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IN BRIEF



ED will arrest Delhi
Minister, says Kejriwal

NEW DELHI
Ahead of the Assembly poll in Punjab, the Central government is putting pressure on the Enforcement Directorate to arrest Delhi Cabinet Minister Satyendar Jain, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Sunday.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

27-year-old arrested in
JNU molestation bid case
NEW DELHI
Days after a PhD student faced a molestation bid inside JNU campus on January 17 night, the Delhi police have arrested a 27-year-old man in connection with the incident.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Punjab Police books
Sidhu aide Mustafa

CHANDIGARH
The Punjab Police has booked Mohammad Mustafa, the principal strategic adviser of State Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu, for allegedly promoting enmity between different groups.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

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EDUCATION PLUS ▶ PAGE 2

Omicron in community transmission: INSACOG

'Most cases mild, but hospitalisations, ICU cases up'

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

Omicron is now in community transmission in India and has become dominant in multiple metros, where new cases have been rising exponentially, the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) said in its latest bulletin on Sunday.

INSACOG, jointly initiated by the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry, the Department of Biotechnology and others, is a consortium of 38 laboratories monitoring the genomic variations in SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus causing COVID-19.

The two-page bulletin, dated January 10 and released on Sunday, says while most Omicron cases so far had been asymptomatic or mild, hospitalisations and ICU cases had been increasing in the current wave. The threat level remained unchanged.

The recently reported new SARS-CoV-2 variant - B.1.640.2 - lineage was being monitored, it added and said there was no evidence of rapid spread and while it had features of immune escape, it was currently not a variant of concern. "So far, no case detected in India," the bulletin said.

BA.2 lineage, it added,



Intense check: A passenger being taken for COVID-19 test at the Bengaluru city railway station on Sunday. ■ SUDHAKARA JAIN

3.05 lakh cases on Sunday

THE HINDU DATA TEAM
CHENNAI

The country recorded 3,05,220 COVID-19 cases on Sunday, an 18% increase compared to a week ago.

The total number of infections has reached 3.92 crore, and the active cases have

crossed the 21.9 lakh mark.

Karnataka recorded 50,210 cases on Sunday, followed by Kerala (45,449) and Maharashtra (40,805).

On Sunday, 430 deaths were recorded in India.

FULL REPORT ▶ PAGE 12

was a substantial fraction in India and S-gene dropout-based screening was thus likely to give high false negatives. Tests suitable for PCR-based screening applicable

to all Omicron lineages had been approved. S-gene drop-out was a genetic variation like that of Omicron.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

Boy from Arunachal found: PLA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China has told the Indian Army that it has found a "missing" boy believed to be from Arunachal Pradesh.

A senior Army officer said on Sunday that the PLA personnel did not specify where its soldiers found the boy. But it has been presumed that he is 17-year-old Miram Taron who was allegedly abducted on January 18 by PLA soldiers from near the Line of Actual Control in Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

In the spotlight



Standing tall: A hologram of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose unveiled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at India Gate in New Delhi on 'Parakram Divas', the birth anniversary of the freedom fighter on Sunday. ■ ANI (RELATED REPORTS ON PAGE 10)

German Navy chief quits over remarks at Delhi event

Vice-Admiral Kay-Achim Schönbach's speech led to diplomatic row with Ukraine

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

Following an unprecedented controversy in Germany and a diplomatic incident with Ukraine, German Navy chief Vice-Admiral Kay-Achim Schönbach handed in his resignation late on Saturday over his comments in New Delhi that Ukraine can never get back Crimea and Russian President Vladimir Putin "probably" deserved respect.

"I have asked Defence Mi-



Vice Admiral Kay-Achim Schönbach. ■ REUTERS

Admiral Schönbach said in a statement, according to Reuters. "The Minister has accepted my request," he added.

Speaking at an interactive session at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MPIDSA) on Friday during his visit to India, which coincided with the port call by German frigate Bayern in Mumbai, the German Navy chief said the Crimean peninsula, which was annexed by Rus-

nia from Ukraine, was "gone" and "not coming back".

He wondered if Russia really wanted to attack Ukraine.

"Does Russia really want a small and tiny strip of Ukraine soil to integrate into their country? Putin is probably putting pressure because he can do it and he splits EU opinion. What he really wants is respect," Vice-Admiral Schönbach said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

Only Indian tunes at Beating Retreat'

Plan more appropriate for 75th year of Independence, say government sources

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Responding to criticism over the dropping of the hymn *Abide with me* from the Beating Retreat event this year, government sources said this year being the 75th year of Independence, playing of Indian tunes is considered more appropriate.

"This year, only Indian origin or indigenous tunes are on the list," a government source said on Sunday. *Abide with me* will not be played so as to include the maximum number of Indian tunes, the source said.

'Ae mere watan ke logon' is an Indian tune and pays respect to all who laid down their lives for the safety and integrity of the nation, the source added.

Phasing out of tunes handed down from a colonial past and including tunes that have a deeper connect



Final revision: The Indian Armed Forces band rehearsing for the Beating Retreat ceremony at Vijay Chowk in New Delhi. ■ PTI

with the people of India is an exercise, another government source said.

Former Union Minister and senior Congress leader P. Chidambaram said *Abide with me* was a Christian hymn written in 1847 but no longer "only" a Christian hymn. "The hymn was part of the Beating Retreat cere-

rade this year, there will be 16 marching contingents, said Major General Alok Kackar, Chief of Staff, Delhi Area, in a briefing on the Army's participation at the parade. Due to COVID-19, like last year, this year too, the parade will end at National Stadium and not go to the Red Fort, he said.

In view of this, the size of the marching contingents, too, has been reduced from 144 to 96 individuals per contingent, another officer said. The number of attendees at the parade is significantly reduced in view of the large number of cases.

At the parade, the Army will showcase the evolution of its various uniforms and weapon systems over the decades, with new and modern weapon systems displayed alongside their legacy counterparts, Major General Kacker said.

At the Republic Day pa-

Elephant corridors to be restored in south Bengal

403 human deaths recorded between 2014 and 2019

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

The fragmented and patchy forests of south Bengal have emerged as one of the hotspots of human-elephant conflict in the country, resulting in loss of lives of both humans and pachyderms.

At times, the conflict results in law and order problems. In November 2021, a herd of 50 elephants came within 5 km of east Burdwan town, prompting the district administration to impose prohibitory orders in several gram panchayats in the region. Between 2014 and 2019, as many as 2,381 human deaths were recorded in



Safe abode: The five-year restoration project aims to create an ecosystem where humans and elephants can coexist. ■ FILE PHOTO

elephant attacks across the country, of which 403 (over 16%) were reported from West Bengal. The State, however, is home to less than 3% of the elephant population and records a high death count of pachyderms in conflicts.

Minimising elephant-human conflict is the pressing need of the region and wildlife

organisations and experts have now taken up the task of undertaking ecological restoration of elephant corridors in south Bengal.

Degradation of forests "The degradation started not just with increased agricultural activities in the region but also participatory joint forest management such as community forestry,

which changed the very nature of the forest to make it commercially viable, not considering the biodiversity of the region," said Diya Banerjee, an ecologist from Uttarayan Wildlife, who is leading the five-year restoration project. It is also aimed at creating a balanced ecosystem so that humans and animals can coexist in consonance with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Abhishek Ghosh, who is

associated with the project,

said there are 180 to 200

elephants in the region, but due to fragmentation of

forests these herds are no

longer following traditional

migration.

"This is the reason that sometimes we see elephants entering towns in Burdwan, Bankura and Medinipur," Mr. Ghosh said.

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Rethinking online education

Technology should be used to redesign learning experiences based on cognitive research, not to replicate offline experiences online

■ AANAND SRINIVAS

Why have we been mostly unsuccessful in helping children meet learning outcomes? A common theory is that it is due to a lack of money. If we offer more money and attract more talented people to teaching, will we be done? While some countries like India don't spend enough on education, even big spenders do not see meaningful improvements. The real reason education fails in its purpose is that education practice today is not based on cognitive research.

Over the past decades, learning science has taught us about how the brain learns. What teachers think causes learning and what students feel causes learning often is not true. Our education practice is not learning science-based; it still relies on obsolete practices such as lectures to "transmit" information and a carrot-and-stick policy to motivate children. Trying to improve education without addressing this root problem means that we are investing in scaling an architecture that is fundamentally wrong and therefore

creating even more inertia to moving towards a learning science-based education model.

Impact on education

Here are three ways in which learning science can impact education.

Spiralling curriculum: Today's curricula are mostly linear like checklists. Each topic is done and then we move to the next. When exams come, students don't remember important ideas because they've been done just once. But learning science shows that, when we revisit important ideas multiple times, children understand and remember them much better. This is called spiralling curriculum and implements "spaced repetition" of key ideas.

By using technology to redesign the curriculum, we can now integrate more such models quickly and track their impact.

Mastery learning model: Today, we budget a fixed amount of time for a topic and move on to the next, whether learning has been accomplished or

not. This is a timetable-based approach. But the reality is that students will have gaps in their understanding that accumulate and lead to loss of interest in later classes as they move to more advanced topics. Learning science offers the mastery learning model, which allows the teacher to understand the accumulating gaps and put in place a structure to help fill them. One way is by having separate online spaces for synchronous and asynchronous learning. The coach becomes more like a facilitator who observes the child in both the spaces, identifies the gaps and spends time with each to bridge those.

Teaching to learn: Today, we tell students that their job is to learn but we don't teach them how learning works. For example, most people don't know

Learning science research shows that, when we revisit important ideas multiple times, children understand and remember them much better

that reading a storybook requires a different techniques from reading a textbook. They don't know how the muscle of long-term memory is built or how to improve concentration over time. This lack of understanding is why many children tend to cram, practise rote learning and fail to apply concepts in the real world.

Over the last decade, online education has mainly tried to package self-study content for the same old school syllabus or tried to provide foundation test-prep content for competitive exams. But, in the coming decade, we will be using technology not to replicate offline experiences online but to redesign learning experiences from the first principles of cognitive research and provide up-to-date knowledge, social skills, and learning mindsets. If we succeed, in the next 10 years, we will build an education system that the next generation can truly be grateful for.

The writer is the Founder and CEO, StayQuirious.

A question of focus

Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This Q&A column may help



OFF THE EDGE
NANDINI RAMAM

I am in the first year of B.Sc. Hons Horticulture. I am confused about finding my passion. I want to be an IAS officer but am interested in other things also. How can I find my calling? - Harshita

Dear Harshita,

Read *Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life* and then find a competent career counsellor. Get a personality and career profiling done to identify what you are good at. This will help you set realistic goals and find your passion. It is also okay to have a few (varied) hobbies and interests besides your academic education and pursuits.

My dream from childhood has been to take the CSE but I am afraid of facing an audience in class (both online and offline) and in competitions. How can I overcome it? - Nandhana

Dear Nandhana,

Meet a good counselling psychologist and work on your fear. You need to find a healthy mechanism to overcome it and it is possible and doable. We all get nervous from time to time while facing an audience (online/offline) but that doesn't stop us from doing our thing. You will greatly benefit from Cognitive Behaviour Therapy.

I live in Deoghar, a small town in Jharkhand, but studied in Ranchi. I completed my B.Com. last year. I got a job as Assistant Marketing Manager but was paid just Rs. 5000 as salary. I quit in June

and am currently at home. I want to do something that adds value to society and makes me financially independent. How can I find out which job suits me? - Yashaswee

Dear Yashaswee,

While ₹5000 is a low salary, could you not have worked to enhance your skillsets at the job and then moved on? You can still do a Master's in Social Work. But check the requirements. Does it work for you? If not, get in touch with a career counsellor to identify your areas of excellence. Also identify if you need start working right away or can take time to study.

I am pursuing my graduation in Agriculture in Uttar Pradesh. I wish to do my post-graduation but my parents cannot afford it. Should I work for a year or find some way of continuing my education? Also, is it better to do my PG in India or abroad? I dream of becoming a researcher. - Anugraha

Dear Anugraha,

Put in all efforts to sign up for your post-graduation. There are many options to raise funds for the fees in addition to a bank loan. If you choose to work, use the gap year to work in the field to understand the nuances better and shortlist your area of interest while you arrange funds. Whether you study in India or abroad depends on the money you are able to get. You can realise your dream of being a world-class researcher.

Disclaimer: This column provides advice and suggestions on education and careers. It is merely a guiding voice.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. Send your questions to edups.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line 'Off the edge'.

New COVID-19 cases fall below 10K; TPR at 13.32%

Private offices prepare to open with 50% working capacity

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

New COVID-19 cases in the Capital fell below 10,000 cases a day for the first time since January 4 on Sunday. This comes 10 days after the current wave peaked on January 13 with 28,867 new cases being recorded in a single day, which was the highest number of cases recorded in a single day since the pandemic began.

Over the past 24 hours, 9,197 new cases were recorded along with 34 deaths. The health bulletin released by the Delhi government said that 69,022 tests had been conducted with a positivity rate of 13.32%.

54,246 active cases
There are 54,246 active cases in the Capital of which 42,438 are under home isolation. Out of those patients in hospital, 814 are currently on oxygen support while 164 are in need of a ventilator.



A health worker attending to a patient at the CWG Covid Care Centre in the city on Sunday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Delhi on Saturday recorded 11,486 cases with a positivity rate of 16.36%. On Friday 10,756 cases were recorded, with a positivity rate of 18.04%.

The Delhi government had sent a proposal to Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal on Friday to remove restrictions such as night curfew and odd-even opening of markets. But the proposal was rejected.

The L-G had cleared the proposal to let private offices

start working with 50% capacity, adding that he would seek the advice of experts on removing further restrictions.

Education Minister Manish Sisodia said on Saturday that since COVID numbers were declining and most of the students studying in higher classes had been vaccinated, a proposal may be placed before the Delhi Disaster Management Authority to reopen schools for higher classes.

Wettest Jan. on record since 1901

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Delhi experienced its wettest January on record since 1901 after another spell of heavy rain late on Saturday evening. A total of 88.2 mm of rain has been recorded so far this month, according to data shared by the India Meteorological Department.

The month has had six rainy days so far, under the influence of back-to-back western disturbances, which have led to prolonged cold-day conditions.

On Sunday, the Safdarjung weather station reported 19.7 mm of rainfall in the 24 hours ending 8.30 a.m. on Sunday and a maximum temperature of 14.9 degrees Celsius, which was six degrees below normal. The minimum temperature settled at 10.5 degrees Celsius, which was three degrees above normal.

The IMD has forecast a partly cloudy sky with moderate fog in the morning on January 24 with cold day conditions in a few places.

HC seeks details on fake Aadhaar cardholders

IDs were issued for civil defence training

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Days after a PhD student faced a molestation bid inside the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) campus on January 17 night, the Delhi police have arrested a 27-year-old man in connection with the incident, officers said on Sunday.

The accused, identified as Akshay Dolai, lives with his wife and children in Munirka and worked at a mobile repair shop at Bhikaji Cama Place. "He knew all the routes of the campus as he

worked as a ticketing agent till 2015 and used to frequent JNU's ticketing campus daily," DCP (South-West) Gaurav Sharma said.

On the day of the incident, Dolai consumed liquor at his shop and went to JNU on his scooter. He entered the campus through the gate and when he saw a girl jogging in the area, he followed her and attempted to molest her. "After the girl raised an alarm and took out her phone to call the police, he snatched it and fled the spot," the DCP said.

The case is based on a complaint by BJP leader Vinod Gupta in January 2020 at Delhi's Anti Corruption Branch stating that the hiring process of marshals for Delhi Transport Corporation buses, which recruits ci-

vil defence volunteers, was "illegal and manipulated". The complaint further said that Kuldeep Pakad, then District Magistrate (DM) of Shahdara, had issued fake certificates to over 400 people from his home state Rajasthan. The certificates validated them as Delhi residents so that they could enrol for Aadhaar cards. Mr. Pakad had compelled them to pay ₹2 lakh per head.

UIDAI's counsel said that authority was ready to share the information being sought.

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PPF, NSC and Bank FD are rates for the respective years. Source for Bank FD Rates: SBI website. ELSS (Equity Tax Savings) Category Average from Value Research - 1 year returns are as on 31 Dec 2019, 2020 and 2021, 3 years CAGR as on 31 Dec 2021.

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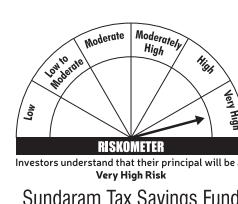
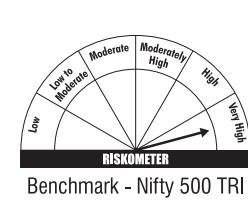


Performance comparison with benchmark			
Returns	Sundaram Tax Savings Fund (%)	Nifty 500 TRI (TIER I & TIER II) (%)	Additional Benchmark [Nifty 50 TRI] (%)
Last 1 year	32.4	31.6	25.6
Last 3 years	20.4	19.1	18.3
Last 5 years	18.8	17.9	17.7
Last 10 years	17.0	16.7	15.5
Since Inception	12.3	N/A	N/A

Value of ₹10,000 Invested			
Returns	Sundaram Tax Savings Fund (₹)	Nifty 500 TRI (TIER I & TIER II) (₹)	Additional Benchmark [Nifty 50 TRI] (₹)
Last 1 year	13,241	13,160	12,559
Last 3 years	17,462	16,906	16,552
Last 5 years	23,641	22,775	22,561
Last 10 years	48,161	48,767	42,467
Since Inception	1,97,899	N/A	N/A

Performance details for other funds jointly managed by Mr. Sudhir Kedia and Mr. Rohit Seksaria

Fund	1 year Return (%)		3 years Return (%)		5 years Return (%)	
	Fund	Benchmark	Fund	Benchmark	Fund	Benchmark
Sundaram Long Term Tax Advantage Fund - Series II	30.4	31.6	17.7	19.3	15.1	18.1
Sundaram Long Term Tax Advantage Fund - Series I	30.4	31.6	17.1	19.3	14.7	18.1
Sundaram Diversified Equity	31.5	31.6	15.3	19.1	13.7	17.9
Sundaram Long Term Micro Cap Tax Advantage Fund - Series III	71.3	60.7	21.4	21.7	12.9	15.7
Sundaram Equity Savings Fund	12.0	11.5	8.7	10.9	8.3	10.4



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Data source and computation: In-house

Sundaram Tax Savings Fund: The fund managers Mr. Sudhir Kedia and Mr. Rohit Seksaria have been managing this fund since Jan 2022 and February 24, 2021, respectively. Scheme Inception: 31 Mar 1996.

Other funds have been provided based on 5-year CAGR. Inception Dates: Sundaram Long Term Tax Advantage Fund - Series I: 26 Mar 2015, Sundaram Long Term Tax Advantage Fund - Series II: 21 Mar 2016, Sundaram Diversified Equity: 22 Nov 1999, Sundaram Long Term Micro Cap Tax Advantage Fund - Series III: 18 Nov 2016, Sundaram Equity Savings Fund: 23 May 2002.

Performance of other funds displayed have been taken considering jointly managed funds.

SEBI vide various circulars under MF Regulations have prescribed the disclosure of performance of mutual fund schemes since inception. In this regard, it is clarified that such disclosure of performance shall be made since the date of allotment of units in the scheme.



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The equity shares offered in the Issue have not been and will not be registered under the U.S. Securities Act of 1933, as amended ("U.S. Securities Act"), or any state law of the United States and, unless so registered, may not be offered or sold within the United States, except pursuant to an exemption from, or in a transaction not subject to, the registration requirements of the U.S. Securities Act and applicable state securities laws. Accordingly, the equity shares are being offered and sold (i) within the United States only to persons reasonably believed to be "qualified institutional buyers" (as defined in Rule 144A under the U.S. Securities Act) under Section 4(a) of the U.S. Securities Act, and (ii) outside the United States in offshore transactions as defined in and in compliance with Regulation S under the U.S. Securities Act and the applicable laws of the jurisdiction where those offers and sales are made. There will be no public offering of the equity shares in the United States.

Source: *Technopak Report. #Nielsen Retail Index – MAT March 2021. ^The Economic Times Brand Equity in 2020. **IMRB.

Timings

DELHI
MONDAY, JAN. 24
RISE 07:13 SET 17:54
RISE 23:56 SET 11:08
TUESDAY, JAN. 25
RISE 07:13 SET 17:55
RISE 00:00 SET 11:41
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 26
RISE 07:13 SET 17:56
RISE 00:58 SET 12:17

Delhi Weather
max min
Delhi City 15 11
Safdarjung 15 11
Palam 16 11

Delhi Pilm Today
15°C The weather will be mostly dry. Cold day conditions with cold breeze to continue. Night also will be cold and foggy.

Delhi Pilm Tomorrow
16°C The cold day like conditions with cold winds to prevail. Morning and night will be cold and foggy.

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THE HINDU
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Parkash Badal demands release of 1993 blast convict Bhullar

Punjab ex-CM urges Kejriwal to 'not allow political opportunism on decision'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

CHANDIGARH



Former Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal on Sunday sought immediate release of 1993 Delhi bomb blast convict Davinderpal Singh Bhullar in the "larger interest of consolidating peace and communal harmony" in Punjab.

Bhullar was convicted in connection with the killing of nine people and injuring of 31 in the blast. Among those who survived the attack are former Youth Congress chief M.S. Bitta.

In a statement here, Mr. Badal urged Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to not allow a "communal bias or political or electoral opportunism to dictate his decision and refusal to grant immediate clearance for Bhullar's release".

"Bhullar must be released without even a moment's delay as he has already served

Court in 2014.

The Centre in September 2019 had recommended special remission to eight Sikh prisoners, including Bhullar, to mark the 500th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev.

It has been alleged by some Sikh bodies that the Aam Aadmi Party government in Delhi has not given its clearance for Bhullar's release. A few days ago, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee had also accused the Delhi government of obstructing Bhullar's release.

Health complications

Mr. Badal drew Mr. Kejriwal's attention to the serious health complications Bhullar is facing. He said, "Even the basic humanitarian concern, apart from just legal considerations, should compel you to act expeditiously and positively in this case." The Akali Dal patriarch said.

Bhullar was awarded the death penalty by a designated TADA court in August 2001 but his capital punishment was commuted to life sentence by the Supreme

stalwart said Bhullar's release "will boost this sentiment of peace and brotherhood among communities in Punjab as it would help in mitigating the lingering sense of injustice against Bhullar."

"I really don't know why the Delhi CM is not allowing justice to be delivered to Bhullar even after the latter has already suffered long years of laceration and served more time in jail than the full tenure of sentence," he said.

"I urge and request Kejriwal sahib to immediately accord the requisite permission and I see no reason why he wouldn't heed my request and advice in this regard," said Mr. Badal.

Earlier in the day, in a recorded video message from a Ludhiana hospital, Mr. Badal thanked Punjabis for their good wishes after he tested positive for COVID-19.

'Haryana govt. dismissing agitating anganwadi workers'

False cases are being registered, allege union leaders

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GURUGRAM

The Haryana Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union general secretary, Shakuntala, on Sunday accused the State government of dismissing those on strike and registering false criminal cases against them to crush the agitation.

She added that the undemocratic methods of the government reflected the exaggeration of those in power and this would further strengthen the movement.

Ms. Shakuntala was addressing the State convention of the union at the Karamchari Bhawan in Rohtak. More than 40,000 anganwadi workers and helpers are on strike since December 8.

Their demands include implementation of several announcements made by the Union and the State governments regarding their wages, among other demands.

them by the State government, said the leaders. Also, Chief Minister Manohar Lal had made an announcement in the Assembly on March 6, 2018, to pay them at par with the semi-skilled and unskilled contractual workers as per the State government's outsourcing policy and link it with the Dearness Allowance, but the government was now going back on its words, the leaders said.

Stubborn attitude

The leaders accused the government of having a stubborn attitude towards the genuine demands of thousands of women workers.

The strike has crippled all the Integrated Child Development Scheme services across the State.

They said the agitating women were seeking the implementation of the announcements made by the Union and the State governments.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced a hike of ₹1,500 and ₹750 to the honorarium of the workers and the helpers respectively in 2018, but the benefits were not being passed on to

the State government, said the leaders. Also, Chief Minister Manohar Lal had made an announcement in the Assembly on March 6, 2018, to pay them at par with the semi-skilled and unskilled contractual workers as per the State government's outsourcing policy and link it with the Dearness Allowance, but the government was now going back on its words, the leaders said.

Meeting today

The union leaders alleged that dozens of workers and helpers were dismissed in Karnal, Gurugram, Rewari and Narnaul. Also, cases were registered against them in Kaithal, Jind and Gurugram on false charges of obstructing public servants from discharge of their duties.

The co-ordination committee will meet on January 24 to decide on the future course of action.

Six accidental death reports filed in fire case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

The Mumbai police have registered six accidental death reports in connection with the fire that broke out in a residential building in Tardeo area of central Mumbai, which claimed six lives and left 23 others injured, an officer said on Sunday.

The blaze had erupted on Saturday around at Sachin Heights, a ground-plus-20-storey building located opposite Bhatia Hospital at Gowalia Tank.

"As the fire claimed the lives of six persons, separate accidental death reports were registered at the Gamdevi police station on Saturday night," the police officer said.

The police are waiting for a report by the fire department to know the exact cause of fire, he said.

Police intensify anti-terror vigil in Delhi ahead of Republic Day

Over 20,000 personnel deployed in the Capital: Asthana

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi police have intensified anti-terror measures ahead of Republic Day with over 20,000 security personnel being deployed for increased patrolling across the city to ward off any threat, Police Commissioner Rakesh Asthana said on Sunday.

Briefing mediapersons on the security arrangements undertaken so far, Mr. Asthana said, "In the last two months, we have intensified anti-terror measures across the Capital be-

cause like every year, Delhi is a target for any terrorist or anti-social element... This year too, our forces are alert with everything from vehicle checking, labour and tenant verification being undertaken".

The Commissioner said that over 20,000 security personnel were deployed constituting Delhi Police personnel, DCPs, ACs, Sub-Inspectors, commandos, armed battalions, Central Armed Police Force jawans and their commandos.

"In the last 15 days, we

have increased checking at border points and counter drone technology will also be used in order to secure the airspace," Mr. Asthana said. He added that the Delhi police have also been coordinating with other State police in order to chalk out a security strategy to guard Republic Day events. "Anti-sabotage checks are being carried out and a total of 200 teams are working on it... We have also been spreading awareness through our Social Media Monitoring Cell," Mr. Asthana said.

White wash



Vehicles covered in snow at a parking lot during heavy snowfall in Shimla on Sunday. ■ PTI

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PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is for notice of the General Public that a Political Party is proposed to be registered by name of National Lok Kalyan Party. The office of the Party is located Aggarwal Millennium Tower-2, 9th Floor Office No.-978, Netaji Subhash Place 110034. This Part has submitted application to the election commission of India "New Delhi for its registration as Political Party under section 29A of the Representation of People Act, 1951. Name/address of the office-bearers of the Party are as below:- President: Hardev Singh Preet Singh s/o Dr. Hardav Singh Tehsil Delhi (110034) If any one has any objection to the registration of National Lok Kalyan Party they may send their objection with reasons thereof, to the President (National Lok Kalyan Party), Election Commission of India, Nirvanachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi - 110001 within 30 days of the publication of this Notice.

BJP, TMC clash after stones hurled at MP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BARRACKPORE

Clashes broke out between BJP and TMC supporters in Bhatpara near Kolkata on Sunday as stones were allegedly hurled at Barrackpore MP Arjun Singh when he was attending a programme to mark the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, police said.

It will be based on a incident of tribal massacre 'worse than Jallianwala Bagh' that occurred in the State around 100 years ago.

"Around 100 years ago, in Pal and Dadhava villages of North 24 Parganas district, the Britishers mas-

Gujarat to depict British massacre of tribals

Its tableau will highlight a 1922 incident which was 'worse than Jallianwala Bagh'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

AHMEDABAD

As the Centre and several States are trading allegations and counter-allegations over the tableaux to be displayed at the Republic Day parade in Delhi, the Gujarat government announced the theme of the State's tableau over the weekend.

It will be based on a incident of tribal massacre 'worse than Jallianwala Bagh' that occurred in the State around 100 years ago.

"Around 100 years ago, in Pal and Dadhava villages of North 24 Parganas district, the Britishers mas-

tery and sacrifice of the tribals," a State government release said.

According to the details, on March 7, 1922, Bhil tribal villagers in Sabarkantha district had gathered on the banks of Her river under the leadership of Motilal Tejawat, to protest against the land revenue system imposed by the British and the feudal lords.

Soldiers from Mewad Bhil Corps arrived at the site and under direction from its officer, Major H.G. Saturn, fired on the tribals. In the unprovoked firing 1,200 innocent tribal were killed, the

release added.

"Like a battlefield, the entire area was filled with corpses. Two wells – Dhekadiya and Dudhiya – were overflowing with the bodies of about 1,200 innocent tribals. Motilal Tejawat was shot twice, and his companions carried him away on a camel to the hill by the river," stated the release.

It is claimed that the horrific incident, which took place just three years after Jallianwala Bagh, was forgotten but as Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi had "brought this crucial chapter of history before the world."

Girl's suicide in T.N.: parents give statements

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

TIRUCHI

The statements of the parents of a Class XII student of a Christian missionary school in Thanjavur district, who died by suicide recently, were recorded by a judicial magistrate in Thanjavur on Sunday in compliance with the Madras High Court's direction.

The parents appeared before the Judicial Magistrate-III in Thanjavur and gave their statements, which were recorded under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The process went on for two hours, police sources said.

A copy of the state-

ments will be submitted to the Madurai Bench of the High Court in a sealed envelope on January 24.

The girl, belonging to Ariyalur district, was staying at the school hostel near the institution. After the emergence of a video clip in which she claimed that two years ago, the school asked her parents to convert her to Christianity, the BJP launched protests and urged the government to ensure a fair probe into the charge.

Assistance for overcoming suicidal thoughts is available on the State's health helpline 104 and Sneha's suicide prevention helpline 044-24640050.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

RESPECTFUL HOMAGE

SC sets aside order directing T.N. govt. to compensate victims

NGT had asked State to give compensation to kin of cracker unit blast victims

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court, in the interests of justice, has set aside a National Green Tribunal decision ordering the Tamil Nadu government to pay compensation to the families of those who were dead and injured in a blast at a firecrackers unit in Virudhunagar in February last year.

A Bench led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, on Friday, set aside the tribunal judgment of June 2021, *suo motu* directing the State to pay ₹20 lakh to the families of the dead and ₹15 lakh to the kin of the injured, saying the decision was made *ex parte*.

The decision was based on an appeal by the Tamil Nadu Fireworks And Amorces Manufacturers Associa-



The matter proceeded *ex parte* against the parties concerned, including the appellants, the top court noted. ■

tion (TANFAMA), which questioned the jurisdiction of the tribunal to initiate *suo motu* proceedings. "Even if the tribunal were to initiate *suo motu* action, it must put every person likely to be affected by its decision, to notice and give an opportunity of hearing before passing fi-

nal orders. In the impugned judgment, it is noted that in spite of notice, the authorities and parties concerned did not enter appearance. In that sense, the matter proceeded *ex parte* against the parties concerned, including the appellants," the top court noted in its order.

C In the impugned judgment, it is noted that in spite of notice, the parties concerned did not enter appearance

Disposing of the appeal, the court ordered "in the interest of justice, it is appropriate to set aside the judgment and order, and relegate the parties before the National Green Tribunal for reconsideration of the entire matter, after giving an opportunity to the parties concerned, including the appellants, and to pass appropriate orders in accordance with law."

The court asked the tribunal to take up the case again on February 14, 2022.

Man found dead after stabbing wife

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 32-year-old man was found dead after stabbing his wife with a surgical blade at her maternal home in west Delhi's Khyala, police said on Sunday.

DCP (West) Urvija Goel said that the woman has sustained severe neck and face injuries and is currently hospitalised.

After police began to trace the accused, they found that he had fled to the house of his brother-in-law at Ambedkar Nagar in Loni.

After reaching there, he was found dead, the DCP said. A case under attempt to murder has been lodged.

Ex-student leader injured in police firing in Assam, CM orders probe

Police said that he was selling drugs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
GUWAHATI

A former student leader, alleged by law enforcers to be a drug peddler, was injured in police firing in Assam's Nagaon district, leading to the Opposition calling it an effect of the prevailing "jungle raj" and claiming that the present situation is worse than that during the "secret killings" of the 1990s.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has ordered a probe into the incident.

Police claimed that former Nagaon College general secretary Kirti Kamal Bora was selling drugs and he was shot in the leg after he attacked law enforcers on Saturday, while AASU alleged that he had protested to drunk policemen beating up a youth, which irked them.

whether it was an act of "overdoing" by the police.

In the preliminary investigation, I found that police received information that some bikers were selling drugs. When two policemen in civil dress reached the spot, this particular youth asked them whether they were law enforcers. When they replied in affirmative, the accused hit one of them with his helmet and injured him. A backup police team placed nearby also reached the spot and tried to overpower him, but he continued attacking them. Left with no other option, police fired at his leg. Eight vials containing heroin were seized from his possession," Mr. Mishra said.

The Chief Minister said that Additional Chief Secretary Paban Borthakur has been entrusted with conducting an inquiry.

"Borthakur will go into the details and submit the report within seven days," he said.

Mr. Bora's mother and some students staged a demonstration in front of Nagaon police station demanding a judicial inquiry.

Nagaon Superintendent of Police Anand Mishra said that he will personally investigate the matter to find out

Locals noticed the dead monkeys in the morning and immediately alerted the Forest Department officials.

24 monkeys found dead close to highway near Tiruchi in T.N.

Poisoning not ruled out

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHI

In a shocking incident, 24 monkeys were found dead in an open area near the Tiruchi-Chennai national highway at Nedungur, a few kilometres way from Tiruchi, on Sunday.

Locals noticed the dead monkeys in the morning and immediately alerted the Forest Department officials.

Male and female

A Forest Department official said 18 out of the 24 monkeys were male and six were female. The department has launched an investigation in



Bodies of the monkeys near Tiruchi. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

to the incident, constituting a team.

Although the cause of the death was not known immediately, the autopsy report would establish the reason behind it, the official said.

The age of the monkeys would also be determined in the post-mortem. It is being suspected that the monkeys would have been caught in

some other place or district and their bodies dumped near the highway.

Chief Conservator of Forests, Tiruchi Circle, N. Sathesh told *The Hindu* that a special team had been formed to probe the "unnatural death" of the monkeys.

Poisoning of the monkeys was also not being ruled out, he said.

Protest over attacks on non-tribals

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A couple on Sunday staged a sit-in in Meghalaya capital Shillong to "silently protest" 40 years of atrocities against non-tribal people in the north-eastern State.

The demonstration at Khyndai Lad, a central landmark in the city, followed the January 20 assault by "unidentified miscreants" on eight non-tribal people, opposite a police station in the Lumdiengiri locality. Three of them, including two Muslims, had to be hospitalised.

Sushit Kanti and Kalpana Choudhury were allowed to hold the protest by the government for six hours on Sunday.

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Information Memorandum for Expression of Interest (EoI) for setting up fabric manufacturing and processing units in West Bengal

Government of West Bengal has been providing school uniforms to all students up to Class VIII which require procurement of woven fabric (approx. 6 crores mtrs. every year). The state government has decided to develop fabric manufacturing units (spinning, weaving, knitting and processing) in West Bengal

The state has planned to purchase minimum 50% of the required uniform fabrics (and other fabrics to be decided at a later stage) for at least 3 years from the units that will be set up under this Expression of Interest. Uniform fabrics for other categories (e.g., hospitals, hospitality sectors, etc.) may also be added in this category, subsequently increasing the committed procurement

Highlights:

- Developed land can be provided to intending entrepreneur in existing industrial parks land with basic common infrastructure facilities like boundary wall, internal road network, etc.
- Intending entrepreneurs may also develop their own industrial park utilising the benefits under Scheme of Approved Industrial Parks (SAIP). Details can be seen at www.wbmsmet.gov.in
- Availability of raw material and skilled manpower
- Proximity to road, rail & air
- Fiscal benefits:** MSME units to get incentives of capital subsidy, interest subsidy, power subsidy and other benefits under 'Bangashree' scheme. Additionally, power loom units to get further benefits under New Power Loom Incentive Policy (dovetailing permitted with GoI schemes). Details of Bangashree and power loom incentives are available on www.wbmsmet.gov.in
- Non-fiscal Benefits:** Committed buyback arrangement for at least 3 years for around 3 crore metres of fabric every year; developed land with basic common infrastructure, 24x7 electricity and water supply, skill training assistance, facilitation for approvals and subsidies and others benefits as mentioned in EoI

Important information on date and time schedule:

Sl.	Particulars	Date & Time
1	Publication of EoI	24 January 2022
2	Pre-Bid Meeting	2 Feb 2022 at 3pm (Shilpa Sadan)
3	Start Date and Time of submission of EoI	7 February 2022 at 10am
4	End Date and Time of submission of EoI	4 March 2022 up to 3:30pm

For more details and EoI, please visit www.wbmsmet.gov.in

DEPARTMENT OF MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES AND TEXTILES
GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

ICA-D64(1)/2022

Interrogation of Dileep, four others begins

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHEE

The first day of interrogation of actor Dileep and four others at the Crime Branch office in Kalamassery got over on Sunday night. This was part of the probe into a case registered on the basis of his reported threat to endanger the life of police officers who were probing the 2017 sexual assault on an actor in Kochi, in which Dileep is an accused.

The High Court of Kerala on Saturday directed Dileep and others to report before the investigation officer on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday.

A team led by S. Sreejith, ADGP, led the interrogation. Dileep is said to have contended that he did not issue any threat.

Third wave: lockdown total in Kerala

Concern over staff crunch in crucial departments

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Life appeared relatively stagnant in Kerala on Sunday, with the government enforcing a State-wide lockdown to arrest the COVID-19 surge.

The police fanned out in strength across the State to discourage in-essential travel and clustering in public places. They turned back travellers without affidavits attesting to their reason for travel.

Most private buses, autorickshaws and taxi cabs remained off the road. Bars remained closed.

Restaurants and hotels disallowed customers but permitted takeaways and home delivery. But toddy shops were allowed to operate since the government



Strict enforcement: The deserted Civil Station Road in Thirissur district on Sunday. ■ K.K. MUSTAFAH

reckoned toddy tapping a traditional sector.

Fish, meat, milk, vegetable, fruit and provision stores; medical shops; laboratories; clinics and diagnostic services remained open from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Portedly under fire from the Opposition, the go-

vernment postponed elections to Kudumbashree units in B-category (Threshold-2) districts. Currently, Idukki, Thiruvananthapuram, Pathanamthitta and Wayanad fall under the categorisation.

The government is reportedly worried that COVID-19 impelled critical staff short-

60 doctors test positive in 2 Telangana hospitals

STAFF REPORTER
HYDERABAD

Several doctors and healthcare officials at government hospitals in Telangana have tested COVID-19 positive. Among them are 33 senior and junior doctors out of the around 50 at the Government General and

Chest Hospital, Erragadda, and over 30 out of the 100 at Government ENT Hospital. "The services are not interrupted. But, by the time the isolation period of one doctor is ending, another doctor is testing positive," said Dr. Mahabob Khan, Chest Hospital superintendent.

VID-19 had temporarily incapacitated an estimated 1,500 officers. It has called for streamlining deployment and reorganising law and order duties to tide over the shortfall.

The government will reimpose the lockdown again on January 30.



States so that penalty can be enforced on citizen who does not maintain a tree in his whole life.

After hearing Mr. Bhardwaj, the Bench said, "It is a settled law that framing policies is the domain of the government and it is not for this court to direct framing of any policy".

The Bench further said that courts can certainly examine a policy or an action of the Executive, if it is unreasonable, unfair, arbitrary or unlawful or if it is unconstitutional, but cannot issue directions to frame a policy in a particular manner.

Separation of power

"There is a clear separation of power in the scheme of the Constitution of India and the duty to formulate policy is entrusted to the Executive. Predominant role of the court is to expound and interpret the law and not to legislate," the Bench said.

In this view, prayers relating to formulation of the policy relating to environmental protection and directing that it be made on the principle of 'one person one tree', as suggested by the petitioner cannot be allowed," the High Court said.

It, however, said that Mr. Bhardwaj could make a comprehensive representation to the authorities towards protection of the environment.

Stalin opposes changes to IAS Rules

Forcing States to send officers will pose governance deficit, he says in letter to PM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Sunday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, opposing the proposed amendments to the IAS (Cadre) Rules, 1954. He argued that it struck at the very root of the country's federal polity and State autonomy. He urged the Prime Minister to engage with the States to further strengthen the nation's federal spirit.

Contending that civil servants must be allowed to work with a free mind and stay apolitical, Mr. Stalin said the ramifications of the proposed amendments were ominous and "would cause an irreparable damage to the spirit of cooperative federalism that exists between the



C It will cause irreparable damage to the spirit of cooperative federalism that exists between the Union and the States and result in concentration of power with the Union government
M.K. STALIN,
Tamil Nadu Chief Minister

Union and the States and result in concentration of power with the Union government." A copy of the letter was shared with the media.

Instead of imposing restrictive provisions to usurp the power of the States, the Union government can "positively reconstruct the working/service conditions for All India Service officers through a transparent empowerment process and by en-

abling professional space and independence" so that the officers could opt for deputation to the Union government "voluntarily without any need for coercive rules," Mr. Stalin said.

Highlighting that many States were "woefully short of officers," primarily owing to the wrong cadre management policies of the Union government, he said while the Union government was

Drop amendments, Kerala CM urges Modi

'These will induce a fear psychosis'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has urged the Centre to drop the proposed amendments to the deputation rules of IAS and IPS officers.

In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mr. Vijayan said the amendment would induce a fear psychosis and an attitude of hesitancy among All India Service officers to implement the policies of a State government formulated by a party/parties politically opposed to the ruling party at the Centre.

Pointing out that the present deputation rules were heavily loaded in favour of the Centre, he said further



Pinarayi Vijayan

stringency would weaken the very root of cooperative federalism. "In our federal setup, the State governments are on a par with the Central government, as both of them are elected by the people, though the division of authority in the Constitution does give the Union jurisdiction over a wide range of subjects."

A.P. govt. employees to serve strike notice today

STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA

Government employees in Andhra Pradesh have resolved to go on strike from February 7 in protest against their revised pay scales.

The Pay Revision Commission (PRC) Sadhana Samiti steering committee, comprising various employees' unions, will serve a strike notice to Andhra Pradesh Chief Secretary Sameer Sharma on Monday around 3 p.m.

On the other hand, the Committee of Ministers which was appointed to persuade the employees' associations to accept what had been recommended by the PRC, invited them for talks in the Secretariat at noon on Monday.

Apolitical fight

The employees' associations have decided to keep the political parties at bay and have an apolitical struggle. The committee has decided to send a leader from each Joint Action Committee (JAC) to each district to lead the fight against the "injustice".

The employees allege that the government reduced their salaries and benefits through deceptive means, and that the mechanism adopted by the PRC to arrive at the revised pay scales has been kept a closely guarded secret.

MLC K.S. Lakshman Rao extended support to the employees.

Calling it "pay reversal", the employees on January 18 rejected outright the government orders on the pay revision and demanded that they be withdrawn as they were "detrimental" to their interests.

The employees will organise agitations in different modes before moving on to an indefinite strike.

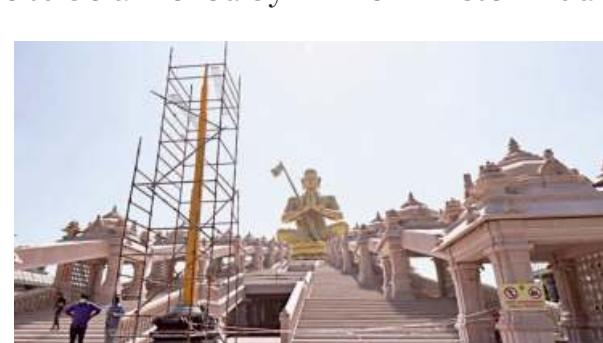
'Statue of Equality' gets final touches

Sri Ramanuja's statue to be unveiled by Prime Minister Modi on Feb. 5

N. RAHUL
HYDERABAD

Work is going on the 216-ft tall statue of the 11th century reformer and Vaishnavite saint, Sri Ramanuja, to be unveiled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the sprawling 40-acre ashram of Sri Tridandi Chinna Jeer Swamy in Muchintal on the outskirts of Hyderabad on February 5.

The 'Statue of Equality', as it is called, is being installed to mark the 1,000th birth anniversary of Sri Ramanuja. It was built of panchaloha, a combination of gold, silver, copper, brass and zinc, by the Aerospool Corporation in China and shipped to India. It is the second largest in the world in sitting position of the saint.



The statue of the 11th century reformer Sri Ramanuja is coming up at Muchintal in Telangana. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The monument will be surrounded by 108 "Divya Desams" of Sri Vaishnavite tradition (model temples) like Tirumala, Srirangam, Kanchi, Ahobilam, Badrinath, Mukti Nath, Ayodhya, Brindavan, Kumbakonam

and others. The idols of deities and structures were constructed in the shape of the existing temples.

The base building, which is 16.5 metres tall, has a meditation hall where a 54-inch statue of Sri Ramanuja made

of 120 kg gold, representing the years he lived, will be inaugurated by President Ram Nath Kovind by performing the first puja on February 13. The deity at the inner sanctum is meant for daily worship by people.

Laser show planned
The beautification works at "Sriram Nagar" where the ashram is located are in full swing.

A 45-ft tall dynamic water fountain in front of the statue is being painted in myriad hues. Work on the fountain, laser show, modern lighting and sound system are nearing completion.

The road widening works to Sriram Nagar from the Bengaluru highway are on a brisk pace.

Superintending Engineer of the project Venkateswara Rao said they would reply to the notice saying the project

Environment Ministry notice to Telangana

No nod for Dindi lift irrigation project

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

The Ministry of Environment and Forests has recently issued a show-cause notice to the Telangana government seeking explanation on the execution of the Dindi lift irrigation project without environmental clearance from it.

The issue came to light after the Ministry filed an affidavit with the National Green Tribunal (NGT) when the latter sought a clarification on a complaint lodged Andhra Pradesh that the project did not have environmental clearance.

The road widening works to Sriram Nagar from the Bengaluru highway are on a brisk pace.

Superintending Engineer of the project Venkateswara Rao said they would reply to the notice saying the project

Framing policies is the domain of govt. and not courts: Delhi HC

PIL seeking to form panel rejected

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has rejected a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking to constitute a special commission on environment to frame a policy on the principle of 'one person one tree', noting that framing policies is the domain of the government and not the courts.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh remarked that, "making a policy with respect to environmental protection and reorganising law and order duties to tide over the shortfall.

The government will reimpose the lockdown again on January 30.

"It is no longer res integra (points of the law which have not been decided) that a court will not interfere in policy making as the policies are framed based on expert knowledge of the persons concerned in the respective fields," the Bench said.

It added, "Courts are not equipped with the necessary expertise to substitute their own views and direct formulation of policies tailor-made to suit the requirements of the petitioner in a given case".

The High Court's observation came while hearing a petition by one Rahul Bhardwaj, who sought direction to constitute a special commission on environment for bringing the policy on sustainable development including the 'one person one tree' scheme.

Mr. Bhardwaj had argued that there should be penalty of not abiding the rules related to protection of environment. He also sought direction to the authorities to fix higher liability on Forest Departments of Union and all

States so that penalty can be enforced on citizen who does not maintain a tree in his whole life.

After hearing Mr. Bhardwaj, the Bench said, "It is a settled law that framing policies is the domain of the government and it is not for this court to direct framing of any policy".

The Bench further said that courts can certainly examine a policy or an action of the Executive, if it is unreasonable, unfair, arbitrary or unlawful or if it is unconstitutional, but cannot issue directions to frame a policy in a particular manner.

Separation of power

"There is a clear separation of power in the scheme of the Constitution of India and the duty to formulate policy is entrusted to the Executive. Predominant role of the court is to expound and interpret the law and not to legislate," the Bench said.

In this view, prayers relating to formulation of the policy relating to environmental protection and directing that it be made on the principle of 'one person one tree', as suggested by the petitioner cannot be allowed," the High Court said.

It, however, said that Mr. Bhardwaj could make a comprehensive representation to the authorities towards protection of the environment.

Destinations get closer



Boost for tourism: A helicopter taking off from the Jakkur Aerodrome in Bengaluru on Sunday. Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai launched the heli-tourism initiative on Sunday, on the occasion of the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the 75th Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

Rape victim's earlier note blames police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MALAPPURAM

A note reportedly left by a rape victim who was found dead in her house at Tenhipalam here in Kerala last Thursday has accused the police of threatening her. The girl had left the note when she tried to commit suicide by cutting her wrist about a year ago.

The girl was a victim in several cases charged under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act at the Ferroke police station. The note, circulated on social media, said the inspector at the station had spoken to her obscenely and threatened the man betrothed to her.

(Suicide prevention helpline: 0484-2540530)

CMYK

CORONA ISN'T OVER REMEMBER TO FOLLOW ALL COVID PRECAUTIONS



Wear a mask properly
Wear your mask before
stepping out of the house.



Wash your hands frequently
Wash your hands regularly with
soap or use sanitizer for atleast
20 seconds.

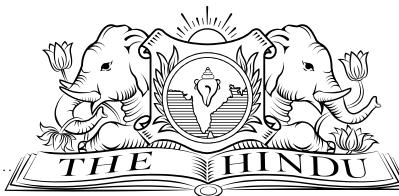


Practice social distancing
Avoid going to crowded places,
and remember to maintain a
minimum distance of 6 feet.

"According to experts, Omicron spreads very rapidly, but there is no need to panic. Continue to wear your mask and remember to follow all covid norms."

- Arvind Kejriwal





False dichotomy

The top court's view that quotas ensure equal opportunity is a blow for affirmative action

The Supreme Court has once again addressed the 'merit versus reservation' debate, a misleading binary that has engaged public and judicial discourse for years. While ruling in favour of extending reservation to OBCs in the all-India quota (AIQ) of seats in admission to under-graduate and post-graduate medical and dental courses, the Court has concluded that the binary has become superfluous. The courts have now come to recognise the idea of 'substantive equality', which sees affirmative action not as an exception to the equality rule, but as a facet of the equality norm. 'Formal equality', or the principle that everyone competes on an equal footing, is inadequate to address social inequalities and the inherent disadvantages of the less advanced sections, necessitating provisions that help them compete with the advanced classes. The competitive examination may be necessary for distribution of educational opportunities, but it does not enable equal opportunity for those competing without the aid of social and cultural capital, inherited skills and early access to quality schooling. Good performance in an examination does reflect hard work, but does not always reflect "merit" solely of one's own making. "The rhetoric surrounding merit obscures the way in which family, schooling, fortune and a gift of talents that the society currently values aids in one's advancement," writes Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, and raises the relevant question whether marks are the best gauge of individual merit. Seen in this light, reservation ensures that backward classes are able to avail of opportunities that "typically evade them because of structural barriers".

The provision of 27% reservation for OBCs within the AIQ was introduced only in July 2021. Implemented from 1986, the AIQ was envisaged as a domicile-free quota to access medical education in all colleges in the country. It comprises 15% of undergraduate medical and dental seats and 50% of post-graduate seats surrendered by the States for admission through a central pool. For two decades, there was no reservation in this segment. In 2007, the Court allowed the introduction of 15% reservation for SCs and 7.5% for STs. Even when the OBC quota was introduced in Central government institutions alone, there was none in State colleges. The decision to end this discrimination now has judicial imprimatur. The Court has also rejected the argument that there was no need for reservation in post-graduate medical education. The impact of backwardness, it has said, does not simply disappear because a candidate has a graduate qualification and does not create parity between advanced classes and backward classes. The latest judgment marks another notable addition to the body of affirmative action jurisprudence.

A stellar fallacy

Assessment of environmental costs, benefits of projects should not be done in haste

A move by the Union Environment Ministry to implement a 'star-rating system' has sparked controversy after one of its official communiqués became public. Under this scheme, State-level environment committees that appraise industrial projects on their potential environmental risk would be incentivised with points for "transparency, efficiency and accountability". This idea followed a Union Cabinet meeting this month to facilitate the Government's broader commitment to 'Ease of Doing Business'. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is one of the cornerstones of ensuring that the ecological costs of infrastructure development are minimal. Prospective projects above a certain size and with a potential to significantly alter the natural environment must be first approved by the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) comprising State officers and independent experts. Projects that are even bigger or involve forest land – category A – must be cleared by an expert committee formed by the Centre. SEIAA projects make up the bulk of projects for approval including building and construction, small mining, small industry projects, and are considered 'less polluting'.

The star rating system proposed is to "rank" and "incentivise" States on how quickly and "efficiently" they can accord environmental clearances. It spells out seven criteria to rate SEIAAs on "transparency, efficiency and accountability". On a scale of 7, an SEIAA, for instance, gets more points for granting a clearance in less than 80 days than for within 105 days and no marks for more. A score of seven or more would be rated 'five star'. However, a reading of the order gives the impression that States, in the quest for more stars, would logically vie for speedily clearing projects rather than ensure a thorough appraisal. The Environment Ministry, has said, in response to criticism, that the intention is not to hasten clearances but accelerate the pace of decision making. Rather than files being sent back for every query, all objections must be compiled and addressed at one go, it contends. While quicker decision-making benefits everyone, State committees are currently hampered by having too few independent experts and decision-making being left to bureaucrats than to environmental specialists. Both industrialists and States gain from projects and, therefore, the tendency is always to elide environmental concerns. In many instances, site visits are critical to understand the potential environmental challenges. Calculating the risks and the benefits of industrial projects *vis-à-vis* their environmental impact is understandably hard. The way forward is to take steps to increase trust in the system and ensure that all States have competent experts who can conduct appraisals without fear or favour. A list of empty rankings is the least advisable way to bring about this.

A chance to support growth, fiscal consolidation

Two years of real growth in economic activities have been wiped out by COVID-19, which the Budget must take note of



C. RANGARAJAN &
D.K. SRIVASTAVA

The National Statistical Office (NSO) released the first advance national accounts estimates for 2021-22 on January 7, 2022. India's real GDP growth in 2021-22 is estimated at 9.2%, that is 30 basis points lower than the projection by the Reserve Bank of India and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projection of 9.5%. In an earlier analysis (*The Hindu*, December 18, 2021, "The challenge of achieving 9.5% growth rate"), we had considered some of the ongoing challenges to the 2021-22 growth forecast, indicating a possible decline. The adverse effect of the third wave of COVID-19, which is mainly affecting the last quarter of 2021-22, may call for a further downward adjustment in the growth rate to about 9%. The main sectors that have held back a more robust recovery are trade, transport, *et al.* on the output side and private final consumption expenditure (PFCE) on the demand side as their annual estimated 2021-22 magnitudes remain below the corresponding levels in 2019-20.

Growth prospects

With respect to the prospects of 2022-23 growth, IMF and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) forecasts have indicated growth rates at 8.5% and 8.1%, respectively. However, these may prove to be optimistic as the base effects characterising 2021-22 may be limited. In fact, as per the NSO's advance estimates, at the end of 2021-22, the

magnitude of GDP in real terms is estimated at INR147.5-lakh crore that is only a shade higher than INR145.7-lakh crore in 2019-20. Thus, due to the three waves of COVID-19 that India has experienced, two years of real growth in economic activities have been wiped out. The economy has to now start on a clean slate. Growth in 2022-23 would depend on the basic determinants such as the saving and investment rates in the economy. As per the advance estimates, the gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) relative to GDP at current prices stands at 29.6% in 2021-22. Capacity utilisation in India continues to have considerable slack. Available quarterly data indicate a capacity utilisation ratio of only 60% at the end of the first quarter of 2021-22 and an average of 61.7% in the preceding four quarters. As such, a pick-up in private investment may take some time.

Private final consumption expenditure (PFCE) also shows a low growth of 6.9% in 2021-22. Any pick-up in demand would continue to be constrained by low-income growth in sectors characterised by a high marginal propensity to consume (MPC) such as the trade, transport, *et al.* sector and the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector more broadly. Growth in 2022-23 would also continue to be constrained by supply-side bottlenecks and high prices of global crude and primary products. It may thus be prudent to expect a real GDP growth in the range of 6%-7%. The implicit price deflator (IPD)-based inflation which was as high as 7.7% in 2021-22, may come down to about 5%-6%. Thus, we may expect a nominal GDP growth of about 12%-13% in 2022-23. It is the nominal magnitude which is crucial as far as the Budget is concerned.

It was due to the high IPD-based



inflation that the nominal GDP growth in 2021-22 at 17.6% exceeded real GDP growth by a margin of 8.4% points. This high nominal growth combined with base effects resulted in the Centre's gross tax revenue (GTR) growth of 50.3% during the first eight months of the current fiscal year. In the first six months of 2021-22, this growth was even higher at 64.2%. In October and November 2021, the average growth in the Centre's GTR fell to about 17.4% as the base effect was weakening. We assess that the annual growth in the Centre's GTR may be close to 35%, implying a buoyancy of nearly 2. With these buoyant tax revenues, the Government may be able to limit the 2021-22 fiscal deficit to its budgeted level of 6.8% of GDP although a marginal slippage may not be ruled out. There may be some slippage in disinvestment targets and supplementary expenditure demands have also to be accommodated.

Going forward, since the base effects in the Centre's GTR would have weakened, we may expect a lower annual GTR growth of about 15%-16% in 2022-23 which in combination with a nominal GDP growth of 13% implies a buoyancy of about 1.2. This would still compare well with the Centre's GTR growth performance in the pre-COVID-19 years which averaged only 5.6% during 2017-18 to 2019-20. The major corporate income

tax (CIT) reform undertaken in 2019-20 had provided, among other things, a concessional CIT rate of 15% for fresh investment in manufacturing by domestic companies provided their production took off on or before March 31, 2023. As nearly two years have been lost due to COVID-19, the Government may consider extending the time limit for availing this benefit. The GST compensation provision would also come to an end in June 2022. This would cause a major revenue shock at least for some States such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. While this matter may be considered by the GST Council, the compensation arrangement should be extended by two years in some modified form. Its impact on the Centre's Budget should be provided for.

With respect to non-tax receipts, the scope of the National Monetization Pipeline (NMP) may be extended to cover monetisation of government-owned land assets. Disinvestment initiatives may have to be accelerated.

Expenditure priorities

Expenditure prioritisation in 2022-23 should focus on reviving both consumption and investment demand. The National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) should be reassessed, and its path may be recast in order to make up for existing deficiencies in relation to the original targets – particularly in the health sector. In this regard, the infrastructure investment undertaken by State governments and the public sector should be realistically ascertained and shortfalls with respect to original targets may be identified and remedial measures initiated. Since consumption demand remains weak, some fiscal support in the form of an urban counterpart to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employ-

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Decoding the 2022 elections and the script for 2024

It would be wise not to make judgments about the outcome of the general election based on the Assembly poll results



SANJAY KUMAR

Five States in India go to the polls in early 2022. And by the end of this year, Assembly elections will also be held in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. Since Uttar Pradesh, the largest State in terms of the number of Lok Sabha seats, goes to the polls in early 2022 – along with Punjab, Uttarakhand, Goa, Manipur and Manipur – this round of Assembly elections is being referred as the semi-final to the final (the Lok Sabha or the general election) which will be held in 2024. As in any match, winning the semi-final would guarantee a spot to play in the final, though it does not guarantee a victory in the final match.

The electoral verdict in the seven States that go to the polls this year (2022) will give us an idea of which party has the larger support base in which State; but these results cannot be an indicator of what might happen in 2024. Many State elections will take place in 2023 which would be much closer to 2024. There have been phases in India's elections when people have chosen the same party to run the State government as well as the Central government, but it is a trend that no longer holds in present-day politics. In the last five years, there have been several elections such as in Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Bihar, when voters have voted very differently while

GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO



casting their vote for the State government and during the Lok Sabha election. There is no evidence to suggest these patterns would have changed over the last few years. So, in my opinion, the verdict of the State Assembly elections will not be any indicator of what might happen in 2024. In fact, to repeat what I have said earlier, one should refrain from making judgments about the likely outcome of the 2024 Lok Sabha election based on the verdicts in these Assembly elections.

In Uttar Pradesh

But this does not suggest that the verdicts in these Assembly elections will not have any impact on how politics in India might take shape in the coming years. For instance, if the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerges victorious in Uttar Pradesh, it would certainly boost the chances of the BJP for winning the 2024 Lok Sabha election; such a result would also boost the stature of incumbent Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath within the party. On the contrary, a loss for the BJP would dampen its prospects in 2024 and affect Mr. Adityanath.

The verdicts in these Assembly elections would also have implications for the other political parties in the fray: namely, the Indian National Congress, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the Trinamool Congress (TMC), the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party. Of the seven States which go to the polls, the Congress is the ruling party in Punjab but the main Opposition party in Uttarakhand and Goa where it is the main Opposition party.

In Uttarakhand, the government has changed every five years ever since the State came into being. With the BJP in power there for the last five years, all eyes are on the Congress's prospects. But elections are won by mobilising the support base and not by any set rules. Such rules have broken occasionally in the last few years, most recently in Kerala.

AAP as a factor

The Congress also has its task cut out in fighting the BJP as there is now the stronger presence of AAP in State politics; this is likely to help it gain some of the anti-BJP votes, in turn posing a threat to the prospects of the Congress. In Goa, the Congress has lost its shape ever since the last Assembly elections; a number of its MLAs have defected to other parties – mainly to the BJP and the TMC. Given this

situation, the Congress is in for a tough fight in Goa. In the case of the elections in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh, and in the event of there being a bi-polar contest, the Congress stands a good chance of winning. But one must not forget that it would be facing a very strong political force, the BJP. The BJP would like to retain Gujarat at any cost, being the home State of both the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, and the Home Minister, Amit Shah. The question is does the Congress have its house in order to be able to defeat the BJP in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh? Given the State-specific scenarios, 2022 is certainly going to be a challenge for the Congress.

AAP is also trying hard to expand its base in various States with an eye on trying to replace the Congress as the main Opposition party to the BJP at the national level if not fill the political vacuum being created by the decline of the Congress's support base in many States. Much would depend on how AAP performs in Punjab and in other States. A victory in Punjab would certainly boost the party's prospects and also provide a broader platform for its leader Arvind Kejriwal to emerge as a bigger player in national politics.

The TMC too

The other leader too who is looking forward to playing a bigger role in national politics is the West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC leader Mamata Banerjee. After the thumping victory of the TMC in the West Bengal Assembly elections last year, the TMC is also another party trying hard to expand its base in other States. The party has been successful in draw-

ing in various leaders from other political parties – from Congress, former Goa Chief Minister Luizinho Faleiro, Mahila Congress President Sushmita Dev, Kirti Azad (Bihar), former Haryana Congress president Ashok Tanwar (Haryana), and Uttar Pradesh Congress leaders Rajesh Pati Tripathi and Lalitash Pati Tripathi. There have also been other political jumps – by former Finance Minister in the BJP government Yashwant Sinha, former Union Minister and BJP MP Babul Supriyo, BJP leader Mukul Roy along with his son Subhrangshu and former Janata Dal (United) MP Pavan K. Varma.

These defections to the TMC are an indication of which way the wind seems to be blowing. But the TMC would need to make its presence felt in some of the States in these Assembly elections if Ms. Banerjee is to stake a claim (even if informal) as the leader who should be the consensus candidate from among the Opposition parties to challenge the BJP in 2024. The TMC is working hard in Goa to pose a challenge to the two established political parties, namely the BJP and the Congress. But one needs to wait and see what kind of an impact the TMC can make in these elections in Goa.

The stage for the 2022 Assembly elections and what its impact on Indian politics may be is wide open. We need to wait and watch to see how things unfold in the coming months and over the next two years before the final match in 2024.

Sanjay Kumar is a Professor with the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and a political analyst. The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Extinguishing history
'Obliteration of a memory' is the phrase that comes to one's mind after reading the report, "Amar Jawan Jyoti now merged with National War Memorial flame, says Government" (January 22). Applying the same strange logic, why don't we 'merge' all the statues of political leaders too? Already, the obliteration of history is a work in progress. One wonders what the next casualty will be. The Independence Day address from a Mughal-era fort?

R. THOMAS PAUL,
Bangalore

■ Surely, both flames could have co-existed as the stand-alone icons of our glorious past, signifying the grit and the valour of our veer jawans across different time frames. For many veterans like me, and even to our millennials, the Amar Jawan Jyoti memorial, with an eternal flame, has always held deep memories of our past, colonial included. To subsume articles of immense value is quite unheard of in the annals of Indian history. Arguably, the Government could have also elicited our views.

G. RAMASUBRAMANYAM,
Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh

■ Many travellers to the national capital make it a point to visit the solemn place to derive inspiration and to absorb national pride. The jyoti gave significance, an identity, a purpose and a charm to the iconic place and has, so far, not posed any hindrance to any segment of society. The Government could have left it untouched.

V. JOHAN DHANAKUMAR,
Chennai

■ Belittling, distorting, erasing history and carving new narratives to suit its political and religious ideology tools the ruling party is employing to polarise the electorate for narrow political gains. The exuberance shown in appointing a committee to 'examine' ancient history, observing a Partition Horrors Remembrance Day, the Central Vista Project, renaming of public monuments, cities, towns, educational institutions and even dropping Mahatma Gandhi's favourite hymn from this year's Beating Retreat ceremony are all examples of a well-crafted, despicable plan with a quest for a new history to drive a future politics. It is time for the people of this great

country to see through these political ploys.

Dr. BIJU C. MATHEW,
Thiruvananthapuram

Not in the hymn book
I am shocked and surprised that the Government has decided to drop the Mahatma's favourite hymn, 'Abide with me', from this year's Beating Retreat ceremony, and played every year since 1950. Who is the brain behind this unwarranted move? Will it not touch the nation to the quick? It is a stark fact that the younger generation today is oblivious of the yeoman services rendered by

Gandhiji. Now, to drop his favourite hymn will only make this even worse.

MANI NATAKARAJAN,
Coonoor, The Nilgiris

Subhas Bhowmick
Subhas Bhowmick was famed as a 'bulldozer' in the football *maidan* of his generation. He shook the opponent's defence with his dribbling skills. Remarkable too was his switcheroo to coaching. His contributions will always be linked to the rise of Indian football.

BIDYUT KUMAR CHATTERJEE,
Paridabla, Haryana

CM YK

To read more letters online, scan the QR code



AN-NDNE

Budgeting for the education emergency

It is astonishing that public expenditure data on the education sector are not easily available



SAJITHA BASHIR

In the current Budget session, how much money the Central and State governments will allocate to education and for what purpose should be a matter of public concern and debate. Even before the pandemic, public spending on education in most States was below that of other middle-income countries. Most major States spent in the range of 2.5% to 3.1% of State income on education, according to the Ministry of Education's Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure on Education. This compares with the 4.3% of GDP that lower-middle-income countries spent, as a group, between 2010-11 and 2018-19. Low-income countries increased their spending from 3.2% to 3.5% of GDP in the same period (World Bank, Education Finance Watch, 2021).

Spending on education

Faced with an unprecedented education emergency, this is the time to substantially ramp up public spending on education and make it more effective. Inexplicably, however, in the 2021-22 Budget, in the midst of the gravest education crisis, the trend was in the opposite direction for the Central government and many State governments. The Central government's allocation for the Education Department was slashed compared to the previous year, even though the size of the overall budget increased. Of the major States and Delhi, eight either reduced or just about maintained their budget allocation for education departments in 2021-22 compared to 2020-21. Seven States marginally increased their allocation by 2%-5%. Only six States increased their allocation by more than 5%, though it remains to be seen how actual expenditures compare with budget allocation.

The education system now needs not only an infusion of resources for multiple years, but also a strengthened focus on the needs of the poor and disadvantaged children. The vast majority of the 260 million children enrolled in preschool and school, especially in government



RAGU R.

schools, did not have meaningful structured learning opportunities during the 20 months of school closures. They have lost basic literacy and numeracy skills, and even the habit of learning. Millions have disengaged from education, due to lack of contact with teachers. Even when schools started re-opening in October, they were operating only at half schedule. Some States have still not opened primary schools. In anticipation of the Omicron wave, State governments rushed to close primary schools first in early January 2022, contrary to all international trends.

Increased public spending alone is a necessary but not sufficient condition to address all these problems. What it is spent on and how effectively resources are used are important. It is clear what additional resources are required for. The needs include: back-to-school campaigns and re-enrolment drives; expanded nutrition programmes to address malnutrition; reorganisation of the curriculum to help children learn language and mathematics in particular, and support their socio-emotional development, especially in early grades; additional learning materials; teacher training and ongoing support; additional education programmes and increased instructional time during vacations and weekends; additional teachers and teaching aides, where required, in part to cope with transfers of students from private schools; and collection and analysis of data.

Many State governments and the Central government have been spending public resources to use technology in education. This is a good time to ask how much of public resources was/is being spent on technology and how effective it was dur-

ing the pandemic, when less than 20% of all students could access even prerecorded videos. How does expenditure on technology compare with the amounts spent on teacher training, which represents just 0.15% of total estimated expenditure on elementary education? Teachers are central to the quality of education, so why does India spend so little on teacher training?

The disaster caused by the pandemic could be the opportunity to reverse the chronic under-funding of India's public education system. UNESCO's 2030 framework for action suggests public education spending levels of between 4% and 6% of GDP and 15%-20% of public expenditure. A recent World Bank study notes that India spent 14.1% of its budget on education, compared to 18.5% in Vietnam and 20.6% in Indonesia, countries with similar levels of GDP. But since India has a higher share of population under the age of 19 years than these countries, it should actually be allocating a greater share of the budget than these countries.

Opacity of data

How does India's public education expenditure "effort" compare with the UNESCO indicative benchmarks? The opacity of education finance data makes it difficult to comprehend this. For instance, the combined Central and State government spending on education was estimated to be 2.8% of GDP in 2018-19, according to the Economic Survey of 2020-21. This figure had remained at the same level since 2014-15. On the other hand, data from the Ministry of Education indicates that public spending on education had reached 4.3% of GDP in the same year, rising from

3.8% of GDP in 2011-12.

The difference in the figures is due to the inclusion of expenditure on education by departments other than the Education Department. Including expenditure on education by, for example, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (on Anganwadis, scholarships, etc.), the Ministry of Science and Technology (for higher education) is of course legitimate. But many of the other departments comprise a smorgasbord. No fewer than 43 Ministries and Departments of the Central government are supposed to be spending on education. Education expenditure by other departments has been rising faster than that by the Education Department, at both Central and State level. They constitute one-quarter of the education expenditure by the States in 2018-19, and half of the Centre's expenditure on education.

However, the composition of these expenditures is not readily available. Public expenditure on elementary education (about 1.8% of GDP) and for other levels of education are rough estimates. The reason is that other than the Education Ministry, education expenditures of departments are not shown by level. They are somewhat arbitrarily assigned to different levels of education and estimated by the Central government. The estimation of education expenditure by other departments of the State governments is even more crude, as they do not even provide separate expenditures on education. The ratio of education spending in other departments at the Central level is used to estimate this for each of the States.

In an era of data deluge, it is astonishing that public expenditure data on the education sector are not easily available. But the questions for this Budget should be clear. How much additional funds are being allocated for different levels of education by the principal departments in 2021-22? Are the funds being spent on the specific measures required to address the education emergency facing the children who have been deprived of learning opportunities?

Sajitha Bashir is former Education Manager and Adviser, World Bank, and core member of the National Coalition on the Education Emergency

Solving the Sterlite problem

The trust deficit between Vedanta and the people of Thoothukudi needs to be bridged if the smelter has to restart



M. KALYANARAMAN

Sterlite Copper of Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu has become a moral issue after the police firing on protesters resulted in the deaths of 13 people in May 2018. Over some 20 years of plant operation, the company had violated many pollution regulations and faced at least two major allegations of excessive emissions. It also faced consistent protests against pollution from the plant. It had been ordered shut many times only to reopen and expand capacity.

Complaints against the plant

Residents around Sterlite say that when the plant was operating, there would be release of gas at 3 a.m. every day. They would wake up short of breath and to a foul smell. Even cattle were refusing to drink groundwater since it was contaminated by Sterlite effluents, they say. Now, the air is cleaner, they contend. The business community complains that Sterlite did not employ enough local people and did not give enough contracts for local businesses. It was a high-handed management that talked down to them.

Though Sterlite has constructed toilets, water tanks and community centers, it has not invested much in serving the educational or health needs of the local population.

Distrust of Sterlite is so much that many people now credit good rains in the last few years to the shutting of the plant. During the 2018 protests, WhatsApp videos of a grieving widow of a cancer patient demanding shutting of Sterlite went viral. There has not been any study to link cancer with Sterlite emissions. But people were only eager to believe the talk. Sterlite representatives have faulted protesters for spreading rumours and serving hostile vested interests. But the company's record has not been above board.

Sterlite's product, copper, is a strategic metal. Important applications are energy, electrical equipment and electronics. Nations are switching more and more to wind and solar due to global warming constraints. This means new projects and transmission lines. There is a push for electrical vehicles. Globally, and in India, copper demand is only set to ramp up. Imports can cause supply bottlenecks. End consumers such as electrical equipment manufacturers sometimes pay a high premium as a result.

There are more than 120 copper smelters

across the world. All major copper-consuming countries have copper smelters within their country. Copper production provides strategic balance and price stability. The shutting of the Sterlite plant quickly made India, a copper exporter, an importer. Domestic copper price is typically higher than the landed price of imported copper, increasing forex outgo. India now imports copper at the rate of 3 lakh tonnes a year and the figure is only likely to grow. Volatile global copper prices are now at least 50% more than what they were when the plant shut.

A copper smelter would serve India well. The only other major smelter in India is Hindalco. Thousands of jobs were lost when Sterlite shut. Real estate and local businesses serving the employees were hit. Imports through the Thoothukudi port fell by 25% the year Sterlite was shut and have only slid further since then. The port lost some 120 calls of vessels every year carrying copper concentrate. Port dues, berth charges, wharfage, etc. took a hit. In 2018-19, the operating income of the port fell by 15% and operating surplus reduced by 20% compared to the previous year. Without Sterlite's copper exports, the port's container terminal has been struggling. The business of some 20 stevedores and 100 clearing and forwarding agents came to zero. On average, 5,000 lorry trips were needed to transport the concentrate import from each ship to the plant. A whole lorry ecosystem had developed in Thoothukudi sustaining thousands of families. In 2020, the Madras High Court, while upholding the 2018 State government order closing the plant, said, "when economy is pitted against the environment, environment will reign supreme." Sterlite has gone on appeal to the Supreme Court.

An opportunity

While the economic and national interest case for a copper smelter is proven, the trust deficit between Vedanta and the people of Thoothukudi needs to be bridged if the smelter has to restart. The framework for a solution could focus on adherence to norms and creating harmony between the company, government and the people. Sterlite presents an opportunity for the people of Thoothukudi to move forward in national and local economic interest. It is an opportunity for a corporate group to act responsibly and take people along while conducting its business.

The process, however, needs someone who can help bridge the trust deficit. An assurance from him, her or an agency should guarantee any settlement. And it's not something governments can do.

M. Kalyanaraman is founding editor of inmathi.com

STATE OF PLAY

For an inclusive linguistic identity

There is consternation that the BJP government is promoting Sanskrit, apparently at the cost of Kannada

K.V. ADITYA BHARDWAJ

Over the last couple of months, the pushback by some Kannada activist groups against the "hegemony" of Sanskrit has seen a renewed vigour. The BJP government in Karnataka stands accused of providing "step-motherly treatment" towards Kannada academic research, while promoting Karnatakam Samskrit University, which was started by the BJP government during its previous regime.

The controversy centres around a grant of ₹320 crore given to Karnatakam University at a time when Karnatakam University at Hampi has been paralysed for want of funds. Karnatakam University's financial condition has been so precarious that it has not admitted a single new student in three years, and it has been several months since it has paid all its employees. The government is pushing it to become "self-reliant".

KARNATAKA

The plight of Karnatakam University, earlier funded by the government, has triggered many campaigns in the last two years. It is in this context that the government's promotion of Samkrit University has caused consternation.

This also comes on the heels of a PIL filed by several organisations, including an RSS affiliate, promoting Sanskrit learning and opposing the making of Kannada mandatory in undergraduate courses, a government order which the Karnatakam High Court ordered to be set aside. One of the mostly unstated reasons behind the opposition to make Kannada mandatory is that doing so would reduce the number of students opting for Sanskrit, as most would opt for English as the other language under the two-language policy. The defence of the need to promote Sanskrit as the "mother of all languages", apparently at the cost of Kannada, has made the State government's affirmation that it is committed to the Kannada cause seem less credible.

At the same time, an online campaign for 'Ellara Kannada' (everyone's Kannada) to simplify the Kan-

nada alphabet by dropping features that it had borrowed from Sanskrit has picked up steam. First proposed by grammarian Shankara Bhat in the 2000s, it has now been re-articulated as a pushback against "Sanskrit hegemony" that has made the language "elitist and Brahminical". Many spearheading the campaign this time come from the Dalit Bahujan communities. This renewed push against Sanskrit and "Brahminism" also comes in the backdrop of assertions by Brahmins in recent times. For instance, Brahmin organisations, including the government body Brahmin Development Board, ensured that criminal cases were booked against two Karnatakam film personalities for their criticism of "Brahminism". This has led to polarisation among communities.

However, these articulations for a regional identity seem to lack political bite as there is no regional party in the State that champions this plank consistently. The JD(S), which comes closest to it, has not identified itself wholeheartedly as a regional party. Though Congress leader Siddaramaiah tried to project a federal plank against the ruling BJP back in 2017, with a State flag, anthem and an argument that the State has been financially victimised by the Union government, it did not go very far given that he is also from a national party. The emergence of the BJP as the single-largest party, just shy of majority in the 2018 Assembly polls, also implies it did not garner popular support.

Some academics have argued that even on the cultural front, the Karnatakam movement has always had its roots in Hindutva. Many early stalwarts who articulated a Karnatakam identity were conservative, upper caste Hindus. However, forces that have argued for a more inclusive articulation of Karnatakam identity have always resisted the tide. The present debate is the latest instance of such resistance.

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DATA POINT



AVERAGE DAILY DOSES | The chart depicts the average daily doses administered in the country during each 10-day period between October 13, 2021 and January 20, 2022. For instance, between January 11 and 20, 7.5 million doses were administered daily on average

SOURCE: PRATAP VARDHAN, STATOSOFINDIA.IN, COVID19BARAT.ORG

Average daily doses administered (in million)

OCT, 13-22 2021 DEC, 2-11 2021 JAN, 11-20 2022

Vaccination pace drops slightly

Major States, such as Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand and Bihar, will take more than 90 days to fully vaccinate adults if they continue to inoculate at the rate recorded in the last 10 days. As of January 23, 67.2% of the country's 15+ population were fully vaccinated, while 91.3% had received at least one dose. About 56.6% in the 15-17 age group had received their first dose.

By The Hindu Data Team

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 11 and 20

	391	317	300	240	232	204	187	135	131	121	113	95	92	81	79	69	59	55	50	47	46	43	42	38	27	22	15	14	13	11	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
Puducherry	391	317	300	240	232	204	187	135	131	121	113	95	92	81	79	69	59	55	50	47	46	43	42	38	27	22	15	14	13	11	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
A&N Islands	317	300	240	232	204	187	135	131	121	113	113	95	92	81	79	69	59	55	50	47	46	43	42	38	27	22	15	14	13	11	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
Manipur	300	240	232	204	187	135	131	121	113	113	113	95	92	81	79	69	59	55	50	47	46	43	42	38	27	22	15	14	13	11	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nagaland	240	232	204	187	135	131	121	113	113	113	113	95	92	81	79	69	59	55	50	47	46	43	42	38													

FROM PAGE ONE

Omicron in community transmission: INSACOG



Caution to the wind: A crowded Sadar Bazar in Gurugram on January 16. ■ PTI

Meanwhile, the INSACOG, in its January 3 bulletin, had warned that Omicron was now in community transmission in India and had become dominant in Delhi and Mumbai, where new cases have been rising exponentially.

It further said that the spread of Omicron in India was now expected to be through internal transmission, not by foreign travellers, and a revised sampling and sequencing strategy of INSACOG is being worked out to address genomic surveillance objectives in the wake of dynamic changing

scenario of virus infection.

"Most Omicron cases so far have been asymptomatic or mild. Since initial detection has primarily been in vaccinated travellers, this should not be taken to mean that Omicron infection will also be mild in high-risk unvaccinated subjects. The threat level remains high and requires constant vigil as the situation rapidly evolves with community spread," it had said adding that COVID-19 appropriate behaviour and vaccination were main shields against all form of mutations of SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Boy from Arunachal Pradesh found: PLA

"Only one person from Arunachal Pradesh is missing from that sector along the LAC. So, we believe it is the teenager," the officer said, confirming that the PLA had informed the Indian Army about finding the missing boy.

Opang Taron, the boy's father, said Miram would be received by the entire village, Zido, when brought home. He added that his wife had gone into shock since their son was "taken away" by the PLA.

Miram and his friend Jhony Yaying had ventured into a forest close to the LAC to hunt and collect herbs and were apprehended by Chinese soldiers. On January 19, Jhony told local officials that he had managed to flee from the Chinese soldiers. He had trekked to Tut-

ing, the nearest circle headquarters.

Miram and Jhony are from the same village, about 35 km from where the alleged abduction took place. Tapir Gao, the BJP MP for Arunachal Pradesh, on January 19 tweeted about the "abduction" of the teenager and sought his safe return.

There have been a few cases of people in Arunachal Pradesh going missing from the LAC. In September 2020, the PLA had kidnapped five boys from the State's Upper Subansiri district and released them after about a week.

Arunachal Pradesh shares a 1,080-km border with China and villagers, often lacking access to basic amenities, have to forage in the jungles close to the international border.

German Navy chief quits over remarks

Further he said: "He (Putin) wants high-level respect and my God, giving some respect is low cost, even no cost. If I was asked, it is easy to give him the respect he really demands and probably also deserves. Russia is an old country, Russia is an important country. Even we India, Germany, need Russia. we need Russia against China..."

Earlier in the day, Ukraine's Foreign Ministry said it summoned German Ambassador Anka Feldhusen in Kiev to stress "the categorial unacceptability" of his comments. German Ministry of Defence in Berlin distanced itself from his comments.

The German Defence Ministry stated that navy chief's statement in "no way correspond to the position of the [German government] in terms of content and choice of words."

He was also given the opportunity to make a statement to the Inspector General of the German military, according to Germany's *Bild* newspaper.

Later, Vice Adm Schönbach backtracked from his comments in a post on Twitter, saying "it was clearly a mistake."

"My defence policy remarks during a talk session at a think tank in India reflected my personal opinion in that moment. They in no way reflect the official position of the defence ministry," he said in another tweet.

Vice Adm Schönbach also apologised for his comments, Reuters said. "My rash remarks in India... are increasingly putting a strain on my office... I consider this step (the resignation) necessary to avert further damage

'Govt ignored Tokyo's Renkoji temple offer'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA

Tokyo's Renkoji temple gave permission to Indian authorities to conduct DNA tests on ashes said to be those of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, according to a fresh translation of a letter which refutes claims that the temple was "retired", placing doubts on a commission of enquiry's ruling that the ashes were not Netaji's, Madhuri Bose, his grand-niece, says.

A new translation of a letter in Japanese written by the chief priest of Tokyo's Renkoji temple to the Indian government in 2005 revealed that permission was given for DNA test of the remains to the Justice M.K. Mukherjee Commission. This portion of the letter was not translated and an edited English version was attached to the Justice Mukherjee Commission's report on the disappearance of Bose as evidence that "on account of the Temple Authorities reticence... the commission could not proceed further [on the issue of DNA tests]" and concluded that the ashes were not of Netaji's, she said.

Many freedom fighters recognised now: PM

Modi calls upon people to take inspiration from Netaji

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday unveiled a hologram of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose at India Gate, where a grand statue of the freedom fighter would be placed soon.

Marking Netaji's 125th birth anniversary, the hologram was installed under the canopy where a statue of King George V had stood till its removal in 1968.

The Amar Jawan Jyoti, or eternal flame in the memory of those killed in the line of duty in the 1971 war, had flickered in front of the empty canopy till last week. While government officials claimed the flame had been merged with the one at the National War Memorial nearby and not extinguished, the Amar Jawan Jyoti was removed from the site on January 21.

The statue, in black granite, would be made by a team of artists headed by Adwita Gadanayak, Director-General, National Gallery of Modern Art, Delhi, a Culture Ministry official said. Till the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiling the hologram in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ PTI

ji, as steps in that direction.

Mr. Modi said Netaji had stated that there was no power in the world that could shake India. "Today, we have a goal to fulfil the dreams of Independent India. We have the goal of building a new India before the 100th year of Independence," he said. He called upon people to take inspiration from Netaji's "can-do" and "will-do spirit".

Mr. Modi conferred the Subhas Chandra Bose Aapda Prabhbandhan Puraskar, or awards for disaster management, for 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 on individuals and institutes for their work in disaster management.

Why neglect West Bengal, asks Mamata

Slams Centre for not allowing tableau

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday said the Union government's decision to install a statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose at India Gate was taken under pressure, and raised the issue of non-inclusion of the State's tableau in the Republic Day parade.



Mamata Banerjee

will we able to write the date of his death," Ms. Banerjee asked. The Chief Minister emphasised the contribution of West Bengal to the country's freedom struggle, and said there were forces in the country that were trying to divide the country over Hindus and Muslims.

"I request them to read about Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. None of these personalities ever talked about dividing the country," she said.

Ms. Banerjee said that it was a matter of shame that the Planning Commission, which was envisaged by Netaji, had been done away with.

'T.N. will definitely execute Hogenakkal water project'

We have the right, says Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI



Duraimurugan

Water Resources Minister Durai Murugan on Saturday asserted that Tamil Nadu had the right to execute, legally and on humanitarian grounds, the second phase of the Hogenakkal combined drinking water project.

Assuring the people that the project would be "definitely implemented," Mr Durai Murugan, in a statement, referred to observations of his Karnataka counterpart Govind Karjol against Tamil Nadu's project.

The Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal, in its final order of February 2017, allocated 2.2 thousand million cubic feet (tmc ft) to Tamil Nadu for consumptive use. Consequently, the State had been permitted to draw about 11 tmc ft.

This had been made, after the Tribunal had apportioned water among States [and Union Territory of Puducherry] of the Cauvery basin on the basis of irrigated areas served.

After providing water for various beneficial uses to all parties to the dispute, the Tribunal had fixed 25.71 tmc ft as Tamil Nadu's share out of the balance quantum of

Punjab Police book Sidhu aide Mustafa

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH

The Punjab Police have booked Mohammad Mustafa, the principal strategic adviser of State Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu, for allegedly promoting enmity between different groups.

The police have registered an FIR against Mr. Mustafa, a former Director-General of Police, under Section 153-A (Promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence) of the Indian Penal Code, and Section 125 of the Representation of the People Act. According to the FIR, the police received information about a video of Mr. Mustafa allegedly delivering an inflammatory speech.

Mr. Mustafa is the husband of Congress candidate and former Minister Razia Sultana. Mr. Mustafa dismissed the allegation, and said his political opponents were trying to make an issue out of nothing.

Archaeologist and epigraphist Nagaswamy passes away at 92

He was instrumental in protecting several monuments

B. KOLAPPAN
CHENNAI

R. Nagaswamy, the first Director of the Department of Archaeology, died of age-related complications on Sunday. He was 92, and is survived by two daughters and two sons.

An authority in archaeology, architecture, epigraphy, numismatics, iconography, south Indian bronzes and temple rituals, Nagaswamy favoured the idea of closing temples in Tamil Nadu during the COVID-19 pandemic. He would say that *ahamic* principles allowed such closure during *mahanari* (epidemic), fire, earthquake and invasion. "Invoke the God in a *tharpai* [tarpaulin] and worship in a private place," he said.

Nagaswamy was born at Kodumudi in Erode district, an abode of Lord Siva sung by Saivite saints. But he would take pride in saying, "K.P. Sundaramalukkum enga ooruthan [It is also the



R. Nagaswamy

tyam. He penned a book, *Masterpieces of Early South Indian Bronzes*, in 1983 and compiled a coffee-table book for the Tamil Nadu government to mark the World Classical Tamil Conference. His other important books are on Mamallapuram, published by the Oxford University Press, Uthiramerur and Gangaikondacholapuram. He had also published books in Tamil.

According to his website tamilartsacademy.com, Nagaswamy was instrumental in protecting several historical monuments, including the Chera inscriptions at Pugalur, the palace site of Gangaikondacholapuram, the famous 17th century Thirumalai Nayak Palace in Madurai, the Danish Port at Tranquebar and the birthplace of national poet Subramania Bharati in Ettayapuram. He oversaw excavations at the palace site of Veerapandiya Kattabomman at Panchalan-kurichi and at Korkai.

NIA links with Germans on probe into SFJ agent

He was booked for terror activities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is in touch with its German counterparts for assistance in the probe against Jaswinder Singh Multani of the Sikhs for Justice (SFJ).

He has been booked along with his associates from other pro-Khalistani banned outfits on the charge of attempting to spread terror activities in Punjab.

Having registered a case

against Multani and others, the NIA has announced a reward of ₹10 lakh against him. His suspected role in the recent Ludhiana blast case is also being investigated on the basis of the inputs.

The agencies have gathered evidence to establish that various social media platforms and messaging applications were allegedly used as well as funds were raised by Multani and his associates to radicalise and recruit youth in Punjab over the past two years.

APPEAL

Baby Mithran (6 months) diagnosed to undergo a VSD Closure at Public Health Centre. His family condition is very poor and cannot afford his hospitalisation & Surgery. Cost of Rs. 2,00,000/- He seeks your generous contribution for his surgery. The donations sent through CH/D/O/NEFT Transfer & GOOGLE PAY (Canara Bank, Nungambakkam Branch, A/C No. 60182010063310, IFSC No. CNRB0016018) favouring WOMEN'S WELFARE SYNDICATE are entitled for exemption under 80G IT. Please give us your E-mail ID.

All Correspondence is done through WWS, Regd. Public Charitable Trust, Flat No. GF 1, Cordell Apartments, O.No. 29, Pyroto Garden Lane, Chennai-600008. Ph: 044-42137401 / 28235324 / 7338978027. E-mail ID: womenswelfaresyndicate@gmail.com Website: www.womenswelfaresyndicate.org

WWS

A ND-NDE

Charter flight operators rue ban on rallies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The ban by the Election Commission of India on physical rallies in five poll-bound States due to the ongoing COVID-19 wave has hit the business of charter flight operators.

Just 10%-15% of the 350 to 400 flight hours per month are election-related travel at this stage, the operators said.

"Electoral travel has not really picked up. It had started to pick up initially, around mid-December, but then the EC announced the ban on rallies so that completely stopped most of the (election-related) travel," said Rajan Mehra, CEO, Club One Air. Kanika Tekriwal, CEO and Founder, Jet-SetGo Aviation, said the company has seen only 70% inquiries for poll-related travel this year compared with last year. However, no inquiry has been actually converted in actual flights as of yet and their conversion is in process, she added.

Mayawati takes a dig at Priyanka over CM face

Parties such as Congress are vote-cutters, says BSP chief

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

Taking a dig at Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati on Sunday said the Congress was in such a bad shape for the upcoming Assembly election in Uttar Pradesh that its "chief ministerial candidate" changed her stand within hours.

It would be better if people did not "spoil their vote" by voting for the Congress, she said, adding that they should vote for the BSP.

"In Uttar Pradesh, parties such as the Congress are viewed as vote-cutters [dividers] by the people," Ms. Mayawati said.

The former Chief Minister's attack on Ms. Vadra came a day after the Congress leader clarified that she had not said that she was the chief ministerial face of the party. On Friday, Ms. Vadra clarified to a news agency that she did not



Poll pitch: BSP supremo Mayawati in Lucknow. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

face of the Congress campaign but did not reveal if it meant contesting election or projecting herself as a contender for the Chief Minister's post.

"Do you see any other face from the Congress party? You are seeing my face everywhere," Ms. Vadra had responded on being asked by presspersons on who would be the party's chief ministerial candidate.

On Saturday, however, Ms. Vadra clarified to a news agency that she did not

mean that she was the CM face of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh and had made the earlier remark in "irritation" as presspersons were asking her the same question repeatedly.

While warning voters against the Congress, Ms. Mayawati said the BSP was best placed to overthrow the BJP in Uttar Pradesh.

The BSP chief said the State needed a government that cared for the entire society and had a "tried and tested" leadership.

Punjab Lok Congress releases first list of 22 candidates

Former CM Amarinder to contest from Patiala Urban

VIKAS VASUDEV
CHANDIGARH

The Punjab Lok Congress (PLC) led by former Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh (retd.) on Sunday announced the candidates from 22 constituencies for the February 20 Assembly election.

The PLC is fighting the election from 37 of the 117 seats as part of its alliance with the BJP and the SAD (Sanyukt).

Of the 37 seats in the PLC kitty, 26 are from the Malwa region. The PLC's share in the seat allocation for the Majha region stands at seven, while the Doaba region



Amarinder Singh

accounts for four seats.

Releasing the first list, Capt. Amarinder said all the candidates had strong political credentials and were well-known faces in their respective constituencies.

The former Chief Minister would be contesting from

his home constituency of Patiala Urban. There are eight other Jat Sikhs in the first list. Four of the candidates belong to the Scheduled Castes (SC) and three to the Other Backward Classes (OBC), while five are Hindus.

Lone woman candidate

There is one woman in the first list. Farzana Alam Khan, a former Shiromani Akali Dal MLA, will contest from Malerkotla in the Malwa region.

Another key candidate from the Malwa region is Mayor of MC Patiala Sanjeev Sharma who will contest from Patiala Rural.

BJP will not win majority in Goa: Raut

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

With the BJP in Goa riven by internal rebellions, Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut on Sunday claimed that the saffron party would not win a majority in the upcoming Goa election.

Speaking in Mumbai, Mr. Raut said if Utpal Parrikar, son of late Manohar Parrikar, fought the Panaji seat with determination, then he had the potential to lead Goa in future.

The Sena leader alluded to the resignations of both Mr. Parrikar and former Goa Chief Minister and long-time BJP loyalist Laxmikant Parsekar, both of whom exited the party after being denied tickets.

"Both Manohar Parrikar and Laxmikant Parsekar had already laid the BJP's roots in Goa. Now, Mr. Parsekar and the late Mr. Parrikar's son, Utpal, are no longer with the BJP... I can give you in writing that the BJP will not get a majority in the upcoming election," he said.

'Operation Lotus coming back to haunt BJP in Goa'

Leaders deserting it: Chidambaram

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Expressing confidence that the people of Goa would vote into office a stable, single-party government led by the Congress in the upcoming Assembly election, senior Congress leader P. Chidambaram on Sunday said the BJP's "Operation Lotus" to lure MLAs from the Goa Congress and elsewhere was coming back to haunt it, with many of the saffron party's leaders deserting its ranks today.

Speaking to reporters in Panaji, Mr. Chidambaram said the question of whether the Congress would ally with non-BJP parties after the election did not arise at the moment.

"What you sow, you reap... What the BJP did to us in 2017 and 2019 is coming back to haunt them. In Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Manipur and in other States [including Goa], the BJP sowed the seeds of 'Operation Lotus', which is buying people. Now, it's coming

back to haunt them. Their own people are leaving them...," said the former Union Minister.

Responding to the comments made by Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee that every vote for the Congress was a vote for the BJP, Mr. Chidambaram said: "I hold a very humble position in the Congress party... I can't engage with the verbal exchange with the distinguished MP from Bengal. All I can say is that the Congress has the strength, membership, deep roots in Goan society, and past record of history in service to the Goan people."

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, Percentage tender through online only will be received upto 02.03.2022 11.00 hours by the Superintending Engineer (H), C&M, Tirupur Circle for CRIDP 2021-2022 Works - (TPR - 050 to TPR - 054 and a Single Works (2 Nos)) - pertaining Karur (H) C&M Division.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU TIRUPUR HIGHWAYS (Construction & Maintenance) Circle TENDER NOTICE

T.N.No. 23/2021-22/HDO

Dated: 21.01.2022

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, Percentage tender through online only will be received upto 02.03.2022 11.00 hours by the Superintending Engineer (H), C&M, Tirupur Circle for CRIDP 2021-2022 Works - (TPR - 050 to TPR - 054 and a Single Works (2 Nos)) - pertaining Karur (H) C&M Division.

Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available from 31.01.2022 onwards in the Government website <https://tntenders.gov.in>. If any Changes / Corrections in the tender, it will be published in the above Government website only.

Superintending Engineer (H), DIPR / 533 / Tender / 2022 C&M, Circle, Tirupur.

"காந்தன் கந்து கந்திரம் அடைந்தோம், காந்தன் பிரிந்து கந்திரம் மத்திப்போம்"

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e-mail : calmint@spmcil.com | CIN : U22213DL2006G0144763

Sealed tenders from eligible and qualified bidders are invited by the undersigned for procurement of below mentioned items:

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING)

Item	Tender No.
Silver Refining Plant	54/PT-129(21-22)/6000016924

For all other details including last date for submission of tender, please visit our website <http://igmkolkata.spmcl.com>. Any amendment or extension shall be notified on Website only.

Sd/-
The Chief General Manager

Office of Additional Chief Engineer PHED, Region Bharatpur

Telephone No.: 05644-222731, 221500, Email: rj_acbepa@nic.in

Notice Inviting Bid No. 198 to 203/2021-22

Online bids for NIT No. 198 to 203/2021-22 (6 works), Costing Rs. 1654.62 Lacs is invited on behalf of the Governor of Rajasthan from eligible entities in appropriate class contractors of PHED, Rajasthan and meeting eligibility criteria. Contractors enlisted with other departments of Government of Rajasthan and enlisted with other departments of Government of Rajasthan and enlisted with CPWD/ Postal/ Telecom/ Railways/ MES/ other State Government Central Government undertakings/ organization in class equivalent to "AAA" class of Rajasthan (as applicable) and meeting prescribed eligibility criteria may also apply. Details of this Bid notification and pre-qualification criteria can be seen on website <http://www.dpr.rajasthan.gov.in> and <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> from 14.01.2022 to 07.02.2022 (6 PM) & Bids are to be submitted online in electronic format on website <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> from 08.02.2022 in presence of willing bidders/their authorized representative.

NIT Code:- PHE2122A5374

UBN No.: PHE2122WSOB11732, PHE2122WSOB11733,

PHE2122WSOB11734, PHE2122WSOB11735,

PHE2122WSOB11736, PHE2122WSOB11737

(Jagat Tiwari) Addl. Chief Engineer

PHED, Region Bharatpur

DIPR/C/680/2022

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU TIRUPUR HIGHWAYS (Construction & Maintenance) Circle TENDER NOTICE

T.N.No. 25/2021-22/HDO

Dated: 21.01.2022

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, Percentage tender through online only will be received upto 04.03.2022 11.00 hours by the Superintending Engineer (H), C&M, Tirupur Circle for CRIDP 2021-2022 Works - (TPR - 059 to TPR - 066 and Single Work 1 No) - pertaining Tirupur (H) C&M Division.

Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available from 31.01.2022 onwards in the Government website <https://tntenders.gov.in>. If any Changes / Corrections in the tender, it will be published in the above Government website only.

Superintending Engineer (H),

DIPR / 535 / Tender / 2022 C&M, Circle, Tirupur.

"காந்தன் கந்து கந்திரம் அடைந்தோம், காந்தன் பிரிந்து கந்திரம் மத்திப்போம்"

INDIA GOVERNMENT MINT
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Sealed tenders from eligible and qualified bidders are invited by the undersigned for procurement of below mentioned items:

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING)

Item	Tender No.
Silver Refining Plant	54/PT-129(21-22)/6000016924

For all other details including last date for submission of tender, please visit our website <http://igmkolkata.spmcl.com>. Any amendment or extension shall be notified on Website only.

Sd/-
The Chief General Manager

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

INVITATION FOR TENDER

(Only through e-procurement portal)

BWSSB invites tenders in Two cover system from reputed Manufacturers & Eligible Contractors for the following works.

Office of the Chief Engineer (West), 6th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560 009.

IFT No.: BWSSB/EIC/CE(W)-I/DCE(M)-II/TA(M)-II/5594/2021-22 Date: 20.01.2022

Name of the Work Amount put to tender

E.M.D. Rs. 3,50,26,646/-

Rs. 5,26,000/-

Providing & laying of water supply lines (Missing bits) in ward No. 160, R.R. Nagar, coming under AEE(W-2) Sub-division. (3rd -Call).

Last date and time for submission of completed tender documents: 07.02.2022 upto 16:00Hrs. Date of opening of tenders: 09.02.2022 after 11:00Hrs.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer (West).

Office of the Chief Engineer (Design), 9th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560 009.

IFT No.: BWSSB/CEDT/ACE(QA)/TA/1944/2021-22 Date: 20.01.2022

procurement of 40,000 Nos. of 15mm dia Multi Jet Class "B" Magnetic type water Meters conforming to IS: 779/1994 OR ISO:4064/1,with its latest amendments.

Last date and time for submission of completed tender documents: 23.03.2022 before 16:00Hrs. Technical Bids will be opened on: 25.03.2022 after 12:00Hrs.

The



Venkaiah tests positive for COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu, who was in Hyderabad, tested positive for COVID-19, his Secretariat tweeted.

Ahead of his departure for New Delhi to participate in the Republic Day parade, Mr. Naidu underwent the COVID-19 test.

This is the second time that he has tested positive. He was positive for COVID earlier in September.

The tweet further said that the Vice-President decided to remain in home isolation in Hyderabad for a week.

18% increase in cases from a week ago

Total number of infections in the country reaches 3.92 crore; active cases cross 21.9-lakh mark

THE HINDU DATA TEAM
CHENNAI

The country recorded 3,05,220 new COVID-19 cases on Sunday, an 18% increase from a week ago. The total number of infections has reached 3.92 crore, and the active cases have crossed the 21.9-lakh mark.

The figures are based on the State bulletins released until 10 p.m. on Sunday. However, Ladakh, Tripura, Jharkhand and Lakshadweep had not yet released their data for the day.

Karnataka recorded 50,210 infections on Sunday, followed by Kerala (45,449) and Maharashtra (40,805).

On Sunday, 430 deaths were recorded in India, considerably higher than the average levels recorded in the last week. The total number of recorded fatalities has reached 4,89,473.

Kerala reported the most deaths with 77 fatalities (39 were from a backlog), followed by Maharashtra (44),



Virus control: A health worker attending to patients at the Commonwealth Games Village COVID Care Centre in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

and Tamil Nadu recorded 40 deaths.

On Saturday, 18.75 lakh tests were conducted (the results for which were made available on Sunday). The test positivity rate (TPR; the number of cases detected per 100 tests) was 16.2%.

As of Sunday, 91.3% of the eligible population has been vaccinated with at least one

dose, while 67.2% have received both doses. In the 15-17 years age cohort, 56.6% of the population have received their first dose. Altogether, 92,99,71,622 first doses, 68,44,36,700 second doses, and 78,02,602 boosted doses have been administered across India.

Telangana recorded 3,603 positive cases and one death

on Sunday. The number of tests conducted stood at 93,397.

A.P.'s highest TPR

Andhra Pradesh reported four more deaths due to COVID-19 and 14,440 fresh cases of infection in the 24 hours ending Sunday morning. It was the highest single-day tally in the past 24 days

(since May 28, 2021). At 30.95%, the daily TPR rate of the 46,650 samples tested in the past day was the highest ever reported in the State.

The cumulative tally increased to 21,80,634 and the toll reached 14,542. The active cases increased to 83,610 and the number of recoveries also increased to 20,82,482, including 3,969 recoveries in the past day. The recovery rate further came down to 95.50%.

East Godavari, Guntur, Prakasam and Visakhapatnam districts reported one death each in the past day.

COVID-19

Visakhapatnam has again reported over 2,000 fresh cases (at 2,258 cases). This was followed by Anantapur (1,534), Guntur (1,458), Prakasam (1,399), Kurnool (1,238), Chittoor (1,198), Nellore (1,103), East Godavari (1,012), Srikakulam (921), Kadapa (788).

extension of time period for re-exports of ISO containers meant for transportation of Liquid Medical Oxygen grade, till September 30, 2022, upon receipt of requests from the importers," the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs circular said.

Duty-free import

Currently, containers are allowed to be imported duty-free with the condition of re-export in the next six months. If they are not re-exported within six months or the time limit as given by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, import duty is levied on such containers. When the deadly second wave of COVID-19 pandemic hit India in April-May last year, there was a massive surge in oxygen demand and the government had taken a host of steps to increase domestic availability of medical oxygen.

Re-export deadline eased for oxygen containers

Customs gives time till September 30

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Customs Department has given time till September 30 for the re-export of high-quality containers imported for efficient transportation of liquid medical oxygen during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a circular to field formations, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) said it had received representations through the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) for providing relaxations in the re-export of ISO containers imported temporarily for combating the pandemic.

Such containers have been used for efficient transportation of liquid medical oxygen owing to the inherent advantage related to multi-modal transportation.

"Board hereby guides all the field formations to allow

'Vaccine must for breaking transmission'

Many refusing immunisation over mistrust, fear of adverse reaction: health workers

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

Lack of faith in the vaccine, mistrust in the fast roll-out of the vaccines and the possibility of governments hiding adverse reaction data – these were among the top reasons given to *The Hindu* by several persons who have refused to take even the first shot of the COVID-19 vaccine so far, despite being eligible.

The problem of a large population being uncovered is compounded by the fact that 6.5 crore persons are now overdue for their second dose of COVID vaccination, according to the Union Health Ministry's submission earlier this week. "Good vaccination coverage is a must for breaking transmission," says experts.

"Most unvaccinated persons are waiting to see how it



Experts stress on need to bring in measures to ensure sustained vaccination.

goes," said a senior health worker at Safdarjung Hospital. "Despite the best efforts to educate and create awareness about the need for vaccines by the government and medical staff, persons often tell us that they want to wait till a sizeable population is vaccinated." They are filtering to see the adverse reac-

tions because of an alleged narrative that adverse reactions aren't entirely reported," she said.

Dr. Rajeev Jayadevan, vice-chairman, Research Cell, Indian Medical Association, Kerala, notes that the most reliable indicators of vaccine effectiveness are critical illness and death rates and not "hospitalisations" any more.

Experts have previously suggested that there is a need to bring in measures to ensure sustained vaccination.

"While majority of Indians would accept the vaccine, given the large population of India, even a small proportion of hesitant individuals would translate to millions of unvaccinated individuals.

"COVID vaccination has only been give emergency

use authorisation which means you are willingly participating in a public trial with limited legal powers," said a retired government official whose entire family including elderly parents with co-morbidities have opted to not vaccinate. He also expressed apprehension about how in such a short time a number of companies have brought out an array of vaccines.

Medical experts, however, say that they are aggressively counselling people to opt for the vaccination. "Vaccines protect against deaths," said Dr. Anil Bansal, member IMA. Stating that this is now a proven fact, he said that people need to be educated.

"We have to work with the people and help each other to break the pandemic chain," he said.

Third dose: CII calls for higher CSR levy

Industry body urges State governments to lift restrictions on economic activity

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Ahead of the upcoming Budget, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on Sunday recommended introduction of an additional 1% corporate social responsibility (CSR) levy for a 12-month period to be used for providing "precautionary" shots of COVID-19 vaccine.

The industry body also urged the State governments to lift restrictions on economic activity.

It reasoned that the occu-

pancy rate of hospital beds due to the Omicron variant of coronavirus was well within the manageable level.

The CII, in a statement, said it had written to the Chief Ministers to consider curbs at micro-containment zones only when hospitalisation rates crossed 75%.

"Hospitalisation rates in the present wave stand at manageable levels and therefore, industry feels that COVID-related restrictions can be removed to enable the robust recovery process

to continue," T.V. Narendran, president, CII, said.

Mr. Narendran added that the CII had suggested to the government that an additional 1%, apart from the mandated 2%, be added to the CSR requirements in the Budget for a specified period of 12 months so that boosters can be made available to all age groups.

"In fact, our recommendation has been that if companies spend on vaccines for their employees, their families and members of the

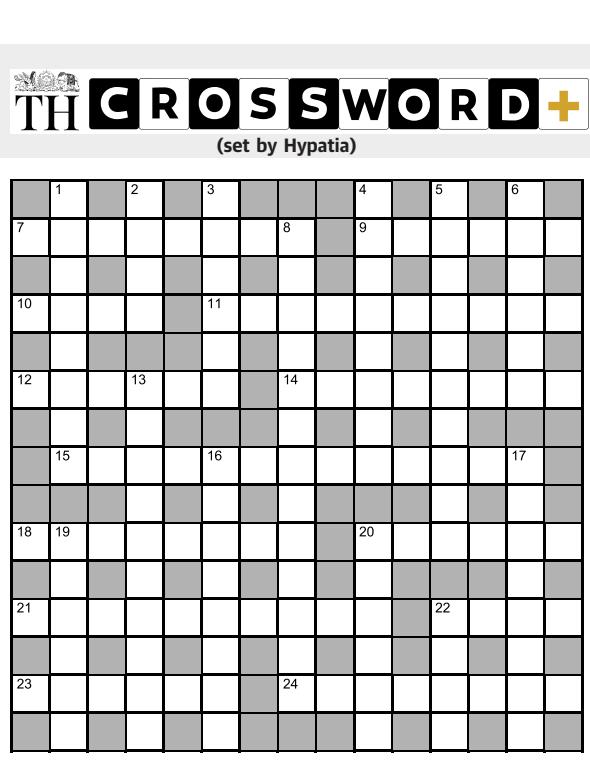
community, then that expense can be set off against this additional CSR spend. Besides the government-provided boosters, the market mechanism should also be made to work for people who can afford to pay for their booster shots," he added.

The CII also requested for fast-tracking imports of all international-approved mRNA and protein-based vaccines at a price to be determined by the government.

- 14 Pennies saved by new account holder (8)
- 15 She manages artist cast in small commercial upfront (13)
- 18 Desire just carelessly (8)
- 20 Doctor Hardy touring India's capital (6)
- 21 Concerning papers of Claude Monet leaving Europe by mistake (10)
- 22 Press conference, initially in Pakistan (4)
- 23 Good French kiss in bed exuding first sign (6)
- 24 Playing polo – day before yesterday's final game (8)
- DOWN
- 1 Love exercising in section put up in plant (4,4)
- 2 Insect bite changing wife to model (4)
- 3 Father sadly parts without love (6)
- 4 One engaged to check notes, basically with registered lender (8)
- 5 House husband, in Delhi say embracing old method of treatment (10)
- 6 Bird drone carries little weight (6)
- 8 Neural networks in my sets? (7,6)
- 13 As per Spooner, old president avoids vehicles (4,6)
- 16 Eager to wear grandmother's yellow clothes (8)
- 17 Free – one cryptic clue for fun (8)
- 19 Maybe Old Welsh regularly left homes (6)
- 20 What banks have done again for yield (6)
- 22 Flower distributor? (4)

ACROSS

- 7 Worker cutting pure fruit (8)
- 9 Between two, neither partner's backing conservative – that's funny (6)
- 10 Can extroverts keep succeeding? (4)
- 11 Shook the tree and bullied (10)
- 12 Sensitive nurse (6)



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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13460

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

S	A	B	O	T	A	G	E	O	C	C	U	L	T	
A	R	I	I	L	N	N	O							
T	R	A	T	R	W	I	N	D						
R	N	L	A	R	M	E	N							
A	D	R	E	S	E	B	I	R	D					
P	O	O	A	A	A	M								
D	I	A	L	R	E	B	C	C						
V	A	M				L	T							
A	T	T	I	M	E	S	V	I	E					
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A	G	E	N	T	S	R	A	N	G					
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Moscow may install proxies in Kiev: U.K.

Britain claims to have evidence of Kremlin trying to install pro-Russian politicians in Ukraine

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON
Britain on Saturday alleged that it had information that Moscow was "looking to install a pro-Russian leader in Kiev" as fears of a Russian invasion of Ukraine grow.

Tensions have soared in recent weeks as tens of thousands of Russian troops mass on Ukraine's border, along with an arsenal of tanks, fighting vehicles, artillery and missiles.

London said it had seen evidence that several former Ukrainian politicians had maintained links with Russian intelligence services, and that former MP Yevgen Murayev was being considered as a potential leader.

Some of those in contact with Russian intelligence officers were "currently involved in the planning for an attack on Ukraine", the Foreign Office said in a statement, though did not release



Keeping guard: An Ukrainian soldier near the line of separation from Russian-backed rebels on Saturday. ■ REUTERS

details of the evidence. A U.S. official called the alleged plot "deeply concerning".

Moscow dismissed the claims as "disinformation", and urged London to "stop spreading nonsense."

Mr. Murayev, the man named by London, lost his seat in the Ukrainian parlia-

The other four politicians named by the U.K. were Mykola Azarov, Sergiy Arbuzov, Andriy Kluyev and Volodymyr Sivkovich.

"The information being released today shines a light on the extent of Russian activity designed to subvert Ukraine, and is an insight into Kremlin thinking," British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said.

"Russia must de-escalate, end its campaigns of aggression and disinformation, and pursue a path of diplomacy."

Ukraine said on Sunday it would continue countering pro-Russian individuals and entities aiming to destabilise Ukraine.

"Our state will continue its policy of dismantling any oligarchic or political structures that could be working to destabilise Ukraine or aid the occupiers," said Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to President Volodymyr Zelen-

sky's chief of staff.
The term is often used by officials in Kiev to refer to Russia and its annexation of the Crimean peninsula in 2014.

"For some time, Russia has seen its main strategy towards Ukraine to be the selection of specific individuals in oligarchic or political circles and the attempt to promote Russia's interests through them," Mr. Podolyak said.

Deeply concerning
In Washington, U.S. National Security Council spokeswoman Emily Horne said: "This kind of plotting is deeply concerning."

The claims came hours after a senior U.K. defence source said that Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu had accepted an invitation to meet British counterpart, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace, to discuss the crisis.

Beijing to test 2 mn ahead of Olympics

Measure follows an outbreak in Fengtai district leading to nine cases

ANANTH KRISHNAN

HONG KONG
China's capital, Beijing, will test more than two million residents as it deals with a new cluster of COVID-19 cases just two weeks before it hosts the Winter Olympics, city officials said on Sunday.

Beijing's Fengtai district, the centre of the latest outbreak, reported nine new cases on Sunday – a small number in most places but a break from normalcy in a city where a strict "zero-COVID" strategy has been in place – with the total number over the weekend nearing two dozen.

Xu Hejian, a spokesperson for the Beijing government, said all of Fengtai's two million residents would be tested in coming days.

Under China's "zero-COVID" approach, the country still maintains tight restrictions on international travel, and carries out mass testing and quarantining of all close contacts in centralised facilities until cases are brought



Testing times: Residents lining up for COVID-19 tests at a residential area in Beijing on Sunday. ■ AP

to zero. The approach has helped China avoid a major second wave and maintain normalcy at home for much of the past year, although it has come at the cost of continued international isolation.

Beijing is particularly on edge ahead of the Winter Olympics, which President Xi Jinping will open on February 4.

Russia's Vladimir Putin and Pakistan's Imran Khan are among foreign leaders expected to attend.

"We must make every ef-

fort to stop the spread as quickly as possible by taking firm, strict and decisive measures," said Mr. Xu of the Beijing government.

Of the 43 cases in Beijing reported since January 15, six were of the more transmissible Omicron variant, while the rest were Delta.

The Omicron variant has challenged the "zero-COVID" approach still in place both on the Chinese mainland and in Hong Kong. On Sunday, Hong Kong reported 140 new cases, most tied to a

housing estate, marking the highest daily number since July 2020.

Thousands have been locked down in the housing estate while many close contacts have been sent to quarantine facilities, while mass testing is being carried out. Among the more extraordinary measures, more than 2,000 hamsters have been culled because of spread in a pet-shop, prompting anger from both pet owners and animal rights groups.

While the "Zero-COVID" playbook helped quickly squash earlier clusters, microbiologist Yuen Kwok-yung of the University of Hong Kong warned the speed of the current spread suggested more cases "would continue to be uncovered" in the coming weeks.

"It may take around two to three months to calm down," he was quoted as saying by the *South China Morning Post*. "We have to see if our existing measures are effective enough."

ELSEWHERE



UAE bans use of drones for a month after attacks

ABU DHABI
The United Arab Emirates has banned the use of drones for one month, days after Yemen's Houthi rebels launched a deadly drone and missile attack on oil storage facilities in Abu Dhabi. "The Ministry of Interior is currently stopping all flying operations for owners, practitioners and enthusiasts of drones, including drones and light sports aircraft," the official WAM news agency reported late on Saturday. Those who need to fly drones for work must ask the authorities for the "necessary exceptions and permits", it added. AFP

Belgium witnesses COVID-19 protests

BRUSSELS
Police fired water cannons and tear gas in Brussels on Sunday to disperse protesters marching against COVID-19 vaccinations and restrictions. The march followed demonstrations in other European capitals on Saturday that also drew thousands of people protesting vaccine passports and other requirements. In Brussels, demonstrators chanted "Liberty!" as they marched. White-helmeted police riot officers later sought to disperse protesters, who ignored instructions broadcast over loudspeakers that the demonstration was finished and that they should leave. Police water cannon trucks fired powerful jets at protesters, while thick clouds of smoke filled the air in the Belgian capital. AP

COVID: 'Europe could be headed for endgame'

Omicron start of a phase: WHO official

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

COPENHAGEN

The Omicron variant has moved the COVID-19 pandemic into a new phase and could bring it to an end in Europe, the WHO Europe director said on Sunday.

"It's plausible that the region is moving towards a kind of pandemic endgame," Hans Kluge told AFP in an interview, adding that Omicron could infect 60% of Europeans by March.

Once the current surge of Omicron currently sweeping across Europe subsides,

"there will be for quite some weeks and months a global immunity."

"So we anticipate that there will be a period of quiet before COVID-19 may come back towards the end of the year, but not necessarily the pandemic coming back," Mr. Kluge said.

"There is a lot of talk about endemic but endemic means ... that it is possible to predict what's going to happen. This virus has surprised us more than once so we have to be very careful," Mr. Kluge said.

S. Korea says it has paid Iran's UN dues

ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUBAI

Using Iranian bank funds freed from American sanctions, South Korea has paid Iran's \$18 million in delinquent dues owed to the United Nations, Seoul said on Sunday. The step was apparently approved by Washington to restore Tehran's suspended voting rights at the world body.

The South Korean Foreign Ministry said Seoul paid the sum using Iranian assets frozen in the country after consulting with the United States Treasury.

Peru declares environmental emergency following oil spill

Waves from Tonga eruption hit a tanker unloading at refinery

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LIMA

Peru declared an environmental emergency Saturday to battle an oil spill caused by freak waves from a volcanic eruption in the South Pacific.

The stunningly powerful eruption on last Saturday at an undersea volcano near Tonga unleashed tsunami waves around the Pacific and as far away as the United States.

In Peru, the oil spill near Lima has fouled beaches, killed birds and harmed the fishing and tourism industries.

With its 90-day decree, the government said it plans

"sustainable management" of 21 beaches tarred by 6,000 barrels of oil that spilled from a tanker ship unloading at a refinery last Saturday.

One aim of the decree is to better organise the various agencies and teams working in the aftermath of the disaster, the Environment Ministry said.

But the Ministry said it issued the emergency decree because the crude still in the water was still spreading, reaching 40 kilometers from the spot of the original spill.

The Environment Ministry said "the spill amounts to a sudden event of significant impact on the coastal marine ecosystem."

Taliban, Afghan civil society members begin Oslo talks

Women activists, journalists meet ruling dispensation

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

OSLO

The first Taliban delegation to visit Europe since returning to power in Afghanistan began talks on Sunday in Oslo with Afghan civil society members focused on human rights, ahead of highly-anticipated meetings with Western officials.



Common ground: Taliban delegates posing for photos at the Kabul airport before departing for Oslo on Saturday. ■ AFP

ment, and Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt stressed that the talks would "not represent a legitimisation or recognition of the Taliban".

The discussions, which are being facilitated by Norway and are to focus on human rights and the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, are taking place behind closed doors.

No country has yet recognised the Taliban govern-

ment, and Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt stressed that the talks would "not represent a legitimisation or recognition of the Taliban".

The Conservative Party whips' office said Ms. Ghani's claims "are categorically untrue."

The Prime Minister's office said Mr. Johnson met with Ms. Ghani to discuss her concerns in 2020, and invited her to file a formal complaint, but that she didn't do so.

Several Conservative lawmakers, however, spoke up to support Ms. Ghani.

Caroline Nokes, who heads Parliament's Women and Equalities Committee, said Ms. Ghani's treatment had been "appalling" and

she was brave to speak out.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi tweeted that Ms. Ghani's allegations must be "investigated properly & racism routed out."

Conservatives under fire

Some people have accused the Conservative party of failing to stamp out anti-Muslim prejudice under Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who in 2018 compared women who wear face-covering veils to "letter boxes."

Ms. Ghani's allegation comes after another Conservative legislator, William Wragg, accused party whips of intimidating and blackmailing members of Parliament to ensure they supported the government.

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ARATI KRISHNAN

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KAMAL DAKKE

We regret to tell you that your return expectations are very unrealistic. Today, the safe fixed income options in the market such as government bonds, deposits with leading banks and government-backed small savings schemes pay out interest of about 5.5-7.5% per annum (pa). But for an investment of ₹5 lakh to fetch ₹10,000 per month, the effective return would have to be about 24% pa. Even if you were to look for instruments that offer half this return, you'd be putting your capital to considerable risk in today's interest rate environment.

Given your age and life stage, we would suggest that you prioritise capital safety over returns and invest this lumpsum in government-backed schemes, even if it means settling for lower returns. The monthly income schemes that offer relatively high returns with such government backing are the Post Office Senior Citizens Savings Scheme (SCSS), Post Office Monthly Income Account and LIC's Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana. The SCSS is a deposit scheme that you can invest in via India Post or leading banks. It's a five-year scheme which offers quarterly interest. The interest is changed by the government at the beginning of every quarter but the current rate (valid for deposits upto March 31 2022) is 7.4 per cent per annum. The Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana is a scheme from LIC where you make an upfront payment and receive monthly pension at the rate of 7.4% p.a. To get a pension of ₹9,250 per month from this scheme you need to make an upfront payment of almost ₹15 lakh. This scheme carries a 10 year lock in period. The Post Office Monthly Income Account pays you monthly income against an upfront deposit of up to ₹4.5 lakh. The scheme carries a 5-year lock in period and currently offers an interest rate of 6.6 % p.a.

Q. I am a 18-year-old student. I have started SIPs in smallcap funds from Axis, ICICI Pru and Kotak with monthly contributions of ₹700. I also invested ₹500 in Quant ELSS Fund. Is this the right track? What else I can do to improve my investing strategy?

TANMAY ADHIKARI

It is admirable that you are thinking of saving and investing at such a young age. But You need to take a more planned and systematic approach to investing, so that your investments help you meet your goals without subjecting you to undue risks. Before you choose funds to invest in or start SIPs, it will be good to put some thought into why you'd like to invest in the first place. The target sum you'd like to save up, the time horizon over which you're hoping to get to this target and the risks you're willing to take along the way - all will have a bearing on which instruments you choose and the kind of products you decide to invest in. This earlier article we published has details on how you can go about taking a planned approach to your investment journey.

Having said this, we have three comments on your fund choices currently. One, small-cap equity funds today have the highest past returns but you should be aware that such funds, because they invest in the less established, emerging companies in the listed universe, usually carry very high risks. While small-cap funds, if run well, can deliver very high returns beating all other categories of funds in bull markets, they can also lose money equally fast during a correction or in a bear market. Therefore, you should invest in small-cap funds only if you will not panic or lose sleep over a 40-50% drop in your investment value in a corrective phase. While small-cap funds do have high wealth creation potential especially for young investors like you, such potential works in your favour only if you can hold on for a really long period (say 7-10 years) and will not exit your investments midway, either because you need the money or are hit by losses or poor returns. If you don't have such a risk appetite, index funds that invest in broader markets like Nifty 500 funds or BSE 500 funds or a combination of a Nifty50 and Nifty Next50 fund would be a better bet for SIPs.

Two, it is never a good idea to invest all your savings in a single fund category or even in an asset class. As a beginner, we'd typically advise you to split your money between safe investments (like the PPF) and risky investments like equity MFs. Even within equity MFs, you should ideally invest in a multicap/flexicap fund or diversify across large, mid and small-cap funds rather than concentrate your SIP money in three small-cap funds.

Three, ELSS funds are usually meant for individuals who earn a taxable income and would like to avail of the ₹1.5 lakh a year tax exemption under section 80C. As a student, there's no specific reason why you should prefer an ELSS fund over a plain vanilla multicap or flexicap fund. While there's no harm in investing in an ELSS fund even without looking for tax breaks, you need to be aware that ELSS funds carry a 3-year lock in period for each of your SIP instalments, whereas open end flexicap/multicap funds do not have any such lock-in requirements.



Readers can e-mail queries on personal finance and investing to the moneywise@thehindu.co.in ID. The experts on personal finance will answer select queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund scheme, share or fixed deposit.

What mutual fund SIPs are really about

They make you invest, automates that investment and keeps you building wealth over the years

BHAVANA ACHARYA

At about ₹5.65 lakh crore, the mutual fund systematic investment plans (SIP) accounts for 15% of the total mutual fund assets under management (AUM).

That's higher from the 13% share in April 2021. SIP AUM has grown at almost double the rate that the entire mutual fund AUM has between April and December 2021, with monthly SIP amounts breaking past ₹10,000 crore last September.

All this is welcome! SIPs are great ways to invest and build wealth. But along the way, the SIP, its purpose and benefits have become somewhat contorted. So, here's putting SIPs in perspective – what they are and how they really help you.

Committed investments
In a SIP, you are putting money into a fund at regular intervals through the year. You knew that already. But what you're also probably discounting is the true benefit of this.

A SIP's biggest advantage is that it makes sure you invest every month.

It makes sure that you don't overspend and skimp on saving. It doesn't give you the excuse to put off investing for the next month. For the salaried es-

specially, with income coming in every month, SIPs are the best way to ensure that investments happen.

More, by investing smaller sums every month, SIPs allow you to slowly and surely build up wealth.

Large financial goals are hard to reach with lumpsum investments for most of us! As your income grows, raising your SIP amounts - and AMCs and investment platforms provide several handy ways in which you can increase SIP amounts – will improve your wealth-building and see to it that savings keep in step with rising income.

Not a cure
But the emphasis on SIPs over the past few years have pushed down this fundamental benefit and elevated others, giving SIPs an identity that's often

misunderstood.

Take the 'rupee cost averaging' benefit. In reality, averaging costs down doesn't play out easily. To genuinely average costs lower, two factors are needed. First, markets should correct. Second, you need that market fall to continue for long (or be steep) enough so that you're able to make enough additional SIPs at those low levels such that your overall investment costs shift lower.

When you run SIPs through a market upswing, your costs are in fact moving up as you're investing at steadily higher levels. Longer the rally, the more your cost trends upwards and the more you need a correction to lower costs.

The longer you run your SIP, the more you need a long market downturn to average, since your investment amount itself is likely to be large.

Next, consider the benefit that SIPs are the solution to investing at the wrong time. Yes, SIPs help reduce the risk of investing at highs when stocks are peaking, as SIPs allow investing at different NAVs and market levels. But, this often gets twisted into the belief that SIPs prevent losses or that they ensure high returns. That doesn't happen.

SIPs are a mode of investment. You don't invest in an SIP. You invest in a fund through an SIP. Your investment is the fund. Your return will be that of the fund. If a fund is unable to deliver well, having invested through SIP is not going to improve that return. If markets are correcting, so does your fund and your investment.

To extend this point further, you also don't have 'SIP funds' or 'lumpsum funds' for the same reason. SIPs and lumpsums

are only methods of investing in a fund and are not the investment itself. You only have good funds that are worth investing in, whether it is through SIP or lumpsum.

With equity markets on a tearing run for close to two years now, and with no prolonged corrective period even before that, it's important not to lose sight of what SIPs are and are not. Having lofty or faulty expectations from your SIP is likely to disappoint you, make you lose faith in your investments should markets take a breather this year.

This can push you into stopping SIPs, the one thing you shouldn't do. You need to run your SIPs through a market correction to truly get their 'averaging' effects.

Not always needed
The mistiming risk and averag-

ing benefit is also uniformly applied to all funds, making SIPs out to be the only way or the right way of investing. No. Again, look at what SIPs do.

SIPs reduce risk of investing highs. But this high risk of mistimed investments is primarily only in equity funds (and aggressive hybrid funds). Only stock markets can drop sharply or stay down for a long time. Mistiming risk is minimal or very short-lived in all debt funds (other than gilt funds) and in hybrid categories other than aggressive hybrid.

Similarly, it is only in equity funds/hybrid aggressive funds that you can turn market volatility to your advantage, by investing on dips and lowering costs. In the absence of that volatility, you get no averaging benefit; in such funds, as long as your timeframe is right, it doesn't matter whether you invest through SIP or lumpsum.

Therefore, remember the fundamental advantage and need for an SIP, which is that it makes you invest, automates that investment, and keeps you building wealth over the years. Don't focus excessively on other aspects that may not apply and may only confuse you or leave you disappointed.

(The author is co-founder Primeinvestor.in)



COVER NOTE: EQUITABLE CONTRACT

Mis-selling in health insurance

Utmost good faith is the underlying principle of any insurance product

K. NITYA KALYANI

Insurance is unique among products, especially financial products, in that the contract is based on a few underlying principles that are immutable.

They include Insurable Interest, Indemnity and Subrogation and one of the important principles is that of Utmost Good Faith.

This principle, uberrimae fidei in Latin, says that BOTH the insurer and the insured must disclose all material facts before the policy inception. A Material Fact is one that has a bearing on the risk proposed to be covered and hence the insurer's decision whether to cover it, and if so, at what (premium) rate and terms.

If the principle were binding only on the insured, we can brush it away with cynicism that the big, bad corporate will always have the upper-hand and the buyer will just have to beware.

But Utmost Good Faith is binding upon the insurer also making it a more equitable contract.

Arguably the most customer interest is for health insurance. It is also the type of insurance that makes for quite some embittered customers.

Part of the reason lies with misleading or partial information from the seller's side, and part with the casual approach of the buyer and his presumptions.

Let us see typical examples of mis-selling and mis-buying in health insurance and how you can steer clear.

Expectation, reality
By far the biggest gap between expectations and reality in health insurance is that many insureds think everything is covered and that it will be an all expenses paid in full deal up to the sum insured.

If you are one of them, stop and see your policy document. It clearly spells out what is covered and what is excluded and never covered. It also spells out what is covered after a specified waiting period of unbroken coverage.

No claims in the first 30 days

except if due to an accident, pre-existing diseases are covered after a waiting period of 48 months of unbroken coverage, some procedures and treatments are covered after a waiting period of 12 or 24 months... these are the broad parameters of typical hospitalisation insurance covers.

Sub-limits
A second type of mislead is the sum insured itself. Insurers usually start you off with a low-

er sum insured and you can enhance it later on. Each enhancement has the same waiting period conditions tagged to it.

But the devil is in the details and this one is called sub-limits. It will be clearly spelt out in the policy document that you will be eligible for only 1% of your sum insured as daily hospital room rent. So, with a ₹3 lakh policy you can opt for a ₹3,000 room and get reimbursed in full.

Or, you can upgrade yourself



Loud and clear: Both the insurer and the insured must disclose all material facts before the policy inception. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

to a ₹4,000 room but the policy will pay only ₹3,000. Still sounds ok to you? There is more. Actually, there is less.

Almost all hospital costs like medical professionals' fees and ICU charges are linked to your room rent. So, you will get only three fourths of each of these expenses.

This is rarely spelt out at the point of sale and so, we buy a policy and enter a zone of false comfort.

If this is not spelt out to you when you buy, that is mis-selling.

To protect against that, regulations require you to sign an undertaking that details have been explained to you and you have understood them. You should take this undertaking seriously since you are signing your assent.

Another point you must seek clarity on is, who is covered by the sum insured. Family policies are attractive as they are packages and have a lower premium rate with a discount. But do see if it is a floater sum insured or individual sum insured because that can make all

the difference. Floater sum insured offers the entire amount across family members, and hence the premium is lower, while individual sum insured is the opposite. It is your view to take on which will work better for you. Don't go by the seller's focus on lower premium alone. If there is a lower premium, there will be a reason for it. Find it, own it and then buy the policy.

Indemnity, benefit policies
Similar issues will arise if you buy without clarity on indemnity and benefit policies. Indemnity policies make good your expenses on hospitalisation. Benefit policies pay on diagnosis and you can make a claim on it in addition to your indemnity policy claim as payment is not against actuals.

Buying health insurance is a one-time decision but requires your total attention. Just as you would choose your hospital or surgeon!

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)

PERSONAL LOAN - RATES AND CHARGES

Name of Lender	Interest rate (%)	EMI (Rs)		Processing fee (% of loan amount)
		Loan amount 5 lakh	Loan amount 1 lakh	
HDFC Bank	10.25-21.00	10,685-13,527	2,149-2,705	Upto 2.5% (Max Rs 25,000)
Citibank	9.99-16.49	10,621-12,290	2,124-2,458	Upto 3%
ICICI Bank	10.50-19.00	10,747-12,970	2,149-2,594	Upto 2.50%
Bank of Baroda	10.00-15.60	10,624-12,053	2,125-2,410	2% (Min Rs 1,000 and Max Rs 10,000)
State Bank of India	9.60-13.85	10,525-11,595	2,105-2,319	Nil across all channels till 31st January 2022
Canara Bank	10.20-13.90	10,673-11,608	2,135-2,322	Upto 1%
Punjab National Bank	7.90-14.45	10,114-11,751	2,023-2,350	Upto 1%
Bajaj Finserv	13.00 onwards	11,377 onwards	2,275 onwards	Upto 4%
South Indian Bank	10.30-18.05	10,697-12,710	2,139-2,542	2%
Indian Overseas Bank	11.30-12.05	10,946-11,135	2,189-2,227	Upto 0.75%
Indian Bank*	9.05-13.65	10,391-11,544	2,078-2,309	1%
Dhanlaxmi Bank	11.90-15.70	11,097-12,079	2,219-2,416	Upto 2.5% (Min Rs 1,250)
IndusInd Bank	11.00 onwards	10,871 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 3%

*For pensioners, NIL processing fees for loan upto Rs 25,000, and fees of Rs 250 for loan above Rs 25,000.

Rates and charges as on January 20

CAR LOAN - RATES AND CHARGES

South Africa keeps its nerve to win a thriller, completes sweep

de Kock scores his sixth ODI ton against India as hosts make 287; Men in Blue lose by four runs despite a cameo by Deepak Chahar and Dhawan & Kohli's efforts

INDIA IN SA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CAPE TOWN

India failed to avoid a series whitewash against a South African team in transition despite Deepak Chahar's scintillating 34-ball 54, losing the third ODI by four runs here on Sunday to end a disastrous tour of the Rainbow Nation.

Asked to take first strike, South Africa scored 287, thanks to Quinton de Kock's aggressive hundred and Rassie van der Dussen's fluent half-century. In reply, India was all out for 283 in 49.2 overs after needing just 10 runs in three overs with three wickets in hand.

Having taken two wickets with the ball, Chahar blazed away with the bat, smashing five fours and two sixes. In a rush of blood, he went after Lungi Ngidi off the first ball of the 48th over and ended up skiing the ball. Jasprit Bumrah tried to go for glory and hit straight to South Africa captain Demba Bavuma at mid-off off Andile Phehlukwayo before Yuzvendra Chahal fell to Dwaine Pretorius off the second ball of the final over.

India made four changes, bringing in Suryakumar Yadav, Jayant Yadav, Deepak Chahar and Prasidh Krishna for Venkatesh Iyer, Shardul Thakur, R. Ashwin and Bhuvneshwar Kumar. Suryakumar batted well before being dismissed for 39 off 32 balls. Opener Shikhar Dhawan struck a 73-ball 61 while Kohli made an 84-ball 65 after skipper K.L. Rahul went cheaply again.

Earlier, India rallied to bowl out South Africa under 300 after de Kock and van der Dussen's knocks. De Kock struck 124 off 130 balls and added 144 for the fourth wicket with van der Dussen before India applied the brakes. de Kock's sixth ODI century against India pulled him level with A.B. de Villiers.

David Miller contributed a 38-ball 39 and 287 proved to be just enough.



In good nick: After de Kock piloted South Africa to 287, Chahar almost pulled it off for India with a superb knock. ■ REUTERS/AFP



SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA

Quinton de Kock c Dhawan b Bumrah 124 (130b, 12x4, 2x6), Janneman Malan c Pant b Deepak Chahar 1 (6b), Temba Bavuma run out 8 (12b, 1x4), Aiden Markram c sub (Ruturaj) b Deepak Chahar 15 (14b, 3x4), Rassie van der Dussen c Shreyas b Chahal 52 (59b, 4x4, 1x6), David Miller c Kohli b Prasidh 39 (38b, 3x4, 1x6), Andile Phehlukwayo run out 4 (11b), Dwaine Pretorius c Suryakumar b Prasidh 20 (25b, 3x4), Keshav Maharaj c Kohli b Bumrah 6 (5b, 1x4), Sisanda Magala c Rahat b Prasidh 0 (2b), Lungi Ngidi (not out) 0 (0b); Extras (lb-2, w-7, nb-2): 11; Total (in 49.5 overs): 283.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-18 (Rahul, 4.1), 2-116 (Dhawan, 22.2), 3-118 (Pant, 22.6), 4-156 (Kohli, 31.4), 5-195 (Shreyas, 37.1), 6-210 (Suryakumar, 39.5), 7-223 (Jayant, 42.1), 8-278 (Chahar, 47.1), 9-281 (Bumrah, 48.3).

SOUTH AFRICA BOWLING

Ngidi 10-0-58-3, Pretorius 9.2-0-54-2, Magala 10-0-69-1, Maharaj 10-0-39-1, Phehlukwayo 7-0-40-3, Markram 3-0-21-0.

Toss:

India.

Mo & Series:

de Kock.

South Africa won by four runs, clinched series 3-0.

K.L. Rahul c Malan b Ngidi 9

'Series an eye-opener'

Middle overs a concern: Dravid

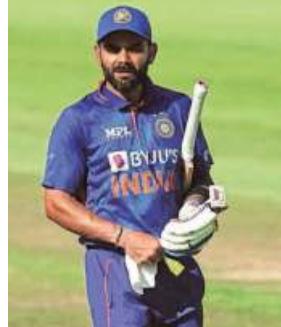
S. DIPAK RAGAV

India head coach Rahul Dravid termed the 0-3 loss in the ODI series an "eye-opener."

"This series has certainly been an eye-opener for us. I think it's going to be a good opportunity for us to reflect and learn, and look to keep improving and getting better. We will get better and we will improve... no doubt about it," said Dravid.

He identified the middle overs as an area that needed to be worked with, both in batting and bowling.

"We could do better with the batting in the middle overs. I think some of the guys who help us balance the squad and give us those all-round options at six seven and eight are not here. Hopefully, when they come back, it will give us a little more depth and allow us to play in a slightly different style," said Dravid.



Kohli top-scored for India with 65 in third ODI ■ REUTERS

Bat according to the situation'

Mithali feels too much importance is given to strike rate

ASHWIN ACHAL

India women's ODI captain Mithali Raj downplayed the importance of strike rate, calling on her teammates to bat according to the match situation instead. The veteran batter has faced criticism in recent times for her low strike rate.

"I think too much importance is given to strike rate by you all. In the Australia [ODI] series, the decider that Australia won, Beth Mooney scored her 50 in 80-odd balls, but went on to play a match-winning innings for the team (125 n.o. off 133 balls). I believe that cricket is a game played according to the situation on the ground," Mithali said at a media interaction on Sunday.

The Indian team will travel to New Zealand to compete in a bilateral series, which commences on Feb. 9. A month later, it will feature in the Women's ODI World Cup.



Mithali, right, and coach Pawar... ready for the challenge.

India-NZ series

- One-off T20I: Feb. 9, Napier (5.30 a.m.)
- ODIs: Feb. 11, Napier (6.30 a.m.); Feb. 14 and 16, Nelson (3.30 a.m.); Feb. 22 and 24, Queenstown (3.30 a.m.) (all times IST)

go there in the World Cup. Right now, my focus is on the next two months."

Would be great if the Indian pacers develop attitude too, says Shoaib

LEGENDS LEAGUE

P.K. AJITH KUMAR MUSCAT

His muscular frame speeding up to the wicket, his hair falling all over the place, his thunderbolts released from hell: it was beastly, yet beautiful to behold. Shoaib Akhtar in full flight was one of cricket's most exhilarating sights in the decades either side of the millennium.



Shoaib Akhtar. ■ LLC

At 46, he is of course no longer the incredibly quick bowler that would get the better of the best batters of the time. Remember those swinging yorkers that cleaned up Rahul Dravid and Sachin Tendulkar, off successive balls, in the Kolkata Test of 1999?

The skills are still there; and they were on display in the opening match of the Legends League Cricket. The attitude and the swagger are very much there, too.

He says he is delighted that the sub-continent continues to produce quality pace bowlers. And he is mighty impressed with the current crop of Indian quicks.

"All the Indian pacers are good; I love Umesh Yadav, I love Jasprit Bumrah," says Shoaib. "I think Mohammed Shami is great. I feel it would be great if they could develop attitude too, like that of their Pakistani counterparts."

As for his own experience of bowling for Asia Lions against India Maharanas in the opening match of the Legends League Cricket, he says he enjoyed it, though it was painful. He took one for 21 in four overs. "I hurt myself," he says. "But I loved it."

Going by the crowd's reaction, they loved it too. The writer is in Muscat at the invitation of Legends League Cricket.

Shubhankar sizzles, finishes T2



Shubhankar Sharma. ■ GETTY IMAGES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ABU DHABI

Shubhankar Sharma produced an impressive show in a star-studded field but came up one stroke short of what would have been the biggest victory of his career at the Abu Dhabi championship on Sunday.

The Indian finished tied second, along with Spaniard Rafa Cabrera-Bello, with a nine-under after starting the day tied fourth. Belgian Thomas Pieters kept his nerve to win the title.

"I am very happy with the way I played today and I am delighted with my finish," said Shubhankar. "This gives me a lot of confidence going forward in the season. Some of the top players in the world were here this week, and I know I can compete with them."

Four-time Major winner Rory McIlroy finished T12.

BFC-Goa in 1-1 deadlock

SPORTS BUREAU

cross to Fox who made no mistake.

BFC returned with more purpose after the break, launching a flurry of attacks. The Goa defence held firm till the hour-mark before BFC skipper Chhetri breached the defence. The goal ended a 11-match barren run for the India captain and took him to the top of the ISL goal-scoring chart with 48, the same as Ferran Corominas, former Spanish striker of Goa.

Congolese forward Prince Ibara played a part in BFC's goal, sending an accurate cross to Chhetri positioned on top of the box. The India skipper's powerful header gave Goa goalkeeper Dheeraj Singh no chance.

The results: BFC 1 (Chhetri 61) drew with FC Goa 1 (Fox 41); ATK MB 0 drew with Odisha 0.

Chelsea stays in the hunt

AGENCIES LONDON

Chelsea kept alive its remote Premier League title chances with a 2-0 win over London rival Tottenham Hotspur on Sunday, set on its way by an exquisite strike from Hakim Ziyech which was quickly followed up by a Thiago Silva header.

In LaLiga, Real Madrid needed a stoppage-time goal by Eder Militao to salvage a 2-2 draw against Elche. On Saturday, Atletico Madrid dramatically defeated Valencia 3-2 after overcoming a two-goal deficit.

The results: Premier League: Arsenal 0 drew with Burnley 0; Crystal Palace 1 (Edouard 55) lost to Liverpool 3 (Van Dijk 8,

mid-off off Andile Phehlukwayo before Yuzvendra Chahal fell to Dwaine Pretorius off the second ball of the final over.

India made four changes, bringing in Suryakumar Yadav, Jayant Yadav, Deepak Chahar and Prasidh Krishna for Venkatesh Iyer, Shardul Thakur, R. Ashwin and Bhuvneshwar Kumar. Suryakumar batted well before being dismissed for 39 off 32 balls. Opener Shikhar Dhawan struck a 73-ball 61 while Kohli made an 84-ball 65 after skipper K.L. Rahul went cheaply again.

Earlier, India rallied to bowl out South Africa under 300 after de Kock and van der Dussen's knocks. De Kock struck 124 off 130 balls and added 144 for the fourth wicket with van der Dussen before India applied the brakes. de Kock's sixth ODI century against India pulled him level with A.B. de Villiers.

David Miller contributed a 38-ball 39 and 287 proved to be just enough.

Shapovalov has Zverev's number

Nadal, Barty on course; Monfils stays alive; Pegula packs off Sakkari

AUS OPEN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE MELBOURNE

Rafael Nadal survived an epic 28-minute tie-break to seal his spot in the quarterfinals of the Australian Open and women's top seed Ashleigh Barty joined him with victory over giant-killer Amanda Anisimova here on Sunday.

Nadal will now face Canada's 14th seed Denis Shapovalov who stunned third seed and Olympic champion Alexander Zverev.

Nadal, who is chasing a men's record 21st Grand Slam title, was pushed all the way by Adrian Mannarino in an 81-minute first set before breaking the Frenchman's resolve in a 7-6(14), 6-2, 6-2 victory.

Flashy French 17th seed Gael Monfils warned he was "not quite finished yet" after he surged past Miomir Kecmanovic of Serbia to set up an encounter with Italian seventh seed Matteo Berrettini.

Big-serving Berrettini sent down 28 aces to blow away Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta in three sets.

In the women's draw, home hope and World No. 1 Barty thrilled the crowd by defeating 60th-ranked Anisimova 6-4, 6-3. The Australian faces another American, Jessica Pegula, in the last eight.

The 21st-seeded Pegula was a surprise winner over fifth seed Maria Sakkari of Greece.

Also into the last eight is French Open champion Barbara Krejcikova, who blew away former two-time Melbourne champion Victoria

THE DAY IN NUMBERS

1 Maiden quarterfinal appearance for Shapovalov at the Australian Open. It is also the first time the Canadian has beaten a top-5 player at a Major

2 Since reaching the semifinals at the 2016 US Open, this is only the second entry for Monfils into the last-8 at a Grand Slam (2019 US Open)

4 Berrettini has now reached the quarter-final or better at all four Slams, making him the first Italian man to do so

15 Zverev has lost 15 of his 19 matches against top-20 opposition at Majors

MONDAY'S PICKS

MEN

2-Medvedev vs. Cressy

4-Tsitsipas vs. 20-Fritz

9-Auger-Aliassime vs. 27-Cilic

11-Sinner vs. 32-De Minaur

WOMEN

2-Sabalenka vs. Kanepi

7-Swiatek vs. Cirstea

14-Halep vs. Cornet

19-Mertens vs. 27-Collins

FALLEN SEEDS

MEN

3-Zverev | 19-Carreno Busta

WOMEN

5-Sakkari | 8-Badosa | 24-Azarenka

It's always better to finish in three ... this is probably the one I least expected to finish in three. I'm happy to pull through and win SHAPOVALOV after beating Zverev in straight sets

It's been a long journey and I'm quite

TV PICKS

Pro Kabaddi: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m. onwards
ISL: Star Sports 3, 7.30 p.m.
Legends League Cricket: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 8 p.m.
Australian Open: Sony Ten 2 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 5.30 a.m. onwards (Tuesday)

IN BRIEF



Middleton shines as Bucks beat Kings

LOS ANGELES
Khris Middleton scored 34 points and Jrue Holiday added 26 as host Milwaukee Bucks capped a flawless three-game homestand by beating Sacramento Kings in NBA action on Saturday.

The results: Milwaukee 133 bt Sacramento 127; Cleveland 94 bt Oklahoma City 87; Phoenix 113 bt Indiana 103. REUTERS

East Bengal faces the Hyderabad challenge

Perosevic's return would boost SCEB, HFC fourth on the table eye full points

ISL 2021-22

SPORTS BUREAU

Bolstered by the first win of the current Indian Super League season a rejuvenated SC East Bengal will be looking to amass more points when it takes on Hyderabad FC in second phase match at Tilak Maidan Stadium on Monday.

Handicapped by the absence of most of its foreign recruits owing to suspension, injury and poor form, the Kolkata giant did well by managing with its committed Indian roster to a good effect.

Most of the points that East Bengal earned so far has resulted from the efforts of its domestic players. It was Naorem Mahesh Singh whose two goals fetched East Bengal its first win. New Spanish coach Mario

Sindhu ends title jinx in style against Malvika

Men's final a non-starter as Merkle tests positive

MODI BADMINTON

RAKESH RAO
LUCKNOW

P. V. Sindhu won the title with expected ease, by doing just enough to end her title drought.

Excitement was at a premium on the final day of the \$150,000 Syed Modi India International badminton that produced one-sided matches. As expected, World No. 7 Sindhu ended the spectacular run of Malvika Bansod 21-13, 21-16 for her first World Tour title since the 2018 BWF World Tour Finals.

The all-France men's final was a non-starter after Arnaud Merkle tested positive for Covid.

Since the other finalist, compatriot Lucas Clerbaut was also his roommate, he was also withdrawn from the final for being a primary contact of Merkle.

As per the BWF guidelines, the final was declared a 'No match'. The finalists will get the ranking points and the prize-money assigned for reaching the final, as per a technical official.

Sindhu, without a BWF title since the world crown in 2019, indeed broke the title-jinx but given the poor quality of field, she will be far from elated.

After a spate of withdrawals owing to injuries and Covid positive tests, Sindhu was expected to go all the way and she did.

Defensive abilities

Against the young, left-handed Malvika, Sindhu was never under any pressure after establishing leads of 7-0 in the first game and 17-8 in the second. At the same time, a lot of credit is due to young Malvika for winning some very fine points, mainly because of her defensive abilities. There were times when Malvika surprised Sindhu with her retrieving abilities and play at the net but overall, the champion was comfortably ahead during the 35-minute final.

Assured of the mixed doubles title, India lost the men's doubles and women's doubles finals to Malaysia's lower-ranked pairs.

The results (final, Indians unless stated): Men: Arnaud Merkle (Fra) versus Lucas Clerbaut (Fra) - No match.

Doubles: Man Wei Chong & Kai Wun Tee (Mas) bt Krishna Prasad & Vishnuvardhan Goud 21-18, 21-15.

Women: P. V. Sindhu bt Malvika Bansod 21-13, 21-16.

Doubles: Anna Ching Yik Cheong & Teoh Mei Xing (Mas) bt Treesa Jolly & P. Gayatri 21-12, 21-13.

Mixed doubles: Ishan Bhattacharjee & Tanisha Crasto bt Nagnendra Babu & G. Sriveda 21-16, 21-12.



Hardly troubled: Sindhu broke no sweat in dismissing Malvika's challenge. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

COVID-19 outbreak scuttles India's chances

Forces it to withdraw from match against Chinese Taipei

ASIA CUP

SHAYAN ACHARYA
NAVI MUMBAI

A COVID-19 outbreak in the team forced host India to withdraw from its second group match of the AFC Women's Asian Cup against Chinese Taipei on Sunday at the DY Patil stadium.

With several members of the team testing positive, India failed to adhere to the AFC guidelines of having a minimum of 13 players – 11 starters and two reserves – to continue a game.

"Following several positive cases of COVID-19, India failed to name the required minimum of 13 players for the Group A match against Chinese Taipei. In accordance with Article 4.1 of the 'Special Rules Applicable to AFC Competitions during the COVID-19 pandemic' (Special Rules), India was therefore unable to participate in the match and the full provisions of Article 4.1



A long wait: Chinese Taipei players warm up in vain for the match against India. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

will apply," the AFC said in a statement.

According to Article 4.1 in the AFC special rules for the competition during pandemic, "If a participating team / participating club has less than 13 participating players (including one goalkeeper) available for a match for any reason (whether or not relating to COVID-19), the relevant participating

team / participating club shall not be able to participate in the match.

"Such participating team / participating club shall be held responsible for the match not taking place and shall be considered to have withdrawn from the relevant competition.

"The relevant participating team / participating club and its affiliated member as

sociation shall be subject to the provisions of the relevant Competition regulations regarding the consequences of withdrawal, as applicable."

The matter will now be referred to the relevant AFC Committee(s) in accordance with the applicable regulations.

This virtually rules out India's chances of making the knockouts of the continental championship and also casts a doubt over India's final group game against China on Wednesday.

Even though the match officials and the members of the Chinese Taipei team took the field almost an hour before the scheduled start time and warmed up, there was no sign of the Indian team.

All India Football Federation (AIFF) president Praful Patel said, "The team is heartbroken. Unfortunately, this happened to us despite the best measures out in place. It is sheer bad luck."

van Foreest hands Vedit a first loss

TATA STEEL CHESS

SPORTS BUREAU

Vedit Gujrathi suffered his first loss while R. Praggnanandhaa surrendered to World champion and new leader Magnus Carlsen in the seventh round of the Masters section of the Tata Steel chess tournament at Wijk aan Zee, near Amsterdam, on Saturday.

Joint leader after six rounds, Vedit (4 points) faltered against defending champion Jorden van Foreest in 43 moves to be tied for third spot.

Praggnanandhaa (2.5 points), playing his first classical time-format game against Carlsen (5), lost in 34 moves.

But the talking point of the day was Daniil Dubov's decision to give a walkover to Anish Giri after being asked by the organisers to play with his mask on.

The Russian maintained

that since he had tested negative for COVID before the round, he was not required to wear the mask during play.

In the Challengers' section, leader Arjun Erigaisi (6 points) drew with second seed Rinat Jumabayev (Kazakhstan) in 84 moves to lead the field by a point.

Seventh-round results (Indians unless stated):

Masters: Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 3.5) bt Vedit Gujrathi (4); R. Praggnanandhaa (2.5) lost to Magnus Carlsen (Nor, 5); Richard Rapport (Hun, 4) drew with Shakriyar Mamedyarov (Aze, 4.5); Anish Giri (Ned, 4) w/o Daniil Dubov (Rus, 2.5); Andrey Esipenko (Rus, 4) drew with Sam Shankland (USA, 3); Jan-Krzysztof Duda (Pol, 3) lost to Fabiano Caruana (USA, 3.5); Nils Grandelius (Swe, 2) drew with Volodar Murzin (Rus, 3.5).

Challengers (involving Indians): Rinat Jumabayev (Kaz, 4.5) drew with Arjun Erigaisi (6); Surya Sekhar Ganguly (4) drew with Volodar Murzin (Rus, 4).

Sports anthem to be released today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

A sports anthem featuring 18 achievers from the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics will be launched on Monday, the 72nd anniversary of the adoption of *Jan Gana Mana* as the National anthem.

Five Olympic medallists

– Neeraj Chopra, Ravi Dahiya, Mirabai Chanu, Lovlina Borgohain, and P.R.

Sreejesh – would be the main attraction of the video titled *Mann me hai maidan* (Playground is in the heart). They will be joined by 13 top Paralympians including Sumit Antil, Manish Narwal, Pramod Bhagat and Padmashri Devendra Jhajharia.

Denim and Sonal given top billing

TENNIS

SPORTS BUREAU

Denim Yadav and Sonal Patil were seeded No. 1 in the boys and girls' sections respectively in the ITF grade-5 junior tennis tournament, to be played at the Indore Tennis Club from Monday.

Despite rain, the organisers were able to complete three rounds of the qualifying event over two days and the main draw should be a happy hunting ground for precious ITF points for India's second string juniors.

The results (third and final qualifying round): Boys: Tarun Korwar bt Sarth Bansode 6-2, 6-4; Arnav Paparkar bt Dreeh Saha 6-2, 6-1; Debasis Sahoo bt Fateh Singh 6-4, 6-1; Anshul

Despite rain three qualifying rounds completed

Satav bt Arjun Abhyankar 6-2, 6-0.

Girls: Maithili Mothe bt Hriti Ahuja 6-1, 4-6, [10-7]; Mrunmayee Joshi bt Rushika Dofode 6-1, 6-2; Harshini Nagaraj bt Ananya Bhatia 6-3, 6-2; Priyanka Ranu bt Kaavya Nayyar 7-6(5), 6-2.

The seedings: Boys: 1. Denim Yadav, 2. Saheb Sodhi, 3. Daksh Agarwal, 4. Vineeth Mutyal, 5. Deep Unim, 6. Akash Gaonkar, 7. Krish Tyagi, 8. Ansh Kundu.

Girls: 1. Sonal Patil, 2. Kashish Bote, 3. Chahana Budhbhatti, 4. Nandini Dixit, 5. Niyati Kukreti, 6. Gauri Mangaonkar, 7. Radhika Mahajan, 8. Milee Chug.

West Indies thrashes England

Holder's double double whammy does the trick

ENG IN WI

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BRIDGETOWN

Jason Holder did the bulk of the damage as England's latest batting collapse paved the way for West Indies' nine-wicket win in the first Twenty20 International here on Saturday.

Towering paceman Holder twice struck off successive deliveries on his Kensington Oval home ground during a format-best return of four for seven as England was dismissed for just 103.

West Indies then cruised to the target with 17 balls to spare, opener Brandon King finishing on 52 not out as the hosts went 1-0 up in this five-match series.

It was heartening result



Crucial strike: Holder celebrates the dismissal of Moeen Ali, one of his four victims. ■ AFP

for the West Indies, fresh from a 2-1 One-Day International series loss at home to Ireland. England was without T20 regulars Jos Buttler and Ben Stokes.

The scores: England 103 in 19.4 overs (Chris Jordan 28; Jason Holder 4/7) lost to West Indies 104/1 in 17.1 overs (Brandon King 52 n.o., Nichola Pooran 27 n.o.).

Sensibility for Godolphin Barb Million

khat Singh 50.5.
1. DRD, 2. SACRED LAMP,
3. APPENZELLE

3 AGOSTINI PLATE (DIV. I)
(1,200m), 5-y-o & upward,
rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 1.50: 1.
Apollo (5) Gaurav Singh 60, 2.
Mind Reader (1) R.S. Jodha 60, 3.
Lockhart (7) Nakhath Singh 59, 4.
City of Blossom (11) Mukesh Kumar
57.5, 6. Royal Grace (8) Afroz Khan
57.5, 6. Multimoment (4) R.Kiran
Naidu 56, 7. The Akhanda (4)
Ashad Aspar 56, 6. True Icon (1)
B. Nikhil 56, 7. Black Opal (8)
G. Naresh 54.5, 8. Crimson Rose (5)
Akshay Kumar 54.5 and 9. This is
Me (7) Mukesh Kumar 54.5.

1. AYR, 2. CRIMSON ROSE,
3. BLACK OPAL

4 AGOSTINI PLATE (DIV. III)
(1,200m), 5-y-o & upward,
rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 1.50: 1.
Max (5) N.B. Kuldeep 60, 2. N.R.I.
Premier Action (4) Kiran Naidu 61,
2. Scramjet (5) S.J. Jodha 56, 3.
Ashwa Yashobali (7) Gaurav Singh
55, 4. Kesariya Balam (2) Akshay
Kumar 54.5, 5. Skipton (1) Santosh
Raj 54, 6. Staridar (6) Abhay Singh
52.5 and 7. Summer Night (3)
Ajeeth Kumar 50.

1. KESARIYA BALAM, 2. SCRAMJET,
3. SUMMER NIGHT

6 ASTONISH PLATE (1,600m),
rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II), 3.35: 1.
Maximum Glamour (2) A.A.
Vikram 60, 2. Lamha (11) Akshay
Kumar 56.5, 3. Just Incredible (3)
R. Ajinkya 55.5, 5. Miss Marvellous
(10) N.B. Kuldeep 55, 6. Morina
(8) Surya Prakash 55, 7. November
Rain (4) Mukeesh Kumar 55, 8. Mark
My Word (9) P. Gaddam 54, 9. Super
Angel (1) B. Nikhil 54, 10. Bandit
King (6) Santosh Raj 53.5 and 11.
Committed Warrior (7) Md. Ismail
51.

1. MIND READER, 2. FLAMINGO
FARE, 3. MULTIMOMENT

4 AGOSTINI PLATE (DIV. IV)
(1,200m), 5-y-o & upward,
rated 20 to 45 (Cat. IV), 1.50: 1.
Apollo (5) Gaurav Singh 60, 2. Rapid Fire
(3) Surya Prakash 60, 3. Circumflex
(8) Mukesh Kumar 58.5, 4. Dhanwantri
(2) Santosh Raj 58, 5. Dharasana
(10) D. N. R. I Heights (1)
Vikrant 56.5, 7. Sacred Lamp (9)
Abhay Singh 55, 8. N.R.I Heights (1)
Rafique Sk. 54, 9. Sea Wolf (4)
B. Nikhil 51 and 10. Loch Stella (5)
Naresh 55.

1. HASHTAG, 2. TOP IN CLASS,
3. MONARCHS

5 EME CENTRE ROLLING
TROPHY (2,000m), 4-y-o &

NEWS IN NUMBERS



Receding R-value

1.57

The reduced R-value of India, which indicates the rate of spread of the coronavirus, from January 14-21. The national peak of the third wave of the infection is expected to come in the next fortnight, according to a preliminary analysis by IIT Madras. R-value indicates the number of people an infected person can spread the disease to. According to the data, the R-value of Mumbai was 0.67, Delhi 0.98, Chennai 1.2 and Kolkata 0.56. A pandemic is considered to end if this value goes below 1. PTI

Cost overruns

4.4

In lakh crore, the cost overruns of 445 infrastructure projects, each entailing investment of ₹150 crore or more, according to a report by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. Of 1,673 infrastructure projects, 445 projects reported cost overruns and 557 projects were delayed. According to the report, the expenditure incurred on these projects till December 2021 is ₹13,08,766.65 crore, while the average time overrun in 557 delayed projects is 45.69 months. PTI

Cancelled trains

35,000

The number of trains cancelled in the first nine months of the 2021-22 fiscal year due to maintenance reasons, according to a reply by the railways in an RTI query. The highest number of such cancellations in recent history was in 2019, when around 3,146 trains were cancelled due to maintenance work. In 2014, 101 trains were cancelled due to maintenance work and the number increased to 829 in 2017, 2,867 in 2018 and 3,146 in 2019. PTI

Wettest January

88.2

mm, Delhi's cumulative precipitation this January, which is the highest in the month since 1901, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). Before this, the capital recorded 79.7 mm of rainfall in 1989 and 73.7 mm in 1953, the IMD data showed. The rainfall had also brought the maximum temperature down to 14.7 degrees Celsius on Saturday, seven notches below normal and lowest this season so far. Minimum temperatures have been close to and above normal. PTI

Prison airstrike

87

The death toll in a prison facility in Yemen hit by a Saudi-led coalition airstrike. Ahmed Mahat, head of the Doctors Without Borders mission in Yemen said 266 people were wounded in the airstrike during an intense air and ground escalation in the country's civil war. Yemen's conflict began in 2014, when the Iranian-backed Houthis took the capital, Sanaa, and much of northern Yemen, forcing the Government to flee to the south, then to exile in Saudi Arabia. The coalition entered the war to restore the Government to power. AP

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

EXPLAINER

A proposal for Indian Environmental Service

What were the recommendations of the T.S.R Subramanian report on environment?

JACOB P KOSHY

The story so far: The Supreme Court has asked the Government if it will create an Indian Environmental Service (IES) as recommended by a committee headed by former Cabinet secretary T.S.R Subramanian in 2014.

What is the T.S.R Subramanian committee report on environment?

The Subramanian committee was set up in August 2014 to review the country's green laws and the procedures followed by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC). It suggested several amendments to align with the then Government's economic development agenda. But a Parliamentary Standing Committee rejected the report on the grounds that it diluted key aspects of environmental legislation.

The report proposed an 'Environmental Laws (Management) Act', under which two expert bodies, the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) and State Environmental Management Authority (SEMA), will be constituted at the Central and State levels to evaluate project clearance in a time bound manner. It also proposed a National Environment Research institute and an Indian Environment Service (IES) to recruit qualified human resource in the environment sector.

The report also recommends that an "environmental reconstruction cost" should be assessed for each project on the basis of the damage caused by it to the environment.

aspects of environmental legislation designed to protect the environment. The committee suggested that another committee, with more expertise and time, be constituted to review the environmental laws.

What did the T.S.R report recommend? The report proposed an 'Environmental Laws (Management) Act' (ELMA), that envisioned full-time expert bodies—National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) and State Environmental Management Authority (SEMA)—to be constituted at the Central and State levels respectively to evaluate project clearance (using technology and expertise), in a time

bound manner, providing for single-window clearance. To accelerate the environmental decision-making process, they suggested a "fast track" procedure for "linear" projects (roads, railways and transmission lines), power and mining projects and for "projects of national importance." The Air Act and the Water Act is to be subsumed within the Environment Protection Act. The existing Central Pollution Control Board and the State Pollution Control Boards, which monitor and regulate the conditions imposed on the industries to safeguard environment, are proposed to be integrated into NEMA and SEMA once the new bodies come into existence.

It also suggested an appellate mechanism against the decisions of NEMA/SEMA or MoEF&CC, in respect of project clearance, prescribing a three-month deadline to dispose appeals.

The report also recommends that an "environmental reconstruction cost" should be assessed for each project on the basis of the damage caused by it to the environment and this should be added into the cost of the project. This cost has to be recovered as a cess or duty from the project proponent during the life of the project. At the tail end, it proposed a National Environment Research institute "on the lines of the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education" to bring in the application of high-end technology in environment governance and finally, an Indian Environment Service to recruit qualified and skilled human resource in the environment sector.

Has the report been accepted by the Government?

The Centre never formally accepted this report and neither constituted a new committee as recommended by the Parliamentary Standing Committee. However, many of these recommendations are implicitly making their way into the process of environmental regulation. The Government has proposed rewrites to the Forest Conservation laws, set timelines to the pace at which expert committees that appraise the suitability of infrastructure



projects must proceed, as well as sought to make existing laws consonant with court judgements.

How did the subject of the IES come to the fore?

The Supreme Court was responding to a petition filed by a lawyer Samar Vijay Singh, whose counsel pointed out that matters of environment required special expertise.

Currently matters of environmental regulation rests on scientists of the Ministry of Environment and Forests as well as bureaucrats from the Indian Administrative Services.

The apex court expressed reluctance at getting into administrative matters of the Government but nevertheless asked the Centre if it expects to go about constituting such a mechanism.

Extra care: An anti smog gun being used against pollution, as the air quality of the national capital keeps receding. ■SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

EXPLAINER

The need for shared parenting

What are the custody laws in India? Are the best interests of the child maintained through these laws?

ANIL MALHOTRA

The story so far: Court justice is justice, according to the law. With access to courts in child custody matters getting tougher with the return on restrictions on court hearings during the pandemic, non-custodial parents and children are again at the receiving end. Seeking custody of a child in the event of a marriage breaking down is a messy affair. While the concept of shared parenting is a reality in countries such as the U.S., the U.K. and Australia, it is not an option in India. Here, antique laws rule the roost.

What does the law say?

Two laws determine the custody of children in India. The first is The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act (HMG) of 1956, which states that the natural guardian of a Hindu minor boy or unmarried girl shall be the father and mother, provided that custody of a minor who has not completed five years of age shall ordinarily be with the mother. But the HMG does not contain any independent, legal or procedural mechanism for deciding custody rights or declaring court-appointed guardians.

Therefore, we fall back on the second law, which is colonial in nature. This is the Guardian and Wards Act of 1890 (GWA). This deals with the appointment of a person as a 'guardian' to a child, both with respect to the child and property. Child custody, guardianship and visitation issues between parents are



determined under the GWA, if a natural parent wants to be declared as an exclusive guardian to his/her own child. Upon disputes between parents in a petition under the GWA, read with the HMG, guardianship and custody can be vested with one parent with visitation rights to the other parent. In doing so, the welfare of the minor or "best interests of the child" shall be of paramount consideration.

What does "best interests of the child" mean?

India is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The definition of "best interests of the child" has been incorporated from the UNCRC in the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. The "best interests of the child" means "the basis for any decision taken regarding the child, to ensure fulfillment

of his basic rights and needs, identity, social well-being and physical, emotional and intellectual development" and is paramount in any custody battle. In 2019, the Supreme Court of India held in *Lahari Sakhamuri v. Sobhan Kodali* that the "best interests of the child" is wide in its connotation and "cannot remain the love and care of the primary care, i.e., the mother in case of an infant or the child who is only a few years old." This is child-centric approach. Again, in 2022, the Supreme Court in *Vasudha Sethi v. Kiran V. Bhaskar* held that a child's welfare, not the individual or personal legal right of the parents, is of paramount concern in a custody battle. Welfare of the child must get precedence over the parents' rights.

Have any recommendations been made for joint parenting?

Recommendations have been made for joint parenting by various committees. The Law Commission of India Report in 2015, on Reforms in Guardianship and Custody Laws in India, recommended joint custody and shared parenting. It disagreed with the idea of singular child custody with one parent. It made exhaustive recommendations for amendments in the HMG and GWA for joint custody and for guidelines for such custody, child support, and visitation arrangements. Report 263 of the Law Commission of India, titled The Protection of Children (Inter-Country Removal and Attention)

are the future of the nation." Regrettably, a prolonged separation divides and splits families.

What is the way forward?

Despite the idea of joint parenting growing in India, the laws remain unchanged. Courts are bound to the HMG/GWA and have no other option. As a result, it is children who suffer in silence. During the pandemic, there have been many cases of custodial parents taking advantage of the laws and denying visitation rights to non-custodial parents. This affects the child in unimaginable ways. Family courts offer little aid in such cases. Therefore, general guidelines or practice directions by the Supreme Court are the need of the hour. Shared or joint parenting with equal rights is a viable, practical, balanced solution for the child's optimal growth. Family courts are equipped under the Family Courts Act of 1984 to devise their own procedure, independent of the technicalities of law.

They can formulate out-of-box methods and insist that children be shared by the father and mother. For a child to be caught in a conventional single parent custody trap is archaic and destructive to the child. It ruins the child's life and also causes misery to the parent, especially to the one who does not have custody.

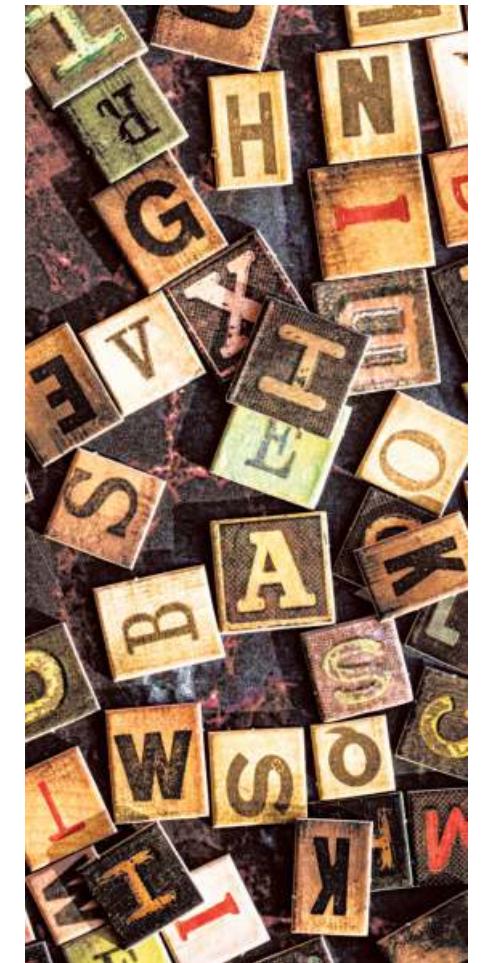
Anil Malhotra is a practicing lawyer and has published nine books pertaining to issues in international family law. He can be reached at anilmalhotra1960@gmail.com.

THE GIST

■ Two laws determine the custody of children in India. The first is The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act (HMG) of 1956 and the second is the Guardian and Wards Act of 1890 (GWA).

■ All custody laws are founded on the "best interests of the child", which is a concept incorporated from the UNCRC in the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. The "best interests of the child" means "to ensure fulfillment of his basic rights and needs, identity, social well-being and physical, emotional and intellectual development".

■ The report in 2015, on Reforms in Guardianship and Custody Laws in India, recommended joint custody and shared parenting. In 2016, a draft bill was recommended for protecting the "best interests of the child" titled The Protection of Children (Inter-Country Removal and Attention) Bill.



CACHE

Reining in the power of tech giants

What is the American Innovation and Choice Online Act? How will it break e-market monopoly?

ISHAN PATRA

The story so far: On January 20, the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary approved a bill that would prohibit Big Tech platforms, such as Amazon.com Inc., Facebook-owner Meta Platforms Inc., Apple Inc. and Alphabet Inc.'s Google, from favouring their products and services or 'self-preferencing'. The committee's 16-6 majority vote to pass the bill aimed at weakening the dominance of Big Tech, exhibited bipartisan support for the antitrust legislation and moved it closer to the floor of the full Senate for consideration. The bill, however, faces strong resistance from tech firms and their lobbying activities, with still a long road ahead before it becomes a law.

Why did the lawmakers introduce the bill? The American Innovation and Choice Online Act was introduced in Senate on October 18, 2021, by Senators Amy Klobuchar and Chuck Grassley, and co-sponsored by Senator Richard Durbin, Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee, and nine other Senators.

The bill also prohibits dominant digital platforms from using non-public data from other businesses to compete with them on their platforms. Big Tech has been actively opposing the bill while over 30 small and medium tech companies have endorsed it.

The EU has also approved of two proposals—the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA)—meant to take on U.S. tech giants. The negotiations on the new rules are expected to begin this year, with the rules likely to be adopted in 2023.

businesses and entrepreneurs to reach more consumers, instead of the ones pushed by the dominant firms, who have been alleged of crowding out other players in their domains.

Lawmakers have stated that the bill will give more choices to the consumers. However, there were counterarguments and concerns about the bill from tech firms, their lobbying groups, as well as lawmakers.

What is the likelihood of the bill becoming law?

The bill, which now advances out of the Judiciary Committee to the full Senate, needs 60 votes to pass the Senate floor, superseding the legislative filibuster, a political tactic to stop a legislation's final approval. During this round of approval, the six votes against the bill were all from Republican Senators. But going forward the markup would need significant Republican support as well. The committee's Ranking Member Senator Grassley, a Republican, said that he's looking forward to continued collaboration with Senator Klobuchar and others to get this bill passed in the full Senate.

The idea is to create a more level playing field that would help products from other companies reach more consumers, instead of the ones pushed by the dominant firms.

The legislation also received endorsement from firms like Roku, DuckDuckGo, Yelp, Spotify, and Match Group, who sent a letter to the committee urging it to advance legislation, along with over 30 small and medium tech companies.

During the committee's meeting, some concerns were raised about the bill, including "the broad scope and the vague language" it contains, as well as "privacy and security", and "global competitiveness". The Senators also presented over 100 amendments to the bill. An amendment, which was adopted, addressed national security concerns by clarifying that the legislation doesn't require data to be shared with

bad actors, a statement said, adding that "foreign companies, including Chinese Big Tech companies such as TikTok, are subject to the same rules."

Their counterparts in the U.S., however, don't want to be bound by the rules and have started massive lobbying operations. Senator Ted Cruz, who voted for the legislation, stated that he had a 40-minute phone call with Apple CEO Tim Cook, who "expressed significant concerns about the bill." Other Big Tech platforms have also voiced their concerns.

With mixed views about the bill, including some who wish to ensure "robust competition on dominant tech platforms", with some others supporting the tech firms for political or personal reasons, and taking into account external forces like lobbying, the final passage of the legislation could become an uphill task for the sponsors.

Are other countries doing something similar?

Yes. The European Commissioner for Competition Margrethe Vestager has made the 27-country bloc's stance clear about U.S. tech firms with proposals for two sets of rules—the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA)—meant to take on U.S. tech giants.

The DSA proposal defines clear responsibilities and accountability for providers of intermediary services, and in particular online platforms, such as social media and marketplaces. It would force Amazon, Apple, Google and Meta to remove illegal products, services or content on their platforms or risk fines up to 6% of global turnover.

The DMA proposal blacklists certain practices used by large platforms acting as "gatekeepers" and enables the commission to carry out market investigations and sanction non-compliant behaviours, with fines of up to 10% of global turnover.

While the European Parliament had approved the DMA proposal in December last year, the DSA was approved on January 20. The negotiations on the new rules are expected to begin this year, with the rules likely to be adopted in 2023.

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

No hyperbole talk here!

A grasp of the language is invaluable!

S. UPENDRAN

What is the difference in meaning between 'valuable' and 'invaluable'? (Anmol Mahajan, Buduan)

The two words can be used with both people and objects. When you say that a particular painting on the wall is 'valuable', what you are suggesting is that it is worth a lot of money—which probably explains why you are often advised to keep all your 'valuables' in a safe. A 'valuable' piece of advice is an excellent piece of advice—one that is helpful. The prefix 'in' has several different meanings. It is sometimes used to mean 'not' or 'no'. For example, 'incomplete' is the opposite of 'complete'—it means 'not complete'. Similarly, 'inadmissible' means 'not advisable'. This, however, is not the case with 'invaluable'—it does not mean 'not valuable'. When you say that something is 'invaluable', what you are suggesting is that it is priceless. It is of greater value than something that is 'valuable'. A 'valuable' member of a cricket team is someone who is important. An 'invaluable' member, on the other hand, is someone who is irreplaceable—he is indispensable. The team is unlikely to do well without him. There was a time when Srinath was considered a 'valuable' member of the Indian cricket team; Tendulkar, on the other hand, was always considered 'invaluable'.

How is the word 'hyperbole' pronounced? (R Malini, Hyderabad)

This word of Greek origin consists of four syllables, not three. The first syllable rhymes with 'tie', 'die' and 'pie', while the second rhymes with 'sir', 'pur' and 'fur'. The 'o' in 'bo' is pronounced like the 'a' in 'china', while the final 'e' sounds like the 'i' in 'hit', 'bit' and 'kit'. The word is pronounced 'hy-PER-be-ly' with the stress on the second syllable. It is normally used to refer to the type of language one uses to describe things or people. Sometimes, people tend to exaggerate when describing someone or something—it could be either to make the individual seem better or worse than he/she actually is. Just think of advertisements; the write up for any product makes it sound that it is the best in the world. The language that is used to describe the product is full of hyperboles because the company wishes to exaggerate the importance or the uniqueness of the product. One can also use hyperboles when one is talking about something or someone one does not like.

As a journalist, you need to be objective. Avoid hyperboles.

The party is promoting the Chief Minister's daughter with the usual hyperbole.

Which is correct: data is or data are? (K Vignesh, Vellore)

It depends on whom you ask. In the past, people used to argue that since 'data' is the plural form of the Latin 'datum', it should always be followed by a plural verb. Nowadays, there is a tendency, even among native speakers of English, to use both—some people use a singular verb, while others use a plural verb after 'data'. It is possible to say, 'The data is' or 'The data are'. Of the two, the singular verb is used much more frequently than the plural.

The thing that shocks people is that I mean what I say. I don't use hyperbole.

-Newt Gingrich

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DAILY QUIZ

The shifting of the Amar Jawan Jyothi to the National War Memorial created a buzz some days ago. A quiz on memorials to different wars, operations, and incidents during conflicts

1 The National War Memorial in New Delhi has four concentric circles (chakras). Two are Rakshak and Amar. Name the other two.

2 Located in a National capital and designed by Peter Eisenman and Buro Happold, this memorial consists of 2,711 slabs arranged in a grid pattern on a sloping field. Name the memorial.

3 In which memorial in an Indian State capital can one find the epitaph that has this inscription: "When you go home Tell them of us and say, For your tomorrow, We gave our today?"

4 Locally referred to as the 'Namgyal Chortan', where can one see the memorial that has names of more than 2,400 dead soldiers etched in gold on 32 black granite plaques.

5 'The Motherland Calls' unveiled in 1957 is the tallest statue (excluding pedestal) of a woman and shows a woman with a sword. In which city can one see this?

6 Spanning 243 kilometres from Torquay to the City of Warrnambool, and dedicated to soldiers who were killed in the Great War, this memorial is considered the world's largest war memorial. What is it called?

7 Where in India does a UNESCO World Heritage Site property 'encircle' a memorial to a particular band of soldiers who have sacrificed their lives to protect the sovereignty of the country since independence?



◀ What is the local name for this memorial?
■ AFP

Please send in your answers to the dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Answers to the 21 January edition of the daily quiz: 1. Linux, Linus Torvalds, 2. Github, 3. Arduino, 4. Hyperloop, 5. Covid19india.org, 6. OpenStreetMap

Early Birds: Mahmood Lebbai| Raibandi Ashwin Ratna| Pranoy Jana| Kevin Toms| Sreejil Nair

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