

TIME AND US

DAILY

Srinagar, Kashmir

SATURDAY

● MAY, 05, 2018
● 18 SHABAN 1439 AH
● ISSUE: 106
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● PAGES: 08

WEATHER TEMPERATURE		
STATION	MAX TEMPERATURE	MIN TEMPERATURE
	ACT	ACT
SRINAGAR	23.0	8.9
JAMMU	36.8	22.3
LEH	18.9	4.3
KARGIL	16.4	5.0

SUNSET SATURDAY: 07:18 PM
SUNRISE SUNDAY: 05:38 AM

LOCAL FORECAST OF SRINAGAR
Generally Cloudy Sky. Maximum & Minimum temperatures will be around 22°C & 09°C respectively.

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

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CHIEF SECRETARY REVIEWS PERFORMANCE UNDER GRAM SWARAJ ABHIYAN WITH DCS

BJP TO INCREASE PM MODI RALLIES FROM 15 TO 21 IN KARNATAKA

FLIPKART BOARD SAID TO APPROVE \$15 BILLION DEAL WITH WALMART

STEVE SMITH RETURNS TO AUSTRALIA, VOWS TO EARN BACK FANS' SUPPORT

Protests held at Jantar Mantar seeking CBI inquiry in Kathua case



► **KNB**

New Delhi, May 04: A protest was held at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi demanding CBI inquiry into Kathua child homicide rape and murder case.

The protestors organized by Bhim Singh led Panthers Party while raising anti-govt slogans took out a procession towards the Parliament but a strong contingent of Delhi Police raised huge barricades in the midway and restrained the protestors from advancing further near the Parliament House. The lead-

ers and the activists also clashed with the police during the protest.

Expressing shock over the way the Crime Branch of J&K Police handled the infamous Rassana murder case, Panthers Party leader Harsh Dev Singh said that the new media reports had raised millions of eyebrows and instilled doubts among the people regarding the credibility of the Crime Branch in dealing with the case.

Accusing the Saffron Party of brazenly defying the collective sentiments of the

► See **Protests...**Pg 02

Actress Emma Watson backs Kathua rape victim's lawyer

► **KNB/Agencies**

New Delhi, May 05: World renowned actress, model, and activist Emma Watson on Friday came into support of Deepika Singh Rajawat, the lawyer fighting the case of a minor girl of Kathua brutally raped and murdered by Hindu goons. The victim was reportedly held captive inside a temple and was sedated before being raped, tortured and murdered.

Watson on Friday shared an article authored by Sonia Mariam Thomas about "How the Kathua rape case lawyer is a force to reckon with" and wrote: "All power to Deepika Singh Rajawat."

The British actor has been a UN Women Goodwill Ambassador and she has actively dedicated her efforts towards the empowerment of young women.

► See **Lawyer...**Pg 02

Jordan, Algerian ambassadors call on Chief Minister



SRINAGAR, MAY 04: The Ambassador of Jordan, Hassan Al Jawarneh and the Ambassador of Algeria, Hamza Yahia Cherrif, who are on a visit to Kashmir Valley, called on the Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti here today.

During the informal meeting, the two

► See **Call...**Pg 02

CHORUS GROWING FOR NAEEM AKTHAR TO BE GIVEN STRATEGIC ROLE

► **KNB**

Srinagar, May 04: Public Works Minister Naeem Akthar is among the senior politicians of the state and prominent voice, face of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party, who was the spokesman of the party when it was in opposition.

► See **Naeem...**Pg 02

Fifty houses damaged, woman injured in cross LoC fire at Tangdar

Kupwara, May 04: A woman was injured and fifty residential houses severely damaged in exchange of fire between troops of India and Pakistan on the line of control in Karnah sector of north Kashmir's frontier district

► See **LoC...**Pg 02

CET SCAM: COURT ORDERS COMPENSATION FOR 50 STUDENTS

Srinagar: A special anti-corruption court has ordered compensation of Rs 50,000 each to 50 students who were denied admission in professional colleges due to the Common Entrance Test (CET) scam that hit Jammu and Kashmir in 2012.

The compensation to 50 students was given as per the merit list.

The compensation was awarded by Special Judge Anti-corruption Yash Paul Bournay in his 382-page judgement in the CET 2012 scam case delivered last week.

The kingpin of the scam, then Chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Board of Professional Entrance

► See **CET...**Pg 02

Painful to see educated youth join militant ranks, Parents must urge them to return: PDP minister

'We want sustainable peace by taking on board all the stake holders'

► **KNS**

Srinagar, May 04: Feeling contented over the cabinet birth allotted to him, senior Peoples Democratic Party leader and minister for CAPD Muhammad Ashraf Mir Friday said, young boys joining militant ranks was worrisome and parents must urge their gun wielding sons to return back.

He also said that Kashmir issue can be resolved through



dialogue and that PDP was committed to create an atmosphere of reconciliation for a sustained dialogue with all

stakeholders on board.

Talking to KNS Mir said: "It was painful to see educated lot joining militant ranks in Kashmir. I urge their parents to appeal their sons to return. We don't want to lose our young boys every day," he said.

However he maintained that while educated youth joining militancy ranks was a concern for all, most of the youth eventually realize the

► See **PDP...**Pg 02

HIGH COURT DIRECTS GOVT TO APPOINT MAGISTRATES FOR JUVENILE BOARDS

► **KNB**

Srinagar, May 04: Jammu and Kashmir High Court today directed the government to appoint Judicial Magistrates (First Class), a requirement to set up Juvenile Justice Board in each district of the State.

According to the judgment by division bench headed by Justice Mohammad Yaqoob Mir and Justice Ali Mohammad Magrey, "22 Juvenile Justice Boards are required to be set up for 22 districts of the State of Jammu & Kashmir. While noticing that, in absence of 22 Juvenile Justice Boards to be set up under Section 4(1) of the Jammu & Kashmir Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children)

► See **Court...**Pg 02

Inefficiency of PDP-BJP bonhomie result in killings of political activists: G A Mir

Says central, state Govt have no roadmap to deal with current situation

► **KNS**

Srinagar, May 04: Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) chief, Ghulam Ahmad Mir on Friday said that an inefficiency of current regime and no plan of the central government to deal with the situation in Kashmir have resulted into the killing of political activities here.

In a brief chat with Kashmir News Service (KNS), Mir said that it seems that the central government doesn't want peaceful situation in the Valley for the petty political gains. "The situation is being created that affect the normal business especially the tourist players,



which in totality affect the economy of the state," he said.

"I believe that they monitor the situation

► See **Mir...**Pg 02

DENTAL COLLEGE PRINCIPAL PLAYS REVENGE POLITICS, STUDENTS' CAREER AT STAKE; DAK AGHAST

► **KNS**

Srinagar, May 04: Doctors Association Kashmir President Dr Suhail Naik in a communique stated that the "Principal of Government Dental College (GDC), Srinagar is playing with the career of its post graduate dental students. It is pertinent to mention that a delegation of MDS Orthodontics students met us about two months back and briefed about the harassment being faced by them through their Head of Department (HOD). The delegation informed us that they have been mentally, physically and emotionally tormented by him. The height of the matter is that they have been forced to do his personal and household work, including car wash, ferrying family members to the

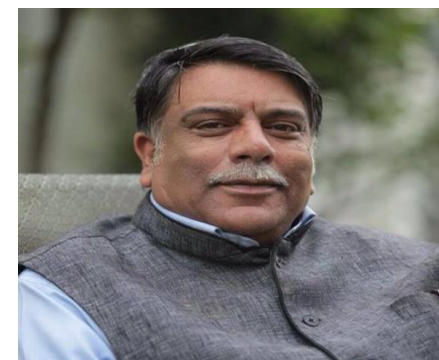
► See **Dental...**Pg 02

Govt job forms should be provide free to jobless youth, appeals Khurshid Alam

► **KNB**

Srinagar, May 4: Peoples' Democratic Party's Srinagar District president and Upper house member Mohammad Khurshid Alam on Friday appealed the state government to take immediate measures for the waiving off of the form fee taken from the job aspirants from government recruitment agencies in the state.

In a statement issued to KNS, Alam said that the job seekers have been facing tough time due to the system kept in vogue by the JKSRB and various other recruitment agencies under which the aspirants are asked to pay Rs 300 to Rs 500 per job application.



"This is being viewed as an unnatural measure being taken by these agencies as the

► See **Alam...**Pg 02

POLITICISATION OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS WON'T BE ALLOWED

PSAK, JCPS distances itself from so called Joint Coordination Committee of private schools

► **KNS**

Srinagar, May 04: Coming down heavily on an unknown organisation by the name of J&K Joint Coordination Committee of Private Schools started with some ulterior looking motives, two main organisations representing private schools in Kashmir valley have distanced itself from the body.

The Private Schools Association of Kashmir (PSAK) and Joint Committee of Private Schools (JCPS) today in an emergency meeting termed the situation unfortunate and alarming. "We came to know from newspapers that

► See **Schools...**Pg 02

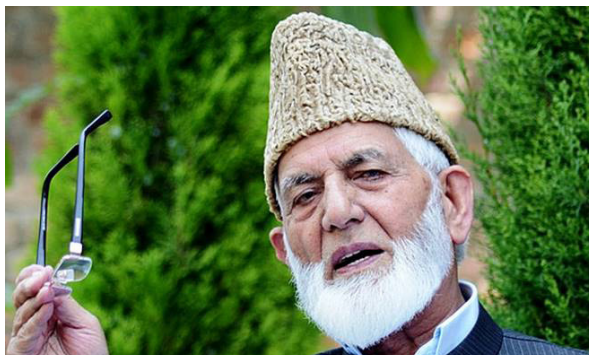
Geelani barred to offer Friday prayers at Masjid Iqra

'Kashmiris will continue with their struggle till freedom is achieved'

► **KNS**

Srinagar, May 04: Authorities on Friday barred Hurriyat Conference (G) Chairman, Syed Ali Geelani from offering Friday prayers in Masjid Iqra in Lal Chowk, a spokesman said.

According to the statement issued to KNS, the spokesman said that Geelani was stopped after he defied house arrest restrictions. "The police



forces outside his residence did not allow him to venture

out to march towards Masjid Iqra," he said.

He said that large contingents of police and CRPF were deployed on main roads leading to the residence of Geelani and no one was allowed to move out of Hurriyat office.

Earlier, the amalgam on May 2 had announced that Geelani will offer Friday congregational prayers and added that resistance

► See **Struggle...**Pg 02

BMO LANGATE DELAYING INFORMATION UNDER RTI ACT, ALLEGE APPLICANT

Will direct him to provide timely information: CMO Kupwara

► **KNS**

Srinagar, Apr 04: In brazen violation of norms set under Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2009, the applicant here in Langate Handwara has accused the Block Medical Officer (BMO) Langate Handwara of delaying the RTI Act process.

However Block Medical Officer, Nazir Ahmad termed the allegations as fabricated and said the delay in providing information was only because of clerical staff strike.

KNS has learnt from the applicant that the BMO Langate has allegedly delayed the process of granting of

► See **BMO...**Pg 02

Continue from Front Page.....

PROTESTS

people of Jammu region, Mr. Singh regretted that the saga of BJP's betrayals and treachery further continued following the 'rijig' in the quota of its Ministerial births when the obnoxious remarks of Kavinder Gupta added fuel to the fire by calling the murder of 8 year old girl as a 'small incident'.

"The BJP Ministers were 'bunch of jokers' enjoying the power ride with its diametrically opposite PDP. Its MLAs lacked political acumen, disregarded the people's mandate and only bothered about Ministerial births for them. They have nothing to do with public aspirations and wishes", Harsh rued.

LAWYER

The article shared by Watson brings attention to Rajawat's confident and professional demeanor as she is flanked by men who are not staring at her.

The case is ongoing in the Jammu and Kashmir High Court. Rajawat has been in defiance against her own colleagues in the Jammu Bar Association who allegedly warned her against taking up the case.

CALL

ambassadors evinced keen interest in the Natural beauty and landscape of the Kashmir Valley.

The Chief Minister apprised the two visiting ambassadors of many of the welfare and humanitarian measures being taken by her Government for bettering the lot of people.

The two Arab ambassadors are accompanied by their spouses, Basimah A.Jaradat and Yasina Cherrif respectively.

NAEEM

Naeem Akhtar is a vibrant strategic politician. Akhtar was elected to the Legislative Council on 7 March 2013 as a Jammu and Kashmir People's Democratic Party candidate. In 2015, Akhtar was given the Education Ministry portfolio in the Mufti Mohammad Sayeed government. In September 2015, Akhtar installed a helpline number to his personal office to hear complaints from the stakeholders, namely parents, teachers and students concerned. He has also advocated for the separation of politics and education.

He was then made public works minister. The growing clout of PDP Workers, Party Supporters, analysts are calling that since many electoral battles are near the time has come for the party to ask a senior face like Naeem Akhtar to relinquish the ministry and take active part in strengthening the party affairs and build more touch with party worker on ground zero.

A political analyst stated - "Naeem Akther considering the party needs and his own composure as politician does not look suited for the ministry job as he can contribute big way in strengthening the party by formulating effective strategy as PDP direly needs that. Time has come for PDP to ask Naeem Akhtar to give away ministry and bring him in top role to formulate the policy and strategy of the party."

If these voices turn into pragmatic we might soon see Naeem Akhtar being dropped from ministry and given a senior policy maker role so that PDP gains its lost ground after it's not so popular alliance with right wing BJP.

LOC

Kupwara.

Locals told KNS correspondent Peerzada Sayeed that during night intervening Thursday and Friday heavy exchange of fire between the troopers of India and Pakistan resulted in heavy damages to fifty residential houses as the entire area was shaken by the exchange of mortar shells and bullets.

Confirming that one woman identified as Noor Jahan wife of Ghulam Hassan Qureshi resident of Forward Satpora Teetwal Karnah was injured in the exchange of fire. The residents have demanded construction of bunkers which they can use during the troubling times for the purposes of shelter and safety.

CET

Examinations (BOPEE) Mushtaq Ahmad Peer was sentenced to 16 years rigorous imprisonment while 49 others were also convicted for offences under various acts.

The accused were slapped with varying amounts of fine with Peer directed to pay Rs one crore.

"Out of the fine amount so realized, each of the candidates whose score was more than 90% in the academic side in the qualifying examination and had appeared in the CET 2012 and was within the next 50 candidates in the order of merit from the cut off point, shall be paid Rs 50,000 each as token compensation," the court ordered.

Commenting on the beneficiary students of the scam and their parents, the court said these parents in their eagerness to see their wards in coveted course have used their money power for grabbing illegally berths which otherwise would have gone to meritorious students whosoever deserved the most.

"However, as of now they have not only failed in their nefarious mission and lost the money which they paid but also have lost the berths illegally grabbed by their wards," the judge said while sentencing the parents to rigorous imprisonment of three years and fine of Rs five lakh each.

It is pertinent to mention here that some of these 19 parents had paid amounts ranging between Rs 15 lakh and Rs 23 lakh to get the papers from Peer, through brokers, for securing admissions in MBBS course.

The court had a word of sympathy for 11 beneficiary students of the scam, saying they had just completed their teens and attained the age of majority.

"Most of them have fallen prey to the sinister designs of their over-ambitious parents/guardians who, instead of leading to the righteous path during their impressionable years of life, have pushed them to the situation wherein they have landed today.

"But, these students have also not spared a thought for their meritorious brethren who deserved these berths on account of their superior merit. In the process, they have not only been turned out but have also lost precious years of their careers besides being stigmatized forever," the court observed.

In these circumstances, the court said they deserve special leniency.

"They are accordingly sentenced to simple imprisonment of one year".

PDP

futility of violence and returned home to live normal lives

with dignity.

The PDP leader further said that his party is committed to its mission for establishing a long-lasting peace, resolution and holistic development of Jammu and Kashmir. "There will be no betrayals with the people. We are duty bound to address the aspirations of every section of the society no matter what difficulties we may face,"

He claimed that his party is committed to empower the youth also and provide them a better space to lead the nation with innovative and energetic ideas.

"Peace is imperative for growth and development of the State so our priority was and is to establish lasting and sustainable peace by taking on board all the stake holders", he said and added that youth always occupied prime place in PDP's agenda as stake-holders in social upliftment and political and economic empowered.

He said that he will keep up the expectations of youth. "Youth has a role to play and party considers the youth as its foundation stone. I have been given the responsibility by the Party to work for the public good in general and youth in particular," he maintained.

Mir further told KNS that the State Government's resolve to take the initiative of dialogue through the institution of Centre's Special Representatives to its logical conclusion is an appreciable decision.

He added that the process of dialogue by Centre's Special Representative is moving in right direction and there is a visible progress in gaining the required trust needed for such initiatives. "People from all walks of life have established communication with the interlocutor and feel satisfied on the grievance redressal mechanism. It is a clear indication that all stake holders will make peace a common cause and allows the initiative to culminate into real hope and promise," he maintained.

Commenting on the implementation of Srinagar Master Plan, the minister informed KNS that it is ready and would be formally implemented soon.

"It was put on public domain for suggestions. I hope in next one or two months it will be formally put into practice," he said.

It may be recalled that Ashraf Mir during the last Budget session, had left the government red-faced after he had raised question over delay in finalization of master plans for the twin capital cities of Srinagar and Jammu.

Mir had also accused the government of making "mockery of the system" over the delay.

The draft Master Plan has envisioned increase in Srinagar local area from the existing 416 Sq Km to 766 Sq Km - 82 percent increase from the existing Master Plan limits.

COURT

Act, 2013, the Chief Judicial Magistrates, having jurisdiction in their respective areas, are exercising the powers and performing the functions of the Boards till the formal constitution of the aforesaid Juvenile Justice Boards, this Court, in terms of order passed on 11th of August, 2017, therefore, observed that 22 Additional posts of Judicial Magistrates (FirstClass) would have to be created, being a requirement of the Act of 2013 and the Rules of 2014."

The judgement further read, "Consequently, the Law Department was directed to process the requirement of 22 posts of Judicial Magistrates (FirstClass) on priority basis, without awaiting any further communication from the Registrar General of this Court."

Pertinently, state counsel brought to the notice of the Court that the Government has accorded sanction for the creation of eight posts of Principal Magistrates (Civil Judge Junior Division/ Munsiff) for eight Juvenile Justice Boards to be constituted at Anantnag, Baramulla, Srinagar, Jammu, Doda, Rajouri, Kargil and Leh in the Phase-I.

The court appreciated the selection-cum-oversight Committee in implementing the Juvenile Justice Act and the rules on ground and noted that the Committee not only completed the selection process for Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees in record time, but also strived to make the institutions under the Act functional.

MIR

and take the benefits out of such situation and other things for their petty political gains," he said, adding that no roadmap of the state as well the central government is visible on the ground to deal with the situation that is currently prevailing here.

Asked about the present situation in the Valley, the JKPC chief said that all time worst situation is prevailing in the Valley at present, which affect everybody here especially youth as well as their parents. "Such situation was never witnessed before in the Valley," he said.

He said that there are various reasons behind such situation but the major factor is betrayal done by PDP-BJP regime. "The ruling elite, PDP sought votes from the people over various issues and failed to fulfill their promises after assuming the power that led to the anger amongst the people. The only agenda the ruling elite is carrying forward is to rule the state," he said, adding that anger amongst the people is increasing with each passing day.

Asked about the rise in militancy, Mir said that such issue has taken place due to the unholy alliance of PDP-BJP. "I believe that the educated youth from the Valley are getting alienated with the government due to the betrayal of the ruling elite," he said.

Referring to the upcoming assembly polls in the state, the state congress president said that he is very much sure that the people will come out from their homes and will cast their ballots in the favour of congress. "The people have got alienated with the government but at the same time they are aware about the things they suffered. So I believe they will surely come out to choose their better candidates. The Congress party hopes that it will gain more seats in the assembly elections as compared to the previous year," he said.

DENTAL

airport and children to school for which they provided us with the documental and other electronic evidence".

"Based on the representations made out to DAK, we formed our own committee of 3 members who met HOD Orthodontics among various other faculty members, aggrieved MDS students, Registrars and undergraduate students of the GDC, Srinagar. To conclude the report DAK tried to meet the Principal GDC but he categorically refused to talk on this sensitive matter instead of started discussing non-relevant issues. It's very forlorn on the part of Principal GDC who showed cold

shoulder towards a very serious matter in which the career of our budding dentists is at stake", Dr Naik further said.

"Seeing no light at the end of the tunnel, students of GDC, Srinagar went on an indefinite strike at that time which compelled the Govt. to form a committee headed by Divisional Commissioner. Based on the report made by the District Commissioner the HOD Orthodontics was removed from the post. It is now more than 2 months since then but the students have not been assigned any guide, and their Principal is deliberately using dilly dallying tactics to take the revenge from them so that there exam gets delayed and nobody in future would try to raise his voice against the injustice which has become a norm in the GDC, Srinagar and to add insult to the injury the examination forms of these students have not been and in the meantime exam date sheet has been issued by the university which is starting from 15th of May but the "orthodontics dept." figures nowhere in the exam date sheet," Dr Naik added

"We are astonished that how can a person who has been given a charge of Care Taker Principal many years back still continues to be on this sacred chair though according to Hon'ble Supreme Court guidelines Govt. has to make a permanent arrangement for post within 6 months. The Principal has also been charged with a criminal case by vigilance dept. of Kashmir and have further recommended his removal from the post but he still continues to be there, unless and until there isn't a deep seated unholy nexus it wouldn't have been possible that he is still continuing on that chair", Dr Naik further added.

DAK urges Chief Minister for immediate intervention in this grave issue of the aggrieved students whose career is at stake so that sanctity of the prestigious Institute is maintained. DAK also appeals the Vice Chancellor University to take the students out from this mess.

ALAM

job seeker already bearing the brunt of unemployment and uncertainty has to pay such a huge sum only to appear in an interview. It is a high time that such a policy is revoked so that a sigh of relief is provided to the already perturbed unemployed youth of the state," Alam said in a statement.

The PDP leader said that as per the figures of the year 2014, the recruitment boards had earned a whopping Rs 20 crore from job aspirants. Alam said that the latest data reveals SSRB has earned Rs 72.76 crore as fees from the job seekers, followed by PSC which has pocketed Rs 6.78 crore, while PRA has collected Rs 3.62 crore.

The PDP leader stated that the practise to mint money from the jobless youth has been the practise of the previous anarchic regimes and that there are high hopes from the present regime that such a system will be revoked.

He added that an unemployed youth who is already striving to make both ends meet shouldn't be burdened with such extra costs and that the government must take remedial measures to do away with such a practise.

Alam appealed the Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti to address the concerns of the unemployed youth who on the basis of the merit want a dignified place for themselves in government service. "It is a much known fact that the PDP has been on the forefront to address the concerns of the youth and have taken several measures which are proving imperative for the overall empowerment of the state's younger generation. The recruitment processes have been fast tracked and new schemes are being rolled out to accord a dignified and honourable living to the youth of Jammu and Kashmir," Alam said.

Alam further appealed the government to waive off the loans of the Kashmiri artisans who have been reeling under the uncertain times and finding it hard to earn livelihood for their families.

He appealed the government to waive off the loans of the Kashmiri artisans who have been reeling under the uncertain times and finding it hard to earn livelihood for their families.

SCHOOLS

a certain organisation by the name of J&K Joint Coordination Committee of Private Schools has been floated and both of us have been included in it without our consent," said G N Var president PSAK. "We have no idea when the body was formed, who is in it and what are their objectives. The said body has floated advertisements appealing politicians and giving political statements, which we will never do."

The Association said that it is a sad day for education sector that some unscrupulous elements are trying to divide the educational platform for their petty needs. "PSAK is the only registered association of schools in Kashmir. JCPS is a platform representing all schools of Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh. It is the platform which connects schools of various divisions with each other and also with schools organisations like NISA at national level and global level," said Var. "Only these two organisations represent private schools here and there is no scope and no need for any other organisation."

The Association said that PSAK is a living example of an organisation that has been united forever. "We have never been divided and we will protect our unity at any cost. We have vibrant grievance redressal mechanism wherein if anybody has any issue we jointly resolve it," said Var.

The association said that as has been the experience, there are always people trying to divide the community and use their smaller platforms to gain political or other favours. "Our organisation has nothing to do with politics and it will always remain apolitical. Our only agenda is for betterment of education sector and benefit to students," said Var.

The Association warned people of using their name without consent and if the same is repeated in future criminal charges will be filed against the person.

STRUGGLE

leadership had planned to stage a peaceful protest against civilian killings in Shopian.

Hurriyat said soon as Geelani moved towards Lal Chowk Srinagar to offer Friday prayers, he was prevented by a heavy contingent of police from doing so.

Lashing at authorities, Geelani said that "Delhi groomed authorities have unleashed a reign of terror against innocent civilians in state. Even innocent students are being mercilessly killed."

Geelani in his address said by placing curbs and detaining resistance leaders, the government was denying them to stage peaceful protests.

Geelani said Kashmiris will continue with their struggle till freedom is achieved. He said the sacrifices of youth won't

go waste and nobody will be allowed to play with their sacrifices, saying "we will never surrender or succumb to pressure but will pursue our cherished mission till it is taken to its logical conclusion. Nowhere on earth are such repressive measures being employed by authorities."

He urged youth to demonstrate steadfastness and commitment against state sponsored terrorism.

Geelani expressed serious concern over the deteriorating health condition of senior resistance leader Shabir Ahmad Shah in Tihar Jail, saying that "he is suffering from multiple ailments; however, he is not being provided specific treatment. The incarcerated leader is being subjected to political vendetta," Geelani said.

"Those languishing in jails including Masarat Aalam Bhat, Dr Gh Mohd Bhat, Altaf Ahmed Shah, Peer Saifullah, Ayaz Akbar, Raja Meraj-ul-Din Kalwal, Shahid-ul-Islam, Farooq Ahmad Dar, Nayeem Ahmad Khan, Zahoor Ahmed Watali, Shahid Yusuf, Dr Qassim Fakto, Dr Shafi Shariati, Gh Qadir Bhat, Tariq Ahmad Dar, Manzoor Ahmad, Mohd Muzaffar Dar, Gh Mohd Khan Sopori, Ameer Hamza, Ab Gani Bhat, Mir Hafeez Ullah, Mohd Yousuf Falahi, Raies Ahmad Dar, Shakeel Ahmad Yatoo and Mohammad Yousuf Mir and others are meted out ill treatment and in absence of proper medical care they are facing immense hardships. Despite their falling health no medical treatment or care is provided to them," he said.

Lashing at authorities, Geelani said that they have virtually turned state into a prison and basic rights are denied and trampled by authorities.

He condemned authorities for continuous detention placing Mohd Ashraf Sehrai and Mohd Ashraf Laya under house arrest.

Geelani urged the people of state to boycott all upcoming elections, saying that "it provides Indian leadership opportunity to mislead world community"

Meanwhile, Hurriyat staged protest against continuous house detention of Geelani and the civilian killings in Shopian, Pulwama and Islamabad.

Spokesman said that peaceful protests after congregational Friday prayers were held in Hyderpora Srinagar.

The statement said that Hurriyat Conference organized a peaceful protest at Hyderpora Srinagar against the killing spree and besides large number of people and leadership including Nisar Hussain Rather, Feroz Ahmad Khan, Syed Mohammad Shafi, Mohammad Yousuf Naqash, Molvi Bashir Irfani, Hakeem Abdul Rashid, Mohammad Yaseen Aataie, Mohammad Shafi Lone, Imtiyaz Ahmad Shah, Yasmeen Raja, Gulshan Aabas, Syed Yasoof, Syed Imtiyaz Haider, Mohammad Saleem Zargar, Khawaja Firdous, Syed Bashmir Indrabi, Mohammad Shafi Mir, Nazir Ahmad Shah, Haji Mohammad Ramzan, Ashiq Hussain, Abdul Ahad Mir, and Wali Mohammad Mir and others participated.

Voicing serious concern over the spree of killings at the hands of Indian troops, Hurriyat General Secretary, Gh Nabi Sumji reiterated that the policy of oppression can't deter people from pursuing the sacred movement.

Demanding immediate halt on innocent killings and arbitrary measures perpetrated by Indian forces, he appealed world human rights organization for their cognizance and impressed to raise their voice and come to the rescue of subjugated people in Kashmir.

The resistance leaders and people in an unanimously declared that if forces are not contained, people from all corners of valley will come up with stiff resistance and local government and their masters will be responsible for the situation rising thereof.

Addressing protestors and people, Sumji said that the growing Indian aggression against unarmed and peaceful people in state has touched the alarming line and turned this beautiful place into a battle field. "Under well thought out plan the Indian authorities, forces and their henchmen are carrying genocide," they said.

Referring to recent killing spree, Sumji said that "Kashmir has been turned into a killing field where the lives of men, women and even children are not safe. killings in Tral, Islamabad and Shopian is worst form of state sponsored terrorism."

He said that authorities are desperate to cover their gruesome and inhuman acts and shielding criminals under the garb of," cross firing and stray bullets".

BMO

information to him.

An applicant named Mohsin Hussain War, S/ O Gulam Nabi War, R/O Haril Block Langate has sought information from the BMO Langate regarding utilization of funds made under Van Bandu Kalayan Yojna (VBKY) in Village Monbal and the Sub centers falling around its jurisdiction.

The applicant said even after 39 days, no information has been provided to him. "I have been visiting the office to seek the status of my application but the concerned officer is taking the matter for granted. The officials here have blatantly violated the norms set under RTI Act 2009," the applicant told KNS.

According to the application which is the possession of KNS, details have been sought by the applicant about the total funds received under Van Bandu Kalayan Yojna (VBKY). "Information may be provided about opening balance, Amount received, total balance utilization, Refund, closing balance. Purpose for the utilization of these funds, Name whom the payment was made, Name of the party, amount paid date, vide cheque number, party account number, closing balance,"

The applicant has also sought the information about the bank statement, photocopy of bills, stock register, mode of purchasing either tendering or else, funds utilized for the strengthening of ST/ SC sub centers under VBKY Scheme and how much funds have been utilized for conducting of health, medical campus under those SC,ST areas.

Information may also be provided about the date of medical camp, venue, and number of patients seen.

One of the RTI activist said if any official delays or denies information than the applicant needs to appeal before the First Appellate Authority (FAA) who are the designated officers.

He said if the applicant still is not satisfied or is not being provided information than the second appeal is to be filed before the second appellate authority. He also said third party information can be provided if public interest is involved in it.

Chief Medical Officer Kupwara, Dr Prehlad Singh when contacted told KNS that he will talk to the concerned BMO and inquire about the matter.

HRD Ministry notifies 75 National Resource Centres (NRCs) for online refresher programmes for Higher Education faculty through SWAYAM

New Delhi, May 04: The Ministry of Human Resource Development has launched a major and unique initiative of online professional development of 1.5 million higher education faculty using the MOOCs platform SWAYAM. In the first phase, 75 discipline-specific National Resource Centres have been identified which are tasked to prepare online training material with focus on latest developments in the discipline, new & emerging trends, pedagogical improvements and methodologies for transacting revised curriculum.

A varied set of institutions such as, Centres under the Ministry's Pan-

dit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (PMMMNMTT) located in Central Universities, IISc, IUCAA, IITs, IISERs, NITs, State Universities; UGC's Human Resource Development Centres (HRDCs), National Institutes for Technical Teachers Training (NITTTRs), IITs, Open Universities have been notified as NRCs. These NRCs cover wide ranging disciplines of Social Sciences, Sciences, Engineering and Technology, Design & Manufacturing, Humanities, Language Teaching, Commerce, Management, Education Planning and Administration, Public Policy, Leadership &

Governance, Library & Information Science, Astronomy & Astrophysics, Assessment and Evaluation, Pedagogy and research methods, cutting edge areas of Nano-sciences, Internet of Things, etc.

Under this initiative, all in-service teachers, irrespective of their subject and seniority will have an enabling opportunity to keep abreast of the latest developments in their disciplines through the technology based online refresher course. The NRCs will develop the Refresher Module which will include the latest trends in their earmarked discipline by 15th June each year. The training materials will

be uploaded and made available through SWAYAM to all the teachers w.e.f. 1st October each year and based on the response, the course can be repeated in the following January. NRC will publish the list of the faculty who have been certified by 31st December, 2018. UGC will issue order/regulations for the purpose of Career Progression and APIs. Faculty can benefit from this initiative as it is highly flexible and can be done at one's own pace and time. The NRCs will revolutionize professional development of faculty by catering to massive numbers by leveraging ICT and online technology platform of SWAYAM.

Change in the shareholding pattern of GSTN

New Delhi, May 04: The Goods and Services Tax Network - Special Purpose Vehicle (GSTN-SPV) was created as a private limited, not-for-profit company under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956 (Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013) by Govt. of India on 28th March, 2013 with an objective to provide shared IT infrastructure and services to Centre and States Governments, tax payers and other stakeholders for implementation of Goods and Services Tax (GST) in the country.

Presently, the Central Government and State Government are holding 24.5% equity shares respectively and the remaining 51% are held by non-Governmental institutions and through various mechanisms, GSTN is under strategic control of government. Majority of the GST processes including registration, filing of returns, payment of taxes, processing of refunds is IT driven and GSTN is handling large-scale invoice level data of lakhs of business entities including data relating to exports

and imports. Considering the nature of 'state' function performed by GSTN, Council felt that GSTN be converted into a fully owned government Company. In view of the above, GST Council in its meeting held today decided: Acquisition of entire 51% of equity held by the Non-Governmental Institutions in GSTN amounting to Rs. 5.1 crore, equally by the Centre and the States governments and allow GSTN Board to initiate process for acquisition of equity held by the private Companies; and

GSTN Board shall be allowed to continue the existing staff at existing terms and conditions for the a period upto five years, and shall have the flexibility of hiring people through contract on the terms and conditions similar to those used by GSTN till now while hiring regular employees. The existing financial commitments given by Centre and States to GSTN to share the capital and O&M cost of the IT Systems shall continue.

Naeem Akhtar visits SPS Museum, Central Library

'Preservation of SPS heritage building Govt's priority'

SRINAGAR, MAY 5: Minister for Public Works Naeem Akhtar today visited SPS Museum in Lal Mandi and SPS Central Library, M.A Road to review the progress of the ongoing construction works there.

On his visit to SPS Museum, Akhtar asked the executing agency to expedite the ongoing works and complete all pending works at an earliest so that the Museum is made fully functional.

While inspecting the old building of the SPS museum, the Minister said that the building itself has a great heritage value. Akhtar directed the officials that all the necessary measures should be taken to restore the glory of this building. "The preservation of this building will be my priority as it is of rich heritage value," he said.

Earlier, on his visit to SPS Central Library, the Minister



reviewed the progress of construction work on the library building. He was informed that the construction works have been completed, however, the work on the construction of lifts is pending which will be completed soon.

It was informed that the centrally placed library will accommodate about 1,10,000 books and it will have facilities like separate sections for children as well as elderly persons,

in addition to students.

Besides, the library will be fully air-conditioned and equipped with computer labs, meeting hall, art gallery, manuscript section, newspaper and magazine section along with other facilities.

The building is being made at an estimated cost of Rs 32.15 crore with the total space of 55,239 square feet, which includes basement, ground floor and five floors.

Chief Secretary reviews performance under Gram Swaraj Abhiyan with DCs

Massive outreach planned for financial inclusion on 5th May

SRINAGAR, MAY 4: Chief Secretary, B B Vyas, Friday chaired a video conference with DCs to review the to-date performance of the State under the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, a special multi-departmental and multi-sectoral initiative launched on 14 April 2018 for achieving saturation under seven pro-poor programmes of Government of India.

Chief Secretary also discussed the plan of action in regard to achieving 100% saturation under the financial inclusion schemes including PM Jan-Dhan Yojana, PM Jeevan-Jyoti Bima Yojana and PM Suraksha Bima Yojana.

Dheeraj Gupta, Principal Secretary (Coordination), Resident Commission, J&K Government, New Delhi, Mandeep Kaur, Nodal Officer for J&K, Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, GoI, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Secretary Rural Development and Panchayati Raj and other senior officers participated in the video conference.



The meeting was informed that the State has achieved 100% saturation under the Mission Indradhanush programme, adding that other programmes including PM Ujjwala Yojana, PM Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana and Ujala Scheme have also recorded substantial saturation. It was said that massive outreach programmes were organized across the villages in the State as part of the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan.

The Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, a special multi-departmental and multi-sectoral initiative for reaching out to the poor households in 21058 villages, was launched across the country including Jammu and Kashmir on 14th of April 2018 and will conclude with obser-

vation of the Aajeevika Diwas on 5th of May 2018.

Appreciating the performance of DCs and other stakeholders in the implementation of the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, the Chief Secretary stressed on the district administration and the banking institutions to ensure 100% saturation of Financial Inclusion schemes. He directed for deploying special teams to the villages for the purpose comprising government and bank officials on 5th May 2018.

"Coordinate with bank branch managers, deploy teams to every select village and organize special camps to achieve 100% saturation of Financial Inclusion Schemes," the Chief Secretary asked DCs.

B'pora town to achieve ODF status by June 2018

BANDIPORA, MAY 04: District Development Commissioner (DDC) Bandipora Khursheed Ahmad Sania convened a meeting to review the pace of progress on Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM - Urban) here today.

The meeting was attended by the Executive Officer, Municipal Committee Bandipora, Executive Engineer PHE, R&B, Tehsildar Bandipora, besides President Traders Federation, Bandipora.

It was given out in the meeting that as many as 2835 applications have been received for construction of house hold latrines under SBM in Municipal Committee Bandipora, of which 1165 applications have been approved.

The meeting was further informed that 969 house hold latrines were constructed during last two months while as construction of 138 House Hold Latrines is in progress. An amount of Rs 1.18 crore is being provided to the beneficiaries as financial assistance for construction of the House Hold Latrines in the town.

Speaking on the occasion the DDC asked the concerned officers to gear-up the field functionaries and ensure that all households could construct individual latrines so that the target of declaring Bandipora as open defecation free (ODF) is achieved by June 2018.

The DDC constituted a team of officers comprising of Executive Officer, Municipal Committee and Tehsildar Bandipora to conduct a fresh survey in the town in 3 days and identify land for construction of Soakage pits and septic tanks.

The DDC also urged upon the people of Bandipora town to coordinate with district administration to achieve the target of making Bandipora Open Defecation free.

DC Samba finalizes arrangements for Red Cross Day



SAMBA MAY 04: Deputy Commissioner, S. Rajinder Singh Tara, today chaired a meeting to finalize preparations for celebration of Red Cross Day on 8th May.

It was given out in the meeting that the theme of this year's celebration is "Red Cross Everywhere for Everyone Smile."

The DDC, also the Chairman of District Red Cross Society, discussed in detail the catalogue of activities to be taken up during Red Cross Day celebration. He also laid stress on motivating people to be active members of the society and help the people in distress and desolation due to food shortage, epidemic diseases or natural calamities.

He also directed Chief Education Officer to celebrate Red Cross Day at 16 cluster head of schools in which flag hoisting, symposium, paper reading contest will be held.

Among others, SSP Anil Mangotra, SDM Ghagwal, ACD, CMO, CEO, all ZEOs, all principals and volunteers of District Red Cross Society were also present during the meeting.

Zulfkar reviews Darhal's development scenario

Calls for speedy completion of projects, maintaining quality standards

JAMMU, MAY 04 - In its endeavor to give new dimensions to Darhal area of Rajouri, Minister for School Education, Haj & Auqaf and Tribal Affairs, Chowdhary Zulfkar Ali today said the government is committed to complete development projects in a time bound manner.

The Minister was speaking during a meeting convened to review the pace and position of work on development projects being undertaken by different departments in Darhal constituency.

The meeting was attended by Chief Engineers of PHE, Irrigation and Flood Control, PMGSY, Superintending Engineer, PHE, ADC Rajouri and various district and sectoral officers.

While reviewing the status of Government Medical College, Rajouri, the Minister was informed that construction work of RCC retaining wall and foundation of Administrative Block and academic block has been completed while as the construction work on hostels and faculty house is under progress. Further, it was informed that the work on 1.50 km long approach road to Medical College (GMC) at Mera is completed.

The Minister was informed that the



project would be completed by March, 2019.

The Minister directed ADC and concerned department to provide power connection for GMC construction site so that ongoing work can be paced up.

Reviewing the physical achievement of the construction of Ans Irrigation Canal, the Minister was informed that work for construction of main canal and tunnel amounting to Rs. 4.380 lakh has been allotted and executing agency has mobilized its resources. The work at Portal P2 executed tunnel of length 25 mtr have been completed besides work of tunnel excavation in progress from both sides.

While giving instructions for ensuring quality of work, the Minister asked the officers and executing agencies to enhance the work force to complete the projects within the time schedule and

avoid the cost overrun.

Reviewing the status of improvement and upgradation of Koteranka Khawas road, the Minister was informed that earthwork upto 28 km road has been completed. The Minister directed to constitute a Committee headed by Superintending Engineer (R&B) to prepare a comprehensive report and remove the bottlenecks in the execution of the project.

The Minister further directed the concerned officers of PHE, PDD to ensure the shifting of utilities at several locations in the town within a week's time on Koteranka-Khawas road.

The Minister also reviewed the Ans water supply scheme at Kandi Gala and said the government's first and foremost priority is to make provision of better basic amenities in every nook and corner of the state.

Ramadan arrangements reviewed

DODA MAY 04: District Development Commissioner, Bhawani Rakwal reviewed the arrangements for upcoming holy month of Ramadan here today. Assistant Commissioner Revenue Tariq Hussain Naik, CPO Yoginder Katoch, Dy SP Hq Iftikhar Ahmed, Tehsildar Doda Giasul Haq, Executive engineer PWD (R&B) B. L. Thusoo, officials besides members of Seerat Committee, presidents of different trade unions and prominent citizens attended the meeting. The meeting devised a strategy to provide hassle free essential services to the people in the holy month and to ensure that they may not face any problem with

regard to supply of essential commodities, drinking water, electricity, traffic management, security and sanitation.

DDC directed the police department to deploy sufficient number of security personnel around mosques, business areas and other places during the day as well as night.

Responding to the issues raised by the representatives of Seerat committee and President Beopar Mandal/ Butcher Association, the DC directed PDD and PHE department to take measures to provide adequate services to the people.

While directing FCS & CA to constitute checking squads to intensify market

checking, he asked the market inspection committee to conduct regular inspection to overcharging, hoarding and black marketing besides ensuring quality check of food items being supplied to the people. PDD Department was directed to ensure uninterrupted supply of electricity during the month especially during sehri and iftar time.

DDC asked Municipal Committee to maintain proper sanitation and cleanliness in and around the places of worship and also installation of street lights around Masjids. The committee also fixed the rate of live chicken, dressed chicken and mutton in the town.

DDC for active public partaking to ensure success of GSA

UDHAMPUR MAY 05 -: District Development Commissioner, Ravinder Kumar today conducted an extensive tour of remote village of Mali, Panjar, and Patti to generate awareness about Gram Swaraj Abhiyan

During interaction with villagers, the DDC asked people to cooperate with the district administration in implementing and availing the maximum benefit of the seven schemes of under Gram Swaraj Abhiyan in the district.

DDC further asked all front lineworkers to work in tandem



with the local populace so that intended beneficiaries get covered under the schemes in GSA. He also asked people for full involvement in creating awareness regarding the GSA.

On the occasion, people also put forth their demands including adequate drinking

water supply, ration, staff in educational and health institutions, repair of various roads and uninterrupted electricity supply.

Responding to the demands, the DDC directed the concerned officers to ensure redressal of grievances at the earliest.

The programme was attended by Nodal Officer, and other district and Tehsil level officers of different departments besides large number of people were present on the occasion.

LMD Sgr penalizes school tuck shop for price tag violation

SRINAGAR, MAY 04: Legal Metrology Department (LMD) Srinagar today penalized a school tuck shop for selling uniforms without carrying price-tag on them.

An enforcement squad of the LMD inspected a tuck shop operating in the premises of a private Srinagar school. "It was found that cost of school uniform was not exorbitant as reported in some sections of media. However, labels on the uniforms were not carrying price-tags," a statement of the LMD said.

Accordingly, a challan was registered against the seller and a notice was served for the lapse as warranted under Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules 2011.

GDC Dooru organizes road race

ANANTNAG, MAY 04: Department of Physical Education Government Degree College (GDC) Dooru today organized annual College road race here.

The race began early in the morning from Upper Market Dooru and culminated at Main Market Verinag in which 63 students of the college participated.

Elaborate arrangements were made for the overnight stay of students who had come from far-off places like Kokernag and Banihal. The road race was flagged-off by GDC Dooru Principal Prof Mushtaq Ali Mir.

Hajj training sessions at Anantnag, Kupwara

SRINAGAR, MAY 04: The orientation-cum-training programme about Manasik-e-Hajj and other logistics at Government Degree College for Boys Anantnag is being held on May 05, 2018 for intending pilgrims of the district from cover number JKF-24-4-0 to JKF-8713-1-0.

Whereas, in Kupwara first phase of Hajj orientation training programme shall be conducted Markazi Jamia Masjid here for pilgrims from cover number JKF2-2 to JKF10072 on May 6.

While as for intending pilgrims of the district from cover number JKF 10076 to JKF 14125-1 shall be held on May 7 at the same venue. All the selected Hajj pilgrims of both the districts are informed to attend the training sessions on the scheduled dates on time.

Lok Adalat at Handwara on May 9, 30

KUPWARA, MAY 04: A Lok Adalat is being held in the premises of Chief Judicial Magistrate on May 9 and 30 during which cases of varied natures are expected to be taken up for hearing.

Interested litigants are informed to approach the concerned court authorities so as to list their cases in the said Lok Adalat.

Time and Us

Editorial
SRINAGAR
& J&K

Secret agent: on JD(S) in Karnataka polls

A kingmaker with only one option is no kingmaker at all. The Janata Dal (Secular) is probably headed for a third-place finish in Karnataka, but is banking on making its seats count in a hung Assembly, which many opinion polls suggest is likely. The party's 'secular' outlook did not prevent it from partnering in a coalition government with the Bharatiya Janata Party in 2006; notwithstanding the protestations of patriarch H.D. Deve Gowda, another such arrangement between the two parties cannot be ruled out. Mr. Gowda likes to put all the blame on his younger son, H.D. Kumaraswamy, for the 2006 partnership and vows it will not be repeated. But the reasons that drove the party to join hands with the BJP at that time have not disappeared now. The support bases of the two parties are in different regions, with the JD(S) confined to Mysuru and southern Karnataka where the Vokkaligas have a strong presence. The BJP relies heavily on the Lingayat vote in north and central Karnataka. Therefore, neither party is fearful of conceding space to the other. The Congress remains the principal rival for both. Although the 2006 experiment ended badly with Mr. Kumaraswamy refusing to keep his end of the bargain, senior BJP leaders are not likely to let the past hold the future hostage.

Indeed, Prime Minister Narendra Modi indicated as much when he praised Mr. Gowda, and sought to blame Congress president Rahul Gandhi for not showing the JD(S) leader enough respect. This might have been intended to send separate signals to JD(S) leaders and the BJP cadre. One, that the BJP is still willing to do business with the JD(S). Two, that in constituencies where the fight is between the Congress and the JD(S), the BJP, rather than finish a close third, would have the JD(S) win. Not surprisingly, both Mr. Gowda and Mr. Kumaraswamy have sought to downplay Mr. Modi's remarks. Too much proximity to the BJP prior to the election is not going to help the JD(S), which would like to keep its supporters interested in the contest as a three-way fight. Prior to its coalition with the BJP, the JD(S) had indeed been in a coalition with the Congress, but the prospects for such a situation have dimmed in the years since. In addition to its concerns of the Congress encroaching on its political space, the JD(S) has one other difficulty: the rise of Siddaramaiah in the Congress. The Karnataka Chief Minister was earlier a front-ranking leader of the JD(S), and his rebellion remains a sore point with Mr. Gowda and his son. But depending on the nature of the verdict, it will not be averse to building bridges with a Congress without Mr. Siddaramaiah, even if only to increase its bargaining position with the BJP. Without doubt, the JD(S) is the unknown agent in the political mix.

WHEN INDIA AND CHINA MEET

► Nirupama Rao

The path of India-China relations is strewn with the ghosts of summits past. The leaders of the two countries have met, expressed the loftiest of sentiments, gone their separate ways. No doubt, summits are good, nobody has a quarrel with them, the media at least loves them. The relationship has often benefited from such meetings.

A note of hope was therefore sounded when Prime Minister Narendra Modi flew into the Chinese city of Wuhan to meet with President Xi Jinping for an "informal" summit last week. The aim, as announced, was to build strategic communication and provide a long-term perspective for what is a complex and adversarial bilateral relationship.

Cautious optimism

For the duration of a day and a half, the leaders of the world's two most populous countries held talks against a classic Chinese landscape of gardens and lakes, with and without aides. The optics were reassuring and optimism about the outcome of these conversations was implied. Only a year ago, on the high Himalayan plateau of Doklam on the borders of Bhutan, India and China, overlooking the vital Siliguri Corridor connecting 'mainland' India to the Northeastern States, Indian and Chinese troops engaged in a tense stand-off lasting 73 days. The visit of the Dalai Lama, exiled in India for nearly six decades, to Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh engendered deep Chinese resentment. The voluble Indian opposition to China's flagship Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), especially the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) being developed in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, was also a source of serious friction. China's growing inroads in the form of high-profile projects and support for anti-Indian political interests in India's South Asian neighbourhood fuelled Indian distrust. Hawkish and hypernationalist voices in both countries raised tensions further, and the spectre of armed conflict on a shared but disputed frontier lurked in the shadows.

Last year was an annus horribilis for the India-China relationship. The Wuhan summit signalled that the two countries are working on restoring a much-needed equilibrium in a deeply disturbed relationship. This is a relationship in therapy. For Mr. Modi, whose scorecard on neighbourhood policy has been underwhelming, a detoxifying policy facelift with China is certainly advantageous both in terms of his domestic political image, with the 2019 parliamentary elections drawing near, as well as in improving his global profile.

The outcome statement from the Indian foreign office and from the Prime Minister's social media network speaks about Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi having forged a common understanding in Wuhan on the future direction of India-China relations "built upon mutual respect for each other's developmental aspirations and prudent management of differences with mutual sensitivity". These are words that can be variously interpreted. Their distilled essence is: let us give each other space and let us rationalise our opposition to each other and our differences in a grown-up way. The takeaway buzzword from Wuhan appears to be "strategic communication" by both leaders in order to provide a more cogent sense



of purpose and direction that helps heal the relationship.

Two statements

The Indian statement (the separate statement from the Chinese foreign ministry is not so full-bodied) also makes it known that the two leaders have "issued strategic guidance" to their militaries to strengthen communication in order to especially "enhance predictability and effectiveness in the management of border affairs". The intention is to prevent incidents in border regions of the Doklam variety, it is presumed. The situation bears watching. There are many pockets along the 3,500 km border between the two countries where the Line of Actual Control is disputed. Transgressions from both sides occur regularly and military establishments, Indian and Chinese, are trained not to yield an inch. Efforts to establish a clearly delineated Line of Actual Control have not succeeded, mainly due to Chinese reluctance. The summit at Wuhan coincided with news that India will build 96 more border outposts along the frontier with China.

The summit has apparently not yielded (and neither was it expected to) any significant reduction of differences on the CPEC. The Indian government can ill-afford to give the impression of any concession on this question to China given the Pakistan factor — a perennial trigger for public hysteria. The announcement that China and India will jointly work on a project (details yet to be announced) in war-torn Afghanistan is a first and unlikely to give Pakistan comfort, although China will no doubt provide undercover assurances to the former that its interests will not be harmed.

The Indian statement (the separate statement from the Chinese foreign ministry is not so full-bodied) also makes it known that the two leaders have "issued strategic guidance" to their militaries to strengthen communication in order to especially "enhance predictability and effectiveness in the management of border affairs".

A sober prognosis for the future of India-China relations is warranted despite the euphoria of Mr. Modi's visit to Wuhan. The potential for tension on the Himalayan piedmont is aggravated by the clash of Chinese and Indian ambition in the maritime environment of the Indo-Pacific. The growing alignment of interest among three democracies — India, the U.S. (now termed an "indispensable" partner) and Japan — is a source for Chinese insecurity, just as China-Pakistan strategic cooperation and China's inroads in South Asia make India uneasy. Twenty-first century Asia is not a pacific place. It is multi-polar and multi-aligned and a testing ground for the security architectures of the future.

Securing the Asian century

Decades ago, India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, famously said that the challenge between India and China "runs along the spine of Asia". As India and China re-emerge from the shadows of history, hopes for the so far elusive dream of an Asia united will be centred on the progress and development of these two nations. At the same time, tension or conflict between the two takes away from the prospects of the Asian century that their leaders speak of. Perhaps it is this realisation that prompted the rendezvous in Wuhan. The world should have no quarrel with India and China beating swords into ploughshares. We need a regular pattern of more informal summits between the leaders of the two countries. The challenge across the spine of Asia does no one good.

(Courtesy: The Hindu)

THE TURNING POINT IN 1932: ON DALIT REPRESENTATION

► Mohammed Ayoub

In the current climate of Dalit assertion that has the potential to frustrate the BJP's dreams of regaining power in 2019, it is relevant to revisit the era when the Dalits asserted their clout in Indian politics for the first time but were stymied by Mahatma Gandhi. This happened under the charismatic B.R. Ambedkar in the 1920s and 1930s and almost succeeded in gaining separate representation for the "Depressed Classes", as they were euphemistically termed in British legalese, in the central and provincial legislatures. It is equally important to speculate what it would have done to the Hindu-Muslim equation, and therefore the prospect of Partition, if Ambedkar had succeeded in reaching his goal. This article attempts to answer this question.

Deep insecurity

The politics of the Muslim elite — and all politics in the run-up to Indian independence was elite politics — was driven primarily by a sense of deep insecurity. This tendency was accentuated when it became increasingly clear from the 1920s that the British would have to leave India sooner or later. The Muslim sense of insecurity was rooted

in many factors relating to history, demography, lack of progress in English education and, probably most importantly, the shift of the centre of gravity of Indian politics from the heartland of northern and central India, where much of the Muslim elite, the ashraf, were concentrated, to Calcutta, Madras and Bombay and their hinterlands dominated by the new English-educated, predominantly Hindu elite.

Partition was the outcome in substantial part of this insecurity although other factors, including aggressive forms of Hindu nationalism advocated by the likes of V.D. Savarkar, K.B. Hedgewar and M.S. Golwalkar contributed to it in considerable measure as well. The soft Hindutva of many stalwarts within the Congress, including Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and Vallabhbhai Patel, added to Muslim concerns, as did Jawaharlal Nehru's disdain for what he termed the Muslim League's "communal politics".

The Muslim elite's anxieties were centred largely on the demographic and, therefore, political disparity between Muslims and Hindus and the domination of India's political and economic landscapes by the upper caste Hindu elite. Political parity between caste Hindus



and Muslims, therefore, remained the primary goal of the Muslim League through much of its existence as a political party.

A landmark announcement in 1932 by British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald came close to removing these anxieties. He accepted Ambedkar's demand that it was necessary for the "Depressed Classes" to have separate representation in the central and provincial legislatures in order to protect their interests which ran counter to the interests of the dominant Hindu castes who also hogged most of the seats in the legislatures. This was the case because elections in British India were held under a very restricted franchise based primarily on property, income and educational qualifications. Only about 13%

of the population had the right to vote. The Dalits lagged far behind caste Hindus in all the three qualifications that determined the right to vote and, therefore, were not only under-represented but also represented by members of those castes that were opposed to according equality to them.

The British Prime Minister accepted Ambedkar's arguments and awarded separate electorates to the Depressed Classes on lines similar to those for Muslims. The Muslim League, recognising the import of this decision in that it had the potential to weaken the caste Hindu leadership's hold on the entirety of the Hindu population, readily accepted the award. However, to everyone's consternation, Mahatma Gandhi, who was seen as a leading advocate for Dalit rights, went on a fast unto death to persuade the British to repeal the award. To him, the award was a ploy to divide Hindu society that he found unacceptable. Initially, Ambedkar refused to bend to Gandhi's coercive fast. However, when it became clear that Gandhi's life depended on Ambedkar's decision, Ambed-

kar was forced to give up his demand in return for reserved seats for Dalits but on the basis of a single Hindu electorate. Years later, Ambedkar came to bitterly regret his decision.

Equally, if not more important, Gandhi's extreme reaction to the award of separate electorates to the Dalits convinced the Muslim elite that Gandhi and the Congress were bent on not giving Muslims their due share in the future political arrangement in India. Their reasoning was simple: if implemented, the Communal Award, as it was known, would have led to parity between caste Hindu and Muslim representatives in the legislatures, and the Dalits, who the Muslim elite did not find threatening and who they saw as potential allies against caste Hindus because of the common fear of upper caste domination, would have held the balance. This would have precluded the need for demanding Partition and in all probability kept India united.

This argument sounds plausible because for most of the 1940s Pakistan was but a bargaining counter for Jinnah and the Muslim League. This is why Jinnah accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946, which would have kept India united in the form of a loose fed-

eration, but which Nehru torpedoed. With the failure of this last-ditch British effort to keep India united, Jinnah was hoisted with his own petard and forced to accept what he called a "mutilated, moth-eaten Pakistan."

More potent than 1937

It appears in hindsight that Mahatma Gandhi's stance on the Communal Award — even more than Nehru's refusal to enter into a coalition with the Muslim League in the United Provinces in 1937, which is widely seen as the turning point in Muslim politics in favour of separatism — was responsible for increasing the Muslim leaders' distrust of the Congress that made Pakistan an attractive option for them. One could plausibly argue that Gandhi's rejection of the Communal Award sent the message to the Muslim leadership that he and the Congress were more interested in promoting a monolithic Hindu bloc than in nurturing Hindu-Muslim unity or providing justice for the Dalits in the form demanded by Ambedkar. This increased their sense of insecurity and finally led to the demand for a separate state comprising the Muslim majority provinces of British India. The rest is history.

(Courtesy: The Hindu)

BJP to increase PM Modi rallies from 15 to 21 in Karnataka

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi may end up addressing 21 election rallies in Karnataka, instead of the 15 planned earlier, in a late campaign blitz before the May 12 assembly polls, two Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders familiar with the matter said.

Modi began on Tuesday the second round of his campaign in the southern state, addressing three rallies in Chamrajnagar, Udipi and Belagavi. He returned to Karnataka on Thursday to address three more public meetings in Gulbarga, Ballari and Bengaluru. In the first round, he addressed about half a dozen rallies before poll dates were announced on March 27.

"The original plan had three more public meetings each on May 5, 7 and 8," the first of the two leaders cited above said on condition of anonymity. "Now he will also address rallies on May 6 and 9. He may end up addressing 21 rallies instead of 15."

The second BJP leader said the number of rallies Modi is to address were increased because of the positive public response to his public meetings on Tuesday. "He is our only hope. So the party wanted him to spare as much



time as he could for campaigning," he said.

May 10 is the last day of campaigning for the Karnataka elections. A couple of opinion polls have predicted a close contest between the Congress and the BJP in the southern state, and political rivals accused Modi of shying away from the campaign for fear of a loss.

BJP general secretary P Muralidhar Rao said in an interview on Monday that any comparison between the

number of rallies Modi addresses in Karnataka and bigger states like Uttar Pradesh, which has almost two times the number of assembly seats, was unnecessary.

Karnataka has a 224-member legislative assembly and the 21 rallies Modi may end up addressing in the state are fewer than the 34 he spoke at in Gujarat, which has a 182-member assembly.

He addressed 24 rallies for last year's multi-phase polls to the

403-member Uttar Pradesh assembly. The BJP increased number of Modi meetings in the middle of the Uttar Pradesh campaign; spent three days in and around his parliamentary constituency Varanasi and the move benefitted the BJP, which swept to power in India's most populous state.

Karnataka is seen as the BJP's prospective gateway to the south. It is also the largest of the states that the Congress governs now.

On Tuesday, Modi launched a blistering attack on the Congress and chief minister Siddaramaiah, as he floated "2+1" theory to target the "dynasty Congress". Siddaramaiah is contesting two assembly seats, Chamundeshwari and Badami, while his son is the Congress candidate from Varuna. "PM Modi's rally on May 1 not only energised the BJP cadre, it even built momentum against the Congress. We hope more rallies of the PM will tilt the balance in the BJP's favour," the first BJP leader said.

The Congress has earlier accused the BJP of limiting the number of Modi rallies in Karnataka sensing an impending defeat. The BJP has rejected the claim.

BJP Karnataka election manifesto promises loan waive-off, China training for farmers

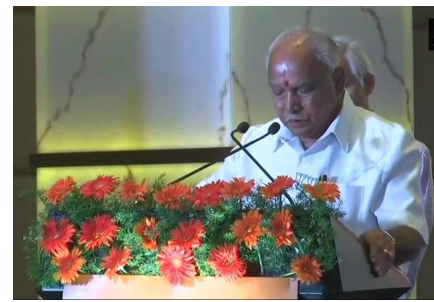
Bengaluru: The Bharatiya Janata Party's manifesto for the May 12 Karnataka elections promised a range of schemes for farmers, from waiving all loans of up to Rs 1 lakh to sending them abroad for training.

The manifesto called "Namma Karnataka Namma Vachana" (Our Karnataka, Our promise) said the party, if it's elected to power, will extend the loan waive-off to nationalised banks for farmer loans of up to Rs 1 lakh. Chief minister Siddaramaiah's Congress government has waived off loans worth Rs 8,500 crore, but only from cooperative banks.

The party said it will set apart Rs 5000 crore as minimum support price for crops and spend Rs 1,50,000 crore by 2023 to complete all irrigation projects in the state. It will start a Rs 2-lakh accident insurance for farmers injured in accidents and send at least a thousand of them to Israel and China each year to study the best practices.

As many as 20 lakh small landholding farmers will get Rs 10,000 each under 'Negila Yogi' scheme, the 64-page document released by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) chief ministerial candidate BS Yeddyurappa.

The party will spend Rs 10,000 crore to promote market products manufactured by women entrepreneurs. Women who live below the poverty line will get Rs 25,000 and a 3



gram gold mangalsutra when they marry. The manifesto promises skill development programmes and free laptops to all college students. Hubli, Bengaluru, Raichur, Kalburgi, Mysuru, and Mangaluru will get software hubs to encourage entrepreneurship.

To counter the Congress government's Indira canteens that serve subsidised food, the BJP promises to set up 300 Annaaporna canteens. A corpus of Rs 1,500 crore will be set up for SC and ST (Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe) students for higher education and studying abroad. Rs 8,500 crore will be spent on building houses for SC communities. OBC communities will get Rs 7,500 crore for a similar housing programme. The party promised to set up two All India Institute of Medical Sciences in the state. All community health centres will get subsidised medi-

SC/ST Act judgment has govt, Supreme Court arguing over reasons for deaths

New Delhi: The Centre told the Supreme Court that its judgment diluting a stringent provision of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act has "seriously affected their (SCs/STs) morale and confidence".

Attorney General KK Venugopal on Thursday told a bench of Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel and Justice Uday Umesh Lalit that their March 20 judgment holding that arrest on a complaint under the law was not mandatory has shaken the confidence of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes "in the ability of the state to protect them".

He added that it resulted in the death of eight people during protests as well as an increase in the instances of attack on the SCs and STs.

The bench however questioned the submission saying its judgment did not lead to the deaths. "Our judgment did not incite anyone to commit crime. Our judgment has been wrongly understood. The SC/ST community has full protection of this court," said Justice Goel refuting Venugopal's argument.

Amicus curiae Amarendra Sharan opposed the plea by



the Attorney General urging the court to stay the operation of its March 20 judgment by which it had issued several directions providing for preliminary inquiry before an FIR is lodged and action is taken on a complaint alleging atrocities under the Act.

"Don't stay (it), it will send a wrong message" that by taking to the streets, the top court's judgment can be bent, he argued.

Telling the court that its judgment amounted to an exercise in law making, the Attorney General urged the bench to refer to a larger bench the question whether the top court can issue directions, guidelines or mandamus contrary to the provision of existing laws.

He said that directions

issued in the March 20 judgment which the Central government is seeking to be reviewed were contrary to the provision of the Act and amounted to whittling down of the stringent provisions.

Citing several instances from the court's past pronouncements including that of collegium system, appointment of judges, Justice Goel said: "The court has stepped in to fill the gaps in law. (Constitution's) Article 21 - guaranteeing protection of life and personal liberty - has been read in the SC/ST Act."

Justice Lalit said what has been put by the court is a "filter" before a complaint is acted upon.

"It is not that the judgment says no registration of crime. It is not that the perpetrators

of crime should not be punished. Let there be a filter" before a complaint is acted upon and an accused is arrested, he said.

As the Attorney General cited the instances of an 83-year-old Dalit woman burnt alive and Thakur community members not allowing a Dalit bridegroom to mount a horse as his wedding party goes to the bride's home, Justice Goel asked: "Why it is that action is not being taken. There has to be quick punishment."

The judge also said the burning of the Dalit woman was murder.

As Venugopal argued that only 13 to 15 per cent of the complaints were found to be false, the court observed that does not mean that remaining 85 per cent were true.

The court fixed May 16 for further hearing of the matter when Sharan would respond to the Attorney General's submissions.

The Central government moved the top court for the review of its March 20 judgment that generated a lot of protests including by lawmakers, who felt that the Supreme Court verdict had diluted the provisions of the Act.

Opposition plans joint candidate against BJP in Kairana bypoll

New Delhi: Opposition parties are discussing the possibility of fielding a joint candidate against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the May 28 by-election to the Kairana Lok Sabha seat in Uttar Pradesh, three leaders familiar with the matter said.

While there has been engagement at multiple levels between the Congress, the Samajwadi Party (SP), the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), it is BSP chief Mayawati who holds the key to such a unity and determining the candidate, the leaders said.

Negotiations between different forces centre on two issues - can all four non-BJP parties come together, and who would be the candidate - said an RLD interlocutor familiar with the political dialogue underway.

"We have learnt from Gorakhpur and Phulpur. We need to stay together if we want to defeat the BJP," said a SP leader, recalling the SP-BSP alliance that defeated BJP in the recent bypolls. But the west UP political theatre has an additional player - Ajit Singh-Jayant Choudhary-led Jat-dominated RLD.

"Everyone is in touch with



everyone else. Rahul Gandhi and Jayant Chaudhary, Jayant and Akhilesh, Akhilesh and Mayawati, and even Jayant and Mayawati have met. There is a recognition that we must come together in some form to defeat the BJP," said the RLD functionary quoted above.

There are over five lakh Muslims in the constituency, close to two lakh Dalits and Jats, a substantial section of Gujjars, and then other upper castes and OBC communities. The BJP candidate is likely to be Mriganka Singh, daughter of the late MP Hukum Singh, whose death necessitated the bypolls. She happens to be from the Gujjar community.

The RLD sees itself as a natural claimant in west UP

and Choudhary himself is open to being the candidate, provided he is backed by the Congress, SP, and BSP. The SP, however, does not want to let go of the opportunity either, and wants to build on the success in recent bypolls.

"We are looking ahead to 2019, and of course, we believe SP should get the seat," said a key party leader. The name of Lucknow University professor Sudhir Panwar, a Jat who contested on an SP ticket in the last assembly poll, is doing the rounds. The Congress is open to supporting a unified opposition candidate.

However, the key will be in the hands of Mayawati. The BSP was inclined to contest from Kairana, after its unity with the Samajwadi Party ensured BJP's defeat in Go-

rakhpur and Phulpur earlier this year. But Mayawati decided to stick with her self-imposed rule of not contesting a by-election. She remains the swing force though. "The BSP is inclined to support a Samajwadi Party candidate," a BSP leader said. "Given its history of supporting the BJP, the RLD cannot be trusted."

But an RLD leader said Mayawati and Choudhary have met too. When asked if they would contest separately if BSP backed SP, the RLD leader said, "I doubt it. The aim is to defeat BJP. We will stick to the opposition alliance." The BJP won the Kairana seat in 2014 with a margin of 2.36 lakh vote. Hukum Singh polled 5.65 lakh votes, compared to Samajwadi Party's tally of 3.29 lakh and BSP's 1.60 lakh votes.

While the BJP candidate was a Gujjar, the SP and the BSP fielded Muslim candidates in a communally charged contest.

The BJP retained its hold over five assembly segments - Nakur, Gangoh, Kairana, Thana Bhawan and Shamli - of Kairana Lok Sabha seat in the 2017 assembly election, but the BSP improved its tally.

Maharashtra NCP leader Chhagan Bhujbal gets bail after spending 2 years in jail

Mumbai: The Bombay high court on Friday granted bail to senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader and former deputy chief minister of Maharashtra Chhagan Bhujbal in a money-laundering case.

The NCP leader is accused of money laundering in the Maharashtra Sadan case, and had moved the Bombay HC seeking bail after the declaration of section 45 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

Section 45 of PMLA restricts granting of bail to any person booked for the offence.

Earlier, a PMLA court had rejected his bail plea after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) opposed it, claiming that Bhujbal was influential and had already been accused of threatening two co-accused for their willingness to turn approvers in the case. In the fresh plea, Bhujbal's lawyer Salabh Saxena claimed that after the apex court's order, several accused have been granted bail by respective courts. Bhujbal cited the case of Yogesh Mittal, booked for his role in a money-laundering case in Delhi, and meat exporter Moin Qureshi, booked for his alleged connections with a hawala racket. Bhujbal also made an emotional appeal about his age and health, claiming that "he is unable to defend his case effectively or seek legal opinion."

It is alleged that the redevelopment of Maharashtra Sadan, the state guesthouse, was not advertised. The contractor allegedly gave a sub-contract to companies owned by Bhujbal's kin and friend. A private developer was reportedly allowed to carry out the makeover of the Sadan and the Andheri RTO in lieu for Floor Space Index (FSI) for a slum rehabilitation project in Andheri. The FIR said the move benefitted the developer, KS Chamankar, but the state suffered losses.

US can't ignore Uttar Pradesh if it wants better ties with India, says state minister

Washington: If the United States wants to improve its ties with India, it can no longer ignore or sideline Uttar Pradesh, a visiting delegation from the most populous Indian state has said.

Uttar Pradesh health minister Sidhartha Nath Singh is leading the high-powered delegation of top state officials to the US.

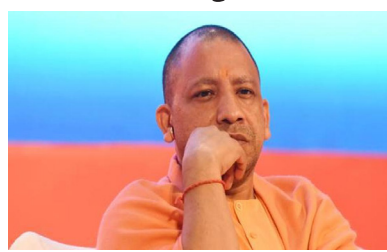
"It is important for the Government of the United states to understand that for any relationship with India to go up, obviously other states are important, but Uttar Pradesh remains the most important," Singh told PTI.

"Even if you want to improve the health index of India, for example, ... India can come up only if UP scores well in this area," Singh said.

Having concluded their trip to the Silicon Valley in California, the delegation was in Washington DC on Thursday, holding meetings with US government officials.

They met with officials from the State Department, the Department of Commerce and USAID and had round tables with the industry representatives, sending them the common message that they can "no longer" afford to ignore or skip Uttar Pradesh if they want to invest in or improve ties with India.

Singh said the BJP government had initiated a series of administrative reforms in sectors like health, agriculture, industry and education so as to make



Uttar Pradesh a business-friendly destination.

"In addition, UP offers a huge market for companies," Singh and his delegation said during their powerpoint presentation before representatives of US companies.

He said the American corporate sector had shown interest to invest in defence manufacturing, IT and health sectors in Uttar Pradesh, while some of the top educational institutions wanted collaborative research and problem-solving projects.

During the Investors Summit-2018 in February in Uttar Pradesh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced a defence industrial corridor in the Bundelkhand region, saying it would bring an investment of Rs 20,000 crore and generate employment avenues for 2.5 lakh people.

"After recent announcement of defence corridor, a number of US defence companies have shown serious interest in investing in this sector in the state," said Singh.

He held meetings with representatives of the Lockheed Martin here while a meeting with Boeing is also on the cards.

"US companies have shown big interest in UP's health sector, for which the BJP government has announced ambitious expansion plans, and the fast-developing IT sector in Noida, adjoining the national capital," said Singh.

He also suggested that the state could collaborate with some American universities for fellowship programmes, exchange programmes or research programmes.

"That could be a big, big takeaway for us," Singh said, as he referred to a meeting that the delegation has had with the Stanford University in Silicon Valley this week.

Companies like Pepsico and Cargill have shown interest in investing in the state's agriculture sector. Both the companies have signed memorandums of understanding with UP.

Singh said his delegation has received an invitation from the US India Strategic and Partnership Forum (USISPF) for chief minister Yogi Adityanath to visit the United States later this summer.

"We hope the chief minister visits the US soon," Singh said.

"The US trip is basically to get UP to be known in a new way and also to get investment from US into Uttar Pradesh," Singh said.

Relief workers pick up the pieces after dust storm leaves a deadly trail

Lucknow: Workers on Friday rushed to restore electricity to scores of towns and villages in northern and western India where a powerful dust storm and thundershowers caused more than 100 deaths and injured another 200.

Winds blew up to 130 kilometers (80 miles) per hour as the storm swept through Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan states on Wednesday night, demolishing hundreds of mud huts, uprooting trees and causing extensive damage to wheat and vegetable crops. It also killed scores of cattle and buffalo.

It also damaged electric poles and transformers, plunging parts of 20 districts of Uttar Pradesh state into darkness, state Relief Commissioner Sanjay Kumar said Friday.

Amid repair and relief work, India's meteorological department warns another powerful dust storm would sweep parts of the two states this weekend.

At least 70 people were killed and another 83 injured by the 'freak storm' in Uttar Pradesh state that sent tin roofs and advertising displays flying in 10 worst-hit districts, Kumar said.

The devastation was particularly severe in Agra, the city of Taj Mahal. Forty-three people died there, but there was no damage to the monument, Kumar said.

In neighbouring Rajasthan state, another 36 people died and 150 were injured. Many of the dead were sleeping when their houses collapsed after being struck by lightning or gusts of wind.

Rajasthan Home Minister Gulab Chand Kataria said efforts to bring back water and electricity supply in the three dust storm-affected districts of the state have picked up pace and claimed that relief was provided in minimum time.

Whooping cough is happening more frequently than before. Here's what to do

Turns out, whooping cough is more widespread than previously known. According to a study conducted by the Public Health Ontario, whooping cough cases are happening much more frequently than previously known, reinforcing the importance of up-to-date vaccinations to protect against illness and the spread of disease.

Whooping cough (formally known as pertussis) is a highly contagious respiratory tract infection. In many people, it's characterised by a severe hacking cough followed by a sharp intake of breath that sounds like "whoop".

Many people, though, don't develop the whoop; sometimes, a persistent hacking cough is the only sign that someone has the illness. In the case of infants, they may not cough at all. Instead, they may struggle to breathe, or may even temporarily stop breathing. Infants are most at risk for serious complications from whooping cough.

A previous study done by the University of Georgia showed that the resurgence of whooping cough in the



US is a predictable consequence of incomplete coverage with a highly effective vaccine.

Deaths associated with whooping cough are rare. When deaths do occur, however, they are most commonly seen among infants, especially those who are too young to be immunised against the disease. While whooping cough is required to be reported to public health in Ontario, the new study suggested that the incidence of illness is significantly underreported.

The researchers compared and

cross-referenced three different datasets in Ontario and found that the estimated total number of cases among infants was almost double, from 545 recorded cases to an estimated 924 cases. The datasets include the period from 2009 to 2015. For those aged one year and older, an estimated total of whooping cough cases was nearly eight times the number actually reported (12,883 estimated cases vs. 1,665 cases reported to public health).

One of the main drivers of the

underreporting is the variability of physicians recognising and reporting the illness to public health, noted the researchers. "These numbers clearly show that whooping cough is much more prevalent in the community than we realised, making the risks of people catching and spreading the disease higher," noted Natasha Crowcroft, lead author of the paper.

"Whooping cough is a vaccine-preventable disease, and these research findings reinforce the need for people to make sure their immunisations are up-to-date to limit potential infection and spread. This is particularly important for people who care for or are in contact with young infants," continued Crowcroft.

Ensuring that immunisations are up-to-date are one way to control future outbreaks, said Crowcroft. In addition, better surveillance data to capture the true incidence of the whooping cough in the province can help enable evidence-based decisions when it comes to timing and frequency of immunisations. The study appears in the journal PLOS ONE.

Weight loss surgery could be harmful for bone health, mass

Weight loss surgery can lead to a reduction in bone mass and strength, and also increase the risk of fractures, a recent study has found.

A review which came out in the journal JBMR Plus, says that skeletal changes post surgery happen fast and continue even after the weight returns to normal.

"Current clinical guidelines do address bone health, but most recommendations are based on low-quality evidence or expert opinion," said Anne Schafer from the University of California, San Francisco in the US.

Of course, weight loss surgery also has health benefits, like the fact that it can help reverse liver diseases and sleep apnoea in individuals who are obese. This was discovered after two studies were conducted on the subject, by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

Coming back to the topic of bone health, various factors, such as nutrition, mechanical unloading, hormones and changes in body composition and bone marrow fat could lead to poor bone health. The researchers found



that clinical guidelines on weight loss surgery need to discuss bone health as an important issue.

"Future studies should address strategies to avoid long-term skeletal consequences of these otherwise beneficial procedures," Schafer said.

Earlier studies have also shown a different factor regarding weight loss surgeries, which is that it is possible that you might be too fat for them! The study, conducted by the University of Michigan, Wayne State University and Henry Ford Health System found that only one in three patients who go through the operation are successful in reducing their body-mass index (BMI) below 30, which is the cut-off for obesity, during the first year.

PARENTAL DIET, OBESITY BEFORE CONCEPTION AFFECTS CHILD'S HEALTH

London: Besides smoking and drinking alcohol, parents' health including obesity and poor diet can have "profound implications" for the growth, development and long-term health of their children before their conception, says a series of studies published in the journal Lancet.

The findings showed that smoking, high alcohol and caffeine intake, diet, obesity and malnutrition in either or both parents, potentially increases a child's lifelong risk of heart attacks, stroke, diabetes, immune and neurological diseases.

The research emphasises the need for greater awareness of preconception health and improved guidance, with greater focus on diet and nutrition to improve the health of future generations.

"Research is now showing that our gametes and early embryos are sensitive to a variety of environmental conditions including poor parental diet. These effects can change the process of development, affecting growth, metabolism and health of offspring, so makes the case for both parents to have a healthy lifestyle well before conception and pregnancy," said Tom Fleming, professor at the University of Southampton.

Maternal obesity is thought to enhance levels of inflammation and hormones, which can directly alter the development of the egg and embryo. This, in turn, boosts the odds of chronic disease later in life.

In men, being obese leads to poor sperm quality, quantity and motility associated with many of the same conditions. "The preconception period is a critical time when parental health -- including weight, metabolism and diet -- can influence the risk of future chronic disease in children, and we must now re-examine public health policy to help reduce this risk," said Judith Stephenson, professor from the University College of London.

"While the current focus on risk factors such as smoking and excess alcohol intake is important, we also need new drives to prepare nutritionally for pregnancy in both parents," Stephenson added.

The results were based in part on two new analyses of women of reproductive age - 18 to 42 - in the UK and Australia.

The team also found that women are often not "nutritionally prepared" for pregnancy. Some 96 per cent of the women, for example, had iron and folate intakes below the recommended levels, 14.8 milligrams and 400 micrograms per day, respectively. Adjusting diet after a pregnancy has begun is often not good enough to fundamentally improve child health, the researchers said.

They propose that behaviour change interventions, supplementation and fortification starting in adolescence, by schools could help young adults prepare for healthy parenthood in the future.

Fat accumulation in brain could be indicator for Parkinson's disease

High levels of some types of fat molecules in the brain could be an early indicator of Parkinson's disease, according to a recent study.

This research could have major implications for identifying patients who could be at risk of developing Parkinson's disease, so that early treatment takes place.

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a degenerative, progressive disorder which leads to a significant reduction of nerve cells, especially dopamine neurons which are involved in movement initiation, in the brain's area called substantia nigra.

For several years, the reason for losing these nerve cells

was said to be due to the toxic accumulation of the protein alpha-synuclein. However, in the last 15 years, researchers have been looking into the relationship between the risk of having PD and a group of disorders called lysosomal storage diseases - in particular Gaucher disease, which happens due to mutations, leading to the loss of function in the glucocerebrosidase (GBA) gene.

"This means that lipid accumulation may also be important in PD, and scientists have previously shown that there is an elevation of a class of lipids, called glycosphingolipids, in the substantia nigra of patients with PD,"



said Ole Isacson, professor at Harvard Medical School in the US.

"Recent studies have shown that there is a risk of developing Parkinson's disease in patients with a group of disorders called Lysosomal Storage Disorder (LSD) especially

Gaucher Disease, which is caused by bi-allelic mutations in GBA1, the gene that encodes acid beta-glucocerebrosidase. The enzyme glucocerebrosidase leads to the break up of fat and in the absence of this enzyme in childhood fat (lip-

ids) accumulate in the brain. In a subset of patients affected with Gaucher's later they develop symptoms of Parkinson's disease," says Dr R. Sureshkumar Professor, Department of Neurology, Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences, Kochi.

Researchers from McLean Hospital in the US and the University of Oxford in the UK worked together for measuring glycosphingolipids levels in the aging brain, using young and old mice. They discovered that the same glycosphingolipids whose levels go up in the brains of Parkinson's disease patients also rise in the brains of aging mice.

"These results lead to a new hypothesis that lipid alterations may create a number of problems inside nerve cells in degenerative aging and Parkinson's disease, and that these changes may precede some of the more obvious hallmarks of Parkinson's disease, such as protein aggregates," said Penny Hallett, lead author of the study published in the journal Neurobiology of Aging.

"This potentially provides an opportunity to treat lipid changes early on in Parkinson's disease and protect nerve cells from dying, as well as the chance to use the lipid levels as biomarkers for patients at risk," Hallett said.

Consuming raw fruit, veggies boosts mental health: Study

London: Do you include fresh fruits and veggies in your daily diet? If no, then start doing so because it is good for mental health.

A new study has found that eating raw fruit and vegetables such as kiwis, bananas, apples and dark leafy greens may lower symptoms of depression and improve mental health, more than cooked, canned and processed food.

Consuming raw fruits and vegetables leads to lower levels of mental illness symptomatology, such as depression, as per the findings. It also improved levels of psychological well-being including a positive mood and life satisfaction.

Lead author Tamlin Conner, senior lecturer at the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand said, "Our research has highlighted that the consumption of fruit and vegetables in their un-



modified' state is more strongly associated with better mental health compared to cooked/canned/processed fruit and vegetables."

Conner said, when the fruits and vegetables are cooked, canned and processed, they lose their mental health benefits as the process potentially diminishes the nutrient levels.

"Cooking and processing likely limits the delivery of nutrients that are es-

sential for optimal emotional functioning," Conner added.

For the study more than 400 young adults from New Zealand and the US aged 18 to 25 years were surveyed.

Conner says public health campaigns have historically focused on aspects of quantity for the consumption of fruit and vegetables (such as 5+ a day).

However, the new study found that for mental health in particular, it may also be important to consider the way in which produce was prepared and consumed.

"This research is increasingly vital as lifestyle approaches such as dietary change may provide an accessible, safe and adjunct approach to improving mental health," Conner said.

The study was published in the journal Frontiers in Psychology.

THREE CUPS OF COFFEE, TEA DAILY MAY CUT STROKE RISK: STUDY

Sydney: Are you an ardent coffee or tea lover, but advised to avoid caffeinated beverages due to your heart conditions? Cheer up, drinking up to three cups of coffee or tea a day is safe as well as reduce irregular heartbeat and stroke risk, a study says.

A single cup of coffee contains about 95 mg of caffeine. It acts as a stimulant to the central nervous system and works to block the effects of adenosine -- a chemical that causes atrial fibrillation (AFib).

AFib is the most common heart rhythm disorder, causes the heart to beat rapidly and skip beats, and if left untreated, can cause strokes.

The results suggest that caffeine intake of up to 300 mg per day may be safe for arrhythmic patients.

"There is a public perception, often based on anecdotal experience, that caffeine is a common acute trigger for heart rhythm problems," said lead author Peter Kistler, Director at Melbourne's Alfred Hospital.

But, "caffeinated beverages such as coffee and tea have long-term anti-arrhythmic properties mediated by antioxidant effects and antagonism of adenosine," he added.

For the review, published in the journal JACC: Clinical Electrophysiology, the team analysed multiple population-based studies.

A meta-analysis of 228,465 participants showed that AFib frequency decreasing by 6 per cent in regular coffee drinkers, and an analysis of 115,993 patients showed a 13 per cent reduced risk.

Another study of 103 post-heart attack patients who received an average of 353 mg of caffeine a day showed improvement in heart rate and no significant arrhythmias -- or abnormal heart rhythms, that cause the heart to beat too fast, slow or unevenly.

However, in two studies, where patients drank at least 10 cups and nine cups of coffee per day, showed an increased risk for ventricular arrhythmias (VAs) -- a condition in which the lower chambers of the heart (ventricles) beat very quickly.

On the other hand, patients with pre-existing heart conditions who consumed two or more energy drinks -- that contains concentrated caffeine -- per day reported palpitations within 24 hours.

WHY MIDDLE-AGED SMOKERS SHOULD QUIT

New York: Middle-aged individuals who smoke could be at far greater risk of developing heart failure than those who never smoked, or those who quit, according to new research. Heart failure is a chronic condition in which the heart does not pump blood properly.

"Previous research has focused on smoking and atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries, but not enough attention has been given to the other bad effects of smoking on the heart," said Michael E. Hall, a cardiologist at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in the US.

The new study found that current smokers were nearly three times more likely to be hospitalised for heart failure,



while current smokers who smoked a pack or more a day were over three times more

likely to be hospitalised. Current smokers' left ventricle -- the heart's main

pumping chamber -- showed early signs of not working properly.

These changes in the left ventricle's structure and function are likely put a person at

greater risk of developing heart failure, Hall said.

For the study, detailed in the journal Circulation, the team included 4,129 participants, aged 54 and of African-American origin.

The study took into account high blood pressure, diabetes, body mass and other factors that might have biased results.

Even those with a smoking history, equivalent to smoking a pack a day for 15 years, were also twice as likely to be hospitalised for heart failure.

"As healthcare professionals, we would recommend that all patients quit smoking anyway, but the message should be made even more forcefully to patients at higher risk of heart failure," Hall said.

Flipkart board said to approve \$15 billion deal with Walmart

Bloomberg: The board of Flipkart Online Services Pvt has approved an agreement to sell about 75% of the company to a Walmart Inc.-led group for approximately \$15 billion, according to people familiar with the matter, an enormous bet by the American retailer on international expansion.

Under the proposed deal, SoftBank Group Corp. will sell all of the 20-plus percent stake it holds in Flipkart through an investment fund at a valuation of roughly \$20 billion, said the people, asking not to be named because the matter is private. Google-parent Alphabet Inc. is likely to participate in the investment with Walmart, said one of the people. A final close is expected within 10 days, though terms could still change and a deal isn't certain, they said.

That would seal a Walmart triumph over Amazon.com Inc., which has been trying to take control of Flipkart with a competing offer. Flipkart's board ultimately decided a deal with Walmart is more likely to win regulatory approval because Amazon is the No. 2 e-commerce operator in India behind Flipkart and its primary competitor. Amazon is out of the running unless



Walmart hits unforeseen trouble. If completed, the deal will give Bentonville, Arkansas-based Walmart a leading position in the growing market of 1.3 billion people and a chance to rebuild its reputation online. The world's largest retailer has struggled against Amazon as consumers increase their spending on the internet. India is the next big potential prize after the US and China, where foreign retailers have made little progress against Alibaba Group Holding Ltd.

SoftBank declined to comment. Flipkart, Walmart and Google didn't

immediately respond to requests for comment.

Amazon has already been aggressively expanding in the country on its own. Founder Jeff Bezos has committed \$5.5 billion to the country and his local chief, Amit Agarwal, has made progress by adapting the site to local conditions.

Amazon has been gaining ground quickly on Flipkart and it tried to derail the Walmart transaction at least in part because it will fortify the Indian rival. Walmart can aid Flipkart with deep pockets and decades of retailing expertise in skills from lo-

gistics to marketing. The U.S. retailer has been working to win over the Indian company since at least last year.

Last month, Walmart agreed to cede control of its UK grocery chain, Asda, as part of a global strategy to prioritize faster-growing markets over some more mature ones. Walmart is merging Asda with the British retailer J Sainsbury Plc and will retain a 42% stake in the combined company.

As part of the Walmart deal, Flipkart's existing shareholders Tencent Holdings Ltd., South Africa's Naspers Ltd. and Microsoft Corp. are expected to retain small stakes, the people said. A \$20 billion valuation for Flipkart would be substantially higher than the \$12 billion mark it hit last year. It is already the most valuable startup in India.

SoftBank stands to make a tidy profit on a stake it took only last year. The Japanese company, through its Vision Fund, invested \$2.5 billion at the earlier valuation, people familiar said at the time. That stake could be worth more than \$4 billion at the Walmart deal's valuation.

GST Council: Single return filing system to come into force in six months

New Delhi: Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on Friday said that a road map for introduction of simplified return filing under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) has been decided.

A single monthly return filing system would come into force in six months, finance secretary Hasmukh Adhia said.

The GST Council, chaired by Jaitley, also deferred a decision on levying a cess on sugar and referred the issue of incentivising digital payments to a group of state finance ministers.

Another group of ministers (GoM) would look at the issue of levy of cess on sugar beyond the GST tax rates. West Bengal finance minister Amit Mitra said some states were not in favour of such a levy.

The panel, the highest decision making body of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, in its 27th meeting agreed to a proposal to convert the GST Network -- the company that provides IT backbone to the new indirect tax regime -- into a government-owned entity.



Jaitley said the GST Network or GSTN currently is 24.5% owned by the central government and a similar percentage is held by state governments collectively. The remaining 51% is with five private financial institutions -- HDFC Ltd, HDFC Bank Ltd, ICICI Bank Ltd, NSE Strategic Investment Co and LIC Housing Finance Ltd.

The council agreed to a proposal of buying out the stake of private entities to make GSTN a government-owned entity, he said adding the central government will own 50% and the remaining would be collectively held by state governments.

GST Council meet today, taxpayers may get simpler return filing forms

New Delhi: The 27th meeting of the GST Council on Friday will among other things consider introduction of simplified tax return form and also decide on proposal for converting GST Network into a government company.

The Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley-chaired council, comprising state finance ministers, will meet through video conferencing.

The meeting comes at a time when Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections achieved its record high by exceeding Rs 1 lakh crore milestone in April.

The government mopped up Rs 1.03 lakh crore in GST collections last month. The new indirect tax regime, which was rolled out on July 1 last year, had earned a revenue of Rs 7.41 lakh crore in entire 2017-18.

A decision on return simplification is on the agenda with the Sushil Modi-led group of ministers (GoM) putting the three models of new return form for discussion before the council, an official said, adding GSTN proposal will also come up for consideration.



Currently, five private financial institutions -- HDFC Ltd, HDFC Bank Ltd, ICICI Bank Ltd, NSE Strategic Investment Co and LIC Housing Finance Ltd -- hold 51 percent stake in GSTN, which was incorporated on March 28, 2013, in the erstwhile UPA regime.

The remaining 49 percent stake is with the Centre and states.

With Jaitley being advised by doctors to stay in isolation to avoid contracting infection, the meeting has been planned through video conferencing.

The council, the official said, will deliberate on the new simplified form to be common for both small and

large tax payers and providing some relief for NIL return filers by allowed them to file return quarterly.

At present, NIL return filers have to file returns monthly.

Besides, monthly return filing process for other and quarterly return filing for composition taxpayers will continue.

The council had in March held discussions on the two models of GST returns and suggested that the GoM work on further simplification. The official said the amendment to the law would also be taken up once the council clears the new GST return format.

One of the models presented before the council was that provisional credit should not be granted unless the taxpayers file returns and pay taxes. The second model stated that provisional credit can be granted to a taxpayer, but returns must be filed within three-four months. It added that taxes must be paid, else the credit amount would be reversed.

After consulting the stakeholders, the GoM earlier this month worked out a third model for return filing according to which credit could be extended once the invoice uploaded by the supplier is verified by the purchaser on the GSTN portal.

Jaitley had earlier this month asked Finance Secretary Hasmukh Adhia to "examine the possibility" of converting GSTN into a majority government company or a 100 per cent government company. GSTN provides the IT backbone for the new indirect tax regime.

Cryptocurrency trade surges, prices rally before RBI ban comes into force

Mumbai: A month after the Reserve Bank of India barred regulated lenders from facilitating cryptocurrency transactions, trading volumes have surged dramatically alongside a sharp rally in prices.

Exchange operators, investors and analysts say people are rushing to take advantage of a three-month window the RBI has given banks to sever ties with cryptocurrency traders and exchanges.

Getting in now enables investors to convert rupees into cryptocurrencies, which they can later swap for other coins via private trading platforms even after the central bank's rules take hold.

"There is a positive sentiment in the industry that the government will not ban trading in cryptocurrencies, and even if formal banking channels cannot be used, people can move to crypto-crypto trading platforms," Shivam Thakral, chief executive of BuyUcoin, a cryptocurrency exchange.

"New investors are coming to our exchanges while existing ones are regaining interest after the drop because



they're getting good value and are making money as the prices of cryptocurrencies move higher," he said.

Prices of the volatile bitcoin in India are back up to Rs 618,000 (\$9,270), recovering from a low of Rs 350,001 after the central bank's announcement in early April.

Average daily volumes have also seen a sharp recovery and were as high as \$75 million, close to levels before the rule changes, according to Pune-based cryptocurrency exchange Coindelta.

The government has taken a tough stance against the use of virtual currencies, fearing they could be used to finance illegal activities. The country's finance minister said in February that they

should be banned as a payment system.

But many investors hope the government will soften the central bank's blow by regulating cryptocurrencies rather than banning them outright.

A panel with members from the central bank, the finance ministry and market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India is expected to soon formulate a recommendation on what to do next.

People who have been trading cryptocurrencies would probably continue to do so if it remained legal, regardless of the banking ban, said 24-year old Shubham Yadav, co-founder and head of business at Coindelta.

Once the central bank's prohibition on commercial banks' involvement in cryptocurrencies takes effect, most trading is likely to move to peer-to-peer networks or social applications such as Telegram, according to retail investors.

In the meantime, some cryptocurrency traders have challenged the central bank's order in court, citing constitutional issues.

Analysts argue that pushing virtual currencies out of the formal banking system would be counterproductive because it puts the money completely out of view of regulators - making illicit transactions easier.

Lawyers are advising clients to hang onto their investments and take a "wait and see" approach.

Traders and investors, meanwhile, say they are just trying to stay optimistic.

"Unlike fiat currency, prices of virtual currencies are based on people's beliefs and aspirations," BuyUcoin's Thakral said. "The long-term vision for us and the people who are investing now is that cryptocurrencies are here to stay."

Flipkart buys back shares worth \$350, step closer to Walmart deal

Bangaluru: Flipkart has bought back shares worth \$350 million from several minority investors, including DST Global, IDG Ventures and ICONIQ Capital, as India's most valuable internet start-up prepares to sell a majority stake to Walmart Inc.

The country's largest online retailer has bought back about 1.9 million preference shares from minority investors in a transaction that values Flipkart at \$17.69 billion, according to documents filed with Singapore's Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority that were sourced from data intelligence platform Paper.VC.

According to the documents, the buyback is a significant step towards

Flipkart converting itself into a private company as per Singapore law, paving the way for its proposed sale to Walmart.

This is the second such transaction in the past 12 months, although in the latest instance, a number of minority Flipkart shareholders have been handed complete exits. In August, most of Flipkart's minority shareholders sold a portion of their stakes to SoftBank, which pumped in roughly \$2.5 billion in Flipkart to buy primary and secondary shares in the online retailer.

Some of the individual investors who have sold their shareholdings in Flipkart completely in the latest buyback include Accel's Shekhar Kirani and SoftBank's Deep Nishar.

A large number of pension funds have also exited as part of the latest deal.

Most of Flipkart's large investors, including Tiger Global, Accel, Microsoft, Naspers and eBay, remain on Flipkart's capitalization table, although Tiger Global and Accel -- Flipkart's two earliest investors -- have sold a small portion of their holdings from their earlier funds as part of this deal.

Mint reported on 2 May that Walmart, the world's largest retailer, is in final negotiations to buy a majority stake in Flipkart even as a rival combination of Flipkart and Amazon looks increasingly unlikely. 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 report said.

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.

The buyback also appears to be the first somewhat public confirmation from Flipkart of its current sale talks with Walmart, which will buy at least 55% of Flipkart in a deal that will value the company at \$20-21 billion. Walmart may end up spending anywhere between \$8 billion

and \$12 billion to buy a majority stake in Flipkart, and is expected to increase its shareholding in the online retailer in a phased manner.

Mint reported on Wednesday that 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.

Binny Bansal and Krishnamurthy, a former executive at Flipkart's most influential shareholder Tiger Global Management, are likely to stay back after the deal.

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.

Sensex sheds 187 points to snap winning streak, telecom stocks fall



Mumbai: After starting on a positive note, the benchmark BSE Sensex fell over 187 points to end 0.53% lower on Friday, on weak global cues as investors eyed the outcome of US-China trade talks, ahead of the US jobs report.

The 30-share index, after opening 103.41 points higher, turned negative on profit-booking to end at 34,915.38, 187.76 points or 0.53% lower, while the broader NSE Nifty plunged 61.40 points to 10,618.25. The BSE gauge had lost 73.28 points in the previous session.

Top laggards were Sun Pharma, Yes Bank, Bajaj Auto, ITC, Axis Bank and Coal India, falling as much as 2.95%.

Top gainers included Adani Ports, HUL, HDFC Bank, Powergrid, IndusInd Bank and ICICI Bank, with gains as much as 2.87%. Brokers said, a weak trend in other Asian bourses as investors watched the outcome of trade talks between the US and China, ahead of the April employment data, to be released later in the day, influenced sentiments here. Market participants booked profits at higher levels in opening trade, they added. Meanwhile, on a net basis, foreign institutional investors (FIIs) sold shares worth Rs 148.42 crore and domestic institutional investors (DIIs) sold shares worth Rs 578.92 crore in Thursday's trade, provisional data showed.

Ola founder Bhavish Aggarwal pre-empting Flipkart's fate

It is well-known that Ola co-founder and chief executive Bhavish Aggarwal used to obsessively track the strategy and tactics deployed by Travis Kalanick, the co-founder of Uber. What isn't that well-known is that the goings-on at Ola's neighbour, Flipkart, and Snapdeal have left more of a mark on Aggarwal.

Flipkart and Ola count SoftBank Group Corp. and Tiger Global Management as their two largest shareholders.

After several missteps by co-founders Bansals, investors led by Tiger Global pushed them out of the day-to-day running of Flipkart last year. Tiger Global, the New York-based investment firm, installed its man Kalyan Krishnamurthy as Flipkart's CEO in January 2017. Barely a year later, Flipkart is on the verge of selling itself to Walmart Inc. for \$20-21 billion in a deal that is being driven by Tiger Global partner Lee

Fixel. While the sale is the biggest money-spinner ever in India's start-up ecosystem, it is still a let-down for Flipkart's ambitious founders who once wanted to become world-beaters.

Early last year, at another unicorn Snapdeal, its largest shareholder SoftBank was trying to force a sale of the company to Flipkart against the wishes of its founders, Kunal Bahl and Rohit Bansal, who had lost out to Flipkart

and Amazon in the e-commerce war. The sale finally fell through after another key investor Nexus Venture Partners sided with the Snapdeal founders.

Now, Ola's Aggarwal is trying to pre-empt the fate of the Bansals and the Snapdeal founders, who are also angel investors in Ola.

Mint reported on Thursday that Aggarwal is in the midst of a boardroom battle with SoftBank after he effectively pushed out Fixel from the board of Ola last year.

In dealing with investors, Aggarwal has been ahead of the curve compared with other top entrepreneurs. He strengthened his legal rights and restricted those of SoftBank last year. Even before that, he ensured that with every new funding round, he brought new investors to Ola thereby curbing the influence and power of any single investor. That's unlike Flipkart and

Snapdeal, which were over-dependent on Tiger Global and SoftBank, respectively.

Last year, Ola closed a \$1.1 billion funding round from SoftBank Group, Tencent Holdings and a bunch of other investors. Two people familiar with the matter said that SoftBank had offered to invest much more in Ola but Aggarwal resisted its offer and instead worked to bring new investors. Although the process took nearly a year.

IPL 2018: How Shubman Gill ruled Eden Gardens in KKR's match vs Chennai Super Kings

Mumbai: The aura around MS Dhoni and Virat Kohli -- and Sachin Tendulkar when he pulled on a Mumbai Indians' shirt -- is such that it gets in the way of full-throated support for Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR). But to have shut that out and then got the Eden Gardens to back him completely during the Indian Premier League (IPL 2018) match on Thursday should be an important step in the transition of Shubman Gill from being a boy wonder to a batsman ready for the big league.

When they spent a total of Rs 8 crore on India's under-19 World Cup winners Gill, Shivam Mavi and Kamlesh Nagarkoti, many felt KKR had gambled their present for the future. At Rs 3.20 crore, Nagarkoti is the most expensive among the trio but injury took him out even before the fast bowler could get started.

Mavi's debut too was fast-tracked after R Vinay Kumar went for 63 in 23 balls spread over two matches including one against Chennai Super Kings (CSK). Barring the last over against Delhi Daredevils away, Mavi



looks settled in the team. Gill got his chance after Rinku Singh developed starting trouble and showed he had the poise and potential to play at this level.

So it fit that after Gill anchored KKR to a six-wicket win against CSK in Kolkata on Thursday, skipper Dinesh Karthik would credit the management for reposing faith in these young players.

A lost cause in New Delhi had Gill

making 37 off 29 balls and adding 64 runs with Andre Russell for the sixth wicket. On Thursday, against the IPL's highest winning team, Gill scored an unbeaten 57 in 36 balls with six fours and two sixes. A 33-run partnership in five overs with Singh steadied KKR's reply after they were 64/3 in 6.4 overs.

"When the two youngsters were at the crease (Singh is 20), we looked at it as a time to put pressure... As Gill's innings got on, he gained com-

posure and played well. This was his first real opportunity and he played a big part in winning the match," said CSK coach Stephen Fleming.

After Singh, Gill joined Karthik for a brisk, unbeaten 83-run fifth-wicket stand in six overs to seal the comprehensive win.

Nitish Rana being out with injury meant Gill could come at No. 4 and build the innings. At No. 7 where he was slotted at the start, Gill was expected to begin in fifth gear which isn't his game.

"I had said during the training camp here that he is a special talent and today he proved it," said KKR's leggie Piyush Chawla.

"With a player like Rana (he is 24) out, we needed someone who can craft the innings and today Gill did that," said Chawla.

Days after the under-19 World Cup win in February, Sourav Ganguly had said the future looks bright for India. Two players Ganguly spoke of, Mavi and Gill, have shown again why the former India skipper is said to have a third eye for talent-spotting.

Steve Smith returns to Australia, vows to earn back fans' support

Mumbai: Banned Australian cricket team captain Steve Smith on Friday thanked his family and fiancée Dani Willis for their support, as he announced return to his home in Australia vowing to earn back trust and support of his fans.

Smith made his first post on his social media pages after he had announced accepting Cricket Australia's (CA) decision to ban him from playing any form of top flight cricket in the country as well as a two-year ban from leadership role in Australian cricket.

Smith, along with his deputy David Warner were banned for one year while young opening batsman Cameron Bancroft was banned for nine months for their involvement in the ball-tampering episode that rocked cricket fraternity during the Cape Town Test earlier this year.

Upon his return from South Africa, Smith had not only held a tearful press conference but had also declared that he would accept the punishment handed out by the cricket



governing body down Under.

"It's great to be back home in Australia. I have had some time away to come to terms with everything and now it's time to get back into it," Smith wrote on Friday.

"The amount of emails and letters I have received has been incredible and I have been extremely humbled by the enormous amount of support you have given me. I now have a lot to do to earn back your trust. To my Mum, Dad and Dani you have been my rock through this and I can't thank you enough. Family is the most important thing in the world and I thank you for your love and support," Smith added.

Former England batsman Jonathan Trott retires from first class cricket

Mumbai: Former England batsman Jonathan Trott, who remained a vital cog in the team's successful run from 2009 till 2013 wherein they briefly became world No 1, will be retiring from all forms of cricket at the end of this season.

Trott who announced retirement from international cricket in May 2015, has continued to play county cricket in England. However, the ICC Cricketer of the Year 2011, has said he will be playing his last game for Warwickshire at the end of this season. "Choosing to retire at the end of the season is something that I have spoken about at length with my family and this is now the right time to look at the next chapter of my career," Trott was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo. "It hasn't been that difficult a decision. When you have played at a club (Warwickshire) for as long as I have it is important that not only is the decision right for you but it's also right for the club," he added.

Trott, who scored 245 on debut for Warwickshire second XI, had also scored a Test debut ton for England -- 119 in the second innings at The Oval against Australia in 2009 -- after scoring 41 in the first essay.

He had to wait for his second century in Test cricket but when it came, Trott ensured it was a colossal effort. Facing 349 balls and striking 20 fours, Trott scored 226 runs at Lord's in May 2010 to showcase his appetite for big scores. After making the first impression in the Ashes 2009, Trott ended as the third highest run-getter in Ashes 2010-11 Down Under, assisting England to their first win in the opponents' backyard in 28 years. With scores of 135* at Brisbane -- in which he added 329 with Alastair Cook to deny Australia a victory, 78 at Adelaide and 168* at Melbourne, Trott amassed 445 runs at 89 over five Tests.

The year 2012 was decorated with two superlative knocks in the Indian subcontinent -- 112 against Sri Lanka at Galle and 143 versus India at Nagpur -- with the latter helping England recording an elusive series win in India. With three fifties in the Ashes 2013 in England, Trott may not have played a strong role but he continued to be one of their key batsmen.

However, the disintegration began in mid 2013 when a certain Mitchell Johnson and Australia derived a plan to attack Trott on the leg side with short balls, and a cricketer who already had mental issues to deal with, found the going extremely tough when England reached Australia for Ashes 2013-14.

Why Haryana state powers India's sports engine

More sweets, fireworks, floral garlands, victory parades, and athletes with medals around their necks -- Haryana celebrated more than anyone else when the Indian contingent returned from the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games this April with an impressive tally of 66 medals, including 26 gold. The athletes from Haryana accounted for 22 or every third medal India won as the country finished third behind hosts Australia and England in the quadrennial event. The feat is not new for this northern state with a population of 25 million people (according to the 2011 census). Haryana won 19 of the 64 medals India collected in the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games and 27 out

of 101 in the 2010 edition in New Delhi. And it's not hard to know why the state is a sporting powerhouse. Scrape the surface and turn some pages from history and Haryana's culture.

The state's domination in sports is somehow linked to the majority of its people's collective preference for a robust physique that helps them work the fields under a sweltering sun, get jobs in the military, and indulge in sporting activities, more likely wrestling, experts say.

Wrestling has always been an integral part of rural Haryana, where grapplers in loin-cloths competed for prizes that varied from a fistful of cash or a pot of ghee to nothing but village pride in dangals,



or local competitions, held in red dirt rings. These rustic rings produced some of India's best wrestlers, including the Phogat sisters whose life and success spawned the 2016 Bollywood biographical blockbuster Dangal.

But it's the army that laid the foundation for agrarian Haryana to turn into the country's sports nursery. Before

the green revolution in the 1970s that made the state one of the top crop producers, hundreds of able-bodied Haryanvis joined the army and paramilitary forces to supplement their family income and some of these soldiers eventually become national and international athletes with military patronage. The army continues to

do its bit to this day.

All the early Olympians from the state had an army background. After retirement, many of them took to coaching young talents in their home state and helped inspire and shape generations of champions. Wrestlers Lila Ram and Devi Singh and long jumper Ram Mehar, all three from the army, were part of the 59-member Indian contingent in the 1956 Olympics and became the pioneers from the state -- at that time Haryana was part of Punjab -- to compete in the world's biggest sporting event.

Ram became the country's first Commonwealth Games gold medalist in Cardiff in 1958 and was honoured with a Padma Shri for his achieve-

ments. "Maharashtra and Punjab used to be the country's wrestling hubs and royal patronage was the reason behind it. But Haryana upstaged them and the army has a major role in it. Today, Indian wrestling means Haryana," says 83-year-old triple Olympian Uday Chand, who competed in the 1960, 1964, 1968 Olympics.

In Gold Coast, nine wrestlers in the 12-member squad were from Haryana and each won a medal apiece.

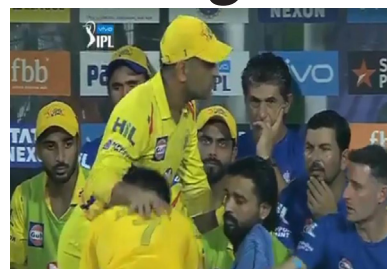
Chand from Hisar was the first Indian wrestler to win a medal in the world championship -- a bronze in 1961. After retirement, the former soldier shouldered on by coaching and mentoring a number of international medallists.

Fan invades Eden Gardens field to touch MS Dhoni's feet during IPL 2018 match

Chennai Super Kings (CSK) captain MS Dhoni is back in red-hot form and his fans are absolutely loving it. Dhoni has time and again played invaluable innings for CSK in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL 2018), rolling back the years.

Dhoni's fans have not only flocked the stadiums in large numbers to provide him as well as the Super Kings support in their comeback year.

On Thursday night, during CSK's match vs Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR), one fan breached the security at the Eden Gardens to run up to the former Indian cricket team captain, and touched his feet.



Dhoni was seen advising the fan to remain in the permitted area and not invade the playing field.

Twitter Ads information and privacy

This has happened with Dhoni several times in recent years -- fans making

their way right up to the middle and touch the feet of Captain Cool.

During the tour match between India A and England in January 2017, a fan had jumped over the fence at the Brabourne Stadium in Mumbai and ran up to Dhoni, who had scored a half-century in his final match as captain of the Indian cricket team.

Similar incidences have happened with Dhoni in this IPL and India's series in Sri Lanka late last year.

The Dhoni-led CSK are currently on a roll, and despite their loss by six wickets to KKR on Thursday night, they remain favourites for this year's IPL trophy.

IPL 2018: AARON FINCH HAPPY KINGS XI PUNJAB WINNING DESPITE HIS LACK OF RUNS



Indore: Seasoned Australian batsman Aaron Finch is not too concerned about his poor personal form as Kings XI Punjab (KXIP) look to resume their great run in IPL 2018 against bottom-placed Mumbai Indians (MI) at the Holkar Stadium on Friday. KXIP's top-order batsmen have helped delivered five wins out of seven games, but Finch, who missed the start of IPL due to his wedding, has not joined the party. KL Rahul, Chris Gayle and Karun Nair have scored consistently, while KXIP's middle-order comprising Mayank Agarwal, Aaron Finch and Yuvraj Singh is yet to fire. Asked if that's a worry, Finch, who has managed just 24 runs in six games, said: "Not at all."

"It's true that we haven't scored much. But the great thing is we still have five wins. Chris, KL and Karun have been brilliant. It's important to stay optimistic. It's just a matter of time before the middle-order fires," he said at a media interaction on Thursday. Although, holders Mumbai Indians are staring at elimination, Finch cautioned his teammates against any complacency.

"They have been one of the best sides in the history of the tournament. They are three-time IPL champions. They've had slow starts in the past and still managed to reach the playoffs. We are not going to take them lightly. We will have to be at our very best to beat them."

MI have only two wins from eight games and need to win their remaining six matches and hope other teams help them stay in playoff contention.

Skipper Rohit Sharma, Kieron Pollard, Evin Lewis and Hardik Pandya all haven't got big scores. In bowling, Mitchell McClenaghan (nine wickets), Mustafizur Rahman (seven wickets) have both been expensive, at the start and in the death overs. On the other hand, KXIP, under R Ashwin's leadership, have lost just two games and are inching close to the play-offs. In Mohali, they won all three games and will now play their remaining four home games in Indore.

Under Justin Langer, Australian cricket will be in good hands: Darren Lehmann

Former Australia coach Darren Lehmann has welcomed the appointment of his former teammate Justin Langer as the next head coach of the Australian cricket team.

Lehmann was forced to quit as the Australian head coach after the ball-tampering episode from the Cape Town Test rocked the cricketing world, with many raising fingers on the team atmosphere that stayed on during his tenure.

While admitting that he would miss being the coach of the Australian cricket team, Lehmann said the future of the team is in good hands.

Lehmann was quoted as

saying by cricket.com.au, "Having watched JL's press conference, I'm just so pleased that Australian cricket is going to be in such good hands. He's got the best job in the world, and I know it's a job that I'll miss because I loved every minute of it."

"But this is a time that Australian cricket needs to move forward and they couldn't have a better person to lead them now."

Lehmann extended his support to the current Australian cricket team sans Steve Smith, David Warner and Cameron Bancroft, who all are serving bans each from cricket.



"He (Langer) has got a really good group of players and they'll play in an exciting way, and I'm really looking forward to watching them do that," Lehmann said.

"They all bring different attributes, but they are all such good professional athletes and

aren't playing as well. I was really pleased that Justin made mention of those three guys (Smith, Warner and Bancroft) who aren't playing at the moment because they are, and they'll continue to be, valuable players for the future of Australian cricket."

"He didn't close the door on anyone, and I think that's an important message," he added.

"Langer will find the right balance"

Lehmann expressed confidence that Langer is the right person to lead Australia into a new era, with many in the cricket world anticipating that the 'good, hard cricket' from

Down Under would be without ugly sledging and on-field episodes.

"He (Langer) spoke passionately about how he wants them to play, and he's going to find the right balance that works best for that group. There's no doubt that the toughest time in that job is when the team's not winning."

"As he said in his media conference, winning away from home is the ambition for every team, but winning at home is also paramount. Winning away is everyone's aspiration, but if you don't win at home that starts to present its own challenges," Lehmann concluded.