

TIME AND US

DAILY

SRINAGAR, KASHMIR

TUESDAY

- MAY, 15, 2018
- 28 SHABAN 1439 AH
- ISSUE: 113
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WEATHER TEMPERATURE

| STATION | MAX TEMPERATURE | MIN TEMPERATURE |
|----------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | ACT | ACT |
| SRINAGAR | 19.8 | 11.1 |
| JAMMU | 34.5 | 23.3 |
| LEH | 18.8 | 2.7 |
| KARGIL | 19.8 | 5.2 |

SUNSET TUESDAY: 07:26 PM
SUNRISE WEDNESDAY: 05:30 AM

LOCAL FORECAST OF SRINAGAR
Light rain/Thunder shower. Maximum & Minimum temperatures will be around 20°C & 11°C respectively.

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

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E-PENSION PAYMENT ORDER: NEW STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

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MS DHONI, DINESH KARTHIK AND OTHER INDIAN WICKETKEEPERS MAKE A STATEMENT IN IPL 2018

ARTICLE 35-A:

SC to hear petitions demanding scrapping of on August 16

New Delhi, May 14 (KNS): The Supreme Court on Monday said it will hear on August 16 the petitions challenging the validity of Article 35-A of Indian Constitution, which gives special rights to permanent residents of the Jammu and Kashmir. Pertinently, Four petitions have been filed, demanding scrapping of Article 35A in Jammu and Kashmir.

In this regard, the main petition was filed by Delhi-based NGO, 'We the Citizens' in 2014. Subsequently, three more petitions challenged the provision and were filed and clubbed with the main one.

In October last year also, SC had deferred the hearing for three months after Center told the apex court that it had appointed an interlocutor for holding talks with various stakeholders in Jammu and Kashmir and requested it to adjourn the hearing over the politically contentious issue, claiming the court hearing may affect the dialogue process.

Article 35A empowers the J&K



legislature to define permanent residents of the state. It was added through the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954 issued under Article 370 of the Constitution. The J&K Constitution, which was adopted on November 17, 1956, defined a Permanent Resident as a person who was a state subject on

May 14, 1954, or who has been a resident of the state for 10 years and has "lawfully acquired immovable property in the state". The J&K legislature can alter the definition of permanent residents only through a law passed by two-thirds majority.

The provision bars Indian citizens, ▶ See **SC**...Pg 02

Pakistan calls Nawaz Sharif's Mumbai attacks remark 'false, misleading'

▶ Agencies

New Delhi: Pakistan has rejected its former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's comments on the 2008 Mumbai attacks and termed it "completely false and misleading", the Geo TV reported.

The National Security Committee (NSC) of Pakistan met on Monday under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi to discuss Sharif's "misleading media statement", the news channel reported.

"It was very unfortunate that the opinion arising out of either misconceptions or grievances was ▶ See **Pakistan**...Pg 02

BJP not ready to listen to reason on JK: Dr. Farooq

'Expresses concern over deteriorating law and order scenario in the valley'

Srinagar, May 14 (KNS): National Conference President and Member of Parliament for Srinagar, Dr. Farooq Abdullah chaired Party's Provincial Committee meeting at 'Nawa-e-Subha' Complex in Srinagar today. Blaming the incumbent state government as well as the central government for the rapidly deteriorating situation in the state Dr. Farooq Abdullah said deaths, communal polarization, chaos, anarchy have engulfed all the three regions of the state.

While taking stock of the emerging situation across the state Dr Farooq Abdullah said, "Under the present PDP-BJP government, people of the state are being pitted against one another along regional and religious lines. This is being done with a design to seek specific political dividends by the ruling regime. BJP government at the centre instead of helping us get out of this vortex of violence is watching as a mute spectator. They seem to have given up on the state and have so far failed in bringing in a workable, practical and sensible way-out. When it comes to Kashmir the present leadership of BJP is so dogmatic in their approach that they are not ready to listen to reason."

In the meeting party Working President Omar Abdullah, General Secretary Haji Ali Mohammad Sagar, Additional General Secretary Dr Sheikh Mustafa Kamal, Provincial



President Nasir Aslam Wani, and other senior leaders and party functionaries from Kashmir province including A R Rather, Mohammad Akbar Lone, Chowdhary Mohammad Ramzan, Mubarak Gul, Mohammad Shafi Uri, Sakina Itoo, Shamima Firdous, Saifullah Mir, Ishfaq Jabbar, Altaf Kalo, Dr Bashir Veeri, Ab Majeed Bhat, Irfan Shah, Peer Afaq Ahmad, Gh Mohiuddin Mir, Gh Ahmad Shah, Sharief din Shariq, GN Ratanpuri, Qaiser Jamsheed Lone, M Syed Akhoun, Syed Shafi, Javed Dar, Sajjad Shafi, Showkat Mir, Mushtaq Guroo, Salman Sagar, Imran Nabi Dar, Mudassir Shalmiri, Sabiya Qadri, Jagdish Azad, GN Talhal and others were also present.

Expressing serious concern over the ▶ See **Farooq**...Pg 02

Mehbooba stresses on adopting cautious, professional approach while dealing situations



SRINAGAR, MAY 14: Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti today asked the officers of Police Department to adopt a cautious and professional approach in dealing with the

day to day situations in the State. She said the Police has been and should be an institution of public reassurance rather than a cause of fear among the masses.

The Chief Minister said this while interacting with a group of Police officers here today.

Mehbooba Mufti advised ▶ See **Mehbooba**...Pg 02

Mehbooba reviews Ramadhan arrangements

Also directs close coordination between civil admn, Police, Army to ensure no inconvenience to people during morning, evening prayers

SRINAGAR, MAY 14: As the Holy month of Ramadhan is set to start across the world in a few days, Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti reviewed the arrangements put in place by the administration for the holy month across the State in a high level meeting of officers here today.

The Chief Minister took a detailed review regarding status and availability of power, drinking water, essential supplies, sanitation and other arrangements made by the con-

cerned Departments for the coming month across the State.

Mehbooba Mufti also directed the DCs and District SPs to ensure complete synergy between civil administration, Police and Army so that people do not face any inconvenience during offering prayers in late hours and early mornings. She also directed the district administrations across the State to remain alert and cautious ▶ See **Ramadhan**...Pg 02

'Corruption cases await disposal for years, Officers facing charges enjoy plum postings'

Departmental heads asked to act promptly on corruption related queries: Govt

Srinagar, May 14 (KNS): The state anti graft agencies dealing with corruption cases of government officials, are awaiting disposal of hundreds of complaints that are pending with various departments of the Jammu and Kashmir Government.

Sources told Kashmir News Service (KNS) that most of the government departments were reluctant in sharing case histories of the accused. "Over the years hundreds of cases have been sent



to different government departments for action and on the basis of evidence col-

lected, prima facie charges have been established against ▶ See **Cases**...Pg 02

KATHUA RAPE, MURDER CASE A CONSPIRACY TO DEFAME JAMMU PEOPLE: LAL SINGH

Jammu: Senior BJP leader Lal Singh said on Monday there was a "conspiracy" to defame the people of Jammu over the gruesome rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl in Kathua, and reiterated the demand for a CBI probe into the case.

Singh, who resigned from the Jammu and Kashmir council of ministers after courting controversy by attending a rally in support of the accused in the case, questioned the state government and "Kashmir-centric people" about their objection to a CBI probe.

"I want to ask those against CBI probe whether they think CBI is a Pakistan agency," he said.

"Shame on those who dubbed Dogras of Jammu as ▶ See **Lal Singh**...Pg 02

TAJ MOHI-U-DIN ASKS PEOPLE TO GEAR UP FOR ELECTIONS

Says ruling dispensation crosses all limits of failures

Srinagar, May 14 (KNS): Emphasizing people to gear up for elections, Senior Congress Leader & Former Minister Taj Mohi-u-Din while addressing series of public meetings in various far off places in Uri Assembly Segment described the ruling dispensation as a complete failure, saying that the unnatural alliance between PDP BJP has crossed all limits of failure & discrimination.

Despite heavy rains, people of Chotali, Thajal and Naganari attended the public meetings in thousands complaining about the indifferent attitude of the Government ▶ See **Taj**...Pg 02

Govt. must revoke order, asking Kashmiri Pandits to register before pilgrimage: Er. Rasheed

SRINAGAR, MAY 14 (PTK): Appealing Govt. to withdraw the order asking Kashmiri Pandits to register themselves before visiting any shrine in the valley, AIP Supremo and MLA Langate Er. Rasheed has said that there is no threat to any Kashmiri Pandit at least from the side of common Kashmiris, stone palters and even militants.

In a statement issued today Er. Rasheed said "It makes no sense that Govt. has issues the circular asking Kashmiri Pandits to register themselves before visiting any shrine, so as to provide security to them as Kashmiri Pandits are the inhabitants of Kashmir and have been visiting their shrines, ancestral places and also attending social and other functions with their Muslim neighbors even



in worst turmoil. There are dozens of examples in every nook and corner of Kashmir when the Muslim community has performed last rites of some deceased Pandits and taken care of old aged ailing Kashmiri Pandits, orphans and all those families who preferred not ▶ See **Rasheed**...Pg 02

Police solves Shopian Murder Case of an elderly person

Srinagar, May 14 (KNS): Police on Monday claimed to have solved a murder case of an elderly person in south Kashmir's Shopian district by arresting three persons "involved in the crime."

A police spokesperson said that on May 13, police post Imamshah Shopian received a written complaint from Maqbool Bhat, a resident of Handew Shopian, in which ▶ See **Police**...Pg 02

Suspected movement along International Border, high alert sounded in Jammu

▶ Agencies

Jammu: The Border Security Force (BSF) sounded a high alert along the entire 198-km long international border with Pakistan in Jammu region on Monday after a trooper noticed a group of three to four suspected terrorists in a rivulet in Hiranagar sector of Kathua district late Sunday night.

"On the intervening night of May 13 and 14 around 0015 (12.15 am) the 173rd battalion



of the BSF noticed a suspicious movement of three to four suspected terrorists, who were in combat fatigues and with backpacks, in Tarnah Nullah near Bobiya and Londi border out posts of the BSF," said an intelligence official.

"It seems there was an ▶ See **Border**...Pg 02

Scores injured as police use batons, water cannons against SSA teachers

'Will protest till Govt fulfill our demands'

Srinagar, May 14 (KNS): Scores of teachers were Monday injured after police used batons and water cannons to disperse the protesting Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) teachers who were on the streets to press for their demands.

The protesting SSA teachers assembled at Srinagar's Pratap Park and tried to march towards Civil Secretariat to protest against the inordinate delay by the state government in de-linking their salary from



funds received from Government of India.

However, as soon as the ▶ See **SSA**...Pg 02

Tarigami condemns use of force on SSA teachers

Srinagar, May 14 (KNS): While condemning the use of force on Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) teachers, who were protesting against the inordinate delay by the ▶ See **Tarigami**...Pg 02

SRINAGAR AIRPORT BEING READIED FOR NIGHT LANDING, TO BE OPERATIONALISED SOON

Mehbooba directs quick completion of infra upgradation at the airport; also reviews Jammu airport expansion, directs working out extension of landing hours

SRINAGAR, MAY 14: The Srinagar airport would soon be having night landing facility for which all preparations are being done by concerned agencies.

This was disclosed in a high level meet held here today with Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti in chair.

The introduction of the facility would give a big push to the tourism sector in particular besides further improving the connectivity with other areas of the country and would also help in improving the economy of the State as well.

The meeting was informed that the Directorate General of Civil Aviation has granted necessary permission for operating night flights and the necessary infrastructural upgradation in this regard is being done by the Airport Authority of India and other State agencies.

The Chief Minister directed completion of all these upgradations within a month's time so that the facility is thrown open in view of the tourist season in the Kashmir Valley. She di-

rected immediate release of Rs. 3.86 crore for meeting the expenses of raising ancillary infrastructural facilities for night hours at the Airport for the convenience of travellers and the staff.

Mehbooba Mufti also directed the concerned agencies to take measures for minimising the rush of the traffic on the road leading to Srinagar airport from Humhama. She asked for exploring the suggestions of putting more body scanners at the gate, widening of entry road from the gate upto terminal building

and use of buses for taking passengers inside airport.

The Chief Minister also reviewed the pace of work on the expansion of Jammu Airport and directed early start of works on the expansion of the runway for which the tenders have been already floated. She directed the Divisional Commissioner, Jammu and Jammu Airport authorities to flesh out the formalities of exchange of land with Army authorities to start the work on runway expansion at the earliest.

The meeting was informed that 375 kanals of land have been transferred to Animal Husbandry Department in lieu of their land at Belicharan and rest of the land would be provided to them at Chhatta.

Mehbooba Mufti directed the Jammu Airport authorities and Jammu Divisional administration to explore, in the meantime, extension of landing hours at the Jammu airport beyond 5pm and take measures required in this regard.

The Chief Minister also directed the

Jammu Divisional administration to identify spots for construction of Greenfield airport at Jammu.

Chief Secretary, B B Vyas; DGP, Dr. SP Vaid; Financial Commissioner, Housing & Urban Development, K B Aggarwal; administrative secretaries of concerned Departments; Divisional Commissioners of Kashmir and Jammu; representatives from Airport Authority of India; officers of Divisional and district administration were present in the meeting.

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SC

other than those who are permanent resident of Jammu and Kashmir, from seeking employment, settling in the state, acquiring immovable properties or undertaking any trade or business if the state makes any law to that effect and it cannot be challenged before any court.

It is worth pointing that the NGO challenged the provision on the ground that it could only have been introduced through a Constitutional amendment under Article 368 and not through a Presidential Order under Article 370.

PAKISTAN

being presented in disregard of concrete facts and realities," said a statement released by Abbasi's office after the meeting.

Sharif, for the first time, publicly acknowledged in an interview that militant organisations are active in Pakistan and questioned the policy to allow the "non-state actors" to cross the border and "kill" people in Mumbai.

"Militant organisations are active in Pakistan. Call them non-state actors, should we allow them to cross the border and kill over 150 people in Mumbai? Explain it to me. Why can't we complete the trial?" he had told Dawn newspaper.

It is being seen as an admission of Pakistan's involvement in the terrorist attack in 2008.

However, on Sunday, his party, the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) issued a clarification stating that Nawaz's remarks were "grossly misinterpreted by Indian media".

Facing backlash and ire from international and local media, the NSC meet was called. Top military leaders, the acting foreign minister, chiefs of the navy and air force and other top civil officials of the government attended the meeting at Abbasi's house.

The participants of the Committee "condemned the fallacious assertions".

Ten Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorists had sailed from Karachi to Mumbai in November 2008 and carried out co-ordinated attacks, killing 166 people and injuring over 300.

Nine of the attackers were killed by police while lone survivor Ajmal Kasab was caught and hanged after handed down death sentence.

Pakistan-based Jamaat-ud-Dawah's Hafiz Saeed was named as the mastermind in the case.

However, the case is now in its 10th year, and Pakistan is yet to punish any of the suspects.

FAROOQ

deteriorating law and order scenario in the State, NC President said, "The continuous spree of killings has led to a situation where our youth are being pushed into an area of confrontation and later become the unfortunate victims of this conflict. Being the head of the state and of the unified command, Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti has failed completely to put a stop to civilian casualties. Its time for both PDP as well as BJP to do some introspection and listen to voices from the ground and do some course correction which I am afraid to say is too late."

Dr Farooq reiterated the party's resolve to ensure all the three regions of the state are united, to protect the states special status and to defeat forces inimical to peace, dignity and prosperity of the state.

Asking party leaders to empower youth and make them part of decision making process Dr Farooq Abdullah said, "We have to prioritize our outreach to the youth of the state and make all efforts to empower them in every possible way. Their outlook towards things is different but not divisive. We need to encourage that and provide them with all our assistance."

MEHBOOBA

the Police officers to adopt and popularise community policing to track down the crime in the State. The approach, she said, would also help in guiding youth and dissuading them from venturing on wrong tracks. She said stress should be laid on counselling, advice and interaction in their discharge of duties. A compassionate and responsive approach with the general population of law abiding citizens would automatically isolate the criminal elements in the society, she said. She also directed use of modern methods of investigation and crime detection instead of the obsolete ones to overcome any allegation of harassment or excess.

The Chief Minister asked the officers to follow a social catharsis approach while dealing with youth which would persuade them not to venture on the path of violent waywardness, thereby utilising these youth for positive and gainful purposes in the society.

Mehbooba Mufti asked the officers to enhance their public outreach in their respective areas to get a feel of the needs and difficulties of people. She advised them to be in constant touch with village elders and community leaders and be always ready to help them when ever called for.

Director General of Police, Dr. SP Vaid; Additional Directors General of Police, A G Mir and Muneer Ahmad Khan; IGP Kashmir zone, S P Pani and several Police officers were present on the occasion.

RAMADHAN

and do not allow any anti social element to create any law and order issue.

Mehbooba Mufti directed that uninterrupted supply of drinking water, power, essential commodities like sugar, meat, milk etc. be made available to consumers without any difficulty. She directed the Srinagar Municipal Corporation and Urban Local Bodies to ensure that cleaning of roads to

places of congregational prayers like Hazratbal, Jama Masjid, Peer Dastageer sahib and other places is done on round the clock basis. She also directed the two Departments for management of dog menace on the streets during nights so that people are not inconvenienced during Fajr and Tarawih prayers.

The Chief Minister directed deployment of adequate manpower to manage and regulate traffic during peak hours at major junctions like Parimpora, Batwara and Rambagh, major towns of the State and on National Highway.

Mehbooba Mufti also directed making available transport facility, sanitation and street lighting for devotees to places of congregational prayers like Dargah Hazratbal, Jama Masjid, Srinagar, Jama Masjid, Jammu, Hazrat Peer Dastageer Sahib, Srinagar and other places across the State. She also directed setting up of health facilities near the places of congregational prayers in view of the hot summer season at Jammu.

The Chief Minister directed the PDD authorities to install High Mast lights at prominent places in the capital cities, particularly downtown Srinagar and Jama Masjid, Khanqah i Mou'la etc. where people generally pass through for offering congregational prayers. She directed strict regulation of power supply during peak hours of Sehri and Iftaars and making adequate number of transformers available for replacement so that people don't face any difficulty in getting power supply.

The meeting was briefed by the Divisional Commissioners of Kashmir and Jammu about the arrangements put in place by the administration. She was informed that adequate arrangements of sanitation, street lights, essential supplies and transport have been made and also Control Rooms have been set up at district headquarters where people can call in case of any difficulty.

The Chief Minister was informed that a Ramadhan Helpline is being established at all district headquarters which people can contact in case of any distress. She was also informed that in many districts a revised curtailment schedule of power has been prepared to ensure that no curtailment takes place at Iftaar and Sehri times. Additionally, she was informed that PDD has constituted Quick Reaction Teams (QRT) to respond to any request for help to people in case of transformer damage or any other disruption in power supply.

Mehbooba Mufti also reviewed the arrangements put in place by District administrations across the State in this regard. She also reviewed the status of power supply and availability of transformers in the districts. In many districts, she was informed that, school timing is also being readjusted so that students and teachers reach home before Iftaar.

Ministers, Choudhary Zulfikar, Naeem Akhtar, Shyam Choudhary, Sat Sharma, Sunil Sharma and Asia Naqash; Vice Chairman, J&K Wakf Board, Nizamuddin Bhat; Chief Secretary, B. B. Vyas; Financial Commissioner, Housing & Urban Development, K B Aggarwal; ADGP, Security, Muneer Ahmad Khan; administrative secretaries of several related Departments; Divisional Commissioners of Kashmir and Jammu provinces; and heads of several field Departments were present in the meeting.

All the Deputy Commissioners and District SPs across the State attended the meeting through video conferencing.

CASES

identified officials, however so far action has been taken only in few cases and action against the remaining hundreds were pending," sources in the State Vigilance organization told KNS.

Sources said that it is astonishing that number of officers facing corruption charges was awarded plum postings. "Posting officials against whom investigations are going on is demeaning government's own initiatives against the menace of corruption," said sources.

The government had issued a circular, where the chief vigilance officers and departmental vigilance officers of all departments were directed to ensure completion of the enquiries pending with them "expeditiously".

"They shall develop strong internal vigilance mechanism in their respective departments, as also to work in tandem with State Vigilance Commission (SVC) to eradicate the menace of corruption at all levels," the circular reads.

An official of the SVC said that corruption cases remain pending for years in the state. "Departmental heads seem less interested in punishing the corrupt officials," the official said.

Sources said the complaints of corruption, nepotism and malpractices against officers and officials of government departments have increased, and if this pace is not reversed the situation will assume dangerous proportion.

Sources said that the officers of departments were directed by the government to take departmental action on the enquiry reports, wherever necessary, and not to wait for the outcome of enquiry/investigation being conducted on the same charges by Vigilance Organization or SVC. However sources said that nothing has been done in this regard.

One of the top officials of the Vigilance commission said that there is a deluge of complaints being received by the State Vigilance Organization and vigilance commission from last few years. "In a number of complaints in 2015- to 2017, allegations are mainly about violation of codal formalities in the award of contracts in works, purchases, appointments, promotions and transfer, denial of services by the government departments etc," he said.

The official said that often these complaints are lacking in specifics and with the result the department doesn't attract provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The people believe that the officials in departments and government-owned corporations have not shown accountability as there are no checks and inspections.

The duties of departmental vigilance officers and district vigilance officers are explicitly defined in Jammu and Kashmir State Vigilance Commission Rules, 2013. Their role is to check

Corruption in departments, even on the basis of media reports.

It is to mention here that the government had earlier decided to order premature retirement of 'corrupt and incapable' officials, who have not been able to deliver in their respective departments.

The government had also constituted a high-level committee headed by Chief Secretary and the committee was to be the final authority to take action against the corrupt officials.

Late Mufti Mohammad Sayeed in 2015 affirmed his commitment to bring transparency and accountability in the state administration when he removed tainted officials and non-performing bureaucrats from the plum postings.

The chief minister Mehbooba Mufti had also admitted that corruption was a major challenge in the state with various anti-graft agencies having received thousands of complaints in this regard. "Corruption is a major challenge for the government and its adverse effects on the society cannot be underestimated," CM had said.

Meanwhile one of the senior ministers in the government told KNS that the State government has directed authorities in all the departments to act promptly on the graft enquiries conducted by them or the State Vigilance Organization (SVC) against officials. "The departmental vigilance officers and district vigilance officers have been directed to adopt a multidimensional approach for checking corruption allegations against government officials," the minister said wished not to be named.

The minister also claimed that the officers of departments were also directed to take departmental action on the enquiry reports, wherever necessary, and not to wait for the outcome of enquiry/investigation being conducted on the same charges by Vigilance Organization or State vigilance commission.

LAL SINGH

pro-rapists. They will be exposed. The perception created by national media and some Kashmir-centric people that Dogras are pro-rapists was a conspiracy against Jammu and its Dogras to defame and weaken them," Singh told reporters in Jammu.

Singh, who has organised over 30 rallies in Kathua, Samba, Jammu, Udhampur, and Reasi district since he resigned as minister last month, said, "We will force the government to conduct a CBI probe. CBI probe will restore the respect of Dogras and provide justice to the victim girl."

"We want CBI probe and will not stop till CBI probe is ordered," he said.

The BJP leader said that the Dogras would take out a 'Swabhiman Rally' on May 20 in the Hiranagar belt of the district "to restore respect and dignity of Dogras".

The girl, belonging to a nomadic community, was abducted, gangraped and murdered in January this year. The case triggered a nationwide outrage.

TAJ

and sought an end to the hardships confronting them due to the step-motherly attitude of the PDP BJP coalition.

Addressing the meetings Taj Mohi-ud-Din lashed out at ruling dispensation of PDP BJP for the current crisis in the State, besides hardships people were facing due to the lackadaisical attitude of the ruling dispensation.

The developmental scenario started by successive UPA Government's have come to standstill. Corruption, favoritisms and nepotism have become the hallmark of the ruling dispensation, even the people were being made to pay for construction of toilets constructed under the scheme so called Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), he said

He (Taj) said the dilapidated condition of roads, lack of basic amenities including non-availability of essentials have added miseries to people living in far flung places.

Expressing serious concern over the failures of the Government, Taj said that this Government is going to fall shortly because of the anti-people and wrong policies adopted by them and emphasized the people to gear up for elections and ensure that PDP BJP combination is defeated. He said it is the Congress Party alone which has served the people best and it will continue to represent urges and aspirations of the people.

The unnatural alliance between PDP BJP will continue to remain main source behind disillusionment and anguish among the people he added and said that Administration is bias towards the people, rising unemployment, lack of basic facilities, step-motherly attitude of ruling dispensation, discrimination with the people has added chaos to the people.

RASHEED

to migrate.

Govt. should not forget that never ever any militants outfit objected to visits of Kashmiri Pandits to valley and even most of the pro-resistance leaders including Syed Salah-uddin appealed Kashmiri Pandits to return to the valley. By issuing a confusing and controversial order Govt. is trying to send a negative message that Kashmiri Pandits are under some threat but world should know that Kashmiris are not seeking a resolution to Kashmir dispute on religious lines

and even those favouring concept of caliphate also are well versed with the fact that Islam provides complete respect and protection to all minorities".

Er. Rasheed however accused a section of Kashmiri Pandits of defaming the majority community only for their persons ends and to serve the interest of various agencies in New Delhi. Er. Rasheed demanded immediate revocation of order and said that by issuing such dictates Govt. is itself delaying the return of Kashmiri Pandits to their ancestral places.

Er. Rasheed reiterated that most of the Kashmiri Pandits are never interested to come back to valley fearing losing of perks and privileges and Govt. should not issue any such order which would give them an excuse to justify their not returning back home.

POLICE

he stated his father Ghulam Mohammad Bhat, 70, was ruthlessly beaten by the accused persons in his house over some property dispute, resulting in injuries to him.

"The injured was referred to SMHS Hospital from DH Shopian, where he succumbed to his injuries," the spokesperson said.

He said after registration of case FIR number 153/2018, Shopian police took swift action and arrested three accused persons—Yaseen Bhat son of Ghulam Mohammad Bhat, Adil Bhat son of Yaseen Bhat and Irfan Bhat son of Yaseen Bhat, all residents of Handev village of Shopian district.

"Initial investigations reveal that the prime motive behind murder was property dispute. Further investigation of the case is going on," he added.

BORDER

infiltration attempt. The troops and local police have been put on a high alert and special nakas (check posts) were established," he added.

Army troops along with sniffer dogs have also been pressed into service in Tarnah Nullah to locate suspected intruders.

Tarnah Nullah, a seasonal rivulet, has always remained a preferred route of infiltration for the Pakistani ultras.

BSF Jammu frontier inspector general Ram Awatar, who rushed to Hiranagar sector to supervise the search operations and assess the situation, said, "Late last night a BSF man on duty point saw a suspicious movement and he immediately alerted all the neighbouring border outposts. Army and police were also informed about it."

Thereafter, security forces were deployed and searches were launched in the area but so far there has been no clue about the suspected intruders, he added.

The IG said that there was a wedding in the area when the BSF man observed the suspected movement.

He, however, said that there was no breach of border fence in the area.

"I also don't have any inputs with me about footprints found in the nullah," he said.

But BSF has sounded a high alert and every unit has been asked to maintain strict vigil on the international border, he added.

All vital installations including defence formations along the Jammu-Pathankot highway have also been put on high alert.

On March 30, the BSF DG, KK Sharma had said that the he had been regularly getting information about training camps and launching pads across the international border.

SSA

protesting teachers blocked the main road, police swung into action and used water cannons and batons to disperse them. In the police action, scores of SSA teachers sustained injuries.

It is worth to mention here that the salary of teachers recruited under SSA scheme is pending from past three months.

Earlier, the SSA teachers said that the government has failed to release their salaries from past three months, forcing them to hit the streets to press for the demands. "We are facing immense hardships as the government is ignoring our plights. We appeal the government to fulfill our demands at an earliest," they added.

Meanwhile, during the police action, scores of SSA teachers were detained and were lodged at Police Station Kothi Bagh. Witnesses said that hundreds of vehicles were seen stranded on the busy Lal Chowk road during the protest of SSA teachers.

The traffic mess that took place due to the blockade of the main road by the teachers ended after an hour.

TARIGAM

government in de-linking their salary from funds received from government of India, CPI (M) leader and MLA Kulgam Muhammad Yousuf Tarigami Monday rued that this government's answer to every issue is to use force.

Several teachers have been reportedly injured in the police action while dozens of them have been detained. It is unfortunate that teachers, who are nation builders, have to face the police lathis for demanding their dues.

Instead of giving an ear to the problems of its employees', the Government believes that use of force is the answer to all problems. Terming the police action against protesting SSA teachers as unjustifiable, he called for an immediate end to such bullying tactics adopted by the Government.

The administrative apathy towards their genuine issues is against justice and fair play. The salary of Rehbar-e-Taleem teachers (ReT) recruited under SSA scheme is pending from over three months. And if the teachers demand their salaries, Government instead of immediately releasing it, uses force.

Swachh Bharat and Swastha Bharat must be mass movement through CSC: Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad

New Delhi, May 14: Union Minister for Electronics & IT and Law Justice, Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad said today that the Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs) have played a major role in revolutionizing Common Service Centre Movement in the country. Inaugurating the two days workshop on "Tele-Centre Entrepreneurship Course" today, he said time has come when these entrepreneurs have to be the main drivers of shaping new India as envisaged by the Government.

He appreciated the efforts of the enterprising VLEs in providing key services at the grassroots level and announced introduction of rewards at both central and regional level for the best performing entrepreneurs. He said next year onwards best performing VLE will get cash reward of one lac rupees. These awards will also be on regional basis and there will be 5 activity based awards.

The Minister said, "When our government came into existence, there was 83,000 CSCs in India, now, we have 2.92 lakh CSCs across the country. 54,000 women VLEs are working hard to achieve the goals of Digital India mission in rural areas. In just 4 years, the total transactions of VLEs have increased from just one Cr (in year 2013-14) for an amount of 180

Cr to 17.83 Cr for an amount of Rs. 19,000 Cr in 2017-18. CSCs have given employment to more than 10 lakh people in India. I am confident that, all VLEs will be able to achieve the turnover of Rs. One Crore during the current year."

Appreciating the strength of VLEs in mobilizing rural citizens under Digital India mission, the Minister said: "I have great expectation from CSC VLEs. Our VLEs are change makers of India. I am happy to note that CSCs are training auto drivers for using BHIM and encouraging them for Cashless India movement. I congratulate our VLEs who are running Sanitary Napkin manufacturing units in various part of country and contribution in women's health and hygiene. Swachh Bharat and Swastha Bharat must be mass movement through CSC."

He added, "We want to take our Digital Economy to Rs. one lakh Crore. In next few days, expansion of railway reservations would be done through CSCs. CSCs has opened 31 BPOs in India and the plan is to open more such BPO in CSC."

The Minister was addressing 700 VLEs at a two days training workshop organised by CSC SPV on "Tele-Centre Entrepreneurship Course". The

main objective of the Telecentre Entrepreneur Course (TEC) is to inculcate the skills of entrepreneurship among the Village level Entrepreneur (VLE) and train them on various government and other services provided by Common Services Centers.

The Minister also asked to explore the possibility of involvement of CSCs in health insurance scheme and support the citizens in availing this unique initiative of the government.

Sh. Ajay Prakash Sawhney, Secretary, MeitY, said, "CSC movement has great significance in Digital India mission. I want to congratulate VLEs for their tremendous role. CSC VLEs are enabling the disbursement of entitlement and pension to various citizens living in far flung areas of the country." He added, "The VLEs should encourage citizens and merchants for using BHIM app through BHIM QR code in their day to day transactions. Today, we have 110 Micro Manufacturing Units of sanitary pads. It's a matter of pride for all of us. This is magic of entrepreneurship, that VLEs have converted their turnover to more than Rs. One Crore We would support CSCs in setting up 10 seater BPOs."

Sh. Pankaj Kumar, Additional Secretary-MeitY said, "CSCs are play-

ing a central role in the government's Digital India program. The government is encouraging women to set up CSC. CSCs are regarded as change of social change."

While welcoming the participants to the workshop, Dr. Dinesh Tyagi, CEO, CSC SPV said, "VLEs like Samkit Jain (Rajasthan), Padma (Andhra Pradesh), Dhanlakshmi (Tamil Nadu), Sonu Bala (Haryana), Ramshida (Kerala), Snehlata (Rajasthan), Gokul Saini (Rajasthan) are doing wonders through their hard work. CSC will make 6 Crore people digitally literate in India as well as build the Gram Swaraj in India. Today, government has a lot of expectations with CSC. We have to work hard to fulfill the mission of empowerment of Rural India."

The two day workshop will also cover: Topics of entrepreneurship relevance by experts in the field as Prof. MM Pant, Prof. Alok Pandey and Bijay Bhattacharya (from Tally).

The Minister presented awards to VLEs who successfully passed Telecentre Entrepreneurship Course exam. On the occasion, a special publication highlighting Top 500 transacting VLEs of CSC and film on Rural Entrepreneurship through CSC also launched by the Minister.

E-Pension Payment Order: New Step in the Right Direction

New Delhi, May 14: Furthering the Digital India initiatives of Govt. of India, Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pensions), Allahabad has started issuance of electronic-Pension Payment Orders (e-PPOs) to the pensioners along with their Pension Disbursement Agencies viz., Banks, Defence Pension Disbursement Offices, Post Offices, etc. What began in the first phase, for all Commissioned Officers and JCOs/ORs of Armed Forces from the month of October 2017,

has now been extended to all defence pensioners including defence civilians.

Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pensions), Allahabad is the sole agency under Ministry of Defence which sanctions Pensions for the Defence Services viz., Army, Coast Guard, Defence Research and Development Organization, General Reserve Engineer Force, Border Roads Organization, Military Engineering Services and other Defence organisations including Defence Account Depart-

ment and Defence Civilians.

The shift from manual system to e-PPO system is expected to minimize delays in pension disbursement and further revision as and when needed. This initiative also eliminates the occurrence of human errors in data entry at multiple levels. The next big step in this direction would be digitizing pension documents received from 46 record offices and more than 2900 Heads of Offices. This initiative by PCDA (P) will facilitate better implementation of OROP.

Chairman Human Welfare Association J&K meets Governor

SRINAGAR, MAY 14: Sh. Mohd. Saifullah Farooq, Chairman Human Welfare Association J&K, met Governor N.N. Vohra at the Raj Bhavan today.

Sh. Farooq apprised Governor about various socio-economic problems being faced by people due to the recurring disturbed law and order situations in Kashmir and the deleterious effect on growth and development.

He briefed Governor about various programmes devised by the Association for alleviating the problems of the people and enhancing peace and normalcy. He sought Governor's support in the implementation of his proposed approach. Governor appreciated the Association's efforts to restore normalcy in Kashmir and observed that Sh. Farooq's initiatives would be provided support.

Environment Minister Launches Mobile App of GSDP

New Delhi, May 14: Emphasising that the Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP) will go a long way in reaping the demographic dividend in the country, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan has said that the GSDP aims to get 80,000 people imparted green skills and in filling the skill gaps in the environment sector. Speaking after launching the Mobile App of Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP) at the Ministry premises here today, Dr. Harsh Vardhan pointed out that more than 30 programmes have been identified, which will be conducted in 84 institutions across the country. He also stressed that such an initiative will complement the vision of the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, of skilling India's youth and strengthening the resolve to conserve and protect the environment.

The Minister said that the number of people to be employed under GSDP will be increased to cover 2.25 lakh people next year and to about 5 lakh people by the year 2021. Dr. Harsh Vardhan pointed out that the objective of GSDP is skilling the youth of India, especially dropouts and in increasing the availability of skilled workforce. Recalling

his positive experience from the interactions with the people who underwent training as part of the pilot project during his recent visit to Botanical Survey of India (BSI) and Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Kolkata, Dr. Harsh Vardhan underlined that those who imparted the training skills and those who received it were highly enthused. "The programme will be modified and strengthened from time to time", he averred.

Addressing the gathering, Senior Economic Advisor, MoEF&CC, Dr. Anandi Subramanian said that 31 percent of children are dropouts from school after the secondary stage itself. She said that skill development is one of the key priorities of the Government, with the objective to develop skill sets with employability linkage. Dr. Subramanian said that while there is a need for skilled workforce, there is also a shortage of middle-level workforce.

BACKGROUND OF GSDP: Realizing the need for developing the green skills, the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC) is utilising the vast network and expertise of Environmental Information System (ENVIS) hubs and Resource Partners (RPs). The Ministry has taken this initia-

tive for skill development in the environment and forest sector to enable India's youth to get gainful employment and/or self-employment. The programme endeavours to develop green skilled workers having technical knowledge and commitment to sustainable development. It will help in the attainment of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), National Biodiversity Targets (NBTs), as well as Waste Management Rules (2016).

The pilot project of GSDP was launched in June, 2017, for skilling Biodiversity Conservationists (Basic Course) and Para-taxonomists (Advance Course) for 3 months duration each at 10 locations, spread over 9 bio-geographic regions of the country. 94 trainees successfully completed the basic course qualifying as skilled Biodiversity Conservationists and 152 Trainees completed the Advance Course qualifying as skilled Para-taxonomists. ENVIS RPs in Botanical Survey of India (BSI), Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) and their respective regional offices were the nodal Centres for the pilot programme.

Based on the feedback received from the stakeholders, the GSDP is being scaled

up to an all-India level. More than 30 skilling programmes will be conducted during 2018-19. The skilling programmes cover diverse fields such as pollution monitoring (air/water/soil), Sewage Treatment Plant, Effluent Treatment Plants and Common Effluent Treating Plants (STP/ETP/CETP) operation, waste management, forest management, water budgeting, auditing, conservation of river dolphins, wildlife management, para taxonomy, including Peoples' Biodiversity Register (PBRs), mangroves conservation, bamboo management and livelihood generation. The duration of the courses ranges from 80 hours to 560 hours approx. In the first stage, a pool of Master Trainers/Specialists is being created, who can further train the youth across the country. All courses will be National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) compliant. The Ministry will give Certificates indicating the skilling levels to all successful candidates.

Economic Adviser, MoEF&CC, Shri Yashvir Singh made a presentation on GSDP on the occasion. The programme was also attended by senior officers/officials of MoEF&CC, as well as representatives of the ENVIS RPs located in Delhi.

Examination, evaluation important component of edu system: CUK VC

New Delhi, May 14: Central University of Kashmir (CUK), Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir today described Examination and evaluation as extremely important component of any educational system, especially the university.

"Some of the universities in India have come in the news for bad reasons simply because there has been something wrong in the examination and evaluation of the respective universities," Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir said while addressing the participants on the first of the two day 6th Post End Semester Examination (ESE) workshop organised by the varsity's Examination and Evaluation Wing (EEW) on "Assessment Examination Evaluation: Issues and Challenges," at Nowgam-I academic block of the varsity.

He said that nobody will be satisfied with the marks given by the evaluators. "However, the matter of concern is when the student approaches the authorities in the university and quotes relevant evidence (study material), questioning the less number of marks given to him and once the paper is reevaluated, certain discrepancies have been found," Prof. Mehraj ud Din

Mir said. He said the basic purpose of holding the workshop was to sensitise the faculty members about the importance of examination and evaluation, adding that when the faculty members are assigned the task of conducting the examination and subsequent evaluation, they have to be fair and honest.

Former Vice-Chairman, NCTE, Prof. R S Khan, Prof. Shoab Abdullah, Registrar and I/c Controller of Examinations, Prof. M Afzal Zargar, Director Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) and Nowgam campus-I, Prof. N A Nadeem, Director Research and Development, Prof. Abdul Gani, Deans of Schools, Heads and Coordinators, faculty members and senior functionaries of the varsity attended the workshop.

Inaugurating the workshop and delivering a lecture on "Assessment and Evaluation-Concept, Differentiation and Application," noted educationist and former Vice-Chairman NCTE, Prof. R S Khan, said that unless you challenge the intellect of students, it would be very difficult for them to get employment. He appreciated the CUK for holding regular ESE workshops, adding that this practice should

be implemented in all the institutions linked with the conduct of examinations and evaluations. "To discuss the success or the objectives formulated, whether they have been achieved or not during the examinations is really wonderful and I congratulate the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir for this," Prof. Khan added.

Prof. R S Khan said that those attending the workshop will be benefited from the discussions during the workshop and it will add up to their knowledge and way of thinking. Welcoming the guests, Registrar and I/c Controller of Examinations, Prof. M Afzal Zargar said the ESE workshop has been a regular feature of the CUK and was started by the first Controller of Examination, Dr. Nazir Ahmad Gilkar. Prof. Zargar said that during this workshop, all the participants would have comprehensive interaction with each other and would thoroughly discuss the issues confronted during holding of the examinations and subsequent evaluation of the answer booklets. He hoped that the real aims and motives of the workshop are achieved.

Director Internal Quality

Assurance Cell (IQAC) and Nowgam campus-I, Prof. N A Nadeem, while speaking on the occasion said, the programme is the best practice and very few universities organise workshops like these. "The workshop is organised with a specific purpose which is to present and discuss as many issues confronted by the faculty during the conduct of examination and evaluation," Prof. Nadeem said, adding that during the exercise, several solutions come up which are sent to the concerned quarters for implementation. He said that in order to discuss the issues threadbare and involve the faculty members, the workshop is being held for two consecutive days.

Later during the technical sessions, Prof. N A Nadeem made a presentation on "Revised CIA Scheme and Grading Scale," Prof. Shoab Abdullah made presentation on "Issues in Question Paper Setting," and Prof. Abdul Gani made presentation on "Issues and Challenges in Evaluation of Research Degree Programmes." Assistant Registrar, EEW, Mr. Faisal Irshad Ganaie conducted the programme proceedings while as Head Department.

DDB approves Rs 86.63 cr annual plan for district Shopian

Ashraf Mir underlines need for timely implementation of Board decisions

SHOPIAN, MAY 14: The District Development Board approved the outlay plan of Rs. 86.63 crore for the district Shopian. The decision was taken at the board meeting held today under the chair of Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs Mohammad Ashraf Mir, who is chairman of District Development Board Shopian.

The meeting was attended by MP Raja Sabha Nazir Ahmad Laway, MLA Shopian Mohammad Yousuf Bhat, MLA Wachi Aijaz Ahmad Mir, MLC Zaffar Iqbal, MLC Showkat Hussain, DDC Shopian Gazanfar Ali, Heads of departments, Chief Engineers and all District officers besides other concerned officers.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman said Shopian will continue to receive focused attention of the present dispensation in the field of development and social security. He said the horticulture, tourism and other important sectors upon which the economy of the district as well as of the State depends would be prioritized for focused funding and development.

Mir said that prioritized focus is being given on boosting horticulture and tourism sectors in the State and measures are afoot to improve economy of Shopian district by fo-

cusied funding of projects under these sectors.

He directed the DDC to personally monitor ongoing development projects in the district and take measures for removal of bottlenecks, if any, for timely completion of the projects. He called upon the officers to work with added zeal and enthusiasm to serve the people.

The Minister also asked the District Development Commissioner to hold regular meetings to assess the implementation of the developmental and welfare schemes adding that the officers concerned will be made accountable for their work.

He also directed HODs to conduct frequent field visits to monitor the quality and pace of developmental works.

The Chairman also assured the legislators that all their grievances and demands will be given due priority. The Chairman said that all the suggestions made by the MLAs would also be taken care of by provisional heads and directed the officers that every plan should be finalized in consultation with the legislators.

The chairman also recommended including Shopian district under the category of Special Area Development Fund.



Earlier, the District Development Commissioner, Gazanfar Ali, while giving a detailed power point presentation, briefed the August house about the achievements made under various sectors in the district.

The meeting was informed that against the availability of 6190.13 Lacs, CAPEX Budget 2017-18, 6092.41 Lacs have been expenditure ending March 2018 which amounts to 98.42%.

The Board was informed that with regard to Roads and Buildings

sector, developmental works worth Rs 1490.45 lacs have been carried out in the fiscal 2017-18, which among others included completion of two Bridges at Vishroo and Reban at an estimated cost of Rs. 364.35 lacs & Rs. 325.00 lacs respectively and 5 School buildings at Kaprin, Vehil, Nowgam, Nazneenpora and Nadigam under RMSA with financial involvement of Rs. 236.59 lacs each have also been completed. Further 10 Road projects with Project Cost of Rs 1646.01 lacs taken up under Ca-

per Budget (Regular Schemes).

Major projects taken by R&B Sector include Bijbehara-Shopian Road at an estimated cost of Rs. 4893.00 lacs with total Road Length of 25 Kms, Reshnagri Bridge under NABARD at an approximate revised Cost of Rs. 2350.00 lacs, Pampore-Shopian Road at an estimated cost of Rs. 130.00 lacs, Rebon Bridge at an estimated cost Rs. 325.00 lac, Zainapora Bridge at an estimated cost of Rs. 398.96 lacs, Batpora Baily Bridge at an estimated cost of Rs. 696.68 lacs, 8 Roomed Lecture Hall at GDC at an estimated cost of Rs. 535.62 lacs, Lecture Hall with Library at GDC Spnat an estimated cost of Rs. 698.48 lacs, Gujjar & Bakarwal Hostel at Shirmal Shopian costing Rs. 325.00 lacs. The meeting also discussed shortfall of staff in the district hospital Shopian, sub-district hospitals and PHCs in the district. The Director Health Services Kashmir was impressed to meet out the shortfall of staff.

Threadbare discussion was held on the board decisions taken during 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18. The respective legislators raised their genuine concern over the time taken by the authorities for the completion DDB decisions.

Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh discusses Insurance and Pension related issues with Dr Jitendra Singh

New Delhi, May 14: A delegation of Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), represented by its Pratiraksha (Industrial) unit called on the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh here today and discussed wide range of issues related to Central Government employees, including Insurance, Pension, promotions and other matters.

In a memorandum presented to the Minister, the delegation submitted that the Central Government Employees Group Insurance Scheme was notified on 1st November 1980 and came into effect from 1st January 1982. The scheme is intended to provide Central Government employees, at a low cost, on a wholly contributory and self-financing basis, the twin benefits of an insurance cover to their families in the event of death in service and a lump-sum payment to augment their financial sources on retirement. However, the BMS demands that the government should immediately notify the customized Group Insurance Scheme for Central Government employees with low premium and high risk cover.

The memorandum also expressed discontentment of a section of employees for being left out from the provision of minimum guaranteed pension under National Pension Scheme (NPS). It requested that a minimum pension be guaranteed equivalent to 50% of the employee's last drawn Basic Pay plus Dearness Relief for neutralization of price rise.

Among other issues raised by the delegation was the demand for one-time relaxation for compassionate appointments. This has become important because a large number of wards are waiting for their appointment on compassionate grounds to look after their family. The delegation also demanded the framing of an appropriate transfer policy in all cadres in favour of single woman/single mother employees.

DAILY Editorial Time and Us

Karnataka votes

No matter who wins, the Karnataka Assembly election is set to redraw the political landscape at the national level prior to the 2019 Lok Sabha poll. True, elections are due later this year in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, but the Karnataka verdict could colour these too. Winning Karnataka is essential for the BJP's plans to present itself as a truly pan-Indian party, one with a presence in the south. It will also provide a fillip to its unrealistic boast of creating a Congress-mukt Bharat. For the Congress, Karnataka is critical. It is the only really large State where it is in power and the only one in the south, if we discount Puducherry. It is nowhere close to being a contender in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, and currently is a poor second to the TRS in Telangana and the LDF in Kerala. A loss in Karnataka will be perceived as a serious setback to the Congress's plans to mount a challenge to the BJP next year. For the BJP, a failure to wrest Karnataka will be difficult to ingest. As the principal opposition party that won a majority of the Lok Sabha seats from Karnataka in 2014, the BJP was the front-runner until the last bend. Over the last year, there is a perception that it has lost some of its earlier connect with the southern State, allowing Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to stage a fightback. With regional sentiments running high, the consolidation of the Hindu vote is not happening in favour of the BJP; indeed, Mr. Siddaramaiah has shrewdly and cynically fanned linguistic and caste emotions to paint the BJP as a pro-Hindi party opposed to regional sentiments. To this end, the Congress pushed ahead with its plans for a separate Karnataka flag, and the status of a religion for the Lingayat sect.

The return of B.S. Yeddyurappa to the party has increased the BJP's vote-share in the northern and central parts of the State. But as the party's chief ministerial candidate, the Congress has been given a handle to raise the corruption bogey given the cases he was embroiled in; at the same time, his candidature has diminished the force of the charges against the Congress government on this very ground. The big question is whether there exists a latent anti-incumbency sentiment that the BJP can tap into. The one certainty about this election is that the Janata Dal (Secular) will come in third; whether it is in a position to play king-maker in a hung Assembly remains to be seen. Although Mr. Siddaramaiah betrayed political insecurity by contesting two seats and secured a seat for his son, he managed to keep the focus on Karnataka and prevent the election from being transformed into a presidential-style national face-off between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress president Rahul Gandhi. There is something to be said for this, but in what opinion polls suggest will be a really tight race, all bets seem to be off.

A TIME TO THINK FAST: ON THE US EXIT FROM THE IRAN DEAL

► [Happymon Jacob](#)

American President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), popularly called the Iran nuclear deal, is bound to have serious implications for the international system, and for India. To be sure, the least affected will be the U.S.; European Union countries will be moderately affected due to the business ties with Iran; and the most affected will be countries closer to the region, in particular India. Moreover, for a U.S. administration that has made it a habit of accusing other countries of "undermining the rules-based order", this action has severely undermined the rules-based global order.

Unreasonable act

Washington's decision is unjustified and unreasonable for several reasons. For one, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has consistently maintained that Tehran has complied with the strictures of the JCPOA without fail. Moreover, Iran has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) which prohibits it from developing nuclear weapons, and has agreed to ratify the IAEA's Additional Protocol five years from now which will grant IAEA inspectors wide-ranging access to monitor nuclear-related activities in Iran. And yet Mr. Trump has thoughtlessly undone the outcome of negotiations that went on for close to two years.

Second, the argument that since the provisions of the JCPOA will become less strict over the years enabling Iran to move towards nuclear-weapon capability is not a credible rationale for undoing the deal. In fact, if indeed there are concerns about Iran potentially moving towards a nuclear option, efforts should be made to engage Tehran in negotiations rather than undo what has already been achieved. This is a classic case of throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

With regard to Iran's involvement in the various West Asian conflicts and "promotion of terrorism", Iran is not the only country engaging in them. And in any case the way out, again, is diplomatic engagement rather than further unsettle an already volatile region.

The implications

The global non-proliferation regime has taken a direct hit from the U.S.'s decision to renege on the Iran deal. It is important to understand that norms, rules, persuasion and good faith make up the moral foundation of the non-proliferation regime, and the inability of the great powers to abide by them will dissuade non-nuclear weapons states from signing on to or abiding by new or existing agreements, protocols or regimes. Second, even though Mr. Trump might think that playing hardball with Tehran will help him to extract concessions from Pyongyang, it is equally possible that the North Koreans will think twice before entering into any agreement with the untrustworthy Trump administration.

Third, Washington's unilateral and dictatorial withdrawal from the deal would create deep fissures in the time-tested but increasingly shaky trans-Atlantic security partnership. Not least because it implies potential secondary sanctions against those European companies which are engaged in business deals with Iran. Here again, the U.S. does not have much to lose given its almost

Hassan Rouhani, the moderate President of Iran, who negotiated the nuclear deal, might lose his standing in the country as hardliners pitch for more aggressive steps, including developing a nuclear weapon capability and more military engagement in the neighbourhood. The chief of staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, Maj. Gen. Mohammad Bagheri, has said that the "Iranian people never favoured the nuclear deal". This is an indication of the hardline Iranian responses in the offing as and when sanctions are reimposed.



non-existent business contacts with Iran.

Besides, Mr. Trump's Iran decision follows a pattern of similar unilateral steps — such as the withdrawal from the Paris climate accord and formal recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Let alone the loss of face suffered by European leaders and the financial losses by their countries' firms, U.S. unilateralism has deep-running implications for the global security and governance architecture, and other multilateral arrangements and regimes. It is in this context that what French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said becomes significant: "The deal is not dead. There's an American withdrawal from the deal, but the deal is still there." The argument has found support in several global capitals.

Hassan Rouhani, the moderate President of Iran, who negotiated the nuclear deal, might lose his standing in the country as hardliners pitch for more aggressive steps, including developing a nuclear weapon capability and more military engagement in the neighbourhood. The chief of staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, Maj. Gen. Mohammad Bagheri, has said that the "Iranian people never favoured the nuclear deal". This is an indication of the hardline Iranian responses in the offing as and when sanctions are reimposed.

Iran's refusal to fall in line might prompt Israel and the U.S. to carry out attacks against Iran leading to Iranian counter-strikes against American allies in the region, or even Israel. This would further destabilise a region already reeling under terrorism, wars and internal conflicts. Americans, and the international community, should remember how the misguided military campaign against the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq turned out to be a huge geopolitical disaster.

India's Persian dilemmas

While the U.S. has almost nothing to lose in renege on the JCPOA, India has a lot to lose both economically and geopolitically, and it will take deft diplomacy to adapt to the changing alignments. A more unstable West Asia would ipso facto mean more difficult choices for New Delhi. More conflict in the region would adversely impact the welfare and safety of Indian expatriates in West Asia, leading to a sharp decline in the remittances they send home, and an assured hike in oil prices. Low crude oil prices had given India

the much-needed economic cushion in the past few years — that phase of cheaper oil has now ended. Recall how the U.S. war on Iraq had a debilitating impact on Indian workers and the West Asian remittances. India also had to abandon the Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline in 2008 thanks to U.S. sanctions against Iran.

The Narendra Modi government's efforts to maintain a fine balance between India's relations with Iran on the one hand and with the U.S., Israel and Saudi Arabia on the other will be seriously tested in the days ahead. The new warmth between Iran and India could attract American ire. What is even more worrying is that unlike the last time when the U.S. imposed sanctions on Iran, and India had to choose the U.S. over Iran, the geopolitical realities are starkly different this time. Not only are the Americans going it alone this time, but the regional ganging-up against the U.S. and in support of Iran will be more pronounced this time around, making India's ability to make a clear choice more difficult.

India's dreams of accessing Central Asia via Iran could also be dashed with the return of American sanctions against Iran. India's projects in Iran's Chabahar port have been widely viewed in New Delhi as a crucial plank of its Iran-Afghanistan-Central Asia strategy. With U.S. sanctions again tightening around Tehran, New Delhi may find it hard to continue with this project. As a matter of fact, thanks partly to India's dilly-dallying on Chabahar during the previous round of U.S. sanctions against Iran, Iran had invited Pakistan to the Chabahar project. Some have even suggested a potential link between Chabahar and Gwadar in Pakistan.

Given that there is little consensus around Mr. Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA, several of the dissenting parties might look for ways of thwarting U.S. efforts at isolating Iran. Such efforts, especially those led by China and Russia, both parties to the JCPOA, would have implications for the Southern Asian region as well. If indeed China manages to bring together a group of regional powers, including Russia, Iran, Pakistan and interested others, to counter Washington's influence in the region, New Delhi might find itself in a corner.

(Courtesy: The Hindu)

It's not about the nuclear deal

► [Chinmaya R. Gharekhan](#)

If — and that's a big if — the leaders of the U.S., China, South Korea and North Korea succeed in concluding a deal on the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula as well as on a peace treaty formally ending the Korean War, they would be front runners for the Nobel Peace Prize. That deal could appropriately be called a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) if it lays down a detailed blueprint for denuclearisation, with provisions of intrusive inspections. The only thing that could stand in their way is Iran.

There should be little doubt that U.S. President Donald Trump's real, but of necessity undeclared, objective in withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal is a regime change in Tehran. This goal is even more ardently desired by Israel and Saudi Arabia. Ever since Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad made particularly provocative statements about Israel, Israelis of all political persuasions have wanted to get rid of the regime in Iran. The Saudis have openly called for cutting off the head of the (Iranian) snake. Thus, three important and powerful states have a congruence of interests

seldom seen in recent times.

There have been frequent and persistent reports in the Western media for several months about large-scale demonstrations and protests by Iranian people against the regime. Living conditions are difficult. Iran did not get the goodies that it expected after signing the JCPOA. Inflation is high. The Iranian rial is trading at 75,000 to the dollar. People are angry with the government. According to the well-researched work Democracy in Iran: Why It Failed and How It Might Succeed by American academic Misagh Parsa, disaffection among the people has manifested itself in several forms. Hundreds of mosques do not have imams and the attendance at Friday prayers has dwindled dramatically. Some are converting to Christianity and, according to Professor Parsa, even to the Baha'i faith, which is the largest non-Muslim community in Iran. Professor Parsa states that there is massive corruption as well as economic inequality in Iran. All in all, he suggests that it is quite likely that there might be a revolutionary upsurge, though he is careful not to indicate any timeline for it.

A different calculation

It is this discontent that Mr. Trump might be counting on tapping. His calculation seems to be that the reimposition of severe sanctions would render life very difficult, almost unbearable, for the populace who might, in the absence of other avenues, take to the streets, as they did in 1979 to overthrow the Shah's regime which too, like the present one, had strong military and oppressive secret services such as the Savak but which could not defeat public anger, frustration and rage. For these reasons, Mr. Trump is unlikely to listen to voices of reason or to appeals from his Western allies. He is equally not likely to grant exemptions from sanctions to any country engaging in any form of trade and other transactions with Iran. His administration will follow strict interpretation of the guidelines regarding the sanctions regime.

Iran has shown restraint, forsaking knee-jerk reaction. It did not declare that the deal was dead, as it might well have done. It did not announce immediate resumption of uranium enrichment, which it emphasised will be at the industrial level. It has so far not called off International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections. Iran will consult

with the other signatories to the JCPOA for several weeks before taking any further action. This shows the maturity of Iranian diplomacy. It remains to be seen how long France and others will stick to their position of continuing to adhere to the deal; they will eventually have to fall in line in some way with the Americans, if not for political then for economic considerations. For Mr. Trump, the Republicans are fully with him and the Democrats will be too eventually.

Will Iran live up to the American calculation? For the present, Mr. Trump's decision has strengthened the hardliners. President Hassan Rouhani, regarded as a moderate, has no option but to take a defiant stance. The Iranian people, proud as they are of their heritage, will stand behind their regime. But there may come a time when their hardships reach a stage when they might feel compelled to take to the streets.

In the meanwhile, Iran will even more vigorously support the Bashar al-Assad regime in Damascus, in which it will be joined by Russia and Hezbollah, which has done very well in the parliamentary elections in Lebanon this month. The Houthi rebels in Yemen will feel more emboldened to take on the Saudi-led

coalition; of course, the Yemeni people will continue to suffer, as will the Syrian people, for years to come. Iran will more directly intervene in Iraq and render the possibility of progress in the non-existent peace effort in Afghanistan even more difficult.

If the regime in Tehran does not collapse, the Washington-Jerusalem-Riyadh axis might look for an alternative course of action, not excluding military. In that case, the Nobel Peace Prize will elude Mr. Trump.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has established special relationship with Israel and its present Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. He has also made efforts to forge intimate relations with the U.S. With both India has the upper hand, since it is they who want to sell expensive military hardware to India. Under the circumstances, India has made a well-drafted two-sentence statement on the Trump decision. The first strikes a balance between Iran's right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes as also the international community's concern to ensure that its nuclear programme remains strictly peaceful. The second sentence contains implicit disapproval of the American

decision and warns, again implicitly, against any strong military action. For India, the question will also be: can it rely on the U.S. to honour even its written word embodied in international agreements? Mr. Trump wants to annul every single achievement of his predecessor — Obamacare, the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Paris Agreement, and now JCPOA. India will have to remain vigilant in dealing with this administration; it would not be prudent to assume that it is a special case.

Fallout for India

The impact on India will be severe. The price of crude is already close to \$80. Energy imports from Iran will become difficult and expensive. Fuel prices will go up. The Reserve Bank of India might have to increase interest rates to contain inflation and step in to check the fall in the rupee's value. All this might have a direct bearing on politics, given the fact that the government was the beneficiary of low crude price for the first four years but may have to face consequences of inflation and attendant factors in its fifth.

(Courtesy: The Hindu)

Andhra BJP unit revolts after former Congress minister is appointed state chief

Hyderabad: The appointment of former Congress minister Lakshminarayana Kanna as the president of Andhra Pradesh unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has triggered a rebellion in the party on Monday, barely two months after its alliance with the ruling Telugu Desam Party ended.

The BJP central leadership on Sunday announced Kanna as the president of BJP's Andhra Pradesh unit, contrary to the earlier reports that firebrand legislator Somu Veerraju was tipped for the post. Veerraju was made the convener of the party's state election committee.

Kanna's appointment took the state BJP leaders by surprise and shock. While Veerraju switched off his mobile phone and was not available for comments, several BJP leaders from East Godavari and West Godavari districts openly expressed their resentment against the party's decision.

BJP's East Godavari district wing president Malakondaiah and Rajahmundry urban BJP president Bomula Dattu announced their resignations from the party in protest against Kanna's appointment. Many BJP leaders from West Godavari also threatened to resign if Veerraju was not made the party chief within 24 hours.

Veerraju hails from Rajahmundry



and has a strong following among the Kapus in twin Godavari districts. On the other hand, Kanna is also from Kapu community but hails from Guntur district, where the rival Kammas are predominant.

According to a BJP leader from West Godavari, the appointment of Kanna goes against the party's fundamental principles. He was a hard core Congress leader for over three decades before he joined the BJP in November 2014, after realising that the Congress had lost its ground completely in Andhra Pradesh. As such, he is a fairly new comer into the BJP.

Kanna's detractors also pointed out that he does not have any background of the Sangh nor did he have

any association with the BJP in the past. "This is against the basic tenets of the BJP. How can the party select a leader with Congress background as the state BJP president, ignoring loyalists like Veerraju, who have been struggling to strengthen the party right from the beginning?" Malakondaiah asked.

Kanna has also been accused of being a mercenary. He had resigned from the BJP last month after the reports from Delhi that the party had finalised the name of Veerraju, a relatively junior in politics, as the state BJP chief. He was getting ready to join the YSR Congress party on April 25 but dropped the plan at the eleventh hour after receiving a call from the

BJP central leadership. "Is it fair to make such a leader who almost defected to the YSR Congress party for his political gains as the BJP chief?" the BJP leader wondered.

The newly-appointed BJP state president, who was in Delhi on Monday, brushed aside the revolt as a minor incident. He told media that he would make his best efforts to bring glory to the party in Andhra Pradesh by taking everybody into confidence.

"I have no detractors in the party and I respect everybody, I will bring all like-minded forces together and bring down the undemocratic rule of Telugu Desam Party president N Chandrababu Naidu in Andhra," Kanna said.

Meanwhile, Telugu Desam Party described Kanna as the YSR Congress party's mole in the BJP.

"He was appointed as the state BJP chief on the recommendations of YSRC president Y S Jaganmohan Reddy. Everybody knows Jagan has become a spokesman of BJP and he has funded the BJP campaign in Karnataka elections," TDP official spokesman and MLC Y Babu Rajendra Prasad said. The TDP parted ways with the BJP in March after the Centre refused to grant special category status to Andhra Pradesh which the saffron party had promised in the 2014 general election campaign.

AMU sports instructor suspended for 'felicitating' Hindutva leader



Aligarh: The Aligarh Muslim University administration has suspended its sports instructor Mazharul Qamar for felicitating a Hindutva group leader at a function in DS College in Aligarh, an official said here on Monday.

The AMU suspended Mazharul Qamar, Instructor (Weight Lifting), University Games Committee, late on Sunday after his reply was found unsatisfactory.

The Hindutva group leader had been booked and jailed for his alleged involvement in the May 2 attack on the AMU. He is currently out on bail.

An official said Qamar would be given an opportunity to explain his position in a time-bound manner and an inquiry will be initiated.

The university took a serious view of the

matter and asked for an explanation from Qamar within 24 hours.

The show-cause served to him stated: "You were aware that the person was part of the group of hooligans who shouted abuses and slurs against the university, students and staff on reaching Bab-e-Syed and you met him despite the situation in the campus."

"You have hurt the sentiments of the AMU fraternity, particularly students, who are sitting on a dharna demanding a probe in the matter."

The notice said what Qamar did was not expected of a responsible university employee.

Qamar told IANS on Monday that he had been asked to keep shut and explain his conduct before the inquiry committee which he would do.

Karnataka elections 'most expensive ever' in terms of party expenditure: Survey

The just-concluded Karnataka state elections were the "most expensive ever" assembly poll in the country in terms of money spent by political parties and their candidates, according to an analysis by a research organisation.

The Centre for Media Studies, which describes itself as a not-for-profit, multi-disciplinary development research and facilitative think-tank on its website, has described the electoral exercise as "money guzzler".

According to the CMS, the money spent by various political parties and their candidates in the Karnataka assembly polls is in the range of Rs 9,500-10,500 crore, which is more than twice of what was spent in the previous assembly poll in the state in 2013.

"This does not involve the costs of the prime minister's campaign," the survey claimed.

Earlier field studies by the CMS over 20 years had indicated that poll costs in Kar-



nataka were usually higher than assembly elections in most other states.

Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, in that order, have been the highest poll-time spenders in the country, it said. "... at this rate, 2019 Lok Sabha poll expenditure estimate is Rs 50,000-60,000 crore against Rs 30,000 crore expenditure involved in 2014," according to N Bhaskara Rao of the CMS.

The assembly poll in the state was announced by the Election Commission of India on May 2. The voting in the single-phase poll in the state

took place on May 12 and the counting of votes is scheduled for tomorrow. This Karnataka Assembly poll had increased the share of individual candidate's expenditure to 75 per cent of total poll costs involved, the survey finds.

"In the case of Lok Sabha poll, the candidate share, however, is expected to be 55-60 per cent and what political parties spend will increase to 29-30 per cent, which is expected to be Rs 12,000-20,000 crore in 2019," the organisation said in a statement.

It claimed that half of what

parties spend, or little over that, is likely to be that by the ruling party.

"The biggest story of this assembly election is about free and fairness of the poll. Seizure of a hundred crores could only be symbolic. The Election Commission came out helpless in this poll," the statement said.

It said the estimate of expenditure this time is also based on field reports in the media, feedback of journalists and discussions with key functionaries at different levels in the field.

"This poll expenditure methodology is based on using our own past base data state-wise and taking into account the per cent of voters paid in different blocks of assembly constituencies and the amount paid on average by different parties, and what was spent on key campaign activities by candidates and parties at different levels. These were tracked and assessed from discussions," it said.

Shashi Tharoor charged with abetting suicide in Sunanda Pushkar death case

New Delhi: Delhi Police charged Congress leader Shashi Tharoor with abetting the suicide of his wife, Sunanda Pushkar, drawing a sharp response from the politician who termed the move "unbelievable" on Monday.

Police also told a court in Delhi that Tharoor's custodial interrogation was necessary since investigations had not yet concluded. Pushkar was found dead in a south Delhi luxury hotel room four years ago.

In a 3000-page chargesheet filed before metropolitan magistrate Dharmendra Singh, police alleged that Tharoor, who is the Lok Sabha MP from Thiruvananthapuram, subjected his wife to cruelty.

Tharoor, the only person named as an accused in the case, was charged under sections 498 A (husband or his relative subjecting a woman to cruelty) and 306 (abetment of suicide) of the Indian Penal Code.

On Twitter, Tharoor called the chargesheet, which the court will consider on May



24, "preposterous", stressing that he will contest it "vigorously".

A Delhi Police spokesperson said: "On the basis of medico-legal and forensic evidence analysed during investigation as well as opinion of psychological autopsy experts, the chargesheet was filed. The matter is sub-judice."

Psychological autopsy is a reconstructive mental state evaluation to understand an individual's mental state at and around the time of death for the purpose of identifying the cause of death, according

to news agency PTI. Pushkar was found dead in the suite of a south Delhi hotel on January 17, 2014. The suite was sealed the same night for investigation.

The couple's domestic servant, Narayan Singh, is one of the key witnesses in the case.

The chargesheet, which includes several annexures, said Pushkar died within three years, three months and 15 days of her marriage with Tharoor. The couple tied the knot on August 22, 2010.

An FIR was registered by Delhi Police on January 1,

2015, against unknown persons under IPC section 302 (murder).

The Delhi high court dismissed last October BJP leader Subramanian Swamy's plea seeking a court-monitored probe by a special investigation team (SIT) into the death of Pushkar.

Later, Swamy moved the Supreme Court, challenging the HC order, which asked the BJP leader to satisfy the court on the question of maintainability of his plea.

ASIT on April 20 had told the apex court that a draft final report had been prepared after conducting "thorough professional and scientific investigations". Delhi Police, in its affidavit filed in the top court, said then that a draft final report had been sent to the prosecution department of the government of Delhi for "legal scrutiny" and it would be filed in the concerned trial court after being vetted.

Don't pay heed to canards, Mamata urges people as Bengal rural polls begin amid violence

Kolkata: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee has urged people and political parties to not pay heed to canards and "fake videos" and participate peacefully in the panchayat elections underway amid reports of violence on Monday.

Banerjee said her government has taken steps to ensure that the law and order remains normal during the rural polls.

"I urge people as well as all political parties to remain alert and not

pay attention to provocations or canards. I appeal to common people to exercise their democratic right and vote peacefully for the development of rural Bengal. The state administration is with them," she told a news channel.

Referring to the arrest of Trinamool Congress leader Arabul Islam in connection with the killing of a supporter of an independent candidate in Bhangar in South 24 Parganas district, Banerjee said the police took

action, irrespective of the "political colour" of the person.

"The state administration will play a strong role in tomorrow's panchayat elections... Nobody will be spared (if found disrupting peace). We have taken strict steps against Arabul despite he being a candidate of the Zilla Parishad, because we felt that the matter was not right," she said.

The chief minister urged people to not believe "fake videos" and warned them against falling prey to these.

"I have information that some people are planning to create problem from (Monday) morning using fake videos or using videos of incidents that had happened in Bangladesh or somewhere else in Jharkhand. We will not allow them to spread such things. I urge people not to believe in fake videos," she said.

Polling for the panchayat elections began at 7am and will end at 5pm. The counting will take place on May 17.

Manmohan Singh questions PM Modi's language in Karnataka speeches, writes to President Ram Nath Kovind

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi must be cautioned against using words that were "threatening, intimidating in content and a public warning" against the leaders of the Congress, former prime minister Manmohan Singh and several leaders of the main opposition party have said in a letter to President Ram Nath Kovind.

The letter, written on May 13 and signed by Singh, P Chidambaram, Anand Sharma, Karan Singh and others, points to a video of the Prime Minister's speech on May 6 in Karnataka's Hubli during an election rally.

Modi reportedly warned Congress president Rahul Gandhi and United Progressive Alliance chairperson Sonia Gandhi not to "cross the limits of public decorum" or else they would have to pay for it. He did not directly name any leader but mentioned "Congress ma (Congress mother)" and her son in an apparent reference to the Gandhis.

Singh and other leaders said all the prime ministers in the past maintained "immense dignity and decorum" in the discharge of public or private functions and actions.

The letter said the "threat held out by the Prime Minister to the INC's leadership deserves to be condemned".

"This cannot be the language of the Prime Minister of a constitutionally governed dem-



ocratic country of 1.3 billion people. Such discourse whether in public or private is unacceptable conduct. The words used are menacing and intimidating with intent to insult and provoke breach of peace," Singh and other leaders said.

"The Congress leadership has always exhibited courage and fearlessness in facing threat and challenges. We would like to state that neither the party nor our leaders will be cowed down by such threats," they said in the letter.

They added the Prime Minister cannot use "menacing language" as it "tantamounts to using his powers and privileges as the Prime Minister to settle personal and political scores".

"Hon'ble President may caution the Prime Minister from using such unwarranted, threatening and intimidating language against leaders of the Congress party or any other party or person as it does not behave the position of the Prime Minister," they said.

500 farmers arrested in Gujarat for violent protest against land acquisition

Ahmedabad: The Gujarat police arrested nearly 500 farmers Sunday night after they staged a violent protest at Bhavnagar's Surka village, around 176 km west of Ahmedabad against land acquisition by government-owned lignite mining company Gujarat Power Corporation Limited (GPCL) more than 20 years ago.

"The farmers had gathered at the site on Sunday and pelted stones on the policemen in response to which tear gas shells were lobbed. In the connection with the violent protest some 500 farmers have been arrested on Sunday

night," said Bhavnagar superintendent of police P L Mal.

"As many as 200 young boys were also detained along with adults. But the police later let them go and have not registered cases against them. Among the 500 booked, around 180 are women from 12 villages of Ghogha and Bhavnagar taluka," said Pravinshin Gohil of Khadsaliya village and one of the leaders of the protesting group.

The clash between farmers and police was the third such incident since April. The protests which have gained wider traction began with GPCL beginning the work on



around 1,414 hectare of land, which it had acquired and given compensation to the farmers between 1995 and 2005.

The farmers had earlier written to state officials demanding the return of their

land.

"As per land acquisition rules, the company should have claimed the land and started the work within five years of acquisition. Now, they should either let the farmers continue to till their land or

go through the acquisition process again," said Gohil.

Gohil is among 500 farmers who have sought permission for mass euthanasia if the government does not heed their demand. "Soon we will march toward Gandhinagar and then Delhi," Gohil added.

The farmers have also moved the Gujarat High Court. Since the first protest on April 1, there has been tension at the site as well as 12 surrounding villages.

"Four platoons of SRP, including a women's platoon, have been deployed in and around site to avoid any untoward incident," said Mal.



Smoking cigarettes can harm your intestines, says study

Crohn's disease is a chronic inflammatory bowel disease that affects the lining of the digestive tract causing severe pain. Smoking cigarettes can be harmful to the intestines and

also increase the risk of developing Crohn's disease, says a study. Crohn's disease is a chronic inflammatory bowel disease that affects the lining of the digestive tract causing se-

vere pain. It is more likely to occur in people with reactive airway disease (bronchial spasm), suggesting that inflammation in the lungs is linked to inflammation in the gut', says an expert.

Smoking also increases the levels of CD4+ T cells, a type of white blood cell, which releases a pro-inflammatory protein called interferon-gamma. These white blood cells activated by

cigarette smoke in the lungs, travel to the colon to cause colitis, an inflammation of the colon resembling Crohn's disease. 'Our results suggest that cigarette smoking activates specific

white blood cells in the lung, which might later move to the colon, triggering bowel inflammation, explains the expert. Smokers, especially those who also have bowel dis-

ease, should reduce their smoking. The researchers also found increased levels of mucus and inflammation in the colon, and blood in the feces of the smoke-exposed mice.

Dear moms-to-be, breastfeeding for longer may improve maternal sensitivity

Women who breastfeed their children longer exhibit more maternal sensitivity well past the infant and toddler years, according to a 10-year-long study. Maternal sensitivity was defined as the synchronous timing of a mother's responsiveness to her child, her emotional tone, her flexibility in her behaviour and her ability to read her child's cues.

Previous research shows that breastfeeding for two months can cut risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome by half, and can help mothers cope with the changes taking place.

Researchers, including those from Boise State University in the US, analysed data from interviews with 1,272 families. They were recruited when their infants were a month old, mothers completed a home interview and became part of the initial study sample. The sample included a substantial proportion of less-educated parents — 30% had no college education, and ethnic minority families — 13% were African-American.



In the study, published in the journal Developmental Psychology, women breastfed for an average of 17 weeks. Fewer than one per cent breastfed for 24 months and 29% did not breastfeed at all. Researchers interviewed and

videotaped families in their homes periodically until their child turned 11. Parents interacted with their children during free play scenarios and age-appropriate problem-solving tasks. Researchers found that even though increased breastfeeding duration led to greater maternal sensitivity over time, the effect sizes were small.

That means the close interaction experienced during breastfeeding may be only one of many ways the bond is strengthened between mother and child, said Jennifer Weaver from Boise State University.

"It was surprising to us that breastfeeding duration predicted change over time in maternal sensitivity," Weaver said.

"We had prior research suggesting a link between breastfeeding and early maternal sensitivity, but nothing to indicate that we would continue to see effects of breastfeeding significantly beyond the period when breastfeeding had ended," Weaver said.

Antacid consumption may lead to stomach cancer



If you are habitual of popping up drugs to treat acid reflux and stomach ulcers, hold on as they might cause cancer.

As per a research, the link between common Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs) like pantoprazole or rabeprazole may put you at double the risk of developing stomach cancer. Although the researchers from the University of Hong Kong said it was an observational study and no firm conclusions can be drawn about cause and effect and PPIs were generally considered safe, the link is significant as millions take such drugs to lower acid reflux.

To understand the link, the team led by Ka Shing Cheung from Department of Medicine at University of Hong Kong compared the use of PPIs with another type of drug used to dampen down acid production called H2 blockers (like ranitidine) in 63,397 adults treated with triple therapy -- a combination of a PPI and two antibiotics to kill off "H pylori" over seven days -- between 2003 and 2012. They were subsequently monitored until they either developed stomach cancer, died or the study ended (end of December 2015), whichever came first. The average monitoring period lasted 7.5 years.

During this time, 3,271 (5 per cent) people took PPIs for an average of nearly three years and 21,729 took H2 blockers. In all, 153 (0.24 per cent) people developed stomach cancer after triple therapy. None tested positive for H pylori at the time, but all had long-standing gastritis (inflammation of the stom-

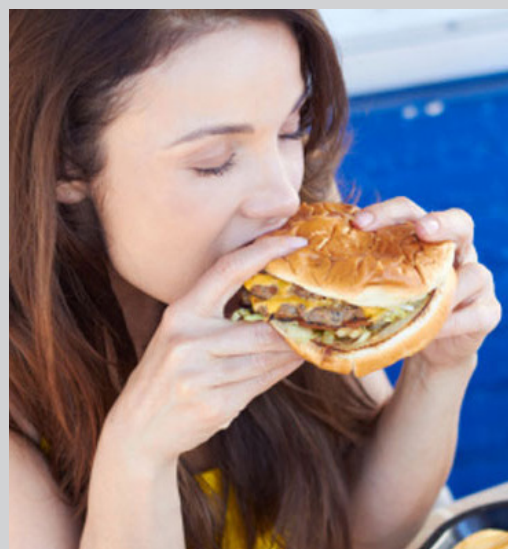
ach lining). "Taking PPIs was associated with a more than doubling (2.44) in the risk of developing stomach cancer, while taking H2 blockers was not associated with any such heightened risk," the study noted.

The average time between triple therapy and the development of stomach cancer was just under 5 years.

More frequent use was associated with greater risk, with daily use linked to a more than quadrupling in risk (4.55) compared with weekly use.

The drug first eliminates a bacteria called as Helicobacter pylori (H pylori) suspected of fuelling the cancer's development. However, even after H pylori was removed, the risk of developing the disease still rose in tandem with the dose and duration of PPI treatment, the researcher noted in the paper published in the journal Gut. The longer PPIs were used, the greater was the risk of developing stomach cancer, rising to 5-fold after more than a year, to more than 6-fold after two or more years, and to more than 8-fold after three or more years, the researchers said. Recent research has also linked long term use of PPIs to various unwanted effects, including pneumonia, heart attack and bone fracture. The "clear dose-response and time response trend" in the use of PPIs and stomach cancer risk, suggests that doctors "should exercise caution when prescribing long-term PPIs...even after successful eradication of H pylori", the researchers noted.

Your body structure affects your appetite too, says study



A study says that human skeleton is much more than just the structure supporting the muscles and other tissues, it has an affect on the appetite also.

Researchers in Canada studied a hormone produced by human bones, called osteocalcin, which affects how we metabolize sugar and fat. They unveiled a new piece of the puzzle that explains how osteocalcin works which might open the door to new ways of preventing type 2 diabetes and obesity eventually.

Just think about how women are more prone to suffer from osteoporosis when they reach menopause because their oestrogen levels drop, said Mathieu Ferron, director of the IRCM's Integrative and Molecular Physiology Research Unit. However, the idea that bone itself can affect other tissues took root only a few years ago with the discovery of osteocalcin.

Thanks to this hormone, produced by bone cells, sugar is metabolised more easily.

"One of osteocalcin's functions is to increase insulin production, which in turn reduces blood glucose levels," Ferron said.

"It can also protect us from obesity by increasing energy expenditure," he said.

Studies have shown that, for some people, changes in blood concentrations of osteocalcin may even stave off the development of diabetes.

Osteocalcin is produced by osteoblasts, the same cells responsible for making our bones.

The hormone builds up in bone, and then, through a series of chemical reactions, is released into the blood, researchers said.

Here's why anti-ageing is a myth and ageing impossible to beat

Efforts to find the secret to everlasting youth may be futile, as scientists have mathematically proven that it is impossible to halt ageing in multicellular organisms like humans.

Current understanding of the evolution of ageing leaves open the possibility that ageing could be stopped if only science could figure out a way to make selection between organisms perfect. One way to do that might be to use competition between cells to eliminate poorly functioning "sluggish" cells linked to ageing, while keeping other cells intact. However, the solution is not that simple, researchers said.

"Ageing is mathematically inevitable. There's logically, theoretically, mathematically no way out," said Joanna Masel, professor at University of Arizona in the US.

Two things happen to the body on a cellular level as it ages, Nelson said. One is that

cells slow down and start to lose function, like when your hair cells, for example, stop making pigment. The other thing that happens is that some cells crank up their growth rate, which can cause cancer cells to form.

As we get older, we all tend, at some point, to develop cancer cells in the body, even if they are not causing symptoms, researchers said. They found that even if natural selection were perfect, ageing would still occur, since cancer cells tend to cheat when cells compete.

"As you age, most of your cells are ratcheting down and losing function, and they stop growing, as well," said Paul Nelson from University of Arizona in the US. "But some of your cells are growing like crazy. What we show is that this forms a double bind - a catch-22," said Nelson, lead author of the study published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Eating walnuts may help ward off several diseases: Experts

Eating a diet rich in walnuts may help prevent several diseases prevalent in India such as cardiovascular disorders, cancer and diabetes, according to an international team of researchers.

Researchers and medical professionals from the field of Nutrition, Cardiovascular, Cognition, Alzheimer's and Diabetes today held a scientific meeting here to discuss the state of health in India, dietary patterns, chronic health conditions and promotion of healthy lifestyles. The day-long Scientific and Health Research Meeting hosted by the California Walnut Commission (CWC) discussed the role of walnuts in disease prevention and maintenance of healthy lifestyle in the country.

Several research findings have shown positive outcomes of walnuts in health issues such as cardiovascular disease,

cancer, diseases of ageing and diabetes. According to Dr Rekha Sharma, Former Chief Dietician, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, metabolic syndrome combined with physical inactivity and under nutrition co exists in India, as a double

burden on health.

Obesity, hypertension, diabetes and coronary artery disease are like a rising inferno in India, particularly in urban areas and on the other side of the spectrum we have under nutrition, especially in children, she said. Sharma quoted a Lancet study which found that India is the third most obese country in the world after US and China.

"Indian population should increase consumption of fruits and vegetables, legumes, whole grains and nuts in a daily diet," said Sharma. "All nuts are rich source of monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFA) and walnuts in addition also contain high amounts of omega-3 fatty acid, making it heart healthy," she said. Researchers said that the inci-



deuce to around 16,300 crores, they said. "Walnuts in the diet may improve cognitive function in normal individuals, and reduce the risk or delay the onset or progression of mild cognitive impairment (MCI) and dementia in Alzheimer's disease (AD)," said Abha Chauthan, from New York State Institute for Basic Research in Developmental Disabilities (IBRD) in the US.

The event saw the presence of several international researchers who talked about their area of study on walnuts. "Walnuts are the only tree nut to contain a significant amount of the plant-based omega-3, alpha-linolenic acid, required by the human body," said Dr H K Chopra, who chaired the meeting.

"A handful of walnuts also offers four grammes of protein, two

grammes of fibre, and is a good source of magnesium," said Chopra. "With a variety of nutrients and a flavour profile that pairs well with an array of seasonal foods, they are an ideal ingredient any time of the year," he said. The CWC has been actively highlighting walnuts to Indian consumers through marketing activities that promote walnuts of California origin, quality, taste and positive health benefits.

These health benefits have been demonstrated through over 180 research papers published since early 1990's when the commission actively began assessing the role of walnuts in diet and effect on chronic disease prevention.

"This Scientific and Health Research Meeting was an exceptional platform to discuss the state of health in India, dietary patterns, chronic health conditions and promotion of healthy lifestyles," said Michelle McNeil Connelly, CEO of the CWC.

"We hope that this meeting provides an opportunity to maintain a network of researchers and medical professionals who may contribute to walnut-specific health research in India," Connelly said.

Exit polls to vex Indian markets as majority seen eluding Modi

India's equities, rupee and bonds posted modest gains Monday as exit polls signalled that majority may prove elusive for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party in elections in Karnataka.

At least four polls, including Today's Chanakya, which accurately predicted Modi's victory in 2014 elections, showed the BJP as the single largest party winning between 95 to 120 seats in the 224-member Karnataka assembly. The incumbent Indian National Congress -- also the main opposition party at the Centre -- is seen bagging 72 to 99 seats.

"Margin of victory is the most important factor and with the exit polls indicating all kinds of permutations and combinations, the markets are definitely going to be volatile," said Avinash Gorakshakar, head of research at Mumbai-based Joindre Capital Services Ltd. "Having said that, a conclusive BJP win can push the Nifty above 11,000 this week and a Congress victory can see the gauge drop as much as 400 points."

The equities benchmark S&P BSE Sensex rose 0.2 percent to 35,602.84 as of 10:22 a.m. in Mumbai, with vol-



ume on the NSE Nifty 50 Index 34 percent below the 30-day mean for this time of day. The Indian rupee added 0.1 percent to 67.2375 per dollar. Sovereign bonds halted three days of declines, with the benchmark yield dropping two basis points.

Investors fear an inconclusive verdict could prompt the federal government to take populist measures to shore up public support ahead of nationwide elections in 2019. Markets will cheer an outright win for BJP as a vindication of a slew of reform mea-

asures -- including a nationwide sales tax and a funding plan for state-owned lenders -- that prompted the first sovereign rating upgrade from Moody's Investors Service in 14 years.

Exit polls predict that the Janata Dal (Secular), a regional party led by former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda, will be kingmaker in case of a hung assembly in Karnataka.

An India Today-Axis Poll pegged Congress as the front-runner winning as many 118 seats while Times Now VMR exit poll also predicted BJP

finishing second. Both saw JD(S) finishing third.

"Exit polls are all over the place," said Anindya Banerjee, a foreign-exchange analyst at Kotak Securities Ltd. in Mumbai. "In case, the BJP forms the government, it will be a positive development for the rupee, which is already one of the worst performing currencies in the emerging market basket in 2018. It will reduce some of the political risk premium."

The Sensex and the Nifty each climbed 1.7 percent on March 14 last year, a day after the BJP sealed a thumping victory in Uttar Pradesh, the nation's most populous state. Votes for Karnataka ballot, that took place on Saturday, will be counted on May 15.

After Karnataka, the BJP will lock horns with the Congress in at least five state elections -- including Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha -- before the national polls in 2019.

The Sensex has climbed 49 percent since the BJP in May 2014 won the biggest mandate in three decades, while the rupee has slid more than 13 percent.

CBI files chargesheet in Nirav Modi case, names ex-PNB chief, senior officials

New Delhi: The CBI on Monday filed its first charge sheet in the country's largest financial scam worth over Rs 2 billion in Punjab National Bank by billionaire jeweller Nirav Modi, detailing the alleged role of the bank's former chief Usha Ananthasubramanian, who is now Allahabad Bank CEO and MD, officials said.



The charge sheet, filed in a special court in Mumbai, also names several other top officials of the bank.

Ananthasubramanian was the MD and CEO of PNB from 2015 to 2017 and was questioned recently by the CBI in connection with the case.

The agency has also named PNB executive directors KV Brahmaji Rao and Sanjiv Sharan, and general manager (international operations) Nehal Ahad in its charge sheet.

The agency has detailed the roles of Nirav Modi, his brother Nishal Modi and Subhash Parab, an executive in Nirav Modi's company, officials said.

The charge sheet basically deals with the first FIR registered in the case relating to the fraudulent issuance over Rs 6,000 crore of Letters of Undertaking to Diamond R US, Solar Exports and Stellar Diamonds.

The agency has not given in detail the role of Mehul Choksi in the present charge sheet. It is likely to come up when the CBI files supplementary charge sheets in the case related to the probe of the Gitanjali group.

The CBI has registered three separate FIRs in connection with the alleged fraud in the public sector bank by the companies of the nephew-uncle duo of Modi and Choksi.

Both Modi and Choksi had left the country before PNB filed the complaint with the CBI.

Investigators probe another Deepak Kochhar company, NuPower Technologies

New Delhi: Investigative agencies scrutinizing NuPower Technologies, a subsidiary of NuPower Renewables, say that just like the parent, there is confusion over the subsidiary's ownership and that it too has had shareholder-level transactions with a company promoted by a relative of the Ruia of Essar.



NuPower Renewables is owned by Deepak Kochhar, husband of ICICI Bank MD and CEO Chanda Kochhar. "There are several irregularities in this company. And no clear answers are available," said an income tax officer who did not wish to be named, referring to NuPower Technologies. The irregularities include the identity of the real owner of the company and investments made by the holding company, NuPower Renewables in it, this person added.

NuPower Technologies was sold to the Anirudh Bhuwarka-owned A-One Parts & Services in 2016. Bhuwarka is also the owner of AMW Motors and is the nephew of Essar Group's Shashi Ruia. While shareholding details

of NuPower Technologies as of March 2017 list it as a company wholly owned by Bhuwarka, he has clarified that though the share purchase agreement was signed in January 2016, the deal was never concluded.

"Based on this agreement, a token advance of Rs 1 crore was paid to NuPower Technologies in March 2016. However as the conditions of the agreement did not get concluded, the transaction did not get consummated and hence no further payment has been made by A-One to NuPower thereafter," Bhuwarka said in a phone interview.

He added that the shares have been already transferred to his company which is why statutory filings reflect its

owner as A-One.

Apart from this confusion, there is also the matter of fully convertible debentures bought by NuPower Renewables in NuPower Technologies, right after its sale in 2016, claimed an officer in one of the investigation agencies looking into the matter. He too did not wish to be named.

Fully convertible debentures are debt investments that can be converted into equity after a stipulated time. Nishant Kanodia, another Ruia relative, invested in Kochhar's NuPower Renewables, although he exited in 2013 after selling his stake to the Mauritius based DH Renewables, whose ownership isn't known.

Essar Group has said that

all its business dealings with Nishant Kanodia's group has been on an arm's length basis and that it has not invested in NuPower Renewables or Firstland Holdings, Kanodia's company that invested in NuPower. The Essar Group did not respond to an email seeking comment.

Deepak Kochhar and his companies are being investigated after a whistleblower complained that Videocon Chairman, Venugopal Dhoot, had transferred his personal stake in it to Deepak Kochhar as a quid-pro-quo for a loan extended by ICICI Bank to Videocon. Deepak Kochhar and Dhoot have both been named in a preliminary enquiry of the central Bureau of Investigation.

The Essar Group is one of ICICI Bank's large borrowers and has had extensive dealings with the bank over the past several decades. Hindustan Times learns that the conglomerate still owes the lender around Rs 10,000 crore after paying back several times that in recent months, courtesy the \$13 billion sale of Essar Oil last year to Rosneft.

RBI declines to share copies of inspection reports for PNB

New Delhi: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has declined to share inspection reports for scam-hit Punjab National Bank (PNB), citing RTI clauses that bar disclosure of details which may impede the investigation process or prosecution of offenders among other reasons.

Replying to an RTI query, the central bank also said it does not have "specific information" on what resulted in detection of over Rs 13,000 crore scam at PNB and directed the application to the state-run bank for providing those details.

The scam, considered to be the biggest ever fraud in India's history, came to light earlier this year. PNB was allegedly defrauded by diamondaire Nirav Modi and his uncle Mehul Choksi, the promoter of Gitanjali Gems.

Among other agencies and regulators, the RBI is also undertaking a detailed probe into the case for necessary action.

In response to queries under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, the central bank clarified that the RBI



does not carry out audit of banks. However, the RBI conducts inspection/risk-based supervision of banks, it added.

Giving details for the past ten years, the RBI gave dates for the annual inspection carried out at the PNB head office between 2007 and 2017, except for 2011, for which the bank said the "dates (are) not available".

When asked about the copies of inspection reports and details of objections raised by it, the RBI said the information was exempted under various clauses of the RTI Act.

"The inspection reports of banks and other related documents contain information which is exempt from

disclosure under Section 8 (i) (a), (d), (j) and (h) of RTI Act, 2005," it said in reply to the RTI application filed by this correspondent.

The Section 8(i) (a) bars disclosure of information which would prejudicially affect the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security, strategic, scientific or economic interests of the state, relation with foreign state or lead to incitement of an offence.

The clause (d) bars information the disclosure of which would harm the competitive position of a third party, whereas the section 8 (i) (h) exempts disclosure of information "which would impede the process of investigation

or apprehension or prosecution of offenders".

The clause (j) bars information which relates to personal information and the disclosure of which has no relationship to any public activity or interest, or which would cause unwarranted invasion of the privacy of the individual.

The RBI said that the severance of exempt parts in all inspection reports would divert the resources of the public authority in an unreasonable way.

"In view of the same it is not feasible to disclose the information sought by the applicant," the central bank said.

The RBI has transferred the application to the PNB on query seeking details of inspection reports that led to detection of the massive fraud in the bank.

"The specific information sought is not available with us. However, the RTI application is being transferred to PNB under Section 6 (3) of the RTI Act, 2005 for providing information, if any, directly to the applicant," it said.

Vijaya Bank tags Reliance Naval as NPA from March quarter

Mumbai: The state-run Vijaya Bank has classified the Anil Ambani group-led Reliance Naval & Engineering, whose auditors had recently expressed doubts about the company's ability to continue as a "going concern", as non-performing asset from the March quarter.

The company, which was earlier known as Pipavav Defence & Offshore Engineering, was bought over by Anil Ambani group in 2016 and renamed it as Reliance Defence & Engineering. It owes over Rs 9,000 to over two dozen banks mostly state-run, led by the troubled IDBI Bank.

The Bengaluru-based Vijaya Bank said the action was necessitated by the February 12 changes that the Reserve Bank had brought to the NPA resolution framework, which while scrapping all the existing frameworks, including debt restructuring, asked banks to consider even one-day delay in payments as default which if not cleared in 180 days should be sent to NCLT for bankruptcy proceedings.

"A few accounts, including Reliance Naval, were under various restructuring schemes like the SDR and S4A by all the lenders. With the February 12 circular, the RBI made it clear that all those accounts where restructuring could not happen by then, have to be treated as NPAs.

"Reliance Naval was under restructuring (SDR), but the implementation



could not happen, and so, it slipped into NPA from the March quarter," a senior Vijaya Bank official told PTI over phone from Bengaluru over the weekend.

The official further said the bank has made adequate provisions for the Reliance Naval account in the March quarter without disclosing how much is its exposure and how much it has provided for.

A mail sent to the company last evening did not elicit a response till the time of transmission of this story.

Reliance Naval is the second firm from the Anil Ambani group to become NPAs after its once flagship but now

bankrupt Reliance Communication, which is already at the Mumbai NCLT. RCom owes over Rs 45,000 crore to 31 banks apart from a China Development Bank.

Defence Naval, which is into defence ship-building, has also been tagged as NPA by state-run Union Bank of India, according to media report, which also said the account was tagged as SMA2 by all the lenders since the past many quarters. But PTI could not verify it with the city-based lender.

An account is called SMA 2 if it is in default for up to 60 days but if it remains so for another 30 days then it has to be tagged as an NPA account

and the bank has to make provision and since the February 12 RBI circular, should be sent to NCLT for bankruptcy provisions.

As of March 2017, Reliance Naval had an outstanding borrowings of Rs 8,753.19.38 crore.

In the March 2018 quarter, it reported a threefold jump in net loss to Rs 408.68 crore from Rs 139.92 crore in the previous 12 months period. For the full year to March 2018, its net loss almost doubled to Rs 956.09 crore from Rs 523.43 crore in previous year.

In the March quarter, the IDBI Bank-led lenders consortium recalled their loans to the company and invoked the pledged shares as well as the guarantees available with them.

In a note in the FY18 earnings statement, its auditors Pathak HD & Associates had raised doubts about the company's ability to "continue as a going concern".

Auditors listed cash losses, net worth erosion, loan recall back by secured lenders, mounting current liabilities which are substantially higher than assets and winding up petitions by a few operating creditors to raise its doubts.

Ambani had picked up controlling stake in Pipavav Defence & Offshore Engineering in 2016 and renamed it as Reliance Defence & Engineering. Last year, it was renamed again as Reliance Naval & Engineering.

Hindujas toppled from UK rich list, Jim Ratcliffe tops with £21.05bn worth

London: After topping Britain's rich list for several years, the Hinduja brothers were relegated to the second position in the latest version by the rags-to-riches story of Jim Ratcliffe, who founded a chemical company and is estimated to be worth £21.05 billion.



The annual Sunday Times Rich List said Hinduja brothers, Srichand and Gopichand, were worth £20.64 billion after seeing their fortune rise by £4.44 billion from 2017. At £14.66 billion, steel magnate Lakshmi Mittal and family dropped one place from 2017 to the fifth place in the top 10.

Robert Watts, who compiled the 1,000-member strong list, said the list had become more international since its inception in 1989, with more high net worth individuals from various countries moving to London and the United Kingdom.

He said: "Britain is changing. Gone are the days when old money and a small band of industries dominated the Sunday Times Rich List. Aristocrats and inherited wealth has been elbowed out of the list and replaced by an army of self-made entrepreneurs".

"Today's super rich include people who have set up businesses selling chocolate, sushi, pet food and eggs. We're seeing more people from humble backgrounds, who strug-

gled at school or who didn't even start their businesses until well into middle age."

The 30th edition of the list finds the 1,000 richest individuals and families have a combined wealth of £724 billion -- a 10% rise on last year's figure of £658 billion. The billionaire count has risen to 145 -- 11 more than last year.

In 1989, the rich list had only five rich individuals from the ethnic minorities; now the number has risen to 86, including 83 from the Asian community. Several of them arrived here as refugees, the list compilers said.

On more foreign high net worth individuals making it to the list, they added, "The reason they appear in the list is because London is now a magnet for the world's super-rich. Tycoons running organisations straddling the world choose to base themselves and their business here in a way scarcely imaginable 30 years ago. But perhaps the most striking force blowing through the rich list is technology."

MS Dhoni, Dinesh Karthik and other Indian wicketkeepers make a statement in IPL 2018

Mumbai: Till some time back, a wicket-keeper's job was to execute his duties behind the stumps. Then came the likes of Adam Gilchrist and Mark Boucher and the equation changed in the limited-overs format.

From wicketkeepers who could bat, the preference shifted to batsmen who could keep wickets. The Rahul Dravid-Sourav Ganguly saga was a part of the shift.

At 36, MS Dhoni isn't getting younger. Although his age-defying finishing abilities coupled with lightning-fast reflexes behind the wickets suggest otherwise, in reality, he will hang up his boots in the near future.

It's impossible to find his replacement but this IPL has thrown up options that one can look forward to when the fateful day arrives.

Had Ishan Kishan been a year younger, he would be half of Dhoni's age. Yet, his batting prowess is something that might have even taken the veteran by surprise. The lanky 19-year-old hits the ball clean and plays at a



rate which startles the opposition.

He's played nine innings in the IPL so far and has 238 runs at a strike rate of 160.81. He's also the most successful Indian behind the stumps and has effected nine dismissals with seven catches and two stumpings.

Like Ishan, it has also been a dream season for his former under-19 teammate Rishabh Pant. Pant is the leading run-getter this season, and has a

63-ball 128 knock against his name. The swashbuckling left hander has already earned his national cap, having featured in four T20s.

Playing an attacking brand of cricket comes naturally to the duo. Even in the 2016-17 Ranji season, Pant's season strike rate was a staggering 107.28 while Kishan's read 83.92.

It has also been a great season for

Sanju Samson and the experienced KL Rahul. A significant reason why Kings XI Punjab have been enjoying a great run this season is because of Rahul's partnership with Chris Gayle at the top.

Like Rahul, Samson has been one of the main run-getters for Rajasthan Royals but needs to convert his starts into big scores. He, however, hasn't been keeping wickets as Jos Buttler is in that role. Unlike Pant and Ishan, Rahul and Samson often switch gear between their knocks if required to settle things down before upping the ante. The other Indian keeper who has been enjoying a decent season is veteran Dinesh Karthik, the highest run-getter for Kolkata Knight Riders, but hasn't quite impressed like Rahul, Ishan and Pant.

Rahul and Karthik are in the squad for the ODI and T20I series against Ireland and England, while Pant and Samson earned a call-up for the India A squad for the four-day and ODI tri-series in the UK.

IPL 2018: Shane Warne sees bright future for Sanju Samson, Rishabh Pant

Mumbai: Rajasthan Royals batsman Sanju Samson has been dubbed as India's next big superstar by Australia's all-time leading wicket-taker Shane Warne on the back of his stunning form in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2018.

The 23-year-old has scored 379 runs at 34.45 in 12 games for Rajasthan Royals in the IPL this year, and boasts of an impressive strike-rate of 140. The right-handed batsman has also bagged two man-of-the-match awards this term.

"He's good against pace and spin in all conditions and I think he's going to be the next superstar of Indian cricket," Warne, who is serving as a mentor at RR, was quoted as saying by cricket.com.au.

"He's the new rock star, Sanju Samson that's for sure. He's an outstanding player and he's a quality international cricketer."

Samson's only appearance for India so far came in 2015 in a T20I against Zimbabwe at Harare but Warne has still backed the rising star to come good alongside Delhi Daredevils'



Rishabh Pant, who is also currently the leading scorer in the IPL 2018.

"India at the moment are blessed with some riches of talent, I think our man Sanju Samson is right up there with (Rishabh) Pant," Warne said. "I think those two guys are probably the two best young Indian batsmen I've seen in a long, long time."

RR have boosted their chances of making the IPL play-offs with three consecutive wins, the most recent coming against Mumbai Indians on Sunday at the Wankhede Stadium.

RR take on Kolkata Knight Riders at the Eden Gardens in their next fixture on Tuesday.

Sebastian Vettel defends Ferrari's two pitstop strategy in Spanish Grand Prix



Sebastian Vettel defended Ferrari's Spanish Grand Prix strategy on Sunday after a second pitstop dropped the Formula One title challenger to fourth place and 17 points adrift of Mercedes rival Lewis Hamilton.

The German, winner of the season's first two races, had been second before coming in for a fresh set of tyres while Hamilton won with one stop from pole position.

"We couldn't make the tyres last, so for us it was clear we come in again. I think it was the right thing to do," said Vettel. "We were going through the tyres too quick and therefore we were not able to stay out for another 23 laps. Even in the end, with the fresher set I wasn't able to attack until the end," he added.

Vettel had pitted when the virtual safety car was deployed to slow the field, something that had played in his favour at previous races.

Instead, both Mercedes' Valtteri Bottas and Red Bull's Max Verstappen were able to get ahead, with Vettel also losing time with an error.

"Obviously, you have to slow down, the tyres are getting cold and it's my mistake. I came into the box maybe a bit hot -- well, cold with the tyres -- and overshot the position," he explained.

"And then the guys (mechanics) have to reshuffle and I think that cost us a bit of time. We had some traffic in the pitlane as well."

The race was the third in a row that Vettel, stuck on 49 career wins, had finished off the podium. Two weekends ago in Azerbaijan, the four-time champion was also fourth and in China before that eighth.

Pirelli had reduced the tread depths of the tyres used at the smoother but grippier Circuit de Catalunya to reduce the risk of overheating but had said the change would not be noticeable in performance terms or stint length.

Ferrari clearly had more problems than Mercedes making them last, however, but Vettel was not making excuses.

"One, we were not quick enough. If we are not able to see that then we are more than blind," said the German. "Second, I think we struggled a little bit over the course of the weekend with the tyres. They changed, but they changed for everyone. Third, I think it was a poor weekend in terms of reliability. Kimi (Raikkonen) had an issue with the engine yesterday, had to change the engine today and obviously retired in the race."

Ravichandran Ashwin is India captaincy material: Joe Dawes

Indore: Before the start of Indian Premier League (IPL) 2018, Ravichandran Ashwin vowed to be at his 'unpredictable best' as Kings XI Punjab captain. Ashwin said he would try and use his experience to be proficient in his job. The results have been positive. He's taken a team that finished eighth, eighth and fifth in their last three IPL seasons closer to the play-offs.

One of the standout characteristics of Ashwin's captaincy has been the faith he has shown in his bowlers. Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Andrew Tye have gone for runs in a few matches but Ashwin's backing is one of the reasons why they feature among the top wicket-takers in the tournament. Tye has 20 wickets from 11 games while Mujeeb has 14.

Ashwin has even taken some major decisions like dropping David Miller, Yuvraj Singh and Aaron Finch. Chris Gayle, who went unsold at the auctions before being picked by the Punjab-based franchise in the final round, has been utilised well. Australia's Joe Dawes, former India bowling coach, feels if the occasion arises Ashwin would do well as India captain.

"As captain, I think he (Ashwin) will excel (at the international level). Once he finds his feet, he will do a good job because he has a great cricketing brain," said Dawes.

Dawes, who worked with the India team from 2012-2014, also spoke about Ashwin's eagerness to develop new deliveries and his idea to try leg-spin could help him get more success.



"Ashwin is a unique cricketer. He loves to try out new things and tinker with what he has. There were times as coach I would have loved him to keep things simple but this is what makes him tick and has helped him become one of the best spinners."

"As coach, you should encourage players to add skills to their game as long as it does not take away from their core game," he added.

Shami, Umesh for World Cup
In the last one-and-half years, Mohammed Shami and

Shami and Umesh can get the job done.

"They have given opportunities to a number of fast bowlers in recent times like Shardul (Thakur), Bumrah to go with Shami, and the pairing of Umesh and Bhuvneshwar. I'm confident the experienced guys will step up when required."

Asked if IPL is the right platform for a young bowler who has played at the U-19, U-18 level but is yet to play domestic cricket, Dawes said: "They have expectations, not only from their families, but also from themselves and sometimes we see a lot fail early. But cricket is about taking your chances. If a young Indian can come into IPL and do well, he is in a good position to play domestic and international cricket."

IPL 2018: Mumbai Indians' inconsistent batting reason for defeat - Ben Cutting

Mumbai: Mumbai Indians all-rounder Ben Cutting on Sunday blamed the side's defeat against Rajasthan Royals to the inconsistency shown by their batsmen, stating that despite the stunning start that had been provided by openers Suryakumar Yadav (31-ball 38) and Evin Lewis (42-ball 60), the side was around 20 runs short as they threw a 169-run target for the visitors to chase on the night.

With an 87-run partnership to show for after being sent in to bat first, Mumbai Indians lost the plot in the middle overs after Jofra Archer (2/26) sent pack Yadav and skipper Rohit Sharma (0) in the space of just two deliveries. Cutting praised Archer's efforts but wasn't ready to admit that it was the only reason why they finished second-best.

The Australian was, however, heaped praise on Jos Buttler (53-ball 94) who notched up his fifth consecutive half-century on Sunday en route to aggregate 505 runs in the IPL this season. On being asked how does one plan against a player with the attacking mindset as that of the wicketkeeper-batsman, Cut-



ting stated: "It's tough. We were pretty close to our plans tonight. (He) missed a few balls with execution here and there but that happens in Twenty20 cricket. He's in red hot form and he's scored over 500 runs. But his confidence is high; he's striking the ball well."

He further reiterated: "I'm not going to put it down to their bowling. It's probably back to our batting. A few times this time we've fallen in a heap and sort of lost quick three or four wickets in three overs for not many runs. So when you lose 2 for 20, 3 for 30, it's tough to build up and fire again regardless of the bowling," he added, before lamenting over their string of last-over losses in the initial stages of the tournament. "If you go back to our first 3-4 games of the

season that we lost in the last over, had we won two of those four games we wouldn't be having the same conversation. We'd be sitting comfortably on 14-16 points."

Dhawal Kulkarni, however, praised Archer, who's the side's best performer with the ball and has 13 wickets under his belt despite missing out a couple of games early in the season owing to an injury. "I think he's been bowling consistently well. No doubt about that. But today it was special. The wicket assisted him really well. The way he was getting that bounce, it was really special. I just wished that he got a hat-trick. It would have been better for us and for him," he said.

With Royals moving up to 12 points from as many games, Mumbai Indians' hopes of going through to the last four now depends on how the rest of the teams fare. With Sunrisers Hyderabad and Chennai Super Kings already through and Delhi Daredevils out of the competition, the remaining two spots are open for all the five teams, none of whom can afford slip-ups anymore.

First Sanju Samson, now Jos Buttler carrying Rajasthan Royals' play-off hopes

Mumbai: If there's a side that has been completely dependent on individual performances and has yet found ways to somehow keep their play-off hopes alive, it has to be Rajasthan Royals.

The Royals have won six games so far and on five of those occasions, it was either Sanju Samson or Jos Buttler who walked away with the man-of-the-match award.

It has been a tale of two halves for the duo with Sam-

son carrying the mantle in the first half of the season followed by Buttler in the second. It was Buttler's third consecutive man-of-the-match performance as he toyed with the Mumbai Indians bowling attack, thus helping his side chase down 168 with 12 balls and seven wickets to spare.

Buttler's innings oozed class. Right from the first ball, the Englishman seemed to be on top of his game and continued from where he had

left during his unbeaten knock of 95 against Chennai Super Kings.

While he missed his century by just five runs back then, he missed one again on Sunday by six, albeit he wouldn't mind them one bit owing to the results that these knocks have fetched.

Mumbai looked clueless in their attempt to tackle Buttler. After all, in the pre-match press conference, all that Krunal Pandya had in offer

on being asked how do they plan to keep Buttler in check was: "If you see the positive side, he has been consistent for the last 3-4 games, so he's due for one bad game. So I see it in that way as an opponent," he had said.

Such planning against a batsman who's now slammed five consecutive half-centuries only had one outcome. For the first three overs, Buttler held himself back, trying to gauge the bounce of the

Wankhede Stadium; something that had helped the likes of Jofra Archer and Ben Stokes trouble the Mumbai batsmen with. Once that initial reece was done, he lofted Krunal Pandya inside out over the cover region for a boundary. By the time one got done appreciating it, the next one was dislodged over backward square for his first six on the night. After that he was simply unstoppable. He notched up three consecutive boundaries

off the next three overs to keep the scoreboard ticking and the asking rate in check while his skipper Ajinkya Rahane did what he does best — assist from the other end. The two put up 95 runs for the second wicket in which while Rahane contributed at a modest rate of 36-ball 37, Buttler had 55 off 38 deliveries. He ended the day with nine boundaries and five sixes as he put up a 53-ball 94 to climb up the No 5 on the highest run-getter's

HEENA SIDHU WINS SHOOTING GOLD, P SHRI NIVETHA SETTLES FOR BRONZE IN HANNOVER



Heena Sidhu clinched the gold medal while compatriot P Shri Nivetha settled for bronze in the women's 10m air pistol at the International Shooting Competitions of Hannover (ISCH) ahead of next week's ISSF Munich World Cup.

Heena was in a brilliant form in the final where she was tied with France's Mathilde Lamolle on 239.8 points. She won the tie to win the gold ahead of Mathilde. While Shri Nivetha finished on 219.2.

The finish marks a strong build-up to next week's ISSF World Cup in Munich.

After beginning with a series of scores in the 9s, Heena switched gears and notched up 10 and above consistently to break away from the field. Her second series produced consistent 10s and she even hit a perfect 10.9 in the elimination round to put herself in contention for gold.

After initially fighting for the 3rd-4th position, the Commonwealth gold medalist Indian scored a 10.9 on her 13th shot in the final to take the lead and then held her nerve till the end.

Heena qualified for the final in the fourth place scoring 572 while Shri Nivetha topped the qualification with a total of 582.

"I am feeling good with how my training is shaping up. Of course, it's not perfect but we are moving in the right direction so it's just a matter of time," said Heena after her gold medal win.

The ISSF Munich World Cup will be held from May 22 to 29 and will be Heena's second major competition after her twin medal success at the Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast and the World Cup in Korea.

Heena had won a gold in the women's 25m pistol event in Gold Coast and a silver in 10 metre air pistol.