

TIME AND US

DAILY

SRINAGAR, KASHMIR

FRIDAY

- MAY, 18, 2018
- 02 RAMADHAN
- ISSUE: 116
- VOLUME: 04
- PAGES: 08

WEATHER TEMPERATURE		
STATION	MAX TEMPERATURE	MIN TEMPERATURE
	ACT	ACT
SRINAGAR	24.4	11.5
JAMMU	37.3	23.7
LEH	21.2	7.3
KARGIL	21.4	5.4

SUNSET FRIDAY: 07:28 PM
SUNRISE SATURDAY: 05:28 AM

LOCAL FORECAST OF SRINAGAR
Light rain/Thunder shower. Maximum & Minimum temperatures will be around 22°C & 11°C respectively.

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

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INTERSTATE | 5

BUSINESS | 7

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SMART CITIES MISSION - 1,333 PROJECTS WORTH RS.50,626 CRORES COMPLETED OR

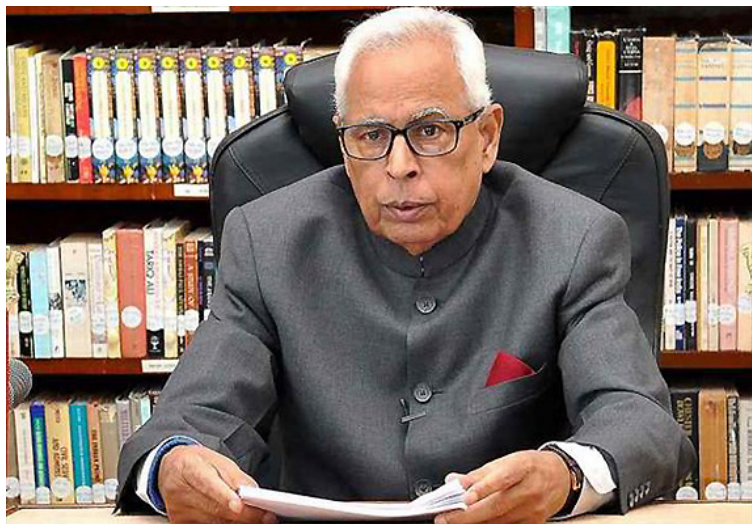
MOCKERY OF CONSTITUTION', SAYS RAHUL GANDHI AS YEDDYURAPPA TAKES OVER AS

LAND ACQUISITION WOES THWART INDIA'S MEGA REFINERY PLAN WITH SAUDI ARAMCO

ICC SET TO DEBATE COIN TOSS, MAY DO AWAY WITH IT AHEAD OF TEST CHAMPIONSHIP

Jammu and Kashmir Governor Ordinance approving death penalty to child rapists welcomed

Srinagar, May 17: What can be termed as significant path forward in tackling the crimes against Children, Governor N. N. Vohra has promulgated the Jammu and Kashmir Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018 and the Jammu and Kashmir Protection of Children from Sexual Violence Ordinance, 2018. It comes in backdrop of increase in violence against women in general and sexual violence in particular in various parts of the country, including the State of J&K, need was felt to carry out certain amendments in the Criminal Laws (the Ranbir Penal Code, Samvat, 1989; the Code of Criminal Procedure, Samvat, 1989; and the Evidence Act, Samvat, 1977) on the analogy of the amendments made in the Central Criminal Law in 2018, said an official spokesman.



1989; and (iii) the Evidence Act, Samvat, 1977.

The ordinance is being welcomed by one and all. The features of the aforesaid Ordinance include:

The Jammu and Kashmir Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018 seeks to amend: (i) the Ranbir Penal Code, Samvat, 1989; (ii) the Code of Criminal Procedure Samvat

Committing rape on a woman under sixteen years of age has been made punishable with rigorous im-

prisonment for twenty years and may extend to life sentence, which shall mean remainder of that person's natural life. Committing rape on a woman under twelve years of age has been made punishable with death sentence.

Gang Rape on a woman under

sixteen years of age has been made punishable with imprisonment for life, which shall mean imprisonment for the remainder of that person's natural life

Gang Rape on woman under twelve years of age has been made punishable with death sentence. Investigation in such cases is to be completed within a period of two months. On the other hand, Trial to be completed within six months and reasons for any delay shall need to be communicated to the High Court. It has been provided that no Bail shall be granted without hearing the Public Prosecutor.

Muzamil Maqbool, a peace activist, while talking to The Kashmir News Bureau stated – "It is a welcome step done by His Excellency Governor of the state Mr. NN vohra by approving Ordinance on death penalty to child rapists. There should be no second thought on any rape be it an adult rape or a minor one. Tough laws like death sentence are an immediate

See **Governor...**Pg 02

'It's not ceasefire but NICO'

Home Ministry outsourced to Mehbooba Mufti?

Srinagar, May 17, CNS: The 'unilateral ceasefire' announced by Government of India for the month of Ramadan in Kashmir Valley is being widely discussed on social media networking sites. A very few have opposed the government decision while majority are supporting the move hoping that peace may finally prevail in conflict zone Kashmir.

Retired Lieutenant General Tej Sapru said that it is not a ceasefire at all but NICO which stands for Non Initiation of Counter Insurgency Operations. "I appreciate the Govern-

ment's declaration of Non Initiation of Counter Insurgency Operations (NICO) as I call it (not Ceasefire). It is an excellent gesture for our people in Kashmir and I do hope that everyone makes the best of it to rethink the narrative positively for lasting peace," Sapru tweeted.

Another retired army officer who is known for his anti-Kashmir stand also took to twitter and expressed resentment over the government move.

See **NICO...**Pg 02

Ensure proper facilities to people during Ramzan: NC to Administration

SRINAGAR, MAY 17 (PTK): NC leader and political secretary to Working president, Tanvir Sadiq today visited various areas of Zadibal & downtown Srinagar to review the ongoing development works under MPLAD of the Member parliament Srinagar Dr Farooq Abdullah.

See **NC...**Pg 02

DGP asks local militants to return home

Srinagar, May 17 (KNS): Asking militants to use the opportunity of the ceasefire to return home, Director General of Police has said that this is the best time for local militants to return home.

Talking to Kashmir News See **DGP...**Pg 02

BJP ERODING AUTHORITY OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS: CONGRESS

SRINAGAR, MAY 17 (PTK): Reacting to the oath ceremony of B.S. Yeddy Rappa in Karnataka without having appropriate numbers, Congress Leader Kadfeen Chowdhury today slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi over eroding the authority of democratic Institutions to grab power, cautioning the people of hypocrisy on the part of BJP hell bent upon to take the entire Nation for ride

Kadfeen emphasized all secular forces to get united to defeat the designs of BJP RSS emphasizing that it is ultimately the people, who has to decide future of the Nation, besides rising to the occasion to defeat the divisive politics of BJP in the larger interests of securing the democratic institutions of the Country

See **Congress...**Pg 02

Pak army's statement on talks; right thing at right time: PDP

Such developments instill hope in people of JK to expect dignified future: Mansoor

Srinagar, May 17 (KNS): Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) on Thursday termed the Pakistan army's statement in which it expressed readiness to hold talks with India, as a very positive development taking place at a very right time.

In a statement issued to KNS, PDP General Secretary Mansoor Hussain Soharwardy said such a development will strengthen the reconciliatory measures that



are in the offing between the two countries to resolve the long pending issues. Mansoor said that the PDP

has always been pitching that without a thaw between India and Pakistan, peace in South Asia including Jammu and Kashmir will remain elusive. "Perpetual efforts are needed from all sides so that the two countries come closer and make peace an inseparable feature of the sub-continent. The hostilities only have yielded death and destruction and people of the state have been the worst sufferers

See **PDP...**Pg 02

TRANSPORTATION OF SCHOOL CHILDREN FRAUGHT WITH DANGERS IN SRINAGAR

Wahid Bhat

SRINAGAR, MAY 17 (PTK): The transportation ferry children to and fro from their respective top private schools in Srinagar district are fraught with great dangers but the authorities seem unmoved.

Though there is a clear direction from the education ministry that a particular 'type' and model buses only, painted yellow and supporting all measures as per the guidelines should be used for ferrying children, however contrarily it is opposite in some top most private schools in Srinagar.

Magic Tempo, Ecco and Tata 407 vehicles are hired by the private institutions to pick and drop the school children,

See **Children...**Pg 02

RDD schemes transforming socio-economic profile of rural areas: Veeri



Srinagar, May 17: Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Abdul Rehman Veeri has said that RDD plays a pivotal role in the transformation of rural sector and

everyone associated with this department needs to take keen interest in achieving the positive results. He said the schemes in

See **Veeri...**Pg 02

BABY MARIUM REUNITES WITH FATHER, FINALLY

Srinagar, May 17 (GNS): Marium, one-year-old baby girl, on Thursday met her father, released by police after four days of arrest over allegations of stone pelting in Kupwara district of north Kashmir.

Marium's mother, Misra Bano died in "cross firing" during an encounter on December 11, 2017 that also left three militants dead at Younsow Handwara village of the north Kashmir's Kupwara district. Marium father, Ishfaq Ahmad Wani, was arrested by police on charges of stone pelting and despite family's plea, he has not been released for four days.

"After seeing her father, Marium glued to him," said one of the relatives Ishfaq, Marium's father who has been jailed by police on charges of stone pelting in Handwara.

See **Baby...**Pg 02

AIP to receive PM Modi with Black Flags: Er Rasheed

SRINAGAR, MAY 17 (PTK): Ridiculing state DGP's appeal to militants to utilize the opportunity of ceasefire and return to their families AIP Supremo and MLA Langate Er Rasheed has said that even if New Delhi shows some sincerity vis a vis ceasefire but security agencies, especially Jammu and Kashmir Police, will leave no stone unturned to fail the move as their vested interest with the violence has become an industry.

Addressing a press conference in Srinagar today Er Rasheed said that a shameless police officer in Handwara has already begun the operation to sabotage the ceasefire process, obviously at the behest of his seniors.

Er Rasheed said "arrest of Ishfaq Ahmad



Wani by Handwara police in alleged stone pelting case has exposed the dirty and notorious mindset of Jammu and Kashmir police

See **Rasheed...**Pg 02

4 KAS OFFICERS TRANSFERRED

Srinagar, May 17 (GNS): The Jammu and Kashmir government on Thursday transferred four KAS officers in the interest of administration.

According to a government order, Mohammad Hussain Mir (KAS), awaiting orders of posting in the General Administration Department, has been posted as Special Secretary to the Government, School Education Department.

Ghulam Rasool Mir (KAS), Additional Secretary to the Government, GAD, has been transferred and posted as Director, Employment, J&K, against an available vacancy.

Mussarat-ul-Islam (KAS), Additional Secretary to the

See **KAS...**Pg 02

Kashmir not an issue of economic doles or privileges: Mirwaiz

APHC holds seminar in Srinagar

Srinagar, May 17, CNS: A seminar organised by the APHC titled "Responsibility of Leadership in Safeguarding the Sanctity of Martyrdom" was held at the amalgam's Rajbagh headquarters here in connection with the ongoing martyr's week. Rich tributes were paid to Shaheed-e-Milat Mirwaiz Moulana Muhammad Farooq, Shaheed-e-Hurriyat Khwaja Abdul Gani Lone and martyrs of Hawal



massacre of May 21, 1990. The speakers who addressed the gathering include Hurriyat leaders Prof Abdul

Gani Bhat, Bilal Gani Lone, JKLF chairman Muhammad Yasin Malik, heads of trade organizations that include Kashmir Economic Alliance head Muhammad Yasin Khan, Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industries Javid Ahmed Tanga, senior trade union leader Sampat Prakash and Hakeem Abdul Rashid, who was representing the Hurriyat Conference led

See **Mirwaiz...**Pg 02

BODY RECOVERED UNDER MYSTERIOUS CONDITIONS IN HAJIN

Srinagar, May 17: (GNS) Police on Thursday recovered body of 21 year old youth from Hajin area of north Kashmir's Bandipora district.

Official sources told GNS that some locals informed concerned police station about the body lying in an orchard at Bun Mohalla area of Hajin.

Soon after informing, a police team reached the spot and recovered the body.

The deceased has been identified as Hilal Ahmad Parray son of Abdul Rashid Parray.

A police officer told GNS Parray as according to his

See **Body...**Pg 02

PROVIDE QUALITY EDUCATION, MAINTAIN PEACE IN COLLEGES: ANSARI

Higher education set for overhaul in JK

SRINAGAR, MAY 17: Minister for Information Technology, Technical Education and Higher Education, Moolvi Imran Reza Ansari today urged educationists and academics to provide quality education at all levels.

Speaking at a maiden review meeting of higher education department, the minister said asked the participating principals of various Degree Colleges of Kashmir region to help in overhauling higher sector across the State.

"I want that the Principals other than the infrastructure must focus on providing quality education and most importantly peace has to be maintained on the campuses," he said.

"Nothing can be done when there is no peace inside the college campus and we won't be able to focus on the quality education," he said.

He said that everything can't be blamed on the situation.

"We should stop linking everything to the situation. This is the only way forward for us. We must take the ownership and run the colleges and not let the outside forces to run it for you," Minister asked the Principals.

Ansari said that the government has prioritized education with the launch of numerous reformative measures in this regard.

"A discernible transformation is being witnessed in all parameters of education with a notable development in infrastructure and related facilities in educational institutions of the state," he said. He emphasized the need for involving all stakeholders, including parents, teachers and local legislators, in further streamlining of the vital sector on which



the onus of building a strong and developed nation lies.

"If we have to transform our colleges and universities into world class

institutions, it must safeguard the interests of young researchers and scholars and students," he said.

"I know in our State, higher education sector is faced with many problems. But we have to work together and transform this vital sector of knowledge," he added.

Ansari stressed for preparing a mechanism for the students of the rural areas by which they could compete with students of urban areas. "There is a need of collective efforts and a well-knit strategy to further add to the standards of curricular and extracurricular activities, especially in rural areas," he added.

The Minister said that in order to make remarkable impressions on the ground, all the stakeholders and prominent educationists must come forward to help the government in evolving the higher education sector.

He interacted with the Principals and sought their suggestions over overhauling the education sector. He said that he has been receiving a plethora of responses from intelligentsia and Government would launch some substantial steps to bring changes on the ground.

He asked the Principals and teachers that government would provide all possible help to them if they wanted to go on any academic refreshing courses. "Academic collaborations must be done with foreign institutions that can help us bring some remarkable changes," he said.

The meeting was also attended by Secretary Higher Education, Javed Ahmad Khan, Director Colleges, Director, JJKSDM, Dr Peer Ghulam Nabi Suhail, Principals of the various colleges of Kashmir among other departments.

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GOVERNOR

block to strop these major and shameful acts in the society. Mr. NN vohra, The governor of state must start the death penalty with Kathua case of little child. Let J&K hang those involved in this rape case so that people will take a lesson in the state and rest of the rest at large. This Ordinance would be a mere amendment if kathua child killers don't get justice and I still have high hopes that justice will be delivered soon."

Mushtaq Ul Haq Ahmad Sikander, a Writer-Activist, while talking to the Kashmir News Bureau stated - "The death penalty for child rapists has its flaws and positives. The death for a child rape can certainly act as a deterrent but then it should extend to juvenile rapists also. The factual reality is that the death penalty has certainly failed to act as a deterrent for rapists. Instead of demanding death for rapists the emphasis should be laid on inculcating gender sensitivity among children and youth particularly boys. Gender and it's contours should be included in the school curriculum only then we can witness a positive change in the coming decades and decline in rapes. But such steps need seriousness; law should be the last resort to fight the menace of rapes.

NICO

"Has our Home Ministry been outsourced to Mehbooba Mufti? She wanted 9730 stone pelters released- our Home ministry promptly okayed it. Just 2 days later they were attacking an army convoy to lynch a JCO and wounded 7 soldiers and later killed a tourist and smashed the head of a school kid. They have been brazenly intervening in army ops to kill terrorists. The other day The Army chief rightly cautioned against a ceasefire in Kashmir. The 200 odd terrorists are under serious pressure. Every time that happens the OGWs and separatists start a campaign to stop Army ops, break the momentum of SF and give the terrorists a breather to rest and recoup. The army is being asked to stop operations have the terrorists ever said they will? Have they announced a cease fire? What if they kill two busloads of Amarnath pilgrims? Who will be responsible? Why are we in such a dire appeasement mode?" Maj Gen G.D Bakshi said.

NC

On his tour to Saderbal, Kaniter, Lalbazar, Umar Colony & Nowshera while appreciating the pace and quality of works under MPLAD, people complained about the lack of basic amenities.

Tanvir requested the administration to ensure basic amenities are provided to the people during Ramadan and special care should be taken to ensure power supply especially during Sehri, Iftaar and Taraweeh.

Tanvir requested the administration to ensure uninterrupted power supply, adequate drinking water, medicare facilities and sanitation for the holy month of Ramadan. He said that a fool-proof mechanism should be put in place to provide better amenities to people during Ramadan.

He also requested the authorities to ensure proper cleanliness, sanitation and other related facilities in various areas of Srinagar & especially in and around mosques and shrines.

Meanwhile Tanvir also reviewed many development works that are ongoing under Member parliament Srinagar Dr Farooq Abdullah's MPLAD in various areas.

He was accompanied by Block President Zaidal Mushtaq Beig, Youth President Imran Bhat & other prominent people of the areas.

DGP

Service (KNS), Dr. S.P Vaid appealed the families of the local militants to use their influence to secure the return of their loved ones who have chosen the path of violence. DGP said that ceasefire provides the best opportunity for the local militants to do away with the gun.

CONGRESS

Stating that democracy is in great danger under BJP rule at Centre, Kadfeen Chowdhury said that the Karnataka Assembly Elections should work as eye opener for the Nation and decide as to what steps they need to take to protect the democratic institutions of the Country being used by BJP especially Prime Minister Narendra Modi to grab power.

He said this is high time for all secular forces in the Country to get united to save the democracy and secular image of the country, as that, the BJP is making all out efforts to undermine all democratic institutions aiming to use these to suppress secular forces, which needs to be thwarted, he added and reiterated his appeal to entire Nation to defeat the divisive policies of BJP RSS.

PDP

of the arch rivalry of the yesteryears," Mansoor said, adding that the statement made by the Pakistan army has to be

welcomed as it aims to put lid over violence and usher era of peace.

The PDP General Secretary said that after the encouraging development of Ramadan ceasefire by the central government, the statement of the Pakistan army has instilled new hopes to the people of the state to look forward towards a better, peaceful and dignified future.

Mansoor said that both India and Pakistan should take immediate measures for the de-escalation of violence, opening of more routes, initiate talks with the stakeholders and ensure successful people to people contact on both the sides of the border and LOC. "The time has come when the political leadership, armies and the civil societies of both India and Pakistan should pitch for sustainable dialogue and reconciliation as the only means to address the pending issues and save precious lives," said the PDP General Secretary.

Mansoor said the basic foundation of the PDP was laid upon the principle of restoration of peace and end of enmity between both India and Pakistan and that the party founder spent his entire life amid perpetual efforts to stop the guns of both the sides from roaring. "Time is vindicating the earnest and consistent stand of the PDP towards everlasting, peaceful and honorable solution of the Kashmir conflict," he added.

The PDP leader said that time has come when irrespective of the party lines, the political groups in Kashmir too need to rise above and play a constructive role in unison so that state's present generation is saved from mayhem and bloodshed," he said.

CHILDREN

which is an open violation of the norms and exposed the children to all traffic perils.

While talking to Press Trust of Kashmir a group of parents said, "We cannot list grievance with the school authorities as they will either take our wards to task or find excuse asking us to take the discharge certificate. Government schools are not that well equipped to disseminate quality education and hence we have to remain contented only".

They alleged that despite Supreme Court guidelines regarding the safety of children in school buses adding that top most private schools in Srinagar fail to follow the standard. They said that children in preparatory schools face travel in similar conditions.

They said that many vehicles carrying school children are in excess of its permitted seating capacity. "There is no enough space to keep school bags.

"Children have to retain their bags in their laps or the drivers put the bags on top of the vans to accommodate more children. The seating arrangement of the children is so hazardous and overloaded which can invite any eventuality any time", they said.

They added that a van having the seating capacity of 8 persons generally ferry 15-18 children, most of whom are seen hanging on the foot rest of the vehicle or are superimposed upon one another. When contact Chief education officer Srinagar he said, "RTO department is monitoring transportation system of education".

VEERI

RD sector are changing socio-economic profile and developmental landscape of the rural areas.

The Minister said this while chairing a meeting with District Development Commissioners of Kashmir division to review the progress of schemes being implemented by RDD at a meeting convened, here today.

Secretary RDD Sheetal Nanda, Director RDD Kashmir Nazir Ahmed, Director RDD Jammu R K Bhat, Director Planning RDD, ACDs and other senior officers.

Termining the role of DDCs important for monitoring the implementation of all government schemes at district level, the Minister said that they should have ensure strong monitoring of these schemes so that a visible impact can be seen on ground.

There are sufficient amount of funding under all the schemes but the need is to utilize them properly, the Minister said adding that the rural people have great expectations from the government and serious efforts need to be put in by all of us. Addressing the DDCs, Veeri said that besides many government schemes/programmes being implemented by various departments, thrust should be given to the RDD sector. He said that your guidance to ACDs will take them in a right direction and positive results will be achieved.

"DDCs should take a monthly exclusive meeting with ADCs, DPOs, BDOs and Programme Officers (IWMP) so that their progress be monitored and ground issues be resolved in time", the Minister said.

Veeri asked the DDCs to make BDOs responsible and accountable for delivery of services on the ground.

With regard to activities under MGNREGA, Veeri said that convergence mode component of this programme has proved very beneficial and many new works have been added

to the list of convergence works.

"We should take maximum benefits out of convergence mode but only after ensuring that works taken up should be completed in given time", he said.

He asked for ensuring distribution of job cards to the registered workers and seeding of Aadhar with their bank accounts for online transfer of wages.

Veeri stressed for creating vermicom post units in the rural areas under MGNREGA. He asked for developing at least one village in a block as organic village to promote organic farming.

The Minister asked for focusing on achieving given targets under SBM and to put in dedicated efforts in making the blocks ODF. He also asked for completing ODF verification at the earliest and to submit ODF sustainability plan at the earliest. The district lagging behind in construction of IHHLs should expedite the works and also the geo-tagging of the assets be expedited.

During the meeting, the District Development Commissioners gave brief overview of the RD activities being carried out in their respective districts and also put forth various issues they are facing at district level including shortage of technical staff at BDO offices.

The Minister assured the DDCs that all the issues raised would be taken care of. He asked Secretary RDD to look into the concerns and resolve them at the earliest for improved performance under the schemes.

On the occasion, the Minister unveiled a booklet comprising details of works that can be taken up under convergence mode in MGNREGA.

BABY

For four days Mohammad Shaban, father-in-law of Ishfaq, an elderly man who along with her aged wife looked after Marium.

The elderly couple's only issue, daughter Misra, was married to Ishfaq, originally a resident of Hardsheva Sopore.

"He (Ishfaq) was not part of any stone pelting protests. There were protests and stone pelting and he along with other people, he fled from the area but he was not part of any stone pelting protests," Shaban had told GNS said while holding Marium in his lap.

The locals of the area had urged Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti to interfere and order release of Ishfaq for the baby girl. "Holy month of Ramadan is beginning now and she (Mehbooba) should interfere and ensure that baby girl is not now denied father's affection as her mother died in violence already," the locals had said.

Ishfaq was arrested on Monday after summoned by police to its post at Chowgal. As he appeared before police, he was put behind the bars, they said.

RASHEED

as the same SP who was begging before Ishfaq when his wife was murdered with intention by a bullet of men in uniform proved so shameless that he summoned the victim to his police station and put him in lockup thus making sixteen month old motherless baby to cry in isolation. I as the public representative informed chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti and police chief about the incident whose intervention finally helped Ishfaq to get released this afternoon".

Er Rasheed added that despite being women herself, the it took chief Minister 24 hours to wake up and feel the pain of a baby whose mother was shot dead by police and father locked up in a police station". He said "it is obvious that the chief Minister has compromised everything for chair and left people at the mercy of the men in uniform".

Er Rasheed said that the said SP has created havoc in the entire area and has crossed all limits for the reason he is enjoying the patronage of power corridors. Er Rasheed added that dozens of videos circulating in social media are ample proof to conclude that the black sheep in Jammu and Kashmir Police have brought a bad name to the entire police force, which otherwise has a good number of God fearing and pro Kashmir elements in it.

Er Rasheed said that booking of the leaders of Jamat e Islami and other pro resistance parties in Ganderbal and other parts of valley has unmasked the ugly face of Jammu and Kashmir Police. He said "the men in uniform, especially Jammu and Kashmir Police, are the biggest beneficiaries of turmoil and bloodbath. Most of the Police officers have made huge assets by not only sucking money from innocent Kashmiri's but also have blackmailed and looted New Delhi.

Unfortunately most of these Police officers are the locals who have forgotten that they have to die some day and get buried in their native grave yards". Er Rasheed said that under such circumstances the Prime Minister's visit is nothing except an attempt to mislead the world community as he has been constantly giving the notion that whatsoever is happening in Jammu and Kashmir is being done by the miscreants and Pakistani agents and is no way different than a law and order problem.

While appealing the masses to observe complete shutdown

on 19th May, Er Rasheed said that AIP will receive PM Modi with black flags so as to make world community realize that India is not serious and sincere in resolving the issue. Er Rasheed appealed the people of Jammu, Ladakh, Pir Panchal and Chenab Valley to support the strike call for the largest interest of the people of state.

KAS

Government, School Education Department, has been transferred and posted as Director, Libraries, J&K, against an available vacancy. Charandeep Singh (KAS), Joint Director, Education Jammu, has been transferred and posted as Additional Secretary to the Government GAD

The government also posted Shamim Kraipak, under orders of repatriation to SKICC, Srinagar, as Administrative Officer in the office of the Divisional Commissioner, Jammu.

MIRWAIZ

by Syed Ali Geelani. The seminar was moderated by Moulana M S Rehman Shams.

In his presidential address, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said that Kashmir is not an issue of economic doles or privileges but a political and humanitarian issue and it is our consistent stand that this issue can be resolved either by implementation of UN Resolutions on Kashmir or through a sustained result oriented meaningful dialogue among India, Pakistan and the people of Kashmir and that military might can't muzzle the genuine aspirations of people of Kashmir.

Without directly referring to Ramadan Ceasefire Mirwaiz said that no temporary initiative can prove fruitful unless steps are taken to address the basic dispute of Kashmir. He asked what next after this month? Will Government of India start killing people of Kashmir again?

Mirwaiz said that the people of Kashmir are engaged in a struggle based on the internationally accepted principal of Right to Self Determination and in order to crush this genuine struggle of the people the repressive measures used by the government of India are faced and fought with complete determination and unity by the people of Kashmir which he said, will bear fruit.

Paying glowing tributes to the Shaheed-e-Milat and Shaheed-e-Hurriyat and the martyrs of Hawal massacre besides all the martyrs of Kashmir, Mirwaiz said that the martyrs have put the duty on us which demands that we show our complete commitment towards the movement with unison of thought and action. Mirwaiz said the it is a fact people of Kashmir have Rejected FEAR and have become resilient and Govts tactics of bullet and pellet, arresting people and leadership confining them in jails or houses, torture, use of NIA, repeated restrictions and curfews and harassment and intimidation and other measures of pushing the youth to the wall have proved a complete failure. In fact all these have boomeranged upon the perpetrators. Mirwaiz said that besides resistance leadership every segment of society including lawyers, traders, students, businessmen, employees, and teachers have to share the responsibility to take the movement forward.

In his address, JKLF chairman Muhammad Yasin Malik said that Shaheed-e-Milat and Shaheed-e-Hurriyat had made unity as their way of life whenever they faced serious threats and onslaughts from New Delhi. He said the present dispensation at New Delhi has decided to kill and trash Kashmiris. He said operation all out started by the GoI through its forces in Kashmir was not only against militants but against the political pro-freedom leadership too. He said in such circumstances, where Delhi's intentions are clear, the only option left with the Kashmiri people is to resist this onslaught with unity.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof Abdul Gani Bhat said the Kashmiri nation is a wise nation and people like him are not the watchmen of darkness but light. He stressed on forging unity on all fronts till the final goal is achieved. Senior APHC leaders also paid tributes to Shaheed-e-Milat and Shaheed-e-Hurriyat stating that he always keeps on telling people to keep the sanctity of the Hurriyat as a complete form that represents true aspirations of people, intact.

In his address the senior Hurriyat leader Bilal Gani Lone said that when we talk of collective leadership then individual approaches and agendas are to be made subservient to the collective cause. While paying rich tributes to Shaheed-e-Milat and Shaheed-e-Hurriyat he said that Hurriyat is carrying forward their mission and the legacy.

BODY

family was abducted by a group of unknown gunmen from his residence last night and today his body was found strangled in the orchard.

The body was later handed over to the family after conducting all legal medico formalities including the post mortem, the officer said.

A case under relevant sections of law has been registered and further investigation taken up, the officer added.

Smart Cities Mission - 1,333 projects worth Rs.50,626 crores completed or under implementation / tendering

New Delhi, May 17: This is with reference to the article "Only 22% funds utilised in six Housing Ministry schemes" published on 12th May 2018 in a newspaper which was based on the information given to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Urban Development. This is a misinterpretation of the statistics relating to funds released/utilisation regarding schemes/missions being implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, resulting in incorrect inferences. While funds released/utilisation is part of the normal government financial procedures to ensure proper accounting systems, it is not a true barometer of the physical progress and speed of the implementation of the mission targets/objectives. Most of the schemes have large capital intensive projects with a completion time range of 1-3 years for the project.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has been able to achieve substantial milestones in both physical and financial terms in so far as mission objectives/targets are concerned. The utilization certificates are required to be submitted within 12 months of the closure of the financial year in which the grants were released. Thus, during the year 2017-18, while the total cumulative grants released was Rs.46,663 crores, Utilization Certificates were due only for the grants released upto March

2016, i.e. for approximately Rs.10,365 crores. The utilization figures, given to the Standing Committee pertained mostly to funds released upto 2015-16 as only this was due in 2017-18. In fact, at the closure of the year 2017-18, as against the due amount of Rs.10,365 crores for utilization certificates (UCs), actual UCs for an amount of Rs.15,403 crores were received in the Ministry. This figure also included some UCs which were due in the next financial year i.e. 2018-19.

Mission wise progress of funds released, projects progress and utilisation status, etc. is given below:

Smart Cities Mission
Smart City Mission has lots of convergence with other missions like AMRUT etc. and some of the projects are implemented under Public Private Partnerships. 1,333 projects worth Rs.50,626 crores have been completed or under implementation / tendering. Overall projects worth Rs.2,03,979 crores have been identified for all 99 smart cities across the country.

Out of 99 Smart cities which have been selected so far, 91 of them have already incorporated SPVs (Special Purpose Vehicles), 9 Smart Cities viz. Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Vadodara, Visakhapatnam, Bhopal, Pune, Kakinada, Surat & Nagpur have already established Integrated City Command and Control Centres (ICCC). Work is under progress on 14 more and

32 are under tendering stage.

Smart Road projects have been completed in 4 cities worth Rs.228 crores and are under implementation/tendering stage in 40 cities worth Rs. 5,123 crores. Smart Solar projects in 6 cities have been completed, while projects in 49 cities are under implementation/tendering. Smart Water projects have been completed in 6 cities while projects are under implementation/tendering in 43 cities. Similarly, Smart Waste Water projects in 46 cities have been completed/under implementation/ tendering. Public Private Partnership projects worth Rs.734 crores have been completed in 13 cities while projects worth Rs.7,753 crores are under implementation/tendering in 52 cities. Apart from this, other impactful projects like heritage conservation, water front development, public space development etc. have been completed in 13 cities worth Rs.107 crores and projects worth Rs.5,865 crores are under implementation/tendering.

The selection of smart cities was done in various stages with the last 9 cities being selected in Jan 2018. It is pertinent to mention that it normally takes around 12 to 18 months after selection of a city as Smart City to set up a Special Purpose Vehicle, appointment of a Project Management Consultant, prepare detailed project reports and award the work after tender. The timeline for the comple-

tion of smart city projects according to the rounds in which they were selected is given below:

- Round 1 cities- 2019-20 to 2020-21
- Round 2 cities- 2019-20 to 2021-22
- Round 3 cities- 2020-21 to 2021-22
- Round 4 cities- 2020-21 to 2022-23

AMRUT
Under AMRUT, out of State Annual Action Plan (SAAP) size of Rs.77,640 crores, projects worth Rs.65,075 crores (84%) are under various stages of implementation including projects tendered and where DPRs have been approved. More than 22 crores urban population will benefit from this mission. Total of Rs. 11,945 crores has been released so far. Close to 400 projects worth Rs.325 crores have already been completed and for 2,188 projects worth Rs.40,074 crores, contracts have been awarded and are at various stages of implementation. Further, 895 projects costing Rs.13,586 crores are under tendering and for 729 projects costing Rs.10,824 crores DPRs have been approved. Further, 8.58 lakh water tap connections have been provided so far under the Mission and by convergence of other schemes. By the end of the Mission, i.e. June 2020, nearly 1.4 crore water taps will be provided across the country. 37 lakh street lights have been replaced with energy efficient LED lights. Around 322 green spaces and parks projects have been

completed under the Mission. A Single window clearance system has been implemented in Delhi and Mumbai for construction permits, where only 8 procedures and less than 60 days are required for all approvals. Online Building Permission Systems (OBPS) is operational in 370 Mission cities and is under various stages of implementation in remaining cities.

PMAY(U)
Total of Rs. 24,475 crores has been released to the States under the scheme. So far, 45.86 lakh houses have been sanctioned under the scheme; out of these 23.43 lakh houses have been grounded and 7.02 lakh houses have been completed so far (including incomplete houses of earlier scheme).

DAY - NULM
Under the Mission Rs.1907.5 crores have been released so far. The Mission has been extended to all the statutory towns. Since the beginning of the mission, employment has been generated for 6,36,956 beneficiaries. Around 11 lakh urban poor have been imparted skill training to improve their employability. A total of 2,81,197 Self-Help Groups have been formed and 1,94,879 SHGs have been assisted with Revolving Fund while 3,82,746 SHGs have been disbursed loans under SHG Bank Linkage Programme. Street Vendor Survey has been completed in 2,178 towns and 16,76,403 street vendors have been identified and 7,92,286 ID cards is-

sued. 1,565 shelters for urban homeless have been sanctioned and 961 shelters made operational.

HRIDAY
City HRIDAY Plans (CHPs) for 12 cities have been approved. 66 DPRs amounting to Rs. 421.47 crores have been approved and Rs. 261.31 crores have been released to 12 cities for implementation of scheme. Total expenditure under the scheme so far is Rs.209.5 crores. 58 projects are under implementation at various stages. All works will be completed by September 2018.

Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban)
A total of Rs. 6,592 crores have been released to states. Total number of 48.67 lakh individual household toilets and 3.3 lakh Community/Public Toilet (CT/PT) seats have already been constructed and 8.3 lakh individual toilets and 0.37 lakh CT/PT are under construction. 2679 cities have been so far self-declared Open Defecation Free and after third party certification 2,133 cities/ ULBs have been certified as Open Defecation Free (ODF). 62,436 urban wards have been covered under 100% Door to Door collection of solid waste while waste to compost total achievement is 13.11 lakh TPA from 145 functional Plants and work on 65 lakh TPA is under progress. Around 88 Mega Watts of energy is being produced from waste and work on Waste to Energy plants of 412 MW is under progress.

Environment Ministry Forms 19 Teams to Undertake Cleaning of Beaches, River Fronts and Lakes in Nine Coastal States

New Delhi, May 17: In the build-up to the World Environment Day 2018, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, has formed 19 teams to take up cleaning of beaches, river fronts and lakes in the country. Cleaning up of around 24 beaches in nine (9) coastal states (list attached) and cleaning of river fronts in 24 identified polluted stretches in 19 states (list attached) will be undertaken. Besides the listed rivers, a special cleanliness drives will be carried out at Yamuna riverfront in Delhi. Certain lakes and water bodies have also been identified for cleaning.

The 19 teams will include senior officers of MoEF&CC, state nodal agencies in-charge of eco-clubs of schools, State Pollution Control Boards, district administration, col-

lege of fisheries located along the coastal stretches and other educational/research institutions. The teams will involve school children, college students and local communities in the cleaning exercise. The Ministry will be engaging Eco-club schools, which are being provided assistance from MoEF&CC under the National Green Corps programme.

An amount of Rs. 10 lakh has been earmarked for each stretch of beach, river front and lake. Cleaning up around important archaeological sites will also be taken up. The clean-up activities have started from May 15 and will conclude on June 5. During this period, various cultural programmes, quiz competition, debate, awareness rallies will also be organized.

State Nodal Agencies

(SNAs) are the nodal points for implementing the programme of the Ministry in every State. For the cleaning of the water bodies, the Ministry has identified the stretches in consultation with SNAs and institutional heads from College of Fisheries, which are near the water bodies in each State. The cleaning programme will involve students from various schools and colleges and will also include members from NGOs, National Cadet Corps (NCC), Border Security Force (BSF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Coast Guard and citizens. Cleaning equipment such as brooms, baskets, gloves for children and dustbins will be provided, as well as transportation arrangements will also be made. The waste collected

from the beaches and river fronts will be safely disposed off to identified sites, in coordination with local municipal authorities.

Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, has written to the Principals of schools across the country, requesting them to declare their schools/institutions free from plastic pollution. The Ministry will certify schools that become plastic free and publicize the harmful effects of plastics in a mission mode by undertaking following activities like-No plastic items may be used in schools such as plastic water bottles, plastic bags, plastic cups, plastic plates, plastic water jugs, plastic folders/trays/penstands etc.

Adopt a water body, pond, wetland, beaches or eco-sensitive area etc. in or around

schools/colleges and make them plastic free. Cleanliness drives to be undertaken on prescribed holidays between April to May.

At the end of the programme, the Minister will be awarding certificates titled 'Green School/college' to institutions that declare themselves free from plastic pollution. The programme will be monitored by senior officers of the Ministry, regional offices of MoEF&CC and district administration. Union Minister for MoEF&CC will issue certificates to all participating schools and colleges as an appreciation of their efforts.

Besides the above mentioned cleanliness drives, the Ministry will organize a mini-marathon at Vinay Marg on June 3, to spread awareness on proper utilization of plastic. The marathon will be attended by students from

Delhi-NCR. Around 10 thousand to 15 thousand people are expected to participate in the mini-marathon. Simultaneously, marathons will also be organized in five other cities - Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, Gangtok, Bhopal and Bhubaneswar the same day.

India is the global host of World Environment Day celebrations 2018, the largest UN-led celebrations on environment. The theme of this year's edition of World Environment Day is - "Beat Plastic Pollution". In this regard, the Ministry has drawn up several programmes and activities scheduled to begin from May 2018 onwards. Some of the activities drawn up for the World Environment Day celebrations include - activities in Vigyan Bhawan, exhibitions on Rajpath lawns and activities in various states.

Creation of Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) in Department of Commerce

New Delhi, May 17: Department of Commerce formally issued notification for creation of Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Hon'ble Commerce and Industry Minister Sh. Suresh Prabhu has given his approval for creation of DGTR in Department of Commerce, consequent upon amendment carried out by Government of India to the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961 on May 7, 2018 in this regard.

DGTR will be the apex National Authority for administering all trade remedial measures including anti-dumping, countervailing duties and safeguard measures. The DGTR will bring Directorate General of Anti-dumping and Allied duties (DGAD), Directorate General of Safeguards (DGS) and Safeguards (QR) functions of DGFT into its fold by merging them into one single national entity. It will also provide trade defence support to our domestic industry and exporters in dealing with increasing instances of trade remedy investigations instituted against them by other countries. In the last three years, India initiated more than 130 anti-dumping/countervailing duty/safeguard cases to deal with the rising incidences of unfair trade practices and to provide a level playing field to the domestic industry.

DGTR has been approved with a sanctioned strength of 112 posts drawn from Directorate General of Anti-dumping and Allied duties of Department of Commerce and Directorate General of Safeguards of CBEC. DGTR will be a multi service organization drawing upon the skill-set of various officers from the field of International Trade, Customs, Revenue, Finance, Economics, Costing and Law. The creation of DGTR will also result in savings of 49 posts to the Government on account of merging DGAD and DGS. This has been in tune with the goal of the Prime Minister to have "Minimum Government Maximum Governance".

Sh. Suresh Prabhu, Commerce and Industry Minister has expressed satisfaction over creation of DGTR, an issue pending since 1997, and has termed it to be manifestation of vision of Prime Minister to provide a level playing field to our domestic industry.

Students' Council meet held at CUK

Srinagar, May 17: A meeting of the Students Council of the Central University of Kashmir (CUK) was held at varsity's Nowgam campus-I on Wednesday with Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir in chair.

The student members of Council representing all the teaching departments participated in the meeting and expressed optimism about the academic transaction in various departments of the university. However, they invited attention of the authorities towards certain issues specific to different teaching departments.

Addressing the Council members, Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir, said the university appreciates the involvement of students in decision making at all levels. He said the student representatives of respective departments have been associated with the Board of Studies and School Boards wherein they can put forth their point of view about the curriculum development and other academic issues.

Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir said the students, despite several constraints, have been successful in bringing laurels to the university after participating in competitions held in the varsities of Jammu and Kashmir and other States.

Welcoming the participants, Dean Students Welfare, Dr. Fayaz A Nikka said the CUK believes in democratic functioning where the inputs of students as the primary stakeholders are considered for various policy formulations. He said the university authorities are seized of the issues confronting the students and are trying hard to resolve them.

Librarian, Dr. Abdul Majid Baba and Assistant Registrar, Academics, Mr. Syed Adil Andrabi were also present during the meeting.

Hanjura for strict action against encroachers of govt land

SRINAGAR, MAY 17: Minister for Revenue, Ghulam Nabi Lone Hanjura, today directed custodian department to initiate legal action against encroachers of government land.

The Minister said this while chairing a meeting convened to review the functioning of the Custodian Department here.

The meeting was attended by Commissioner Secretary Revenue, Custodian General, Custodian Kashmir, Custodian Jammu, Director Finance Revenue and all the Deputy Custodians of the department. During the meeting, the Minister also directed that a special drive is initiated to remove the encroachments on the custodian land.

The Minister asked Custodian Department officers to improve work culture so that evacuee property is safeguarded and put to productive use across the State.

The Minister sought details on various functions carried out by the Evacuee Department, adding that any violation or deviation from rules would not be tolerated.

Hanjura asked authorities to implement all departmental acts in letter and spirit to protect the Custodian property.

In order to streamline the functioning of the Evacuees Department, the Minister directed the officers/officials of the Department to work with added zeal and dedication to improve the functioning of the Department.

The Minister said no laxity would be tolerated with regard to the safeguarding of evacuee property. The custodian officials were directed to submit monthly statements of the property including the retrieved land.

Stressing on the need for a paradigm shift from being the custodian of land to development of productive assets which will fetch revenue to the Department, the Minister directed the concerned officers to explore the possibility of creating state-of-the-art public utilities on custodian land in the State. The Minister also urged for regular assessment of the evacuee property to ensure proper revenue realization to ensure complete transparency in the functioning of the Department. Earlier, the Minister received brief on the status of various properties being administered and managed by the Evacuee Department including over 14 Lakh Kanals of Land in Jammu Division and over 58000 Kanals of land in Kashmir Division besides houses, shops, flats, orchards and other properties administered in both divisions.

CAG and Secy MDWS empty toilet pit near Pune for Swachh Bharat

New Delhi, May 17: The Comptroller and Auditor General of India, Shri Rajiv Mehrishi, and Secretary, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Shri Parameswaran Iyer emptied a toilet pit from a twin pit toilet in rural Maharashtra early this morning. Senior sanitation officers from States across the country, including Additional Chief Secretaries of Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, followed suit to encourage use of twin pit toilets in rural India, and to de-stigmatize emptying of toilet pits by the household themselves.

The twin-pit toilet is the safest toilet technology most suited to large parts of rural India and is recommended by the World Health Organization as well as the Government of India. Research has shown that one of the reasons rural households might hesitate in building and/or using this low-cost technology is the stigma associated with emptying of the pit.

However, it is scientifically proven that a pit in a standard twin-pit toilet model fills up in roughly 5 years for a 6-membered family. The waste can then be easily re-directed to the second pit,

and it becomes safe-to-handle compost in 6 months to 1 year, and is rich in NPK (nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium) nutrients which makes it ideal for use in agriculture. In many parts of India, this is also known as sonakhaad (golden fertilizer) because of high nutritious content.

Today's pit-cleaning exercise in Pandhwarewadi gram panchayat, Daund block of Pune district was a step towards dispelling these myths, biases and stigmas. Several State Principal Secretaries (Sanitation), senior officers of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), and senior officers of Maharashtra government joined in this exercise.

All officers then held up the compost in their hands. Commemorative jars full of the compost were taken home by all present at the event.

The pit-emptying exercise was a part of an ODF-Sustainability workshop. The Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) has made significant progress in the three and a half years since its launch. The rural sanitation coverage has more than doubled since the launch of the mission from 39% to nearly 84%. Over 7 crore

toilets have been built across rural India under the Mission. As an outcome, over 3.6 lakh villages and 385 districts have been declared Open Defecation Free (ODF), across 17 States and Union Territories.

With over half the country declared ODF, the Mission is also working on sustaining the ODF status in these areas. To that end, detailed ODF Sustainability Guidelines have also been issued, and a workshop was conducted with ODF States and districts in Pune over the last two days.

Speaking at the workshop, the Secretary, Shri Parameswaran Iyer, said that along with declaring the country ODF, the Mission is working with States towards sustaining this ODF status over the years and decades to come. For this, he said, sustained behavior change efforts had to be undertaken at all levels, and the Swachhagrahis had a critical role to play in this. He also announced that the Mission will soon be launching a mass media campaign to promote twin pit toilets in rural India, featuring leading actors, Shri Akshay Kumar and Ms Bhumi Pednekar.

Live social media session on Startup India with Suresh Prabhu : AskPrabhu

New Delhi, May 17: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Civil Aviation Shri Suresh Prabhu in a live session on social media answered aspiring and existing entre-

preneurs who had pressing questions on Startup India and the support which they could expect from the government on 16th May. Wednesday between 4:30 pm and 5pm.

Participants used the hash tag #AskPrabhu to put their questions across during the live session. The Minister answered queries regarding benefits available to entre-

preneurs and the support systems that the Government has put in place. He laid emphasis on unleashing the entrepreneurial spirit in the country.

DAILY Editorial Time and Us SRINAGAR J&K

Cauvery water issue: At last, a scheme

Now that the Karnataka election is over, the Centre has finally mustered the courage to submit a draft scheme in the Supreme Court to implement the final decision on apportioning the Cauvery waters among the riparian States. The draft, which gives no name for the authority it proposes to create to monitor implementation of the Cauvery Tribunal's final award, as modified by the Supreme Court, has been largely drawn from the Tribunal's directions. It will be a two-tier structure, with an apex body charged with the power to ensure compliance with the final award, and a regulation committee that will monitor the field situation and water flow. The powers and functions of the authority are fairly comprehensive. Its powers would extend to apportionment, regulation and control of Cauvery waters, supervision of operations of reservoirs and regulation of water releases. The draft makes the authority's decisions final and binding. However, there is an ambiguous clause: if the authority finds that any one of the States is not cooperative, it can seek the Centre's help, and the Centre's decision will be final and binding. This can be seen either as an enabling clause to resolve the situation when there is a stand-off, or as one that gives scope to the Centre to intervene on behalf of one State. To allay apprehensions of the Centre acting in a partisan manner, it would be better if it is not given the final say, but mandated to help in the implementation of the Tribunal's award at all times.

There are a few differences between the Cauvery Management Board envisaged by the Tribunal and the authority proposed in the scheme. The Tribunal favoured the chairperson being an irrigation engineer with not less than 20 years of experience in water resources management, whereas the scheme says the chairperson could be a senior and eminent engineer with wide experience in water resources management or an officer in the rank of Secretary or Additional Secretary to the Union government. Similarly, the representatives from the four States would be administrators rather than engineers as proposed by the Tribunal. It is possible that Karnataka and Tamil Nadu may have differing views on the nature and powers of the authority, as well as its name and composition. But it is vital that all States accept the mechanism, and that the authority itself have adequate autonomy. The Cauvery dispute has dragged on for several decades, and it would be unfortunate if the implementation of a final decision arrived at through rigorous adjudication is not monitored by an independent authority. All States should agree to the broad contours of this scheme and comply with the authority's decisions. The most welcome feature of such a mechanism is that an issue concerning the livelihood of thousands of farmers will be taken out of the political domain and entrusted to experts.

PIECES OF A SCATTERED MANDATE

Valerian Rodrigues

There are some trends that stand out in Karnataka's 2018 Assembly elections. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has held on to the Central Karnataka region and the coastal and Malnad belt. In the Bombay-Karnataka region, while the BJP has held on to its existing advantage, in the Lingayat region of central North Karnataka, it has conceded much more space to the Congress as compared to the 2013 Assembly elections or the 2014 Lok Sabha elections.

However, the BJP has made significant advances in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region, except Ballari. Moreover, it has emerged as the rival to the Janata Dal (Secular), or the JD(S), in the southern belt dominated by Vokkaligas, replacing the Congress, although in Mysuru and Chamarajanagar the latter is still holding out. In Bengaluru city the BJP and the Congress are almost equipoised. In the North Bombay-Karnataka region, hitherto dominated by the BJP, the Congress has made significant inroads.

It is important to note that in Ballari district, dominated by the mining barons, the Congress has succeeded in whittling down the hold of the BJP-linked Reddy brothers. While the JD(S) is sitting pretty in the Old Mysuru region, except Malnad, it has made significant gains in Hyderabad-Karnataka and in some parts of the North Bombay-Karnataka region. While one can always draw parallels to the 2013 Assembly elections and 2014 Lok Sabha elections, what is important to note is the significant shift in the electoral cartography that this election signals.

Shift in the electoral base
There has been a shift in the JD(S)'s electoral constituencies, and the support extended by Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) as an ally, and by All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen publicly has been crucial in some constituencies. In Hyderabad-Karnataka, where the BSP always enjoyed a base, it also rallied Muslims towards the JD(S). The memory of the recent Gorakhpur and Phulpur Lok Sabha by-elections, where the Samajwadi Party and BSP set up an alliance to inflict a stunning defeat to the BJP, was too fresh to be ignored. It is important to point out that Madigas, the most numerous Dalit community in this region and who form the main base of the BSP, have nursed a grievance that major benefits of reservation have accrued to Holeyas, and the Congress has tended to give relatively fewer seats to them. Besides, there is not even a single influential Muslim leader from this region in the State Congress today, particularly after the passing away of Qamarul Islam.

Two measures that the outgoing Chief Minister, Mr. Siddaramaiah, embraced, although much criticised, made the loss bearable to the Congress. The first was to undercut the dominant mining barons in Ballari. Otherwise, it was quite possible that the Congress would have suffered a great loss of face in this district.

The second issue was the recommendation of the Siddaramaiah cabinet to accord to Lingayats a distinct religious minority status. The inroads that the Congress has made in the Bombay-Karnataka region cannot be explained without significant sections of Lingayats shifting their loyalties to the



Even within the caste bloc that Mr. Siddaramaiah came to wield, there was much restiveness with regard to opportunities and resources, and it came to be dubbed as a pro-Kuruba bloc not merely by the upper castes, but by castes and communities below in the social hierarchy.

Congress. The BJP may face the prospects of a declining social base in Northern and Central Karnataka if it does not respond to this recommendation. The genie is out of the bag!

The BJP has truly consolidated its power in the State, but the reasons vary across regions. In the coastal belt it has been strident Hindutva mobilisation alongside a new alliance between land-holding sections and business interests. In the Bombay-Karnataka and Malnad regions, it is a complex set of factors alongside Hindutva: self-conceit among Lingayats, that they be regarded as the first in the order of priority, and identification with B.S. Yeddyurappa as their salvific agent. Lingayats as well as Vokkaligas have smarted under the assertion of lower castes on Mr. Siddaramaiah's watch. Further, the split along the Lingayat-Veerashaiva axis came too late, without attending to their other grievances. Like Lingayats in the North, in the Old Mysuru region, Vokkaligas were smarting under the assertion of Kurubas, Mr. Siddaramaiah's caste.

What about the Narendra Modi factor? While this and BJP president Amit Shah's organisational finesse were important, it was only relative to some of the important cleavages and trends mentioned above.

The Congress's take away
The Congress is still to come to terms with Hindutva as a mass ideology, particularly with extensive support among the young across the caste divide. This ideology is sustained through regular public enactments and demonstrations of communal solidari-

ties. The Congress, believing that secularism is too weak to combat Hindutva's attraction, decided to play popular Hinduism with an inclusive appeal.

But popular Hinduism in Karnataka today is largely in the grip of Hindutva, and therefore the Congress gesture sounded inauthentic, as there is no major battle that the Congress has fought so far to retrieve a distinct version of Hindutva. The time has come for the Congress to ask whether a different Hinduism, or for that matter Islam or Christianity, can speak?

The Congress thought that the track record of the Siddaramaiah regime with lower caste concerns upfront and a large number of populist measures, combined with a sustained attack on Modi government, could be an adequate plank. It was not explained why it had centred on these populist measures and not others, and why for measures targeted at a section of the population others should vote for the party.

Even within the caste bloc that Mr. Siddaramaiah came to wield, there was much restiveness with regard to opportunities and resources, and it came to be dubbed as a pro-Kuruba bloc not merely by the upper castes, but by castes and communities below in the social hierarchy.

There was little enthusiasm within the Congress leadership in the State with regard to certain measures that Mr. Siddaramaiah embraced. Dalit and Vokkaliga Congress leaders in the State showed little interest in the Lingayat issue, and none of them brought the issue of sub-categories within Dalits or

the marginalisation of Muslims in the State to the fore. Eventually, the proverbial Congressman was interested in his safe niche.

Several charges made against the Siddaramaiah regime, both by the BJP and the JD(S), stuck a popular chord, such as corruption and institutional disarray. Often Mr. Siddaramaiah was found alone battling against such charges.

One wonders why the Congress did not forge an alliance in Karnataka with the BSP or even the JD(S). There was everything going for it, particularly in view of the 2019 elections. Mr. Siddaramaiah, of course, had a personal axe to grind with the JD(S) leadership. While he has deep roots and a mass base in the State, it was important to supplement charisma with political prudence.

There is one consequence of this election which probably none of the contenders had expected, or sought. Suddenly the boundaries of the State have become expansive and stretch to its northernmost and north-westernmost ends, with Mr. Siddaramaiah invoking the rich legacies of Pulakeshin II in Badami, Sonia Gandhi addressing a political twilight speech in Vijayapura, and Mr. Modi, Mr. Shah and Congress president Rahul Gandhi making repeated sorties to this region. Hitherto, much of the politics in the State was concentrated in the centre and the south of its territorial expanse. It is in North Karnataka that most of the problems of poverty, underdevelopment and distress migration lie, as well as resources to reimagine the deep plural legacies of the region as a whole.

(Courtesy: The Hindu)

TOWARDS A CEASEFIRE IN J&K?

Radha Kumar

Finally, after four bleak years of unremitting conflict, a small ray of light appears to be struggling to get through in Jammu and Kashmir. Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti's proposal for a Ramzan ceasefire, backed by a State all-party delegation, has gained some traction in the policy community. Though we are yet to see how Prime Minister Narendra Modi responds, there is little doubt that a ceasefire would be hugely welcomed, most of all by the Jammuites of the border areas and the Kashmiris of the Valley, who have had little respite from violence since 2014.

Then and now
Yet there is a sting in the proposal. Ms. Mufti talked about a unilateral ceasefire as was declared by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in November 2000. In response, Chief of Army Staff General Bipin Rawat has asked who would then guarantee that the security forces would be defended from attack. The question is not idle. During the first three months of the 2000 ceasefire, casualties amongst security forces rose sharply, despite the fact that there was consider-

able public pressure on the separatists as well as Pakistan to reciprocate, including from the 'azaadi' constituency.

Gen. Rawat is right in anticipating that there will be continuing attacks on security forces under a unilateral ceasefire. Nevertheless, it is imperative to curtail the violence that people in Jammu and Kashmir suffer, and a ceasefire might provide the best opportunity to de-escalate. As the rising number of youth turning to arms attests, the last four years of counterinsurgency have not succeeded in ending insurgency. We could have learned this lesson from past experience too — the counterinsurgency of the 1990s did not end insurgency. But it did pave the way for a peace process and it was this peace process that made progress towards ending armed conflict until Pakistan's then leader, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, put it on a back burner.

The 2000 ceasefire experience also showed that casualties among the security forces could have been minimised had more urgent attention been paid to tightening defence of security installations and personnel. The Vajpayee administration did not prepare for continuing attacks and the ceasefire created

both resentment among the troops and an understandable but misplaced relaxation of alertness. Gen. Rawat and his corps commanders could work on plugging such lapses and the Modi administration could take rapid steps to improve working conditions for security forces, including shorter service periods in the Valley.

What impact will a unilateral ceasefire have on the ground? Clearly there will be immediate relief to the beleaguered residents of the State. But the ceasefire can only provide an opportunity for other steps to be taken, such as India-Pakistan talks, dialogue with the Hurriyat and allied groups, and backchannel negotiations for a reciprocal ceasefire by armed groups. It is not clear whether such initiatives are already in the pipeline or whether the State government has presented a road map of how to get them going. What is clear is that taking these steps is far more difficult now than it was in 2000.

Mr. Vajpayee's ceasefire took place at a time when there were active negotiations at a multitude of levels — India-Pakistan, Hizbul-Indian Army, Hurriyat-India-Pakistan, civil society and even

business groups. He was able to set off the rise in casualties during the ceasefire against the political gains of a peace process, which eventually led to a sharp decrease in violence.

That context is gone today. There is little public pressure on the armed groups. The impetus for peace has been replaced by communal stand-offs, anger and hatred. More civilians, militants and security forces have died in the first five months of 2018 than in corresponding periods for the previous decade. The State is polarised, and society has become increasingly lumpen, as the death by stoning of a young Tamil tourist and the communal mobilisation around the rape and murder of a child in Kathua indicate. In the Valley, alienation from India is as high as it was in the early 1990s, when insurgency took root.

The Pakistan factor
For a unilateral ceasefire to have the desired impact, of paving the way for a sustained peace process, it will have to be accompanied by rapid action on two fronts: externally, wide-ranging peace talks between India and Pakistan, the Modi administration and 'azaadi' groups; and internally, peace-building on the

ground by the Mufti administration and Opposition parties.

There are faint indications that Pakistan's military might be nudged into curtailing support for armed groups. The announcement of a unilateral ceasefire would put considerable international pressure on Pakistan's civil-military leadership to restore the 2003 ceasefire along the International Boundary and the Line of Control. Negotiations with armed groups to reciprocate the ceasefire will be more difficult to get started — there is no Majid Dar today, and here again Pakistan holds the key, with so many instigators lodged there.

The quid pro quo for Pakistan will be talks on Kashmir. This is a bitter pill for the Modi administration, which has opposed talks while terrorist attacks continue. One way out would be to encourage talks between Home Minister Rajnath Singh's all-party delegation and Pakistan Parliament's Kashmir committee. This would allow the Modi administration some flexibility. It has the added advantage of having been proposed by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq back in 2010.

Talks with the Hurriyat are also complicated. The Mirwaiz Hurriyat is

vulnerable, and the Geelani Hurriyat that has some, albeit limited, influence on militants is under a new leader who refused to ask his son to give up arms — how is he to be persuaded to support a ceasefire? Will he be amenable to suggestions from the other members of the 'Joint Resistance Leadership' who have supported ceasefires earlier? And what about the Hizbul and other armed groups? Given the lack of youth leadership, despite the plethora of martyr icons, Yusuf Shah, aka Salahuddin, might be the best bet for the first port of call. Alternatively, there is our own short-lived initiative as interlocutors, of putting out feelers through militants safely lodged in jail, which aroused such a howl of protest that we were forced to abandon it.

Opposition within
Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has already opposed Ms. Mufti's proposal as have Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office Jitendra Singh and the State Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) unit. Mr. Vajpayee was able to silence opponents within his party and alliance.

(Courtesy: The Hindu)

'Desperate' Congress murdered democracy by making opportunist offer to JD(S) to form govt in Karnataka: Amit Shah

New Delhi: Democracy was murdered the moment "desperate" Congress made an "opportunist" offer to the JD(S) to form the government in Karnataka for "petty political gains", BJP president Amit Shah said on Thursday while hitting back at the Congress over its "murder of democracy" accusation.

The Congress had termed on Wednesday Karnataka governor Vajubhai Vala's decision to invite BJP leader B S Yeddyurappa to form the government as "murder of democracy and trampling of Constitution".

Responding to the accusation, Shah, in a tweet, said, "The 'Murder of Democracy' happens the minute a desperate Congress made an 'opportunist' offer to the JD(S), not for Karnataka's welfare but for their petty political gains. Shameful!"

He also cited the fall in Congress



tally from 122 in 2013 to 78 seats this time and said his party's number stood at 104 seats, suggesting that the BJP has the mandate to form the government.

"Who has the people's mandate in Karnataka? The BJP, which has

won 104 seats. Or Congress which dropped to 78 seats, whose own CM and Ministers lost by big margins. JD(S) who won only 37 seats and lost their deposits on several others. People are wise to realise," he said in another tweet.

BJP legislature party leader B S Yeddyurappa was on Thursday sworn in as the chief minister of Karnataka for a second time, after an overnight high-voltage legal battle in the Supreme Court which refused to stay his swearing-in.

Yeddyurappa has 15 days to prove his majority in the Assembly.

The BJP has 104 MLAs in the House, eight short of the magic figure of 112. On the other hand, the Congress and JD(S), which have already announced post-poll tie-up, have won 78 and 37 seats respectively.

Launching a fusillade against Karnataka governor Vajubhai Vala after he invited the BJP to form the government in the state, the Congress had dubbed him a "stooge" of the NDA major and termed his decision as "murder of democracy and trampling of Constitution".

Mockery of Constitution', says Rahul Gandhi as Yeddyurappa takes over as Karnataka chief minister

New Delhi: The Constitution is under "severe attack" and there is an atmosphere of fear in the country, said Congress President Rahul Gandhi on Thursday, referring to the political drama in Karnataka where the governor invited

BJP leader BS Yeddyurappa to form the next government in a hung assembly.

"The RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] is making way into all institutions in the country. This happens in Pakistan or in a dictatorship," Gandhi said in Chhattisgarh, where he launched his party's election campaign.

Yeddyurappa took oath as chief minister in Bengaluru this morning after the Supreme Court declined to stay his swearing-in ceremony as the Congress had wanted in a late-night appeal. The Congress lost the elections in Karnataka but tied up with the Janata Dal (Secular) and asked the governor to let the combine form the next government in the



state. Early this morning, Gandhi criticised the governor's decision asking Yeddyurappa to take over as chief minister and prove his majority in 15 days.

"The BJP's irrational insistence that it will form a Govt. in Karnataka, even though it clearly doesn't have the numbers, is to make a mockery of our Constitution. This morning, while the BJP celebrates its hollow victory, India will mourn the defeat of democracy," said Gandhi on Twitter.

30,000 people sign petition in support of Indian professionals denied UK visas

London: Over 30,000 people have signed an online petition calling on the UK government to stop "abusing" a national security clause to deny hundreds of highly-skilled Indian professionals the right to live and work in the country.

Britain's newly-appointed Pakistani-origin home secretary Sajid Javid told a parliamentary committee this week that he would "urgently" look into some of the cases of extreme hardship while an ongoing UK home office review into the cases is completed.

The applications involve doctors, lawyers, engineers and entrepreneurs from countries outside the European Union (EU) on a tier-1 (general) visa who are being denied residency rights over reportedly minor, legally acceptable corrections in their tax returns.

"It is an important issue because if people are being turned down for their tier-1 applications for the wrong reasons or for information not being looked at properly, it needs to be looked at properly... If it is a case of genuine error, then it should be taken into account," Javid told the House of Commons home affairs select committee (HASC) on Tuesday.

The minister, who revealed that at least 300 such cases



are currently undergoing a judicial review appeals process and looked at by a UK judge, was warned by cross-party members of HASC that the home office may be on the path to another Windrush scandal over this issue.

The scandal involved around 63 migrants from the Caribbean being wrongfully deported from the UK and had resulted in the resignation of Javid's predecessor Amber Rudd last month for allegedly misleading the Parliament over the scale of the problem.

"This smacks of the Windrush scandal, which was also seen as individual cases and dismissed as such. It paints a pattern of the home office not picking up what's coming down the track," Labour Party MP and HASC member Naz Shah told Javid.

The latest crisis involves professionals from countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh entitled to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain

(ILR) or permanent residency status after a minimum of five years' lawful residency in the United Kingdom.

While the tier 1 (general) visa until April this year if they made up the required number of points on their application.

However, legal experts noted a pattern of many such applications being turned down by home office caseworkers citing clause 322(5) of the UK Immigration Act, a discretionary rule aimed at denying convicted criminals and terrorists the right to live in the UK.

The home office questioned the "good character" of these professionals over apparent differences in their declared earnings to the UK tax department and the home office, resulting in as many as 1,000 facing potential deportation unless their appeals are accepted.

UK immigration minister Caroline Nokes had launched a review into the cases to distinguish between those involving "genuine fraud" and others that may have fallen victim to "overzealous" caseworkers.

"A review into the specific HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) related tier-1 issue raised by the Chair was commissioned immediately following the minister's appearance at HASC and is ongoing," a UK home office spokesperson said.

Meanwhile, an online petition started by the Highly Skilled Migrants group last week on the 38 Degrees campaign website to highlight the home office's alleged "abuse" of clause 322(5) attracted 30,800 signatures within days.

"Nisha Mohite, a pharmaceutical specialist working to develop anti-cancer drugs has lost her job, her home and her savings after the home office used an anti-terrorism clause to try and deport her because of an error her accountant made," the petition notes in reference to an Indian professional who has challenged the UK home office decision.

"Together we are demanding the home office uses the clause for what it was designed to do, protect us from terrorists, not deport our doctors, teachers, scientists and lawyers," it adds.

Anil Vij fumes over naming of central scheme as ABHAY

Chandigarh: The rechristening of the ambitious national health protection scheme, Ayushman Bharat, as Ayushman Bharat Haryana Arogya Yojana (ABHAY) and the bidding process adopted for the scheme by the Manohar Lal Khattar government in Haryana has stoked a controversy.

The move has not gone down well with state health minister Anil Vij, who is livid at the renaming of the scheme as ABHAY, the name reminding one of the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) leader, Abhay Singh Chautala, a vociferous critic of the BJP government and the leader of opposition in Haryana assembly.

Vij's other point of objection is regarding the bidding process for the selection of an insurance company which will implement the scheme. As per the request for qualification (RFQ) document for ABHAY prepared by the health department, the two-stage bidding process entailed shortlisting of up to seven suitable pre-qualified applicants, who will be eligible for participation in the second stage of the bidding process comprising the request for proposal (RFP).

"Limiting the number of shortlisted bidders was a point



of contention. It smacks of nepotism and will give ammunition to the opposition," said an health official, who did not want to be named.

The RFQ document also stated that health department reserved the right to increase the number of shortlisted applicants by adding an additional applicant.

"I have objected to the naming of the national scheme as ABHAY. I have also written on the file that state government should follow the Centre's guidelines for selecting the bidder and executing the scheme," Vij said. The file will be put up to chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar for approval.

Additional chief secretary, health, RR Jowel, when asked, said the RFQ was only to discover the eligible bidders. "It

is the RFP that will finally decide the bidder. The matter is under deliberation of the state government. We will follow the Centre's guidelines," he added.

It has been learnt that additional secretary, union health and family welfare ministry, Manoj Jhalani has also written to the state government to follow the RFP document of the Central government.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between Haryana government and the Centre for the Ayushman Bharat scheme on Monday in Shimla.

Sources in the government said two top officials handling the preparation of RFQ for the scheme were transferred out after they objected to the bidding process. The RFQ was

designed by the health department after consulting former Rajasthan cadre IAS officer Gajendra Haldea. Haldea had tendered his advice on the basis of the model RFQ formulated by the department of expenditure in the Union finance ministry. The former officer, however, refused to comment on the matter.

What is Ayushman Bharat scheme

It is a national health protection scheme of Union ministry of health and family welfare. Bids will be invited to select insurance companies for implementing the scheme.

In Haryana, the scheme is estimated to cover 40 to 45 lakh families. Treatment under the scheme will be provided by empanelled hospitals, including the government ones.

Karnataka case did not deserve pre-dawn hearing: Mukul Rohatgi

New Delhi: The rush projected by Congress for an immediate hearing in the Karnataka case was in no way akin to the life and death issue witnessed in 2015 when the Supreme Court had held a historic pre-dawn hearing, hours before Mumbai blast convict Yakub Memon was to be hanged, a top lawyer said.

His contention was rebutted in the top court by a lawyer representing the Congress-JD(S) combine, who said the Constitution was going to be "hanged" in the Karnataka case.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, who vehemently opposed in the top court the Congress-JD(S) plea challenging Karnataka governor's decision to invite the BJP to form government in the early hours on Thursday, said this was not a Yakub Memon hanging situation which deserved a midnight hearing.

In 2015, lawyers and human right activists, on behalf of Memon, had moved the top court late at night after it had dismissed their last-ditch effort during the day against his plea to stay his execution.

The top court had conducted an unprecedented 90-minute hearing on July 29, 2015, which had gone well past 3 AM, and rejected the appeal of the lone death row convict in the 1993 Mumbai blasts.

Memon was executed by hanging at the Nagpur Central Jail at around 6:30 am on July 30, 2015, his 53rd birthday. Rohatgi, arguing in the Karnataka case for BJP MLAs Govind M Karjol, C M Udasi and Basavaraj Bommai, said he got a call when he was asleep, after two of these MLAs saw the developments on TV and urged him to take up their matter. "In the Yakub Memon case, I argued from 2 am to 5 am in the top court because the man was going to be hanged at 6 am.

"What is the urgency here? Is somebody going to be hanged? The question of 15 days for floor test can be decided in the next 2 or 3 days. What is the urgency," asked Rohatgi, who as an Attorney General had argued against the staying of the hanging of Memon.

MC employees' strike: As Haryana stinks, Khattar blinks

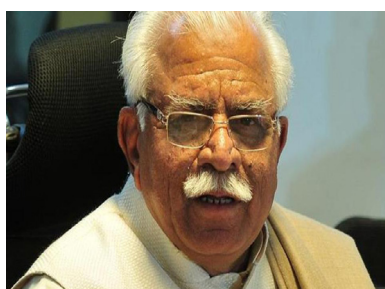
Karnal: As Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Wednesday said consensus had already been reached on some demands of striking employees, civic bodies employees' union leaders said they will hold their union's executive meet on Thursday to decide on their ongoing strike.

While interacting with mediapersons after convening a meeting between urban local bodies department and representatives of agitating MC employees, Khattar, said, "A consensus has already been reached on some demands of employees." He expressed hope that the strike would be called off.

However, president of Nagar Palika Karamchari Sangh, Naresh Shastri, said, "We are not satisfied with the assurance given by the chief minister that all our issues will be sorted out within next eight days. We want action on our demands now, not an assurance."

"The Sangh executive committee will hold a meeting on Thursday to take a final call on the next step," he said adding that the workers' stir was still on.

Meanwhile, urban local bodies minister Kavita Jain said the state government had decided to constitute a committee on one of the workers' demand — equal pay for equal work — under the chairmanship of the chief secretary. The committee will submit its report before May 31, she added. On the question of workers' other demands, including regularisation of their services and hike in allowances, she said it had been decided to enhance the sanitation workers' allowance from Rs 300 to Rs 1,000. "It



was also decided that no new outsourcing contracts on supply of employees, including sanitation workers and sewer-men, will be done in future and the present outsourcing policy contracts will continue till the date of their expiry and thereupon, the outsourced manpower will be shifted to the municipal roll," she said.

"From now onwards, the provident fund and employees' state insurance will be directly deposited by the urban local bodies department in the accounts of the individual employees as was demanded by workers," she added.

Around 30,000 employees of 87 civic bodies had gone on three-strike on May 9, intensified it on May 11 and extended it till May 14. The striking staff have now pushed it till May 17, though final decision will be taken on Thursday at their meeting in Rohtak.

Garbage piles up in Karnal Chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar's Karnal is stinking and heaps of garbage can be seen piled at several places, owing to the ongoing strike by the sanitation workers in Haryana. Though the strike entered its eighth

day on Wednesday, there were no alternative arrangements in place to deal with the problem being faced by the residents of Karnal, the city that produces about 10 quintals of garbage daily.

The officials at the Karnal municipal corporation (MC) said the striking employees did not allow anybody to lift the garbage as a pressure-building tactic on the government.

They said the municipal commissioner had been appealing to people not to dump garbage outside their houses till the strike continued, but the residents showed reluctance to follow the directions.

"It was the duty of the corporation and government to deal with the problem as we pay taxes to the government. We cannot keep the garbage inside our houses," said Rajesh Sharma, a Karnal resident.

Similarly, Bhanu Kalyan of Karnal's Sadar Bazaar area said, "We are facing problems as the garbage is being dumped outside our houses."

"Blame government for this mess" "We will continue our strike till our demands are met. The government is responsible for the increasing heaps of garbage," said Inderjeet Chanalalia, a protesting municipal worker.

Meanwhile, Karnal municipal commissioner Rajiv Mehta, in a contradictory statement, stated, "We are making all efforts to keep the city clean. I don't know how somebody can claim there is garbage lying in the city, whereas we are getting appreciation from everywhere.

Centre wants to demolish democracy, misusing ED to threaten Karnataka MLAs: JD(S) leader Kumaraswamy

Bangaluru: Janata Dal (Secular) leader HD Kumaraswamy on Thursday said the Narendra Modi government wants to demolish democracy in the country and accused the Centre of using agencies like the Enforcement Directorate to threaten MLAs of the Congress-JD(S) combine in Karnataka.

Addressing reporters after the BJP's BS Yeddyurappa was sworn in as Karnataka chief minister, he also reached out to non-BJP parties to join hands and bury their differences if any to "protect the interest of the country".

Terming governor Vajubhai Vala's decision to invite Yeddyurappa to form the government "unconstitutional", the former chief minister lashed out at the Centre and said, "How is this Central government behaving? This Narendra Modi government wants to demolish democracy in the country."

Kumaraswamy, whose claim to form the government was ignored by the governor, added that giving a party without majority the opportunity to form government and giving it 15 days for a floor test was probably a first in the country.

"What was the reason for 15 days...is it for business?" he asked.

Responding to a question, Kumaraswamy said the Modi government was misusing central government agencies. "They are threatening and putting pressure on MLAs," he alleged.

Referring to speculation that Congress MLA Anand Singh, who has been out of touch with his party, could rejoin the BJP, Kumaraswamy said the ED was being used against him as there was a case pending against him.

"I have not spoken to Anand Singh... one of the Congress' MLAs told me that Singh had called him and expressed his problem... The Congress MLA gave me the message and asked me to take a lead in this issue," he claimed.

Kumaraswamy also asked non-BJP parties to unite and requested his father and former prime minister Deve Gowda to take the initiative.

LONG-TERM CONSUMPTION OF COFFEE MAY WORSEN ALZHEIMER'S SYMPTOMS: STUDY



London: Long-term consumption of coffee can worsen the neuropsychiatric symptoms in those suffering from Alzheimer's disease, scientists claim. It is well known that memory problems are the hallmarks of Alzheimer's disease. However, this dementia is also characterised by neuropsychiatric symptoms, which may be strongly present already in the first stages of the disorder.

Known as Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia (BPSD), anxiety, apathy, depression, hallucinations, paranoid, and sun-dozing, are some of the symptoms which are manifested in different manners. They are considered the strongest source of distress for patients and caregivers.

Coffee or caffeine has recently been suggested as a strategy to prevent dementia, both in patients with Alzheimer's disease and in normal ageing processes, due to its action in blocking molecules-adenosine receptors-which

may cause dysfunctions and diseases in old age.

However, there is some evidence that once the cognitive but also the NPS symptoms are developed, caffeine may exert opposite effects. To address these issues, researchers from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) in Spain and the Karolinska Institutet (KI) in Sweden was conducted with normal ageing mice and familial Alzheimer's models.

"The mice develop Alzheimer's disease in a very close manner to the human patients with early-onset form of the disease," said Raquel Baeta-Corral, from UAB. "They not only exhibit the typical cognitive problems but also a number of BPSD-like symptoms, so it is a valuable model to address whether the benefits of caffeine will be able to compensate its putative negative effects," said Baeta-Corral.

"We simulated a long oral treatment with a very low dose of caffeine (0.3 mg/mL) equivalent to three cups for a human coffee-drinker

to answer a question which is relevant for patients with Alzheimer's, but also for the ageing population in general, and that in humans would take years to be solved since we should wait until the patients were aged," said Bjorn Johansson, researcher at the Karolinska University Hospital.

The research was conducted from the onset of the disease up to more advanced stages, as well as in healthy age-matched mice. The results indicate that caffeine alters the behav-

our of healthy mice and worsens the neuropsychiatric symptoms of mice with Alzheimer's disease. The researchers discovered significant effects in the majority of variables studies, especially in relation to neophobia, a fear of everything new, anxiety-related behaviours, and emotional and cognitive flexibility. In mice with Alzheimer's disease, the increase in neophobia and anxiety-related behaviours exacerbates their BPSD-like profile. Learning and memory, strongly influenced by anxiety,

got little benefit from caffeine. "Our observations of adverse caffeine effects in an Alzheimer's disease model together with previous clinical observations suggest that an exacerbation of BPSD-like symptoms may partly interfere with the beneficial cognitive effects of caffeine," said Lydia Gimenez-Llort, researcher from UAB. "These results are relevant when coffee-derived new potential treatments for dementia are to be devised and tested," said Gimenez-Llort.

This new method can fix damaged ear and treat hearing loss

New York: A team of researchers have found a new method to fix cells inside the ear, which could help millions of people who suffer from hearing loss.

The study conducted by researchers at University of Southern California (USC) in the US demonstrates a novel way for a drug to zero in on damaged nerves and cells deep inside the ear.

Researchers said, the new method is a potential remedy for a problem that afflicts two-thirds of people over 70 years and 17 percent of all adults in the US.

Charles E McKenna, a professor at USC, said "What is new here is we figured out how to deliver a drug into the inner ear so it actually stays put and does what it is supposed to do, and that is novel."

"Inside this part of the ear, there is fluid constantly flowing that would sweep dissolved drugs away, but our new approach addresses that problem," said McKenna, lead author of the study.

He said, "This is a first for hearing loss and

the ear. It is also important because it may be adaptable for other drugs that need to be applied within the inner ear."

The research was conducted on animal tissues in a petri dish. It has not yet been tested in living animals or humans.

Yet, the researchers are hopeful given the similarities of cells and mechanisms involved. McKenna said since the technique works in the laboratory, the findings provide "strong preliminary evidence" it could work in living creatures. They are already planning the next phase involving animals and hearing loss.

The finding breaks new ground because researchers developed a novel drug-delivery method. Specifically, it targets the cochlea, a snail-like structure in the inner ear where sensitive cells convey sound to the brain.

Hearing loss occurs due to ageing, working with noisy machines and too many loud concerts.

Over time, hair-like sensory cells and bundles of neurons that transmit their vibrations break down, as do ribbon-like synapses, which connect the cells.



Exercise before pregnancy key for healthy motherhood

New York: Expectant mothers who are more fit before pregnancy are at lower risk of developing gestational diabetes, a study suggests.

Gestational diabetes is a condition in which women develop diabetes during the last half of pregnancy.

Women with gestational diabetes are more likely to develop Type 2 diabetes after giving birth.

"Women are very careful during pregnancy with what they eat and the exercise they get. But the study shows women should engage in these healthy behaviours before they get pregnant as well," said co-author Kara Whitaker, Assistant Professor from University of Iowa.

For the study, published in the journal *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, the team analysed data from 1,333 women over a 25-year period (1985 to 2011) who enrolled in a National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute study called Coronary Artery Risk Development in Young Adults

(CARDIA).

The women completed seven study visits after first being enrolled, reporting whether they had become pregnant or gave birth and whether they developed gestational diabetes.

The researchers also performed a fitness exam during the first study visit by testing whether the women could walk for two-minute intervals on a treadmill at increasing speeds and on steepening inclines.

Over the study period, 164 women developed gestational diabetes.

Using that information, the research team determined that pre-pregnant women with high levels of fitness had a 21 per cent lower risk of developing gestational diabetes than did those with lower fitness



levels.

"People interested in becoming more fit can do so by engaging in at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week -- 30 minutes per day, five days per

week," Whitaker said. "Brisk walking would constitute moderate physical activity -- jogging would be considered vigorous physical activity," she added.

URINARY INCONTINENCE LINKED TO REDUCED SEXUAL URGE IN ELDERLY

New York: Elderly men and women who suffer from urinary incontinence may face complications as well as reduced sexual drive, researchers say.

Urinary incontinence (UI), also known as involuntary urination, is any uncontrolled leakage of urine. It is a common and distressing problem, in the elderly and may have a large impact on quality of life.

Women suffering from frequent urine leakage reported declines in sexual activity and ability to become sexually aroused.

On the other hand, men with urinary incontinence reported declines in sexual desire, increased erectile and orgasm difficulties, the study showed.

The study also highlighted the need for the "taboo" subjects to be discussed by



health professionals.

"Our findings highlight strong links between urinary incontinence and a number of negative outcomes regarding sexual health. Both urinary incontinence and later-life sexuality remain taboo subjects in society and are likely

to be under-reported as co-existing health problems," said lead author David Lee, researcher at the Manchester Metropolitan University in Britain. "Given the relatively high occurrence of incontinence, particularly among women,

healthcare professionals should be aware of the potential impacts on quality-of-life and well-being, and recognise that sexual activity and satisfaction are key factors in this equation," Lee added.

For the findings, published in the journal *BJU International*, the team included 3,805 individuals. Previous studies mentioned that pelvic floor and bladder training, advice on lifestyle changes (for example, reducing fluid intake and losing weight), drugs to reduce bladder contraction, and surgery are certain measures currently undertaken to treat urinary incontinence in women.

Protein from nuts, seeds could be good for your heart

New York: While eating red meat that is rich in protein is linked with increased risk of heart disease, protein from nuts and seeds could be beneficial for the human heart, suggests a study including more than 80,000 participants.

The study, appearing in the *International Journal of Epidemiology*, found that people who consumed large amounts of meat protein experienced a 60 per cent increase in cardiovascular disease (CVD), while people who consumed large amounts of protein from nuts and seeds experienced a 40-per cent reduction in CVD.

"While dietary fats are part of the story in affecting risk of cardiovascular disease, proteins may also have important and largely overlooked independent effects on risk," said Gary Fraser, from Loma Linda University in California.

Fraser added that nutritionists have traditionally



looked toward what he termed "bad fats" in meats and "helpful fats" in nuts and seeds as causal agents.

As a result of being high in unsaturated fat, nuts and seeds are traditionally included in the "good fat" category. However, it is also possible that "good protein" that also adds to their positive health impact.

"This new evidence suggests that the full picture probably also involves the biological effects of proteins in these foods," he said.

For the study, the team compared animal proteins versus plant proteins in 81,337 men and women.

Associations between the "meat" and "nuts and seeds" protein factors and cardio-

vascular outcomes were strong and could not be ascribed to other associated nutrients considered to be important for cardiovascular health.

Healthy diets can be advocated based on protein sources, preferring low contributions of protein from meat and higher intakes of plant protein from nuts and seeds, the study noted.

Land acquisition woes thwart India's mega refinery plan with Saudi Aramco

Mumbai: At the International Energy Forum in Delhi in April, the world's top oil producer Saudi Aramco inked a preliminary deal to partner with a consortium of Indian players to build a \$4.4 billion refinery and petrochemical project on India's west coast.

The huge project was touted as a gamechanger for both parties — offering India steady fuel supplies and meeting Saudi Arabia's need to secure regular buyers for its oil. Despite the obvious benefits, though, the prospects for the plan — in the works since 2015 — are growing dimmer by the day.

Thousands of farmers oppose the refinery and are refusing to surrender land, fearing it could damage a region famed for its Alphonso mangoes, vast cashew plantations and fishing hamlets that boast bountiful catches of seafood.

"We earn enough to fulfil our needs and we do not want to surrender our lands for a refinery at any cost," says Sandesh Desai, standing amid his fruit-laden mango orchard in Nanar, a village in Ratnagiri district, some 400 km south of Mumbai.

Land acquisition has always been a contentious issue in rural India, where a majority of the population depends on farming for their livelihood. In 2008, for example, India's Tata Motors had to shelve plans for a car factory in West Bengal after facing widespread protests

from farmers.

And while Prime Minister Narendra Modi has tried to ease land acquisition rules to jumpstart delayed projects worth tens of billions of dollars, the government has faced resistance to amending populist laws enacted by his predecessors.

Like Desai, a majority of the farmers from 14 villages around Ratnagiri that need to be relocated for the refinery project firmly oppose the plan, a state government official told Reuters.

Opposition politicians and even a local ally of Modi's Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) support the farmers' movement, complicating matters further for the government ahead of state and general elections in 2019.

The state government, which is responsible for acquiring the land for the project, has so far failed to secure even one acre of the roughly 15,000 acres needed for the refinery, Maharashtra industries minister Subhash Desai told Reuters.

"The state is not going to acquire land as a majority of the farmers are against the plan," said Desai, the minister, who is a member of the Shiv Sena, a regional party allied with the BJP in the Maharashtra state government. Under land acquisition rules, at least 70 percent of the land owners need to provide consent for a project, he said.

Still, some believe that the opponents



are only objecting to get better compensation packages for their land.

"Eventually all stakeholders will give their consent, but it will take time," said Ajay Singh Sengar, who heads a rival forum that supports the refinery project. A local government official in the area said he thought many farmers would agree to a deal once a compensation package was announced.

Job Promises

The Ratnagiri Refinery & Petrochemicals Ltd (RRPL), which is running the project, says the 1.2-million-barrel-per-day (bpd) refinery, and an integrated petrochemical site with a capacity of 18 million tonnes per year, will

help create direct and indirect employment for up to 1,50,000 people, with jobs that pay better than agriculture or fishing.

But farmers say they have sufficient work in their orchards and fields.

"We don't have enough people to maintain our mango orchards. That's why every year we employ migrant labour from Nepal," says Arvind Samant, the secretary of a farmers' and fishermen's group that was created to organise opposition to the project.

Samant says instead of a refinery the government should bring agro-processing plants or other industries that suit local needs.

RRPL, a joint venture between Indian Oil Corp (IOC), Hindustan Petroleum and Bharat Petroleum, said suggestions the refinery would hurt the environment were baseless. It says it will continue to cultivate mangoes and cashews on some 4,500 acres of land around the project.

Despite the opposition, RRPL is hopeful the project will proceed.

"Some people misguided farmers and created fear. We're now trying to answer each and every doubt," said Anil Nagwekar, a spokesman for the RRPL, adding RRPL was struggling to convince farmers as they refused to even discuss the plan with the company.

Hundreds of people have joined non-violent protests, blocking surveyors from even measuring land needed for the site, said Omkar Prabhudesai, who heads the local group opposing the project.

"There is no point in listening to the company's views. We have already decided not to give our land," said Prabhudesai.

The refinery, announced in 2015, was to be commissioned by 2022, but delays in land acquisition mean the deadline is likely to be pushed back.

"Ideally the state government should have acquired land by now and the work for the project should have started. The delay could impact deadlines," said RRPL's Nagwekar.

Saudi Aramco declined to comment, while India's oil ministry did not respond to a Reuters email seeking comment.

Even if the government wanted to implement the project, it would not start any land acquisition process before elections in 2019, conceded a senior state government official, who asked not to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter.

"Sensing political mileage every political party is opposing the project. For the next one year there won't be any progress," the official said.

Workers of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), a regional party, vandalised offices of RRPL in Mumbai in April.

An MNS spokesman confirmed reports of the incident and said the party was strongly opposed to the refinery plan. Parties like the Indian National Congress, and the Nationalist Congress Party also oppose the plan.

Still, some officials remain hopeful. Building a large project such as this in India was possible, but could take years, said IOC's head of refineries Rama Gopal.

"We conceived the Paradip refinery project in 1994," he said, referring to a plant it runs on the east coast. "But for various reasons the project got delayed and it was finally only commissioned in 2014."

Credit Suisse 'underweight' on Indian equities

New Delhi: Global brokerage Credit Suisse is "underweight" on Indian equities in an Asia Pacific context, as the domestic equity market's premium has risen to the highest level.

The global financial services major in its strategy report said the MSCI India index has fallen by the least as against Indonesia and the Philippines.

According to the report, India fell just 9.9% from the highs versus falls of 19% for both MSCI Indonesia and MSCI Philippines.

"With continued downgrades to consensus EPS and weak ROE, India's premium on our P/B vs ROE valuation model has now risen to 64%



"We believe the current combination — closest to highest ever premiums versus the region, four consecutive years of downgrades to consensus EPS, current account deficit, rising oil prices further pressuring the current account and fiscal deficits and the fact that foreign investors

— close to its highest ever," Credit Suisse Research Analysts Sakthi Siva and Kin Nang Chik said in the note.

Credit Suisse reiterated its underweight call on India in an Asia Pacific context.

The brokerage believes overvalued markets could stay overvalued for longer than expected especially if the US-China trade war escalates, but cautioned that India could be the next shoe to drop.

have yet to capitulate — suggest India could be the next shoe to drop," the report noted. The BSE benchmark Sensex is hovering around 35,300 points. It has gained 3.65% so far this year.

Sensex plunges 239 points amid political wrangling in Karnataka

Mumbai: The BSE Sensex plunged 239 points on Thursday to end at 35,149.12 as nervous investors took money off the table amid political wrangling in Karnataka.

Muted quarterly earnings, crude oil prices inching closer to US \$80 per barrel, mixed cues from global markets and unabated foreign fund outflows were other factors behind the sharp fall, brokers said.

BJP legislature party leader B S Yeddyurappa was today sworn in as the chief minister of Karnataka for the second time, after an overnight high-voltage legal battle in the Supreme Court. However,



the apex court made it clear that the swearing-in and the government formation would be subject to the final outcome of the case before it.

The 30-share Sensex re-

sumed higher at 35,483.62

and advanced to a high of 35,510.01. However, it slipped on profit-booking and touched a low of 35,087.82, before finally settling at 35,149.12,

down 238.76 points, or 0.67%. This is the benchmark's lowest closing since May 4 when it had closed at 34,915.38.

The gauge had lost 168.83 points in the previous two sessions. The NSE 50-share Nifty also lost 58.40 points, or 0.54%, to 10,682.70, after shuttling between 10,777.25 and 10,664.50.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) net sold shares worth Rs 699.22 crore, while domestic institutional investors (DIIs) bought shares worth Rs 229.06 crore on Wednesday, as per provisional data.

Sensex plunges 245 points on political uncertainty in Karnataka, global cues

Mumbai: The BSE benchmark Sensex tumbled over 245 points in early session on Wednesday amid uncertainty over government formation in Karnataka and sustained foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share index was trading lower by 245.23 points, or 0.69%, at 35,298.71.

On Tuesday, the gauge had soared more than 400 points intra-day after the BJP emerged as the single largest party in Karnataka. However, it gave up all gains to end modestly lower after the Congress unexpectedly stitched up a post-poll alliance with the JD(S) and staked claim to form the government.

Sectoral indices led by bankex, PSU, oil and gas and healthcare were trading in the red, down by up to 1.90%.

The NSE Nifty fell 72.85 points, or 0.67%, to 10,729.

Brokers said apart from political uncertainty in Karnataka, a weak trend at other Asian bourses following overnight losses at the Wall Street dampened sentiments.

Global markets were stumped after North Korea cancelled high-level talks with Seoul and threatened to call off the much anticipated summit with the US if it was pushed into unilaterally giving up its nuclear arsenal.



Back home, trade deficit widened to USD 13.7 billion in April, which further affected trading sentiment.

Prominent losers included Hero MotoCorp, ICICI Bank, SBI, Adani Ports, RIL, ONGC, Axis Bank, Bajaj

Auto, M&M, Coal India, IndusInd Bank, NTPC and Bharti Airtel, falling by up to 3.27 per cent.

Meanwhile, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) sold shares worth a net Rs 518.47 crore, while domestic institutional investors (DIIs) bought shares worth Rs 531.33 crore on Tuesday, as per provisional data.

Among other Asian markets, Hong Kong's Hang Seng shed 0.49 per cent while Japan's Nikkei was down by 0.38% in early trade on Wednesday. The Shanghai Composite Index too inched lower by 0.25%.

The US Dow Jones Industrial Average ended 0.78% lower on Tuesday.

Petrol at Rs 75.32 in Delhi as crude oil prices surge



New Delhi: A surge in crude oil prices pushed the cost of petrol in the country further higher on Thursday, with the transport fuel being sold at Rs 75.32 per litre in the national capital.

With this, the price of petrol in Delhi inched further close to the previous high of Rs 76.06 a litre, reached in September 2013.

In the other major cities of Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai also petrol was priced at multi-year highs on Thursday -- Rs 78.01, Rs 83.16 and Rs 78.16 per litre, respectively. The previous highs in these cities were Rs 78.03 (Kolkata, August 2014), Rs 83.62 (Mumbai, September 2013) and Rs 79.55 (Chennai, September 2013) respectively.

Similarly, prices of diesel -- the fuel largely used for transportation of food and agriculture products and in turn affecting inflation -- also rose to fresh all-time high levels across metros.

In Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai, diesel was priced at Rs 66.79, Rs 69.33, Rs 71.12 and Rs 70.49 per litre, respectively -- all at unprecedented levels.

This rise in transport fuel prices comes as crude oil prices continue to gain. On Thursday, Brent crude oil edged close to \$80 per barrel and is currently over \$79 per barrel.

Prices of transport fuels are now changed on a daily basis, unlike the previous norm of fortnightly revisions.

However, the Indian Oil Corporation had suspended the dynamic pricing system for 19 days, "to avoid creating unnecessary panic among the consumers", until resuming it on Monday, May 14.

Infosys says new blockchain-based trade finance network can avoid PNB-like fraud

India's Infosys Ltd has formed a blockchain-based trade finance network with seven private-sector banks, to increase security and efficiency in the banking sector while also broadening its product offering.

India's second-biggest software services exporter, whose Finacle software powers the core functions of the majority of Indian lenders, is in talks to sign up more domestic and foreign banks to the network, senior company executives told Reuters on Wednesday.

Blockchain technology allows all stages of transactions to be securely shared between network members, as opposed to each bank working independently which is

more expensive and increases the chance of error.

Just days earlier, HSBC Holdings PLC said it had performed the world's first trade finance transaction using a shared blockchain platform, in a push to boost efficiency in the multi-trillion-dollar trade finance segment.

Infosys is setting up its trade finance network in a banking sector rattled by an over \$2 billion fraud at India's second-biggest state-run lender, Punjab National Bank (PNB), allegedly by two jeweller groups with help from rogue bank staff.

The jewellers have been accused of raising credit from Indian banks' overseas branches using fake trade finance guarantees provided by PNB



staff in Mumbai who did not enter those guarantees in the bank's computer system.

Infosys' network will make transactions transparent for "the buyers, the sellers, the buyer's bank, the seller's bank

and any regulator who is on this network," Rajashekara Maiya, Finacle global head of product strategy, said in a telephone interview.

"With that kind of a capability, the technology can avoid

all the fraud that could have taken place in a situation like Punjab National Bank," he said. In March, India's central bank barred all lenders from issuing letters of undertaking -- a form of credit guarantee

at the heart of the PNB fraud.

Banks can continue issuing letters of credit and bank guarantees. The instruments are among the various forms of trade finance that importers use to fund overseas purchases. Sanat Rao, chief business officer at Finacle, said lenders currently testing its trade finance network are ICICI Bank Ltd, Axis Bank Ltd, Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd, Yes Bank Ltd, IndusInd Bank Ltd, RBL Bank Ltd and South Indian Bank Ltd.

Rao said Infosys is also in talks with other Indian and overseas lenders.

"We're in very advanced discussions in Australia with a consortium of banks and I think you'll see more announcements," he said.

ICC set to debate coin toss, may do away with it ahead of Test Championship

New Delhi: The various debates over revamping Test cricket have raged on for a number of years, with the advent of pink-ball day-night Tests seen as one way to keep fans invested in the longer format of the game.

Now, the International Cricket Council (ICC) is set to debate and take a call over another traditional aspect of the game: the coin toss.

Cricket's governing body is mulling over scrapping the coin toss altogether for matches contested as a part of the Test Championship, which will commence in 2019 with Australia's Ashes tour to England.

The reason for doing away with the toss would be to reduce the advantage of the home team, with a growing belief among cricket fans and experts that home boards overly manipulate conditions to the point where there is far too much importance placed on the toss.

"There is serious concern about the current level of home team interference in Test pitch preparation, and more than one committee member believes that the toss should be automatically awarded to the visiting team in each match, although there are



some others on the committee who do not share that view," read briefing notes circulated ahead of the ICC committee meet in Mumbai later this month, according to an ESPNcricinfo report.

Success in English County circuit The groundwork for such a rule in international cricket was laid in the 2016 English County Championship, although it's worth noting that the toss wasn't altogether done away with; it was made optional.

Under the new rules, the visiting captain is given the choice of bowling

first. If he accepts, there will be no toss. But if the visiting captain declines the offer, the toss will take place.

The new rule brought in immediate results. According to ESPNcricinfo, the ECB reported that 85% of matches went into a fourth day compared to 74% in 2015 - the highest percentage since 2009.

Furthermore, 71 of the 142 matches in both divisions were drawn - discounting two abandoned matches - meaning there was a definite result in the other 71 matches. In 2015, there were 93 results and only 51 draws.

The idea of doing away with the coin toss is something many former players including Darren Lehmann, Ricky Ponting, Michael Holding and even Steve Waugh have spoken about in the past.

"My solution to ensure the best possible pitches is, at international level, to do away with the toss, with the visiting side given the option of whether they want to bat or bowl," former Australian cricket team coach Lehmann said in his 2016 book, 'Coach'.

"That way the result is not decided by the toss of the coin, host boards have a greater incentive to produce decent pitches that are fair to both sides and the chances are that after five days the better side - rather than the one that has called correctly and thus been able to take advantage of favourable conditions - is the one that will come out on top," he added.

Former Australian cricket team captain Steve Waugh had similar things to say on SEN Radio in 2015. "At the end of the day I think there's probably too much emphasis placed on the toss and the conditions away from home. I don't mind the authorities looking at some other options."

David Warner to play Sydney club cricket after ball-tampering shame

Disgraced former Australian vice-captain David Warner will start his road to redemption by playing club cricket with Sydney's Randwick Petersham, officials said.

The opener is serving a year-long ban from state and international cricket for his part in a plan to use sandpaper to tamper with the ball during the third Test in South Africa in March.

But he is free to play at club level and is set to make a return to the field in September. Randwick Petersham club president Mike Whitney, a former Test fast bowler, said Warner will play in at least three of the first four matches of the season.

"We're delighted to have him. He's one of the best players Australia has had since World War II," he told the local Southern Courier newspaper on Wednesday.

"He's been speaking to one of our club officials and he has committed to the first three or four rounds of the season. Why it is only three or four rounds at this stage I don't know."

Warner has also been linked with playing in the Northern Territory's limited-overs Strike League. Whitney, who played 12 Tests for Australia, said he emailed Warner shortly after he was banned in April to tell him the door was open.

"Everyone is excited to have him. He will be great in the changing rooms with younger



players," Whitney said. Warner has been on the books at Randwick Petersham since 2013-14, but has rarely played due to state, international and Indian Premier League commitments.

He was identified as the mastermind behind the plan to tamper with the ball. While former skipper Steve Smith was charged with knowledge of the plot, Warner was charged with developing it and instructing Cameron Bancroft to carry it out.

Earlier this week, Bancroft was cleared to play club cricket in Western Australia while serving his suspension. Smith's plans are not yet known.

New national coach Justin Langer has indicated he will welcome all three back into the team once their bans are served, if their form justifies selection.

Ajinkya Rahane, Ben Stokes misfiring has dealt Rajasthan Royals crippling blow in IPL 2018

As IPL enters its business end and teams sprint around the final bend, it is anybody's game. Teams that earlier surged ahead of competition have lost momentum; others who gasped for breath initially have got second wind.

This season, only CSK and Sunrisers Hyderabad have been consistent; Delhi Daredevils too, but in a different way. CSK is a settled team led by an astute captain who knows how to win. Sunrisers have solid bowling and a captain who keeps finding new ways to win. The difference between the two captains is that MSD is a legend, permanent member and chairperson of IPL's club of icons. Kane Williamson is a fresher who would have sat on the bench in Hyderabad had Warner been present.

SMITH BLOW TO RR

It is interesting how the fortunes of teams change, and what causes these changes. DD underperformed again and must find out why they are where they are. Mumbai began poorly, KKR/RCB had their moments. Kings sped off the blocks like Usain Bolt only to pull a hamstring halfway. Royals were excellent one day, exasperating the next.

Sometimes, it is possible to understand the changing fortunes of teams. Captain Ashwin admitted they are not a champion side and initially punched above their weight. For Royals, Steve Smith missing out proved a crippling blow, their situation made worse with Rahane and Stokes not putting their hand up when needed.

The major gain is the emergence of bright young Indian talent. Batsmen still in an age category to be called juniors have won matches for their teams. This new set of players are skilled, confident and fearless. But don't miss the irony: this latest batch of under-19s are mentored by Rahul Dravid, who considers the longer format far more important than 20-over cricket.

Strangely, young players slightly senior are having a mixed season. Nitish Rana, Deepak Hooda, Mandeep Singh and Rahul Tripathy are more down than up. Manan Vohra, Saurabh Tiwary and Manoj Tiwary, all so promising in previous editions, are on the fringes. More surprising is the inability of Karnataka's experienced batting muscle to make an impact. Manish Pandey, Mayank Agarwal and Karun Nair (collectively worth several crores) are yet to 'express' themselves. But KL Rahul, their Ranji colleague, has had a standout season.

The fortunes of senior players have thrown up conflicting trends. Some are pushed aside, unable to survive the rush of a format that disrespects age. Gautam Gambhir stepped down at DD and Yuvraj is no more central to Kings' plans. Raina, Jadeja and Uthappa are not as forceful as they were. Harbhajan is not an automatic four-over option.

Two players defy this narrative. Ambati Rayudu, an IPL expert, is having his best-ever season. DK at KKR is successfully playing multiple roles --

In the wake of 100-ball cricket, need White Paper on how to save Tests

I ran into John Wright, former New Zealand captain and India coach, at a get-together in Mumbai recently and asked him what he thought of the 100-ball-a-side league mooted by the England Cricket Board, which has intrigued and confounded aficionados.

"The English were entering the T20 league universe and had to do something distinct to be in this race too," said Wright wryly about the need to shorten an already seriously abridged format. But I also sensed a hint of helplessness in him at the way cricket is headed. For latecomers to the unfolding 100-ball story, this is the ECB's effort to play catch up with the IPL, Big Bash, Caribbean Premier League and sundry other T20 tournaments that have proliferated all over the world in the past decade.

The 100-ball format entails each side playing 15 overs, with the final over being of 10 balls. Not just that, an innovation being discussed is that for this 10-ball over the cap-

tain could use three bowlers if he so desires!

This is radical. While cricket has had eight-ball overs in the past, multiple bowlers being used - outside of injury in the course of an over - is unheard of. What's the deal?

Indeed, why tinker with the T20 format when it has proved so successful? And where such experimentation will end is anybody's guess. How far are we from a 10-overs-a-side league? Or just a 'Super Over', winner takes all slugfest?

A MASSIVE THREAT
The mind boggles and the heart sinks. This is not good news for lovers and romantics of the five-day format. The primacy of Test cricket, which is what held up the sport for more than 125 years, has never been under greater threat.

ECB chairman Colin Graves, expounding the need for 100-ball cricket said last week, "the younger generation is just not attracted to cricket. In all the work, surveys



and research we have done, they want something different..." The import of this can't be lost on anybody.

Ironically, Graves's statement came in the same week that Ireland played their first-ever Test, against Pakistan. And did a mighty good job of it too, winning hearts and admiration even if they failed to win the match.

Whether sunrise for Ire-

land cricket has come when the sun is setting on the five-day format is a cruel paradox that affects all Test countries, players and fans, not just the newbies. (Afghanistan, incidentally, play their first Test against India in mid-June).

So, can anything be done to salvage the situation?

Perhaps yes, if there is will power and concerted effort. While several players from

different countries see T20 leagues as their future, a vast majority - and from the more influential Boards - still maintain that Test cricket is the apex of their careers.

NEED INDIA'S SUPPORT
But they need to do more to give this succour. While Virat Kohli opting for county experience to enhance his performance in Tests is laudable, I wish he would also use

his clout to convince the BCCI why it is important for the future of the five-day format that India plays day-night Tests too.

There is dire need of leadership from the playing fraternity to save Test cricket. This needs to come from those recently retired or playing currently because they are more in tune with trends in cricket, society and player psychology.

At the HT-Mint Asia Leadership Summit in Singapore last month I moderated a session with Sachin Tendulkar where he spoke of making Test cricket more interesting for spectators by having different balls from both ends, ala ODIs.

Whether this will work or something else is open to debate. But it could be a good starting point for a White Paper on how to save Test cricket, put together by the likes of, say, Tendulkar, Sangakarra, Ponting, Kohli, Williamson, Root etc.

A lost cause is only one given up without a fight!

Gautam Gambhir, former India opener, says BCCI has not marketed Test cricket well

New Delhi: The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) may have created extremely popular and successful Indian Premier League (IPL) but the Indian board has not done much to market Test cricket, revered by the purists, says former India opener Gautam Gambhir.

Known for his straight talking, the two-time World Cup winner put forth his point in presence of CoA chief Vinod Rai and CEO Rahul Johri.

"I don't think BCCI has marketed Test cricket as well as they have done with ODIs and T20s. I remember a Test match at Eden Gardens against West

Indies (in 2011). India batting on the first day and there were 1000 people," Gambhir said.

"Imagine Virender Sehwag, Sachin Tendulkar, VVS Laxman playing and there are only 1000 people," the senior opener said during launch of cricket historian Boria Majumdar's book 'Elevens Gods and Billion Indians'.

Seasoned spinner Harbhajan Singh felt Test cricket should be taken to tier-2 cities but Gambhir said it's hardly a solution.

"I don't know but they have messed it somewhere. Maybe cut down on T20s and ODIs," the veteran of 58 Tests and

147 ODIs.

The former ICC 'Test batsman of the Year' also feels that playing white ball cricket before Test matches will be of little help.

India are scheduled to play three Twenty20 and three ODIs before the five-Test series against England during their upcoming tour, starting June 27.

"Playing with red duks in Test is completely different from playing white ball cricket. The three T20s and three ODIs isn't an indicator of how well you are prepared for the Tests," said the two-time IPL winning captain.

Mumbai Indians defeated Kings XI Punjab because of fielding: Andrew Tye

Mumbai: Mumbai Indians, in the end, trumped Kings XI Punjab by just three runs on Wednesday despite a heroic chase led by KL Rahul in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2018 game at the Wankhede Stadium.

It was a match befitting the do-or-die clash, which in the end left the Kings XI Punjab players' heartbroken. Punjab's pacer Andrew Tye was brilliant with the ball,

returning with figures of four for 16, but in a losing cause. IPL's leading wicket-taker with 24 scalps, Tye, attributed the loss to the brilliant fielding of the Mumbai Indians, who put their bodies on the line in the field and pulled off some tough catches.

The Western Australia player also blasted his batsmen for not being able to provide adequate support to KL Rahul, who again played



alone hand with a 60-ball 94. "It's bitterly disappointing that we did not win against Mumbai tonight. We had the

firepower in our team to chase it down and we could not do it. Doesn't really matter if I take 4 for 16 or someone else takes 4/16. It means obviously someone else has let you down and it's not a whole team effort. That is something that we've struggled for a lot this IPL. We haven't had enough boys standing up other than KL with the bat or myself and Mujeeb (Ur Rehman) with the ball. So, fair credit to Mumbai.

I personally feel they won the game with their fielding. In a close match like that, they made a couple of really good saves on the boundary... chased a couple of balls down and, you know, that makes a difference when you lose the match by about five runs," said Tye. It has been a story of two halves for Punjab. They were brilliant in the first half, also leading the points table at one point of time.

BCCI members vow to safeguard their interests in wake of ICC decisions

New Delhi: Miffed at a few decisions taken by the ICC in the last few months, some members of the BCCI have alleged that the Member Participation Agreement (MPA) has not been honoured by the world governing body of the game. It has been learnt that representatives of 18 full members of the BCCI held deliberations over a conference call this evening and have vowed to safeguard the Board's interest. According to the MPA signed in 2014, India were to host 50-over Champions Trophy in 2021 but now BCCI has been asked to host the tournament in the Twenty20 format.

Sources say BCCI members are not pleased with the fact that in its Global Strategy for Cricket, the ICC has described the heavy dependence on the Indian fans and revenues as a "weakness" and "lamented" the lack of aggressive growth strategy to counter over-reliance on India.

"Thus, the intent with regard to India is apparent. The decision to convert the Champions Trophy into a World T20 event is another such recent development," said an official on the condition of anonymity.

"The members took a dim view of these developments and were of the view that the BCCI as an organisation would necessarily need to discuss these issues of policy and take appropriate decisions in this regard at a General Meeting," the official said.

"Consideration of and deliberations on the proposed Member Participation Agreement with the ICC would also be undertaken to safeguard the BCCI's interest before the same is executed on behalf of the BCCI, in lines with an earlier decision of the General Body of the BCCI," the official said.