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another FIR filed  
against Cong. leaders  
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Half of Europe on track  
to contract Omicron by  
March, warns WHO  
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Kohli top scores with 79,  
India shot out for 223  
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## IN BRIEF



Most serious patients  
unvaccinated: doctors

NEW DELHI

Most COVID-19 patients on ventilator beds or oxygen support in two city hospitals are unvaccinated, said doctors. The situation, however, is different in some other hospitals..

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Channi missing as Sidhu rolls out 'Punjab Model'

CHANDIGARH

Missing photographs of Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and former Punjab Congress president Sunit Jakhar at PCC chief Navjot Singh Sidhu's press conference on Tuesday indicated that fissures remain in the Congress' State unit.

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Lalu invites KCR to enter national politics

HYDERABAD

RJD president Lalu Prasad on Tuesday invited Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao to take the lead in national politics in the fight against the BJP.

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OPPORTUNITIES ▶ PAGES 4 & 5

## In blow to BJP ahead of polls, senior Minister quits U.P. govt.

OBC leader yet to reveal decision on quitting party; Akhilesh welcomes him to SP

OMAR RASHID

LUCKNOW

In a blow to the BJP in Uttar Pradesh ahead of the 2022 Assembly election, senior OBC leader Swami Prasad Maurya on Tuesday resigned from the State Cabinet, accusing the Yogi Adityanath government of neglecting Dalits, OBCs, farmers and the youth.

Three more MLAs – two from the OBC bloc and one Dalit – said they were leaving the BJP and would follow Mr. Maurya's political lead. One of them, Brajesh Kumar Prajapati, MLA for Tindwari in Banda, has submitted his resignation letter to the party.

Soon after Mr. Maurya said he had submitted his resignation to Governor Anandiben Patel, which was yet to be accepted, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav tweeted an undated picture of himself with Mr. Maurya and "welcomed" the OBC leader and his supporters into his party.

**Options open**  
However, while not denying future prospects with the SP, Mr. Maurya, who is yet to formally resign from the BJP, remained tight-lipped on his next move. He said he would make a formal decision on joining another party after



**Big twist:** Swami Prasad Maurya at his residence following his resignation from the U.P. government in Lucknow on Tuesday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

consultation with his supporters.

Sources said Mr. Maurya's supporters backed a pre-poll alliance with the SP through the Loktantrik Bahujan Manch which he had formed after quitting the BSP in 2016 rather than joining the party.

"Now they will know the status of Swami Prasad Maurya. In the 2022 election, they will know what mass base I have. The party where I go to will form the government," he said.

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10**

## Pawar says people want change, strikes deal with SP

STAFF REPORTER

MUMBAI

Claiming that the people of Uttar Pradesh are looking for a change and the Assembly election will bring that change, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president Sharad Pawar on Tuesday said that the party would contest the election in alliance with the Samajwadi Party (SP).

"We are going to contest in three out of five States that are going to the polls in coming months. In U.P., a meeting of like-minded parties in forming a coalition with the Samajwadi Party will be held on Wednesday where seat sharing will be discussed," Mr. Pawar said.

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10**

## Cong. forms jumbo panels for Punjab

Move seen as a fine balancing act

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday formally constituted the manifesto and campaign committees for the Assembly election in Punjab.

The State is scheduled to vote in a single phase on February 14.

While the Congress had earlier named former Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) chiefs Partap Singh Bajwa and Sunil Jakhar as heads of the manifesto and campaign committees, respectively, party president Sonia Gandhi approved other names by Tuesday.

As the party is facing intense factional fights, the move is seen as a fine balancing act to accommodate all groups within the State unit.

The 20-member manifesto committee has Deputy Chief Minister O.P. Soni, Surjit Singh Swaich, Amit Vija, Jaiveer Shergill, Ashok Choudhary and others.

The 25-member panel for the party's campaign, headed by Mr. Jakhar, includes Ravneet Singh Bittu, Amarpreet Singh Lally, Raj Kumar Verka, Vijayinder Singhla, Raja Warring and Navjot Dharia.

### Final list

The committees have been announced before the Congress's Central Election



**Sunil Jakhar**

Committee (CEC) is expected to approve the final list of candidates later this week.

So far, the screening committee, headed by Ajay Makken and including Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, PCC chief Navjot Singh Sidhu and Mr. Jakhar, has had six meetings to shortlist nominees. But the process to prepare the final list of candidates has turned out to be a tricky affair.

The party has to factor in the possibility of defections and desertions; sitting legislators and leaders who do not get ticket could switch to the recently launched Punjab Lok Congress of former Chief Minister Capt. Amarinder Singh (retired) that has tied up with the BJP.

"More than taking on our political rivals, for our party, this election has been about dealing with the demands of different groups and egos of various leaders," a party leader told *The Hindu*.

Fall in cases in Mumbai for fourth day

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

The number of COVID-19 cases in Mumbai declined for the fourth consecutive day, recording 11,647 infections on Tuesday. The positivity rate, which indicates the number of positive cases detected per 100 tests conducted, also reached a seven-day low of 18.7%.

The initial data from the city, which recorded more than 1.75 lakh cases in the past 40 days, indicated a possible early flattening of the case curve.

Data from Delhi and Chennai too hinted at a possible slowdown of the spread of infections. In Delhi, 21,529 cases were recorded on Tuesday. While the positivity rate rose slightly above 25%, the pace of increase in cases has slowed down. A similar trend was recorded in Chennai too on Tuesday.

However, the national level numbers continued to rise, recording 1,85,189 cases on Tuesday. This is India's highest single-day rise in infections in the ongoing wave. With this, the number of active cases crossed the 9-lakh mark. The figures are based on the State bulletins released till 1 p.m. on Tuesday.

Jharkhand, Tripura and Telangana had not yet released data for the day.

**FULL REPORT ▶ PAGE 12**

+

Govt. to hold 35.8% stake in Vodafone Idea

**Out of sync**



**Need for caution:** Amid a nationwide surge in cases, people crowd a vegetable market in Lucknow on Tuesday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

## Rain delays Central Vista project, again

Preparations for R-Day are under way

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Board of Directors of Vodafone Idea Ltd. late on Monday approved the conversion of interest – related to spectrum auction instalments and on adjusted gross revenue dues to the Centre – into equity.

Post-conversion, the government would own 35.8% of the telecom carrier. This follows the reform package announced by the government last year. "The Net Present Value of this interest is expected to be about ₹16,000 crore," the firm said.

**FULL REPORT ▶ PAGE 14**



Construction work under way at the Central Vista Project. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

"hopefully". "I use the word hopefully because we plan but we got the highest amount of rainfall that any day in January has witnessed in the last many years and I think my Central Vista Avenue expansion programme has probably lost a day or two, but not more."

This isn't the first time that rainfall has caused delay in the project. In September 2021, Mr. Puri had visited the site and tweeted that more workers were being deployed to compensate for the time lost due to rain.

The curious case of a cereal burglar! Despite its many health benefits, turns out, cooking khichdi during a burglary attempt can be injurious to your well-being. The burglar has been arrested and @GuwahatiPol is serving him some hot meals.

traffic police tweaked the "hum do, hamara do" slogan coined in 1952 for a family planning campaign. "Aami duta, amar duta helmet (the two of us, our two helmets)," the tweet in Assamese read above the red inverted pyramid of the family planning campaign. "Ensure safety for yourself and people close to you... Don't be lax when your life matters," the tweet added.

Locals in the city's Hengerbari area were alerted by the sounds from the kitchen of a house whose occupants were away. They caught the burglar cooking and handed him over to the police. On Monday, the Guwahati

**ASSAM POLICE**  
 The curious case of a cereal burglar! Despite its many health benefits, turns out, cooking khichdi during a burglary attempt can be injurious to your well-being. The burglar has been arrested and @GuwahatiPol is serving him some hot meals.

drivers, drunk drivers, other eligible violators," it said in a tweet.

**On the menu: CopCake**  
"Special performance by DJ Lockup. On the menu: CopCake and other dessert items in our custard-y," the tweet added. A State police team under Harmeet Singh, now Guwahati's Commissioner of Police, had in 2018 begun adding fun to the force's campaign against crime in 2018. He was then the Additional Director-General of Police (Modernisation-Logistics).

One of the first fun-tweets was: "Sharing rumours/hate messages online can enable you for a date with us in nearest police station this weekend."

"Mobs may not follow the law, but the law will follow them. If you hit, the law won't miss," followed.

These and scores of other such messages have been shared through the Assam Police's Facebook and Instagram accounts besides Twitter. They were under the "Think" campaign in three hashtag segments - #ThinkBeforeYouPost, #ThinkBeforeYouHit and #ThinkBeforeYouTalk.

On the ground, the Assam Police has been tough against criminals of all hues. Since May 2021, when Himanta Biswa Sarma took charge as the Chief Minister, the force has killed 33 alleged drug dealers, cattle smugglers, kidnappers and murder accused in "encounters".

medical infrastructure at Lok Nayak Hospital later in the day, Mr. Kejriwal said the Delhi government was "completely prepared" to deal with what continued to be a dynamic situation and would increase the number of dedicated COVID beds in the city to 37,000 and ICU beds to between 10,000 and 11,000.

Meanwhile, COVID Care Centres are mostly lying vacant – only 561 of over 5,000 beds at 23 centres are currently occupied. These are currently serving as quarantine centres for both international passengers as well as citizens who do not have adequate isolation facilities at home.

In the previous hearing, the court had told Kerala and Tamil Nadu not to approach it for every issue regarding the dam, urging them to behave like normal litigants and not use the court as a platform to score political brownie points.

The court had said the States should approach the Mullaperiyar issue in a dispassionate manner and take decisions in a consensual manner. It has been constantly reminding the two neighbouring States that the apex court should not be compelled into the day-to-day management of the dam.

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10**

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Private offices in Delhi closed till further orders

CM Kejriwal reiterates his government is not in favour of imposing lockdown

JATIN ANAND

NEW DELHI

All private offices have been asked to shut down, in addition to restaurants and bars in the Capital, by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA).

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday said the decision to step up restrictions was taken considering the health of the citizens. He said the Delhi government was not in favour of imposing a lockdown and would lift the current restrictions "as soon as possible".

All private offices, except those falling under the exempted category such as medical establishments, financial institutions, trans-



An RT-PCR test being conducted in the Capital on Tuesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

sportation and courier services, among others, were asked to shut down premises with immediate effect till further orders by the DDMA. Restaurants have been allowed to extend takeaway and home delivery services.

After taking stock of the

basis - it was above 15% on Tuesday - it remained "well below" the average occupancy of 20% recorded during the second wave of infection in April-May last year.

Despite this, a senior official said, private hospitals have been given the go-ahead to increase the number of COVID beds by 25% if they feel the need to do so.

Meanwhile, COVID Care Centres are mostly lying vacant – only 561 of over 5,000 beds at 23 centres are currently occupied. These are currently serving as quarantine centres for both international passengers as well as citizens who do not have adequate isolation facilities at home.

Government sources told *The Hindu* that though hospital bed occupancy was increasing slightly on a daily

Not here to administer Mullaperiyar Dam: SC

'Panel is looking into safety aspect'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday told Tamil Nadu and Kerala that it was not there to "administer the dam" when a supervisory committee was already in place to examine the issue of safety of the Mullaperiyar Dam and the management of its water level.

## Online yoga classes for COVID patients

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

COVID patients in home isolation will be able to partake in free online yoga classes being organised by the Delhi government, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Tuesday.

There will be eight classes of one hour each from 6 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. and patients are free to choose a slot of their comfort to be part of the initiative dubbed 'Dilli ki Yoghala', Mr. Kejriwal said.

A registration link will be sent to all patients in home isolation through which they could choose a time of their convenience, he said. "Currently, 1,500-2,000 hospital beds have been occupied by COVID-19 patients and the rest are in home isolation," the CM said.

## Most serious patients unvaccinated: doctors

All patients on ventilator beds have comorbidities; TPR rises to 25.65% and active cases stand at 74,881

NIKHIL M BABU  
NEW DELHI

As the pandemic is peaking, most COVID-19 patients on ventilator beds or oxygen support in two city hospitals are unvaccinated, said doctors. The situation, however, is different in some other hospitals.

In Lok Nayak Hospital, of the nine patients on ventilator beds on Tuesday, four were unvaccinated, two were partially vaccinated and only one was fully vaccinated. The vaccination status of two were unknown. In Holy Family Hospital, of the nine patients either on ventilator or oxygen support, six were unvaccinated, two were partially vaccinated and all of them were above 50 years of age.

Sumit Ray, head of the Department of Critical Care at Holy Family Hospital, said: "One of the nine patients is



**Upping guard:** A teenager takes a dose of Covaxin at a centre in Rajouri Garden on Tuesday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

fully vaccinated, but has been undergoing chemotherapy. Also, all four patients on the ventilator are unvaccinated. Most with serious illness are either unvaccinated or partially vaccinated."

Of the nine patients, seven were above 60 years of age and two were above 55, added Dr. Ray. But all eight patients on ventilator beds at the hospital have comorbidities. The situation is similar in his hospital, said Dr. Byotra. "All patients on ventilator beds have comorbidities.

ly vaccinated, said S.P. Byotra, Head of Department of Internal Medicine at the hospital.

Deputy Medical Director of Lok Nayak Hospital, Ritu Saxena, said all the nine patients on ventilator beds at the hospital have comorbidities. The situation is similar in his hospital, said Dr. Byotra. "All patients on ventilator beds have comorbidities.

They have kidney disease or heart disease and it is primarily due to these conditions that they are on ventilators," he added.

In Aakash Healthcare, all 13 people in ICU have taken either the first or second dose of the vaccine. "Twelve of them need only minimal oxygen supply and all of them have comorbidities. One does not even require oxygen support," said Kousar Shah Ali, COO of Aakash Healthcare.

### 23 deaths

Meanwhile, the upward trend in cases continued with the test positive rate (TPR) increasing to 25.65%, which is the highest in about seven months, according to a government bulletin.

With a fall in tests compared to Sunday, the number of fresh cases in 24 hours was

21,259, which is less than 22,751 on Sunday. But twenty-three new COVID-19-related deaths were reported in 24 hours – the highest in the current wave – taking the total deaths to 25,200.

The number of active cases has also shot to 74,881 from 65,806 a day earlier. But the rate of increase of both TRP and new cases have slowed down over the past three days compared to last week when the daily spike in new cases was as high as 94.5%. For instance, the TRP was 25.65%, 25% and 23.53% on Tuesday, Monday, and Sunday respectively.

Noting that there have been 70 deaths since the last week of December, the government issued an advisory to hospitals, directing them to ensure that specialists attend to COVID-19 patients with comorbidities.

## 'City witnessing steady rise in Omicron variant'

Of the 675 samples, only 14% were Delta

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

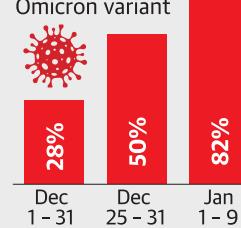
There is a steady increase in the Omicron variant of COVID-19 in the city as 82% of positive samples sent this year for genome sequencing have Omicron variant, an official told *The Hindu*.

"There is now a spike in the Omicron variant like it happened with the Delta variant during the second wave. Also, there is an increase in the sub-lineages of Delta too," the official said.

Of the 675 samples, whose genome sequencing was done from January 1-9, 82% showed Omicron variant of the virus and 14% was Delta and its sub-lineages. "Of this 14%, about 50% are sub-lineages of Delta. These sub-lineages are the ones like Delta plus that was seen earlier," the official

### Case diary

Percentage of samples tested positive for Omicron variant



said.

Jugal Kishore, head of the Community Medicine Department at Safdarjung Hospital, said that the Omicron was not a big worry as it was causing a mild infection.

The Delhi government is currently not sending all positive COVID-19 samples for genome sequencing.

## Two years on, chargesheet in Delhi riots case says 'no evidence' against BJP leader

Petitioner, who is an eyewitness, has moved a protest application

ARNABJIT SUR  
NEW DELHI

Nearly two years after Nisar Ahmed, a Delhi riots victim, filed a complaint regarding vandalism and ransacking of his house and shop in northeast Delhi's Bhagirathi Vihar, Delhi Police has said that it has found "no sufficient evidence" against BJP

leader Kanhaiya Lal, one of the accused in the case. Mr. Ahmed had also alleged that burqa-clad women were being killed and thrown into the Bhagirathi drain.

In a chargesheet filed in Mr. Ahmed's case before Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Arun Kumar Garg, police have kept Mr. Lal, a BJP councillor from east Delhi's Joharpur ward, in column 12.

Column 12 in a chargesheet means that there is not enough evidence to make a person an accused in a case. Another accused, Mukesh

Masterji, has also been kept in column 12. "The name of Kanhaiya Lal and Mukesh Masterji have been kept in column no. 12 of the chargesheet, as no sufficient evidence has come on cases filed against them. The honourable court may summon them for trial, if it thinks fit," the chargesheet stated.

Eight other accused have, however, been summoned through notices under several IPC sections pertaining to rioting, arson and criminal intimidation.

Mr. Ahmed in his com-

plaint said: "On February 24, 2020, at around 4 p.m., some locals started protesting in support of CAA and the accused persons, including Mr. Lal, purportedly started setting up mics and speakers in the locality and raised inflammatory slogans against Muslims. The crowd swelled to around 600 people and started randomly checking IDs of passers-by who if found to be a Muslim, were brutally beaten and thrown into the Bhagirathi Vihar drain."

The complainant alleged that repeated calls to the police went unanswered. The next day, a mob came to his house, vandalised his garment shop and ransacked his house. He and his family fled the place following the incident, he added. Mr. Ahmed initially claimed that the police told him to file an unnamed complaint but he refused to do so. He later filed a written complaint naming all the accused at the Gokalpuri police station.

Mr. Lal attempted to intimidate and get the applicant

to change his statement," the complaint stated.

Thereafter, Mr. Ahmed allegedly started receiving threat calls from Mr. Lal and other accused asking him to withdraw the case. Mr. Ahmed was also provided with witness protection as he is a key witness in several other cases. He received a copy of the FIR only three months later after moving the Delhi High Court.

**Complaint merged**  
However, his complaint was merged into an unnamed

FIR of one Aas Mohammad regarding burning and looting of his property. A magistrate's court had in October 2020 pulled up the police for clubbing the complaints into a single FIR and ordered them to file an FIR in his case. Police had challenged the order before a sessions court through a revision petition.

The sessions court too had rapped the police stating that there was "complete lack of supervision" and FIRs had been clubbed "to protect the accused". A se-

parate FIR was then registered in July last year against all the 10 accused.

Mr. Ahmed's lawyer, M.R. Shamshad, has moved a protest application challenging the removal of Mr. Lal and Mr. Mukesh under the penial charges.

Mr. Ahmed told *The Hindu*: "Mr. Lal led the mob which vandalised my house and shop and gave anti-Muslim speeches, my family and I are eyewitnesses ... how can they give him a clean chit? I hope the court takes note of our protest petition."

## Give clarity on weekend curfew: BJP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Tuesday expressed concern over the rising number of COVID deaths in the Capital and demanded clarity on whether the city would also be under curfew this coming weekend.

"Last minute announcement of imposition of weekend curfew can cause economic loss," Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said.

Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said according to government records, 70 people had died in the first ten days of January. The question that needed to be answered was whether these deaths were being driven by the Omicron or the Delta variant, he said.

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# Bishnoi – a radicalised lone wolf

Sister blames  
'theory of coding',  
police deny it

HEMANI BHANDARI  
NEW DELHI

Twenty-year-old Niraj Bishnoi represents a class of online trolls who are not paid but influenced; they could be the boy or girl next door, a police officer probing the offensive 'Bulli Bai' app case said. Bishnoi belongs to a lower middle class family; his father is a staunch Congress supporter while his grandfather was a supporter of a Communist leader, the family said.

Hailing from Nagaur in Rajasthan, the family now based in Assam, is facing the heat after Niraj's arrest. His sister who's pursuing law and did not wish to be named, claimed that her brother hadn't created the application against Muslim women but against those



Niraj Bishnoi

posting messages against Ram Mandir.

"My brother had created the application but it wasn't anti-Muslim. The application was self-generating and was coded in a way that names and pictures of those posting against Ram Mandir would pop up as 'Bulli Bai of the day,'" she told *The Hindu*, adding that there was "no auctioning" of women like it was in 'Sulli Deals' application.

"The word 'deal' wasn't used in this app. It featured women. And I understand that it would enrage any wo-

man whose photo would feature there," she said.

A senior police officer, however, denied the sister's theory of coding, and said Niraj had coded the application in a way that it would throw up names of one of the 102 Muslim women whose names had been fed by him into the app.

The family said that as the word spread back in the villages in Rajasthan and Assam, people started believing that Niraj was trafficking in women.

"Someone told my mother that Niraj was buying women for ₹2 lakh each and selling them for ₹4 lakh. Now what should I tell her? She fell sick and was hospitalised," claimed Niraj's father Darshar Bishnoi.

Four of Mr. Dasrath's brothers are still based in Rajasthan, including two who are Army officers. Mr. Dasrath was brought to Assam by his maternal uncle in 1986

when he was in his early teens and after studying for two years, he started working with his uncle. Ten years later, in 1996, he opened his own grocery store in Jorhat.

Talking about his own political views and that of his father, which he is sure have not influenced his son, Mr. Dasrath said that his father, who used to reside in Rajasthan with his brothers and passed away in 2012, used to support a Communist leader.

"I have always been a supporter of the Indian National Congress," he said. "My son is an introvert and is very sensitive I feel. The politicians and TV news show anchors should speak responsibly. They don't know who might get influenced by their words," the father said.

Niraj was arrested by the Delhi Police Special Cell for creating the 'Bulli Bai' application - a crime he has admitted to committing.

## JNU mulls changing entrance exam format for admissions

Proposal being placed without discussions, say teachers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

the university, however, said that the proposal to change the entrance examination format is being placed without any deliberation and discussion with the JNU community. They also accused Vice-Chancellor M. Jagadesh Kumar of "bulldozing" the decision in the AC meeting conducted online.

The NTA has been assigned the task of conducting the CU-CET as a single window opportunity for students seeking admission to both undergraduate/integrated and postgraduate programmes at participating un-

iversities/institute(s) across the country. Currently, 12 Central universities hold their admissions using the CU-CET. Delhi University has also recently expressed its intent to adopt the CU-CET.

The teachers said for the AC meeting on Wednesday, the extra agenda item was circulated just two days before, leaving no time for discussions. They also said that it has failed to consider the multidisciplinary courses offered by JNU that are not common with other universities and require a unique admission process.

Ensure people's participation in innovative ways, L-G asks officials

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal on Tuesday instructed officials to ensure maximum digital and technology-enabled participation of people in various programmes as part of Aazadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav in the city.

According to sources present in the meeting, Mr. Baijal said despite COVID-19 restrictions, people's involvement on the occasion of India's 75 years of Independence through innovative ways would be befitting.

Mr. Baijal advised officials to document the events in the form of electronic and physical booklets and publications.

Achieving the goal of 100% digital delivery of government services in Delhi by August 2023, when the celebrations would conclude, should become part of the initiative, the L-G said. He also said that he would take up the matter with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for seamless implementation.

He instructed the archives department and the commissioners of the municipal corporations to identify the monuments not already under the ambit of the Archaeological Survey of India and the localities associated with unsung freedom fighters and undertake their maintenance and conservation.

This, Mr. Baijal said, would go a long way "in expressing our gratitude towards those who won us our freedom".

Umar Khalid referred to web series to create a perception, court told

Argument against bail in riots case to continue on Jan. 24, 31



Khalid was part of a conspiracy whose main objective was to "sarkar ko ghutne par laana hain" (bring the government to its knees).

"The ultimate object of rioters was to overawe the government and undermine the authority of the government which enacted the Citizenship [Amendment] Act and to destabilise the democracy," Mr. Prasad said.

Mr. Khalid, through his advocate Trideep Pais, earlier argued that he had no role to play in the conspiracy and had merely sent a few messages on the Delhi Protest Support Group's WhatsApp group.

To this, Mr. Prasad, while referring to Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, said it was not a crime to purchase a battery in Nalini's (convict) case. "The north-east Delhi riots were not spontaneous. This fact has also been appreciated by the High Court," he said.

The prosecution will further argue against the bail next on January 24 and 31.

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Timings DELHI	
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 12	
RISE 07:16 SET 17:44	
THURSDAY, JAN. 13	
RISE 13:30 SET 02:21	
RISE 07:16 SET 17:45	
RISE 14:05 SET 03:16	
FRIDAY, JAN. 14	
RISE 07:16 SET 17:46	
RISE 14:44 SET 04:11	

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	18	06
Safdarjung	18	06
Palam	16	07

Delhi Palam Today  
18°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be cold with fog and mist. Day will be cool with cold breeze. Temperature pattern to decrease.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow  
18°C The dry weather to continue. Cold wave like conditions to prevail. A foggy morning turns cold day like conditions with cold breeze.

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- CS : 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2022
- CH : 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2022

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New Batches from 10<sup>th</sup> Jan, 2022

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CE, ME (Hinglish)

Timing : 8:00 AM - 2:00 PM

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TMC launches housing rights drive in Goa

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The Trinamool Congress on Tuesday launched its 'Mhaje Ghar, Maaliki Hakk' campaign in poll-bound Goa, aimed at giving housing rights to people living in the coastal State before 1976.

TMC MP Mohua Moitra and other party leaders launched the scheme, whose title means 'my home, my right'.

It is a landmark housing rights scheme, party leader Kiran Kandolkar said.

"Within 250 days of coming to power, the TMC will ensure all Goan families residing in the State before 1976 are given title and ownership rights of the land under their possession. We also plan to give 50,000 subsidised homes to the homeless," Mr. Kandolkar said.

## Mayawati not to contest U.P. polls: party leader

S.C. Mishra adds he too will not fight in the State election

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW



Mayawati

For now, Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati will not contest the upcoming Uttar Pradesh Assembly election, party general secretary Satish Chandra Mishra said here on Tuesday.

"Behenji is busy in getting others to contest," Mr. Mishra said. If at all Ms. Mayawati later decides to contest, the call would be taken by her, he said.

The BSP is contesting in all 403 seats in the State.

Mr. Mishra added he will also not contest the State elections, which will be held in seven phases starting from February 10.

Since elections are being held in five States, including Punjab, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh, the BSP presi-

dent will not contest the polls and help party candidates win, he said.

Later, he told PTI, "The decision of the party for now is that Mayawati ji and I will not fight the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election. However, future decisions will be taken by Mayawati ji herself."

Ms. Mayawati is neither a legislator nor an MP. Mr. Mishra is a Rajya Sabha member.

(With PTI inputs)

## CPI(M) to counter campaign against SilverLine

The party to expose 'biased, misleading information' against project

BHUJU GOVIND  
KOZHIKODE

With mounting protests from multiple quarters, the CPI(M) leadership in Kerala has exhorted its cadre to undertake door-to-door campaigns to counter the propaganda unleashed against the proposed Thiruvananthapuram-Kasaragod semi-high-speed rail project, SilverLine, of the Kerala Rail Development Corporation Limited (K-Rail).

The party machinery and its affiliated organisations, including the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI), would be geared up to take on the "negative narrative" against the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government with massive

campaigns in the coming days. Workers would be asked to go to all households to expose the biased and misleading information against the project, informed sources said.

The CPI(M) leadership believes that fringe environmental groups with the support of the Opposition parties, especially the Congress and the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), as well as the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind and the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) are spearheading the agitation against the project in some regions. "This political propaganda against the government should be exposed," a party functionary said.

During his address to delegates at the ongoing Kozhikode district conference, CPI (M) State secretary Kodiyeri Balakrishnan interpreted that the protest against the SilverLine was a political weapon against the LDF government. "If they are against the project, they should come and discuss about it. We have to defeat this political propaganda," he said.

### CM to hold meetings

Mr. Balakrishnan said Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan would hold meetings in all districts. This would be followed up with public meetings.

The CPI(M) has decided to take on the orchestrated

analogy of the United Democratic Front (UDF) to portray the SilverLine protest in Kerala as the West Bengal farmers' agitation in Nandigram and Singur. The Left parties which are aware of these agitations are now implementing the SilverLine project. "We have clearly mentioned this in our manifesto," Mr. Balakrishnan said, adding land owners who part with property would not have to shed a tear.

Also, the CPI(M) leadership has decided to expose the double standards of the BJP-led government at the Centre. The ₹63,941-crore SilverLine project is a joint venture of the State government and the Ministry of Railways.

## 'BJP giving false hope to contestants in Manipur'

Those denied tickets will revolt: Shiv Sena

IBOYAIMA LAITHANGBAM  
IMPHAL

The Shiv Sena has taken a strong exception to the manner in which the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is giving hopes of tickets to several politicians in most of the 60 Assembly constituencies in Manipur which goes to polls on February 27 and March 3.

Talking to reporters on Tuesday the State unit Shiv Sena president M. Tombi said, "There are four or five politicians in most of the constituencies who are hopeful of getting a BJP ticket. Those who are denied the same will revolt. Is the BJP leadership fully pre-

pared to cope with such a situation?" Some such politicians had declared that those who miss out on tickets shall not extend cooperation to the ticket winners.

He recalled that Manipur has already seen three killings using sophisticated guns and many others had sustained life-changing bullet injuries. Long before the allotment of the party tickets, BJP members had allegedly resorted to violence in Bishnupur district. Shots were fired during the scuffle. The party had organised an internal meeting for opinion polls to single out the politicians who have the best chance to get elected.

## Bail plea of actor Dileep adjourned in assault case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOCCHI



Dileep

The Kerala High Court on Tuesday adjourned to January 14 the hearing on a petition filed by actor Dileep seeking anticipatory bail in a new case registered against him by the Crime Branch for allegedly threatening the investigation officer in a case relating to a sexual assault on a woman actor.

Dileep's brother P. Sivakumar and brother-in-law T.N. Suraj, who are also araigned as accused, have also sought anticipatory bail. According to the petition by Dileep and his kin, the registration of the FIR was "nothing but a vindictive and retaliatory act of IO Baiju

Paulose" against whom Dileep had initiated criminal contempt of court proceedings. The FIR was filed in the wake of the allegation by Balachandran Kumar, who claims to be a friend of Dileep, that he had overheard Dileep issuing death threats against the IO and his team.

**THE HINDU**

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## Talent war: Focus extends to new cities

A new study shortlists 15 tier-2 cities for their attractiveness in terms of producing relevant talent and providing a conducive atmosphere for business. Ahmedabad, Coimbatore and Chandigarh hold the top three positions

**R**everse exodus is as defining of these times as masking and social-distancing. With living rooms playing makeshift offices, it made sense for employees to return to their roots, operating from their hometowns. Between Coronavirus surges, when there would be a semblance of normality, companies in various sectors sought to test and establish work models more aligned with the changing times and employee expectations. Now, after nearly two years of the pandemic in India, hybrid work models and permanent remote work are options being offered by many organisations.

With permanent work-from-home fitting in with various positions, companies are looking for talent in tier-2 cities, and the offer letters are gold-rimmed with the irresistible perk of letting the new recruits operate from those cities.

That is not all. As found by a new study by Zinnov, a management consulting and strategy firm, a growing number of corporates are setting up centres in these tier-2 cities, where they had not had a striking presence earlier.

The trend underlines that these organisations do not want to lose the battle for talent that is also being waged in these geographies.



An aerial view of Coimbatore

and Safety, to name a few."

According to the study, the top 15 cities are: Ahmedabad, Coimbatore, Chandigarh, Jaipur, Visakhapatnam, Indore, Kochi, Bhubaneswar, Nagpur, Vadodara, Surat, Thiruvananthapuram, Mysuru, Madurai, and Goa.

One of the findings of the study: A workforce consisting of over two million relevant professionals from the IT, ER&D, and BPM sectors is currently concentrated in the top 15 tier-2 cities.

The Zinnov study held the magnifying glass to around 300 emerging Indian cities. Following the assessment, 15 companies stood out for a variety of parameters: "City Attractiveness, Ease of Operations, Ease of Doing Business, Connectivity, Talent Availability, Migratable Talent, Cost Index, Climate,

The southern cities of Coimbatore, Kochi, Madurai and Thiruvananthapuram have improved their 'City Attractiveness' quotient over the last year

sible due to accelerated digitalization and remote working opportunities," the study reveals.

The study further notes that the southern cities of Coimbatore, Kochi, Madurai, and Thiruvananthapuram have improved their 'City Attractiveness' over the last year, significantly moving up in the rankings."

Another observation: Coimbatore has the highest number of engineering colleges, which translates to a consistent supply of fresh STEM talent, and migratable talent due to emerging IT and ER&D hubs being set up there. Chandigarh, on the other hand, has a strong education system with ample schools, colleges, and research institutes.

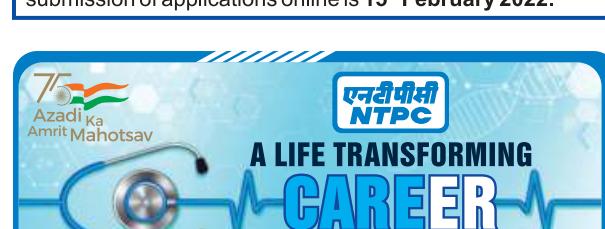
The study has found that in Karnataka, "cities such as Mangalore, Mysuru, Belagavi, Hubli-Dharwad, and other areas have a great thrust on education and infrastructure, with the potential to attract future investments and employment opportunities"

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	<b>Schedule - II b</b>	27th March 2022	11th March 2022	
<b>Phase III (2022 Joining)</b>	<b>Schedule - III</b>	8th May 2022	22nd April 2022	12th June 2022
<b>Phase IV (2022 Joining)</b>	<b>Schedule - IV a</b>	9th October 2022	23rd September 2022	11th December 2022
	<b>Schedule - IV b</b>	20th November 2022	4th November 2022	
<b>Phase I (2023 Joining)</b>	<b>Schedule - I a</b>	8th January 2023	23rd December 2022	28th February 2023
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# NEET Bill: T.N. Law Department sent reminder to Raj Bhavan

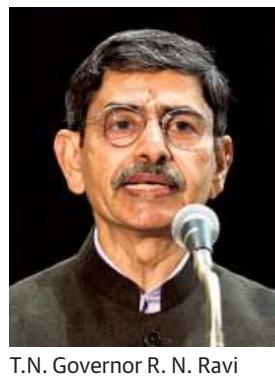
This has come to light in Law Department's response to RTI plea

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu Law Department had, in December last year, sent a reminder to the Governor's Secretariat on the Bill to dispense with NEET-based admissions for undergraduate medical courses, which was passed by the Legislative Assembly in September. This has come to light in a response from the Law Department to an application filed under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

In an application dated November 22, 2021, P. B. Prince Gajendra Babu, general secretary of State Platform for Common School System (Tamil Nadu) had sought to



T.N. Governor R. N. Ravi

that a reminder was sent to the Raj Bhavan on December 1 last year.

In the letter, C. Gopi Ravikumar, Secretary to Government (Legislation), pointed out that on September 18, the Tamil Nadu Admission Undergraduate Medical Degree Courses Bill 2021, passed by the Legislative Assembly, was submitted to the Governor to reserve the Bill for consideration of the President. He said the Tamil Nadu Agricultural Produce and Livestock Contract Farming Services (Promotions and Facilitation) Repeal Bill 2021 and the Bharathiar University (Amendment) Bill 202, were sent to the Governor's Secret-

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He requested the Secretary to Governor, "to obtain the orders of the Honourable Governor" on the Bills and to return the files to the Law Department.

Earlier, by a reply dated December 17, the Raj Bhavan had informed Mr. Gajendra Babu that the file relating to the NEET exemption Bill "is under consideration" of the Governor.

On January 8, chairing a meeting of all-party legislators on the NEET Bill, Chief Minister M K Stalin had complained that the Governor did not forward the Bill to the President though he had met and urged him to do so.

know the status of the Bill, which requires Presidential assent.

Responding to this, Law Department Under Secretary K Sakthivel has informed Mr. Gajendra Babu on January 6

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IDP the global leader in international education services launches 23 new offices in India in a single day

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National Youth Parliament Budget Dialogues 2022 held on 10th & 11th Jan 2022

National Youth Parliament Organization (NYP) is organizing Budget Dialogues 2022 on 10th and 11th January 2022 to formulate the Union Budget of India for FY 2022-23. This Youth Parliament endeavours to channelize the energies of Indian school students to lay their economic agenda and set forth a Budget that propels India into high growth trajectory. The year 2022-23 shall be crucial for India as the economy is taking-off after six quarters of setback caused by Covid-19. The initiatives taken by Government in the form of Atma-Nirbhar Bharat, Ayushman Bharat, Startup India, Make in India, Banking and Insolvency Code, Direct tax relief for corporations, GST, Jan-Dhan Yojana and several other schemes have positioned India to take the giant leap. The brief structure of NYP – Budget Dialogues 2022 is as below: 2 to 5 school students from all states & UTs of India will attend the final round . 25 students shall be assigned portfolios of Key Ministries for whom they will present Key Goals for 2022-23, estimate of Budget for 2022-23 (estimate of Revised Budget for 2021-22, under the guidance of NYP Mentors). Budget will be presented for the following ministries of Home, Defence, Health, MHRD, MSDE, o Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Consumer Affairs and Food Distribution, Food Processing, Chemicals and Fertilizers o Heavy Industry, MSME, Coal, Steel, Commerce and Trade, o Railways, Roads and Highways, Shipping, Civil Aviation, Housing, Power, Communications, MEITY, Jal Shakti, Tourism o Labour, Rural Development, Social Justice, Women, Tribal Affairs, DONER, Youth Affairs and Sports, Minority Affairs o Environment

NCR registers 16.5 % growth in originating freight loading by the end of third quarter of the financial year

Sustaining the momentum in the growth of originating loading, as the third quarter of 2021-22 closes, NCR registers a 16.5 % growth in its originating freight loading as compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. Monetizing the figures in revenue terms, a growth of 13.12 % has been registered in the same period. NCR loaded a total of 13,776 million tonnes during the period from April to December this year against a loading of 11,809 million tonnes during the corresponding period of last financial year. Revenue earned out of this outward loading during this period comes out to be Rs.1418.62 crores. In the month of December 2021, 1,746 million tonnes of freight was loaded, which is best ever loading figure for any month in the current financial year. Total revenue earned by NCR in the month of December 2021 itself is 192.17 crores (approx.). During the weekly safety and punctuality meeting, chaired by General Manager Shri Pramod Kumar, above details were shared by the Principal Chief Operations Manager (PCOM) Shri Biplov Kumar. Shri Biplov Kumar lauded the efforts of Business Development Units of Headquarter and the divisions for their proactive roles in attracting new traffic for NCR. Sharing the information, the PCOM informed that among the major commodities which showed an upward trend were cement, food grains and Petroleum oil lubricants. Container traffic too showed a 16.2% growth in loading as 2.08 million tonnes of containerized cargo was loaded during April to December this year as compared to 1.79

million tonnes of container traffic last year. PCOM also informed about the new loading of fly ash which started from Udaipura (Jhansi Division) and Bevara (Prayagraj Division). DRM Prayagraj Shri Mohit Chandra informed that the new loading of HSD started from BPCL, Panki last month will attract good revenue for Railways and on an average, 50 rakes per month are expected to be loaded. Speaking on the achievement, General Manager Shri Pramod Kumar congratulated the BDUs and all the officers and their team members. GM however expressed his concern over lagging behind the target set by Board. GM said that all necessary steps should be taken to step up the loading further and targets should be achieved. Achievements are laudable, but we have to work harder to surpass the target set by the Railway Board for the financial year", said the GM. "All Divisions must identify the potential locations from where new traffic can be captured and should work hard in that direction", added Shri Pramod Kumar while interacting with the DRMs of Prayagraj, Jhansi and Agra who joined the meeting virtually. In the beginning of the meeting, GM congratulated DRM Prayagraj and team of officers from Headquarter associated with the successful completion of electrification of Shikohabad-Mainpuri section.

**Patanjali provides naturopathy solution to Corona**

Almost 2 years has passed since Covid emerged. In these last 20 months, Patanjali has done more than 30 research on Coronil, Swasari, Anutel, Giloy, Ghanwati, Chayanprash, Divyapeya and Ashwagandha etc. Also to help the people in this period of crisis of this third wave of epidemic, Patanjali has decided that all Patanjali medical centers in the country will give 25 percent discount on Coronil kit, one can order Coronil Kit at a discount by ordering directly from Patanjali Order Me App or online at [www.patanjalivaidurved.net](http://www.patanjalivaidurved.net). Those who have low immunity, use Yoga, Ayurveda Naturopathy to recover themselves from omicron and strengthen themselves from inside. Allopathy can only suppress the diseases, but the cure process in allopathy is negligible. Adopting the traditional scientific methods as much as possible and eradicate the disease from the root. Patanjali commitment is to establish an integrated system of thinking across the world's medical systems to fulfill WHO's objective of Sustainable Health. Through Patanjali Wellness, it is our aim to give people a permanent solution to diseases.

**NCR makes giant stride towards electrification**

Aggressively pursuing towards mission 100% electrification, NCR completed a total of 216 Route Kilometer & 314 Track Kilometer of electrification between April-December'2021. Major routes which have been electrified during first three quarters of current financial year are: Biranagar-Udimer (101 km), Mahoba-Khejrahu (64 km), Shikohabad-Mainpuri (51 km). In addition, newly laid double line between Chaura-Malasa (19 km), Nandkhas-Parauna (32 km) (both part of Bhimsen-Jhansi doubling project) and third line between Babina-Jhansi (24 km) are opened along with electrification. At present, NCR has 2933 electrified Route Km and 6313 electrified track kilometers. In addition to above major routes, electrification works of sidings like Chunar, Churk, Meja NTPC, Shankargarh have also been completed. As a result of massive electrification, need for traction changing from AC engine to diesel engine is now done away at these places thereby reducing detentions and increasing mobility and punctuality. With a total broad gauge network of 3222 route kilometers in NCR, electrified route km (2933) now stands at 91% of overall broad gauge network of NCR. Electrification of remaining routes like Khajuraho-Udaipura, Barhan-Etah and Etawah-Mainpuri-Farrukhabad is targeted to be completed this year.

that a reminder was sent to the Raj Bhavan on December 1 last year.

In the letter, C. Gopi Ravikumar, Secretary to Government (Legislation), pointed out that on September 18, the Tamil Nadu Admission Undergraduate Medical Degree Courses Bill 2021, passed by the Legislative Assembly, was submitted to the Governor to reserve the Bill for consideration of the President. He said the Tamil Nadu Agricultural Produce and Livestock Contract Farming Services (Promotions and Facilitation) Repeal Bill 2021 and the Bharathiar University (Amendment) Bill 202, were sent to the Governor's Secret-

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know the status of the Bill, which requires Presidential assent.

Responding to this, Law Department Under Secretary K Sakthivel has informed Mr. Gajendra Babu on January 6

# Haryana govt. invokes ESMA against strike

Doctors' association calls for indefinite stir from Jan. 14 if demands are not met

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GURUGRAM

The Haryana government on Tuesday invoked the Essential Services Maintenance Act after the Outdoor Patient Department services across the State were crippled due to a day-long strike by the doctors in support of their demands.

The direct recruitment for SMOs puts the in-service doctors at disadvantage

M.P. SINGH  
HCMSA vice-president

post-graduation courses and create a specialist cadre of doctors. The emergency services, such as post-mortem and COVID-19 duties, were not affected as already announced by the Association.

## 'Cannot strike'

Announcing the decision to invoke ESMA, Haryana Health Minister Anil Vij, in a tweet, said: "ESMA has been invoked in Haryana. Now health workers cannot proceed on strike for six months. The step was taken after a group of doctors de-

cided to go on strike and create hurdles in the prevention of COVID-19."

Mr. Vij told media persons that the government had "in-principle" agreed to the demands of the doctors and it was conveyed to them on Monday, but they still decided to go ahead with their plan to hold the strike.

## Fight against COVID-19

He said a force seemed to be behind them to disrupt the fight against COVID-19 in the State.

HCMSA vice-president

and Gurugram Deputy Chief Medical Officer M.P. Singh told *The Hindu* that their demands had gone unheeded for long and they were forced to go on the day-long strike.

Mr. Singh said doctors

would proceed on an indefinite strike from January 14 if the government failed to come up with a concrete offer in response to their demands.

"The direct recruitment for SMOs puts the in-service doctors at disadvantage and limits their career growth. Similarly, the in-service doctors should be given a fixed 40% quota in PG courses to provide them a level playing field. Also, creation of a specialist cadre would ensure that the doctors hired under the cadre are not diverted to other duties," said Mr. Singh.

The civil hospitals and the community healthcare centres in the State witnessed long queues of distressed patients all through the day with the OPD services not running.

# Solar power all set to brighten lives of farmers

11 solar plants installed in Rajasthan

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

JAIPUR

Solar power generation is set to make rapid strides in Rajasthan with public sector banks acceding to the State government's request to grant loans without collateral security to farmers for installing solar plants at their infertile or semi-barren land.

The work was earlier affected as the farmers faced difficulty in getting bank loans. The Rajasthan Renewable Energy Corporation has allotted 722 MW plants to 623 farmers under the KUSUM scheme.

A probe began after a 50-year-old woman, identified as Anwari Abdul Shaikh, told VP Road police that an infant had been kidnapped by one Ibrahim Shaikh on January 3, after which a case was registered for kidnapping and trafficking of minor, the police officer said.

"We first arrested Ibrahim Altaf Shaikh (32) based on human and technical intelligence, and then, based on his interrogation, raided areas in Sion, Dharavi, Malad Jorashewari, Nagpada in Mumbai and Kalyan and Thane. This led to further arrests of two women and

"The loans to be sanctioned without collateral security for the solar plants of half kilowatt to 2 MW will speed up the work and help achieve the targets set in the renewable energy sector," Mr. Agarwal said.

Mr. Agarwal said the electricity generated at the solar plants would be purchased at ₹3.14 per unit for 25 years following the signing of power purchase agreements. The discoms will deposit the loan instalments directly with the banks and the remainder amount in the bank accounts of farmers.

The farmers who do not have money to invest can lease out their land to private developers and receive an annual income. The availability of power near the sub-stations will also help reduce transmission losses as well as expenses for expansion of infrastructure.

The Congress government in the State had adopted the solar energy and the wind and hybrid energy policies in December 2019 with the plans to develop a capacity of 38,000 MW renewable energy.

**Energy security**  
Mr. Agarwal said the KUSUM scheme would ensure energy security for farmers, as they could generate revenue from their barren lands. It would also later provide for solarisation of tubewells and lift irrigation projects of the government sector.

## OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

## HC orders notice to Centre on Dam Safety Act

DMK MP files plea against legislation

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Tuesday ordered notice to the Centre on a case filed by Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) Lok Sabha member S. Ramalingam challenging the constitutional validity of the Dam Safety Act, 2021, on the grounds that it goes against federalism and is beyond the legislative competence of the Centre.

The First Division Bench of Acting Chief Justice Munishwar Nath Bhandari and Justice P.D. Audikeshaval heard preliminary arguments advanced by senior counsel P. Wilson for the petitioner and directed Additional Solicitor General R. Sankaranarayanan to make sure that a counter affidavit



was filed within three weeks.

In an affidavit filed in support of his petition, the Member of Parliament had said, "The impugned (under challenge) Act is a legislation passed by the Union through brute majority to blatantly usurp the States' power in broad day light when legislators like myself were helpless to prevent the violence done to the Constitution."

Dheeraj was stabbed to death and two other students, Thrissur native Abhijith T. Sunil and Kollam resident A.S. Amal, were injured in a clash related to college union elections.

Nikhil was held from a bus

A CORRESPONDENT  
IDUKKI



Loud and clear: SFI workers staging a protest against the killing of Dheeraj, in Thiruvananthapuram. ■ S. MAHINSHA

at Karimanol while trying to escape to Ernakulam on Monday evening, the police said.

The police said Nikhil confessed to committing the crime and that he threw away the weapon used for it. A search would be held to find the weapon.

Six persons were included as accused in the first information report and the police will also look whether they received outside support in committing the crime. Nikhil told the police that he reached the campus to help his relative contesting the college union elections. He

said he kept a knife with him in self-defence.

The police said a tense situation developed after outsiders reached the campus, which SFI workers, including Dheeraj, questioned, leading to the clash. The primary autopsy report cited a deep wound in the chest as reason for Dheeraj's death. There were injury marks on his body in addition to a head injury.

The body of Dheeraj was taken to his native place Taliparamba after autopsy at the Government Medical College Hospital at Cheruthoni. The body was received by SFI and CPI(M) leaders.

Former Minister and CPI (M) leader M.M. Mani covered the body with the party flag. A large number of students and local people paid their last respects to the body kept at the hospital and the engineering college.

## Param Bir's distrust of police 'disturbing': SC

He wants FIRs transferred to CBI

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday found former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh's abiding distrust of the very police he once led "disturbing". Mr. Singh wants the FIRs of extortion and corruption registered against him by the police to be transferred to the CBI.



Param Bir Singh

against the former top police official. The apex court had said the primary question that needed to be answered was that of bias raised by Mr. Singh against the State police.

The Bench was hearing an appeal filed by Mr. Singh against a High Court order dismissing his plea against the enquiry against him for corruption and allegedly violating service rules.

Senior advocate Darius Kambatta, for Maharashtra, had said the cases should remain with the Maharashtra police. The issues raised by Mr. Singh concerned departmental enquiries which should be resolved in the Central Administrative Tribunal.

**CBI's claim**  
As if to buttress Mr. Singh's negativity about the Maharashtra State apparatus, the CBI, represented by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, said several stumbling blocks had been laid out in its way in the probe against Mr. Deshmukh.

The apex court had protected Mr. Singh from arrest in November, provided he co-operated with the investigation against him.

On Tuesday, the court extended the protection. The State argued that Mr. Singh is being wrongly portrayed as a "whistle-blower", he wrote the letter against him to the Maharashtra Home Minister Mr. Anil Deshmukh and leaked it to the media when he sensed the tide was turning against him.

In early December 2021, the apex court had indicated its *prima facie* view that the CBI, and not the Maharashtra police, ought to probe the allegations of corruption and misconduct against Mr. Singh.

The court had not stopped the Maharashtra police from continuing with their probe into Mr. Singh, but had restrained them from filing charge sheets compared to Telangana.



## TRS leader calls BJP CMs for debate

'BJP leaders making baseless charges'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD



B. Vinod Kumar

Senior TRS leader and vice-chairman of the Telangana State Planning Board B. Vinod Kumar has asked the Chief Ministers of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-ruled States and its Central leaders to come for a debate on welfare in their States compared to Telangana.

Speaking to reporters here on Tuesday, he said that the BJP leaders, who had been visiting Telangana for the last couple of months, were making baseless charges against the TRS government and Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao.

Mr. Kumar offered to ar-

range four helicopters for Chief Ministers of BJP-ruled States to visit any corner of the State and also participate in a debate at Ravindra Bharathi, a cultural events venue, here for arguing over development in their States compared to Telangana.

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## Straws in the wind

The spurt of defections away from the party in Uttar Pradesh should worry the BJP

The stereotypical image of politicians in India in popular culture is mostly unflattering, but it is also somewhat unfair. Politics as a vocation is not an easy one and no one receives more scrutiny than legislators and politicians in public life and despite there being several things to improve upon, electoral democracy in India allows for a fair amount of accountability by empowering the voter to evaluate those contesting to represent them. Yet, if there is one act that reminds citizens of the tendencies of politicians, it is that of switching sides on the eve of fresh elections in a State. No State is spared of this act, and hardly any party escapes defections. In a world where principles and ideologies determine party affiliation, switching parties at the last minute would be a rare anomaly for there would have been ample time for disgruntled partymen to rethink the bandwagon they had hitched themselves to. But in the real world, elections bring in hard calculations – politicians who sense a whiff of change in the mood of the electorate are ready to take the risk to switch. These occurrences are more pronounced when parties select their legislators on considerations such as caste/community identity – but they are no longer rare events even in States where the polity features a clear ideological divide, for instance, Kerala. But there are also occurrences – dime a dozen – when the electorate does not punish political opportunists and considerations other than legislative ability alone determine the electoral fortunes of contestants.

In the case of Goa, a State with a small Assembly and which has a history of party-hopping, the spurt of defections of late should not come as a surprise. But the fact that electoral contestation in an already fractious polity with a high number of competitive political parties has now increased with the Trinamool Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party in the fray, has exacerbated matters by widening the choices for the political opportunist. In Uttar Pradesh, even considering the fact that such defections are routine, the spurt of MLAs switching sides from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to the Samajwadi Party (SP) should worry the ruling party, more so if the party hoppers are from the Other Backward Classes who had been diligently wooed and represented in the BJP to get an edge over the Mandal parties. The BJP could still take consolation in the fact that last minute defections in West Bengal had little effect on the ruling Trinamool in the election last year but unlike in the eastern State, the politics of identity is more salient in Uttar Pradesh. This indicates that the political contest in a State where the ruling coalition secured 51.2% of the votes and led in 284 of the 403 Assembly segments in the State in the 2019 Lok Sabha election, is getting to be a close call with the SP putting up a spirited fight. At the very least, the aura of invincibility that the BJP had since 2014 is markedly absent. Although the Opposition camp is still divided, the erosion in the BJP support base is unmistakable.

## Young knights

Indian chess needs tournaments that pit the country's best against the world's strongest

A few days after he expectedly won his fifth World Chess championship in a row, Magnus Carlsen suggested he might abdicate his crown – unless Alireza Firouzja qualifies as his challenger for the next World title. The Norwegian genius spoke of how the recent performances of the 18-year-old Iran-born French player motivated him. The teenager is now the frontrunner to be Carlsen's rival for next year's World title match. A few years later, an Indian could be facing the World champion across the chessboard in a title match, for the first time since 2014. It may be no exaggeration to say that India currently possesses the world's most exciting group of chess prodigies. Players such as Arjun Erigaisi (18), Nihal Sarin (17), R. Praggnanandhaa (16), D. Gukesh (15) and Raunak Sadhwani (16) are capable of breaking into the elite of world chess. And there is much promise outside that bunch too, like Bharath Subramanyam, who became India's 73rd Grandmaster on Sunday, at the age of 14. The list of the world's top juniors is a reasonable indicator of the future stars. In the latest list released by FIDE, five of the top 13 are Indians. Among the seniors, Viswanathan Anand continues to be the highest ranked Indian. The five-time World champion, who single-handedly revolutionised chess in the country, is the World No. 16.

It is no mean feat considering Anand is 52 and keeping him company are six other Indians in the top 100. Among countries, India is ranked fifth. In the women's list, Koneru Humpy is ranked third and Dronavalli Harika eleventh. Not many exceptional talents are coming through from among the junior girls, though. That is one deficiency the All India Chess Federation could look into. The federation also needs to do all it can to ensure that Indian chess retains its momentum. Never has it seen so many gifted youngsters making rapid strides on the global stage at the same time. That they are being trained, among others, by Anand is one of the most positive developments in Indian chess in recent times. Conducting a few top-tier tournaments that could pit India's best against the world's strongest, in addition to the large number of open events that are already there, is something the administrators have to do on a regular basis. At present, there is only one; and that too, thanks to Tata Steel. Chess has recently become more mainstream in India, and the huge increase in popularity of live streams of chess events suggests even better days are ahead. If there is a time to tap the huge potential of the game in the country where it originated 15 centuries ago, it is now.

# Extending GST compensation as a reform catalyst

The transition to GST is still in progress and an extension will provide comfort to States to help roll out crucial changes



M. GOVINDA RAO

**I**t has been claimed that the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India was a grand experiment in cooperative federalism in which both the Union and the States joined hands to rationalise cascading domestic trade taxes and evolve a value-added tax on goods and services. Although the rate structure was presumed to be revenue neutral, the States agreed to forgo their revenue autonomy in favour of tax harmonisation. This was in the hope that it would turn out to be a money machine in the medium term due to improved compliance arising from the self-policing nature of the tax.

### The calculation

To allay the fears of States of possible revenue loss by implementing GST in the short term, the Union government promised to pay compensation for any loss of revenue in the evolutionary phase of five years. The compensation was to be calculated as the shortfall in actual revenue collections in GST from the revenue the States would have got from the taxes merged in the GST. This was estimated by taking the revenue from the merged taxes in 2015-16 as the base and applying the growth rate of 14% every year. To finance the compensation requirements, a GST compensa-

tion cess was levied on certain items such as tobacco products, automobiles, coal and solid fuels manufactured from lignite, pan masala and aerated waters.

Unfortunately, the compensation saga was not without controversy. In the first two years of its implementation, the amount of compensation to be paid to the States was modest and the compensation cess was sufficient to meet the requirements. In fact, the cess collections exceeded the compensation requirements by ₹21,466 crore in 2017-18 and ₹25,806 crore in 2018-19.

### Reason for mistrust

In 2018-19, the shortfall in the payment requirement from the cess collections was ₹24,947 crore which could be met from the surpluses of the previous two years kept as balance in the compensation fund. However, in 2020-21, due to the most severe lockdown following the novel coronavirus pandemic, the loss of revenue to States was estimated at ₹3 lakh-crore of which ₹65,000 crore was expected to accrue from the compensation cess. Of the remaining ₹2.35 lakh-crore, the Union government decided to pay ₹1.1 lakh-crore by borrowing from the Reserve Bank of India under a special window and the interest and repayment were to be paid from the collections from compensation cess in the future. However, the entire compensation payment episode plunged the Union-State relationship to a new low, creating humongous mistrust.

The agreement to pay compensation for the loss of revenue was



for a period of five years which will come to an end by June 2022; and considering the uncertainty in revenue collections faced by the States, they are keen that the compensation scheme should continue for another five years.

### Core issues

Although it was hoped that the tax structure would stabilise in the first five years, the reform is still in transition.

First, the technology platform could not be firmed up for a long time due to which the initially planned returns could not be filed. This led to large-scale misuse of input tax credit using fake invoices. The adverse impact on revenue collections due to this was compounded by the pandemic-induced lockdowns.

Second, this is the only major source of revenue for the States and considering their increased spending commitments to protect the lives and livelihoods of people, they would like to mitigate revenue uncertainty to the extent they can. They have no means to cushion this uncertainty for the Fi-

nance Commission which is supposed to take into account the States' capacities and needs in its recommendations; the next Commission's recommendations will be available only in 2026-27. More importantly, the structure of GST needs significant changes and the cooperation of States is necessary to carry out the required reforms.

### A case for amendments

It is very well acknowledged that the structure of GST requires significant reforms. Notably, almost 50% of the consumption items included in the consumer price index are in the exemption list; broadening the base of the tax requires significant pruning of these items.

Second, sooner or later, it is necessary to bring petroleum products, real estate, alcohol for human consumption and electricity into the GST fold.

Third, the present structure is far too complicated with four main rates (5%, 12%, 18% and 28%). This is in addition to special rates on precious and semi-precious stones and metals and cess on 'demerit' and luxury items at rates varying from 15% to 96% of the tax applicable which have complicated the tax enormously. Multiple rates complicate the tax system, cause administrative and compliance problems, create inverted duty structure and lead to classification disputes. Reforming the structure to unify the rates is imperative and this cannot be done without the cooperation of States. They would be unwilling to agree to rationalise rates unless the compensation

payment for the revenue loss is continued.

Thus, extending the compensation payment for the loss of revenue for the next five years is necessary not only because the transition to GST is still underway but also to provide comfort to States to partake in the reform. GST is the most important source of revenue to States and any revenue uncertainty from that source will have a severe adverse effect on public service delivery.

Similarly, reforming the structure to complete the process of transition to a reasonably well-structured GST is important not only to enhance the buoyancy of the tax in the medium term but also to reduce administrative and compliance costs to improve ease of doing business and minimise distortions. It has been pointed out by many including the Fifteenth Finance Commission that the compensation scheme of applying 14% growth on the base year revenue provided for the first five years was far too generous. The issue can be revisited and the rate of growth of reference revenue for calculating compensation can be linked to the growth of GSDP in States to ensure the comfort of minimum certainty on the revenue. This will incentivise them to accomplish the reform in the true spirit of cooperative federalism.

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## Treating the planet well can aid progress

An integrated perspective is necessary as social and environmental problems cannot be addressed in isolation anymore



SRIKUMAR CHATTOPADHYAY

**T**he 2020 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), titled "The Next Frontier - Human Development and the Anthropocene" (<https://bit.ly/3qeEgE3>) proposed a planetary pressure-adjusted Human Development Index (HDI). Ever since the UNDP took up computation of the HDI driven by the vision of Mahbub ul Haq and articulated by Amartya Sen in 1990, there have been adjustments such as inequality-adjusted HDI. Besides, there was computation of several other indices such as Gender Development Index, Gender Inequality Index, and Multidimensional Poverty Index to flag the issues that warranted the attention of policy-makers.

### Human-induced change

The environment is one such issue now considered to be an essential component to be factored in to measure human development. The concept of the planetary boundary was introduced by a group of scientists across the world, led by J. Rockström of the Stockholm Resilience Centre in 2009. This was to highlight that human-induced environmental change can irrevocably destabilise the long-term dynamics of the earth system, thereby disrupting the life-supporting system of the planet. Both global and local evidence indicate that biodiversity loss, climate change, land system/land-use change, disruption of biogeochemical cycles, and scarcity of freshwater availability are a threat and increase the vulnerability of society.

The purpose of the prompt action (Page 1, "Top court to urgently hear hate speech cases", January 11). After identification of such elements, legal provisions should be invoked. It is evident that the hate talk emanating from podiums and in open public gatherings cannot be the handiwork of a single person. A well-crafted and deliberate strategy seems to be in place and at work behind the scenes. Though the Vice-President of India has expressed his strong disapproval of hate speech, there is no doubt that unless there is strong legal action alongwith fast trials,

planetary pressure adjusted HDI, or PHDI, is to communicate to the larger society the risk involved in continuing with existing practices in our resource use and environmental management, and the retarding effect that environmental stress can perpetuate on development.

### Impact on country rankings

When planetary pressure is adjusted, the world average of HDI in 2019 came down from 0.737 to 0.683. This adjustment has been worked out by factoring per capita carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emission (production), and per capita material footprint. The average per capita global CO<sub>2</sub> emission (production) is 4.6 tonnes and the per capita material footprint is 12.3 tonnes.

The global ranking of several countries was altered, in a positive and negative sense, with adjustment of planetary pressure. Switzerland is the only country in the group of high human development countries whose world rank has not changed with adjustment of planetary pressure, although the HDI value of 0.955 has come down to 0.825 after the necessary adjustment. Among 66 very high human development countries, 30 countries recorded a fall in rank values ranging from minus 1 for Germany and Montenegro to minus 131 for Luxembourg. It succinctly brings out the nature of planetary pressure generated by the developed countries and indirectly indicates their responsibility in combating the situation.

In the case of India, the PHDI is 0.626 against an HDI of 0.645 with an average per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emission (production) and material footprint of 2.0 tonnes and 4.6 tonnes, respectively. India gained in global rankings by eight points (131st rank under HDI and 123rd rank under PHDI), and its per capita carbon emission (production) and material footprint are well below the global average.



Challenges in India, SDGs

Nevertheless, India's natural resource use is far from efficient, environmental problems are growing, and the onslaught on nature goes on unabated with little concern about its fallout – as evident from a number of ongoing and proposed projects. At the same time, India has 27.9% people under the Multidimensional Poverty Index ranging from 1.10% in Kerala to 52.50% in Bihar, and a sizable section of them directly depend on natural resources for their sustenance. Kerala has an exemplary achievement in human development with an HDI value of 0.775, well above the all-India average. However, on the environmental front there are several challenges which warrant concrete actions; otherwise, the gains of human development may not be sustained.

The twin challenges of poverty alleviation and environmental safeguarding that former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi first articulated in her lecture during the Stockholm conference on the human environment in 1972 still remain unattended. Fifty years have passed. There is little change in the scenario. In fact, the situation is much more complex now.

Since the Stockholm conference was held, there have been several summits and initiatives by the United Nations, the latest being the adoption of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) with a specific target to meet by 2030. The SDGs have acquired high priority in the context of climate change and its impact on society.

Human-induced climate change has emerged as an important issue of global deliberations. The Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2021 laid stress on limiting global temperature rise at the 1.5°C level and strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty. This was reaffirmed in the Conference of Parties (COP) 26 at Glasgow in 2021.

'No poverty' and 'Zero hunger' are the first and second SDGs. According to NITI Aayog (2020-21), out of 100 points set for the grade of Achiever, India scored 60 (Performer grade, score 50-64) for no poverty and 47 (Aspirant grade, score 0-49) for zero hunger, with wide State-level variations. India's score in the SDGs of 8, 9, and 12 ('Decent work and economic growth'; 'Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure' and 'Responsible Consumption and Production', respectively) – considered for working out planetary pressure – are 61 (performer), 55 (performer) and 74 (front runner), respectively.

### Better awareness now

There are wide gaps in managing the environment. The Chipko movement (1973) in Uttarakhand and the Silent Valley movement (the late 1970s) in Kerala are two of the most well-known modern-day people's movements for environmental protection in India that inspired several other environmental movements during the last five decades. Subsequently, there is now widespread awareness about the environment and several initiatives both at the level of the government and the community.

However, standalone environmental safeguarding actions are not sufficient to navigate the Anthropocene (the 'unofficial unit of geologic time to describe the most recent period in earth's history

when human activity started to have a significant impact on the planet's climate and ecosystems'). It is now well established that there are interdependences of earth system processes including social processes, and their relationships are non-linear and dialectic. Therefore, the central challenge is to nest human development including social and economic systems into the ecosystem, and biosphere building on a systematic approach to nature-based solutions that put people at the core.

### Local level involvement

It is now essential to consider people and the planet as being a part of an interconnected social-ecological system. Social and environmental problems cannot be addressed in isolation anymore; an integrated perspective is necessary. This can be conceived and addressed at the local level, for which India has constitutional provisions in the form of the 73rd and 74th Amendments.

The remarkable advances in earth system science and sustainability research along with enabling technology of remote sensing and geographic information system have helped to document and explain the impact of human activities at the ground level and stimulate new interdisciplinary work encompassing the natural and social sciences. They also provide insights into how to mitigate these impacts and improve life. What is required is a reorientation of the planning process, adoption of a decentralised approach, a plan for proper institutional arrangements, and steps to enable political decisions.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to [letters@thehindu.co.in](mailto:letters@thehindu.co.in) must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

**Stop the hate**  
The rising trend of propagating hate speech poses a serious threat to India's peace and harmony. The question that should be asked is why this is happening whenever elections are around the corner. The answer is obvious – to secure vote banks. Astute politicians do not get involved in such sinister designs directly, but through their extended arms. Such dangerous trends must be eliminated. The Election Commission of India, the law and order machinery, and, above all, the judiciary should take

prompt action (Page 1, "Top court to urgently hear hate speech cases", January 11). After identification of such elements, legal provisions should be invoked. It is evident that the hate talk emanating from podiums and in open public gatherings cannot be the handiwork of a single person. A well-crafted and deliberate strategy seems to be in place and at work behind the scenes. Though the Vice-President of India has expressed his strong disapproval of hate speech, there is no doubt that unless there is strong legal action alongwith fast trials,

there will be no change on the ground. There must also be a strong message from all our top leaders that hate has no place.

RAVI BHUSHAN,  
Kurukshetra, Haryana

■ It is unfortunate that there has been a silence as far as condemning hate speech is concerned. Hate speech amounts to an open call to inflict grievous hurt against an entire community. It is an open secret that right-wing elements in particular carry out dark acts against the minorities, emboldened by the stony silence maintained by the powers that be. One

hopes that the Supreme Court of India renders justice to hapless communities.

THARCIUS S. FERNANDO,  
Chennai

**Election schedule**  
As a citizen of a country which has already entered the third wave of the deadly coronavirus pandemic, I am shocked by the Election Commission of India's decision to announce the election schedule at this point of time. Hasn't the poll body learnt any lesson from last year's election season which preceded the deadly second wave? Has it forgotten the way the Bench

of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy of the Madras High Court came down on it heavily for "not stopping political parties from violating the Covid protocol" in their rallies for Assembly elections? Has Indian democracy become so fragile that it needs to go ahead with elections in such a situation?

RITTICK MUKHERJEE,  
Kolkata

# Hate speech in the time of free speech

It is important that specific and durable legislative provisions be enacted to combat hate speech



MANRAJ SHUNMUGASUNDARAM

The rising frequency of hate speech in India has not gone unnoticed. The Supreme Court has agreed to hear a petition on the events organised by the Hindu Yuva Vahini in Delhi and by Yati Narsinghanand in Haridwar on December 17 and 19, 2021, respectively, wherein calls to violence were made against Muslims. But the laws dealing with hate speech are ineffective and deficient. So, the Supreme Court has been asked to review hate speech laws and various High Courts have been called upon to provide interpretation of ingredients of hate speech. The lack of clear legislative guidance has meant that we are seeing discordant judicial outcomes. Nevertheless, this growing incidence of hate speeches, especially those targeting minorities, in combination with the judicial ambiguity has provided an opportunity to chart legislative reforms.

#### Criminalising hate speech

Hate speech is neither defined in the Indian legal framework nor can it be easily reduced to a standard definition due to the myriad forms it can take. Black's Law Dictionary has defined it as "speech that carries no meaning other than the expression of hatred for some group, such as a particular race, especially in circumstances in which the communication is likely to provoke violence." Building on this, the Supreme Court, in *Pravasi Bhali Sangathan v. Union of India* (2014), described hate speech as "an effort to marginalise individuals based on their membership in a group" and one that "seeks to delegitimise group members in the eyes of the majority, reducing their social standing and acceptance within society."

The current legislative set-up has several provisions to criminalise offences which can be characterised as hate speech. The High Court of Karnataka, in *Campaign Against Hate Speech v. The State of Karnataka* (2020), was of the opinion that the Indian Penal Code illegalises speech-



ISTOCK PHOTO

es that are intended to promote enmity or prejudice the maintenance of harmony between different classes. Specifically, sections of the IPC, such as 153A, which penalises promotion of enmity between different groups; 153B, which punishes imputations, assertions prejudicial to national integration; 505, which punishes rumours and news intended to promote communal enmity, and 295A, which criminalises insults to the religious beliefs of a class by words with deliberate or malicious intention, contribute to combating hate speeches. The Supreme Court has upheld the view that the objective behind such provisions is to "check fissiparous communal and separatist tendencies and secure fraternity so as to ensure the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation".

The Supreme Court, in *State of Karnataka v. Praveen Bhai Thogadai* (2004), emphasised the need to sustain communal harmony to ensure the welfare of the people. In the *Pravasi Bhali Sangathan* case, the Supreme Court underlined the impact hate speech can have on the targeted group's ability to respond and how it can be a stimulus to further attacks.

The Madras High Court has on several instances dealt with the issue of hate speech, characterising it as small spark capable of merely lighting a lamp to destroying a forest. In *G. Thirumurugan Gandhi v. State* (2019), the Madras High Court explained that hate speeches cause discord between classes and that responsibility attached to free speech should not be forgotten. Summing up these legal principles, in *Amish Devgan v. Union of India* (2020), the Supreme Court held that "hate speech has no redeeming or legiti-

mate purpose other than hatred towards a particular group".

Despite judicial guidance from the *Amish Devgan* case, uncertainty around interpretation of hate speech has resulted in the adoption of varying standards. The Madras High Court, in *Maridhas v. State* (2021), quashed an FIR alleging hate speech involving targeting of minorities by holding that the 'YouTuber' is entitled to protection under Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution and distinguished this case from the application of the 'Who? What? Where?' test laid down in the *Amish Devgan* case. Per contra, the Madras High Court, in the case of *F.P. George Ponniah v. Inspector of Police* (2022), gave no relief to the petitioner by holding him to be a person of influence. By doing so, the High Court has failed to appreciate that a YouTuber with more than 4 lakh subscribers and a periodic record of publishing motivated content would have more influence than a priest with a limited audience from an isolated incident. It is trite that statements made by 'persons with influence' having the mere likelihood of breach of peace have to be construed to constitute hate speech.

Unfortunately, divergent decisions from constitutional courts expose the lack of established legal standards in defining hate speech, especially those propagated via the digital medium.

#### Policy prescriptions

The Law Commission of India, in its 267th report, recommended the insertion of two new provisions to criminalise and punish the propagation of hate speech: Section 153C and Section 505A of IPC. Section 153C was

drafted to cover an offence committed when any person uses threatening words which are intended to cause fear, or commands hatred for the purpose of inducing violence through words, spoken or written, visible representation or signs on the grounds of race, caste, religion, sex, gender identity and other characteristics. Section 505A was to include provisions penalising causing of fear, alarm, or provocation of violence. Furthermore, the 189th Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs, in 2015, recommended the incorporation of separate and specific provisions in the Information Technology Act to deal with online hate speech. None of the recommendations have been acted upon and this has partly given rise to ambiguity in construing hate speech by various constitutional courts.

Much of the existing penal provisions deal with hate speech belong to the pre-Internet era. The need of the hour is specialised legislation that will govern hate speech propagated via the Internet and, especially, social media. Reference can be drawn to the Australian federal law called the Criminal Code Amendment Act, 2019, which imposes liability upon Internet service providers if such persons are aware that any abhorrent violent material, which is defined to include material that a reasonable man would regard as offensive, is accessible through the service provided by them.

Action commonly taken against modern-day hate speeches have a whack-a-mole effect wherein the underlying objective of inciting communal disharmony or hatred, despite the detention of the offender, survives through digital or social media platforms for eternity. Thus, taking cue from best international standards, it is important that specific and durable legislative provisions that combat hate speech, especially that which is propagated online and through social media, is enacted by amending the IPC and the Information Technology Act. Ultimately, this would be possible only when hate speech is recognised as a reasonable restriction to free speech.

*Manraj Shunmugasundaram is Advocate, Madras High Court and Spokesperson, DMK. Inputs for the article were provided by Thiagarajan B.*

# Making a case for side hustling

It is time for companies to stop preventing their employees from holding multiple jobs



CHAYANI BHAYANA & NEHARIKA VOHRA

and life, as a route to their next change in job, and as security in case the organisation ran into difficulty. Several spoke of other benefits: they said the side job was a stress buster, added to their self-esteem and confidence, and helped them make good use of their free time.

The opposing perceptions of organisations and employees and acknowledgement of the current context, where organisations are unable to promise lifelong employment, and the ubiquity of gig work, when juxtaposed, highlight the need for organisations to not look at side hustles as a zero-sum game. Having multiple jobs could have the potential for positive spillovers from one domain to the other. For instance, enhanced skills through side projects could be transferred on the job, leading to better performance at work; or a happy employee is likely to be more productive than one who is feeling trapped in the restrictive work contracts.

Rather than look the other way to what employees do outside the organisation or keep forcing archaic contracts and rules, it would perhaps be better for organisations to adapt to make the most of the current reality. It may thus be wiser for organisations and leaders to recognise their own limitations in satisfying the entire gamut of needs of an employee. Denying employees' requests for engaging in side activities might leave them disgruntled and unhappy, resulting in lesser commitment and engagement at work.

#### Individuals with diverse needs

Companies need to recognise that they don't own the employee. It is best to accept that employees are not just employees but individuals with diverse needs, motivations, aspirations, and interests. Rather than create a system where employees are forced to hide what they do in their free time, perhaps it may be more appropriate to create a psychologically safe environment. It would, then, be possible to acknowledge that while the organisation accepts their other parts of work, boundary conditions of the organisation need to be met. Organisations can set boundaries around no use of company resources and proprietary information and time committed to the organisation. Such companies will have an edge over the others. It is time to recognise that stifling opportunities for employees to pursue their passions or building diverse skill sets not only puts the onus back on the organisation to manage the whole individual and his/her career and life but also leaves the employee with little agency.

*Chayani Bhayana is Ph.D. Scholar, IIM Ahmedabad, and Neharika Vohra is Vice Chancellor, Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University*

#### STATE OF PLAY

## Rot in the Malayalam film industry

Neither the course of the 2017 assault case nor the fate of the Hema Committee report instils confidence

#### S. ANANDAN

Malayalam films are going places, with refreshingly new narratives and experiential filmmaking. But that belies the rot that has afflicted the industry, a glimpse of which came in view in 2017 when a popular woman actor bravely stood up against those who abducted and sexually assaulted her in Kochi.

The investigation team soon reached for actor Dileep, who was booked on charges of conspiring to carry out the sexual assault. The case, tried in-camera, has since seen several twists and turns with an unsuccessful demand by the survivor for a change of judge and the resignation of two special prosecutors ostensibly miffed with the trial proceedings. A new case has also been launched against Mr. Dileep, in the wake of a flurry of allegations levelled by one of his former acquaintances, for threatening to harm the police officials probing the sexual assault case.

Back in 2017, the outpouring of solidarity with the survivor was as pronounced as the misogynistic statements from members of the Malayalam film fraternity and the complicit silence of industry bigwigs. Standing with the survivor, a group of women working in Malayalam movies came together to form a 'Women in Cinema Collective' (WCC) with a vision for "equal spaces and equal opportunities for women in cinema" and sought the Chief Minister's intervention to deal with issues of gender bias and workplace harassment in the industry. The move was widely welcomed when the government constituted a three-member committee headed by former High Court Judge K. Hema and comprising veteran actor Sharada and former civil servant K.B. Valsala Kumari to study the gamut of gender issues in the industry. The committee submitted its report in end-2019. It has been kept under wraps ever since.

Two years later, the government's cavalier disregard for the issues

raised in it has riled many women. The culture department officials are reportedly poring over the committee findings and recommendations, but what will become of it is anybody's guess. The government has been largely circumspect in its responses.

Meanwhile, the contention that the report should remain confidential has angered many who had mustered the courage to depose before the committee to recount their horrific experiences. Actor Parvathy Thiruvothu minced no words in calling out the apathy and systemic oppression in the face of what now seems to be an endless wait for justice. Many skeletons such as the existence of sex racket-facilitators in the industry would tumble out if the report was released, she told a news channel. If an actor of her standing fears for her life, the magnitude of the threat is imaginable.

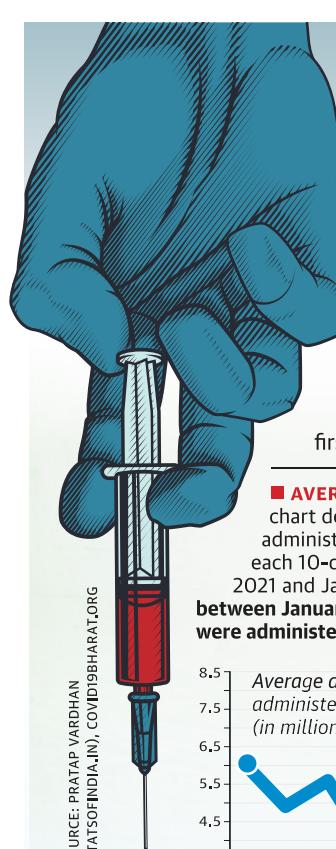
Strikingly, disparity in compensation, an unsafe working environment, sly demand for sexual favours in return for work and denial of work if that's unmet were some of the issues the women in the industry hoped would get addressed by way of an institutional mechanism, maybe a tribunal as in other industries, in the aftermath of the Hema Committee report.

But speaking out has had its consequences, as several of them realised when made to face loss of livelihood. That's one of the reasons many others have chosen to side with the eloquently silent and superstar-driven cine association that works more like a clique of domineering men.

Neither the course of the assault case nor the fate of the Hema Committee report instils confidence in those who seek gender justice and parity in the film industry. But the fight will go on regardless, as the survivor of the assault, who, a few days ago, broke her five years of silence to thank those who stood by her in testing times, and the members of the WCC have pointed out.

*anandan.s@thehindu.co.in*

#### DATA POINT

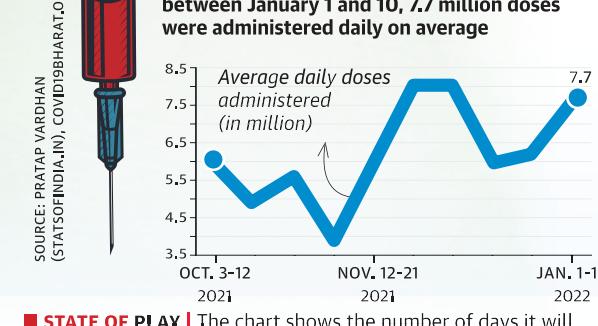


SOURCE: PRATAP VARDHAN (STATSFINDINDIA.ORG), COVID19BHARAT.ORG

## Daily inoculations pick up in January

Several major States, including West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra, will take more than 50 days to fully vaccinate adults if they continue to inoculate at the rate recorded in the first 10 days of January. As of January 10, 62.5% of the country's 15+ population were fully vaccinated, while 87.6% had received at least one dose.

**AVERAGE DAILY DOSES** | The chart depicts the average daily doses administered in the country during each 10-day period between October 3, 2021 and January 10, 2022. For instance, between January 1 and 10, 7.7 million doses were administered daily on average

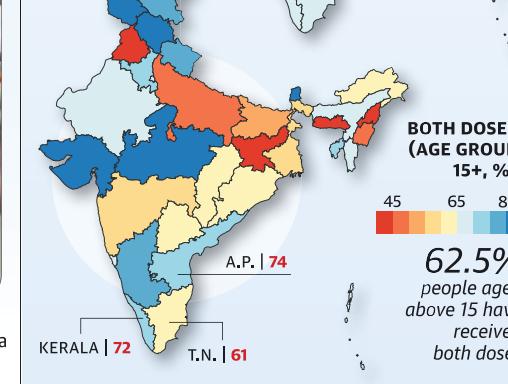
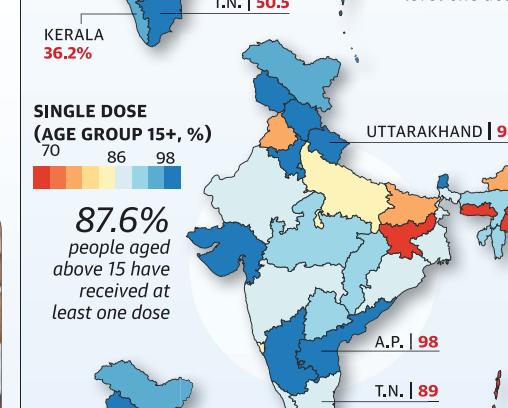


**STATE OF PLAY** | The chart shows the number of days it will take for each State to fully vaccinate its adult population if it continues inoculation at the average daily rate recorded between January 1 and 10

Nagaland	1255
Meghalaya	529
Manipur	399
Puducherry	194
Arunachal	128
Punjab	124
A&N Islands	119
Jharkhand	113
Chandigarh	93
Bihar	88
Goa	77
Maharashtra	65
Mizoram	65
Kerala	61
U.P.	59
W.B.	54
Tripura	52
Telangana	47
Ladakh	46
Assam	43
Tamil Nadu	41
Odisha	40
Chhattisgarh	36
Rajasthan	34
Delhi	31
Lakshadweep	24
A.P.	17
M.P.	14
Karnataka	12
Haryana	11
Uttarakhand	10
D.N.H., DD	2
Gujarat	2
Himachal	0
J&K	0
Sikkim	0

Third shot: Police officers being administered the booster dose in Vijayawada on Tuesday. ■ V RAJU

**SHARE OF POPULATION** | Till January 10, 62.5% of the country's 15+ population were fully vaccinated, while 87.6% had received at least one dose



#### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 12, 1972

Cow and calf not religious symbol

Ahmedabad, Jan. 16: The Gujarat High Court yesterday dismissed an election petition filed against Congress-R supported independent candidate Indulal Yagnik who was returned to the Lok Sabha from the Ahmedabad city constituency in the mid-term poll. The petitioner, Mr. Prasannadas Patwari, had alleged that Mr. Yagnik had used the "religious symbol" of the "Cow and Calf" for furthering his election prospects and had therefore committed a corrupt practice. The court, rejecting the contention, referred to a decision of the Supreme Court in the case of Ramabhai Ashabhai versus Dabhai Ajitkumar where in the court had observed that any particular object, bird or animal could be regarded as a symbol of Hindu religion. The court held that though in India a high spiritual and mystical significance was attached, a pictorial representation of a cow or a calf did not symbolise the religion. The court said that it was not possible to say that by looking at the picture of cow and calf, the whole religious concept was evoked in the mind of the viewer. Even in common experience it was seen that cows were grossly neglected by Hindus and they were left strolling on the roads seeking food from garbage, the court said. If the cows with their ribs and bones projecting out did not evoke any religious sentiments or a protest on the grounds of religion, it was difficult to say that a mere picture of a calf and cow would, it said.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 12, 1922

Bombay Committee

Poona, Jan. 10: After recording evidence at Bombay Ahmedabad and Karachi the Committee appointed by the Bombay Legislative Council to consider the question of the feasibility of introducing compulsory education in the Presidency met at Belgaum last week, Sir Narayan Chandavarkar presiding. Twenty-five witnesses including the Collector of Belgaum and the assistant collector of Dharmar and several well-known gentlemen interested in the question of education were examined at Belgaum, all of whom except one favoured the simultaneous introduction of compulsory education both for boys and girls. The non-official view was generally in favour of the transference of the management and control of schools in the rural areas to either the district or local boards of special education boards, while the official witness from the revenue and Education Departments were in favour of the status quo.

## FROM PAGE ONE

## Ahead of polls in U.P., senior Minister quits

However, Mr. Maurya said his daughter Sanghamitra would continue as a BJP MP and will continue to carry out her promises as MP of Budaun. "My decision has nothing to do with my son or daughter," he said. A five-time MLA, multiple-time minister, and sitting legislator from Padrauna in Kushinagar in Purvanchal, Mr. Maurya held the Labour, Employment and Coordination portfolio in the Yogi Adityanath cabinet. In his resignation letter, Mr. Maurya, who comes from the Kanshiram thread of Bahujan politics, said he had carried out his ministerial duties diligently despite "adverse circumstances" and ideological differences with the BJP.

**BJP's OBC vacuum**  
His departure comes as big loss to the BJP's OBC game plan in east and central U.P. as Mr. Maurya, who spent most of his life in the BSP, is considered a popular face among the most-backward castes especially the Maurya and Kushwaha communities he leads. If he joins the SP, it would come as a further boost to Akhilesh Yadav, who has already stitched key alliances with parties backed by the Maurya, Noniya Chauhan, Kurmi and Rajbhar OBC communities in eastern U.P. The SP chief has worked assiduously to ensure wider acceptability among the numerically crucial and dominant OBCs whom the BJP has been aggressively wooing with welfare schemes, Hindutva discourse and representation.

Following Mr. Maurya's decision, Mr. Yadav welcomed him to the SP, hailing him as a leader who "fights

for social justice and equality."

"There will be a revolution of social justice, there where be a change in 2022," Mr. Yadav said in his tweet in Hindi.

## Crucial departures

MLA Brajesh Kumar Prajapati, who resigned in support of Mr. Maurya, said that in the past five years, Dalit, OBC and minority leaders were not given due respect or importance by the BJP government.

Hailing Mr. Maurya as the "voice of the exploited," Mr. Prajapati said, "he is my leader and I am with him."

Three-time MLA from Tilhar (Shahjahanpur) Roshan Lal Verma said he would follow the course of action decided by Mr. Maurya. Bhagwati Sagar, a four-time Dalit MLA from Bilhar in Kanpur Dehat, who was minister in three Mayawati governments, also said he was leaving the BJP and would follow Mr. Maurya, indicating a soft-corner for the SP.

Responding to the development, U.P. Deputy CM and BJP's Maurya face from the RSS stable Keshav Prasad Maurya appealed to Mr. Swami Prasad Maurya to reconsider his decision and hold talks. "Decisions taken in haste often prove to be wrong," Mr. Keshav Prasad tweeted.

Sidharth Nath Singh, BJP government spokesperson, was more critical. He questioned Mr. Swami Prasad Maurya's claim to do politics of the backward castes when he was leaving the only party which works for Dalits, poor and farmers to ride the "punctured cycle of the SP", he said.

Curiously, Mr. Saraswati is

## Pawar says people want + change, strikes deal

"The people of U.P. have realised that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has not fulfilled a single promise it made and therefore, this State will see change this time," he added.

Slamming the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for his comment of 80% people with him and 20% against him, Mr. Pawar said that such statement from a Chief Minister of a State is shameful.

"He said what he believes in. But this shows that communal thoughts must be countered to maintain unity

and tolerance in the country and we are confident that people of Uttar Pradesh will vote against it," he said.

Mr. Pawar said that the NCP will be contesting five seats in Manipur and is in talks with the Congress, Shiv Sena, Trinamool Congress for seat sharing in Goa.

"It is required that the BJP government in Goa is removed from its position for which a coalition is necessary. Prafull Patel from NCP, Sanjay Raut from Shiv Sena and Congress leaders are holding talks for the same," he said.

## Not here to administer Mullaperiyar Dam: SC

The court's stern words had come after Kerala filed an application complaining that Tamil Nadu was releasing water from the dam at the middle of the night without any prior warning, endangering the lives of thousands living downstream. Kerala said Tamil Nadu should inform 24 hours before opening the shutters to release water.

The court had said it was up to the supervisory committee to consider the need for release of water from the dam and when or how it should be released.

"Political statements are being made here and such statements cannot be made in court. Let there be a dispassionate approach. Appli-

cations cannot come here on a daily basis. This is all generated by somebody's ingenuity," Justice Khanwilkar had remarked.

Tamil Nadu, in an affidavit, had said the safety of the dam was supported by reports of the expert committee and the empowered committee after extensive study. It said the height of storage level of the dam at 142 ft. was endorsed by the Supreme Court in 2014 in a judgment.

Kerala, in turn, had demanded a reconsideration of the rule curve as the dam is situated in a seismic zone. It had accused Tamil Nadu of adopting an "obsolete" gate operation schedule dating back to 1939.

## India's passport rank improves to 83 from 90

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

India's passport power has improved this quarter compared to 2021. It now ranks at 83<sup>rd</sup> position in the Henley Passport Index, climbing seven places from 90<sup>th</sup> rank last year. However, in 2020, its rank stood at 84 while in 2016, India was ranked 85<sup>th</sup> along with Mali and Uzbekis-

tan. Japan and Singapore top the index. The current rankings are for first quarter of 2022 and India shares the position with Sao Tome and Principe in Central Africa, behind Rwanda and Uganda.

Since 2005, Henley Passport Index ranks world's passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without

## SC to hear plea seeking probe into Haridwar hate speech today

'Speeches calling for genocide pose a grave threat to unity and integrity of country'

## LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

A three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana is scheduled on Wednesday (January 12) to urgently hear a petition seeking the arrest and trial of people who made hate speeches, inciting violence towards Muslims, at the Haridwar Dharma Sansad.

The other judges on the Bench are Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli.

Chief Justice Ramana had on Monday assured senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing in the petition, that the court would list the case quickly.

The hate speeches consisted of open calls for genocide of Muslims in order to achieve ethnic cleansing.

The speeches are not mere hate speeches but amount to an open call for murder of an entire community. The speeches, thus, pose a grave threat not just to the unity



**United stand:** People staging a protest in Dehradun against the Haridwar hate speeches, in this January 1 photo. •PTI

and integrity of our country but also endanger the lives of millions of Muslim citizens," the petitioners, former High Court judge Anjana Prakash and journalist Qurban Ali, had highlighted in the top court.

"We are living in different times where slogans in the country have changed from *Satyamev Jayate* to *Shashtramev Jayate*," Mr. Sibal had submitted in court during

the oral mentioning on Monday. The senior lawyer had said no investigation or arrests had been made despite the registration of FIRs. Video footage raises suspicions of the police being hand in glove with the orators of hate. The hate speeches were allegedly delivered between December 17 and 19, 2021 in Haridwar by Yati Nar singhanand and in Delhi by the 'Hindu Yuva Vahini'. The

blatant inaction by the police also came into the forefront when a police officer's video went viral on the Internet, wherein one of speakers openly acknowledged the officer's allegiance with the organisers and speakers of the *Dharma Sansad*... the police authorities are hand in glove with the perpetrators of communal hate," the petitioners argued.

## Multiple FIRs against hate speech accused

Even slapping Goondas Act on Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati has been 'ineffective'

## ANUJ KUMAR

GHAZIABAD

With the Supreme Court agreeing to hear the Haridwar Dharma Sansad hate speech case, the focus has again shifted on Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati, the chief priest of the Dasna Temple in Ghaziabad and mahamandaleshwar of the influential Ju na Akhada.

The petitioners have said it had already been almost a month but no action had been taken by the Uttarakhand police on the FIR lodged against him and several others.

Curiously, Mr. Saraswati is

facing at least 10 FIRs in Ghaziabad as well, and the U.P. police has filed chargesheet in at least two of them. More importantly, the attempt to slap the U.P. Control of Goondas Act, 1970, on Mr. Saraswati hasn't yielded results in more than two months.

After the news came out in October 2021, Mr. Saraswati told reporters that if the Act was imposed against him, he would stage a sit-in protest at the Chief Minister's residence in Lucknow.

This is not the first such report, officials said. A similar report was allowed to lapse a few years ago.

Admitting it was a Catch-22 situation, Pawan Kumar, Senior Superintendent of Police, Ghaziabad, said after Mr. Saraswati's vile statements against women politicians, especially those of the BJP, went viral on social media and drew widespread condemnation, three FIRs were registered against him and a report recommending imposition of the Goondas Act was submitted by the police to the magistrate. "The magistrate had asked whether the case was covered under the Goondas Act or not. The location where the said statements were made was not clear.

D.P. Singh, the then Sub-Divisional Magistrate said he did send the report back to the police for re-examination but refused to specify the details. Meanwhile, a call has been made for Dharam Sansads in Ghaziabad and Aligarh. "He hasn't sought permission from us yet," said Mr. Kumar.

Now, the report is under legal scrutiny."

Mr. Kumar added there was a provision in the Act that a complaint should come from the locality where the person resides. "In this case, there has not been any such complaint."

D.P. Singh, the then Sub-Divisional Magistrate said he did send the report back to the police for re-examination but refused to specify the details. Meanwhile, a call has been made for Dharam Sansads in Ghaziabad and Aligarh. "He hasn't sought permission from us yet," said Mr. Kumar.

## SIT submits report on Naga killings

Over 60 witnesses questioned: officer

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted to probe the killing of 14 civilians in Nagaland's Mon district submitted its preliminary report to the State government on January 9, four days after the stipulated time.

A senior official privy to the probe declined to disclose the contents of the provisional report that was prepared after the five-member SIT examined more than 60 witnesses and also interrogated members of an elite force of the Army said to have carried out the botched operation on December 4.

## Final report not yet

"It will take some time for the final report to be submitted. Reports are awaited from the Central Forensic Science Laboratory, that is the reason," the official said.

"We have completed the examination of the Army personnel in Assam's Jorhat who were reportedly involved in the massacre at Oting village. The other aspects of the investigation are going smoothly," the official added.

On January 10, Konyak ci-



A file photo of Nagas protesting against the killing of 14 civilians in Mon. •AP

their action plan over the delay in booking the culprits of the killings. The Konyak Nagas are the dominant community in the Mon district.

Among the demands of the Konyak organisations is the trial of all the officers and jawans involved in the killing of the 14 civilians in an "applicable civil court".

Soldiers of the Army's elite unit on December 4 gunned down six coal miners near Oting village in a botched operation, "mistaking" them to be extremists. Seven more people were killed when the villagers, alarmed by the gunshots, attacked the soldiers. Another person was killed in Mon, the district headquarters, when the security forces opened fire on a mob that attacked an Assam Rifles camp to protest the killings.

## BrahMos advanced variant test fired

The extended range naval version of the missile was launched from a destroyer

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

An extended range sea-to-sea variant of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was test fired on Tuesday from the recently commissioned stealth guided missile destroyer INS Visakhapatnam.

"Advanced sea-to-sea variant of BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was tested from INS Visakhapatnam today. Missile hit the designated target ship precisely," the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) said.

The successful test-firing certifies the accuracy of the ship's combat system and armament complex and also validates a new capability the missile provides the Navy and the nation, the Navy



**Blazing a trail:** The advanced variant of BrahMos supersonic cruise missile being tested from INS Visakhapatnam. •PTI

said. "Augurs very well for Aatma Nirbhar Bharat and provides the Navy yet another shot in the arm," it added.

## Mission readiness

Congratulating scientists on the successful test firing, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh

## Maurya defends right of Sansad speakers

U.P. Deputy CM walks out of interview

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya walked out of a BBC interview on Monday, annoyed at questions on the BJP government's silence over hate speeches made at the Haridwar Dharma Sansad last month. Mr. Maurya also defended the right of the *dharma charyas* (religious leaders) to express their views from their platform.



Keshav Prasad Maurya

accused Yati Narasimhanand was from Ghaziabad and Annarpura from Aligarh, asking why action had not been taken against the kind of atmosphere they were creating, Mr. Maurya said, "Nobody tries to create an environment, what is the right thing, what is the wrong thing, what is appropriate in their platform, they would say..."

He then turned on the reporter, accusing him of speaking like an "agent" and not as a journalist. In the video posted by BBC Hindi, Mr. Maurya is then seen removing his lapel mic. The BBC, in its report, said once the camera was switched off, Mr. Maurya pulled the reporter's mask and directed his security personnel to forcibly delete the video.

The cameraman managed to recover the deleted video – the video has been deleted from both the cameras, it was confirmed by the security personnel of K.P. Maurya, but the video could be recovered from the camera chip," the BBC report said.

The BBC said it had officially sent a complaint to the BJP national president, the party's State president, and the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, expressing serious objection to the incident, but no response had been received so far.

Russia and is capable of being launched from land, sea, sub-sea and air against surface and sea-based targets, with a range capped at 290 km initially.

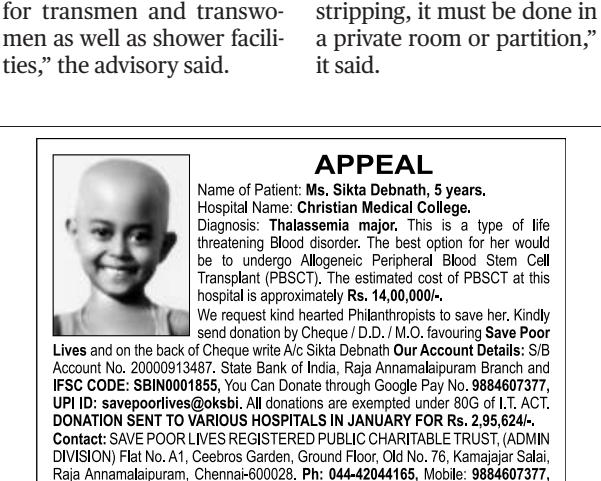
The range of the missile was originally capped at 290 km as per obligations of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). Following India's entry into the club in June 2016, officials said the range would be extended to 450 km and to 600 km at a later stage. An extended range missile had been tested earlier.

INS Visakhapatnam, with a displacement of 7,400 tonnes, is the first of four ingeniously designed and built Project-15B class stealth guided missile destroyers and was commissioned in November 2021.

## Safeguard transgender prisoners: Centre

closure for transgender prisoners, due care may be taken by the prison authorities that this may not result in their complete isolation or propagate social stigma among such prisoners," it said.

"There should also be adequate preservation of right to privacy and dignity of the person being searched. At the stage where the search procedure requires stripping, it must be done in a private room or partition," it said.



**APPEAL**  
Name of Patient: Ms. Smita Debnath, 5 years.  
Hospital Name: Old M.C. Hospital, Cuttack.  
Diagnosis: Thalassemic major. This is a type of life threatening blood disorder. The best option for her would be to undergo Allogeneic Peripheral Blood Stem Cell Transplant (PBSCT). The estimated cost of PBSCT at this hospital is approximately Rs. 14,00,000.  
We request kind hearted Philanthropists to save her. Kindly send donation by Cheque / D.D. / M.O. favouring Save Poor Lives Foundation, Old M.C. Hospital, Cuttack.  
IFSC CODE: SBIN001855, State Bank of India, Raja Annamalaiapuram Branch and UPI ID: savepoorlives@ksbti. All donations are exempted under 80G of I.T ACT.  
DONATION SENT TO VARIOUS HOSPITALS IN JANUARY FOR 2022.  
Contact: SAVE POOR LIVES REGISTERED PUBLIC CHARITABLE

# Chief Minister Channi missing as Sidhu rolls out 'Punjab Model'

Event by PCC chief came as Cong. president Sonia set up election committees

VIKAS VASUDEVA  
CHANDIGARH

Even as the Congress party has promised to fight the upcoming Assembly election in Punjab under a "collective leadership", the absence of Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and former party State president Sunil Jakhar's photographs at PCC chief Navjot Singh Sidhu's press conference on Tuesday indicates that fissures in the party remain.

At the press conference, Mr. Sidhu launched the 'Punjab Model' that according to him would bring back power to the hands of people.

The banner at the event included only photographs of AICC president Sonia Gandhi, former president Rahul Gandhi, general secretary Priyanka Gandhi and Mr. Sidhu.

Interestingly, Mr. Sidhu



**Poll mode:** Punjab Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu addressing a press conference in Chandigarh on Tuesday. • PTI

launched his 'Punjab Model' even as Ms. Gandhi set up a 'manifesto committee' for the Punjab election.

Mr. Sidhu said the Punjab Model was formulated in consultation with the party's Punjab affairs general secretary.

Unveiling policies on issues such as liquor, sand mining, cable TV and trans-

sport, Mr. Sidhu asserted that the State and its people should wake up to the possibility of change and unravel the potential of the schemes announced by the PCC. This time, people will elect their Chief Minister based on the futuristic agenda, he said, adding, "These changes will transform the landscape of the people and lead us to a

prosperous Punjab." He said the aim was to utilise the State's resources to the maximum and generate maximum revenue possible so that the same can be invested in the development of people.

## 'Convince party first'

The event on Tuesday came days after Mr. Jakhar stated that before going and convincing the public of the benefits of his 'Punjab Model', Mr. Sidhu should first convince the party and get it adopted by the party, and not just go ahead with it as an individual's model.

Congress spokesperson and national general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala had recently stated that Mr. Channi, Mr. Sidhu and Mr. Jakhar would together lead the party in Punjab for the upcoming election.

# After HC bail, Majithia trades charges with Randhawa

Akali leader alleges Cong. vendetta; Minister cites drug charge

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Former Minister and Shiromani Akali Dal leader Bikram Singh Majithia on Tuesday accused Congress leaders, including Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and Home Minister Sukhinder Randhawa, of conspiring against him and indulging in political vendetta.

The Home Minister hit back saying the Akali leader was "rejoicing shamelessly over his interim bail, but he should remember that he is not a 'freedom fighter' but a 'drug peddler' on the run and the Akali leader will have to soon pay for his sins against Punjab and its youth".

Addressing a press conference a day after he was granted interim bail and stay on arrest by the Punjab and Haryana High Court, Mr. Ma-



Mr. Majithia said, "Never before in the history of the State have three DGPs and four Directors of the Bureau of Investigation been changed in such a short period."

Mr. Majithia also alleged that there has been a complete politicisation of the police force in Punjab under the present Congress regime. "The clearance to compromise the safety of Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his recent visit to Ferozepur was a well-planned conspiracy, which was hatched at the Chief Minister's residence with the CM himself and the Home Minister being the prime conspirators," he alleged.

Responding to the Akali leader's allegations, Mr. Randhawa, in a statement, said Mr. Majithia can't escape from the punishment for the crime.

# Five-phase panchayat polls in Odisha

STAFF REPORTER  
BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha State Election Commission (SEC) on Tuesday announced that panchayat polls in the State will be held in five phases between February 16 and 24.

State Election Commissioner Aditya Prasad Padhi announced a complete ban on political rallies in view of the rising COVID-19 cases.

After a gap of five years, 2,79,352 voters will elect their representatives for 853 zilla parishad seats, 6,794 in gram panchayats and 91,916 in wards on February 16, 18, 20, 22 and February 24 between 7 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Counting of votes will take place at the block headquarters on February 26, 27 and 28.

The model code of conduct will remain in force between January 11 and February 28.

Mr. Padhi said guideline issued by the Election Commission of India for the upcoming State elections would be followed. A gathering of not more than five persons, including candidates, would be allowed. Public rallies have been prohibited in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Candidates can take the help of digital medium to reach out to their voters. There will be no victory rallies. Candidates and party will be penalised if they violate guideline issued under the Disaster Management Act 2005. Only people with negative RT-PCR or antigen tests will be allowed into the counting hall.

The SEC has announced the election dates despite resistance from Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party and Congress.

# Lalu invites KCR to enter national politics

Leader of Opposition in Bihar Assembly Tejashwi meets Telangana Chief Minister

N. RAHUL  
HYDERABAD

Rashtriya Janata Dal president and former Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad on Tuesday invited Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao to take the lead in national politics in the fight against the BJP.

The invitation came in the midst of a meeting between Mr. Rao and Mr. Prasad's son and Leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Assembly Tejashwi Yadav at the former's camp office.

Significantly, Mr. Tejashwi called on Mr. Rao three days after the general secretaries of the CPI and the CPI(M) met Mr. Rao separately to discuss the unity of parties to pull down the BJP-led government at the Centre.

As Mr. Tejashwi and Mr. Rao were discussing the "anarchic rule" of the BJP at the Centre, the latter called up Mr. Tejashwi's father over phone. The RJD chief urged Mr. Rao to play a role at the



**Reaching out:** RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav with Telangana CM K. Chandrasekhar Rao in Hyderabad. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

lowed to go to ruins. "You must take the lead," he told Mr. Rao.

Earlier at the meeting, Mr. Tejashwi and Mr. Rao were of the view that there was an urgent need for democratic and secular forces to unite to reject the divisive and undemocratic policies of the BJP. The two leaders came to the conclusion that an action plan should be chalked out shortly in the struggles against the BJP, sources said.

The struggles of parties at the national level should be focussed on intensifying the unity of secular and democratic forces. The message was instantly conveyed to Mr. Prasad over phone, they added. Mr. Tejashwi enquired about the welfare programmes of the Telangana government and development of agriculture and irrigation sectors in the State. They also discussed the latest political situation in Uttar Pradesh which is going to the polls.

## 'Unite against BJP'

Mr. Prasad also insisted that all secular parties should unite to rid the country of the anarchic rule of the BJP. The country should not be al-

# Guild seeks SC probe into Tek Fog app row

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

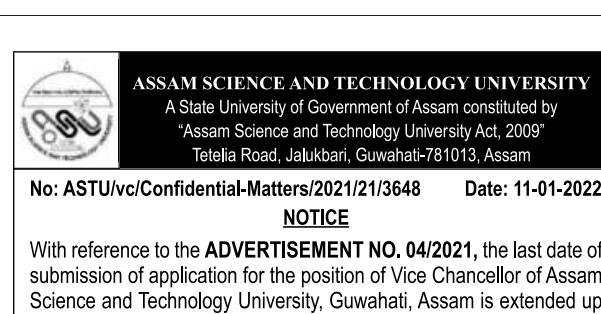
In view of the latest revelations made in the news portal *The Wire*, which laid bare an extensive and well-funded network built around an app, Tek Fog, for cyberbullying journalists, the Editors Guild has demanded that the Supreme Court should take cognisance of the matter and order a probe.

The Guild also urged the government to take steps to dismantle this "misogynistic and abusive digital ecosystem".

In a statement here, the Guild said there should be a thorough investigation to identify and punish all the people working for the app. It was disturbing to note, the statement said, that most of the attacks were targeted at journalists who had been critical of the current government and the ruling party. "This is a travesty of all democratic norms, and in violation of law," it added. The purpose of the app, the Guild said, was to "instil fear" and prevent journalists from doing their job.

## Offensive apps

Separately, the Guild also highlighted the case of offensive apps which targeted Muslim women. Though the police have made a few arrests, the Guild sought further investigation "in order to ensure that all those behind such despicable acts, even beyond those arrested, are brought to justice".



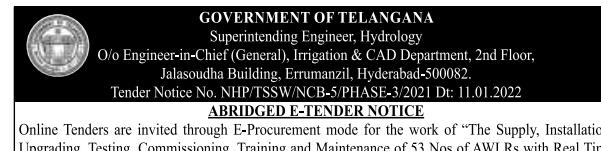
No: ASTU/vc/Confidential-Matters/2021/3648 Date: 11-01-2022

## NOTICE

With reference to the ADVERTISEMENT NO. 04/2021, the last date of submission of application for the position of Vice Chancellor of Assam Science and Technology University, Guwahati, Assam is extended up to 31-01-2022.

For details about the University, application format and eligibility for the position, the website: [www.astu.ac.in](http://www.astu.ac.in) may be visited.

Sd/- Registrar  
Janasanyog No.DF/2449/21



GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA  
Superintending Engineer, Hydrology  
O/o Engineer-in-Chief (General), Irrigation & CAD Department, 2nd Floor,  
Jalasoudha Building, Errumanzi, Hyderabad-500082.  
Tender Notice No. NHP/TSSW/NCH-5/PHASE-3/2021 Dt: 11.01.2022

ABRIDGED E-TENDER NOTICE

Online Tenders are invited through E-procurement mode for the work of "The Supply, Installation, Upgrading, Testing, Commissioning, Training and Maintenance of 53 Nos of AWLRs with Real Time Data Acquisition System (RTDAS) for selected Barrages, Reservoirs and Rivers/ Streams for Surface Water sector in Telangana and integrate with Global Location Center located at Hyderabad, Telangana - Phase - II", from reputed firms in India. Detailed Tender document will be available on eprocurement portal i.e. [Yours sincerely,  
Sd/- Dt. 11.01.2022, Superintending Engineer \(H\),  
O/o Engineer-in-Chief \(General\)](https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/appfrom: 12/01/2022 @ 3.00 p.m. to 11/02/2022 upto 3.00 p.m. Last Date and Time for Bid Submission: 11/02/2022 by 3.00 P.M. The bid forms and other details can be seen in the notifications in the website: www.hmda.gov.in, Contact Person: Smt. Ch. Parva Jyoti, Superintending Engineer-H, O/o Engineer-in-Chief (General), Mobile: 09849909811, e-mail: ce@hmda.gov.in, Pre-Bid Meeting date: 19-01-2022 at 11:30AM @ O/o Chief Engineer, 7th Floor, Swarna Jayanti Complex, Ameerpet, Hyderabad. Proposals Last date of submission: 28-01-2022 upto 15:00 Hrs (IST). DIPR No.2556-PP-CL-Agency/ADVT/1/2021-22, Dt:11-01-2022</p>
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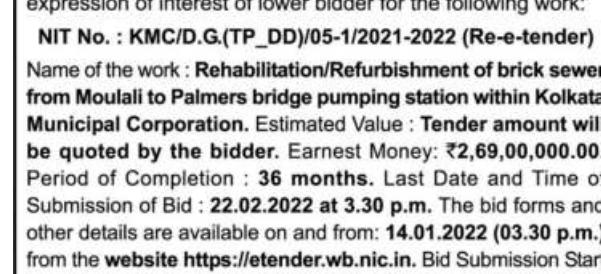
HYDERABAD METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
[O/o The Chief Engineer, 7th Floor East Wing, Swarna Jayanti Commercial Complex, Ameerpet, Hyd-500082]  
Tender Notice No. HMDA/DEV/C/E/16/2021-22, Date : 11-01-2022

REMEDIATION OF HUSSAIN SAGAR LAKE IN HYDERABAD, TELANGANA, INDIA

Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority invites Global Bidding for Request for Proposal (RFP) to Design, Procure, Implement Proven technological intervention to arrest odour nuisance, algal bloom and to improve water quality from the reputed National / International agencies in single stage three cover system. (Cover-I-Eligibility Criteria, Cover-II-Technical Proposals, Cover-III-Financial Proposals). The scope of work, eligibility criteria and other details can be seen in the notifications in the website: [www.hmda.gov.in](http://www.hmda.gov.in), Contact Person: Smt. Ch. Parva Jyoti, Superintending Engineer-H, O/o Engineer-in-Chief, 7th Floor, Swarna Jayanti Complex, Ameerpet, Hyderabad. Proposals Last date of submission: 28-01-2022 upto 15:00 Hrs (IST). DIPR No.2556-PP-CL-Agency/ADVT/1/2021-22, Dt:11-01-2022

REMEDIAL WORKS FOR HUSSAIN SAGAR LAKE

REMEDIAL WORKS FOR HUSSAIN SAGAR LAKE



KOLKATA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION e-TENDER

ABRIDGED NIT

The Director General (TP&DD), KMC invites re-e-tender online expression of interest of lower bidder for the following work:

NIT No. : KMC/D.G.(TP\_DD)/05-1/2021-22 (Re-e-tender)

Name of the work : Rehabilitation/Refurbishment of brick sewer from Mouli to Palmers bridge pumping station within Kolkata Municipal Corporation. Estimated Value : Tender amount will be quoted by the bidder. Earnest Money: ₹2,69,00,000.00.

Period of Completion : 36 months. Last Date and Time of Submission of Bid : 22.02.2022 at 3.30 p.m. The bid forms and other details are available on and from: 14.01.2022 (3.30 p.m.) from the website <https://etender.wb.nic.in>. Bid Submission Start Date (Online) : 14.01.2022 (3.30 p.m.)

(776/21-22)



TNPL - MAKER OF BUGASSÉ BASED ECO-FRIENDLY PAPER

DIPR/168/Tender/2022



TNPL - MAKER OF BUGASSÉ BASED ECO-FRIENDLY PAPER

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DIPR/168/Tender/2022



TNPL - MAKER OF BUGASSÉ BASED ECO-FRIENDLY PAPER

DIPR/168/Tender/2022



TNPL - MAKER OF BUGASSÉ BASED ECO-FRIENDLY

# India records a whopping 1.85 lakh cases

Highest single-day rise in infections in the third and ongoing wave; active cases cross nine-lakh mark

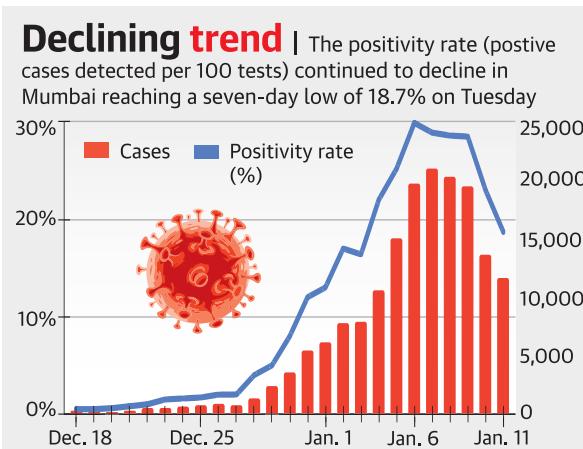
## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM  
The number of COVID-19 cases in Mumbai declined for the fourth consecutive day, with the city recording 11,647 infections on Tuesday. The positivity rate, which indicates the number of positive cases per 100 tests conducted, also reached a seven-day low of 18.7%.

The initial data from the city, which recorded more than 1.75 lakh cases in the past 40 days, indicates a possible early flattening of the case curve.

Data from Delhi and Chennai too hinted at a possible slowdown of the spread of infections. In Delhi, 21,529 cases were recorded on Tuesday. While the positivity rate rose slightly above 25%, the pace of increase in cases has slowed down. A similar trend was recorded in Chennai too on Tuesday.

However, the national le-



vel numbers continued to rise, recording 1,85,189 cases on Tuesday. This is India's highest-single day rise in infections in the third and ongoing wave. With this, the number of active cases crossed the nine-lakh mark.

According to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), the bed occupancy in Mumbai dropped to

19.9% on Tuesday compared with 21.0% on Monday.

On January 7, Mumbai had recorded 20,971 cases, the highest single-day rise during the present wave. Since then, the numbers have been declining. However, sources within the civic body said the downward trend in cases cannot be seen as the plateauing of the case curve

and that no conclusions can be reached at this point in time. The data that emerges over the next week may reveal the trend.

Odisha on Tuesday recorded one of the sharpest spikes in COVID-19 cases when 7,071 new cases were reported in the past 24 hours. The growth rate in

## COVID-19

new cases was 46%, compared with the previous day.

Telangana reported 1,920 new cases on Tuesday when 83,157 samples were tested in the past 24 hours. For the third consecutive day, the new cases reported remained below the 2,000 mark. Two new deaths were reported on Tuesday.

Karnataka on Tuesday reported 14,473 new cases with Bengaluru Urban alone accounting for 10,800 cases.

The test positivity rate touched 7.7%. As many as 1,40,452 tests were conducted in the past 24 hours.

Andhra Pradesh again reported a spike in infections, with 1,831 fresh cases in the 24 hours ending Tuesday morning. It was the highest single-day tally in the past five months (152 days). The number of active cases jumped to 7,195, the highest caseload in the State in the past three months.

The case graph of Kerala rose steeply, with 9,066 persons testing positive in 24 hours. The total number of samples tested was 63,898. The growth rate of new cases was 100% in the week from January 4-10, in comparison to the previous week.

Assam had 2,837 new cases of COVID-19 when 49,840 samples were tested on Tuesday. The test positivity rate was 5.69%, up from 4.49% on January 10.

# 'Omicron variant behind current surge in cases'

Rise expected to continue for a few weeks, says N.K. Arora

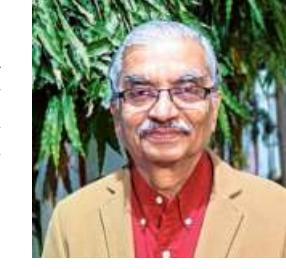
## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI  
The current surge in COVID-19 cases is driven mostly by the Omicron variant, a top health expert in India said on Tuesday.

He said the rise in numbers was expected to continue for the next few weeks. At present, COVID deaths were being reported mostly among those with co-morbidities, the expert said.

Following the continued spike in cases across India, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Tuesday held a virtual meeting with members of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) to discuss the clinical treatment guidelines and measures to be brought in to ensure that correct information was provided to the public.

"Most COVID-19 cases in India currently seem to be driven by the Omicron variant," said N.K. Arora, who heads the National Techni-



N.K. Arora

a faster and taller peak is likely to occur. On the other hand, vaccination and administrative actions such as night curfews and weekend curfews tend to flatten the curve," he said.

He said the initial experience from the genomic surveillance showed that from 10 days to two weeks, over 90% of the virus circulating in big cities like Delhi, Pune and Mumbai was the Omicron variant.

However, the Delta variant cases were not completely out and some districts of Tamil Nadu and the areas of the northeastern States were still reporting the cases.

Dr. Arora said that as per reports, most of the COVID-19 deaths were associated with patients with comorbidities.

"About 85% of the deaths being reported are from people above 60 years of age," he added.

# No Molnupiravir: ICMR team

It says drug is not of much benefit in COVID-19 treatment

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI  
The ICMR's National Task Force for COVID-19 has decided against including anti-viral drug Molnupiravir in the Clinical Management Protocol for COVID-19 as of now, official sources said on Tuesday.

The court said the Chief Secretary, Government of West Bengal, would be personally liable to ensure the compliance of above directions and the directions contained in the January 7 order.

**State against ban**  
While public health experts have expressed concern over holding the annual pilgrimage, the West Bengal government, in an affidavit in the court on January 6, had informed that it was not in favour of banning the Ganga-sagar Mela at this stage in view of the arrangements already made.



Molnupiravir got the Drug Regulator General of India's approval on Dec. 28, 2021.

restricted use in emergencies. Mutagenesis is a process by which the genetic information of an organism is changed by the production of mutation.

"Members of the National Task Force for COVID-19 were not in favour of including the drug in the national

treatment guidelines citing that it does not have much benefit in the treatment of coronavirus infection and that there were safety concerns," an official source said.

Indian Council of Medical Research chief Balram Bhargava had said Molnupiravir had major safety concerns. He added that the World Health Organization and the U.K. had not included it for treatment. He said this drug could cause defects in a developing foetus and could damage the muscles also.

"Contraception will have to be done for three months for male and female if this drug is given because the child born could be problematic due to teratogenic influence," he said.

# More curbs for Ganga Sagar mela

Calcutta High Court says negative RT-PCR report must for attending event

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA



A Dec. 30 photo of workers carrying a makeshift room as preparations are under way for the Ganga Sagar Mela. ■ PTI

ative of the Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission.

The State government submitted before the court that the committee "should not only be an independent one but it should not have a political member".

The High Court said that

when it had issued an order on January 7 it was not made known to it that the posts of the Chairman, Human Rights Commission, and the Secretary of the West Bengal Human Rights Commission were vacant.

"To avoid any misappre-

hension in the mind of the applicants or the State, we deemed it proper to reconstitute the committee with the retired judge of this High Court as chairperson to review the situation on the spot at the Ganga Sagar Island," the Bench said.

The court said the Chief Secretary, Government of West Bengal, would be personally liable to ensure the compliance of above directions and the directions contained in the January 7 order.

**State against ban**  
While public health experts have expressed concern over holding the annual pilgrimage, the West Bengal government, in an affidavit in the court on January 6, had informed that it was not in favour of banning the Ganga-sagar Mela at this stage in view of the arrangements already made.

# Habib apologises to NCW over disrespect to women

In viral video, hair stylist applies saliva on a woman's head

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Celebrity hair stylist Javed Habib appeared before the National Commission for Women (NCW) and submitted a written apology after a video of him spitting on a woman's head went viral last week.

"Mr. Habib appeared before the Commission and stated that he didn't intend

to hurt or disrespect anyone and submitted a written apology. NCW has directed him to ensure that such a thing is not repeated," the Commission posted on Twitter.

The NCW has also written to the Uttar Pradesh DGP on the issue. An FIR has been registered against Mr. Habib at a police station in Muzaf-farnagar, where the incident

took place at a workshop he was conducting. The video which went viral shows Mr. Habib using his saliva to style a woman's hair during a live demonstration.

Later, the hair stylist apologised for his actions in a video message on Instagram. "I was conducting a seminar. These are often long shows and we try to make them humorous," he had said.

Following a tip off on the possession of a rare antique

One arrested for illegal possession  
**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI  
The Idol Wing CID Police on Tuesday seized 11 idols, including eight antique ones, from an art shop in Mamallapuram. The police also arrested Javed Shah, a native of Srinagar in Kashmir, who was running the shop, on the charge of illegal possession and further interrogation is on.

Following a tip off on the possession of a rare antique



One of the seized idols.

## SUDOKU

6	4	9		8				
8	3		6					
	7			1	9			
		8		5				
3	8		9	6				
5	9							
2	8		6					1
	7	4	3					
1		8	7	5				

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

## Solution to puzzle 13451

L	A	B	O	R	S	T	A	L	L	S	S
I	E	N	D	O	O	O					
I	N	C	A	S	T	M	A	C	H	I	G
E	S	C	C	S	E	B					
B	A	N	T	E	R	U	N	T	E	D	D
G	E	M	S	G	A						
S	C	O	F	F	A	R	O	M	A		
E	T	N	I	R	E	N	E	N	I		
D	E	B	O	N	A	I	R	N	E	D	E
R	V	N	I	E	N	E	D	E	R		
F	O	R	E	G	N	E	D	E	R		
O	R	L	S	I	U	F					
T	A	S	S	E	L	C	A	B	I	N	S

## Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

7	2	4	5	6	1	9	3	8
6	1	9	3	8	2	5	4	7
5								

# Lockdown in China amid Omicron fears

Despite zero COVID policy, cities report fresh cases in run-up to Winter Olympics, Chinese New Year

ANANTH KRISHNAN  
HONG KONG

Several cities in China have locked down hundreds of thousands of their residents and carried out mass testing amid concerns that the spread of the Omicron variant could threaten the country's "zero COVID" strategy.

Cities in central Henan province as well as the municipality of Tianjin in the north, near Beijing, have reported local spread of Omicron cases, prompting the sweeping measures. The timing is of particular concern for China's authorities with both the Winter Olympics in Beijing and the annual Chinese new year holiday in the first week of February.

Henan accounted for most of the 110 new local cases reported in China on Monday - a high number for a country following a "zero COVID" approach including continued restrictions on international travel for close to two years - with the rest in Tianjin and in northwestern Shaanxi.



On guard: Women wearing masks sitting outside a mall in Beijing on Monday. ■ AP

Xi'an, the capital of Shaanxi, had been the epicentre of an outbreak in December, reporting 2,000 cases in recent weeks, prompting days of a strict lockdown. Residents in recent weeks took to social media to complain of food shortages as well as medical treatment being denied for other illnesses because of the stringent measures. After

a pregnant woman posted on social media saying she had lost her baby after being prevented entry into a hospital, authorities moved to sack local officials and instructed hospitals to accept patients, as many residents questioned the costs of all-out containment.

The situation in Xi'an has since somewhat eased and after weeks of a lockdown,

Xi'an reported 13 cases on Monday, with the focus now shifting to Henan in central China. The concern in Henan and Tianjin is because the Omicron variant has been detected in the community. Zhengzhou, Henan's capital, on Monday closed schools and carried out mass testing. At least two Omicron cases have been reported in Henan with the number expected to rise.

## Fresh restrictions

On Tuesday, Hong Kong, which last week put in place a 6 p.m. curfew for dining venues, announced fresh restrictions citing community transmission, although the Special Administrative Region only reported 21 cases on Tuesday, of which 13 were imported.

Nevertheless, because of the continuing "zero COVID" approach in Hong Kong, the city moved to close kindergartens and primary schools after three children tested positive, having been infected

by their parents.

The latest cases in Hong Kong have also triggered a political controversy after as many as a dozen senior government officials as well as 20 lawmakers last week attended a birthday party of 200 guests, with two attendees later testing positive.

Senior officials, including the Home Secretary Caspar Tsui and the head of the police force, were among the dozens of guests subsequently sent to the government's centralised quarantine facility in Penny's Bay and were reprimanded by the government for attending the event.

Hong Kong has also announced a two-week suspension of flights from eight countries - India, Australia, the U.S., the U.K. Canada, France, Pakistan and the Philippines. On Tuesday, Bloomberg reported that Hong Kong will, starting January 15, also ban travellers from all "high risk" nations from transiting through Hong Kong airport.

Moscow has demanded wide-ranging concessions from Washington and its NATO allies, which in turn have threatened severe sanctions for any attack.

A meeting of the NATO-Russia Council will take place in Brussels on Wednesday.

"Our expectations are entirely realistic and we hope

that this will be a serious, deep conversation on key, fundamental problems of European security," Mr. Grushko said, referring to the talks in Brussels.

## 'Little optimism'

He said Russia would demand a comprehensive response from the alliance to its demands.

The Kremlin also said on Tuesday the security talks with the U.S. amid tensions over Ukraine have given little reason for optimism, adding that Russia would wait for the outcome of other meetings this week before deciding whether it's worth

continuing negotiations.

In December, Russia unveiled proposals to contain the United States and NATO in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, saying that the U.S.-led alliance should not admit Ukraine or Georgia as new members.



After their meeting, Russian and U.S. sides have agreed to keep talking.

say that a moment of truth is coming in our relations with the alliance," Mr. Grushko was quoted as saying by Russian news agencies.

Moscow has demanded wide-ranging security guarantees from Washington and its NATO allies and insists it has been promised that NATO would not expand eastward.

"Our expectations are entirely realistic and we hope

Anti-Kremlin writer flees Russia

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MOSCOW

A prominent Russian satirist who was branded a "foreign agent" by authorities announced on Tuesday that he had fled the country, saying he feared punitive criminal prosecution.

Viktor Shenderovich, 63, is a writer and commentator famous for depicting President Vladimir Putin as an ugly dwarf in a show called "Puppets".

# Zelensky calls for international summit to end Ukraine crisis

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
KYIV

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called on Tuesday for a new summit with France, Germany and Russia to resolve the conflict in his country, at the centre of intensive talks between the West and Russia this week.

The wave "is challenging health systems in many countries where Omicron has spread at speed," Mr. Kluge lamented.

A panel of WHO experts also warned that repeating booster doses of the original COVID vaccines is not a viable strategy against emerging variants and called for new jabs that better protect against transmission.

The wave "is challenging health systems in many countries where Omicron has spread at speed," Mr. Kluge lamented.

According to the WHO, 26 of those countries reported that over 1% of their populations were "catching COVID each week" as of Ja-

nuary 10, and that the region had seen over seven million new virus cases reported in the first week of 2022 alone.

Mr. Kluge said the "unprecedented scale of transmission" now meant countries were seeing rising hospitalisations from COVID-19, but added that mortality rates were still stable.

The wave "is challenging health systems in many countries where Omicron has spread at speed," Mr. Kluge lamented.

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According to the WHO, 26 of those countries reported that over 1% of their populations were "catching COVID each week" as of Ja-

sary decisions during a new summit of the leaders of the four countries," Mr. Zelensky said in a statement following his meeting with European diplomats on Monday.

The Ukrainian presidency did not specify the nature of those "decisions", but said that Monday's talks also touched upon steps aimed at "de-escalation" at the Ukrainian border, where Moscow-backed troops that broke out in 2014.

The negotiations failed to bring an end to a conflict between Kiev forces and Moscow-backed troops that

has amassed some 1,00,000

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# Kazakh President fires salvo at predecessor

Regime built a layer of rich people'

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE  
ALMATY

Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev issued rare criticism of his long-ruling predecessor on Tuesday, and said he expected Russian-led forces to leave the troubled Central Asian country in the next 10 days.

The oil-rich country's descent into chaos has laid bare infighting at the top of a government once dominated by Mr. Tokayev's mentor, 81-year-old Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Addressing lawmakers in a video conference, Mr. Tokayev fired an eyebrow-raising broadside at Mr. Nazarbayev.

Mr. Tokayev, 68, said Mr. Nazarbayev's rule had created "a layer of wealthy peo-



Kassym-Jomart Tokayev

# U.S. announces \$308 mn in aid for Afghanistan

UN asks for \$5 billion from members

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON

The White House has announced \$308 million in additional humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan, offering new aid to the country as it edges toward a humanitarian crisis since the Taliban takeover nearly five months ago.

White House spokesperson Emily Horne said in a statement on Tuesday that the new aid from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) will flow through independent humanitarian organisations and will be used to provide shelter, healthcare, winterisation assistance, emergency food aid, water, sanitation and hygiene services.

The USAID called on the

Taliban to allow "all aid workers, especially women ... to operate independently and securely" as humanitarian groups look to assist those suffering.

UN's biggest appeal

Meanwhile, the United Nations said on Tuesday it needed \$5 billion in aid for Afghanistan in 2022 to avert a humanitarian catastrophe and offer the ravaged country a future after 40 years of suffering.

In its biggest-ever single-country appeal, the UN said \$4.4 billion (3.9 billion euros) was needed within Afghanistan, while a further \$623 million was required to support the millions of Afghans sheltering beyond its borders.

# Pig's heart beating inside human

57-year-old receives organ from genetically modified pig as last resort treatment

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE  
WASHINGTON

U.S. surgeons have successfully implanted a heart from a genetically modified pig in a 57-year-old man, a medical first that could one day help solve the chronic shortage of organ donations.

The "historic" procedure took place on Friday, the University of Maryland Medical School said, in a statement, on Monday.

While the patient's prognosis is far from certain, it represents a major milestone for animal to human transplantation.

The patient, David Bennett, had been deemed ineligible for human transplant - a decision that is often taken when the recipi-



New avenues: The surgery represents a major milestone for animal to human transplantation. ■ REUTERS

ent has very poor underlying health.

He is now recovering and being carefully monitored to determine how the new organ performs.

"It was either die or do this transplant. I want to live."

I know it's a shot in the dark, but it's my last choice," the Maryland resident said a day before the surgery.

Mr. Bennett, who has spent the last several months bedridden on a heart-lung bypass machine, added: "I

We are proceeding cautiously, but we are also optimistic that this first-in-the-world surgery will provide an important new option for patients in the future."

look forward to getting out of bed after I recover."

The Food and Drug Administration granted emergency authorisation for the surgery on New Year's Eve, as a last ditch effort for a patient who was unsuitable for conventional transplant.

'Breakthrough surgery'

"This was a breakthrough surgery and brings us one step closer to solving the organ shortage crisis," said Bartley Griffith, who surgically transplanted the pig heart.

"We are proceeding cautiously, but we are also optimistic that this first-in-the-world surgery will provide an important new option for patients in the future."

## MARKET WATCH

	11-01-2022	% CHANGE
Sensex	60,617	0.37
US Dollar	73.94	0.15
Gold	46,606	0.34
Brent oil	82.11	0.91

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	765.10	+26.25
Asian Paints	3538.75	-14.75
Axis Bank	743.25	0.45
Bajaj Auto	3436.75	1.65
Bajaj Finserv	17799.50	0.70
Bajaj Finance	7669.85	-61.45
Bharti Airtel	703.45	-1.50
BPCL	391.15	-6.40
Britannia Ind	3743.35	+24.95
Cipla	915.95	-0.25
Coal India	158.55	-2.15
Divis Lab	4516.55	50.75
Dr Reddys Lab	4669.25	-29.80
Eicher Motors	2794.35	-21.15
Grasim Ind	1846.90	8.05
HCL Tech	1343.65	55.55
HDFC Bank	2710.95	51.30
HDFC Life	1565.90	6.75
Hero MotoCorp	2568.25	-9.85
Hindalco	486.35	-6.55
Hind Unilever	2403.65	-3.40
ICICI Bank	810.65	-0.10
IndusInd Bank	917.95	-2.90
Infosys	1855.60	4.85
Indian Oil Corp	118.60	-1.10
ITC	221.95	-1.35
JSW Steel	645.70	-26.40
Kotak Bank	1936.80	-11.15
L&T	1961.15	8.05
M&M	841.40	-0.55
Maruti Suzuki	8143.85	18.25
Nestle India Ltd.	19761.95	53.95
NTPC	132.30	0.45
ONGC	160.95	2.60
PowerGrid Corp	203.85	-0.15
Reliance Ind	2455.55	17.55
SBI Life	1233.40	4.30
State Bank	505.95	2.30
Shree Cement	27038.55	93.50
Sun Pharma	832.40	5.70
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	738.65	6.75
Tata Motors	501.30	-2.40
Tata Steel	1130.25	-38.80
TCS	3915.90	36.05
Tech Mahindra	1737.15	21.15
Titan	2653.35	-4.15
UltraTech Cement	7606.30	21.15
UPL	819.55	-2.05
Wipro	694.15	0.65

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.71	74.03
Euro	83.49	83.89
British Pound	100.21	100.65
Japanese Yen (100)	63.84	64.12
Chinese Yuan	11.56	11.61
Swiss Franc	79.50	79.89
Singapore Dollar	54.44	54.69
Canadian Dollar	58.28	58.55
Malaysian Ringgit	17.58	17.68
Australian Dollar	52.91	53.18

Source: Indian Bank

## IN BRIEF



## B2B marketplace Recykal raises \$22mn

HYDERABAD  
B2B marketplace for waste and provider of cloud-based solutions to facilitate traceable material flows in waste Recykal has raised \$22 million from Morgan Stanley India. Existing investors Circulate Capital, Vellayan Subbiah and Arun Venkatachalam also participate, the firm said.

**DGFT imposes curbs on export of two drugs**  
HYDERABAD  
The Centre has imposed restrictions on export of anticoagulant Enoxaparin and Intra-Venous Immunoglobulin (IVIG). The export of Enoxaparin (formulation and API) and IVIG (formulation and API) has been brought under restricted category, a DGFT notification said.

## SPORT

## On-field uncertainty is welcome, off-field it can be troubling

## BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESH MENON

These are stimulating days for Test cricket. In New Zealand, Bangladesh win their first Test there for perhaps the most historically significant recent event. And in South Africa, just when the question, 'how can this Indian team be beaten?' was being asked, the hosts show how. The Ashes meanwhile is no whitewash, England's last-wicket pair hanging on to ensure that.

Bangladesh lost the following Test by an innings, England might revert to type in the final Test and India could well show South Africa who is boss in the decider in Cape Town. But no matter. For a few brief shining moments, the underdogs had caused a surprise and made us feel good about ourselves.

## Govt. set to hold 35.8% in Vodafone Idea

Conversion of interest on dues into equity set to trigger change in holding; move follows DoT package

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The board of directors of Vodafone Idea Ltd. late on Monday approved the conversion of interest – related to spectrum auction instalments and on AGR (adjusted gross revenue) dues to the government – into equity.

This means that after conversion, the government would own 35.8% of the telecom carrier.

This is as per a scheme offered by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) for settlement of dues.

"The Net Present Value (NPV) of this interest [on spectrum auction instalments and AGR dues] is expected to be about ₹16,000 crore as per the company's best estimates, subject to confirmation by the DoT," Vodafone Idea said in a fil-



**Third man:** In the new structure, Vodafone Group would hold 28.5%; Aditya Birla group's stake would be 17.8%. ■ AFP

ing. "Since the average price of the company's shares at the relevant date of 14.08.2021 was below par value, the equity shares will be issued to the government at par value of ₹10 per share, subject to final confirmation by the DoT." The conversion will result in dilution to all

existing shareholders, including promoters.

"Following conversion... promoter shareholders would hold around 28.5% (Vodafone Group) and around 17.8% (Aditya Birla Group), respectively," it added. In light of the conversion of interest into equity,

the company added, the promoters had mutually agreed to amend the existing Shareholders' Agreement for "reducing the minimum qualifying threshold from 21% to 13% for the purpose of exercising certain governing rights, such as appointment of directors and of certain key officials".

Earlier, the DoT had provided various options to the company, including deferring payment of Spectrum Auction Instalments due up to four years, excluding the instalments due in respect of Spectrum Auction 2021; one-time opportunity to opt for deferral of AGR related dues as determined by the Supreme Court in the AGR case, by a period of four years with immediate effect; one-time opportunity to exercise the option of paying

interest for the four years of deferment on the deferred spectrum instalments and AGR dues via conversion into equity of the NPV of the interest amount.

In October, the telco had opted for deferral of spectrum auction instalments and of AGR-related dues.

## Shares slide

On Tuesday, shares of Vodafone Idea plummeted to 21% to ₹11.80 on the BSE.

Separately, Tata Teleservices (Maharashtra) on Tuesday said it would opt for conversion of interest related to AGR dues into equity and that post-conversion, the Centre's holding in the telco is expected to be about 9.5%.

The NPV of the interest amount is about ₹850 crore, the company said in a filing. (With PTI inputs)

## Retail sales rise 7% over pre-pandemic level: RAI

Pace of growth drops on COVID wave'



CEO Kumar Rajagopalan said in a statement. The impact can be seen at the category level, with the beauty, wellness and personal care segment dipping 7%, compared with December 2019 sales, RAI said. It also said it had appealed to the Centre to instruct States to refrain from imposing curbs based on positivity rate and consider hospitalisations as the criteria to determine restrictions instead, as most of the population is vaccinated.

## Households expecting higher inflation affects bank savings'

Sentiment shapes consumption patterns, savings: RBI paper

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

When expectations around future inflation are on the higher side, households change their savings portfolio with respect to bank deposits, according to a working paper released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Tuesday.

Inflation expectations play a vital role in regulating households' consumption behaviour and consequent savings, said the paper titled 'Taking Cognisance of Households' Inflation Expectations in India'.

The paper is authored by Devendra Pratap Singh, Adi-

tya Mishra and Purnima Shaw of the RBI. The findings of the paper are of the authors and not of the RBI, the authors said.

Especially in the case of a developing economy, it is desirable for households to save in financial instruments like debt or equity, which

can be used further into production-enhancing activities, they said in the paper.

If households expect inflation to pick up in the medium term and they suspect low returns due to low real interest rates, it may be preferable for them to invest in commodities such as precious metals, jewellery and the like, than saving in term deposits, they said.

The authors said that similar to India, inflation expectations are biased and not efficient in other countries too, such as the US, England, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, Czech Republic, Philippines and Russia.

## December fuel use shows little growth'

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

India's fuel consumption showed negligible growth in December, ahead of fresh curbs kicking in to control the surge of a new variant of COVID-19 that is likely to further dampen demand, official data showed.

Total petroleum product consumption was 18.43 million tonnes, compared with 18.36 million tonnes a year earlier.

Diesel, accounting for almost 40% of all petroleum product usage, rose 1.5% to 7.305 million tonnes (MT) and was near the pre-COVID-19 demand of 7.387 MT December 2019, data from the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell showed.

## India agrees to allow import of U.S. pork products, says Tai

Move follows resumption of Indian mango exports to U.S.

## SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

The U.S. administration announced that India will permit the import of American pork and pork products into the country following the re-engagement of the two governments via the U.S.-India Trade Policy Forum (TPF) in New Delhi in November.

India and the U.S. have had a number of persistent challenges in their bilateral trade relationship, including in agricultural trade.

"India's agreement to allow U.S. pork imports for the first time is great news for U.S. producers and for Indian consumers," U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Katherine Tai said via a statement on Monday in Washington.

Erine Tai said in a joint statement with Ms. Tai.

Mr. Vilsack said the imports would begin "as soon as possible." The U.S. is the world's third-largest pork producer and the second-largest exporter, as per U.S. government estimates.

Katherine Tai

## Winding up: HC dismisses SpiceJet's plea

## LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

A Division Bench of the Madras High Court on Tuesday dismissed a writ petition preferred by air carrier SpiceJet Ltd. challenging a single judge's December 6 order to wind up the company for non-payment of more than \$24 million in dues to SR Technics, which maintains and repairs aircraft engines.

Justices Paresh Upadhyay and Sathi Kumar Kurup said they were convinced that the air carrier had not made out any ground to entertain the appeal. However, the Division Bench extended the interim stay till January 28 to allow the airline to prefer a further appeal in the Supreme Court.

## BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESH MENON

The off-field uncertainty thanks to Covid-19 might be troubling, but the uncertainty on-field, the unexpectedness, is the bedrock of competitive sport. The race is not always to the swift etc.

Does Australia's Ashes win mean that their cricketers are now forgiven for their boorish behaviour and for bringing the game into dispute with their entitled conduct in South Africa not so long ago? Steve Smith, captain when some players used unfair tactics ('Sandpapergate'), who was then banned was back as captain for a Test when Pat Cummins had to pull out. But it is more interesting than that.

**Change of image**  
Australia are a proud sporting nation, and nothing gives them greater pride than thrashing England at cricket. Under new skipper Cummins, they have not only done that, they have also looked un-Australian (in a good way) by being mostly well-mannered and applauding their opponents. Perhaps this has confused England more than their bowling has! As the writer Greg Baum has pointed out, Australians have subtly moved away from the

'hard but fair' formulation of the past which had suggested these terms were mutually exclusive, and are playing hard and fair. If so, it is a commentary to the effect a captain can have on a team.

## Eliminating racism

# Kohli-Rabada contest lights up the opening day at Newlands

Skipper top scores with 79 to propel India to 223 before falling to the South African spearhead who finishes with four wickets; Jansen scalps three

## INDIA IN SA

**S. DINAKAR**  
CAPE TOWN

Batting was challenging. There was a cloud cover, the pitch sported grass and the surface offered seam movement and bounce.

In these conditions, Virat Kohli deserved his best. His 79 of character sparked in India's total of 223 after the side elected to bat.

India hit back with Jasprit Bumrah who moved the ball across the left-handed Dean Elgar to have him caught at first slip. A big strike.

At stumps on day one of the third Freedom Test at Newlands on Tuesday, South Africa was 17 for one. The decider on the boil.

Kohli walked in early, at 33 for two, after the fall of Mayank Agarwal's wicket in the 13th over and was the ninth batter dismissed at 211 when Kagiso Rabada snared him outside off.

Kohli began by cover-driving left-arm Marco Jansen. He did not desert a shot that has given him so many runs. Kohli, however, was conscious about which deliveries to play the stroke.

**Fascinating match-up**  
The match-up between Kohli and Rabada, in his 50th Test, was fascinating. Rabada fired one inches outside off, Kohli

left it alone. When Rabada pitched it up, Kohli cover-drove. When he erred in line, Kohli worked him off his hips.

Kohli's game had foot-work, balance and timing – the three key ingredients that define batting.

And the manner in which Kohli leaned into his off and cover drives, executed the on drive, essayed the flick and drove the ball straight, was exemplary.

He defended with assurance and found the gaps with a surgeon's precision.

India was jolted at the start. K.L. Rahul, made to play deliveries a lot closer to his off-stump, succumbed to a Duanne Olivier ball that landed short and bounced around his off-stump.

Rabada, bowling a teasing line, got Mayank Agarwal to edge one around the off-stump to the cordon.

Cheteshwar Pujara and Kohli began rebuilding the innings. Pujara, mixing caution with aggression, held firm. Between periods of solid defence, he pulled Olivier past the ropes, and then flicked and glanced Lungi Ngidi for boundaries.

It took some smart bowling from Jansen after lunch to end Pujara's (43) determined tenure. The versatile left-arm switched to round the wicket and brought the delivery into the right-han-

## SCOREBOARD

### INDIA – 1ST INNINGS

K.L. Rahul c Verreyne b Olivier 12 (35b, 1x4), Mayank Agarwal c Markram b Rabada 15 (35b, 3x4), Cheteshwar Pujara c Verreyne b Jansen 43 (77b, 7x4), Virat Kohli c Verreyne b Rabada 79 (20b, 12x4, 1x6), Ajinkya Rahane c Verreyne b Rabada 9 (12b, 2x4), Rishabh Pant c Petersen b Jansen 27 (50b, 4x4), R. Ashwin c Verreyne b Jansen 2 (10b), Shardul Thakur c Petersen b Maharaj 12 (9b, 1x4, 1x6), Jasprit Bumrah c Elgar b Rabada 0 (9b), Umesh Yadav (not out) 4 (14b), Mohammed Shami c Bavuma b Ngidi 7 (20b, 1x4); Extras (b-5, lb-1, nb-7): 13; Total (in 77.3 overs): 223.

### FALL OF WICKETS

1-10 (Rahul, 11.2 overs), 2-33

der with the angle. Ajinkya Rahane did not last long, done in by a fuller delivery from Rabada that held its line and found the edge. Interestingly, Rahane reviewed but replays confirmed the nick.

Rishabh Pant gave Kohli support and applied himself. The 'conversation' the team management had with him appeared to have worked.

The southpaw was not stroke-less but batted more responsibly. A backfoot punch through covers and a pull off Rabada stood out.

Pant (27) added 51 valuable runs with Kohli for the fifth wicket when he, at-

(Mayank, 12.2), 3-95 (Pujara, 37.3), 4-116 (Rahane, 42.1), 5-167 (Pant, 60.3), 6-175 (Ashwin, 62.5), 7-205 (Shardul, 67.4), 8-210 (Bumrah 70.5), 9-211 (Kohli, 72.3).

### SOUTH AFRICA BOWLING

Rabada 22 4-73-4, Olivier 18-5-42-1, Jansen 18-6-55-3, Ngidi 14.3-7-33-1, Maharaj 5-2-14-1.

### SOUTH AFRICA – 1ST INNINGS

Dean Elgar c Pujara b Bumrah 3 (16b), Aiden Markram (batting) 8 (20b, 1x4), Keshav Maharaj (batting) 6 (12b, 1x4); Total (for one wkt. in eight overs): 17.

### FALL OF WICKET

1-10 (Elgar, 4.4).

### INDIA BOWLING

Bumrah 4-4-0-1, Umesh 2-0-10-0, Shami 2-0-7-0.

### Toss:

India.

tempting to glide a Jansen delivery of extra bounce, ended playing into wide gully's hands. R. Ashwin did not last long, edging a delivery angled across from Jansen. If you 'feel' for these balls, you are in trouble.

Left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj, finally seeing some action, had Shardul Thakur taken low by Keegan Petersen at short-cover. Replays confirmed the catch was clean. The Indian innings was wrapped up soon. In his milestone Test, the reliable Rabada scalped four. And the impressive Jansen took three.



**Up for the challenge:** Kohli held India's batting together against a probing South African pace attack. ■AP



**Incisive spell:** Rabada celebrated his 50th Test with a four-wicket haul. ■AP

**Tata Group is title sponsor**  
Gets on board for the 2022-23 editions

## IPL

**AMOL KARHADKAR**  
MUMBAI

The Tata Group has replaced Vivo as the title sponsor for the Indian Premier League 2022 and 2023 editions.

"We are delighted with Tata Sons having come on board as the title sponsors for IPL. The situation arose with Vivo being unable to continue its association. Tatas will be the title sponsors for the next two editions," IPL chairman Brijesh Patel told *The Hindu* after the IPL governing council meeting on Tuesday.

With Vivo deciding to pull out of its existing contract running till 2023, the Tata group stepped in, thus extending its association with Indian sport from tennis and badminton to cricket. *The Hindu* understands that the Tatas will have to shell out more than ₹440 per year that Vivo was paying, due to the increase in number of matches per edition from 60 to 74.

Brijesh confirmed that the governing council finalised the mega-auction in Bengaluru next month and ratified the decision to award the Letter of Intent



(LoL) to the promoters of the Ahmedabad and Lucknow franchises.

"As of now, the IPL auction will be scheduled in Bengaluru on Feb. 12 and 13," Brijesh said. "The two new teams will get two weeks to finalise their pre-auction signings and submit the names around Jan. 25."

The recent COVID-19 surge has yet again put a question mark on the fate of the IPL's 15th edition, with last year's tournament being suspended midway through before being moved overseas. The governing council has decided to wait and watch after discussing the issue.

"It is too early to take a call on the IPL venues due to the dynamic COVID-19 scenario. We are hoping that we'll be able to stage it in India. For that to happen, we will wait as late as possible," Brijesh said.

Sindhu took just 27 minutes to beat K. Sri Krishna Priya. Second-seeded Thai Ongbambrung-

## Ashmita knocks out Kosetskaya

Sindhu, Srikanth ease through; Yew wins in three games

## INDIA OPEN

**RAKESH RAO**  
NEW DELHI

Ashmita Chaliha is part of the talented bunch aspiring to be the torch-bearer of India's women badminton after P.V. Sindhu.

Ashmita took the first available opportunity of 2022 to serve a reminder by knocking out fifth-seeded Russian Evgeniya Kosetskaya from the ₹400,000 India Open here. Before the bigger names in all sections won as expected on the opening day, the left-hander from Guwahati saved three game-points for a 24-22, 21-14 victory over Kosetskaya, the 2018 European champion runner-up.

Ashmita, the fourth highest-ranked Indian in the world list at 84, held a 19-16 lead in the first game before the Russian clawed back.

Undeterred, Ashmita continued to attack and saved three game points from 19-20. Eventually, she converted her first game point. In the second, it was Ashmita all the way.

Sindhu took just 27 minutes to beat K. Sri Krishna Priya. Second-seeded Thai Ongbambrung-

phan also advanced to the second round after her opponent, Canada's Wen Yu Zhang, withdrew.

In the midst of one-sided encounters, that saw K. Srikanth and Sameer Verma stay on course for their third-round meeting, it appeared as though World champion Loh Kean Yew dropped the opening game only to get some extra on-court time.

He breezed past Xiaodong Sheng, a Canadian of Chinese origin, in the next two.

### Important results (first round, Indians unless stated):

**Men:** K. Srikanth bt Siril Verma 21-17, 21-10; Sameer Verma bt Saurabh Verma 21-7, 21-7; Loh Kean Yew (Sin) bt Xiaodong Sheng (Can) 16-21, 21-4, 21-13.

**Women:** P.V. Sindhu bt K. Sri Krishna Priya 21-5, 21-16; Ira Sharma bt Doha Hany (Egy) 21-10, 21-11; Ashmita Chaliha bt Evgeniya Kosetskaya (Rus) 22-21, 21-16. **Doubles:** Treesa Jolly & Gayatri Gopi Chand bt Anastasiya Prozorova & Valeriya Rudakova (Ukr) 21-12, 21-10.

**Mixed doubles:** Dhruv Kapila & N. Sikki Reddy bt Chirag Arora & Nishu Sapana 21-11, 21-11;

Chen Tang Jie & Peck Yen Wei (Mas) bt M.R. Arjun & Treesa Jolly 21-11, 21-6; Venkat Gaurav Prasad & Juhi Dewangan bt Aman Arora & Rageshri Garg 21-9, 21-8.

**Causa flutter:** Ashmita saved three game points before beating Kosetskaya in straight games. ■BAI



## Gabon beats Comoros

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
YAOUNDE (CAMEROON)

Aaron Boupendza stepped up in the absence of Covid-stricken Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang to earn Gabon a 1-0 victory over Africa Cup of Nations debutant Comoros on Monday.

Aubameyang and Mario Lemina missed their team's opening Group C fixture after testing positive for the virus last week.

**The results:** **Group B:** Guinea 1 (Sylla 35) bt Malawi 0; **Group C:** Gabon 1 (Boupendza 16) bt Comoros 0; **Group D:** Nigeria 1 (Iheanacho 30) bt Egypt 0; **Group E:** Algeria 0 drew with Sierra Leone 0.

**Pirates climb to the top**

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
BENGALURU

Patna Pirates once again showed why it is a favourite for a playoff spot by thrashing U Mumba 43-23 in the ProKabaddi League here on Tuesday.

Pirates dominated with defenders Neeraj Kumar and Mohammadreza Shadlou picking High 5s. The win helped the team move to the top. In another contest, Gujarat Giants beat Telugu Titans 40-22.

## Technology under scrutiny yet again

**S. DINAKAR**  
CAPE TOWN

The umpiring, rather the technology used in officiating, has been under sharp scrutiny in this series.

If technology, with all the scientific advancement, cannot give the right answers, what's the point in having these gadgets at all.

First it was the case of Rassie van der Dussen in the second Test at the Wanderers. When the front and the only clear view gave the true picture of a bump-ball catch by Rishabh Pant, the third umpire looked at the side view, which was a less revealing, and gave the evidence to overturn the verdict. The ICC has introduced technology and then it has tied itself in a tangle giving weightage to an umpire's on-field decision before technology is used.

So had the on-field umpire declared Kohli out, the third umpire might well have come up with the same verdict. Just as in the case of leg-before decisions when an umpire's call decides whether a ball just brushing the stumps sounds the death knell for a batter or not. Either you depend on technology or you don't. This in-between stand is being counter-productive to the whole idea of employing technology.

huddin Palekar.

While the earlier replays revealed little, once the snicko came into the picture, a thin spike was clearly visible when the ball passed the bat, and it was not close to the pads or the thigh.

A spike on the snicko is a spike, big or small and there were sufficient grounds for the TV umpire to overturn the decision. However, umpire Palekar felt otherwise. A thin spike was apparently not enough to overturn the verdict. The ICC has introduced technology and then it has tied itself in a tangle giving weightage to an umpire's on-field decision before technology is used.

And here at the Newlands, India captain Virat Kohli was on 39 on Tuesday when he appeared to nick the ball while attempting to essay a glance off a Duanne Olivier delivery.

The South African, convinced Kohli nicked it, celebrated, but the umpire remained unmoved. South Africa went for a review and it was over to umpire Marshall. And here at the Newlands, India captain Virat Kohli was on 39 on Tuesday when he appeared to nick the ball while attempting to essay a glance off a Duanne Olivier delivery.

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Marshall was my hero. I tried to do everything the way he did. He was the greatest of them all

said, "I don't want to praise him too much. These are early days. He's a left-armer, has the ability. But in Test cricket if you bowl 20 overs in a day, you got to bowl with the same intensity the next day. You got to be as quick in your last spell as in your first."

### Improved Indians

About the Indians, Ntini said, "It is very effective, that's why you are so good overseas now. Bumrah's approach and action are different. It makes a huge difference."

Ntini added, "Shami's seam position is excellent. And who would have thought Shardul could be so aggressive and thriful?"

Ntini, now, wants to focus on coaching. "I would love to come to India," he said.

## Washington set to miss ODI series

**AMOL KARHADKAR**  
MUMBAI

Washington Sundar is set to miss India's ODI series in South Africa after having recently been diagnosed with COVID-19. The national selection panel has asked Jayant Yadav to stay back as back-up for the three-match

## TV PICKS

**South Africa vs India:** Third Test, day 2, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 2 p.m.  
**Pro Kabaddi:** Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m. onwards  
**ISL:** Star Sports 3, 7.30 p.m.  
**Premier League:** SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 1.15 a.m. (Thursday)

## IN BRIEF



**Embiid takes Sixers to seventh straight win**

LOS ANGELES  
Joel Embiid had 31 points and eight rebounds as Philadelphia 76ers won its seventh straight NBA game with a 111-91 victory over Houston Rockets on Monday. **The results:** Hornets 103 bt Bucks 99; Pistons 126 bt Jazz 116; Celtics 101 bt Pacers 98 (OT); Knicks 111 bt Spurs 96; Rockets 91 lost to 76ers 111; Kings 108 lost to Cavaliers 109; Trail Blazers 114 bt Nets 108. **AP**

## Second WI-IRE ODI postponed

KINGSTON (JAMAICA)  
The West Indies and Ireland have postponed their second One-Day cricket international scheduled on Tuesday. Ireland was too depleted to play after two more positive coronavirus cases in camp plus two players becoming injured. Cricket West Indies and Cricket Ireland said in a joint statement on Monday. The boards were reviewing the schedule and hoping to complete the ODI series. The third and last match is scheduled for Friday. A one-off Twenty20 was down for Sunday. **AP**

## Morris calls it quits

South Africa all-rounder set to take up coaching role

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
JOHANNESBURG  
South Africa all-rounder Chris Morris on Tuesday announced his retirement from all forms of cricket and is set to take up a coaching role with domestic side Titans.

The 34-year-old cricketer made the announcement on social media. "Today I announce my retirement from all forms of cricket! Thanks to all who have played a part in my journey whether it be big or small...it's been a fun ride! Delighted to be taking up a coaching role at @titanscricket #lifebeginsnow," Morris wrote on his Instagram page.

A right-arm pacer and explosive batter, Morris made his Test debut as late as 2016 and featured in only four games in the traditional format, making 173 runs and taking 12 wickets. He also

## New Zealand squares series

Batting maestro Taylor bows out with winning wicket; Das hits defiant century



**Fairytail finish:** Taylor removes Ebadot signalling victory for New Zealand. ■ GETTY IMAGES

## NZ-BAN SERIES

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
CHRISTCHURCH

Ross Taylor ended his 15-year Test career by taking a wicket with his part-time off-breaks that clinched victory for New Zealand over Bangladesh by an innings and 117 runs and tied the two-match series here on Tuesday.

In dimming light and with Bangladesh nine wickets down, the crowd at the Hagley Oval began baying for Taylor, the 37-year-old batter retiring from Test cricket after his 112th match.

When the light became too poor for the quicks, New Zealand captain Tom Latham bowed to the crowd's demand and Taylor's third ball brought a false shot from

Ebadot Hossain, who skied to Latham.

A defiant 102 by wicket-keeper Liton Das made Bangladesh a hard nut to crack, forcing a match which many thought would be over quickly into the final session of the third day before the last wicket fell 20 minutes from scheduled stumps.

Das batted almost one-handed for much of his innings after being struck on the glove. He weathered a barrage of short-pitched bowling to post his second Test century, off only 106 balls.

Bangladesh rallied around his resilient example to keep New Zealand waiting, but the end came swiftly after his departure as the two dismissals for 278.

## A slice of history

It was significant that the final catch was taken by Latham as the captain had an outsized influence on this match. He scored 252 – his

second Test double century – in New Zealand's first-innings of 521 for six declared, then took six catches as Bangladesh was bowled out for 126 and 278 after the follow-on was enforced.

## SCOREBOARD

New Zealand – 1st innings: 521/6 dec.

Bangladesh – 1st innings: 126.

Bangladesh – 2nd innings: Shadman Islam c Blundell b

Jamieson 21, Mohammad Naim c Latham b Southee 24, Najmul Hossain Shanto c Boult b Wagner 29, Mominul Haque c Taylor b Wagner 37, Liton Das lbw b

Jamieson 102, Yasir Ali c Latham b Wagner 2, Nurul Hasan c Wagner b Mitchell 36,

Mehidy Hasan c Latham b Jamieson 3, Taskin Ahmed (not out) 9, Shoriful Islam c Southee b

Jamieson 0, Ebadot Hossain c Latham b Taylor 4; Extras (b-4, lb-1, w-2, nb-4): 11; Total (in 79.3 overs): 278.

Fall of wickets: 1-27, 2-71, 3-

105, 4-123, 5-128, 6-229, 7-

244, 8-269, 9-269.

New Zealand bowling: Southee

17-6-54-1, Boulton 16-6-42-0,

Jamieson 18-4-82-4, Wagner 22-7-73, Mitchell 6-1-18-1,

Taylor 0.3-0-0-1.

Player-of-the-Match: Latham.

New Zealand won by an innings and 117 runs; Series drawn 1-1.

## Ishan Pandita rises to the occasion

His last-gasp header secures JFC's win over SC East Bengal

## ISL 2021-22

SPORTS BUREAU

Ishan Pandita once again proved the super-sub as he found the target for Jamshedpur FC minutes from the final whistle against SC East Bengal in an 11th round match of the Indian Super League at Bambolim on Tuesday. The result took JFC to the top of the table with 19 points from 11 matches as East Bengal continued at the bottom with six.

East Bengal's nice defensive organisation bothered Jamshedpur from the beginning. East Bengal's interim coach Renedy Singh kept his faith in an all-Indian lineup and almost pulled off a coup but for Pandita's goal. Pandita has scored all his goals in ISL as a substitute.

The opening half ended barren with Jamshedpur's famed attack-line failing to

fire a single shot on target. The contest was quite even with East Bengal keeping its shape and attacking on the breaks.

In the second half Jamshedpur put more resolve in its offence. The break almost came Jamshedpur's way in the 52nd minute when Jordan Murray saw his looping header come off the cross-piece. East Bengal suffered a blow in the 57th minute

when it lost the mainstay of its defence, Adil Khan, to injury.

Jamshedpur FC's Scottish coach Owen Coyle infused more attackers by introducing Pandita and Alex Lima in the final quarter of the action. Pandita finally rescued JFC in the 88th minute with a glancing header from a Greg Stewart corner.

**The result:** Jamshedpur FC 1 (Pandita 88) bt SC East Bengal 0.

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# Text & Context

## NEWS IN NUMBERS



### Cases in Kerala rise

**50,000**

The number of cumulative COVID-19 related fatalities in Kerala as of Tuesday. The State crossed the grim mark after recording 296 new fatalities on Tuesday. Of the deaths, 19 were recorded over the last few days and 277 were designated as COVID-19 deaths after receiving appeals based on the new guidelines of the Centre and the directions of the Supreme Court. The State reported a sharp rise with 9,066 new infections on Tuesday. PTI

### Hinting at a decline

**18.70**

In percent, the positivity rate of Mumbai on Tuesday, the lowest in past seven days. The city recorded 11,647 infections on Tuesday, the lowest in four days. The initial data from the city points to an early flattening of the curve. Data from Delhi and Chennai too hinted at a possible slow down of the spread of infections. The data from Indian metros are similar to the trend observed in Gauteng, South Africa, which is considered the origin point of the variant.

### Losing mobility

**3**

The number of Chinese cities in complete lockdown as of Tuesday. The city of Anyang in Henan province on Monday night told its five million residents not to leave their homes or drive cars on the roads, China's official Xinhua news agency said. Last week, the one million people in Yuzhou — also a city in Henan — were told to stay at home. Xi'an, home to 13 million people, is in its third week of lockdown. China reported 110 new local virus cases on Tuesday, a tiny figure compared with the hundreds of thousands emerging daily in global hotspots such as the United States. AFP

### Exports rise

**33**

In percent, the rise in India's exports in the first week of this year compared to the same week last year. During the first week of this month, imports rose to \$11.60 billion compared to \$8.72 billion in the same period of 2021. Healthy performance across various sectors, including engineering, petroleum and gems, and jewellery, led to the rise according to preliminary data from the commerce ministry. Imports, excluding petroleum, increased in the period under review by 29.8 % over the same period of 2020-21, as per the data. PTI

### US plans more aid

**308**

In million dollars, the additional humanitarian aid the U.S. is planning to donate to Afghanistan. This brings the total U.S. aid for the impoverished country and Afghan refugees in the region to nearly \$782 million since October, the White House said on Tuesday. They are also providing one million additional vaccine doses to Afghanistan, bringing the total to 4.3 million doses, the White House added. The United Nations says nearly 55% of the Afghan population are facing extreme levels of hunger. REUTERS

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

## EXPLAINER

# Election Campaign Funding by political parties

Where do political entities get money for canvassing and campaigning? What are the rules around election fundraising?

## THE GIST

TRILOCHAN SAstry

■ Voters vote for political parties so that they deliver benefits to the citizens. If election funds are obtained from other sources, the Governments in power are obliged to the funders more than the voters.

■ For instance, the Government Budget reports that in 2019-20 the loss to the Government on account of incentives to companies and reduction in duties and taxes was ₹2.24 lakh crore. The voters do not know this.

■ Transparency in funding is absent after the introduction of Electoral Bonds. In spite of the CIC ruling, all political parties have refused to submit themselves to the transparency that comes with Right to Information. Limits on funding are also not well defined.

which many support and others oppose, had a budget allocation of less than ₹75,000 crore.

### What are the remedies for this?

This subject has been studied at length by Government commissions and scholars. There is also much to learn from international experience. Broadly there are three classes of remedies. First is to make all election funding completely transparent so that voters know who is funding whom. Second is to prevent private interests from unduly influencing elections or Governments. This is done by a set of rules on limiting funding. Third is to try and have a more level playing field so that good politicians, candidates and parties with less funds also stand a chance of competing in elections. In the U.S. for instance, every citizen has the option of letting a small part of his taxes be used for election funding. This is done only with his or her consent.

### What is the situation in India on election funding?

It is not yet an important issue with proper legislation. Transparency in funding is absent after the introduction of Electoral Bonds. Now citizens cannot know who is funding the political parties. In spite of the Central Information Commission (CIC) ruling, all political parties have refused to submit themselves to the transparency that comes with Right to Information. Limits on funding are also not well defined. For instance, there was a cap on how much funds a corporate can donate to a political party out of the profits it earns. That upper limit has been removed. There is no move towards a level playing field. Today as per information available with the EC and the Income Tax Department, and as reported by the political parties, 90% of the funds go to just one party. This does not allow for a level playing field. Another important issue on electoral funding is that of Electoral Bonds. Some Public Interest Litigations (PILs) have been filed and even admitted in the Supreme Court. The appeal to the Court is to make



the Electoral Bonds completely transparent so that voters know where political parties are getting their funds from. Such information is available in all other leading democracies worldwide like the U.S. and the EU countries. But the Government refuses to amend the law and the case has not yet been heard in the Supreme Court. Another important issue is transparency in political parties. The CIC ruling was ignored by all political parties. This has now been challenged through another set of PILs in the Supreme Court. Here also the case has been admitted but no hearing has taken place. Such transparency is there in all other countries.

### What can I do as a citizen and voter?

First and foremost is to vote, and equally important, make an informed choice. This means gathering all relevant information about the candidate, funding, spending and so on. There are so many rumours floating around. Some of them are true and some are

false. There is a lot of exaggeration as well. It becomes difficult to separate fact from fiction. But official websites of political parties, the Election Commission and some nonpartisan NGOs have information. It would also help if such information is shared widely with friends. Voting for any candidate or party that spends too much should be considered very carefully. It may go against the voter's own interest.

Another long term solution is to fund political parties or one's favourite candidate with small donations of ₹10 to ₹500. If the money is raised from voters then the winner will work for the people. Such large scale experiments have succeeded in hundreds of panchayat elections where elections were won by spending one hundredth of the other candidates.

This was because the voters funded the winning candidate.

Trilochan Sastry is a professor at IIM Bangalore and the chairman of the Association for Democratic Reforms

## EXPLAINER

# The Government bailout of Vodafone Idea

What changes have been approved for Vodafone Idea? How much of a role will the Government play in the functioning of the telecom operator?

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA

**The story so far:** Struggling telecom operator Vodafone Idea's board on Tuesday approved the conversion of interest on the Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) and on spectrum instalments during the four-year moratorium period into equity issuable to the Government. This is in line with the telecom package approved by the Union Cabinet in September. The company had in October opted to exercise the option to defer the AGR-related dues as well as spectrum auction instalments by a period of four years.

As per Vodafone Idea estimates, the Net Present Value (NPV) of the interest is expected to be about ₹16,000 crore. The equity shares will be issued to the Government at par value of ₹10 per share. Both are subject to confirmation by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT).

Following the conversion, the Government will likely hold 35.8% in the company. This will result in dilution to all existing shareholders of the telco, including promoters. Vodafone Group holding will go down to 28.5% from 44.4% and for the Birla Group, to 17.8% from 27.7%.

**What does the telecom package say about conversion of dues into equity?**

One of the major decisions in the telecom relief package was to offer telcos a moratorium of up to four years in annual payment of dues arising out of the

Supreme Court's judgment on AGR as well as on dues payments for spectrum previously purchased.

The Government also gave telcos a one-time opportunity to exercise the option of paying interest for the four years on deferred spectrum instalments and AGR dues by way of conversion into equity of the NPV of such interest amount. Details of the interest amount furnished by the company will have to be certified by the DoT. Equity shares will be issued to the Government on a preferential basis as the relevant date for pricing was 14.08.2021. Edelweiss Securities notes that the pricing at which shares will be issued is lower than the current market price, but come at a 58% premium to the relevant date of pricing.

Industry analysts had termed the flexibility offered by the Government as crucial for the survival of debt-laden Vodafone Idea, which ensures that India remains a three-private player market, while also blunting the urgency to raise tariffs.

**How will the move help Vodafone?** Vodafone Idea's total gross debt stood at ₹9,47.8 billion as of September 30, 2021, comprising deferred spectrum payment obligations of ₹1,086.1 billion, AGR liability of ₹634 billion and debt from banks and financial institutions of ₹227.7 billion, the company had said.

The move will help Vodafone Idea address near-term liquidity concerns by significantly reducing its payment burden. It also eases some concerns over the debt burden even though it remains a



major issue.

As per analysts, this will help the company free up funds for investments in improving network quality as well as for investments in 5G. The move is also likely to improve the company's ability to secure long-term funding.

### What will the Government's role be?

Following the conversion, the Government will become the largest shareholder in Vodafone Idea. At the same time, it will be the largest creditor of the company. This may have both positive and negative fallout.

While there is no immediate clarity on the extent of Government's involvement in the running of the business, Vodafone MD and CEO Ravinder Thakkar had previously said that in all conversations with the Government leading up to the reforms, the Centre had made it clear that it had no interest in owning, acquiring or running any telecom

company afresh.

UBS in a note pointed out that Vodafone Idea is now in a better financial position to raise external funds and possibility of future flexibility in payments to the Government is also possible; for, it would be in the Government's interests to protect the equity value of the company. On the other hand, this raises some concerns in management style and governance, depending on how much the Government would get involved in operations.

Vodafone Idea has also said that it would be amending the Shareholders Agreement (SHA) for reducing the minimum qualifying threshold from 21% to 13%. This means existing promoters will continue to exercise certain governing rights e.g. appointment of directors and relating to appointment of certain key officials, despite their decline in holdings.

**Are tariff increases in the offing?** Deutsche Bank Research said that an increase in tariffs is more likely now as "as operators realise that waiting out VT's demise is now a much longer and less likely event". It also said there was greater regulatory protection possible and the two other private operators - Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio - will need to be careful not to offend the Government with fierce promotions that undermine Vodafone Idea. Further, it added that the Government as owner of a large portion of the industry will be getting more feedback on the economic

impact of its policies, and will probably be more sensitive of policy impact on operators.

This may be just what the company had been seeking. As per the company's latest investor presentation, its subscriber base stood at 253 million for the quarter ended September 2021 with a market share of 23.7% -behind Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio. Its subscriber base totalled 272 million a year earlier. When Vodafone India and Idea Cellular announced their intent to merge in March 2017, the combined entity was the largest telecom player with close to 400 million customers and 35% customer market share.

### What lies ahead?

Though the move brings temporary relief to the company, significant growth in average revenue per user (ARPU) remains a critical to the company's long-term viability. "ARPU needs to increase to ₹250, from its current ₹109, over the next 3-4 years for it to sustain the leverage," Edelweiss said.

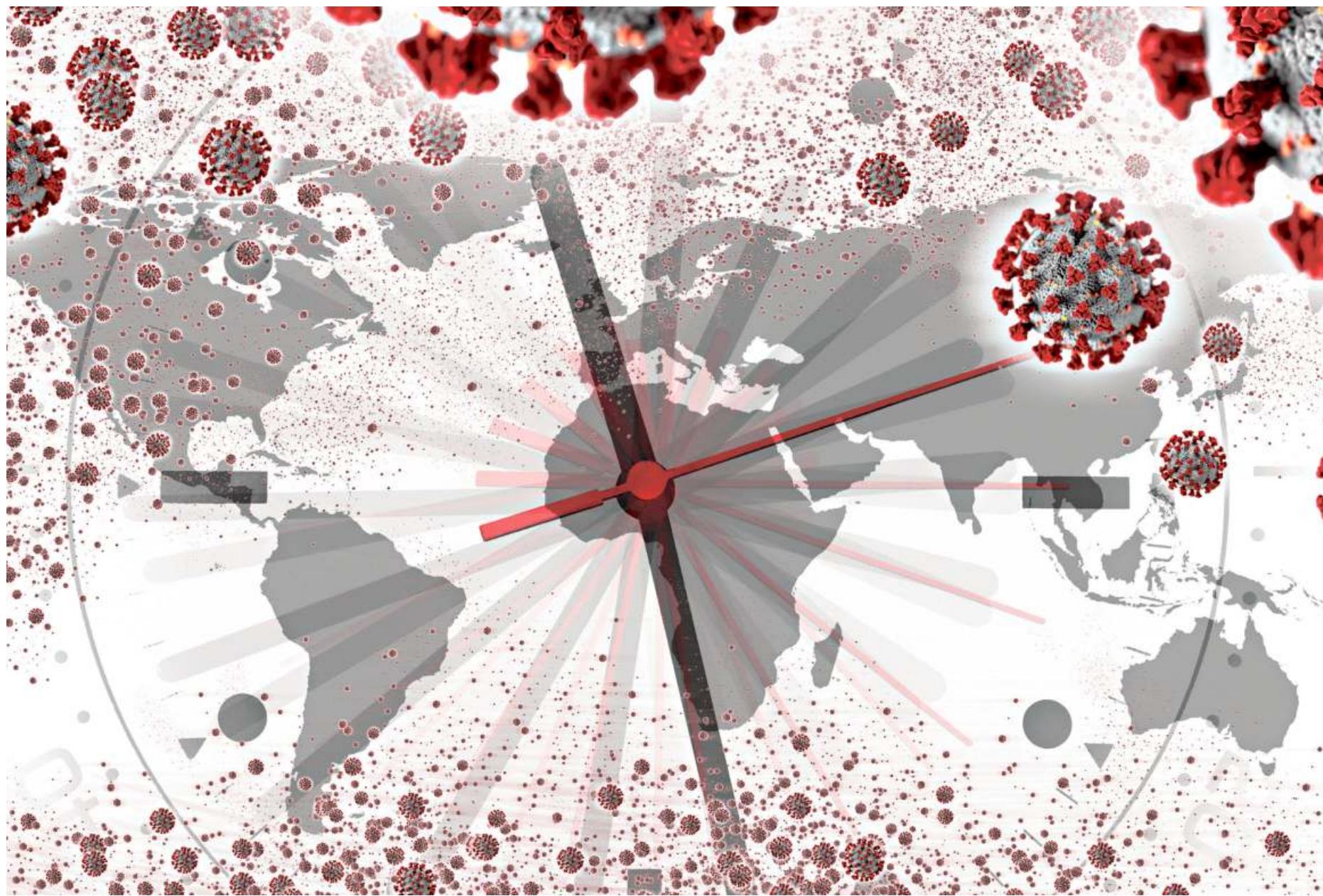
Likewise, Citi Research added that while the near-term existential concerns had been addressed, the onus is on the company to successfully complete its capital raise, accelerate network investments, and stem subscriber losses. There is also still considerable uncertainty on the ability of the company to meet its enhanced payments to the Government after the moratorium period ends, which would require far more meaningful tariff increases and potentially further Government relief.

## THE GIST

■ Vodafone Idea's board approved the conversion of interest on the Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) and on spectrum instalments during the four-year moratorium period into equity issuable to the Government. This means that the Government will likely hold 35.8% in the company.

■ The move will help Vodafone Idea address near-term liquidity concerns by significantly reducing its payment burden. It will also help the company free up funds for investments in improving network quality as well as for investments in 5G.

■ Vodafone Idea is now in a better financial position to raise external funds and possibility of future flexibility in payments to the Government is also possible. On the other hand, this raises some concerns on how much the Government would get involved.



## ABSTRACT

## COVID-19's own groundhog day

The pandemic has irrevocably and fundamentally changed our perception of time and space

RAMYA KANNAN

Parui A, Simi Raj M. "The COVID-19 crisis chronotope: The pandemic as matter, metaphor and memory." *Memory Studies*. 2021;14(6):1431-1444. doi:10.1177/17506980211054346

**THE GIST**

The researchers in the paper try to understand how our idea of space and time has changed profoundly, and how this would have a definite psychological and social impact.

The lockdowns that forced individuals to stay confined at home, either singly or in family units, erased the familiar quotidian and its humdrum, replacing it with a feeling of time running on loop.

A paper in the *Journal of Affective Disorders*, in December 2020, studied the impact of alienation caused by the pandemic on individuals. Social distancing may have an impact on individuals' mental health by the feeling of alienation.

**How landscape changed**  
This is what researchers from IIT Madras have tried to qualify to an extent in their recent paper on 'The COVID-19 crisis chronotope: The pandemic as matter, metaphor and memory,' which has appeared in the *Journal of Memory Studies* (Sage). As they attempt to traverse this cavernous landscape, where time seemed to be frozen and space immaterial, Avishhek Parui and Merin Simi Raj naturally seek insights from that rarefied conjunction between science and philosophy.

"Our idea of space and time has changed profoundly, and naturally, this is going to have a definite psychological and social impact. It has changed the fundamental nature of human relationships, and how we now perceive what was

'normal', routine," explains Dr. Parui. He and his co-author both belong to IIT Madras. The lockdowns that forced individuals to stay confined at home, either singly or in family units, erased the familiar quotidian and its humdrum, replacing it with a feeling of time running on loop. The equivalent of the Bill Murray film of 1993 –Groundhog Day. Bill Murray, a weatherman gets stuck on a single day, that repeats over and over only for him. In a fantasy, solutions are relatively easy –the protagonist could figure out how to break out of the loop, after several repeats of the same day, of course. The pandemic arguably precipitated the world's Groundhog Day.

**Not just a medical condition**  
"COVID-19 should not be seen just as a medical condition. The space and time we took for granted appears to be fractioned now. We cannot ignore any aspect of a condition that changes our conception of time and space," Dr. Parui explains. His article therefore aimed at examining the possibility of conceiving and conceptualizing COVID-19 as a crisis chronotope, using Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's concept that examines processes whereby familiar spaces turn to sites of crisis and familiar time gets suspended and mapped on to different dimensions of temporality. It also examines the "possible configurations and emergence of COVID-19 as a complex connective metaphor, in the realm of individual and collective memory."

It is not merely a feeling of being trapped in time that seems to have stopped or at least slowed down, explains Dr. Parui. The impact this alienation and defamiliarisation of once familiar spaces has on human behaviour is deep, he points out. The fear of contagion has also impacted on human concepts of trust and touch. "Sharing a cup of tea or coffee, meeting someone at the coffee shop or park, this was not possible any more. The moment you step out of home, if you had to, all you encountered was masked up entities. At a literal level, we did not really meet people, we were negotiating with incomplete or partial entities."

It is quite ironic that a single problem that enveloped the globe with its spike protein did not

foster a sense of solidarity. "Though we were one big family affected by the same virus, COVID-19 pushed us away from each other, and created an enormous sense of alienation," Dr. Parui articulates.

A paper in the *Journal of Affective Disorders*, in December 2020, by a Chinese research group (Yue Zhu et al) studied the impact of alienation caused by the pandemic on individuals: Social distancing may have an impact on individuals' mental health by the feeling of alienation, which was moderated by affective disorders. The authors went on to recommend that clinical psychologists should identify individuals' particular cognition and mental disorders to provide a more accurate and adequate intervention for them.

**A tactility crisis**

The IIT team also examined the situation in New Delhi, where they noted that the conversion of public parks to crematoria and funeral sites had a huge psychological impact on the people –particularly children and senior citizens. "This ad hoc remapping – what did it do to urban geography? Places that are classically places of entertainment overnight became places of death and despair. These factors have contributed to trauma that has resulted in a lack of trust and a tactility crisis."

Yes, a tactility crisis, as the deep suspicion of contagion, and COVID-19 safety protocols effectively put distance between people, not allowing them the normal contact that people are used to. Historically, the two World Wars too had an impact on people's consumption of space and time, but in terms of sheer magnitude, the Spanish Flu a 100 years ago is the only event that might bear up in comparison.

However, the problem with that was that it had little or no representation in literature, and thus the memory has not survived.

Dr Parui explains, "With COVID-19 there is no dearth of representation –through art, paint, poetry, film, documentary and social media. This will ensure that it will have a much larger impact on collective memory, and will probably remain there forever."

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

## Know your English

"Good morning, sir!"

"Good afternoon. It is around 4 o'clock now. Why do you say 'Good morning'?"

"I see you for the first time today, sir. Somebody told me that when I see someone for the first time in the course of the day, I must say 'Good morning'. I even say 'Good morning' at night when I see a person for the first time that day."

"No, no. It is not correct. I don't know who told you this. Till around noon, you say 'Good morning'. From noon till about 6 p.m., you say 'Good afternoon'. Anytime afterwards till bedtime, you say 'Good evening'. Some people in this country have a feeling that they should say 'Good night' at night. You say 'Good night' only when you take leave of a person and not when you meet a person. When you meet a person after about 6 p.m., you say 'Good evening'. When somebody says 'Good night' to you, it means he is taking leave of you. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir. Thank you very much. Sir, tomorrow is a restricted holiday. I want to avail it."

"Have a nice time. Please remember that when you use 'avail' in this context, you should say: I want to avail myself of the restricted holiday. 'Avail oneself of' is used in formal English. It is much simpler to say 'I want to take advantage of the restricted holiday'."

"What is the difference between 'effect' and 'affect', sir?"

"'Affect' means to 'influence'. Examples: Please wear a sweater as the weather will affect you. The slightest criticism affects him greatly. 'To effect' means 'to bring about', 'to produce'. As a verb, this is used on formal occasions and in official communications. Let me give you an example: Certain changes were effected by the administration. It means that certain changes were brought about by the administration. 'Effect' is used as a noun in the sense of 'result', 'outcome'. It is pointless to advise him; it has no effect on him."

"Sir, please tell me whether 'Who did Rama see?' is a correct sentence?"

"I understand your difficulty. In conversation, who is used rather than whom. In formal or literary style, it would be 'Whom did Rama see?'. I can give you some more examples: Who did you give the book to? (To whom did you give the book?). I do not know who he is talking to. I do not know to whom he is talking). 'To whom did you give the book?' would sound pedantic in spoken English. It is all right in formal English".

"I must go now, sir. There is likely to be a bus strike tomorrow. There will be troubleshooters today."

"You don't like troubleshooters? Troubleshooters are really good people. You should welcome them. Troubleshooters are not those who shoot trouble at others. A troubleshooter is one who locates trouble and sets it right. He does not cause trouble but removes it. Because of the word 'shoot', it is often misunderstood and therefore misused. A troublemaker is different from a troubleshooter. A troubleshooter is a very desirable person. Do you understand?"

"Yes, thank you, sir. Goodbye."  
"Goodbye".

## THE DAILY QUIZ

A quiz on Swami Vivekananda, the Hindu spiritual leader, and reformer, on his 159th birth anniversary.

1 What was the christened and 'daak naam' (pet name) of the Swami?

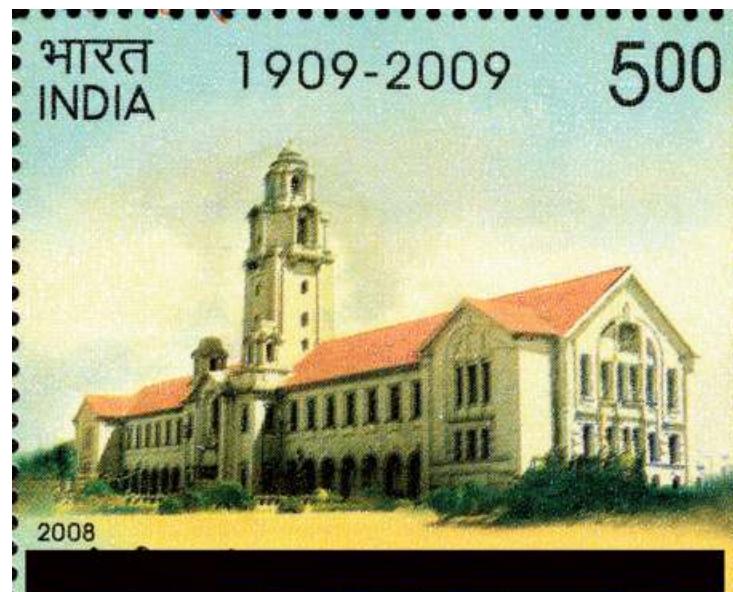
5 In which small town was the first math (monastery) of the Ramakrishna Order established in 1886-87?

2 What is the single biggest contribution of family friend Surendranath Mitra to Vivekananda's life?

6 What is Vivekananda describing here? "The wavy waters in the picture are symbolic of Karma; the lotus, of Bhakti; and the rising-sun, of Jnana. The encircling serpent is indicative of [Raja] Yoga and the awakened Kundalini Shakti, while the swan in the picture stands for Paramatman (Supreme Self)..."

3 On which benefactor's advice did he adopt the name Vivekananda?

7 In which year did the Government of India take a decision to celebrate his birthday as National Youth Day?



◀ This prestigious institution was established thanks to an interaction its founder had with Swami on a ship voyage in 1893. Name the institution and the founder. ■ INDIA POST

Please send in your answers to the

[dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in](mailto:dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in)

Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. Baskaran Adhiban, 2. Arjun Erigaisi, 3. Rustam Kazhimdzhanov, 4. Levon Aronian, Wijk Aan Zee (Tata Steel), 5. Parimarjan Negi, 6. R Praggnanandhaa; D Gukesh

Early Birds: Vishakha Jain, Sagar Sakalley, Pooja Khyalia, Laxmikant Kalshetty, Priyesh Jain