

TIME AND US

DAILY

SRINAGAR, KASHMIR

WEDNESDAY

● DECEMBER, 13, 2017
● 24 RABI-AL-AWAL 1439 AH
● ISSUE: 292
● VOLUME: 03
● PAGES: 08

WEATHER TEMPERATURE		
STATION	MAX TEMPERATURE	MIN TEMPERATURE
	ACT	ACT
SRINAGAR	5.0	-0.2
JAMMU	16.1	12.5
LEH	5.4	-1.4
KARGIL	1.2	-3.0

SUNSET TUESDAY: 05:23 PM
SUNRISE WEDNESDAY: 07:29 AM

LOCAL FORECAST OF SRINAGAR
Generally Cloudy sky. Maximum & Minimum temperatures will be around 07°C & 2°C respectively.

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

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ZULFKAR CHAIRS STATE CONSUMER PROTECTION COUNCIL MEET

PM MODI CONSUMES MUSHROOMS WORTH 1.20 CR EVERY MONTH, CLAIMS CONG ALLY

ADANI SAYS WILL 'ADJUST TO CONSTRAINTS' AFTER AUSTRALIA COAL LOAN VETO

SOURAV GANGULY HITS OUT AT INDIAN CRICKET TEAM SELECTION AFTER DHARAMSALA DEBACLE

RBI HALTS CASH INFLOW TO VALLEY

In state's fiscal history, banks apprehend worst ever cash crunch

Srinagar, Dec 12: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has restricted the cash flow to Jammu and Kashmir, top sources privy to the development divulged, apprehending that it could be the worst ever fiscal disaster witnessed by the state in its modern history.

Official sources in different banks operational in the state told Kashmir News Service (KNS) that the RBI has halted the flow of higher currency notes including Rs 500 notes in Jammu and Kashmir for past one month, sending common masses and business fraternity into tizzy.

"The amount from the RBI has also been reduced up to almost 80 per cent for last one month. We are getting mere 20 percent amount against the required sum. The flow of higher currency notes has been halted by the RBI while it sends currency notes of mere Rs 100, Rs 50, Rs 200," official sources wishing anonymity said.

The Jammu and Kashmir Finance Minister, Haseeb Darbu told KNS over phone from New Delhi that such re-



ports are baseless and carry no weight. "It is impossible. No such thing is happening that the RBI can halt the cash flow to the state. Paucity of the higher currency notes could be a country-wide issue but it can't be specific to the Jammu and Kashmir state," Drabu said.

When asked about the mounting complaints related to the dearth of

cash in banks and in ATMs, the finance minister said he will take up the issue with the concerned officials.

However, top sources within the banks divulge details contrary to that of the incumbent finance minister.

They reveal that the banks have been informed 'unofficially' that the higher currency notes have been restricted in view of the surge in the

militancy related activities in the state. "We were not informed officially but the unofficially we have been told that the currency notes have been restricted in the backdrop of the violence infesting the state at present," sources said, adding that they have never witnessed the cash crunch of such a dreadful nature even when the militancy was at its peak in 90's.

The officials claimed that they are facing a tough time here while it is also being apprehended that the situation may further deteriorate as the stoppage of notes from the RBI has resulted in the frequent high and dry of ATMs at various places.

Divulging the details further about the ATMs present in Valley, the official sources said that over 2400 ATMs including that of Jammu and Kashmir Bank are currently available in the state. "The people across the state were withdrawing Rs 90 crores in a day while the withdrawal limit from past one month has been reduced

▶ See **RBI**...Pg 02

Kashmir witnesses fresh snowfall

Srinagar-Jammu highway and Mughal road closed for traffic



Srinagar, Dec 12: The fresh snowfall disrupted life in Kashmir Valley while traffic movement on majority of the link roads was temporarily suspended. The Srinagar-Jammu highway and Mughal road were also closed for vehicular movement on Tuesday.

MeT has also predicted more rains and

snow fall in Jammu and Kashmir. The present weather conditions are like to continue till Friday.

An official said that due to heavy snowfall the Srinagar-Jammu highway was closed for traffic. He said that heavy snowfall was

▶ See **Snowfall**...Pg 02

Omar Abdullah questions PM Modi over security guidelines

SRINAGAR, DEC 12: Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to fly in a single-engine seaplane and asked why security guidelines were relaxed for the Prime Minister.

Abdullah took to micro-blogging site Twitter to question the Prime Minister over the mockery of security guidelines. Abdullah said that the

▶ See **Omar**...Pg 02

Human rights situation improves: UN chief

United Nation: United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said the overall human rights situation has improved over the decades but problems remain.

"Over seven decades, humanity has achieved considerable progress. People around the world have gained progressively greater freedoms and equality," Guterres on Monday told a gathering at UN Headquarters in New York to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Xinhua reported.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was ad-



opted by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948, a date later became Human Rights Day globally.

"They have been empowered to oppose discrimination,

fight for protection, and gained greater access to justice, health, education and development opportunities," he said.

▶ See **UN**...Pg 02

NC to go alone in assembly elections: Dr Farooq

'Will bring legislation on regional autonomy in first LA session'

Udhampur, Dec 12: Jammu and Kashmir National Conference President Dr Farooq Abdullah on Monday announced to contest the next assembly election alone, saying his party was confident of a massive mandate on its own, given support of the people at ground zero.

"We won't have alliance with any party", National Conference President said while addressing workers here this afternoon, adding that a



stable, strong and people friendly government is the

answer to problems facing

▶ See **Farooq**...Pg 02

Snow avalanche: Five soldiers go missing from army camps

Bandipora, Dec 12: Five soldiers went missing after avalanches hit two Army posts on the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir, police said on Tuesday.

Two soldiers went missing in Kupwara district's Nowgam sector on Monday evening and three others disappeared on Tuesday morning in Bandipora district's Gurez sector.

Confirming the incident, an official said that at least

▶ See **Five**...Pg 02

SRO for regularisation of daily wagers to come out in a week: Drabu

'Departments to be directed to implement order soon after its issuance'

Srinagar, Dec 12: The finance minister on Tuesday said that the government within five to seven working days is issuing the SRO related to the regularisation of about 60 thousand daily wagers and casual labourers working in various departments in Jammu and Kashmir.

"The cabinet has already approved the road map for the regularisation of the daily wagers in Jammu and Kashmir. It is now the SRO that is being issued by the government within the time span of five to seven working days," finance minister Haseeb Darbu told KNS.

He added that once the order is issued, it will be sent to all the departments across the



state wherein daily wagers are working, for its implementation.

▶ See **Drabu**...Pg 02

Aspiring entrepreneurs at receiving end: JKDFC GENERAL MANAGER DOESN'T LIKE TO TAKE DICTATION FROM STATE AUTHORITIES

Srinagar, Dec 12: Jammu Kashmir Development Financial Corporation, a Government of India Enterprise has not benefited a single entity in the State, contrary the officials at the helm of affairs use dilly daily tactics and harass the aspiring entrepreneurs on the one or the other pretext.

JKDFC claims its motto is "Your partners in Industrial Development" but the ground reality is entirely different. Instead of encouraging entrepreneurs, it acts as road block for them. The recent example is of a woman entrepreneur from Kashmir capital Srinagar who wanted to establish a printing press but due to alleged callous

▶ See **JKDFC**...Pg 02

Kashmir electricity department bill arrears touch Rs 600 cr

Major defaulters include, R&B, Agriculture, Health, PHE, IFCD, HUDD
Srinagar, Dec 12: The Power development departments have been identified among the defaulters for nonpayment of power tariff over a long period of time.

The official said that the departments include, Health, Roads and Buildings, Public Health engineering, Irrigation and Flood control, Housing and Urban development department, Education department.

Sources said that it is surprising that at the time of allocation of funds to the departments, a good percentage is earmarked for expenditures on account of

▶ See **Electricity**...Pg 02



Fire incident at DCJ CUK

EXAMINATIONS TO BE HELD ON TIME: VC

Srinagar, Dec 12: Fire broke out at the Central University of Kashmir (CUK) Nowgam Campus-I on Tuesday morning heavily damaging electronic equipment and other items in the Department of Convergent Journalism (DCJ).

The fire presumably emanated from the media studio and spread to the other adjoining rooms of the Department. There was a major damage to the costly equipment and the infrastructure of the media studio, which was of state-of-the-art in itself. Despite fire safety measures, the studio suffered extensive damages. The exact cause of fire is not known and is being ascertained by the police and

▶ See **VC**...Pg 02

Reaction of Kashmiri against Zaira Waseem was totally unfortunate: Iqbal Khan

▶ Malik Sameed

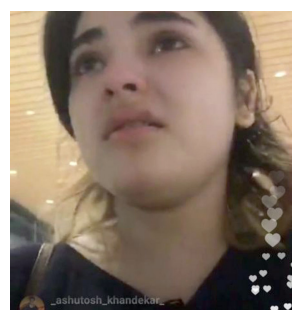
Srinagar, Dec 13: As Dargal actress Zaira Wasim took to Instagram to recount her ordeal wherein she alleged molestation inside a Mumbai-bound Air Vistara flight by a middle aged male passenger in a business class has erupted a new controversy.

The video went viral thanks to national news channels and newspapers who described the video of Zaira as shameful. Bollywood stars left no

stone unturned to condemn the alleged act and want immediate action against the culprit.

But the question raised by one of the Delhi based Guinness Record Holder Madhu Agrawal that "It is unbelievable that a matured girl traveling with her mother in business-class of the airplane could not find any opportunity to shout in the two-hours long journey to complain about alleged molestation."

Iqbal Khan, a famous Bol-



lywood actor while taking to Kashmir news Bureau state - "Firstly I would like to say that I don't know what is right and wrong but the reaction

of some Kashmiri against Zaira Waseem was really unfortunate and unjustified, as how they were commenting and abusing this the alleged victim on social media.

Headed "She is from your state Kashmir, please adopt her and treat her as own."

Dargal actress posted two videos. In the first video, Zaira said, "So, I was in a flight travelling from Delhi to Mumbai today and right behind me one middle-aged man

▶ See **Khan**...Pg 02

THOUSAND MW TRANSMISSION LINE SET TO QUELL KASHMIR'S POWER PAUCITY THIS MONTH

JK Govt. requires more time to receive additional electricity, says infrastructure yet not ready

Srinagar, Dec 12: A Mumbai-based electric transmission development company, Sterlite Power, is completing the 1,000 MWs transmission line, spread over 400 kilometres from Jammu's Samba to Kashmir's Sopore, by the end of this month. The project will bring un-interrupted electricity supplies to the power starved state.

However, the government sources reveal that it would take state a little bit more time to augment its infrastructure to cope with the additional power.

According to the reports received by KNS, the

▶ See **Thousand**...Pg 02

Zulfkar chairs State Consumer Protection Council meet

Reviews consumer protection measures in healthcare, education sector

JAMMU, DECEMBER 12: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs and Tribal Affairs Chowdhary Zulfkar Ali today chaired a meeting of State Consumer Protection Council to discuss the measures that need to be initiated for Protection of consumer interests with regard to education and health sector.

During the meeting, threadbare discussion was held on various consumer concerns related to health, education and other sectors including selling of books by private schools, consumer grievances redressal mechanism in case of online shopping, services provided to consumers by both government and private hospitals, classification of nursing homes and educational institutions, variation in charges of nursing homes, rates fixed and facilities provided by these nursing homes, variation in charges of clinical labs, variation in test results of various clinical labs, non-issuance of bills by some of nursing homes, sanitation issues in the hospitals and nursing homes, variation in rates of medicines of same nature at different medical stores, rationalization of teaching, paramedical staff and doctors, prosecution of cases filed by government on behalf of public business establishments, uniformity in the parking rates at outside the hospitals, business establishments, educational institutions and court premises.

The Minister, while calling for



further strengthening of the Consumer Forums in the state, said that government is committed to secure the rights of the consumer besides providing them with a strong, accessible grievances redressal mechanism.

Taking note of issues pertaining to the health sector, the Minister directed health department not to confine themselves towards services rendered by the government sector, but also focus on health care services being provided by the private sector to ensure that consumers are not exploited.

He asked the health department to review feasibility of moving the ICU in GMC Jammu to the ground floor for the convenience of the people.

With regard to education, the Minister directed education department to conduct a detailed survey of private schools and categorize their fee structure as per the infrastructure being provided to the students. He

asked the members of the council to build confidence among consumers to send their wards to government institutions. He directed Education dept to constitute an enforcement committee in coordination with LMD and FSC&CA dept to monitor the functioning of private institutions.

Further, the Minister emphasized the need for checking adulteration of various items like milk, drugs etc. He directed the officers to constitute District Consumer Forum for the district to safeguard the interests of the Consumers.

Members present in the meeting also gave their valuable suggestions for improving functioning of health-care and education sectors in the state.

The Minister appreciated the members for airing their views regarding streamlining of working of the department and ensuring protection of the rights of the consumers.

Among others Principal Secretary

Health and Medical Education Department Dr Pawan Kotwal, Commissioner Secretary School Education department Farooq Ahmad Shah, Commissioner Secretary Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department M D Khan, Senior Additional Advocate General Seema Khajooria Shekhar, Members of State Consumer Protection Council, Directors of FCS&CA Department Jammu and Kashmir Division, Director Family welfare, Director School Education, Controller Legal Metrology, President Chamber of Trade Federation, President Akhar Bhartiya Ghrak Panchayat at President Consumer Forum Protection Organization, President Retailers Association, President Jamia Masjid Traders Association, President KCC&I and other senior officers of concerned departments and representatives of various other organizations and establishments attended the meeting.

DDC Shopian reviews implementation of CM's commitments

SHOPIAN, DECEMBER 12: District Development Commissioner Shopian, Mohammed Aijaz Asad today convened a meeting to review the progress made so far on Chief Minister's commitments which she made during her September 17 visit to the district.

On the occasion, the DDC emphasized upon the officers to work diligently for the early completion of all the commitments and directions of the Chief Minister. He sought a detailed issue-wise latest action taken report of various decisions being implemented in the district.

Threadbare discussions were held regarding work on the Bijbehara-Shopian road, setting up of PHE sub-division at Wachi, developing playfields in the district, fencing and uninterrupted power supply to the people of the district including local ziyarats, augmentation of facilities at Nadigam, Zawoor, Kerawa, Kapran and Gatipora health

centers, improvement of Keller, Dunaro Shopian Keller, Panzgam, Reshipora roads, besides development of tourism facilities in the town.

The DDC impressed upon all the officers to ensure judicious use of funds and ensure quality asset creation in the district. He stressed on time bound completion of all the development works and fulfilment of CM's directions on priority. Calling for complete synergy between various departments involved in infrastructure building and implementation of various welfare schemes, the DDC stressed on strict adherence to timelines for completion of all on-going projects so that the people at large are benefited.

The R&B, I&FC, PHE, Mechanical and Civil and Rural development authorities were directed to complete all the developmental works at an earliest, besides submission of DPR estimates within next one week.

District admin Anantnag launches demolition drive along National Highway

ANANTNAG, DECEMBER 12: The district administration Anantnag today launched a demolition drive against the illegal structures along the national highway.

The demolition drive was headed by the Additional Deputy Commissioner Anantnag, Shabir Hussain Bhat,

who was accompanied by the Tehsildars, personnel from police and officials from Revenue and other Departments.

During the drive carried out from Al Stop Wanpoh towards Qazigund and around 10 structures falling in the alignment of the na-

tional highway were demolished.

The ADC gave a deadline of a week's time to all the encroachers to remove the encroachments on their own. He said action, as warranted under rules, shall be taken against the defaulters after the expiry of the deadline.

Ramesh Arora chairs DRSC-IV meeting

Reviews overall functioning of Higher Education Deptt

JAMMU, DECEMBER 12: A meeting of the Department Related Standing Committee (DRSC-IV) of Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Council was held today under the Chairmanship of MLC, Ramesh Arora to review the overall functioning of Higher Education Department.

Legislators, G N Monga, Vibod Gupta, Balbir Singh attended the meeting and gave their valuable suggestions to make the functioning of the Higher Education Department vibrant and student oriented.

The Committee discussed various issues regarding the Higher Education Department including literacy rate of female students, availability of hostels for women etc.

Principal Secretary, Higher Education Department, Asgar Hassan Samoon briefed the meeting about status of



several initiatives launched for improvement of education system in the state. He also informed that several hostels for women are in the process of being constructed to encourage them to continue their studies.

The Committee appreciated the department for quick action regarding construction of Boundary wall at Rajouri College and reduction of

charges of Bus Services provided to the students.

Further it recommended that all colleges must provide students with free internet service besides inviting former students to hold interactions in the institutions with present students.

Principals of all higher education institutions from Jammu province were asked to submit their concerns to

the house committee so that their issues can be taken up for redressal.

Among other, Director Colleges, Prof. Zahoor Ahmed, all the Principals of Degree Colleges, in Jammu region, besides Special Secretary Legislative Council, Abdul Majid Wani, senior officers and officials of the Council Secretariat were present in the meeting.

Efforts afoot to augment basic services for people: Dy CM

Meets deputations from across JK

JAMMU, DECEMBER 12: Deputy Chief Minister, Dr Nirmal Singh today said that efforts to are afoot to ensure that the people of the state are provided with quality basic facilities of living and necessary directions have already been passed to the executing agencies to ensure timely completion of various flagship initiatives being taken in different sectors.

The Deputy Chief Minister was interacting with several deputations who had come to meet him and projected their respective grievances and demands. The deputations had come from Kathua, Mendhar, Kargil, Ramban, Anantnag, Budgam, Poonch, Paddar and other areas of the State. Besides Jammu and Kashmir



Federation of Tour Operators, JK Gaddi Sippy Welfare Association also met the Deputy Chief Minister and projected their demands.

Dr Singh while assuring early redress of the grievances projected by the deputations also gave on spot di-

rections to the officers of the concerned departments to ensure that these are resolved within shortest possible time. He said the officers should work in a coordinated manner to ensure that people do not suffer and the benefit of the welfare schemes reaches the

targeted populace. It is pertinent to mention that Deputy Chief Minister had been conducting public Durbar on every Tuesday in which hundreds of Deputations and people from every district have come for redressal of their grievances.

PUC examines Audit Paras of JKHPMC

Asks Corporation to improve its functioning

JAMMU, DECEMBER 12: The Committee on Public Undertakings of Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly today directed the higher authorities of Horticulture department to take all necessary steps to boost horticulture sector in the state.

The committee said this during a threadbare discussion on CAG's Audit report pertaining to Jammu and Kashmir Horticultural Produce Marketing and Processing Corporation Limited. The Committee which met here today under the Chairmanship of MLA, Sat Paul Sharma to examine audit Paras pertaining to the corporation for the years 2004-05 regarding operational performance, diversion of funds, working of Apple juice concentrate plant at Doabagah, inventory management and utilization of refrigerated vans.

Legislators, Asgar Ali Karbalaie, Mohammad Khalil Bandh, Rajeev Sharma and Vikram Randhawa also attended the meeting and gave remedial measures to early sort out the paras besides to improve the functioning of the Corporation.

During the discussions, the Committee asked the higher authorities of the corporation that they should go in depth and get a detail for each and every procurement and also told them that they should also come up with the reasons for why 36 units of the Corporation are non-functional and asked the management the necessary steps must be taken to bring the Corporation a profitable organization.

The Committee also discussed past directions and recommendations of its 42nd and 46th reports and what action has taken by the Corporation for the revival and development of this sector in the state. The Committee also discussed other issues pertaining to the Corporation including revival policy of the Corporation and to promote of apricot, mango, walnut etc, besides providing of cold storage facilities to the growers in the state. Secretary, Horticulture Manzoor Ahmed Lone briefed the Committee about the actions taken by the corporation on observations made by the CAG's besides overall functioning of corporation.

ICOMOS's 19th General Assembly, Scientific Symposium inaugurated at New Delhi

JK Govt acts as Platinum Sponsor of event

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12: The 19th General Assembly and scientific symposium, themed "Heritage & Democracy", of International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) was today formally inaugurated in the auditorium of Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium at New Delhi with an inaugural address by President ICOMOS India, Dr Rohi-Jigyesu.

The first ever ICOMOS General Assembly and Scientific Symposium in India, being organized from 11th to 15th of December 2017, is aimed at to provide great opportunity to promote international co-operation and strengthen understanding thereby creating a robust ecosystem in the field of heritage conservation. The programme is the perfect place to network with world over heritage conservation professionals including architects, historians, archaeologist and experts for integrating heritage and sustainable urban development by engaging diverse communities for heritage management.

Pertinently, the Jammu and Kashmir Government, Department of Culture, is sponsoring the event as a Platinum sponsor besides being supported by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and Ministry of Culture, Government of India, Government of Bihar and Odisha and key Tourism players. The Directorate of Archives Archaeology and Museums is coordinating other



departments of the state like Tourism, Handlooms and Handicrafts for making the best use of the platform. Besides, the Department of Archives Archaeology and Museums has put some of its valuable publications on the display and distribution stalls relevant to the subject like Monuments and Sites, which are receiving high appreciation by the delegates of the nation and abroad.

Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Vijay Goyal, was Chief Guest at the event.

The other dignitaries, who expressed their brainstorming ideas on preservation of Monuments and Heritage Sites on the inaugural day, were Gustavo Arazo President ICOMOS, Dr. Mechtild-Rosler Director UNESCO world heritage center Paris, Mr. Shigeru Aoyagi Director and UNESCO representative to INDIA, BHUTAN, MALDIVES AND SRI LANKA, Mr. Stefano De Caro Director General ICCROM.

Vijaya Goyal elaborated on the significance of preservation of tangible and intangible heritage of the national and world over and also assured full assistance for the purpose on behalf of the Government.

During the event, renowned heritage professionals and enthusiasts like archaeologists, architects, urban planners, engineers, curators, building conservation professionals, art historians from diverse cultural backgrounds shares and exchanged their brainstorming views and ideas on relevant topics such as Integrating Heritage and Sustainable Urban Development by Engaging Diverse Communities, Role of Cultural Heritage in Building Peace and Reconciliation, Protecting and Interpreting Cultural Heritage in the Age of Digital Empowerment; Culture- Nature Journey, exploring the Complexities of Human Relationships with Natural .

Div Com reviews disaster management preparedness

JAMMU, DECEMBER 12: Divisional Commissioner, Dr Mandeep K Bhandari reviewed the status of disaster management and preparedness plan being made by the respective district administrations of the division through video conferencing, here today.

Detailed discussion was held on issues like procurement of rescue equipments, community based disaster management, inventory of resources, critical infrastructure, emergency operations centre besides financial aspects and other vital issues.

While discussing various rescue measures needed to be taken during disasters, Dr Bhandari stressed upon the need for close coordination among different departments. He asked the concerned DCs to identify land for establishment of dedicated Emergency Operation Centres to minimize damages during disasters.

He also called for chalking out effective strategies for revamping district disaster management plan including sensitization of people appropriately of the preventive measures to be taken to deal with the disaster situations, holding mock drills in educational institutions, organizing capacity building and skill development programmes at district level and involve district Red Cross Society for the purpose.

He emphasized for imparting hands-on-training for individual rescue operations to volunteers so that they can give their best during disasters.

Dr. Bhandari asked the DCs to gainfully utilize funds provided under State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) and send UCs to the concerned quarters at the earliest. He also asked the DCs to compile list of specific requirements and send the same to his office for further course of action.

IGP Jammu Dr. S D Singh Jamwal, DC Jammu Kumar Rajeev Ranjan, Commissioner JMC, Ramesh Kumar, CO SDRF 2nd Bn, Rashmi Wazir, Chief Engineer, PHE, Ashok Gandotra, Chief Engineer Mechanical Engineering

DAILY Editorial Time and Us SRINAGAR J&K

CRUNCH TIME AT WTO

As leaders at the World Trade Organisation's 11th biennial Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires seek to define the future contours of multilateral global trade, the challenges the U.S. has mounted on the institution are impossible to ignore. Notable among the proposals trade ministers will consider are those relating to new rules on farm subsidies, the elimination of support for unsustainable fisheries, and the regulation of e-commerce. With the backing of more than 100 countries, a joint proposal from India and China to eliminate the most trade-distorting farm subsidies worth \$160 billion in several industrialised economies is arguably the most contentious agenda item at the Ministerial. The two countries see this as a prerequisite to address the prevailing imbalance in the Agreement on Agriculture, which unfairly benefits developed countries. But host Argentina has cautioned that the joint proposal could potentially unravel negotiations. Lending credence to such scepticism is the lukewarm stance the U.S. has adopted towards the WTO over the past year, suggesting that the Ministerial meet should serve as a forum for reflection rather than to shape substantive agreements. The other major dispute centres on finding a so-called permanent solution to the large subsidies that underpin public stock-holding programmes to bolster food security in the developing world. The G-33 coalition — which includes Indonesia, China and India — seeks a complete exemption from commitments to reduce subsidies, such as minimum support prices, from this poverty-alleviation programme. New Delhi has declined to negotiate any more trade-offs on this proposal at Buenos Aires, or accept calls for stringent transparency requirements to monitor these schemes. The EU and Brazil have expressed broad support for the G-33 coalition's position on public stock-holding programmes. But in return they seek agreement on their own proposal to reduce trade-distorting subsidies on a percentage basis, in both advanced and developing economies.

The existential crisis facing the WTO is heightened by U.S. President Donald Trump's combative approach to the multilateral institutional framework. Washington has been exploring an alternative, unilateral route away from the formal dispute resolution mechanism of the Geneva-based body to settle perceived and real trade conflicts with partners. It has blocked fresh appointments to fill vacancies on the seven-member WTO appellate body. The risk of Mr. Trump's protectionist rhetoric translating into economic barriers remains real. The response to that challenge is to make the gains of globalisation more visible and its transient downsides politically less painful. Trade leaders gathered in Buenos Aires can ill-afford to lose sight of this imperative.

War of words

By SUHRID SANKAR

MAKING public a telephone call to her by Governor Keshari Nath Tripathi, a visibly angry West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee told a press conference on July 4: "Today the Governor said a lot of things to me and I have been highly insulted. The office of Governor is a constitutional post and he has to work as per the Constitution. I have not come to power thanks to the Governor. I have been elected by the people; the Governor has been nominated by the Centre. The language he used while speaking to me on behalf of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] was humiliating. I have never been so insulted in my life."

Relations between the Trinamool Congress government and the Centre hit an all-time low with a bitter public spat between the Chief Minister and the Governor over a communal flare-up in Baduria town in the Basirhat subdivision of North 24 Paraganas district. Such a direct and strident confrontation between the nominated head of the State and the elected head of the government is unprecedented in West Bengal. Mamata Banerjee said the Governor had "threatened" her. "I told the Governor that you cannot talk to me like this. The Governor was speaking like a block president of the BJP. Why should this happen? We are not servants. After today's insult, I even thought of quitting... The Governor cannot threaten me," she said.

The phone call from the Governor came almost immediately after a BJP delegation met him at the Raj Bhavan and expressed grave concern over the communal tension at Baduria. An objectionable post on Facebook by a 17-year-old student unleashed communal fury on July 2. The police stood by helplessly as rioters went on the rampage. The violence continued unabated even after the arrest of the teenager. Private property was looted and destroyed, police vehicles were torched and one shopkeeper, Kartik Ghosh, was stabbed to death by miscreants. The violence spread to the surrounding areas. Four companies of the Border Security Force (BSF) were deployed to bring the situation under control. Although the violence had abated by July 8, the region continued to remain tense (as of July 11), and the security forces remained on high alert.

Governor's reaction
The Governor expressed surprise at the "attitude and language used by the Hon'ble Chief Minister during the press conference". A statement issued by the Raj Bhavan that evening said: "The talks between the Hon'ble Chief Minister and the Hon'ble Governor were confidential in nature and none is expected to disclose it. However, there was nothing in the talks for which the Hon'ble Chief Minister may have felt insulted, threatened or humiliated. The Hon'ble Governor did say to the Hon'ble Chief Minister to ensure peace and law and order by all means." The statement further clarified that the Governor, being head of the State, "is the guardian of all citizens of the State and not of any particular party or section of society".

The war of words did not end there. Rather the tones got even more abrasive and



the attacks sharper. State Parliamentary Affairs Minister and Trinamool secretary general Partha Chatterjee said: "The Governor is the State's constitutional head, can he speak in this manner, which is beyond the limits of his authority? We would clearly like to remind the Governor that Raj Bhavan can never become a BJP den. We strongly condemn the language he used with the Chief Minister, threatened her, hurt her feelings... It has repeatedly come to our notice that Raj Bhavan has been instigating/helping those people who fan communal passions." He pointed out that the Governor's phone call came after a BJP delegation met him. "We had written to him on many issues earlier. We had written to the Centre repeatedly seeking financial assistance. But he never spoke out then. Today, he is behaving exactly like a [BJP] cadre," said Chatterjee.

In a strongly worded press release, Raj Bhavan said Chatterjee's statement was an "attempt to cover the lapses of the State government and divert the attention from the main issue of law and order", and the allegations of the Chief Minister amounted to "insulting and humiliating the Governor and his Office". It said her allegations were "baseless" and were "meant only to emotionally blackmail the people of West Bengal".

"The Governor says that instead of making accusations against him, it is better for the Chief Minister and her colleagues to direct their attention to maintain peace and law and order in the State without making any distinction on the basis of caste, creed or community," the press release from the Raj Bhavan read.

Mamata Banerjee announced a judicial inquiry into the communal outbreak and claimed that those responsible for starting the riots had come from across the border, from Bangladesh. Aiming her guns at the Centre, she wondered: "How did the border suddenly open up? The State government is not responsible for guarding the border; it is the Centre's job." The Trinamool Congress received another handle to attack the Governor with, when, much to the embarrassment of the BJP, senior BJP leader and the party's national secretary, Rahul Sinha, described the Governor as a "sainik" (soldier) of the "Modi bahini" (Modi army).

"The cat is finally out of the bag. We have been saying for a while that the Raj Bhavan has been turned into a BJP office; Rahul Sinha's statement confirms it," said Chat-

terjee. The BJP, however, dismissed Sinha's comment as his own. "The party does not agree with him. It is not the party's stand," said Kailash Vijayvargiya, BJP national general secretary who is in charge of West Bengal. It was at Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh's intervention that decorum was restored.

Interestingly, neither Mamata Banerjee nor Raj Bhavan went into the details of the conversation that took place between the Chief Minister and the Governor. Even at her emotionally charged press conference, Mamata Banerjee did not mention what it was that she found insulting and threatening in the Governor's words. Although the point of conflict remained unclear, the issue has once again revived the age-old debate on the role of the Governor and the scope of his functions and powers.

According to the former Advocate General and noted constitutional expert Bimal Chatterjee, there is really no boundary line to curb the functions of either the Governor or the Chief Minister. "It is their conscience, their sense of propriety and awareness of their duties, that ultimately dictate their functioning. I am not aware of any constitutional provision or legislation laying down the limits of a Governor's functions and powers. I do not know of any provision that says that beyond this point a Governor is overstepping the boundaries of his powers and functions. The boundary is defined by the mutual respect for each other and the mutual consciousness of their respective responsibilities," Bimal Chatterjee told Frontline.

The social scientist and professor of political science at Rabindra Bharati University Biswanath Chakraborty pointed out that the Governor, being a constitutional head, had full right to aid and advice the Council of Ministers headed by the Chief Minister, but it was up to the Council to use its discretion to heed the advice or not. The Governor can express concern and even caution the Chief Minister on a particularly sensitive issue.

"The Governor, I feel, is totally justified in expressing concern to the Chief Minister over the disturbance in Basirhat, as there was widespread lawlessness and no sign of any Central forces. He did his normal constitutional work. But the way the Chief Minister reacted is unprecedented. We have seen conflicts between the Governor and the Chief Minister in several States, including West Bengal, earlier, but we have never seen such

a public outburst against the Governor by the Chief Minister. This goes against the spirit of the parliamentary form of government," Chakraborty said. He also felt that the Governor's repartee, particularly the second one, was unnecessary and it aggravated the situation. Many point to Tripathi's long association with the Rashtriya Swamsewak Sangh and the BJP to justify the apprehension of the Trinamool Congress that he is behaving in a partisan manner against the State government. "It is precisely for this reason that the Constitution framers had preferred the post of the Governor to be occupied by a non-political person," he said.

Centre-State relations
The State government's bitter feud with the Governor marked a new low in the relationship between the Trinamool government and the BJP at the Centre—a relationship that has never been cordial, despite the fact that Mamata Banerjee was once part of the National Democratic Alliance (1999 to 2001, and again in 2004). In her tirade against the Governor, Mamata Banerjee also launched a thinly veiled attack on the Centre and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Some people are destroying the country and then going abroad to talk of unity. They are setting fire to the harmony between communities and religions and then saying sweet words on religious unity in foreign lands," she said.

The spat served to throw open the floodgates of grievances against the Centre. The main complaint of the State is that of non-cooperation of the Centre, particularly with reference to the deployment of Central forces to the Darjeeling hills, which have been on the boil since June 8.

"It has been a month since trouble broke out in the hills... We have been asking for additional Central forces, but the Centre is sitting on the requisition... This is a clear case of non-cooperation that goes against our federal structure," Mamata Banerjee said.

Trouble seems to be erupting all at once in different places and in different forms for Mamata Banerjee, creating immense pressure on her government. The Darjeeling hills continue to burn as the movement for a separate State of Gorkhaland has taken a violent turn, communal flare-ups have led to a serious law and order crisis in the State requiring Central forces to quell the situation, and some of the most influential leaders of the Trinamool Congress are being summoned one after the other by the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate in connection with the Narada case (a sting operation carried out by the news portal Narada in which several top Trinamool leaders, including its Members of Parliament, Ministers, MLAs, and the Mayor of Kolkata, were seen accepting cash on camera).

"This is the first time since she turned her political career around in 2009 that Mamata Banerjee is facing challenges from every corner, and her past successes are fast collapsing. Most of the problems she is facing are also being exacerbated owing to the complete lack of support from the Centre," Chakraborty said.

A game of chicken in the Korean peninsula

Happy Mon Jacob

Thirteen thousand kilometres. That's how far North Korea's newest Hwasong-15 missile can travel, which puts the United States, its principal adversary, within striking distance. With nuclear capable intercontinental ballistic missiles in its arsenal, and with hardly any workable U.S. military options to disarm Pyongyang, nuclear North Korea is now an inevitability and here to stay. Lessons from the tragic end of Saddam Hussein and Muammar Qadhafi would further disincentivise North Korean supreme leader Kim Jong-un to give up his weapons. Pyongyang's neighbours, namely Japan and South Korea, and the international community, the U.S. in particular, however, have not reconciled to this reality provoking a nuclear crisis in the Korean peninsula.

The rationality of escalation
Kim Jong-un has been called all kinds of names, from a ruthless dictator to a madman. But Kim's actions consolidating his hold over power in Pyongyang or developing North Korea's strategic arsenal show that he is anything but irrational. More pertinently, his policy of taking on the entire international community is seemingly premised on the classical military strategy of escalating to de-escalate — to initially escalate to unacceptable levels so as to force one's adversaries to make concessions in areas they otherwise would not. Being

recognised as a nuclear weapon capable state would be the foremost objective; survival of his regime and an eventual removal of sanctions would be the natural consequences of such a recognition.

Given that Pyongyang is pursuing such an escalatory strategy when there is a great deal of great power disharmony and American indecisiveness, the odds are heavily stacked in its favour. In this game of chicken, Kim seems to be the winner.

Great power buck-passing
Ever since Pyongyang withdrew from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003, which led to the Six-Party Talks to diffuse the situation in the Korean peninsula, the North Korean regime has played the great powers against each other, exploiting their respective strategic calculations vis-à-vis Pyongyang, and each other. Having outmanoeuvred the big boys, North Korea conducted several nuclear tests and has now reached a point of no return, leaving the great powers stupefied and outwitted. Notwithstanding Pyongyang's determination to go down this road by all means, the differing great power endgames and their unwillingness to commit sustained political and diplomatic capital, individually and together, to the Korean peninsula have contributed to the current crisis in a major way.

Today, having exhausted all its strategies, from imposing sanctions to isolating North Korea, Washington has neither any leverage nor is it in a position to

make a successful military strike against the country. China is not only worried about a lethal nuclear fallout in its neighbourhood and the potential rush of North Korean refugees into its territory but also uneasy about what may otherwise be an excellent solution — a reunified Korea, something Beijing thinks will undercut its rising regional predominance. Russia, having had clandestine dealings with the North Korean regime in the past, also has no cards to play. And yet, if the unravelling of the Korean peninsula weakens Washington's standing in the region further, Moscow and Beijing would certainly not mind that.

Japan and South Korea, in a sense, then are the real victims in this game of great power buck-passing and geopolitical expediency. Seen as arch-rivals by Pyongyang and located in what is arguably the world's most dangerous neighbourhood, Tokyo and Seoul would be the first to face Kim's wrath. What is complicating their plight even more is the shakiness of the extended deterrence commitments of U.S. President Donald Trump's "America First" policy.

Going nuclear would not take too much time or effort for either of these technologically advanced countries. The lack of a firm commitment from Washington on security commitments could potentially prompt them to develop a modest strategic arsenal which would have a domino effect for the region and the rest of the international system. In a self-help world of such kind, the NPT-

led non-proliferation regime as we know it would cease to exist.

Systemic crisis
At the heart of it, the crisis in the Korean peninsula reflects an endemic and worrying disorder in the contemporary international system. For one, international diplomacy has failed in the region. The ability of the great powers to compromise and reach a workable consensus to deal with global crises seems to have considerably reduced especially with the arrival of Mr. Trump and the assertion of China and Russia. What is even more worrying is this: the failure of the great powers to arrive at a workable consensus in crisis situations is perhaps a sign of the times to come.

Second, the current crisis is further intensified by the deal-breaking tendencies of Mr. Trump. For instance, his administration's tirade against the Iran nuclear deal, the end result of long, arduous negotiations, is sending out all the wrong signals to the international community. If Kim's North Korea is decidedly revisionist, Mr. Trump's revisionist tendencies are equally damaging.

What is also becoming clear today is that isolating states that "misbehave" does not resolve conflicts. Be it Pakistan, Iran or North Korea, isolating states in the international system can only further complicate existing crises. The reason why we have been able to restrain the development of Iranian nuclear weapons is precisely because the P5+1 (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom,

the United States, plus Germany) reached a historic nuclear deal in 2015 despite pressure from within the U.S. and countries such as Israel to use force against Tehran. Had it not been for this deal, we would have had quite a mess in our neighbourhood today.

Finally, and at a deeper level, the disarmament platitudes of the N-5 (or the five nuclear weapon states) and no progress on their disarmament commitments have eroded the faith of the nuclear have-nots in the global nuclear order. In an indirect but relevant way, such erosion of a normative global order has contributed to the North Korean crisis. Therefore, those lamenting how Kim's nukes will weaken the non-proliferation regime have only themselves to blame for it.

Now that Pyongyang has crossed the nuclear threshold, international sanctions and the use of force against North Korea will not yield the desired results. It will lead to immeasurable human suffering within North Korea and in its neighbourhood. We are way past tactical solutions, and, therefore, only a comprehensive, sustained and diplomatic solution will work, though the result of which is uncertain, and the intent for which is non-existent among the great powers at this point. However, if indeed Kim is "escalating to deescalate", Pyongyang might be open to such engagement especially since it has now gone beyond being forcibly disarmed. Moreover, for Kim, talking itself would

constitute a form of recognition for his regime.

The most unpleasant part of such a comprehensive solution would involve according de facto "recognition" to North Korea's nuclear weapons. In other words, North Korea has nuclear weapons and its delivery mechanism in its custody, and there is no getting away from that fact, not now. If so, all we can do now is to consider how we can live with a nuclear North Korea rather than think of impractical military solutions to disarm Pyongyang. For sure, it would be a pity to add it to the list of states possessing nuclear weapons. But then there is a time to prevent something from becoming a reality, and there is a time to accept when it becomes an inevitable reality.

The operational aspect of this approach would involve taking on board North Korea's historical grievances, involving the regional powers including China and South Korea to reach out to Kim, and reviving the dormant Six Party Talks at the earliest. Revival of the Six Party talks is important precisely because entrusting China and or Russia to solely deal with North Korea would be unwise. Moreover, multilateral engagement would also prevent anyone from engaging in underhand dealings with Pyongyang.

Happy Mon Jacob is Associate Professor of Disarmament Studies, Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University

PM Modi consumes mushrooms worth 1.20 cr every month, claims Cong ally

BANASKANTH: Latest in the line of peculiar allegations hurled this election season is Congress ally in Gujarat Alpesh Thakor's claim that the complexion of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has turned fair because he eats mushrooms imported from Taiwan that cost Rs 80,000 per piece. "Someone told me that you can't eat what Modi ji eats, because it's not a food for the poor," Thakor said addressing a gathering in Gujarat's Vadgaon, and continued the anecdote, saying he was told that the Prime Minister eats mushrooms that come from Taiwan. "One mushroom costs Rs 80,000, and he eats five mushrooms a day. That is why I wonder how he turned so fair. He was as dark as me," Thakor added.



Thakor also alleged that the same person told him that Prime Minister Modi has been eating those mushrooms since he became the chief minister of Gujarat, in 2001. "The Prime Minister who eats mushrooms worth Rs 1.20 crore in a month, you can imagine how many crores of money his workers must be eating up," Thakor added. Amidst the Gujarat elections, both Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress Party are leaving no stone unturned to claim victory. The controversial statements range from Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar's "Neech" remark at the Prime Minister to the allegations of treason against Aiyar and other senior Congress leaders by Prime Minister Modi.

Special courts to hear cases against convicted politicians

NEW DELHI: The Central Government will set up 12 special courts, to deal with cases against MPs and MLAs convicted of committing serious offences.

The Centre filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court on Tuesday in this regard, amid hearing of the case pertaining to seeking lifetime ban on convicted politicians from contesting election. A petitioner has filed a PIL in the apex court to bar convicted politicians for life from contesting polls. Earlier in April, the Centre had opposed the petition citing that there were already adequate provisions in the Representation of the People Act (RPA) to deal with it.



According to the legal regime under the RPA a politician convicted and sentenced to a jail term of two years or more shall be disqualified from contesting polls for six years from the date of his release from prison after conclusion of the term.

Meeting with Pak officials was not 'secret', says former advisor to Manmohan Singh

NEW DELHI: Former advisor to ex-prime minister Dr. Manmohan Singh on Tuesday rubbished all allegations about latter conducting a clandestine meeting with Pakistani officials to fix results of Gujarat elections.

Speaking to ANI, senior journalist Prem Kumar Jha said it was a dinner hosted by suspended congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar for Ex-Pakistan External Affairs Minister Khurshid Kasuri. And that there was nothing 'secret' about the event.

"Kasuri was here and Mr. Aiyar hosted a dinner..he invited people from the Congress party and friends like me. And there in all 14 to 15 people.

It was a very impressive group. Former prime minister Manmohan Singh came and he came in the condition that he will not speak. He just wanted to listen to us and above all to Kasuri. Former vice-president Ansari and many former senior diplomats were also there," he said.

Continuing his stance, Jha said that Singh and Ansari both have Z+ security protection and so have to submit the full list to SPG. So there is nothing secret.

"Every invitation came on email, they didn't come on WhatsApp, viber or any encrypted email services," he averred.

Singh yesterday quashed Prime Minister Modi's accusation about the former's secret meeting with Pakistani officials, and expressed 'anguish' at 'the canards being spread' by the latter.

"I am deeply pained and anguished by the falsehood and canards being spread to score political points in a lost cause by none less than Prime Minister, Sh. Narendra Modi. Fearing imminent defeat in Gujarat, desperation of Prime Minister to hurl every abuse and latch on to every straw is palpable," Singh said in an official statement.

In one of his campaign rallies, Prime Minister Modi alleged Pakistan's interference in the Gujarat elections. Claiming that Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar, former prime minister Manmohan Singh and former vice president Hamid Ansari met with Pakistan's High Commissioner and Foreign Minister at Aiyar's house just before the elections, the Prime Minister also sought an explanation from the opposition.

Punjab industry threatens to boycott Congress in municipal elections

LUDHIANA: Punjab's industry associations have accused the Congress led state government of not fulfilling its promise of providing cheap electricity. Miffed industrialists have threatened to oppose the Congress party in the municipal corporation elections. After a meeting, the representatives of the associations also announced that if their demand was not accepted within 15 days, they would go on an indefinite strike.

Bandish Jindal, President of the Federation of Punjab Small Scale Industries Associations, alleged that the Punjab government has sent old bills and imposed additional tariff.

"The government has not only failed to fulfil its promise but also betrayed us. The government is trying to put its failures on the industries. After taking votes of the industrialists during the election, the government is now backing on its promise of providing electricity at



Rs 5 per unit," Jindal said.

He gave a 15-day ultimatum to the government and said, "After this, strict action will be taken including the hunger strike."

The industry will oppose govern-

ment officials, office bearers, MPs, legislators and their respect will be changed into humiliation. The Congress party's manifesto will also be challenged in the court," he added. Avatar Singh Bhogal, a member

of the United Cycle Parts Manufacturers Association, alleged that because the government of the Akali Dal or the Congress, they do not fulfil their poll promises.

"The Congress in its election manifesto promised to give power at Rs. five per unit for five years but has started deceiving in the beginning only. We will completely boycott Congress in the Municipal Corporation elections," Bhogal said.

KK Garg and Mohinderpal Singh Gupta, on behalf of Furnace Associations, said that the industry will not pay old bills to the government and will take electricity at the rate of Rs 5 per unit. "We will shut our industries if the demand is not met. Prior to the elections, Congress had said that its manifesto is an affidavit. We will challenge the party's manifesto in the court too," they said. Captain Amarinder Singh is heading the Congress government in Punjab.

Rains to boost agriculture in northern region: Bikram Singh

DEHRADUN: Spells of rains will provide boost to agriculture in the region, said Bikram Singh, director of Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) Dehradun.

"Major spells of rain have been received on December 11-12. Now,

medium to low rainfall will be received. This system will prevail for next 24-48 hours. High altitudes will receive fresh snowfall today and tomorrow," said Singh.

Earlier, the Meteorological Department (MeT) has said that

the western disturbance, in association with an induced cyclonic circulation, would bring snowfall and rainfall in northern India.

Heavy snowfall have been reported from the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand and

Himachal Pradesh. Scattered showers and thunderstorms were also reported in the Northern plains, including Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR). The MeT department has also forecasted that

minimum temperatures are very likely to fall significantly from December 13 onwards over north India. Cold days and cold wave conditions are likely to prevail due to the active weather system, the department said.

Opposition to meet before winter session to formulate strategy

NEW DELHI: The Opposition leaders will hold a meeting on December 14, a day ahead of the winter session to chalk out strategy for it. The meeting will be held in Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad's office in the Parliament.

Senior Congress leaders including Anand Sharma, Ghulam Nabi Azad and Mallikarjun Kharge will participate in the meeting.

Parliament Winter Session which will start from December 15, 2017 and last till January 5, 2018, is expected to witness heavy fireworks as the Congress would try to corner Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government over a range of issues. Earlier, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge had asserted that the Congress party would raise various issues in the Parliament session including Goods and Services Tax (GST), demonetisation, Rafal deal and economic condition.

Centre was recently targeted by the Opposition for delaying the winter session allegedly in the wake of Gujarat assembly elections.

Congress former president Sonia Gandhi slammed the Centre saying that it was sabotaging the Winter Session of Parliament on flimsy grounds.

PM Modi's statement against Mammohan Singh unacceptable: Rahul

AHMEDABAD: Congress president-elect Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said that the statement made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi about his predecessor Dr Manmohan Singh meeting with Pakistan minister is not acceptable. Gandhi made the statement after Prime Minister Modi had recently alleged that a "secret meeting" was held by Dr Singh and other Congress minister's with Pakistan's High Commissioner and Foreign Minister at party leader Mani Shankar Aiyar's house just before the elections. Reacting on suspended Congress leader Aiyar's derogatory statement against Prime Minister Modi, he said, "I have made it clear I will not tolerate such things, Modi ji is after all the Prime Minister of India, though what all Modi ji said about Dr Manmohan Singh is also not acceptable." In one of his campaign rallies, Prime Minister Modi alleged Pakistan's interference in the Gujarat elections and said that Aiyar, Dr Singh and former vice president Hamid Ansari met with Pakistan's High Commissioner and Foreign Minister.



The Prime Minister also sought an explanation from the opposition. Today is the last day of campaigning in poll-bound Gujarat before the final phase of state assembly elections. The second phase of the Gujarat polls will be held on December 14 in 93 assembly constituencies. The first phase of polls for 89 seats took place on December 9 and counting of votes will be done on December 18. The crucial elections are being seen as prestige battle for BJP, which has been ruling the state for last 22 years, while it is a litmus test for the Congress.

BJP terms Rahul Gandhi's temple visits as 'hypocrisy'

NEW DELHI: In another scathing attack at Congress president-elect Rahul Gandhi over his temple visit, Minister of States for Prime Minister's Office, Jitendra Singh on Tuesday questioned his frequent visits to temples in poll-bound Gujarat and not in Delhi. Speaking to ANI, Singh further said that the Congress scion was undermining the votes of Gujarat and is trying to sway the voters by his 'temple visit hypocrisy'.

"Religion and faith come naturally to a person. He (Rahul Gandhi) visited 28 temples during Gujarat elections. I don't know what he is trying to show to



the people of Gujarat. For Prime Minister Narendra Modi it is his natural way of life. When our leaders were not in power then also they visited temples

and observed fasts. But Rahul doesn't go to the temple behind the backyard of their residence in Delhi," he said.

Stating that Gujarat assembly elections will be a one-sided competition in favour of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the senior cabinet minister added that the Congress party would get a befitting reply on the day of elections's result on December 18. In the run-up to Gujarat Assembly elections, Rahul has been visiting various temples in the state while on a campaign trail. However, the BJP has termed the move as an appeasement tactic to woo the Hindu voters.

'SEAPLANE' A BIG REVOLUTION IN TRANSPORT SECTOR: GADKARI

NEW DELHI: After Prime Minister Narendra Modi became the first sea-plane passenger in India, Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday called it a "big revolution" in the field of transport.

Speaking to ANI, Gadkari said the first-ever flight by such a craft in the country can also be a revolutionary dream for the people of India. "Today is a historical day as the Prime Minister traveled in a sea-plane. Sea-plane is a revolutionary factor in the field of transport. It will be a big revolution in the transport sector as India has huge potential," he said. He further informed that within three months the government along with the Aviation Minister will formulate its rules and regulations and start seaplanes transport in different states by 2018.

When asked if Prime Minister Modi com-



feel proud that the Prime Minister of this country took the trial."

Prime Minister Modi today travelled from Sabarmati River in Ahmedabad to Dharoi Dam via sea-plane. During a rally on Monday, the Prime Minister had said, "Tomorrow for the first time in the history of the country a sea-plane will land on the Sabarmati River. I will go to Ambaji in the sea-plane after landing in Dharoi dam and come back."

Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani had said that this is for the first time in the history of the country that a sea-plane will land on a water body.

Centre calls all party meet to discuss strategy for winter session



NEW DELHI: Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ananth Kumar has called an all party meeting on December 14 in Parliament Library to prepare the strategy for the Winter Session of Parliament. Parliament Winter Session will be held from December 15, 2017 to January 5, 2018. Meanwhile, the Opposition leaders will also be holding a separate meeting, a day ahead of the winter session, in Ghulam Nabi Azad's office in Parliament.

Senior Congress leaders including Anand Sharma, Ghulam Nabi Azad and Mallikarjun Kharge will take part in the meet.

A number of important bills are expected to be discussed in the upcoming session.

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government was recently targeted by the Opposition for delaying the winter session in the wake of Gujarat assembly elections.

Kidney disease may up risk of diabetes: Study

If you are suffering from kidney dysfunction, you may be at high risk of developing diabetes, finds a study. The risk may be attributed to the rising level of urea -- the nitrogen-containing waste product in blood, which comes from the breakdown of protein in foods. Kidneys normally remove urea from the blood, but it can build up when kidney function slows down, resulting in greater insulin resistance as well as secretion in the body.

"We have known for a long time that diabetes is a major risk factor for kidney disease, but now we have a better understanding that kidney disease, through elevated levels of urea, also raises the risk of diabetes," said the Ziyad Al-Aly, Assistant Professor at the Washington University in St. Louis.

"When urea builds up in the blood because of kidney dysfunction,

It often results in increased insulin resistance and impaired insulin secretion," Ziyad added. The findings, published in the journal *Kidney International*, are significant because urea levels can be lowered through medication, diet -- for example, by eating less protein -- and other means, thereby allowing for improved treatment and possible prevention of diabetes, the researchers said.

For the study, the team evaluated the records of 1.3 million adults without diabetes over a five-year period, beginning in 2003.

Out of these, 117,000 of those without diabetes -- or 9 per cent -- had elevated urea levels, signalling poor kidney function and were at 23 per cent higher risk of developing diabetes.



Vigorous exercise could delay Parkinson's disease

Three intense workouts a week could slow the progression of Parkinson's disease, according to a study. A team of researchers at Northwestern Medicine and the University of Colorado School of Medicine have found that vigorous exercise in the early stage of the degenerative disease can decrease worsening of motor symptoms. The symptoms of the disease include progressive loss of muscle control, trembling, stiffness, slowness and impaired balance. As the disease progresses, it may become difficult to walk, talk and complete simple tasks. Most people who develop Parkinson's are 60 and older.

"If you have Parkinson's disease and you want to delay the progression of your symptoms, just a stroll isn't sufficient. You should exercise three times a week with your heart rate between 80 to 85 percent maximum. It is that simple," said lead author Margaret Schenkman.

Previously, it was thought high-intensity exercise was too physically stressful for individuals with Parkinson's disease.

Parkinson's symptoms include progressive loss of muscle control, trembling, stiffness, slowness and impaired balance. As the disease progresses, it may become difficult to walk, talk and complete simple tasks. Most people who develop Parkinson's are 60 and older.

Because medications for Parkinson's have adverse side effects and reduced effectiveness over time, new treatments are needed. The randomized clinical trial included 128 participants ages 40 to 80 from Rush University Medical Center, Northwestern University and the University of Pittsburgh in addition to the University of Colorado Anschutz in Aurora.

Participants enrolled in the Study in Parkinson Disease of Exercise (SPARX) were at an early stage of the disease and not

taking Parkinson's medication, ensuring the results of the study were related to the exercise and not affected by medication.

"The earlier in the disease you intervene, the more likely it is you can prevent the progression of the disease," said co-lead author Daniel Corcos.

"We delayed worsening of symptoms for six months; whether we can prevent progression any longer than six months will require further study."

Scientists examined the safety and effects of exercise three times weekly for six months at high intensity, 80 to 85 percent of maximum heart rate, and moderate intensity, 60 to 65 percent of maximum heart rate. They compared the results to a control group who did not exercise.

After six months, participants were rated by clinicians on a Parkinson's disease scale ranging from 0 to 108.

The higher the number, the

more severe the symptoms.

Participants in the study had a score of about 20 before exercise. Those in the high intensity group stayed at 20. The group with moderate exercise got worse by 1.5 points. The group that did not exercise worsened by three points. Three points out of a score of 20 points is a 15 percent change in the primary signs of the disease and considered clinically important to patients. It makes a difference in their quality of life.

"We catch people early in the disease and are slowing them from getting worse, which is significant, particularly for a disorder that is chronic and progressive," Schenkman said.

Schenkman and colleagues confirmed it was safe for the participants to do high-intensity exercise by giving them a cardiologist-supervised graded exercise test to evaluate the heart's response to exercise. The findings have been published in *JAMA Neurology*.

Researchers say air pollution increases risk of birth defects

A new study adds to growing evidence that exposure to air pollution before conception or even during the first month during pregnancy increases the risk of birth defects in children.

Although the increased risk is modest, the potential impact on a population basis is noteworthy because all pregnant women have some amount of exposure.

"The most susceptible time of exposure appears to be the one month before and after conception," says Emily DeFranco, senior author of the study. "Public health efforts should continue to highlight the importance of minimizing population-level exposure to harmful particulate matter in the air."

Dr. DeFranco and her colleagues examined fine particulate matter, which is a significant health hazard because these tiny particles can deposit deep into the lower airways and air sacs within the lungs and enter the circulatory system.

Fine particulate matter is a mixture of extremely small particles and liquid droplets that get into the air and, once inhaled, can negatively affect many aspects of a person's health. To conduct the study, the researchers used birth certificate data from the Ohio Department of Health and particulate matter data from the US Environmental Protection Agency's 57 monitoring stations throughout Ohio.

They linked the geographic coordinates of the mother's residence for each birth with the nearest monitoring station and calculated average exposures. They then estimated the association between abnormalities at birth and the mother's exposure to increased levels of fine particulate matter in the air during pregnancy.

Dr. DeFranco says there are inherent limitations of observational studies such as this but that it provides a good foundation on which future studies can build. Birth defects affect three percent of all births in the United States.

The study has been published in *The Journal of Pediatrics*.

This 'black box' recorder can measure surgeons' proficiency

Scientists have developed a novel recorder similar in concept to a flight recorder on an airplane that can be used to objectively measure surgeons' proficiency in robotic-assisted prostate cancer surgery.

The recorder, called the dVLogger developed by the US-based Intuitive Surgical, similar to the "black box" in flight would evaluate a surgeon's proficiency in performing the surgery to ensure patient safety.

When attached to a robotic surgery system during radical prostatectomy procedures -- the most common treatment for prostate cancer -- the recorder would capture data that could be used to discern the difference between novice and expert surgeons, the study showed.

It captures both anonymised video and movement data. "The dVLogger records the surgeon's movements, capturing where the instruments are and how the surgeon is moving the instruments," said lead author Andrew Hung, Assistant Professor at University of Southern California.

To measure the recorder's ability, four basic prostate surgery steps were analysed. Data from 100 procedures performed by both novice and expert surgeons were recorded.

The results, forthcoming in *The Journal of Urology*, showed that novice and expert surgeons could be identified by measuring time to complete operative steps, distance of instrument and camera travel and frequency of camera movements.

"We now have an opportunity to put surgeon proficiency under the microscope and see what role it plays in patient outcomes," Hung said.

"Creating a sustainable, objective method for evaluating surgeon proficiency and standardising credentialing is a way to help ensure patient safety," he noted.

50 percent individuals aged 40-54 have clogged arteries: Study

You may be middle-aged and pride yourself on being perfectly healthy -- normal weight, no diabetes, don't smoke -- but you still may have clogged arteries. Urging stronger measures to lower cholesterol, researchers have warned that a high level of so-called "bad cholesterol," or LDL-C, is the main reason why apparently healthy individuals suffer heart attacks or strokes in middle age.

The report in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* (JACC) said: Atherosclerotic plaques are present in 50 percent

of middle-aged individuals (40-54 years old) with no classical cardiovascular risk factors. The report was based on nearly 1,800 people who had no classical risk factors for heart disease or stroke.

LDL cholesterol was the top predictor of arteries that were in the process of hardening, but had not yet caused a health crisis.

"Even in people with optimal blood pressure, blood sugar, and total cholesterol, we detected an independent association between the level of circulating LDL-C and the presence and extent of sub-clinical atherosclerosis," said



study co-author Javier Sanz of Spain's Centro Nacional de Investigaciones Cardiovasculares Car-

los III (CNIC). Current guidelines from the US National Cholesterol Education Program describe

LDL-C levels that are above 160 mg/dL as "high." Those from 130 mg/dL to 159 mg/dL are considered "borderline high." Experts should consider lowering these thresholds to improve population health, the researchers argue. "Although the absence of classical cardiovascular risk factors is linked to a low risk of cardiovascular events, people in this situation still have heart attacks and strokes," said lead author Leticia Fernandez-Friera. "We therefore need to define new markers of early atherosclerosis in these apparently healthy individuals."

Abortion in India: One in three pregnancies gets terminated

Gender identification of an unborn baby is frowned upon in India, compelling authorities to set up strict laws forbidding it. Since it leads to female foeticide, a practice that involves aborting the baby, the process of gender identification has been long since prohibited. However, the results of the country's first large-scale study on abortions and unintended pregnancies that accounted for 2015 data has revealed that one in three of 48.1 million pregnancies in India ended in an abortion. According to the study published in the noted medical journal *Lancet*, India recorded around 15.6 million abortions in 2015. Nearly half (48%) of the pregnancies were unintended and 0.8 million women used unsafe methods for an abortion, putting their health and lives at risk. The most popular method used for abortion was abortion pills, which

totaled up to 12.7 million or 81% of all abortions, while surgical terminations of pregnancy was at 2.2 million. Around 22% or 3.4 million abortions were done in public health facilities. But 11.5 million or 73% were medication abortions done outside health facilities and 0.8 million were conducted by informal providers. In a comparison of the statistics, India's abortion rate of 47 per 1,000 women aged between 15 and 49 years is lower than Pakistan's 50 and higher than Nepal and Bangladesh, whose figures are 42 and 39 respectively. India has a strict anti-abortion law that prohibits termination of foetuses above 20 weeks, except when the mother's life is at risk. Surgical abortion can be performed only by trained, certified doctors in registered facilities, while pills to abort foetuses up to seven-weeks-old can be prescribed outside registered hospitals.

Soy, broccoli may cut breast cancer treatment's side effects

Consuming soy foods such as soy milk and tofu and cruciferous vegetables such as cabbages, kale and broccoli may help reduce common side effects of treatment in breast cancer survivors, researchers say.

Treatments designed to prevent breast cancer recurrence often inhibit the body's production or use of oestrogen -- the hormone that can fuel breast cancer growth.

As a result, such patients often experience hot flushes and night sweats, among other side effects that are commonly post menopause.

The findings, led by researchers from Georgetown University, showed that intake of cruciferous vegetables and soy foods were associated with fewer reports of menopausal symptoms. Higher soy intake was also associated with less reported fatigue. Phytochemicals, or bioactive food components, such as isoflavones in soy foods and glucosinolates in cruciferous vegetables may be the source of the benefit, the researchers



said. While isoflavones bind to oestrogen receptors and exert weak oestrogenic effects, glucosinolates in cruciferous vegetables influence levels of metabolising enzymes that can modulate inflammation and levels of oestrogen, possibly attenuating treatment-related symptoms. The study addresses an important gap in research on the possible role of lifestyle factors, such as dietary habits, in relation to side effects of treatments, said lead author Sarah Ope-

neer Nomura from the University's Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center. "These symptoms can adversely impact survivors' quality of life and can lead them to stopping ongoing treatments," Nomura said. "Understanding the role of life style factors is important because diet can serve as a modifiable target for possibly reducing symptoms among breast cancer survivors," she added. For the study, published in *Breast Cancer Research and Treatment*, the team

included 173 non-Hispanic white and 192 Chinese Americans. Women who consumed more soy foods also showed suggestive associations with lower reporting of other symptoms, including joint problems, hair thinning/loss and memory, but these associations did not reach statistical significance. Thus, until more study is conducted, breast cancer patients should not suddenly start eating soy, if they have not consumed it before, the researchers warned.

Premier League: Chelsea's out of sorts Alvaro Morata to miss Huddersfield game



LONDON: Chelsea forward Alvaro Morata will miss the Premier League game at Huddersfield Town on Tuesday with a back problem but Danny Drinkwater has returned to the squad after illness, coach Antonio Conte said on Monday. "Drinkwater started to train on Sunday after his fever," said the Italian, with the former Leicester City midfielder having missed Saturday's 1-0 defeat at West Ham United. "He's come with us, but for sure after three or four days with a fever, his physical condition is not at the top level," Conte said on Chelsea's website (www.chelseafc.com). "David Luiz is continuing to recover from his knee problem. And Morata is out. He is a bit tired and he has a problem in his back," Conte added of the Spaniard, who has 10 goals this season.

The Italian, whose team won the title last season without the demands of European football, were drawn on Monday to face Barcelona in the Champions League last 16 stage. "I think we have to face the reality and will try to do our best," said Conte, whose players are already tired having featured in a pre-season tour of Asia before the season began. "If I stay here to complain it is not the right way."

"For sure it is difficult because to face a game every three days is not simple, especially if your squad is not big, but at the same time we have to face this situation," he was quoted as saying by The Independent.

"We have to try to do our best. For sure some players can be tired, that's normal because some players are playing from this summer and our tours in China and Singapore."

Conte is struggling to get consistent results in the Premier League this term and his third-placed side are 14 points adrift of leaders Manchester City after 16 games.

Huddersfield have won three of their last four games at the John Smith's Stadium, with Manchester City only securing a 2-1 win with a late goal, and Conte expects a tough test. "We are facing a team in a good moment of form. In the last game they played a great game against Brighton," he said referring to Saturday's 2-0 home win.

"We must pay great attention to the counter-attack because they have fast players."

"They are in a good moment of form and we must be very good to be more clinical in this game, because in the recent period we weren't clinical."

Sourav Ganguly hits out at Indian cricket team selection after Dharamsala debacle

The Indian cricket team arrived here on Monday, carrying a burden of expectations. If the weather and conditions are anything to go by, then the home batsmen are up for a challenge again as seamers may again play an important role in the second ODI at Mohali.

MOHALI: India are already 1-0 down and they need to win this match to stay alive in this 3-match series.

Former India skipper Sourav Ganguly is confident of an India comeback.

"You see," Ganguly told Hindustan Times over phone, "whatever happened in Dharamsala was an aberration and we all know the capability of these batsmen. What is worrying me though, is, are India playing the best team? I know it will seam in Mohali too -- since it's an 11.30am start -- and India must play Ajinkya Rahane at No.3. He should have played in Dharamsala too because he has the ability to play in such conditions. So, I am a

little curious to know why he didn't play."

India were reeling at 29-7 before Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Kuldeep Yadav took them to 112. That proved too little in the end. After the game, the stand-in captain Rohit Sharma said the team management has earmarked him for opener's slot.

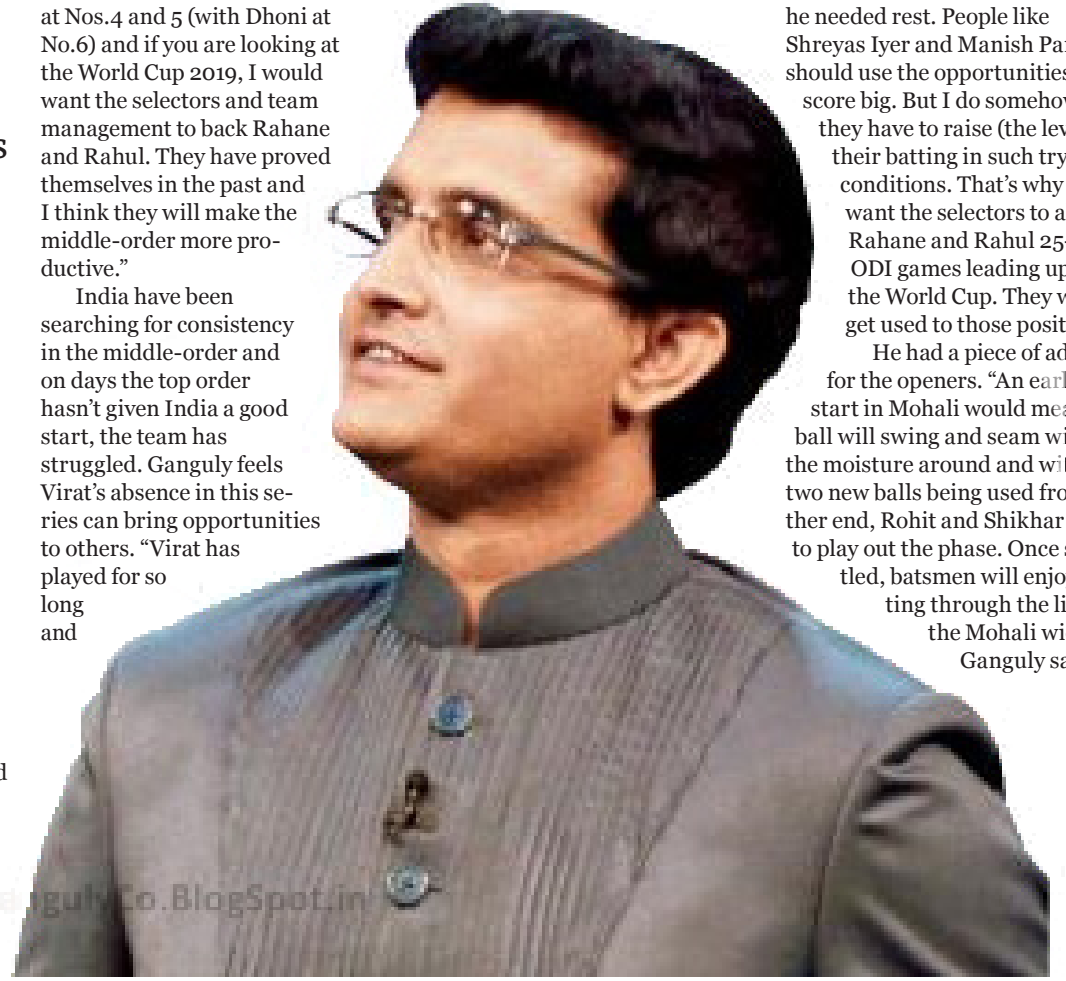
But Ganguly differed. "There isn't much difference in the jobs of Nos. 1-3 in ODIs. So, going by the conditions in Dharamsala and Mohali, it is imperative Rahane plays at No.3. In fact, to my mind, both Rahane and KL Rahul (not in the squad) should be playing more and more ODIs. When Virat comes back at No.3, there will still be slots

at Nos.4 and 5 (with Dhoni at No.6) and if you are looking at the World Cup 2019, I would want the selectors and team management to back Rahane and Rahul. They have proved themselves in the past and I think they will make the middle-order more productive."

India have been searching for consistency in the middle-order and on days the top order hasn't given India a good start, the team has struggled. Ganguly feels Virat's absence in this series can bring opportunities to others. "Virat has played for so long and

he needed rest. People like Shreyas Iyer and Manish Pandey should use the opportunities and score big. But I do somehow feel they have to raise (the level of) their batting in such trying conditions. That's why I want the selectors to allow Rahane and Rahul 25-30 ODI games leading up to the World Cup. They will get used to those positions."

He had a piece of advice for the openers. "An early start in Mohali would mean the ball will swing and seam with all the moisture around and with two new balls being used from either end, Rohit and Shikhar have to play out the phase. Once settled, batsmen will enjoy hitting through the line on the Mohali wicket," Ganguly said.



Ashes 2017-18: Alastair Cook dismisses retirement talks heading into 150th Test



LONDON: Former England captain Alastair Cook insisted retirement is not on his mind as he prepares for his 150th Test against Australia in the Ashes.

Already England's most capped Test player, veteran batsman Cook will reach another milestone when struggling Ashes holders England face Australia in Perth on Thursday.

But there are suggestions the end could be nigh for Cook, who has only managed scores of 37, 16, 2 and 7 as Australia enjoy a 2-0 series lead in the Ashes, with former players Mitchell Johnson and Kevin Pietersen indicating as much recently.

However, the 32-year-old opener told reports on Tuesday: "They've had no contact time with me."

"They wouldn't know the extra nets I've done behind doors."

"I have no idea [when he will retire] and I've said that since I gave up the captaincy."

If England lose the third Test at the WACA, they will surrender the urn to Australia.

BCCI's decision to host Afghanistan for first-ever Test lauded



BARCELONA: Barcelona needed an overzealous tackle by an inexperienced Villarreal opponent to help keep their five-point lead at the top of La Liga on Sunday.

Barca were struggling to break down Villarreal until 22-year-old Daniel Rabaseda earned a direct red card for a studs-first tackle into the ankle of Sergio Busquets.

Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez took full advantage of the holes that opened up in the hosts' defence, scoring twice to give Barcelona a 2-0 win away from home.

"We were in control and the sending-off completely changed the match," Villarreal coach Javier Calleja said. "He tried to go for the ball and arrived late. It was a foul, but I don't think it was a red. It is easier to send off young players." Suarez broke the deadlock in the 72nd minute, rounding goalkeeper Sergio Asenjo to complete a move of quick passes by Messi, Jordi Alba and substitute Paco Alcacer before Messi blasted home a second 11 minutes later to get the Catalans back to winning ways after successive draws with Valencia and Celta Vigo.

"In the second half after the sending-off we had more chances to win the game," Suarez told Movistar TV.

"They played a very good game tactically and we weren't precise enough, but in the second half we came out with a different mentality to take the three points."

Valencia remain Barca's closest challengers five points back, but Atletico Madrid also maintained their title charge with a 1-0 win at Real Betis after a goal by Saul Niguez to stay six points off the top.

Real Madrid are eight points behind in fourth and Barca will have the chance to go into El Clasico away at Real in two weeks' time with an 11-point lead over their rivals.

Barca host Deportivo la Coruna next weekend, whilst Real are in action at the Club World Cup in Abu Dhabi.

Suarez and Messi strike as Barca maintain La Liga lead

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'ANDERSON LIKELY TO BE LESS DAMAGING IN PERTH'

PERTH: England opening bowler James Anderson is unlikely to get the same swing and movement that made him 'very damaging' during the second Ashes Test but will still be a handful early on in Perth, Australia's Cameron Bancroft has said. Anderson was at his unplayable best with the pink ball in Australia's second innings in the day-night Test in Adelaide and took 5-43 to bowl the hosts out for 138 and give his side an outside chance of squaring the series. "When he's able to swing the ball like that, he's extremely hard work and he's very, very damaging," Bancroft told reporters in Perth on Monday

ahead of what could be the series-clinching match for the hosts. "No matter what's going on, it's bloody hard work when the ball is swinging like that."

"You can have the best game plan in the world but there can be a ball with your name on it."

Bancroft added that the pressure Anderson applied in the twilight on the third day of the second Test had stymied the normally free-flowing Australian batsmen and made them work for every run.

Anderson's performance, his first five-wicket haul in Australia, turned out to be in vain in the end, though, as the hosts steadily chipped away at England on



the fourth day when they were chasing 354 for victory.

Josh Hazlewood then took two quick wickets early on the fifth day before Mitchell Starc ripped through the tail to bowl England out for 233 and give Australia a 120-run victory and 2-0 series lead heading to the WACA Ground for the third Test starting on Thursday.

Perth local Bancroft was looking forward to playing on his home ground, having scored a career-best 228 not out there against South Australia before he was called into the national side to make his debut in the first Test in Brisbane.

While the WACA pitch had

flattened and become more batsmen friendly compared to the past when it provided steeping bounce and express pace, Bancroft said it would still give the swing bowlers like Anderson some assistance early on. "Always in the first session at the WACA it can be quite hard work, but like anything, if you're willing to put in the hard yards early you can reap rewards later in the game," said Bancroft.

"It's such a fast outfield that you don't have to worry too much about scoring, the ball goes through the infield and you instantly get two even if you don't hit it really well. That's the beauty of playing at the WACA."