

TIME AND US

DAILY SRINAGAR, KASHMIR

THURSDAY

● DECEMBER, 07, 2017
 ● 18 RABI-AL-AWAL 1439 AH
 ● ISSUE: 286
 ● VOLUME: 03
 ● PAGES: 08

WEATHER TEMPERATURE		
STATION	MAX TEMPERATURE	MIN TEMPERATURE
	ACT	ACT
SRINAGAR	15.0	-3.3
JAMMU	22.4	6.4
LEH	7.2	-13.6
KARGIL	10.2	-7.5

SUNSET THURSDAY: 05:22 PM
SUNRISE FRIDAY: 07:25 AM

LOCAL FORECAST OF SRINAGAR
 Generally Cloudy sky. Maximum & Minimum temperatures will be around 14°C & -3°C respectively.

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

STATE | 3 GOVERNOR PARTICIPATES IN 55TH RAISING DAY OF HOME GUARDS & CIVIL DEFENCE
 INTERSTATE | 5 I WON'T REMAIN SILENT ON TRIPLE TALAQ: PM MODI
 BUSINESS | 7 RBI CAPS MERCHANT DISCOUNT RATES TO BOOST DEBIT CARD TRANSACTIONS
 SPORTS | 8 VIRAT KOHLI GETS 'CLASSY' PRAISE FROM FORMER SRI LANKA SKIPPER KUMAR

There should be no pre-conditions set for dialogue with separatists: Radha Kumar

'Integral part, complete freedom claims must not act as stumbling blocks now'

Srinagar, Dec 6: The former interlocutor Radha Kumar on Wednesday termed the decision of releasing the first time stone pelters 'encouraging' for the return of peace in restive Kashmir Valley. She however underlined the need of not setting any pre-conditions to hold dialogue with the separatist groups.

Radha Kumar told KNS over phone from New Delhi that when she along

with the two others including Dilip Padgaonkar and MM Ansari were deputed to Kashmir as Centre's interlocutors after 2010 unrest, the amnesty at that time too was given to the first time stone pelters and also some political prisoners too were released then. "To everybody including us, there is nothing new in freeing the stone pelters. It will help in bringing the normalcy back but other mea-



asures too are needed that could ensure the everlasting peace in Valley," Radha told KNS.

She added further that there is a need for not setting any pre-conditions for the dialogue as this is the only way forward to achieve the long-lasting peace. "I think people should now simply ignore the years old rhetoric and decide to move ahead. They have

▶ See **Radha**...Pg 02

Srinagar Master Plan draft to be submitted to cabinet in Jan

I&FC raises objections on various flood zones

Srinagar, Dec 06: Srinagar Development Authority is likely to present the final draft of Srinagar Master Plan to State Cabinet for approval in the beginning of next month.

Highly placed sources told Kashmir News Service (KNS) that nearly three hundred suggestions have been received by the authority which are being scrutinized in order to incorporate them in the final draft.



If sources are to be believed the ▶ See **Plan**...Pg 02

CM's public outreach, follow up

Ending their dual control, Chief Minister directs SKIMS to take over CHC Sumbal, 14 other adjoining health centres

SRINAGAR | DEC 06: As a follow up of her Public outreach programmes at Bandipora and Ganderbal, Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti has ordered the taking over of Community Health Centre, Sumbal and its affiliated 14

health centres in the adjoining areas by SKIMS, Soura, Srinagar.

This would end the dual control over the functioning of these health centres and improve their functioning with more expertise and equipment

from the premier health institute of the State.

The demand for ending the dual control over these institutions and handing them over to SKIMS had come from people during Chief Minister's ▶ See **CM's**...Pg 02

After two years, only 40 bunkers approved along LoC

SRINAGAR | DEC 06: In a strange move by the J&K government, despite repeated promises and even announcement in the state assembly to construct 2000 bunkers along Line of Control (LoC) and International Border (IB) in the year 2015, only 40 bunkers have been approved in the first face after lapse of more than two years time.

Shockingly these 40 bunkers with the sitting capacity ▶ See **LoC**...Pg 02

POLICE CRACKS SEPOY IRFAN DAR'S MURDER CASE

HM commander Saddam Padder, 2 others behind killing: SSP Shopian

Srinagar, Dec 06: The recent gruesome murder of Army man Irfan Dar who was working with 175 Territorial Army has been worked out and one of the co-conspirators has been arrested, Police said on Wednesday.

According to a statement issued to KNS, District Police ▶ See **Murder**...Pg 02

MET ISSUES WEATHER WARNING, PREDICTS HEAVY SNOWFALL

SRINAGAR | DEC 06: The Meteorological Department for Jammu and Kashmir has issued a weather warning from December 11 to December 15.

In a statement issued today, the Met said: "A fresh Western Disturbance is most likely to affect the state of J&K ▶ See **Met**...Pg 02

PSC TO DECLARE MERIT LIST OF MEDICAL OFFICERS SOON

Written test conducted, further process likely to be completed till December: PSC

Srinagar, Dec 06: The vacant posts of doctors in different hospitals of the state are likely to be filled soon, as the Public Service Commission (PSC) Tuesday said that the selection list is likely to be submitted to the government soon.

"Written test of Medical officers has already been conducted. The further process for appointment of doctors is in process. Things are moving very fast. We are hopeful that we will be able to submit the selection list to the government by the end of December," one of the officials of the Public service commission (PSC) told KNS, insisted not to be named for not being authorized to ▶ See **PSC**...Pg 02

NC demands Gas Turbines be started to alleviate power crisis: NC

'Govt's irresponsible behavior to upgrade transmission network criminal'

Srinagar, Dec 06: National Conference on Wednesday lashed out at the State Government and the Administration for its ruthless approach to the miseries of the people on account of the dismal power scenario in the Valley. In a statement issued from National Conference Headquarters, 'Nawa-e-Subha' in Srinagar on Wednesday, Party's Provincial President for Kashmir Nasir Aslam Wani said the PDP-BJP Govern-

ment's lack of seriousness and will to upgrade the transmission network was criminal since the Valley was being starved of essential additional power during the winters.

"Why isn't the Chief Minister barely concerned about the unimaginable sufferings of the people in the harsh winter by exploring all possible available options to give some relief to the people? The fact remains that the present



Government has not done anything to make crucial upgradations to the transmission

network to enable the State to buy additional power on a contingency basis in view of the harsh weather conditions in winter. To add misery to this already dismal situation, the Chief Minister has failed to initiate a process of starting the Gas Turbines when people are suffering", the NC Provincial President said in the statement.

The NC Provincial President said that almost the ▶ See **NC**...Pg 02

'TRANSFER ME ELSE I WILL COMMIT SUICIDE'

Says Doctor 'in depression' serving at SDH Tangdar for last 25 years

Tangdar, Dec 06: Emotionally hurt and visibly distressed, a medico has threatened to commit suicide if he was not transferred out of the remote Tangdar area of frontier District Kupwara where he has been serving as medical officer from last nearly three decades. Dr Parvaiz Iqbal, was appointed in 1990 and posted in District Hospital Baramulla wherefrom he was shifted to Tangdar just after two years. While talking to KNS correspondent Dr Iqbal said that since 1992 he has been left to rot in the remotest area of the valley without caring for his own health and the family.

"In 1990 I was appointed and posted at District ▶ See **Transfer**...Pg 02

Educational institutions should help address social chaos in Kashmir: Dr Drabu



Srinagar, Dec 6: Minister for Finance and Labour & Employment, Dr Haseeb A Drabu today said schools in Kashmir Valley should

become centres for change in addressing the social disorder and chaos in our society.

▶ See **Drabu**...Pg 02

SDH Sopore Negligence Cases: DIRECTOR HEALTH FURNISHES INADEQUATE, CONCOCTED REPORT TO CM'S GRIEVANCE CELL

SRINAGAR | DEC 06: Nearly after four months, the cognizance taken by the Chief Minister's grievance cell in pediatric negligence cases at Sub District Hospital (SDH) Sopore turns futile as the Director Health Services Kashmir allegedly shields the accused doctors by providing inadequate response to cover up the complaint.

On September, 02, the CM's grievance cell sought response of the director in the complaint within the next 10 days considering the matter as important.

However, making mockery of the cognizance, the director on September, 18 in his reply to the CM's grievance cell wrote, "As reported by CMO Baramulla, Dr. Suhail ▶ See **Health**...Pg 02

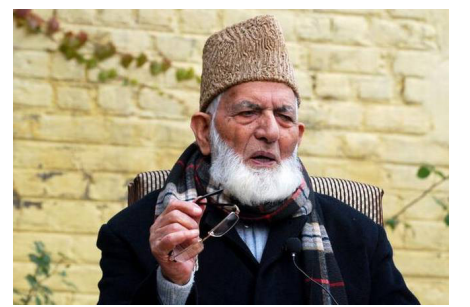
PDP is a creation of agencies: Hurriyat (G)

'Pellets, bullets and PSA symbol of their politics'

Srinagar, Dec 06: Demanding immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners, Hurriyat Conference (G) blamed PDP led administration for unnecessarily prolonging their detention period. Accusing PDP for playing deceitful politics, Hurriyat (G) said that hypocrisy and treachery is the trait of PDP.

In a statement issued to KNS, lashing at PDP, Hurriyat Conference (G) said that this party is the creation of agencies and its rhetoric for battle of ideas stand exposed and added that they should realize this fact that pellets, bullets and Safety Act now stand sign and symbolic for their treacherous politics.

Since the inception of PDP, they are following dictates from Nagpur and there seems no let-up in pellets and bullets, said Hurriyat



and added that though pellet gun and chemical weapons are specifically used against wild animals, however PDP in order to remain in power corridors and appease their masters, used these weapons against innocent ▶ See **Hurriyat(G)**...Pg 02

Making Koul Commission Report Public: DIVISION BENCH GRANTS 3 WEEKS TIME TO GOVERNMENT

Srinagar, Dec 6: A Division Bench of Jammu Kashmir High Court yet again granted three weeks time to Government for filing its response to Public Interest Litigation (PIL) seeking Koul Commission Report on 2010 Kashmir killings be made public.

The PIL has been filed by an NGO (Peoples Forum) through its General Secretary M M Shuja seeking a direction for making public the report of "Koul Commission" of retired Justice M L Koul and its follow up action.

The Division Bench of Justice Muhammad Yaqoob Mir and Justice Ali Mohammad Magrey directed the state counsel Additional Advocate General Bashir Ahmed Dar to file the final response within three weeks. ▶ See **Division**...Pg 02

The Sufi wealth of Kashmir

▶ Sadaf Kursheed

Srinagar, Dec 06: The spread of Islam in Kashmir has been a long process carried out by the Sufi saints who came from the different parts of central Asia and finally settled in Kashmir or the original inhabitants of the valley. The whole valley is home to many Sufi shrines and many famous are in district Baramulla including the Sufi shrine of Janbaz wali and Baba Shakar din at watlab Sopore.

Janbaz wali was a prince

from a royal family of Isfhan Iran who left behind all the luxurious of his life and came to Kashmir with some 1200 followers some 665 years ago and took a large number of people into the fold of Islam. The shrine of Janbaz wali is located in Khanpora Baramulla (Khawanpora in Raj tarangni which means place of eating)

Kalhan in his book Raj tarangni gives him the name of Annapurna which means food giver he used to serve food to a large number of people. This shrine is famous



as people of all religions be it Muslims, Sikhs or Hindus visit the shrine. People pray and when their wishes are

fulfilled, according to the customs cook a special type of khichidi in a big vessel (daigh) which consists of some 2-3 hundred kgs of rice, moong dal and chicken and this dish takes approximately 1 day and 1 night to cook and when ready is served to people as Tabruk. The urs of Janbaz wali is celebrated on 24th Rabi ul awal (3rd month of Islam calendar) every year. The people of Khanpora have high regards for the Sufi saints as he was instrumental in bringing ▶ See **Sufi**...Pg 02

Stone-pelting incident aftermath:

FIVE INJURED IN HAJIN AFTER ARMY ALLEGEDLY GO BERSERK

Hajin, Dec 6: At least five people were injured after Government Forces used pellets and tear-smoke shells to disperse stone-throwers while army soldiers went on rampage in different localities of Hajin town of Bandipora district.

Reports said that Army soldiers from 13 Rashtriya Rifles were on a patrol when a couple of youth pelted stones on them. According to eyewitnesses, this infuriated soldiers who went on a rampage in town.

"Army soldiers ransacked houses and shops, thrashed people irrespective of their age and gender and set fire to stacks of dried grass in Parrey Mohalla, Bon Mohalla and Khos Mohalla localities of Hajin," said a local. ▶ See **Five**...Pg 02

Continue from Front Page.....

RADHA

to understand that there is no way to achieve the objective other than holding dialogue and strive for peace in Valley that has been witnessing bloodshed and uncertainty since long," Radha Kumar said.

She added that the claims of 'integral part or complete Azaadi' should act as hurdles in holding talks with the separatists. "If everyone is yearning for peace then these pre-conditions shouldn't act as the stumbling blocks in the process."

PLAN

preparation of the final draft has also hit a road block as the Irrigation and Flood Control Department has raised objections with regard to Shalimar and Athwajan flood zones. However the sources added that a high level meeting involving Deputy Chief Minister Dr. Nirmal Singh and Irrigation and Flood Control Minister Sham Chowdhary besides senior officers of various departments is on cards to iron out the differences. Meanwhile, a meeting of senior officers of various departments headed by Administrative Secretary Housing and Local Bodies was held on Wednesday in Srinagar to review the progress of the preparation of final draft.

Vice Chairman SDA Abdul Majid Raina told KNS that nearly 287 objections and suggestions have been received by SDA which were discussed during today's meeting. He said it will still take nearly twenty days to scrutinize all the suggestions that would allow committee to decide which one is to be incorporated in the final draft.

Mr. Raina further told KNS that a comprehensive strategy is being adopted to prepare a full proof final draft that was likely to be submitted to state cabinet in the beginning of coming year. In the meantime the committee decided to constitute a Sub-Committee headed by Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, which shall submit the detailed report within 15 days to the chairman of the Committee.

It was also decided that after completion of scrutinizing the objections/suggestions a meeting under the chairmanship of Deputy Chief Minister will be held and Minister for I&FC Department, MLAs and Chief Engineer will be also requested to attend the meet, so that a comprehensive and detailed document is presented before the state Cabinet.

The meeting was attended by the constituted Committee members viz Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Commissioner SMC, Vice Chairman SDA (Member Secretary), representative of Vice Chairman LAWDA, besides other officers of SDA and Town Planning Organization, Kashmir.

CM'S

public grievances redressal programmes at Bandipora and Ganderbal on December 03 and 04 recently. A number of deputations at Bandipora and Ganderbal had sought ending the dual administrative control over these health institutions and handing over these to SKIMS for proper and efficient service delivery. The health institutions which the SKIMS would be taking over include, besides CHC, Sumbal, PHC, Trigam; NTPHCs, Nowgam, Asham and Odina; Unani Dispensary, Ganistan and Shadipora and Sub Centres at Panzina, Dangerpora, Zalpora, Nesbal, Gadhkhud, Ankul, Shilwat and Chek Ganistan.

LOC

of maximum 600 persons are being constructed in the Balakote, Mandr, Mankote, Poonch and Mandi sectors having population of more than 6000 persons, thus completely insufficient and moreover construction of just 15 bunkers has been started so far while rest 25 bunkers still awaits their construction to began.

Deputy Commissioner Poonch when contacted over the issue told PTK, that these 40 bunkers in the first phase are on experimental basis and if the scheme will remain successful then more bunkers will be constructed in the region.

Pertinent to mention here, that these bunkers were sanctioned for the safety of border dwellers by the former chief minister late Mufti Mohammad Sayeed who even then announced this in the state assembly in the year 2015 after the 48 deaths of civilians and security personals (28 civilian and 20 security personals) due to Pakistani shelling between the year 2012 to 2015.

As per the official data available due to cross border firing 1 civilian was killed and 5 were injured In the year 2014, in the year 2015, 08 civilians were killed and 03 were injured while 07 security personal were killed and 12 were injured, in 2016, 02 civilian were killed and 21 were injured while 03 security personal were killed and 14 were injured and in the current year i.e. 2017 up to September 13 civilians have been killed and 27 got injured while 08 security personals have also been killed and 31 of them got injured.

A local resident of the area said that government only does hollow promises for votes as it was repeatedly promised by the government that Rs 5 lakhs and a government job will be given as compensation to the family of person killed in cross border firing but only Rs 1 lakh was given to them and despite repeated appeals to the higher ups no response has been given by them so far.

MLA Poonch Shah Mohammad Tantry told PTK, that government has initiated the process of constructing these bunkers is a good sign and soon they (bunkers) will be constructed in other areas also as people's safety is the first priority of the ruling regime.

MLA Mendhar Javid Ahmed Rana while lashing over the government said that construction of just 40 bunkers in the area having more than 6000 population is a joke with the innocent people who are being killed from Pakistani bullets and shells from years. He said that it is just a eyewash to befool the public and a damage control gimmick too.

MURDER

Shopian said the investigation conducted so far has revealed that militants involving Saddam Padder resident of Heff, Bilal Mohand resident of Heff, Touseef resident of Gadbugh and one newly recruited unidentified militant along with arrested accused Muzamil resident of Shirmal hatched a criminal conspiracy to kill the sepoy Irfan Dar.

In pursuance of the said criminal conspiracy, on 24th November, the accused Muzamil went to the native village of Irfan and took him to Wuthmulla where the above mentioned militants were already present in a nearby orchard. They came out from the orchard and fired at the Sepoy Irfan, resulting in instant death of the victim on the spot.

After executing the gruesome murder, all of them fled from the spot. On the basis of evidence available could unearth

the entire chain of conspiracy and finally nabbed accused Muzamil who is presently in custody. The lookout for the other three militants is on and necessary legal proceedings are in progress to complete the investigation of the instant case," Police said. The investigation conducted so far has revealed that militants involving Saddam Padder resident of Heff, Bilal Mohand resident of Heff, Touseef resident of Gadbugh and one newly recruited unidentified militant along with arrested accused Muzamil resident of Shirmal hatched a criminal conspiracy to kill the sepoy Irfan Dar.

In pursuance of the said criminal conspiracy, on 24th November, the accused Muzamil went to the native village of Irfan and took him to Wuthmulla where the above mentioned militants were already present in a nearby orchard. They came out from the orchard and fired at the Sepoy Irfan, resulting in instant death of the victim on the spot.

After executing the gruesome murder, all of them fled from the spot, Police said.

Police on the basis of evidence available could unearth the entire chain of conspiracy and finally nabbed accused Muzamil who is presently in custody. The lookout for the other three militants is on and necessary legal proceedings are in progress to complete the investigation of the instant case. SSP Shopian Shriram Dinkar told media persons that the case of army man Irfan who was abducted and killed later. "Three militants of LeT and Hizb are involved in this crime. The militants are Saddam Padder, Bilal Mohand and Tawseef Itoo," he said. The bullet-riddled body of Dar was recovered from village Wuthmulla on 25th of November 2017 and consequently Case FIR No 298/2017 of Police Station Shopian under section 302 RPC and 16 UA (P) act was registered and investigation was taken up.

MET

from 11th to 15th Dec. 2017 with moisture feeding taking place from the Arabian Sea."

"Under the influence of this system, moderate to heavy rain/snow is expected at widespread places of Jammu, Kashmir & Ladakh region.

"The main activity of this system (moderate to heavy rainfall/snowfall) is likely to occur during 12-13th Dec 2017 and gradual decrease thereafter. This will be the first 'major wet spell' during the current season for J&K.

According to the Director MeT, Sonam Lotus the weather system may lead to disruption of surface and air transportation like Srinagar-Leh, Srinagar-Jammu, and Mughal Road etc. It will bring relief to farmers, especially who have sown Rabi crops in plains of Kashmir and Jammu region and overall improvement in soil moisture.

Hence farmers are advised not to irrigate the fields this week, it said. Lotus issued a general warning for the state, saying higher reaches of Kashmir, Ladakh & Hilly area of Jammu most likely to receive moderate to Heavy snowfall during this period. "There will be significant fall in day temperature and slight rise in night temperature," it said.

PSC

speak to media. Lateef-ul-Zaman Deva, Public Service Commission Chairman, could not be contacted as he was busy in the interview process.

It is to mention here that Minister for health, Bali Bhagat had told KNS that the government will fill up 500 vacant posts of doctors till December this year. "We have referred the posts to the public service commission. It is a good thing to say that 500 posts of doctors are to be filled till December this year," the minister had said. Meanwhile one of the top government officials told KNS that steps are being taken to fill the other vacant posts in various government hospitals soon.

Sources said that the Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti had recently expressed concern over vacancies at hospitals and called for time-bound steps to fill up those.

Sources said that in the first round, the vacancies of doctors will be filled in some of the Major hospitals of the state.

The government had revealed in the legislative assembly that there are over 2200 vacancies of doctors in hospitals run by directorate of Health Service as well as those under the Srinagar and Jammu government Medical Colleges.

Meanwhile sources said that most of the vacant posts of Para medicos falling under direct quota have been referred to the recruiting agencies. Kargil district in Ladakh region has 106 vacancies against sanctioned strength of 167 doctors followed by Anantnag with 80 out of 306 sanctioned posts. Kulgam has 106 doctors in position against the sanctioned strength of 167 while Leh has 51 vacant posts of doctors against the sanctioned strength of 133. Srinagar with no vacancy among 104 posts is at the bottom of the ladder, Shopian has 17 vacancies out of 70 while Ganderbal has 18 vacancies among 120 sanctioned posts. Pulwama district has 27 vacancies out of sanctioned strength of 190 doctors while Budgam has 338 sanctioned posts and 300 are in position. Bandipora district with sanctioned strength of 92 doctors has 40 vacancies.

Hospitals of Jammu province working under its health directorate have 2003 sanctioned posts of doctors and 1148 are in position. Among the 855 vacancies, Rajouri district with 144 vacancies tops the list followed by Doda district with 139, Poonch (131), Kathua (128), Udhampur (91), Ramban (72) Kishtwar (61), Reasi (60), Jammu (17) and Samba with sanctioned strength 120 doctors has only 12 vacancies.

Regarding GMC Srinagar, the government had said that there are 34 posts of professor vacant among sanctioned strength of 79, 31 vacancies of associate professors, 60 assistant professors, 157 lecturers, 63 registrars, 16 demonstrators, 90 assistant surgeons and 176 other doctors.

Regarding GMC Jammu, the government had revealed that against sanctioned strength of 391 posts in faculty, 163 are vacant while among 459 other gazetted posts, 440 are in position and 19 are vacant.

NC

entire Valley has been plunged into darkness and dismay and the Administration seems to be deriving sadistic pleasure from the abject misery of the people rather than taking steps to alleviate the problem. "A lot of transformers too are awaiting repair for months and the department is sleeping on this issue as the political leadership has chosen to turn a deaf ear towards this crisis. It seems like the Government was under the presumption that there won't be a winter in Kashmir this year and is now acting surprised and claiming helplessness as people continue to suffer", Nasir Aslam Wani added.

"The Government should immediately start the Gas Turbines and ensure that people all across the Valley get a bare minimum about of power supply to enable them to live with-

out misery and suffering in the harsh winter months. Contingency plans are there for a purpose and if the Chief Minister is not able to grasp the severity of this situation, then she has no right to go from one District to another for her political photo-ops. She has to first fulfill her basic administrative responsibilities and as things stand now there seems to be a complete refusal from her side and that of her Government to take any decisive action to improve the power scenario", the NC Provincial President said in the statement.

TRANSFER

Hospital Baramulla. Two years later I was transferred to Tangdar. Since then I am here...rather rotting here," he told KNS correspondent Peerzada Sayeed.

Dr Iqbal who has a specialization in Gynecology has been overburdened and looking after the ultra-sonography and other departments for which no specialised doctor has been posted in the hospital.

"I also attend on call duties round the clock. I also see OPD patients," he said.

Dr Iqbal said he applied for transfer several times with the CMO's Director's and health minister's offices, but nobody ever took up his case.

Stagnant at one place from over two decades, Dr Iqbal said he is suffering from depression. "I am going to retire in next 3 to 4 years. I am suffering from depression due to the long stagnation at one station for last 25 years."

Now, he appeals the Chief Minister, Health minister and Director Health Services to do some justice with him and transfer him to some other place.

Don't I have right to work at any other place," he says. "If my request is again overlooked, I have no option but to commit suicide. I have landed in severe depression due to long stagnation at one place of posting".

DRABU

"No human being is born with the innate desire for ferment. We grew up in a normal environment but today, it's an abnormal situation. Schools are the best places to understand and effect the change we require to make J&K a peaceful and prosperous state," he said.

"Schools must take cognizance of the situation around and train students to face the real world, not just for landing good jobs. Give them (students) tools to understand the situation. Once they deal with it, they will be able to change it," he said. The Minister was speaking at a felicitation ceremony organized by Doon International School here for its two students, Moomina Manzoor and Mehsood Fatima, and their coach, Umar Akbar, who won gold and silver medals at a Taekwondo championship held at Macau, China last month.

Congratulating the students, Dr Drabu said they have brought laurels for J&K and the entire country, "I am amazed by the kind of talent we have in Kashmir. You need nurturing and caring and I am sure you will continue to scale newer heights," he said.

Regretting the systemic erosion of societal values in Kashmir, the Finance Minister said Jammu and Kashmir used to be a diverse, liberal and emancipated society, "Globally, there has been a rise to dominance of illiberalism and J&K is no exception but no culture is richer than J&K as regards our diversity. And our future lies in going to past to discover our liberal moorings," he said.

Dr Drabu said schools should evolve as per the cultural context in which they are situated, "Every school has a culture around it and it should adapt some of its teachings. We must spend time to venture into troubled societies and bring sensitivity among the students which will also help in chalking out long term solution to our problems," he said.

Exhorting the students to enjoy life to the fullest, Dr Drabu advised them to stop worrying about future, "It is important to be a good human being rather than being an out-performer. Imbibe education as a way of living life and make sure everybody around you is happy and not just yourself. Build relationships and try create an enclave of peace prosperity and happiness. You must create a world that you aspire to live in," he said.

HEALTH

Naik is already posted there. However, one medical officer from DH Baramulla visits SDH Sopore twice a week".

Observing that the reply of the director is not adequate and relevant to the cases, CM's grievance cell shot another letter to the director on November, 24 asking him to furnish the relevant response. The letter reads, "With regard to the reply furnished, it has been found that the registered grievance was related to negligence and the reply given is regarding posting of doctors. Kindly provide adequate response in the grievance considering it in the larger interest of common people".

In response to this letter, on November, 27 the director wrote, "The said complaint has been investigated by a team of officers of this directorate who have reported that pediatrician, Dr. Suhail Naik, posted in SDH Sopore has attended the new borns in both the cases well in time and the committee has concluded that the said complaint is baseless".

Interestingly, it took director health services just two days to submit the 'clean chit response' in favour of accused, however it took him nearly four months to understand the complaint registered against the doctors. Now the question arises, if the director in his first reply into the complaint failed to furnish any details related to the grievance of negligence, how come just within two days, his team of officers investigated it overnight to conclude the case. Now if the director has got it investigated earlier, then why he failed to submit his relevant response earlier and compelled CM's grievance cell to write him again.

Pertinently on August 18, the CM's grievance cell took cognizance of the complaint that the pediatricians posted in the hospital do not take care of proper checkup of new born babies. The gist of the complaint registered (No. 71064) by the grievance cell reads, "A lot of hue and cry came up recently from the Sub District Hospital (Sopore), District Baramulla wherein several patients have claimed that the pediatricians posted in the hospital do not take care of proper screening of new born babies. The matter became extremely crucial as a baby needs immediate screening in the first 48 hours of his/her birth. The missing of doctors (Pediatricians) causes a problem for the new born babies".

The grievance cell wrote in the cognizance letter that the matter was also raised by the concerned BMO who sought a report from Dr. Suhail Naik who is allegedly running a private clinic. "The authorities are requested to consider the matter

as extremely important and take necessary action by intervening properly", the grievance cell wrote to the Director Health Service, Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Baramulla and Deputy Commissioner Baramulla besides asked to submitted report within in one week.

Worth to mention that the matter came into the light when some news reports regarding the negligence of paediatricians were published in section of media after an infant died on August 11 in the hospital. The news reports also mentioned that for most of the time, paediatricians in the hospital are missing which forced parents of another infant to run from pillar to post after the infant developed some problems on August 12.

DIVISION

Advocate Dar in his submission said: "One man Commission of Enquiry is under examination, in consultation with General Administration Department, Police Head Quarter, IGP, CID and Deputy Commissioner Srinagar."

He submitted that vigorous efforts are being made to finalize the Action Taken Report on the recommendations made by Rtd Justice Koul in his report.

Dar submitted that the position was last reviewed in a meeting chaired by Principal Secretary (Home) which was amongst others attended by attended by Director General of Police and others. "Certain inputs are still awaited for which the matter is being vigorously pursued to enable us to conclude the examination of the report in an expeditious manner," the State Counsel submitted.

More than 120 people were killed by police and paramilitary CRPF personnel in Kashmir valley in 2010.

"Had the report been filed on time and the recommendations implemented, the unrest of 2016 and the continuing disturbance in the Valley could have been averted," the plea says.

The one-man judicial Commission was appointed on June 19, 2014 by the then Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to probe the 2010 killings. The Commission submitted its report in December 2016.

SUFI

The Islam to the area. Any new officer who is posted here never misses to visit the shrine be it army police or administration, narrated Mohd Shafi Akhoo, ex-general Secretary Aukaf Committee Khanpora

Another shrine which is of historical importance is the shrine of Baba Shakar din at watlab Sopore. There is a wooden door at the entrance of the shrine which is believed to have some magical powers as locals tried to relocate that gate to again find that door in the same place next day. The gate as per the locals was gifted to Baba Shakar din by Baba Richi who was the assistant of the former. The shrine welcomes people from all faiths. It's also believed that in 870 Baba dug a grave for himself and was buried in the same grave when he left this world. Every year the urs is celebrated on 27th of Jamadi ul Sani and large number of devotees turn up on that day and pray during the whole night. Baba Shakar din is believed to be originally from district Budgam and was more inclined to spiritual knowledge from childhood and in this connection received knowledge from two famous saints Sheikh Noor din wali and Hazrat Zain ul din Reshi. He is said to have warded off the evils to save the valley from destruction. At the shrine one can have the whole glimpse of Wullar lake as this shrine is situated on a hilly area.

FIVE

The locals hit to roads and clashed with government forces who arrived in the town in large numbers.

According to locals government forces used tear-smoke shells and pellets while even a youth was hit by a bullet in his leg and was referred to Bones and Joints hospital Srinagar.

"Four youth were hit by pellets. Another youth was hit by bullet in his ankle. The injured youth were shifted to CHC Hajin," the locals said. A doctor posted in CHC Hajin said that they received five injured youth, one of them identified as Nayeem Ahmad Mir was hit by a bullet in his left ankle.

When contacted, Srinagar based Defence spokesperson, Colonel Rajesh Kalia told CNS that: "I am ascertaining the facts and will get back to you."

HURRIYAT (G)

and unarmed civilians. Their rhetoric for battle of ideas, is nothing but hoax, said Hurriyat (G) and instead caged people and strangled their genuine voices. Slapping PSA against its opponents and youth is its favourite game, said Hurriyat and added that PDP puppets of Nagpur have crossed all limits and turned valley into a graveyard.

Hurriyat Conference (G) expressed its deep concern over the deteriorating condition of prisoners, saying they are being subjected to political vendetta and no proper medical treatment is provided to ailing detainees.

Hurriyat Conference (G) while referring to Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Bhat, Altaf Ahmed Shah, Pir Saifullah, Ayaz Akbar, Raja Meraj u Din, Nayem Ahmed Khan, Shahid-ul-Islam, Farooq Ahmed Dar, Shahid Yusuf, Dr. Muhammad Qassim, Dr. Mohammad Shafi Shariati, Ghulam Qadir Bhat, Sheikh Farooq Ahmed, Asiya Andrabi, Ghulam Mohammad Khan Sopori, Mohammad Rustam Bhat Amir Hamza Shah, Mir Hafeez u ullah, Mohammad Yousaf Falahi, Raies Ahmad Mir, Fehmeda Sofi, Mohammad Yusuf Mir, Danish Malik, Abdul Ahad Parey, Abdul Shaban Wani, Master Ali Muhammad, Mohammad Yousuf Lone, Abdul Ghani Bhat, Nasir Abdullah, Shah Wali Mohammad, Ghulam Mohammad Tantry, Mohammad Shaban Khan, Mohammad Rafiq Ganai, Shakil Ahmad Boya, Sheikh Mohammad Ramzan, Bashir Ahmad Sofi, Shakeel Ahmed Yatoo, Mushtaq Ahmed Hura, Showkat Ahmad Hakim, Mohammad Yousuf Bhat Muhammad Amin Ahangar, Abdul Hameed Parey, Qazi-ul-Islam, Sarjan Barkati, Ghulam Hassan Shah, Haji Ghulam Mohammad, Salman Yousuf, Mufti Abdul Ahad, Ghulam Hassan Shah, Hakim ur Rehman, Manzoor Ahmad Kaloo, Ghulam Mohammad Tantry Pervez Ahmed Kaloo, Abdul Khaleq Regu, Abdul Aziz Ganai Ghulam Hassan Malik, Bashir Ahmad Bhat, Mushtaq Ahmed Mir, Mohammad Ashraf Begh, Mohammad Ramzan Mir, Siraj u Din, Mohammad Siddiq, Safer Ahmad Lone, Showkat Ahmad Dar, Javed Ahmed Fuley, Nazir Ahmad Manto, Mufti Nadim, Mohammad Amin Dar, Imtiyaz Ahmed and Bashir Ahmad Sofi And Shariq Maqbool Gaane said that during people's uprising in 2016, state authorities arrested thousands while as PSA was slapped against six hundred," the statement claimed.

Governor participates in 55th Raising Day of Home Guards & Civil Defence

Urges for raising more battalions

JAMMU, DECEMBER 6: Governor N.N. Vohra attended the 55th Raising Day of Home Guards & Civil Defence (HG & CD), here today. On his arrival at the Gulshan Parade Ground he took the salute and inspected the parade.

Emphasizing the importance of valuable relief and rescue work being done by the HG & CD in J&K, Governor observed that ever since its inception in 1962 this Organisation has been providing crucial assistance to the Administration in dealing with varied arising emergencies-floods, earthquakes, management of festivals and other important events.

Governor lauded the role being played by this Organisation to assist the Police in maintaining Law and Order, traffic regulation, fire fighting, evacuation of injured persons. He observed that consequent to the establishment of the two Battalions of State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) HG & CD Volunteers had been providing valuable support in the regulation of Shri Amarnathji Yatra.

Considering the crucial tasks to be attended by the SDRF in very difficult situations, Governor stressed



the urgent need to enlarge the strength of highly trained volunteers and urged the State Government to raise more SDRF battalions for deployment in the Jammu, Srinagar and Ladakh regions.

Noting that the Jammu and Kashmir regions fall in seismic Zones-IV and V, respectively, and are vulnerable to natural disasters particularly earthquakes, Governor re-iterated that there is no substitute to SDRF being assisted by large numbers of well trained volunteers who are

equipped with state of the art machines and gadgets to effectively deal with arising exigencies. He appealed to the youth to come forward and volunteer for offering their services for the cause of humanity.

Governor congratulated Sh. Dilbagh Singh, Commandant General, on the Raising Day of the Home Guard and Civil Defence Organization and urged the Administration to enlarge and strengthen this important Force.

Governor took salute of the marching contingents of the Home Guards,

Civil Defence, SDRF, Trained Volunteers, Central Police Brass Band and Armed Police Pipers.

On the occasion, the Fire Fighting Rescue Bikes were launched. These Bikes have been inducted in the Organisation to enable it to promptly reach the affected areas and render timely help. The Volunteers demonstrated their preparedness in dealing with emergencies through a well conceived demonstration which showed their skills in handling an earthquake situation.

Sh. Dilbagh Singh, Commandant General HG/CD & SDRF presented the Welcome Address and highlighted the functioning of the Organisation. Smt. Rashmi Wazir, Commandant SDRF 2nd Battalion gave away the Vote of Thanks on the occasion.

Sh. Kavinder Gupta, Speaker Legislative Assembly; Sh. M.Y. Tariqami, MLA Kulgam; Dr. Krishan Lal, MLA Chhamb; Dr. S.P. Vaid, DGP, Sh. P.L. Gupta, Chief Vigilance Commissioner; Major Genl. Nilendra Kumar, ADG NCC, J&K; serving and retired civil and police officers and dignitaries from the civil society were among those present on the occasion.

Veeri, Kavinder inspects ongoing works at New Assembly Complex

Call for its completion by November 2018

JAMMU, DECEMBER 6: Minister for Revenue, Disaster Management, Relief Rehabilitation & Reconstruction and Parliamentary Affairs, Abdul Rehman Veeri and Speaker, J&K Assembly Kavinder Gupta inspected the ongoing works of New Assembly Complex, here today.



Deputy Speaker, J&K Assembly Nazir Ahmad Gurezi, Legislators Sat Sharma, Rajeev Jasrotia, Commissioner Secretary PWD (R&B) Sanjeev Verma, Secretary J&K Assembly M R Singh, G M JKPC and other concerned officers were also present on the occasion.

While taking brief review of the progress on the works, the Minister asked the G M JKPC to speed up the works and ensure its completion by ending November 2018 so that this prestigious complex would be ready for conducting next assembly session.

"The works on this new complex needs to be expedited for its timely completion and for making this complex functional for assembly related activities", the Minister said.

Veeri also directed to ensure sufficient seating arrangements for Lawmakers, officers, media persons and visitors, besides proper ventilation, lighting and heating arrangements for smooth conduct of assembly proceedings.

The Minister said that there is sufficient

amount of funds are available and required funds would be released soon for smooth execution of all related works but the works needs to be completed at the earliest even if there is a need for carrying out the works in double shift.

"Deadline fixed for the completion of the project should be taken seriously and all the works needs to be carried out accordingly", the Minister said. Speaker, Kavinder Gupta asked the concerned officers to ensure proper seating arrangements for the legislators with all required facilities besides provision of meeting halls at the complex. He said that all pending works needs to be expedited for its timely completion.

On the occasion, it was apprised that the complex has a total area of 23465 square metres with two basements, 2 floors for Legislative Assembly and 2 floors for Legislative Council. The new complex will also be connected with the Secretariat building and the existing Assembly complex.

Dy CM reviews power scenario in Kashmir, calls for reducing T&D losses

Sets August 2018 deadline for completion of Alasteng Grid Station

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 6: Deputy Chief Minister, Dr Nirmal Singh today called for making concerted efforts to reduce the transmission and distribution losses in the electricity sector and continuous innovations in work execution to improve overall power scenario in the Valley.

The Deputy Chief Minister, who is also Minister for Power Development and Housing & Urban Development, said this at a meeting which he chaired here today to review power scenario in Kashmir.

Minister of State for Housing & Urban Development, Asiea Naqash and Minister of State for Power Development, Syed Farooq Ahmad Andrabi were also present on the occasion.

During the meeting, Dr Singh reviewed the present position of power supply and pace of work on various ongoing PDD projects. He stressed on augmentation of power infrastructure, and strengthening of the system, which he said is vital to realize the dream of round-the-clock uninterr-



rupted power supply in the State. He asked the officers to follow the already notified electricity schedule and avoid unscheduled power cuts. He also directed to re-examine all feeders and adding more feeders into the system wherever it is necessary to minimize snapping of high-voltage power lines.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that with the commissioning of Alasteng grid station, power scenario in Srinagar and South Kashmir

would improve significantly. He set August 2018 deadline for completion of the grid station. He asked the officers to review the progress of the power station every 15 days to ensure its completion within the stipulated time.

He also called for expediting land acquisition for construction of Budgam grid station so that work on it starts as early as possible.

To ensure speedy repair of electric transformers, the Deputy Chief Minister called

for increasing the capacity of the Department's workshops. He said that 200 transformers have been acquired and kept in the buffer stock for prompt replacement of faulty ones. He said steps are afoot to increase the human resource of the Department to better cater to rising demands.

Dr. Singh also reviewed progress on various ongoing works under Prime Minister's Regional Development Plan (PMDRP). He stressed on the officers to expedite work on all the projects so that their time-bound completion is ensured. He said that the Department needs to gear up to meet people's expectations. He said that there is no shortage of funds and called for time-bound completion of the development projects.

Commissioner Secretary, Power, Housing & PDD Hirdesh Kumar, Chief Engineer PDD, VC LAWDA, VC SDA, Commissioner SMC, MD Housing Board, MD JKPC, SE Drainage and other concerned officers attended the meeting.

Kohli stresses on proper guidance, awareness about fish farming

Minister distributes 111 Bicycles, 4 Auto Rikshaws among registered fishermen

JAMMU, DECEMBER 6: Minister for Animal, Sheep Husbandry and Fisheries, Abdul Gani Kohli has stressed for providing proper guidance, awareness about fish farming among the farmers so that they can be benefitted from various flagship programmes.

The Minister said this while speaking at a concluding function held in connection with 3-Day Skill Development Programme on composite Fish Culture organized by the Fisheries Department at Regional Fish Farmers Development Agency with the assistance of National Fisheries Development Board, here today.

The Minister said that the Government is committed to promote the fish culture in the state for which several initiatives have already been taken and various programmes are in pipeline. He said the Jammu and Kashmir has a huge scope of fish farming but the need is to provide proper guidance and latest techniques to the interested farmers. He said that there is immense scope for promoting the cold as well as warm wa-



ter fisheries across the state owing to its varied agro-climatic condition.

Kohli said such training programme can help the farmers for boosting fish farming and improve socio-economic conditions of the farmers. He said by adopting pisciculture, it will not only help to increase in income but also create employment opportunities to the unemployed educated youth.

Several flagship programmes have been launched by the Centre and State Gov-

ernments with the aim to improve socio-economic conditions of the people of the weaker sections of the society, the Minister said adding that instructions have already been given to the administration to aware general masses about these schemes so that they can be benefited. He also appealed the people to come forward and take advantage of these welfare schemes.

The Minister also went around various stalls and appreciated the department for

organizing such events. He hoped that the maximum farmers have taken the benefit of the training programme and also asked the fish rearing farmers that the experience gained during the training programme should be reach to other fish rearing community.

On the occasion, Kohli distributed 111 Bicycles and 4 Auto Rikshaw among the registered fishermen of various districts of Jammu division. He also handed over certificates among the participants.

The farmers present on the occasion also put forth their demands and suggestions including covering Private Fish Farmers under Fish Insurance Scheme and proper transport facility to Private Farmers so that they can send their produce to markets without delay.

The Minister gave them patient hearing and assured them that their genuine demands will be looked into.

Director Fisheries, R K Pandita also spoke on the occasion and highlighted the activities of the Department.

Right career guidance to pave way for successful future: Priya Sethi

Career Planning Counselling Seminar for students held in Jammu

JAMMU, DECEMBER 6: Minister of State for Education, Culture and Tourism, Priya Sethi today stresses on right career guidance for students which empowers them to embrace opportunities and paving the way towards a successful future.

The Minister was speaking during Career Planning Counselling Seminar for Students of 11th & 12th class organized by the Directorate of Libraries and Research, here today.

During the seminar, guidance sessions focusing on Preparation of NEET & JEE were held by IIT Toppers & Professionals from Mumbai & New Delhi.

Renowned career counselling experts including trained expert from Harvard, Prateek Bhargava, CEO Mindler Prikshit Dhanta, Supriya Dhanta, Anoop Pandey, CEO Placeness Hiren Shah, Vice President Placeness Ranjeet Gakhare and other counselling experts from national level shared their expertise on the occasion.

Addressing the students, the



Minister said that bright future of younger generation will not only results in a better society but also led to a prosperous nation.

"Enhancing student's exposure to the diverse career outlooks, this is a great learning opportunity for the students that will guide them to make considered decisions based on their interests and strengths so they can contribute meaningfully to society through their future professions", the Minister affirmed. The wealth of experience this

counselling team possesses will able to help the students to prepare them in finding more lucrative career options, the Minister added.

The Minister further said that today's job market scenario is changing rapidly and it is important for the students to be more adaptable and hardworking as these are the basic requirement for success. She said that students should start making their career goals at an early stage to have a better knowledge about their career options.

The Minister exhorted upon the need of right guidance for students to transform their aspirations into reality and through counselling and other such activities they can explore their strengths and interests.

Government is designing strategic programmes that can give wings to the dreams of future generation so that they can achieve new heights of success, the Minister maintained.

While lauding the efforts of Directorate of Libraries and Research in holding the career counselling

sessions, the Minister calls for holding more such sessions spreading awareness regarding different aspects of career counselling.

Work on making libraries more vibrant is already under process, the Minister said while adding that the government is planning to make libraries a centre for career guidance as well.

Speaking on the occasion, Director Libraries and Research, J&K, Mukhtar-ul-Aziz said that the department aims to help students in choosing right career and providing career counselling to train the youth of state to compete at national level.

An interactive session giving opportunity to the participatory students to clear their queries on career guidance was also held. Around 700 students from different districts of Jammu division attended this session along with their teachers and parents.

Deputy Director Libraries, Jammu, Renu Kumari besides senior officers of the concerned departments were also present on the occasion.

Dy CM reviews progress on AMRUT projects in Srinagar

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 6: Deputy Chief Minister, Dr Nirmal Singh today convened a meeting to review the status of projects in Srinagar city-funded under Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) which are being executed by Urban Environmental Engineering Department (UEED).

Minister of State for Housing & Urban Development, Asiea Naqash and Minister of State for Power Development, Syed Farooq Ahmad Andrabi were also present on the occasion.

Commissioner Secretary Housing & PDD Hirdesh Kumar, VC LAWDA, VC SDA, Commissioner SMC, SE Drainage and other concerned officers attended the meeting. The Deputy Chief Minister was informed that 16 schemes worth Rs 70 crore have been taken up under the AMRUT in the Summer Capital.

While reviewing progress of the development works, Dr Singh said that the several major towns of the State would also be covered under AMRUT so that they are replete with all the modern facilities of urban living. He asked the executing agency to ensure timely completion of the projects through proper monitoring and supervision at the highest level.

Stressing on close monitoring, he directed Deputy Commissioner Srinagar to conduct regular inspections of construction sites to remove bottlenecks, if any, hampering the pace of progress of the works. He stressed on the need for close coordination among different agencies to ensure that the works are completed in a time-bound manner.

During the meeting, the Deputy Chief Minister took exception of the slow pace of work on the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and asked the officers to pace up the work under the scheme. He also asked for the status of the drainage projects to be taken under Jehlum Tawi Flood Recovery Project (JTFRP).

On the occasion, Minister Asiea Naqash directed the officers to gear up and keep snow clearance machines and de-watering pumps in the state of readiness and press them into service immediately during the heavy snowfall for the relief of the general public.

DAILY Editorial Time and Us SRINAGAR J&K

FORGOTTEN WAR — ON SAUDI-YEMEN CRISIS

For the past 33 months, Saudi Arabia has been bombing Yemen with help from its Western allies, turning the country into a humanitarian tragedy. Yemen is now on the brink of "the world's largest famine", according to the United Nations. Already, 17 million people are dependent on external aid for food and medicine, while the country is fighting a massive cholera outbreak. The breakdown of government services, lack of drinking water and a crumbling health sector, besides the miseries of civil war and aerial bombardment, are fast turning Yemen into a failed state, and a breeding ground for extremist groups such as al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. The Saudis say they are fighting Houthi rebels on behalf of the "legitimate" government of Yemen led by Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi. But the facts are more complicated. When Yemen plunged into chaos after the resignation of President Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2012, Houthi rebels mobilised forces and captured the capital city Sana'a and western parts of the country. Saudi Arabia, which shares a long border with Yemen, was wary of the rising influence of the Shia Houthis, who it sees as Iran-sponsored militia. The Saudis formed a coalition of anti-Houthi Sunni groups in Yemen and provided them with money and weapons, while its warplanes started attacking Houthi positions in March 2015. The war has dragged on since, with Sana'a still under Houthi control. Saudi Arabia appears desperate to change the outcome of the war. This explains its decision last month to impose a blockade on the country in the midst of a severe food crisis. Though it eased the blockade later due to international pressure, the war still rages. It is high time the Saudis and the Houthis came to terms with reality. Houthis have ground-level support among Shias and perhaps assistance from Iran, but it is unclear whether they are capable of controlling the whole of Yemen and uniting its diverse populace. On the other side, Saudi Arabia has allies on the ground and superior air power, but it has still failed to defeat the Houthis. In recent weeks, the Saudis had reached out to Saleh, whose loyalists were fighting alongside the Houthis, in an apparent bid to break the rebel coalition. But a day after Saleh expressed readiness for talks with Riyadh, Houthis claimed to have killed him on Monday, escalating the civil war. To break this cycle, all warring parties, including the Houthis, the Saleh faction, fighters loyal to President Hadi and Saudi Arabia should move towards talks. Till now, the international community has largely looked away. It cannot continue to do so. Allies should put pressure on Riyadh to cease the bombing, and set the stage for talks between the factions.

The political ascent of Rahul Gandhi: Miles to go before...

Vidya Subrahmaniam

In its August 12-18, 1990 issue, the now defunct Sunday magazine ran an interview with Rajiv Gandhi, months before his assassination in 1991, with the introduction that while "face-to-face it is impossible not to like Rajiv Gandhi," in his public interactions he tended to be indiscreet and rash, which frequently landed him in trouble.

However, in the interview, the then Leader of the Opposition came through as a politician mellowed by defeat and possessing the humility to accept that, "Yes, I made mistakes." Rajiv Gandhi wondered why people were now more appreciative of him when he hadn't "changed a bit". "When I say or I do something now, suddenly I'm told by media and by other people, 'It's fantastic. Why didn't you do this before?'"

Behind the transformation Twenty-seven years later, it is his son, Rahul Gandhi, who might have been transformed from "a nice guy prone to gaffes" to someone suddenly winning appreciation. The best that was said of him was that he appeared to be sincere but somewhat dull. As against this, there were the endless Pappu jokes triggered by his seeming gift for saying absolutely the wrong things.

In 2007, he bragged that his family had broken Pakistan in two, which thankfully did not set off a diplomatic crisis. In 2013, to the bewilderment of all, including the Congress, he spoke of Dalits needing the escape velocity of Jupiter to succeed. Mr. Gandhi's January 2014 interview to Times Now's Arnab Goswami had Twitterati wisecracking that Mr. Goswami ought to have been sued for harassing a minor.

In recent months, Mr. Gandhi's public appearances have made people sit up and take notice — and for the entirely different reason that nearly everything about him has changed for the better. The transformation was first noticed on his tour of the United States, where on his campus interactions, he came across as sober, self-assured and able to convey ideas, if not with scintillating intellectual depth, then certainly in a commonsensical way. However, he has been a revelation on the Gujarat campaign trail; indeed if anyone has made a splash in this election, aside from the young caste leaders who have shored up the Congress, it is Rahul Gandhi himself. Gujaratis are talking to him and talking about him.

Although nowhere in the league of the phenomenal Narendra Modi, Mr. Gandhi has developed a distinct style of his own. On the stump, he looks relaxed and confident, slow-delivering his lines to make them uncomplicated and effective. His speeches are direct hits at the Prime Minister and his Gujarat model, and there are frequent digs at the now dying Tata Nano, which he says was part of Mr. Modi's agenda of "transferring wealth from the poor to the rich." To much giggling from the audience, he asks, "Any of you here seen a Nano on the road? You?



Bhaaisaab you?" His Gabbar Singh Tax for the Goods and Services Tax (GST) broke the Internet and the other runaway hit, vikas gando thayo che (development has gone crazy) is apparently also a surrogate from the Congress stable. If there is a light, fun quality to these coinages, what has earned Mr. Gandhi respect is the line he has drawn at abuse and uncivil language in the face of coarse, low-level personal attacks from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Mr. Modi.

And yet in a striking parallel with Rajiv Gandhi earlier, Rahul Gandhi's team insists that he is what he always was, believing in the same things — pro-poor, pro-farmer — he did earlier. And that people are warming to him and his ideas in a changed environment. Not really. The evolution of Pappu to First Congressperson is best seen via his earlier videos where he appears stiff and distracted, struggling to compose his thoughts, and beginning every sentence with "Bhaiya — in short, the stand-up comic's delight and quite the contrast to the easy camaraderie evident in his recent outings.

Dents in the image It is true, however, that this change would not have created the buzz it has, had it not coincided with the people's own willingness to look away from Mr. Modi, if ever so slightly, to a possible, tentative alternative. Up until now, Mr. Modi was god in Gujarat. When he became Prime Minister, the rest of India was awestruck by the power and authority he exuded, magnified by his victory with an absolute majority and the decimation of the Opposition. Today, while the fascination with Mr. Modi undeniably remains, the first murmurs can be heard, among traders, among

the unemployed and in middle class households. The constant adjustments to the demands of demonetisation, and now GST and Aadhaar, have devastated small businesses, the poor and the old, many of them living in a blighted world beyond the dips and spikes in the national GDP.

But as everyone agrees, pitted against the combination of Mr. Modi and Bharatiya Janata Party national president Amit Shah, and the humongous election cum public relations machinery they have created, Mr. Gandhi could be a toddler taking his first steps to indulgent applause. Though his elevation to Congress President is imminent, the challenges before him are immense. The Congress organisation is in tatters, its votes are shrinking, and the haze around the party's vision often makes it indistinguishable from the BJP. It is true that the Congress has always held a range of ideas within it. But the party as a whole was conceived as centrist with a strong liberal core.

The Left and the right co-existed in Jawaharlal Nehru's Congress but his absolute commitment to the idea of a progressive, enlightened nation ensured that the centre prevailed. The innumerable unethical compromises the Congress made thereafter are not Rahul Gandhi's doing. But having inherited them, he has to find a way to reassert the party's founding philosophy and, more difficult still, make it saleable to voters swayed by the BJP's enormously attractive Hindutva appeal. Recently, the student-wing of the Congress, the National Students Union of India (NSUI), fought and won the students' union election in Delhi University (DU) on the slogan, "Take back DU." The NSUI promised a progressive vision based on gender

equality and the freedoms to eat, wear and go out as the students pleased, without being shamed as immoral.

Road ahead The election the Congress fought in DU was tiny but the party went to the heart of what is wrong with India today. Maybe Mr. Gandhi can start with a "Take back India" campaign. But that requires courage and the conviction that the right way is the best way. That is not going to happen, judging by the Congress's embarrassingly uneducated response to the recent questions on Mr. Gandhi's religion. The BJP's multiple spokespersons amplified the noise that television spat out: "Hindu or Catholic?" Instead of asking why it's wrong to be a Catholic, the Congress produced photographs of Mr. Gandhi wearing the Janevu (sacred thread).

With all the anti-incumbency, such is the Modi legend that few in Gujarat will bet on the verdict. In any case, Mr. Gandhi's real fight will begin after Gujarat which is a two-party State. The rest of India is more complex with a bunch of regional leaders, all ambitious for themselves. If this is problematic, consider the twin tags that hound the Congress: dynasty and corruption. On dynasty, Mr. Modi is unbeatable. He is self-made and has ostensibly shed his family in the service of Bharat Mata. Whether Mr. Gandhi, or indeed even the entire Opposition, can summon the cleverness to turn the tables on corruption, only time will tell.

Vidya Subrahmaniam is Senior Fellow at The Hindu Centre for Politics and Public Policy. E-mail: vidya.subrahmaniam@thehinducentre.com

The one-election idea is a farce

Praveen Chakravarty

In his address on National Law Day 2017, Prime Minister Narendra Modi once again sounded the bugle for simultaneous elections to Parliament and all State Assemblies, under the banner of "one nation one election". Mr. Modi also cited four reasons: massive expenditure; diversion of security and civil staff from primary duties; impact on governance due to the model code of conduct, and disruption to normal public life. The case is weak and the reasons are a mere alibi. The cost factor The Election Commission incurs a total cost of roughly ₹8,000 crore to conduct all State and federal elections in a span of five years, or roughly ₹1,500 crore every year. Nearly 600 million Indians vote in India's elections, which means, it costs ₹27 per voter per year to keep India an electoral democracy. Is this a "massive" expense? To put this in context, all the States and the Centre combined incurred an expenditure of nearly ₹30 lakh crore in FY2014. Surely, 0.05% of India's total annual expenditure is not a large price to pay for the pride of being the world's largest and most vibrant electoral democracy. The notion that elections are prohibitively expensive is false and misleading. Code of conduct and polls The model code of conduct for elec-

tions was agreed to by political parties in 1979, and prohibits the ruling party from incurring capital expenditure for certain projects after elections are announced. If India is indeed embarking on a path of "cooperative federalism" as the Prime Minister also claims, then more such projects will be undertaken by each State and not by the Centre. So, why should elections in one State hinder governance in the rest of the States? And if all political parties still feel the need to reform the code, they are free to do so. The solution is to reform the code and not the electoral cycle. Governance paralysis due to State elections is a mere alibi. The real reason is that the two national parties are excessively dependent on their national leaders' campaigns in State elections, as seen in Gujarat. This is certainly a drain on the Prime Minister's time and a distraction from governance. Depending on their national leaders is the problem and the prerogative of the national parties. It is not the fault of the electoral system. In the elections in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, in 2016, and where the two national parties and their leaders had a minimal role, nothing stopped the Union government from continuing its governance for the rest of India. Thus it is wrong to conflate the interests of the national parties with those of the "flaws" of the electoral system.



Diversion of civil staff and disruption of public life were the two other

reasons cited, but these sound more like reasons against holding elections in general. Surely, a disruption to public life twice in five years is not a binding constraint in the larger interests of inter-accountability. The right of a voter to exercise her choice twice in a span of five years and hold governments accountable is much more important than just casting her vote once and having no option to express her opinion for the next five years. These two reasons are very weak when measured against the costs of limiting electoral opportunities for citizens. Voter behaviour My research on all simultaneous elections to State Assemblies and Parliament between 1999 and 2014 shows that simultaneous elections do have an impact on voter behaviour. These elections comprised 513 million voter choices. In 77% of these constituencies, voters chose the same political party for both State and Centre. When elections were held even six months apart, only 61% chose the same political party. When elections became disparate, there was no evidence of the voter choosing the same party. This analysis is not based on mere headline victory in a State but on vote shares and the winners in each constituency. There is clear empirical evidence that most Indian voters tend to choose the same party when elec-

tions are held simultaneously to both Centre and State, with the relationship diminishing as elections are held farther away. Political autonomy Further, simultaneous elections impinge on the political autonomy of States. Today, any elected State government can choose to dissolve its Assembly and call for fresh elections. If elections are to be held simultaneously, States will have to give up this power and wait for a national election schedule. There can be legitimate reasons for State governments to dissolve their Assemblies and call for fresh elections, as should be the case in Tamil Nadu. Under a simultaneous elections regime, the State will be beholden to the Union government for elections to its State, which goes against the very grain of political autonomy under our federal structure. There is still much that is wrong with our nation in its governance and elections. But disparate elections to States and Parliament are not one of them. There is much to improve in terms of efficiency of our governance. But "oneness" is not the desired path to efficiency in a diverse polity such as India. Praveen Chakravarty is Senior Fellow at the IDFC Institute and founding trustee of IndiaSpend

I won't remain silent on triple talaq: PM Modi



DHANDHUKA: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said he would not remain silent on the triple talaq issue due to any election compulsions.

Addressing a rally here, the Prime Minister said, "When the triple talaq matter was in the Supreme Court, the government had to put their affidavit. Newspapers commented that Modi will remain silent because of Uttar Pradesh polls. People told me not to speak on the matter else there will be losses in elections." He further added that he would not remain silent on triple talaq as the issue is for the rights of women. "I am clear that on triple talaq; I will not be silent. Everything is not about elections. This issue is for the rights of women. Elections come later humanity comes first," said Prime Minister Modi.

Triple Talaq, also known as talaq-e-biddah, (instant divorce) and talaq-e-mughallazah (irrevocable divorce), is a form of Islamic divorce which has been used by Muslims. It allows any Muslim man to legally divorce his wife by stating the word talaq (the Arabic word for 'divorce') three times in oral, written, or more recently electronic form.

On August 22, 2017, the Supreme Court deemed instant triple talaq (talaq-e-biddah) unconstitutional. Three of the five judges in the panel concurred that the practice of triple talaq is unconstitutional.

The remaining two declared the practice to be constitutional while simultaneously asking the government to ban the practice by enacting a law.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government constituted an inter-ministerial committee headed by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh and it prepared the draft bill 'Muslim Women Protection of Rights on Marriage Bill'. It makes instant triple talaq a cognisable and non-bailable offence.

Ravi Shankar Prasad questions Congress' stand on Ram Janmbhoomi case

NEW DELHI: Union Minister of Law and Justice Ravi Shankar Prasad on Wednesday questioned the Congress Party's stand on the controversial Ram Janmbhoomi matter. "I want to question the Congress Party and explain if it wants the Ram Janmbhoomi matter to be heard at the earliest or not," he asked. Prasad's statement comes after it was announced that senior advocate and Congress leader Kapil Sibal, who is representing the Sunni Waqf Board in the ongoing hearing of the long-standing dispute, wanted the matter to be heard only in July 2019, after the completion of the next Lok Sabha polls citing political ramifications.

Speaking on the same, Ravi Shankar Prasad said, "As a lawyer,

Kapil Sibal can argue any matter but he should not forget that he has been the law minister in the past." Prasad also called Kapil's statement irresponsible and unfair.

Meanwhile, the Congress Party had, on Tuesday, furthered the war of words with the BJP and said it was raking up non-issues just to garner votes.

"Congress' stand has always been clear, that the Ayodhya matter will be heard and decided by the Supreme Court.

The same has been said by the Law Minister many times. BJP chief Amit Shah is trying to garner votes in the name of Lord Rama. The BJP is playing the role of 'Manthara', raking up Kapil Sibal's stand on the hearing," Congress leader



Randeep Surjewala said, while addressing the media. The Supreme Court had fixed the next hearing for the long-standing matter for

February 8, 2018.

The Supreme Court commenced the hearings in the Ayodhya dispute on Tuesday morning.

The stakeholders in the case had moved the apex court after the Allahabad HC directed the Sunni Waqf Board, the Nirmohi Akhara and the Lord Ram Lalla to settle for a three-way division of the disputed site. The Babri Masjid was built by Mughal emperor Babur in Ayodhya in 1528.

The Hindus, however, claim that a Ram temple that originally stood there was demolished to construct the mosque. Citing this, Hindu zealots demolished the mosque on December 6, 1992, triggering communal riots in various parts of the country.

Pradyuman murder: SC reserves order on plea challenging Pinto family's interim bail

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Wednesday reserved its order on the plea filed by Varun Thakur seeking cancellation of the interim bail granted to Pinto family, the owners of Ryan International School, in connection with the murder of his son Pradyuman in Gurugram. The apex court will pronounce the order on December 11.

Thakur had filed a petition in the apex court after the Punjab and Haryana High Court granted an anticipatory bail to the Pinto family in a November 21 hearing. Justice Suresnder Gupta, who was presiding over the case in the High Court, barred the family from leaving the country without permission and directed them to extend their help in the investigation.

On September 8, Pradyuman was



found in a pool of blood with his throat slit inside the school, sparking a public outcry following which the Gurugram Police arrested bus conductor Ashok, accusing him of killing the seven-year-old student. However, the Central Bureau

of Investigation (CBI), which is now probing the matter, gave him a clean chit and held a class 11 student of the school responsible for the murder.

Pradyuman's family have alleged the Pinto family to be complicit in the crime.

Tribal family sells child for Rs 200 in Tripura, third incident this year

TELIAMURA: Another case of selling of a child has come to light in Communist-ruled Tripura after a tribal man confessed to the crime.

Karna Debbarma from Sarat Chandra ADC village of south Maharanipur, under Teliamura sub-division, confessed to selling of his eight-month old daughter, for just Rs 200 to fetch some food for his poor family.

"Due to poverty, I was compelled to sell my child in order to feed my family," he said.

Debbarma added: "In spite of demanding on several occasions, I only have an APL (above poverty line ration) card. I even did not get any house or toilet (which are generally provided free under the government's flagship programme). I have demanded for a house and a BPL (below poverty line ration card) to the Left Front government. I am poor and somehow run my family by selling straw and bamboo."

This year, it is the third incident reported of a tribal poor family selling their children off in order to run their families in Tripura.

Debbarma added, "The politicians have been assuring me that when the appropriate time comes, they will fulfill my demands. But, they never gave us anything." There are six members in his family at present and their lives are dependent on selling of forest products. They are deprived of the various schemes launched by the Centre and the state government for the tribal people. Local villagers alleged that in spite of the poor condition of Karna's family, he got nothing from the government.

Samprti Debbarma, a local villager said, "I have seen Karna Debbarma for the last many years at Maharanipur. His condition is poor and he does not have a house to live. He had appealed to the government several times for a BPL card or a house, but he did not get anything. Ultimately, he sold one of his children for just Rs 200." He runs his family by collecting straw, bamboo and firewood from the forest and sells them in Ghilatali or Mochcherra market. For so many years, the Left Front government is there in power, but did nothing for the poor. He had seven members in his family. But after selling one of their children, they are now six," Samprti added.

Similar incidents of poor tribal families selling their children off to run their family were reported in Tripura this year.

Earlier, a tribal woman at Rangia Tilla of Haldia ADC village, under Teliamura police station, bordering Khowai district, was compelled to sell her 11-day old son for Rs 5000. She did this to bear the treatment cost of her ailing husband. The incident took place around 50 km east of the state capital Agartala, in the third week of April.

Congress linking 'Ayodhya Ram Temple' with 2019 elections: PM Modi



DHANDHUKA: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said the Congress party now wanted to link Ram Temple in Ayodhya with 2019 elections.

Addressing a rally here, Prime Minister Modi trained guns at the Congress over its leader Kapil Sibal's arguments in the Supreme Court (SC) in the Ramjanambhoomi-Babri Masjid case. "Yesterday in the SC, a Congress MP Kapil Sibal was arguing (which is his right) for the Babri

Masjid. He is entitled to do that but is it right for him to say: postpone hearing till 2019? Why does he have to link a Ram Mandir with elections? Is such thinking proper," the Prime Minister asked.

Coincidentally, today is the 25th anniversary of the Babri Masjid demolition in Ayodhya.

He further added, "Now Congress is linking Ram Mandir with elections. They are least bothered about the nation."

While representing the Sunni Waqf Board in the Ramjanambhoomi-Babri Masjid case on Tuesday, Sibal urged the court to take up the matter after 2019 general elections as "the case was being used to polarise the electorate with an eye on the polls".

The court didn't accept his appeal and set the final hearing for February 8, 2018.

Since then the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been cornering the Congress by asking to clarify what was the real meaning of Sibal's statement. Addressing a press conference in poll-bound Gujarat, BJP president Amit Shah demanded Congress should clear its stand on this.

He also took a jibe at the Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi's Temple visits in Gujarat.

"Rahul ji is visiting temples in Gujarat but on the other hand Kapil Sibal is being used to delay Ram janmbhoomi case. Rahul ji should tell us what his view on this is," Shah said. The Congress, however, distanced itself from Sibal's argument in the court. "Congress has nothing to do with it as it's Kapil Sibal's personal matter who he represents in court," Congress spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said.

Sambit Patra's poetic jibe at Rahul Gandhi



NEW DELHI: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday took a poetic jibe at Congress Vice President Rahul Gandhi, saying his faith changed according to the place he visited.

While attending a press conference in Gujarat, Sambit Patra, BJP national spokesperson, said, "Badalte huye mausam ka badalta huya parwana hoon main. Gujarat mein janeudhari Hindu hoon toh UP-Bihar mein maulana hoon main. (With the changing weather I change myself. In Gujarat I am a Hindu and in UP-Bihar I am a Muslim)".

Like other BJP leaders, Sambit Patra criticised Congress leader and senior lawyer Kapil Sibal's statement in Supreme Court that the matter should be heard only in July 2019, after the completion of the next Lok Sabha polls, citing political ramifications.

The apex court yesterday fixed the next hearing for the long-standing Ayodhya dispute matter for February 8, 2018.

Sibal is representing the Sunni Waqf Board in the ongoing hearing of the long-standing matter.

SC asks to conduct examination of witnesses in Tarun Tejpal rape case



NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Bombay High Court to conduct a trial and examination of the witnesses in the rape case against former Tehelka editor-in-chief Tarun Tejpal.

The apex court has also asked the state high court to decide on Tarun Tejpal's plea seeking discharge.

Earlier on September 28, a Goa court charged Tejpal with rape, sexual harassment and outraging the modesty of a woman. Public Prosecutor, Francisco Tavora informed

from the Bombay High Court at Goa. The High Court refused to stay the process of framing of charges against Tejpal at a lower court in Mapusa in North Goa.

This is the first case in recent times in which the probe has relied on "position of trust" as a crucial aspect in an allegation of rape. Tejpal is indicted of sexually assaulting a junior woman colleague inside a lift at Hotel Grand Hyatt during an event organised by the Tehelka magazine in Goa in November.

that charges against Tejpal have been framed under section 354-A (sexual harassment), 354-B (assault or use of criminal force on a woman with intent to disrobe), 341 and 342 (punishment for wrongful restraint) and 376 (punishment for rape) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Tavora also informed "Tejpal has pleaded not guilty."

Earlier, 54-year-old

Tejpal couldn't get any relief

from the Bombay High Court at Goa. The High Court refused to stay the process of framing of charges against Tejpal at a lower court in Mapusa in North Goa.

This is the first case in recent times in which the probe has relied on "position of trust" as a crucial aspect in an allegation of rape. Tejpal is indicted of sexually assaulting a junior woman colleague inside a lift at Hotel Grand Hyatt during an event organised by the Tehelka magazine in Goa in November.

Mother-daughter duo found dead in Greater Noida

NOIDA: The bodies of a mother-daughter duo were recovered from their flat in Greater Noida's Gaur City. The incident came to light last night, when a few neighbors contacted the police after the victims' relatives called them asking about the latter's whereabouts.

"On reaching here, we found that the door of the house was locked from outside and when we broke in, a lady and her daughter's bodies were found inside," Superintendent of Police (SSP) Luv Kumar told the media here.

The SSP added that the woman and daughter were hit by a sharp weapon, while a cricket bat with blood on it has been found.

The police said that there were no sign of robbery.

"There are no signs of robbery, and it seems like the accused did not come with the intention of robbery. The reason behind the murder is being investigated," he added.

BJP dubs Rahul Gandhi a 'Babar Bhakt'

NEW DELHI: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader on Wednesday launched a scathing attack on Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi by calling him a 'Babar Bhakt' and a 'Kin of Khilji'.

BJP spokesperson GVL Narasimha Rao took to his Twitter handle and castigated Rahul for teaming up with Owaisis and Jilanis to oppose construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya.

"Rahul Gandhi has teamed up with Owaisis, Jilanis to oppose Ram temple in Ayodhya. Rahul Gandhi is certainly a 'Babar Bhakt' & a 'Kin of Khilji'. Babar destroyed Ram temple & Khilji plundered Somnath. Nehru dynasty sided with both Islamic invaders. Travesty & Perversity of dynasty!," Roa tweeted.

Yesterday, BJP chief Amit Shah targeted Congress and Rahul for adopting double standard in the matter of Ram Janmbhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute.

Shah said while on one hand Rahul is visiting temple in Gujarat, Congress leader Kapil Sibal wanted to delay the Ram Janmbhoomi case. Supreme Court on Tuesday fixed the next hearing for the long-standing Ayodhya dispute



matter for February 8, 2018.

During the hearing Sibal, who is representing the Sunni Waqf Board in the ongoing hearing of the long-standing Ayodhya dispute, wanted the matter to be heard only in July 2019, after the completion of the next Lok Sabha polls citing political ramifications.

Earlier on November 30, Rahul while addressing some people claimed that his family is devotee of Lord Shiva, but does not believe in using it for political gain.

Researchers create new dental material to kill microbes and resist plaque

Researchers have developed a new dental material tethered with an antimicrobial compound that can not only kill bacteria but also resist plaque growth.

Dentists rely on composite materials to perform restorative procedures, such as filling cavities. However, these materials, like tooth enamel, can be vulnerable to the growth of plaque, the sticky biofilm that leads to tooth decay.

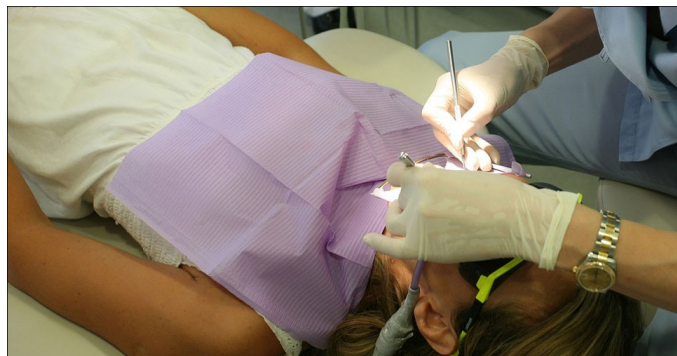
Now, researchers from the University of Pennsylvania in the US have evaluated a dental material containing an anti-

microbial compound that can not only kill bacteria but also resist biofilm growth.

Unlike some drug-infused materials, the material is effective with minimal toxicity to the surrounding tissue, as it contains a low dose of the antimicrobial agent that kills only the bacteria that come in contact with it. "Dental biomaterials such as these need to achieve two goals: first, they should kill pathogenic microbes effectively, and second, they need to withstand severe mechanical stress, as happens when we bite

and chew," said Geelsu Hwang, assistant professor in Penn's School of Dental Medicine.

"Many products need large amounts of anti-microbial agents to maximise killing efficacy, which can weaken the mechanical properties and be toxic to tissues, but we showed that this material has outstanding mechanical properties and long-lasting antibiofilm activities without cytotoxicity," Hwang said. The material is comprised of a resin embedded with the antibacterial agent imidazolium. Unlike some traditional



biomaterials, which slowly release a drug, this material is non-leachable, thereby only killing microbes that touch it.

"This can reduce the likelihood of antimicrobial resistance," Hwang said. Researchers put the material through its

paces, testing its ability to kill microbes, to prevent growth of biofilms and to withstand mechanical stress. The results, published in the journal ACS Applied Materials and Interfaces, showed it to be effective in killing bacterial cells on contact, severely disrupting the ability of biofilms to grow on its surface.

Only negligible amounts of biofilm matrix, the glue that holds clusters of bacteria together, were able to accumulate on the experimental material, in contrast to a control compos-

ite material, which showed a steady accumulation of sticky biofilm matrix over time. The team assessed how much shear force was required to remove the biofilm on the experimental material. While the smallest force removed almost all the biofilm from the experimental material, even a force four times as strong was incapable of removing the biofilm from the control composite material. "The force equivalent to taking a drink of water could easily remove the biofilm from this material," Hwang said.

Google - Our source for every information could actually lead to dementia

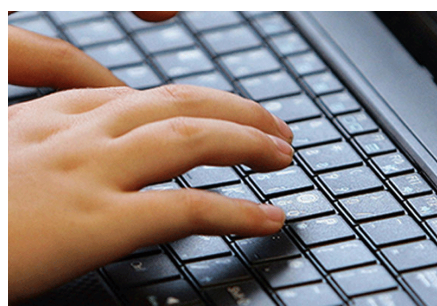
Frequent use of Google to search for information may lead to dementia, says a study. Researchers say that rather than using our brain, most of us rely on Google, which is not right.

Researchers have described the practice as an 'experiment' they are conducting on themselves.

"It's important to promote good brain health and to do that is to use it, but these days we seem to outsource our brain to the internet," said Frank Gunn-Moore, from the University of St Andrews in the UK.

"If we want to know something, we look it up online rather than trying to recall the information from our memory," Gunn-Moore was quoted as saying to The Sunday Post.

"It's an experiment the human race is running and we will have to wait and see if this outsourcing affects dementia prevalence," he said.



Gunn-Moore will be speaking at the annual Alzheimer Scotland Christmas event in Edinburgh on December 14.

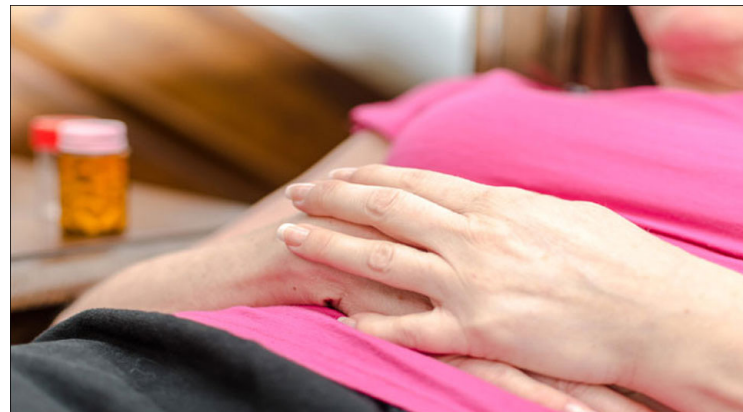
"There are several factors that could result in Alzheimer's? environment, stress on the brain, genetics," he said.

In 2015, the number of people with dementia reached almost 45 million, two times more than in 1990, according to a rough estimate.

Nanoparticles new hope for uterus cancer treatment

Tumour-targeting nanoparticles loaded with a drug that makes cancer cells more vulnerable to chemotherapy's toxicity can be a new approach in the treatment of endometrial cancer -- that begins in the uterus, researchers suggest.

Combining traditional chemotherapy with the relatively new cancer drug that attacks chemo-resistant tumour cells, the researchers packed both into tiny nanoparticles to create an extremely selective and lethal cancer treatment. The super-lethal nanoparticles reduced tumour growth and extended survival rates, a researcher said. "For the first time, we were able to combine two different tumour-targeting strategies and use them to defeat deadly Type II endometrial cancer. "We believe this treatment could be used to fight other cancers, as well," said lead research-



er Kareem Ebeid, graduate student at the University of Iowa. In mice with Type II endometrial cancer, the team combined two anti-cancer drugs: paclitaxel, a type of chemotherapy used to treat endometrial cancer, and nintedanib, or BIBF 1120, a relatively new drug used to restrict tumour

blood vessel growth. However, in the study published in the journal Nature Nanotechnology, nintedanib was used to target tumour cells with a specific mutation, known as Loss of Function p53 that interrupts the normal life cycle of tumour cells and makes them more resistant to the lethal effects of

chemotherapy.

Paclitaxel chemotherapy killed cells when they were in the process of cell division, but tumour cells with the Loss of Function p53 mutation often slowed down this process, making cancer more resistant to the chemotherapy treatment.

Nintedanib, on the other hand, attacked tumour cells with the mutation and compelled them to divide, a point at which they were easily killed by chemotherapy.

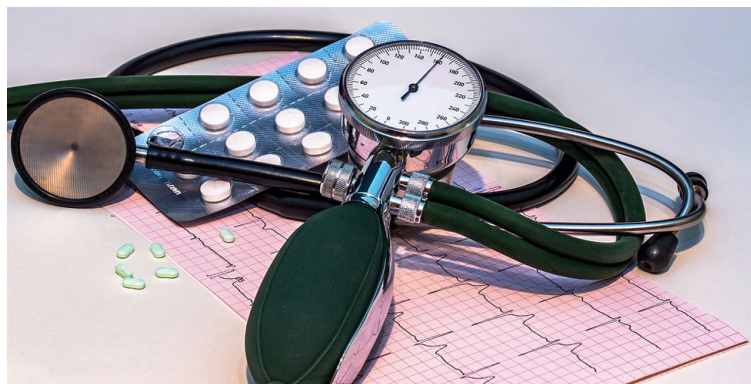
"Basically, we are taking advantage of the tumour cells' Achilles heel--the Loss of Function mutation--and then sweeping in and killing them with chemotherapy," Ebeid said.

The novel approach could also be used to treat other cancers as well, including types of ovarian and lung cancers that also carry the Loss of Function p53 mutation, he noted.

Common BP lowering drugs linked to skin cancer risk: Study

Long term use of drugs that help lower high blood pressure may increase the risk of developing skin cancer, a study with nearly 80,000 participants has claimed. Hydrochlorothiazide -- one of the most commonly used antihypertensive drugs worldwide -- is a thiazide diuretic (water pill) that helps prevent your body from absorbing too much salt, which can cause fluid retention. The findings revealed that using medicines that contain hydrochlorothiazide increases the risk of developing squamous cell carcinoma -- skin cancer that develops in the cells of the outer layer of the skin -- up to seven times.

"We knew that hydrochlorothiazide made the skin more vulnerable to damage from the sun's UV rays, but what is new and also surprising



is that long term use of this blood pressure medicine leads to such a significant increase in the risk of skin cancer," said Anton Pottegard, associate professor at the University of Southern Denmark.

The researchers had previously

demonstrated that hydrochlorothiazide can increase the risk of lip cancer.

In the study, published in the Journal of the American Association of Dermatology, the team observed zero risk of skin cancer with other commonly used hypertension medi-

cines. However, one should not interrupt the treatment without consulting the doctor, Pottegard suggested, because "hydrochlorothiazide is an effective and otherwise safe treatment for most patients".

Besides treating hypertension, hydrochlorothiazide is frequently used for the treatment of congestive heart failure, symptomatic edema, diabetes insipidus and renal tubular acidosis.

The pill is also used for the prevention of kidney stones in those who have high levels of calcium in their urine. "Nevertheless, our results should lead to a reconsideration of the use of hydrochlorothiazide. Hopefully, with this study, we can contribute towards ensuring safer treatment of high blood pressure in the future," Pottegard noted.

New zika vaccine promises to protect against infections

Scientists in the US have developed an experimental Zika vaccine which has been found safe in preventing infections.

Two experimental trials were conducted and the vaccine was found to be promising in preventing infection by the deadly virus.

The findings showed that it induced an immune response in healthy adults.

The investigational vaccine, developed by scientists at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), part of the US National Institutes of Health, includes a small, circular piece of DNA called a plasmid.

Scientists inserted genes into the plasmid that encode two proteins found on the surface of the Zika virus.

The researchers found that when the vaccine was injected into muscle, the body produced proteins that assemble into particles that mimic the Zika virus and trigger the body to mount an immune response.

For clinical testing, the researchers developed two different plasmids - VRC5288 and VRC5283. They were tested in two separate trials.

The scientists analysed blood samples obtained from participants four weeks after their final vaccinations.

They found that 60 to 89 per cent of participants generated a neutralising antibody response to VRC5288, whereas 77 to 100 per cent of participants generated a neutralising antibody response to VRC5283.

Here's why women are more fit than men

A study has found that women are athletic than men, contradicting the assumption that men are more fit and agile than women. Females are more fit naturally as they can process oxygen more quickly than males, when they start to exercise, says the study. According to the University of Waterloo researchers, women can process oxygen more quickly than men when they start to exercise. Quick oxygen uptake places less strain on the body's cells and is considered an important measure of aerobic fitness. Lead author Thomas Beltrame said the findings are contrary to the popular assumption that men's bodies are more naturally athletic. The team compared oxygen uptake and muscle oxygen extraction between 18 young men and women of similar age and weight during treadmill exercise. The results suggested that the women consistently outperformed men with around 30 percent faster oxygen handling throughout the body. Another researcher Richard Hughson stated that women's muscles extract oxygen from the blood faster, which, scientifically speaking, indicates a superior aerobic system. By processing oxygen faster, women are less likely to accumulate molecules linked with muscle fatigue, effort perception and poor athletic performance. "While we don't know why women have faster oxygen uptake, this study shakes up conventional wisdom," said Beltrame.



New imaging needle may transform heart surgery, says study

Scientists have developed a new optical ultrasound needle that can be used to image heart tissue in real-time during keyhole procedures.

The technology has been successfully used for minimally invasive heart surgery in pigs, giving an unprecedented, high-resolution view of soft tissues up to 2.5 centimetres in front of the instrument, inside the body. Doctors currently rely on external ultrasound probes combined with pre-operative imaging scans to visualise soft tissue and organs during keyhole procedures as the miniature surgical instruments used do not support internal ultrasound imaging. Researchers at University

College London (UCL) and Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) in the UK designed and built the optical ultrasound technology to fit into existing single-use medical devices, such as a needle. "The optical ultrasound needle is perfect for procedures where there is a small tissue target that is hard to see during keyhole surgery using current methods and missing it could have disastrous consequences," said Malcolm Finlay from QMUL. "We now have real-time imaging that allows us to differentiate between tissues at a remarkable depth, helping to guide the highest risk moments of these procedures," said Finlay, who co-led the study published in the journal Light: Science &



Applications. "This will reduce the chances of complications occurring during routine but skilled procedures such as ablation procedures in the heart," said Finlay.

"The technology has been designed to be completely compatible with MRI and other current methods, so it could also be used during brain or foetal surgery, or with guiding epidural needles," he said. The team developed the all-optical ultrasound imaging technology for use in a clinical setting over four years.

The technology uses a miniature optical fibre encased within a customised clinical needle to deliver a brief pulse of light which generates ultrasonic pulses. Reflections of these ul-

trasonic pulses from tissue are detected by a sensor on a second optical fibre, giving real-time ultrasound imaging to guide surgery.

One of the key innovations was the development of a black flexible material that included a mesh of carbon nanotubes enclosed within clinical grade silicone precisely applied to an optical fibre, researchers said.

The carbon nanotubes absorb pulsed laser light, and this absorption leads to an ultrasound wave via the photoacoustic effect, they said. A second innovation was the development of highly sensitive optical fibre sensors based on polymer optical microresonators for detecting the ultrasound waves, the researchers said.

3D-printed ear implants can improve treatment for hearing loss

Scientists have 3D-printed accurate, custom-designed prosthetic replacements for damaged parts of the middle ear, paving the way for improved surgical treatments for hearing impairment.

The technique has the potential to improve a surgical procedure that often fails because of incorrectly sized prosthetic implants, researchers said.

Conductive hearing loss can be treated through surgical reconstruction using prostheses made from stainless steel struts and ceramic cups.

The surgery, which generally involves tailoring a prosthesis for each patient in the operating room, is plagued by high failure rates.

"The ossicles are very small structures, and one reason the surgery has a high failure rate is thought to be due to incorrect sizing of the prostheses," said Jeffrey D Hirsch, assistant professor at the University of Maryland in the US. "If you could custom-design a prosthesis with a more exact fit, then the procedure should have a higher rate of success," said Hirsch. Researchers studied 3D printing as a way to create customised prostheses for patients with conductive hearing loss. The technology has been used successfully to solve a number of other medical prosthesis problems, including in the areas of joint replacement and facial reconstruction surgery. The researchers removed the middle linking bone in the ossicular chain from three human cadavers and imaged the structures with CT. The prostheses were made from a resin that hardens when exposed to ultraviolet laser light. Each of the prostheses had unique measurements. Four surgeons then performed insertion of each prosthesis into each middle ear, blinded to the bone from and for which each was designed. The researchers then asked the surgeons to match each prosthesis to its correct source.

Banking system liquidity moving towards neutrality: RBI Dy Gov

MUMBAI: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Deputy Governor Viral Acharya on Wednesday highlighted that as far as the present condition is concerned, the banking system liquidity is moving towards neutrality.

Addressing a press conference here post the rollout of RBI's Bi-Monthly Policy drafted by the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), Acharya observed that liquidity conditions continue to normalise, adding that open market operations will be considered if the need to inject liquidity arises.

"Liquidity conditions continued to normalise gradually during the year. Overhang of liquidity surplus in banking system forced withdraw-



al of specific bank notes in Nov 2016, and touched peak of close to Rs. 7.96 trillion at the year's beginning. This, however, has come down now. We will consider open market operations if liquidity needs to be injected," he said. Acharya further stated that from January 6 to November 24 this year, currency expanded by 7.6 trillion in

the economy. He also said excessive surplus liquidity was due to the overhang of demonetisation from November last year, coupled with foreign exchange operations. However, the RBI has adopted an approach involving a mix of open market operations and issue of securities. Variable reverse repo rates will be used to absorb short term surplus. In the coming year, Acharya said liquidity conditions would be marginally in surplus, adding that system liquidity may reach neutrality in mid-2018. "The RBI will manage evolving liquidity conditions for handling short-term fluctuation and open market operations for durable basis," said Acharya.

The MPC in a 5:1 majority de-

ecided to keep the key policy repo rate unchanged at six percent, and reverse repo rate at 5.75 percent. The cash reserve ratio too has been left unchanged at four percent.

The projection of real GVA (gross value added) growth for 2017-18 of the October resolution at 6.7 percent has been retained.

"On the whole, inflation is estimated in the range 4.3-4.7 per cent in Q3 and Q4 of this year, including the HRA effect of up to 35 basis points, with risks evenly balanced," the apex bank said in its policy statement.

The MPC estimates growth in the third and fourth quarter of this fiscal year to be seven and 7.8 percent respectively.

RBI caps merchant discount rates to boost debit card transactions

MUMBAI: In a bid to boost transactions using debit cards, and digitisation on the whole, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday has capped merchant discount rate (MDR) and will create a framework for asset-light acceptance infrastructure.

The decision was announced by the central bank's six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) while discussing the bi-monthly monetary policy here.

The MPC stated that a differentiated MDR for asset-light acceptance infrastructure and a cap on the amount of MDR per transaction will be prescribed. This, the RBI believes, will help facilitate increased usage of debit cards along with sustainability of the business for the entities involved.

The decision comes after the MPC noted a significant increase in the use of POS (point of sale). To this regard, the RBI revealed that it was "about time" that a further push was given, and hence proposed impos-

ing a limit of the MDR.

According to the RBI, the proposed scheme will help widen the network of establishments that will enable use of debit cards. Further, it noted that marginalising MDR would increase debit card usage among small merchants. Meanwhile, the MPC in a 5:1 majority decided to keep the key policy repo rate unchanged at 6 percent, and reverse repo rate at 5.75 percent. The cash reserve ratio too has been left unchanged at 4 percent.

The projection of real GVA (gross value added) growth for 2017-18 of the October resolution at 6.7 percent has been retained.

"On the whole, inflation is estimated in the range 4.3-4.7 per cent in Q3 and Q4 of this year, including the HRA effect of up to 35 basis points, with risks evenly balanced," the apex bank said in its policy statement.

The MPC estimates growth in the third and fourth quarter of this fiscal year to be 7 and 7.8 percent respectively.

Grofers launches postpaid grocery shopping

NEW DELHI: Grofers, the low price online supermarket has joined hands with Simpl and launched 'Postpaid Grocery Shopping' in its industry-first initiative to help customers to avoid deferring their purchase to their initial salary days of the month. With the addition of Simpl in its payment method, now customers can continue to purchase grocery and other items at any time during the month and pay the entire amount with just one bill at the month-end.

"It's a unique service that champions the best value benefits of organized (savings) and traditional (credit) retail which maximizes the customer benefit," Albinder Dhindsa, co-founder and CEO, Grofers said.

In the initial phase, this service is only extended to the loyal customer base of Grofers. In the second phase, Grofers will extend the Simpl payment option of Postpaid Grocery to all its customers. "Grofers' users can now keep buying groceries with ease and settle one total bill. In many ways, getting one bill for all the grocery purchases is the online equivalent of a khata from the neighbourhood store," Nitya Sharma, Co-founder and CEO of Simpl said.

Earlier this year, Grofers had also partnered with Sodexo to ease payment on the delivery process.

FICCI RECOMMENDS TAX RATE CUTS FOR INDIVIDUALS, BUSINESSES TO SPUR DEMAND

NEW DELHI: Flagging off pre-budget expectations in lieu of the Union Budget 2018-19, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) on Wednesday stressed on the need for tax rate cuts across the board for individuals and businesses to spur domestic investment and demand, and retain India's global competitiveness.

FICCI President Pankaj Patel, in a letter to Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, noted that although a roadmap for bringing corporate tax down to 25 percent was chalked out in the earlier budget, nothing was implemented across the board.

It further shed light on the impact of the Dividend Distribution and Buyback Tax, which, along with the basic corporate tax, would push India's overall tax rate for companies

above 40 percent, which is quite high. The FICCI, in this light, has recommended that the tax rates be brought down across the board.

On the Goods and Services Tax (GST) front, the FICCI noted that going forward; convergence of tax slabs into three or four rates is needed, which will include all excluded items under its ambit.

It also stated that the tax should not be applicable on intra-entity transfer of services, as this would lead to taxing artificial transactions rather than real economic ones.

Patel further highlighted the need for clarity on anti-profiteering provisions under the GST, especially its relevancy on product or entity level, applicability on product stock prior to the GST, examination at the central or state govern-

mental level, and so on. Clarity, the FICCI says, is necessary to avoid penal consequences on non-compliant taxpayers. The industry body in its letter also highlighted the significance of enactment of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016, adding that tax considerations are crucial for efficiency of the same. "The enactment of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC) is significant. Tax considerations are important for successful implementation of insolvency schemes and tax provisions should not be a deterrent in achieving the policy objectives of IBC. In this regard, there is a need to exempt levy of Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) on write back of notional income pursuant to approved plan of IBC," it noted.

ClearTax, Unicommerce tie-up to help online retailers get GST-ready

NEW DELHI: With the implementation of GST, India is moving towards a digitised economy. Spearheading this transformation is the e-filing website ClearTax, also the country's biggest online tax platform, which today announced its partnership with Unicommerce eSolutions Pvt. Ltd., a SnapDeal company and a known name in the B2B space.

Unicommerce eSolutions provides end-to-end supply chain solutions (warehouse management, omnichannel etc.) for both online and offline merchants. Founded in 2012, the company has grown rapidly to become the "backbone of e-commerce industry" with the platform being used to process 100 mn+ orders annually, amounting to 15-20 percent of overall Indian e-commerce transactions, with presence in 220+ cities in India. Since GST has changed tax rules for the e-commerce sector, it has now become necessary for all online marketplaces to adopt GST-compliant processes at the earliest. Unicommerce has been making efforts to help its vendors become GST-ready, and partnering with ClearTax is the latest move in this regard. Under the aegis of this alliance, ClearTax will help Unicommerce's retailers transition smoothly to the new tax regime with the help of its flagship product ClearTax GST Software.

This customized software will help Unicommerce sellers prepare GST-compliant invoices, file returns, and adhere to TCS regulations in an easy manner. GST is more than just a massive tax reform; experts have called it a 'behaviour change' of an unforeseen magnitude. Being GST-compliant requires a sea change in the way businesses file taxes, bill invoices, and connect with suppliers and vendors. E-tailers will also see a marked difference in tax filing post-GST.

Unicommerce has already been actively working with its sellers and other stakeholders to make them aware of the new policies and has rolled out several initiatives across channels for communication and training. The ClearTax GST Software will be a major boost for Unicommerce vendors.

"We are very excited to partner with Unicommerce. Our software has been customised to offer GST solutions to quickly onboard businesses to GST and ease compliance for them. Given our technological expertise we are committed to make GST compliance easy and smooth," said founder and CEO ClearTax, Archit Gupta. "We have always believed in simplifying the lives of our customers, and this latest partnership with ClearTax will help our customers (e-commerce sellers) adapt to the new GST regime seamlessly, without causing any disruption to their ongoing business," said CEO Unicommerce, Kapil Makhija. In the VAT regime, online sellers would file returns once per quarter depending on their turnover, but under GST they need to file GSTR-3B every month. Also, GSTR-1 is also required to be filed on a monthly or quarterly basis depending on the turnover.

CBEC, FICCI collaborate for smooth implementation of TIR System in India

NEW DELHI: Sandeep Kumar, Commissioner (Customs & EP), Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) and Dr. Sanjaya Baru, Secretary General, FICCI interacted with the participants of a press meet organised by FICCI in association with CBEC and IRU to discuss the benefits and smooth implementation of TIR System in India.

Making his welcome address, Dr. Sanjaya Baru, Secretary General, FICCI talked about the benefits of TIR system and said, "TIR plays an important role in trade facilitation and has been a successful model for reducing trade transaction costs and facilitating higher growth of intra-regional and inter-regional trade. He further stated that based on FICCI's vast experience on ATA Carnet management, CBEC has chosen FICCI as National Guaranteeing Association for the operation of TIR System in India. It's a proud moment for FICCI and will be committed to work towards smooth and successful implementation of the system in India.

He also mentioned that given the significance of TIR in boosting regional connectivity, and India's accession to the convention, it is recommended for other BBIN countries to opt for TIR to improve the effective transit procedures among the four countries and by connecting the BBIN region to other world markets. FICCI will extend its maximum support to CBEC to help other BBIN countries to



accede to the convention and reap the benefits. "In his special address, Sandeep Kumar said, "The Government is looking at very active participation by the business sector to be able to use this particular convention that India has acceded to. Further he stated that the accession process will be completed on December 16 2017 and planning to ship out first containers from Nhava Sheva to Russia via Iran under TIR by early January 2018."

Nirankar Saxena, Assistant Secretary General, FICCI said, "TIR is one of the successful examples of a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) model in international trade facilitation and will be a win-win collaboration for customs, FICCI and the business community." Umberto de Pretto, Secretary General, IRU, said, "The critical role of road transport in transforming economies and the

necessary impetus that international trade facilitation conventions, like TIR, can offer in this endeavour, is in clear focus. We look forward to working with CBEC and FICCI on establishing seamless TIR operations for India - to the benefit of trade across the region."

TIR is the only global customs transit system for moving goods across international borders. Supporting trade and development for more than 60 years, it is governed by the United Nations TIR Convention, overseen by the United Nations Economic Commission (UNECE), and managed by IRU, Geneva. TIR stands for "Transports Internationaux Routiers".

One of the most successful international transport conventions, TIR makes border crossings faster, more secure and more efficient, reducing transport costs, and boosting trade and development.

India acceded to the United Nations TIR Convention on June 15 - the Customs Convention on International Transport of Goods under cover of TIR Carnets. FICCI has been appointed by CBEC as National Guaranteeing Association for the operation of TIR System in India similar to ATA Carnet.

TIR will help Indian traders to have access to fast, easy, reliable and hassle free international system for movement of goods by road or multi-modal means across the territories of other contracting parties. It will be a boon to India's trade and aims to integrate the economy with global and regional production networks through better connectivity. It can be an instrument for movement of goods along the International "North-South" Transport (INSTC) Corridor, which India is developing along with Russia.

Chinese lenders plan to pursue Reliance Communications in insolvency court

NEW DELHI: Two major Chinese lenders plan to support a move by China Development Bank to put Indian wireless carrier Reliance Communications (RCOM) into insolvency court as they seek to recover about \$2 billion in debt, said three people with knowledge of the matter.

Last month, CDB began insolvency proceedings against RCOM, which has been trying for months to restructure its debt via a debt-for-equity swap. Now, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), the country's biggest-listed lender by assets, and Export-Import Bank of China, plan to back CDB, the sources said. The combined effort would be a rare tilt against an Indian conglomerate by a group of Chinese lenders, keen to boost their presence in India. And it would also further jeopardize Anil Ambani-controlled RCOM's efforts to restructure out of court. RCOM last week said the majority of its creditors will oppose CDB's

insolvency bid. With total debt of 457.33 billion rupees as of end March, RCOM is the most-leveraged of all listed telecom carriers in India. The company has not reported its debt level since then. The CDB petition seeking insolvency proceeding against RCOM is not on behalf of all three Chinese banks, but the banks are "on the same page", said one of the people with knowledge of the development.

If needed, the other two banks will file their own petitions at India's National Company Law Tribunal, which hears bankruptcy cases in the country, the person said.

Two other people with knowledge of the Chinese banks' plans also confirmed that ICBC and Export-Import Bank would seek to join the insolvency bid unless the parties reach an out-of-court settlement.

The people spoke to Reuters on condition they not be named due to the sensitivity of the matter. RCOM did not immediately respond

to a request for comment.

ICBC declined to comment, while the other two Chinese banks and the mobile carrier's top Indian lender, State Bank of India, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

There has not been any consensus yet on whether Indian banks would oppose the CDB petition as the Joint Lenders' Forum, that comprises all banks that have lent to RCOM, is yet to meet following the filing of the insolvency plea, according to two sources. The sources also said that there is no concrete mechanism for other lenders to block insolvency proceedings initiated against a creditor by one of their peers.

An out-of-court settlement between RCOM and the Chinese lenders would be "very difficult" from the Chinese banks' perspective as they were frustrated that RCOM had not kept promises it made previously on debt repayment, one of the people said.

Industry pushes lower corporate tax in pre-Budget meet with FM Jaitley

NEW DELHI: Corporate India on Wednesday sought lower tax and more incentives for investments while exporters called for quicker GST refunds at a meeting with finance minister Arun Jaitley in the run-up to the last full-year Budget of the NDA government before 2019 general elections.

The industry bodies suggested lowering the corporate tax to 18-25%, from up to 30% at present.

The exporters, who are grappling with blockage of working capital, pressed for exemption from tax on export income or lower levies on forex earnings and faster clearance of GST refunds.

"The finance minister has promised 25% corporate tax rate long back and we expect that the finance minister will fulfil his promise in this Budget," FICCI president Pankaj Patel told PTI.

The industry body also sought support for innovation, employment generation through investment in the MSME and startup sector and specific incentives for new investments, highlighting the

need to establish an export zone with manufacturing facilities but without any taxes or regulations. "We have asked to reduce the corporate taxes.

Across the world, people are reducing corporate taxes and India is among the highest. We do need to create more demand and capacities for private investment and if you see today, GST has increased the tax rates," CII President Shobana Kamineni said.

CII suggested that the road map for corporate tax rate for India should include reducing it to 18% (all inclusive) at the earliest and withdrawal of surcharges and cesses.

"The implementation (of GST) and refund delays are a cause of concern, so we have suggested that if they can give us the IGST refund also, along with the drawback. In the US, there is a differential tax rate for export earnings, so we have sought a lower rate of tax on export earnings than the normal corporate rates," EEPIC India Working Committee member PK Shah said. Ac-

ording to Shah, refunds of exporters to the tune of at least Rs 60,000-70,000 crore are stuck post GST rollout in July. "We have asked the finance minister to take the corporate tax to 25% comparing with developed and industrialised nations.

This would help in investment and which, in turn, would increase employment opportunities. Dividend distribution tax, which is around 20%, should also be lesser," said Assocham President Sandeep Jajodia.

"We would urge the government to provide fiscal support to units that provide additional employment in the export sector. Such a scheme will also help the workers move from informal employment to formal employment, which is a priority of the government.

"Incentives may be provided based on twin criteria of growth in exports and growth in workers so that while export is increased, the employment intensive units also get a boost," exporters' body FIEO said.



Virat Kohli gets 'classy' praise from former Sri Lanka skipper Kumar Sangakkara

MUMBAI: Virat Kohli, who completed the year 2017 on a new high and also sealed a series win over Sri Lanka, was praised by Sri Lankan legend Kumar Sangakkara on Twitter. Kohli achieved a rare distinction of starting a series with a duck but still ending up as its highest run-getter. He notched up scores of 0, 104*, 213, 243 and 50 in the three-match series which India clinched 1-0.

The Indian captain thus scored more than 600 runs in the series, but fell a little short of Sangakkara's overall tally of 2,868 runs across formats in a calendar year by a whisker. Kohli will not be taking part in the limited-overs series — consisting three ODIs and as many T20Is against Sri Lanka — and thus ends the year 2017 with 2,818 runs.

As of December 6, Kohli was the third highest run-scorer in Test cricket with 1,059 runs at 75.64 with the help of five centuries and a fifty. In ODIs, Kohli is by far the best batsman in the format with 1,460 runs in 26 matches, at 76.84 with six centuries and seven fifties. In 10 T20Is, the Indian captain made 299 runs with two fifties.

On Wednesday, after a Sri Lankan cricket statistician pointed out that Kohli has fallen short of Sangakkara's stunning record, the legendary cricketer replied in a manner that would give immense confidence to Kohli. Virat Kohli will now be taking a break - and will reportedly marry girlfriend Anushka Sharma during his time off - before the Indian cricket team's tour of South Africa, which begins late December with a tour match.

The first Test on the South Africa tour will begin January 5, at Cape Town.

Virat, Anushka Sharma set to marry in Italy in December, says report but actor's rep denies

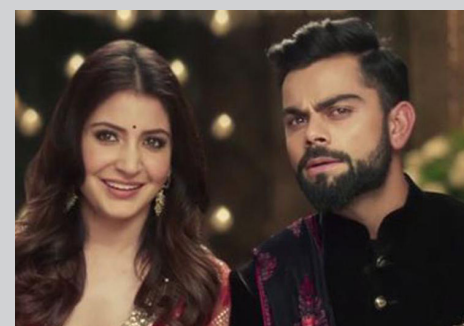
NEW DELHI: Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma are set to marry this month, as per a report on Wednesday. The long-time couple are reportedly planning a wedding bash in Italy this month.

India Today, quoting sources, reported that the Indian cricket team skipper and the Bollywood actress will head to Italy for their marriage, which will take place in between December 9-11.

While a representative of Anushka Sharma denied the news while speaking to Hindustan Times, rumours of a marriage have been further fuelled by Virat Kohli taking a break from international cricket, having been offered a rest for the limited-over series against Sri Lanka starting December 10. Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma have been dating each other since 2013 after meeting during the shoot of a television commercial.

Anushka has been seen attending India and Royal Challengers Bangalore games in recent years. She was often seen travelling to New Zealand and Australia during the 2015 World Cup.

Virat has himself been spotted in the past in Anushka's shoots, most notably for Bombay Velvet in Sri Lanka and PK in Udaipur. He united in early 2016, after Kohli hit back at trolls for targeting Anushka over his



batting form. The Indian skipper spoke highly of his girlfriend during a recent interview in web series Breakfast with Champions, saying it was Anushka who motivated him during his difficult periods.

"Anushka has taught me a lot over the last four years including how to be poised and how to utilise my position. She motivated me during my difficult phase when I wasn't in the best form. And later, I ended up scoring runs. So it was a special thing for both of us," he had said.

The two were recently seen in a TV commercial for a second time, this time for a bridal clothing brand.

While Virat and Anushka have often been spotted together in public, it wasn't until Valentine's Day earlier this year, that the Indian skipper publicly acknowledged the relationship.

Chandimal axed for ODI series



NEW DELHI: Sri Lanka on Tuesday left out Test skipper Dinesh Chandimal from the one-day squad to face India on the day he completed a crucial century to help his side save face in the third Test.

All-rounder Asela Gunaratne and opening batsman Danushka Gunathilaka return to the side that has lost 21 One-day Internationals this year and won just four.

Chandimal, who was last man out for 164 in Sri Lanka's first innings in New Delhi on Tuesday, is the major victim of the latest changes made to rejuvenate the national fortunes.

Sri Lanka Cricket last week named Thisara Perera as one-day captain in place of Upul Tharanga.

Under Tharanga, Sri Lanka suffered three consecutive ODI whitewashes this year against South Africa, India and Pakistan.

Gunaratne returns to the side for the first time since being injured in July against India in Galle.

He will strengthen the batting order alongside the former skipper Angelo Mathews who returns having missed the last ODI series against Pakistan through injury.

Sri Lanka and India play one day games between December 10 and 17 in Dharamsala, Mohali and Visakhapatnam.

Squad: Thisara Perera (captain), Upul Tharanga, Danushka Gunathilaka, Niroshan Dickwella, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Lahiru Thirimanne, Angelo Mathews, Asela Gunaratne, Chaturanga de Silva, Sachith Pathirana, Akila Dananjaya, Jeffrey Vandersay, Dushmantha Chameera, Suranga Lakmal, Nuwan Pradeep.

Ashes 2017-18: Mitchell Marsh gets Australian cricket team call-up for Perth Test

ADELAIDE: Mitchell Marsh was called up to join his brother Shaun in the 13-man Australia squad for next week's third Ashes test in Perth on Wednesday with seamer Chadd Sayers making way.

Marsh, who injured his shoulder playing the last of his 21 tests in India in March and needed reconstructive surgery, is no stranger to the WACA as captain of Western Australia.

The 26-year-old would be expected to offer a fourth pace option to back up the strike trio of Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins, who secured Australia a 120-run victory to give them a 2-0 lead in the series on Wednesday.



day. To get into the side, however, he will probably need to supplant Peter Handscomb or brother Shaun, who won the Man of the Match award for his unbeaten 126 in the first innings in Adelaide.

Handscomb, who bats at number five, has scored 14, 36 and 12 in his three innings in the series and looked jittery at the crease in his second innings in Adelaide.

Squad - David Warner, Cameron Bancroft, Steve Smith (captain), Jackson Bird, Pat Cummins, Peter Handscomb, Josh Hazlewood, Usman Khawaja, Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Marsh, Shaun Marsh, Tim Paine, Mitchell Starc.

Ben Stokes suffers in New Zealand domestic game, England's Ashes woes continue

LONDON: England's journey Down Under is turning into a nightmare. Not only did they lose the Adelaide by 120 runs to go down 2-0, but across the Tasman in New Zealand, Ben Stokes, who is currently suspended has endured a torrid time in Canterbury. Stokes, who has been suspended from international cricket following his brawl at a Bristol bar, was dismissed for a 41-ball 34 and remained wicketless in his spell of 7-0-39-0. The Ford Trophy encounter between Canterbury and Auckland is turning out to be a forgetful affair for Stokes, who was punished by Munro.

The left-hander hammered three boundaries in an over off Stokes in an unbeaten 174 off 118 balls, and according to the New Zealand Herald, Stokes' 'body language hardly improved' during the game. Stokes

and Munro — two extremely vital players for their respective national sides — were then seen involved in a bitter spat and had to be separated by the on-field umpire.

Reports have suggested that Eng-



land may draft in Stokes ahead of the third Ashes 2017-18 Test at Perth, but the England and Wales Cricket Board awaits police decision, which will be followed by their own inquiry.

Pollution cloud hovers over Delhi Dynamos vs Jamshedpur FC ISL match

NEW DELHI: The severe air pollution in New Delhi has affected life in the capital and is also having a drastic impact on sporting events in the city.

The Delhi Half Marathon (ADHM) went ahead despite warnings of poor air quality. The third Test between India and Sri Lanka has also been affected, with some Sri Lanka cricket team members suffering from nausea and vomiting due to exposure to the smog. The Indian Super League (ISL) match between Delhi Dynamos FC and Jamshedpur FC at the Jawaharlal Nehru stadium on Wednesday, in all likelihood, will also be played at a time when the levels of particulate matter in the air is beyond the critical mark. Delhi Dynamos coach Miguel Angel Portugal expressed concern about air pollution during the pre-match press conference on Tuesday. "Pollution is a very big problem not just for us but society in general," he replied, when quizzed on the severe pollution the players would be exposed to. "My players have to train with masks so that they face no health issues. I removed my own mask before entering this room."

However, the coach doesn't think the venue for the home matches of Dynamos would be changed.

"I think we shall continue to play in New Delhi," he said. Jamshedpur FC manager Steve Coppell took a dimmer view on the matter, stating that it is a problem that needs to be addressed soon — even if it means shifting games getting shifted to another venue. "It's déjà vu for me, really. It was around Diwali last year that I came to Delhi with the Kerala Blasters and the particulate level was over 500," said Coppell. "I said at the time after the game that I don't think matches should be scheduled at this point of the year."