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## Pakistan arrests 250 for rioting, disrupting peace

Govt moves against 3day protests in blasphemy case

**ISLAMABAD/LAHORE:** The Pakistan police on Sunday arrested nearly 250 people from across the country on charges of arson, vandalism and violence during the three-day mass protests following the acquittal of Christian woman Asia Bibi.

A day after striking a deal with the radical Islamist party Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), the government swung into action as it started a crack-

down against the people who vandalised public property during the protests.

Asia Bibi, a 47-year-old mother of four, was convicted in 2010 after being accused of insulting Islam in a row with her neighbours.

She always maintained her innocence, but has spent most of the past eight years in solitary confinement.

In a landmark judgement last Wednesday, a three-judge

bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice Saqib Nisar overturned the conviction of Asia Bibi facing execution for blasphemy, sparking protests led by the TLP and other groups across Pakistan.

The protesters led by the TLP and other groups blocked major highways and roads in different parts of the country.

The interior ministry has initiated criminal proceedings against the rioters and booked 5,000 people, including TLP chief Khadim Hussain Rizvi and senior leader Afzal Qa-

dri, on charges of rioting and disrupting peace during the demonstrations

In Lahore, the police registered 11 cases against 1,500 persons, including the TLP leaders for blocking roads and creating law and order situation. The FIRs against Qadri and Rizvi have been sealed, *The Express Tribune* reported.

In Faisalabad, the police registered 29 cases against 3,000 protestors and arrested 218 persons.

In Chiniot, 3 cases were registered and 13 persons were arrested; in Sargodha, 2 cases were registered against 300

persons and in Jhang two cases were registered against 150 persons. Twelve of these people were arrested, the report said.

In Okara, FIR was registered against 200 people. Twenty people later got bails and released.

The Rawalpindi police also registered 18 cases against hundreds of TLP workers while 16 workers were released on Saturday.

In Islamabad, two cases were registered against more than 100 accused, including 20 workers of a religious party. In Karachi's Gulistan-e-Jauhar

and Pehlwan Goth areas, three persons were arrested for firing and forcing people to shut down their businesses.

Prime Minister Imran Khan, who is currently on an official trip to China, reportedly expressed his anger over damage to public and private properties during the three-day-long protests.

Khan ordered the arrest of the people who were engaged in vandalism and directed the federal government to work in collaboration with the provincial governments, the report added.

**PTI**

### World at a glance



A firefighter tries to extinguish a house set on fire in downtown Noumea overnight on Sunday, following the results from an independence referendum in the French Pacific territory of New Caledonia. AFP

### New Caledonia votes against independence from France

The Pacific islands of New Caledonia opted to remain part of France on Sunday, early results showed, as voters rejected independence in a closely-watched referendum seen as a measure of support for Paris in one of its many strategic outposts, AFP reports.

Some 18,000 kilometres from the French mainland, New Caledonia is home to a quarter of the world's known supplies of nickel — a vital electronics compo-

nent — and is a foothold for France in the Pacific.

With 70% of voting slips counted, 59.5% of people had rejected the proposition that New Caledonia become independent, the local electoral authority said.

Some 1.75,000 people were eligible to vote in the remote islands fringed by spectacular beaches, with opinion polls ahead of Sunday's ballot predicting a large majority in favour of staying French.

### Far-right overtakes Macron

France's far-right Rassemblement National (RN) party jumped ahead of President Emmanuel Macron's LREM for the first time in a poll of voting intentions for May 2019 European Parliament elections, AFP reports.

An Ifop poll published on Sunday showed the centrist Republic on the Move (LREM) with 19% of voting intentions compared to 20% at the end of August, while far-right

leader Marine Le Pen's RN — formerly the National Front — rose to 21% from 17% previously.

Together with the seven percent score of sovereignist Nicolas Dupont-Aignan and one percent each for "Frexit" parties led by former Le Pen associate Florian Philippot and Francois Aselineau, far-right parties won a combined 30% of voting intentions, up from 25% end August.

## Lanka crisis: Tamils held in jails may be released

Rajapaksa tries to woo Tamil party legislators

**COLOMBO, PTI:** Sri Lanka Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa's legislator son Namal on Sunday indicated that the long-held demand of the Tamil minority community to release all Tamil prisoners may be fulfilled soon, a move aimed at persuading Tamil legislators to support Rajapaksa.

Tamils say some of the prisoners have been held over a long time under anti-terrorism law without even being formally charged.

Namal's comments are aimed at persuading the legislators in the Sri Lanka's main Tamil party — Tamil National Alliance (TNA) — to switch their allegiance to Rajapaksa in his bid to prove majority in Parliament.

So far, Rajapaksa has 100 MPs on his side while sacked prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has 103 MPs in the 225-member assembly. Most of the 22 remaining MPs, including the TNA, are likely to oppose Rajapaksa.

Rajapaksa camp had already enticed a TNA legislator to join ranks by giving him a deputy ministerial position.

The TNA's parliamentary strength has been reduced to 15 as a result and there was speculation that at least 4 more of them were willing to support Rajapaksa.

The TNA has said it will support a no-trust motion against Rajapaksa, amid mounting pressure on President Sirisena to let the suspended parliament hold a vote to end the ongoing political crisis.

"President (Maithripala) Sirisena and Prime Minister Rajapaksa would make a decision (on the issue) very soon," Namal tweeted in Tamil language.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had run a military campaign for a separate Tamil homeland in the northern and eastern provinces of the island nation for nearly 30 years before its collapse in 2009 after the Sri Lankan Army killed its supreme leader Velupillai Prabhakaran.

Rajapaksa, who was the president at the time, has repeatedly said that the war was against the LTTE and not against the Tamil community.

Since the war with the LTTE ended in 2009, the Sri Lankan government has denied that the imprisoned LTTE members are political prisoners.

## Twitter removed thousands of accounts

**WASHINGTON, AFP:** Twitter has deleted thousands of automated accounts, many posing as Democrats, that were posting tweets encouraging US voters to sit out Tuesday's crucial midterm elections.

The reports cited a Twitter statement on Friday as saying the social media company had "removed a series of accounts for engaging in attempts to share disinformation in an automated fashion — a violation of four policies."

CNN said the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee had alerted Twitter to the accounts, which were removed in late September and early October. Twitter said it appeared the account network was run out of the US, but did not provide details on how the accounts worked.

### Groovy



Former Malagasy President and presidential candidate Hery Rajaonarimampianina (R) gestures and dances during a campaign rally on Sunday at the Colyseum stadium in Antananarivo. AFP

## China faces grilling over camp for Muslims

**BEIJING, AFP:** China will be grilled over its mass detention of Uighur minorities during a UN human rights review on Tuesday, with Washington leading demands for Beijing to come clean on how many people are held in a sprawling network of camps.

As many as one million ethnic Uighurs and other Muslim minorities are being kept in extra-judicial detention in China's fractious far western Xinjiang region, according to estimates cited by a UN panel.

The centres where they are thought to be detained have come under increasing

scrutiny this year, with rights activists describing them as political re-education camps.

They say members of China's Muslim minorities are held involuntarily for transgressions such as wearing long beards and face veils.

"The Human Rights Council must send an unequivocal message to the Chinese government that their campaign of systematic repression in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, including the arbitrary detention of up to one million people, must end," said Patrick Poon, China researcher at Amnesty International.

All 193 UN member states must undergo a periodic review by the Human Rights Council in Geneva. China will present a report on its domestic human rights situation and on changes made since its last report in 2013, while diplomats from around the world will have the opportunity to ask questions — some of which have already been submitted.

One question by the US — which is leading demands for Beijing to come clean — says: "Can China clarify the basis for its apparent criminalization of peaceful religious practices as justification to detain people

in these political 're-education' camps in Xinjiang, as well as which officials are responsible for this policy?"

Britain has asked when China will implement a UN racial discrimination panel's recommendation that it "halt the practice of detaining individuals who have not been lawfully charged, tried, and convicted for a criminal offence in any extra-legal detention facilities".

The US and Germany have requested UN access to Xinjiang and Tibet to investigate allegations of mass detention and restrictions on religious freedoms.

## Iranian marchers chant 'Death to America'



Iranian protesters burn an effigy of the US president placed on huge prints of US 100 dollar banknote images during a demonstration outside the former US embassy in the capital Tehran on Sunday. AFP

**DUBAI:** Iranians chanting "Death to America" rallied on Sunday to mark both the anniversary of the seizure of the US Embassy during the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the imminent reimposition of US sanctions on Iran's oil sector.

Thousands of students in the government-organised rally in the capital Tehran, broadcast live by state television, burned the Stars and Stripes, an effigy of Uncle Sam and pictures of President Donald Trump outside the leafy downtown compound that once housed the US mission.

Hardline students stormed the embassy on November 4, 1979 soon after the fall of the US-backed Shah, and 52 Americans were held hostage there for 444 days.

The two countries have been enemies, on opposite sides of Middle East conflict, ever since.

Iranian state media claimed millions turned out for rallies in most cities and towns around the country, swearing allegiance to the clerical establishment and its headline top authority, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Rallies

replete with "Death to America" chants are staged on the embassy takeover anniversary every year.

But US-Iranian rancour is especially strong this time round following Trump's decision in May to withdraw the US from world powers' 2015 nuclear deal with Iran and reimpose sanctions on Tehran.

The deal brought about the lifting of most international financial and economic sanctions on Iran in return for Tehran curbing its disputed nuclear activity under U.N. surveillance. **Reuters**

## By-poll results 'a lesson' for Suu Kyi

**YANGON, REUTERS:** Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) expects to have won only seven of 13 seats up for grabs in by-elections, a spokesman said on Sunday, conceding that Myanmar's ruling party needed to do more for voters from ethnic minorities.

The polls, held on Saturday, will not alter the balance of power but were seen as an early test ahead of a general election in 2020.

Nobel laureate Suu Kyi promised to make ending the country's decades-old ethnic conflicts her government's top priority, but peace talks have stalled and fighting has intensified.

"We lost five out of six seats in ethnic areas. Ethnic people are not satisfied with our performance on the peace process," said NLD spokesman Myo Nyunt, sharing the party's understanding of the results ahead of an official announcement by the election commission.

"This result is a lesson for us. We will come up with a strategy for each constituency for the coming election."

Suu Kyi has led Myanmar's civilian administration since winning a majority in both houses of parliament in 2015 elections that ended decades of military rule.

But she must share power with the army, which automatically takes 25% of parliamentary seats under a military-drafted constitution. Saturday's polls included seats in state and regional legislatures, as well as the national parliament in the capital, Naypyitaw. **Reuters**

### Trump versus Obama

After boasting about the economy and raising fears over immigration, US President Donald Trump is facing pushback from his predecessor Barack Obama, who is taking on an increasingly prominent role in the final weekend of campaigning before midterm elections in which Republican control of Congress is threatened, AFP reports.

With rallies taking place in Montana and Florida, a state he had already visited on Wednesday, Trump is

keeping up his relentless campaign schedule before Tuesday's ballot, which has become a referendum on his utterly unconventional presidency.

The campaigning comes one week after a gunman, who allegedly hated immigrants and Jews, killed 11 people at a synagogue in Pittsburgh, and after a fanatical Trump supporter was arrested in Florida on charges of mailing homemade bombs to more than a dozen Trump opponents, including Obama.

### Over 30 dead in Italy storms

Floods killed 12 people on the island of Sicily, including nine members of a single family, pushing Italy's week-long storm toll beyond 30, rescuers said Sunday, AFP reports from Casteldaccia (Italy).

After a river burst its banks, the bodies of the family including children aged one, three and 15, were discovered in the town of Casteldaccia in the Palermo region.

Their house was near a small river which had burst its banks, rescue services said.

The other victims' ages ranged from 32 to 65.

Three family members managed to escape, one by climbing a tree, the Agi news agency reported.

"I lost everything. I have nothing left, just my daughter," one of the survivors, 35-year-old Giuseppe Giordano, told journalists.

His wife, two other children, his parents, brother, and sister all died, he said.

After flying over Casteldaccia on Sunday, Sicilian prosecutor Ambrogio Cartosio described scenes of "total disaster".

### 19 jihadist suspects killed

Nineteen suspected jihadists linked to a deadly attack on Coptic Christians in central Egypt have been killed in a shootout with police, the interior ministry said Sunday, AFP reports from Cairo (Egypt).

Those killed in the exchange of fire were part of a cell that led dead seven pilgrims in Friday's attack in Minya province, a statement by the ministry said.

"The terrorist elements opened fire on the (security) forces who responded," the statement said.

The 19 suspected jihadists were found "as part of a pursuit of terrorist elements involved in carrying out hostile operations in the country, including the last armed attack which targeted citizens returning from the Saint Samuel monastery", the ministry said.



Pakistani vendors carry cotton candy as they ride on a bicycle along a street in Lahore on Sunday. AFP

## Editorial

## Statue of divisive politics

The 182-metre, Rs 3,000 crore statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, dedicated to the nation by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Gujarat last week, has been presented to the country as India's 'Statue of Unity'. It is the tallest statue in the world and was completed in four years. The statue was conceived as a monument to Patel, independent India's first deputy prime minister and home minister. He was a great administrator and was known as the 'iron man' who integrated the country by merging the native states into a union. There is no need for some bronze to reinforce Patel's name in people's memory, and the statue now rises to the sky as a symbol of divisive politics and wasteful spending. No-one from other parties was invited to the function, only BJP leaders and workers attended it. National unity can well be more inclusive.

The BJP has been trying to create a pantheon for itself by appropriating freedom fighters and national leaders like Gandhi, Patel, Subhash Chandra Bose and Baba Saheb Ambedkar. The appropriation is done by misinterpreting and misrepresenting their ideas, public positions and activities. The BJP's intellectual and



Idea was to honour Patel as BJP needs him to be

political predecessors had bitterly opposed Gandhi, but it praises him now. The party has put Patel on a very high pedestal because, apart from being from Gujarat, he can be presented as a counterweight to Jawaharlal Nehru, whom the BJP loves to demonise. But Patel and Nehru were not rivals, they actually admired and complemented each other. Patel was always a staunch Congress man. His idea of national unity was different from the BJP's and, as home minister, he banned the RSS after Gandhi's assassination. But the party has built a politics around Patel.

So, the idea behind erecting the statue is not to commemorate Patel as he was, but to create an image of the leader that the BJP desperately needs. It is an unreal and invented image. Modi might also like to be identified in the public mind with it. It is true that Patel suffered from some neglect. No-one would grudge him his place in history but it is not right to create a new Patel and erect a statue for him for the wrong reasons. India's map, the map that he himself helped create, is the best memorial for him. Gandhi is also from Gujarat, but he has not been considered for a statue. The question whether it is right to spend Rs 3,000 crore on a statue is also relevant. Even if so much money was to be spent on Patel's memory, there were better and more useful ways of spending it.

## Sikkim shows the organic way

The conferment of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation's (FAO) Future Policy Gold award on Sikkim is a mark of recognition of the state's creditable achievements in the field of agro-ecology and sustainable development. The state won the honour because of its status as a fully organic state. It became fully organic in January 2016 and has maintained that status ever since. The FAO award, considered to be the Oscar in its area, is given for implementation of laws and policies that promote agro-ecology. Sikkim won the award beating 51 other nominees, including Brazil, Denmark and Quito, which shared the silver prize. The FAO statement said that "Sikkim is the first organic state in the world with all its farmland certified organic," and its "approach has proven truly transformational for the state and its citizens."

Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, who received the award, had launched the state on the organic path in 2003 and achieved success against many odds. The sale and use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides were gradually phased out and subsidies for them stopped. Villages were designated as bio-villages and vermiculture hatcheries and greenhouses were set up. Farmers were given training and organic farming lessons were introduced in the school curriculum. New types of bio-manure and pest control methods were developed by farmers, tapping into indigenous knowledge. Farmers became more aware of the nature and needs of their soil. That improved soil health. Action plans were developed for specific ecosystems and the right crops were selected. New kinds of labelling and marketing of produce were adopted. Production improved with economies of scale coming into play, and there were other benefits, like increased tourism.

Sikkim is a small state with a population of just over six lakh people. That does not make its achievement any less creditable. The programme was very challenging but it has now become a people's programme. The state has not yet become self-sufficient in food, partly because it concentrated on crops most suited for its soil and best for exports as high-value organic food. The Sikkim story should inspire other states to follow its example. Unfortunately, it has not been noticed widely enough and has not attracted enough attention in our vitiated and distracted times. Its experience may hold lessons for other states that want to follow the organic path. But each state has a different agricultural and economic environment, challenges and needs. Plans suitable for particular states and regions can be developed and implemented if there is a will and commitment to make agriculture natural and sustainable. The positive impact on health and welfare can well be imagined.



This should inspire other states to emulate Sikkim

## MODI MEETS ABE MEETS XI

## Asia's tangled triangle

India and Japan are concerned over Chinese assertiveness; Trump's trade policies are pushing Tokyo and Beijing closer

Rajaram Panda

Two summits with three major nations in Asia involved and with Japan as the fulcrum provides a good setting to examine the unfolding geopolitical churn in Asia. Shinzo Abe made a rare trip to Beijing on October 23, the first by a Japanese prime minister since 2011, to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping. Upon his return to Japan, he hosted Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The overriding, if hidden, concern was, how to manage China's increasing assertiveness in regional issues.

While the core of the Abe-Xi discussion was on sharing mutual concerns and interests, what emerged on the surface was how to get Japan involved in Xi's pet Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Seeking to deepen economic relations was the logical common ground as both nations have come under US pressure on trade. Since President Donald Trump has levied tariffs on imports from both China and Japan, accusing both of unfair trade practices, finding ways to cope with Trump's America dominated the discussion. In fact, the trade war seemed to have hastened Abe's China visit. The situation presented China to seek an ally in Japan.

Does it mean that Japan has stopped worrying about China's brazen expansionist design and increasing assertiveness in regional issues, besides territorial disputes over the Senkaku islands? From all indicators, this is not the case. Japan is aware that the BRI project has come under severe criticism, with many countries either summarily cancelling or downgrading the scale of projects and others starting to review their participation, as fears of falling into a Chinese debt trap rise. Yet, Japan has hesitatingly agreed to participate in BRI with a view to 'manage' China.

In contrast to the adversarial relations between Japan and China, relations between India and Japan are robust and devoid of either the shadow of history or any strong irritant. In fact, there is plenty of warmth and goodwill earned over history. There are no negatives, only opportunities.

This was the fifth annual summit be-

tween Modi and Abe and their 12th meeting since 2014. Besides bilateral issues, the two leaders discussed regional and global issues, including the situation in the Indo-Pacific region. Those discussions reaffirmed the bonds of friendship between the two countries and strengthened their multi-faceted cooperation in diverse fields. Their meeting will advance the vision of both countries to work together in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.



Prior to Modi's visit, in an interaction at the Brookings India think-tank, Japanese envoy Kenji Hiramatsu had observed that strengthening of defence and trade ties would top the agenda. As it transpired, strengthening maritime cooperation, including the signing of the Mutual Logistical Support Agreement, was one of the main agendas. Japan has evinced greater cooperation between the navies of the two countries on maritime domain awareness and security issues. The two sides agreed to have greater defence equipment and technology cooperation, including joint research activities on unmanned vehicles and robotics. For the first time, the armies of the two countries will hold a joint military drill in Mizoram in November, while Japan will be an observer at the India-US 'Cope India' air force exercise.

On defence procurement, India has expressed interest in buying Japan's Soryu class submarine. At present, the Japanese government is discussing this possibility with the private sector. There is no decision yet on collaborating with India for the project. The two sides also discussed India's interest in buying the US-2 amphibious aircraft and some progress is expected in due course.

One driver of expanding India-Japan cooperation in the defence and maritime domain between is China's increasing military footprint in the region and the perceived threat to the sovereignty of smaller neighbouring countries. The fear of China's assertiveness disturbing regional stability, including the global commons, is drawing closer those countries that respect global rules of law and freedom of navigation.

The bonhomie that Abe and Modi share has also helped in lifting the relationship further. It may be recalled that Modi chose Japan among the first nations to visit after taking power four years ago. He has been urging countries in the Indo-Pacific region to unite against protectionism and cross-border tensions.

## Common adversary

Interestingly, the three major Asian nations — China, Japan and India — have come under President Trump's protectionist onslaught, providing an opportunity for the three to work out economic strategies in their mutual interests. In particular, Trump's policies have targeted mostly China with tariffs. Trump has also accused Japan and other nations of unfair trade practices, pushing Delhi and Tokyo to promote their economic ties.

Abe has made bolstering and opening up the nation's economy central to his policies, called 'Abenomics', and has encouraged trade, foreign investment and tourism. Although the US remains Japan's main ally, especially in defence, Abe is courting other ties. He has also been vocal about free trade, which runs counter to Trump's move to raise tariffs. This background provides an ideal opportunity for Japan to expand and deepen economic cooperation by increasing investment in Indian projects. Japan's assistance in building a super-fast railway system may be seen in this light.

Two other takeaways from Modi's visit are India and Japan initiating a 2+2 dialogue involving the countries' foreign and defence ministers and entering into a \$75 billion bilateral currency swap agreement. While upgrading the institutional framework from secretary to ministerial level will help build a robust mechanism on the Indo-Pacific strategy, the currency swap agreement is expected to bring stability in foreign exchange and capital markets in the country. Being one of the largest swap arrangements in the world, it reflects the depth of the economic relationship between the two countries.

(The writer is Lok Sabha Research Fellow, Parliament of India)

## RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

## A moonlit memory

The girls came in simple frocks and broad smiles, with hair tightly plaited...

Sabita Prasad

In the late 1960s, remembering one's birthday was unheard of, let alone celebrating it! But I had the privilege of enjoying such a celebration, and being the youngest in the family came with the fringe benefit of being the first to have such a celebration, albeit a small and simple one. And here's how that happened!

I was born on a full moon day and my mother suddenly had this idea to make it a moonlit affair to keep me merry on this eventful day. So that evening, she gathered us all on the rooftop of our small and pristine home to indulge in snacks followed by dinner.

This involved carrying up the stairs the charpoy, plates, glasses and all the sundry items needed to party on the rooftop. Oh, how I enjoyed clambering up and down, and finally putting out the

delightful spread. And the snack spread consisted of homemade chips, kheer and kodbudalae (ring murukku), and Mysore pak thrown in as a savoury sweet. There were no plastic plates or throw away cups and spoons, no cake to cut or blow the candle, or getting smeared with creamy vanilla all over my face!

The simple yet stupendous event had the presence of my siblings and parents, of course; but on the invited list were my friends who played with me every evening a variety of games like hopscotch. Other games I must recall are lagori and hide-and-seek. The girls came in simple frocks and broad smiles, with hair tightly plaited in two pig tails. We played and as the moon peeped through the clouds, they were offered the delicious savouries which they began to gorge on with delight. The gifts, if they came at all, were profound and giving away return gifts was unheard of!

We jumped with glee on the terrace under the magic of the moon even as the scintillating smell of the surrounding jasmynes filled our nostrils and each flower glowed like a little white star in the

dazzling night light. We were, of course, unaware of all this then! Now you may ask, "Why did this bygone bonhomie come out of the closet and float out of the memory bank now?"

Well, there are two reasons. The first came about when a small book fell on me while clearing my cupboard of books. It had yellowed with time and had worn out, but surprisingly, the title of the book smiled back at me. It was one of Enid Blyton's *Famous Fives* series, which was gifted to me on that eventful moonlit birthday that threw open a floodgate of memories and along with it absolute tranquillity, urging me to create this piece!

The second reason was my birthday that celebrated recently. It was to honour my new status of being promoted to a senior citizen. Surrounded by loved ones, it was indeed memorable, and it came with all the paraphernalia that a birthday of today brings. Though this brought me immense joy, it was nothing compared to the euphoria of the bygone birthday celebrated on the rooftop under the moonlit night, with bubbly and energetic maidens many decades ago!

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Sabarimala: BJP playing politics of identity

Sir, Apropos "Ayodhya of South for BJP" (*DH*, Sunday Spotlight), the way the BJP is using the Sabarimala shrine verdict and its aftermath to incite protests in Kerala indicates identity politics. In the wake of its failure to deliver development and governance outcomes, the BJP is playing the religion card with an eye on electoral gains in the 2019 elections. However, it is important to see how the voters of Kerala respond to this electoral move of the BJP and its tactics to use religion for Balkanizing the voters share.

## Sunny-side up

Sir, Apropos "Protest fizzles out, Sunny enralls B'luru" (*DH*, Nov 4), the protest against actor Sunny Leone by self-styled Kannada activists is totally uncalled for, illogical and unethical. After all, what's their locus standi? Who are these people to decide who should perform where or act in what or certify someone's character? The terms Kannada, Cauvery, Karnataka, etc are liberally used by self-centred outfits unmindful of the disrepute they heap on the peace loving and hospitable people of this State. **PRABHU HARLE**, Bengaluru

## Cold-blooded murder

Sir, Apropos "Avni, maneater of Maharashtra, shot dead" (*DH*, Nov 4), the state-sponsored killing of tigress Avni

has immensely pained animal-rights activists who had long been pleading for her capture along with her two young cubs and their safe relocation. The state government has obviously succumbed to demands from capitalists for allocation of the mineral-rich land falling in the territory of the tigress. Avni paid the ultimate price for pursuing her survival instincts. **KAMAL LADDHA**, Bengaluru

## A bombshell

Sir, Apropos "SC verdict on firecrackers: Sivakasi feels the heat" (*DH*, Nov 4), the recent SC verdict on firecrackers has come as a bombshell for lakhs of employees engaged in its making in Sivakasi. With cracker manufacturers in the dark on what is meant by green crackers and how to produce them, the authorities need to come out with

guidelines and ensure that the workers are not robbed of their livelihood. **N J RAVI CHANDER**, Bengaluru

## Welcome initiative

Sir, Apropos "Now, diary for government school students too" (*DH*, Nov 4), this is a welcome decision by the DPI. This will enable communication between teachers and parents about the wards and help monitor attendance, academic progress and inculcate discipline. **V N SUBRAMANYAM**, Bengaluru

## More letters on 'Net Mail' at www.deccanherald.com

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## SPEAK OUT



"Light a diya in the name of Lord Ram, because it (Ram temple) will happen very soon. It is time to make it a reality."

YOGI ADITYANATH, Uttar Pradesh CM

The highest revelation is that God is in every man.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

## IN PERSPECTIVE

## How to revive Indian universities

Start an all-India Teaching Service, build university-schools, varsity-industry linkages

Lalit Kumar

What one does between the completion of MA and getting a job is called research... Moreover, most of the research papers state the same thing in a thousand different ways," wrote the acclaimed Hindi satirist Harishankar Parsai in *Research Ke Chakkhar Mein*. Lal Shukla, in his celebrated novel *Raag Darbari* called research "ghaas khodana", or digging up the grass. These remarks succinctly capture how our society at large perceives research — as a leisurely activity, an act of squandering time and resources.

The failure of Indian universities to secure a spot even in the top 250 on the list of Times Higher Education World University Rankings, therefore, does not come as a surprise. The abysmal rankings have become, in fact, an anticipated annual ritual and a foregone conclusion. However, what is worrisome is that the state of education in a country that was once the land of the most ancient and excellent universities in the world — Takshashila, Nalanda, Vikramshila and Vallabhi — has been reduced to such a degenerated level. In 1193, when Bakhtiyar Khilji burnt down these centres of excellence, mainly Nalanda and Vikramshila, the University of Oxford was in its infancy and the University of Cambridge was not yet born.

In India, the British are credited with having started universities in the modern sense of the term. Ever since they started universities in Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta in 1857, these centres could match neither their ancient Indian counterparts nor their contemporary British equivalents. The two British universities — Oxford and Cambridge — are consistently among the top universities on the Times list.

The number of international students studying there ranges 35-38%, whereas in premier Indian institutions, like IISc, the IITs and the University of Delhi, international students make up 1% or less of the student population. Oxford and Cambridge universities have also consistently done exceptionally well on mainly two fronts: research quality and research income per academic staff member. Our performance on these two counts — consistently low.

The indicators used by Times Higher Education are grouped into five areas — teaching, research, citations, international outlook and industry outcome. To improve on these indicators, we need to begin with two simple but gigantic steps: eradication of corruption in faculty appointments, and massive investment on building world-class infra-

structure in the universities. The recent announcement by PM Narendra Modi to spend Rs 1 lakh crore on revitalising infrastructure in the next four years is thus a much-needed initiative.

This must be accompanied by a slew of other important measures. The government may constitute an All-India Teaching Service (ITS) to attract the brightest minds to academics and to weed out corruption and nepotism. The selection of candidates can be done along the lines of that for the All-India Services conducted by the Union Public Service Commission.

The candidates thus selected through a rigorous method of examination should undergo training in teaching, research and administration for a year before they are inducted into the system. Currently, teaching is one of the few professions in which one has the enormous responsibility of building future leaders, without themselves having any training to do so.

The government also needs to initiate collaboration between universities and industries earnestly and urgently. This will have two benefits. One, universities will begin to perform better on the indicator of research income per academic staff member. Two, scholars from the Sciences will be able to directly contribute to the 'Make in India' initiative. Their efforts, combined with the management skills of the social scientists, will help bridge the gap between academic knowledge and industrial output.

Scholars from the literature departments, on the other hand, should be encouraged to translate the vast repository of learning from ancient and medieval India. We need to start translation centres in every university to translate texts from Persian, Sanskrit and other Indian languages into English and vice versa so that India's rich and diverse cultural heritage may be preserved and presented to the world. We also have an obligation to translate books on management, medicine, architecture, commerce and related disciplines from English into Indian languages for those who are not conversant with English.

One must add here that we can never have 'Institutions of Eminence' in the true sense at the university level without strengthening our primary and secondary education system. We need to develop various centres of excellence and eminence at the school level, to begin with.

Universities and colleges must collaborate with and adopt one government school each from their vicinity and give them innovative pedagogical tools. Several research scholars may contribute to this exercise of laying a strong foundation for students at an early stage. After Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), it is time to think of Academic Social Responsibility (ASR) to restore the lost glory of Takshashila and Nalanda. (The writer teaches English at Deen Dayal Upadhyaya College, University of Delhi)

## OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 years ago: November 5, 1968

CWC fails to find formula for total Prohibition

prohibition throughout the country during the Gandhi centenary year.

Panaji, Nov 4. Despite a marathon session lasting 150 minutes, the Congress Working Committee failed to evolve a compromise formula in respect of the controversial question of total

The exchanges were frequently heated and it was in a measure of the wide divergence of views that the committee decided to hold on unscheduled meeting tomorrow to work out a consensus.

25 years ago: November 5, 1993

'Ignore Seshan's fiats': Krishnamurthy

Chief Election Commissioner T N Seshan, and other officials, about the possibility of prosecution for "disobeying" the Ordinance enlarging the Election Commission, even as he and another commissioner, M S Gill, overturned some of Seshan's decisions.

New Delhi, Nov 4. In an unprecedented action of far reaching legal consequences, the newly appointed election commissioner, G V G Krishnamurthy warned the

# Google's travel tools know what you do next summer

Google has launched travel-focused features and updates that highlight the intuitive AI technology, writes **Nikki Ekstein**

In the world of luxury travel, two superpowers currently prevail above all: personalisation and intuition. The better a hotel, app, or travel company can respond to users' needs and desires—and ideally, predict them before they bubble up to the surface—the more likely they are to gain a loyal following.

But it's not a hotel or travel agency that's cracking the golden acorn. It's Google. The tech titan is leveraging its immense artificial intelligence and machine-learning capabilities to boost its travel offerings, which currently cover everything from flight and hotel search to activity recommendations, destination guides, and mapping services.

Travel tech expert Gillian Morris, founder of airfare search app Hitlist, says this is a space in which Google is uniquely positioned to succeed. "One reason why it's so hard to innovate and give satisfying experiences in the travel industry is that companies rarely know anything about you; you don't log in to Kayak or Expedia so that they can learn what you like," she explains. "Personalisation is difficult when you don't have a clear picture of the traveler. But Google has so much info through your email, flight confirmations—everything—they actually can deliver that magical trip experience."

The proof is in the pudding. Over the past few months, Google has quietly launched an array of travel-focused features and updates that highlight just how intuitive its AI technology has become. Put them all together and you'll have enough reason to believe your next travel agent might just be a Google-powered bot.

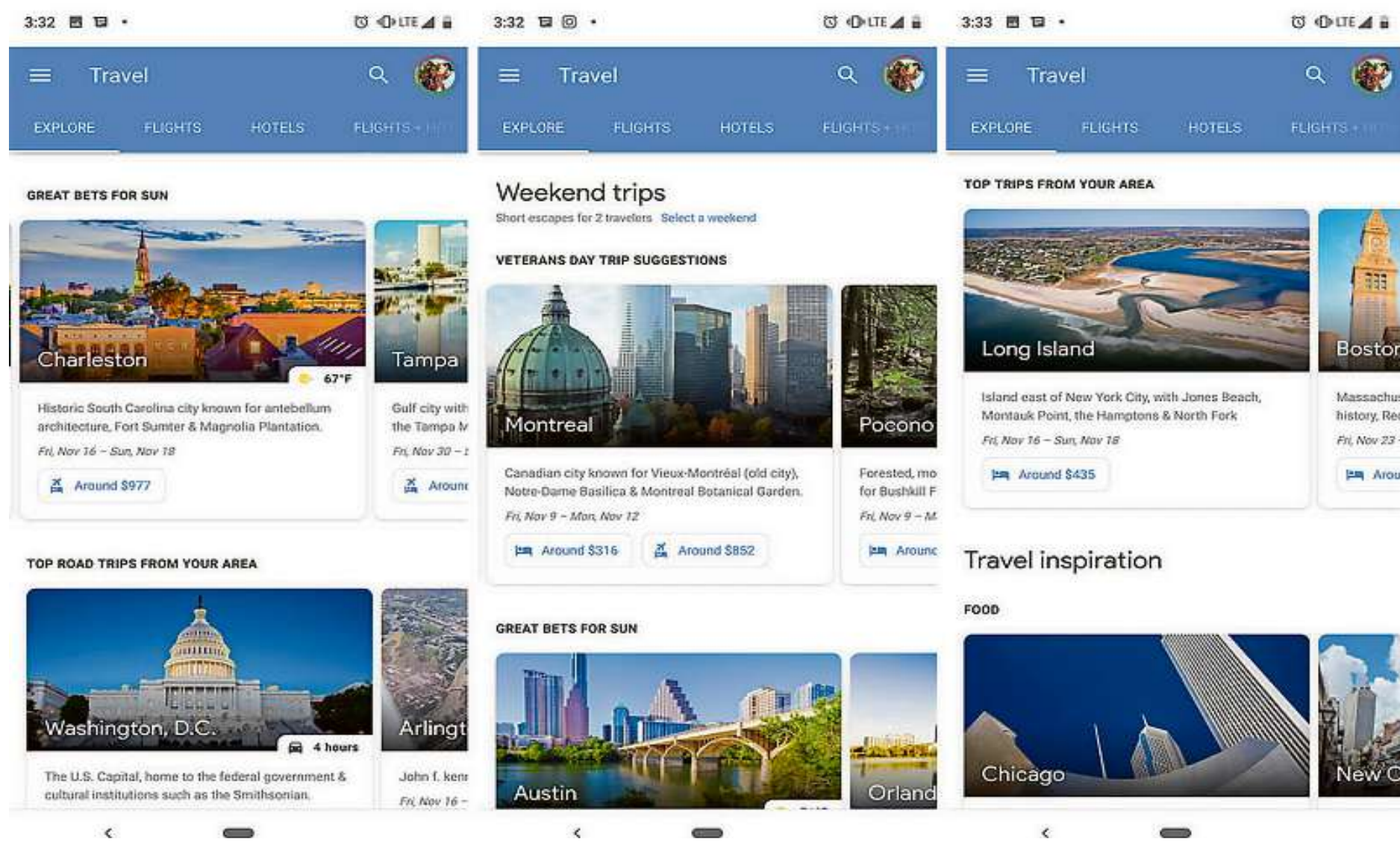
Here, the game-changing features to look for—or hide from, if you're more concerned with privacy than being an early adopter.

## Potential trips

No matter what your search, Google is watching. (And if you use a voice assistant such as Google Home, it might also be listening.) But what feel like random, daydream-inspired searches—"best tacos in Mexico City," maybe, or "how to do yoga on horseback"—offer excellent clues that tell Google where you might be interested in going next.

Now the engine is using those searches to file away "Potential Trips," folders with information about hotels, restaurants, and activities you've previously researched in specific destinations.

"If you've recently started looking at hotels or activities in Los Angeles but



BLOOMBERG

haven't booked anything yet, we will organise this information in Your Trips, along with destination-specific searches, tracked flights (if you have any), and more tips," explains Richard Holden, Google's vice president of product management, who says the tool will help travelers pick up where they left off if their travel plans are delayed. "We want users to consider this as their travel bucket list, and now when they search, they can easily access and leverage any research they've done to date related to a destination," he says.

**How to use it:** For now, it's a bit cumbersome to find your potential trips. They're not saved within an app such as Inbox or accessible from an easy-to-reach dropdown menu on Chrome. You have to manually type this URL into your mobile browser: [google.com/travel/trips](https://google.com/travel/trips). Click on any of the destinations you've researched and you'll find your recent search queries, Google's travel guide to the destination, and any routes you might be tracking on Google Flights. Once you book, the whole folder moves to a separate heading called "Upcoming Trips," where all your reservations are centralised and viewable in itinerary form.

## Match scores

Thanks to partnerships with culinary-focused websites such as Zagat and Infatuation, Google knows a lot about restaurants: everything from how crowded or noisy they might be to how they resonate with particular dietetic needs. And it's constantly stringing together

patterns about what you like, based on where you've gone in the past. Enter the Match Score, which combines all that intel to predict how likely you are to enjoy a particular place. It launched in May and is currently restricted to restaurants, but it could potentially expand to venues such as hotels.

**How to use it:** Find your match score by expanding a venue listing in Google Maps—it appears as a percentage rating next to a circular logo, right next to the overall star rating that you've always known to look for.

**Want to make it smarter?** Head to your preferences settings; here, you can teach Google all about your favourite food types, whether that means "notable coffee" or "Scandinavian" or "Kosher." (The options can be found under Settings > Exploring Places > Food and Drink on Android, or Settings > Food and Drink on iPhone.)

Another way to train Google's algorithm is to "save" places on Google Maps—it shows the tool what most interests you. Do that by clicking the bookmark icon on any listing. Then, when you're in Explore mode on Maps, you'll see a growing number of personalised recommendations in a tab called "For You," which works in any city, no matter where you go.

Want to disable all this instead? Turn off Location History.

## Predictive flight delay notifications

If you use a Gmail address to confirm your

flight bookings, Google has a clear sense of when you're traveling—and where. Since it also has access to such things as Federal Aviation Authority data, historic flight-status data, and geo-positional aircraft data, it can also tell you whether those plans are on the verge of being delayed.

"Our models can come up with incredibly accurate predictions," Holden said recently during a panel discussion at Skift Forum, an annual travel conference. "We're getting a lot of customers telling us that we're notifying them before the carrier or anyone else."

**How to use it:** The most important step is using a Gmail address so that Google can be alerted to your flight confirmations and track them accordingly.

Then, in the days and hours leading up to your flight, simply type "My Flight" or the actual flight number into your browser; you'll see status updates that are more up-to-the-minute than anywhere else.

## Travel deals

Most of the websites that sell airfare—Expedia, Kayak—make it a priority to steer travelers toward packaged deals whose flight and hotel prices are bundled. How can you tell if you're really getting a discount?

"There's no transparency on this type of data. Travelers don't know where to go to compare component pricing and package deals side by side, and we want to help with that," Holden told the audience.

**Google's solution:** In certain markets, which currently include Germany and the US, it has rolled out a feature that highlights bundled travel deals alongside a la carte pricing.

Looking for a place to go over the upcoming Veteran's Day holiday weekend, for example?

At a glance, Google will tell you that a flight from New York to Montreal that weekend costs \$239 round trip and a three-star hotel will run \$409 for four nights; together, it's \$648.

That speaks to Google's broader goals with this tool and all the others it's introduced.

As Holden put it, "We provide comprehensive information and surface relevant insights to assist travelers and reduce stress in the decision-making process. What we want is to make travel easier."

**How to use it:** In the Google app on your phone, head to either [google.com/travel](https://google.com/travel) or [google.com/flights](https://google.com/flights).

On either page, you'll see a menu across the top of your screen that includes such options as "Flights" and "Hotels."

Choose "Explore" and you'll get a tailored selection of package trips, highlighting the next long weekend you might have off; top road trips from your area; or great bets for midwinter sun.

## Bloomberg

(Disclaimer: This article first appeared on [bloomberg.com/asia](https://www.bloomberg.com/asia), and is published by special arrangement.)



FILE PHOTO: A Mastercard logo is seen on a credit card in this illustration. REUTERS

## Mastercard will store your data locally in India after new laws

Aditya Kalra

Global card payments giant Mastercard is storing its new Indian transaction data locally, the company said recently, as it starts to comply with a regulatory directive which US companies unsuccessfully lobbied hard to dilute.

The Indian central bank in April said companies such as Mastercard, Visa and American Express will from October need to store their payments data "only in India" so that the regulator could have "unfettered supervisory access".

The directive sparked an aggressive lobbying effort from US companies who said the rules would increase their infrastructure costs, hit their global fraud detection platforms and affect planned investments in India where more and more people are using digital modes of payments.

The companies had sought dilution of the central bank directive, requesting they be allowed to store data both locally and at their offshore offices, a practice widely known as "data mirroring". But their requests were declined.

Mastercard has started storing all its new payments transaction data in India at its technology centre in the western city of Pune, the company said. It did not specify whether a copy of that data was still being stored abroad.

The company said it has submitted a proposal with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for "storage of data only in India within a specified timeframe". It did not give a timeline.

Visa too has started storing a copy of its new transaction data locally and had sought time from the RBI to comply with the requirement to store Indian data only within the country, two industry sources said.

Visa and American Express did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

## RBI push

The RBI directive was part of a wider push by India to ask companies to store more of their data locally at a time when governments globally are enforcing more stringent rules to protect user data.

Government sources have previously told Reuters that stringent data localisation measures were essential for gaining easier access to data during criminal and other investigations.

Two US senators this month called on Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to soften India's stance on data localisation, warning that measures requiring it represent "key trade barriers" between the two nations.

Other than the RBI proposal, India is working on an overarching data protection law that calls for the storing of all critical personal data in India. Ecommerce and cloud computing policies are also being developed. REUTERS

# Spotting disinformation online before elections

Kevin Roose

How do *New York Times* journalists use technology in their jobs and in their personal lives? Kevin Roose, a technology columnist in New York who has been writing about disinformation online, discussed the tech he's using.

## As a technology columnist, what are some of your favourite tech tools for work?

For work, I use a company-issued MacBook Pro. I hate, hate, hate the keyboard on it, so I sometimes use an external keyboard, which makes me look incredibly cool at the coffee shop.

But my only other option is using my MacBook Air, which is about seven years old, runs out of hard drive space every time I use it and has a battery life of maybe 20 minutes.

A few years ago, I got hacked really badly. (It was my own fault—I was hosting a TV show about tech and volunteered to have a few professional hackers attack me, as an experiment.) As a result, I'm pretty paranoid. I use physical security keys, VPNs, an encrypted email provider, and half a dozen secure texting apps to communicate with sources and colleagues.

I know I should be using to-do apps and bullet journaling, but I'm still pretty old school about taking notes.

I carry a little brown Field Notes notebook in my shirt pocket, and I write down everything that could possibly be of interest—story ideas, errands to run, people I need to call, words I want to look up—in my atrocious chicken-scratch handwriting,

in no particular order. When I fill up a notebook, I add it to a big pile on my bookshelf. I'm excited to reread them all when I'm old and nostalgic, and see some indecipherable interview notes along with 46 pages of "CALL WAGRENS."

When I really need to get work done, I use an app called SelfControl, which blocks my access to certain potentially distracting websites for a set period of time.

Mine is set to block Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Reddit, and I usually set it for two or three hours at a time.

I also bought noise-canceling headphones this year, because my colleagues, God love them, are always talking on the phone with their sources. I'm pretty into a Spotify playlist called Focus Flow, which is perfect for drowning out their lovely, incessant yakking.

## What are some of the trade-offs of using this tech?

I like taking physical notes because I retain information better when it's written on actual paper. The downside is that I spend a lot of time scrambling around my apartment looking for the notebook I left in a jacket pocket or under the sofa.

There's also a definite trade-off between security and convenience. I probably spend 30% of my day typing in two-factor authentication codes. But I sleep better than I used to.

**You've been covering the spread of online disinformation in the run-up to the mid-term elections. What is your advice for spotting disinformation? What tools do you use to do that?**  
A lot of spotting disinformation is hang-



The app SelfControl, which Kevin Roose uses to help himself focus by blocking potentially distracting websites, in New York. Roose, who has been writing about disinformation online, discussed the tech he's using. INVT

ing out in the right places. I spend a fair amount of time on Reddit and 4chan and in private Facebook groups where a lot of hoaxes and viral rumors tend to originate. I also rely on tips from our readers, who have been submitting hundreds of examples of disinformation from their own feeds. And Twitter (deep, heaving

sigh) is useful, too. Recently, I've also been spending a lot of time on Crowdtangle, a tool that allows you to see what's spreading rapidly across Facebook at any given moment. (Crowdtangle used to be an independent company, but Facebook bought it in 2016.)

I have a series of dashboards set up

that allow me to monitor thousands of Facebook pages on different topics and see which false claims are being shared by which people and pages.

## What kind of election-related tech shenanigans have you seen recently?

There have been a fair number of shenan-

igans on social media this cycle—things like coordinated influence campaigns, fake Facebook ads, and hacking attempts on campaigns and think tanks. We've also seen new forms of disinformation, including the spreading of false claims over peer-to-peer texting apps.

## What are you doing to combat those annoying robotexts?

I actually haven't gotten that many political robotexts. I do get frequent robotexts from a Caribbean restaurant in Queens, which I've never been to but whose promotional list I somehow got on.

## Outside of work, what tech product are you obsessed with?

I cook a lot, and I'm still pretty into my Instant Pot.

I've also been working on my sleep recently, which is very Arianna Huffington of me. Recently, I bought a \$15 noise machine on Amazon, which is a little hockey-puck-size speaker that has six or seven settings. You can fill your bedroom with jungle noises, or ocean waves, or crickets on a summer night. It's phenomenal.

On the recommendation of several friends, I also bought a gravity blanket, which is weighted down with heavy beads. It's meant for people with anxiety, but I just like the way it sits heavy on my body and prevents me from rolling over too much at night. I have the 25-pound version.

## What could be better about it?

I wish the blankets came in heavier weights. INVT

## BJP seeks to placate saints with Ram statue

**NEW DELHI, DHNS:** Caught in a bind following the deferment of the Ayodhya case by the Supreme Court and faced with increasing demand for a Parliamentary legislation for Ram Temple construction, the BJP seeks to placate the restless saint community by erecting a huge statue of Lord Ram on the bank of the Saryu river in Ayodhya.

According to sources in the state BJP here, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath could make the announcement about the statue in Ayodhya on Tuesday during the Diwali celebrations.

The 151-ft tall statue would come up on the bank of the Saryu river, the sources said. The bids for the erecting the statue had been invited.

BJP leaders here admitted that the decision to erect the statue was aimed at placating the saint community in Ayodhya. "The saints and seers in Ayodhya want the Centre to bring a legislation in the winter session of Parliament to pave the way for Ram Temple construction," said a senior UP BJP leader told DH.

## UP teen gang-raped in ICU

**LUCKNOW, DHNS:** A minor was allegedly gang-raped while she lay on her bed in the intensive care unit (ICU) of a private hospital in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly town, about 250 km from here.

The victim, who had been admitted to the hospital after being bitten by a poisonous insect, was on oxygen as she had difficulty in breathing, according to sources here on Sunday.

The culprits, who are hospital staff, allegedly administered some sedative to the victim and blindfolded her before sexually assaulting her on Thursday, sources said.

Other patients in the ICU were unaware of the sexual assault as the victim's bed was covered by long curtains from all sides. The victim could not tell her father and others, who came to meet her at the ICU, as she was not in a condition to speak. "She tried to tell us with signs but we could not understand," said one of the family members.

The matter came to light after the victim was shifted to the general ward on Saturday.

Sources said that five hospital employees, including the ward boys, allegedly gang-raped her. A case was registered against the five accused and a hunt was launched to nab them.

## Security up as Sabarimala...

The Pathanamthitta district administration said no female pilgrim has, so far, sought permission to visit the hill shrine.

Devaswam Minister Kadakampally Surendran, while reiterating that female activists would not be allowed to use the temple as a platform to further their interests, said the government was committed to providing security to all woman pilgrims visiting the shrine. No woman aged below 50 years has entered the sannidhanam, the deity's abode, since the Supreme Court judgement.

Between October 17 and 22, when the temple was open for monthly pujas, protesters thwarted attempts by about 15 women to enter the temple.

Early on Sunday, police stopped entry of media to the base camp and beyond, but the restrictions were taken off later. By evening, media teams were stationed at Nilakkal. State Police Chief Loknath Behera said there was no ban on entry of journalists and the arrangement was in place only to ensure adequate security for mediapersons. On October 17, mediapersons including woman reporters were attacked by protesters following clashes with the police, at Nilakkal. A team of woman police personnel aged above 50 years has also been deployed as part of the security measures.

The Sree Chithira Atta Thirunal marks the birth anniversary of Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma, the erstwhile king of the royal family of Travancore.

# NSCN (IM) detain and interrogate army officer

### Questioning of 16-member team went on for 30 minutes

**Sumir Karmakar**

**GUWAHATI:** The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (IM) "detained and interrogated" a 16-member army team led by a Lt Colonel for about half-an-hour after it "trespassed" the gate of the outfit's central headquarters at Hebron in Nagaland.

A statement emailed to DH by the NSCN (IM) said the incident happened around 4.30pm on Friday when the

army team led by Lt Col Mohammad Zabiulla belonging to its signal department in its Zakhama post entered Kamdi Bazar in Peren district, where the outfit's central headquarters is situated.

"The army personnel came in 4 gypsies and trespassed the gate of central headquarters at Hebron to go towards Jalukie. However, they were stopped at the gate by the Naga Army personnel who were already alerted about the Indian Army



**Lt Col Mohammad Zabiulla.**  
PHOTO CREDIT/ NSCN (IM)

personnel moving towards the Hebron. "The Indian army personnel were detained and interrogated for about half-an-hour. "The Indian army personnel who started their journey from Rangapahar army camp claimed that they followed the direction given by the passersby and had no idea that they were to cross the central headquarters of Government of People's Republic

of Nagalim (GPRN)," said the statement. The statement said it was a violation of the ground rules of ceasefire it had signed with the government in 1997. "However, the Indian army personnel were cautioned and set free in good faith after they admitted their serious mistake," it said.

**Its own govt**

The NSCN (IM), which is in ceasefire with the Centre since 1997, runs its own government called GPRN and its central headquarters at Hebron is its power centre.

They have their armed cadre whom they call Naga Army

and move freely in the designated areas in Nagaland. The NSCN (IM) says Nagas were never part of India and have been leading an "armed battle" for protecting unique identity of the Nagas.

The NSCN (IM) signed a broad framework agreement with the government in August 2015 and is expected to sign a final agreement soon for a solution to the decades-long Naga problem.

"The GPRN wonders why the Lt Col did not coordinate with the various Indian army units stationed in and around Dimapur.

"The Indian army person-

nel could have taken the Sukhovi village route where the Indian army has its training centre to connect to Jalukie or taken the Niland route which is being used by the public due to roadblock/landslides at NH-29 near Chumukedima.

"It was a total negligence on the part of the Indian army personnel to have reached a sensitive area such as the doorstep of our central headquarters at Hebron," said the statement.

An army spokesperson, when asked by DH on Sunday, said he was not aware of such an incident yet.

**DH News Service**

## In brief



**Widows of Vrindavan celebrate Deepavali at Gopinath Temple in Vrindavan on Sunday. PTI**

## 25 women home guards harassed

As many as 25 women home guards in the Surat city of Gujarat have accused two senior officials of harassment and seeking sexual favours, prompting an inquiry, reports PTI.

The women approached city police commissioner Satish Sharma on Friday with a written complaint. Sharma said a "local complaints committee" set up under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act was looking into it.

The complaint named two senior home guard officials, alleging that the duo subjected women to "mental, physical, sexual emotional and financial harassment", and even asked sexual favours from some of them.

## Army: Pak trying to vitiate atmosphere

A day after warning that attempts were being made to "revive insurgency" in Punjab, Army Chief General Bipan Rawat Sunday accused Pakistan of trying to vitiate the atmosphere in the country, PTI reports from Nabah.

Rawat also stressed that people needed to be careful during the ongoing festival season to prevent anti-national forces from succeeding in their nefarious designs.

"See we have a neighbouring country which always tries to vitiate atmosphere here. Our country is progressing which is not liked by them," Rawat said.

## 2 suspected militants lynched

Two unidentified men, who were assaulted by a mob at Assam's Cachar district after they were found carrying arms and ammunition, have succumbed to injuries, a police officer said on Sunday, reports PTI from Silchar, Assam.

The men, suspected to be militants, were rescued by the police on Saturday evening and taken into custody from a bus stop at Harinagar in Lakhimpur sub-division of the district, he said.

They were then admitted to Silchar Medical College Hospital in a serious condition.

Cachar Superintendent of Police Rakesh Roshan said that three AK-56 rifles, one Chinese-made LMG, one 12 bore single barrel and one 5.56 mm rifles were seized from the possession of the two men.

## BSF man held for sharing info

A BSF jawan was arrested for reportedly sharing secret information such as photographs of border fencing and roads with a Pakistani agent, PTI reports quoting police.

The accused, Sheikh Riazuddin, was under the scanner of the BSF intelligence wing for his suspicious activities for the last few months, they said.

He is a resident of Renpura village in Maharashtra's Latur district and was posted with the BSF's 29th Battalion in the Ferozepur Sector in Punjab.

Two mobile-phones and seven SIM cards were seized from him.

Riazuddin reportedly shared photographs of fencing and border roads, contact numbers of senior BSF officials and some other secret information with Mirja Faisal, an agent of Pakistani spy agency ISI.

# Must bring this govt again, says Sant Samiti

**Anand Mishra**

**NEW DELHI:** The two-day Akhil Bhartiya Sant Samiti meeting on Ayodhya, which began on Saturday on a note critical of the Modi government for not fulfilling the promise on Ram temple construction, ended on Sunday with a message "this government has to be brought again."

The government has so far not given any categorical assurance as to whether it is ready to accept the "ordinance or legislation" demand of seers to begin construction of the temple at Ayodhya even as a number of BJP leaders, including Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, justified the "people's expectations on this count" from the government.

While announcing a slew of programmes to build the tempo for Ram temple, the 'Dharmadesh' meeting attended by over 3,000 Hindu seers from over 125 organisations concluded, "We are satisfied with whatever this government is doing to resolve the problems. This government has to be brought again."

At a time when the upper caste constituency of the BJP is restive and there have been media reports that incensed over the government's perceived aggressive SC/OBC pitch, they could opt NOTA option not to vote for any party in 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the Saint Samiti meeting dubbed

as "anti-national" those clamouring for NOTA.

**Gau, Ganga, Gayatri**

It said, "vote only for those who respect the cow, the Ganga and the Gayatri (Gau, Ganga aur Gayatri). NOTA is the insult of democracy. Those opting for NOTA are anti-national."

The resolution also quoted a couplet of noted Hindi poet Ramdhari Singh Dinkar to hammer home the point that history will take of note of those who remained neutral, suggesting that such people will also have to share the blame. Seer Jagatguru Ramnandacharya Hansdevacharya said that it is for the first time in last five thousand years that seers are giving 'dharmadesh'. "What else is this if not 'achche din'. Had there been any other government in place, section 144 would have been clamped here and we would have been in jail," he said recalling "earlier when Shankaracharya tried to give dharmadesh, he was sent to jail."

Training guns on previous governments (headed by Congress and other Opposition parties), he said that the past governments used to gift replica of "Tajmahal and Bible" while now the foreign delegates are gifted the Gita and the Ramayana. "What else this is if not achche din," he said.

"Achche Din" was the key poll slogan of the BJP in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls. **DH News Service**



## Snowfall throws life out of gear in Kashmir

**Zulfikar Majid**

**SRINAGAR:** Heavy snowfall in upper reaches and moderate in the plains of Kashmir brought life to a standstill for second consecutive day on Sunday with national highway remaining closed and air traffic disrupted.

The season's first major snowfall also disrupted electricity supply and hit inter-district road connectivity.

Despite administration claiming that machines had been moved out to clear snow on intra- and inter-district roads, scores of vehicles remained stuck on roads across the valley, reports said.

**Only link closed**

Srinagar-Jammu national highway, the only road link between Kashmir and rest of the country, remained closed for second consecutive day as the

## Deepavali boom for NE monsoon in TN

It will be a wet Deepavali for people in Tamil Nadu if the forecast by the IMD is anything to go by.

The department has predicted that the north-east monsoon is likely to intensify in the state between November 6 and November 8 due to a low-pressure area over the Bay of Bengal.

Tamil Nadu is heavily dependent on the NE monsoon for irrigation and drinking water purposes. The monsoon, which usually hits the TN coast by October 20, had set in more than 10 days late this year — first rains lashed the state on November 1. The Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) also warned fishermen against venturing into the sea in certain areas following the likelihood of rough seas.

264-km road has been blocked by landslides at several places on the other side of Pir Panjal mountain range, an official said.

Over 300 passengers, including dozens of security personnel, were rescued on Saturday night after they were

caught in heavy snowfall near the Jawahar tunnel on the highway.

The official said that the flight operations at Srinagar airport resumed in the afternoon after snow was cleared from runways.

The Valley witnessed snow-

fall in November for the first time since 2009 throwing life out of gear. This was fourth time since 2000 when Srinagar recorded snowfall in November. It was earlier in 2004, 2008 and 2009, reveal records available with the meteorological department.

Due to the snowfall, most parts of Kashmir reeled under darkness as the lines had snapped by the snow.

The season's first snowfall also caused extensive damage to the apple orchards in the upper reaches of south Kashmir districts of Shopian and Pulwama.

"20 to 30% of the apple production is still lying on plants. Fruit growers were waiting to supply it in this week due to upcoming Diwali festival," Bashir Ahmad Basheer, chairman of kashmir valley fruit growers association, said.

**DH News Service**

## BJP leaders have tea at SC man's house, lunch in slum

**Tabeenah Anjum**

**JAIPUR, DHNS:** As countdown for ticket distribution begins in Rajasthan ahead of the Assembly elections, BJP leaders are trying to woo voters by having lunch and dinner people from different castes.

State election in-charge and Union Minister Prakash Javadekar on Sunday visited a few houses in the slums of Jhalana, and had lunch with one of the beneficiaries of a scheme. Earlier in the day, Javadekar had tea at a SC man's house.

The gesture was part of the Booth Maha Sampark Abhiyan launched by him on Friday from the revered Govind Devji Temple in Jaipur.

Earlier, Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje also visited a person of her constituency, Jhalrapatan. According to the press note sent by the Chief Minister's Office, San-



**Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje has tea with a supporter at the latter's house. DH PHOTO**

tosh Rathore, a beneficiary of Ujjawala scheme, had invited the chief minister to have tea with her at her home in Jhalrapatan. "The chief minister went all the way from Jaipur to have tea with her," the press note said. Raje was accom-

panied by her son Dushyant Singh who is also an MP from Jhalawar-Baran.

The outreach programme of the BJP that concluded on Sunday, was meant for party workers to visit door to door in 51,000 booths in the state.

## Raman slams Cong slogan

In an attempt to dent the Congress' pro-poor plank, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Raman Singh on Sunday slammed the party saying that it doesn't have a policy to eradicate poverty.

"Congress has given slogan for Garibi Hatao (eradicate poverty) but for last 70 years, on the ground, the party did nothing as it they didn't have any policy for it," he said.

## Jaipal Reddy on TRS, BJP

Alleging a "more than tacit" alliance between Telangana's ruling party TRS and the BJP, senior Congress leader S Jaipal Reddy said on Sunday that the two parties could eventually join hands after the



**Union Minister Prakash Javadekar has lunch in a slum in Rajasthan. DH PHOTO**

"Out of the four crore voters, two crores have benefited from various schemes of the BJP government in Rajasthan. We wanted to inform the voters of this," BJP Spokesperson Satish Poonia said.

Earlier in the day, Javadekar

accompanied by state party leaders, visited Govind Devji temple and performed puja. Following his lead, BJP leaders in the state visited temples before knocking on the doors of prospective voters, seeking their votes.

## Shah asks Rahul's stand on Maoism

BJP president Amit Shah on Sunday asked Congress president Rahul Gandhi to announce his clear cut stand on the issue on Maoism. Shah was referring to the Saturday's statement of Congress leader Raj Babbar in Chhattisgarh that Maoists are revolutionaries.

To this, Shah said that revolution does not take place through bombs and guns, Milk Revolution is the real revolution where the poor get their share.