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NEARBY  
Uncertainty over Bengal panchayat elections

KOLKATA  
There is uncertainty over holding of the panchayat elections in West Bengal on May 14 with the Calcutta High Court on Tuesday saying that the date announced by the State Election Commission cannot be treated as final. The court said that May 14 can be considered as a tentative date only.

FAST PAGE 2

Ghaziabad rape: report says accused not juvenile

NEW DELHI  
The bone ossification test report of an accused held in connection with the rape of a 10-year-old girl inside a madrasa in Ghaziabad has indicated that he is a major, the police said on Tuesday.

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DELHI METRO PAGE 4

# SC tells HCs to set up panels to monitor POCSO Act trials

Supreme Court shocked by high rate of pendency of child sexual assault cases

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

Shocked by the high rate of pendency of child sexual assault cases, the Supreme Court directed High Courts to set up panels of its judges to regulate and monitor trials under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

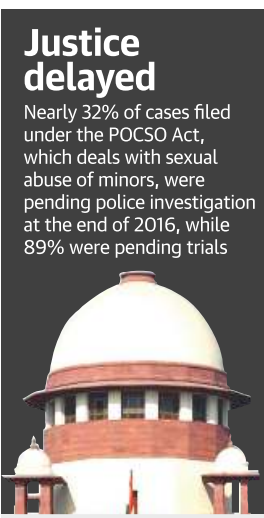
The Supreme Court, which had ordered a review of the backlog under POCSO, found that States such as Uttar Pradesh have over 30,000 cases pending despite the child protection law coming into existence as early as 2012.

Many States have not yet even set up Special Courts to try POCSO cases as mandated by the law.

Bad implementation

In February, a three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra found the implementation of POCSO in a shambles and decided to review the issue. The Bench was hearing the case of rape of an eight-month-old child in the National Capital.

The PIL petition filed by Alakh Alok Srivastava said child rapists should be awarded the death penalty.



Though the government was initially against the death penalty in child rape cases, saying "death penalty is not an answer for everything," the rape of an eight-year-old in Kathua proved to be the last straw and the government recently promulgated an ordinance allowing courts to pronounce death penalty to those found guilty of raping children up to 12 years of age.

Speedy justice  
Additional Solicitor General Pinky Anand, for the govern-

ment, informed the court about the ordinance. She submitted that it warrants investigation to be completed in two months and courts to dispose of appeals in six months, ensuring speedy justice to victims. But the court said the POCSO statistics showed that children and victims in many States were still waiting in the corridors of courts for justice.

The Bench, also comprising Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and D.Y. Chandrachud, issued a series of directions which supplement the ordi-

nance. These include: the State police chiefs should constitute special task forces to investigate cases, High Courts should ensure that they are tried and disposed of by the designated Special Courts under the Act; POCSO judges will give no adjournments and make every effort to fast-track trial, witnesses should be produced in court on the day of the hearing and high courts should make every effort to provide a child-friendly atmosphere in tune with the spirit of the Act.

# Taj Mahal turning brown and green, says worried SC

Asks govt. whether it has expertise to conserve monument

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Taj Mahal was yellow and now turning brown and green, a Supreme Court Bench of Justices Madan B. Lokur and Deepak Gupta found from photographs handed over to them by noted environmental lawyer M.C. Mehta in open court on Tuesday.

Mr. Mehta said the upkeep of the UNESCO World Heritage site was in a shambles. River Yamuna, which used to flow nearby, has dried up. Encroachments and industries have cropped up in the neighbourhood of the white marble mausoleum. CCTVs hardly work. The government merely views the Taj as a money-making venture.

"Perhaps, you do not care," Justice Lokur told Additional Solicitor-General A.N.S. Nadkarni.

'Seek help'

Looking at the photographs repeatedly, Justice Lokur wondered whether the Taj Mahal, in its present discoloured form, would end being the "eighth wonder of the world." Justice Lokur asked the government whether it had or not the ex-



In distress: Environmental lawyer M.C. Mehta said the upkeep of the UNESCO World Heritage site was in a shambles. ■PTI

pertise to conserve the 17th century monument.

"Even if you have the expertise, you are not utilising it," the court observed. It urged the government to get help from international conservation experts, if required, to restore the monument to its pristine glory.

Foreign dignitaries

The court observed that foreign dignitaries were still given a tour of the Taj Mahal. This would surely mean that the government was interested in its preservation.

Mr. Nadkarni submitted that the maintenance was done by the Archaeological Survey of India. He said

there were also expert bodies like the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), which had worked to preserve an ancient fort in Goa.

"These photographs show a lack of will... When was the last time you visited the Taj," Justice Lokur asked the government lawyers. When they replied that it had been over a decade, Justice Lokur replied: "Well, you better go and take a look again." ASG Mehta, appearing for Uttar Pradesh, said the State could assure the court that steps to protect and preserve the monument would be accelerated.

(With PTI inputs)

# GST receipts cross ₹1 lakh cr. in April

TCA SHARAD RAGHAVAN  
NEW DELHI

Revenue from the Goods and Services Tax (GST) for April 2018 has finally crossed the ₹1 lakh crore threshold, coming in at ₹1,03,458 crore, according to official data released on Tuesday.

"The total Gross GST revenue collected in the month of April 2018 is ₹1,03,458 crore of which

CGST is ₹18,652 crore, SGST is ₹25,704 crore, IGST is ₹50,548 crore (including ₹21,246 crore collected on imports) and cess is ₹8,554 crore (including ₹702 crore collected on imports)," the government said in a release.

'Reforms yield results'

"GST collections in April exceeding ₹1 lakh crore is a landmark achievement and

a confirmation of increased economic activity as brought out by other reports," Finance Minister Arun Jaitley tweeted after the data was released.

"With the improved economic climate, introduction of e-way bill and improved GST compliance, GST collections would continue to show a positive trend."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

# Soon, you can make calls, browse while flying in India

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA  
NEW DELHI

Flyers on board an aircraft will be able to make calls and remain connected to the Internet while travelling through the Indian airspace in the next three to four months.

The Telecom Commission, which is the highest decision-making body in the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), on Tuesday gave its nod to a proposal by regulator TRAI.

This will also be applica-

ble to communication on ships.

"The in-flight connectivity has been approved. It was decided to accept the TRAI's views except that the satellites used for providing services should be the Department of Space-approved satellites and the gateway should be in India," Telecom Secretary Aruna Sundararajan said.

The regulator had recommended that the on-board Internet traffic be routed to a satellite gateway

on Indian soil as it provides an effective mechanism for legal interception and monitoring.

Ms. Sundararajan, who also heads the Telecom Commission, said the department would now work towards creating the licence framework for a separate category of in-flight connectivity (IFC) service providers. These would be charged a licence fee of ₹1 per annum.

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NOD FOR OMBUDSMAN PAGE 13

# PM hits back, throws Rahul a challenge

'Speak without notes for 15 minutes'

LAIQH A. KHAN  
SANTHEMARAHALLI  
(CHAMARAJANAGAR DISTRICT)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday challenged Congress president Rahul Gandhi to deliver a speech in any language of his choice for 15 minutes, without reading from a piece of paper.

He was speaking at Santhamarahalli in the border district of Chamarajanagar in poll-bound Karnataka.

Mr. Modi's dare was to counter Mr. Gandhi's challenge to allow him to speak for 15 minutes in the Lok Sabha on the irregularities of the BJP government at the Centre. Mr. Modi said it would be an achievement in itself if Mr. Gandhi could speak for 15 minutes.

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SPECULATION AS PM PRAISES DEVE GOWDA PAGE 5  
COASTAL POLITICS PAGE 11

# End of celebrations with party poppers

JACOB KOSHY  
NEW DELHI

In a dampener for celebrants, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has banned party poppers – a popular decorative used at parties and celebrations, including at IPL matches – on the grounds that the devices posed a health risk.

Such poppers are commonly available at neighbourhood stores and work akin to the popping of a champagne bottle. It is a sealed cardboard case, as big as a rolled-up newspaper, and stuffed with shredded paper and glitter. Pulling an attached string sets off a mild, chemical explosive, which 'pops' open the case and releases a confetti of coloured paper and glitter. However, these plastic bits and the associated chemicals, the CPCB says, are harmful to health. "It is observed that the plastic glittering material and the other charge chemicals, which are generally low-intensity explosive, often composed of red-phosphorous, potassium chlorate and potassium perchlorate, are harmful to human health and environment. They get mixed with food items and may cause severe eye



ILLUSTRATION: DEEPAK HARICHANDAN  
trauma or facial injuries," said a note on the CPCB website.

An official in the Environment Ministry said the government's aim was to spread awareness of the harm from poppers. "It's quite common in birthday parties. There's a chemical explosive charge and sometimes the contents explode with such force that it can, if not positioned properly, hurt children," said Manoj Gangeya, Director, Ministry of Environment and Forests, who issued the order.

However, there is hope for safer alternatives. The Ministry note says that poppers that don't rely on the chemical explosive are fine, though as of today, it's the explosive version that dominates the market. From now on, CPCB officials would be empowered to fine stores that stock explosive-laden poppers, Mr. Gangeya said.

EXPLAINER PAGE 7



DELHI ☀️Timings

WEDNESDAY, MAY 02		
☀️ RISE	05:40	🌃 SET 18:57
🌙 RISE	21:08	🌅 SET 07:21
THURSDAY, MAY 03		
☀️ RISE	05:39	🌃 SET 18:57
🌙 RISE	22:01	🌅 SET 08:03
FRIDAY, MAY 04		
☀️ RISE	05:39	🌃 SET 18:58
🌙 RISE	22:51	🌅 SET 08:49

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	38	26
Safdarjang	38	26
Palam	39	26

**Delhi Palam Today**  
38°C Moderate rain is expected in some parts of city. A windswept day is expected. The sky will remain cloudy over the city.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
36°C Sky will be cloudy over the city with a comfortable morning. A sweltery and dry afternoon will follow with a pleasant night.

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IN BRIEF

**Man held for raping, murdering 5-year-old**  
DHANBAD (JHARKHAND) A man has been arrested for allegedly raping and murdering a five-year-old girl in Dhanbad district, the police said on Tuesday. The accused was the neighbour of the victim and also the friend of her elder brother, the police said. **PTI**

INLD, BSP launch Jail Bharo agitation

Demand immediate completion of SYL canal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

The Indian National Lok Dal and the Bahujan Samaj Party on Tuesday jointly started a State-wide agitation, demanding immediate completion of the controversial Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) canal.

As workers and leaders of both the parties presented themselves for court arrest in Bhiwani under the *Jail Bharo* agitation, INLD leader Abhay Singh Chautala said the BJP governments, both at the Centre and the State, were conspiring against the interests of Haryana by not constructing the SYL canal despite the Supreme Court's order in favour of Haryana.



Indian National Lok Dal leader Abhay Chautala. •

“The Centre and BJP government in Haryana have an insensitive approach. They do not realise that Haryana is staring at a disaster with its legitimate share from the river waters getting delayed,” he said, adding that parts of south Haryana

have slipped into the ‘dark zone’ with regard to groundwater.

**‘Land to go barren’**  
“Development in the (south) region was undertaken based on the confidence that the water needs of the region, both agricultural and residential, would be adequately met with the water from the rivers through SYL canal. But now that it appears that this region is on the brink of becoming barren,” he said.

The INLD-BSP's *Jail Bharo* agitation will be held in Yamunanagar on May 4, in Nuh on May 8, Sirsa (May 11), Naraul (May 15) and Kurukshetra (May 18).

Jinnah portrait sparks row

Aligarh MP objects to photo at AMU students' union office

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
ALIGARH (U.P.)

A BJP MP has asked Aligarh Muslim University to explain why it displays a portrait of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, triggering a row days after a student sought permission to hold an RSS shakha on its premises.

In a letter written to Vice-Chancellor Tariq Mansoor on Monday, Aligarh MP Satish Gautam objected to the Pakistan founder's picture on the wall of the AMU students' union office.

**Life membership**  
AMU spokesman Shafey Kidwai on Tuesday defended the portrait, apparently hanging there for decades, saying that Jinnah was a founder member of the University Court and granted life membership of the students' union.



Aligarh Muslim University. •

Traditionally, photographs of all life members are placed on the walls of the students' union office, he said. “Jinnah was also accorded life membership of the AMUSU in 1938. He was the founder member of the University Court in 1920 and also a donor,” the spokesman said.

“Jinnah was granted the membership before the demand of Pakistan was raised

by the Muslim League,” he added.

The spokesman said no national leader had raised any objection to the photo even after Independence.

Mr. Kidwai said AMU students' union has a long tradition of granting life membership to prominent people in politics, social and educational fields. Their photographs are a part of the rich heritage of undivided India and no one ever thought of raising this issue before, he said.

The first recorded life membership by the students' union was granted to Mahatma Gandhi on October 29, 1920, he said. This was followed by a long list of luminaries, including C. Rajagopalachari, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, C.V. Raman and British writer E.M. Forster, he said.

Parents responsible for rape: MLA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BALLIA (U.P.)

Wading into the debate on violence against women and minor girls once again, Uttar Pradesh's BJP legislator Surendra Singh has said parents are responsible for the increasing incidents of rape and should not let their children roam around freely.

**‘Don't give mobiles’**  
The legislator from Bairia, who had earlier made news when he said no one can rape a mother of three children, also advised parents not to give their children mobile phones.

“The parents of youths are responsible for growing incidents of rape as they do not take care of their wards,” the local BJP MLA told reporters here on Monday night.

Dogs maul 3 children to death

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
SITAPUR (U.P.)

Packs of stray dogs attacked and killed three children in separate incidents in the Khairabad police station area here on Tuesday, officials said.

Two girls, Shamli (11) and Komal (12), and a boy, Khalid (12), were attacked and killed by stray dogs in Tikaria, Gulpulia and Khulia villages respectively, Khairabad police station incharge Sachin Kumar Singh said.

The children were attacked by the dogs when they were alone and before any locals could rush to their rescue, he said.

Help has been sought from the Lucknow Municipal Corporation for catching the dogs as there is no dog-catching squad in Sitapur, he added.

Punjab for 4G jammers in jails

Proposal sent to Centre for sanction, says Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Minister for Prisons Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa on Tuesday said that in a bid to equip jails across the State with latest technology, a proposal for according sanction for installation of 4G jammers has been sent to the Union Home Ministry.

“After getting the nod from them that these jammers can be installed.. Also full body scanner installation is being contemplated in jails. Besides, it has been decided that nobody barring the superintendent would be allowed to carry mobile phones inside the jails,” said Mr. Randhawa here.

**High-level meet**  
He was presiding over a high-level departmental meeting to review security of jails in Punjab. He said those inmates



Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa with ADGP (Jails) Iqbal Preet Singh Sahota in Chandigarh on Tuesday. • AKHILESH KUMAR

who are desirous of pursuing academics would be provided with congenial atmosphere and all assistance. “Health of the inmates would be given topmost priority for which we would demand from the health ministry to depute on permanent basis expert doctors,” he said.

Mr. Randhawa divulged that during 2017 a total of

1,500 mobiles have been recovered from jails which is a cause of concern.

“In order to stop this trend the additional chief secretary would instruct all the district police chiefs to probe mobile recovery cases in an in-depth manner. Any jail officer-official found guilty would be given exemplary punishment,” the Minister added.

Major bureaucratic reshuffle in Rajasthan, 81 officers shifted

D.B. Gupta appointed new Chief Secretary of the State

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
JAIPUR

In a major bureaucratic reshuffle, the Rajasthan government has transferred 81 Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers after the appointment of D.B. Gupta as the new Chief Secretary. The Collectors of 15 districts and three Divisional Commissioners were among those shifted in the orders issued late on Monday night.

Mr. Gupta, a 1983-batch IAS officer, was appointed the Chief Secretary after the retirement of N.C. Goel, who had the shortest tenure of four months. Speculations were rife about Mr. Goel's extension, but the Centre reportedly did not accept a proposal sent by the State government in this regard.

Mr. Goel played a key role

in the execution of the Vasundhara Raje government's ambitious projects, including the inauguration of oil refinery in Barmer, during his tenure. Mr. Gupta, 58, was earlier Additional Chief Secretary (Finance, Excise and Taxation). The charge of these departments has been given to Mukesh Kumar Sharma.

**‘Political overtones’**  
The reshuffle, which may have been the last before the State goes to Assembly polls in December this year, seemingly had political overtones with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party keen on sending across a message of good governance to the electorate. Seven officers of the rank of Additional Chief Secretary were given new responsibilities

in the reshuffle, while T. Ravikanth was posted as Divisional Commissioner in Jaipur, Lalit Kumar Gupta in Jodhpur and Kailash Chand Verma in Kota.

Neeraj K. Pawan, who was reinstated in November last year after his arrest and suspension in connection with a graft case, was posted as Special Secretary, Administrative Reforms Department. The 2003-batch IAS officer spent eight months in jail on charges of corruption in the award of contracts in the National Rural Health Mission.

The Collectors of Bikaner, Pratapgarh, Kota, Ajmer, Dholpur, Rajsamand, Bhilwara, Tonk, Sawai Madhopur, Bundi, Hanumangarh, Churu, Alwar, Jaisalmer and Bharatpur were transferred in the reshuffle.

Odisha juvenile sent to correction home

Found guilty in triple murder case

STAFF REPORTER  
BERHAMPUR

A Juvenile Justice Board of Odisha's Rayagada district on Tuesday found a teenager guilty of taking part in the murder of three persons of a family, who were alleged to be sorcery practitioner by a group of inhabitants of Kitung village.

The Board ordered him to be sent to a correctional home for three years, said Additional Public Prosecutor of Rayagada Rabi Prasad Mohapatra.

On April 13, a sessions court at Gunupur district had awarded death sentence to nine persons in the triple murder case.

Uncertainty over Bengal panchayat polls on May 14

High Court says date announced by the State Election Commission not final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KOLKATA

There is uncertainty over holding of the panchayat elections in West Bengal on May 14 with the Calcutta High Court on Tuesday saying that the date announced by the State Election Commission cannot be treated as final.

The court said that May 14 can be considered as a tentative date only.

The final decision on the election date will be considered by a Division Bench headed by the Chief Justice of the High Court, Justice Subrata Talukdar said passing the direction on petitions by political parties challenging the SEC's decision to hold the panchayat poll on a single day.

The Opposition BJP, the CPI (M) and the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS)



**Election time:** A porter carries Trinamool flags ahead of the panchayat polls. • FILE PHOTO

had moved the court of Justice Talukdar claiming that his earlier directions on announcing the date/dates for elections were also not complied with by the Commission with regard to prior consultations with stakeholders.

They also claimed that the Commission, which had earlier announced the date for elections in three phases, has now notified that it would be done in only one phase thus raising the issue of security of voters as well as of candidates.

BJP ally wins one more seat in Meghalaya

National People's Party tally in the State Assembly goes up to 20 with the Williamnagar seat

RAHUL KARMAKAR  
GUWAHATI

The National People's Party (NPP), a regional grouping formed by former Lok Sabha Speaker Purno A. Sangma and an ally of the BJP, has won the Williamnagar Assembly seat in Meghalaya on Tuesday. Election to the seat was postponed after the killing of the NCP candidate a week ahead of elections in February this year.

The victory has taken the NPP's individual tally to 20 in the 60-member House with an effective strength of

59 after former Chief Minister Mukul Sangma of Congress gave up Ampati, one of the two seats he had won.

The NPP-led alliance, including two BJP legislators, now has 37 MLAs.

The NPP candidate Marcuise N. Marak got 9,558 votes – 37.5% of the total votes cast. Of the constituency's 32,345 voters, 78.8% had exercised their franchise.

Independent candidate Sengbath R. Marak came second with 4,698 votes while former minister Deborah C. Marak of the Congress, who

won the seat in 2013, finished third with 4,517 votes. Krinilla R. Mark, the widow of slain Nationalist Congress Party leader Jonathone N. Sangma who was expected to gain sympathy votes, came fourth with 4,009 votes.

**Adjourned**  
Election in Williamnagar had to be adjourned after extremists killed Mr. Sangma by blowing up his vehicle a week ahead of the polls on February 27. Mr Sangma was an NCP candidate of NCP,

which later decided to field his wife. “The challenge of living up to the expectations of the people begins now,” said Mr. Marak, who had won the Rongrenggiri seat as an NCP candidate in 2008, after the result was declared. Apart from the NPP's 20 MLAs and BJP's two, the alliance constituents have six MLAs of the United Democratic Party, four from the People's Democratic Front, two from the Hill State People's Democratic Party, one from the NCP and two independents.



NPP candidate Marcuise Marak after winning the Williamnagar Assembly seat. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



# Khadse claims ‘clean chit’ in land grab case

ACB submits its report on Pune MIDC land in court

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE  
PUNE

The State Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has submitted its report to a Pune court in an alleged land grab case involving former State Revenue Minister Eknath Khadse of a prime plot belonging to the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) in Bhosari.

Sources said the agency, which submitted the report on Friday, had allegedly failed to find “definite proof” that Mr. Khadse had misused his office as Revenue Minister to seize a three-acre plot in the possession of the MIDC for his private use.

Mr. Khadse, reacting to the development in Mumbai, said the agency had given him a clean chit. Speaking in Mumbai, he remarked that his two years in political wilderness were his “trial by fire.” “The accusations against me had no substance. But during my ‘trial’, I have come to know my



Eknath Khadse

friends from my enemies. I do not want to speak now of those who turned against me, despite my contribution towards building my party in Maharashtra,” said the BJP leader. He said he had voluntarily resigned from his post, and not due to pressure from any party.

**‘Premature to comment’**  
However, whistleblower Hemant Gawande, who first filed a complaint against Mr. Khadse in May 2016 in the case, said nothing definite can be said till the ACB re-

veals what the report says. “The ACB is the investigative agency directed by the High Court to investigate this case. It is not the final authority. It is too premature to comment on anything as I have not received any official notification about the report being submitted,” he told *The Hindu*.

In May 2016, Mr. Gawande’s complaint, among other factors, had eventually contributed to Mr. Khadse’s resignation from the State Cabinet. In April last year, the ACB had lodged an FIR against Mr. Khadse in compliance with the Bombay High Court’s directive.

The ACB had lodged an FIR under Sections 13 (1) d, 13 (2) and 15 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, and Section 109 of the Indian Penal Code against the former minister, his wife, Mandakini, son-in-law Girish Chaudhari, and Abbas Rasool Ukani, the original owner of the plot.

## Flag fight



**Sorry state:** The police stop Vidarbha Rajya Aghadi protesters at K.P. Ground from hoisting a ‘Vidarbha flag’ at Vidhan Bhavan in Nagpur on Tuesday. The party has been demanding separate statehood for Vidarbha. •S. SUDARSHAN

# Five held for NCP activists’ murders

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE  
PUNE

Five people were arrested on Monday night for the murder of two Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) youth wing workers in Ahmednagar district last week.

Kailas Mane (46), his brother Prakash (44), and Datta Gaikwad (50) are residents of Jamkhed, while Bapu Kale (50) is from Solapur district and Sachin Jadhav (32) from Ahmednagar’s Karjat township.

“They are believed to be associates of the main accused, Govind Gaikwad. They abetted the shooters in the plot to kill the NCP activists,” said Ranjan Kumar Sharma, Ahmednagar Superintendent of Police. He said a case has been registered

against them under Section 212 (harbouring offenders) of the Indian Penal Code.

The police have formed 15 teams, comprising 75 police personnel and led by 15 officers, to nab the three assailants who gunned down Yogesh Ambadas Ralebhat (30) and his cousin Rakesh Ralebhat (25) in Jamkhed tehsil on the evening of April 28. The two NCP workers were shot at point-blank range by the motorcycle-borne assailants near an eatery on Beed-Jamkhed Road.

The police said Govind Gaikwad had a rivalry with Yogesh Ralebhat. “There were clashes between the two in the past, including once over setting up some political hoardings,” said a senior police officer.

## NCP seeks SIT probe

STAFF REPORTER  
MUMBAI

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) on Tuesday demanded that a Special Investigation Team (SIT) be formed to investigate the murder of NCP activists Rakesh and Yogesh Ralebhat in Jamkhed, Ahmednagar, last week.

NCP leader and former Assembly Speaker Dilip Walse-Patil said, “Jamkhed does not have a doctor in the government hospital, and they had to be taken to Ahmednagar. The police took them to a

private hospital instead of the civil hospital. Post-mortem was done in Pune. All this creates a doubt in the minds of people, and therefore an SIT should be formed to investigate case.”

He said both activists were threatened with a gun on April 1. “The people involved are being sheltered by powerful individuals. The police has no control over the criminals in the district, and the guardian minister must resign.” Mr. Walse-Patil, visited the family of the victims on Tuesday.

# Sindhudurg airport may be completed by June

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

The work for the new airport in Sindhudurg district, estimated to cost ₹520 crore, is expected to be completed in June, according to the Civil Aviation Ministry.

The airport at Parule Chipi is being constructed by IRB Sindhudurg Airport Pvt Ltd. on a design-build-finance-operate-transfer basis for the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC).

“Work on the project is expected to be completed in June this year, before the onset of monsoon and the Ganesh festival, which will begin in September,” the ministry said in a statement on Tuesday.

It said that being constructed at an approximate cost of ₹520 crore, the aerodrome will have a 2,500-metre runway. The airport will have the capacity to handle 200 departing and 200 arriving passengers during peak hours, the statement said.

# Rupani starts campaign to save water

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
AHMEDABAD

Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani started a water conservation drive at Kosamdi village in Bharuch on Tuesday, the State’s 58th foundation day.

Mr. Rupani rode a JCB machine to deepen a lake as part of the month-long drive. The initiative, Sujalam Sufalam Jal Abhiyan, aims to increase the State’s water storage capacity by 11,000 lakh cubic feet.



IN BRIEF



**Kerala RTC chief dons conductor's role**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM  
The Kerala State Road Transport Corporation CMD Tomin Thachankary on Tuesday donned the role of a bus conductor to get a first hand knowledge of the working conditions of the staff in the State-owned undertaking. The senior IPS officer, wearing the conductor's uniform and equipped with a hand held ticket machine, boarded the Thiruvananthapuram-Guruvayur fast passenger bus in the morning. PTI

**ACB traps 'crorepatti' attender in A.P.**  
NELLORE  
The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) officials on Tuesday unearthed huge quantity of property reportedly amassed illegally from the house of K. Narasimha Reddy, 55, an attender in the transport department. Expensive jewellery and documents of movable and immovable properties were seized. Mr. Reddy has put in 34 years of service in the Nellore Deputy Transport Commissioner's Office. The value of the seized properties is said to be around ₹80 crore.

**Woman set ablaze by estranged husband, dies**  
THRISSUR  
A 23-year old woman died after being allegedly set on fire by her estranged husband at the meeting venue of 'Kudumbashree', a woman empowerment scheme, in the district, police said on Tuesday. The incident occurred on April 29 at Changallur and the woman succumbed to burns at the Thrissur Medical College Hospital on Monday night, they said. Panchayat members and 'Kudumbashree' workers were present when the incident occurred. PTI



**Seeking blessings:** BJP president Amit Shah during his visit to the Sringeri Sharada temple in Karnataka, and right, State BJP president B.S. Yeddyurappa with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Santhamarahalli in Chamarajanagar district on Tuesday.  
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT AND M.A. SRIRAM



Political heat intensifies as Modi and Siddaramaiah indulge in war of words

## Speculation as PM praises Gowda

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
UDUPI  
Amid prediction of a hung Assembly by several pre-poll surveys, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday showered praise on Janata Dal (S) supremo H.D. Deve Gowda and criticised AICC president Rahul Gandhi for not showing basic courtesy to the veteran leader on the first day of his campaign in Karnataka.  
Coming a day after the former Prime Minister declared that he would disown his son and former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy if he again joined hands with the BJP in the event of a fractured verdict, the remarks of Mr. Modi raised eyebrows in political circles.  
Mr. Gandhi and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah have been attacking the JD(S) and its leaders by accusing them of being the “B team of the BJP.”

**‘Tall political leader’**  
Addressing a public meeting as part of his campaign for the BJP at Udupi, Mr. Modi

said Mr. Gowda was a former Prime Minister and a tall political leader. “Every time Mr. Gowda comes to New Delhi to meet me, I go to his car and receive him. After we finish talking, I walk Mr. Gowda down to his car and see him off,” he said.  
**Basic courtesy**  
Mr. Modi said that though there might be political differences, basic courtesy should be shown to leaders of other political parties.  
“Though Mr. Gowda is politically against me and criticises us, he is one of the top political leaders of the country. But Mr. Gandhi spoke in a derogatory manner a fortnight ago during his campaign. You [Mr. Gandhi] have just started your life and you are treating Mr. Gowda in this manner,” he said.  
Reacting sharply to Mr. Modi's jibe, Mr. Siddaramaiah said such remarks clearly showed that Mr. Gowda and Mr. Modi had entered into a covert understanding for the Assembly polls.

## It's 2 Reddys plus 1 Yeddyurappa: CM

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
BENGALURU  
It was a day of attacks and counter-attacks in the campaign for Assembly election in Karnataka.  
On Tuesday, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused the Karnataka Chief Minister of adopting a “2+1 formula” — Siddaramaiah contesting from two seats and his son contesting from one seat — Mr. Siddaramaiah took to Twitter to respond to the digs. He tweeted that the Prime Minister's 2+1 formula was “2 Reddys and 1 Yeddyurappa.”  
“Today PM avoided talking about his complicity in closing CBI cases against the Reddy brothers. Instead, he spoke about some 2+1 formula. Here is the explanation to his formula to win election. 2 Reddys + 1 Yeddy (sic),” Mr. Siddaramaiah tweeted. The BJP has been embarrassed by its truck with the controversial Reddy brothers, and the allegations of corruption against its chief ministerial

candidate B.S. Yeddyurappa have given the Congress a big handle in this poll season.  
Responding to Mr. Modi's jibe that Mr. Siddaramaiah contested the second seat as he feared defeat, the Chief Minister asked, “Was it fear that drove you to contest from 2 parliamentary constituencies (Varanasi & Vadodara) Mr. PM? Of course you are a 56 inch man, you would have some clever explanation!! Forget 2 seats, Sir. Worry about the fact that your party will not cross 60-70.”  
Mr. Siddaramaiah also challenged Mr. Modi for “an open debate on a single platform on crime and law and order situation in Karnataka vis-a-vis BJP-ruled States.” This came after Mr. Modi claimed in his Udupi rally that crime was on the rise in the State and as “the nation was following ease of doing business, the State government had created an environment where there was ease of doing murder.”

# CBI probe into iron ore export scam stalled

Karnataka withdrew consent, Tamil Nadu delayed request

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI  
Withdrawal of consent by the Karnataka government in poll-bound Karnataka and a four-year delay in approval from the Tamil Nadu government stalled a comprehensive probe into alleged irregularities in iron ore exports, according to a CBI source.  
“The withdrawal of consent by the Karnataka government pertaining to six preliminary enquiries did not allow CBI investigations into the entire chain, including the mining and movement of iron ore to six ports, including two each in Karnataka, Goa and Tamil Nadu.

The cases were handed over to a State agency,” said a CBI official.  
The official said the Tamil Nadu government also took four years to recommend a CBI probe to the Centre. “The request has not yet reached us,” said the official.  
**‘Lack of jurisdiction’**  
In November 2013, based on a Lokayukta report, the Karnataka government had recommended CBI investigations involving nine ports, including three in Andhra Pradesh where the probe is still under way.  
“While pursuing the leads in Goa, we realised that

there was a need to reconstruct the entire chain starting from the mining of iron ore in Karnataka and its transportation. However, we could not do so due to lack of jurisdiction,” the official said.  
In two matters, however, the CBI sent a self-contained report to the Karnataka government recommending action under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act against 77 companies involved in iron-ore business. The agency is currently pursuing 23 under-trial cases of alleged illegal ore exports in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Hyderabad.

## Students hack college website

**STAFF REPORTER**  
HYDERABAD  
Over a dozen students of a reputed engineering college near Shamshabad hacked its official website and manipulated the examination results.  
The incident which left the college management red-faced, reportedly took place hours ahead of declaration of the results of the third-year Computer Science course.  
According to a top Cyberabad police official, the incident took place a few weeks ago. The students who had failed the examination allegedly hacked the website and altered their results. The faculty became suspicious as they felt that it was difficult for some students to have passed the examination.

## Kerala ends extortion by headload workers

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM  
The Kerala government's decision to abolish ‘nokku-kooli’ (extortion without doing any work) by headload workers and ensure freedom to engage workers in those sectors exempted from the purview of the Headload Workers Act came into force on Tuesday.  
The government issued an order on Monday abolishing the practice and declaring it unlawful.  
The order seeks to end the practice of certain labour unions providing workers at sites for a commission.  
The order was issued on the basis of the discussions Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had with trade union leaders on March 8 to end such practices. Such tendencies were found to be an impediment to the nurturing of a healthy investment milieu and a new work culture.  
**Fixed rates**  
The order says that labourers would be able to levy only the rates fixed by district labour officers for various tasks.  
On engaging workers of registered trade unions for loading and unloading of domestic goods, farm products and such others exempted from the Headload Workers Act, they would have to pay the rates fixed. Workers would not be permitted to collect wages without doing any work.



IN BRIEF



**Khattar spends night with Haryana villagers**  
KARNAL  
Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar spent a night with the residents of Salaru village in Karnal district as part of a Gram Swaraj Abhiyan programme to check the progress of his government's schemes in the State. PTI

**Girl raped by juvenile neighbour in U.P.**  
BANDA (U.P.)  
A six-year-old girl was raped allegedly by a juvenile in the Baberu area here, the police said on Tuesday. According to a complaint filed by the victim's father, their 17-year-old neighbour allegedly abducted the girl on Sunday and raped her. PTI

**Pilgrim dies en route to Vaishno Devi shrine**  
JAMMU  
A 36-year-old pilgrim died en route to the cave shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi in Trikuta Hills of J&K's Reasi district. Mohan of Maharashtra collapsed at Himkoti and was rushed to the Public Health Centre where doctors declared him brought dead, police said. PTI

**Woman among two held with cannabis**  
JAMMU  
Two narcotic smugglers, including a woman, were on Tuesday arrested and 2 kg cannabis was seized from them in Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district, police said. A police party conducted a search along with magistrate at Zallas Gool in the district and seized 2 kg of cannabis from the house of the couple. PTI

**FIR against five youth for murdering 20-year-old**  
SAMBHAL (U.P.)  
An FIR has been registered against five unidentified persons for allegedly killing a youth after a video went viral on social networking sites in which they were seen purportedly beating a youth, the police said on Tuesday. The FIR was registered on Monday. PTI

Red-letter day



**March on:** Members of trade unions take part in a rally to mark Labour Day, in Bengaluru on Tuesday. The day was observed across the country and abroad. Security forces arrested six persons in Tehran for an unauthorised demonstration. • PTI

Sugarcane farmers threaten stir

'Mills yet to pay ₹11,000 crore in arrears; the govt. yet to come up with a solution'

**STAFF REPORTER**  
MEERUT  
Farmers and farmers' groups in Uttar Pradesh are feeling increasingly unhappy with the piling up of sugarcane arrears. Sugarmills are yet to pay over ₹11000 crore in dues to the farmers in the State.

The State sugarmill association, however, blames the decreasing rate of sugar for its inability to sufficiently and promptly clear the dues. According to officials of the State Cane Department, cane dues are ₹10657 crore, which has led to many farmers' groups in the State to warn of agitation and State-wide protest.

The Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU), the biggest and most influential farmers' body, and the Bharatiya Kisan Mazdoor Manch (BKMM) have threatened protests in



Farmers with sugarcane queue up outside a mill in Modinagar in Uttar Pradesh. • FILE PHOTO SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

every district against the failure of the State government to get the sugarmills to clear their dues. "The BJP government had won the votes of the farmers promising them to deliver cane dues in 14 days from the beginning of the crushing. The arrears will soon cross ₹12,000 crore but the government is yet to come up with any solution. Only yes-

terday a farmer in Saharanpur attempted suicide by taking poison after the local bank issued him recovery notice. Such incidents will become more frequent if the Adityanath government continues to sleep," said Prof. Sudhir Panwar, former Member of the State Planning Commission. Mr. Panwar said the situa-

U.P. districts like Baghpat, Shamli, Meerut, Muzaffarnagar and Saharanpur was worse Cane Development Minister Suresh Rana, however, said the government was doing everything possible to ensure timely payment of dues. "We are acting against sugar mills which are not paying the farmers. District administrations are issuing notices and taking actions against the defaulter sugar mills," he said. Highly placed sources in the State Cane Department told *The Hindu* that the Modi government was contemplating a whole range of solutions to deal with the crisis, including proposing a production-linked subsidy scheme for sugarcane farmers, imposition of sugar cess and reducing GST on ethanol.

Official on demolition drive shot

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**  
SHIMLA

A Town and Country Planning official was shot dead and a PWD official injured when the owner of a guest house in Kasauli opened fire at them on Tuesday. Shailbala was killed when Narayani guest house owner Vijay Singh opened fire at the officials who had come to demolish the guest house. The injured, Gulab Singh, was taken to Dharampur hospital from where he was referred to PGI, Chandigarh. Kasauli has a number of hotels and guest houses, and many of these have been declared illegal by the Supreme Court. The Court had ordered the demolition on April 17. The officials complying with the apex court and the NGT orders are having a tough time in getting these properties vacated or demolished.

NHRC notices over caste 'stamps'

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

Termining the incident a violation of right to equality and dignity, the NHRC on Tuesday issued notices to the Madhya Pradesh government and police over candidates for the post of constable from reserved categories being stamped on their chests. The NHRC took suo motu cognisance of media reports on the issue. The photos led to the State police ordering a probe. According to reports, the NHRC said, the stamps were used in order to prevent confusion as the norms for height and chest measurements for general and reserved category applicants are different.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: SKYMET (TAKEN AT 17:00 HRS)

**Forecast for Wednesday:** Heavy rain very likely at isolated places over Gangetic West Bengal, Odisha, Assam and Meghalaya. Heat wave conditions very likely to prevail at some parts of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Marathwada and Vidarbha.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala.....	54	32.5	20.0	Kozhikode .....	19.4	36.2	23.6
Ahmedabad.....	43.0	26.1	14.0	Kurnool.....	43.3	31.1	23.0
Aizawl.....	27.0	14.0	14.0	Lucknow.....	34.5	31.0	23.0
Allahabad.....	39.2	21.4	14.0	Madurai.....	39.7	27.4	27.4
Bengaluru.....	5.7	35.2	21.4	Mangaluru.....	35.7	27.1	27.1
Bhopal.....	42.3	28.2	12.1	Mumbai.....	33.1	24.1	24.1
Bhubaneswar.....	31.8	36.8	21.2	Mysuru.....	21.0	34.9	19.9
Chandigarh.....	40.0	27.4	27.4	New Delhi.....	41.5	25.6	25.6
Chennai.....	36.9	28.6	28.6	Patna.....	0.4	30.4	22.2
Coimbatore.....	35.4	36.6	20.8	Port Blair.....	0.8	33.6	25.4
Dehradun.....	0.2	35.2	20.0	Puducherry.....	36.4	26.8	26.8
Gangtok.....	7.4	19.0	12.1	Pune.....	40.7	20.1	20.1
Goa.....	33.0	27.0	27.0	Raipur.....	43.0	28.0	28.0
Guwahati.....	8.1	24.3	20.0	Ranchi.....	1.4	35.7	18.5
Hubballi.....	38.0	22.0	22.0	Shillong.....	14.4	12.0	12.0
Hyderabad.....	42.0	27.0	27.0	Shimla.....	22.9	15.8	15.8
Imphal.....	1.5	28.0	16.0	Srinagar.....	28.4	10.1	10.1
Jaipur.....	44.2	27.1	27.1	Trivandrum.....	34.8	27.0	27.0
Kochi.....	32.8	27.0	27.0	Tiruchi.....	41.1	26.4	26.4
Kohima.....	1.2	25.9	12.8	Vijayawada.....	39.7	29.0	29.0
Kolkata.....	9.2	32.1	23.5	Visakhapatnam.....	34.0	28.8	28.8

Pollutants in the air you are breathing						Yesterday
CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>2</sub>	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad.....	76	36	42	126	.....	.....
Bengaluru.....	7	28	30	160	.....	.....
Chennai.....	5	121	49	104	.....	.....
Delhi.....	2	39	76	97	180	.....
Hyderabad.....	11	44	18	91	129	.....
Kolkata.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Lucknow.....	3	38	34	44	.....	.....
Mumbai.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Pune.....	56	23	45	80	99	.....
Visakhapatnam.....	2	22	21	23	53	.....

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)  
**SO<sub>2</sub>:** Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.  
**NO<sub>2</sub>:** Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.  
**CO:** Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.  
**PM2.5 & PM10:** Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease





### Lalu admitted to cardiac ward in Ranchi hospital

**RANCHI**  
Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad was on Tuesday admitted to the cardiac ward of the Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences in Ranchi, hours after he arrived from New Delhi. The AIIMS in Delhi had discharged him on Monday. PTI

### Youth held for sharing objectionable post

**JAMMU**  
A youth, Showkat Ali of Barota area, has been arrested for allegedly sharing a post against a particular community on his Facebook page in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, the police said.

### Land record receipts: Maharashtra goes digital

**MUMBAI**  
Maharashtra on Tuesday became the first State to provide digitally-signed land record receipts (also known as 7/12 receipts), which Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis claimed would check irregularities and bring in transparency.

### CBI examined loan papers of Sivasankaran: IDBI

**NEW DELHI**  
The IDBI Bank on Tuesday said that the CBI has examined documents related to its loan exposure to the companies of former Aircel promoter C. Sivasankaran. The bank said that it was providing requisite information to the authorities. PTI

## Dalit man beaten and forced to drink urine

Four arrested in Budaun district of U.P.

**OMAR RASHID**  
**LUCKNOW**

Four persons have been arrested in Budaun district of Uttar Pradesh on the charges of beating a Dalit man and forcing him to drink urine after he refused to work on their fields, the police said on Tuesday.

The station house officer of Hazratpur police station, Rajesh Kashyap, was also suspended for negligence in failing to lodge a case on the victim's initial complaint.

Sitaram Valmiki, in his complaint, said that some influential men in his village beat him with shoes and slippers and abused him after he refused to harvest their crops.

Mr. Valmiki said he wanted to work on his own field first. He said the accused started hitting him when they found him gathering

## ‘Sub-village units will be powered too’

Centre says Saubhagya scheme will reach hamlets not covered by rural electrification programme

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
**NEW DELHI**

The government on Tuesday responded to allegations that its village electrification programme was still incomplete despite its claims of 100% electrification, saying that the few remaining “sub-village units” would be covered under its Saubhagya household electrification scheme.

“There are reports in some sections of media that some villages are still un-electrified, contrary to the government’s claim of achieving 100% village electrification,” the Ministry of Power said in a statement.

“In this connection, it may be reiterated that the Government had taken up electrification of remaining un-electrified census villages, duly identifiable as per census code, reported by the States as on April 1, 2015, under ‘Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana’ (DDUG-JY). Electrification of all these villages has been reported complete by all the concerned States.”

“Some of the households in sub-village units viz. habitations/hamlets/Dhanis/Majras/Tolas may not be having electricity as of now, and it is felt that certain news agencies are reporting about such habitations,” it added. “All the remaining households located in the habitations/hamlets/Dhanis/Majras/Tolas associated with the census villages and households attached to urban settlements would be covered under ‘Saubhagya.’”



**In anticipation:** A torch hangs from a home with no power connection in a village on the outskirts of Alwar, Rajasthan, on April 17. •BLOOMBERG

## Assam senior citizens refute PM’s electrification claims

**RAHUL KARMAKAR**  
**GUWAHATI**

A senior citizen in Assam has sought electricity for his village, soon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi claimed via Twitter that the BJP-led

NDA government had achieved complete rural electrification in the country.

Harendra Chandra Das, a retired teacher of Peragaon in western Assam’s Barpeta district, posted a letter addressed to State BJP president Ranjeet Kumar Dass, on his Facebook page late on Monday.

“You may recall visiting our village of 12 families and 46 voters before the [2016] Assembly election. We told

you we have everything except electricity, and you called up a contractor for connecting our village to the grid beyond,” Mr. Das said.

“Sometime ago, I bought 800 metres of wire to get electricity from the constituency of your neighbouring MLA, but the other villagers are not as resourceful as I am,” the retired teacher said.

Peragaon, in Barpeta Assembly constituency represented by the State BJP chief, borders the Bijnai constituency that is represented by Kamal Singh Narzary of Bodoland People’s Front (BPF). The BJP and BPF are ruling allies in Assam.

Mr. Dass could not be con-

tacted, but one of his aides said he has taken note of the teacher’s Facebook reminder.

“We will act on it after assessing the situation on the ground,” the aide said.

Monday also saw another senior citizen carrying out a hunger strike to draw attention to the lack of basic amenities, including electricity, in central Assam’s Dima Hasao district.

Bahim Chandra Langthasa, founder of Jadikhe Naiso Hasam, an apex organisation of the Dimas community, called off his fast in the evening after local authorities assured to bail the district’s Langtingdibu area out of isolation.

### What are 'party poppers'?

Party poppers work akin to the popping of a champagne bottle

- Sometimes they are shaped like bottles but, in most instances, they are sealed cardboard cases, about as big as a rolled-up newspaper, and stuffed with shredded paper and glitter
- Pulling an attached string sets off a mild, chemical explosive, which 'pops' open the container and releases a confetti of coloured paper and fine glitter
- There have been reports of injury, even in India, when party poppers exploded. Majority of them being eye injuries
- Armstrong's mixture, which is used to create the explosive, consists of:
  - Red phosphorus
  - Potassium chlorate
  - Potassium perchlorate
  - Sulphur
- Very small quantities of these chemicals—less than a 1000th of a gram—is used in poppers

INPUTS: JACOB KOSHY

## NHRC notice to Rajasthan on assault

**STAFF REPORTER**  
**NEW DELHI**

The National Human Rights Commission on Tuesday said it had issued notices to the Rajasthan Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, seeking detailed reports on the incident where a Dalit family was allegedly beaten up by upper caste people during a pre-wedding procession in the presence of the police last week.

“The Commission has observed that the incident, if true, indicates that in spite of specific provisions under law and awareness campaign run by the authorities, people belonging to Dalit community are still being subjected to discrimination and they are not safe even after giving prior intimation to the police authorities,” the NHRC said in a statement.

## Passenger claims insect in food; airline denies it

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
**NEW DELHI**

A passenger on board a Vistara flight on Tuesday complained of spotting a cockroach in his food while the airline rejected the claim.

The passenger took to Twitter on the issue.

The airline in its reply to the passenger said “the insect was not on or from the meal and we are fumigating the aircraft regularly”.

In a series of tweets, the airline, however, said, “despite regular fumigation, insects still find a way in and we apologise for the inconvenience caused. As the aircraft doors are opened regularly on ground, insects can sometimes still find a way in despite our best efforts of fumigating the aircraft”.

The incident comes a few days after the government ordered a probe last month after a doctor was allegedly manhandled and offloaded from an IndiGo flight at Lucknow airport when he complained of mosquitoes on board.

## Six families banished for opting out of local school

Manipur victims allege lack of facilities

**IBOYAIMA LAITHANGBAM**  
**IMPHAL**

The traditional tribal village authority of Kotlen in Kangpokpi district of Manipur has drawn flak for banishing six tribal families as punishment for not sending their children to the local government school.

They had put their wards in the school of the neighbouring village. Village chieftain Dongjiang Haokip asked the six families to leave by April 28, which they did after demolishing their tin-roofed houses.

Tonglet Haokip, one of the victims, said that as there are not enough teachers, they had decided to send their children to the neighbouring village.

Despite complaints by the victims, the police are yet to intervene. The victimised families said the government school in the village was in a bad shape with two local youths, recruited as substitutes, looking after all the seven classes.

The district officials also admitted there were not



They had put their wards in the school of the neighbouring village.

• GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

enough teachers in the school. They further alleged that the chieftain, himself, was sending his children to schools in Imphal, the State capital.

The victimised families said they were taking shelter in Hengjol and Tintong Laijang villages.

The village elders said the families had gone against the resolution of the authority that all parents shall send their children to the local government school up to Class V.

The parents said they opted for the Tongsat Memorial Junior School in the neighbouring village about 1 km away. All the eight children of these six families are now studying there.

## NCERT issues cybersafety guidelines

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
**NEW DELHI**

Allowing only authorised people to access computer labs, banning use of USB flash drives, blocking pop-ups and keeping a check on appearance of new and unfamiliar icons on computers are among the cybersecurity and safety guidelines issued to schools and parents by the NCERT.

The National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) has sent guidelines defining the role of teachers as well as parents in promoting safe, legal, and ethical use of the Internet by students.

## SC admits petition to quash Section 377

A threat to human dignity: petitioner

**KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL**  
**NEW DELHI**

Seventeen years after he was imprisoned for his sexual orientation and efforts to help the LGBT community, the Supreme Court on Tuesday admitted the petition of a man to quash the “tyranny” of Section 377 of the IPC, which criminalises homosexuality.

Arif Jafar, who ran an outreach programme at his Bharosa Trust in Lucknow, was beaten up in public by the police and jailed for 47 days in 2001. He termed Section 377 a threat to human dignity and freedom of choice.

His office premises, where he conducted the outreach programme for homosexuals and distributed condoms, was raided. Literature on gender, sexuality and safe sex were seized by the police as evidence of “running a gay racket.” He was denied bail by the local sessions court. The charges mounted against Mr. Jafar, represented by advocate Sunil Fernandes, included conspiracy to promote homosexuality, “polluting the entire society” and abetting young persons to commit the offence of sodomy.

### “Chilling effect”

Mr. Jafar, who introduced himself to the Supreme Court as a “gay man and a citizen of India,” said the brutal shutting down of his peer support programme evoked



A file photo of a participant walking under a rainbow flag during a gay pride parade in Chandigarh. •REUTERS

a “chilling effect” on similar interventions to prevent and control HIV among men having sex with men. Sexual orientation and identity cannot be the basis of denying a person their inherent dignity.

Mr. Jafar quoted the court’s decision in the recent Hadiya case judgment which upheld the fundamental right to determine the “choice of one’s intimate partner, within or outside marriage.” Section 377, the petition said, specifically and directly violated this right.

A Bench, led by Chief Justice of India, issued notice to the government and tagged the petition with a series of petitions to be heard by a Constitution Bench.

The Supreme Court had similarly on January 8 referred to a larger Bench a writ petition filed by five gay and lesbian members of the community to strike down Section 377.

## DNA profiling Bill in Monsoon Session, Centre informs SC

PIL plea seeks use of technology to identify unclaimed bodies

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT**  
**NEW DELHI**

The government on Tuesday informed the Supreme Court that it would introduce the DNA profiling Bill in the Monsoon Session of Parliament.

The government was responding to a PIL petition filed by NGO Lok Niti Foundation in 2012 on the use of DNA profiling for identifying unclaimed bodies, especially to match them with old cases of missing persons. A Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra, recorded the submission made by Additional Solicitor General Pinky Anand, for the government, and observed that the Centre should take steps as expeditiously as possible.

The court said that with the competent authority un-

dertaking to bring about a legislation there was no need for a mandamus from the Supreme Court in this issue.

However, the counsel for the NGO urged the court to keep the matter pending as the government has been promising a law since 2007. The court said the petitioner was free to move the top court in case of any future grievances.

### Law Commission report

Last year, the Law Commission of India, in its 271st report, prepared the draft Bill named, The DNA Based Technology (Use and Regulation) Bill, 2017, after examining various judicial pronouncements and constitutional provisions.

The exercise was initiated by the commission after the

Department of Biotechnology forwarded its draft of ‘The Use and Regulation of DNA based Technology in Civil and Criminal Proceedings, Identification of Missing Persons and Human Remains Bill, 2016’.

The Commission recorded that DNA profiling was indeed used for disaster victim identification, investigation of crimes, identification of missing persons and human remains and for medical research purposes. It, however, also flagged that privacy concerns and the ethics involved in this scientific collection of data were very high. The commission said the procedure for DNA profiling, if given statutory recognition, should be done legitimately as per constitutional provisions.





## Power drive

Getting affordable electricity to every household needs sustained policy support

Access to electricity drives the productivity of households, empowers women and enables education and communication. Millions of homes still lack this vital resource in India. And as of April 1, 2015, the official count of unelectrified villages was 18,452. So when Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently announced that all inhabited villages now enjoy electrification, it signalled a significant milestone in the country's development. It is an achievement that will raise aspirations in the remotest districts. Yet, broad-brush statistics conceal severe disparities, including the actual number of households in villages that have power connections, the number of hours they get reliable power, and the per capita power that rural and urban Indians consume. For one, the existing definition to declare a village electrified is coverage of a mere 10% of households and common facilities such as schools, panchayats and health centres. The claim of electrification pales when viewed against some of these realities. Rural household electrification has a wide range across States, from 47% to 100%. The average hours of power supplied in a day to rural areas in January 2018 ranged from 11.5 in Mizoram, 14.91 in Haryana and 17.72 in Uttar Pradesh to 24 hours in Kerala, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. These anomalies are often the result of infrastructure deficits and administrative inefficiency and they show that, even with supportive Central schemes, the Power for All 24x7 goal adopted by States and Union Territories with a deadline of April 1, 2019 is far from realistic.

Census data for 2001 and 2011 indicate that the number of rural households that use electricity as their primary source of lighting rose by about 12 percentage points to 55.3%, while in that decade urban households rose five points to 92.7%. The per capita consumption between rural and fast-rising urban India also represents a challenge, since there is a divergence between the two. There are twin challenges to be faced in improving access and equity. To many, the falling cost of renewable, decentralised sources such as solar photo-voltaics represents a ready solution for rural India. Yet, the evidence from States such as Maharashtra, which made an early claim to full electrification six years ago relying partly on solar power, shows that theft, damage and lack of technical capacity can pose serious hurdles. The answer may lie in a hybrid solution that ensures continued scaling up of both grid-connected and standalone solar systems in appropriate areas, augmenting conventional sources of electricity, with a clear emphasis on rooftop solutions for cities. Cheaper renewables will enable differential pricing for households in remote areas, a key determinant of wider social benefits of electricity. Rural electrification in India has been a long effort, achieving rapid growth from the Third Plan to the Twelfth Plan, but getting affordable power to every household needs sustained policy support.

## Nicaragua rocked

Protests over welfare reform have brought Daniel Ortega's authoritarianism into focus

The violence and the clampdown that have convulsed Nicaragua, marked by mayhem on the streets of Managua and other cities, have left many dead, and undermined President Daniel Ortega's authority. The public protests were triggered by the government's decision to simultaneously raise individual contributions and reduce social welfare benefits and pensions. The economic rationale behind the move was to contain the ballooning social security deficit of recent years, based on the financial projections by the IMF for the end of the decade. But the economy registered a healthy rate of growth last year and the current account deficit has been falling. Given this, the government could have considered staggering the painful economic measures. The backlash has forced Mr. Ortega to roll back the reform proposal. But the damage was been done, and the reversal of the decision has energised the opposition to mount a concerted challenge to Mr. Ortega's authoritarian style of functioning. Rosario Murillo, his wife and the Vice-President, is said to be the power behind the throne, and has been criticised for placing close family members in crucial positions. 'Comandante Daniel', as Mr. Ortega was popularly known among his Sandinista revolutionaries, has over time altered the constitution to overturn the prohibition on a second term and, in a separate manoeuvre, allowed for indefinite re-election bids. An example of the creeping unaccountability was the decision to bar international observers during the 2016 elections, which Mr. Ortega won for a third successive five-year stint.

The current escalation has revived memories of the 1970s, with parallels being drawn between the dictator Anastasio Somoza, whom Mr. Ortega overthrew. The release of a few student protesters has done little to ease tensions, as calls grow louder for guarantees that the President and the Vice President will not seek re-election in 2021. Another demand is for the next polls to be advanced. While the outcry reflects public anger against an authoritarian ruler, there is no sign yet that the current mood could be channelled into a coherent political alternative. The government should do everything in its power to prevent any escalation of the violence, which has claimed more than 60 lives according to the country's Permanent Commission on Human Rights. The dialogue with the protesters should start. The country offers yet another instance of the dangers posed to democratic accountability by those dispensing with presidential term limits. Leaders in various Latin American states have made it a habit to prolong their tenures by curtailing political freedoms. It is time the matter was considered at a larger regional forum.

# The rocky road to 2019

Concrete steps are needed to defuse crises that could disrupt India's political and social equilibrium



M.K. NARAYANAN

As 2019 and the general election beckon, the situation within the country appears far from reassuring. Several events over the past few months seem to presage that there is worse to follow. Protests and agitations have a life of their own and underestimating their potential could be cause for grief. Hence, it might be worthwhile for the nation's leaders to pay heed to the ancient Chinese proverb, "the wind sweeping through the tower heralds a storm rising in the mountain", and take anticipatory steps.

**Lowdown on internal security** The authorities need to analyse why simultaneous upheavals are taking place on different planes across the country. Each day, a concatenation of events and situations are contributing to feelings of deep unease. Take internal security, for instance. The authorities may claim that the situation is stable but the daily litany of violence tells a different story. Jammu and Kashmir is a good example where the situation has been steadily deteriorating. The past year has witnessed an increase in casualties, of civilians and security personnel, an upsurge in terrorist violence, a rise in cross-border terrorism and increased infiltration from Pakistan. Despite the surgical strikes by India, a palpable fear syndrome prevails in the areas bordering Pakistan.

Likewise, claims made latterly of the eclipse of the Maoist menace – there are reports of scores of Maoists having been killed in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district in end-April – are clearly uncon-

vincing. Maoist violence is not so prevalent in areas where it was once rampant; while the kill-ratio of Maoists to security force personnel appears to have gone in favour of the security forces, the capacity of Maoists in carrying out selective violence has not been significantly blunted, especially in their strongholds in Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra. As an ideology-based militant movement, Maoism needs to be countered by a sustained ideological campaign in rural and urban areas, but this is nowhere in evidence.

Next is the growing spectre of agrarian unrest. Over the past year, a series of protest movements by farmers have rocked the country. While the causes are varied, the basic issue remains the same, viz. the neglect of farmers and the agrarian community by those in authority. Large-scale protest marches by farmers such as the one in Maharashtra in March, evoke both concern and fear. More protests are in the offing. With cohesive leadership, the current peaceful agrarian protests could attain a dangerous dimension.

### Dalit identity and concerns

An even bigger challenge confronts the nation today – on how to deal with the issue of Dalit "self-assertion". This aspect was clearly manifest during the April 2 Bharat Bandh which was sponsored by different Dalit groups; its pan-India imprint was unprecedented. The bandh was to protest the judgment of the Supreme Court, amending the Scheduled Castes and Schedules Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. The outburst of violence, which resulted in some casualties and the destruction of property worth crores, went far beyond this aspect. There was and is no mistaking the pent-up resentment or the degree of mistrust. Anger and resentment have



been building up within the Dalit community for quite some time. Growing numbers of atrocities against Dalits in recent years, which thanks to modern communications systems and social media have gained critical publicity, are undoubtedly the root cause of the pent-up anger. Instances in 2016, such as Rohith Vemula's death at Hyderabad University, and, separately, in Una, have been triggers for the explosion of anger and violence.

However, the recent outburst points to a new brand of Dalit "rejectionist politics" which should be a matter of utmost concern. Appeasement is no longer acceptable. Moderating or repealing cow protection laws will hardly matter or make a difference. More reservation in jobs is unlikely to assuage Dalit concerns. A group of alumni from the Indian Institutes of Technology have given up their jobs to form a political party to fight for the rights of the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes.

### Violence against children

If the authorities have been found wanting or are being accused of their inept handling of the April 2 agitation, they are now being hauled over the coals for their inability to check the spate of incidents of rape across the country. The brutal assaults on young children have touched a raw nerve. Demands are being made to ensure that crimes of this nature end

and that the administration sheds its helplessness and starts taking stringent action.

Today, the place names, Kathua (Jammu) and Unnao (Uttar Pradesh), have become synonymous with the "epidemic" of rapes. But sexual violence still continues despite public outrage and the administration is seen to be helpless in preventing it, which is beginning to create a crisis of confidence in the ability of the administration and the government to deal with the situation. Questions are being asked as the administration is unable to fulfil one of its most basic responsibilities – to protect the honour and the dignity of women and children. Mere condemnation of rape by those in authority will not do.

### Cracks in the two pillars

Distinct from these issues, but equally worrisome, is the extent of disruption seen in the functioning of Parliament. A disruption of parliamentary proceedings is not new, but the near total washout of the Budget session has shaken the faith of the nation.

The view from the Treasury Benches that the Opposition is to blame for this has gained little traction. Most people believe that the responsibility to ensure the smooth functioning of Parliament rests equally, if not more, with the ruling dispensation, apart from the Presiding Officers of the two Houses. What the nation is demanding is a resolution of the impasse, and not the assigning of blame. A lack of demonstrable action is only adding to the sense of dismay.

The prevailing dissonance in the higher judiciary, the display of divisions within the highest court of the land, and the charges levelled against the Chief Justice of India by Opposition parties which are seeking his impeachment, are again highly disturbing. There has been no precedent for such a sit-

uation. The persistence of such trends is giving rise to serious concerns as to where the nation is headed.

### Cyber concerns

The authorities also need to be aware that as various State elections draw near, newer threats are likely to emerge. Among them are cyber threats. India is possibly the third most vulnerable country today from the point of view of cyberattacks. Many experts are of the view that as the digital economy expands, India will confront the spectre of cyberattacks. Given that it is already struggling to deal with threats such as ransomware and cryptojacking, India will need to tone up its strategic mindset and increase its homegrown capabilities expeditiously; a devastating cyberattack could undermine public confidence in an election year.

Finally, given the current resurgence in communal and caste aspirations, India cannot afford to overlook the danger of a rise in regional subnationalism, of which there are already some incipient signs. Such tendencies could gain a fillip, if as anticipated, the coming elections witness bitter electoral campaigns based on a variety of considerations that include caste and community.

It is not that solutions for all these problems fall within the purview of the authorities or the government. However, it is in the nature of things that the responsibility for situations tends to devolve on the government. Hence, it is important that the road to 2019 is paved with not only professed good intentions but also concrete steps to mitigate and "defuse" a succession of crises that have the potential to disturb the political and social equilibrium in an election year.

M.K. Narayanan is a former National Security Adviser and a former Governor of West Bengal



SHASHANK JOSHI

On Monday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu presided over a theatrical press conference that was part TED Talk, part show trial. With "Iran lied" emblazoned in oversize capital letters and props arrayed on the stage, the optics were reminiscent of his speech to the UN General Assembly in 2012, when he famously brandished a picture of a cartoon bomb.

### Behind the 'spectacle'

Mr. Netanyahu pointed to cabinets stacked with files and old-fashioned CD-ROMs, lending the show a curiously anachronistic air. He announced that his country had audaciously spirited out tens of thousands of documents from a secret facility in Iran which "conclusively prove that Iran was brazenly lying when it said it never had a nuclear weapons programme". The purpose of this spectacle was to put Tehran in the dock once more, this time just two weeks before U.S. President Do-

nald Trump is due to decide whether he will certify, or annul, the nuclear deal painstakingly negotiated in 2015 between Iran and six world powers.

But 'Bibi's' big reveal was, in some ways, a big fizzle. Long before the nuclear deal was signed in 2015, there was copious evidence that Iran had spent decades pursuing a clandestine nuclear programme. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), amply supplied by the intelligence agencies of the U.S., Israel and Europe, was able to develop a remarkably detailed picture of these illicit activities. In November 2011, for instance, the Agency produced a diagram showing how the structure of Iran's nuclear weapons programme had changed over time, in exactly the way that Mr. Netanyahu breathlessly recounted on Monday.

### Hardly revelatory

No wonder that Olli Heinonen, former IAEA chief inspector and a fierce critic of Iran in recent years, was underwhelmed. "I just saw a lot of pictures I had seen before," he told *The Guardian*, noting that many of these had been shown to the IAEA board over a decade ago. It is hardly revelatory that Iran had a secret nuclear weapons programme. Indeed, this is precisely



why Western countries, joined by Russia and China, put so much economic, political, and at times military pressure on Iran in the years leading up to 2015. The nuclear deal was not premised on Iranian good faith, but precisely the opposite – like any robust diplomatic agreement. Although the U.S.'s intelligence community judged in 2007 that Iran had largely halted its nuclear weapons programme four years previously, there were credible concerns that some research and development had continued. The deal not only placed sweeping restrictions on Iran's civilian nuclear activity, thereby limiting how much fissile material Iran would be able to produce for a bomb, but also put into place one of the strongest inspections regimes seen anywhere in the world.

To be clear, Israel's intelligence coup is undoubtedly impressive. The exfiltration of such a remarkable trove will one day make a fine *Argo*-like movie. The data are likely to be of real value, perhaps corroborating the IAEA's existing knowledge of Iran's nuclear weapons programme, adding new details to the picture, or, most importantly of all, helping the Agency ascertain how much of that work continued beyond the early 2000s. Those who implausibly insisted that Iran was innocent of all charges, framed by artful adversaries, look even more foolish today. These documents may not be new; they are nevertheless a damning indictment of Iran's brazen dishonesty over a long period.

### If Iran slips away

Yet far from undercutting the Iran deal, they reinforce its importance. If the U.S. walks away from its commitments on May 12, Iran would be free to reinstall advanced centrifuges, pile up enriched uranium, and revert to less intrusive inspections. The international community would have fewer opportunities to clarify its understanding of the weapons programme described in these documents, ultimately increasing the risk of on-going or future deception.

If the deal were to collapse under this mounting pressure, it would come at an extraordinarily sensitive time in West Asia. As Iranian forces bed down in southern Syria, Israel is aggressively trying to root them out. Late on Sunday, air strikes – almost certainly carried out by Israel – struck several airbases in Syria used by Iranian forces, including a depot for surface-to-surface missiles, reportedly killing almost a dozen Iranians. Such raids are becoming a near weekly occurrence. Tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran are also growing, with Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's callow Crown Prince and de facto ruler, repeatedly comparing Iran's leader to Hitler.

Meanwhile, a hawkish new national security team is taking over the reins in Washington, with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and National Security Adviser John Bolton flanking the President. Mr. Netanyahu's performance on Monday, timed for lunchtime in Washington and delivered in English, was intended largely for this audience. It will spur on their reckless efforts to pour fuel onto a raging fire.

Shashank Joshi is a Senior Research Fellow at the Royal United Services Institute in London

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### Executive v. judiciary

It is a bit rich on the part of the writer (Editorial page – "A dangerous incursion", May 1), who is also "an MP, former Union Minister and senior Congress leader", to be singling out the government of the day for encroaching upon the independence of judiciary. The fact is that almost all our political parties, and this includes the Congress party, are responsible for politicising the judiciary for electoral gains.

GADDAM SUDHEER KUMAR REDDY, Koilkuntla, Andhra Pradesh

■ The judiciary has always enjoyed an independent stature in the Indian democratic structure, but recent developments around it now, such as the demand for the impeachment of the Chief Justice of India, the controversy around the elevation of judges to the

Supreme Court and even certain verdicts, reveal the danger of a judiciary that capitulates. Those within it need to guard against outside forces that would be keen to manipulate its workings in a passive manner. The current state of the judiciary in India gives one the impression of it being helpless and fast becoming a tool in the hands of political entities.

TUSHAR HARIT, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh

■ It is clear that the reasons given by the Centre not to elevate the Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court to the Supreme Court are far from convincing. His verdict striking down the imposition of President's rule in Uttarakhand may have been unpalatable to the government, but it was a step that has proved the integrity and moral uprightness of our judges. Our country needs

the services of such personalities in every sphere of administration. The Constitution has been framed in such a way that all the three wings, the legislature, the executive and the judiciary, have their pride of place. In recent times people by and large have lost faith in the efficacy of the legislature and the executive but still have abundant faith in the judiciary. There should be no 'Star Wars' between the executive and the judiciary.

A. MICHAEL DHANARAJ, Coimbatore

### Gram and jyoti

The BJP government appears to be more interested in claiming credit for electrification of all villages than the accomplishment of electrification itself or sharing the credit with the governments it has succeeded ("All villages have

been electrified, says Modi", April 30). The hope that electrification in itself will transform the lives of the multitudes is rather misplaced given the persistence of widespread impoverishment. As of now, a village qualifies to be reckoned as an electrified one if 10% of its households have an electricity connection. This definition should change to include all households. A fact is also that households that are yet to be electrified are often too poor to afford the expenses. Free/subsidised power to the poor is needed to bring some cheer in their lives and secure a semblance of equitable distribution. Finally, uninterrupted supply must be ensured. For adequate supply we can turn to renewable sources of energy – the sun and wind.

G. DAVID MILTON, Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

### Reaching out

It is a wonderful gesture on the part of the management of Chennai Super Kings to acknowledge the support of its band of loyal fans. Reports that CSK's management is taking small steps to ensure arrangements for their travel and stay at various match venues are inspiring and perhaps a first in Indian sport. Of course, nobody could do anything about the move to shift CSK's matches out of its home turf in Chennai after threats by fringe elements. But this has been more than compensated for by CSK's understanding and the value of supporting its fans ("CSK fans, players go the extra mile to cheer", April 28).

V.S. GANESHAN, Bengaluru

### Moving gesture

I wish to share this anecdote about former Tamil Nadu

Chief Secretary T.V. Venkataraman (Tamil Nadu editions, "Former Chief Secretary T.V. Venkataraman no more", April 21). I had the honour of knowing him as an IAS officer and a friend. I once requested him to help a patient with cancer; after having spent more than ₹2 lakh on treatment, the man's wife was wondering what to do. After discussion, the lady and I decided to go to Venkataraman's residence. Following a patient hearing, he asked us to meet him again in his office at Fort St. George. We were greeted by his staff along with a village officer. Immediately after signing a few papers, he sanctioned ₹50,000 for the additional treatment. I can never forget Venkataraman's kind gesture and humility.

KOSHY PHILIP, Chennai

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THE WEDNESDAY INTERVIEW | STEVEN PINKER

# ‘People are safer now than they were several hundred years ago’

If we base our view of the world on quantitative trends over history rather than on news, we will get a different picture of the state of humanity, says the cognitive psychologist

JACOB KOSHY

Professor Steven Pinker is a cognitive psychologist at Harvard University. His popular science books have dwelt on how we learn language and how our mind makes sense of the world. In his latest book, Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism and Progress, he argues that the ideals of the European Enlightenment have played a key role in making the 20th century the most prosperous one in human history. In this interview conducted over the telephone, he says that pessimism from threats including terrorism and right-wing populism is largely unwarranted. Excerpts:

You’ve been a professional observer and analyst of language, psychology and cognitive science, and your early popular science works have focussed on these. However, since *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, you seem increasingly preoccupied with how the human race is progressing. Could you explain this transition?

I’ve always been interested in the big questions about the human condition. One of the reasons I went into cognitive science was that it seemed to deal with the issues of human nature – like the sort of questions dwelt upon by rationalists, empiricists, ancient Greek philosophers. On the other hand, cognitive science was more intellectually tractable as it relies on data and experimentation to illuminate debates on how the human mind works. But what triggered a shift in the focus of my own writing was an issue that I dealt with when I wrote *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*, where I asked the question: Why is there a political and moral pressure for people to believe that there is no such thing as human nature? Why do so many prominent intellectuals deny it? I thought it was from an unspoken assumption that if you believe in human nature, you must lose all hope for progress and that there is no hope for im-

proving society. The fear is that if people have antisocial traits – dominance, aggression, jealousy – then there is no hope for improvement. I argued there that this was an error. Human nature has many parts and along with all of these, it also has positive components such as the ability to come up with new ideas, solve problems, share ideas through language, have a sense of sympathy and the ability to be concerned about the welfare of others. What actually happens in a society depends on which part of human nature predominates. Social improvement is possible – and it has happened: slavery has been abolished, the Soviet Union went out of existence with very little violence, and I also noted that the rate of homicide in Europe had declined by a factor of about 35 since the Middle Ages. People are safer now than they were several hundred years ago and there are examples of how society can change even though human nature hasn’t. Instead of basing one’s view of the world on the news and headlines, if you base it on quantitative trends over history, you get a very different picture of the state of humanity.

A key message that emerges from your book is that we need to remain optimistic about the future of our species. Was the emergence of Donald Trump a major motivation for you to list



ROSE LINCOLN / HARVARD STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

and flesh out reasons for hope?

It wasn’t the original motive. When I began the book, Donald Trump was still a television star – and kind of a national joke who couldn’t dream he would be President. But I did realise, during the writing of the book, that a more evidence-based or fact-based picture of the world is essential in arguing back against the dark, dystopian view that Trump advanced. His advertising, his inaugural speech painted the picture of a country as degenerating, increasingly violent, increasingly poor – all of which are contradicted by facts. These are: crime had been declining in the U.S, war has been declining, ter-

It’s much easier to be a social critic and to cry out about all the problems than point out what has gone right.

rorism is actually a minor phenomenon compared to other sources of death. So, yes, I thought that a more fact-based assessment of my country and the world was necessary to fight back against the panicky view that Trump and other populists had advanced.

You’ve mentioned the rise of right-wing populism in many countries. However, your book also speaks about an increasingly “leftward-bias” in American

universities. Isn’t this a paradox?

I don’t think it’s a paradox; they are related, in fact, for a couple of reasons. For one, they both fail to appreciate the benefits of a secular, liberal democracy and the progress that we have enjoyed thanks to science, democracy, trade and an international community. These facts aren’t emphasised in the press, in the university, in intellectual magazines. It’s much easier to be a social critic and to cry out about all the problems than point out what has gone right.

Notably, several Enlightenment intellectuals themselves didn’t strive for universal human rights for

women, residents of the colonies they controlled, minorities. Do you think in some way the Enlightenment gets more credit than it deserves?

I don’t see a connection between colonisation and the Enlightenment because European colonisation began much before, pretty much with the discovery of the Americas. With improvements in sailing technology and navigation techniques, empires – like several before them – expanded, conquered; they colonised and subjugated. It was only after the Enlightenment that we began to have criticisms of imperialism and, most notably, in the U.S. The guiding principle was independence from the British empire. It’s true that many of the people of the Enlightenment era themselves were blinkered when it came to questions of slave ownership, the rights of women.

One of your chapters is on the problem of inequality and you seem to take the position that concerns about inequality rising and threatening the world are overblown because, on average, people the world over are getting richer. So shouldn’t governments demand more transparency of the functioning of tax havens or impose greater tax on accumulated wealth?

Tax havens and tax evasion are forms of unfairness. Inequality has to be distinguished from different problems that are often lumped together. One of them is the well-being of the poor. That’s not the same as inequality because that deals with the gap between the rich and the poor. And human welfare is a matter of the well-being of the poor and only if one has a

zero-sum view of wealth – as a finite lump – would one confuse poverty and inequality. An equal society where everyone is poor is not something to strive for. The other problem is that people often confuse inequality with unfairness. If the wealthy are gaming the system in their favour, then that absolutely must be opposed. The use of tax havens and the unbalanced influence of the wealthy in the political process, particularly in the U.S. – those are very serious problems. However, a higher tax rate on the wealthy will itself not reduce their influence on politicians.

Another concern that you see as hyped is the fear that Artificial Intelligence (AI) will progress to superhuman levels. Technologists such as Ray Kurzweil, the philosopher Nick Bostrom and even Elon Musk have warned that such a future is imminent. Using reason, how can non-experts decide which expert to take seriously or not, in matters such as AI taking away our jobs or AI becoming humanity’s overlord?

Well, the way out is to evaluate their arguments. Each has to make a case and we go with the most persuasive. We have to make a distinction though: there’s a difference between AI making certain occupations obsolete and AI turning us into slaves and spelling the end of the human race. It’s quite possible that AI will make truck drivers go the way of telephone switchboard operators. That may cause a displacement and that’s certainly not more dangerous than nuclear weapons or the end of the human species. Both the experts and people judging the experts have to evaluate the claims and make distinc-

tions. There’s been an absence of commentators, journalists and analysts looking at past predictions and noting how off the mark prophets have been. I have a discussion in the book on the science of prediction.

China is an emerging scientific superpower but doesn’t care much for the core Enlightenment idea of liberal democracy. Japan, another science major, grossly underpays women researchers compared to men. Doesn’t this imply that liberalism and gender parity aren’t always a precondition for a country’s advancement?

It need not be, though Japan, which has had huge setbacks in the last couple of decades, will come to realise that by failing to take advantage of 50% of its intellectual talent, it’s putting itself at a disadvantage. China is not a liberal democracy but compared to what it was during the Maoist era, it is far more concerned about the welfare of its citizens than with ideology. Look at the direction that it is moving in: It is an advocate of trade, economic growth, and the well-being of the mass of its citizens – all Enlightenment values – rather than advancing the ideology of the revolution. China’s official statements may be about advancing communism, but in practice, it has been the exact opposite. It’s an interesting, open question as to how far the country can advance without democracy or have problems that never get addressed because the people do get fired or oppressed or jailed. So it’s possible that it will come up against its own limitations. It’s a fact that many more Chinese students come to the U.S. or Europe to study than the other way round.

SINGLE FILE

## Fake and frightening

Rana Ayyub’s case shows how fake news is being created to target individuals

VEENA VENUGOPAL



Fake news has wreaked damage several times over the last few years. It has whipped up communal frenzy. It has potentially sabotaged elections. Even as governments and social media companies grapple with methods of countering the publishing of fake news, a particularly alarming strain has come into existence recently, in the Rana Ayyub case.

Last week, Ms. Ayyub, a freelance journalist and author of *Gujarat Files*, a book about the 2002 riots, registered a police complaint in Delhi about personalised fake news that put her in danger. According to her complaint, Ms. Ayyub was alerted by friends that a fake quote accompanied by her photograph was doing the rounds on social media. It was first tweeted by a fake account mimicking a TV channel’s logo. The fake quote went viral and triggered real outrage.

Ms. Ayyub pointed out on her social media accounts that the quote and the account were fake, but this did not do much to control either the virality of the tweet or the damage. Soon, she began to receive death and rape threats. In addition, pornographic videos using morphed images of her began to make the rounds. Her phone number and home address were posted on the Internet. In her complaint to the police as well as media statements, Ms. Ayyub said she is genuinely scared for her life and the well-being of her family.

Several aspects of this case are worrying. While fake news has tended to malign whole communities so far, it wasn’t a weapon to attack a person. Social media users, especially opinionated women, are well acquainted with troll attacks. The attacks often come and go in a span of 24-48 hours, leaving a litter of bilious comments and misogynistic observations in their wake. However, those attacks are often for something the user might have actually said; therefore it can be explained and some kind of background provided in defence. In Ms. Ayyub’s case, neither the original post nor the dog whistle to it was hers. This is a potential threat to anybody who has an online presence. It has been proven that false news spreads faster and farther than real news. Any attempts at correcting statements that are wrongly attributed to users will find a much more limited audience and once the screenshots reach WhatsApp, there is absolutely no stopping them as they leap from group to group within seconds. The damage to one’s reputation is immediate and impossible to completely reverse.

Social media has now brought us to a point where the possibility of a baying mob outside our homes, based on absolutely nothing we might have done, is imminent. The speed of distribution of false news as well as the ease of maintaining anonymity on the Web make it difficult for law-enforcement officers to prevent these attacks or track down perpetrators. Since this is a problem created by technology, its solution too lies in technology. Unless users push digital publishing companies to ensure a trail for every post and eliminate anonymity, incidents like this are likely to escalate.

The writer is an Associate Editor with The Hindu in New Delhi



CONCEPTUAL

### Downs-Thomson paradox

ECONOMICS

This refers to the observation that increasing the supply of roads for transit does not necessarily lead to less traffic congestion. It is named after economists Anthony Downs and John Michael Thomson who theorised that any increase in the supply of roads would bring additional demand for these roads from people who earlier used various forms of public transport. The phenomenon has been used by many economists to argue that the problem of traffic jams cannot be solved merely by increasing the number of road lanes. Instead, they recommend that citizens be charged a price for the use of roads.

### MORE ON THE WEB

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NOTEBOOK

## In the Korean Demilitarised Zone

Recollections from a visit many years ago

INDRANI DUTTA

The video of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un crossing over a slab of concrete to greet South Korean President Moon Jae-in not only went viral, with many calling this single step a creation of history, it also brought back vivid images of my own trip to the Demilitarised Zone some years ago.

Located about 35 km to the north of Seoul, the Korean Demilitarised Zone is considered by some as one of the most dangerous strips of land in the world. It is a heavily fortified area. Surrounded by mountains, a bunch of us journalists, visiting South Korea as part of a Korea-India journalist exchange programme, stood excitedly at a checkpoint, the tension between the two Koreas palpable there.

It was a cold November morning in 2012. Adding to the chill were the views provided by telescopes

placed on a terrace of a forbidden and unknown land. This was no happy, bustling touristy area. It seemed calm, but uneasily so. As we peered into the telescopes, joint military personnel, who were manning the area, stared ahead into vast swathes of uninhabited land.

If this wasn’t unnerving enough, we were more edgy at the next site we were escorted to: the Third Tunnel of Aggression, simply called the Third Tunnel. We deposited all our belongings at one spot before clambering down a gently sloping 200 metre underground tunnel, which South Korea claimed was burrowed surreptitiously by the North (in the days of heightened tension) to sneak in their troops into ‘enemy’ territory. North Korea, however, claimed that this was an underground coal mine. We reached a peep hole that gave us an aperture view

of the communist country. A TV journalist clicked photographs stealthily, but not stealthily enough for a patrolling soldier who immediately caught him and forced him to delete all the photos.

We were also taken to Dorasan Station, situated on the Gyeongui Line, on the border. Located about 56 km from Seoul station and 205 km from Pyongyang station, it marked the aspiration for a reunification of the two Koreas.

The artificial divide between the two countries reminded me of such a divide closer home: between West Bengal and Bangladesh. Both, after all, are the outcomes of soured political relationships which have affected thousands of people over generations. Hopefully, the small steps taken by the leaders of the North and South will herald big leaps for the peninsula sometime in the foreseeable future.

FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 2, 1968

### Control on cloth output liberalised

A comprehensive short-term policy, which includes adjustments of pattern of production, marketing and excise duty on cotton textiles, was announced by the Commerce Minister, Mr. Dinesh Singh, in the Rajya Sabha to-day [May 1, New Delhi] to relieve the present difficulty faced by the textile industry. Under the new scheme, the area of control has been reduced from 40 to 25 per cent. The controlled varieties will now consist of dhotis, saris long cloth, shirting and drill made in coarse and lower medium categories. The superfine, fine and higher medium categories have been taken off the control. A two per cent increase in the ex-mill price of the controlled varieties has been allowed, but this will not affect the consumer price, because it will be absorbed by the reduction in excise duty from 3 paise to 1½ paise per square metre and abolition of processing surcharge. In order to maintain the competitive position of decentralised sector vis-a-vis the mill sector, a corresponding reduction is being made in the processing surcharges applicable to coarse and medium handloom and power-loom cloth.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 2, 1918.

### German Demand for Release of Prisoners.

The German Government has taken up the Swedish Press reports of disturbances in Petrograd and restoration of Monarchy. M. Bussche, Foreign Under-Secretary, has telegraphed to Irbach, Ambassador in Moscow, mentioning the Swedish reports. He says that he has received a letter from Petrograd dated 13th April, stating that the Monarchist pronouncement is imminent and that General Alexieff, Gutchkoff, Milukoff and Rodzianko are in Petrograd. M. Bussche suggests that the reports are not improbable and asks for a telegraphic reply.

[Meanwhile] Germany demands immediate release of all fit German war prisoners, while the sick shall remain in Russia under the care of neutral physicians. Germany will only release unfit Russians. The State Department [in Washington] learns that Germany is sending to Russia a big Commission to present demands regarding the exchange of prisoners, failing compliance with which she threatens to occupy Petrograd.

DATA POINT

### State of the unions

India ranks low in trade union density – the number of employees who are union members as a percentage of the total number of employees. But it ranks higher than the United States in the metric. A look at the countries with the highest and the lowest trade union density. Scandinavian countries (largely social democratic) and communist Cuba top the list

Country	Trade union density (%)
Iceland	90.4
Cuba	81.4
Denmark	67.2
:	
China	44.9
:	
Sri Lanka	15.3
India	12.8
U.S.	10.3
Pakistan	5.6
Myanmar	1
Venezuela	0.2

SOURCE: INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION (2016)



## GST receipts cross ₹1 lakh cr. in April

“The GST revenue collections in April have shown a phenomenal buoyancy as compared to the collections in previous months, which is very encouraging,” Abhishek Jain, Tax Partner at EY India said in a note.

“With anti-evasion measures like e-waybill already introduced and others like TDS, TCS and credit matching which may get introduced in the coming months, the Government could be hopeful of very good GST collections in the current fiscal year, that is, 2018-19.”

The government was, however, cautious about declaring April’s collections as a trend for the future.

“The buoyancy in the tax revenue of GST reflects the upswing in the economy and better compliance,” the release said.

“However, it is usually noticed that in the last month of the financial year, people also try to pay arrears of some of the previous months also and, therefore, this month’s revenue cannot be taken as trend for the future.”

Compliance, however, still remains a problem as shown by the fact that 60.47 lakh GSTR 3B returns were filed for March up to April 30, out of 87.12 lakh who were eligible to file, which is a compliance rate of just 69.5%.

“April was also the month for filing of quarterly return for composition dealers,” the release added.

“Out of 19.31 lakh composition dealers, 11.47 lakh have filed their quarterly return (GSTR 4) which is 59.40% and have paid total tax of ₹579 crore.”

## Soon, you can make calls, browse while flying in India

The government will not intervene with the pricing mechanisms used by the operators. Globally, the Internet services on board aircraft are available at a premium.

The regulator had suggested that mobile communication on aircraft (MCA) systems be operated once the plane reached an altitude of 3,000 metres to avoid causing harmful interference to ground-based mobile networks. However, the flyer will be able to access Internet through on-board Wi-Fi when electronic devices are permitted to be used only in flight/airplane

mode. The Commission also approved the regulator’s recommendations on setting up public Wi-Fi hotspots for proliferation of Broadband.

Under this, TRAI had mooted setting up of Public Data Offices, which will be an upgraded version of the cyber cafe and the PCO model, to ensure last mile connectivity for Wi-Fi services.

As per the regulator’s estimates, usage of Wi-Fi networks will bring down the approximate cost per MB of data usage to less than 2 paise as opposed to the current 23 paise per MB on 2G, 3G and 4G networks.

## PM hits back, throws Rahul a challenge

He said the Congress president could speak in any language, including “Hindi, English, or his mother’s mother tongue” for 15 minutes on the Siddaramaiah government’s achievements in Karnataka “without referring to a piece of paper.”

He also taunted Mr. Gandhi for his mispronunciation of names of Karnataka icons such as Engineer-Dewan Sir M. Visvesvaraya.

“During your 15-minute speech, you should mention

the name of Visvesvaraya at least five times,” Mr. Modi said.

**‘Naamdar and kaamdar’**

Continuing in a mocking tone, Mr. Modi claimed that ordinary people like him, who do not dress well, do not have the status to sit in front of “naamdar” (famous) people like Mr. Gandhi.

Speaking on May Day, he described himself as a “kaamdar” (worker).

## Scribes write to Smriti over online norms

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**

A group of over 100 journalists and professionals related to online media on Tuesday wrote to Information and Broadcasting Minister Smriti Irani to express concern over the Ministry’s proposal to regulate online content.

Among the journalists who signed the petition are Quint founder Raghav Bahl, The Wire founding editor M.K. Venu, Senior journalist Nalini Singh, The News Minute founder Dhanya Rajendran, senior journalist Seema Mustafa.

On April 4, the Ministry constituted a committee to come up with regulations similar to that of print and electronic media for online media.

In their e-mail, the media professionals said that it would be wrong to say that there are no norms for content on the internet. “Even a cursory reading of the IT Act would reveal that all content is covered under its scope.”

They also said that the online medium cannot be compared to print and television, because most of the contents are produced by individual citizens in exercise of their right to freedom of expression.

## The end of multiple eras

Former Bengal Finance Minister was a polymath member of significant groups

**JAYATI GHOSH**

Ashok Mitra was one of the most remarkable personalities of Independent India. A polymath who spanned technical economics, literature, policy and politics, he brought to all of these his distinctive flair, razor-sharp intelligence, and enormous energy and passion.

His death – in Kolkata on Tuesday after almost a month’s stay in hospital for diarrhoea and later respiratory problems – marks the end of multiple eras, as he was the last surviving member of several significant groups: the influential progressive economists who in the 1950s laid the groundwork for economic strategies of the subsequent decades; the founder trustees of the *Economic Weekly* (later *Economic and Political Weekly*) that played such a significant role in the intellectual life of India; the Cabinet of the first Left Front government in West Bengal that came to power in 1977 and became the longest serving such elected government anywhere in the world.

Born in pre-Independent East Bengal, Mitra first studied at Dhaka University, then Banaras Hindu University, and completed a doctorate in The Netherlands with Jan Tinbergen.



ASHOK MITRA (1928 - 2018)

He claimed that he ended up studying economics because the queue was too long to get into his first choice, literature. But he never abandoned that first love, combining his academic and policy-making activities with continuous and prolific literary output in English and Bengali.

**Income distribution**

Mitra’s Ph.D. dissertation on “The Share of wages in national income” addressed income distribution, which remained at the heart of his concerns throughout his life.

On returning to India in 1954, he worked in government as well as other research institutions. In the 1960s he was Chairman of the Agricultural Prices Commission and then Chief Economic Adviser in the Finance Ministry. After leaving the government in 1972 because of dissatisfaction with the direction of official policy, he wrote the book *Terms of trade and class relations* that highlighted how government price policies affected distributional tensions between large farmers and other classes in the country.

In 1977, he became Finance Minister in the newly elected Left Front government in West Bengal led by Jyoti Basu, serving for nearly a decade with distinction and commitment.

He emphasised inequalities in centre-state fiscal relations and strongly advocated greater federalism.

He resigned in 1986 because of differences on education policy, and threw himself into writing that brought out injustice, identified contradictions, demanded accountability and pointed to progressive possibilities.

His columns, including the famous *Calcutta Diary*; his trenchant commentary on economic policies and devastating critique of neoliberalism; his forays into literature, art and music; his immensely varied Bengali pieces; and then later his memoirs: all were widely read and influential.

The continuous stream of sharp and stylish writing that emerged from his pen made people think, wonder, learn and laugh.

Friends hoped to predecease him, because he was so good at capturing their essence in his obituaries.

Erudition matched memory: he could remember almost everything, from the lines of poems to the details of significant historical events to amusing and insightful anecdotes about the galaxy of people he knew in India and around the world.

**Intellectually active**

Most of all, he remained intellectually alive and passionate almost to the very end.

Fittingly, he died on May Day – a decade to the day after his beloved wife, Gouri. But even a few weeks before that, despite his frail body, failed eyesight and failing hearing, he was as involved as ever in the progress of the new Bengali journal *Arek Rakam* that he had helped to set up as its first editor; wanted to add his name to an economists’ statement on public banking; added to the guest list for a proposed celebration of his 90th birthday. We can be proud of living in a society that could produce such a person.

## Rahul, Goyal lock horns on Twitter

Spat over sale of Union Minister’s firm

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**

Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and Railway Minister Piyush Goyal sparred on Twitter after Mr. Gandhi accused the latter of a “₹48 crore scam” and demanded his resignation.

“Piyush Goyal’s, 48 Crore FlashNet Scam is about deceit, conflict of interest and greed. The evidence is on the table,” Mr. Gandhi tweeted, using the hashtag #GoyalMustResign.



Rahul Gandhi

**Quotes the PM**

The Railway Minister soon responded. “Till 26th May 2014, before I became a Minister, I was a professional Chartered Accountant and investment banker. Unlike you, Mr. Rahul Gandhi, I have not learnt well the art of living without working. I am also a *kaamdaar* (worker) and not a *‘naamdaar’* (dynast),” Mr. Goyal said. The Minister was playing on words used earlier in the day by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to target the Congress at an election rally in Karnataka.

The crux of the Congress allegation is that Mr. Goyal sold his company, Flashnet Info Solutions, for ₹48 crore

to the Piramal Group with interests in the power sector, after he took over as Union Power Minister in 2014. Mr. Gandhi had alleged that it was a clear case of conflict of interest and questioned Mr. Modi’s silence on it.

On Monday, the Congress had levelled a number of allegations including the charge that shares of Flashnet were sold for 1000 times more their face value.

“How was Flashnet with a net worth of ₹12.50 crore valued at almost ₹50 crore within a few months? Why is Shri Piyush Goyal shying from making the valuation report of Flashnet Info Solutions (India) Limited public? When will he make this report public?” Congress spokesperson Pawan Khara had asked on Monday.

INTERVIEW | GULSHAN RAI

## ‘Aadhaar biometric data is 100% secure’

India’s cybersecurity chief says there have been no cases of biometric leaks, and key data has several rings of protection

SUHASINI HAIDAR

*Despite a series of government website failures and Supreme Court hearings over Aadhaar data security and privacy, India’s cybersecurity chief, Gulshan Rai, who is the Chief Information Security Officer in the Prime Minister’s Office, says he is confident of India’s cybersecurity systems, and wants the government, consumers and civil society to work closer to ensure a balance between national security and privacy.*

**There have been a spate of incidents in which government-run websites, including those of the Defence Ministry, NICNET and the Supreme court, were hacked. What is the reason for this?**

■ There are several trends when it comes to cybersecurity that are leading to these attacks or incidents. The proliferation of IT is increasing in all sectors, including government, industry, everywhere. CERT has seen about one lakh reported cyber incidents in the past year, and the number is rising definitely. The financial sector has emerged as the place the most cyber incidents occur, then the government sector, then others. One startling trend is the spike in cases of cyber incidents in the medical sector.

**Indians are facing increasing cyberthreats with bank accounts and identity details being hacked. How are you helping them?**

■ I agree that cases are rising, but it must be remembered that the weakness in the banking industry is due to too much outsourcing for services.

These are the weak links that criminals exploit to identify customers who can be taken advantage of. The fact is that technological hacks are less than human fraud in these cases, and consumers need to be better educated about the risks of fraud if they want to protect themselves.

**The people who are most vulnerable are those lacking such education. Is the**

**government then pushing too far and fast with its digitalisation goals?**

■ No, there is no contradiction. The government is creating a massive awareness programme, pushing banks to advertise to educate consumers not to give away private information. Particularly after demonetisation, we have more than 2.8 billion e-transactions per day. Obviously, people have faith in these transactions.

So transactions are increasing, and we need to do more to protect people, but consumers must do their bit too.

**One of the big concerns on privacy and security comes from the Aadhaar database. In court, the government said there is a “10-foot wall” to protect Aadhaar data, which raised many laughs, but on a serious note, how secure is the Aadhaar data of every Indian?**

■ Yes, it is secure, 100%. Ultimately, what do you mean by the Aadhaar database? There are two parts to it: the demographic data (name,



**Civil society groups must point out places where the government needs to improve, but in a constructive manner**

age, address, etc.) and the biometric database. When people speak of security, they are referring to the biometric database. So far, there have been no cases of biometric leaks.

The central part has the maximum security, and is kept behind several rings of protection. Even with the worst cases of leaks that have appeared publicly, none have touched this central part.

When Jio was attacked, it was their database that leaked, not the Aadhaar database.

**But Jio has access to the Aadhaar database, as do others that need Aadhaar authentication or “bridging” services?**

■ Yes, but it is their databases that need to be secured better. We do 180 crore (18 million) of Aadhaar authentications every day, how many breaches have been reported in comparison. I would say that accusations are far more than the reality. It is important for civil society groups to point out places where the government needs to improve, but it is necessary that they do it in a constructive manner.

**Shouldn’t these input and authentication services also be taken care of by government agencies then? Does the Aadhaar Act, which includes the provision of outsourcing to these companies (Section 8(4)) need to be amended?**

■ These are places where we need to learn from experience, and Aadhaar has already moved to tighten its systems, and weed out such companies where there may

be any problem. Let us remember that many countries want us to help them build their database. Why would they, if our system was not secure? We are the only country that has a 10-finger (biometric) database.

**You have expressed such confidence, yet you have been quoted as saying you don’t use Net banking and I see you carry a small phone, not a smartphone. How confident are you personally about cybersecurity systems, and what precautions would you suggest to all?**

■ My personal philosophy is that we must reduce our surface of risk. I do use Net banking, but I reduce my risk by using it for a separate account where I keep a small amount, not connected to my main account where I conduct Internet transactions.

What I said was that I don’t do any international Internet banking, because I don’t believe we can control those transactions. I use a smartphone, but only when necessary.

## Kashmir shuts down

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR**

The Valley observed a shutdown on Tuesday, as two militants killed in the Pulwama encounter on Monday were given funerals. Three civilians shot dead in Baramulla on Monday were buried quietly, as no one came forward to name the killers.



**Widespread violence:** Youth clash with the police during a protest against bypolls in Srinagar on April 9, 2017. ■ FILE PHOTO

thereafter the Anantnag bypolls could also be held. But then, they had to defer the panchayat polls for security reasons. The Commission is now reviewing the ground situation periodically to take a call on the issue,” said the official.

Last year, the EC had announced that byelections to the Srinagar and the Anantnag Lok Sabha constituencies would be conducted on April 9 and 12, 2017. Central armed police forces were arranged for security arrangements.

However, a large number of security personnel could not be deployed in Srinagar because of heavy rain and floods. This, coupled with widespread violence, led to a very low turnout, forcing the EC to review the situation.

Following multiple rounds of meetings with all stakeholders, including the State administration, the EC decided to first defer and

then cancel the Anantnag byelection.

It is the first time that a Lok Sabha seat has been vacant for 22 months. Earlier in 1991, the EC could not hold elections to any Lok Sabha seat in the State due to stepped-up militancy. On April 18, 1991, the President promulgated the Representation of the People (Amendment) Ordinance to enable the EC to conduct Lok Sabha elections without taking into account the seats in J&K.

## Dalit woman denied entry to temple

**S. SENTHALIRI PUDUCHERRY**

A Dalit woman was turned away from the Sri Kamatchi Sameta Boodanadheeswarar temple in a non-descript village about 25 km from here on Sunday.

When Radha, a woman in her thirties, from Kunchampet Dalit colony, tried to enter the temple, she was surrounded by a group of people who insisted that she leave and visit “the temple of her community”. The incident has gone viral on social media.

The villagers of Kunchampet consider the 20-day festival in the Sri Draupadiammam Alayam and Sri Kamatchi Sameta Boodanadheeswarar Temple very auspicious.

“Several people from the colony go to the temple during this festival but they stand outside and pray. Most do not dare to enter the temple. It has been the practice over the years,” said Ms. Radha.

## Collegium to reconsider Joseph’s name

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**

The Supreme Court Collegium led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra will meet on Wednesday to discuss and possibly reiterate the elevation of Chief Justice of Uttarakhand High Court K.M. Joseph to the Supreme Court.

The Collegium – including Justices J. Chelameswar, Ranjan Gogoi, Madan B. Lokur and Kurian Joseph – have to unanimously reiterate their January 11 recommendation.

Once this is done, the recommendation is binding on the government.

The government had recently cleared Indu Malhotra’s name while returning Justice Joseph’s file to the Collegium for re-consideration even though both names were sent to the government as a batch.

This decision itself came after a delay of three months.

The government argued that Justice Joseph was “at serial number 42” in the All India seniority list, 11 Chief Justices across different High Courts were senior to him and his parent court, the Kerala High Court, was already “adequately represented” in the country’s top court.







ELSEWHERE



**Chinese platform bans 'subversive' Peppa Pig**

BEIJING  
A Chinese Internet platform has given the British cartoon "Peppa Pig" the chop as state media lamented that the series had become a "subversive" icon for slackers and anti-social young people. At least 30,000 clips of "Peppa Pig" were removed from the popular Douyin platform, *The Global Times* reported on Monday. AFP

**U.S. delays imposition of tariffs on metal imports**

WASHINGTON  
U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday held off on imposing controversial tariffs on steel and aluminium from Canada, Mexico and the European Union, offering them a 30-day reprieve after fears of a trade war spooked Wall Street. The 25% tariffs on steel and 10% duties on aluminium were set to go into effect on Tuesday. AFP

**Dr. Afridi could be released soon**

PESHAWAR  
Shakil Afridi, a Pakistani doctor serving a 33-year jail term for helping the CIA track down Osama bin Laden, could be released this month after authorities remitted 10 years of his sentence. His lawyer Qamar Nadeem said that Afridi will complete his jail term this month. PTI

**Air passenger fined for opening emergency exit**

BEIJING  
A 25-year-old Chinese man, who felt "stuffy" and opened the emergency exit of a plane to get some fresh air, has been detained and fined, a media report. He was detained for 15 days for the unauthorised removal of aviation facilities. He will also be fined 70,000 yuan. PTI

# Iran deal built on lies, says Pompeo

U.S. Secretary of State backs Israel's claims about Iran's 'secret nuclear weapons programme'

**VARGHESE K. GEORGE**  
WASHINGTON  
Documents claimed by Israel as proof of Iran's secret nuclear weapons programme are authentic and the U.S. is assessing the future of the Iran nuclear deal in light of the revelations, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has said. Mr. Pompeo's public endorsement of Israel's position could be prelude to America's withdrawal from the nuclear deal later this month. President Donald Trump has set May 12 as the deadline to reimpose sanctions suspended under the 2015 nuclear agreement. In October 2017, Mr. Trump had refused to certify that continuing with the Iran deal was "vital to the national security interests of the United States", as required by the domestic law. Since then, Mr. Pompeo has become the Secretary of State and John Bolton the National Security Adviser. Both are strong opponents of the deal, and Israel's claims strengthen their hand within



U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Tel Aviv. • AP

the administration. "For many years, the Iranian regime has insisted to the world that its nuclear programme was peaceful. The documents obtained by Israel from inside of Iran show beyond any doubt that the Iranian regime was not telling the truth. I have personally reviewed many of the Iranian files..." said Mr. Pompeo. "We are therefore assessing what the discovery of Iran's secret nuclear files

means for the future of the JCPOA," he said, referring to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, commonly known as the Iran deal.

**Illicit activities**  
Mr. Pompeo said American non-proliferation and intelligence officials have been analysing tens of thousands of pages and translating them from Farsi. "We assess that the documents we have reviewed are authentic." He added that the deal

had whitewashed Iran's "illicit activities related to its military nuclear programme".

"Iran had many opportunities over the years to turn over its files to international inspectors from the IAEA and admit its nuclear weapons work. Instead, they lied to the IAEA repeatedly. They also lied about their programme to the six nations who negotiated the Iran nuclear deal. What this means is the deal was not constructed on a foundation of good faith or transparency. It was built on Iran's lies."

Mr. Trump, who has all along argued for ending the nuclear agreement, said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech on Iran's weapon's programme proved his point.

But he sought to keep some suspense on the fate of the deal itself. "I'm not telling you what I'm doing. A lot of people think they know. And on or before May 12, we'll make a decision," he said during a press conference on Monday.

## Israel PM's claims find no takers

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
JERUSALEM

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's claims led to scepticism on Tuesday from backers of the Iran deal.

The IAEA cited its assessment from three years ago that it had no "credible indications" of an Iranian nuclear weapons pursuit after 2009. The U.K. and France both said Mr. Netanyahu's claims reinforced the importance of the nuclear deal.

Iran lashed out at Mr. Netanyahu, with Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi on Tuesday calling him an "infamous liar".

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Mr. Netanyahu was "the boy who cries wolf".

# Mueller has dozens of questions for Trump

REUTERS  
WASHINGTON

Special Counsel Robert Mueller has at least four dozen questions he wants to ask U.S. President Donald Trump in his investigation of possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia, *The New York Times* reported on Monday.

Mr. Mueller is investigating alleged Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, possible collusion with the Trump campaign and whether the President has unlawfully tried to obstruct the probe.

*The Times* said the majority of the questions relate to possible obstruction of justice.

Mr. Trump has said the probe is a "witch-hunt" and has called for it to end.

The list includes questions about Mr. Trump's firings of former FBI Director James Comey and former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn, his treatment of Attorney General Jeff Sessions and a meeting at the Trump Tower between campaign officials and a Russian offering dirt on Hillary Clinton, *The Times* said. "What

efforts were made to reach out to Mr. Flynn about seeking immunity or possible pardon?" Mr. Mueller planned to ask.

**22 charged**  
Mr. Mueller has charged 22 individuals and entities to date, including Mr. Trump's former campaign chairman Paul Manafort and his associate Rick Gates.

Mr. Mueller's questions also relate to the prospect of pardons for former aides, the report said. Flynn pleaded guilty in December to lying to the FBI about his con-

tacts with Russia, and he agreed to cooperate with prosecutors delving into the actions of Mr. Trump's inner circle before he took office.

Manafort has pleaded not guilty to charges against him that include conspiring to launder money, failing to register as a foreign agent, bank fraud and filing false tax returns.

The questions also deal with Mr. Trump's businesses and discussions he may have had with his personal lawyer Michael Cohen about a Moscow real estate deal.

Mr. Mueller's investigators

read the questions to Mr. Trump's lawyers, *The Times* said. The paper said it obtained the list from a person outside Mr. Trump's legal team.

The questions also appear to suggest that Mr. Mueller is interested in the steps that Mr. Trump took to fire him last year and his subsequent backing away from the decision, *The Times* reported.

Calling the leaks "disgraceful", Mr. Trump on Tuesday said: "It would seem very hard to obstruct justice for a crime that never happened!"

# Defiant workers hold May Day rallies

Thousands defy Sri Lanka govt.'s decision to delay workers' day events to May 7

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

Thousands of workers on Tuesday defied an order of the Sri Lankan government postponing May Day events, by rallying in Colombo's Fort area to mark the International Workers' Day.

Earlier, the Cabinet decided to defer workers' day events to May 7, citing an overlap with the Buddhist festival of Vesak or Buddha Poonima, that fell on April 29 and 30. The move, which followed a request from the influential Buddhist clergy, drew severe criticism from independent trade unions.

"We did not want to cow down to any pressure from the government. We did not want to change the International Workers' Day. Workers have come in huge numbers today," said Linus Jayatileke, president of the United Federation of Labour.

Workers from free trade zones, private sector enterprises and the banking sector, many of whom took the day off to participate in the rally, marched with banners reiterating their right to



The Christian Workers Fellowship held its annual workers' mass at an Anglican church in Colombo. • MEERA SRINIVASAN

eight-hour work days and fair wages. Police barricaded the road leading to the Presidential Secretariat, but workers peacefully culminated ahead of the stretch, as their leaders criticised the government for undermining workers' rights.

The rally drew not just workers, but also farmers from as far as Anuradhapura, about 200 km north of Colombo. Terrance Gamini, from the Collective of Farmers and Environmental Cooperative Societies, said

the government is no different from its predecessor. "They buy farmers' produce at cheap prices and then sell it to workers at high prices," he said.

## Workers' mass

The Christian Workers Fellowship held its annual workers' mass at St. Michael's, an old Anglican church in Colombo. A tradition that they began in 1960, the workers' mass has since become an annual May Day feature in Colombo, with

priests sporting red shawls with bold prints of the hammer and sickle. In a special ceremony, workers brought in tools of labour and laid them at the altar.

The leftist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front), a party which mainly works among the Sinhalese working class in the south, held its May Day rally in Jaffna, the biggest city in the island's Tamil-speaking north. Party leader Anura Kumara Dissanayaka accused the government of ignoring working people's concerns, both in the south and the north, and pushing them into a dangerous debt trap. He called for a unified force of people from the north and south to take on the government.

Participating as a special guest in the event was CPI (M) central committee member A. Soundararajan. Speaking on the assault on labour rights, he asked why the Sri Lankan government was reluctant to reopen many of the old industries in the north nine years after the war ended.

## Pope's aide to stand trial on sex abuse charges

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MELBOURNE

The Vatican's finance chief Cardinal George Pell, 76, on Tuesday became the highest-ranked Catholic to be sent for trial over sexual offences, as the priest vowed to fight the charges.

Cardinal Pell was impassive throughout the hearing in Melbourne that ordered him to face a jury on "multiple" charges, although half of the allegations against him - including some of the most serious - were thrown out.

"Not guilty," the top aide to Pope Francis said loudly and without hesitation when asked his plea, a stance he has taken since

first being charged last year. Melbourne magistrate Belinda Wallington said she was satisfied there was enough evidence to justify a trial on "multiple" charges. A hearing is due on Wednesday to discuss a trial date.

## Released on bail

Cardinal Pell, who entered the court surrounded by a large police presence, was released on bail on condition he does not leave Australia.

Some of the alleged offences were at a swimming pool in Ballarat in Victoria in the 1970s and at Melbourne's St. Patrick's Cathedral in the 1990s, the court heard.

# Kim didn't smoke, but drank heartily

The North Korean leader, a chain smoker, refrained from lighting up at summit

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
REUTERS  
SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, a heavy smoker, refrained from lighting up during a summit with the South's President Moon Jae-in, but enthusiastically accepted every offer of a drink.

Mr. Kim has often been seen with a cigarette dangling from his fingers - riding a subway train, visiting hospitals or schools, even when inspecting a ballistic missile. But Mr. Kim was not seen smoking throughout Friday's summit, neither indoors nor out. "Chairman Kim did not smoke even when there were no prying

eyes from journalists and photographers around him," a Moon aide was quoted as telling journalists. "This was probably a gesture of respect towards President Moon who is much older than him," he said.

## 'Drained in one shot'

However, Mr. Kim drank heartily at a dinner after the event, the reports said on Monday. "When South Koreans approached him with a drink, he stood up from his seat, let them pour for him and drained it all in one shot," according to one participant.

Mr. Kim's passion for basketball was confirmed when



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. • AP

he suggested that the two Koreas focus on it for sports events rather than football.

Also, the two Koreas on Tuesday began dismantling loudspeakers that blared propaganda across their heavily fortified border on Tuesday, South Korea's Defence

Ministry said, fulfilling a promise made at last week's historic summit.

Mr. Moon, meanwhile, asked that the UN help verify North Korea's planned shutdown of its Punggye-ri nuclear test site in a phone conversation on Tuesday with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, a statement from the presidential Blue House said. Mr. Guterres said the requests need approval from the UN Security Council, but he wanted to cooperate to build peace on the Korean peninsula and would assign a UN official in charge of arms control to cooperate with South Korea, the statement said.

## Sirisena carries out his fourth Cabinet reshuffle

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
COLOMBO

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena on Tuesday reshuffled his Cabinet for the fourth time and changed the portfolios of 18 Ministers, weeks after six Ministers had resigned from his National Unity government.

Six Cabinet Ministers had resigned on April 12, after they voted against Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe in a no-trust motion moved by Mahinda Rajapaksa-led Joint Opposition on April 4.

Following the resignations, four acting Ministers were sworn-in on April 12 by the President.

In Tuesday's reshuffle,

former Justice Minister Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe, who was sacked in August last year, was appointed as the Minister of Higher Education and Cultural Affairs.

The Higher Education portfolio was earlier held by Kabir Hashim, who was appointed as the Minister of Highways and Road Development, while Thalatha Athukorala was made the Minister of Justice and Prison Reforms.

Former Army chief Sarath Fonseka, who was holding the charge of the Regional Development Ministry, was sworn in as the Minister of Sustainable Development, Wildlife and Regional Development.



IN BRIEF



**GAIL signs ₹2,000 crore loan pact with SBI**

NEW DELHI

State-owned gas utility GAIL India said it had borrowed ₹2,000 crore from State Bank of India to meet its general capital expenditure requirements. The loan is for a 15-year tenure, the company said in a statement, without saying what interest rate it would pay on the borrowing. "... The purpose of the loan is for general capital expenditure of GAIL, mainly in the gas pipeline projects, in the forthcoming years," GAIL said.

**No proposal to raise FDI limit in PSBs, says Garg**

NEW DELHI

Putting to rest speculations around raising the FDI limit in public sector banks, Economic Affairs Secretary Subhash Chandra Garg said there was no such proposal and also ruled out their privatisation. Currently, 20% FDI is permitted in PSBs under the government approval route. The limit is 74% for private lenders, provided there is no change of control and management of the investee company.

**Oil PSUs freeze prices ahead of Karnataka polls**

NEW DELHI

A fortnight before Karnataka goes to the polls, PSU oil firms have stopped revising petrol and diesel prices even though benchmark international rates have gone up by almost \$2 per barrel. With the Centre refusing to cut excise duty to give relief to customers from petrol hitting a 55-month high of ₹74.63 a litre and diesel at a record high of ₹65.93, oil PSUs have, since April 24, not changed fuel rates.

Telecom panel okays post of ombudsman

Office to address consumer grievances

**YUTHIKA BHARGAVA**

NEW DELHI

In a major relief to consumers, the Telecom Commission on Tuesday gave its nod to a proposal for setting up an ombudsman for resolution of grievances of telecom consumers.

"... this has been a long-pending demand. There are about 10 million grievance and complaints per quarter from telecom consumers. The proposal was cleared today[Tuesday]," Telecom Secretary Arun Sundararajan said. "This will bring in a much better and more satisfactory grievance redressal system in the telecom sector," she added.

Asked if the Ombudsman would have the power to levy penalty, she said: "This will have to be worked out by TRAI but obviously it will



Aruna Sundararajan

have to be an effective ombudsman." As per TRAI's recommendations, to function as an effective body, the ombudsman should have the power to levy penalties on telcos.

Under the new mechanism, consumers can first approach the operator. If dissatisfied, they can then approach the Consumer Grievance Redressal Forum. Final appeals can be taken to the Ombudsman.

FB privacy: WhatsApp's Koum to quit

**REUTERS**

SAN FRANCISCO

The co-founder of WhatsApp, a messaging service owned by Facebook Inc. with more than 1 billion daily users, said he was leaving the company, in a loss of one of the strongest advocates for privacy inside Facebook.

Jan Koum's plan to exit comes after clashing with the parent company over WhatsApp's strategy and Facebook's attempts to use its personal data and weaken its encryption, *The Washington Post* reported, citing people familiar with the internal discussions.

"It's been almost a decade since Brian and I started WhatsApp, and it's been an amazing journey," Mr. Koum, WhatsApp CEO, said in a post, referring to co-founder Brian Acton.

Centre extends EoI date for Air India

Allows changes in consortium at RFP stage; buyer can also integrate AI with existing businesses

**JAGRITI CHANDRA**

NEW DELHI

The deadline for submission of expression of interest in Air India's stake sale has been extended to May 31 from May 14 and the selected bidder will be announced by June 15, the government announced on Tuesday.

Consortia keen to buy Air India have also been allowed to change their composition within 15 days of the request for proposal being issued.

Earlier, no changes were allowed after submission of an expression of interest. The new buyer can also integrate Air India with its existing businesses subject to applicable law, the government clarified. These responses were issued more than a month after the Aviation Ministry released a preliminary



**Sliver of a stake:** The Centre said it was a 'considered decision' to retain a 24% stake in AI and not sell out fully.

Core sector growth slows to 4.1% in March

Eight sectors grow 4.2% in FY18

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

NEW DELHI

The growth of eight core sectors slowed to a three-month low of 4.1% in March due to weak performance in six sectors including coal, crude oil and natural gas.

The other sectors which showed slower growth rates were refinery products, steel and electricity.

The growth rate of the eight infrastructure sectors, including fertilizers and cement, was 5.2% in March 2017, according to data released by the Commerce Ministry on Tuesday. The previous low was 3.8% in December 2017.

Cumulatively, the eight core sectors grew 4.2% in 2017-18. The growth was

4.8% in the previous fiscal. The core sector growth would have an impact on the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) data as these eight segments account for about 41% of the total factory output.

**Fertilizer, cement rise**

Only the fertilizer and cement sectors reported healthy numbers, growing 3.2% and 13% respectively in March.

Coal, natural gas, refinery products and steel production growth slowed to 9.1%, 1.3%, 1%, 4.7% respectively in March.

Electricity generation growth rate too decelerated to a growth of 4.5% as against 6.2% in March 2017.

Maruti posts best-ever monthly sales in April

M&M, Tata Motors also report double-digit growth

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

NEW DELHI

Automakers began the new financial year on a strong note led by market leader Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) which posted its best-ever monthly wholesale figures in April for the domestic market.

Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata Motors also reported robust double-digit sales growth during the month while Hyundai clocked single-digit growth.

MSI said its domestic sales stood at 1,64,978 units in April, up 14.2% from 1,44,492 units a year earlier, fuelled by strong sales of compact segment cars.



Sales of Swift, Estilo, Dzire and Baleno jumped 31.8% to 83,834 units. Utility vehicle sales, including for Ertiga, S-Cross and compact SUV Vitara Brezza, increased marginally to 20,804 units.

M&M reported a 19.34% increase in sales in the domestic market to 45,217 units last month. "The company

Kuwait petroleum eyes stake in Bina refinery

BPCL, which has funded a recent expansion of the plant, may like to retain 50% stake

**REUTERS**

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) is in talks to buy 24% of the Bina joint venture refinery in central India, two Indian and two foreign sources said, as the West Asian nation wants to increase its South Asian market share.

Global oil producers are vying to gain entry into India's expanding refining sector. The world's third-largest oil importer plans to raise its refining capacity by 77% to about 8.8 million barrels per day (bpd) by 2030 to meet rising fuel demand.

**'Preliminary stage'**

"Talks with KPI are at a preliminary stage," said one of the Indian sources. KPI is the international downstream unit of state-owned Kuwait Petroleum Corporation.

The 1,20,000-bpd Bina



**Growing footprint:** Bharat Oman Refineries Ltd. has plans to double its expanded refining capacity to 3.1 lakh barrels per day and build a petrochemical project.

plant is operated by Bharat Oman Refineries Ltd (BORL), a 50-50 joint venture between Oman Oil Co. and Bharat Petroleum Corp.

Kuwait Petroleum International CEO Nabil Bourisli said in April his company intends to sign a deal soon to buy a stake in an Indian refinery and petrochemical project and supply as much as 2,00,000 bpd of oil.

BPCL, Oman Oil and KPI did not respond to Reuters e-mails seeking comment on any discussions.

BPCL has funded an expansion of the Bina refinery to 1,56,000 bpd that is to be completed later this year. Oman Oil did not invest in the upgrade. BPCL has an option to convert its additional spending into equity that would raise its overall share in BORL to 74%.

Indian sources said BPCL would like to retain at least 50% in BORL, mirroring an equity structure for a planned west coast refining project co-financed by Saudi Aramco in which Indian and foreign ownership is evenly split.

India rejects U.S. request on medical device price caps

U.S. firms irked by price controls imposed last year; New Delhi may add curbs on 3 products besides stents, knee implants

**REUTERS**

NEW DELHI

India has told the United States it won't abstain from capping prices for more medical devices, regardless of pressure to rethink its stance after price controls on heart stents and knee implants spoil the market for some U.S. firms, sources familiar with the matter said.

India's drug pricing authority is also pushing to bring three more devices, used in treating heart ailments, under the ambit of price controls as they are sometimes more expensive than the stent itself, showed a government letter reviewed by Reuters.

India's \$5 billion medical device market has provided rich fishing grounds for U.S.-based companies like Abbott Laboratories and Boston Scientific Corp., but the prospect of price caps being ex-



**Healthy profits:** India's medical device market has provided rich fishing grounds for U.S. companies.

tended to more products sent shivers through their ranks. In September, the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's office and Commerce Minister Suresh Prabhu urging them "to not expand price controls to additional medical devices", according to a copy of the letter seen by Reuters.

During a meeting last month, Indian officials told USTR Assistant Trade Representative Mark Linscott that India had decided against making any such commitment, a trade ministry official told Reuters on Tuesday.

**'Illegal profiteering'**

"This position will not change, it is within the right of the government of India [to impose price caps]," said the official, who declined to be named.

Mr. Linscott "expressed

ery on whether the Centre would consider a payout instead of retaining a stake, the government said that it was a "considered decision" that it would retain a 24% stake.

However, the possibility of its complete exit from Air India through a call and put option in the agreement wasn't ruled out.

Following concerns over the government requiring the selected bidder to maintain an arms-length distance between the functioning of Air India and other businesses, the Centre clarified on Tuesday, "Further clarified that operational synergies span the full range of business activities associated with running a large global airline including..., HR policies, operations, sales and marketing, revenue management, procurement and contracting financial management and business strategy," the Ministry said in a corrigendum.

**Employee concerns**

On obligations to Air India staff, the Ministry said employee concerns were being "suitably addressed" and the exact cost to be borne towards related liabilities was being currently determined.

A source also said the Centre had sought to clarify that a public listing of AI by the new buyer was not mandatory. An aviation industry insider said, "Core issues of government stake, debt and employees [have not been] addressed. It is unfortunate that leading airlines are unlikely to show much interest in the disinvestment."



**Cherry-picking:** The purchase is expected to help France's Schneider Electric expand its presence in India.

L&T to sell electrical unit to Schneider

₹14,000 cr. deal to aid in focus on core

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

MUMBAI

Engineering and construction major Larsen & Toubro has agreed to sell its electrical and automation (E&A) business to Schneider Electric for an all-cash consideration of ₹14,000 crore.

The move is a part of L&T's strategy to focus on high growth businesses and unlocking value for future growth by selling its non-core businesses.

**'4.5% of L&T revenues'**

The E&A business, with net revenue of ₹5,038 crore accounting for 4.5% of L&T's consolidated revenue for 2016-17, will help the French industrial group expand its presence in India.

The unit offers low and medium voltage switch-gear, electrical systems and marine switch-gear, among others according to a company statement. As part of the deal, the transaction includes all the current business segments of E&A except marine switch-gear and servomotor systems.

A.M. Naik, group chairman, Larsen & Toubro said: "We believe the partnership with Schneider Electric, which has a strong product and geographic presence,

would further enhance the business prospects for E&A business & its employees."

L&T's E&A manufacturing facilities are located at Navi Mumbai, Ahmednagar, Vadodara, Coimbatore and Mysore in India as well as in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the U.K.

The transaction is expected to be closed within 18 months subject to receipt of required regulatory approvals, said the statement.

S.N. Subrahmanyam, CEO & MD, L&T, said: "The divestment... is in line with L&T's stated intent of unlocking value within the existing business portfolio to streamline and allocate capital and management focus for creating long-term value for our stakeholders."

**'Positive for investors'**

Paras Bothra, head of equity research at Ashika Stock Broking, told *The Hindu* that the deal looked positive for L&T's shareholders.

The firm's "combined strategy of exiting from low-margin, non-core business portfolio and enhancing operational efficiency with improving economic outlook will be instrumental in re-rating the stock," he said.

RBI allows FPIs to buy T-bills; debt limit stays

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has allowed foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to invest in treasury bills issued by the central government.

The central bank's move comes close on the heels of foreign portfolio investors being permitted to invest in corporate bonds with minimum residual maturity of above one year.

"The requirement that investment in securities of any category [G-secs, State Development Loans or, in terms of this circular, corporate bonds] with residual maturity below one year shall not exceed 20% of total investment by an FPI in that category applies, on a continuous basis," the central bank said in a circular issued on Tuesday.

**Consistency**

Incidentally, the April circular was issued to bring consistency across debt categories and hence it was stipulated that investments by an FPI in corporate bonds with residual maturity below one year should not exceed 20% of the total investment of that FPI in corporate bonds.

"At any point in time, all securities with residual maturity of less than one year will be reckoned for the 20% limit, regardless of the maturity of the security at the time of purchase by the FPI," the RBI said in Tuesday's circular.

According to the circular, if there are investments in securities with less than one year residual maturity as on May 2, and it constitutes more than 20% of the total investment in any category, the FPI will have to bring such share below 20% within a period of six months from the date of the circular.





**Dabur net jumps 19% on strong volume growth**  
NEW DELHI  
FMCG major Dabur India on Tuesday reported a 19.04% rise in consolidated net profit to ₹397.18 crore for the quarter ended March 2018 on strong volume growth and a rise in operating margin. Total income grew 6.38% to ₹2,106.15 crore. "Our India operating margin touching a historical high of 27.2%,... on the back of improved operating efficiencies and judicious cost management," said Dabur India CEO Sunil Duggal. PTI

**NDTV sells 7.38% of unit to Delhi office landlord**  
NEW DELHI  
NDTV has sold 7.38% stake in subsidiary Red Pixels Ventures to A.R. Chadha And Co, the landlord of its office premises in the national capital, to meet working capital requirements and pay outstanding rent, it said in a BSE filing. NDTV and NDTV Convergence hold 37.04% and 55.57%, respectively, in RPVL. Last year, NDTV said it had initiated a turnaround plan to bring down costs and improve profitability. PTI

**S.C. Khuntia appointed IRDAI Chairman**  
NEW DELHI  
Former IAS officer Subhash Chandra Khuntia was appointed as the Chairman of Insurance Regulatory Development Authority of India (IRDAI) for three years. His appointment was approved by Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, IRDAI said in a statement. Mr. Khuntia will succeed T S Vijayan, who completed his five-year term in February. The post has been lying vacant since February 21. PTI

# Malaysia's IHH, Hero-Burman submit revised bids for Fortis

Hero-Burman combine's bid weighs in at ₹1,800 crore; IHH offers ₹175 per share

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI  
Sunil Kant Munjal of Hero Enterprises and the Burman family of the Dabur group raised their joint bid for Fortis Healthcare once more, on the last day to submit bids. Malaysia's IHH Healthcare also improved on an earlier bid as the takeover battle for the cash-strapped hospital and diagnostics group intensifies.

**20% increase**  
Mr. Munjal and the Burmans have offered to invest ₹1,800 crore directly into Fortis, 20% more than the ₹1,500 crore proposed earlier. In a letter to Fortis on Tuesday, the combine offered to in-



**Seeking a bargain:** The board of Fortis Healthcare, which runs about 30 hospitals in India, is set to meet on May 10. ■REUTERS

fuse ₹800 crore through preferential issue of equity shares at ₹167 per share or as per SEBI ICDR guidelines, whichever was higher. They also proposed an additional ₹1,000 crore through prefe-

rential issue of warrants at ₹176 per share or SEBI ICDR guidelines, whichever was higher. Including the warrant subscription, the upfront investment would be ₹1,050

crore, the combine told Fortis. The Hero-Burman offer is valid until May 15. Rival bidders include IHH Healthcare, KKR-backed Radiant Life Care, a consortium of Manipal Health Enterprises and TPG and China's Fosun. IHH also submitted a proposal on Tuesday for an 'immediate equity infusion' at a price of ₹175 per share and a subsequent equity infusion at a per-share price not exceeding this. Fortis Healthcare, which runs about 30 hospitals in India, has set up an advisory committee to evaluate binding offers, the submission deadline for which was May 1. The company's board is set to meet on May 10.

## Srikalahasti chalks out ₹125 cr. expansion plan

QIP, internal accruals to help funding

**N. ANAND**  
CHENNAI  
The board of ductile iron pipe maker Srikalahasti Pipes Ltd., (SPL, formerly Lanco Industries Ltd.), has approved a capital expenditure of ₹125 crore as part of its expansion plan, said a top official. "Our board has approved a capital expenditure of ₹55 crore for setting up two units of 9 MVA furnaces to produce ferro silicon and silico manganese," said G.S. Rath, whole-time director, SPL. "This facility will be commissioned by the second quarter of FY20." He said 50% of the ferro silicon produced would be consumed internally, and

the balance, along with all of the silicon manganese would be sold in the domestic market or exported. He said the project was intended to help reduce cost and was part of a backward integration initiative to achieve self-reliance in sourcing major and critical raw materials. Besides, the board approved an investment of ₹70 crore towards an additional annealing furnace, establishing 1,200 mm dia production facilities and other infrastructure in the plant. "These projects would be funded out of internal accruals and the proceeds of the Qualified Institutional Placement issue."

## Norway's Kongsberg to add software headcount in India

'Staff strength to increase 50% annually in the coming years'

**JAY SHANKAR**  
BENGALURU  
Kongsberg Software & Services, a subsidiary of Norway-based Kongsberg Digital ASA, plans to hire more engineers at its facility in Bengaluru, said Hege Skryseth, EVP of Kongsberg and president of Kongsberg Digital. "Currently, we have 130 employees in Bangalore," Ms. Hege said. "With so much in business... we need more people. If you look back one year, we had almost increased the workforce strength by 50% and we will continue to do so for the years to come." Parent company Kongsberg Gruppen ASA is into



Hege Skryseth

three areas – maritime, defence and aerospace, and digital. The digital arm has developed a platform called "Kognifai," an app store for industries and domains in which the group operates. "It is an open ecosystem which allows... customers and partners to... take full

## SpiceJet, Vistara hail WiFi nod

**JAGRITI CHANDRA**  
NEW DELHI  
Airlines on Tuesday welcomed the Telecom Commission's decision to allow WiFi onboard flights but wondered whether passengers would be willing to pay extra for the service. "We welcome the move and will explore starting these services for consumers," SpiceJet's Ajay Singh told *The Hindu*. Mr. Singh has been a votary of in-flight connectivity to help boost ancillary revenue. "As long as consumers are willing to pay and help us provide this facility, we will be interested in doing so," said Sanjiv Kapoor, chief commercial officer at Vistara. Pricing is likely to be key to the success of the service, according to aviation industry officials.



**Fraught future:** Allowing use of HDPE bags for foodgrains has dried up orders for jute bags. ■ASHOKE CHAKRABARTY

## Irani urges review of jute packaging rule

Jute mills may close for want of orders

**INDRANI DUTTA**  
KOLKATA  
Union Textiles Minister Smriti Irani has sought the intervention of her counterpart at the Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution ministry to help stave off the risk of jute mill closures by increasing orders for jute sacks for packaging foodgrains. "I wish to draw your attention to the fact the jute industry is facing shortage of jute bag orders," Ms. Irani wrote to Ram Vilas Paswan, in a letter dated April 26, a copy of which has been seen by *The Hindu*. The issue was flagged earlier by the Textiles Secretary, who had written to his counterpart in the Consumer Affairs ministry saying that the problem had its genesis in the request made by the Consumer Affairs ministry to the Textiles ministry seeking dilution of the Jute Packaging Mandatory Order (under the Jute Packaging Material Act, 1987) in favour of the HDPE/PP bags sector.

requirement for foodgrains packaging and an anticipated shortage of supply of jute bags. "This relaxation was given to ensure that the food-procurement programme is not affected due to the anticipated shortfall in supply of jute bags till March 31," the official wrote on April 24. The Secretary also noted that subsequently the total requirement till April was projected at 16.7 lakh bales, of which the order for jute bags was put at 13.68 lakh bales. The jute industry had already met 93.4% of this order.

**'Not in tune'**  
The Textiles ministry contends that the total bag requirement (including HDPE) was now being put at only 15.6 lakh bales and that unless the order allowing the use of HDPE bags was withdrawn the jute industry could be hit. "It appears that when we met in February 2018, the supply projection for jute bags was not in tune with ground realities, which led to the dilution of the packaging order," the Textiles Secretary wrote, urging the Food ministry to rescind its decision allowing HDPE bags supply. Responding to the February 8 request from the Consumer Affairs ministry, the Textiles Ministry had granted a relaxation of 2.58 lakh bales for HPDE/PP bags based on a projection of bag



# The Royal Challengers are smiling again

Virat Kohli's men register a thrilling 14-run victory over Mumbai Indians, thanks to some disciplined bowling



SHREEDUTTA CHIDANANDA  
BENGALURU

Going into Tuesday's game at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium, Royal Challengers Bangalore had conceded three totals in excess of 200 this season and failed to defend scores of 175, 176 and 205. But its beleaguered bowling attack put on a superb display as Virat Kohli's men claimed a thrilling 14-run victory over Mumbai Indians. Chasing 168 for victory, after a fine performance from its own seamers on a sluggish pitch, the visitor was in a spot of bother at 84 for five in 12 overs.

But when Hardik and Krunal Pandya added 56 runs for the sixth wicket, there were echoes of capitulations past. Tim Southee (two for 25) and Mohammed Siraj (two for 28) held firm, however, as the home fans rejoiced.

RCB embarked on its defence of the total in emphatic fashion, Southee bowling Ishan Kishan through the gate with a fine in-swing in the first over. Umesh Yadav then struck twice in two balls – just like he had in the reverse



Caught short: J-P. Duminy's painfully slow innings comes to an end as he is run out by Quinton de Kock. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

fixture – packing off Suryakumar Yadav and Rohit Sharma. The Mumbai captain walked in at No. 4 here and was caught behind, off the shoulder of the bat, by a fly-

ing Quinton de Kock.

At 21 for three, Mumbai was lurching. The runs were not quite flowing and when Kieron Pollard edged Siraj to the 'keeper, the visitor was in serious trouble. As J-P. Duminy was run out for a painfully slow 23 (29b), RCB celebrated. The Pandya brothers fought back, but Kohli would not be denied a much-awaited triumph.

Earlier, after winning the toss and sending RCB in to bat, Mumbai never truly allowed the home side to get away. There was plenty of turn on offer from the very first over and RCB found shot-making largely difficult on a slow surface. Manan

Vohra was an exception, though, as he tore into Duminy's off-spin to score an important 45.

### McCullum on the go

It was when Brendon McCullum – sent down the order here – and Virat Kohli allied, adding 60 runs (36 balls) for the third wicket, that RCB looked dominant for the first time in the match. The Kiwi played with a delightful freedom, reverse-sweeping his first ball for four, slashing a high full-toss from Hardik for six, and blithely scooping the subsequent free-hit over the sight-screen. As Kohli – who survived a shout for caught-behind when replays showed

a faint edge – unleashed a couple of fierce hits at the other end, RCB was on the crest of a wave.

That superiority was all too brief, however. With McCullum's exit, RCB began to stutter, losing five for 22 in the space of 27 balls as McClenaghan, Jasprit Bumrah and Hardik put the brakes on. McCullum was run out for 37, caught short by a searing direct-hit from mid-off by Hardik.

The Baroda all-rounder then struck thrice in the 18th over, removing Mandeep Singh, Kohli – whose cross-batted swipe was held at long-on – and Washington Sundar. Only Colin de Grand-

homme's final-over blitz, when 24 runs came off McClenaghan, gave RCB's score a veneer of respectability. That assault would prove to be vital at the end.

### SCOREBOARD

**Royal Challengers Bangalore:** M. Vohra lbw b Markande 45 (31b, 2x4, 4x6), Q. de Kock c Rohit b McClenaghan 7 (13b, 1x4), B. McCullum run out 37 (25b, 4x4, 2x6), V. Kohli c Pollard b Hardik 32 (26b, 2x4, 1x6), Mandeep c Suryakumar b Hardik 14 (10b, 1x4, 1x6), C. de Grandhomme (not out) 23 (10b, 3x6), Washington Sundar c Rohit b Hardik 1 (3b), T. Southee c Cutting b Bumrah 1 (2b), Umesh Yadav (not out) 1 (2b); Extras (b-1, lb-2, nb-2, w-1): 6; Total (for seven wickets in 20 overs): 167.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-38 (de Kock, 4.6 overs), 2-61 (Vohra, 8.4), 3-121 (McCullum, 14.3), 4-139 (Mandeep, 17.1), 5-139 (Kohli, 17.2), 6-141 (Washington, 17.6), 7-143 (Southee, 18.5).

**Mumbai Indians bowling:** Duminy 2-0-28-0, McClenaghan 4-0-34-1, Bumrah 4-0-22-1, Krunal 4-0-24-0, Markande 3-0-28-1, Hardik 3-0-28-3.

**Mumbai Indians:** Suryakumar lbw b Umesh 9 (9b, 2x4), Ishan Kishan b Southee 0 (1b), J-P Duminy run out 23 (29b, 3x4), Rohit c de Kock b Umesh 0 (1b), K. Pollard c de Kock b Siraj 13 (13b, 1x4), Hardik c Kohli b Southee 50 (42b, 5x4, 1x6), Krunal c Mandeep b Siraj 23 (19b, 1x4, 1x6), B. Cutting (not out) 12 (6b, 1x4, 1x6), M. McClenaghan (not out) 0 (0b); Extras (b-1, lb-4, w-18): 23; Total (for seven wickets in 20 overs): 153.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-5 (Kishan, 0.6 overs), 2-21 (Suryakumar, 3.1), 3-21 (Rohit, 3.2), 4-47 (Pollard 7.1), 5-84 (Duminy 11.6), 6-140 (Krunal, 18.3), 7-143 (Hardik 19.1).

**Royal Challengers bowling:** Southee 4-0-25-2, Umesh 4-0-29-2, Siraj 4-0-28-2, Chahal 4-0-23-0, Washington 1-0-15-0, de Grandhomme 3-0-28-0.

**Toss:** Mumbai Indians.

**Man-of-the-Match:** Southee. RCB won by 14 runs.

# Dhoni makes life tough for bowlers: du Plessis

Daredevils' Vijay Shankar rues not accelerating earlier than he did



Versatile: Ambati Rayudu has delivered, whether opening the batting or coming down the order. ■ B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

S. DIPAK RAGAV  
PUNE

Chennai Super Kings opener Faf du Plessis had high praise for M.S. Dhoni after the skipper's 22-ball 51 against Delhi Daredevils on Monday helped the team get its sixth win.

"He is in really good form at the moment and it's extremely tough to bowl to him. He has got such a big arc and if you want to bowl wide he can still hit you to leg side. It makes life difficult for the bowler and the captain to plan and bowl to him," said du Plessis.

The South African captain said he was impressed with Ambati Rayudu's form, especially his flexibility in adapting to different roles.

### Ideal spot for Rayudu

"Rayudu has been excellent at the top but the flexibility he has shown has really impressed me. He has the ability to come at four and five and score a boundary straight-away which not a

lot of people can do and I personally feel that is the best position for the team."

The 33-year old also spoke about how well compatriot Lungi Ngidi bowled on his debut after losing his father a few weeks back and said the latter would have played even earlier if not for his personal loss.

Delhi's Vijay Shankar, who got an unbeaten fifty, said that in hindsight he could have accelerated a bit earlier during his partnership with Rishabh Pant as his side fell short by just 13 runs.

"When I was batting, Rishabh was going really well. We were getting that 10-12 runs. Obviously, I could have gone for a couple of big hits. I tried doing it, but couldn't connect. I thought I should get the game to the 20th over, where I gave myself a chance to get closer to the target. If I had connected those it could have been different but that's how it is"

# Daredevils take on fellow strugglers Royals

The big foreign names in both sides have not clicked and the fielding has been dismal

UTHRA GANESAN  
NEW DELHI

Coming off agonising losses in close games, desperate to stay in the race for the play-offs and failing to find the winning formula, Delhi Daredevils will hope to lift itself out of the bottom position when it hosts fellow strugglers Rajasthan Royals here on Wednesday.

It is a familiar but not comfortable position for DD across the past 10 editions. A change of personnel both in the middle and the dugout hasn't really made much of a difference. The batting has been inconsistent, and the bowling – barring Trent Boult – fumbling.

The big foreign names in the side have not fired – Glenn Maxwell, Jason Roy, Liam Plunkett, Daniel Christian – have all underperformed, and Chris Morris is out with injury. The Indians

have been too erratic with Rishabh Pant and new captain Shreyas Iyer doing the bulk of scoring. And the fielding has left a lot to be desired.

In a way, the two teams have mirrored each other in their disappointing results, and the problem areas, and the campaign on its return to action this year has been hampered by a lack of sufficient contribution from the foreign names and some dismal fielding.

Its English batsman Jos Buttler accepted he hadn't done as well as he would have liked.

"We haven't quite performed as well as we would have liked to in the middle phase, myself and Ben Stokes specially, we really expected us to be able to come and play that role but we haven't quite done it yet. (But) it takes just one little slice of



Desperate times: Royals will need to be consistent and sharp if they harbour hopes of making the playoffs. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

luck to kick-start again and come back into the tournament," Buttler said ahead of Wednesday's game.

RR itself fell short of a

much-easier 152-run chase against Sunrisers Hyderabad, collapsing towards the end.

Slightly better off than DD

# Dhoni's 'late style' augurs well for the World Cup

His unhurried batsmanship and anticipation has been one of the highlights at the IPL so far



BETWEEN WICKETS  
SURESH MENON

Mahendra Singh Dhoni turns 37 in July. He will celebrate the landmark in Bristol while India prepare to take on England in the third T20 International the following day.

His 38th birthday will also in all likelihood be celebrated in England – at the World Cup. But this is not about where the most experienced white-ball cricketer in the team gets his face plastered with cake. It points to an intriguing Indian "late style", if you will.

The phrase is borrowed from the culture critic and intellectual Edward Said, who wrote, "Late style is what happens if art does not abdicate its rights in favour of reality." Great players go against the grain as well as place themselves at the head of a trend.

Dhoni's batting in the IPL has not been merely Dhoni-like (which is destructive enough), but occasionally beyond that. There have been glimpses of a super-Dhoni, showing that anticipation is as important for batsmen as it is for fielders. To get into position early and comfortably is the essence of all moving ball games, and Dhoni's unhurried batsmanship at the IPL has been one of its highlights.

### Remarkable strokes

In one magical over from Trent Boult in the match against Delhi Daredevils, he hit two sixes, each of which deserves to be preserved in a museum for future generations (luckily, these things can be done easily now! A cricket museum with a section on specific shots – the cover drive, the helicopter swish and so on – is not impossible).

But back to *that* over. Fast bowler Boult from over the wicket would have been difficult enough to swing to the off side because of the angle. Dhoni went for the difficult, almost impossible alternative, in ideal position seemingly a split second before the ball was deli-

vered. He struck flat, low and square – an unreasonable combination – for six. Then he got into position again as Boult pitched up and swung him over long on.

It was said of Sachin Tendulkar's batting that he psyched the bowler into bowling where the batsman wanted him to. Dhoni did the same. That flat-bat six came with a message for the future; it was the future.

It is not uncommon for batsmen who began their careers as leading stroke-makers to finish as part of the supporting cast. Age converts the carefree into the careworn.

Rohan Kanhai is a good example of a batsman who began by inventing strokes against the best bowling and ended by playing "experienced" innings in the shadow of the next generation.

### Fortune favours the brave

T20 has been demonstrating that there is no supporting cast. It is the haven of the risk-taker, rewarding the creative player, bowler or batsman. Experience often means that players are more aware of things in their own game that do not work, and are chary of taking

chances.

T20 forces them to look into their dark sides, as it were. Players are trained not just to think outside the box, but to ignore the box altogether.

Edward Said was speaking of musicians and writers, but cricketers too have "late style", as Dhoni is demonstrating today, and two greats – Sunil Gavaskar and Sachin Tendulkar – did earlier.

Gavaskar, who began his career as a generic name for batting technique, discovered late the joys of hooking fast bowlers; a ferocious attack on Malcolm Marshall and Michael Holding featured in his 29th Test century. It took him just 94 deliveries, and was one of the fastest in the game's history. This, from an opener who batted through 60 overs to make 36 not out in a World Cup match.

### Tendulkar's transformation

Tendulkar's journey, though in the opposite direction, was no less dramatic. If Gavaskar found his responses within the tenets of orthodoxy, Tendulkar, no less orthodox for being a more attacking player, extended the reach of such or-

thodoxy. If Gavaskar became more aggressive – his sole century in one-day internationals came in his penultimate match, at the age of 38 – Tendulkar became less so, playing well within himself.

Tendulkar had a better ODI record after the age of 36, his average almost five runs per innings higher than his career average, and his strike rate superior by six. It was also after 36 that Tendulkar scored the first double century in the format in an innings so orthodox, so correct, that he appeared determined to prove that cricket did not need any more invented strokes!

The focus at the England-India series commencing next month would be on two unrelated events, one assured and the other hoped-for by Indian fans. These are England's 1000th Test match, and the Indian captain Virat Kohli's finally coming good there. Dhoni's white ball efforts might be pushed into the background.

The World Cup, however, is a different matter, and there might be a call to "Do it for Dhoni" as his own team in 2011 did it for Tendulkar.



Breathtaking shots: M.S. Dhoni's sixes against Boult deserve to be preserved in a museum. ■ B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM



TV PICKS

**NBA:** Sony Six (SD & HD), 5 a.m.  
**IPL:** Star Sports 1 & SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 8 p.m.  
**UEFA Champions League:** Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m. (Thursday).

IN BRIEF



**Salah wins writers' association award**  
LONDON Mohamed Salah was on Tuesday named as the Football Writers' Association Footballer of the Year after scoring 43 goals so far in an incredible debut season for Liverpool. The Egypt international narrowly topped the poll ahead of City's Kevin de Bruyne and Tottenham's Harry Kane. AFP



**Neeraj Goyat is WBC 'Asia Boxer of the Year'**  
NEW DELHI India's Neeraj Goyat, the reigning WBC Asia champion in welterweight category, has been conferred with the WBC Asia Boxer of the Year award. Since turning pro in 2011, Neeraj has won nine fights including two knock-outs. PTI

Indian men rally past Croatia

SPORTS BUREAU  
HALMSTAD (SWEDEN)

Indian men fought back from 0-2 down to defeat Croatia 3-2 and keep their hopes of making it to the knockout stages (round of 16) alive in the men's championship division of the world team table tennis championship here on Tuesday. India takes on Austria in its last group match on Wednesday. After Sharath Kamal and G. Sathiyan lost the first two rubbers to Andrej Gacina and Tomislav Pucar respectively, Harmeet Desai came to India's rescue. The Indian came out all guns blazing to defeat Frane Kojic in a five-game thriller.

Sathiyan was outstanding in attack and defence as he outplayed Gacina in straight games. That victory gave the team some much-needed confidence.

Sharath used all his experience to outwit Pucar in five games to close out the tie. In fact, Sharath's defeat to Gacina was his first in the Championship. **The result: India bt Croatia 3-2** (Sharath Kamal lost to Andrej Gacina 11-5, 8-11, 9-11, 9-11; G. Sathiyan lost to Tomislav Pucar 11-7, 5-11, 13-15, 7-11; Harmeet Desai bt Frane Kojic 11-3, 8-11, 9-11, 11-3, 11-7; Sathiyan bt Gacina 12-10, 12-10, 11-7; Sharath bt Pucar 11-8, 11-8, 10-12, 10-12, 11-5).

Harendra is men's coach

Marijne goes back to manage the women's hockey team after eight months

UTHRA GANESAN  
NEW DELHI

The constant change in Hockey India continues and this time around, Harendra Singh has been given the hot seat as coach of the National men's team. He swaps places with Dutchman Sjoerd Marijne – who goes back to the women's team, for which he had come in February last year, after eight months. The decision makes Harendra the first Indian coach of the side since Joaquim Carvalho at the Olympic qualifiers in 2008, although he had been given interim charge thrice before.

While the actual terms of the contract are yet to be drawn up, sources confirmed he would be included in the top bracket of Indian coaches and paid approx. ₹2 lakh per month. The decision was taken after a marathon meeting here on Tuesday.

Too close for comfort

It's a decision that was obvious when Roelant Oltmans was sacked in September last year but is now too close to big tournaments for comfort.

The women's team would be participating in the Asian Champions Trophy starting May 13 but Marijne is back in Holland, waiting for visa. The men go for the Cham-

Musical chairs

A look at the Indian men's team coaches under Hockey India:

**Jose Brasa (Spain)**  
May 2009-Nov. 2010  
Appointed till the 2012 Olympics, helped India win a Commonwealth Games silver for the first time (2010). Contract not renewed after the team finished runner-up in 2010 Asian Games

**Michel Nobbs (Australia)**  
June 2011-June 2013  
Helped India qualify for London Games, but was removed after the sixth-place finish at the Hockey World League Round 3 (Rotterdam, 2013) though his tenure was till the Rio Games

**Terry Walsh (Australia)**  
Oct. 2013-Oct. 2014  
Guided the team to the 2014 Asian Games gold, the country's first after a 16-year gap. The triumph helped India become the first side to book a ticket to Rio 2016. He, however, lost his job immediately

**Paul van Ass (Holland)**  
January-July 2015  
Led India to the fourth spot-place finish at the HWL Round 3 (Antwerp, 2015). That turned out to be his final assignment as he did not return

**Roelant Oltmans (Holland)**  
July 2015-Sept. 2017  
Given charge till the Rio Olympics and getting an extended contract until 2020 Tokyo, he was sacked after a string of unimpressive outings

**Sjoerd Marijne (Holland)**  
Sept. 2017-April 2018  
Shifted from the women's team to replace Oltmans, sent back to the women's squad after India finished fourth at CWG



pions Trophy in June, giving Harendra just over a month to get into the job.

Under Harendra, the women's team had improved vastly, winning the Asia Cup against higher-ranked opponents last year and finishing a creditable fourth at the recent Commonwealth Games, including an impressive victory against Olympic cham-

pion England. The same finish, however, was deemed disappointing for the men with questions being raised on Marijne's selection policies and tactics.

**Overall satisfaction**  
Officially, all parties concerned have expressed satisfaction. "Harendra Singh brings with himself wealth of



Harendra Singh...in the hot seat • K. MURALI KUMAR

experience and has previously managed a lot of the men's team players during his stints in the Hockey India League and with the junior teams," Hockey India secretary general Mohd Mush-taque Ahmed said.

"It is an honour for me to manage the Indian men's team. It has been a very satisfying journey with the women's team and I would like to thank Hockey India for entrusting me with the new role," said Harendra. "I'm excited to reunite with the women's team and will look to focus building on the good form exhibited by the team in last six months," the 44-year old Marijne declared.

The men's team has welcomed the move. The women, however, would feel hard done by. But even they seem to have accepted the status quo.

Wimbledon increases prize money

REUTERS  
LONDON

Wimbledon on Tuesday announced it was hiking its total prize pot for the 2018 tennis championships to £34 million, up 7.6%.

That pool includes prizes of £2.25 million each for the men's and women's champions.

Organisers also issued a warning that players who compete while knowingly carrying an injury, and quit mid-match, face being docked all their first-round prize money.

The move is aimed at preventing a repeat of the rash of retirements in early action last year.

Under the new rule, if an injured player withdraws on site after midday on the Thursday before the Championships he/she will receive 50% of the first-round prize money.

The replacement "lucky-loser" will get the other 50%.

In addition to stripping players of their first-round prize money if they pull out of a match or perform to what the club deems "below professional standards", it will strictly enforce warm-up timing to speed up the game, but will also extend the time allowed between points from 20 to 25 seconds.

Dronacharya Award: Dravid's name not recommended

VIJAY LOKAPALLY  
NEW DELHI

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Tuesday categorically denied having recommended Rahul Dravid for the 2018 Dronacharya Award.

Reacting to reports that Dravid was BCCI's nominee for the award given for excellence in coaching, a top Board official told *The Hindu* that there was no truth in it.

It may be recalled that Committee of Administrators (CoA) chief Vinod Rai confirmed Dravid's nomination for the Dronacharya award.

The response from the Board was essentially to dispel any speculation related to the awards. According to sources, the BCCI did recommend Sunil Gavaskar for the Dhyani Chand Lifetime Achievement Award, little realising that the legendary opener did not meet the eligibility criteria.

Any candidate conferred with either the Arjuna or Dronacharya award is not eligible for



Rahul Dravid. • FILE PHOTO: VIVEK BENDRE

the Dhyani Chand honours.

Gavaskar had won the Arjuna in 1975.

The BCCI has never recommended any name for the Dronacharya award ever since two coaches claimed to have trained the same cricketer.

Of the five Dronacharya awardees in the past - Desh Prem Azad (1986), Gurcharan Singh (1987) and Sunita Sharma (2004) had been recommended by the Sports Authority of India while Ramakant Achrekar (1990) and Rajkumar Sharma (2016) were recommended by their students, Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli.

IOB overcomes Hissar Club

Jeena and Anjana help Kerala pip Tamil Nadu

FEDERATION CUP

A. JOSEPH ANTONY  
CHITTOOR

International cagers stood out with sterling displays in the opening rounds of the Federation Cup basketball championships at the Chittoor District Sports Authority stadium on Tuesday.

For instance, Arvind Annadurai was in the thick of action as IOB (Chennai) subdued Hissar Club 73-65 after leading 36-22 in their men's Group B match. On the dis-

taff side, Jeena, who had shone in the recent Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast, played the role of forward with finesse, 19 points testimony to her prowess in Kerala's 66-60 defeat of Tamil Nadu in their women's Group A match.

Aby assisting her was captain Anjana with 17, also as forward. Siblings Pushpa and Sathiya Senthil, the former a forward and the latter a guard, built up TN's resistance in tandem with guard Nishanthi.

Earlier, Eastern Railway

trounced Telangana 64-22 in their women's Group B match, the defending champion leading 33-20 at half-time.

Experience separated the two sides, the Railway women tested in the first two quarters but breezing through the next two. Telangana buckled and caved in tamely, especially in the latter half, when the Railway women employed the full court press.

With each quarter, the Telangana girls seemed to tire, the margins widening steadily. Their passing was poor, pounced upon by Railways' agile and alert attack. When they did manage to penetrate the rival D, Eastern Railway effected steals and set off on fast breaks. Capitalising on these turnarounds was Railways' Salma Devi.

**The results: Men: Group A:** Customs & Central Excise (Kochi) 70 (Eudrick Pereira 21, Manoj 11, Shinumon 13) bt SAAP 62 (Naveen Kumar 14, I.B.P.C.H. Varma 12, V.M. Sagar 12). **Group B:** IOB 73 (Arvind Annadurai 16, Siva Balan 13) bt Hissar Club 65 (Sandeep 13).

**Women: Group A:** Kerala 66 (Jeena 19, Anjana 17) bt TN 60 (Pushpa Senthil 14, G. Nishanthi 12, Sathiya 11).

**Group B:** Eastern Railway 64 (Salma Devi 15, Madhu Kumari 10) bt Telangana 22.



On the prowl: Libina of Eastern Railway is all set to score against Telangana. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
ROME

Liverpool returns to the scene of two of its most famous European triumphs amid tight security ahead of Wednesday's Champions League semifinal, second leg clash here.

Jürgen Klopp's side is on the brink of reaching the final of Europe's elite club competition for the first time since 2007 as it looks to defend a three-goal advantage against AS Roma.

But off-pitch tensions are high as Liverpool supporter Sean Cox lies in a coma after being attacked before last week's first leg in Anfield.

Two Roma supporters were arrested on suspicion of attempted murder and club legend Francesco Totti has appealed for "fair play,

• Liverpool needs just one more to equal Barcelona's 1999-2000 record for most goals (45) in a single CL season

• Roma has scored three or more goals eight times at home this season

• Milner's nine assists this season is a competition record



Big day: The Liverpool players arrive in Rome for their semifinal second leg clash against Roma on Wednesday. • AP

hospitality and respect for our opponents".

Former Roma striker Mohamed Salah scored two brilliant goals and set up two more as Liverpool went five up at Anfield before two late goals gave Roma hope of a potential fightback.

Klopp's side is bidding for a sixth European title having won two, in 1977 and 1984, at the Stadio Olimpico.

Liverpool has suffered serious disruption in the build-up after Klopp's right-hand man, Zeljko Brusic, stepped aside for personal reasons this week.

midfielder Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, out for the season with a knee injury, with Georginio Wijnaldum likely to be the only change from the first leg.

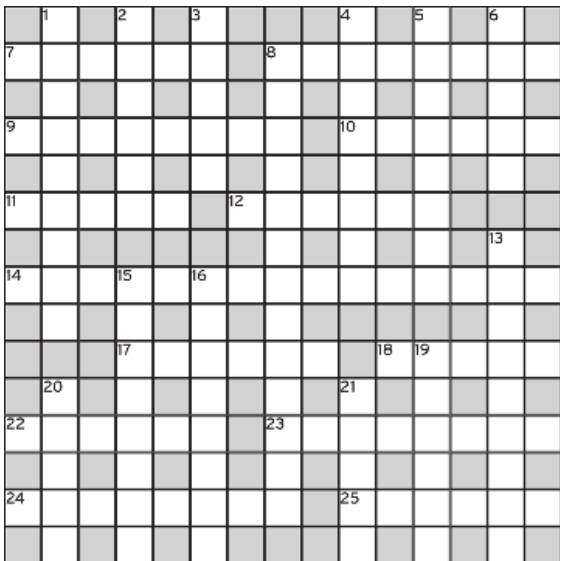
Emre Can (back) and Adam Lallana (hamstring) are also struggling with injuries.

Eusebio di Francesco looks set to be without Kevin Strootman as Roma targets just its second final – 34 years after that fateful defeat to Liverpool.

First-leg stats

Liverpool		Roma
5	Goals	2
20	Total attempts	14
11	Shots on target	6
50	Possession (%)	50
80	Passing accuracy (%)	81
348	Passes completed	380
114.8	Distance covered (km)	111.6
61	Balls recovered	49
7	Tackles	6
13	Fouls committed	7

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12306



ACROSS

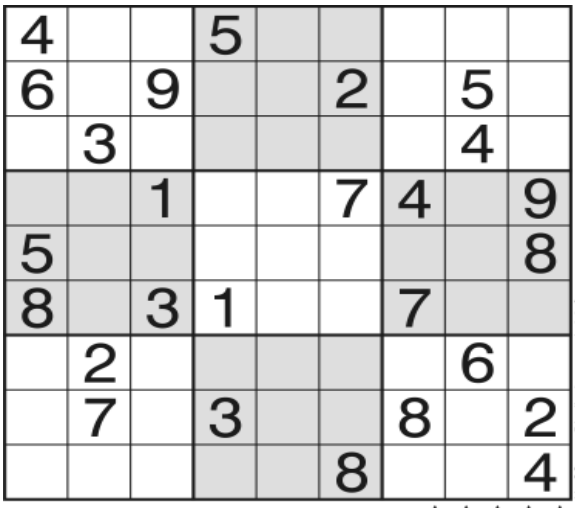
- 7 Concerned with member heading country clubs (6)  
8 Body's speaker failing to admit old case (5,3)  
9 Cold got from study of patient (8)  
10 Claim pin tears nappy (6)

- 11 Microbe seems to store fat (5)  
12 Form to get married? Apply and throw (6)  
14 Move around a bit showing what the Duke of Exeter's daughter may do below the waist? (7,4,4)  
17 Home restored, let out after a while (2,4)  
18 Water flowing out of a pipe's mouth, a mere squirt (5)  
22 Mugger possibly retreating in silence, a black mark? (6)  
23 Close call if son remains on the line (4,4)  
24 Suitable case for today's feature (8)  
25 Not above stealing beginner's thunder (6)

DOWN

- 3 Pull out from parking lot (5)  
4 Appeal claiming silver upheld, settling draw or tie (8)  
5 The plimsoll line crossed? In this ocean, tricky to be unloaded at full tilt (4-4)  
6 Yield picked up in branch (5)  
8 Valour of enemy stranded a good deal (5,3,5)  
13 Harrier runs through gorges as directed (9)  
15 Monumental legend in golf happier abroad (8)  
16 Commission ruined without right crop (3,5)  
19 Doctor's boring device, a simple boring tool (6)  
20 Forbidding divine area to be seized (5)  
21 Coats of armour primarily worn by knights? On the contrary (5)

SUDOKU

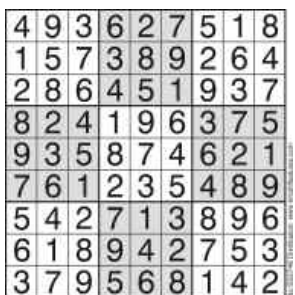


DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to puzzle 12305



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



FAITH

Meditation is the key

In the Brahma Sutra text, the very second sutra shows how it is possible to meditate on Brahman through His attributes in relation to the universe. Commentators point out that the deep import of this sutra can be traced to the crucial statement about Brahman in the Taittiriya Upanishad. "That from which these beings are born, that by which when born they live and that into which when departing they enter, that is what one should seek to know. That is Brahman." In a discourse, Sri Madhava Ganapadigal drew attention to the fact that more than mere reasoning, meditation on the truths declared by Vedanta texts is essential when trying to understand Brahman. The Upanishad points to the creative side of Brahman. Brahman is shown as the sole cause of the world, and also as responsible for its sustenance and dissolution. Adi Sankara explains this with the analogy of cause and effect. Every effect has a cause. The manifest world of cosmology could not have come into existence on its own; it obviously has a creator. From this created world, one begins to speculate about the creator. How was this magnificent world created? What materials have been used? How is this phenomenon sustained with such precision? Where does all this go finally? These questions lead to a creator who transcends all distinctions of subject and object and yet for purposes of understanding and discussion, He is described as one with empirical form. The Supreme Brahman is behind creation as one who is in full control of everything. This Brahman stands beyond what is accepted as chronology or time in human terms; He stands beyond the name and form that constitute the infinite variety in the created world of objects and beings. This implies that omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence are the attributes of Brahman.



IN BRIEF



Mario Balotelli wants to return to Italy

MILAN  
Italian international striker Mario Balotelli said on Monday he wants to return to play in Italy after two years in France with Nice, where he has scored 39 goals. "I'd like to go back to Italy," said the 27-year-old. "There's no chance of me returning to the Rossoneri." AFP

Napoli, Juventus kick-off at same time

MILAN  
Champion Juventus and title-challenger Napoli, following a request from the latter, will kick off at the same time on the penultimate day of the league (May 13), Serie A officials announced on Monday. However, Juve could already be crowned champion this weekend if it beats Bologna and Napoli loses at home to Torino. AFP

16 for Youth Worlds

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA

Sixteen boxers, including 10 women, have qualified to represent India in the AI-BA boxing championships in Budapest in August. The challenge in the women's section will be spearheaded by Nitu (48kg) and Shakshi Choudhary (57kg) and Jony (60kg). Accompanying them will be Neha Yadav (+81kg), Manisha (64kg) and Lalita (69kg), Anamika (51kg), Ashta Pahwa (75kg), Sakshi Gaidhani (81kg) and Divya Pawar (54kg). Ankit (60kg), Bhavesh Kattimani (52kg), Akash Kumar (56kg), Akash (64kg), Vijay Deep (69kg) and Ronak (81kg) will also look to make a mark.

Spurs beat Watford

Wembley win puts side five points clear of Chelsea

PREMIER LEAGUE

REUTERS  
LONDON  
Tottenham Hotspur's England duo Harry Kane and Dele Alli fired it to a comfortable 2-0 win over mid-table Watford that cemented its place in the top four at Wembley on Monday.

The win put fourth-placed Spurs five points clear of Chelsea with three games remaining and within a point of Liverpool, which has two matches left, in the race for Champions League spots. Tottenham took the lead after 16 minutes when Watford keeper Orestis Karnezis spilled a cross from Kieran Trippier and Christian Eriksen scooped the ball to Alli who had the simple task of stroking the ball home from near the penalty spot.



Hit-men: Tottenham Hotspur's Dele Alli, right, celebrates his strike with fellow goal-scorer Harry Kane. •REUTERS

Kane put Spurs two goals ahead in the 48th when he tucked away a cross from the right by Trippier and it almost had a third when Jan Vertonghen hit the post with a late header. The result: Tottenham 2 (Alli 16, Kane 48) bt Watford 0.

Foreign coach sought for trap shooting

NRAI is willing to offer €500 per day to deserving candidate

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Much against the projection that the trap coach for more than two decades, Marcelo Dradi, would continue under chief National coach Mansher Singh, the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) has sought the services of a foreign coach till the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

While felicitating the shooters for their excellent performances during the Commonwealth Games, the NRAI president Raninder Singh had stated that there was no attempt to curtail the services of the Italian.

It may be recalled that Dradi had a tough time, trying to stop the services of the personal coach of Kynan

Chenai and Mansher Singh, in the run-up and during the Rio Olympics.

The NRAI had said that it would allow private coaches during the camps etc., with the approval of the coaches concerned.

Eventually, the equations changed and Mansher gained the upper hand as the National coach.

The NRAI in collaboration with the Sports Authority of India is willing to offer €500 per day to the deserving candidate, and willing to step it up further, if required.

Despite the age restriction of 60, it may be relaxed for suitable candidates.

Shotgun selection trials  
Meanwhile, the third and

fourth set of selection trials for shotgun shooters will be held at the Dr. Karni Singh Range, Tughlakabad, from May 7 to 20.

Except for the shooters who figure in the National squad, the rest will have to pay an entry fee of ₹9,900 per event, and make arrangements for their ammunition.

The 18th Kumar Surendra Singh shooting championship in rifle and pistol will be staged in Thiruvananthapuram from May 31 to June 11.

The event will be organised by the Gagan Narang Sports Foundation.

The fifth set of selection trials for rifle and pistol will be held concurrently from June 8 to 17.

Rizvi ranked World No. 1



Shahzar Rizvi. •PTI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

India's 10m air pistol shooter Shahzar Rizvi on Tuesday grabbed the No. 1 spot in ISSF World rankings, riding on the silver he won in the World Cup in Changwon, Korea. Other top-10 rankings: Men: 10m air pistol: Jitu Rai (6); 10m air rifle rankings: Ravi Kumar 4, Deepak Kumar 9. 50m rifle 3-positions: Akhil Sheoran 4, Sanjeev Rajput 8. Women: 10m air pistol: Manu Bhaker 4; 10m air rifle: Mehuli Ghosh 7. 50m rifle 3-position: Anjum 8.

NEW DELHI ROUND-UP

Ankit and Tejas shine for Rann Star

Haryana under-19 player Ankit Redhu and Delhi under-23 spinner Tejas Baroka picked up three wickets each as Rann Star Club managed to edge past Ravi Brothers Club by one wicket to enter the pre-quarterfinals of the 34th All India Laxman Das Chhabra memorial cricket tournament.

The scores: Ravi Brothers Club 204 in 39.2 overs (Neeraj Bhati 45, Ankit Redhu three for 27, Tejas Baroka three for 39) lost to Rann Star Club 205 for nine in 37.2 overs (Sawej Khan 34).

Arvind Verma scalps eight

Leg-spinner Arvind Verma's eight for 36 helped Inborn Academy score a massive 227-run over Delhi Academy in the Swastik Cup Open cricket tournament.

Earlier, Dhruv Khatri, Ishan Kumar and Rohit Sharma scored half-centuries to help Inborn post a mammoth 322 in 39.5 overs.

The scores: Inborn Academy 322 in 39.5 overs (Dhruv Khatri 81, Ishan Kumar 78, Rohit Sharma 77, Siddarth Sahni three for 25) bt Delhi Academy 95 in 27.3 overs (Siddarth Sahni 52, Arvind Verma eight for 36).

Rajesh stars for Tulli Cricketers

Rajesh Kumar top-scored with 71 runs and picked up three wickets as Tulli Cricketers beat St. Angels Academy by 57 runs in the Ghevra under-13 cricket tournament.

The scores: Tulli Cricketers 216 for nine in 35 overs (Rajesh Kumar 71, Satish Mehra 45, Vaibhav Saini three for 28) bt St. Angels Academy 159 in 31.4 overs (Vaibhav Saini 42, Rajesh Kumar three for 15).

Ankita Raina cruises past Tang Qianhui in round 1

SPORTS BUREAU ANNING (CHINA)

Ankita Raina made an impressive start, beating Tang Qianhui of China 6-2, 6-1, in the first round of the \$125,000 WTA tournament on Tuesday.

The 25-year-old Ankita will next challenge second seed Wang Yafan of China, who bounced back from the brink of defeat to overcome Danielle Lao of USA 5-7, 7-6 (6), 6-4.

Other results: \$15,000 ITF women, Akko, Israel:

Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Shelly Bereznyak (Isr) & Lina Glushko (Isr) bt Diana Borodina (Rus) & Mihika Yadav 6-1, 6-0.

\$15,000 ITF women, Hua Hin, Thailand: First round: Zeel Desai bt Jia-kang Li (Chn) 6-1, 6-0; Natasha

Palha bt Apichaya Runglerd-kriangkrai (Tha) 6-3, 6-3.

\$25,000 ITF men, Abuja, Nigeria:

First round: Moez Echargui (Tun) bt Aryan Goveas 6-3, 3-6, 6-1.

Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Ronnie Schneider (USA) & Arjun Kadhe bt Suraj Prabodh & Hardeep Singh Sandhu 6-1, 6-2; Aryan Goveas & Anurag Nennani bt Franco Feitt (Arg) & Emmanuel Idoko (Ngr) 6-2, 6-4.

\$15,000 ITF men, Cairo, Egypt: First round: Thomas Statzberger (Aut) bt Manish Sureshkumar 6-1, 6-2.

Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Manfred Fellin & Pietro Licciardi (Ita) bt Tarun Anirudh & P.C. Vignesh 7-6(3), 6-3.

\$15,000 ITF men, Kampala, Uganda: First round: Jayesh Pungliya bt David Oringa (Uga) 6-2, 6-3;

Kunal Anand bt Sheil Kotecha (Ken) 7-5, 6-4.

Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Vasisht Cheruku & Prajwal Dev bt Anton Chekhov (Rus) & Aaron Cortes Alcaraz (Esp) 6-3, 6-4; Giovanni Samaha (Lbn) & Kunal Anand bt Niklas Johansson & Christoffer Solberg (Swe) 6-4, 7-6(3).

\$15,000 ITF men, Thua Thien Hue, Vietnam:

First round: Niki Poonacha bt Nitin Kumar Sinha 6-4, 7-5; Alexios Halebian (US) bt Abhinav Sanjeev Shanmugam 6-3, 5-7, 6-2.

Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Poonacha & Abhinav bt Rio Noguchi & Ryota Tanuma (Jpn) 7-5, 6-3.

Alexio Halebian (USA) & Nitin Kumar Sinha bt Michale Look & Damien Polkinghorne (Aus) 6-4, 6-4.

AIFF to recommend Chhetri for Padma Shri

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) is set to recommend Sunil Chhetri for the country's fourth-highest civilian award – the Padma Shri – a huge recognition for the nation's all-time leading goal-scorer, should he get the honour.

Chhetri leads the India chart with 56 goals from 97 appearances and is one of the forwards with better strike rates in world football.

The AIFF said that it was considering recommending a top player for the honour without confirming the name, but sources close to the apex body said it was Chhetri. "If there is one name in Indian football who deserves to be recommended for such a huge honour, it



Sunil Chhetri. •FILE PHOTO

is undoubtedly Chhetri," a well-placed source said.

When contacted, AIFF general-secretary Kushal Das also said that the federation has recommended Jeje Lalpekhlua and Gurpreet Singh Sandhu's names for the Arjuna Awards.

Asked if Chhetri is being considered by the AIFF for the Padma Shri, Das did not confirm, but, in what seemed a give away, lavished rich praise on the 33-year-old star striker.