

**OPINION 8**  
MODI'S  
LEADERSHIP FLAW

**WORLD 12**  
BRITAIN MAY NEVER LEAVE EU  
IF BREXIT DEAL REJECTED: MAY

**SPORT 15**  
AUSTRALIA BEAT INDIA  
BY 32 RUNS IN 3RD ODI

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## SC picks Ayodhya mediators

### 3-member panel to convey progress in 4 weeks, final report in 8 weeks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A three-member panel headed by former apex court judge Fakkir Mohamed Ibrahim Kalifulla and consisting of spiritual guru Sri Sri Ravishankar and senior advocate Sriram Panchu, a renowned mediator, will try to find a negotiated settlement of the Ayodhya's Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land dispute case.

The Supreme Court referred the sensitive dispute for mediation to this panel and asked it to submit the progress report within four weeks and final report in eight weeks.

The mediation will be held at Faizabad and proceedings would be held "in camera". The five-judge Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi said it does not find any "legal impediment" to make a reference to mediation for settlement of the dispute.

"We, therefore, order accordingly, and having taken note of the names suggested by the parties, we are of the view that the following panel of mediators should be appointed to go into the dispute with liberty to the mediators to co-

opt other members of the panel, if so required," it said. The Bench, also comprising Justices SA Bobde, DY Chandrachud, Ashok Bhushan and S Abdul Nazeer, was told earlier by Hindu bodies, except for Nirmohi Akhara, and the Uttar Pradesh Government that they oppose the court's suggestion for mediation. The Muslim bodies supported the proposal.

"Considering the provisions of the CPC (Civil Procedure Code)... we do not find any legal impediment in making a reference to mediation for a possible settlement of the dispute(s) arising out of the appeals. Whether the said provisions of the CPC would apply in the event parties arrive at a settlement/compromise in the mediation proceedings is a matter left open to be decided at the appropriate stage," the Bench said.

Interestingly, all the three members in the mediation team hail from Tamil Nadu. Justice Kalifulla hails from Karaikudi in Sivaganga district while Ravi Shankar was born in Papanasam near Kumbakonam in Thanjavur district and Panchu is Chennai-based. All



parties in the civil appeal in the title case and all interveners are allowed to present their views before the mediation panel.

The top court directed that the mediation proceedings should be conducted with "utmost confidentiality" for ensuring its success and the views expressed by any of the parties including the mediators should be kept confidential and not be revealed to any other person. "We are of the further opinion that while the mediation proceedings are being carried out, there ought not to be any reporting of the said proceedings either in the print or in the electronic media," the Bench said.

However, it refrained from passing any specific restraint order at this stage and instead empowered the mediators to pass necessary orders in writing, if so required, to restrain publication of the details of the mediation proceedings. "The

Chairman of the mediation panel may also inform the registry of this court any difficulties that the panel may face in carrying out the task assigned to it by the present order and also to inform of any requirement to facilitate the mediation and to conclude the same at the earliest," the Bench said.

The top court fixed the seat for mediation process in Faizabad of Uttar Pradesh, around 7 km from Ayodhya, and said that the adequate arrangements, including the venue of the mediation, place of stay of the mediators, their security, travel should be forthwith arranged by the State Government so that proceedings could commence immediately. It also directed that the mediation proceedings be held in camera as per the norms applicable to conduct the mediation proceedings.

#### AMICABLE SOLUTION

- The three-member panel to be headed by former apex court judge Fakkir Mohamed Ibrahim Kalifulla
- Sri Sri Ravishankar and senior advocate Sriram Panchu are other members
- The mediation will be held at Faizabad and proceedings would be held "in camera"
- Interestingly, all the three members in the mediation team hail from Tamil Nadu

"The panel of mediators is requested to ensure completion of the process during the period of the interregnum indicated above and send a report of the progress of the mediation to this court within four weeks of the commencement of the process," it said.

## Cong plans 2nd list to force SP-BSP hands

**UP chief Raj Babbar, Sriprakash Jaiswal among probables; shortlisting on for Varanasi candidate**

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Day after the Congress announced its list of 11 candidates, the party is set to come out with a second list and hopes that its resolution to play on "front foot" will force the Samajwadi Party and the BSP to reopen negotiation with the grand old party.

"The SP and the Congress performed equally bad in 2014 Lok Sabha polls and the 2017 Assembly polls. But Mayawati drew a big zero in last LS polls and still she is creating road-block in the formation of a formidable grand alliance. If we all have the common intentions to take on the BJP, then the SP and the BSP are committing a hara-kiri by excluding the Congress from the alliance," said a top Congress leader looking into the affairs of UP and helping newly-appointed general secretaries Priyanka Gandhi and Jyotiraditya Scindia.

The second list might include names like UP State Congress chief Raj Babbar from Muradabad and former Union Minister Sriprakash Jaiswal from Kanpur.

A senior party leader said the Congress is still hopeful that sanity would prevail and the Akhilesh Yadav-Mayawati combine may include the Congress as part of the Mahagathbandhan.

Party sources said senior leader Sanjay Singh may be fielded from Sultanpur, Akhilesh Pratap Singh from Deoria and Ashok Singh from Etawah, considered a stronghold of the SP.

While the search of a formidable candidate for the

Varanasi Lok Sabha seat, now represented by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, continues, the screening committee of the AICC has shortlisted candidates like Begum Nur Bano and Sanjay Kapur), rebel BJP MP Savitri Bai Phule who joined Congress last week, and Zafar Alo Naqvi and Naem Siddiqi. "The party intends to field a large number of Muslim candidates and those belonging to the SC keeping in mind the caste and religion equation in the crucial Hindi heartland," explained the leader.

Another senior leader in the party said announcement of Sonia Gandhi candidature showed that she play a vital role before and after elections. "Her equation with senior leaders of several parties cannot be underestimated as she also played key role in creating counter narrative to defeat the Shining India campaign of Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2014 polls," said the leader.

Ending all speculation, Congress on Thursday announced UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi to contest from Rae Bareilly and party chief



Rahul Gandhi from his home turf Amethi.

Sonia's re-nomination from Rae Bareilly has also scotched rumours about she is making way for daughter Priyanka Gandhi Vadra at this family bastion.

The leaders say it would also ensure that the family's youngest entrant into the political scene can dedicate her energy on poll campaign across the state and in other places rather than limiting it to just one seat.

## Most hail SC, some doubt about Sri Sri

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Majority of political and religious leaders have welcomed the SC order for mediation in the Ayodhya dispute.

However, some leaders from Muslim community and Left parties disapproved of the presence of spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar on the mediation panel.

A number of senior BJP leaders made it clear that building Ram temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya is the only way out of the impasse. Union Minister Uma Bharti said one has to respect the SC order but asserted that she stands for building the Ram temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya and a mosque can be built outside its vicinity.

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIM-PLB) welcomed the SC order,

saying it would be most befitting that the matter is resolved through negotiations.

"It would be most befitting," AIMPLB general secretary Maulana Wali Rehmani told media.

Mahant Ram Das of the Nirmohi Akhara, one of the main litigants in the case, too welcomed the setting up of a panel of mediators, but said it would have been better had a Hindu judge, connected with the case, been included in it. He added that besides the mediation efforts, the court hearing in the matter should also go on simultaneously so as to see that the case does not get prolonged further if the litigants are not satisfied.

In reference to Sri Sri, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi said he should act in an "unbiased" manner.

## Delhi Govt hikes auto fare by 19%

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on Friday hiked the auto-rickshaw fare by 18.75 per cent in the national Capital.

The Delhi Cabinet approved recommendations of a fare revision committee to hike auto-rickshaw tariff by ₹1.50 per kilometre, from ₹8/km to ₹9.50/km.

The meter-down charge of ₹25 for first two kilometres has also been raised to ₹25 for first 1.5 kilometre, said Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot.

The waiting charge has also been increased from ₹30



per hour to ₹45 per hour. However, there is a change in the waiting hours. The committee has scrapped the minimum limit of 15 minutes when the vehicle is completely stuck in traffic or moving extremely slow.

The night and luggage charges will remain the same.

The existing night charge is 25 per cent extra fare between 11 pm and 5 am.

The revised charges will come into effect after the Transport Department's notification, Gahlot said.

Gahlot said fare revision is not a reserved subject and there is no need for the approval of Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajaj.

The order has been welcomed by auto union members but many among them have asked the Government to remove the system of compulsory GPS for auto-rickshaws as it is open vehicle.

## CAPSULE

**NIRAV MODI'S BUNGALOW DEMOLISHED TO GROUND**  
Mumbai: A few seconds was all it took to bring down the 30,000 sq ft seaside mansion of fugitive diamondaire Nirav Modi, at Kihim beach in Maharashtra on Friday. The bungalow was demolished using controlled blasting.

**PM MODI DEPLORES ATTACKS ON KASHMIRIS**  
Kanpur: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday asked State Governments to take stern action if there is any attack on Kashmiris, calling those who targeted them recently in Lucknow "crazed people".

**PAK STOPS MEDIA FROM VISITING BALAKOT SITE**  
Jaba: Pakistani security officials on Thursday prevented Reuters team from climbing a hill in northeastern Pakistan to the site of a madrasa and a group of surrounding buildings that was targeted by Indian warplanes last week. Pakistani security officials guarding the way to the site cited "security concerns" for denying access in Islamabad.

## I-T detains AAP MLA after ₹2-cr cash 'linked' to him recovered

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

An Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA has been detained by Income Tax Department sleuths for questioning after their team surveying a builder here on Friday found over ₹2 crore cash allegedly "linked" to the legislator and his associates, officials said.

They said Uttam Nagar MLA Naresh Balyan, a property dealer, and 2 others are being questioned by the tax officials in Dwarka to ascertain if the recovered cash was "illegal and unaccounted."

"Balyan has been detained for questioning after it emerged that the recovered cash had purported links with him. The tax officials are questioning the MLA and others present with him about the source of the money," a senior official said.

## Team India don army caps, win hearts with patriotic gesture

**Indian team members to donate match fees for Pulwama martyrs' kin**

PRANAV PRATYUSH ■ RANCHI

The Indian squad at the Jharkhand State Cricket Association International Sports Complex showed an unmatched gesture before the world by donning the Indian Army caps during the third One Day International Cricket Match here on Friday. Indian skipper Viart Kohli also announced that the team members would donate their match fees of the third ODI to the kin of Pulwama attack martyrs.

The special Army caps were distributed by former Indian Skipper and local boy Mahendra Singh Dhoni to team members, including non-players, before the toss. While Dhoni presented the caps to the players, a couple of them also saluted him for the gesture.

The Board of Cricket Control in India (BCCI) tweeted: "#TeamIndia will be sporting camouflage caps today as mark of tribute to the loss of lives in Pulwama terror attack and the armed forces and to encourage countrymen to donate to the National Defence Fund for taking care of the education of the dependents of the martyrs #JaiHind."

Captain Virat Kohli came for the toss wearing the cap and said that about the cap that it was a special one, "A tribute to the armed forces." On the occasion, the Indian skipper announced that his team will donate their entire match fees from the third ODI to the families of the martyrs. Kohli also appealed to the



Indian players wearing camouflage caps as a mark of tribute to CRPF personnel, who lost their lives in the Pulwama terror attack last month and the armed forces during the 3rd ODI Cricket match against Australia at JSCA stadium in Ranchi on Friday. Ratan Lal I Pioneer

masses to join in and support the kin of the martyrs. "We are donating our match fees of the ODI to the families of the martyrs. I urge everyone in the country to come forward and support the families of our armed forces," said the Indian Captain.

Notably, Mahendra Singh Dhoni has been awarded the honorary rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Territorial Army in the year 2011. Sources said that it was the former Indian skipper's brainchild to come with the noble gesture idea.

However, Team India Media Manager Anand Subramanian said that the decision of donning the camouflaged caps to salute the armed forces was that of BCCI. "We have made a beginning here in Ranchi. If we get a good response, we will surely contemplate about continuing with similar gestures in upcoming matches," he said, adding that the gesture would surely motivate millions of countrymen to

support the noble cause. Each player of the playing 11 gets Rs eight lakh as match fee, while four non-playing team members are paid Rs four lakh for each match.

Notably, soon after the match was started the Indian commentators also donned the special army cap. Former India skipper Sunil M Gavaskar entered the commentary box with caps and distributed them to Laxman Sivaramakrishnan Sanjay Manjrekar, Murali Karthik and Harsha Bhogle. Manjrekar handed over the cap to Gavaskar.

A number of cricketers and Twitterazzis admired the move by the Indian side. Renowned commentator Harsha Bhogle Tweeted: "So the Indian team will wear army camouflage style caps today in tribute to, and in solidarity with, the armed forces. Maybe in future, one cricket day will be dedicated to the armed forces. No surprise this is a Dhoni initiative."

## Rafale papers not stolen, petitioners used 'illegal' photocopies, clarifies AG

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Attorney General KK Venugopal on Friday claimed the Rafale documents were not stolen from the Defence Ministry and that what he meant in his submission before the Supreme Court was that petitioners in the application used "photocopies of the original" papers, deemed secret by the Government.

His comments in the apex court on Wednesday that Rafale fighter jet deal docu-

ments were stolen caused a political row, with Congress president Rahul Gandhi targeting the Government over stealing of such sensitive papers and seeking a criminal investigation.

"I am told that the Opposition has alleged what was argued (in SC) was that files had been stolen from the Defence Ministry. This is wholly incorrect. The statement that files have been stolen is wholly incorrect," he told PTI, in an apparent damage-control exercise.

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# Gail to set up 41 CNG stations at Seraikela-Kharsawan

2.20 lakh households to get piped natural gas

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

As part of its major expansion plans, Gail Gas Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of GAIL (India) Limited will set up 41 CNG stations and will supply gas to 2,20,000 households with Piped Natural Gas (PNG) over a period of eight years. The initiative is being taken under its City Gas Distribution (CGD) projects in Seraikela-Kharsawan.



He informed that the cost of City Gas Distribution (CGD) projects in Jharkhand's Seraikela-Kharsawan and West Singhbhum districts will be worth around ₹1,200 crore.

### The main source pipeline for the CGD projects will be GAIL's Jagdishpur-Haldia-Dhamra-Bokaro Pipeline

The GM further said that West Singhbhum CGD Project will cover a 7224 kms area in the district.

The district will have 5 CNG stations and approximately 6028 households will be connected with Piped Natural Gas in the first phase. A network of 100 inch kms will be laid in the district, benefiting 15 lac population.

The main source pipeline for the CGD projects will be GAIL's Jagdishpur-Haldia-Dhamra-Bokaro Pipeline.

Earlier, Jharkhand Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs minister, Saryu Roy inaugurated a customers' meet and awareness campaign for the city gas distribution project. Addressing the gathering, Roy said, "Piped gas supply is a dream come true for people

of the state as we will have an alternative fuel option available for the consumers."

Apart from Seraikela-Kharsawan and West Singhbhum districts, he said GGL has also been authorized to supply piped natural gas in Giridih and Dhanbad districts, where work will start from this year end.

Currently, GGL operates 70 to 80 CNG stations that supply piped natural gas to 3,800 commercial units and 600 industrial houses in the country.

# Variety to the fore at healthy cooking contest

### Little Hearts School organises contest on International Women's Day

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

On the occasion of International Women's Day, Little Hearts School, Bistupur organised a healthy cooking contest for the mothers whose kids study at the school. The contest was themed around 'No fire No bake' cooking contest. The participants came up with wide variety of desserts and snacks.

"We have been promoting healthy eating habits among our students and today we gave platform to the mothers to show their skills in cooking healthy food. We are overwhelmed with the response. The contest not only helped the participants to showcase their skills but also promoted the cause of healthy eating," said Rubina Bodhanwala, principal, Little Hearts School.

She noted that the contest also emphasised that cooking is not a daily chore but is all about dedication, knowledge, patience and expertise. She added that the search for wellness through eating healthy is what has sparked so much interest in food over the past few years.

The contest was judged by Swati Chakravorty, general manager, Hotel Sonnet. She judged each dish on various



Women participate in Healthy Cooking Contest organised by Little Hearts School on Friday. Pioneer photo

parameters, including skill, technique and style. She also appreciated the school for organising the event and said that healthy food is the need of the hour.

The women from different walks of life showcased their talent with their delicious dishes which they prepared at the school campus. In the contest, the first prize went to Energy Balls in Desert category and Fusion Chart was winner in Snacks category.

City-based philanthropist, Divya Taneja also appreciated the initiative and said that our city is known for serving quality food and the contest was the best way to connect with people having passion for cooking.

"Food has become important in our lives. Cooking skills of Indians are unique and complement their stories and experiences. Best way to appreciate their talent is to showcase their adventure in every dish and task which were assigned to them," said Taneja.

"Those who took part in

the competition had to practise and think outside the box. The contest also gave an opportunity to the women to interact with each other and see the new ideas they came up with, which we otherwise would not have had. The participants showcased new ways of working with elements and materials. They combined flavours and experimented with presentation," said Dolly Upadhyay, teacher, Little Hearts School.

### City-based philanthropist, Divya Taneja also appreciated the initiative and said that our city is known for serving quality food and the contest was the best way to connect with people having passion for cooking

# Two trucks with illegal coal seized



SURESH NIKHAR ■ BOKARO THERMAL

Two trucks (JH10-AP-0484, JH 2L-1568) laden with illegal coal were seized in a raid conducted by the Officer-in-Charge Umesh Kumar Thakur near Bodia basti area of Bokaro here on Thursday. Officer-in-Charge of Bokaro Thermal said that the vehicles were illegally taking away coal from the CCL Kathara project area and started on the way when the Bokaro thermal forces team conducted a surprise raid near exit point. Police also arrested

three persons in this connection.

A case has been registered with the police in connection with the incident. The capture of trucks loaded with 20 and 12 tonnes of illegal coal from the area towards the fact that CCL security has so far been unable to effectively check the activities of the coal mafias in the Bermo area, sources added. The arrested persons were later identified as Vim Kumar Das driver, Hari Yadav and Jitendra Kumar.

The coal traders have now adopted novel method of ille-

gally mining coal from the Damodar and Konar river basins where they have dug up permanent tunnels hidden under a thin layer of sand.

The coal is transported by bullock carts and by motorcycles to dumps along the national highway and Nawadih forest areas.

The trucks now ply from Narki, Kanjkiro, Visungrah, and Bagodar areas through the GT road from 1am to 5am every morning to make sure that the entire coal is transported out of Jharkhand before day break, added Source.

# Married Woman commits suicide

PNS ■ BOKARO

A 25-year-old married woman committed suicide by hanging with the ceiling at her residence at Sector IX near street no-16 under Harla police station area on Friday. According to the police, the deceased Khusboo Devi was found hanging at her house around 2 in the night and was later declared dead when rushed to a nearby hospital, said Harla Officer-in-Charge.

The brother of the deceased, Rajesh, alleged that Khusboo's husband Sharad Kumar used to harass his sister physically and mentally by demanding money.

The body was sent for post mortem and police have registered a case under section 174 of the CrPC and have started further investigation. The couple got married in the year 2011 and has two children from their marriage. Police said that the reason behind suicide would be investigated as no suicide note or any other evidence of suicide has been found in the initial investigation.

# Health Dept holds Health Fair on Women's Day



VINOD PRASAD ■ LOHARDAGA

The District Health Department on Friday organised Health Fair in Town Hall to mark International Women's Day. On this occasion, healthworkers including Sahiyas and VHSNC were felicitated at block level.

The fair was inaugurated by the Civil Surgeon of Lohardaga, Vijay Kumar. He asked the participants to take benefit of the fair and get their health examined. Several stalls were set to provide details of different diseases and their treatment. He asked everyone to be aware of

diseases. DRO Dr Arya, DPM Joya Reshma, RCH Officer Dr Sonami Horo, STT, BTT of all blocks, Sahiyas and Sahiya sathis were present on this occasion.

A voters' awareness programme was also a part of the fair in which Kala Jattha made people take oath of the honouring democracy by casting their votes in coming general elections.

In a separate programme nukkad natak was staged to aware people of various schemes including Ayushman Bharat. Mainly people were told about EVM, VVPAT, Ballot and control units.

# International Women's Day celebrated at CCL



PNS ■ RANCHI

International Women's Day was celebrated with fervor and enthusiasm by women workforce of Central Coalfields Limited (CCL) at Vichar Manch, Darbhanga House, CCL on the theme 'Balance for Better' on Friday. On this occasion, Pramila Singh, wife of CMD CCL/BCCL was Chief Guest of the function. Guests of Honor Ashwani Pawar, Lieutenant Col, A Vijayalakshmi, IPS.

Sunita Mahapatra wife of Director (Personnel), Archana Srivastava, W/o Director (Technical/Operation), Nidhi Srivastava, W/o CVO were present to grace the occasion along with General Manager(NEE) Vinita Saran, General Manager (Samadhan) Rashmi Dayal, Dr. Manju Mishra, Dr. Suman Sinha, Dr. Mayuri Bhattacharya, Archana Sinha, Rekha Pandey, Rubni Toppo, Smt Ruby Ranjan, and large number women employees from CCL HQ, Central Hospital, Gandhinagar and command areas of CCL.

On this occasion, the Chief Guest Pramila Singh congratulated everyone on the occasion of the International Women Day. She said that country is heading towards the goal of women empowerment and we need to continue our endeavors in this direction. Speaking on the occasion, Ashwani Pawar, A Vijayalakshmi and Sonali Das motivated the women employees to be the torch bearers of women empowerment, which starts from our homes.

On this occasion present dignitaries honored the women

of different areas of CCL for their outstanding contributions. Women workforce of the company participated with great enthusiasm in the much-awaited programme. The programme was coordinated by Rakhi Gupta and Rupa Das while Rashmi Dayal, General Manager (Samadhan) delivered the Welcome Speech and vote of thanks was proposed by Vinita Sharan, GM (NEE).

### "Arogyam" health Clinic inaugurated

PNS ■ RANCHI

"Arogyam" health clinic was inaugurated by Pramila Singh at Gandhinagar Central Hospital, in the presence of Sunita Mahapatra W/o Director (Personnel), Archana Srivastava, W/o Director (Technical/Operation), Nidhi Srivastava, W/o CVO General Manager(NEE) Vinita Saran, Dr. Manju Mishra, Dr. Suman Sinha, Dr. Mayuri Bhattacharya Gandhinagar. The clinic will be conducted on every Tuesdays from 9 am to 1 pm, in which free diagnosis of breast cancer and cervical cancer for women will be provided through mammography and other tests.

It is important to note that the above two types of cancer are prevalent among women, which if diagnosed at early stage can be treated and cured

# Five star hotel platter for denizens

PNS ■ RANCHI

Deck has been cleared for setting up a five star hotel in the State Capital. After the State Cabinet on last Wednesday gave its nod to set up a five-star hotel at Sahajanand Chowk, the State Urban Development and Housing Department has initiated the process for setting up a luxury hotel.

The State Cabinet has approved a proposal for leasing out 6.44 acres of land to Jharkhand State Housing Board at Harmu. The Housing Board will lease out the 6.44 acres land of Harmu Housing Board to private players.

Ajay Kumar Singh, secretary Urban Development and Housing department said, "The Cabinet has approved the plan to lease out the land. The Housing Board will now issue a tender for construction of the five star hotel at the designated place." Once the tender is issued, interested parties which include big players such as Taj Group, ITC etc will participate in the tender process for construction of five star hotel.

Sources said that the proposal for setting up five star hotel at Harmu was pending for quite some time. The process got delayed due to finance and



the Law Department giving their nod for construction of five star hotel at Harmu.

If the Hotel at Sahajanand Chowk comes into existence, Capital will have two five star hotels. Presently, Radissons Blue is the only luxury hotel in state capital having the five star ratings. Sources said that in last few decades, there has been growth in hotel business mainly due to flow of tourists to State Capital.

Many corporate companies are booking hotel for holding their corporate functions such as seminars, workshops, meetings and other assignments.

The hotel industry in State Capital also gained momentum after neighboring state, Bihar introduced liquor prohibition in State. An official of Patna-based Hotel Kanakya on condition of anonymity said, "We have witness a drop in official

bookings by pharmaceutical companies in our hotel since liquor prohibition in 2016. Pharmaceutical companies used to book the hotel. Pharmaceutical companies and other corporate clients used to order liquor for the selected clients but due to liquor prohibition we were unable to meet their demands."

Sources said that though the Cabinet has approved a plan to set up five star hotel at Sahajanand Chowk, the proposal is likely to face people protest. In 2018, when there was proposal to set up five star hotel at Sahajanand Chowk a section of residents protested the Government plan to set up hotel in the area claiming that the proposal was an attempt to rob the area of open spaces in the name of development. They instead want areas to be used for social and cultural functions.

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Govt. of Jharkhand Health, Medical Education & family Welfare Department State Drug Control Directorate Director-cum-Member Secretary Jharkhand, Namkom, Ranchi-834010.

Advertisement for seeking claim of compensation by the patients implanted with ASR Hip implant manufactured by M/s DePuy International Ltd. (now Johnson and Johnson). The Government of Jharkhand has constituted a State Level Committee to address the claim for compensation to Patients who has been implanted with ASR Hip Implant of DePuy International Ltd. (Now Johnson and Johnson) before August, 2010.

Issued in Public Interest by State Government of Jharkhand. Address: State Drug Control Directorate, 3rd Floor, Directorate Building, R.C.H. Campus, Namkom, Jharkhand, Ranchi-834010. Mail id :- directoratedrug.jharkhand@gmail.com. Phone :- +91-9661659696. PR 204601 Health Med Edu and Family Welfare (18-19)\_D

**RUN FOR NIINE**

**Ranchi Women run to impel menstrual hygiene awareness**

**India's largest nationwide run witnesses huge participations**

PNS ■ RANCHI

Celebrating the occasion of International Women's Day in the most commendable way, women from all walks of life in Ranchi joined their hands for 'Run4Niine' movement to repulse social stigma associated with one of the most vital yet less talked about issue - 'Menstrual Hygiene'.

The 'Run4Niine' movement aims to bridge the gap between sanitary napkin users from 18 per cent to 82 per cent by bringing together people of both genders across all ages, backgrounds and abilities.

The mega event flagged off

by ace actor and 'Padman' of India - Akshay Kumar at Lucknow on Friday covered more than 100 cities of India to spread awareness about menstruation and adoption of best practices. The event organised here in Ranchi at Morhabadi Ground saw the participation of Mayor Asha Lakra, Jharkhand's Padman - Mangesh Jha, members of Junior Chamber of International (JCI), female members of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) including other dignitaries.

"Lack of awareness and access to hygienic sanitary napkins is a severe threat for the society. In an attempt to eradicate this social stigma, people from all walks of life need to come forward. Those residing in urban pockets must try to engage themselves in spreading awareness about 'Menstrual Hygiene'."



Ranchi Mayor Asha Lakra, along with JCI members, takes part in a 'Runathon' to mark the Women's Day celebrations at Morhabadi ground in Ranchi on Friday. Vinay Murmu | Pioneer

said Jha who left his job and has been travelling extensively in the rural belts of the State to weed out the taboo associated with menstrual hygiene. 'Padman' of Jharkhand - Jha who visits villages every week to distribute free sanitary pads to rural women, stated,

"The figures of National Family Health Survey-4 (2015-16) suggests that women age 15 to 24 years who use hygienic methods of protection during their menstrual period though is high in the urban regions but the figures are quite alarming for rural areas.

Only 39.4 per cent of rural women use hygienic methods during menstruation here in Jharkhand. In urban pockets of the state, 77.2 per cent of people use hygienic methods."

Ranchi Mayor appreciated the move of the organisers, "Organising 'Marathon' to raise different social issues has been a common phenomenon. However, the menstrual hygiene issue needs to be brought into limelight for building healthy society and such effort is worth appreciating," she said.

Hundreds of participants participated in the 'Run Movement' to help break the silence associated with menstruation. Run4Niine-Ranchi chapter was organised by JC Deepthi Bajaj of JCI India. The non-profit organisation has been encouraging young people to be active responsible citizens and to take the 'Let's Talk about Periods' message to the streets of hundreds in different cities through various events.

The joint statement of JCI India 2019 President Shirish Dundoo and JCI India 2018 President Arpit Hathi, who are mobilising support for Run4Niine across cities states, "India has more than 50 per cent of its population below the age of 25 and it is important that the youth of today is encouraged to come address topics such as menstrual hygiene.

It is shocking to believe that 70 per cent of girls in India have no knowledge of menstruation before their first period. We need to bridge this gap and we are proud to be a part of the Run4Niine initiative by Niine Sanitary Napkins."

**Irfan Ansari 'invites' PCC chief to contest from Godda**

PNS ■ RANCHI

Congress Jamtara MLA Irfan Ansari has gone on coining Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee president Ajoy Kumar to contest from Godda; the seat he has been said to be eyeing for his father Furkan Ansari.



Irfan who is camping in Delhi to press for his demand on Friday changed his stance over candidature which is perceived as last ditch effort by him. As per the understanding reached among coalition partners spearheaded by the Congress, the seat is likely to fall into JVM's kitty.

"The Congress should contest from Godda otherwise it would be finished in Jharkhand. PCC president Ajoy Kumar should contest from the seat. Minorities have been sidelined everywhere but at least save the Congress from disappearing in Santhal Pargana. We can absorb sacrifices done by minorities but not by the Congress in the region," said the MLA during his meeting with senior party office bearers.

He added that Godda seat the only seat at Santhal where the Congress can win easily and this should not be conceded. Irfan had on Thursday told The Pioneer about his claims and also rapped the JVM for demanding the seat under the coalition. He again trained his gun against JVM MLA Pradeep Yadav who is eyeing to contest from Godda by saying that he should file his papers from Jamshedpur.

"Jamshedpur parliamentary seat should go to the JVM where it had fared second on the last occasion. The agitation Pradeep Yadav is referring to (against Adani power plant in Godda) would have its impact all over the State and not only at Godda! The party should not be misled by putting such arguments," said Irfan Ansari.

He issuing a word of caution to Congress State in-charge RPN Singh and the PCC chief said that denying the party the seat would be suicidal and it is being done under a conspiracy. The MLA claimed that the party leaders in Delhi have nodded to his point of view and assured him to take a proper decision.

**"Jamshedpur parliamentary seat should go to the JVM where it had fared second on the last occasion"**



A cricket fan in get-up of Wing Commander Abhinandan outside the JSCA stadium during the 3rd ODI cricket match against Australia at JSCA stadium in Ranchi on Friday. (R) A group of fans celebrating. Vinay Murmu | Pioneer



Cricket fans get their face painted outside the JSCA stadium during the 3rd ODI cricket match against Australia in Ranchi on Friday. Vinay Murmu | Pioneer

**Shops allotment process at vendors market raises eyebrow**

PNS ■ RANCHI

The auction for allocating shops to the street vendors at State's first vendors' market has raised the eyebrows of several hawkers including different committees. According to the protesting vendors, the Ranchi Municipal Corporation (RMC) has restricted the entry of those vendors who sell street food items or any such perishable products.

The Municipal Corporation started the auction process on March 7. As many

as 417 street vendors got the shops there. "In order to keep the premises clean, sale of edible items sold along side streets has been restricted. The marketing complex started with an aim to provide a dedicated place will be started in a full-fledged way in a while. At present, with a few shops, the vendors' market has been made operational," said Mayor Asha Lakra.

During the first survey as many as 660 vendors were registered in the list while when some objection were entered,

it was found that the actual strength of street vendors are 541, those who have all valid documents. The resurvey was completed on November 1. After several rounds of facts verification of the claims and objections, some 470 vendors are found to be eligible to get shop at the vendors market.

The State Capital's busiest route between Kutcheri Road to Albert Ekka Chowk that remains under the domination of street sellers will be declared 'No Vending Zone' soon. "After completing the process of shift-



ing the vendors' market at the designated place, the route will be declared 'No vending zone,'

Lakra added. The building (G+5) that cover a carpet area of 2,94,240

sq. feet with basements, a banquet hall, a cafeteria, 23 offices, 472 kiosks, 108 shops is the first and the biggest Vendors Market of the State with all State-of-the-Art facilities. Constructed at a cost of Rs 54 crore granted by the Government of Jharkhand (GoJ), the Vendors Market has amenities ranging from CCTV cameras, fire extinguishers, public announcement systems, advance parking service have been equipped inside the building for better crowd management and maintenance.

**DURING THE FIRST SURVEY AS MANY AS 660 VENDORS WERE REGISTERED IN THE LIST WHILE WHEN SOME OBJECTION WERE ENTERTAINED, IT WAS FOUND THAT THE ACTUAL STRENGTH OF STREET VENDORS ARE 541, THOSE WHO HAVE ALL VALID DOCUMENTS**

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Mizoram Guv quits to face Tharoor in poll ring

Less than 10 months after being appointed as the Mizoram Governor, Kummanan Rajasekharan has resigned from the post giving rise to speculation that he may be pitted against Congress leader Shashi Tharoor from Thiruvananthapuram Lok Sabha seat. Tharoor is the sitting MP from the seat. An RSS strong man and a former chief of state unit of BJP, Rajasekharan, 65, is being seen as the saffron party's best Lok Sabha chance from Kerala, which is the only major state where it is yet to open an account. President Ram Nath Kovind has accepted the resignation of Rajasekharan as Mizoram Governor, a Rashtrapati Bhawan spokesperson said in New Delhi on Friday. Though the BJP leadership

is yet to announce the candidate list, state party sources here said chances are high that Rajasekharan could contest from the prestigious Thiruvananthapuram seat, one of the half-a-dozen constituencies where the party hopes to put up a good showing. Rajasekharan was made the Mizoram Governor on May 25 last in a surprise move when the crucial Chengannur Assembly bypoll was round the corner. Since then, a section of party workers had been demanding and speculating about the return of the senior leader to active politics. If Rajasekharan is chosen for the Thiruvananthapuram constituency, a tough triangular contest involving the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF), opposition United Democratic Front (UDF) and the BJP will be on the cards.

Though the Congress-led UDF is also yet to announce its candidate list, Tharoor is expected to seek a third term from here. The LDF has named CPT's sitting MLA C Divakaran as its nominee. Asked for his reaction to the possible fielding of Rajasekharan from the constituency was sought, Tharoor said the BJP leader was a good human being, but it was the ideology of the party which the candidate represented mattered. "As far as I know, he is a good human being. But it's not the individual but the ideology of the party which he represents and what kind of India that they envisage is most important. People of the constituency know very well what I have done for them in the last 10 years," he told reporters. Divakaran said who would be the rival candidate did not matter for him.

Panda who joined BJP this week made party's V-P, spokesperson

The BJP on Friday appointed Odisha leader Baijayant Jay Panda, who joined the BJP this week, as party's vice president and spokesperson, giving him a key role in boosting the party's Lok Sabha prospects in his home state. Panda, an articulate politician, running a group of publications in Odisha, is expected to raise the tempo and content of BJP campaign against five-term Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and raise BJP's tally in Lok Sabha and also counter the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) in the assembly polls which are likely to be conducted along with the General elections. In a brief statement, BJP President Amit Shah said Panda has been appointed as Vice President and spokesperson of the party with immediate effect. This has been an exceptional rise for one who has spent barely a week in the party and speaks lot about BJP's confi-



BJP has made quick inroads during the panchayat and local level polls and gained second position in the state by relegating the Cong to the third slot

dence and expectations from him in strengthening party's base in the eastern state where it has nudged out Congress from the second position. Panda has been suspended by the BJD for the alleged anti-party activities early last year prompting him to resign from the party and his Lok Sabha seat Kendrapara from where he was elected twice on the BJD ticket. BJP hopes that senior leader's presence could expand its influence along the coastal belt in the state. BJP has made quick inroads during the panchayat and local level elections and gained second position in the

state by relegating the Congress to the third slot. The MP had been close to the state chief minister and often articulated BJD's view point at the national level before he fell out with him in the recent years. BJD had accused him of money laundering and demanded a probe. In a letter to Patnaik, Panda had said the CM's absence at the last rites of his father, Bansidhar Panda, was "the last straw" among "many humiliations over the past four years". Panda's father was a well-known industrialist with close ties to Naveen's father, former Chief Minister Biju Patnaik.

Price of 390 cancer drugs slashed

In a major relief to cancer patients, maximum retail price of 390 non-scheduled cancer medicines have been reduced by up to 87 per cent, which would result in annual savings of around Rs 800 crore for the patients, the Government said on Friday. The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) on February 27 had brought 42 non-scheduled anti-cancer drugs under price control, capping trade margin at 30 per cent. Manufacturers and hospitals were directed to convey the revised MRP, to be effective from March 8, based on the trade margin formula. "The NPPA under Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers has put out list of 390 anti-cancer non-scheduled medicines with MRP reduction up to 87 per cent. The revised prices would come into effect from March 8, 2019," an official release said. A total of 390 brands -- that is 91 per cent of the 426 brands reported by the manufacturers -- showed downward price movement, it added. This move is expected to benefit 22 lakh cancer patients in the country and would result in annual savings of around Rs 800 crore to the patients, the release said. "The trade margin rationalisation for 42 anti-cancer drugs was rolled out as Proof of Concept, stressing on the new paradigm of selfregulation by the industry. The manufacturers of these 42 drugs have been directed not to reduce production volumes of brands under regulation," it said. While the MRP of 38 brands has been reduced by 75 per cent and more, 124 brands have seen reduction between 50 per cent to 75 per cent. The MRP of 121 brands has been reduced between 25 per cent to 50 per cent, while the maximum retail price of 107 brands have been reduced below 25 per cent.

Pulwama slain CRPF families paid over ₹1cr ex-gratia each

Next of kin of the 40 CRPF personnel, killed in the February 14 Pulwama suicide bombing, have been paid over ₹1.01 crore ex-gratia amount each as per service rules. Seventy per cent of the compensation from the risk fund is given to the spouse and 30 per cent to the parents of the martyrs. As per normal practice, the amount from the risk fund is paid after Court of Inquiry and a consolidated report from the Sector IG. But in the instant case, realising the magnitude of the tragic incident, the Director General has desired that the amount be disbursed to the NOK February 18 positively, IG Administration Vikram Sehgal said in a message on February 17 to IGs of the Sectors from which the martyrs belonged. Officials said the 'next of kin' of these slain personnel will also get an additional ex-gratia amount that has been announced by various state governments, where the troops hailed from, in a case-to-case basis. A total amount of over ₹1.01 crore has been paid to the families of the 40 personnel who were killed in the Pulwama terror attack on February 14, the CRPF said in a statement on Friday. This amount includes ₹35 lakh given by the central government as ex-gratia to the Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) personnel killed in the line of action, ₹21.50 lakh under the risk fund, ₹15 lakh from the 'Bharat Ke Veer' corpus and ₹30 lakh from the SBI paramilitary service pay insurance cover.

DENIAL OF VOTING RIGHTS IN ASSAM

Apex court asks EC Secy to appear on March 12

The Supreme Court Friday asked the Election Commission of India Secretary to appear before it on March 12 in connection with a PIL alleging that several categories of persons in Assam have been deprived of voting rights ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. The apex court sought the personal appearance of the secretary as despite the notice being issued on February 1 no one appeared to represent the Election Commission. The categories include

some whose names figure in the draft NRC but not in the voters' list. The matter came up before a bench comprising Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and justices SA Nazeer and Sanjiv Khanna. The PIL alleged that a category of persons whose names were deleted from the voter list were some whose names appeared in the draft NRC published on July 30, 2018. The petition claimed these people had voted in the last Lok Sabha election held in 2014.



President Ram Nath Kovind in a group photo with recipients of 'Nari Shakti Puraskar-2018' on the occasion of International Women's Day at Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi on Friday

EC bribery case: Delhi HC stays trial against TTV Dhinakaran

The Delhi High Court on Friday stayed trial against former AIADMK leader TTV Dhinakaran in a case of allegedly bribing Election Commission officials for getting the 'two leaves' symbol for the Sasikala-led faction of the party. Justice Sunil Gaur also sought response of the Delhi Police on Dhinakaran's plea challenging framing of charges against him by the trial court for the alleged offences of criminal conspiracy and destruction of evidence in the case. The high court in its interim order stayed the trial court proceedings and listed the matter for further hearing on

March 20. Dhinakaran, in his application through senior advocate Arvind Nigam and advocate Naveen Malhotra, sought the quashing of trial court's December 4, 2018, order in the case of alleged bribery to Election Commission officials to get the 'two leaves' symbol for the party. A trial court here had framed charges for the alleged offences punishable under sections 120B (criminal conspiracy) and 201 (destruction of evidence) of Indian Penal Code (IPC) and under section 8 (taking gratification by corrupt or illegal means to influence public servant) of the Prevention of Corruption (PC) Act. It had on November 17 last

year ordered framing of charges against him. Dhinakaran, who floated the Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam party after being expelled from the AIADMK, was arrested in April 2017 here and later granted bail. Dhinakaran won the by-elections held in Radha Krishnan Nagar Assembly constituency in December 2017 under the 'pressure cooker' symbol with a margin of over 40,000 votes. Alleged middleman Sukesh Chandrasekar, who is in judicial custody, was earlier put on trial in the case for the alleged offences of criminal conspiracy, destruction of evidence under the IPC and under the PC Act.

French Joint Forces Commander in Indian Ocean visits India, holds talks with officials

Rear Admiral Didier Malterre, Commander of the French Joint Forces deployed in the Indian Ocean, visited India last week and discussed ways to enhance bilateral defence engagement with top officials. The French Joint Forces Commander, during his maiden official trip to New Delhi after assuming command, first visited the Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) and the Information Fusion Centre (IFC). His trip to the two centres came after Admiral Christophe Prazuck, Chief of the French

Indian Navy and the Coast Guards, IMAC focuses on the analysis of maritime information. Naval Staff, made a trip there two months ago, a french Embassy statement said. Jointly run by the Indian Navy and the Coast Guards, IMAC focuses on the analysis of maritime information across the world. It draws on numerous sources of information for building its database on the global maritime situation, particularly by relying on its agree-

ments with partner countries. At the end of 2018, India also established IFC to monitor the region. It plays a central role in coordinating information in the Indian Ocean. During the visit from February 26-28, the Commander of the French Joint Forces deployed in the Indian Ocean held meetings with top officials of the Indian Navy such as Vice Admiral M S Pawar, Chief of Staff, Eastern Naval Command, and Vice-Admiral Ashok Kumar, Vice Chief of the Indian Navy, as well as at the Integrated Defence Staff level, represented by Lieutenant-General Amarjeet Singh Bedi.

V-P Venkaiah conferred with honorary doctorate

Vice President of India and Chairman Rajya Sabha M Venkaiah Naidu has been conferred an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Peace founded by the United Nations Organisations (UNO) for his contribution "to the Rule of Law, democracy and sustainable development in India". Naidu received the degree of 'Doctor of Philosophy' (Doctor Honoris Causa) from the Dean of the University of Peace in the Costa Rican capital of San Jose. Naidu called for defeating the destructive forces of hatred

The University of Peace was founded further to a resolution of United Nations' General Assembly in December, 1980 incorporating an International Agreement for the establishment of the University of Peace with the mandate of "Engaging in dissemination of knowledge fundamental to the full development of the human person and societies through interdisciplinary study of all matters relating to peace". India is a signatory to this resolution and Naidu is the first Indian to receive an Honorary Doctorate from this University. On the occasion Naidu called for defeating the destructive forces of hatred, the fanatical cries of religious bigotry and the megalomaniac displays of despotic rulers to ensure peace for promoting the welfare of humankind.

IAF tweets poem, asks Pakistan to mend ways

In a first, the IAF on Friday tweeted a poem in Hindi from its official Twitter handle sending out a message to Pakistan that India had to send its Mirage 2000 jets across the Line of Control (LOC) as Pakistan had crossed all limits. The poem, penned by Bipin Allahabadi, also gave a stern warning to Pakistan to mend its ways. The poem in Hindi says that a fighter whose name is "Mrigmarichikaa" (Mirage) had to cross over the boundaries as someone had crossed all limits. "Ab need kaise aayegi unko, thoda sa jhakjhor aaye hain unko," the poem reads, which means "how will they get sleep now, we have given jolted them". The lines were an obvious reference to India's pre-dawn aerial strike that destroyed terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed's (JeM) training camp at Balakot on February 26. The strikes were carried out after 40 CRPF personnel were killed in a suicide attack in Pulwama, Kashmir on February 14 and the JeM owned responsibility for it.



India, US discuss terrorism

New Delhi: India and the US on Friday discussed terrorism and Pakistan's continued support besides developing regional security environment. The issue came up during a meeting between Army Chief General Bipin Rawat and visiting US Special Operations Command chief General Raymond Thomas. Acknowledging India's role in peace and stability in the region, Raymond emphasised on the need for further military cooperation in the field of technology and military to military exchanges between the two countries, an Indian Army statement said. The Pakistani jets retaliated after the Indian aerial strikes on February 27 and intruded into Rajouri sector to target military installations there. However, they were not successful and the IAF jets chased them away. In the ensuing aerial combat,

Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman's MIG-21 Bison was hit by Pakistani air defence. He ejected from the crashing jet and landed in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) and captured. He was released two days later.

Foundation stones of Delhi-Mumbai, Dwarka expressways laid

Union Ministers Sushma Swaraj, Arun Jaitley and Nitin Gadkari Friday laid the foundation stones of two high-speed highway corridors -- Rs 90,000-crore Delhi-Mumbai Expressway and Rs 9,000-crore Dwarka Expressway here. The ministers also dedicated the Rs 1,217-crore Jaipur Ring Road to the nation. Addressing a gathering on the occasion, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said the three projects are a gift for Delhi and Haryana. The Delhi-Mumbai Expressway will change the future of Meerat region, and will bring it on industrial map of the country, she said appreciating that over 20 lakh new trees will be planted on these new roads, and these roads have the potential of becoming tourist attraction in near future. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway would link two most important freight centres of the country, and will boost economic activity and generate great employment opportunities. He appreciated Road Transport, Highways, Shipping, Water Resources, Ganga Rejuvenation and River Development Minister Nitin Gadkari's efforts in developing



Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar at the foundation-stone laying ceremony of Dwarka Expressway and Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, in Dwarka area of New Delhi on Friday

the national highway network in the country and said that he has successfully brought up this sector to building of 29 km of National Highways a day. Jaitley said nearly 91 per cent of the country's villages are linked with main roads. The Dwarka Expressway, once completed, will open newer avenues for industrial development in the entire region, he said and added these express-

ways will improve overall development. Gadkari said while developing expressways and highways, full attention is being given to minimising pollution levels. He said the Delhi-Meerut Expressway, Dhaura Kuan flyover, etc, will definitely reduce traffic congestion, thereby improving the air quality in the city. The Delhi-Mumbai

Expressway will also speed up the development and smart cities will develop along them generating vast employment opportunities for the local people. He said projects worth over 15 lakh crore are underway in the ministry, and these are being taken up with full transparency in a corruption-free atmosphere. He said all projects are being completed within time schedules.

The greenfield Delhi-Mumbai Expressway will be India's longest expressway at 1,320 km and would reduce the travel time between the metropolises to 13 hours from the current 24 hours, he said. Gadkari said the expressway would be completed in three years and has the potential to generate 50 lakh mandays of employment during construction. The expressway will pass through underdeveloped areas and about 15,000 hectares of land is being acquired for it at an estimated cost of Rs 25,000 crore, he added. In line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Digital India vision, all transactions related to land acquisition, including transfer of compensation to landowners, are being done digitally. "Delhi-Mumbai will be India's most environment-friendly expressway with a tree cover of 20 lakh trees and rainwater harvesting system at every 500 metres," Gadkari said. The expressway has taken a record time-frame of less than one year from conceptualisation to award, with 148.5 km of works already awarded and a further 400 km to be awarded this month, he said. The remaining 800 km will be awarded in the next six months.

PNB SCAM

Fugitive Modi's seaside bungalow razed to ground

By TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The luxurious beach-side bungalow of Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam accused and fugitive diamond...



A view of Nirav Modi's demolished bungalow in Alibaugh town near Mumbai on Friday

Within minutes, the 33,000 sq feet bungalow — named Roopanya — was reduced to debris...

the “implosion” to bring down Nirav Modi's bungalow, located off Khim beach at Alibaugh, nearly 100 km from Mumbai,

PM unfit for his post: Didi on file theft

By SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A Prime Minister who fails to protect classified documents kept in his office is misfit for his post, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday said...

Virtually blowing the election bugle from an International Women's Day rally Banerjee said the Modi Government which had “crossed its expiry date” will never be able to restore peace in Jammu & Kashmir...

huge rally in Kolkata and spoke at the end of the procession.

“Why did your Government failed to take sufficient action and preempt attacks on Uri, Pathankot and Pulwama despite prior intelligence reports” Banerjee asked adding “a new Government will come in the Centre after the elections and bring peace in the country.”

The BJP had failed to protect the lives of the security personnel by not acting on time she said. Speaking on the alleged theft of confidential files related to Rafale deal Banerjee wondered “how a Prime Minister who cannot protect files from being stolen from his office can protect the country.”

All 3 mediators on Ayodhya dispute are from Tamil Nadu

Chennai: The three mediators appointed by Supreme Court to resolve the Ayodhya dispute have a common thread — all hail from Tamil Nadu.



Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Sriram Panchu and Justice Kalifulla

The Supreme Court on Friday referred the politically sensitive case for mediation and appointed retired apex court judge FMI Kalifulla as the head and senior advocate Sriram Panchu and spiritual guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar as two other members of the panel for the purpose.

Kalifulla hails from Karaikudi in Sivaganga district while Ravi Shankar was born in Papanasam near Kumbakonam in Thanjavur district and Panchu is Chennai-based.

saying the outgoing judge provided valuable insights.

“While deciding the BCCI matter I felt like I was sitting besides a former Indian cricket captain. That much insight was provided by Kalifulla. He has so much insight into the working of BCCI. I am eternally grateful to him for helping me and the game as such in regaining its glory,” Justice Thakur had said.

On Friday, Kalifulla said the SC-appointed committee will take every step to settle the Ramjanmaboomi-Babri Masjid dispute “amicably.” Panchu, a senior advocate of the Madras High Court, is a pioneer in the mediation movement.

Founder of the country's first court-annexed mediation centre — The Mediation Chambers — in the Madras High Court in 2005, he has authored books on mediation, including a comprehensive manual -- Mediation: Practice and Law.

Panchu has mediated a number of cases, including the one involving the boundary dispute between Assam and Nagaland.

“It is a very serious responsibility given to me by the Honourable Supreme Court. I will do my best,” he said on the apex court nominating him as one of the mediators.

Sri Sri Ravishankar, according to his Bengaluru-based Art of Living foundation, was born to Visalakshi Ratnam and R S Venkat Ratnam in Papanasam.

He, however, shifted to Bengaluru early in life and graduated in Bachelor of Science from St Joseph's College.

The spiritual guru has been attempting mediation on the dispute for some time now, before the court chose him as part of the panel Friday.

On his being included in the panel, he said every body must move together to end long-standing conflicts.

“Respecting everyone, turning dreams to reality, ending long-standing conflicts happily and maintaining harmony in society — we must all move together towards these goals. #ayodhyamediation,” he tweeted.

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PM's dyslexia jibe: Body of disabled people expresses shock

Kolkata: An organisation that works for differently abled people in West Bengal on Friday expressed “shock” at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's comment, purported to be a political jibe at Congress president Rahul Gandhi, during a discussion on dyslexia with a student on Sunday.

the disabled people of the country, General Secretary of the Paschim Banga Rajya Pratibandhi Sammilani, Kanti Ganguly, said in a statement.

Ganguly, also a senior CPI(M) leader, said the differently abled people were “shocked” as the Prime Minister “has made fun of a serious condition which has been inducted as disability in the Rights of Persons with Disability (RPD) Act, 2016, passed unanimously”.

Farmer suicide doubled in last 4 yrs in Maha: RTI reply

By TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a shocking disclosure made through a reply obtained under the RTI Act, the Maharashtra Revenue department has said that the number of farmers' suicides nearly doubled in the State during the last four years from 6,268 in 2015 to 11,995 in 2018.

The reply obtained by RTI activist Jeetendra Ghadge revealed that Amravati revenue division — comprising districts of Akola, Amravati,

Buldhana, Washim and Yavatmal in eastern Maharashtra — accounted for a maximum of 4,383 out of the total 5,727 farmers' suicides reported from across the state between 2014 and 2018.

Surprisingly, the RTI reply also confirmed that many of the affected farmers' families received compensation of ₹1 lakh were denied to compensation by the State Government.

In 2014, 1,358 farmers' families received the compensation whereas 674 application seek-

ing compensation had been rejected. However, in 2018, the number of rejections increased to 1050, while the approved cases approved decreased to 1,330.

In March 2015 then Revenue Minister Eknath Khadse had announced in the State Assembly that the compensation would be increased from ₹1 lakh to 5 lakh to per affected family. He had also announced a life insurance policy that would cover all the farmers.

Probe should start from Parrikar: Rahul

Panaji: The probe into the “missing” Rafale papers should start from Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar who had claimed files related to the deal were with him, Congress president Rahul Gandhi said on Friday.

Parrikar was Defence Minister when the Rafale deal was signed with France and the Centre has told the Supreme Court some documents related to the multi-billion contract have been “stolen”.

NEW DELHI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL ZONAL CENTRE, TILAK LANE, NEW DELHI

SOUTH DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

SPECIAL TRAIN - 2019 In order to clear extra rush of passengers, Northern Railway has decided to run one Special Train (Single side) from H. Nizamuddin to Yesvantpur as per schedule given below :-

State-run Goa abattoir to be outsourced to private firm

Panaji: The State-run Goa Meat Complex Limited will outsource its abattoir operations to a private player for a period of five years starting June 1 this year, its managing director Rajendra Prabhugaonkar said on Friday.

He said the GMCL, set up in 1971 in North Goa's Usgao village to cater to the beef requirement in the coastal State, was shut since October, 2014 due to technical issues and lack of animals for slaughter.

Prabhugaonkar said a minimum of 30 animals are required for slaughter every day for the abattoir to function optimally.

“As per the tender, the private player will run the abattoir, provide meat for local consumption, and share revenue with the State Government,” he said. He said the abattoir has all requisite permissions including those from the Factories and Boilers department, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and the Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB).

Mumbai: CBI nabs fugitive customs officer after 20 yrs

By TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After having been masquerading as a doctor for the past 20 years, law finally caught up with an erstwhile appraiser of the Customs department-turned-absconding accused Abhinav Singh, when the CBI finally arrested him from Uttar Pradesh.

Singh, who was impersonating as Dr. Rajeev Gupta for the past two decades, was working as an Associate Professor with a Medical College at Akbarpur, Chhata, Mathura in Uttar Pradesh, when the police arrested for allegedly causing to the tune of ₹4,00,72,496 by way of Customs duty on goods imported.

after having been masquerading as a doctor for the past 20 years, law finally caught up with an erstwhile appraiser of the Customs department-turned-absconding accused Abhinav Singh, when the CBI finally arrested him from Uttar Pradesh.

Singh, who had earlier been declared a Proclaimed Offender by the Court, was brought to Mumbai from Uttar Pradesh on a transit. On Friday, Singh was produced before a Special Judge, Mumbai who remanded him in CBI Custody till March 13.

Singh was wanted in a CBI case registered on September 29, 1999 on a complaint lodged by the Customs, SIIB, New Custom House, Mumbai against him and others including private firms.

PUBLIC NOTICE The Original Agreement dated 10.02.1982 pertaining to Property No.4132/4131, Ward No.3, Naya Bazar, Delhi, my clients: (1) Smt. Lata Goyal wife of Sh. Parmod Kumar, resident of C-9/21, Sector-7, Rohini, Delhi, (2) Smt. Sonia Goyal wife of Sh. Amit Goyal, resident of C-9/20, Sector-7, Rohini, Delhi, and (3) Sh. Akhil Goyal son of Sh. Ajay Kumar Goyal, resident of C-9/101, Sector-8, Rohini, Delhi, have been misplaced/hosted somewhere and not traceable at date. If any body found, the same may be submitted to the address of my clients. PARVEEN GARG (Advocate) 222, Deepali, Pitampura, Delhi-34 Enrolment No. D713368

LOST AND FOUND This is to inform all general public for lost our company Form 38 No. 3308303 & 2 Form C No. 0773369 and 0177701 issued by Uttar Pradesh Sales Tax Department. Whoever finds the same may return to below mentioned address. misuse of the same will not be our responsibility. Technocraft Construction Pvt. Ltd. B-27, Sector-49 Noida

EAST DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER M-II SHAH, SOUTH VISHWAKARMA NAGAR JHILMIL DELHI-110095

DELHI JAL BOARD: GOVT. OF N.C.T. OF DELHI OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (CENTRAL)-I NEAR UGR & BPS RAMLILA GROUND JLN MARG, NEW DELHI- 110002.

RAJASTHAN STATE ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION HIRING OF BUSES ON KM. BASIS IN RSRTC FOR VARIOUS DEPOT

WESTERN RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION OF NEW FOBs Divisional Railway Manager (WA), Western Railway 6th floor, Engg. Deptt. Mumbai Central, Mumbai - 400008 invites E-tender as per details given as follows: 1. Executive: DEN(Br/Spl)BCT. Tender Notice No. : BCT/18-19/605 dtd.06.03.2019. Work and location: Naigaon: Proposed 6 m wide new FOB towards north side. Approx. cost of work: ₹ 368917.36. EMD: ₹ 334500/- Date & Time of submission: on 10.04.2019 till 15.00 Hrs. Date & time of opening: on 10.04.2019 at 15.30 hrs. 2. Executive: DEN(Br/Spl)BCT. Tender Notice No. : BCT/18-19/607 dtd.06.03.2019. Work and location: Virar: Providing new middle FOB 6 m wide new subway. Approx. cost of work: ₹ 73699181.26. EMD: ₹ 518500/- Date & Time of submission: on 10.04.2019 till 15.00 Hrs. Date & time of opening: on 10.04.2019 at 15.30 hrs. 3. Executive: DEN(Br/Spl)BCT. Tender Notice No. : BCT/18-19/607 dtd.06.03.2019. Work and location: Andheri: Proposed 6 m wide new FOB towards north side. Approx. cost of work: ₹ 107001602.35. EMD: ₹ 685000/- Date & Time of submission: on 10.04.2019 till 15.00 Hrs. Date & time of opening: on 10.04.2019 at 15.30 hrs. Regarding details of nature of work, containing cost of tender document (non refundable), EMD, eligibility criteria, similar nature of work, detailed tender conditions, please visit: www.irps.gov.in. Manual offers will not be considered. Follow us on twitter.com/WesternRly

# PM slams SP for delay in start of UP project

**Varanasi (UP):** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday claimed that "non-cooperation" by the previous Samajwadi Party Government in Uttar Pradesh was responsible for the delay in start of a beautification project in his Lok Sabha constituency.

He was addressing a gathering here after laying the foundation stone for the Kashi Vishwanath Temple's approach road and its beautification.

"In the first three years there was non-cooperation of the state government. The developmental projects here picked pace after you (people of Uttar Pradesh) made Yogi Adityanath the chief minister," he said.

"Had there been cooperation earlier, we would have launched the project instead of laying the foundation," Modi said.

Attacking previous governments, the prime minister said, "In the past 70 years no



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with the members of Self Help Groups at the National Women Livelihood Meet 2019, a programme organised on the occasion of International Women's Day, at Deendayal Hastkala Sankul in Varanasi on Friday

government thought of Baba (Lord Shiva) and were silent. They took care of themselves but not of this place."

Noting that it was his "pleasure" to have initiated the work at Kashi Vishwanath, he said, "I have dreamt for a long time to work for this place. When I was not in politics I came here several times and used to think

that something should happen here."

"Bhole Baba ney tai kiya hoga baatein bahut karte ho yahan aao kuch karke dikhao," (Lord Shiva must have decided that you talk much, so now you should come here and do something)," he said, adding that due to the blessings the fulfillment of his dream has started. **PTI**

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY Cover of book on 1st transgender mother unveiled

**Mumbai:** The cover of a book, which chronicles the life and struggles of Gauri Sawant, the first transgender mother of the country, was unveiled here on Friday on the occasion of the International Women's Day.

The book, "Gauri - The Urge to Fly", will be launched on May 12 on the occasion of the Mother's Day, said its author Rhythm Wagholikar.

He said the book chronicles the varied aspects of Sawant's life, her struggle and motherly love for the sex workers' children who are abandoned after birth.

The 38-year-old transgender activist, born in Pune, was discarded by her father in childhood. She runs an NGO, Sakhi Char Chowghi, that promotes safe sex and counsels transgen-

ders. The revenue earned from the book will go to fund Sawant's project "Nani Ka Ghar" under which homes will be provided to transgenders," the 25-year-old author said.

Born as Ganesh Sawant, she realised that she was different from other boys. As a child, she has always felt more inclined to female gender, prompting her father to discard her. Sawant, who successfully adopted a sex worker's daughter after overcoming many hurdles, wants her to join the police force. "Today I am overwhelmed. I never expected or thought of it (a book being written on her). This is going to add to my responsibilities," an emotional Sawant told mediapersons at an event held the Press Club here. **PTI**

# Peter Mukerjea 'silent killer' of Sheena Bora: CBI to court

**Mumbai:** Former media executive Peter Mukerjea is the "silent killer" of Sheena Bora, the daughter of his wife Indrani Mukerjea from a previous relationship, the CBI told a special court on Friday while opposing his bail plea in the 2012 murder case.

Peter Mukerjea, arrested in the sensational Sheena Bora murder case in 2015, had moved the bail application in November last year before special CBI Judge J C Jagdale. This is the third time he has approached the court for bail.

Opposing his bail plea, special public prosecutor Bharat Badami argued that the CBI has sufficient evidence to prove Peter Mukerjea's role in the murder conspiracy.

Badami told the court Peter Mukerjea didn't take any step to find Sheena Bora, who had gone missing, despite the fact that she was his son Rahul Mukerjea's fiancée.

"Peter was knowing everything...He was not a statue of

the family. He took no step when Rahul was desperately asking about Sheena.... Peter is silent killer of Sheena," the CBI lawyer said.

Rahul Mukerjea is yet to depose before the court and if Peter Mukerjea is released on bail, he may try to win over the witness (Rahul), the lawyer added.

Badami argued there was sufficient material against Peter Mukerjea that led to framing of charges against him. Therefore, the accused cannot seek bail by merely stating the charges against him were "defective", he said.

One of the reasons forwarded by Peter Mukerjea for not being involved in Sheena's murder was that he was in London when the murder took place.

However, the CBI contested this argument.

Hafiz Saeed (LeT chief) was in Pakistan when the 26/11 Mumbai attacks took place, but that doesn't mean he wasn't

involved in the attacks. So, even if Peter Mukerjea was in London (at the time of the murder) it doesn't mean he was not part of the criminal conspiracy, the CBI counsel argued.

The April 2012 murder of Sheena Bora (24), Indrani Mukerjea's daughter from an earlier relationship, came to light in August 2015 when her driver Shyamwar Rai spilled the beans after being arrested in another case.

Indrani Mukerjea, a former media executive, her former husband Sanjeev Khanna, Rai and Peter Mukerjea were arrested in the case. Rai later became an approver and was pardoned.

Indrani Mukerjea, who is in jail since her arrest in August 2015, is facing murder charge, while Peter Mukerjea has been accused by the CBI of being a part of the criminal conspiracy.

The CBI has claimed a financial dispute led to the killing of Sheena Bora. **PTI**



Devotees from Myanmar offer prayers at Maha Bodhi temple in Bodhi Gaya on Friday

# We have our list ready, says Bengal Cong

## Left declares candidates for 2 seats

**Kolkata:** Miffed over the CPI(M) unilaterally announcing candidates for the Raiganj and Murshidabad Lok Sabha seats, Congress Bengal unit chief Somen Mitra on Friday accused the Left Front of not being keen on having an alliance.

Mitra said his party won't compromise with its dignity and has its list of 42 candidates ready, asserting that it has left the matter to the high command to take a final call.

"It seems that the Left Front is not keen on having an alliance with the Congress. The Left Front won't be able to win a single seat without the help of Congress in the state. But Congress would be able to retain its four seats," Mitra told reporters late in the night after an urgent meeting with state leaders.

"If needed we will fight alone in the state. We have our list of 42 candidates ready. We wanted an alliance till 2021 assembly polls so that our alliance or understanding gets acceptability from the masses. But the CPI(M) is more keen on short term political gains and doesn't want any long-term adjustment," he said.

Amid the ongoing seat-sharing talks between the

CPI(M) and the Congress, the Left Front on Friday announced its candidates for Raiganj and Murshidabad seats, the bone of contention between the two parties.

The current MPs in those two seats -- Mohammed Salim from Raiganj and Badaruddoza Khan from Murshidabad -- would contest, Biman Bose, chairman of the CPI(M)-led Left Front, said.

The announcement of candidates in these two seats held by the CPI(M) might lead to a breakdown in the seat-sharing discussions between the two side and eventually pave the way for a four-cornered contest in the state in the upcoming general elections.

The development came at a time when Congress president Rahul Gandhi had asked his party's in-charge of West Bengal, Gaurav Gogoi, to speak to CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury in order to resolve the impasse over seat-sharing. Gandhi had also met the state Congress chief to discuss the matter. The state Congress had requested Gandhi to take a call on the matter.

The CPI(M)'s central committee on Monday came out with a proposal of "no mutual contest" in the Lok Sabha polls in the six seats held by the two parties in the State. It was seen as a move to untangle the seat-sharing skein between the two parties, aimed at consolidating the anti-BJP and anti-TMC votes. **PTI**

# Sessions court stays Gujarat Congress leader's conviction

**Ahmedabad:** A sessions court in Gir Somnath district of Gujarat on Friday stayed the conviction of Congress leader Bhagvan Barad in a 24-year-old illegal mining case and also suspended his jail term of two years and nine months.

Barad, an MLA, was disqualified by the Assembly Speaker after he was held guilty by a magistrate's court on March 1 in the 1995 case. He was also granted bail in the case.

The Congress leader challenged his conviction in the district and sessions court in Veraval town of Gir Somnath district.

Principal district judge M M Babi stayed Barad's conviction while hearing his plea, said the Congress leader's lawyer Rajesh Buch.

In addition, the district judge also allowed Barad's plea, seeking suspension of the sentence of two years and nine months awarded by the judicial magistrate of Sutrapada Taluka court. "The sessions court stayed the conviction as well as ordered suspension of the sentence given by the magistrate. The court also granted bail to Barad till the pendency of his appeal against the magistrate's order," said Buch. He said a stay on the con-

vicition was necessary to allow Barad to continue as the MLA of Talala constituency in Gir Somnath district.

The 60-year-old Congress leader won from Talala in the 2017 Assembly polls.

Barad was accused of stealing limestone worth Rs 2.83 crore through illegal mining on government land in Sutrapada. The material was then sold to a local chemical factory, according to an FIR lodged against him against him in 1995. The magistrate pronounced Barad guilty under Section 379 of the Indian Penal Code, which deals with punishment for theft. **PTI**

# 2 Guj MLAs quit Cong, 1 joins BJP, another on the way

**Ahmedabad:** In a setback to the Congress in Gujarat ahead of the general elections, two party MLAs Friday tendered their resignations, with one of them joining the ruling BJP later in the day and another announcing his decision to join the saffron party soon.

Manavadar MLA Jawahar Chavda gave his resignation to Gujarat Assembly Speaker Rajendra Trivedi in the afternoon, while Parsotam Sabariya, who represented Dhrangadhra seat in Morbi district, gave his resignation in the evening.

Chavda joined the BJP at the party's headquarters in Gandhinagar, while Sabariya announced that he will join the

ruling party soon. Sabariya was arrested in October last year in connection with the irrigation scam. He was granted bail in February by the Gujarat High Court.

"Congress MLA from Dhrangadhra seat, Parsotam Sabariya, tendered his resignation today evening. I have accepted his resignation. He has not given any particular reason in his resignation letter. He now ceases to be a member of the Gujarat Assembly," Trivedi said.

Commenting on his decision, Sabariya said he was joining the ruling BJP to develop his constituency. "I was not under any pres-

sure because of the pending case. I am already out on bail. I have resigned voluntarily. I am not dissatisfied with any Congress leader. I am joining the ruling BJP as I felt that this is the best way to serve the people of my constituency," he said.

The former MLA claimed that he was not offered any ministership in the Gujarat government by the BJP.

Sabariya was arrested in October last year for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe from persons accused in an irrigation scam in Morbi district in return for not raising the issue in the Assembly and with the state government.

Just an hour before Sabariya's resignation, Chavda joined the BJP at party headquarters in Gandhinagar after giving his resignation as the MLA of Manavadar seat in Junagadh district.

Chavda, 55, a four-time MLA, was inducted into the party by state Home Minister Pradeepsinh Jadeja and senior party leader K C Patel.

After joining the BJP, Chavda said he has not left the Congress out of any discontent or differences with the Congress leadership.

Chavda, a prominent OBC leader from Ahir community, said he also resigned from the primary membership of the

Congress and sent a letter to party president Rahul Gandhi to inform him about his decision.

Talking to reporters, he claimed that the BJP has not offered ministership to switch sides ahead of the Lok Sabha polls.

"It is not true that I am joining the BJP to become a minister. I am in politics to serve the people. I am joining the BJP as I felt that I can serve the people in a better way if I join the party that is in power."

"I also felt it necessary to support Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the current security scenario of the country," Chavda said. **PTI**

# First women officers to run Hovercraft arrive on Chennai coast



Indian Coast Guard Deputy Commandants Anuradha Shukla and Shirin Chandran inside the hovercraft, in which they set on a 500-km surveillance mission from Rameswaram on Friday

**Chennai:** Commemorating International Women's Day, the first woman captain of hovercraft H-197 Anuradha Shukla along with her colleague and deputy commandant Shirin Chandran arrived here Friday after undertaking a 500-km journey on rough seas.

Shukla and Chandran were among the first four women to be trained to operate air-cushion vehicles popularly known as hovercraft.

After commencing their surveillance voyage from Coast Guard Station, Mandapam, near Rameswaram, on March 6 and patrolling the Gulf of

Mannar and Palk Bay, the officers moored the H-197 at the Coast Guard headquarters here in the afternoon.

Coast Guard undertook a major step towards empowering women and facilitating greater gender parity, and became the first force to deploy women officers in operational roles on boardships.

"By doing so, India joins a select few nations, including Australia, Germany, Israel and the United States, which have allowed the women officers to take on command roles for law enforcement", an official press release said. **PTI**

# Everything fine now, says Kashmiri vendors after 'insaniyat' of locals, cops

**Lucknow:** The abusive rant of saffron-clad men against two Kashmiris sent shock waves across the country, but timely police action and warmth of locals have brought a sense of security to the vendors who were back to selling dry fruits on Friday.

The two, who are residents of Jammu and Kashmir Kulgam's district and come in Lucknow during winters to sell dry fruits, are doing brisk business in the same locality under the watchful eyes of the police and local vendors.

"People here are very good... Everything is fine now," Mohd Afzal, one of the victims, told PTI. "We have no fear with the people extending so much love and care and there is no plan to rush back."

Asked what message they will take back for their people in the strife-torn Valley, Afzal said he would tell how people here are good. "It is only the 'goondas' (goons) here who do such thing while the people are very helping."

He said that they would depart after 20 more days and will be here again.

On Wednesday, Afzal and Abdul were selling dry fruits - as has been the practice for the past several years -- when they were attacked with sticks by saffron-clad persons at Daliganj area, the video of which went viral on social



Kashmiri dry fruit vendors Mohd Afzal and Abdul Salam, who were beaten up by a few saffron clad men on Wednesday, back to their roadside selling business in Lucknow on Friday

media. Local people, however, rushed to their rescue and informed the police.

A vegetable vendor nearby said that the incident could have been avoided had the two been sitting nearby. "They were sitting a little distance away from us and so the saffron-clad youth could thrash them.... Had they been with us, we would not have allowed anyone to even touch them," Raju said.

Police on duty were seen moving around in the area on Friday and keeping a close eye on the crowds. **PTI**

# NC chief questions release of Masood Azhar in 1999

**Jammu:** National Conference president Farooq Abdullah on Friday questioned the release of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) founder Masood Azhar in Afghanistan by then BJP Government in 1999 in exchange of the hijacked Indian airlines flight IC-814 despite his Opposition.

He strongly opposed the ban on the Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) and said the time has come when banning should end, and meeting with these outfits should start.

"Who released Azhar (JeM founder) and who took him to Kandahar (Afghanistan)? The centre should reply. When I told them not to release Azhar, they did not listen to me (at that time). Today I am anti-national and they are national," Abdullah, who was the Chief Minister during the hostage crisis in 1999 told reporters on the sidelines of a function here.

Azhar was arrested on February 11, 1994 at Khanabal Chowk in Anantnag district of south Kashmir but was released in exchange of passengers of IC-814 on December 31, 1999 by the then BJP Government along with two other terrorists.

Asked about the ban on JeI, Abdullah said, "Banning is not the way out because the minute you ban anything they go underground and they become more vicious." **PTI**

"The time has come when it is not (about) banning, it is meeting them (recognised/unrecognised entities) politically, that is important. Unless you meet them politically, you are never going to be able to sort out these people," he said.

The Centre Thursday last banned JeI and Kashmir for five years under anti-terror law on grounds that it was "in close touch" with militant outfits and was expected to "escalate secessionist movement" in the state.

A notification banning the group under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act was issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs after a high-level meeting on security chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Asked about the involvement of Hizbul Mujahideen terror outfit, considered JeI's militant wing, in Thursday's grenade attack in Jammu which left two persons dead and 31 others injured, the NC leader said, "I do not know whether the group is really JeI's militant wing."

"I do not know... I have been chief minister and I have never had any such input that they belong to JeI. I think this brigade (responsible for the grenade attack) is the one that is run by Sallaudhin from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir," he said.

In response to another question on the centre's decision to

ban JeI, he said "I am not in power now. Information on them will be available only with the intelligence and the governor who rules (the state) today. I have no intelligence input about them now."

He said when Jagmohan was the governor of the state JeI schools were banned and those teachers were inducted in government schools.

"Did he do right or did he do wrong? The same people then met the Prime Minister and the home minister so that we could find a way out," he said, referring to the Hurriyat leaders talks with the centre.

"Look at the history, you have to meet them, not ban them or put them in jail. You have to meet them by talking to them and finding out why are they not part of this nation. What stops them from being part of this nation. That is what we need to do," he said. Abdullah further said his party never questioned the air strikes by India in Pakistan on February 26. In a separate function organised to welcome prominent persons from Basholi area of Kathua district into the party fold, the NC leader called for isolation of divisive forces and maintaining of harmony, saying the politics of divide is against the ethos of the nation and the state, which encompasses all religions, castes and regions. **PTI**

PAPER WITH PASSION

## Why Cong needs Sonia

Priyanka's exclusion from Uttar Pradesh poll list shows that the party can't do without her mother's steadying abilities



The Congress' first list for the Lok Sabha election, which incidentally had key seats in Uttar Pradesh, was conspicuous by the absence of one name that was expected to be an elixir for its moribund state unit, that of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. She was expected to relieve her ailing mother and Congress supremo Sonia Gandhi from the family seat of Rae Bareilly, having led the war room there in past elections. Considering that Rahul Gandhi continues from Amethi and senior Congress leaders like Salman Khurshid, who had lost in 2014, are retaining their seats, the party seems keen on status quo. It would rather not break the mould or allow the whiff of confidence brought in by young Turks under new chief Rahul Gandhi to aerate the rank and file. Obviously, observers are wondering why the Congress is underplaying its charismatic trumpcard, one who could really steal the optics from a resurgent Prime Minister Narendra Modi and even match speech for speech? Or is it that the Congress is not unleashing her simply because 2019 is a political muddle post Pulwama and Balakot airstrikes, and with a nationalist swell in the heartland, it is advantage Modi for now? Is it that the party is grooming her for 2024, letting Rahul consolidate his presidentship first? Or is it that the Congress wants to revive its own tally ground up than play second fiddle to the federal front? Undoubtedly, Priyanka has successfully managed past elections at the booth level for both family seats but perhaps as general secretary of eastern UP, one that includes Modi's Varanasi seat and one that will be a litmus test of her organisational and vote transference skills, she needs to be seen as a serious game-changer more than a poster child. Had she contested, she would have had to pay more attention to Rae Bareilly and spread herself thinly. For now she seems to have adopted a deep-rooted and precise local strategy than deal with the weight of expectation that always follows her.

Looking deeper, the Congress has to deal with challenges of realpolitik. Sonia Gandhi is still the bridge for both the Opposition and the generational divide within the party. Knowing that it cannot claim some relevance for itself unless it synergises with regional parties, it needs Sonia to push through strategic alliances and rescue a flagging *mahagathbandhan*. She has the better experience of being an adhesive. Many alliance partners and potential ones prefer to deal with her directly, given past associations, than new president Rahul. This was evident during the Karnataka alliance with HD Kumaraswamy last year. Even Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee has gone on record saying that she was more comfortable with Sonia. The Congress has not been able to crack a sharing formula with the SP-BSP in Uttar Pradesh or the AAP in Delhi under the new dispensation. The federal front, comprising strong regional leaders seasoned for decades, is yet to soften towards Rahul, who may have come a long way but is still not seen as an equal to regional heavyweights. Besides, within the party, Sonia is the only reassurance and voice of reason for the old guard, who see their continuity through hers. It was only due to her insistence that the chief ministerial posts in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh went to seniors Ashok Gehlot and Kamal Nath, much to the chagrin of the new brigade. Had Priyanka Gandhi been fielded from Rae Bareilly, it would have meant that the brother-sister duo would call the shots henceforth and relegate them to the last row. Rahul himself may not be happy about these inner frictions but at this stage of the party's tenuous recovery graph, he cannot risk their hostility either. Besides, Sonia being in the electoral fray also means a huge cushion for him in Amethi, where the BJP has launched a strident campaign and announced a slew of development projects, promising a tough fight. Amethi needs to feel the matriarch is with them and her son in the fight. The Congress is in transition in unsettling times and Sonia, for some time, will be indispensable as captain steadying the ship.

## Ayodhya breather

The SC order on mediation has allowed Modi some reprieve to act decisively on the temple issue



The Supreme Court has clearly neutralised the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land dispute case, given its gravitas in our body politics and hold on our national consciousness, and dissociated it from the considerations of electoral politics. In that sense, yes it is healing. It has ordered mediation in the case by a three-member panel including spiritual guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Justice (Retd) FM Kalifulla and senior advocate Sriram Panchu in a time-bound manner, all of whom have a proven track record in dispute resolution through consensus. Of course, the mediation process, to be done in eight weeks, is no easy project considering that there have been at least three reconciliatory attempts in the past that haven't got any of the three parties — the Sunni Waqf Board, the Nirmohi Akhara and Ram Lalla — closer to resolution. Even now, reports suggest that both sides are adamant about their stated positions. For both Muslims and Hindus, compromise equals climbdown when it comes to the legitimacy of the mosque and the temple. But as the court said, the past cannot be undone and the only option was to take things forward hereon.

The Hindu right-wing, which has based its claim to political legacy on the temple, cannot afford to water down Ayodhya. And in times of polarisation, even the BJP has but to address its core constituency. For it has derived only incremental advantages by converting what was once an upper caste concern to a heartland plank. Though the rath yatra by veteran BJP leader LK Advani laid the foundation of the movement, it was not until the demolition of the mosque that the construction of the Ram temple wrested the pan-India narrative. So, BJP will never be able to settle for half measures on the *mandir* issue though the traction has been diminishing over the years, compelling even RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat to declare that the subject should be taken up after the general elections. The temple issue even failed to create a ripple effect in last year's bypolls and Assembly elections in the heartland states, considering its supporters were mostly concentrated there. Truth be told, the Pulwama terror attacks and the Balakot airstrikes have given a nationalist and pan-India surge that has shored up Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ratings and the party can now afford to delay its Ayodhya strategy instead of giving into the pressure of issuing an ordinance from ideologicals of the Sangh Parivar. Although Modi has clarified that any discussion on Ayodhya would be considered only after the judicial process is over, it is true that even two months ago, he had been expected to take an imponderable step to ensure temple construction, the cascading effect of which would have posed a double-edged threat to his electoral prospects and governance. So the top court's offer of mediation, with a friendly spiritual guru on the panel, has spared Modi and given him the time and reprieve to push this issue on the backburner. Post-elections, it will be another matter.

**Varun Bengaluru**

# Modi's leadership flaw

While the nation is very proud of our servicemen, it is disgraceful that the political leadership has been found wanting in tackling questions about the strike



AJOY KUMAR

Last Friday, India welcomed its hero, Abhinandan Varthaman, back from Pakistan. He spent close to three days in Pakistani captivity as a result of a brief skirmish with Islamabad's Air Force, during which, his MiG-21 Bison went down. Officer Abhinandan's return is the latest course of events in an episode that has not yet seen its last act but India can at least momentarily heave a sigh of relief. His return also provides us with enough pause to examine the events that unfolded over the past few weeks, to praise the bravery of our armed forces and to ask questions to the Prime Minister, who is the man entrusted with providing leadership to the armed forces.

Primarily, in this article, I aim to examine the concept of leadership and whether the Prime Minister demonstrated it this time around. While the entire nation is extremely proud of our armed forces and the huge sacrifices they are regularly asked to make, it does make it all the more important to ensure that they are led by a political leader who exhibits similar qualities. The events of the past few weeks make it apparent that while the country is proud of the armed forces, the political leadership leading them has been found wanting.

So what is leadership? Norman Schwarzkopf defined it as, "Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without strategy." Over the past few weeks, the ruling Government has displayed a lack of both.

**Lack of strategy:** Pakistan is a hub of terror. There are not many people in the world who would disagree with this statement. Even recently, while Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan did earn some goodwill on the world stage by allowing Abhinandan to return and by ensuring that he was not mistreated while in Pakistan's captivity, much of that goodwill was wasted by the clear propaganda videos that were released by the Government over there. During the entire ordeal, Imran Khan alleged that the attack by India on the terrorist camps did not really cause any harm to Pakistan. He also garnered sympathy and goodwill from world leaders by taking the initiative to return Abhinandan to India.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi allowed Pakistan to take the initiative by not speaking to the nation in its hour of need and failing to rebut Pakistan's claims that there were no casualties due to India's strikes. This was especially shocking since members of the BJP like Sambit Patra have said that close to 400 terrorists were killed while BJP chief Amit Shah said that 250 of them were killed. Instead of giving a fitting reply to Pakistan and reclaiming the initiative, Modi, as someone who rarely gives up an opportunity to speak, remained silent on this crucial issue and, therefore, let slip an opportunity to prove Pakistan and the world media wrong. By



doing so, it was the Pakistani Prime Minister who appeared to garner greater admiration from the world rather than our Prime Minister.

**Character:** In terms of character, the BJP Government has an unenviable lack of it. There have been repeated reminders over the past few years of this character flaw. Whether it is the words used by the Prime Minister to describe women or the language used by the BJP when dealing with any member of the Opposition, the Government rarely covers itself in glory. However, in light of the recent events, there was some hope that maybe the Prime Minister may actually conduct himself in a manner befitting his role and get the entire country together. How naïve of us! Despite the Opposition issuing a statement reiterating their stance that they stand behind the armed forces, Modi repeatedly took political potshots without once addressing the nation in a dignified manner.

While the Prime Minister is often found near a microphone when the wind is in his favour, he is conspicuously missing when the nation actually needs answers. This time, too, he addressed a number of rallies when India's brave Air Force attacked the terrorist bases in Pakistan, taking credit for the bravery of our armed forces but the minute one of our pilots was captured and there was a need

for calm, clarity and composure, there was not a whiff from the Government or the Prime Minister. Instead, in the aftermath of Abhinandan's capture, just a quick glance of the Prime Minister's twitter feed shows that he addressed BJP workers in their booths before addressing the nation and even then, it was only through rallies or other political events that he talked about strikes rather than having a conversation with Indian citizens, which is only apropos in case of events of national significance, such as this one.

What was all the more disheartening was the fact that while media speculation about the precarious state of affairs was rife, there was no one from the Government to answer the lingering questions. Instead, the Government chose to send the armed forces in the line of fire again and forced it to field questions that could obviously only be answered by its representatives.

As stated above, one such question was about the claims made by international media channels about the number of dead terrorists after the attack. While there is no denying that it is difficult to quantify the number of terrorists killed in the mission, it was the BJP itself that came out with wild, varying figures. The armed forces have categorically come out and said that they have no idea

about the exact figure and that this was a question for the Government to answer.

If the armed forces have no clear figure in mind and the BJP has been saying it's 400 or 250 or whatever the last person from the party has said, is it not logical to question whether the Government actually had any such estimate or was it just making up numbers as it went along?

But when one of us, mere mortals, actually asks the BJP why they are saying 400 when the armed forces are saying they have no idea about any exact figure, the party hides behind the armed forces and says that the people of India cannot question the armed forces. Waah Modiji, Waah!

My views on how a leader is supposed to be a product of my time as an officer in the Indian Police Service. As someone who has had the opportunity to serve with other brave police officers, I was always told that you need to be the first one to take criticism to protect your officers and the last to take credit for their bravery. This is slightly different from Prime Minister Modi's policy of hiding behind the armed forces when tough questions are asked and basking in the glory, taking selfies when the sun is shining. India, in my opinion, has had enough of Modi's unique brand of leadership.

(The writer is Jharkhand PCC president, former MP and IPS officer. Views are personal)

“WHILE THERE IS NO DENYING THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO QUANTIFY THE NUMBER OF TERRORISTS KILLED IN THE MISSION, IT WAS THE BJP ITSELF THAT CAME OUT WITH WILD, VARYING FIGURES. THE ARMED FORCES HAVE COME OUT AND SAID THAT THEY HAVE NO IDEA ABOUT THE EXACT FIGURE AND THAT THIS WAS A QUESTION FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO ANSWER”

## SOUNDBITE

We are proud to have taken numerous decisions that have furthered women empowerment.

**Prime Minister**  
—Narendra Modi



We must all move together towards ending long-standing conflicts happily by maintaining harmony in society.

**Spiritual guru**  
—Sri Sri Ravi Shankar



India and Pakistan should turn the page following the Pulwama attack and convert the present tensions into opportunity.

**Chinese Foreign Minister**  
—Wang Yi



The coming Lok Sabha election will be marked by more money, violence and hatred given the way political parties fight among themselves.

**Former CEC**  
—TS Krishnamurthy



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Aviation woes

Sir — A report of the specialist aviation advisory, CAPA India, has predicted that the Indian aviation industry will need more maintenance staff, pilots, security personnel and engineers by 2028 to sustain its growth. The report comes at a time when both full-service and low-cost carriers are facing mounting losses, operational and crew-management issues, rising ATF prices and management-owner-tussle in some of the major airlines. The Government, on the other hand, has been trumpeting the UDAN scheme, which seeks to connect Tier-II and Tier-III cities and the NABH Nirman scheme, aimed at airport infrastructure development.

### A paradigm shift in OIC's stance?

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), a league of 57 Islamic nations, describes itself as "the collective voice of the Muslim world." However, India with the second-largest Muslim population in the world after Indonesia, is still treated as a rank outsider even after 50 years of the latter's creation. Even a permanent observer status has still not been bestowed. But the invitation of the organisation to the External Affairs Minister of India to be the Guest of Honour at the inaugural plenary session of the 46th meeting of the Foreign Ministers was construed a paradigm shift. It was jubilantly touted as "a welcome recognition of the presence of 185 million Muslims in India and of their contribution to its pluralistic ethos, and of India's contribution to the Islamic world."

Be that as it may, in the lexicon of the OIC, Jammu and Kashmir continues to be an area "occupied by India." Kashmir remained as the "core dispute" between India and Pakistan in the resolutions adopted in the



conference. Phrases such as "extra-judicial killing" and "Indian terrorism" in the Valley used unthinkingly during deliberations confirmed the view that there wasn't a radical shift in the stance of the organisation on India-related issues. But yes, a beginning has been made with a nudge.

**Haridasan Rajan**  
Kozhikode

### Take action

Sir — Close on the heels of the remarks by former Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah about being scared of people who wear *tilak* on their forehead, another Karnataka Congress leader, BK Hariprasad's unpalatable remark, linking the Pulwama terror attack to Modi-Imran nexus is not only irresponsible but in poor taste. One wonders why the Congress leadership and its chief Rahul Gandhi in particular, who have been directing tirades almost every day at Prime Minister Modi, are conspicuously silent over such distressing remarks made by their state units.

Even the Opposition, which is usually critical of Modi, is quiet over the deplorable and inexcusable remarks of the two senior leaders. Agreed rhetoric is raging on both sides during election season. But we have to make sure that we do not cross the lines of decency.

**KR Srinivasan**  
Secunderabad

celebrate how much women have achieved. We also commemorate the many ways that women have advanced in various spheres, careers and roles as independent, autonomous people who are now able to strive towards their full potential. We celebrate the many creative and innovative ways that women are successfully contributing to the global community.

### Celebrating women

Sir — This refers to the article, "Become partners to achieve gender equality" (March 8) by Bidisha Pillai. International Women's Day is an occasion to

Women are beautiful creations of God, who complete our lives. Our own scriptures and texts accord her an equal status, balancing *Prakriti* or Nature as the sacred feminine with the trinity of the *Purush* or the male energy.

The fact is that life is birthed in the womb of a woman and it is the mother who imparts life lessons and philosophies.

And that is the reason why all religions have always emphasised giving due respect to women. But as reports of their abuse and exploitation keep piling up across the world in frightening proportions, we must understand that the survival of the human race is at stake if we do not accord them equal space.

**Jubel D'Cruz**  
Mumbai

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)



## FIRST COLUMN

## Self-serving moral code

There is a lingering fear of dystopia which may weaken the link between morality and governance but politics won't let it break



PRAKHAR SINGH

In *History of the Peloponnesian War*, the Athenian historian, Thucydides, documented a dramatised negotiation between the Athenians and the Melians. The Melian dialogue held during the war between Athens and Sparta is a classic case study to support the realist view that morality will always be subordinate to power. The island of Melos advocated for justice by choosing to stay neutral. The Athenians mercilessly killed the men and enslaved the women by saying, "Question of justice hardly ever comes into human affairs. The truth is that the powerful take what they can and the weak grant what they must."

In the megalomaniacal international affairs, chaos in the world order melts the ethical boundaries of countries in their quest for power. The question that comes to mind is: "Does morality play a role in international relations?"

In the wake of the Pulwama terror attack, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, graced India with his hagiographic presence. The strategy was simple: To pressure Pakistan by issuing a joint statement with the kingdom condemning the heinous attack. Much to our surprise, the condemnation happened without any reference to the state of Pakistan. The confluence of ideologies between Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad bin Saud's forming the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, defying terror and fundamentalism, is surely an anomaly. Lest we forget that 15 of the 19 terrorists involved in the 9/11 attacks were Saudis.

Letting bygones be bygones, one should not lose sight of the happenings on Mahatma Gandhi's 149th birth anniversary, observed on October 2, 2018. Celebrated as the International Day of Non-Violence, this was the day when over a dozen men were reportedly flown from Riyadh to Istanbul to kill one journalist, Jamal Khashoggi. Surely, the lives of a few are much more valued and the sins of a few are excessively tolerated than others.

This example is not to project any particular Government/individual/ideology in bad taste. As the elder American statesman, Henry Kissinger, said, history reflects that on the international stage; there are no permanent friends or enemies, only interests. The Anglo-French invasion of Egypt in 1956 against the nationalisation of the Suez canal was criticised by former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru as soon as it happened. However, the Soviet invasion, followed by the Hungarian Revolution during the same period, which led to a formation of a more responsible Government, witnessed no condemnation. The Indian representative, VK Krishna Menon, had abstained in the UN resolution, "calling upon the Soviet Union to withdraw all of its forces without any delay." Ramchandra Guha, a contemporary historian, raised an important question: "How non-aligned was our non-alignment? As a moral project, perhaps, non-alignment was over."

The principles of a utopian state and the ideals of morality always contradict the reality. The pursuit of human beings or what Hans Morgenthau, one of the leading 20th century figures in the study of international politics, calls the "*animus dominandi*", our lust for power exists universally. To manoeuvre this irrationality, often the actions taken by the international community leads to a zero-sum game in which one's gain is exactly balanced by the losses of others.

The United State's decision to go to war with Iraq in 2003 was based on the latter's possession of weapons of mass destruction and to free the people of Iraq. The irony of the American "democracy project" is that neither did Iraq possess WMD, nor did it deserve the catastrophic destruction that followed soon after.

History has been a victim of the "isms" and rigid doctrines. In the garb of socialism, communism, nationalism and liberalism, people at power have substantiated their own self-interest. Any ideology practised as monism without regard to the ever-evolving realities leads to catastrophe. The Native American Cherokee parable poses a tradeoff between the good and the evil: Between two "wolves" inside us all. The winner is the one you feed. To expect the world to be utopian would be perfecting the imperfection. Amid the dystopia, the link between morality and governance may weaken but the international community shall strive to not let it break.

(The writer is policy and legislative researcher)

UNFORTUNATELY, ATTEMPTS ARE BEING MADE TO DOWNPLAY OUR ARMY'S VALOUR. CAN WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO GIVE STATEMENTS THAT PLEASE PAKISTAN?

—PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

## POINT COUNTERPOINT



PRIME MINISTER DESH BHAKTI KI BAAT KARTE HAIN LEKIN VAYU SENA SE PAISA LEKAR APNE MITR ANIL AMBANI KO DETE HAIN.

—CONGRESS PRESIDENT RAHUL GANDHI

## Break the vicious cycle

Financial access alone is not enough. To put money in accounts, we have to stimulate productivity, raise living standards, unleash entrepreneurial energy and reduce inequality



MOIN QAZI

India has grown into a global powerhouse. Its economy is soaring but the picture on the ground is still quite arid. The green shoots that you see are only a patch of its landscape. Most Indians are hapless victims of inequity. India is one country where intense poverty abounds in the shadow of immense wealth.

The Indian economy is projected to be the fastest growing major economy in the world in 2018-19 and 2019-20, ahead of China, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Per capita national income rose from ₹86,647 in 2014-15 to ₹1,12,835 in 2017-18. Furthermore, improved telecommunications, seamlessly connected global markets, universalisation of information through Internet and innovations in the financial ecosystem have all opened up opportunities for the common man like never before. It is, therefore, imperative that lack of demand and supply of financial services — to all levels of society — do not act as an impediment to the country's growth.

Inequality and exclusion are two of the most pressing challenges facing the world today. In recent years, policy-makers have realised that development will be uneven and not wholesome if we do not address the problem of exclusion in a big way. Inclusive growth is necessary to ensure that the benefits of a growing economy extend to all segments of society.

Access to and integration of every individual into the formal economy by providing opportunities to use his/her potential to improve upon their well-being is essential for the building of a prosperous and stable economy. Inclusive growth is widely recognised as having four mutually supporting pillars — an employment-led growth strategy, financial inclusion, investment in human development priorities and high-impact multi-dimensional interventions (win-win strategies).

It is now accepted wisdom that a key ingredient of inclusive growth is financial inclusion. Inclusive financial systems have potentially transformative power to accelerate development gains. They provide individuals and businesses with greater access to resources to meet their financial needs such as investment in education and housing, capitalising on business opportunities, saving for retirement and coping with various economic shocks.

Like all other rights, citizens have the right to participate in the economy. The Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP), the development arm of the World Bank, puts it well: "Ensuring the financial system is inclusive is paramount in the process of creating a more inclusive, equal and peaceful society."

For the millions of individuals who are in the lower deciles of the economic pyramid, lack of access to financial services is extremely difficult, expensive and harrowing. It constrains their ability to plan for their family's future and traps households in cycles of poverty. More broadly, it limits the economic growth potential of a country. People need to protect themselves against hardship and invest in their futures to cope with risks such as a job loss or crop failure — all of this can push families into destitution. Many poor people around the world lack



access to financial services that can serve many of these functions such as bank accounts. Instead, they rely on cash, which is not only unsafe but hard to manage.

Financial inclusion, in its broader market conceptualisation, is the belief that people, including the very poor and marginal, should gain access and be able to regularly use these services — an idea that the World Bank promotes as part of building inclusive economies, financial institutions, fintech companies and mobile operators and others pursue for evidently more self-serving reasons. Having an account isn't the angle — it's using the account to achieve development goals, to save, to invest in business and educational opportunities and to build financial resilience.

The objective of financial inclusion is a task that independent India has tried out in different forms over the decades but has not been able to get it quite right. Initiatives include the cooperative movement, followed by priority sector lending, lead bank schemes, service area approach, creation of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development and Small Industries Development Bank of India, introduction of Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), Local Area Banks (LABs) microfinance, kisan credit cards, business correspondence and finally, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana.

All these initiatives have been supply-driven — delivery of banking services to the poor people, if need be, at their doorstep. However, they have not been able to achieve the goals with which they are designed and mandated. Most of them were based on a misconceived premise and assumption. One important lesson they have offered is that the availability of finance is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for poverty reduction. It is certainly not an end in itself.

In this race to financial inclusion, we will be missing the mark if we believe that financial

inclusion will by itself eliminate poverty. Financial literacy, access to financial tools and economic empowerment underpin the development of healthy and stable states. But it needs to be complemented with a host of other services. Financial services alone cannot vault the poor out of poverty. They can enable economic enfranchisement but cannot solve social exclusion, which has to be addressed by tackling the entire combination of problems. The issues include: Unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes and poor housing. One of the main reasons that the excluded populations cite for not having a financial account is that they simply don't have enough money to open and use an account.

We need to remind ourselves of the memorable piper of Dudley Seers, first president of the prestigious European Association of Development Institutes (EADI), on development: "The questions to ask about a country's development are: What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality?" Credit is a powerful tool if it is used effectively when it is made available to the credit-worthy among the economically active poor participating in at least a partial cash economy — people with the ability to use loans and the willingness to repay them. But other tools are required for the poor, who have prior needs, such as food, shelter, medicine, skills training and employment.

For development to be wholesome, it must cover all basic facets of individual or society's well-being: Health, education, housing and employment. The well-known economist VKR Varadaraja Rao underlined that integrated development is not done in isolation through the project approach or even the programme approach but is integrated to take account of their mutual interaction and their linkages forward or backward, temporal or spatial, friend-

ly or hostile, with a view to achieving the total result, which is universalisation of health and enrichment of the quality of life.

Since substantial public investments are being made to promote financial inclusion, convergence, inclusive collaboration and mutual reinforcement alone can ensure better resource utilisation. Plans and strategies that operate in exclusive silos lose out on the benefits of mutual synergy and convergence of the various development channels. Advocates of financial inclusion claim that financial services will reduce poverty and promote pro-poor development but critics believe that this is illusory and that it falsely prioritises finance over delivery of more important services. Financial services are presented as central to social and economic growth and development.

Inclusive finance requires us to break the vicious cycle where educational, financial and digital exclusion combine to create social exclusion and isolation. The obvious lesson is that financial access alone is not enough: There has to be money to put into the account. For this, we have to stimulate productivity, raise living standards, unleash entrepreneurial energy and reduce economic inequality.

Financial inclusion is actually a tool in a broader development toolbox but in certain conditions, it happens to be the most powerful tool. It will make the poor a little more resilient but it is not the answer on its own. It has all to do with how we are using it and how we are defining the outcomes. Access to credit is not enough to alleviate indigence. More than micro-loans, what the poor need are investments in health, education and the development of sustainable farm and non-farm related productive activities.

(The writer is Member, NITI Aayog's National Committee on Financial Literacy and Inclusion for Women)

## Secularisation without secularism

Economic, scientific and political modernity saw Muslim reformers relegate rituals to the private sphere but transform Islam as an identity marker

Many aspects of it still inform French secularism today. A form of *laïcité* was also practised by the Turkish state during the rise and coming to power of Turkish nationalist Kemal Atatürk (1923-38). However, some advocates of *laïcité* like to differentiate this strand of secularism with the one that was imposed in communist countries such as China, the Soviet Union, Cambodia and North Korea.

However, Tylor is hesitant in defining "Secularity 1" as secularism proper. According to him, a polity needs to fulfill three criteria to qualify as secular: There should be equality of people of all faiths; "all spiritual groups must be heard"; and there should be respect for the "free exercise of religion" (as long as it is not political in nature).

"Secularity 2" is largely a social occurrence triggered by powerful intellectual currents and a shift from traditional modes of economics to modern ones. The most prominent example in this respect is the erosion of the power of the church in Europe during the Age of Enlightenment from 18th century onwards. The period saw the

advent of Constitutional democracy, modern science, industrialisation and the separation of the church and the state. It saw reason as being the primary source of authority. Unlike Secularity 1, Secularity 2 is not anti-religion but advocates the relegation of faith to the private sphere.

But much of Tylor's magnum opus is dedicated to "Secularity 3." To Tylor, this is the category which best defines the "secular age" that has continued to develop well into the 21st century. But Tylor posits that Secularity 1 and 2 cannot be explained away as being outcomes of the rise of the modern sciences and modern models of politics and economics.

Instead, he wrote that secularism was actually a continuation of a reformation process within the Christian faith. His thesis proposes that for over a 1,000 years, there has been constant pressure within Christianity to continue to reform itself. Fearful of crumbling in the face of modernity, Christianity tried to keep pace with change by modernising itself. This gave the believers the space to

let go of the idea of the state being a political and moral expression of faith, without renouncing faith itself or without one first coming to a self-attained understanding of it. Tylor wrote that, had this not happened, secularism could never have managed to attract the consent of so many populations in Europe.

Tylor's Secularity 3 is about reaching a secular state of existence by actually reflecting on spiritual and theological ideas that have opened up for intellectual scrutiny. For him, secularism is part of the tradition of reform that has continued within Christianity. He wrote that this is also why secularism has managed to survive in countries such as the US where most citizens call themselves religious.

Intrigued by Tylor's theory, the French political scientist Christophe Jaffrelot, in a 2014 essay for France's *Hyper Articles en Ligne*, went on to identify a "Secularity 4." Jaffrelot wrote that Tylor's secularity types were largely associated with the secularism that developed in the West. Being an expert on South Asia, Jaffrelot took the example of Muslims in

India, and then in Pakistan, to define a Secularity 4.

According to Jaffrelot, economic, scientific and political modernity introduced by the British in South Asia saw modern Muslim reformers push to relegate Islam's rituals to the private sphere but transform Islam as an identity marker. In other words, the process advocated making Islamic rituals private and Islam public as a cultural-political identity marker.

Jaffrelot wrote that when modern Muslim reformers such as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Muhammad Iqbal tried to demonstrate that Western modernity and Islam were compatible, and that this was what made Muslims a unique cultural entity, they opened the way for politicians such as Jinnah to claim that the Muslims of India were a separate cultural entity but one which was as modern as any Western national community.

According to Jaffrelot, Sir Syed, Iqbal and Jinnah formulated a unique way to form a non-theological Muslim polity without compromising its Muslim identity, because, after all, this was what was to gain

a separate Muslim country.

Jaffrelot wrote that this is why, right from the onset, the Pakistani state tried to undermine and isolate those demanding a theocracy. The state did this by "nationalising Islam." Jaffrelot wrote that the state invested in highlighting Islam as a modern political ideology of Pakistan but not the basis of formulating laws. He defines this as "secularisation without secularism." The state continued to usurp social and physical spaces once dominated by the clerics, *pirs* and *ulemas*. This way the state gave itself the sole right to define what an Islamic state was and at the same time deride the non-state explanations of faith as being "anti-progress" and "backward."

According to Jaffrelot, this process peaked during the Ayub regime (1958-69). He wrote that it continued across the ZA Bhutto regime (1971-77) and even during the conservative Gen Zia dictatorship in the 1980s. But beginning in the mid-1970s, Jaffrelot wrote, due to purely political reasons, a point came when the state found it necessary to engage with non-state ele-

ments. This gave those who were once blocked from the state's religious narrative the chance to become stakeholders of the process.

They managed to change its course, which resulted in constitutional clauses based on certain strands of the faith, a clear departure from the state's ways till the mid-1970s. Eventually, from the mid-1980s onwards, the state opted out from framing Islam in the context of how it was framed by the likes of Sir Syed, Iqbal, Jinnah and Ayub. Unchecked by the state (and even encouraged), the process spiralled out of control, causing religious violence and insurgencies in a highly polarised polity.

Recently, when Prime Minister Imran Khan insisted that "the monopoly of violence remains with the state", he was reiterating the state's urgency to reclaim the space to define what religion was in the context of Pakistan. And to, therefore, once again, neutralise the state's competitors in this respect and return to what Jaffrelot calls Secularity 4: Secularisation without secularism.

(Courtesy: The Dawn)



NADEEM PARACHA

In his 2007 book, *A Secular Age*, Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor wrote that three categories of secularism have evolved since the proper emergence of the idea — mainly from the 18th century onwards. He described "Secularity 1" as the total expulsion of religion from all spheres of public life. This strand can be traced back to the turbulent days of the 18th century French Revolution and also in the policies of Mao Tse Tung's China (1949-76), Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union (1922-52), the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia (1975-79) and currently in North Korea.

This form of secularism is also known as *laïcité* which originated during the French Revolution.



Passenger vehicle sales down 1.11% in February To miss FY forecast: SIAM

Domestic passenger vehicle (PV) sales dropped 1.11% in February, making it the seventh decline in eight months, prompting auto industry body SIAM to suggest that it will miss even the scaled down forecast of 6% for the ongoing fiscal.

The Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) said uncertainty ahead of elections coupled with weak market sentiment and unfavourable factors like high interest rates and insurance cost were continuing to affect sales.

What we are seeing is that the market sentiment is subdued. Interest rates are still high and we have not been able to recover from the impact we have had earlier on the year,

The sales decline in February is the seventh instance in the last eight months, with the only positive growth since July last year coming in October, he added.

Azim Premji Trust sells over 2.66 crore Wipro shares on BSE

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Major Wipro on Friday said one of its promoters, Azim Premji Trust, had sold 2.66 crore shares of the company in a block deal on the BSE.

The company, however, did not disclose further details of the transaction. Following the said block deal, the shares of the company closed at ₹256.50 on Friday, down 4.58% from its previous close on the BSE.

Azim Premji Trust is part of the promoter group that held 3.36,19,97,805 shares amounting to 74.30% stake in the company as of the quarter ended December 31, 2018.

On March 7, Azim Premji Trust had sought pre-clearance for selling equity shares of the company and was granted permission for the aforesaid proposal on the very same day, Wipro said in a regulatory filing.

Pre-clearance for selling equity shares of the company is required under the company's code of conduct and SEBI regulations. "On March 8, 2019, the company has been informed that Azim Premji Trust has sold 2,66,66,667 equity shares of the company on BSE," the filing added.

The Bengaluru-based company said it would make necessary disclosures to stock exchanges as required under the SEBI Insider Trading Regulations within the prescribed timelines.

MSMEs created 14% more jobs in last 4 years. says CII survey

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Job creation by the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sector saw a growth of 13.9% in the past four years, claims an industry survey.

The findings are contrary to the official and other industry data which show that there was massive job losses since the note-ban and GST implementation in this very sector.

While private sector economic think-tank has found that as many as 13 million jobs were lost in 2018 alone, the official NSSO data show that unemployment rate touched a 46-year high in 2018.

According to a CII survey among over one lakh MSMEs, there has been a 13.9% increase in net jobs additions (or 3,32,394 new jobs created), over the past

four years, which is a 3.3% increase per annum in these four years.

The survey, that covered 1,05,347 MSMEs of varying sizes, across sectors, located in about 350 industrial centres spread across the country, indicates that micro enterprises were the largest job creators in the past four years and will continue to be so in the next three years.

To put the findings in context, the survey mapped the jobs figures against publicly available macro-level data sourced from the Labour Bureau (for total workforce).

"Given that the total workforce size according to the Labour Bureau is estimated at 450 million, the overall job additions work out to 13.5149 million per annum," it said.

The top job generating sectors were hospitality and tourism followed by textiles and apparel and metal products, during the past four years.

Machinery parts and transport and logistics were the next significant job creators, it showed.

In terms of states, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Telangana were the largest job creators, while in case of exporters, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Telangana topped.

"There is an expectation of higher growth on employment for the next three years," the survey said.

This optimism emanates from the fact that government initiatives like the 2% interest subvention given to all MSMEs and trade receivables e-discounting system (TReDS) would drive future growth leading to more employment, the report said.

Suven plans to buy US-based Rising Pharmaceuticals' assets

New Delhi (PTI): Biopharmaceutical firm Suven Life Sciences Ltd on Friday said it had entered into an asset purchase agreement to buy the assets of Aceto Corporation's Rising Pharmaceuticals through its joint venture partner Shore Pharma Inc.

through its joint venture partner Shore Suven Pharma, Inc has entered into a "stalking-horse" asset purchase agreement to buy the assets of Aceto Corporation's Rising Pharmaceuticals and Rising Pharmaceuticals through its joint venture partner Shore Pharma Investments LLC of USA.

"This potential acquisition of Rising's assets would transform Shore Suven Pharma into a strong US generic pharmaceutical company. Leveraging Rising's extensive product portfolio to become vertically integrated with our already world class API and finished dose manufacturing capabilities will enable us to better serve US customers," Suven Life Sciences CEO and chairman Venkat Jasti said.

Vimal Kavuru, who will serve as CEO of Shore Suven Pharma said the opportunity to work with Rising's suppliers and employees to ensure continuity of product supply to customers in connection with this proposed integration will be the company's top priority.

NIFTY 50

Table with columns: SCRIP, OPEN, HIGH, LOW, LTP, CHANGE. Lists various stocks like NIFTY 50, NTPC, GAIL, etc.

BSE 500

Table with columns: Script, Open, High, Low, LTP. Lists various stocks like SUZLON, WIPRO, JPASSOCIAT, etc.

NIFTY NEXT 50

Table with columns: SCRIP, OPEN, HIGH, LOW, LTP, CHANGE. Lists various stocks like NIFTY NEXT 50, ICICIPRULI, etc.

BSE Sensex

Table with columns: NIFTY, BSE Sensex, NSE Nifty. Includes charts and data for market indices.

Table with columns: APOLLOTRE, CIPLA, PVR, UBL, DIVISLAB, etc. Lists various stocks and their prices.



SHORT CIRCUITS



**SONAM KAPOOR AHUJA**

Inheritance is not about money, property or legacy. It's the values you instill in your children. Teach them to do the right thing and to stand up for the benefit of their future selves and the people around them. Seeing my parents interact as equals, I knew I too could have a voice someday. I felt empowered.



**RICHA CHADHA**

Last year, a survey claimed that India is the world's most unsafe place for women and I was really embarrassed. I was even more disturbed to read in another survey that 42 per cent of women think that being beaten is okay. There needs to be a drastic shift in mindset if we are to progress in a genuine way as a country.



**RIMA DAS**

Both *Village Rockstars* and *Bulbul Can Sing* have strong women characters at the centre. It's wonderful that the critics and audiences alike are very receptive to such stories. It also goes on to reiterate that it doesn't matter whether the film is helmed by a male or female filmmaker. I strongly believe that content is queen, I would like to see more of it.



**PALLAVI JOSHI**

In an era of #MeToo and social media, crusaders who appear as torch bearers of women empowerment somehow forget the real issues. Urban India is a minuscule part of the country and where women empowerment is truly imperative, social media unfortunately has not yet trickled down to.

**AKSHAY KUMAR**

It is a significant day for women and girls across the world... a day when women are not only celebrated for their achievements and contributions in all sectors of life but a cold reminder of the inequalities that exist in our society which have kept girls and women back for centuries.



ENCOUNTER 35 MINUTES

'LIVE IN THE PRESENT'

Actress **TAAPSEE PANNU** tells **AYUSHI SHARMA** that the manner in which a film is being showcased matters more than its content



As they say, life happens while you're busy making other plans and actress Taapsee Pannu is a firm believer of that. She says, "Every other person in the world can have a peaceful ride, enjoy the present moment, yet we can't help but make plans for future in order to be assured. But the actual experience of being alive is beyond those plans that happens to us when they are least unexpected. I am that point in my life where I feel it's all a dream. I never aimed at becoming an actor. I never dreamt of it. If I hadn't stepped into this industry, I probably wouldn't have even realised that I could act."

Taapsee tries to make the best out of each and every opportunity. She believes that to stay on path, every person must live in the present and "let go of fear."

About her recent thriller, *Badla*, which is a remake of a Spanish film, she believes that the Indian audience is not quite open when remakes of any story are made, they prefer original content over anything. However, telling the same story again doesn't always mean that it isn't unique. "A story is a world view of what a filmmaker set out to do under the given circumstances and what they bring out from various characters. Though the structure might be of

“ WE ARE GETTING ATTRACTED TOWARDS MORE ENGAGING STORIES. WHEN THE CONTENT IS REAL, PEOPLE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO CONNECT WITH IT. A GOOD FILM KEEPS THE AUDIENCE HOOKED FOR TWO HOURS ”

a Spanish film but the entire insight is very different," she says.

The film, which released yesterday which opened to good reviews, is Taapsee's second outing with Amitabh Bachchan after *Pink*, the film which put the spotlight on her.

After portraying disparate and offbeat characters, there is still one left for Taapsee. She says she really wants to *X-Men* or *Avengers* as she is a huge fan of super hero films. She says, "It hasn't happened yet and I'm eagerly looking forward to it."

Bollywood is currently high on the trend of biopics, and increasingly picking up subjects that portray realism or stand for

social causes. The actress disagrees. She feels that it would be better to say that the industry is creating good content rather than forcefully putting realism into its focus. She says, "It's because we are getting attracted towards more engaging stories. The content matters and when it is real, people have no choice but to connect with it. A good film is one that keeps the audience hooked. It could be any genre — thriller or comedy."

For her, it doesn't matter what you are showcasing but the manner in which it is being projected. An instance — *Badla*.

Taapsee's next project is *Mission Mangal*. Photo: Pankaj Kumar

A spate of accidents in the recent past of very powerful vehicles makes you wonder whether there should be a separate driving licence for bigger cars



KUSHAN MITRA



A licence to speed

A recent accident in Delhi involved a Bentley Bentayga being driven by a 19-year old youth which slammed into an auto-rickshaw killing one of the occupants. Being someone who has driven in Delhi and across India for a long time, I will not absolve the auto driver of blame. The average auto-rickshaw driver is clueless about concepts like right of way and the idea of flashing indicators is alien to them. Of course, in that respect they much like most folks taking control of a motorised vehicle in India. However, there is little doubt that the Bentayga driver was in all likelihood driving a vehicle far beyond his competence levels.

Most of us know that in India, with the exception of some states like Delhi, the process of getting a driving licence is a corrupt and flawed one. I have noticed several taxi drivers with licences from other states in Delhi with extremely poor understanding of driving rules and regulations. But this is not an elitist issue. Many young children get a licence at the age of 18 with little or no understanding of road rules and regulations. And this is the scary part, when you get a driving licence it says which class of vehicle you can drive — two-wheeler, light motor vehicle or a heavy vehicle. There are no restrictions on power and performance. So you could technically drive a Bentley Bentayga with 500 horsepower the day you get your DL when you should ideally be driving a Maruti Alto or Hyundai Santro.

This is not just specific to India though, across the world you can drive whatever vehicle you want the day you get your DL, and that is either when you turn 16 or 18. In most countries the driving tests are far more stringent but even then few go as far as Finland where drivers have to be trained to drive in slippery and icy conditions. Little wonder Finland has more Rally and F1 World Champions per capita



than any other nation on earth.

And while there are young 18-year-olds in India with the requisite driving skills to handle a powerful car, you can probably count them on your fingertips. Let me assure you when I turned 18, I did not have the skills to handle a 100 horsepower car back then, it takes experience and it helps if you get some training. I have driven some manic cars on the streets of Delhi and Indian highways but I know how to control the power but most other road users in India are not expected to comply with rules. That is not accounting for our burgeoning bovine population on the roads. Handling a powerful car isn't something you should do straight out of basic driving school, it takes time, particularly in India.

In many Western nations, massive insurance premiums for younger drivers restrict them to small, less powerful machines. While this means that the rich can

abuse the system, even rich fathers would balk at the premium of letting his 18-year old drive a moderately powerful BMW, because the premium would be half the car's value, and in most nations a crash history record would lead to insurance premiums doubling. The easiest solution in India would be a similar route, insurance premiums should be determined on the basis of the age of the driver and lying should be made punishable. And while the Indian auto industry is cribbing about new long-term insurance requirements, they were necessary.

However, I am suggesting another solution. There should be a special driving licence in India to drive a car with more than 250 horsepower. The reason for that number? Because 99 per cent of cars sold in India have less than that amount of power. And remember the saying, with great power comes great responsibility.

STUDIO CHAT 50 MINUTES

AN EXPLORER'S DIARY

With bullets whizzing over his head, the African peacekeeping force constantly safeguarding his crew, author and documentary filmmaker **SIMON REEVE**, after discovering the extremities of the Indian Ocean, found Indian roads to be the scariest of all. By **TEAM VIVA**

With its sun-bleached shores and stunning islands, the Indian Ocean washes some of the most beautiful and exotic locations on the planet — Zanzibar, the Seychelles, Mauritius, the Tasman Sea. But the world's third largest body of water is also crucial to its future — politically, economically and environmentally.

From pirates plaguing ships off the coast of Somalia, to the Tamils of Sri Lanka and the rise of militant Islam in Yemen and Sumatra, the region touches places of extreme volatility. It is also increasingly the hub of global trade and competition, and industrial activity which, in turn, has a huge impact. Author and documentary filmmaker Simon Reeve travelled around the region for his new show, *Indian Ocean with Simon Reeve*. Through the show the audience would be able to witness the portrait of a fascinating and increasingly important area, as Reeves engages in the lives and struggles of its varied coastal people. Excerpts:

**You've called this as your most exotic and extreme journey. Which was the exotic part of the journey?**

It's a tough one to answer. The Indian Ocean is home to endless stunning tropical islands like the Seychelles

and Mauritius. But visiting the Maldives was the most beautiful and exotic part of the journey. We travelled to breathtaking coral atolls, freedived with dozens of manta rays, and landed on stunning remote islands. When I was a child growing-up in grey west London, I had a poster on my ceiling of a gorgeous paradise beach fringed by palm trees. I used to stare at that beach in wonder, never imagining I'd be able to visit somewhere similar. But the Maldives really is like that. It's truly exotic. I've never been anywhere quite like it.

**What was the most extreme?**

At the other end of the spectrum, we also visited Mogadishu in Somalia, which is often described as the most dangerous city on the planet. Conflict has raged in Somalia for decades. The government collapsed after a civil war, warlords took over and battled endlessly. At least one million people have died. Because of the constant instability and anarchy, Somalia has become the source of the piracy epidemic that plagues the western Indian Ocean. It's also increasingly becoming a source of international terrorism, and I felt it was somewhere we had to visit if we were to tell the story of the ocean. We were under the protection of an



African peacekeeping force that is trying to bring peace and stability to the country after decades of fighting. We had our flak jackets and helmets, of course, and even blast boxers, which can help to prevent blast and fragment injuries to the

groin. But it's not somewhere you ever feel safe. It's the most extreme place I've ever visited.

**Your journey took you from the tip of South Africa to Madagascar, the Seychelles, Somalia, the Maldives,**

**Bangladesh and Australia, to name a few. Which is your favourite?**

I loved visiting Australia, Oman, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Madagascar, and Indonesia. There's nowhere we visited that I wouldn't love to visit again. But I'm particularly fond of

Bangladesh. The country is beautiful and although the people face enormous challenges, they adapt, they struggle and they survive. We tend to associate it just with disasters, flooding and tragedy, but it is also a lush, beautiful country with some of the warmest and friendliest people on the planet.

**You visit some beautiful places throughout the series but also find yourself in a number of difficult situations. What was the scariest situation you found yourself in?**

Another difficult question to answer. I was in a drug-den in South Africa, and on the frontline in Mogadishu with bullets whizzing over my head, but the scariest situation was probably driving on Indian roads with huge trucks and buses rocketing the wrong way towards us in our lane. In other scary situations, I had a moment to dive behind, cover or flee, but there's not much I could do when I was strapped into the front passenger seat in India, except pray.

**You've visited more than 110 countries over the years and have encountered many different people and customs. Were there any places on this trip that took you**

**completely by surprise?**

I was endlessly surprised by the places we visited. In fact, there wasn't a single day when I didn't feel amazed or challenged by what I saw and learnt. In Mozambique, we visited a former 5-star hotel that used to be one of the grandest in Africa, but has since been stripped bare and is now home to thousands of locals and refugees. It sounds desperate, and it certainly wasn't luxurious, but the residents are an inspiring lot who have elected their own mayor and formed committees for sanitation, housing, security and so on. That all came as a surprise. So did finding a vast, stinking, toxic rubbish island in the Maldives, which they don't put in the brochures, and visiting an island off Kenya where locals recycle the world's discarded flip-flops into toys. We also discovered a place where smugglers race illicit refrigerators to Iran on super-powered speedboats, and visited ship-breaking beaches where the world's huge tankers go to be ripped apart by an army of workers. The journey was fascinating, shocking, hilarious and amazing. And always surprising.

(The series will premiere on March 11 and air from Monday to Friday at 9 pm on Sony BBC Earth.)

CONVERSATION 60 MINUTES

# A MEETING OF MINDS

Four women filmmakers, ZOYA AKHTAR, REEMA KAGTI, ALANKRITA SHRIVASTAVA and NITYA MEHRA, in a conversation with SAIMI SATTAR, reveal what makes them a part of the new content-driven entertainment, one where they are breaking barriers beyond just gender

**W**hat do you get when you have four powerhouse directors who have a distinct oeuvre in one place? A swirl of ideas and thoughts that might not be linear but each of which is certainly coherent and individualistic. Zoya Akhtar, Reema Kagti, Alankrita Shrivastava and Nitya Mehra might have learnt the ropes from some of the best in the industry but now are names to reckon with on their own. The four of them have come together to collaborate on *Made in Heaven*, a show that is being aired on Amazon Prime, a digital platform. So while Zoya, Reema and Alankrita wrote the script where the protagonists are wedding planners, Nitya was the showrunner who ensured continuity as each of them directed a few episodes. They reveal what makes them a part of the new content-driven entertainment, one where they are breaking barriers beyond just gender.

**The show is on Indian weddings, the economy and the culture around it. What were some of the discoveries you made while researching for it?**

**Reema:** For that, you will have to watch the show (laughs). Yes, there was a lot of research that we did on the subject and found out so many aspects that we did not know about. Marriage is not big in India without a reason. It is the problem-solver for everything and an equaliser of sorts. Some of our personal and family experiences have also made it to the show. The idea first came from Zoya as she has a friend of hers who works in the business.

**Nitya:** Zoya and Reema recently attended back to back weddings of two of our mutual friends in Delhi. They stayed with me and since it was like a break from work, we observed everything as spectators.

**Zoya:** That's when I realised that there was so much of backroom gush to produce a great magical spectacle, much like a grand film. It was a fascinating mosaic of much that I actually got to a desk to write about it.

**How did the four of you manage to maintain the creative tempo?**

**Zoya:** The slight style difference is welcome. The bigger picture was that the three of us (Reema, Zoya, Alankrita) wrote it and so we were already on the same page as we had come on board from the beginning while she (Nitya) was the show runner. It was a challenge to treat the subject visually. Each wedding is episodically different, so each chapter changes how you want to treat it in terms of design and style. We had a continuity with the crew and our actors are very good. The moment they get their pitch, they do not need the director telling them what their character graph is, they know it.

**Alankrita:** What worked for all of us is that we went with our instinct and gut feeling.

**Zoya:** All four of us believe in originality and that honesty is the reason why there is a seamless flow to things.

**How did you resolve creative differences in terms of show continuity, from one episode to the next?**

**Reema:** That's why Nitya was the showrunner throughout.

**Nitya:** That is a part of my job profile to absorb breaks in movement if the crew or the director changes. Not too many people know about this job because it is new. The primary job of a showrunner is to be able to bring everybody that is straying away on the same page and to whatever was decided in the beginning. We did have a writers' and a directors' room but we read the entire series from the first to the last episode and if any director had a problem, it was brought to the table as were the suggestions. Like Zoya



said, it was nice to have different directors for different weddings. And every time someone was straying, we just brought them back.

**Alankrita:** We were on the same page while developing it. We knew what the location would be or what we were looking for in terms of cast. When you've worked on the material and been a part of the developing process, you kind of know what you want. It made it much simpler that we did not come in from the cold.

**Nitya:** Once the crew sets in, it is easy whether directors come in or not. If it is not working, then you just make it work.

**Alankrita:** And we are just this amazing set of people, so we do know how to work well. (All of them laugh).

**Nitya:** We also had Prashant Nair (director of episode 5 and 6) who was not a part of the process. So I understood that he needed a little more of hand-holding.

**Zoya:** If you're clear about your specifics and pen them down to the last detail, work with your actors to grow into the characters... in short if your prep is thorough, there are no disputes.

**Would you say that you have been able to break out of that mould of being categorised as women directors?**

**Zoya:** I haven't directed any typical woman-centric film and my subjects have been vastly different between projects. Yet that is what I keep hearing.

**Alankrita:** It is a very offensive thing to say that women make typical films. We never set a grammar for male directors or attribute content to their worldview. A protagonist is a protagonist and a story is a story irrespective of the fact whether it is about a man or a woman. The bigger question is whether you are humane and sensitive in your treatment.

**Zoya:** Absolutely.

**Alankrita:** Also, when 50 per cent of the population comprises women, why shouldn't 50 per cent of the stories be

about them? If men have been telling stories about other men without getting stereotyped, I don't know what's the harm in having women protagonists?

**Nitya:** Moreover a typical story is a typical story regardless of the gender of the maker.

**Zoya:** Alankrita's *Lipstick Under My Burkha* was not typical at all.

**How do you see the digital platform, since all of you are directing for it for the first time?**

**Reema:** Nitya has worked on such a format before.

**Nitya:** Yes, I directed some episodes of the first season of 24. It was for television but still in an episodic format. This is definitely the first web series.

**Zoya:** A series has a different base. It has eight hours to tell a story, develop characters, get nuances and layers. There is a lot of time to develop the arc. There is no censorship and no pressure of box office and opening weekend. But you have to shoot very fast and tighten your budget. Yet I thoroughly enjoyed it and considered it a new training ground. I think I really grew up and I want to continue doing it.

**Would you say that in films and web series, the projection of women is changing but the same cannot be said about TV?**

**Zoya:** I don't watch TV honestly because the shows don't appeal to me or speak to me. I don't connect with them.

**Reema:** To be fair, there are also a lot of films and web series that are regressive. It is not as if only this format is regressive.

**Zoya:** Absolutely. All TV is not regressive, just as every web series is not progressive. I guess it depends on who is serious about challenging norms, pushing the envelope and making a mark.

**Would you say that the collaboration between the four of you was a learning**

**process?**

**Zoya:** Any project that you do, you learn. You take something from the team you work with and they take something off you. That is a part and parcel of life. There is a certain comfort and camaraderie that develops. There is a certain amount of trust that you can go to sleep with while the other person has your back. That is something that is non-negotiable. That is not something that you find easily.

**Reema:** The project has been going on for one-and-a-half years, so you cannot expect us to do nothing but this. So as people came and went, whosoever was there would cover for everybody else.

**Nitya:** It has been a true collaboration.

**Zoya:** That to me is very precious.

**So all of you have known each other outside work?**

**Alankrita:** We (Zoya and Reema) have known each other the longest since we were assistant directors together in our 20s. We met Nitya on the sets of *Lakshya* around 2003-2004.

**Nitya:** They were my bosses. (laughs)

**Zoya:** We met and we became buddies. The story about Alankrita is really weird because I read her script before I met her. I had read the script of *Lipstick Under My Burkha* as part of the Sundance Lab which has to be anonymous. I was vetting or judging or whatever for lack of a better word. I read the script and I fell in love with it. Later, when we were developing the script of *Made in Heaven*, I called up Urmi Juvekar, who is a writer and was part of the same lab, to get Alankrita's contact. So, I was in love with her before I met her. (Both of them laugh)

**Reema:** We just fell into a system. I was a bit worried as Zoya and I have been collaborating for long and we have a system. But Alankrita came and fitted right in.

**Alankrita:** For me, it was a huge learn-

ing process as I have never really collaborated for anything from a scratch. I really wanted to work with Zoya and Reema. And it turned out to be so much fun. I think I grew up a lot through it. For me it was very new and exciting. I will really cherish that.

**Nitya:** In a film you really don't get the chance to collaborate as much. You will do it with the crew. There is one DOP and you are the director. In that sense, the format is very different. Very rarely do you see that one writer is writing nine episodes or one director is doing all of them. This was more of a collaboration.

**Indians are still obsessed with the idea of a big fat wedding. Is that the reason why you did this show?**

**Zoya:** I mean, yes. World over people are obsessed with weddings. Some are big and fat and some are even one-day, compact affairs. Everyone is obsessed with their wedding day. The beauty of the Indian wedding is that it is such a massive celebration and with that comes so much hoopla.

**Nitya:** Which is a great backdrop for drama.

**Zoya:** There are generations, family, money — all of that is involved.

**Nitya:** The show goes really beyond the weddings. They are the backdrop, of course. The tracks of the protagonists (the wedding planners) and the turmoil that they are going through in their personal lives as they are planning them, as well as the new families that pop up in each episode... all jostle for a space in the canvas. So there is a social commentary as well.

**Zoya:** And there are egos.

**Is it possible to watch one episode alone?**

**Alankrita:** It is a seasonal story, so no.

**Nitya:** The wedding planners remain throughout the season, so you are actu-

ally invested in their personal stories.

**After watching the trailer, many people have compared it to the film *Band Baaja Baaraat*. What do you have to say?**

**Zoya:** People say anything. When *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* released, they said it was like *Hangover*. When *Gully Boy* trailer went on air, they said it was *Eight Miles*. Now they are saying *Band Baaja Baaraat*. The thing is that all the films that they are comparing with are good.

**Nitya:** There's *Monsoon Wedding* too.

**Zoya:** We are in good company, so we aren't comparing.

**Reema:** Any film that breaks the mould will always be compared.

**Zoya:** That is because they want to have a reference point.

**Reema:** Sometimes they are jumping the gun. Sometimes they are being the know-it-all.

**When you were conceptualising the show, did you know there would be four directors?**

**Zoya:** When the show got green-lit, our individual films also took off almost at the same time. So we knew that we would not be able to direct the entire season ourselves. Initially, we thought just the three of us would do it but then we realised that we had to add one more because there was no way I could direct more than two. I had to leave because I had to prep for *Gully Boy*.

**Reema:** I could not shoot any because I was shooting *Gold*.

**Nitya:** I could have directed but then I just became the show runner, so I couldn't. Despite that, I directed the maximum (three).

**Zoya:** While we were prepping it, she was promoting *Lipstick*.

**The actors, how did you zero down on them?**

**Zoya:** They just worked for the part. Shobhita Dhulipala has something very mysterious about her which kind of works with her. She also has this sense that she can oscillate between two worlds which is important for the show. She has this appearance of being in control and perfect. She has that cold vibe. You start unravelling and you realise what makes her steely. Her test was very good.

**Arjun (Mathur), we love. He is a very good actor. There is something very fragile about him. He is very attractive. Men like him a**

**nd** so do women. It is very easy to fall for him on screen. He doesn't come with rubbish about whether he should play this part or not.

**Nitya:** He is Karan Mehra. He plays the part of a homosexual in the show. But he is not looking at that. He is going beyond because that is just his orientation. That is not his character. When Zoya mentioned him, very soon his picture was up on the board.

**Any more plans of collaborating?**

**Zoya:** I hope so. I feel like-minded people in the industry should collaborate. There is learning, fun and it makes for better work.

**Reema:** Normally when you are writing and directing alone, it can be quite lonely. So I loved having so many women around.

**What went on behind the scenes?**

**Nitya:** We were not really together. Except for me who was there throughout. People would come and go. It was not like since there were so many of us and just because it was a wedding theme, it was going to be a blast. Weddings are serious work. There are a lot of people and huge sets involved. We also wanted to explore the scale that Delhi weddings have. It was challenging.

Photo: Pankaj Kumar

CONVERSATION 20 MINUTES

## Celebrate the fire within you

**O**n the occasion of International Womens Day, 21 women such as actresses Neena Gupta and Swara Bhasker, rapper Hard Kaur and yoga expert Natasha Noel came together to celebrate womanhood through a music video titled *Fire within me*.

The video, which features the women, is part of the campaign #ishapemyworld by Levi's brand.

Swara said, "As an artiste, my job is not just to express but to engage. Films are transformative, they are humongous... Kubbra's (Sait) performance (of a transgender) in *Sacred Games* was found inspiring by many people from that community, it was a representation of that community.

"Rest is whatever resonates with the audience, but a performance, a good film, a good story — has a power. So,

we should engage people globally with our art because we are not just artistes but also citizens."

Referring to the #MeToo movement, she said, "One hashtag that started many years ago, restarted in 2017... it has changed our mind on how we look at our workplace and why certain behaviour from people in the position of power is not accepted."

Talking about engaging the audience with art, comedian Kaneez Surkha said, "As a comedian, I find 'improv' more engaging than stand-up comedy and every time I am doing it, I am doing it out of passion... without intending to break the norms."

"But it made me realise that I'm pushing the bound-



ary whenever I face obstacles and stand strong with my conviction that I will do 'improv'."

On one of the defining moments of her journey that changed her life, actress-host Kubbra said, "My mother protected me so much when I was a child that I was scared to go beyond my call of duty. Then one day when I was 21 years old, my mother put me on a flight to Dubai saying that 'You get yourself a job!' I was scared. I mean a girl who did not even travel alone and now in a different country, searching for a job?"

"But when I think about it, my mother gave me constant support, had confidence in me, I won every situation. When I took up the role of Kukko in *Sacred Games*, though people said that it was a bold choice, I did not look at it that way. It was not courageous to play that (a transgender character), I was just doing my job."

"If it played out that way and created impact, it is great. But initially, that was not my intention, I did what my job, my craft allowed me to do," she explained.

Natasha Noel, a survivor of sexual violence, spoke about how she reached a point and decided not to be defined by the sorrow of her life.

"I was three years old when my birth mother burnt herself live in front of me. Of course that affected me but like all of us would love to believe that things will be fine with time, mine got worse."

"So much so that I started getting comfortable with pain... and then, I realised that I was carrying it with me all the time. I thought without my pain, I could not be anything. But, I don't want to be defined by my pain. Thus, I picked myself up and found my way to heal," the yoga expert said.

—IANS





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