

TIME AND US

DAILY

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WEATHER TEMPERATURE		
STATION	MAX TEMPERATURE	MIN TEMPERATURE
	ACT	ACT
SRINAGAR	17.2	8.9
JAMMU	32.5	18.3
LEH	20.4	4.7
KARGIL	17.2	2.6

SUNSET WEDNESDAY: 07:05 PM
 SUNRISE THURSDAY: 05:57 AM

LOCAL FORECAST OF SRINAGAR
 Light Rains/Thundershower. Maximum & Minimum temperatures will be around 18°C & 09°C respectively.

STATE | 3

INTERSTATE | 5

BUSINESS | 7

SPORTS | 8

PM ADDRESSES INDIAN COMMUNITY IN STOCKHOLM

MUSLIMS, WOMEN GET RAW DEAL IN TICKET DISTRIBUTION FOR KARNATAKA POLLS

GOVT DEFENDS SCAM-HIT BANKS AS CASH CRUNCH HITS ATMS, SAYS NO NEED TO PANIC

ROHIT SHARMA NOT BOTHERED BY MUMBAI INDIANS' DISAPPOINTING START IN IPL 2018

'President arrives on a two day visit to JK, Security tightened'

Expresses anguish over Kathua rape and murder incident



Jammu, Apr 18: Amid tight security arrangements, particularly in the Kakryal, in Katra, the President Ram Nath Kovind today reached here as part of his two-day visit to the Jammu division.

Sources told KNS that elaborate security arrangements were put in place in Jammu Division for President Ram Nath Kovind's visit. "President arrived at the Governor's house around 10 am. The president, Governor Vohra and chief minister Mehbooba Mufti then reached the SMVDU where he address the students besides present Gold medals and PhD degrees to them," sources maintained.

According to official sources, while the President participated in the convocation of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU), Kakryal, in Katra, is also scheduled to visit the Vaishno Devi shrine tomorrow.

Sources said that tight security arrangements were in place in the entire Jammu division. "Apart from police the central armed forces, was involved in

▶ See **President**...Pg 02

Mehbooba asks universities to act as nurseries of good citizens, not mere examining bodies

'Our material growth becomes meaningless if we are unable to become good human beings with compassion, humility, inclusive sense'

Katra, Apr 18: Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti today asked universities to act as nurseries of good citizens and not mere examining bodies distributing degrees.

Addressing the 6th Convocation of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi (SMVD) University here today, the Chief Minister said universities have to work on a two-pronged strategy of diffusing scientific, technical and professional knowledge on the one hand and inculcate value system in youth

as an integral part of education on the other.
 ▶ See **Mehbooba**...Pg 02



Resume dialogue for peace: Farooq tells India, Pakistan

'Rassana victim must get justice'

Amritsar, Apr 18: National Conference President Dr Farooq Abdullah on Wednesday said, dialogue is the only way forward to herald peace in Indo-Pak region and urged the two nations to break the ice and initiate meaningful engagement to sort out the issues.

"National Conference has been consistently and strongly vouching for Indo-Pak talks and this has now even been endorsed by the Chiefs of Army of the two countries as well, which is a welcome development", Dr Farooq Abdullah said in an informal interaction with media after paying obeisance at the Golden Temple here.

Accompanied by Provincial President Devender Singh Rana, the National Conference chief expressed happiness over realization dawning on the Army chiefs of the two countries and said, "This is vindication of our stand". He added that wars were no solution to solve problems, howsoever, serious in nature these may be, as negotiation table is ultimately the forum to thin down difference and reach conclusions. He hoped that the positive observations and assertions of the Army chiefs would be taken forward to create conducive conditions for talks. He said beneficiaries of the Indo-Pak dialogue would be people of Jammu and Kashmir, who have been braving the brunt of hostilities.

National Conference chief said history



stands testimony to the fact that all the issues have been sorted out by sitting around the table and hoped that the common sentiment for dialogue process would be initiated by India and Pakistan.

Dr Farooq Abdullah exuded confidence that Indo-Pak talks would lead to culmination of the border hostilities and cycle of violence in Kashmir. He reiterated that talks with all the stakeholders with an avowed objective of addressing to internal and external dimensions of the Jammu and Kashmir imbroglio, which he termed as political in character, would be a major initiative towards lasting peace in the region.

On the Rassana murder and rape case, the National Conference President said

▶ See **Farooq**...Pg 02

STUDENT PROTESTS AGAINST KATHUA INCIDENT CONTINUES, CLASHES ERUPT

Two cops injured, two protesters injured during clashes: Police



Srinagar, Apr 18: The students for the third consecutive day on Wednesday continued to protest against the rape and murder of a minor Kathua girl in January this year in Ransana area of Hiranagar district of Jammu region.

According to the KNS correspondent, Hussain Babu, the students protest in KP road area of South Kashmir's Anantnag district today.

The students during the protest chanted slogans in favour of a minor nomadic girl and demanded stern action against the culprits.

Witnesses said that the students also pelted stones on forces during the protest, resulting in clashes between them and government forces.

They said that at least 15 students mostly girls sustained injuries during the clashes in Anantnag who were shifted to District Hospital Anantnag for treatment.

The clashes later spread to nearby areas Lal chowk and Janglat mandi during which forces used tear smoke shells to disperse them.

The clashes also led to the closure of shops and other business establishments in the town. Medical Superintendent of DH Anantnag, Dr Majid Mirab told Kashmir News Service (KNS) that the hospital received 15 injured today. "All the injured were treated in the hospital while one among them was shifted to Srinagar's Bone and Joint hospital for specialized treatment," he added.

▶ See **Protest**...Pg 02

166 per cent more civilian fatalities in JK in 2017: MHA

NEW DELHI: Jammu and Kashmir witnessed 166 per cent more civilian fatalities due to militancy while there was a 42 per cent rise in number of terrorists neutralised in 2017 compared to the previous year, the Home Ministry said.

The annual report of the Ministry of Home Affairs for 2017-18, released today, said that since the advent of militancy in Jammu and Kashmir in 1990, a total of 13,976 civilians and 5,123 security personnel have lost their lives till December 31, 2017.

"The year 2017 also witnessed a 6.21 per cent increase and 166.66 per cent increase in the number of terrorists incidents and fatalities of civilians respectively in comparison to the corresponding period of 2016," the report said.

In 2017, there were 342 violent incidents in Jammu and Kashmir in which 80 security personnel, 40 civilians and 213 terrorists were killed.

There were 322 incidents in the state in 2016 in which 82 security personnel, 15 ci-

vilians and 150 terrorists were killed.

According to the report, there was 2.44 per cent decrease in casualties in security forces.

There has been a spurt in infiltration attempts last year from the Pakistan side — from 371 in 2016 to 406 in 2017.

As many as 123 infiltrations were successful in 2017 in comparison to 119 in 2016.

The report said the central government in tandem with the state government has adopted a multi-pronged

▶ See **MHA**...Pg 02

Two Million fund raised in Kathua case, lawyers says "pleading case free of cost"

▶ Bilal Bashir Bhat

Srinagar, April 18: An online campaign agency has raised the amount of two million rupees with reference to Kathua's rape-and-murder of an eight-year-old nomadic Muslim Bakerwal community girl in a bid to help family to pursue the case. However, the lawyers' panel fighting for the justice of the Kathua victim has said that they are pleading the case free of cost and need no money.

The online fundraising agency 'Crowdfunder' in its latest campaign stated to raise funds jointly for Kathua and Unnao victims under which they managed to raise an amount of Rs 40,61,970 from 1573 contributors with highest contribution from Bollywood actor and comedian

▶ See **Lawyers**...Pg 02

SHAH SEEKS APOLOGY FROM RAHUL OVER 'CONG-COINED' TERM 'SAFFRON TERROR'

BENGALURU: BJP president Amit Shah today accused the Congress of having defamed the country in the name of "saffron terror and Hindu terror" and demanded apology from party chief Rahul Gandhi following acquittal of five right-wing activists in the 2007 Mecca Masjid blast case.

"He said the Congress had committed the 'sin' of "linking the great Hindu culture with terrorism."

"The great Hindu culture taught the world about culture, peace and civilisation for lakhs of years, and the Congress party has committed a sin by linking it to saffron terror," he said in his address at a meeting of party "Shakti Kendra" here.

▶ See **Shah**...Pg 02

Sehraie terms current political situation in JK as 'highly volatile'

Condemns use of 'repressive measures' on peaceful protest

Srinagar, Apr 18: Terming the current political situation in Jammu and Kashmir as 'highly volatile and gruesome in the garb of excessive use of brute force' to calm down the genuine slogans for the right to self-determination raised by the people of Kashmir, especially the youth belonging to the third generation of the suppressed nation, the Tehreek-e-Hurriyat chairman, Mohammad Ashraf Sehraie Wednesday condemned the frequent use of all repressive measures by Indian occupation forces on the peaceful protest marches organized by the freedom loving people of Kashmir.



Giving details of atrocities perpetrated

▶ See **Sehraie**...Pg 02

Truck involved in hit & run case seized

SRINAGAR, APR 18: Few days back Srinagar police circulated news item in print & social media regarding the identification of truck involved in hit & run case on Chana-pora bye-pass near Haryana marbles in which one person had lost his life.

Photographs of the truck involved in the case were obtained from the CCTV footage & accordingly circulated for identification & help was sought from the general

▶ See **Truck**...Pg 02

Why was Lal Singh allowed to carry processions after being sacked: Er. Rasheed

SRINAGAR, APR 18: Hundreds including students, men and women joined a protest march at Humhama Srinagar today, condemning India's Hypocrisy and seeking stern punishment for the culprits of Kathua rape and murder case.

Protesters holding play cards in their hands and raising strong slogans against the incident were questioning India's silence over Kunan Posshpora and Shopian cases. Led by AIP Supremo and



MLA Langate Er. Rasheed protesters headed towards Srinagar International Airport and staged strong protest against the double standards of Indian state.

Speaking on the occasion Er. Rasheed said "New Delhi has many questions to answer. While it took rulers and politicians three months to wake up from slumbers but none spoke when the incident took place in January.

Not only Kashmiris but the international community has a right to know that why was not the ill fated 8 year, old Asifa not allowed even to be buried in her native place and what were the reason

▶ See **Rasheed**...Pg 02

Don't link rapes with politics, says vice-prez Venkaiah Naidu

Guwahati: Vice-president Venkaiah Naidu on Wednesday spoke against linking rapes with politics, in an obvious reference to the protests over recent incidents of sexual assault and murder in Uttar Pradesh and Jammu.

He was addressing a gathering at the launch of the Atal Amrit Abhiyaan, a health assurance initiative of the Assam government, during a visit to Guwahati.

Naidu, who is on a three-day tour of Assam, Meghalaya and Manipur, also said



that merely bringing in a new bill will not stem instances of violence against women in the country. "The mindset needs to change," he stated.

"There should be stringent implementation of the law by the state governments concerned."

▶ See **Naidu**...Pg 02

Governor briefs President

JAMMU, APRIL 18: Governor N.N. Vohra, briefed the President, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, who arrived in Jammu today, regarding all important issues relating to the State.

Among other matters, Governor briefed the President about the external security situation; the obtaining and emerging internal security environment; status of various important socio-economic development schemes and programmes; issues relating to the functioning of the

▶ See **Briefs**...Pg 02

GOVERNOR CONFERS HONORIS CAUSA ON SH. SUNIL BHARTI MITTAL, AND SH. PAWAN MUNJAL

6TH CONVOCATION OF SMVDU HELD

KAKRYAL, APRIL 18: The 6th Convocation of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU) was held at its Auditorium here today. The President of India, Sh. Ram Nath Kovind, who was the Chief Guest, delivered the Convocation Address. First Lady, Smt. Savita Kovind, was present on the occasion. Governor N.N. Vohra, who is Chancellor of the University, presided over the Convocation while Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti was the Guest of Honour on the occasion.

Governor conferred Honoris Causa on Sh. Sunil Bharti Mittal, Founder and Chairman Bharti Enterprises Ltd. and Sh. Pawan Munjal, Chairman Managing Director and CEO, Hero Moto Corp Ltd.

Governor awarded 882 degrees, including PhDs, Masters and Bachelors degrees, and presented 9 Silver Medals to meritorious students. The President gave away 10

Gold Medals.

Governor congratulated all those who received degrees, medals, and awards at the Convocation and wished them high success in their future careers.

In his address, Governor welcomed President Sh. Ram Nath Kovind and First Lady and said that it was a proud moment for the University that the President was among them to address the Convocation.

Recalling the objectives of the establishment of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, Governor observed that the University, set up and fully funded by Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, shall be fourteen years old in August this year. He said that this fully residential University provides learning programmes and research opportunities in Science, Technology, Architecture, Management, Social Sciences and the Humanities at the Graduate, Post-gradu-

ate and Doctoral levels and presently they have 1675 students of whom about 25% are from 23 States of the country, about 46% of the total number of students are girls and nearly 3600 students had passed out since the establishment of this University.

Governor observed that this University lays high emphasis on merit at the time of admitting students to the various academic programmes and, post admission, planned efforts are made to encourage and reward performance. Merit-cum-Means Scholarships are provided to students at all levels and Assistantships are awarded for the pursuit of higher studies. During the past year they have provided support valuing Rs. 176 lakh to the meritorious students.

Governor observed that when this University commenced functioning it faced varied challenges among which perhaps the foremost related to their Campus being not

well connected with the Jammu National Highway. He said that it is gratifying that in the past several years it has been possible to construct several roads and bridges which connect this Campus with the Pathankot-Jammu-Srinagar National Highway and with the Katra Railway Station which has virtually reduced the journey time from Jammu to half of what it was earlier. The University is now able to attract nationally renowned teachers and eminent researchers who fly to Jammu, lecture at the Campus and return the same day, if they so wish.

Governor said that it was a matter for considerable satisfaction that though still in its infancy this University has been ranked among the top 100 Engineering Institutions in the country and finds its place within the top 150 Universities of the country as per the recently concluded NIRF 2018.

Governor observed that the



University, set up essentially as a Science and Technology institution, has been striving to establish close connectivity with centres of excellence and with the leading industrial and business enterprises in the country. Governor noted that as a step in this direction, two outstanding entrepreneurs of India had been honoured by the University today, both of whom are steering enterprises which are known the world over. He said that the exceptional achievements of both these leaders of industry are a source of inspiration for all those

who are involved in the industry, business and management arenas in our country and he looked forward to Shri Mittal and Shri Munjal periodically visiting this Campus to interact with faculty and students and to advise the University regarding the pattern on which Technology and Business learning programmes should be developed for effectively meeting the emerging challenges.

Governor said that for the passing out students the Convocation marks the culmination of their hard work when, with degrees in their hands, they cross the portals of the University to seek employment or pursue higher studies. He congratulated the students who had received degrees, medals and awards, wished them very bright careers ahead and said that he expected all the passing out students to maintain high ethical and moral standards in their personal lives as well as in the course of

all their future professional engagements, wherever they chose to work.

Governor thanked Prof K.L. Chopra, former Director of IIT Kharagpur and Shri R.P. Agrawal, former Education Secretary of India, members of the Executive Council, for their continuing support and advice in regard to all matters relating to the management of this institution. He also thanked Prof D.P. Agrawal who recently steered an Academic Audit of this University. He complimented Prof Sanjeev Jain, Vice Chancellor, Deans, Faculty and the staff, for their sustained devotion to take the University forward on all fronts.

Earlier, Prof. Sanjeev Jain, Vice Chancellor, SMVDU, presented the Vice Chancellor's Report, highlighting the past achievements and future action plans. He gave details of the campus placements, publications brought out by the University.

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PRESIDENT

providing security at the airport and on the road routes the President travel," sources maintained.

"The routes from the airport to Raj Bhavan and from here to the Katra saw heavy presence of security forces," sources said. Sources said that Traffic on various routes was diverted.

During his earlier visit, the President had visited the Ladakh region on August 21 last year where he presented the President's Colours to the Ladakh Scouts Regimental Centre and the five battalions of the regiment.

Sources said that the President will attend a dinner hosted by the Governor at Raj Bhawan.

Meanwhile sources told KNS that Kovind after presenting degrees to the students during the sixth convocation of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, Katra, at Kakryal in Reasi district, expressed his anguish over the recent rape and murder incident.

"Society has to provide safety and security to children. The incident in J&K is an eye-opener for society and that moral values were eroding," according to sources the president said.

Governor NN Vohra and Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti were also present.

MEHBOOBA

She asked the students to re invoke among themselves the urge to innovate and do things differently, in order to bring around a change for better.

President, Ram Nath Kovind delivered the convocation address while Governor, N N Vohra also addressed the convocation.

The Chief Minister said stress should be laid on developing a value system free from aberrations and excesses against the weak. "When we talk of value system, I feel it is under real crisis. The recent happenings against weaker and underprivileged, especially the females are alarming and have shaken us as a society," she said. Our material growth of all sorts, she added, becomes meaningless if we are not able to become good human beings having compassion, humility, inclusive sense and a set of values which can distinguish us as civilized humans. She said while the endeavor to create a knowledge-based society must be there, we must also make value education an integral part of all our learning efforts.

The Chief Minister said Jammu and Kashmir has traditionally been a fountain of knowledge and spirituality. She said spiritualism has always instilled scholarship and knowledge among the masses in the State the examples of which are galore in history from Sharda Peeth to Shahdara Sharief which reflects our deep commitment to knowledge, scholarship and tolerance for differences and ideas.

Welcoming the President, Ram Nath Kovind on the occasion, Mehbooba Mufti said his life, work and struggle represent the best combination of scholarship, talent and wisdom. His struggle, against all odds, proves that with hard work, our country offers the very best opportunities to succeed, even to the most deprived sections of our society, she added.

Complimenting the University administration for its academic excellence, the Chief Minister said Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University has established itself as a centre of excellence in a short period of time and is playing a key role in the transformation of the State into a Knowledge Economy and Knowledge Society. She committed her wholehearted support to the University in its mission to pursue education, scholarship and research and its application to society.

Congratulating the graduating students on the occasion, Mehbooba Mufti said she visualizes the University, as part of a rich legacy and composite heritage, ushering the State and the society into a new world of peace and prosperity.

FAROOQ

that the matter is sub-judice. However, he added that the innocent girl must get justice and guilty delivered exemplary punishment.

He hoped people to maintain their cool and strengthen the time tested bonds of amity, unity and brotherhood.

Earlier, Dr Farooq Abdullah and Devender Singh Rana paid obeisance at the Golden Temple and prayed for universal peace and brotherhood.

Dr Abdullah also prayed for well being of the people of the country and Jammu and Kashmir State besides end to the disturbed conditions that have caused enumerable sufferings to the people.

PROTESTS

Reports said that the clashes between students and forces also took place in Tral area of South Kashmir's Pulwama district during which students of Government Degree College pelted stones on forces who is retaliation used tear gas can-

isters to disperse them.

Scores of people also sustained injuries during the incident, witnesses said.

Meanwhile, two police officers sustained injured during the clashes that reported between students of Islamic University of Sciences and Technology (IUST) Awantipora and forces on Wednesday.

The students of IUST held a protest to exhibit solidarity with Kathua minor girl.

Reports said that police swung into action after the students of the varsity staged protests on the Srinagar-Jammu highway at Awantipora, triggering clashes.

Officials said that the forces used tear gas canisters to disperse the students who were pelting stones on forces.

They said that two officials including SDPO and SHO Awantipora got injured who were rushed to a hospital for treatment.

Following the clashes, IUST management suspended the class work.

In north Kashmir's Bandipora area, clashes erupted between students of Boys Degree College Baramulla and forces after they staged protests against the rape-and-murder of Kathua girl.

Reports quoting eye witnesses said that police lobbed scores of tear gas shells to disperse the protesting students, triggering clashes.

They said that the students were holding a protest inside the college premises when tear gas was fired. The students raised slogans during the protest.

In Central Kashmir's Ganderbal district, the students of Degree College Ganderbal boycotted their classes and staged protest against the Kathua rape-and-murder.

The students assembled in the premises of the college and held protests, demanding apital punishment to the culprits.

Amid anti-culprits sloganeering, the students came out of the college premises and held sit-in on Ganderbal-Shalbhig road.

In Srinagar, the law students assembled at Srinagar's Pratap Park to protest in solidarity with the Kathua girl.

The law students including boys and girls chanted slogans in favour of justice for Kathua victim.

The students while holding placards reading slogans in favour of the victim and against the culprits, demanded stern action against the culprits.

The students while talking to KNS said that the culprits should be hanged till death.

Besides students, the lawyers and civil society members also held a protest in favour of Asifa at Srinagar's Pratap Park.

The lawyers also held a signature campaign in favour of the minor girl in which lawyers as well the civil society members participated. Meanwhile, police spokesman in a statement issued to KNS said that two policemen and two protesters were injured after peaceful protest demonstration turned violent in Anantnag in South Kashmir.

"A peaceful protest was taken out at Anantnag which was allowed by police and district administration. Subsequently some miscreants indulged in stone pelting and turned violent and tried to enforce forceful shutdown in Anantnag town. In the said incident 2 police personnel and 2 miscreants received injuries when they were hit by stones. All of them are stated to be stable," police spokesman said.

The statement further said that in another incident at Pulwama, while municipal committee Pulwama was busy in anti-encroachment drive, the demolition drive was pelted upon to disrupt the process. Police party reached the spot and subsequently dispersed the miscreants. No injuries were reported in this incident.

"In Awantipora miscreants tried to block main road but due to timely intervention of local police, the situation was handled and no street vandalism could take place", the statement reads. "The situation has been brought under control in all these locations," spokesman added.

MHA

approach to contain cross border infiltrations like strengthening of the border infrastructure and multi-tiered and multi-model deployment along the International Border and Line of Control. The ministry said the endeavour of the government has been to allow proactive and coordinated measures by all the security forces to safeguard the country from cross-border terrorism and to contain militancy.

The Centre wants to ensure that the democratic process is sustained and primacy of civil administration is restored to effectively tackle the socio-economic problems facing the people on account of the effects of prolonged militancy in the state, it said. The government also wants to ensure a sustained peace process and provide adequate opportunities to all sections of people in the state who eschew violence, the report said.

LAWYERS

Vir Das.

Talking to Kashmir News Bureau (KNS) Mr. Anand Mangnale, Director and Co-Founder Crowdnewsing said the total amount of 40,61,970 will be equally distributed among the families of Kathua and Unnao victims to pursue their cases.

"The amount raised by our campaign stands in the official account of Crowdnewsing and as soon as the amount get liquidated by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) the families of both victims will get the amount in form of cheques," Mangnale added.

Meanwhile, talking to Kashmir News Bureau, one of the Kathua victim's lawyers Advocate Talib Hussain said they are pleading the case free of cost, adding, it is the campaign of RSS under which some elements like Waqar Bhatti, Nazakat Khatana and others are trying to malign the credibility of our team and Shehla Rashid.

When asked how they managed the costs of traveling and other logistic help in the case, Talib said that 'All Tribal Coordination Committee' to which he is also the Chairman takes care of their financial assistance, adding a defamation case will be filed soon against the culprits trying to divert the issue.

Talib Hussain also thanked people of Kashmir and particularly media for their unflinching support to raise this issue which forced authorities to act instantly.

Meanwhile, talking to Kashmir News Bureau, Salman Nizami who offered the free accommodation to the victim family said there was no need to raise money in this case as it fought by the state itself, adding, some people are taking benefit over the pain of the victim family.

When contacted Waqar Bhatti he preferred not to talk citing the reason 'busy in protests.'

SHAH

"Shah said the Congress had defamed the country for several years around the world by using the term 'saffron terror' and 'Hindu terror'."

"Rahulji, Terror has no religion. Now Congress says we never used these words. Many Congress leaders including (Karnataka) Chief Minister Siddaramaiah are on record using these terms," he said. Following the BJP attack in the wake of the Mecca Masjid blast verdict on Monday, the Congress had said there was nothing called 'saffron terror' and asserted that terror cannot be linked to any religion or community. The party had also asserted that neither its leader Rahul Gandhi nor the party ever used the phrase.

The Congress had reacted in reply to the BJP attack over it following acquittal of right-wing activist Aseemanand and four others in the 2007 Mecca Masjid blast in Hyderabad.

The BJP had attacked Congress alleging the party had defamed Hindus by using the term "saffron terror" and demanded apology from both the previous and current Congress presidents - Sonia and Rahul Gandhi.

Recalling that former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, following the Congress' landslide victory in the 1985 Lok Sabha elections in wake of the assassination of erstwhile Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, had mocked at BJP by saying 'hum do, hamare do', Shah said his party today has a full majority in Parliament and more than 1,600 MLAs in 20 states.

"Rajiv Gandhi Ji had taunted us when we had just two 'MPs, saying 'BJP believes in hum do hamare do'. Today BJP has a full majority in Parliament, has more than 1600 MLAs, in power in 20 states and in numerous local bodies and municipalities," he said.

"Shah said the credit for forming government in 20 states goes to both the workers and 'Shakhi Kendra Pramukhs.'

"We started off with 10-party members and now we are the largest political party in the world with 11 crore party members," the BJP chief said.

SEHRAIE

by the police forces in the nook and corner, Islamabad, Kulgam, Shopian, Budgam, Sopore, Baramulla and Kupwara of the Jammu and Kashmir state, the Tehreek-e-Hurriyat chairman in a statement issued to KNS said that the young students, both male and female ones of Islamabad Degree college were forced to face a war like situation when the men in uniform resorted, without any provocation, to brisk tear-gas shelling and cane-charge, which caused injuries to the dozens of innocent students.

He further said that raids and widespread arrests spree-son for father and brother for brother- is a tailored ploy to demand ransom for their release.

Hailing the high spirits and the moral and courage of the people of Kashmir especially the young generation, the Tehreek-e-Hurriyat leader said the unbending resolve and invincible commitment for the sacred goal of freedom movement displayed by the people of Kashmir irrespective of the high

handedness and use of barbarism by Indian occupation forces has created a matchless history in the contemporary world.

The TeH Chairman while expressing his utmost satisfaction on the positive role played by our young generation, categorically said that no movement in the world history has been defeated by the imperialistic and aggressive forces that have been launched by the pious and young people with par excellent conviction and firm faith in their cherished goal.

He demanded a positive role of United Nations Human Rights Divisions to take cognizance of the gross human rights violations at the hands of Indian occupation forces in Jammu and Kashmir.

TRUCK

public.

The circulation of news item along with photographs of truck proved very useful & finally led to the identification of the said truck with registration no JK13D 518 and was accordingly seized and driver was arrested.

In this regard case FIR 49/2018 under section 279, 337, 304-A RPC stands registered in Police Station Sadder and investigation is under going on.

Circulation of news item in the media played vital role in identification of the said truck and subsequent arrest of the accused driver.

Srinagar police has thanked the general public for their co-operation in nabbing the accused.

RASHEED

that even the water supply of the whole Muslim population including victims family was cut off. By all angles it was obvious that Karbala was being repeated in Rasana. The Govt. has not taken any action so far against the Govt. officials including PHE officials and local police for their miserable failures.

The Govt. has failed to protect right of minorities in Jammu and whatsoever little is being said and done in Asifa's case is being portrayed like a favour to Muslim community. Had Govt. being truly neutral it would never have allowed Lal Singh, the former Minister, to carry out public gatherings in Kathua and Jammu districts yesterday. His speeches were even more hateful and communal than before and he levelled baseless charges against not only the Jammu Muslims but entire Muslim community of Kashmir."

Er. Rasheed appealed world community to ask India if it tries to hide its failures despite talking too late over Asifa's issue, what is the justification for denying punishment for those army men who were involved in mass gang rape in Kunan Poshpora in 1991 why is denying justice to Aasia and Neelofar being related to so called national interest.

Er. Rasheed appealed civil society of India to ask questions to their army, bureaucracy and politicians that how could they justify the rape cases of Kunan Polshpora and Shopian, despite the fact they are among the heinous crimes committed by the army and other men in uniform.

NAIDU

The rape-cum-murder of an eight-year-old child allegedly by right-wing activists at Kathua in Jammu and the alleged sexual assault of an Unnao resident by BJP MLA Kuldeep Sengar have put the ruling NDA government on the backfoot. BJP-ruled Assam has also witnessed a spike in crime against women in recent months. Residents of the state took out a series of protests after the brutal rape-cum-murder of a Class 5 student at Nagaon in March.

In what seemed to be a veiled reference to the recent Dalit protests against a Supreme Court order, Naidu then went on to denounce "those trying to create controversies on the basis of caste and religion" in the country. "They believe it is a shortcut to power. We should be careful about these people," he said, but refrained from naming any political party.

Naidu expressed his appreciation for a recent Asian Development Bank report predicting a 7.6% growth rate for India, but maintained that all sections of the society should be a part of this success story. Stressing on inclusive growth, he called upon the central and state governments to focus on bridging the rural-urban divide, poverty alleviation and eliminating illiteracy irrespective of caste, religion or any other consideration.

BRIEFS

administrative apparatus; growing incidence of corruption; impact of social media and enhancing radicalisation; and the challenges facing the school education and health sectors. Governor also informed Rashtrapati ji about issues relating to higher education and functioning of the Universities in the State.

PM addresses Indian Community in Stockholm

New Delhi, April 18: The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, today addressed the Indian Community in Stockholm. He thanked the Government of Sweden, in particular His Majesty the King of Sweden; and the Prime Minister of Sweden, Mr. Stefan Lofven who was present at the event, for the warm welcome he received in Sweden.

He said that India is going through a great transformation today. He said that the current Union Government had been elected on the mandate of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas. He said the Government has worked

towards a developed and inclusive India, in the last four years. He said all efforts are being made to create a New India by 2022.

The Prime Minister said that through initiatives such as International Yoga Day, efforts are also being made to see that India emerges as a global thought leader once again. He said the world is looking at India with confidence. In this context, he mentioned humanitarian relief and rescue efforts, the International Solar Alliance, and membership of key regimes such as MTCR, Wassenaar Arrangement, and Australia Group. He said

the world is acknowledging India's technological capability, including its space programme.

The Prime Minister said that because of digital infrastructure, the format of engagement between citizens and Government is changing. Technology is bringing about accountability and transparency, he said. He said access to Government is no longer a privilege, but a practice. In this context, he mentioned faster file disposal, Ease of Doing Business, GST, Direct Benefit Transfer, and access to cooking gas through the Ujjwala Yojana. The Prime Minister

said that through the MUDRA scheme, there are new opportunities available to entrepreneurs. He said 74 percent of the beneficiaries under the MUDRA scheme till now, are women. He also mentioned the Atal Innovation Mission, Skill India and Start Up India.

The Prime Minister said that India is also building International Partnerships to boost innovation. In this context he mentioned the innovation partnership with Sweden, and a similar initiative with Israel. He said the Government is focusing on Ease of Living. In this context,

he also mentioned the Ayushman Bharat scheme, which he described as the world's biggest healthcare assurance scheme.

The Prime Minister said that these steps are indicative of a transformation in India. He said that towards this end, the partnerships with Sweden and the other Nordic countries are very important.

The Prime Minister urged the gathering to not limit their connect with India, to just an emotional one. He said the emerging New India offers them many opportunities to innovate, trade and invest as well.

Plan for Accelerating Growth of Districts by 3%

New Delhi, April 18: To involve the districts more actively in the growth of the Indian economy and to formulate a common development vision starting from the district level, through a participatory mechanism, it has been decided by Union Commerce & Industry Minister Shri Suresh Prabhu that District Plan will be created for achieving this goal. Shri Suresh Prabhu emphasised the need to accelerate growth in the districts to ensure growth at the national level. There is need to create resource based plans, for the districts based on a bottom-up approach and implement the plan by going beyond a silo-ed mind-set. An addition of 3% growth at the district level will ensure that USD 5 trillion target for the Indian economy becomes achievable.

The Plan will provide specific interventions taking into account resources, strengths of the districts, sectoral interventions for agriculture including mapping of cropping pattern, industry including MSME and services relevant for the districts, skilling initiatives, Ease of Doing Business, access to credit and convergence of existing efforts in public and private sectors. Active participation of the State governments and district administration will be sought for effective implementation of the plan.

The initiative will begin with 6 districts, including Sindhudurg & Ratnagiri in Maharashtra, Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, Muzaffarpur in Bihar, Vishakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh and Solan in Himachal Pradesh have been selected. A Steering Committee will be formed to oversee creation and implementation of the plan. It will be headed by Minister for Commerce and Industry with members from different Ministry of Union Government and representatives from State Governments of Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. The Indian Institutes of Management (IIM) in the selected States will prepare the plan. An implementation committee is proposed at the District level to ensure implementation of the plan. The Committee will be headed by the District Collector/ District Magistrate.

Cities Eligible for upto 7-star rating under Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban)- 1st Regional Workshop on star rating of Garbage- Free Cities Inaugurated

New Delhi, April 18: The 1st regional workshop on star rating of garbage-free cities, organized by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) in collaboration with the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) was inaugurated by Smt. Meenakshi Lekhi, Member of Parliament in the presence of Sh. Durga Shanker Mishra, Secretary, MoHUA. Sh. Naresh Kumar, Chairman, NDMC & Sh. V K Jindal, National Mission Director-SBM(Urban) were also present at the event. Addressing the gathering, Ms Lekhi said that a coordinated approach with decentralized solutions should be put in place for tackling the huge generation of Municipal waste in the cities. Emphasizing on the importance of public par-

ticipation in making cities garbage free, she also pointed out for enforcing penalties for violators of hygiene and cleanliness principles.

Sh. Durga Shanker Mishra said that along with the annual Swachh Survekshan activity, the star rating of garbage free cities will create a healthy competition among the cities across the countries to achieve the goals of cleanliness and 100% solid waste management. The day-long workshop was attended by over 250 Urban Local Body (ULB) officials, including Mayors and Commissioners, from New Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Haryana and neighbouring ULBs of Uttar Pradesh. The workshop was held to familiarize and build the capacities of state and city

officials and other relevant stakeholders about the newly launched Star Rating Protocol of Garbage- Free Cities by MoHUA, which is a holistic evaluation system for the entire solid waste management (SWM) value chain.

The Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) focuses on two key objectives- eradication of open defecation and 100% scientific solid waste management (SWM) across all 4041 statutory towns and cities. To continue the momentum on scientific management of solid waste and motivate cities to achieve more cleanliness, the Star-Rating Protocol of Garbage Free Cities was launched by MoHUA on January 20, 2018. The 7-star rating is innovatively designed on a SMART.

Health coverage schemes must provide widest coverage: Vice President

New Delhi, April 18: he Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that there is a need to create health coverage schemes that provide widest coverage to the young, aged and infirm and those suffering from both critical acute and chronic ailments. He was addressing the gathering after launching the Atal Amrit Abhiyan by Assam Government, which seeks to provide access to quality medical care to 3.2 crore people, in Guwahati, Assam today. The Governor of Assam, Prof. Jagadish Mukhi, the Chief Minister of Assam, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, the Minister for Health & Family Welfare, Assam, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President called

on the private sector to supplement the efforts of the government in a big way in reaching out medical care to the people in rural areas. He further said that quality of health services should be good enough to improve the health of those receiving services. People should be protected against financial risk, ensuring that the cost of using services does not put people at risk of financial harm, he added.

The Vice President said that modern day lifestyle is leading to various non-communicable diseases and said that efforts are needed to arrest the growing incidence of such disease which is affecting even the young. There has to be concerted efforts from all stakeholders in healthcare to raise awareness among

the people on the dangers of leading sedentary lifestyles, eating junk food, harmful use of alcohol and tobacco, he added.

The Vice President stressed on the need to change school curriculum include lessons on NCDs and physical exercises should be made mandatory for school and college students. Wherever possible, yoga asanas should also be taught to children, he added.

The Vice President said that north-eastern States like the rest of India are facing shortage of medical manpower and medical facilities in rural areas. This shortage has to be bridged by opening more medical colleges and setting up more number of healthcare facilities in the rural places, he added.

Demolition drive against illegal structures conducted in Pulwama

PULWAMA, APRIL 18: In order to clear the encroachments and illegal constructions in Pulwama, District Administration today launched a massive demolition drive against unauthorized and illegal constructions in the town.

The demolition drive was headed by the District Development Commissioner Pulwama Ghulam Mohammad Dar, who was also accompanied by the Additional Deputy Commissioner Pulwama, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Tehsildar Pulwama, officers from municipal Corporation, Revenue Department and other concerned Departments. The drive was carried out from DC office Complex towards Hospital road, during which a number of unauthorized constructions and structures in the form of shops and walling were pulled down.

On the occasion DDC Pulwama said that District administration has initiated action against the offenders who have raised illegal constructions and encroachments in the town along road sides especially on foot paths. He said that the drive would continue in future. DDC warned people not to indulge in illegal construction activities and encroachments. He also said violators will be dealt according to the law.

Zulfkar inspects progress on upcoming FCS&CA Complex at Jammu

JAMMU, APRIL 18: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumers Affairs (FCS&CA) & Tribal Affairs, Chowdhary Zulfkar Ali today visited Warehouse, Bikram Chowk to inspect progress of ongoing construction work on Food Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs (FCS & CA) building.

The project is being executed by J&K Housing Board at an estimated cost of Rs 20 crore.

The Minister was accompanied by Director FCS&CA, Jammu, R.A Inqalabi, Deputy General Manager J&K Housing Board Rajesh Abrol, engineers of executing agency besides senior officers of concerned department.

During the visit, the Minister took round of various blocks of the building and inspected the ongoing construction works. He was informed that the construction work of Block 'A' would be



completed soon and work of slab of 2nd floor, Block 'B' is in full swing and would be completed at the end of this month.

Zulfkar directed the executing agency to accelerate the pace of work so that the prestigious project is completed well in time. He said that with its completion,

Directorate Office would be outfitted with all modern infrastructural facilities. He said that the government is paying focused attention on infrastructure upgradation in cohesion with infusion of new technology to ensure effective and efficient functioning of the Department.

"Our focus is on expediting development works, ensuring good governance and providing a corruption-free administration," he further said.

While reviewing the status of existing food stores at Ware House, Zulfkar directed the officers to prepare a DPR for the renovation/ repair of the same. He also directed for dismantling the sheds which are in dilapidated condition.

Zulfkar Ali asked the concerned to take measures for restoration of a Vintage car of the department parked at the Warehouse for showcasing it to the public visiting the area.

Divisional Commissioner reviews traffic management 'Continuous drive against encroachments, illegal vendors, traffic violators showing results'

SRINAGAR, APRIL 18: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Baseer Ahmad Khan today said that the continuous drive against roadside encroachments, illegal vendors and violators of traffic laws is showing the positive effect and the drive needs to be sustained to achieve the final goal of hassle-free movement of traffic and pedestrians.

The Divisional Commissioner was speaking at a meeting held to review the overall traffic scenario in Kashmir. The meeting was attended by RTO Kashmir, Amicus Curie, Chief Town Planner, SSP Traffic and representatives of SDA, SMC and other offices.

The meeting discussed in detail the steps taken by the government over the last few months in streamlining the traffic and explored the further scope of improvement in them. The Div Com directed for a sustained drive, up to six drives per day, by



SMC, police and other officials to get rid of illegal vendors in Lal, Chowk, Hari Singh High Street and other places. At Parimpora and Panthachowk, the Div Com directed to remove all illegal vendors and shift them to the dedicated vending zones earmarked for them.

He also directed to impose a fine of Rs 40,000 for shopkeepers who keep their merchandise outside of their shops. The SMC was also directed to stop external renovation works undertaken by shopkeepers without permission.

The Div Com said that the dedication of roadside parking has given positive dividends. The meeting was informed that 12 such parking are already functional and

three more are being finalized in the current week. The Div Com directed the officials to make all 47-parking functional within next 15 days. Furthermore, the intelligent traffic lights will be made functional by the end of the current month, it was revealed.

The RTO Kashmir informed the meeting that 55 percent of passenger taxis have been colour coded and entire exercise will be completed shortly. The Div Com directed the officials to explore providing of logos to Tourist Taxis. The Div Com said that with such steps, the entire traffic scenario will experience a sea change and common people will be the main beneficiaries.

Basharat Bukhari for ensuring sustainable irrigation facilities for horticulture

JAMMU, APRIL 18: Minister for Horticulture, Syed Basharat Ahmed Bukhari today reviewed the status of progress made by the committee constituted for inspecting the sites identified for providing and developing irrigation facilities on community basis in orchid areas falling in Karewas of Kashmir division. The meeting was convened here at Kissan Ghar, Narwal Mandi, Jammu.

The Minister also took stock of the implementation of directions passed in earlier meetings and sought detailed report of the progress achieved by the committee and recommendations being made thereof.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Horticulture, Manzoor Ahmad Lone, Director Horticulture, Jammu, Anuradha Gupta, Director Horticulture, Kashmir, Manzoor Ahmad Qadri, Additional Secretary Horticulture, Dr Subhash Chander, Deputy Director Horticulture, Mohammad Yousuf Dar besides committee members along with concerned officers of Horticulture department, PHE, I&FC and other departments.

Underlining the importance of enhancing the productivity and revamping

horticulture sector of the state, the Minister emphasized on providing better and sustainable irrigation facilities for horticulture and asked the concerned officers to take innovative initiatives to modern scientific lines for exploring possibilities to improve irrigation facilities for horticulture growers on community basis through community ponds, tanks, bore wells and tube wells.

"It is imperative to adopt modern irrigation methods as the traditional tube wells and bore wells used for irrigation in the orchids are falling short of fulfilling the purpose", he maintained.

The committee was constituted under the chairmanship of Deputy Director Central, Horticulture Kashmir which includes AEE Ground water, AEE Science and Technology department, AEE Civil and the concerned Chief Horticulture officers as its members submitted a detailed report of their recommendations.

The Minister asked the concerned officers to go for the exploration for possibility of water from bore wells and other irrigation sources and explore four areas - Shanganug and Kokernag from the South and Kharchak and

Bandipora from the North that has been identified for developing irrigation facilities.

Basharat Bukhari directed the officers to identify more areas where irrigation facilities are needed to be taken on community basis for assured supply.

Stressing on optimal utilization of resources and funds, the Minister called for clubbing different components to benefit the public at large. He directed the senior functionaries to personally monitor the status of work on the schemes in the districts. The Minister also directed the officers of the department to reach out to the public and make them aware about the schemes in horticulture sector, so that maximum benefits can be availed by them.

Basharat Bukhari asked the officers to prepare DPRs as per requirements and availability of resources and different characterization of both regions and requirements of hectares per season shall also be considered. He passed directions for phase wise installation of bore wells.

The Minister said that the committee shall be extended as per requirements and the similar committee to be constituted for Jammu as well.

Notary licenses of 2 advocates suspended

JAMMU, APRIL 18- Government today ordered that the certificates of practice as Notary issued in favour of Advocate Surjeet Singh and Advocate Ghulam Qadir Rather, for territorial jurisdiction of Municipal limits of Jammu city and for territorial jurisdiction of District Court Budgam respectively are put under suspension with immediate effect.

تعزیتی مجلس

مورخہ 18 ماہ اپریل 2018 کو عوامی ایکشن کمیٹی ہاک لال بازار سرینگر نے ایک مائی مجلس میں شرکت کی۔ جس میں الحاج میر محمد بوست ساکنہ بورشاہ محلہ لال بازار سرینگر کو خراج عقیدت پیش کیا گیا۔ اس موقع پر مقررین نے مرحوم کے حق میں ایصال ثواب پیش کیا اور مرحوم کے لواحقین کے ساتھ ہمدردی اور رنجش کا اظہار کیا۔ اس موقع پر سید الرحمن شخص صاحب نے فاتحہ خوانی کے فرائض انجام دیئے۔ غلام جیلانی لنگر صاحب، حاجی بشیر احمد شاہ صاحب، محمد یوسف صاحب، رؤف اور میر عبدالرشید صاحب اور دیگر زما عوامی ایکشن کمیٹی اس تعزیتی مجلس میں موجود تھے۔ میوزر زما حضرات نے لواحقین کو یقین دلایا کہ اس دکھ کی گھڑی میں ایکشن کمیٹی ان کے ساتھ ہے۔

اظہار تشکر

بہ فرزند ان مرحوم محمد یوسف میر ساکنہ بورشاہ محلہ لال بازار ان تمام رشتہ داروں، ہمسایگان اور دوست و احباب کا تہنیدل سے شکر یہ ادا کرتے ہیں جنہوں نے آج رسم چہارام فاتحہ خوانی میں شرکت کی۔ آبا ئی قبرستان ملکہا اور ہمارے غریب خانے پر آکر ہمدردی اور تعزیت پر ہی کر کے آپ سب نے ملکر ہمارا دکھ اور غم کو کم کرنے میں بہت حد تک اپنا کردار بخوبی نبھایا۔ جس کیلئے ہم آپ سب کے ممنون و مشکور ہیں۔

ہم یو این پریڈیٹ وقف بورڈ چیف شیخ صاحب، اعجاز احمد شاہ صاحب، پریس بکٹر میٹری امتیاز احمد صاحب، سہیل بارسکندری اسکول تلمدان پورہ، گلپور احمد شیخ صاحب، سٹیبل آفس وقف بورڈ کا بھی شکر یہ ادا کرتے ہیں جنہوں نے ہمارے ساتھ ہمدردی اور تعزیت کا اظہار کیا۔

سوگواران
میر توفیق احمد و میر امجد علی

Time and Us

Editorial
SRINAGAR
J&K

Slippery slick: On Centre's oil policy

After a sharp fall at the beginning of the year, oil prices have risen dramatically in recent weeks. The price of Brent crude has risen by around \$10 since it touched a short-term low of around \$62 in early February, hitting its highest mark since late 2014. Tensions in West Asia after U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to strike Syria helped push up prices. But it is important to separate short-term volatility in oil prices owing to geopolitical tensions from longer-term trends in the oil market. In its latest market report, the International Energy Association (IEA) noted that with oil prices ruling over \$70, the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has "accomplished" its goal of ending the glut in global oil supply. Notably, OPEC cut production by around 201,000 barrels a day in March compared to February. Yet, total world oil supply actually rose by 180,000 barrels a day in March, as output from non-OPEC countries, including the U.S., has been increasing in response to higher oil prices. IEA executive director Fatih Birol said last week that the next wave of shale supply may be in the offing as oil prices have remained high for some time now.

In India, rapidly rising international crude oil prices have failed to push local petrol and diesel prices upwards in equal measure. The retail selling prices of petrol and diesel across major Indian cities have in fact risen by less than a rupee since the beginning of April. That is, they are not in sync with the upward rise in crude oil prices. Last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for more 'responsible' oil prices, which he said have been in "roller coaster" mode for too long. Oil prices, he argued, need to factor in the interests of both consumer and producer. This assertion, along with the talk of allying with China and other Asian countries now to buy oil from OPEC members at lower prices, would have held more weight if the government's actions matched the sentiment. It has imposed high duties on petroleum products ever since crude oil prices started moderating in 2014, but has been reluctant to scale down those duties in the face of rising prices, leading to record pump level prices. This clearly doesn't benefit the consumer. Now, with the general elections about a year away and critical Assembly polls in Karnataka just a month away, the Centre is being cautious not to have higher oil import costs passed on to consumers. This flies in the face of the pricing freedom it had ostensibly granted to the oil marketing companies and packaged as a major deregulation reform. So its stance hasn't benefited the producers either, as is reflected in their falling stock prices. How the Centre responds to rising international crude oil prices was always going to be the litmus test of its commitment to fuel price deregulation. In the current situation, it appears that the government has only tied itself up in knots over the petroleum pricing policy, and with it, its reformist credentials.

2019 GENERAL ELECTION WILL BE NO CAKEWALK FOR NARENDRA MODI, BJP

► Milan Vaishnav

In about 12 months, Indian voters will go to the polls to elect their next Parliament. While elections in India are notoriously difficult to predict, one need not go out on a limb to declare that the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of Prime Minister Narendra Modi would be the clear favourite if the elections were to be held today. Following the BJP's decisive 2014 mandate, many analysts confidently proclaimed that Modi would remain in power for at least two terms. Opinion polls reveal that Modi remains highly popular after four years in office, and the BJP has managed to methodically expand its footprint in the numerous state elections since 2014. The BJP and its allies now run 21 of 29 states; prior to Modi's election, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) controlled just eight. The Opposition has struggled to counter the BJP onslaught.

Yet the election's clear front-runner is far from invulnerable. Although the intricacies of the upcoming race remain unknown, underlying structural conditions suggest far rockier terrain may lie ahead. In particular, four crucial objectives keep BJP strategists up at night: expanding beyond regional strongholds, recruiting new — and retaining old — coalition partners, withstanding a disappointing economic performance, and contending with fluctuations in voter mobilisation. The party's performance in the 2019 election will hinge on its ability to address these potential vulnerabilities and the Opposition's ability to exploit them.

Reimagining the map
Pulling off an encore of the BJP's sweeping 2014 victory will be a tall order; to compensate for potential losses in its core areas, the party must venture into new territory. In 2014, the BJP swept areas where it traditionally enjoys strong support in northern and western India. Just eight states — Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh — accounted for over 75% of the BJP's tally in Parliament.

Replicating the performance will be difficult. After all, Indian voters are legendary for their tendency to harbour anti-incumbency sentiments; research suggests that members of Parliament (MPs) are just as likely to get thrown out of office at the end of their term as to get voted back in. There are also state-level anti-incumbency effects that have negative spillovers on national politics. Parliamentary candidates representing a given state's ruling party enjoy an electoral advantage in national elections, but only when national elections are held early in the state government's term. Once this honeymoon period is over, holding power in India's states becomes a liability in general elections. This poses a problem for the BJP, which is the ruling party in all eight of these core states; in five of them, its governments are nearing the end of their terms.

Because Modi and BJP president Amit Shah know engineering another sweep of these core states will be difficult, they have focused on expanding the BJP's footprint into parts of the country where it traditionally has been weak. Hence, the BJP's painstaking devotion to breaking into India's Northeast, which is often seen as inconsequential to the overall electoral picture given its sparse population. Yet the region boasts 25 parliamentary seats, a tempting prize for a party that covets new territory to compensate for losses likely to be sustained



elsewhere. Thanks to a series of recent triumphs, the BJP now sits in government in seven of the eight northeastern states and is building up organisational and alliance networks across the region. Whereas the Congress retains the capacity to put up a fight in the Hindi heartland, its stature in the Northeast has diminished.

Having established a foothold in northeastern India, the BJP now aims to increase its strength along India's eastern seaboard in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and West Bengal. With the exception of Andhra — where the BJP has worked primarily through its now estranged alliance partner, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) — the aforementioned states serve as a firewall the BJP has struggled to penetrate in national elections. Together, these five states collectively account for 144 seats in parliament. Each is home to one — or more — powerful party with strong linguistic, regional, and cultural identities the BJP currently lacks.

However, this firewall may be fracturing. In West Bengal, the BJP trails the ruling Trinamool Congress in terms of statewide appeal. But it views the demise of the two principal opposition forces — the Left and the Congress — as providing a crucial opening. Odisha's ruling Biju Janata Dal won 20 of 21 parliamentary seats in 2014, ceding just one to the BJP. But the latter won a quarter of the vote and has subsequently performed well in municipal elections. In Tamil Nadu, the BJP is a bit player on its own but sees the potential to make inroads through alliances. Fissures within the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam have given the BJP hope that the party system might be ripe for realignment.

Coalition dynamics
Sustaining previous hard-won gains and breaking new ground in pockets of the country outside BJP strongholds, however, will require partners. On this score, the BJP's prognosis is mixed.

In three recent state elections — Goa, Manipur, and Meghalaya — the BJP failed to emerge as the single largest party. Nonetheless, the BJP formed government in all three by winning over smaller parties that decided to join a party gaining momentum rather than one losing it.

However, traditional BJP allies are voicing concerns about the party's methods, raising the possibility that its coalition could fracture. The Shiv Sena announced in January that it would contest the 2019 elections

alone. In March, the TDP withdrew from the NDA over the denial of "special category status" for Andhra. These ruptures, while not fatal or irreversible, complicate the BJP's electoral arithmetic.

Luckily for the BJP, the Opposition remains in disarray. While the Congress will likely gain seats in 2019, its leaders privately admit that a triple-digit figure would be a stretch. Left parties have seen a precipitous decline nearly everywhere save Kerala. The Aam Aadmi Party has struggled to extend its reach beyond the national Capital. Moreover, with the exception of the 2015 Bihar elections and recent Lok Sabha bypolls in Uttar Pradesh, parties opposed to the BJP have failed to forge a united front. Regional players could give the BJP a run for its money, but doing so will require them to work cooperatively — something that does not come naturally to bitter rivals.

Economic anxiety

But it is not only allies the BJP must worry about retaining; many voters who were swayed by Modi's promise of ushering in 'acche din' by reenergising the Indian economy have also grown restive. As economic progress has fallen short of expectations, anxieties about the lack of jobs have led to massive popular protests in state after state.

BJP strategists once believed that economic renewal would be the hallmark of the 2019 campaign. Unfortunately for them, economic growth remains well below the country's potential. A failure to deal quickly with a systemic banking crisis has plagued the investment cycle. Inflation, which has fallen from double-digit levels, remains a risk in an election year when the pressure to spend will be elevated. Furthermore, the Modi government's demonetisation exercise and the sweeping Goods and Services Tax (GST) reform have hurt short-term growth. More importantly, job growth has been anaemic. According to the Reserve Bank of India, total employment actually shrank between 2014 and 2016.

The BJP is betting that its flagship welfare schemes might inoculate it against its patchy economic record. Stung by Rahul Gandhi's 'suit-boot ki sarkar' jibe, Modi has doggedly tried to burnish his pro-poor credentials by doubling down on major welfare schemes — such as Jan Dhan Yojana, Ujjwala, and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana.

These efforts notwithstanding, economic travails are especially apparent in rural India. Although once the bailiwick of the

Congress, many rural voters in 2014 switched their allegiance to the BJP. The rural shift toward the BJP could easily swing back to the Congress; despite Modi's promises of doubling agrarian incomes by 2022, agriculture remains in a state of disrepair.

A clear warning shot was fired in December 2017's Gujarat elections. Although it retained its majority in the state assembly, the BJP encountered serious rural opposition — especially in Saurashtra — where the Congress prevailed by capitalising on caste politics and the waning fortunes of farmers. In March 2018, as many as 50,000 farmers descended on Mumbai to demand the BJP-run Maharashtra government move swiftly to aid them. All eyes will be on upcoming state elections in Karnataka (in May) and Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan (in December) to discern whether this drop-off in rural locales is sustained.

Voter mobilisation

A final concern for the BJP is mobilisation. In 2014, the party successfully channelled popular disaffection with the Congress into a record voter turnout. Indeed, there was a strong association between the growth in voter turnout and the improved fortunes of the BJP in the 2014 election.

A key source of strength came from young voters: states with the largest increases in the share of first-time voters in 2014 also experienced the biggest gains in BJP vote share. With the novelty of Modi and BJP rule in New Delhi wearing thin, there is a risk that voter turnout will return to ordinary levels, reducing the BJP's enthusiasm advantage.

One key demographic the BJP believes it can energise is women. Although they do not vote as a bloc, the party believes several of its welfare schemes can influence their votes. This is significant because Indian women are voting in greater numbers than ever before. In 2014, women voted at higher rates than men in a majority of states. At the state level, the female turnout now regularly surpasses the male turnout.

The real challenge, however, is mobilising voters as the incumbent. One possibility is that the BJP will choose to invoke the Hindutva card more intensively to energise its base. Such a move toward polarisation would become even more likely if the Opposition successfully bands together to forge a common anti-BJP front. Yet such a risky strategy could turn off as many voters as it galvanises.

Daughter of Jammu

► Veenu Gupta

An obscure village Rassana in district Kathua has suddenly become the most debated place for the whole country, albeit for all wrong reasons. Barbaric and heinous crime of gang rape and then brutal murder of a minor and innocent girl of only 8 years of age belonging to Nomad community of Bakerwal. What followed was absolute commotion.

But some questions are to be answered first. She was kidnapped and kept in confinement and repeatedly raped over a period of not less than a week and our police system was not responding. No system was in place from where Home Minister of State could get information and act swiftly to such ghastly situation. Instead, the victim family approached the High Court but by that time the innocent child had lost her life. But please don't blame system or lack of it. Find easy targets to cover up.

After initial cover up by local police when social media of Kashmir took the issue in big way to project it as hate crime to divide society, the Govt meekly sur-

rendered and directed constitution of SIT by Crime Branch and then persons put in the team fully exposed what was the desire — to appease media and separatists in Kashmir. Prominent amongst members of SIT is a police officer who was involved in raping a girl of minority community and killing her brother in custody in Thathri about a decade back. Crime Branch team coming and harassing the whole village led to mass unrest in people and they demanded that investigation should be done fairly. None defended the culprits though. Demand of impartial investigation gathered momentum and overnight civil society constituted team named Hindu Ekta Manch which put demand for CBI enquiry instead of Crime Branch for whom there was large scale mistrust.

Coming days saw momentum getting strong and spreading to Kathua Hiranagar and Samba and also Jammu as people sensed motive of Crime Branch to create wedge on communal lines and branding one community as devil. With spread of issues spontaneously the political leaders also responded and two ministers were detailed by BJP to go and talk



to agitating people. Ministers Lal Singh and Chandar Prakash Ganga having listened to people assured them that their point will be put before the Government and that CBI investigation will be in the interest of both victims and culprits. They never supported the accused rather they took a stand that whoever has committed crime should be punished. Matter was taken to Chief Minister but she never wanted to annoy

her core constituency, so she shot down the proposal. In the meanwhile sensing reaction of people, Crime Branch got petition filed by victim's family before High Court for monitoring so as to block the Government from referring the matter to CBI.

Jammu Bar in the meantime took many issues involving sentiments of Jammu people including this issue in its hand as also Rohingyas and tribal

notification giving illegal protection to Gujjars and Bakerwals from eviction from encroachment. Bars suspended work in court and during this period, advocate for the victim party continued appearing in the court. BJP, in the meanwhile, passed a resolution in the working committee taking a clear stand that it stands with the victim and sought severe punishment for criminals but maintained that no innocent should be harassed. In its press conference, it clarified that there should be no agitation on this issue, and the matter should be taken to the court instead of public. Bar General House, however, decided to continue with Jammu Bandh seeking assurance from Govt instead.

Another drama which unfolded was the commotion caused by lawyers in Kathua at the time of presentation of challan by Crime Branch, such conduct by lawyers was totally uncalled for. Even if the investigation by Crime Branch was shoddy the proper way was to challenge it in court. Challan was accepted by Magistrate late night as can be seen from instructions from Administrative Judge. An incomplete challan where investigation

is half done as such has been accepted because of conduct of Kathua lawyers. And, in the meanwhile, Daughter of Jammu waits in Heavens with moist eyes for justice to be delivered to her.

Media including national media in the meanwhile took the issue in a twisted way by projecting that demand of BJP Ministers for CBI investigation was against victim. One fails to understand how demanding fair investigation is against justice and how CBI is communal. These two Ministers under pressure of media thought it better to resign than to put party to embarrassment.

Now the worst part of the whole scenario started with media projecting Jammu Bar and rather Jammu society as against the interest of the victim and even Supreme Court took cognizance of petition and issued notices to Jammu Bar to check its conduct. So demand of CBI investigation became a crime for Jammu. In the meanwhile, vested elements, Separatists and land mafia has the last laugh as no one will dare to ask them to vacate Govt land occupied by particular community which became victims who are to be protected.

Muslims, women get raw deal in ticket distribution for Karnataka polls

Only 22 women and 23 Muslims have been fielded by the Congress, BJP and the Janata Dal (Secular) for the Karnataka assembly polls so far.

The three principal parties have already announced over 497 candidates for the electoral contest on May 12. While the Congress fielded 15 women and 15 Muslims out of 218 candidates, the BJP propped four women but no Muslim in its list of 154 so far. The JD(S) did not do much better, having named just four women and seven Muslims in its list of 126 candidates.

According to the 2011 Census, women comprise around 50% of the population while Muslims account for around 13%. But individually, these groups do not constitute even 5% of the total candidates announced.

Political leaders said the prospect of victory trumps societal representation in matters concerning candidate nomination. Only six women and 11 Muslims were elected to the Karnataka assembly, comprising 224 legislators, in the 2013 election.

"Victory in the polls was the only consideration in our mind while picking candidates," said Dinesh Gundu Rao, working president of the state Congress. He added that the number of Muslims may go up slightly as the party was yet to pick candidates for six constituencies – including Shanti Nagar.



HD Kumaraswamy, JD(S) leader and the party's chief ministerial face, said the party would increase its Muslim-women tally because it has announced candidates for just 126 seats until now. "We will ensure that the number of Muslims and women is increased in our second list of 98 candidates. In all, we hope to prop up 15 candidates from each group," he added.

Repeated attempts to reach BJP spokespersons proved unsuccessful. Noted writer BT Lalitha Nayak said the patriarchal structures in society are intact despite visible changes on the surface, and this is the primary reason for the under-representation of women in electoral politics. "Unfortunately, there is a

feeling that women will not be able to compete against men – especially in politics," she observed. "As victory is the only criterion that matters to political parties, this situation is unlikely to change soon."

Nayak held differing standards for male and female politicians as one of the primary reasons for this perception. "For example, if a female politician distributes liquor among her supporters in the same way as some male candidates do, she would be boycotted even by women voters," she said.

While the writer admitted that reservation for women could help to an extent, she maintained that strict implementation of rules by the Elec-

tion Commission was a better solution. "This can become a level playing field for women only if the cap on political funding is strictly enforced, and criminal activity is curbed," said Nayak.

Qazi Arshad Ali, a former legislator, said the 1978 elections witnessed the highest number of Muslim candidates being elected to the Karnataka assembly. "As many as 15 Muslim candidates won back then, as opposed to 11 in the 2013 elections," he added.

Ali said there were two primary reasons for the under-representation of Muslims in Karnataka politics. "Although Muslims account for around 13% of the population, they are spread evenly across the state... they are not concentrated. There are only two seats in the state where Muslims are a majority – Chamaraja in Mysuru district and Gulbarga North."

The second reason, he said, was the increasing competition between political parties. "When the Congress was the dominant force, it could get anybody elected. But that is no longer the case. The number of Muslim representatives has declined because the prospect of victory is now the only criterion for consideration," he added.

Ali said the situation would have been similar for the SC/ST community in the state too, if it hadn't been for reservation.

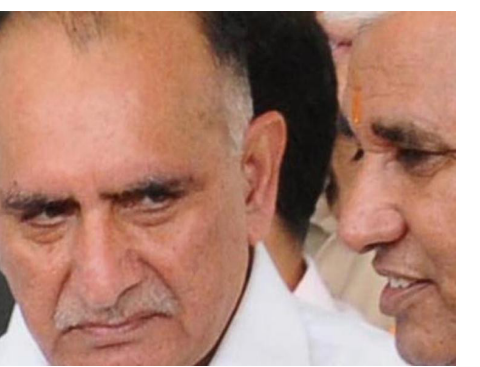
BJP moves to rejig organisations in poll-bound Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan

Having suffered reverses in recent bypolls, the BJP moved to rejig its organisations in two states where Assembly elections are due later this year, as it appointed a new party president in Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday and appeared set to bring in a new chief in Rajasthan.

BJP president Amit Shah appointed Rakesh Singh, the party's chief whip in Lok Sabha, as the head of its Madhya Pradesh unit, replacing Nandkumar Singh Chauhan, who had been at the helm since August 2014. A BJP statement said Rajasthan party chief Ashok Parnami and Andhra Pradesh unit chief K Hari Babu – both of whom resigned – have been made members of its national executive, besides Chauhan.

Parnami on Wednesday resigned as BJP chief of Rajasthan. Sources said new heads of the party in Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh will be announced soon. "I have worked for strengthening the party as its worker. I will continue to work in accordance with responsibilities given to me as a disciplined party worker," Parnami said. He was appointed Rajasthan BJP chief in February 2014 and is an MLA from Jaipur's Adarsh Nagar constituency. Asked if his resignation was a fallout of the BJP's defeat in the recent Lok Sabha bypolls in Alwar and Ajmer, Parnami said, "Any defeat or victory is a collective responsibility and individuals are not responsible."

Union minister Narendra Singh Tomar, who was in contention for the post of party



president in Madhya Pradesh, will be its campaign committee chief, sources said.

Elections to the 230-member Madhya Pradesh Assembly will be held by the end of the year. The BJP is in power in the state for 15 years and chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has led it to convincing victories in the 2008 and 2013 Assembly polls.

However, the party's loss in a string of bypolls coupled with agitations by farmers and Dalits has given the opposition Congress hope that it can breach the saffron fortress this time.

The BJP is believed to be facing a much stronger challenge in Rajasthan, underlined recently in its loss in the two Lok Sabha bypolls. Rajasthan too will go to polls later this year. In Andhra Pradesh, the party has been left without an ally and hopes to strengthen its organisation under a new president. It has claimed that the decision of the Telugu Desam Party to break ties has given the party an opportunity to broaden its base.

Former Tripura CM Manik Sarkar asks for govt bungalow and vehicle as oppn leader

Former chief minister and now leader of opposition in Tripura Assembly Manik Sarkar is likely to get government accommodation and a vehicle after he sought the same from the government.

He has been staying at the CPI(M) party office since the BJP government took over about a month ago.

Sarkar, who ruled the state for 20 years, had moved to CPI(M) party office with his wife Panchali Bhattacharya on March 8, a day before oath-taking ceremony of the new BJP-IPFT government as he did not have a home in Agartala.

In a letter, to Tripura legislative assembly secretary Bamdeb Majumder last week, Sarkar sought government accommodation near the chief minister's official residence and a vehicle according to his entitlement as leader of opposition in the assembly.

Majumder confirmed receiving the letter in which he has sought government home.



"Sarkar verbally requested to allot him either an Innova or Scorpio as he is not physically fit to travel in an Ambassador car," Majumder said, adding that a Bolero jeep was given to him after the request was received.

But Sarkar did not accept the Bolero, which was about five years old and had been driven 1.25 lakh km. The former CM who is in Hyderabad to attend the CPM's party congress which begins on Wednesday, could not be reached for comments as he

doesn't carry a mobile phone.

CPM state secretary Bijan Dhar said that Sarkar has asked for a large vehicle to travel to different parts of the state as he could not ride in an Ambassador due to his physical problem.

Dhar said Sarkar had told him that he could take the Innova belonging to CPM party office if the BJP government cannot provide him the vehicle. "Being a leader of opposition, Manik Sarkar is supposed to get required privileges and facilities like

accommodation and vehicle. He had specified the vehicle verbally due to his physical problem," Dhar said.

But the BJP took pot shots at Sarkar, saying he has turned a 'bourgeoisie.'

"Sarkar had rejected a vehicle allotted to him for his movement and specified a particular brand of SUV. It shows that though he was known as the poorest chief minister of the country, he leads a luxurious lifestyle. His demands proved the point," BJP spokesperson Subrata Chakraborty said without elaborating how the demand for a particular vehicle because of Sarkar's health problem means he indulges in luxury.

Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb is scheduled to move into his official residence Wednesday. The lane that leads to chief minister and other cabinet ministers' official residences was renamed after Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookherjee after removing the 15-year-old name 'Marx Engel Sarani.'

Trump and Abe talk trade as well as relations with North Korea

Seeking to reassure Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of their close alliance ahead of planned talks with North Korea, the Trump administration has signalled it is open to considering exempting Japan from new steel and aluminum tariffs that Abe opposes.

Hosting Abe at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Trump said the tariffs could be a topic during the visit, which comes as Trump prepares for an historic summit with North Korea's Kim Jong Un.

Trump also gave Abe a win on Tuesday, pledging to raise the issue of Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea, a top Japanese priority, in his meeting with Kim.

But Trump later suggested there was one area where he and Abe would have to agree to disagree: the Trans-Pacific trade partnership, which Trump pulled the U.S. out of days after his inauguration, but has recently said he might be open to re-joining.



"While Japan and South Korea would like us to go back into TPP, I don't like the deal for the United States," Trump tweeted, following a dinner with Abe and their wives. "Too many contingencies and no way to get out if it doesn't work. Bilateral deals are far more efficient, profitable and better for OUR workers."

The two-day Trump-Abe summit played out amid growing tensions between the two countries over North Korea and trade. Japan has warned that Kim may simply be trying to buy time and has raised concerns that the U.S. might not press Kim to abandon his short- and medium-range

missiles, which pose an immediate threat to Japan, as they discuss the country's nuclear weapons program.

Japan has also been questioning why it wasn't granted exemptions to Trump's protectionist measures on steel and aluminum when most other key U.S. allies – among them Australia, Canada, the European Union and Mexico – have been.

But Abe spent much of Tuesday praising Trump's courage for agreeing to meet and suggested the two had already come to terms on several contentious issues.

Speaking through a translator during one of their meetings, Abe said he and Trump had had "very in-depth discussions" on both North Korea and economic issues and said that "on those two points" they had "successfully forged a mutual understanding."

The two did not reveal what those agreements were, but Abe had been expected to urge Trump to exempt Japan from the tariffs and press him on the missile issue.

Larry Kudlow, the director of the National Economic Council, had said earlier Tuesday that issuing Japan the waiver was "on the table," but he declined to say what Trump would ask for in return.

The talks came amid news that CIA Director Mike Pompeo had recently traveled in secret to North Korea to meet with Kim ahead of a U.S.-North Korea summit planned in the next two months. Two officials confirmed the trip to The Associated Press on Tuesday. The officials were not authorized to discuss the visit publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Narendra Modi, Theresa May discuss chemical attacks in Syria, UK

Prime Minister Theresa May and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi on Wednesday discussed recent chemical attacks in Syria and poisoning of two people in Britain's Salisbury, with May reiterating her government's position on Russia.

"The Prime Minister (May) reiterated the UK's position on Russia's recent destabilising behaviour, underlined by the attack in Salisbury and the protection provided for the Syrian regime's repeated use of chemical weapons against its people," a Downing Street spokesperson said.

Britain has blamed Russia for the Salisbury incident in March, which set off an international row between the West and Moscow.

The spokespersons said after their breakfast meeting that both expressed concern and made clear their opposition to the use of chemical weapons by any party in any circumstances.

Modi and May discussed during the meeting that lasted over one hour a range of issues, including Brexit and the shared priorities between the two countries in the Indo-Pacific, and committed themselves to working more closely together to ensure it remained free and open.

"The Prime Minister updated Prime Minister Modi on the progress



of the UK's withdrawal from the EU, saying the implementation period agreed in March gives Indian companies and investors the confidence that market access will continue on current terms until the end of 2020," the spokesperson said. "She reiterated that the UK will remain committed to global free trade and investment and that the UK will remain a leading hub for global finance. Prime Minister Modi said there would be no dilution in the importance of the UK to India post-Brexit. He said

the City of London was of great importance to India for accessing the global markets and would remain so," the spokesperson added.

The interaction included discussion on the progress made on bilateral defence and security cooperation since May's visit to India in 2016 and the agreement to a number of Defence Capability Partnerships in key strategic areas, with closer military-to-military ties.

They agreed to continue working together closely to combat terrorism,

radicalisation and online extremism, an official source said.

May updated Modi on the progress of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, saying the implementation period agreed in March gave Indian companies and investors the confidence that market access will continue on current terms until the end of 2020.

The leaders also welcomed the £1 billion of commercial deals agreed on Wednesday and agreed to build on the recommendations of the UK-

India Joint Trade Review to reduce barriers to trade, to make it easier to do business in both countries and enable a stronger bilateral trade relationship for the future.

"Looking to the future the Prime Minister and Prime Minister Modi discussed the new UK-India Tech Partnership agreed today which will create thousands of jobs and generate significant investment in both our economies. The Prime Minister said the Partnership will be at the core of much that we'll do together over the next decade," according to the spokesperson.

Prime Minister Modi arrived in London early on Wednesday to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) as he looks to enhance India's role in multilateral organisations.

Modi is the first Indian prime minister to attend the meet in nearly a decade; former vice-president Hamid Ansari represented India in 2011 and 2015 while former external affairs minister Salman Khurshid attended the 2013 meeting. He will meet Queen Elizabeth, attend the signing of several patents, launch the Ayurvedic Center of Excellence, and take part in a diaspora event at Central Hall Westminster.

Nordic countries support India's bid to United Nations Security Council

India is a strong candidate for a permanent seat in a reformed United Nations Security Council, according to a joint statement issued in Stockholm after the first Indo-Nordic Summit. "The Nordic countries (Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Finland) agree that India is a strong candidate for a permanent seat in a reformed Security Council expanded with both permanent and non-permanent members," said the statement issued late on Tuesday.

The Nordic countries and India reaffirmed the need for the Council's reform, including its expansion in both permanent and non-permanent seats to make it more representative, accountable, effective and responsive to the realities of the 21st century.

"The Nordic countries welcomed India's application for membership to the Nuclear Suppliers' Group and reaffirmed their commitment to work constructively within the Group with the aim of reaching a positive outcome at the earliest opportunity," it said. India and the Nordic nations also agreed to deepen cooperation on issues related to global security, economic growth, innovation and climate change at the Summit which was attended by Modi during his visit in Stockholm. "The Summit emphasised India's strong commitment to innovation and digital initiatives as key to prosperity and sustainable development, with national flagship programmes such as Make in India, Startup India, Digital India and Clean India," said the statement. The Prime Ministers acknowledged that terrorism and violent extremism were the major challenges for the international community. The leaders discussed global security, including cyber security, based on their shared values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. For India, Nordic countries are a potential source for clean technology, environmental solutions, port modernisation, cold chain, skill development, innovation among other areas.

Depression in mothers can hurt child's IQ, even in their teenage

Many mothers - whether they are new to motherhood or are bringing up children of different ages -- go through phases of blues. Maternal depression is common post child birth; it is often called baby blues. Feelings of helplessness, fatigue, poor sleep, all combined with the new responsibilities of motherhood can often be overwhelming to a new mother. In 9 women experience depression before, during or after pregnancy.

Now, according to a study -- published in the journal Child Development -- when a mother's depression goes untreated, it can negatively impact a child's cognitive development up to the age of 16. The findings suggest that early identification and treatment of maternal depression is key to healthy growth of her children.

For the study, researchers surveyed about 900 healthy children and their mothers living in Santiago, Chile, at five-year intervals from the child's infancy through age 16. They observed how affectionate and responsive mothers were to their children at each age period, as well as how much mothers provided age-appropriate learning materials.



Impact on IQ

These children were then assessed on verbal cognitive abilities using standardised IQ tests. Mothers were also tested for symptoms of depression.

"The consistency and longevity of these results speak to the enduring effect that depression has on a mother's parenting and her child's development," she added. On a scale from one to 19, the average verbal IQ score for all children in the study at age five was 7.64. Children who had severely

depressed mothers were found to have an average verbal IQ score of 7.30 compared to a score of 7.78 in children without depressed mothers.

The difference in IQ The difference may seem small (from 7.78 to 7.30), but it was highly meaningful when it comes to assessing the child's verbal skills. "Our study results show the long term consequences that a child can experience due to chronic maternal depression," she added.

East said study data suggested

approximately 20% of mothers who are severely depressed when their child turns age one remain depressed for a long time. "For health care providers, the results show that early identification, intervention and treatment of maternal depression are key," said East.

First and foremost, a complete evaluation is needed to identify whether the mother is depressed and the degree of the condition. This test will also help the health care provider understand trigger points. It is important to continue follow-ups to make sure that the treatment is complete.

According to another study published in the British Journal of Psychiatry, mothers who sing in groups with their babies may overcome the symptoms of post-natal depression more quickly. Singing workshops saw the mothers learning lullabies and songs from around the world with their babies and creating new songs together about motherhood. Those with moderate to severe symptoms of post-natal depression reported a much faster improvement than mothers in the usual care and play groups.

Why middle-aged smokers should quit

New York: Middle-aged individuals who smoke could be at far greater risk of developing heart failure than those who never smoked, or those who quit, according to new research.

Heart failure is a chronic condition in which the heart does not pump blood properly.

"Previous research has focused on smoking and atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries, but not enough attention has been given to the other bad effects of smoking on the heart," said Michael E. Hall, a cardiologist at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in the US.

The new study found that current smokers were nearly three times more likely to be hospitalised for heart failure, while current smokers who smoked a pack or more a day were over three times more likely to be hospitalised.

Current smokers' left ventricle -- the heart's main pumping chamber -- showed early signs of not working properly.

These changes in the left ventricle's structure and function are likely put a person at greater risk of developing heart failure, Hall



said.

For the study, detailed in the journal Circulation, the team included 4,129 participants, aged 54 and of African-American origin.

The study took into account high blood pressure, diabetes, body mass and other factors that might have biased results.

Even those with a smoking history, equivalent to smoking a pack a day for 15 years, were also twice as likely to be hospitalised for heart failure.

"As healthcare professionals, we would recommend that all patients quit smoking anyway, but the message should be made even more forcefully to patients at higher risk of heart failure," Hall said.

Over 100 genes that determine hair colour identified



London: Scientists have identified 124 genes that play a major role in determining the colour of our hair, a finding that could help law enforcers predict the hair colour of a criminal from DNA evidence at the crime scene.

The discovery sheds new light on our understanding of the genetic complexity underpinning variations in human pigmentation, and could advance our knowledge of conditions linked to pigmentation, such as skin, testicular, prostate and ovarian cancers.

The findings, published in the journal Nature Genetics, are also relevant for forensic sciences.

Although previous studies have found that a large percentage of hair colour variation is explained by heritable factors, they only identified a dozen or so hair colour genes. The new study largely explains the genetic knowledge gap. Researchers from King's College London in the UK and Erasmus MC University Medical Center Rotterdam in the Netherlands analysed DNA data from almost 300,000 people of European descent, together with their self-reported hair colour information.

By comparing the hair colour of the group with their genetic information, stored at several million locations across the human genome, the team identified 124 genes involved in the development of hair colour, of which more than 100 were not previously known to influence pigmentation. The scientists also demonstrated that predicting hair colour with this new genetic information is more accurate than with previously known genes.

"This work will impact several fields of biology and medicine. As the largest ever genetic study on pigmentation, it will improve our understanding of diseases like melanoma, an aggressive form of skin cancer," said Tim Spector from King's College London.

The genes that affect hair colour also affect other cancer types, while other pigment genes affect the chances of having Crohn's and other forms of bowel disease.

"Our work helps us to understand what causes human diversity in appearance by showing how genes involved in pigmentation subtly adapted to external environments and even social interactions during our evolution," said Spector. "We found that women have significantly fairer hair than men, which reflects how important cultural practices and sexual preferences are in shaping our genes and biology," he said. "Besides substantially increasing our understanding of human pigmentation genetics in general, finding these new hair colour genes is also important for further increasing the accuracy of hair colour prediction from DNA traces in future forensic applications, which can help to find unknown perpetrators of crime," said Manfred Kayser from Erasmus MC.

Are you eating too much sugar? Don't ignore these 4 warning signs

I have been on a sugar cleanse -- no added sugar, sugary drinks, desserts (you get the point) -- for the past two weeks. I do this often because I come from a family of diabetics (some of my relatives even wear it like a badge of honour, like martyrs in war).

Cutting out sugar has been one of the hardest things I've done so far; harder than those tyre flips and 100 jumping jacks in the gym. What makes it so tough? According to a study, sugar shuts down the release of stress hormone cortisol. What this means is that sugar gives you the temporary feeling that 'all is well'. And this makes you go back to it again.

What triggered this decision? It started when I was working out and eating all the right things, but half a spoon of sugar in my morning coffee and that occasional dessert was messing with all the hard work that I was putting into getting fit.

If you are unable to shed those kilos, maybe it's time to evaluate your sugar intake. Here are some other signs that tell you if you're consuming too much sugar.

Mood swings: According to Mumbai-based nutritionist Raheela Khan, sugar is sometimes an emotional need. For instance, when you feel down, you may end up picking a donut instead of a fruit. "Sugar has no nutritional



value. But we still end up loading up on it, which is not good for the body. It's important to control cravings and opt for healthier things such as green tea, fresh fruits etc," she says. According to Prevention.com, a high-sugar diet is also associated with depression.

Constant acne: Growing up, a lot of girls struggle with acne. "The main culprit here is often hormonal imbalance and sugar is known to aid this process. If your skin routine is safe, then just keep a check on your sugar intake,"

says Bangalore-based nutrition and fitness expert Iram Zaidi.

High Blood Pressure: Our body starts sending red flags when it's high time to cut down on sugar. And one of the important signs is an increase in blood pressure.

Cavities: Did you discover some new cavities during your regular dental check-up. This could be because of hidden sugar in your diet. The bacteria in your mouth digest carbohydrates and produce acid that combines with saliva to make plaque, which when not cleaned well can lead to cavities.

So, now that you know you're eating too much sugar, you'd be wondering how to

cut it out. You may not see success overnight, but you'll definitely see a marked improvement in your energy levels and mood in a couple of days.

Best alternatives to sugar: Stevia: This natural sweetener is one of the most popular sugar substitutes. It is easily available at drugstores and in super markets.

Honey: This is an easily available substitute for your green tea, desserts, oats porridge.

Agave: This natural sweetener is one and a half times sweeter than sugar. It is considered healthier than honey.

Coconut sugar: Made from the sap of coconut tree, this has lower glycaemic index.

Poor sleep may raise obesity risk in kids

London: Besides healthy eating and exercise, getting enough sleep may also be a key factor in managing weight in children and adolescents, a new study has found.

The findings showed that children and adolescents who get less than the recommended amount of sleep for their age are at a higher risk of gaining more weight.

Overall, they were 58 per cent more likely to become overweight or obese -- a common risk factor for various cardio-metabolic diseases.

"Being overweight can lead to cardiovascular disease and Type-2 diabetes which is also on the increase in children. The findings of the study indicate that sleep may be an important potentially modifiable risk factor (or marker) of future obesity," said Michelle Miller, from the University of Warwick in Coventry, UK.

For the study, published in the journal Sleep, the team reviewed the results of 42 population studies of infants, children and adolescents aged zero to 18



years which included a total of 75,499 participants.

"The results showed a consistent relationship across all ages indicating that the increased risk is present in both younger and older children," Miller said.

The prevalence of obesity has increased world-wide and the World Health Organisation has now declared it a global epidemic.

According to the recent recommen-

dations by US-based National Sleep Foundation infants (four to 11 months) must get between 12-15 hours of nightly sleep, toddlers (one-two years) must sleep for 11-14 hours.

Children in pre-school (three-five years) should sleep for 10-13 hours, while school aged children (six-13 years) must get between nine and 11 hours of sleep. Teenagers (14-17 years) are advised to get eight-10 hours.

Weight loss fail: Before spending hours in the gym, fix this problem first

The one thing that most fitness experts get asked on a regular basis: how to keep the metabolism high and running? And just like every other aspect of fitness, there's no one answer. You may have set high weight loss goals, but there are many factors, other than your hard work in the gym, that have a direct impact on the result.

One mistake many fitness enthusiasts make is of counting calories and skipping meals when they think they've already exceeded their daily average. If you are doing this, we suggest, stop right away. This habit is undoing all the hard work you've put into your workout and healthy eating.

Why should I care about metabolism? Simply put, metabolism is the chemical process that keeps fuelling your body. Every person functions on different speeds of metabolism. Those with slow metabolism have more fuel (calories) that gets stored as fats. And those with a faster metabolism tend to burn more calories.

Does that mean if you belong to the former, you're doomed? No. There are sure shot ways of boosting your metabolism. And one of the most important one is to ensure that you eat nutritious meals at regular intervals. "Eat small, but frequent meals instead of two big meals," says Chennai-based nutritionist Preet Chhabria. Once you do this, you'll not only feel like you are burning more calories, but you'll also feel energetic through the day.

Apart from regular meals, you also need to ensure that you're drinking at least 3-4 litres of water every day," says Chhabria. According to a 2003 study published in The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism, drinking 500 ml of water increased metabolic rate by 30% in healthy men and women.

Some other studies also suggest drinking cold water to rev up your metabolism. Apart from increasing metabolic rate, water also helps you feel full. This means that you are less likely to fill yourself up with empty calories.

Apart from increasing water intake, Chhabria also suggests including lots of fruits, dry fruits, green tea and buttermilk between meals. "Adding lots of fibre to the diet can also help with getting your metabolism up and running," she says. Simply spending hours in the gym is not going to guarantee results. These small, but useful lifestyle changes can help you achieve your goals.

THREE CUPS OF COFFEE, TEA DAILY MAY CUT STROKE RISK: STUDY

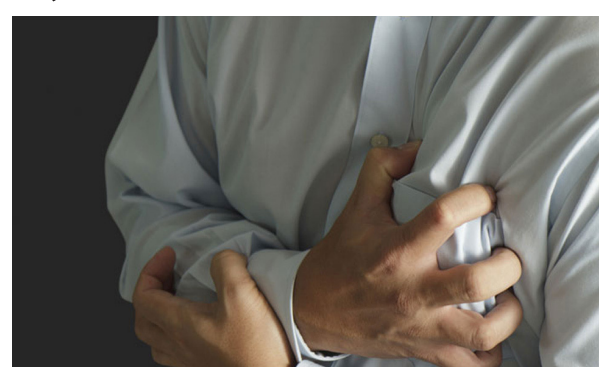
Sydney: Are you an ardent coffee or tea lover, but advised to avoid caffeinated beverages due to your heart conditions? Cheer up, drinking up to three cups of coffee or tea a day is safe as well as reduce irregular heartbeat and stroke risk, a study says.

A single cup of coffee contains about 95 mg of caffeine. It acts as a stimulant to the central nervous system and works to block the effects of adenosine -- a chemical that causes atrial fibrillation (AFib). AFib is the most common

heart rhythm disorder, causes the heart to beat rapidly and skip beats, and if left untreated, can cause strokes.

The results suggest that caffeine intake of up to 300 mg per day may be safe for arrhythmic patients.

"There is a public perception, often based on anecdotal experience, that caffeine is a common acute trigger for heart rhythm problems," said lead author Peter Kistler, Director at Melbourne's Alfred Hospital. But, "caffeinated beverages



such as coffee and tea have long-term anti-arrhythmic properties mediated by antioxidant effects and antagonism of adenosine," he added. For the review, published in the journal JACC: Clinical

Electrophysiology, the team analysed multiple population-based studies. A meta-analysis of 228,465 participants showed that AFib frequency decreasing by 6 per cent in regular coffee drinkers, and an analysis of 115,993 patients showed a 13 per cent reduced risk.

Another study of 103 post-heart attack patients who received an average of 353 mg of caffeine a day showed improvement in heart rate and no significant arrhythmias -- or abnormal heart rhythms, that cause the heart to beat

too fast, slow or unevenly.

However, in two studies, where patients drank at least 10 cups and nine cups of coffee per day, showed an increased risk for ventricular arrhythmias (VAs) -- a condition in which the lower chambers of the heart (ventricles) beat very quickly.

On the other hand, patients with pre-existing heart conditions who consumed two or more energy drinks -- that contains concentrated caffeine -- per day reported palpitations within 24 hours.

Govt defends scam-hit banks as cash crunch hits ATMs, says no need to panic

India's cash machines are running dry, leaving policy makers and bankers scrambling to assuage the public and prevent perception about the nation's fraud-hit financial system from worsening.

As the banknote shortage spread across several states, the government addressed the issue in a statement Tuesday, where it cited an "unusual spurt in demand" for cash. The finance ministry rolled out top officials to assure Indians -- still stuck with memories about Prime Minister's Narendra Modi's shock demonetisation in 2016 -- that while there's ample amount of currency available, steps are also being taken to print more and the broader banking system is healthy.

"Our first order of response is to make sure that adequate cash is available at ATMs and in banks so that whatever demand, for whatever reason it is there, is met," Sanjeev Sanjay, Modi's principal economic adviser and a former Deutsche Bank AG global strategist, told Bloomberg Quint. "There is no crisis, the banks are in perfectly good shape, we have more than adequate cash and more will be printed if necessary. So there is absolutely no need for anybody to panic about this."

Reasons for the squeeze range from farm spending to looming elections, but its roots lie in Modi's 2016 decision to overnight void 86% of the currency in circulation -- from where cash levels have never quite fully recovered. Back then, the cash shortage was a creation of government policy;



this time public nervousness could overwhelm authorities already grappling with the nation's biggest banking scam, hidden bad loans and allegations of impropriety.

"The country is moving to a very risky scenario as this cash crunch erodes faith in the banking system," said C.H. Venkatachalam, general secretary of the All India Bank Employees' Association, which represents about 1 million bank employees. "If the situation continues for another week we fear for the safety of bank employees" in affected states, he said.

Eroding trust Venkatachalam said citizens are concerned that a proposed bill, which gives regulators the option to use public deposits to bail out a bank that goes bust, is pushing individuals to hoard cash. While the government has repeatedly issued statements to assure the public that their money would be safe, concerns linger, he said.

These concerns are heightened by news that emerged in February of a \$2 billion fraud at state-run Punjab National Bank, where a jeweller allegedly colluded with a bank employee to siphon off money before leaving the country.

"Trust in the banking system has hit an all time low," said Kranthi Bathini, director of Mumbai-based financial advisory company Wealth-Mills Securities Pvt., who tried about 15 cash machines across 250 kilometers of a highway while traveling in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh last month, but all were dry.

The bedrock of the issue is that authorities haven't been able to replenish cash lost as a result of Modi's 2016 ban. As a share of the economy, cash in circulation is about 11%, lower than 12% before the demonetization drive.

What the RBI's saying: "It is clarified at the outset that there is sufficient cash in the RBI vaults

and currency chests. Nevertheless, printing of the notes has been ramped up in all the 4 note presses. "The shortage may be felt in some pockets largely due to logistical issues of replenishing ATMs frequently and the recalibration of ATMs being still underway. RBI is closely monitoring both these aspects. "Further, as a matter of abundant precaution, RBI is also taking steps to move currency to areas which are witnessing unusually large cash withdrawals." -- Reserve Bank of India statement, issued late on Tuesday.

Another reason for the cash shortage is that payments to farmers have gone up during the ongoing crop-purchase season, Rajnish Kumar, chairman of State Bank of India, the country's largest lender, told ANI. "In the next week, things will start coming back to normalcy," he said.

There's also speculation that looming elections in some Indian states are triggering the crunch. Money for votes is a common practice in India, as well as spending in cash for legitimate expenses such as paying people for door-to-door campaigns.

Opposition parties are not wasting any time in attacking the government.

"Now you understand the deception that was demonetisation, that terror is back," Rahul Gandhi, who may well be Modi's main competitor for the prime minister's post come 2019, wrote in a Hindi rhyme on Twitter. "Our cash machines are empty once again, and look at the state of our banks."

India may become surprise victim of US-China trade war, says Rabobank



India's economy will be hit hard by a combination of a global tariff war and the US Federal Reserve's monetary tightening cycle, according to a study by economists at Rabobank International.

A tariff war will reduce exports and lead to imported inflation, which will hurt Indian purchasing power and investments, according to the Rabobank study. That could mean as much as 2.3% of missed GDP growth for India by 2022. "Many countries could end up being caught in the middle," economists Hugo Erken, Raphie Hayat and Marjin Heijmerikx wrote about the current trade spat between the US and China. "India could fall victim to adverse trade policies" of the US or China or both. They cite three possible scenarios how this could happen:

China targets Indian exports because the nation is regarded to be an American ally India chooses not to side with the Donald Trump administration and the US has a go at Indian exports India retaliates against the US.

The last scenario is likely to cost the Indian economy the most, they wrote.

This goes against the argument that India is relatively insulated from a trade war, given

its low share of total world exports of just 1.7%. President Donald Trump has threatened tariffs on \$150 billion of Chinese imports in retaliation for alleged violations of intellectual property rights, while Beijing has vowed to retaliate on everything from American soybeans to planes.

Besides a possible trade war, a faster-than-expected tightening of US monetary policy will lead to capital outflows. Rabobank's models estimate India losing \$22 billion in capital flows by 2022, with the scenario getting complicated further, in case political instability hits India. India goes into its general elections early next year.

In such an event, the Rabobank model sees the rupee depreciating sharply and the missed capital flows will amount to \$32 billion by 2022, they wrote.

"If India uses its foreign reserves in such a case, interest rates could rise sharply as liquidity decreases," they wrote, adding that even though India's reserves are substantial, markets might still become concerned about the prospects of further declines. "All in all, these developments will create major speed bumps on India's road to economic prosperity."

ICICI Bank working to create common standards for blockchain in trade finance

The embattled head of ICICI Bank Chanda Kochhar on Tuesday said the largest private sector lender is working towards creating common standards for adopting blockchain technologies in the banking industry.

"We are collaborating with peer banks and other partners to create a comprehensive ecosystem in the industry using blockchain and evolve common working standards to contribute to even greater adoption," she said.

It can be noted that, a few domestic lenders like Axis Bank and Yes Bank have already started using blockchain solutions in certain areas, while the largest lender SBI is planning to do so during the current fiscal year.

In a statement on Tuesday, ICICI Bank said it is co-creating a blockchain-based system for trade finance in partnership with other banks through a consortium, which seeks to invite various constituents of trade, including buyers, sellers, logistics partners, insurers and others on to the blockchain ecosystem.



Kochhar, who is currently battling a series of allegations of conflict of interest in the bank's lending practices with the Videocon group, said her bank has on-boarded 250 corporates on its blockchain platform for trade finance and claimed that this is the largest in the country.

The on-boarded corporates are undertaking domestic or international trade finance transactions using the blockchain or the distributed ledger technology platform, a bank statement said. ICICI Bank said it has been

using blockchain technologies since August 2016, when it became the first domestic lender and one of the few globally to use the platform for international trade finance and remittances.

"The usage of blockchain technology simplifies the paper-intensive trade finance process by bringing counterparties on the same platform, enabling decision making in almost real-time," its statement said.

It added that usage of blockchain solutions is time and cost-efficient.

Earlier in the day, global rating agency Moody's acknowledged that blockchain can significantly reduce costs and time involved in cross-border transactions but flagged concerns on it exerting pressure on fees and commissions.

The ICICI Bank statement said its solution digitises paper-intensive international trade finance process as an electronic, distributed and unalterable ledger, and gives the participating entities including banks the ability to access a single source of information.

Airlines inspecting Boeing 737 engines after fatal Southwest incident

Some major customers of Boeing Co's popular 737 jets, including Korean Air Lines Co Ltd said on Wednesday they were inspecting engines of the type that blew apart mid-air in a fatal Southwest Airlines Co flight on Tuesday.

European regulators this month began requiring an inspection by early next year, and a person familiar with the matter said US regulators were near a similar rule, which affects a number of 737s in operation globally.

Southwest Flight 1380 made an emergency landing in Philadelphia on Tuesday after an engine ripped apart mid-air, shattering a window on the 737 and nearly sucking a passenger through. One of 144 passengers died.

The actions by regulators show that there has been some concern, albeit non-urgent, about the engine, a workhorse of the global civil aviation fleet that has logged more than 350 million hours of safe travel but was also being examined after a 2016 accident.

The CFM56-7B engine type involved in the Southwest incident was produced by a



joint venture of US firm General Electric Co and France's Safran SA called CFM International. It is one of the most common engines, paired with the world's most-sold plane, the Boeing 737.

Southwest said it is speeding up inspections of all related engines out of extra caution, which it expects to complete within 30 days.

An early review of the failed Southwest engine found apparent metal fatigue where a fan blade had broken off, Robert Sumwalt, chairman of the US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), told reporters on Tuesday.

"We are very concerned" about metal fatigue, Sumwalt said. "There needs to be

proper inspection mechanisms in place to check for this before there's a catastrophic event."

Korean Air said on Wednesday it had not yet been prompted by its regulators for a check but it planned to inspect engines used on its entire 737 fleet by November following the Southwest incident.

About 20% to 30% of its 35 Boeing 737 jets use the same type of fan blade as the one on the Southwest jet, a Korean Air official said.

A Japan Airlines Co Ltd spokesman said two 737 jets in its fleet had engines with affected fan blades and inspections were due to be completed by the end of the day on Wednesday.

In August 2016, a Southwest flight made a safe emergency landing in Pensacola, Florida, after a fan blade separated from the same type of engine, and debris ripped a foot-long hole above the left wing. Investigators found signs of metal fatigue.

The 2016 incident prompted the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to propose ultrasonic inspections of similar fan blades and their replacement should they fail the test. Sumwalt said the NTSB will review whether the engines involved in Tuesday's incident might have been subject to the directive, which is not yet finalised.

The FAA proposal estimated that checks would require two hours of labour per inspection.

Not all airlines operating 737s are affected.

Australia's Qantas Airways Ltd, a large 737 operator, said its engines were of a slightly different model than those targeted for inspection.

Spokespeople for several other major airlines operating 737s could not be reached immediately for comment.

CEO SALIL PAREKH SAYS INFOSYS READY TO INVEST IN TECH, SKILLS, SACRIFICE MARGINS FOR GROWTH

Salil Parekh didn't get much time to settle in after taking over the helm of Infosys Ltd.

Since becoming chief executive officer in January, the 53-year-old has crisscrossed three continents to meet with customers and employees to get his hands around the challenges facing India's iconic tech-services giant. He talked with 48 clients in his first three months -- and he's determined to see every single one face to face in the next two quarters.

He's already making tough decisions. He says Infosys has to sacrifice profit margins now by investing in advanced technology and skills in order to capture the opportunities ahead. That includes pumping more money into technologies such as the Internet of Things, retraining employees, localizing its workforce in the US and building up the sales staff.

"To build the future Infosys, we have to make those investments now," says Parekh, perched on a couch in the office he clearly hasn't used much. On his sparse desk are three photos of his family, a laptop and small statue of Ganesha, the god of new beginnings. "If we don't do that now, the real concern is that we won't be relevant to our clients in the future."

It's a message that may unsettle investors. On Monday, Infosys shares tumbled after the IT services giant said it expected operating margins to be 22% to 24%, lower than the previous year's.

On Wednesday, shares declined as much as 1% while the markets rose. The stock is trading at about the same level it did two years ago.

Parekh contends Infosys has a rare combination of skills and experience that will benefit the company in the years ahead. It's been working with customers for decades and can use that understanding to help them navigate shifting technology trends, like cloud computing and artificial intelligence.

Infosys now reaps \$2.8 billion in revenue from such digital services. But the potential market is \$200 billion.

"We are best positioned to help clients navigate their journey into the future and take them to the next phase," says Parekh. "Our clients are pushing us because they know we have the capabilities."

Parekh may also cut some big acquisitions, like he did in his previous job. He has already met with the M&A team and asked them to draw up a short list of possible targets that could help buttress its digital capabilities. He's also on the lookout for "opportunistic things



that we can do that will help accelerate our digital pace."

In his first interview with international media, Parekh was engaging and a bit disarming. He explained he's in the process of signing the lease on a house for his wife and youngest son to join him in Bangalore from Mumbai, even as he sends another son off to college in the US.

"You miss them, you don't stop thinking about them," he says, dressed in a blue shirt and striped tie, while his jacket is thrown over the back of a chair.

Through it all, his focus clearly is on

urgent challenges at Infosys. Parekh is trying to get the company back to stable footing after the tumultuous tenure of his predecessor. Vishal Sikka arrived in 2014 as a well-respected executive from SAP SE, but quit in August after a clash with the company's founders over strategy and compensation.

Parekh was a surprise choice as CEO. He was plucked from Caggemini SE over a field of internal candidates and former executives. He joined Caggemini in 2000 as part of an acquisition and then built its India business to the point it competed with Infosys and rival Tata Con-

sultancy Services Ltd.

Parekh jokes about his management style -- "What are my options? I'll pick one" -- but he quickly makes clear what he believes in is data.

"That's the basis of all my decisions," he says, explaining he spends so much time talking to staff and customers because he doesn't like "second-hand" information. "I get into the details but I'm not a micro-manager."

Infosys and TCS are pioneers in providing back-office support for the world's largest corporations, but they've had to evolve to go beyond traditional low-margin, labor-intensive work. The country's \$167 billion IT services industry is investing in cloud computing and AI to jump-start growth, as clients from banking to retail turn to automation.

Spending on advanced technologies puts pressure on margins. Infosys and its peers are seeing hiring costs rise alongside immigration curbs by administration of Donald Trump. It also needs to install and train a vast workforce unaccustomed to digital services.

"Investments in digital capabilities through 2019 will likely delay margin expansion," said Anurag Rana, an analyst with Bloomberg Intelligence.

Parekh says Infosys has to sharpen

its recruiting in the US to better compete for top-notch employees. The company long depended on bringing in Indian staff on work visas, a practice on which the Trump Administration is cracking down.

Infosys has gotten more serious about hiring in the US. In the fiscal year that ended in March, the company added 3,900 workers in the country, including 850 college graduates. It's also building a 50-acre training center in Indiana.

All that investment won't get growth back to that of the boom years though. On Friday, Infosys forecast a 6 to 8% increase in revenue this year, a disappointment to many given the slide in margins.

Parekh says the forecast is simply realistic. He looked at what clients will do, the overall geography and how the business is doing internally -- and can't promise more.

For a photo shoot after the interview, Parekh is back to his most formal. He grabs his jacket, stops to exchange polite greetings with employees en route, and he walks into the verdant garden outside the C-suite offices.

"Should I smile?" he says, squinting into the bright sunlight. "Oh, OK, no smile."

Rohit Sharma not bothered by Mumbai Indians' disappointing start in IPL 2018

Mumbai Indians' (MI) captain Rohit Sharma on Tuesday said he was not worried with his side losing three matches on the trot at the start of their defence of the Indian Premier League (IPL) title.

Mumbai Indians ended their three-match losing streak with a commanding 46-run victory over the Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) at the Wankhede Stadium, with Rohit smacking 94 off 52 balls and Evin Lewis scoring 65 to power their team to a massive total of 213/6. In their reply, Mumbai Indians kept RCB to 167/8 despite Virat Kohli's 92 not out.

"We were positive all throughout; to be honest I did not look into the last three games at all. They were close finishes; one bad shot from the batsman would have won us the game. So I did not look much into it. The only thing we did not do as a group in the last three games was sometimes (when) we batted well, (then) we did not bowl well. (When) we bowled well, we did not bat well. The idea was to get both of these departments going and we wanted to be consistent with both - our bowling as well as batting," Rohit told media post Mumbai's win.

"I think today we did that and we got wickets with the new ball. Mitch



(Mitchell McClenaghan bowled a great spell upfront to get the experienced batsmen out [Quinton de Kock and AB de Villiers], and then Krunal (Pandya) came in and used his variation to his advantage. He is a very clever, thinking bowler. He knows exactly where the batsman is going to target him and what he has to bowl to that kind of players. He reads the batsman really well and not to forget Mayank (Markande) as well, he is just 20-year old playing his fourth game and to come out and bowl in such difficult conditions it is not easy. I think these two guys (have to be) given a lot of

credit," he said.

Rohit added, "Obviously our pace battery has been doing the job for a number of years. Mustafizur (Rahman) is playing for the first time and he (has) had a great few games. It did not go well today but these things can happen, sometimes you will be consistent and sometimes it will not be your day."

The Mumbai Indians' captain said his side will continue with the pair of Suryakumar Yadav and Lewis at the top.

"I do not think right now we are looking to change anything. It is im-

portant to give the guys the comfort, because they should know where they are batting for the next few games. You cannot chop and change so much. I think it is not a good idea and it is not good for the team as well. They should know where they are batting and they can plan accordingly," Rohit said.

"I think for me it is important to understand that and let that message go across. For me the reason I came down (the order) was... you know, the new guys, Surya has played before, Ishan (Kishan) is playing for the franchise for the first time and we want him to just go there and bat freely because he is that kind of a player. You need to give him that freedom, and (to) Surya as well. He has done well for KKR; he was with this franchise (Mumbai Indians) before. So we want him to go up the order and bat freely," Rohit continued.

"All of us, myself, (Kieron) Pollard, Krunal (Pandya), Hardik (Pandya), we can take the pressure and make sure that the team gets into good position all the time. Again, like I said it can happen and sometimes it cannot happen. I think this is the ideal combination for us right now," he added.

UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin 'worried' over use of VAR at World Cup

UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin has expressed concern over the decision to employ the video replay system (VAR) at the 2018 World Cup, saying the technology still needed more testing before it can be considered for use in the Champions League.

Global soccer body FIFA voted in March to deploy VAR at the June-July tournament in Russia, only two weeks after its use was approved by IFAB, the organisation responsible for rule changes in the sport.

"I have some fear for the World Cup, where we will have referees who have never officiated with the VAR," Ceferin told Italian paper Gazzetta dello Sport in an interview.

"I hope there are no scandals or problems." Ceferin has already said that VAR would not be used in the Champions League next season.

"The Champions League is like a Ferrari or a Porsche; you cannot drive it right away, you need training, offline testing. And everyone has to understand how it works," he said.

"It's too early for VAR. That doesn't mean we will never have it as the process is inevitable... We'll have it one day in the Champions League but there's no rush."

VAR is already being used in Serie A, the Bundesliga and Portugal's Primeira Liga this season, among others. IFAB insists it has



reduced refereeing mistakes but critics say there has been confusion in a number of matches.

Goals have been annulled several minutes after being scored -- with the teams waiting to restart -- and penalties revoked with the ball on the spot.

Another criticism is that the spectators are not kept informed of what is happening when a decision is reviewed.

Ceferin said that VAR would not have made any difference in last week's Champions League quarter-final between Real Madrid and Juventus, where a soft stoppage-time penalty led to the Spanish side advancing 4-3 on aggregate. "What would have changed with VAR? Nothing. There are those who have watched it 20 times, I've watched it 50, but for half the people it's a penalty and for the other half, it isn't."

Law Commission urges Centre to bring BCCI under RTI Act

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) should be brought under the ambit of the RTI Act, the Law Commission said today noting that it falls under the definition of a public authority which has received substantial financing from governments. "It also said non-consideration of the role played by the BCCI as 'monopolistic' in regulation of the game of cricket has resulted in the board 'flying under the radar of public scrutiny, encouraged an environment of opacity and non-accountability'. In July 2016, the Supreme Court had asked the commission to recommend whether the cricket board can be brought under the Right to Information Act. There have been demands to bring the cash-rich cricket body under RTI to usher in transparency.

The report, submitted to the Law Ministry today, states that BCCI ought to be classified as 'state' within the meaning of Article 12 of the Constitution. "An analysis of the functioning of BCCI also shows that the government does exercise control over its activities and functioning.

"... BCCI, falling in line with the foreign policy of India, did not recognise a player from South Africa due to their practice of apartheid; and that the cricket matches between India and Pakistan in view of tense international relations were made subject to government approval. The foregoing positions BCCI as a 'limb of the state'," the law panel report said. It said though the BCCI is continued to be regarded as a "private body", owing to its "monopolistic character coupled with the public nature of its functions, it can still be termed as a 'public authority' and be brought within the purview of the RTI Act.

The report pointed out that BCCI has received "substantial financing" from appropriate governments in the form of tax exemptions and land grants.

The BCCI has enjoyed tax exemptions of "thousands of crores", the report said. "To be precise, between 1997-2007, the total tax exemption amounted to Rs twenty-one billion six hundred eighty-three million two hundred thirty-seven thousand four hundred eighty-nine. It may also be noted here that from 2007-2008 onwards, the registration of BCCI under section 12A of the Income Tax Act, 1961, as a charitable trust, was withdrawn," it noted.

The BCCI, it said, exercises 'state-like' powers affecting the fundamental rights of the stakeholders.

Rajasthan Royals, Kolkata Knight Riders aim to continue winning momentum

It will be a battle about which team carries forward the winning momentum as Rajasthan Royals (RR) clash with Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in the 15th match of the 2018 Indian Premier League (IPL) here on Wednesday.

Following a loss to Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) in their opening fixture, the Ajinkya Rahane-led Royals have made a solid comeback to win their next two matches and find a firm footing in the 11th edition of the cash-rich Twenty20 tournament.

The hosts will play their second home game of the season at the Saii Mansingh Stadium where last time, the Royals edged out Delhi Dare-

devils (DD) by 10 runs (D/L method) in a rain-curtailed thriller.

One wicket the Knights will be looking to get early is Sanju Samson. With scores of 49, 37, 92 not out, the 23-year-old is currently the highest run-scorer in IPL 2018. Samson was his team's top-scorer in two out of three games and has already won the Man-of-the-Match awards twice.

Though they do not have a plethora of stars, Rajasthan Royals' batting looks quite settled with skipper Rahane being consistent as an opener, even though he is yet to 'explode' with the bat. Coming down the order, Englishmen Ben Stokes and Jos Buttler can accelerate when needed



and are assets to the team. Credit has to be given to the Royals bowlers, who despite looking vulnerable, have led their team to victories in the last two games. In a format where teams prefer to bat second, the Royals bowlers delivered when it mattered most. On Wednesday, Rahane

will be hoping the flip of the coin falls in his favour after losing all three tosses yet and being asked to bat.

The Knights, on the other hand, have had a topsy-turvy four matches so far. After impressing with a convincing win over the Virat Kohli-captained Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) in their

opener, they went down in an enthralling contest to Chennai Super Kings (CSK) and then surrendered to Sunrisers Hyderabad.

However, a dominant win over Delhi Daredevils on Monday has put their campaign back on track and new skipper Dinesh Karthik will look to impress with his captaincy skills.

This will be KKR's second away game in five matches after losing narrowly to CSK in the only game that was played at Chepauk, this IPL.

The Royals may have Samson, but KKR's Andre Russell is also in prime form, currently being the tournament's second highest run-getter. Other KKR batsmen have also

chipped in when needed with the likes of Chris Lynn and Nitish Rana coming good in crunch situations.

But the troika of Sunil Narine, Piyush Chawla and Kuldeep Yadav spinning a tight web around opposition batsmen is what will really bother RR.

Jaipur cricket fans will also be eager to see some action after the previous game on April 11 was curtailed due to rain.

Curator Taposh Chatterjee said that the side batting first should score around 180-190 runs. "It is a batting friendly track, according to the demands of the format and the outfield is very fast," said Chatterjee.

Why Virat Kohli was not happy despite becoming highest run-scorer in IPL history

Virat Kohli smashed 92 off 62 balls to become the highest run-scorer in Indian Premier League history but his efforts could not halt Royal Challengers Bangalore's slump in this year's tournament.

Kohli's innings took his IPL total to 4,619 runs in 153 matches, putting him ahead of Suresh Raina of Chennai Super Kings on 4,558.

However, his knock went in vain however as Bangalore went down to defending champions the Mumbai Indians by 46 runs on Tuesday.

"I don't feel like wearing this (orange



cap) right now because it really doesn't matter," said Kohli, who is top of the IPL batting chart with 201 runs in four games

this season.

"We tried our hardest but couldn't get the breakthroughs," Kohli said on his team letting Mumbai score 213 after batting first. It was Bangalore's third loss in four matches.

The 29-year-old Kohli has been with Royal Challengers Bangalore since the IPL started in 2008, but has not won a single title in the cash-rich T20 league.

The Kane Williamson-led Sunrisers Hyderabad -- a side that edged out Bangalore to win their maiden title in 2016 -- leads the points table with three wins from three games.

County cricket lifeline for Steve Smith, David Warner, Cameron Bancroft?

Steve Smith, David Warner and Cameron Bancroft, the three Australian cricketers banned for ball tampering, may get a life line from County cricket. English county team Surrey has shown interest in signing one of Australian banned cricketers.

Surrey coach Michael Di Venuto, who served as the batting coach of Australia till 2016, has confirmed that he would love to have one of the trio in his team provided the English and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) agrees for the same.

Surrey had earlier signed Australian all-rounder Mitch Marsh as one of its overseas players for the season, but he is now not available following an ankle surgery. In Marsh's absence, Surrey signed South African opener Dean Elgar for April and May, which leaves one overseas spot vacant for the second half of the season.

Smith, Warner or Bancroft can be considered for this spot.

"From an Australian perspective, it is probably important that they play a bit of cricket at some stage," Di Venuto was quoted as saying by cricket.com.au.

"I don't know if they are allowed to play in this competition. I know what it states in their sanctions that they can't play domestic cricket in Australia.

"We have got a relationship with Mitch to see how he goes with his ankle but we have got a spot we have got to fill as well. So, if they are in the right mental state to play cricket and the ECB will have to allow it to start with, then we'd be mad not to look at some of the world's best players potentially playing," he said while talking to the Australian website.

Di Venuto is considered close to both Smith and Warner who are currently undergoing a 12-month ban due to their involvement in the ball-tampering scandal. Following the announcement of sanctions from Cricket Australia, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) barred the disgraced Australian stars from taking part in the ongoing IPL as well.

Bancroft, the other member of the banned troika, has been handed over a nine-month ban following which English country Somerset took his name off its contract list.

Neymar out until at least May 17, eyes 'dream' World Cup

Brazilian superstar Neymar said Tuesday that he won't be back playing at least until the second half of May, when he is scheduled to have his final medical exam following foot surgery.

"There isn't an exact date yet. I have the last exam, if I'm not mistaken, I'm not sure, on May 17," the Paris Saint-Germain and Brazil forward told a press conference in Sao Paulo.

"I'll be cleared to play. Then I'll see, it depends on how things develop, it depends on my next exams.... It has not been decided," he said.

The timing leaves the world's most expensive footballer in a tight race to feature again for PSG with the freshly crowned French champion's season ending on May 19 with

a game against Caen.

However, his prospects for starring in Brazil's much fancied side at the World Cup in Russia, which runs from June 14 to July 15, look much better. Brazil open their campaign on June 17 against Switzerland in Rostov.

"I hope I won't watch the World Cup on TV," Neymar joked, calling the tournament a "dream".

"I will have enough time to prepare," he said at the press conference, where he walked with crutches and his foot immobilized in a medical boot. "It's evolving well."

With the enforced rest period Neymar added, "I will arrive better than I was before."

Neymar, 26, broke a bone in his right foot on February 25 in a Ligue 1 game against



Marseille, before returning to his home country for surgery and rehabilitation.

Brazil's national team doctor Rodrigo Lasmar, per-

formed surgery on March 3 and then estimated that Neymar would be out for "two-and-a-half to three months".

In his absence, PSG were

knocked out of the Champions League by Real Madrid in the last 16 in March.

Brazil will also face Costa Rica and Serbia in their group,

as they target winning a sixth World Cup, four years after the nightmare of their 7-1 loss to Germany in the semi-finals on home soil in 2014.

For now, Neymar said he spends much of his time playing poker, his "favorite pastime," and "playing video games and going on the computer".

Not that he enjoys the couch potato experience much.

"There are doubts, of course. I feel them too. But it's normal for a guy who ended up injured. This was the first surgery in my career," he said. "It's really hard seeing my team score and becoming champions without me being with them."

"Still, I am more rested," he said. "We have to look on the bright side."