

TIME AND US

DAILY SRINAGAR, KASHMIR

TUESDAY

- MAY, 01, 2018
- 14 SHABAN 1439 AH
- ISSUE: 102
- VOLUME: 04
- PAGES: 08

WEATHER TEMPERATURE		
STATION	MAX TEMPERATURE	MIN TEMPERATURE
	ACT	ACT
SRINAGAR	28.6	9.1
JAMMU	40.0	21.0
LEH	19.3	-0.4
KARGIL	21.2	3.6

SUNSET TUESDAY: 07:15 PM
SUNRISE WEDNESDAY: 05:42 AM

LOCAL FORECAST OF SRINAGAR
Mainly Clear Sky. Maximum & Minimum temperatures will be around 28°C & 09°C respectively.

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

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IPL 2018: MUMBAI INDIANS FAVOURITES AGAINST VIRAT KOHLI'S ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE

TOP HIZB COMMANDER SAMEER TIGER AMONG TWO MILITANTS KILLED IN PULWAMA

Army Major among 2 soldiers injured critically; over 45 protesters injured; authorities suspend train, internet services in south Kashmir; KU postpones exams for tomorrow

Srinagar, April 30: Top Hizb Commander Sameer Tiger was among two militants killed in an encounter with government forces at Drabgam area of south Kashmir's Pulwama district on Monday.

A civilian teenage youth was also killed after hit by a bullet during the clashes near the gunfight site while as 45 others suffered injuries.

Official sources told GNS that the joint team of forces during the searches recovered two militant bodies— Sameer Ahmad Bhat alias 'Tiger' son of Mohammad Maqbool of Drabgam and Aqib Khan son of Mushtaq Ahmad Khan of Rajpora.

DGPSP Vaid confirmed the killing of militants Sameer Tiger along with his associate in Drabgam, Pulwama, saying "it should bring peace in the area."

"In Drabgam Pulwama encounter today morning in a joint operation



two HeM (militants) killed including top commander Sameer tiger who was involved in number of civilian killings. It should bring peace in the area," DGP said in a tweet. A civilian Shahid Ashraf Dar (18) son of Moham-

mad Ashraf Dar, a resident of Arihal, sustained a critical bullet wound during the clashes near the site of a gun battle. He later succumbed to injuries. The gunfight broke out in Drubgam village early Monday morning after

the joint team of Army, SOG and CRPF launched a cordon and search operation in the area.

A major and a soldier of 44 RR were injured in the initial exchange of fire with the militants, reports said. The injured have been identified as Rohit Shukla (Army Major) and Abhinav Pathak (sepoy) and were shifted to 92 base military hospital in Badami Bagh Srinagar where the condition of both them are said to be critical.

At least 45 protesters were also injured during clashes near the encounter site and its adjoining areas, reports said.

Among the injured, 12 sustained bullet wounds and 16 others suffered pellet injuries. "All the injured have been hospitalized."

The reports of stone pelting clashes were also received from some parts

▶ See **Killed**...Pg 02

Eight New Ministers Administered Oath In Coalition Government



Jammu, April 30: The much-awaited reshuffle in Jammu and Kashmir state cabinet was held Monday following Governor NN Vohra administered the oath to six BJP ministers and two PDP ministers at convention Hall in Jammu. The portfolios will be assigned by Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti later in the day.

As per the latest on Cabinet reshuffle of the Jammu and Kashmir Government, Kavinder Gupta, Sat Paul Sharma, Sunil Kumar Sharma, Rajiv Jasrotia, DK Manyal (all BJP), Mohammad Khalil Band and Mohammad Ashraf Mir (both PDP) have been sworn in as Cabinet Ministers by J&K Governor NN Vohra. Shakti Raj Parihar (BJP) took oath as MOS.

Khalil Band is senior leader of PDP and MLA Pulwama

▶ See **Oath**...Pg 02

Kathua MLA Induction to Cabinet Creates Furor

Srinagar, April 30: The induction of Kathua MLA Rajiv Jasrotia by BJP on Monday as a minister in the Jammu and Kashmir

▶ See **Kathua**...Pg 02

KABUL BLASTS: 8 JOURNALISTS, AMONG 25 PEOPLE KILLED

Kabul, April 30 (Agencies): A coordinated double suicide bombing hit central Kabul on Monday morning, killing 25 people and wounding 45 others. Kabul police spokesman Hashmat Stanekzai confirmed that four policemen were killed, while an Afghan media watchdog, the Afghan Journalists Safety Committee (AJSC), confirmed that eight journalists were also killed.

The AJSC said that six journalists were reportedly wounded in the attacks. Agence France-Presse (AFP) confirmed that its chief photographer Shah Marai, a journalist from iTV and one from Tolo News were among the dead.

A first bomb was detonated by an assailant on a

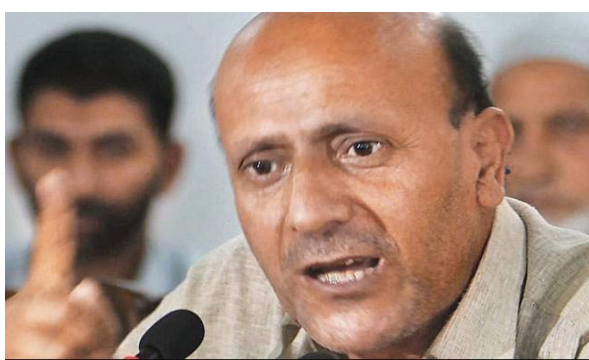
▶ See **Kabul**...Pg 02

Kavinder Gupta's remarks after oath ceremony shameless: Rasheed

Let Mehbooba explain how is Jasrotia different than Lal Singh and Chandra Prakash

Srinagar, April 30: Asking Mehbooba Mufti to clear her stand on how Rajiv Jasrotia was inducted into her cabinet, AIP Supremo and MLA Langate Er. Rasheed has said that his induction has exposed the collusion Government's claims of taking a moral ground over Kathua rape and murder case.

In a statement issued today, Er. Rasheed said "If Lal Singh and Chandra Prakash were sacked from the cabinet for their participation in the



rally of Hindu Ekta Manch favoring culprits involved in Asifa's rape and murder, the role of MLA Kathua Rajiv

Jasrotia was even more worst.

The fact of the matter is that it were MLA Kathua Rajiv Jasrotia and MLA Samba Kuldeep Raj who were instrumental in getting Lal Singh and Chandra Prakash to the Ekta Manch rally.

BJP General Secretary Ram Madhav seems rightly to have said that Cabinet reshuffle had nothing to do with Kathua Incident. It is evident that even sacking of two

▶ See **Rasheed**...Pg 02

ASHRAF MIR'S INDUCTION IN CABINET SLATTED TO BOOST SRINAGAR CITY

Srinagar, April 30: With today's Cabinet reshuffle, the PDP will have Muhammad Khalil Band, an MLA from Pulwama, and Mohammad Ashraf Mir, an MLA from Sonwar, as Cabinet ministers, with induction of the latter is considered a major representation of Srinagar city in a big way. A city of more than 1.5 million and among the oldest cities of world Srinagar has always complained over it being underrepresented when it comes to ministerial berths and important portfolios.

Political watchers state that Ashraf Mir induction into State Cabinet will boost both the youth of Srinagar and its neglected people in terms of overall development.

Asif Ahmad, a youth from Downtown Srinagar stated

▶ See **Ashraf**...Pg 02

All villages in India electrified: PM

NEW DELHI: More than seven decades after independence, India has achieved electrification of all its villages after electricity reached Leisang village in Manipur.

The target was achieved 12 days ahead of the deadline set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"28th April 2018 will be remembered as a historic day in the development journey of India. Yesterday, we fulfilled a commitment due to which the lives of several Indians will be transformed forever! I am delighted that every single village of India now has access to electricity," Modi tweeted.

As many as 18,452 villages were without electricity when the BJP-led government came to power in May 2014. Today, all of the country's 5,97,464 census villages have been elec-



trified. Electrified means the village is connected to power grid. It essentially does not mean that all its inhabitants have access to electricity.

▶ See **PM**...Pg 02

JRL CALLS FOR COMPLETE STRIKE TODAY

Srinagar, April 30: Calling for a complete strike tomorrow, the joint resistance leadership (JRL) comprising Syed Ali Geelani, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Muhammad Yasin Malik have expressed deep sorrow and anger over the killing of a civilian Shahid Ashraf Dar (during clashes) and armed youth Sameer Ahmed Bhat and Aqib Ahmad Khan in gunfight with government forces at Drubgam in south Kashmir's Pulwama district on Monday.

The JRL in a statement issued to GNS said, "Under the garb of an encounter with the armed youth, the state forces which include army, police and CRPF have unleashed a reign of terror. Shielded by draconian laws they are selectively targeting and killing Kashmir's young generation knowing well that they will not be held accountable. By

▶ See **JRL**...Pg 02

'Black Cat' commandos set to be deployed in Kashmir

NEW DELHI: 'Black Cat' commandos of the elite counter-terror force NSG are set to be deployed soon in Jammu and Kashmir to help security forces in dealing with encounters and hostage-like situations, officials said today.

The Ministry of Home Affairs is examining a proposal to deploy a contingent of the National Security Guard (NSG) commandos in the Kashmir Valley so that they can join the Indian Army, the CRPF and the state police when a high-risk militancy related incident takes place.

"We are planning to deploy the NSG in Kashmir. They are trained to deal with terrorists and hostage-like situations. We are



mullying over it," an official said requesting anonymity.

Director General of Police, Jammu and Kashmir, S P Vaid had also said recently that he has been working on the proposal.

▶ See **Black**...Pg 02

KASHMIRI GIRLS FALLING PREY TO DRUGS

Stress, family disputes emerging as main causes

▶ **Wahid Bhat**

SRINAGAR, APR 30: Drug abuse, known to be widespread among youth in Kashmir Valley, is now showing a new trend whereby teenage girls are increasingly turning into addicts.

College-going girls are abusing substances, especially toluene, a common thinner, is testified to by officials at the de-addiction centre in Srinagar.

Sources told Press Trust of Kashmir that girls students abuse or 'glue sniffing' has become widespread because the chemical is readily found in paints, petrol, varnishes, lacquers, paint thinners, adhesives, glues, rubber cement

▶ See **Prey**...Pg 02

Jasrotia's elevation another added insult to injury, CM must answer: NC

'Kevinder Gupta's remarks shocking; exposes sadism of PDP-BJP Alliance'

Srinagar, Apr 30: National Conference Monday condemned in the strongest of terms the elevation of BJP MLA Rajiv Jasrotia as a Minister in the State Government despite his presence at the Hindu Ekta Manch rally that sought to trivialize the barbaric and brutal rape and murder of a young child in Rasana, Kathua. Terming Jasrotia's inclusion in the Council of Ministers as shame-



ful and tragic, NC State Spokesperson Junaid Azim Mattu said this shocking development

had yet again exposed the inherent sadism and opportunism of the PDP-BJP Alliance as also the hypocrisy and complete surrender on part of the Chief Minister.

The NC State Spokesperson also strongly condemned the unacceptable and insensitive remarks of Deputy Chief Min-

ister, Kevinder Gupta who has termed the Kathua incident as a "small issue". Hitting out at the PDP-BJP Government, the NC Spokesperson said the heinous and heart-rending tragedy in Kathua was anything but a small issue and was a barbaric manifestation of a politics of divisiveness and communalism being practiced by the powers that be. "If Kevinder Gupta thinks

▶ See **NC**...Pg 02

KARVAN-E-AMAN BUS LEAVES TO CROSS OVER TO POK

SRINAGAR: The Karvan-e-Aman bus, operating between Srinagar and Muzaffabad, capital of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK), left here to cross over to other side of the Line of Control (LoC) on Monday morning, official sources said.

The bus with 14 passengers left Bemina, Srinagar, for Kaman post, the last Indian post on this side of the LoC, sources said.

The bus has reached Trade Facilitation Centre (TFC), Salamabad, Uri, where more passengers will board it before proceeding towards Kaman post, they said adding the exact number of passengers crossing over to other side will be known in the afternoon.

Similarly, they said, the number of people travelling

▶ See **Karvan**...Pg 02

KCSDS EXPRESSES GRAVE CONCERN ON STATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Says 'Mad rush for opening new colleges, quality education on decline'

Srinagar, Apr 30 (KNS): Kashmir center for social and development studies (KCSDS), in a meeting deliberated on the state of higher education today in Kashmir and expressed grave concern over the deteriorating quality on the one hand and mad rush for opening new colleges on the other. The existing colleges that have been opened in the past decade or so are bereft of basic infrastructure both in terms of teaching faculty and the infrastructure needed to carry on the process of education smoothly and satisfactorily. The qual-

ity of higher education has steadily deteriorated because of unplanned extension of education without the necessary concomitant infrastructure both in terms of human power and basic facilities. We will be coming up with a detailed report on what ails higher education in coming days. So is true of the quality of govt school education. Otherwise students wouldn't go to the coaching centres if they were quite satisfied with their respective educational institutes. The govt's shutting down educational institutions every now and then

to stall protests by students over the gruesome killings of youth and other horrific acts amounts to the endorsement of such crimes. Instead of providing safe space for peaceful protests and free speech and expression within the educational institutions, govt has closed all avenues for students of individual and collective expression in a free, safe and peaceful atmosphere. Govt's abruptly closing coaching centres is an unthinking hasty step in the wrong direction. It has closed them without taking into consideration how much parents have already paid to

the centres by way of fees. And how they are making a rude interruption in the academic life of students of all levels who go to these centres. Govt's job is to act as a watch dog against exorbitant fees and overload in classes the centres hold as well as in private schools. But instead it reneges its responsibility in streamlining the private sector to benefit the citizenry and is instead creating hurdles even in the academic life of students. This is tyranny of the highest order - to disturb and disrupt educational career of our young scholars just to show political power and

control over the lives of citizens as if military control were not enough, as if they do not have already enough problems to deal with in this blighted land. The govt must immediately order the opening of these centres to put students' academic life back on tracks, to save their precious time without further adding to their problems. It should desist henceforth from closing educational institutions for fear of protests. Let the students be allowed to express themselves and their anger in a peaceful atmosphere. Formation of student

unions allows for the expression of their dreams and desires, urges and aspirations and their anger at the state of affairs in which they find themselves, in which their brothers and sisters are brutally killed and crippled. They need a safe space to express all this so that they do not grow into psychologically disturbed and suppressed characters. And their precious study time is not rudely disrupted. The govt must first of all provide all the faculty and infrastructure in the already established colleges before they open new silos to encamp the young generation.

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KILLED

of Anantnag, Kulgam, Shopian and Chadoora. Meanwhile, in wake of the encounter, authorities snapped mobile internet services in south Kashmir parts as a "precautionary measure". Official sources told GNS, that the internet was blocked after police have sent a communication to the cellular companies wherein they have directed them to snap down the mobile internet data in Pulwama, Shopian and Kulgam with immediate effect. Authorities have also suspended railway services to and fro South Kashmir from today afternoon. A railway official told GNS that the train services from Srinagar to Banihal has been suspended from today 1 pm. However, the train will run as per normal schedule from Srinagar to Baramulla. KU postpones exams. Meanwhile, Kashmir University postponed all examinations on Tuesday "in view of concerns expressed by students. "All Kashmir University examinations scheduled to be held on May 1, 2018 (Tuesday) are postponed," PRO of the varsity in a statement issued here said. Fresh dates for the deferred examinations shall be notified separately, later, he added. Police speaks. A police spokesman in a statement issued here said that a joint party of 44RR, 182/183 CRPF along with Pulwama Police carried out searches at Drubgam village. "As the search was going on, militants fired upon the search party which was retaliated by the security forces triggering an encounter at Drubgam, Pulwama," a police statement issued here said. "Sameer was earlier recruited as an OGW by the militant outfit HM after passing Class 8th since he had discontinued his education due to lack of interest in studies. He was involved in several stone pelting incidents prior to his militant activities. He was active in the area since May 2016 and had remained part of several cases of civilian 'atrocities' in the area," the statement said. Police claimed that he was involved in the firing incident on the residential house of Ex-MLA Syed Bashir Ahmad in Sheikhhard and in a grenade attack on the Naka Party at Hawal, Pulwama. "Besides his involvement was established in the kidnapping and firing on two civilians from Qasbayar in which one civilian Bashir Ahmad Dar had died instantly while another Altaf Ahmad Dar was seriously injured." Last year, the spokesman said, he had indiscriminately fired upon a patrolling party of 44 RR besides he had also entered into the residential houses of civilians in South Kashmir and forced them to issue video statements against the government and security agencies. "Several FIRs pertaining to these incidents had been registered in Police Station Rajpora," the statement said. Sameer was said to be a close confidant of HM commander Riyaz Naikoo and both had been spotted together in a video released recently on social media. "The other militant was Aqib Mushtaq Khan who was active since July 2017. He also had plotted several attacks on the security establishments in South Kashmir along with Sameer Tiger and was closely associated with him after joining the militant ranks," the statement said. Bodies of both the slain militants were retrieved from the site of the encounter, the statement said. Moreover, 2 AK 47 rifles and other incriminating material have also been seized, the statement said. "In the incident one civilian named as Shahid Ahmad Dar aged 25 son of Mohd Ashraf Dar resident of Arihal Pulwama died in cross firing while some others were injured who are all stated to be stable," the statement said, adding a case has been registered and "investigation is on"

OATH

since there turns, Mohammad Ashraf Mir MLA from Sonwar and Kavinder Gupta leader of BJP has served as Speaker with Sat Paul Sharma senior leader and strategist of BJP. The cabinet reshuffle comes in the backdrop of serious heated and dramatic politics witnessed especially in past few weeks over brutal rape and murder of eight year old child at Kathua. Earlier Dr Nirmal Singh, Deputy Chief Minister Bali Bhat, Abdul Haq Khan, Sunil Kumar Sharma and Priya Sethi resigned from their respective ministries and their resignation was accepted by the governor. The Oath ceremony was attended by Ms. Mehbooba Mufti, Chief Minister; Ministers; Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of various Boards and Commissions; Members of Parliament; Legislators; Sh. B.B. Vyas, Chief Secretary; Dr. S.P. Vaid, DGP; senior Civil and Police officers, political leaders and prominent citizens of the State.

KATHUA

cabinet has triggered a fresh controversy with sane voices raising question over his participation in a rally to favor the accused in Kathua minor's rape and murder case for which BJP earlier forced two stalwarts to quit. Jastrotia, who took oath along with eight others, was part of the controversial Kathua rally in support of the accused in

the rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl. Jastrotia was also questioned in connection with the case. Furor has been generated due to his induction. Prominent Journalist Barkha Dutt tweeted - "Rajiv Jasrotia #Kathua MLA who also attended the rally to back men charged with rape & murder of an 8 year old girl has today been made minister in #JammuAndKashmir. So why drop the two state ministers at all? Here's what the child's lawyer Talib Hussain told me about MLA's role" Pertinently, the state can have a maximum of 25 ministers, including the chief minister, out of which 14 portfolios are with the PDP and the remaining are with the BJP. Eight ministers were inducted into the cabinet today, of which seven were new faces. Inam un Nabi, Political analyst, while talking to The Kashmir News Bureau stated - "The induction of MLA who came in support of rapists in State cabinet shows the level to which politics has been degraded in Kashmir and especially how those who encourage goon and criminal elements are rewarded. This development is bound to alienate youth further and have negative consequences on the overall situation. PDP BJP coalition government is taking rot to new levels." Meanwhile, asking Mehbooba Mufti to clear her stand on how Rajiv Jasrotia was inducted in her cabinet, MLA Langate Sheikh Abdul Rasheed has said that his induction has exposed the collusion Government's claims of taking a moral ground over Kuthua rape and murder case.

KABUL

motorcycle and left at least four dead and five injured, according to the Interior Ministry. A second explosion came minutes after the first targeted reporters at the scene, Stanekzai told AFP. "The bomber disguised himself as a journalist and detonated himself among the crowd," he said. A security source also confirmed both were suicide blasts. The militant Islamic State (IS) group claimed responsibility for the attacks in a statement issued via its propaganda agency Amaq. It claimed that two suicide bombers had targeted the Kabul headquarters of Afghanistan's intelligence services. Shah Marai joined AFP as a driver in 1996, the year the Taliban seized power, and began taking pictures on the side, covering stories including the US invasion in 2001. In 2002 he became a full-time photostriker, rising through the ranks to become chief photographer in the bureau. He leaves behind six children, including a newborn daughter. "This is a devastating blow, for the brave staff of our close-knit Kabul bureau and the entire agency," the agency's global news director Michele Leridon said. "We can only honour the strength, courage, and generosity of a photographer who covered often traumatic, horrific events with sensitivity and consummate professionalism."

RASHEED

ministers had nothing to do with Kuthua case but BJP was in search of appropriate timing and excuse to sack them for the reason that party had some internal organizational issues". He said that those PDP leaders including Chief Minister who were taking credit for sacking the two ministers supporting Ekta Manch rally, stand exposed and their helplessness is evident. He asked Mehbooba Mufti to clear her stand over the issue or she must restrain from lying and misleading people. He further said that by inducting the main supporter and organizer of Hindu Ekta Manch in the cabinet, BJP has not only encouraged those supporting killers of Asifa but has in a way reaffirmed the communal and fringe elements their full support and Mehbooba Mufti seems to have made yet again a shameless surrender. Rasheed said that shameless words of Kavinder Gupta immediately after taking the oath by downplaying Kuthua rape and murder incident have shaken everybody. He said "Kavinder Gupta's claim that Kuthua incident is a small incident deserves condemnation and proves that appeasing pro-Hindu Ekta Manch forces was the only purpose of today's cabinet reshuffle. It is obvious now that Induction of Rajiv Jasrotia into Cabinet and Kavinder Gupta's insulting words have exposed both BJP and PDP".

ASHRAF

- "Srinagar city has long been left out of developmental horizon as a result people from all the areas of this big city have suffered. The absence of basic amenities on ground zero has added to the woes of citizens of Srinagar, now we hope with the prominent and grassroots face of Mohammad Ashraf Mir as Cabinet Minister hopes have been raised that development will be ushered in the Srinagar District and he will use his political experience to change the dynamics of development in the Srinagar area towards betterment." On the ground zero, the Srinagar District has over the decades felt left out of real development and there is an urgent need for creation of new business districts like the South Business District, North Business District so that economic growth is achieved in a balanced manner, and with Ashraf Mir induction this is expected to get boost. Pertinently, former Chief Minister and political stalwart,

Omar Abdullah was in last elections defeated Ashraf Mir on winning from Sonawar constituency.

PM

According to government definition, a village is considered electrified if it has the basic electrical infrastructure and 10 per cent of its households and public places have power. "Leisang village in Manipur, like the thousands of other villages across India has been powered and empowered! This news will make every Indian proud and delighted," Modi said in another tweet. Modi had in his Independence Day speech in 2015, spoken of electrifying all villages within 1,000 days. The task, however, took 988 days to complete as an average of 16 and a half villages were electrified every day. "I salute the efforts of all those who worked tirelessly on the ground, including the team of officials, the technical staff and all others, to make this dream of a #PowerfulIndia a reality. Their efforts today will help generations of Indians in the coming years," Modi said in another tweet. When the BJP-led government launched its version of the village electrification scheme - the Rs 76,000-crore Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY) - there were an estimated 18,452 unelectrified villages. An additional 1,275 villages were added to the list subsequently. According to official estimates, about 3.14 crore rural households, or 17 per cent of total 17.99 crore rural households, still do not have any access to electricity. The highest number of them are in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Jharkhand and Odisha. To take electricity to all households by end 2018, the government has launched the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana or the Saubhagya scheme. Of the Rs 16,320 crore needed for the task, Rs 12,320 crore has already been provided in the Union Budget.

JRL

indiscriminately firing bullets, pellets and tear gas shells at peaceful protestors in Drabgam they killed budding flowers and left dozens seriously injured." The leadership paid glowing tributes to the slain youth and said that by choking all means of peaceful expression Kashmir's young generation is being pushed to the wall. It said the heavily armed state machinery by using immense lethal force against our vulnerable youth is adding fuel to the fire and making the situation more fragile. "The people of Kashmir are offering immense sacrifices on all fronts and the entire nation is committed to safeguard these sacrifices and remain steadfast towards the goal," the leader said. JRL called for a complete strike across Kashmir on May 1 (Tuesday) stating that "the open aggression against the people of south Kashmir is reflective of the fact that people have been left at the mercy of forces as a result youth are killed at the will and wish of the forces". The leaders said that peace cannot prevail in South Asia as long as the Kashmir dispute remains unresolved. They said it is time that New Delhi shuns its "obduracy" and acknowledge the ground reality in Kashmir. "Sooner or later the people of Kashmir will have to be given a chance to exercise their political will and the Kashmir dispute will be resolved as per the wishes and aspirations of the people of Kashmir," JRL said.

BLACK

"Hope I will be successful," he had said. This is not for the first time that the NSG commandos, popularly known as 'Black Cat', would be deployed in Jammu and Kashmir. The commandos of the elite force have been deployed in the Valley in the past too. Their special skills of carrying out house intervention and hostage rescue can act as "clincher" during a terror siege, the official said. Home Minister Rajnath Singh, during a recent NSG event in Telangana, had said the government is planning as to how the force's role could be "enlarged" vis-a-vis the new security challenges faced by the country, as these commandos can play a "big role" in operations such as those where terrorists take a human as shield and enter civilian premises. The move to deploy NSG commandos in Kashmir comes in the wake of increasing incidents of encounters where security forces have lost many soldiers during high-risk house intervention operations in densely populated localities. The NSG commandos, when allowed, would get opportunities to test their skills and it will be a force-multiplier for anti-militancy forces deployed in Jammu and Kashmir, another official said. Normally, a small NSG team comprises five commandos led by a non-commissioned officer along with bomb experts and crack marksman. The commandos use sophisticated Heckler and Koch MP5 sub-machine guns, sniper rifles, through-the-wall radar and C-4 explosives to eliminate holed up terrorists without causing much damage to the structure. The NSG was raised in 1984 in the aftermath of Operation Blue Star, which was carried out to flush out terrorists hiding in the Golden Temple in Punjab's Amritsar. There are around 7,500 personnel currently working with the NSG.

The 'Black Cat' commandos were deployed to tackle the terrorists who carried out the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack, January 2016 terror attack at the Pathankot air base as well as eliminating the terrorists who attacked the Akshardham temple in Gujarat.

As many as 60 incidents of terrorist violence have taken place in Jammu and Kashmir from January till mid-March this year, killing 15 security personnel and 17 terrorists, according to data provided to Parliament.

PREY

and shoe polish. The abuse of toluene is getting very common in Kashmir because it is easily available. Sources further said that getting other drugs is a bit more difficult for girls than buying ink remover or polish. When Press Trust of Kashmir talks with doctors they said that the major causes for drug addiction among girls are study pressure, stress, family disputes, failure in life, examination stress, love affairs. Sources further said that due to lack of facilities, social stigma restricts women from seeking rehabilitation or treatment. While taking with some girl students they said that it's important to keep it in view the social stigma which female drug addicts face, it is important to set up a de-addiction centre for girl students. One of the girl name changed Asma while taking to Press Trust of Kashmir said that she began with glue sniffing "for fun" during her school days and then moved on to opiates. Fear of social stigma and lack of facilities in Kashmir Asma's parents to take her outside Kashmir for treatment. She said that "now I am fine after the treatment of 11 months I am okay". Sources said that the health department does not maintain data on the status of drug addiction in Kashmir. Zainab one of the medical students while taking to Press Trust of Kashmir said that youth on drugs may physically live in the same house with their families, but live alone emotionally. She added that they do not care about what happens to their near ones and these insensitivities extend towards society. Reports revealed that 65 to 70 percent of the student community in Kashmir was into drugs and that 43 percent of female students were involved in drug abuse. More than 70 percent of addicts fall in the 18-35 age-group. Sources confirmed that no survey has since been undertaken in the health department.

NC

the Kathua issue was a 'small issue', then why were two BJP Cabinet Ministers forced to resign after national outrage over their patronage to the divisive Hindu Ekta Manch? Had this been a 'small issue', Kevidar Gupta wouldn't have been inducted today to fill the vacancies caused by those forced resignations. His remarks are utterly insensitive, outrageous and unacceptable and reveal the deep malice that forms the basis of BJP's politics in the State," the NC Spokesperson said. The NC State Spokesperson also questioned the sleeping conscience of the Chief Minister and her party which continued to remain apologetic and subservient in the face of repeated remarks such as these from BJP Ministers and leaders. "For PDP to term these utterly cringe worthy remarks as 'careless' is another tragedy in itself and shows how low the party has stooped to remain in power despite the dignity of the State and its peoples being ridiculed with each passing day. Fact of the matter is that Mehbooba Mufti failed to act when the two former Ministers in her cabinet attended the Hindu Ekta Manch rally and was forced to react after national outrage over the issue. Today it has become clear beyond any doubt, yet again, that Mehbooba Mufti has lost the moral right to govern and pretend to be anguished over what happened in Kathua. She along with her colleagues, alliance partners and Ministers have and continue to add salt to the gaping wounds of the child's family," the NC Spokesperson added. "While it would be foolish to expect PDP to take a stand on this issue, one hopes the Chief Minister realizes the grave costs of her surrender for power and introspects on how her Government has brought the state on the precipice of tumult. PDP should stop playing both sides and realize that their fixed-matches with the BJP don't amuse the people anymore. The people have now witnessed their deceit and treachery and are well aware of their lack of conviction and conscience", the NC Spokesperson added.

KARVAN

from POK will also be known in the evening. The bus service, introduced on April 7, 2005 has helped thousands of families, divided in 1947, to meet each other. However, only state subjects from both sides of the LoC are eligible to travel in the cross-LoC bus, one of the major Confidence Building Measures (CBM), taken by India and Pakistan despite opposition by militant organizations. State subjects from both sides are allowed to travel on travel permits instead of International passports. Barring Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Shabir Ahmad Shah, majority separatists leaders have travelled in the bus to POK.

Dr. Jitendra launches Ayushman Bharat Scheme at Udhampur

UDHAMPUR, APRIL 30- Minister of State for Development of North Eastern Region (Independent Charge), Prime Minister's Office, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Department of Atomic Energy and Department of Space GOI, Dr. Jitendra Singh formally inaugurated Ayushman Bharat Scheme here today.

The scheme forms the part of the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan started on April 14, 2018 to commemorate the birth Anniversary of Bhim Rao Ambedkar.

The launch programme was attended by Deputy Commissioner, Ravinder Kumar, Senior Superintendent of Police, Rayees Bhat, Chief Planning Officer, Ashok Khajuria, Chief Medical Officer, Dr. K.C Dogra, Chief Executive Officer Municipality, Santosh Kotwal, Medical Superintendent district Hospital, Dr Vijay Basotra, Deputy Medical Superintendent, Vijay Raina, and other district officers of Health and RDD departments, staff members and students of ANMT school and a large number of beneficiaries.

Earlier, the District Development Commissioner, Udhampur Ravinder Kumar threw light on the Ayushman Bharat scheme. He informed that



Ayushman Bharat is national health protection scheme, which will cover over 10 Crore Backward classes, landless farmers, poor and needy people across the country. "Around 50 Crore families will be provided Rs 5 lakh insurance cover per year for secondary and tertiary hospitalization, he said. For effective implementation of Ayushman Bharat under the 1st phase, the district administration has set up

12 centres deployed 29 ISM doctors for spreading awareness among the general public, the DC informed.

In his address, Dr. Singh said that the aim and objective of Gram Swaraj Abhiyan is to intensify mass awareness about the benefits of various social security Schemes and their effective implementation at the grassroots. He informed that on April 14 Prime Minister launched Pradhan

Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Saubhagya, Ujala scheme, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana and Mission Indradhanush under Gram Swaraj Abhiyan.

He said 19 villages of Udhampur district have been taken up under Ayushman Bharat in district Udhampur. Describing Gram Swaraj Abhiyan as a revolutionary scheme of the present Government, the Union Minister said that it envisages to safeguard the interest of poor people of the country.

He said the central government led by PM Modi was working with new ideas to ensure the welfare of the people and development of the nation. The Union Minister said the Ayushman Bharat would focus on welfare of the poor and address the aspirations of every Indian.

Listing the J&K projects, Dr Singh said that various initiatives have been taken by the present dispensation for the development of the state.

Citing Devika River Rejuvenation project, he said Rs 170.50 Crore has been sanctioned for this prestigious project.

Ajay clinches Maitra Kesari Title 2018



RAMBAN, APRIL 30: Ajay Sharma from Udhampur clinched the Annual Maitra Kesari Dangal-2018 by beating Gopal Sharma from Mawal in the main bout played at Ramlela Ground Maitra, here today.

The Maha Dangal (wrestling matches) was organized by Dangal committee Maitra. MLA Ramban, Neelam Kumar Langheh was the chief guest on the occasion.

The winner of the Main bout was awarded a prize of Rs.10,000 and Patta while runner up was given cash prize of Rs. 7000. The 2nd and 3rd bout winners were given Rs 5000 each while runner up of the same bouts got Rs 4000 each.

Over 55 bouts were held during the wrestling event with the participation of a large number of renowned wrestlers from across the state. The wrestlers repeatedly cheered from across the jam packed Dangal ground

were Salman, Nazir Shota Binia and Zakir.

MLA, lauded the efforts of President Maitra Dangal Committee for organizing the event every year. He said that such events help to promote communal harmony, brotherhood and national integration among the youth which is prime need in the present scenario.

President of Dangal Committee, Gopal Krishan Raina, Dy. SP, Tosif Ahmad, Naib Tehsildar, Abdul Jabar, President Sanatan Dham Sabha, Dr. Mohan Lal Sharma, President Beopar Mandal, Bushan Lal Ranjay Kumar, Cashier Krishan Lal, Modh Janu, Mohammad Mushtaq and Surinder Jamwal rendered technical assistance in the event.

Committee President Gopal Krishan informed that the Prize of one lakh Rupees has been distributed among the wrestlers during the Dangal. Earlier, veteran wrestlers were also felicitated by the organizers.

Award ceremony marks end of Road Safety Week in Jammu

JAMMU, APRIL 30- The 29th National Road Safety Week 2018 inaugurated by Minister for Transport Sunil Kumar Sharma on April 23, 2018 from Gulshan Ground culminated with an impressive award ceremony cum valedictory function held here today at Police Auditorium.

During the week long programme a number of events were organised by Motor Vehicles Department on this year's theme "SADAK SURAKSHA-JEEVAN RAKSHA". The programmes included Walkathon, Medical Health Check-up, Blood Donation Camp, Painting Competition at Kalakendra, Helmet Rally, Poster Design Competition at Wave Mall and Cycle Rally from the University of Jammu. 92.7 Big FM and RED FM 91.9 were the media partners in the different events organised by the department.

The valedictory function also witnessed thought provoking lectures by experts. Dr. V.S. Santhil Kumar,



Chief Conservator of Forest was the Chief Guest on the award ceremony. The cultural programme by Ramaloo Ram, Dogri Folk Singer and party was performed on the mission of Road Safety which enthralled the audience present in the auditorium.

Folk song on Road Safety composed by Mohinder Kumar of Information Department was performed by him along with his group. A documentary on the Road Safety produced by Maruti Driving School Jammu was also played in the programme to make people aware about the im-

portance of Road Safety.

Earlier, Vikas Sharma, Joint Transport Commissioner welcomed the Chief Guest and other dignitaries in the Award Ceremony.

Dr. V.S. Santhil Kumar stressed upon all to inculcate the habit of good driving skills to be secure and safe. He asked the young students and parents to take mission of Road Safety Week further and make every day as Road Safety Day. He also distributed awards in different categories among the students and other dignitaries who excelled in different events and supported the cause of Road

of Safety actively.

Deep Raj, RTO Jammu presented vote of thanks and expressed gratitude to the Chief Guest, Dignitaries, Teachers, Parents, Students, Automobile Dealers, Print and Electronic Media, Authorities of University of Jammu, Kala Kendra, Wave Mall, 92.7 Big FM, RED FM 91.9, Traffic Police, Police Management for their support for holding activities during the National Road Safety Week.

The prominent among others present in the ceremony were Mohinder Singh Additional Transport Commissioner J&K, Rakesh Sarangal Director School Education Jammu. Mir Afroz Managing Director SRTC, R.K. Bhat Additional Secretary State Road Safety Council, Naresh Kumar Joint Director Information, Dr. Chandar Prakash, Deputy Director Health Services, Sunaina Mehta Secretary Municipal Corporation Jammu, ARTOs, MVI's and other staff members.

DDC Bandipora flags-off Drug De-Addiction rally

BANDIPORA, APRIL 30: District Development Commissioner (DDC), Bandipora Khursheed Ahmad Sanai flagged-off a Drug De-addiction rally from Mini Secretariat Bandipora here today.

The rally comprising students, Aanganwari and Asha workers, carrying placards in their hands and shouted slogans "Say No to Drugs" went through various markets

of Bandipora town and culminated at S K Sports Stadium, Bandipora

The rally was organized by ISM Health Bandipora aimed at sensitizing people about the harmful effects of drugs. SSP Bandipora, Sheikh Zulfkar Azad, District Nodal Officer ISM Health Dr Ifitikhar, programme officer ICDS Altaf Hussain, Dy CMO and other concerned were present

on the occasion.

It was given out that a series of activities including awareness programmes, seminars, rallies and painting competition will be organised in colleges and schools of the district throughout the year to make people aware about the programme.

Speaking on the occasion, the DDC stressed on the need for moral education of the

children of present-day age and appealed both parents as well as teachers to ensure that children do not fall prey of any social evil. He said district administration will launch a vigorous awareness campaign against drug menace across the district. He also urged upon the student community to concentrate on studies and also take part in sports and athletic activities.

MVD Kathua felicitates Schools, Unions for active participation in Road Safety Week campaign

KATHUA, APRIL 30- The Motor Vehicle Department Kathua today organised an Awareness cum felicitation programme to mark the last day of the 29th National Road Safety Week.

Acknowledging the support extended by different stakeholders, Motor Vehicle Department under the aegis of RTO Kathua felicitated participating schools and Bus unions for their awareness activities during the week-long event.

Speaking on the occasion RTO Pardeep Manhas hailed the administration of participating Schools, Bus Union, Mini Bus and Truck Unions for coming forward and actively participating in the awareness activities organised by RTO office across the district. He said this year target was to create maximum awareness among schools and commercial drivers as per this year theme of 'Sadak Suraksha, Jeevan Raksha'. He said involv-

ing all stakeholders was aimed to inculcate among them the spirit of adhering to traffic rules.

An impressive Nukkad Natak presented by Sargam Group was key attraction on last day of the Road Safety Week. An Educative Session on traffic rules and road safety by MVD Inspectors was also held during the programme where a large number of locals were present. Pamphlets were also distributed among the participants.

29th Road Safety Week concludes at G'bal, Kulgam, B'pora

SRINAGAR, APRIL 30:- Motor Vehicles Department (MVD) Ganderbal today organized valedictory function of 29th Road Safety Week with the theme "Sadak Suraksha - Jeevan Raksha" at Meeting Hall, Mini Secretariat DCO office complex Ganderbal. The concluding function was chaired by District Development Commissioner, Ganderbal Dr. Piyush Singla.

Speaking on the occasion, the DDC underlined the importance of raising awareness among masses towards traffic rules and regulations to prevent road accidents and to bring improvement in the system of traffic. He stressed to ensure proper safety through adherence to traffic rules, education, proper design of roads and enforcement.

Various speakers on the occasion briefed the audience about the traffic rules one needs to follow while driving and standard operating procedures that require being followed while driving or moving on the roads, besides stressing upon the norms people need

to follow while driving.

During the week-long programme Awareness Camps, Seminars, Medical Checkup Camps, Maxi Cab and Bike Rallies were organized in the District.

Later, DDC also awarded mementoes to all the participants, who excelled in different activities organized during the Road Safety Week.

Assistant Regional Transport Officer (ARTO) Ganderbal Manzoor Ahmad, Executive Engineer R&B, Deputy Chief Education Officer Ganderbal, Chief Medical Officer Ganderbal, other concerned officers and representatives of various Transport Unions of the district were also present during the programme.

Similarly, a function was also held at Kulgam today.

ACR Kulgam Shah Nawaz Ahmad Shah was Chief Guest on the occasion. ARTO Kulgam Jamsheed Choudhary, Dy SP, District Officers, Transporters, Media persons and other members of MVD, and other employees of

other departments were present on the occasion.

While speaking on the occasion, ACR said that such programmes would go a long way in generating awareness among the people and would be helpful in minimizing the road accidents and encourage safe driving.

ARTO said that the Road Safety Week remained abuzz with different activities which include bike rally, ophthalmic checkups of drivers and other awareness programmes in the district to create awareness.

ACR Kulgam later distributed memento and certificate to winners and participants who propagate awareness.

Meanwhile, the concluding function at Bandipora was chaired by District Development Commissioner (DDC) Khursheed Ahmad Sanai.

The function was organised by Motor Vehicle Department (MVD), was attended by SSP Bandipora Sheikh Zulfikar Azad, District Social Wel-

fare Officer Altaf Hussain, Dy CEO G.M Lone, Inspector MVD Mohammed Younis, Media Persons, students besides drivers and other people.

Speaking on the occasion the DDC enjoined upon the drivers to follow traffic rules in letter and spirit. He stressed for use of seat belt and helmet during driving to minimise road accidents. He said that this message should reach to every nook and corner of the district.

It was informed that walkathon rally, bike rider rally, maxi cabs rally besides awareness camps, seminars, debates, trauma counselling camp, medical checkup and painting competitions were organised during the week-long programme in the district.

Later, certificates were distributed among the participants who took part in different events and performed well to make the week-long programme a success.

On the occasion, Mementoes were also presented to DDC, SSP and media person Suhail Rather.

KVK organizes LSD programme at Ganderbal

GANDERBAL, APRIL 30:- Krishi Vigyan Kandra (KVK), Ganderbal, organized a Live Stock Development (LSD) programme at Pahelnaar, today, in which a scientist-farmer interaction and animal clinical camp was held, besides, broiler birds, area specific mineral mixture developed by SKUAST was distributed among farmers.

Member Legislative Assembly, Kangan, Mian Altaf Ahmad was the Chief Guest on the occasion.

Addressing a well-attended gathering of farmers Mian Altaf impressed upon farmers to take full advantage of the latest technology and techniques of agriculture and livestock farming from the top experts from SKUAST-K.

Referring to the extension programmes conducted by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra Ganderbal, Mian Altaf Ahmad thanked SKUAST-K for their outreach to the far-off tribal villages of Ganderbal. He asked VC SKUAST Kashmir to have such programmes in different tribal areas of the region on regular basis.

"Our farmers in these far and flung areas are mostly illiterate and have less access to the latest techniques of farming and conducting awareness camps on regular basis would be very helpful in livelihood making of these



poor Tribals," Mian Altaf said Vice-chancellor SKUAST Kashmir, Prof Nazeer Ahmad on the occasion announced the adoption of Pahelnaar for different integrated farming activities by SKUAST-K and promised every possible technical help from SKUAST-K to the farmers of the region.

He asked Krishi Vigyan Kendra Ganderbal to install a walnut grading unit and egg incubator out of Tribal Sub Plan funding and popularization of high-density plants. SKUAST-K developed fruit planting material. He also asked Kendra scientists to expand their Aroma mission to the area.

Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, Dr. Piyush Singla, Director Extension, SKUAST-K, Prof Mushtaq Ahmad and scientists of KVK Ganderbal also spoke on the occasion.

Later, Animal Clinical camp, distribution of birds, de-worming drugs, and Ganderbal specific mineral mixture was formally inaugurated by the chief guest, Mian Altaf Ahmad in presence of VC Prof Nazeer Ahmad, Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, Director Extension SKUAST-K and head KVK Ganderbal, Dr. Javid Bhat.

Experts from SKUAST-K, Prof D.M Makkhdoomi, Dr. Parvaiz Reshi, Dr. Gowher Gull, Dr. Showkat Nabi, Dr. M.D. Niko treated animals for different diseases.

Ayushman Divas under Gram Swaraj Abhiyan observed at Baramulla

BARAMULLA, APRIL 30: District administration Baramulla today observed Ayushman Divas as part of recently launched Gram Swaraj Abhiyan. In this connection, a grand function was today organized by Chief Medical Officer Baramulla in collaboration with Block Medical Officer Sheeri at Dak Bungalow Baramulla which witnessed the participation of a huge gathering of the public.

District Development Commissioner, Dr Nasir Ahmad Naqash was the chief guest whereas Chief Medical Officer Dr Bashir Ahmad Chalkoo, Dy CMO Dr Jozi Bashir, Block Medical officer Sheeri Dr Farooq, DEIMO Ghulam Rasool Bhat and officers from various departments were also present on the occasion.

Pertinent to mention that Ayushman Bharat is a National Health Protection

Scheme to cover 10 crore poor and vulnerable families comprising approximately 50 crore beneficiaries providing coverage upto Rs 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.

Speaking at the event, the DDC impressed for availing the benefits of these schemes which mainly aims at improving the socio-economic development of the society. He

stressed for disseminating awareness especially among rural folk besides exhorting upon various officers to play a pivotal role in the regard.

DDC termed better healthcare facilities as his administration's priority besides terming this index as a vital component of social progress.

Chief Medical Officer Dr Bashir Ahmad Chalkoo said that the department has

organized various free medical camps in remote areas of the district so that more and more inclusion of economically downtrodden is ensured. He also briefed about various centrally as well as state-sponsored health-related schemes.

By CMO who is also the Nodal officer highlighted the various objectives of the scheme and said that need of the hour is to avail benefits from these schemes.

Time and Us

Editorial
SRINAGAR
& J&K

Wisdom at Wuhan: on the Modi-Xi meeting

For an "informal summit", the Wuhan meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping appeared to cover much ground over the two days — in terms of public appearances and in the two statements issued. Most of their conversations were unstructured, at informal events where they were accompanied only by translators. There was just one delegation-level meeting. The statements denoted the wide range of subjects discussed, from bilateral to regional and global challenges. On the bilateral front, they decided to "issue strategic guidance to their militaries to strengthen communication", essentially to avoid another Doklam-like confrontation. Both sides addressed measures to better balance the ballooning trade deficit of about \$52 billion (of about \$84 billion bilateral trade), mostly by encouraging agricultural and pharmaceutical exports to China. Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi discussed a joint project in Afghanistan. Finally, they attempted to reduce the heat over unresolved issues and so-called "irritants" in the relationship, such as China's block on India's NSG membership bid or the UN's terror designation for Pakistan-based groups, and India's opposition to the Belt and Road Initiative or its use of the Tibet issue. For this, existing mechanisms of dialogue will be strengthened, not allowing broader bilateral movement to be hit.

Such a conciliatory approach from Delhi and Beijing has been evident over the last few months of preparation for the Wuhan meeting, with both sides turning down the post-Doklam rhetoric. While their previous meetings, in 2015, 2016 and 2017, were preceded or overshadowed by a military standoff or Chinese army intrusion, this time the air has been relatively calm. The message from Wuhan is an overarching one: that despite bilateral and geopolitical differences, India and China can resolve differences peacefully and through prolonged dialogue. Despite hundreds of years of engaging each other, the two neighbours have been to war only once; since the Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility was signed in 1993, neither side has fired a weapon along the 3,500-km boundary, which is largely undemarcated. And despite both countries' atomic weapons arsenals, parleys have never carried even a hint of the nuclear overhang. The Wuhan summit has recommitted India and China to managing bilateral relations in a manner that creates the conditions for the "Asian Century", and Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi are well-placed to proceed along that path. Much will depend on whether the Wuhan understanding can prevent skirmishes and misunderstandings becoming standoffs, as in the past. The test of that begins now.

These hectic diplomatic activities were accompanied by a clear change of tone in Beijing and New Delhi, reflecting a positive rethink on bilateral ties and a desire to avoid future military standoffs.

SUBSTANCE AND OPTICS OF THE SUMMIT

► Happymon Jacob

The recently concluded 'informal' summit meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Wuhan was more about optics than substance. That doesn't take away from the fact that the summit was a much-needed one and has added to the ongoing attempts to bring the bilateral relations between the two Asian giants back on track. Most of all, the Wuhan summit has underlined the necessity of an entente cordiale between the two countries, which have become increasingly distrustful of each other. In that sense, Wuhan was about the desire to return to the negotiating table, not about negotiating anything specific. It is, therefore, important to consider the timeline.

The run-up to Wuhan India-China relations have been under great stress in recent years. The 2017 military standoff at the Doklam tri-junction and the war of words that followed vitiated a relationship that was already reeling under a great deal of pressure. The Wuhan summit should be viewed in the context of this vitiated atmosphere and a strong desire for stability and rapprochement. Both sides had emerged bruised from the Doklam standoff, and having sold their preferred versions of how the standoff ended for domestic political purposes, the desire to stabilise the relationship was visible since late last year.

In December, the two Foreign Ministers met in New Delhi followed by a meeting between China's then state councilor Yang Jiechi and Mr. Modi's National Security Adviser, Ajit Doval, again in New Delhi. Then in February this year, Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale visited China. The Wuhan summit was preceded by the visits of Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj and Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to China for Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meetings.

These hectic diplomatic activities were accompanied by a clear change of tone in Beijing and New Delhi, reflecting a positive rethink on bilateral ties and a desire to avoid future military standoffs.

The electoral schedule Notwithstanding the India-China rapprochement that was achieved in Wuhan, it is important to notice the significance of the timing of the summit. The fact that the meeting had no pre-defined agenda and was called 'informal' indicates that it was crucial for domestic political messaging too. Clearly, Mr. Modi needed this meeting more than Mr. Xi did given how the former would need a calm and peaceful India-China border as he leads his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) into the general election. Consider this: India-Pakistan relations are nowhere near normal, India's neighbourhood policy is in doldrums (despite the recent overtures towards Nepal) and India-China relations have been becoming difficult. While tensions with Pakistan wouldn't be costly for the BJP from an electoral point of view, a 'failed China policy' could potentially be used by the Opposition to take on Mr. Modi in the context of the BJP's unsuccessful policy towards the neighbourhood. China is unlike India's other neighbours. It is India's biggest trading partner, and in many ways unavoidable from an economic and geopolitical point of view. The Wuhan summit — and the warmth and chemistry between the two leaders — also needs to be viewed in this context.

Outcomes



The summit's outcomes may have been limited but are very valuable to stabilise the relationship. The most significant outcome pertains to the contested border. In Wuhan, Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi "underscored the importance of maintaining peace and tranquility in all areas of the India-China border region... To this end, they issued strategic guidance to their respective militaries to strengthen communication in order to build trust and mutual understanding and enhance predictability and effectiveness in the management of border affairs", and "directed their militaries to earnestly implement various confidence building measures agreed upon between the two sides".

This basically means that the two countries have realised that local military activities on the border and tactical factors can have strategic and political implications — and that not everything that happens on the India-China border between the two militaries is politically sanctioned. That border tensions, which often occur without the explicit directives of the central leaderships, can potentially derail the relationship is an important realisation and the two sides should be credited for addressing it.

For sure, this is not a new realisation. In 2013, New Delhi and Beijing signed the border defence cooperation agreement which aimed at maintaining peace along the Line of Actual Control. In 2015, during Mr. Modi's visit to China, the two countries further agreed to "carry out annual visits and exchanges between the two Military Headquarters and neighbouring military commands, endeavour to operationalise the hotline between the two Military Headquarters, expand the exchanges between the border commanders, and establish border personnel meeting points at all sectors of the India-China border areas". Many of these suggested measures have not yet been implemented, most notably, the hotline between the two military headquarters.

Moreover, lower-level military contacts that have been put in place have not been able

to reduce friction, as was evident during Doklam. Given that the two countries recognise the importance of controlling local military standoffs, it is important that they update the 2013 defence cooperation agreement as well as set up the hotline.

Meanwhile, the proposed joint economic project in Afghanistan could be instrumental in mitigating the trust deficit between the two sides. China is acutely aware of the potential Pakistani negative response to India-China cooperation in what Pakistan considers to be its sphere of influence. However, if China can persuade Pakistan to see the utility of India-China (and potentially Pakistan) collaboration in Afghanistan, it could promote trust and cooperation all around. More significantly, if China and India can cooperate in Afghanistan, they can certainly do so in other parts of the neighbourhood. In that sense, then, India, instead of being agitated about Chinese 'encroachments' into its traditional sphere of influence, should consider joint India-China projects in the region.

Going forward Notwithstanding the positive outcome of the Wuhan summit, it must be asked whether the summit has come too late in Mr. Modi's current term as Prime Minister to herald a new beginning between India and China, especially on the border question. China watchers argue that the broad contours of an India-China border agreement have been worked out during the 20 rounds of talks at the Special Representatives level. However, an agreement can only be arrived at a higher political level. While Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi, both with strong domestic political standing, would be able to reach such an agreement, and use it to further consolidate their domestic appeal, will Mr. Modi take that gamble? If not, weren't the ministerial visits that were already taking place and Mr. Modi's upcoming visit to China in June for the SCO summit enough to sustain the thaw? The answer perhaps lies in Mr. Modi's keen eye for the optics and its domestic political utility.

A SUMMER OF GATHERING DISCONTENT

► Sanjay Hegde

At the First Round Table Conference in 1930, B.R. Ambedkar reminded his audience: "The men who fought with Clive in the battle of Plassey were the Dusads, and the Dusads are Untouchables. The men who fought in the battle of Koregaon were the Mahars, and the Mahars are Untouchables. Thus in the first battle and the last battle (1757-1818) it was the Untouchables who fought on the side of the British and helped them conquer India." The battle of Koregaon was fought on January 1, 1818, between the upper caste army of the Peshwa empire of the Marathas on one side, and the East India Company's army manned by Mahars and their British officers on the other. The result is viewed with mixed emotions in today's India. It is easy to say that an Indian empire lost to the British company. But it is difficult to not acknowledge that probably the Indian empire lost because of its insistence on treating fellow Indians as untouchables.

In pre-independent India, as part of his movement on behalf of the depressed classes, Ambedkar used to commemorate the victory of the battle of Korega-

on, and often visited the site of the battle itself. That tradition of celebrating the rare triumph of broken men, over the twice-born, has been followed without interruption even after Independence.

Two hundred years after that battle, no lessons appear to have been learnt. New year this time began with the bicentennial celebrations of the "victory" of the lower castes being attacked by mobs led by upper-caste leaders. The Devendra Fadnis-led government in Maharashtra, which is often called the new Peshwai, seemed to have done enough on New Year's Day to justify that label. The leaders of the anti-Dalit violence were allowed to roam free and Dalits are even today agitating for the arrest of Sambhaji Bhide, who is said to be one of the principal instigators of the violence.

Anti-Dalit violence is not limited to Maharashtra alone. On February 15, a retired revenue officer and Dalit activist, Bhanubhai Vankar immolated himself in the District Collectorate of Patan, north Gujarat, to protest against the State government's failure to regularise ownership of land titled by a Dalit. Also in Gujarat, on March 30 a 21-year-old Dalit youth called Pradip Rathod, of Timbi village in Bhavnagar district, was

killed allegedly by upper caste men for owning and riding a horse. Around the same time, the Allahabad High Court dismissed a petition of a Dalit man, Sanjay Kumar Jatav, who had sought its protection to ride a horse at his baarat (wedding procession) around a village in western Uttar Pradesh's Kasganj district. An administrative solution was sought to be brokered by the district administrator to allow Sanjay to arrive on horseback at his marriage. At least five Dalit MPs from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party have publicly voiced misgivings about the Central and State governments' handling of Dalit issues.

Into this bubbling caste cauldron, on March 20, came the Supreme Court judgment in Subhash Kashinath Mahajan v. the State of Maharashtra. The court in effect, defanged the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. The judgment directed, "in respect of offences under the Atrocities Act, no arrest may be effected, if an accused person is a public servant, without written permission of the appointing authority and if such a person is not a public servant, without written permission of the Senior Superintendent of Police of the District... As and

when a person arrested is produced before the Magistrate, the Magistrate must apply his mind to the reasons recorded and further detention should be allowed only if the reasons recorded are found to be valid. To avoid false implication, before FIR is registered, preliminary enquiry may be made whether the case falls in the parameters of the Atrocities Act and is not frivolous or motivated."

Notwithstanding the government's feeble protestations of not being responsible and despite filing an immediate review petition, the judgment was perceived as the straw that broke the camel's back. A nationwide bandh in the first week of April saw an outpouring of Dalit anger that resulted in at least 10 deaths, mostly protesters. Protests had to be put down with the heavy hand of the state. The genie of caste unrest has however escaped from the bottle of social control. There has been a counter-mobilisation to do away with caste-based reservations in favour of the Scheduled Castes. The nation stands teetering on the precipice of a hot summer of discontent. It appears, as Ambedkar put it in his last address to the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949, that "those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of

political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up."

He had prophetically warned: "On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognising the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value." It is an inescapable task of nation-building to seek to restore equal value to each individual who has been rendered less than a whole by socially assigned caste fractions. Ambedkar's postulate for Dalit and Savarna alike was: "So long as you do not achieve social liberty, whatever freedom is provided by the law is of no avail to you." He warned: "It is not enough to be electors only. It is necessary to be law-makers; otherwise those who can be law-makers will be the masters of those who can only be electors."

Politics reflects society. From the days of the Poona Pact of 1932, Dalits have been co-opted into the power structure on terms dictated by others. They have been given a share of the pie, but

never the rights to distribute or allocate the pie. It took nearly 50 years after Independence before a subaltern party headed by Kanshi Ram, managed to install a Dalit Chief Minister in its own right. That "miracle of democracy", to use P.V. Narasimha Rao's felicitous phrase, grew into a full majority in 2007 with Mayawati serving a five-year term as Chief Minister till 2012.

In the Lok Sabha elections of 2014, despite a largely intact vote share, her Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) failed to win a single seat in U.P. Dalit representation even in the reserved seats was provided by BJP members, many of whom had been with the BSP earlier. In terms of political power, Dalits today are no more independent wielders, but have been subordinated to their assigned roles within the Hindutva umbrella. The witting of the Dalit political clout has simultaneously seen an increase in the use of legal and illegal force against them, by those who think that they have at last regained their rightful roles of dominance. In response, attempts are now being made to harness the Dalit vote to the votes of others who feel equally alienated. Immediate results have followed, in the form of victories.

Bengal rural polls: Trinamool sets record winning 27% seats uncontested

With 27% of the total seats in the Bengal panchayat elections won without any contest, the Trinamool Congress has set an all-time record, beating the Left Front which won 11% of the total seats uncontested in 2003.

But the opposition has slammed the Trinamool's record, reiterating yet again that the ruling party used violence to prevent their candidates from filing nominations.

The three-tier panchayat polls for Zilla Parishad (ZP), Panchayat Samity (PS) and Gram Panchayat (GP) started in West Bengal in 1978, a year after the Jyoti Basu-led Left Front government came to power.

This year, the single-phase poll is scheduled on May 14 and the counting will be on May 17. The polling was earlier scheduled to be held in three phases.

The scrutiny which ended on Saturday, revealed that the Trinamool Congress won 2,069 of 9,217 of Panchayat Samity seats without any contest while the party won 11,520 of 48,650 Gram Panchayat seats uncontested.

The Trinamool Congress also set another record of uncontested victories in Zilla Parishads, the highest body in the three-tier panchayat system.



The ruling party won 130 out of 169 ZP seats in four districts of Birbhum, Murshidabad, Bankura and East Burdwan without any contest. Never before was a single ZP in Bengal won uncontested, according to the State Election Commission (SEC) records.

In Birbhum, Trinamool won all the 42 ZP seats without any contest. In Murshidabad district, Trinamool has won 48 out of 70 ZP seats uncontested already, thus ensuring control of the ZP even before the polling day.

Similarly in Bankura district, Trinamool bagged 31 out of 46 ZP

seats. In the newly formed East Burdwan district, Trinamool bagged nine out of 11 ZP seats uncontested.

But the ruling party's formidable record even before polling has drawn flak from the opposition.

CPI (M) central committee member, Rabin Deb said these results prove to what extent the polling process has been undermined by the 'joint conspiracy of Trinamool, police and SEC'.

"In the past there had been instances of PS or GP seats won uncontested. But it had never happened in case of Zilla Parishad. There is a total authoritarian regime in West Bengal," Deb said.

However, Trinamool's Birbhum district president, Anubrata Mondal said that these are lame excuses of the opposition who were unable to get people to contest for them. "What can we do if they do not get candidates? Had they got candidates, I personally would have arranged for their nomination," Mondal said.

Congress legislator from Murshidabad district, Manoj Chakraborty said such uncontested results are unbelievable in case of Murshidabad, which traditionally had been a Congress stronghold. "Since the beginning our candidates were intimidated and not allowed to field candidates," he said.

BJP's state president in Bengal, Dilip Ghosh claimed that since Trinamool has got isolated from the people they are resorting to such violence to win uncontested. "However, we are confident of giving a tough fight to the ruling party in the seats we are contesting," Ghosh said.

On April 20, the Calcutta High Court had directed the state election commission to issue fresh extension of filing of nomination for panchayat polls. The state poll panel then extended the last date for filing of nominations to April 23.

Shiv Sena criticises PM Modi's China trip, asks if he is adopting Nehru's Panchsheel policy

The Shiv Sena on Monday criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his recent visit to China, which it said had no particular agenda, and questioned him on what was achieved by such a trip.

In an editorial in the party's mouthpiece 'Saamana', the Sena slammed Modi for not taking up crucial issues with Chinese President Xi Jinping, such as Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Chinese incursions in Arunachal Pradesh, Doklam, Uttarakhand and Ladakh, during the two-day meeting that was described as an "informal" summit.

China is Pakistan's biggest supporter, and it is backing Pakistan to make India unstable, said the Sena, a part of the National Democratic Alliance led by the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) at the Centre.

"The leaders did not speak on the CPEC, which runs through Pak-occupied Kashmir (PoK). Manmohan Singh's government had opposed the project and had raised it with the Chinese at a bilateral meeting," the editorial said. "The foreign secretary clarified that none of the controversial topics were taken up during the meeting. So what did Modi do during his visit to China?" the editorial asked.

The editorial is the latest in a series of criticisms by the Sena of Modi and his party. The editorial said Modi, who has criticised



Jawaharlal Nehru time and again, seems to be adopting Nehru's Panchsheel (five-point) plan for peaceful co-existence. "Pandit Nehru befriended China, and it proved costly. Modi does not miss an opportunity to criticise Nehru, but like the first PM, Modi, too, is adopting a Panchsheel policy in his dealings with China. He has become a supporter of the five-point agenda. What does the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) have to say about it?" the editorial questioned.

Following talks with the Chinese premier, Modi had said that both sides can work on improving bilateral relations by focusing on a shared vision, strong relationship, shared resolve, better communication and shared thought process. "If we follow the path of Panchsheel, it will bring world peace, stability and prosperity," he had said.

Govt for reservation in job promotions for SC, ST people: Ram Vilas Paswan

In a bid to emphasise its seriousness over Dalit issues, the government said it would approach the judiciary to ensure reservation in promotions for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes for government jobs.

Union minister and BJP ally Ram Vilas Paswan said the Modi government wants three issues -- reservation for SCs and STs in promotions in government jobs, quota for them in universities, besides the law on atrocities against them -- to be settled as per the demands of the Dalit groups, which have argued that a string of court orders on these matters have hit their interests adversely.

While the government has already filed a review against the apex court's order on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, it has announced that it will also challenge a judicial order which led the University Grants



Commission (UGC) to change rules for the counting of reserved seats for teachers in universities.

Dalit groups have claimed that the UGC direction has led to a fall in the number of seats reserved for the SCs and STs.

A group of ministers, including home minister Rajnath Singh, social justice and empowerment minister Thaanvachand Gehlot and Paswan, is of the view that the government should also move the Supreme Court on

the issue of reservation in promotions in government jobs for the two communities, Paswan said.

The group of ministers has been constituted to deal with these issues.

The Lok Janshakti Party president, who has emerged as a key spokesperson of the government on Dalit issues, told PTI that the Union government is "determined" to ensure that "justice" is done to the SCs and STs.

Paswan had earlier hinted that the government would

not shy away from coming out with an ordinance if such a need arises.

He said the benefit of reservation in promotions for the communities has come to a stop following a judicial order which had laid down certain guidelines for it to continue.

"We would move the apex court and urge it to review the decision," he said.

Dalit groups had hit the streets following a March 20 Supreme Court order which, they claimed, diluted provisions of the law against atrocities.

Opposition parties were quick to seize the issue to target the BJP-led NDA government and had dubbed it as "anti-Dalit".

The BJP and the Modi government have since taken a host of measures to woo Dalits which would be crucial to the party's electoral fortunes in the Lok Sabha polls next year.

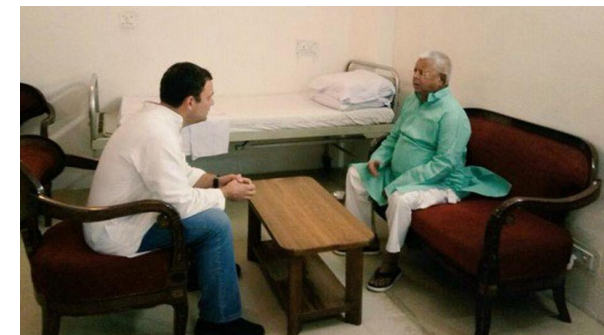
Rahul meets Lalu at AIIMS ahead of transfer to Ranchi hospital

Congress president Rahul Gandhi met ailing Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi on Monday morning, hours before he was transferred to a Ranchi hospital.

A photograph tweeted by party strategist Sanjay Yadav showed Gandhi and Prasad holding hands. The accompanying caption read: "True leaders know who they are and what they stand for."

The image seemed to suggest that the two had put behind alleged misunderstandings of the past to herald a reinforced bond ahead of the 2019 general elections. The post was later retweeted from Prasad's handle.

Rajya Sabha MP Manoj Jha termed the meeting as a new beginning. "Time demands likeminded people to come onto one platform. Laluji's deteriorating health condition is a matter of utmost concern not only for his family, but everybody who wants



him to be fit and active for the 2019 elections. We believe Rahulji also shares the same concern," he said.

Jha went on to term the decision to shift the former Bihar chief minister back to the Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) at Ranchi as an "unprecedented low" in politics.

In a letter sent to the AIIMS director, Prasad had accused the medical institute of transferring him to RIMS "under political pressure". This contention also found reflection in a tweet by Tejashwi Prasad Yadav, his son and opposition leader in the Bihar assembly,

not well. I suffer from heart disease, kidney problem, sugar and a host of other ailments. I suffer from back pain and I often feel giddy. I fell in the bathroom quite a few times. My blood pressure and sugar suddenly jumps. My treatment here is still on," he said in the letter. The former chief minister further claimed that RIMS was unequipped to treat kidney ailments. "It is the fundamental right of every citizen to avail medical treatment that meets his satisfaction. I don't know under what political pressure this sudden decision to remove me is being taken. As you are well aware, I am under custody and it takes 16 hours by train to reach Ranchi. Doctors are next to God, and they should not take any such decision under pressure."

Prasad ended the letter by stating that if he were to come under any danger due to the transfer from AIIMS to RIMS, the "responsibility will rest on all of you".

Karnataka elections 2018: Cash, jewellery seizure 3 times more than last year, says EC

As Karnataka gears up for assembly polls, the value of cash and jewellery seizure by the income tax department there has gone up three times to about Rs 25 crore in the state as compared to the last elections, the Election Commission (EC) said on Monday.

The EC said it has also been found that the "bulk of cash seized during operations in the present assembly elections has been meant for distribution." During the last assembly polls in 2013, the tax department had seized Rs 4.97 crore of cash and jewellery worth Rs 3.41 crore during the "entire" campaign period, the EC said.

"Total cash seizures (as part of the ongoing poll campaign) as on

April 30 is Rs 19.69 crore and unexplained jewellery of Rs 4.81 crore has been made by the investigation wing of the income tax department in Karnataka since the start of the assembly election related surveillance," the poll body said in a statement here.

There is still over a week more of campaigning left for the May 12 single-phase polls in the state.

"The probe wing of the ITD has been doing intensive surveillance and monitoring activities in the state. For the first time, teams with statutory powers and sufficient resources in terms of manpower, vehicles among others has been posted in each district of the state," the EC said. It added that the tax sleuths,

as part of this election-related drive, searched a candidate, on April 28-29, who is contesting the polls on a party ticket and he and his family have declared an income of Rs 18 crore post the raids.

The tax department is now conducting valuation of Rs 191 crore worth properties of this candidate, whose identity was not disclosed.

The action was taken against him, it said, based on "verification of his poll affidavit and some specific intelligence about cash transactions." "It was found that the contesting candidate is a non-filer (of IT returns) since assessment year 2012-13 but had declared some income in his election affidavit.

"He put a remark in the affidavit

that online filing of IT return has been blocked by the ITD and hence he could not file his return and has paid self assessment tax," it said.

The EC said that the candidate's contention that filing of e-ITRs was blocked is incorrect.

"There are substantial discrepancies between income declared by his wife in her return of income filed, declared in affidavit and actually detected during the search," it said.

The Commission said the candidate "accepted" that five assets of his family members were not declared by him in the election affidavit.

In another instance, the EC said, raids were carried out against a person in state capital Banagalore who was "funding certain candidates

of a particular party" and after 32 hours of sustained action, Rs 3.18 crore cash was seized, that included Rs 2 crore from a car parked near the person's residence.

As part of this action, unaccounted cash of Rs 4.01 crore and 6.5 kg jewellery were seized by the taxmen during searches conducted against three contractors in Bengaluru, Davangere and Mysore.

The tax department has said that it has found evidence of inflation of purchases, payments to bogus sub contractors, inflated and fraudulent labour payments, and unaccounted cash payments during these searches in Karnataka. The counting of votes for the 224 elected seats in the Assembly is scheduled for May 15.

Bhindranwale never demanded Khalistan: Subramanian Swamy

Stating that militant leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale was his friend, BJP's Rajya Sabha member Subramanian Swamy on Sunday claimed that the former never demanded 'Khalistan'.

Swamy, while addressing a seminar organised by Vishav Samvad Samiti, an organisation affiliated to RSS, here said, "I closely watched what happened in Punjab in the nineties. This was a conspiracy of external forces to disintegrate the nation."

He said Bhindranwale, who led the Sikh militants holed up in the Golden Temple during Operation Bluestar, never raised the separatist demand. "Show me a recording of any speech in which he raised such a demand," he said when he was told by a scribe that a video is available on Youtube, in which Bhindranwale is seen saying "Army attack on Golden Temple would lay the foundation of Khalistan".

He said, "As per my conversation with him, he did not demand Khalistan, but said he won't reject it (Khalistan) if anybody gifts it to them."

Terming Operation Bluestar as a blunder, Swamy said the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was the force behind it. Condemning the anti-Sikh riots, he termed these as "genocide". "However, the Sikh hardliners in western countries like Canada use this term to support their separatist demand," he pointed out.

Stating that DNA of all the people who take birth in India is the same, Swamy said all Indians are Hindus genetically, irrespective of their faith. Replying to a query on the Kathua rape case, he sought stern action against the accused. "Capital punishment is not enough. The rapist should be made impotent through surgery so that he cannot rape any woman again."

Swamy said disinformation is being spread through social media against Hindus with the help of external forces. Notably, the seminar was also addressed by Prafull Ketkar, editor of RSS mouthpiece Organiser. The event was organised on the occasion of 'Narad Jayanti.'

State heads, global business leaders to attend World Hindu Congress 2018

Heads of several countries with sizeable Hindu population, chief ministers of states, top corporate honchos and religious leaders are scheduled to attend the second World Hindu Congress (WHC) in Chicago in September, organisers of the mega event said on Monday.

Billed as the biggest-ever gathering of who's who of the Hindu community across the globe, WHC from September 7-9 is being held to commemorate 125 years of Swami

Vivekananda's historic Chicago address on September 11, 1893.

The chief ministers who have confirmed their participation at the event include Yogi Adityanath from Uttar Pradesh and Devendra Fadnavis from Maharashtra.

Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, Art of Living founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, and Pranav Pandya from Gayatri Parivar are among the religious leaders who have consented to attend the event.

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat would also be addressing the mega event in Chicago, which is expected to be attended by more than 2,000 Hindu delegates from over 50 countries.

Tulsi Gabbard, the first Hindu lawmaker in the US Congress, is the chairperson of the Chicago event, which is being organised by World Hindu Foundation headed by former IITian Swami Vigyananand.

With India emerging as a global economic power, top

corporate leaders from India, the United States and others parts of the world are likely to attend the three-day WHC. Many of them include those leading Fortune 500 companies.

According to organisers, some Bollywood and Hollywood superstars would also be participating and addressing the mega event.

The purpose is to "ignite" global Hindu community for its political and economic empowerment, Vigyananand

told a Washington audience on Monday on the occasion of the first anniversary of the Washington DC Chapter of the World Hindu Economic Forum (WHEF).

He said the purpose of the WHEF is to make Hindus visible and respectable across the globe. "Hindus should be the dominant force in the world economy," Vigyananand said.

"The day Hindus -- who constitute 16% of the world population -- become 16% of the world economy, people

would start listening to them (Hindus)," he said.

Noting that some 30 years ago, no one in the world cared about China, Swami Vigyananand said the world is now paying attention to China, because of its economic power, which results in military power and global power.

"Our whole purpose is to regain economic strength," he said, as he urged the entrepreneurs present at the gathering to consider entire world as the market.

Meet the Chennai women who deadlift 90 kilos for fun

As I walk into The Unit, a strength and conditioning gym, for my regular class, Srividya Gowri comes up to me, lifts up the sleeve of her T-shirt, and says, "Hey, see my cut." I am somewhat confused by Gowri's apparent glee about the 'cut' — and by the fact that I cannot see any cuts on her arm. Srividya sees my confusion. "My bicep cut," she explains. We burst out laughing.

Gowri is 43, the mother of two teenage daughters, a homemaker, Carnatic singer, and your typical new-age Madras 'maami' outside of the gym. Inside the gym though, she is straight out of a Marvel comic, a Peter Parker shedding identities like second skin. Here, she is a 'bro', deadlifting 90 kilos and benching 40 kilos. Here, she speaks the language of cuts and reps and brace and form. Here, she transforms into the living, breathing, walking epitome of 'strong'.

Behind Chennai's tapestry of sensory clichés — the aroma of filter kaapi, the rustle of Kancheepuram silks, the shimmering Marina, the heat that wilts, the Margazhi that revives — is a group of feisty women who lift weights. They compete. And they defy clichés.

"If women can strap on several kilos to their spine and carry the weight around for nine months, and then some more when the child is three or five, why is it difficult to understand when I shape it properly for you like a barbell? If you are going to lift, you might as well lift with proper form," says Jyotsna John with her trademark wit. 'Jo', as she is called, began The Unit a little over five years ago at a friend's home and later ran it from the backyard of a school.

I joined The Unit two years ago and by then it had found its own space. It was like I had opened a secret wardrobe to an intoxicating and impossible new world where the smells of rubber and iron merged with the sounds of grunts

and groans. Six months later, I participated in my first competition — a State bench press competition — and won gold.

Popping veins
At powerlifting tournaments, there is a sea of men and a tiny island of women. The testosterone in the air is overwhelming and raucous. A stage is set with a table on one side where three members from the Tamil Nadu Powerlifting Association sit, all dressed in white, calling out names and numbers from little slips of paper.

For the uninitiated, the competition is divided based on age and weight, and how much you lift is calculated accordingly. They weigh you in, record your weight and age, ask you what your first lift will be, and then you wait your turn. You are allowed three attempts, and increase your lift with every turn.

At the centre of the stage, against a big banner showcasing flexed muscles and popping veins, is the bench (for bench press) or a simple barbell (for deadlifts), or a squat rack (for squats), with 2.5 kilo, 5, 10, 15, 25 kilo plates (and more) lying around looking strangely disconcerting, like uninvited guests. Sitting on a chair up front, back to the audience, is the judge.

At the competition, I remember feeling disoriented, nervous and woefully inadequate. I watched the impossible weights the men were lifting, as awe turned to fear and the fear incapacitated me. I bungled my first attempt — 22.5 kilos. I repeated the weight in my second. I went on to 25 kilos in my third, and that won me the gold.

In India, the belief that women over a certain age cannot lift weights is as deep-rooted as mould on an abandoned building. Add to this the fact that within the powerlifting community, too, women stop once they are married and have children.



Meenal Jaliha, 62, has been strength training at The Unit for a year. "I constantly hear the 'Oh, if you stop weights you will become fat' line, but perhaps the most bizarre line I have heard till now is 'Your uterus will fall out!' So I just smile and tell them how much I love my uterus." The benefits of powerlifting are many, says Jaliha: "Quality of life improves, your reflexes improve, memory improves, you feel energetic and, most important, especially for women my age, you can sit cross-legged on the floor!"

Gowri agrees. Battling obesity in her teenage years and continuing to battle hyperthyroidism, Gowri found her way to The Unit five years ago to help strengthen and support her running form and iron out (pun unintended) small injuries. "I got a casual invitation from Jo to come for the State bench press competition last year, where I ended up winning a gold in my age and weight category. That feeling was incomparable, and I shifted completely to strength training after that. I find that I am a lot more confident and empowered now."

In school, Gowri's nickname was 'chubby'. "How I wish 'chubby' could hear that I am now 'athletic, fit and toned,'" she says.

On her Instagram page, Gowri recently posted a picture of her washboard abs giving all of us, regardless of age, #fitnessgoals.

"Many people think that after 50 there is not much one can do," says Jaliha. In fact, at the 2018 National Powerlifting Championship held in Coimbatore, during the weigh-in, the man taking down names and categories refused to believe Jaliha was over 60. Incidentally, she won the national gold.

Jo says her intention as a coach is not about creating powerlifters or to get people to compete. "Rather, the focus is on helping you attain whatever goal you have. Usually it is weight loss and that is a great place to start. But there are other uses to strength training and all I do is point you in the right direction, and help you see that there is more to this than just the mirror."

Jo, whose efforts led to the creation of a separate women's trophy in competitions, has been selected Assistant Secretary of the Chennai District Powerlifting Association. "The reason we chose Jyotsna for this post was because of the number of women she has introduced to the sport. I remember how in one competition there were more than 20 women from her gym alone. Not only

do they lift with good form and heavy weights, but a lot of them have gone on to become champions at the State and district level, and now at the nationals too," says S. Bhagavathy, Joint Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Powerlifting Association.

Like most women (and men) who find their way to The Unit, I ended up here because of an injury — my knees had taken a hit after my two pregnancies. At 35, I found I couldn't climb the two floors to my home without a sharp, shooting pain in my left knee, and simple everyday activities left me completely winded. "Men and women have the same quality of muscle in their body, but we have 30% less muscle than men of the same weight and height. With older women, the ability to build muscle slows down. Most people who come to me have injuries and just want a way out of pain," explains Jo.

Once you discover strength training, it's like cold water on a summer afternoon — refreshing, invaluable and life sustaining. Sowmya Cotah, 51, a life coach, says she has never been an 'exercise person'. "My tryst with fitness was sporadic at best until I started to enjoy it. And watching so many women around you powerlift encourages you to give it a shot and then you are hooked," she says. Cotah also represented the State at the Nationals and won silver. "It's not winning that matters — because you know that in the Masters category (40-50 years; Masters 2 is 50-60 years) there are so few women participating in India that most times you are assured of a medal. But even to get that medal, you need to lift right and lift well, and then it becomes about how much more you can do the next time; how much you can better yourself."

Muscling in
Sumitra Ravindranath, 50, an architect, deadlifted 105 kilos at the Nationals to win a bronze. "A year ago, I

visited my daughter in Chandigarh and climbed the overbridge at the station with my suitcase, reached the other side of the platform, and then realised I had actually done it," she says. "I think competing is significant because, at least for me, it is important to know what it feels like to be on stage in front of an audience; to be able to overcome that nervousness and still be able to do your lift. At the Nationals, I actually lifted 110 kilos, but I was so excited I had done that, I dropped it instead of putting it down and the lift was disqualified."

In Time magazine's 2017 special edition on "The Science of Exercise", one of the stories looked at the benefits of strength training for women. The story paints a scary picture of how a sedentary lifestyle is making us weaker by the day and how increasing muscle mass is a way to fight that — it leads to denser bones, a necessity especially for women. "If we imagine the bone as a bank account that stores calcium, then you can begin to see how imperative it is to keep that account active," explains Kannan Pugazhendhi, sports physician at the Indian Institute of Sports Medicine. "Women lose a lot of bone mass as they grow older and more so at menopause. And the only way to deposit calcium is through movement, through optimum weight and strength training, so when you begin to lose it, you already have an account to depend on."

At the end of the day, when I think back to the medal around my neck, it seems so clear — this is what I want. Not the medal itself, but all that it represents: strength of bone and muscle, sure feet on the ground, emotional and physical balance, pride and a sense of achievement, and the incredible language of movement. As Jo says, "What many of these women feel is a huge sense of vindication: 'Everyone is wrong, I am awesome.'"

The running-shoe closet

The number of running shoes a guy can own is much like the number of cycles he may possess, always n+1, where 'n' is the maximum possible integer that said chap can achieve without having his partner throw him out of the relationship, house, et al.

There is some truth to the notion that all races are not run (well, cannot be, but also should not be) in the same pair of shoes. Just like a mountain bike would be useless in a time-trial sprint, wearing heavy water-tight shoes with deep-grooved grips to run a marathon is not a smart plan. It will lead to unnecessary fatigue for one, and sometimes improper gear can also leave you open to injuries. Here then, are a few broad categories under which you can file your sneakers (for more detailed reviews, try runrepeat.com). These can also be used as possible explanations to your partner in case of, as the impolite phrase says, s***-meeting-fan.

Low-cushion race-day shoes

It's true: Running with low-cushion shoes always places you at an advantage to run a faster time. Trouble is if your leg muscles aren't up to the task; then they just tire early in the race and lead to aches, pains, cramps, and even injuries. But once you are in form, these will get you across the line soonest. Adidas Adios Boost 3: Among the best race-day flats by far. Gentle boost cushion on the mid-sole and extending into the heel, good continental rubber grip outer soles, and a tight toe box. May not be suitable for people with broad feet.

On Running Cloudflash or Cloudrush: A Swiss brand which is still designed and made entirely in its country of origin. They ship all their wares the world over and even with the first-class delivery charges, they work out to be much cheaper than most imported shoes available off our shelves. One caveat: they wear out fast.

Puma Speed 300 Ignite: This sits comfortably between the Speed 500 Ignite with rich cushion and the leaner Speed 100 Ignite. Good for fast runs with ample support (even if a little stiff), but a worthwhile contender for this list. Reebok Astorride: Reebok makes shoes which appear low on frills and yet pack in all the essentials: seamless uppers, foam linings, ample cushion, good looks. This one is, by far, the most affordable shoe in this article; great value-for-money stuff. Nike Zoom Pegasus and the Zoom Vaporfly 4%: The 4% shoe (a) only helps if you are already fast and (b) you would have to be faster still to get a pair every time they become available! But it is a race-day beast, merging good chunky cushion with extreme aero-features and a low drop. The Zoom Pegasus, Nike's most successful running shoe, is still out there and will perform comparably well for most mortals.

Yoga to keep cool: Sit back and breathe this summer

Sit in a comfortable cross legged position, with the spine straight. Soften the facial muscles and relax the shoulders.

Gently clench the lower and upper teeth together and separate the lips as much as you can and it feels comfortable, keeping the jaw relaxed and the teeth exposed to air.

Inhale the breathe from the gaps of the teeth and focus on the hissing sound of the breathe as it moves in. Close the mouth and exhale from both the nostrils.

Repeat breathing the same way for 10-20 breaths and then relax and breathe naturally.

Repeat the same for two to three rounds. Then relax.

Benefits: This pranayama induces a very cooling effect to the body and naturally lowers

the body temperature and is ideal for the summer season. Since this breathe has the capacity to lower the temperature of the body it should not be practised in the winter season

Balāsana / child pose
Come on the knees and join the big toes, thighs and knees together. Place the palms on the floor and separate the knees as wide as you can making sure that it is comfortable for you. If not then place a bolster between the knees, if your hips don't touch the ankle and a blanket under the feet if you feel uncomfortable.

Inhale raise the arms up extending the spine.

Exhale come forward and rest the torso on the floor between the knees, make a pillow with the palms and rest



the forehead on the palms. If the torso does not rest on the floor take a bolster and place it in the middle and rest the torso on it.

Breathing deeply for 1 to 2 minute. Remember to stay in still and avoid movement

while you hold the pose. This is very important as there is no forcing, striving or pushing while you are in the pose as we working on just being present to just where you are in the moment. Inhale rise the arms up

and as you exhale lower the arms and release the pose.

Benefits: The child pose is a very healing pose for the body and mind. It calms the mind and the focus shift into the breathe. It releases tension from the spine and the hips. This pose releases all the tension and fatigue the heat or summer season brings.

Simhasana (Lion Pose)

Sit in a cross legged comfortable position and focus on the breathe. Relax the shoulders and the facial muscles. Keep the palms on the thighs facing the ceiling and the index finger gently touching the thumbie chin mudra. Focus on the breathe and relax.

Inhale deeply through the nostrils, open the mouth as wide as you can and stretch

the tongue out and exhale from the mouth making a loud sound of HA or roar like a lion.

Close the mouth and shift the gaze or focus the eyes between the eyebrows.

Repeat the same for two more times and then relax in child pose.

Benefits: This pose relieves tension from the face and the chest. It works on releasing the entire stress out of the body and relaxes the mind.

Seema Sondhi discovered yoga when she suffered three lumbar slipped discs and was advised complete bed rest. Over the last 18 years, she has trained and been certified from the International Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre and Matthew Sweeney. She has also written six books on the subject

This fatal pregnancy complication could cause early labour

Foetal immune rejection may be one of the causes for preterm labour -- a common pregnancy complication leading to birth occurring before the 37th week of pregnancy, researchers say. The findings showed that it may sometimes happen when the foetal immune system "wakes up" too early and begins to reject the mother, causing the uterus to start contracting. The researchers think the foetal immune system becomes triggered in a case of mistaken identity. An initial infection in the mother can result in inflammation and arouse the foetal immune system. The foetal immune cells confuse the mother's cells for an invader and mount an attack, in the form

of inflammatory chemicals.

These chemicals then trigger contractions, leading to preterm labour, the leading cause of infant mortality, the researchers explained. "The dogma has always been that the foetus has a very immature immune system, and as a result, people haven't really considered its possible role in pregnancy complications," said Tippi MacKenzie, Associate Professor at the University of California-San Francisco.

"We showed that in patients who have preterm labour as a result of some kind of infection or inflammation -- the most common cause of preterm labour -- the foetal immune system awakens

prematurely and may trigger labour," MacKenzie added.

For the new study, published in the journal Science Translational Medicine, the team tested umbilical cord blood, which contains foetal cells, along with blood taken from nearly 200 women who had healthy pregnancies and those who went into early labour. While the scientists saw no signs of an immune response in the mother's blood, they instead, detected activation in two types of immune cells -- T-cells and dendritic cells -- in the cord blood of preterm infants. The researchers also found greater numbers of the mother's cells circulating in the cord blood of preterm infants.

Midlife crisis? What midlife crisis?

I never had a midlife crisis. I was too busy drinking. This caused a variety of crises, but none of them were connected to midlife. I never felt any urge to date younger girls. My wife has always been in my heart, although she did try to run away once or twice when she was much younger, and some sixth sense was warning her that she should get out while there was still time. Now she realises that it's too late. Even otherwise, I have never tried to get fresh with girls much younger than me. It seems unfair. Here I am, magnetic, intelligent and impossibly handsome. I can even tell jokes. It would be too easy, like taking candy from a child. My innate sense of fairness, yet another attractive feature, prevents me from doing this.

I have not gained weight in midlife. In fact, I've lost some, because I had to. After drinking a refreshing glass of Glucon-D every morning for 20 years, making sure that it was nice and cloudy, suddenly I was told I was diabetic. My eating habits have improved since then. I used to be a lot less disciplined.

When I was much younger, I found myself alone one New Year's Eve, and decided to drown my sorrows in rum balls, generous with the sugar, from Flurys, a famous Calcutta confectionery. If I could finish 12 of them, I thought, it would be an excellent way to ring in the New Year. I would feel a sense of achievement. I took my box of rum balls to my bedroom. I switched on the TV. The Doodardshan New Year programme was on, featuring Bablu and Kanchan. Bablu was playing a Casio keyboard, while Kanchan was doing a gentle bump and grind. All was well. I opened my box of rum balls, filling the room with the aroma of cheap, soggy cardboard. The first rum ball was delicious. The second was also quite good. The third was a bit of a struggle. I gave up halfway through the fourth. Nowadays, I'm not like that. I never have more than two. I'm also less paunchy than I used to be. Sometimes my belly slips, but it's nothing that a little belt tightening cannot fix.

Music reduces anxiety, activates brain regions of Alzheimer's patients

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive one as it destroys the memory and thinking skills and eventually the ability to carry out even simple tasks. But there are things in our surroundings like music that help to activate regions of the brain that are not yet affected by it.

A study conducted by researchers at the University of Utah Health, examined that region of the brain to develop music-based treatments to alleviate anxiety in patients

with dementia. "People with dementia are confronted by a world that is unfamiliar to them, which causes disorientation and anxiety," said Jeff Anderson, associate professor. "We believe that music will tap into the salience network of the brain that is still relatively functioning," he added.

Previous studies have shown that regular physical activity can help older people suffering from Alzheimer's disease. A 2007 study had also shown that music reawakens



memories thought to be lost. When patients heard popular

old songs, they suddenly started to sing along or dance.

The researchers helped participants select meaningful songs and trained the patient and caregiver on how to use a portable media player loaded with the self-selected collection of music. The study found out that music activates the brain, causing whole regions to communicate. By listening to the personal soundtrack, the visual network, the salience network, the executive network and the

cerebellar and corticocerebellar network pairs all showed significantly higher functional connectivity.

It is still unclear whether the effects identified in this study persist beyond a brief period of stimulation or whether other areas of memory or mood are enhanced by changes in neural activation and connectivity for the long term. The findings of the study were published in the Journal of Prevention of Alzheimer's Disease.

Sensex soars to 3-month high on earnings boost; banks, IT stocks rally

Indian equity markets continued their winning run for a third straight session, with the BSE benchmark Sensex rising 191 points to a near three-month high of 35,160, led by intense buying mainly in banking and IT stocks amid positive global cues and high optimism on corporate earnings.

The broader NSE Nifty too gained over 47 points to breach the psychological 10,700-level.

Market sentiment also got a boost after the Reserve Bank on Friday further liberalised external commercial borrowing (ECB) policy by including more sectors in the window, in a bid to facilitate easy access to overseas funds by the India Inc.

A higher opening in European markets and positive Asian cues, following last week's historic North-South Korea summit, too fuelled optimism.

The gains on domestic bourses were led by financial and technology stocks as investors widened their exposure ahead of key corporate results.

"Market continued its winning streak led by positive global cues and RBI's ease in rules for FPIs to invest in bonds. PSU banks outperformed in expectation of stability in yield while volume growth in bond market will provide relief to rupee," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services Ltd, said.

Quarterly results so far have been better, contrarian bet IT industry is gaining investors' attention owing to improving macros and strengthening dollar, he added.

The January-March quarterly results posted by companies so far are largely in line with market expect-



tations. Meanwhile, the Mortgage lender HDFC on Monday reported 28.63% rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 3,961.17 crore for the quarter ended March 31, 2018.

Driven by realty, capital goods, IT and banking stocks, the BSE Sensex reclaimed the 35,000-mark at the outset to hit a high of 35,213.30 before ending at 35,160.36, up 190.66 points, or 0.55%. This is its highest closing for the Sensex since February 1 when it had ended at 35,906.66.

The gauge had climbed 468.43 points in the previous two days.

For the 50-share NSE Nifty, the close came in at 10,739.35, higher by 47.05 points, or 0.44%, after shuttling between 10,759 and 10,704.60.

The two benchmark indices, BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty - remained well above their key levels of 35,000 and 10,700 levels points, respectively throughout the session as investors were optimistic about upcoming results from more companies.

Domestic financial institutions continued to hold ground and retail investors built up more bets amid a

firming Asian trend.

Domestic institutional investors (DIIs) picked up shares worth a net Rs 633.71 crore on Friday. Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) exited, pulling out shares amounting to Rs 759.21 crore on a net basis, showed provisional data.

Metal, realty, capital goods, healthcare, power, PSU and auto sector stocks were other major winners of the day.

In the Asian region, Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 1.74%. Taiwan up 0.99%, while Singapore rose 1.03%. Financial markets in Japan and China were shut for public holidays.

Key indices in Europe were in a better shape in their early session. Frankfurt's DAX was up 0.22% and Paris CAC 40 gained 0.23%. London's FTSE edged up 0.50%.

During the session, stocks of auto makers attracted investors' attention ahead of sale numbers data for April.

Yes Bank continued its upward march and topped the BSE Sensex list by surging 3.90% to Rs 362.05 largely on the back of better-than-expected Q4 earnings posted last week.

Hindustan Unilever surged 2.34%, to Rs 1,509.05, followed by India's largest IT firm TCS which went up 2.22% to Rs 3,531.40.

HDFC Ltd shot up by 1.44% to Rs 1,884.65 after the company today posted 29% growth in its net profit at Rs 3,961.17 crore for the fourth quarter.

Other big movers were Kotak Bank, L&T, SBI, HDFC Bank, Wipro, Asian Paint, M&M, Adani Ports, Tata Motors, Infosys, NTPC, Dr Reddy's, ITC Ltd, Tata Steel, Sun Pharma, IndusInd Bank, Bharti Airtel, Maruti Suzuki, Bajaj Auto and Hero MotoCorp.

Shares of Reliance Industries, however, fell 3.18% after it announced plans to shut oil and gas production at its main fields in KG-D6 block in the coming months and begin complying with the government's guidelines for decommissioning facilities in the Bay of Bengal block where output has hit its lowest ever.

The company on Friday reported a 17.3% jump in its fourth quarter net profit on the back of robust petrochemicals margins and telecom arm Jio's maiden profits.

Axis Bank fell 3.87% on weak earnings declared last week, making it the biggest loser on the BSE Sensex.

As for sectoral indices, the BSE realty took the lead by rising 1.50%, followed by capital goods at 1.48%, IT (1.44 pc), FMCG (1.35 pc), Teck (1.10 pc), Infrastructure (0.91 pc), Power (0.89 pc), Healthcare (0.84 pc), Bankex (0.43 pc), Auto (0.39 pc), PSU (0.37 pc) and Metal (0.32 pc).

Broader markets such as small-cap and mid-cap indices too rallied in step with key indices, surging by 0.89% and 0.56%, respectively

India's \$35 billion pension fund may get a stock market boost soon

India's \$2.3 trillion equity market has surged in recent years, and is about to get a new endorsement -- from the nation's pension regulator.

"We are pressing the government to increase the equity proportion for government employees, and expect a favourable response very soon," Hemant Contractor, chairman of the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority, said in an interview. The PFRDA has called for a bump to 50%, from 15% -- to match the maximum for private-sector pensions overseen by its National Pension System arm.

India's equity culture may also get a boost from a stewardship code to be rolled out for the country's fund managers to push for corporate-governance best practices. The PFRDA, along with the insurance and securities regulators, is pursuing the new code, Contractor said in New Delhi Friday.

Contractor, who's headed the pension regulator since 2014, said the new code will help improve the professionalism of business management, with challenges ranging from the misuse of corporate funds to boards taking insufficient action when things go wrong.

Government employees contribute about 87% of the Rs 2.3 trillion (\$35 billion) overseen by the NPS, which started in 2004 and later opened to all citizens for voluntary contributions. Aside from the NPS, the government operates the Employees' Provident Fund Organization, which offers investors defined returns on savings. Contractor said his agency has pressed for legislation allowing workers to shift from that plan to the NPS.

With interest rates trending lower, "equities, if managed properly, should provide that



extra bit" of return, Contractor said. There's great appetite for putting money in stocks, and one proposal under consideration is to boost the limit for non-government subscribers to 75%, he said, adding that the strategy does carry risk.

Pension funds from Japan to Australia have taken on greater risk over time, conferring increased volatility. Norway's sovereign wealth fund said April 27 it lost \$21 billion in the first quarter thanks to the global sell-off in equities. In India, appetite for risk may be less in a country where the 1.3 billion population doesn't have social security coverage, and where savings have declined as a share of the economy from a peak a decade ago.

But with risk comes the potential for outsized gains. After returning less than bonds in 2016 and a loss in 2015, the NSE Nifty 50 had a 31% total return in rupee terms in 2017, compared with the 3.1% on Indian government bonds according to ICE Bank of America Merrill Lynch data.

Contractor saw less need to expand the cap on investment in corporate bonds, which is currently set at 40% of the portfolio. He said there's just not enough issuance in the market to make it more attractive. He also ruled out investing in overseas markets for some time to come, given the likelihood of better returns at home.

HDFC Bank raises FD rates by 0.10% - 1% for various tenures

HDFC Bank Ltd has increased rates for fixed deposits (FDs) below Rs 1 crore for most tenures above 1 year, in the range of 10-100 basis points (bps). One bps is one-hundredth of a percentage point. With this, the highest rate for non-bulk FDs (less than Rs 1 crore) from HDFC Bank with a tenure of 1 year 17 days to 5 years has reached 7% (see graph). There has been no change for FDs of tenures longer than 5 years.

Some customers of HDFC Bank received an email stating that the higher rates were available for just three days. However, the new rates will be applicable till the next revision, HDFC Bank clarified later.

HDFC Bank is not the first lender to hike FD rates. In February, State Bank of India had increased rates on term deposits by 10-75 bps.

The rationale Banks are increasing deposit rates to deal with the tightening liquidity condition. Banks use the money collected through deposits to lend to borrowers. If the demand for credit from borrowers goes up, more money should flow



in, in the form of deposits.

Data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) suggests that growth in demand for credit is higher than growth in deposits. For instance, for public sector banks, annual growth in aggregate deposits in the quarter ending December was 0.9%, while bank credit growth was 6%. Similarly, for private sector banks, deposits grew 13.5%, but credit growth was 23.6%, in the same period. This creates a mismatch. To rectify the situation, banks try to attract more depositors through higher FD rates.

The impact This also means that the cost of funds for banks is going up. This will impact the

marginal cost of funds-based lending rates (MCLR), making MCLR-linked loans costlier in the next revision cycle. Which explains why interest rates on loans have also been increased by many large banks despite the RBI not having raised the repo rate.

Mint Money take With the interest cycle turning, other banks too could revise their FD rates upwards to boost demand.

Prakash Praharaj, founder, MaxSecure Financial Planners, said that as people are learning about mutual funds, many of them prefer to invest in them instead of FDs. Mutual funds also have some tax advantages over FDs. For instance, for Section 80C

investments, mutual funds have a lock-in of three years, whereas tax-saving FDs have a lock-in of five years.

Senior citizens too are opting for senior citizen schemes that give a return of 8%, said Praharaj.

Though banks are increasing their FD rates, returns on an investment should not be the only deciding factor when you invest. You should also keep in mind your risk profile, investment time-frame, related goals and asset allocation. Asset allocation helps in diversifying your risk as well as in achieving financial goals in the most efficient manner; so when one asset goes down, it does not have a drastic impact on the entire portfolio.

China's economy shows little sign of slowdown amid strong PMI data

China's economy is giving little sign that a slowdown is approaching, with services strengthening and manufacturing remaining robust.

The official manufacturing purchasing managers index stood at 51.4 in April versus the 51.3 estimate in a Bloomberg survey and 51.5 last month. The non-manufacturing PMI, covering services and construction, rose to 54.8, the statistics bureau said Monday, beating estimates. Levels above 50 indicate improvement.

In the face of persistent threats to the trade outlook from a dispute with the US and the impact of a credit clampdown, policy makers have expressed fears that the economy could slow more sharply than the cyclical moderation that's already anticipated. That said, a cut in the amount of funds that lenders must park at the central bank has buoyed markets, and a mission to China by US trade officials in the coming days may ease tensions.

"We believe the government will manage the situation well and won't let a trade war take place," said Shen Jianguang, chief Asia economist at Mizuho Securities Asia Ltd.



"Domestic consumption is also resilient, and only investment -- local government investment in particular -- has slowed a bit, and that's aimed at controlling debt."

A gauge of new export orders edged down to 50.7 from 51.3, though remained broadly in line with readings over the past several months. New orders also slipped, to 52.9 from 53.3.

Input prices decreased slightly to 53. Inventories of finished goods, stockpiles of raw materials, backlogs of work and employment all remained about in line with prior readings.

"The numbers are pretty solid," Zhu Haibin, chief China economist at JPMorgan Chase & Co. in Hong Kong, said in a Bloomberg Television interview. "This news suggests growth momentum is still

fine," though risks still remain, he said.

The statistics bureau cited steady production growth and stable demand, according to a statement released with the data. It also noted that high-tech manufacturing remained robust, with a gauge for that sector rising to 53.8 amid gains for pharmaceuticals, special equipment manufacturing, and computer, communications and electronic equipment.

The steel industry PMI also increased, climbing to a five-month high of 51.7 as gauges of new orders and export orders both expanded from a month ago. The data suggest a recovery in the sector as prices rebounded amid falling stockpiles.

Early indicators Alternative data signals that April output softened.

The sales-manager sentiment index published by World Economics Ltd. declined, and Standard Chartered Plc's Small and Medium Enterprise Confidence Index slipped from a one-year high the previous month.

Private PMI data from Caixin due for release Wednesday and Friday are projected to show readings for services and manufacturing both at lower levels than the official gauges. The Caixin PMI can better reflect conditions among smaller firms and the private sector.

Economists surveyed by Bloomberg forecast full-year growth of 6.5 percent for 2018, a substantial slowdown from 2017's 6.9 percent performance. That's still in line with official targets, and policy makers are de-emphasizing numerical objectives as they push to strip out financial risk and put expansion on a more sustainable footing.

"The economy is facing a bit of downward pressure," said Zhou Hao, an economist at Commerzbank AG in Singapore. "A lot recent macro data suggest a little bit of a downward trend, but in general PMI is holding up. Sentiment is stable."

US wireless carriers Sprint, T-Mobile merge. Here are three big takeaways

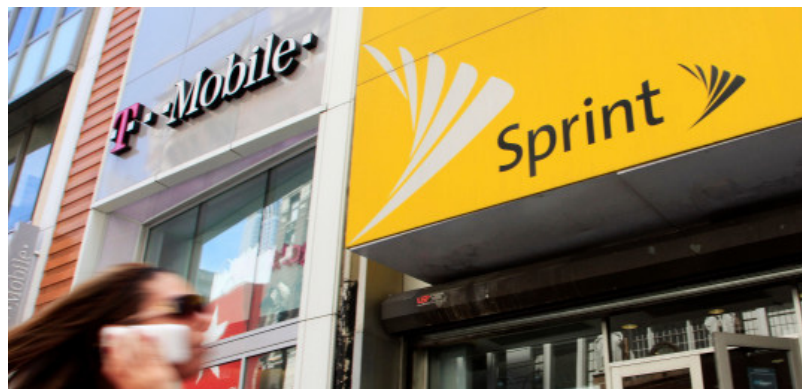
I almost can't believe it. After years of flirtation and false starts—not to mention false hope for investors—wireless carriers T-Mobile US Inc. and Sprint Corp. have finally inked a deal.

T-Mobile agreed on Sunday to buy Overland Park, Kansas-based Sprint in a stock swap that values Sprint at about \$26 billion, plus the assumption of its scary \$32 billion net debt load. The transaction will give the No. 3 and No. 4 US wireless carriers a much-needed leg up in a cutthroat marketplace still dominated by Verizon Communications Inc. and AT&T Inc. And it comes at a time when AT&T is trying to get even bigger by reaching outside its wheelhouse to acquire media giant Time Warner Inc., a deal that, if approved, would likely inspire Verizon to pursue its own cross-industry megamerger. For these reasons and more, T-Mobile and Sprint need one other.

Here are the three most important

takeaways from T-Mobile and Sprint's announcement:

A deal could dramatically improve profits. Between overhead redundancies, overlapping store locations and duplicative cell towers, the companies are estimating more than \$6 billion in annual cost savings. This would be meaningful for their bottom line. Sprint's business has been overburdened by debt and seemingly incapable of sustaining profitability as the weakest player. Its Ebitda figures are even worse than they appear because it doesn't expense handsets the way its rivals do, as I explained here earlier this month. For T-Mobile, the financial benefits of a merger will help keep investors happy as its own impressive growth record naturally begins to slow some. Of course, this all assumes that the integration is seamless, which is usually the wrong assumption for big mergers. But it's hard to imagine the two being any better off on their



own. This would solve Sprint's unfixable problem. No matter how much money Masayoshi Son, the Japanese billionaire that controls Sprint, was willing to throw at the business, Sprint would never be able to climb out from the financial doldrums as long as its brand was the industry punchline. Even though the company got Verizon's "Can you hear me now" ad guy to switch sides, the Sprint

service is generally considered not that great—whether that reputation is deserving or not. T-Mobile CEO John Legere, who is going to run the combined company, has proven himself to be a branding master, having taken T-Mobile from the bottom of the pack to unseating Sprint as the industry No. 3 and leaving all his competitors' stock prices in the dust. From the sound of the merger press re-

lease, the Sprint brand may go away. The company, to be called T-Mobile, "will determine brand strategy after the transaction closes," it read.

It's only an announcement. T-Mobile and Sprint still need to secure government approvals before they can merge, and we know that in the past regulators have taken issue with reducing the market from four to three major carriers. The current administration has been unpredictable when it comes to deciding which mergers pass muster. That said, there's room for debate about consolidation and the degree to one type of combination would be more detrimental to consumers than another. Which is worse: A) allowing a weak wireless business to combine with its next-biggest competitor in an industry that's lost much of its pricing power, and as cable heavyweights Comcast Corp. and Charter Communications Inc. add mobile services, or B) giving the green light to AT&T for a deal

that will confer a significant amount of power over the pay-TV market through the ownership of Time Warner's premier entertainment content? T-Mobile and Sprint, despite being direct competitors, may actually stand a better shot at obtaining regulatory clearance than AT&T and Time Warner, which don't compete with one another.

That's all to say, it's been a long road getting to this point, but we're still a long way from a done deal. Getting there will be good for both businesses. Should the deal collapse again, though, T-Mobile shareholders can at least take comfort in knowing that its growth prospects remain better than peers and for that reason, T-Mobile will always be in play for acquirers wanting a toehold in the wireless space. Sprint, on the other hand, doesn't have much of a fallback plan. Let's hope this is the last and final time we have to ruminate on the what ifs of a T-Mobile-Sprint tie-up.

IPL 2018: Mumbai Indians favourites against Virat Kohli's Royal Challengers Bangalore

Virat Kohli may be the Indian cricket team skipper and probably the most powerful player in Indian cricket, but it is his opposite number for Tuesday's game who knows how to win Indian Premier League (IPL) titles.

Rohit Sharma, skipper of Mumbai Indians, who clash with Virat Kohli's Royal Challengers Bangalore at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore on Tuesday, has won three IPL trophies. Virat, on the other hand, has failed to lay hands on even one.

RCB's best under Kohli has been a runner-up finish two seasons ago. Back then they looked a dangerous side with power-hitters at the top and a decent bowling unit that had a quality all-rounder or two. Not much depended on local Indian players as the imports along with Kohli were just too brutal.

This time though RCB are finding how local Indian players, that have driven other teams like Rajasthan Royals, Kolkata Knight Riders, Kings XI Punjab, Chennai Super Kings and



Sunrisers Hyderabad in the past and even this season, are important to an IPL side.

With the foreign stars, aside of AB de Villiers, not being extraordinary, RCB's local Indian players have been found wanting.

Mandeep Singh, Manan Vohra, Sarfaraz Khan, M Ashwin and Mohammed Siraj have struggled not just with their primary skill but also when fielding while even Umesh Yadav leaked

plenty on Sunday.

What makes their opponents on Tuesday, Mumbai Indians, favourites going into the crucial game is the balance of the side, especially with the presence of two all-rounders in Pandya brothers Hardik and Krunal.

RCB, on the other hand, have been playing musical chairs with Colin de Grandhomme and Corey Anderson and both haven't been useful especially with the ball, something that

Shane Watson was when he was here.

MI's bowling also looks much tidier than RCB's with the likes of Mustafizur Rahman and Jasprit Bumrah around. Their Indian component has been holding them up with bowler Mayank Markande being the pick bagging the most wickets and Krunal continuing to be effective.

Suryakumar Yadav has been among runs while Ishan Kishan too has chipped in. If anything, they just need to worry about Kieron Pollard whose form is probably why MI are at sixth, just one spot above RCB.

But as their previous games showed, their bowling can be the difference. By restricting CSK to a gettable total, the bowlers made it possible for batsmen to ensure victory.

This is the last round of the first half of the league and a win is important for both teams. As Brendon McCullum said on Sunday night, "we'll be on the road for a few matches after Tuesday's, so it will be important to get a win under the belt. We only have made it tough for ourselves".

Lucky loser Marco Cecchinato claims maiden ATP title in Hungary

Italy's Marco Cecchinato claimed his maiden ATP Tour title with a 7-5, 6-4 victory over John Millman in the Hungarian Open final on Sunday.

Cecchinato converted four out of eight break points to beat his Australian opponent in an hour 47 minutes. The world number 92 became the first lucky loser to win a title since Leonardo Mayer triumphed in Hamburg last July.

"I lost Sunday (in qualifying) and now I won the tournament. It's amazing for me," the 25-year-old Cecchinato said. "Maybe it's a dream, I don't know."

Cecchinato broke Millman early in the first set to race into a 4-2 lead, but the 28-year-old Australian dragged himself back into the match by winning the next three games.

Cecchinato saved a set point on his serve while trailing 5-4 before regaining his com-



posure to take the first set.

Millman took a 4-1 lead in the second but Cecchinato fought back in style to claim victory.

"Today is a special day because I won the first title of my career," he said. "I'm very happy."

Millman reached the final earlier on Sunday after winning the final set of a 2-6, 7-6(3), 7-6(5) victory over last year's runner-up Aljaz Bedene. The semi-final was suspended on Saturday due to darkness.

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It was a grinding victory vs RCB, says Kolkata Knight Riders' Chris Lynn



Facing Yuzvendra Chahal has been a bit of a challenge for most batsmen in recent times. Especially, on a surface that helps spinners like the Chinnaswamy's.

However, Chris Lynn, with his sweep shots, showed no concern as he made a match-winning 62 not out to script Kolkata Knight Riders victory over Royal Challengers Bangalore. "Early with the new ball, it was the easiest time to bat. You had Sunil at the other end taking off the pressure. It was important to knock down a few before the rain break as it was expected to play a part. So, against a couple of quality spinners, the ball turning, you had to grind away. Wasn't your typical T20 game of cricket with the ball flying around and for me, it were the sweep shots," said Lynn after the match.

KKR employed the usual strategy of one batsman holding an end up and the other going hard against the bowlers. It was Lynn, who played the anchor as first Sunil Narine and then Robin Uthappa went after the bowling.

"It (the wicket) was challenging. We have one bloke at one end anchoring the innings and then one at the other chipping in with quick runs. It was important for Robbie to come and take pressure off with the spinners bowling. He is a class player. As I said that he scored a couple of boundaries to get the momentum back. In the past, we'd lose back-to-back wickets. But tonight we didn't do that. We retained momentum for the majority of the game."

For his part, Lynn is returning from an injury and hasn't been the usual ballistic self as he is known to be. The Aussie batsman said that he is slowly trying to work and get into the rhythm.

"It hasn't been as free-flowing as I would have liked. I am coming back after a couple of injuries so I haven't really hit the ground running. Maybe my body didn't allow that early on but it is coming. I have started to find a bit of momentum, which is important especially at the back-end of the tournament. On a night like tonight and a wicket like tonight, it was a bit challenging to get a strike rate of 200, so the more time I am going to spend in the middle.

India resist Australia move for Adelaide day-night cricket Test

Australian cricket chiefs are still trying to convince reluctant Indian cricket team to play a day-night Test in Adelaide this year after releasing their international playing schedule on Monday.

Cricket Australia have scheduled the opening Test of the four-Test India series in Adelaide from December 6-10, with hopes it will be a pink ball match following concept successes against New Zealand, South Africa and England in recent years.

Australia believes day-night Test cricket is the future of the sport and perhaps the only way to save the format despite boom television ratings and record crowds.

But the powerful Board of Control for Cricket in India

(BCCI) have so far resisted CA's overtures.

CA will play a pink-ball Test against Sri Lanka in Brisbane from January 24-28 next year, but chief executive James Sutherland said he was still negotiating with India.

"It is our preference that we play India in a day-night Test match in Adelaide, but we are still working through this detail and hope to have an answer on this in the coming weeks," he said.

Sutherland has been pushing hard at International Cricket Council level for the new Test Championship schedule to include day-night Tests, but the powerful BCCI has a big say in outcomes.

CA confirmed Australia will face South Africa in a



Twenty20 international on Queensland's Gold Coast, while the new Perth Stadium and Canberra's Manuka Oval will both host Test cricket for the

first time. But Hobart misses out.

The international season starts on November 4 with the first of three ODIs against

South Africa before the one-off T20 against the Proteas on the Gold Coast, which will be followed by three T20s against India preceding the

start of the Test summer.

"Our men's international season structure changes slightly this summer, with one-day and T20 international matches against South Africa and India in November," Sutherland said.

Adelaide opens the Test series against India for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy and Perth Stadium will host the second Test, before the series moves back to Melbourne and Sydney for the traditional Boxing Day and New Year's showpiece games.

Following the Tests, there will be three ODIs against India in a seven-day window before a two-Test series against Sri Lanka in Brisbane under lights at the Gabba and a second match in Canberra.

FC Barcelona have been far superior in La Liga, says Lionel Messi

Lionel Messi revelled in Barcelona's seventh La Liga title in 10 seasons on Sunday, saying his team were "far superior" to their domestic rivals during their double-winning campaign.

The Argentinian star scored a brilliant 30th La Liga hat-trick as Barca survived a scare to beat Deportivo La Coruna 4-2, wrapping up the club's 25th league title with four matches to spare and keeping their hopes of an unbeaten season alive.

"We have been far superior to our rivals, we haven't lost a match during the whole season," Messi told Barcelona's in-house television channel.

"It's a very special Liga in that sense, because we haven't lost a single match. We've had some tough times and we've overcome everything without losing, which is unbelievable."

Regaining the top-flight crown from Real Madrid also secured Barcelona their



third double in four years after thrashing Sevilla 5-0 in last weekend's Copa del Rey final.

The only blemish on their season was a stunning Champions League quarter-final loss to Roma when they blew a 4-1 first-leg lead to be dumped out at the Stadio Olimpico.

"We lost just one in the Cup and disappointingly another in the Champions League," added Messi, who leads the La Liga scoring charts with 32 goals this term.

"That was an unexpected result in view of our shape. But we take a lot of merit to win a title as difficult as this without losing a game."

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner also paid tribute to captain Andres Iniesta.

The 33-year-old midfielder came off the bench in the 87th minute at Deportivo to make his 670th Barcelona appearance just two days after announcing that he will leave the club at the end of the season.

"It's a shame for us and the club, but he deserved to go like that," said Messi.

"We deplore what happened in the Champions League, it prevented him from going out with a treble, but he's leaving in an impressive fashion."

"This double is more than deserved for Andres, for all he has given to this club. I am very happy for him and wish him all the best."

Matthew Wade warns Australia to not 'go too far the other way'



Discarded wicketkeeper-batsman Matthew Wade has stoked a controversy of sorts by claiming that Australia should not 'go too far the other way', as they may lose their drive if they try and play like New Zealand.

Australia were hit by a string of controversies during their last Test assignment in South Africa, which saw players not only being fined and reprimanded for their on-field conduct, but their captain and vice captain were banned for a year for tampering the ball in the final Test at Cape Town.

Australia captain Steve Smith, his deputy David Warner were banned for a year, while rookie opener Cameron Bancroft banned for nine months by Cricket Australia (CA) for stoking the ball-tampering controversy.

There were calls made by cricket fraternity for Australia to reassess their approach and on-field conduct, which were bolstered by Darren Lehmann's admission that Australia should draw a few lessons from New Zealand's book. Wade, who was brought into the Test side in end 2016 for bringing in competitiveness and strong verbal support to the bowlers in place of Peter Nevill, wants Australia to not go too soft.

Wade was quoted as saying by cricket.com.au, "When I got back into the team (after five straight losses in 2016), there was a lot of media and public stir about how they wanted the team to have a crack through that period. They felt like we were rolling over a little bit."

"I hope now we don't go too far the other way and lose all our drive ... and try and play like New Zealand. Every team needs a bit of competitiveness on the field. What happened in South Africa wasn't a good look. But I just think we need to be careful about what direction we go in from here." Interestingly, Wade, who was dropped for his lack of runs, says that he would take a look at his own approach. "You want to be playing for Australia, but there was certainly a part of me that was feeling a touch lucky I wasn't there (in Cape Town)," he said.

Manchester United inflict more Old Trafford woe on Arsene Wenger's Arsenal

Arsene Wenger was honoured by Manchester United on his final visit to Old Trafford as Arsenal manager, but left beaten once more on the field as Marouane Fellaini's stoppage time header handed the hosts a 2-1 win.

Wenger was greeted by former United boss Sir Alex Ferguson and current manager Jose Mourinho before kick-off and even presented with a glass memento.

However, the Frenchman was left empty-handed when it came to points as defeat left sixth-placed Arsenal mathematically out of the race for a top-four finish.

Fellaini rose highest to flick home the winner after Henrikh Mkhitaryan's second-half strike against his former club had cancelled out Paul Pogba's early opener.

United have now sealed their place in the Champions League next season and move closer to their target of finishing at least second best to champions Manchester City by opening a five-point gap on Liverpool.

Ferguson told the United website ahead of the game that his clashes for many years with Wenger's strongest Arsenal sides over a decade ago "made the Premier League."



But it was a sign of how far Arsenal have fallen that Wenger made eight changes from the side that drew 1-1 with Atletico Madrid in the first leg of their Europa League semi-final on Thursday as he had already given up hope of

a top-four finish.

Alexis Sanchez became the latest of a number of leading Arsenal players to leave towards the end of Wenger's reign in search of more success and more money in January.

And in his first appearance

against his former club, the Chilean was heavily involved in the opening goal on 16 minutes.

Romelu Lukaku picked out Sanchez at the back post and after his header was deflected onto his own post by Hector Bellerin, Pogba had the simple task of tapping into an unguarded net.

Wenger included club record signing Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Mkhitaryan, who was the makeweight for Sanchez to move in the other direction, among a side littered with youngsters.

But it was the visitors who posed the greater threat for

the remainder of a soporific first 45 minutes.

Mkhitaryan dragged a shot from the edge of the box just wide before Aubameyang's tame header was too close to David de Gea. United suffered a blow at the start of the second period when Lukaku limped off to be replaced by Marcus Rashford.

And the hosts soon also lost their lead when Mkhitaryan pounced on some slack United defending to fire across De Gea into the bottom corner to muted celebrations despite enduring a troubled 18 months under Mourinho before joining the Gunners.