



Mamata-Centre row: Parliament adjourned for the day after noisy protests by Trinamool members

(News. Track) The protest was against alleged misuse of the CBI by the Union government. Proceedings in the Rajya Sabha were Monday washed out owing to ruckus by Trinamool Congress members protesting over alleged misuse of the CBI by the Union government. The Lok Sabha too witnessed two adjournments before Speaker Sumitra Mahajan adjourned the House for the day. The Rajya Sabha was adjourned till 2 p.m., minutes after it assembled as the TMC members shouted anti-Centre slogans. As soon as the House resumed in the afternoon, TMC leader Derek O'Brien asked Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu about his notice for a discussion on the issue. Replying to this, Mr. Naidu said, "I have told you in the morning that you can raise this issue during Zero Hour. During the motion of thanks to the President's address to Parliament, you can



also raise the issue and others related to your State." Meanwhile, TMC and SP members trooped into the well of the House and started raising slogans. The Chairman said, "You don't want to speak on reply to the motion of thanks [to President's address]". When TMC members did not show any signs of relenting, Mr. Naidu adjourned the House for the day. The Lok Sabha was

first adjourned till 12 noon, and later till 2 p.m. as members of the Trinamool Congress trooped into the well of the House. During Zero Hour, the Speaker permitted TMC member Saugata Roy to speak about the incidents in Kolkata involving the CBI and the Kolkata Police. BJD leader B Mahtab, Leader of the Congress in the House Mallikarjun Kharge and those from the Left, SP, NCP and RJD also spoke against the Centre during Zero Hour.

Saumitra Khan, who won on the Trinamool Congress ticket and recently joined the BJP, also spoke from the Treasury benches. Sunday's incident unfortunate: Rajnath When Home Minister Rajnath Singh started to speak on the issue, wherein he said Sunday's incident was unfortunate, Trinamool Congress members trooped into the well of the House and began shouting slogans. Some of them were also seen clapping. Soon

after the House met at 2 p.m., members of Trinamool Congress trooped into the well of the House and started raising slogans likening the CBI to a parrot. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Narendra Singh Tomar made a plea to the agitating members to go back to their seats, stating it was time for Motion of Thanks on the President's address. But continuous sloganeering led to the House being adjourned for the day.

Major European nations recognise Juan Guaido as Venezuela's President

(News. Track) Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez delivers a statement at the Moncloa Palace in Madrid, Spain on France, Britain, Spain, Austria, Sweden and Denmark on Monday recognised Opposition leader Juan Guaido as interim President of Venezuela. The coordinated move from major European nations came after the expiry of an eight-day deadline they set last weekend for President Nicolas Maduro to call a new vote. "Venezuelans have the right to express themselves freely and democratically. France recognises @jguaido as 'interim president' to implement an electoral process," French President Emmanuel Macron said. Earlier in the day, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian told France Inter radio that "faced with President Maduro's refusal to organise presidential elections which would clarify, calm the situation in Venezuela... we consider that Mr. Guaido has the capacity and legitimacy to organise these elections."



"Nicolas Maduro has not called presidential elections within 8 day limit we have set," Britain's Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said on Twitter. "So U.K. alongside European allies now recognises @jguaido as interim constitutional president until credible elections can be held," Mr. Hunt said. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez told reporters in Madrid on Monday that "we are working for the return of full democracy in Venezuela—human rights, elections and no more political prisoners."

Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said on Twitter that Austria supported efforts to restore democracy in Venezuela, where he said there was an absence of the rule of law. Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom told Swedish broadcaster SVT the vote that brought Mr. Maduro to power was not a "free and fair election". "Denmark recognises the President of the National Assembly... until new free and democratic elections take place," Denmark's Foreign Minister Anders Samuelsen tweeted ahead of a meeting with EU counterparts in Brussels. "Applaud similar statements from key EU partners. Important EU statement coming up," Mr. Maduro said on Sunday that he would not give into ultimatums. He has so far rejected calls by European countries to call an early election. He has offered to call early parliamentary elections instead. The Venezuelan leader, accused of running the OPEC nation like a dictatorship and wrecking its economy, has defied that, saying Europe's ruling elite are sycophantically following U.S. President Donald Trump's agenda. Mr. Guaido, who leads the Opposition-controlled National Assembly, declared himself temporary leader on January 23 in a move that has split global powers. France recognises @jguaido as 'interim president' to implement an electoral process," French President Emmanuel Macron said. Earlier in the day, French Foreign Min-

ister Jean-Yves Le Drian told France Inter radio that "faced with President Maduro's refusal to organise presidential elections which would clarify, calm the situation in Venezuela... we consider that Mr. Guaido has the capacity and legitimacy to organise these elections." "Nicolas Maduro has not called presidential elections within 8 day limit we have set," Britain's Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said on Twitter. "So U.K. alongside European allies now recognises @jguaido as interim constitutional president until credible elections can be held," Mr. Hunt said. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez told reporters in Madrid on Monday that "we are working for the return of full democracy in Venezuela — human rights, elections and no more political prisoners." Mr. Trump immediately recognised him and European Union nations backed Mr. Guaido, though some have been nervous over the global precedent of a self-declaration. Russia and China, who have poured billions of dollars of investment and loans into the OPEC nation, are supporting Mr. Maduro.

No proof shown by CBI to back claim that Kolkata Police Commissioner is trying to destroy electronic evidence in chit fund cases, says SC

(News. Track) Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, for CBI, highlights that Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar, a senior officer with uniformed services, joined the dharna of TMC. The Supreme Court on Monday said there is not one evidence shown by the CBI in its application to back the claim that the Kolkata Police Commissioner is attempting to destroy electronic evidence in the chit fund cases. A day after CBI officers, who went to question Commissioner Rajeev Kumar were detained and released, a Bench of Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi and Justice Sanjeev Khanna did not take on face value the claim made by the CBI in the court that it had moved in on Mr. Kumar to prevent the destruction of evidence crucial to their investigation. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, for the CBI, cried foul to the court about what happened to the agency officers in Kolkata and its aftermath. He said the face-off that occurred in Kolkata was an "exceptional situation". "The CBI officers were kept in the Park Street police station. They [police] retreated only after they found we are moving the Supreme Court. The family of the Joint Director CBI was held hostage. They were released only after the Joint Director held teleconference publicising his situation," he submitted. Mr. Mehta highlighted that Mr. Kumar, a senior officer with uniformed services, joined the dharna of the TMC (Trinamool Congress). This, Mr. Mehta alleged, was a clear indication of a collusion to destroy evidence in violation of the Supreme Court's judgment in the Saradha ponzi case that the State police and establishment should provide the "fullest cooperation" in probe. The law officer said the CBI had sought the surrender of the Commissioner and had also filed a plea of contempt of the Supreme Court against the West Bengal government and its police. "First, Mr. Mehta, we went through your application. You have not shown one proof that evidence is being destroyed... If you can lay a single piece of evidence that the Police Commissioner is even remotely thinking of destroying evidence, we will come down so heavily on him that he will regret it," Chief Justice Gogoi addressed Mr. Mehta. "But we got the record only today... The applications were prepared last night..." Mr. Mehta stated. He sought an urgent hearing on Monday itself. "What is this... You say that you got records just moments before entering this courtroom... We will hear your court room at 10.30 a.m.," the Chief Justice dis-



missed the explanation given by Mr. Mehta. The intervening 24 hours of Monday, the court ordered, could be availed by "the Solicitor General or any party" to bring before the court proof to show that the "State of West Bengal, including the police, are engaged in or planning to destroy any evidence relevant to the police investigation. The aforesaid material will be placed before this court". As to the CBI

claims that electronic evidence is being destroyed, the Chief Justice said, "if evidence is destroyed, it can always be retrieved. It is electronic evidence". Senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, for the West Bengal government, grabbed the opportunity towards the end of the session to quickly submit that Mr. Mehta had been "economical with the truth" in his submissions before the court. Mr. Singhvi said all the CBI questions were answered in writing by the Commissioner. Besides there was no FIR against Mr. Kumar. Even the Calcutta High Court had agreed in his favour, he submitted. But the Chief Justice cut him short, saying "this is not necessary. Dr. Singhvi is not known to make such unnecessary interventions in court". The court will hear the CBI pleas on Tuesday.

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Rishi Kumar Shukla takes charge as CBI Director

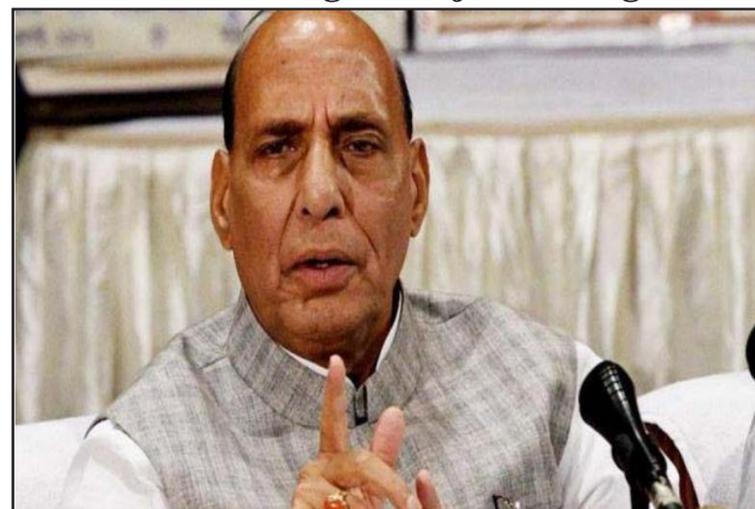


(News. Track) Rishi Kumar Shukla takes charge as the Director of Central Bureau of Investigation, in New Delhi on Monday. Mr. Shukla (58) is a former DGP of the Madhya Pradesh Police and an Intelligence Bureau veteran. Rishi Kumar Shukla took charge as CBI Director on Monday. Mr. Shukla, a 1983 batch IPS officer, is assuming office at a time the agency is busy in a turf war with the Kolkata Police that has spiralled into a political slugfest between the Centre and

the West Bengal Government. A perplexed interim CBI chief M. Nageswara Rao was seen scrambling resources to counter the West Bengal Police's action that not only detained a CBI team, which went to question Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar, but also cordoned off the agency's office at the CGO complex in Salt Lake City. The arrival of 58-year old Mr. Shukla, a former DGP of the Madhya Pradesh Police and an Intelligence Bureau veteran, as a

full-fledged director is likely to bring some sort of order in the CBI as it moves the Supreme Court to challenge the action of the West Bengal government in ponzi scam cases. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had started a dharna on Sunday evening to protest against the Union government's action. The issue was triggered when a team of CBI officials arrived at the doors of Mr. Kumar to question him in connection with Saradha and Rose Valley scams.

There may be constitutional breakdown in West Bengal: Rajnath Singh



(News. Track) Home Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday said there may be a constitutional breakdown in West Bengal in the wake of the Kolkata Police-CBI face-off and asserted that the Centre has power to take action. Amidst din in the Lok Sabha, he also termed as "unprecedented" the move to stop the probe agency from performing its duty. Earlier, opposition parties in Lok Sabha attacked the government over the alleged misuse of central agencies against political rivals, saying it was against democratic norms. Members from Trinamool Congress, Biju Janata Dal, NCP and Samajwadi Party spoke against the CBI move to question the Kolkata Police commissioner in connection with chit fund scams.

Making a statement in Lok Sabha on the prevailing situation in Kolkata, Mr. Singh described the action against the CBI probe team, which went to question Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar, as "unprecedented" and a threat to the federal political system of the country. "There may be constitutional breakdown in West Bengal... under the Con-

stitution, the central government has been vested with the power to maintain normalcy in any part of the country," he said. Earlier, opposition parties in Lok Sabha attacked the government over the alleged misuse of central agencies against political rivals, saying it was against democratic norms. Members from Trinamool Congress, Biju Janata Dal, NCP and Samajwadi Party spoke against the CBI move to question the Kolkata police chief. A CPI(M) member said both the Trinamool Congress and the Centre were at fault. As soon as the House took up Zero Hour, Speaker Sumitra Mahajan allowed members to raise the issue.

Editorial

Standard deviations: On jobs data



The resignations of the National Statistical Commission's acting Chairperson P.C. Mohanan and member J.V. Meenakshi appear linked to the Centre's refusal to release new data on employment that were due to be made public in December 2018. They could also be related to unease about the recently unveiled back-series data on the economy, which recorded slower growth during the UPA-led government's rule, and were released by the NITI Aayog bypassing convention and the commission's views. Reports suggest that the findings of the new Periodic Labour Force Survey, for July 2017-December 2018, are not too flattering, with unemployment registering a five-decade high. The government has said no such reservations were expressed by Mr. Mohanan or Dr. Meenakshi during NSC meetings and that the report will be released after 'quarterly' data for the survey period is processed. A key role of the NSC, set up in 2006, is to verify whether data being put in the public domain are reliable and adequate. Information has been collected and disseminated by successive governments under laid-down schedules, earning Indian data greater global trust than most other emerging market peers, especially China. On the question of job-creation for the youth, the Prime Minister and his Cabinet have been building an argument that jobs abound, but credible data are missing. The National Sample Survey Organisation's quinquennial employment surveys were to be conducted in 2016-17. The year was switched to 2017-18 as the new Labour Force Survey was being prepared to replace it. Separately, a quarterly survey of select employment-intensive sectors initiated by the Labour Bureau after the 2008 global financial crisis, that provided some clarity on ground realities, was inexplicably junked. Instead, proxy data from enrolments into social security schemes for formal sector employees are being touted as a sign of job-creation: economists have rightly called them out as inaccurate. Even then, Arun Jaitley, in his last year's Budget speech, cited 'an independent study' to claim seven million formal jobs will be created in 2018-19. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy has pegged job losses in 2018 at 11 million based on its regular employment surveys. The government's coy approach to jobs-related data may be due to its disastrous demonetisation gambit which hurt supply chains and informal jobs in the economy and whose effects have lingered. Contrast this with the NSSO surveys of 2009-10 that revealed little good news on household incomes and job-creation, thanks to after-effects of the global financial crisis. The UPA didn't dither from releasing the data, took criticism on its chin, explained it was an exceptional situation and commissioned another set of surveys in 2011-12 to correct for the timing. The Modi government should have treaded the same path without upending India's statistical integrity.

Legitimacy of the basic structure

(News, Track) The doctrine may be derived from the abstract. But it exists within the Constitution itself. It has now been more than 45 years since the Supreme Court ruled in Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala that Parliament's power to amend the Constitution was not unlimited, that the Constitution's basic structure was infrangible. But as entrenched as this doctrine might now be, it remains, to some, a source of endless antipathy. There have already been grumbings over the rule's legitimacy in certain quarters in response to challenges made to the recently introduced 103rd Constitutional Amendment, which provides for reservations based on economic criteria in government jobs and education. The common criticism is that the doctrine has no basis in the Constitution's language. The phrase "basic structure", it's argued, finds no mention anywhere in the Constitution. What's more, beyond its textual illegitimacy, its detractors also believe the doctrine accords the judiciary a power to impose its philosophy over a democratically formed government, resulting in something akin to what Union Minister Arun Jaitley once termed as a "tyranny of the unelected". Unquestionably, some of this censure is a result of the Supreme Court's occasionally muddled interpretation of what the Constitution's basic structure might be. But to reject the doctrine altogether because the judiciary sometimes botches its use is to throw the baby out with the bathwater. For not only is the basic structure canon legally legitimate, in that it is deeply rooted in the Constitution's text and history, but it also possesses substantial moral value, in that it strengthens democracy by limiting the power of a majoritarian government to undermine the Constitution's central ideals. Ever since the constitution was first amended in 1951, the true extent of Parliament's power to amend the document has been acutely contested. But the dangers inherent in granting untrammelled power to the legislature were perhaps best brought out in a lecture delivered by a German professor, Dietrich Conrad. His talk "Implied Limitations of the Amend-



ing Power", delivered in February 1965 to the law department of the Banaras Hindu University, came at an especially fraught time. Only months earlier Parliament had introduced the contentious 17th Constitutional Amendment. Through this, among other things, a number of land reform legislations had been placed into the Constitution's Ninth Schedule. This meant that those laws, even when discriminatory, were immunised from challenge. But it wasn't the merit of the amendment that troubled Conrad. He was concerned with the suggestion that Parliament's power to alter the Constitution was plenary. Influenced by the theoretical scholarship of the jurist Carl Schmitt, Conrad believed that even if a legislature were bestowed with the widest of powers to amend the Constitution, its authority was always subject to a set of inherent constraints. Parliament, he contended, was, after all, a creature of the Constitution. It could not, therefore, make changes that had the effect of overthrowing or obliterating the Constitution itself. As A.G. Noorani has pointed out, Conrad was affected by his own country's history. In Germany, the viru-

lent end brought to the Weimar Republic by Nazism had meant that when the country adopted its Basic Law in 1949, it quite explicitly placed checks on the legislature's powers. This included a bar on lawmakers from amending those provisions of the Basic Law that concerned the country's federal structure, that made human rights inviolable and that established constitutional principles such as the state's democratic and social order. In his lecture, Conrad said India hadn't yet been confronted with any extreme constitutional amendment. But jurists, he warned, ought to be mindful of the potential consequences inherent in granting Parliament boundless power to change the Constitution. How might we react, he wondered, if the legislature were to amend Article 1, for example, by dividing India into two. "Could a constitutional amendment," he asked, "abolish Article 21, removing the guarantee of a right to life? Or could Parliament use its power "to abolish the Constitution and reintroduce... the rule of a Moghul emperor or of the Crown of England?" Although it was delivered to a limited audience, M.K. Nambyar, who was to soon

lead arguments in the Supreme Court against the 17th amendment in Golaknath's case, was alerted to Conrad's urgings. Devoid of any direct precedent from other Commonwealth nations, where an amendment had been subject to the rigours of judicial review, Nambyar thought the German experience carried with it a set of important lessons. This meant that those laws, even when discriminatory, were immunised from challenge. But it wasn't the merit of the amendment that troubled Conrad. He was concerned with the suggestion that Parliament's power to alter the Constitution was plenary. Influenced by the theoretical scholarship of the jurist Carl Schmitt, Conrad believed that even if a legislature were bestowed with the widest of powers to amend the Constitution, its authority was always subject to a set of inherent constraints. Parliament, he contended, was, after all, a creature of the Constitution. It could not, therefore, make changes that had the effect of overthrowing or obliterating the Constitution itself. As A.G. Noorani has pointed out, Conrad was affected by his own country's history. In Germany, the viru-

lent end brought to the Weimar Republic by Nazism had meant that when the country adopted its Basic Law in 1949, it quite explicitly placed checks on the legislature's powers. Were Parliament's powers considered infinite, he argued, the parliamentary executive can be removed, fundamental rights can be abrogated, and, in effect, what is a sovereign democratic republic can be converted into a totalitarian regime. The court, in Golaknath, didn't quite feel the need to go this far. But, ultimately, just four years later, in Kesavananda Bharati, it was this formulation that shaped Justice H.R. Khanna's legendary, controlling opinion. While the judge conceded that it wasn't possible to subscribe to everything in Conrad's arguments, this much, he said, was true: "Any amending body organized within the statutory scheme, howsoever verbally unlimited its power, cannot by its very structure change the fundamental pillars supporting its Constitutional authority." Yet, the limitation, wrote Justice Khanna, wasn't much implicit from a reading of the Constitution as a whole as it was evident from the very meaning of the word "amendment". According to him, what could emerge out of an amendment was only an altered form of the existing Constitution and not an altogether new and radical Constitution. This interpretation, as Sudhir Krishnaswamy has shown, in some depth, in his book, Democracy and Constitutionalism in India, is compelling for at least two reasons. First, it represents a careful reading of the text of Article 368, and, second, it delivers an attractive understanding of the moral principles that anchor the Constitution. Article 368 grants Parliament the power to amend the Constitution, making it clear that on the exercise of that power "the Constitution shall stand amended". Therefore, if what has to remain after an amendment is "the Constitution", naturally a change made under Article 368 cannot create a new constitution. Such a construal is also supported by the literal meaning of the word "amendment", which is defined as "a minor change or addition designed to improve a text". Hence, for an amendment to be valid, the constitution that remains standing after such a change must be the Constitu-

tion of India; it must continue to possess, in its essence, those features that were foundational to it even at its conception. Now, consider Conrad's extreme example: were an amendment to be introduced relinquishing control over India to a foreign power, would it not result in the creation of a constitution that is no longer the Constitution of India? Would not such an amendment strike at the root of the Constitution's Preamble, which, in its original form, established India as a sovereign democratic republic? On any reasonable analysis it ought to, therefore, be clear that the basic structure doctrine is not only grounded in the Constitution's text and history, but that it also performs an important democratic role in ensuring that majoritarian governments do not destroy the Constitution's essential character. He was concerned with the suggestion that Parliament's power to alter the Constitution was plenary. Influenced by the theoretical scholarship of the jurist Carl Schmitt, Conrad believed that even if a legislature were bestowed with the widest of powers to amend the Constitution, its authority was always subject to a set of inherent constraints. Parliament, he contended, was, after all, a creature of the Constitution. It could not, therefore, make changes that had the effect of overthrowing or obliterating the Constitution itself. As A.G. Noorani has pointed out, Conrad was affected by his own country's history. In Germany, the virulent end brought to the Weimar Republic by Nazism had meant that when the country adopted its Basic Law in 1949, it quite explicitly placed checks on the legislature's powers. Were Parliament's powers considered infinite, We must remember that constitutions are not like ordinary laws. Interpreting one is always likely to be an exercise fraught with controversy. But such is the nature of our political design that the court, as an independent body, is tasked with the role of acting as the Constitution's final interpreter, with a view to translating, as Justice Robert H. Jackson of the U.S. Supreme Court once wrote, abstract principles into "concrete constitutional commands". It may well be the case that the basic structure doctrine is derived from the abstract. But that scarcely means it doesn't exist within the Constitution.

Afghanistan at a crossroads

(News, Track) Any agreement between the Taliban and the U.S. at the expense of the Afghan government and people is doomed to fail. Afghanistan is seeing growing national, regional and global attempts to seek a peaceful settlement to the conflict. The U.S. is desperate to extricate itself from the war, heightened by an unpredictable President and an ambitious negotiator, Zalmay Khalilzad. This desperation is matched by growing fears in Afghanistan that the Taliban will seek to overthrow the government, as it did in 1994, and that the government, the political class and the democratic constituency will be betrayed by a hasty deal between a desperate U.S. and an overconfident Pakistan. Desperation, fear and hubris may produce a peace agreement, but such an agreement may not bring inclusive and sustainable peace. Addressing the main drivers of the conflict are the principal tenets of any sustainable peace settlement. The causes of the Afghan conflict are religious, ethnic and external in nature. The conflict has been fought over the identity, legitimacy and sovereignty of the Afghan state and society; Should it be a Pashtun-dominated entity or a pluralistic state? Is an Islamist/theocratic emirate a true identity of the nation or a constitutional republic? Should it be a puppet state of Pakistan or a sovereign and independent state? Should it be a representative or plutocratic state? There have been numerous peacemaking efforts and agreements since the beginning of the conflict in 1979. The leftist Najibullah Ahmadzai, the Mujahideen-led government of Burhanuddin Rabbani, and the Western-installed governments of Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani all pursued political settlements based on the principles of power-sharing and democratic governance but failed. Since its formation in 1994, the Taliban has remained consistent in its ambition of total victory and establishing "a pure Islamic government". The Taliban is not primarily a nationalistic insurgency fighting a foreign occupation, but an ideological movement determined to re-establish a political order that is in

alignment with Pakistan's geo-strategic ambitions. The presence of international troops is an obstacle to the Taliban's goal. The key questions are (a) whether the Taliban's goal of establishing a "pure Islamic government" is compatible with the principles of pluralism, power-sharing and election-based politics; (b) whether Pakistan will accept a sovereign, independent Afghanistan; (c) whether the potential peace settlement is to be built upon the fragile achievements in the fields of state-building, democratisation, pluralism and connectivity; and (d) whether there will be an effective guarantee and mechanism for ensuring the sustainability of any peace agreement. In March 1979, the U.S. began covertly supporting the Mujahideen via and with Pakistan through 'Operation Cyclone'; it has remained a party to the conflict ever since. However, the U.S.'s Afghan policy has been driven by instinct rather than deliberation. Its current peace efforts are mainly driven by Washington's selfish instincts and ever-changing moods rather than the realities on the ground, particularly the role of the Afghan government and people. U.S. President Donald Trump follows his predecessors in changing the goalposts from conditions-based engagement to cater to the U.S.'s domestic impulses and/or emerging geopolitical attractions. Neither the current military environment nor the political structure is conducive for a sustained peace process. Unlike the Afghan and the coalition forces, the Taliban is not militarily and politically exhausted and/or desperate. The leadership of the Taliban and their Pakistani enablers have more stamina, resources and reasons to be hopeful of total victory. Their confidence has been reinforced by the Trump administration's "all bark no bite" approach in dealing with Pakistan. The Afghan presidential election, in which 17 candidates from different political backgrounds have registered to compete, is scheduled to take place in July. The speedy talk between the U.S. and the Taliban has created a parallel process in competition with the planned presidential election. Many in Kabul rightly



fear that the U.S. may sacrifice Afghanistan's nascent democracy and sovereignty to attain its objectives. Any agreement between the Taliban and the U.S. at the expense of the two principal stakeholders — the Afghan government and the people — is doomed to fail. The Afghanistan of 2019 is fundamentally different from the Afghanistan of the 1990s. Despite many shortcomings, the state of Afghanistan enjoys significant capacity and legitimacy and is endowed with a formidable and growing national security force. On the other hand, both Pakistan and the Taliban remain despised and distrusted by an overwhelming majority. In 2018, the Asia Foundation's annual Afghanistan survey and the nationwide survey conducted by the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies found that over 90% of the population do not support the Taliban's cause. In the words of the Taliban, Afghanistan is "the school of jihad" for jihadists around the world. Therefore, any arrangement with the Taliban would have direct implications for other violent Islamist groups. Separating the Taliban from wider global Islamist movements is the product of Western political duplicity and intellectual naivety.

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The art and charm of shoshin



(News, Track) The often-un discovered excitement of wondrous moments, such as of pebble-skipping on water. Pebble-skipping on water is an art that isn't appreciated enough ever. If anyone has spent time watching pebbles make ripples across ponds as they skim along the surface, they will know what I am talking about. If not, I encourage you to take on your person a couple of pebbles, as flat as possible, and hike up the high hills and mountains, or cut through the pristine forests, in search of a puddle, pond or lake of reasonable size to set off those ripples. Then, with the hand held flat, proceed to skip the pebbles across. The skillful amongst you may get the pebble to skip and skim the water in the first few attempts, causing beautiful rippling waves as they go along. I did not. The elementary school-going son attempted a large stone throw in a small lake nearby, and I held on to him lest he launched himself with the stone. Size matters: large stones and small boys could cause the cannon to fly with the missile. This is the kind of thing that would have made Newton come up with complex mathematical calculations to support the theory of pebbles and ripples, missiles and cannons, and extend it to comets and stars. We, on the other hand, laughed, and

substituted a flattish stone in his hand. Father and son threw pebbles and I sat watching mesmerised at the beautiful rippling effect it had on the water. I raised my face upwards towards the sun and my thoughts drifted. As I sat there thinking of this and that, a beautiful thing happened. The mind snapped out of the mundane and omnipresent things that occupied it, and went into a lovely, meditative state. Watching the sun sparkle drift meditatively on the waters was marvellous. The world seemed to be throwing these tiny diamonds into the water for our enjoyment and they drifted obligingly with the tiny waves — little shimmers bobbing up and down, dancing and shining in the sun's rays, set to the perfect rhythm of the breeze rustling through the bare winter branches of the trees nearby. The earth was bursting with new shoots and moss lined pathways from the recent rains. Ducks, coots, pelicans, and geese were bobbing on the waters in the distance. Birds were chirping and swooping, and I enjoyed the swift, elegant swoops of swallows as much as the impressive regal swoops of the hawks overhead. Some people were biking, some others walking. The white clouds drifted lazily across the skies, as though they too enjoyed the sunshine and did not

want to hide the sun. The air smelt fresh and clean with little wafts of eucalyptus and fir-scented drifts. Nature's shows are marvellous. For a moment I forgot about the to-do lists, the worries and tensions that the concept of a New Year brings, and enjoyed the free show in front of me, feeling revived and refreshed in spirit with every passing moment. All my senses were keen, alert and marvelling at the wonder around me. I looked at the little fellow enjoying himself by the waters, and hoped he would remember these simple pleasures as he grows up and takes his place in this frenetic world. The writing of the poet laureate, Mary Oliver, who died recently, spoke to my heart (emphasis added): "Teach the children. We don't matter so much, but the children do. Show them daisies and the pale hepatica. Teach them the taste of sassafras and wintergreen. Give them peppermint to put in their pockets as they go to school. Give them the fields and the woods and the possibility of the world salvaged from the lords of profit." My hope is for everyone to savour moments like these every now and then, to keep the capacity to wonder alive in us, to capture the beauty of shoshin. Shoshin is the Zen Buddhist word for 'beginner's mind', denoting the capacity to bring wonder and open-mindedness to learning anything.

Mamata Banerjee's protest in Kolkata- To continue her sit-in till Feb. 8

(News. Track) West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during her dharna in Kolkata on February 4, 2019. Mamata Banerjee is on a sit-in over the CBI's attempt to question the Kolkata Police chief in connection with chit fund scams West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is on an indefinite sit-in in front of the Metro Channel at Esplanade in Kolkata from Sunday night, after CBI officials tried to enter Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar's residence to allegedly question him in connection with the Saradha chit fund scam case. Ms. Banerjee said her agitation was to "save democracy, the Constitution and the country." She blamed the Central government, particularly the BJP's leadership and the National Security Adviser, for forcing her to go on an agitation. Ms. Banerjee has decided to skip the crucial Budget session of the Assembly. She even chaired a Cabinet meeting at a police outpost near the protest venue. A grunged BJP leader Shatrughan Sinha on Monday fired a fresh salvo at the Narendra Modi government, accusing it of playing with fire by targeting West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee whom he called a tried and tested mass leader. The second consecutive term Patna Sahib MP also rued that the party in power at the Centre has almost lost its credibility and people are not accepting anything "we are saying." "Sirji, what is happening. Why are we playing with fire through the much-maligned, disgraced and condemned government institutions, that too when elections are around the corner," Mr. Sinha, who had recently annoyed his party by addressing an Opposition rally organised by Ms. Banerjee at Kolkata, tweeted. "By targeting the tried and tested mass leader with impeccable image, Bengal Tigress @MamataOfficial the lady who is identified with hawai chappal and cotton saris. We have almost lost our credibility and people are not accepting whatever we are saying. Let us not get into knee-jerk panic action reaction," Mr. Sinha added in another tweet. For quite some time, Sinha has been criticising the leadership of Mr. Modi and BJP president Amit Shah calling it a one man army and two man show. He has also indicated that if denied a ticket by the BJP, he was ready to seek re-election from Patna Sahib as a nominee of another party with the cryptic remark location would be same, situation may be different. West Bengal Governor K.N. Tripathi has sent a confidential report to the Ministry of Home Affairs on the current scenario in the State, sources in from Raj Bhawan told. Earlier in the day, Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh spoke to the Governor. Mr. Tripathi told Mr. Singh that he had summoned the Chief Secretary and Director General of Police and asked them to take immediate action to resolve the situation. PTI reported quoting Raj Bahwan officials. Addressing the gathering, Mamata Banerjee said her sit-in protest will continue till February 8. Insisting that her protest is apolitical, she said her dais only mentions "Save India" and not her political party's name. The State Board Examinations are set to begin from February 12 and use of microphones and speakers are barred across the State four days ahead of examinations. Poet Joy Goswami takes part in the protest along with West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, in Kolkata on Monday. Poet Joy Goswami has joined the protest. The Sahitya Akademi award-winning poet was seen exchanging pleasantries with the Chief Minister. Addressing the crowd, Mr. Goswami said he was participating in the dharna to protect the democracy. "This Satyagraha is important to stop the divide that has been created in the society in recent times," he added. Trinamool Congress party workers hit the streets from morning in Hooghly, Howrah, Bankura, Burdwan East, Purulia, Birbhum and North 24 Parganas districts, officials said. Effigies of Modi and BJP national President Amit Shah were also burnt by them. In Howrah and Hooghly districts, TMC activists obstructed train movement while they put up blockades on national highway in Bankura district. Shouting slogans against the CBI, the TMC cadres vowed to continue their fight till the Narendra Modi government is defeated in the next Lok Sabha polls. Mamata Banerjee had directed party leaders to organise protest marches across the State on Monday between 2 pm and 4 pm without inconveniencing the people. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addresses the crowd before heading to a Cabinet meet near the protest venue in Kolkata on Monday.



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addresses the crowd before heading to a Cabinet meet near the protest venue in Kolkata on Monday.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addresses the crowd before heading to a Cabinet meet near the protest venue in Kolkata on Monday, describing her sit-in over the CBI's attempt to question Kolkata Police chief as a "non-political" protest. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Monday said support has poured in for her from different quarters of the country. Welcoming support for her dharna, Banerjee said, "It's not a political programme. But all political parties can join us in our protest." Ms. Banerjee maintained that Andhra Pradesh counterpart Chandrababu Naidu, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, Madhya Pradesh CM Kamal Nath, DMK president M.K. Stalin and former J&K chief minister Mehbooba Mufti were among those who called up to express solidarity to her protest. Addressing her party workers, who raised slogans against Modi near her dais, Banerjee said, "We want a peaceful demonstration. Please do not burn any effigies here." RJD leader Tejaswi Yadav and DMK MP M.K. Kanimozhi are set to meet Mamata Banerjee at the protest venue to express solidarity with her. While Mr. Yadav is expected to reach Kolkata on Monday evening, Ms. Kanimozhi will join the protest on Tuesday. Ms. Banerjee has received the support of Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav for her stir after the CBI tried to question the Kolkata Police Commissioner. Mr. Yadav demanded that the "due process" be followed so that "CBI is not used as a tool of political interference." Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and TDP chief N. Chandrababu Naidu alleged that the BJP government at the Centre was acting with vengeance against Ms. Banerjee as the Opposition parties' rally in the West Bengal capital on January 19 had been a great success. In his daily teleconference with Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leaders, Mr. Naidu said after Akhilesh Yadav and Mayawati, it was now the turn of Mamata Banerjee to face a "witch-hunt." Expressing solidarity with the West Bengal Chief Minister, the TDP chief said, "Cases against those who surrender to the BJP are being lifted. They are digging out old cases against those who oppose the BJP. The recent Kolkata rally was successful, hence the vengeance against Mamata Banerjee." Accusing the Narendra Modi government of conspiring to usurp the powers of the State, he said, "They are completely damaging the Centre-state relations." "The BJP is deriving pleasure by foisting cases against opposition leaders. They are destroying the constitutional institutions," Mr. Naidu alleged, adding the issue would be discussed during his visit to New Delhi and an action plan in this regard would be chalked out. Union Minister and senior BJP leader Prakash Javadekar on Monday claimed that Ms. Banerjee was on a dharna to save herself from the CBI. Mr. Javadekar, at a press conference in Kolkata, said, "This is not Narendra Modi's emergency but Mamata Banerjee's emergency in Bengal. She is on dharna to save herself from the CBI." The Union HRD Minister claimed that constitutional order has completely broken down in the State, but stopped short of demanding imposition of President's rule in West Bengal. "We would say both law and order and Consti-

tutional order has completely broken down in the state," Mr. Javadekar said. On whether the BJP would demand imposition of President's rule in the state, he said, "We won't say anything as of now." West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who is staging a sit-in protest at the Metro Channel held a Cabinet meeting at a police outpost nearby. The Cabinet meet was held ahead of the Budget, which will be presented in the West Bengal Assembly later in the day. Earlier, Ms. Banerjee urged her party MLAs to leave the protest venue and take part in the Budget session proceedings. Finance Minister Amit Mitra will table the Budget, in the absence of the Chief Minister. Arrangements are being made to distribute Police medals at a stage next to dharna venue on Monday evening. Tamil Nadu MP Kanimozhi on Monday extended her support to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's sit-in protest over the CBI's attempt to question the Kolkata Police chief in connection with a chit fund scam. In a tweet, Kanimozhi said: "Anyone who cares for Democracy, Federalism and Constitution must stand with Ms @MamataOfficial." On Sunday night, DMK president M.K. Stalin also extended his support to Ms. Banerjee. "The independence of every institution has been compromised under this fascist BJP Government. I stand with @MamataOfficial Didi in her fight to protect the federal structure of this country and to save democracy," he said in a tweet. Trinamool Congress member Sougata Roy speaks in Lok Sabha. Trinamool Congress member Sougata Roy speaks in Lok Sabha. Home Minister Rajnath Singh made a statement in Lok Sabha regarding the situation in Kolkata. Terming the stopping of CBI from performing its duty as "unprecedented", Mr. Singh said it was "unfortunate" that two law enforcement agencies are at loggerheads. He warned that this may lead to a constitutional breakdown in West Bengal. Mr. Singh said the CBI was probing a multi-crore chit fund scam that is said to have taken place in several parts of the country including West Bengal. He urged the West Bengal government to cooperate with the central agency in order to book the culprits. Mr. Singh's statement, however, failed to cut ice with the protesting opposition members. Disruptions forced adjournments in the Lok Sabha twice. Support from Opposition leaders poured in for West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee whose sit-in over the CBI's attempt to question the Kolkata Police Commissioner in connection with chit fund scams continued on Monday. Support for Ms. Banerjee poured in even as the CBI moved the Supreme Court accusing Kolkata Police chief Rajeev Kumar of destroying evidence related to the case and him of indulging in contempt of court. "Distressed by the news out of Bengal. A complete breakdown of trust in institutions under an authoritarian Modi Govt obsessed with regaining power at all costs. Mamata Ji is resisting & has the support of all those who understand the agenda behind these moves," tweeted Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) vice-president Jayant Chaudhary. Speaking to reporters, AAP MP Sanjay Singh said he had given a notice in the Rajya Sabha for suspension of business and demanded discussion on the "misuse of the CBI". TMC spokesperson Derek O'Brien said all Opposition parties will go to the Election Commission later on Monday over the issue in Bengal. "Inside the House [Parliament] and outside the House we will all move together. What-

ever action we take will do together. This is not the CBI, its the parrot of Amit Shah and Modi. "We have to save the Constitution, the country and the federal structure. Later today, all opposition parties will go to the Election Commission," Mr. O'Brien said. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and TDP chief N. Chandrababu Naidu told reporters that he will hold discussions with Opposition party leaders in Delhi on Monday and draft an action plan on a nation-wide movement. "TDP MPs will strongly protest along with other Opposition leaders today on the CBI issue," he said. Rashtriya Janata Dal's Manoj Jha said the Opposition's protest was against the pride of the Modi government. "After the Alok Verma incident CBI does not have any credibility. After the elections, we will see who will go to jail," said Mr. Jha. "What happened in West Bengal is an attack on a state's federal rights guaranteed by our constitution. We stand with West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee," Karnataka CM H.D. Kumaraswamy tweeted this morning. Mamata addresses farmers from protest venue

From the dharna site in the heart of Kolkata, Mamata Banerjee addressed a State conference of farmers over phone, which the participants at the "The BJP, the Modi government have snatched farmers' sleep," Ms. Banerjee said, claiming that nearly 12,000 farmers have committed suicide in the country. "Farmers are being cheated before the elections," she alleged, referring to the sops announced in the interim budget placed by the NDA government in Parliament on Friday. Addressing the farmers gathering, Ms. Banerjee said owing to demonetisation, farmers are in deep distress with many having committed suicide or lost their livelihood. "Our government is the only one in the country which does not acquire farmland and have returned acquired land in Singur," Ms. Banerjee said. Highlighting several schemes and benefits that her government has given to farmers since coming to power in 2011, Ms. Banerjee said Rs 1,200 crore have been spent by her government for such schemes. The chief minister said over one crore people were benefited from various social security programmes of the state government. "Modi government is saying that by 2022, farmers' income will be doubled, but in Bengal we have already tripled their income," she said. PTI The Supreme Court on Monday said there is not one evidence shown by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to back their claim that the West Bengal government and the State Police is colluding to destroy electronic evidence in the chit fund cases. A day after CBI officers, who went to question Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar were detained and released, a Bench of Chief Justice of India anjan Gogoi and Justice Sanjeev Khanna did not take on face value the claim made by CBI in court that it had moved in on Mr. Kumar to prevent the destruction of evidence crucial to their investigation. Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh has spoken to West Bengal Governor Keshari Nath Tripathi to take stock of the situation in the wake of a CBI team being allegedly obstructed by the State police to grill the Kolkata Police Commissioner in the Saradha ponzi scam case, officials said Monday. The Ministry has decided to deploy Central forces at the official and residential premises of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in West Bengal and the MHA is now "closely monitoring the situation", they said. The Home Ministry on February 3 evening

received information that officers of the CBI in Kolkata had experienced "intimidation and threat to personal safety in course of investigation into the Saradha scam being conducted under the directions of the Supreme Court", they said. Mr. Singh called up the Governor to be apprised of the facts of the "unfortunate and unprecedented situation of CBI officers being manhandled, detained, intimidated and obstructed", the officials said. Mr. Tripathi told Mr. Singh that he had summoned the Chief Secretary and Director General of Police (DGP) and asked them to take immediate action to resolve the situation, according to the officials. Reports were also received that the residence of Joint Director of the CBI was surrounded by Kolkata police, they said. The proceedings of the

Lok Sabha were adjourned for nearly 45 minutes on Monday morning amid protests by Trinamool Congress members over alleged "misuse" of the CBI by the Central government. TDP members protesting outside the Parliament seeking Special Category Status to Andhra Pradesh, on Monday. TDP members protesting outside the Parliament seeking Special Category Status to Andhra Pradesh, on Monday.

As soon as the House paid obituaries to former members who had died in the recent past, members of the TMC raised the issue, saying they have given notice for an adjournment motion to discuss the issue. As it happened | Parliament proceedings live: In Lok Sabha, TMC's Sougata Roy accuses govt of misusing CBI When Speaker Sumitra Mahajan said they can

raise the issue after Question Hour, TMC members rushed to the Well of the House and started raising slogans against the BJP. Members of the Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) were also in the Well supporting the TMC. Later, Congress members entered the Well holding placards about the Rafale jet deal and unemployment figures. They, however, did not shout slogans. The Speaker continued with the Question Hour for 15 minutes and later adjourned the House till noon. The treasury benches were largely empty with only a few members present in the House. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during her dharna in Kolkata on February 3, 2019. Kolkata Commissioner of Police Rajeev Kumar (left) is also seen. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata

Banerjee during her dharna in Kolkata on February 3, 2019. Kolkata Commissioner of Police Rajeev Kumar (left) is also seen. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday continued her sit-in protest Kolkata over the CBI's attempt to question the Kolkata Police chief in connection with a ponzi scheme scam, as Samajwadi Party leader Kiranmoy Nanda joined her. The Trinamool Congress chief, surrounded by her Ministers and top party leaders, stayed up the entire night on a makeshift dais at the city hub Dharamtala area, near the Metro Channel, after starting the demonstration around 9 p.m. on Sunday. There is a blanket security cover in the area. "This is a Satyagraha and I'll continue till the country is saved," Ms. Banerjee said.

ICC ODI rankings: India rise to 2nd; Kohli, Bumrah remain on top

(News. Track) India's players celebrate with the series trophy after beating New Zealand their fifth one day international at Westpac Stadium in Wellington, New Zealand. The Indian cricket team on Monday rose a rung to second in the ICC ODI rankings in which captain Virat Kohli and pacer Jasprit Bumrah continued to top the respective charts for batsmen and bowlers. India have accumulated 122 points on the back of series wins over Australia and New Zealand and are placed behind England (126) in the fresh list, the ICC said in a statement. Mahendra Singh Dhoni also moved up owing to a strong showing against Australia last month, which fetched him the Player of the Series award. Dhoni has moved up three places to 17th position in the batting list for a run which included three consecutive half-centuries against Australia. New Zealand fast bowler Trent Boult surged to third in the rankings for bowlers after finishing with 12 wickets in the series against India, which culminated in Wellington on Sunday with a 4-1 victory for the visiting side. The 29-year-old left-arter, who swung the ball prodigiously to claim five for 21 and helped New Zealand to a win in the fourth match, has moved up seven places, the International Cricket Council said in a statement. Boult topped the rankings in January 2016, and is again on his way up, with only



Bumrah and Afghanistan leg-spinner Rashid Khan ahead of him. India leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal (up one place to fifth) and fast bowler Bhuvneshwar Kumar (up six places to 17th) are among others to move up in the latest rankings. The latest update also takes into account India's preceding three-match series against Australia, the five-match series between South

Africa and Pakistan, and the three matches between the United Arab Emirates and Nepal. Kedar Jadhav (up eight places to 35th) is another one to advance for India in the list led by Kohli. For South Africa, Quinton de Kock (up one place to eighth), Hashim Amla (up three places to 13th) and Reeza Hendricks (up 36 places to 94th) have moved up among batsmen while Andile Phehlukwayo's

eight wickets have seen him gain 13 places and reach 19th position and Dwaine Pretorius has moved up from 53rd to 44th slot. In the team rankings, New Zealand have slipped behind South Africa to fourth place. Nepal now have a full ranking after crossing the threshold of eight matches and are now tied with the UAE at 15 points with their 2-1 win but marginally behind on decimals.

Pakistan police culture of impunity faces trial by social media

(News. Track) Analysts saying reforms are needed to challenge impunity in the police ranks. In this picture Pakistan police officers stand alert during a protest in Islamabad, Pakistan. File n a latest "encounter", a family was gunned down in broad daylight in the eastern city of Sahiwal last month. Five policemen raise their guns and fire dozens of times into a parked car at point-blank range in Pakistan. Then they reach inside, around the bodies of the dead, to pull out three crying children. The footage filmed by shocked witnesses to the killing went viral, sending Prime Minister Imran Khan scrambling to quell anger over a police culture of impunity that is now being threatened by social media. Thousands have been gunned down in recent years across Pakistan in so-called "encounter killings" — incidents where suspects allegedly resist arrest, are slain, then later identified as terrorists to boost statistics. This latest "encounter" saw a family gunned down in broad daylight in the eastern city of Sahiwal last month, leaving four people dead including two parents and their teenage daughter. Three children survived the incident, including nine-year-old Umair Khalil who later told journalists that police shot at the family as their father offered the cops a bribe, pleading to let them go. "My father told them to take our money and not to shoot their guns. But they started firing," Umair said in the video broadcast widely across Pakistan news outlets and social media. Police initially defended their response saying terrorists with links to the Islamic State (IS) group were in the car using the family as a human shield. But this "encounter" was fundamentally different to others — it was



filmed on phones and the videos posted online. Authorities have since backtracked as furor grew with the Prime Minister vowing to mete out "exemplary punishment" to the guilty. Five officers were hit with murder charges and protests erupted in nearby Lahore. "People... know that a video they make from their cell phone can have far more impact than the camera of a news channel," said Pakistani digital rights activist Haroon Baloch. "Had the nearby people not filmed the Sahiwal incident, nobody would have noticed the extrajudicial killing," he added. The incident is the latest instance of how phones are radically changing Pakistanis' relationship with power. During elections over the summer, a host of videos went viral, showing angry voters

hounding elected representatives over their failure to serve their constituents. In the U.S., the Black Lives Matter movement coalesced as outrage exploded following a series of viral videos allegedly showing police killing black Americans, bringing greater scrutiny to racial profiling and pushing some police departments to outfit patrol officers with body cams. The Sahiwal incident comes almost exactly a year after a similar killing of a young social media star in Karachi ignited an ethnic rights movement by the country's beleaguered Pashtun community. The movement it spawned — the Pakistan Protection Movement, or PTM — has been largely sustained by social media and videos captured on mobiles, piling even more pressure on

authorities. But the killings continue, with analysts saying reforms are needed to challenge impunity in the police ranks. "It's a culture of the police in Pakistan to kill people and make it look like an encounter," Mehdi Hasan, chairperson of the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), told AFP. Data compiled by HRCP showed that 4,803 people were killed in these "encounters" in Pakistan within the past three years alone. "The police need to be properly trained if such incidents are to be avoided in the future," Mr. Hasan added. Security analyst Amir Rana, however, argued that increased police accountability and judicial reform were key to cementing lasting change. "This culture has existed in the police force for decades,"

ISRO set to launch communication satellite GSAT-31 on February 6



(News, Track) It will be used for supporting television uplinks, DTH television services The Indian Space Research Organisation is all set to launch its 40th communication satellite GSAT-31 on February 6 from the spaceport in French Guiana. The satellite with a mission life of 15 years will provide continuity to operational services on some of the in-orbit satellites and augment the Ku-band transponder capacity in Geostationary Orbit, the space agency said. In a statement, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said the satellite, weighing about 2,535 kg, is scheduled for launch onboard the Ariane-5 (VA247) from Kourou in French Guiana. "The satellite GSAT-31 is configured on ISRO's enhanced I-2K Bus, utilising the maximum bus capabilities of this type. The satellite derives its heritage from ISRO's earlier INSAT/GSAT satellite series. The satellite provides Indian mainland and island coverage," the agency said. ISRO also said the GSAT-31 will be used for supporting VSAT networks, television uplinks, digital satellite news gathering, DTH television services, cellular back haul connectivity and many such applications. The satellite will also provide wide beam coverage to facilitate communication over large oceanic region comprising large part of the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean using wide band transponder, ISRO said. The agency added that two Ku-band beacon downlink signals are transmitted for ground tracking purpose.

West Indies reclaims Wisden Trophy with emphatic victory



(News, Track) The West Indians, led by captain Jason Holder, acknowledge their supporters. Coach and Holder lead the rout against England in second Test. Kemar Roach and captain Jason Holder led another rout of the England batting line-up as the West Indies completed a crushing series-clinching 10-wicket victory after tea on the third day of the second Test at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Saturday. Trailing by 119 runs at the start of the second innings after Darren Bravo's ultra-patient half-century extended the West Indies first innings total to 306 in the morning, England was demolished for 132 with Roach and Holder claiming four wickets each. Openers Kraigg Brathwaite and John Campbell then enjoyed the formality of knocking off the 14 runs required for victory in 2.1 overs, Campbell sealing the result in style by hoisting James Anderson for six over midwicket. "We're hungry for success," said a delighted Holder.

Campaign over citizenship bill seeks to derail development: CM



(News, Track) Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi. He chief minister alleged that a misinformation campaign has been launched by certain vested interest groups that 1.9 crore Bangladeshi immigrants would get settlement in Assam in the days to come if the Bill is implemented. Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal has claimed that a "motivated campaign" is going on surrounding the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill to derail the pace of the development the state is witnessing in the BJP rule. Addressing the Asha and National Health Mission convention here, Mr. Sonowal assured the people that the land, culture, language of the indigenous people are fully safe in the hands of the present government. "This [protests against the Bill] is a motivated campaign to derail the pace of development of the state. I urge all people to stand united to thwart the evil design of divisive forces," he said on Sunday. The chief minister alleged that a misinformation campaign has been launched by certain vested interest groups that 1.9 crore Bangladeshi immigrants would get settlement in Assam in the days to come if the Bill is implemented. The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, passed by the Lok Sabha on January 8, seeks to grant Indian citizenship to non-Muslims who fled religious persecution from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan, and entered India before December 31, 2014. Protests against the bill have rocked the entire northeast over the past five weeks, with several organisations and political parties vehemently opposing it. Addressing the Asha and National Health Mission convention here, Mr. Sonowal assured the people that the land, culture, language of the indigenous people are fully safe in the hands of the present government. "This [protests against the Bill] is a motivated campaign to derail the pace of development of the state. I urge all people to stand united to thwart the evil design of divisive forces," he said on Sunday. The chief minister alleged that a misinformation campaign has been launched by certain vested interest groups that 1.9 crore Bangladeshi immigrants would get settlement in Assam in the days to come if the Bill is implemented. The protesters claim that the bill will nullify the provisions of the Assam Accord of 1985, which fixed March 24, 1971, as the cut-off date for deportation of illegal immigrants, irrespective of religion.

Battling more than just a disease: on leprosy

(News, Track) The fight to end discrimination, stigma and prejudice against people afflicted with leprosy rages on in India, which reported the highest number of new cases in the world in 2017. Bindu Shajan Perappadan speaks to Vagavathali Narsappa, who was abandoned as a child due to his medical condition, about the changing dialogue around leprosy "Leprosy does not kill, but the social discrimination, isolation and disability associated with the disease do not allow people to reach their potential, which is worse than death," said Vagavathali Narsappa, who works with the Association of People Affected by Leprosy (APAL-India), a support group for leprosy patients. The 55-year-old activist was abandoned by his parents at the age of nine when he was diagnosed with the disease. Left to fend for himself on the streets, the disease quickly spread to his fingers, which eventually had to be amputated. "I met my wife at the leprosy hospital where we were both being treated. We have been blessed with two girls... we now work for APAL to support people afflicted with leprosy," said Mr. Narsappa, who was recently in the Capital to participate in leprosy eradication-related programmes. One of the biggest challenges in the battle against leprosy is that one in every



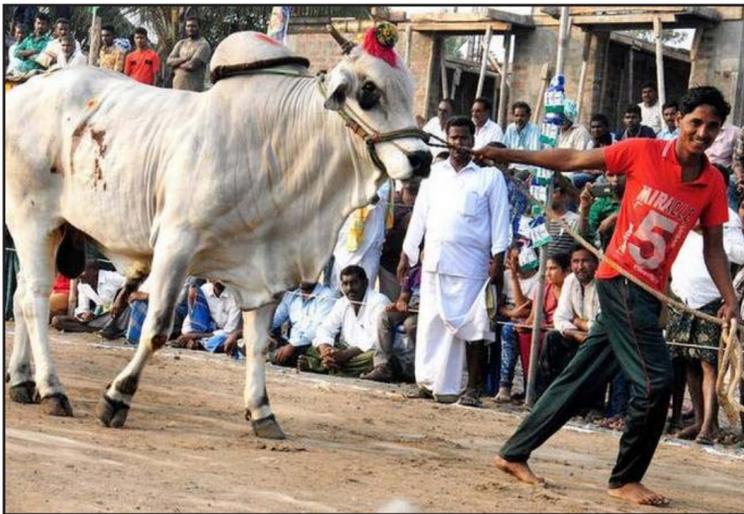
10 new leprosy patients is a child, he said, adding: "Unlike other diseases, leprosy does not have a vaccination or a preventive pill... the fact that leprosy can cause childhood disabilities makes awareness and timely treatment vital." Older patients are also vulnerable, with untreated ulcers often proving to be fatal. "The government and various organisations working in this area are doing their bit but the stigma attached to leprosy still remains... though people are more open to diagnosis and treatment now," said Mr. Narsappa. While welcoming the passing of a Bill excluding leprosy as grounds for divorce, the activist said that

society's mindset needs to change too. "My dream and mission is to work towards zero disability, and for that to happen we need to create awareness, remove misconceptions about leprosy, have early detection and voluntary reporting. School curriculum should make children aware that early detection can prevent disability. People afflicted with leprosy should be made partners in policy making," said Mr. Narsappa. Last-mile efforts in leprosy eradication will need enabling environments where people afflicted by the disease feel comfortable in coming forward and seeking treatment, he said, adding that till this happens

eradicating leprosy "will remain a distant dream for India". In India, World Leprosy Day is celebrated on January 30 to commemorate the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The date was chosen by French humanitarian Raoul Follereau as a tribute to the life of the Mahatma, who had compassion for people afflicted with leprosy. This year's theme was 'ending discrimination, stigma, and prejudice'. Several reports have revealed that a majority of leprosy patients have experienced some form of social stigma and discrimination and nearly 50% end up suffering from mental health issues such as depression or anxiety.

Increase in Rashtriya Gokul Mission outlay raises ryots' hopes

(News, Track) A youth showcases the beauty of majestic Ongole bull for racing at Kothapatnam village in Prakasam district. Forum seeks an integrated indigenous cattle breeding centre in Prakasam. The Ongole breed of cattle had been flourishing between Gundalakamma and Musi rivers in Prakasam district in the past. But the highly productive cows and bulls are on the verge of becoming extinct here while some of the well-bred cattle had turned a money-spinner for farmers in Brazil. Now the farmers see a ray of hope with the Centre doubling the allocation to over ₹750 crore for the Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM) in the Central budget for protecting and promoting the indigenous breeds. The Narendra Modi government should immediately sanction an integrated indigenous cattle breeding centre in Prakasam district to promote high genetic merit Ongole breed of cattle and facilitate setting up of breeders' societies, Prakasam District Development Forum (PDDF) president Ch.Ranga Rao said. The working of the state-run farms at Chadalawada, Chintaldevi and LAM farm was far from desired, he said. The government should latch on to the offer by the Brazilian Agriculture Research Corporation (EMBAPA) to provide technical support to elite cattle to arrest the fall in the number of pure breed of Ongole cattle, said an elite farmer from Podili, Sangala Venkateswara Reddy, who has a passion for rearing racing bulls. While the average farmer had switched over to tractors, elite farmers still rear the bulls with superior genetic features to take part in racing events held in rural Prakasam from time to time. The superior bulls raised by elite farmers fetch up to ₹40



lakh per animal, said P. Seshadri Chowdary, another breeder from N.G.Padu village. The amount spent on promotion of native breeds was far less compared to the allocation made each year, observed Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangham district secretary Vadde Hanuma Reddy. The self-styled 'Go Rakshaks' had hurt the dairy farmers saddled with unproductive cattle, he felt. He said that ₹6,000 announced for farmers with less than two

hectares as too meagre. "What the farmer needed the most is remunerative price for their produce," he said, adding that when this was ensured there would be no need for loan waiver or farm subsidies. The market prices for most crops ruled below minimum support price, while the agreement between farmers and paper mills brokered by the State government was followed more in breach than in practice, he lamented.

CMFRI opens doors to marine wonders for public

The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) will throw open its doors to the public on Tuesday as part of its 72nd Foundation Day celebrations. The public can view splendours of the marine world like precious pearls in the deep sea and the process of extracting them from farmed pearl oysters. The exhibition will be a display of diverse marine aquatic species as well as a platform to understand the latest developments in marine research. The National Marine Biodiversity Museum at the CMFRI is rich with collections from a wide spectrum of niches ranging from estuaries to coastal and deeper waters of the Indian seas, various laboratories, newly-designed marine research aquarium, hatcheries and other facilities. The exhibition will be open between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., said a press release here. The National Marine Biodiversity Museum at the CMFRI is rich with collections from a wide spectrum of niches ranging from estuaries to coastal and deeper waters of the Indian seas, various laboratories, newly-designed marine research aquarium, hatcheries and other



marine research aquarium showcases different marine ornamental varieties including bat fish and lion fish. The National Marine Biodiversity Museum at the CMFRI is rich with collections from a wide spectrum of niches ranging from estuaries to coastal and deeper waters of the Indian seas, various laboratories, newly-designed marine research aquarium, hatcheries and other

facilities. Those curious about the latest research developments in marine fisheries may visit various laboratories dedicated to bioprospecting, ocean acidification, fishery biology, environmental research, climate change and cell culture. The fish ageing laboratory will help uncover the secrets behind estimation of fish age which is a revolutionary step in marine fisheries research. Visitors

can also acquire knowledge in the area of developing medicines from marine organisms for various diseases. CMFRI opens doors to marine wonders for public. Among the research facilities of the CMFRI, the scanning electron microscope that produces images of a sample in higher resolution that is 10-lakh fold is expected to draw the attention of visitors.

I will contest only from Mandya Lok Sabha seat: Sumalatha



(News, Track) The actor says she is weighing in all options and waiting for a clear picture to emerge. With the Mandya Lok Sabha constituency occupying the centre stage in Karnataka politics because of indications by both the coalition partners — the Congress and the Janata Dal (Secular) — that they are keen on contesting from the seat, all eyes are on veteran actor Sumalatha, wife of actor-politician late M.H. Ambareesh. Ms. Sumalatha is weighing in all options and waiting for a clarity between the coalition partners. In unequivocal terms, she said, "There is no question of contesting from any other constituency except Mandya because of the bonding my family has with the people the district". Excerpts from an interview. With pressure mounting on you to take a plunge into electoral politics from people of Mandya Lok Sabha constituency, there is confusion and speculation. When can people expect some clarity? Taking a decision on entering politics at this juncture is a difficult task. The political picture is hazy. I don't know whether or not the Congress and the JD(S) will put up a combined fight in Mandya. If it were to be a straight fight, I would have decided to contest and take on the responsibility. Taking a decision in a conflicting situation is not that easy. I will base my decision after weighing in the situation, as it will be a big step in my life. In case of the Congress and the JD(S) not reaching a consensus, are you ready to contest as an Independent? I am not a professional politician. But, I understand that contesting as an Independent in the present political situation is not prudent. Even the BJP and people of Mandya have offered support if I decide to contest as an Independent. But, I haven't applied my mind on contesting as an Independent so far. What really made you think of contesting from Mandya? The way people of Mandya reached out to me really touched my heart deeply. It is beyond politics and cinema. Basically, it is an emotional connect. So whether in politics or not that bond will be there with the people of Mandya who had reposed faith in Ambareesh and his family without any expectations. When I looked into their eyes, I could not say 'no' to them. I want to clarify that it is not a political decision. People are arguing that they supported Ambareesh all these years and are expecting me to reciprocate their gesture by contesting from Mandya. That is why if I decide to take a political plunge, it will be only from Mandya Lok Sabha constituency and not from anywhere else. Has the Congress, which is staking its claim for Mandya seat, approached you to contest from the constituency? Excerpts from an interview. With pressure mounting on you to take a plunge into electoral politics from people of Mandya Lok Sabha constituency, there is confusion and speculation. When can people expect some clarity? Taking a decision on entering politics at this juncture is a difficult task. The political picture is hazy. I don't know whether or not the Congress and the JD(S) will put up a combined fight in Mandya. If it were to be a straight fight, I would have decided to contest and take on the responsibility. Taking a decision in a conflicting situation is not that easy. I will base my decision after weighing in the situation, as it will be a big step in my life. In case of the Congress and the JD(S) not reaching a consensus, are you ready to contest as an Independent? I am not a professional politician. But, I understand that contesting as an Independent in the present political situation is not prudent. Even the BJP and people of Mandya have offered support if I decide to contest as an Independent. But, I haven't applied my mind on contesting as an Independent so far. No, none has contacted me. Congress leaders have not spoken to me as they are in a dilemma because of the alliance with the JD(S). However, a senior leader sought my opinion on contesting from Bengaluru North Lok Sabha constituency. I told him in no uncertain terms that I am not here just to get into politics. If I want to enter politics, it will be only from Mandya. Otherwise, I will be totally away from politics as it is not my ambition at all. If politics had been my ambition, I would have been somewhere else by this time. It is learnt that you have been offered an MLC seat just to keep you away from Mandya constituency. Is it true? Yes, there were feelers on making me an MLC. However, a senior leader sought my opinion on contesting from Bengaluru North Lok Sabha constituency. I told him in no uncertain terms that I am not here just to get into politics. If I want to enter politics, it will be only from Mandya. Otherwise, I will be totally away from politics as it is not my ambition at all. I have told those who sent such feelers that I don't have the ambition to become either an MLC or an MLA. I don't think of representing any constituency other than Mandya, as Ambareesh had represented it. If the alliance partners reach a consensus on my candidature from Mandya, I will contest from the land of Ambareesh. Otherwise, I am happy with what I am.

Bags containing detonators, gelatine sticks found at Guwahati Railway Station



(News, Track) Three bags containing detonators and gelatine sticks were found at the Guwahati Railway Station in the early hours of Monday. The Government Railway Police (GRP) recovered the bags from platform No. 3 at 5.45 a.m. while the Awadh Assam Express was still on the platform. Police found 440 pieces of gelatine sticks in 22 packets, 700 pieces of detonators in seven packets and three bundles of fuse wire. Another bag of explosives was recovered near the toilet of the AC-2-tier coach of the same train by the Jagiroad GRP-OP staff. Jagiroad is a town situated around 60 km east of Guwahati. The bag contained 160 pieces of gelatine sticks in eight packets and 500 pieces of detonators in five packets. A case has been registered and the police are reportedly exploring the possibility of an extremists' plan for a major strike in Assam.