

TIME AND US

DAILY

SRINAGAR, KASHMIR

WEDNESDAY

● MAY, 16, 2018
● 29 SHABAN 1439 AH
● ISSUE: 114
● VOLUME: 04
● PAGES: 08

WEATHER TEMPERATURE		
STATION	MAX TEMPERATURE	MIN TEMPERATURE
	ACT	ACT
SRINAGAR	21.6	11.3
JAMMU	35.0	22.0
LEH	20.0	7.1
KARGIL	18.2	4.2

SUNSET TUESDAY: 07:27 PM
SUNRISE WEDNESDAY: 05:29 AM

LOCAL FORECAST OF SRINAGAR
Light rain/Thunder shower. Maximum & Minimum temperatures will be around 20°C & 12°C respectively.

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

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RS 6 CR WATER SUPPLY SCHEME COMING UP AT NARBAL: SHAM CHOUDHARY

AMIT SHAH BLOWS 2019 ELECTION BUGLE, ASKS PARTY TO ADDRESS DALIT ISSUES

INDIAN BANKS ON HOOK FOR \$26 BILLION IN LOANS TO STRESSED ELECTRICITY PROJECTS

OUR SPINNERS CAN TROUBLE INDIA: AFGHANISTAN SKIPPER ASGHAR STANIKZAI

SRINAGAR DISTRICT PLAN PEGGED AT RS. 149.54 CR, CM CHAIRS DDB MEET

Mehbooba announces release of Rs. One Cr each to MLAs of Srinagar district to strengthen social infra

SRINAGAR, MAY 15: Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti today announced release of Rs. One crore each in respect of all the MLAs of Srinagar District for rebuilding social infrastructure in their constituencies even as the District Capex Plan has been pegged at Rs. 149.54 crore for 2018-19.

Chairing the District Development Board meeting of Srinagar district here today, the Chief Minister also announced release of Rs. five crore to be kept at the disposal of SKIMS for establishing a Cancer Centre there. A similar release of Rs. five crore would be made for Jammu for establishing a Cancer Centre there as well, the Chief Minister announced. She also directed earmarking Rs. 10 crore for constructing Community Halls in various parts of the city, particularly Shehre Khaas.

Ministers, Syed Altaf Bukhari, Javed Ahmad Mir, Muhammad Ashraf Mir, Asiea Naqash; legislators, Ali Muhammad Sagar, Mubarak Gul,



Shamima Firdous, Noor Muhammad, Moulvi Abid Ansari, Ishfaq Jabbar, Khursheed Alam and Anjum Fazili were present in the meeting. Mehbooba Mufti directed the officers to undertake repair of lanes, drains, macadamisation of roads and strengthening of power distribution system in the Srinagar city, particularly Shehre Khaas, on priority adding that the allocations of Rs. One crore each be utilized for pacing up these works. She said there is a need for developing more parks and green spaces in the city and till the Smart city project kicks off these interventions should be made on priority.

See Mehbooba...Pg 02

Director FTII Pune calls on CM

SRINAGAR, MAY 15: Hailing the joint initiative launched by Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune and the Department of Information & Public Relations (DIPR), J&K to conduct skill development courses in Television Production and Filmmaking for the State's youth, Chief Minister, Ms Mehbooba Mufti today assured full support of the State Government for carrying forward this novel initiative.

"The State Government will provide whatever support is needed to carry forward this innovative and creative initiative," Ms Mehbooba told the Director, FTII Pune, Mr Bhupendra Kaintholawho called on the Chief Minister here this morning. He was accompanied by Director Information & Public Relations,

See Director...Pg 02

Trooper killed in Pak firing, cop loses life in militant ambush in South Kashmir

Srinagar, May 15, CNS: A Border Security Force (BSF) trooper was killed on Tuesday in cross-border firing on the international border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district.

"Pakistan rangers started ceasefire violation at 1.30 a.m. They resorted to unprovoked

firing at the BSF positions on the IB in the early hours.

"BSF constable, Devinder Singh, was injured in the firing. He succumbed to his injuries later," a BSF official said here.

The Indian positions retaliated effectively and strongly. Firing exchanges between

the two sides continued for nearly three hours, he added.

Meanwhile, militants attacked a police vehicle in South Kashmir that resulted in the injuries of two cops. One of the injured cop succumbed to his injuries.

Militants carried out

See Trooper...Pg 02

Council Panel calls for improving working conditions for Police personnel

SRINAGAR, MAY 15: The Department Related Standing Committee-(DRSC-III) of Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Council today reviewed the overall functioning of the Home Department at a meeting held here under the chairmanship of MLC, Surinder Choudhary.

Legislators, Showkat Hussain Ganai, Thakur Balbir Singh, S Charanjeet Singh and Firdous Ahmed Tak, Principal Secretary Home Department, R K Goyal, Special DGP Hqs, V K Singh, ADGP (AP), A K Choudhary, ADGP (Security), Munir Khan, IG Headquarters, Anand Jain, Special Secretary

Legislative Council, Mohammad Ashraf Wani and other senior officers of Police and Council Secretariat attended the meeting.

The issues which were prominently figured in today's meeting included, transfer policy for SPOs, drivers, hike of their wages, improving other facilities so that they can perform their duties more efficiently. The Committee opined that the SPOs and drivers are performing their security related duties in tough conditions and they deserve some encouragement by way of providing them suitable monitoring benefits,

See Council...Pg 02

POLICE ACTION ON TEACHERS DURING PROTEST SHAMEFUL: QAYOOM WANI

'Ignoring contingent paid employees in SRO 520 totally unjust'

Srinagar, May 15 (KNS): Senior JCC Leader and President Employees Joint Action committee, Chairman JKTF Abdul Qayoom Wani condemned the use of force on peaceful demonstration of teachers at Partap Park Srinagar.

In a statement issued to KNS, Wani said that the builders of nation deserve respect and honor at all situations but the way police used lathicharge, water canning, excessive use of force on builders of nation is totally unacceptable. He urged upon the administration for immediate enquiry into the incident so that such type of inhuman

See Qayoom...Pg 02

Improve performance, show visible change on ground: Veeri to RDD Officials

Srinagar, May 15: Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Abdul Rehman Veeri has said that various project and programme being implemented by Rural Development Department in the state needs to be executed efficiently so that benefits reach the common masses. He said that every officer associated with RDD is responsible and accountable for the task assigned to them and are supposed to bring positive change on the ground by putting in their dedicated efforts.



The Minister was speaking while chairing a meeting to review the progress under schemes of National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) including UMEED and Hi-

mayat. The meeting also discussed the performance under Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) in Kashmir division. Secretary RDD Sheetal

Nanda, Chief Executive Officer IWMP Farooq Ahmad, Mission Director JKSRML Javed Bakshi, Chief Operating Officer Himayat Kapil

See Veeri...Pg 02

2 years on: ANANTNAG PARLIAMENT SEAT STILL VACANT

Political leaders on run in South Kashmir

Srinagar, May, 15, CNS: It has been over two years, Anantnag Parliament seat is still lying vacant. Not a single political party or any leader is willing to approach people or organize any rally in any part of South Kashmir's four districts-Pulwama, Shopian, Kulgam and Anantnag.

Once a bastion of ruling People's Democratic Party, South Kashmir is now hub of militancy where people mostly youth are showing greater inclination towards militancy. The gunfights, killings, stone-pleting, clashes and protests have almost blocked the entry of politician who fears to tread into Southern parts of Kashmir.

Anantnag Assembly seat had fallen vacant with the

See Anantnag...Pg 02

Sat Sharma for making use of cost-effective techniques in constructions

SRINAGAR, MAY 15- The Minister for Housing and Urban Development, Mr. Sat Paul Sharma today directed the officers to incorporate latest trends in architecture for cost effective constructions of government and related buildings in the state.

The Minister was addressing officers during a review meeting of the J&K architect organization and building centres here today. It was attended by the Chief Architect and Director Building Centre J&K, Mr. V. K. Panth



and other senior officers. The Minister called for using the innovative and cost-effective techniques in constructions to make housing facilities affordable

See Sharma...Pg 02

JK HCBA CONDEMNS BUKHARI'S ARREST

Describes arrest as assault on judiciary, lawyers

Srinagar, May 15 (KNS): J&K High Court Bar Association Srinagar, condemns the unwarranted and illegal arrest of Advocate Shabir Ahmad Bukhari, member lawyer of the Bar Association by the State Police authorities and describes the arrest of the Ld. Advocate assault on the judiciary and lawyers.

A General Body meeting of the Bar Association was held at High Court complex, wherein the lawyers expressed deep concern on the arrest of said advocate and demanded his immediate release. Taking serious note of the illegal arrest of Shabir Ahmad Bukhari, the members of the Bar Association decided to abstain from appearing before the

See HCBA...Pg 02

'Increasing menace of beggars in Srinagar city worry residents, tourists'

Police completely turned a blind eye to the matter

Srinagar, May 15 (KNS): In the absence of strong laws, begging of non- Locals has taken alarming dimensions in the Srinagar city, with the women and children as young as six-year-olds in shabby conditions roaming the market places and seeking alms.

It has also been seen that the increasing menace of beggars is also worrying the hundreds of tourists visiting the valley daily. "Instead of being welcomed by the authorities of J&K Tourism or Tourism Development Corporation (JKTDC) the visitors after entering into the city here are welcomed by scores of non State Subject beggars who mostly include children and women," one of the senior resi-



dents of Rajbagh said.

He said that most of time the situation turns ugly when these beggars force the

See Beggars...Pg 02

School Timing Changed

Srinagar, May 15 (KNB): The school education department has once again ordered change in school timings in Kashmir province. Pertinently, as per an order issued by secretary school education department, timings for all government and recognized private schools in Kashmir division and winter zone of Jammu will be from 09 am to 3 pm "with immediate effect."

"Heads of the schools of government as well as private

See School...Pg 02

JRL calls for Lalchowk Chalo on PM Modi's Kashmir visit

To form six member committee to chalk out mechanism for future strategies

Srinagar, May 15 (KNS): The Joint Resistance leadership (JRL) comprising of Syed Ali Geelani, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Muhammad Yasin Malik on Monday called Lalchowk Chalo on Saturday May 19 against the proposed visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and dared the Modi government to lift ban on the political activities of pro-freedom leaders.

In an extraordinary meeting the leaders strongly con-



demned the atrocities committed against people throughout the Kashmir," the JRL said and added that proposed

visit of Indian premier is aimed at to hoodwink the opinion of international community.

See JRL...Pg 02

'Despite spending crores over the years, Govt fails to restore pristine glory of Dal lake'

No visible improvement in cleaning, dredging, dewatering of lake

Srinagar, May 15 (KNS): Despite the government having spent more than Rs 10 crore for dredging, cleaning, dewatering, Dal Lake, the departments concerned have failed to restore pristine glory of the lake.

Official sources told Kashmir News Service (KNS) that above Rs 10 crore have been spent on cleaning, dredging and dewatering of Dal from 2015. Despite that the condition of the famed Dal Lake



has deteriorated over the years. Giving details sources said

that an amount of Rs 4.06

See Dal...Pg 02

Written test for General Teacher posts postponed to May 27

Srinagar, May 15 (KNB): Secretary J&K Services Selection Board today informed that the written test for the posts of General Teacher, earlier scheduled for May 19, is postponed to May 27, 2018.

"Objective type written test for General Teacher posts for advertisement number 06/2017/02, 06/2017/06, 06/2017/07 and 06/2017/10 is here postponed and

See Test...Pg 02

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MEHBOOBA

The Chief Minister also directed immediate operationalisation of Radpora stadium and identifying a patch of land at Iddgah for establishing a children's park there. She also directed completion of heritage gate by Tourism Department at Iddgah for which she asked the IGP Kashmir zone to sort out issues with CRPF. She also asked the Health Department to explore the possibility of shifting the shopkeepers at Gousia hospital to a nearby complex and use that space for hospital activities.

The meeting was informed that five bridges are being commissioned in the city soon besides two each schemes under CRF and NABARD. Also an expert team from New Delhi is coming to Srinagar to survey the need for establishment of grade separators at various spots in the city to arrest the traffic congestion.

Besides, the meeting was informed that Cluster University, Srinagar and SPS Library complex at M A Road are almost ready for operationalization and two colleges at Zakura and Bagh 1 Dilawar Khan would be inaugurated by year end. Besides work on additional blocks at LD Hospital is on and a project for Rs. 19 crore has been projected for compensating the relocation of shopkeepers coming in the construction of Mini Secretariat, Batmalo.

The Chief Minister directed to look into the causes of cost escalation of projects and check this unhealthy trend so that projects are not left midway for paucity of funds.

The meeting was also informed that projects worth Rs. 65 crore are under execution in Sports and other youth activities in the district.

The meeting was informed that to tide over the problem of disruption in power supply the capacity of grid stations is being enhanced besides commissioning some new grid stations. Alastain Grid station, the meeting was informed, is expected to be commissioned by October this year along the commissioning of Srinagar-Kargil-Leh transmission line. Also work on grid stations at Bagh 1 Ali Mardan Khan and Tengpora is going to be started shortly.

Also, the meeting was informed, the existing grid stations in the Srinagar city would be expanded in capacity by addition of more transformers to tide over the problem of frequent power cuts, low voltage and other issues. These measures on completion are expected to give major relief to people in coming winter from power disruptions.

Mehbooba Mufti asked the Chief Secretary to monitor the pace of work and capacity enhancement on these grid stations regularly so that these are operationalized before the onset of winter this year. She also directed the Divisional Kashmir, Kashmir to sort out the issues of land acquisition coming in the way of construction of some of these grid stations.

Later, the board approved an enhanced outlay of Rs. 149.54 crore for the district for 2018-19.

Chief Secretary, B B Vyas; Financial Commissioner, Housing & Urban Development Department, K B Aggarwal; administrative secretaries of all the Departments; Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Baseer Ahmad Khan; IGP Kashmir zone, S P Pani; heads of all the Departments; officers of Divisional and District administration were present in the meeting.

DIRECTOR

Mr Muneer-ul-Islam.

Thanking Mr Kainthola for sending his faculty all the way from Pune every time as also for his personal attention to the initiative to impart training to JK youth, the Chief Minister evinced keen interest in having a Regional Centre of FTII in J&K given the huge interest of local youth in Filmmaking and Television Production. She said the State Government will take up the matter regarding setting up of FTII Regional Centre in J&K with the Union Minister for Information & Broadcasting.

The Chief Minister said such training programmes would not only help the State groom professionals in the field of TV Production and Filmmaking, but also open up vast career opportunities for the local youth in the related field.

Mr Kaintholabriefed the Chief Minister about the initiatives taken by FTII Pune in collaboration with Department of Information & Public Relations, J&K to organize a series of specialized training courses for media professionals in J&K to harness their creative talent.

Mr Kainthola informed the Chief Minister that he and his faculty are highly impressed with the enthusiasm and appetite for artistic skills among J&K's talented youth. He said the lack of proper training and exposure to latest technology and techniques in film and television production, is the only hindrance in harnessing the full potential of the State's youth. "It is with this objective that FTII Pune has embarked on a mission, in collaboration with Department of Information & Public Relations, to train as many youths from the State in specialized filmmaking courses," he said and added that as a part of SKIFT initiative FTII has already conducted four Certificate courses at Jammu and Srinagar including courses in Digital Filmmaking, Film Appreciation, Still Photography and Screenplay Writing.

He said in the next phase, FTII is going to organize specialized courses in Digital Cinematography, Digital Film Production, Acting, Digital Video Editing and Writing for TV Fiction. "While most of these courses will be conducted in Srinagar, Jammu and Ladakh, the course in Digital Video Editing would be conducted at FTII Pune campus for which selection of students from J&K would be made by DIPR-JK," he said and added that FTII Pune is ready to enter into an arrangement with the State's School Education Department through DIPR-JK to launch various courses in TV and Film production even at the school level.

TROOPER

the attack at Pazzalpora area of Bejhbhera in South Kashmir's Anantnag district.

A police official said that two cops received bullet injuries and were taken to nearby hospital for treatment. One of them died on way to hospital.

Reports said that shortly after the attack, area was cordoned off and a search operation was launched to nab the attackers.

COUNCIL

besides launching other welfare measures for them and their families.

The Committee sought details relating to the welfare schemes for the orphans, widows of police personnel, details

of Police Melas and revenue collected there from during the past five years and utilization of funds so collected from the events, details regarding mode of selection of awarding gallantry awards to the jawans, rehabilitation policy for drug addicts and measures taken to control the menace. The information was also sought with regard to the fabrication of police vehicles as Bullet Proof & criteria adopted thereof, details regarding purchase of uniforms, BP Jackets for police jawans, criterion for establishing new police stations at Leh & Kargil, position of manpower deployed with retired police officers and measures put in place to check road accidents, especially on National Highways across the State.

The Committee called for paying focused attention to improve the working conditions for the jawans, PSOs and drivers, besides appropriate measures to make the police force more professional and people friendly.

QAYOOM

acts may not occur in future. Wani said that to protect for rights is birth right of every person but use of force always proved counterproductive at every situation.

He showed sympathy with the injured teachers and prayed for their speedy recovery. Wani also hoped that the Minister for Education Chowdhary Zulfiqar Ali will keep up his commitment which Minister has made with the leaders of Teachers Forum in a broad based meeting on 12th May regarding delinking of SSA Salary from SSA to State sector to streamline the salary once for all.

EJAC President welcomed the committee and urged upon the members of the committee which has been constituted for resolving the SSA Salary issue to feel the pain of SSA teachers while submitting the report within a fixed period of time as directed by the Minister of Education during the meeting. Wani hailed the positive approach of Finance Minister Syed Mohd Altaf Bukhari regarding SSA Salary issue and hoped that he will keep up his word to redress this grave issue so that SSA teachers may get a sigh of relief. He said that leaders of Teachers Forum are minutely watching the progress after constituting the committee and will react at appropriate time if need arises.

Senior JCC leader asked the SSA teachers not to be panic and hope for the best as Teachers Forum will never compromise with the Honor, Dignity and rights of SSA teachers and history is witness when Teachers Forum burned all the boats to counter so called screening test drama which was aimed to humiliate and disrespect the teaching community but Teachers Forum succeeded in protecting the rights and honour of the teachers and enemies of teaching community and their puppets also realized the reality and power of Teachers Forum.

Wani condemned the step mother treatment towards contingent paid employees who are working on the meager amount during difficult situations and are still performing the watch and ward and sweeping in schools in absence of Chowkidars and sweepers.

He urged upon the Govt to include contingent paid employees in SRO 520 and provide them 50% quota from recent creation of twenty thousand watch and ward vacancies for schools. Wani termed the protest of contingent paid employees justified and EJAC assured them for their just cause and all EJAC leaders will participate in their protest on 16th May 2018.

VEERI

Sharma, Assistant Mission Director JKSRLM, Programme Officers IWMP of Kashmir Division and other concerned officers of Rural Development Department attended the meeting.

Director NRLM briefed the meeting about the progress made under the project UMEED and its success rate in the state. He informed that till now 26054 SHGs and 2218 Village Organizations (VOs) have been formed covering 240089 households and 24792 SHGs bank account opened.

He further said that several innovative measures have been initiated to ensure phase wise implementation of the Livelihood Mission UMEED to cover all the blocks.

Veeri while discussing the implementation of UMEED project asked for making it visible on ground by achieving given targets and to provide proper publicity for making people aware of its benefits.

He also sought the details of activities being carried out in the villages by the SHGs and block wise performance report. It was told that Rs 111 crore has been provided to the SHGs formed in the state as financial assistance.

Informing the Minister about another activity in rural areas, MD NRLM informed that around 206 Milk Collection centres have been opened which are fully managed by the local people.

The Minister asked for putting in a monitoring mechanism and taking measures to involve women/girls in the schemes or making them self-dependent.

Regarding progress under Himayat programme, Chief Operating Officer Himayat apprised the meeting about the target approved by MoRD for three years (2016-19) and achievements made in this regard so far. He said that 7 Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) have been sanctioned by JKSRLM and 1st installment has been released to them as per the guidelines of DDU-GKY, MoRDGoI.

Covering a target of 20,701 candidates to be trained and provided employment by these 7 PIAs in different trades. As on date, 14 training centres are functional with a total training capacity of 2,997 and presently 2393 are undergoing skill training in different trades in different cities of the country.

He said that 10 more centres will be made functional by May 31, 2018 by increasing the capacity of 2500 candidates. Within next three months, the target of 12000 candidates will be hopefully achieved, he added.

While asking for strict monitoring of this ambitious programme, the Minister directed for removing working difficulties and making it a successful programme by skilling the youth for getting employment.

Veeri asked for recruiting staff at district level for its effective implementation. "Desired results only be achieved if we dedicate ourselves for implementation of this programme on ground followed by positive results", he added.

The meeting also reviewed the performance under IWMP in Kashmir division and discussed the road map to complete the projects and utilize the funds allocated by GoI.

ANANTNAG

death of Mufti Muhammad Sayeed in January 2016. His

daughter Mehbooba Mufti, who had succeeded him as chief minister, won that election in June. And as mandated by law, she quit her Anantnag Lok Sabha seat. Which meant another bye-election was due.

The polling was scheduled on April 12, 2017, three days after the bye-election to the Srinagar Lok Sabha seat. But due to protests, killings and lower turnout in Srinagar, the Election Commission cancelled the bye-poll and till date the Commission as well as regional political parties are silent over the issue.

Big political stalwarts from South Kashmir including Muhammad Yousuf Tarigami, Haseeb Drabu, Farooq Andrabi, Abdul Rahim Rather, Abdul Rehman Veeri, Zahoor Mir, Ajaz Mir, Mushtaq Shah, Muhammad Yousuf Bhat, Muhammad Khalil Bandh, Abdul Majeed Paddar, and Abdul Majid Larmi are allegedly all in hibernation waiting for situation to change.

"How situation will change when government is not addressing the unrest politically," questions senior legislator from Kulgam Muhammad Yousuf Tarigami. He adds: "There is no response from the current government to the demands of people. The unrest is stopping political parties and leaders to approach people and organize rallies. This government has been doing nothing on political front," Tarigami asserts.

Barring a few political meetings inside fortified rooms, no political leader in South Kashmir has organized any rally or road show since July 8, 2016-the day when charismatic Hizb Commander Burhan Wani was killed in Bimbhora village of South Kashmir's Anantnag district. Post Burhan episode, there were incidents when the houses of some political leaders were attacked. Recently, a petrol bomb was hurled on the house of PDP legislator from Shopian, Advocate Muhammad Yousuf Bhat.

Bhat refused to comment when asked why he is unable to hold political rallies in his home constituency.

SHARMA

for all. He said the technological interventions in building constructions would also address various other issues of the State since it comes under the high seismic zone area.

Mr. Sat Sharma asked the officers of the to get material and expertise from the building centres while undertaking construction of various developmental works and related infra. He said it will ensure the self-sustainability of these centres besides actively involving them in various developmental activities.

He asked the officers to also involve the building centres while implementing various Government schemes like Housing for All (HAL), Construction of Individual Household Latrines and also in Swach Bharat Abhiyan. He said there should be formal directions for both the Municipal Corporations as well as Urban Local Bodies to procure the material prepared by the Building Centers for construction of lanes, drains and other related activities.

Mr. Sat Paul Sharma said that there should be formal directions to different departments to take the architectural consultancy from the architect organization while undertaking constructions of different government buildings and projects. He said that the same would ensure that the component of funds spent on engaging external consultants is saved and would also make the working and activity organization broader based and vibrant.

The Minister also revived the projects undertaken by both the all organizations in Jammu and Srinagar and directed for ensuring early completion of these.

The meeting was also given detailed power point presentation about the projects and the type of construction material being constructed by the building centre.

HCBA

Courts including the High Court in protest against the arrest of the advocate Shabir Ahmad Bukhari. Accordingly the work remained suspended by the members in the High Court as well as in the Courts subordinate to it at Moominabad. Besides the members of District Bar Association Budgam supported the call of the High Court Bar Association Srinagar.

Addressing the general body meeting the general secretary of the Bar Association G. N. Shaheen informed the members that Advocate Shabir Ahmad Bukhari is reported to have been called on telephone by IGP Kashmir, to present himself before him by 2:00 p.m. on Saturday the 12th of May, 2018. The Ld. Advocate voluntarily presented himself before the police authorities and since then his whereabouts were not known and was missing in custody, which has forced the lawyers to go for the protest strike demanding immediate release of the Ld. Advocate. The said advocate is a human rights defender and his arrest seems an interruption in due discharge of the professional duties, besides the assault on freedom of judiciary.

The Bar Association demands immediate and safe release of the Ld. Advocate Shabir Ahmad Bukhari forthwith and in case the authorities do not respond, the Bar Association will be forced to take stringent steps at the risk and cost of the State authorities.

The Bar Association also condemns the repeated assaults and aggression on the students of Islamic University of Science and Technology Awantipora. It is worth to mention that in the last one month the Indian forces entered the campus forth time yesterday without any reasonable cause and have showered teargas shells and fired bullets in the campus resulting injuries of number of students and the students were carnaged till 11:00 p.m. in the evening in the campus, which caused apprehension among the parents as well as the teaching staff in the campus. The Bar Association feels the repeated armed assaults by the armed forces security forces IUST campus an aggression on academic institutions to destroy the peaceful atmosphere in the campus and subvert the intellectual and academic pursuits carried out by the students. The Bar Association while condemning the armed actions by the Indian Security Forces inside the campus demands that such aggression be stopped forthwith and the campus be allowed to carry out its day to day functions without any interruption by the security forces.

BEGGARS

tourists and residents to pay money to them and also demand eatables from them when they make purchasing from local shops. "The child beggars follow the passengers' vehicles when they reach at crossing points and stop them and demand money," he maintained.

The visiting tourists here are so scared of these beggars that they hesitate to eat anything in their presence as they

gheero them and do not allow them to purchase anything before paying them money or something to eat.

The authorities watch this like mute spectators without bothering about the discomfort of the people who feel humiliated due to the actions of the beggars who mostly are from Rajasthan and have become a problem for the residents and tourists.

The alarming thing is that the small children who should have been in school as it was the age of their schooling are being used for begging either by their parents or by any agency which has made the begging as a means of earning money. The authorities instead of maintaining constant check on the same are not bothered about it.

One of the woman beggars at Lalchowk told this KNS reporter that she belongs to Rajasthan and they chose begging to earn their livelihood. She said ten to 15 children are also begging and did not want to go school for education.

These beggars are residing in temporary sheds raised on the different areas of the city with their family members and all of them are non residents of the State.

Lalchowk, Batamallo, Residency road, M. A road, Hayderpora and bus stops are some of the busy areas where the presence of beggars is creating problems for people. Though the J&K Prevention of Beggary Act, 1960, makes it a criminal offence to beg and empowers the police to arrest a person if found begging, the police however has completely turned a blind eye to the matter.

SCHOOL

educational institutions shall ensure that the school timings are followed in letter and spirit," the order reads.

JRL

According to a statement issued to KNS, blaming Indian forces for turning whole state into a battle field, the leadership said that innocent people are detained on frivolous charges and are detained in different jails while as youth are being pushed to the wall, adding, such undemocratic and inhuman situation can't be tolerated for long.

The resistance leadership is denied the political space and genuine voices strangled and added that those detained are subjected to torture and inhuman behavior, statement said.

Joint Resistance Leadership (JRL) said that though Indian state and its abettors in Jammu Kashmir have put almost all the leadership either in jails or under house arrest, but despite these oppressive tactics and use of police and military might, JRL will stage a peaceful protest on May 19. JRL said that forcing silence of a graveyard by using military might and designating it as peace can only be termed as foolishness and if Indian rulers and their abettors really believe in democracy and freedom of speech, they should stop their oppressive tactics and allow JRL to hold this peaceful protest.

JRL leaders said a fascist government in power, is trying to paint their wrong doings and killings and arranging these patch works and visits of their masters and added it is their ploy to give wrong impression of brutal pacification of Kashmir as peace and return of normalcy.

JRL leaders said that Lal Chowk Chalo has been called to demonstrate before the whole world what people of Kashmir stand for. "If Indian rulers assume that oppression unleashed by their army and forces has crushed resistance in Kashmir, then they should find some courage to lift ban on political activities of the resistance camp and allow such programs," JRL said in a statement.

"India and its stooges only know to suppress people's voices under the pretext of so-called democracy and normalcy which is highly condemnable," it added.

Lalchowk Chalo will highlight the miseries and hardships faced by the people of Kashmir at the hands of oppressive forces, it will also highlight the reign of terror unleashed by Indian occupational forces and it will also be a show of solidarity with the people of south Kashmir where Indian army, forces and police have let loose an ugly phase of horror.

DAL

crore was spent on cleaning, dredging and dewatering of Dal during 2015-16 year. Rs 3.54 crore was utilized in 2016-17 and Rs 2.77 was utilized during 2017-18."

Sources said that the government of India has also released Rs 273.85 crore for conservation of Dal and Nigeen Lake under NLCP. "Out of total package of Rs 356.30 crore, Rs 83.18 crores have been released under PMDP as well," sources maintained.

However sources told KNS that the condition of the Dal lake day in and day out is deteriorating. "A new lake could have been created by the money spent on the lake over the years," an official said. "There seems no accountability whether there has been any improvement in the lake despite spending crores."

Sources said that it has been seen that Lakes and Water Development Authority is only carrying out de-weeding around the SKICC as the centre has a distinction of hosting important functions both government as well as private. "Government has also failed to complete the rehabilitation process within a time frame work and all these projects have missed the deadlines," sources said.

"Spending such a huge amount and no visible change in the condition of the Dal raises serious questions on the working of officials," said Habibullah, a resident of Shalimar.

It is to mention here that a major project 'National Lake Conservation Programme' was started in 2005 costing Rs 298.76 crore. Under the 'Prime Minister's Reconstruction Programme' (PMRP) costing Rs 356 crore, over Rs 100 crores have been released so far. It was for acquisition of land and structures in Dal and Nigeen lake.

The third project was for the rehabilitation of the families dislocated from Dal and Nigeen lakes. The project at a cost of Rs 416 crore for development of site at Rakh-I-Arth for preparation of site and provision for infrastructure like road, water supply, electricity, drainage, and sewerage and other community facilities and providing house units to the dwellers under State plan and Central assistance 315.90 crore and 90.92 crore respectively.

TEST

now shall be conducted on May 27 (Sunday)," the Secretary said. "Time of examination of the written test shall now be as 12 pm to 2 pm and reporting time at test venue shall now be 11 am," he added. However, the Secretary said that admit cards already downloaded by the candidates would be valid for May 27 written test.

NDMA reviews preparedness of States to deal with thunderstorms and lightning

New Delhi, May 15: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) reviewed the situation in the wake of the thunderstorms, lightning and squall that recently hit various parts of the country, for better early warning and preparedness. In a video conference held with various stakeholders yesterday, the Authority enquired about the timeliness and adequacy of early warning messages issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD). States expressed satisfaction over the accuracy of these messages and informed that the timely warning enabled them to put preparedness measures in place, and save many lives.

Assessing the damage and destruction caused by the recent incidents, the meeting also discussed ways to reduce the impact of such events in future. NDMA also asked the States to share a report on the relief measures taken by them. IMD now shares localised and specific warnings with the States, which are widely disseminated using various modes of communication such as mass SMSes, radio, Television and social media. Some State governments have been able to send out these warnings right up to the Panchayat levels by leveraging the mobile numbers available in voter databases. Simple Do's and Don'ts for thun-

derstorms and lightning are also widely circulated. NDMA has also shared short audio-video awareness generation material with States. These Do's and Don'ts as well as the videos have been translated by the States into their local languages and are being used for creating greater public awareness. Representatives of Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Jharkhand, Tripura, Chandigarh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Delhi and West Bengal attended the meeting. Relief Commissioners of Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal, - the states which

reported the maximum damage during the lightning strikes and thunderstorms on Sunday, 13th May participated in the meeting through videoconferencing. Representatives from Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), IMD, Central Water Commission (CWC) and Doordarshan were also present. This is the third meeting conducted by NDMA for management of thunderstorms, lightning and squall. Earlier, two meetings were held on May 11, 2018 and May 4, 2018, which has resulted in improvement of early warning and preparedness measures.

Atal Pension Yojana subscribers base crosses 1 crore mark on completion of 3 years of launch of the Scheme

New Delhi, May 15: Atal Pension Yojana (APY) Scheme's subscriber base crossed 1 Crore on completion of 3 years of the Scheme launch. APY was launched by the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi at a function in Kolkata on 9th May, 2015 and the current number of subscribers stands at 1.10 Crore. Atal Pension Yojana (APY), a guaranteed Pension Scheme for citizens of India announced by the Government of India, is focused on the unorganised sector workers which constitute more than 85% of workforce. Under the APY, the guaranteed minimum pension of Rs. 1,000/- or 2,000/- or 3,000/- or 4,000/- or 5,000/- per month will be given at the age of 60 years depending on the contributions by the subscribers. The Spouse of the Subscriber is also eligible for pension and the nominee would be receiving the accumulated pension

wealth. To commemorate the 3 years of completion of the Scheme and its launch, Pension Fund Regulatory Development Authority (PFRDA) in coordination with the Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, Government of India organised a massive outreach campaign "APY Formation Day" across the country to enhance the enrolments in APY by the banks and Department of Posts. The subscriber base in APY has grown manifold to reach the current position and APY is offered by all the banks and post offices. Across the country, 1.60 lacs branches which include 20 thousand post offices offer the services of opening APY account for their customers. Out of this branch network, nearly 90% of the branches have mobilised one or more APY account in the last 3 years. Till date Rs. 3950 crores of contribution

Rs 6 cr Water Supply Scheme coming up at Narbal: Sham Choudhary

Minister asks PHE authorities to ensure regular water supply during Ramadhan

SRINAGAR, MAY 15: Minister for PHE, Irrigation and Flood Control, Sham Lal Choudhary today directed the PHE authorities for ensuring adequate supply of potable water to people of the State during the Holy Month of Ramadhan.

The Minister passed these directions during the inspection of Water Supply Schemes (WSS) of Beerwah Constituency. During the visit, he inspected Water Supply Schemes of Gagerpora and Magam and took stock of their functioning. Interacting with the people at Gagerpora Narbal, the Minister said that the Government is aware about the hardships being confronted to them on account of availability of potable water.

He said in order to meet requirement of water supply in the area, the government



is constructing Water Supply Scheme at Chinar Colony Kawoosa at a cost of Rs 6.54 crore under NABARD, adding that work on the scheme would be started soon. He said that with the completion of the scheme over 12000 souls of 4 villages of the area get benefited directly besides water supply in the other villages of the area would also be augmented.

Directing the concerned for starting the work on the scheme, the Minister set 4-month target to complete

the Scheme. He also asked the concerned to provide water supply to people of area till the scheme is completed.

Sham Choudhary said that more WSS and Filtration plants would be installed and defunct WSS would be made functional to ensure water supply in the area.

The Minister was informed that the 7 schemes worth Rs 22.33 crore and 4 schemes at an estimated cost of Rs 12.79 crore have been taken up under Centrally Sponsored

Scheme and District Sector on which Rs. 9.62 crore and 5.10 crore stands expended respectively. With the completion of these schemes, over 30,000 souls of the area get benefited, the Minister was informed.

The Minister was further informed that the work on 6 irrigation schemes at an estimated cost of Rs 86.75 crore has been taken up in the area, on which Rs. 36.58 crore have been expended up to March this year.

Earlier, giving brief account of PHE schemes in District Budgam, the Minister was informed that out of 26 and 33 on-going Water Supply Schemes under District sector and NRDWP respectively in district, 5 have been completed last year and 8 more schemes are expected to be completed during this fiscal.

Shri J P Nadda inaugurates two-day risk communication workshop

New Delhi, May 15: Shri J P Nadda, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare inaugurated a two-day workshop on 'Risk Communication during Public Health Emergencies' at Shimla. During his inaugural address, Shri Nadda urged the public health functionaries for keeping their communication simple and effective during the delivery of healthcare services. Shri Vipin Parmar, Health Minister, Himachal Pradesh, Shri Vineet Chawdhary, Chief Secretary, Himachal Pradesh, Dr. Promila Gupta, DGHS, Dr. Pauline Harvey, Team Lead-NPSP, WHO Country Office and Shri Prabodh Saxena, Principle Secretary (Health), Himachal Pradesh were also present at the inaugural function.

Addressing the participants, Shri Nadda said that prevention and control of

disease outbreaks or spread of Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) in the country need multi-sector approach. "It encompasses inter-sectoral cooperation and co-ordination between various ministries. He added that during public health threats mis-communication or mis-interpretation of public messages can have significant negative impact on preventive and control strategies. "It is important to identify and quantify the risk, possible channels spread, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for prevention, control and treatment," the Health Minister said.

Laying stress on preparedness, Shri Nadda said that many diseases have the risk of spreading from one state to another. "Health Ministry has been regularly interacting with the States for monitoring

and reviewing their preparedness to manage vector borne diseases in the country in terms of availability of diagnostic kits, drugs, testing labs, manpower funds and awareness activities," Shri Nadda added.

Shri Nadda assured the participants for implementing the protocols and SOPs emerging from the workshop and also unveiled a 'Communicable Disease Alert on Scrub Typhus' and a draft of strategic guidance on "Risk Communication during Public Health Emergencies".

Shri Vipin Parmar, Health Minister, Himachal Pradesh described the workshop as an important effort and said that the findings from the workshop will prove to be beneficial for not only the State but for the entire country. He further expressed his commitment towards strengthening

health services in the State.

More than 100 people from various government department participated in the two day capacity building workshop which was jointly organized by National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Delhi and World Health Organization. The main objectives were to enhance the capacity of key International Health Regulation (2005) and emergency stakeholders in responding effectively to urgent communication during acute public health events through an application of evidence-based principles in the country, to draw attention to the systemic capacities and planning needs to enable effective risk communication during emergencies, using an all-hazard approach and to share experiences of risk communication during recent public health events

Basharat Bukhari reviews progress on Railway, Highway projects

Directs for expediting work on highway expansion, Katra-Banihal railway line

RAMBAN, MAY 15: Minister for Horticulture, Law, Justice & Parliamentary Affairs, Syed Basharat Ahmed Bukhari, today convened a meeting to review the progress of ongoing prestigious projects being executed by Northern Railways and National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).

Vice-Chairman Advisory Board for Development of Gujjars & Bakrawals Gulzar Ahmed Khatana, Lawmakers Aijaz Ahmed Khan, Vikar Rasool Wani, Neelam Kumar Langleh, Sham Lal Bhagat, District Development Commissioner Ramban Tariq Hussain Ganai besides representatives of Northern Railways, NHAI and executing agencies were present in the meeting.

The meeting took stock of four-laning of Srinagar-Jammu National Highway from Nashri to Jawahar tunnel and Katra-Banihal railway line project and also discussed issues

hampering the pace of these prestigious projects.

The Minister directed both the authorities to accord priority to locals while employing people on the projects, especially with regards to skilled manpower. He also asked the authorities to ensure that the salaries being paid to local skilled manpower is at par with their counterparts in other parts of the country and remove discrepancies if any.

Taking a serious note of the concern raised by legislators regarding delays in clearance of compensation claims by the Railways, the Minister directed the Northern Railways Authorities to expedite the process and clear pending cases within a month's time. He also stressed upon authorities to expedite the rent claim cases for people who have been affected due to these projects.

Similar directions were passed



to NHAI to ensure no delays in clearing the compensation claim cases so that people do not suffer undue difficulties.

With regards to the natural water sources being adversely affected by ongoing development projects, Bukhari directed agencies to take up simultaneous restoration and preservation measures for these water sources. He also asked the agencies to take up remedial measures to ensure drinking water supply to left out areas affected due to drying of some water sources and

judiciously utilize Rs 3.89 crore funds released for the purpose. Additional directions were passed to Railway authorities to allow access to PHE Department to tap water from the mountain steam found at Tatihal while dredging and excavation work for tunnel there within two days time.

Railways Authorities were also directed to take up regular maintenance and upkeep of roads being used by them as logistic lines, especially the Banihal - Bankoot - Tatihal stretch and approach roads.

Further, Railways were directed to release funds for construction of approach road from village Kaskoot to Railway Station so that works can be taken up for the same.

The Minister directed the concerned to expedite the land acquiring process for highway expansion works and transfer the same to NHAI and directed the executing agencies to ensure the upkeep of Banihal-Ramban and Ramban-Nashri stretches especially in the light of forthcoming Amarnath Yatra.

He also asked them to undertake anti-pollution for major towns along the highway stretch including Banihal, Ramsoo and Ramban.

Bukhari also directed the Railways and NHAI to take up CSR works in consultation with local legislators. He asked both the agencies to submit a detailed report for works completed, being taken up and proposed under CSR initiative.

Sunil for early completion of 132 KV Ramban-Kishtwar Transmission Line



SRINAGAR, MAY 15: The Minister for Power, Mr. Sunil Sharma today directed the officers to ensure that the 132KV/D/C Ramban-Khilani-Kishtwar Transmission Line is completed by sorting out the issues, if any, so that the transmission capacity gets a boost and people of Kishtwar and adjacent areas get adequate supply of electric power.

The Minister was addressing the officers during a review meeting convened to discuss the status of this prestigious project meant to augment power supply in the Kishtwar region. Commissioner Secretary PDD, Mr. Hirdesh Kumar, Commissioner Secretary Law, Mr. Abdul Majid Bhat, Development Commissioner Power and senior officers were present.

The Minister asked the officers to work out a viable mechanism to ensure that the issues concerned are sorted out as early as possible so that the work can be started on the prestigious transmission line which would go a long way in increasing the transmission capacities and capabilities of the department and would cater to large chunk of population of the Chenab region. He said that they should hold regular meetings with the implementing agency as well so in order to amicably solve the pending issues if any and re-start the work on the same.

Mr. Sunil while enumerating the various initiatives being undertaken by the Central government for upgrading and augmenting the electric infra in the state said that the major chunk of the funds under the Prime Minister's Development Package has been earmarked for the power sector and we have to ensure that they are spent in a judicious manner so that the people of the state get 24x7 power which would go in consonance with the Prime Minister's initiative of providing round the clock electric supply. He said that the officers should also ensure that the various initiatives being undertaken are completed within the stipulated time frames so that the cost escalation of the scheme is checked and the targeted populace get the requisite benefits.

The meeting was informed that the work was initially allotted to M/s KEC International Limited on turnkey basis at the total contract value of Rs. 35.25 crore for the entire scope of the work and it was due to certain issues like clearances from different authorities, natural calamities and other related things that the project got delayed.

It was further giving out that the main components of the transmission line or supply of tower material and accessories, supply line material and accessories, costing of foundations, erection of tower superstructures, stringing of transmission line, providing of protections to tower footings.

DDB approves Rs 168.30 cr annual plan for Doda district

Sajjad Lone calls for strengthening services, removal of bottlenecks hindering vital projects

JAMMU, MAY 15: The District Development Board (DDB) today approved Rs 168.30 cr annual plan for Doda district at its meeting held under the chairmanship of Minister for Social Welfare, Science & Technology and ARI & Training, Sajjad Lone here at convection center.

The DDB meeting was attended by Minister of State for Education, and Tourism, Shakti Raj Parihar, Vice Chairperson J&K State Advisory Board for Development of Kissan Daljit Singh, Vice Chairperson for J&K State Advisory Board for Pahari Speaking People Kuldeep Raj Gupta, Vice Chairperson for J&K State Advisory Board for Development of SC Bhusan Lal Dogra, Vice Chairman, J&K State Adv. Board for Welfare & Dev. of OBCs Rashpal Verma, Legislators G. M. Sauroori, Daleep Singh, Neelam Kumar Langleh, Naresh Kumar Gupta, Sham Lal Bhagat and Heads of various Depart-

ments and the district administration team led by Deputy Commissioner.

Speaking at the meeting, Sajjad Lone called for laying special focus on core sectors and constant perusal for completing the procedural formalities resulting in early start of proposed projects. He asked the district administration to furnish a detailed report about the projects pending for want of different formalities including forest clearance so as to seek instant solution from the concerned quarters. He underlined the need for systematic removal of bottlenecks hindering vital projects and strengthening service sector to provide sustained benefits to the people.

Expressing concern and displeasure over shortage of medical staff in the health institutions in the district, the Minister directed the district administration to approach the concerned authorities to take immediate



steps in this regard.

He directed health department to sort the issue at an earliest and express serious concern over the failure of health department to appoint different streams of doctors as per the commitment made in the last meeting.

"We will approach with a detailed memo to seek prompt resolution of issues

and demands concerning each department" the Minister asserted.

Meanwhile, projecting the issues of their respective constituencies, the legislators sought upgrading of schools, health institutions, new connectivity and maintenance of existing PMGSY roads, promotion of agriculture and allied sectors, improvement

of power scenario, augmentation of drinking and irrigation water facilities, creation of tourism infrastructure at potential places and the issues related to healthcare and education.

Earlier, giving a resume of achievements recorded under past financial year plan, the Deputy Commissioner said that against available

funds to the tune of Rs 14611.052 Lakh, an expenditure of Rs. 13985.174 Lakh was made in the last fiscal thus registering an achievement of about 96%.

Listing achievements under flagship schemes, the DC said against 64808 households identified under baseline survey 2012, around 56086 IHHL units (85%) have been constructed under SBM till date, while the District is set to achieve the ODF status by 15th July 2018. Three blocks and 120 panchayats have been already declared as ODF, he informed. He added that around 1100 works and 4.29 lakh mandays were generated under MGNREGA against an expenditure of Rs 111.25 crore till March end last.

He also gave detailed overview of completed and ongoing roads, bridges, schools buildings under PMGSY, R&B, Rural Development and Education sector Schemes.

DAILY Editorial Time and Us SRINAGAR J&K

Collective assertion — On Justice Joseph's elevation

It may no longer be possible for the Union government to delay Justice K.M. Joseph's elevation to the Supreme Court. The five-member collegium has unanimously agreed, in principle, to reiterate its recommendation to appoint the Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court as a judge of the Supreme Court. When reiterated unanimously, the Centre is bound to act on the collegium resolution, going by the law laid down by the Supreme Court in the Third Judges Case of 1998. The Centre, which denies that its objection had anything to do with Justice Joseph's decision in 2016 to quash the imposition of President's Rule in Uttarakhand, ought not to delay his appointment once the reiteration is formally made. However, it is puzzling that the collegium didn't send its reiteration to the Centre immediately. It has decided that his name would be part of the next set of recommendations, which would include proposals to elevate the Chief Justices of some more high courts. One explanation for this could be that the collegium wants to address the concern the Centre has indirectly raised about the need for fair representation to all high courts. While objecting to Justice Joseph's appointment on the ground that he was not senior enough, the Centre spoke about 'excessive representation' that a relatively 'small' high court (the Kerala High Court) may get after his appointment.

While the unanimous reiteration may end the current controversy, there is a larger issue here: the propriety of the Centre holding back one or two names from a list of recommendations and clearing the rest. Justice Joseph's name was sent along with that of senior advocate Indu Malhotra in January, but the Centre took three months to act on it. It cleared her name alone, while seeking reconsideration of Justice Joseph's name. That it has a right to raise a particular judge's case is beyond question, but selectively approving some names from a batch of recommendations can make a difference to the seniority of the judges concerned — especially when seniority is the sole consideration for appointment of the Chief Justice as well as membership of the collegium. In a judge-recommended system of appointments, one that is peculiar to India, differences over particular candidates cannot be avoided, but it ought to be possible for the two sides to minimise these differences and act expeditiously. The onus is more on the government of the day to ensure it is not seen as blocking the appointment of anyone the judges themselves have found fit and deserving. It does not augur well for the institution if the present consultative process, admittedly not an ideal one for a diverse democracy, is seen to be vitiated by executive intransigence.

THE CHANGING TERMS OF ENDEARMENT

► Zoya Hasan

Uttar Pradesh's pivotal importance to Indian politics is hard to exaggerate. Anyone who wishes to rule India must control this State. The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP's) biggest win in 2014 came from U.P., which was instrumental in providing Narendra Modi with a clear majority in the Lok Sabha. The party won 73 (with its ally) of the State's 80 seats, while its nearest rivals, the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Congress, got only five and two seats, respectively. The BJP repeated this performance in the 2017 Assembly election, winning 325 seats (with its ally) in the 403-member State Assembly, which is about 80% of the seats. No party has ever registered such a colossal tally, not even Indira Gandhi, whose party, the Congress, had won 309 seats in the then 425-member Assembly in 1980.

An alienation But barely a year after its stunning victory the situation has changed significantly. The strongest sign of the changing public mood is the growing alienation of Dalits from the government. Even though many Dalits voted for the BJP in 2014, they feel excluded from access to power and the benefits it brings. Attacks on Dalits have not ceased even after the national furor over the Saharanpur violence in May 2017. A Dalit student of Allahabad University was lynched in February. Some of the BJP's Scheduled Caste MPs from U.P. wrote to the Prime Minister to express their anguish over these incidents. One of them accused the government of only paying lip service and not doing anything for the benefit of the community. This unusual development had occurred just days after the BJP lost in its bastions, Gorakhpur and Phulpur (which is part of Allahabad district), to the SP-Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) alliance in the by-elections pushing scores of Dalits towards the anti-BJP camp.

Elements of a strategy The growing conflict between Dalits and Hindutva must be seen in the context of the paradigm shift in U.P.'s politics which is increasingly defined in narrow majoritarian terms, even as the BJP is seeking to co-opt the oppressed groups within its electoral umbrella. Two key elements of the BJP's electoral strategy are inclusion/visibility of Dalits and exclusion/invisibility of Muslims. It has shown that it can win elections without Muslims even though they constitute a fifth of the State's population, which is larger than the population of several Muslim-majority countries. By contrast, it has made every effort to demonstrate its love for Dalits. But they are unhappy with the terms of endearment since they want greater Dalit representation to address their concerns regarding social exclusion, food preferences, education, employment, housing, and so on.

The BJP has consistently used religious polarisation to trump the caste divide in U.P., but it hasn't succeeded; in fact, the divide has been exacerbated by the cold caste and sub-caste calculations of its top leadership to undercut old forms of caste mobilisation. Moreover, the attempts to assimilate Dalits within the fold by invoking the legacy of B.R. Ambedkar or the symbolism of communal inter-dining is not enough



to cool tempers of Dalits who face discrimination and atrocities despite the stringent provisions of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. The instrumental use of both gestures is obvious to everyone; not surprisingly, these gestures have failed to quell the growing tide of discontent, with many Dalit voters losing patience with the ruling dispensation.

Elusive development Dalit inclusion will work when their core concerns are addressed and when there is overall development, which the State badly needs. Development and economic growth has, of course, been a constant leitmotif in the electoral campaigns of the BJP since 2014. But there is no evidence to show that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is the leader who can deliver development for the State. In fact, the very idea of development was sidelined by his controversial appointment. He was installed as Chief Minister to polarise public opinion on Hindu-Muslim lines, and not to promote integration through development. His elevation signalled a decisive shift from the dual strategy of combining Hindutva and development to a singular embrace of Hindutva which has been used as a weapon of mass mobilisation to offset the fissures of caste, class, language and culture. Asked about Opposition parties linking his speeches and work to Hindutva and not development, the Chief Minister replied that "Hindutva and development are complementary to each other... Those who are opposing Hindutva are in fact opposing development and Bharatiyata". In other words, even the optics of development and the claims of taking everyone along through development will be sacrificed at the altar of Hindu nationalism ahead of the 2019 election.

Going by the policy decisions of his government, the cow appears to be the fulcrum of the U.P. model. It took centre stage in the government's budget with a record ₹233 crore allotted for the welfare of cow and dairy development. In a similar vein, social sector spending has been reduced while religious tourism is being given a boost. Mr. Adityanath made a plethora of promises such as building houses, toilets, laying roads and providing 24-hour electricity supply. But these promises are unlikely to be fulfilled, which is causing restlessness even among people who voted to bring the BJP to power in 2017. This is evident from several events

in the past few months. In October 2017, sugarcane farmers burned their crop in front of the U.P. Assembly after the government increased the minimum support price by only ₹10; in January, farmers unhappy with the minimum support price for their potato harvest dumped the crop in front of the houses of VVIPs in Lucknow; and the much-hyped farm loan waiver turned into a farce as many of the beneficiaries received waivers of amounts as small as ₹1 to ₹500. The employment situation remains grim, as large-scale government recruitments — the major source of public employment in the State — are not regular and even previously conducted exams, for instance, for clearing the backlog in police jobs have been cancelled. An extravagant 'UP Investors Summit 2018' held in February to boost investment in the hope of creating employment cannot promote industrialisation and job creation unless the structural constraints of underdevelopment are removed.

Closing the gap What seems to be working for the BJP is the disarray in the Opposition camp. However, this can change as political majorities are constituted and reconstituted in changing historical and political circumstances. Political majorities are contingent and do not last, at least in part because the Opposition parties make adjustments to capitalise on opportunities. The Mandal (caste) and Mandir (religion) interregnum of the early 1990s signified the arrival of identity politics, which unstaged religious politics that was catapulted by the Ayodhya movement to take centre stage. The ensuing upper caste-backward caste confrontation displaced the Congress from its position of dominance in U.P. and prevented the BJP from reinforcing its political clout despite unprecedented public support for Hindutva in north India for the first time since Independence. Twenty-five years later, in 2104, the BJP closed the gap between the economic and the political sphere with its mantra of development to secure a popular mandate. Currently, the Opposition is making tactical adjustments to counter the overarching narrative of Hindu nationalism. The by-election results demonstrate that if the two main Opposition parties combine, they can give the BJP a run for its money. If there is one State where Opposition unity can upset the BJP's plans for majority rule in 2019, it is U.P.

(Courtesy: The Hindu)

IN FACT, THE VERY IDEA OF DEVELOPMENT WAS SIDELINED BY HIS CONTROVERSIAL APPOINTMENT. HE WAS INSTALLED AS CHIEF MINISTER TO POLARISE PUBLIC OPINION ON HINDU-MUSLIM LINES, AND NOT TO PROMOTE INTEGRATION THROUGH DEVELOPMENT. HIS ELEVATION SIGNALLED A DECISIVE SHIFT FROM THE DUAL STRATEGY OF COMBINING HINDUTVA AND DEVELOPMENT TO A SINGULAR EMBRACE OF HINDUTVA WHICH HAS BEEN USED AS A WEAPON OF MASS MOBILISATION TO OFFSET THE FISSURES OF CASTE, CLASS, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE.

Karnataka symbolises the rot in our polity

Now that the results of the acrimonious elections for the Karnataka assembly are just one night away, the public intellectuals hurt by the vitiated political discourse must be relieved. They might be praying for the next legislature to act more responsibly. People's representatives who cannot respect the sanctity of the elections should at least keep their promises to the electorate. But is it likely to happen?

Before getting into the question that I've posed, I would like to draw your attention to the profile and character of the candidates. According to the Association for Democratic Reforms, 94% of the 220 candidates that the Congress fielded were crorepatris and 27% face criminal cases. Similarly, 93% of the BJP's 224 candidates were crorepatris and 37% charged with criminal cases. For the Janata Dal (Secular), 77% of its 199 candidate were crorepatris and 21% had cases registered against them. One of the candidates has declared movable and immovable assets of 10 billion rupees.

This is the scenario when the number of crorepatris in the fray has reduced since 2013. In that year, 681 out of 1,052 candidates (65%) were crorepatris. The

marginal fall in the number of affluent candidates shouldn't mislead you into believing that this is the beginning of fair ticket distribution to ordinary people. Unfortunately, across the nation our politics has been usurped by moneybags. These individuals have started mixing business with politics. As a result, instead of political discussions or real issues, elections are fought on the basis of corporate propaganda. Before this, some disturbing facts had come to light during the elections in the Northeast, particularly in Nagaland.

Is this why the quality of our politicians and politics is deteriorating? I am not saying we should assume that a candidate is guilty just because a case has been registered and prevent him from contesting elections. I am not suggesting that crorepatris don't have the right to contest elections. But I take strong objection to the manner in which issues that affect the lives of ordinary people are fast disappearing from the political discourse.

Another thing that bothers me: The incomes of people associated with politics and political parties grow substantially between one election and another even as the financial conditions of ordi-



nary candidates keep dwindling. Those days are long gone when sobriety was seen as the ornament of leaders in Indian politics. I have personally witnessed a number of legislators and MPs walk for miles together. They might not have

spent a night in Dalit homes, but the economically deprived still perceived them as their saviours. Whenever I see people's representatives surrounded by bodyguards, a question comes to my mind: When will they get time to meet the people who've elected them?

This is an era where money power scores over people power. In these times, who wants to pay attention to the premature murder of issues that concern ordinary people?

Let us look at Karnataka. After Rajasthan, this state is believed to be the worst affected by drought in the country. A recent BBC study put Bengaluru among 11 metropolises that are facing a severe drinking water crisis. What will our politicians do to prevent Bengaluru, known as the city of lakes, from turning into another Cape Town? A constructive debate on this issue wasn't heard during the entire election campaign. Not just the state capital, the state is battling an enormous water crisis.

Owing to this, 3,515 farmers committed suicide between April 2013 and November 2017. Of these, 2,525 can be attributed to drought and crop failure. Ideally, before seeking votes, our politicians should have presented a compre-

hensive action plan to the people. What happened was nowhere close to this.

Karnataka is a state where the mountains, ocean, greenery and drought co-exist at the same time. The mismatch in natural resources across the diverse regions of the state has already made governing the state quite complex. On top of this, with Bengaluru becoming an IT hub, this metropolis needs round the clock supply of electricity. The state's rural areas end up paying a price for this. They face power cuts lasting six to eight hours. A combination of heat, lack of rains and shortage of electricity has made people's lives miserable. Instead of finding a solution to this, our politicians turned the election campaign into a clash of personalities, religious appeasement and caste tensions. They realise that the despondent Indian always seeks refuge in religion. In the blind race to draw cults and religious leaders into their fold, we've seen the democratic tradition being ripped apart.

India's politicians, kindly pay attention: Democracy is always of the people, by the people and for the people. The Karnataka assembly elections have again emphasised the need to remember this. (Courtesy: HT)

Amit Shah blows 2019 election bugle, asks party to address Dalit issues

New Delhi: BJP president Amit Shah has blown the bugle for the 2019 election, targeting to win the next parliamentary election with a margin bigger than 2014, party spokesman Syed Shahnawaz Hussain said on Monday. And, for the BJP's national office bearers and state presidents who met with him on Monday, he even had a slogan: Meri sarkar, achhi sarkar (my government, good government), Hussain said.

"We have to change this perception that BJP cannot return to power at the Centre. We have to prove that BJP knows how to form government, run it and win consecutive election," Hussain quoted Shah as telling BJP leaders.

During the meeting, which came two days after the bitterly fought Karnataka assembly elections (and a day ahead of results), Shah also asked the party to address issues related to Dalits, down to the block level, another BJP leader said on condition of anonymity. RSS pracharaks holding the posts of organisational secretaries at state level were also present at the day-long



conclave. The BJP president, widely credited, along with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the party's star campaigner, for the success the BJP has seen over the past four years also warned the audience against arrogance, complacency, and lack of attention to the party organisation. "Congress got wiped out because of its arrogance and ignoring the organisation. We have reached a situation where it has

become a BJP versus all battle." BJP spokesman Sudhanshu Trivedi said Shah "cautioned BJP leaders that satisfaction over electoral success should not converge into self complacency." "We have built the first floor by winning one election, 2019 victory will be the second floor. We have to raise a high building," he quoted the party president as saying. Shah told the audience that the BJP has over 110 million members,

330-plus MPs and over 1,800 MLAs, a feat that has been achieved because of party's organisational strength that many other political parties were now copying. "It is our privilege that we have Modi's leadership, but we have organisational strength too. We have strength at the booth level and we are winning because of it," Hussain said, quoting Shah.

The BJP chief told party leaders they should not rest until states such as West Bengal, Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telanagana were won.

Shah took stock of the preparation for construction of party offices in district levels, the number of nights spent by central ministers and party office bearers in villages during the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan programme between April and May, discussed ways to popularise the NaMo App, and sought suggestions for Modi government's fourth anniversary celebrations.

The party will hold a joint executive meeting of its different wings on May 17 that will be addressed by the Prime Minister.

Hadiya re-run? Uttarakhand man wants wife 'freed' from parents

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has asked the Uttarakhand Police to produce in the court on Wednesday a 20-year-old woman who converted to Islam to marry after her husband sought her "release" from her parents' custody, in what appears to be a re-run of the Hadiya case.

Requesting the court to reunite him with his wife, 23-year-old Mohammad Danish on Monday told a bench led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra that he was arrested for the abduction of his wife, Aisha alias Shweta Bhist, and was lodged in the Haldwani jail since April 20.

"We want to talk to the girl and know what she wants. Does she want to stay with her parents or otherwise," CJI Misra said, ordering Aisha be in the court on Wednesday.

Danish and Aisha, who both hail from Haldwani, were pursuing bachelors in business administration in Bheemtal when they fell in love. Aisha's parents were opposed to the relationship so they eloped and got married in Delhi on April 19 as per Islamic customs, the petition says. Bhist took the name Aisha after converting to Islam of her own free will and they got the marriage registered in Ghaziabad, it says.

Her parents lodged an abduction complaint against Danish and the Uttarakhand Police arrested the couple from Delhi the next day.



The Uttarakhand government rubbished Danish's petition. "The marriage certificate and the nikahnama are fake and it is a case of abduction," deputy advocate general Manoj Gorkela said.

Danish said apprehending trouble, Aisha had emailed an affidavit to inspector general of police and Naital senior superintendent of police informing them of her marriage and conversion. In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court in March upheld the marriage of Hadiya, a 26-year-old Kerala woman who converted to Islam and wed a Muslim man, upholding a woman's right to choose a partner.

On her father's petition, the Kerala high court had quashed the marriage and ordered Hadiya in her parents' custody.

A bench led by Misra, after hearing Hadiya, ruled an individual's right to marry a person was a matter of privacy, intrinsic to right to life and state and society had no role in determining the choice.

Bombs hurled at houses in Howrah as post poll clashes rock parts of Bengal

Kolkata: A day after 12 people were killed in widespread violence during the West Bengal panchayat elections, post poll clashes continue to rock parts of the state on Tuesday.

The state administration, however, claimed only six of those deaths were poll-related, State Election Commission (SEC) said.

"According to the report received from the state administration, 12 deaths are reported on the polling day on Monday. Among them six are poll-related deaths, while the rest were due to different reasons," SEC secretary Nilanjana Shandilya told IANS.

Post poll violence was reported from parts of Howrah district where bombs were hurled in at least 20 houses during a clash between Trinamool Congress workers and BJP activists.

A few vehicles were also vandalised and torched.

Sporadic incidents of violence took place in South and North 24 Parganas and Nadia districts late on Monday.

The single-phase rural polls in the state on Monday



saw large scale violence and clashes between opposing political outfits throughout the day even as more than 60,000 armed personnel and 80,000 civic volunteers were deployed to guard close to 58,000 polling booths.

As the day progressed, reports of clashes, booth capturing, vandalising of ballot boxes and rigging were received from pockets of South and North 24 Parganas, North Dinajpur, Nadia, West Midnapore and Cooch Behar districts.

In several places, gun-toting goons attacked policemen on duty at polling premises, leaving at least two police officers severely injured. Several attempts to rig the

election process were also reported across the state as miscreants poured water into ballot boxes or set them on fire. Additional director general of West Bengal Police Amuj Sharma on Monday said Trinamool activist Arif Ali Gazi died in poll-related violence in South 24 Parganas while two other workers of the party died in Nadia.

He said two Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) workers died in Nandigram in East Midnapore district and a Jharkhand Disom Party worker died in Kushiundi of South Dinajpur.

The opposition parties accused the Trinamool Congress of orchestrating unprecedented terror on the polling

day and alleged the SEC and state administration completely failed to conduct a free and fair election.

Representatives of CPI-M held a protest demonstration outside the SEC office on Monday evening demanding an answer from the poll panel about the adverse situations across the state.

The state's ruling Trinamool Congress, however, claimed that the people were able to exercise their democratic rights and said the situation was well handled barring a few isolated incidents.

It accused the Bharatiya Janata Party of bringing in people from Bangladesh, Assam and Jharkhand with the help of Border Security Force personnel on the polling day to create unrest.

Voting for the rural bodies in West Bengal was to be held on May 1, 3 and 5, but as the nomination process started in April, it was rescheduled to May 14 by the SEC following a Calcutta High Court order to extend the nomination deadline and announce a fresh polling date.

NGT slams Ganga Mission for failure to file compliance report

New Delhi: The National Green Tribunal on Tuesday rapped the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) for not filing a compliance report on the steps taken by the Centre and the UP and Uttarakhand governments to clean the river Ganga in the stretch between Gomukh and Unnao.

A bench headed by acting NGT chairperson Justice Jawad Rahim said that despite its April 3 order to file an affidavit stating measures taken by various authorities, the NMCG has not complied with its direction.

"We had asked you to file an additional document on April 3 about steps taken by various authorities including setting up of treatment plants. What did you do in this time. Why have you not complied with our order?"

"We are not bothered about your meetings and impleadment. We are bothered about our order of compliance. We want compliance," the bench observed and directed NMCG to file the report by May 23.

The green panel also directed tannery industries to file a report about the compli-



ance of its directions and said it would deal with the cleaning of stretch from Unnao to Uttar Pradesh Border on May 23, the next date of hearing.

It also summoned records from the Eastern Bench of NGT of a similar case dealing with Ganga rejuvenation in the stretch from Bihar to Bengal.

On April 3, the NGT had directed NMCG to file additional statement with regard to the claims made by the Central Pollution Control Board and UP Pollution Control Board.

The UP Jal NGT had earlier told the NGT that it has filed preparation of detailed project report in Kasganj, Bareilly, Kannauj and Rampur.

direct that 100 metres from the edge of the river would be treated as no development/ construction zone between Haridwar to Unnao in UP.

"No-development zones" are areas where no construction including commercial or residential buildings can come up.

It also imposed a complete prohibition on disposal of municipal solid waste, e-waste or bio-medical waste on the floodplains or into the river and its tributaries.

Regarding shifting of tanneries located in Jajmau cluster in Kanpur, the tribunal had sought an action plan from the leather units, failing which "the UP government shall be duty bound to close the tanneries and shift the same to Banthar, Unnao or any other developed site which it considers appropriate."

The tribunal reiterated its earlier order of ban on mechanical mining in Ganga and said "no in-stream mechanical mining is permitted and even the mining on the floodplain should be semi-mechanical and preferably more manual.

NCP calls BJP's performance in Karnataka elections 'unbelievable', bats for ballot boxes

Mumbai: The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) on Tuesday expressed its distrust for electronic voting machines, stating that the BJP's performance in the Karnataka polls was "unbelievable" because the results were not in sync with the ground situation.

PTI quoted Maharashtra NCP president Jayant Patil as saying that the Congress was well-positioned

in Karnataka, and the Siddaramaiah government did not face any anti-incumbency. "In this context, the BJP's victory is unbelievable. There is a difference between what was in the people's mind and the situation that has emerged," he told reporters, demanding that future polls be held through ballot boxes.

The Sharad Pawar-led party had extended support to the Congress

without fielding its own candidates in the Karnataka polls.

Patil maintained that the image of the BJP and its chief ministerial candidate, BS Yeddyurappa, was "not good" due to allegations of graft. "The BJP's reach in Karnataka was limited. This result should be analysed properly," he said. "The election commission should conduct elections through ballot boxes to remove

doubts. There will be a delay, but doubts will be cleared."

The Congress also expressed a similar sentiment. "I have been saying this from day 1. There is no political party in India that has not raised questions on EVMs (electronic voting machines), and even the BJP has done it in the past. Now, when all parties are doubting EVMs, then what problem does the BJP

have with conducting polls through ballot?" asked party leader Mohan Prakash. However, these doubts regarding voting machines are not echoed by every non-NDA party. "Please save this tweet for future reference. If I win, it was all my charm and hard work. If I lose, it's all down to those blasted EVMs," National Conference leader Omar Abdullah remarked in a tongue-in-cheek tweet.

Navjot Singh Sidhu acquitted of homicide, convicted of causing hurt in 1988 road rage case

New Delhi: In a relief for Punjab cabinet minister and former cricketer Navjot Singh Sidhu, the Supreme Court on Tuesday acquitted him of culpable homicide and convicted him of causing hurt in a 1988 road rage case in which one person died. Despite the conviction, Sidhu retains his cabinet berth. As per the Representation of the People Act, any person convicted of an offence or crime and punished for a term of two or more years is immediately disqualified as a lawmaker. The Supreme court fined Sidhu Rs 1,000 and did not give him a jail term.

The Congress politician was convicted under Section 323 (causing hurt) of the India Penal Code, under which he faced up to a year in jail or a fine or both.

Sidhu thanked the people of Punjab after the verdict. "I want to thank the people of Punjab, because of their prayers I have come out ten feet tall. I have sent a message to Rahul Gandhi ji & Priyanka Gandhi ji that my life is yours," ANI quoted Sidhu saying.

The tourism minister in the Amarinder Singh government, Sidhu had hit a 65-year-old man, Gurnam Singh, on the head during an argument over the parking of a car in December 1988. Singh later died in a hospital.

Sidhu said Singh died of a cardiac arrest and not because he was punched in the head

The former cricketer was acquitted of the murder charges by a trial court in September 1999. However, the Punjab high court reversed the verdict and held Sidhu and his co-accused Rupinder Singh Sandhu guilty of culpable homicide not amounting to murder in December 2006. It sentenced them to three years in jail and imposed a fine of Rs 1 lakh each.

Both Sidhu and Sandhu filed an appeal in the Supreme Court, which stayed their conviction in 2007, paving the way for Sidhu to contest the by-poll for Amritsar Lok Sabha seat.

Role of regional parties cannot be undermined, say BJP allies in Goa

Panji: Junior alliance partners in the BJP-led government in Goa said on Tuesday that the importance of regional parties cannot be undermined in politics.

The remarks came two days after BJP chief Amit Shah said his party aimed to win in at least 35 out of the total 40 seats in the next Goa elections.

The Manohar Parrikar-led state government, which came to power after the elections in March last year, is currently supported by the Maharashtra Gomantak Party (MGP), Goa Forward Party (GFP) and three Independents.

The MGP and the GFP have three legislators each in the

Goa Assembly.

GFP president Vijai Sardesai told PTI, "You can't wish away the regional parties. Look at the results in the Karnataka elections and the impact of the JD(S). You cannot undermine the importance of regional parties in politics."

On May 13, Shah, while addressing BJP workers near Panaji, said, "We have to take the oath that in 2019, we will win both (Lok Sabha) seats (in Goa), and in the next assembly elections we will win in at least 35 out of the total 40 constituencies in Goa."

The MGP also said that regional parties will always remain an important factor in Goa's politics.



"It is Shah's dream to win 35 seats. We also have a dream of winning 18 seats in the next Goa Assembly polls. We also

have a dream of making Marathi as the state's official language," MGP chief Dipak Dhavalikar said.

He said everyone has to work towards achieving their dreams, but noted that regional parties have always

gained a "sizeable share" of seats in the Goa elections.

"There are at least eight to nine seats which will always remain with the regional parties," Dhavalikar claimed.

The MGP leader asserted that no national party can take regional outfits lightly in Goa's politics.

"What I am saying has been proved by the results of some of the last assembly elections in Goa," he said.

The BJP currently has 14 seats in the Goa assembly. It came second in the state polls after the Congress (17 seats), but managed to garner support from other parties and Independents to attain majority and form the government led by Parrikar.

No horn, please: How street noise is hurting our health

New Delhi: Dust mixed with toxic fumes from vehicular exhausts exacerbate lung and heart diseases and trigger death from heart attack, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung infections like pneumonia, and cancers of the lung and respiratory tract.

What is less known is that traffic noise adds to this incessant vehicular assault on human health. Revving motors, ceaseless honking, overloaded vehicles and blaring music not just damage the health of commuters but also those who live or work around busy roads.

Annoyance, irritability and hearing damage are the obvious fallout, but several studies show that traffic noise leads to high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, heart failure, diabetes, depression, memory impairment, disrupted sleep and hyperactivity in children.

With the time spent commuting growing by the day in noisy cities, both big and small, even those who do not

live close to busy roads risk sacrificing more than just sleep.

Heart disease

Environmental noise from traffic and aircraft disrupts the body on the cellular level to raise heart disease risk factors, according to a review of the underlying mechanisms that lead to noise-induced heart disease. Sound pollution causes metabolic abnormalities and autonomic imbalance, which is characterised by dizziness and exercise intolerance, said the study.

Noise activates the sympathetic nervous system to induce a stress response, which raises the blood levels of the stress hormones such as cortisol, adrenaline and noradrenalin, even during sleep. These hormones prepare the body to survive an imminent "fight for flight" threat by making the heart beat faster, constricting blood vessels and pushing up blood pressure to feed more blood to the brain and muscles. When this phys-



iological stress becomes constant, it leads to heart disease and diabetes, among others.

Memory, learning

Traffic noise harm children's ability to learn as they are more affected than adults by noise while doing tasks involving speech perception and listening

comprehension. It also affects learning that doesn't involve speech perception and listening comprehension, such as short-term memory, reading and writing. This, over time, affects their cognitive development. Another study in Teheran found it affected the auditory verbal learning and memory of boys more than

girls.

Exposure to traffic noise also causes behavioural problems, particularly hyperactivity and inattention symptoms, in early childhood. Sleeping in rooms exposed to sound of night-time traffic raises children's blood pressure, raising their risk of heart disease in later life.

Sleep, mood

Night-time traffic noise lowers the quantity of sleep, leading to irritability, lowered attention, delayed response, tiredness and fatigue. People who live near busy streets have difficulty falling asleep, wake up frequently during the night, and get up too early, found a population-based study from Norway, where traffic movement is quieter than on India's roads.

People living in areas with high traffic noise were 25 percent more likely than those in quieter neighbourhoods to have symptoms of depression such as sadness, loneliness and trouble concen-

trating. In developing countries such as India where traffic movement is often more chaotic, mounting stress and irritability fuels hostility and road rage.

No horn, please

Noise hazards can be mitigated by improving traffic management and regulating driving behaviour, which should include both motor and non-motor road transportation. According to Section 190 (2) of the Central Motor Vehicles Act (2), "Any person who drives or causes or allows to be driven, in any public place a motor vehicle, which violates the standards prescribed in relation to road safety, control of noise and air pollution, shall be punishable for the first offence with a fine of ₹1,000 and for any second or subsequent offence with a fine of ₹2,000."

Along with fines, the challenge is to make aggressive road warriors aware that noisy driving harms their own health as much as others.

GOUT, THE PAINFUL CONDITION DOESN'T INCREASE YOUR RISK OF FRACTURE



People who suffer from gout, a painful inflammatory arthritis, may not have an increased risk of fracture as earlier believed, says a new study. Gout is a common form of arthritis that can affect anyone. Sudden, severe attacks of pain, swelling, redness and tenderness, often to the joint at the base of the big toe accompany this condition.

A gout attack can occur suddenly, often waking you up in the middle of the night with the sensation that your big toe is on fire. The joint can get hot, swollen and so tender that even a small weight on it may seem a lot. According to Dr Shalini Suralkar, full time consultant rheumatologist, Dr L H Hiranandani Hospital, "The pain can be quite excruciating, that's the most important symptom to watch out for. Most patients can suffer an attack in the middle of the night."

Method for study

Gout is caused by the build-up of urate crystals in a joint. To better understand the links between gout and fracture risk, the researchers from Keele University conducted a study in Britain using a large primary care database.

It included 31,781 patients with gout who were matched to 122,961 controls and followed them for between 6.8 and 13.6 years until the first diagnosis of a fracture. The rate of fracture was similar in people with and without gout, the findings showed.

In addition, medication to lower urate levels in people with gout did not appear to benefit or adversely affect the long-term risk of fractures. "Our use of a nationally representative cohort should enable our study findings to be generalisable not only to the UK but also to other countries with similar health care systems," said Zoe Paskins from Keele University.

Any other risks?

According to Dr Suralkar, "Gout can lead to a fracture only if a person has really long-standing condition and has affected almost all the joints. Otherwise there is no risk of fracture involved. However, it is important to note that if gout is left untreated over many years it can also affect a person's kidney and could lead to damaging of the joints."

Prenatal marijuana use may lead to low birth weight in babies

If you smoke marijuana during your pregnancy, your baby could be at high risk of being born with a low birth weight as well as influencing behaviour problems, researchers have warned.

The findings, published in the journal Child Development, suggests that prenatal marijuana use can have consequences on infant's weight and can influence behaviour problems, especially when combined with tobacco use.

The researchers found that infants who had been exposed to both tobacco and marijuana, especially into the third trimester, were smaller in length, weight and head size.

They were more likely to be born earlier, compared to

babies who were not exposed to anything, the researcher said.

"We also found that lower birth weight and size predicted a baby's behaviour in later infancy," said co-author Rina Das Eiden from the University at Buffalo in New York.

"Babies who were smaller were reported by their mothers to be more irritable, more easily frustrated and had greater difficulty calming themselves when frustrated. Thus, there was an indirect association between co-exposure to tobacco and marijuana and infant behaviour via poor growth at delivery," Eiden added.

For the study, the researchers recruited nearly 250 infants



and their mothers. Of these, 173 of the infants had been exposed to tobacco or marijuana during their mothers' pregnancies. None were exposed to significant amounts of alcohol.

Women who showed symp-

toms of anger, hostility and aggression reported more stress during pregnancy and were more likely to continue using tobacco and marijuana throughout pregnancy, the researcher said.

Therefore, due to the co-

exposure, they were more likely to give birth to infants smaller in size and who were more irritable and easily frustrated, the researchers added.

The infants' irritability and frustration is also linked to mothers who experienced higher levels of stress while pregnant.

"Our results suggest that interventions with women who smoke cigarettes or use marijuana while pregnant should also focus on reducing stress and helping them cope with negative emotions," Eiden said. "This may help reduce prenatal substance exposure and subsequent behaviour problems in infants," Eiden noted.

However, other studies

paint a different picture as far as marijuana use is concerned. Recently a study by researchers from the Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH) discovered that marijuana use does not lower a couple's chances of getting pregnant. This study was the first to establish whether there was any link between fecund ability - the average per-cycle probability of conception - and using marijuana.

Researchers from the study also opined that classifying people accurately depending upon the amount of marijuana they have used, especially when they rely on self-reported data, is a challenging task.

TAKING ORAL DRUGS DAILY MAY PROTECT CANCER PATIENTS FROM DEADLY BLOOD CLOTS

London: Taking oral drugs daily can be an effective treatment for nearly 10 million cancer patients worldwide suffering from a deadly blood clot condition, results from a clinical trial have showed. People with cancer have an increased risk of developing blood clots, with roughly one in five experiencing venous thromboembolism (VTE) - either a blood clot in a deep vein or a condition in which one or more arteries in the lungs become blocked by a blood clot.

The results from the clinical trial called "select-d" suggested that prescribing the oral drug rivaroxaban significantly reduced VTE recurrence among patients with cancer. "Clinicians were already adopting the oral drug into practice for non-cancer patients and now they have data from this study to indicate that this form of treatment is an alternative option for many cancer patients who have a clot," said lead author Annie Young, Professor at University of Warwick in the Britain.

Although there are many causes and risk factors for VTE, cancer patients are particularly at risk due to a combination of factors such as immobility, pancreatic and gastric tumours as well as che-



motherapy, the researcher said.

For the "select-d" trial, researchers enrolled 406 patients who had cancer and VTE; most (69 per cent) were receiving cancer treatment (typically chemotherapy) at the time of their VTE. Half were randomly assigned to receive low-molecular-weight heparin (dalteparin) and half were given the oral drug rivaroxaban. After six months of treatment, the VTE recurrence rate was four per cent among those taking the tablet and 11% in those receiving dalteparin. The results for secondary outcomes were

mixed, the researcher said.

In patients receiving rivaroxaban, there were around the same percentage of major bleeding events (6%) as those receiving dalteparin (4 per cent) but a marked and significant increase in clinically relevant non-major bleeds (13%) with rivaroxaban compared to those having low molecular weight heparin (4%).

The reason for increased bleeding is not known. It may be because rivaroxaban is more 'potent', the paper published in the Journal of Clinical Oncology said.

DIABETES AND HEART DISEASE SHOULD BE TOP HEALTH PRIORITIES

Chronic diseases claim more Indian lives than infectious diseases, and take a huge toll: Between 2012 and 2030, non-communicable diseases and mental health conditions are expected to cost India \$4.58 trillion. The government supports states to respond, but much more needs to be done. New research for India Consensus, a collaboration between Tata Trusts and Copenhagen Consensus, reveals some strategies should be prioritised against specific diseases.

The analysis by Professor Shreelata Rao Seshadri of Azim Premji University with Vijayalakshmi Hebbare fills evidence gaps by identifying the costs and benefits of responses to non-communicable diseases.

Diabetes will cost India Rs 9.7 trillion between 2012 and 2030. The situation varies from state to state, but taking the example of Andhra Pradesh, about one in three people are overweight or obese, and one in 10 have high blood sugar. On current trends, diabetes will kill 159,000 adults in the state alone in 2030.

The new research shows screening and therapy would cost around Rs 2,000 per person annually, or about ₹590 crore over the next 13 years, and save more than 11,000 lives annually and cut chronic suffering by more than 10%. Putting those benefits into economic terms, every rupee would achieve more than 18 times costs.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a killer with such a high national burden that its cost between 2012 and 2030 is almost the equivalent of wiping out an entire year of Indian GDP. In AP, it will claim the lives of nearly one lakh adults this year.

The simple answer is screening and cheap medicine for those at risk. This could avoid more than 2.6 lakh deaths over 13 years, at an average cost of about Rs 4,000 per treated person. The total cost of Rs 4,400 crore will result in benefits worth 31 times the costs.

The researchers also look at cervical cancer and breast cancer, both significant killers of Indian women. Coverage of screening services is very poor: only about one-third of women in AP have had a cervical exam, and about 5% have had a breast exam.

But screening and treatment for cervical cancer costs about Rs 3,200 crore, to save around 600 lives. This means the return on each rupee is a modest Rs 1.6 in social benefits. And using the Clinical Breast Exam would only avoid about 10% of the 3,000 lives claimed by breast cancer each year, but is the most expensive approach studied, at about Rs 5,600 crore. Cervical and breast cancer screening and treatment are important for closing gender gaps and ensuring women access high-quality healthcare.

But a broader view at benefits and costs indicates that resources spent averting a cervical cancer death could save 18 women from CVD death.

Making trade-offs is ultimately the domain of policymakers and voters, but the project's new research provides costs and benefits for a comprehensive range of policy choices in health, education, environment and the economy, which means new evidence to help tough decisions.

Across India, adequately financing chronic disease, particularly heart disease and diabetes, should be a priority.

Weight loss diet tip fitness experts swear by, have your breakfast on time

Missing out on your breakfast is not good for the system and can actually lead to weight gain, studies have shown.

By skipping this meal, not only do you end up putting on weight, but also open the door to lifestyle related diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular diseases.

Researchers from Tel Aviv University (TAU) and Hebrew University in Israel found that eating breakfast helps in regulating the post-meal glucose and insulin responses, hence improving our glycaemic control. If you have breakfast before 9:30 am, it will improve the metabolism rate of your body, leading to weight loss.

"Skipping breakfast can not only make your metabolism dip, but also leave you

lethargic. Since the brain needs fuel to function, you will end up craving for any food that is available later in the day, causing weight gain in the longer term. A good breakfast made up of carbohydrates and lean protein can help reduce cravings and overeating for the rest of the day," says Dr Anil Mehta, general physician on Lybrate, Delhi.

But how exactly does skipping breakfast lead to weight gain? "As the day wears on, serotonin levels dip, and you get cravings for chocolate, cookies, and other similar foods. Eating these causes an increase in serotonin levels and the body begins to associate good feelings with them, creating an addictive cycle," explains Dr. Mehta.

But what if one gets up



late in the day, like after 10 am? Then what is the correct time to have breakfast?

"Our body is primed to look for food when we wake up in the morning. So ideally we should have a healthy breakfast within two hours

of waking up," says Priyanka Verma, nutritionist, Portea Medical, Bangalore.

Weight gain aside, there are various other lifestyle related diseases we can save ourselves from, along with many benefits we can get if

we have breakfast regularly.

Verma explains that breakfast has a number of benefits from as simple as providing energy in the morning to take on the day to kick-starting our metabolism.

It also makes the brain

alert and activated, improves concentration levels, immunity and cognitive functions, she said. "It also helps avoid gas and acidity, boosts heart health and your mood, and keeps you calm," she said.

Verma noted that since cortisol and adrenaline levels are at their peak in the morning, our brain needs instant energy, and eating too less or not eating at all can prompt it to look for another fuel source.

"This leads to activation of an emergency system, pulling energy from muscles and destroying muscle tissue in the process. When one eats later in the day, the body saves energy from the food as fat because the body and brain are still in high-alert mode," she explained.

Indian banks on hook for \$26 billion in loans to stressed electricity projects

Enron Corp. is long gone, but the scandal it left behind in India has beguiled the country's lenders for almost two decades.

However, if the bankers who financed the US energy company's unviable power plant in Maharashtra state aren't ruing that 2,000-megawatt debacle any more, it's only because they're now staring at a mess 20 times bigger.

India's total electricity-generation ability is 344,000 megawatts, a 72 percent increase over six years. The country, notorious for its outages, still doesn't have a power surplus. But coal-fired plants in the private sector that ran at 84 percent capacity utilization at the start of the decade are struggling to stay alive with load factors of 55 percent. As much as 40,000 megawatts of capacity — equal to 20 Enron plants — has become stressed assets for the banking system.

Lenders, on the hook for \$26 billion, are yet to classify these exposures as nonperforming, let alone provide for losses out of (their increasingly nonexistent) profits. However, now that the central bank is forcing them to clean up their act, they're trying to think of creative solutions. According to BloombergQuint, the banks will convert debt that's unsustainable into



equity and sell those shares to a jointly owned asset management company. The AMC will hawk its controlling stakes in power producers after a turnaround.

A better idea may be to fix the underlying profitability of the power business.

Forget long-term power purchase agreements. State utilities are shy to sign such contracts anyway and prone to ditch them at the first hint of cheaper electricity in the wholesale market. Let most of the demand and supply move to exchanges with open access for all bulk buyers and sellers, says Hemant Kanoria, chairman of India Power Corp., a 99-year-old company

involved in both electricity generation and distribution.

The share of power trading in the country's overall demand-supply equation has been stagnant for years at about 10 percent. This needs to change.

The other big issue, as Kanoria rightly notes, is coal. India has no shortage of the fuel, but its dominant miner, which met 95 percent of its 600 million ton production target last year, needs to crack the whip on underperforming subsidiaries.

Power plants' coal inventories are falling, and linking domestic availability to whether a producer has a long-term electricity purchase agree-

ment with a state utility isn't helping. Rather than continue with a less-than-satisfactory auction system, let Coal India Ltd. fix a price at which it would assure supply to whoever is willing to pay and take away the feedstock.

Finally, financing costs, which have ballooned to half of the total expense of putting up a power plant, need a tweak. Restructuring unserviceable loans into other instruments — such as preference shares — would give producers some breathing room, Kanoria says.

It's silly of lenders to expect that debt with annual interest rates of 16-percent-plus won't eventually turn bad. Dragging borrowers to the bankruptcy tribunal won't solve anything. Most assets would sell for scrap value; jobs would be lost. Sweeping the problem under the carpet of an asset management company may preserve employment, but the immediate financial hit to banks could upset their already weak capital position. Besides, if existing owners are booted out, who will run the plants?

It was relatively easy to leave Enron's Indian unit in the care of a couple of state-run companies, as the government did in 2005. That can't be a template for a problem 20 times larger.

Sensex slips 59 points as BJP falls shy of majority in Karnataka, Cong-JD(S) talk alliance



After soaring over 436 points in early trade, stock markets entered the negative terrain towards the fag-end on Tuesday amid poll trends indicating that the BJP might fall short of simple majority in Karnataka.

The benchmark Sensex gave up all gains and was trading lower by about 59 points at 35,497.92 on reports that Congress would offer support to the JD(S) to form the government in Karnataka.

As per latest poll trends, the BJP was leading on 108 seats, while congress was ahead on 73 and JD(S) on 38.

Investors who had created huge position

after early trends on hopes of BJP win trimmed their bets after the saffron party seat prospects shrank.

The 30-share BSE index hit a high of 35,993.53 in morning trade. Later, it met with profit-booking at higher levels and slipped in the negative zone, falling 58.79 points, or 0.16 per cent to trade at 35,497.92.

The 50-share Nifty reclaimed the key 10,900-mark to touch a high of 10,929.20 in initial trade and fell back by 25.20 points, or 0.23 per cent, to trade at 10,781.40.

Globally, Asian markets ended mixed and European markets opened lower.

PNB fraud: Govt initiates process to remove bank officials named in CBI chargesheet

The finance ministry on Monday initiated the process of removing top bank officials named by the Central Bureau of Investigation in its chargesheet over the Rs13,000-crore Punjab National Bank fraud case involving jewellers Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi as accused.

Former managing director of PNB and the current MD of Allahabad Bank, Usha Ananthasubramanian, and two PNB executive directors — Sanjeev Sharan and KV Brahmaji Rao — have been named in the chargesheet that was filed in a special Mumbai court on Monday.

"The government has initiated the process of removal of the senior management of banks who have been named in the chargesheet," said Rajiv Kumar, secretary, depart-



ment of financial services.

"In the meantime, the government has instructed the government nominees to move board resolutions seeking divesting their responsibilities." While the PNB board met on Monday and approved the government director's resolution to take away the responsibilities of the two executive directors, the board of the Allahabad Bank will meet soon after an

emergency meeting was called by the government nominee, according to sources. The government had issued a notice to the officials 10 days back after receiving information from the investigating agencies.

This is the first step to initiate their removal under Section 8 of the Nationalised Banks Act.

Calls and messages to Ananthasubramanian remained unanswered, while

Sharan declined to comment on the issue. Messages left for Rao with his office remained also unanswered.

Ananthasubramanian, who was the MD and CEO of PNB from August 2015 to May 2017, was questioned by the CBI in February in connection with the case.

Jeweller Modi allegedly used fake letter of undertaking to defraud PNB of over ₹13,000 crore in connivance with bank officials by exploiting the loophole of non-integration of SWIFT with the Core Banking System.

The CBI has filed a chargesheet against Ananthasubramanian and 21 others, including 11 bank officials, over the PNB fraud case. So far, 19 people have been arrested in the case while Modi and Choksi are on the run.

Flipkart's former employees can cash out only 30% of their ESOPs

Walmart Inc.'s plan to buy back roughly \$500 million worth of employee stock options following its \$16 billion majority purchase of Flipkart has left former employees of India's largest online retailer feeling that they have been treated unfairly.

While current Flipkart employees will be allowed to encash their holdings fully over the next two years, former employees can only cash out 30% of their vested options and have to hold on to the rest for an undefined period, according to Walmart's plan.

A dozen former employees spoke to said they were considering ways in which they can get Flipkart to pay them. For former employees, it's particularly shocking because Flipkart had been the fairest employer among all Indian start-ups in terms of offering



stock options.

"This is a terrible deal, especially for people who had been at the company for many years. If you played an important part in building Flipkart, right now you'll feel like you've been cheated. There's no communication from Flipkart on what happens to the 70%," said a former employee who had worked at Flipkart

for more than five years.

To be sure, the ESOP payout by Walmart will still be the biggest-ever in the Indian start-up world and is expected to turn a few hundred Flipkart employees into crorepatis. Over the past six years, there have been at least five other buybacks at Flipkart, including a \$100 million repurchase last year.

But given that Flipkart, including its unit Myntra, has employed tens of thousands of people over the past decade, hundreds of former employees will be left with significant stock in the company with no visibility on when it will turn into cash.

"It seems unfair to treat current and former employees differently—if your options have vested, you should ideally be treated like any other shareholder," said Subramanya SV, founder of fintech startup Fisdom and a former MD at venture capital firm Bessemer Venture Partners India.

The differential treatment has reignited the debate among startup employees, investors and entrepreneurs about how employee stock option plans, or ESOPs, should be treated.

Forbes honours 100 Gulf-based Indian businessmen

Over 100 Indian businessmen and executives based in the UAE have been recognised for their phenomenal success in the Arab world by Forbes Middle East who have a collective net worth of \$26.4 billion.

Titled "Top 100 Indian leaders in the Arab world", the list consists of the heads of the region's top companies, as well as the most influential of experts, Forbes said in a statement.

Billionaires of Indian-origin, based in the Gulf, have a collective net worth of USD 26.4 billion, according to Forbes' World's Billionaires 2018. The top three individuals, who are self-made billionaires in the UAE with a combined net worth of more than USD 12 billion, are leading the

rankings, with retail magnate Yusuff Ali MA, managing director of LuLu Group International, taking the crown as the top business owner.

The Indian tycoon is the third-richest self-made billionaire in UAE with a net worth of USD 5 billion, Gulf News reported.

Also UAE-based businessmen BR Shetty, who holds a net fortune of USD 3.6 billion, and Ravi Pillai, with a net worth of USD 3.5 billion, are ranked second and third, respectively.

These top businessmen have now shifted their gaze and are claimed to also be investing heavily in the Arab region as well as India.

Navdeep Singh Suri, Ambassador of India to the UAE, said that



the Indian community across the UAE holds key positions in all the different aspects of life.

"The work Indian leaders are

doing in the region displays the finest aspects of India and we are privileged to have these leaders being ambassadors to the UAE and

bridging the gap between the two countries," he said.

Suri also went on to say that the Indian businessmen have not only shone with their business successes, but that they also have been a contributing factor in India's success in various sectors, including healthcare, retail, construction, hospitality and manufacturing.

This has subsequently helped in the creation of jobs and better infrastructure in India.

The Indian community is the most populous expat community in the Gulf. Many are long time residents of the region, having come to the Gulf much before the advent of oil that prospered the local economies, the statement said.

Retail inflation rises to 4.58% in April, reverses declining trend

Reversing the declining trend, retail inflation moved up to 4.58% in April due to gradual rise in prices of cereals, meat, fish and fruits. The inflation based on Consumer Price Index (CPI), a key data factored in by the Reserve Bank while deciding interest rate, was 4.28% in March.

The inflation was at 2.99% in April last year.

The CPI index had been declining since January this year. As per data released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), the rate of price rise in the protein rich items like meat and fish inched up in April to 3.59%, as against the previous month of 3.17%.

Similarly, the inflation in the fruit basket was higher at 9.65% compared to 5.78% in the previous month.

However, inflation in vegetables segment was lower at 7.29% in April compared to 11.7%. Overall, inflation in the food basket remained flat at 2.8% month-on-month. The CSO data further revealed that inflation in the fuel and light segment also came in lower at 5.24% month-on-month basis.

Petrol, diesel prices soar for second time in two days after Karnataka polls

Petrol price in the national capital touched Rs 74.95 per litre on Tuesday, a fresh high, since it hit Rs 76.06 a litre in September 2013. Prices rose for a second day in a row after Indian Oil Corp (IOC) resumed the dynamic pricing system on Monday after a 19-day halt.

In the other metropolitan cities of Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai also, petrol prices were at fresh multi-year high levels of Rs 77.65, Rs 82.79 and Rs 77.77 a litre respectively, data from the IOC website showed.

The previous high in these cities was Rs 78.03 (Kolkata, August 2014), Rs 83.62 (Mumbai, September 2013) and Rs 79.55 (Chennai, September 2013) respectively.

Prices of diesel, which have been touching record levels, rose to a new high in all the metropolitan cities on Tuesday. It was sold at Rs 66.36, Rs 68.90, Rs 70.66 and Rs 70.02 per litre in Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai.

Vodafone India posts Rs 9,805 cr operating profit for 2017-18

Vodafone India on Tuesday posted operating profit of Rs 9,805 crore for the financial year 2017-18, ended March 31.

It had reported a loss of around Rs 30,690 crore for 2016-17 on account of the UK-based Vodafone group cutting down valuation of Indian unit by taking gross impairment charge of 4.5 billion euro.

Vodafone, which is in the process of merging with Idea, expects the process to be completed by June, possibly making the latest results the last on standalone basis.

Vodafone Group CEO Vittorio Colao said at a web conference that both the compa-

nies have already starting branding exercise for the new entity.

Vodafone India continues to face tariff war heat and reported 18.7 per cent decline in organic service revenue to around Rs 35,045 crore in 2017-18 compared to Rs 42,927 crore service revenue registered in the preceding fiscal.

"Intense competition is euphemism. There was 86 per cent decline in data price on year-on-year basis. Good news is that we have got 10 million customer in last quarter but there is a price to be paid for this success," Colao said.

Data traffic on network of Vodafone India increased four



fold but the company could not reap financial benefits because of sharp decline in data prices.

The reduction in mobile termination rates added to

the woes of the company.

"Losses continued in India as service revenue declined 18.7 per cent as a result of intense price competition from the new entrant, aggressive

competitor responses and a significant reduction in MTRs (mobile termination rates)," Vodafone said.

It added that the impact of lower revenues was partially offset by significant actions to lower our operating cost base, as well as the benefit of a provision release in the fourth quarter following positive legal judgements.

The net debt of Vodafone India stood at 58,119 crore or 7.7 billion euro at the end of the period, down from Rs 64,014 crore (8.7 billion euro) at the end of the prior financial year due to the positive translation impact of closing foreign exchange rates on the

debt balance of 1.2 billion euro and proceeds of Rs 3,850 crore from the sale of Vodafone India's standalone towers to American Tower Corporation.

"Following the completion of Idea's equity raising in February 2018, under the terms of the merger agreement with Idea the Group intends to inject up to 1 billion euro (around Rs 7,500 crore) of incremental equity into India, net of the proceeds of the sale of a stake in the joint venture to the Aditya Birla Group (ABG), prior to completion," Vodafone said.

Vodafone Group did not include India business in their financial performance.

OUR SPINNERS CAN TROUBLE INDIA: AFGHANISTAN SKIPPER ASGHAR STANIKZAI

New Delhi: Afghanistan captain Asghar Stanikzai believes the 'world-class' spinners in his team will pose a serious challenge to the much-vaunted Indian batting line-up in the historic one-off Test in Bengaluru from June 14.

Afghanistan will make their much awaited Test debut at the Chinnaswamy Stadium and Stanikzai said the aim is to give a good fight to India, who will be without their regular skipper Virat Kohli.

"With or without Kohli, India are a top team and even stronger at home. Kohli is a very big player and we would have enjoyed playing against him," Stanikzai told PTI.

"Irrespective of who is playing, everyone knows how tough it is to face India in India. It will be a great learning experience but we are surely not overawed by the challenge. We will be playing to win. We have world-class spinners in our team and they can trouble India."

Afghanistan are currently training in Greater Noida but would be travelling to Dehradun later this week ahead of the three-match T20 series



against Bangladesh early next month.

While coach Phil Simmons has stressed on making his team mentally and physically ready for the five-day challenge, Stanikzai feels adjusting to the Test mode from four-day cricket will not be much of an issue.

"We would like to learn from their players and they can learn from ours. Yes we are playing our first Test but we are going into the game with enough first-class experience.

"We play about 10 four-day games in a year and have won the ICC Inter-

continental Cup twice. Tests will be different obviously but I would not say that there is a huge difference," said the veteran of 86 ODIs and 51 T20s.

The team's key players -- spinners Rashid Khan and Mujeeb Zadran, and all-rounder Mohammad Nabi -- are currently playing in the IPL. Rashid especially has evolved into a top-quality leg-spinner and a few others including Mujeeb, Zahir Khan and Qais Ahmed too are improving rapidly.

"Spin is our strength, there is no doubt about that. We have pacers too, Dawlat and Shapoor Zadran, who can bowl at 140kmph plus speeds. So we have the resources."

Any specific reason why Afghanistan producing spinners at a rapid rate?

"Our spinners are doing well so that is why most people are talking about them. The wickets in Afghanistan are similar to what you see in India, more helpful to the spinners. That could be one reason. Because of that factor, our batsmen also play spin well," said Stanikzai.

He sees the upcoming Afghan T20 league in Sharjah further fast-tracking the growth of the game in the country.

"What we would have achieved in 10 years, with the league we could do that within the next three years. Our players will get to rub shoulders with the best in the business. The main thing in international cricket is absorbing pressure and they will get to learn that by playing alongside top foreign players," the 30-year-old added.

Shashank Manohar wins second term as International Cricket Council chairman

Shashank Manohar, former BCCI president, has been re-elected to serve as the independent chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC) for second term. He was the sole nominee put forward by the ICC Board.

Manohar, who became the first independent ICC chairman in 2016, will continue for a second two-year term following his unopposed election. Under Manohar, the ICC introduced a revised governance structure, including the appointment of the ICC's first independent female director Indra Nooyi.

Manohar also played a key role in bringing in place a reformed constitution that ended the 'Big Three' model. The previous model guaranteed India, England and Australia the lion's share of ICC's revenue and more power in governance.

After getting re-elected, Manohar said: "It is an honour to be re-elected as the chair-



man of the International Cricket Council and I would like to thank my fellow ICC Directors for their continued support. Together we have made big strides over the last two years, fulfilling promises I made to the sport when I was appointed in 2016.

"Over the next two years we can look forward to launching a global strategy for the sport in partnership with our Members so we can grow the game and ensure more of the world can enjoy cricket. The sport is in good health but we are the guardians of the game and we must continue to work hard to maintain that."

RAVICHANDRAN ASHWIN BACKS KINGS XI PUNJAB BATSMEN TO COME GOOD AT 'BIG MOMENTS'

R Ashwin is hopeful that the likes of Aaron Finch, Karun Nair and Mayank Agarwal will find form as Kings XI Punjab look to win their remaining two matches against defending champions Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings to qualify for IPL 2018 play-offs. Ashwin said that 'good players come good at big moments', something he experienced during his time with CSK.

"The best thing is to forget the 12 games. I've been in a team like CSK where we used to do this all the time. We had batsmen who found the going tough throughout the tournament but went on to score a 90-odd in the final. That's how it goes," Ashwin said after Kings XI Punjab's loss to Royal Challengers Bangalore at the Holkar Stadium here on Monday.

Leaving openers KL Rahul and Chris Gayle, no other KXIP batsman has shown stomach for a fight and this has been one of the major factors why they have lost five of their last six games.

Against RCB, Rahul and Gayle put on a 36-run stand but their departure led to a collapse as KXIP were knocked over for 88, their lowest total this season. Except Finch, Nair, Agarwal and Marcus Stoinis couldn't even cross the double figures. Virat Kohli's side eventually won the match by 10 wickets.

While Ashwin accepted his team's frailties, he said there is no reason why KXIP can't make a comeback.

"I think we were very poor. It was a day when nothing clicked for us. But that happens," said Ashwin.

"To be honest, we haven't been one of the top champion sides in IPL. We actually punched way above our weight in the first half of the competition (this year). But things haven't gone our way in the last few games. To be precise, I didn't expect this. But I think it's time for everyone to step up. We have lost three in a row. Mumbai is a place where there's a lot of bounce and generally the foreign batsmen love it. So I'm confident we will bounce back.

"We are desperate. Any team can be dangerous they are desperate," he added.

Asked about Mujeeb Ur Rahman, who missed the game against RCB after being hit on his bowling hand in the match against Kolkata Knight Riders, Ashwin said: "His injury is quite serious. We will assess his fitness before the next match."

IPL 2018: Mumbai Indians in do-or-die clash with Kings XI Punjab

Mumbai: So competitive has the Indian Premier League been this season that teams have struggled for consistency. There's been no margin for error. The smallest chinks have proved costly. Mumbai Indians and Kings XI Punjab have learnt this lesson the hard way.

The late surge Mumbai Indians are famous for has eluded them this time. As they face Kings XI Punjab on Wednesday in their penultimate game, MI's chances of progressing to the playoffs hang by a thread.

Kings XI have a two-point advantage, but are also fighting to stay alive in the tournament. They have lost the early momentum and are in a freefall.

With two rounds to go, MI are on 10 points after 12 games while Kings XI have

12 from 12.

NOMARGINFORERROR A defeat on Wednesday will signal the end of Mumbai's campaign. Their precarious situation is owing to the four defeats suffered in their first five games -- all last-over losses.

It's been the reverse for their opponents. Kings XI Punjab started brightly, but a poor show by the middle-order has seen the team stumble to five defeats in their last six games.

MI'S 2014 INSPIRATION Even if MI win their remaining fixtures, they can at best finish with 14 points. The problem is, as of Tuesday evening, there were five teams who can finish with 14 points.

MI will take heart from the fact that the tally has sufficed in 2014, helping them to make the playoffs. How-



ever, all other results have to go their way.

Sunrisers Hyderabad and Chennai Super Kings have already booked their playoff spots. The other two spots are up for grabs, but there are five teams in the fray. Apart from MI and Kings XI, Kol-

kata Knight Riders, Rajasthan Royals and Royal Challengers Bangalore too are in with the chance.

MI find themselves in this situation due to a lack of punch towards the end of the innings. Kings XI's Achilles heel is their middle order, and rivals have

capitalised.

The last game on Sunday was another example of MI's finishing woes. An excellent start (87 for no loss) from Suryakumar Yadav and Even Lewis was frittered away.

After a roaring start to the tournament, Kings XI have

lost momentum. After shooting themselves in the foot against Royal Challengers Bangalore on Monday, succumbing to 88 all out in 15.1 overs, Kings XI have little time to regroup.

KINGS' BEST CHANCE On current form, among their last two opponents, Kings XI's best chance is against MI. In their final round, Kings XI are up against hot favourites Chennai Super Kings, while MI have a relatively easier game against bottom-placed Delhi Daredevils.

The last time the two teams played, they dished out a thriller. With 31 needed off 16 balls, Krunal Pandya (31 off 12 balls) played a blinder to take the game away from Kings XI as MI won by six wickets. With everything riding on the game, another cracker is on the cards.

Delhi High Court asked to make decision on Sreesanth's IPL spot-fixing case

The Supreme Court today asked the Delhi High Court to decide by July end the appeal challenging a trial court order discharging several cricketers, including S Sreesanth, in the sensational IPL spot-fixing case.

Sreesanth, who has been awarded life ban by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), has filed an appeal in the apex court challenging the Kerala High Court decision upholding the ban on him.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra said it understood the "anxiety" of the cricketer to play cricket but would like to wait for the high court's decision

on the appeal of Delhi Police challenging the trial court order discharging the cricketers and others in the IPL spot-fixing case.

Sreesanth has sought an interim direction that he should be allowed to play the English County cricket in the view of the fact that he has already been discharged in the IPL spot-fixing case and has been suffering the ban for the past four years.

The Delhi Police had arrested Indian pacesman Sreesanth and other two cricketers Ajit Chandila and Ankeet Chavan on charges of spot fixing during IPL in 2013.

A single-judge bench of Kerala High Court had on August 7 last year lifted the life-ban imposed on 34-year-old Sreesanth by the BCCI and set aside all proceedings against him initiated by the board. A division bench of the high court had later restored the ban on a petition filed by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) against the single-judge bench's order.

All the 36 accused in the spot-fixing case, including Sreesanth, Chavan and Chandila, were let off by a Patiala House court in July, 2015. The BCCI, however, had refused to alter its disciplinary decision even after the verdict.

UMESH YADAV'S INCLUSION IN ENGLAND TOUR 'MUCH-DERIVED': PARTHIV PATEL

Indore: Royal Challengers Bangalore wicket-keeper batsman Parthiv Patel feels that Umesh Yadav's selection to India's limited-overs squads for their upcoming tour of England is a good one, given how the 30-year-old fast bowler has performed in the ongoing 11th edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL).

"He (Umesh) is bowling brilliantly. He was India's best bowler in their last home season. And this IPL, he has been magnificent and has been rewarded with a place in the ODI and T20I squads for England tour. It's a well-deserved selection. He is thinking right and is executing his plans to perfection," said Parthiv after Royal Challengers Bangalore's 10-wicket win over Kings XI Punjab at the Holkar Stadium here on Monday.

A fired-up Umesh got the better of KL Rahul and Chris Gayle with short deliveries and the rest of KXIP's batting line-up couldn't punch above its weight as the hosts were bowled out for 88 in 15.1 overs. Umesh also took the wicket of Andrew Tye to finish with figures of 3/23. Overall, he has taken 17 wickets from 12 games in IPL 2018.

While his omission from India's limited-overs series against Sri Lanka in December 2017 and South Africa earlier this year was baffling, it seems Umesh's show in the cash-rich league has brought him back into the thick of things, as far as India's ODI set-up is concerned and with the World Cup just a year away, his experience would be a boon for Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Jasprit Bumrah, Shardul Thakur and Siddharth Kaul.

After Umesh's brilliance, RCB opens Parthiv and skipper Virat Kohli hit some sizzling shots as the visitors won the game with 11.5 overs remaining which in turn also boosted their Net Run Rate (-0.261 to 0.218). They now need to win their remaining two matches and hope that Rajasthan Royals, Kolkata Knight Riders and KXIP don't win more than one match.

"This tournament is all about momentum. A couple of wins and you are back on track. Say two games before, we (RCB) weren't in a good shape but we have fought hard and I'm confident we'll do well in the rest of four games," Parthiv expressed. Asked about his own batting form, Parthiv, who has scored 119 runs in four games including a half-century, said: "I feel that I'm in a good space. I have stuck to my natural game. Every time I have tried to slog in the past, I've gotten out."

BANGLADESH BURY HATCHET WITH EX-COACH GORDON GREENIDGE AFTER 19 YEARS

Daka: Bangladesh have finally buried the hatchet with West Indies batting great Gordon Greenidge -- nearly two decades after unceremoniously sacking him as head coach in the middle of the 1999 World Cup.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board hosted a reception for Greenidge late Monday in Dhaka, reuniting the coach with his former players and the executives who dumped him.

Greenidge led Bangladesh to the ICC Trophy title in Malaysia in 1997, and also steered the cricket minnows to their first World Cup.

He was awarded honorary citizenship of Bangladesh in

recognition of his achievements.

But his relationship with cricket officials soured after he opposed Bangladesh's bid for Test status, a move he considered premature.

Greenidge, who was sacked as Bangladesh prepared to play Pakistan in a World Cup fixture in England in 1999, had returned to Bangladesh just once since his sudden exit -- until Monday's function.

"The parting was disappointing. I would have liked to spend more time with Bangladesh cricket, but it wasn't to be. I have no ill will. But these things happen," Greenidge told reporters at the reception.

Members of the squad he



steered to victory in the ICC Trophy swapped stories with their old coach at the function. Greenidge said he hoped the frostiness was resigned to the past.

"I cherish all my memories here in Bangladesh. Now that we have met again, I sincerely hope that we can renew that relationship, and continue where we left off," he said.

In a goodwill gesture, Bangladesh cricket officials donated 500,000 taka to a school Greenidge founded in his native Barbados. Greenidge played 108 Tests and 113 one day internationals and was known as one of the most destructive batsmen of his time.