

# TIME AND US

DAILY

SRINAGAR, KASHMIR

WEDNESDAY

- APRIL, 25, 2018
- 09 SHABAN 1439 AH
- ISSUE: 97
- VOLUME: 04
- PAGES: 08

WEATHER TEMPERATURE		
STATION	MAX TEMPERATURE	MIN TEMPERATURE
	ACT	ACT
SRINAGAR	26.0	7.1
JAMMU	36.9	18.6
LEH	17.3	6.5
KARGIL	17.8	2.4

SUNSET WEDNESDAY: 07:10 PM  
SUNRISE THURSDAY: 05:50 AM

LOCAL FORECAST OF SRINAGAR  
Mainly Clear Sky. Maximum & Minimum temperatures will be around 25°C & 08°C respectively.

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

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WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES IN INTERNATIONAL SME

OPEN TO PERMANENT COMMISSION OF WOMEN IN ARMY, GOVT TELLS SUPREME

INDIA TO IMPORT MORE OIL, DRONES AND AIRCRAFT FROM US AMID TRUMP TRADE WAR

RAVICHANDRAN ASHWIN'S BEEN INNOVATIVE AS KINGS XI PUNJAB CAPTAIN IN IPL 2018

## Cabinet approves implementation of 7th pay commission recommendations

Slew of administrative reforms rolled out

Jammu, Apr 24: In a major decision, the state cabinet that met here today under the chairpersonship of Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti approved implementation of 7th pay commission recommendations for state government employees and pensioners with effect from January 2016.

The decision would benefit around five lakh employees and pensioners in the state. The financial implications for the implementations of 7th pay commission recommendations would be Rs 4201 crore annually while financial implications on account of one-time arrears would be Rs 7477 crores.

The State government employees can now draw the salary for the month of April 2018 as per the revised scales.

According to the decision, for the purpose of implementation of 7th Pay Commission Recommendations, basic pay as on 31.12.2015 of employees shall be multiplied by uniform factor of 2.57 and then adjusted in the matrix recommended by the Pay Committee.

The benefit of House Rent Allowance on revised pay shall be available from



April, 2018 and all allowances except Dearness Allowance (DA) shall continue as before while DA from January, 2016 onwards shall be paid on revised pay on new rates to be notified by Finance Department.

According to the decision, Gratuity shall be enhanced from the existing ceiling of ₹10.00 lakh to ₹20.00 lakh with effect from 01.01.2016, with increase in the ceiling on gratuity by 25 percent whenever DA rises by 50 percent as recommended by 7th CPC/ as per Central Government pattern.

The pensioners shall be given option to choose revision of pension by any of the two formulations suggested by the Pay Committee.

Arrears of pensioners shall be paid in cash in three six monthly instalments while arrears of all employees shall be drawn and credited to their G.P Fund accounts with moratorium of 3 years for withdrawal of same. However, there will be no moratorium for withdrawal in case of employees retiring upto 31.03.2021.

The implementation of 7th pay  
▶ See **Cabinet...** Pg 02

### CABINET APPROVES JK PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE ORDINANCE-2018

JAMMU, APRIL 24: The state cabinet that met here today under the chairpersonship of Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti approved the Jammu and Kashmir Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018 and the Jammu and Kashmir Protection of Children from Sexual Violence Ordinance, 2018.

As per the Jammu and Kashmir Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018, committing rape on women under 16 years of age has been made punishable with rigorous imprisonment for 20 years and may extend to life sentence, which shall mean remainder of that person's natural life, committing rape on women under 12 years of age has been made punishable with death sentence.

Gang-rape of women under 16 years of age has been made punishable with imprisonment for life, which shall mean remainder of that person's natural life, gang-rape of women under 12 years of age has been made punishable with death sentence.

According to the ordinance, investigation in such cases is to be completed within a period of two months  
▶ See **Children...** Pg 02

### Cabinet approves JK Preventive Detention Laws Ordinance-2018

Scores transferred, promoted

Jammu, Apr 24: The state cabinet that met here today under the chairpersonship of Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti approved the Jammu and Kashmir (Preventive Detention laws) Ordinance, 2018.

According to the decision the Ordinance would provide the government a wider choice of retired eligible persons who could be considered for selection/ appointment as chairmen and members of the advisory boards under the legislations.

Cabinet approves time-bound grade promotion for KAS officers; cadre review of Secretariat Subordinate Services

The state cabinet that met here today under the chairpersonship of Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti approved grant of time-bound grade promotion for the KAS officers.

As per the decision, a Junior KAS/feeding service officer in the pay band of Rs 9300-34800 with grade pay of Rs 4800 will be eligible for placement in scale of 15600-39100 + GP 6600. (Deputy Secretary level- non-functional scale after 10 years of service)

A Time Scale KAS officer with 4 years' service in the Time Scale will be eligible for placement in the Selection Grade (non-functional) of Rs 15600-39100 with grade pay of Rs 7600.

A Time Scale KAS officer with 08 years of service in Time Scale may be considered for placement in Special  
▶ See **Laws...** Pg 02

### Indian Congress has Muslims' blood on its hands: Salman Khurshid

New Delhi, April 24: Former Indian Minister of External Affairs and Senior Congress leader Salman Khurshid in a scolding revelation said that this party's hand is stained with the blood of Muslims, adding, we are ready to show the blood on our hands so that you understand that you too must not get blood on your hands.

Responding to a question  
▶ See **Salman...** Pg 02

### Fulfilling commitments made with every section of society: Mehbooba

Says employees' welfare focus of her attention, a promise with State's women also fulfilled today

JAMMU, APRIL 24: Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti today said that her Government is fulfilling the commitments made with every section of society in the State.

The Chief Minister said this while interacting with a delegation of Employees Co-ordination Committee, led by its Chairman, Ghulam Rasool Mir, who had come to thank her for the historic decisions taken in today's cabi-



net meeting chaired by her. Mehbooba Mufti said she had committed to employees of State Government about

implementation of 7th Pay Commission recommendations in their favour despite  
▶ See **Mehbooba...** Pg 02

### Four militants, one cop, Army trooper killed in Tral encounter

Two among them were very important: SSP Awantipora

Srinagar, Apr 24: Four Jaish militants, one policeman and an Army trooper were Tuesday killed in an encounter that raged between forces and militants in Laam Aripal village of Tral area in South Kashmir's Pulwama district, police said.

Police said that all the four militants who were affiliated with Jaish-e-Mohammad were killed in an encounter at Lamm area of Tral today.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Awantipora, Mu-



hammad Zahid informed Kashmir News Service (KNS) that four Jaish militants in-

clude top Jaish commander, Omar Khalid was replaced  
▶ See **Tral...** Pg 02

### Bail pleas of Shahid, Ayaz to come up for hearing on May 03

Srinagar, Apr 24: Bail application of Shahid-ul-Islam the Spokesman of Hurriyat Conference (M) and Ayaz Akbar the Spokesman of Hurriyat Conference (G) will come up for hearing in the special NIA court at Patiala house on May 03.

Family sources while disclosing this to KNS revealed  
▶ See **Bail...** Pg 02

### State, Centre eroding authority of PRIs for personal, political benefit: Congress

G A Mir addresses party workers at Khanabal Anantnag

Srinagar, Apr 24: On the 25th year of 73rd, 74th Amendment of Panchayat Raj Act implemented in the Country, Congress today blamed both State and Centre Governments for undermining the authority of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the Country and State to get benefitted politically.

Congress also blamed State Govt for purposefully halting the empowerment of people through PRIs with the fear of losing power, although Congress Party has significantly worked out to incorporate various clauses of 73rd & 74th Amendment of Panchayat Raj system into State's Panchayati Raj Act in order



to empower people fully at the grass roots level, but the Govt of the day with the ill  
▶ See **Congress...** Pg 02

### DEMAND FOR WITHDRAWING AFSPA IN JK; 'Act must go but situation not conducive', says ruling PDP

Srinagar, Apr 24: With the voices getting louder for the revocation of Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) in Jammu and Kashmir, the Ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) Tuesday said that though the act must go but maintained that situation was not conducive to withdraw the act.

The AFSPA is in vogue in Jammu and Kashmir since 1990, gives sweeping power and immunity to the armed forces.

"From day one we wanted peace in Kashmir. We too want that AFSPA should end, but let situation improve  
▶ See **AFSPA...** Pg 02

### Disclosure of rape victims' identity: Even dead have dignity: SC

NEW DELHI: Even the dead have dignity. They cannot be "named or shamed."

This was the observation of the Supreme Court today as it dealt with the issue of disclosure of identity of rape victims, including the eight-year-old girl who was raped and brutally murdered recently in Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir.

It said that even in cases where the rape victims were alive and were either minors or of unsound mind, their identities should not be revealed as they have the right to privacy and they cannot live under such a "stigma" throughout their life.

"Think of the dignity of dead also. It (media reporting) can be done without naming or shaming them. The dead also have dig-



nity," a bench comprising Justices Madan B Lokur and Deepak Gupta said while hearing the matter in which senior lawyer Indira Jaising raked up the issue of section 228-A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) which deals with disclosure of identity of victims of  
▶ See **SC...** Pg 02

### Kashmiris know the meaning of Azadi: JKDFP to Dulat

'Dulat is trying to befool government of India to get a job from it'

Srinagar, Apr 24: Reacting very sharply to the fresh utterance of former RAW chief A S Dulat in which he has said that 'freedom Kashmiri people want actually means an accommodation within India', Jammu Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (JKDFP) has said that Dulat is in fact upset ever since his retirement. He was expecting a re-engagement from the government of India however when his expectations did not come true he started issuing statements only to remain in news.

The former Indian spy clearly knows what Kashmiri people mean by saying 'Azadi' but playing cleverly and  
▶ See **JKDFP...** Pg 02

### Principal Secy to Governor, Div Com review arrangements for Shri Amarnathji Yatra 2018

JAMMU, APRIL 24- A high level meeting was convened by Principal Secretary to Governor who is also Chief Executive Officer Shri Amarnath Shrine Board, Umang Narula to discuss the necessary arrangements required to be made for Shri Amarnathji Yatra 2018.

The meeting was attended by Divisional commissioner Jammu Hemant Kumar Sharma, IGP Jammu S D Singh, IG CRPF A V Chauhan, DIG Rafiq-ul-Hassan, DC Ramban



T. H Ganai, DC Udhampur Ravinder Kumar, DC Kathua Rohit Khajuria, ACEO SASB Bhupinder Kumar, Chief Engineer M&RE Wing Ashwani Kumar Gupta, Director Tour-

ism Jammu Smita Sethi, ADC Jammu Arun Manhas, ADC Samba T. R. Sharma, SSP Security Ashok Sharma, SSP Ramban Mohan Lal, SSP Traffic NHW Sanjay Bhagat, SSP

Traffic Jammu Joginder Singh, SSP Samba Anil Magotra, Joint Commissioner JMC Rishpal Singh, RTO Kathua Pardeep Singh, Deputy Director Information PR Atul Gupta, General Manager JKTDC Veenakshi Koul, besides other senior officers of concerned departments.

Narula informed that the Yatra will commence on June 28, 2018 and culminate on the Raksha bandhan day on 26 August, 2018. He apprised  
▶ See **Principal...** Pg 02

### INDIA STRONGLY RAISES TERRORISM ISSUE AT SCO FMS' MEET IN CHINA

BELJING: In a veiled attack on Pakistan, India today said that terrorism is an enemy of the basic human rights and the fight against it should also identify States that "encourage, support and finance" the menace and "provide sanctuary" to terror groups.

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, during her address at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Foreign Ministers meeting also attended by Pakistan Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, raised the issue of global terrorism and protectionism.

There are a number of challenges that are being faced by the world today, foremost being the threat of global  
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# Continue from Front Page

## CABINET

commission recommendations for PSUs and autonomous organizations will depend on the availability of resources with the respective organizations.

Regarding pay anomalies, the cabinet decided that the existing Pay Committee shall look into and address the issue of anomalies starting with the issue of anomalies of the Clerical Cadre.

The cabinet also approved a slew of administrative reforms to streamline the functioning at various levels in the government. These measures include increasing working days and working hours for government business, putting in place system of automatic abolition of posts which are not filled for 3 years, establishment audit of all offices needs to be expedited to work out norms for optimal sanctioned strength of employees in all offices/ Departments across the State, making of illegal appointments of whatsoever nature (whether regular, adhoc or casual) by any officer be treated as major offence, Visitor Management System, particularly in Civil Secretariat to be streamlined, Drawl of pay by Drawing and Disbursing Officers in all offices to be linked to Biometric Attendance and objective assessment of skills & competencies required to be made.

## CHILDREN

whereas trial is to be completed within six months and reasons for any delay be communicated to the High Court.

Stringent provisions for bail have been incorporated in the Ordinance. It has been provided that no bail shall be granted without hearing Public Prosecutor.

The Jammu and Kashmir Protection of Children from Sexual Violence Ordinance, 2018, will provide alternative punishment for an act or omission constituting an offence under the ordinance and also under various provisions of the state Penal Code relating to sexual assault. The offender found guilty of such offence shall be liable to punishment only under such law or the Ordinance as provides for punishment which is greater in degree.

The Ordinance provides provisions relating to child-friendly procedures and reporting, recording of evidence, investigation and trial of offences. The Ordinance also provides for provisions relating to establishment of special courts for speedy trial of such offences. The ordinance makes it mandatory for the educational institutions to ensure safety and protection of children and not to expose them to any kind of sexual abuse.

Cabinet observed that both the Ordinances will prove useful and will act as a deterrent with regard to violence against women in general and sexual violence in particular in the state.

## LAWS

Scale Rs 37400-67000 + GP Rs 8700 (non-functional). The cabinet also approved cadre review of secretariat subordinate services and approved measures to fast-track promotion of officers belonging to the secretariat sub-ordinate service.

Cabinet approves setting up of JK Renewable Energy Corporation

The state cabinet that met here today under the chairpersonship of Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti approved setting up of Jammu and Kashmir Renewable Energy Corporation.

According to the decision, the corporation will be a private limited company wholly owned by the state government with the authorized share capital of Rs 1 crore fully paid up and subscribed by the state government.

The cabinet authorized the administrative secretary Science and Technology department to take necessary steps for creation and setting up of the Renewable Energy Corporation.

Cabinet approves enhancement of duty allowance of Volunteer Home Guards

The state cabinet that met here today under the chairpersonship of Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti approved the enhancement of duty allowance of volunteer home guards from Rs 90 to Rs 300 per day. The proposed enhancement will benefit 4300 Home Guard.

According to the decision, the Volunteer Home Guards will be entitled to Rs 300 per day instead of Rs.90/- which will cover both the training period of two months and three months call up duty in a year.

The enhancement in remuneration/honorarium will be borne by the State Government and above the central share.

Cabinet approves academic arrangement of 2154 posts of teachers

The state cabinet that met here today under the chairpersonship of Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti approved to make academic arrangement 2018-19 for 2154 posts of teachers referred to the Service Selection Board.

The cabinet observed that pending selection against the referred posts, the school education department would make academic arrangement for the session 2018-19 in respect of all the vacancies for all districts except Jammu and Srinagar where there is saturation of staff.

The move is to address the deficiency of teachers in Zone-III far flung areas and the concerns raised by the Legislators during the Budget Session 2018 about the shortage of teachers in schools particularly in far flung areas.

The cabinet observed that the school education department require putting in place a fool proof mechanism in place to ensure that academic arrangement against these posts of teachers is made in a most transparent manner.

Cabinet approves engagement of 2200 Lecturers, 400 Teachers on academic arrangement basis

The state cabinet that met here today under the chairpersonship of Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti approved temporary engagement of 2200 Lecturers and 400 Teachers under up-gradation programme on academic arrangement basis for the academic Session 2018-19.

The arrangement will be made at an enhanced honorarium of Rs.14000/- per month and at the rate of Rs.10500/- for third/hard zone and Plain areas in respect of Lecturers for ten months in Higher Secondary Schools and Rs.7500/- per month and Rs.4500/- per month for 3rd/ Hard Zone and Plain Areas respectively in respect of Teachers for 10 months in upgraded High Schools. The academic arrangement will subsist till regular selections are made.

Cabinet approves re-engagement of Constable (Operators) as Wireless Assistants

The state cabinet that met here today under the chairpersonship of Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti approved re-engagement of Constable (Operators) as Wireless Assistants who were disengaged earlier owing to wrong advertisement.

According to the decision, they will be called as 'Wireless Assistants' and entitled to honorarium of Rs.25000 per month and entitled to regularization against commensurate positions after completing 10 years of continuous working and will be called designated wireless operators.

The posts of constable operators will be utilized for their regularization and in the event of their non-availability these positions shall be deemed to have been created.

According to the decision, their past service in the Police Department will also be counted and will be allowed annual hike of 3% on higher consolidated remuneration, terminal benefits under NPS, leave and medical reimbursement. They will work under administrative control of PHQ and shall be considered a Belt Force and their service bio-data records will be maintained by PHQ as per the Police Rules.

In the matter of work, conduct, discipline and appeal, they will be governed by Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services (Employees) Conduct Rules, 1979 and CCA Rules, 1956 while their career progression will be worked out separately.

Cabinet approves establishment of State Knowledge Initiative Platform

The state cabinet that met here today under the chairpersonship of Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti approved establishment of State Knowledge Initiative Platform (SKIP).

SKIP aims to implement the recommendations of the knowledge initiative group as to serve as for generating knowledge-based policies and a clearing house for new ideas and to serve as permanent think tank on all matters leading to education, knowledge and skills.

The SKIP shall comprise a Governing Council headed by Chief Minister as Patron, Advisor to Chief Minister as Chairman, Minister for Education as Co-Chairman and all other Members of the working group for operationalization of knowledge initiative. Administrative Secretary, Higher Education Department shall be the ex-officio Secretary General of the Council. The SKIP shall carry out its activities through its Secretariat which shall comprise suitable personnel, initially drawn on deputation from the State Government/autonomous bodies/Universities.

Cabinet observed that the role of SKIP will be to advise the Government on implementation of recommendations of the knowledge initiative group, implementation of the vision documents, preparation and implementation of policies, guidelines and schemes with multiple objectives etc, evolve schemes and mechanism for promotion and preservation of classical, heritage and folk music and provide a forum for interaction among academia industry and service sectors.

Cabinet approves enhancement of perks of Chairman, Executive Councillors, Councillors of LAHDC

The state cabinet that met here today under the chairpersonship of Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti approved enhancement of salaries and allowances of Chairman, Executive Councillors and Councillors of Ladakh Hill Development Council (LAHDC).

## SALMAN

at an event organized in Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) on Monday, Khurshid, according to ANI, said, "I am a part of Congress so let me accept that we have the blood of Muslims on our hands. I am telling you this; we are ready to show the blood on our hands so that you understand that you too must not get blood on your hands."

"If you attack them, you are the ones who would get stains on your hands. Learn something from our history and don't create such situation for yourself where if you come back to AMU after 10 years you will find one like you to ask the question," he added. "Khurshid said this while replying to a question asked by a former AMU student.

"The first amendment was in 1948. Then, there was Presidential order in 1950. After that Hasanpura, Maliana, Muzaffarnagar and there is a long list of riots under the Congress regime. Then there was the opening of the gates of Babri Masjid, placing idols inside and then the demolition of Babri Masjid while Congress was in power at the centre. Congress has Muslims' blood on its hands. What do you have to say about it?" the former student asked.

Later talking to reporters, Khurshid said that he was defending the Congress party. "I am not a representative of the Congress party, I am the Congress party. I was defending Congress party. What I said I will continue to say, I made the statement as a human being," he said.

## MEHBOOBA

resource crunch and today she was happy that the commitment stands fulfilled. She said employees being integral part of governance system, their welfare in terms of emoluments, accommodation, career progression etc. has remained focus of her attention. Similarly, she added, a mega housing project has been initiated by her Government for meeting the accommodation needs of the employees.

A similar commitment, the Chief Minister said, she had made with the daughters, sisters and mothers of the State to bring a strong law prescribing capital punishment for convicts of sexual crimes against women which also has been fulfilled today. The employees' delegation thanked the Chief Minister for taking other reformative steps also like removing stagnation of officers and creating avenues of promotions for other subordinate staff.

## TRAL

Mufti Waqas, Ashfaq Ahmad Khan, Yasir a foreigner who was the area commander of Tral and the fourth one was Abid Maqbool who had joined militancy before one and a half month. Saying that the operation that was carried out jointly by police, 48 RR and CRPF was very difficult, the SSP said that the two among the slain militants were very important.

"The operation started at around 6:30 and concluded at around 05:00 pm," he informed, adding that the bodies of the militants have been retrieved.

Earlier, Police said that a cop identified as Latif Gojri and an Army trooper as Ajay Kumar were also killed in the encounter. "We pay out tribute to policeman Latif Gojri whom we lost today at Tral. We stand by with the family of our martyr who made supreme sacrifice in the line of duty," Kashmir zone police tweeted. "Our tribute to army jawan Ajay Kumar who attained martyrdom at #Tral today in the line of duty," police said in another tweet. Meanwhile, wrath laying ceremony of the slain cop was held at District Police Line Awantipora during which floral tributes were paid to Latif.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir Range, Swayam Prakash Pani also paid floral tributes to the slain cop at DPL Awantipora. "Wreath laying ceremony of police official Latif Gojri held at DPL Awantipora .... Floral tributes paid

to the Martyr," police tweeted.

## BAIL

that the bail application will be heard by the court and a decision from the court is expected the same day. It is in place to mention here that both Shahid-ul-Islam and Ayaz Akbar were arrested on July 25 last year in connection the money laundering case taken up for investigation by the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

Family sources also disclosed that the health condition of other two detainees Shabir Ahmad Shah the Democratic Freedom Party chairman and senior leader of Hurriyat Conference (G) and Altaf Ahmad Shah alias Altaf Funtoosh another leader of Hurriyat Conference (G) along with Shahid-ul-Islam presently lodged in Tihar jail Delhi is worsening. Family sources also said that the jailed leaders have turned diabetic and suffer from hypertension as well.

## CONGRESS

intentions to undermine the PRIs did not take appropriate measures to strengthen the PRIs citing certain unfounded reasons, from time to time.

Addressing the gathering of Senior Party Workers at Khanabal today, the J&K Pradesh Congress Committee (JK-PCC) President G.A. Mir lashed out at PDP BJP Coalition for eroding the authority of Panchayats to get politically benefited, as that, the incorporation of 73rd 74th Amendment into the State Panchayat Raj act directly benefitting, besides empowering the people fully at the grass roots has not gone well with the Coalition with the fear of losing power, for the fact, the PDP BJP have lost the ground miserably in Jammu and Kashmir.

He said the Govt is hell bent upon to abolish and change the three-tier panchayat system of PRIs in the State aiming to elect their party representatives as Sarpanch's and Panchs without going through the normal course as prescribed under the Panchayat Raj Act, which is anti-people and a futile process on the part of Govt, besides badly affecting the functioning of Panchayat Raj Institutions in the State.

He said instead of empowering people the Govt is disempowering them under the garb of bringing new laws in the Panchayat Raj System for personal benefit, Congress Party being the main architect of Panchayat Raj System in the Country will continue to work for strengthening democratic Institutions in the State to ensure benefits to people at grass roots level.

## AFSPA

so that the law could be withdrawn," Maternal uncle of Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti and PDP Vice President Sartaj Madni told KNS over phone.

He said that the PDP is keen that laws like AFSPA are withdrawn. "The revocation of AFSPA is part of Agenda of Alliance and party has always supported its revocation from the state. We have created the party for such things. We want the people of the Jammu and Kashmir have dignified normal life," Madni added.

Terminology dialogue as the core philosophy of his party, Madni said that PDP has been emphasizing on this aspect for long and even will continue to do so.

During 2014 assembly campaign in the state the PDP leaders has promised that if voted to power, the party will ensure that AFSPA is withdrawn from the state. The BJP on the other hand, had opposed any withdrawal of the act.

Mehbooba's predecessor and Opposition National conference leader, Omar Abdullah had in 2012 expressed confident that "the day was not for" when AFSPA will be withdrawn from the state during his governments tenure.

However after failing in his attempt, Omar blamed the coalition partner congress and opposition PDP for not supporting him in his endeavour to get AFSPA revoked.

The act has remained the bone of contention between the regional parties, PDP, NC and National parties BJP and the congress. While the regional parties in favour of revoking the act, the National parties want the AFSPA to remain to provide legal cover to the security forces operating in anti-militancy operations in the state.

## SC

sexual offences.

The bench, which agreed to examine the aspect related to section 228-A of the IPC, also questioned as to how the identity of a minor rape victim could be disclosed even after getting consent from her parents. "Why should this happen, that the identity of a minor victim be disclosed just because her parents have given consent," the bench asked, adding, "Even if a person is of unsound mind, she has a right to privacy. A minor will become major. Why should this stigma be there for life?"

Jaising, who is assisting the court as an amicus curiae, said it was necessary for the apex court to clarify section 228-A of the IPC. She said there cannot be a "blanket ban" on the media from reporting such incidents and the apex court would have to balance freedom of press and the rights of the victim.

During the hearing, the bench observed that the issue required clarification. It asked that even in cases where the victim had died, "why should there be disclosure of name". Jaising, without directly referring to the Kathua incident, said in a recent case, the victim had died which had led to demand for justice not only in India but also globally.

The bench said it would examine the issue related to section 228-A of the IPC, after which the Centre's counsel sought time to seek instructions. The court then listed the matter for hearing on May 8.

The top court was hearing the petitions filed after the brutal gangrape-and-murder case in Delhi on December 16, 2012 raising concerns over safety and security of women.

Last week, the Delhi High Court had directed 12 media houses to pay a compensation of Rs 10 lakh each for revealing the identity of the Kathua rape victim. These media houses had apologised in the high court for revealing the details of the victim.

## JKDFP

giving a message as if he alone knows the psyche of Kashmiri people, Dulat is trying to befool the government of India to get a job from it.

Dulat and company well know the fact that Jammu and Kashmir is a disputed region and the people living in it demand for the Right to Self Determination as promised by India and endorsed by the whole world so that they can determine their political future.

This is the only "crime" for which the country of Dulat has made the lives of Kashmiri people hell. We are being massacred, raped, jailed, maimed, thrashed, dishonoured and what not. But, despite every oppression of Dulat's India, Kashmiris well know the meaning of Azadi and are well aware of the fact that how people like Dulat used to divide Kashmiris when they were assigned to do so. The irony is that these elements have not stopped to try to break the Kashmiri people but a lot of water has come down the Jhelum and people in our part of the world have become aware of each and every imperialistic tactic.

Dulat has rightly stated that 'Kashmiris want honour, dignity and most of all, justice' and we want to make it clear that all this can be possible only by means of accepting the Right to Self Determination of the people living in the disputed region.

JKDFP has made clear upon the former Indian officer that the time of making promises with Kashmiri people has really gone. Now Kashmiri people do not want any 'accommodation' but Right to Self Determination, so no more deceptive politics please.

## PRINCIPAL

that advance registration of yatrias has already started through various branches of Punjab National Bank, J&K Bank and YES Bank across the country. He informed that on-spot registration facility during the Yatra period will be available at Jammu at Vaishnavi Dham, Saraswati Dham, Jammu Haat and Geeta Bhawan/ Ram Mandir.

Narula stressed the need for all concerned agencies to enforce sustained close watch and maintain effective co-ordination to ensure the smooth conduct of the forthcoming Yatra.

In the meeting all aspects related to yatra including Yatra Registration, accommodation/transportation for Sadhus, accommodation/ transportation for yatrias, emergency/disaster management, boarding of yatrias, setting up of flangers, security arrangements, barricading, medical facility, lodging facilities for yatrias in Jammu province, security arrangements, fixing of signboard by PWD, communication centre at Yatri Niwas, sanitation/cleanliness, temporary toilets, mobile toilet vans in Bhagwati Nagar and Parade area, uninterrupted supply of electricity, adequate water supply, besides others were discussed in detail.

Addressing the meeting, the Divisional Commissioner, said that the administration has already initiated action with regard to the arrangements that need to be made for the yatra this year. He said that all the arrangements are being monitored strictly at all levels so that the devotees would have to face no inconvenience on this account.

Meanwhile, Principal Secretary to Governor and Divisional Commissioner also sought suggestions from civil society members so that no loophole is left in arrangements required for comfortable pilgrimage of the yatrias.

The civil society members including Mahant Rameshwar Dass of Ram Mandir, Jammu, Col Karan Singh, Vice President Dogra Sadar Sabha, Karan Singh Charak, General Secretary Baba Yatri Niwas besides other members of various organizations also spoke and gave their suggestions.

Later, the Divisional Commissioner Jammu along with senior functionaries of Civil and Police administration visited the Yatri Niwas Bhagwati Nagar and took stock of necessary arrangements to be required for the upcoming Shri Amarnath ji Yatra.

## INDIA

terrorism and the imminent need to build a strong security architecture to combat it, the minister said.

"Terrorism is an enemy of the basic human rights: of life, peace and prosperity," Swaraj said.

The criminal terrorist militias are not impeded by borders as they seek to destroy the architecture of international stability and build walls of fear in societies that believe in pluralism, she said.

"We strongly believe that our fight against terrorism should not only seek to eliminate terrorists but should also identify and take strong measures against States that encourage, support and finance terrorism and provide sanctuary to terrorists and terror groups," Swaraj said without mentioning any country.

Maiming and killing innocent lives indiscriminately, constitutes the most blatant violation of human rights, she said.

"We have to work together to wipe-out this scourge from the face of the earth. In order to realise this objective, we must unite across our differences, strengthen our resolve and script an effective strategy against terror. We welcome the clarity shown by the SCO on terrorism from its inception.

"We should also urgently resolve to establish Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism that India proposed more than two decades ago in the United Nations. We are determined to consistently strengthen cooperation within the SCO framework for comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security," the minister said.

On trade and investment, Swaraj said that "protectionism in all its forms should be rejected and efforts should be made to discipline measures that constitute barriers to trade".

The meeting was also attended by foreign ministers Wang Yi of China, Kairat Abdrakhmanov of Kazakhstan, Abdyl daev Erlan Bekeshovich of Kyrgyzstan, Sergey Lavrov of Russia, Sirodjidin Muhridinovich Aslov of Tajikistan, Abdulaziz Khafizovich Kamilov of Uzbekistan, and Secretary General of the SCO Rashid Alimov among others.

Swaraj also raised the issue of reforms at the UN Security Council and said "it is clear to many of us that the Security Council is increasingly unable, or sometimes unwilling, to respond to the security challenges of our times, with tragic consequences.

For long India has been calling for the reform of the UN Security Council, the world body's top organ.

"We must not lose sight of the fact that reforms of the UN will be incomplete, without reforms in the Security Council to make it more representative of contemporary realities".

"Since 2008, the international community has carefully nurtured the ongoing Inter Governmental Negotiations at the UN to take our discussions on UNSC reforms forward," she said. An overwhelming majority of members have expressed their desire to see these negotiations continue on the basis of a text, Swaraj said.

India is committed to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement of 2015 on combating climate change. Addressing Climate Change and promoting secure, affordable and sustainable clean energy are India's shared priorities, she said.

# Raksha Mantri's Address at The 15th SCO Defence Ministers meeting in China

New Delhi, April 24: India is participating in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers Meeting for the first time. The 15th SCO Defence Ministers Meeting was held at Beijing in China, today. Speaking at the meeting, Raksha Mantri Smt Nirjala Sitharaman highlighted India's keen interest in developing an expanded partnership with the broader Eurasian region. In doing so, India has sought to build on her long-standing ties of deep mutual trust and confidence with Russia, vibrant historical and cultural linkages with countries of Central Asia and closer development partnership with China and to further enhance and deepen ties with all the member countries for mutual benefit.

Smt Nirjala Sitharaman stated that in the days ahead, India will work with the SCO partners to energize and revitalize the age-old ties of affinity with the countries of the region. She sought a forward looking partnership based on robust dialogue and concrete initiatives to enhance the economic, trade and cultural cooperation as well as mutually beneficial interactions on defence and security matters.

She called for SCO members to

work towards enhancing greater communication among member countries within the region as well as in the broader international context. This is essential for progressive trends towards stability and peace to reassert itself and to arrest the current drift in ties between major powers and to address any possible implications for the region.

Raksha Mantri Smt Nirjala Sitharaman said that many problems that confront the region, such as climate change, cyber security, narcotics trafficking or violent trans-national crime require solutions based on cooperative frameworks that involve all countries and stakeholders. This is particularly necessary to address the persistent threat of cross-border terrorism and extremism.

Smt Sitharaman stated that international terrorism is today the most serious threat to our peaceful societies. Terrorism threatens to derail our developmental aspirations and create sustained instability both within our countries and across national borders. She called upon the member countries to closely coordinate and adopt a policy of zero tolerance towards terrorism. She contended that arguments of political convenience to provide an

alibi for terrorist groups or organisations that support terrorism through material support or otherwise are no longer tolerable. Indeed, as the world has now realized, there are no good terrorists. India, she stressed, will continue to engage strongly with the SCO-Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure based in Tashkent in this regard.

In this context, she said that we must also work towards the goal of a stable, secure and peaceful Afghanistan. She strongly condemned yet another tragic terrorist attack in Kabul, recently. The SCO must adopt an uncompromising approach towards the persisting threat of terrorism in Afghanistan, as it is essential to advance peace and prosperity in the region. India is committed to doing all it can to assist Afghanistan in its quest to regain stability and reconstruct its economy and polity. This includes cooperation in building capacities and capabilities of the Afghan national security forces. In doing so, India will continue to be guided by the requirements of the government of Afghanistan and the shared objectives of the international community, Smt Sitharaman said.

Since defence cooperation, especially enhanced linkages between

armed forces is an important dimension of SCO, Smt Sitharaman stated that India is keen to explore the full potentialities of this engagement. India will engage with a positive approach and an open mind on all issues related to defence cooperation within the SCO framework.

She stated in this context "we note the decision to set up an Experts Working Group (EWG) mechanism under the SCO Defence Ministers Meeting to support greater cooperation in the defence field. There is a need for further discussions on how the EWG mechanism can be best developed to meet our shared requirements and objectives for defence cooperation in the SCO framework. India has already commenced practical steps to take forward defence engagement under the framework, as reflected in our first ever presence at this Ministerial Meeting and participation of the Indian Army Band at the Fanfare for Peace Military Tattoo being held in conjunction with our meeting today". Further, she stated that "we will also engage as feasible on the items under the Agreed Programme of activities for defence cooperation under the SCO for 2017-19. As we move ahead, India will also explore

the possibility of coordinating some SCO defence activities in the coming years".

The Raksha Mantri stated that India will participate in the SCO's Peace Mission joint military exercises being held in Russia later this year. As India enjoys excellent bilateral defence cooperation with a large number of SCO countries especially with Russia as well as with all of India's Central Asian partners represented in the SCO, she expressed belief that cooperation in the SCO framework will help reinforce India's efforts to strengthen bilateral cooperation with the partners in the region in the field of defence.

Recognizing the value of improving regional transportation and communication networks through mutual consultation, sustainability and sharing of benefits, the Raksha Mantri opined that it can create a network of physical and digital connectivity that extends from Russia's northern regions to the shores of Indian Ocean. The International North South Transportation Corridor is an important step in that direction. However, she noted that it would also be essential that such initiatives respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries.

## Women Entrepreneurs share their Experiences in International SME Convention

New Delhi, April 24: Women entrepreneurs from India, Finland, Italy, Russia and Cambodia today shared their experiences of success and obstacles faced, in a session during the first ever International SME Convention being held in New Delhi from 22nd to 24th April 2018. A special session was devoted to "Women Entrepreneurs --- Sustainable Livelihoods to Successful Business" and was chaired by Additional Secretary & Development Commissioner in the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, MSME, Shri Ram Mohan Mishra. The Development Commissioner said that the MSME ministry is in the process of drafting strategies for encouraging women to set up their own businesses.

Underlining the importance of women in entrepreneurship, Ms. Anuradha Sahu of Auro Arts said that women are the baseline of the pyramid of success. Another speaker Mrs. Priyanka Mokshmar said that awareness about various schemes of the ministry of MSME is important for setting up a successful enterprise.

Joint Secretary in the MSME Ministry, Ms. Alka Arora said that women all over the world are doing a wonderful job and for this they require support of their families.

SME delegates from 37 countries including Australia, Austria, France, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Korea, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, Philippines, Poland, Russia, Spain, Sri Lanka, South Africa and UAE are participating in the Convention. The delegates represent small and medium enterprises of their countries in different sectors including agriculture, healthcare, strategic defence training, education, logistics, digital entertainment and waste management.

## PM launches Rashtriya Gramin Swaraj Abhiyan; unveils roadmap for overall development of tribals

New Delhi, April 24: Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Rashtriya Gramin Swaraj Abhiyan today, at a public meeting, in Mandla in Madhya Pradesh. He unveiled a Road Map for overall development of tribals during the next five years.

He laid the foundation stone of an LPG bottling plant of Indian Oil Corporation at Maneri, Mandla District. He also launched a Local Government Directory.

The Prime Minister felicitated the Sarpanches of villages which have achieved 100 percent smokeless kitchens, 100 percent vaccination under Mission Indradhanush, and 100 percent electrification under Saubhagya Scheme.

Addressing Panchayati Raj representatives across the country, from Mandla, the Prime Minister recalled Mahatma Gandhi's call for Gramoday to Rashtroday, and Gram Swaraj. He said he is delighted to be in Madhya Pradesh on National Panchayati Raj Day. He added that Mahatma Gandhi always highlighted the importance of villages and spoke about 'Gram Swaraj'. He called upon everyone to reaffirm the commitment to serving our villages.

The Prime Minister said that while talking about rural development, budgets are important. But, he added, there is a shift in the discourse in the last few years. People are now talking about the need to ensure that money allocated for a project is utilised and it is done in a timely as well as transparent manner, he said.

He urged people to focus on the education of their children, and added that this is essential for the child's future.

The Prime Minister underscored the efforts towards self-reliance in the agriculture sector. He urged the Panchayat representatives to pay attention to water conservation, and to ensure that every drop of water is conserved.

Shri Narendra Modi spoke of the importance of Jan Dhan Yojana for financial inclusion; Van Dhan Yojana for empowering tribal communities; and Gobardhan Yojana for making farmers more self-reliant, besides converting waste into energy.

He said that a transformation of villages would ensure a transformation of India.

The Prime Minister also said that the recent steps taken by the Union Government will be beneficial in furthering the safety of women.

## CEC reviews status of power purchase agreements of projects under KREDA

KARGIL, APRIL 24: Chairman and Chief Executive Councillor (CEC) Kargil Kacho Ahmad Ali Khan today convened a meeting to review the status of the execution of power purchase agreements of small hydro projects

under Kargil Renewable Energy Development Agency (KREDA) with the State Power Development Department.

Executive Councillor for Power Advocate Muhammad Amir, Executive Councillor for Agriculture Muhammad Hussain, Executive Councillor for Zanskar Affairs Tenzin Sonam, Deputy Commissioner Kargil and Vice Chairman KREDA Haji Gulzar Hussain, Project Director KREDA Kacho Ahmad Khan, Executive Engineer PDD Kargil Altaf Hussain besides other concerned officers were present in the meeting.

During the meeting, the officers of KREDA informed the CEC that power has continuously been supplied to PDD right since the commissioning of Biarass Project in November last year since KREDA has no distribution system of its own.

It was given out that to realize revenue for the power generated from the hydro projects, KREDA has to sell the energy to PDD adding the team of State Electric Regulatory Commission (SERC) has already inspected the project and submitted its recommendations for execution of power purchase agreement. The status of the pre-feasibility reports and DPRs of the power development projects under PMDP, delay in release of funds for capacity building and execution of projects under KREDA and other related issues also came up for discussion. The CEC assured the concerned officers that he will take up all issues with the concerned quarters for early headway in the implementation of projects and redressal of grievances in a time bound manner. Meanwhile, the CEC directed the Project Director KREDA to facilitate the installation of 5KW Rooftop Power Plants in Government offices, schools and health institutions.

## "Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality by 2030 A Critical Need": Dr. Harsh Vardhan

New Delhi, April 24: Emphasising the importance of land as a resource and the need to protect and harness its resources in a manner that does not adversely affect its health, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan has underlined the critical need to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) by 2030. Inaugurating the four-day Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) here today, Dr. Harsh Vardhan urged the delegates to transform the Workshop into a milestone in combating land degradation, desertification and drought.

"In India, total land area under land degradation is 96.40 million hectares, which is 29.32% of the country's total geographical area", Dr. Harsh Vardhan stated. Pointing out that drylands lose 23 hectares per minute to drought and desertification, the Minister said that this gets translated into a loss of 20 million tonnes of potential food grain production. Underlining India's strong commitment to the Convention, he pointed out that India has around 70% of its total geographical area under drylands and about 30% of its land affected by land degradation and about 25% of the land affected by desertification.

In the global context, Dr. Harsh Vardhan said that

nearly 24 billion tonnes of fertile soil and 27,000 bio-species are lost every year. He stated that nearly 30 per cent of the world's population lives in dry areas. "8 out of 21 UNESCO World Heritage Sites are in drylands", he added. Lauding some of the success stories of other nations, the Minister mentioned Sahel Integrated Lowland ecosystem Management (SILEM) in Burkina Faso, besides the Capacity and Management Support for combating land degradation in dryland ecosystems in China. In the Indian context, he highlighted the Sustainable land, water and biodiversity conservation and management for improved livelihoods in Uttarakhand watershed sector, as well as Sustainable Rural Livelihoods Security through Innovations in Land and ecosystem management in India. Dr. Harsh Vardhan added that India has documented its Sustainable Land and Ecosystem Management practices in the form of SILEM book, published in 2014.

The Minister referred to various schemes of the Government of India that have been launched for capacity-building of the stakeholders at multiple levels. Among others, he referred to some of the schemes which include - Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), National Food Security Mission (NFSM), Soil Health Card

Scheme, Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PKSY), Per Drop More Crop, Swachh Bharat Mission, Har Khet Ko Pani (HKKP) and National Rural Drinking Water Programme.

Addressing the gathering, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNCCD, Dr. P.K. Monga said that the main objective of such Workshops is to enable country Parties to participate effectively in the UNCCD reporting process and to submit the national report in time. In his address, UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. Yuri Afanasiev stressed that land degradation is the single most crucial issue facing the world. "The good news, certainly for India, is that this problem is combatable and secondly, land degradation, together with issues like energy efficiency are the lowest cost, no-regret measures for the countries to adopt", Mr. Afanasiev added.

Earlier, Dr. Harsh Vardhan also released a report on the "Economics of Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought" at the inaugural session of the Workshop.

This Regional Workshop in India is the fourth in a series of UNCCD Workshops held around the world, with Turkey, Ethiopia and Brazil hosting the first two Workshops for their respective regions. This four-day Workshop (April 24-27, 2018) will participate of representatives from nearly 40 Asia-Pacific nations.

## Shri Rajnath Singh chairs third meeting of Island Development Agency

New Delhi, April 24: The Union Home Minister, Shri Rajnath Singh, chaired the third meeting of the Island Development Agency (IDA) in Delhi today. The Island Development Agency reviewed the progress made towards preparation of Development Plans for identified Islands (four in A&N Islands i.e. Smith, Ross, Long, Avis and five in Lakshadweep i.e. Minicoy, Bangaram, Thinnakara, Cheriyam, Suheli). For these Islands, Final Site Suitability Reports have been prepared, Carrying Capacity determined and Environmental zoning carried out to ensure sustainable development.

CEO, NITI Aayog made detailed presentation giving details of actions taken in pursuance to decisions taken in earlier meetings. The Union Home Minister expressed satisfaction at the progress made since its last meeting held on November 8, 2017 when directions were given to identify additional Islands for sustainable development and also accord priority to key infrastructure projects.

Additional Islands/Locations in Islands, 12 in Andaman and Nicobar (North Passage, Cinque, Inglis, Viper, Neil (Bharatpur Beach), Ramnagar Beach, Karmatang Beach, Dhaniyallah Beach, Kalipur Beach, Rutland, North Bay and Great Nicobar - B Quarry) and 5 in Lakshadweep (Kalpeni, Kadmat, Agatti,

Chetlat and Bitra) have been identified by NITI Aayog, in consultation with the UT Administrations, for planning of suitable projects aimed at creation of more jobs for the Islanders. Community-based tourism would be promoted benefiting the Islanders.

Key Infrastructure projects such as creation of jetties/berthing facilities, Roll-on/Roll-off ships; Bridges on Andaman Trunk Road; Upgradation of Diglipur Airport; Construction of Minicoy Airport; Modernization of existing Jetty at Kavarati; Augmentation of Satellite Bandwidth from 1.118 Gbps to 2.118 Gbps in Andaman & Nicobar; augmentation of helicopter services for Islanders and tourists etc. are being accorded priority. With better communication services, Information Technology based and other Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) would be promoted in the Islands.

Further, after carrying out systematic study, 18 Projects, both in Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep, have been identified for implementation, out of which 7 Projects are ready for launch through PPP. 3 such projects in Andaman & Nicobar (one each in Long, Smith and Ayes Island) and 3 in Lakshadweep (one each in Suheli, Minicoy and Kadamat) are ready to be launched. After implementation of these projects, investment of about Rs. 650 crore is expected from

the private sector. Preference would be given to the local people for employment. It was informed that investors' conference would be held in May, 2018.

Union Home Minister called upon all concerned to expedite implementation of ongoing key infrastructure projects in the islands, particularly for improving air, road and web connectivity; providing good quality drinking water to the residents; and power supply. He directed that designs of these projects be made in such a way to provide maximum benefits to the local population. Home Minister observed that development of Islands was first discussed in 1999 and now it is taking concrete shape. He appreciated collective efforts being made by all the Ministries for holistic and sustainable development of Islands.

The meeting was attended by Lt. Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Administrator of Lakshadweep, Cabinet Secretary Shri P.K. Sinha, CEO, NITI Aayog Shri Amitabh Kant, Union Home Secretary Shri Rajiv Gauba, Secretary Defence, Secretary Tourism, Secretary, Tribal Affairs and other Senior Officers of Central Ministries of Tourism, Power, Defence, Health, Telecommunications and Civil Aviation. Vice Chief of Naval Staff and Air Commodore from Indian Air Force were also present during the Meeting.

## Govt issues traffic advisories for durbar move days

JAMMU, APRIL 24- According to traffic advisories issued by the government for durbar move days, only up traffic i.e. from Jammu to Srinagar shall be permitted on 28th and 29th April, 2018 on Srinagar-Jammu NHW therefore, no traffic movement including that of convoys of Army and Para-military forces, shall be permitted on the NHW-1A from Srinagar to Jammu on these dates.

Similarly, in order to facilitate smooth movement of vehicles carrying Jammu based Darbar Move employees from Jammu to Srinagar on 5th and 6th May, 2018, only UP traffic i.e. from Jammu to Srinagar, shall be permitted on NHW-1A. Therefore, no traffic movement, including that of convoys of Army and para-military forces shall be permitted on the NHW-1A from Srinagar to Jammu on 5th and 6th May 2018.

Pertinently, as per an earlier order issued by the Government, Darbar Move offices observing five-day week shall be closing at Jammu on 27th of April 2018 after the office hours and the offices observing six-day week shall close on 28th of April 2018 after the office hours.

All the offices shall re-open at Srinagar on 7th of May 2018, in this connection the Srinagar based employees shall be moving to Srinagar on 28th and 29th April 2018 whereas the Jammu based employees shall be moving to Srinagar on 5th and 6th May, 2018. Moreover, the main convoy carrying the important official records from Civil Secretariat, Jammu / other Darbar Move offices shall proceed to Srinagar on 29th of April 2018 (Sunday).

## Speaker lays foundation of Sulabh Toilet Complexes at Satwari, Narwal

Also interacts with Sikh pilgrims who returned from Pakistan

JAMMU, APRIL 24: Speaker, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Kavinder Gupta today laid foundation stones of 2 Sulabh Toilet Complexes at Airport Road Satwari and Narwal Chowk Jammu. MLC, Vikram Randhawa was also present on the occasion.

These public conveniences would be constructed at a cost a total cost of Rs 21 lakh (Rs 10.50 lakh each) by the Jammu Municipality Corporation under the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM). The facilities were need of the hour in the area in view of the thick movement of commoners. The facilities are available for both males and females.

Speaking on the occasion, the Speaker said that the complexes have been constructed as a part of the National Swachh Bharat Mission launched by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He said that it is endeavor of the Government to construct more than 100 such Sulabh Toilet Complexes in the vicinities of ur-



ban areas across the state within next three months to ensure public conveniences to the people. The objective of these facilities is to ensure sanitized and clean surroundings and atmosphere all around, said the Minister.

Earlier, the Speaker also called on the Sikh pilgrims, who returned from Pakistan after performing the pilgrimage on the occasion of Baisakhi at religious places there. He welcomed them and congratulated for their safe journey and performing the pilgrimage at the historic places of Sikh Gurus in Pakistan.

On the occasion, the management of the Gurudwara Prabandhak Commit-

tee shared their experience during their pilgrimage to Pakistan and highlighted some demands like enhancement of existing quota from Jammu and Kashmir State to facilitate maximum number of devotees to have opportunities to visit to these historic religious places for performing pilgrimage.

The Speaker assured to take up the demands with the appropriate authorities in the Centre Government and try to get the issues resolved.

Later, the Speaker also attended a function at BDO office, Gadhni Garh in which the Prime Minister of India has launched Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan on National Panchayat Raj Day in Mandla, Madhya Pradesh.

Block Development Officer, Satwari Shahid Iqbal Mughal, Secretary, Panchayat halqa Gadhni Garh, Rajesh Gupta, Ex Sarpanch, Vijay Sharma, a large number of students and prominent citizens were also present.

## Time and Us

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### Uniting line: on CPI(M)'s political resolution

By adopting a political resolution acceptable to both the majority and minority sections, the 22nd party congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) averted a divisive contest for the post of the general secretary and gave a fresh term to the incumbent, Sitaram Yechury. In its essence, the political line was not very different from the draft political resolution backed by the majority section led by former general secretary Prakash Karat, but it was sufficiently vague to give some manoeuvring room to the beleaguered Mr. Yechury. The clause of contention related to allying with the Congress to defeat the BJP — with the majority Karat line, backed by most of the Kerala unit, against it, and the minority Yechury line, supported by most of the West Bengal unit, for it. The compromise involved replacing the phrase “without having an understanding or electoral alliance with the Congress party” with “without having a political alliance with the Congress party”. The end-result allowed both sides to claim victory. For the Karat side, ruling out a political alliance meant ruling out an electoral alliance; for the Yechury side, the withdrawal of the specific bar on understanding and electoral alliance with the Congress opened up the possibility of taking such a course. For those not used to the intense debates in Communist parties this might seem more like word-play than sword-fight. But the differences are rooted not only in a theoretical understanding of the threat posed by the BJP, whether it is communal authoritarianism or fascism, but also in the practical difficulty of fighting the Congress in Kerala and allying with it elsewhere. If fascism were the only concern for the West Bengal unit, an alliance with the Trinamool Congress should have been just as viable.

However, reducing its whole politics to the question of allying with the Congress would have been a serious mistake for the CPI(M), which built its support base first on the back of working class struggles, and later in opposition to the growing threat from neo-liberalism, represented in equal measure by the BJP and the Congress. The political line, in any case, allows for an understanding with all secular opposition parties, including the Congress, on agreed issues inside Parliament, and a broad mobilisation of people against communalism. The happy compromise allowed Mr. Yechury a second term, leaving the question of whether the unity on theory will hold in practice to be answered at the time of a general election in West Bengal. True, the current political line does not prohibit the CPI(M) from having seat adjustments or a post-poll understanding with the Congress. But not even an imaginative reading of the resolution can allow for the type of alliance the two parties had in West Bengal in 2016.

# ON A SOUND FOOTING

► By VIKHAR AHMED

As the political battle heats up in Karnataka, which is expected to go to the polls soon as the term of the current Assembly ends on May 28, there is cautious optimism in the Congress camp. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has managed to outwit his main rival, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in social, political and administrative spheres at various points of time ever since he assumed power in 2013. The saffron party seems to be fumbling to find a narrative to counter the Congress.

This optimism is not unfounded if one looks at the Congress' electoral record in the State since 2013. In the 2016 zilla panchayat elections, the Congress secured 46.88 per cent of the vote and won 498 zilla panchayat seats and 1,709 taluk panchayat seats while the BJP won 406 and 1,362 respectively. (There are 30 zilla panchayats with a total of 1,083 seats and 175 taluk panchayats with a total of 3,884 seats in the State.) The Congress also won the Gundlupet and Nanjangud Assembly seats in byelections held in April last year.

In a pre-election survey conducted by the market research group Cfore between July and August last year, the Congress was well ahead of its main opponent, the BJP and the regional party, the Janata Dal (Secular). The survey predicted a vote share of 43 per cent for the Congress (translating into 120-132 seats), 32 per cent for the BJP (60-72 seats) and 17 per cent for the JD(S) (23-30 seats).

If the survey results translate into actual seats, it would place the Congress in an exactly similar position that it found itself after the last election, winning 122 of the 224 Assembly seats. Siddaramaiah has already set a record of sorts in Karnataka's politics as the only Chief Minister to have completed his full term since D. Devaraj Urs in 1977.

Siddaramaiah's ascent to the top legislative post was the culmination of a long and chequered political journey which began in the 1970s when he became close to socialist leaders such as Pa. Mallesha and M.D. Nanjundaswamy in Mysuru. Political observers say that he deserved to become the Chief Minister much earlier, considering his competence and closeness to former Chief Minister and Prime Minister, H.D. Deve Gowda. But Deve Gowda's partiality towards his son H.D. Kumaraswamy ensured that this was not to be. Siddaramaiah, who was Deputy Chief Minister twice in the Deve Gowda government, was expelled from the JD(S).

When Siddaramaiah was elected as the Congress Chief Minister in 2013, many political observers predicted that he would not last a full term as he was considered an “outsider”. Siddaramaiah joined the Congress in 2006 and was soon battling factions. A member of the backward Kuruba community, he is now leading the Congress in the Assembly elections for the second time.

It is no secret that G. Parameshwara, Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president and a Dalit, and D.K. Shivakumar, the powerful Vokkaliga leader from south Karnataka, have been vying for the top post. Mallikarjun Kharge, again a Dalit and a veteran Congress leader from north Karnataka, was seen as a contender a few years ago. Apart from factionalism, it was felt that the government had become slack. The fact that Karnataka went through a long spell of drought which resulted in a spate of farmer suicides did not help the government.

However, there has been a turnaround in the past two years, and the Chief Minister has been exuding confidence in taking on



the BJP. Of late, Siddaramaiah has been swift and aggressive in his retorts to any charge made by the BJP and its government at the Centre, be it the charge of murder of Hindus under his regime or allegations of corruption. A series of events helped Siddaramaiah quell factionalism and consolidated his position as the Chief Minister who enjoys popular support as well as the support of Congress president Rahul Gandhi.

How did Siddaramaiah manage this turnaround? Prithvi Datta Chandra Shobhi, a political commentator based in Mysuru, said: “After a very long time, a Congress Chief Minister has had the autonomy to shape the campaign in his own image and to take decisions on crucial issues like ticket distribution. Even a few years ago, there was a feeling that this government had not taken off. Then how did he get through?” Shobhi explained. “Through deft political management and a populist public policy.”

The Congress' victory in the byelection in Gundlupet and Nanjangud (two constituencies in south Karnataka dominated by Lingayats and Dalits respectively) in a straight fight with the BJP helped Siddaramaiah immensely. This came after senior Congress leaders such as former Chief Minister S.M. Krishna and Dalit leader V. Srinivas Prasad joined the BJP.

Over the past year, Siddaramaiah has endorsed the demands of a section of Lingayats who want to be recognised as a separate religion distinct from Hinduism. He appointed a seven-member panel to study the demand and on March 19, after a marathon Cabinet meeting, approved its recommendation that Lingayat be recognised as a separate religion. It is unclear to what extent Siddaramaiah saw this as a core strategy. A bureaucrat, who is close to him, said Siddaramaiah was a true believer in the ideals of Basavanna, the 12th century reformer who founded the Lingayat creed by advocating a casteless society. Others say that the support for the demand for a separate religion is a calculated political strategy.

Whatever may be the case, the Congress is sure to benefit from Siddaramaiah's stand. The Lingayat community is predominant in northern Karnataka where the BJP has won the majority of its Assembly and Lok Sabha seats. The government's approval for separate religion status is expected to make at least a section of the community favour the Congress. Considering the sensitivity of the issue for Lingayats, the BJP has not been able to challenge the Congress. The BJP's chief ministerial candidate B.S. Yeddyurappa, who is himself a Lingayat, appears to be unable to take a clear stand on the issue.

While Siddaramaiah's bold move has caused consternation in political circles, its

long-term and more important ramification will weaken the Hindutva ideology. The idea of Hindutva will work only if Hinduism is imagined as a monolithic entity. If it is seen instead as an agglomeration of caste groups and theological and schismatic offshoots, then the underpinning of the Hindutva ideology becomes unstable.

Siddaramaiah has been vocal about his differences with the divisive ideology of Hindutva. By ensuring his support to the Lingayat demand for a separate religion, he has caused a dent in the ideological foundation of the BJP as well.

Another factor that seems to be working in favour of Siddaramaiah is that he is conducting himself like a regional satrap and using the motif of Kannada pride, which the BJP is unable to counter. Although he is a member of a national party, his actions suggest that he is working like a regional leader. It is clear that he has used issues such as endorsing the demand for a State flag and the removal of the Hindi language from the Bengaluru Metro signboards to bolster his core constituency. “Since Siddaramaiah came to power, Kannada schools have stopped facing closure all over the State,” Pa. Mallesh, an 84-year-old educator based in Mysuru, said.

On the day he unveiled the State flag, Siddaramaiah also took to Facebook to make a strong pitch for regional identity. He wrote: “Whether we now like it or not, the States of India were organised on linguistic basis. Many of the languages and cultures of the States pre-date the Indian identity. Yet, we Indians are bound by a common history, common civilisation, and a common destiny. My identity as a proud Kannadiga is not inconsistent with my identity as a proud Indian. So, in Karnataka when we speak about primacy to Kannada, argue against imposition of Hindi language, or call for adoption of a State flag, we are confident we are contributing to the building of a strong India; for, a confident Indian nation is confident about the individuality of all her daughters.”

A close aide of Siddaramaiah said his espousal of regional identity caused some discomfort in the Congress leadership, but when it realised that this posture would benefit the party in Karnataka, the high command did not make it an issue. It also realised that Siddaramaiah had a loyal following in the State, and it is clear that the Congress needs him more than he needs the Congress. This is evident from the fact that he refused to support the high command's two non-Kannada candidates (Sam Pitroda and Janardhan Dwivedi) for Rajya Sabha seats. Instead, he ensured that three local candidates of his choice (a Muslim, a Dalit and a Vokkaliga) filed their nominations.

While some of Siddaramaiah's old associates question his commitment to socialism, it is undeniable that progressive sections of society such as Left-leaning activists, intellectuals, writers, members of the farmers' movement and Dalits continue to support him. This group feels that he is sincere in his commitment to fighting fascist forces and stopping the BJP in Karnataka. His image as someone who does not believe in rituals and his personal effort in getting the Karnataka Prevention and Eradication of Inhuman Evil Practices and Black Magic Bill, 2017, or the Anti-Superstition Bill, passed in spite of strong opposition from the BJP, have endeared him to this group.

Siddaramaiah has countered allegations—both inside and outside the Assembly—that Hindus are under threat under his government. The BJP, at all public fora, including when Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and party president Amit Shah visited the State, has been accusing the Congress of being soft on communal killings of Hindutva workers. The saffron party is aggressively propagating the idea that Siddaramaiah is anti-Hindu, especially in religiously polarised areas such as coastal Karnataka and the Malnad districts. While this may have a limited political impact in favour of the BJP, the Congress is countering the propaganda effectively. In a case-by-case examination of each death, Home Minister R. Ramalinga Reddy proved that the BJP's allegations were false.

Siddaramaiah, who assiduously built his AHINDA (a Kannada acronym for backward classes, Dalits and minorities) vote bank, has retained it throughout his term. The BJP has not managed to make a dent in this vote bank. AHINDA is a notional bloc brought together for political convenience and machinations. The Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Dalits, while opposed to the dominant castes, have internal hierarchies among them. Retaining the support of this conglomerate consisting of numerous castes is not an easy task, but Siddaramaiah has managed to do this through smart budgetary allocations. He has formed separate boards for various backward castes.

Recognising the importance of cultural identity, his government added close to 30 jayantis (anniversaries) to the celebrations in the State. Tipu Jayanti, which has become controversial because of the BJP's opposition to commemorating Tipu Sultan, is the only anniversary that is well known. There are a number of OBC icons who are celebrated on various days through the year. While it is clear that Kurubas have benefited during Siddaramaiah's term, he has not alienated the OBCs. His regime is not referred to as a Kuruba regime the way past governments in the State were described as Lingayat or Vokkaliga regimes. The practice of previous Chief Ministers, who mostly belonged to either of the two dominant castes, was to surround themselves with a coterie of bureaucrats and Ministers from their community. The State government is engaged in an advertisement blitzkrieg over the past few months to project its various schemes in order to seek re-election on the development plank. Siddaramaiah often claims that 90 per cent of the State's populace is governed by one welfare scheme or the other. “For a below poverty line family, 50 per cent of its income comes from the government now,” said Dinesh Amin Mattu, media adviser to the Chief Minister.

Siddaramaiah is particularly proud of Annabhagya, the flagship scheme that he announced a day after he became Chief Minister.

## A summer of gathering discontent

► Sanjay Hegde

At the First Round Table Conference in 1930, B.R. Ambedkar reminded his audience: “The men who fought with Clive in the battle of Plassey were the Dusads, and the Dusads are Untouchables. The men who fought in the battle of Koregaon were the Mahars, and the Mahars are Untouchables. Thus in the first battle and the last battle (1757-1818) it was the Untouchables who fought on the side of the British and helped them conquer India.”

The battle of Koregaon was fought on January 1, 1818, between the upper caste army of the Peshwa empire of the Marathas on one side, and the East India Company's army manned by Mahars and their British officers on the other. The result is viewed with mixed emotions in today's India. It is easy to say that an Indian empire lost to the British company. But it is difficult to not acknowledge that probably the Indian empire lost because of its insistence on treating fellow Indians as untouchables.

In Ambedkar's footsteps  
In pre-independent India, as part of

his movement on behalf of the depressed classes, Ambedkar used to commemorate the victory of the battle of Koregaon, and often visited the site of the battle itself. That tradition of celebrating the rare triumph of broken men, over the twice-born, has been followed without interruption even after Independence.

Two hundred years after that battle, no lessons appear to have been learnt. New year this time began with the bicentennial celebrations of the “victory” of the lower castes being attacked by mobs led by upper-caste leaders. The Devendra Fadnavis-led government in Maharashtra, which is often called the new Peshwai, seemed to have done enough on New Year's Day to justify that label. The leaders of the anti-Dalit violence were allowed to roam free and Dalits are even today agitating for the arrest of Sambhaji Bhide, who is said to be one of the principal instigators of the violence.

Anti-Dalit violence is not limited to Maharashtra alone. On February 15, a retired revenue officer and Dalit activist, Bhanubhai Vankar immolated himself in the District Collectorate of Patan, north Gujarat, to protest against the State government's failure to regularise

ownership of land tilled by a Dalit. Also in Gujarat, on March 30 a 21-year-old Dalit youth called Pradip Rathod, of Timbi village in Bhavnagar district, was killed allegedly by upper caste men for owning and riding a horse. Around the same time, the Allahabad High Court dismissed a petition of a Dalit man, Sanjay Kumar Jatav, who had sought its protection to ride a horse at his baarat (wedding procession) around a village in western Uttar Pradesh's Kasganj district. An administrative solution was sought to be brokered by the district administrator to allow Sanjay to arrive on horseback at his marriage. At least five Dalit MPs from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party have publicly voiced misgivings about the Central and State governments' handling of Dalit issues.

Into this bubbling caste cauldron, on March 20, came the Supreme Court judgment in Subhash Kashinath Mahajan v. the State of Maharashtra. The court in effect, defanged the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. The judgment directed, “in respect of offences under the Atrocities Act, no arrest may be effected, if an accused person is a public ser-

vant, without written permission of the appointing authority and if such a person is not a public servant, without written permission of the Senior Superintendent of Police of the District... As and when a person arrested is produced before the Magistrate, the Magistrate must apply his mind to the reasons recorded and further detention should be allowed only if the reasons recorded are found to be valid. To avoid false implication, before FIR is registered, preliminary enquiry may be made whether the case falls in the parameters of the Atrocities Act and is not frivolous or motivated.”

Outpouring of anger  
Notwithstanding the government's feeble protestations of not being responsible and despite filing an immediate review petition, the judgment was perceived as the straw that broke the camel's back. A nationwide bandh in the first week of April saw an outpouring of Dalit anger that resulted in at least 10 deaths, mostly protesters. Protests had to be put down with the heavy hand of the state. The genie of caste unrest has however escaped from the bottle of social control. There has been a counter-mobilisation to do away with caste-based reservations

in favour of the Scheduled Castes. The nation stands teetering on the precipice of a hot summer of discontent. It appears, as Ambedkar put it in his last address to the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949, that “those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.”

He had prophetically warned: “On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognising the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value.”

It is an inescapable task of nation-building to seek to restore equal value to each individual who has been rendered less than a whole by socially assigned caste fractions. Ambedkar's postulate for Dalit and Savarna alike was: “So long as you do not achieve social liberty, whatever freedom is provided by the law is of no avail to you.” He warned: “It is not

enough to be electors only. It is necessary to be law-makers; otherwise those who can be law-makers will be the masters of those who can only be electors.”

Politics reflects society. From the days of the Poona Pact of 1932, Dalits have been co-opted into the power structure on terms dictated by others. They have been given a share of the pie, but never the rights to distribute or allocate the pie. It took nearly 50 years after Independence before a subaltern party headed by Kanshi Ram, managed to install a Dalit Chief Minister in its own right. That “miracle of democracy”, to use P.V. Narasimha Rao's felicitous phrase, grew into a full majority in 2007 with Mayawati serving a five-year term as Chief Minister till 2012.

In the Lok Sabha elections of 2014, despite a largely intact vote share, her Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) failed to win a single seat in U.P. Dalit representation even in the reserved seats was provided by BJP members, many of whom had been with the BSP earlier. In terms of political power, Dalits today are no more independent wielders, but have been subordinated to their assigned roles within the Hindutva umbrella.

# Open to permanent commission of women in army, govt tells Supreme Court

The Centre is considering granting permanent commission (PC) to short service commission (SSC) women army officers, it told the Supreme Court on Monday, in a move that could bring an end to an eight-year old battle in the apex court, and which will make the army the last of India's armed forces to do so.

The court also asked the Centre why it was not granting PCs to women army officers in combat roles and asked it to file an affidavit, with a comprehensive policy on the PCs within two weeks.

Additional solicitor general Maninder Singh told a bench led by Justice NV Ramana that Union Defence Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, held meetings with the three chiefs (of Army, Air Force and Navy) last week and the government was not averse to granting PCs to women officers on SSC in the army.

"Deliberations happened with all earnest. They are considering expanding PC, wherever it is possible. Modalities, however, need to be worked out and a decision needs to be taken as to in which areas it (PC) can be given," the ASG said. He also added that there was no question of taking



those women officers back who left the services before 2008. He also said no PC would be given to women officers in the combat division because no SSC is offered in this stream.

The government's latest position is a climbdown from its earlier one. It appealed in the apex court after the Delhi High Court in March 2010 ordered it to give women army officers on SSC a permanent commission. In contrast, the air force and navy did this.

Before the HC judgement, women officers retired after 14 years and had no scope of extension while their male

counterparts were eligible to receive it after five years.

Justice Ramana's bench on April 13 pulled up the government for harassing SSC women officers, opposing their plea for PC. Even on Monday the court described the Centre's stand as "wishy-washy." "Question is that you have done it for officers in air force and navy. Why this discrimination against the army officers?," Justice Ramana said. He also questioned why the ASG was qualifying his remark with "wherever it's possible."

The judge also questioned the hesitation on Centre's part to give PC

to women in combat roles.

Reacting to the government's response in the top court, former army chief Lieutenant General AS Lamba (ret'd) said it was a step in the right direction.

"It's logical to extend PC to women as they have the same intellect, determination and exposure as men," Lamba said. "And the army will certainly align itself to accept women in different roles and help them discharge their responsibilities."

"Too little too late," said Wing Commander Anupama Joshi (ret'd), who is from the first batch of women officers commissioned into the IAF in the early 1990s.

"The IAF is already granting PCs to women in cases where vacancies exist. This matter dates back to March 2010 and the army should have done it much earlier, Joshi said. She added that the fact it has taken eight years for the army to agree clearly indicates that there is still some internal resistance to the move.

In 2015, then defence minister Manohar Parrikar told Parliament that the armed forces had given PC to 340 women officers. More recent data wasn't immediately available.

# Venkaiah Naidu overstepped jurisdiction on CJJ removal motion, say legal experts

Even as a section of eminent jurists have supported the Rajya Sabha chairman M Venkaiah Naidu's decision to reject the notice of motion for the removal of the Chief Justice of India (CJI), another section of eminent legal experts believe the Chair may have overstepped its jurisdiction.

Vice-president Naidu on Monday said in a 10-page order that the notice was of no substantial merit and the allegations raised by the Opposition were neither "tenable nor admissible". Raju Ramachandran, senior advocate and former additional solicitor general, said the notice should have been sent to a committee for examination.

"I don't think the Chair was justified in going into the merits of the charges. The order uses phrases like 'not verifiable', but verification can only happen at the stage of inquiry," he said. Ramachandran, who served as the counsel for the Justice Sawant Committee, set up when a removal motion had been admitted against Justice V Ramaswamy in 1991, added: "The chair has made the same mistake that many commentators have made in recent days — that the notice must be based on proven misbehaviour. The motion is only required to cite instances of misbehaviour and, if it exists on the face of it, then it calls for an inquiry. Proven misbehaviour is the ground for removal, not a precondition for a motion to be admitted." Senior advocate Sanjay Hegde said he disagreed with the Congress-led op-



position's move to give the notice, but once it was given, the chairman of the Upper House should have admitted it.

"My opinion was that the Congress should not have bothered. In the past, impeachment cases have been preceded by non-political endorsements justifying it... (But) it is very dangerous for one single person to dismiss the motion. This smacks of arbitrariness and gives too much power to one person to protect a judge against prospective impeachment," he said. Hegde argued it would have been better to let the matter play out, go to a committee, and the committee may well have concluded that the charges did not hold.

"It is necessary in any accountable democracy that provisions exist to be able to remove a high constitutional authority."

Huzefa Ahmadi, another senior advocate, argued that the chair may have overstepped his jurisdiction. "The jurisdiction of the chair to adjudicate the motion on its merits is extremely limited. My personal view is he has transgressed the limits of jurisdiction."

# Kapil Sibal and Sitaram Yechury, the men who drove the CJJ removal motion

The notice for the removal of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dipak Misra was largely driven by two opposition leaders, Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary Sitaram Yechury and senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal.

Yechury was quite vocal about the plans. On January 23, six days before the commencement of the budget session of Parliament, he said: "We are discussing with Opposition parties the possibility of an impeachment motion against the chief justice in the budget session."

Yechury's initiative came at a time when his political line of a broader understanding, including with the Congress, was facing resistance in the party. (Yechury's line was eventually upheld at the party congress, the highest decision making body of the CPI(M) in Hyderabad last week).

Yechury convinced opposition parties such as the Nationalist Congress Party of the need to move forward on the issue.

The Trinamool Congress, after showing initial interest, didn't sign the petition. In fact, its leaders such as lawyer Sukhendu Sekhar Roy vehemently opposed the move.



The DMK too stayed away. The Rashtriya Janata Dal took the position that its members would be the last to sign since their leader Lalu Prasad faced serious legal challenges and their support for the motion could be construed as being driven by a desire for vengeance (they eventually did not sign).

"Soon after the four Supreme Court judges held a press conference, I spoke to both Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi on the need to move an impeachment motion," Yechury said.

His reference was to the January 12 conference of the four senior-most judges of the apex court after the CJI.

The four raised objections to the CJI's style of functioning, including his choice of judges to whom key cases would be allotted.

There didn't seem to be too many takers for Yechury's suggestion. The CPI(M) leader said Rahul Gandhi conveyed to him the divide within his party on the issue the day former President Pranab Mukherjee hosted a dinner on the launch of his foundation on March 15.

That's where Sibal came in. Several members of the Congress, especially lawyers, were opposed to the party supporting the move.

Former law ministers Salman Khurshid and Ashwani Kumar — neither are MPs — were opposed to the move. Congress spokesperson and Rajya Sabha MP Abhishek Manu Sanghvi initially had reservations but eventually toed the party line.

In the face of the internal division, Sibal played a key role in mobilising opinion both

within the party and with allies, said a leader familiar with the development. "He was regularly in touch with Rahul Gandhi on the issue," added this person who asked not to be identified.

Sibal, with his grasp over legal affairs, presented the strongest pro-notice viewpoint and laid out the scenarios if Congress went ahead. To keep the option of going ahead with the notice open, the Congress, during the post-recess budget session, got the signatures of over 50 MPs — but held back from giving it to the chair.

Former PM Manmohan Singh and ex-finance minister P Chidambaram were deliberately kept away from the process. While Singh was not involved because a former Prime Minister, Chidambaram's signature was not sought in view of the cases pending against his son.

On the morning of April 19, the leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Ghulam Nabi Azad, called up Yechury to inform him that the Congress was going ahead, and to invite him for a meeting the following day. Yechury, in Hyderabad at the time, said he couldn't attend the meeting but fully backed the move. The process eventually ended with the man who had started it.

# Cooperation and chemistry: What to expect from Modi and Xi's Wuhan summit

The informal summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping will be marked by practical cooperation and personal chemistry, officials familiar with preparations for the meet said.

The two leaders will meet in the Chinese town of Wuhan on April 27 and 28 to talk about their shared vision of the bilateral ties, they said.

"This is the meeting between two strong leaders of two major countries in Asia, discussing the state of the relationship and how they would like to see the ties moving ahead in the days and years to come... It's all about practical cooperation and the personal chemistry between the leaders, who would discuss all aspects of the relationship, the region and more," a diplomat said on condition of anonymity. The ties between the two countries, key economies in Asia and partners in various regional groupings such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), have been strained in the past year after a border standoff in Doklam region.

"A host of issues piled up, which virtually came in the way of practical cooperation that the two countries would



have forged despite having their healthy differences. But the fact that the two countries could defuse all the possible flashpoints in the ties showed the resilience in the ties and how the top leadership sees their relationship," another government official said.

The practical cooperation, he insisted, can be stepped up in a host of areas such as economic relations, counter-terrorism efforts, regional security architecture, climate change, working for an Asian century and strengthening multilateral organisation.

Another official said the way the US sees multilateralism, often undermining it,

gives an opportunity to countries such as India and China to come together to discuss issues related to it.

"So in other words, the leaders would get a chance to discuss their larger vision for the region and the world," the second official said.

Two countries have also been at loggerheads over the Belt and Road initiative, Beijing's resistance to bring Pakistan-based militant Mazood Azhar under UN sanctions and China's reservations over India becoming a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

The officials also said the summit would give an op-

portunity for the leaders to put their personal chemistry to work. "Prime Minister Modi gave a public reception to President Xi in September 2014. Xi returned the gesture by receiving Xi in his hometown in Xian in May 2015. Whenever they had met, the leaders gave the indication that they are keen on taking the ties forward and they see it as a very important bilateral partnership," the official said.

"The informal summit will highlight the personal friendship and enhance personal chemistry between the two leaders", said Luo Zhaohui, China's ambassador to India.

# Aseemanand's confession in blast case to police not voluntary: NIA court

The special anti-terror court that acquitted five accused in the Mecca Masjid blast case held that the confessional statement of Hindu preacher Swami Aseemanand to the police, which he retracted later, was not voluntary.

The NIA court also maintained that a person cannot be considered "communal or anti-social" only because of links to the RSS, which is not a banned organisation.

The court also dismissed the prosecution's claim that Aseemanand had confessed to his guilt to two inmates of a prison here, saying the CBI, which initially probed the case had not provided any documentary evidence to back its charge.

A powerful blast, triggered by remote control, had ripped through the over four centuries-old mosque here during an assembly of devotees on May 18, 2007 when they had gathered for Friday prayers, killing nine people and wounding 58.

Special Judge K Ravinder Reddy in his April 16 order said the confessional statement of Aseemanand was "hit by section 26 of the Indian Evidence Act and the same is not a voluntary one which was recorded during the



course of police custody".

The Special Public Prosecutor for NIA, the country's premier agency that probes terror cases, had submitted that Aseemanand gave the confessional statement in December, 2010, and retracted it four months later.

Rejecting the prosecution charge that Aseemanand had confessed his guilt to two inmates - Maqbool Bin Ali alias Chawaish and Shaik Abdul Khaleem in the Chanchalguda prison, the court said there was no record to show that the duo was in the prison at the time when Aseemanand was lodged there.

"Except the oral testimony of PW (prosecution witness) 104 and PW

105, there is no other record to show that they have been in Chanchalguda jail when Aseemanand was lodged there," the court said.

The order said Additional SP of CBI Raja Balaji, one of the investigating officers,

"has not collected any documentary evidence and produced before this court" showing that the two witnesses had been in Chanchalguda jail along with Aseemanand.

The CBI official did not examine the jail superintendent and record his statement that Khaleem and Chawaish were in the prison when Aseemanand was there, it said.

In the order, the judge also observed that working for Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) does not make a person communal and anti-social.

He made the observation while referring to Devender Gupta, one of the accused, who was an RSS pracharak from Bihar.

The court said the evidence produced by the prosecution did not prove beyond reasonable doubt that Gupta, being an RSS volunteer, nurtured communal hatred.

"There were no records to show what were the communal hatred speeches of Devender Gupta being delivered at Jamtara (Jharkhand). The oral evidence given by a prosecution witness does not support the charge," he added.

"The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is not a proscribed organisation. If any person works in it, it does not give any scope that he is a communal and anti-social," the judge observed.

The court had acquitted all the five accused, who faced trial, holding that the prosecution failed to prove "even a single" allegation against them.

Besides Aseemanand and Gupta, other acquitted are Lokesh Sharma, Bharat Rateshwar and Rajender Chowdary.

There were 10 accused in the case. Two accused -- Sandeep V Dange and Ramchandra Kalsangra -- are absconding, while Sunil Joshi was murdered. Investigation is continuing against two others.

# Kerala Police detain woman after mysterious deaths of her children and parents

The Kerala police on Tuesday detained a woman in connection with the mysterious death of four of her family members, including her two daughters and parents in north Kerala's Pinarayi village over the last five years. Three of them died in the last four months.

The case was transferred to the crime branch later on Tuesday with deputy superintendent of police Raghu Raman taking charge of the probe.

Local people got suspicious after they noticed the same pattern in all deaths and alerted the police. Police later moved the court and obtained permission to exhume one of the bodies on Sunday. An autopsy revealed high traces of aluminium phosphide (usually used to poison rodents) in the intestine.

Police said four members of the Vanathumveedu family succumbed to unexplained illness since 2013. Since all of them died in their house and no complaint was lodged, all the bodies were buried without post-mortem.

Police now suspect foul play after the autopsy determined high quantity aluminium phosphate in the exhumed body and took custody of the lone survivor in the house, PK Soumya. They also detained two youth of the area who were reportedly close to Soumya. However their details were not disclosed.

Police said the first to die was Soumya's one-year-old daughter Keerthana in 2013 who succumbed after a bout of vomiting and diarrhoea. Her sister Iswayra (6) died with same



symptoms in January this year.

However, the death of Soumya's parents in quick succession raised doubts among neighbours. Her mother Vadavathi Kamala (68) died on March 7 and father PK Kunjikannan (76) died on April 13 with same symptoms. Separated from her husband, Soumya and her children were staying with her parents in Pinarayi, a village in Kannur district. Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan also hails from the village, a bastion of Communists.

"Her statements are inconsistent and contradictory. We suspect some foul play and investigation is on to find out whether more people were involved," said a senior police officer who did not wish to be named. He also said that a clear picture will emerge only after Soumya is thoroughly questioned.

Doctors said aluminium phosphide when used on humans affect vital organs leading to a multi-organ failure and its ready availability means it is commonly used in suicides.

# Is there a cure for flu virus? Answers to your 10 most-asked questions

There are viruses and then there is the flu virus. What makes influenza unique is the shape-shifting nature of the virus. As it continuously changes its form and shape, people are exposed to newer strains every year. All of this makes it a tough disease to eradicate, and experts say there are chances of a flu pandemic. Which means, you really need to read this handy guide to protect yourself.

Dr Sanjith Saseedharan, Head of Intensive Care Unit, S L Raheja Hospital, answers some common questions about the virus:

• Why do a lot of people treat the flu virus lightly?

Just like "common" cold, people tend to take the flu virus lightly. This can be a very wrong practice as the disease can aggravate suddenly. Some patients may need hospitalisation or even admission to the Intensive Care Unit in a very short span of time. So, the wait and watch policy can prove dangerous.

• Why is the virus dangerous for health?

The flu virus, in itself, is not dangerous. However, the body does mount a response against it by mediators called as Cytokines which, in effect, causes all the symptoms of flu. At times, this immunological reaction can be overwhelmingly strong, causing damage to various organs, including the lungs. Most importantly, patients getting infected with the flu virus become conflicted by other bacteria which causes an increased morbidity and sometimes mortality.

• Can the flu vaccine give you the flu?

No. The vaccine may cause some side effects like muscle soreness, maybe a mild fever for a day or two, but it will never give a person the flu.

• How do you know if you really have the flu?

The symptoms would include headache, body ache, generalised weakness, sore throat and other ailments. In severe cases, there may be difficulty in breathing, bluish discoloration of lips, severe dehydration, drop in urine output and



dizziness.

• Why do some people suffer from severe flu?

Usually, people suffering from flu will recover within two weeks. However, some patients who do have other chronic health problems will experience worsening of the primary problem, which

thus makes such patients very sick, warranting hospitalisation (for e.g. worsening of asthma, or even heart failure). Severe flu-like illnesses are also seen at extremes of age (less than 5 years and more than 65 years), in pregnant women and those people living in chronic healthcare facilities.

• Does air travel increase risk of getting flu?

Air travel, in itself, does not increase the risk of catching flu, unless there is another flu-infected traveller seated close to you (within two rows), and manifesting symptoms like a cough, which may lead you to acquiring it.

• Why is flu linked to cold weather?

The flu virus can remain stable in air when the weather is cold, and especially with low humidity. This may also be associated with the fact that there may be overcrowding in cold weather as people tend to remain indoors and hence, cross-infection is quicker.

• How can you protect yourself from getting/spreading germs?

Ensure you wash your hands well as the flu can persist on door knobs and tables for prolonged periods. Also, avoid being in close proximity to patients who are sick with the flu. This is apart from eating nutritious food, having a good night's sleep, and keeping the house and environment clean. When infected,

cover your mouth when you cough, avoid crowded places and remain at home till a day after the fever subsides.

• Can your pets get the flu?

It is very rare to transmit the human flu from oneself to one's dog, as the flu virus is species-specific. However, there is a canine-specific flu which may travel between pets.

• What are some remedies for the flu?

There are a number of remedies that have passed from generation to generation, but the common point among all is the heat or steam that is related to a hot soup, tea, or warm water, that may soothe the sore throat and reduce post-nasal drip. Similarly, salt water gargles help reduce the inflammation and help in relieving the upper respiratory congestion symptoms of the flu. However, it is important to drink adequate amount of water as flu can lead to dehydration. Keep eating nutritious food. Most importantly, get flu shots which can help in preventing seasonal flu.

## What does your handshake say about your health?



Your physical strength has a lot of impact on your brain. In short, a fit body means a sharper brain. A study conducted by the NICM Health Research Institute, Western Sydney University, Australia, reveals that stronger people perform better in brain functioning tests. And muscular strength, measured by handgrip, is an indication of how healthy our brains are, said the study published in the journal Schizophrenia Bulletin.

"Our study confirms that people who are stronger do indeed tend to have better functioning brains," said study co-author Joseph Firth from NICM Health Research Institute, Western Sydney University, Australia. For the study, the researchers used data from 4,75,397 participants from all around Britain. The new study showed that on average, stronger people performed better in brain functioning tests that included reaction speed, logical problem solving, and tests of memory.

The impact is not just on the mind. A previous study had shown that hand grip strength is also associated with a healthy heart.

The findings also showed that maximal handgrip was strongly correlated with both visual memory and reaction time in over one thousand people with psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia. "We can see there is a clear connection between muscular strength and brain health," Firth, who is also an honorary research fellow at the University of Manchester in Britain, said. "But really, what we need now, are more studies to test if we can actually make our brains healthier by doing things which make our muscles stronger — such as weight training," he added.

Previous research by the group has already found that aerobic exercise can improve brain health. "These sort of novel interventions, such as weight training, could be particularly beneficial for people with mental health conditions," Firth said. "Our research has shown that the connections between muscular strength and brain functioning also exist in people experiencing schizophrenia, major depression and bipolar disorder — all of which can interfere with regular brain functioning," he added.

"This raises the strong possibility that weight training exercises could actually improve both the physical and mental functioning of people with these conditions," he said.

## Playing video games is one of the best ways to learn a new language

Science often has a love-hate relationship with video games. On the one hand, studies have shown that playing action games can put you at risk of developing brain illnesses. But, contradictory studies have shown that playing video games can act as a stress buster, be a viable treatment for depression, improve your brain efficiency, and may even make you a better student.

A new study shows that popular video games can also be used to teach a new language. In the study done by Saint Louis University in Spain, scientists used the Assassin's Creed II to teach Italian language to a class of

students. Simone Bregni, associate professor at the university, is also one of the many people who have benefited from video games. He started playing video games in 1975 when he was 12. By the mid-1980s, he was playing textual adventures, and realised his English was improving rapidly as he played.

He began incorporating video games in the classroom in language labs in 1997. It was the introduction of a new generation of animated, interactive adventure games in 2009, however, that brought striking results to his students. "Games have now evolved.



They are interactive movies," Bregni said.

Bregni has also used games like Final Fantasy, Trivial Pursuit, Who Wants to be a Millionaire, Heavy Rain and Rise of the Tomb Raider in his classrooms, though As-

sassin's Creed II has proved to be the most useful. "In my Italian Renaissance literature course, for example, students explore Florence as it flourished under the Medici by playing Assassin's Creed II," Bregni wrote in the study

published in the journal Profession.

"My 21st-century American students partake in the life of Ezio Auditore, a 20-something man from an affluent family, by wandering around a cultural and historical re-creation of 1476 Florence," Bregni said. Bregni used games to reinforce vocabulary and grammar, introduce cultural data and teach students to problem solve in Italian.

In a class called Intensive Italian for Gamers, all students made progress equal to two semesters of Italian over the course of a single fall semester. By the final, students were

3 to 5 points ahead of students in a traditional Italian course. On a typical day, Bregni led 30 minutes of traditional instruction, such as exercises to practice past tenses, for example, followed by 20 minutes of gaming.

"Studies indicate that a strong shared interest within a learning group will foster language acquisition. We start with things that students know and can figure out, which is reassuring, and we build from there," Bregni said. "I firmly believe that learning should be fun. The fact that it is fun doesn't take away from the seriousness — it's just more effective," he said.

## Fear exercise after a heart attack? This study will motivate you

A heart attack or even a heart surgery can be a life altering event. For many, it has been a wake up call to start moving. And now, according to this study, becoming physically active after a heart attack can actually add to your life.

Conducted by the European Society of Cardiology, exercise after a heart attack halved the risk of death within four years. "It is well known that physically active people are less likely to have a heart attack and more likely to live longer," said lead author Dr Örjan Ekblom, associate professor, Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences, GIH, Stockholm, Sweden. "However, we did not know the impact of exercise on people after a heart attack."

Method of study 22,227 patients in Sweden were included in the study that was conducted between 2005 and 2013. Their levels of physical activity were reported 6-10 weeks and 12 months after the heart attack. The difference between answers was considered a change in physical activity over the year following the heart attack.

On both occasions, patients were asked how many times they had exercised



for 30 minutes or longer during the previous seven days. Patients were categorised as constantly inactive, reduced activity, increased activity, or constantly active.

Compared to patients who were constantly inactive, the risk of death was 37%, 51%, and 59% lower in patients in the categories of reduced activity, increased activity, or constantly active, respectively.

Ekblom added, "Our study shows that patients can reduce their risk of death by becoming physically active after a heart attack. Patients who re-

ported being physically active 6 to 10 weeks after the heart attack but became inactive afterwards seem to have a carry-over benefit. But of course the benefits for active people are even greater if they remain physically active."

"Our study shows that this advice applies to all heart attack patients," he continued. "Exercise reduced the risk of death in patients with large and small myocardial infarctions, and for smokers and non-smokers, for example."

Apart from the health benefits, physical activity helps keep the mind strong too.

## Fish is the healthiest food you can include in your diet. Here's why

Almost every nutritionist worth her salt will tell you to consume more fish to reach your weight loss and fitness goals. Fish, they say, is the healthiest food you can include in your diet. However, until now, the reasons were not clear why dieticians and nutritionists included fish in most healthy diet. Omega 3 and -6 — present in large quantities in fish — have been called your skin's best friend. But there's more to eating fish than just good skin.

According to a recent study conducted by the Chalmers University of Technology, fish is linked to better long-term neurological health. A certain protein called parvalbumin is found in great quantities in different fish species. This protein helps prevent formation of certain protein structures that are closely associated with Parkinson's disease.

"Parvalbumin collects up the 'Parkinson's protein' usually prevent it from aggregating, by aggregating itself explained la Wittung-Stafshede, the lead author.

According to Janvi Chitalia, fitness nutritionist and weight management expert, "Another benefit of eating fish is associated with combating depression. A study which compared levels of anxiety and stress showed reduced levels of these parameters in people who had a regular intake of omega 3 for 12 weeks." She further adds that Omega 3 fatty acid plays a big role in improving mental abilities such as improving memory, concentration and reasoning.

Apart from these, there are many other benefits of consuming fish. According to Mumbai-based nutritionist Neha Sahaya, fish is an excellent source of lean protein without saturated fat. "It is also one of those few sources of vitamin D, which is important for the absorption of calcium," she says.

We know that consuming fish has been linked to better vision. Sahaya explains how. "The brain and eyes are heavily concentrated in omega-3 fatty acids and need them to maintain their health," she adds.

So, are all kinds of fish good for us? According to Chitalia, oily fish such as salmon, mackerel and sardines are related to prevention of the onset of dementia. Sahaya adds that fish varieties such as trout, tuna and salmon are considered to be the healthiest.



## ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS ARE NOT SAFE, CAN CAUSE OBESITY AND DIABETES

While replacing sugar with artificial sweeteners may seem like a good solution to lose weight or prevent diabetes, you may want to rethink that. A host of studies have shown that artificial sweeteners could be harmful for your health. A new study done by the Medical College of Wisconsin and Marquette University shows that sugar replacements could even cause health changes linked with diabetes and obesity. Earlier research had shown

that artificial sweeteners could increase risk of obesity, diabetes and heart disease. Another study showed that sweeteners combined with a low carbohydrate diet could significantly increase the quantity of calories consumed.

The study, which was conducted on rats and cell cultures, is the largest examination till date to track biochemical changes in the body. Researchers also looked at the impact of the substances



on the lining of blood vessels. "Despite the addition of non-

caloric artificial sweeteners to our everyday diets, there

has still been a drastic rise in obesity and diabetes," said lead

researcher Brian Hoffmann, adding, "In our studies, both sugar and artificial sweeteners seem to exhibit negative effects linked to obesity and diabetes, albeit through very different mechanisms from each other." But should you go back to sugar then? Researchers caution that the results don't provide a clear answer and there needs to be a further study on this topic. The research will be presented at the American Physiological Society.

# India to import more oil, drones and aircraft from US amid Trump trade war

India is seeking more oil, drones and aircraft from the US to help narrow its \$28 billion trade surplus amid rising concerns of possible collateral damage to its economy from President Donald Trump's trade spat with China.

Asia's third-largest economy could bridge the surplus by up to \$4 billion through oil imports alone, government officials said, asking not to be identified as they are not authorized to speak to the media.

India is among partner countries seeking to allay US trade deficit fears by raising imports as the Trump administration redraws bilateral trade plans and seeks to alter world trade norms. Earlier this month the US added India to a list of countries it's monitoring for possible currency manipulation aimed at boosting exports. India, which denied its central bank interventions help exports, fits one of the main criteria for countries making the list -- a bilateral trade surplus of at least \$20 billion.

Along with South Korea, India was the only other country to cut its surplus -- merchandise and services -- with the US after Trump took charge. The surplus dropped to \$28 billion



in 2017 from the \$30.8 billion in 2016, according to data from the Office of the US Trade Representative. Its merchandise trade surplus with the US in 2017 fell 6.1 percent to \$22.9 billion, mostly helped by more than doubling imports of aircraft and parts from the US in fiscal 2017 to \$4.24 billion, data from India's commerce ministry show.

The number may narrow further this year after the US lifted its four-decade-long curbs on crude oil exports, the officials said. India, which received its first US oil shipment in August 2017, could import oil worth \$4 bil-

lion, according to one of the officials. On April 19, Trump cleared the 'US Policy on the Export of Unmanned Aerial Systems' that could allow India to buy drones.

India, which imports more than 80 percent of its crude oil requirement, sourced nearly 12 million barrels of crude oil from the US in the last six months. Its 37 billion cubic feet of natural gas purchases over the past couple of years will help correct trade imbalances with India, US Energy Secretary Rick Perry said in New Delhi on April 17.

Counter-productive

"India importing more from the United States, if it is in its interest, is a good thing. But Trump's approach to trade has been fairly negative and counter productive," said Joshua P. Meltzer, Washington-based senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. "It forces countries to think about how do they narrow bilateral deficits."

It's too early to say how it will affect the World Trade Organisation, but there's a danger that a longer stint for Trump in the White House could mean countries will reposition themselves in a more permanent way, Meltzer said.

In the meantime, conflicts over trade tariffs remain. India is seeking an exemption to steel and aluminum tariffs imposed by the US even as it last week asked to join the WTO's dispute consultations between China and US. It alleged the Trump administration's measures violated WTO's most-favored nation principle, officials said. India plans to discuss its market access demands, concerns over H1B visas and changing rules to allow its information technology workers US social security benefits at the trade policy forum scheduled to be held in New Delhi in October or November.

# IHH Healthcare revises bid for Fortis, offers Rs 650 crore for immediate infusion



Malaysia's IHH Healthcare Berhad on Tuesday revised its proposal for Fortis Healthcare Ltd, making a binding proposal for about a fifth of its offer value, as the battle for takeover of Fortis escalates.

The revised offer includes a binding proposal for an immediate infusion of Rs 650 crore (\$98.0 million).

IHH plans to infuse the amount via a preferential issue and allotment of shares at Rs160 per share for which it would be given the right to appoint two directors on Fortis board, IHH said.

The non-binding part of the proposal is for subsequent infusion of up to Rs 3350 .

Earlier this month, IHH, one of Asia's largest healthcare operators, said it was ready to infuse Rs 4000 crore, at up to 160 rupees per share.

Fortis, which confirmed the receipt of IHH's revised offer, has received as many as five offers for control of its hospital business. Rival hospital operator Manipal Healthcare Enterprises Pvt Ltd and a consortium of two prominent Indian business families have submitted a binding bid and an investment offer, respectively.

China's Fosun International and KKR-backed Radiant Life Care Private Ltd are other suitors.

# \$4.5 trillion: That's how much gender inequality could be costing Asia-Pacific economy

It might be the most dynamic region in the world but the Asia Pacific isn't meeting its economic potential, and some of that has to do with gender equality, according to the McKinsey Global Institute.

Targeted policies to achieve more women's equality in Asia-Pacific economies could add \$4.5 trillion to the region's combined annual gross domestic product by 2025, or 12 percent better than if the status quo were maintained, MGI, the business and economics research arm of McKinsey & Co., said in a report Tuesday.

"Women can help -- and are helping -- to power this engine, making vital contributions to sustaining and enhancing Asia's growth and lifting more people out of poverty," the report's authors wrote. "Yet gaps remain large in many countries in the region on gender equality both in work and in society."

The researchers estimate that 58 percent of that potential growth would be from raising women's labor-force participation rate, a quarter



from putting more women to work in higher-productivity sectors and 17 percent from boosting women's work hours.

MGI judged 18 economies in the region for gender equality in work and in society. On the work metrics, the Philippines was lauded for progress, followed by New Zealand and Singapore. India and Pakistan were judged furthest from gender parity in work.

While there are fewer than four women globally in leadership roles to every 10 men, the ratio is only one in four in the Asia-Pacific region, according to the report. On societal metrics, South and Southeast Asia offers a lot of

potential for gender parity in digital and financial inclusion, while physical security and autonomy are considered greater worries.

MGI's calculations focus on supply-side estimates that account for labor-force participation rates by gender and age cohorts, part-time versus full-time work among men and women and employment patterns for men and women across sectors. The authors note that the supply-side approach needs demand-side policies, including those that would help create jobs that attract female workers.

Women account for half of the combined Asia-Pacific

population but contribute just 36 percent of the \$26 trillion in GDP -- the same as the global share, the report showed.

And while the region as a whole has shown "significant progress" on gender equality over the past decade -- including on maternal health and adult literacy -- much improvement is needed on boosting women's workforce participation, according to the report. That's one of five metrics the group used to measure gender equality at work.

While Singapore has shown high marks on this count, boosting female participation to 58 percent in 2016 from 28 percent in 1970, even the city state's relatively progressive policies haven't prevented a wide gender gap in areas such as hours worked and productivity.

The MGI authors suggest that encouraging women's participation in the so-called STEM fields -- science, technology, engineering and math -- and addressing skills shortages should help alleviate Singapore's gender inequality.

# Walmart wants to play India well after missteps in China

Walmart Inc. lost out in China by betting on the wrong horse. In India, the retailer is prepared to pay up to secure the top steed.

The world's biggest retailer is nearing a deal to buy a majority stake in India's top online retailer for at least \$12 billion, people familiar with the matter said. Flipkart Online Services Pvt's major investors, including SoftBank Group Corp., are on board with Walmart purchasing as much as 80% of the company, the people said, and they may complete the agreement in the coming weeks.

In buying Flipkart, Walmart would seek to redress missteps in China, where it initially bought an unprofitable, second-tier online marketplace, then exchanged it five years later for a stake in JD.com, the number-two player behind market leader Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. The strategic shift forced Walmart to play catch-up in the world's biggest e-commerce market, and chief executive officer Doug McMillon doesn't



want to miss the opportunity before him in the world's second most-populous nation.

"They missed the boat in China, and they don't want to make the same mistake in India," Robert Gregory, global research director at consultant Planet Retail RNG, said by phone. "It's quite clear that the future of markets like China and India are online. If Walmart wants to play in India, it has to invest."

Online competition A Flipkart investment would likely be Walmart's biggest deal in almost two decades and strike a blow against rival Amazon.com Inc., which holds 27% of India's \$30 billion e-commerce market, according to data track-

er Euromonitor. Amazon's market share trails Flipkart's 34%. The online retailer has committed \$5.5 billion to expand its business in India, where it's built a new mobile app and is pushing into new areas like groceries just as it has in the US.

Walmart has tapped India and China as its two main growth markets abroad. The retailer needs to grab more customers in both nations, since other international regions such as Brazil and the UK have floundered. Online sales are the key in those sprawling Asian markets due to the difficulty involved in reaching shoppers with traditional big-box stores. The retailer operates 443 stores

in China and 20 member-based wholesale clubs in India.

China deals Walmart's initial Chinese foray involved buying a stake in online retailer Yihaodian in 2011, hoping to tap into the booming web market and complement its physical locations. But Yihaodian held just 2% of Chinese online sales and couldn't help Walmart gain ground on Alibaba. A series of management reshuffles didn't help, and so when McMillon became Walmart's CEO in 2014, fixing China was on the top of his to-do list.

In the summer of 2016 McMillon acquired a 5% stake in JD.com, which took ownership of Yihaodian as part of the deal, giving Walmart a fresh start in China through access to JD's flagship online store. Later that year Walmart struck a partnership with a firm called New Dada that provides delivery of online orders in less than an hour. Walmart now owns 12% of JD.com, which sells everything from washing machines.

# Raghuram Rajan among contenders for top post at Bank of England: Report

Financial Times newspaper has named Raghuram Rajan as one of the top contenders for the job of Bank of England governor when incumbent Mark Carney's term ends next year.

This is at least the second time that the former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor's name has been mentioned as a candidate for a top central bank. In October, financial magazine Barron's had said that Rajan would be the ideal choice to chair the US Federal Reserve, a role that eventually went to Jerome Powell.

Financial Times said that attracting Rajan would be a "coup" for Bank of England.

Rajan's career progression has

been truly global. He worked as chief economist at the International Monetary Fund from October 2003 to December 2006. Rajan went back to academia after completing his three-year term as RBI governor in 2016. He is currently professor of finance at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

Rajan shot to prominence on the global stage in 2008 when the US sub-prime crisis started unravelling. Three years earlier, speaking at the US Federal Reserve's annual Jackson Hole conference, Rajan had warned about growing risks to financial system and called for putting in place policies to mitigate these risks. His views were criticized then,



but the onset of the crisis silenced his detractors.

His assignment as RBI governor was also dramatic. He took over in September 2013, when the Indian

currency was in a free fall, foreign exchange reserves were depleting and the country's current account deficit was widening. Within days of taking charge, Rajan, an alumnus

of the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, and Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, had helped stem the rupee's fall and managed to assuage jittery investors. He was credited with putting sex back into the falling 'Sensex', India's benchmark equity index, society columnist Shobhaa De wrote.

In his three years at RBI, Rajan was never short of quotable quotes, a quality that set him apart from his predecessors. Rajan spoke his mind and never minced his words. Naturally, he had a few run-ins with the government for his comments on its flagship Make in India programme, fiscal policies, and banking sector reforms, to name a few.

# Record pace of national highway project awards to continue in FY19, says BofAML

Construction of national highways has increased to record levels and the momentum is expected to continue this financial year too, as funding is not an issue and the pace of land acquisition has improved, says a report.

According to BofA Merrill Lynch (BofAML), 2018-19 is likely to be another robust year for the highway sector, even as some disruption is likely in the fourth quarter of this fiscal owing to 2019 gen-

eral elections.

"Funding is not an issue in the near-term; and the pace/process of land acquisition has improved. Large number of open tenders gives us comfort on the ordering outlook," BofAML said in a research note. Ordering/construction of national highways has increased to all-time highs of 17,055kms/9,829kms, respectively in FY18.

Meanwhile, the government has fixed the national



highways project award target at 20,000 km for the current fiscal, up 25% over the previous year.

After reporting a signifi-

cant jump in highway awards to 7,397 kms in FY18, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is targeting 8,000-10,000 kms of

project awards in FY19.

"We reckon that these targets are achievable," the report said.

The report further noted that the pace of land acquisition -- one of the key bottlenecks for the sector historically -- has improved to around 9,500 hectares in 2017-18 as against an average of about 7,700 hectares over the preceding five years.

Besides, several NHAI officials highlighted higher

compensation to land-owners, better coordination with state governments and higher autonomy to NHAI in the process as the key reasons for the uptick.

According to the report, capacity constraints on contractors' side are likely to delay execution. Many new players have won road awards -- may find it difficult to ramp-up their equipment/manpower to execute elevated order books in time.

# Track core inflation to predict RBI's next move on interest rates

Investors wrong-footed by the hawkish Reserve Bank of India (RBI) monetary policy meeting minutes might rather want to train their sights on underlying trends in inflation than the volatile headline number, analysts say.

The RBI, which Bloomberg economists Tom Orlik and Justin Jimenez rate among the top 3 central banks that surprise the most, has a mandate to keep headline inflation around 4% in the medium term. But commentary from members of RBI's rate-setting panel show they are more focused on core inflation -- the gauge that strips out volatile food and fuel components.

Globally, focus on core inflation is par for course. But in India's context, it's the headline inflation that matters, at least until now. According to the minutes of the April 4-5 meeting released last week, Deputy Governor Viral Acharya said the headline inflation was being influenced by volatile vegetable prices, which according to him wasn't amenable to monetary policy actions. His panel colleague, Michael Patra, a noted hawk and head of the RBI's research department, sought an increase in the repurchase rate, citing the stubborn rise in core inflation to above 5%.

"This volatility is largely 'noise' from an interest-rate setting perspective," said Acharya, who heads the monetary policy department. What concerns him more is inflation -- minus food and fuel -- which "one can consider as the 'signal' given its persistence."

The stubborn nature of this inflation gauge along with an optimistic outlook for growth and demand meant Acharya would vote for withdrawal of accommodation in the June policy meeting -- news that sent bond yields soaring. That was a far cry from early April, when bond investors interpreted RBI's lowering of near-term inflation projections as a signal that interest rates would remain on hold for sometime. "India's volatile food prices can often obscure the underlying inflationary trends," said Priyanka Kishore, lead Asia economist at Oxford Economics in Singapore, adding that investors would do better to keep an eye.

## Ravichandran Ashwin's been innovative as Kings XI Punjab captain in IPL 2018

The standout feature of 2018 the Indian Premier League (IPL 2018) this year is not last-ball results or Chris Gayle and Andre Russell muscling balls out of the stadium. The real star is Ravichandran Ashwin — nothing matches what he has done.

As captain of Kings XI Punjab, Ashwin has been innovative and aggressive, refreshingly flexible in approach. And for the world's best off-spinner to suddenly morph into a quality leg-spinner is mind boggling.

This isn't someone learning a new trick to send down the occasional doosra or leg-cutter or knuckle ball or the floater that drifts away from the bat. Ravichandran Ashwin is a completely new bowler, tossing up pure wrist spin like Anil Kumble — genuine stuff. He regularly bowls in the powerplay and, as if to prove a point, confronted his former captain MS Dhoni with leg-breaks and with a slip in place!

That someone can reinvent himself so radically shows remarkable courage and extraordinary self-belief. Not to forget great skill. Ashwin be-



coming a leggie is like Virat Kohli turning left-handed.

One possible reason for Ashwin's makeover is a desire to improve, grow as a bowler and become better. The change could also be triggered by the pressure of T20 cricket which has almost forced regular off-spinners out of business.

Seen in that context, Ashwin represents the plight of all bowlers in T20s and points to the increasing imbalance between bat and ball.

An equal bat versus ball matchup is fundamental to traditional cricket, not T20. Here rules favour batters with field restrictions, powerplays, four overs per bowler rule, tram-lines to monitor wides, freehits and limit on bouncers.

The stakes are loaded so heavily against bowlers, the contest resembles a fixed boxing bout where one has a hand tied behind his back. On designer pitches, batsmen are rarely challenged and average team scores

keep climbing. Nowadays, 180 is unsafe and 200 not unusual. Scoring 60 in the powerplay is just about par and chasing down 70 in the last five is very doable.

To push the runrate, fearless batsmen use friendly conditions to create newshots. First came the scoop, reverse sweep and the front-foot pull off fast bowlers. Now it is the ramp shot, slashed strikes for six over thirdman, square cuts over point and the most spectacular of all — the straight bat back-foot drive off fast bowlers that clears long-off or long on.

Bowlers have responded to the onslaught by undergoing a refresher course that taught them new questions to ask batsmen. Earlier it was yorkers, back of the hand stuff, slow bouncers. Now it's wide yorkers and, if available, raw pace.

But this tactic is the exception, not the rule. More than before, spin is in fashion with teams bowling 12 overs of spin. Slow bowlers bowl with the new ball and 'mystery' bowlers Sunil Narine and Rashid Khan keep batsmen guessing.

## Joe Root, England Test captain, backs plans for 100-ball format

Joe Root, England Test captain, says controversial plans for a domestic 100-ball competition could attract a new audience to Test cricket.

The England and Wales Cricket Board's proposal to introduce a new format, tentatively titled "the Hundred", with 15 regular six-ball overs and one 10-ball over, has proved divisive since an announcement last week but the England skipper is on board with the idea.

One of the fundamental aims of the ECB is to simplify the game for a fresh audience, specifically women and children, and Root thinks if the format takes off it could lead to interest in the longer forms of the game.

"It's going to appeal to a completely new audience and I think that's great," Root told the newspaper. "The more people and kids we can get into sport, the better."

"We've got to be very careful we don't measure it against the other formats... it's something to gather a new audience and gain



interest, not a threat to other formats. As players, working with the ICC (International Cricket Council), we've got to make sure the other formats don't suffer but it has a place in the game and, hopefully, we'll see that over time.

"There will be people that compare it to Twenty20 and worry it might take away interest from Test cricket, but it's important to remember it will bring new people to the game."

"It might be someone who didn't know much about the game before and then goes on to watch a Test match and gets immersed in that. That's the way I'd like to look at it."

## Carlo Ancelotti offered job of Italy coach: Reports



Carlo Ancelotti is set to be given the job of reviving the fortunes of Italy's national team, according to reports on Tuesday.

Ancelotti, who was sacked by Bayern Munich last September, met with Italian Football Federation (FIGC) commissioner Roberto Fabbricini and sub-commissioner Alessandro Costacurta in a Rome hotel on Monday, Corriere dello Sport reported.

Sky Sport Italia said the 58-year-old has been offered a two-year contract, which is likely to be less lucrative than his previous deal with the German champions.

Italy have been without a permanent coach since Gian Piero Ventura was sacked after they failed to qualify for the World Cup for the first time in 60 years after losing to Sweden in a two-legged playoff in November.

Ancelotti, who has also managed Chelsea, Real Madrid, AC Milan, Juventus, Roma and Paris Saint-Germain, has three Champions League titles to his name as a coach. He has also won the league in Italy, France, Germany and England.

The FIGC budget for a new coach and his staff is five million euros (\$6.1 million) per year, which would be a big drop from the reported 12 million euros plus bonuses that Ancelotti earned at Bayern Munich.

Ancelotti joined Bayern in 2016 and won the Bundesliga title in his first season but has been out of football since he was sacked following a 3-0 defeat to Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League.

Costacurta is reported to have offered Ancelotti, who has also been linked with former club Chelsea and the soon-to-be-vacant manager's job at Arsenal, a free hand in choosing his staff.

Ancelotti's son Davide, who was his assistant at Bayern, could play a role as well as former stars such as Andrea Pirlo, Gianluigi Buffon and Paolo Maldini.

Costacurta, who was coached by Ancelotti at AC Milan in the 1980s, was appointed to find a successor to Ventura and set a deadline of May 20 for the appointment of a new coach. Among the other names touted were Zenit St Petersburg coach Roberto Mancini, Chelsea boss Antonio Conte and former Leicester coach Claudio Ranieri, now in charge of French club Nantes.

Italy's under-21 coach Luigi Di Biagio has been filling the position with the four-time world champions on an interim basis.

## Sachin Tendulkar says an off-spinner with leg-breaks like a multi-lingual person

An off-spinner who can bowl leg-breaks is like a multi-lingual, said Sachin Tendulkar, reflecting on the growing demand for wrist spinners in limited-overs cricket given the difficult questions they are posing to batsmen all around.

While Tendulkar did not take any names, his observation on off-spinners trying to bowl leg-break would certainly be music to Ravichandran Ashwin's ears, as he is trying his hand at wrist spin with an eye on national comeback in the shorter versions.

"I feel it can only help. It's like you know two to three different languages. Now there is no harm in knowing five or six different languages. It can't take away anything from you," Tendulkar, who is celebrating his 45th birthday today, told PTI in an interview.

"It's exactly the same when one develops more variation. So it's wrong to say that they (finger spinners) are joining a handwagon now that they are bowling leg spin. No, they aren't. Rather, we should see that they have put in effort to

develop a delivery," he said.

And what does he make of the view that the off-spinners' attempts are futile?

"I think it's wrong thinking of people (that off-spinners can't bowl leg-breaks). I am not blaming the player here. I am blaming the people (perception) here. Leg-break could be just another weapon in your armoury."

"People can bowl off-spin but along with that off-spin, if they are capable of bowling leg-spin as a variation, then why not," Tendulkar said.

The legendary batsman feels that if someone can get his leg-breaks right, it should be considered a strength. "If doosra bowled by an off-spinner is seen as a weapon, then him bowling a leg-break if situation demands, shouldn't be considered his weakness. Rather, it should be considered his strength, when he gets it right."

"I can talk about myself. In matches, I used to bowl off-spin to left handers and leg-breaks to right handers. If you are able to do it, then why not."



On the younger lot of batsmen failing to read leg-break bowlers' wrists, Tendulkar feels that the current crop of bowlers have really made the willow-wielders think.

"I don't think it would be a great thing to generalise that batsmen are not reading the googlies from leg-breaks. A batsman can see an outswinger and still manages to edge it. "To err is human. But I agree that leg-spinners have forced today's batsmen to think more," said the legend of 200 Test matches."

Mumbai Indians' young leg-spinner Mayank Markande has been one of the finds of the season and Tendulkar lavished praise on the Punjab youngster.

"Leg-spinners have got the batsmen to think. Mayank (Markande) has got the batters to think and watch him even closely. It is a compliment to Mayank's ability that he has been able to disguise his googly so well. It is indeed praiseworthy," the MI mentor said.

But he does believe that if there is will power, the batsmen can do their homework against leg-spinners, like he did way back in 1998 in order to tackle Shane Warne before a home series against Australia. Tendulkar roped in former India leg-spinner Laxman Sivaramakrishnan to bowl to him on under-prepared pitches with rough on both sides.

But will today's players be able to find time with the pres-

sure of three formats?

"Of course, time is there. I don't see any reason to say there's no time. One needs to chalk out a plan and then follow that. It boils down to an individual."

"There are guys who like preparing and there are players, who would like to deal with a situation when it arises." Tendulkar has seen an evolution happen in world cricket since the time he made his India debut as a teenage prodigy at the age of 16 in 1989. "Change has been the only constant thing. The biggest change has been the advent of T20 cricket and the kind of impact it has had on cricket-loving public. It has grabbed eye balls."

"When I started playing, for a considerable period, I have played ODI cricket in whites. But now even IPL's standard of cricket has changed from what it was during first three years," Tendulkar opined.

So would an 18-year-old Tendulkar have batted differently had IPL started in 1990 or 1991?

"Of course, I would have batted differently," answered the man, who had scored a 17-ball half-century against Pakistan in an exhibition one-day in his debut series.

Talking about his own journey, he recollected his twin hundreds against Australia at Sharjah, exactly two decades ago. The first is still known as the 'Desert Storm' hundred while the second came in the final in a match-winning cause.

"It's a great feeling. All these things have happened in my life. I feel blessed to have had all these wonderful moments in my career. I think those two Sharjah matches are etched in people's memories." Tendulkar also spoke about the brutal assault on Abdul Qadir during the rain-curtailed exhibition match where his power-packed batting was noticed by one and all.

"I never realised the kind of impact that little innings had on people. Obviously, it's moments like these that stay with people and I feel happy that about it."

## Mohammad Amir granted visa for Pakistan cricket team's UK tour

In what may come as a major respite to Pakistan cricket team, pacer Mohammad Amir has been granted visa by the UK authorities to travel to the country to be with the squad for the upcoming series against England.

Confirming the news, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said the 26-year-old would fly to the United Kingdom to join the remaining squad, who had already headed to the country earlier

this week.

This means Amir will now be available to feature in Pakistan's four-day game against Kent, beginning April 28 in Canterbury.

Amir had earlier faced similar kind of delay during Pakistan's 2016 tour to England, featuring four-match Test series and a five-match ODI series.

The PCB had to ultimately approach their England counterpart to help them

secure Amir's travel documents after which he was able to depart with the team.

Ireland are slated to play their inaugural lone Test against Pakistan from May 11 before the latter side head into England for two-match series, beginning May 24.

This will be followed by two T20Is against Scotland on May 12 and 13 respectively.

## Snubbed Joe Root holds no grudge for England team-mates in Indian Premier League

England Test captain Joe Root is not bitter about his exclusion from this year's Indian Premier League (IPL) and believes his team mates playing in the Twenty20 tournament will hugely benefit from the experience.

The 27-year-old England on their gruelling tour of Australia, where they suffered a 4-0 Ashes defeat, followed by another Test series loss in New Zealand in March. Root went unsold in the

IPL players' auction in February but does not grudge several England players who are in India to showcase their talents in the ongoing tournament.

"It's not frustration watching the other guys," Root told Sky Sports Cricket.

"...I went into the IPL auction to get a bit more exposure to T20 cricket, it didn't materialise, it would have been nice to be involved in that but I've got no bitter feelings to-



wards the other guys, I think it's great." Root is instead watching his England team mates, including all-rounder

Ben Stokes and wicketkeeper batsman Jos Buttler, play in the eight-team league and believes their experience would

only strengthen the team.

"They'll benefit hugely from it and we, as a side, will benefit hugely from it. Look at the way Jos and Ben and a few guys came back from it last year and what it has brought to their games..." Root said.

"Hopefully that can happen on a wider scale with more and more players going out there from English cricket, playing under scrutiny and in the high-pressure situations

that the tournament brings, it can only be a good thing for us in the long term."

Root has completed a little over a year in his captaincy role and following the underwhelming results over the last few months, the skipper is predicting significant changes to his team.

"Looking forward, there will be changes, especially long-term and then it is up to guys to come in and take the opportunities," Root said.

## Virat Kohli's new love: India captain adds dream supercar to his collection

It is a well-known fact among Virat Kohli fans that the India cricket team captain is a huge admirer of German car manufacturer Audi. Kohli is currently the owner of an Audi R8 LMX Limited Edition, Audi R8 V10, Audi A8L W12 Quattro, Audi S6, Audi Q7 4.2 TDI, Toyota Fortuner and a Renault Duster, and he has added a Bentley Continental GT to his collection.

According to a Cartoq report, Virat Kohli's registered name, Vikas — who happens to be the second owner in the In-



to a Cartoq report, new Bentley Continental GT is apparently in his brother's Kohli, and Virat pens to be a savior for Audi — is er. Other Bentley owners in the Indian team include Virender Sehwag and Yuvraj Singh.

Kohli, who tied the knot with Bollywood actor Anushka Sharma last December, recently cancelled a Rs 34 crore luxury apartment he booked in the Omkar 1973 tower located in the tony Worli area of the megapolis.

In June 2016, the cricketer had bought the 7,171-sqft sea-view apartment on the 35th floor of the under construction tower C of this super-luxury project for Rs 34 crore. The project is being developed by Omkar Realtors & Developers. A source close to the development confirmed the cancellation of the transaction saying Kohli recently leased out a sea-view apartment in the skyscraper by the Raheja group in the nearby Dr Annie Besant Road for a monthly rental of Rs 15 lakh. Kohli, who was rested for the Nidahas Trophy, will lead Royal Challengers Bangalore in IPL 2018, starting April 7. RCB's first game is against Kolkata Knight Riders on April 8.