

# TIME AND US

DAILY

Srinagar, Kashmir

THURSDAY

- MAY, 03, 2018
- 16 SHABAN 1439 AH
- ISSUE: 104
- VOLUME: 04
- PAGES: 08

WEATHER TEMPERATURE		
STATION	MAX TEMPERATURE	MIN TEMPERATURE
	ACT	ACT
SRINAGAR	23.0	13.1
JAMMU	33.5	26.2
LEH	22.2	10.0
KARGIL	22.6	4.4

SUNSET THURSDAY: 07:17 PM  
SUNRISE FRIDAY: 05:40 AM

LOCAL FORECAST OF SRINAGAR  
Mainly Clear Sky. Maximum & Minimum temperatures will be around 20°C & 11°C respectively.

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

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AZHAR MAHMOOD ADAMANT PAKISTAN WANT MORE FROM MOHAMMAD AMIR

## Centre agrees to accord in principle National Highway status to Mughal Road

Mehbooba stresses on taking Vailoo, Sughmahadev tunnels, Mughal Road, other projects as national priority  
Gadkari directs fast tracking of JK's mega connectivity projects  
On CM's suggestion, Union Minister directs engagement of local youth in skill training, material supplies

New Delhi, May 02: The Centre has agreed in principle to accord National Highway status to Mughal Road connecting Jammu and Kashmir provinces through Pir Panchal region. The Centre has also decided to put the construction of Vailoo-Singhpura and Chenani-Sudhmahadev tunnels on the fast track mode to expedite the start of work.

These decisions were taken in a marathon meeting of officers held here today with Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH), Nitin Gadkari and Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti jointly in chair.

Minister for Public Works & Culture, Naem Akhtar was also present in the meeting.

The meeting was informed that the process for formulation of project reports for these projects has already been started and the consultancy report has been received by the Union Government and with the melting of snow on these roads further action would be initiated.



Termining connectivity critical in bridging the mental divide between the people of Kashmir and rest of the country, the Chief Minister stressed on taking these tunnel projects in mission mode as a national priority.

The Chief Minister also raised the fast tracking of Baramulla-Gulmarg-Loran road which was founded in 2015. The road would provide alternate connectivity to Gulmarg via Poonch thus ensuring more inter regional connectivity and giving the

tourist inflow a push as well. The Union Minister directed the concerned agencies to use latest technologies and soil stabilising methods to get ahead on the construction so that the project is completed at the earliest.

Mehbooba Mufti also took up the issue of 80 kilometre long Doda-Dessa-Kapran road connecting Doda district with Anantnag. The Union Minister directed completion of all formalities on the project including

forest clearances for its quick consideration.

The Chief Minister also raised the issue of widening of Srinagar-Jammu National Highway and the bottlenecks coming in the way on the Ramban-Banihal stretch. She stressed on attaching national importance to the project as it is the only Highway connecting Kashmir Valley with rest of the country.

The Union Minister assured the Chief Minister that he would himself review the status of all these connectivity projects soon with all the concerned agencies. He also directed constitution of an expert team which would visit the Jawahar tunnel and inspect the repairs to be done as suggested by the Chief Minister.

In a significant decision involving local youth, Mr. Gadkari on the persistent demand of Mehbooba Mufti, directed training of 3000-4000 local youth in tunneling, highway construction, earth cutting and stabilisation

▶ See **Road**...Pg 02

## Stone Pelting on School Bus angers Kashmir, two minors injured



Srinagar, May 02: Outrage, anger, disgust was witnessed on Wednesday as news of school bus pelted with stones in Zavoora area of south Kashmir's Shopian district came into light causing injuries to two minor students among them one with head injury was shifted to Srinagar for specialized care.

Given details of the incident Jammu and Kashmir Police Chief, Shesh Paul Vaid tweet-

ed "miscreants pelted stones on school bus of Rainbow School Shopian resulted in injuries to 2nd class student Rehan. He has been shifted to SKIMS for treatment with head injury. Complete madness how stone pelters are targeting young school children. These criminals will face the law."

Expressing shock and anguish over

▶ See **Stone**...Pg 02

## COALITION GOVT CONFINED TO SECRETARIAT ONLY: VIKAR RASOOL

Addresses gathering at Senabati Paristan

Banihal, May 02: Describing PDP-BJP coalition government as complete failure, former minister and member legislative assembly (MLA) from Banihal Vikar Rasool wani said that present PDP BJP regime has failed to address issues confronting people and has created the environment chaos and confusion among the people of the state.

MLA Banihal Vikar Rasool Wani along with the secretary Pradesh Congress Committee Intiyaz Ahmed Khanday and other senior leaders including Farooq Ahmed Katoch, Haji Mohd Yousuf and others was addressing huge public rally at Senabati Paristan here today, where

▶ See **Coalition**...Pg 02

## Introspection of stakeholders a prelude to dialogue, trust building: O P Shah

On return from Pakistan Shah engages with top separatists, mainstream leaders in Srinagar

Srinagar, May 02: Noted political analyst and track II diplomat O P Shah on his return from Pakistan air dashed to Srinagar and held extensive meetings with top separatist leaders including Syed Ali Shah Geelani the Hurriyat Conference (G) Chairman, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq the Hurriyat Conference (M) chairman, Muslim Conference chairman Prof Abdul Gani Bhat and veteran mainstream leaders Dr Farooq Abdullah



and M Y Tarigami to know their response on the desire of Pak civil society for dialogue over Kashmir and good neighbor relations between India and Pakistan.

Talking to Kashmir News Service (KNS), O P Shah said "all stakeholders have to introspect themselves to create a conducive atmosphere for dialogue over Kashmir as this is my belief after knowing the views of top political leaders and civil society in Pakistan including former foreign minister Khurshid Kasoori, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman Imran Khan, another former foreign minister Shah Mohammad Qureshi,

some sitting and retired judges of Pakistan and senior journalists of that country." He said people of all shades in Pakistan with whom I held several meetings showed their deep interest in establishing friendly relations with India and resolution of all issues concerning peace and stability through dialogue.

Replying to a question O P Shah said "both national and local media have to

▶ See **Shah**...Pg 02

## TEENAGED YOUTH DEAD, 10 INJURED DURING CLASHES AMID GUNFIGHT IN SHOPIAN

Srinagar, May 2: A teenaged youth was killed and ten others, half of them suffered bullet wounds, in forces action during clashes following a gunfight in Terkiwangam area of Shopian in south Kashmir on Wednesday.

Official sources told GNS that a joint team of army and SOG cordoned off Terkiwangam village following specific information about the presence of some militants in the area.

As the joint team of forces approached the suspected spot amid firing some warning shots, the militants, hiding in the area, opened fire, triggering off a gunfight.

A police officer told GNS that the contact has been established with a group of militants.

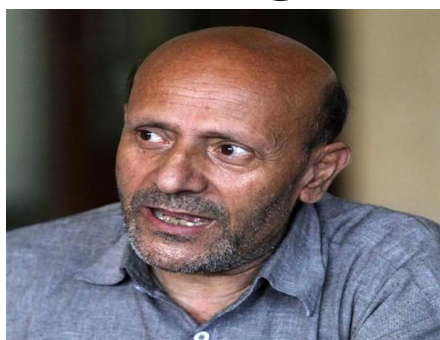
"The operation is going on in the area," he said.

▶ See **Teenaged**...Pg 02

## Muslims in Jammu reeling under insecurity, says MLA Langate

Srinagar, May 02: Condemning the brutal murder of Liyaqat Ali, an eleventh class student in Bilawar Kathua by goons, MLA Langate Sheikh Abdul Rasheed has warned government of dire consequences for its failure to protect the minority community in Jammu.

In a statement to KNB, Er Rasheed said that Govt. has proved to be a failure on all fronts and the unwanted provoking statement of Deputy Chief Minister Kavinder Gupta and a negative campaign by a section of Indian Media to give direct support to Kathua accused culprits has emboldened fringe and communal elements to do damn things of their choice.



Er Rasheed said, "The free hand given to goons has rendered Jammu Muslims in

▶ See **MLA**...Pg 02

## SECURITY PLAN FOR AMARNATH YATRA BEING IMPLEMENTED: IGP

Jammu: Security agencies have started implementing a plan chalked out in a recent meeting with the Jammu and Kashmir governor for the safety of pilgrims and success of the upcoming 60-day long Amarnath Yatra, a senior police official said Wednesday.

Governor N N Vohra on Monday had reviewed the security plan for the yatra in a meeting that was attended by Director General of Police S P Vaid and Chief Secretary B B Vyas.

The annual yatra to the Himalayan shrine in south Kashmir will start on June 28 and it would be longer by 20 days this year. It will end on Raksha Bandhan.

▶ See **Security**...Pg 02

## BJP High command says no trouble within party in JK

'Equal representation given to everyone, Poor performance of ministers won't be tolerated': Avinash Rai Khana

Srinagar, May 02: The Bhartiya Janta Party high command while rejecting any trouble within the BJP unit in Jammu and Kashmir, Wednesday cautioned the recently made ministers that their performance will be reviewed and decision will be taken accordingly in the future.

The BJP on Monday did a major reshuffle of its ministers when five new faces were inducted into the cabinet.

The BJP's decision to revamp the ministerial team came after adverse reports by local RSS and BJP leaders that, in Jammu,



the party is seen to have completely

▶ See **BJP**...Pg 02

## ABDUL HAQ KHAN ALL SET TO GET A LEAD ROLE IN THE ORGANISATION: MADNI

SRINAGAR 02 MAY: Describing Abdul Haq Khan as an asset and party's devoted leader Peoples Democratic Party wants to boost from his influence and experiences in the party, PDP Vice President Mohammad Sar-taj Madni said that Haq has served the state ably as a legislator and minister and in his capacity as cabinet colleague of Party patron Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and party president Mehbooba Mufti, he raised the governance standards very high through his administrative capability, political vision and commitment for public. He said his contribution is valued by the party cadre and people at large and he is all set to get a lead role, befitting his

▶ See **Madni**...Pg 02

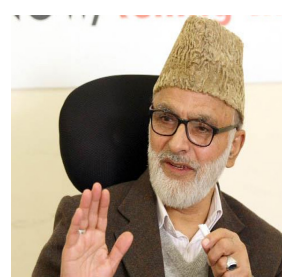
## NC committed to upholding the rights and dignity of people: Sagar

Gulrez Mushtaq joins National Conference

Srinagar, May 02: National Conference General Secretary Haji Ali Muhammad Sagar on Wednesday said the party was committed to upholding the rights and dignity of the people and would continue to fight for the interests of the State. Welcoming social and political activist, Gulrez Mushtaq into National Conference at a function organized at Party Headquarters, 'Nawa-e-Sub-

hba' in Srinagar, the NC General Secretary said the current political dispensation at the helm of affairs posed numerous challenges to the State's unity, integrity and political identity.

Gulrez Mushtaq, who is the grandson of renowned Sufi figure from Kashmir Late Ahad Bab Sahib, joined National Conference on this occasion and pledged to work towards strengthening the party at the



grassroots level. Gulrez Mushtaq has an MBA from Cardiff Metropolitan University and has worked in London and

Dubai before returning to Kashmir.

Speaking on the occasion, the NC General Secretary said the party was open to youngsters who wanted to serve the people of the State and would empower them to fight the myriad challenges the State is faced with. "As more and more dedicated, well-meaning and competent young faces continue to join the

▶ See **Sagar**...Pg 02

## World Press Freedom Day: J&K GOVERNMENT LIFTS BAN ON CARRYING GADGETS TO OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS FOR JOURNALISTS

▶ Bilal Bashir Bhat

Srinagar, May 02: Ahead of World Press Freedom Day being observed on 3 May, the Jammu and Kashmir Government on Wednesday revoked ban on carrying gadgets to official functions for journalists.

According to the Joint Director Information and Public Relation Sajid Yehya Naqash, vide order No: 151-53/2018, dated 02-05-2018 which lies with Kashmir News Bureau (KNB): "various representations from media fraternity were pouring in for seeking redressal of problems of

▶ See **Ban**...Pg 02

# GOVERNMENT AWARE ABOUT PROBLEMS OF PEOPLE: KOHLI

RAJOURI, MAY 2: Minister for Animal, Sheep Husbandry and Fisheries Abdul Gani Kohli today said that the Government is fully aware of the problems of the people, and is taking various initiatives in this regard to mitigating them. The Minister expressed these views after inaugurating a bore well at Kallar and laying the foundation stone of filtration plant at Agrati, Kalakote in Rajouri. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that the present Government is fully aware of the problems of the people. He said several initiatives have been tak-

en to improve the living standard of the people. The Minister said every possible effort is being made to provide better basic amenities including adequate safe drinking water facilities to the people of the State, especially living in rural and far-flung areas. He further said that there is a dire need to tap groundwater facilities to fulfil the drinking water requirement of the people where water resources are not available. The Minister was informed that the inaugurated bore well is drilled by PHE Ground Water Di-



vision at an estimated cost of Rs 24 lakh and will benefit as many as 600 souls of the local populace. Likewise, the filtration plant of water supply scheme Agrati will be constructed at an estimated cost Rs. 1.67 cr under centrally sponsored scheme NRDWP. The plant will have the

capacity of 10000 gallons per hour and will benefit over 1500 souls of the area. The Minister directed the concerned executive agency to complete the work in a time bound manner so that the people are provided drinking water without facing inconvenience. He said PHE department has already been instructed to conduct a survey of the Constituency and identify the habitations that have not been provided drinking water facilities so far. The Minister stressed for using the water judiciously. He said suf-

ficient funds have been earmarked under PHE sector for the development and upgradation of PHE infrastructure in Kalakote constituency for the current fiscal. He directed the employees to work with extra zeal and dedication to maintain the essential services to the people. The people of the area thanked the Minister for the initiative and for fulfilling the long pending public demand. Senior officers of district administration including PHE department were present on the occasion.

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### ROAD

works etc. by concerned project executing agencies so that subsequently they are engaged in similar projects. On the suggestion of the Chief Minister, the Union Minister also directed the project executing agencies to associate local youth in the material supplies and other ancillary works so that the socio economic development of the catchment areas is also taken care of. It may be recalled here that projects worth Rs. 60, 000 crore in infrastructure including highways, tunnels and roads are under execution in the State currently. The Chief Minister also sought construction of grade separators and flyovers on the National Highway where it touches major towns like Kathua, Samba, Jammu, Awantipore, Bijbehara and Srinagar to check the frequent traffic jams besides construction of a Bye Pass at Anantnag on the Dornipawa-Ashajipora road stretch. The meeting was also informed of complete and satisfactory utilisation of Rs. 332 crore under Central Road Fund by the State Government. The meeting was also informed that the inception report of the water transport in the Jhelum river has been completed and the Detailed Project Report in this regard would come in next month. The Chief Minister, it may be mentioned here, had sought revival of water transport across the Jhelum river to provide an alternate transportation mode and enhance the tourist attraction of the place. Secretary, MoRTH, Udhveer Singh; Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources, V P Singh; Principal Resident Commissioner, R K Gupta; Commissioner, Indus Commission, P K Saxena; Principal Secretary to Chief Minister, Rohit Kansal; Secretary, PHE, Irrigation & Flood Control, Sanjeev Verma and other senior officers from J&K Government and Central Government were present on the occasion.

### SCHOOL

the incident, Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti wrote on Twitter "Shocked & angered to hear of the attack on a school bus in Shopian. The perpetrators of this senseless & cowardly act will be brought to justice." Hurriyat (G) chairman Syed Ali Geelani on Wednesday expressed his dismay over stone throwing incident in Shopian, wherein a school bus carrying children was targeted by some unscrupulous elements. Terming the incident as inhuman, the father of the injured minor student said that "my son has been injured in stone pelting, this is against humanity. This could have been anyone's child." Former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, while reacting to the incident said, "The amnesty granted to stone-pelters was meant to encourage more reasonable behavior but some of these goons are determined to use the opportunity given to them to just pelt more stones." While referring to attack on school bus in Shopian MLA Langate Sheikh Abdul Rashid appealed students to make education their priority and refrain from targeting their own colleagues. Nisar Ahmad, a youth stated - "This is new low and no ideology can be used or should be used to defend the heinous act of pelting stones on school bus. The culprits should be handed exemplary punishment so that nobody dares to do such inhuman act. One cannot imagine the foolish, cowardly mentality behind such disgraceful act. We need to introspect where we are heading as a society. We need to raise our voice against such acts." From left, right to center everyone condemned this ghastly approach. Ruling party PDP Youth leader Tahir Syeed, while reacting to the episode stated - "Latest: Cowards aiming to get political justice to Kashmiris, target a school bus, grievously injuring two minor students. Another reminder to those-- sympathizing with these "street revolutionaries" & justify their every criminal act!"

### COALITION

thousands of locals from adjoining areas gave warm reception to their local MLA on his extensive visit of the area. Locals hail and appreciate the efforts of Vikar Rasool Wani for bringing the backward back ward corners of Senabati Paristan on developmental map and also appreciate his concern for projecting Senabati for up-gradation to the level of Higher Secondary School, which was the long pending demand of area. While addressing large gathering Vikar Rasool Wani said that Congress is committed to resolve the issues confronting people and to fight against discrimination. Taking stock of the overall socio-political situation emerging due to "misrule" by PDP BJP Coalition government Congress MLA from Banihal Vikar Rasool Wani expressed deep concern over the multiple issues confronting people, like war like situation in Kashmir valley and communalizing the Kathua rape and murder case by BJP, he added that present government has created environment of fair and lawlessness in the state and irresponsible statements of people running the affairs has creating the feeling of helplessness among the people. He said that the Modi led government at the centre has failed to fulfill a single commitment with the people and has brought miseries for the common man due to unprecedented price hike in the country. He described the coalition government as total failure on all fronts and causing unrest and

untold miseries to each and every section of the society due to its wrong policies and assured the people that Congress would continue to play its role of a responsible and vibrant opposition to highlight the failures of the government and make it accountable to the people of the state. Earlier Senior Congress Leader Intiyaz Ahmed Khanday lashed out at the PDP-BJP government in the state for its failure on all fronts and vitiating the atmosphere of peace and harmony in the state due to their wrong policies. He said that two power hungry forces in the state (PDP & BJP) having nothing common in their ideology, have joined hands for the sake of power leaving aside all important commitments with the people. He said both Centre and State Government make certain issues to divert the attention of general public from their failures but people are not fool, they will teach them lesson at appropriate time. Congress working District president Farooq Ahmed Katho said that PDP & BJP having nothing common in their ideology, have joined hands for the sake of power leaving aside all important commitments with the people of the state. Various among others who spoke on the occasion including Haji Mohd Yousuf senior Gujjar leader, Rtd SSP Sanaulah Naik, Ishaq Khandy, Sakhi Mohd, Block president Congress Committee Ukerhaal Parvaiz Ahmed Wani, Sarpanch Udhham Singh.

### SHAH

act as a bridge for rebuilding trust and creating a conducive atmosphere for meaningful dialogue over Kashmir." Admitting that some national TV channels and news papers are portraying an unhealthy picture about the happenings in Kashmir that damages the prospectus of peace and working of democratic institutions in the State, O P Shah said the media has to show responsibility for portraying the real picture of Kashmir to disallow any negative propaganda on Kashmir situation. Confirming that he held extensive meetings with Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Mirwaiz Umar Farooq who, he said, also endorsed the view that dialogue is the only way forward but they said the rigidity Government of India has been showing in creating a conducive atmosphere for dialogue. Geelani, he said, made a point that several rounds of dialogue on Kashmir initiated by India and Pakistan didn't bear fruits due to the non seriousness and insensitivity shown by the Government of India. He also confirmed his meetings with National Conference president Dr Farooq Abdullah, NC Provincial president Nasir Aslam Wani, senior PDP leaders Nizam-u-Din Bhat and Dr Mehboob Beg and CPI(M) secretary M Y Tariqami. He favored increase in the intensity of people to people contacts between the people of the divided parts of Jammu and Kashmir and the people of India and Pakistan for peace and regional stability in the Indian sub continent and hinted the possibility of handing over a report on the feedback he received in Pakistan and Kashmir to the incumbent Modi Government in Delhi, as he said "though I am not in government but will surely play a constructive role for bridging the gaps between India and Pakistan and smoothening their relations for restoring peace and stability in Indian sub continent.

### TEENAGED

A large number of youth took to streets soon after the news about the encounter spread and pelted rocks on the forces. The police and paramilitary CRPF used tear smoke shells, pellet guns, and live ammunition. At least eleven youths suffered injuries, six of them with bullet wounds. One of them, a teenaged youth identified Umar Kumar (17) son of Abdul Ahad Kumar of Pinjra Shopian, succumbed to injuries. They were removed to a local hospital from where two of them— Inayat Abbas Malla and Javid Bashir Sheikh were referred to Srinagar for specialized treatment. However, police said that only one person suffered bullet injuries and identified as Inayat. "In an ongoing encounter at Turkwangam Shopian one civilian namely Inayat sustained an injury in cross firing and is being treated at a hospital in Srinagar. Area under cordon," the police tweeted.

### MLA

a feeling of absolute sense of insecurity. Govt. leaves no stone unturned to prove majority community in Jammu and Kashmir intolerant and radical but the fact of the matter is that their blood has become cheap from Kathua to Baramulla and Pulwama to Billawal and elsewhere. Voice of the majority community goes unheard and their every genuine demand is given communal color under a well-crafted plan to strengthen the communal forces in Jammu". Er. Rasheed while appealing for maintaining communal harmony in the entire state questioned Indian Media and state Government that why did they turn a blind eye towards the confession made by tourists hailing from other Indian states that they received all sorts of cooperation from locals in Kashmir when they came under stone pelting at some places In South Kashmir. Er Rasheed said that party will carry out a protest march towards Civil secretariat on 7th of May, on eve of opening of Darbar in Srinagar, against sense of insecurity among Jammu Muslims, use of disproportionate force against Kashmiris, continuation of SRO-202, failure of Govt to fulfill genuine demands of clerical staff, delay in release of salaries of SSA

teachers and flooded entry of beggars and slum dwellers in Kashmir valley.

### SECURITY

"Security agencies have already started implementing the security plan chalked out at a recent meeting chaired by Governor N N Vohra for the success of the yatra. "Security forces are working together to deal with and eliminate any threat posed to the pilgrimage," Inspector General of Police (IGP), Jammu Province, S D Singh Jamwal, said. Over one lakh pilgrims, so far, have already registered themselves for the yatra at centres across the country and advance online booking of helicopter tickets for the pilgrimage will begin on April 27. Efforts are being taken to make the yatra to the 3,880-metre high holy cave shrine of Amarnath peaceful and without any incidents, Jamwal said. "The Amarnath yatra is a very big event, depicting our culture, history and brotherhood... Elaborate plans have been worked out to ensure a peaceful yatra and make it a best experience for pilgrims," the officer said. The annual yatra, which is being managed by the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board headed by the governor, is scheduled to begin from two routes from June 28. He said the pilgrimage ended peacefully without any untoward incident in the Jammu region last year because of tight security arrangements. "Last year, not a single untoward incident was reported from the Jammu province during the yatra due to stringent security arrangements and we are sure that the pilgrimage will pass off peacefully this year with the cooperation of the people," Jamwal said. Though no untoward incident was reported in the state's Jammu region, a terror attack in south Kashmir on July 10 last year had left eight pilgrims dead and several others injured. The mastermind of the attack, Abu Ismail, along with his associates were killed in an encounter on September 14, 2017. Last year, a bus with pilgrims on board skidded off the road near Ramban along the Jammu-Srinagar national highway resulting in the deaths of 17 pilgrims. "We are working round the clock. Elaborate arrangements with regard to security and traffic management on the highway will be in place. Our attempt is to ensure a peaceful yatra and we are confident that it will be peacefully," he said. On intelligence inputs suggesting terrorists waiting across the border, especially along the Line of Control (LoC) and International Border (IB) in Jammu, Jamwal said Pakistan is always out to promote disturbance in the state and the country. "They always try to push terrorist into this side. There are general inputs, but no specific information," he said. However, the IGP said security forces along the border have been put on alert and the surveillance, especially on the highway linking border roads, stepped up to scuttle attempts to push militants into this side. Referring to the killing of four infiltrators in Sunderbani in Rajouri district in March, he said the success was the result of the anti-infiltration security grid and the cooperation of the people. "The yatra is starting next month and it will be followed by Independence Day... We are keeping our focus on the calendar and working out our plan accordingly to thwart any attempt of sabotage, he said.

### BJP

surrendered to the PDP, which is strong in Kashmir. The party has also faced backlash after its two ministers took part in a rally in support of those accused in the rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl in Kathua. BJP National Vice-President, and Kashmir Affairs incharge Avinesh Rai Khanna, said that performance of newly inducted ministers will be reviewed. "The ministers have to perform better. Those who perform poorly will be dealt accordingly," Khanna told KNS over phone from New Delhi. Within hours after the Cabinet reshuffle, the BJP faced a revolt as party legislator from the Chenani segment of Udhampur district, Dina Nath Bhagat, termed the state government "anti-Dalit", which was working against the neglected and marginalised sections of society. Another sulking legislator boycotted the legislature party meeting to protest the denial of ministerial berth to him. "As far as our strength in the Assembly is concerned, we deserve at least two Cabinet berths," Bhagat has said. However, Khanna said there was no resentment within the BJP. "We are analyzing Bhagat's statement. We gave equal representation to everyone. There was no discrimination neither the BJP believes in it," he said. Bhagat has said that instead of giving due representation to the neglected and marginalised sections, the government was rather gagging their voice. "Monday's reshuffle in the Council of Ministers has authenticated our allegations that this regime is anti-Dalit," he has alleged and added that reserved category employees had been demanding promotion in reservation but the government had adopted a casual approach. Meanwhile sources said that the ministers who join PDP-BJP government's cabinet were told that they were chosen with great consideration. Sources said that the party high command had received

the reports that BJP's graph has gone down during three years in the entire state as party Ministers and legislators focused less on development works and addressing people's issues.

When Khana was asked by KNS that there were reports that party Ministers had completely lost connection with the masses, he said BJP won't allow such things to happen and accordingly has conveyed clear cut instructions to all the party Ministers to make all possible efforts to take the party to new heights.

"We will review the working of party Ministers on regular basis and that if any negative report would be received the party will take stern action," Khana warned.

Meanwhile according to reports the BJP high command has set the process in motion for election of new State party president in place of Sat Sharma, who was inducted as a Cabinet Minister.

### MADNI

stature and competence. In a statement issued here Madni hinted at the party president assigning Haq an important job in the organization to help fill a void caused by preoccupation of most of the senior colleagues in government and other key sectors. The party feels that North Kashmir in particular and state unit in general needs the services of a seasoned politician who can spare his time and energy to steer the party successfully out of challenges seen a head it bears mention that Haq has cultivated a constituency much beyond Lolab and Kupwara and is now known for his standing in Pahari belts of the state. It is widely believed in party circles that a prominent position to him in the party can help consolidate further the base of the party here and elsewhere. Madni said that Party leadership has always relied in his potential and qualification as a valuable performer and ever since his joining PDP, he has lent tremendous push to the party image. He is respected for integrity and honesty and it is as law and Rural Development Minister that he changed the face of rural areas by introducing a productive work culture and innovative growth concepts. It was his doings that state earned several awards for proper utilization of funds in the rural sector. He said that PDP has faced difficult times and Party leadership is keen to get best out of its colleagues and the cadre by appropriate placements that are dictated by the time and urgencies. Keeping in view the role and relevance of PDP as harbinger of peoples dignity and honour, the party President will rely on popular faces to meet the larger objectives and goals the party had set for itself at its outset, Madni added. He said Abdul Haq Khan is seen as one of the most dedicated PDP leaders who are respected by the people for their conviction and he is likely to get a suitable responsibility to serve the people's cause along with other top party leaders. Party president believes, he is a trouble shooter whose services will boost the party image.

### SAGAR

party, we are going to reach out to the youth and take them on board to evolve solutions to the political, social and economic problems the State is faced with. I welcome Gulrez Muhstaq to National Conference and wish him the best in his endeavour to serve the people", the NC General Secretary said. Speaking on the occasion, Gulrez Mushtaq reposed his faith in the party and said National Conference has a glorious and valiant history of fighting for the rights and interests of the people and it is this goal that he would nurture and contribute towards.

NC Provincial President Nasir Aslam Wani, Party Leaders Chaudhary Muhammad Ramzan, Muhammad Akbar Lone, Muhammad Sayeed Akhoun, Qaiser Jamsheed Lone, Javed Ahmed Dar, Salman Ali Sagar, Showkat Ahmed Mir, Sardar Jagdish Singh Azad besides various leaders of the party's youth wing were also present on the occasion and welcomed Gulrez Muhstaq to the party.

### BAN

not allowing them to take phones/electronic gadgets etc with them whenever they are needed to attend meetings / government functions etc. It has accordingly been found expedient that all the registered media houses/persons shall be allowed to carry their phones or electronic gadgets to the venues where the meetings/ government functions are likely to be convened expect in case of any extraordinary situation that, for security and other unavoidable reasons may not be admissible/ allowed," read the order issued by government. Earlier, July last year, the journalists during special session called on the GST implementation in the state were informed by Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Council and Assembly not to carry cameras and mobile phones inside forcing media-persons to boycott the proceedings. However, the order was later revoked. This important development to lift the ban on carrying gadgets and accessories to government functions for media men comes a day before World Press Day being observed globally on May 03 to raise awareness of the importance of freedom of the press and remind governments of their duty to respect and uphold the right to freedom of expression enshrined under Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

## Cabinet approves Restructuring of the Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) – creation, abolition & upgradation of posts of Joint Secretary-level and above

New Delhi, May 02: The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the Restructuring of the Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) by upgradation, creation and abolition of certain posts of Joint Secretary-level and above. The total cadre strength of Indian Bureau of Mines has been maintained at the existing strength of 1477.

The restructuring would help in enabling the IBM to effectively discharge its function to help reform and transform the regulation of the mineral sector. It will enable the adoption of IT and space technology by the IBM to improve its effectiveness in mineral regulation and development. Further, the posts entail a great deal of decision-making and accountability in the functioning of the organization.

Impact:

The proposal will create direct employment opportunities for technical personnel with higher responsibility for contribution in faster development of mineral sector, thereby generating more employment avenues in the sector as a whole. The improved and enhanced performance of IBM would benefit the mining sector.

Details:

The upgradation, creation and abolition of certain posts of Joint Secretary-level in IBM consists of:

Creation of 1 post of Chief Controller of Mines in Level 15 and 3 posts of Controller of Mines in Level 14;

Upgradation of 11 posts i.e. 1 post of Controller General from Level 15 to 16, 2 posts each of Chief Controller of Mines and Director (Ore-Dressing) from Level 14 to 15 and upgradation of 8 posts (5 posts of Controller of Mines, 1 each

of Chief Mineral Economist, Chief Ore-Dressing Officer and Chief Mining Geologist) in the existing Level of 13A to 14; and

Abolition of 1 existing cadre post of Deputy Director General (Statistics), an officer of Indian Statistical Service in Level 14 in pay matrix.

Background:

IBM was set up by the Government of India on 1st March, 1948 under the Ministry of Works, Mines and Power, primarily as an advisory body to help in formulation of policy and legal framework for mining sector and advising Central and State Governments on development and utilization of mineral resources. The role and responsibility of IBM have changed with emerging needs of the sector as facilitator and regulator of mining sector (other than coal, petroleum and atomic

minerals).

Ministry of Mines had constituted a Committee for comprehensive 'Review and Restructuring of the Functions and Role of IBM' in the light of the 'National Mineral Policy' (NMP) 2008. The Committee submitted its report on 04.5.2012 which was accepted in the Ministry.

The Ministry of Mines has taken a number of initiatives through IBM for effective facilitation and regulation of the mineral sector:

Implementation of the Sustainable Development Framework (SDF) and Star Rating of Mines for their efforts and initiatives encompassing the scientific, environmental and social aspects of the mining activity;

development of Mining Surveillance System (MSS) in association with Bhabha Institute of Space Application & Geo-informatics (BISAG) to detect

illegal mining within 500 metres zone of lease boundary of major minerals using satellite imageries; and thrust on R&D activities on mineral processing including process development for upgradation of low grade ore; (iv) development of IT enable Mining Tenement System (MTS) for computerizing the mineral sectors activities.

The restructuring of IBM was essential to enable it organisationally to take up the responsibilities entrusted in the role with the recent changes in the policy and legislations, revised charter of function of IBM and the new activities and initiatives undertaken by IBM. IBM is also engaged in handling the States for auction of mineral blocks for greater transparency in allocation of mineral concessions. IBM is helping the States in preparation of auction blocks, publishing of

average sale price, assisting in post auction monitoring and approval process.

The relocation of offices of IBM has already been effected for carrying out the responsibilities given to IBM. New Regional Offices at Raipur and Gandhinagar have been opened and the sub-regional office at Guwahati has been upgraded to Regional office. The existing Regional Offices at Kolkata and Udaipur have been upgraded to the Zonal office (East) and Zonal Office (North). For the purpose of Skill Development, an Institute of Sustainable Development Framework at Udaipur and 'Remote Sensing Centre' at Hyderabad and National Level Training Centres 'Institute of Sustainable Mining' at Kolkata have been opened and Skill Development Centre at Varanasi is also shortly being opened.

## Cabinet approves continuation of Umbrella Scheme 'Green Revolution – Krishonnati Yojana' in Agriculture Sector

New Delhi, May 02: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for the Umbrella Scheme, 'Green Revolution – Krishonnati Yojana' in agriculture sector beyond 12th Five Year Plan for the period from 2017-18 to 2019-20 with the Central Share of Rs. 33,269.976 crore.

The Umbrella scheme comprises of 11 Schemes/Missions. These schemes look to develop the agriculture and allied sector in a holistic and scientific manner to increase the income of farmers by enhancing production, productivity and better returns on produce. The Schemes will be continued with an expenditure of Rs. 33,269.976 crore for three financial years, i.e., 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20.

3. The Schemes that are part of the Umbrella Schemes are :-

(i) Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) with a total central share of Rs. 7533.04 crore, MIDH aims to promote

holistic growth of horticulture sector; to enhance horticulture production, improve nutritional security and income support to farm households.

(ii) National Food Security Mission (NFSM), including National Mission on Oil Seeds and Oil Palm (NMOOP), with a total central share of Rs. 6893.38 crore. It aims to increase production of rice, wheat, pulses, coarse cereals and commercial crops, through area expansion and productivity enhancement in a suitable manner in the identified districts of the country, restoring soil fertility and productivity at the individual farm level and enhancing farm level economy. It further aims to augment the availability of vegetable oils and to reduce the import of edible oils.

(iii) National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) with a total central share of Rs. 3980.82 crore. NMSA aims at promoting sustainable agriculture practices best suitable to the specific agro-ecology focusing on integrated farming, ap-

propriate soil health management and synergizing resource conservation technology.

(iv) Submission on Agriculture Extension (SMAE) with a total central share of Rs. 2961.26 crore. SMAE aims to strengthen the ongoing extension mechanism of State Governments, local bodies etc., achieving food and nutritional security and socio-economic empowerment of farmers, to institutionalize programme planning and implementation mechanism, to forge effective linkages and synergy amongst various stakeholders, to support HRD interventions, to promote pervasive and innovative use of electronic / print media, inter-personal communication and ICT tools, etc.

(v) Sub-Mission on Seeds and Planting Material (SMSP) with a total central share of Rs. 920.6 crore. SMSP aims to increase production of certified / quality seed, to increase SRR, to upgrade the quality of farm saved seeds, to strengthen the seed multiplication chain, to promote new

technologies and methodologies in seed production, processing, testing etc., to strengthen and modernizing infrastructure for seed production, storage, certification and quality etc.

(vi) Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation (SMAM) with a total central share of Rs. 3250 crore. SMAM aims to increase the reach of farm mechanization to small and marginal farmers and to the regions where availability of farm power is low, to promote 'Custom Hiring Centres' to offset the adverse economies of scale arising due to small landholding and high cost of individual ownership, to create hubs for hi-tech and high value farm equipment, to create awareness among stakeholders through demonstration and capacity building activities, and to ensure performance testing and certification at designated testing centres located all over the country.

(vii) Sub-Mission on Plant Protection and Plan Quarantine (SMPPP).

## President of India presents Visitor's Awards 2018;

New Delhi, May 02: The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, hosted a one-day meet of Vice-Chancellors of Central Universities of whom he is Visitor, today (April 2, 2018) at Rashtrapati Bhavan. During the inaugural session of the meeting, he presented the Visitor's Awards for Research in the field of Basic and Applied Science and in the field of Humanities, Arts and Social Science.

Speaking at the award presentation ceremony, the President congratulated the winners of the Visitor's Awards, 2018. The awards were presented to Prof. Sanjay K. Jain for his work on the development of a drug delivery system having the potential to make cancer treatment more effective and affordable; Prof. Ashis Kumar Mukherjee for his research on the molecular complexity of the snake venom; Prof. Ashwani Pareek's work on the development of a rice variety

having the potential to enhance the farm productivity and income of farmers; and Prof. Pramod K. Nayar for his work in the field of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences.

The President said that research and innovation is the bedrock of advancing knowledge, and knowledge alone holds the key to finding solutions to the problems we face in our world, nation and society. It is sometimes not understood that research is a demanding profession and a researcher is almost always riding a roller coaster. Pursuing research demands constant determination from the researcher as well as full institutional support. Research is not a 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. job and thus our approach towards supporting and promoting a research culture cannot be a pedantic one.

The President said that research and innovation can play an important role in lifting our people out of poverty,

ensuring their health and well-being or attaining food and energy security. Researchers and innovators can help develop solutions to the problems we experience on a daily basis. Universities can also develop mechanisms to support innovation by ordinary people and help such grassroots innovators to further refine their work.

The President said that universities should incorporate community-oriented initiatives in their academic programs and engage with the communities near to their campuses. Those universities which are located in backward regions have a special responsibility of working with communities around them. Such community initiatives will further expand the horizon of their students and prepare them well for life ahead.

During the day presentations were made by Vice-Chancellors of the central universities on issues relating

to promotion of research and innovation in central universities.

Later, addressing the concluding session of the meeting, the President said that universities should play a leading role in addressing the specific challenges faced by our nation. Many of these challenges require creative and innovative solutions. It is their paramount duty to ensure that their campuses emerge as spaces that nurture free expression and ideas, where experimentation is encouraged and failure is not ridiculed but is seen as learning. In addition, universities should become the conduits for exposing students to the problems faced by our people, our nation, cities, towns and villages. Through such exposure coupled with a push towards creative and innovative thinking, universities can prepare students to take up research and innovation projects contributing to national development.

## PRADHAN MANTRI SWASTHYA SURAKSHA YOJANA (PMSSY) APPROVED BEYOND 12TH FIVE YEAR PLAN

New Delhi, May 02: The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for continuation of Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) beyond 12th Five Year Plan for a period 2017-18 to 2019-20 with a financial outlay of Rs. 14,832 crores.

Expressing gratitude to the Prime Minister for his constant support, Shri J.P. Nadda, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare said that the Government is consciously working towards improving health infrastructure as well as health manpower in the country. "Setting up of new AIIMS would not only transform health education and training but will also address the shortfall of health care professionals. Construction of new AIIMS is fully funded by the Central Government and the Operations and Maintenance expenses on new AIIMS are also fully borne by the Central Government," Shri Nadda elaborated.

Shri Nadda further stated that setting up new AIIMS in various states will lead to employment generation for nearly 3000 people in various faculty and non faculty posts in each of the AIIMS. He said that indirect employment generation will take place due to facilities and services like shopping centre, canteens, etc. coming in the vicinity of new AIIMS. The Union Health Minister added that for each functional AIIMS established under PMSSY, a total of 4089 posts were created for a 960 bedded hospital. "The same number of posts will be created for a 960 bedded hospital for the new AIIMS that are being established under PMSSY. So far, for new AIIMS at Mangalagiri, Nagpur and Kalyani, a total of 1144 posts have been created with the approval of Ministry of Finance," Shri Nadda mentioned.

Highlighting the benefits of the scheme, Shri Nadda said that each new AIIMS will add 100 UG (MBBS) and 60 B.Sc (Nursing) seats, 15-20 Super Specialty Departments and around 750 hospital beds. He further said that in each GMC up-gradation project, 8-10 Super Specialty Departments get added on an average and an up-gradation project also gives benefit of adding of around 15 new PG seats on an average. "As per data of current functional AIIMS, it is expected that each new AIIMS would cater to around 1500 OPD patients / day and around 1000 IPD patients / month," Shri Nadda said.

The Union Health Minister said that PMSSY aims at correcting regional imbalances in the availability of affordable/reliable tertiary healthcare services and also at augmenting facilities for quality medical education in different regions of the country. He said that various initiatives under PMSSY will lead to development of apex level medical education and nursing education and connected research facilities. It will also lead to creation of tertiary level health care infrastructure through establishment of new AIIMS.

## Boost to healthcare infrastructure: Cabinet approves continuation of Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana upto 2019-20

New Delhi, May 02: In a major boost to the expansion of healthcare infrastructure in the country, the Union Cabinet Chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the continuation of Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) beyond 12th Five Year Plan to 2019-20. The financial outlay for this purpose is Rs 14,832 crore. Under this scheme, new AIIMS are established and Government medical colleges are upgraded.

Objectives:

The PMSSY, a Central Sector Scheme, aims at correcting the imbalances in the availability of affordable tertiary healthcare facilities in different parts of the country in general, and augmenting facilities for quality medical education in the under-served States in particular.

Impact:

Setting up of new AIIMS would not only transform health education and training but also address the shortfall

of health care professionals in the region. Construction of new AIIMS is fully funded by the Central Government. The Operations & Maintenance expenses on new AIIMS are also fully borne by the Central Government.

Upgradation programme broadly envisages improving health infrastructure through construction of Super Specialty Blocks/Trauma Centers etc. and procurement of medical equipment for existing as well as new facilities on Central and State share basis.

Employment Generation:

Setting up new AIIMS in various states will lead to employment generation for nearly 3000 people in various faculty & non-faculty posts in each of the AIIMS. Further, indirect employment generation will take place due to facilities & services like shopping centre, canteens, etc. coming in the vicinity of new AIIMS.

The upgradation programme is car-

ried out in selected Government Medical Colleges (GMCs) by agencies appointed by the Government of India under the direct supervision of the Central Government. Post-Graduate seats and additional faculty posts as per norms will be created and filled up in these GMCs by the respective State/UT Governments. The construction activity involved for creation of the physical infrastructure for the various new AIIMS and Government Medical Colleges' up-gradation projects being undertaken under the scheme is also expected to generate substantial employment in the construction phase as well.

Background:

The PMSSY was announced in 2003 with objectives of correcting regional imbalances in the availability of affordable/reliable tertiary healthcare services and also to augment facilities for quality medical education in the country. PMSSY has two components.

## Cabinet approves accession to the Protocol under WHO Framework Convention on tobacco control to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products

New Delhi, May 02: The Union Cabinet Chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given approval to accede to the Protocol under World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on tobacco control to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products. It will be applicable to both smoking and chewing or smokeless tobacco (SLT) forms as negotiated and adopted under Article 15 of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC). India is a party to WHO FCTC.

Details:

The protocol lays down obligations of the parties. It spells out supply chain control measures that must be adopted by the parties viz. licensing of manufacture of tobacco products and machinery for manufacturing of tobacco products, due diligence to be kept by those engaged in production, tracking and tracing regime, record keeping, security, and measures to be taken by those engaged in e-commerce, manufacturing in free-trade zones and duty free sales.

The protocol lists out offences, enforcement measures such as seizures and dispos-

al of seized products. It calls for international cooperation in information sharing, maintaining confidentiality, training, technical assistance and cooperation in scientific and technical and technological matters.

Impact:

Elimination of illicit trade in tobacco products through strengthened regulation will help in strengthening comprehensive tobacco control, leading to reduction in tobacco use which in turn, will result in reduction in disease burden and mortality associated with tobacco use.

Accession to such treaty

will provide actionable alternatives against such prevailing practices that are affecting public health at large. India, being at the forefront of tobacco control, would be able to influence the international organizations including World Custom Organization in controlling such illicit trade.

The protocol to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products is a path breaking initiative in strengthening global action against tobacco and is also a new legal instrument in public health. It is a comprehensive tool to counter and eventually eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products.

## CABINET APPROVES FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO SUGAR MILLS FOR CLEARING CANE DUES OF FARMERS

New Delhi, May 02: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval to provide financial assistance @ of Rs. 5.50 per quintal of cane crushed in sugar season 2017-18 to sugar mills to offset the cost of cane, in order to help sugar mills to clear cane dues of farmers.

Details:

The assistance shall be paid directly to the farmers on behalf of the mills.

It will be adjusted against the cane price payable due to the farmers against Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) including arrears relating to previous years.

Subsequent balance if any, shall be credited into the mill's account.

Assistance shall be provided to those mills which will fulfil the eligibility conditions as decided by the Government.

Background:

Due to higher sugar production against the estimated consumption during the current sugar season 2017-18, the domestic sugar prices have remained depressed since the commencement of the season. Due to depressed market sentiments and crash in sugar prices, the liquidity position of sugar mills has been adversely affected, leading to accumulation of cane price dues of farmers which have reached to more than Rs.19,000 crore.

In order to stabilize sugar prices at reasonable level and to improve liquidity position of mills thereby enabling them to clear cane price dues of farmers, Government has taken following steps in past three months:

Increased customs duty on import of sugar from 50% to 100% in the interest of farmers.

Imposed reverse stock holding limits on producers of sugar for the months of February and March, 2018.

Government has also fully withdrawn the customs duty on export of sugar to encourage sugar industry to start exploring possibility of export of sugar.

In view of the inventory levels with the sugar industry and to facilitate achievement of financial liquidity, mill-wise Minimum Indicative Export Quotas (MIEQ) have been fixed for sugar season 2017-18. Export Quotas of 20 Lakh tonnes of all grades of sugar; viz. raw, plantation white as well as refined, have been prorated amongst sugar factories by taking into account their average production of sugar achieved by the sugar mills during last two operational sugar seasons and the current season (up to February, 2018).

## Time and Us

Editorial  
SRINAGAR  
& J&K

### Headline-grabber

Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb is a gift to headline writers. It is not even two months since he took over from Manik Sarkar, the CPI(M) veteran who was Chief Minister for 20 years. Yet, Mr. Deb has held the spotlight on himself for one gaffe after another. He has said, in a literal manner, that the Internet and satellite communication were in use in ancient India, and that instances of their use could be referenced in the Mahabharata. Freely jumping across themes, he has compared the Indianness of the beauty of Miss Worlds. He has most recently said, very seriously, that civil engineers are better trained to be in the civil services compared to mechanical engineers as the former "know how to build society". For some of these he has apologised – not for others. He has also made it a habit of doing ridiculous back-of-the-envelope calculations to ask the people of Tripura to, variously, consider how much richer they would be if they had kept a cow or sold paan. Mr. Deb is clearly revelling in his turn in the sun, as the BJP's young talent come good in a vital ideological face-off by hollowing out the Congress's State unit and humbling the CPI(M). In the days after the BJP swept the February Assembly election, winning 35 of the 60 seats on its own, with ally the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura bringing in another eight, it was said the victory in the State was as valuable to the party as its earlier achievement in Uttar Pradesh.

It is against this backdrop that Mr. Deb's irrational remarks reveal the BJP to be completely out of its depth after its historic victory. On Mr. Sarkar's watch, Tripura had moved up the development indices. According to the 2011 Census, with a literacy rate of about 87% it ranked fifth in India. Its sex ratio is a relatively respectable 960, and mortality rates for infants and children have been drastically reduced. On the flip side, Tripura's good social health indices are not matched by those on the economic front – its per capita income has languished below the national average, its infrastructure facilities are poor and unemployment rate is extremely high. This is what Mr. Deb seeks to mock. Rather than make laughable references to technological prowess in a mythical age, he would do better to envisage and execute a firm plan to strengthen the State's economic health. Rather than wade into needless controversies by talking about things such as how a 'quintessential' Indian woman looks like – which, given the manner the remark was couched, is something of an affront to Tripura's ethnic diversity – he should be urged by his political bosses to let his performance, rather than his loose tongue, to do the talking. His advice to people to increase household savings instead of hankering after a government job reflects an incapacity to address the youth constituency that is seen to have voted the BJP to power on the desire for better jobs. All around, Mr. Deb is letting down his office and the people of Tripura.

# SHOCK AND DESPAIR

By T.K. RAJALAKSHMI

FIVE years ago, a brutal gang rape in Delhi that led to the death of a young physiotherapist drew widespread public attention to the increasing crimes of a heinous nature against women and children. It compelled leading political parties to hold forth on the rising graph of crimes, and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which was then in the opposition, projected the incident as a symbol of the law and order situation under the then United Progressive Alliance regime led by the Congress.

The abduction, gang rape and murder of an eight-year-old in Kathua in Jammu district of Jammu and Kashmir by eight persons in January this year and the almost year-long sexual exploitation of a teenager in Unnao, Uttar Pradesh, allegedly involving a legislator from the ruling BJP are incidents that bring back the horrific memories of the 2012 incident and are symbolic of the violence against women and children in general. In Kathua, 90 kilometres from Jammu, the body of the little girl who had gone missing was found in a forest area on January 17. The Crime Branch of the State police investigated the case, and the charge sheet, close to 500 pages long, was filed and the trial was to begin in the Sessions Court in April when the incident roused public opprobrium because of the open support given to the accused by two BJP Ministers—Chandra Prakash Ganga and Lal Singh—in the coalition government the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) is running with the BJP in the State.

What was most galling was the stoic silence of none other than Prime Minister Narendra Modi who refrained from condemning the participation of Ministers from his party in a rally called to support those accused in the Kathua case. His silence in the case involving the prolonged sexual exploitation of a teenager in Unnao allegedly by a BJP MLA and the subsequent death of the victim's father in suspicious circumstances after being allegedly assaulted by the supporters of the MLA was equally inexplicable.

It was widely observed that the otherwise voluble Prime Minister had been silent on both the incidents throughout much of March and April. On April 13, he broke his silence at a function in New Delhi held to commemorate B.R. Ambedkar's birth anniversary and said that the culprits would not be spared. On April 18, when Modi, who was on a visit to London, was greeted with protests over the rape and murder of the eight-year-old, all that he could say was that rape should not be "politicised". Interacting with the Indian community in Westminster at an event titled "Bharat ki Baat, Sabke Saath", he made it a point to say that when a child was raped, "we cannot compare these incidents in numbers for different governments".

Yet it was difficult to overlook the fact that the two incidents of violent crime against women and children had taken place in States governed by the BJP, one by itself, Uttar Pradesh, and the other in coalition with the PDP. The other more shocking feature was that in both cases, elected representatives from the BJP were either directly involved or appeared to be supporting the accused.

Retired civil servants' missive  
On April 14, as many as 49 retired civil servants wrote to the Prime Minister pointing to the "terrifying state of affairs" in the country and sought strong action against the perpetrators of these crimes, saying that it was the "darkest hour in post-Independence India". The letter says: "The bestiality and



the barbarity involved in the rape and murder of an eight-year-old child shows the depths of depravity that we have sunk into. In post-Independence India, this is our darkest hour and we find the response of our government, the leaders of our political parties, inadequate and feeble. At this juncture, we see no light at the end of the tunnel and we hang our heads in shame. Our sense of shame is all the more acute because our younger colleagues who are still in service, especially those working in the districts and are required by law to care for and protect the weak and the vulnerable, also seem to have failed in their duty."

Former Director General of Police of Gujarat Julio Ribeiro and former Chief Information Commissioner Wajahat Habibullah were among those who signed the letter, which said: "We had hoped that as someone sworn to upholding the Constitution, the government that you head and the party to which you belong would wake up to this alarming decline, take the lead in stemming the rot and reassure everyone, especially the minorities and vulnerable sections of society, that they need not fear for their life and liberty. This hope has been destroyed. Instead, the unspeakable horror of the Kathua and the Unnao incidents shows that the government has failed in performing the most basic of the responsibilities given to it by the people."

They said they were writing to give voice to a "collective sense of shame" but wanted to express "rage over the agenda of division and hate your party and its innumerable, often untraceable offshoots that spring up from time to time, have insidiously introduced into the grammar of our politics, our social and cultural life and even our daily discourse. It is that which provides the social sanction and legitimacy for the incidents in Kathua and Unnao." On April 19, at a function in Katra, Jammu, President Ram Nath Kovind called the Kathua rape "barbaric".

Kathua rape and intimidation  
The gang rape and murder of the eight-year-old from the Bakarwal nomadic community has shocked people's sensibilities. And the open support given to the accused by one political party has only confirmed suspicions that the heinous act was deliberate and aimed specifically at removing the nomadic community from the area. It also appeared communal in nature as the Bakarwals are Muslims.

Investigations by the Crime Branch, which took over the case on January 22, revealed that the child had been sedated, raped three times, suffocated and bludgeoned to death.

Her internal organs, including the uterus, had received severe injuries. The act of rape itself took place in a temple. The caretaker of the temple is the main accused, according to the charge sheet. The others among the eight accused include a juvenile and a former revenue official and a special police officer of Jammu and Kashmir. Two members of the Jammu and Kashmir Police have been named in the charge sheet for taking money to destroy evidence.

The distinctive and yet shocking element in the Kathua incident was the polarisation along communal lines by way of the overt support given to the accused by the two BJP Ministers. They took part in a road show from Jammu to Kathua protesting against the charge sheet filed by the Crime Branch and demanding a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the incident. Interestingly, no such demand for a CBI probe has been made to date by the victim's family, which seemed satisfied with the Crime Branch probe.

Part of a larger conspiracy  
A significant difference between the gang rape of the physiotherapist in 2012 and the eight-year-old in 2018 was the direct political intervention in favour of the accused in the case of the latter. The widespread outrage that erupted over the public support given by the BJP to the accused compelled the party's central leadership to demand their resignation from the State government. It was only after the rally in support of the accused and the speeches of the BJP Ministers were widely publicised that the central leadership swung into action.

Even as violence against women and children has risen exponentially as exemplified by the latest data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the Kathua incident has drawn attention to the use of rape as a tool to terrorise and intimidate sections among the population, which is a relatively new phenomenon. Not only was there overt political support for the accused; the Jammu wing of the Jammu and Kashmir Bar Association on April 9 prevented the Crime Branch from submitting its charge sheet. The charge sheet had indicated that the crime was part of a conspiracy to "drive out the Gujjars and Bakarwals from the area".

Talking to Frontline, Mohammad Yusuf Tarigami, the lone Communist Party of India (Marxist) MLA in the State, said that communal polarisation as an agenda was being assiduously pursued ever since the formation of the PDP-BJP government. He said it was shocking that none of the BJP legislators or Members of Parliament representing Jammu

had visited the victim's family.

In February, Tarigami became the only MLA to give a calling attention motion in the Assembly demanding a status report on the investigation of the rape and murder in Kathua. In his notice, he stated that some anti-social elements were trying to politicise the issue and derive political mileage. The government informed him that the case was with the Crime Branch, which had constituted a Special Investigation Team. No one took the kidnapping of the child seriously, he said. There was no concern for the victim by the elected representatives from the area, all of whom were from the BJP, including the MP from Jammu, Jitendra Singh, who is a Minister at the Centre.

Tarigami told Frontline that an eviction campaign against the Gujjar-Bakarwals in Jammu and Samba districts had been going on ever since the coalition government had taken charge. He had received complaints that the targets of eviction belonged to a certain community. "In Samba, Gujjars were being made to relocate to facilitate the setting up of an AIIMS [All India Institute of Medical Sciences]. We protested against the forcible eviction," he said, adding that he had organised a meeting of Gujjar-Bakarwals with the Chief Minister on the harassment faced by them.

Clamour for the death penalty  
Five years on, the Nirbhaya case, as the Delhi gang-rape case came to be known, has got reduced to a talking point even as incidents of rape and other serious crimes against women and minors soar. The involvement of people from political parties, including elected representatives, in such crimes and the overt and covert forms of support given to the accused in order to influence the outcome of the investigations are the new challenges. The standard response to sexual crimes against children is the demand to award the death penalty to those convicted.

Disturbed by the Kathua incident, Maneka Gandhi, Union Minister for Women and Child Development, asked her department to work out a proposal to amend the Protection of Children Against Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, in order to include a provision for the death penalty for the rape of a minor below 12 years. The maximum sentence at present is life imprisonment.

Farooq Abdullah, National Conference president, demanded a special session of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly to pass a law awarding the death penalty to those convicted of child rape. The outcry for the death penalty has been mainly from the BJP; three BJP-ruled States, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan, had recently amended their criminal laws to introduce the death penalty for child rape in their statutes. On March 16, Arunachal Pradesh became the fourth State to amend the law to include the death penalty for child rape.

According to NCRB data, the incidence of crimes against children went up from 89,423 in 2014 to 1,06,958 in 2016. From 2015, it rose by 13.6 per cent in 2016. The three States of Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh accounted for the highest number of cases filed for kidnapping and abduction and registered under the POCSO Act. Similarly, while there was an overall rise in the incidence of crimes against women from 2014 to 2016, the four States of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan accounted for the highest number of rape cases in the country. All four States are at present ruled by the BJP.

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## A dangerous incursion

By Kapil Sibal

The government's opposition to the elevation of the Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court, Justice K.M. Joseph, to the Supreme Court, as recommended by the Supreme Court collegium as far back as January 10, 2018, is per se unprincipled. Its logic is faulty, both statistically and otherwise.

Justice Joseph pronounced a historic judgment in April 2016 when he struck down the imposition of President's rule in Uttarakhand. Little did he know that his judgment would stand in the way of his elevation. This has created a situation where the very independence of the judiciary is now under attack. We will have to await the response of the collegium. I hope its members stand together and speak in one voice. That is the only way the Supreme Court can reassert its supremacy in the matter of judicial appointments.

Justice Joseph's request to be transferred to the Andhra Pradesh High Court on health grounds since he had undergone a bypass surgery was ignored. In May 2016, the collegium had cleared his

transfer to the Andhra Pradesh High Court. For inexplicable reasons, the recommendation was not forwarded for approval to the then President of India, Pranab Mukherjee. In the normal course of events, recommendations for transfers are cleared within 10 days. The attitude of the Union government shows that he was being targeted. The Centre's obduracy by supplying unedifying reasons for rejecting the collegium's recommendation can be clearly attributed to his judgment of April 2016.

Let us analyse the reasons put forth in Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad's letter of April 26, 2018 for rejecting the recommendation for Justice Joseph's elevation. The first is that in the All India High Court Judges Seniority List, Justice Joseph is placed at serial number 42 and that 11 Chief Justices of various High Courts in the said list are otherwise senior to him.

This reasoning is flawed. The first is that Justice Joseph was, obviously, elevated as Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court on account of his qualities as a judge over other judges who might otherwise have been senior. Second, seniority among High Court judges has

never been the only benchmark for appointment as Chief Justice of a High Court or elevation to the Supreme Court. Ever since 2014, the government of the day has never considered seniority as the only basis for elevation. When Judges Deepak Gupta and Navin Sinha were appointed in February 2017 to the Supreme Court, there were 40 High Court judges across India senior to them. Similarly, in the case of Justices S. Abdul Nazeer and Mohan M. Shantanagoudar, who were also elevated to the Supreme Court in February 2017, there were 20 High Court judges who were senior to them. When Justice S.K. Kaul was elevated too, there were 14 High Court judges senior to him. In denying Justice Joseph his due, the government has left itself without cover.

Another reason given by the Law Minister is that several High Courts including smaller high courts are not represented in the Supreme Court at present. It is true that High Courts in a few States are not represented. This has happened under the present regime as well as in the past. Justices K.G. Balakrishnan, Cyriac Joseph and K.S.P. Radhakrishnan were all from the Ker-

ala High Court despite the Law Minister calling it a relatively small High Court. This was at a time when the strength in the Kerala High Court was less than 40 judges. Justices K.S. Paripoornan and K.T. Thomas were also elevated to the Supreme Court from the Kerala High Court when its strength was just 21. So, a small High Court such as Kerala's has had a slew of elevations perhaps because of the outstanding quality of individual judges. The Delhi High Court, with a judge strength of 60, has three judges in the top court. The reason given by the Law Minister that in elevating Justice Joseph there would then be two judges from the Kerala High Court—which he considers inconsistent with the concept of adequate regional representation—is clearly specious.

The Law Minister ought to have disclosed that in February 2017, two judges from the Karnataka High Court, Justices Shantanagoudar and Abdul Nazeer, were elevated on the same day. If two judges can be elevated from Karnataka, especially in light of the fact that Justice Kurian Joseph, also from Kerala, is going to retire in the course of this year, the logic of not having two judges

from the Kerala High Court is clearly manufactured only to oppose Justice Joseph's appointment.

If one looks at the aspect of regional representation made much of by the Law Minister and analyses the current representation of judges in the Supreme Court, then the Allahabad High Court, which has a sanctioned strength of 160, should have many more than two judges. This logic also applies to the Punjab and Haryana High Courts as well as the Bombay High Court. While the Allahabad High Court has two judges in the Supreme Court, the Bombay High Court has three. Therefore, the opposition to Justice Joseph's elevation on the basis of inadequate regional representation is a bogey.

The third reason is that there is an inadequate representation of the Scheduled Castes (SC) and the Scheduled Tribes (ST) in the Supreme Court. First, the total sanctioned strength of the Supreme Court is 31 judges. At the moment, there are 25. Six judges are to retire this year. Consequently, its strength, if no judges are appointed, will be reduced to 19. There will be 12 vacancies. If the government so chooses, it can give representation to the SCs and STs consistent with

its logic. But this logic cannot be advanced in opposing Justice Joseph's elevation. Such an argument only betrays the real intent behind the opposition.

Having demonstrated the fragility of the reasoning of the Law Minister, all the points for not elevating Justice Joseph—such as seniority at the level of the High Court, regional representation, representation of SCs and STs—become insignificant when there is an outstanding candidate for elevation. I only wish to reiterate the recommendation made by the collegium on January 10, 2018: "The Collegium considers that at present Mr. Justice K.M. Joseph, who hails from the Kerala High Court and is currently functioning as Chief Justice of Uttarakhand High Court, is more deserving and suitable in all respects than other Chief Justices and senior puisne Judges of High Courts for being appointed as Judge of the Supreme Court of India."

It is crystal clear that the opposition to Justice Joseph is mala fide. The executive is seeking to blatantly interfere in the appointment process. If the government's stand is legitimised, such incursions on the independence of the judiciary will become routine.

# How Congress has shifted its strategy to attack PM Modi by name

In his last two major political speeches, Congress president Rahul Gandhi named and targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi for attack 99 times over a stretch of 65 minutes. The aggression with which Gandhi assailed Modi personally, Congress leaders say, reflects a conscious shift in strategy. Until a year ago, the Congress had treaded cautiously in referring to Modi.



The party has now decided on a gloves-are-off approach, having concluded that the 2019 general election must be projected as a Modi vs Gandhi contest, something it had hitherto shied away from.

At the same time, the opposition party is focusing the narrative on corruption, a plank on which Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) rode to victory over the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) in 2014.

In the last two rallies in Delhi, Gandhi has been unrelenting in attacking Modi.

Launching a 'Save the Constitution' campaign from New Delhi's Talkatora Stadium on April 23, Gandhi mentioned Modi by name 47 times in a 30-minute speech, attacking him on a range of issues, from his 'silence' on the issue of corruption to the alleged atrocities committed on Dalits, women and minorities.

He followed it up at the 'Jan Aarosh' (public anger) rally in Ramlila Maidan on April 29. Gandhi spoke for nearly 35 minutes and mentioned Modi 52 times, targeting him for his silence over alleged corruption, for the failure to mention last year's Doklam standoff in his informal summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping, for unkept pre-poll promises and

recent incidents of rape in different parts of the country, including Unnao and Kathua.

Gandhi even took a jibe at the PM, repeatedly calling him 'desh ka chowkidar' (country's watchman), a term Modi had frequently used during his campaign for the 2014 elections.

Congress leaders now say that Modi needs to be held "accountable" since he is the "be all and end all" of this government, with the BJP itself "gradually becoming redundant" compared to the PM. "The pain and sufferings of the people have to be espoused by the principal opposition leader. The corruption and the maladministration need to be exposed by the principal opposition party. Modi is the be all and end all of this government and this government begins and ends with him in every aspect. So he has to be responsible for its failures and that is why Rahul Gandhi is taking him on," party's chief spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala said.

Rajasthan Congress chief Sachin Pilot agreed. "The content of Rahul Gandhi's questions on corruption and other issues is compelling. As the

leader of the principal opposition party, he is doing what the country expects of him. This has clearly rattled the government," he said.

This is a clear deviation from the past when the Congress would avoid attacking Modi personally, out of concern that the move may backfire and that Modi could "twist the situation" to his advantage. In 2007, the then Congress president Sonia Gandhi's "mout ke saudagar (merchants of death)" barb against Modi, who was then the Gujarat CM, boomeranged in the assembly elections that year. This forced the Congress to avoid any mention of the 2002 riots in the subsequent polls. A dominant section in the party had repeatedly argued that raking up the issue of the 2002 riots during campaigns have proved counter-productive.

Political analysts are divided on the issue. Sanjay Kumar of the Delhi-based Centre for the Study of Developing Societies termed it a "bad strategy", Delhi-based analyst N Bhaskara Rao said Gandhi has no option but to take on Modi directly and emerge as his main challenger in the next Lok Sabha elections. "It is better for the

Congress to criticise the policies and highlight the failures of the government rather than attacking Modi," Kumar said. "There is a dilemma before the Congress. They know Modi is the big vote-catcher for the BJP and want to puncture his image but at the same time he remains the most popular leader of the country. There is a strong belief that Modi is an honest man and implicating him in corrupt practices might backfire," he said.

Rao said Gandhi has to launch his attacks "intelligently and strategically" given that he is up against a powerful opponent. "While Modi is a great strategist, Rahul is trying to catch up. That's the name of the game," he said.

Gandhi's attacks have also indicated that his party is carefully trying to project the 2019 elections as a Gandhi versus Modi contest and send a clear message that it is the Congress leader and not any regional leader who will be the Prime Minister's primary challenger. This is a departure from the past when the Congress was willing to hand over the leadership role to regional leaders -- whether it be Nitish Kumar in Bihar or Sharad Pawar in Maharashtra or Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal.

"Well, that is how it always would be and that is how it is going to be," Surjewala said.

Pilot said Gandhi as the Congress president is leading from the front in challenging, questioning and holding the government accountable forcefully. "It is actually a rallying point for all the opposition forces. The last year or so, there has been a steep fall in the credibility of the BJP as a political party and the Prime Minister continues to be silent on pressing issues," he said.

# SC collegium names Justice KM Joseph to top court, govt disagrees: A recap

The Supreme Court collegium, headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra, will meet on Wednesday to discuss the way forward after the government asked it to reconsider the name of KM Joseph, Chief Justice of Uttarakhand High Court, for elevation to the apex court.

It is the latest potential flashpoint between the executive and the apex court. Here is what you should know about the controversy:

- Judges to the Supreme Court are appointed by a panel of the court's top five judges who make up the collegium. On January 10, the collegium recommended two judges for elevation to Supreme Court.

- On April 25, the government cleared senior advocate Indu Malhotra's appointment as a Supreme Court judge, but held back a decision on Justice Joseph. In 2016, Justice Joseph had ruled against President's Rule in Uttarakhand, which paved the way for the Congress to come back to power in the state.

- On April 26, the central government returned the collegium's recommendation to elevate Justice Joseph. Law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, in a detailed note to Chief Justice Misra, said the proposal to reconsider Justice Joseph's name was approved by President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

- The centre's argument is that there was adequate representation of Kerala, Joseph's home state, in the higher judiciary while other states did not have a representative. The government also said that the principle of seniority was not observed by the Supreme Court Collegium as Justice Joseph is placed at 42 on the list of seniority.

- The Congress called the government's action an "assault on the judiciary". "As the law stands now, the recommendation of the SC collegium is final and binding in the appointment of judges... What is holding up Justice KM Joseph's appointment? His state, or his religion or his judgement in the Uttarakhand case?" said senior Congress leader P Chidambaram.



Law Minister Prasad rejected the allegation. "The Congress party has no moral authority or stand to ask questions about dignity of the judiciary from us. The whole record of Congress party is littered with repeated instances as to how the judiciary of India was supposed to be compromised," he said.

Senior lawyer Indra Jaising filed a petition urging the top court to put on hold Malhotra's appointment and direct the government to clear Joseph's name -- a request that was rejected by a bench led by Chief Justice Misra. The government is within its right to send back a name for reconsideration, the bench said. "Supposing the government is sending it for reconsideration, it will be seen. You are saying 'stay the warrant' (of Malhotra's appointment). It is unthinkable, unconscionable, unimaginable, and if I may add 'never heard before,'" said Misra.

Earlier this year, four senior judges publicly criticised Chief Justice Misra for his style of administration and over the allocation of cases. Justices Jasti Chelameswar, Ranjan Gogoi, Madan Bhimrao Lokur and Kurian Joseph said they were forced to speak in public, breaking the settled principle of judicial restraint, because Chief Justice Misra did not take steps to redress their grievances.

# Rajasthan allots land for BJP offices, Congress says rules flouted

The Vasundhara Raj government's move to allot land in 25 of the state's 33 districts to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for setting up party offices has spiralled into a controversy with the opposition Congress party claiming the allotments are being made at concessional rates, facilitating a "land-grab", even as the BJP and the state government insist the allotments are above board, and paid for.



The BJP's desire to have an office in each of the state's 33 districts comes from national party president Amit Shah's declaration that the party would have an office in each of India's 640 districts by December 2018, well before the parliamentary elections that are likely to happen in the middle of 2019. Each district office will link to the BJP's swank new HQ in Delhi through video conference.

The BJP says there has been no violation of rules and regulations in the acquisitions in Rajasthan.

"There has been no political pressure. The party has acquired land legally by paying the right price and there has been no loss to the state exchequer," said the party's

media head in the state, Anand Sharma.

State Congress president, Sachin Pilot, said the BJP has gone about the land allotment in a clandestine manner and in violation of regulations. "They are grabbing prime land at concessional rates. They have changed land use at several places. This is misuse of office." "If the Congress comes to power, we will cancel all the allotments," he added.

Last week, the Rajasthan High Court ordered status quo on allotment after it received a petition challenging land allotment for the BJP office in Sirohi district.

Rajasthan's urban development and housing minister, Shrichand Kriplani, said land has been allotted as per norms and there is no illegality. "The

land was given at the reserve price + 15%. The land allotment has been made in public interest. Land has been allotted after proper examination."

The party has been asked to submit all necessary documents, said Kriplani. These include the notification of party registration by the Election Commission of India, a copy of the party by-laws, an affidavit stating that previously no land has been allotted to the party, and a copy of the proposal for land allotment.

Asked if any other political party had been allotted land, Kriplani said no other party had applied. "We will give land to any party that approaches us," he said. Pilot said the Congress isn't aware

of this. "How would we know about land allotment when the government did not publish any advertisement or write to party leaders?" He said the Congress has applied for land in a couple of districts but claimed its applications were not being considered.

In two of the 25 districts, Sawai Madhopur and Bikaner, land conversion is underway before the allotment to the BJP is done.

In the remaining eight districts, the allotment is being processed in two (Baran and Ajmer), the party has acquired private land in two (Jalore and Sikar), it has not applied for land in three (Jodhpur, Alwar and Pratnagarh), and it hasn't been able to find a plot it likes in Jaipur.

The party is scouting for 6000 sqm land for the party office in Jaipur. Sharma said the party wants land near the present office in the centrally located C-Scheme area. The party did not find the options given by the Jaipur Development Authority suitable as they are far away from the city centre, he said. Currently, BJP offices are either in government buildings or have been taken on rent, he said.

# J Dey murder case: Chhota Rajan gets life sentence, journalist Jigna Vora acquitted

A special Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) court on Wednesday sentenced underworld don Chhota Rajan and seven others to life imprisonment for killing senior journalist Jyotirmay Dey seven years ago.

The court acquitted journalist Jigna Vora and Paulson Joseph, a member of Rajan's gang, in the murder case.

Other than Rajan, those convicted earlier in the day include Rohit Thangappan alias Satish Kalia, Anil Waghmode, Abhijit Shinde, Nilesh Shedge, Arun Dhake, Mangesh Agawane, Sachin Gaikwad, Deepak Sisodia and Vinod Asrani, who died during the trial.

Dey, who was Editor (Investigations) of Midday was shot dead on June 11, 2011 when he was on his way home in Powai. According to the prosecution, gangster Chhota Rajan's men, Satish Kalia, Anil Waghmode, Abhijeet Shinde, Nilesh Shedge, Arun Dake, Mangesh Agawane and Sachin Gaikwad, followed Dey from his mother's house. Kalia shot him with a .32 bore pistol near Powai garden before fleeing with the rest of the gang.

The prosecution said Dey was shot on the orders of Ra-



jan, who was allegedly instigated by Vora, who worked with a different newspaper at the time. The mafia don was deported from Indonesia's Bali in November 2015 and subsequently made an accused in the case.

Arup Patnaik, who was the police commissioner of Mumbai at the time of the murder, said: "I feel relieved. This is the first time that an underworld don has been convicted in a regular (murder) case."

"Whether the acquittals of (Jigna and Paulson) were on technical grounds or based on facts will be known only after obtaining a copy of the order. Anyway, I am sure the CBI will appeal against it in

the higher court," Patnaik added.

According to CBI, Dey was on the books of the underworld for which he was meeting members of all gangs, including those of Dawood Ibrahim. The agency claimed Rajan was angry about Dey's connections with the Dawood gang. Rajan suspected Dey of leaking information on him, CBI said.

The dispute allegedly started with Dey's proposed book on the life of 20 gangsters. He had proposed that the book be named 'Chindi - Rags to Riches'.

According to the CBI, between January and March 2011, Rajan tried several times to dissuade Dey from allegedly belittling him through

his stories. Rajan particularly tried to dissuade Dey from writing Chindi - Rags to Riches and another one that eulogised gangster Dawood Ibrahim. Rajan feared that the books would show him in a poor light.

The investigating had also said that in order to complete the book, Dey had requested Rajan to meet him during his visits to London and Philippines just a month before his murder. Instead, an angry Rajan decided to order the journalist's murder.

The agency claimed that the last trigger for the plot to kill him was two articles by Dey. One was headlined 'Did Rajan plan hit on Kaskar', which said, "Sources believe that ageing gangster may have plotted the shoot out as a desperate attempt to seize a lion's claim in the underworld pie." The other article was titled 'Rajan gangsters off to pilgrimages'.

The crime branch claimed that such articles had the potential to undermine Rajan's illegal activities such as extortion and collection of protection money. It claimed that he had issued orders to eliminate the journalist "to send a message to the journalistic community".

# Indian professionals drag UK govt to court for denying them work permits

Scores of Indian doctors, teachers, entrepreneurs and other professionals are challenging the UK government in court over being denied the right to live and work in Britain.

The professionals, brought together under the banner of 'Highly Skilled Migrants' group, were back opposite Parliament Square in London on Wednesday to protest "unjustified" refusals by the UK home office of their applications for indefinite leave to remain (ILR) in Britain.

Since their last protest in February, many of the professionals refused ILR have appealed against the home office decision in the first tier tribunal and upper tribunal -- the courts which hear immigration appeals.

"Given the Windrush scandal involving innocent migrants being denied their

citizenship rights and the new home secretary (Sajid Javid) assuring the public that the home office will be fair in its immigration decisions, these cases take on an added significance," said Aditi Bhardwaj, one of the convenors of the group.

"The way some of these skilled professionals have been treated is worse than criminals. We have evidence to show that the entire approach of the home office is unfair because it is based on how to find a way to deny someone's legitimate application to live and work in the country," she said.

The common factor among all the professionals, from non-European Union countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nigeria, is that they were in the UK on a tier-1 (general) visa.

They were entitled to apply for ILR

or permanent residency status after a minimum of five years' lawful residency in the UK. While the visa category itself was discontinued in 2010, former applicants were eligible to apply for ILR until April this year if they met the necessary requirements.

But legal experts have noted a pattern of many such applications being turned down on the basis of Rule 322(5), a discretionary rule linked to an applicant's "good character".

The reason for refusal under this rule is most often a discrepancy in the earnings declared to the home office and that to the UK's tax department. While in some cases there may be a legal case of downplaying income for tax reasons or overstating for immigration purposes, experts believe the rule has been used unfairly as a blanket reason



for turning down most applications under the tier-1 (general) route.

"In the last couple of years, this refusal reason seems to have become near-automatic. The home office should not be treating legitimate businesspeople as dishonest where there may be an innocent explanation," said Mark Symes,

a senior immigration barrister aware of several such cases where the UK home office seems to have displayed a "shoot first mentality".

"The main potential for injustice is the seemingly automatic refusal of applications even when there are good explanations provided, for example where an accountant has admitted their own error in writing," he said.

A 31-year-old Indian professional, who underwent a similar situation due to a minor correction in his tax return, is now fighting his case in the UK's court of appeal. The former Heathrow Airport worker's case has the potential of becoming a test case for hundreds of others who have been denied their ILR on

similar grounds.

"The judge has indicated that the grounds of appeal have a good prospect of success," said the professional on condition of anonymity.

"My entire life has been on hold for two years, during which I have been unable to work or focus on anything else. The home office is just interested in its immigration targets and finding any means to deny what is our right as skilled professionals who have been working hard and paying our taxes in this country," he said.

His case comes up for its next hearing in June and could pave the way for a wider class action legal challenge.

"It is possible that a class action would be a good way for getting the law and the legal requirement for fairness to be clarified," said Symes.

## This skin disease is not that bad, after all!

Washington: The therapy for psoriasis can reduce heart plaque, a new research has found.

According to a study conducted by the Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions, not only do the psoriasis treatments reduce the volume of the plaque, but also the plaque becomes less inflammatory over time harbouring fewer characteristics prone to rupture and cause a heart attack. Late-breaking clinical science shows common therapy options for psoriasis (PSO)-a chronic inflammatory skin disease-can help reduce coronary plaque.

It is the first-in-human observational study demonstrating that treating remote inflammation in the body can modulate coronary disease.

Psoriasis is associated with an accelerated risk of myocardial infarction and has increased risk for atherosclerosis, which is the development of plaque within the walls of blood vessels.

For the first time, recent evidence demonstrated a significant reduction in adverse cardiovascular events targeting interleukin-1 beta (IL1B), a cytokine that is central to the inflammatory response.



The authors worked to identify if treatment of the inflammatory skin disease potentially affected coronary plaque. Anti-tumor necrosis factor (TNF) agents are commonly used, biologic, and FDA-approved immunomodulatory treatment options for PSO.

More than 80 consecutive patients were stratified by biologic treatment

(predominantly anti-TNF; n=57) and non-biologic treatment (n=27). Non-calcified burden (NCB), plaque volume (PV), and maximal artery stenosis in the proximal vessels (diameter >2mm) were blindly assessed based on coronary CT angiography using dedicated software.

The patients were middle-aged and at low cardiovascular risk by tra-

ditional risk scores. At one-year, the plaque volume in the biologically treated group decreased by 40 percent (p=0.002), a finding not observed in those without treatment (p=0.04).

Trends in NCB and maximal stenosis were significant and consistent with PV in both groups. Furthermore, change in PV was also positively associated with a change in IL1B (β=0.56, p=0.03), even after adjustment for traditional cardiovascular risk factors and statin use.

"To see a reduction in coronary plaque after just one year of biologic therapy alone is incredible and very assuring. It's the first time we're seeing treatment of a skin disease with biologic therapy have an impact specifically on the plaque in the coronary," said Nehal N. Mehta, the Principal Investigator of the study.

"Our study results further emphasize the importance of patients maintaining and treating psoriasis to decrease the risks of adverse cardiovascular events occurring. This also opens the door for us to look at other disease states and see how anti-inflammatory therapy options could impact coronary plaque over time."

## Smoking, alcohol consumption raise lifetime risk of irregular heart rate

Smoking and alcohol consumption increase the lifetime risk of a rapid and irregular heart rate, called atrial fibrillation, which can lead to a stroke, dementia, heart failure and other complications, a new study says.

The results, published in the journal *The BMJ*, showed that among individuals aged 55 years or older, the overall lifetime risk of atrial fibrillation (AF) was 37% and was influenced by the burden of lifestyle risk factors such as smoking and drinking alcohol.

"We examined the lifetime risk of atrial fibrillation, which measures the cumulative risk of developing a disease during the remainder of an individual's life," said study co-author Ludovic Trinquart, Assistant Professor at Boston University School of Public Health in Massachusetts, US.

"It is essential to look at lifetime risks in addition to short-term risks, because it may enable early identification of individuals at higher long-term risk and facilitate lifestyle



change counseling," Trinquart said.

In the study involving more than 5,000 participants, the researchers identified smoking, alcohol consumption, body mass index, blood pressure, diabetes, and history of myocardial infarction or heart failure as risk factors.

"Studying atrial fibrillation is important because it is emerging as a global epidemic; it also imposes considerable socioeconomic burden. Atrial fibrillation hospitalisations follow an exponential increase and have surpassed heart failure admissions," Trinquart said.

## MOST EFFECTIVE CANCER THERAPY COMES CLOSER TO REALITY

Washington: Turns out, when it comes to fighting cancer, the size does matter.

According to researchers at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) and The Ohio State University, doctors could be a step closer to finding the most effective way to treat cancer with a double whammy of a virus combined with boosting the natural immune system.

"The findings of this research are very exciting because it helps unravel the complex yin and yang relationship between the natural cancer-fighting power intrinsic to our immune system and externally added cancer-killing cells that are given as a therapy. It's very significant because it shows, contrary to recent scientific claims, that virotherapy can be combined with cell therapy for a positive effect," said corresponding author Balveen Kaur.

Previous scientific wisdom discredited combining virotherapy and externally added NK cell therapy to the body's natural killer (NK) cells, but there could be clear cancer-fighting benefits - providing enough external NK cells are deployed to destroy the tumor and stop its spread, as revealed in this paper.

To reach this conclusion, physicians devised a mathematical formula unlocking the complex interactive relationship between externally introduced viruses and NK cells in addition to the immune system's existing NK cells to calculate cancer cell-killing potency.

The mathematical modeling was able to predict how a virus-treated tumor would respond to NK cell therapy, depending on the number of NK cells introduced to the tumor. It showed that when the number of externally introduced NK cells is increased, the ability to fight cancer is strengthened.

While the patient's own NK cells, present in smaller numbers, concentrate on clearing the virus and therefore have an adverse effect on virotherapy by limiting the virus's cancer-busting power, this impact can be reversed to destroy more of the tumor by introducing greater numbers of external NK cells. The theory behind these equations was subsequently confirmed in practice by experiments on mice with brain tumors, paving the way for further work.

NK cells are an essential part of the innate immune system and they play a critical role in protecting the body from cancer. The primary function of NK cells is to fight infections, which means they attack the introduced virus, thus thwarting its therapeutic capacity. However, if sufficient numbers of extra NK cells are added, they can kill more tumor cells directly and compensate for this negative influence.

## Your facewash may not be safe, tiny plastic bits in it could make you ill

The use of facewash, scrub or bodywash can contribute to the dwindling population of fish in the rivers and lakes, a new study has found.

These personal care products use microplastic or tiny pieces of plastic, which end up in rivers through drains when they are washed off after use. This microplastic enters the food chain through fish and can even come back into the human system if people eat those fish.

A study done by a Delhi-based NGO, Toxics Link, has stated that several personal care products sold in Delhi and across India contain tiny pieces of plastics, known as 'microplastics' and 'microbeads'. They are added to the personal care products for a number of reasons, such as to make the product more abrasive or for decoration.

The researchers tested 18 personal care products, including facewash and bodywash, covering 16 major consumer brands, to check whether they contain microplastics and microbeads. They were all purchased from Delhi, even though they are available across India.

"Results indicate that 28% of all the products tested contained microplastics. At least 50% of the facewash samples and 67% of the facial scrubs were found to contain microplastics. Other products such as toothpastes and shampoos could also contain them," said Priti Mahesh, chief programme coordinator of Toxics Link, who was a member of the research team.

These tiny beads are washed down the drains when you rinse off. As they are smaller than 5mm and some



even smaller than 1mm, they evade the routine filtration system at sewage treatment plants and eventually get discharged into the rivers and oceans. "Microplastics are mistaken as food particles by fish, which eat them. These particles then block the digestive tract and damage tissue systems. These particles can

then travel up the food chain and reach us," said Satish Sinha, associate director of Toxics Link.

Even though research is still going on across the globe to find out how these tiny plastic pieces can affect humans, experts said that floating plastic beads attract a range of known toxic chemicals,

which also enter the food chain along with microplastics.

"Just like secondary pollutants which are formed in the air, these toxic chemicals after latching on to the microbeads also act like secondary particles. Many of these contaminants are endocrine disrupting chemicals, persistent organic chemicals and other known chemicals, which can affect even the human reproductive system," said Alok Dhawan, director of CSIR-Indian Institute of Toxicology Research in Lucknow.

Earlier in January 2018, the National Green Tribunal had directed the union government to test cosmetics containing microbeads. The decision came on the heels of a plea seeking a total ban on cosmetics containing microbeads by a Delhi-based lawyer.

"Microplastics in a worldwide threat and is a major source of marine pollution. Even though microplastics are banned in many countries including the US and Europe, there is hardly any legislation in India. The Bureau of Indian Standards has classified microbeads as 'unsafe' for use in cosmetic products but it is still being allowed to use," said Sinha.

The NGO is now planning to conduct another research to find out the presence of microplastics in the river and other water bodies.

"We would also place these report before the union government and speak with the manufacturers. There are a lot of alternatives such as beeswax, rice bran and joboba wax among others, which would be used instead," said Sinha.

## Smoking, boozing boosts atrial fibrillation

Washington: Smoking and drinking are two lifestyle habits that get a lot of negative criticism for a good reason. Giving up on these can be a challenge for many, but doing that can decrease the lifetime risk of stroke, heart failure and other heart-related complications, or simply atrial fibrillation.

Atrial fibrillation is an abnormal heart rhythm, characterised by a rapid and irregular beating of the atria. Often it starts as brief periods of abnormal beating, which become longer and possibly constant over time.

A study conducted by Boston University School of Medicine found that among individuals aged 55 years or older, the overall lifetime risk of atrial fibrillation (AF) was 37 percent and was



influenced by the burden of risk factors.

The increase in the number of individuals with atrial fibrillation is linked to the global increase in life expectancy. Established risk factors for developing atrial fibrillation within 10 years include cigarette smoking, alcohol misuse, hy-

perension, obesity, diabetes, myocardial infarction, and heart failure.

However, prior research has provided little insight into the lifetime risk of atrial fibrillation.

The researchers identified smoking, alcohol consumption, body mass index, blood pressure, diabetes, and history of myocardial infarction or heart failure at an index age as risk factors. They later categorized risk factor burdens as optimal, elevated, and borderline, and compared the lifetime risk estimates according to those levels of risk factor burden.

The researchers emphasized that preventive efforts to reduce the disease burden should target modifiable borderline and elevated risk factors.

## CLICKING PHOTOS EVERY DAY, KEEPS THE BLUES AWAY

Washington: Turns out, this one addiction also has health benefits!

According to a study, clicking a picture a day is good for our wellbeing.

A study co-authored by Dr Liz Brewster of Lancaster University and Dr Andrew Cox of the University of Sheffield recorded what photos people took, what text they added and how they interacted with others on the photo-a-day site for two months.

They found that taking a daily photo improved wellbeing through:

- Self-care
- Community interaction
- The potential for reminiscence

Taking a moment to be mindful, and looking for something different or unusual in the day were seen as positive

well-being benefits of the practice. One participant said: "My job was a very highly stressful role... There were some days when I'd almost not stopped to breathe, you know what I mean... And just the thought: oh wait a moment, no, I'll stop and take a photograph of this insect sitting on my computer or something. Just taking a moment is very salutary I think."

It also led to more exercise and gave a sense of purpose, competence and achievement.

Another participant said: "It encourages me out of the house sometimes when I could just sit on my backside with a cup of tea. I'll think maybe I'll take a walk down on to the seaford and before I know it I'm two miles along the coast."

The online contact helped people to manage loneliness and grief as well as meeting



new people with shared interests. Several participants had taken early retirement and found that the contact established via photo-a-day

replaced some of the daily office chatter that they missed. "There's the banter in the workshop or the office or the place where you work. And

perhaps [photo-a-day] offers that... Because I'm having conversations with people that I would perhaps have had in the workplace," said another.

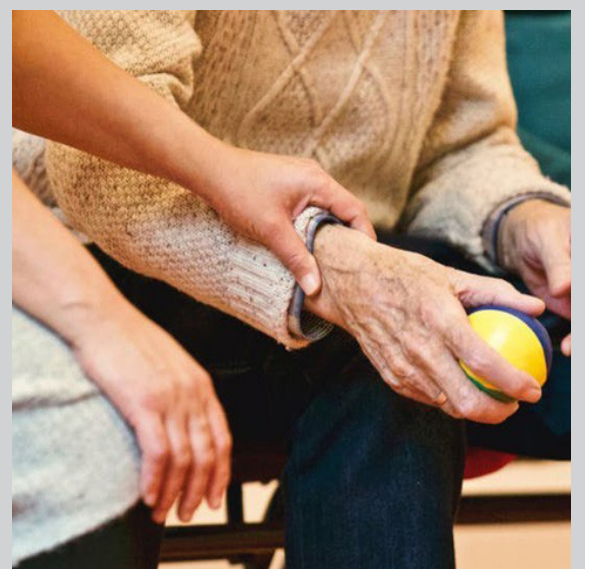
The online interactions created a community based on the photos and accompanying text. "It could be a rubbish photograph but if somebody commented on it, it made it worthwhile."

The online text was used to provide personal narratives, reminiscences, and explanations of repeated images.

"I'm ever feeling down or something it's nice to be able to scroll back and see good memories. You know, the photos I've taken will have a positive memory attached to it even if it's something as simple as I had a really lovely half an hour for lunch sitting outside and was feeling really relaxed."

The researchers said the practice is "an active process of meaning making, in which a new conceptualisation of wellbeing emerges."

## NEW APPROACH TO HELP VULNERABLE OLD PEOPLE IN HOSPITALS



Washington: A new approach has been developed to identify frail, old people in the hospital.

A new research has been conducted by the University of Leicester, where experts have devised a 'risk score' which will be used to help frail older people have better support in hospital.

Using the concept of frailty (which captures vulnerability), researchers have created a risk score that will help identify older people who are more vulnerable.

This will help commissioners and hospitals identify this group of people, evaluate their outcomes and improve services to be more responsive to their needs.

Researcher Simon Conroy said, "Leicester researchers are leading the way in improving outcomes for older people with frailty who have to come to the hospital. Many older people attend hospitals throughout the UK every day, but some are more vulnerable than others".

"The 'Hospital Frailty Risk Score' was able to identify older people at significantly increased risk of harms, longer stays in hospital and readmission following discharge from hospital", Conroy continued.

The researchers concluded, "It is hoped that by identifying and focussing upon this high-risk group that hospitals will be able to provide more holistic care to vulnerable older people to improve their outcomes."

# Is India's banking crisis a by-product of its most successful growth strategy?

India has retained its status as the world's fastest growing major economy in the April 2018 edition of IMF's World Economic Outlook (WEO). WEO statistics also point towards a peculiar feature of India's current high-growth phase though. Chart 1 shows a scatter plot of percentage share of investment in GDP and GDP growth rate for the top 20 countries by GDP for 2016. As can be seen, India seems to be an outlier in the group. This is because its high growth rate is accompanied by a relatively low share of investment in GDP.

The mismatch between India's high growth and low investment rate was also pointed out by the Economic Survey a couple of years ago. This discrepancy also shows up when we compare long-term movements in GDP growth rate and share of investment in GDP for India. A revival in growth rate despite a reduction in investment share of GDP, which is what characterizes the current phase, has not been seen since the 1980s.

As can be seen from Chart 2, the previous economic boom in India was

characterised by a sharp spike in share of investment in GDP. It is from these investments that a majority of India's bad loans was created. By the end of 2014, capital intensive sectors – mining, iron and steel, infrastructure and aviation – accounted for 44% of the total stressed assets in India's banking system. Infrastructure alone accounted for 30% of total stressed advances of Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs). The exposure of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) to infrastructure was more than double that of foreign or private banks. Why did infrastructure end up with such a large share of stressed assets? What explains the disproportionate exposure of PSBs to the infrastructure sector?

In a 2013 speech delivered at the Annual Infrastructure Finance Enclave K C Chakrabarty, the then deputy governor of RBI, blamed banks for high level of NPAs in the infrastructure sector. "There is enough evidence to suggest that a substantial portion of the rise in impaired assets in the (infrastructure) sector is attributable to non-adherence



to the basic appraisal standards by the banks", Chakrabarty said. The speech also blames poor appraisal techniques by PSBs, which had been "more impressionistic rather than being information based" for a concentration of infrastructure NPAs in PSBs. To be sure, Chakrabarty also pointed towards an overreliance on debt in financing of infrastructure sector projects. "The infrastructure companies are highly leveraged and the

flow of equity in the infrastructure project funding has been very minimal... lack of equity investment in the (infrastructure) project means that the promoter-developer has little skin in the game and the motivation for success of the venture is that much limited", the speech says. Former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan once used the term riskless capitalism to describe this phenomenon.

There could be another explanation for the concentration of infrastructure loans in PSBs though. A 2017 Economic and Political Weekly paper by Rohit Azad, an assistant professor of economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University and others shows that there was a significant spike in infrastructure spending during the 11th and 12th Five Year Plan period in India. Numbers from the erstwhile Planning Commission show that percentage share of infrastructure investment in GDP increased from 5% between 2002-03 to 2006-07 to projected levels between 8.2% during 2012-13 to 2016-17. A large part of this increase was driven by increase in private sector spending, which was projected to almost match public sector spending in the sector in the 12th Five Year Plan period.

The projections did not materialise as bad loans started piling up towards the end of this period. But it is clear that infrastructure push was an important element of growth strategy during this period. If this was the case, it is reason-

able to assume that PSBs would have received some sort of a nudge to lend to infrastructure projects. The point being, the lack of due diligence on part of PSBs while lending to infrastructure projects could have been the result of this policy push rather than any individual oversight by bank officials. Government intervention to channelize credit towards particular sectors via PSB lending is not unprecedented in the Indian economy. Just a few PSBs lending aggressively to infrastructure would have been enough to force similar actions by others due to fears of losing business. The strategy created India's best ever economic boom. The EPW paper cited above says, "such PSB credit finance investments, particularly in the infrastructure sector, played a crucial role in generating high levels of economic activity in the aftermath of global economic crisis in 2008-09... Such a growth trajectory, however proved to be unsustainable when the expansionary phase came to an end in 2011-12 and bad loans began piling up in the banking system".

## Apple putting "lot of energy" in India to tap huge opportunities, says CEO Tim Cook

Apple Inc is putting a lot of energy in India, with an aim to launch all its initiatives, including retail, in the country where it has an "extremely low" overall market share, the technology giant's CEO Tim Cook has said.

India, the third largest smartphone market in the world, has huge opportunities for Apple, Cook said.

"... We have extremely low share in that market overall," Cook said during Apple's second quarter 2018 earnings call on Tuesday.

He said the company is "putting a lot of energy" in India and working with the carriers in that market, and "they're investing enormously on the LTE (Long-Term Evolution) networks."

Apple's chief financial officer (CFO) Luca Maestri said during the conference call that Apple's Mac set a new March quarter revenue record, including new records in both the Americas and Greater China.

"We sold 4.1 million Macs, generating year-over-year growth in many emerging markets including Latin America, the Middle East and Africa, Central and Eastern Europe and India," Maestri said.

Cook said in India, Apple set a new first-half record. "So we continue to put great energy there and try to – our objective over time is to go in there with all our different initiatives from retail and everything else. And so we're working toward those things," he said.



Describing India as a "huge market", Cook said many people will be moving into the middle class over time in the country, referring to the tremendous consumer opportunity that presents to global companies.

On China, Cook said he believes it is a phenomenal country with lots of opportunity both from a market and an app developer point of view.

Apple has almost two million application developers in China that are writing apps for iOS and the App Store, and "they're doing unbelievably creative work and innovative work. So we look at China holistically, not only as a market."

"But my own personal view of China is that it's a great market... and feel very bullish on the opportunity and the environment there," he said.

Cook was asked if he feels the iPhone market is saturated and not much room is left for growth even as potential exists in emerging markets like India.

"I don't buy the view that

market's saturated. I don't see that from a market point of view or – and certainly not from an iPhone point of view," he said.

Cook stressed that the smartphone market is like the best market for a consumer product company in the history of the world. "It's a terrific market, and we're very happy to be a part of it," he said.

He highlighted that in terms of the market in general, last year there were still half a billion feature phones sold in the world, with many of these being sold into emerging markets.

"And we still believe that over time every phone sold will be a smartphone. And so it seems to us that with that many feature phones being sold, that's a pretty big opportunity," Cook said.

Cook acknowledged that in terms of the iPhone itself, Apple's market share globally is low and its sales are low compared to the full market of smartphones even though Apple sells quite a few

phones across the course of a year.

"And so our task is to convince people that currently – or have another type of phone to switch, while really taking care of people that have an iPhone so that they choose – when they elect to buy another phone, that they buy another iPhone. And so we've spent quite a bit of time on that, as you might guess," he said.

Apple posted quarterly revenue of USD 61.1 billion for its fiscal 2018 second quarter ended March 31, 2018, an increase of 16 per cent from the year-ago quarter. International sales accounted for 65 per cent of the quarter's revenue. The company's net income for the second quarter was USD 13.8 billion, up from USD 11 billion a year ago. Cook said it was Apple's best March quarter ever, with strong revenue growth in iPhone, Services and Wearables.

"Customers chose iPhone X more than any other iPhone each week in the March quarter, just as they did following its launch in the December quarter. We also grew revenue in all of our geographic segments, with over 20 per cent growth in Greater China and Japan," he said.

Apple sold 52.2 million iPhones in the second quarter of 2018, which was down 32% from the first quarter of this year when it had sold 77.3 million iPhones but up only 3% from the second quarter of 2017 when it had sold 50.7 million units.

## India's oil addiction undermines economy once more

From about the beginning of 2017, even sceptics had to admit, India looked to be recovering from a growth slowdown. Most dramatically, in the last two quarters for which data is available, investment in physical capital – which had long been too low for growth to recover – increased by 12 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively. In the first two months of 2018, exports grew by over 9 per cent. For once, optimism seemed warranted: Decent growth and macro-economic stability seemed likely to bolster optimism, encourage more investment and launch a virtuous cycle.

Unfortunately, while growth is indeed reviving, the macro-economy isn't looking all that robust. Most worryingly, the rupee is just about the worst-performing currency in Asia this year; some analysts believe that it will, before the end of the year, be cheaper against the dollar than ever before. Others may not be as gloomy but, across the board, they've lowered their forecasts for India's currency.

What's going on? Well, in part, the problem is a familiar one: India's dependence on imported oil. The health of the Indian economy tends to rest on two great, uncontrollable factors – the level of monsoon rains and the price of oil. India's enjoyed a nice run of low prices and lower import bills for the past several years, as crude prices crashed from over \$100 a barrel to near \$40 a barrel. But now that they've climbed



back to \$75 a barrel and may go higher, India's again facing worries about inflation, government spending and the current account deficit.

Back when crude oil prices were at their peak, India was being talked about as one of the "fragile five" economies most at risk from a tightening of the US Federal Reserve's monetary policies. The country's current account deficit stood at an uncomfortably high 4.8 per cent of GDP. There were even murmurs that India might have to seek relief from the International Monetary Fund, until the government, spooked into action, imposed a sharp series of import controls – particularly on gold, for which India has a ravenous appetite.

Then, luckily, crude oil prices began to crash in the middle of 2014. So did the current account deficit, falling to 0.7 per cent of GDP in 2016-17. Now things are heading in the opposite direction: Kotak Institutional Equities worries that during 2018-19, India's current account deficit could be as high as 2.9 per cent of GDP. In itself, that wouldn't be

a crisis. India has more than enough dollar reserves; capital inflows show no signs of stopping. But, the trend has been ugly enough for the rupee to crash and for worries about inflation to return. The central bank committee that sets monetary policy for India released the minutes of its last meeting recently and most members seem to think that the Reserve Bank of India might need to act soon. In other words, the incipient recovery might be choked off by higher rates even before it properly begins.

It's a frustrating rerun: Once again, India's insatiable thirst for imports seems destined to hold it back. But, that's really only half the story. While the cost of imports is rising, exports, in a well-run economy, should be rising to compensate.

Instead, India has consistently under-performed as an exporter. After the healthy start to 2018, export growth turned negative in March. Four years ago, India exported \$310 billion worth of goods a year. Now, it exports \$302 billion a year – the lowest, as

a percentage of GDP, in a decade and a half. And anemic world trade isn't to blame. Four years ago, Vietnam's exports were \$150 billion; in 2017, at \$213 billion, they were worth 43 per cent more.

India's failure isn't the inability to wean itself off imported crude. It's that it has failed to compete in world markets so it can pay for the oil it needs.

India has wasted the easy years since 2014, when it should have reformed its export processes, cut red tape, backed its manufacturers and pushed them to go out and create new markets. Instead, export processes are by and large just as complex and inefficient as they were four years ago. Tax incentives for exporters have been withdrawn, tax refunds withheld and the entire orientation of India's economy turned inward. Instead of building up exports, India has decided to try and ward off imports; the government has raised tariffs across the board, for the first time in a generation.

There's still time to reverse things. If the rupee does in fact hit record lows, India shouldn't mourn. It should see the new level as a boost for its exporters, an unhoped-for reduction in the price of Indian goods. The government should follow up by slashing red tape and the tariffs that keep Indian companies from integrating with global supply chains. India's import dependence need not be a chronic disease. There is a cure: exports.

## Rising oil prices and weakening rupee fuelling calls for RBI rate hike

A surge in prices of crude oil, India's biggest import item, and a sharp weakness in the rupee are pushing some economists to change their minds on when the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will raise interest rates.

Deutsche Bank AG and DBS Bank Ltd. are among lenders who have brought forward their rate increase calls, more in line with what the markets have been predicting – that the Reserve Bank of India may be forced to raise rates faster than what most analysts are forecasting.

The onshore swap markets are pricing in at least 50 basis points of rate hikes over the next year with one full hike of 25 basis points priced in by August, according to Vivek Rajpal, a Singapore-based rates strategist at Nomura Holdings Inc. The repurchase rate is at 6 per cent, currently.

A Bloomberg survey shows the consensus is for the first rate increase in the second quarter of 2019. Only a tiny minority expect rate increases this year and they include Wall Street investment firms Goldman Sachs Group Inc. and Morgan Stanley. Now, Deutsche Bank has joined them.



"Given the sharp and substantive increase in crude oil prices, we now expect the rate hike cycle to be brought forward," Kaushik Das, the Mumbai-based chief India economist at the German lender wrote in a note last week, calling for a rate increase as early as in June. Credit Agricole CIB had already penciled in an increase in the second quarter.

Das wrote that higher global crude oil prices are a drag for the economy, given it pushes inflation higher, widens the fiscal and current account deficits and exerts downward pressure

on the rupee. The central bank may need to act early to maintain macro-economic stability, he said.

"A pre-emptive rate hike in June can help strengthen RBI's credibility as an inflation targeting central bank, stabilise the rupee and help pace the rate hikes with a comfortable time gap, which will impact growth less adversely," he said.

Asia's worst performing currency Echoing those macro-economic risks, DBS has brought forward its forecast to the third quarter of this year.

"As a defense against market volatility, particularly a weaker rupee, and sticky core inflation, a measured 25 basis point rate hike is likely in the third quarter of 2018 and another in the first quarter of 2019," Radhika Rao, an economist at DBS in Singapore, wrote in a note Friday.

The rupee is Asia's worst performing currency this year on concerns that slowing capital flows and a wider trade deficit could stretch the funding of India's current account gap. That raises the specter of 2013 when vulnerable external accounts saw the rupee plunge to record lows amid the Federal Reserve's signal that it would gradually withdraw some of the extraordinary monetary policy accommodation. Hugo Erken, senior economist at Rabobank International, who sees a rate increase after September, does not rule out an earlier move by the Reserve Bank.

"Would a hike be warranted before? Yes definitely, if oil prices keep rising, the rupee maintains its depreciating trajectory and in case of a faster-than-expected acceleration of the Fed tightening cycle," he said.

## Flipkart-Walmart deal talks in final stages

Walmart Inc., the world's largest retailer, is in final negotiations to buy a majority stake in Flipkart Ltd even as a rival combination of Flipkart and Amazon looks increasingly unlikely, three people familiar with the matter said. Walmart and some Flipkart investors, including Japan's SoftBank Group Corp., are yet to agree on the final details and a deal could take at least a month to be signed, the people cited above said on condition of anonymity.

SoftBank, Flipkart's largest shareholder, was pushing other investors to wait for a rival offer for Flipkart from Amazon. But the Japanese company has now agreed to sell the online retailer to Walmart as all the other key shareholders, including Tiger Global Management, Naspers and Accel Partners, were firm in their preference for Walmart, the people said.

Walmart will buy at least 55% of Flipkart in a deal that will value the company at \$20-21 billion, the people said. Walmart will get a majority of its stake by purchasing shares from existing Flipkart investors at a discount to the \$20-21 billion tag, they said.

The transaction could be structured in such a way that Walmart increases its ownership in Flipkart over time, they said. Depending on how much Flipkart investors decide to

sell, Walmart's initial stake could be higher than 55%. The American retailer could end up spending anywhere between \$8 billion and \$12 billion to buy the stake, the people said. Walmart also wants Flipkart co-founders Binny Bansal (group chief executive officer) and Sachin Bansal (executive chairman) and CEO Kalyan Krishnamurthy to continue in their roles after the acquisition, the people said.

Binny Bansal and Krishnamurthy, a former executive at Flipkart's most influential shareholder Tiger Global Management, are likely to continue in their current roles after the deal, the people said. Sachin Bansal hasn't yet taken a decision on his future or how much stock he will sell in the proposed deal but he is also likely to stay on, the people said.

Flipkart didn't respond to an email seeking comment. Walmart declined to comment. The Walmart-Flipkart negotiations have been reported by Mint and other publications for several months now. The Economic Times newspaper first reported about the negotiations in January, although it had said that the deal would be a minority investment.

In late 2016, initial talks between Walmart and Flipkart stalled and Flipkart went on to raise \$3 billion in two funding rounds from Tencent, SoftBank, eBay and Microsoft.

# Azhar Mahmood adamant Pakistan want more from Mohammad Amir

Pakistan cricket team bowling coach Azhar Mahmood "wants more" from Mohammad Amir, a challenge he believes the pacer will rise to in upcoming Test matches against Ireland and England.

Amir was the hottest property in world cricket after bursting on the scene as a teenager in 2009.

He was soon earning comparisons with fellow Pakistan left-arm fast bowler Wasim Akram, with Wasim himself declaring Amir a better bowler than he had been at the same age.

At 18, Amir was the youngest bowler to have reached the landmark of 50 Test wickets.

His first 14 matches in the five-day game saw him take 51 wickets at just a fraction over 23 apiece -- figures that had Amir on course to be an all-time great.

But Amir's world was turned upside down in 2010 when he and Mohammad Asif became involved in a spot-fixing scandal after deliberately bowling no-balls during the Lord's Test against England at the behest of then Pakistan captain Salman Butt.

In 2011 Amir was given a five-year ban by the International Cricket Council and sentenced to six months in jail by an English court.

Amir returned to international duty in 2016 but his 16 Tests since his



comeback have yielded 44 wickets at a relatively expensive 37.25.

"We want more from Amir, as bowling coach I want more from Amir," Mahmood told AFP after the pacer took one wicket for 45 runs in 15 overs during Pakistan's drawn tour opener against Kent at Canterbury on Tuesday.

"Responsibility" "If you see his record since he came back it's not great, but he was coming back after five years out," the former Pakistan all-rounder added. "He needs to take a bit more responsibility and get more wickets for us."

"If he's the leader of this attack, he needs to show us a bit more."

"I'm sure he will do that and that's what we want from him." Given his lengthy absence it is unsurprising that the now 26-year-old Amir has not quite scaled the heights he reached earlier in his career.

Nevertheless, there have been some memorable moments since his return, with Amir taking a superb three for 16 in six overs as Pakistan thrashed arch-rivals India by 180 runs in the final of last year's Champions Trophy one-day tournament at The Oval.

Amir's figures against Kent on a cool, if sunny, day were nothing like as spectacular. This, however, was a warm-up match, with Pakistan next facing Northamptonshire before pro-

viding the opposition for Ireland's inaugural Test and then returning to England for a two-Test series.

And one delivery from Amir, who served part of his prison sentence in Canterbury jail, stood out on Tuesday when he demolished the stumps of Alex Blake with a late-swinging yorker.

'Imagination'

It certainly caught the admiring attention of Kent assistant coach Alan Donald, the former South Africa fast bowler.

"When I saw this kid a few years ago, he's one of the most skilful that's going around," Donald said.

"When you saw him knocking over those 'poles' that's exactly what you expect from him -- so much skill, so much imagination and creativity to produce that sort of thing on flat pitches."

He added: "When it gets flat, you have to think out of the box and to see that happening was an eye-opener."

Meanwhile Donald predicted Pakistan, whose last Test series in England ended in a highly creditable 2-2 draw in 2016, would impress again this year.

"There are some seriously good players in this Pakistan team," he said. "I think it's going to be a great series -- I hope it warms up for them though."

# Pakistan pacer Wahab Riaz joins Derbyshire for T20 blast



Pakistan's left-arm fast bowler Wahab Riaz has signed up with English County side Derbyshire in his bid to make a comeback to the national team.

According to ESPNcricinfo, Riaz will be playing the Vitality T20 Blast for Derbyshire, hoping to bolster his chances for a recall to the Pakistan cricket team.

The 32-year-old left-arm bowler who last played for Pakistan in October 2017, has been criticised by their head coach Mickey Arthur over fitness as well as form-related issues.

Apart from being excluded from the Pakistan training camp for the upcoming two-Test series in England and one-off Test in Ireland, Arthur had remarked that Riaz had 'not won us a game in two years'.

Underlining the importance of high performance culture in the Pakistan cricket team, Arthur has said, "I expect players that have

been around for a long time to be winning us games and setting standards. The guys need to push themselves and get out of their comfort zones."

"I cannot fault Wahab when he has a ball in his hand but his work ethic around training is something [that] needs to be looked at. I am changing the culture in this Pakistan environment and I am not interested in players doing just the bare minimum."

Despite the criticism, Derbyshire are confident about their signing. Riaz has had a surgery for a sinus problem, and is expected to be available for a huge part of Derbyshire's fixtures before leaving for the Caribbean Premier League (CPL).

Riaz had finished as the joint highest wicket-taker alongside Faheem Ashraf in the Pakistan Super League (PSL), with 18 wickets for Peshawar Zalmi.

## Steven Gerrard confirms 'positive' managerial talks with Glasgow Rangers

Steven Gerrard confirmed he will hold further negotiations with Glasgow Rangers over the vacant managerial job at Ibrox on Thursday after "positive" early talks.

Rangers sacked Graeme Murty on Tuesday following Sunday's 0-5 thrashing at the hands of bitter rivals Celtic that saw Brendan Rodgers's men seal a seventh consecutive Scottish Premiership title. "There's an interest, there's been initial talks and the plan is to pick them up in a couple of days time," Gerrard told BT Sport, who he works for as a pundit on top of his duties as Liverpool's under-18's coach. Gerrard will be in Rome on Wednesday as Liverpool FC aim to reach the UEFA Champions League final, holding a 5-2 first leg lead over Roma.

However, on his return to the UK, the former England captain plans to meet once more with the Rangers hierarchy. "I've held positive talks with them. I'm busy for a couple of days now, but the plan is to pick them up on Thursday and we'll see if we can progress it."

Rangers said they hope to be able to release details about Murty's successor "in the near future".

Assistant coaches Jimmy Nicholl and Jonatan Johansson will take over dugout responsibilities for Saturday's home game with Kilmarnock, while Rangers chiefs look to lift the gloom currently sitting over Ibrox.

The appointment of Gerrard, whose glorious Liverpool career came to an end when Rodgers was still in charge at Anfield in 2015, would restore some lost glamour to Scottish football. However, hiring a rookie with no senior managerial experience would represent the latest in a series of gambles by Rangers' beleaguered board.

The Glasgow giants lie third in the Premiership table with three games of the season remaining, with only goal difference separating them from fourth-placed Hibernian.

Murty took over on an interim basis for the second time in October following the sacking of Pedro Caixinha.

After Aberdeen manager Derek McInnes turned down the chance of a return to Ibrox in December, Murty was then put in charge for the rest of the season.

But two days on from Sunday's Parkhead mauling, the 43-year-old was called into a meeting with managing director Stewart Robertson to be told he was being sacked.

"Rangers are grateful to Graeme, who did not hesitate when asked last October to become interim manager after the departure of Pedro Caixinha and then, at the turn of the year, when he was offered the role as manager until the end of the season," the club said in a statement. "Graeme has had to contend with difficult and challenging circumstances but conducted himself in a thoroughly professional manner. He will take some time to consider his options."

# Zinedine Zidane hails gritty Real Madrid win over Bayern Munich

Real Madrid scrapped their way into a third consecutive Champions League final on Tuesday and coach Zinedine Zidane said he would not have wanted it any other way.

After their last-gasp win over Juventus in the quarter-finals, Real were left hanging on against Bayern Munich at the Santiago Bernabeu as Karim Benzema's double secured a 2-2 draw and 4-3 win on aggregate.

When Joshua Kimmich gave Bayern an early lead and James Rodriguez levelled with 27 minutes remaining, Real looked in danger of surrendering their 2-1 advantage from the first leg.

By the end, Real's fans were begging for the full-time

whistle and if it is to be Liverpool in the final in Kiev, Jurgen Klopp's men will take heart.

Zidane, however, insists the grit his team have shown to overcome Paris Saint-Germain, Juve, and now Bayern, should not be underestimated.

"In football, you have to suffer," Zidane said. "You cannot be in the final without suffering, it's even better, more beautiful when you win like that."

"Madrid never gives up. It is the same in adversity, we believe in what we do and we get things done by believing in ourselves and fighting."

Real, and Zidane, are now on the brink of a third con-



secutive Champions League triumph, and 13th overall in Europe's premier tournament.

Whether it be Liverpool or Roma they face in Kiev, Los Blancos will be strong favourites to lift the title.

"We are only in the final,"

Zidane said. "You can be happy, you have to be, it is not normal to be in the final for the third consecutive time."

"But now that we are, what we have to do is try to win. We will fight to defend our title."

Spectacular Navas Benzema's two goals were also credit to Zidane, who had picked the striker despite a poor run of form that had included only one goal in 12 games.

"He never gave up and I'm happy for him," Zidane said. "I defended Karim as I defend all my players, I defend them until the end."

Bayern, meanwhile, are left wondering what might have been after dominating large spells of the two legs but paying a heavy price for individual mistakes.

Benzema's second, which proved decisive, was a gift, with goalkeeper Sven Ulreich making a mess of Corentin Tolisso's under-hit back pass

and allowing the Frenchman to slot into an open net.

"If you look at both games it is quite apparent we were the best team," Bayern coach Jupp Heynckes said.

"I'm very disappointed in the result. We dominated, I believe, and they should thank Keylor Navas for his performance in goal, he was spectacular, particularly towards the end of the match."

On Ulreich's error, Heynckes added: "He had a little blackout, he got confused, he didn't realise he couldn't pick it up with his hands. 'It's terrible for a player to live through such a moment, but nevertheless we did have a lot of opportunities, and all in all our 'keeper performed well.'"

# Virat Kohli's India toppled by England from top of ICC ODI rankings

Virat Kohli's Indian cricket team has been knocked out of the top spot by England in the latest International Cricket Council (ICC) annual ODI rankings which were updated on Wednesday.

In a release put out by the ICC, England's rise up the table is largely because the 2014-15 season has been dropped from the latest calculations while those from the 2015-16 and 2016-17 seasons are weighted at 50 per cent. Eoin Morgan's side had a forgettable 2014-15 season where they won only seven out of 25 ODIs against other Full Members.

England's rise to the top of the ODI rankings has been remarkable following their exit in the league stages of the 2015 ICC Cricket World Cup held in Australia-New Zealand. Following their humiliat-

ing exit, the team's attitude towards white ball cricket changed and in the last three years, England have won 11 out of 14 bilateral ODI series, with losses only to Australia, India and South Africa.

Since 2017, England has won six consecutive bilateral ODI series, with wins in Australia and New Zealand. On the other hand, India has not put a foot wrong in the last couple of years when it comes to the limited-overs format.

Barring the loss in the Champions Trophy final against Pakistan in 2017, India have won nine consecutive bilateral ODI series, including their first-ever series win in South Africa where they thrashed the Proteas 5-1.

South Africa, who were second, have dropped down to third place after losing

four points, from 117 to 113 following their series loss, leaving them nine points adrift of India and only one point ahead of fourth-placed New Zealand.

World champions Australia have lost eight points to go down to 104 in fifth position and are only two points ahead of reigning Champions Trophy winners Pakistan, who have gained six points.

The T20I rankings are led by Pakistan and there is no change in the top seven places but Afghanistan are now ahead of Sri Lanka in eighth slot. Pakistan (130) and Australia (126) remain in the first two positions without a change in their points total while India have gained two points to reach 123. New Zealand (116) are unchanged on points while England (115) have gained a solitary point.

## Three bad overs cost Mumbai Indians the IPL 2018 match vs RCB: Shane Bond

Mumbai Indians bowling coach Shane Bond said that they were on top for most of the match against Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) on Tuesday, but three bad overs from the bowlers cost them dear.

In fact, two of the overs made a massive difference. Royal Challengers Bangalore skipper Virat Kohli said that the JP Duminy over early on, in which Manan Vohra scored 20-odd runs, was the turning point. His teammate and pacer Tim Southee said the last over from Mitchell McClenaghan which earned Colin de Grandhomme three sixes was the one. Bond admitted that they were chasing 15 runs too many. "We gave 15 runs above what we would have liked. Whereas we bowled well for 17 overs, we bowled three overs which were terrible basically, which cost us probably 60-65 runs," said Bond.

"That was always going to make it difficult. I think 155 or anything under 160 would have been good for us. But 170 or 165 was always going to be difficult for a run chase," added Bond. "It is a sense of déjà vu. It has happened in the past that we've had 17 good overs and three bad overs that have cost us games. So that's the most difficult thing. You expect to go for runs, the quality of players, the size of the grounds but overs that go for 20-plus or 25 cost you the game and that happened to us today," said the Mumbai Indians bowling coach.

Bond defended skipper Rohit Sharma's decision to bat at No. 4 after his innings at No. 3 helped MI beat Chennai Super Kings in the previous game.

"If you look at the success of the team and the times you have won titles, he has always batted at No. 4. So at the end of the day, he has batted at No 4 and won games for us. There's always been a debate about where Rohit should bat. History would suggest No. 4 is the best place he should bat at. Today he got a beauty of a delivery," added the former New Zealand fast bowler.

Mumbai Indians have now lost six games and have just four points from eight games. Bond said that they'd like to win all their remaining matches and hope other results go their way.

## Nothing wrong in choosing limited-overs cricket over Tests: Jos Buttler

os Buttler has been in the forefront of England's resurgence in ODIs since the 2015 World Cup disaster. The England wicketkeeper has three of the fastest ODI centuries for England and he has also been one of the key performers in the Big Bash League, Bangladesh Premier League and the Indian Premier League. In an exclusive chat, the 27-year-old England batsman opened up on how England's perspective towards the IPL changed, the club versus country debate, shun-

ning snobbery of wanting to play in all three formats and learning to play the piano during his off days.

Excerpts: How do you cope with the pressure of Rajasthan Royals not performing as per expectations?

The pressure is always there in professional sport. It is a result-oriented business. We know the IPL is not won in the group stages. We need to start playing better cricket to allow ourselves the opportunity to enter the knock-



out stages. Following England's poor World Cup 2015 campaign, what led to the team's current ODI resurgence?

We decided that we could not play any worse or do anything worse. We wanted to push the boundaries of what we are capable of. In England,

ODI cricket was always seen as a poor relation to Test cricket, which was always deemed important. Andrew Strauss (England's Director of cricket) sort of arrested that balance and made a more conscious effort in making a successful white ball team.

You hold the three fastest hundreds for England in ODIs...

My style has always been to score as many runs you can and as quickly as you can. That is the basic template. Ball-striking is going from strength

to strength in this era. Guys practice these things more than they used to. No wonder the consistency has improved. That is the crucial factor.

From initial resistance to the IPL, what has changed for England which has seen so many players in this edition?

The changing opinions and attitudes towards white-ball cricket are key. The IPL clashes with our county season. We are taking white ball cricket as seriously as red ball cricket.