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S. J. Jadhav
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Flying cabs could be reality in 7 years: Uber

ARINDAM MAJUMDER & KARAN
CHOUDHURY

New Delhi, 6 September

Global cab aggregator Uber has shortlisted India as one of the five countries to explore the launching of Uber Elevate or a fleet of flying cabs for inter- as well as intra-city transportation.

The company has initiated the process of dialogues with everyone, starting from the government and aviation agencies such as Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and air transport infrastructure developers, in hopes of launching the service in the next seven years, Eric Allison, head of Uber Aviation Programs, said.

Unlike its cab aggregation business, where it has faced a host of regulatory issues with a number of countries including India, Uber Elevate has started working closely with the governments and aviation agencies for a smooth take-off. If things go according to plan, the company is expecting to launch its commercial operations in 2023.

"I do not know if we would build certain portions of the vehicle here but it is conceivable to train partners"

ERIC ALLISON

head of Uber Aviation Programs

The firm aims to hold flight demonstrations by 2020 in Dallas and Los Angeles in the US. From there, it plans to move to countries, including Japan, Australia, Brazil, and India. It is working with as many as five aircraft manufacturers globally to build air taxi prototypes.

"Our partners have said that we are on track. In large cities, we will have four to five sky ports and have 10 to 15 vehicles during launch. In whatever city in India we launch, we have to develop real estate partnerships. We have to work with them to prepare sky ports. I think five years is enough to do that," Allison said, adding that Elevate



A scaled model of Uber Technologies' eCRM-003, an electric vertical take-off and landing jet, is displayed during the Uber Elevated Asia Pacific Expo event in Tokyo, Japan

BLOOMBERG

would be a time-saving tool.

"The time-saving potential is huge. Congestion does not differentiate between rich and poor. I think it is important to drive this into a mass-market product. Ultimately, it will come down to how many people you can serve. The cost a mile we showed is done in US. We haven't done the analysis for

India, yet. The cost structure in India is a lot cheaper than the US," he said.

The company said they had engineered products in India that were not available in the US such as UberGo, which is cheaper in India than the UberX in the US. "I want to point out that the ride-sharing concept allows you to drive at a lower cost. So,

the capex of the vehicle does not matter much if you can operate a lot of trips. It is those types of economics which can be applied in India," Allison said.

To keep the costs down, the company is also toying with the idea of manufacturing certain portions of the vehicle in India. "I do not know if we would build it here but it is conceivable to train partners. Like a lot of other companies develop products in India for its use, it is conceivable that it can be done," Allison said. In the US, Uber has started engaging with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and flight schools on how to prepare pilots. It plans to do the same in other countries as well.

However, having UberEats delivering food via drone could still take some time, as carrying payloads via drones is not allowed in India. But Uber is hopeful. "The FAA did not allow carrying payloads but they are moving fast. I hope this is the trend other regulators will pick up," he said.

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Rohtak, more than one hundred years ago

Would you have expected irrigation and canals to lead to inferior health outcomes?



INFRA DI

BIBEK DEBROY

A word caution first. Since this column is about District Gazettars, I am going to burlesque you with a few notes I find interesting. "The mosquitoes of Gohana are said not to bite: The natives of the bite Europe; Rohtak Distri Times change when I read the role of the watch and 702 village waited villages: age of one to ciation and 20 last is double government... men is usual mensmem, but ways. Not a fr where they be custodian the little land. Th system of pr undertaken l selves and is n of all able-bo pieces of pot

vessel in the village rest-house. Day by day the names of as many men as are needed to keep guard at certain fixed places in the village and on the roads are drawn out, and these men watch from nightfall to morning. The process is repeated daily till the lots are exhausted, when it begins over again with another vessel, into which in the meanwhile the lots drawn daily have been placed. The custom is a useful one, and should be maintained."

The 1883-84 Gazetteer was revised in 1910 and let me now quote from this revised version. Once you read it, it is obvious enough. But a priori, would you have expected irrigation and canals to lead to inferior health outcomes? "There are parts or the district however where the figures are not so favourable, and the people themselves recognise clearly that a canal with a high water level in the sub-soil is a source of sickness: 'Where flows the canal water there go sickness and strife.'...Gohana town has a much higher death rate than any of the other four which are all in dry tracts, and though the evil effects of swamping were never so disastrous here as in Kamal, and have been largely removed by the remodeling of the canal system, it still remains true that the old Gohana tahsil and the better watered parts of Rohtak are more malarial, more productive of lung, spleen and bowel disorders, and more the haunt of plague than the rest of the district."

Remember that the following was written more than one hundred years ago, probing Hindu-Muslim differentials in sex ratios in Rohtak. "Custom argues against the belief no less strongly than statistics; for the purchase of brides is admitted by the Jats — with a certain amount of apology and obvious sense of shame — to be a practice that gains ground every year... There is a sud-

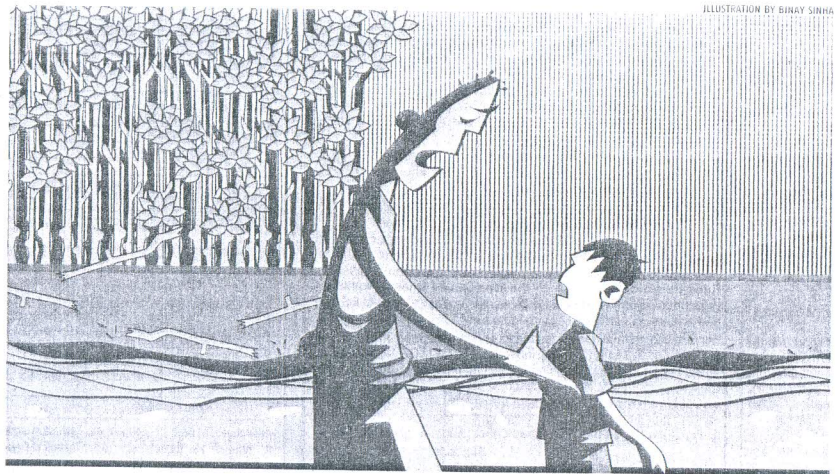


ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

den drop in the proportion of females in the fifth year of life and in the case of Hindus there is one in the third year as well... From 10 to 20 there is a remarkable drop in the number of Hindu women. It is probable that there really is a considerable decrease here, for this is the nubile age for Hindu girls, and there is no doubt that many fall victims to early child bearing, but it is not improbable that just because these are the nubile years the age of a good number of girls who have not yet found husbands is minimized, which would increase the apparent scarcity of girls of this age... The first outstanding conclusion is that the marriage age is later for Muhammadans than for Hindus and later for males than for females within each class — facts which of course need

no statistics to prove them. The next point is that infant marriage is the exception and not the rule, and that even child marriage — as distinct from infant marriage — on the one hand and adult marriage on the other is comparatively rare amongst Muhammadans of the male sex... The next fact which is noteworthy is the large number of Hindu males that die old bachelors... These considerations and the figures support the belief, which most officers conversant with this tract of country have entertained, in the existence sub rosa of a system of polyandry... It is the concomitant of female infanticide."

This was a time of famines and an English rendering of a popular song is evocative of what happens. "The traders collected old and bad grain, and sold it

for an enormous price. The beam of their scales broke, and their weights were worn away (by constant use), the trader lived, and the Jat died. The carts remained useless, for the oxen were dead; and the bride went to her husband's house without the due formalities." But also, "The effect of the railway was seen in the two most recent famines when large quantities of bhusa were imported from the Panjab at specially reduced rates. Vast heaps of straw were to be seen at the side of the line at every station and many cattle were saved which would otherwise have perished or been sold or driven out of the district."

The author is chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister. Views are personal

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Rain triggers landslips, uproots trees

BHANU P LOHUMI
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

SHIMLA, SEPTEMBER 6

The normal life was disrupted following a heavy thunderstorm accompanied by downpour lashed Shimla this afternoon.

The town received 20 mm rain in a short spell, uprooting trees, triggering landslides and blocking the roads, leading to traffic jams.

A major landslide occurred near Indira Gandhi Medical College Hospital where five vehicles were buried under the debris and the road remained blocked for more than three hours. The highway was blocked due to landslide near Bhattakufar, 12 km from here, and many vehicles, including apple-laden trucks, remained stranded for more than two hours.

A huge tree was uprooted in a Bemlooe colony but there was no loss of life or property. Some houses near the old bus stand were endangered as the retaining wall caved in and trees were uprooted. The power supply was also disrupted in some colonies as overhead transmission lines were damaged.

The local Met office has predicted rain and thundershowers at a few places in lower and



PEOPLE MAKE WAY THROUGH RUBBLE NEAR THE IGMC IN SHIMLA ON THURSDAY. AMIT KANWAR

mid hills and rain or snow at isolated places in higher hills from September 7 to 12.

As many as 57 roads — 29 in the Shimla zone, 17 in the Kangra zone and 11 in the Hamirpur zone — were blocked and the Public Works Department has deployed 120 JCBs, 33 tip-pers and 11 dozers to clear these and 37 roads would be

opened tomorrow, said sources. The PWD had suffered losses to the tune of Rs 713 crore.

Sunni was the wettest with 34 mm rain while Banjar recorded 32 mm rain, followed by Chail and Fagu 30 mm, Shimla 21 mm, Manali 15 mm, Sarahan 14 mm, Bhawain 11 mm, Palampur and Nagrota Surian 7 mm, Dharmasala and

Chamba 5 mm.

The day temperatures fluctuated marginally and Una was the hottest with 35.8 degree, followed by Sundernagar 33 degree, Bhuntar 32.2 degree, Solan 29 degree, Nahan 28 degree, Dharamsala 27.6 degree, Palampur 25.5 degree, Shimla 23.9 degree, Kalpa 22.6 degree, Keylong 18.2 degree and

Power supply hit, vehicles buried

- A major landslide occurred near IGMC where five vehicles were buried under the debris and the road remained blocked for more than three hours.
- The highway was blocked due to a landslide near Bhattakufar and many vehicles, including apple-laden trucks, remained stranded for more than two hours.
- A huge tree was uprooted in a Bemlooe colony, but there was no loss of life or property
- The power supply was also disrupted in some colonies as overhead transmission lines were damaged.
- At least 57 roads — 29 in Shimla zone, 17 in Kangra zone and 11 in Hamirpur zone — were blocked.

Manali 17.6 degree.

The minimum temperatures remained steady and Keylong was the coldest with 10.5 degree while Kalpa and Manali recorded 12 degree, followed by Shimla 16.5 degree, Dharamsala 17.2 degree, Bhuntar 19 degree, Solan 20 degree and Una 24 degree C.

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Swelling Ganga brings in a spate of trouble to Uttar Pradesh

Rain-related deaths hit 80 in State,
about 5 lakh struggle to survive

OMAR RASHID
UNNAO

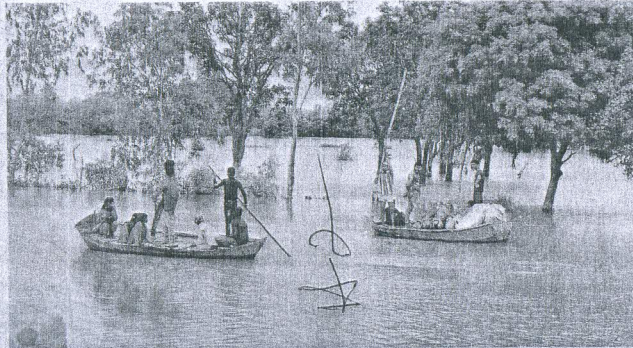
Sunita Mallah could only salvage a pair of clothes, two little cots, a buffalo, a plate, a spoon and a tumbler. Though the water level had been constantly rising for days, slowly but steadily, she did not anticipate that, by Saturday evening, her semi-pucca hut would get submerged in the swelling Ganga.

'Everything drowned'

"The water rose swiftly and, while we still deciding on evacuation, it reached chest-high. We could not take out anything. Everything we had went under water. Only our lives were saved," says Ms. Sunita, sitting on a cot, her children, two of them still in their school uniform, by her side.

After escaping the flooded Devipurva village in Unnao on a boat along with her family, Ms. Sunita, who belongs to a community of traditional boatmen, a Backward Class, took shelter on a bridge connecting the district to Kanpur's Bithoor. All that they, along with dozens of other families, have for shelter are makeshift tarpaulin tents. With little or no cash, they are surviving on relief material and food packets provided by the administration, even as the river remains in its swollen state.

"The last time we saw such a situation was in 2011. We had to evacuate to another area. There is nothing to shelter us except for this tarpaulin. If it rains heavily again, we won't have anything to protect us," says



In dire straits: Villagers moving to flood relief camps in Unnao district of Uttar Pradesh as the Ganga was flowing above the danger mark on Thursday. • RAJEEV BHATT

another Mallah woman, also named Sunita. The flood damaged all her crops, mattresses and clothes. Depressed by the annual flood situation along the Ganga, she lashes out at the government for failing to provide a permanent solution.

"Every time there is a flood, they provide us food packets, that's all," she says.

The recent bout of heavy rainfall has caused havoc in parts of Uttar Pradesh, with at least 80 people dead since September 1, and over 2,000 houses and huts damaged or

submerged, with territory of over 1.12 lakh hectares affected.

According to the Uttar Pradesh Disaster Management Authority, on Thursday evening, there were still 153 marooned villages and 805 flood-affected villages in

the State, directly impacting over 5 lakh people. On Thursday, 18 deaths were reported, with four each in Unnao and Faizabad, and two each in Rampur and Gonda, and 158 homes were damaged.

According to Relief Commissioner Sanjay Kumar, till 5 p.m., 47,470 people had been evacuated to safe locations, while 21,629 were living in 170 relief camps.

In Unnao alone, 32,453 persons had been rescued from 17 villages and more than 12,000 people are currently living in 32 relief camps.

"I don't know how long we will carry on like this. I have nine animals to take care of. Two calves have already taken ill and cannot walk any more," says Ram Janaki of Babu Bangali village.

Suresh Mallah, who is listening to the conversation, adds that the water damaged all his vegetable crops and

animal fodder, and drowned two goats. "The wall of my house fell and my goats panicked and jumped out, only to drown," said Mr. Suresh.

Temporary relief

The administration is shifting rescued persons to the nearest temples or schools for temporary relief.

Videos of affected areas shared by the villagers showed many homes submerged. Many rivers across the State continue to be swollen.

The Ganga was flowing over the danger mark in Naraura in Bulandshahr, Kachla-bridge in Budaun, Fatehgarh in Farukhabad and Ballia, while the Ghagra had crossed dangerous levels in Barabanki, Ayodhya and Ballia. In Shahjahanpur, the Ramganga was also above the red mark, so was the Sharda in Lakhimpur Kheri and Kuano in Chandripath in Gonda.

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Torrential rain batters coastal Odisha

Several rivers in spate; possibility of large-scale floods ruled out

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

Torrential rain battered the coastal region of Odisha on Thursday, worsening the deluge and disrupting normal life in the State.

Although heavy rains sent several rivers into spate, the office of the Special Relief Commissioner said there was no possibility of large-scale floods except in a few areas in Keonjhar district where the Baitarani river was flowing above the danger mark.

"There was very heavy and extremely heavy rainfall

in some coastal districts of Odisha in the last 24 hours ending on Thursday morning. The average rainfall in the State was 54.9 mm," said the SRC analysing the situation.

Average rainfall (more than 100 mm) was recorded in five districts – Kendrapara (271.7 mm), Jagatsinghpur (236.1 mm), Jajpur (137 mm), Cuttack (113.5 mm) and Bhubaneswar (105.7 mm). Ersama block of Jagatsinghpur recorded the highest 450 mm rain during the last 24 hours.

"All major rivers are flow-

ing below the danger level. Only Baitarani river is flowing above the warning level at Akhuapada. There has been waterlogging in Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara and Jajpur districts which have received extremely heavy rainfall," said SRC Bishnupada Sethi.

Waterlogging was also reported on the campus of Sun Temple in Konark. The Archaeological Survey of India deployed four high-powered motors to pump out the water from the campus.

The Cuttack district admini-

stration ordered closure of educational institutes in view of heavy rain on Thursday.

More rains predicted

The Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre has predicted heavy rainfall on Friday. "The depression over north-west Bay of Bengal and adjoining West Bengal and north coastal Odisha moved slightly westwards and intensified into a deep depression. It is very likely to continue to move west/north-west and weaken gradually during the next 24 hours," it said.

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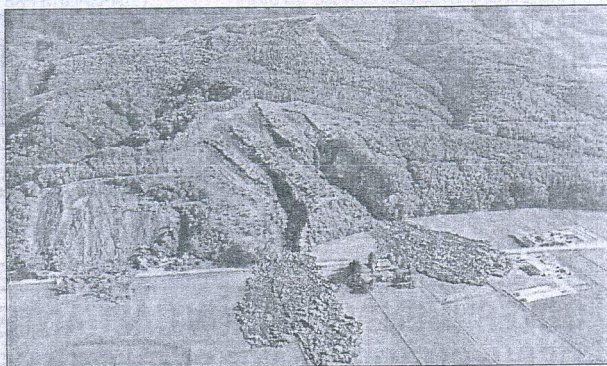
9 killed after earthquake hits Japan's Hokkaido island

SAPPORO: A powerful earthquake struck Japan's northernmost main island of Hokkaido on Thursday, triggering dozens of landslides that crushed houses under torrents of dirt, rocks and timber, prompting frantic efforts to unearth any survivors.

At least nine people were killed, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said. Officials said at least 366 were injured, five of them seriously, and about 30 people were unaccounted for after the magnitude 6.7 earthquake jolted residents from their beds at 3.08 am.

Nearly three million households were left without power by the quake — the latest in an exhausting run of natural disasters for Japan.

It paralysed normal business on the island, as blackouts cut off water to homes, immobilised



■ A landslide in Atsuma town, Hokkaido prefecture.

AFP

trains and airports, causing hundreds of flight cancellations, and shut down phone systems.

In the town of Atsuma, where entire hillsides collapsed, rescuers used small backhoes and

shovels to search for survivors.

The island's only nuclear power plant, offline for routine safety checks, temporarily switched to a backup generator to keep its spent fuel cool.

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Rain brings down humidity but causes snarls

HT Correspondent

■ htreporters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: A spell of rain lashed Delhi on Thursday bringing much-needed respite from the humidity.

The rain, however, left roads of the city flooded, leaving commuters stuck in massive traffic jams in the evening.

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast more rain in the coming days. Light rains and thunderstorm is likely to continue till Monday.

A senior Met official said that the Monsoon trough might shift slightly southwards during the weekend and the amount of

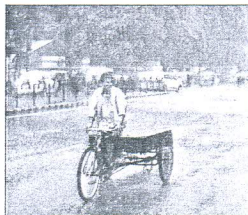
rainfall in Delhi might reduce after Sunday.

On Thursday, the maximum temperature was recorded at 31.6 degrees Celsius, three notches below the season's average while the minimum temperature was recorded at 26 degrees Celsius.

The rain on Thursday caused havoc on the roads with several arterial roads being clogged with vehicles.

Roads such as the Okhla intersection, South Avenue, Vikas Marg, Jawaharlal Nehru Marg, Qutub Road, Barapullah, MB Road, GT Road and Mathura Road were waterlogged.

Delhi Traffic Police used its



■ Thursday's rain helped bring much-needed relief from the humidity.

BURHAAN KINU/HT

Twitter handle to advise people to avoid the route from Yusuf Sarai market towards All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), as the carriageway

was submerged in water after Thursday's downpour.

"Waterlogging reported on the carriageway from Yusuf Sarai market towards AIIMS. Kindly avoid the stretch," the tweet said.

Traffic police said that waterlogging was also reported near the Defence Colony flyover and near the carriageway from Moolchand Hospital towards Lajpat Nagar Metro station.

Traffic snarls were also reported from ITO intersection, the India Gate roundabout, Shahjahan Road, Moti Bagh Sarai intersection, Rao Tula Ram Marg, Dhaura Kuan, Rajouri Garden, Dwarka Road, Palam

intersection, Uttam Nagar intersection (near the metro station) and near Subhash Nagar main market.

In many intersections, the traffic situation became worse after the signals stopped functioning because of the rain.

Several commuters stuck in traffic snarls took to social media platforms to vent their frustration.

Anjula Srihan tweeted, "Stuck at South EX for an hour now. Traffic is crawling and there is no way to get out. Same story after every rain (sic)."

Cases of three trees falling were also reported by the three municipal corporations.