



'Abide with me'  
dropped from Beating  
Retreat ceremony  
page 6



India records 3,30,836  
new COVID-19 cases,  
512 deaths on Saturday  
page 8



IPL-15 likely to  
begin on March 27,  
says BCCI  
page 14



India plays for pride  
in final ODI against  
South Africa  
page 14

### IN BRIEF



Punjab model not merely  
for sake of election: Sidhu

CHANDIGARH  
In the run-up to the Punjab Assembly election, State Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu on Saturday said his 'Punjab model' is not a mere election model but a well-researched tailor-made solution model created for the people of Punjab.

STATES ▶ PAGE 5

Clubhouse case: six users identified, no arrests  
NEW DELHI  
The Delhi police on Saturday said they have identified six users of the viral audio chat room on Clubhouse.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 6

Soren writes to PM on IAS cadre rules  
NEW DELHI  
Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren wrote a letter to the Prime Minister on Saturday to oppose the proposed amendments to the IAS (Cadre) Rules, 1954.

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MAGAZINE ▶ 8 PAGES

CLASSIFIEDS ▶ PAGE 4

## Ban on large poll rallies, roadshows to continue

EC allows meetings of up to 500 people for first two phases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India (EC) on Saturday decided to continue the ban on large rallies and roadshows till January 31 for the Assembly elections in February, but allowed outdoor meetings of up to 500 people for candidates of the first two phases of polling.

The EC had placed a ban on all physical rallies and processions while announcing the Goa, Punjab, Manipur, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand elections on January 8. The ban was extended till Saturday after a review on January 15, while indoor meetings of up to 300 people were allowed.

#### Reviews COVID trends

On Saturday, the EC once again reviewed the situation by holding meetings with the Union Health Ministry and the Chief Secretaries, Health Secretaries and Chief Electoral Officers of the States. The three-member commission held a comprehensive review of the status and projected trends for the COVID-19 pandemic in the five States, an EC statement said. The EC also reviewed the progress of the vaccination drives in the States.



New norms: The BJP's election campaign vans that were flagged off in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, on Saturday. The EC has allowed video vans for publicity. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

## SP chief Akhilesh to contest from Karhal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav will contest the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election from Karhal in the Yadav family bastion of Mainpuri. Party patron Mulayam Singh is the Lok Sabha

member from Mainpuri.

SP national general secretary Ramgopal Yadav, who is Mr. Akhilesh's uncle, announced the candidature on Saturday.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

MORE POLL STORIES ▶ PAGE 7

"The commission deliberated on relaxing restrictions for physical rallies in the wake of the prevailing situation. After taking into consideration inputs and ground reports from these officers, the commission also deliberated on require-

ments of the campaign period in phases where candidate list will be finalized on January 27, 2022 for Phase 1 and on January 31, 2022 for Phase 2," the statement read.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

REVIEWING THE CAMPAIGN PERIOD

Modi speaks to District Magistrates

## Six killed in Mumbai high-rise fire

24 injured in blaze  
on 19th floor of  
20-storey building

STAFF REPORTER  
MUMBAI

Six people were killed and 24 injured after a fire broke out on the 19th floor of a 20-storey building in the Tardeo area of south Mumbai on Saturday. Six of the injured are in a critical condition.

According to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), the fire was reported from the "Kamala building" (also known as Sachin Heights) at 7.28 a.m.

The fire brigade arrived around 7.42 a.m. and doused



Rattled residents: People who were evacuated from the building that caught fire in Mumbai. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

the blaze after a nearly six-hour operation. Thirteen fire engines and seven jumbo tankers were deployed.

According to the resi-

dents, they heard a loud sound around 7 a.m. and black smoke emanated from the top floors. They rushed outside for safety, and the

lights in the building went off. The explosion of an air-conditioner compressor could have led to the blaze.

Some trapped in smoke  
There are six flats on each floor. While some residents rushed outside, others were trapped in the smoke. Many were sleeping when the explosion took place.

Maharashtra Environment Minister Aaditya Thackeray visited the spot and said that *prima facie*, a short circuit appeared to have caused the fire. An investigation has been ordered.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

## Work on time-bound targets, PM tells officials

Modi speaks to District Magistrates

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday asked the District Magistrates (DMs) to work on time-bound targets for 100% saturation of government services and facilities, and urged every district to prepare a vision for the next two years to increase ease of living.

Mr. Modi, who virtually interacted with the DMs and Chief Ministers of select States after reviewing the

implementation of various government schemes, said the teamwork of the Centre, the States and the local administration had yielded good results in the aspirational districts.

Mr. Modi said various Ministries of his government had identified 142 districts across 22 States that could not be classified as "backward" but had lagged in one or two parameters.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

## German Navy chief strikes a tough note on China

Delhi speech raises hackles in Berlin

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
DINAKAR PERI  
NEW DELHI

China is "giving money to dictators and killers" so long as they give rights over their country's resources, the Chief of German Navy, Vice-Admiral Kay-Achim Schönbach has said.

At an interactive session at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses on Friday, he also said that Ukraine "cannot" meet the require-

ments of joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and what Russian President Vladimir Putin really wanted was "high-level respect" and it was "easy" to give him that as countries needed Russia against China.

On Saturday, Germany's *Bild* newspaper reported that Vice-Admiral Schönbach has been asked to explain his comments at the German Ministry of Defence in Berlin.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

## + J&K leaders are leading youth astray: Shah

Peace in Union Territory dependent on good governance, says Home Minister

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
JAMMU

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday accused the J&K regional parties of leading the people, especially youth, astray with their provocative statements "at a time when the Union Territory was witnessing percolation of democracy, which is the solution to all problems, at the grassroots level".

In an oblique reference to the National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Mr. Shah said the youth of Kashmir should start asking these leaders questions and not "fall prey to their motivated remarks made for political ambitions".

"The three families, which ruled J&K, are unnerved by the fact that their grip has loosened on J&K with the implementation of the Panchayati Raj Act, which gave representation to



New initiative: Home Minister Amit Shah virtually releasing the District Good Governance Index in Jammu on Saturday. ■ PTI

people's aspirations through over 30,000 elected representatives," said Mr. Shah while launching the first-ever District Good Governance Index (DGGI) in J&K.

He said there were leaders who expressed their extreme views, saying there will be no improvement in law and order in J&K till Article 370 was restored and the

situation had deteriorated after August 5, 2019.

#### Dip in terrorism

Official figures on the ground show the real situation. J&K has seen a decrease in terrorists' activities by 40% and the deaths have also come down by 57%, the Union Minister said.

Mr. Shah said peace in J&K

has no relation with the changes made (in 2019) but is directly dependent on good governance.

Reiterating that elections will be held only after the completion of the delimitation process and statehood will be restored once peace establishes in J&K, Mr. Shah asked the youth to "walk on the path of development set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and work towards achieving a golden period for J&K".

He said his government has already set up AIIMS, NIFT, IIT and IIIM and provided additional medical seats in J&K. He said the increase in the UT's Budget from ₹21,000 crore to ₹90,000 crore is the highest jump for any State. "It shows the commitment and vision of the PM for J&K."

WHERE IS THE NORMALCY, ASK PARTIES ▶ PAGE 6

## Showcasing culture



Song and dance: Artistes performing in front of Karnataka's tableau during the press preview of tableaux from different States for the Republic Day parade in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

## In Gurugram, contractual workers grapple with livelihood issues

Loss of income  
and growing  
expenses pushing  
them over the edge

ASHOK KUMAR  
GURUGRAM

Room rents, school fees, prices of cooking gas, groceries and vegetables have increased substantially in the last two years. But the monthly income of Kiran, a contractual worker with an auto company in Khanda village here, has dwindled since the COVID-induced lockdown in March 2020.

To make both ends meet, she has stopped sending her 11-year-old son for private tuitions, and reduced the family's monthly consumption of milk and vegetables.

"Ab Babu ko doodh nahi deti. Pehle, mein do



In search of work: People wait outside a building for a job interview in Gurugram, Haryana. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

without a job for two months. "We are turned away wherever we go seeking a job. Before the lockdown, it was never so difficult to find employment. We don't have a ration card either and often we and our three children are forced to starve. I borrowed money from an uncle to pay this month's rent," says the Kanpur native.

No overtime  
Contractual workers across the garments and automotive sector in Gurugram are struggling. Anita Yadav of Gurgaon Mahila Kamgar Sangathan says the daily wagers

earning anything between ₹11,000 and ₹13,000 a month - have hit badly since the first lockdown.

The fall in production due to lack of demand means no overtime wages, which constituted 25-30% of the monthly income of the workers, and no increase in regular wages as well for the past two years.

"Since the lockdown, we have got work for only routine eight-hour shifts," says Jalaluddin, contract worker in a garment unit. Another migrant from Budaun, Gyan Mohammad, has stopped sending his children - aged 8, 10 and 13 - to school to cut down expenses. "The schools have been shut for two years and the children were not learning much online. The prepaid recharge rates too are up," he says.

Sunil Kumar from Bihar's Ara says his company in Delhi's Ghitoria hired a few workers in the last six months with increase in demand, but again laid off some during the current third wave.

The provident fund of most of the workers hired over the past two years is not deducted, while many are not even being paid the mandatory minimum wages.

'No help from govt.' Deenanath, a migrant worker from Mirzapur in U.P., recalls his several hundred kilometres' walk home during the March 2020 lockdown. "We were assured of help from the government and made to fill forms priced at ₹100 each, with the promise of a job. But it turned out to be an eyewash," he says.

## Cong. Goa candidates take loyalty pledge

They vow not to quit party after poll

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

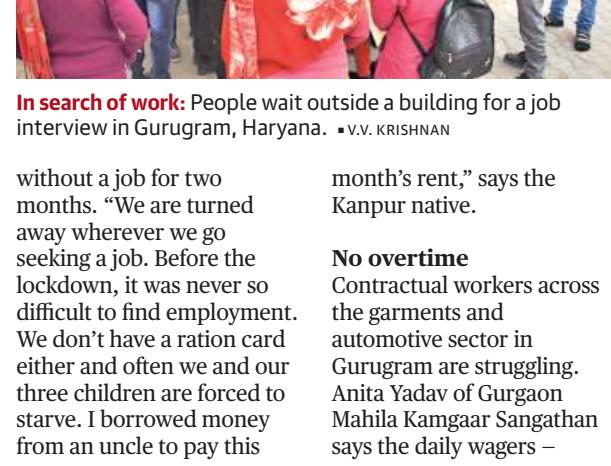
#PledgeOfLoyalty.

Former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram, a senior poll observer for the State, was present at the Mahalaxmi temple.

'It is very important'

"It is a very important thing. We are going to a temple, church and dargah to take an oath that we will not quit the party after elections," Michael Lobo, a former Ports Minister who quit the Bharatiya Janata Party and is now the Congress candidate from the Calangute seat, told reporters.

The Congress, which has tied up with the Goa Forward Party, has so far named 34 candidates for the election, which is scheduled to be held on February 14.



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**THE HINDU**  
India's National Newspaper

## JNU molestation: DCW issues notice to registrar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Commission for Women on Saturday sent a notice to JNU's registrar regarding an alleged molestation incident on the university campus, seeking an action taken-report within five days, officials said.

It has asked JNU to highlight steps taken to ensure student safety. The incident occurred on the night of January 17.

## Woman found dead at home; husband's role suspected

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 52-year-old woman was found murdered and her husband injured at their residence in south Delhi's Saket on Friday. The police suspect that the husband killed the wife following an argument and physical fight between the two.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Benita Mary Jaiker said that the victim has been identified as Shashi Lata Pandey and the injured suspect as Chander Mohan Pandey, 58, both residents of Saket's G Block.

The police said they received a PCR call around 7 p.m. on Friday wherein the caller, Kapil Pandey, said his aunt Shashi was dead and his uncle was injured following a fight. On reaching the spot, the police found Shashi lying in a pool of blood with no visible injury marks. The couple were taken to a hospital where Shashi was declared dead and Chander is undergoing treatment. The police said that Chander's statement has not been taken because he is being treated in the ICU.

The couple's son Shivam, who was at his workplace at the time of the incident, told the police that his father was depressed after losing his job about two years ago. "There were issues between his parents over residing in their house as the father wanted to sell off the house and the mother wanted to stay there," the DCP said.

## FOOD SPOT

# Nothing like the good ol' dosa!



RAHUL VERMA

A nice and simple south Indian meal can sometimes trump the most delectable fares



Comfort food: Dosa ordered from Juggernaut.

like having something completely different. And I surprised myself by going online in search of the homely dosa.

I realise now that the dosa is quite my idea of comfort food. As a callow young man, I gorged on masala dosas and sambar at Delhi's coffee houses. Later, the binging on dosas continued at Andhra Bhavan and Sarvana Bhavan.

And, now, it was the time for Juggernaut. This place had caught my attention some months before the COVID-19 pandemic. I had heard that it offered good south Indian vegetarian food and we decided to order some dosas home. We asked for an onion rawa masala dosa, a ghee roast masala dosa and a set dosa.

But once back in Delhi, I felt like having something completely different. And I surprised myself by going online in search of the homely dosa.

I realises now that the dosa is quite my idea of comfort food. As a callow young man, I gorged on masala dosas and sambar at Delhi's coffee houses. Later, the binging on dosas continued at Andhra Bhavan and Sarvana Bhavan.

like having something completely different. And I surprised myself by going online in search of the homely dosa.

For dinner, we had rice with the leftover sambar, redolent with the flavours of vegetables and asafoetida, and the crispy onion bajjis. There was a sweet dish, too, which I think came gratis. A soft ball with a heart of coconut, it brought the curtain down on what was a nice and simple meal.

Juggernaut is in Kailash Colony and delivers through food delivery apps. The menu includes snacks, meals, super-meals, shakes, coffees, sweets and savouries. The food is homelike and simple. And for a while, they make you forget all about Kolkata's steak and kidney pie and filet mignon.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT NATIONAL HIGHWAYS PROJECTS e-procurement notice INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB) NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING						
1. The Superintending Engineer, National Highway Circle, HP.PWD, Shahpur invites Bids on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh for construction of works detailed in the Table.						
TABLE						
Sr. No.	Name of work	Name of Division	Approximate value of work (Rs.)	Bid Security (Rs)	Cost of documents (Rs)	Period of completion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Rehabilitation of 262.50 meter span bridge over Swan River at Km. 13/450 on 503A in the State of Himachal Pradesh	Executive Engineer, NH Division, HP PWD, Hamirpur	4,29,46,838/-	8,59,00/-	12000/- each set	Nine Months

2. Period of availability of Tender on-line/Date & time of Pre- bid meeting/date and time of on-line bid submission and Date & time of opening of Bids are as given below:

Availability of Tender on-line for bidders	Date & Time of pre bid meeting	Last Date & Time for on-line Submission of Bids	Date & Time of Opening of tender	Technical Bid	Financial Bid
From	To				
01-02-2022 11:00 AM	05-03-2022 5: 00 PM	09-02-2022 3:00 PM	01-02-2022 11:05 AM to 05-03-2022 5: 00 PM	07-03-2022 11:30 AM	Date to be announced

3. Bidding documents can be downloaded from the web site <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>. The document downloaded from the web site should not be tempered, and if any such tempering is detected before or after the opening of bids, the bidder shall be penalized and black listed.

Other terms and conditions shall remain same as given in the bid document.

Superintending Engineer,  
National Highway Circle,  
HP.PWD, Shahpur.

HP / 6436/21-22

# 23 जनवरी, 2022 पराक्रम दिवस नेता जी सुभाष चन्द्र बोस की 125वीं जयन्ती के अवसर पर देशवासियों का शत-शत नमन

"नेताजी सुभाष चन्द्र बोस की जीविटा, धीरता, दूरदृष्टि और राष्ट्रभक्ति पीढ़ियों से हमारे लिए प्रेरणास्रोत रही है। उन्होंने अपने राष्ट्रवादी विचारों से भारत में एक ऐसी सृजनात्मक शक्ति का संचार किया था जिससे हमें गुलामी की झंगीरों को तोड़ने की शक्ति मिली। उनका विराट व्यक्तित्व और विचार युगों-युगों तक भारतीय जनमानस में देशभक्ति की लौ को प्रज्ञपति करते रहे।"

- मनोहर लाल

"नेताजी सुभाष चन्द्र बोस भारत के पराक्रम की प्रतिमूर्ति हैं। आज जब देश आत्मनिर्भर भारत के संकल्प के साथ तेजी से आगे बढ़ रहा है, तब नेताजी का सम्पूर्ण जीवन, उनका हर कार्य, हम सभी के लिए बहुत बड़ी प्रेरणा है।"

- नरेन्द्र मोदी



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@DiprHaryana

Comfort food: Dosa ordered from Juggernaut.

thought we'd have some onion pakoras and dahi vadas.

**Deliciously crisp**  
The set dosai (₹209) captured my heart. It was a set of three dosas, but prepared like utthapams, somewhat thick and round. I had one of the dosas, soft and crispy at the same time, and enjoyed it thoroughly. The onion rawa masala dosa (₹229), always a favourite, didn't disappoint us. Prepared with a semolina batter, it had a light and lacy texture. The ghee roast masala dosa (₹209) was deliciously crisp, and came with a side helping of potatoes prepared with mustard seeds, onion and curry leaves. I loved the dahi vada (₹199) - soft vadas in sweet-and-sour curd with

aromatic flavours of hing and ginger, tempered with fenugreek and curry leaves. The food came with tomato and coconut chutneys. For dinner, we had rice with the leftover sambar, redolent with the flavours of vegetables and asafoetida, and the crispy onion bajjis. There was a sweet dish, too, which I think came gratis. A soft ball with a heart of coconut, it brought the curtain down on what was a nice and simple meal.

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HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)						
1. The Executive Engineer, Shimla Division No-III, HPPWD, Shimla-3 on behalf of Governor of H.P invites the item rate bids, in electronic tendering system, from the eligible class of contractors registered with HPPWD., for the work as detailed in the table.						
Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost	Starting date of downloading bid	EMD	Cost of Tender	Time allowed for submission of bid
1	C/O Zone-I at Shimla(SH-C/O Steel bridge to be replaced by building with new Building including structure parking, railing & main gate at entrance of Hospital building	Rs. 1,59,84,416/-	29-01-2022	Rs. 3,19,700/-	Rs. 500/-	Nine Months
2	Annual surfacing on road from Navabharat Holly Lodge KM 200 to 2/670 (SH-C/O Create wall embankment along the Tirthan Khad from RD 840 to 1230 Mtrs.,Left Side	Rs. 28,52,851/-	29-01-2022	Rs. 57,700/-	Rs. 1500/-	One Month

The bidders are advised to note other details, of tenders from the department website [www.hppwd.gov.in](http://www.hppwd.gov.in). The Executive Engineer reserves the right to accept/reject any tender/application without assigning any reason.

HP / 6432/21-22

"HIM SUCHANA AVAM JAN SAMPARK"

ANNEXURE-A PRESS NOTICE TO BE ISSUED FOR PUBLICATION IN NEWSPAPERS						
The Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti Division Thunag invites tender on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh from approved eligible contractor for the following work(s) through e-tendering process:-						
<b>Work No 1 :</b> - Providing Flood Protection Work at Tirthan Khad near Balichowki Bazar in GP Balichowki Tehsil Balichowki Distt. Mandi (HP). (SH-Construction of crate Apron along the Tirthan Khad RD 120 to 390 RHS, RD 660 to 810 and RD 840 to 1230 LHS). Right Side.						
Estimated cost :- 70,55,831/- Earnest money :- 1,03,100/- Cost of Tender Form :- 800/- Time Limit :- Six months.						
<b>Work No 2 :</b> - Providing Flood Protection work at Tirthan Khad near Balichowki Bazar in GP Balichowki Tehsil Balichowki District Mandi (HP) (SH- C/O Create wall embankment along the Tirthan Khad from RD 840 to 1230 +390 Mtrs.,Left Side						
Estimated Cost :- Rs.79,87,386/- Earnest Money :- Rs. 1,12,400/- Cost Tender Document:- Rs. 800/- Time Limit:- 6 Months						
<b>Schedule of Tendering:</b>						
1 Site Visit From 21/01/2022 at 10.00 AM to 25/01/2022 at 5.00 PM						
2 Bid Submission start date On 20/01/2022 At 10.00 AM						
3 Bid Submission end date 26/01/2022 at 05:00 PM						
4 Opening of Eligibility criteria & Technical Information (Cover-I) 27/01/2022 at 11:30 AM						
5 Opening of financial bid Date and place to be notified separately						

Last date of filling/uploading the tender through e



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### BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

#### INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL

**BRIDEGROOMS WANTED**  
**BRIDES WANTED**  
**BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED**

Classification common for Brides, Bridegrooms, Brides & Grooms

Assamese

Awadhi

Bengali

Bhojpuri

Bihari

Chhattisgarhi

English

Gujarati

Haryanvi

Hindi

Kannada

Kashmiri

Konkani

Malayalam

Manipuri

Marathi

Marwari

Nepali

Oriya

Parsi

Punjabi

Saurashtra

Sindhi

Tamil

Telugu

Tulu

Urdu

Advocate

Business

Defence

Doctor

Engineer

Finance / Banking

Government / Quasi-Govt.

IAS / Allied Services

Information Technology

MBA / CA / ICWA

NRI

Cosmopolitan

Divorcee

Physically Challenged

MARRIAGE BUREAUS

WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

COSMOPOLITAN

NAIR GIRL 47 Msc PHD ASST. Professor, Chicago US Citizen, Caste / Language No Bar. US Residents only Contact 9985824903

GIRL VERY fair, beautiful, slim Feb'90 - 168cms, PG Jn. 10.5L, F North M Tamil Iyer. Looking for similar match below 35, qualified, well settled, Chennai, handsome groom, never married. CT: 9945569529.

CHENNAI BASED Punjabi Family is looking for a suitable Match for their Daughter 44 / Slim / Fair 5.3 / Computer Science (US) Divorcee with a teenage Daughter. Caste no bar. Apply to: kumamarayana84@gmail.com

DOCTOR

PARENTS OF Doctor Gynaecologist 30 yrs Naidu looking for settled good natured groom please send BHP to balkrishnay@gmail.com

Tamil Hindu Pillai/Vellar Girl, 29 Yrs, 60Kg, MBBS M/S(OB/GYN), 54'. Prefer Chennai Doctor. Contact 9840442064.

BALIA NAIDU M.B.B.S Ketai, Viruchikam 23/165 fair good looking girl, Kanchipuram seeks Doctor (or) Higher qualified from same caste Contact: 9443380196, 944202555

Hindu SC AD, 43 Doctor Govt Employee. Divorced no issues, seeks suitable Alliance Contact: 903189739

BALIA NAIDU MBBS Doctor girl Chennai based well mannered Father Doctor, Mother H/w, seeks Doctor / Preferably PG Groom from good family in Tamilnadu. Ct: 9840196677, 9790 32870, e-dr\_nv@yahoo.com

ENGLISH

NAIR GIRL Tvm 27/157 BTech MBA, analyst, MNC,Chennai,seeks hair boys 28-32,professionally well placed.Parents well settled at Tvm.Brother specialist DM Chennai. Ph:7356879376.

GOVT / QUASI GOVT

PSU EXECUTIVE, 31/158, Good looking, B.Tech, PGDM, Vanniyar/CNB, Chennai, seeks groom of similar background. 9488549285, 7588317771

IAS / ALLIED SERVICES

KERALITE HINDU SC girl, 6/4/1988, MBBS, Indian Information Service Officer in Delhi, seeks IAS/IFS/IPS/RS/IES, similar services/Doctors/ Engineers. Caste no bar. 9589881011

### THE HINDU MATRIMONIAL

BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

#### IAS / ALLIED SERVICES

✓ HINDU MBBS, I.R.S, seeks Groom State/Caste No bar. Contact 09382743021

#### MALAYALAM

RE-MARRIAGE, Alleppuzha Nair girl (widow - issueless), 38/ 158, Uthram, B.Tech, MNC Bangalore. 9633851831 / 9880273614.

NAIR GIRL, 26 doing MD, General Medicine,PG doctors, Civil Service Officers interested. 9847334042

MALAYALEE VISWAKARMA(G.S) girl 38/162, Avitom, Deputy Manager in MNC,Chennai. Seeks educated & Employed Groom(CNB). 944561626 / 9790739037

MENON GIRL 26/151 cms Chennai settled doing Mds seeks Doctors only. Kindly contact 9566074556.

GROOM WANTED: 33/165 F, Very Fair, Engineer, MBA Graduate, Occupation: CXO seeks well educated / well settled professional or Businessman in age 33 to 36 from Hindu Malayalee, Caste No Bar, ph: +91 7397-182752

✓ SC - ADIDRAVIDAR Hindu 33/156 STAR AYILAM MD DR. Seeks Dr. IAS/IPS Age 34-37 Caste No bar 9486435320

MUDALIAR 25/160, MBBS, PG doing, Chennai, Having own Bus service, Commercial complex, Guest House, Only daughter,Elite Family, Seeks Groom Doctor/ Business/ Abroad 979010258

ROYAL MUDALIAR 25 M.B.B.S, M.D. Own BusTransport (100 Buses) Own Liquor Factories/Wine Shops Star Hotels Etc., (1000 Crores)Family

Menon Groom 9940248235

#### GROOM WANTED

For fair & good looking Hindu Ezhava girl, age - 27, 5'4". M.Com. Seeking alliance from reputed business family in Kerala.

Email id: tcrabhi@gmail.com

① 98470 25632

KANNUR NAMBIAR Girl, 43/165, Chithra, MDS Doctor working Abroad. Looking for Suitable alliance. 9495545852.

#### TAMIL

GROOM WANTED preferably Software Engr, Financially Well Settled Job, God fearing, Below 30 Years from Tamil Catholic "Adidravidar" grooms, for our only daughter 24/154 cm , dark complexion, CSE Eng from Upper Middle Class family living in Delhi. Contact: 9999143474

CHRISTIAN NADAR 33 MBA M.Phil, (PhD), Ass't Professor Seeks Suitable Groom Ct: 99410 62047/ 91590 22915

TAMIL MUSLIM Pious Girl 25/163 BPT seeks Pious Prof Qualified Groom Ct: 7708438031.

INTERCASTE FAMILY fair good looking well educated employed in Canada 31 / 164 cms Data Science, Castle / religion no bar. Looking for a like minded match. Pr: 8127 56699.

CSI CHRISTIAN Nadar Girl Fair, Good Looking, 03-04-1986 born 152cm / M.Sc M.Phil working as Assistant Professor in a Reputed Women's College, Mount Road, Chennai. Both Parents Doctors (Private), Suitable Alliance, Employed / Settled in Chennai / With Clean Habits from Same Community. Contact: 9841182514

SEEKING MUSLIM educated Groom aged 40 to 45 willing to settle with Govt. servant bride (TN) of age 40. Ct: 9788634844.

RC NADAR Bride, 32/ 5/ Fair, M.E, Software Engineer seeks BCF/C Groom. Ct: 9866887755.

Hindu Saipallai 22/170 cm swathi tulasingham pura Ragu ketu dasham seeks pillar Groom 8667415252.

TAMIL CATHOLIC Christian, Vellalar pillar 28, Fair Works in MNC Chennai, Seeks educated groom (velalar/mudaliar). Ct:9940283379

RC CHRISTIAN Devendra kuzhavelar, Age 32, Rs.75000/-PM BE software Engineer, Chennai, Caste No Bar, Seeks Christian Groom: 944555629.

MUDALIAR 25/160, MBBS, PG doing, Chennai, seeking a good looking girl, for their daughter, 25,Fair, 5.4' I.D.Octor currently working in UK hospital. Ct: 9942787243 (WhatsApp)

GIRL VERY fair, beautiful, slim Feb'90 - 168cms, PG Jn. 10.5L, F North M Tamil Iyer. Looking for similar match below 35, qualified, well settled, Chennai, handsome groom, never married. CT: 9945569529.

CHENNAI BASED Punjabi Family is looking for a suitable Match for their Daughter 44 / Slim / Fair 5.3 / Computer Science (US) Divorcee with a teenage Daughter. Caste no bar. Apply to: kumamarayana84@gmail.com

DOCTOR

PARENTS OF Doctor Gynaecologist 30 yrs Naidu looking for settled good natured groom please send BHP to balkrishnay@gmail.com

Tamil Hindu Pillai/Vellar Girl, 29 Yrs, 60Kg, MBBS M/S(OB/GYN), 54'. Prefer Chennai Doctor. Contact 9840442064.

BALIA NAIDU M.B.B.S Ketai, Viruchikam 23/165 fair good looking girl, Kanchipuram seeks Doctor (or) Higher qualified from same caste Contact: 9443380196, 944202555

Hindu SC AD, 43 Doctor Govt Employee. Divorced no issues, seeks suitable Alliance Contact: 903189739

BALIA NAIDU MBBS Doctor girl Chennai based well mannered Father Doctor, Mother H/w, seeks Doctor / Preferably PG Groom from good family in Tamilnadu. Ct: 9840196677, 9790 32870, e-dr\_nv@yahoo.com

ENGLISH

NAIR GIRL Tvm 27/157 BTech MBA, analyst, MNC,Chennai,seeks hair boys 28-32,professionally well placed.Parents well settled at Tvm.Brother specialist DM Chennai. Ph:7356879376.

GOVT / QUASI GOVT

PSU EXECUTIVE, 31/158, Good looking, B.Tech, PGDM, Vanniyar/CNB, Chennai, seeks groom of similar background. 9488549285, 7588317771

IAS / ALLIED SERVICES

KERALITE HINDU SC girl, 6/4/1988, MBBS, Indian Information Service Officer in Delhi, seeks IAS/IFS/IPS/RS/IES, similar services/Doctors/ Engineers. Caste no bar. 9589881011

#### TAMIL

✓ HINDU MBBS, I.R.S, seeks Groom State/Caste No bar. Contact 09382743021

#### MALAYALAM

RE-MARRIAGE, Alleppuzha Nair girl (widow - issueless), 38/ 158, Uthram, B.Tech, MNC Bangalore. 9633851831 / 9880273614.

NAIR GIRL, 26 doing MD, General Medicine,PG doctors, Civil Service Officers interested. 9847334042

MALAYALEE VISWAKARMA(G.S) girl 38/162, Avitom, Deputy Manager in MNC,Chennai. Seeks educated & Employed Groom(CNB). 944561626 / 9790739037

MENON GIRL 26/151 cms Chennai settled doing Mds seeks Doctors only. Kindly contact 9566074556.

GROOM WANTED: 33/165 F, Very Fair, Engineer, MBA Graduate, Occupation: CXO seeks well educated / well settled professional or Businessman in age 33 to 36 from Hindu Malayalee, Caste No Bar, ph: +91 7397-182752

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SC - ADIDRAVIDAR Hindu 33/156 STAR AY

IN BRIEF



Kerala clamps down on life and trade today

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM  
The Kerala government has imposed a stringent lockdown on Sunday. For weeks, the administration had weighed whether to regulate life and trade to bridle the accelerated spread of the suspected Omicron-propelled COVID-19 variant. The administration has stopped short of terming the restraints on "inessential activity" as a shutdown.

Lakshadweep ships to run at half-capacity

KOCHI  
All passenger ships under Lakshadweep Administration that operate from the Lakshadweep isles to Kochi and between the isles would operate at 50% of their passenger capacity, to ensure social distancing, the administration has said in a release.

## All-party meeting on inter-State water disputes in Feb.: Bommai

We will fight both legally and politically to safeguard State's interests, says CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

The Karnataka government has decided to convene an all-party meeting in the first week of February in Bengaluru to discuss and decide on the future course of action to safeguard Karnataka's interests in inter-State water sharing disputes, especially in light of the Tamil Nadu government's move to utilise excess water in the Cauvery basin and its opposition to the State's balancing reservoir project at Mekedatu.

The announcement was made by Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Saturday after he held elaborate consultations through a video-conference with members of the legal team representing the State in the Supreme Court, the Advocate-General



Taking stock: Karnataka CM Basavaraj Bommai meeting Ministers on inter-State water disputes. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

al, and senior officials of the Law and Water Resources departments. Mr. Bommai discussed pending cases in the Supreme Court and court/tribunal orders related to irrigation projects in the Krishna and the Cauvery basins and the Mahadayi project.

Mr. Bommai said he

would hold another round of videoconference with the State's legal team and irrigation experts at the end of January to obtain information about preparations made by the team to fight the State's cases in the Supreme Court.

The all-party meeting involving floor leaders of political parties in both the House

of the legislature would be convened in the first week of February to arrive at a consensus on steps to be taken to fight the State's interests in water disputes.

"We have faced several challenges in the past with regard to inter-State water disputes. We will fight both legally and politically to safeguard the State's interests in water sharing," Mr. Bommai said.

The State government had already filed a petition in the Supreme Court opposing Tamil Nadu's proposed inter-linking project, which seeks to draw surplus water from the Cauvery basin. The government would also oppose Tamil Nadu's plan to take up the second phase of the Ho-

genakkal combined drinking water project, Mr. Bommai said.

Punjab model not merely for sake of election: Sidhu  
It's tailor-made to fix problems of State  
■ SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

In the run-up to the Punjab Assembly election, State Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu on Saturday said his "Punjab model" is not a mere election model but a well-researched tailor-made solution-model, based on geographical, social and economic factors created for the people of Punjab.

"We have faced several challenges in the past with regard to inter-State water disputes. We will fight both legally and politically to safeguard the State's interests in water sharing," Mr. Bommai said.

The State government had already filed a petition in the Supreme Court opposing Tamil Nadu's proposed inter-linking project, which seeks to draw surplus water from the Cauvery basin. The government would also oppose Tamil Nadu's plan to take up the second phase of the Ho-

genakkal combined drinking water project, Mr. Bommai said.

and Hyderabab for better business opportunities. With setting up of advanced IT hubs and launching StartUp city in Mohali, it is expected to become the Millennial Tech-City and Mohali would become the Silicon Valley," he said.

He added, "Youth, Skill-ing and Entrepreneurship can change the face of the State. It's time to be a part of this change and create the future we want the next generation to live in."

"Mohali is the centre of technological advancement and future of Punjab. Our youth is going to Bangalore

Property Act.

In an order passed by Additional District Magistrate Rakesh Patel, Mr. Intiaz has been described as "a frightful person with a criminal aptitude who is a threat to the peace and tranquillity of the city".

Mr. Intiaz was president of the Aligarh Muslim University Students' Union when the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protests broke out on campus in 2019-2020. He also led protests in the Old City area of the town. Six cases had been registered against him under various sections of the IPC including 342, 360, 504, 153A, 153B, and relevant sections of the Prevention of Damage to Public

A.P. HC to hear plea against pay revision tomorrow

STAFF REPORTER  
VIJAYAWADA

The writ petition filed in the Andhra Pradesh High Court by the A.P. Gazetted Officers' Joint Action Committee chairman K.V. Krishnaiah against the government employees' revised pay scales of 2022 notified through Government Order No. 1 on January 17 is listed for hearing by a Division Bench comprising Justices Ahsanuddin Amannullah and B.S. Bhanumathi on January 24.

Mr. Krishnaiah stated in the petition that the Government Order No. 1 is contrary to the provisions of the AP Reorganisation Act, 2014 and the Constitution of India. He sought a direction to the respondents (Chief Secretary, Principal Secretaries - Finance and Revenue, PRC Commissioner and Secretary of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs) to notify the pay scales only after taking their representations into consideration in order to ensure that their salaries are protected by continuing the payment of existing emoluments like HRA.

Further, the petitioner argued that the revised pay scales were fixed with effect from July 1, 2018 and an absurd clause had been provided in the same notification, which says that pay fixations made contrary thereto, would be recovered. This is against the settled principles of administrative, employment and labour laws.

The PRC recommendations and the findings of the Committee of Secretaries were neither analysed nor revealed to the employees, Mr. Krishnaiah stated.

## Cong's Aligarh candidate slapped with Goondas Act

ANUJ KUMAR  
GAZIABAD

The Aligarh administration has exonerated Salman Intiaz, the Congress candidate from the city seat, for six months under the U.P. Control of Goondas Act.

Mr. Intiaz was president of the Aligarh Muslim University Students' Union when the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protests broke out on campus in 2019-2020. He also led protests in the Old City area of the town. Six cases had been registered against him under various sections of the IPC including 342, 360, 504, 153A, 153B, and relevant sections of the Prevention of Damage to Public

Property Act.

In an order passed by Additional District Magistrate Rakesh Patel, Mr. Intiaz has been described as "a frightful person with a criminal aptitude who is a threat to the peace and tranquillity of the city".

He has been asked to leave the city limits immediately and report at the Gajdoodwara police station in Kasganj district. The order further said people live in fear of Mr. Intiaz and refrain from depositing against him.

Mr. Intiaz said he had responded to the show-cause notice in September 2020 and hadn't heard from the authorities since then.

## Kerala's wait for a war memorial continues

Land in capital was identified in 2020

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The goal of having a war memorial in Thiruvananthapuram, for soldiers who fought in the post-Independence era wars and military operations is yet to become a reality, despite land being earmarked two years ago. Originally conceived in the 1990s, the project had languished on the backburner for years. Land-related objections later forced the Sainik Welfare Department, Kerala, to abandon a plan to construct the memorial near the Shanghumugham beach. Although 1.5 acres of government 'porambokke' land at Akkulam was identified in 2020 as the alternative site, work on the memorial is yet to begin.

A design for the memorial submitted by the Sainik Wel-

fare Department to the State government is also awaiting clearance, sources said. A senior official of the department told *The Hindu* that work on developing the land was in progress at Akkulam. The chosen location is close to the tourist village and the headquarters of the Southern Air Command. He attributed the delay to the outbreak of COVID-19 and problems in determining the precise boundaries of the land. The latter problem has been sorted out.

"We have completed the construction of the perimeter fence. Soil tests are under way now," the official said. The way things stand, department officials expect to have the foundation stone for the project laid only by the next financial year, at the earliest.

They get interim protection from arrest till January 27

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Saturday directed actor Dileep and four others, including his kin, to report before the investigation officer for interrogation on January 23, 24 and 25 from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. in a case relating to hatching a conspiracy to finish off the investigation officers in the actor sexual assault case.

Justice Gopinath P., however, restrained the police from arresting them till January 27. The court passed the interim order on the anticipa-



Dileep

tory bail plea filed by the petitioners.

The court directed the actor and others to cooperate

## + Chakmas in Arunachal approach NHRC for help

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

People of two Arunachal Pradesh villages facing displacement by oil drilling projects are being denied compensation, the National Human Rights Commission has been told.

In a complaint to the apex rights body on Saturday, the New Delhi-based Chakma Development Council of India (CDFI) said Oil India Ltd. has resorted to coercion to deny compensation to the inhabitants of two villages in Changlang district.

The oil major has undertaken drilling work in the Mudokka Nallah and Sompai-II villages dominated by the Chakma and the Deori communities respectively.

"Both are recognised villages according to the gazette notification issued by the Arunachal Pradesh government, and the communities are owners and oc-

cupants of the lands. But the local authorities and the OIL have been using third parties to coerce the poor affected families to accept a [nominal] package without any formal process under the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013," the CDFI said in a statement.

The foundation cited a Supreme Court verdict in a case where the Arunachal Pradesh government was specifically directed not to evict the Chakmas from their homes. "If any attempt is made by the Ministry of Petroleum and Gas, the OIL and the State government to evict the Chakmas... in clear violation of the Supreme Court direction, it becomes the responsibility of the NHRC to initiate contempt proceedings," said Suhas Chakma from the foundation.

The oil major has undertaken drilling work in the Mudokka Nallah and Sompai-II villages dominated by the Chakma and the Deori communities respectively.

"Both are recognised villages according to the gazette notification issued by the Arunachal Pradesh government, and the communities are owners and oc-

### Picturesque walk



Slow and steady: Students walking towards their tuition centre unmindful of the snowfall in Tangmarg, north Kashmir, on Saturday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

Some 300 staff fanned out across Bandipur to start the quadrennial tiger count

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MYSURU

Nearly 300 field staff and officials of the Forest Department fanned out across Bandipur on Saturday to commence the quadrennial tiger count whose result is expected to reinforce the national park's reputation as one of the best sanctuaries for the big cats in the country.

This is the fifth in the series that began in 2006 but unlike in the past the exercise is being held in the shadow of the pandemic as a result of which the NGOs and volunteers are not part of the tiger count.

It is strictly a departmental affair and comprises field staff and members of the special tiger force, all whom were extensively trained by the Wildlife Institute of India



On the spot: Field staff of the forest department studying a pug mark during the tiger enumeration exercise in Bandipur.

er count exercise have been fully vaccinated and even tested," according to senior Forest Department officials who are part of the All-India Tiger and Mega Herbivore Estimation.

Apart from the tiger census and COVID-19, this is fire season and in the absence of a full-time Director, V. Karikalan, Deputy Conservator of Forests (Mysuru), is holding charge and monitoring the activities. He said a core team had been constituted to oversee the enumeration exercise in all the 112 beats of the Bandipur Tiger Reserve.

Each team has to walk along the line transects covering 5 km daily in their assigned beat looking for the presence of carnivore signs, including pug mark, scat, scratches on bark etc., besides physical sighting of the animal.

An intensive camera trap exercise, lasting nearly a month, was already completed last year and the data will be collated with the current exercise.

## Counting tigers amid threat of COVID-19

KBA is arguably Asia's largest bird atlas in terms of geographical extent

M.P. PRAVEEN  
KOCHI

The Kerala Bird Atlas (KBA), the first-of-its-kind State-level bird atlas in India, has created solid baseline data about the distribution and abundance of bird species across all major habitats, giving an impetus to futuristic studies.

Conducted as a citizen science-driven exercise with the participation of over 1,000 volunteers of the bird-watching community, the KBA has been prepared based on systematic surveys held twice over 60 days a year during the wet (July to September) and dry (January to March) seasons between 2015 and 2020.

The KBA accounts for nearly three lakh records of 361 species, including 94 very rare species, 103 rare spe-

cies, 110 common species, 44 very common species, and 10 most abundant species. "The KBA offers authentic, consistent and comparable data through random sampling from the geographical terrain split into nearly 4,000 grids. We are in the process of bringing out papers on interesting trends based on a scientific analysis of solid data besides making futuristic predictions. It will be exciting to undertake a similar exercise between 2025 and 2030, giving an insight into the changes in the decade since the first KBA," says P.O. Nameer, one of the State-level coordinators of the KBA.

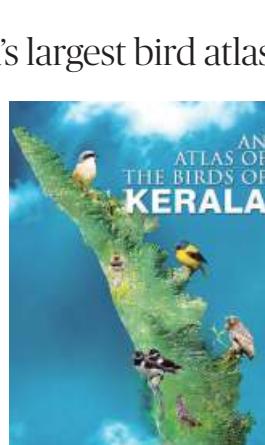
It is arguably Asia's largest bird atlas in terms of geographical extent, sampling effort and species coverage derived from the aggregation of 25,000 checklists. It was found that the species count was higher during the dry season than in the wet season while species richness and evenness were

higher in the northern and central districts than in the southern districts.

Most of the endemics were concentrated in the Western Ghats while the threatened species were mostly along the coast. The KBA is considered to be a valuable resource for testing various ecological hypotheses and suggesting science-backed conservation measures.

Volunteers were divided into survey teams of two to five members. They were deployed across all 14 districts armed with technological tools such as Locus Free, an Android GPS application, and eBird platform for seamless conduct of the survey and documentation.

The survey ignored the short duration passage of migrant species.



The atlas has created baseline data about the distribution of bird species.

FROM PAGE ONE

## Ban on large poll rallies, roadshows to continue

For phase one, which will see 58 Assembly constituencies of U.P. go to the polls on February 10, the EC allowed physical meetings in designated open spaces with a maximum of 500 people or 50% of the capacity of the venue or the limit set by the State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA), whichever is lower, from January 28 to February 8. For phase two, where 55 constituencies of U.P., all 40 seats of Goa and all 70 seats of Uttarakhand will go to polls on February 14, the EC allowed physical meetings from February 1 to February 12.

## SP chief Akhilesh Yadav to contest from Karhal

While Mr. Akhilesh Yadav has been a Member of Parliament from Kannauj and Azamgarh, and also elected to the Legislative Council, this would be his first Assembly election. He won the 2019 Lok Sabha poll from Azamgarh in Purvanchal.

Senior party leader Sobaran Singh Yadav won the last three elections from the Karhal seat. In 2002, he contested as a BJP candidate and defeated the SP by a narrow margin. From 1986 to 2002, Ram Babu Yadav held the seat on symbols of

various socialist parties – the Lok Dal, the Janata Dal, the Janata Party (Secular) and the SP.

The Karhal seat was one of the 47 the SP won in 2017 when the BJP overthrew it to come to power in the State along with its two allies, securing 325 out of the 403 seats in the Assembly. In 2017, the SP got 1.04 lakh votes in the seat, while the BJP stood second with around 35,000. "He [Akhilesh] will reach the Vidhan Sabha with record votes," Mr. Ramgopal said.

## Six killed, 24 injured in Mumbai high-rise fire

Speaking to presspersons, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said a detailed investigation into the tragedy would be conducted, and Mr. Thackeray and Mumbai city's Guardian Minister Aslam Sheikh, would monitor the probe.

Mumbai Municipal Commissioner Iqbal Singh Chahal has formed a committee that will submit a report in 15 days on the reasons behind the fire, and whether there were any unapproved changes in building design.

## Work on time-bound targets, PM tells officials

The Chief Ministers of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Karnataka participated in the interaction among others.

"This is a new challenge for all the governments – the government of India, the State government, the district administration and the government machinery. Now we have to complete this challenge together."

In his closing remarks, the Prime Minister dwelt

upon the successes of the aspirational districts programme – aimed at quickly and effectively transforming 112 most under-developed districts – and lauded the officials and the State governments.

Mr. Modi said these districts had proven that the elimination of silos in the implementation of policies ensures optimum utilisation of resources and talked about a "top to bottom as well as bottom to top governance flow".

## German Navy chief strikes a tough note

"The [Admiral's] statement in no way correspond to the position of the [German government] in terms of content and choice of words. Vice Adm. Schönbach is given the opportunity to make a statement to the Inspector General," Bild reported that the Ministry of Defence official had said.

The German Embassy in Delhi declined to comment, pointing instead to German Ambassador Walter J. Lindner's piece in *The Hindu* on Saturday as Germany's official position.

Asked for a response, particularly to the Admiral's comments on China, the Ministry of External Affairs also declined to comment.

Describing China as a growing "hegemonic power" which is using its money and power to put pressure on the international order,

Vice Adm. Schönbach said China has behaved as an enemy to some and has a "hidden agenda" in dealings with countries.

Giving an example of Chinese attempts to steal technology, the German Navy Chief spoke of Kuka robotics, a German company which was taken over by a "private" Chinese company and the "whole technology was gone" and "China is not paying back".

In the context of this and other developments, he recalled German politicians' view of China and said they believe that, "China is not that nice a country we probably thought of." In this regard, he stated, "I am well aware when Germany even gives technology to Pakistan, it goes one by one through Pakistan in direction of India."

## Prohibition leads to heady political dramas in Gujarat

AAP leader says law being used against him to settle scores; at least seven petitions in High Court challenging the legislation

VIJAYA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

Isudan Gadvi, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader in Gujarat, was in for a shock when a forensic report found traces of alcohol in his blood, after he was arrested by the State police for protesting at the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) headquarters in Gandhinagar on December 20. Two BJP women members said in their complaint to the police that Mr. Gadvi and others had showed up drunk – a crime in Gujarat. On January 2, the Gujarat police slapped additional Sections – 66(l)(b) and 85 (l) under the Gujarat Prohibition Act – against Mr. Gadvi after it received a forensic report that his blood sample had 0.0545 w/v (weight per volume) alcohol concentration. The permissible limit is 0.05 w/v.

Mr. Gadvi says he has been a teetotaler all his life, and was framed – bringing to the fore a new question of policing political protests. The use of the sedition law and UAPA against political opponents of governments remains hugely controversial in India. "I am dismayed at

the forensic report. I have filed an application with the police station to preserve the blood sample, I want to get it checked from an independent agency. The police, at the behest of the ruling party, is trying to tarnish my image and foist false cases against me because I joined AAP," he said.

He said that he could secure bail after getting legal help from party colleagues from Delhi. "They secured bail for me....the legal team told me my case was unprecedented and they had never heard anyone being booked for such an offence. I was told that sometimes when one consumes medicine or *bajra* (maize), then also the blood content could show erroneous alcohol results," Mr. Gadvi told *The Hindu* by phone.

Mr. Gadvi said his consent was taken before drawing the blood sample, but the police can force people to give their blood samples or DNA specimen as per law. According to R.K. Vij, former special Director-General of Police, Chhattisgarh, the police have such powers under



**Double-edged sword:** The law allows officials to search homes and make arrests without a warrant. ■ FILE PHOTO

Sections 53 and 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Mr. Gadvi's counsel Pranav Thakkar said they had demanded a copy of the forensic report and asked the police to preserve the blood sample slides. "The protest happened in front of over 500 people, it is hard to digest that they landed there in a drunken state. The police acted under political pressure it seems."

Gandhinagar Superintendent of Police Mayur Chavda did not respond to calls or messages if police has taken a decision to preserve Mr. Gadvi's blood sample.

Gadvi's blood sample.

In Gujarat, any officer empowered by the State government "may enter at any time by day or by night, any place including homes of people if

### SPECIAL

he or she has reason to believe that any intoxicant is kept or concealed in the premises". The Act also empowers the officers to arrest without warrant any person whom he has reason to believe to be guilty of an offence under the 1949 Act.

Similar powers allow the

police and officials in Bihar also to search private homes, vehicles and premises at will.

In September 2016, the police searched the house of Abhijit Bhattacharya, General Post Office chief postmaster in Patna, after getting an anonymous call that liquor was being served there. The matter was escalated and with the intervention of the Union Communications Ministry, a high-level probe was ordered since nothing was recovered from his house. A middleman was later arrested by the police for giving false information. The accused wanted to settle scores with the chief postmaster and he intended to plant a liquor bottle in his balcony but the police reached the house before he could do so.

On January 11, Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana said that courts in Bihar were choked

with liquor bail matters. On August 23, 2021, the Gujarat High Court while admitting the petitions said in an order that the Supreme Court for the first time in the Puttuswamy case of 2017 recognised "Right to Privacy" of the citizen as a fundamental right and the "petitioners have assailed some of the provisions of the 1949 Act on the ground that they violate the Right to Privacy." "The same has never been tested before in context of personal food preferences weaved within the right to privacy," the order said. Now, with the police invoking the law against a political activist, the police may have just found a new disturbing use for the law.

## Extinguishing flame an insult to martyrdom'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Saturday said the Union Government's move to extinguish the eternal flame of the Amar Jawan Jyoti at India Gate amounted to an insult to the martyrdom of the country's brave soldiers. The rationale behind the act was beyond everyone's comprehension, Mr. Gehlot said.

"If two different flames were kept burning in the honour of martyrs, what was the problem for the Narendra Modi government?" Mr. Gehlot asked, taking exception to the merger of the Amar Jawan Jyoti with the immortal flame at the National War Memorial.

Mr. Gehlot said while the

National Conference spokesman Imran Nabi Dar said the ground situation belies all the claims of administration. "Much touted 84,000 jobs for youth, infrastructure augmentation, incentivising entrepreneurship, a comprehensive package for our tourism, horticulture, and handicraft sectors continue to remain a far-fetched dream," he said.

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## Mayawati banking on Muslim candidates

BSP performed poorly in west in 2017

OMAR RASHID  
LUCKNOW

In western Uttar Pradesh, where it performed poorly in the 2017 Assembly election, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is once again banking on Muslim candidates.

Of the 109 candidates declared by the BSP for the first two phases of the election in the region, 40 are Muslim, making it 36.7% of the candidates declared. While Muslims are roughly one-fifth of the State's population, in the western part of the State, they are much higher, often touching and going beyond 35%-40% in some districts.

That the BSP is fielding a considerable number of Muslim candidates may cause concern for the SP-RLD alliance, which was hoping to consolidate the Muslim voters in the region along with the agrarian communities, primarily Jats and Gujjars, to make the most of the farmers' protest.

In the first phase of election for 58 seats, covering parts of the sugarcane belt and districts adjoining the National Capital Region, the BSP has fielded 17 Muslims. This includes three Muslims out of the total six candidates in the community-sensitive Muzaffarnagar district, which witnessed com-

munity violence in 2013 when the SP was in power.

In its second list of 51 candidates for the second phase, mostly covering the districts in the Rohilkhand region and Saharanpur district, the BSP has fielded 23 Muslims. The BSP failed to win a single seat in this region in 2017.

In Saharanpur, which has a considerable population of Muslims and the BSP's core Jatav (Dalit) voters, party chief Mayawati has banked on three Muslims, including Congress turncoat Noman Masood who had lost the Gangoh seat on Congress ticket in the last election.

In Bijnor, the BSP has fielded Muslims on five out of seven seats. In Moradabad, where the SP is traditionally strong, the BSP has fielded Muslims on five out of six seats. In Sambhal, out of four candidates, three are Muslim, while in Rampur two out of five are Muslim.

Asked if the BSP was fielding so many Muslims out of desperation, spokesperson Faizan Khan said the party believed in giving representation to each community as per its share in population. "Jiski kitni sankhya bhari, uski utni hissedari (Representation as per population)," he said.

ANUJ KUMAR  
GAZIABAD

As the process of filing nominations for the first phase of the Uttar Pradesh election comes to a close, the battle for western Uttar Pradesh has begun.

Riding on the perceived Jat-Muslim unity after the farmers' agitation and the Bahujan Samaj Party's "indifference", the Samajwadi Party-Rashtriya Lok Dal alliance is hoping to seize control of the region, where the BJP won a whopping 53 out of the 58 seats in 2017. On average, Jats and Muslims constitute between 30% and 50% of the electorate in these seats. The SP has left 33 seats for the RLD in the first round, out of which on five seats, SP candidates are contesting on the hand pump symbol. While the alliance has picked 10 Jat candidates, the BJP has opted for 12. Eleven Muslim candidates are also in the fray under the SP-RLD alliance.

However, after the ticket distribution, the fissures among Jats and Muslims that helped the BJP win after the Muzaffarnagar riots of 2013 came into the open.

The ruckus created by Jats, after a Muslim candidate from the SP was asked to contest from Siwalkhas (in the Baghpat Lok Sabha con-

stituency) on the RLD symbol, has come as a roadblock for the alliance. It has emerged that while Muslims are supporting the Jat candidates, Jats are not too keen on returning the favour, particularly in seats where the BJP has also fielded a Jat candidate.

RLD chief Chaudhary Jayant Singh tried to take off the religious connotation from the Jat-Muslim brotherhood and presented it as social cohesion. Responding to a tweet, he said Chaudhary Charan Singh (his grandfather and former Prime Minister) did not do the politics of Hindus and Muslims, but stood for the cause of farmers and workers. Mr. Singh's wife had to make an impassioned appeal to party workers not to make it a Hindu-Muslim election.

### Caste identity

No doubt, it is a laudable ideological pitch, but observers felt it was bereft of political reality in the Meerut zone, where Jats are seeking greater representation from a party that it has always looked up to.

Party insiders said while Chaudhary Charan Singh did talk of farmer-worker unity, he did invoke the MAJGAR [Muslim, Ahir (Yadav), Jat, Gurjar, Rajput] formula for



**What lies ahead:** Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav and RLD chief Jayant Chaudhary at a rally in Meerut. ■ FILE PIC

political consolidation as well. "Today, the RLD is effectively left with only the MAJ part and it needs to be protected and reimaged," said a senior Jat leader, requesting anonymity.

The ripples in the alliance gave the BJP, whose candidates are facing anti-incumbency and farmers' anger, an opportunity to polarise the election, with Union Minister Sanjeev Balyan, the Jat face of the BJP, describing the lack of Jat representation as a betrayal of the community's trust and pride. The party tried to shift focus from its Khatauli MLA being chased by farmers by tweeting an edited video from the party's official handle where Mr. Jayant Singh could be heard saying that he had not taken up a contract for Jats and late RLD supremo Ajit Singh de-

scribing the SP as a "goonda party". The voice-over says that Mr. Singh had put a question mark over the ability of Jats to give Ahmed Hameedi ticket from Baghpat. Local BJP sources said the party was trying to bring into its fold a section of Jats that felt Mr. Singh didn't assert his caste identity enough.

Party spokesperson Sunil Rohata, one of the two RLD contenders for the Siwalkhas seat, admitted that the "drama was unwarranted" and that the divide had been bridged. "We should appreciate that Jayantji has tried to give representation to all the communities, including Gujjars (three), Dalits (eight), Thakurs (two) and Brahmins (three)." It is not that the alliance didn't see it coming. In a bid to prevent polarisation, it has not given a single

ticket to a Muslim in Muzaffarnagar, despite a significant Muslim presence in each of the six Assembly constituencies in the district.

It tried to compensate it in Meerut (three), Baghpat, Shamli (two), Baghpat (two), and Bulandshahr (two), but party sources said Jats wanted their candidates even in seats where Muslims are more than a lakh and the Jat presence is only around 40,000-50,000.

Old-timers said Jats in rural areas were still living in the pre-EVM era when their candidates used to "stamp" their way to victory even in seats where their numerical strength was poor. They haven't come to terms to the BJP era when poll managers take into account even the strength of sub-castes at every booth.

Sanjeev Chaudhary, a farmer leader of Desh Khap in Baraut, said "Jai lena jaanta hai, dena nahin (Jats like to command support not offer it). Jats will not vote for the Muslim candidate, particularly, in seats where the Samajwadi Party has put up its candidate."

However, Sokhendra Chaudhary of Battisa khap that held sway over 32 villages in Shamli felt differently. "The Muslim candidates put up by the RLD in Baghpat and Shamli are only culturally Muslim. They are one amongst us," he said.

Congress releases first list for Uttarakhand elections

SANDEEP PHUKAN  
NEW DELHI

The Congress late on Saturday night announced its first list of candidates for the upcoming Uttarakhand Assembly election.

While former Chief Minister Harish Rawat hasn't been fielded yet in the first list of 53 candidates, Leader of the Opposition in the outgoing Assembly, Pritam Singh, has been named from his present constituency of Chakrata. Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) head Ganesh Godiyal has been named from the Srinagar constituency.

The list has also named Surender Singh Negi from the Kotwali constituency, a seat held by Harak Singh Rawat, the expelled Bharatiya Janata Party Minister who rejoined the Congress on Friday along with his daughter-in-law Anukriti Gusain.

Though there is no official word, there is speculation that Ms. Gusain may be fielded from Lansdowne. The seat doesn't figure in the list. Another former Minister, Yashpal Arya, who had quit BJP to join Congress, has been fielded from the Bajpur.

## Defeat those working for one particular caste or community, says Shah

ANUJ KUMAR  
GAZIABAD

The BJP government has brought an end to the politics of appeasement in Uttar Pradesh, said Union Home Minister Amit Shah as he kicked off the party's campaign for the upcoming Assembly election in the State from Kairana on Saturday.

"Those responsible for the exodus of families from Kairana have been forced to mi-

grate from the State," he told reporters after the door-to-door campaign with BJP candidate Mriginka Singh.

Ms. Singh is the daughter of Hukum Singh, former BJP MP from Kairana, whose report on alleged exodus of Hindu families in 2016 had put the nondescript town on the national map.

"We have to defeat those who work for one particular caste or community," Mr.

Shah said. A large number of party workers turned up for the first political programme of the BJP since the Election Commission of India announced the date of election in the State.

The Opposition parties have charged the district administration with discrimination in applying COVID-19 guidelines.

In Bulandshahr, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said

when the BJP government came to power in 2017, the first decision it took was to shut down illegal slaughterhouses, form an "anti-Romeo" squad for the safety of daughters, and waive loans of farmers.

"When the Samajwadi Party came to power, it tried to drop the terror charges against those who attacked the Ram Janmabhoomi complex in Ayodhya," he said.

## Baghel takes dig at ECI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Chhathiar Singh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Saturday took a dig at the Election Commission of India over Union Home Minister Amit Shah's door-to-door campaign in Kairana.

Mr. Baghel tweeted a video showing that Mr. Shah's campaign had more people than the mandated five persons. In a sarcastic tweet,

Mr. Baghel said, "The Election Commission should make him a brand ambassador of door-to-door campaign and use his video for DEMO purposes". "Otherwise, questions on the impartiality of @ECISVEEP will continue to be raised."

On January 17, an FIR was filed against Mr. Baghel and others for violating the norms of door-to-door campaigning with five people.



**Sounding the bugle:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah during his door-to-door campaign in Kairana on Saturday. ■ PTI

## No surprises in Congress's Manipur list

RAHUL KARMAKAR  
GUWAHATI

There were no surprises in the first list of 40 candidates the Congress released on Saturday for the Assembly election in Manipur.

The election to the 60 Assembly seats will be held in two phases – on February 27 and March 3. The party had won 28 seats in the 2017 poll, but its number in the House dropped to 13, days before Mandate 2022 was announced.

The party retained the MLAs that remained and the loyalists who lost the last election. Former Chief Minister and Congress Legislature Party leader Okram Iboibi Singh will contest from his pet Thoubal constituency.

Among the other senior leaders, former State party president Gaikhangam will contest from Nungba, party leader Gaikhangam will contest from the Nungba (ST) constituency and T.N. Haokip from Saikot.

Former BJP spokesperson Okram Joy has been fielded from Langthabal, while Soraisham Manaoiton, who was the Trinamool Congress candidate last time, will contest from Naoriya Pakhanglakpa.

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU,  
HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT  
Tiruvannamalai Highways  
(Construction & Maintenance) Circle**

**TENDER NOTICE**

**T.N.No. 19/2021-22/HDO** Dated: 22.01.2022

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, **Percentage tender under two cover system through online only** will be received upto **07.03.2022 / 12.00 hours** by the Superintending Engineer (H), C&M, Tiruvannamalai Circle for CRIDP 2021-2022 (26 works) pertaining Tiruvannamalai, Cheyyar and Kallakurichi (H) C&M Division.

Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available from **03.02.2022 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 / 517 / Tender / 2022 C&M, Circle, Tiruvannamalai.

"சொந்தன கட்டுவ கந்திரம் அடைந்தோம், சாதன புரிந்து சரித்திறம் படைப்போம்"

"Stop Corona; Wear Mask, Follow Physical Distancing, Maintain Hand Hygiene"  
DELHI JAL BOARD: GOVT OF NCT OF DELHI  
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (PROJECT) W-VI  
Chandivali WW-II, Civil Lines, Delhi-110054  
Ph: 011-23814133, E-mail: eepw6.djb@nic.in

**SHORT NT NO. 07 (2021-22)**  
Tender ID: 2022\_DJB\_214990\_1

S. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Date of release of tender in e-procurement solution	Tender Fee (Rs.)	Last date / time of receipt of tender through e-procurement solution
1	P/LU D.I. feeder main of dia ranging from 100 to 700 mm for Tube well water from Corporation WWT to Lahanipuri C-D Block UGR.	19,20,000/-	21.01.2022 11:00 AM onward	1500/-	07.02.2022 upto 3:00 PM	

The complete details can be seen on website <https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>. The tender has been uploaded on website.  
**ISSUED BY P.R.O.(WATER)**  
Advt. No.J.S.V. 1038 (2021-22)

(S.P.Singh)  
Dy. S.E.(Project)W-VI  
9650291594

**KERALA WATER AUTHORITY- e-Tender Notice**  
Tender No : 89/2021-22/KWA/PHC/2/TV/ KIIF Project-Tranche13-WRD 025-07-Thiruvananthapuram Neyyar Alternative Source-Supplying,Laying,Jointing, Testing and commissioning of 1422mm MS pipe clear water gravity main from 120mld WTP to be constructed at Neyyar to PTP Nagar & allied works. EMD : Rs. 5,00,000/- Tender fee : Rs. 15,000/- Last date for submitting Tender: 14-02-2022 03:00:pm Phone: 0471-2322303 Website : [www.kwa.kerala.gov.in](http://www.kwa.kerala.gov.in), [www.etenders.kerala.gov.in](http://www.etenders.kerala.gov.in) Superintending Engineer PH Circle, Thiruvananthapuram KWA-JB-GL-6-948-2021-22

**RAJASTHAN RAJYA VIDYUT UTPADAN NIGAM LTD.**  
Kota Super Thermal Power Station, Kota-324008  
**E-TENDER NOTICE TN-19047(RVU2122GLOB01690)**  
Online E-tenders are invited for Design, supply, installation and commissioning of high performance energy chain system (Retrofitting) in place of CRD for stacker reclaimer No. 2 of CHP of KSTPS. Tender details are available on <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> (for e-tender), [www.energy.rajasthan.gov.in/rvunl](http://www.energy.rajasthan.gov.in/rvunl) & [www.sppr.rajasthan.gov.in](http://www.sppr.rajasthan.gov.in). RVN/PR/2021-22 Chief Engineer (KSTPS)

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU  
VILLUPURAM HIGHWAYS  
(Construction & Maintenance) CIRCLE**

**Tender Notice**  
T.N.NO. 62/2021-22 / HDO. DATED: 21.01.2022

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, **Percentage tender through online under Two Cover System** will be received upto 07.03.2022, 13.00 hours by the Superintending Engineer (H), C&M, Villupuram Circle for CRIDP 2021-22. Twelve works for Cuddalore (H) C&M Division and Thirteen works for Villupuram (H) C&M Division. Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender document and all other details are available from 04.02.2022 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), C&M Circle, Villupuram.

"சொந்தன கட்டுவ கந்திரம் அடைந்தோம், சாதன புரிந்து சரித்திறம் படைப்போம்"

**KARNATAKA STATE MEDICAL SUPPLIES CORPORATION LIMITED**  
PHI Building, Opp. To SJP Polytechnic, K.R. Circle, Sheshadri Road, Bangalore-560001. Phone: +91-80-29619801  
E-mail: [latha.mdkmscl@gmail.com](mailto:latha.mdkmscl@gmail.com)  
No: HFW/KSMSCL/EQPT/CPHC-HWC(1)/56/2021-22 (IND-91) Dated:22/01/2022  
**TENDER NOTIFICATION**

Ref: 1. Tender Notification No: HFW/KSMSCL/EQPT/CPHC-HWC(1)/56/2021-22 Date: 22/01/2022 (IND-91)  
2. Tender Notification No: HFW/KSMSCL/EQPT/CPHC-HWC(2)/56/2021-22 Date: 22/01/2022,(IND-912)  
3. Tender Notification No: HFW/KSMSCL/EQPT/CPHC-HWC(3)/56/2021-22 Date: 22/01/2022, (IND-913)

Nation wide Tender is invited through e-portal, under KTPP Act 1999 and Rules 2000 for the following tenders:

1. Tender For Supply and Installation of Equipment, Diagnostics and Furniture under Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Programme. (IND-91)
2. Re-Tender For Supply and Installation of Equipment, Diagnostics and Furniture under Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Programme. (IND-912)
3. Re-Tender For Supply and Installation of Equipment, Diagnostics and Furniture under Universal Health Coverage Programme. (IND-913)

Details regarding specification EMD, Terms and Conditions and other information are available in the Tender Document, which can be downloaded from the KSMSCL website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> from 23/01/2022 the eligible tenderers shall submit their e-tenders in e-procurement platform for above mentioned tenders. Further

# 512 new fatalities recorded across India

3,30,836 new cases reported on Saturday

THE HINDU DATA TEAM  
CHENNAI

The country recorded 3,30,836 new COVID-19 cases on Saturday, a 23.6% increase from a week ago. The total number of infections has reached 3.89 crore, and the active cases have crossed the 21.1-lakh mark.

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

Maharashtra recorded 46,393 infections on Saturday, followed by Kerala (45,136) and Karnataka (42,470).

On Saturday, 512 deaths



**Vital dose:** A health worker administering a COVID-19 vaccine in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

were recorded in India, considerably higher than the average levels recorded in the last week. The total number of recorded fatalities has reached 4,88,923.

Kerala reported the most deaths with 132 fatalities (62 were from a backlog), fol-

lowed by Maharashtra (48). Delhi recorded 45 deaths.

On Friday, 19.6 lakh tests were conducted (the results for which were made available on Saturday). The test positivity rate (the number of cases detected per 100 tests) was 16.8%.

As of Saturday, 91.2% of the eligible population has been vaccinated with at least one dose, while 67% have received both doses. In the 15-17 age cohort, 56% of the population have received their first dose. Altogether, 92,86,86,390 first doses, 68,23,24,226 second doses, and 76,57,932 booster doses have been administered across India.

Gujarat continues to report above 20,000 cases and over a dozen deaths per day.

On Saturday, it reported 23,150 new infections and 15

deaths, increasing the active cases to 1,29,875, out of which 244 patients are on ventilator support.

Out of 15 deaths, 5 deaths

were recorded in India, considerably higher than the average levels recorded in the last week. The total number of recorded fatalities has reached 4,88,923.

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lowed by Maharashtra (48). Delhi recorded 45 deaths.

On Friday, 19.6 lakh tests were conducted (the results for which were made available on Saturday). The test positivity rate (the number of cases detected per 100 tests) was 16.8%.

As of Saturday, 91.2% of the eligible population has been vaccinated with at least one dose, while 67% have received both doses. In the 15-17 age cohort, 56% of the population have received their first dose. Altogether, 92,86,86,390 first doses, 68,23,24,226 second doses, and 76,57,932 booster doses have been administered across India.

Gujarat continues to report above 20,000 cases and over a dozen deaths per day.

On Saturday, it reported 23,150 new infections and 15

deaths, increasing the active cases to 1,29,875, out of which 244 patients are on ventilator support.

Out of 15 deaths, 5 deaths

## Soren writes to PM on IAS cadre rules

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren shot off a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday to oppose the proposed amendments to the Indian Administrative Service (Cadre) Rules, 1954 giving overriding powers to the Union government to depute IAS, IPS, and Indian Forest Service (IFoS) officers to the Centre.

Mr. Soren said the "Centre should introspect and find out the reasons for the perceptible decline, over a couple of years, in the number of officers opting to go on Central deputation."

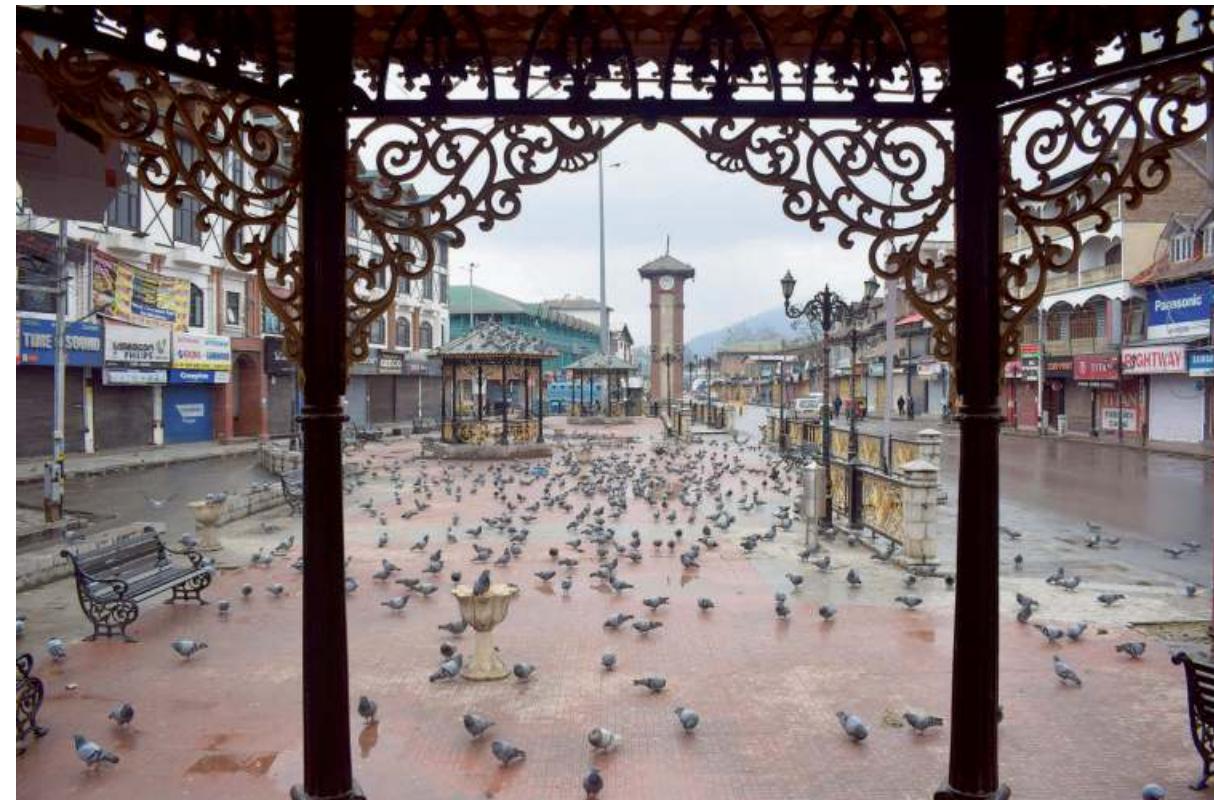
He said the amendments were likely to affect the objectivity, performance and efficiency of the officers and they would not be able to give candid opinion in matters which entail taking sides in sensitive matters of Centre-State disputes.

"Undoubtedly this move is likely to further strain the already stressed Centre-State relations. It has immense potential to be misused for harassment of officers and vendetta politics against the State government," he said.

### Growing pushback

In the past 10 days, Chief Ministers Mamata Banerjee (West Bengal), Bhupesh Baghel (Chhattisgarh) and Ashok Gehlot (Rajasthan) have sent letters to Mr. Modi opposing the amendments. Mr. Soren suggested that the Centre may consider creating a permanent core cadre of such officers for themselves and not solely depend on borrowed players.

## Avian takeover



**Pigeon paradise:** A view of a closed market during lockdown as part of restrictions to curb the spread of COVID-19 in Srinagar on Saturday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

## National master plan portal to be ready by end of March

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Gati Shakti programme announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year envisages a digital platform for a national master plan of infrastructure projects in the country which will be ready by March 31, 2022, according to a senior government official.

All infrastructure projects will be mapped on the national master plan [portal]. 75% of data from Central Ministries on their infrastructure projects have already been uploaded. We

are now training State governments to share their data. We are hopeful that the national master plan [portal] will be ready by March-end," Amrit Lal Meena, Special Secretary, Department for Promotion of Investment and Internal Trade told *The Hindu*.

### Centre-State linkage

Prime Minister Modi announced the Gati Shakti national master plan (NMP) on October 13, 2021, for setting up a centralised portal, and "institutionalising" planning, designing and execu-

tion among 17 different Ministries in the Centre as well as States. It will include projects worth ₹100 lakh crore. The programme also aims to cut down logistical costs and improve supply chains.

"The national master plan will show us geographical features such as forests, water bodies, mines, religious and archaeological sites and help us plan alignment of infrastructure projects so that we can circumvent these. Earlier, projects would be planned from within the confines of offices," Mr. Meena said.

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## Antrix-Devas may not be last such high-profile row

Many challenges faced by tech firms entering private sector

JACOB KOSHY  
NEW DELHI

In Assam, 5,580 new cases were detected on Saturday out of 45,900 people tested. The positivity rate is 12.16%, up from 12.13% on January 21. Kamrup (Metro) district, mostly comprising Guwahati, recorded the highest caseload of 1,172. 13 new deaths were also recorded. Total deaths attributed to COVID-19 in the State since January 1, 2022 stands at 124. The State's recovery rate is 91.99%, down from 92.31% on January 21.

Telangana logged 4,393 new SARS-CoV2 cases by 5.30 p.m. on Saturday, according to the medical bulletin issued by the Department of Health.



Antrix Corporation is the commercial arm of the ISRO.

sectors. The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research in 2009 brought in place reform that allowed its scientists to launch private companies and have a financial stake, much like professors in several leading research universities in the United States and Europe. Few, however, have actually gone on to do so because some have been harassed for their initiative.

### Conflict of interest

Rajesh Gokhale, now Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, an immunologist and known for throwing new light on aspects of tuberculosis, partner, Factum Law, Bengaluru, who was involved in an effort to draft new legislation for an updated law governing space applications in India, said that barely any inputs to prevent future conflicts he submitted were accepted. "This is certainly not the last we've seen of the litigation as it remains to be seen how the Supreme Court order will be interpreted internationally, given that India's bilateral treaties are also at stake," he told *The Hindu*.

Unlike in the e-commerce sector that saw international investments worth billions into Indian start-ups, the challenges are heightened when a private company moved into a space that has traditionally been occupied by the public sector.

"Sectors such as telecom, defence, aerospace and satellite technology, where public sector companies, are loath to cede space, are where these issues are most likely to crop up and, to my mind, nothing has changed fundamentally. Only an evolution in institutional culture over years can result in visible change," Mr. Prasad added.

These challenges though are not unique to India's space or high-technology

2021 from 773 in 2020. Nagpur division, which covers the eastern part of Vidarbha, witnessed an increase in the number of suicides to 309 in 2021 from 269 in 2020. Amravati division, which covers the western Vidarbha region, has recorded the highest number of farmer suicides in both years. In 2020, a total of 1,128 deaths were registered here and in 2021 the number till November was 1,056. The Konkan division has recorded zero deaths during both years. In Pune and Nasik divisions, which cover western and north Maharashtra regions respectively, the recorded deaths in the year 2020 are

26 and 351 while in 2021 are 13 and 307.

As per the information obtained under RTI, kin of an average of 50% dead farmers were found eligible for ₹1 lakh compensation from the State government.

According to Mr. Ghadge, "Ignoring the mental health aspect of the farmers and just giving loan waivers to all will never address the problem. It's important to filter out distressed farmers so that help is channelised to ones who need it the most."

*Help and counselling is available at Sanjivini Society for Mental Health - 011-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m. - 7.30 p.m.*

## Farmer suicides still haunt Vidarbha

More deaths in 2021 than in previous year

ALOK DESHPANDE  
MUMBAI

Maharashtra recorded 2,489 farmer suicides from January 1 to November 30, 2021, and 2,547 farmer suicides in 2020, with over 50% deaths coming from the State's Vidarbha region during both years.

According to the information obtained by activist Jitendra Ghadge, based on an application under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, the State recorded 2,547 farmer



Farmers in Vidarbha have been struggling for a long time. ■ FILE PHOTO

suicides in the year 2020. Out of this, 1,206 deaths were eligible for aid as per the norms of the State government.

When compared, the Aurangabad division, which covers the entire Marathwada area of the State, has seen an increase in the number of farmer suicides to 804 in

2021 from 773 in 2020. Nagpur division, which covers the eastern part of Vidarbha, witnessed an increase in the number of suicides to 309 in 2021 from 269 in 2020. Amravati division, which covers the western Vidarbha region, has recorded the highest number of farmer suicides in both years. In 2020, a total of 1,128 deaths were registered here and in 2021 the number till November was 1,056. The Konkan division has recorded zero deaths during both years. In Pune and Nasik divisions, which cover western and north Maharashtra regions respectively, the recorded deaths in the year 2020 are

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## Disability activists flag concerns in new accessibility norms

2021 guidelines had made changes in dimensions and heights, leading to confusion on the standards to be followed

DAMINI NATH  
NEW DELHI

A month after the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) released revised accessibility guidelines, disability rights activists have raised concerns over the changes, including in handrail heights, from the 2016 version, as well as sought clarity from the government on which version would be applicable for auditing public buildings.

Anjlee Agarwal, the executive director of Smarthyam, which has worked with NITI Aayog and various government departments on accessibility issues, said the 2021 guidelines had made changes in dimensions and heights, leading to confusion.

Ms. Agarwal, who had worked on the 2016 guidelines, wrote to the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry on January 20 asking for "synergy" between the standards mentioned in the



**Better access:** More public buildings and spaces need facilities for the differently abled. ■ FILE PHOTO

ergonomics. "Upper level handrail on ramp is 900-1,000 mm, while on steps it is 900-1,100 mm. Is everyone 6 feet tall?" she asked.

She pointed out that the knee recess of wheelchair user, which was used for giving dimensions of tables, workstations, washbasins and so on, had been changed from a minimum of 650-680 mm to 600 mm and 675 mm. "For

ability Rights Alliance, had filed a petition in the Madras High Court in September 2021 seeking greater public consultation on the draft guidelines. While disposing of the petition in November 2021, the court had said such drafts should be circulated in all official languages in the country.

### Not specific enough

Speaking to *The Hindu* from Chennai, Ms. Jayakumar said: "The guidelines are not comprehensive enough. Bus, railway coach, airplane, etc., are barely covered. Despite the name, it's still mostly built environment. We need an overarching universal design and accessibility code. It is also not specific enough."

For instance, Ms. Jayakumar said the guidelines said "non-slip" floors should be used, but did not adequately define what that meant. She said government projects had continued to use polished granite for aesthetic

reasons, instead of the more slip-resistant unpolished granite. The guidelines say "marble/granite" have "good" slip resistance when dry and unpolished, while it is "very poor" when wet and polished.

Rama Chari, the director of the Diversity and Equal Opportunity Centre, said the 2021 harmonised guidelines had a "lot more figures and photos, which is good". But, she added, there were "no explanations for the changes made".

# Taliban delegation heads for Oslo talks

Afghan regime's meeting with Western officials to focus on human rights and humanitarian aid

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
KABUL

The Taliban's first official talks with the West on European soil since seizing power in Afghanistan will help to "transform the atmosphere of war" after a two-decade insurgency against NATO forces, the group's top spokesman told AFP on Saturday.

The Islamists stormed back to power in August as U.S. and foreign troops began their final withdrawal from the country following a stalemate on the battlefield.

No country has yet recognised the Taliban's government – notorious for human rights abuses during a first stint in power between 1996 and 2001 when they were ousted by a U.S.-led invasion.

"The Islamic Emirate has taken steps for meeting the demands of the Western world and we hope to strengthen our relations through



Seeking thaw in ties: Taliban soldiers patrolling the streets of Kabul on Saturday. ■ REUTERS

diplomacy with all the countries, including European countries and the West in general," Zabihullah Mujahid said on Saturday.

The Taliban want to "transform the atmosphere of war... into a peaceful situation".

The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan has deter-

iorated since the Taliban's takeover. International aid came to a sudden halt and the U.S. has frozen \$9.5 billion in Afghan central bank assets held overseas.

Hunger now threatens 23 million Afghans, or 55% of the population, says the UN.

The Oslo visit from Sunday to Tuesday will be fo-

cussed on human rights and humanitarian aid as a poverty crisis deepens in Afghanistan. The hardline Islamists will meet Norwegian authorities and officials from a number of allied countries including Britain, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy and the U.S., the Norwegian Foreign Ministry

statement said.

The delegation is also expected to meet Afghans from civil society, including women leaders and journalists.

"These meetings do not represent a legitimisation or recognition of the Taliban" Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt said Friday. "But we must talk to the de facto authorities in the country. We cannot allow the political situation to lead to an even worse humanitarian disaster."

The 15-member Taliban team represented by men, and led by Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, left Kabul on Saturday on a plane organised by the Norwegian government, a Taliban spokesman said.

Ali Maisam Nazary, the foreign relations chief for the National Resistance Front (NRF) – an opposition group

– condemned Norway over the talks.

# Saudi-led coalition denies targeting Yemen prison

Death toll in airstrike is at least 82, says aid group

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
REUTERS  
SAADA

The Saudi-led coalition fighting Iran-aligned Houthis in Yemen denied targeting a detention centre in Yemen's Saada province, saying the facility hit was not a site restricted from strikes, the Saudi official news agency SPA reported on Saturday.

The death toll from the airstrike climbed to at least 82 detainees, the rebels and an aid group said on Saturday.

Internet access in the Arab world's poorest country meanwhile remained largely down as the coalition continued airstrikes on the capital of Sanaa and elsewhere.

The airstrike in northern Saada province on Friday was part of an intense air

and ground offensive that marked an escalation in Yemen's yearslong civil war. The conflict pits the internationally recognised government, aided by the Saudi-led coalition, against the Iranian-backed rebels.

The escalation comes after the Houthis claimed a drone and missile attack that struck inside the United Arab Emirates' capital earlier in the week. It also comes as government forces, aided by UAE-backed troops and airstrikes from the coalition, have re-claimed the entire province of Shabwa from the Houthis and pressured them in the central province of Marib.

Ahmed Mahat, head of Doctors Without Borders, a charity mission in Yemen, said they counted at least 82 dead and more than 265 wounded in the airstrike. But Mr. Mahat said the air-strike hit a different part of the facility housing other types of detainees. "The migrants there are safe," he said.

wounded in the airstrike.

Saudi coalition spokesman Brig. Gen. Turki al-Malki alleged the Houthis hadn't reported the site as needing protection from airstrikes to the UN or the International Committee of the Red Cross. He claimed the Houthis' failure to do so represented the militia's "usual deceptive approach" in the conflict.

The Houthis used the prison complex to hold detained migrants, mostly Africans attempting to cross through the war-torn country into Saudi Arabia, according to the humanitarian organization Save the Children.

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# Iran warns coalition over Yemen attack

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
TEHRAN

Iran on Saturday condemned recent air strikes on rebel-held areas of Yemen, warning they make achieving peace in the war-torn country "more difficult".

IS launched the attack on Thursday night against the prison housing some 3,500 suspected members of the jihadist group, including some of its leaders, said the Observatory.

The jihadis "seized weapons they found" in the detention centre and freed several fellow IS fighters, said the Britain-based monitor, which relies on sources inside war-torn Syria for its information.

"The continuation of the coalition's military attacks on Yemen with the silence and indifference of the international community and the uncontrolled sale of weapons to the aggressors... has made the path to achieve a just peace even more difficult," Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said.

## U.S. suspends 44 passenger flights to China

### Biden, Kishida vow to 'push back' on China

They seek to strengthen U.S.-Japan alliance, slam N. Korea's spate of missile tests

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WASHINGTON

The U.S. announced on Friday that it was suspending 44 Chinese flights from America to the Asian giant in response to restrictive moves by Beijing under its COVID-19 protocols. The flights are operated by Air China, China Eastern Airlines, China Southern Airlines and Xiamen Airlines.

China used the circuit breaker policy to cancel flights by American, Delta and United airlines when passengers who tested negative for COVID-19 before takeoff later tested positive once arriving in China.

Mr. Biden has made res-



Closer ties: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, right, in a virtual meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden. ■ AP

toring the importance of the U.S.-Japanese relationship a priority since taking office exactly a year ago, following his predecessor Donald Trump's questioning the benefit of even longstanding

U.S. alliances in both Asia and Europe.

After the meeting, which took place by video link, Mr. Biden tweeted that it was "an honour to meet with Prime Minister Kishida to

further strengthen the U.S.-Japan Alliance – the cornerstone of peace and security in the Indo-Pacific and around the world," using an alternative name for the Asia-Pacific region.

A U.S. official said Mr. Biden and Mr. Kishida expressed concern over China "intimidating" its neighbours. "The two leaders resolved to push back against the People's Republic of China (PRC)'s attempts to change the status quo in the East China Sea and South China Sea" and also "under-scored the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," the White House readout said.

The assault on the Ghwayran prison in the northern city of Hasakeh is one of IS's most significant since its "caliphate" was declared defeated in Syria nearly three years ago.

"At least 28 members of the Kurdish security forces, five civilians and 45 mem-

## Zen master, who brought mindfulness to West, dies

Thich Nhat Hanh opposed Vietnam War

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
HANOI

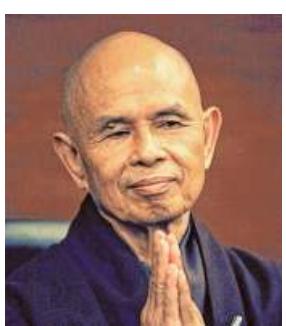
Vietnamese monk-turned-peace-activist Thich Nhat Hanh, a hugely influential Buddhist credited with bringing mindfulness to the West, has died aged 95.

The Zen master, whose reach within Buddhism is seen as second only to the Dalai Lama, spent nearly four decades in exile after being banished from his homeland for calling for an end to the Vietnam-American War.

Thich Nhat Hanh "passed away peacefully" at the Tu Hieu Temple in the city of Hue, Vietnam's Buddhist heartland, his Zen teaching organisation, the Plum Village Community of Engaged Buddhism, said.

Before his return to Vietnam in 2018, he set up retreats around the world and wrote over 100 books including on mindfulness and meditation – a cornerstone of a \$4.2 trillion global wellness industry espoused by Oprah Winfrey, Arianna Huffington and tech billionaire Marc Benioff.

Born in 1926, Thich Nhat



Thich Nhat Hanh

Hanh was ordained aged 16 and went on to found a youth school which trained volunteers to build clinics and infrastructure in villages blighted by war.

In the early 1960s he travelled to the U.S., where he taught at Columbia and Princeton universities, but after one trip in 1966 to meet U.S. civil rights icon Martin Luther King – who joined his calls to end the Vietnam War – he was barred from returning home. Believing that war was fundamentally wrong, the monk refused to take sides in the conflict and was consequently persecuted by the governments of both North and South Vietnam.

He was ordained aged 16 and went on to found a youth school which trained volunteers to build clinics and infrastructure in villages blighted by war.

Born in 1926, Thich Nhat

## A GREETING TO REMEMBER



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Email : chennai.tro3@incometax.gov.in

### AUCTION SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY SITUATED AT PONMAR VILLAGE

Notice is hereby given that the office of the undersigned has proposed to conduct an auction as per the provisions laid down in the 2nd Schedule of the Income Tax Act, 1961 and sale of immovable property, which belongs to Shri. Anand Muruga Utharkar, No.69, VGP Layout, 3rd Part, 2nd Main Road, Pallavakkam, Chennai- 41 being income tax defaulter for the purpose of recovery of income tax arrears.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTIES

Property 1 : Plot No. 31B & 32, Flat No. 32-A, FF & SF, Sri Sai Nagar Layout, Ponmar, Chennai - 600 048 - SRO, Gudivancherry, measuring 3600 Sq.ft and being bounded on North by : 40 feet Road, South by : Plot No. 33, East by : 40 feet Road, West by : Plot No. 31-A.

Property 2 : Plot No. 31B & 32, Flat No. 32-D, FF & SF, Sri Sai Nagar Layout, Ponmar, Chennai - 600 048 - SRO, Gudivancherry, measuring 3600 Sq.ft and being bounded on North by : 30 feet Road, South by : Plot No. 33, East by : 40 feet Road, West by : Plot No. 31-A.

Reserve price In Rupees : Property I - Flat No. 32-A - Rs.41,23,00/- plus poundage fee & costs  
Reserve price In Rupees : Property II - Flat No. 32-D - Rs.41,23,00/- plus poundage fee & costs

E.M.D. In Rupees : Rs.1,00,000/-

DATE AND TIME OF AUCTION

31.01.2022 @ 11.30 AM

VENUE OF AUCTION

Income Tax Auditorium (Vaigai Hall) in the Income Tax Main Building Campus, Ayakar Bhavan, 121, M.G. Road, Nungambakkam, Chennai - 600034.

#### CONDITIONS:

1. The intending bidders are requested to deposit Rs.1,00,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Only) as Earnest Money Deposit for the above property by means of Demand Draft in favour of 'Tax Recovery Officer-3, Income tax Dept., Chennai' drawn on any schedule bank payable at Chennai before the beginning of actual auction proceedings, which is refundable to the parties except successful. The successful bidder shall pay immediately after such declaration, deposit of 25 % on the amount of his purchase money to the officer conducting sale, and in default of such deposit the property shall forthwith be put up again and resold. The full amount of purchase money payable should be paid by the purchaser to the undersigned on or before 15th day from the date of sale of property, exclusive of such day, or if the 15th day being a Sunday or other holiday, then on first office day after the fifteenth day. In default of payment within the period mentioned above, the property shall be resold after issue of fresh proclamation of sale.
2. The Property will be auctioned on "as is where is and what is there is basis".
3. The details of the property and the copy of the Encumbrance Certificate can be perused at the office of the undersigned on any working day prior to auction, after fixing an appointment with the undersigned during office hours.
4. Detailed terms and conditions of the auction sale may be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours.
5. The aforesaid property will not be sold below the Reserve Price of Rs.41,23,000/- (Property I - Flat No. 32-A) , Rs.41,23,000/- (Property II - Flat No. 32-D).

(C.D.Vejayalakshme)

Date: 06.01.2022 Tax Recovery Officer-3

Place : Chennai O/o. Pr.Commissioner of Income Tax-3, Chennai.

## OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

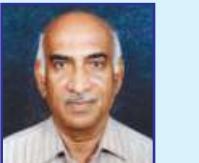
### DEATH



Dr. V. KUMARAGURU  
Passed away on 22-01-2022  
after a brief illness.  
Funeral at Chennai on  
Monday, 24-01-2022.

Deeply mourned by  
K.Renganayagi  
Dr.Bharathan - Vaishnavi  
Kundavi - Ananthakrishnan  
and Grand children.  
Mobile: 8248174131

### DEATH ANNIVERSARIES



In loving memory of  
**George Thomas**  
DOB: 08-05-1942 - DOD: 23-01-2020  
Your memory is eternal  
and you are forever in our hearts.  
We miss you so much!  
Fondly remembered by  
FAMILY MEMBERS

### DEATH ANNIVERSARIES



**M.A.GAJENDIRAN**  
DOB: 02.12.1952 - DOD: 23.01.2021  
"Still in our minds and hearts"  
Fondly remembered by  
Wife, Son, Daughter &  
M.P.M. Family members

### FIRST ANNIVERSARY



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## SNAPSHOTS



## Dinosaur evolution

A new study of dinosaurs led by University of Bristol made a reconstruction of the limb muscles of a small-to-medium sized dinosaur, Thecodontosaurus, which roamed the earth 205 million years ago. The study reveals how massive, 50-tonne quadrupedal dinosaurs like Diplodocus evolved from this biped species.



## How people 'click'

When two people agree, and 'click' during a conversation, this shows in their 'response times' or time between when one person stops talking and the other begins, finds a study published in *PNAS*. The study examined response times of strangers and close friends. It also studied how listeners interpreted the quality of conversations between two others.



**Doomed exoplanets**  
NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) mission has spotted three huge Jupiter-like extrasolar planets that are orbiting dangerously close to their giant or sub-giant stars. One of them, TOI-2337b, is likely to get absorbed by its star in less than a million years, the shortest for any known exoplanet. The study helps in understanding the past, present and future of planets.



**Time your exercise**  
An international team of researchers studied the effect of exercise performed at different times in the day. The study, published in *Cell Metabolism*, reveals how the body produced different health-promoting signalling molecules, in an organ-specific way, depending on the time of the exercise. Insights include how to realign 'faulty' circadian rhythms by adopting the right exercise.

## More evidence of excess deaths in India during pandemic

A recent paper in *Science* concluded India's cumulative COVID-19 deaths were six to seven times higher than reported official mortality

**SRINIVASAN RAMANI**

In the State-wise data compiled by the Union Government, represented by the Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati in the Supreme Court, it was shown based on media reports that 6,14,211 claims of compensation for deaths due to COVID-19 were filed in 20 States against the reported death toll of 4,29,872 in those States. Yet, the fact that some States have gone to process a high number of compensation claims, several multiples over and above their reported death tolls suggest that their governments have acknowledged that these tolls reflect an undercounting of the actual death tally.

## Excess deaths

This is not surprising. Excess deaths analyses based on deaths registered in the Civil Registration System (CRS) have shown that they have been as high as six times the official death toll for just 11 States and Union Territories (Maharashtra, Punjab, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh) for which such data was available. Studies have found the CRS method to analyse death tolls to be a robust way to measure mortality across States. The more complete the CRS registration in States, "the better the opportunities to understand population health and its determinants," a paper by Aashish Gupta and others recently found.

A recent peer-reviewed paper in *Science* by Prabhat Jha and others used a national survey of 1.4 lakh adults and estimated that COVID-19 constituted 29% of deaths from June 2020 to July 2021. This corresponds to 32 lakh deaths, of which 27 lakh occurred in April-July 2021.

## Estimating losses

Across the world, the true death toll due to COVID-19 was more than recorded

■ According to media reports, 6,14,211 claims of compensation for deaths due to COVID-19 were filed in 20 States against the reported death toll of 4,29,872 in those States. The numbers were stark for some States

■ A recent paper in *Science* used a national survey of 1.4 lakh adults and estimated that COVID-19 constituted 29% of deaths from June 2020-July 2021

■ This corresponds to 32 lakh deaths, of which 27 lakh occurred in April-July 2021

■ This number was corroborated with two government data sources which showed all-cause mortality increased by 27% and 26% respectively

■ The authors reached out to approximately 57,000 people in 13,500 households and found "similar temporal increases in mortality with COVID and non-COVID deaths peaking similarly"

■ Extrapolating from subnational data for these countries, it could be shown, as the *Science* paper did for India, that excess deaths were several multiples over the official death toll and revealed undercounting



undercounting.

A data story in *The Hindu* published in September 2021 compared excess deaths for the countries with the highest reported death toll and found that the estimated multiple over the reported toll (using the same method) for India was the highest (5.8 times) and only Chile (5.7 times) came close.

## Varied reasons

What explains this substantive undercounting of deaths? In the case of India, the reasons are varied. In States like Kerala which have tallied a high number of deaths after reviewing its COVID-19 mortality reporting over time, initially, some deaths of infected people who died after testing negative or left hospitals and then died were not tallied under COVID-19 deaths. This has since been corrected, and Kerala's case fatality rate has risen to 0.9 (closer to the national average).

But in others such as Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana, where excess deaths multiples were quite high, the reasons for the undercounting have also got to do with the States seeking to report less of the mortality as COVID-related. There are States such as Uttar Pradesh, for example, where public health systems remain weak and were overwhelmed by the sudden increase in the

sput of infections and mortality during the second wave, in particular. This also contributed to the significant underreporting of COVID-19 deaths. Many cases were not detected through adequate testing in several States. Also, the absence of proper health care institutions resulted in several deaths occurring outside institutional care and were undocumented.

States with a robust CRS (Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala for example) in which deaths are quickly registered after occurrence have tended to show lower excess deaths multiples or have addressed these deaths as COVID-19 related after audits - Maharashtra, for example.

But as the Gujarat example shows, even if undercounting of deaths was done for political expediency, such States have had to acknowledge compensation claims even if they are much higher than the reported COVID-19 tolls for the same reason.

Estimating the actual death toll due to COVID-19 is an important step in acknowledging the challenges faced by public health institutions and the state in India. This should help epidemiologists and public health specialists devise clear steps to take when faced with a pandemic-like situation and also to prepare institutions to respond to it.

## Two species of fungi associated with basal stem rot found

Future studies can use the public database entry for early detection of the pathogen

**SHUBASHREE DESIKAN**

Researchers from Kerala have identified two new species of fungi from the genus *Ganoderma* that are associated with coconut stem rot. They have also genotyped the two fungi species, named *Ganoderma keralense* and *G. pseudoapplanatum* and identified genetic biomarkers. The DNA barcodes have been made publicly available in DNA sequence repositories so that future studies can use it for early detection of the pathogen. The research was published in the journal *Mycologia*.

**Basal stem rot**  
The butt rot or basal stem rot of coconut is known by several names in different parts of India: Ganoderma wilt (Andhra Pradesh), *Anaberooga* (Karnataka) and Thanjavur wilt (Tamil Nadu), to mention a few.

The infection begins at the roots, but symptoms in-

clude discolouration and rotting of stem and leaves. In the later stages, flowering and nut set decreases and finally the coconut palm (*Cocos nucifera*) dies.

A reddish brown oozing is seen. This oozing has been reported only in India. Once infected, recovery of the plants is not likely. Not surprising then, that this causes a huge loss: By some estimates made in 2017, in India, around 12 million people are said to depend on coconut farming.

**Late signs**  
Another sign of infection is presence of shelf-like "basidiomata," which are the fruiting or reproductive structures of the fungus, on the tree trunks. "Although microscopic, many fungi... produce macroscopic fruiting structures on the substrates where they grow [for example, *Ganoderma*]," says T.K. Arun Kumar of Zamorin's Guruvayurappan College, Kothikode, who led this



**Signs of infection:** Shelf-like basidiomata, the fruiting or reproductive structures of the fungus, grow on the tree trunks. ■ ARUN KUMAR

research, in an email. He further explains that the basidiomata of *Ganoderma* bear reproductive propagules (called spores) which are dispersed through wind and sometimes with the help of insects. "That is how the pathogen spreads from one host to the other," he adds.

Since the fungus is microscopic, it is only detected after the symptoms start manifesting or when the reproductive structures are borne, which can be too late.

## Lack of taxonomy

Surprisingly, before this study, the disease was commonly attributed to the genus *Ganoderma* and the specific species involved were not identified correctly.

One reason for this could be the lack of studies focusing on taxonomy. "Plant pathologists may be very good at identifying diseases based on disease symptoms, devi-

ating strategies to prevent disease occurrence and even in developing disease resistant plants. However, there is a dearth of fungal taxonomists among plant pathologists who are able to identify fungal pathogens with accuracy," says Dr Arun Kumar.

The two-member team

collected the material for

their research during the

years 2015 to 2019. "There

was a large-scale outbreak

of the disease in Kozhikode

district, Kerala, a few years

back and our examination of

the collected fungal speci-

mens along with collections

[over many years] from plan-

tations throughout Kerala re-

vealed that the identity of

the pathogenic species was hitherto unrecognised," says Dr Arun Kumar. This led him

to study the specimens fur-

ther, first morphologically

and then through genome

sequencing. The two species

seemed to be new to science.

"This discovery was based

on morphological charac-

ters, DNA sequences of the

Kerala collections and phylo-

genetic analyses by compar-

ing DNA of all *Ganoderma*

species known worldwide,"

says Dr Arun Kumar. The re-

search has revealed the iden-

tity of the pathogenic spe-

cies associated with butt rot.

Hence, species-specific dis-

ease prevention strategies

can now be developed.

As Dr Arun Kumar says:

"So far, scientists and farm-

ers had to solely rely on the

visible symptoms of the dis-

ease [which appear only at a

later stage, after complete

colonization], but now they

can easily detect the pre-

sent of the pathogen much

earlier by analysing plant ex-

tracts which can be easily

obtained at any stage of

growth."

## New study on antibody responses

STAFF REPORTER

A recent study looked at the neutralising antibody responses generated by breakthrough infections in individuals vaccinated against SARS-CoV2. The findings are published this week in *Cell*.

A University of Washington, School of Medicine, press release said that the researchers learnt that the degree of antibody response depended on whether a person has had one, two, three, or four exposures to the spike protein through infection, vaccination, or a mixture of the two.

Among their study subjects, those who had completed a three-vaccination protocol, and those who had been vaccinated after recovering from COVID-19, and those with a breakthrough infection after having been vaccinated launched almost comparable neutralising antibody responses.

## Adding radioactive substances in wearables unjustified

The guidance issued by IAEA follows the usage of products exceeding safe radiation levels

**K. S. PARTHASARATHY**

Over a year ago, alert press reporters found a device hanging around Congress M.P. Shashi Tharoor's neck. Was it a GPS device, Translator or a small dictionary? He tweeted that it was "An air purifier (negative ioniser)." Its sellers claim that the device emits two million healthy negative ions per sec from the black brush on its top. These ions may impinge on pollutants, make them negatively charged and get them collected on surfaces of tables, windows, bed etc. Whether it helps to reduce pollution in real life, or not needs scientific validation. Is copious emission of negative ions from it a red flag?

**Radioactive products**  
Sellers of "negative ion" consumer products and "scalar energy products" claim that these products improve the user's health. They may state that they are composed of volcanic ash, minerals etc. These can contain radioactive substances, which emit ionising radiation, which can cause tissue damage and are bad for the user's health.

Popular online platforms have been offering such products, often in the form of pendants, necklaces, bracelets,



**Toxic adornments:** Products containing radioactive substances are often in the form of pendants, necklaces, bracelets, sleep masks etc. ■ GETTY IMAGES

lets, sleep masks etc. for many years now. Manufacturing and selling products containing radioactive substances is not a justified practice. The ANVS found that the level of radiation in these products is low and the risk of health problems is also low. The agency informed all known vendors of these products in the Netherlands that it has prohibited their sale and that they must stop trading in these products immediately.

Wearing such products for a long period (a year, 24

mSv for public (PLOS ONE June 1, 2021). The dose from the most radioactive pendant was 2.8 mSv/year. (When the physical energy absorbed by tissues from x-rays, gamma rays or electrons is one Joule per kg, the biologically effective dose is considered to be one Sv. Since Sv is a huge unit, specialists use milliSv - one thousandth of a Sv - as a unit; skin dose in a chest x-ray exam is about 0.1 mSv.)

## Undergarment samples

In another IAEA supported project, Hassan and others from Malaysia, the U.K. and Spain found that the undergarment industry in Malaysia and elsewhere advertised that their "negative ion undergarments" contain tourmaline, monazite and zircon, all known to contain uranium and thorium. Among the 13 samples of undergarments they assessed, three were capable of exposing their wearers to annual effective doses above one mSv, the IAEA reference level (Applied Sciences, June 10,

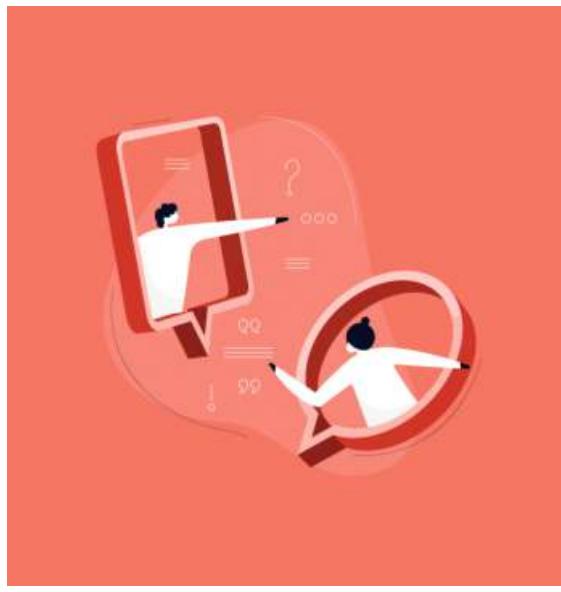
2021). Realising the safety significance of Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials (NORM), IAEA and member countries provided guidance on the matter.

In "Radiation Protection and Safety of radiation Sources: International Basic Safety Standards" (2014), the IAEA considers that the frivolous use of radiation or radioactive substances in toys and personal jewellery or adornments, which result in an increase in activity, is unjustified.

The IAEA also published a specific safety guide titled "Radiation Safety for Consumer Products (2016)." The Atomic Energy (Radiation Protection) Rules, 2004 contains provisions consistent with those of the IAEA.

Be aware of the facts before using consumer products containing radioactive substances or presenting them to anyone!

(K.S. Parthasarathy is a former secretary of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board, Email: ksparth@yahoo.co.uk)



## Cadre rules plan

Why have States raised questions about the Centre's proposed changes on civil servants' deputation?

VIJAYA SINGH

**The story so far:** The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) sent a communication to all States on January 12 seeking their opinion on the proposal to amend Rule 6 (deputation of cadre officers) of the Indian Administrative Service (Cadre) Rules 1954. Similar letters were also sent proposing changes in cadre rules of the other two All India Services (AIS): the Indian Police Service (IPS) and the Indian Forest Service (IFoS). Through the amendments, the Union government plans to acquire powers to depute IAS/IPS and IFoS officers to the Central Government and Ministries without necessarily taking the State government's nod. After the All India Services Act, 1951 came into existence, the IAS cadre rules were framed in 1954.

**What are the changes proposed?**

■ Four amendments including two new insertions are proposed. First, the States should make available the names of such officers, part of a central deputation reserve (CDR), who can be deputed to the Centre. "The actual number of officers to be deputed to the Central government shall be decided by the Central government in consultation with the State government concerned," the proposed amendment says. The CDR cannot be more than 40% of the actual strength at any point.

According to existing norms, States have to depute AIS officers to the Union government offices.

The second change is in case of any disagreement between the Centre and the State, the matter shall be decided by the Central government and the State shall give effect to the decision of the Centre "within a specified time." The "specified time" clause is a new insertion.

+ In its January 12 letter, DoPT said in spite of existing provisions, States are not sponsoring adequate numbers of officers for Central deputation and the available officers are not sufficient to meet requirements

The third and one of the major changes proposed is if the State government delays posting a State cadre officer to the Centre and does not give effect to the Central government's decision within the specified time, "the officer shall stand relieved from cadre from the date as may be specified by the Central government." Presently, officers have to get a no-objection clearance from the State government.

The fourth change is that in a specific situation where services of cadre officers are required by the Central government in "public interest" the State shall give effect to its decisions, within a specified time.

**What triggered the move?**

■ In its January 12 letter, DoPT said in spite of existing provisions, States are not sponsoring adequate numbers of officers for Central deputation and the available officers are not sufficient to meet requirements. The letter was preceded by similar communications sent on December 20, December 27 and January 6 where DoPT sought comments from the States. Half-a-dozen States opposed the move and the rest did not respond; it revised the proposal and States have been given time till January 25 to reply. In 2021 and 2020, DoPT sent letters cautioning States that not sending enough officers may affect the future cadre review proposals and that it was unable to fill vacancies at director and joint secretary levels in various Central ministries.

**Is the problem acute?**

■ According to 2021 data, of the total 6,709 IAS officers in the country, 445 were posted with the Union – only 6.6%. In 2014, of the 4,605 officers, 651 were posted with the Union (14%).

In 2021, only 10% mid-level IAS officers (deputy secretary/director, 9-14 years experience) were posted with the Centre in 2021, a sharp fall from 19% in 2014, even though the total pool of such officers at this rank expanded from 621 in 2014 to 1130 in 2021, an increase of around 80%.

**Why are States opposed to the changes?**

■ West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has written two letters to Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying it was against the "spirit of cooperative federalism". The Chief Ministers of Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Jharkhand – Bhupesh Baghel, Ashok Gehlot and Hemant Soren have also written to Mr. Modi. Before any AIS officer is called for Central deputation, his or her concurrence is required. The Establishment Officer in DoPT invites nominations from State governments. Once the nomination is received, their eligibility is scrutinised by a panel and then an offer list is prepared, usually done with the State government on board. Central ministries and offices can then choose from the list of officers on offer. AIS officers are recruited by the Union and they are lent to States.

The publication of the offer list on DoPT's website was discontinued by the Government in 2018 amid reports that not many State government officers were willing to move to the Centre.

## Why is 5G rollout a problem near U.S. airports?

What are the differences in the way the technology is deployed in other countries and in America?

MURALI N. KRISHNASWAMY

**The story so far:** The rollout of the 5G C-band spectrum (3.7 GHz-3.98 GHz) in the U.S., on January 19, 2022 – after a pushback since December 2021 (the original roll-out date) – led to several major airlines, including Air India, temporarily cancelling their flights to the U.S. over fears of spectrum interference with crucial aircraft navigation systems. An aircraft type largely affected in this was the Boeing 777. The two major telecom firms concerned, Verizon and AT&T, also took cognisance of appeals by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and airlines about their worries, leading US President Joe Biden to put out a statement on January 18, 2022. Called the "Statement by [U.S.] President [Joe] Biden on 5G Agreement", he "wanted to thank Verizon and AT&T for agreeing to delay 5G deployment around key airports and to continue working with the Department of Transportation on safe 5G deployment at this limited set of locations."

The issue has led to a comparison of how 5G services in Europe and parts of Asia have hardly led to any disruptions to aviation in these parts of the world unlike the near panic that has set in the U.S. How is this so?

■ An aviation expert said the main worry is of 'radio emissions' at the top of the C-band's 3.98 GHz frequency 'bleeding over' into the 4.2 GHz-4.4 GHz band used by civil aircraft radio altimeters.

The FAA has said that there are differences in the way 5G technology has been deployed in other countries. These include lower power levels; frequencies that are 'of a different proximity to frequencies that are used by aviation equipment' and a different placement of antennas in the vicinity of airports.

In Europe, 5G services are in the 3.4 GHz-3.8 GHz range. In Korea, they are in the 3.42 GHz-3.7 GHz range.

In U.S. airspace, which the FAA calls 'the most complex in the world', the initial stages of 5G use will try and mirror the safeguards used in France. But even here, there are differences. In France, for example, the 5G power level (on average, 631 Watts) is still lower than what it would be in the U.S. (on average, 1,585 Watts). Also the planned buffer zones around airports in the U.S. will protect only the last 20 seconds of the flight. France



REUTERS

has a permanent safeguard of protecting the last 96 seconds of a flight. It also has a condition that the antenna angle has to have a downward tilt to limit potential interference. The height of a 5G antenna and the power of the signal are the factors that determine how close it can be allowed near an airport or a flight path.

The height of a 5G antenna and the power of the signal are the factors that determine how close it can be allowed near an airport or a flight path

The buffer zones around an estimated 50 U.S. airports will be designed to try and keep 5G signals and aircraft separate.

In Japan, three frequency bands have been allocated for 5G: the 3.7 GHz band (3.6 GHz-4.1 GHz), 4.5 GHz band (4.5 GHz-4.6 GHz), and the 28 GHz band (27.0 GHz-29.5 GHz), according to a special article published in 2020 in the *NTT Docomo Technical Journal*.

Another report in a leading technology news publication says the Electronic Navigation Research Institute, National Institute of Maritime, Port and Aviation Technology, Japan had conducted a study on 5G interference with radio altimeters, and submitted its findings to the International Civil Aviation Organisation

(ICAO) in March 2021. The detailed experiments used altimeters manufactured by Rockwell Collins and Honeywell, which are the key suppliers to aircraft manufacturers, Airbus and Boeing.

One of the findings was that there would need to be "at least 60 MHz" of what was called a 'guard band' to avoid interference with radio altimeters. It also made a finding of locating the high-power 5G base station 200 metres away from the approach path of an aircraft. The findings were made after ensuring that the antennas were pointed downwards.

**What has the FAA been doing?**

■ It says that the delays to the 5G rollout have helped it in 'processing 5G transmitter location and power level information'. Further, under what is called an Alternative Method of Compliance (AMOC) process, it has collaborated with airlines 'on how they can demonstrate altimeters are safe and reliable in certain 5G C-band environments'.

Between January 16 and January 20, 2022, the FAA issued approvals clearing 78% of the commercial fleet of airlines to perform low-visibility landings at airports where the 5G C-band is in use. These are aircraft models with one of the 13 cleared altimeters – a range of Boeing aircraft (including the Boeing 777 and Boeing 787), most Airbus planes and some models of regional jets.

## Is suspension of MLAs up for judicial review?

Can members of legislative assemblies be barred beyond one session? Does a one-year ban violate the Constitution?

K. VENKATARAMAN

**The story so far:** Twelve BJP legislators were suspended for one year by the Maharashtra Assembly last July for alleged disorderly conduct. The unusually long period of suspension has been questioned by the Supreme Court, which is hearing a challenge to the Assembly's action. The court has reserved its judgment after hearing elaborate arguments. The main question before the court is whether suspension for a whole year is valid.

**What happened on July 5, 2021?**



**In protest:** The SC has questioned the constitutional validity of the one year suspension. ■ PTI

**What questions has the Supreme Court raised?**

■ In the course of the hearing, a Bench, comprising Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, Justice Dinesh Maheshwari and Justice C.T. Ravikumar, questioned the rationality of suspending members beyond an ongoing session.

The Bench also cited Article 190(4) of the Constitution, which stipulates that the House may declare vacant the seat of a member who is absent for 60 days without permission, to wonder whether any suspension could traverse beyond this 60-day limit.

Also, the Representation of the People Act, 1951, says any vacancy in the House has to be filled up through a by-election within six months of its occurrence, the Bench pointed out, and wondered if a constituency can be unrepresented in the Assembly for a whole year in the light of this six-month limit.

Further, suspension seemed to have worse consequences than outright expulsion from the legislature, as a by-election will be held within six months; whereas, a one-year suspension does not entail mandatory filling up of the vacancy. The Bench also wondered about the likely consequences of an unlimited power of suspension for democracy, as it could be misused to alter the composition of a House in which a Government has only a slender majority.

**What does the State government say?**

■ Counsel for the State government has argued that there is no limitation on the power of the legislature to punish for breach of privilege or disorderly conduct in the course of its proceedings. Once the power to punish a member for disorderly conduct is recognised, there can be no judicial review of the manner in which it is exercised. Under Rule 53 of the Maharashtra Assembly Rules, the Speaker could direct a Member to withdraw from the Assembly for disorderly conduct for the day, or the remainder of the Session. However, there is no such limitation when the whole House decides to impose suspension.

In this context, counsel contended that when the power to expel a member is available, the power to suspend, being a lesser punishment, is also available to the House at all times. On the provision for declaring a seat vacant if the member is absent for 60 days, the Government has argued that it is the House that declares the seat vacant, and it is not a necessary consequence of a member's absence for 60 days on which the House met. Further, during suspension, a member continues to hold office, but only loses their voice in the legislature.

## What can cause an aircraft to fly into terrain?

How frequent are such mishaps? What type of technology and pilot training are required to avert these accidents?

SURESH SESHADRI

**The story so far:** Earlier this month, the Indian Air Force announced that the preliminary findings of a tri-service inquiry into the Mi-17 V5 helicopter crash that killed Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Gen. Bipin Rawat and 13 others in December had established that an "unexpected change" in weather conditions had led to the spatial disorientation of the aircraft's pilot resulting in Controlled Flight into Terrain (CFIT).

**What is Controlled Flight into Terrain?**

■ The International Air Transport Association (IATA), the airline industry's trade association that supports aviation with global standards including for airline safety and security, defines a Controlled Flight into Terrain incident as an accident in which there is a collision with terrain, water, or obstacle during the course of a flight, without indication of loss of control. IATA stresses that the critical distinction in these incidents versus other types of aviation accidents is the fact that the aircraft remains under the control of the flight crew till the occurrence of the incident.

**How does a CFIT incident occur?**

■ An IATA analysis of CFIT accidents involving commercial flights between 2008-2017 established several factors that could contribute including: 'Latent Conditions or conditions present in the system before the accident and triggered by various possible factors; Environmental Threats where an event or error occurs outside the influence of the flight crew, but which

requires crew attention and management if safety margins are to be maintained; Flight Crew Errors where an observed flight crew deviation from organisational expectations or crew intentions occurs; and Undesired Aircraft States where a flight-crew-induced aircraft state clearly compromises safety of the aircraft. The study also found that the approach-cum-landing phase of an aircraft's flight accounted for two-thirds of all CFIT accidents and contributed to 62% of fatal CFIT incidents.

**What exactly happened in the case of Gen. Rawat's flight?**

■ Specifically, in the case of the military helicopter that crashed while flying over the Nilgiris to its destination at the Defence Services Staff College's helipad in Wellington, the court of inquiry found that an unexpected change in weather conditions in the valley resulted in the aircraft flying into clouds that in turn caused the helicopter's pilot to experience sudden spatial disorientation – a condition where the pilot loses the ability to correctly interpret aircraft attitude, altitude or airspeed in relation to the Earth or other points of reference – and made him fly into terrain.

**How often do CFIT accidents occur?**

■ While the breakdown of such incidents concerning military aircraft is hard to find in the public domain, the IATA 'Accident Analysis Report' for the 2008-2017 period found that while CFIT incidents accounted for 6% of 837 commercial aviation accidents recorded in the IATA Accident Database, disproportionately CFIT was the second most frequent category of fatal accidents,

representing 42 fatal accidents or almost 28% of total fatal accidents. The only category of accidents with a higher level of fatalities was Loss of Control In-flight (LOC-I). Also, CFIT accidents tend to be severe in terms of the number of fatalities and the extent of damage to the airframe. Forty six out of the 47 CFIT accidents in the IATA study resulted in a hull loss – in other words the aircraft was a complete write-off.

For the majority of CFIT incidents relating to commercial flights, 70% involved turboprop aircraft, with planes with jet engines only accounting for 30% of such accidents.

**How can such incidents be avoided?**

■ A combination of the use of technology and appropriate and adequate pilot training, including in simulators, can help minimise/avoid CFIT incidents. Particularly, installation of Ground Proximity Warning System (GPWS) / Terrain Awareness and Warning System (TAWS) in aircraft help generate the requisite alerts to the flight crew and if the pilots are adequately trained to respond to these alerts, maintain situational awareness and make the right interventions, CFIT accidents can be mostly avoided.

## THE MULAYAM CLAN

## The patriarch, the successor and the party parivar

By keeping the Yadav stalwarts together and reaching out to OBC leaders, Akhilesh seems to be in charge of the party

OMAR RASHID

**A**round this time five years ago, when Akhilesh Yadav overcame an acrimonious family feud and seized the reins of the Samajwadi Party (SP) as well as its symbol, 'cycle', from his father Mulayam Singh, a flashy blue Lamborghini made heads turn in Lucknow. The luxury car served as a tool for the BJP to underscore the apparent disparity between the SP's claims of espousing grassroots socialism and the lavish lifestyle of members of the ruling Yadav family.

Prateek Yadav, Mr. Akhilesh's step-brother, owned the car, which had then become the subject of a 125-second video clip released by the BJP, themed, 'Paanch crore ki Lamborghini par saawaar Samajwaad' ('Socialism on a ₹5 crore Lamborghini'). Not directly involved in politics, Mr. Prateek is a real estate entrepreneur and a body-building enthusiast, who runs a high-end gym in Lucknow, which was in 2015 inaugurated by Mr. Mulayam, himself a wrestler in his youth. On January 19, Mr. Prateek's wife, Aparna Bisht Yadav, joined the BJP.

The Lamborghini episode was not the only time when Ms. Aparna and her husband put the SP in an awkward situation. Be it posing for a selfie with Prime Minister Narendra Modi or praising his policies and expressing views divergent to the SP's ideological line, such as opposing caste-based reservation, Mr. Prateek and Ms. Aparna had made news in the past. So, when Ms. Aparna, a Kshatriya by birth, was inducted into the BJP, SP workers joined BJP workers

in the celebration. "Na vote hai na jaat. (She has neither a mass base nor the caste base). It was wrong of her to use family pressure for an election ticket," said an SP office-bearer from Etawah, the family bastion of the SP.

The BJP, which successfully used the 'parivarad' charge to put the SP on the backfoot, came to power in 2017 after overthrowing Mr. Akhilesh, who, despite having a majority government, was bruised by a long-drawn family battle involving himself, his father and uncle Shivpal Yadav.

**Strategic change**

Much has changed in the way the Yadav family has projected itself over the past five years, partly due to a strategic rearrangement and partly forced by circumstances (electoral defeats of the party as well as of individual family members).

Aman Singh, Mulayam's long-time acquaintance whom Mr. Akhilesh had accused of fuelling the tension within the Yadav family at the BJP's behest, died in 2020.

Ms. Aparna's exit notwithstanding, the Yadav family today looks like a much more cohesive unit, with little drama or differences flowing in

to public space. With Mr. Akhilesh taking over as the new supremo of the party, other members of the family have taken a step back from the media glare and the party stage in Lucknow, even though they remain active in politics.

On January 22, Pramod Gupta, the brother of Mulayam's second wife Sadhna Gupta, Mr. Prateek's mother, also joined the BJP, which is trying to re-ignite memories of the Yadav family battle to dent Mr. Akhilesh's narrative. But in sharp contrast to 2016-17, Mr. Akhilesh could afford to make light of it.

"The BJP should be happy about this. It accuses us of parivarad, at least they are finishing off our parivarad. For this, I thank them," he recently said, with a chuckle.

Ill-health and age have gradually reduced the 82-year-old patriarch Mr. Mulayam's participation in politics. But on rare occasions, the former CM makes an appearance, leaving a mark. Recently, donning the red party cap, he produced a cheeky moment when he told party workers how much the BJP's top brass were "troubled" by the headgear.

Mr. Akhilesh was born to Mulayam and Malti Devi in

1973. She died in 2003. He is an engineer by qualification and studied in Mysore. He went to the Military School in Dholpur, something he flaunts even today to take on the BJP's nationalism narrative. He is married to Dimple Yadav, daughter of a retired Army officer who hails from

one of the five SP candidates who won; all four were family members. Mr. Mulayam had contested from two seats. But in 2019, while Mr. Akhilesh won in Azamgarh, she lost her seat, Kannauj, an SP bastion. As Akhilesh was caught with the family feud, in 2017, the demure elder *baahu* of the Yadav clan, Ms. Dimple, stepped in to support her husband. She addressed rallies, worked on her oratory skills, tried to win over women voters and offered digital media and backroom support, something she still does.

In 2014, Ms. Dimple was

Uttarakhand and graduated in commerce from Lucknow University. The couple have two daughters and one son – Aditi and twins Tina and Arjun. In 2009, Ms. Dimple unsuccessfully contested the by-election to the Lok Sabha from Firozabad against actor-turned-politician Raj Babbar. She was elected unopposed in the 2012 bypoll after Mr. Akhilesh vacated the seat to take over as the youngest Chief Minister of U.P.

In 2014, Ms. Dimple was

their ancestral village, is a graduate from Allahabad University. The three-time MP who is known for raising issues related to 'social justice' and street activism, lost the 2019 election from Budauli. Mr. Dharmendra's elder brother Anurag Yadav contested the 2017 Assembly election from Sarojini Nagar in Lucknow, but lost.

Mr. Akhilesh is the son of Ramgopal Yadav, Mr. Mulayam's cousin who is the party national general secretary and Rajya Sabha member. He lost the 2019 election from Firozabad. Though Mr. Ramgopal is not a mass leader, he is considered powerful in decision-making and party management in Delhi. He had backed Mr. Akhilesh during the feud with Shivpal Yadav and helped him gain control of the party.

**End of feud**

After a prolonged cold war between them, which threatened to derail the SP's 2022 campaign, Mr. Akhilesh and uncle Shivpal have finally forged political unity.

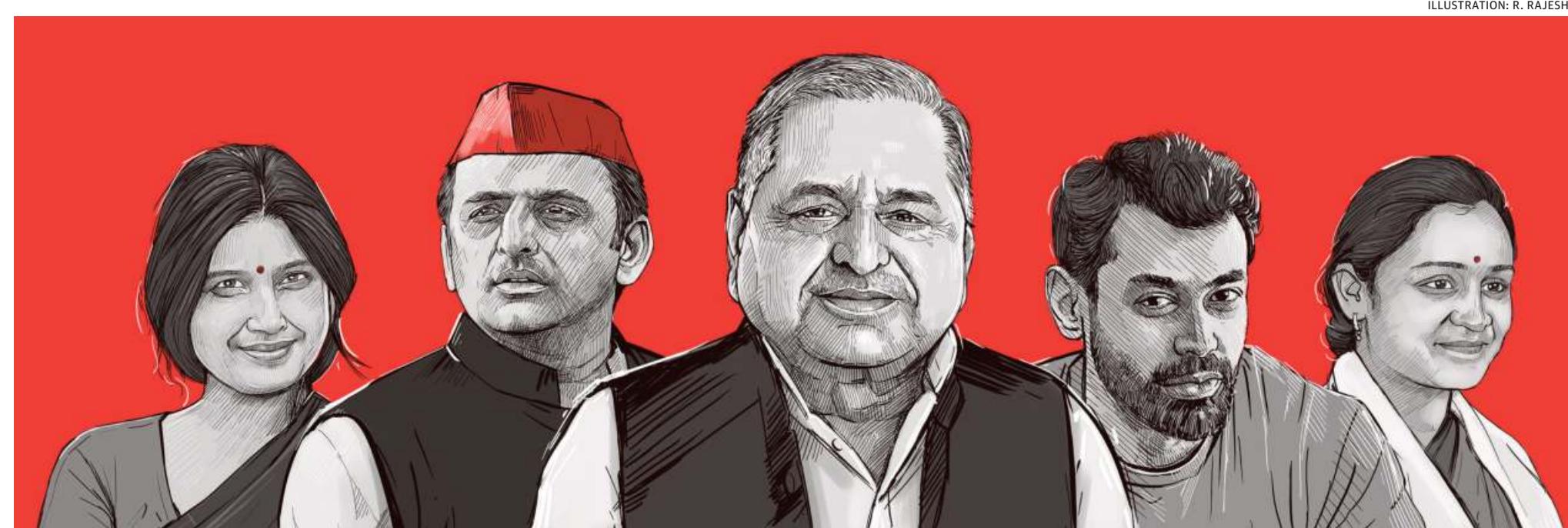
By bringing Mr. Shivpal on board amicably, Mr. Akhilesh has, for now, ensured peace and demonstrated a united Yadav face.

With Mr. Akhilesh provid-

ing a platform for OBC and Dalit leaders who joined the SP, as well as his alliances with backward caste parties, he has managed to shift the attention from the family and its previously Yadav-heavy leadership, to pressing political issues, party members opine.

According to Rajendra Chaudhary, an SP spokesperson and old-time Mulayam loyalist, the BJP was trying to target Mr. Akhilesh over his family. The family members as well as the people of U.P. look at him as a "capable leader" in whose hands the future of U.P. will be safe, he added. "He [Akhilesh] had already given the slogan, 'Bada ka haath, Yuva ka saath' ('Blessings of elders, support of the youth'). He respects all." After working under the shadow of his father and uncles in 2012 and 2014, allying with Rahul Gandhi's Congress in 2017 and tying up with Mayawati, who dominated the equation, in 2019, this time, Mr. Akhilesh is on his own. This assembly election is truly the first one in his career, where the Yadav scion has emerged as the undisputed commander of the clan and the leader of the 'socialist' party.

**The first family:** (From the left) Dimple Yadav, Akhilesh Yadav, Mulayam Singh, Prateek Yadav, Aparna Bisht Yadav



## In Focus

■ Akhilesh Yadav's first term as Chief Minister, during 2012-2017, was rocked by a family feud involving himself, his father Mulayam Singh and uncle Shivpal

■ By forging political unity with Shivpal Yadav and with the support of an ageing Mulayam, Akhilesh signals that the family is now a cohesive political unit

■ The BJP, which welcomed Mulayam's daughter-in-law Aparna Yadav to its fold, is challenging Akhilesh's narrative that he is in command

## WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

## For the rich and powerful

The Davos meet is driven by a set agenda based on global trends and challenges

PRASHANTH PERUMAL

**T**he rich and the famous gather each year at the Swiss resort of Davos for the World Economic Forum to discuss major challenges facing the world. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi's briefly disrupted address at the WEF this year gained attention in India, the event itself has not been without its fair share of controversies in the past. Critics call the annual meeting a popular networking event for the rich and the powerful held under the pretence of saving the world. The organisers of the WEF, however, have argued strongly that the forum is open to a far wider range of people who would not meet each other if not for the annual event.

The WEF, which was founded in 1971 by German economist Klaus Schwab, claims to work to "improve the state of the world". The first meeting of the WEF was held as a management forum that brought together European businessmen to discuss how to compete against U.S. businesses.

Over the years, the event has been thrown open to personalities from other fields of life as well, perhaps in a bid to increase its overall appeal. It is now attended by politicians from both developing and developed countries, CEOs of large corporations, and members of civil society working on a variety of development issues. Diplomats, journalists, movie stars and other kinds of



celebrities are also part of the event each year. This year, for instance, the event was attended by heads of state from India and China, billionaires such as Bill Gates and Sunil Bharti Mittal, and technocrats including Janet Yellen and Christine Lagarde.

**Entry fee**

Participants must pay an expensive entry fee, which varies based on benefits, unless they are invited to the event by the organisers. Last year, the WEF earned 241 million Swiss Francs (about \$260 million) in membership and partnership fees. Why would over 3,000 people pay to attend an event like Davos? Is it all really with the aim to "improve the state of the world"? Critics of the WEF argue that businessmen in particular pay hefty fees to attend the event because it gives them access to top political leaders they may not be able to meet as easily otherwise.

Businessmen use the WEF as a platform to discuss and finalise business deals behind closed doors.

Whether such deals benefit the wider economy or simply benefit a few billionaires with privileged access to decision-makers is another relevant issue raised by critics. Attending the event also adds to the image of the attendees as members of high society. Given these benefits, the high entry fee may not seem that exorbitant to the guests. It should be noted that the WEF itself is funded by over a 1,000 large corporations each with an annual turnover of at least \$5 billion. Others who attend the event, such as politicians and members of civil society, may enjoy the attention and influence that it offers them. Climate activist Greta Thunberg's speeches at the WEF, for instance, have made headlines across the world.

The WEF's sympathisers say the annual meeting is an

opportunity for leaders who can influence global affairs to exchange views and launch important initiatives. They point to the supposed role the forum played in persuading South African leader Nelson Mandela in 1992 to embrace markets and globalisation, for instance. The WEF has also tried to shed its elitist image by pointing to the wide range of guests, other than billionaires, who have attended the event in recent years.

Each year, the Davos meeting is driven by a set agenda based on global trends and challenges that face the world. Whether the WEF really cares about these agendas or not, they certainly help project the image of the WEF as being a forum to discuss global challenges that affect people across the world. Issues such as climate change and inequality have been on the WEF's agenda recently. This year, a group of millionaires signed an open letter stating that they were taxed too little by governments despite the significant growth of their wealth during the pandemic. Critics, however, view these pledges as useless lip service by the elite that does not really change realities on the ground. Other critics, meanwhile, have argued that the elite business and technocrats who gather at Davos are a threat to global freedom as they wish to exclusively shape policy that would affect billions of people across the world.

The WEF's sympathisers say the annual meeting is an

## ACTIVISION BLIZZARD

## Game for a big bet

The \$69-bn buy will put Microsoft at the third spot in the video gaming market

SRIRAM SRINIVASAN

**I**n the late 1970s, four programmers David Crane, Larry Kaplan, Alan Miller and Bob Whitehead bid goodbye to Atari, a pioneer in home video consoles, disappointed that they weren't getting paid enough despite being responsible for bringing in a lot of money for the company. They started a new venture, which they initially called Computer Arts but whose name was changed pretty soon to Activision. The latest avatar of this company, Activision Blizzard, is what Microsoft agreed to buy last week in an all-cash deal for nearly \$69 billion.

This is not just the biggest deal in the gaming industry but also the biggest acquisition by Microsoft till date, being more than one-and-a-half times what it paid to buy professional network LinkedIn in 2016. The Microsoft announcement came just days after Take-Two Interactive, the publisher of *Grand Theft Auto*, announced that it would acquire Zynga, the name behind *FarmVille*, for \$12.7 billion.

The journey from Computer Arts to Activision Blizzard over the decades has involved the acquisition of many studios and, more importantly in 2008, the merger with Vivendi Games that gave the company its current name. Over these years, the company has come to own some of the most prominent titles in the



gaming realm, from 'Pitfall!' in its initial years to 'Call of Duty', and from 'World of Warcraft' to 'Candy Crush'. It has nearly 400 million monthly active players, with 'Call of Duty' itself accounting for about a fourth of it.

The deal has come at a time when Activision was struggling with the weight of allegations of sexual harassment at the workplace. Its business had, however, grown to over \$8 billion in revenues during the first year of the pandemic.

**Under pressure**

"The deal comes at a time of weakness for Activision," said a Reuters story, which noted that its shares have fallen more than a third since hitting a record high last year. The *Wall Street Journal* had reported that Activision's CEO Bobby Kotick knew about the allegations but didn't tell the board. There was pressure on the company. And that's when Microsoft rushed in.

maker Mojang Studios.

The acquisition of Activision Blizzard, which is expected to take over a year to complete, will put Microsoft at No. 3 behind Tencent and Sony in the video gaming market. Mr. Nadella, in a conference call after the deal, said: "Gaming is the largest and fastest-growing category in entertainment. Today, 3 billion consumers around the world play games, and we expect this number will reach 4.5 billion by 2030."

The deal gives Microsoft a lot of content, a bigger mobile play, as also a much more clout in its console wars with Sony. At the same time, this also lends itself to the evolution of the gaming experience, as Microsoft likes to put it, from being device-centric to being player-centric. Building metaverses, virtual reality spaces, for gaming communities could be another goal.

Research projects a bullish phase for gaming coming up, with advanced network connectivity and 5G being the likely drivers. The global gaming industry, valued at \$173.7 billion in 2021, is likely to grow to \$314 billion by 2027, according to market research firm Mordor Intelligence. How Activision, under its new owners, deals with the allegations that has haunted it since last year, and whether Microsoft can get past any regulatory concerns will be questions that are key to this mega deal's future.

# India's reliance on Chinese goods surged in 2021

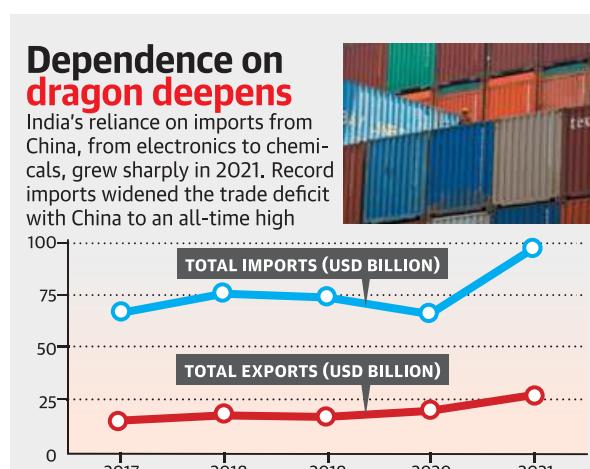
Shipments of finished electronics to intermediate chemicals from China rose sharply, lifting imports to a record \$97.5 bn

ANANTH KRISHNAN  
HONG KONG

India imported \$16 billion more of its key top 100 imports from China in the last year, an increase of almost two-thirds from the previous year, an analysis of trade figures shows, underlining deepening dependencies on many crucial imports.

India's total imports from China crossed a record \$97.5 billion last year, making up a large chunk of the bilateral trade that reached \$125 billion, for the first time crossing the \$100 billion mark, figures released earlier this month by China's General Administration of Customs (GAC) showed.

Of the 8,455 different types of items imported from China between January and November of last year, a staggeringly diverse list covering everything from a range of chemicals and elec-



tronics to auto components and textiles, 4,591 showed an increase, according to an analysis of India's Ministry of Commerce data.

The top 100 items by value accounted for \$41 billion, up from \$25 billion in 2020, according to a study of the numbers by Santosh Pai, an Honorary Fellow at the Insti-

tute of Chinese Studies in New Delhi. Most of the top 100 items – each of which accounted for more than \$100 million in trade, and included a range of electronic products, chemicals, and auto components – showed sharp growth. The list included both finished and intermediate goods.

Intermediate products, particularly chemicals, also recorded striking growth. One of those, acetic acid, was up by more than eightfold.

Among the reasons for the rising imports are a recovery in domestic demand for finished products from China, and an industrial recovery. Growth in India's exports worldwide has also pushed up the need for many crucial intermediate inputs, and disruptions elsewhere have led to greater sourcing from China in the short-term, for instance in the case of coking coal previously sourced from Australia and Indonesia.

India's record imports from China in 2021, amid a continuing political impasse

over the as-yet-unresolved crisis along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), have reignited a debate on whether the trade relationship and a growing deficit is sustainable. In the past 12 months, according to GAC data, the value of India's imports exceeded total two-way trade in 2019 before the pandemic.

**'Need to differentiate'**

India is sourcing both finished goods for the Indian market, such as electronics, in record numbers, while also relying on China for a range of intermediate industrial products, many of which cannot be sourced from elsewhere and are not made in India in sufficient quantities.

If dependencies on China had overall increased substantially in the past year, Mr. Pai observed that there was a need to differentiate bet-

ween the different categories.

"If the growth in imports of finished items such as toys, electronics, or furniture, which we could be manufacturing in India, is not a good dependency, the fact that we are acquiring new intermediate goods, for instance, is probably a good development in the broader picture as it means we are emerging as a manufacturing hub and need new inputs to match the global demand for a finished Indian product," Mr. Pai observed.

"The other question is which of these are short-term changes because of disruption during the pandemic, and which are longer-term trends that we need to consider and deal with, and ask whether we can start manufacturing in India rather than still buying from China," he added.

## Ed-tech firm Veranda mulls ₹200 crore via IPO

Funds to help finance acquisition

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Ed-tech firm Veranda Learning Solutions Ltd. is planning to raise ₹200 crore through an Initial Public Offering (IPO) to finance acquisition, reduce debt and fuel growth initiatives.

The firm is seeking to grow its 'pandemic-proof' learning model for students and corporate training in terms of content digitisation and campus-in-campus training through multiple acquisitions.

It operated 23 Preferred Delivery Centres (PDCs) across 23 cities and in two States as of Q3FY22. It is planning regional expansion and geographical ex-



## Public Wi-Fi can create 2-3 crore jobs'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Setting up of one crore public Wi-Fi hotspots across the country by this year as envisaged under the present telecom policy has the potential to create 2-3 crore job opportunities, a senior government official said on Saturday.

"Given conservative estimate of each hotspot enabling 2-3 direct and indirect jobs, the creation of 10 million hotspots as per the National Digital Communications Policy target by 2022 would potentially generate 20-30 million job opportunity in the small and medium scale sectors," Telecom Secretary K. Rajaraman said.

Expansion through PDCs in Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Gurugram, Kolkata and Mumbai, its promoter said.

Kalpathi Suresh, chairman and executive director said the firm was seeking strategic acquisitions and evaluating targets for brand or business acquisitions in areas such as CA, PSC, MBA, Engineering, Medical and other skilling courses.

## Yes Bank Q3 profit surges 77% to ₹266 cr., total income drops

Lender's cash recovery stood at ₹610 crore for Dec. quarter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Private sector lender Yes Bank on Saturday reported a 77% jump in profit to ₹266.43 crore for the third quarter ended December.

The bank had posted a profit of ₹150.77 crore in the October-December quarter a year earlier.

However, total income during the quarter under review declined to ₹5,632.03 crore from ₹6,408.53 crore, Yes Bank said in a filing. Net interest income also slipped by 31% to ₹1,764 crore compared with ₹2,560 crore in the same quarter in 2020.

Gross non-performing as-

sets (GNPAs) as a percentage of assets eased to 14.65% from 15.36%.

### Net NPAs rise

On the other hand, net NPAs increased to 5.29% as against 4.04%. Provisions other than tax and contingencies came down significantly to ₹374.64 crore from

₹2,089 crore.

"On November 1, 2021, the bank had completed the sale of its entire stake in its wholly owned subsidiaries YES Asset Management (India) Limited and YES Trustee Limited to CPL Finance and Investments Limited.

The net positive impact to the financial results post this sale, including reversal of the impairment provision was ₹14.94 crore," it said.

Provision coverage ratio decreased to 79.3% at the end of December 31, 2021.

Fresh slippages stood at ₹978 crore while there was cash recovery of ₹610 crore and upgrades of ₹573 crore.



## Chennaiyin rallies to best NEUFC

The win takes former champion to the third spot

### ISL 2021-22

SPORTS BUREAU

Two quick goals early in the second half allowed Chennaiyin FC (CFC) to come back from a goal down at half-time and beat North-East United FC (NEUFC) 2-1 at the Nehru Stadium in Fatorda on Saturday.

CFC's fifth win took the two-time champion to 18 points and third in the table after 12 matches, while NEUFC stays at the bottom with nine points from 13 matches.

In the 52nd minute, CFC's Ariel Borysiuk took a shot from outside the box but unfortunately for NorthEast it deflected off its player Sehnaj Singh and the goalkeeper couldn't do much to stop the equaliser.

Minutes later, Vladimir Koman scored the winner



with a freekick from the left flank that sailed into the far post.

### Rahim messes up

Earlier in the first half, the Highlanders started the match pressing high but CFC did well to peg them back.

Slowly Chennaiyin started asking questions but yet

again the team's profligacy in front of the goal was on display as Rahim Ali fluffed two easy chances within a space of a minute at the half-hour mark.

Vladimir Koman sent in a loopy delivery and found Rahim on-side and unmarked but the Indian striker hurriedly took a weak shot that

rolled to the keeper.

Moments later he received a long ball from the backline and had only the keeper to beat but a heavy first touch sent the ball off-target. Against the run of play, NorthEast went ahead thanks to a poor bit of goal-keeping from Debjit Majumder.

Defending a corner at the far post, Debjit made a weak attempt with his hands and palmed it down in front of Laldanmawia Ralte who tapped it in easily to help NEUFC take the lead in the 35th minute.

Though NEUFC kept the pressure on CFC in the final fifteen minutes of the match, it missed a slew of easy chances and slumped to its eighth defeat of the season.

**The result:** Chennaiyin FC 2 (Ariel Borysiuk 52, Vladimir Koman 58) bt NorthEast United FC 1 (Laldanmawia Ralte 35).

## ATK Mohun Bagan back in action today

SPORTS BUREAU

ATK Mohun Bagan (ATKMB) will look to regain the rhythm as it returns to Indian Super League action after missing three rounds of action owing to COVID outbreak in the squad.

The Mariners take on Odisha FC (OFC) at Fatorda on Sunday in the rescheduled fixture of the January 8 engagement that was called off after some players in the ATKMB's camp tested positive.

The Mariners, who are unbeaten in the last five games, have a tally of 15 points from nine matches. A

win on Sunday would take them to the top-four with two games in hand.

While ATKMB has bolstered its backline with the addition of Sandesh Jhingan, the team will be miss the suspended playmaker Hugo Boumous.

OFC, which returned to its winning ways in its previous outing against North-East United FC, will be using the newfound momentum against the supposed might of ATKMB. OFC has not beaten ATKMB in the two meetings they have had so far.

OFC's new coach Kino Garcia will be keen to find a win.

## Grand double for Shahani

### MOTORSPORTS

SPORTS REPORTER  
CHENNAI

Shahan Ali Mohsin won a grand double as curtains came down on the third round of the MRF MMSC FMSCI Indian National Car Racing Championship 2021 at the MMRT here on Saturday.

Shahan won the first and third races in the premier MRF F1600 category.

The two victories put Shahan within 13 points of leader Chirag Ghorpade in the championship standings.

**The results (winners only, provisional, all 10 laps unless mentioned):** MRF F1600 (Race-2): Deepak Ravikumar (Performance Racing, Chennai) 20:02.552.

### Formula LGB 1300

(Race-2): Tijil Rao (Momentum Motorsport, Bengaluru) 20:04.385.

**Volkswagen Polo (Race-2):** Pratik Sonawane 19:49.042.

**(Race-3, 8 laps):** Anmol Singh Sahil 15:51.553.

**MRF Saloon Cars (Toyota Etios – Race 3, 5 laps):** Angad Matharoo (Red Line Racing, Chandigarh) 10:39.105.

## PVL moved to Hyderabad

Due to rising COVID cases in Kerala

STAN RAYAN  
KOCHI

With the COVID cases rising in Kerala, the Baseline Ventures which is organising the PVL, told *The Hindu* on Saturday.

The PVL is a seven-team event and three teams – Kochi Blue Spikers, Calicut Heroes and Kolkata Thunderbolts – are currently preparing for the event in Kerala.

"It will be held at the Gachibowli Stadium. There is no change in dates and the event will start on



**Banking on performance:** The private sector lender said the quarterly profit was the highest-ever. ■ REUTERS

## ICICI Bank Q3 profit rises 25% to ₹6,194 cr.

Remain optimistic about economy: ED

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

ICICI Bank Ltd. said third-quarter standalone net profit rose 25% from a year earlier to ₹6,194 crore, on account of overall improvement in net interest margin, fee income, core operating profit and a 27% reduction in provisions for bad loans.

This was the highest-ever quarterly profit, it said.

"There was all-round growth during the quarter," said Sandeep Batra, ED. "We have adequate provisions to meet any situation. There has been a localised impact of the third wave. We do not anticipate any significant disruption to the economic activity at this point and remain optimistic about the overall economy."

### Interest margin rises

Core operating profit (profit before provisions and tax, excluding treasury income) grew by 25% year-on-year (YoY) to ₹10,060 crore and net interest income rose by 23%. Net interest margin stood at 3.96%, compared with 3.67% in the year-earlier period.

Fee income grew by 19% to ₹4,291 crore.

Total deposits rose 16% to ₹10,17,467 crore. Net NPA ratio declined from 0.99% at September 30, 2021, to

0.85% at December 31, 2021, the lowest since March 31, 2014. Coverage ratio was 79.9% at December 31, 2021, the bank said in a filing.

Provisions (excluding provision for tax) declined by 27% to ₹2,007 crore from ₹2,742 crore a year earlier.

### Net NPAs shrink

Net non-performing assets declined by 10% sequentially to ₹7,344 crore.

The gross NPA additions declined to ₹4,018 crore from ₹5,578 crore in the previous quarter and ₹7,231 crore in the quarter ended June 30, 2021.

Excluding NPAs, the total fund based outstanding to all borrowers under resolution was ₹9,684 crore or 1.2% of total advances at December 31, 2021, a similar level compared to September 30, 2021, the bank said.

The bank continues to hold COVID-19 provisions of ₹6,425 crore as of December 31, 2021, the same level as September 30, 2021.

The loan and non-fund based outstanding to performing borrowers rated BB and below reduced to ₹11,842 crore at December 31, 2021, from ₹12,714 crore at September 30, 2021.

The bank said consolidated profit after tax increased by 19% year-on-year to ₹6,536 crore.

+ SPORT

</div

# India plays for pride with the series lost



In full flow: Pant, who has been in scintillating form, will look to finish the series on a high. ■ AFP

## Bawa and Angkrish star for India

The two smash centuries in crushing win over Uganda

### U-19 WORLD CUP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)

Opener Angkrish Raghuvarsh (144, 120b, 22x4, 4x6) and Raj Bawa (162 n.o., 108b, 14x4, 8x6) went on the rampage, adding 206 for the third wicket, as India amassed 405 for five and bowled out Uganda for 79 in its Under-19 World Cup match on Saturday.

Harnoor Singh, the other opener, was dismissed for 15 while skipper Nishant Sidhu went for 15. Bawa, who joined Angkrish in the middle with India on 85 for two in 15.1 overs, was unstoppable. The two batters hit a dozen sixes and three dozen fours between them.



Bawa and Angkrish added 206 for the third wicket.

The Uganda batters were all at sea against the Indian attack, with captain and left-

## A wonderful initiative: Hafeez

### LEGENDS LEAGUE

P.K. AJITH KUMAR  
MUSCAT

Mohammed Hafeez has been one of cricket's most durable men. The Pakistan all-rounder was 41 when he announced his retirement early this month.

His last match was the semifinal against Australia in the T20 World Cup last November. He soon found himself playing in a tournament for the international cricketers. Turning out for Asia Lions at the Legends League Cricket, he played a splendid cameo to help his side chase down a daunting target set by World Giants at the Al



Hafeez. ■ LLC

Amerat Cricket Stadium here on Friday night. His 13-ball 27 was what the Lions needed after the second-wicket stand of 88 between the Sri Lankan duo of Tillakaratne Dilshan (52, 32b) and

**United jumps to fourth**  
Southampton holds Manchester City

### EURO LEAGUES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MANCHESTER

Marcus Rashford lifted Manchester United into fourth place in the Premier League as his last-gasp goal sealed a 1-0 win against West Ham, while Southampton held Manchester City to a 1-1 draw.

**The results: Premier League:** Southampton 1 (Walker-Peters 7) drew with Manchester City 1 (Laporte 65); Everton 0 lost to



The clincher: Rashford bundles in Manchester United's winner against West Ham. ■ GETTY IMAGES

CM YK

Visitors may experiment with playing XI for final ODI

### INDIA IN SA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
CAPE TOWN

The Indian team's strategy is expected to undergo paradigm shift as it faces a possibility of a clean sweep against South Africa in the third ODI here on Sunday.

India's strategy looked completely out of sync with the white-ball game as the batters failed to keep the momentum in the middle overs and the bowlers, save Jasprit Bumrah, looked club class.

In two matches, India has been only able to pick up seven wickets – four in the first game when Proteas batted first and only three in the second.

R. Ashwin and Bhuvneshwar Kumar, the two senior-most bowlers, looked far from threatening. With the two players having flopped completely, it needs to be seen whether it will try out Jayant Yadav and Deepak Chahar in the next game.

At Newlands, there will be

We are playing an ODI series after a long time and we are just getting used to that

PANT

more pace and bounce on the track and the Indian team that has been perennially struggling would want to avoid the ignominy of a 0-3 loss.

For skipper Rahul, the whole tour, save his match-winning hundred in the first Test, has been a nightmare. Although he is being seen as a long-term future leader, there hasn't been any spark in his leadership.

There hasn't been any tactical improvisations in the two games so far.

### Lack of energy

Virat Kohli may have scored 51 in the first game but what is visible is his lack of energy on the field. Rahul would do well to imbibe some of it from his former captain.

The two Iyers – Shreyas in

battling and Venkatesh as an

all-rounder – haven't yet set the stage on fire

In all, massive improvement required in order to be competitive.

South Africa has been fined 20% of the match fee for maintaining a slow over-rate against India in the second ODI at Parl, the ICC said on Saturday.

**The teams (from):** India: K.L. Rahul (Capt.), Jasprit Bumrah (Vice-capt.), Shikhar Dhawan, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer, Venkatesh Iyer, Rishabh Pant (wk), Ishan Kishan (wk), Yuzvendra Chahal, R. Ashwin, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Deepak Chahar, Prasidh Krishna, Sharad Thakur, Mohd. Siraj, Jayant Yadav and Navdeep Saini.

**South Africa:** Temba Bavuma (Capt.), Keshav Maharaj (Vice-capt.) Quinton de Kock (wk), Zubayr Hamza, Marco Jansen, Janneman Malan, Sisanda Magala, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Wayne Parcell, Andile Phehlukwayo, Dwaine Pretorius, George Linde, Tabraiz Shamsi, Rassie van der Dussen, and Kyle Verreyne.

Match starts at 2 p.m. IST.

## Malvika to meet Sindhu

Frenchmen Merkle, Claerbout in final

### MODI INTL.

RAKESH RAO  
LUCKNOW

Malvika Bansod battled from the brink of defeat to set up a face-off with P.V. Sindhu in the final before unseeded players Arnaud Merkle and Lucas Claerbout turned the men's title clash into an all-France affair in the \$150,000 Syed Modi India International badminton tournament here.

Though Saturday witnessed a number of matches that went the distance, Sindhu was required to spend only 13 minutes on the court against Evgeniya Kosetskaya. After Sindhu won the first game 21-11, the Russian girl gave up the match due to stomach pain.

From the other semifinal, Malvika faced unexpected resistance from Anupama Upadhyay. During the 66-minute match, Malvika was down a game and trailed 16-19 in the second before turning the script on its head, winning 19-21, 21-19, 21-12.

**Mixed doubles:** Ishan Bhatnagar & Tanisha Crasto bt M. R. Arjun & Treesa Jolly 18-21, 21-18, 21-11; T. Nagendra Babu & Srivedya Gurazada bt Akshan Shetty & Simran Singh 15-21, 22-20, 21-9.

**Women:** P.V. Sindhu bt Evgeniya Kosetskaya (Rus) 21-11 (retd.); Malvika Bansod bt Anupama Upadhyay 19-21, 21-19, 21-7; (**Doubles:**) Anna Ching Yik Cheong & Yeo Mei Xing (Mas) bt Haritha Harinayanan & Ashna Roy 21-18, 21-7; Treesa Jolly & P. Gayathri bt Low Yeen Yuan & Valeree Siow (Mas) 17-21, 21-18, 21-16.

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**Confluence of faith:** The Sagar Island in West Bengal on the occasion of Makar Sankranti when thousands of people took a dip at the confluence of the Ganga and the sea. The annual pilgrimage at the southernmost tip of West Bengal was held amid restrictions due to a COVID-19 surge.

## + Mela in COVID shadow

Thousands of health workers were deployed along with the police to manage the Ganga Sagar Mela

TEXT AND IMAGES BY DEBASISH BHADURI

Ganga Sagar Mela was held between January 12 and 15 on the Sagar Island in the southernmost tip of West Bengal amid curbs due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Public health experts had expressed reservations on holding the annual pilgrimage when the third wave of the pandemic was at its peak and West Bengal was registering more than 20,000 active infections daily.

The festival was held as per instruction of the Calcutta High Court, which had directed pilgrims with two doses of vaccine and negative RT-PCR tests to enter the island, which is located about 130 km from Kolkata. The State government had in an affidavit informed the High Court that it was not in favour of cancelling the pilgrimage.

The West Bengal government had made elaborate arrangements which included testing and vaccination at various

entry points and on the island. Organising the festival had become an arduous task for the State administration. During the four-day festival, thousands of health workers were deployed along with the police and other security agencies. While the crowd was thinner than in previous years on the first few days, there was a swell on Makar Sankranti, January 14, considered auspicious for the holy dip. Lakhs of people took a holy dip in front of the Kapil Muni temple in the waters considered the confluence of the Ganga and the sea.

Every year, about 20 lakh people come to the Island on the occasion of Ganga Sagar Mela, but this year, the number was about five lakh. Amidst the curbs and restrictions, the colour of the festival, which becomes a melting pot of people from different parts of the country, was clearly visible. There was also a huge gathering of Sadhus (seers) belonging to different traditions. On some occasions the COVID-19 protocols took a back seat amidst the festivities and religiosity.



**Fighting a virus:** Health workers sanitise the Kapil Muni temple on the Sagar Island.



**Strict curbs:** Health workers carry notice of preventive measures on the Sagar Island. Pilgrims had to undergo mandatory COVID-19 tests and produce vaccination certificates.



**Display of religiosity:** Pilgrims bow to a man dressed as Lord Shiva on the island. Despite the elaborate checks, the devotees are not wearing masks.



**Preventive steps:** A woman devotee gets her child's hands sanitised.



**Long wait:** Devotees waiting for their turn for a dip at the confluence.



**Waiting army:**  
Makshay tents for  
healthcare  
volunteers.



**Crossing miles:** A  
young devotee all the  
way from Midnapore.

**Mela ends:** Dusk  
descends on the island  
on Makar Sankranti  
evening. After day-long  
festivities with  
thousands of people,  
calm is back.