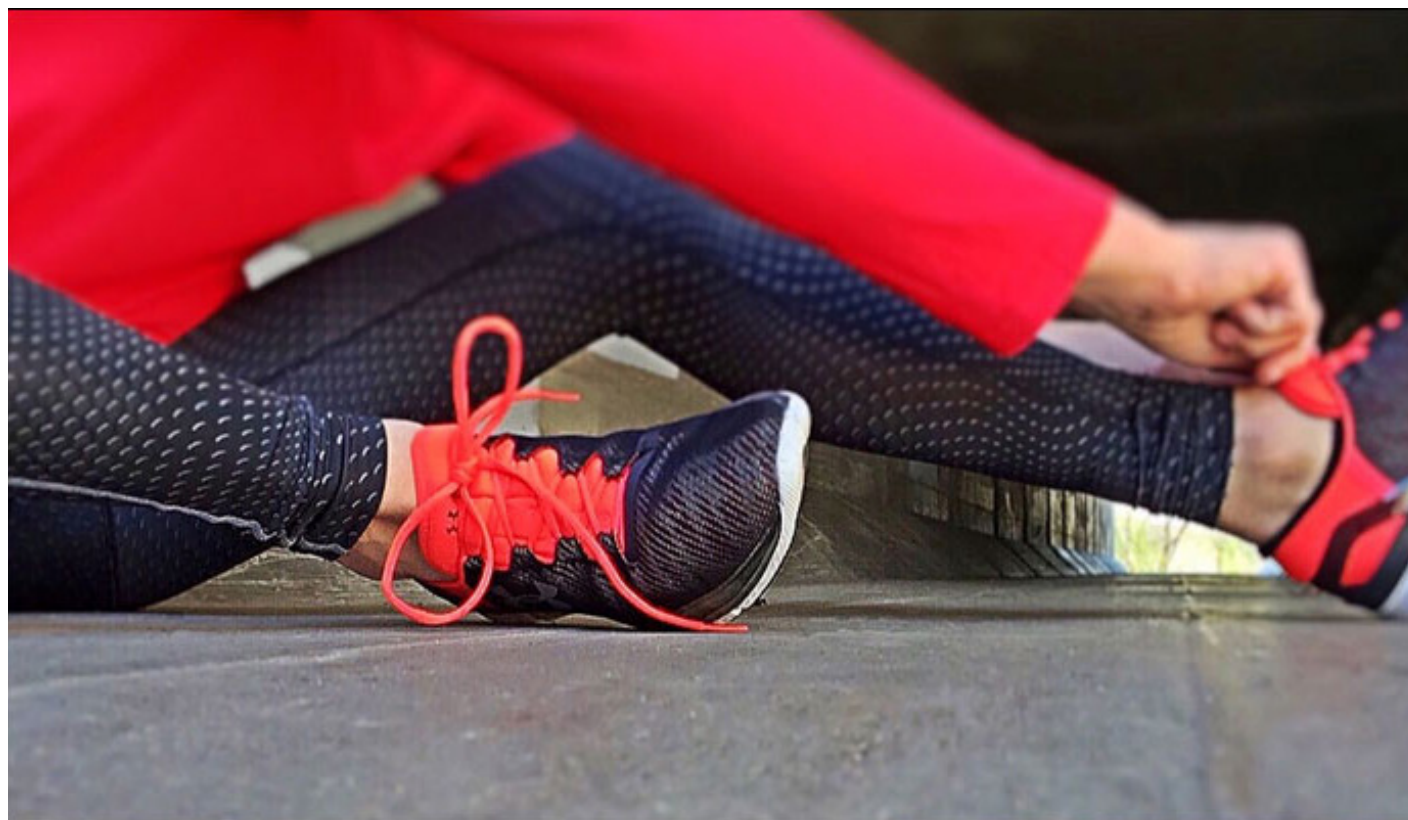
India submitted its memorial in September while Pakistan has time till December 13 to make its submission.

The ICJ has asked Pakistan not to go ahead with the execution of Jadhav, accused of involvement in spying and subversive activities, till it gives its final ruling. The Pakistan Army said last month its chief is close to a decision on Jadhav's mercy petition. Jadhav has already been refused clemency by a Pakistani military appellate court and can approach the president if the army chief too turns down his mercy petition.

India has dismissed the charges leveled against Jadhav, saying the former naval officer was kidnapped from the Iranian port of Chabahar, where he was running a business.

For a healthy heart and long life, munch on a variety of nuts everyday

If you're looking for superfoods to remain healthy, this is it. Include nuts in your diet plan. Eating five weekly servings of walnuts, peanuts or other kinds of tree nuts was linked to a 14% lower risk of cardiovascular disease, and a 20% lower risk of fatal complications due to hardened arteries, said the report in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*. Walnuts appeared to be the healthiest option, according to the findings, based on more than 210,000 people who answered regular surveys as part of a nurses' study that spanned 32 years. "After looking at individual nut consumption, eating walnuts one or more times per week was associated with a 19% lower risk of cardiovascular disease and 21% lower risk of coronary heart disease," said the report. People who ate peanuts two or more times per week had a 13% lower risk of heart disease than people who ate none. Those who ate tree nuts, such as almonds, cashews, chestnuts and pistachios, had a 15% lower risk of heart disease. "Our findings support recommendations of increasing the intake of a variety of nuts, as part of healthy dietary patterns, to reduce the risk of chronic disease in the general populations," said lead author Marta Guasch-Ferre, a research fellow at the department of nutrition at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Many past studies have examined the role of eating nuts on people's health. Researchers said this one stands out due to its size and the way it looked at the association between specific types of nuts and major cardiovascular events. However, because it was an observational study based on self-reported questionnaire responses, it was unable to prove cause-and-effect.



Exercise regularly to boost brain functioning, says study

Previously conducted numerous studies have shown solid evidence of how regular exercise in any form can contribute towards treating a plethora of health issues. Adding to the list, a new study has suggested that regular physical activity can also improve your brain functioning. As per the research, indulging in aerobic exercises can help you increase the brain size that further enhances the memory function and maintains a good brain health. Brain health decreases with age, with the average brain shrinking by approximately five percent after the age of 40, as mentioned in the study, published in the journal *Neuroimage*.

Aerobic exercises can help a particular region of the brain called the hippocampus, which is critical for memory and other brain functions. It may also prevent ageing-related neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's and dementia, the researcher noted. "When you exercise, you produce a chemical called brain-derived neurotrophic factor, which may help to prevent age-related decline by reducing the deterioration of the brain," said Joseph Firth, researcher at the Western Sydney University in Australia. The researchers reviewed 14 clinical trials, which examined the brain scans of 737 people before and after aerobic exercise programs.

The participants, aged between 24 to 76 years, included a mix of healthy adults, people with mild cognitive impairment such as Alzheimer's and people with a clinical diagnosis of mental illness including depression and schizophrenia. The researchers examined effects of aerobic exercise, including stationary cycling, walking, and treadmill running. The length of the interventions ranged from three to 24 months with a range of 2-5 sessions per week. The results showed that while exercise had no effect on total hippocampal volume, it did significantly increase the size of the left region of the hippocampus in humans.

Indian population has gained nearly a decade of life expectancy since 1990: Study

In the first comprehensive analysis of health of India's 1.34 billion citizens – encompassing almost a fifth of world's population, a study on Monday revealed that the Indian population has gained nearly a decade of life expectancy since 1990, but with vast inequalities between states. The study, published in the noted medical journal *Lancet*, said that while India had gained life expectancy, there was vast inequalities between states, ranging from 66.8 years in Uttar Pradesh to 78.7 years in Kerala for women. It estimates the key drivers of ill health, disability, and premature death in all 29 states, many of which have populations the size of large countries, and include people from over 2,000 different ethnic groups. The researchers divided India's states into four groups according to their level of development or epidemiological transition, using the ratio of illness and premature death caused by communicable, maternal, neonatal, and nutritional diseases (CMNNDs) versus non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and injuries as an indicator. "Individual states in India are in different phases of epidemiological transition, and this has resulted in wide inequalities in the magnitude and progress against various diseases and their causes," said Lalit Dandona, from the Public Health Foundation of India in Gurugram. "Rather than taking a more generic approach, these new estimates will be crucial to steering health policy to take account of specific health problems and risks in each state, and ultimately achieving the government's vision of assuring health for all," said Dandona, who led the study. The Indian population has gained nearly a decade of life expectancy since 1990, rising to 66.9 years in men and 70.3 years in women.

Since 1990, India has made substantial gains in health, with the overall health loss from all diseases and conditions about one-third less per person in 2016 than in 1990. However, progress has been mixed, with greater improvements in states at the most advanced phases of development (eg, Kerala and Goa), compared to those in the earlier stages (eg, Assam, Uttar Pradesh and several other poorer north Indian states). Child health remains a particular concern, with high levels of neonatal and under-5 disease relative to other age groups. The under-5 mortality rate has reduced substantially since 1990 in all states, but rates in Assam and Uttar Pradesh are four times higher than in Kerala, indicating major health inequalities. The burden from CMNNDs has decreased. Yet, diseases that primarily cause illness and death in children and mothers continue to dominate in the country. Lower respiratory infections and diarrhoeal diseases were the 3rd and 4th leading causes of health loss in 2016, accounting for about 9 per cent of all premature death and ill health. Moreover, there are wide differences between states in terms of overall progress. Despite signs of progress, several CMNNDs including diarrhoeal diseases, iron-deficiency, anaemia, and tuberculosis, still cause a disproportionate amount of ill health, and claim more lives, than is expected for India's stage of development, particularly in states in the early stages of epidemiological transition. As a result of urbanisation and ageing, the burden of NCDs is large and rapidly rising in all states. The fastest-growing causes of ill-health over the last 26 years were diabetes (increased by 174 percent) and ischaemic heart disease (up 104 percent). Rapid urbanisation is responsible for rising deaths and health loss from road injuries in most states since 1990, highlighting the lack of a comprehensive national policy for injury prevention, researchers said.

In a first, US regulators approve pill that digitally tracks patients' medication intake

Marking a significant step forward in the convergence of healthcare and technology, US regulators have approved the first digital pill with an embedded sensor to track if patients are taking their medication properly and on time. A version of Otsuka Pharmaceutical Co Ltd's established drug Abilify, the medicine is for treating schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and depression and contains a tracking device developed by Proteus Digital Health. Through this, doctors can objectively measure whether patients are swallowing their pills on schedule, thereby opening up a new avenue for monitoring medicine compliance that could be applied in other therapeutic areas. Shares in Otsuka rose 2.5 percent on Tuesday after news of the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

late on Monday. The FDA said that being able to track ingestion of medicines prescribed for mental illness may be useful "for some patients", although the ability of the digital pill to improve patient compliance had not been proved. "The FDA supports the development and use of new technology in prescription drugs and is committed to working with companies to understand how technology might benefit patients and prescribers," said Mitchell Mathis of the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. The system works by sending a message from the pill's sensor to a wearable patch, which then transmits the information to a mobile application so that patients can track the ingestion of the medication on their smartphone. About the size of a grain of salt,

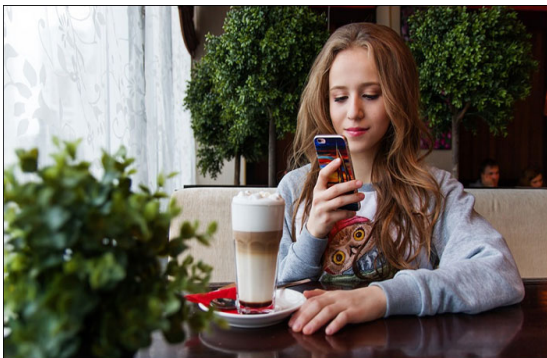


the sensor has no battery or antenna and is activated when it gets wet from stomach juices. That completes a circuit between coatings of copper and magnesium on either side, generating a tiny electric charge. In the longer term, such digital pills could also be used to manage patients with other complicated medicine routines, such as those suffering from diabetes or heart

conditions. Poor compliance with drug regimens is a common problem in many disease areas, especially when patients suffer from chronic conditions. Proteus has been working on the pill tracking system for many years and the sensor used in Abilify MyCite was first cleared for use by the FDA in 2012. The unlisted Californian company has attracted investments from several large healthcare companies, including Novartis AG, Medtronic Inc and St. Jude Medical Inc, as well as Otsuka. Abilify MyCite is not approved to treat patients with dementia-related psychosis and contains a boxed warning alerting health care professionals that elderly patients with dementia-related psychosis treated with antipsychotic drugs are at an increased risk of death.

Study links excessive digital screen time among teens with depression, suicide

Excessive smartphone use has previously been linked to sleep deprivation in teenagers and some studies have even highlighted their impact on teens' mental health. Taking it a step further, a new study has said that spending more time on cellphones, tablets or playing computer games increases the risk of depressive disorders or induces suicidal tendencies in teenagers. The research has found that teenagers, especially girls, who spend several hours per day before the digital screens are more likely to be depressed and have suicide-related outcomes. The findings, published in the journal *Clinical Psychological Science*, noted that 48 percent of teenagers who spent five or more hours per day on electronic devices reported at least one suicide-related outcome, compared to only 28 percent of those who spent less than an hour a day on devices. "These increases in mental health issues among teens are very alarming," said Jean Twenge, Professor at the San Diego State University in California. "Teens are telling us they are struggling, and we need to take that very seriously," Twenge added. The researchers studied the question-



naire data from more than 500,000 teenagers. The results found that the suicide rate for girls, aged between 13 to 18 years, increased by 65 percent. Also, the number of girls reporting symptoms of severe depression increased by 58 percent. "When the teens were asked about their leisure time activities, most of them increasingly spent more time with screens and less time on other activities. That was by far not a good formula for mental health," the researchers noted. It was also suggested that engaging in social interaction, sports and exercise, doing homework, attending religious services, and others, was linked to having fewer depressive symptoms and suicide-related outcomes.

US guidelines redefine high blood pressure as 130/80, not 140/90

The first comprehensive high blood pressure guidelines in the US in more than a decade have suggested that hypertension should be treated earlier when it reaches 130/80 mm Hg rather than 140/90. The guidelines are being published by the American Heart Association (AHA) and the American College of Cardiology (ACC) for detection, prevention, management and treatment of high blood pressure. Earlier guidelines released by the AHA stated that a normal systolic blood pressure is less than 120 while high blood pressure is categorised as above 140. Hypertension or high blood pressure is one of the most common lifestyle diseases prevalent today and is a major contributor to health problems like strokes and heart attacks. Considered to be a "silent killer" by medical professionals across the globe, hypertension is a cardiovascular disease whose detection is a bit complex, due to its subtle signs and symptoms. Rather than one in three US adults having high blood pressure (32 percent) with the previous definition, the new guidelines will result in nearly half of the US adult population (46 percent) having high BP, or hy-



pertension, AHA said in a statement. However, there will only be a small increase in the number of US adults who will require anti-hypertensive medication, it said. High blood pressure is now defined as readings of 130 millimetres of mercury (mm Hg) and higher for the systolic BP measurement, or readings of 80 and higher for the diastolic measurement. That is a change from the old definition of 140/90 and higher, reflecting complications that can occur at those lower numbers. The new guidelines stress the importance of using proper technique to measure blood pressure. Blood pressure levels should be based on an average of two to three readings on at least two different occasions, AHA said. High blood pressure accounts for the second largest number of preventable heart disease and stroke deaths, second only to smoking, it said. It is known as the "silent killer" because often there are no symptoms, despite its role in significantly increasing the risk for heart disease and stroke. Paul K Whelton, lead author of the guidelines published in the journal *Hypertension* and the *Journal of the*

American College of Cardiology, noted the dangers of blood pressure levels between 130-139/80-89 mm Hg. "You have already doubled your risk of cardiovascular complications compared to those with a normal level of blood pressure," Whelton said. "We want to be straight with people – if you already have a doubling of risk, you need to know about it. It does not mean you need medication, but it is a yellow light that you need to be lowering your blood pressure, mainly with non-drug approaches," he said.

Finance ministry asks PSBs to submit fund-raising road map in a month

NEW DELHI: As part of Rs 2.11 lakh crore recapitalisation exercise, the finance ministry has asked state-owned banks to submit their board-approved road maps for raising funds and strengthening core activities in about a month. The government had last month unveiled a whopping Rs 2.11-lakh crore two-year programme to strengthen the NPA-hit public sector banks (PSBs), which includes recapitalisation bonds, budgetary support and equity dilution. Banks should follow responsible and responsible banking, a senior official said, adding that each board should decide in a month

or so before recapitalisation actually takes place as to what are the future areas they would like to work on.

They should look at their portfolios, stressed assets, non-core activities, fund raising from market and the core competencies, the official said.

This will help in better utilisation of the money that the government intends to provide to them, he said. In order to enhance the capital base of bad loan-ridden banks, the two-year plan includes infusion of Rs 1.35 lakh crore by way of recapitalisation bonds, Rs 18,100 crore



through budgetary support, and Rs 58,000 crore from the market.

The Non-performing assets (NPA) or bad loans of PSBs have increased to Rs 7.33 lakh crore as of June 2017, from Rs 2.78 lakh crore in March 2015.

In the last three-and-a-half years, the government has pumped in more than Rs 51,000 crore capital in PSBs.

The proposed capital infusion will help enable banks to get into their core activity of lending, which has seen muted growth in the past several months due to pressure of stressed assets. Earlier this week, finance minister

Arun Jaitley had said that higher capital for the PSBs will prompt them to increase credit flow to MSMEs so that the 'third engine' of private investment is fired up to propel growth and create jobs.

He had said that there has been a significant increase in public investment and FDI inflows, but the private investment continued to lag.

"We need the third engine (private investment) also to fire and a robust private sector and MSME sector so that the optimum growth rate which we have the potential for can be reached," he had said.

Amazon India doubles its war chest to \$4.7 billion to take on rival Flipkart

BENGALURU: Amazon India has nearly doubled its authorised capital to Rs 31,000 crore (\$4.74 billion), nearly matching its mammoth capital commitment of \$5 billion made in June last year.

Not only does it improve the prospect of further investment commitments from founder and CEO Jeff Bezos, it also sets the stage for an all-out, high-stakes war against local e-commerce rival Flipkart.

According to regulatory filings with the Registrar of Companies on Tuesday, Amazon India has already issued paid up capital of Rs 17,839 crore (\$2.7 billion) towards its marketplace arm Amazon Seller Services — far exceeding its initial commitment of \$2 billion made in July 2014. The latest move by Amazon indicates that the American e-commerce giant is more than willing to not just match, but outweigh the war chest commanded by rival Flipkart in the battle for what is widely seen as the world's last major consumer Internet economy.

"As India's largest and fastest growing e-commerce player, and with

a long-term commitment to make e-commerce a habit for Indian customers, we continue to invest in the necessary technology and infrastructure to grow the entire ecosystem.

We are delighted and humbled by the trust from our customers, to lead in India on things that matter to our customers in over four years of our business, while continuing to launch innovative India-first initiatives as well as completely new offerings like Echo, Prime and Prime Video," said an Amazon India spokeswoman in response to a query from Mint. Flipkart, which is also extremely well funded and counts among its investors Japan's SoftBank Group Corp., China's Tencent Holdings Ltd, South Africa's Naspers Ltd and Accel Partners, among others, has already raised nearly \$3 billion in two separate tranches this year and has declared that it has at least \$4 billion of cash reserves.

Flipkart did not immediately respond an email seeking comment.

Amazon's willingness to pump in more funds is especially significant at this point, because it comes after

a bruising festive season battle against Flipkart where it lost out to the Indian online retailer, as Mint reported on 27 September. The company also lags Flipkart in terms of overall gross sales. To be sure, Amazon has disputed the claim that it lags Flipkart and has asserted that its methodology of calculating gross sales could be different from that deployed by Flipkart. Gross sales refers to the value of goods sold on a platform, not net revenue. In recent interviews, Amazon India chief Amit Agarwal has indicated that the online retailer has a multi-year, multi-billion dollar view as far as India is concerned.

"I think our investments are still squarely in the same three areas—how do we add more selection, how do we make it easier for sellers to offer more competitive prices and how do we build for faster deliveries... A layer on top of that is that we keep investing in Prime—so video, music, Echo, etc, are our key areas," said Agarwal in an October 27 interview.

Mint reported in April 2016 that Amazon India, which was launched in June 2013, had doubled its autho-

rized capital to roughly about Rs16,000 crore. Since then, Amazon has invested twice in its Indian marketplace—a Rs2,010 crore infusion in December last year and another Rs. 1,680-crore investment in June.

The pace at which Amazon has raised the stakes in India to fight Flipkart has been staggering. In July 2014 Amazon's authorized capital was only Rs1,500 crore, when Bezos made the initial \$2-billion commitment. In June 2016, Amazon committed a further \$3 billion. Amazon has nearly caught up with Flipkart in its four years of operations in India.

"As of now, the battle between Flipkart and Amazon is too close to call. I don't think Flipkart is going to lose out in the near future, unless they make big strategic blunders, which is highly unlikely," said Harminder Sahni, founder and managing director of consulting firm Wazir Advisors. "Having said that, Amazon should be happy with what they've achieved so far. They have already realized that India is not a winner-takes-all market and that there's enough room for two big players to compete."

Xiaomi and Samsung top smartphone brands in India: Report

NEW DELHI: Xiaomi emerged as the fastest growing smartphone vendor in India in the September quarter, as its sales quadrupled in the period, according to the International Data Corporation's latest quarterly mobile phone tracker. India accounted for 10% of all global smartphone shipments at 39 million units in the period—an increase of 40% over the previous quarter and a year-on-year increase of 21%.

Xiaomi now controls 23.5% of the Indian smartphone market, which ties it with Samsung as the leading smartphone vendor in the country.

Xiaomi's market share in last quarter was 17%. The popular Redmi Note 4 continues to be the highest selling smartphone in the country.

Samsung, which held 24% of the market in last quarter, registered quarter-on-quarter growth of 39%. Among other vendors, Lenovo made a comeback after two quarters of decline. Its shipments in the September quarter went up by 83% and it now controls 9% of the smartphone market, making it the third

largest smartphone vendor in India.

Vivo, which had a phenomenal June quarter when it held 13% of the market, has slipped to the fourth position. Its market share stands at 8.5%. Unlike Vivo, Oppo didn't face a major shift in market share. It held 8% of the market share in the June quarter and controlled 7.9% in the September quarter. IDC attributes the rise in smartphone shipments to the pre-festive season sales and attractive deals on smartphones offered by Amazon, Flipkart and other online stores. Around 13 million smartphones were sold online in the September quarter, making for year-on-year growth of 35% and quarter-on-quarter growth of 73%. "Online retailers have popularized many trends in the Indian smartphone market, like making devices more affordable through easy financing options, attractive exchange offers on existing smartphones. On the back of fresh infusion of funds and focus on India market, the online stores are expected to remain aggressive in 2018 as well," said Jaipal Singh, senior analyst, IDC India.

Reliance group stocks tumble up to 12% on heavy selling

MUMBAI: Shares of Reliance group of companies, led by Reliance Communications, on Wednesday came under massive selling and tumbled up to 12%.

The scrip of Reliance Communications slumped 12.12%, Reliance Capital tanked 10.21% and Reliance Infrastructure plummeted 9.16% on BSE.

Among others, Reliance Power dived 8.55 per cent, Reliance Naval and Engineering tumbled 8.18%, Reliance Home Finance (7.09%) and Reliance Nippon Life Asset Management (6.87%). In intra-day trade, shares of RCom crashed 16.88% to hit its 52-week low of Rs 9.60, Reliance Capital plunged 14.99% to Rs 400.20.

Reliance Infra slumped 14.99% to Rs 390.60 in intra-day session, Reliance Power dropped 10.23% to Rs 34.65 (52-week low), Reliance Naval tanked 11% to Rs 42.40 (52-week low), Reliance Home fell sharply by 12.14% to Rs 62.55 (52-week low) and Reliance Nippon Life skidded 9.14% to Rs 248. Debt-laden telecom operator Reliance Communications on Saturday reported a consolidated loss of Rs 2,709 crore in the second quarter to September 2017.

The company had registered a profit of Rs 62 crore in the same period a year ago.

This is the fourth straight quarter of loss for the company. RCom, which is on the verge of shutting its voice call service, witnessed a decline in revenue from its both India and global operations.

All well in Infosys, Nandan Nilekani very organised: Narayana Murthy

BENGALURU: Infosys founder NR Narayana Murthy said on Wednesday all was well in the company and its chairman Nandan Nilekani has the skills of simplifying "lots" of complexities in the software major. "Absolutely, all is well. Remember, in my speech with the investors, I said now that we have Nandan as the chairman, we can all sleep well," he told reporters after the distribution of Infosys Prize for 2017-18 in Bengaluru.

"He (Nilekani) is a very organised person. His strength is simplification of complex ideas. There were lots of complexities and therefore he has his hands full," he added. Murthy also said, "Let's leave it to him and let's all keep quiet, so that he can do his job well."

Murthy, had on October 24, expressed disappointment that none of the questions raised by him on "poor governance" had been answered by the company's board with transparency. On scouting new CEO for Infosys, Murthy said there is no need to give advice to Nilekani because he had been a good CEO himself.

"Having been a good CEO himself he



knows what is required. So, there is no need for advice," he said.

Some names including former Infosys executive Ashok Vemuri's had cropped up in the media but he has reportedly expressed his unwillingness to accept the job.

Vemuri had quit Infosys in 2014 after

Vishal Sikka was brought in as the company's CEO and managing director.

Sikka had quit amid turmoil in the company after a prolonged battle between the Board and the company founders leading to the return of Nilekani, a company co-founder, at the helm in August.

GSTN utility for exporters to claim refunds goes live tonight

NEW DELHI: Merchant exporters can start claiming tax refunds using the new utility that will be activated on the GST Network portal tonight, GSTN CEO Prakash Kumar said. With the new utility RFD-1A, a merchant exporter can claim refund of GST paid at the time of buying goods which he has exported in the relevant month.

"GST RFD-1A for refund of input tax credit on export of goods and services and additional amount in cash ledger would go live on GSTN portal tonight," Kumar told PTI.

The refund claims can be filed for July-September and that would be matched with the corresponding GSTR-3B filed by the exporter.

Earlier, GSTN had launched the utility for processing refund claims by manufacturing exporters who had paid Integrated GST (IGST) while exporting goods.

Kumar further said a new functionality has been introduced on the portal that enables businesses to engage and disengage a GST Practitioner (GSTP).

As many as 46,000 people have applied for enrolling themselves as GST Practitioner and central tax officers are in the process of validating their applications.

"The list of practitioners would be put up on the GSTN portal and businesses can search for a GSTP in their locality and send request. The practitioner can then decide to accept it or reject," Kumar said.

He added that once the business appoints a practitioner, any communication sent to the taxpayer would be automatically sent to the authorised GSTP as well.

Besides, GSTN has come out with form REG-09 for registration of non-resident taxable persons who engage in supply of goods or services occasionally, but have no fixed place of business in India.

All foreign exhibitors participating in fairs like IITF who also want to sell their goods are required to register as non-resident taxpayer, Kumar said.

Sensex falls 113 points on wider trade deficit, muted earnings

MUMBAI: The BSE benchmark Sensex dropped by 113 points in early session on Wednesday, weighed down by metal stocks, as trade deficit widened to an almost 3-year high.

Moreover, disappointing quarterly earnings by some blue-chip companies and weak global cues made mood gloomy. The 30-share index was trading lower by 113 points, or 0.34 per cent, at 32,828.87. The gauge had lost 372.69 points in the previous two sessions. All the sectoral indices led by metal, power and FMCG were trading in the red, falling by up to 2.14 per cent. The NSE Nifty fell 30.85 points, or 0.30 per cent, to 10,155.75 in early trade.

Exports entered negative terrain after over



an year, contracting 1.12 per cent in October. Trade deficit widened to almost a 3-year high of USD 14 billion last month as imports surged.

Metal stocks suffered the most following the decline in metal prices in the global market, traders said.

Sun Pharma suffered the most among Sensex components by tumbling 2.54 per cent after the pharma major yesterday reported a big drop in consolidated net profit. Other prominent losers included Tata Steel, ONGC, NTPC, M&M and ITCL Ltd. Among other Asian markets, Hong Kong's Hang Seng shed 0.10 per cent while Japan's Nikkei was down by 0.93 per cent in early trade today.

Ashish Nehra set for special debut in India vs Sri Lanka series

MUMBAI: Ashish Nehra, who retired from all forms of cricket after the Twenty20 International between India and New Zealand on November 1 at the Feroz Shah Kotla, is all set to make a special debut. This time, in the commentary box.

The 38-year-old former left-arm pacer will be commenting in the India versus Sri Lanka Test series, starting November 16 at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata. India and Sri Lanka will play three Tests, with the second to be played at Nagpur from November 24 while the third will be at New Delhi from December 2. Nehra had announced his retirement after the end of the Twenty20 match in New Delhi against New Zealand amid a lot of fanfare, with the Indian cricket team giving him a fitting farewell at his home ground. India broke the Twenty20 jinx against New Zealand as they secured a convincing 53-run win. The announcement of Nehra's new role in cricket was made by his former teammate and friend Virender Sehwag, who an-



nounced the news on social media in his typical swag. Both Nehra and Sehwag go a long way back, having both started out in the Ranji Trophy for Delhi. Both were members of the Indian cricket team squad that

reached the final of the ICC World Cup 2003. Both were present in the squad when MS Dhoni lifted the World Cup in 2011, although Nehra missed the final due to injury. Hailing from the same place,

Nehra and Sehwag have been friends since their childhood days. They have also shared stories of how they would make two-wheeler rides to and fro from cricket camps and training.

Of Sachin Tendulkar's debut, Don Bradman's 100th first class century

MUMBAI: The date November 15 carries a great significance in cricket history for reasons more than one. On this day, 28 years ago, arch rivals India and Pakistan were blessed with two champion cricketers in Sachin Tendulkar and Waqar Younis, who made their Test debuts. And in 1947, on this date, touted the greatest batsman ever went on to register his 100th first-class century while playing for an Australian XI against the touring Indian cricket team.

The greatest batsman ever Don Bradman never played in India; his only visit to the country was in the mid-1950s when he toured Calcutta (now Kolkata) with his wife. In fact, the only series that Bradman ever played against India was in 1947-48. According to ESPNcricinfo, Bradman mentioned the series against India as one of the 'most friendliest and enjoyable contests he was involved in'. Bradman scored a staggering 715 runs in five matches at an average of 178.75, with four centuries and one fifty. In his career, Bradman scored 6,996 runs at a mind-boggling average of 99.94, with 29 centuries and 13 fifties in his 52 Tests for Australia. Overall, in first-class cricket, he played 234 matches scoring 28,067 runs at 95.14, with 117 centuries and 69 fifties. Beginning of an era Sachin Tendulkar's Test debut in Pakistan at the tender age of 16 against a famed bowling attack is one of the most commonly told



tales in Indian cricket circles. But still, 28 years since his first match, the country remains infatuated with what transpired.

Tendulkar went on to become one of the greatest batsmen ever seen, often drawing comparisons with Bradman. In fact, the Australian legend himself termed Tendulkar as the one 'who plays like me'. Tendulkar holds several records as a batsman as well as a player. He is the only cricketer ever to have played 200 Tests, only to have scored 100 international centuries (51 in Tests and 49 in ODIs), and has most runs in Tests (15,921) and ODIs (18,426). In the Karachi Test of 1989, Pakistan saw the arrival of one of their legendary fast bowlers Waqar Younis, who went on to become their captain and then later coach.

Credited for his masterly use of reverse swing, he finished with second most wickets (373) for Pakistan in Tests. Waqar played 87 Tests and under his captaincy, Pakistan played 17 Tests and won 10.

Aleem, Erasmus to umpire Ashes opener

SYDNEY: Pakistan's most celebrated umpire Aleem Dar and Marais Erasmus of South Africa will officiate in the first Ashes cricket Test between Australia and England, which begins at The Gabba in Brisbane on Nov 23. Aleem will also stand in the second Test in Adelaide, with New Zealand's Chris Gaffaney, while Erasmus with team up with Gaffaney for the third Test in Perth. Sri Lanka's Kumar Dharmasena will umpire the last two Tests of the five-match series, joining India's Sundaram Ravi for the fourth Test in Melbourne and then Joel Wilson of the West Indies for the final clash in Sydney.



Ex-West Indies captain Richie Richardson has been appointed match referee for the first three Tests while ex-Sri Lankan skipper Ranjan Madugalle is given the job for the last two matches.

Ricky Ponting predicts Ashes 2017-18 stroll for Australia

MUMBAI: Former Australia captain Ricky Ponting says England's only hope of winning a test in the upcoming Ashes 2017-18 series is the day/night match in Adelaide and has predicted a 4-0 victory for the hosts.

Ricky Ponting savaged England's batting order and said the absence of all-rounder Ben Stokes, along with injuries to their fast bowling stocks, would play into Australia's hands.

His comments come after fierce criticism of the Australia batting lineup from former England greats Ian Botham and Graeme Swann.

"I've been a bit more outward than normal about this one because I honestly think that Australia will win really easily," Ponting, who captained Australia in 77 tests, told Cricket Australia's website (cricket.com.au).



"If you look through the current England team, they're searching for an opener, they're searching for a number three, Stokes might not be there, a couple of their quicks have gone down.

"I just think right now England have got more gaps and more concern in not only in their 11 but in their entire squad, than what Australia have." England seamer Jake Ball is likely to miss the tourists' final

warm-up ahead of the first Ashes test, beginning on Nov. 23 in Brisbane, after suffering an ankle ligament strain in the tour match at Adelaide Oval.

Their pace bowling stocks took a hit earlier this week when Steven Finn was ruled out of the tour with a knee injury and replaced by Tom Curran.

Ponting said England fast bowlers James Anderson and Stuart Broad were on a "steady decline" but maintaining a "reasonably high" level of performance, while Australia boasted a flourishing bowling line-up. The 42-year-old said England's only chance of winning a match was the second test in Adelaide.

England won the last Ashes 3-2 on home soil but were humiliated 5-0 the last time they came to Australia for the series in 2013/14.

Nathan Lyon backs struggling Matt Renshaw for Ashes 2017-18 berth

MELBOURNE: Australia opening batsman Matt Renshaw's horror run in the domestic Sheffield Shield has raised speculation that his Ashes berth may be in danger but team mate Nathan Lyon said the left-hander had the backing of the "inner sanctum".

Renshaw has compiled just 70 runs in six innings for Queensland in the first class competition and has failed to score a half-century in his previous nine test innings. Selectors will name Australia's Ashes squad on Friday, with the first test against holders England starting in Brisbane next week. Renshaw enjoyed a fine home summer after making his debut against South Africa in Adelaide last year and has averaged 36.64 from his 10 tests. However, while opening partner David Warner implored the 21-year-old to score more runs earlier this week [nL3N1NiO6H], off-spinner



Lyon stopped short of confirming Renshaw's selection in the squad but said the batsman had internal

support. "Playing for Australia, you are going to come under scrutiny from the media and the pub-

lic," Lyon told reporters. "But if you are in the inner sanctum and have the support - which he does -

then you can usually get out of that head space and perform well." The media can write what they want but, if you have positive energy around the team - which there is already - I know there will be support for everyone (in the test team). Renshaw scored 184 against Pakistan in his last home test in Sydney in January and is highly regarded for his ability to bat for long periods of time. Although dismissed for 16 and one in the ongoing Shield match against New South Wales in Brisbane, Renshaw was taken for a nets session against Australia's test fast bowlers.

"I am not a selector but I am a big fan of Matt - he is a class batsman," Lyon added. "But there are going to be times in this series when everyone is going to be placed under pressure - it is how you bounce back."

Player draft or cricket's cattle market

LONDON: STARTED as a game of gentlemen and taken as a favourite pastime for English aristocracy, cricket was a form of entertainment for the rich and the royals and pure in its original and uncomplicated form. But with the passage of time it has changed to an extent in its shape, in its shades and colour and is no more the game it was but a commodity for the buyers and the sellers.

Till the late seventies it did, however, manage to hold its purity and kept its sanctity intact as a gentleman's game where umpire's word was final and the spirit of the game considered to be a lot more important than the game itself.

However, Australian media tycoon Kerry Packer's intrusion in the game with his rebellious World Series Cricket (WSC) in 1977 - in retaliation to the rejection of his bid to acquire the rights for his television channel by the then Australian Cricket Board (ACB) - then took this game through a rollercoaster journey where money talked and stakes shot up to raise the profile of the players who prior to that were poorly paid as professionals of the game. Once on that path, the whole world of cricket took a turn into a new era and in a direction that dictated the fate of the professionals in the hands of the highest bidder. That, no doubt, has given the modern game an opportunity to compete with other sports and for the players to enjoy respectable existence.

INTERNATIONAL RETURN FOR ZLATAN GETS SWEDEN TALKING

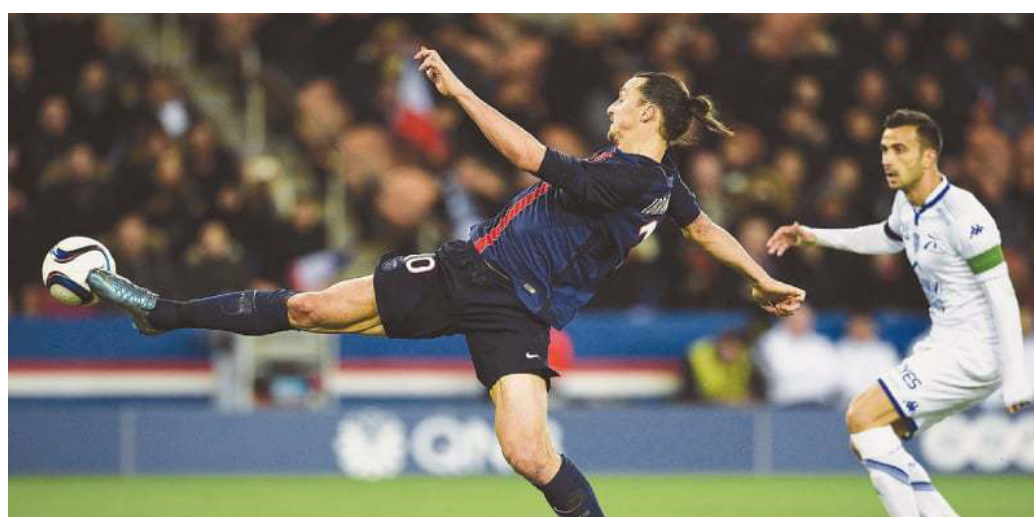
STOCKHOLM: The final whistle which signalled that Sweden had qualified for the World Cup was still echoing around the San Siro when the speculation began - will retired record goalscorer Zlatan Ibrahimovic return for the finals in Russia?

Sweden had just secured a 1-0 aggregate victory over Italy with a squad short on big names, a team that snatched second place in European qualifying Group 'A' from the Dutch and beaten France at home before knocking out Italy, all without Ibrahimovic. In the minutes after the Swedes hung on for a goalless draw on Monday that secured one of the big World Cup upsets, Ibrahimovic wrote "We are Zlatan" on Instagram next to a photo of the delighted team, deliberately

adding the 'Z' of his name to his country's. The Manchester United striker, who retired from the national team in 2016, was among the crowd in the San Siro to cheer on his former Sweden team-mates.

In the post-match press conference, coach Janne Andersson was irritated by reporters' focus on whether their veteran former star could again pull on the yellow jersey at the finals in Russia next year. "This is incredible. The player has just stopped to play one-and-a-half years ago and we are still here talking about him," Andersson told reporters. "We need to talk about the great players we have in this team."

The 36-year-old departed the national team after a disappointing group stage exit at Euro 2016, ending an international career



that saw him score 62 goals, many of them spectacular, in 116 matches for his country.

"Zlatan is, as I expressed it,

our greatest player of all time, a fantastic athlete in every way, but he has chosen not to take part," Andersson said.

The Manchester United striker, who is currently recovering from a serious knee injury, has always been something of a di-

visive figure in his native country, adored for his skills but often perceived as arrogant and selfish.

After his departure and that of former manager Erik Hamren, the Swedes went back to their traditional style of being a tightly-knit collective where no individual is more important than the team - a return for Zlatan now could upset that delicate balance.

Andersson's players were not in the mood to discuss a possible return either.

"First and foremost he must open up the possibility himself. Otherwise I don't think one should have this discussion," defender Ludwig Augustinsson said after the Italy game. Ibrahimovic's agent Mino Raiola was a lot more positive towards a comeback for his

client. "If it's up to me, I'll deliver him myself," he told Sweden's SportExpressen. Italy totally dominated Monday's match but Sweden earned a return to the World Cup for the first time since 2006 thanks to Jakob Johansson's strike in the bruising first leg in Stockholm.

"I have never experienced anything like this," said goalkeeper Robin Olsen.

Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven was overjoyed at the against-the-odds victory.

"Jaaaaaa! It will be the World Cup for Sweden in 2018 after two strong matches against Italy... Congratulations to the national team!" he wrote on Facebook. Newspaper Dagens Nyheter could hardly believe the result either, calling it "surreal".